

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025



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FOREWORD/ED's Desk

Dear Readers,

Greetings from SaciWATERS!

I am delighted to present the Annual Report of SaciWATERS for the year 2024-2025. This report highlights the initiatives and activities undertaken during the year and reflects our commitment to advancing research, practice, and capacity building across diverse thematic areas. I take this opportunity to thank all our partners for their continued support, which has been vital to our achievements. My sincere gratitude also goes to the board members for their guidance and commitment in steering the organization forward. Finally, I extend heartfelt appreciation to the dynamic SaciWATERS team whose creativity, dedication, and hard work have been central to delivering impactful projects, training programs, workshops, and publications.

During 2024–2025, SaciWATERS advanced its mission across South Asia through initiatives under **Water Policy and Governance**, **Climate Change and Coastal Resilience**, **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**, and **Environmental Sustainability**.

- Under **Water Policy and Governance**, the team strengthened coastal resilience through multi-country civil society partnerships funded by the Global Nature Fund (GNF). Collaborating with partners from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives, the organization promoted community-driven approaches, knowledge sharing, youth capacity building, and policy advocacy via webinars, briefs, and multi-stakeholder forums. Contributions at the National Forums in Chennai and Pune included youth-led exercises, dialogue on just water governance, and discussions on mangrove policy. Feasibility studies further guided community-based mangrove restoration, integrating sustainable livelihoods and inclusive stakeholder engagement.
- **Climate Change and Water:** Funded by Dasra-ClimateRISE Alliance, SaciWATERS conducted a scoping study on India's blue forest ecosystems—including mangroves, seagrass meadows, and tidal salt marshes, combining desk research with expert consultations. The study assessed ecosystem diversity, vulnerabilities, policy frameworks, and governance, culminating in the launch of the *Shields of the Shore* report during Dasra Philanthropy Week 2025, offering evidence-based recommendations for sustainable conservation.

- **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):** In partnership with Qvantel Software Solutions, SaciWATERs improved WASH infrastructure in five government schools in Hyderabad by installing LifeStraw filters, functional toilets, handwashing stations, and conducting environmental awareness programs. Child Cabinets empowered students to lead hygiene practices and school cleanliness initiatives. In Hyderabad's informal settlements, baseline surveys guided the creation of community-driven Water ATMs, enhancing equitable access to safe drinking water and generating livelihood opportunities for women. Additionally, SaciWATERs assessed solid and liquid waste generation in Kothapally Village and Haliya Municipality, Telangana, identifying gaps in infrastructure, governance, financial planning, and community engagement, providing insights for targeted interventions in rural and emerging urban areas.

Through these initiatives, SaciWATERs reinforced its commitment to pro-poor, human rights-based, gender-inclusive, and ecosystem-centered approaches, integrating water, sanitation, climate resilience, and environmental stewardship to advance equitable development across South Asia.

Through these engagements, SaciWATERs remains committed to an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach, bringing together stakeholders from academia, civil society, government, and the private sector. By fostering capacity building, knowledge exchange, and dialogue, we aim to strengthen governance, promote equity, and support sustainable water management for the region.

As I have always emphasized, these achievements are made possible by the continued trust and support of numerous funding organizations across the globe. I am pleased to see SaciWATERs beginning to realize the positive impact of building and sustaining meaningful partnerships across South Asia. Our greatest strength remains the qualified, and highly motivated SaciWATERs team. Looking ahead, we will continue to focus our efforts on the broad themes of water policy and governance, climate change and adaptation, drinking water and sanitation, water resources accounting, and urban water management.

Let me take this opportunity to express my sincere pleasure and pride in congratulating every one of the SaciWATERs family for making this year very productive.

Prof S. Janakarajan
President, Executive Board

About SaciWATERs

SaciWATERs, the South Asia Consortium for Interdisciplinary Water Resources Studies, is a not-for-profit organization based in Hyderabad, India. Established in 2002, it works at the intersection of research, policy, and practice to address the complex and evolving challenges of water management in the face of climate change. With a legacy of impactful research and transformative initiatives, SaciWATERs continues to spearhead efforts toward resilient, inclusive, and sustainable water futures across South Asia and beyond.

Through an integrated and holistic approach, SaciWATERs examines water in its multiple dimensions: social, economic, environmental, and political, to promote sustainable and equitable solutions. Its work is driven by three pillars: **research** to generate new knowledge, **capacity building** to nurture future leaders and practitioners, and **implementation** to translate ideas into action at the community level.

