

Human Values and Ethics in the Workplace

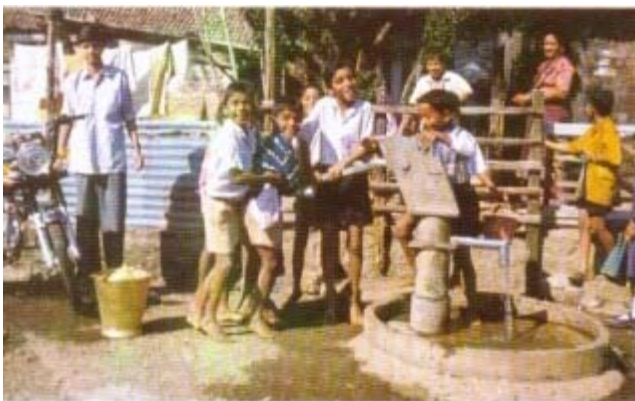
*Improving Leadership and
Performance in the Water
Education, Supply and
Sanitation Sectors*

RESOURCE PAPERS



**#4 Water for Life –
One Leader Can
Make a Difference**

**#5 Universal Access
to Water: Making the
Impossible Possible**



“Human Values and Ethics in the Workplace” is a capacity-building initiative developed in a collaborative effort between the Global Dharma Center (GDC) and UN-HABITAT, within the framework of the Human Values Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education (HVWSHE) Initiative of the Water for African/Asian Cities Programmes. The purpose of the capacity-building is to improve leadership and performance in every aspect of the water education and water supply and sanitation sectors, and to help bring about a new ethic in water use and management.

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#4 – Water for Life – One Leader Can Make a Difference

by Debra and William Miller
Global Dharma Center

Imagine Phnom Penh, 1993... The Khmer Rouge have been defeated, although the city is still not “secure.” Only 20% of the total population have access to water supplied by the Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority (PPWSA). There has been no maintenance of the system and virtually all documentation of the water infrastructure and customer base has been destroyed. Over 70% of the water produced is “lost” to leakage or illegal taps to the pipes. The PPWSA staff of 500 is under-qualified, underpaid, with low motivation, and working with low efficiency. Nepotism is widely practiced. The higher management is working for self-interest, often offering illegal water connections for money in their own pockets.

How would you like to be in charge of turning this situation around? That’s exactly what one man, Ek Sonn Chan, took responsibility for when he became Director of the PPWSA.

To restore and ensure everyone’s right to water, and solve these seemingly

insurmountable problems, Ek Sonn Chan began a “changing of culture.” He first tapped into his own personal values: responsibility, service, quality, safety, health, high integrity, and working to uplift his country. He developed around him a staff of 20 people totally dedicated to his vision and values. Together they insisted that others, inside and outside the organization, do the same.

They conducted an accurate survey of their customer base and discovered that only 40% were paying water bills (some never received them). Ek Sonn Chan even went house to house to convince non-paying or low-paying customers, including rich and powerful VIP’s, to pay their fair share for water. They installed new water lines, especially to the poor. They repaired old facilities and leaking pipes. They installed water meters. Within 3 years, they were generating enough revenue to cover the costs of operating the system, and they reduced the lost water from 70% to less than 25%.

Today in 2007, as a result of this massive effort, 162,000 connections are metered, and 90% of the entire Phnom Penh City is connected to the water distribution

network, there is a 99.7% collection rate, and lost water is down to 7%. Also, PPSWA has a team of people who are hardworking, responsible, and self-motivated. And due to a higher collection ratio, it has fully recovered its expansion costs.

Ek Sonn Chan is an inspiring example of how one committed leader can make a difference – particularly when it comes to meeting one of the most daunting challenges of this early millennium: providing universal access to safe water and sanitation. After all, today, over 1.2 billion people lack access to safe water and 2.5 billion are without proper sanitation. And over 5 million people die every year from disease related to poor water quality.



Towards this end, the UN has set a Millennium Development target “to halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.” The UN has taken the additional step to declare 2005-2015 as the International Decade for Action to

provide “Water for Life,” which includes sufficient water supply to meet people’s basic needs for drinking water, hygiene, and subsistence agriculture and stockbreeding... as well as sustainable management of aquatic ecosystems.

Many people and organizations applaud such initiatives, but hesitate to step forward to help. They are suspicious that funds will be used inefficiently or will end up in private bank accounts and distrust the capability and integrity of the leadership in the more impoverished countries.

Ek Sonn Chan and others like him give us a different picture... a view of “Water for Life” leaders who create a culture of trust and excellence, and then initiate innovative policies and practices. In fact, there is no scarcity of capable, values-driven, innovative leaders in the developing countries.

One such leader is Mr. Shaoxia Cheng, Director of the Project Management Office of the Sanjiang Plain Wetlands Protection Project in the PRC. He has long been devoted to the values of environmental sustainability and caring for future generations, having participated in a variety of wetlands-related projects through the years. Innovation is also a key part of his work. He states that the Wetlands Protection Project, under his direction, “differs significantly from other

wetland conservation in the PRC in its close linkage of watershed management with the management of wetland nature reserves, and with the way it directly addresses the needs of the plain's local residents.”

