

Global South Academic Conclave

WASH and Climate Linkages

6th - 7th February 2026

CEPT University | Ahmedabad

REPORT

CWAS CENTER
FOR WATER
AND SANITATION
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Conclave Summary



Climate change is increasingly manifesting through extreme weather events such as heat waves, erratic rainfall, floods and droughts, significantly affecting the delivery, sustainability and equity of water and sanitation services. These impacts are particularly severe for vulnerable and marginalized communities, while WASH systems themselves contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, further intensifying climate challenges. In this context, there is a growing need to

strengthen the evidence base, foster cross-learning and develop practical pathways for integrating climate resilience into WASH systems.

Building on the foundation laid in previous editions, the Centre for Water and Sanitation (CWAS) at CEPT Research and Development Foundation (CRDF), CEPT University organised the third edition of the Global South Academic Conclave (GSAC) on WASH and Climate in February 2026. The conclave brought together over 750 participants from more than 50 countries, including representatives from academia, government agencies, utilities, development organisations and civil society, reflecting the increasing global relevance of the platform.



The two-day conclave featured six keynote addresses, four panel discussions, multiple technical sessions and poster presentations selected from a large pool of abstracts. These sessions collectively addressed key thematic areas including monitoring WASH outcomes in the context of climate change, governance and financing mechanisms, inclusive service delivery and innovations in technology and systems. The structure of the conclave reflected a shift from conceptual discussions in earlier editions to more practice-oriented and solution-driven dialogues.



Across sessions, a strong emphasis emerged on strengthening monitoring frameworks and data systems to better understand and respond to climate impacts on WASH services. Discussions highlighted the limitations of existing approaches in capturing emissions, vulnerabilities and service outcomes, underscoring the need for more localized, granular and real-time data systems. Integrating climate considerations into performance assessment tools and planning frameworks was identified as critical for enabling evidence-based decision-making.

Governance and financing discussions highlighted persistent structural challenges, including fragmented institutional responsibilities, limited municipal capacities and inadequate prioritization of WASH within climate finance frameworks. Participants emphasized the need for decentralized and flexible financing mechanisms, improved financial autonomy of urban local bodies and innovative instruments such as blended finance and green bonds. Strengthening the linkage between policy intent and on-ground implementation emerged as a key priority.



The conclave also placed significant focus on inclusion and equity within climate-resilient WASH systems. Deliberations highlighted the disproportionate impacts of climate change on informal settlements, sanitation workers and marginalized communities. Case studies and field experiences demonstrated the importance of community-led approaches, engagement of self-help groups and participatory governance models in improving service delivery, enhancing accountability and building long-term resilience.

Technological innovation and service delivery models were discussed as key enablers for transforming the WASH sector. There was a growing consensus on the need to move towards decentralized, nature-based and resource-efficient systems that are adaptable to diverse local contexts. Such approaches not only improve access and service reliability but also contribute to both climate mitigation and adaptation objectives.

A recurring theme across the conclave was the emerging leadership of the Global South in developing context-specific, scalable and innovative solutions. Participants highlighted that the experiences and models from these regions offer valuable lessons for global discourse, particularly in advancing decentralized, inclusive and climate-responsive WASH systems.



Over the course of the conclave, the platform facilitated meaningful exchanges between researchers, practitioners and policymakers, fostering a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities at the intersection of WASH and climate change. The discussions reflected a clear progression from



earlier editions—from building awareness and evidence towards identifying actionable strategies and implementation pathways.

Overall, GSAC 2026 reinforced the importance of continued collaboration, strengthened data systems, inclusive governance and innovative financing to advance climate-resilient WASH systems. It reaffirmed the role of GSAC as a critical platform for knowledge exchange and collective

action, contributing to shaping the future agenda of WASH and climate resilience in the Global South and beyond.

Key Take aways for 2026 Conclave

Monitoring WASH Outcomes and Climate Impacts

- Need for strengthened and climate-responsive monitoring systems:
Existing monitoring frameworks are not adequately capturing climate risks, service vulnerabilities and emissions. There is a clear need to integrate climate indicators, resilience metrics and risk-informed planning into WASH monitoring systems.
- Importance of localized and granular data systems:
Discussions highlighted significant gaps in global estimation methods, particularly for GHG emissions and service-level vulnerabilities. Locally grounded data, direct measurement approaches and real-time monitoring tools are essential for accurate planning and decision-making.
- Linking data to action and planning:
Monitoring systems must move beyond reporting to enable actionable insights. Integrating data with planning frameworks, performance assessment systems and city-level decision-making processes is critical for improving service delivery under climate stress.

Governance and Financing for Climate-Resilient WASH

- Need for integrated and coordinated governance structures:
Fragmented institutional responsibilities across sectors continue to hinder effective implementation. Strengthening inter-agency coordination and aligning WASH within broader urban and climate governance frameworks is essential.
- Bridging the gap between policy and implementation:
While policies increasingly recognize climate-resilient WASH, challenges persist in translating them into actionable programmes. Strengthening institutional capacity and accountability mechanisms at the local level is critical.
- Reimagining financing for resilience:
Climate finance remains limited and skewed towards mitigation. There is a need to prioritize adaptation-focused investments and explore innovative financing mechanisms such as blended finance, green bonds and climate-linked funding streams.
- Enhancing financial sustainability of local bodies:
Municipal financial autonomy, improved revenue systems and access to capital markets are essential to sustain investments in climate-resilient WASH infrastructure and services.

Inclusive and Climate-Resilient WASH Systems

- **Prioritizing vulnerable and underserved communities:**
Informal settlements, sanitation workers and marginalized groups are disproportionately affected by climate impacts. Inclusive planning approaches must ensure equitable access to resilient WASH services.
- **Strengthening community-led approaches:**
Engagement of self-help groups, local institutions and community networks has proven effective in improving service delivery, monitoring and ownership. These models are critical for building long-term resilience.
- **Embedding gender and social inclusion in practice:**
While gender and inclusion are recognized in policy frameworks, their translation into implementation remains limited. There is a need to integrate these considerations into infrastructure design, governance systems and service delivery models.

Innovations in Technology and Service Delivery

- **Shift towards decentralized and adaptive systems:**
Decentralized WASH systems offer greater flexibility, lower costs and improved resilience to climate risks compared to traditional centralized infrastructure models.
- **Promoting nature-based and resource-efficient solutions:**
Solutions such as rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, wastewater reuse and circular sanitation approaches are critical for enhancing water security and reducing environmental impacts.
- **Adoption of context-specific and scalable innovations:**
Technological solutions must be tailored to local contexts and supported by enabling ecosystems, including institutional readiness, regulatory frameworks and user acceptance.

Cross-Cutting: Knowledge, Evidence and Global South Leadership

- **Strengthening the WASH–climate evidence bases:**
The conclave reiterated the need for deeper research and empirical evidence to better understand the interlinkages between WASH systems and climate change, particularly in the Global South.
- **From discourse to implementation:**
GSAC 2026 reflected a shift towards operationalizing climate resilience through tools, frameworks and field-level applications, moving beyond conceptual discussions.
- **Global South as a hub for innovation and practice:**
The conclave highlighted that many scalable, inclusive and cost-effective solutions are emerging from the Global South, offering valuable lessons for global adaptation and replication.



