

Citywide Inclusive Sanitation: Old Wine in a New Bottle or a New Paradigm?

Citywide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) is the new paradigm shift in urban sanitation that both research and practice are championing. In many ways, it is becoming the sanitation counterpart to water security. The historical context and evolution of CWIS from its conception to definition is outlined. Abishek S. Narayan¹, Christoph Lüthi¹

Introduction

Sanitation as a development agenda received widespread recognition at the turn of the century through the Millennium Development Goals. Attention towards urban sanitation since then has been increasing in both research and international development. However, the challenge remains for cities of the developing world to manage the entire sanitation value chain [1].

Genesis

Conferences are not just a platform where research findings and development agenda are showcased, but also meeting points at which sector professionals can ideate. That is what happened in the case of ‘Citywide Inclusive Sanitation’ (CWIS) at a conference in 2016 dedicated to urban sanitation, where a Call for Action was released by a consortium with the aim of combining global efforts towards a united cause at the Stockholm Water Week in 2017 [2]. CWIS was broadly put forth under four pillars: human rights, economy, partnerships, and the sanitation value chain.

Progress

In the following years, a large number of efforts, both CWIS labelled and otherwise, were found to be aligned with this cause [3]. From the World Bank’s sanitation strategy to the Gates Foundation’s city-level grants, the intent to deliver a unified effort was clear.

In 2018 at the Beijing Toilet Expo, a commitment to unlock 1 Billion USD towards CWIS, through the Urban Sanitation Innovation Partnership, was jointly made by Bill Gates and Jim Kim, then President of the World Bank [4].

Since CWIS required definition and operational indicators, a set of principles was drafted at the Manila Conclave, and then matched with corresponding quantitative indicators in 2019. These draft principles include: safe and equitable service delivery, resource recovery, business models, technologies, planning and political will. The Manila CWIS Principles would be the first major update to urban sanitation after the Bellagio Principles on Sustainable Sanitation [5]. The CWIS initiative is new and live; refinements to the principles through a consultative process are ongoing.

Unpacking CWIS

This new paradigm shift has inclusion as its centrepiece. The term ‘inclusive’ encompasses informal and peri-urban, sewer and non-sewer technologies, the entire value chain, all stakeholders, larger urban goals, and importantly marginalisation based on gender, disability, age, religion, caste and income level. Emphasis is placed equally on the process of inclusive urban sanitation planning as on the end results. CWIS could therefore, be defined as a: state of urban sanitation, where all members of the city have access to safe and affordable sanitation services through appropriate sewer and non-sewered systems, without any contamination to the environment along the sanitation value chain.

Conclusion

Since its conception, CWIS has been criticised as a repackaging of the status quo, with most efforts based on well-established principles and foundations of sustainable urban sanitation. However, CWIS is the first such holistic initiative of a united front on a global scale with the backing of finance and expertise, using the latest research and developments to face the ur-



Photo: Looking beyond sewers.

ban sanitation challenge. Even if it seems to be old wine in a new bottle, CWIS may likely be the valuable impetus that is needed.



Figure: Evolution of CWIS.

- [1] Reymond, P., Renggli, S., Lüthi, C. (2016): Towards sustainable sanitation in an urbanising world. In Ergen, M. (Ed.) *Sustainable Urbanisation*, 116–134.
- [2] BMGF et al. (2017): Citywide inclusive sanitation: a call to action. Available at: www.citywideinclusivesanitation.com/resources.
- [3] USAID (2018): Citywide Inclusive Sanitation. *Water Currents*. Available at: www.globalwaters.org/resources/assets/water-currents-citywide-inclusive-sanitation
- [4] World Bank (2018): World Bank Group and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Commit to Innovation to Speed Up Sanitation for All. Press Release on 6 November 2018.
- [5] Schertenleib, R. (2005): From conventional to advanced environmental sanitation. *Water Science and Technology*, 51 (10), 7–14.

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CWIS at Sandec:

The project focuses on selected mega and secondary cities in India with the aim to develop a novel methodology that could bridge top-down and bottom-up sanitation planning to achieve CWIS. For more information: www.sandec.ch/CWIS

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