Also consider Rebecca Ravalo, Program Manager for the Water Supply and Sanitation Program Management Office (WSSPMO) in the Philippines. Dedicated to working on behalf of the underserved communities in the 20 poorest provinces in the country, she has introduced innovative ways to involve local governments down to the village level in different stages of her projects – giving them a sense of ownership of the water supply systems installed. Drawing upon her values and creativity, she continues to address many daunting challenges. “We have 30 agencies handling different aspects of water management and service delivery; this leads to incredible coordination constraints. Financing is also a very complex and prevailing issue. And we need to continue building the local governments’ capacity to assess their needs and be self-sufficient enough to address them.”

Many people may feel it's inevitable that universal access to “Water for Life” will never be reached. But to quote Mr. N. Vittal, Chief Vigilance Commissioner of India (in charge of anti-corruption measures):

“It was Alexis de Toqueville who said that the inevitable becomes intolerable the moment it is perceived to be no more inevitable.”

Ek Sonn Chan, Shaoxia Cheng, and Rebecca Ravalo are three leaders who do not see a lack of “Water for Life” as inevitable – only *intolerable*. They are leaders who have the strength and personal character to bring out the very best in others: staff, customers, community stakeholders alike. They do this by putting into practice values that are fundamental to human existence and found in varying degrees in all societies, cultures, nationalities, classes, and spiritual traditions – values such as honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, inner peace and confidence, caring, compassion, and respect for all.

Despite their efforts, the world as a whole is failing to meet the Millennium Development target for safe water and sanitation (as well as other Millennium Development Goals). As James D. Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank, has stated:

“The world is at a tipping point: either we in the international community recommit to delivering on the goals, or the targets we set in a fanfare of publicity will be missed, the world's poor will be left even further behind, and our children will be left to face the consequences.”

It's time for us – the global community – to step forward and give self-empowered leaders like Ek Sonn Chan, Shaoxia Cheng, and Rebecca Ravaló our trust and encouragement, as well as the financial, technological, and human resources they need. It's time for us to remove the

obstacles of bureaucratic red tape to getting these projects off the ground and completed expeditiously. It's time for us to focus ourselves on reducing poverty and upholding human dignity by empowering the committed leaders who can complete the job of providing “Water for Life.”

#5 – Universal Access to Water: Making the Impossible Possible

by Debra and William Miller
Global Dharma Center

Before 1953, people considered it virtually impossible to climb to the top of Mt. Everest, the highest place on earth. But Tenzing Norgay of Nepal and Sir Edmund Hillary of New Zealand shattered this belief by reaching the peak on May 9, 1953. In the next 20 years, 22 more people successfully made the climb. Recently, between 1998-2002, over 700 people have done it as well. What had been thought impossible has become quite possible for those who choose to do it.

What made Norgay and Hillary's initial achievement possible? Their own reflections on their climb point to the human capacity, which we all share, for self-determination, discipline, courage, good humour, and teamwork.

Before 1996, people considered it virtually impossible to successfully complete *in only 18 months*, start to finish, a US\$65 million water supply project in rural India that would reach over 700 villages and 1 million people, laying more than 2,500 km (1,500 miles) of pipeline. Yet that was

exactly what happened in the state of Andhra Pradesh in 1996, with a project that was governed by a collaboration of NGO, local, and state government institutions. The same feat has also been replicated elsewhere in India, El Salvador, and Mali.

What made this possible? According to a UN report on this project, first of all there was the presence of *shared human values* among those who worked on the project – trust, confidence, inspirational leadership, dedication to professionalism – all focused on achieving a meaningful mission.

Secondly, the leaders inaugurated *key innovations* in three areas: innovative approaches to broad-based partnerships among public, private, and community sectors; innovative methods of cost control and MIS-based planning; and innovative means of achieving new levels of responsibility, commitment and execution among the government agencies.

This combination of shared human values and innovativeness comprise a formula for accomplishing another *seemingly impossible* task: providing universal

