

Children die for lack of toilets

Editorial

This Day

Tens of thousands of Nigerian children die every year because this country lacks basic sanitation, said *This Day*. It's not just that rural areas have no indoor plumbing—they don't even dig latrines. The country is "one huge field, where people defecate without shame and without taking into consideration the impact of their actions on the health of others." Some go in creeks and rivers, polluting the water we all depend on. Even in "our so-called modern cities," people defecate outdoors, and walkways and bushes reek with the stench of urine and fecal matter. This filth is spread microscopically "by flies and dust," so it's

nearly impossible to avoid ingesting human waste, even if you yourself have a decent toilet. The result is that diarrheal disease is endemic, especially among children—85,000 of whom die every year from typhoid fever, dysentery, and other conditions. That makes this scourge more of a threat to us all than Boko Haram or any terrorist group. The scarcity of toilets also puts girls and women at risk of sexual violence when they can't find places to relieve themselves in private. Nigeria has the resources to bring plumbing to the people, and to educate them on its importance. What it has so far lacked is the will.