

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

**SDG 6: Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of
Water and Sanitation for All**

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**BEST PRACTICES ON INTEGRATING THE ENVIRONMENTAL
PERSPECTIVE INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SDG 6:
Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and
Sanitation for All**

Executive Summary

Considerations involving sustainable management of water and sanitation for all must include the needs of all of Nature as well as all of humanity. Human beings are just one integral part of the hydro or water subsystem, which also includes plants, animals and the Earth itself. Ecosystems are an important building block on which biodiversity relies and their need for water must be considered along with that of human beings.

The health of our water correlates with the health of the life that depends upon it. The natural cycle of water controls life on the planet. To achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all, it is necessary to recognize that water is the giver and provider of all life. When humans hold it as precious, they naturally pay close attention to its ongoing supply and protect it from contamination.

To address water scarcity and truly promote access to fresh water for all it will be necessary to create a culture of caring for all of Nature as well as all human beings. To stimulate interest in regenerating fresh water sources, humans can profit from learning how Nature creates sustainable development using fifteen billion years of experience. Several simultaneous steps and number of actions are proposed to help achieve this.

Integrated water resources management, including trans-boundary cooperation, requires that we do not treat water-related ecosystems and other aspects of nature as simple commodities to be exploited for the benefit of the few. Rather, we must recognize that environments producing fresh water are essential to human life. These intact environments also constitute valuable learning laboratories for children, students, scientists as well as Nature communicators and can be used in many constructive ways if left undisturbed.

Finding ways to share the wisdom and knowledge of those who understand the complexities of these ecosystems will benefit both human beings as well as Nature. It is important to acknowledge that developing countries are as knowledgeable as developed nations about best practices for maintaining fresh water and sanitation and in fact, may be demonstrating more effective stewardship and better cooperation with Nature, living closer to the Earth.

This document discusses Nature-inspired practices to purify water sources as well as a number of best practices in dealing with open defecation and sanitation issues. It

includes as well a variety of useful perspectives and practices to bring the Earth and her resources back into balance.

At our core, humans are social beings who share an integral relationship with Nature. By reinforcing these basic values, leaders can inspire their communities to take action. With the support of local government, people can take the lead themselves. Actions are proposed to help bring this about.

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

In consideration of our goal to ensure a sustainable supply of clean, life-giving water for all, it is helpful to remind ourselves of the nature of water itself. Water is the most basic element of life, in constant motion on the earth and in the earth's atmosphere. The movement of water is governed by Nature through an intricate planetary system that takes up and releases moisture in complex, interrelating, climatic cycles. Where water is abundant, life flourishes; where water is scarce, life withers.

Because water is a shared resource on the planet—vital to the ongoing survival of not just our species but *all* species—it is evident that human beings must work together in cooperation to implement this goal. If we approach the implementation of this sustainable development goal from a place of appreciation of clean water for *all life*, we will set in motion what is required to support us in our efforts.

Sustainable management of water and sanitation *for all* must include the needs of all of Nature as well as all of humanity. Human beings are just one integral part of the hydro or water subsystem, which also includes plants, animals and the Earth itself. Ecosystems are an important building block on which biodiversity relies and their need for water must be considered along with that of human beings.

The health of our water correlates with the health of the life that depends upon it. When water is contaminated in one location, it continues to contaminate all downstream locations within its reach, ultimately polluting the oceans as well as the land. We are reminded that cooperation for the wellbeing of all life requires that we value water quality everywhere and in every nation, because the quality of water in one nation is intimately connected with the quality of water in another.

The natural cycle of water controls life on the planet. It determines which life forms, and which combinations of life forms exist naturally in each ecosystem. The way the water cycle functions at any given time affects habitats, availability of food, climates, water availability, and performs an important function in the evolution of species and how well they live with one another.

Human beings make changes to the Earth System at their peril; we are seeing this with climate change. Over time there has been a shift from our understanding of humans as an integral, harmonious part of Nature to humans attempting unsuccessfully to control nature, causing crises such as droughts, fires, conflicts over water and mass extinction of species. Through their mega-projects, such as dams, levees, and tapping underground aquifers for intensive agriculture, people have disturbed natural processes so that water availability and management has become a critical issue.

