



UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

[Source of Innovation: Accelerating SDG 6]

[Friday, March 24, 8:00-9:15 am (ET), UN HQ Conference Room 6]

Organized by: [Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) of the Government of Switzerland, Government of Israel, Ministry of Environment of the Government of South Korea, Fundación FEMSA and Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI).]

Background on the event (one paragraph)

Innovation requires the opening of spaces for dialogue and exchange, so that both traditional (ie, service providers and regulators) and non-traditional actors (ie, entrepreneurs and innovators) can interact, learn, collaborate, and contribute to the adoption of innovative solutions to ensure the achievement of the SDG6. In these spaces, the governments play a fundamental role by creating and implementing policies, programs, and regulations that create favourable conditions to scale-up innovations and reach vulnerable populations.

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

Under UN DESA consideration, soon to be published.

Source of Innovation is an alliance of the IDB Group with external partners to promote the development and adoption of innovative solutions in the water, sanitation, and solid waste sector to achieve smart, inclusive, and sustainable services, with a focus on service providers in Latin America and the Caribbean: <https://www.iadb.org/en/sector/source-innovation>

The commitment of the Source of Innovation alliance and its partners to achieve SDG 6 is to promote innovation as an accelerator towards better services and to continue carrying out different initiatives that identify and support the transformation of the WASH sector in Latin America and the Caribbean for the next five (5) years. This will be achieved through activities such as: the e-Hackathon for young people to develop innovative ideas to address gaps in the WASH sector (i.e. sanitation in informal settlements, water services in dispersed rural areas), the Ideas in Action awards that recognize service operating companies, and the IDB-FEMSA Awards for entrepreneurs and innovative companies, to promote cooperation for water and tangible actions for the coming years in the sector.

Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points): <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k17/k17xrqxqtg>

- The water and sanitation sector faces many challenges. We need to innovate to overcome these complex challenges.
- To innovate, an innovation ecosystem is needed, in which innovators and support agents can interact, exchanging resources that enable innovative ideas to transform into innovations that are adopted by the sector.
- In Latin America, there is a broken link in the innovation chain; only 20 percent of utilities have an innovation unit, less than 10 percent practice innovation, and only 2 percent have innovation plans. Source of Innovation is a new opportunity for the sector to build such innovation ecosystems that support innovation processes to reach the water and sanitation targets.
- Our invited innovators (Wayru, Tierra Grata, and EPMAPS Agua de Quito) are successful examples of key agents in an innovation ecosystem, and prove how the interactions with other agents have enabled them to scale. In Nuevo Leon, the local government is working on building resiliency through desalination, reductions in urban consumption, dams, and environmental policies.
- The [IDB-FEMSA Innovation 2023 Awards](#) competition for projects in safe water, sanitation and solid waste was officially launched. This award will seek to recognize the most innovative projects in sanitation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)

- Governments should implement specific and targeted incentive mechanisms to foster innovation.
- To activate the innovation ecosystem in water and sanitation, we need to identify key players, conduct participative diagnosis of the state of maturity of innovation ecosystems, understand the interactions that are happening, prioritize the components of the ecosystem to strengthen it, identify short, medium and long-term mechanisms, and implement a roadmap.
- It is essential to modernize traditional infrastructure to unlock new capabilities that were not possible before. Sensors, advanced analytics, Artificial Intelligence, as well as out-of-the box approaches and adapted technologies to reach the most vulnerable communities, can facilitate sustainable and inclusive growth, which is critical for supporting economic development, improving safety, promoting sustainability, and enhancing quality of life.
- Innovation in all fields plays a critical role in accelerating action towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Only by embracing new approaches and adopting new business models, we can make service delivery more efficient and cost-effective, and create a more equitable and prosperous future.