

WORLD TOILET DAY: ACCESSIBILITY OF TOILETS FOR PEOPLE WITH SPINA BIFIDA AND HYDROCEPHALUS IS A HUMAN RIGHT

How often do you think of access to a toilet as a human rights issue? How often do you ponder over its availability to you at little or no cost, the possibility of using it at home, shopping malls and schools independently and whenever you want, or over doing it correctly? Chances are, not so often. Chances are, you take it for granted.

Well, many people with disabilities, such as those born with spina bifida, cannot take it for granted. They rely on specific toileting protocols and use continence materials to maintain their health and well-being. Far from being a luxury, access to these protocols and materials makes the difference between health and sickness, autonomy and complete dependence and, often, life and death.

Alarming, many people with spina bifida, wherever they are in the world, still do not enjoy access to a toilet that is accessible, safe, hygienic, affordable and provides them with dignity and privacy. People living in poverty are particularly at risk of serious irreversible health damage due to lack of disability-friendly sanitation procedures. The main barriers include:

- Lack of accessible toileting facilities that include considerations of step-free access, entrance size, interior space, sitting toilet, handrails, adult changing facilities, as well as availability of water supply;
- Lack of affordable continence materials of acceptable quality and in sufficient quantities;
- Lack of information and support about the correct toileting protocols due to widespread stigma around intimate care.

The stigma around the right to toilet must end. It is the responsibility of all of us as members of the society to make sure that people with disabilities are able to access this basic and essential right without discrimination or embarrassment. Equitable access to toilet and sanitation is absolute prerequisite for people with disabilities' participation in education, employment and life in the society. The 'Leave No One Behind' principle of the Sustainable Development Agenda can only be realised if everyone has access to equitable and accessible sanitation.

Recognise access to toilet for persons with disabilities for what it is: A. HUMAN. RIGHT. Not less, not more.

IF ivzw

International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus
Consultative status special category Economic and Social Council at the United Nations