

Preliminary Elements of a Communications Strategy prepared for the International Decade of Action ‘Water for Life’: 2005-2015

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1. Introduction

In December 2003, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2005-2015 as the International Decade for Action, “Water for Life”, to commence on 22 March 2005. The aim of the Decade is to provide a greater focus on water and sanitation-related issues in order to help achieve the internationally agreed goals on water and sanitation by 2015. A special emphasis was placed on the importance of ensuring the participation and involvement of women in such efforts.

The ‘Water for Life’ Decade provides a unique opportunity to build on the efforts made to date to protect, use and manage freshwater resources in a sustainable manner. These include the International Year of Freshwater in 2003 and the outcomes of the Commission on Sustainable Development’s twelfth and thirteenth sessions. Importantly, the timing of the Decade coincides with that of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and will help reinforce efforts to achieve the MDGs and related targets on water and sanitation by 2015.

The General Assembly called upon the relevant United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, regional commissions and other organizations of the United Nations system to deliver a coordinated response, utilizing existing resources and voluntary funds to make ‘Water for Life’ a decade for action. United Nations activities for the ‘Water for Life’ Decade are being coordinated by UN-Water.

A key component of maintaining world attention on water issues during the Decade will be an effective communications strategy. UN-DPI at the request of UN-DESA, as UN-Water Secretariat, has prepared this preliminary communications strategy for consideration by all members of UN-Water as a base for providing collaborative input and feedback on possible activities and events throughout the Decade.

The strategy aims to provide a framework of important dates throughout the Decade which can form the basis for activities at the local, national or international level. It also provides guidelines on key themes and related messaging for the Decade.

While each agency will have its own area of expertise in the area of water, every effort should be made to leverage activities, reports, events etc. across the UN system and to ensure consistency in messaging, facts/figures and visual identity as much as possible.

The UN Communications Group can serve as the basis for communicating amongst agencies with the DPI Focal Point acting as the facilitator for meetings and communications.

The activities and products included in this strategy are divided into three “categories” - already existing products, those that are currently planned by DPI and DESA under existing budgets, and those that would require a lead partner and funding to implement.

2. Communications Objective

The primary communications goal of the Decade is to promote efforts to fulfil international commitments made on water and sanitation-related issues by 2015 – a decade of action.

Relevant commitments include the Millennium Development targets to reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015. The goals for all countries to stop the unsustainable exploitation of water resources, to cut the unacceptable daily toll of 4,500 children dying daily from lack of water, sanitation and poor hygiene and to develop integrated water resource management and water efficiency plans by 2005 agreed at the Johannesburg Summit, are also an important focus of the Decade.

3 Strategic Considerations

The Decade is to be promoted utilizing existing resources and voluntary funds. Therefore the aim will be to gain leverage from events such as the Commission on Sustainable Development and special events of partners such as the 4th World Water Forum, the annual Stockholm World Water Week and planned efforts of UN-Water partners, in addition to encouraging voluntary contributions from Member States and other like-minded organizations.

It should also be noted that the 'Water for Life' Decade also coincides with the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005 – 2014).

4 Target Audiences

The following three target audiences can be identified:

- Governments in developed and developing countries who are responsible for implementation of the internationally-agreed water and sanitation-related goals, including those in the Millennium Declaration and bilateral and multilateral donors who will be encouraged to increase investment in water-related projects.
- NGOs and grassroots organizations in developed and developing countries that are active in water and sanitation issues will be prompted to request greater resources for the development of programmes and activities; and
- People throughout the world, particularly children and youth, women's groups and media organizations as well as those with a prior interest in water and sanitation issues, who will be able to learn more about the importance of the sustainable development and preservation of the world's water resources.

5 Logo for the 'Water for Life' Decade

The logo for the International 'Water for Life' Decade: 2005-2015 was chosen by UN-Water members from several designs submitted by the Department of Public Information and an independent designer working on a pro bono basis. The chosen logo by the independent designer is illustrated here.



The logo is designed to be used by UN-Water members and other UN entities on all UN publications and promotional materials pertaining to the Decade and can also be used by outside parties who seek permission through the UN-Water Secretariat.

6 Key Events and Dates During the 'Water for Life' Decade

Major international events on water are included in the following calendar. A more comprehensive calendar of events and activities is available on the Water for Life Decade website www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/calendar and on the UNESCO website at www.unesco.org/water/water_events.

