

All India Convention on Right to Sanitation Organized by Right to Sanitation Campaign, 19 March 2015

Recommendations & Resolutions

An all India convention on Right to Sanitation was held on 19 March 2015 in New Delhi as a part of the World Water Day Programs in India. The convention was organized by Right to Sanitation Campaign in India and brought grassroots voices directly to the highest decision makers in the country to discuss the urgent need of addressing the issue of water in the overall framework of SBM and to share the practical bottlenecks in implementation and adoption at the community level from different social and geographic perspectives. More than 300 elected representatives from the Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies from 14 states and three Members of Parliament from two states viz., Telengana and Kerala along with support organizations and people working on the issues participated in the convention.

The following set of insights and recommendations emerged from the day-long convention:



From Urban Landscapes

- Residents of poor urban settlements, women and marginal communities (disabled, homeless, unemployed, destitutes, transgenders, etc.) are concerned with immediate priorities of access to adequate, safe drinking water and sewerage connectivity for household sanitation, functional and clean toilets with bathing and washing facilities, protection of women in accessing the toilets.
- The 20kl/month/family life line free water supply and accompany sewerage system in Delhi in 2014 and 2015, is the first concrete action by any state government in India in recent times in the direction of identifying in future the content and norms of right to water and sanitation. However this remains a Delhi Jal Board scheme and not a Right.
- Water and Sanitation services should be treated as social goods and not economic goods. Life line water supply is not enough, minimum water supply and service levels should be defined in concrete terms and legislated as Rights that are not subject to administrative tinkering/change.
- Cities should aim at self sufficiency in water supply, aim at 100% water recycling and reduce dependence on rivers and rural areas. Delhi does not need water from Renuka dam.
- Suspend all PPP and Privatisation of water and sanitation projects in urban areas. Take a refreandum and decide this if required.
- Time bound plans for compulsory rain water harvesting from all public and private institutions including government buildings, private institutions, schools, Flyovers, shopping malls, embassies, airports, etc.



infrastructure investment and free water and electricity be provided to community toilets by the government. Minimum user charges and no denial of services if someone cannot pay. Women caretakers for women toilets, lighting of roads and protection of women by police from criminals and anti social elements that frequent community toilets.

- Decentralised peoples management of sewerage and drainage systems including natural drains, sewerage treatment plants, etc. People committees representing one lakh population or for every 1Km length of drainage channels.
 - Management of community toilets should be addressed as a public service and not as a commercial contract, only then it can be maintained by local community groups. All major
- Public toilets for men, women and trans genders, in market place and roads as per a standard policy.
 - Household connectivity for water and sanitation as a priority.
 - Drainage and cleanliness services remain as government responsibilities. Full time regular jobs for cleaners and sweepers provided and not contractual low paid staff.
 - Low cost bio remediation measures for solid waste management, in place of expensive incinerators and power plants and land fills.

From Rural Landscapes

- There is an intrinsic relation between water and sanitation and needs to be addressed in an interconnected approach. Most peoples' representatives mentioned toilets are not used by rural people if water is not available.
- Right to water should be included in the Right to Sanitation taking into account women's special needs such as health and menstrual hygiene management.
- Sanitation is not all about toilets and must be seen in integration with water, health and education.
- The current national budget allocation for sanitation, appears highly inadequate to achieve the target of making India open defecation free by 2019. The SBM guidelines financial allocations will change after the 2015 union budget and it is not clear if the same level of funding support remains for the SBM. Where is the budget allocation for undertaking 65% sanitation coverage @ Rs.12000/toilet? There is an urgent need to make provisions for adequate budget in a transparent and accountable manner.



- Vest power and authority on the gram panchayats so as to ensure people-centric planning, implementation and monitoring as well as peoples' larger ownership over the process.
- On an average, people spend 10-15 hours outside their homes and thus toilets should not be only house-centric and rather be addressed with a life-cycle approach.
- There is a need for ensuring effective governance and accountability system to address the urgent need of water and sanitation.
- Manual scavenging and manual cleaning of pits stills remains a major issue. Who will clean the toilets that get filled up under the SBM programme? Dalits should not be forced to do this.
- There is a need to understand why people do not want to use toilets and what can be done. Simply assuming that people are not aware of the health impacts of open defecation is not right.
- It is hoped that the Ghost toilets issue will be resolved by the revised baseline done by the MDWS in 2013-14, now all eligible households will be able to get the subsidy for toilet construction.



Suggestions and commitments from the Parliamentarians

The three members of parliament present in the convention included:

- 1- Mr. N K Premachandran, Kerala
- 2- Mr. B. Vinod Kumar, Telengana
- 3- Mr. Prabhakar Reddy, Telengana

The members of parliament endorsed these recommendations and expressed their commitments to take it forward in the parliament and with the concerned ministries. They emphasised on the following:

- Sanitation is a human right and there should be a legislative mandate to facilitate equal and universal access by all
- It is extremely important to concentrate on adequate and appropriate sanitation (from village to capital) if India has to progress from being a 'developing nation' to a 'developed nation'
- Concrete actions on the ground are needed and Swachh Bharat Mission must ensure active participation of local governance structures to ensure that.
- In the efforts to provide water to everyone, it is important for the government to ensure safe drinking water for everyone.





- Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Women and Child Development should find a solution to address the criticality of menstrual hygiene management among people and communities.
- Development does not mean laying of roads and construction of buildings. Panchayat leaders should be the champions and leaders on sanitation as they are supposed to be the drivers for development.

Resolutions made in the convention

The participants of the convention took the following resolutions:

- Work in collaboration with other similar initiatives, expand reach and regular engagement and support activities
- Demand for a legislative backing to Right to Sanitation – recognise it as a separate right in the constitution
- Forming a network of Gram panchayat leaders on Sanitation within the Right to Sanitation Campaign
- Demand an increase the budget allocation in the union budget on water and sanitation that has been reduced almost by half this year
- Carry out mass programs at the state levels to push for constitutional right to sanitation
- Influence the spaces such as SACOSAN VI, Post 2015 SDG processes and also the parliamentarians


