



Florence Nightingale and the U.N.'s 17 Sustainable Development Goals: *Her Keen Relevance for Our Times*

by DEVA-MARIE BECK, PhD, RN; BARBARA DOSSEY, PhD, RN, AHN-BC, FAAN, HWNC-BC;
and WILLIAM ROSA, MS, AGPCNP-BC, ACHPN, AHN-BC, CCRN-CMC, FCCM

More than 150 years ago, Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) left an indelible legacy for the profession of modern nursing. She captivated the hearts and minds of people by sharing significant stories about humanity and human caring for the health of the world – keenly relevant for our times (Dossey, 2010). Today, global nurses are called to expand our consciousness to raise powerful voices about being planetary citizens and becoming more aware of strategies for personal and planetary health (local to global), resulting in an ideal of healthy people living worldwide. Planetary citizenship requires nurses to strive for universal human dignity, to embrace a holistic awareness of

“One Mind–One Health–One Planet,” and to “honor the light in all of life” for the sustainability of self, other, and environment (Rosa, 2017, p. 519-520).

Nightingale knew that the circumstances surrounding people could make a direct impact upon their health and were often the cause of poor health and disease. Her efforts often focused on changing and improving these factors (Dossey, 2010). Today we call these same factors “health determinants” comprised of two areas: social determinants and environmental determinants. Social determinants include the economic and social conditions under which people live that determine their health. These include

family composition, friends, religion, culture, race/gender, socioeconomic status, education, and occupation/profession. Environmental determinants include any external agent, such as food, water, air pollution and home/workplace spaces (Dossey, Beck, Oerther, & Manjrekar, 2017).

In the year 2000, world leaders convened at the United Nations (U.N.) to establish eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to work toward a sustainable quality of life between 2000 and 2015. Of these goals, three are directly related to combat specific diseases like HIV/AIDs and malaria, and to the health of children and their mothers. The other five MDGs – to create global partnerships, address extreme poverty and hunger, and to achieve universal primary education, gender equality, and environmental sustainability – are all factors that help determine health, or lack of it (Beck, 2017).

To celebrate the International Year of the Nurse/Nightingale Centennial in 2010, nurses across the world (notably including AHNA members) understood that Nightingale had worked to achieve these same goals. In keeping with this recognition, the 2010 International Year of the Nurse became the first time in history when nurses answered the call to advocate for achieving global goals: the U.N. MDGs (Beck, Dossey, & Rushton, 2010; NIGH, 2010).

But the MDG timeframe was limited to only 15 years. Thus, it was recognized that a new and longer framework called the “Post-2015 Development Agenda,” would need to be defined. This resulted in a series of global discussions and involved representatives from civil society, philanthropic organizations, academia, and the private sector, as well as within U.N. member governments (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2013). Again, nurses were called upon to participate in this agenda. They were invited to do so by nursing leaders from the Nightingale Initiative for Global Health and Sigma Theta Tau International, who were representing the voices of nurses at the United Nations during that time (NIGH, 2014).

From the outcomes of the Post-2015 Agenda, a new set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – to be achieved by 2030 – were proposed, identified, and unanimously adopted by all U.N. member (nation) states in 2015 (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

The International Council of Nurses now emphasizes that the voices of all nurses are needed to achieve the 17 SDGs (ICN, 2017). As with the earlier MDGs, health is the central common thread running through all 17 SDGs, and these point directly back to the work Nightingale achieved in her lifetime.

continued on page 20

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



17 U.N. Sustainable Development Goals Icons used with full attribution and according to UN.org Guidelines (www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/news/communications-material)



Today, we are challenged to reflect upon Nightingale’s legacy and to recognize how the SDGs can improve the health of people – from local to global. In her footsteps, the global community of nurses are grassroots activists and catalysts to achieve a healthy, civilized, and prosperous world! These SDGs are our framework to connect the dots between everything needed to achieve a healthy world (Beck, 2018). The following discussion looks at each one of the 17 U.N. SDGs listed below (United Nations General Assembly, 2015) and relates these goals to Florence Nightingale’s work for global health.

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere



Nightingale was aware of the immediate impact of poverty on health, particularly the impact on children and early childhood development. She saw the connections between poverty and lack of food, housing, clothing, and shelter (Beck, 2018).

