



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

OVERVIEW AND KEY RESULTS



STOP SOIL EROSION
SAVE OUR FUTURE

World Soil Day

5 DECEMBER 2019



GLOBAL SOIL
PARTNERSHIP

World Soil Day - 5 December 2019

Overview and key results



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
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Executive summary

World Soil Day (WSD) 2019 'Stop soil erosion, Save our future' was celebrated with over **560 events taking place in 100 countries across the world**. Official ceremonies were held in Rome, New York, Tunis, Uppsala, Lisbon, Dhaka, Bangkok, and Sochi. Furthermore, **thirty FAO regional, sub-regional and country offices** actively supported the campaign and organized celebrations.

Since its official inception in 2013, the **WSD communication campaign has quickly attracted attention and has mobilised masses over the years**, growing from a little-known occurrence with few events/countries celebrating it (8 countries – 8 events), to become a global network of more than 700 event organizers – from colleges and universities, to activists, museums, entertainment industry and NGOs (100 countries – 553 events).

Media coverage was strong - reaching 653 million users - roughly 1 in 10 persons worldwide. The campaign was covered by over 300 online articles on 5 December with most coverage coming from China, the United States, Italy, and Thailand. Broadcasters such as **BBC, NDTV.com and Al Jazeera** extensively covered WSD 2019's yearly theme.

Major outlets such as the New York Times, Washington Post, the Guardian, the Wall Street Journal, Forbes, the Huff Post, CNN World, Times of India, Sidney Morning Herald, the Telegraph, da Spiegel, le Monde Diplomatique, Corriere della Sera gave prominence to soil on and beyond 5 December.

The campaign material, translated in 15 languages, was widely disseminated, used and shared, as confirmed by the ever-increasing popularity of the query 'World Soil Day' on Google Trends. The World Soil Day logo is now available for download in **91 languages**.

The webstory on soil erosion, published on the **FAO homepage received 11 500 views on WSD** while the **dedicated website doubled its views compared to 2018** with over 150 000 sessions on 5 December. Since the campaign launch in September 2019, **FAO soil-related websites totaled around 1.5 million views**.

On social media, the organization was **mentioned 1 220 times and reached 400 million social media users** in their feed. On Twitter, the hashtag #WorldSoilDay was trending worldwide in the afternoon of 5 December and the **42 second video on soil erosion** – went viral. A synthesis of the key findings is reflected in **Table 1**.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RESULTS
CAMPAIGN MATERIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90 products (gifts, cards, posters, banners, videos) in 6 FAO languages • Visual identity (declined in posters, web banners and buttons) translated in 15 languages • Over 8 000 downloads: +13.04% compared to 2018
WSD LOGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 91 translations of the logo
ANIMATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 000 non-cumulative views • 1 178 from one FAO single tweet
42 SECOND VIDEO ON SOIL EROSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 275 415 views and 10 337 engagements with 4 236 retweets, 5 973 likes and 128 comments on Twitter
CONTEST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 500 individuals engaged in the photo contest
EVENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 official celebrations • 30 FAO offices • 553 events in 100 countries • Participation of millions of individuals sharing their testimonies (2 GB of photos received)
MEDIA ARTICLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 300 top-tier articles on 4-7 December 2019 reaching 653 000 000 people
WEB TRAFFIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150 000 sessions (5 December 2019) for the WSD website • Approximately 11 000 hours spent on the website by 60 000 users on 5 December with an increase of +46% compared to 2018 • 1.5 million views (September – December 2019) for FAO soil-related websites
SOCIAL MEDIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70 dedicated tweets from various FAO accounts on 5 December • 1 220 mentions reaching 400 000 000 accounts in their feeds (increase of +233% compared to 2018)
TOP TWEET/POST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The top tweet published on @FAO on 5 December received 34 000 views and 868 retweets, 1 356 likes and 31 comments, followed by an analogous tweet by @FAOClimateChange with 33 993 views • The top post on Facebook on 5 December totalized 22 000 shares on 5 December
KEY INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google trends +53.8% compared to 2018 • Hashtag: #WorldSoilDay was trending globally on 5 December

Table 1. Source: WSD 2019 key results.

World Soil Day – Background

World Soil Day (WSD) is an international day, celebrated annually on **5 December** to raise awareness for healthy soils worldwide, which lay at the foundations of agricultural development, healthy food production, and are key to basic survival as well as our planet's sustainable future.

In December 2013, the 68th session of the UN General Assembly declared 5 December as an official UN observance ([A/RES/68/232](#)) and gave the FAO Global Soil Partnership (GSP) the mandate to coordinate the implementation of its global communication campaign.

Since then, WSD has adopted a different theme each year in order to highlight areas needed for action - threats to soil resources - and provide a common focus to the campaign.

WSD campaigns call on governments, education and academic sectors, farmers, scientists, youth, business, and civil society to take action, trigger international attention and build new working relationships with other strategic partners and donors.

During the last six years, WSD has gained great momentum and has become one of the most celebrated days of the UN calendar reaching hundreds of millions.

The World Soil Day 2019 Campaign

Overview

This year's campaign was held with the slogan, '**Stop Soil Erosion, Save our Future**' [Hashtags: **#StopSoilErosion; #WorldSoilDay**] to draw attention to the global issue of soil loss and the urgent need to increase collective efforts to reach zero hunger.

The theme of the year was proposed and endorsed by FAO member countries and GSP partners during the 6th Plenary Assembly of the Global Soil Partnership (June 2018, FAO HQ).

Erosion is putting our soil and productive land in danger. Due to climate change, land management decisions, and/or poor and unsustainable soil use practices, the world is witnessing an alarming decline in fertile soils, which is forecast to continue and make soils progressively infertile and ever more prone to drought, desertification, and floods.

The GSP, along with FAO, recognizes erosion as a critical threat to the zero hunger goal and has made it a priority to raise awareness about the risks of degrading and losing this essential natural resource. Critical to achieving this goal was the development of an evidence-based communication campaign that could promote worldwide consciousness, understanding, and action.

WSD 2019 campaign kick-started officially in September 2019 thanks to the support of FAO regional, sub-regional and country offices, GSP regional partnership secretariats, and their extensive partner network. The launch included a campaign implementation guide to support countries, organizations, and individuals in using the campaign materials, taking part in global contests, and/or organizing *ad hoc* events. These resources were made publicly available to users through the official WSD 2019 website.

Strategy and objectives

The main objective of the WSD campaigns is to keep soils high in the global agenda and communicate to an ever-growing audience that soil resources are the key ingredient to achieving a food secure, climate-resilient and zero-hunger future.

Along with the slogan ‘Stop soil erosion, Save our future’, FAO-GSP developed and implemented an integrated strategy on the protection of soil resources against soil erosion.

Building on the communication efforts made for the Global Symposium on Soil Erosion (GSER19), FAO-GSP designed, coordinated and implemented the global communication campaign tailoring communication tools and content in order to maximize the outreach on a global scale.

To turn insights and momentum into action, the communication strategy focused on five major activity sets. All were designed in a way that they could be jointly ‘followed’ and implemented by all interested participants and to the benefit of all.

Activity Set 1: Activating networks

Thanks to the dedicated website, socials, media, newsletters, special announcements, events, challenges, and awards, the WSD campaign was able to reach a vast array of stakeholders that use their own communication channels for the incremental spread of messages. Networking (online and offline) including creating and maintaining a network of contacts at global, regional and national levels is key to share and disseminate information and raise awareness around this year’s theme.

Activity Set 2: Building the WSD website

The interactive, digital platform plays an essential role in the WSD campaign connecting global actors, local implementers and an increasingly involved general public in support of each other. In particular, the website offers ready-to-use and multilingual [communication material](#) and provides a platform to disseminate scientifically accurate, simple and influential information.

