

BEST PRACTICES ON INTEGRATING THE ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVE INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

SDG 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*

**Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.*

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BEST PRACTICES ON INTEGRATING THE ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVE INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SDG 13:

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*

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Executive Summary

A crucial development in the global struggle to combat climate change and its impacts is the growing awareness that a major transformation of attitudes, approaches and beliefs is now required to enable humanity to achieve a prosperous, sustainable future. This transformation of mindsets must involve a shift toward active collaboration with our Biosphere, within which humans are embedded and have evolved.

Humanity's ability to respond and adapt to climate change and global warming is dependent upon our relationship with Nature. Nature is the source of our economy and society, of every resource we need to survive and indeed of life itself. The UN website *Harmony with Nature* (www.harmonywithnatureun.org) underlines this perspective, delineating the understanding that for humanity to thrive and evolve Nature must also be allowed the right to thrive and evolve. This understanding is grounded in "*the recognition of the intrinsic value of Nature and of human-Earth relationships that are symbiotic, interconnected and subject to the natural laws of the Universe...in which human-Earth relationships are balanced within the greater web of life to live in Harmony with Nature.*" (Report of the UN Secretary General on Harmony with Nature of 15 Aug. 2013, A/68/325)

Human activity has caused fundamental shifts in three crucial planetary boundaries—climate change, biodiversity and the nitrogen/phosphorus cycle—to the point where they are no longer fully supporting human life. It is therefore essential that we learn to once more live in harmony with Nature. (Source: Steffen, W., Richardson, K., Rockstroem J., Cornell, S.E., Fetzer, I., Bennett, E.M., Biggs, R., Carpenter, S.R., de Vries, W., de Wit, C.A., Folke, C., Gerten, D., Heinke, J., Mace, G.M., Perssen, L.M., Ramanathan, V., Reyers, B., and Soerlin, S. (2015 Planetary Boundaries; Guiding human development on a changing planet. *Science* 347; 10.1126/science. 1259855.)

Climate change is exacerbated by efforts to manage, control and own that which is natural, that which should be left untouched for all to appreciate and benefit from. Humanity's fear of loss of resources has given priority to predictability, ownership, and

control over balanced, interconnected human-Earth relationships. Rather than ceding ownership of Nature to the highest bidder, we must foster ownership in partnership with all of humanity. (See the Report of the UN Secretary General on Harmony with Nature of 15 Aug. 2013, A/68/325)

Humans are Nature's children as well as Nature's stewards. In Nature, no individual species has sole ownership of its habitat. Plant and animal species sustain themselves and thrive by sharing their environment with others. This is a valuable lesson for humanity. If we can appreciate the profound beauty and richness we have available to us on Mother Earth, and practice ways to share and steward it, we can birth a new human awareness, a new human being. (See www.harmonywithnatureun.org)

Living in harmony with the natural forces of Nature nourishes all living beings. When all species thrive, then people individually and the whole human species will be able to thrive. When other species do not thrive then neither do human beings. Realizing our place as fellow members in this balanced community of Nature gives us both the opportunity and the responsibility to respect and live in that balance.

Taking the path of living in harmony with Nature involves living in alignment with the highest and best for our species and for all life. To accomplish this it is not necessary to break down our old systems; it is simply necessary to think creatively going forward and take actions that are in alignment with all life. When we stop fearing Nature, and instead seek to understand her wisdom and work *with* her systems and processes, we operate from a position of true power.

The earth is changing. In our lifetime we are witnessing extremes in temperatures and climactic events unparalleled in recent history. We are being reminded of the power of Nature to continually find balance. Fear of extinction can be a powerful motivating force. In this time of global peril, we have the choice, indeed the environmental imperative, to actively collaborate with Nature so that we can realize our place in the community of life and thrive alongside our fellow species.

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*

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The Earth System goes through natural warming and cooling trends during which planetary boundaries are created that can inhibit human life. Relevant examples include the various Ice Ages, through which some humans were able to survive while many others perished. Scientific evidence of current global climate phenomena largely supports the view that a significant factor in the planetary warming taking place today involves human endeavour.

