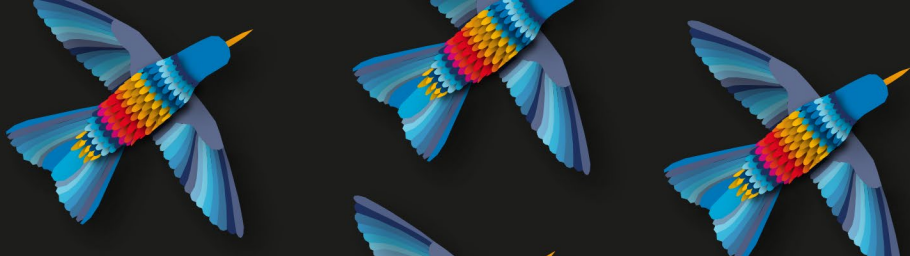


# CAMPAIGN FACTSHEET: WORLD TOILET DAY – ACCELERATING CHANGE





### Quick facts on World Toilet Day

- **World Toilet Day is held every year on 19 November.** It has been an annual United Nations Observance since 2013, but was first celebrated in 2001 by the World Toilet Organization ([www.worldtoilet.org](http://www.worldtoilet.org)).
- **World Toilet Day celebrates toilets** and raises awareness of the 3.5 billion people living without access to safely managed sanitation.
- **World Toilet Day is about taking action** to tackle the global sanitation crisis and achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030.
- **World Toilet Day and World Water Day share the same theme**, proposed every year by UN-Water – the United Nations’ coordination mechanism on water and sanitation. (Previous themes can be found here: [www.worldtoiletday.info/archives](http://www.worldtoiletday.info/archives)).
- **The World Toilet Day global campaign**, launched by UN-Water, begins in the months ahead of the day at [www.worldtoiletday.org](http://www.worldtoiletday.org) and on social media (#WorldToiletDay). Individuals, organizations, governments, companies and schools promote the issues online and hold real-life events.
- **World Toilet Day 2022** generated over 1.45 billion digital views in 147 countries last year.

### What is World Toilet Day 2023 about?

‘Accelerating change’ is this year’s theme. Why? Because there is a global sanitation crisis and the world is working too slowly to solve it.

Right now, we are seriously off track to meet SDG 6: safe toilets and water for all by 2030.

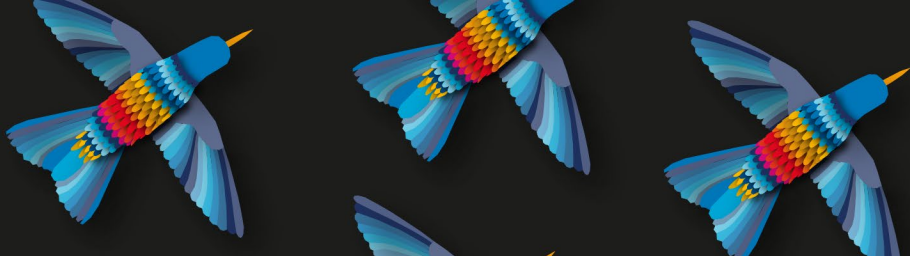
World Toilet Day 2023 is about getting the world on track by taking much faster action. Governments and big institutions must be accountable for delivering on their promises. And every one of us must do what we can – however small – to help speed up progress.

### What is the global sanitation crisis?

Today, 3.5 billion people live without a safe toilet. A “safe toilet” is shorthand for a safely managed sanitation system, which means 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 and treatment plant.

The world is seriously off track to meet SDG 6: to ensure “availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all” by 2030. We are on a countdown, with less than seven years left to correct course. There is an urgent need to accelerate change.





Find out more:

- WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene: [www.unwater.org/publications/who/unicef-joint-monitoring-program-update-report-2023](http://www.unwater.org/publications/who/unicef-joint-monitoring-program-update-report-2023)
- UN World Water Development Report 2023: [www.unwater.org/publications/un-world-water-development-report-2023](http://www.unwater.org/publications/un-world-water-development-report-2023)
- The Global Burden of Disease Study 2023: [www.healthdata.org/gbd](http://www.healthdata.org/gbd)

### Why is solving the sanitation crisis important?

Sanitation is a human right. It is a foundation stone of public health and plays a critical role in protecting the environment. To leave so many people behind without safe toilets is immoral, dangerous and self-defeating.