Activity Set 3: Establishing pathways for youth engagement

Thanks to the [Greening the future photo challenge](#), [contests](#), [tutorials](#) and [activity books for kids](#) and in partnership with UNESCO and the Italian Ministry of Education, the WSD campaign portrays the many and ever-changing faces of the topic of erosion, keeping an eye on emerging influencers, online video streaming, and new social platforms.

Activity Set 4: Leading regular activities for mobilizing the general public

The engagement of prominent voices (European Space Agency’s astronaut [Luca Parmitano](#)), technical experts ([Eduardo Mansur](#), FAO- Director of the Land and Water Division), champions and far-reaching media platforms allow to elevate messages and calls to action. Furthermore, the collaboration with government leaders (Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte), private businesses, artists (the kid’s chorus of Piazza Vittorio) and some local initiatives (Isola della sostenibilità) all contributed to generate and maximize media (local and international) exposure.

Activity Set 5: Leveraging WSD events and conferences

Celebrations constitute the opportunity for a large set of participants from different sectors and regions to interact directly on WSD. Events take place on-site or virtually, in the form of discussions and exchanges, reaching key decision-makers and building out sectoral and cross-sectoral conferences as debating platforms. The [WSD 2019](#)

[interactive map](#) is crucial to promote healthy competition among countries, regions, entities, and individuals, stimulating engagement.

Key messages

WSD 2019 #StopSoilErosion presents key data and insights to the general public in a way that is engaging, valuable and comprehensible. They were disseminated in different formats and through different channels from September and December 2019.

Every year, the GSP Secretariat creates clear and concise key messages targeting a wide range of audiences/users. Key messages are placed in the centre of the WSD campaigns and are used to produce communication materials such as posters, postcards, animated GIFs as well as on social media.

Key messages generally include a call to actions for certain target groups (**Figure 1**). The SDGs are generally localized in there so that their relevance and impact on people's daily lives becomes clear. They use evidence-based data and arguments and a short but effective phrasing, often referring to comparative examples between regions and countries (**Table 2**).



Figure 1. WSD 2019 key messages' cards.

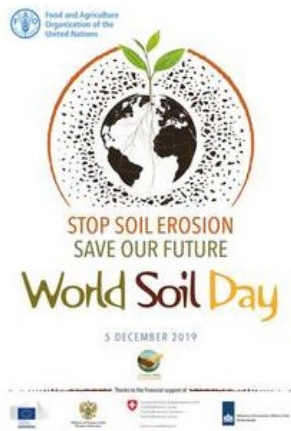
Extract of the key messages developed and translated in the 6 FAO languages:

- 33% of the Earth's soils are already degraded and over 90% could become degraded by 2050.
- Soil erosion is the removal of the most fertile top layer of soil from the land surface through water, wind, and tillage.
- Soil erosion is the #1 threat to soil functions.
- Soil erosion decreases agricultural productivity, degrades ecosystem functions, amplifies hydrogeological risk such as landslides or floods, causes significant losses in biodiversity, damages to urban infrastructure and, in the most severe cases, leads to displacement of human populations.
- Soil erosion occurs naturally under all climatic conditions and on all continents but it is accelerated, up to 1000 times, by unsustainable human activities.
- By 2050, soil erosion could lead up to a 10% loss in crop production.
- Over 80% of soil degradation in sub-Saharan Africa is due to soil erosion.
- If nothing is done, by 2050 the estimated crop yield losses would be equivalent to removing 1.5 million square kilometers of land from crop production – or roughly all the arable land in India (FAO, 2015).
- It can take up to 1 000 years to produce just 2-3 cm of soil.
- Every five seconds the equivalent of one soccer pitch of soil is eroded.
- Soil erosion and land degradation pose a major threat to global food security and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – compromising the well-being of at least 3.2 billion people around the world.
- Because 95 percent of the food we eat comes from the soil, soil erosion mitigation through the application of Sustainable Soil Management (SSM) is critical for protecting our soil while ensuring a sustainable and food secure world.

Table 2. WSD 2019 extract of the key messages of WSD.

Materials

The success of this year’s campaign was largely due to the simple message and theme that easily engaged different cultures and nationalities. The theme was amplified by coordinated visuals and communication material that could be easily customized to the local contexts.



The materials were initially prepared in the six official FAO languages on the World Soil Day campaign webpage for easy sharing with external partners. At the request of some countries, the GSP Secretariat provided ad-hoc translations in non-FAO languages. The materials, available in different formats - **posters, banners, and buttons** - were downloaded **8025 times** with an **increase of +13.04 percent** compared to the previous year.

This year, a poster ([Get involved!](#)) was prepared to guide users on how to use WSD communication materials. The poster also listed ideas on ways to get started and how to use the communication toolkit. This smart implementation guide was published in September 2019 and disseminated through all communication channels (**Figure 2 and Table 3**).



Figure 2. WSD 2019 samples of the campaign material.

TO PRINT		
Campaign Material	Languages	Dissemination Period
Posters	6 UN Official Languages + (Portuguese, Catalan, Italian, Indonesian, Hindi, Albanian, Hungarian, Malagasy)	From Sep 2019
Banners	6 UN Official Languages	
Buttons	6 UN Official Languages	
Templates for presentations	6 UN Official Languages	
Graphics for the production of t-shirts, hats	6 UN Official Languages	
WSD Logo	91 languages	Up to 5 Dec 2019
Key message postcards	6 UN Official Languages	From May 2019
Four animated GIFs	6 UN Official Languages	From May 2019
Infographic and actions	6 UN Official Languages	From Oct 2019
Infographics, Threats on soil functions, Thematic infographics. factsheets	Various	Previous years
DIGITAL		
Webstory on soil erosion: Let's #StopSoilErosion to ensure a food secure future. 5 reasons why we need to protect our soils	6 languages	May-Dec 2019
Social media: Trello board	6 languages	Nov 2019
Press release: Save Our Soils: Finding ways to stop erosion	6 languages	May-Dec 2019
Website highlights:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The Global Soil Partnership in action (2) Animation #StopSoilErosion available in all languages (3) Today is World Soil Day (4) Greening the future photo challenge: results 	
Newsletters and special announcements: Oct, 24 Dec, 2 Dec, 5	Eng	
Promotional emails	Eng, Fr, Es	Sep-Dec 2019
Flickr photo gallery: Worldwide events		Dec 2019

Table 3. WSD 2019 printed and digital campaign material and production timeline.

Activities

The contest ‘Greening the future’, launched in the beginning of November 2019, invited a wide range of stakeholders to take part in a global photo contest. It challenged children, teens, youth, and adults worldwide to cover the soil and take a concrete step to stop soil erosion. A flyer illustrating how to participate in five easy steps and a pledge card to hold while taking the picture were prepared. Planting local species is a fun and easy way to fight erosion and raise awareness for WSD.

Hundreds participants and over 500 photos were received and collected in the [Flickr photo gallery](#) (Figure 3)!



Figure 3. Photo challenge ‘Greening the future’ in pictures

A set of **Human Interest Stories** showcasing actions to stop soil erosion in the field, featuring individuals, were shot in the framework of the [video contest on soil erosion](#). Family farmers, governments and private sector representatives were called on to talk about their actions to prevent erosion or restore eroded sites, be it through their work or simple actions in their daily lives. The involvement of the astronaut Luca Parmitano, the European Spatial Agency, and the kid’s chorus of Piazza Vittorio increased campaign resonance (Table 4).

Multimedia	Languages	Dissemination Period
Video message Eduardo Mansur	Eng	Nov 2019
Video animation: ‘ Stop soil erosion, Keep the soil where it belongs ’	6 languages	May-Nov 2019
Video for social media: ‘ Stop Soil Erosion to secure our #FutureofFood ’	4 languages	May-Nov 2019
Human Interest Stories series (in the framework of the video contest on soil erosion)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aynoq'as y Taqanas - Bolivia 2. The signs of soil erosion – Burundi 3. Mother Earth – Nepal 4. Promoting environmentally sustainable agriculture in Rwanda – Rwanda 5. The impact of olive cultivation on soil erosion in the Mediterranean – Spain 6. The story of a reinvigoration in Karapınar, Central Anatolia - Turkey 	May 2019
Video message of Luca Parmitano	Eng	May 2019

Table 4. WSD 2019 multimedia material and production timeline.

