

# CITYWIDE INCLUSIVE SANITATION

## A CALL TO ACTION

### **A silent urban sanitation crisis is underway. It's time to clean up our acts!**

A successful city is one where all citizens live productive, healthy and dignified lives in an environment free from fecal contamination. Human waste must be managed in ways that safeguard the urban environment, including water and food supplies. Far from being a reality, this vision is under increasing threat. With limited financial and human resources, a changing climate and rapid, unplanned urbanization, cities are struggling to cope. 'Business as usual' is not working. However, the Sustainable Development Goals provide new impetus to ensure access to sustainable water and sanitation services, to keep cities safe and resilient, and to ensure citizens' health and well-being.

*Citywide inclusive sanitation* means that: everybody benefits from adequate sanitation service delivery outcomes; human waste is safely managed along the whole sanitation service chain; effective resource recovery and re-use are considered; a diversity of technical solutions is embraced for adaptive, mixed and incremental approaches; and onsite

and sewerage solutions are combined, in either centralized or decentralized systems, to better respond to the realities found in developing country cities. Cities need to develop comprehensive approaches to sanitation improvement that encompass long-term planning, technical innovation, institutional reforms and financial mobilization. They will need to demonstrate political will, technical and managerial leadership, to focus on durable drivers for innovation, and to manage funding for sanitation in new and creative ways.

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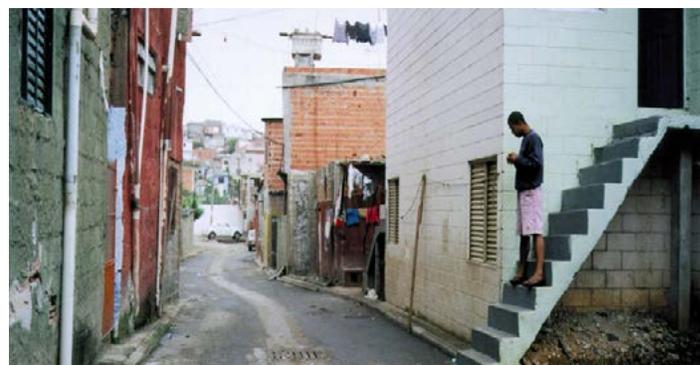
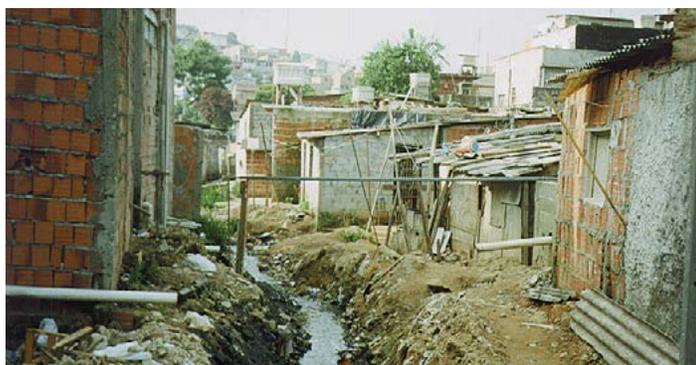
*To achieve citywide inclusive sanitation, a radical shift in mindsets and practices is needed in sanitation and urban development.*

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*Initiated by a growing group of institutions,<sup>1</sup> this Call to Action seeks to mobilize all stakeholders to embrace a radical shift in urban sanitation practices deemed necessary to achieve citywide inclusive sanitation.*

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<sup>1</sup> The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Emory University, Plan International, The University of Leeds, WaterAid, the World Bank.



*Moving from inadequate sanitation to citywide inclusive sanitation – an example from São Paulo, Brazil  
(Credit: Secretariat of Housing, Municipal Government of São Paulo)*

This briefing note sets the scene and defines guiding principles for citywide inclusive sanitation. Its objective is to bring all actors – including you! – to the table to start the conversation. The principles are not set in stone and a number of specific aspects need to be further developed to help define paths to 2030. We hope to benefit from your inputs as we define a global strategy for implementing this Call to Action. For more information, follow our progress at: [bit.ly/CWISblog1](http://bit.ly/CWISblog1).

**Join us as we commit to this challenging and critical goal of moving to citywide inclusive sanitation by signing up at [bit.ly/CWISsignup](http://bit.ly/CWISsignup).**



Join the conversation using #InclusiveSanitation

## A Call to Action: Key Principles to Deliver Citywide Inclusive Sanitation

Citywide inclusive sanitation requires collaboration between many actors, including: national, sub-national and city/municipal governments; utilities and municipal service providers; business and the private sector; civil society, local and international NGOs; donors, bilateral and multilateral agencies and private foundations; as well as academia and, importantly, households themselves. Each city is organized

in a unique way. Local actors need to acknowledge shared responsibilities and work collaboratively to chart their own path to providing urban sanitation to all.