The organization actively collaborates with universities, research institutions, development organizations, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and networks across the global north and south. These partnerships strengthen its efforts to foster dialogue, knowledge exchange, and evidence-based decision making, ultimately catalyzing a **paradigm shift** in water resources management in South Asia.

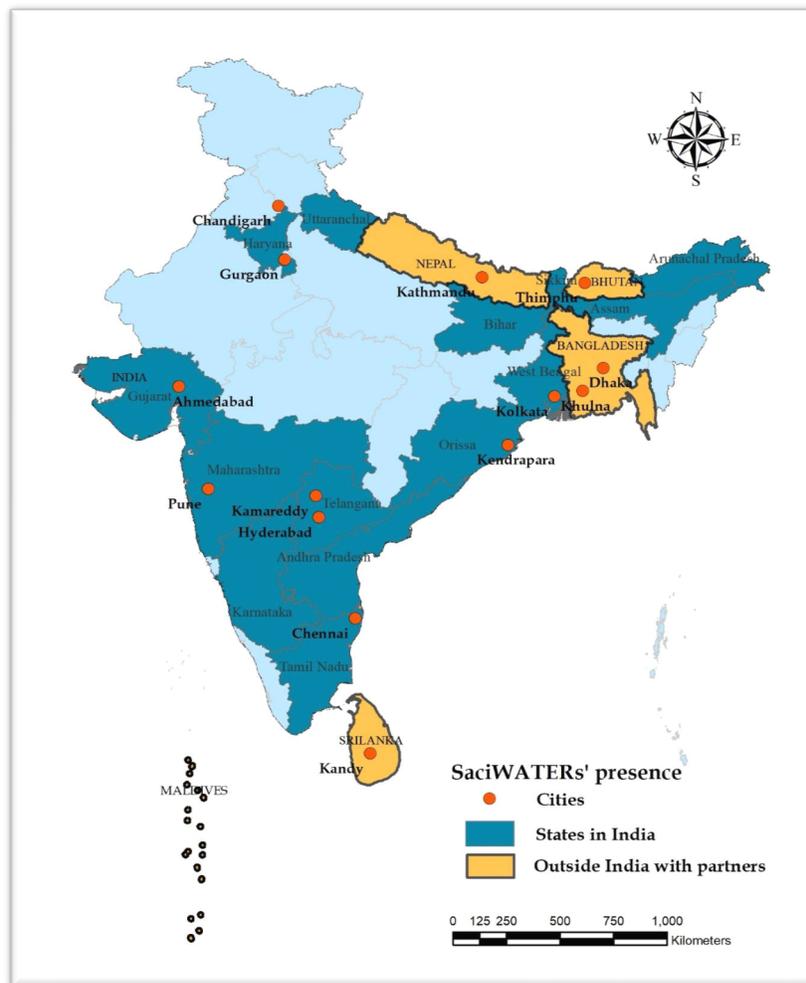
Key thematic areas include water governance and policy, gender and water, climate change adaptation, sanitation, the water energy food nexus, and transboundary water cooperation. By engaging with policymakers, communities, and academia, SaciWATERs strives to shape resilient, inclusive, and sustainable water futures in the region.

In alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SaciWATERs integrates international, regional, and national water policies into its initiatives, both in principle and practice, making it a leading voice for interdisciplinary and impactful water research in South Asia and beyond.

Our Thrust Areas

- Interdisciplinary Water Education & Capacity Building
- Water Policy and Governance
- Water and Gender
- Water and Climate Change
- Biodiversity, Ecosystem Rejuvenation and Nature-based Solutions
- Water Quality
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
- Urban and Peri-urban Water Security
- Sustainability and Environment, Social and Governance (ESG)

Our Presence in South Asia



Overview of Projects

Theme of the Project: Water Policy & Governance

Water systems are typically complex, with the relationship between water and development being particularly dynamic. In this context, conflicts are increasingly determining the interactions between water policy and governance. Working in partnership, SaciWATERs focuses on the characteristics of water institutions in South Asia, evaluates their influence on reform processes, analyses disputes over divergent water uses and assesses the impact of salient actors in promoting or obstructing institutional change.

