

Transformative Futures for Water Security Initiative

Latin America Regional Dialogue Harvest

The Latin American Regional Dialogue is a participatory, multi-stakeholders dialogue co-organized by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), The Organization of American States and Interamerican Development Bank, co-designed and facilitated by Perspectivity.

More than 30 representatives from the major designated stakeholders' groups in the water industry attended the Latin American Regional Dialogue, which brought together high-level knowledge from local state agencies, the public sector, civil society, academia, youth, and the commercial sector. The Latin American Regional Dialogue was held on January 19-20, 2023, and brought together participants from Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Argentina, Costa-Rica, Colombia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Uruguay, Ecuador, who actively participated in an actively engaging, participatory, and dynamic working process inspired by "Future Search" conference methodology (which is a unique planning method that enables large, diverse groups to validate a common mission, take responsibility for actions, and collaborate on projects). All the participants of the Latin American Regional Dialogue worked around one central question – "What are high-ambition, collective actions that will create strong alignment of knowledge and research, policy, business and on-the-ground implementation to deliver future water security?" and they worked on generating concrete regional input for the TFWS Global Conference that will be held in February 2023 in South Africa, and furthermore to the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York in March 2023.

This harvest document is a high-level overview of the regional dialogue's outstanding themes. The facilitation and hosting teams collaborated on its creation.



Image-1: Word Cloud presents the words that stayed with participants from day-2. Showing governance, work, change, regional vision, shared vision, cooperation, quality, constructive dialogue, community, women, hope, exchange of ideas, challenges, water agenda, integrated, citizen etc.

Process Overview

Latin America Regional Dialogue was the seventh of eight regional dialogues organized in 2022-2023. The regional dialogue concentrated around the central question, and designed to be interactive and engaging process, where every participant had a voice and shared their views and ideas around the future of water security. The results of the regional dialogues will be used to finalize the design of the water security action plan at the TFWS Global Conference in South Africa (more information about this event can be found [here](#)). And all the results will contribute to the outcome of the UN 2023 Water conference, 22-24 March 2023 in New York (more information can be found by following this link [here](#)).

The Regional Dialogue process allowed the diverse and intersectoral stakeholders to explore the central question by working collectively on four progressive, engaging, and self-managed tasks.

In mixed stakeholders' groups, participants worked on key four tasks:

1. **Describing the Past** – what happened in the past and what were the factors that caused the current situation?
2. **Understanding the Past** – understanding the situation where we find ourselves now. The groups looked around the key factors that might have affected the present situation – social, economic, financial, political, scientific, ecological etc.

3. **The Future** – what is the desirable, motivating and the best possible scenario of the future?

4. **How to reach the future** – what do we need to keep and what do we need to let go to reach all the goals and create best solutions for the future water security.

Working platform

During these two days participants generated ideas, looked for solutions and created their vision of future in the uniquely create working platform in padlet. This platform allowed participants to express their views freely and engaged all the stakeholders from different age group and professional background. The working process and all the relevant documents can be found by following this link: <https://padlet.com/Perspectivity/dialogos-regionales-sobre-transformaciones-futuras-para-la-s-vffin6zsc3psfxqq>

Youth representatives and co-hosts

Generally, there were good number of youth participants from all countries at the Latin American Regional Dialogue. It was very inspiring to see the engagement and active participation of the youth, who shared their views about the current situation around the water security in the region, and provided their vision for the future, how it should look like and what should be

the focus in ensuring the water security. The regional dialogue engaged two youth co-hosts, who actively engaged in the working process and voiced the youth's opinion and stand on the issues of water security in Latin American region. The two leading youth co-hosts – Axel Martinez Nieto and Carolina MacKinnon Tornesi.

IWMI presence at the Latin American Regional Dialogue

The regional dialogue was supported, co-hosted, and attended by two IWMI representatives – Juan Carlos Sanchez Ramiriz and Chiara Christina Colombo. Opening and closing remarks were

delivered by Juan Carlos Sanchez, IWMI representatives based in Uganda.

Facilitation and Harvesting

The Latin American Regional Dialogue was designed and facilitated by Perspectivity team members – Jose Antonio Peres, Marjolein Kok and Azamat Shambilov. More information about Perspectivity can be found [here](#).

Working language

Latin American Regional Dialogue was held in Spanish language.

“This regional dialogue gave us the unique platform to share our common concerns regarding the water security in all countries, and we were able to look for common solutions that would suit all”

Regional dialogue participant

Latin America Regional Dialogue – Stakeholders' Group

The regional dialogue brought together stakeholders from eight groups and engaged in working process to generate ideas, solutions, and recommendations. The working process enabled the participants to share the knowledge from various sectors and helped to shape the recommendations based on all the information from different sources.

- ⇒ Youth
- ⇒ Policy makers
- ⇒ Local government and public water service providers
- ⇒ Knowledge generators (academia, research, indigenous knowledge, and solution providers, startups, entrepreneurs, thematic media outlet representatives)
- ⇒ Funders and investors
- ⇒ Civil society organizations, NGOs working in the field of environmental issues and water resources.
- ⇒ Users group
- ⇒ Private sector (multinational companies, SMEs, private water companies etc.)