Access to sanitation and drinking water is a catalyst for every aspect of sustainable development and provides critical resilience against the impacts of climate change.

Falling short on SDG 6 puts in jeopardy the entire 2030 Agenda, with the poorest people, particularly women and girls, paying the highest price in terms of poor health, missed education, loss of productivity and general insecurity.

Find out more:

- UN-Water SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023: [www.unwater.org/publications/sdg-6-synthesis-report-2023](http://www.unwater.org/publications/sdg-6-synthesis-report-2023)
- UN-Water Water Facts: [www.unwater.org/water-facts](http://www.unwater.org/water-facts)

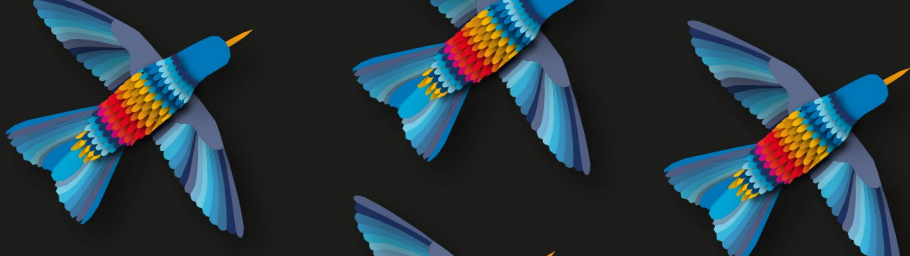
### Where should our poo go?

A safely managed sanitation system makes sure that human waste – our ‘poo’ – goes on a journey, protecting our health, keeping our environment clean and even generating jobs all along the ‘sanitation chain’, which is made up of four stages:

- 1. Containment:**  
Poo must be deposited into a hygienic toilet and stored in a sealed pit or tank, separated from human contact.
- 2. Transport:**  
Pipes or latrine emptying services must move the poo to the treatment stage.
- 3. Treatment:**  
Poo must be processed into treated wastewater and waste products that can be safely returned to the environment.
- 4. Disposal or reuse:**  
Safely treated poo can be used for energy generation or as fertilizer in food production.







## What is the plan of action?

The countdown to 2030 has begun. We must rapidly accelerate progress to ensure everyone has safe toilets and water by 2030.

The latest data show we must work five times faster to meet our targets on sanitation.

Back in March, the world united at the UN 2023 Water Conference and produced the Water Action Agenda.

The Agenda is the collection of more than 800 existing and new commitments on sanitation and water from governments, companies, organizations and other institutions.

On top of this, over 7,000 members of the public have made their own promises via the Be The Change campaign at [www.unwater.org/bethechange](http://www.unwater.org/bethechange)

Accountability is key to acceleration. What we need now is much faster action – for everyone to deliver on their promises.

Find out more:

- *UN-Water SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023:*  
[www.unwater.org/publications/sdg-6-synthesis-report-2023](http://www.unwater.org/publications/sdg-6-synthesis-report-2023)

## Why is the hummingbird the symbol of World Toilet Day 2023?

The hummingbird is the symbol of this year's World Toilet Day and World Water Day because of an ancient story where she helps put out a great fire by carrying droplets of water in her beak. She is a powerful symbol of taking action – no matter how small – to tackle a big problem.

In the old tale, originally told by the Quechua people in Peru, a forest fire breaks out. All the animals run for their lives. They stand at the edge of the blaze, looking at the flames in terror and sadness.

