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THE GLOBAL GOALS

We all know that we face big challenges in today's world: poverty, hunger, inequality and climate change are just some of the issues we need to address urgently.

Big challenges need bold action to overcome them, and that is where the Global Goals come in. In 2015, the global community launched the 2030 Agenda, with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that should be reached by 2030.

To accelerate the kind of urgent, efficient, and effective action needed to achieve the Goals, it is crucial to address interconnectedness. We must recognize the central role of water as a catalyst for action and progress across all SDGs.

Water can help us find a more sustainable path, since water connects all the 17 SDGs. When viewed this way, it soon becomes apparent that many new approaches to water will effectively address several of the goals simultaneously.

Learn more about the SDGs: www.globalgoals.org



Those living in poverty are often hardest hit by drought or floods.

Being able to wash hands with soap reduces the likelihood of sickness, leading to fewer missed days of work or school both of which come at great personal economic cost. Access to running water removes barriers to economic growth for both individuals and society.

Water must also be considered in terms of resilience. Using water to build resilient communities will mitigate the economic impacts of extreme weather events, and climate action with water being used for both adaptation and mitigation will reduce the likelihood of such events.

High poverty rates are often found in small, fragile and conflict-affected countries. Conflict over water has increased drastically, making transboundary water cooperation crucial to minimizing conflict over water which can cause extreme poverty.



Ending hunger requires more than access to food. Lack of handwashing leads to diarrheal diseases, which in turn limit the body's ability to absorb nutrition from food.

WHO estimates that roughly half of child under-nutrition is caused by poor water, sanitation and hygiene.

Significant volumes of water are required to produce food, effectivising agriculture can ensure that we are producing more nutrition per drop of water meaning Zero Hunger can be achieved even in areas where water is scarce.

In the face of climate change access to water could make or break much needed transformation of food systems.



Access to clean running water, and soap, have the immediate benefit of improved health and is a cost effective way of preventing health issues from diarrheal disease to a global pandemic. Adequate toilet facilities also contribute hugely to good health.

Mismanagement of wastewater leads not only to waterborne diseases but can facilitate the development of antimicrobial resistance in bacteria found in the water, which once transferred to humans renders many antibiotics futile. Antimicrobial resistance poses a significant threat to humanity, health leaders have warned, as a study reveals it has become a leading cause of death worldwide and is killing about 3,500 people every day.

1 million deaths each year are associated with unclean births. Infections account for 26% of neonatal deaths and 11% of maternal mortality.



Being able to wash hands with soap reduces the likelihood of sickness, leading to fewer missed days of school. Increased attendance can be facilitated by ensuring there are adequate sanitary facilities on the premises, this ensures even those who don't have access to e.g. functioning toilets, can use them at school – providing incentive to attend school.

Travelling to access water for their household reduces the amount of time children spend in the classroom – leaving huge gaps in attendance around the world. Increasing access to water means that children all over the world can spend more time enjoying the education that are entitled to.



From education to sanitation, women and girls are disproportionately affected by water issues.

Women and girls face increased risk of violence when travelling long distances to access sanitation or running water, especially at night.

In 80% of water deprived households, women and girls carry the burden of water collection. Reducing the time it took to fetch water from 30 minutes to 15 minutes increased girls attendance at school by 12% according to a UNICEF study in Tanzania.



Water is the source of all life on earth. The lack of clean water and lack of access to basic sanitation is a health risk. It is also an obstacle to development for a large part of the world's population, especially the most vulnerable.



Water is key to affordable and clean energy and vice versa.

There is a clear interdependence between water and energy: most sources of energy require water in production, e.g. for cooling, and are as such a major user of water. Wastewater from the energy sector can release large quantities of pollution, thermal and chemical, into water bodies.

Considered use of grey water for cooling purposes would help reduce water consumption in energy production.

Ramping up renewables and boosting energy efficiency can help ensure water availability for all, reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity, minimize water pollution, and protect water-related ecosystems.



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



In order to achieve “full and productive employment and decent work for all”, removing barriers such as increased sickness due to poor sanitation, or needing to spend time collecting water rather than at work or in education is an essential factor.