Inaugural Session

The third edition of the Global South Academic Conclave (GSAC) on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Climate commenced on 6 February 2026 at CEPT University, Ahmedabad with an inaugural session that brought together leaders from academia, development organisations and the WASH sector. The conclave is convened by the Center for Water and Sanitation (CWAS), CEPT Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) in collaboration with the Faculty of Planning, CEPT University, with support from the Gates Foundation and the Viega Foundation.

The inaugural session set the tone for the two-day conclave, emphasizing the importance of collaborative dialogue, evidence-based policy engagement and collective learning in addressing the growing intersection between climate change and water and sanitation systems. Participants representing governments, academic institutions, utilities, development agencies, civil society organisations and private sector partners gathered to reflect on emerging challenges and opportunities in building climate-resilient WASH services, particularly in the context of the Global South



The session began with a welcome by **Ms. Saubiya Sureshwala**, who greeted the distinguished guests, speakers and participants from across the globe. She reflected on the evolution of GSAC as a platform for dialogue and knowledge exchange since its inception. Building on the success of the previous editions in 2024 and 2025, which together engaged over 2,000 participants from across regions, the 2026 conclave witnessed participation from **more than 750 delegates representing**

over 50 countries. The programme for the two-day event included six keynote addresses, four panel discussions, technical sessions and poster presentations selected from more than 130 submitted abstracts, reflecting the growing interest and engagement of the global WASH and climate community. She also acknowledged the contributions of institutional partners, faculty members and student volunteers of CEPT University who played a vital role in organizing the conclave.



Setting the context for the conclave, **Mr. Dhruv Bhavsar, Centre Head, CWAS**, reflected on the purpose and journey of GSAC. He noted that the platform was conceptualized to bridge the gap between academic research and real-world practice, creating a space where scholars, practitioners and policymakers can exchange ideas and co-develop solutions. While GSAC is rooted in the experiences and challenges of the Global South, it also encourages cross-regional learning and dialogue with global institutions.

He noted that the impacts of climate change on water and sanitation systems are increasingly visible, with extreme weather events, water scarcity and environmental degradation already affecting service delivery. In this context, platforms like GSAC are vital for fostering collaboration, informing development agendas and translating research into actionable policy and practice.

Reflecting on the origins of the platform, **Mr. Aasim Mansuri, Strategy Center Head, CWAS** shared the conceptual journey that led to the establishment of GSAC. The idea emerged from discussions in 2023 on the need for a dedicated forum where academic research, practitioner insights and policy perspectives could converge to address the complex challenges at the intersection of WASH and climate change. Since its first edition, GSAC has steadily expanded both in scale and scope. What began as a gathering of about 300 participants from 30 countries has evolved into a global platform engaging over 750 participants from 50 countries in 2026.



He encouraged participants to make the most of the conclave by engaging actively in discussions, questioning established approaches and building collaborations that continue beyond the event.

Offering reflections from the founding leadership of CWAS, **Prof. Meera Mehta** spoke about the vision behind GSAC as a platform for dialogue among scholars and practitioners working in the WASH sector. She emphasized the importance of bringing together diverse perspectives from across the Global South to collectively reflect on shared challenges and identify pathways for more resilient water and sanitation systems. She also noted that in a rapidly changing global context, such collaborative platforms play an important role in advancing the WASH and climate agenda through research, partnerships and knowledge exchange.



Prof. Dinesh Mehta further highlighted the multidimensional nature of water and sanitation systems. He emphasized that WASH challenges cannot be addressed in isolation, as they intersect with governance systems, financing mechanisms, monitoring frameworks and issues of equity and inclusion. Climate change, he noted, adds another layer of complexity to these challenges. Addressing them requires integrated approaches that combine strong institutions, reliable data systems and sustained policy engagement. He acknowledged the longstanding partnerships that have supported CWAS’s work and reaffirmed the Centre’s commitment to advancing action-oriented research and policy dialogue.



Providing the academic perspective, **Prof. Shalini Sinha, Dean of the Faculty of Planning at CEPT University**, highlighted the university’s long-standing commitment to integrating research, education and practice.

She noted that CEPT’s academic programmes increasingly engage with issues related to water, sanitation and climate through multidisciplinary studios, research projects and coursework. She also spoke about CEPT’s role as the regional hub for the **Global Sanitation Graduate School**, which aims to strengthen professional capacities and expand knowledge

on sanitation systems globally. Emphasizing the importance of collaboration, she noted that addressing complex challenges such as climate-resilient WASH requires strong linkages between academia, policymakers and practitioners.



Welcoming participants to CEPT University, **Prof. Barjor Mehta, President of CEPT University**, reaffirmed the institution’s commitment to research that informs policy and practice. He highlighted the achievements of the Center for Water and Sanitation and its growing contributions to the WASH sector through research, training and capacity-building initiatives. Over the past year, CWAS programmes have contributed to **training more than 18,000 government officials and community stakeholders**, strengthening institutional capacities in water and sanitation management. Prof. Mehta also noted that CEPT’s distinctive model—combining academic research with practical engagement—has enabled the university to contribute significantly to development discourse and public policy despite operating without direct government grants.

Representing the development partners supporting the conclave, **Ms. Sakshi Gudwani from the Gates Foundation** reflected on the importance of strengthening locally driven solutions for



WASH and climate resilience in the Global South. She emphasized the need to strengthen governance systems, monitoring frameworks and institutional capacities to ensure that innovations in technology translate into sustainable improvements in service delivery. Collaborative platforms such as GSAC, she noted, are essential for fostering dialogue, sharing knowledge and accelerating progress toward more resilient and inclusive WASH systems.



The session also featured a **video message from Ms. Medje Prahm, CEO of the Viega Foundation**, who highlighted the growing pressures that

climate change places on water and sanitation systems across the world. She emphasized that addressing these challenges requires strong

Keynote Addresses:

The two-day conclave featured six keynote speakers who brought global insights on advancing climate-resilient WASH systems. Discussions highlighted the need for resilient infrastructure, sustainable investments, and systems-based approaches to strengthen governance, financing, and service delivery. Speakers also emphasized the importance of policy reforms, leadership, and private sector partnerships in scaling impact. A strong focus was placed on integrating public health with WASH and ensuring equitable access, underscoring the need for collaborative and multi-sectoral action.

Keynote Address by Ms. Neeta Pokhrel

*Ms. **Neeta Pokhrel**, Director of the Water and Urban Development Sector Office at the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**, delivered a keynote address focusing on the role of water and sanitation systems in advancing climate resilience, inclusive development and sustainable urban growth. Drawing on more than two decades of experience working across Asia and the Pacific, she reflected on emerging sector challenges and emphasized the need for practical, inclusive and implementable reforms in WASH systems.*

research, partnerships and international collaboration. Platforms such as GSAC, she noted, play an important role in bringing together diverse stakeholders to share knowledge and co-develop solutions for climate-resilient WASH systems.

The inaugural session concluded by reinforcing the need for **collective action, evidence-based policymaking and sustained collaboration** to address the evolving WASH and climate challenges. The reflections shared by speakers highlighted the importance of bridging research and practice, strengthening institutional systems and advancing inclusive solutions that respond to the realities of communities across the Global South.

