

REGIONAL CONFERENCE

on

Sustainable Sanitation Solutions (3S)

25-27 January 2019, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Organised by

The Regional Sanitation Centre (RSC) for SACOSAN

Background

The Regional Sanitation Centre (RSC) for SACOSAN is an independent institution established by the Ministry of City Planning and Water Supply, Sri Lanka in 2017. The RSC has been legally constituted by the Government of Sri Lanka to fulfil its commitment made at the SACOSAN VI in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Ministerial Summit at the SACOSAN VI made a declaration, which included a commitment to establish a Regional Sanitation Centre for SACOSANs with the mandate to act as a regional learning centre, and promote research and best practices in sanitation in the South Asian region. In pursuance of this mandate one of the key activities proposed by the RSC is to organise a Regional Conference on Sustainable Solutions for Sanitation.

The RSC in collaboration with regional partners is organising this conference from 25 to 27 January 2019 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The conference aims to provide a platform to learn about scalable sanitation solutions and best practices from the South Asian national governments and water and sanitation experts and practitioners from the region. It is expected that the solutions and best practices shared will contribute to cross-fertilisation of ideas and strengthen knowledge and practice towards addressing the current and foreseeable challenges and barriers to achieving sustainable sanitation. This conference is being viewed as the first step towards fostering knowledge-sharing linkages amongst practitioners and governments in the region and, thus, act as a complementary process in translating the spirit of SACOSAN's commitments into action.

Thematic Focus Areas of the Conference

The scope of the conference themes within which best practices and scalable solutions need to be shared are:

- Improving Sector Governance through Policy & Programme Monitoring, Reporting & Accountability Instruments
- Scalable Faecal Sludge and Septage Management Solutions
- Environmentally Sustainable and Climate Resilient Sanitation Solutions
- Building Blocks for Achieving Inclusive and Equitable Sanitation

Theme A: Improving Sector Governance through Policy & Programme Monitoring, Reporting & Accountability Instruments

Good governance in the sanitation sector is important not only because access to basic services is an essential element in people's ability to rise out of poverty, but also because neglect in service provisioning can result in devastating declines in public health. Towards this, there is a need to develop strong national sector monitoring systems and social accountability processes that inform in-country learning and respond to national policy priorities. Further, good governance and best standards of financial integrity are high priorities for improving development effectiveness. Research has shown that poor governance has adverse effects on those who can least afford it — the world's poor.

Policies and programmes determine national priorities, commitments to the people, allocation of resources and how the commitments are to be implemented over a given period of time. Reporting, monitoring and accountability mechanisms are essential elements to ensure that priorities set in the policies and programmes are implemented with efficiency, effectiveness and transparency.

This theme will explore successful experiences rooted in policy and programme design that have resulted in establishing stronger reporting, monitoring and accountability mechanisms, which have fostered development effectiveness in the sanitation sector. Sharing of best practices and solutions by the representatives of South Asian national

governments will inspire all governments to initiate similar moves to improve governance and accountability in the sanitation sector while implementing their plans to achieve national and global sanitation targets.

Theme B: Scalable Faecal Sludge and Septage Management Solutions

To achieve sustainable sanitation new models and approaches are needed that foster integrated sanitation service chains, that reach all urban and rural dwellers rather than a few, and that are financially viable. Solid technical and managerial leadership is required to plan, coordinate, implement and manage sanitation service chain interventions. This theme will explore the best practices and innovative solutions in the region with regards to safe and sustainable faecal sludge and septage management (FSSM) and business models and approaches to address related challenges.

This theme will focus on successful experiences around:

- **Sanitation as a service:** Experiences of identifying, developing and testing new or context-specific solutions along the sanitation service chain, particularly that of FSM that focus on service delivery outcomes and cost-recovery, ensuring affordable access to all, especially low-income, vulnerable populations, or those in informal settlements. Solutions that have allowed for diversity and an integration of technical approaches with associated viable business models along the sanitation service chain for FSSM. For example, enabling better combinations of sewerage networks and on-site sanitation, hygienic and safe transportation of waste/wastewater, and its treatment and reuse.
- **Integrated business models:** Experiences of integrated business models and approaches that have enabled cost-recovery and fund mobilization as well as the channelling of public funding in ways that incentivise FSSM. For example, Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models for FSSM; promoting waste resource recovery and reuse solutions that take advantage of the location and context for cost-recovery – circular economy models, etc.

