

DATUM FOUNDATION

HOW TOILETS SAVE LIVES

April 2013

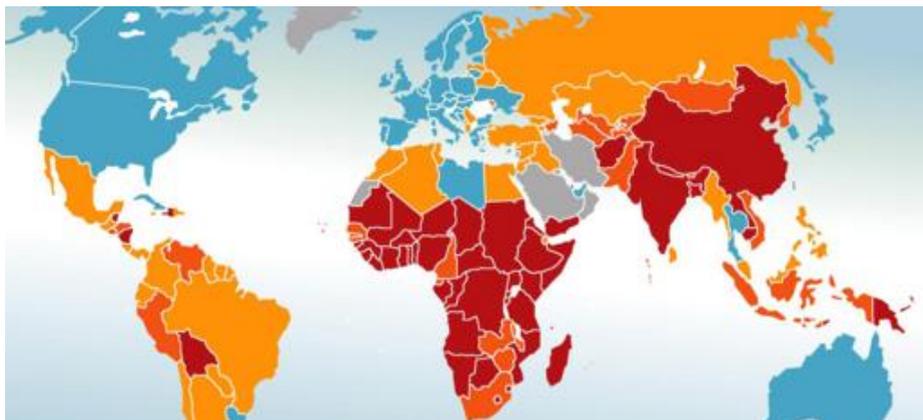
Millions of children die each year from diseases that could be prevented if they had access to toilets.

The simple toilet, that we take for granted, can act as a barrier to pathogen transmission and hence can greatly improve the health of children in the developing world.

“1.9 million children die from diarrhoea each year”

This shocking statistic is largely caused by illness resulting from a lack of basic sanitation. It emphasizes the need for the provision of that most basic of human requirements: a safe place to defecate.

Worldwide 1.2 billion people have no access to a toilet. The areas coloured in red on the map below indicate countries where more than half of the population have no access to toilets. These are mainly in Sub Saharan Africa and Asia.



The people in these areas suffer the daily indignity of defecating in fields, forests and rivers near their homes.

This is important due to the serious health risks open defecation poses to individuals and communities from diarrheal diseases and worm infestations caused by pathogens.

These include viruses like *Enteritis*, which causes gastroenteritis. This is a major cause of mortality in underdeveloped nations, especially among young children.

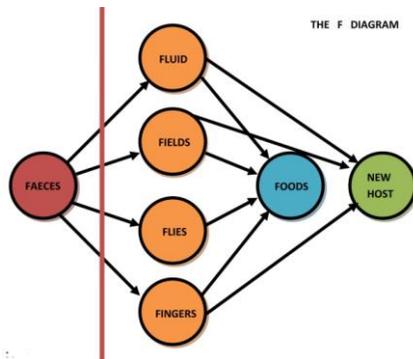
Faeces also contain bacteria. For example *Salmonella* which causes typhoid fever and *Vibrio cholerae* which causes cholera.

Several parasitic worms also pass their eggs in human faeces. These include, hookworms, whipworms and roundworms

The roundworm, *Ascaris lumbricoide*, is the most common intestinal parasite in the world infecting an estimated one billion people.



There are four routes in which the pathogens of an infected individual can be transmitted to a new host.



Pathogens from excreta can get onto fingers, food or fluids and then may reach a new host. Also, flies landing on excreta can carry pathogens to foods.

“The main purpose for sanitary procedures is to eliminate pathways to new hosts.”

There are four hygienic practices that block this transmission:

- Access to toilets.
- Consistent use of the toilet.
- Safe disposal of faeces.
- Hand washing.

Toilets act as primary barrier because they dispose faeces in such a way that they are isolated from human contact. They also prevent the spread of pathogens by flies or the contamination of water supplies.



DATUM recognizes the importance of providing toilets and hand washing facilities to the health of children as some examples of their projects illustrate.

Over recent years DATUM has been rebuilding the primary school in the village of Chisasa in Malawi

All of the 380 children had to share one derelict toilet, so DATUM provided funds for new toilets. New 3m deep pits were dug, which should last many years. The improved sanitary facilities means the local children should enjoy a much healthier future.

Following a site visit DATUM decided to try and improve the living conditions of the boys of Sri Jinananda Children's Home where "The Monk", the Reverend Urumutte Sugathananda Thero, cares for and educates 78 orphans.

Construction of four new toilets and three showers were completed in September 2012. All areas were fully tiled. Sinks were also fitted for hand washing. These new facilities should improve the health of the boys.



DATUM are currently working on the primary school in the village of Kankalabe in Guinea, which was founded in 1929. The school has 658 pupils of which 380 are boys and 278 are girls. There are only three toilets for the whole school and no clean water supply.

As part of the phased repair and refurbishment of the existing classroom blocks DATUM are providing new toilets.

DATUM are also providing a well and pump for the supply of clean water for drinking and hand washing



The World Health Organization states that sanitation provides a vital primary barrier to pathogen transmission and can thus prevent disease.

The simple toilet can prevent disease by removing pathogen-rich excreta from the immediate environment. A toilet, when correctly installed, regularly used, and properly maintained has a real potential to improve the health of children and save lives.

UNICEF have estimated that providing safe toilets for all those currently without sanitary facilities could reduce worldwide diarrheal related deaths by more than one third.

That is the equivalent of saving the lives of 500,000 children per year.

Investment is urgently required to meet the sanitation needs of the world's poorest communities especially in rural and urban slum areas of the developing world.

Further efforts are required to provide children with simple toilets to save lives.

Datum Foundation appreciates any support that you may be able to give. We maintain a Just Giving account to facilitate regular or one-off donations.

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www.datumfoundation.org.uk

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