

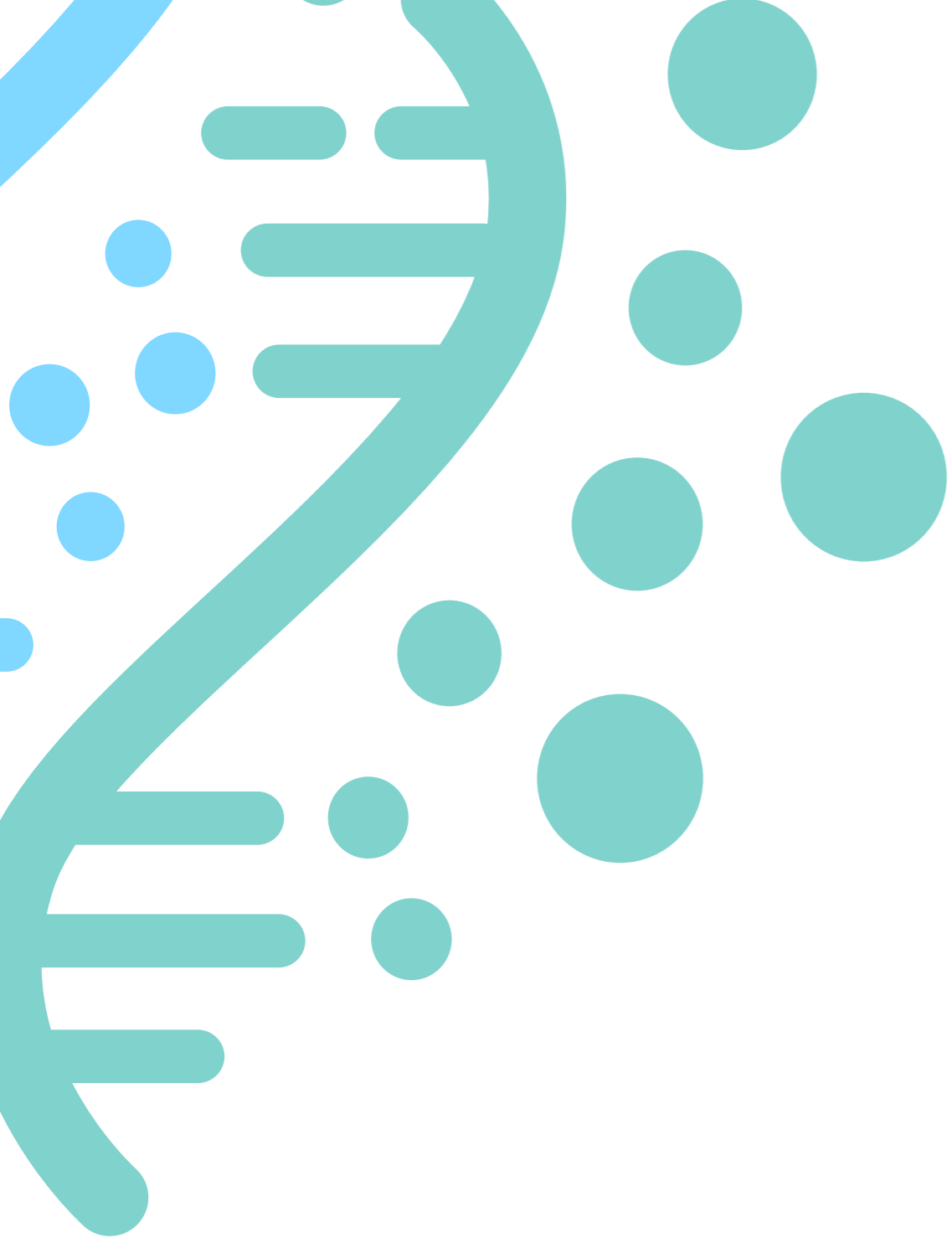


**Insights and calls to action from  
700 changemakers at the  
All Systems Connect  
International Symposium 2023**



**asc23**

[www.allsystemsconnect2023.org](http://www.allsystemsconnect2023.org)



This communiqué draws together the key insights and calls to action from the All Systems Connect International Symposium 2023, World Forum, The Hague, The Netherlands, 2-4 May 2023.

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## Systems change starts with us. Now is the moment.

### Insights and calls to action from 700 changemakers at the All Systems Connect International Symposium 2023

The biggest issues facing our world today cannot be solved by the fragmented and siloed thinking of the past. Our global challenges – from climate change to competition for scarce resources – require us to think differently, act differently, and connect across sectors and disciplines. We can only do this through systems leadership and collective action, with governments at the centre.