Moving forward in this century and beyond, water quality will continue to grow in

importance, partly because of the tremendous growth of the population and urban expansion and development. This increasing human and industrial growth puts increased stress on the natural water resources, which further erodes our water quality.

Water quality is a very complex subject, in part because water is a complex medium intrinsically tied to the ecology of the Earth. Industrial pollution, including runoff from agricultural areas, urban storm- water runoff, and discharge of untreated sewage, especially in developing countries, is a major cause of water pollution everywhere, including our oceans.

Going forward, it is essential that we work with one another, together as one people, remembering the importance and precious value of water on the planet. It is important we look closely at our daily activities in relation to water use and preservation, as individuals, businesses, communities, nations and as a global community.

It is also necessary that we discuss our needs honestly with regard to water availability and sanitation. To have productive discussions that will allow us to reach our long-term goal, we must initiate greater acceptance of each other, particularly those we have considered "other". From that place of mutual acceptance, *together*, we open to a perspective from which creative, and effective solutions can emerge.

Human ingenuity is abundant everywhere on the planet. By sharing new ideas, methods, and technologies, we can resolve challenges and learn to live together in harmony with each other and with natural forces. Humans, like water and all other aspects of Nature, are interconnected and interdependent. The wisdom of water shows us our inseparability from each other and all of life. While no single nation can accomplish this goal alone, any one nation can lead the way for others to follow.

6.1 By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all

Water is the giver and provider of all life. When humans hold it as precious, rare, essential, even sacred, they naturally pay close attention to its ongoing supply and protect it from contamination.

What we value as precious, rare or essential to life, or to our livelihood, we pay close attention to and manage with care.

Modern technology has made water available at the turn of a knob, and has promoted a belief that fresh, clean water is always readily available for bathing, drinking and all other purposes.

While most people are aware of how precious water is, many in technologically advanced

countries take it for granted. There is an illusion that fresh water is always available and the only imagined inconvenience would be a plumbing issue inhibiting the flow of water to us.

While the technology is truly something to celebrate, we must consider the reality of the dwindling fresh water source and people must be reminded that the faucet could go dry. Nature has not always provided.

Proposed Actions

It would be valuable for young people in technologically advanced countries to have alternate experiences with water as part of their education. This would enable new generations to understand the reality of the preciousness of water and foster the production of new technologies based on the sustainability of water for current and future generations. In such an educational process, students might:

- Practice living without the technology which makes water so readily available;
- Study water ecology;
- Live in communities where water must be carried and where water is used in whatever form or condition it is found because that is the only option;
- Learn to care for water resources with reverence and respect, as sacred sources;
- Learn to cleanse contaminated water sources using natural methods;
- Learn about using non-toxic, recyclable containers to collect water;
- Explore innovative solutions to desalinating water more efficiently;
- Create water pipelines to dry areas where water can be collected in central places for access by individual households.

6.2 By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations

Locations where open defecation still continues are prime locations to test and develop new technologies that can be adapted for use in all locations. What is currently utilized in cities with running water and flush toilets is a great feat of technological development but may not be sustainable in the future. By placing priority on bringing new technologies to areas that have been forgotten, sustainable advancement can be made on a planet-wide scale, which will bring greater equitability and wellness to all.

Proposed Actions

- Identify areas where change is needed with regard to equitable sanitation, hygiene and open defecation.

- Publicize the issues worldwide and invite people and organizations to become involved in bringing new technologies that will transform these areas.
- Implement various advanced technologies in these locations to test their effectiveness.
- Monitor and study the technologies to perfect them.
- Adopt these new technologies and sustainable practices for waste and water management in other locations and regions of the world going forward; publicize results widely to build awareness and create alignment with natural earth ecology.
- Focus first on areas in greatest need so that they are transformed and then work on areas of secondary need going forward.