1. Building a multi-country, civil society partnership to increase the resilience of coastal populations in South Asia

Funded by: Global Nature Fund (GNF)

Period of funding: 15 December 2021 – 31 December 2024

A short note on the project:

The project, funded by the Global Nature Fund (GNF), aims to strengthen the resilience of coastal communities in South Asia by addressing the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. It seeks to enhance coastal protection, secure livelihoods, and promote the sustainable management of natural resources through collaborative, community-driven, and transboundary approaches. To achieve this, the project brings together a regional CSO partnership comprising NEWS, CReNIEO, TERRE Policy Centre, and SaciWATERs from India; BEDS from Bangladesh; Nagenahiru and EMACE from Sri Lanka; and Huvadhoo Aid (HAD) from the Maldives. This partnership promotes the sharing of best practices, joint development of innovative solutions, and stronger policy advocacy at both national and regional levels.

The primary role of SaciWATERs in the project is to serve as a knowledge partner, advancing the project's objective of enhancing the resilience of coastal populations through the following means:

- Establishing a knowledge hub to disseminate the best practices implemented by organizations under various project objectives and sub-goals,
- Providing capacity development support for the youth within partner organizations and the coastal community they are working with.
- Engaging in policy advocacy at the national and regional levels through co-creating knowledge for evidence-based advocacy, webinars, and policy briefs.

Through these endeavors, SaciWATERs aims to involve a wider array of stakeholders including representatives from other civil society organizations, local communities, authorities, and

government officials. This ensures the feasibility of proposed solutions and the scaling up of the project.



Thangal Mangrove Restoration Site by CRenIEO



Mangrove plantation by TerrePolicy Center



Mr. Kabindra Sharma organizing Youth Forum in the Regional Forum Chennai



Beneficiaries of the Kothumeladu project



Coastal Resilience Project Team Member at National Forum Chennai

Project Outputs

Events:

SaciWATERS has been actively involved in regional and national forums that brought together diverse stakeholders to advance dialogue on climate resilience, youth engagement, and water governance.

- During the **National Forum in Chennai (6–8 August 2024)**, hosted by CReNIEO, youth engagement was a central focus. Through structured exercises and role plays led by Mr. Sharma, students critically examined climate and environmental challenges, identified real-world issues in their surroundings, and proposed innovative solutions. This interaction demonstrated the potential of young people to be active contributors to addressing the climate crisis and shaping sustainable futures. The forum also included a Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Just and Conflict-Free Water Governance, led by Prof. S. Janakarajan, and a field visit to CReNIEO's centre in Pulicat to connect policy discussions with community-level experiences.
- At the **National Forum in Pune (21–23 November 2024)**, organized by TERRE Policy Centre, SaciWATERS participated in the Conference on Coastal Resilience and Water. The team contributed to discussions on Mangrove Policy and Governance in the Coastline of India: Gaps and Opportunities, highlighting challenges in policy implementation and opportunities for strengthening governance frameworks.

In all these forums, the youth sessions proved to be a valuable platform for learning and exchange. They encouraged young participants to think critically about climate and environmental challenges, build practical skills, and share their ideas for solutions. By creating these interactive spaces and connecting youth perspectives with broader policy dialogues, SaciWATERS highlighted the crucial role of younger generations in shaping resilient coastal futures.

SaciWATERS organized a series of two **Regional Policy Advocacy Webinars** on key thematic areas:

- **Coastal Governance in South Asia: Strengthening Coastal Regulatory Policies** (16 October 2024), jointly presented by the Global Nature Fund (GNF) and SaciWATERS, in collaboration with the Global Mangrove Alliance (GMA) and Bay of Bengal Programme–Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO).
- **Ecosystem-based Approaches to Coastal Development and Resilience Building for Coastal Communities** (29 November 2024), with a special focus on mangrove restoration, SAIME, and coral restoration, led by NEWS, CReNIEO, BEDS, and HAD.

Publications:

- SaciWATERS was invited to convene a panel on “**Policy Perspectives: Coastal Resilience and Livelihoods in South Asia**” at the 5th India **Public Policy Network (IPPN)** Conference, held at IIT Bombay from December 6–8, 2024. The panel, led by Mr. Kabindra Sharma, created a platform to highlight the work of CRP partners and address critical gaps in coastal governance policy discourse in the region. As part of the conference theme “Policy Processes in the Global South”, the session facilitated dialogue among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners on resilience-building, livelihood opportunities, and the role of effective policy in shaping sustainable coastal futures.