This communication draws together the key insights and calls to action from 700 changemakers and systems leaders from water, sanitation and hygiene, health, climate, economic development and social justice. Importantly, these included governments from some of the countries facing the greatest injustices. They came together as part of a determined intervention to change the way we work, to accelerate action towards the Sustainable Development Goals, and to promote the delivery of safe and sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene as a gateway to justice for all.

## About All Systems Connect

All Systems Connect (World Forum, The Hague, The Netherlands, 2-4 May 2023) was convened by the One For All Alliance – IRC, Water For People and Water for Good – and partners and featured:

- **10 ministerial level delegations** from Ethiopia, Guatemala, Ghana, Honduras, Indonesia, Liberia, Malawi, Nepal, Rwanda and Uganda, and government representatives from 57 other countries;
- **250+ presenters**, recognised for their global expertise and influence;
- **66+ sessions** sharing evidence and ideas;
- **5 Action Assemblies**, supported by a Wisdom Council, to synthesise insights and calls to action;
- **3 Make Change Design Sprints** prototyping solutions around youth action, head of state engagement and national systems strengthening;
- **4 country and regional dialogues** sharing insights and experiences.



# Priority actions for all systems leaders

## SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP

*Promote, champion and build capacity for systems leadership.*

We live surrounded by systems: natural systems; human-made systems; regulatory systems; infrastructure systems. We rely on them to provide us with crucial services. Only strong systems can do this, and failing systems need to change. People are central to these systems and *systems leaders* are key to transforming systems to face existing and emerging challenges.

### What we need to do

- Courageously step up to our role as systems leaders, wherever we are in the system.
- Improve our understanding of systems strengthening and leadership through ongoing dialogue, learning, resources and training.
- Identify and support local and national systems leaders (current and emerging), and develop leadership programmes to help us to do this.



## CONNECTION & COLLECTIVE ACTION

*Promote, champion and build capacity for connected action between sectors and disciplines.*

Achieving systems change means understanding the connections between health, finance, climate, social justice, and water, sanitation and hygiene. Vision-led collective action through systems leadership is not a choice: it's essential. It will help us to work effectively with people and institutions with diverse perspectives and sometimes conflicting agendas.

### What we need to do

- Invest in collective action: relationship-building, joint visioning, mutual accountability, conflict-resolution, effective coordination and information sharing.
- Forge new multi-sector and multi-actor alliances.
- Actively participate in (and expand) coordination and collaboration mechanisms such as joint sector reviews and working groups via Sanitation and Water for All and Agenda for Change as well as wider alliances through the UN and climate summits (Conference of the Parties – COPs).

## PRESIDENTIAL COMPACTS

*Increase the number and impact of these high-level national commitments that place water, sanitation and hygiene and systems strengthening at the heart of national agendas.*

During the Symposium, Ministers from Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, and Malawi, and Heads of Delegations from Liberia, Mali, Rwanda, and Uganda joined a breakfast convened by The Kingdom of the Netherlands, aimed to accelerate discussions on presidential compacts for water, sanitation and hygiene.

### What we need to do

- Work with all ministers and country level stakeholders to join the movement to engage heads of states. Be bold and fearless in advocating for and achieving high-level engagement.
- Forge new alliances to stimulate transformative action, building multi-sector leadership champions for compacts.
- Meaningfully involve young people in advocacy, decision-making, and action, and use human connection and empathy to build momentum and a movement for change.



## HEALTH

*Further develop policy frameworks that connect water, sanitation and hygiene with health.*

"Health is cheaper than healthcare" (Dr Githinji Gitahi at All Systems Connect). And water, sanitation, and hygiene systems are an inexpensive way to improve health. Yet they remain low on global health agendas. Responsibilities for water sanitation and hygiene are spread across multiple ministries and agencies. Poor communication and lack of accountability prevent opportunities to work together. To make matters worse, water, sanitation and hygiene is part of an undervalued primary health care sector that competes for resources with other health priorities.

### What we need to do

- jointly driver/Identify coordination mechanisms between health and WASH stakeholders at the national level, agreeing upon roles and responsibilities and common objectives.
- Advocate jointly for water, sanitation and hygiene as a driver of public health within existing global health initiatives (eg One Health, Planetary Health, Primary Health Care); and at the highest levels of government and funders.
- Collaborate with health advocates to draft a cabinet-level memo that Ministries of Health can adapt to create buy-in and ownership of WASH with other ministries.
- Integrate WASH data into existing health management information systems.
- Include water, sanitation and hygiene in key global health events and ensure achievable calls to action.

## CLIMATE

*Strengthen links between water resources management, climate action, and water, sanitation and hygiene.*

Reliable water and sanitation services are key to making communities resilient in the face of climate change and reducing climate related inequalities. In addition to increasing the severity and frequency of droughts, floods and saltwater intrusion, climate change is placing pressure on the governance, finances and stakeholder cohesion in water, sanitation and hygiene systems at large. This multiplier effect is why we must act with great urgency to enable systems to function within an increasingly volatile context.

