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WORKING WITH WATER: LINKING WATER WITH DEVELOPMENT

A WORLD WATER WEEK SPECIAL

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WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

The World Water Week in Stockholm is a week-long global water conference held each year in August or September. The World Water Week in Stockholm is arranged and led by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) and addresses a wide range of the world's water, development and sustainability issues and related concerns of international development. (World Water Week: Programme and Theme, 2016)

Over 2,500 participants attend the conference each year, featuring experts and members from business, governments, water management and science sectors, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, research and training organizations, and United Nations agencies. The conference features comprehensive sessions and panel debates, scientific workshops, poster exhibitions, side events and seminars. More than 200 organizations from around 130 countries all over the world collaborate in the organization of events. (World Water Week; Thematic Scope, 2016)

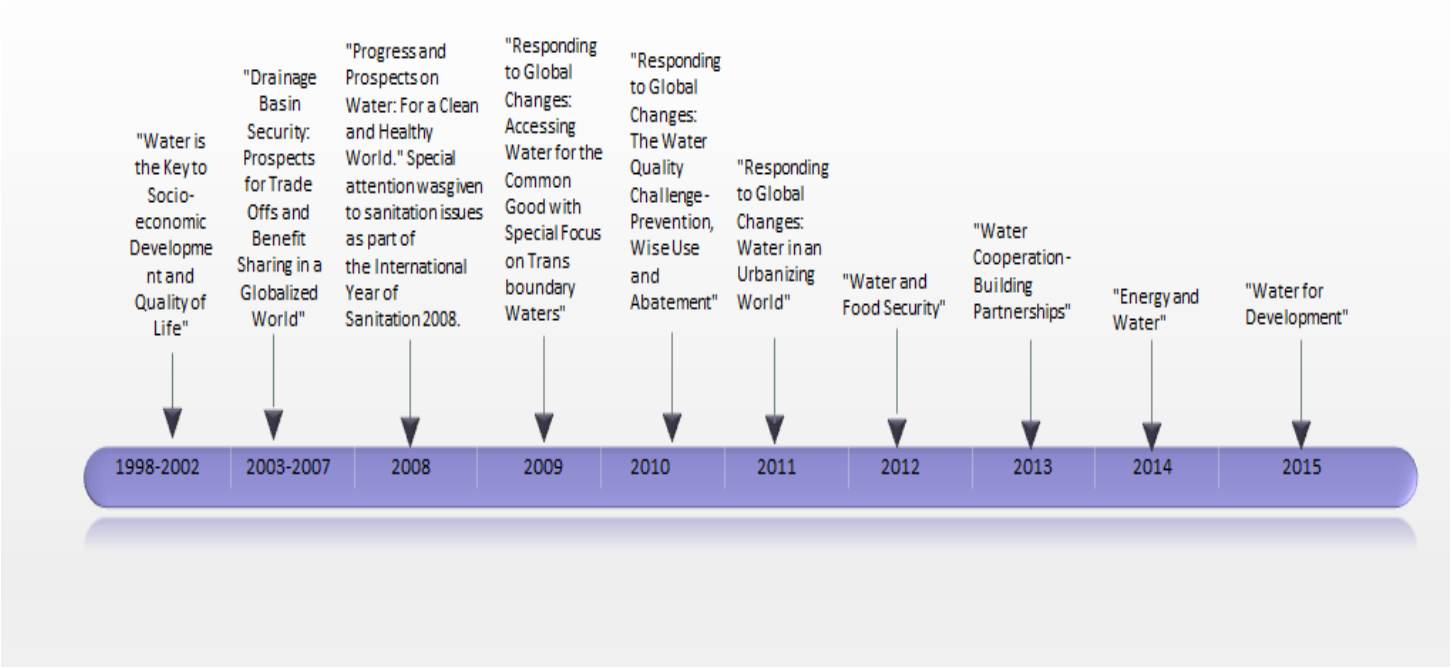
The World Water Week in Stockholm originally began as the Stockholm Water Symposium in 1991 and has been convened annually ever since. In 2001, it officially took on the name World Water Week in Stockholm. Past conferences have placed continued focus on specific aspects of the world's escalating water crisis. Functioning as an open and dynamic platform, the World Water Week enables participants to build capacity, form partnerships and review implementation, thereby advancing the world's water, environment, health, livelihood and poverty reduction agenda.

