



INTRODUCTION

The theme of World Toilet Day 2019 is 'Leaving no one behind', which is the central promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This year, we want to show that a toilet is not just a toilet; it's a life-saver, dignity-protector and opportunity-maker.

We encourage everyone to imagine daily life for the 4.2 billion people without safely managed sanitation and ask how anyone could lift themselves out of poverty without it. We remind the international community that we must leave no one behind as we expand access to safe toilets, because whoever you are, wherever you are, sanitation is your human right.

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS WE FACE?

Today, 4.2 billion people live without safely managed sanitation, 673 million still practise open defecation and three billion lack basic handwashing facilities.¹ This sanitation crisis means untreated human waste is spreading diseases into water supplies and the food chain for billions of people. Inadequate sanitation is estimated to cause 432,000 diarrhoeal deaths every year.²

Globally, the world is off track to meet Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 to ensure sanitation and water for all by 2030. Funding is falling short,³ demand is rising, water pollution is worsening and existing governance structures are often weak and fragmented.⁴

1 WHO/UNICEF (2019): Joint Monitoring Programme 2019 update report: *Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene*: https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/jmp-report-2019/en/

2 WHO (2019): <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sanitation>

3 WHO (2019): *UN-Water global analysis and assessment of sanitation and drinking water (GLAAS) 2019 report: National systems to support drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene: global status report 2019*: https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/glaas-report-2019/en/

4 UN (2018): *UN-Water SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation*: https://www.unwater.org/publication_categories/sdg-6-synthesis-report-2018-on-water-and-sanitation/

Poor and marginalized people are much more likely to lack safely managed sanitation services and often face many forms of discrimination. They can be left behind as they try to access and manage sanitation services or improve their current facilities.

WHAT IS THE AIM OF WORLD TOILET DAY?

World Toilet Day, celebrated on 19th November every year, is about inspiring action to tackle the global sanitation crisis.

Established by the World Toilet Organization in 2001, World Toilet Day was made an official UN day in 2013. UN-Water leads a taskforce of international agencies to campaign around a common theme.

In this year's World Toilet Day campaign, we encourage a range of actions, including:

- Learning about the issues by reading [stories](#) and this factsheet.
- Sharing the issues by using World Toilet Day [social media assets](#) to generate debate.
- Taking action by attending or holding an [event](#) and using World Toilet Day [resources](#) to make change happen.

WHAT ARE THE GLOBAL SANITATION TARGETS THE WORLD IS AIMING FOR?

SDG 6 is to ensure availability and sustainable management of sanitation and water for all people, in all settings, by 2030. The sanitation targets within SDG 6 include:⁵

- To achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation for all. (SDG target 6.2)

- To end open defecation. (SDG target 6.2)
- To improve water quality by reducing pollution and increasing safe reuse of treated wastewater. (SDG target 6.3)

SDG monitoring data shows a massive acceleration in progress is needed on SDG 6. At current rates of progress only 40 out of 152 countries are on track to achieve 'nearly universal' basic sanitation by 2030. Rates of progress are even slower for rural communities and the poorest populations. Achieving SDG 6 will require faster rates of progress in the least advantaged segments of society.^{6,7}

WHAT DOES 'SAFELY MANAGED SANITATION' MEAN?

When someone has a 'safely managed sanitation service', it means they use hygienic toilet facilities that are not shared with other households and where excreta are either separated from human contact and safely disposed of in situ or transported and treated off-site, thereby protecting people and the environment from disease agents.^{8,9} Examples include flush/pour flush toilets connected to piped sewer systems, septic tanks or latrine pits; ventilated improved pit latrines; composting toilets; or, pit latrines with slab covers.

WHY IS SAFELY MANAGED SANITATION IMPORTANT?

For health: Without safely managed sanitation, people often have no choice but to use unimproved toilets, sometimes shared with many families, or to practise open defecation. For the millions of people who have been forced to flee their homes, there are often barriers to accessing sanitation and water services while in transit or in temporary camps. Wherever sanitation systems are inadequate, untreated human waste gets out into the environment and spreads diseases.