For that reason, it is important not to accelerate global warming through escalating human-induced activities, and to mitigate warming as much as possible by keeping human activity within the planetary boundaries needed for humans to survive.

It is also necessary to prepare to confront the consequences of global warming, by:

- Using science and technology to create environments and support systems (food, shelter, water, heating and cooling systems) that are conducive to human well-being even when these have been affected by global warming.
- Developing disaster relief systems that can meet crises associated with global warming.
- Restoring and regenerating ecosystem health in order to help people not only respond to climate change but also mitigate climate change and prevent it.

It is important to remember that Nature, left to her own devices, is inherently sustainable and inclusive of all species. The question is how to live in a manner that naturally honours the wisdom of Mother Nature. It's up to each of us to treat Mother Earth with respect and care for her as we care for ourselves. It is up to us to treat our only home with great care, love, and reverence. We must make the changes needed to make a better world together.

We have a tendency to think that we are separate from Nature and so we talk about the 'environment' as if we are not part of it. Before anything else, we must remind ourselves that we are all part of the earth and have a responsibility to follow the rhythms of Nature, to keep its harmony and balance. If we fail to do so, we face the extinction of our own species, as well as many others.

Points to Consider

- Make it a habit to look at Nature without prejudice: simply observe and be aware of all that is.

- Consider that earth's resources are finite, contributed to humanity by other living beings. Take only what you need.
- Be mindful that change is possible when we realize that people and planet are one and the same.
- Remember that we are all part of the earth and have a responsibility to follow the rhythms of Nature, to keep its harmony and balance.
- Learn to listen—to ourselves, to our own hearts, to each other, as well as to nature, animals, trees, and plants.
- Think and act in ways that are inclusive of the wellbeing of all species.
- Consider that Nature already knows how to be sustainable and life supporting. As stewards, it is our responsibility to support and enable these natural capacities.

13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries

It is natural to worry about floods and other disasters stemming from climate change. But instead of giving into fear and fighting with other people for control over natural resources, it is more advisable to act from a deep understanding of both the dynamics of Nature that produce climate change and those that allow all species and all of Nature to thrive.

One of the best and most important ways to create resilience is to restore our natural ecosystems, create water retention landscapes and regenerate our large- and small-scale watersheds in order both to avert and respond to climate change.

Eventually, human survival depends on living in harmony with Nature and that would be greatly enhanced if we learned once more to *consciously* use our inborn capacity for ongoing communication with the Earth System. (See SDG 13.3--Education) This capacity is functioning *unconsciously and/or semiconsciously* in all people (response to light and darkness, temperature, air quality, sensing of danger, and the like.) Our lives depend on this. But being in ongoing *conscious* communication with Nature will enable people to live in cooperation with other species and the planet on which all life depends and help us to learn to live within those planetary boundaries that can support human life.

As a first step in re-establishing conscious communication with the Earth System and creating transformative regenerative processes, we can work with those who already consciously use that capacity. Among these are many Indigenous Peoples and a growing number of people now learning nature communication skills, as well as with scientists who can measure subtle changes in life energy and those who live close to the land.

When we study early Earth history, it is evident that our current climate change may be, in part, a natural phenomenon, aggravated by human activities. Because we do not yet know how many of its effects are possible to mitigate, it is important to prepare in all countries for climate-related hazards and natural disasters.

As part of this preparation, all nations and cultures can benefit from a *global* exchange of best practices. These best practices should include the wisdom of those who live close to nature and are knowledgeable about land-based practices that can provide valuable resources for the rest of the world.

In cases of massive environmental disruption, where the usual social, economic and other infrastructure may not be functioning effectively, it will be necessary to build cooperative working relationships among all people in a community so that survivors can begin to form teams to deal with the aftermath of disasters while waiting for help from the outside world. Trainings in schools, at work, and community education would all help to prepare survivors to work together and create a strong sense of cooperation that will benefit communities in many other ways as well.