Regional Dialogue Highlights

Participants agreed that each nation in the region is attempting to tackle its own issues. An agreement among participants on the universality and consistency of water security concerns across the Latin American region, despite differences in certain factors in each country, however similarity in common challenges and barrier in ensuring the water security.

The political and institutional crisis has generated a mismanagement of economic resources which diminishes the possibility of establishing or improving infrastructure and technologies. Citizens' participation is still insufficient in most of the countries in the region, citizens are not aware of the importance of water issues. Rapidly growing agricultural industry has implied a change in the use of water resources and brought its own challenges to the context of water security in the region.

The regional dialogue participants stated that there is need to maintain and develop further expansion of the "South-South Cooperation" across the region and engage other regions in developing water security practices. Participants from Latin America region shared their common views on importance to incorporate water security issues into the "South-South Cooperation". The Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation held in March 2019 in Buenos Aires¹ brought together the members states, UN entities and key stakeholders and encouraged states to work in the framework of the South-South Cooperation and promote the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs)².

Another significant point was raised about promotion and implementation of the United Nations Escazu Agreement³ "Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean". This agreement is a tool used for the protection of the environment and human rights.

The Escazu Agreement seeks to guarantee:

- ✓ Access to information,
- ✓ Public Participation Access to Justice regarding environmental matters in Latin America,
- ✓ It sets forth objectives to ensure people can have access to environmental information,
- ✓ People can be consulted in environmental decision-making processes, because they can act in cases of the environmental damage,
- ✓ It promotes and defends the rights of environmental defender and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.

¹ UN Second High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation <https://unsouthsouth.org/bapa40/>

²Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, outcome document <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/N1911172.pdf>

³ UN Escazu Agreement <https://www.cepal.org/en/escazuagreement>

The regional dialogue shaped the discussion around the next key thematic areas:

- > Effective governance
- > Shared regional vision
- > Water agenda
- > Regional cooperation and interexchange of experiences
- > Absence of necessary legal regulations and outdated legislations
- > Old infrastructure and lack of professionals in the field
- > Challenges and environmental issues

I. Participants listed number of issues that lead to the current situation "where we are now":

- The legal regulations and laws should be modernized and adapted to the current needs
- Local protective communities are not recognized in their role of the headwaters, bordering the rivers and lakes
- Deforestation and degradation of ecosystems
- There is urging need to pay attention to the issues of the rivers and lakes
- Abandonment of the monitoring systems of the basin headwaters (bodies of water)
- Deficit in water sanitation, and the quality of the water due to the excessive use
- Cross-border cooperation is still insufficient
- The effects of Climate Change - vulnerability due to exposure of extreme hydrometeorological events (hurricanes, droughts etc.)
- Increased need to transfer water from other basins
- Water quality problems (contamination, sedimentation)
- One of the most important challenges is water governance
- Fragmentation / atomization of the IWRM approach (certain actors focus on certain issues: WASH, forestry). Water actors often work in isolation
- Disorderly population growth has generated significant pressures on the region's watersheds. Internal migration to urban centers has generated sensitive problems in the water supply in many of the largest cities in the region
- The Region has experienced trade agreements that resulted in increased exploitation of water for certain uses, generating pressure on bodies of water (expansion of the agricultural frontier, increase in the extractive industry)
- Conflicts between users due to increased demand
- Certain countries have not changed their production systems, which place greater pressure on ecosystems, directly affecting bodies of water (e.g., Honduras maintains an agricultural vocation, despite being a forest country)

II. The groups worked around the key factors that have affected the present situation – social, economic, financial, political, scientific, ecological:

Socio-political factors

1. Poor governance causes fragmentation and atomization of IWRM participants (certain actors focus on certain issues: WASH, forestry). Water performers typically work alone.
2. National instability and socioeconomic crises have a severe influence on the implementation of development activities at the level of access to PHC and IWRM services.
3. The pandemic has been a watershed moment in both ways (in terms of exposing the importance of access to services and revealing weaknesses),
4. Service privatizations or nationalizations,
5. Organizational weakness (hinders the correct application of the laws in the countries),
6. Political will (progress in water concerns is heavily dependent on the priorities of the governments in power; there is a lack of a country vision that transcends government periods and assures continuity),
7. A lot of instrumentalization but insufficient implementation,
8. Communication problems - lack of interaction/disassociation between generated technical information and decision makers (better dissemination of academic and the scientific information are required at different levels),
9. Regional inequity, which affects access to services,
10. A lack of laws and disparities, as well as non-approval of norms. For instance, consider overturning in bodies of water. Legislative diversity varies by province and area. Some operators operate with varying water quality and discharges/overturning. Work is being done to standardize standards,
11. Because large businesses have greater resources, management capacity is more uneven. Access to technical collaboration, for example, for energy efficiency, is challenging for small firms. As a result, there is insufficient water value to bridge the gap and apply techniques. In neither the provision nor the rivers. Rivers are viewed as sewers, and the utility of water is undervalued, particularly in cities. There isn't always a link between the rivers. As a result, many resource management plans fail to take the basin into consideration. A lack of proper basin governance. Inadequate treatment and a lack of complete vision,
12. Political polarization; the trade-off between growth and sustainability. Corruption is a problem, limiting investment opportunities in the water sector. Control of water resources concerns are directly related to corruption. Behind illicit mining is drug trafficking. Absence of the presence of the State in certain areas, such as the Amazon.

