

Press Release of the German Toilet Organization



“Leave Noone Behind”

School Pupils in Berlin Demand Safe Sanitation for Everyone Worldwide

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According to the World Health Organization (WHO) 4.2 billion people worldwide have no access to safe sanitation. Berlin school students publicly demonstrated on the occasion of World Toilet Day 2019.

Dressed in suits, Berlin school students invited passers-by to a “toilet exhibition tent” at Potsdamer Platz in the heart of Germany’s capital. Inside the tent, a self-built, “inadequate” toilet demonstrated the poor sanitary conditions, which are reality in many parts of the world. Bottles of dirty water were handed out and a toilet-cake was on offer. The message: Toilets can save lives!

The students are highlighting the fact that the global community can only achieve their self-imposed development goals, if they show solidarity with those, who are most affected by the sanitation crisis: the elderly, sick, refugees, children, otherwise marginalised groups and all those affected by disasters who are most affected by the world’s sanitation crisis.

Toilets are an elementary part of human dignity and since 2010 also a human right. It is a scandal that many politicians do not know this and that the states do not act sufficiently, a spokesman for the students explained. The states would only achieve their self-imposed United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals in the area of sanitation if politics finally got the taboo subject out of the dirty corner. Goal 6 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals calls for safe toilets, clean drinking water and access to hygiene for all people by 2030.

"If governments and even donor countries like Germany do not start to focus their efforts on those people who are most difficult to reach, we will crash and miss this target," explains Johannes Rück, spokesman for the German Toilet Organization (GTO). There are still 673 million people without toilets, including the poor, the elderly and the sick, residents of slums, refugees, indigenous people and those affected by disasters. World Bank figures prove that the aid is not reaching these people today: only 6% of the subsidies that flow into water and sanitation in developing countries benefit the poorest 20% of the population.

According to the WHO, access to water, sanitation and hygiene can save the lives of 297,000 children under the age of 5 every year. Washing hands also reduces the risk of diarrhoea by 30 percent. Although the proportion of people with access to safely managed sanitation has risen from 28 to 45 percent in the last 10 years, 673 million people are still defecating in the open - an inhumane situation with serious consequences for public health and the environment. WHO studies further show that increasing investment in access to improved toilets results in low health costs, higher productivity and fewer premature deaths.

The event was part of the development education project "Toiletised World" of the GTO. Within the project, GTO organises one-day workshops at schools and jointly plans events to raise public awareness for development-policy issues with the school children.

The following schools participated: Werner-von-Siemens-Gymnasium (Steglitz-Zehlendorf), the John-F.-Kennedy Schule (Steglitz-Zehlendorf) and the Johann-Gottfried-Herder-Gymnasium (Lichtenberg). The GTO has successfully implemented "Toiletised World" since 2009.

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The German Toilet Organization e.V. (GTO) is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation, which was founded in Berlin in 2005. GTO works in the fields of developmental cooperation, humanitarian aid, health and environmental protection. The vision of GTO is equal access to clean toilets and

sustainable sanitation for all humans. To this end, GTO runs projects, campaigns and educational events in Germany and abroad.

More information: www.germantoilet.org

In Germany, the GTO is a member of the WASH network (www.washnet.de). Internationally, GTO is a partner of the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (www.sunasa.org). The action of the GTO is hereby a contribution to the collective action and list of other celebrations taking place in these networks on the occasion of World Toilet Day.

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