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture



In the 1860s, Nightingale worked to reform the Liverpool Workhouse Infirmary where 1,200 impoverished and hungry people were crowded into unsafe, unsanitary conditions. Because of this effort, and at Nightingale’s urging, reform of the entire British workhouse system included placing trained, salaried nurses in workhouse settings to address these conditions (Dossey, 2010).

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages



This goal is central to Nightingale’s legacy and to the work of nurses and midwives worldwide. Yet Nightingale saw health through a much wider lens than simply caring for people after they become sick or injured. Nightingale saw that the challenge of improving human health is multifaceted, holistic, and integral to all human needs (Beck, 2018; Dossey, 2016).

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



Nightingale was a keen advocate for education as an essential part of progress for individuals as well as for society. She passionately noted the key connections between education and health, writing, “oh teach health, teach health, health, health, to the rich, and poor, to educated and, if there be any uneducated, oh teach it all the more – to women especially – to young mothers, to young mothers especially!” (Nightingale, 1870).

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



In her own time, Nightingale advocated and worked tirelessly to develop a nursing education curriculum. This effort focused on improving the earning-capacities and living conditions of young women by providing them the means to join a profession that was becoming well-respected because of her own example (Dossey, 2010).

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all



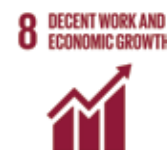
Nightingale clearly anticipated this issue as essential to health. In 1860, she said: “Within the last few years, a large part of London was in the daily habit of using water polluted by the drainage of its sewers and water-closets. This has happily been remedied. But, in many parts of the country, well-water of a very impure kind is used for domestic purposes. And when epidemic disease shows itself, persons using such water are almost sure to suffer” (Nightingale, 1860, p.15).

Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all



Although Nightingale did not specifically anticipate the need for renewable energy, she often called for observing and following the “laws of nature” and to using these “laws” to improve the quality of life (Beck, 2018). It is also interesting to note that she used an energy-related metaphor in one of her most famous quotes: “Health is not only to be well, but to use well every power we have” (Nightingale, 1893/2005, p. 289).

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all



Nightingale (1872) shared her relevant thoughts on how to achieve these aims: “The very essence of all good organization is that everybody should do her (or his) own work in such a way as to help and not to hinder every one else’s work.”

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation



Throughout her own career, Nightingale wrote about these same issues and was responsible for the innovative design of the original St. Thomas's Hospital. Her specific innovations included setting windows in such a way as to allow sunlight to be readily available to patients and the nurses caring for them (Dossey, 2010).

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries



Nightingale was notably concerned with inequalities that arose from cultural intolerance. Serving both British and Turkish soldiers during the Crimean War, she modeled cross-cultural understanding between Christian and Muslim faiths. To this day, she is widely appreciated across the Islamic world for her own commitment to their well-being (Beck, 2018). The original Nightingale biographer, Edward T. Cook (1913), quoted her as reflecting that *"To know God we must study Him as much in the Pagan and Jewish dispensations as in the Christian. . . this gives unity to the whole – one continuous thread of interest to all these pearls"* (p. 74).

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable



Nightingale (1863) applied this concern directly saying, *"It may seem a strange principle to enunciate as the very first requirement in a Hospital that it should do the sick no harm."*

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns



Although not widely known, Nightingale was herself an ardent environmental activist. Throughout the 1860s to 1880s, she collaborated with leaders based in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras to address environmental concerns affecting the health of the Indian people, including issues related to deforestation resulting in loss of tillable soil during monsoon seasons and even to what we know today as acid rain (Dossey, 2010; Beck, 2018).

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



For Nightingale, pure air in homes, schools, and towns was an essential element for health. Much of her writing focused on patients at risk because of cold air, night air, and contaminated air in poorly constructed houses and buildings, and smoke (Dossey, 2010). She would be appalled today at our air pollution and encourage all of us

to take action and identify things that impact climate change (Beck, 2018).

