

30th AGUASAN Workshop (2014): Briefing Note

WATER CHALLENGES BEYOND WASH

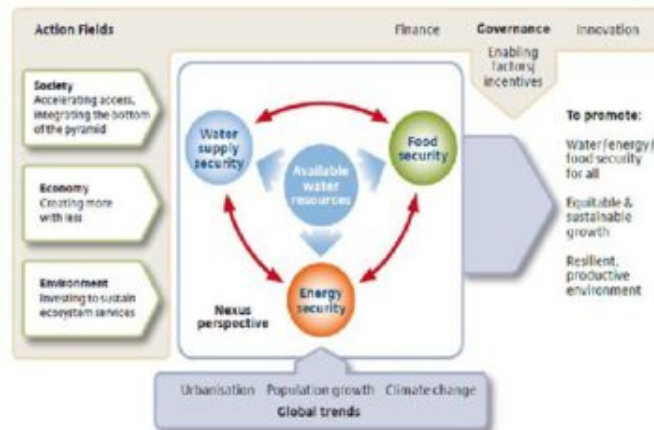
Bridging the water, food and energy sector divides

Topic

The **centrality and challenges of water at global level** have been again clearly articulated in 2013/14 in the various consultation processes on the post-2015 development agenda. Water is at the core of sustainable development in its social, economic and environmental dimensions. Water is also directly linked to peace and security. However, the world's freshwater resources are over-exploited, wasted and polluted to a degree never experienced before in the history of humanity. The magnitude of this global water crisis can be significantly reduced, but for this massive efforts into increasing water productivity in all sectors are required to balance supply and demand.

Global water security has thus to be addressed as one of the world's highest sustainable development priorities. Although the water community widely agrees on this, there are different opinions on what such a SDG for water should entail. While WASH is not disputed and well justified by the human right to water & sanitation, the other crucial issues of sustainable water resource management, of safe wastewater management and of water quality, will only get into the future development agenda as long as the interlinkages with other important development challenges such as food security, energy and the environment are clearly articulated. Hence, cross-sector issues are receiving increased attention, providing tremendous opportunities for innovations.

Since the 2011 Bonn Conference, the **Nexus approach** is widely discussed. Accordingly, increasing water, energy and food demand worldwide and related conflicts are more and more understood as interlinked problems which can only be solved based on integrated approaches to ensure water, energy, and food security for a more social equitable and ecological sustainable global development. These interlinkages are presented in the adjacent figure (Hoff, 2011).



Main features of a Nexus approach:

1. Increasing **resource efficiency** (productivity of resources; "creating more with less"), decoupling of economic development from resource use through technological innovations and recycling
2. **Reducing trade-offs** (conflict of goals)
3. Building **synergies**: "system efficiency" instead of "isolated sector productivity"
4. Improving governance across sectors: **dialogue** between sectors to support **equitable allocation and efficient use** of natural resources
5. Accelerating access, **integrating the poorest**
6. Investing to sustain **ecosystem services**



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