

WEFE Nexus Initiatives and Governance in Transboundary Water Resources

Introductory Remarks by Dr. Hazim El-Naser
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WEFE Nexus Policy Webinar 5
Scaling for impact: Integrating WEFE Nexus innovations across regions and sectors

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WEFE Nexus Policy Webinar 5
SCALING FOR IMPACT: INTEGRATING WEFE NEXUS INNOVATIONS ACROSS REGIONS AND SECTORS

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Introduction

Good afternoon, everybody, I would like to thank the organizers for giving me the opportunity to speak to this distinguished gathering.

Drawing from extensive experience in transboundary water agreements, my introductory remarks will summarize key insights on managing shared resources using the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus approach—a tool of hydrodiplomacy that integrates water, energy, food, and ecosystem concerns across borders.

The WEFE Nexus is an effective means to spark dialogue and raise awareness before formal cooperation agreements are signed, but its impact is maximized when integrated with diplomatic efforts.

Water diplomacy combines principles of traditional diplomacy with technical expertise, scientific data, and stakeholder engagement to ensure equitable and sustainable use of shared water bodies.

The key concepts that form the basis of water diplomacy:

- Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM): Water diplomacy often aligns with IWRM, a framework that promotes coordinated development and management of water, land, and related resources to maximize social and economic benefits without compromising ecosystems.
- Equity and Sustainability: Water diplomacy emphasizes equitable allocation of water among riparian states while ensuring the long-term sustainability of water systems.
- *Sustainability focuses on long-term preservation, IWRM emphasizes comprehensive and coordinated management. Together, these approaches can help hydrodiplomacy to address current water challenges while safeguarding resources for future generations.*
- Preventive Action: The goal is to address potential conflicts before they escalate by fostering cooperative dialogue and joint management agreements.

- **Multi-Stakeholder Engagement:** Effective water diplomacy involves diverse stakeholders, including governments, civil society, private organizations, and international bodies.
- **Science-Policy Interface:** Scientific data and analyses are crucial for informed decision-making in water diplomacy, ensuring that solutions are evidence-based and practical.
- **WEFE nexus** can be considered as one of the hydrodiplomacy tools of all hydrodiplomacy tracks, the official, the communities and NGOs or the grass roots, to initiate dialogue among parties, raising awareness and demonstration of win-win experience which usually takes place before signature or agreement on cooperation. Unless its connected to diplomacy the objective of such initiatives will vanish out in the technical details of such initiatives.

Having said that, WEFE nexus initiatives can take place before signature of cooperation agreements or after signature with different purposes depend on the political status of the involved countries; are they in war, hostilities or just political tension. Here, we have so many examples. (Lebanon, Israel, Iraq, Egypt, Ethiopia). So, the design of WEFE cannot stand on itself as most of the initiatives today, it must simulate the reality of the basin in under consideration. Initiatives after signing cooperation agreements are more successful.

So, what are the WEFE objectives. Some just to raise awareness, where some are to build confidence, and few to deliver tangible benefits.

Trust in the context of transboundary water disputes refers to the confidence each party has in the commitment, honesty, and credibility of the other parties. Trust need time to be built due to the past conflicts and hostilities, and in no way be on the short term built; it requires consistent actions, transparent communication, canceling cooperation in hydrological measurement and data sharing, and reduced fear of resource violation and abuse by other riparian countries for a mutual respect over time. Without trust, negotiations often collapse, agreements lack legitimacy, and long-term cooperation is jeopardized.

What are the prerequisites for successful WEFE Nexus? in general, WEFE nexus projects require WEFE nexus at the national level before going to the cross-boundary projects. As it has to do with data standardization and measurements alignment of sector policies, etc.

- **National Water Plans and Their Intertwine** with the transboundary resources can be a real obstacle in advancing WEFE nexus.
- **On the regional level,** Transboundary water resources are shared by two or more countries, making their management inherently complex. Differences in national priorities, legal frameworks, and levels of development can lead to competition, mismanagement, or conflict. However, with effective cooperation and integrated governance, shared water resources can become a source of collaboration and regional stability.

What are the usual examples of WEFE Nexus Initiatives in Transboundary Contexts?
there are several international and regional initiatives have adopted the WEFE Nexus framework to address the complexities of transboundary resource management. Key features of successful initiatives include:

- **Capacity Building:** Providing training and technical support improves institutional capacities for Nexus-based planning and implementation
- **Initiatives related to climate change, weather and draughts** would help discussion initiation.
- **Joint Assessment and Planning:** Countries work together to assess resource availability and needs, such as inventories studies.
- **Standardization of measurements, data Sharing and Monitoring:**
- **Policy Harmonization:** Aligning national policies and regulations helps minimize conflicts and supports the integrated management of shared resources.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Involving local communities, civil society, and the private sector ensures that diverse perspectives are considered and that governance is inclusive.

