“Breaking the Taboo”
Congratulatory Messages

King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands  |  Goh Chok Tong  |  Professor Tommy Koh  |  Tharman Shanmugaratnam  |  George Yeo  |  Hilde Schwab and Professor Klaus Schwab  |  Jan Eliasson
On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the World Toilet Organization which was founded by you, I would like you to know how much I admire your tireless efforts for worldwide sanitation. I often reflect on the years I was actively involved in this work as Chairman of the United Nations Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation. In those days, we were frequently in touch with each other. During summits in New Delhi and Macau I noticed how you always managed to motivate people with your energy and creativity. A fantastic inspiration for many and also for me!

In 2008 I remember visiting Atteridgeville, close to Pretoria, and addressing a crowd of 3000 school children during Global Handwashing Day. I told them how important it is to wash your hands thoroughly. Washing your hands with soap is the best and easiest way of protecting yourself from a contagious disease. To many people – both young and old – this seemed somewhat of an abstract notion. No-one could have imagined that just 11 years later, we would experience first-hand that such simple hygienic measures are a matter of life and death the whole world over. Covid-19 has made us face the facts. Basic hygiene and adequate sanitary facilities can save millions of lives. This is a message that you, as founder and initiator of the WTO, have been spreading with such determination.

We must make every effort to carry on with this work. According to the United Nations, 4.2 billion people are without safely managed sanitation and 3 billion don’t have basic hand washing facilities at home. We are still a far cry from our Sustainable Development Goal to provide access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all. I hope and expect that the recent experiences with the corona virus will give us new impetus. This work is of vital importance for a safe and healthy future.

Mr Sim, both your expertise and enthusiasm in this field are crucial. Thank you so very much for everything you and the WTO have contributed to health, dignity and development in the last two decennia and I wish you every success in the years to come!
I grew up in a house without electricity or modern sanitation until my family moved into a three-room public housing flat. My appreciation for modern sanitation is the reason why I supported Jack Sim when he launched his quirky World Toilet Organization. I have also always felt that we should nurture graciousness in our society, and have publicly suggested that the cleanliness of public toilets is one marker to track our progress towards a gracious society. I applaud Jack and the World Toilet Organization for their efforts to improve toilet and sanitation conditions worldwide over the past 20 years.
I consider you a treasure of Singapore and the world. Your campaign to enable every citizen of this planet have access to a toilet is magnificent. Because of your passion, eloquence and persuasiveness, your campaign has been embraced by the leaders of the world, including China and India. Because of your initiative and efforts, the UN has designated the 19th of November as World Toilet Day.
I would like to extend my congratulations to you on the 20th anniversary of the World Toilet Organization.

Access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene are basic to progress. Yet more than half of the world’s population still lacks proper sanitation. As countries urbanise and population grow, the most disadvantaged will continue to bear the brunt of poor sanitation. Access to safe and adequate sanitation is also fundamental to public health in pandemics, in lowering the risk of disease and preventing premature deaths.

The World Toilet Organisation’s efforts have made a significant contribution to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation for all. I wish the World Toilet Organisation continued success in uplifting the dignity and livelihoods of vulnerable populations globally.
Ten years ago, as I was using a public toilet in Sanya on the south coast of China’s Hainan Island, I saw on the wall a notice in Chinese and English informing the reader that there were two WTO’s in the world – one based in Geneva and the other in Singapore. Jack Sim’s WTO is funny and it has made Singapore famous.

By making toilets a funny subject, Jack has succeeded in surfacing a subject which has long been shunned in public discourse even though it affects everyone everyday. In many countries, it is common for women to avoid drinking water in order to reduce the need to use the toilet. In many offices, senior staff have special toilets in order that they need not use common toilets.

Toilets are an egregious example of market failure. It is not expensive to provide good, clean toilets. Yet these are often short in supply. The reasons are principally sociological and psychological. The lack of money is sometimes but not often a reason. I was involved once in helping a Singapore embassy raise money for toilets for a rural district in a developing country. The toilets were built quickly enough. We did not expect that, far from being welcome, what we did was met with suspicion. The opening ceremony which I was looking forward to attending had to be cancelled. Poor toilets are the result of a deeper problem in society which is not purely economic.

In some countries, it is difficult to find a dirty toilet. Japan is an outstanding example. However, Japanese culture is exceptional in many ways and not always easy for non-Japanese to emulate. We therefore need a combination of efforts. Economic resources are needed to establish sewage systems. Public policy matters. But culture matters even more. How do we encourage a person who is alone in the WC to keep a toilet clean when no one is looking? There has to be motivation from inside. We also know that it is easier to keep a clean toilet clean.

Jack has struggled for years to shine a light to a problem which all of us know exist but often pretend not to notice. In fact, he has managed to put it on the global agenda. In 2013, with the help of the Singapore Foreign Ministry, he succeeded in getting the UN General Assembly to adopt unanimously the founding day of the World Toilet organization on 19 November as UN World Toilet Day. If toilets were an easy problem to solve, there is no need to trouble the UN which has enough problems on its plate already. It is not an easy problem to solve. It is a tenacious problem which requires the movement which Jack started to become a movement in every country. We need a worldwide movement.

We celebrate twenty years of the establishment of the World Toilet organization and congratulate Jack and his friends for their fantastic effort. But this is only a milestone. There is much more work to be done, and that work must be done by all of us.
We extend our heartfelt congratulations to the World Toilet Organization for reaching this 20 year milestone. WTO’s tireless efforts have helped to improve the hygiene and sanitation conditions of millions of lives around the world. They are championing an issue that is so prolific yet often neglected. Jack Sim was among one of the first members of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship community almost 20 years ago. His energy, enthusiasm and passion to bring positive change will always be an inspiration to us all. We wish Jack and the WTO team continued success in tackling this global crisis.
I think this approach that you, Jack, introduced by bringing the toilet issue to the highest levels of government, as you have done so successfully in so many countries; I’m really impressed by how many Prime Ministers and Presidents are lining up at your side, but also that it is all related at the end to the little villages in Africa, or the villages in South Asia, where people really are suffering.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jack Sim  |  Calvin Chu  |  Trudi Bishop  |  Sandeep Khanna  |  Ali Shabaz  |  William Sim
Jack Sim is a leading social entrepreneur and sanitation advocate who broke the taboo around toilets by bringing the sanitation crisis to the global media spotlight. Known for his unique efforts in combining humour and serious facts to advocate for improved sanitation conditions globally, Sim has mobilized a global movement involving governments, policy makers, UN agencies, international civil society, thought leaders and activists to work together in addressing the sanitation crisis.

A highly successful businessman with over 20 years experience in entrepreneurship, Sim, at the age of 40, decided to devote the rest of his life to social work. In 1998, he established the Restroom Association of Singapore (RAS). This was soon followed with a global body on sanitation – the World Toilet Organization (WTO) in 2001. Today, WTO is a growing network of 235 organizations in 58 countries. Sim pioneered the creation of a game-changing social enterprise – SaniShop in 2008, a year designated by the United Nations as the International Year of Sanitation.

In 2011, Sim created another milestone for WTO and Singapore by being the first Singapore-based non-profit organization to create and implement a Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) commitment. In 2013, Sim worked with the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs to table a resolution titled ‘Sanitation for All’ at the United Nations General Assembly to designate 19 November as an official UN World Toilet Day. On July 24 2013, the resolution was adopted by consensus and was co-sponsored to more than 100 countries. Sim has received worldwide recognition for his contributions to the field of social entrepreneurship and sanitation.
Calvin Chu is a Partner at Eden Strategy Institute, with responsibilities in thought leadership, strategy design, client servicing, mission delivery, and practice management. Before founding Eden, Calvin was Vice-President of Business and Strategy Development at the Singapore Exchange (SGX), and Business Group Director leading the Singapore office of a London-listed global consulting firm. He is Eden’s Practice Lead for the Financial Services sector.

Calvin specializes in the areas of growth and competitive strategy, innovation scouting and development, product launch and market entry, M&A and partnerships, scenario planning, and wargaming. He has advised over a hundred Fortune 500 clients in more than 20 countries, including prestigious organizations such as 3M, Canon, Coca-Cola, Covidien, Cummins, DBS Bank, etc.

He has been published in business titles such as Asian Banking & Finance, Asian Intellectual Property, Asia Pacific Biotech News, BusinessWeek, Harvard Business Review, the Star, the Straits Times, the Singapore Business Review, Today, and The Wall Street Journal. Calvin has also been invited to address international conferences such as the ASEAN Social Entrepreneurship Forum, the Asia-Pacific CFO Summit, Biomedical Business Conference (NUS & the Harvard Club of Singapore), etc.

Calvin is an Associate Lecturer in Strategy and Organization with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, an iAdvisor with IE Singapore, an Executive Advisor at NUS Enterprise, and a Board Member of Conjunct Consulting, BioFourmis, and Rotary Club. Calvin was recognized as a NetImpact Change-maker in 2014 and inducted into the International Who’s Who of Professionals in 2009. Calvin graduated from the National University of Singapore majoring in Psychology and Political Science and holds an MBA from the University of Chicago.
Trudi Bishop is the director of her own consultancy, Bee Licensing, advising on product marketing strategies and brand licensing partnerships. While based in the United Kingdom, she spent 15 years working in pan-European and Asia Pacific roles as a Product Marketing executive for blue chip companies such as Callaway Golf, Cartamundi, and Leapfrog Toys.

She was voted as the top 100 women in toys and licensing four years running from 2014 - 2017 by UK industry peers. Trudi has had numerous articles published in global magazines, Total Licensing and Toy News focussing on sustainability, the climate crisis and brand purpose driving awareness and change within the toy and licensing industries.

In 2020 Trudi trained as a Climate Reality Leader as part of Al Gore’s Climate Reality project generating awareness to the climate crisis and its potential solutions.

Trudi is now based in her home country of New Zealand where she has been appointed as a Committee Member on the Banks Peninsula Water Zone committee for Environment Canterbury.

Trudi has always been passionate about the environment, the interconnectedness of nature, and equality for all living beings. After meeting World Toilet Organization’s founder, Jack Sim, at a global Sustainability Conference in 2018, Trudi’s eyes were opened to the deep issues relating to 40% of the global population being without access to clean sanitation.

Understanding the relationship between clean sanitation, education, health, and the environment drives Trudi forward in all her passions.
Over 30 years of rich cross-cultural experience in advertising, marketing, consulting and learning across Asia. Having worked in 4 countries in Asia (India, Singapore, Vietnam, and the Philippines), has a strong knowledge of emerging markets coupled with a deep understanding of Asian consumers, branding, and business.

