

## IT'S EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

**World Toilet Organization (WTO) is a global non-profit organization committed to improving toilet and sanitation conditions worldwide. Founded in 2001, it now has 103 member organizations in 45 countries working towards eliminating the toilet taboo and delivering sustainable sanitation.**



WTO was created as a global network and service platform wherein all the toilet and sanitation organizations can learn from one another and leverage media and global support that in turn can influence governments to promote sound sanitation and public health policies.

WTO is the organizer of the very successful series of World Toilet Summits and World Toilet Expo and Forum, hosted in Singapore 2001, Seoul 2002, Taiwan 2003, Beijing 2004, Belfast 2005, Moscow 2006 and New Delhi 2007. Each event addresses the critical issues of toilet and sanitation from technologies, development, funding, to design, maintenance, social entrepreneurship, capacity build-ings, research and various other related topics, creating massive media coverage and momentum. Last year, the World Toilet Summit 2007 was open by President Abdul Kalam and Prince of Orange of the Netherlands William Alexandra.



Asia Development Bank will co-host with WTO the 2008's World Toilet Summit in Macau on 4-6 November. We invite you to join us at the Venetian Resort Macau where we plan to create an efficient sanitation market-place at the bottom of the pyramid to serve the 2.6 billion poor as customers.

WTO also declared its founding day of November 19 as World Toilet Day and this is now being celebrated by members all over the world increasing awareness and generating local action for better sanitation.

In 2005, WTO started World Toilet College (WTC) providing training in toilet design, maintenance and implementation of Sustainable Sanitation systems, School Sanitation and Disaster Sanitation training. WTO is also one of the founding members of the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance, a coalition of 50 prominent organizations to promote sustainable sanitation systems.

In 2006, the Schwab Foundation awarded the Outstanding Social Entrepreneur of the Year to WTO. In 2007, WTO was honored as an Ashoka Global Fellow for its excellence in social entrepreneurship.

WTO has mobilized USD 700,000 funding to rebuild toilets and small sanitation treatment systems in the tsunami devastated areas in Sri Lanka and Aceh, Indonesia. WTO also implemented rural school sanitation in Shanxi, China in collaboration with Lien Aid as part of the New Socialist Countryside program in China.

In addition to advocacy, capacity building and sanitation projects, WTO is now driving a market-based strategy to address the dysfunctional sanitation market for the poor.

### Why the Toilet?

When you ask a person how many times he eats a day, they probably will say 3 or 4 times a day.

But when you ask the same person how many times he uses the toilet a day, that'll probably be the first time in his life he has ever had to think about it.

The Toilet was a taboo subject.

We visit the toilet about 6 times a day, spend an entire 3 full years of our lives on the toilet... and we don't want to talk about it.



We could talk passionately about the best restaurants and that special bottle of red wine but never wonder what happens to it after it is consumed.

But should we be talking about toilets?

The answer is Yes and very much overdue, because what we don't discuss, we can't improve.

Ever wondered why ladies have to queue up for the public toilet but gents don't have to? This is because the current design has remained the same since before one cares to remember, before the women's liberation movement!

The ladies toilet was designed during an era when women folk stay at home. Today women are liberated but their toilets are not!!

Typically, it takes less space for a urinal than a cubicle.

The reality today is we need more than 1 cubicle in the ladies to compensate for every urinal in the gents. For gents, urination takes about 35 seconds (zip-shoot-zip). The ladies takes much longer as their clothing designs are different, they need more storage space, mirror, sanitary napkin change, and also they need to sit or at least hover. ▶

connecting business

Since 2005, the World Toilet Organization has addressed this problem by successfully lobbying a change in the Singapore Code of Practice to have the 'ladies' now double the size of the 'gents'. This means more cubicles; ladies do not have to queue anymore. Together with the International Code Council, WTO are introducing the same laws to other countries in the Region.

But our problems are not as large as those of the poor.

#### FACT 1

2.6 billion people or 40% of mankind still have no access to proper sanitation. Young girls are often molested or raped while defecating openly.