2. **Feasibility study for the Project Community-based mangrove conservation in South and South Asia**

Funded by: Global Nature Fund (GNF)

Period of funding: 1 November 2024 and 31 January 2025

A short note on the project:

SaciWATERS conducted a feasibility study to evaluate a mangrove conservation project “Mangrove Conservation and Integrated Ecosystem Management to Strengthen Local Communities in South and Southeast Asia” proposed by the Global Nature Fund (GNF) in India, Bangladesh, and Indonesia. The feasibility study examined the urgent issue of mangrove deforestation and its impacts on ecosystems, climate resilience, and community livelihoods. It aimed to assess the potential for implementing a science-based, ecologically sound, and community-driven approach to mangrove restoration, stakeholder collaboration, and sustainable livelihoods. The findings are intended to guide the design of targeted interventions that address ecological challenges, strengthen community resilience, and align with national and regional conservation priorities.

For the project, SaciWATERS developed an intervention logic (Theory of Change), analyzed environmental and livelihood impacts, conducted desk research, held various rounds of stakeholder consultations, and organized workshops. The team also reviewed international and regional reference documents to strengthen the analysis and ensure applicability across sites. Key sources included Logical Framework Analysis, and reference to documents like the Indonesia Mangroves for Coastal Resilience Project, Stakeholder Engagement Plan (2022).

The deliverables included the Blue Forest Proposal Feasibility Study Main Document, SWOT Analysis, and Stakeholder Analysis. Together, these outputs aligned the project with BMZ and

OECD-DAC criteria for development projects and laid the groundwork for community-based restoration, sustainable livelihood strategies, and inclusive stakeholder engagement in mangrove conservation.

Theme of the Project: Water, Sanitation & Hygiene

Despite massive interventions, basic access to safe drinking water and effective, equitable and sustainable delivery of sanitation remains a major challenge throughout most of South Asia. Initiatives at both the policy and institutional levels have fallen far short of meeting these critical needs in the region's eight countries. The lack of independent studies on a sufficiently representative scale is further exacerbating the problem of correctly assessing ground realities. Recognizing the importance of the issue, SaciWATERs is developing an inclusive, cross-sectoral strategy.

3. Empowering Schools for a Sustainable & Healthy Today and Tomorrow: Revamping Infrastructure and Cultivating Environmental Stewards

Funded by: Qvantel Software Solution Private Limited, Hyderabad

Period of funding: 14th March 2025 to 31st March 2025

A short note on the project:

A baseline survey was conducted across five government schools in Secunderabad and the Cantonment Zone of Hyderabad to assess the availability of drinking water, sanitation facilities, hygiene practices, and overall school infrastructure. The survey revealed contaminated water sources, non-functional or insufficient toilets, inadequate handwashing facilities, and low awareness of hygiene among students.

To address these gaps, SaciWATERs implemented a WASH and environmental awareness project aimed at providing safe drinking water, improving hygiene practices, promoting environmental education, and fostering nutrition awareness through kitchen gardens. Key interventions included the installation of six LifeStraw water filters, repair and renovation of toilets, establishment of handwashing stations, and WASH workshops for students and teachers.

The project also established **Child Cabinets** to strengthen student leadership, promote hygiene and sanitation practices, and involve students in school cleanliness management. Students actively participated in kitchen gardens, learning about seasonal crops, composting, and the nutritional value of vegetables.

By integrating infrastructure improvements with capacity-building programs and practical environmental activities, the project successfully created a safer, healthier, and more inclusive

learning environment. Its long-term success will depend on continued community engagement and strong partnerships with government authorities.



Awareness regarding basic sanitation practices



Provisioning water filters in the schools



Child cabinet with roles and responsibilities



Handwash Stations

4. Providing and Institutionalizing Safe Water for Water-Marginalized Urban Poor : Safe Water As A Human Right For Urban Poor

Funded by: CSR partnership of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL), support from Bordeaux Métropole, and the Government of Telangana

Period of funding: 03 May 2024-on 31 Oct 2025

A short note on the project:

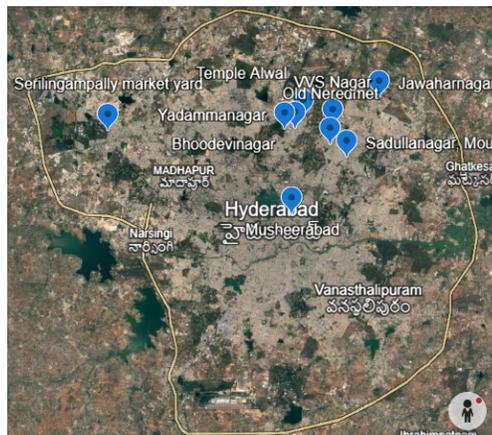
As part of its initiative to ensure safe, equitable, and sustainable access to drinking water in Hyderabad's informal settlements, SaciWATERs conducted a comprehensive **baseline survey** across ten identified sites. The survey, carried out through household questionnaires, focus group discussions, and field visits, assessed water demand, supply sources, sanitation and hygiene practices, and the overall health and economic conditions of residents.