5 UN Sustainable Development Goals: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg6>

6 WHO/UNICEF (2019): Joint Monitoring Programme 2019 update report: *Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene*: https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/jmp-report-2019/en/

7 WHO (2019): *UN-Water global analysis and assessment of sanitation and drinking water (GLAAS) 2019 report: National systems to support drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene: global status report 2019*: https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/glaas-report-2019/en/

8 WHO/UNICEF: <https://washdata.org/monitoring/sanitation>

9 WHO (2018): *Guidelines on sanitation and health*: https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/guidelines-on-sanitation-and-health/en/



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For children: 297,000 children under five are estimated to die each year from diarrhoea because of unsafe drinking water, sanitation, and hand hygiene.¹⁰ Diarrhoeal diseases also undermine children's physical and cognitive development, mainly due to chronic malnutrition caused in part by repeated bouts of severe diarrhoea and vomiting. Many children regularly miss school due to poor health caused by inadequate sanitation or lack of sanitation facilities at school, particularly adolescent girls during their menstrual period.

For safety and dignity: Finding a place to urinate or defecate outside, often waiting until the cover of darkness, can leave women and girls vulnerable to abuse and sexual assault. In many countries, girls miss classes during menstruation due to lack of proper sanitation facilities at schools.

For productivity: Sanitation-related poor health has severe effects on businesses through absenteeism, reduced concentration, exhaustion, and decreased productivity. Where untreated wastewater is used to irrigate fields, there are substantial health risks for workers along the food production chain.^{11,12}

For the environment: Beyond the community, the lack of effective waste disposal or sewerage systems can contaminate ecosystems which in turn impacts on livelihoods and contributes to disease pandemics.

WHAT IS THE HUMAN RIGHT TO SANITATION?

Recognized as a distinct right by the UN General Assembly in 2015, the human right to sanitation entitles everyone to have physical and affordable access to sanitation, in all spheres of life, that is safe, hygienic, secure, and socially and culturally acceptable and that provides privacy and ensures dignity.¹³

International human rights law obliges states to work towards achieving universal access to water and sanitation for all, without discrimination, while prioritizing those most in need.¹⁴

WHY ARE PEOPLE BEING LEFT BEHIND WITHOUT SAFELY MANAGED SANITATION?

People from different groups are being left behind for different reasons. The following are some of the 'grounds for discrimination' that cause certain people to be particularly disadvantaged when it comes to accessing sanitation:

- Sex and gender
- Race, ethnicity, religion, caste, language, and nationality
- Disability, age and health status
- Property, tenure, residence, economic and social status

Where these grounds for discrimination combine – or 'intersect' – a person's exclusion or marginalization can be compounded.

10 WHO (2019): <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/drinking-water>

11 Environmental Research Letters (2017): 'A global, spatially-explicit assessment of irrigated croplands influenced by urban wastewater flows': A L Thebo et al 2017 Environ. Res. Lett. 12 074008: <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/aa75d1>

12 WHO (2006): *Guidelines for the safe use of wastewater, excreta and greywater*:

https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/gsuweg4/en/

13 OHCHR (2015): <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16903&LangID=E>

14 A/RES/70/169, paragraph 5, a) adopted on 17 December 2015 by consensus (without a vote). Cf. General Assembly Resolutions A/RES/72/178 of 19 December 2017, A/RES/64/92 of 28 July 2010 and A/RES/68/157 of 18 December 2013, Human Rights Council Resolutions 24/18 of 27 September 2013 (A/68/53/Add. 1), 27/7 of 25 September 2014 (A/69/53/Add. 1 and Corr. 1 and 2) and 33/10 of 29 September 2016, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217(III)), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/220A(XXI)), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (United Nations, Treaty Series, Vol. 660, No. 9464), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Ibid., Vol. 1249, No. 20378), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Ibid., Vol. 1577, No. 27531), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Ibid., Vol. 2515, No. 44910).



Other factors, such as environmental degradation, climate change, population growth, conflict, forced displacement and migration flows can also disproportionately affect marginalized groups and their access to sanitation and water services.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

To 'leave no one behind', we must remove the stigma and taboos around sanitation and accelerate our efforts towards including people who have been marginalized or ignored because they are difficult to reach. These are the same people that often suffer the worst health consequences of inadequate sanitation.

Ensuring sanitation for those left behind is not only an imperative for their health but also for the community's as a whole. The health benefits of sanitation are only fully realised when **everyone** has safely managed sanitation.¹⁵

Sanitation services must meet the needs of marginalized groups and their voices must be heard in decision-making processes. Regulatory and legal frameworks must recognise the right to sanitation for **all** people, and funding must be dramatically increased and effectively targeted at those who need it most.

