



United Nations Environment Programme

برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة • 联合国环境规划署
PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT • PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE
ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

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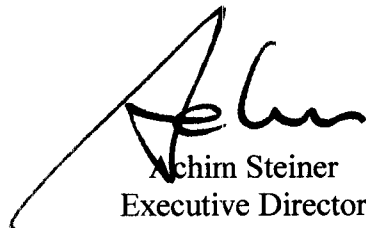
Dear Ms. Arbour, *dear Louise*

Thank you for your letter dated 8 March 2007 requesting information on human rights obligations related to equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

I am pleased to be of assistance and hope that the information attached on relevant UNEP activities, responding to your specific queries, will be useful to you in the drafting of the study on Human Rights and Access to Water.

Yours sincerely,

+ best wishes!


Achim Steiner
Executive Director

OHCHR REGISTRY

18 MAI 2007

Recipients :...*N.M.*.....
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UNEP's contribution to the Human Rights and Access to Water report

How human rights obligations related to equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation have been integrated into your organizations programs, plans, strategies or emergency interventions.

UNEP's work on freshwater is guided by UNEP's Water Policy and Strategy (WPS) (<http://www.unep.org/themes/freshwater/>) which was recently approved at UNEP's Governing Council in February 2007. An important part of the WPS strategic principles declares that UNEP will contribute to sound economic and social development, including poverty reduction, through integrated assessment and management of water resources and associated ecosystems. Under this principle "UNEP will promote the greater use of economic and social instruments and technological improvements to promote the efficient and equitable use of water." Through this principle, UNEP commits to mainstreaming efficient and equitable use of water into all its water and sanitation projects and programmes.

From UNEP's perspective, it is important to stress water as an environmental resource, and go beyond the scope of access to water as a social good only. Water is a finite resource - there are many examples of efforts to improve access and water allocation resulting in ecosystem destruction and resource depletion - sometimes such environmental impacts are unintended, while others are intentional. The Iraqi Marshlands is one example of upstream actions directly contributing to the downstream demise. As an environmental resource, there is a need to address the provision of actual water in sufficient quantity (minimum 20 liters per day per capita) and quality (defined by WHO as well as national standards) as well as access, and also address how to sustainably manage the entire water resource (i.e., surface and ground water sources, ice caps, biodiversity) and other ecosystem services supported/provided by water resources.

The impact of these programmes, plans, strategies, emergency interventions or other measures in promoting or restricting equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

In all its water programmes and projects, UNEP strives to promote the sustainable and equitable use of water. The very basis of UNEP's WPS framework is integrated water resources management (IWRM) which has broad stakeholder participation at its core.

Currently UNEP is assisting developing countries to develop IWRM roadmaps that can further assist the national governments to put IWRM into practice. UNEP is also building the capacity of developing countries to make assessments of their groundwater quality and quantity thereby providing tools to better manage groundwater resources. See (<http://www.unep.org/themes/freshwater/> for the latest UNEP publication on "Groundwater pollution in Africa". UNEP hosts the Rainwater Partnership and has a rain water harvesting project which is empowering women by providing them with alternative

livelihoods such as small-scale agriculture and liberating some of the time they would normally use for collecting water

Examples of approaches considered to represent “best practice” related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

As mentioned above the involvement of all stakeholders in the planning and decision making process for water resources is recognized by most as essential. *Integrated water resource management* is globally acknowledged to be a significant tool to use because of its multi-dimensional and multi-institutional nature. Through the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation the target of IWRM and water efficiency plans has become a global target. The challenge is to ensure that the water resources available are distributed so that the needs of all sectors of society are met while leaving enough water for ecosystems (environmental flows) to keep themselves. In terms of the best practice approach, UNEP works to introduce an integrated, environmentally sound approach towards improving access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Such an approach has various components, including technical implementation, institutional and human capacity strengthening, data collection and analysis, community engagement, awareness raising, and policy and coordination support.

For example, for the Iraqi Marshlands, UNEP has identified various options for water and sanitation provision, and analyzed the environmental and community impacts of the selected technical options (reverse osmosis for drinking water, submerged constructed wetlands for sanitation). The options have been implemented to provide drinking water to 22,000 residents and to provide adequate sanitation to 170 people. These people have suffered from lack of access to water and sanitation and also live in ecologically sensitive areas. Prior to interventions, UNEP also insisted that the communities to be served are officially endorsed by all relevant ministries and community groups, and identified as priorities for interventions. Various ministries and local communities have been engaged from the project inception. Over 300 persons have been trained in technical, policy, and data-management aspects of the Marshland management, and many trained participants have been engaged in project implementation and operations. UNEP also works to ensure that results and lessons learned from successful initiatives are well documented and shared with local institutions, so that they can be replicated and multiplied. From the policy perspective, UNEP has supported Iraqi institutions to move towards the development of a marshland management plan framework, served as a liaison for donor coordination, and provided input to other UN agencies in the UN Country Team to ensure cooperation and coordination.