Input is requested from members of UN-Water for major water-and sanitation-related reports or events during the Decade (even if not exact at this stage).

2005	
22 March	World Water Day Launch of the "Water for Life" Decade
April 2005	WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme report: "Water for Life: Making things happen". The JMP is updated annually and a report on specific themes is published every two years.
5 June	World Environment Day – theme "Green Cities: Plan for the Planet!"
21-27 August	World Water Week and the 15th Stockholm Water Symposium (organized by the Stockholm International Water Institute)
12 October	International Day for Disaster Reduction – theme reducing risk using micro-finance tools and safety nets
December	DPI Student Conference on Human Rights which has as its theme "Water as a Human Right" (organized by UN Cyberschoolbus)
2006	
	International Year of Desertification
16 – 22 March	4 th World Water Forum in Mexico City (21-22 March will be the Ministerial Conference) Launch of the World Water Development Report
22 March	World Water Day – theme "Water and Culture"
1 – 12 May	14 th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development – themes Energy, Industrial Development, Air pollution/Atmosphere and Climate Change
5 June	World Environment Day
August	World Water Week (organized by the Stockholm International Water Institute)
12 October	International Day for Disaster Reduction
2007 – 2015	
22 March	World Water Day
5 June	World Environment Day
August	World Water Week (organized by the Stockholm International Water Institute)
12 October	International Day for Disaster Reduction
31 December 2015???	End of the International "Water for Life" Decade
	Target date for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

7. Media Outreach During the 'Water for Life' Decade

The publication of the next *World Water Development Report* which will coincide with the 4th World Water Forum in March 2006 will be a major initial focus of the Decade's public information activities. Press materials based on the findings of the report will be prepared and media outreach undertaken in the lead up to and during the Forum. This would be an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of the Decade, cross-promoting the Decade in the press materials for the report as well as linking to the report from the 'Water for Life' Decade website.

World Water Days (celebrated on 22 March each year) throughout the Decade will also serve as a useful peg for media activities. While each year will have specific themes determined by UN-Water, the Decade should be a constant theme throughout. This is an excellent opportunity for agencies to use the logo and mention the context of the Decade in their statements or materials for World Water Days.

Promotion of the Decade will be sought through other international conferences and events such as the annual Stockholm Water Symposium, the Stockholm World Water Week and the 4th World Water Forum, among others. For example, the "Dakar Statement," issued at the first Global Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Forum in December 2004 in Dakar, Senegal, called on all countries to celebrate "Sanitation Week" (immediately preceding World Water Day every year on 22 March. This will draw attention to the sanitation target and the 2.6 billion people who do not yet have access to sanitation and hygiene education.

The 'Water for Life' Decade website offers a service for media to sign up to receive press releases and related materials on water and other sustainable development issues. This could be maximised by sending regular updates (an electronic newsletter or similar publication) on developments in the area of water.

8 Key Themes to Guide Communications on the International Decade for Action: 'Water for Life'

The following goals and themes provide some initial guidance for communications on the Decade and will be useful particularly for the development of key messages.

Input from members of the UNCG on these themes would be very useful.

- The primary goal of the Decade is to promote efforts to fulfil international commitments made on water and water-related issues by 2015 – a decade of action.

Relevant commitments included in the 2000 Millennium Declaration include the target to reduce by half the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water and to stop the unsustainable exploitation of water resources. Additional goals adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), held in Johannesburg in 2002, aim to develop integrated water resource management and water efficiency plans by 2005 and to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people who do not have access to basic sanitation. These goals are also an important focus of the Decade.

