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## Communicating about Nexus

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### **1. What kind of examples of Nexus in Central Asia do you know? Why do you think it is important?**

Central Asian states are undergoing socio-politico-economic transitions since early 1990s, including natural resources management systems. Energy-water-food linkage plays a critical role for economic development and shared prosperity. These three resources are tightly interconnected, forming a resource and policy nexus. The regional political economies are still based on increasing resource abstraction instead of its reorientation toward efficiency improvements. Central Asian countries once practiced quasi-nexus approach during the Soviet period when commodities exchanged, water and energy development coexisted. During the course of its “statehood construction” in Central Asia, regional integration was outpaced with more autonomous development pathways of each state. During the Soviet period, centralized Soviet economy could be an example of pseudo-nexus experience. The single centralized, planned economic umbrella with a common energy system, water infrastructure used to be dispatched by Moscow.

The disagreement between water for irrigation and water for hydropower in the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers basins is a widely known problem. During the Soviet pseudo-nexus period, the Toktogul Dam in upstream Kyrgyzstan and Nurek Dam in upstream Tajikistan were designed as irrigation – hydropower facilities. Water was stored in reservoirs during the winter for release in the summer to satisfy downstream-irrigated agricultural needs. Hydropower, generated during summer, was distributed through a united energy grid system.

The energy distribution was controlled from the United Dispatch Center, located in Tashkent City (Uzbekistan).

Positive results of the implemented approach were not only timely distributed water resources between countries and energy but also dispute settlement between upstream and downstream countries. Today, when these countries are no longer dependent on central government, but are independent, such system will not work without readiness and better understanding of economic benefits might stem from this approach.

### **2. What aspects of Nexus can promote regional cooperation in Central Asia?**

Nexus approach takes into consideration interlinkages between water-energy-food and environment. Central role here belongs to water and use of this resource in different sectors. As water in the region is a transboundary resource, it leads to competition between countries in the region. Regional water cooperation that existed during the soviet period is not working anymore due to the newly formed independent states trying to secure their resources. Today, water management system of countries faces several difficulties including poor governance and weak institutional capacity, absence of appropriate wide stakeholder participation and integration of intersectoral approaches into water planning, governance, mistrust between countries. Inefficient water management influences other sectors and main competition is about water for energy and water for irrigation. So, Central Asian countries should further collaborate on ways to develop agreements and policies to achieve mutual benefits and mechanism to compromise with preserving both environment and economic sustainability.

### 3. What is necessary in order to strengthening intersectoral cooperation?

Water issues in the region have been centerpiece of the post-independence period of Central Asian history. Existing mode of water governance is more of “watercentric” than integrative. Without systemic and long-term solution to the water problem, Central Asia cannot develop sustainable solutions in water, energy, food, and environmental issues. These are interlinked and interdependent sectors.

The countries of the region have declared their commitments to global climate change agreement and sustainable development goals. Yet, the implementation of these commitments requires establishment of intersectoral coordination and monitoring mechanisms. Transitions in energy, agriculture, and environmental sectors from the Soviet system into semi-market arrangements although finished, the state of the sectors is fluid. New challenges such as growing population and climate change require more of coordinated policies and intersectoral approach in managing and governing water resources. Limited water resources, growing land degradation, and water quality degradation cannot be handled via sectoral improvements only. Nexus approach could bring more opportunities and options if interlinkages are understood and efficient mechanisms for better coordination are installed.

### 4. Are the Central Asia countries ready to implement nexus approach in decision making processes?

Understanding of a need to cooperate between countries is growing. Decreasing of water, land resources and increasing food scarcity as an outcome drive countries to review their conventional approaches in this regard. Long-term and integrative planning is a key element of the nexus approach. The water legislation of countries provides stakeholder and public participation platforms such as public consultative–advisory basin councils in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and ad hoc technocratic intersectoral water councils in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Therefore, basin councils may act as a platform for both balancing the decision-making power and the empowerment of local communities and facilitation of long-term basin planning and nexus implementation. Successful practices in the region even small one can be shown as a positive result of integrating nexus approach and helps to promote the approach.

Beyond that, food security is a component where nexus approach can play specific role and where countries can probably compromise. Activities on this component will also influence the social-economic situation in CA.

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