

2008: International Year of Sanitation



WaterAid/Abir Abdullah

The United Nations has declared 2008 the International Year of Sanitation. Throughout the year WaterAid will highlight the scandalous fact that over 2.6 billion people - 40% of the world's population - do not have a safe, clean or private place to go to the toilet; and we will be working hard to change this.

Sanitation is in crisis. There is compelling evidence that sanitation brings the greatest returns on investment of any development intervention (roughly US\$9 for every US\$1 spent). Yet it remains one, if not the, most neglected and most off-track of the Millennium Development Goal targets. 2008 is the year to change this. It's time to make a stink about bad sanitation.



WaterAid/Suzanne Porter

In 2006 sanitation was voted as the greatest medical advance since 1850 in a survey run by the British Medical Journal.

In the developing world, the costs of not investing in sanitation and water are huge - infant deaths, lost work days, and missed school are estimated to have an economic cost of at least US\$38 billion per year, with sanitation accounting for 92% of this value. And yet the potential returns are so great that sanitation, in effect, pays for itself. Faced with the evidence, governments must tackle this crisis.

2008 also marks the 150th anniversary of the 'Great Stink'. In 1858 the stench from the lack of sanitation in London made the Thames so vile that MPs were forced to act. The resulting expansion of sanitation infrastructure in the 1880s contributed to a 10 year increase in life expectancy in a single decade. There has been no other single intervention that has brought greater public health returns.

The kind of political action shown in London in 1858 must now be taken across the developing world today. 2008 is the year to make this change. 2.6 billion people need action not words.

Take action

WaterAid is asking people to get involved with a range of events and activities throughout the year to help us raise vital funds and campaign to help more people gain access to sanitation and water.

End Water Poverty

Take action with End Water Poverty and campaign for water and sanitation for all. The international campaign is calling for:

A global action plan to provide sanitation and water for all.

A global taskforce to lead an extraordinary government-led effort on sanitation.

A commitment that no country plan should fail for lack of finance.

A national framework to deliver improved sanitation at the local level.

To find out how you can get involved and to see the latest actions visit:

www.endwaterpoverty.org

Get involved

WaterAid couldn't survive without the dedicated efforts of our volunteers and supporters. Find out how you or your company, club, school or faith group can get involved at www.wateraid.org/getinvolved

Make a donation

To make a donation to support our vital work please visit www.wateraid.org/donate or call **0845 330 8400**.

The G8 Summit 2008



The G8 summit will take place in Hokkaido Toyako, Japan

from 7-9 July, 2008. Here the leaders from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, plus the President of the European Commission, will meet to discuss issues of global importance. Help put sanitation on the agenda by campaigning with End Water Poverty.

Sanitation - the Millennium Development Goal orphan

When the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were agreed in 2000, to halve world poverty by 2015, it was not until 2002 that sanitation was added in its own right. Yet now, halfway through the MDG timeframe, the target to halve the proportion of people living with safe sanitation is way off track. With current

progress it will not be reached until 2076 in Africa. Sanitation is crucial to the achievement of all of the MDGs. If we are serious about reaching these and reducing poverty then sanitation must be given as high a priority as health and education.

In Africa it is estimated that 5% of GDP is lost to the illnesses and deaths caused by poor sanitation and water.

MDG target

Link to sanitation

1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Bad sanitation spreads disease and the resulting illnesses or time spent caring for sick relatives decreases people's capacity to work. Extra money is needed for healthcare and medicines while diarrhoea and worms limit people's ability to absorb nutrients.



2 Achieve universal primary education

Both pupils and teachers stay away from schools without sanitation: 443 million school days are lost each year because of diarrhoea and teachers won't work in schools without sanitation facilities.



3 Promote gender equality and empower women

The lack of privacy caused by inadequate sanitation means women often wait until dark to go to the toilet risking their health and sexual abuse.



Women caring for relatives suffering from diseases caused by poor sanitation can't earn money and girls who don't attend school because of a lack of sanitation miss their chance of an education.

4 Reduce child mortality by two thirds for children under five

Diarrhoea caused by unsafe sanitation and water kills 5,000 children a day – arguably the biggest single cause of preventable child death. In addition hand washing with soap and water can reduce incidences of pneumonia by 45%.



5 Improve maternal health

During pregnancy the lack of sanitation means that women cannot carry out basic hygiene practices. Good sanitation helps to minimise the chance of illness for women and their babies.



6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

With weakened immune systems HIV/AIDS sufferers are greatly affected by the opportunist diseases caused by the lack of sanitation. Their frequent illnesses also mean they have a greater need for sanitation. Malaria carrying mosquitoes breed where sewage and waste remains in the open.



7 Ensure environmental sustainability – including targets to halve the proportion of people living without water and sanitation.

2.6 billion people still live without access to sanitation and 1.1 billion still live without safe water.



8 Develop a global partnership for development

Sanitation is vital for development and poverty reduction, yet it is not prioritised by governments and decision makers. Sanitation must be an integral part of all poverty reduction efforts.



