Background: Key Sanitation-related Data Points | Progress & Economic Impact

Lixil and Oxford Economics – The True Cost of Poor Sanitation (2016)
This report examines the hidden costs of poor sanitation and the impact that sanitation has on national and global economies.

Key data points:

- Poor sanitation cost the world $222.9 billion (U.S.) in 2015, up from $182.5 billion in 2010.
- Report breaks down these cost dimensions by mortality ($122.8 billion); productivity ($16.5 billion); healthcare ($56.6 billion); access to sanitation ($27 billion).
- Regionally, the economic burden of poor sanitation is heaviest in Asia Pacific, which accounts for a cost of $172.3 billion, or over 75 percent of this global figure.

World Bank, Water and Sanitation Program - Economics of Sanitation Initiative (ESI) studies (2007 – 2018)
Portal page to wide range of World Bank studies focused on estimating the economic costs of poor sanitation and hygiene. First study of its kind to attribute dollar values to a country's losses from poor sanitation. Portal includes 28 country studies across Africa, East/South Asia, and Latin American countries.

Key data point:

- For the 18 African countries represented in this study – economic losses account for $5.5 billion (U.S.) every year due to poor sanitation – with annual economic losses between 1-2.5 percent of GDP.

UNICEF – Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (2017)
The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP) has produced regular estimates of national, regional and global progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) since 1990. The JMP monitoring and reporting enables benchmarking and comparison of progress across countries at different stages of development. This 2017 report (the most recent) includes updated data on sanitation coverage, service, and quality, globally, building on established indicators and additional criteria mandated through Sustainable Development Goal 6.2, which establishes a goal of safely-managed sanitation for all, by 2030.

Key data points:

- 4.5 billion people, globally, lack access to safely managed sanitation.
- 68 per cent of the global population (5.0 billion people) use at least a basic sanitation service (use of improved facilities that are not shared with other households). 2.3 billion people still lacked even a basic sanitation service.
- Although in many countries urban areas are mainly served by sewer connections, on-site sanitation (systems that are not connected to a sewer) is the principal form of improved sanitation in urban as well as rural areas of Central Asia and Southern Asia, Oceania and sub-Saharan Africa.

World Health Organization – Global costs and benefits of drinking-water supply and sanitation interventions to reach the MDG target and universal coverage (2012)
This report updates earlier economic analyses conducted by WHO. The study aimed to estimate global, regional and country-level costs and benefits of drinking water supply and sanitation intervention to meet the Millennium Development Goals target in 2015.

Key data points:

- The benefit-cost ratio (BCR) to attain universal access of improved sanitation ranges from 2.8 in Sub-Saharan Africa to 8.0 in East Asia.
- The global economic return on sanitation spending is $5.5 (U.S.) per U.S. dollar invested.
- The BCR to attain universal access to drinking water ranges from 0.6 in Oceania to 3.7 in South Asia.
- The global economic return on water spending is $2.0 per U.S. dollar invested.
- Combined water supply and sanitation interventions have a benefit-cost ratio of 4.3 at the global level.
- The total economic losses associated with inadequate WASH were estimated at $260 billion annually. The total economic benefits of meeting the MDG target amount to $60 billion annually.
- The main contributor to overall benefits of sanitation and water supply is the value of time savings which accounts for more than 70 percent of total benefits in all regions for both services.

World Bank, Water and Sanitation Program – The Economic Returns of Sanitation Interventions in Yunnan Province, People's Republic of China (2011)
A sub-national briefing document from the ESI series focused on Yunnan Province, China.

Key data point:

- Sanitation interventions have very favourable socio-economic returns to household and society – in this study, an economic return of at least 6 times the cost from simple sanitation systems like pit latrines, and 2 times the cost for off-site treatment options in urban areas.