Built award-winning and highly effective marketing programs and helped transform brands as diverse as paints, mobile phones, and consumer durables.

Pioneered Digital Marketing initiatives and used consumer insights to build compelling brand differentiation. Thought leader in branding and marketing through spoken and written forums.

Built high performing teams across the region—in regional and local roles. Coached leaders to become the best versions of themselves. Demonstrates a positive, can-do attitude (probably stems from the blood group—B positive!) and a hands-on work ethic.
One of Asia’s most experienced and highly awarded Creative leaders, with over 25 years’ experience in advertising and brand building across SEA and the Middle East. He has led agencies and teams creating big ideas across all disciplines. An avid trainer who conducts regular workshops on digital-readiness and unlocking creative potential.

Recognised at every major award show with over 30 Cannes Lions and the first Innovation and Product Cannes Lions for Singapore for the “The Life Saving Dot”, which featured in TIME Magazine and BBC.

Voted Advertising Person of the Year, Singapore & Most Influential Creative Director, Singapore, and among the top ten creative leaders in Asia.

Delivered talks on Creativity to HSBC’s global team, to Google on “Advertising post-Covid” at HR conferences, the Singapore Institute of Management, NAFA Singapore and NUS Singapore.
William Sim is an entrepreneur with diverse business experiences. William is actively in Community and Social Services despite his busy schedule. He started in 1981, serving for 16 years in Resident’s Committee and Neighbourhood Committee. From 1997 to 2000, William was one of the first 47 appointed Council Member of the Tanjong Pagar Community Development Council for 2 Consecutive terms, involved in “Fund Raising” and taking care of “Senior Citizen”.

He currently serves as Advisor to SAFRA Entrepreneurs Club (website: www.safra.sg/sec). He is Honorary Patron of Nanyang Sim Clan Association and a Fellow member of the Singapore Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management (SIPMM). SIPMM is the organization that provides the monthly Purchasing Managers Index to the press for publication. He is now serving as 1st Deputy President of Singapore Numismatic Association under Peoples Association’s Hobby Club. He is the Honorary Director of Teochew Poit Ip Huay Kuan. He was Council Member of Singapore Heritage Society (SHS) for 10 years. SHS is an Institution of Public Character (IPC).
Nielsen is a Product Manager at a software company in Canada, and has experience in a broad range of business functions across Asian and North American industries. More importantly, she deeply appreciates the mission that WTO champions because of her personal background. Nielsen grew up in an area of Indonesia where she witnessed the unfortunate state of sanitation and the negative effects it can have on society. Nielsen has always been passionate about toilets, and she is excited to be bringing her expertise and passion to her work with the WTO.
LETTER FROM JACK

REFLECTION ON WORLD TOILET ORGANIZATION’S 20TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Image right:
Jack Sim in 1960 when he was 3 years old. Open defecation was common in Singapore in those days.

GROWING UP IN SINGAPORE.
I was born in Singapore in 1957 when Singapore was a British colony. In the 1950s – 1960s, Singapore was very different from the modern Singapore as we know it today. I grew up in the slums of Singapore, and the concept of a modern toilet was alien to our communities. In those days, toilets were a row of common timber huts shared by the whole community. We were living in a kampung (a slum) on Lorong Ong Lye, near Paya Lebar Rd. Our house had an ‘atap’ roof made of coconut leaves. It often leaked when it rained and we would put pails and other containers under it to collect the dripping water.
The public accessed clean water from a common standpipe but the water supply was inconsistent. The lack of proper sanitation and easy access to clean water often led to cholera and typhoid fever outbreaks. Most of the children also suffered from intestinal worms. The children that I played with were often naked, and I remembered seeing intestinal worms wriggling out of their bums while we were playing hopscotch.

Children taking a shower at communal standpipe taps.

Singapore gained independence in 1965. The country’s nominal GDP per capita then was around USD 500. To avoid high healthcare expenditures, the public policy approach was geared towards preventative care rather than curative. Under strong leadership, Singapore started to thrive as its economy boomed. Within a few years, many families acquired the means to move out of the slums into public housing flats equipped with modern flush toilets.

My family was poor and I did not have the opportunity to pursue higher education. I started my entrepreneurship journey at the age of twenty-four importing building materials from Europe into Singapore for its construction industry. Fast forward sixteen years later, I owned sixteen profitable businesses across many industries, including building materials trading, manufacturing, education, and real estate development.
The late 1990s saw the coming of the Asian Financial Crisis (1997–1998) and Singapore was hit by a recession. I had just turned forty and had lost half of my wealth. My life was in crisis, and that made me ponder. What is the purpose of making money? Is there a higher purpose in life? And suddenly, it struck me. I knew what I wanted. I wanted to live a fulfilling life. I wanted to be useful. To achieve that, I needed to go beyond merely making money.

I began my quest in search for my purpose in life. I was exploring my options when I read our then Prime Minister Mr Goh Chok Tong’s remark about how we should rate our level of graciousness by the cleanliness of our public toilets. Good toilet hygiene! Yes, that was it! This was my calling. I could feel it in my bones. Toilet hygiene was an oft-neglected topic and a taboo. Nobody wanted to think or talk about the stink and the poo, but this was an important topic. I was good at storytelling, and stories have power. I could use my skills to highlight the issue and bring attention to the importance of good toilet hygiene.

That was why I decided to found the Restroom Association of Singapore in 1998. The initiative was very well-received by the Singapore public and I went on to partner with our then Ministry of Environment to promote toilet cleanliness across the island: in shopping centers, schools, factories and office buildings. I did not stop there, I wanted to ensure that every country in the world had access to clean toilets. I founded the World Toilet Organization as a global movement to promote good sanitation worldwide. I decided to “retire” so as to devote the rest of my life to the advocacy of bringing access to toilets and basic sanitation to every corner of the globe.

When I first started working in the social development sector some twenty years ago, I was astonished to find the lack of spotlight on the sanitation agenda. In 2001, 2.6 billion people had no access to basic sanitation. Yet, the spotlight was shining elsewhere; sanitation was subsumed under the more “glamorous” water agenda. People felt uncomfortable using words such as Shit, Pee, or Poop as part of a global movement. Instead, a euphemism was used for sanitation --- “fecal sludge management” --- a terminology that packed a mouthful but did little to attract attention since this was not the common parlance of the ordinary folks.
I pondered upon how to break the taboo and an idea hit me. I could use humor. Humor catches attention. Humor connects people. I decided to play a pun on the well-established World Trade Organization that was well-recognized worldwide, even to the lay person on the street. I would create an organization for my advocacy and leverage the acronym of “WTO”. I would call my organization “World Toilet Organization”.

My marketing strategy worked wonderfully. WTO (our WTO, not the other one) was a hit with the global media. They absolutely adored it and gave extensive media coverage to the sanitation agenda. At last, a topic as important as sanitation was reaching 2–3 billion readership annually.

As the World Toilet Organization grew in stature, we started receiving more support from international organizations worldwide. In 2013, all 193 member states of the United Nations General Assembly unanimously voted to adopt our founding day (19th November) to be the official United Nations World Toilet Day. In 2015, the United Nations set forward a collection of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (“SDG”) which was designed as a blueprint for world leaders to adopt and act on with the aim of achieving a more sustainable and better future for all. SDG 6 is about clean water and sanitation for the world. As we continue to march on with courage and conviction, I am confident that we will be able to achieve this goal.

WTO was founded 20 years ago as a global advocacy movement to put sanitation on center stage. We are mobilizing media, politicians, NGOs, academia, corporations and funders into this collaborative effort to improve the state of sanitation globally successfully. To understand the significance of what we are trying to achieve, it’s important to remember what the world’s sanitation was like when WTO was founded. In 2001, the world’s population was 6 billion, with 2.6 billion (40%) having no access to proper sanitation. Today, the world’s population stands at 7.9 billion, with 2 billion without proper sanitation (25%). Improvements in sanitation over the last two decades have collectively brought toilets to about 15% of the world’s population, representing over 1 billion people today.

The year 2021 marks the 20th Year Anniversary of the World Toilet Organization. The past twenty years have been a wonderful journey, and all that we have achieved could not have been possible if not for the partnerships and support we had received from various parties: the governments, public and private organizations, as well as various communities. Together, let us continue our work to address the sanitation crises around the world, and build a healthier and cleaner world for all.
Introduction
Life is a journey. We have, each of us, only about 80 useful years or 29,200 days before our time runs out. When time runs out, life runs out. It does not matter how famous, rich, or powerful you are in life. When you are dead, you are dead and gone. Death is not to be feared but to be accepted as inevitable. All our ancestors have passed and so will we. Whatever you are capable of, you can only do it when you are alive. Personal fame, power, and fortune are ephemeral. They are only distractions from our real usefulness in life.

If the legacies we leave behind can continue to make the world a better place, even long after we have departed, it would have been a much more meaningful and sustainable life for us. Our cause is larger than our individual self. Our combined impact is more powerful than individual efforts. Once we realize this, and put our mission before self, we can achieve much more, for we have ceased to become an obstacle to our Mission.

JACK SIM
With each passing day is a day shorter in our lives. The only way to remove our anxieties about death is to face it upfront and live a courageous life. Set a date for when your life ends. Live a useful life from now until that day. On my 40th birthday, I set a CountDown date on my phone. I set the day of my 80th Birthday as my ‘expiry’ date. I had 14,600 days left to live. The following day, I had 14,599. The day after, 14,598. You get the picture. I realised that the real currency of life was not money. It was time.

Since time is so precious, I need to use it wisely. I need to use it to its fullest. Material pursuit is not our real purpose in life, it is only a means to an end. To me, the highest calling and greatest purpose one can have in life is to serve humanity. That was when I started to live my life with a sense of urgency. That was when I decided to live a useful life.

When I started writing this book, I had only 5,700 days left on my calendar.

Human beings go to the toilet six to eight times a day. In terms of the number of years, each of us on average spend an entire 3 full years of our lives inside the toilet. Whatever we do in our daily lives forms a habit, and habits and behaviors, over time, become our way of life. Our way of life becomes our culture. It is therefore imperative that we have a ‘clean’ toilet culture to enjoy a high-quality life.

In 1998, I founded the Restroom Association of Singapore (“RAS”) to clean up our public toilets. The response from the press and public were encouraging. They too had long felt revolted by the stink and sight of dirty toilets everywhere. Someone ought to have done this a long time ago, they said.

Bolstered by the public support, I paid a visit to Daniel Wang Nan Jee, who was the Director General of the Ministry of Environment at that time. I presented my proposal to him, and this was his response: “I appreciate your effort, but I’ve been trying for 20 years to get Singaporeans to behave themselves in the toilet and it is impossible.”

