



RESPONDING TO THE SANITATION SCANDAL: WSSCC LAUNCHES THE GLOBAL SANITATION FUND

Geneva, 7 March 2008 - The **Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC)** is launching on 14 March in Geneva the **Global Sanitation Fund**, the first global financing mechanism to increase expenditure on sanitation and hygiene.

Forty percent of the world's population - 2.6 billion people - do not have access to basic sanitation. The Millennium Development Goal target of halving the number of people without access to sanitation is the furthest from being achieved. However, the estimated annual cost for attaining this goal is only \$9.5 billion. If sustained, the same investment could ensure basic sanitation for the whole world in one or two decades. **To help reach this target, the WSSCC is launching the Global Sanitation Fund, one of the major initiatives of the International Year of Sanitation 2008.**

Around the world, 10 million children die every year. Poor sanitation and hygiene are the chief or underlying causes in over half of these deaths. Diarrhoeal diseases, caused primarily by inadequate sanitation, are the second largest killer of children, and cause 17% of deaths in children under-five. Over the past 10 years diarrhoea has killed more children than all the people lost in armed conflicts since the Second World War. Clean toilets save lives. Healthy people can go to school and go to work. Research indicates that meeting the sanitation MDG target would yield economic benefits of \$63 billion each year, and universal access would yield \$225 billion. In other words, clean toilets contribute to economic development. However, poverty is more than a lack of income; it refers to social inclusion and dignity. Around 800,000 people in India still personally remove faeces from latrines, carrying them away in baskets on their heads - a practice that bars their inclusion from mainstream society. Poor women and girls are hit hardest by the absence of toilets, risking sexual harassment while looking for privacy in the darkness.

Clearly, **access to sanitation services has enormous potential to improve and save lives. What is lacking is the means to achieve this.** According to Dr. Roberto Lenton, WSSCC Chair, 'the Global Sanitation Fund seeks to help achieve our vision of improved sanitation services and good hygiene practices for all, through grants to carefully selected community-based programmes in the world's poorest countries'.

The aim of the fund is to support national efforts to help larger numbers of poor people attain sustainable access to basic sanitation and good hygiene practices. Many developing countries have national sanitation and hygiene policies, but lack the means to implement them. WSSCC will work alongside governments in eligible countries to implement existing sanitation policies through the giving of grants. The Global Sanitation Fund will focus particularly on groups

WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL



CONSEIL DE CONCERTATION POUR L'APPROVISIONNEMENT EN EAU ET L'ASSAINISSEMENT
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whose needs are not met by existing funding mechanisms, especially the poor in rural and peri-urban areas. Since sanitation and hygiene have strong gender links, the Global Sanitation Fund requires that all funded projects give due consideration to gender.

Jon Lane, Executive Director of WSSCC, stresses that the Global Sanitation Fund is **demand-driven and people-centred**. 'The Global Sanitation Fund will not embark on the construction of kilometres of sewerage pipes and other huge construction projects, since top-down investments in the sanitation sector don't reach the poorest people. The Global Sanitation Fund will support programmes that have been developed through decision-making processes involving local communities and will concentrate on hygiene education, raising awareness and creating demand.'

The creation of a Global Sanitation Fund recognizes the importance of reaching the sanitation MDG target. However, accelerating access to improved sanitation and hygiene contributes also towards other goals, including reducing child mortality, the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, achievement of universal primary education and the empowerment of women.

WSSCC was founded in 1990 in line with a United Nations General Assembly resolution and its Secretariat is legally and administratively hosted by the WHO. Its mission is to achieve sustainable water supply and sanitation for all people. The Global Sanitation Fund is the latest in a series of ground-breaking WSSCC initiatives dedicated to solving the present sanitation and hygiene crisis. The Global Sanitation Fund is complementary to the two other WSSCC activities, being Networking and Knowledge Management; and Communications and Advocacy - particularly the global Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All (WASH) campaign, which directly targets decision-makers to urge them to make the necessary investments in sanitation and hygiene.

More information on the Global Sanitation Fund can be found on: www.wsscc.org

DATE & VENUE Launch Global Sanitation Fund:

14 March 2008

International Environment House II,

RHIN meeting room

7, Chemin de Ballexert, 1219 Châtelaine-Geneva

15h00 - 16h00

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