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Hurry Up in the Toilet: 2.4 Billion are Waiting

"Are we to decide the importance of issues by asking how fashionable or glamorous they are? Or by asking how seriously they affect how many?" Nelson Mandela (1918-)

Imagine a life without a clean, private place to defecate and urinate: the embarrassment of going to the toilet in an abandoned plot or on the open street and, for girls, the fear of assault at night.

This is the reality of life for a staggering 2.4 billion people, most of whom live in extreme poverty in Africa and Asia. Inadequate sanitation in the home and in public places erodes human dignity, undermines development, and causes disease.

Putting fingers into their mouth puts young children most at risk of catching diarrhoea. For families, preventing faecal-oral contamination depends on proper hygiene, and disposing of children's faeces safely. The availability of sufficient water enables both children and adults to wash their hands before meals and after defecating. Simple hand-washing could save up to one million lives every year.

Realizing the Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people without access to sanitation by 2015 would still leave almost a quarter of humanity without a basic latrine. Hopes of achieving even this modest goal are fading fast.



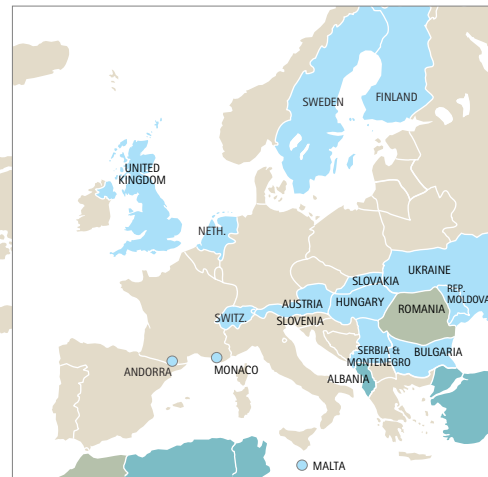
One gram of faeces may contain 10 million viruses, 1 million bacteria, a thousand parasite cysts and a hundred worm eggs.

Health effects

Diseases caused by inadequate sanitation and hygiene:

- Intestinal worms (including ascariasis, trichuriasis and hookworm)
- Schistosomiasis
- Trachoma

Intestinal diseases (map 4)

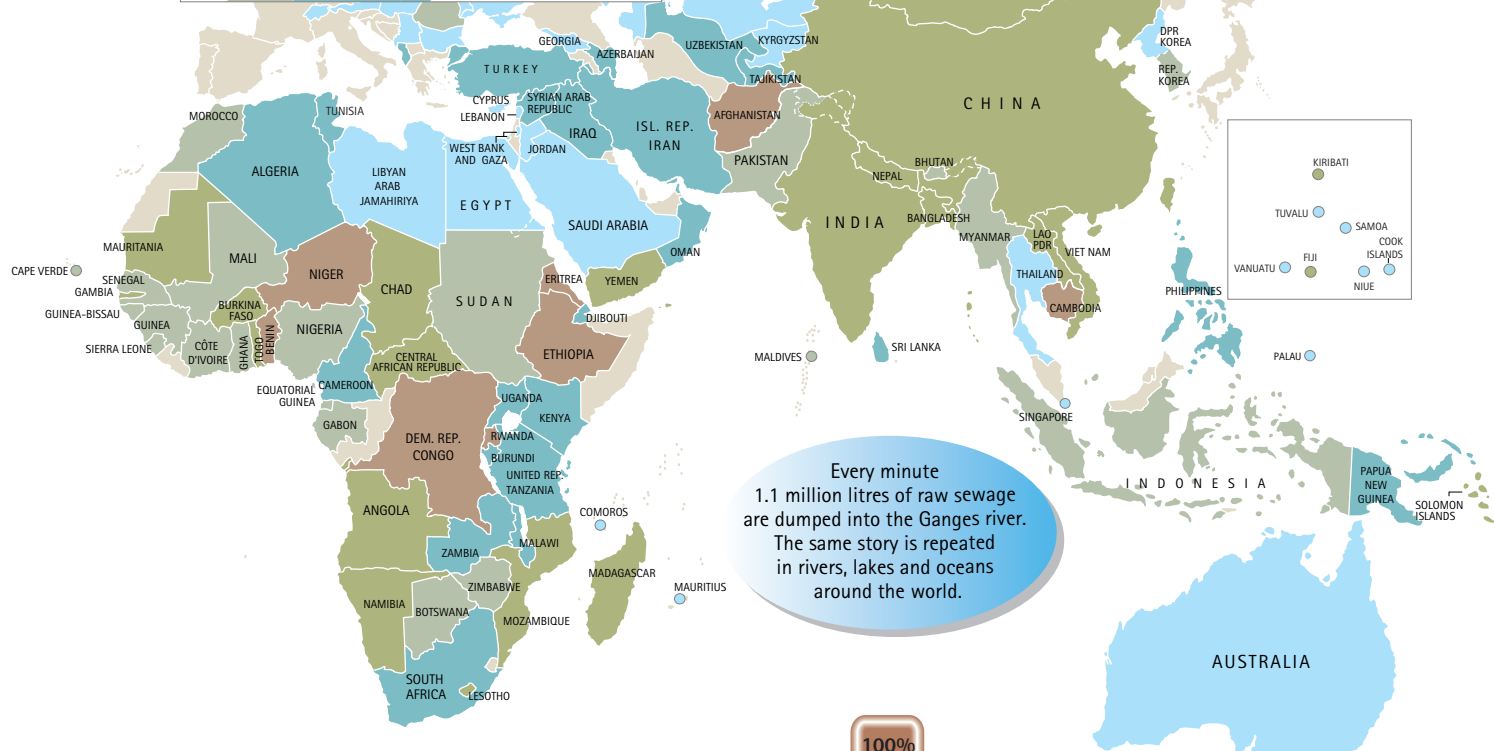


Meagre sanitation

Percentage of households without access to improved sanitation 2000 or latest available data

Improved sanitation facilities include flush toilets and pit latrines, if they are not shared between households and provide privacy.

over 75%	6% – 25%
51% – 75%	5% and under
26% – 50%	no data



Every minute 1.1 million litres of raw sewage are dumped into the Ganges river. The same story is repeated in rivers, lakes and oceans around the world.