*We specifically call on all actors to work on the basis of four inter-locking principles:*

### Prioritise the **human right** of all to sanitation

- Develop **inclusive** strategies and programs to reach the most vulnerable, especially **women and children**
- Focus on **informal settlements** and account for **land tenure** insecurity
- Show political, technical and managerial **leadership**
- Allocate sufficient **funds** for investment and O&M
- **Empower** qualified staff
- Take **calculated risks** to shift the status quo: start addressing the challenges!



### Deliver 'safe management' along the **whole sanitation service chain**

- Address **complex problems** rather than deliver fixed solutions
- Allow for a **diversity of solutions and approaches**, focusing on outcomes rather than technologies
- Focus on **innovation**, testing and evaluating approaches
- Facilitate **progressive realization**, building on what is already in place – **embrace incrementalism**
- Recognize the **trade-offs** that exist along the sanitation service chain



### Recognise that sanitation contributes to a **thriving urban economy**

- Integrate sanitation in **urban planning** and renewal
- Clean up city streets: remove unsightly pollution and bad odours
- Increase **resource recovery and reuse**
- Reform **regulatory policies**
- Recover water bodies for **recreation** and for **fauna and flora**



### Commit to working in **partnership** to deliver citywide inclusive sanitation

- Embed sanitation within **urban governance**. Use an integrated approach: link to water supply, drainage, solid waste management, paving, affordable housing, urban development
- Leverage **urban development, health, education and environmental budgets and savings** thanks to improved sanitation
- Establish clear **roles and responsibilities**, with accountability and transparency
- Articulate and build demand and engage with civil society at the **grass roots level**



## Poor sanitation is stifling economic growth

With neighborhoods and public spaces turning into open sewers, many cities struggle to manage human waste. Currently, some 60 million new residents move to urban areas every year. One in four lives in slums, amounting to 1 billion people with inadequate housing, limited access to basic services and usually lacking land tenure security.<sup>2</sup> As a result, urban population growth dramatically outpaces gains in access to safe sanitation. Only 37% of urban excreta is safely managed globally.<sup>3</sup> Evidence shows that even where piped water networks exist, sewerage and septic tank connections lag far behind.<sup>4</sup>

The resulting environmental degradation and public health impacts lead to high child mortality and morbidity, poor school attendance and performance, especially for girls, and low productivity. They also contribute to the vicious cycle affecting the delivery of other key urban services such as housing, potable water, solid waste and drainage. All these factors ultimately limit economic growth, urban development and city competitiveness. *A silent urban sanitation crisis is stifling the realization of the urban transformation called for in the Sustainable Development Goals.*

In 2007, readers of the British Medical Journal chose the “sanitary revolution” as the greatest medical advance since 1840. This 19<sup>th</sup> Century revolution must become a 21<sup>st</sup> Century reality for everyone. Acknowledging the importance of urban sanitation and its intrinsic link to appropriate land use planning and the need for affordable housing is fundamental in the transformation of cities becoming clean, livable and productive.

## Why ‘business as usual’ is not working

‘Business as usual’ in urban sanitation primarily focuses on centralized/conventional infrastructure, which only benefits a small percentage of the population. It fails to shift political priorities, funding allocations, institutional coordination, as well as the planning, design and management practices needed to achieve services for all. It fails to consider the tradeoffs between sanitation investments and doesn’t consider incrementalism. Only a radical shift in mindsets

and practices, with sustained behavior change, will make a difference. Common myths surrounding sanitation need to be debunked.

This radical shift requires the engagement of all stakeholders – formal and informal – and political accountability of all citizens, rich and poor alike. City leaders need to use their political capital and power to drive a coherent citywide strategy that delivers on sanitation as a human right. The consequences of inadequate sanitation affect everyone, as human waste and its pathogens recognize no boundaries and spread freely across urban areas.

Professionals working in urban development must better coordinate their respective mandates (e.g. sanitation, land use planning, housing). To achieve sustainable, universal and safe management of human waste, sanitation sector professionals must blend both conventional and new solutions in innovative ways that consider the needs and resources of their clients and links to urban development.