Three out of four of the jobs worldwide are water-dependent meaning water shortages and lack of access may limit economic growth in the years to come. A water dependent job can be anything from a farmer relying on irrigated fields to a car manufacturing plant needing water for its processes.

Increased agricultural production through smart water management will result in rural economic growth and create farm-level job opportunities including for the youth and women. This can mitigate rural-urban migration and reduce youth exposure to low-paying jobs, poverty, crime and drugs in the urban areas.



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



We need to water to achieve inclusive and sustainable industrialization. Water is fundamental to industry—both quality and quantity matter.

If innovation is to be inclusive, it cannot exacerbate existing issues such as water stress. Considering water when innovating and developing infrastructure will help ensure that nobody is left behind.

To succeed in contributing to SDG 9 companies will need to look beyond the “business-as-usual” responses to pollution management and pursue plans to grow differently.



Water, and access to it, is key to ensuring that SDG targets do not widen gaps in equality.

Already vulnerable communities are often hardest hit by water scarcity yet have little to no power in the decision-making processes which affects them so greatly.

Universal access to safely managed water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and appropriate management of water resources will only be achieved if the rights of women and marginalised people are fulfilled.

SDGs which depend on water use or management for their success must ensure water is considered holistically so that achieving an SDG target is not cause for an increase in inequality. E.g. increased water scarcity due to increased production affecting a local indigenous community who were not consulted on the expansion of the production plant yet are most negatively impacted.



Water is fundamental to sustainable cities and communities. To survive the climate crisis and its consequences they must be resilient.

In order to build the resilience of any city or community, one must understand and embrace the complexity of its urban water system. Building this resilience includes better buildings, new early-warning systems and smarter planning. Protecting wetlands lets them buffer against floods and recharge groundwater, even during dry spells. Investment in wastewater treatment and safe sanitation ensures that people can cope with a growing number of diseases.

Achieving a reduction of the per capita environmental impact of cities depends upon and supports a sustainable, reliable water supply of adequate quality and quantity.



Responsible production in factories must be total, from reducing the use of water in production to safely managing wastewater at the end of the production process. This not only reduces pollution caused by wastewater mismanagement but could also reduce overall water use if wastewater can be treated and reused.



We need to prioritize actions that let us both adapt to climate change and reduce its impact. We cannot achieve net zero without some of the largest carbon sinks such as wetlands, oceans and forests – all maintained by water.



If water quality is improved it will reduce marine pollution. Improving wastewater and solid waste collection and management presents the most urgent short-term solution to reducing marine litter.

Globally over 80% of all wastewater is discharged without treatment causing ecological damage, health risks and economic loss.

Flows of some rivers are so highly diverted that little water actually reaches the sea, robbing coastal ecosystems of the water, sediment and nutrients they need.

The degradation of freshwater and marine environments has a direct impact on crucial ecosystem services and furthermore on livelihoods and food security, especially for the already vulnerable people.



Healthy water systems are crucial to maintaining biodiversity. Aquatic ecosystems such as wetlands, estuaries and riparian forests are especially rich with species, and also rich in numbers of individuals within the species, increasing the likelihood of variations within a species.

They are also the spawning grounds for many young birds and aquatic species, allowing them to grow and develop before joining the adult flock. This makes these environments and their biodiversity even more important to protect: to ensure generation of new generations of species.

Freshwater covers only 1% of the earth's surface but is home to 10% of known species.



Water is crucial for peace, justice and strong institutions.

Exclusion, scarcity and/or unequal distribution of nature's resources to people can fuel social instability and conflict in many areas of the world.

Conflict over water has increased drastically, making transboundary water cooperation crucial to minimising conflicts and their consequences. With increasing populations facing extreme water stress it is more important than ever that a reduction in resources does not result in conflict over the already scarce resources.

Strong governance concerning policies on water resource management mitigates the risk of conflict or injustice.



There is a direct connection between water and our chances of achieving the global development goals. Water is an enabler that helps us tackle all the biggest global challenges of our time. Therefore, cooperation is required across geographical, political, economic and expertise boundaries. Only by working together, with a unified focus can we, with the help of water, achieve a more sustainable future.