With these opening reflections, the conclave formally commenced its technical discussions and knowledge exchange sessions over the following two days.



Ms. Pokhrel began her address by highlighting that **water is a cross-cutting sector** that underpins urban development, energy systems and agriculture. As climate risks intensify, the water sector is increasingly required to respond to extreme weather events, infrastructure vulnerabilities and growing urban demand. She noted that within ADB's regional portfolio, **flood management and climate adaptation** have become critical priorities, particularly for countries that face recurrent climate shocks.

She also discussed the operational challenges faced by utilities in many small and island economies across the Pacific region. These utilities often struggle with **limited human resources, difficulties in attracting skilled professionals and financial sustainability issues**. To address these challenges, ADB has supported collaborations with technical universities and training institutions to strengthen sector capacity and provide internship opportunities that encourage youth to join the water sector.

From a development finance perspective, Ms. Pokhrel explained how **ADB supports governments through a combination of loans, grants, trust funds, partnerships and technical assistance**, helping countries design policies and implement water and sanitation projects. She emphasized that development finance institutions play an important role not only in financing infrastructure but also in

strengthening governance systems, institutional capacity and sector reforms.

A key theme of her address was the importance of **inclusion in water and sanitation governance**. She stressed that youth can act as important drivers of innovation and change in the sector. At the same time, she highlighted the need for stronger representation of women in water governance institutions. Reflecting on project experiences across the region, she noted that many Gender Action Plans exist on paper but often fail to reflect the everyday realities faced by women professionals and communities.

She illustrated this through an example from an ADB-supported initiative in **Nepal covering approximately 170 small towns**, where a cost-sharing financing model is implemented through the Town Development Fund. The programme requires **30 percent representation of women in water committees, with women also occupying leadership roles**, ensuring that governance structures reflect gender inclusion in practice.

Ms. Pokhrel also spoke about ADB's long-standing collaboration with development partners such as the **Gates Foundation**, which has supported the integration of sanitation and non-sewered sanitation solutions within water sector programmes. She noted that targeted technical assistance and relatively small trust funds have often had significant influence in shaping sector policies and encouraging more inclusive approaches to sanitation.

Another important aspect of her address was the need to move beyond development terminology and focus on **practical resilience planning**. She questioned the widespread use of the term "resilience" without clearly defining how it translates into operational actions for utilities and local governments. According to her, resilience planning should involve **simple and actionable operational**

frameworks, clearly identifying responsibilities during emergencies such as shutting valves, sending alerts or protecting infrastructure assets during climate events.

She further illustrated the gap between policy commitments and real-world conditions through an example from a Pacific utility where **none of the fifteen treatment plants had toilet facilities for women staff**. This meant that women engineers avoided drinking water during field visits due to the absence of facilities. The example highlighted the importance of incorporating everyday operational realities into infrastructure planning and ensuring that gender considerations go beyond policy commitments.

From a financing perspective, Ms. Pokhrel also discussed the challenges of integrating the **water–gender–climate nexus within climate finance frameworks**. While mitigation outcomes are easier to quantify, adaptation benefits related to water and sanitation systems are often more difficult to measure. This creates challenges in mobilizing climate finance for water sector initiatives.

During the discussion with participants, questions were raised regarding global climate finance trends, private sector participation and the integration of environmental, social and governance (ESG) frameworks in WASH projects. Ms. Pokhrel clarified that **ADB’s commitments to climate adaptation and**

water investments continue to grow, despite global geopolitical uncertainties. She also noted that while private sector participation can support innovation and efficiency, **concessional public financing remains essential for ensuring equitable access to basic WASH services**.

Responding to questions on gender mainstreaming and institutional reforms, she acknowledged that development institutions continue to evolve in their approaches. She encouraged stakeholders—including governments, civil society organisations and academic institutions—to engage early in project design processes and actively identify gaps to strengthen programme outcomes.



Her keynote address underscored the importance of **inclusive governance, practical planning and institutional collaboration** in strengthening climate-resilient water and sanitation systems. The discussion reinforced the need to translate policy ambitions into operational actions that improve service delivery and strengthen resilience across communities in the Global South.

Keynote Address by Mr. Silver Mugisha

*Dr. Eng. Silver Mugisha, Managing Director of the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC), Uganda, delivered a keynote address on **running successful and high-performing public water and sanitation utilities in the Global South**. Drawing on more than three decades of experience in water sector leadership and utility management, he shared the institutional journey of NWSC and highlighted the management reforms and operational strategies that have enabled the utility to expand water and sanitation services across Uganda.*



Dr. Mugisha began by reflecting on the **growing pressures faced by urban water utilities**, particularly in developing countries. Climate variability, rapid urban growth, informal settlements, ageing infrastructure and financing constraints are increasingly affecting service delivery. He emphasized that modern utilities are no longer purely engineering institutions but operate at the intersection of **climate resilience, governance, public finance and social equity**, making effective management and institutional leadership critical to achieving universal water access.

He presented the scale and evolution of the National Water and Sewerage Corporation, which currently provides water and sewerage services to **over 22 million people across 287 urban centres through more than 23,000 kilometres of pipeline networks and over one million connections**. Over the past decade, NWSC has significantly expanded its infrastructure capacity, service coverage and financial turnover, reflecting a deliberate institutional transformation towards efficiency, innovation and commercial viability.

A major driver of this transformation has been the introduction of **incentive-based performance management systems**. The utility operates through clearly defined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) at corporate, regional and individual levels, with performance contracts linked to rewards and accountability mechanisms. Regular

performance reviews and data-driven monitoring enable managers to track progress and improve operational productivity. According to Dr. Mugisha, performance contracts have played a crucial role in reshaping organisational behaviour and strengthening accountability within the utility.

Another important aspect of NWSC's success has been its emphasis on **continuous staff capacity development**. Dr. Mugisha highlighted that innovation in utilities often emerges from practical field experience rather than formal qualifications alone. Training programmes therefore focus on developing practical skills, operational knowledge and problem-solving capabilities among staff. He emphasized that infrastructure investments can only deliver results when supported by skilled personnel, noting that "infrastructure does not run itself—people do."

Government support and development partner financing have also played an important role in expanding water infrastructure. These investments have enabled NWSC to strengthen production capacity, extend network coverage and improve service delivery across urban centres. At the same time, environmental protection initiatives such as **tree planting, wetland conservation and catchment protection** have been integrated into operations to enhance long-term water security and climate resilience.

Dr. Mugisha also highlighted the importance of **external benchmarking and water operator partnerships**, which allow utilities to learn from peer organizations while sharing their own experiences with others. Through these collaborations, NWSC has provided consultancy services to utilities in several countries, contributing to capacity-building

efforts and knowledge exchange within the global water sector.

A significant focus of the utility's transformation has been the adoption of **digital and technology-based solutions**. NWSC has developed several homegrown digital systems to improve operational efficiency and customer engagement. These include applications for billing, e-payment systems, complaint management platforms and digital network management tools. The introduction of these systems has strengthened customer service delivery and improved financial management across the organization.