I left his office and sent him a heartfelt hand-written letter written with a fountain pen. I wrote: “Daniel, when your children misbehave, you never give up. Now, your citizens are also under your care and similarly, you cannot give up on them.” The letter moved him. Soon after, he called for a meeting with the Heads of various agencies (including the Urban Redevelopment Authority, Sports Council, Ministry of Education, National Parks, Tourism Board, Ministry of Health, People’s Association, etc). I was asked to present to them my proposed roadmap for “having clean toilets across Singapore.”

I offered a simple ABC plan:
The existing layout has to go. We need to design better toilets. We need to have more ergonomically-designed toilet ware to make it easier for our users and cleaners to use and clean. This will help to keep our toilets dry, well-ventilated and bright. We need a dignified environment. This will improve user behavior. No one wants to use a dirty toilet.

Respect is key. When the toilet respects the user, so will the user respect the toilet. A user in the toilet at the lobby of a five-star hotel will be much more well-behaved than in a dirty toilet elsewhere. We need well-designed toilets and better cleaning routines to nudge user behavior in the right direction.

Cleaners were often regarded as lowly unskilled workers. We need to change this perception. Cleaners must be trained professionally and paid better wages. Turn them into professional cleaners, give them smart uniforms. Instil in them a sense of pride for keeping the toilets clean and well-maintained.
Besides the ABC plan, I also customized my persuasion and communication to each stakeholder accordingly. To the shopping centres, I highlighted the opportunity cost of losing revenues if their shoppers had to leave the shopping malls to seek cleaner toilets elsewhere. Shoppers are unlikely to return after their toilet break if they have to leave the malls. Clean toilets would make shoppers linger around longer while shopping and dining at the malls. The message was loud and clear, and shopping centers took heed. They started engaging with professional cleaning companies to ensure that their toilets were always in tip-top condition.

I also went to the schools. I persuaded the principals to upkeep their school toilets. I cautioned them that the students’ academic performance, and hence, the school’s overall school ranking performance, could drop if students had to hold their bladders in order to avoid using dirty toilets, thus affecting their concentration in class. That could affect not only the school’s rankings but more importantly, could harm the kids’ health.

Moreover, the number of toilets near the canteen was inadequate especially during recess time given the surge in the number of students who would need to use the toilets. The schools’ teachers must also relax their rules about giving students permission to use the toilets during class.

The bus terminals and MRT stations also joined the ranks to upgrade their toilets. We soon witnessed a change in our toilet culture. The cleanliness of toilets and user behavior improved as both providers and users of the toilets started to enjoy the benefits of having clean toilets. The providers were happy as cleaner toilets were easier to clean and cost less to maintain. The users were happy as cleaner toilets make for a more enjoyable user experience.

We even started a ‘Happy Toilet Star-Rating’ system to assess and award toilets with 3, 4, 5 or 6 stars, giving the highest ratings to the most exemplary of all restrooms across Singapore.

In 2005, the Restroom Association of Singapore and World Toilet Organization sent a joint-proposal to the National Environment Agency (NEA). For ten months, we worked with NEA on our proposed new Potty Parity rule to ‘liberate’ the ladies’ restrooms by equipping them with more cubicles. The rule soon became the new Code of Practice for all new buildings that were constructed after 2005. This was a great milestone for Singapore. The Code of Practice has since become a standard requirement in the design of all female toilets in China’s hotels and other tourism-related sectors. It has also been incorporated into Hong Kong’s building codes.

RAS was a prototype and Singapore was a testbed. With the success of RAS, it was time to cast a wider net and thrust the idea forward to a wider audience. It was time to go on the world stage and grab the attention of the world.
I was energized by the thought. The idea seemed to have breathed life into the still air. It was now alive and awakened. I was brimming with excitement as my heart raced and my head filled with ideas. I was raring to go. I must raise the awareness...set the stage...galvanize the people...but how do I get them excited about pee and poo as most people find these repulsive and a taboo subject?

I set off to break the taboo.
CHAPTER 1

MAKING TOILET A SEXY BUSINESS
Breaking a taboo is not impossible.

Throughout human history, many taboos have been broken. But first, what is a taboo? Why is something a taboo? A lot of it has to do with culture and perceptions. Perhaps it is something that is excessively repulsive, or something that is too sacred.
In our collective past that was not so long ago, slavery was a common occurrence and a widely accepted practice for the privileged. No one wanted to talk about it or be seen as against it for it was a ‘social norm’; it was simply ‘the way it was’. However, the taboo was broken and henceforth ushered in a new social norm and along with it, a new social justice. It created a better future for all.

Sanitation is a taboo subject, considered as dirty and repulsive. Yet we have to go to the toilet six to eight times a day, maybe even more for those with digestive issues. Going to the loo is a daily habit. It is a daily routine. It is a culture. We need to have a good toilet culture. We need to break the taboo by talking about it openly and treating it as any other normal subject, as normal as eating and sleeping. This is important because when we do not discuss it, we cannot improve it. It must not be considered as rude, embarrassing, or unspeakable. We need to make it a sexy subject for normal discourse. We need to invent new vocabulary for a good discussion on toilet issues.

I had my trepidations at first. I was utterly clueless as I had zero experience in starting a global movement. I sought out the mentorship of Mr Mechai Viravaidya, who was better known as ‘Mr Condom of Thailand’. I wanted to learn how he had created a massive movement for the Sex Industry and advocated the use of the condom as a standard protection against unwanted pregnancy and sexual diseases.

This was what he taught me:

Make people laugh. When they are laughing at you, they are listening to you. Do not be upset that people laugh at you. If you laugh with them, they will become your friends. 

Chapter 01 - Making Toilet a Sexy Business
This is a taboo subject. It is an embarrassing topic. No one wants to talk about it. It is too “unglamorous”. How can we break this taboo? How can we make sanitation a more palatable topic for discussion? We need to break the ice. We need to make toilets more desirable. We need to use humor, for who does not like a good joke about the toilets?

Sanitation is often subsumed under the water agenda and given little attention compared to its more “glamorous” cousin – the water scarcity issue. When water and sanitation are bundled together as a topic for discussion, all fundings would go to the water issue, leaving little or none for the sanitation issue. Hence, there was an urgent need to decouple the sanitation issue from the water agenda. We need to give the sanitation issue the attention that it truly and fully deserves.

Donations for the sanitation cause are grossly inadequate. There are not enough funds to promote the cause. We need to drum up attention, and hence, incoming funds through the marketplace. We need to leverage market forces by changing the culture of the people in order to drive the demand for toilets.

Sanitation is not only an issue about hygiene or health. It is much more than that. It is about a habit and a culture. More people must be made cognizant of this fact.

Rational persuasion is futile. Drumming on the importance of sanitation will likely fall on deaf ears. We need more strategic communication. We need to reposition toilets as a status symbol. It must be seen as an object of desire.
I was getting more and more excited. My thoughts went into overdrive and one idea after another hit me, repeatedly. I was brimming with ideas. To succeed in our cause, we must turn the table around and change mindsets. As the Chinese proverb goes, “there lies within every crisis an opportunity”. We cannot continue to perceive sanitation as a problem to be solved. Rather, we must position it as a market opportunity not to be missed. We must sell toilets to the poor the way we would sell Louis Vuitton bags to the rich.

It is time to give a shit to shit. We must make toilets a sexy business.
Advocacy 101

Here is how we created huge global outreach despite having scant resources in our guerilla marketing campaign: Leverage the power of storytelling.

Here are some tips:

- Be authentic
  Don’t fake your story. Tell your true story and tell it from your heart. There is no need to quote others.

- Be audacious
  Do not worry about the naysayers. Focus on your real audience who will benefit from your story.

- Be original
  Tell it fresh each time, even if you have told the same story a thousand times. Tell it like you’re telling it for the first time.

- Be energized
  Your energy will inspire your audience. Your body language speaks volumes.

- Be concise
  Use lots of soundbites. Make them headline-worthy for the interviewer or reporter.

- Focus on the message, not on yourself
  The Purpose of the message is your Paramount Mission. You are not your mission. You may become famous for your advocacy but that is not your aim. If fame is what you seek, you will become boring.

- Make sacrifices for the story
  War journalists get killed in the crossfires while telling their stories. I may look ridiculous and silly even doing quirky photoshoots, but this is a small sacrifice to make.

- ‘Push’ is costly and ‘Pull’ is free
  I have never spent any money on publicity, yet our outreach is billions of audiences worldwide. You cannot push your story to the people, but your stories can pull them towards you to help and support your cause.

- Use humor appropriately
  humor works for me and it has been working for me for twenty-four years. Humor may seem like a risky approach to take in a politically-correct world, but you command respect for being brave enough to use humor in your approach.

- Build a Belief System
  Tug at the heartstrings of your audience with your message. When that happens, it will perpetuate the message which will take on a life of its own. Your audience will amplify your message by sharing their own stories. Remember, it is never about you. Powerful stories will resonate with your audience and win them over to your cause. Make them believe and join in the movement to create change.

- Stay creative, stay relevant
  Songwriters have been writing love songs for centuries. So why have these not gone out of fashion? The trick is: adapt to the times. The love songs du jour are a reflection of our current lifestyles and value systems.

You can apply these principles to any stories that you want to tell.
CHAPTER 2
FILLING IN THE MISSING PIECES
“...there were 2.6 billion people in the world who had no access to proper sanitation. That was more than 40% of the world population of six billion.”

In 1999, I was in Tokyo to attend the Asia-Pacific Toilet Symposium which was hosted by the Japan Toilet Association. I was shocked to find that there were 2.6 billion people in the world who had no access to proper sanitation. That was more than 40% of the world population of six billion. Children under the age of five were dying of diarrhea, more so than those who died from Malaria, HIV and measles combined. It became clear, now more than ever, that providing the poor with access to proper sanitation and good hygiene became my utmost priority.

I learned that there were fifteen toilet associations around the globe, but these were operating as individual and disparate entities. There was no headquarters. I suggested that the Japanese Toilet Association be the leader of the groups to spearhead the global toilet movement, but they declined. The delegates of the fifteen toilet associations suggested instead that I get it together to push forward the toilet movement globally.
I devised a Theory of Change on how we could incentivise each stakeholder, from public agencies to private entities, to assume ownership of the agenda.
Create Powerful Stories to win over the 4th Estate:
The media is interested in unique stories to sell to its readers and increase its readership and advertising revenue. Make our story exciting for the readers and drive demand for well-designed toilets and proper sanitation worldwide.

Make Sanitation an Election Ticket to influence the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Estates:
When public demand for proper sanitation and toilets become a hot-button issue, politicians cannot help but take note. They will try to win votes by promising and delivering on their promise to provide public toilets and proper sanitation for the electorate.

