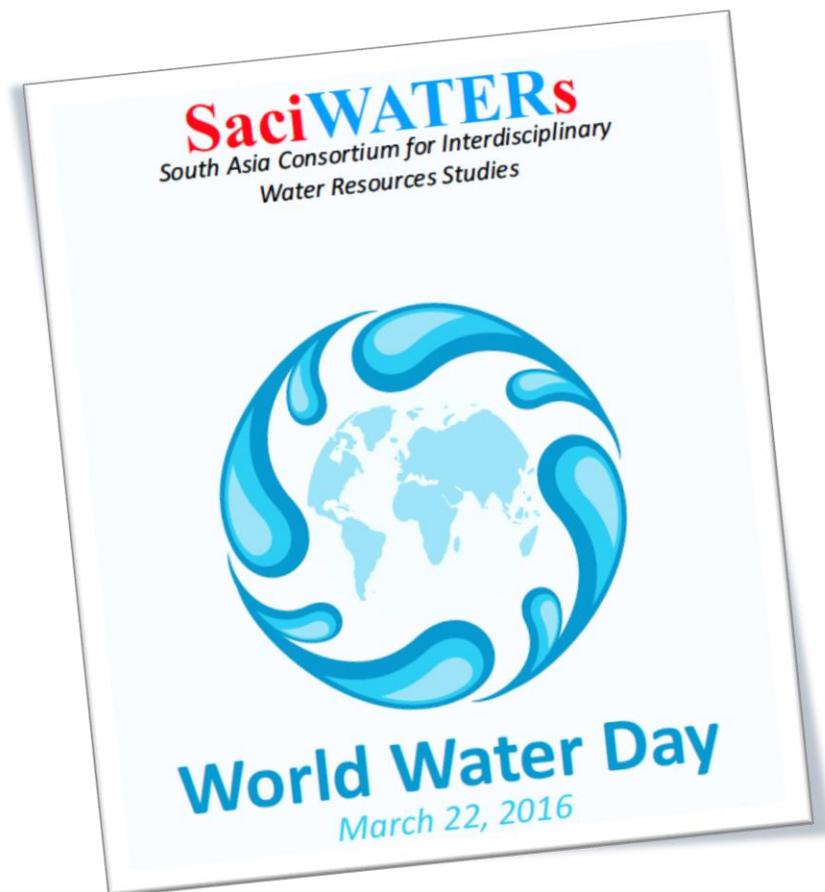




WORLD WATER DAY – 2016
'WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH'



Background

In alignment with the larger theme for the upcoming World Water Day in 2016, SaciWATERS hosted the event titled 'Water for Sustainable Growth' on 22nd March 2016. In the current times of urbanization in the state of Telangana, there is a pressing need for water security for domestic consumption purposes and for the sustenance of livelihoods. Moreover, in meeting the demand for water, quality of the same cannot be undermined. The event therefore focused on the current initiatives taken by Government of Telangana and SaciWATERS to meet the critical challenges of water quality and water security in Telangana in general and in Hyderabad in particular. The event also highlighted activities happening around India that can serve to assist these critical challenges. The event also served as a platform for exchange of ideas, approaches, thoughts and exploration of possible future collaborations.

Inaugural Session

Dr. Anamika Barua, the Executive Director (ED) of SaciWATERS, welcomed the participants for the World Water Day 2016 under the theme “Water for sustainable growth” and gave a brief overview of what SaciWATERS have been working on for the past 16 years since its inception. She spoke about the vision of SaciWATERS, which is to contribute towards water secure South Asia and the challenges faced in reaching this vision. She emphasized on the fact that despite of all the talk surround conflicts for water, “Water continues to be a unifying source across South Asia”. She concluded by stating that idea of this event is to find the ways and opportunities on how we all can work closely with the Government of Telangana and aim together to make state of Telangana water secure.



Addressing the gathering Sri B.V.Papa Rao principal political advisor to the Chief Minister of Telangana (retired IAS) spoke about efforts being taken for sustainable socio-economic growth of the State of Telangana. Through “Mission Kakatiya” preservation, regeneration and renewal of existing tanks is being carried out. Mission “Bhagiratha” is planned for providing treated tap water for every household from the river system. Further to revive and conserve there are efforts planned to tap waters from Krishna and Godavari rivers during rainy season and lift them to the tanks for later use. Sri B. V. Papa Rao ended his speech on the remark that “We cannot go on using only the ground water, we don’t want Hyderabad to become a desert. We need to explore the river water sources also”.



The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) commissioner and Managing Director of Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB), Dr. Janardhan Reddy on this occasion expressed his view on the perception on water scarcity. According to him the problem is not the deficiency of rainfall but the absence of conjunctive use of water and the inability to manage it efficiently. Further elaborating on this topic he mentioned that

NGO’s such as SaciWATERS have a huge space for getting involvement soil and water conservation activities and also do knowledge sharing and raise awareness. “The state of talking is over, now it is time for implementation”.

Dr. Prasanta Mahapatra, Dean, Institute of Health Systems, Hyderabad, stated that “we are living in an age where we have to justify everything in terms of economic growth we should be conserving water even in the absence of the economic growth”. Talking on the topic he highlighted the fact that people need to look at water in the holistic manner, not only as a basic need but as recreational purposes and all. The inaugural session concluded with the closing remark from Dr. Prasanta that “The drilling of bore wells is a sign of desperation, and an indicator for the policy makers to realize that there is something wrong in the water and soil conservation act”.

