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By 2030, the World will ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all!

Well...

That’s at least the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goal number 6 (SDG6).

Progress towards SDG6 is running at a quarter of the level required!

And when I said, “setting the Goal”...

A large number of countries still don’t even have an accepted definition of what ‘safe water’ is, let alone a program to install it.

Add to this, how fuzzy the evaluation of the current situation in informal settlements is, and you're rounding off a much darker yet realistic picture.

So, how do we solve this?

Solution 1

Get more Funding

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Let's be straightforward:
that path is very unlikely.

Every government at the moment has to make hard decisions. And water is always going to be down on the agenda, politically.

So, if a fresh cash flow does not happen, the sector could rather finance itself better by...

Solution 2

Improving the Water's Tarification

Here, it gets more tricky for many reasons, one of them being the fuzzy definition around the "human right to affordable water."

People are very reluctant to charge the appropriate price for water to reflect its worth. And so, water is systematically undervalued...

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In his book, David makes an entire series of projections to evaluate 'affordability.'

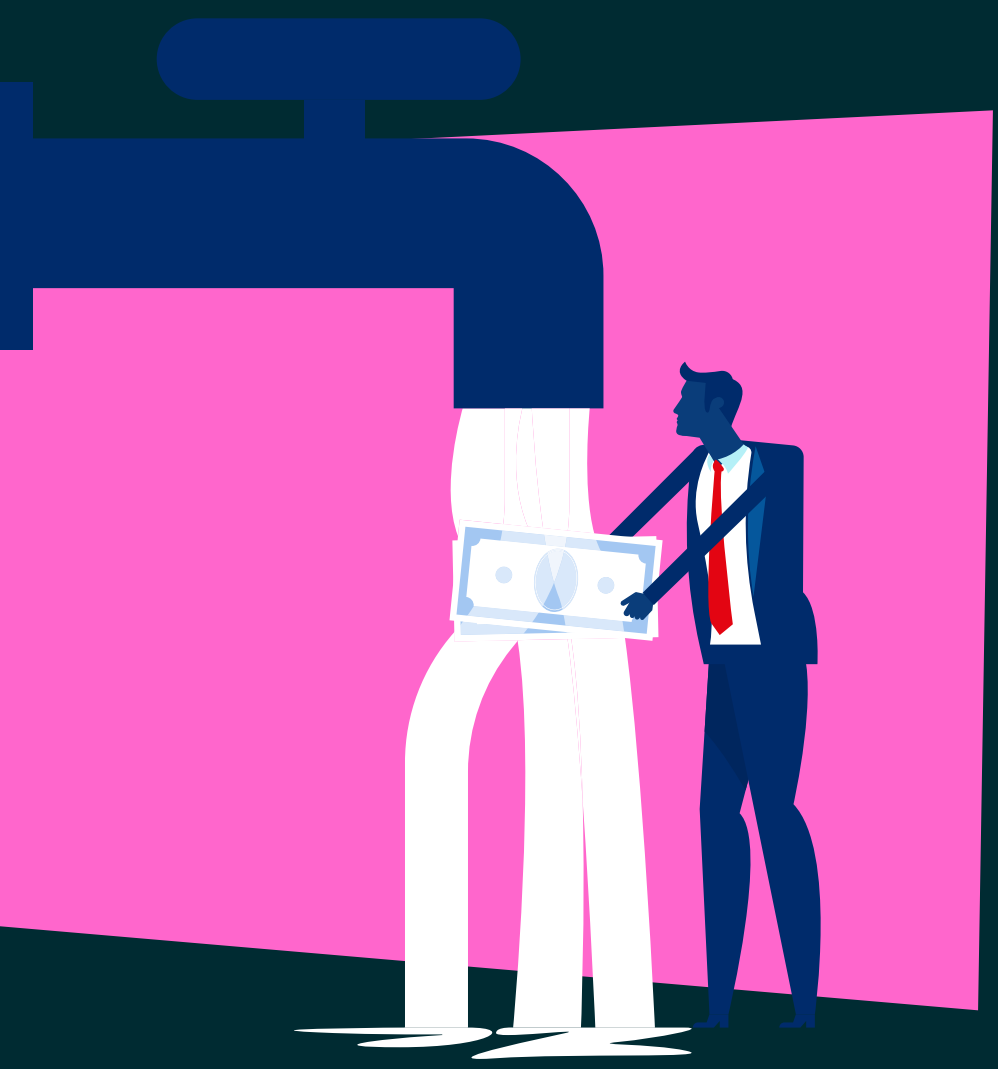
According to the World Health Organization, tariffs actually boil down to two numbers:

percentage of household income and time.

But even if everyone was to agree on affordability, there would still be a major hurdle to overcome:

There's one thing which is a proper tariff, and there's the other tariff, which the politicians might allow you to charge.

That's how we end up with the absurd situation, where tariffs are artificially low but compensated through subsidies - which are a hidden tax on water.



