

Theme: "Groundwater and sanitation- making the invisible visible"

World Toilet Day

The United Nation General Assembly declared **World Toilet Day** an official UN day in 2013 after Singapore had tabled the resolution. Before that World Toilet Day was established unofficially by the Singapore based NGO World Toilet Organization (WTO) in 2001.

WTO was founded by Jack Sim on 19th November, 2001, he subsequently declared 19 November as World Toilet Day. This day exist to inspire, educate, engage and create awareness for people living without access to proper and safely managed sanitation and also to initiate action to tackle the global sanitation crisis.

This year World Toilet Day focuses on "*Making the invisible visible*". The campaign emphasizes on the impact of the sanitation crisis on groundwater, exploring how inadequate sanitation systems spread human waste into rivers, lakes and soil, polluting underground water resources.

Groundwater is the world's most abundant source of freshwater. It supports drinking water supplies, sanitation systems, farming, industry and ecosystems. As climate change worsens and populations grow, groundwater is vital for human survival.

The Central message of the World Toilet Day 2022 is to safely managed sanitation and to protect groundwater from human waste pollution. Currently, the world is off track to meet the promise of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6:2 to ensure safe toilets for all by 2030.

World Toilet Day

- As a part of a 2030 Sustainable Development goals, the UN hopes to ensure availability and sustainable management of sanitation and water for all.
- Diarrheal disease is the second leading cause of death among children under five and is entirely preventable with access to proper and clean water.
- As estimated 3.6 billion people do not have access to proper toilets.
- Improved sanitation can reduce the number of cases of diarrhea by 37.5%.
- 1 in 3 school aged children in developing countries has intestinal worms.
- 40% of the world- more than 4.2 billion people lack access to improved sanitation.

Key message of World Toilet Day 2022

- **Safe sanitation protects groundwater:** Toilets that are properly sited and connected to safely managed sanitation systems, collect, treat and dispose of human waste and help prevent human waste from spreading into groundwater.
- **Sanitation must withstand climate change:** Toilets and sanitation systems must be built or adapted to cope with extreme weather events, so that services always function and groundwater is protected.
- **Sanitation action is urgent:** We are seriously off track to ensure safe toilets for all by 2030. With only eight years left, the world needs to work four times faster to meet our promise.

Importance of access to sanitation

- **Lifesaving:** Enabling families with low income to gain proper access to toilets and running water can cut down the number of deaths by diarrhoeal especially a child.
- **Improve in health:** One in ten people has no other choice but to defecate in open space. This untreated human waste gets out into environment and spreads diseases like thyroid, cholera, hepatitis and trachoma. Open defecation creates a vicious cycle of disease and poverty. This can be avoided by having a proper toilet, which would also improve the health of those people living in slums.
- **GDP boosting:** Loss of productivity due to illness caused by lack of toilets and sanitation is estimated to cost many countries up to 5% GDP. According to World Health Organisation every 1 pound spent on toilets and sanitation has a return of 5.50 pound from increased productivity.

Steps taken by Indian government for proper sanitation

- 1. Central Rural Sanitation Programme (Total Sanitation Campaign):** The main objective of this programme is:
 - To bring about an improvement in the general quality of life in the rural areas.
 - Accelerating sanitation coverage in rural areas.
 - Covering schools in rural areas with sanitation facilities and promote sanitary habits among students.
 - Encouraging cost-effective and appropriate technologies in sanitation.
 - Marketing endeavour to reduce the incidence of water and sanitation related diseases.

- 2. Rural Sanitary Marts and Production Centres (RSM):** RSM is an outlet dealing with the materials required for the construction of not only sanitary latrines but also other sanitary facilities required for individuals, families and the environment in the rural areas.
- 3. Construction of Individual Household Latrines:** The programme aims at covering all the families subsisting below poverty line.
- 4. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan:** Government launched Swachh Bharat Abhiyan programme on 2nd October, 2014 with the aim to make the rural areas of the country Open Defecation Free (ODF) by 2019.
 - Under the programme, people living below and above poverty line can avail reimbursement for constructing toilets at household level.
 - The programme gave a huge impetus to nationwide toilet exercise.
 - Despite the SBA subsidies easing the process of household toilet construction, BPL are faced with significant barriers.

What does a sustainable sanitation system look like?

- Sustainable sanitation begins with a toilet that effectively captures waste in a safe, accessible and dignified setting.
- Waste is then stored in a tank, which can be emptied by a collection service.
- 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.



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