Here are some practical examples of WEF Nexus Initiatives:

- The Danube River Basin: The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River applies Nexus principles to coordinate water quality, hydropower, agriculture, and ecosystem management among multiple countries, a good example is the DRBMP that works on the multiple demand on water resources for navigation, Agri, environment and power to achieve sustainable management under the EU water Framework directive demand.
- The Nile Basin Initiative was launched to promote cooperative management of the Nile River, which flows through 11 countries in Africa: Countries in the Nile Basin have adopted integrated approaches to manage water, energy, and food interdependencies, promoting cooperation and sustainable development.

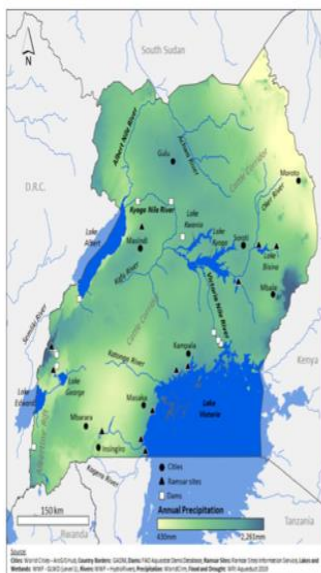
Uganda initiative is on gender and youth dimensions in cross-border trade and investment in the Nile Basin countries with the purpose to enhance the creation of benefits from cross-border trade through value addition across the trade chain and enhance benefit sharing through investment in livelihoods and through mainstreaming men, women and youth across the chain.

Case Studies on Youth Engament: The Nile Basin Initiative

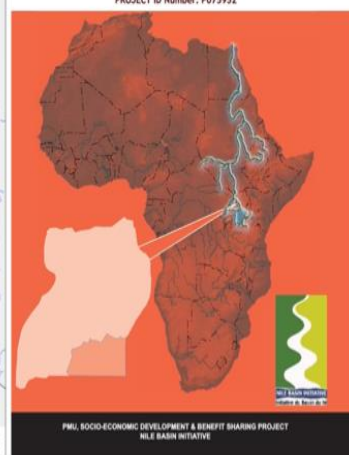
Uganda has abundant water resources, including extensive wetlands, the White Nile River, and major Lakes such as Lake Victoria. Approximately 35 percent of its water resources, originate in neighboring countries, which could create water availability or water quality challenges.

Source: (USAID and SWP 2015)

FIGURE 1. MAP OF WATER RESOURCES



SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND BENEFIT SHARING PROJECT (SDBS)
 FINAL REPORT 2008
 Gender and Youth Dimensions in Cross-Border
 Trade and Investment in the Nile Basin Countries
UGANDA
 PROJECT ID Number: P075952



Outcomes, improve food security, Food commodities move from surplus to deficient Nile Basin Countries ensuring that the peoples in deficient countries have sufficient food to eat. Farmers in the surplus countries are encouraged to produce more as the market is ensured, Increased value across the trade chain, Increase trans-boundary investments.

• **Blue Peace ME's WEF Nexus Activities Focus on:**

Hydro diplomacy cohort and capacity building program is successful; we need to watch and support WEF Nexus pilots, Developing and implementing scalable and replicable regional WEF Nexus pilot projects based on the outcomes of research and studies.

• **The Jordan River Basin**

The Jordan River Basin, shared by Israel, Jordan, and Palestine, has been a focal point for water diplomacy in the Middle East. Various initiatives, including the Red Sea-Dead Sea Water Conveyance Project, have been proposed to address water scarcity and foster cooperation in one of the world's most water-stressed regions.

The Red Sea –Dead Sea Canal Project

The Reed Sea –Dead Sea Conveyance Project (RSDSC) is one of the concepts put forth by the Trilateral Economic Committee with membership from Jordan, Israel and the United States to support the integrated development of the Jordan Rift Valley in accordance with Article 8 and 20 of the Peace Treaty between Jordan and Israel, signed on October 1994.

