

Editorial

Environmental Management, Sustainable Development and Human Health

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a basic necessity. However, such access is highly variable around the world and in particular in Africa, Asia and South America. Much progress still remains to be made in infrastructure improvements and poverty reduction. A recent World Bank report, for example, noted that more than 100 million people in the Latin American region alone lack access to potable water and adequate sanitation systems.

Compounding the issue of water availability is contamination of water supplies and the lack of waste water treatment facilities. This affects human health. The presence of lead as well as excess agricultural fertilizer in the environment, for example, constitutes an ecological and human health concern.

Environmental education plays a major role in achieving changes in attitudes that contribute to environmental awareness in society. The average person is usually somewhat informed about environmental problems. However, not many fully understand the basis of these problems or how to deal with them. One example of rising public awareness is

the increasing use of recycled materials, particularly in road systems, paper making and plastics manufacturing. Environmental education is especially critical for young people who will be future decision makers.

All disciplines and all segments of society will need to work together, proactively, in seeking long-term solutions to environmental problems. The recent establishment of an International Center for Environmental Studies and Sustainable Development (<http://ciemades.suagm.edu/>) is one example of this new approach.

In closing, sustainable development is now considered by many organizations and their stakeholders as being the model to follow. An increasing number of companies currently act and communicate based on their triple performance (i.e. economic, environmental and social). As educators and scientists we can follow this example by keeping in mind the bigger picture when it comes to doing our research and educating our young people. This will help to improve the overall health of the society in which we live. It is a challenge that we should be well able to meet.

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