Dr. Mugisha emphasized that NWSC has deliberately shifted its institutional focus **from profit maximization to service delivery**, particularly for vulnerable and low-income populations. Initiatives such as prepaid water meters allow low-income households to access water directly from the utility at regulated tariffs, reducing dependence on intermediaries and ensuring more equitable access. Government subsidies have further supported the expansion of services to smaller towns and economically disadvantaged communities.

Research and development have also been institutionalized within NWSC as a core component of operational management. The utility conducts research to address practical

challenges such as **meter accuracy, flow measurement and non-revenue water losses**. Ongoing studies have shown that factors such as sub-metering systems, overhead tank supply and low-flow conditions can contribute significantly to metering inaccuracies and commercial losses. These findings help the utility develop evidence-based solutions to improve system efficiency.

Despite significant progress, Dr. Mugisha acknowledged that water utilities continue to face a range of emerging challenges. These include **climate shocks, increasing seasonal water demand, rapid urbanization, water theft and non-revenue water losses**, as well as the need to adapt to evolving technological and regulatory environments.

He concluded by emphasizing the importance of **strong partnerships between utilities, governments and academic institutions**. Collaboration with academia, he noted, is essential to develop research that addresses

real operational problems and supports the adoption of scalable technologies. Ultimately, the future of water and sanitation services in the Global South will depend not only on infrastructure investments but also on **effective leadership, institutional reforms and the willingness to innovate in response to emerging challenges**.

Keynote Address by Mr. Patrick Moriarty

*Mr. Patrick Moriarty, Chief Executive Officer of IRC WASH, Netherlands, delivered a keynote address on strengthening water and sanitation systems to ensure sustainable and reliable service delivery. Drawing from more than three decades of experience working with governments, utilities and development partners, he reflected on lessons from **a decade of systems strengthening work by IRC** and highlighted the need to shift the WASH sector's focus from infrastructure creation to long-term service sustainability.*



Mr. Moriarty began by emphasizing that **safe drinking water and safely managed sanitation are fundamental human rights** and must be delivered as reliable public services that continue to function over time. While the sector has achieved significant success in expanding infrastructure coverage, he noted that maintaining functionality and ensuring consistent service delivery remains a major challenge. This raises a critical question for the sector: if infrastructure can be built successfully, why does it often fail to continue working overtime?

He explained that **infrastructure alone does not guarantee service delivery**. Sustainable WASH services require a broader ecosystem of institutions, governance frameworks, financing mechanisms, professional service providers, monitoring systems and accountability structures. Without these enabling conditions, infrastructure investments risk deteriorating or failing to provide reliable services.

Mr. Moriarty stressed the importance of adopting a **systems approach to WASH**, which considers the broader institutional and governance environment within which services operate. Water and sanitation systems function within complex political, financial and administrative contexts, and effective service delivery depends on how well these interconnected elements function together. Strengthening these systems therefore

becomes essential for achieving sustainable outcomes.

Reflecting on earlier sector approaches, he observed that **community-managed models**, although effective in expanding access in many regions, often placed technical and operational responsibilities on communities without sufficient institutional support. This frequently led to service breakdowns and inconsistent functionality. He therefore advocated for greater **professionalisation of WASH services**, supported by capable utilities, strengthened government institutions and long-term sector planning.

The presentation also highlighted the role of **governance and political leadership** in shaping WASH systems. Effective policy frameworks, planning and budgeting capacity, financing flows, regulatory oversight and institutional coordination are all critical components of sustainable service delivery. Strengthening these institutional foundations is necessary to ensure that infrastructure investments translate into reliable services.

Mr. Moriarty also discussed the complexity of sanitation services, noting that sanitation systems require effective management of the **entire service chain—from containment and emptying to transport, treatment and safe reuse or disposal**. Ensuring that each component of this chain functions effectively requires clear institutional responsibilities, technical capacity and sustained investment.

Drawing on IRC's experience across multiple countries, he highlighted several key lessons from systems strengthening initiatives. Water and sanitation are inherently complex public services that require **strong political commitment, capable institutions and sustained financing**. At the same time, these systems must continuously adapt to changing

environmental conditions, urban growth and evolving public health challenges.

He further emphasized that strengthening WASH systems requires **collective action and collaboration among governments, service providers, research institutions and development partners**. Continuous learning, monitoring and adaptation are essential to improve system performance and ensure that services remain functional over time.

During the discussion that followed the keynote, participants raised questions on how a systems approach can be operationalised in different country contexts, particularly in low-resource environments. In response, Mr. Moriarty highlighted the importance of **long-term partnerships and institutional capacity building**, rather than relying solely on short-term project interventions.

Participants also raised questions about the role of governments in sustaining services after infrastructure projects are completed. Mr.

Moriarty emphasized that governments must play a central role in establishing regulatory frameworks, financing mechanisms and accountability systems that support professional service delivery.

Another discussion point focused on balancing **community participation with professional management models**. Mr. Moriarty acknowledged the importance of community engagement but stressed that increasingly complex water and sanitation systems require professional service providers and strong institutional support to ensure reliability.

He concluded by reiterating that the future of water and sanitation services in the Global South will depend not only on building infrastructure but on **strengthening the systems that sustain services over time**. Achieving universal access will require sustained political commitment, institutional reform, systems leadership and long-term collaboration among all stakeholders working in the WASH sector.

Keynote Address by Ms. Aloka Majumdar

*Ms. Aloka Majumdar, Managing Director and Global Head of Philanthropy at HSBC India, delivered a keynote address highlighting the **evolving role of finance, philanthropy and private sector leadership in advancing climate-resilient WASH systems**. Drawing on her extensive experience in financial inclusion, sustainability and multi-stakeholder partnerships, she reflected on how development priorities are shifting in response to climate risks and global economic transitions.*

The session opened with an engaging interaction with participants, reflecting on key global milestones in the WASH sector, including the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and international observances such as World Water Day and World Toilet Day. This set the context for a broader discussion on how **water, sanitation and climate are increasingly interconnected within global development agendas**.



Ms. Majumdar emphasized that **climate change is no longer a distant environmental concern but a present and multidimensional challenge**, directly affecting water availability, sanitation infrastructure and public health outcomes. She highlighted that “water” has emerged as a **global systemic risk**, with implications not only for vulnerable communities but also for economies, businesses and financial systems worldwide.

She noted a significant shift in the development landscape, where issues of sustainability and resilience have moved from being peripheral concerns to **strategic priorities across governments, corporates and civil society**. In this context, innovation in the development sector is becoming central to addressing complex challenges at scale. She also highlighted the growing importance of **policy evolution**, including increased public investment in health and recognition of issues such as menstrual hygiene as integral to dignity and human rights.

A key focus of her address was the role of **philanthropy and private sector engagement in driving long-term impact**. Ms. Majumdar stressed that addressing climate and WASH challenges requires **patient, flexible and long-term capital**, rather than short-term, project-based funding. She highlighted HSBC’s commitment to sustainability, including its ambition to transition towards **net-zero operations by 2050**, supported by investments, partnerships and institutional reforms.

She further underscored the importance of **collaboration across sectors**, noting that effective solutions require convergence between governments, financial institutions, development partners and communities. Partnerships, she emphasized, are critical for scaling innovations, strengthening implementation and ensuring that

interventions are context-specific and sustainable.