International Soil Awards

Glinka World Soil Prize

Each year since 2016, the GSP presents the Glinka prize to recognise excellence in sustainable soil management related topics. The [Glinka World Soil Prize](#) - sponsored by the Russian Federation – is the annual award addressed to individuals and/or organisations committed to solving acute national, regional or local problems of soil degradation. For its fourth edition, the call was launched in July 2019 together with a [factsheet](#) and [video](#).

Professor Xu Minggang, Director and Professor, South Subtropical Crops Research Institute, Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS) and Professor (Soil Science) and Research Leader, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS), China has been awarded with the Glinka World Soil Prize for his outstanding contribution and work on sustainable soil management.

King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award

Each year since 2018, the GSP presents the WSD Award to recognise the best WSD celebration held in the framework of the previous communication campaign. The [King Bhumibol World Soil Day Award](#) – sponsored by the Kingdom of Thailand - prizes the efforts made by individuals and organizations to celebrate our care for soils with a medal in the framework of the previous campaign ‘Be the solution to soil pollution’, a USD 15 000 check, and a trip to Bangkok, Thailand. The call was launched in July 2019 together with a [factsheet](#) and [video](#).

This year the selection committee assessed 35 candidatures complying with the theme of last year World Soil Day: WSD 2018 ‘Be the Solution to Soil Pollution’.

The winner of the second edition of the Award is **Asociación Costarricense de la Ciencia del Suelo (ACCS)** with its programme **Manos al Suelo** which promoted (1) a massive application of compost on over 3 000 trees;

(2) a hill entirely dedicated to soil conservation practices; (3) a soil fair with compost-making workshops and urban farming demonstrations.

ACCS also pushed for the National Decarbonization Plan, to become the World's first Carbon-free country by 2021, and sponsored the National Composting and Waste Recycling Plan with regular fora of discussion and seminars on soil functions and ecosystem benefits. Furthermore, ACCS established a National Soil and Land Partnership: a series of interviews conducted by ACCS triggered public engagement and outreach with a great involvement of the press, media, social networks, and online communities. More than 2 200 people including children, youth, farmers, citizens, private companies, policy makers and government officials.

Campaign impact assessment

Official events

Each year on the 5 of December, WSD is officially celebrated by UN institutions at UN Headquarters, FAO HQ and FAO regional and sub-regional offices. The official WSD 2019 celebration was held at FAO headquarters in Rome (Italy) on Thursday 5 December with the presence of Ms. Semedo, FAO Deputy Director-General, the permanent representatives of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Russian Federation, the keynote speaker Prof. Xu, winner of the Glinka World Soil Prize, and the multiethnic kids' chorus of Piazza Vittorio. Two publications were launched: the 'Soil loss Atlas of Malawi' and the 'RECSOIL: Recarbonization of global soils' (see the [Flickr photogallery](#)).

Other 11 official celebrations took place in the UN headquarters in New York (US), Bangkok (Thailand), Tunis (Tunisia), Uppsala (Sweden), Oeiras/Lisbon (Portugal), Dhaka (Bangladesh), Sochi (Russia), Xi' an (China), Marrakesh (Morocco), Rome (Italy).

Five FAO regional offices, 4 FAO sub-regional and over 20 FAO country offices around the world actively joined the campaign, namely: FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok), for Latin America and the Caribbean (Santiago de Chile), for Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok), for the Near East (Cairo), for Africa (Accra), for Europe and Central Asia (Budapest), FAO subregional office for Mesoamerica (Panama), for the Caribbean (Bridgetown), for Central Asia (Ankara), for North Africa (Tunis) and FAO country offices including FAO Turkey, FAO Serbia, FAO Myanmar, FAO Nigeria, FAO Democratic Republic of Congo, FAO Argentina, FAO India, FAO Iran, FAO Bangladesh, FAO Gabon, FAO Laos, FAO Japan, FAO Morocco and FAO Liaison Office in New York.

Worldwide events

World Soil Day 2019 was celebrated in more than **100 countries with more than 550 events**. These events have been recorded to the reporting date as 553 and many are still being registered through the WSD interactive map (**Figure 4**).



Figure 4. Miscellaneous from the Flickr photogallery on WSD 2019 worldwide celebrations.

These events include a wide variety of celebrations, from workshops, round-tables, broadcasts, conferences, youth gatherings, farmers' markets, and soil fairs, but also parades, soil run fund-raising, webinars, to tree-planting ceremonies in light of the theme of soil erosion. As a result of the campaign, WSD has now become a permanent fixture on the calendar in a growing number of countries. Go to the [Flickr photo gallery](#).



Figure 5. Worldwide WSD events: locations and number of events.

Since 2013 both the number of events and the countries involved steadily increased, peaking in 2019 (Figure 6).

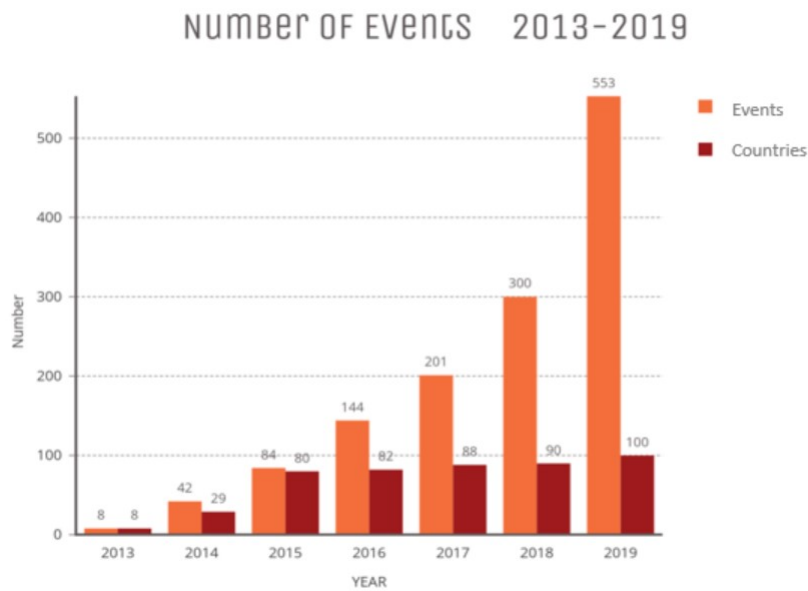


Figure 6. WSD events vs. number of countries for 2013-2019.

WSD was celebrated in all regions also thanks to the support of GSP Regional Soil Partnerships. To the reporting date, 190 events have been registered from Asia, 160 from Latin America and the Caribbean and 105 from Europe (**Figure 7**).

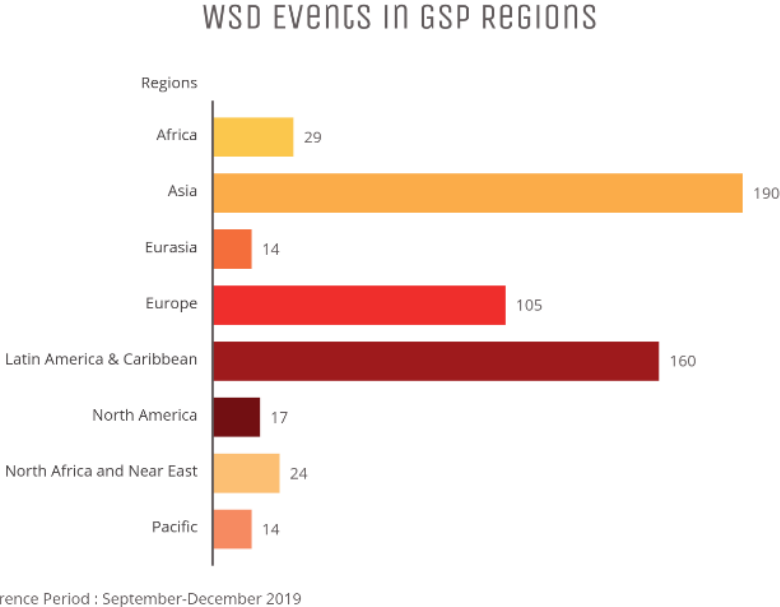


Figure 7. WSD 2019 celebrations and events by regions.

