

Call for Raising the Financial Allocation to Attain the Goal of Toilet for All: World Health Organization

Dear Sir,

The United Nations has acknowledged that an easy access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation facilities is a human right, and thus, all the stakeholders should work in a concerted manner to achieve the same.^[1,2] Despite realizing that sanitary hygienic facilities are a must for optimal public health and an improvement in the same regard, even now in excess of 2 billion people across the world have no access to sanitary toilets, of which 38.8% people still practice open-air defecation.^[1] Poor sanitation is not only linked with the transmission of gastrointestinal infections but even with malnutrition and 0.28 million deaths due to diarrheal diseases.^[1,2]

Keeping the current pace in mind, it is believed that the world will fail to accomplish the goal of the universal sanitation coverage (viz. each individual across the globe has an access to sanitary toilets) by the year 2030, if no urgent actions are taken regarding the implementation of holistic policies and better financial support, both of which are missing big time in the current scenario.^[3] It won't be wrong to state that without having proper access to improved sanitation facilities, the millions of individuals around the globe are deprived of their safety, respect, and right to use a basic toilet.^[2-4]

To support the nations and to improve the existing status to expedite the progress toward meeting the global targets, the World Health Organization has come out with a set of recommendations.^[3] First of all, the measures for improving the sanitation should warrant that entire community has access to toilets that safely contain excreta. Second, the complete sanitation system should be subjected to health risk assessments at the local level itself to ensure that people are not exposed to excreta due to any reasons. Third, to accomplish sustainability, sanitation provisions should be merged with the regular planning measures undertaken by the local governments to avoid additional expenses.^[1-3] In addition, the health sector should allocate more funds and play a better role in the planning of sanitation facilities, with an ultimate aim to improve public health.^[3,4]

In fact, it has been estimated that adoption of the above recommendations, nations will be able to minimize 0.83 million deaths attributed to unsafe water, sanitation, and hygiene measures.^[3] Further, it has been projected that for each US\$ 1 invested in sanitation, a 6 times return is anticipated regarding reduction in medical expenses, better productivity, and lesser number of premature deaths.^[3] The good thing is that some of the nations have come out with innovative programs to improve the sanitation standards among the general population, including Swachh Bharat Mission in India or promoting the use of pit latrines and septic tanks in Senegal.^[1,3]

In conclusion, the current sanitation programs are falling short to accomplish the set health gains, and thus, there is an immense need to implement reforms in sanitation facilities to secure health and wellbeing of everyone regardless of their place of origin.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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