


Nigeria's sanitation crisis

2016 World Toilet Day Nigeria supplement

A photograph of a young boy in a purple t-shirt with a Versace logo and tan pants, walking on a series of large, flat stones across a shallow, polluted stream. The stream is filled with trash and debris. In the background, there are several small, makeshift buildings with corrugated metal roofs, typical of a slum. Other people are visible in the background, some standing and some sitting. The sky is overcast.

In this year's State of the Worlds Toilets 2016 report, *Overflowing Cities*, WaterAid looks at urban sanitation access and some of the world's worst countries for urban sanitation. Urban sanitation presents particular challenges given the fast pace of urbanisation and lack of planning in many parts of the world.

WaterAid/Tom Saater





Modinatu Sofola, 37, is married with 5 children and she sells food for a living in the community where she has lived for the past 19 years. “The biggest challenge we’re facing is the lack of a good working toilet system in the community, no bathrooms and potable water, and we have to go a long distance to buy water. The toilet situation has always been the same for me and my kids, since we moved here.”

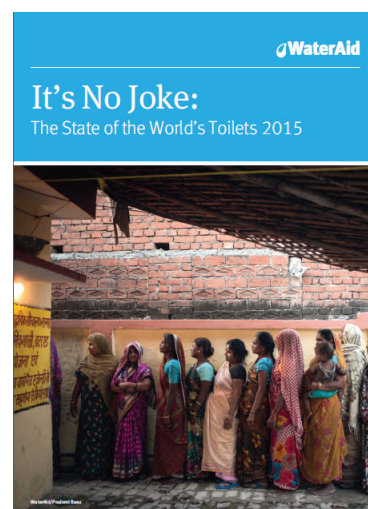
Millions of people living in Nigeria’s slums and informal settlements live in very poor sanitary conditions and defecate in the open using roadsides, railway tracks and even plastic bags dubbed flying toilets because they have no other option.

WaterAid/Tom Saater

Although Nigeria is one of Sub-Saharan Africa’s largest economies, the country is failing when it comes to progress on delivering sanitation to its citizens. It is the third most regressive country in the world on sanitation and only one of a handful of countries around the world where access to basic sanitation is falling rather than rising.ⁱ The percentage of Nigeria’s population without access to safe, private toilets is currently at a staggering 71% (that is over 130 million people) with 25% (over 46 million) practicing open defecation.ⁱⁱ Around 45,000 children under the age of five in Nigeria die every year from diseases caused by the nation’s poor levels of access to water, sanitation and hygiene.ⁱⁱⁱ Nigeria is the most significant contributor to Sub-Saharan Africa’s ranking as the lowest in the world for access to improved drinking water and sanitation. This ranking is in turn linked to the region’s under-five mortality rate which is one of the highest in the world.

WaterAid’s first ‘It’s No Joke: State of the World’s Toilets’ report published in 2015, highlighted just how urgent Nigeria’s sanitation crisis is:

-  The number of households in Nigeria with access to sanitation has declined by 9.1 percentage points since 1990. This is the second-greatest decrease of 38 countries with measurable data in Sub-Saharan Africa.^{iv}
-  Nigeria is one of the most failing on access to sanitation, third on the list of countries in the world with the longest queues for toilets and sixth in the world with the most people practising open defecation.^v



In this year's State of the World's Toilets 2016 report, 'Overflowing Cities', WaterAid looks at urban sanitation access, some of the world's worst countries for urban sanitation and some of the jobs that are created when the challenge is addressed head-on. The report seeks to highlight that:

- Sanitation is essential to the health, wealth and well-being of any city.
- Urban sanitation presents particular challenges given the fast pace of urbanisation and lack of planning in many parts of the world.
- Urban sanitation must be inclusive, reaching even the poorest and most marginalised including older and disabled people.
- Sanitation creates jobs and prosperity, directly and indirectly.



Nigeria has a huge population and extremely rapid rural–urban migration. Economic development and urban planning have not kept pace with the sheer volumes of people arriving – and being born – every day in its towns and cities. The size, density and poverty of the urban population in Nigeria, combined with chronic governmental failure to provide sanitation services to slums, forces over 13 million of these urban dwellers to find anywhere they can to relieve themselves.

As far as urban sanitation access goes, it is a case of one step forward, two steps back for Nigeria. For every one urban dweller reached with sanitation since 2000, two people were added to the number living without. A general lack of awareness among people about the benefits of sanitation, and government neglect of slums, makes a bad situation even worse.

Nigeria

Human Development Index
rank out of 188 countries^{vi}

152

For every one urban dweller reached with sanitation in Nigeria since 2000, two people were added to the number living without.^{vii}

58,920,000

Number and percentage of urban population living without improved sanitation

67.2%



13,588,000

Number of urban-dwellers practising open defecation



44,000+

Annual child deaths from preventable diarrhoeal diseases





33%

Percentage of children under five who are stunted



Nigeria has the biggest population in Africa and nearly half (48%) live in urban areas.^{viii} Sanitation is not prioritised by the Nigerian government. Except in the capital Abuja and some areas of Lagos, there are no sewer systems across communities. Instead, sanitation is usually seen by government as the responsibility of individual households, who cannot afford to make improvements.