Book launch

On this occasion, SaciWATERS launched the book titled “*Status of water quality testing laboratories in Telangana*” in partnership with WaterAid and RWSS in the presence of the dignitaries. The launch by started off with Dr. N. Sudhakar, program co-coordinator WaterAid, talking about current project of WaterAid and SaciWATERS with Telangana Government. He stressed the point that “...it is not only about access to water but it’s also about the quality of water”. On this occasion, Dr. Aditya Bastola from SaciWATERS shared the findings from the book released. The assessment was of the status of water quality testing laboratories in division and sub-division levels in the State of Telangana with regard to safety protocols and procedures.

Panel on Water Security

The panel on water security was chaired by Dr. C. Suvarna, IFS, Telangana Bio-diversity Board. The panel highlighted the existing concerns from the viewpoint of water security in Hyderabad in the current times of urbanization based on the following three key questions:

1. What is the significance of a “rights based approach” for addressing concerns of water inequity in an urbanizing Hyderabad?
2. What are the institutional level challenges affecting sustainable water management in peri-urban Hyderabad?
3. What is the scope of integration of efforts taken by various stakeholders for achieving water security?

Ms. Anne Raimat, Director of International Relations from Bordeaux Urban Community expressed her ideas on how “...we have too much water and at the same time not enough” denoting that there is no balance in water distribution and governance. She further mentioned that it is important for the people and different organizations to engage with the government for better water management.

Dr. C. Suvarna strengthened the statement of Ms. Ann by mentioning about a documentary revolving around spring water highlighting the struggle for water in some of the arid areas of France. However, according to her it is important to understand that when compared to France, the city population here is different, livelihoods of the people are different and hence water required and demanded is different.



In this regard, Dr. Jasveen Jairath, Director of SPD emphasized on the rights based perspective. According to her there is unequal distribution of water, not because there is scarcity of water but because of asymmetrical distribution of water resources. She highlighted the fact that there is very little analysis of how the water is actually distributed. The poor people are the ones who are actually resource starved and they are the ones who are being over the lecture about saving water.

Taking the WASH access aspect further, Dr. M. Snehalatha, regional advisor, Splash added to the discussion that poor people lack the required knowledge, information, money and unity needed to deal with the issues of water scarcity. There is a need to bring all the stakeholders together on one common platform to discuss the issue of equitable distribution and equitable access to water. Dr. C. Ramachandraiah, Professor from Centre for Economic and Social Sciences (CESS) gave emphasis to proper

utilization of water by users ranging from utilization of bottled water at events to water from taps. He further elaborated on how the treated water / water is not given the proper economic value. Based on the views of the panelist, a discussion session with the audience pointed out that in a vast country like India, we cannot assure that one approach/technology would work everywhere do deal with the emerging issues efficiently it is important to adopt new strategies and technologies over the period of time. The discussion concluded with the remark from Dr. Snehalatha that “Until a crisis happens, things don’t move and its high time that this approach changes”.

Panel on Water Quality

The panel on Water Quality started with the presentation by Ms. Safa Fanaian from SaciWATERS on water quality issues in India such as Arsenic and Fluoride. The presentation highlighted the need for increasing awareness about the arsenic issue amongst the affected populations and work towards addressing these issues by supporting coordinated efforts towards arsenic mitigation.

The panel on Water Quality highlighted the significance of water quality despite its availability and access for both drinking and other purposes based on the following questions

1. How is the issue of water quality understood by the different kinds of users and consumers of water?
2. What are the social and health implications of water quality?
3. Given the efforts taken for mitigating issues of water quality, what is the scope of convergence between government departments, civil society organizations and community institutions?

The final panel chaired by Dr. Prasanta Mahapatra, IAS (Retd) was focused on Water Quality. Following up on this topic Shri R. V. Rama Mohan, Director and Team Leader, SuGWM Project, Telangana Resource Centre-Center for World Solidarity talked about quality of drinking water and irrigation water quality and how it affects the farmers. He said that working on water quality issues is difficult because it is challenging to take the knowledge and message about water quality to the people, proper communication and changing peoples’ perception is the most challenging because there is “Black box communication” existing meaning “how we communicate and how scientifically we communicate is important”.

Shri Srinivas Chekuri, coordinator, Nalgonda Collaborative for Fluoride Mitigation talked about different types of fluorosis, dental, skeletal etc. and also about other health problems due to it. He further elaborated how there is an economic drain associated with fluorosis as the affected people economically depend on others. Also there is a social stigma attached to fluorosis. He concluded by stating that “we



are trying to bring a convergence to promote community based surveillance and maintenance of water quality”. Shri N Sudhakar, Program Coordinator, WaterAid India talked about the advocacy perspective,

water quality and livelihood, climate change and livelihoods, equity and accessibility. Sri Sudhakar stated off the many opportunities for cooperation through water. Further he stated that with the State of Telangana that has a strong legislation and so many institutions involved, effective management of water and sanitation can be achieved. He concluded by mentioning that now is the time to convert knowledge in to action and “Water for everyone should be the slogan for us now!”. The discussion followed by the panel talked about three areas, firstly importance of focusing on elements other than arsenic and fluoride, secondly the importance of addressing the root cause of these problems and finally about the sufficiency and efficiency of the laboratories.



Dr. Prasanta Mahapatra concluded the session with the remark that “ultimate convergence comes through informed public, all of us should work towards educating and informing the public as there is no better convergence than that.”

Further, Mr. Manohar Chand talked about the success of *Basti Vikas Manch* (BVM). To deal with the issues of bad water quality in his area, he along with few other people decided to take a step forward. They received training from the program regarding water quality testing and carried out those tests in their *basti*. Now BVM has expanded to many other *bastis* also. BVM basically means everyone from the *basti* should gather and work towards the development of their own *basti* and not depend on anyone else.

Conclusion

Dr. Anamika Barua gave the final remarks of the event by saying that one of the aims of this event is to bring diverse ideas together and then see how we can move forward. She also mentioned that we look forward to working in a partnership mode with governments and other agencies.