The 2016 World Water Week will be carried out under the theme **"Water for Sustainable Growth".** Leaders and experts from the world's scientific, business, government and civic communities assemble in Stockholm to exchange views, experiences and shape joint solutions to global water challenges. The latest World Water Week attracted over 3,000 participants and 300 organizations from 130 countries all over the world. (World Water Week: Programme and Theme, 2016)

EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT

The importance of water in development and the need for its conservation was realized as early as late 1990s when water was considered a key to socio-economic development and quality of life. Since then, the concept has evolved in terms of highlighting the importance of drainage basin security, sanitation, trans-boundary water, water quality, water in urbanization, water and food security, international cooperation and partnerships, energy and water, and water for development.

Some of the previous themes of World Water Week are displayed in the timeline below (World Water Week: Programme and Theme, 2016):



GLOBAL HIGHLIGHTS

Lack of clean water for drinking affect many people in every continent. Around one-fifth of the population in the world stays in areas of physical scarcity while five hundred million people are said to be approaching this situation. (WHO, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, 2016)

According to the World Health Organisation, "Water safety and quality are fundamental to human development and well-being. Providing access to safe water is one of the most effective instruments in promoting health and reducing poverty". (Meena Palaniappan, 2016)

Water is an important factor that influences the health of human beings. Water is consumed in many ways. The quality of water has an adverse effect on human health. It is directly associated with the wellbeing of the people. According to the WHO, almost 1 billion people lack access to improved water supply globally and 4% of the global disease burden could be prevented by improving water supply, sanitation, and hygiene. (Water Sanitation And Hygiene, Facts and Figures on Water Quality and Health, 2016)

Inadequate water supply and contaminated water has made the people in the low and middle income countries prone to various waterborne diseases. Contaminated water and poor sanitation has been the root cause of transmission of various water borne diseases. Improving the quality of water will have a positive impact on human health. (WHO Seminar Pack for Drinking Water Quality, 2016)

The Millennium Development Goal (MDG 7) on drinking-water was met globally in 2010. Between 1990 and 2010, over two billion people gained access to improved drinking water sources, such as piped supplies and protected wells. This was the first MDG target to be met but still challenges are said to remain. (WHO, Media Center, Key Facts, 2016)

UNICEF has stated that Diarrhea, caused by poor sanitation and hygiene practices and unsafe drinking water, remains a major cause of child malnutrition, disease and death in many parts of the South Asia region.

According to WHO SEARO, the South-East Asia Region has managed to provide improved drinking water to more than 90% of its population by 2015. However, major challenge lies in reaching those 10 per cent who reside in the hard to reach areas. (World Water Day: 22 March 2016, 2016)

Key Global Statistics:

- 2.6 billion people have gained access to improved drinking water sources since 1990, but 663 million people are still without water
- At least 1.8 billion people globally use a source of drinking water that is contaminated
- Each day, nearly 1000 children die due to preventable water and sanitation-related diarrheal diseases
- 663 million people (1 in 10) lack access to safe water
- Between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of the global population using an improved drinking water source has increased from 76 per cent to 91 per cent
- But water scarcity affects more than 40 per cent of the global population and is projected to rise.
- More than 80 per cent of wastewater resulting from human activities is discharged into rivers or sea without any pollution removal
- Globally, 1/3 of all schools lack access to safe water and adequate sanitation
- In low and middle-income countries, 1/3 of all healthcare facilities lack a safe water source
- A review of rural water system sustainability in eight countries in Africa, South Asia, and Central America found an average water project failure rate of 20 - 40 percent

Why World Water Week?

World Water Week provides a unique forum for the exchange of views, experiences and practices between the scientific, business, policy and civic communities. It focuses on new thinking and positive action toward water-related challenges and their impact on the world's environment, health, climate, economic and poverty reduction agendas by: (World Water Week: Programme and Theme, 2016)

- Linking scientific understanding with policy and decision-making to develop concrete solutions to water, environment and development challenges
- Fostering proactive partnerships and alliances between individuals and organizations from different fields of expertise
- Highlighting ground-breaking research, best practices and innovative policy work by stakeholders and experts around the world and from multiple disciplines
- Reviewing the implementation of actions, commitments and decisions in international processes and by different stakeholders in response to the challenges
- Awarding outstanding achievement

World Water Week and SDGs

World Water week is critical for addressing the role of water in the post-2015 development agenda. The World Water Week seeks to follow up on the broader context of sustainable growth, and thus directly and indirectly contribute to SDG in promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. World Water Week attempts to achieve sustainable growth for all by focusing on inclusiveness in terms of the societal and human dimensions in all regions of the world. (World Water Week: Programme and Theme, 2016)