KEY FACTS

- 4.2 billion people live without safely managed sanitation – more than half the global population. (WHO/UNICEF 2019)¹⁶
- 673 million people still practise open defecation worldwide. (WHO/UNICEF 2019)¹⁷
- Globally, at least 2 billion people use a drinking water source contaminated with faeces. (WHO 2019)¹⁸
- Inadequate sanitation is estimated to cause 432,000 diarrhoeal deaths every year and is a major factor in diseases such as intestinal worms, trachoma and schistosomiasis. (WHO 2019)¹⁹
- Approximately 1.5 billion people worldwide are infected with soil transmitted helminths, which could be completely prevented with sanitation.²⁰
- 297,000 children under five are estimated to die each year from diarrhoea as a result of unsafe drinking water, sanitation, and hand hygiene. (WHO 2019)²¹
- Children under the age of five living in countries affected by protracted conflict are, on average,

15 WHO (2014): *Preventing diarrhoea through better water, sanitation and hygiene*: https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/150112/9789241564823_eng.who.jsessionid=E3CF684AC4139F721D65B76089730440?sequence=1

16 WHO/UNICEF (2019): *Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000-2017. Special focus on inequalities*: https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/jmp-report-2019/en/

17 WHO/UNICEF (2019): *Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000-2017. Special focus on inequalities*: https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/jmp-report-2019/en/

18 WHO (2019): <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/drinking-water>

19 WHO (2019): <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sanitation>

20 WHO (2019): *Soil-transmitted helminth infections: fact sheet*: <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/soil-transmitted-helminth-infections>

21 WHO (2019): <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/drinking-water>

nearly 20 times more likely to die from diarrhoeal diseases caused by a lack of safe water, sanitation and hygiene than by direct violence. (UNICEF 2019)²²

- One third of all primary schools lack basic sanitation and hygiene services, affecting the education of millions of school children, particularly girls managing menstruation. (UN 2019)²³
- 1.5 billion people use health care facilities with no sanitation services. (WHO/UNICEF 2019)²⁴
- The 70.8 million people who have been forced to flee their home as a result of war and persecution regularly face barriers to accessing safe sanitation and water services. (UNESCO 2019 and UNHCR 2019)^{25, 26}
- Only 17% of refugees have access to safely managed sanitation where they live. This is well behind the global average where 45% of the global population have access to safely managed sanitation at home. (UNHCR 2019 and WHO/UNICEF 2019)^{27, 28}
- The wealthier generally receive high levels of WASH services at (often very) low cost, whereas the poor pay a much higher price for a service of similar or lesser quality. (UNESCO 2019)²⁹
- Loss of productivity to water- and sanitation-related diseases costs many countries up to 5% of GDP. (WHO 2012)³⁰

- For every \$1 invested in basic sanitation in urban areas, an average of \$2.5 is returned in saved medical costs and increased productivity. In rural areas, an average of \$5 is returned for every \$1 invested. (Hutton 2015)³¹
- As the global sanitation workforce increases, sanitation workers should be protected from occupational exposure, such as to injury, asphyxiation and pathogens, through adequate health and safety measures. (WHO 2018)³²

22 UNICEF (2019): *Water under fire*: <https://www.unicef.org/stories/water-under-fire>

23 UN (2019): *Special Edition: Progress towards the SDGs: Report of the Secretary-General*: <https://undocs.org/E/2019/68>

24 WHO/UNICEF (2019): *WASH in Health Care Facilities: Global Baseline Report 2019*: <https://washdata.org/sites/default/files/documents/reports/2019-04/JMP-2019-wash-in-hcf.pdf>

25 UNESCO (2019) *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2019: Leaving No One Behind*: <https://www.unwater.org/publications/world-water-development-report-2019/>

26 UNHCR (2019): <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>

27 UNHCR (2019): UNHCR WASH Monitoring System: <http://wash.unhcr.org/wash-monitoring-system/>

28 WHO/UNICEF (2019): *Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000-2017. Special focus on inequalities*: https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/jmp-report-2019/en/

29 UNESCO (2019) *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2019: Leaving No One Behind*: <https://www.unwater.org/publications/world-water-development-report-2019/>

30 WHO (2012): <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/drinking-water>

31 Hutton (2015): *Benefits and costs of the water and sanitation targets for the post-2015 development agenda*: https://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/sites/default/files/water_sanitation_assessment_-_hutton.pdf

32 WHO (2018): *Guidelines on sanitation and health*: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/274939/9789241514705-eng.pdf?ua=1>