



ABU DHABI
SUSTAINABILITY WEEK

INNOVATIVE WATER SOLUTIONS FOR CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND HUMANITARIAN RELIEF

Roundtable - COP28

Hosted by

MASDAR 

Executive Summary

Held during the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week Special Edition at COP28, this roundtable discussion focused on innovative water solutions for climate adaptation and humanitarian relief.

In the face of escalating water-related challenges exacerbated by climate change, participants addressed the critical nature of water resource management for sustaining life, highlighting both the progress made and the obstacles that are still to be overcome.

Key takeaways

- There is an urgent need for improved governance of water resources, including policy reform, institutional advancements, and regional cooperation.
- Comprehensive data collection will be key to informed decision-making.
- Technology's role is critical, yet reaching scale with low-cost and practical solutions remains a significant challenge.
- Capacity building, education, and active participation of communities, stakeholders and governments are vital for meaningful progress.
- Financing mechanisms must evolve to make water projects more attractive to investors.



Rising up the agenda

At the outset, participants noted that the existence of a session dedicated to water-related issues was itself a sign of progress; the urgency of water management is not reflected in the proportion of attention it usually receives in climate discussions. As one speaker highlighted, the statistics in 2022 were grim: 2.2 billion people lacked access to safe drinking water, 2.4 billion people lived in water-stressed countries, and to meet 2030 targets, progress will have to accelerate by threefold at minimum.

Speakers highlighted the human consequences of the water crisis. Residents of emerging economies are among the least responsible for the climate crisis yet regularly bear the brunt of its impact, often paying with their homes, livelihoods wellbeing and even their lives. The panel pointed particularly to the experience of women in these areas, who can be charged with walking long distances to gather water for their families or be shunned and left homeless after getting ill from inadequate sanitation.

Tackling the crisis

While participants ranged in experience, background and expertise, the roundtable found an overlap in participants' approaches and what they agreed needed to be done in the coming weeks, months and years.

It was acknowledged that good governance, through enhanced and targeted policies and regulations, is foundational to any long-term water strategy. One example given was US mandates requiring farmers to install more efficient irrigation systems. In this case, both sides benefit: farmers ultimately reduced costs by using less water, and the transition to more sustainable technology eases the burden on the water supply.

Participants also agreed on the need for better quality data to help guide decision-making. Speakers highlighted the futility of trying to manage the water crisis without understanding the fundamental baselines: What is the minimum amount of water a person requires? How much water does an agricultural crop require? How much water do we need to run technology and industrial processes? What are the variations between regions? Establishing these baselines and working collectively against them will aid effective policymaking and decision-making locally and globally.

The panel also agreed that while technological advances have been substantial, there is a gap between what exists and what has been implemented globally at scale. The solution, it was posited, lies in optimizing the most impactful

technologies for cost-effectiveness and cultural compatibility. Filtration and desalination, as well as regenerative agricultural practices, were given as examples of advances that are practical and affordable – what's missing is supply chain harmony, training, availability and distribution.

On the role of financing, the discussion highlighted the stark gap between water's essential role and its financial allotment within climate action funds. Innovative financial instruments, including water credits akin to carbon credits, were proposed as a way to incentivize investment.

Solutions weren't all technology, finance and policy based. Community engagement was highlighted as a critical determinant of success. Behavioral change, powered by grassroots education and local stewardship, emerged as a keystone for sustainable water management. The role of the community as both a benefactor and a contributor was emphasized, illustrating the effectiveness of solutions such as fog nets for water collection and solar-powered pumps in remote regions.

The roundtable closed with calls for the international community to mobilize behind the fight against the global water crisis. Throughout the roundtable, the multifaceted nature of the issue was made clear. However, it was agreed that by treating water with the same importance as other critical resources, dedicating political will, and financial commitments, the world could move closer to ensuring clean and safe access to water



Roundtable Participants

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Principal Partner



Roundtable Partner



About Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week

Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW) is a global initiative championed by the UAE and its clean energy powerhouse, Masdar, to accelerate sustainable development and advance economic, social, and environmental progress.

Established in 2008, ADSW provides a global platform for all who have a stake in the future of our planet.

ADSW brings together leaders from across governments, the private sector, and civil society to discuss and engage in bold climate action and innovations that will ensure a sustainable world for future generations.

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About Masdar

Masdar (Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company) is one of the world's fastest-growing renewable energy companies. As a global clean energy pioneer, Masdar is advancing the development and deployment of solar, wind, geothermal, battery storage and green hydrogen technologies to accelerate the energy transition and help the world meet its net-zero ambitions. Established in 2006, Masdar has developed and invested in projects in over 40 countries with a combined capacity of over 20 gigawatts (GW), providing affordable clean energy access to those who need it most and helping to power a more sustainable future.

Masdar is jointly owned by TAQA, ADNOC, and Mubadala, and is targeting a renewable energy portfolio capacity of 100GW by 2030 while aiming to be a leading producer of green hydrogen by the same year.



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