

Published: 5 August 2013

World Toilet Day – no joke, this is serious

With more people globally having access to mobile phones than clean toilets, WaterAid Australia has welcomed the historic decision of the UN General Assembly to declare 19 November as World Toilet Day to help boost efforts to bring sanitation to everyone.



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'This is not just the creation of another UN day, but a sign that governments recognise that toilets for all are essential for saving children's lives,' said Adam Laidlaw, Chief Executive, WaterAid Australia.

One in three people – most in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia – do not have access to a safe, clean and private toilet, a key to health, human dignity, freedom, equality between women, men, girls and boys, and a catalyst to the development of communities and countries.

Diarrhoeal diseases are the second most common cause of death of young children in developing countries, killing more than HIV/AIDS, malaria and measles combined.

'Around the world 2.5 billion people lack access to safe sanitation,' added Laidlaw. 'Around 700 000 children die every year from diarrhoea caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation. That's almost 2000 children a day.'

'We'll certainly be working with others to use World Toilet Day to draw attention to governments of the enormous scale of the problem.'

UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson also welcomed the declaration, saying: 'This new annual observance will go a long way toward raising awareness about the need for all human beings to have access to sanitation.'

The General Assembly resolution was unanimously adopted on 24 July in New York and calls on UN Member States and partners to promote behaviour change and policies to increase access to sanitation for the poor, along with a call to end the practice of open defecation, a choice forced on around 1.1 billion people globally.

World Toilet Day has previously been marked by the Singapore-based World Toilet Organization and other NGOs around the world. However, it was not formally recognised as an official UN day until now.

Source: [WaterAid Australia](#)

From **ECOS** online <http://www.ecosmagazine.com/?paper=EC13179>