According to the report, Nigeria is the worst country in Africa and the third worst globally for urban sanitation with more than 58 million urban dwellers (67.2% of the population) living without access to a safe, private toilet. The report, launched on World Toilet Day 2016, highlights that:

-  Nigeria is third, after India and China, on a list of top 10 countries with the most urban-dwellers without safe, private toilets (by numbers).^{ix}
-  Nigeria is ranked third on a list of countries with the most number of urban-dwellers practising open defecation and tenth on a list of countries with the most percentage of urban-dwellers practising open defecation.^x
-  Nigeria is ranked number one in the list of countries falling furthest behind in reaching people with sanitation in urban areas.^{xi}
-  Between 2000 and 2015, there has been a significant increase in the number of urbanites without improved sanitation, (nearly 31.5 million people).^{xii}

All of this takes a heavy toll on Nigeria's people. A lack of access to sanitation affects livelihoods, health, education, gender equality, nutrition, the environment and the economy. It increases poverty, enlarges wealth disparities and increases the risk of disease and danger, especially for women and children.

Open defecation results in a polluted environment in which diseases spread fast. Diarrhoea caused by dirty water, and poor sanitation and hygiene is the second largest killer of children under five with an estimated 11 children in every 1,000 dying of diarrhoeal illnesses each year in Nigeria.^{xiii} It is also linked to 50% of child undernutrition,^{xiv} which is linked to infections, worm infestations and can lead to stunted physical and mental development. Access to safe sanitation, and ensuring that everyone in a community uses a toilet, is vital for ensuring better health and an important measure in addressing under-nutrition linked to chronic diarrhoeal illnesses. To transform child health, it is essential that sanitation is prioritised and the chronic underinvestment and political neglect that has characterised efforts to improve sanitation does not continue.

A World Health Organization report^{xv} reveals that, in Nigeria almost a third (29%) of hospitals and clinics do not have access to clean water and the same percentage do not have safe toilets while one in six (16%) do not have anywhere to wash hands with soap. The risk is high for babies and mothers in healthcare facilities that do not offer a hygienic birth environment and have inadequate WASH facilities. In Nigeria, one woman in every 23 will on average lose a baby to infection during her lifetime compared to one in 7,518 in the UK.^{xvi} When health workers have access to improved WASH facilities, they are able to carry out their jobs more effectively, protect themselves from infections, transmission of diseases and save the lives of mothers and their newborns - ensuring that children have a healthy start in life.

Without access to safe, private toilets, women and girls suffer indignity and are more vulnerable to attack or rape. Without access to adequate sanitation, girls are unable to manage their menstruation safely and with dignity and are prone to failing or dropping out of school as a result.

Access to water, sanitation and hygiene is a basic human right. These services are essential for good health, for progress in gender equality, for economic development and for our dignity as human beings. Sanitation has a vital role in any sustainable development effort, crucial for national development, promoting general wellbeing and making progress across the Sustainable Development Goals – health, education, climate change, eliminating hunger, reducing inequalities, eradicating poverty, and building sustainable cities and communities.

Mrs Bunmi Alugbin works as a town planner in the urban renewal sector and has been closely involved in the city-wide sanitation planning report with WaterAid. “It gives me joy when I see our plans take shape and people’s lives change and we see the change in the physical environment; it gives me joy that we prepared the plan and people are living it. When you engage with the people and they tell you this is what we would like in our community and you incorporate their concerns and demands in your planning proposals, when it comes to fruition, it gives joy. Community engagement and political will are key. Seeing that our plans are implemented and that people’s lives are changed makes all the difference.”

WaterAid/Tom Saater



Improved sanitation impacts not only health but livelihoods too, and has the potential to transform societies and economies. Current evidence shows that working days lost to poor sanitation costs the global economy approximately \$4 billion per year^{xvii} with loss of productivity due to illnesses caused by lack of sanitation and poor hygiene practices estimated to cost many countries up to 5% of GDP.^{xviii} A lack of access to sanitation cost the global economy US\$222.9 billion in 2015, up from US\$182.5 billion in 2010, a rise of 22% in just five years.^{xix} There is a potential total market of more than US\$2.6 billion in sanitation^{xx} and by increasing access to sanitation, through stimulating need, via sanitation marketing, and responding to existing unmet needs, untapped business opportunities opens up.



Everyday Ganiyu comes to work and waits for people to call him to come and evacuate their septic sewage. Some days he gets to go on many trips on other days he doesn't get any calls.

