

Give a S#*T for Accessible Toilets in Uganda!

The Advocacy Project (AP) is seeking contributions for an important student-led fundraising initiative to build toilets for people with a disability in northern Uganda.

The [Give a S#*T! campaign](#) has been launched by two students from the University of Maryland (UMD), Nicole McDermott and Rebecca Scherpelz. Rebecca, a disability specialist, volunteered as an AP Peace Fellow in 2011 at the [Gulu Disabled Persons Union \(GDPU\)](#) in Uganda. During her fellowship, she raised the alarm about accessible sanitation in a powerful blog, "[When Nature Calls and Society Hangs Up.](#)"



2011 Peace Fellow Rebecca Scherpelz at the Gulu Disabled Persons Union (GDPU) in northern Uganda

Rebecca is now studying for a Masters degree at University of Maryland (UMD), and she and Nicole are appealing for funds under the university's [Do Good Challenge](#), a campus-wide initiative to promote social change. They have raised \$1,500 in three weeks and are hoping to reach \$2,500 by April 6. If they succeed, they could win an extra \$6,000 for the cause.

The money will help GDPU and AP to build accessible toilets and lobby the Gulu district government to integrate accessibility into the long-term sanitation plan.

Please don't turn up your nose at this appeal! Help us by [clicking here](#) to contribute, by tweeting appropriate puns [here](#), and by sending the word out to friends. Any amount will help - and your contribution will not go to waste.

Sanitation is one of the world's most pressing development challenges. In designating November 19 as World Toilet Day, the [UN General Assembly noted last year](#) that one in three people do not have a basic toilet, and that almost 2,000 children die every day from preventable diarrhoeal diseases.

The challenge facing people with disabilities is particularly acute, for obvious reasons. Gulu was devastated by the Lord's Resistance Army rebellion and a fifth of the district's 154,000 inhabitants are thought to have a disability. But when Rebecca wrote her blog in 2011 there was only one public accessible toilet, at the GDPU itself. Rebecca invited her readers to imagine crawling into a public latrine.

Gulu now has a second accessible toilet, thanks to the efforts of two subsequent Peace Fellows, [Dane Macri](#) from the University of Windsor, and [John Steies](#) from University of Minnesota. Dane raised money for a toilet at the Gulu Bus Park in 2012, and John worked with a construction company to complete the project in 2013. John [described his sense of relief](#) when the toilet came on stream in 2013. At the same time, all agree that the larger goal must be to co-opt the government into ensuring accessible sanitation services.

In making their case, the GDPU may well draw on the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#), which has been ratified by Uganda and calls on its 143 member governments to provide access to water and sanitation.

The Convention was modeled on a ground-breaking American law, the Americans With Disability Act, and is currently being considered by the US Senate. But the treaty needs a two thirds majority to pass, and several Senators are concerned that the Convention would supercede US law and undermine the authority of American parents. This has been disputed by disability advocates and by the Obama Administration. It was a point of discussion at a [conference on disability and inclusion](#) at the University of Maryland last week.



2013 Peace Fellow John Steies pictured with the GDPU Chairman at the Bus Park toilet

- * Donate to the [Do Good Challenge](#) before April 6, 2014!
- * Follow the Give a S#*T campaign on [Twitter](#)
- * View photos of the disability accessible toilet on [Flickr](#).