



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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For immediate release

### **World Toilet Organization Won Gates Foundation's Support of USD270, 000**

*Funding boost efforts to increase awareness and attract new partnerships on global sanitation issues*

The Gates Foundation announced a USD270,000 funding that will support the World Toilet Organization global advocacy on sanitation to build and attract new partnerships with the private sector. This will result in increased traditional and media space on sanitation issues as well as new marketing and branding opportunities with the private sector.

World Toilet Organization (WTO) of Singapore has been a prime advocacy group bringing the sanitation and toilets agendas to the forefront since its founding on 19 November 2001. With its unique mix of humor and serious facts, WTO created a global movement awareness of the struggle of 2.6 billion people without access to proper and clean sanitation.

WTO aims to reach 50 million with messages about the importance of sanitation and World Toilet Day through media, social networking/media, and partnerships with corporations. World Toilet Day remains the cornerstone advocacy effort ever since it WTO declared November 19th as World Toilet Day in 2001.

## **The History of World Toilet Day**

Prior to 2001, the subject of toilets and sanitation were still taboo topics.

Although all of us use the toilet everyday an average of 6 times a day and an entire 3 years of our life inside the toilet, people were unwilling to discuss the subject for fear of embarrassment or appearing disrespectful. Indeed even at a young age, children were taught that they should not speak such a disgusting subject and quickly we learn that we disempower ourselves when we speak this taboo.

But what we don't discuss, we can't improve. This neglect in sanitation and toilets heaped up into a situation where 2.4 billion people are without access to proper sanitation in 2001. About 1.5 billion children under 5 die from diarrheal diseases caused by poor sanitation and hygiene.

Furthermore, sanitation in the humanitarian sector was bundled together with Water & Sanitation (Watsan). However, in the competition between these 2 important agendas, most humanitarian effort focuses on the more glamorous agenda - water. Politicians also found it more rewarding to be photographed next to a stand-pipe with happy children with water. Very few are willing to be photographed next to a toilet. Without incentives for leaders to engage in it, sanitation conditions continue to deteriorate. By 2008, the number of people without access to proper sanitation increased to 2.6 billion.

The World Toilet Organization was founded on 19 November 2001, in Singapore. Its objective was to address this agenda openly and to call a spade a spade. The name of the organization itself initially provoked much mixed reactions but with its unique mix of humor and serious facts, and the pun it played on WTO, it excited the attention of the global media and the imagination of their audiences and readers. WTO became immediately a media darling almost overnight from the 19 of November that year. The media legitimacy gave sanitation and toilet its rightful place on the global center-stage and its taboo began to breakdown over the years.

The continuous and growing media support empowers others to begin championing the cause as well.

During its inaugural World Toilet Summit in Singapore, WTO's founding day 19 November was declared World Toilet Day. Over the years, World Toilet Day captured the imagination of people all over the world and as constipated mindsets gave way to free flow of creativity in celebrating this day, this ground-swell movement took a life of its own.

Activities ranges from demonstration in Washington to declare Sanitation as Human Right; to Sanitation Market Festival in Lima, Peru; Press Conference on WC in Berlin, The Big Squat in Singapore, Stand-up Comic acts in London, Crisis Talks UK; Hand-washing in schools in Nepal; Minister of Public Health cleaning up public toilets in Malaysia, Royal Flush cards games in China, World Toilet Summit in India, etc, etc,.

***Evidently, the spontaneous nature of World Toilet Day has made it an international homage to proper sanitation annually.***

Last year, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows' world-premier were on none other than 19 November. It trended 4<sup>th</sup> position on Twitter. World Toilet Day trended 5<sup>th</sup> position. Currently, Google search on World Toilet Day results in 52.5 million mentions.

This year, World Toilet Day celebration is organized by many global organizations such as the Gates Foundation, Unicef, World Toilet Organization, International Federation of Red Cross, WaterAid, End Water Poverty, Water.org, Water and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), World Vision, Habitat for Humanity, World Bank WSP, Sustainable Sanitation Alliance, etc, just to name a few. In addition, many government bodies, NGOs, foundations and companies like Unilever are also great supporters of the event.

## **The Future of World Toilet Day**

**By Jack Sim, Founder of World Toilet Organization**

World Toilet Day is a day of creative relief and selfless compassion. It is also a day for us to demand a better world for the 2.6 billion who are still without access to proper sanitation. As an important part of the quality of life of everyone of us, World Toilet Day has the potential of becoming as popular as Valentine Day. After all, both days are about celebrating intimate, personal relationship.

As we turn poop culture into pop culture, we can expect World Toilet Day to inspire song-writers, musicians, painters, Hollywood and Bollywood celebrities, prominent politicians, sport-stars, dancers, sculptors, fashion designers, greeting e-cards, YouTube video contests, etc. There is now even a Golden Poop Award in UK.

I can imagine someone writing a Symphony of 'P' Minor (ending with a crescendo of flushes), or a SaniRock concert anytime soon. Love songs like "I Can't Live Without You" or "Release Me" may be rehashed with new meaning. I'm sure creative people will find this an opportunity not to be missed. I hope the records companies and American Idol are reading this.

As the Day gains popularity, I envision World Toilet Day Specials celebrated with discounts in Wal-Mart, Tesco, Metro, Carrefour, IKEA, and other corporate participation. Advertising agencies will have a field day exploding their creative juices on pulp and the social media alike. As shoppers get involved, it'll become a market driven annual event with worldwide universal appeal. It's everybody's business.

World Toilet Day's contents are user-generated and spontaneous in nature. Clearly, this day has provoked borderless imagination of people and is no less than a Cultural Revolution in the making over the last 11 years.

Amidst the fun and laughter, let us remember that World Toilet Day's mission is "Improving the state of toilets & sanitation globally". The toilet is our benchmark for human development and progress. It is also an indicator of social justice.

Our vision is that one day in the very near future, "Everyone, anywhere, will have access to safe, hygienic and sustainable sanitation whenever we need to use a toilet."

Let us all answer this 'nature's call' to action. Say your piece, share it widely and do your part to use World Toilet Day to make a difference. Make it very different.

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