



Press Release

Imperative to focus on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector to accelerate pace of sustainable development: TERI

TERI holds its third Regional Dialogue of the year as a precursor to World Sustainable Development Summit 2016

Guwahati, August 24, 2016: The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), an independent, not-for-profit research institute, brought together multiple stakeholder groups to deliberate on the need and importance of access to **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)** for all to accelerate sustainable development in the north-east region of India. The dialogue was attended by senior representatives from government organizations, think-tanks and top Indian conglomerates and saw deliberations that focused on the theme, **“Localising the Post-2015 Development Agenda - Water and Sanitation for All.”**

According to WHO, globally, around 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 the open. As a result, over 800 children under the age of five die every day from preventable diarrhoea-related diseases caused by lack of water, sanitation and hygiene. 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 which has increased to 53.79% as on date. However, this progress needs momentum, especially, in the state of Assam. As compared to rural Sikkim which has 100% household toilet coverage, rural Assam is still at 55.59% of household toilet coverage. Poor sanitation and hygiene conditions affect health and education, which impact the development of a country and eventually affects the economy.

Assam has shown leadership in achieving the SDGs by officially adopting the ‘Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ from January 1, 2016. The State has constituted eight working groups with representatives of concerned departments to prepare action plans for achieving the goals. It has also set up a ‘Centre for SDGs’ and to develop a charter of activities to ensure successful implementation of the goals. A draft vision document, entitled ‘Everything for Everyone – Achieving inclusive and Sustainable Development’ has also been launched. The Government of Assam will partner with the Earth Institute, Colombia University, for implementing the SDGs.

Today’s Dialogue aimed to address some of the above issues and suggested ways to translate challenges to opportunities by providing innovative local solutions. The discussion was based on the existing gap between number of toilets and actual users, the need to change the behaviour of stakeholders in this sector and on channelizing funds to make them available for small and medium scale projects.

A key session as part of the Dialogue was, “Role of various stakeholders in achieving the WASH agenda as part of SDGs”. As the water stress continues to increase, it is imperative to realise that the solution cannot be provided by working in silos but by forming an alliance of stakeholders to solve the larger issues associated with the WASH sector. **An important lesson highlighted was that institutional arrangement should be adopted to implement sustainable wash strategies.** It was also suggested that a PPP model could be helpful to achieve the same.

Dr. Annapurna Vancheswaran, Sr. Director, TERI, remarked, “In a globalizing world, an increasing number of decisions are being made at the global level, which impact the less privileged. Hence, the aim of our Regional Dialogues is “localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda” at the regional, state, and city level. We’ve held two such Dialogues in Mumbai and Bengaluru earlier this month, focusing on URBANISATION. Today, at the 3rd Regional Dialogue of the WSDS in Guwahati we focus on the need and importance of access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) for all, to accelerate sustainable development in the north-east region of India. ”

Mr Cherian Thomas, National Director & CEO, World Vision India, set the context of the Dialogue by commenting: “It is critical that we look at SDG 6, which seeks to provide clean drinking water and sanitation to all, from the point of view of its universality and inclusion in all our programmes. Behavioral change is one of the most critical issues that we need to deal with. Equally critical is the need for all stakeholders – government, community, civil society organisations, universities and private sector – to closely engage.”

During the deliberations on ‘Water and Sanitation for All’, **Dr Tushar Rane, UNICEF** remarked, “Water, sanitation and hygiene need to be an integral part of any discussion on maternal and child health and nutrition.”

“If India achieves water & sanitation sustainability, I will have no complaint not winning Olympic medals; but probably the latter will follow the former naturally”, said **Prof. Chandan Mahanta, IIT Guwahati**.

Mr Simanta Kalita, Centre for Environment Education (CEE) commented, “If we have to achieve this SDG 6, community participation at all levels is a must. There has to be a paradigm shift from the existing ‘supply-driven’ to ‘community-triggering’ approach.”

Other eminent speakers who participated in the discussions at the Dialogue today are as follows – Mr Jaideep Baruah, Assam Science Technology & Environment Council; Dr. Ravi Kota (IAS), Guwahati Jal Board; Mr Samudra Gupta Kashyap, The Indian Express; Dr. Hari Prasad Sarma, Gauhati University.

In the run-up to WSDS 2016, TERI hosted a series of regional dialogues across various zones – Bengaluru, Mumbai and Guwahati. The WSDS 2016 carries forward the legacy of Delhi Sustainable Development Summit (DSDS). WSDS 2016, themed '*Beyond 2015: People, Planet & Progress*', 5-8 October, 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 that need to be adopted to chalk-out a path to realize the SDGs beyond 2015.

About TERI

The Energy and Resources Institute is an independent, not-for-profit research institute focused on energy, environment, and sustainable development and devoted to efficient and sustainable use of natural resources. Since its inception in 1974, TERI has emerged as an institution of excellence for its path-breaking research, and is a global brand widely respected by political leaders, policy-makers, corporate entities as well as by the civil society-at-large.

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