Publish and Validate:
Academia is keen to publish its research and validate our hypothesis and strategy: that preventive measures are cheaper and better than curative treatments. They will use a Cost-Benefit Analysis to prove that providing proper sanitation will cost the state a lot less and reduce its public health burden.

Leverage Corporate Power:
Create a shared value with the corporate entities and foster a corporate sustainability culture in general as our win-win strategy.

Mobilize the Bureaucrats:
Policy makers want to please their political masters, and will allocate funds to the causes that are important to their bosses, such as providing proper sanitation and adequate public toilets.

Mobilize NGOs:
With funding, get NGOs interested and mobilise them to help build the toilets.

Spice it up with celebrities’ endorsements:
Invite celebrities to join in the cause for publicity and goodwill.

Create the ‘right’ narratives for donors / aid agencies / funders:
Nudge public policies in the right direction and integrate this strategy with ‘blended’ capital from Public–Private–Partnerships.

Generate Impact Investments:
Help social entrepreneurs dealing with toilet-related businesses create sustainable and scalable business models across sectors and geographies.

Make Toilets Sexy and Fashionable:
Adequate and equitable sanitation for all can only be sustainable through collective efforts. Both the individual user and the local communities must take ownership for the upkeep and maintenance of their toilets. Make access to proper toilets a status symbol. Encourage people to get ‘jealous’ about their neighbours’ well-maintained and clean toilets. Use this to nudge them to change their toilet habits. Make them want to show off their toilets.
As can be seen, all it takes is good storytelling, narrative framing, and incentivizing the ecosystem to align with our common mission. Our Theory of Change caters to the different aspirations of each stakeholder and incentivizes each differently.

To put an end to the practice of open defecation, and to provide proper sanitation to all, the sanitation agenda cannot operate in silo. Sanitation is an all-encompassing topic. It is related to public health and people’s livelihoods. It affects personal income and safety, contributes to environmental pollution, impacts the tourism industry, involves waste treatment, and affects recycling efforts and agriculture, as well as the quality of life, and the dignity of entire communities. In view of its wide-ranging impact, we need a comprehensive and holistic approach to solve the sanitation crisis.

In order to provide an effective and comprehensive solution, we must adopt a customizable design and offer incentives that appeal to each and every one of the stakeholders involved in all 17 SDGs. This will encourage them to be part of our ecosystem. For example, when we encourage the poor to unlock their entrepreneurial spirit and practice good work ethics, when we equip them with technologies, we are helping to add value to their labor and the downstream sectors. Doing so means they will have more disposable income to build toilets and gain access to clean water, housing, education, healthcare and enjoy a better quality of life in general. This goes beyond providing them with basic sanitation.

The development sectors receive about USD 150 billion in donations every year. Yet even this substantial amount of donation does little to move the needle. The monies, instead of uniting the players, does the opposite. By providing the funds to separate entities in silos, donors are making NGOs and social entrepreneurs compete for funding, and dividing up the sectors into competitive communities that are suspicious and wary of one another. Such practices must be stopped. We need to educate the donors and investors that the ecosystem approach is a much more efficient and sustainable one to adopt than the silo mentality.
# Stakeholder/Incentive Chart

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<th>Social Entrepreneur</th>
<th>NGO’s</th>
<th>Local Communities</th>
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We must give the Base of the Pyramid (BoP) access to a wide range of areas, including access to knowledge/training, customers/markets, finance, logistics, and technologies.

We need to include these areas in our Theory of Change. We have to map out all the assets, match and align them accordingly, facilitate pathfinding, and motivate each and everyone of the stakeholders, both individually and collectively. These can be achieved by using a combination of algorithms and human interventions.

By adopting an ecosystem approach, we can help to facilitate the deliveries of goods and services in a more cost-efficient and sustainable fashion within a shorter period of time. This will help social entrepreneurs attract the much-needed investments, as well as create jobs and incomes for the BoP. With more disposable income, the BoP would have more money to spend. This creates greater cash flow in the market which in turn stimulates economic activity and hence economic growth. The overall multiplier effect also gives rise to a “new middle class” of whom the governments can tax to fund the provision of public goods, ultimately giving the people a better quality of life.

It is not so complicated to change the world. What is more complicated, however, is the complex situation arising from the status quo.

That is why we need to challenge the status quo.
YOUR TOILET IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOU THINK

World Toilet Organization
20th Year Anniversary Book
CHAPTER 3

YOUR TOILET IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOU THINK
The World Toilet Organization was founded in 2001. The inaugural World Toilet Summit was held on 19 November 2001. I called it my first “World Toilet Day”. It also marked my first ever foray into organizing conferences.

As I had neither the resources nor the experience in hosting a global meeting, I made a deal with CEMS, a professional conference and exhibition management company. I would help them sell exhibition spaces in return for their services free of charge. I successfully sold sixteen exhibition booths, and in return, CEMS’ Managing Director Mr Edward Liu helped manage the World Toilet Summit 2001 conference for free as promised. In addition, they donated SGD 8,000 to the Summit.

Former Minister Mr Lim Swee Say was our Guest of Honor. He tabled a matching grant of SGD 5,000 to incentivize coffee shop owners to upgrade their toilets. 400 coffee shops took up the offer and renovated their toilets.

The inaugural summit was a huge success. We were surprised by the global media’s massive coverage of our event. The foreign delegates were impressed by the positive media response, and then Mayor of Suwon City offered to host the 2002 World Toilet Summit in Seoul. This was followed by Beijing’s offer to host the 2004 summit.

The World Toilet Organization is Singapore’s soft power. It is our hope that our organization can be used by Singapore as its tool of diplomacy to strengthen international relations.
World Toilet Summit: Over the Years.

1999

My first time attending the Asia Pacific Toilet Symposium in Japan, in 1999. I discovered that there were fifteen toilets associations around the world operating in silos. There was no “HQ”.

2001

Then Deputy Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong at the launch of World Toilet Organization’s website in 2001.

2002

World Toilet Summit 2002 in Seoul, South Korea.

2003

World Toilet Summit 2003 in Taipei, Taiwan. This was hosted by then Deputy Mayor of Taipei.

2004

World Toilet Summit 2004 in Beijing, China. This was co-hosted by Beijing Tourism Bureau, China Olympic Committee and the Beijing Municipality Government.
2005

- World Toilet Summit 2005 in Belfast, United Kingdom. This was hosted by the British Toilet Association and then Lord Mayor of Belfast.

- World Toilet Forum 2005 in Shanghai, China, this was hosted by Shanghai City Appearance & Environmental Sanitation Administration Bureau.

2006

- World Toilet Summit 2006 in Duma, Moscow. This was, hosted by then Mayor of Moscow, Yury Luzhkov.
Chapter 03 - Your Toilet is More Important than You Think

World Toilet Organization

World Toilet Summit 2007 in New Delhi, India.

World Toilet Summit 2008 in Macau.

World Toilet Summit 2009 in Singapore, with then Minister Mr Lim Swee Say, who was also (check title) …. of National Trade Union Congress.

World Toilet Summit 2010 in Philadelphia, US. This was hosted by International Code Council.

This was co-hosted by Dr Bindeshwar Pathak of Sulabh International, President Abdul Kalam of India and Crown Prince of the Netherlands Willem-Alexander.
World Toilet Summit, Hainan, China, 2011 hosted by Hainan Tourism Bureau and Mayor of Haikou City.

World Toilet Summit, Durban, South Africa, 2012 hosted by Minister of Public Health South Africa.

World Toilet Summit, Solo, Indonesia, 2013 hosted by Mayor of Solo City Indonesia

With Bollywood Megastar Salman Khan at India Today’s Conclave 2014.
Chapter 03 - Your Toilet is More Important than You Think

2015

World Toilet Summit, New Delhi, India, 2015. Hosted by Indian Minister of Urban Development Mr Vekaiah Naidu.

2016

The Honorable Samoa Prime Minister Tuilaepa Lopesoliai Neitani Aiona Sailele Malielegaio conferred the Honorary Ma’atai title of Tufalevao to Jack Sim as Chieftain of Falevao Village in Samoa. Falevao is a local euphemism for Toilet.


2017

World Toilet Summit Program Committee Members, Melbourne, Australia, 2017

2018

World Toilet Summit, Mumbai, India, 2018. Hosted by Chief Minister Devendra Gangadharaa Fadnavis of Maharashtra state, India.

2019

Hosted by Governor Dora Joao of Sao Paulo and Trata Brasil.
THE UN WORLD TOILET DAY MOVEMENT
By 2011, World Toilet Organization’s reach had hit a high of two billion for each year’s World Toilet Day. It was no mean feat, but we aimed higher. We had always wanted a UN-designated World Toilet Day but first, we needed a UN member to table the relevant UN resolution. For years, we lobbied hard. We tried to convince the Singapore Government to table the resolution but were rejected outright. Tabling a toilet project was deemed “too frivolous” and “out of place” for our Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was grossly misaligned with its image and only “serious” subject-matters would be considered. We turned to the governments of Germany, India, and Japan next. Unfortunately, we failed to convince any of them to table the resolution.

For over a decade, we tried to push for the UN World Toilet Day resolution but failed repeatedly. Yet not for a single moment did we lose sight of the ball or give up. Our hard work finally paid off in the eleventh year. That year, Singapore’s then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. George Yeo, was available to attend the World Toilet Summit in Haikou, which is in the Hainan province in China.

Minister Yeo was very surprised and impressed by the scale of the World Toilet Summit. The event had attracted a thousand delegates, many among whom were experts and government officials, including the Mayor of Haikou, Party-Secretary of Hainan province, Governor of Hainan province, Tourism Bureau from Hainan, as well as the Tourism Bureaus of many other provinces and cities in China. The fringe events included a grand exhibition on the history of toilets and different toilet cultures around the world.

Mr Yeo was quite amazed that a Singaporean was able to put together such a massive event on foreign lands. He asked me if there was anything he could do to help our organization. I jumped at the offer. I asked him if the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could help us table a UN resolution to designate a UN World Toilet day. He introduced me to Deputy Secretary Vanu Menon of MFA and the meeting went very well. The MFA eventually decided to adopt this as a major international diplomacy effort and to mobilize all our ambassadors to lobby for support in their respective host countries.
As there was no Standard Operating Procedure on how to draft a resolution for a UN-designated themed day, I started looking around for advisors. I remembered that Mr Kenzo Hiroki of Japan had, in 2008, assisted the Japanese Prime Minister Mr Hashimoto to table a resolution for a UN-designated International Year of Sanitation. I sought out his help and he graciously rendered his assistance. He flew to Singapore to meet MFA and after over 2 hours, our proposal was completed.

