



Transformative Futures for Water Security

A dialogue co-convened by IWMI

IWMI
International Water
Management Institute



Eight transformative missions for science-based action for future water security

The Transformative Futures for Water Security initiative is:

- Five co-design workshops and feeder events
- Eight South-South regional dialogues and one global conference, with representation from 55 countries
- Over 1,000 participants from eight stakeholder groups and 400 organizations

Water is essential for ending poverty and hunger, the environment and achieving the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, water scarcity is experienced in many parts of the world today. Progress on Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation) of the SDGs must urgently accelerate given the rapidly expanding threats to water security for communities, countries and river basins.

To strengthen the international community's response to the world's most pressing water challenges, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) created the Transformative Futures for Water Security initiative (TFWS), which now has over 1,000 participants.

In the lead up to the UN 2023 Water Conference, the TFWS initiative convened representatives from youth networks, national and local governments, water user and advocacy groups, research institutes and the private sector to identify critical gaps and opportunities in water research, policy and action. This was done through a unique process that included eight virtual regional dialogues and a global conference held in Cape Town, South Africa, in February 2023.

**Water security is deeply intertwined with climate security.
Without immediate and bold action, water security is set to worsen.**



Photo: Muhammad Usman Ghani / IWMI.

At the heart of the TFWS initiative lies the question:

What are high-ambition, collective actions that will create strong alignment and convergence of knowledge and research, policy, business and on-the-ground implementation to deliver future water security?

The missions

Eight high-ambition missions for water research, policy and action, around which new coalitions are rallying, emerged from the multi-stakeholder dialogue process. In the diagram below, the first set of missions, highlighted in light blue, aims to achieve systemic outcomes. The second set, highlighted in green, enables

progress on the first set of missions. Participants of the TFWS Regional Dialogues also identified eight systemic levers, shown in orange, which are common to change strategies across the missions. The levers help to catalyze inclusive, long-term and sustainable change.



Missions for systemic outcomes

- 1 Build farmers' resilience to climate change and water risks** – by using climate-smart interventions and raising water productivity to transform agriculture.
- 2 Deliver sustainable, stakeholder-driven water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services** – with accountable institutions, adequate information and policies to achieve universal access.
- 3 Increase freshwater availability** – through circular management of wastewater everywhere, new technologies for non-conventional water, and cutting non-revenue losses.
- 4 Make water infrastructure future ready** – using ecological and built infrastructure that is complementary, equitable and resilient.

Enabling missions

- 5 Overcome data and information barriers** – by developing and operationalizing digital solutions for basins and aquifers worldwide.
- 6 Make water decisions fit for the future** – by integrating the full range of values of water and the objectives of multiple sectors and stakeholders and their tradeoffs.
- 7 Deliver good water governance and transboundary cooperation** – that is inclusive, participatory, equitable, accountable, responsive and smart.
- 8 Adapt to future water regimes and risks** – with enhanced climate information, preparedness, management innovation and capacity development.

Systemic levers

Systems do not transform by themselves. Transformative change only happens if crucial ingredients are present and reinforce each other. Throughout the process, we identified a set of drivers for transformative change:

- Co-creation of solutions with communities through the use of local and Indigenous Knowledge
- Research partnerships across policy and action boundaries
- Technical services that are integrated across the water-energy-food-ecosystems (WEFE) nexus
- Promotion of trust, inclusion and cooperation through multi-stakeholder dialogues
- Long-term and systemic financing
- Youth in leadership
- Women's equality
- Private sector engagement



Transforming future water security with those most affected in the lead

Youth co-guardians

Sixteen representatives from youth networks for water and science across the South were co-guardians of the TFWS initiative. They co-designed the regional dialogues, collected information, and co-facilitated the global conference agenda.

South-South dialogues

Communities that are least responsible for the climate and water crises are often the most vulnerable to their impacts. The

“Young people are not only future leaders, but they are today’s leaders. More than 60% of Africa’s population is under 25. We are integral in shaping the future of water and solving the water crisis.”

Derrick Mugisha, Youth Co-Guardian,
East Africa Representative

“The problem of collaboration between policy and scientific research is central. Strategic water resource management plans do not fit with the realities on the ground.”

Dr. Michèle Nken Okala, Youth Co-Guardian,
West and Central Africa Representative

“Science is broad and flexible. It’s time to do more research on how we can facilitate the participation of marginalized groups, bring up their voices, and start integrating and bridging local knowledge with science.”

Indah Salsabiela, Youth Co-Guardian,
Southeast Asia Representative

TFWS initiative convened virtual regional dialogues, in Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central and West Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East and North Africa, which were grounded in inclusive partnerships, including among organizations in the Global South and Global North.

An unconventional approach

Each regional dialogue gathered policymakers, user groups, funders and donors, knowledge generators, local governments, youth and participants from the public and private sectors to ensure equal representation across all stakeholder groups of the water community, and amplify the voices of the most marginalized.



Photo: Kgothatso Mophosho / IWMI.



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Mission-driven coalitions

Participants of the TFWS regional dialogues are now rallying around the missions to promote and catalyze ambitious collective action to transform the future of water security.

To find out more, contact us at TFWS2023@cgiar.org