



UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

Localising SDGs, Accelerating Urban WASH: Lessons from Tamil Nadu, India

[23 March 2023, 8:00 to 9:30 AM EDT, Zoom]

Organized by: Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Government of Tamil Nadu

This side event highlighted lessons from the Tamil Nadu Urban Sanitation Support Programme (TNUSSP), one of the largest SDG 6 programmes that has impacted over 16 million people across 200 towns in Tamil Nadu, India. Since 2016, TNUSSP has made interventions across the full cycle of sanitation, with a particular focus on enabling non-sewered sanitation, and strengthening inclusive and sustainable sanitation services. Drawing from this experience, the session showcased the design, development, and implementation of unique context-based solutions to accelerate access to total and inclusive sanitation.

IIHS commits to mainstream different forms of sanitation and context-based approaches that deliver safe, sustainable, and inclusive sanitation for all and now. Looking beyond provisioning and towards sustainability of services, IIHS's commitment focuses on the need for investment, capacity development and institutional change for the operation and maintenance of WASH systems. The commitment seeks to enable the implementation of technological, institutional, social, and financial innovations that have been demonstrated at scale.

Key issues discussed:

- “All sanitation is local”, which requires context specific solutions.
- A paradigm shift is required in approach; bringing forward sanitation as a service, including non-sewered sanitation while moving away from the singular pursuit of sewered sanitation and sanitation as infrastructure.
- Approach is to build on strengths and address challenges along the full cycle of sanitation while enabling optimal utilisation of resources.

- Challenges in accelerating access to sanitation, on account of the disparities between and within countries. Lack of equity in accessing sanitation services requires deeper focus on inclusive sanitation.
- Demonstration of innovative technologies and engagement approaches with multiple stakeholders can be a means for scaling sanitation.
- Enabling sanitation service delivery entails buy-in from and coordination with a number of government agencies.

Key recommendations for action:

- **Delivering context-based solutions** that are an appropriate mix of networked and non-networked, centralised, and decentralised systems, and thereby ensuring inclusive and immediate access to safe and sustainable sanitation.
- **Recognising the full chain of sanitation** while developing the strategy to scale sanitation; and considering not just infrastructure but also processes, services and stakeholders at each stage.
- **Leveraging strengths** to improve sanitation service provision and strengthening system functions to ensure sustained service delivery.
- **Focusing on sanitation services** and ensuring sustainability through investment, capacity development and institutional change.
- **Learning from experiences** of other geographies both successes and failures included, and through the transfer of social, institutional, technological, and financial innovations.