Findings revealed a severe shortage of safe water in non-notified slums, where communities largely depend on costly private suppliers or untreated borewell water. This reliance places a heavy economic burden on the urban poor and exposes them to frequent illnesses, further aggravating their vulnerability. Based on community interactions and stakeholder consultations, the study identified **Water ATMs with vending machines** as the most feasible and sustainable solution, integrating a community-driven, business-oriented model for long-term viability.

The baseline survey guided the project's objectives, which include establishing sustainable community-based water supply systems, improving community health and well-being, strengthening local capacity and participation, and creating livelihood opportunities for disadvantaged women from nearby slums.

To build institutional support, a series of meetings were held with government agencies and community groups such as **Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), Alwal and Malkajgiri, Urban Community Development Department, GHMC Alwal, Self-Help Groups (SHGs)** and **Asha Workers**. Meetings with SHG representatives and Asha Workers in Moulali highlighted strong enthusiasm for linking business opportunities with the management of Water ATMs.

Discussions were also held to finalize the design and fabrication of Water ATM cabins, while multiple UV water filter manufacturers were evaluated through site visits, vendor checks, and laboratory tests. The final system is chosen based on water quality results, feasibility, and service provisions, including warranty and AMC.



Project sites marked on the map of Hyderabad



Discussion with the residents in the Temple Alwal slum



Meeting at GHMC, Alwal, UCD Department

Project Activities

Events:

- Meeting with Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, Alwal and Malkajgiri were held.
- Meeting with Urban Community Development Department, GHMC Alwal.
- Meetings with Self Help Groups on zoom and the concept of the Water ATM were explained to them.
- Meeting the women beneficiaries of the Water ATM itself (Atwal) to form an informal group.
- Meeting held with SHG and Asha Workers at Moulali
- Meetings were held with Suppliers for fabrication of Water ATM cabins
- **Launch of the Initiative** at the project location site by Ms. Céline Papin, Ms. Karine Michel, Mr. Lucien Bruneau, and Ms. Sara Giugliano from Bordeaux Métropole.

5. To Assess the current solid and liquid waste generation patterns and management practices in Kothapalli village of Haliya Municipality, Nalgonda district, Telangana

Funded by: TIEEDI Permaculture Foundation

Period of funding: 03rd Feb 2025 to 02nd August 2025

A short note on the project

Effective management of solid and liquid waste is essential for improving sanitation, public health, and environmental sustainability. In many rural and emerging urban areas, waste management is often overlooked due to inadequate infrastructure, limited public awareness, insufficient operation and maintenance systems, and weak institutional frameworks. To address these challenges, the

project focused on Kothapally Village (Gram Panchayat) and Haliya Municipality in Nalgonda District, Telangana, chosen to represent both rural and transitioning urban contexts.

The project conducted a comprehensive assessment of waste generation patterns at the household and commercial levels, evaluated existing collection, segregation, transportation, and disposal mechanisms, and analyzed community awareness and participation in waste management initiatives. Institutional and governance frameworks, socio-cultural influences, financial sustainability, and environmental and health implications of current practices were also studied to gain a holistic understanding of the waste management landscape in these communities.

The study revealed significant gaps between policy intent and on-ground realities. Both sites faced inadequate infrastructure, limited institutional capacity, poor financial planning, and low levels of community engagement, hindering effective waste management. While Telangana's overall performance in waste management appears strong, emerging municipalities like Haliya continue to struggle with disparities, particularly as they transition from rural governance systems.



Focus Group Discussion with local community members



Open dumping at a site in Kothapally



6. Zero Waste Households – Darjeeling

Funded by: The Social Change Nest.

Period of funding: Short term

A short note on the project:

Project Activities:

Events:

Publications:

Theme of the Project: Climate Change and Water

Climate change events in the region, coupled with population growth, are degrading natural resources while making South Asia particularly vulnerable to conflict. As climate change impacts finely balanced social, economic and ecological systems adversely, ripple effects are already being felt in terms of negative pressures on food security, livelihood security and energy security. Acknowledging this, SaciWATERS works to transform existing paradigms in natural resource management, simultaneously considering climate change mitigation and adaptation with food, energy and livelihood optimization strategies.