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development



Nightingale herself made many sea voyages (Dossey, 2010) and remarked about her own love for the ocean. *"When I was a child, I remember reading that Sir Isaac Newton. . . said in his last hours: 'I seem to myself like a child who has been playing with a few pebbles on the sea-shore, leaving unsearched all the wonders of the great ocean beyond'"* (Nightingale, 1872).

Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss



From her work to improve the quality of life in India, Nightingale (1860) also wrote about ways needed to protect life on land. She connected these concerns with the recovery of individuals who are sick: *"The effect in sickness of beautiful objects, of variety of objects [especially flowers], and especially of brilliancy of colour, is hardly at all appreciated"* (p. 33).

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels



Building upon her own service to soldiers during the Crimean War and many years thereafter, Nightingale was keenly aware of the measures needed to prevent war and to promote peace. With this experience, she was called upon to anonymously draft the British government's official text submitted to craft the First Geneva Convention – later leading directly to establishing the League of Nations and today's United Nations (Beck, 2017).

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development



As a nurse, Nightingale often served the suffering by building collaborative relationships with others of like-mind and heart. From her own wide worldview of caring – with her international network of colleagues from many disciplines – Nightingale took her own stand to courageously advocate for and about the needs of others (Dossey, 2010). She was a change agent who established a culture of caring for and collaborating with others that still continues, even now, into the wider possibilities of the 21st century (Beck, 2018).

continued on page 22

Bringing these global goals back around to each of us as individuals, Nightingale always encouraged her nurses to be as healthy as possible so as to reach their highest potential (Dossey, 2016). As the largest health profession, nurses are critical to the health of the nation, and thus the world (Brenan, 2017; Davis, 2012; WHO, n.d.). Healthy nurses are viewed by patients as a more credible source of health information and are more likely to educate patients about improved health (ANA, n.d.) and to advocate for the SDGs needed both at home and around the world.

Thus, nurses are challenged to become more aware of their own personal health practices and assess their current health behaviors. When this is achieved,

- (1) nurses are more likely to make healthier choices and use new strategies to change unhealthy behaviors and sustain new health behaviors.
- (2) nurses will have more success partnering with clients/patients to choose new health behaviors (Dossey, Luck, & Schaub, 2015).
- (3) nurses will have more fulfilling opportunities to collaborate with many interdisciplinary stakeholders to sustain these changes, leading to healthy people, families, communities, nations, and a healthy planet (ANA, n.d.).

Nightingale called her work her “must” (Dossey, 2010). As we increase our awareness of the U.N. SDGs, including our own personal and local-to-global health concerns, this knowledge continues to help us identify our own “musts.” Keeping us focused and empowered, it is an invitation for us, as nurses, to remember the purpose of our work, our sense of calling to service, and our responsibility for using our knowledge, capacities, skills, and caring to improve health worldwide (NIGH, n.d.).

Our times demand that we increase our health and life balance along with new paradigms and a new language – where our focus is on “health span” rather than “lifespan” – integrating the best of what we know in the science and art of healing, including holistic and human caring theories and modalities (Dossey, 2016, p. 4). With a worldview of wholeness, we can share the depth of our professional knowledge, expertise, critical-thinking capacities, and skills for assisting others. We can work to create health through telling and sharing our stories of healing – local to global. Only by paying close attention to the heart of our mission and vision, can we generate the vision, courage, and hope required to unite for achieving a truly healthy world (Dossey, et al., 2017).

Nightingale saw 19th century problems and created 20th century solutions. Many of us have seen both 20th and 21st century problems. We can create 21st century solutions by addressing the concerns we find in our own personal lives and in our families, homes, clinics, hospitals, communities, and the grassroots-to-global issues identified as the 17 U.N. SDGs (NIGH, n.d.).

To further address grassroots-to-global health, consider signing the “Nightingale Declaration for a Healthy World” (www.NIGHvision.net/nightingale-declaration.html) to unite more

than 20 million nurses and midwives in service to world health (NIGH, n.d.). Nightingale’s health determinants – and, now, the 17 U.N. SDGs – are tipping points toward achieving a healthy world!

