

# World Toilet Day 2021: Who cares about toilets?



When we ask the question, “Who cares about toilets?” we hope your answer is, “I do!”

Your participation in the World Toilet Day 2021 campaign is crucial to its success.

In this factsheet, you’ll find explanations, useful facts and stories that you can share and adapt on your social media channels or wherever you like.

You can find other shareable content on [www.worldtoiletday.org](http://www.worldtoiletday.org), and by following [#WorldToiletDay](https://twitter.com/WorldToiletDay)

## WHEN IS WORLD TOILET DAY 2021?

19 November 2021

## WHAT IS WORLD TOILET DAY?

World Toilet Day has been an annual United Nations Observance since 2013. It was first established in 2001 by the World Toilet Organization.

## WHAT IS THE AIM OF WORLD TOILET DAY?

World Toilet Day celebrates toilets and raises awareness of the 3.6 billion people living without access to safely managed sanitation. It is about taking action to tackle the global sanitation crisis and achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030.

## WHO ORGANIZES WORLD TOILET DAY?

Every year, UN-Water – the United Nations’ coordination mechanism on water and sanitation – sets the theme for World Toilet Day. In 2021, the theme is ‘valuing toilets’. Previous themes can be found here: [www.worldtoiletday.org/2021-home/archive](http://www.worldtoiletday.org/2021-home/archive)

## WHAT HAPPENS ON WORLD TOILET DAY?

Ahead of the day, UN-Water launches a global campaign on [www.worldtoiletday.org](http://www.worldtoiletday.org) and on social media ([#WorldToiletDay](https://twitter.com/WorldToiletDay)). Individuals, organizations,



governments, companies, schools and many other actors support the day by using the official messages and assets, or by organizing their own World Toilet Day activities.

### WHAT IS WORLD TOILET DAY 2021 ABOUT?

World Toilet Day 2021 is about valuing toilets. The campaign ([www.worldtoiletday.org](http://www.worldtoiletday.org)) draws attention to the fact that toilets – and the sanitation systems that support them – are underfunded, poorly managed or neglected in many parts of the world, with devastating consequences for health, economics and the environment, particularly in the poorest and most marginalized communities.

### WHAT DOES THE CAMPAIGN SAY?

This is the central narrative of the World Toilet Day 2021 campaign:

“Who cares about toilets? 3.6 billion people do. Because they don’t have one that works properly.

We should all care more about toilets. If you have one, thank it. Life without a toilet is dirty, dangerous and undignified.

Public health depends on toilets. Toilets also drive improvements in gender equality, education, economics and the environment.

There will be no sustainable future without toilets. Governments must work four times faster and ensure toilets for all by 2030.”

### IS SANITATION A HUMAN RIGHT?

Yes. Access to sanitation is recognized by the United Nations as a human right that 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.<sup>1</sup> To meet Sustainable Development Goal 6 – water and sanitation for all by 2030 – governments must take a human rights-based approach to improving and expanding service provision to ensure no one gets left behind.

### WHAT IS THE SANITATION CRISIS WE FACE?

Sanitation and safe drinking water are basic human rights that everyone is entitled to. However, nearly half the world’s population – 3.6 billion people – live without a safely managed sanitation service, which is defined as a toilet, not shared with other households, that either treats or disposes of human waste on site, stores it safely to be emptied and treated off-site, or connects to a functioning sewer. Instead, they use facilities that do not safely dispose of human waste in situ or offsite (what are known as ‘basic, ‘limited’ or ‘unimproved’ facilities) or they may have to relieve themselves outside (‘open defecation’).<sup>2</sup> 494 million people still practise open defecation.

1 United Nations: [https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/169](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/169)

2 WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP): <https://washdata.org/monitoring/sanitation>

## WHAT ARE THE MAIN CONSEQUENCES OF THE SANITATION CRISIS?

When some people in a community do not have safe toilets, everyone's health is threatened. Poor sanitation contaminates drinking-water sources, rivers, beaches and food crops, spreading deadly diseases among the wider population. Globally, at least 2 billion people use a drinking water source contaminated with faeces. Every day, over 700 children under five years old die from diarrhoea linked to unsafe water, sanitation and poor hygiene.

## WHAT IS THE CASE FOR INVESTING IN SANITATION?

Having access to safe sanitation is essential for the realization of all human rights. Toilets particularly drive improvements in gender equality, education, economics and the environment. For instance, every \$1 invested in basic sanitation returns up to \$5 in saved medical costs and increased productivity, and jobs are created along the entire service chain. For women and girls, toilets at home, school and at work help them fulfil their potential and play their full role in society, especially during menstruation and pregnancy.

## WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 6?

Sustainable Development Goal 6 is to 'ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all' by 2030. Target 6.2 on sanitation will be measured by the proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services, including a hand-washing facility with soap and water.