The Solution...the Red Sea-Dead Sea Water Conveyance Project



KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

- 1 **Establish a secure and affordable water supply for Jordan and the region**
- 2 **Save the Dead Sea from environmental degradation**
- 3 **Build a symbol of peace and cooperation in the Middle East, and to Facilitate Public-Private partnership (BOT) scheme**

Source: PPP By Dr Hazim El-Naser on the Red Sea- Dead Sea Project /Phase I, MWI, April 2016

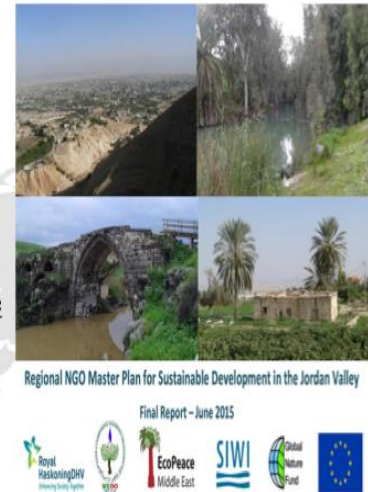
The goals of the integrated development are to promote sustained peace and economic development for both Israel and Jordan in a way that mutual benefits can be derived from improved infrastructural linkages, the reduction of environmental degradation of the Dead Sea, sharing common natural resources, the exchange and development of technologies, the economies of investment, and the implementation of projects that cross national boundaries. The RSDSC is a concept that exploits the potential energy available between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea, an elevation difference of about 400 meters.

Case Studies on Youth Engagement: The Jordan River Basin and Eco Peace Middle East

- Eco Peace Middle East is a unique environmental organization founded in 1994 by activists from Jordan, Israel, and Palestine. Its mission is to promote cooperative efforts to protect shared environmental resources, with the belief that such collaboration can also foster peace. The organization's work on the Jordan River Basin exemplifies this approach, blending environmental advocacy with community engagement.

Case Studies on Youth Engagement: The Regional NGO Master Plan for Sustainable Development in the Jordan Valley

The overall objective of this NGO Master Plan for Sustainable Development in the Jordan Valley is to promote peace, prosperity and security in the Jordan Valley and the region as a whole. This plan identifies feasible interventions that will restore the valley's environmental and ecological values within a realistic financial and economic framework. The Plan assumes that a future independent State of Palestine will be recognized as one of the three riparians to the Jordan River, side by side with Jordan and Israel, with all three nations entitled to an equitable share of the valley's resources. Furthermore, the plan assumes free access to the valley for all people within appropriate and negotiated security arrangements.



One of EcoPeace's most impactful initiatives is its emphasis on youth engagement. Recognizing that young people are the leaders of tomorrow, the organization has developed programs to educate, inspire, and mobilize youth across the region.

They managed to develop master plan for the rehabilitation of the Jordan River, an essential tool for WEF nexus. The master plan that was developed for LPJR in order present a wholistic and complimentary process that includes specific interventions aimed at targeting the needs of all potential economic sectors and the population currently in existence and the potential growth in this population and the socio – economic development requirements in the immediate, short, medium and long term, projecting these requirements all the way into the year 2050.

- **Iraq-Türkiye on the Tigris and Euphrates,**
Almost no WEF nexus programs due to many reasons related to the complexity of the issue and the dynamics of power in the basin as well as in the region.

2009 – The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreed to share hydrological and meteorological information and exchange expertise in these areas. In 2014, the 2009 MOU was amended to include plans for future joint water management projects, among them the assessment of current water resources and water uses and potential climate impacts. This assessment is intended to be used to determine an 'equitable and reasonable' share of river water for Iraq.

Recently, few days ago, Türkiye and Iraq signed a “mechanism document” for the financing of cooperation projects in the field of water as part of a broader framework agreement between the two countries.

Under the mechanism, infrastructure modernization and construction projects aimed at the efficient, effective, and sustainable use of Iraq's water resources will be undertaken by Turkish companies, with financing to be provided through a system based on Iraqi oil sales.

Through this arrangement, we hope that some WEF nexus project will be introduced!

Strengthening Governance for Transboundary WEFE Nexus is a long-term process as it requires:

1. Building Trust and Confidence in Transboundary Resources
2. Establishing sound and reliable Transboundary Institutions: River basin organizations or joint commissions provide platforms for negotiation, conflict resolution, and coordinated action.
3. Ensuring Equitable Benefit Sharing: Mechanisms that distribute the benefits and costs of cooperation fairly help to build trust and long-term commitment among riparian states.
4. Developing Legal and Policy Frameworks: Binding agreements and harmonized policies create a foundation for cooperation and mutual accountability.

Conclusion

The WEFE Nexus approach offers a powerful framework for addressing the interconnected challenges of water, energy, food, and ecosystem management in transboundary contexts. By fostering cooperation, data sharing, policy alignment, and inclusive governance, countries can transform potential sources of conflict into opportunities for sustainable development and regional integration. Strengthening governance structures remains the cornerstone of successful WEFE Nexus initiatives, ensuring that the shared benefits of transboundary resources are maximized for present and future generations.

As national water plans intertwine, the region's countries must navigate a complex web of competing interests and interdependencies. By prioritizing hydrodiplomacy through dialogue, innovation, and sustainable practices, the nations of the middle east can work toward a future where water scarcity becomes a unifying challenge rather than a divide.