

SANITATION FOR ALL



THE DRIVE TO 2015

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Making the right a reality

Almost 40 per cent of people in the world still lack access to improved sanitation. Currently, 2.5 billion people without a proper toilet are at risk of poor health and enjoy few economic opportunities. They often live in degraded environments and are being denied a basic human right. Access to basic sanitation is not a charitable impulse, it is a legal entitlement. The Sanitation Drive to 2015 urges governments and other stakeholders to make this right a reality.

Sanitation is a human right

In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council recognized clean drinking water and safe sanitation to be a human right essential to the full enjoyment of life and all other human rights.¹

Declaring that access to sanitation and water is a human right constitutes an important step towards making it a reality for everyone. It means that:

- Access to basic sanitation and safe water is an entitlement, rather than a commodity or a service provided on a charitable basis.
- Progress on access to basic sanitation must be accelerated.
- Efforts should focus on those least served, including the hardest to reach and most vulnerable.
- Communities and vulnerable groups need to be empowered and engaged in decision-making processes.
- The means and mechanisms available within the United Nations human rights system should be used to monitor nations' progress towards realizing the right to water and sanitation, and to hold governments accountable.

Common misconceptions regarding the human right to sanitation

Misconception	Clarification
The right entitles people to free sanitation.	Sanitation services need to be sustainable and affordable for all. People are expected to contribute financially or otherwise to the extent that they can.
The right entitles everyone to a household service.	Sanitation facilities need to be within, or in the vicinity of, the household and can include facilities such as pit latrines.
A country is in violation of the right if not all of its people have access to sanitation.	The requirement is that governments take steps to progressively realize the right, using the maximum resources available.

¹ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly 64/292, 'The human right to water and sanitation', A/64/L.63/Rev.1, Sixty-fourth session, Agenda item 48, 3 August 2010; and the Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council, 'Human rights and access to safe drinking water and sanitation', A/HRC/15/L.14, Fifteenth session, Agenda item 3, 24 September 2010.

Open defecation is the most extreme manifestation of poor sanitation

The Sanitation Drive to 2015 focuses on ending open defecation, defined as defecation in fields, forests, bushes, bodies of water or other open spaces.

Today, 1.1 billion people – 15 per cent of the world's population – have no alternative other than to practise open defecation, the most extreme manifestation of poor sanitation.² It disproportionately affects the poorest and most marginalized and is strongly related to the spread of major killer diseases such as diarrhoea.

Why is defecating in the open an affront to human rights? Catarina de Albuquerque, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, explains: "Dignity closely relates to self-respect, which is difficult to maintain when being forced to squat down in the open, with no respect for privacy, not having the opportunity to clean oneself after defecating and facing the constant threat of assault in such a vulnerable moment."³

Take action!

Concerted action is needed if we are to transform the right to water and sanitation into a reality.

In 2010, the United Nations called for a redoubling of efforts towards meeting the MDG targets and lent its support to a global effort – the Sanitation Drive to 2015. The Drive to 2015 advocates for increased political focus on sanitation, better targeting of funding, coordinated efforts based on proven successes, involvement of communities and individuals in decision making, and efforts to ensure that all people have access to information and services.

Importantly, it focuses on ending open defecation. The Sanitation Drive urges us all to tackle this inequity by giving priority to the poorest and most marginalized populations.

Take action for sanitation by kick-starting your own Sanitation Drive to 2015 campaign!

Visit www.sanitationdriveto2015.org to:

- Find an online toolkit that includes the Planners' Guide, fact sheets, postcards and more ideas for making your campaign successful.
- Share your success stories and nominate 'Sanitation Drivers' who have been leaders in ending open defecation and promoting sanitation. See www.sanitationdrive2015.org/take-action/be-a-sanitation-driver for more information.

² WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation, *Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation: 2012 update*, United Nations Children's Fund and World Health Organization, New York and Geneva, 2012.

³ Human Rights Council, 'Promotion and Protection Of All Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social And Cultural Rights, Including The Right to Development', Report of the independent expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation, Catarina de Albuquerque, 1 July 2009, p. 19.



About us: The Sanitation Drive to 2015 builds on the United Nations resolution endorsed by all Members States in 2010 – calling for redoubled efforts to meet the MDG target to halve the number of people living without sustainable access to basic sanitation. UN-Water, which includes 30 United Nations entities and 22 partners, is coordinating the work. Civil society groups around the globe have pledged their support.

www.sanitationdrive2015.org