Armed with our proposal, I flew to New York to lobby for support from the Member States. I worked with Singapore’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs to persuade other Member States to support a UN-designated World Toilet Day. It was an uphill task. We were greeted with a lot of resistance. A few countries wanted either a name change or a date change. The name World Toilet Day should be replaced by World Hygiene Day, some suggested, and others opined that the date should be another date other than 19 November, as it coincides with Indira Gandhi’s birthday and Monaco’s National day.

Undaunted by the setbacks, we prodded on. All the Singapore embassies around the globe made concerted efforts to persuade their foreign counterparts to sponsor our proposal. MFA aimed to obtain at least sponsorships from 100 Member States from among the 193 that sat at the UN General Assembly. Eventually, our persistence bore fruits. The European Union and the Forum of Small States were the earliest supporters. We also met the President of the UN General Assembly who gave us the green light to table the UN Resolution. By the month of July 2013, we had succeeded in obtaining the signatures of 122 Member States to sponsor our World Toilet Day UN Resolution. We also received ardent support from a key champion, UN Deputy Secretary General Mr. Eliasson of Sweden.

I still remember that historic moment vividly. At 3 AM Singapore Time, I was still wide awake, forcing myself to stay awake to watch the UN General Assembly streaming live on my laptop. The proposal was read. There was no question or objection from any of the Member States. The gravel hit the table, and that was it. The proposal was passed unanimously by all 193 Member States. World Toilet Organization’s founding day, 19 November, will henceforth be the official UN-designated World Toilet Day forever. It was done and dusted. We had made history.

Chapter 4 - The UN World Toilet Day Movement
Chapter 4 - The UN World Toilet Day Movement

Reaffirming Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/67 of 25 July 1980 on international years and anniversaries and General Assembly resolutions 53/199 of 15 December 1998 and 61/185 of 20 December 2006 on the proclamation of international years,

Reaffirming also the commitment to implement Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development ("Johannesburg Plan of Implementation"), including the time-bound goals and targets, and the other internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals,

Reaffirming further the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012 entitled "The future we want,"

Deeply concerned by the slow and insufficient progress in providing access to basic sanitation services, as shown in the 2012 update report of the United Nations Children’s Fund and the World Health Organization, in which it was noted that 2.5 billion people continue to lack basic sanitation, and conscious of the impact of the lack of sanitation on people’s health, poverty reduction efforts, economic and social development and the environment, in particular water resources,

Appreciating the ongoing work of the organizations of the United Nations system and the work of other intergovernmental organizations on sanitation,

Noting sanitation-related activities, events and initiatives are observed each year in many countries,

Noting also the efforts of countries that are participating in all relevant voluntary initiatives related to water and sanitation, including the Sanitation and Water for All Partnership, to share their experience with interested Member States,

Recognizing that events organized on 19 November in many Member States in the context of World Toilet Day have contributed to a better awareness and concerted actions on different aspects of the critical issue of sanitation for all, and acknowledging in this regard the critical role of civil society organizations,

1. Decides, in the context of Sanitation for All, to designate 19 November as World Toilet Day;

2. Urges all Member States, the organizations of the United Nations system and all other relevant stakeholders to encourage behavioural change, together with policies for increasing access to sanitation among the poor, complemented by a call to end open defecation as an practice extremely harmful to public health;

3. Encourages all Member States, as well as the organizations of the United Nations system and international organizations and other stakeholders, to approach the sanitation issue in a much broader context and to encompass all its aspects, including hygiene promotion, the provision of basic sanitation services, sewage and wastewater treatment and reuse in the context of integrated water management;

4. Invites all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations, as well as civil society, including non-governmental organizations and individuals, to observe World Toilet Day in the context of Sanitation for All in an appropriate manner, including through education and activities to raise public awareness on the importance of access to sanitation for all;

5. Urges all Member States, as well as the organizations of the United Nations system, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders, to accelerate progress in order to achieve Millennium Development Goal 7 and other Millennium Development Goals related to sanitation, including through redoubling efforts to close the sanitation gap through scaled-up ground-level action, and noting in this regard the global effort to realize “Sustainable sanitation: the five-year drive to 2015”;

6. Stresses that the costs of all activities that may arise from the implementation of the present resolution should be met from voluntary contributions, subject to the availability and provision of voluntary contributions for this specific purpose;

7. Requests UN-Water, in consultation with relevant entities of the United Nations system, mindful of the provisions of the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/67, to facilitate the implementation of World Toilet Day in the context of Sanitation for All, in collaboration with Governments and relevant stakeholders;

8. Requests the Secretary-General to bring the present resolution to the attention of all Member States and organizations of the United Nations system.
I remembered thinking to myself at that moment, that if I were to die the next morning, I would have died a happy and fulfilled person. Our accomplishment and legacy of having successfully prodded the UN to designate World Toilet Organization’s founding day as the date for World Toilet Day would accelerate our global movement. It would spur an exponential growth in the number and intensity of toilet-related events and activities as all 193 UN Member States began to incorporate sanitation and improvements in sanitation as part of their national agendas.
We created an open sourced The Urgent Run Campaign to create toilet awareness and it ran concurrently in 30 cities in the world.
World Toilet Organization 20th Year Anniversary Book

One such manifestation was their participation in WTO’s annual event to celebrate UN World Toilet Day, the Urgent Run. This is WTO’s urgent call to the world to take immediate action to end the world sanitation crisis. Over the past three years during the lead-up to UN World Toilet Day, communities worldwide have heeded WTO’s call and organized sanitation-themed Urgent Runs locally. To date, there have been more than 63 such events which took place in 42 countries. These were organised by the community groups, corporations, universities, volunteers as well as the NGOs in a bid to engage and urge the local communities to take up the sanitation challenge.

World Toilet Day is the UN’s clarion call to take urgent action to address the world’s sanitation woes. A catalyst for our common global challenge, it has galvanized the people and ignited the global movement that has transcended borders. People from all walks of life have heeded that call. These included some of the biggest names in the entertainment industry such as Coldplay, Jay Z, Demi Lovato, Aamir Khan, Ranveer Singh and Katrina Kaif who celebrated World Toilet Day by performing at the Global Citizen Festival in India. Many more unsung heroes have contributed their time and effort, silently lending their support behind the scenes. Regardless of our different backgrounds, cultures, beliefs or religions, we shared a common aim: to uplift the lives of everyone in our communities.

Our work has led to improved sanitation in some of the worst slums in the world. World Toilet Day has helped and continues to help to better the lives of millions of people from all over the world from all walks of life. Yet our work has only just begun. Much has been done, but much more still needs to be done. We will persist until our end goal is reached: everyone in the world has access to proper sanitation. When millions of people come together to find a solution, each shining a light along the path, it is only a matter of time before the world sanitation crisis is resolved.
CHAPTER 5

EDUCATING A WORKFORCE: THE RISE OF THE TOILET PROFESSIONALS
The scarcity of toilets among the world’s poor is a serious endemic problem. Equally grave is the issue of poor management, poor hygiene, and poor sanitation that is prevalent in many developing countries. To encourage the proper use of the public toilets, they must be kept clean and well-maintained at all times. This will encourage the users to practice good hygiene and thus greatly reduce the transmission of deadly diseases.

In 2005, former Minister Mr Lim Swee Say had assumed the role of Secretary-General of National Trades Union Congress (NTUC). With funding support from NTUC, WTO was able to bring in Japanese Toilet Maintenance Trainers who were the leading experts in the industry to conduct a three-day pilot course on Restroom Cleaning and Maintenance to train the Singapore trainers.
The year 2005 also saw the birth of the World Toilet College (WTC) which was founded in partnership with Singapore Polytechnic in the belief that there was a need for an independent world body to ensure that best practices and standards in toilet design, cleanliness, and sanitation technologies could be implemented.

We wanted to learn from Japan because they were the best in the industry. Japan's strong cultural penchant for cleanliness was legendary and its hygiene standards unrivalled in the world. Not only were its streets and trains devoid of litter, but the cleanliness of its public toilets were also exemplary. Nowhere else in the world could you have found cleaner public toilets. More importantly, in Japan, cleanliness was a lifestyle embedded in its culture. We needed to inspire our Singapore cleaners to take pride in their work. The Japanese educated our cleaners on the history of diseases and deaths caused by poor hygiene. They also encouraged us to change our mindset and thinking. They wanted our cleaners to know that the work that they did was as important as that of the healthcare practitioners. Both helped prevent the spread of diseases and illnesses in society. The training gave our cleaners a deeper insight into the role that they played in society and their importance to combat diseases in the communities. That instilled in them a great sense of pride in their work.

We had started WTC from scratch and began with nothing. No curriculum, no school premise, no trainer. With the training program, we now had a curriculum, a school premise (at the polytechnic), and salaried local trainers who had a sense of purpose. With WTC's proprietary model, we continue to ensure that the best practices and high sanitation standards in public toilets are implemented both in the urban and rural contexts, especially in the developing countries. We achieve this by adopting a two-pronged approach. Not only do we focus on training the toilet caretakers in the proper cleaning and maintenance of public
toilets, but we also attach great importance to the areas of sanitation marketing, hygiene promotion, behavioral change, public policy, and social entrepreneurship. In order to succeed, all parties must come together and work hand-in-hand. Toilet caretakers were also encouraged to undertake minor repairs in the toilets that they maintained. This greatly boosted their self-confidence and gave them the opportunity to master their profession while raising productivity.

With both the hardware and software in place, WTC is poised to meet the needs of capacity-building for various parties working at various levels in the sanitation value chain, from middle-level government officials to school representatives and local sanitation workers as well as non-profit organization representatives.

Our training courses are delivered by Wash and EcoSan experts\(^1\), and certified trainers who have earned their certification and learned their skills at WTC. It is our grand vision to empower individuals to invest in their professional and personal development by being part of a supportive network of stakeholders in the sanitation industry.

Since WTC’s inception in 2005, we have conducted various programmes and courses, and trained more than 7,500 people across borders. Our courses were conducted in many countries including India (Rishikesh and Tamil Naidu), China (Hainan), Indonesia (Solo, Banda Aceh, and Meulaboh), and Singapore. WTC had started as a traveling college. Today, we are proud to have two World Toilet Colleges permanent campuses located in India. One is found in Rishikesh in the Jharkhand State and the other in Aurangabad in the State of Maharashtra. In the pipeline are our plans to expand to another six states in India.