## The path to 2030 – watch this space!

In this Call to Action we urge stakeholders to assess, as a first step, the status of sanitation in their cities<sup>5</sup> and to map the areas that are worst affected. This can provide a basis for citywide inclusive sanitation approaches to be integrated into urban development planning and implementation, with the goal to provide tangible results for urban residents by 2030. In the coming months, and with your support, we will continue to jointly develop our thinking through a global strategy and additional papers, guidance documents, tools, and knowledge-sharing initiatives. Follow our progress at: [bit.ly/CWISblog1](http://bit.ly/CWISblog1).

<sup>2</sup> UN, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> SFD data 2016.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Ghosh Banerjee, S., and Morella, E. 2011. Africa’s Water and Sanitation Infrastructure. Access, Affordability, and Alternatives. The World Bank.

<sup>5</sup> SFDs or ‘excreta flow diagrams,’ found at <http://sfd.susana.org/>, can be a useful tool in this process.



Transitioning to citywide inclusive sanitation in Mozambique (Credit: WB/WSUP)



## Debunking Urban Sanitation Myths

Sector experts and city managers all over the world have worked hard to support effective urban sanitation, often with limited success. This is often due to a set of enduring myths.

### 1 Myth #1:

#### There is no demand for improvements where sanitation is poor or absent

**In fact:** There is latent demand for sanitation services even in the poorest areas. Poor residents often feel unable to affect change, especially when facing uninterested politicians, land tenure limitations, and technical challenges, and they are reluctant to openly express their demands.<sup>6</sup>

### 2 Myth #2:

#### Poor people are not willing to pay for sanitation services

**In fact:** Poor people are willing to pay for sanitation services and they do, even when they receive services of substandard nature. Often, their only option is to resort to an unregulated private service to periodically empty their latrine/septic tank, whereas richer areas are connected to sewer systems with subsidized or free services.

### 3 Myth #3:

#### There isn't enough money to solve the urban sanitation problem

**In fact:** Investments needs are indeed huge. Urban sanitation represents 40% of estimated amounts to reach the SDG targets 6.1 and 6.2.<sup>7</sup> Increasing public budgets will be necessary but not sufficient. Available resources also need to be better allocated and used more effectively. Service providers and households need to be supported to make efficient investment decisions. Private financing can be leveraged for investment opportunities, especially if public funds are used more strategically.

### 4 Myth #4:

#### Investing in urban sanitation is not productive

**In fact:** Sanitation investments provide demonstrated health, economic, social and environmental benefits that are essential to turn cities into vibrant economic centers. Globally,

inadequate sanitation costs poor countries on average 5% of their GDP.<sup>8</sup> The economic return on sanitation spending is estimated at US\$5.5 for every dollar invested.<sup>7</sup>

### 5 Myth #5:

#### Centralized conventional sewers and wastewater treatment are the only way to solve the urban sanitation crisis

**In fact:** Experience of citywide inclusive sanitation in numerous cities (such as Brasilia, Dakar, Durban, Manila, Kuala Lumpur or Seattle) using a mix of solutions show important progress. Adaptive, expandable, decentralized and cost-effective approaches, mixing onsite and sewerage solutions, can be resilient to external economic, demographic and environmental shocks. Local innovation allows developing sanitation solutions that reflect local conditions and meet the needs of customers.

### 6 Myth #6:

#### Solving urban sanitation is all about toilets

**In fact:** Providing access to a toilet, a latrine or a sewer connection is only part of the solution. The SDGs now require that human waste is conveyed, treated and reused/ disposed of safely and sustainably. The full sanitation service chain needs to be sustainably managed.

### 7 Myth #7:

#### Sanitation produces waste that is a nuisance to be eliminated

**In fact:** Human waste contains valuable nutrients and soil conditioner. These can be recovered and reused for urban and rural agricultural use. Energy can be produced from both heat recovery and biogas combustion. Water can be recycled for industrial, agricultural and even potable use. Such underutilized value, when monetized, can generate revenue to offset service costs.

**In summary:** *There is no simple, single solution to urban sanitation challenges. We must develop locally relevant innovative solutions along the sanitation service chain that put customers first and focus as much on service management as on technology. City planners should consider the tradeoffs between providing basic access to all versus advanced treatment to the few.*

<sup>6</sup>WaterAid. 2016. Overflowing cities: The State of the World's Toilets 2016. Media Briefing.

<sup>7</sup>Hutton, G. 2012. Global costs and benefits of drinking-water supply and sanitation interventions to reach the MDG target and universal coverage. World Health Organization.

<sup>8</sup>Water and Sanitation Program. 2016. Economics of Sanitation Initiative.

