

# UN SDG GOALS: A Look at Countries Getting it Right

*The award-winning documentary Saving Walden's World explores countries surpassing the UN SDG goals well ahead of the 2030 projections*

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EINPresswire.com/ -- The UN's Summit of the Future takes place on September 22-23, 2024, in New York City, with the theme, "Multilateral Solutions for a Better Tomorrow." Relevant to this year's theme is the award-winning [documentary](#) Saving Walden's World.



Saving Walden's World is a documentary film that explores sustainable lifestyles in foreign countries.

This film began as an exploration of how certain countries surpassed the [UN SDG](#) goals well ahead of the 2030 projections.

“

Solutions are possible. A better world is possible. We, as adults, must leave a better world for our children, not assume they'll figure it out.”

*James Merkel, Filmmaker & Writer*

What filmmaker Jim Merkel uncovered is both surprising and, for many, a confirmation of long-held beliefs. His findings demonstrate that empowering women—particularly through education and reproductive rights—transforms entire communities and fosters sustainable development. This critical solution, backed by data, remains underexplored but offers profound insights.

A Journey from Weapons Developer to [Sustainability](#) Filmmaker

Merkel's journey from developing military systems for the U.S. government to becoming a sustainability researcher and filmmaker is a story of radical transformation. His career path exposed him to the gap between U.S. presumptions and on-the-ground realities around the world. A personal turning point came when he became a father, intensifying his resolve to help create a better world for future generations. "Solutions are possible. A better world is possible,"

Merkel asserts. "We, as adults, must leave a better world for our children, not assume they'll figure it out."

Determined to find solutions, Merkel sought out societies demonstrating exceptional human development. His early research led him to three standout locations: Cuba, Kerala (India), and Slovenia. Saving Walden's World highlights how gender equality, literacy, and land reform in Kerala and Cuba reduced poverty and cultivated leaders who implemented some of the world's most sustainable practices.

In Slovenia, Merkel found a powerful example of how national choices can create holistic, system-wide changes. Slovenia's widespread adoption of bicycles has not only reduced pollution but also enhanced public health and personal mobility. In Cuba, free education and healthcare, including reproductive services, have transformed rural communities. Meanwhile, Kerala's Kudumbashree uses microfinance to spawn women-led cooperatives that lift families out of poverty and lower their carbon footprint. Each of these societies integrates permaculture and sustainable farming into their food system.

### 2024 Film Tour: From Maine's Rugged Coast to NYC and Beyond

Merkel's love for sailing inspired him to combine his film tour with an eco-friendly voyage. "As I gained acceptance into Maine's film festivals, I dreamed of sailing the film to ports along the coast," he explains. "This film amplifies the work of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. While the world aims for the 2030 targets, our film documents societies already decades ahead, improving life for people and the planet."

Merkel has since taken Saving Walden's World to historic theaters and festivals along Maine's

DCTV,  
The Firehouse, NYC  
September 23  
Screens 7:00 PM  
Doors open 6:30 PM  
Director Q&A

SAVING WALDEN'S WORLD

SIERRA CLUB MAINE CHAPTER | SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS | NGO COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-NY | Mabel Wadsworth Center | MAINE MEDIA 50 | ALLIANCE SEARS ISLAND | Friends of the Harriet L. Hartley Conservation Area | WE 89.9 COMMUNITY RADIO | UPSTREAM WATCH | Maine Film Association

Saving Walden's World screen in NYC

coastline, including the Maine Outdoor Film Festival and Vacationland Film Festival. His upcoming visit to New York City, initiates his westward tour by EV to the Maumee Film Festival in Ohio, McHenry County College in Illinois, and Boulder, Colorado, for the Iris Global Health Film Festival (IGHFF). Additional screenings are scheduled at international film festivals throughout the remainder of 2024.

#### NYC Special Screening of Saving Walden's World

A one-time screening of Saving Walden's World will take place in New York City on Monday, September 23, 2024, at DCTV's Firehouse. This event will feature a special reunion of the film's Cuba crew, with director Deborah Shaffer and cameraman Pedro Martin Navarro joining Merkel. Shaffer, recently honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award by DOC NYC, has garnered numerous accolades for her documentary work over a career in film spanning 50 years.

The screening offers an opportunity to meet Merkel and his collaborators and to engage in a conversation about sustainability, women's empowerment, and the societies that are leading the charge in meeting and exceeding the UN SDG goals.

Date: Monday, September 23, 2024

Time: 7:00 pm (Doors open at 6:30 pm)

Location: DCTV, The Firehouse, 87 Lafayette St., NY, 10013

Details: [savingwaldensworld.org](http://savingwaldensworld.org)

Q&A session follows the screening, then an informal afterparty on site.

#### About Jim Merkel & Radical Simplicity

Jim Merkel's path to sustainability advocacy is detailed in his book Radical Simplicity, which has been taught in Ivy League colleges for over two decades. Merkel served as Dartmouth College's Sustainability Coordinator and has committed to living a radically simplified lifestyle to promote progressive change.

As the historian Howard Zinn noted, "Jim Merkel has written the most persuasive argument I have yet seen for all of us to radically change the way we live... Radical Simplicity joins the evidence of science to a fertile imagination... This is a profoundly important book."

Merkel lives with his partner Susan Cutting and their son Walden in Belfast, Maine, in a home they built using local materials and powered off the grid.

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