- Clean water and adequate sanitation are two critical factors in ensuring human health and protection against a wide range of diseases. The **'Water for Life' Decade** calls on the international community to strengthen efforts to increase access to water and sanitation for all.
- Achieving the Millennium Development Goals and targets on water and sanitation will contribute significantly to the realization of other development goals including poverty reduction, child mortality, gender equality, maternal health and education.
- Adequate inflow of water for ecosystems is crucial for protecting and preserving biodiversity in all environments -- from freshwater lakes and rivers, to mountain landscapes, wetlands, estuaries, coastal zones and oceans. The **'Water for Life' Decade** provides an opportunity for increased cooperation to protect this vital resource for the future of the earth's diverse ecosystems.
- The **'Water for Life' Decade** recognizes that women play a central role in the provision, management and safeguarding of water and are the main role models within the family when it comes to sanitation and hygiene. It is crucial to look at water and sanitation issues from a gender perspective and to involve women fully in the planning, design and management of water and sanitation facilities.
- The **'Water for Life' Decade** presents an opportunity for the international community to promote the sustainable management of agricultural water resources and fisheries to reduce poverty and ensure food security into the future.
- Global economic prosperity, population growth and urban expansion are driving energy consumption and water use to record levels. Hydropower can provide a sustainable and practical alternative for power generation, while renewable energies such as solar, wind and biomass can provide excellent fuel sources for pumping water.
- International water courses can provide an incentive for peaceful cooperation among states and a catalyst for regional peace and sustainable development. During the **'Water for Life' Decade** it is

important to ensure that there is continuing dialogue, cooperation, and good management of a shared resource that no person can live without.

- The human right to adequate amounts of clean water has been recognized by the UN and is considered essential for achieving other human rights. The **'Water for Life' Decade** calls on governments to ensure sufficient water to meet social needs and maintain ecosystem integrity. It is essential that where pricing policies exist they do not deny access to poor people who cannot afford to pay. All stakeholders must be involved in decisions regarding the allocation and management of water resources.
- Water-related disasters – including floods, droughts, hurricanes, typhoons and tropical cyclones – inflict a terrible toll on human life and property and can cause crippling economic losses. During the **'Water for Life' Decade** it is important to improve and extend to all regions of the world early warning technologies, disaster preparedness and disaster response systems to reduce vulnerability and ensure that hazards do not turn into unmanageable disasters.

9 Communications Tools for Promotion of the 'Water for Life' Decade

As mentioned above, the activities and products included in this strategy are divided into three categories - already existing products, those that are currently planned by DPI and/or DESA under existing budgets, and those that would require a lead partner and funding to implement.

9.1. Communications Tools Currently Available

*The following are some of the communications tools **CURRENTLY AVAILABLE** for promotion of the 'Water for Life' Decade. All members and partners are encouraged to send in their water and sanitation-related events and materials, both print and electronic, to make this list as current and comprehensive as possible:*

PRINT PRODUCTS

'Water for Life' booklet

The Department of Public Information and UN-DESA, on behalf of UN-Water, have produced a promotional booklet for the Decade which includes striking images, facts, figures and recommendations for action across a number of water-related themes such as gender, health, natural disasters, agriculture and biodiversity. This booklet is available in English, French and Spanish and work is currently underway to have the text available in all official UN languages.

'Water for Life' poster

A poster to promote the Decade was produced by the Department of Public Information featuring the cover image of the booklet, the logo and the website address.

Advocacy Guide

WHO, on behalf of UN-Water, prepared an Advocacy Sourcebook. This book, which is available in English, French and Spanish, is a guide for local groups on how to raise awareness and advocate on water issues.

ON-LINE AND ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS

'Water for Life' Decade website

An official website for the 'Water for Life' Decade was launched on 22 March 2005 at www.un.org/waterforlifedecade.org and is now available in all official UN languages. The website will be housed and maintained at United Nations Headquarters, jointly by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as UN-Water Secretariat, and the Department of Public Information. Links to activities of all the other UN-Water member agencies are included. The website will be used as an awareness raising tool and a "clearing house" to present activities taking place at the international, regional and national levels.

'Water for Life' Decade DVD

A DVD was produced by the Department of Public Information and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs containing the message of the UN Secretary-General for the Decade, an eight-minute video *Water: the Drop of Life*, a children's video *Splish and Splash* and the 'Water for Life' booklet.

UN Radio CD

UN Radio and the WSSCC have produced a CD of interviews with eminent personalities and NGOs on water, sanitation and hygiene issues. The interviews and features have been broadcast during the first

Global WASH Forum, World Water Day and other events. UN Radio will also be broadcasting live from the forthcoming Stockholm World Water Week in August 2005.

Cyberschoolbus

The Cyberschoolbus website has a number of water-related materials online (see below).

Photo Library

UNESCO has an online photo library (at www.wateryear2003.org) which was developed for the International Year of Freshwater 2003. A direct link to this resource could also be added to the 'Water for Life' Decade website.