In a crisis, community members may have to learn to cope without medicines, tools, implements and public services. They will then depend on those who know how to locate uncontaminated fresh water sources and use complementary healing modalities, including energy healing.

Throughout history when humans have been confronted with seemingly insurmountable challenges, our inborn creativity and ingenuity has enabled us to take a new course of action. We must now pay attention to, and understand, the new technologies and opportunities available to us to prepare ourselves for the hazards and natural disasters associated with our changing climate.

Potential Actions

- Heads of State and UN staff can facilitate a global exchange of best practices to mitigate the effects of various types of climate-related disasters.
- Governments can organize and train disaster relief teams at the local, regional, state, and national levels, in advance of major crises.
- Disaster relief teams can be trained in the use of emergency medical modalities that go beyond typical equipment and medicines, emphasizing common items likely to be available when normal medical supplies cannot be obtained.
- Other groups can be trained in innovative techniques for dealing with climate-related disasters, using emerging technologies and creative scenario planning.

13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning

At all levels it is important to consider how our environmental policies and relationships with Nature can directly impact various other societal functions and wellbeing. For example, forests, sustainable agricultural practices, and regenerative land management policies can add to the ability to sequester large amounts of carbon, add to soil health and prevent soil depletion, prevent land erosion, run-off and thus mass flooding, provide buffer zones to prevent “natural” disasters, and more.

Such efforts and policies should be put in place at all levels of government from the local to national. The best steps and actions to take can be ascertained both by observing and communicating directly with nature, as is more often being practiced now by those fluent in the use of permaculture, biomimicry, green economy, and even circular economy practices. Those with expertise in these complementary practices and economies should be encouraged to participate in such planning and implementation processes.

Some governments deny life-threatening realities by separating their constituencies from Nature rather than productively addressing difficult realities. Indigenous Peoples have scientifically observed plant, insect, bird, and other animal populations over generations and have learned to employ this knowledge to mitigate climate change. UN Member States could learn valuable environmental lessons by supporting indigenous policies to mitigate and survive climate change, including respecting their forms of government, often rooted in other forms of Nature.

Indigenous Peoples' governments, including treaty organizations, confederations, nation-states, city-states, villages, or other political indigenous structures must be included in negotiations for climate change and climate mitigation measures in order to achieve productive national policies, strategies, and planning. UN Resolution 61/295, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, was crafted for this purpose. Unfortunately, many shortsighted UN Members undermine world security by continuing urban and industrial development without the Free Prior and Informed Consent described in Resolution 61/295, ILO169 and the Convention on Biological Diversity. Peaceful work to mitigate climate change is possible where treaties and other legal agreements are fully honoured and all human rights are respected, including those of Indigenous Peoples. Lack of respect for international treaties undermine our global efforts and deprive humanity of indispensable wisdom.

Climate change can be construed as the combined result of human activities and natural fluctuations in the Earth System itself. Optimistically, all want to believe that the effects of climate change can be mitigated, but it is evident that every living being will be affected and this awareness must be considered as its effects are studied. For this reason,

climate change measures must be included in national policies, strategies and planning.

Potential Actions

- National governments can effectively plan, develop and convey policies, strategies and actions to be implemented locally.
- Governments can develop and share solid information with their citizens about how climate change and its effects can be mitigated.
- Governments can share with each other best practices on climate mitigation and ways to communicate measures to the grass roots.
- Local governments can mobilize grass roots efforts to take effective, ongoing action.

Potential Best Practices

- Introduce into school curriculums environmental education for sustainable development programs that include measures to mitigate and deal with the effects of climate change.
- Incorporate climate mitigation training into young children's play at school and as extra curricular activities (such as survival training, making fires using natural materials, creating places where children take care of other children, and games where they learn confidence and independence to lessen fear and anxiety).
- Encourage students at all levels to work with these skills, building on what is often already taught in environmental education programs, such as using the sun to warm, making fires, using leaves and snow to insulate from the cold, using energy healing to heal when medications are unavailable, observing nature for early warning signs of storms, changing weather patterns, approaching tsunamis, earth quakes, and communicating with nature using time honoured methods still in use by some Indigenous Peoples and other nature communicators.
- Teach teamwork in all subjects to ensure that people collaborate well when disasters hit.

