Webinar Series on '*Towards Water Sensitive Cities - Experience of Approach and Practices in Australia and India*'

Proceedings Webinar 1- Towards Water Sensitive Cities in Australia and India

Date: 18 Nov., 2020 | **Time:** 10-11:30 AM (IST) / 6.30-8.00AM (CEST) / 3.30-5:00PM(AEDT)

Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), India has organised a two-part webinar series on '***Towards Water Sensitive Cities - Experience of Approach and Practices in Australia and India***' in partnership with Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities (CRCWSC), Australia and Alluvium, Australia. The webinar series is aimed at increasing awareness and advocating for the planning and design of water sensitive cities in India, and to share experiences from both countries.

The first webinar of this series, '***Towards Water Sensitive Cities in Australia and India***' was held on 18 Nov., 2020. The webinar was moderated by Dr Suresh Kumar Rohilla, Senior Director, CSE and Dr Harry Virahsawmy, Urban Water Specialist, Alluvium. The webinar had more than 1,000 attendees.

The webinar was kickstarted by Dr Rohilla, where he introduced the speakers and panellists, and provided context for the webinar. He provided a brief overview about India's journey towards water-sensitive cities. He provided the context on how the post-independence Victorian engineering solutions are inadequate to address issues related to urban water management, and the need for the webinar in pushing decentralised water-sensitive principles and solutions.

Dr Virahsawmy and set the agenda for the webinar; as he introduced the water-sensitive cities principles, and provided a brief overview of the journey of Melbourne, Australia in transitioning towards a water-sensitive city from a water-supply city. This was followed by a brief presentation by Michael O' Neill, Senior Manager, Strategic Projects, Water and Catchments, Dept. of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Govt. of Victoria. He talked about the policy level interventions in the state of Victoria, and Melbourne to implement integrated water-sensitive strategies.

The inaugural address was given by Mr Rajiv Ranjan Mishra, Director General, National Mission for Clean Ganga, Government of India. In his address, Mr Mishra advocated for the development of water-sensitive cities in India, and pushed the idea of a comprehensive approach for water supply, wastewater and septage management and stormwater management to develop water-sensitive cities in India. He called for an integrated strategy, combining engineering, planning and other disciplines, to address issues of urban water management.

Mr Mishra also released the CSE Report on '***Roadmap for implementation on Water-Sensitive Urban Design and Planning in Delhi: Stormwater Harvesting in Public Parks and Open Spaces***'. The report is released as a guiding document for preparation and implementation of water-sensitive strategies in Delhi, aimed to address issues of water-logging and urban flooding.

Mr Chris Chesterfield, Urban Water Policy and Planning Specialist, CRCWSC presented the Australian experience in moving towards water-sensitive cities. He argued that a water-sensitive city must be liveable, resilient, sustainable and productive; and he also underlined the principles of water-sensitive cities: acting as water supply catchments, providing ecosystem services, and comprising water sensitive communities. He talked about the transition of Melbourne from a water supply city in 1850s, and now in a Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) paradigm from the 1980s. The key drivers for the transition were waterway health, climate change, flooding, population growth and urbanisation.

The detailed chronology of water-sensitive cities in Australia was reflected upon by Mr Chesterfield, in terms of policy documents, manuals, performance standards and modelling tools. He also threw light on demonstration projects and pilots, which help in spreading awareness and providing a case for scaling up

water-sensitive interventions. He also presented various case studies of WSUD projects from Melbourne, like Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne Cricket Ground, Elizabeth Street, Dockland Parks, etc. He concluded with key learning on the role of research policy, planning, manuals and pilots in a successful transition to a water-sensitive city.

This was followed by a brief presentation by Dr Rohilla, highlighting the key issues related to urban water management in Smart Cities and AMRUT Cities in India. Urban flooding, declining groundwater table, pollution, dwindling and inequitable water supply and loss of local water bodies is common in all urban centres in India. He provided key learnings from CSE research, on using public open spaces and local water bodies as critical green infrastructure, in order to address these issues, and leapfrogging to a water-sensitive city.

This was followed by a panel discussion, centred around how water-sensitive approach is relevant to issues faced by cities and what are the mechanisms for implementation of this approach in cities. Dr Vijay Kumar Chaurasia, Joint Advisor (Public Health and Environment Engineering), Central Public Health and Environmental Engineering Organisation (CPHEEO), Govt. of India, welcomed the approach, as key in implementing the Govt. of India vision for providing water in every household. He argued that though various initiatives under programmes under AMRUT promote groundwater recharge, recycle and reuse of water, reducing water losses, etc. However, these need to be integrated and the water-sensitive cities approach provide opportunity for the same. At the same time, he also called for integrated efforts of the various departments and organisations to work towards water-sensitive cities.

G. Mathi Vathanan, Principal Secretary, Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, Govt. of Odisha shared by journey of Odisha in augmenting the urban water supply mechanisms in the state. He reflected upon the journey of cities of Odisha from water-supply city towards a water sensitive city; in order to address issues of equitable and sustainable water supply resources, rainwater and stormwater harvesting, and groundwater recharge and management. Model designs for various SUDS features have been prepared under the WSUDP Advisory issued to the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) of the state. State-level and city-level task forces have been constituted for implementation of WSUD interventions in the various cities of Odisha. He mentions that 68 ULBs across 25 districts in the state have planned and designed 734 RWH structures, out of which 283 have been successfully implemented over the past 4-5 months.

Dr Kajal, Mission Director, Smart Cities Mission, Govt. of Uttar Pradesh reflected upon the lack on enabling framework in terms of laws and guidelines on the potential of reuse of wastewater and stormwater, and for incentivizing the application of WSUD interventions. She mentions that the framework needs to be in place in order to scale up successful pilots. She also emphasised on the need for training and capacity building of ULB personnel with the latest tools and techniques for implementation of WSUD initiatives.

The panellists and speakers deliberated on the issues related enabling framework for WSUD in India, and concerns regarding water quality and reuse potential in various sectors. They also reflected upon the need for capacity building of practitioners of various disciplines and contractors for implementation, for the role of community participation and awareness scaling up successful pilot cases of WSUD in Indian cities.

The webinar was concluded with a vote of thanks.