

# World Toilet Day 2020: Sustainable sanitation and climate change

## Messaging toolkit

Your engagement in the campaign is crucial to its success.

This is your messaging toolkit to help you take action in the run-up to World Toilet Day, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

Everything in this toolkit is designed to inform you and give you clear messaging to share with your friends, family and colleagues.

There are five sections:

1. What World Toilet Day is all about
  2. Key campaign messages
  3. Explore the theme
  4. Top facts
  5. Find out more
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### 1. What World Toilet Day is all about

#### When is World Toilet Day 2020?

19th November 2020

#### 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 4.2 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 2020, the theme is 'Sustainable sanitation and climate change'. Previous themes can be found here: <https://www.worldtoiletday.org/2020-home/archive/>

## **What happens on World Toilet Day?**

Ahead of the day, UN-Water launches a global public campaign on [www.worldtoiletday.org](http://www.worldtoiletday.org) and on social media. Individuals, organizations, governments, companies, schools and many other actors support the day using the official messages and assets, or by organizing their own World Toilet Day activities.

## **What is World Toilet Day 2020 about?**

The theme of World Toilet Day 2020 is sustainable sanitation and climate change.

A well-functioning toilet is connected to a sanitation system that takes away and deals with human waste.

These systems need to work 24 hours a day, every day, to keep us and our living environments safe and clean.

Today, the world's toilets – and the sanitation systems they are connected to – are under threat from climate change.

Flooding, drought and rising sea levels can damage any part of a sanitation system – toilets, pipes, tanks and treatment plants – spreading raw sewage and creating a public health emergency.

The effects of climate change are only becoming more frequent and more extreme.

We must make our sanitation systems resilient, so they are sustainable as climate change gets worse.

Billions of people live with weak and vulnerable sanitation systems, or no systems at all. Climate change will disrupt or destroy sanitation services for huge numbers of people if we do not act.

Everyone must have sustainable sanitation, alongside clean water and handwashing facilities, to help protect and maintain our health security and stop the spread of deadly infectious diseases such as COVID-19, cholera and typhoid.

## **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 emptied later by a collection service, or transported away by pipework.

The next stage is treatment and safe disposal. Safe reuse of human waste helps save water, reduces and captures greenhouse gas emissions for energy production, and can provide agriculture with a reliable source of water and nutrients.

## 2. Key campaign messages

**In the run up to World Toilet Day, your engagement and support on social media will help people get informed, engaged and inspired to take action – so please share these key campaign messages with your networks. Digital assets are available at [www.worldtoiletday.org](http://www.worldtoiletday.org) and in this [Trello board](#).**

### **What have toilets got to do with climate change?**

Flood, drought and rising sea levels threaten sanitation systems – from toilets to septic tanks to treatment plants. Everyone must have sustainable sanitation that can withstand climate change and keep communities healthy and functioning.

#WorldToiletDay [www.worldtoiletday.org](http://www.worldtoiletday.org)

### **How do toilets protect our health?**

Sustainable sanitation is resilient to climate change and safely processes bodily waste. Toilets, combined with clean water and good hygiene, form a strong defence against #COVID19 and future disease outbreaks.

#WorldToiletDay [www.worldtoiletday.org](http://www.worldtoiletday.org)

### **How can toilets help fight climate change?**

Wastewater and sludge from toilets contain valuable water, nutrients and energy. Sustainable sanitation systems make productive use of waste to safely boost agriculture and reduce and capture emissions for greener energy.

#WorldToiletDay [www.worldtoiletday.org](http://www.worldtoiletday.org)

## 3. Explore the theme

### **What have toilets got to do with climate change?**

- The effects of climate change threaten water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure, such as when floodwater contaminates wells used for drinking water or when flooding damages toilets and spreads human waste into communities and food crops. These incidents, which are becoming more frequent as climate change worsens, spread human waste into people's living environments and cause deadly and chronic diseases. Sustainable sanitation means a system of reliable, effective faecal capture, disposal, treatment and safe reuse, which is resilient to external shocks such as flooding, water shortages and sea level rise.
- Most water and sanitation services around the world are water and energy-intensive. The processes involved in collecting, treating and delivering water, and capturing, transporting and treating human waste result in greenhouse gas emissions. Increasing the efficiency of these systems, and reducing unnecessary water consumption and water loss, mean lower energy use and therefore lower emissions. Biogas from human waste can also be captured and used for greener energy generation.

- Globally, 80% of the wastewater generated by society flows back into the ecosystem without being treated or reused.<sup>1</sup> Sustainable sanitation systems capture, transport, treat, dispose of and safely reuse human waste. In addition to the profound impact on health and living conditions, safely-managed wastewater has massive potential as an affordable and sustainable source of energy, nutrients and water that can mitigate climate risk in the agriculture and energy sectors.
- Improving the way we manage human waste is key to reducing the impact of poorly-treated wastewater. Sustainable Development Goal 6 ([target 6.3](#)) requires us by 2030 to “improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.” The achievement of this target is essential for healthy water environments and creating sustainable livelihoods.

### **How do toilets protect our health?**

- Without safely managed, sustainable sanitation, people often have no choice but to use unreliable, inadequate toilets or practise open defecation. Even where toilets exist, overflows and leaks from pipes and septic systems, and dumping or improper treatment, can mean untreated human waste gets out into the environment and spreads deadly and chronic diseases such as cholera and intestinal worms.
- Sustainable sanitation systems, combined with the facilities and knowledge to practise good hygiene, are a strong defence against COVID-19 and future disease outbreaks. Hand hygiene is a lifesaver – regularly handwashing with soap and water or with alcohol-based rub is one of the most effective barriers to the spread of diseases.
- Improving access to sanitation and handwashing facilities in healthcare settings will reduce infection and mortality rates, particularly in maternal and child health. Hygienic, private bathrooms with clean, running water, sinks and soap will help women and girls manage menstruation safely and with dignity.