REFERENCES

- American Nurses Association (ANA). (2018). Healthy nurse healthy nation™. Retrieved from <http://www.nursingworld.org/HealthyNurse-HealthyNation>
- Beck, D.M. (2017). A brief history of the United Nations and nursing: A healthy world is our common future. In W. Rosa (Ed.), *A new era in global health: Nursing and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (pp. 57-83). New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Beck, D.M. (2018). Nightingale and the UN global goals for sustainable development. Retrieved from <http://www.nighvision.net/fn--the-un-sdgs-1-5.html>
- Beck, D.M., Dossey B.M., & Rushton C.H. (2010). Florence Nightingale: Connecting her legacy with local-to-global health today. *Nursing Spectrum & NurseWeek 2010 Special Tribute* (pp.104-109).
- Brenan, M. (2017, December 26). Nurses keep healthy lead as most honest, ethical profession. *Gallup News*. Retrieved from <http://news.gallup.com/poll/224639/nurses-keep-healthy-leadhonestethicalprofession.aspx>
- Cook, E. (1913). *The life of Florence Nightingale*. (Vol. 1). London: Macmillan and Co.
- Davis, S. (2012, May 8). Why nurses are the unsung heroes of global health [Blog post]. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/sheila-davis-dnp-anpbc-faan/international-nurses-week_b_1499802.html
- Dossey, B.M. (2010). *Florence Nightingale: Mystic, visionary, healer* (Commemorative ed.). Philadelphia, PA: FA Davis.
- Dossey, B.M. (2016). Nursing: Holistic integral, and integrative – local to global. In B.M. Dossey, L. Keegan, C.C. Barrere, M.A.B. Helming, D.A. Shields, & K.M. Avino (Eds.), *Holistic nursing. A Handbook for practice* (7th ed., pp. 3-52). Burlington, MA: Jones & Bartlett Learning.
- Dossey, B.M., Beck, D.M., Oerther, S., & Manjrekar, P. (2017). Florence Nightingale’s legacy: The rationale for an integral worldview in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In W. Rosa (Ed.), *A new era in global health: Nursing and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (pp. 149-178). New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Dossey, B.M., Luck, S., & Schaub, B.G. (2015). *Nurse coaching: Integrative approaches for health and healing*. North Miami, FL: International Nurse Coach Association.
- International Council of Nurses (ICN). (2017). Nurses: A voice to lead – achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from <http://www.icn.ch/publications/2017-nursing-a-voice-to-lead-achieving-the-sustainable-development-goals>
- Nightingale, F. (1860). *Notes on nursing: What it is and what it is not*. London: Harrison.
- Nightingale, F. (1863). *Notes on hospitals* (3rd ed., Preface). London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green.
- Nightingale, F. (1870). [Private note]. Nightingale Papers. British Library Additional Manuscripts, 45844:ff232, London.
- Nightingale, F. (1872). *Address from Miss Nightingale to the probationer-nurses in the “Nightingale Fund” School, at St. Thomas’s Hospital, and the nurses who were formerly trained there*. London: Spottiswoode (Privately printed).
- Nightingale, F. (2005). Sick-nursing and health-nursing (Original work published 1893). In B.M. Dossey, L.C. Selanders, D.M. Beck, & A. Attewell, *Florence Nightingale today: Healing, leadership, global action* (pp. 288-303). Silver Spring, MD: NursesBooks.org.

Nightingale Initiative for Global Health (NIGH). (2010). For the first time: Nurses advocate for global goals. Retrieved from <http://www.nighvision.net/2010-fn-centennial-global-service.html>

Nightingale Initiative for Global Health (NIGH). (2014). A global briefing: The world nurses want: Nursing and the United Nations. Retrieved from <http://www.nighvision.net/a-global-online-briefing.html>

Nightingale Initiative for Global Health (NIGH). (n.d.). Nightingale Declaration for a Healthy World: To achieve 17 global goals for sustainable development (SDGs). Retrieved from <http://www.nighvision.net/nightingale-declaration.html>

Rosa, W. (2017). One mind, one health, one planet – A pledge to planetary citizenship. In W. Rosa (Ed.), *A new era in global health: Nursing and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (pp. 517-520). New York: Springer Publishing Company.