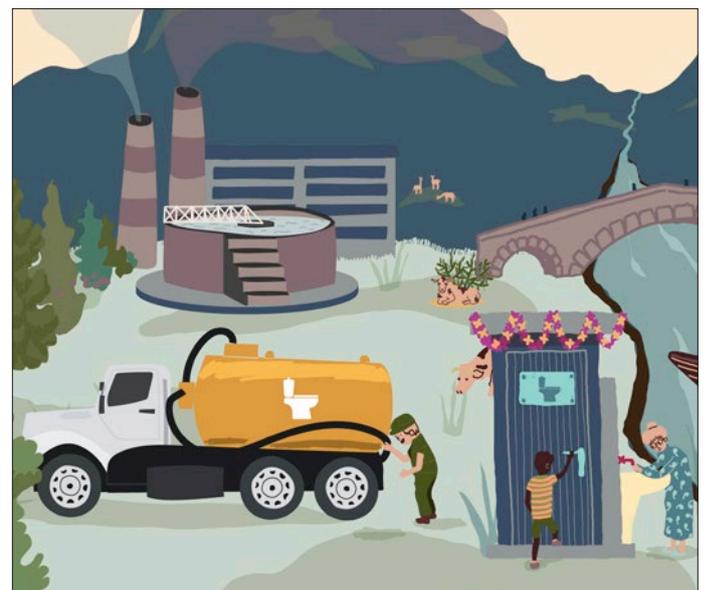
## WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO REACH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 6 BY 2030?

Currently, the world is seriously off track to meet Sustainable Development Goal 6. We urgently need massive investment and innovation to quadruple progress all along the 'sanitation chain', from toilets

to the transport, collection and treatment of human waste. As part of a human rights-based approach, governments must listen to the people who are being left behind without access to toilets and allocate specific funding to include them in planning and decision-making processes. The public and private sectors must work with unserved communities to create sustainable sanitation systems that work for them.

## WHAT DOES A SUSTAINABLE SANITATION SYSTEM LOOK LIKE?

Sustainable sanitation begins with a toilet that effectively captures human waste in a safe, accessible and dignified setting. The waste then gets stored in a tank, which can be treated on-site or emptied later by a collection service, or transported away by pipework. The next stage is treatment and safe disposal or use. Safe reuse of treated human waste can capture greenhouse gas emissions for energy production and provide agriculture with a reliable source of water and nutrients. Sustainable sanitation systems need to be able to withstand more frequent floods, droughts, changes in water availability and sea level rise brought on by climate change.



## CASE STUDIES

### Clean India Mission

The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) – or ‘Clean India Mission’ – was an India-wide campaign from 2014 to 2019 to eliminate open defecation and improve solid waste management. It was the world’s largest sanitation programme, with high-level political support, that catalysed a mass movement to end open defecation. SBM engaged government, households and the private sector, and used community-led behaviour change techniques to transform the lives of millions of people across the country.

A recent study<sup>3</sup> found annual cost savings per household of US\$727, with medical cost savings, averted premature death, and the benefits of reduced travel time to places for open defecation all accounting for a significant share of the benefits.

Full story: <https://www.unicef.org/media/86836/file/State-of-the-world%E2%80%99s-sanitation-2020.pdf>

### Nepal free from open defecation

In 2019, Nepal announced that it had achieved ‘open defecation-free’ status after 10 years of concerted and coordinated government support to the sanitation sector. WASH coordination committees were established at all administrative levels, involving representatives from civil society, nearly every sector and across the political spectrum.

Since then, Nepal has since continued its journey on sustaining and addressing a wider scope of behaviors under its total sanitation manifesto. The

government is focused on moving households to higher levels of service, with recent household surveys showing that the proportion of the population using basic sanitation services has increased from 60 per cent in 2014 to 79 per cent in 2019.

Full story: <https://www.unicef.org/media/86836/file/State-of-the-world%E2%80%99s-sanitation-2020.pdf>

### On-site sanitation in Bolivia

In Bolivia, on-site sanitation solutions are meeting the needs of a rapidly growing population facing high investment costs for conventional sewers and wastewater treatment plants. Consequently, small- and medium-sized private vacuum truck companies have emerged to meet the demand to empty latrine pits and septic tanks. In cities such as Santa Cruz, emptying companies have been operating for more than 30 years without any official control or regulation.

Despite the lack of oversight, there has been progress in protecting sanitation workers. Solutions that are being implemented in Santa Cruz include:

- The use of a toilet technology that limits workers’ exposure to faecal matter.
- The application of national occupational health and safety standards for sanitation workers.
- The standardization of procedures for collection, transport, and discharge of household faecal sludge, focused on industrial safety and environmental protection.
- Training modules developed in partnership with universities.

