

Summary

On October 6, 2022, The Global Water Alliance (GWA), in association with the Water Center at Penn and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, hosted its 15th annual conference, "**Are We There Yet? United Nations Goal of Universal Access to Sanitation Services by 2030- Progress, Challenges, and Solutions**". To successfully implement the goals of the Water Action Decade and other internationally agreed water-related targets, GWA hopes to support the preparatory process and mobilize action through the findings and conversations which have taken place at the 15th Annual Conference.

Howard Neukrug, Executive Director of the Water Center at Penn, kicked off the event by discussing the importance of finance and governance in clean water and sanitation (WASH). He concluded by sharing that young people are the future of this work, and the Water Center at Penn supports the development of water leaders. Keynote speaker Ann Thomas, Senior WASH Advisor for Sanitation and Hygiene at UNICEF spoke about the need for rapid acceleration in order to accomplish SDG 6 by 2030. She discussed the 'World Health Organization UN-Water GLAAS 2022 Report' on safely-managed sanitation, UNICEF's game plan for achieving safely-managed sanitation, and the African Sanitation Policy Guidelines. Rapid acceleration is needed to achieve SDG 6 by 2030 and very few countries have adequately resourced and formally approved sanitation policies. Overall, she noted that we need government-led, non-fragmented policies and coordination for affordable and inclusive sanitation in order to meet global goals.

Kelly Parsons, CEO of WaterAid America, started off the first panel by emphasizing that water and sanitation is a human right, and if SDG 6 fails, so do many others. She discussed vulnerable groups that disproportionately lack access as well as the impacts that climate change has on sanitation. Kelly emphasized that with the current rate of progress, SDG 6 will not be accomplished until 2107. There needs to be a focus on increasing systems strength, capacity, and promotion of behavior change with a systems-based, community led approach. She ended by explaining the economic benefits of providing water and sanitation to all. Next, Clive Lipchin, Director of the Center for Transboundary Water Management at Arava Institute discussed water and sanitation in Israel and Palestine and the disparities in access to the resource between the two countries. He mentioned the need for a local, decentralized approach in emerging markets (where applicable). He also spoke about the link between water and agriculture and how recycled water can and should be used in agriculture.

The session on 'Stories of implementing sanitation governance in developing countries' began with Angelita Fasnacht, the past President of the Global Water Alliance, speaking about sanitation issues in Colombia, particularly in the rural areas of Guajira. She acknowledged that sanitation is an issue and discussed a project that was put in place to help solve these issues. Following that, Mamadou Guisse, the Coordinator for the Initiative Dakar 2022, explained the situation in the sanitation sector in Senegal and concluded by addressing the challenges and actions that were taken to address the lack of sanitation systems and clean water access in the country. The session ended with the audience learning about India from Sujoy Mojumdar, the

Senior WASH Specialist, UNICEF, New Delhi. He shared the grave issues surrounding open defecation in India and shared solutions which are being developed to combat this issue. He also recognized the challenges of scale, speed, stigma, and sustainability in implementing WASH programs in India. Overall, the panelists agreed that there is not one approach that fits all.

The next session was an open audience discussion on sanitation led by Waleska Crowe from Engineers without Borders, USA. Waleska and the audience discussed issues which were left out of the picture as well as ways to increase the creation of programs that have meaningful education centered around respecting people and their humanity. Next, the second keynote speaker David Parker, Deputy Director for Strategy, Planning, and Management of the WASH Program at The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, spoke about city-wide, inclusive sanitation and how infrastructure spending and funding typically fails to reach the poor. In addition, transformative sanitation technologies are necessary due to growing population with urbanization, aging infrastructure, water scarcity and stress, and policy changes. He also discussed the benefits of a reinvented toilet and emphasized that SDG 6 does not have any gender-specific indicators even though women and girls are disproportionately impacted by water and sanitation issues.

In session 7, panelist speakers Eddy Perez (Technical Director, Global Wash, Global Communities), Arturo Ujpan Mendoza (Regional Coordinator, Engineers Without Borders, Guatemala), and Ruthie Rosenberg (SANERGY) opened the session by asking the audience to identify what was wrong with an image they displayed. The picture showed a house with an open pipe emptying into a river, a truck dumping waste, kids swimming, and people washing clothes and defecating in the same river. All the while, people are still gathering water from that very same river. This raised an interesting discussion surrounding the impact of clean water. The speakers focused on South America and Africa (also including some points from South/South-East Asia) and discussed sustainable finance opportunities in sanitation within urban and rural areas in developing nations. The panelists presented the progress that WASH, Engineers Without Borders, and SANERGY have made in South America and Africa. Engineers Without Borders has made immense progress in Guatemala to help decrease open defecation in rural-poor communities. They brought on board more than 80 families who were enthusiastic to help with the construction of EWB's pour flush toilets, costing US\$371/Latrines. SANERGY has provided Africa (Nairobi) with its FreshLife public toilets, FreshFit household toilet, and Mtaa Fresh waste discharge center, which has helped poor-urban communities in Africa ensure human waste does not end up in their environments and is safely handled. Furthermore, their services cost US\$3 per person/year compared to sewer systems at US\$56 per person/year. USAID/Global Communities partnered with WASH and has worked in Ghana to make sanitation products accessible to lower-income citizens. By teaming up with Duraplast, the Digni-Loo Latrine was created. Although the cost of US\$100 was still hard for low-income families to access, WASH and other organizations began to engage with Ghana's government to successfully change their policies to ensure more equity, and allow subsidies for rural sanitation.

The next session focused on financing and governance. Speaker Jim Gebhardt, Senior Financial Advisor, Office of Water, US Environmental Protection Agency, used an economic and

financial lens to compare the State Revolving Fund Model and the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act. He highlighted how these initiatives can help us achieve our water and sanitation goals. The next speaker, Nishith Vora, Service Growth CoE and Global Executive at VEOLIA Water Technologies & Solutions, addressed water and sanitation issues and encouraged creative thinking in the development of new solutions. Julie Waetcher, Chief Programs Officer at DigDeep analyzed water and sanitation issues in the United States, mentioning that 2.2 million people in the United States have no running water or working toilets. This disproportionately impacts indigenous and low income communities and costs both these families and the U.S. economy millions of dollars. Finally, Debbie Heuckeroth, GWA Board Member and Project Committee Chair, facilitated a call-to-action discussion with the audience to share conclusions and learnings from the discussions which took place.

For the full conference agenda, powerpoint presentations, images and more information, please visit us [HERE](#). The following proceedings capture key points made during the full-day event.

For more information on the Global Water Alliance please visit our [website](#). Don't forget to follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#)!