United Nations Economic and Social Council. (2013). Millennium Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/mdg.shtml>

United Nations General Assembly. (2015, October 21). Resolution adopted by the General Assembly. *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. A/RES/70/1. Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

World Health Organization (WHO). (n.d.). Global health observatory (GHO) data: Health workforce. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/gho/health_workforce/en

Deva-Marie Beck, PhD, RN is a global citizen activist, nursing educator and scholar, author, multi-media specialist, and world-wide traveler, serving in all these roles as the volunteer International Co-Director of the Nightingale Initiative for Global Health (NIGH), based at NIGH World's headquarters in Canada. As NIGH's online Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Beck currently focuses on mobilizing public opinion to increase concern for global health issues – notably for the 17 U.N. SDGs as health determinants. She has created online feature articles, videos, and photo essays – developing stories with nurses, midwives, students, concerned citizens, and media professionals. In this, her primary goal is to engage and empower nurses, midwives, and concerned citizens everywhere to advocate for the most pressing global health and development needs of our time. In 2015, 2016 and 2017, Dr. Beck collaborated with NIGH's U.N. DPI-NGO Representatives to sponsor and co-sponsor official "Parallel Events" for the annual U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) – co-sponsoring a 2017 U.N. Parallel Event with the International Council of Nurses. Dr. Beck has co-authored *Florence Nightingale Today: Healing, Leadership, Global Action* (2005) and has since authored and co-authored numerous book chapters and articles. www.NIGHvision.net



Barbara Dossey, PhD, RN, AHN-BC, FAAN, HWNC-BC is an internationally recognized integrative, holistic nursing pioneer, a nurse theorist (*Theory of Integral Nursing; co-author, Theory of Integrative Nurse Coaching*), and Florence Nightingale Scholar. She is Co-Director of the International Nurse Coach Association



(INCA) and Core Faculty of the Integrative Nurse Coach Certificate Program (INCCP) based out of Miami, Florida; an International Co-Director of the Nightingale Initiative for Global Health (NIGH); and Director of Holistic Nursing Consultants (HNC) in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She has authored or co-authored 25 books including *Holistic Nursing: A Handbook for Practice* (7th ed., 2016); *Nurse Coaching: Integrative Approaches for Health and Wellbeing* (2015); *The Art and Science of Nurse Coaching: The Provider's Guide for Coaching Scope and Competencies* (2013); *Florence Nightingale: Mystic, Visionary, Healer* (2010, Commemorative Edition); and *Florence Nightingale Today: Healing, Leadership, Global Action* (2005). She is an 11-time recipient of the prestigious *American Journal of Nursing Book of the Year Award*, and has received many other awards. She is on the *Healthy Nurse Healthy Nation™ Grand Challenge Advisory Board*. www.iNurseCoach.com, www.NIGHvision.net

William (Billy) Rosa, MS, AGPCNP-BC, ACHPN, AHN-BC, CCRN-CMC, FCCM is currently a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Future of Nursing Scholar (University of Pennsylvania, School of Nursing, PhD Program, Philadelphia, PA), and a Supportive Care Nurse Practitioner (Supportive Care Service, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, New York, NY). He is a graduate of the MSK Palliative Care Fellowship (2016-2017). His specialties include holistic nursing, critical care, palliative care, and global health, and he recently spent a year working for the Human Resources for Health Program in Rwanda, East Africa (2015-2016). Billy is the editor of two books on leadership and global health, and has authored more than 150 book chapters and articles. He is a Fellow of the American College of Critical Care Medicine and the New York Academy of Medicine. He has been recognized with numerous awards, and as one of America's Most Amazing Nurses by *The Doctors TV Show* and *Prevention* magazine. Billy has been named one of *Modern Healthcare's* 2017 Rising Stars in Nursing and received the 2017 Daniel J. Pesut Spirit of Renewal Award from Sigma Theta Tau International. Later in 2018, he will receive the American Association of Nurse Practitioners 2018 New York State Award for Excellence. Billy serves on the U.S. Advisory Board for the Nightingale Initiative for Global Health (NIGH).



An Alternative Medicine & Holistic Directory



**Alternatives
for Healing**
Let Your Health Shine Through

- Practitioners
- Products
- Books, Mp3s
- Workshops
- Holistic Videos
- and so much more

AHNA Members Listing Discount - Use Coupon Code: ADFAFH14

AlternativesForHealing.com