

Toilets can save 1m kids: UNDP

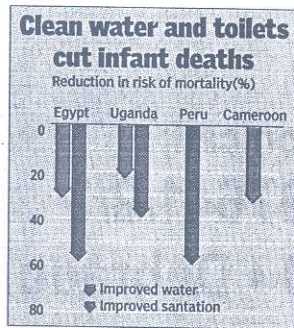
JO1 Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: A flush toilet may seem like an unlikely catalyst of human development but the everyday contraption holds the potential of saving 60% of the estimated 1.8 million children who die of diarrhoea worldwide each year.

According to UNDP's Human Development Report 2006, released on Thursday, access to a flush toilet reduced the risk of infant death by 59% in Peru and 57% in Egypt.

The report is of great significance to India, a country that has traditionally kept toilets away from the living quarters in a misplaced sense of hygiene. Extreme poverty has meant that 120 million homes in the country, or 700 million people, have to make do without proper toilets, leading to the deaths of 450,000 infants due to diarrhoea every year.

The UNDP report documents the consequences of inadequate sanitation and shows that the efficacy of human-waste disposal is one of the strongest determinants of



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child survival. Globally, 2.6 billion people lack access to proper sanitation of which 1.9 billion are in Asia.

UNDP policy specialist Arunabha Ghosh said, "No access to sanitation means people draw water for drinking, cooking and washing from rivers, lakes and ditches fouled with human and animal excrement."

He added that one in three Indians don't have access to toilets. Two out of three people in south Asia lack basic sanitation, leading to loss of \$36 billion in productivity. "From 1990 to 2004, south Asia provided sanitation to 25 million additional people every year. This needs to be increased to 43 million each year by 2015," Ghosh said.

The report takes serious exception to millions of poor missing from national statistics. Citing Mumbai as an example, the report says thousands of poor people are simply not counted because they live in informal settlements.

► **'One toilet for 1,440 people in Mumbai's Dharavi', P 15**