Ganiyu believes that his job has a positive influence on the communities they work in. "In terms of changes in the communities that I work, I will say it differs from area to area, some areas have witnessed improvement, while others haven't." He believes there has been a positive change in the environment they've worked in, in terms of sanitation, also because these days, health inspection officers work hand in hand with them, when they go out to communities. They assess the level of sanitation in the areas and usually when the level is poor, the health inspection officers are already on top of the situation, serving warnings to the tenants. The experience has changed from back in the days somewhat and people are paying more attention towards sanitation.

"I started the job because I love driving and I saw the opportunity and took it but I need more protective gear to protect me from diseases while at work."

WaterAid/Tom Saater

Universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene services would significantly contribute to growth, through greater productivity gained from less time wasted accessing water and sanitation, as well as reduced health care and mortality costs. An investment in improving access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene is probably one of the most – if not the most – effective investment that Nigeria can make to grow its economy and better the lives of its people.

Currently, the total number of new people gaining access to sanitation in Nigeria is 0.7 million. However, a massive 14 million people extra per year must gain access in order to reach the 2030 target of everyone, everywhere.^{xxi} To turn the sanitation crisis in Nigeria around will take political commitment and financing from the very top. Nigeria needs to measure up to its status as Africa's giant and finance its infrastructure accordingly.

With only 14 years to achieve the UN goals, there's no time to waste. The Government must address sector blockages and build strong political will and collaborations between public and private sectors, as well as the wider society to achieve increased access to WASH for everyone, everywhere.

To ensure that everyone, everywhere has access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), WaterAid is calling for:

- ✚ Our leaders to fund, implement and account for progress towards the new UN Global Goals on sustainable development and particularly Goal 6 – to ensure water, sanitation and hygiene for all.
- ✚ An improvement in access to basic sanitation with political prioritisation and long-term increases in financing for water, sanitation and hygiene, by Government at all levels.
- ✚ The Nigerian Government to ensure that schools, healthcare facilities and birthing centres have safe toilets, clean running water and functional handwashing facilities, to reduce maternal, newborn and child deaths and strengthen children's ability to attend school.
- ✚ WASH to be positioned as a crucial contributor to health and for policy makers and health sector stakeholders to become aware of the link and crucial role that sanitation plays in improving child survival rates and health outcomes.
- ✚ The inclusion of water, sanitation and hygiene into health plans, policies and programming and especially in plans to address under-nutrition and acute malnutrition.
- ✚ Aid to be directed to where it's most needed and the mobilising of domestic revenue to make water, sanitation and hygiene a priority.
- ✚ Coordination and collaboration of all relevant stakeholders and actors including donors, NGOs, the private sector, informal service providers and citizens resulting in a harmonised effort towards reaching everyone, everywhere and leaving no one behind.
- ✚ Attitudinal and behavioural change on water, sanitation and hygiene issues such as handwashing and open defecation.

Endnotes

ⁱWorld Health Organization/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (2015): www.wssinfo.org

ⁱⁱWorld Health Organization/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (2015): www.wssinfo.org

ⁱⁱⁱWASHwatch: <http://www.washwatch.org/en/countries/nigeria/summary/statistics/>

^{iv}World Health Organization/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (2015): www.wssinfo.org

^vWorld Health Organization/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (2015): www.wssinfo.org

^{vi}WASHwatch: <http://www.washwatch.org/en/countries/nigeria/summary/statistics/>

^{vii}World Health Organization/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (2015): www.wssinfo.org

^{viii}World Bank (2015)

^{ix}World Health Organization/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (2015): www.wssinfo.org

^xWorld Health Organization/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (2015): www.wssinfo.org

^{xi}World Health Organization/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (2015): www.wssinfo.org

^{xii}World Health Organization/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (2015): www.wssinfo.org

^{xiii}[http:// data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.MMRT](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.MMRT) with calculations by region from:

[http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/langlo/PIIS2214109X\(14\)70227-X.pdf](http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/langlo/PIIS2214109X(14)70227-X.pdf)

^{xiv}World Health Organization (2008), Safer water, better health: costs, benefits and sustainability of interventions to protect and promote health:

http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/43840/1/9789241596435_eng.pdf

^{xv}Water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities: status in low and middle income countries and way forward”

^{xvi}United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Total Fertility
<http://esa.un.org/wpp/excel-data/fertility.htm>

^{xvii}Hutton G, Haller L, Bartram J (2007) “Economic and health effects of increasing coverage of low-cost household drinking-water supply and sanitation interventions to countries off-track to meet MDG target 10”. OMS.

^{xviii}http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/2012/globalcosts.pdf

^{xix}http://www.lxil.com/en/sustainability/pdf/the_true_cost_of_poor_sanitation_e.pdf

^{xx}<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/08/29/study-reveals-large-untapped-potential-water-sanitation-services-world-poor>

^{xxi}The Costs of Meeting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal Targets on Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

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November 2016



WaterAid works to transform the lives of the poorest and most marginalised people by improving access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene.

Our vision is of a world where everyone, everywhere has safe water, sanitation and hygiene.