



STATE MINISTRY OF WATER SUPPLY FACILITIES



**RCS**  
Regional Centre for Sanitation  
Sri Lanka

## Report on

# RAPID ACTION LEARNING (RAL) WORKSHOP

Workshop theme-

Sustainable Sanitation and Leaving No One Behind

(For Eight South Asian Courtiers of SACOSAN )

COLOMBO- SRI LANKA  
9 - 11 DECEMBER, 2019

## SUPPORT PARTNERS-



# **Report on RAPID ACTION LEARNING (RAL) WORKSHOP**

**Workshop theme: “Sustainable Sanitation and  
Leaving No One Behind”**

**Organised by- Regional Sanitation Centre, SACOSAN  
in collaboration with WSSCC and IDS**

**Date: 9 to 11 December 2019**

**Place: Colombo, Sri Lanka**

**(For Eight South Asian Countries of SACOSAN- Afghanistan, Bangladesh,  
Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka )**

## Regional Rapid Action Learning Workshop: Sustainable Sanitation and Leaving No One Behind

*Organised by the SACOSAN Regional Centre for Sanitation (RCS)<sup>1</sup>, Government of Sri Lanka  
In collaboration with Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative (WSSCC)<sup>2</sup>, Fresh Water Action  
Network South Asia (FANSA) and the Sanitation Learning Hub, Institute of Development Studies (IDS)<sup>3</sup>*

### 1. Introduction

In 2017 21 per cent of South Asia's population practiced open defecation and only 57 per cent of households had a basic handwashing facility (UNICEF and WHO, 2019). Though vast progress has been made since 2017, those with a safely managed sanitation and basic handwashing facility remains low while open defecation is still a huge challenge. To share good practices and identify ways forward, a South Asia Rapid Action Learning (RAL) workshop was held in Negombo, Sri Lanka, December 9-11 2019. The event organised by the SACOSAN Regional Centre for Sanitation brought together 56 participants from all eight countries in the region (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) to share, learn and plan actions to increase progress towards sustainable sanitation and hygiene ensuring no one is left behind.

The objectives of the workshop were three-fold:

- To share learning from practical actions implemented in the region for achieving sustainable sanitation focusing on leaving no one behind
- To demonstrate the Rapid Action Learning (RAL) Workshops methodology and other timely, relevant and actionable learning activities
- Plan country/organisation and individual actions moving forward

Due to the decentralised nature of RAL workshops it is not possible to capture all the learnings and exchanges that took place. This rapid report presents highlights of the discussions held.



**Image 1: Participants gather for the opening of the first South Asia Regional RAL workshop**

**RAL Workshops:** This first regional RAL workshop was designed based on the organiser's experience of running similar events at both national and sub-national level in India in support of the Swachh Bharat Mission. The process involved:

- In advance collecting approaches and methods used across the region

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rscsacosan.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wsscc.org/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ids.ac.uk/programme-and-centre/sanitation-learning-hub/>

- Sharing these through a mix of participatory plenary and group discussions
- Hunting and gathering information from others
- Reviewing lessons learnt and planning individual, organisational and country actions moving forward

RAL's are designed to facilitate horizontal peer-to-peer learning between practitioners and policy makers. They can be used to both support learning around sanitation and hygiene more broadly, as well as focus on a specific topic such as menstrual hygiene management or handwashing. A guidance note for convening and facilitating RAL workshops is available [here](#).

**Day 1:** After the Hon. Vasudeva Nanayakkara, State Minister of Supply Facilities officially opened the workshop, practical examples of rapid action learning activities and peer-to-peer knowledge exchanges were presented. Brief overviews of papers were then provided in plenary before themes were identified and thematic groups created. In groups more detailed presentations were given and main lessons learnt across experiences were identified.

**Day 2:** Thematic teams split-up and hunted and gathered, finding out more and contributing to other thematic discussions. In the afternoon two cross-cutting plenary sessions took place. The first looked at examples of multi-stakeholder approaches at national, sub-national and community level. The second focused on ways to identify and plan for those most likely to be left behind.

**Day 3:** Country groups were formed to consolidate learnings and develop country/organisational action plans before reflecting on personal actions that can be taken to support the plans. Finally, both country/organisational action plans and individual commitments were presented in plenary before the workshop was officially closed.

## *2. Thematic Discussions*

### *a. Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM)*

Selected experiences shared:

- The Federal Government have formed a National Working Group for MHM, and Provincial Working Groups have been established in four Provinces (Pakistan).
- 6000 women trained in the production of menstrual hygiene products using locally available resources and Lady Health Visitors were trained to monitor progress and outcomes of the intervention (Integrated Regional Support Programme, Pakistan).
- WASH Women Groups were supported to make antimicrobial pads that are easy to clean, in parallel to MHM awareness activities being run in communities (Oxfam, Bangladesh).
- As part of the District wide MHM campaign in order to help overcome stigma MHM libraries were installed in schools (Ranchi District, India).

Selected Lessons Learnt:

- There needs to be a mix of both pad production and other interventions to get products to women and girls that need them and continued actions and advocacy to break taboos.
- Men and boys can help support with breaking this taboo – however as allies of women rather than speaking in their place.

### *b. WASH in Schools*

Selected experiences shared:

- A multi-stakeholder approach was used involving children's WASH clubs, teachers, self-help groups and village administrations to address toilet usage, handwashing and MHM (MARI, India).