#### FACT 2

Most funding allocated for Water & Sanitation went to water. Sanitation remains neglected.

#### FACT 3

5,000 children die everyday from diarrhoea alone. 3.5 billion have intestinal worms. Everyday, half of the world's hospital beds are occupied by patients suffering from water-borne diseases. Untreated faeces are a killer spread by flies, hands, water, food, bare-foot and other poor hygiene practices.

Proper sanitation is the cheapest preventive medicine and when you give a toilet to a family, they begin to become healthy, productive, and live in dignity with privacy. It can cost between USD50 to USD 300 per house-hold to own a toilet and about USD 5000 to build a school toilet.

#### What can we do to address these issues effectively?

We take a market-based approach to be effective.

Instead of seeing 2.6 billion poor and helpless people, WTO sees 2.6 billion potential customers demanding a toilet with sewage treatment. History has shown us that an efficient market economy has the power to serve itself and is the best sustainable solution. Although there is ample money in the world, donors' funds are not available in sufficient number to solve this problem. Funding individual development projects in isolation can-

not solve the whole problem. We need a systematic approach to create a vibrant marketplace for there is fortune at the bottom of the wealth pyramid. Instead of funding individual projects, we fund the building of market-infrastructures to generate competition and innovation and serve this sector so the poor can learn to become business people as they best know their own needs.

Sanitation is still a dysfunctional market today. Many people who need sanitation have been in the habit of open defecation for generations. To change the habit, we need to make sanitation demand-driven than supply-led.

The poor, like the rich, are motivated stronger by their emotional needs rather than rational needs. Case studies have shown that their fears of being looked down, the avoidance of embarrassment, the need for privacy and dignity have higher priorities than their perceived needs for health, and productivity.

To be successful, we must position toilet as a status symbol and an object of desire, just like a Louis Vuitton handbag! Cost has often been cited as a barrier. Nobel laureate Mohd Yunus has shown us that micro-loan can do wonders. If the poor can get access to financing, they can pay by instalments.

Other innovative models of funding are available. In India, Sulabh International's Pay-for-use public toilets sustain itself by cross-subsidizing profitable city center toilets against loss-making slums toilets.

World Toilet Organization and other social entrepreneur organizations and commercial banks are now cooperating to create innovative financing solutions within a comprehensive framework to create a paradigm shift. These are:

- Map the network of existing resources/ Best practices
- Drive demand for sustainable sanitation
- Teach the poor to become sanitation businessmen
- Fund and build Market Infrastructure for sanitation
- Scale up Winning Models through innovative financing.
- Fund a Support Centre: Bridge to Funding

- Simplify technologies into expert-system software that is picture-based so that the unschooled can learn to be sanitation engineers.

These approaches collectively known as the World Sanitation Fund Facility Project towards a Market Economy are the core of our working principle.

WTO is presently looking for companies interested in making flat-pack toilets by plastic injection moulding. We want to become the IKEA of the poor by delivering the flat-pack units of toilets and making them colourful and pleasing to the eyes.

Billions of customers will allow us to exploit grand economies of scale in supply side and push cost down in financing, promotion, production, distribution, capacity building, and market expansion into other sectors.

As a person who grew up from poverty in the 1960s to become a well-to-do citizen in Singapore today, I have seen how good governance can transform a poor country into an economic powerhouse. The right policies, taxes and allocation of sanitation services reduce hygiene-related diseases and improve the livelihood, health, dignity and poverty alleviation. Parallel to the success of Singapore is its progress in its sanitation improvement. I've visited many villages and slums in India, China, Africa, Russia and other countries. The people I met gave me confidence that they can be helped to help themselves. The spirit of enterprise of the poor often impresses me. Donations alone cannot help us achieve the MDG for Sanitation. But by the above blueprint, I know that we can help the toilet-less people to help themselves. And this is the most sustainable way forward.

The problem of toilets and sanitation is so huge and has been neglected for so long, that it offers opportunities and scope for everyone to participate. We look forward to include you into this meaningful movement. ■

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