\(^1\) **WASH**: Water Sanitation and Hygiene

**EcoSan**: Ecological sanitation, commonly abbreviated as ecosan (also spelled eco–san or EcoSan), is an approach to sanitation provision which aims to safely reuse excreta in agriculture. It is an approach, rather than a technology or a device which is characterized by a desire to “close the loop”, mainly for the nutrients and organic matter between sanitation and agriculture in a safe manner. One of the aims is to minimise the use of non-renewable resources. When properly designed and operated, ecosan systems provide a hygienically safe system to convert human excreta into nutrients to be returned to the soil, and water to be returned to the land. Ecosan is also called resource-oriented sanitation.
CHAPTER 6

CHINA, INDIA, AND BRAZIL
Sanitation and health. These two words are often paired together. Like water, toilets are critical to the health and well-being of every person in the world. In fact, sanitation is a bigger problem than the lack of water, for what good is water if it is polluted due to the lack of toilets and poor hygiene?

To tackle the world sanitation crisis, we cannot work in silos. We must seek partners and collaborate with others, particularly with the populous nations. Over the years, we have partnered with both public and private organizations in many countries to tame the sanitation beast.

This chapter is devoted to some of the work we have done in China, India, and Brazil, in partnership with various entities.
Beijing hosted the World Toilet Summit in 2004, marking an important milestone in the transformation of toilet culture in China.

All that began to change when Beijing won the bid to host the 2008 Summer Olympic Games. Part of China’s soft power strategy, it was an opportunity to showcase to the world the splendor of Chinese culture, Chinese solidarity and Chinese capabilities. It was a bid to win the world’s hearts and minds. However, in order for the Games to succeed, all the grandeur of the opening and closing ceremonies — the highlights of the monumental event — could not save the day no matter how impressive they were should the public toilets fall below standards. With that in mind, the Beijing Tourism Bureau and the Beijing Municipal Government decided to co-host the World Toilet Summit 2004 in a bid to change the toilet culture in China. The public toilets in all tourist sites as well as the Hutongs (traditional courtyard residence and narrow alleys) in Beijing, some 6,000 “toilet blocks”, were renovated and upgraded. These became the template for China’s subsequent overhaul of its public toilets nationwide.

Our press conference for World Toilet Summit 2004 was held following a delegation tour of the beautifully renovated public toilets at Tiananmen Square. The international media wanted to know about the state of public toilets in China. I responded to that query by citing the public toilets at Tiananmen Square as an exemplary demonstration of China’s resolve to transform its toilet culture, adding that all future public toilets in China would look like the Tiananmen Square public toilets.
The international media sat up and took notice. The press conference generated massive positive media coverage, reaching billions of audiences worldwide. All major foreign and local news agencies reported the forthcoming transformation of China’s toilet culture on an optimistic note. Beijing Tourism Bureau Chairman Mr Yu Zhang Jiang was very pleased with the reports and told me that hosting the World Toilet Summit was the most effective publicity campaign he had launched thus far in his career.

The Summit was a big event in China. It was attended by all the tourism bureaus across China at provincial and city levels, all the Chinese municipal governments as well as all tour operators and destinations in China. A key achievement at the 2004 Summit was the passing of the “potty parity” policy to require that all ladies’ toilets should have a larger floor area to accommodate more cubicles. One cubicle to be built in the Ladies’ for each and every cubicle and urinal found in the Gents. In 2005, this requirement was introduced in Singapore as a compulsory building code. This became the first of many legacies that subsequent World toilet Summits left for the world, each creating a lasting impact to improve the quality of life of the people.

In the following year in 2005, Shanghai was the next city to host the World Toilet Forum 2005 in its preparation for the Shanghai World Expo 2010. A new policy was passed during that event to require that public toilets must be made available within every 800 metres of one another in any direction on any location in the city. Today, the policy was widely adopted and most locations in the world have public toilets within a distance of less than 800 metres from one another.
It was now clear that the provision of clean and well-maintained public toilets had a direct and great impact on the tourism industry of the locality. Toilets were no longer regarded as a mere after-thought. We had changed the conventional thinking of viewing “toilets as a cost center” to the radical new approach of viewing “toilets as a profit center”. In short, we had successfully changed the old, prevalent mindset.

In 2011, the World Toilet Summit took place in the Hainan province of China and was co-hosted by the Governor of Hainan and the Mayor of Haikou City. This was China’s prelude to its major toilet revolution at national level. The national movement was given prominence and legitimized by the attendance of Hainan Communist Party Secretary who graced the event.

In 2015, the President of the People’s Republic of China, Xi Jinping, officially announced the launch of the nationwide toilet revolution aimed at improving the sanitary conditions of public toilets at tourist destinations in China. The term “toilet revolution” was entered into the “dictionary of Xi Jinping’s new terms” by the State Council Information Office which provided an elaboration of the campaign: “along with agricultural modernization and new rural construction, local governments will ensure that villagers have access to hygienic toilets.”

The Chinese were fast and efficient. During the three years from 2015 to 2017, over 68,000 public toilets were built across China, with an additional 64,000 public toilets in the pipeline to be completed in 2017. The same year saw the toilet revolution campaign being expanded to the rural areas in China to bring clean, public toilets to the rural poor. The Chinese state media had reported that the unsanitary conditions in the rural public toilets could lead to the spread of diseases like malaria, and the campaign aimed to fix that.

Chapter 06 - China, India, and Brazil
President Xi also became a key champion to advance the toilet revolution in the tourist industry and rural areas in China. Many school toilets in these rural areas were old unhygienic dry toilets without handwashing facilities. They were designed in such a way that the waste disposal site was situated right behind the toilet building which were often left uncovered and exposed to the elements. These communal toilets had holes or troughs dug in the ground. There was little to no privacy as there were neither dividing walls nor doors installed. Moreover, you had to withstand the stench and buzzing flies circling around you while using the toilet. Furthermore, the lack of a cohesive management system in the schools to upkeep and maintain its facilities meant that the toilets often fell into disrepair after long time neglect. That the students had poor hygiene habits did not help, and few would wash their hands with soap. All these factors contributed to long-term devastating impacts on the health and environment.
WTO knew that a key to turning around the situation was to inspire positive long-lasting behavioral changes in the Chinese students. The Rainbow School Toilet Initiative was conceived to fulfil this aim. By raising funds in Singapore, WTO managed to secure the monies to build fifteen Rainbow Schools Toilet Blocks in the Henan and Guangxi provinces in China.

Each Rainbow School Toilet was equipped with a water flush system that was connected to an ecological waste treatment system. Its floors and walls were fully-tiled using ceramic tiles. That put a stop to the stench and annoying flies. Meanwhile, the students were trained to clean the toilets and be responsible for their maintenance. This gave them a sense of ownership. The students said that the new toilets gave them a new self-image and boosted their confidence. They were now able to use the flush toilets like the kids in the cities, and that narrowed the disparity between them.

The success of the Rainbow School Toilet Program impressed China’s Ministry of Education which decided to replicate the program in all 214,000 schools nationwide. WTO continues to engage with the provincial governments of Xi’an and Szechuan, with plans to expand the program to the rest of China.
Our first foray into India was via the World Toilet Summit 2007 which was held in New Delhi and hosted by Dr Bindhoven Pathak of Sulabh International\(^2\). This was a high-profile event which was attended by many dignitaries, including former Indian President Mr Abdul Kalam and Prince of Orange, Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands who launched the opening ceremony together. They were flanked by six other Ministers from India.

Once again, the Summit generated widespread media coverage and put the spotlight on the sanitation agenda which became a key election issue and a popular vote winner. That prompted then Union Rural Development Minister Jairam Ramesh to launch the “Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan” campaign or “Total Sanitation Campaign”, a sanitation program that promised to build 32 million toilets for the poor in the rural areas of India between 2009 and 2012.

\(^2\)Sulabh International is an India-based social service organization that works to promote human rights, environmental sanitation, non-conventional sources of energy, waste management and social reforms through education. (Wikipedia.com)
On 2nd October, 2014, then Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Swachh Bharat Mission, a program which aimed to rid India of open defecation by 2nd October, 2019. The five-year program aimed to achieve this by building at least 110 million toilets across India for both rural and urban households. We supported the goal through two of our World Toilet Summits platforms. One took place in 2015 in New Delhi and was hosted by then Indian Minister of Urban Development Mr Venkaiah Naidu. The other was held in 2018 in Mumbai and hosted by then Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis of Maharashtra State, India. The latter event saw the appearance of one of Bollywood’s most loved Megastar Akshay Kumar, who had starred in the blockbuster film titled “Toilet – a Love Story”.

During that period, I was appointed as the Co-Convener of Swachh Andhra for the State of Andhra Pradesh. The Speaker of Legislature Mr Kodela Prasad was the Convener. On 2nd October, 2019, Prime Minister Modi declared the successful completion of Swachh Bharat and the completion of the construction work. However, the supply-driven project was under-utilized as many of the newly-built toilets were used for storage or other purposes other than as toilets. So there was still much work to be done. We had to drive up demand and encourage the people to use the toilets – as toilets.
[From left] Mr Jack Sim with Andhra Pradesh officials Kodela Siva Pasada Rao and Mr B. Ramanjeneyulu. Mr Sim’s World Toilet Organization is partnering the India Government state to build low-cost toilets and sewage systems. Photo: DIOS VINCOY JR, WORLD TOILET ORGANISATION
In Brazil, half of its population had no access to proper sanitation, and half of its sewage sludge was discharged untreated, polluting its lakes, rivers and beaches, and spreading diseases. The cost of inaction was high due to the dire situation. However, the vast majority of the water treatment plants in Brazil were owned by the State and lacked the funds to invest in proper sewage treatment systems. In September 2019, WTO joined forces with NGO Trata Brasil and water company SABESP to lobby for the Brazilian Senate to pass a bill to allow local and foreign private investors to invest in these state-owned water treatment plants.

Our advocacy was well-received by the Senators, and the drafting of the bill began. On 19 Nov 2019, the Congressmen and Senators announced the launch of the bill during our World Toilet Summit held in San Paulo. In June 2020, the law was passed. Investments started pouring into the water treatment plants, and the total investments were expected to exceed USD 100 billion.

This was yet another instance of a legacy left behind by the World Toilet Organization by virtue of its strong and effective advocacy campaigns. With the leaders of India, China and Brazil, the world’s three most populous developing nations now roped in to our cause as prominent Toilet Champions, we are confident that the Sanitation agenda will meet its SDG #6 Goal by 2030.
CHAPTER 7
CHALLENGES AHEAD
Running a non-profit organization might seem glamorous but the reality is far from it. Like any other venture, NGOs come with their own set of problems. Here are some of the issues that we have faced over the past two decades:
I had started WTO on a shoe-string. I had no experience, no status, no authority, no network, no track record, no funding, and no backers then. I was inexperienced and clueless on how to begin, so I tried asking around to find out how and where to register an international organization. No one knew. It was not until I met the Union of International Associations that I finally got my answer. They taught me something obvious: where the organization was registered did not matter, what mattered most was whether your organization was known to all as an international organization. I decided to name and register World Toilet Organization Ltd as a charity and Company Limited by Guarantee in Singapore.