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Cyberschoolbus

The United Nations Cyberschoolbus offers informative and interactive educational materials about the UN and a wide range of issues on its agenda to primary, intermediate and secondary schools around the world. It is part of the Outreach Division in the Department of Public Information.

The Cyberschoolbus currently has several educational materials and projects on water that can be updated to include reference to the 'Water for Life' Decade. These include:

- A Water Quiz.
- A dedicated website for youth on the Millennium Development Goals that includes information on Goal 7 and an interactive color-coded world map that shows the percentage of people in each country who have access to clean water.
- The "Pumped Up for Peace" project which aims to rally teachers and students around the world to raise money to help communities that lack access to safe drinking water. The first community is an indigenous village in the Amazon rainforest. An interactive forum for schools participating in the Pumped Up for Peace project will be launched in July 2005. This project will be featured in Planet H₂O, an upcoming television show produced by Channel 13 that is scheduled to air in April 2006.

A curriculum guide for primary school teachers called "Sharing the Planet" is currently being printed and includes a chapter on water that highlights the 'Water for Life' Decade.

These materials plus others that were produced for the International Year of Freshwater in 2003 and World Environment Day 2003 (including a slideshow narrated by Mrs. Nane Annan), will be grouped together under the "water" theme in a newly redesigned Cyberschoolbus website which is expected to be completed in 2006.

In December 2005, the annual DPI Student Conference on Human Rights (organized by the Global Teaching and Learning Project) will focus on the theme "Water as a Human Right" which will provide an opportunity to raise awareness of the 'Water for Life' Decade. The UN Cyberschoolbus is currently designing a website dedicated to the conference that will be online by the end of August 2005. The website will include an interactive forum to assist students from different countries to develop a Plan of Action on water issues. The entire conference will be webcast live on the Cyberschoolbus.

The Cyberschoolbus website (www.cyberschoolbus.un.org) can be reached through a link from the main 'Water for Life' Decade website under "Education and Youth".

Splish and Splash video

A children's video initially produced by SWYNK in the Netherlands for the International Year of Freshwater has been updated for the Decade and is available online and on the 'Water for Life' Decade DVD.

Every Body Counts, Every Drop Matters

This classroom resource guide designed to inform students about the world's water resources and get them involved in preserving them is available for sale online and through the UN Bookshop (www.un.org/Pubs/whatsnew/e04026.html).

'Water Alert!'

This interactive online game for children teaching them facts and figures about water management and use is currently available in English and will soon be available in French and Spanish (www.unicef.org/voy/explore/wes/explore_1818.html).

BROADCAST MATERIALS

Video: *Water: The Drop of Life*

This eight-minute video is currently available in different formats and is being distributed to all UN Information Centres.

BBC Earth Report documentaries

The Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) co-produced with the Television Trust for the Environment (TVE) TV documentaries for the BBC Earth Report series entitled: "*Pipe Dreams*" including human interest stories on Uganda, Senegal and India, and the "*Dakar Dialogues*" on WASH topics including gender issues.

WSSCC is also working closely with OneWater Films (USA) to produce a film and TV documentary on water and sanitation for release in 2006.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Water Personalities

A new initiative "Women Leaders for WASH", launched by the WSSCC during CSD-13 in April 2005, is co-convened by the Hon. Ms Maria Mutagamba, Ugandan Minister of State for Water (representing the South), the Hon. Ms. Hilde F. Johnson, Norwegian Minister of International Development (representing the North) and will soon include a head of UN Agency to represent international organizations. Currently comprising 12 women leaders from different disciplines and sectors, the women leaders will focus on raising gender issues and lobby for more priority and resources for water, sanitation and hygiene at major regional and global fora during the Decade.

9.2. Further Ideas for Activities and Communications Tools

The following are some ideas for POSSIBLE activities and communications tools that require funding, human resources and/or a lead partner:

Materials for the ‘Water for Life’ Decade Website

DESA with assistance from DPI will produce the following materials for addition to the website:

- Water saving tips
- Did you know? Facts and Figures on Water

Inventory of Success Stories – “Water projects that work”

An online inventory of successful projects could be a useful capacity building tool.

It could also serve as a source for the development of “real-life success stories” targeted at media and the general public, i.e. stories written from the perspective of how the water or sanitation project changed the life of real person on the ground.