While the primary focus is the promotion of water for sustainable growth, the week will follow up more generally on the implementation of the water related SDGs and the new climate agreement. Firmly placed at the intersection between policy, research and practice the World Water Week is also a natural place for exploring new ideas and perspectives in the area of water and sustainable growth between a diverse set of actors. (World Water Week; Thematic Scope, 2016)

In addition to Goal 6, most of the other global goals rely on water for their accomplishment. Without sufficient, clean and well-managed water resources, goals on poverty, hunger, health, energy and environment, to name a few, will not be reached. The same is true for the climate deal; if water is not brought into the equation, mitigation and adaptation efforts will be fruitless. Water is a connector between sectors, as well as a catalyst for change.

Water in Nepalese Context

The government of Nepal launched a special program in 1987 with the assistance of Asian Development Bank and World Bank involving local community as water users committee. At the call of the United Nations Nepal observed the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1981-90). In the 1980s domestic water supply situation was poor to the extent that covered only 6 % of rural population which has gone up to 71 % by the year 2000. (Water Sanitation And Hygiene, Facts and Figures on Water Quality and Health, 2016)

Currently the body governing the proper water supply and sanitation is the Department of Water Supply and Sewerage (DWSS), under the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD). Additionally the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development has also been working on Water and Sanitation. DWSS aims to provide access to safe water supply and sanitation to all by 2017.

Various policies has been implemented which has been governing the proper access of water and sanitation in Nepal like National Solid Country Paper Nepal Page 5 Waste Management Policy 1996, National Water Supply Sector Policy (Policies and Strategies) 1998, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation National Policy and Strategy (2004) and Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Policy 2009. (Revitalizing Primary Health Care, Country Experience, Nepal, 2015)

According to the National Management of Information Project (NMIP) launched by DWSS the national water supply coverage is 80.4 per cent and national sanitation coverage is 43.0 per cent. The Western Development Region has the highest coverage at 84.6 per cent and the Mid-Western Development Region has the lowest at 76.3 per cent. (Nationwide Coverage and Functionality Status of Water Supply and Sanitation in Nepal, 2011) The report has also recommended that a DWSS should initiate a programme for reconstruction and rehabilitation of water supply projects with

improved water quality in order to achieve national goals by 2017. (Country Paper on Sanitation, Nepal, 2013)

High Powered Committee for Integrated Development of the Bagmati Civilisation under the Ministry of Urban Development has initiated Bagmati Cleaning Campaign. The campaign has been initiated to improve the quality of Bagmati River which has been polluted due to various human actions like increasing settlement, unplanned urbanisation, and unplanned sewage system among others. As the polluted river has been a threat to the environment and human health, the campaign visions to make Bagmati River Pollution free. (High Powered Committee for Integral Development of Bagmati Civilization, 2016)

To improve the quality of life many government as well as nongovernment and private organization have been working for the water and sanitation sector. The country has made progress in the recent years but still reaching the unreached remains a big challenge. (Young child survival and development, Water Sanitation and Hygiene, 2016)

Every year, 22 March is observed as World Water Day to highlight the multiple uses of water and to advocate for managing water resources sustainably for current and future generations. The theme for 2016 is "Water and Jobs" – to give special attention to those who work in water-related sectors. (World Water Day, 2016)

The Way Forward

Water scarcity affects more than 40 percent of people around the world, an alarming figure that is projected to increase with the rise of global temperatures as a consequence of climate change. Although 2.1 billion people have gained access to improved water sanitation since 1990, dwindling supplies of safe drinking water is a major problem impacting every continent. In 2011, 41 countries experienced water stress; ten of them are close to depleting their supply of renewable freshwater and must now rely on non-conventional sources. Increasing drought and desertification is already exacerbating these trends. By 2050, it is projected that at least one in four people are likely to be affected by recurring water shortages. (Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation, Joint Monitoring Program for Water Supply and Sanitation, 2012)

Ensuring universal access to safe and affordable drinking water by 2030 requires for us to invest in adequate infrastructure, provide sanitation facilities and encourage hygiene at every level. Protecting and restoring water-related ecosystems such as forests, mountains, wetlands and rivers is essential if we are to mitigate water scarcity. More international cooperation is also needed to encourage water efficiency and support treatment technologies in developing countries.

Risks of too little or too polluted water, deteriorated water ecosystems and lack of access to water supply and sanitation hinder growth and sustainable development. Sustainable growth therefore requires substantial investments in water security, water infrastructure, risk management and knowledge.

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