It is essential that climate change measures be included in national, state and local policies, strategies and planning. The sooner governments acknowledge climate change as a serious concern the sooner measures can be included in strategies and planning locally and statewide. Countries where climate mitigation actions and policies are already being introduced are leading the movement. They may proudly celebrate their role in bringing new awareness to advance human survival.

13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning

If we view climate change as an opportunity rather than a problem, we inspire the will to learn to live in harmony with all life. This shift in perspective inevitably produces new insights, ideas and actions.

Only by respecting and appreciating Nature will we be able to make the changes and choices needed to limit our energy and natural resource usage and ensure that there is enough for all. In this way will we likewise be able to give up our fossil fuel dependency and move instead to renewable energy sources that Nature produces.

Our indigenous colleagues and other Nature communicators have suggested the following educational processes as a first step: *learn to communicate with Nature*. What we learn can then also be incorporated into our efforts to implement the SDGs.

The challenge is for us to summon the courage to stop being afraid of Nature, as this lies at the heart of our desire to control everything else on earth. We must embrace our vulnerability, for this is our greatest beauty and power. When we learn to live inspired by Nature without having to control her then the solutions for reversing and ending climate change will come easily.

Nature models for us freedom and a vibrant life flow. There is a rhythm within each element of Nature and between discreet entities. It is through this "natural dance" that energy is released and great power can be found.

Our energy systems need to mimic these understandings. Our technologies should not be created in such a way that they obliterate and replace Nature where they are located, but instead work with and draw from Nature. As well, these technologies should be recyclable, manufactured in such a way that their components can be returned to nature, without releasing toxic waste.

The health of the soil, forests, grasslands and watersheds determine the wellbeing of our large- and small-scale watersheds. And likewise the natural functioning of the watersheds is essential to ensure that we can adapt to our changing climatic conditions.

Recreating and protecting healthy soils can and will reverse desertification and at the same time result over time in recreating healthy watersheds. Restoring the health of our soils will also provide us with the ability to feed the world's people, even with expanding population, and even at times of drought if we adopt resilient and climate friendly farming practices. Re-greening dry lands; capturing water in water retention landscapes, swales and check-dams; and planting and restoring billions of acres of forests and trees will enable humanity to restore our natural water cycles. By ensuring that water can flow year round once again, we can halt the declining water tables and in many cases bring them back, and end the usage of brackish, polluted or even highly toxic drinking water.

But if we do want to be able to do these things, we will have to change how we produce our energy and process our wastes. It is essential that we listen to and learn from Nature as we do so. In the end it is Nature that provides us with the means to live and thrive. It is

essential that we respect and learn to live in harmony with her.

We need to produce energy in such a way that it adds as little carbon and other greenhouse gases as possible to the atmosphere; as well, we need to begin to sequester as much carbon and other greenhouse gases from the atmosphere as possible using natural processes. In nature there is no waste. Everything is recycled back into the ecosystem through natural processes. Humanity must also begin to live in these ways.

It is important that we speak up on behalf of Nature and our Planet, while we still have options and opportunities to turn the tide. Nature signals us in many ways that we are off target. Climate Change is one of these indicators. If we are open, willing to listen with our hearts, and courageous enough to take appropriate action, we can change the course of history. We can restore the beauty and balance in Nature that has been gifted to us.

By approaching Nature with the receptivity, sensitivity and inquisitiveness of a child, sharing the fragrance of flowers, the sense of grounding that we get when we feel the Earth beneath our feet and move with the flow of life, we can reconnect with our natural home and remember our place in the web of life. In this way, it is possible for people to teach one another to see afresh, to move with the motion of change and growth, and break through the obstacles caused by their habitual ways of thinking.

