A UNU-MERIT External Event in collaboration with Friend In Need India

Pathways to SDG6: Macro to Micro Perspectives

Background

One of the biggest development problems facing India today is the lack of access to safe and sustainable sanitation. This has been the highlight of the development agenda of the Indian government with the launch of the Swachh Bharath Mission (SBM) in 2014. The aim is to eliminate open defecation in India by 2019 through capacity building in the form of trained personnel, financial incentives and systems for planning and monitoring. However, individual states have flexibility in terms of implementation. Thus, from national to village level, experiments are ongoing to achieve the Swachh mission, leading to the central question of our conference: **What are the different pathways to a SWACHH India?** What is the correspondence if any, between type of initial conditions and type of pathway selected? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different pathways? What are the common pitfalls to be avoided? What are some good practices that can increase the likelihood of good outcomes?

Lack of sanitation is not an Indian problem alone. At the global level, the central role of access to water and sanitation for sustainable development is now fully confirmed with the formal adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs by the UN general assembly. Among these, Goal 6 is to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030. According to the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, “The 2030 Agenda calls on us to renew our efforts in providing access to adequate sanitation worldwide. We must continue to educate and protect communities at risk, and to change cultural perceptions and long-standing practices that hinder the quest for dignity.” Investments in sanitation should not be regarded just as a means to attain SDG6, but an instrument that can serve to catch up with other goals as well as increased sanitation coverage will have significant positive spillovers on many of
the other SDG goals and targets (Ramani and Parihar, 2015). Thus, the role of technology, innovation and their governance in the attainment of SDGs must be examined worldwide.

Objectives and Attendees

The conference was a success as it accomplished 4 distinct objectives that were identified for the conference at the outset:

1. Contribute to a much better understanding of the pathways to SDG6
2. Identify the shortcomings of the Indian NSI vis-à-vis SDG6 and propose solution outlines to try out.
3. Identify the major areas of debate on Technology, Innovation and their governance for the Attainment of the SDGs.
4. Honour the Change Makers of Indian Villages.

The continued debate on SDG6 from multiple perspectives helped understand the pathways to the SDG6 for India. Findings from the dialogue initiated can also be useful for other countries to learn from. Representatives from Africa who attended the conference were in agreement about the same. We were unable to inaugurate
apps for SDG accompaniment during the conference but instead proposed a different solution for engagement with the audience. In order to ensure all ideas are heard and understood clearly, all attendees were given a post card to write out a solution for SDG6. UNU-MERIT received many solutions from different stakeholders.

One of the unique features of the conference was the nature of the audience. There were diverse stakeholders, all working towards the same goal of SDG6. This allowed for focused dialogue that included different perspectives. 130 people registered to attend the conference. One of the attendees pointed out that there was great learning, because different actors in the system were able to hear each other out and understand the other's perspective, as everyone was working towards the same goal.

The audience included Policy makers in charge of WASH outcomes at national (Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman and the national head of the SBM Nipun Vinayak), state (State head of the SBM for Sikkim Anil Raj Rai) and village level (Local Panchayat heads including the head of the Kameshwaram Panchayat Mr Kanagasundaram); Academics from universities (these included NIMS university, Addis Ababa University, Tecnia Institute of Advanced Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, SRM University, Waginengen University, North-Eastern Hill University, Delhi University, Lady Shri Ram College, Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, Wetsus Academy, Shri Ram College of Commerce, University of Madras, The Energy and Resources Institute, Aligarh Muslim University, IIM Trichi, IIT Delhi, Aix-Marseille University) and Think-Tanks (like Caya Constructs, Center For Studies in Science Policy, Center for Social Sciences and Humanities, CIRC, CUTS Institute and Public Affairs Centre); Representatives from global and national institutions working closely in WASH (like Institute of National Planning, WASTE, BRICSLICS: BRICS Innovation Network, Global Development Network, GIZ, India Sanitation Coalition, Public Health Foundation of India, UNDP, Clinton Health Access Initiative, Sanitation Impact Solutions, CSIR-NISTADS, National Council Of Applied Economic Research, UN Habitat, 3R WASTE Foundation, ADB, FINISH, Indian Institute of Sustainable Development); Representations from private firms (including HDFC, Raina Industries, Sulabh International, Sanitation Africa Limited, Air India, DELL India) and representation from the Media (Times of India, Bloomberg).

**Structure of the Conference**

The conference was spread over two days. The first day was dedicated to SDG 6 with 4 multi stakeholder panels addressing different issues related to the goal.

**Day One**

*Panel A : Inaugural address by Dr. Nirmala Sitharaman, Honourable Minister of State*
(Independent Charge) for Commerce and Industry, Government of India.

Panel B: Systemic pathways to SDG
This panel had speakers from the Government, International agencies and non-profits with experience and actively involved in attainment of the SDGs necessary for a Swatch India. The panel was moderated by Prof. Shyama V. Ramani Nipun Vinayak, Director of SBM, opened the floor to questions and went about answering all the questions people had on the Swatch Bharat Mission and the challenges being faced in addition to the possible solutions that are being experimented with under the campaign. Dr Raja Venkataramani addressed the role and challenges of PPP as an instrument for SDG6 attainment. Valentin Post from WASTE, drawing from his experience in FINISH India and FINISH Kenya spoke about the role and challenges of international agencies as an actor-financier-facilitator for SDG6.

