Today, approximately 2.4 billion people live without access to adequate sanitation and hygiene, including nearly one billion people practicing open defecation. Over 800,000 people in low- and middle-income countries die as a result of inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) each year (World Health Organization, 2016). Furthermore, poor sanitation and hygiene is linked to the transmission of diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea, the latter of which is among the leading causes of death worldwide. This crisis also exacerbates malnutrition, impacts on the dignity and safety of women and girls, affects school attendance, and hinders economic development, with the poorest and marginalized most affected.

In 2008, the Global Sanitation Fund (GSF) was launched, and it still remains the only global fund dedicated solely to sanitation and hygiene. The GSF supports national sanitation and hygiene programmes in developing countries. To achieve broad-based, inclusive and lasting social change, GSF-supported programmes target entire administrative areas in a country, such as districts or communes. By demonstrating that sustainable and equitable access to sanitation and hygiene is possible at this scale, the GSF serves as a catalyst to attract additional attention and resources so that nobody is left behind. The GSF aims to achieve its vision of universal access to sanitation and hygiene by investing in collective behaviour change activities and strengthening enabling environments that are conducive to achieving results at scale. This includes working in close partnership with national governments, and building the capacity of local authorities, civil society organizations and other partners to support communities to sustain achievements.

GSF financing fosters movements to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.2: By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.

Since its launch, the GSF has helped 20 million people access handwashing facilities. 

| People Living in Open Defecation Free Environments | 15 million |
| People with Improved Toilets | 12 million |
| People with Handwashing Facilities | 20 million |

Where We Work

- Benin
- Cambodia
- Ethiopia
- India
- Kenya
- Laos*
- Madagascar
- Malawi
- Nepal
- Niger*
- Nigeria
- Senegal
- Tanzania
- Togo
- Uganda
- Pakistan*

* Countries where the GSF plans to support national programmes
Putting people at the centre
GSF-supported programmes empower communities to end open defecation and radically change their sanitation situation for good, by facilitating collective behaviour change and action in communities and entire administrative areas. Programmes use a range of approaches, including Community-Led Total Sanitation.

Championing country ownership
All GSF-supported programmes are fully developed and owned by national coordinating bodies which are led by national governments, and include a variety of national governmental and non-governmental actors from a range of sectors. This process helps make sanitation a policy priority, and demonstrated success in programme areas can be replicated and inform national sanitation strategies because key stakeholders are invested in the work.

Investing in sustainability
GSF-supported programmes empower communities to transform their behaviour and take the lead in addressing community-wide sanitation challenges, while sustaining progress through locally-generated approaches and technologies. Programmes also support the development of appropriate supply chains to ensure long-term access to improved services, and build strategic partnerships to ensure schools, health centres, markets, and other public spaces have adequate access to services.

Leaving no one behind
Ensuring that women, girls, and those in vulnerable situations access and use safe sanitation and hygiene facilities is at the heart of the GSF’s approach. This approach includes prioritizing hard-to-reach areas, and ensuring the full participation of vulnerable groups in community decision-making processes and decisions regarding their own sanitation facilities.

Knowledge and learning
The GSF is actively promoting national, regional and global learning initiatives for WASH practitioners, contributing to SDG 6.2. This is being achieved by supporting learning platforms and networks, documenting knowledge, evidence and best practices from supported programmes, and investing in South-South learning between programmes.

School WASH
To achieve total community sanitation, GSF-supported programmes engage a range of public institutions, including schools. Students are regularly engaged to become champions for improving sanitation and hygiene, and school officials are trained to guide and support these students. Schools are also encouraged to construct and maintain handwashing facilities with soap and water, as well as separate sanitation facilities for boys and girls.

Climate change
The GSF supports programmes in countries that are increasingly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. By supporting governments and sector partners to develop, implement, and scale up national sanitation and hygiene programmes, the GSF aims to promote climate adaptation and foster resilient behaviours, systems and services.

Since its launch, the GSF has helped 12 million people access improved toilets.