



# Multi-stakeholder Dialogue: Water-Energy-Food (WEF) Nexus and Implementing the SDGs



## KEY POLICY MESSAGES

- The Water-Energy-Food Nexus Platform serves to identify and quantify synergies and competition across goals. It is specifically relevant to the implementation of SDGs 2, 6, and 7, and indirectly addresses all 17 SDGs.
- Institutional Barriers impede implementation of SDGs: instructional structures and cross-institutional mechanisms are needed that allow and incentivize integrative planning and better coordination.
- Science-Policy Communication requires the investment of time and effort to develop communication strategies at a level comparable to that devoted to modeling, quantification, and scenario development.
- Transdisciplinary Research needs an honest investment in one-on-one relations that achieve common goals by working together to make the most of the synergy that arises from diversity.

Voting in favor of « Nexus » vs.  
« water-centric » approaches; pre-debate.  
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[wefnexusgroup.org/wwf8](http://wefnexusgroup.org/wwf8)  
[www.iwra.org](http://www.iwra.org)

IWRA in association with  
WEF Nexus Consortium

Daher, B., Mohtar, R.H. et al (2018).  
Multi-stakeholder Dialogue: Water-Energy-Food  
(WEF) Nexus and Implementing the SDGs.  
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Timeline

**2016**

August



**WORLD WATER WEEK**  
in Stockholm

**2017**

June



**XVI World Water Congress**  
International Water Resources Association (IWRA)  
Cancun, Quintana Roo, Mexico, 29 May- 3 June, 2017

**2018**

March



**8th World Water Forum**  
Brasilia-Brazil 2018  
Sharing Water

July



**HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**



**WATER-ENERGY-FOOD (WEF) NEXUS CONSORTIUM MILESTONES**

Building on the strong policy messages and momentum established through a growing coalition of global partners at the Stockholm World Water Week (2016) and the XVI World Water Congress in Cancun (2017), the World Water Forum in Brasilia (2018) hosted a High Level Panel (HLP) linked to the theme of Development (Water for Sustainable Development), and the subthemes of water for food and water for energy. This HLP session complemented and built upon the earlier events to provide the opportunity for stakeholders outside of the water sector to engage in dialogue and address topics that cut across the multiple themes of the Brasilia Forum: water for energy, water for food, governance, financing, and communication.

The session included examples and discussions about the use of the tools of science and dialogue in pursuit of the implementation of SDGs. The lessons learned from the case studies presented, in the HLP and throughout the Forum, highlight the need for coherent, cross-sectoral policies that achieve the closely related SDGs and WEF Nexus challenges they address. Stakeholder diversity and the cross-cutting topics facilitated a broader dialogue that extended beyond the scope of any single session. A primary objective of the coalition was to produce a policy brief to be used at the High Level Political Forum in July 2018, including recommendations for moving forward toward the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

**MAJOR QUESTIONS ADDRESSED BY THE WEF NEXUS CONSORTIUM**

1. How can scientific tools, technology (particularly information and communication technology), data, and case studies contribute coherence to WEF systems / SDGs implementation?
2. What policies and incentives are needed to effectively promote the implementation of SDGs in the context of WEF systems?
3. What are some successful, cross-scale governance and technological lessons to be learned in WEF nexus implementation?
4. How can we communicate the complexities of WEF systems, and share positive messaging while maintaining momentum toward change for a sustainable future?
5. How do we maintain the integrity of human rights issues in the context of WEF systems solutions?
6. How can opportunities be better promoted and coordinated between cross-sectoral players and at multiple scales?
7. How can we support policy coherence efforts in achieving the implementation of the SDGs?
8. How can we facilitate effective dialogue between funding agencies, banks, academics, private and public sector, technology providers, entrepreneurs and civil society regarding the role of the WEF Nexus in SDGs implementation?

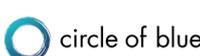
**THE WEF NEXUS CONSORTIUM**




























## KEY MESSAGES OF THE BRASILIA PANEL

1. Shift from efficiency-focus toward exploration of social and policy incentives at the interfaces of resource systems.
2. Provide inexpensive, locally produced infrastructure and technologies, supported by microfinancing programs.
3. Address the challenges of multiple scales of impact and decision making for different resource systems (i.e., water is more local, energy is more broad in scale).
4. Acknowledge and address the knowledge gap between understanding the interconnections of the resource systems and integrating the governance of implementation of interventions.
5. Understand and quantify the trade-offs between alternative interventions (i.e. use network analysis to inform the decision making process).
6. Include all utilities in the discussion (ie. not only the water utilities, but also the energy utilities).
7. Integrate planning across sectors. (i.e. for the financier, the goal is optimization resource use while prioritizing the mobilization of private and public sectors to integrate planning across sectors, spatially, and across financial streams).
8. Coordinate between institutions (i.e. not a centralized WEF planning institution, but enable the right mechanisms to promote and allow coordinated planning across and between existing institutions).
9. Acknowledge and promote the important role of Private-Public partnerships in support of WEF Nexus projects.
10. Discuss the basic values and broader social impacts of the 3 resource securities (water, energy, and food).
11. Acknowledge the important role of education (promote a new generation of integrative thinkers).
12. Acknowledge the role of women in developing capacity and infrastructure in water related issues.