For the past 24 years, I have been working pro-bono for WTO on a full-time basis. For the first seven years, I was working solo to build the WTO brand. Fundraising was never easy since day one. There were many times over the years when we ran out of money and each time, I had to write a personal cheque to pay the staff’s salaries.

In 2017, we made the mistake of expanding the staff strength to nine. With the high overheads, we soon ran out of money again. Meanwhile, all our board members had resigned, leaving me to work alone once more. I had to hit the restart button. Fortunately, we returned to self-sufficiency with just one full-time and one part-time staff member by 2018.

Going forward, my wish for WTO is to transform it from a founder-led organization into a strong, sustainable institution that has multiple revenue streams. This is a work-in-progress.
Many people had volunteered to serve as board members of WTO but most of them, in fact, had little time to devote to social work. Board members serve mostly for governance oversight. Going forward, we hope to recruit more board members who are active and interested in the cause.
Running a non-profit organization largely based on volunteers is a difficult task. Many are episodic volunteers and recruitment has to be continuous.
A service-oriented NGO can measure its direct impact by measuring the provision of its services, likewise a charitable-oriented NGO which measures its direct impact by its number of activities directed towards meeting the needs of its recipients, while the participatory-oriented NGO measures the implementation of its projects. Yet WTO are not such NGOs. We are an empowering-oriented NGO that advocates the global sanitation movement. The impact measurement of a movement is more tricky and not as straightforward. It is the “sum total” of all actors in that sector.

One of the constraints that we faced in measuring our direct impact was the heavy cost of measurement itself. In 2013, the Gates Foundation gave us a grant to measure our media outreach. We engaged media intelligence provider Meltwater whose report indicated that our global exposure was 2.3 billion in readership terms. Perhaps we could think out of the box and measure our direct impact by “measuring the reverse” and “what-ifs” instead. What if no one had broken the taboo on sanitation in 2001 and the whole sector continued to be subsumed under the Water Agenda? What if the UN General Assembly had not declared 19 November as the UN-designated World Toilet Day? Perhaps this would have been easier to investigate and measure.
Previously, talking about shit was deemed rude and offensive, but the WTO had an unique ability to blend humor and facts for effective communication across all channels, be it directed at the traditional media, social media, decision makers or directly to the public at large, and in all languages.

We were audacious enough to call spade a spade, yet this was done in a creative manner that was not crude, crass or vulgar. Our refreshing take impressed many people. In fact, our Leverage Model of Changemaking inspired many others which led to a chain reaction. Many people added to the creative process by tapping onto their imagination to communicate and convey their messages to their communities and sectors using authentic stories of their own.

To us, who got the credit did not matter. What was more important was addressing the issue. Our ultimate goal was to resolve the problem, and we believe we have come a long way since the inception of WTO. From a taboo subject that was shunned by all, a discussion on sanitation and toilets was now deemed normal. We believe one way, it would be as “normal” a subject as talking about eating and sleeping.
After two successful decades of a founder-led advocacy movement, it is now imperative to transform the WTO into an institution on its own merits. We are now actively looking to inject new blood to our cause. We hope more would come forward to continue this journey until the day when anyone anywhere at any time could have access to clean toilets with a properly managed waste sanitation treatment system.
The World Toilet Organization has been blessed with many supporters and sponsors who have rendered us much support and assistance in advancing our cause along the way. Below is a non-exhaustive list of some of the key contributors and sponsors:

- Reckitt Benckiser
- Singapore Economic Development Board
- Singapore Tourism Board
- Lien Foundation
- Singapore Red Cross.
- Singapore National Trade Union Congress
- Work Development Authority
- Jagran Pehel
- ANA Airlines
- Nippon Foundation
- CLSA
- Cartier
- Gucci
- Unilever
- LIXIL
- Global Citizen
- Aga Khan Foundation
- The Free Press Journal
- Clean India Journal
- Borda
- GIZ
- Unicef
- Water.org
- Sustainable Sanitation Alliance
- Poo Pourri
- Thierry de Panafieu
- LC Khong
- Victor Lim
- National Environment Agency
- Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs
As WTO’s global presence continues to grow, we have started working in partnership with social enterprises and other entities that share our vision. Since 2009, the World Toilet Organization has also taken on minority stakes to invest in new social enterprises to support their products and services for the poor.
WTO agrees with SaniShop’s three-pronged approach: treat the provision of access to sanitation as a business; support local production (work with the local masons); create demand and sales (get endorsements from respected community leaders and local entrepreneurs).

On creating demand and sales for SaniShop products, the strategy adopted is to “wow” and “woo”. Wow the villagers with appealing packaging and woo them by appealing to their aspirations and emotions, not their rationality. Make SaniShop’s toilets and accessories highly desirable and much sought-after. Make customers want to own SaniShop products. Make these items a “must-have” and a top priority.
SaniShop’s idea of an integrated value chain unites the ecosystem to create a sustainable business model and effect lasting behavioral change. Latrine coverage is expanded through its provision of a wide range of toilets and accessories, the local economy is boosted through job creation and skills development, and positive behavioral change is instilled when villagers regard toilets as objects of desire to pursue and enjoy. Ownership of these items becomes highly satisfying, and since these are paid for out of their own pockets rather than for free, the villagers are more likely to upkeep and maintain their toilets properly. This has been observed time and again through empirical evidence.

Providing access to sanitation is just the starting point, SaniShop’s ultimate aim is to improve quality of life. By providing safe sanitation and instilling good hygiene practices, both children and adults are protected from diseases such as diarrhea which could have devastating impact on child mortality and public health. Additionally, the lack of access to proper toilets has been a major issue for women who had to resort to using outdoor bushes as toilets, often resulting in their loss of privacy and increasing their risks of getting raped. SaniShop products offer the women and girls their dignity and privacy back besides giving them the convenience and safety of use, especially when it rains or is dark.

By structuring SaniShop as a sustainable business, we aim to create a sustainable movement that outlasts WTO’s intervention. The for-profit social enterprise model is also scalable by working with NGOs/MFIs to diversify and expand the sales channels even as efforts to develop and expand the product range continues. Furthermore, the SaniShop brand could be franchised to local entrepreneurs (such as the masons) and empower them to take ownership of their businesses. This could further amplify the impact of the movement.
Sanotion is an award-winning product innovation company founded in association with the WTO to address some of the world’s major social issues by leveraging innovative and disruptive product and system designs. By identifying, researching and analyzing the most pressing and relevant challenges faced by the people, specially those at the base of the pyramid, Sanotion would then ideate to build disruptive solutions.

Among our first products include Squatease, a breakthrough patented toilet squat pan that is ergonomically designed to improve the posture of the toilet user by affording them a more comfortable and healthier position for defecation. Squatease is now available in Signova retail stores all over India.

*Image source: India Times, Satyajit Mittal/SquatEase
In 2019, the documentary film titled “Mr. Toilet: The World’s Number 2 Man” was released. This multiple award-winning movie was produced by Lily Zepeda over a span of 6 years, documenting the ups and downs of the World Toilet Organization and its progress.

You can find more information about this documentary by going to: mrtoiletfilm.com
Toilet Exhibition at the Singapore Science Center

“Know Your Poo” Exhibition opened on 19th November 2020 in conjunction with World Toilet Day. It was a collaborative effort between the World Toilet Organization and Singapore Science Centre, and supported by the Singapore Ministry of Education.

The fun exhibition touched on the topics of human waste, toilets, and sanitation, and gave visitors a deeper understanding of the history and evolution of sanitation and toilets. The exhibition also highlighted the urgent issue of the global divide, as well as served as a reminder that we all needed to pay attention to the importance of providing good sanitation and practicing good habits to safeguard our health and be a better society. It also took the visitors down the memory lane by showcasing the Singapore Story and what it was like to go to the toilet 60 years ago in Singapore.

*Image source: the smart local, little day out
In 2019, one of Japan’s top publishers published my autobiography in the Japanese language. The book sold 15,000 copies throughout Japan.
CHAPTER 9
THE FUTURE OF TOILET
In 2007, Sanitation was chosen by readers of British Medical Journal (BMJ) as the “greatest medical milestone since 1840“ for the invention of the flush toilet and handwashing have contributed to an extension of human lifespan by some twenty years, a feat that no other medical devices had achieved. However, sanitation awareness has been slow to reach the poor and the low-income in developing countries.

The UN SDG#6 (Sustainable Development Goal) targets to end open defecation and achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all by 2030. Our progress to date had “fallen short” at an alarming level, especially amid the unexpected ordeals of Covid-19 whose resulting economic recessions have affected the income of the poor -- our main targeted population who had no access to proper toilets.
To date, the Covid-19 pandemic has infected more than 200 million people and killed over 4.6 million people worldwide since 2019. Ironically, in a twist of events, the pandemic has also helped to raise awareness of hygiene and sanitation to unprecedented levels in human history. Everyone is now acutely aware of how we have to protect ourselves with masks, vaccination, social distancing, contact tracing, and handwashing.

Hygiene has become our first line of defense against infections, and I hope that good hygiene habits could persist within all different cultures even after the threat of Covid has subsided, which it eventually would.

The Covid-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on our worsening global sanitation challenges. Millions of people isolated at home and without safe sanitation facilities have been forced to turn to communal facilities and poorly managed public latrines (where the virus could easily proliferate) or practice open defecation. Sanitation workers, who are repeatedly stigmatized and denigrated, are faced with high, unacceptable health risks but are forced to continue working as they are providing essential services. The pandemic has once again underscored what has been blatantly obvious: that poor sanitation threatens everyone.

In developing countries, mandatory school closures to contain the spread of Covid-19 has endangered the well-being and education of the children. It also meant that millions of vulnerable kids no longer had access to basic nutrition, health, welfare and protection which had been afforded by the schools. According to WHO/UNICEF, in 2019, 818 million children lacked basic hygiene services at their school. That included 355 million whose schools had facilities with water but no soap, and 462 million whose schools still had no hygiene service. In order to achieve the goal of bringing good sanitation and good hygiene to all by 2030, we must quicken our pace of progress in this area by fourfold.

The much needed leap of progress towards providing adequate and safely-run sanitation services will need sustained joint efforts from the public and private sectors. Innovation and affordability of scalable solutions must go hand in hand with adequate policies, regulation, planning and good governance.

Countries like South Korea, Singapore and Thailand have shown us that fast and effective progress is possible.
How can our UN World Toilet Day Movement contribute to the future of toilets?

