

An exhibition on
Women & Sanitation



UN-HABITAT





Voices
Voices
Voices

||

An Exhibition on Women & Sanitation



Partners

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)
Aga Khan Development Network
Centre for Women's Development Studies
Gram Vikas
International Centre for Women and Child
Institute of Social Studies Trust
Society for Promotion Area Resource Centres
Vikram Sarabhai Foundation





preface

The Sanitation Gap

Official statistics suggest that 2.4 billion people do not have access to improved sanitation. 80 per cent (1.9 billion) live in Asia, 13 per cent (0.3 billion) in Africa, and 5 per cent (0.1 billion) in Latin America and the Caribbean. The lack of sanitation at the household is exacerbated when there is limited sanitation also available in schools.

Lack of a toilet in the home means millions of people have to spend time walking to unhealthy and sometimes unsafe locations to defecate. Lack of sanitation also impacts on educational access and potential. The number of deaths and incidence of illness caused by lack of adequate sanitation and poor or inadequate water supply are comparable with other major disease groups. Globally diarrhoeal disease alone kills more people than TB or Malaria. And it is women and children on whom the burden falls most heavily. Diarrhoea is the most significant disease associated with unsafe water, sanitation or lack of hygiene and causes the deaths of 1.5 million people every year, 90 per cent of which are children under five. Those without access to sanitation are 1.6 times more likely to experience diarrhoeal disease.

In addition to the environmental and health consequences of lack of toilet facilities at home are issues of privacy, convenience safety and security faced by women and young girls as they have no choice but to wake-up early before dawn to perform their morning ablutions in the cover of the darkness. Many young girls report being sexually harassed and or raped as they traverse the distance from their homes to the open fields surrounding their villages.

They suffer tremendous indignities particularly during vulnerable periods of menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth. Poverty and lack of say of marginalized groups in decision making is the main reason for the inaccessibility of such basic facility.

There is a strong international consensus that increased access to appropriate sanitation hardware (toilets) when coupled with the adoption of key hygiene practices, it would have a major impact on health status, particularly for the women and the poorest families with significant benefits to education and the economy.

The sanitation crisis is a serious crisis. Simply meeting the sanitation target by 2015 could avert 391 million cases of diarrhoea a year. All this could come at the price of just over US\$ 9.5 billion each year – it is a large number but it is dwarfed by the potential gains which could result improving appalling living conditions of the women, children and the poorest people.

Global Scenario

Every 15 Seconds a child dies due to lack of sanitation;
equivalent to 20 Boeing 747 aircrafts crashing every day.

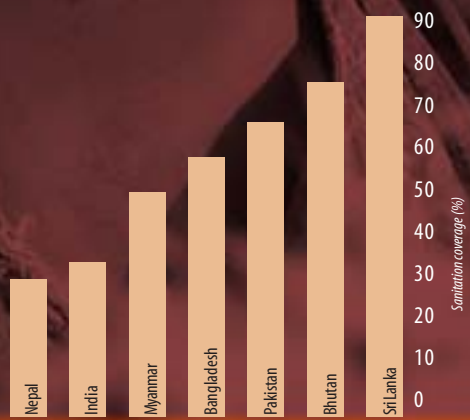
In the past 10 years, diarrhoea has killed more children than all the people lost to armed conflict since World War II.

At any one time it is estimated that half of the world's hospital beds are occupied by patients suffering from water-borne diseases.



Cost is cited as a barrier, BUT
(US\$ 11 billion) is spent on ice cream in Europe.
(US\$ 17 billion) is spent on pet food in the US and Europe.
(US \$ 105 billion) is spent on alcohol in Europe.

This is TEN TIMES the amount required to ensure adequate water, sanitation and hygiene provisions for all.



Sanitation Coverage in South Asia (2000)

Source: Global Water Supply and Sanitation Assessment Report 2000

Millennium Development Goals (MDG)



At the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000, 189 countries pledged to meet eight development goals between 1990 and 2015.

Goal 7 on Water and Sanitation, aims to ensure “Environmental Sustainability,” specifically:

Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation;

Achieve, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.



Current Scenario

World Population

6
Bn

People without access to sanitation

2.4
Bn

People without access to sanitation in India and China

1.3
Bn



Without immediate action, the global sanitation target will be short by over 500 million people.

In other words, close to 2.4 billion people will be without improved sanitation in 2015, almost as many as there are today.

School Sanitation



Of 630,000 primary and upper primary schools in India, only one in five has a urinal and almost none have separate facilities for girls

“As the school is in the middle of the village, there are people passing by and we cannot go alone. We have to take at least one of our friends. During class the teacher will not allow two girls at a time. So we wait till the recess, then all the girls go in one group behind the school; one half goes first, while the other half keeps watch and vice versa.”

“Before leaving for school, I have to help in housework... clean utensils, mop etc. I have to then rush to school. If I am late, the teacher gets angry. The time I spend going to the *wada*, I can complete the housework and reach school on time.”

Lack of adequate sanitation is one of the key reasons for low enrolment rates and high drop-out rates of girls in schools.

Voices



||

I started my labour pains and the birth attendant gave me an enema. My stomach swelled up and suddenly I had to run to a nearby courtyard since I could not run to the '*wada*'. I sat there in the courtyard, without water and then ran home and immediately delivered.

||



Convenience



“When I had diarrhoea, it was painful to walk long distance. My clothes got dirty. Once I got so fed up, I sat under a tree the whole day, instead of coming home. The place was so dirty that I felt like vomiting, but I had no choice.”