### What we need to do

- Mainstream climate-resilience into all WASH programming; ensuring the inclusion of social justice principles.
- Pursue an integrated approach to climate adaptation and resilience that builds on development efforts and institutions, including the strengthening of water, sanitation and hygiene systems.
- Use the language of those we aim to influence, forge compelling narratives that clearly communicate the relationship between resilience in the face of climate change, water resources and water, sanitation, and hygiene systems.



## SOCIAL JUSTICE & CITIZEN VOICE

*Dismantle the systems that marginalise people, and ensure their rights are upheld by governments and others.*

People are not accidentally at the margins or left behind: they are actively excluded by systems of power. Injustices in access to essential services like sanitation are often associated with countries with limited resources, but they also exist in wealthy countries. Repressive laws are spreading, and there are increased restrictions on freedoms to express, participate, assemble and associate. New technologies have given governments excuses to control civil society movements and media freedoms, yet they also have the capacity to shine a new light on injustice and mobilise citizens to bring their voice and agency to enable systems improvements.



### What we need to do

- Increase our awareness of how gender, race, class and power influence the way we act within systems; challenge discrimination by exposing it and prioritise the most vulnerable.
- Include rights organisations in multistakeholder dialogues and include marginalised people in systems strengthening processes.
- Ensure we serve people's material needs (for water, housing, sanitation, a safe environment, health), in a way that respects them and their participation and that access to safe water and sanitation is not subject to a person's legality, formality or documentation.

## FINANCING

*Connect water sector actors with finance institutions, often through intermediaries, to reduce the finance gap.*

The gap in financing for SDG6 is large. There is no single source of funding or best strategy to fill it, but there is a clear order of priority. Most of the potential reduction lies in increasing efficiency by strengthening institutions: reducing non-revenue water and investing in energy efficiency and increasing absorption capacity of (local) governments so they can access and spend the budgets they have. Better performance, and clearly articulated needs for finance are critical to attracting repayable finance. And it's not just banks, service providers, and governments-- intermediaries have a key role in connecting the supply and demand of finance.

### What we need to do

- Use available money better, as a precondition for mobilising new money.
- Build equitable systems to finance the sector through taxes and tariffs. Without these, we're stuck.
- Improve policies and regulations to increase viability of professional service providers that deliver safely managed services.
- Direct public finance into developing pipelines of well-prepared projects to attract repayable finance for infrastructure.
- In developing the financial systems, put emphasis on intermediaries that can link providers of finance to recipients -- service providers and entrepreneurs.
- Segment and bundle investment opportunities to scale up and attract financiers.

## What's next?

### All systems must perform

We need to move from all systems connecting, to all systems performing – and continue to learn and accelerate actions in systems strengthening.

We need to take transformative action in strengthening national systems across all interconnected sectors, complemented by strategic support from private sector and international partners. Collectively we can and must increase opportunities to unite diverse stakeholders for joint visioning, learning, and mutual accountability in collective action.



### Together, the only way

No single organisation or leader can realise the transition from failing infrastructure to safely managed services. Weak regulatory systems prevent even well-designed policy changes from bearing fruit in terms of services. Data is not accessible to decision-makers, making it difficult to plan and coordinate effectively. We don't have enough people with the right skills and knowledge, who are connected across sectors, to achieve SDG6. These simple building blocks of public service delivery must be systematically improved.

The Government of Rwanda has committed to hold a follow up to the All Systems Go Africa! Symposium 2022, in Kigali in 2025 to enhance ownership and commitment by all strategic players to achieve the post-2025 Africa Water Vision.



## People are at the centre of these systems— you, me, them, us.

We call on everyone reading this to think about what you, given your current position and resources, can do to advance the actions outlined here.

While the points are general, change will only occur when individuals and groups use their power to break from the status quo and move us ahead, together.

This communication is just the beginning. Please share it widely and use it as a seed for forging new relationships and collaborations, and a prompt for continued conversation.

The One For All Alliance is continuing to receive insights, synthesis notes, and personal reflections from the 700 participants at All Systems Connect, and we'll be compiling and sharing these over time.

If you haven't already, sign up to our All Systems Connect enews to keep in touch with developments: [www.mailchi.mp/ircwash/allsystemsconnect](http://www.mailchi.mp/ircwash/allsystemsconnect)

### Further reading

- [All Systems Connect – how can systems leadership achieve justice for all? www.bit.ly/ASCnote](http://www.bit.ly/ASCnote)
- [All Systems Connect blogs www.allsystemsconnect2023.org/blogs](http://www.allsystemsconnect2023.org/blogs)
- [All Systems Connect resources www.allsystemsconnect2023.org/resources](http://www.allsystemsconnect2023.org/resources)



# IRC + water for people + water for good.

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