Potential Actions

Students and workers within organizations/corporations/educational institution and governments at all levels can be educated in the following ways:

- Participating in classes to increase understanding of how the effects of climate change express themselves and the precise causes that bring these about; this process should take place in both developed and developing countries and neighbourhoods of all socio-economic backgrounds.
- Sensitizing people to their integral position within the Earth System, to the interconnection of all life and how it contributes to their individual wellbeing and capacity to survive.
- Restoring the inborn capacity of human beings to communicate with Nature, building on the contributions of many Indigenous Peoples and other nature communicators.
- Sharing best practices and ways of combatting climate changes and mitigating its effects in the diverse situations faced both by rich, poor and in diverse geographical and social situations.
- Building the capacity of Indigenous Peoples to maintain their own independent, decolonized institutions of higher learning where they can share their wisdom and knowledge or where their knowledge will be respectfully received.
- Creating competitions in schools, organizations, corporations and human settlements to raise contributions in currency and in kind, as well as ideas for combatting the

effects of climate change.

13.a Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible

The Green Climate Fund is one of the financing mechanisms most accessible to civil society organizations and networks. Such organizations are often at the forefront, applying local solutions that best serve the needs of people while addressing major global challenges in a decentralized but effective manner.

It is essential that funding be provided at increasing levels for scaling up and replicating climate mitigation practices, including such undertakings as: creating water retention landscapes; using natural building practices; regeneration of natural water cycles; solar and wind installations; water harvesting; climate friendly and organic farming practices; agro-ecology; carbon sequestration in soils and plants; eco-system restoration; reforestation and agroforestry; and various types of entrepreneurial activities based on such sectors.

Implementing and operationalizing the Green Climate Fund is vital for the survival of humanity. It must receive the highest priority for implementation, as it has the potential to ensure the ongoing sustainability of our species and all others in the balance.

The most difficult roadblock to accessing adequate funding for climate change and mitigation efforts is the ongoing controversy in the United States and elsewhere regarding scientific proof of the existence of climate change. When people are finally in agreement that climate change exists, the movement to transform the issue will move forward rapidly, enabling us to safeguard life with new awareness and practices. Over and over in our history we have changed course swiftly and effectively when the need arose, averting numerous disasters. At this critical juncture, what is most required is a quorum of dedicated change agents committed in action to securing the future of life on the planet.

Financing has traditionally been conceived of in terms of money, forgetting that this is but one type of system to enable the exchange of goods and services. The fast-growing collaborative/sharing/partnership economy illustrates a shift of perspective in which people see the joy of producing and sharing as a part of the reward. In this way, the giving and receiving of resources free of charge has become an important factor in acquiring resources directly without the need for financing and purchasing. By mobilizing people to counter the effects of climate change, a much more powerful

approach to financing is created because people are changing their behavior patterns and inspiring others to do the same.

Potential Actions

- Participating in classes to increase understanding of how the effects of climate change express themselves and the precise causes that bring these about; this process should take place in both developed and developing countries and neighbourhoods of all socio-economic backgrounds.
- Sensitizing people to their integral position within the Earth System, to the interconnection of all life and how it contributes to their individual wellbeing and capacity to survive.
- Restoring the inborn capacity of human beings to communicate with Nature, building on the contributions of many Indigenous Peoples and other nature communicators.
- Sharing best practices and ways of combatting climate changes and mitigating its effects in the diverse situations faced both by rich, poor and in diverse geographical and social situations.
- Building the capacity of Indigenous Peoples to maintain their own independent, decolonized institutions of higher learning where they can share their wisdom and knowledge or where their knowledge will be respectfully received.
- Creating competitions in schools, organizations, corporations and human settlements to raise contributions in currency and in kind, as well as ideas for combatting the effects of climate change.
- Sharing best practices on the Internet, including all awards given to citizens and groups for their efforts by their governments. A web site can be created for this purpose. (See below.)
- Encouraging all governments to decide on a quota that their people can pay in taxes toward the mitigation of the effects of climate change. This is important both as a consciousness-raising tool and also as a means to mitigate its effects.
- Creating awards for innovative ideas to combat the effects of climate change. Those who have won prizes can become tax exempt for their contributions in other ways. Possibly people can be given an option as to how their tax money will be spent in the context of plans in developed and developing countries. (See below.)