The session also highlighted the need to adopt a more **holistic and ecological perspective on WASH**, recognizing the interdependence between water systems, sanitation, environmental sustainability and climate resilience. Ms. Majumdar emphasized that addressing these interconnected challenges requires integrated planning and coordinated action across sectors.

In outlining the way forward, she identified key priorities for advancing WASH and climate action. These include fostering **innovation and adoption of appropriate technologies**, strengthening **data-driven decision-making**, ensuring **long-term financial and institutional commitments**, and improving **coordination with government systems** to enhance scalability and impact.

During the discussion, participants raised questions on the role of corporates in climate action, the need for adaptive project design and the evolving global climate agenda. Ms. Majumdar responded by highlighting that programmes must be **continuously reviewed and adapted** to respond to emerging climate challenges, including retrofitting and redesigning interventions where necessary. She also noted that while corporate leadership in climate action is still evolving, sustainability considerations are increasingly being integrated into business strategies.

The discussion further acknowledged that despite changing geopolitical dynamics, **climate change remains a critical global priority**, requiring sustained attention and leadership across sectors.

Ms. Majumdar concluded by reiterating that advancing climate-resilient WASH systems will require a **shift in mindset, stronger partnerships and sustained investments**, with

a clear focus on long-term outcomes. Her address reinforced the importance of aligning finance, policy and innovation to build

resilient, inclusive and sustainable water and sanitation systems for the future.

Keynote Address by Mr. Oswald Chanda

*Mr. Oswald Chanda, former Director of the Water Development and Sanitation Department at the African Development Bank (AfDB), delivered a keynote address drawing on over three decades of experience in **water sector reform, utility regulation and development finance**. His address focused on the intersection of **climate change, governance and financing**, and the critical role these play in building resilient water and sanitation systems in the Global South.*



Mr. Chanda began by highlighting that **climate change is primarily experienced through water**, manifesting in the form of extreme events such as floods and droughts. These impacts directly affect water availability, infrastructure performance and service delivery, making the WASH sector central to climate adaptation efforts. He emphasized that responding to these challenges requires moving beyond infrastructure-led solutions towards **system-wide resilience built on strong institutions, governance frameworks and human capacity**.

A key theme of his address was the importance of **engaging with the political economy of the water sector**. He noted that water professionals must actively engage with policymakers and political leaders, as they influence budget allocations and development priorities. Positioning water and sanitation as critical to **economic growth, public health, education and climate resilience** is essential to

secure sustained investment and policy attention.

Mr. Chanda stressed the need for **strong governance and regulatory systems**, highlighting that effective policies, legislation and accountability mechanisms are fundamental to ensuring reliable service delivery. Transparent and independent regulatory institutions, he noted, are critical to maintaining public trust and avoiding political or institutional capture.

He also underscored the importance of **financial preparedness and institutional readiness** in accessing development finance. Countries that demonstrate strong project preparation, transparent systems and effective institutional capacity are better positioned to attract funding from multilateral agencies and climate finance mechanisms. He emphasized that **finance is not always the primary constraint**; rather, the ability to structure, manage and implement projects effectively determines access to funding.

Mr. Chanda further highlighted the need to **leverage domestic resources to mobilize additional finance**, including blended finance and partnerships with development institutions. Efficient use of existing resources and strategic financial planning can reduce risks and unlock larger investments for the sector.

Innovation and technology were identified as critical enablers for improving service delivery. He encouraged the sector to adopt **modern technologies, digital tools and data-driven systems** to enhance efficiency, transparency and operational performance.

The keynote also emphasized the importance of **inclusive development**, noting that projects addressing vulnerable populations, youth employment and gender equity are more likely to receive support from development partners and deliver broader social impact.

Mr. Chanda highlighted the role of **communication and transparency** in strengthening accountability and building



trust. Demonstrating measurable outcomes and clearly communicating impact can help sustain political and public support for WASH investments.

During the discussion, participants raised questions on accessing climate finance, strengthening regulatory systems and improving project readiness. Mr. Chanda emphasized that countries need to focus on **building institutional capacity, strengthening governance systems and preparing bankable projects** to effectively access and utilize available funding.

He concluded by encouraging professionals, particularly young practitioners, to remain **purpose-driven, collaborative and action-oriented**, and to focus on long-term impact. He reiterated that the future of climate-resilient WASH systems will depend on **strong governance, strategic financing, institutional capacity and sustained collaboration across stakeholders**.

Keynote Address by Ms. Kate Medicott

*Ms. Kate Medicott, Team Lead for Sanitation and Wastewater within the WASH programme at the World Health Organization (WHO), Geneva, delivered a keynote address highlighting the **critical intersection between water, sanitation, hygiene and public health**, particularly in the context of climate change and emerging global health risks. Drawing on WHO's normative work and global datasets, she emphasized the growing importance of strengthening WASH systems to address both existing and emerging public health challenges*



Ms. Medicott began by outlining the **global health burden associated with inadequate WASH services**, noting that poor water, sanitation and hygiene contribute to approximately **1.4 million deaths and 74 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) annually**. These impacts extend beyond infectious diseases to include broader effects

on wellbeing and risks associated with chemical contamination in drinking water.

She highlighted the **increasing influence of climate variability on public health outcomes**, particularly through its effects on water systems. Climate-induced events such as floods and droughts are contributing to the resurgence of diseases like **cholera**, while also enabling the spread of **vector-borne diseases such as malaria, dengue and yellow fever** into new geographic areas. These risks are often concentrated in localized hotspots, underscoring the need for targeted and data-driven interventions.

Drawing on global monitoring frameworks, including the **WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP)**, she provided an overview of progress under SDG targets for drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. While access has improved in many regions, significant challenges remain, particularly in **safe wastewater management**, where a large proportion of wastewater—especially from septic systems—continues to be inadequately treated.

Ms. Medicott also highlighted findings from the **GLAAS 2024/25 report**, which reveal critical gaps in sector readiness. Although many countries have established WASH policies and plans, relatively few have **adequately costed strategies backed by sufficient financial and human resources**. She noted that over **50% of WASH financing comes from users**, with government contributions forming a significant share, while external funding remains limited. At the same time, a global shortage of skilled personnel—reported by nearly **70–80% of countries**—continues to constrain implementation capacity.

The keynote emphasized the importance of **strengthening governance, financing and workforce capacity** to improve service

delivery. Positive trends include the expansion of regulatory frameworks across the sanitation service chain and the increasing use of data and climate-resilient indicators in national monitoring systems.

A key focus of her address was the role of **wastewater and environmental surveillance in public health systems**. She highlighted how wastewater monitoring can serve as an early warning system for disease outbreaks, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach is particularly valuable for diseases such as polio, where a large proportion of infections are asymptomatic. WHO has developed guidance to support countries in prioritizing pathogens and implementing multi-pathogen surveillance systems.

Ms. Medicott clarified the distinction between traditional water quality monitoring and environmental surveillance, noting that the latter focuses on analysing untreated wastewater to understand disease prevalence at the community level. Effective implementation requires strong collaboration between **public health agencies, utilities, laboratories and research institutions**.