And it has consequences outside of pure water funding:

People think: ‘well, our water is so cheap, so it can’t be clean.’

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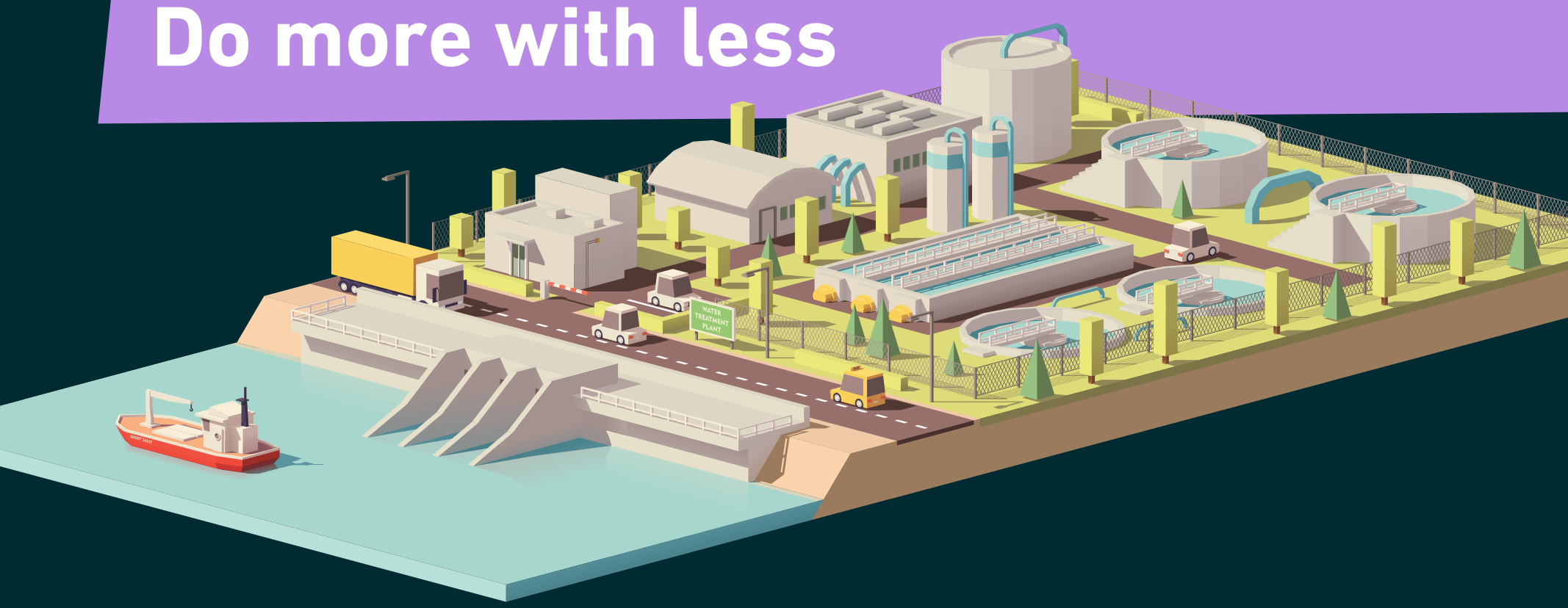
That brings the Water Sector into a devil’s circle David extensively covers in his book (you shall give it a read 😉)

But if we don’t get better Funding, and can’t charge the right tariff, what’s left?

Solution 3

Do more with less



Let’s start with ironic good news: being late on SDG6 means we have fewer new assets to maintain and operate.

But on a more serious note, David explores many avenues in the book to reduce costs.

Let’s conclude this synthesis with the most promising one: a new form of partnership between water utilities and local communities:

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All that manual labor, which normally would have to be paid for externally, is now being donated by the community and towards the project.

It comes with many welcome side effects, from an increased sense of ownership to simply a better quality.

Wouldn't that be the perfect metaphor for the entire World, finally seizing the challenge of bringing Water and Sanitation for all?

We also covered:

- How numbers can be tricky, considering that only the 'best pupils' usually answer surveys and share data
- How water is a political good that can serve much broader ambitions than just satisfy the thirst of people
- How Denmark can be considered the international benchmark when it comes to water preservation and management
- How Chile turned its entire Water Management on its head, thanks to political will - hence becoming another benchmark
- How the current level of Funding in the Water Sector not only fails to reach the SDG6 but also won't allow maintaining current service levels
- How non-utility water will surpass utility water when it comes to Funding by the end of the current SDG cycle, and how that may trigger a negative spiral, ultimately becoming an existential threat
- How the lowest hanging fruit may be cutting non-revenue water, currently representing 77 liters per day and capita in the World.
- Private Vs. Public, Decentralized Treatments, Reuse Vs. Desalination, Populism, David's next writing topics... and much more!

Don't miss a single bite: head over to dww.show