Projected Outcomes

- Immediate improvement of conditions in locations on the planet where change is most needed.
- New awareness among scientists and other technological developers with regard to functioning of newly developed systems.
- The invention of technologies that sustainably manage water as well as waste in harmony with earth systems and planetary boundaries.
- The opportunity to test, perfect and expand ideas and ultimately create new types of sustainable systems that can be implemented in developed nations as well as in developing nations.
- Higher standards of life for the poorest human inhabitants on the planet, bringing new awareness of the potential for greater health to all species of life.
- funding and support for these new sustainable technologies and practices going forward, recognizing their absolute necessity for the continuation of life on the planet.

Many problems relating to availability of natural resources, such as water and energy, can be resolved if we plan our human settlements so that people live within reach of sufficient water and other resources that serve a particular community. Increasingly, people are able to live and work in smaller communities with the help of the Internet. So, when we refer to what is “affordable,” it is essential to interpret that in terms of availability as well as in terms of money. If water has to be transported over long distances, it becomes unaffordable for many people. If fresh water sources are depleted or polluted through poor waste management, people will languish for lack of water.

When it comes to waste, human beings are integrally related to Nature and have much to learn from her examples. Everything discarded as waste by one part of an ecosystem is used by other parts of the system. Nature produces no waste. We can all learn many things from natural environments, including how to reuse “waste” and neutralize toxic substances.

All people can participate in recycling inspired by Nature's processes. Where there is no central garbage collection, people can be encouraged to bring waste to central recycling centers. These can become centers for the exchange of goods. Financial reimbursement can be offered as an incentive for people to bring in articles such as aluminum cans, plastic bottles, reusable building materials and other resalable goods. The recycling keeps the cost of reselling materials low, which is advantageous for the economy.

Nature offers us a free flowing model that operates with a spirit of sharing and cooperation, both within and between species. If people worldwide were to pool their information, know-how and best practices, possibly with the help of the Internet, then communities could choose the practices that suit them best to implement this goal.

It is to our advantage to follow Nature's example, including using circular solutions. Sewage, grey water and other waste can be broken down using a combination of plants, insects and bacteria to free nitrogen, phosphorus, methane gas for cooking and other valuable resources.

Waste management, if it follows nature's example, would be geared to full recycling. Since human beings produce so much toxic waste, the recycling process should be improved to make substances less toxic so they can be recycled and put to good use for the planet. To allow this to come about, people need to develop a desire to fully communicate with life itself, including listening with and to their own physical bodies.

6.3 By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally

This has to be a priority now! It is time that we work in conjunction with Nature rather than continuing our ineffective attempts to challenge and control her. We can follow Nature's way of balance and learn to move with her flow. The solutions lie in the simplicity of Nature and in using natural, non-toxic means of water purification. Plants and trees filter water naturally. We can learn from them and follow their lead.

It is important to educate humans to help them develop awareness of and respect for Mother Earth, to realize that all of life is interconnected and we are all sharing the same precious resources so there is no point in continuing harmful practices such as dumping dangerous materials into our water systems. With a new understanding of how to live in ways that preserve and protect our precious water, keeping it clean and safe, people can raise awareness in the world through their way of thinking, speaking and being as well as their use of technology and media. Indigenous Peoples can share the knowledge of their wise elders to help people learn a loving way of being in harmony and appreciation of nature and animals.

Increased funding should be put toward research and development of natural, earth friendly products and technologies to cleanse Earth's water sources. If we support Nature's own ways of purifying and cleansing her water sources, they will gradually regenerate. To enable such a turnaround, people must begin to appreciate both Nature and themselves for the miracles that they are—a miracle that can never be duplicated by humans. Human beings must first learn to see and treat themselves with respect and act in alignment with their best interests, so that creative solutions that benefit all can evolve.