She also highlighted WHO's role in developing **technical guidelines and standards**, including those related to drinking water quality, sanitation safety, wastewater reuse and hand hygiene. These frameworks support countries in translating evidence into policy and practice, particularly in health-care settings where safe WASH services are essential for infection prevention and control.

In conclusion, Ms. Medicott emphasized that **WASH systems are central to public health resilience**, particularly in the face of climate change and emerging disease risks. Strengthening surveillance systems, improving wastewater management, addressing

workforce gaps and ensuring adequate financing will be critical to achieving

sustainable and resilient WASH services globally.

Panel discussions:

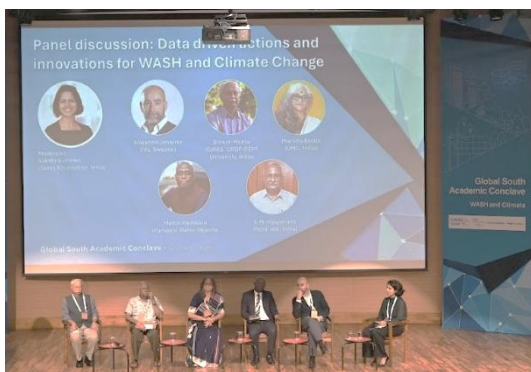
The panel discussions at GSAC 2026 brought together a diverse group of experts from utilities, finance, academia, governance and development sectors, offering a comprehensive perspective on the evolving WASH–climate landscape. Across four thematic sessions, the dialogue reflected a clear shift from fragmented approaches towards integrated, systems-based thinking.

The panels highlighted the need to move from data generation to informed decision-making, address the equity and gender dimensions of climate impacts, strengthen governance and financing mechanisms, and align academic research with on-ground implementation.

Collectively, the discussions underscored that building climate-resilient and inclusive WASH systems will depend on strong institutions, inclusive planning and sustained collaboration, with a continued focus on translating knowledge, data and investments into practical, long-term service outcomes.



Panel discussion: Data driven actions and innovations for WASH & Climate Change



*The panel on “Data-Driven Actions and Innovations for WASH and Climate Change” brought together experts from utilities, academia and governance to explore how data can strengthen climate-resilient WASH systems. Moderated by **Ms. Sakshi Gudwani** (Gates Foundation, India), the discussion highlighted the need to move beyond data collection towards **effective, decision-oriented use of data**. It underscored persistent challenges around **data quality, integration and application**, while emphasizing data’s role in improving governance, accountability and resilience.*

Prof. Dinesh Mehta (CWAS, CEPT University, India) reflected on the evolution of performance measurement in the urban sector, emphasizing a shift from output-based

indicators to outcome- and equity-focused metrics. He stressed that granular and disaggregated data is critical for improving governance and aligning investments.

Mr. Dr. Eng. Martin Kalibbala (*Kampala Water, NWSC, Uganda*) shared how utilities are using structured KPIs, GIS systems and performance dashboards to improve operational efficiency and accountability. He highlighted that data must directly inform action, enabling utilities to respond effectively to disruptions and improve service outcomes.

Ms. Manvita Baradi (*Urban Management Centre, India*) highlighted persistent challenges of data credibility, fragmented ownership and lack of transparency. She emphasized the importance of ground-truthing, citizen engagement and breaking institutional silos to ensure that data reflects on-ground realities and supports inclusive planning.

Dr. Alejandro Jiménez (*IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute, Sweden*) focused on climate uncertainty and the need for multi-scenario planning, vulnerability mapping and hotspot identification. He emphasized that data systems must be linked to response mechanisms, particularly in the context of climate risks.

Mr. S.M. Vijayanand (*Retd. IAS*) (*Former Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, India*) stressed that WASH is fundamentally a local government function, and that decentralized and participatory planning is essential for generating reliable and actionable data.

The panel brought out several key issues central to data-driven WASH systems:

- The need to shift from data generation to data utilisation, focusing on performance and outcomes
- Challenges of data fragmentation, weak integration and limited interoperability across institutions
- Importance of granular, equity-focused data to address service gaps and climate vulnerabilities

- Role of digital tools and real-time systems in improving monitoring and responsiveness
- Integration of WASH data into mainstream climate planning and policy frameworks
- Strengthening accountability and transparency through validated and accessible data systems



Participants raised questions on operationalising data systems at the local level, ensuring data reliability, and linking climate information with WASH planning. Panelists emphasized that **simplified systems, institutional capacity building and community engagement** are critical for improving data quality and usability. It was also noted that **early warning systems must be connected to preparedness and response mechanisms** to be effective.

The discussion reinforced that while the sector is generating increasing volumes of data, the real challenge lies in **translating data into actionable insights and decisions**. Moving forward, there is a need to prioritise **data quality, validation and outcome-oriented use**, supported by decentralized governance and stronger institutional coordination.

The panel concluded that **data-driven decision-making must evolve from a technical exercise to a governance function**, enabling more responsive, equitable and climate-resilient WASH systems. Strengthening collaboration between governments, utilities, researchers and communities will be essential to ensure that data leads to meaningful and sustained improvements in service delivery.

Panel discussion: Water, Climate and Gender



The panel on “**Water, Climate and Gender**” brought together practitioners, policymakers and sector experts to explore the deep interlinkages between water security, climate change and gender equity. Moderated by **Mr. Aasim Mansuri, Strategy Centre Head – CWAS**, the discussion set the context by highlighting that climate impacts are most acutely experienced through water, and that **women and vulnerable communities bear a disproportionate**

share of these impacts. The session emphasized the need to move beyond fragmented approaches and address water, climate and gender as a **connected and systemic development challenge**.

Ms. Bijal Brahmhatt (*Mahila Housing Trust*) drew attention to the critical gap in WASH investments in small and medium towns, which often fall between policy priorities focused on metros and rural areas. She highlighted how climate events such as flooding intensify risks for women, including health hazards, unsafe living conditions and livelihood disruptions. She stressed the need for targeted financing, last-mile partnerships with NGOs and stronger institutional support for these underserved geographies.

Ms. Jane Nabunnya Mulumba (*IRC WASH, Uganda*) brought a grounded perspective on the gendered realities of water access, illustrating how women and girls continue to bear the burden of water collection. She emphasized that climate variability is further reducing water availability, increasing this burden. While acknowledging progress in access, she pointed out gaps in reliability and equity, calling for a shift from planning to implementation of climate-resilient, gender-responsive WASH systems backed by financing.

Ms. Neeta Pokhrel (*Asian Development Bank*) focused on the complexities of climate adaptation in the water sector, particularly the difficulty of measuring and financing it. She highlighted that current systems do not adequately capture the water–climate–gender

nexus, and called for reframing climate finance to prioritize vulnerability, especially the lived realities of women and children.

Dr. Nitin Bassi (*CEEW, India*) emphasized that water, climate and gender must be treated as an integrated system rather than separate policy areas. While acknowledging progress under national programmes such as Jal Jeevan Mission and Swachh Bharat Mission, he cautioned that infrastructure does not automatically translate into service delivery or usage. He highlighted the need for granular, disaggregated data and stronger climate risk assessments to support better planning and investments.