The campaign reached thousands of people in Brazil and Thailand with 170 events followed by India (49) and Mexico (22). The top 10 countries and the number of events are shown in **Figure 8**.

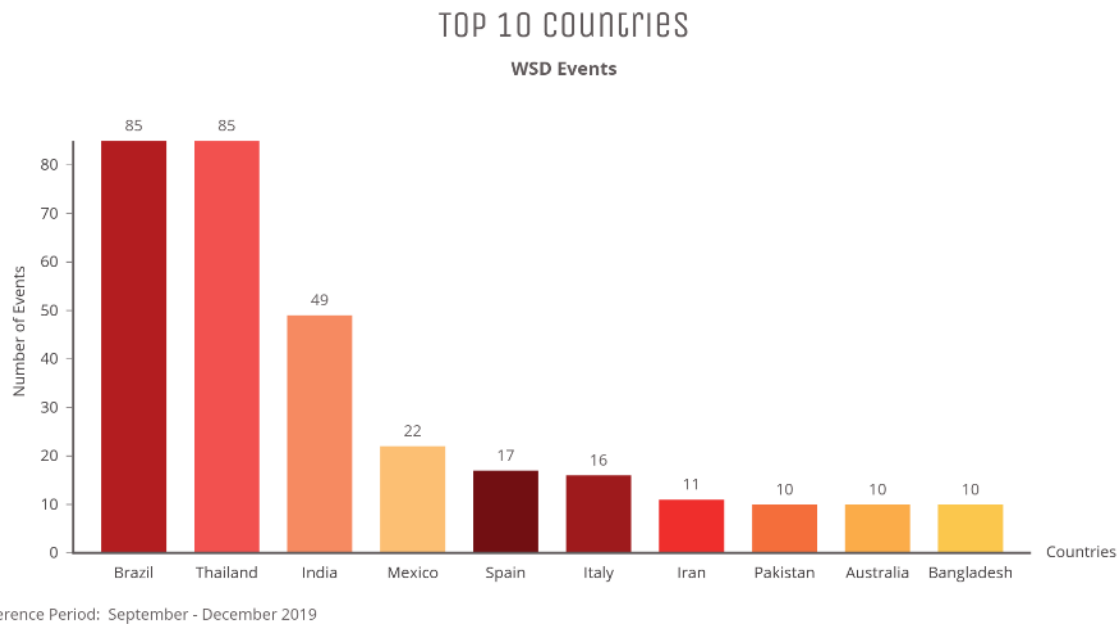


Figure 8. Top 10 countries for number of WSD events in 2019.

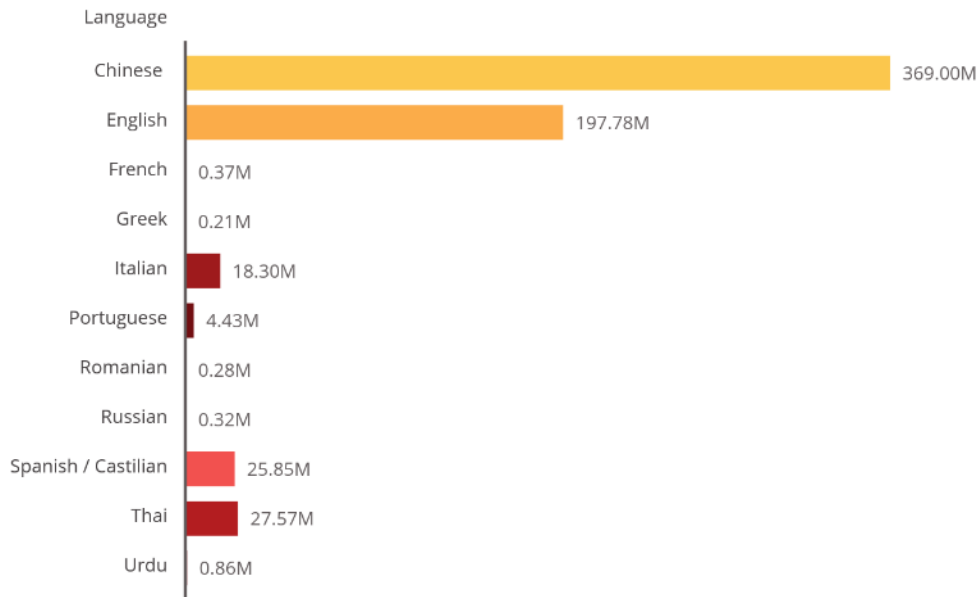
News/Media coverage

This year’s WSD campaign, similar to the previous years, aimed to raise awareness and understanding about soil resources and one of its biggest threats, soil erosion. Through the efforts leading up to the campaign, WSD 2019 was successful in effectively engaging the digital sphere by creating a network, educating and mobilising influencers and raising awareness among the audience.

Since 2012 soils feature more often in the media. The understanding of their importance in the food crisis and the fight against climate change is increasing and people rank the topic high on the list of priorities that governments, society or they themselves should address. The run-up to the launch of the campaign was successful in reaching new audiences and creating awareness on soil resources.

WSD 2019 received a solid coverage - reaching 653 million users, 1 in 10 people globally. The campaign was covered by over 300 articles from national and local newspapers on 5 December including mainstream media from China, the United States, Italy, and Thailand. The campaign has garnered media coverage in several languages across the globe (**Figure 9**) with some countries (top 20) exceeding expectations (**Figure 10**).

WSD 2019 MEDIA REACH - LANGUAGES (MILLION)



Reference Period: 25 November - 15 December)

Figure 9. WSD 2019 media reach (languages).

MEDIA REACH - TOP 20 COUNTRIES

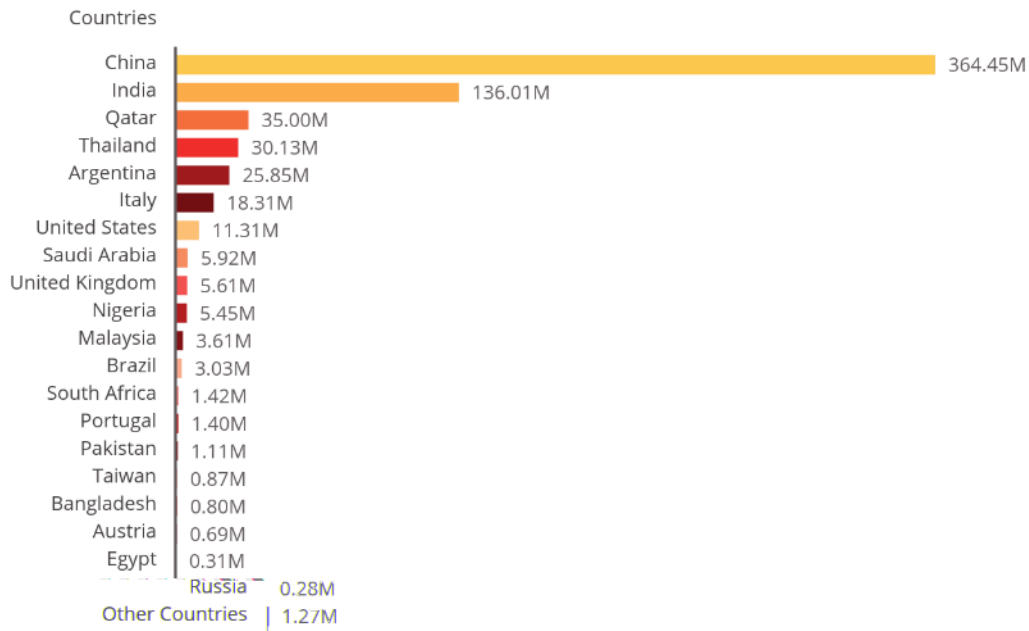


Figure 10. WSD 2019 media reach (top 20 Countries).