Proposed Actions

It is essential to bring the Earth and her resources back into balance. This will require that human beings:

- Cease the use of toxic and dangerous chemicals in all sectors.
- Develop earth friendly technology, including non-toxic cleaners and degreasers.
- Develop clean motors for cars and planes.
- Develop an approach to child rearing that respects the individual's capacity to fulfil his/her potential and develop self-respect as a foundation to developing respect for all life on this planet.
- Create supportive work environments that promote creativity and make it possible for people to have the time and resources for true relaxation and recreation when not working.
- Implement Article 26 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Establish formal education using all types of media to promote awareness and understanding, with emphasis on:
 - The primacy of Nature and the need for Nature-inspired solutions.
 - Success stories of Nature-inspired best practices and effective solutions.
 - Student-centred projects that make use of individuals' unique skills and aptitudes to solve real world problems involving pollution and water quality.
- Create incentives for people to develop solutions to problems relating to waste management and cleaning polluted water sources.
- Provide material support for implementing such solutions.
- Create a website where people can exchange best practices and effective incentives.
- Apply commons rent/Land Value Taxation whereby the use of natural resources is paid for by commons rent/Land Value Taxation; and taxes are removed from labour, thereby causing people to make the most of their natural resources and encouraging people to work.
- Implement legislation prohibiting people from producing products that are not 100% recyclable, and imposing high fines for any pollution or destruction of Nature.

Even though many believe they cannot accomplish what is needed because powerful

interests are in the way, almost anything is possible when people are motivated by a simple desire to do good, to simply take care of what needs to be taken care of. The more people step up and unite to support the best interests of all life on this planet without fears or political agendas, the more they will naturally take actions in alignment with the highest and best for all life on the planet and unleash the powers inherent in Nature.

6.4 By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity

If we want to address water scarcity and truly promote access to fresh water for all it will be necessary to create a culture of caring for all of Nature and all human beings. As well, we will need to stimulate interest in regenerating fresh water sources by learning how Nature creates sustainable development using 15 billion years of experience stored in the Earth. Addressing water scarcity will involve the following simultaneous steps.

Proposed Actions

- Increase awareness of daily water consumption in homes and in industries.
- Establish a cap on the amount daily water use allowed.
- Promote education in effective, environmentally conscious ways for people to save water.
- Provide incentives for people to be responsible regarding their own water consumption.
- Ensure that big companies declare their use of water and have a daily limit.
- Offer assistance to relocate people who live in very dry places move to locations with easier access to water pipelines.
- Ration water use when in short supply to ensure all have access to a fair share of available fresh water.
- Start a wide-scale education campaign to ensure that all understand:
 - The crucial importance of fresh drinking water *to themselves personally as well as* to all others.
 - That access to fresh water must include all species, since leaving out one part of the Earth System from a needed access to fresh water will inevitably have a boomerang effect on one's own wellbeing.
 - The importance of exchanging and sharing information among people worldwide via a special website or the websites of relevant UN Specialized Agencies about Nature-based solutions for regenerating fresh water and best practices used by others facing similar fresh water issues.

- Institute enforceable legislation that ensures that all have the necessary access.
- 10. Create a global system that invites all cultures and nationalities to engage in an understanding of planetary water resources and current developments on the planet as a whole.

Where people shift their vision and truly work together for the wellbeing of all people and the planet, they will experience true empowerment to achieve the goal of increased efficiency of water use, becoming aware of the remarkable miracles already happening on a daily basis.

6.5 By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through trans-boundary cooperation as appropriate

Where we treat water-related ecosystems and other aspects of nature as simple commodities to be exploited for the benefit of just a few, we risk depleting and destroying our natural environments, as is happening today.

Ecosystems that produce fresh water are essential to human life. If we understand that we are an integral part of these ecosystems, and that our very survival depends on supporting and maintaining their continued health and vitality, we shall be increasing much more than just the system's capacity to produce fresh water. We shall be supporting the growth of microorganisms that live in water, insects, reptiles, birds, huge varieties of animals and plants, each of which is an invaluable marvel of nature in its own right as well as an indispensable part of the web of life. Each ecosystem that produces fresh water helps to sustain life on the planet. Each affects the air we breath, cloud formation, and sustains species worldwide through migration and the dispersal of seeds, all of which keeps the food chain in tact.