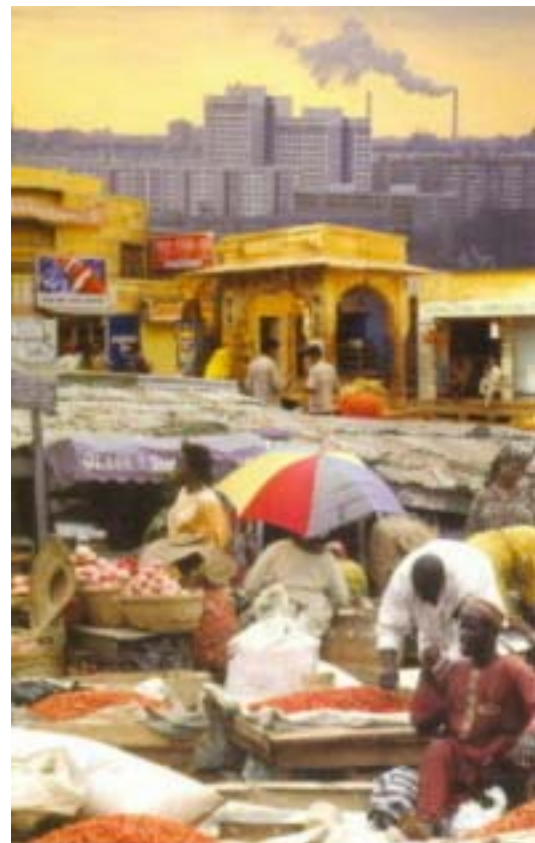
access to safe drinking water and sanitation for all of the world's inhabitants – and doing it expeditiously! An Asian Development Bank study of water supply and sanitation projects has outlined a tangible, practical vision of what *is* possible if we are willing to make it happen:

- providing 100% coverage for drinking water
- protecting alternative water sources through education and the revival of traditional practices
- promoting transparent governance, tariff reform, and demand-side management for sustainable 24-hour piped water supply
- providing 100% coverage for environmentally safe sanitation
- propagating integrated water resources management, with participation by all stakeholders

While the UN Millennium Development target is to “halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation,” there is the clear possibility of reaching that goal even earlier, by 2010, and then moving onwards to *universal* access.

We can make the seemingly impossible possible, especially if we adopt the same attitude that the President of India, A. P. J. Kalam, stated in his book *Vision to Mission: I am not interested in listening to 100 ways by which it cannot be done. Can*

you tell me one way in which it can be done? If I am authorized, I will remove the word “impossible.” When the potent combination of human values and innovation are involved, we can remove the word impossible.



Human values are fundamental to our human existence and are found in varying degrees in all societies, cultures, nationalities, classes, and spiritual traditions – values such as forbearance, compassion, a quest for truth, responsible conduct, peace, and love. The key to human values is that they are *inclusive* values that bind people together across their differences and prompt a concern for other's well-being.

Human values evoke new levels of shared meaning and inner motivation, leading to the development of good character as well as creative, effective action and results. According to Pireh Otieno, Programme Officer, African Water Network, Nairobi, Kenya¹:

“When a value-based approach is fully integrated into development activities, the ideas, insights, and practical measures that emerge are likely to be those that promote self-reliance and preserve human honour, thereby avoiding habits of dependency and progressively eliminating conditions of economic disparity.”

As with human values, innovativeness is inherent in our nature as human beings. In one way, the history of a culture is the history of its innovations. While human values lift us from complacency to action, our capacity for innovation gives us the means to transform “business as usual” into solutions that meet the new challenges of the day. Innovation gives us a way to express our character and inner motivation to make positive, lasting changes. Innovation provides an avenue for incorporating the inputs of all stakeholders. Innovation enables creative yet practical reforms in policies, work processes, and overall governance.

¹ Pireh Otieno, “Value-Based Approaches to Community Water Education” in *Human Values in Water Education*, UN-Habitat

What will it take to achieve the Millennium Declaration target for water in an expeditious manner, which is a critical step toward achieving universal access to water? The UN General Secretary states:

“Knowledge, capacity and the political will to act and provide sufficient resources are necessary components of a successful drive to implement the Millennium Declaration. I would also mention another, equally necessary element: respect for the rule of law.”²

Thus, a four-fold strategy is required to accomplish the seemingly impossible task of providing safe water and sanitation to the 2 billion people who are still suffering from its lack. Human values and innovation have a combined role to play in each of these areas:

- Capital – innovative economic policies, reforms, and financing modalities
- Capacity-Building – innovative means to provide the technological, human resource, and governance know-how and skills
- Compliance – innovative legal covenants and mechanisms for respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the human right to water
- Commitment – innovative approaches to evoking personal, social, and political will, and involving all stakeholders

² Ibid., page 3

When human values and innovation are involved, questions that stimulate meaningful introspection and dialogue are typically more valuable than ready-made answers. On a practical, day-to-day level, this four-fold strategy comes down to a series of creative challenges, including:

- How can we ensure an adequate and timely flow of capital and funds?
- How can we seek high participation and ownership by all stakeholders?
- How can we set and reach stretch goals that go beyond what we think is possible?
- How can we implement pro-poor/good governance practices?
- How can we develop and empower high integrity, skilful, creative workers and stakeholders?

- How can we inform and empower communities regarding their responsibilities as well as their rights?
- How can we mobilize social, political and community will to expeditiously clear obstacles and spur effective action?

We can make the impossible possible when we tap into our natural human capacity for human values and innovativeness. When we allow our hearts to be touched, and reach out with compassion, determination and creativity to those without water and sanitation, then the goal of universal access to safe water and sanitation will become a reality far sooner than we currently believe is possible.



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