

World Bank Launches ‘Water Forward’ Platform to Improve Water Security for One Billion People

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The World Bank Group, alongside a coalition of multilateral development banks and global partners, has launched *Water Forward*, a new initiative aimed at improving water security for one billion people by 2030.

The platform seeks to align policy reform, financing and international partnerships to expand access to reliable water services while strengthening resilience to droughts and floods—factors increasingly recognised as critical to economic stability and job creation.

Water remains a cornerstone of global economic activity, underpinning health systems, agriculture, energy production and an estimated 1.7 billion jobs worldwide. Yet despite its importance, around 4 billion people still face water scarcity, with systemic challenges—including weak regulation, underperforming utilities and limited investment—continuing to constrain progress.

Water Forward is designed to address these barriers by supporting developing countries in building stronger, financially sustainable water systems capable of attracting investment and supporting long-term growth.

“Water is foundational to how economies function. When water systems work, farmers produce, businesses operate, and cities attract investment. Our task now is to align reform, financing, and partnerships to deliver reliable water services at scale,” said Ajay Banga, President of the World Bank Group.

At the centre of the initiative are country-led water compacts, which set out national reform priorities, institutional strengthening measures and investment pathways for the sector. Fourteen countries have already announced their participation, with additional programmes in development.

The initiative brings together a broad coalition of partners, including major development finance institutions such as the Asian Development Bank, European Investment Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank, among others. These organisations are aligning funding and expertise to accelerate project delivery and scale impact.

The World Bank Group has committed to delivering water security improvements for 400 million people by 2030, with the wider partnership aiming to exceed one billion beneficiaries.

The launch comes at a time of growing demographic and economic pressure, with more than 1.2 billion young people expected to enter the workforce in developing countries over the next decade. Reliable water infrastructure is increasingly seen as essential to supporting livelihoods, attracting private investment and enabling sustainable economic expansion.

By linking reform, financing and delivery, Water Forward signals a shift toward more integrated, outcome-driven approaches to infrastructure development—positioning water security as both a development priority and an economic imperative.