Ms. Pallavi Sobti-Rajpal (*Utthan, India*) underscored that technical infrastructure alone cannot deliver outcomes without strong social systems. Drawing from field experiences, she highlighted how women play a central role in water management and climate adaptation but remain excluded from decision-making. She stressed the importance of participatory planning, community ownership and gender-responsive governance structures to ensure sustainability.

The panel brought forward several critical and interconnected issues:

- Persistent investment and service delivery gaps in small and medium towns
- Increasing gendered vulnerabilities due to climate change, especially in disaster and post-disaster contexts
- The disconnect between infrastructure creation and actual service delivery, reliability and usage
- Lack of granular, gender-disaggregated and locally relevant data
- Importance of participatory and community-led planning approaches
- Need to move from policy and planning to implementation and operationalisation
- Limited integration of WASH into mainstream climate finance and governance frameworks

Participants raised concerns around **uneven and politically influenced fund allocation**, and the lack of holistic planning. Panelists acknowledged that while technical and

financial solutions exist, **effective implementation depends heavily on informed and accountable political leadership**, particularly at the local level.

The discussion reinforced that **water, climate and gender are inseparable and must be addressed through integrated, inclusive and context-specific approaches**. While progress has been made in expanding infrastructure, significant gaps remain in **equity, last-mile delivery, resilience and governance**.

The panel concluded that advancing this agenda will require **stronger climate-responsive financing, gender-inclusive planning, participatory governance and improved data systems**. Ultimately, meaningful change will depend on **translating plans into action**, supported by institutional coordination, community engagement and sustained political commitment.

Panel discussion: Governance and financing for climate resilient and inclusive WASH

The panel on “Governance and Financing for Climate-Resilient and Inclusive WASH” brought together



experts from global institutions, finance, markets and academia to examine whether WASH challenges are fundamentally about financing, governance, or both. Moderated by Mr. Dhruv Bhavsar, the discussion set the tone by highlighting that while financing gaps are widely acknowledged, institutional capacity, governance and execution remain equally critical constraints in delivering resilient and inclusive WASH services.

Dr. Meera Mehta (CWAS, CEPT University) brought attention to the structural issue of weak local government finances, noting that urban local bodies often lack fiscal autonomy despite increasing responsibilities. She stressed that strengthening public finance systems and local governance capacity is

essential before expecting private capital to scale solutions.

Mr. Hamanth Kasan (International Water Association) emphasized that the global WASH crisis—where billions still lack access—cannot be explained by financing alone. He highlighted the role of governance, leadership and

execution failures, noting that climate change is only one of several risks affecting service delivery. He advocated for decentralized systems, reuse, non-sewered sanitation and digital operations as key directions for future resilience.

Ms. Aparna Dua (*Blended Finance Company*) highlighted that finance is only one part of the solution, with municipal capacity and project readiness emerging as key bottlenecks. She pointed out that the challenge is often not lack of capital but lack of a credible, investable pipeline. She emphasized the role of technical assistance, outcome-based financing and blended capital in enabling projects to move from pilot to scale.

Mr. Harish Ahuja (*NSE India*) presented the scale of India's water stress and financing gap, noting that while multiple instruments such as municipal bonds and social stock exchange platforms are emerging, their effectiveness is limited by institutional continuity and weak project pipelines. He stressed the need to develop bankable and scalable projects to attract investment.

Ms. Neha Kumar (*Climate Bonds Initiative*) highlighted the need to **crowd in private capital** through instruments such as green and sustainable bonds, while acknowledging that governments alone cannot meet the financing requirements. She emphasized integrating **climate resilience into planning and budgeting**, while also noting challenges such as high verification costs and limited scale in smaller cities.

The panel brought forward several critical themes:

- WASH challenges are fundamentally a combination of governance, financing and execution gaps

- Persistent weak fiscal capacity of urban local bodies limits effective service delivery
- Lack of credible, well-prepared project pipelines constrains access to finance
- Importance of capacity building and institutional strengthening at the municipal level
- Role of blended finance, outcome-based funding and private capital as catalytic mechanisms
- Need to integrate climate resilience into planning, budgeting and infrastructure design
- Limitations of current financing instruments due to scale, cost and governance constraints

Participants raised questions around **accessing finance, scaling municipal bonds, and enabling private participation**. Panelists noted that while capital is available, **project preparation, governance readiness and institutional continuity** remain key barriers. It was also emphasized that financing mechanisms must be supported by **technical assistance and phased transition strategies** to ensure long-term sustainability.

The discussion reinforced that **climate-resilient and inclusive WASH is as much a governance challenge as it is a financing one**. While innovative financial instruments and private capital can support the sector, their effectiveness depends on **strong institutions, credible projects and accountable governance systems**.

The panel concluded that the way forward lies in **strengthening local government capacity, improving fiscal frameworks, building robust project pipelines and integrating climate resilience into core planning processes**. Ultimately, sustainable progress in WASH will depend on aligning **finance with governance, and investments with long-term service delivery outcomes**.

Panel discussion: Academic discourse on WASH climate & urban planning

The panel on “*Academic Discourse on WASH, Climate and Urban Planning*” brought together academicians and practitioners to reflect on how education, research and practice can better respond to emerging challenges in WASH and climate. Moderated by **Prof. Mona Iyer**, the session focused on aligning academic systems with **real-world problem solving, interdisciplinary learning and impact-driven outcomes**, highlighting the role of institutions in shaping future professionals capable of addressing complex urban challenges.



Prof. Jagath Munasinghe (*University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka*) emphasized the need for **interdisciplinary and practice-oriented planning education**. He highlighted that planners must be equipped to work across sectors, negotiate between institutions and integrate diverse data sources. He stressed the importance of grounding planning in **real, available data**, rather than relying on idealised or abstract datasets disconnected from field realities.

Mr. Kalimuthu Arumugam Pillai (*WASH Institute, India*) underscored the importance of **action research and demand-driven innovation**. Drawing from field experience, he highlighted solutions such as **mobile septage treatment units**, demonstrating how practical, decentralized technologies can address service gaps. He also stressed the need for **transparency in data sharing**, including documenting failures to improve sector learning.

Prof. Meenakshi Arora (*University of Melbourne, Australia*) highlighted a shift in academia towards **impact-oriented research and innovation**. She emphasized integrating sustainability and interdisciplinary approaches into academic programmes and strengthening **industry engagement and real-world**

exposure. She noted that institutions must move beyond problem identification to delivering **measurable outcomes and practical solutions**.

Prof. Rajul Gajjar (*Gujarat Technological University, India*) emphasized the importance of **academia–industry–government linkages** to ensure research remains relevant and actionable. She highlighted institutional practices that integrate **SDGs, impact statements and real-world problem statements** into academic research, and stressed that innovation ecosystems must be nurtured through **pilot projects and collaborative learning**, even in imperfect data environments.

The panel highlighted several key themes:

- Break disciplinary silos through integrated, systems-based learning
- Shift from theory to action-oriented, impact-driven research
- Ground academic work in real-world data and field realities
- Promote innovation and entrepreneurial approaches in WASH
- Strengthen academia–industry–government linkages for practical outcomes
- Build adaptable, systems-thinking and negotiation skills among planners

Speakers collectively emphasized that waiting for ideal data or conditions often delays action, and that **working with available information and adapting through implementation** is critical for progress.