Once people begin to realize that ecosystems constitute valuable learning laboratories for children, students and scientists as well as Nature communicators; that they are works of art awe-inspiring in their beauty, bringing solace, nurturing, peace, rest for the weary and much more, people will be more inclined to leave these ecosystems intact to perform their many functions and to provide their many benefits to all life.

6.6 By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes

Proposed Actions

Following are some actions we can take to protect and restore water-related ecosystems:

- Create many more areas that protect nature, such as wildlife sanctuaries.

- Declare every important water source as protected and designate more and larger areas as protected worldwide.
- Create legally enforceable legislation with stiff penalties for industries that dump their waste into water.
- Prevent new buildings from being built that would impact such areas.
- Allow rivers to re-assume their natural form, space and flow wherever possible.

6.a By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies.

Water is an essential element for human life and throughout the ages much wisdom and know-how has been developed regarding locating and stewarding water sources. Finding ways to pool this wisdom and know-how will benefit both human beings as well as Nature. It is important to acknowledge that developing countries are as knowledgeable as developed ones and in fact, may be demonstrating more effective stewardship and better cooperation with Nature, living closer to the Earth.

6.b Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management.

Ours is a world of abundance, as long as we use what we need and leave the rest untouched. Everything is interconnected and we would be wise to acknowledge that fact. If we want to purify the water, we must shift our intentions and emphasize values other than pure profit. This will take a new kind of effort that respects basic human needs.

If we want clean drinking water, we absolutely must stop polluting it. The solutions lie in the simplicity of Nature and in using natural, non-toxic means of water purification. Plants and trees filter water naturally. We can learn from them and follow their lead.

Our human desires for cooperation, collaboration and inclusion are deeply ingrained in our psyche.

At our core, we are social beings who share an integral relationship with Nature. By reinforcing these basic values, leaders can inspire their communities to take action. With the support of local government, people can take the lead themselves.

Proposed Actions

1. Institute a simple education campaign that speaks to the hearts of people, letting them understand deeply why it is essential to save fresh water and improve sanitation even in areas where rainfall is plentiful. (Here organizations such as the Global Ecovillage Network can be extremely helpful.)
2. Create incentives to get all people in local communities involved.
3. Foster a sacred relationship with water as an element to be treated with dignity, kindness, love and respect by:
 - Providing inspiring stories and demonstrations of best practices:
 - Providing education individually or as a group on how to implement best practices.
 - Offering examples of how people have benefited from implementing one or more of these practices.
 - Eliciting responses from others regarding their successes, the joy of working with others as a part of a group or simply as a part of a larger network.
 - Reinforcing the knowledge that they are doing useful, necessary and effective work for the planet.
 - Supporting the creation and exhibition of works of art that portray water as a beautiful and sacred and create a deep connection with water.
 - Bringing attention to current diverse works of art that emphasize our connection with water and Nature.
 - Showing how water is a part of every living being on this earth, how water is a part of all of our own bodies, and how we are integrally related to all bodies of water.
 - Showing through the arts that water is by nature wild and free.
 - Allowing our music to reflect the voices of water, as it sings and roars.
 - Portraying water's movements in dance as it flows and moves through the world.
4. Encourage people to share what they are doing on Facebook and on YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and other social media to increase the potential that these images will go viral.
5. Make what is happening in each community known to other local governments via ICLEI and associations of Mayors, etc., and via the web sites of various UN Agencies.

Once people get a sense that they might be able to see, hear, touch, feel, and dance with what they come to see as the nature of water within themselves and all around them, they may more easily realize that we are all part of each other, our fates are intertwined, and water is not an object outside of us but the primary element that makes us what we are.

In our bodies, and emotions, we are one and inseparable. What happens to water happens to human beings. We are connected in both joy and suffering.

Human emotions are intimately related to the element of water. Both require natural expression and flow. When dammed up, pressure builds, which can lead to torrential and damaging outpourings. Letting emotions and water flow in harmony with the movement of life, living life gracefully, in harmony and balance with the world around us is essential for the health of each human being, each aspect of Nature and the Earth as a whole.