This year, FAO launched the press release ‘[Save Our Soils: Finding ways to stop erosion](#)’ and the webstory ‘[Let’s #StopSoilErosion to ensure a food secure future](#)’, in eight and six languages, respectively. The last totaled 11 500 non-cumulative views only on 5 December.

Other UN agencies and reporting services joined the communication efforts, in particular, UN News ‘[Soil erosion must be stopped ‘to save our future’, says UN agriculture agency](#)’, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) ‘[Combatting Soil Erosion to Help Achieve Zero Hunger and Clean Water: IAEA Commemorates World Soil Day](#)’, UN Environment Programme (UNEP) ‘[The huge potential of agriculture to slow climate change](#)’, and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) ‘[UNCCD celebrates WSD with song to inspire action on land](#)’. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)’s Acting Executive Secretary addressed an [official statement](#) on WSD.

Media outlets, corporations or news media platforms spread the WSD’s message and further promoted engagement opportunities beyond the group of GSP partners and FAO member countries. Eighteen out of the top 50 world news websites for 2019 covered WSD 2019 yearly theme:

[Google News](#), [Reddit](#), [BBC News](#), [The New York Times](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Yahoo News World](#), [CNN World](#), [The Guardian](#), [Times of India](#), [CBC News](#), [Washington Post](#) » [World](#), [NDTV](#), [Reuters](#), [Spiegel online](#), [Sputnik](#), [Euronews](#), [ABC Australia](#), [The Sydney Morning Herald](#).

Major outlets gave prominence to soils all throughout the year:

IISD reporting services on ‘[World Soil Day Initiatives Highlight Links between Soil, Ecosystems and Health](#)’ (10 Dec. 2019), **Relief web** with ‘[Thailand and UN’s FAO collaborate to stop soil erosion to ensure future food security](#)’ (7 Dec. 2019), **Forbes Advocate** with ‘[Local project gaining ground on World Soil Day](#)’ (5 Dec 2019), [东方网](#), **le Monde diplomatique** with ‘[Recarbonización de los suelos del mundo, una opción eficaz para enfrentar el cambio climático](#)’, **Ansa** with ‘[Conte, Italia c’è sulla sfida del clima, lavoriamo al taglio della CO2](#)’ and **il Corriere della Sera** with ‘[FAO World Soil Day: l’importanza della salute del suolo](#)’ (5 Dec 2019), **the Sidney Morning Herald** with the article ‘[It’s World Soil Day. Can you dig it?](#)’ (4 Dec 2019), **The Telegraph** with the articles ‘[World Soil Day 2019: the A-Z of soil](#)’, the ‘[battery pack powering all life](#)’ (30 Nov. 2019) and ‘[Time to ditch the tractor? Why ploughing up the soil could be bad for farming](#)’ (8 Dec. 2019), **the Washington Post** with the interview to Al Gore on healthy soils and carbon sequestration potential ‘[We really need to wake up quickly’: Al Gore warns of a looming food crisis caused by climate change](#)’ (22 Oct. 2019) and the article ‘[Uncovering how microbes in the soil influence our health and our food](#)’ (29 Sep. 2019), the **Wall Street Journal** with ‘[How to Get Rid of Carbon Emissions: Pay Farmers to Bury Them](#)’ (11 Sep. 2019).

Before the official launch of the campaign, soil erosion was covered also by **the Huff Post** with ‘[Creating Healthy Soil Lessens The Impact Of Drought And Flooding. Will Farmers Support It?](#)’ (26 Aug. 2019), **BBC REEL** with ‘[Why soil is disappearing from farms?](#)’ (8 Jul 2019), an episode of ‘[Follow the food](#)’, a new series by BBC Future and BBC World News – looks into where our food comes from and how will this change in the near future, **the Guardian** through the video ‘[It’s time we stopped treating soil like dirt](#)’ (11 Jul. 2019) that went viral and the article ‘[The world needs topsoil to grow 95% of its food - but it’s rapidly disappearing](#)’ (30 May 2019), the graphic journalist Wendy MacNaughton with ‘[To combat climate change, Start from the Ground up \(with dirt\)](#)’ from the **New York Times** (2 May 2019), **BBC News** with ‘[Climate change being fuelled by soil damage - report](#)’ (29 Apr. 2019). To know more about national and local media coverage check the [newsroom](#).

Social media engagement

This section aims to report on the usage of the hashtags #WorldSoilDay and #StopSoilErosion, specifically accentuating the number of social media users that used these hashtags, the most involved geographical areas, as well as the most influential accounts on the topic focusing on the period and monitoring Twitter, Instagram, News, Blogs, and Forums.

In the timeframe of 25 November - 15 December 2019, thousands of people interacted with the most trending posts and hashtags by putting likes, comments, or sharing them.

The WSD 2019 Trello board prepared in the 6 FAO official languages with all sharable content, was pushed out through different channels: mainly FAO corporate accounts, but also FAO social media managers, GSP partners and relevant stakeholders such as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), CGIAR and its partners, Conservation International, Nature Conservancy, 4pour1000, Kiss the Ground, and the Terraton Initiative.

Aside from UN partners and FAO regional and country offices, many non-FAO accounts shared the soil-related content on social media including China Xinhua News, United Nations, Naciones Unidas, Food Tank, EU Agriculture, EU Environment, and many other accounts with a large following.

The campaign's call for action appealed to a diverse and assorted audience from famous environmental activists (Jane Goodall), Leonardo Di Caprio, political leaders (Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and M5S's leader Beppe Grillo), NGOs (Nature Conservancy, WWF, Legambiente Italia), private businesses (IBM, Disney, Time).



Figure 11. WSD 2019 hashtags' performance in the post campaign week.

Twitter

A total of 70 tweets were shared by various FAO accounts on 5 December, and the posts had an opportunity to be seen by 400 million social media users in their feed (**Figure 11**). The hashtag #WorldSoilDay was trending worldwide during the afternoon of 5 December (Rome time). Key corporate accounts for the social media campaign were FAO; FAOknowledge; FAO ClimateChange; FAOArabic; FAOenEspanol; FAOenFrancais; FAORussian for Twitter.

FAO regional and country offices' corporate accounts took an active part in the dissemination of WSD communication material, the greatest support coming from Latin America and the Caribbean, followed by the Near East and North Africa, Africa, Asia, North America, and the Pacific.

The best performing content on Twitter (**Figure 12**) was the 42 second video on [soil erosion](#) produced in collaboration with the photographer Carey Jordan Marks from the University of Plymouth.

This was promoted through all corporate accounts in 4 FAO languages (English, French, Spanish and Arabic) and received a total of 275 415 views and 10 337 engagements with 4 236 retweets, 5 973 likes and 128

comments. The top tweet published on FAO on 5 December received 34k views and 868 retweets, 1 356 likes and 31 comments, followed by an analogous tweet by FAOClimateChange with 33 993 views (see also **Figure 13** on the most influential hashtags'users).

In addition, the [story on soil erosion](#), the soils competition, and the GIFs series were all promoted and well received by Twitter users. The animation ‘Stop soil erosion, Keep the soil where it belongs’ - was mostly shared through FAOknowledge, but penalized by its length of 2:11, ranked lower compared to the above-mentioned video with 1 178 from one FAO single tweet.

