

Join the World's Longest Toilet Queue

World Water Day, March 2010

(Updated 14 August 2009)

On World Water Day, 22 March 2010, End Water Poverty, FAN and WSSCC are asking campaigners across the world to unite around a common mass campaign action, and stand in solidarity with the same voice.

Activists will organise events, long or small, in a whole range of public places to help form the World's Longest Toilet Queue.

This will be the key moment in the campaigning year, at a crucial time to mobilise action to tackle the sanitation and water crisis.

The aim is to influence politicians and experts attending the first ever Annual High-Level Meeting on Water and Sanitation, which is likely to take place in Washington in April 2010 and convened by UNICEF (exact date and location to be confirmed). The meeting will bring together politicians and experts from donor countries, multilateral institutions and representatives from the most off-track regions.

By lobbying politicians, gaining media attention and demonstrating the breadth of support for the campaign, The World's Longest Toilet Queue aims to ensure that the High-Level Meeting delivers real action towards achieving sanitation and water for all.

Why queue?

In many places where access to toilets is limited, queuing for facilities- often unhygienic - is a daily burden and health risk. In the neighborhood of Mbare, Harare, Zimbabwe, for example, up to 1,300 people share one small communal toilet block. For many others around the world, there are not even toilets to queue for.

Holding events, representing the problem of queuing for your most basic of rights, shows solidarity with the 2.5 billion people who do not have access to safe sanitation.

Furthermore, important actions will take place at the queues. Participants will add their names to petitions on local, regional, national and international issues, which will then form one global mandate for action.

The events will offer creative, fun and politically engaging ways of gaining media attention, influencing politicians and showing the scale of support for the campaign.

What do I need to do?

To support this effort you need to organise or take part in an event at which supporters of the campaign queue for the toilet. Events should be held on World Water Day, 22 March 2010, and they can be large or small, and held anywhere.

Make this event your own, and fill it with your own ideas and inspirations, and start planning soon. When you've decided the basics of your event, register it online so we can add your event to the global total.

As well as your own ideas, please try to incorporate the following elements to make it a success:

A demand – Decide on a specific demand or group of demands that participants can support. For example, you may have a local demand for more or better sanitation facilities, or a national demand for a more credible sanitation plan, or you could be calling internationally for developed country governments to provide aid for sanitation plans. Get your supporters to put their name to your chosen demand(s) and ensure that this detail is communicated to organisers of the World's Longest Toilet Queue when you register your event.

An action – All participants should put their name to the event through an action of your choosing, for example, people can sign a petition, they could sign a petition banner, they could have their photo taken on the loo when they reach the front of the queue, or they could make a short speech on why having a toilet is important.

Message - You can devise your own slogans to put on materials, in press releases and chant, but some messages to get across might be “2.5 billion people are dying for the toilet”, “The world can't wait for toilets for all” or “Join the Call, Toilets for All” as well as your specific policy calls.

People - Get as many people involved as possible, including groups such as politicians, health professionals, economists, schoolchildren, women's groups, trade unions, faith leaders, cultural figures, celebrities, and communities affected by poor sanitation.

A toilet - The toilet could be a real toilet, an exhibition, someone dressed up as a toilet, or a hole in the ground where you think a toilet should be. NB. To qualify as part of the Guinness World Record, a toilet (real, representational or mocked up) must be included.

A venue - Encourage queues to be organised at both local and national levels, from queues at politician's offices, shopping centres, workplaces, schools, and community areas up to large scale events in national capitals or at prominent national landmarks.

An idea to make it politically engaging - Could you invite political leaders and politicians to meet and talk with those forming the queue? Could you hold it in a politically significant venue such as outside Parliament, politician's office or a key embassy? How will your participants put their name to the event? Will they sign a pledge, vote in a latrine ballot box, sign a petition board, contribute to a photo petition or write a letter to their political representatives?

An idea to make it fun - Can you liven up the queue with people wearing costumes, making banners or playing music? Could you create activities for people to do while taking part? Are there educational materials you could use? Could you make the queue one part of a bigger event such as a rally or a march? Or for a more sombre event, could you hold a candlelight vigil to commemorate those who have died from poor sanitation?

A media plan - Maximise the impact of your event by promoting it to the local media, and providing press releases, photo opportunities and prominent spokespeople.

A camera and a counter - Take pictures and/or videos of the event, and count how many people took part. Make sure the numbers and photos are sent in to be included in the total and shown on the website.

Once collected and completed, End Water Poverty, FAN and WSSCC will use the actions and messages to communicate to leaders attending the High-Level Meeting.

Nearer the time, further guides, a microsite, ideas and materials will be provided but do start planning your event now! Please contact info@endwaterpoverty.org with plans or questions.

What do we want the High-Level Meeting to agree?

We want leaders to take substantive action and formally support the Global Framework for Action on Water and Sanitation, an agreement in which:

- Southern Governments develop credible national plans to provide sanitation and water for all, and invest more in their implementation.
- Donor Governments support the development of these plans, and ensure that no credible national plan fails for lack of finance
- International systems are developed to monitor and drive progress in the sector, including specifically a global task force, an annual review and an annual global high level meeting.

For more information on the Global Framework for Action please visit www.endwaterpoverty.org/globalframework.