7. Mapping India’s Blue Forest Ecosystem: A Scoping Study

Funded by: Dasra-ClimateRISE Alliance

Period of funding:

A short note on the project

The project aimed to map India’s blue forest ecosystems, including mangroves, seagrass meadows, and tidal salt marshes, assess their health and vulnerabilities, and provide evidence-based recommendations for their sustainable conservation. The study focused on understanding the diversity of these ecosystems, identifying knowledge gaps, evaluating existing mapping efforts, and integrating community perspectives, governance frameworks, and policy insights to guide inclusive conservation strategies.

To achieve these objectives, the scoping study adopted a multi-pronged approach. It began with a systematic desk-based review of academic literature, government reports, and NGO publications to compile information on the current state of India’s blue forests. This was followed

by analysis to identify data deficiencies and assess the feasibility of proposed methodologies for the larger mapping project. Two virtual expert consultations were conducted, focusing first on ecological and mapping aspects and then on socio-economic vulnerabilities and policy frameworks. Insights from these consultations validated findings, refined project focus, and provided recommendations on scientific, governance, and community engagement approaches. The study was completed within a month, culminating in a detailed report “Shields of the Shore” , a first-of-its-kind study conducted by SaciWATERs in close partnership with serves as the foundation for a comprehensive, evidence-based mapping and conservation initiative.

Project Activities:

Events:

- **First Expert Consultation (August 1, 2024):** Virtual session on “*Mapping India’s Blue Forest Ecosystems: Exploring Their Status, Challenges, Resilience, and Preservation*” organized by ClimateRISE Alliance and SaciWATERs.
- **Second Expert Consultation (August 26, 2024):** Virtual session on “*Mapping India’s Blue Forest Ecosystems: Challenges, Resilience, and Preservation*” organized by ClimateRISE Alliance and SaciWATERs.

Publication:

Launching of the project report ” **Shield of the Shores**”: Strengthening India’s Coastal Resilience: From Evidence to Action (25 February 2025): Hosted by ClimateRISE Alliance during Dasra Philanthropy Week 2025 in Bangalore; launched the “*Shields of the Shore*” report and discussed conservation and resilience pathways for coastal blue vegetated ecosystems.

Other events/occurrences

Newspaper Article Publication (30 May 2023): “*Sundarbans: Climate change, water and women’s health in a globally critical ecosystem*” by Dr. Jayati Chourey published in *Economic Times*. ([Link](#))

Sustainable Flows: Springshed Management for Water Security & Climate Resilience in the Himalayas (11 March 2024): Hosted by SaciWATERs, GWP-South

Asia, Women for Water Partnership, and Save the Hills via Zoom as part of the Signpost to Bali – World Water Forum 2024 series.

Signpost to Bali Webinar Series – Part 1 (28 March 2024): Community Engagement for Safe and Inclusive Sanitation Hosted by Dasra with SaciWATERs, Women for Water Partnership, and GWP-South Asia; highlighted community voices, challenges, and regional initiatives in inclusive sanitation.

Signpost to Bali: Capacity Building for Gender-Inclusive DRR (4 April 2024): Dasra, in collaboration with Women for Water Partnership and SaciWATERs, hosted a webinar on gender-inclusive sanitation and disaster risk reduction perspectives.

South Asia Regional Consultation on Gender-Inclusive DRR & Management (3 May 2024): Hosted by Dasra with SaciWATERs, Women for Water Partnership, and Youth for Resilience in hybrid mode; amplified voices of marginalized groups, particularly women and youth, for DRR and resilience planning.

Workshop on Lake Protection and Rejuvenation in Urban Areas, Hyderabad (21 May 2024): Organized by CDMA in collaboration with GHMC and HMDA; SaciWATERs represented by Judith Christiana and Kabindra Sharma contributed to discussions on sustainable lake rejuvenation practices.

- **Documentary Premiere (22 May 2024):** As part of our policy advocacy and outreach efforts, SaciWATERs produced a documentary titled *“The Bleeding Tides: Impact of Climate Change on Women’s Menstrual and Reproductive Health in the Sundarbans, India.”* The film, featuring real-life stories from the region, premiered at the **World Water Forum in Bali, Indonesia**, on May 22, 2024. Showcased during the Asia Pacific Regional Session on *“Strengthening Resilience: Capacity Building for Gender-Inclusive Proactive Disaster Risk Reduction and Management,”* the documentary highlighted the intersection of climate change and women’s health and provided an international platform to amplify community voices from one of the most climate-vulnerable regions.