

sustainable sanitation alliance



Official Launch of the International Year of Sanitation (IYS) 2008
United Nations, New York, 21 November 2007

Urgent Need to Address the Sanitation Crisis Worldwide

The Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA) welcomes the launch of the International Year of Sanitation 2008 through the UN

The urgency for worldwide action in the sanitation sector is obvious. More than 2.6 billion people around the world still lack access to basic sanitation and are therefore forced to practice open defecation or to use mediaeval types of public toilets. These sanitation practises and poor hygiene cause some 2.2 million deaths annually - mostly children under the age of five. The impact on women and girls is especially acute, as sanitation is essential for women's safety, dignity and ability to study and work, i.e. overall quality of life. The actual and opportunity costs of continued neglect of the sanitation sector in health, economic development, agricultural production, education, environmental degradation, livelihoods and poverty reduction terms are huge.

Although sanitation is part of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) - to halve the proportion of people without access to adequate sanitation by 2015 - the Joint Monitoring Programme of WHO/UNICEF and the UNDP Human Development Report 2006 have shown that the progress towards meeting the MDGs and the Sanitation Target is much too slow. The reasons for this are numerous. A major issue is the fact that the benefits and productive side of proper sanitation are generally not recognised by politicians and civil society alike. Therefore, sanitation rarely gets any political attention. Political will has also been sorely lacking in placing sanitation high on the international development agenda. Once the return on investments in sanitation becomes obvious – as recent studies have clearly shown - and when sanitation no longer is taboo we will see changes in political willpower. This is how we anticipate the International Year of Sanitation (IYS) will make a change.

Mobilisation of necessary resources and political will at all levels – in developed and developing countries alike - requires a major paradigm shift, integrating sanitation and waste control in water resources management, re-assessing the sustainability of

conventional approaches, moving from *disposal*-oriented to more *reuse*-oriented systems, and accelerating and expanding investment in new technologies that can be up-scaled in urban, peri-urban and rural settlements. Innovative solutions must be identified and implemented to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Thus, speeding up action for infrastructure investments and operation and maintenance of sanitation, wastewater and solid waste management is called for.

Motivated by the IYS 2008, a coalition of more than 50 prominent multi and bilateral organisations, NGOs, businesses, governmental and research institutions active in the field of sustainable sanitation formed the "Sustainable Sanitation Alliance" or SuSanA and drew up a "Joint Road Map for the Promotion of Sustainable Sanitation within the International Year of Sanitation 2008". The SuSanA network invites those who want to be active in the promotion of sustainable sanitation systems. SuSanA provides space for information and knowledge exchange, discussion and advocacy regarding the full range of sanitation and wastewater treatment and safe reuse options. SuSanA's growing number of partners are united in calling for substantially enhanced attention to social, environmental, economic and cultural aspects with added urgency in regard to the needs of developing countries, especially those most affected by increasing water stress and extreme climate conditions.

SuSanA embraces the IYS 2008 as a breakthrough year in partnership with the United Nations and other stakeholders to ensure that it creates a platform for significant and sustained sanitation efforts also in future years.

Source material:

Joint Roadmap for the Promotion of Sustainable Sanitation within the IYS 2008 Version 1.1
SuSanA Vision Statement - Version 1.1

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