



Key Messages of APWF 14th Webinar

Revolutionizing Sanitation: A World Toilet Day Talk with Jack Sim and Experts from ADB, Water.org, and SATO LIXIL

19th November 2024: World Toilet Day

On November 19, the Asia-Pacific Water Forum (APWF) hosted a webinar featuring Prof. Dr. Jack Sim, founder and director of the World Toilet Organization, a key figure in the establishment of World Toilet Day, and global advocate for improving sanitation, particularly in developing countries. In addition to his keynote presentation, the webinar included a panel discussion with experts and practitioners from ADB, Water.org, and LIXIL Sato, who shared their insights and recommendations. Pierre Flamand of the Japan Sanitation Consortium moderated the panel.

Below is a summary of Jack Sim's keynote speech and the key takeaways from the panel discussion.

Summary of Jack Sim's keynote presentation

Witnessing the health risks and indignity of open defecation in India in 2001 inspired the founding of the World Toilet Organization (WTO). This grassroots initiative sought to break the global taboo around sanitation, using humor and impactful messaging like "Love Your Toilet." Despite no formal authority or budget, the movement gained traction, with November 19th declared World Toilet Day, now a UN observance since 2013.

Over the past 24 years, the WTO has been a driving force for global change, revolutionizing the perception of toilets as a status symbol and adopting market-driven approaches to tackle sanitation challenges. By collaborating with policymakers, governments from nations like India, China, and Brazil, influential figures such as former President Bill Clinton and Bill Gates, and celebrities including Akshay Kumar, Matt Damon, Amitabh Bachchan, and Salman Khan, the WTO successfully drew global attention to the critical issue of sanitation access.

Its initiatives focused on mobilizing resources, advocating for large-scale investments, and expanding sanitation infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. Highlights include China's "Toilet Revolution," which upgraded facilities in 215,000 schools, and India's Swachh Bharat Mission, which led to the construction of 110 million toilets. Brazil's \$14 billion investment in sanitation further underscored the global impact of these efforts.

The WTO has also tackled deeply entrenched harmful practices, such as manual scavenging, by training 75,000 sanitation workers and promoting safer, more sustainable



technologies. These initiatives have transformed sanitation access for 2.5 billion people, leaving an enduring legacy of health, dignity, and progress.

Looking ahead, the focus is on innovative, market-based solutions to sustain progress amid shrinking development aid. The WTO continues transforming lives through improved health, dignity, and peace by fostering collaboration, leveraging collective agendas, and prioritizing sanitation alongside climate action.

Panel Discussion

Panelists:

- Prof Dr. Jack Sim, Founder & Director, World Toilet Organization
- Mr. Jitendra Kumar Singh, Water Supply and Sanitation Specialist, Strategy and Partnerships Team, Water and Urban Development Sector Office, Sectors Group, Asian Development Bank(ADB)
- Ms. Josephine Mendoza, Senior Partnership Account Manager of Water.org.
- Mr. Daigo Ishiyama, Leader, Innovation, SATO Lixil

Moderator: Dr. Pierre Flamand, Japan Sanitation Consortium (JSC)

Summary of the Panel Discussion

Global Efforts and Progress:

World Toilet Day has played a vital role in bringing sanitation challenges to the forefront of global discussions, spurring initiatives to reduce open defecation and improve access to safe toilets. Since its inception in 2013, collaborative efforts across sectors have reached millions of people, showcasing the impact of partnerships and market-based solutions such as those by the WTOⁱ, Sato LIXILⁱⁱ, and Water.orgⁱⁱⁱ.

Emerging Trends:

Innovative approaches using non-sewered sanitation systems, gender-specific toilets, and fecal sludge management with mechanized tools have gained traction over the last decade. Financial institutions like the Asian Development Bank have been integrating sanitation components into broader infrastructure projects and piloting cutting-edge technologies to enhance efficiency and sustainability.

Challenges Ahead:

Despite progress and improved affordability, the willingness to pay for sanitation services and the safe management of non-sewer sanitation systems remain a problem. Behavioral shifts and



strong governmental leadership accompanied by regulatory, institutional and financial frameworks are essential to accelerate access. Leveraging the expertise of the private sector and ensuring inclusive approaches will be key to sustaining momentum in the coming years.

To achieve universal sanitation access, efforts must focus on increasing investments, fostering innovations, and making sanitation solutions as desirable and essential as other life-changing technologies like mobile phones.

Call to Action:

Addressing the global sanitation crisis requires a comprehensive approach beyond toilet construction to encompass the entire sanitation service chain. Challenges such as financial constraints, lack of integrated planning, which leaves out non-sewered sanitation as a public service, and unsustainable donation-driven projects highlight the need for innovative financing mechanisms, institutional and regulatory mechanisms, capacity building, school and community education, and user ownership. Examples like India's Swachh Bharat Mission demonstrate the potential and limitations of large-scale initiatives, emphasizing the importance of creating demand for sanitation infrastructure and ensuring sustainable maintenance. Technical innovations and partnerships with financial institutions, SMEs, and governments are crucial in achieving safely managed and inclusive sanitation for all.

World Toilet Day 2024 emphasizes the need for safe and secure sanitation solutions amid various global security challenges, including disaster risk. Discussions highlighted the potential of innovations like reinvented toilets and the need to reconsider traditional systems. Individual and community actions to invest in sanitation, raising awareness, and holding leaders accountable are crucial for progress. Addressing behavioral barriers and fostering a sense of collective responsibility are equally important. Efficient knowledge sharing and advocating for sanitation's political and economic benefits can drive funding and action. A collaborative, forward-thinking approach is essential to achieving SDG 6.

The recording of the webinar https://youtu.be/LfyAUdw_HQc

Reporter: Yumiko Asayama, Chief Manager

i [WTO](#)

ii [Sato LIXIL](#)

iii [Water.org](#)