

PRESS RELEASE

‘Let’s get Poo to the Loo’ With UNICEF India’s Nationwide Campaign

NEW DELHI – November 11 – UNICEF India today launched ‘Take Poo to the Loo’, an innovative digital-led campaign focusing on putting an end to open defecation. With this three-month initiative, UNICEF India aims to do more than just create awareness on the issue. The idea is to reach young people and create an *active layer of advocates* who can speak out against open defecation, further disseminate the message and influence their communities, families and peers to do the same. Collectively, this voice will help to stimulate the creation of a new social norm, one where everyone, always uses a toilet.

Through interactive social media components and initial on-ground activations across New Delhi, Hyderabad, Pune and Mumbai, the campaign will help to create the much needed buzz and noise about the need to see the nation free from open defecation.

Crafted in the language of young people - quirky, informative and inspiring – ‘Take Poo to the Loo’ aims to promote youth participation and, thus, will give different tools such as games and mobile applications to ‘put poo in its right place’, *the toilet*. Users will also have the opportunity to participate in interactive activities through www.poo2loo.com, www.facebook.com/poo2loo, www.twitter.com/poo2loo - **#poo2loo** and <http://www.youtube.com/takepoo2loo>, and show their commitment to end open defecation by signing a pledge to the Honourable President of India.

“In India more than 620 million people defecate in the open; this represents half the population. The other half have become blind to the practice – it is a socially accepted norm. A change is urgently needed. Everyone has to consider the practice of open defecation as totally unacceptable. Human excreta in the environment represent a risk to all of us, and, therefore, we have a duty to raise our voice, view our duty as citizens differently and support efforts to end this practice. The best way to start is to spread the word that this is not acceptable in the India we all want to live in. By creating buzz we aspire to put pressure on all different actors in society who need to act to make change happen,” states Sue Coates, Chief WASH, UNICEF India.

To help young people open their eyes to the issue of open defecation Mr Poo –the campaign protagonist- will break loose on them. He will be creating havoc in different cities –on ground activation- and online assets. In addition, to amplify the impact of the campaign a series of videos where Mr Poo will be caught in different situations and a song will be released.

Partnerships are crucial to amplify the impact of the campaign. “Open defecation is a pressing public health issue and no sector can address it on its own. Civil society organizations, private sector, youth organizations, government, academia, decision makers, UN agencies and individuals have to work together on this. Everyone’s buy-in is essential to reach out to a wide audience,” says Caroline den Dulk, Chief Advocacy and Communication, UNICEF India.

UNICEF India is working with different civil society organizations, corporates, institutions and key influencers to spread the word about open defecation. For example, the NGO Protsahan is organizing workshops for children on this topic using different forms of art to engage them in the discussion. The Indian Institute of Technology will contribute to the initiative by mobilizing students in the campus in Delhi against open defecation and organizing an event on sanitation technology

options to stop open defecation. Domex, through its partnership, is implementing a campaign on open defecation which includes the development of a website, among other assets, and is contributing part proceeds on the purchase of every bottle in India from October to December. The funds will be used by UNICEF on programmes to improve sanitation for children and communities.

Open defecation refers to the practice whereby people go out to the fields to defecate rather than using a toilet that ensures no direct contact with faeces. Where open defecation is practiced, excreta left exposed and untreated pose a significant public health hazard.

India has made tremendous progress in the provision and use of toilets in the last 20 years, reducing the practice of open defecation from 75 percent of the population in 1990, to 51 percent in 2010. However, it is still home to the world's largest population of people who defecate in the open.

Each year nearly 20 million people are starting to use a toilet – breaking the inter-generational habit that was taught to them as toddlers. But 20 million new users a year is not enough to ensure that all children are born into an environment that will not contribute to them being stunted; where they will no longer suffer from repeated episodes of diarrhea; and where girls will be free from harassment and embarrassment as they enter puberty.

About UNICEF

UNICEF works in more than 190 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: www.unicef.org and www.unicef.org/india

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