### **4. Top facts**

- Over half of the global population or 4.2 billion people lack safe sanitation. (WHO/UNICEF 2019)<sup>2</sup>
- 2 in 5 schools around the world lacked basic handwashing facilities prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. (WHO/UNICEF 2020)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On average, high-income countries treat about 70% of the wastewater they generate, while that ratio drops to 38% in upper-middle-income countries and to 28% in lower-middle-income countries. In low-income countries, only 8% of industrial and municipal wastewater undergoes treatment of any kind. (Sato, T. et al (2013) 'Global, regional, and country level need for data on wastewater generation, treatment, and use'. *Agricultural Water Management*, Vol. 130, pp. 1–13: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0378377413002163?via%3Dihub>)

<sup>2</sup> WHO/UNICEF (2019): *Joint Monitoring Programme 2019 update report: Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene*: [https://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/publications/jmp-report-2019/en/](https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/jmp-report-2019/en/)

<sup>3</sup> WHO/UNICEF (2020): *Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: Special focus on COVID-19*: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/progress-on-drinking-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-in-schools-special-focus-on-covid-19/>

- 40% – or three billion people – of the global population live without basic handwashing facilities with soap and water available at home. (UNICEF 2020)<sup>4</sup>
- Around 297,000 children under five – more than 800 every day – die annually from diarrhoeal diseases due to poor hygiene, poor sanitation or unsafe drinking water. (WHO 2019)<sup>5</sup>
- Globally, 80% of the wastewater generated by society flows back into the ecosystem without being treated or reused. (Sato et. al, 2013)<sup>6</sup>
- Hygiene promotion is the most cost-effective health intervention. (World Bank 2016)<sup>7</sup>
- Climate-resilient water supply and sanitation could save the lives of more than 360,000 infants every year. (UN 2018)<sup>8</sup>
- By 2050, up to 5.7 billion people could be living in areas where water is scarce for at least one month a year, creating unprecedented competition for water. (UNESCO 2018)<sup>9</sup>
- By 2050, the number of people at risk of floods will increase from its current level of 1.2 billion to 1.6 billion. (UNESCO 2018)
- If we limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, compared to 2°C, we could cut climate-induced water stress by up to 50%. (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2014))<sup>10,11</sup>
- Extreme weather – expected to increase in frequency and intensity because of climate change – has caused more than 90% of major disasters over the last decade. (UNDRR 2015)<sup>12</sup>

## 5. Find out more

- World Toilet Day 2020 website: <https://www.worldtoiletday.org>

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF (2020): <https://www.unicef.org/eap/press-releases/handwashing-soap-critical-fight-against-coronavirus-out-reach-billions-unicef>

<sup>5</sup> WHO (2019): <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/18-06-2019-1-in-3-people-globally-do-not-have-access-to-safe-drinking-water-unicef-who>

<sup>6</sup> On average, high-income countries treat about 70% of the wastewater they generate, while that ratio drops to 38% in upper-middle-income countries and to 28% in lower-middle-income countries. In low-income countries, only 8% of industrial and municipal wastewater undergoes treatment of any kind. (Sato, T. et al (2013) 'Global, regional, and country level need for data on wastewater generation, treatment, and use'. *Agricultural Water Management*, Vol. 130, pp. 1–13: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0378377413002163?via%3Dihub>)

<sup>7</sup> World Bank Group (2016): *Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health. Disease Control Priorities*:

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/23833/9781464803482.pdf?sequence=3>

<sup>8</sup> UN Secretary-General's remarks on climate change, September 2018, New York: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2018-09-10/secretary-generals-remarks-climate-change-delivered>

<sup>9</sup> UNESCO (2018), *UN World Water Development Report 2018: Nature-based Solutions for Water*: <https://www.unwater.org/publications/world-water-development-report-2018/>

<sup>10</sup> Gregory Flato et al (2013), 'Evaluation of climate models', *Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/climate-change-2013-the-physical-science-basis/evaluation-of-climate-models/94BC2268C864F2C6A18436DB22BD1E5A>

<sup>11</sup> IPCC (2018), *Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C above Pre-industrial Levels and Related Global Greenhouse Gas Emission Pathways, in the Context of Strengthening the Global Response to the Threat of Climate Change, Sustainable Development, and Efforts to Eradicate Poverty*: <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

<sup>12</sup> UNDRR (2015), *The Human Cost of Weather-Related Disasters, 1995-2015*:

[https://www.unisdr.org/2015/docs/climatechange/COP21\\_WeatherDisastersReport\\_2015\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.unisdr.org/2015/docs/climatechange/COP21_WeatherDisastersReport_2015_FINAL.pdf)

- UN World Water Development Report 2020:  
[https://www.unwater.org/publication\\_categories/world-water-development-report/](https://www.unwater.org/publication_categories/world-water-development-report/)
- UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water: (GLAAS):  
<https://www.unwater.org/publications/hygiene-un-water-glaas-findings-on-national-policies-plans-targets-and-finance/>
- Monitoring Water and Sanitation in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:  
<https://www.unwater.org/publications/monitoring-water-and-sanitation-in-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development/>
- UN-Water Policy Brief on Climate Change and Water: <https://www.unwater.org/unwater-policy-brief-on-climate-change-and-water/>