- **Capacity Enhancement:** Experiences of enhancing the ability of duty bearers to plan, implement and enforce sanitation policies and FSSM regulations, to review implementation progress against service delivery targets to involve all stakeholders, and to manage associated changing circumstances and demands.

Theme C: Environmentally Sustainable and Climate Resilient Sanitation Solutions

Environment management is key for sustainable safe sanitation, especially for keeping freshwater safe from contamination. Toilet technology depending upon the physio-geographic situation are determinants of not only environmental sustainability impacting eco-systems in general, but that of the very basics of sustainability of sanitation and hygiene outcomes. In South Asia, faulty toilet construction and septic tank management has resulted in the contamination of groundwater resources. Furthermore, climate change has added an extra layer of stress; as well as extreme weather situations such as drought, floods and storm surges directly hit water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services first. In this context environmentally, sustainable WASH mitigates the risks of climate change, and is a prerequisite of adaptation strategies. Access to safe drinking water and sanitation is the foremost adaptation and resilience measure for climate change for communities in the long-run, as well as an emergency response to get life back on track. Environmental sustainability and climate resilience for WASH need to be seen in tandem and in complementarity for sustainability of WASH services consisting of the SDG targets (6.1, 6.2 and 6.3).

Against this backdrop, this theme will explore best practices and policies across the region for environmentally sustainable WASH and preparedness for climate resilient WASH, thereby ensuring these issues are brought to the centre both in discourse and action.

Theme D: Building Blocks for Achieving Inclusive and Equitable Sanitation

During the past 15 years national governments in South Asia have been increasing according priority to WASH in their national policies and budgets, which have resulted in remarkable progress in reaching services to the people and improving their living standards. Compelling realities, peoples' demand and aspirations within the countries and global emphasis through the MDGs and SDGs have also contributed to this progress on WASH. However, ensuring this progress is equitable and inclusive, continues to remain as a major challenge in the region.

The current interventions for delivering WASH services are determined by the national policies and the international commitments signed by governments and sector partners. All the eight South Asian countries are signatories to the SDGs and, thus, committed to achieving Goal 6: “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”. Amongst the eight South Asian countries, seven have already joined the SWA global partnership and have made several commitments at the High Level Meetings (HLMs) of this platform to achieve universal access to clean water and adequate sanitation. All the eight national governments of South Asia along with sector partners have been coming together biennially since 2003 to review progress and sign new commitments for improving sanitation in the region through SACOSANs, which is an inter-governmental regional platform on sanitation in South Asia. Commitment-3 of the Dhaka Declaration prioritizes hygiene and sanitation services for children, adolescents, women and differently-abled people, or those excluded due to age, caste, ethnicity, religion or gender, living in hard to reach areas or affected by disasters. It also prioritizes menstrual hygiene management for women and girls.

Achieving sustainable access to sanitation for all, while prioritising the needs of the most disadvantaged individuals and groups, will require realistic plans and strategies; adequate institutional and human resource capacity; robust institutional arrangements; adequate and efficiently-utilized financing, and strong monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

Against this background it is very important to identify the scalable solutions and best practices to make progress on ensuring sanitation services for the marginalised and vulnerable communities referred above. This thematic session of the proposed regional conference is aimed at creating an opportunity to share and learn from the solutions and best practices specifically focused on i) ensuring sanitation progress is inclusive, particularly for persons living with disability and elderly people, and ii) improving the safety, welfare and livelihood needs of the sanitation workforce who are the actual drivers of sanitation progress on the ground.

Participation details

Representatives of South Asian national governments and sector partners interested in presenting their best practices and solutions under the above four conference themes are requested to download the EOI Form and submit the same to the RSC by **30 November 2018**. Limited funding opportunity will be available to sponsor a few selected presenters.

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