



## **WSDS 2016: Guwahati Regional Dialogue**

*Localising the Post 2015 Development Agenda*

### **Water and Sanitation for All Guwahati | 24 August 2016 Concept Note**

#### **Introduction**

Since 2001, TERI annually organised the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit (DSDS) to facilitate the exchange of knowledge on all aspects of sustainable development. Over the past 15 years, it emerged as one of the foremost fora on issues of global sustainability and has brought together Heads of States and Governments, thought leaders, policy makers and the crème de la crème of the industry and academia to deliberate on myriad issues. The World Sustainable Development Summit 2016 carries forward the legacy of DSDS. WSDS 2016, themed '*Beyond 2015: People, Planet & Progress*', will be among the first international platforms to discuss the new development agenda post the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the signing of the Paris Agreement at the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21). The attempt will be to initiate discussions on methodologies to be adopted to chalk a path to realise the Goals beyond 2015.

As a run-up to WSDS 2016, TERI is hosting a series of regional dialogues in the cities of Bengaluru, Mumbai and Guwahati. The Regional Dialogues in Mumbai and Bengaluru were focused on sustainable urbanisation. The Regional Dialogue in Guwahati will focus on the WASH agenda. These discussions are designed to offer a strategic and valuable space for sustainable development stakeholders to formulate innovative plans for smart growth, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and urban risk management.

#### **Goals, Agreements and Missions: Where do we stand?**

Out of the approximately 7.4 billion population of the world, 2.4 billion people mostly in rural areas still do not have access to basic sanitation facilities such as toilets or latrines, and almost 1.1 billion people defecate in open<sup>1</sup>. WASH is incorporated in the Sustainable Development Goals to address the plethora

---

<sup>1</sup>[http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/monitoring/jmp2012/fast\\_facts/en/](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/monitoring/jmp2012/fast_facts/en/)

of problems in developing countries such as high mortality rate among children, high levels of under-nutrition, spread of preventable diseases, poverty, etc. Over 800 children under the age of five die every day from preventable diarrhoea-related diseases caused by lack of water, sanitation and hygiene. Poor sanitation and hygiene have been also linked to stunted growth, and millions of children get weakened and disabled due to infectious diseases such as cholera, malaria, worm infestations and guinea worm diseases. Poor sanitation and hygiene conditions affect health and education, which impacts the development of a country and eventually affects the economy. In June 2012, one of the key issues in Rio+20 Summit was the access to Water and Sanitation for all. In the Rio+20 Summit the importance of integrating water in sustainable development was reiterated and marked the critical importance and need of water and sanitation. A dedicated goal has been included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on water and sanitation (SDG 6) that sets out to “*ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.*” The specific targets 6.1 and 6.2 of this goal take forward the Millennium Development Goal targets on drinking water and basic sanitation.

With the launch of Swachh Bharat Mission by the Government of India, India has embarked on the path of progress. In October 2014, rural India had 42.14% household toilet coverage that has increased to 53.79% as on date. However this progress needs momentum, especially in the state of Assam. Compared to rural Sikkim that has 100% household toilet coverage, rural Assam is still at 55.59% of household toilet coverage<sup>2</sup>.

North-East India has different topography and has long been neglected in terms of both social and economic development. But for the sustainable development of a nation, it is imperative that inclusive development of North-eastern region also takes place with due consideration to local environmental, social, cultural and economic conditions. There is need to share the experience and expertise across the sector to accelerate the pace of this program and target.

To realise this goal, all stakeholders have to come together and take cumulative actions. Efforts are being made to involve different sectors of government and civil society but there is need to expedite the process. Successful public-private partnerships have been achieved in several countries in the sector of water resources management. Some of the ways to accelerate progress include developing innovative and low-cost technologies for countries struggling with sustainable water supplies and sanitation. Another approach could be designing and formulating innovative mechanisms for financing small-scale water and sanitation projects with the cooperation of local government and private sector. With a focus on understanding the challenges and potential solutions including participation of the key stakeholders in the sector, the Regional Dialogue in Guwahati would focus on two sessions:

- 1. Session 1: Water and sanitation for all: translating challenges to opportunities**
- 2. Session 2: Role of various stakeholders in achieving the WASH agenda as part of SDGs**

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://sbm.gov.in/sbmdashboard/IHHL.aspx>

## **Session 1: Water and sanitation for all: translating challenges to opportunities**

WASH sector faces number of challenges ranging from infrastructural issues to mobilising resources for financing programs. The growing problem of urban slums in the mega-cities with no access to water supply, sanitation, schools, health services and other facilities is further worsening the situation for developing countries. About one-third of the rural population in Asia even in 20th century is without sustainable access to improved water supplies and sanitation. On account of the concerted efforts by the government and various international organisations, the last two decades has seen a surge in construction of toilets as well as an overall improvement in the sanitation scenario in the country. However, complete elimination of open defecation still remains a distant dream with vast section of households continuing to practice open defecation despite construction of individual household toilets for technical, social and cultural reasons. These technical, social, cultural challenges also provide a scope of realising the goal of water and sanitation for all. It is important to understand the needs and provide local solutions, which are socially acceptable, which would ensure the success of the intervention. There are number of ways by which challenges can be translated into opportunities and with this background, the panelist of the session would deliberate on the existing challenges and potential opportunities in the sector.

The session would aim to answer the following questions

- What is the reason behind the gap that exists between number of toilets and actual number of users? How imperative it is to change the behavior and mind set of stakeholders in the sector?
- What are the most common impediments in Assam?
- How can funds be channelised from bodies such as Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Small Scale Sustainable Infrastructure Fund, Inc. and made available for small-scale and medium-scale projects?
- How can we ensure gender inclusion innovation in wash sector?
- How other successful states or districts could be involved to accelerate the pace of Swachh Bharat Mission?

## **Session 2: Role of various stakeholders in achieving the WASH agenda as part of SDGs**

However, despite of all these efforts a lot more has to be done to achieve SDG's by 2030. Economic development and population growth are continuously increasing water stress in Asia, and particularly in South Asia. Moreover in urban areas, access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, and proper waste disposal amenities is still a big issue. The solution cannot be provided by an individual or by working in silos. Rather an alliance of stakeholders is needed to solve the larger issues associated with WASH sector. Stakeholders in WASH sector play a pivotal role in setting up priorities and objectives of WASH initiatives according to the relevance and need. Stakeholders would not only involve the beneficiaries, but also the decision makers, grass-root level practitioners, NGOs, research organisations, corporates, etc. Together, the impediments in the path of achieving SDGs could be removed. As per the statistics

provided by UNICEF<sup>3</sup>, if collective efforts are made to provide basic, low cost water and sanitation facilities to the countries in desperate need then the world could save around US\$263 billion per year. Eventually, the spending on health will decrease and there will be improved health; reduced illness and disease; and socio-economic development. Besides, financial implications, working together will overcome other technical, social and cultural challenges. The session would focus on the role of various stakeholders in the sector and the best possible institutional arrangement for enabling the stakeholders to contribute to the target of SDG.

The session would aim to answer the following questions

- What are the enabling conditions that will allow various stakeholders to apply their practices and strategies in a way that supports the target of SDG6?
- What institutional arrangement should be adopted to implement sustainable wash strategies? Is Public Private Partnership a successful model in wash sector? Can we draw some lessons from international case studies?
- How improved water and sanitation services can be used as an instrument to empower local community? What financing, technology, and capacity development actions are required to achieve this?

---

<sup>3</sup>[http://www.unicef.org/wash/3942\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/wash/3942_statistics.html)