



South African Human Rights Commission, Human Right 2 Water and the Water Research Commission

The Human Right to Water and Sustainable Development Goal 6

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The Human Right to Water

- Water is a human right as enshrined explicitly in the South Africa Constitution and for decades, implicitly, in international instruments.
- It is essential to the survival of all life on earth.
- However, its access and availability are under threat.
- On 28 July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly explicitly recognised the human right to water and sanitation.
- The lack of access to potable water violates people's dignity.
- Further from a human rights perspective, the right to water (and sanitation) is essential for the eradication of poverty and inequality.
- Water and poverty are inextricably linked.
- A lack of access to water greatly impacts other rights, and disproportionately affects vulnerable groups.



The SDGs

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emanate from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- This is a broad plan of action for '*people, planet and prosperity*' articulated through the SDGs.
- The SDGs are broad aspirations for achieving the 2030 Agenda.
- The SDGs were also optimally designed to take forward and improve on the Millennium Development Goals.
- The 2030 Agenda recognises the centrality of water resources to sustainable development.
- Importantly, SDG6 goes beyond drinking water, sanitation and hygiene to also address the quality and sustainability of water resources.



SDG 6

- SDG 6 calls on States and people to “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all – ensuring that no one is left behind.
- In 2016, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution where it expressed concern at the negative impact that a lack of access to water and sanitation and hygiene has on health and mortality.
- The resolution mentioned above, requires States to work towards universal access for all to water, without discrimination, using human rights-based service delivery as a basis for the provision of this resource.
- Globally, standards for access to safe drinking water are appalling.
- The duty lies with various role-players to realise the goal of SDG 6.



Challenges in Water Service Delivery

- Water usage is increasing due to population increase and irrigation expansion. Water use has been increasing worldwide by about 1% per year since the 1980s.
- Global water demand is expected to continue increasing at a similar rate until 2050, accounting for an increase of 20 to 30% above the current level of water use.
- Broad challenges include:
 - Discrimination
 - Poor governance
 - Economic factors
 - Urban-rural divide
 - A lack of political will
 - Poor planning



A HRBA for Business

- “Under a human rights-based approach, the plans, policies and processes of development are anchored in a system of rights and corresponding obligations established by international law. This helps promote the sustainability of development work, empowering people themselves – especially the most marginalised – to participate in policy formulation and hold accountable those who have a duty to act”.
- A human rights-based approach (HRBA) to service-delivery advocates for the fundamental standards, principles, and criteria of human rights frameworks.
- In addition to the moral imperative of companies to integrate a HRBA to business, it has found to be good for business.



A HRBA for Business (2)

- In rethinking its position in society as a role-player in economic, social, and environmental development and a member of a community, the discourse on BHR progressively evolves so that it benefits all role-players.
- According to the OHCHR, this approach can result in the following:
 - Improved stakeholder relations.
 - Improved employee recruitment, retention, and motivation.
 - Improved risk assessment and management.
 - Reduced risk of consumer protests.
 - Enhanced corporate reputation and brand image.
 - A more secure license to operate.
 - Strengthened shareholder confidence.
 - More sustainable business relationships with governments, business partners, trade unions, sub-contractors, and suppliers.



Thank You

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