

## Environmental Health Literacy and Agenda 21

Under Agenda 21 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), environmental health education in secondary schools, at universities and for the general public is highlighted under Part 6. Throughout this section reference is made to cooperation requiring a knowledge base that makes collaboration possible.

It is possible to greatly influence environmental health at a significant level by addressing this environmental health literacy challenge which is age-old and, in the area of environmental interpretation and stewardship, is referred to by scientific, philosophical and theological leaders from early times (cf the beginning of Aristotle's *On the Parts of Animals*).

See the [Environmental Health Literacy document](#).

From Part 6 of UN Agenda 21 of the Rio Declaration note:

### (c) Human resource development

6.45. Comprehensive national strategies should be designed to overcome the lack of qualified human resources, which is a major impediment to progress in dealing with environmental health hazards. Training should include environmental and health officials at all levels from managers to inspectors. **More emphasis needs to be placed on including the subject of environmental health in the curricula of secondary schools and universities and on educating the public.**

### (d) Capacity-building

6.46. Each country should develop the knowledge and practical skills to foresee and identify environmental health hazards, and the capacity to reduce the risks. **Basic capacity requirements must include knowledge about environmental health problems and awareness on the part of leaders, citizens and specialists;** operational mechanisms for intersectoral and intergovernmental cooperation in development planning and management and in combating pollution; arrangements for involving private and community interests in dealing with social issues; delegation of authority and distribution of resources to intermediate and local levels of government to provide front-line capabilities to meet environmental health needs.

## **Responsibility to Protect**

Heads of State and Government at the UN World Summit, New York, 2005

In September 2005, Heads of State and Governments from 170 countries at the UN World Summit gave unanimous approval for the adoption of “A Responsibility to Protect” doctrine which required UN intervention for crimes against humanity. Environmental health matters figured prominently in the discussions. At the world summit all states acknowledged not only their obligation to protect their own people, but more crucially, that the international community has a duty to step in on behalf of civilians at risk of crimes against humanity, whenever a government is either directly responsible for these crimes or incapable of stopping them.