- A multi-pronged approach including retrofitting existing infrastructure and building mechanisms for ongoing operation and maintenance (O&M) including creating School WASH Cabinets, supporting School Management Committees to develop WASH plans and training on non-teaching staff in O&M of the facilities (WaterAid, India).
- Child-centred design principles were used to respond to the different needs for children with disabilities, adolescent girls, small children and those coming from vulnerable and marginalised households. This has included architectural innovations as well as engaging school management committees in the cleaning of facility to minimise children from ostracised households being forced to do it (Aga Khan, India).

Selected Lessons Learnt:

- There is a need to involve different stakeholders to ensure use and ongoing O&M of facilities.
- Funding flows from government can severely challenge progress and cause excess stress on existing infrastructure and more frequent breakdown.
- There is need to recognise the heterogeneity of the problems children can face, including differences in age, gender, development, caste and disability.

*c. Vulnerable Groups*

Selected experiences shared:

- Collecting data on vulnerability has included using an app based survey and tagging using GPS (Aga Khan, India), participatory Community Leave No One Behind (CLNOB) mapping and action planning (WSSCC, India) and immersive research to better understand the ground realities and dynamics of sanitation campaigns within villages (IDS, WaterAid, Praxis, Delhi University and WSSCC, India).
- Targeting youth for hygiene promotion for households working in the plantation sector (Sri Lanka).
- In tribal districts coupling sanitation demand creation interventions with the distribution of basic sanitation kits for returnee families to build their own sanitation facilities (Peace and Development Organisation, Pakistan)

Selected Lessons Learnt:

- Different geographical locations will have their own set of categories of vulnerable population and a better understanding of the context is needed.
- A blanket approach is not sufficiently tackling the different barriers people face in gaining access to improved sanitation and hygiene services. Context-specific interventions are needed.

*d. Safely Managed Sanitation/Faecal Sludge Management*

Selected Experiences shared:

- Tiger Toilets have been installed in schools and public places. The toilets use worms to turn sludge into fertiliser closing the sanitation loop and reducing faecal waste by up to 70 per cent (ACTED, Peshawar, Pakistan).
- The Water Supply and Sanitation Improvement Project in Rathnapura District have been working with the community based organisations, especially women, to support the construction of improved sanitation facilities (Sri Lanka).
- Practical Action have been supporting Dhenkanal Municipality, Odisha, private operators and the community to develop a Faecal Sludge Management business model and take actions across the sanitation chain (India).

Selected Lessons Learnt:

- Many still see sanitation as a toilet. More consideration is required across the sanitation chain, including the financial and institutional set-up needed for necessary services.
- It is essential to have a multi-stakeholder approach. Some stakeholders will remain essential throughout, while others will need to be more actively engaged at different stages of the sanitation chain.

#### *e. Campaigns and movements*

- In Nepal, multi-stakeholder WASH Coordination Committees were formed at National, District and villages level to support the sanitation drive, develop post-Open Defecation Free (ODF) strategies and support progression towards Total Sanitation.
- A sanitation campaign in Bangladesh included components on handwashing and child faeces disposal. This included creating demand for potties and sessions targeting caregivers on how to use them to manage child faeces safely (WaterAid).
- The Afghanistan CLTS Movement held a national consultation workshop in 2017 to review and analyse service delivery focusing on marginalised groups. ODF sustainability and water safety planning are currently being integrated – 5,500 communities in over 30 districts have been declared ODF. They aim to have an ODF Afghanistan by 2025.
- In Bhutan, activities in the water supply development and sanitation campaign included building child friendly handwashing stations in schools, developing IEC in local languages, focusing on construction, maintenance and usage of sanitation facilities.
- The Swachh Bharat Mission was designed around four P's: political will, public funding, partnerships and participation (India).

#### Lessons learnt:

- A multi-stakeholder, inclusive approach is needed at all levels – national, sub-national, village/municipality.
- There is a need to build a constructive role for youth in sanitation promotion and galvanise them to help accelerate progress towards achieving SDG 6.

#### *3. Selected Actions:*

- Share learning from workshop in different forums in their countries and with their SACOSAN Focal Points if they were unable to participate (all participants).
- To hold RAL workshops at different levels and for different themes – Maldives (O&M of Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants), Nepal (getting to total sanitation, youth engagement and vulnerability mapping), Pakistan (National, Province and District level) and Afghanistan (National).
- Collect data on vulnerable households and those most likely to be left behind and respond with appropriate and specific policies, guidelines and action plans (Afghanistan and Sri Lanka).
- Integrate LNOB mapping to identify those left behind into existing NGO plans and advocating for Governments to the same (India, Nepal and Pakistan).
- Set-up better co-ordination mechanisms. For example, an MHM task force with representatives from three ministries (Sri Lanka) and organising workshops on multi-stakeholder engagement in the Clean and Green campaign (Pakistan).
- Advocate for the need to think through and strengthen the institutional and financial set-up for faecal sludge management services in both urban and rural areas (India and Maldives).
- To support with documents and technical inputs into rapid action learning activities in the region in the future (RCS, FANSA, WSSCC and IDS).

#### *References:*

UNICEF and WHO, South Asia Region Dashboard, [washdata.org/data](http://washdata.org/data), accessed 11/12/2019