THE GREAT STINK

In 1851 the urban population in Britain superseded that of rural areas for the first time - the first society in human history to do so. But the unplanned and overcrowded cities were unhealthy places to live. New epidemics from diseases like cholera thrived in the dense, overcrowded areas and deaths from sickness were at a level not seen since the Black Death.

In London the problem was becoming a crisis. Hundreds of thousands of homes still had stinking cesspits beneath them and in the poorest areas this vile effluent oozed up through the wooden floor boards.

In 1847 the newly formed Metropolitan Commission of Sewers took action, banning all cesspits and stating all privy refuse should be discharged in the sewers. This added to the waste from the 'water closets' (toilets) of the city's richer residents which had recently become popular.

However the 'sewers' were little more than storm drains and so the new law simply meant all human waste flowed straight in to the Thames. Reports over the following ten years recount how the situation worsened, with some inlets clogged up with piles of sewage. Wildlife died as the Thames became a cesspool reeking of the waste of the city's three million inhabitants.

Yet, despite the filth, the water itself was still pumped by the water companies back to supply the drinking water needs of the city.

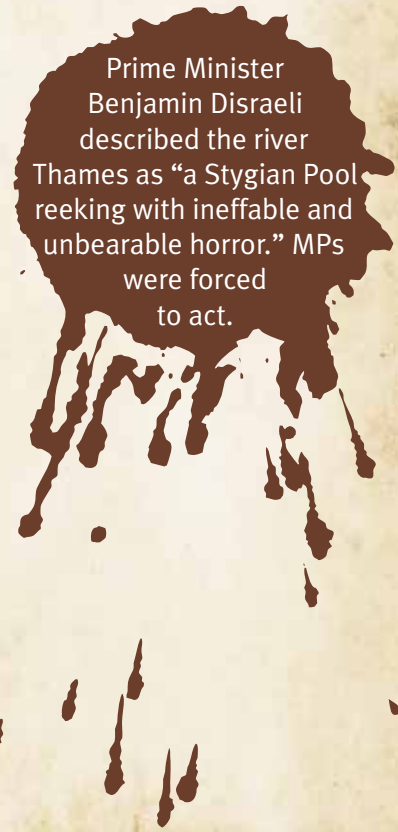
Then in 1858 a long hot summer made the stench unbearable. Tons of chalk and carbolic acid were tipped into the Thames but nothing could mask 'The Great Stink'. Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli described the river as "a Stygian Pool reeking with ineffable and unbearable horror." MPs were forced to act.

Within 18 days a bill was passed and the engineer Joseph Bazalgette was tasked with the vast job of building the city's sewers.

Bazalgette and his team began work in 1859 and in the following nine years, and at a cost of £4.2 million, they built 82 miles of intercepting sewers parallel to the River Thames, and 1,100 miles of street sewers with outfalls at Barking and Crossness. In 1868 the feat described by the Observer as "the most extensive and wonderful work of modern times" was complete; and much is still in use today.



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SIR JOHN SNOW 1813-1858

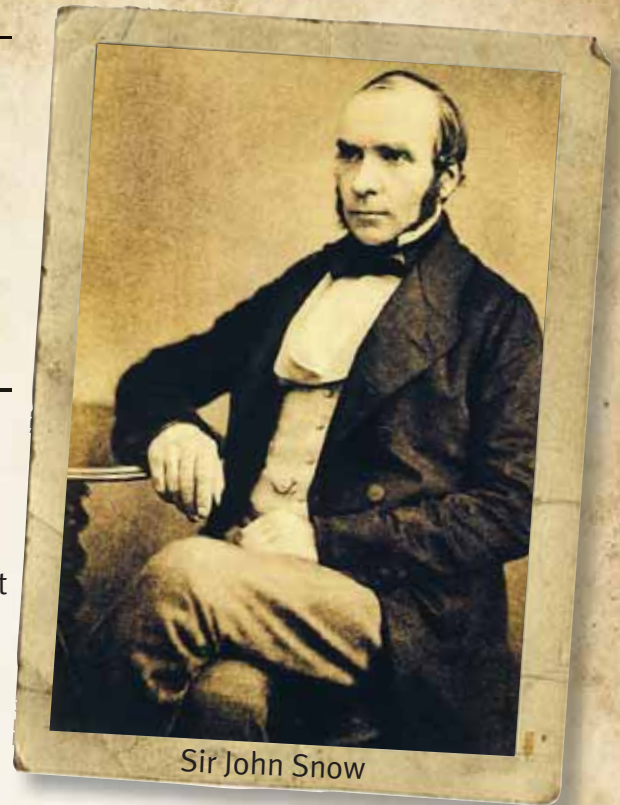
June 16 2008 marks 150 years since the death of John Snow, the famous epidemiologist who identified the cause of cholera in 1854.

The 1853/4 London cholera outbreak killed 10,675 people. It was September of that second year that a further outbreak, having killed some 616 people, was famously traced by Dr John Snow to its source, the sewage-polluted water from Soho's Broad Street pump. Snow had the pump handle removed and within days the outbreak dramatically slowed.