All FAO related tweets are available from [here](#).

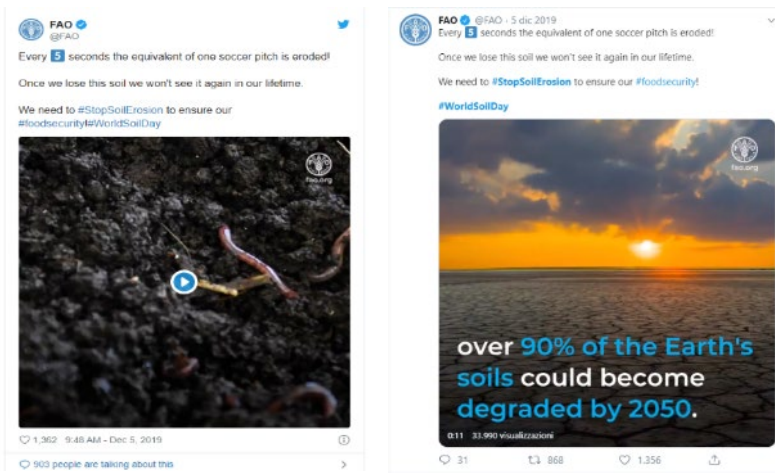


Figure 12. Best performing FAO tweets.

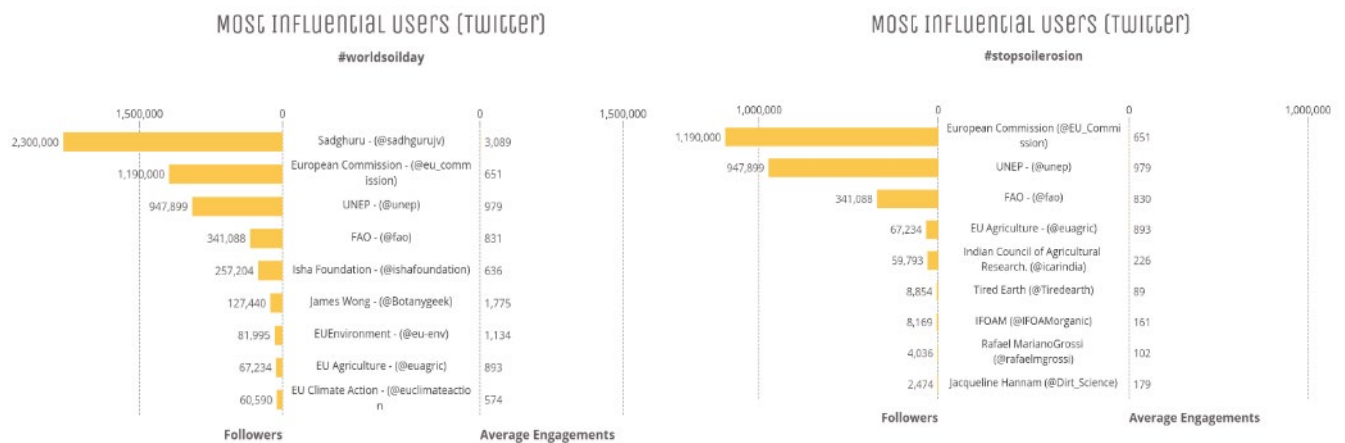


Figure 13. Most Influential Users (Twitter - #WorldSoilDay and #StopSoilErosion).

Instagram

On the FAO Instagram, the video on soil erosion totaled 17 498 views in a single post and 31 comments. Simple quizzes on soil resources were regularly published from September to December 2019 (Figure 14).

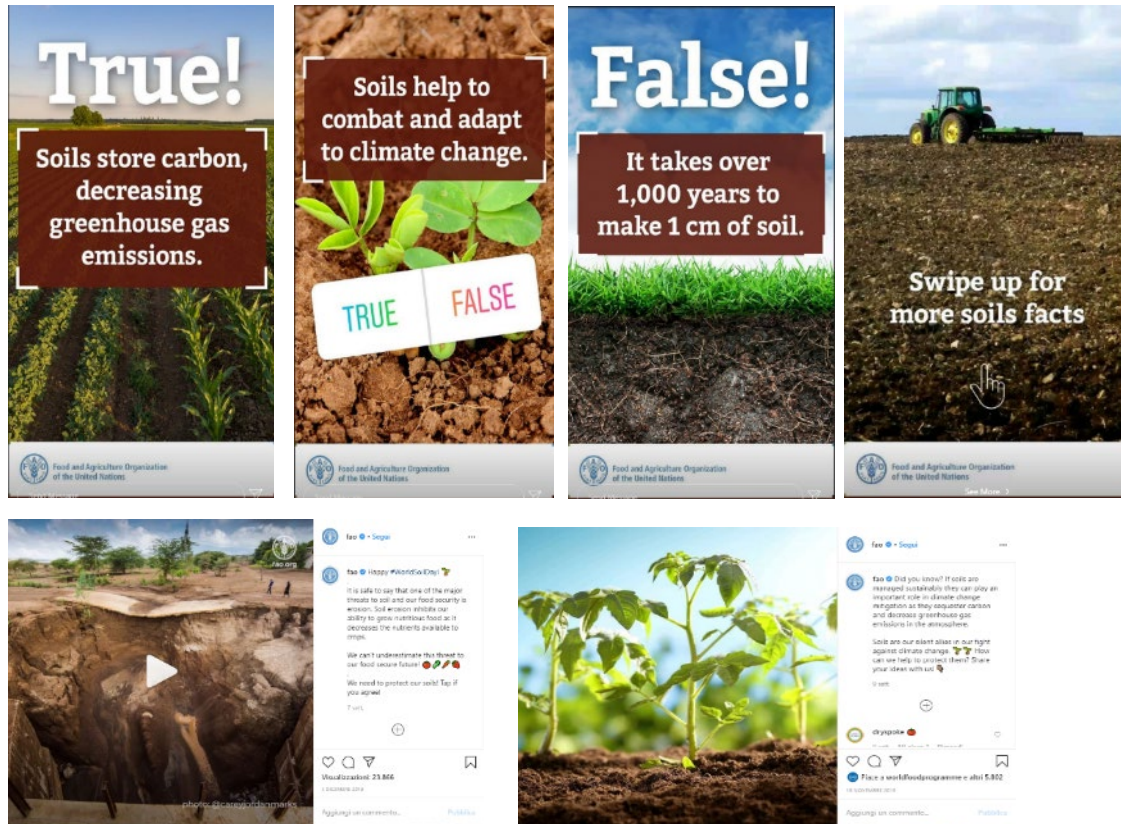


Figure 14. WSD 2019 FAO Instagram samples published on September- December 2019.

Facebook

Soil related posts on FAO Facebook gained the greatest traction on 5 December (**Figure 15**) and were widely shared with a peak of 22 000 shares. The GSP page hit 7 000 followers and had good results in terms of coverage on #WorldSoilDay with the top-performing post reaching 21 200 interactions.



Figure 15. WSD 2019 FAO Facebook samples

LinkedIn

On LinkedIn, the promotion was directed more towards the ‘Greening the future’ photo challenge and the winners of the Glinka and King Bhumibol WSD Award 2019.

YouTube

The animation ‘Stop soil erosion, keep soil where it belongs!’ dedicated to this year’s theme and translated in the 6 official languages received 12 599 views (non-cumulative).

The set of actions from governments, the private sector, and farmers to restore eroded soils in the field and make them healthier was further promoted for WSD 2019 and received 22 265 views and 3 548 engagements.

Website metrics

The WSD website is the hub and the centre-point of the campaign, bringing together key message and creative and conversion points for prospects and users. The website is developed as a microsite under the FAO corporate portal, enabling GSP to be more targeted and specific around campaign messaging. All GSP managed websites totaled 3 million sessions over the campaign period.

