

Tackling a global crisis: International Year of Sanitation 2008



IYS partner organizations

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| UNDESA | (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs) www.un.org/esa/sustdev/sdissues/sanitation/sanitation.htm |
| UNDP | (United Nations Development Programme) www.undp.org/water/priorityareas/supply.html |
| UNEP | (United Nations Environment Programme) www.gpa.unep.org/content.html?id=246 |
| UN-HABITAT | (United Nations Human Settlements Programme) www.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=270 |
| UNICEF | (United Nations Children's Fund) www.unicef.org/wes |
| WHO | (World Health Organization) www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/en |
| WSSCC | (Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council) www.wsscc.org |
| UN Water | www.unwater.org |
| UNSGAB | (United Nations Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water & Sanitation) www.unsgab.org |
| UN-GWTF | (United Nations Interagency Gender and Water Task Force) www.un.org/esa/sustdev/inter_agency/inter_agency_2_genderwater.htm |
| UNESCO | IHE Institute for Water Education www.unesco-ihe.org |
| WTAA | (World Toilet Association General Assembly) http://en.wtaa.or.kr/site/index.htm |
| IRC | (International Water and Sanitation Centre) www.irc.nl |
| GWP | (Global Water Partnership) www.gwpforum.org |
| SuSanA | (Sustainable Sanitation Alliance) www.sustainable-sanitation-alliance.org |
| WaterAid | www.wateraid.org |
| WSP | (Water and Sanitation Programme) www.sustainable-sanitation-alliance.org |
| SIWI | (Stockholm International Water Institute) www.siwi.org |
| WTO | (World Toilet Organization) www.worldtoilet.org |

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SANITATION



2008

'Why do we need an International Year of Sanitation?

Here is why: Because clean water and sanitation are not only about hygiene and disease, they're about dignity, too. Relieving yourself in hazardous places means risking everything from urological disease to harassment and rape. Many examples show that self-esteem begins with having a safe and proper toilet facility.

That is why we, as policymakers, opinion leaders and stakeholders, must make an effort to make proper sanitation accessible and available to everyone. Because everyone and that means ALL the people in the world, has the right to a healthy life and a life with dignity. In other words: everyone have the right to sanitation.'

*HRH Prince Willem-Alexander
of the Netherlands*

*Chair UN Secretary General's Advisory
Board on Water and Sanitation*

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On 20th December 2006, the UN General assembly declared 2008 as the International Year of Sanitation (IYS). The proposal was brought into the General Assembly by 48 Countries at the recommendation of the UN Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation. The International Year of Sanitation provides the global community with an opportunity to raise awareness and accelerate actions for the achievement of the sanitation MDG through a variety of actions and interventions.

UN-Water welcomes and supports International Year of Sanitation as it provides an important opportunity to impact and improve the lives of children and their families throughout the world. IYS is expected to stimulate dialogue at all levels and create a context for political leadership, leading to the allocation of greater resources to sanitation for the poor. The UN-Water Task Force on sanitation have come together to produce this publication *Tackling*

a global crisis: International Year of Sanitation 2008 to contribute to this dialogue and help advocate and increase awareness of the importance of sanitation throughout the globe. The co-ordination of this work was jointly undertaken by UN-HABITAT and UNICEF on behalf of UN-Water.

The messages are clear: sanitation is vital for health; enhances social development; is a good economic investment; improves the environment and most importantly it is achievable. More resources and stronger commitments are needed to deliver on the promise made in the Millennium Development Goal (7c), to halve the number of those without access to basic sanitation by 2015.

Let us use 2008, the International Year of Sanitation, to expose this scandal of human indignity, unnecessary child death and lost economic opportunities by redoubling our efforts and bring this silent crisis to an end.



Dr. Pasquale Steduto
Chair UN-Water

Around the world, 2.6 billion people¹ do not have a clean and safe place to use for performing their bodily functions – they lack that basic necessity, a toilet. Among those who make up this shocking total, those who live in towns and crowded rural environments daily confront squalor all around them, including human faeces, flies, and other disease-carrying agents.

This hidden global scandal constitutes an affront to human dignity on a massive scale. The most important outcomes are:

- widespread damage to human health and child survival prospects;
- social misery especially for women, the elderly and infirm;
- depressed economic productivity and human development;
- pollution to the living environment and water resources.

