



UN
2023 WATER
CONFERENCE

NEW YORK
22-24
MARCH
2023

UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

Rethinking Collective Action- How we can redesign our economic models to incentivise collective action and unlock impact, value and investments at system scale?

Friday 24th, 12:30-13:45, UNHQ Side Event Room 5

Organized by:

Danone, WaterEquity, Government of Chile, World Business Council for Sustainable Development, FCDO, Green Climate Fund, Inter-American Development Bank, Global Water Partnership, The Nature Conservancy, Saguapac, Veolia, Reckitt

Background on the event (one paragraph)

During this event the RETHINKING Coalition was launched. The coalition seeks to demonstrate a model of radical collaboration to collectively REIMAGINE our economic development, governance, planning and financing frameworks to incentivize collective action and unlock collective intelligence, impact, value and investments at system scale to achieve SDG6. The RETHINKING coalition aims to REIMAGINE our approach to water resources management and investment planning and foster collaboration amongst public and private stakeholders to secure multi-sectorial, multipurpose investments and instigate lasting economic change towards regenerative, water-secure development models.

Water Action Agenda (one paragraph, if possible, please include the link to your commitment in the Water Action Agenda database)

The coalition commits to work together intensely the following 3 years to demonstrate a model of radical collaboration to collectively REIMAGINE our economic development, governance, planning and financing frameworks to incentivize collective action and unlock collective intelligence, impact, value and investments at system scale to achieve SDG6. By the World Water Forum in Bali the coalition will have started to demonstrate this multisector public-private radical collaboration approach in selected regions of the world.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)

- Need to work more closely together, public, and private all the way from the beginning of the process of planning of investments and throughout the investment continuum to unlock greater collective action and private sector investments that add up instead of in contradiction or undermining each other.
- There is an urgent need to rethink, reframe and reshape and all coalition members – as expressed by the Chilean Minister of Public Works- have the willingness to engage and commit to a process of radical collaboration, that go beyond a focus on solutions for symptoms and aim at the identification of the root causes of our water challenges and advance the adoption of a multisystemic approach of integrative action initiatives, founded upon a strong commitment to collaborate for added value. A new paradigm for both the public and private sectors, where different entities, governments, ministries, and stakeholders have the necessary trust and skills to engage effectively in co-designing effective strategies for the management of water risks and provision of water services.
- Together the RETHINKING coalition members are willing to engage in a challenging undertaking that requires as Water.org and WaterEquity founder said a “suspension of disbelief”.
- An essential element of success for the RETHINKING process as stated by FCDO, is political leadership and the admission policy failure, changing the narrative of blaming others for our own mistakes and stop merely blaming climate change for current water challenges. A good way to support the work of the coalition is to review as group the Global Commission on the Economics of Water 7 points call to action, which engage transformative thinking to, mainstream inclusion, address the underpricing of water, create Just Water Partnerships, and address a multi-national governance of water.
- As expressed by the WBCSD and Danone, private sector potential goes well beyond provision of finance, and they can bring much more to the table in terms of collective action, like expertise and skills complementary to public sector ones. Principles to unlock private sector impact in collective action are: pre-competitive cooperation, sharing of data and knowledge, aligning owns role with collective action and plans of others, and participating actively in the improvement and alignment of private and public sector (investment) planning processes.
- To unlock investments at scale in water and resolve the mismatch between supply and demand of finance, it is crucial to advance our understanding of the value of water and include it in our investment planning processes. By building a shared understanding of the multiple values of water across sectors we have an opportunity to unlock both supply and demand sides of funding while accessing a greater number of funding pools.
- There is need to innovate yet without neglecting more procedural and transactional elements like contracts, procurement, pre-competitive collaboration, using nature as a baseline and so forth.
- To collectively redesign our economic models to incentivize collective action and unlock impact, value and investments at system scale, we need as expressed by the GCF a 5Cs Approach: Connector, Collaborator, Convener, Co-investment and Collective actions.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

Moving forward as coalition we need to identify countries where there is the political will and move towards demonstrating our radical collaboration approach. As summarized by Xavier Leflaive, Lead Water Team at the OECD Environment Directorate, key recommendations on how to empower collective action are:

- Rethink, reframe and reshape. Rethink and move away on from traditional development approaches towards partnerships that engage people in the way that they can participate in the processes and lead change by themselves. Build on existing capacities, rather than building capacities from scratch. There is much more to be gained by building upon existing assets. Reframe how we collectively work from a perspective of problems to be solved to markets to be served. Move from a hydrocentric and fragmented approach to a holistic way of working in the way investment portfolios are developed and regulations are reshaped, that are conducive to enhanced cooperation between countries and economic sectors.
- Letting go of egos will be critical in advancing the theory of change. We must give up on the illusion of control and trust the dynamic that will flow from collective action.
- Move beyond roles and give up on the notion that we must act according to assigned roles. Collective action requires some ambiguity and going beyond what we are traditionally assigned to do.
- The RETHINKING (collective action and investment planning) coalition is very much aligned with the approach of the Global Commission on the Economics of Water and therefore is important to connect both initiatives and explore in the following months where are the synergies for impact at global and local level. Xavier Water Lead from OECD committed to stablish this connection and dialogue.