Full story: <https://www.unicef.org/media/86836/file/State-of-the-world%E2%80%99s-sanitation-2020.pdf>

3 UNICEF, National Economic and Financial Impact of the Swachh Bharat Mission, UNICEF, New York, 2020.

## Tanzania: “Nipo Tayari/I am ready”

In Tanzania, a national behaviour change communications campaign, Nipo Tayari (I am ready), has been launched to achieve universal sanitation and hygiene by 2025. Sanitation networks, known as jirani (neighbour) groups, are formed at the community level, with leaders for every 10-15 households, to mobilize the communities to achieve and sustain ‘open defecation-free’ status. Informed by evidence from door-to-door surveys, the jirani groups have played a pivotal role in understanding which households have or have not adopted safe sanitation practices. Based on the lessons learned, innovative and targeted measures are being piloted to reach ‘last mile’ households, including socially marginalized and poor households, as well as households that have the economic resources to build latrines.

Full story: <https://www.unicef.org/media/86836/file/State-of-the-world%E2%80%99s-sanitation-2020.pdf>



## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

The United Nations has launched the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework – a new, unifying initiative that involves all sectors of society to speed up progress by improving support to countries. The Framework is part of the UN Secretary-General’s Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs by 2030.

The aim is to drive progress through five accelerators:

1. Optimized **financing** is essential to get resources behind country plans.
2. **Data and information** targets resources and measures progress.
3. **Capacity development** creates a better-skilled workforce, improves service levels and increases job creation and retention in the water sector.
4. **Innovation** in smart practices and technologies will improve water and sanitation resources management and service delivery.
5. And better **governance** and collaboration across boundaries and sectors will make SDG 6 everyone’s business.

Share examples of your work through the SDG 6 Action Space as inspiration for other organizations and networks: <https://www.unwater.org/sdg6-action-space/>

## FACTS AND STATS

- Nearly half the world's population – 3.6 billion people – live without a safe toilet. (WHO/UNICEF 2021: <https://www.unwater.org/publications/who-unicef-joint-monitoring-program-for-water-supply-sanitation-and-hygiene-jmp-progress-on-household-drinking-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-2000-2020/>)
- A 'safe toilet' is shorthand for a 'safely managed sanitation service', which is defined as a facility not shared with other households, that either treats or disposes of human waste on site, stores it safely to be emptied and treated off-site, or connects to a functioning sewer. (WHO/UNICEF: <https://washdata.org/monitoring/sanitation>)
- Globally, at least 2 billion people use a drinking water source contaminated with faeces. (WHO/UNICEF 2021: <https://www.unwater.org/publications/who-unicef-joint-monitoring-program-for-water-supply-sanitation-and-hygiene-jmp-progress-on-household-drinking-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-2000-2020/>)
- Every day, over 700 children under five years old die from diarrhoea linked to unsafe water, sanitation and poor hygiene. (UNICEF 2021: <https://www.unicef.org/media/95241/file/water-security-for-all.pdf>)
- For every \$1 invested in basic sanitation up to \$5 is returned in saved medical costs and increased productivity. (Hutton et al. 2015: [https://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/sites/default/files/water\\_sanitation\\_assessment\\_-\\_hutton.pdf](https://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/sites/default/files/water_sanitation_assessment_-_hutton.pdf))
- 494 million people still practise open defecation. (WHO/UNICEF 2021: <https://www.unwater.org/publications/who-unicef-joint-monitoring-program-for-water-supply-sanitation-and-hygiene-jmp-progress-on-household-drinking-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-2000-2020/>)
- 1 in 3 of the global population – 2.3 billion people – lack basic handwashing facilities at home. (WHO/UNICEF 2021: <https://www.unwater.org/publications/who-unicef-joint-monitoring-program-for-water-supply-sanitation-and-hygiene-jmp-progress-on-household-drinking-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-2000-2020/>)

## hygiene-2000-2020/)

- Achieving universal access to safely managed water and sanitation by 2030 will require a four-fold increase in current rates of progress. (UN-Water 2021: <https://www.unwater.org/sdg6-update-the-world-is-off-track/>)

## FIND OUT MORE

- World Toilet Day 2021 website: [www.worldtoiletday.org](http://www.worldtoiletday.org)
- UNICEF and WHO State of the World's Sanitation report: [www.unicef.org/reports/state-worlds-sanitation-2020](http://www.unicef.org/reports/state-worlds-sanitation-2020)
- UN World Water Development Report 2021: [www.unwater.org/publication\\_categories/world-water-development-report/](http://www.unwater.org/publication_categories/world-water-development-report/)
- WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP): <https://washdata.org/>
- SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework: <https://www.unwater.org/publications/the-sdg-6-global-acceleration-framework/>
- SDG 6 Action Space: <https://www.unwater.org/sdg6-action-space/>
- UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water: (GLAAS): [https://www.unwater.org/publication\\_categories/glaas/](https://www.unwater.org/publication_categories/glaas/)