

ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF POOR SANITATION IN AFRICA



“This is powerful evidence for Ministers that their countries will not be able to grow sustainably without addressing these costs.” -- Jaehyang So, WSP Manager

18 African countries are losing about US\$5.5 billion every year due to poor sanitation

- These countries account for 554million people, which is more than half of Africa’s population
- The annual economic losses due to poor sanitation are equivalent to **between 1% and 2.5%** of GDP.
- The true cost could be much higher: this analysis only deals with losses due to premature deaths, healthcare costs, losses in productivity, and time lost through the practice of open defecation.
- Other adverse impacts of inadequate sanitation likely to be significant, but difficult and expensive to estimate, include the costs of epidemic outbreaks; losses in trade and tourism revenue; impact of unsafe excreta disposal on water resources; and the long-term effects of poor sanitation on early childhood development.

Open defecation alone accounts for almost US\$2 billion in annual losses in 18 countries

- More than **114 million people** still defecate in the open in the 18 countries surveyed; this is about half the number of people on the continent and almost **24% of the total population** in the countries surveyed.
- Eliminating the practice of open defecation in these countries would require about 23 million toilets to be built and used.

Open defecation costs more per person than any other type of unimproved sanitation

- Each person without access to a toilet can spend up to **2.5 days a year** finding a private location to defecate, resulting in losses totaling almost **US\$500 million** in access time annually due to open defecation for the 18 countries surveyed.
- Women shoulder a huge proportion of this cost as they spend additional time accompanying young children or sick or elderly relatives.

The burden of poor sanitation falls disproportionately on the poor

- In all countries, the poorest people are more likely to practice open defecation than the wealthiest people.

In most countries, current investments in sanitation are less than 0.1% of GDP

- Currently, only **five** of the 18 countries surveyed invest between 0.1% and 0.5% of GDP in sanitation.
- Although African countries committed to increase their budgetary allocations for sanitation to at least 0.5% of GDP (*eThekwin Declaration, 2008*), none of the 18 countries surveyed has reached that target yet.

SANITATION DATA FROM 18 COUNTRIES IN AFRICA

| Country | Population (millions) | Annual cost of poor sanitation to national economy (\$ millions) | National economic loss as % of GDP | Annual cost of open defecation (\$ millions) | No. of latrines needed (approx.) |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. Benin | 8.8 | 104 | 1.5 | 75 | 1,000,000 |
| 2. Burkina Faso | 15.8 | 171 | 2 | 124 | 2,000,000 |
| 3. Central African Republic | 4.8 | 26 | 1.2 | 9.1 | 200,000 |
| 4. Congo, Republic of | 4 | 144 | 1.1 | 20 | 65,000 |
| 5. Democratic Republic of Congo | 68.7 | 192 | 1.6 | 32 | 1,500,000 |
| 6. Ghana | 23.8 | 290 | 1.6 | 79 | 1,000,000 |
| 7. Kenya | 39 | 324 | 0.9 | 88 | 1,200,000 |
| 8. Liberia | 3.6 | 17.5 | 2 | 11 | 350,000 |
| 9. Madagascar | 20.7 | 103 | 1 | 48 | 1,500,000 |
| 10. Mauritania | 3.1 | 41 | 1.2 | 30.4 | 350,000 |
| 11. Mozambique | 21.7 | 124 | 1.2 | 70 | 2,000,000 |
| 12. Niger | 15.3 | 148 | 2.4 | 128 | 2,000,000 |
| 13. Nigeria | 149 | 3,000 | 1.3 | 1,000 | 6,500,000 |
| 14. Rwanda | 10.8 | 54 | 0.9 | 3.9 | 70,000 |
| 15. Tanzania | 41 | 206 | 1 | 46 | 1,000,000 |
| 16. Tchad | 10.3 | 156 | 2.1 | 114 | 1,500,000 |
| 17. Uganda | 32.3 | 177 | 1.1 | 41 | 650,000 |
| 18. Zambia | 11.9 | 194 | 1.3 | 71 | 420,000 |

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