In the industrialized world, the modern ‘sanitary revolution’ has long meant that everyone has access to a flush toilet in their home. Water for bathing, laundry and all domestic use is piped into the household, and once sullied, piped out again. At the touch of a handle, human wastes are removed into a sewer or septic tank. In the developing world, such facilities are denied to the vast majority. Neither do they enjoy storm water drainage or regular refuse collection to keep streets and communities clean. Ninety per cent of human excreta in such



Photo © UN-HABITAT

environments end up untreated in rivers, causing serious pollution².

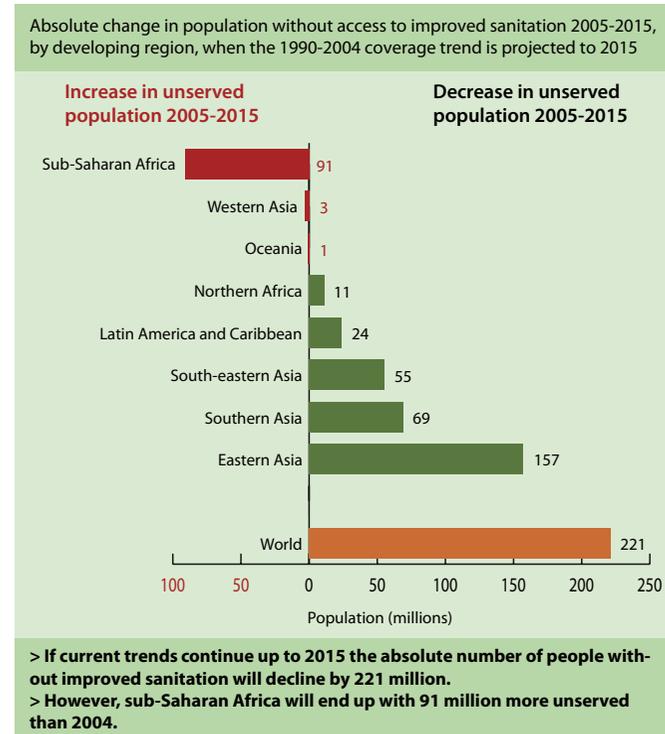
For too long, policy-makers have talked about ‘water and sanitation’ as if they were one and the same thing. Water, without which nothing on earth can survive, is popularly desired and its supply is politically backed above all life-supporting services. But sanitation remains the poor relation. Neither people nor politicians want to engage with sanitation, however necessary it may be. Dirt and its removal are distasteful topics. So the resources needed to tackle the global sanitation crisis have not been forthcoming.

Recognition of the sanitation crisis has prompted the United Nations to declare 2008 *The International Year of Sanitation (IYS)*, and invite its own member states and organizations, and well-wishers all over the world, to get involved. The IYS provides an opportunity to draw attention to the needs of over one-third of global citizens for the most basic of services by promoting *five key messages concerning sanitation*, and to generate new resources to address the crisis at international, national and community levels. The fact that the nations of the world have put this issue squarely on the international agenda is an indication that popular and official attitudes are changing. The time has come to take action to address the sanitation crisis.

Those organizations backing the IYS are using 2008 to bring this neglected subject out of the closet. The taboos surrounding sanitation are being broken, and its profile raised with policy makers, politicians, civil society and the general public. Action is being stimulated at every level from the household to the international to generate momentum behind sanitary transformation. Investments are increasing, in basic toilets, personal hygiene, laundry, solid waste management and drainage infrastructure that millions of ordinary people need, want and can afford.

In 2002, a Millennium Development Goal (MDG) was set, of halving by 2015 the numbers of those in 1990 obliged to manage without toilets. But progress towards the Sanitation Goal has been much too slow. With sufficient political will, financial invest-

ment, popular participation, and the most appropriate and affordable technological and hygiene education approaches, the 2015 Sanitation Goal can be reached.



Source: WHO/UNICEF, Joint Monitoring Programme, 2006

1. Sanitation is vital for health

Lack of toilets and the safe confinement of excreta away from hands, feet, drinking water and eating utensils, and lack of hygiene, especially failure to wash hands after defecation, lead to the transmission of diarrhoeal disease. Provision of sanitation is important for the prevention of illness of all kinds, and saves the huge costs of medical treatment.

2. Sanitation contributes to social development

Where sanitation facilities and hygienic behaviour are present, rates of illness drop, malnutrition in children is reduced, more children, especially girls, attend school and learn better, and women's safety and dignity are improved.

3. Sanitation is a good economic investment

Improved sanitation has positive economic benefits. Livelihoods and employment opportunities are enhanced, and the costs to the community and to the nation of illness and lost productivity is reduced.

4. Sanitation helps the environment

Improved disposal of human waste promotes environ-



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