The traffic on WSD thematic webpages is tracked through Google Analytics, which also provides further details on how visitors engage with the content, behavioral statistics, demographics, linguistic and geographic data.

Access statistics: Traffic

The analytics data show that the WSD campaign website has been reached by more than 60 thousand people viewing more than 150 thousand pages for WSD 2019, spending an aggregate total of 11 000 hours on the

website. A remarkable positive shift to a younger audience between 18 – 35 years old and high traffic peaks in India, United States, Mexico, Thailand, and the United Kingdom can also be inferred.

The number of visitors has increased by 46 percent compared to the previous year (2018). Half of the website traffic was concentrated on the WSD week (2- 8 December) (**Figure 16, 17 and 18**).

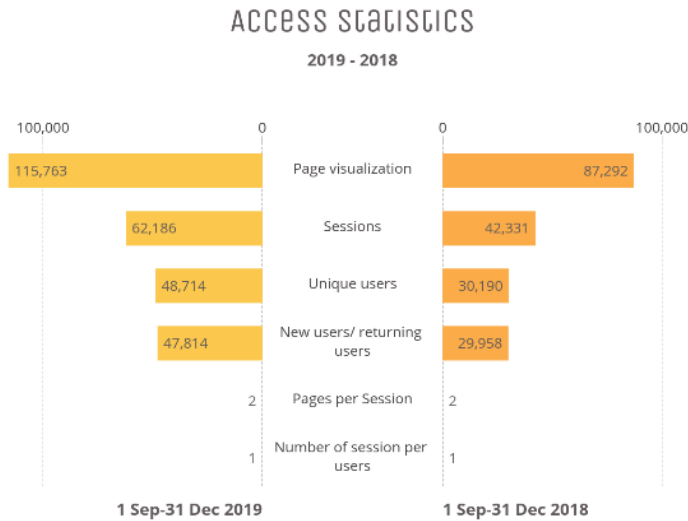


Figure 16. WSD website access statistics 2019-2018 (September-December) (Google Analytics).

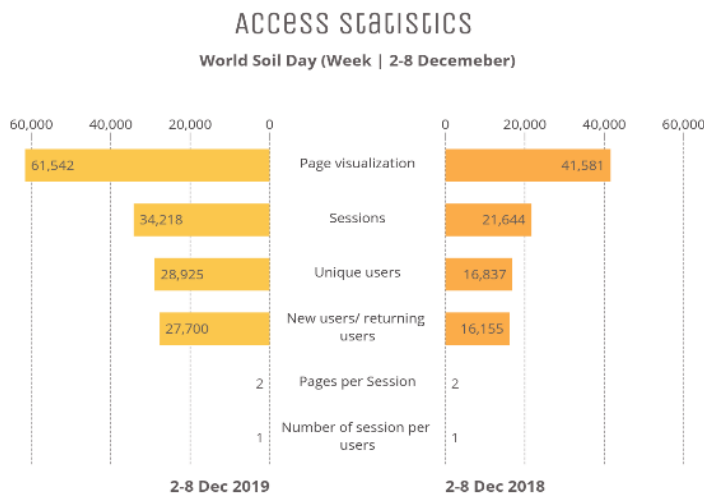
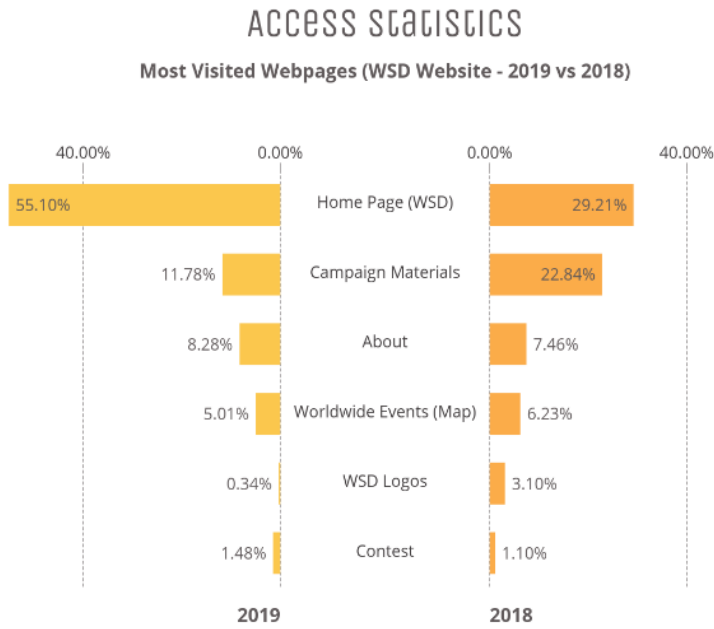


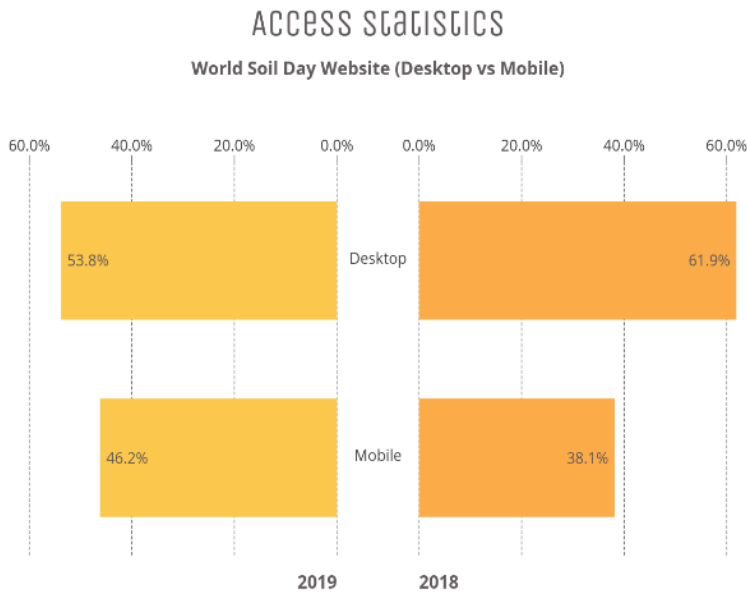
Figure 17. WSD website access statistics - 2-8 December 2019 vs. 2018 (Google Analytics).

Access statistics: Most visited pages



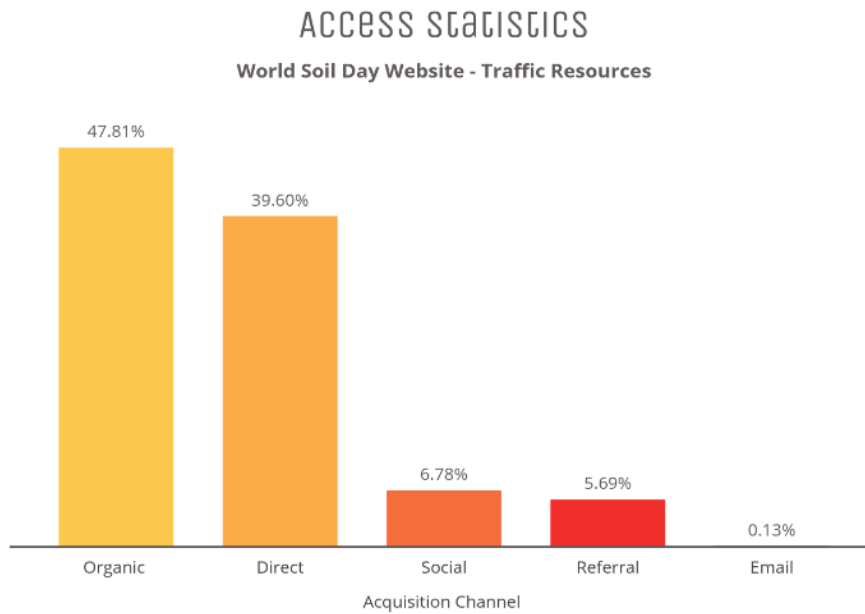
Reference Period: September - December
 Figure 18. WSD website access statistics - Most visited webpages (2019 vs. 2018) (Google Analytics).