Session Panel.  
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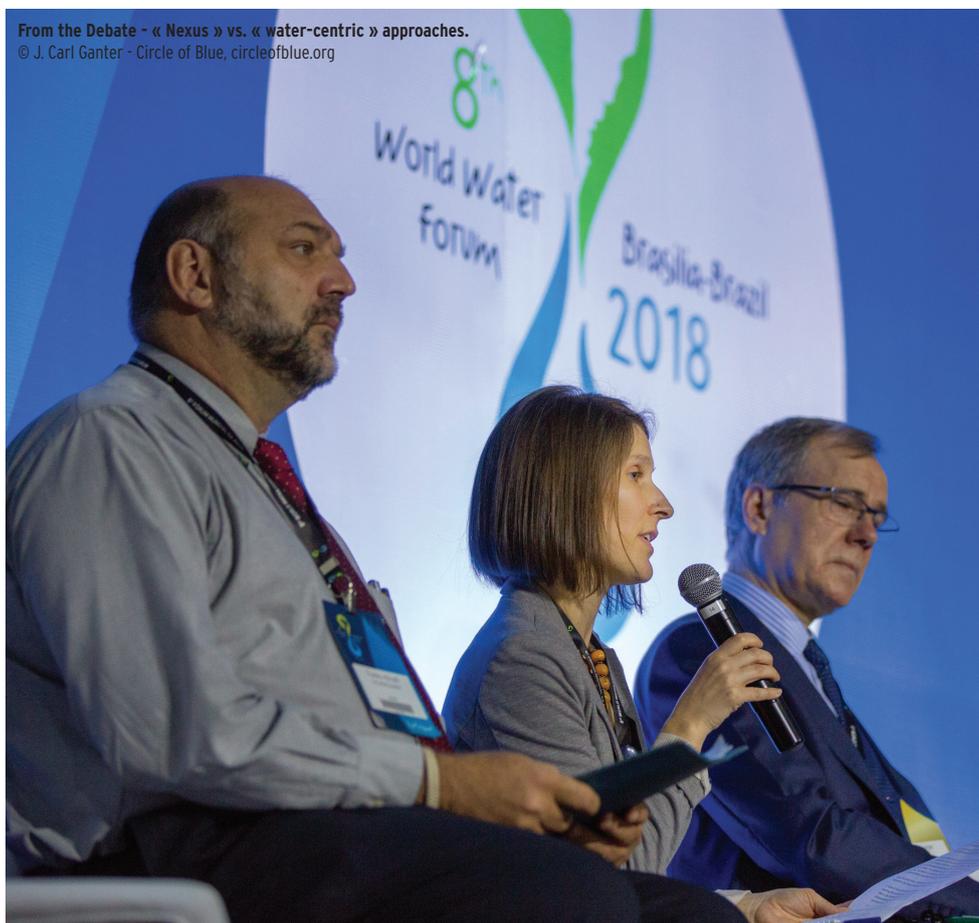
## «AMINA» AND THE EMPTY CHAIR

In addition to ensuring inclusiveness of the different perspectives present in the room, we must be aware of the voices that are rarely able to make it to those discussions. The panel intentionally included an “empty chair” for a sixth panelist, “Amina”, representing the voices of stakeholders unable to be in the room. Panel members endeavored to answer, on behalf of Amina, questions posed by the audience.

## FURTHER READING



Bassel Daher (2017). *Sustainability in the Water-Energy-Food Nexus: Bridging Science and Policy Making*.  
[www.iwra.org/policy-brief-no-6](http://www.iwra.org/policy-brief-no-6)



## COMMUNICATION

The debate that followed the panel discussion focused on two perspectives: the “water centric”, and the “nexus centric”. Using red cards to vote in favor of “water centric” and blue cards in favor of “nexus centric”, the audience voted before and following the debate. The result was a higher number in support of the “nexus” perspective in the pre-debate than after its conclusion. The debate seemed to arouse the audience toward a shift in perspective, increasing in sympathy toward the highlighted barriers that make working across disciplines more challenging: institutional, human resources, and time challenges.

Moving forward, there is a need to focus on strategies that strongly communicate the value of “nexus thinking” in planning and policy making processes, and to address the barriers that challenge those strategies.

## MOVING FORWARD: CHALLENGES TO BE ADDRESSED

- **MOVE BEYOND silos and toward more integrative planning within both scientific and policy making spheres.**
- **BETTER UNDERSTAND the institutional barriers challenging those working within a single sector.**
- **IMPROVE COMMUNICATION and coordination across sectors in support of better integrative planning.**
- **FOCUS ON transdisciplinary research and on creating success stories and case studies to share within the scientific community, and communicate with the decision makers.**
- **ADDRESS SKEPTICISM within the water community as to the value of a ‘nexus approach’.**

A Nexus approach is key to tackling the complexity and interdependency of Sustainability Development Goals, especially SDGs 2, 6 and 7.

**For more information:**  
[wefnexusgroup.org/wwf8/](http://wefnexusgroup.org/wwf8/)

## FURTHER READING

Raya Marina Stephan, Rabi H. Mohtar, Bassel Daher, Antonio Embid Irujo, Astrid Hillers, J. Carl Ganter, Louise Karlberg, Liber Martin, Saeed Nairizi, Diego J. Rodriguez, & Will Sarni (2018): *Water-energy-food nexus: a platform for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals*, *Water International*, DOI: 10.1080/02508060.2018.1446581

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