“I am pregnant. It is very difficult - I feel giddy, nauseous and sometimes, even throw-up on the way. I walk slowly, stopping frequently to rest, when the pain in my stomach becomes unbearable.”

“Only when my father-in-law is not in the house do I bathe... with my petticoat on ... and very quickly. What if someone comes? I do not bathe daily; only on alternate days.”

“I have to go early in the morning or at night, there is no other choice. I sit down, and if someone passes by, I quickly stand up... then sit down again... it is very difficult. Ten times I stand and sit. I feel embarrassed, naturally. At times I just return without having relieved myself.”

privacy



Voices



safety & security

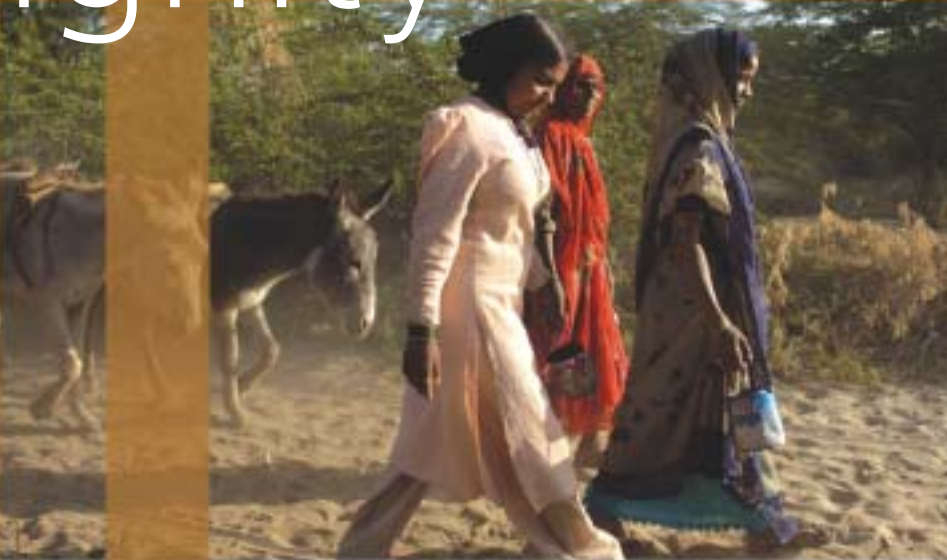
||

Some years ago, a small, six years old girl died. The waters carried her away, when she had gone to the stream to clean herself.

I am scared of going out alone. There have been instances when men have raped young girls, who went out to relieve themselves. They became pregnant and had to undergo an abortion. So, we go together. We all sit in different places and keep watch.

||

dignity



“To bathe, we all go to the *tabela* (cattle shed) as there is water there. But the landlord shouts at us; he says the water is for the cattle, not for you.”

“Sitting to defecate is still fine, but walking down a road with a ‘*dablu*’ (can) in you hand is very shameful. Some people see us and say, hey woman why donit you eat less?”

Voices



equity



“Men can go anywhere but we women have a problem. It is shameful if a man sees us squatting. The next day, the whole lot of them will be discussing us and we have to hide our faces.”

“Even though the scheme made it compulsory and allocated funds for toilets, my husband chose to construct a boundary wall for the house instead. His priorities are clearly elsewhere”.



Voices


resignation



“The nightmare begins in the monsoon, when the ‘wada’ is mired in human excreta and mud. There is so much filth that it stays in your mind. The urge to vomit is overwhelming. When I return home, I don’t feel like eating.”

Voice

disability



“It takes an hour to crawl to the ‘wada’ and back. It is extremely humiliating to be seen crawling. Often, I go alone and cannot carry any water with me; I clean myself only when I return home. It feels like hell; there is a sense of anger and helplessness. I get angry with my condition. My whole life has become a fight for survival.”

“One, I am a woman, and then, I am handicapped, ...because of my leg, I cannot get up and sit repeatedly each time a man passes by. They (men) complain to my husband. I am only 18 and have already given up hope of a better life.”

S

aspirations



“I have just one dream when we get a house, we have in it, a separate toilet and bathroom facility.”

“Even to my enemy, I would advise... Find a groom for your daughter who has a toilet and bathroom facility at his place.”



Voice



concern




I started my labour pains and the birth attendant gave me an enema. My stomach swelled up and suddenly I had to run to a nearby courtyard since I could not run to the '*wada*'. I sat there in the courtyard, without water and then ran home and immediately delivered.



S



A woman in a sari is shown from the side, carrying a water pot on a headstand. The background is a sunset with a gradient from purple to orange. The woman's sari is dark, and the water pot is a reddish-brown color. The text is overlaid on the upper part of the image.

“After 50 years of independence, at the most only 15% of the population have lavatories; the rest must use streets, rivers, field or railway tracks, and women with modesty must wait until it gets dark to relieve themselves. Our civilisation as a whole, in spite of all its great technological triumphs, has failed to look to the most basic of amenities like sanitation, as if human dignity and human decency were below its concern.”

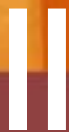
Ved Mehta - the Asian Age,
15 August, 2000



Voices

Voices

Voices



UN-HABITAT



For more information, contact:

United Nations Human Settlements Programme
Water Sanitation and Infrastructure Branch
P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi, KENYA
Tel: 254 20 623039, Fax: 254 20 623588
Email: kalyan.ray@unhabitat.org
Website: <http://www.unhabitat.org>