Access statistics: Devices



Reference Period: September - December
 Figure 19. WSD website access statistics - Devices (Google Analytics).

Access statistics: Traffic resources



1 Sep-31 Dec 2019

Figure 20. WSD website access statistics - Traffic resources (Google Analytics).

Access statistics: Languages

The WSD 2019 campaign reached an audience across different languages. According to the language statistics, English speaking visitors constitute 55 percent of the total visits followed by Spanish (15.8 percent) and Chinese (2 percent) (**Figure 21**).

ACCESS STATISTICS (LANGUAGES)

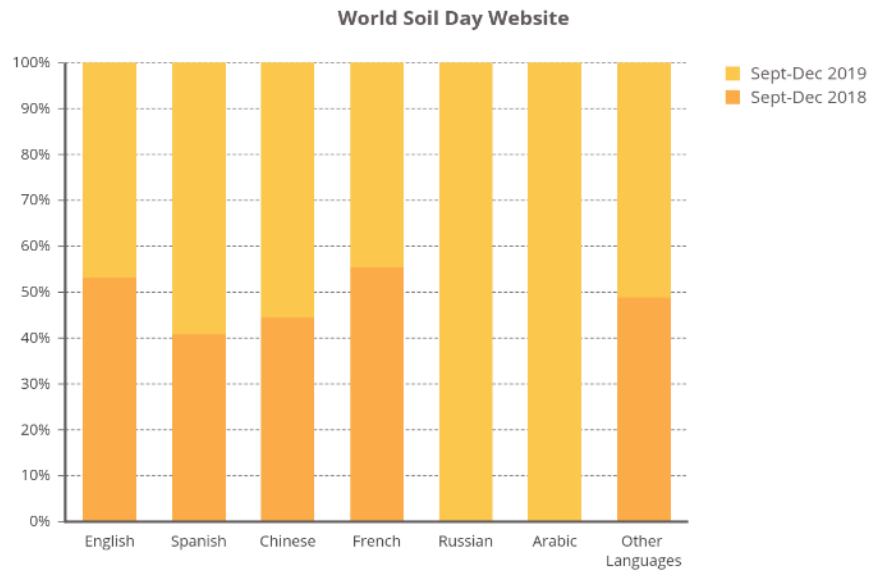


Figure 21. WSD website access statistics - Languages (Google Analytics).

Access statistics: Age groups and gender

The WSD 2019 campaign reached a young audience between 18 – 35 years old (**Figure 23**) balanced from a gender point of view (**Figure 22**).

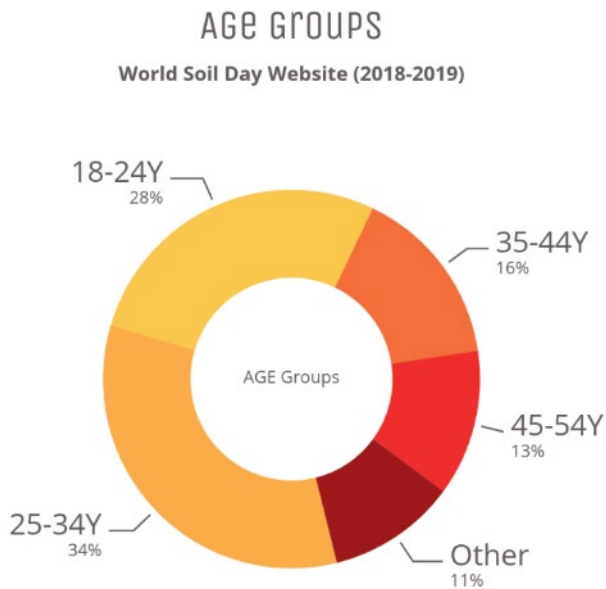


Figure 22. WSD website access statistics - Age groups (Google Analytics).

ACCESS STATISTICS - GENDERS

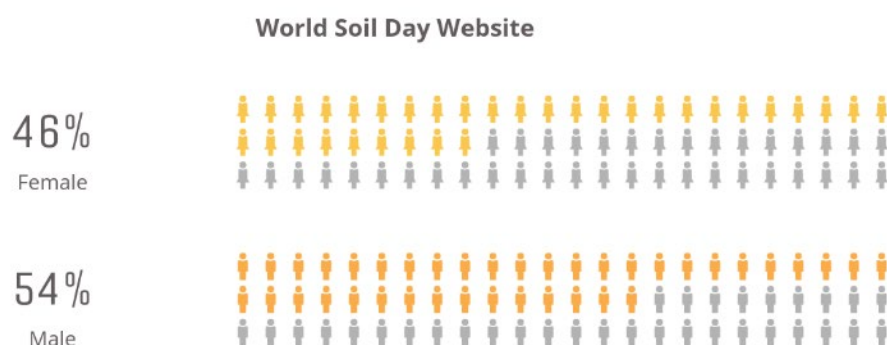


Figure 23. WSD website access statistics - Genders (Google Analytics).

Contest

This year's contest reached and engaged hundreds of contestants and thousands of seeds and seedlings planted all over the world. The winners were announced on the WSD website: Achchu Radha Krishnan from Sri Lanka, Anahita Koochpayeh Haghi and Ayoub Koochpayeh Haggi from Iran, Cristina Gnoli from Italy, Jonathan Villanueva and Mark Lester Bagay from the Philippines, Grahmann from Uruguay, Neneh Massaquoi from Sierra Leone and Rawia from the North Africa and Near East (NENA) region.

Conclusion

This report used a number of **key data and evidence sources** including a review of the communication material produced, the activities performed, and the underlying rationale for the campaign; and an analysis of different types of engagement metrics and key performance indicators.

All these aggregated numbers - worldwide events, content/video views, global/local media coverage, social media, total website visitors, **provided concrete proof of users' engagement in the campaign.**

In general, the campaign showed that soils feature quite prominently in global agricultural, climate and environmental debate, where calls to action center around behavioral change and ecosystems restoration. This has been seen through: the **improved brand recognition and recall** - people successfully associated FAO when prompted with the category 'World Soil Day'; the **increased brand-term search** in terms of direct searches on search engines; but also through the **content resonance** both in terms of number of downloads from the website, usage, and sharing of campaign material on social media and in terms of media coverage.

During the campaign the **share of voice**, representing the percentage of people talking about #WorldSoilDay and #StopSoilErosion that were also talking about FAO confirmed last year expectations, amounting to 90 percent, including people mentioning WSD.

Regarding the viral effect, the campaign ranked high against the most commonly discussed topics in the area - trending on 5 December - with a good engagement rate - number of interactions (clicks, shares, likes, reposts, etc.) per social media post. The number of people directly referring to FAO over the campaign timeframe together with the number of social media messages referring to or tagging the campaign allowed WSD to get an above-average reach associated with a generally positive sentiment measured by a semantic text analysis tool.

All these allow to conclude that - **despite WSD being ‘young’ occurrence** in the UN calendar and **despite the limited resources available** - the enthusiasm and positive results of the celebration itself permitted greater visibility than past WSD editions, confirming that **the campaign model and strategy are effective**.

However, the current challenge is now to engage more people **for WSD 2020 ‘Keep soil alive, protect soil biodiversity’** by reinforcing the digital and media strategy, planning new activities and exploring new methods and tools to continue to strengthening the campaign model and improve the effectiveness of future campaigning efforts.



The Global Soil Partnership (GSP) is a globally recognized mechanism established in 2012. Our mission is to position soils in the Global Agenda through collective action. Our key objectives are to promote Sustainable Soil Management (SSM) and improve soil governance to guarantee healthy and productive soils, and support the provision of essential ecosystem services towards food security and improved nutrition, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and sustainable development.

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