Economic factors

1. Economic reality of the countries regarding to the availability of liquidity for investments,
2. Lack of prominence of Latin America at the international level in terms of reservoirs of water resources (it has been seen more as a supplier of raw materials and therefore a 'extractivist' approach had been adopted),
3. Economic instability in the region, it harms service expansion plans.
4. Prevents the effective and economic future planning. Lack of external financing. This leads to many of the companies supported by international organizations or states, and this prevents them from being achieved.
5. Economic growth generates pressure on water, without considering the exosystemic and sustainable vision for water, both in the use of water and in polluting water (oil and mining industries)

Environmental factors

1. Increase in legally supported protected areas,
2. Revaluation of the region in ecological matters (Greater awareness) -Depending on the governments in power,
3. Disappearance of glaciers, floods, freshwater biodiversity is greatly affected and is one of the least recognized issues.

Scientific and technological factors

1. Increase in data collection,
2. The digitization of information has allowed the systematization of replicable methods of quantification, evaluation, and validation in different regions,
3. Increase in scientific production: professionals dedicated to the study of environmental issues (natural resources, disaster risk, meteorology),
4. Generation of face-to-face and virtual spaces: Dedicated to sharing experiences, disseminating ideas and advances regarding water resources.

"Corruption is a problem, limiting investment opportunities in the water sector. Control of water resources concerns are directly related to corruption"

Regional dialogue participant

III. An overview of the best possible responses for a water secure future

- > Water resources must be handled in an intersectoral and inclusive way (equal representation in decision-making).
- > Communication has developed to accomplish information methods that reach the bases as well as better disseminate scientific knowledge. Future Water Management and Security Communication Strategy.
- > A strong legislative and institutional basis (functional National Water Authorities). There is a body that transcends administrations and maintains the continuation of national programs and initiatives.
- > A body that protects government institutions' institutional memory. That this is legally obligatory and that the degree of compliance with the obligations may be monitored. More access to information will result in increased stakeholder involvement, stronger collective action for water resources, and decision-making participation.
- > Water initiatives will be presented using models (3D printing) and virtual reality. Artificial Intelligence. The distribution of technological concentration will become increasingly uneven. Increased horizontality in certain areas of work. Virtuality will alleviate geographical constraints in collaborative operations.
- > New urban design projects will be based on a better fit with the ecosystems that surround them. The city's action plans include projects for both green and gray infrastructure on a larger scale, while ignoring smaller-scale projects.
- > Technology will allow us to keep track of our consumption through applications. Domestic appliances will be more efficient. New therapeutic technologies will be developed in the future.
- > Value of the water will change. The proportion of individuals (in society) who appreciate the value of water (its significance, value, and relationship to ecosystem services) has grown.
- > Institutions will look differently. Water is no longer seen as a second- or third-level problem by governments in 2050. They now recognize that water is a critical development issue, and the Ministry in charge of water regulation and management is elevated to the level of a first-class ministry (Water Development and Planning). Dynamic and inclusive governance mechanisms: democratic, informed, and organized involvement to manage resources from the most suitable territorial units. Participatory approaches are used to develop public policies from the bottom up.

"There is a new water culture in which there is greater awareness of the amount of water we use on a personal level"

Regional dialogue participant

IV. Main keeps and Let Go's per each stakeholders' group present

What we are keeping and letting to reach and take responsibility for the desired future:

Youth

Keep youth empowerment – maintain youth groups to influence decision-making. Keep the sensitivity and contact with the community.

Let go the fear of intervening in important spaces, with decision makers.
Let go toxic competitive attitude - we all work towards the same goals, encourage collaborative work.

Policy makers

Keep the participation of local governments together with communities and water users.

Let go the style of work in an isolated and sectoral manner.

Local government and public water service providers

Maintain cooperation mechanisms between local organizations in Latin American countries. Preserve and strengthen the integral management of water resources.

Let go the non-inclusion of all the actors in working process.

Civil society organisations / NGOs

Keep the water resource as a right to humanity, with a wide acceptance of nature. Maintain strategic alliances (international), along with cross-border cooperation.

Let go the extensive agriculture that generates demands for resources and increases the pollution. The educational systems that are outdated, and do not increase the importance of water resources. The production of energy resources that are consistent and generate damage to rivers and basins.

"We must act now, and act together to save our water and secure the future with water. We don't have another 100 years to destroy the water, our planet is suffering from what we consume – goods, clothes and food"

Regional dialogue participant

About Perspective

Perspective builds inspiring collaborations for sustainable growth. We work with groups and individuals to address complex realities in organisations and communities. In current times of increasing complexity, blue prints have become obsolete. As Perspective, we dare to look at the world upside down. We bring a fresh perspective!

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