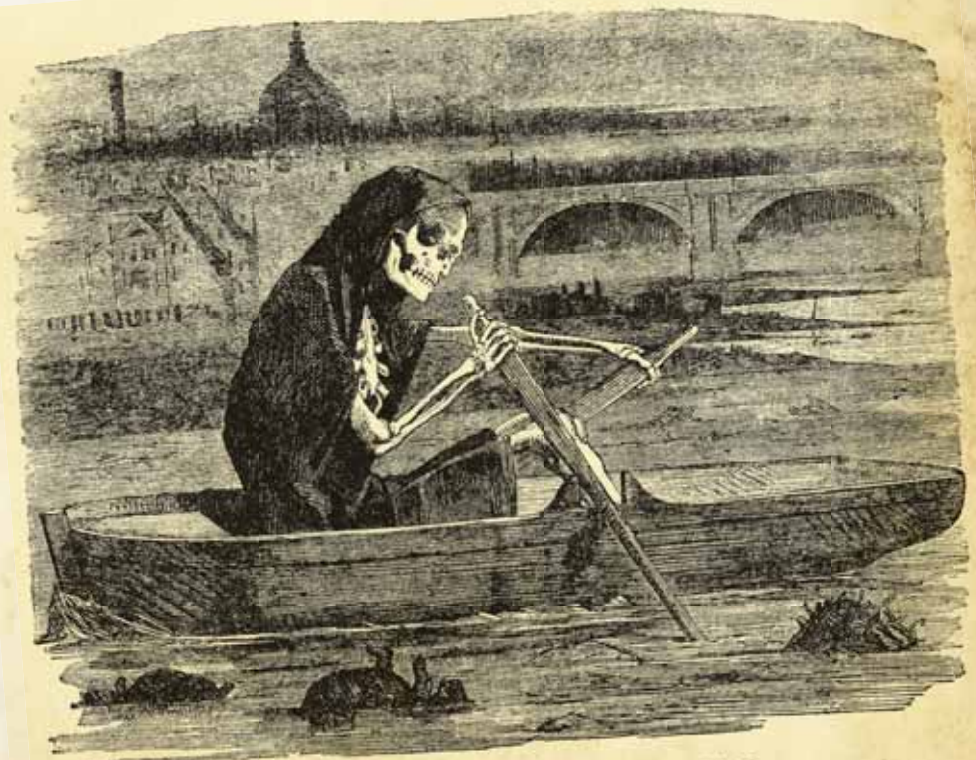
Part of the evidence was the case of a woman living in Hampstead who, having previously lived in Soho, had grown so attached to the taste of the Broad Street water that she still sent her servant to collect water there. And so she alone among the residents of Hampstead died from the Soho cholera outbreak.

Prior to this the received wisdom was that cholera was caused by 'miasma', or bad air. But by demonstrating that the Broad Street water was contaminated by a cesspool which ran underground close to the pump Dr Snow revolutionised the understanding of cholera and the importance of safe water for public health.

Sadly, on publication his research wasn't taken seriously, and it wasn't until the 1860s, after his death, that his findings were widely accepted. The pump can still be seen in Broadwick Street in Soho, close to the John Snow pub.




Sir John Snow




THE "SILENT HIGHWAY"-MAN




Factfile


 **Water, sanitation** and hygiene education can reduce childhood deaths from diarrhoea by 88%.


 **2.6 billion people** in the world do not have access to adequate sanitation, this is roughly two fifths of the world's population.

 **Composting latrines** reuse human waste, giving farmers a free source of compost, boosting crop yields and saving money previously spent on fertilisers.

 **More than half** of the hospital beds in the developing world are filled with people suffering from sanitation-related diseases.

 **The UN estimates** that for every US\$1 invested in sanitation at least US\$9 is saved in health, education and economic development.

 **One gram of human faeces** can contain 10,000,000 viruses, 1,000,000 bacteria, 1,000 parasite cysts, 100 parasite eggs.

 **VIP, or ventilated improved pit,** latrines are designed to take flies and smells away.



WaterAid

WaterAid's mission is to overcome poverty by enabling the world's poorest people to gain access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education.

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Charity registration number 288701

Good sanitation is vital to ensure girls stay in school.



WaterAid/Caroline Irby

Sabina Roka,
Simle School, Nepal



WaterAid/Marco Betti

“We used to hide under the bamboo to go to the loo. It was really difficult especially during our periods or when we had diarrhoea. We wouldn't come to school then and used to stay at home instead. If we had a toilet we could continue our classes instead. Now we don't need to miss our classes and we feel healthier than before. We feel very happy that we can carry on with our studies.”

Patience Dominic,
Teacher at Warok
Primary School, Nigeria



WaterAid/Suzanne Porter

“It was very important to me that the school had a well and latrines, because I know how much safe water and hygiene matter. I have five children, two boys and three girls, and they all go to the school here. I would not want them going to a school without these facilities and I would not be willing to teach in such a school. I know how important education is, especially in rural communities, but I must put the health of my children first.”