Value Water



Recommendations

Headline Recommendation

Use the *HLPW Principles on Valuing Water* to sustainably, efficiently and inclusively allocate and manage water resources, and to deliver and price water services accordingly.

Detailed Recommendations

- Apply the "HLPW Principles on Valuing Water" in order to recognize the various values that societies accord to water and its uses, take these into account in political and business decisions, and in decisions to price water and sanitation services appropriately.
- Conduct all processes to reconcile values in ways that are equitable, transparent, and inclusive, and value, manage, and protect all sources of water, including watersheds, rivers, aquifers, associated ecosystems, and used water flows for current and future generations.
- Promote education and public awareness about the intrinsic value of water and its essential role in all aspects of life and ensure adequate investment in institutions, infrastructure, information, and innovation to realize the many different benefits derived from water and reduce risks.

Preamble

- 1. Water is precious, fragile, and dangerous. Water, in combination with land, air, and energy, is the foundation of life, societies and economies. Water is more than a substance: it carries multiple values and meanings. These are expressed in spiritual, cultural and emotional terms and found in the heritage of water language, norms and artefacts. These reflect the deep perceptions, need for connections and participation of all of society. Making water available for its many uses and users requires tools and institutions to transfrom it from a natural resource to one providing services and the to recover and return it safely back to ecosystems. Water and its sources must be respected because if neglected or misused, they have the power to harm, divide or even destroy societies.
- 2. Water resources are finite and are under threat from multiple pressures: there is an urgent need for action at scale. Water is essential for human health, food security, energy supplies, sustaining cities, and ecosystems. Today, the world's water systems are facing a growing crisis, threatened by overuse, pollution, and climate change. Communities all over the world are experiencing extreme events, droughts, and floods. Billions of people do not have access to safe drinking water at home, or lack safely managed sanitation. Demands are growing from a rising population and growing economies.
- 3. Valuing water means recognizing and considering all the diverse benefits and risks provided by water, and encompassing its economic, social, and ecological dimensions as well as its diverse cultural and religious meanings. Safeguarding ecosystems, and the poor, the excluded, and the vulnerable is required in all instances. Access to water services is necessary for equitable and inclusive human development. Universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a fundamental human right.
- 4. Making all the values of water explicit gives recognition and a voice to dimensions that are easily over-looked. Identifying and recognizing all the values of water, their interdependencies and impacts on all areas of life and activity underlines the importance of collaboration and interaction between all sectors and interests. Valuing water is more than a cost-benefit analysis and is necessary to make collective decisions and trade-offs

that lead towards sustainable and equitable solutions. Women and youths play an essential role in achieving these sustainable solutions.

- 5. Valuing water promotes efficiency and better practices by exposing the short and long-term costs of pollution, waste and misallocation, and facilitating investments. Value-based economic instruments and regulation can signal scarcity, avoid waste, and promote conservation. Any use of water relies on functioning ecosystems and infrastructure, which are valuable and costly to preserve, provide, operate and maintain. Sustainable water management requires these costs to be covered completely. Pricing is part of the solution, but price doesn't equal the value. Where tariffs and prices are used, safeguards are essential to ensure that access to water is available, equitable, and affordable to all.
- 6. Valuing and managing water effectively presents a transformative opportunity to convert risk to resilience, poverty to well-being, and degraded ecosystems to sustainable ones. Working across sectors, communities and nations to value water will help to mitigate conflicts and build collaborative relationships, thus contributing to stability and peace both within and between countries.
- 7. The Valuing Water Initiative of the HLPW is a collaborative process aimed at building capacity, champions, and ownership at all levels, for a shared pathway forward. This initiative presents a unique and mutually reinforcing opportunity to meet all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Principles for valuing water

Valuing water is a shared responsibility of us all. Whether acting as governments, municipalities, businesses, farmers, civil societies, communities, or as individuals, we all have a duty to:

Recognize and Embrace Water's Multiple Values

Principle 1. Identify and take into account the multiple and diverse values of water to different groups and interests in all decisions affecting water. There are deep interconnections between human needs, social and economic well-being, spiritual beliefs, and the viability of ecosystems that need to be considered.

Reconcile Values and Build Trust

Principle 2. Conduct all processes to reconcile values in ways that are equitable, transparent, and inclusive. Trade-offs will be inevitable, especially when water is scarce, and these call for sharing benefits amongst all those affected. Inaction may also have costs that involve steeper trade-offs. These processes need to be adaptive in the face of local and global changes.

Protect the Sources

Principle 3. Value, manage, and protect all sources of water, including watersheds, rivers, aquifers, associated ecosystems, and used water flows for current and future generations. There is growing urgency to protect sources, control, and prevent pollution and address other pressures across multiple scales.

Educate to Empower

Principle 4. Promote education and public awareness about the intrinsic value of water and its essential role in all aspects of life. This will enable broader participation, water-wise decisions, and sustainable practices in areas such as spatial planning, development of infrastructure, city management, industrial development, farming, protection of ecosystems, and domestic use.

Invest and Innovate

Principle 5. Ensure adequate investment in institutions, infrastructure, information, and innovation to realize the many different benefits derived from water and reduce risks. This requires concerted action and institutional coherence. It should harness new ideas, tools, and solutions while drawing on existing and indigenous knowledge and practices in ways that nurture the innovative leaders of tomorrow.

Pathways Forward

There are many pathways forward to implement the HLPW Principles for Valuing Water, including:

- (i) Raise awareness on values of water and their importance among policy makers, industry and community leaders, journalists, writers, scientists, young professionals and teachers with special attention to vulnerable groups and youths. Reports, audiovisual materials and examples need to be compiled and curated to illustrate how and where the HLPW Principles for Valuing Water could be or have been applied successfully.
- (ii) Establish a Global Leadership Coalition on valuing water to mobilize champions that lead by example and showcase the application of the HLPW Principles for Valuing Water in a range of different contexts and settings.
- (iii) Promote collaborative action of key parties such as national and local governments, industry, civil societies, on valuing water in their context, revealing their incentives to act (across risks and co-benefits) and identifying opportunities to improve their practices. Co-benefits and risk management have to be harnessed by a broader range of actors, these cannot be driven by the water sector alone.
- (iv) Encourage key institutions and networks to incorporate valuing water in their policies and practices, building on existing criteria or paradigms such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG), The UN Global Compact, Natural and Social Capital Accounting, Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES), Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) frameworks, and the OECD Principles for Good Governance.
- (v) Build a valuing water action agenda and investment strategies across institutions and networks.