Developing Countries

To maximize the satisfaction of donors and their confidence that donations will be used to full effect, people and governments in developing countries can enumerate specific areas and situations where the effects of climate change must be mitigated in their own

countries. This can include:

- Specific steps that must be taken for implementation of these steps (who will do what, when and timelines for each step).
- Specific amounts of money or help in kind that are needed for each step, so that all contributions are put to good use within the above mentioned plans.

Developed Countries

To maximize the satisfaction of donors and their confidence that donations will be used to full effect, people and governments in developed countries can also enumerate specific areas and situations where the effects of climate change must be mitigated in their own countries. This may include:

- Enumerating specific steps that must be taken for implementation of these steps (who will do what, when and timelines for each step).
- Specifying specific amounts of money or help in kind that are needed for each step, so that all contributions are put to good use within the above mentioned plans.
- Determining how much they will contribute to developing countries (This can also include helping the latter make well constructed plans.)
- Allowing their citizens a say in how their climate taxes and other contributions will be spent.
- Issuing reports on successes and remaining unresolved challenges so that citizens can follow the effects of their donations in currency and in kind; and where failures occur, they can focus on how to remedy these.
- Publishing outcomes of climate mitigation projects.

Global Sharing of Expertise Via the Internet

The more people have access to the Internet and are encouraged to place their individual strategies for the implementation of the SDGs, the more people will be able to help and inspire one another and the less likely that anyone will be left behind.

Such a giant site can provide all people, agencies, organizations, corporations, educational and governmental establishments including the UN with individual pages on which to describe all are doing individually for the implementation of all goals. This site must include a search engine that allows people in similar circumstances to support and help one another. Facilitators in each area would facilitate access to the web site for all, even those who are not Internet literate.

13.b Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities

In the least developed nations, people, particularly women, often live close to the land and have traditions that encourage them to be stewards of nature. In some instances, people in nations more technologically advanced might learn much from them.

In communities where people still depend largely on Nature for their daily living, it can be more socially acceptable for women (and men) to develop their intuitive connection with Nature, for this is our umbilical chord to Mother Nature. In technologically more advanced regions, culture and development have been more dependent on human beings developing “abstract” thinking that often has caused the very dissociation with nature now threatening human and other life on the planet. Intuitive nature communication must be reinstated with the help of those who use it, including many Indigenous Peoples, those living close to the earth, and animal and nature communicators.

At the same time, it is often the poorest populations who, in their desperate attempts to find food, deplete the land and make it difficult for biodiversity to thrive. It is therefore important that these (and others) also learn about the interconnection of all life within the Earth System and how all actions can either reinforce its nurturing qualities with regard to human life or destroy these.

Here are some ways in which people in can reestablish their connection with Nature and perhaps even have a leadership effect on the rest of the world in doing this.

- Be encouraged to share with those in technologically more dominant cultures how to communicate with and live more closely to Nature.
- Learn how the interconnectedness of all within the Earth System makes it essential to pay attention to the effect of all our actions on the Earth System as a whole; understanding how all animals, plants and humans as well as the subsystems of the Earth are integrally interconnected and must be cared for and treated with sensitivity.
- Understand the personal implications of the implementation of para 26 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the right for all to develop the full human personality. This includes intuition.

Climate change can provide the opportunity to instil leadership, a real sense of community and pride in being a part of a powerful movement to transform lives. This can be aided by promoting leadership in women, a sense of community and pride in being a part of a powerful movement to transform lives; and training youth in leadership and awareness programs implemented in all the schools, communities, and governments from local to state and country governments.