Awareness and Advocacy Campaign

DPI would like to conduct an electronic awareness and advocacy campaign to raise general awareness amongst the target audiences of the Decade’s existence and to provide different groups (NGOs, government ministries, private water authorities etc.) with targeted information to inspire them to use the Decade, with suggestions of activities that they could undertake at the local level. The WHO advocacy guide is an excellent resource in this regard and the UN-Water members could assist by disseminating materials through their networks.

“Water for Life” Decade Stamp

In conjunction with the UNPA, a special stamp design could be produced for the Decade. A proposal would need to be submitted two years in advance.

Water Newsletter

A newsletter could be produced three or four times a year with input from all UN-Water members giving updates on water-related issues. This could be distributed electronically to lists of subscribers.

Competitions and Exhibits

Photo, art, poster, poem, short film or other types of competitions could be organized either globally or region-specific. Selected pieces could form the basis of an exhibit that could be displayed at various sites around the world.

Online Video Library

UN-Water partners could submit water-related video pieces to be included on the ‘Water for Life’ Decade website as downloadable files.

Audiovisual Materials

DPI could produce a number of short ‘UN in Action’ pieces on UN agencies’ water-related projects and activities in the field throughout the Decade. These would be distributed to broadcasters globally through the Department of Public Information’s daily feed UNIFEED service. This daily 10-minute transmission of programmes produced by UN agencies and programmes feeds to more than 500 TV stations globally.

Water Personalities

Eminent personalities, celebrities, politicians, business leaders and activists can be invited to spread the message of the Decade to a larger audience as advocates for the Decade. Activities could include speaking at opening of exhibits, events on water, making public service announcements. Some UN-Water partners may already have celebrities that they would be able to use for promotion of the Decade.

Individuals who are already committed to issues relating to water – such as the Prince of the Netherlands, Mexico’s Mario Suarez, Mikhail Gorbachev and the African Women Ministers for WASH – could be encouraged to mention the Decade in their interviews and outreach on water issues.

Public Service Announcements

Public service announcements featuring the key themes of the Decade could be produced through a partnership with a broadcaster or an advertising agency. These PSAs could utilize individuals mentioned in the section above, or local personalities to spread the message of the Decade.

Educational Seminars and Project Visits for Media

One way of increasing publicity and awareness of the Decade and its goals is to educate the media about the relevant issues in their region and to show them real-life initiatives on the ground. Seminars for local media in different regions of the world could be conducted through partnerships between UN-Water members, including field trips to water projects and speakers on various topics. Seminars for larger international media could also be investigated.

Short Film Competition

One possibility could be to partner with an existing short film competition to incorporate water themes and promotion of the Decade.

Annual “Water for Life” Champion Award

An annual award scheme could be conducted with prizes awarded on World Water Day each year to an individual or an organization who has made a significant contribution to water-related issues. Sponsorship could be sought for prizes; perhaps funding that would go towards the organization or to the individual.

Promotional items for sale or distribution at events

Promotional items such as coffee mugs, key rings, postcards, calendars, t-shirts for the Decade would serve as useful awareness raising tools as well as generate income.



Dedicated Photo Library

A collection of photos by UN Photo could be added to the 'Water for Life' Decade website to be available for downloading free. This would supplement those already available on the International Year of Freshwater website.

Water Word Search Game

This children's word search game produced by UNESCO is currently available on the International Year of Freshwater website with instructions in English, French and Spanish. It could easily be adapted for use on the 'Water for Life' Decade website.

(www.unesco.org/water/year_water/games/iyfw_word_search_en_es_fr.pdf)

Water in Different Languages

These interactive maps of the world show the word 'water' in different languages. They are currently available on the International Year of Freshwater website at (www.wateryear2003.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=4988&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html) but could possibly be moved to the Decade site or linked.

10. Budget

The implementation of many of these elements and others that could be proposed for the Decade will depend on sourcing adequate financial and human resources. The coordination and labour for many projects could be undertaken by a full or part-time person dedicated to the promotion of the UN 'Water for Life' Decade which does not currently exist within either DPI or DESA.

Funding for activities such as competitions and exhibits could be sourced through private companies that would gain some publicity in return. National governments could be approached to assist with funding for activities in their region. Partnerships with water authorities to produce co-branded materials could be pursued.