Panel C: Honouring the Change Makers: The Vimal Kshetra Winners

The central objective of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) or Clean India Mission is to eliminate open defecation in India through installation of toilets and triggering of behavioural change. In rural India, the Panchayat Raj (PRI) or Elected Village Councils are the engines of the SBM mission, facilitating sanitation coverage and behavioural change either directly by implementation of government programs or indirectly through facilitating sanitation interventions by other sponsors.

Yet, we know very little about the parameters of these processes, their governance challenges or the pathways being experimented with.

To contribute to closing this knowledge gap, Prof Ramani, Shankhajit Sen and Rushva Parihar undertook a study for the NCSTC unit of the Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India and village pathways to hygiene and health using the framework of evolutionary catch-up processes, as a part of research of Friend In Need India. While in UNU-MERIT they are used to study how countries develop industrial capabilities, our novelty has been to apply this framework to study how countries can
attain SDGs like SDG6.
In the process of research, they came across extraordinary change makers and in order to promote emulation throughout the country to follow their example, they were honoured in the conference. These visionaries were awarded the Vimal Kshetra award for 2016 at the conference. The award was given by the UN young leader for SDG6 Samuel Malinga. The winners were as follows:
- Himanshu Patel, Panchayat Head of Punsari Village, Punsari, Gujarat.
- Anil Raj Rai, Head of Swachh Bharat Mission, Sikkim.
- N K Perumal, Rural Development Organization, RDO Trust, Ooty, Tamil Nadu.
- Mohammed Ataulla Khan and Allirani, Principal and Teacher of K.K. English School, Bangalore, Karnataka.

At the end of the panel Samuel spoke about his own work with sanitation and his NGO Sanitation Africa.

*Panel D: Designing solutions for SWACHH with focus on overlooked or emerging issues.* While looking at SDG 6 some challenges were identified as gaps in the scope of the goal. These gaps include the impact of waste management, sustainable design for ecological toilets and the role and impact of large foundations and charities in addressing the goal. This panel was moderated by Rushva Parihar

Mangesh Wange from Swades foundation spoke about the role of large foundations and how they operate. The audience appreciated his insight in how these foundations work and continue to contribute towards both the Swatch Bharat Mission and SDG6

For many parts of India, the pit latrine is not an advisable model for environmental sustainability. The most ideal toilet in such settings is the Eco-san but there have been many challenges in adoption due to the different usage rules. In order to popularize ecologically friendly sanitation models by Nikita D'Silva and Siddhant Tikkoo from STAND Design developed a new model for ecological sanitation. They explained their new design concept.

Waste management is a big concern for all those working in sanitation. It is important to address this as a gap in the preview of the goal. Priska Prasetya from WASTE, Netherlands
spoke about a new vermicompost model that her team has been trying out in south India and the implications for it when scaled up.

Ankush Sharma from Crescent Ideas spoke about his past project in Madhya Pradesh where they were designing service delivery platforms for sustainable waste management.

Day Two

The second day of the conference was aimed at conducting a dialogue with academics Exploiting technology and promoting innovation for economic growth as well as socio-economic development is a challenge for all developing countries. Here governance is key. The national system of innovation of any country comprises a complex mesh of actors such as the State, firms, public laboratories, institutions, NGOs, civil society and consumers and even nature. Governance involves setting the rules of the game, with monitoring and incentives – so that collective welfare may be maximized. As with Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for astute exploitation of existing technologies, promotions of useful innovations and efficient governance designs for attainment. To further our understanding of the possible pathways by which technology and innovation may be leveraged towards the SDGs, academics presented their latest research on this topic. In addition to academics, there were a number of students who were also present who benighted from the learning.

The day began with a keynote address by Dr. Jitendra Verma, Founder-Director of LifeCare Innovations who gave a comprehensive picture of the healthcare industry and the path forward for sustainable and inclusive growth.

A number of presentations were made on the sanitation question. Manasi Seshaiyah from Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bengaluru, presented a paper on the Sanitation Challenges of the Poor in Urban and Rural Setting, which highlighted the challenges using Case studies of Bengaluru City and Rural North Karnataka. Dr Arijita Dutta and Debasree Ghosh from Calcutta University presented a Regional Analysis of Sanitation Performance in India followed by a paper on Improving Consumer Voices and Accountability in Swachh Bharat Mission, presented by Dr Meera Nair from the Public Affairs Centre, Bengaluru. In the post lunch sessions Rushva Parihar, who is a Research Associate at UNU-MERIT and FIN Trust, presented a working paper on Policy Design and Incentive provisions for MNE to contribute to SDG1 and SDG 9. Shankhajit Sen from Calcutta University presented a working paper with Dr
Shyama V Ramani on the Catch up pathways for SWACHH Villages with insightful case studies from Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Sikkim. Dr Heba Moghaieb from Institute of National Planning in Cairo presented a paper with Dr. Amal Amer and Dr Ahmed Ashour on Egypt’s Path towards SDG- Goal 6.

Other presentations included research on Nanoscience and Understanding standard of living in Slums. Dr Manish Anand from TERI presented his research on Nanoscience and Nanotechnology: The role of these new sunrise industries for SDG attainment. Dr Sugata Bag from the Delhi School of Economics presented his paper on Understanding standard of living and correlates in Slums: an analysis using monetary versus Multidimensional approaches in three Indian cities.

The two-day conference was organized by Rushva Parihar and Prof. Shyama V. Ramani, who engaged over several months with the invited speakers to ensure a fruitful dialogue.