

International Conference of Rural Development Forum, IEI

Achieving Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Sustainability Goals for Developing Countries

The 13th Annual Global Water Alliance Conference on Achieving Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Sustainability Goals for Developing Countries organised under the aegis of Rural Development Forum, IEI in Kolkata on 6-7 January 2020 jointly with Global Water Alliance, Philadelphia, USA in partnership with Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology, Shibpur and Water Management Forum, IEI. Major objective of the Conference was to identify the progress of developing countries regarding the implementation of social, economic and related policies and projects, in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) for water, sanitation and hygiene for all. Further, site visit to WASH and Arsenic Projects in rural areas was a part of the Conference. Findings and recommendations were placed during the Conference.

In his welcoming remarks, Dr Christiaan Morssink, President, Global Water Alliance, Philadelphia, encouraged students, young people, especially school children for achieving the UN 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals. He also emphasized on greater involvement of student community with the envisions of universal, sustainable and equitable access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene for all to face the challenges of the society. President, GWA stressed that the stakeholders should find out a collective action plan for sustainable solutions of rapidly changing urbanization, migration, and impacts of climate change, health, nutrition, education, poverty and economic growth.

Dr Arun Deb, GWA Board Member and Conference Chair, in his address, explained the objective of the GWA Conference and modalities of presentation of papers by experts as well as students from abroad.



Participants from India and abroad discussed on sustainability, innovations, test cases, water quality, wetlands preservation and related issues like technical, sociological, institutional, financial and local aspects with the aim of sharing insights on the progress of implementation of SDG 6 in their respective countries. There are participations from different foreign countries like USA, UK, Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Burundi, Rwanda, Harare, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo and also from different States in India.

During the occasion, Ms Meena Narula, Country Director, Water For People India, presented the keynote address on the theme “Sustainable Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene for All: Achieving the Goal by 2030 & Roles of all Stakeholders”. In her address, Ms Narula stressed on the need of water, sanitation and hygiene for survival and also mentioned about their importance for health, nutrition, education for children, girls and women. The speaker opined further that the 2030 agenda not only includes the universal access to WASH at home, schools and rural areas, but also aims to reduce inequalities between and within countries. She made a forecast that proper preservation and usage of water will determine India's ability to achieve high economic growth, ensure environmental stability and improve quality of life for citizens. She further mentioned that Jal Jeevan Mission got accelerated to achieve providing tap water to all households by 2024.



Mr Sisir Kumar Banerjee, Past President, IEI during his speech mentioned the initiatives by IEI on Swachh Bharat Mission programme of Government of India dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th birth anniversary for drinking water and sanitation and stated that Fora serve as a focal point for Institution's endeavours to promote further development of collaboration among industry, government and academia in the area of skill development.

Earlier, Mr Syama Prasad Datta, Chairman, BOG-RDF welcomed the gathering. Prof (Dr) Anirban Gupta, Director, Rural Development Forum proposed the vote of thanks.

Number of papers were presented during twelve technical sessions, with the dedicated themes, that include, Achieving Universal Access to Safe and Affordable Drinking Water by 2030; Achieving Access to Adequate Sanitation and Hygiene for All; WASH in Urban Environment – Sponsored by United States Agency for International Development (USAID); Implementing Integrated Water Resource Management, Protection of Wetlands and Ecosystems; Achieving Substantial Increase of Water Conservation and Water Use Efficiency; Sustainability Assessment – University of

Pennsylvania and Yale University Students Project Presentations; Improving Water Quality by Reducing Pollution, Increasing Use of Wetlands and Safe reuse; Improving Water Quality by Reducing Pollution, Increasing Use of Wetlands and Safe reuse; Participation of Local Communities in Improving Water and Sanitation Management; Innovations in Sustainable Implementation of WASH Programs; Impacts of Schools and Communities, WASH Projects and Technology Development for Safe Water. Sri Lanka and Bangladeshi representatives expressed their interest to function with Rural Development Forum, IEI in various rural development programmes.

Recommendations emanated from the two-day deliberations include;

Maintaining log book of performance on WASH programme; Empower more students in WASH programme; Sanitary products be available in all schools; Supply of safe drinking water to all be ensured; Water filters to be installed in every school to ensure safe sustainable hygiene; Identification and eradication of urban and rural arsenic problem; Health impacts of arsenic in water and distribution of information in connection with arsenic affected areas should be displayed in all units including residential and commercial; Local people should be discouraged from installing further deep tube wells in general and arsenic prone areas in particular.