Since its inception in 2001, WTO’s advocacy on the need and importance of toilets have changed mindsets and spurred actions. As a result of our advocacy, many countries including India and China have built more public toilets. For instance, India had, in 2015, constructed 110 million new public toilets in a span of five years.

However, our experience over the years has taught us that merely building more toilets is not enough. More must be done in order to provide access to safely-managed sanitation facilities for all. We need to think of more efficient and effective ways to manage toilet waste. We need to encourage more countries to set up smart waste management and waste treatment plants. We need to stop the practice of dumping toilet waste into water bodies. Instead, we should adopt a circular economy where waste could be converted to useful resources. We need to alert the politicians to the benefits of good sanitation agendas such as influencing popularity and winning votes. Policy makers also need to learn how to leverage “the toilet economy” to sustain sanitation services instead of subsidising them perpetually.

By tapping into the economic opportunities of the “toilet economy”, we could customise sanitation solutions to work in off-grid areas with low water supply and rely on renewable energy as power sources to fit the circular economy. According to research by the Toilet Board Coalition, poor sanitation costs the global economy nearly USD 222.8 billion per year. The World Health Organization also estimated that every USD 1 invested into the global sanitation economy generated a global economic return on investments of USD 5.5, in the form of unproductive man-days loss from diseases.
A normal, healthy person is able to excrete enough nutrients (which must be fully processed to prevent the spread of diseases) to fertilize enough food for himself to eat sustainably. Human excreta is not “waste” but a renewable resource. However, the current practice of flushing away these nutrients means that they are not recycled into the farmlands. We need to adopt a “close-loop nutrients cycle” so that we do not need to rely on chemical fertilizers made from the natural minerals and deplete these natural resources over prolonged periods of extraction.

In fact, human waste can be converted into a range of products ranging from energy sources such as biogas and briquette, to natural and sustainable fertilisers for the agricultural sector. These products have huge economic potential. They could help the low-income communities create revenue streams to offset the high costs of sanitation provision. Companies such as Sanivation, Sanergy, Lixil, and many others are now working on various circular economy business models that produce products derived from processed waste. There are a variety of business models for low-income communities to adopt to help them provide adequate and affordable sanitation. For example:

- **Product-As-A-Service**
  Customers pay for the service they use rather than the ownership of the product. Doing so relieves them of the burden of ownership such as paying for the product’s upkeep.

- **Civic Crowdfunding Model**
  It brings micro-financing and web-based crowdsourcing together to provide sanitation to communities who are unable to afford it.

- **Advertising Model**
  A source of revenue is created when the product or service offered is publicised to reach potential customers in remote areas. This can help offset the cost of sanitation.
The future of toilets lies in the smart toilet economy. To ignite the smart toilet economy, we must change the way we view sanitation. Smart toilets will incorporate technologies such as mobile applications, blockchain, sensors, and big data that will improve our daily lives as well as improve the efficiencies in the sanitation value chain. The smart toilet economy will also bring about multiple benefits and conveniences. They have the power to connect service providers and customers. They can facilitate remote payments. They can track health data to stem the spread of diseases. These technologies are already available. Leveraging them will help us to open a myriad of opportunities in the smart sanitation sector across developing and developed countries.

An exciting example of a clever integration of smart technology into the toilet economy is the use of GIS (Geographic Information System) tracking of sanitation service providers to restructure and optimise the fecal sludge emptying and transport service sector. Through the application of the tracking system and the analysis of the resulting data, the sector is informed of the market size. This helps it to optimize its operation strategies, transport routes and efficiencies.
Human progress is often traced by the development of highrise buildings and its cityscape. We propose an alternative means of tracking the progress of human development. We can track our progress in sanitation, hygiene, public health and graciousness.

World Toilet Organization’s mission revolves around sanitation. We want to make good sanitation a culture that engages the society, much like the culture of eating and drinking. Taboos cause problems to fester and prolong sufferings. Our role in taking the taboo out of the poo is critical to improving our quality of life as humans. As the society prospers, so does its sanitation conditions improve. The reverse is true. As sanitation conditions improve, so does the economy prosper. The direct relationship between sanitation and economy was validated in countries such as Japan, Singapore, and Korea among many others. Good public health leads to higher national productivity while unhealthy nations remain poor and unproductive, and its heavy health burden causes a strain on its GDP.

In 2011, Gates foundation challenged the world to reinvent the toilet. To raise awareness of this challenge, Bill Gates appeared on stage with a jar of human feces. He took a giant whiff of pit latrine odor. He also drank water processed from fecal sludge and convinced Jimmy Fallon to drink it. All these stunts helped to get the world’s attention on the serious global issue of poor sanitation.
Under its Reinvent the Toilet Challenge, the Gates Foundation asked researchers to develop safe and workable sanitation solutions without having to rely on sewage systems or running water. Scientists and engineers from all over the world took up the challenge. They conceived and developed hundreds of exciting ideas on how to design toilets that could safely process human waste using little or no water or electricity. They devised toilets that convert human feces into valuable resources such as fertilizers, clean processed water, and even electricity. Other researchers invented a novel system to process fecal sludge from pit latrines, septic tanks, and sewers that turns human waste from entire communities into drinkable water and electricity. These machines, called omni-processors, could be used to support a fecal sludge treatment plant or complement a waste-water treatment plant at just a fraction of the energy, space and cost that a traditional sewer and wastewater treatment plant uses.

In the next phase of the Challenge, a team of researchers led by Dr. Shannon Yee from Georgia Institute of Technology will be taking the best of these ideas to build a low-cost, “reinvented toilet”. It is called the Generation 2 Reinvented Toilet. While challenges still lie ahead and it would be some time before these innovations could be perfected and marketed, there will come a day when they are ready to transform the lives of the billions of people who need them.
To combat the Covid-19 pandemic, bio-surveillance technologies have been deployed to our sewage systems to detect the prevalence of covid-concentrations in neighborhoods, districts and states. The data can help to predict the risk spread curves and trigger mitigation measures.
Toilets replacing Hospitals

With the advancement of sensor, spectra camera and other biomedical technologies, we forecast that the toilet will eventually transform into centers for Predictive and Preventive Medicine with the ability to read and analyse the daily downloads of personal bio-data from urine and feces samples. This information will help us identify at-risk groups and enable prevention or early treatment before diseases take hold. This will save both individuals and the State tremendous cost and unnecessary trauma. We predict that this will become a lifestyle product much like a Fitbit where you can send and read your medical data from your phones.

We are already seeing big players like Toto, Kohler and Google file patents for its Smart Toilet Analytics technologies. There is also a wave of new start-ups mushrooming in the healthcare space. For instance, ClinicAI founded by me (Jack Sim) is one such startup funded by Singularity university and Indiebio BioMed incubator. Others include Outsense from Israel as well as new inventions from the Canary Center at Stanford, a world-class research facility dedicated to cancer early detection programs.

When these products are brought to the markets in the near future, we predict that social media will expand its vocabulary on its language of gentrification, and public discourse on health issues would abound with terms such as colorectal cancer, diabetes, constipation, intestinal worms, Crohn’s disease, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Paruresis, Piles, Urinary Tract Infections, Menstrual Disorder, Fecal Transplant etc. This will not only carve out new industries in predictive and preventive medicines in the areas of hardware/software and pharmaceuticals, but it will also open up a whole new industry on food dietary planning with a focus on matching body types and DNA to dietary intakes.
As our quality of life improves across the board throughout the world, we now need a way to share the knowledge globally and make it available for countries and cities to adapt and customise it for local use. For instance, we note that there are currently different building codes and standards existing in different countries. While it is not feasible to harmonize all existing standards to create a single harmonised version due to different climates, cultures and stages of development, the World Toilet Organization hopes to facilitate cross learning across borders. We are compiling a World Toilet Standard and Design Guidelines e-Book for users to use as a "Ladder Menu". This will help both individuals and countries adapt and apply the useful lessons from others.

This encompasses broad knowledge on wide-ranging areas including water savings; fecal treatment systems; universal design and accessibilities for the disabled, gender and the aged; provisions; cleaning and maintenance; training; layouts; lighting; ventilation; Covid-19 and diseases mitigation; and environmental control; etc.

When the book is completed, we hope to offer free-downloads for all governments, academia, activists, companies, architects and planners. We also plan to organize regular working groups meetings for cross-trainings.

When we share the knowledge, we can all benefit together by leapfrogging our learning curves and improving sanitation conditions, environmental safety and our quality of life.

The World Toilet Organization endeavours to work with policy makers, businesses, civil society, investors, technologists, philanthropists, and local community leaders to drive the demand for good sanitation and hygiene practices in the most effective manner. We hope to reach and nudge all our stakeholders into taking action for their own good and the greater good.
We invite you to contact us in this massive transformative mission.

We await your email at action@worldtoilet.org
1998  RAS formed  
2001  WTO formed  
2004  WTS in Beijing  
2005  World Toilet Expo and Forum in Shanghai; World Toilet College formed in Singapore 
2006  WTS in Russia; World Toilet Expo and Forum in Bangkok  
2007  WTS in India  
2008  WTS in Hong Kong  
2009  WTS in Singapore  
2010  WTS in USA  
2011  WTS in Hainan 
2012  WTS in Durban, South Africa  
2013  July World Toilet Day unanimously passed by UN General Assembly, WTS in Solo, Indonesia; World Toilet Organization was granted consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council  
2015  WTS in New Delhi, India  
2016  WTS in Kuching, Malaysia; Jack received Novus Awards at the UN General Assembly  
2017  WTS in Melbourne, Australia  
2018  WTS in Mumbai, India; Jack received Luxembourg Peace Prize – Outstanding Peace Activist Award; Jack received Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Points of Lights Award 
2019  WTS in Sao Paolo, Brazil; Jack gave a hearing to the Senate in Brasilia to propose a bill for Public Private Partnership for the government on what treatment plans to allow private investment. Public Partnership Bill passed in Brazil 
2020  WTS Virtual Training
Honorary degree for champion for global equality of access to clean, safe toilets

19 November 2021

"Jack’s work on achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, through his support of social entrepreneurs and his belief in the power of enterprise to tackle poverty, aligns with our own efforts in this area, led by our Centre for Sustainable Development, and in our emphasis on putting entrepreneurialism at the heart of our teaching. We are delighted to honour Jack for his work."

strath.ac.uk/whystrathclyde/news/2021/honorarydegreeforchampionforglobalequalityofaccessstocleansafetoilets/
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“Breaking the Taboo”
HEALTH, DIGNITY AND WELL-BEING FOR ALL THROUGH SUSTAINABLE SANITATION