

# WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE

## FACT SHEET

### OVERVIEW

The opportunity to prevent disease and death and to enhance the quality of people's lives through improved sanitation in the developing world is greater than ever.

More than 40 percent of the world's population—about 2.5 billion people, primarily in rural areas—still practice open defecation or use pit latrines that do not safely contain their waste. Another 2.1 billion people who live in urban areas are only containing their waste and not disposing of it safely.

Today there are effective new approaches to create demand for sanitation in areas that still practice open defecation or unsafe sanitation. New investments in sanitation tools and technologies—including latrine design, pit emptying, sludge treatment, and the disposal or reuse of waste—have the potential to make sanitation services safe and sustainable for the poor.

Real progress on sanitation holds the promise of tackling a persistent, and preventable, scourge in the developing world: the water-borne illnesses that kill 1.6 million children each year. Improved sanitation has profound economic, educational, and social benefits. It makes workers more productive, keeps children in school, and increases dignity, particularly for women and girls.



*A mother and child stand in front of a latrine. This village in the Gondola district is open-defecation free, which means every household has and uses a latrine (Venceremos, Mozambique, 2009).*

### OUR APPROACH

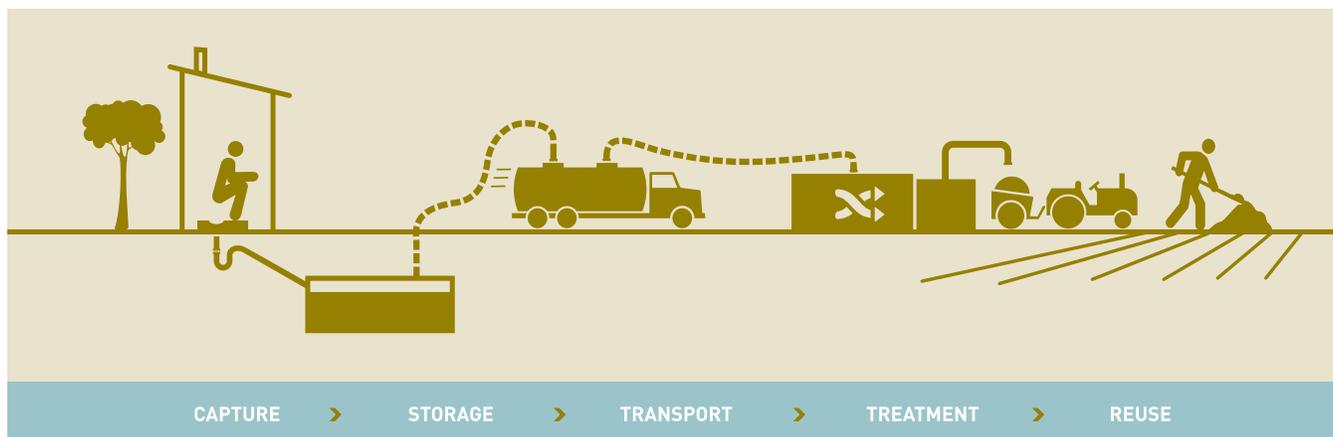
The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works with a wide range of partners through its Water, Sanitation & Hygiene initiative to reduce the burden of water-borne disease and improve the lives of the poor. We have a number of existing grants that support sustainable approaches to clean water and hygiene, but our funding now focuses on sanitation, particularly in Africa and Asia, where the burden of poor sanitation is highest. More than two times as many people lack safe sanitation as safe water.

Our approach aims to expand the use of sanitation that does not connect to a sewer, as this is by far the most common type used by the poor. We

are investing in opportunities across the entire Sanitation Value Chain (see graphic, p. 2). Waste must first be captured and stored so that it does not come in contact with people or contaminate the local environment. In densely populated urban areas, waste must also be extracted, transported, treated, and disposed of safely. Both cities and rural villages can potentially reuse excreta for agricultural purposes and energy generation.

Providing people with safe and sustainable sanitation services means more than simply giving them a latrine or toilet. Indeed, this approach has failed in many cases. Instead, it means understanding the contexts in which poor people live and local companies and government

## Sanitation Value Chain



agencies operate. With this knowledge, it is possible to find lasting solutions that stimulate household demand for safe sanitation, encourage businesses to provide affordable-yet-durable sanitation products and services, and motivate governments to establish effective sanitation policies.

### WHAT WE DO

*We focus our grantmaking on three main areas:*

#### Ending Open Defecation

We support the wide-scale implementation of an effective approach to rural sanitation in order to end open defecation and upgrade unsafe latrines. The core of this approach involves stimulating demand for improved sanitation within rural communities. In addition to triggering demand, we aim to encourage local entrepreneurs to offer a range of affordable, desirable sanitation products. To reach scale and sustain momentum of this approach, we are also working to improve the policy and regulatory environment and build the capacity of local governments to support improved sanitation.

#### Investment in Sanitation Tools and Technologies

By investing in the development of improved latrine design, pit emptying, sludge treatment, and the disposal or reuse of waste, we aim to make sanitation services both safe and sustainable for the poor. Our goal is to encourage the

development of business models and technologies that make sanitation without sewers the preferred solution for millions of people.

#### Policy and Advocacy

We fund advocacy work that informs governments and the international community about successful sanitation approaches and encourages changes in policy and funding priorities to accelerate access to sustainable sanitation. By building broad support among key-decision makers, we aim to achieve a wider impact that goes beyond our direct grantmaking activities.



*Workers pump sewage in Teshie, an overcrowded slum area where poor sanitation has become a serious problem (Teshie, Ghana, 2009).*

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

For additional information on the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, please visit our web site: [www.gatesfoundation.org](http://www.gatesfoundation.org).

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