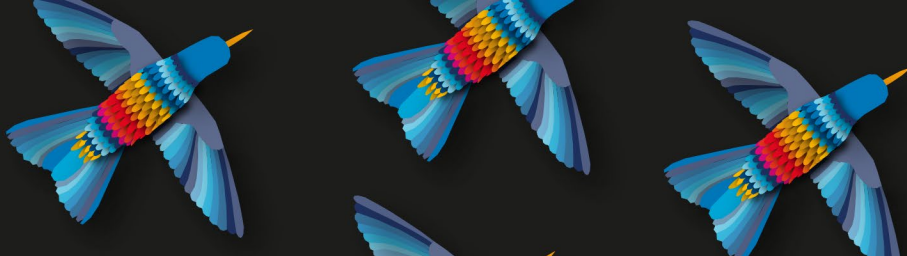
Up above their heads, a hummingbird is flying back and forth to the fire, over and over again. The bigger animals ask the hummingbird what she is doing.

"I am flying to the lake to get water to help put out the fire."

The animals laugh at her and say, "You can't put out this fire!"

The hummingbird replies, "I'm doing what I can."





## What can I do to accelerate change?

Everyone can do something – however small – to help solve the sanitation crisis. You can be like the hummingbird! The more ‘hummingbirds’ there are, the bigger the impact.

Here are three ways to take action:

### 1. Commit to sanitation action

Be the change you want to see in the world. Go to [www.unwater.org/bethechange](http://www.unwater.org/bethechange) and choose one or more of the sanitation related actions and then download your list of personal commitments. Ideas include:

- Break taboos: Talk about the critical connection between toilets, water and menstruation.
- Flush safe: Fix leaking water and waste pipes, empty full septic tanks and report dumping of sludge.
- Stop polluting: Don't put food waste, oils, medicines and chemicals down the toilet or drains.
- Build pressure: Write to elected representatives about budgets for improving water and sanitation at home and abroad.

### 2. Use your voice

Get your World Toilet Day activation kit and spread the word about #WorldToiletDay, using this factsheet and other social media assets.

Start conversations about what your government is doing to ensure more people have access to safe toilets. What action is being taken by your local water and sanitation service providers? What are companies in your country doing to improve sanitation?

*Find out more:*

- *World Toilet Day Activation Kit:* [www.worldtoiletday.info/share-2023#activationkit](http://www.worldtoiletday.info/share-2023#activationkit)

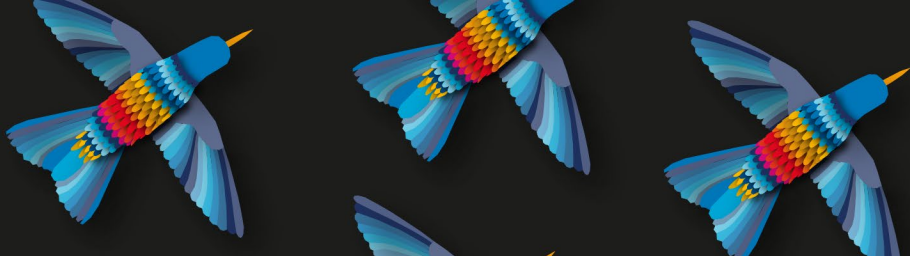
### 3. Make something beautiful

Make an origami nest for a hummingbird. Why? Because thousands of people made folded paper birds for World Water Day 2023, back in March, and they need somewhere to rest! In nature, hummingbirds instinctively keep their nests free from bodily waste to protect their young, so the nests will be a perfect symbol of small actions to improve sanitation.

*Find out more:*

- *The hummingbird flies again!:* [www.worldtoiletday.info/stories-2023/story/create-origami-hummingbird-nests-world-toilet-day](http://www.worldtoiletday.info/stories-2023/story/create-origami-hummingbird-nests-world-toilet-day)



