



19 November 2018 - The world is facing a global sanitation crisis with around 826 million people still defecating in the open without access to proper toilets or sanitation facilities. Around 60% of the global population, 4.5 billion people, either have no toilet at home or one that does not safely manage excreta.

[World Toilet Day](#) encourages Member States and relevant stakeholders to advocate for a behavioral change and to implement policies that increase access to sanitation among the poor. Lack of proper sanitation facilities have both health and social implications.

“In streets and fields around people’s homes, human excreta is spreading deadly diseases by contaminating water resources and farmland that communities rely on to survive,” says Rolf Luyendijk, Executive Director of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC).

If excreta are not properly managed it can lead to diseases and eventually deaths. It contaminates the water and soil that sustain human life thereby turning the environment into an open sewer.

Sanitation is also a question of basic dignity and safety for women. In rural India it has been well publicized that lack of a safe toilet close to home can result in an attacks on women, including rape and murder. A toilet close to home which offers privacy can reduce the risks women face when they have lack of access to these facilities.

Toilets are in many ways instrumental for human health, and the UN has recognized this with Sustainable Development Goal 6 which focuses on [clean water and sanitation](#) . The figures reveal that there is still room for improvement if we are going to achieve the aim of SDG 6 by 2030 of ensuring that everyone has safe toilet and no-one practices open defecation.

“The sanitation crisis, if allowed to continue, will undermine the overarching ambition of the 2030 agenda: to build safer, more resilient societies on a healthy planet,” adds Luyendijk.

To tackle the sanitation crisis, we need to build toilet and sanitation systems that work in harmony with the ecosystem. One example is the [nature-based sanitation solutions \(NBS\)](#) , which creates composting latrines, capturing and treating human waste on site. The result of this, is that it produces a free supply of fertilizer to help grow crops.

520 million people or 40% of the national population practice open defecation in India. The Indian government aims to eliminate open defecation across the country by 2019 through constructing 90 million household and community toilets. This challenge has inspired many organizations to develop sustainable and affordable sanitation models, focusing on NBS such as composting latrines.

Next time you sit down for a moment of relief, take a moment to appreciate a convenience that has not been granted to all.