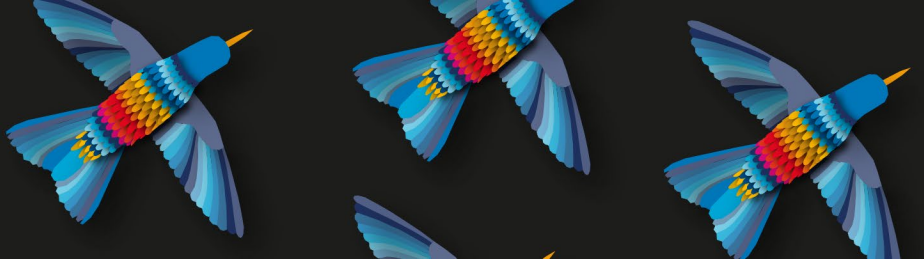


## The sanitation and water crisis in numbers

- There are 3.5 billion people living without safe toilets and 2.2 billion people living without safe drinking water. (WHO/UNICEF 2023: [www.unwater.org/publications/who/unicef-joint-monitoring-program-update-report-2023](http://www.unwater.org/publications/who/unicef-joint-monitoring-program-update-report-2023))
- 419 million people still go to the toilet in the open ('open defecation'). (WHO/UNICEF 2023: [www.unwater.org/publications/who/unicef-joint-monitoring-program-update-report-2023](http://www.unwater.org/publications/who/unicef-joint-monitoring-program-update-report-2023))
- 2 billion people – a quarter of the world's population – lack a basic handwashing facility with soap and water at home. (WHO/UNICEF 2023: [www.unwater.org/publications/who/unicef-joint-monitoring-program-update-report-2023](http://www.unwater.org/publications/who/unicef-joint-monitoring-program-update-report-2023))
- Around 829,000 people in low- and middle-income countries die every year from diseases caused by unsafe sanitation, drinking water and hygiene – such as cholera, typhoid and dysentery. (WHO 2022: [www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sanitation](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sanitation))
- Children are particularly vulnerable to the triple threat of unsafe 'WASH' (water, sanitation and hygiene), the impacts of climate change that affect WASH services and the diseases that spread in these settings. (UNICEF 2023: [www.unicef.org/reports/triple-threat-wash-disease-climate](http://www.unicef.org/reports/triple-threat-wash-disease-climate))
- Unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene are responsible for the deaths of around 1,000 children under five every day. (UNICEF 2023: [www.unicef.org/reports/triple-threat-wash-disease-climate](http://www.unicef.org/reports/triple-threat-wash-disease-climate))
- 42 per cent of household wastewater was discharged without safe treatment. (UN-Water 2021: [www.unwater.org/publications/progress-wastewater-treatment-2021-update](http://www.unwater.org/publications/progress-wastewater-treatment-2021-update))
- At least 10 per cent of the world's population is thought to consume food irrigated by untreated wastewater. (WHO 2022: [www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sanitation](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sanitation))
- Only 25 per cent of countries are on track to achieve their sanitation targets and just 45 per cent are on track to achieve their drinking water coverage targets. (UN-Water GLAAS 2022: [www.unwater.org/publications/un-water-glaas-2022-strong-systems-and-sound-investments-evidence-and-key-insights](http://www.unwater.org/publications/un-water-glaas-2022-strong-systems-and-sound-investments-evidence-and-key-insights))
- Over 75 per cent of countries report having insufficient financial resources to implement national water, sanitation and hygiene plans. (UN-Water GLAAS 2022: [www.unwater.org/publications/un-water-glaas-2022-strong-systems-and-sound-investments-evidence-and-key-insights](http://www.unwater.org/publications/un-water-glaas-2022-strong-systems-and-sound-investments-evidence-and-key-insights))
- At the current rates of progress, 3 billion people will still be living without safe toilets, 2 billion without safe drinking water, and 1.4 billion without basic hygiene services in 2030. (WHO/UNICEF 2023: [www.unwater.org/publications/who/unicef-joint-monitoring-program-update-report-2023](http://www.unwater.org/publications/who/unicef-joint-monitoring-program-update-report-2023))







- To reach everyone with safe toilets and drinking water by 2030 – the promise of Sustainable Development Goal 6 – the world needs to work, on average, five times faster on sanitation targets, six times faster on water targets, and three times faster on hygiene targets. In many countries, the rate of acceleration needs to be many times faster than the average. (UN-Water 2023: [www.unwater.org/publications/sdg-6-synthesis-report-2023](https://www.unwater.org/publications/sdg-6-synthesis-report-2023))