The discussion reinforced that academic institutions play a critical role in shaping the future of WASH and climate action by producing professionals who are **interdisciplinary, adaptive and solution**

oriented. Moving forward, there is a need to strengthen **action research, innovation and institutional collaboration**, ensuring that academic outputs translate into real-world impact. The panel concluded that bridging the gap between **knowledge and practice** is essential, and that education systems must evolve to support **integrated, practical and socially responsive approaches** to urban planning and WASH challenges in a changing climate.

Technical Sessions:

The GSAC 2026 technical sessions brought together diverse stakeholders from the Global South to exchange knowledge on climate-resilient WASH across four themes: monitoring outcomes, governance and financing, technological innovations, and inclusion. Presentations highlighted evidence-based practices addressing climate risks, service gaps, financing challenges, and equity concerns.

Key discussions emphasized strengthening data systems, improving institutional frameworks, promoting decentralized solutions, and ensuring inclusive access. Overall, the sessions underscored the need for integrated, scalable, and practice-oriented approaches to advance climate-resilient WASH systems.

Technical Session 1: Monitoring WASH outcomes and climate impacts

This technical session brought together researchers and practitioners from diverse geographies to examine how monitoring systems can enable climate-resilient WASH service delivery. The session highlighted the growing complexity of climate risks—including floods, droughts, groundwater depletion, and greenhouse gas emissions—and their direct and indirect impacts on water, sanitation, and waste management systems. Across presentations, a strong emphasis emerged on transitioning from conventional, compliance-driven monitoring approaches toward adaptive, data-driven, and performance-oriented systems that integrate climate considerations across the WASH value chain.

Dr. Eng. Jokastah Kalungu (CAWOVS – Kenya) presented the Kenyan experience, highlighting how increasing climate variability is intensifying vulnerabilities in WASH systems through floods, droughts, and associated health risks. While Kenya has developed progressive policy frameworks, their implementation remains constrained by

fragmented institutional arrangements, overlapping mandates, and weak coordination across governance levels. Financing mechanisms continue to be reactive, focusing on post-disaster response rather than preparedness. The presentation emphasized the need for real-time monitoring systems, early warning mechanisms, and improved

accountability frameworks. It concluded that strengthening climate-responsive WASH systems requires institutional harmonization, data-driven monitoring, and a shift toward preventive and adaptive governance approaches to enhance resilience and service reliability.

Ms. Jigisha. J and Ms. Priyadarshini.C (*CWAS-CRDF-CEPT*) examined the challenges faced by small and medium towns in developing climate-resilient waste management systems. It highlighted how climate risks disrupt service delivery while waste mismanagement contributes significantly to methane emissions. Smaller towns face structural limitations in terms of finance, infrastructure, and technical capacity. Through pilot studies, the speakers introduced a Climate Resilient WASH Assessment Framework integrating governance, risk assessment, finance, and citizen engagement. The presentation emphasized that enabling resilient waste systems requires strengthening institutional capacity, improving segregation and treatment systems, and ensuring targeted financial and technical support for smaller urban centres to transition toward sustainable and low-emission service delivery.

Mr. Rishi Bakshi and co-presenters (*Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development*) highlighted the significant role of short-lived climate pollutants, particularly methane from organic waste, in India's emissions profile. It underscored the scale of legacy waste and the systemic challenges posed by poor segregation, outdated infrastructure, and lack of integration of informal waste workers. The speakers emphasized that current waste management systems are not equipped to address changing waste compositions and rising volumes. The discussion highlighted the need for landfill remediation, methane capture technologies, and decentralized waste systems, along with formal recognition of the

informal sector, to reduce emissions and strengthen climate-responsive waste management practices.

Ms. Dhvani Shah's (*CWAS-CRDF-CEPT*) presentation emphasized the limitations of existing WASH monitoring systems, which largely focus on infrastructure access rather than service performance and resilience. The presentation highlighted that current monitoring practices are periodic and compliance-driven, making them inadequate for addressing climate-induced disruptions. Drawing from the PAS framework, the session advocated for real-time, adaptive monitoring systems that integrate climate risk indicators and link service delivery with governance and financial systems. It concluded that scaling such frameworks can institutionalize climate-responsive monitoring and support data-driven decision-making for sustainable WASH service delivery.

Mr. Santanu.D and Upendra. B (*Northeastern Space Applications Centre*) how advanced geospatial tools and machine learning can support climate-responsive groundwater management. By integrating satellite data, groundwater records, and land-use analysis, the study identified correlations between groundwater depletion and land subsidence in Guwahati. Predictive modelling enabled identification of future risk hotspots under urban expansion scenarios. The presentation highlighted that incorporating such data-driven tools into urban planning is critical for proactive groundwater management, risk mitigation, and long-term climate resilience.

Ms. Ansu Susan Cherian's (*BORDA*) presentation focused on the role of water reuse in building climate resilience, particularly in small towns with limited treatment capacity. It highlighted the gap between wastewater generation and reuse, emphasizing that infrastructure alone cannot address the

challenge. The Reuse Readiness Framework was introduced as a tool to assess institutional, financial, and governance readiness. The presentation concluded that water reuse requires a systemic transition involving policy alignment, capacity building, and phased implementation strategies to enable sustainable and circular water systems.

Mr. Pablo Morales-Rico's (*Center for Research and Advanced Studies of the National Polytechnic Institute*) Presentation examined methane presence in groundwater wells, highlighting its biogenic origin and the risks associated with dissolved gas release. Using advanced measurement techniques, the study identified the "champagne effect," where methane rapidly escapes as groundwater rises, creating potential safety hazards in confined infrastructure. The presentation emphasized that methane is not typically included in groundwater monitoring frameworks and highlighted the need for expanded monitoring, risk assessment, and exploration of methane recovery as a renewable energy source, thereby integrating safety, monitoring, and climate mitigation objectives.

Mr. Sagar Gupta (*University College of Engineering, Banswara*) presented a city levelled study which assessed greenhouse gas emissions in a tier-3 city using the GPC framework, focusing on emissions from energy use, transport, and waste. The findings indicated that while emissions are present, natural carbon sinks such as vegetation contribute to near carbon neutrality. The presentation highlighted the importance of developing localized emission inventories for small towns, which are often overlooked, and emphasized their role in enabling climate action, supporting carbon markets, and informing sustainable urban planning.

Mr. Mambwe Evans's (*Lusaka Water Supply and Sanitation Company*) presentation showcased a

performance-based contracting model to improve sanitation service delivery in Lusaka. It highlighted challenges such as informal service provision, delayed services, and inequitable access. The intervention involved a PPP model, zoning of the city, and linking payments to verified performance through independent monitoring systems. Capacity building and financial structuring were key components. The presentation demonstrated that performance-based approaches, supported by strong monitoring and verification mechanisms, can enhance service efficiency, accountability, and equitable access in urban sanitation systems.

Ms. Ansu Susan Cherian's (*BORDA*) examined WASH systems in small and medium towns across South Asia, highlighting the disconnect between infrastructure provision and actual service delivery. Through multi-country research, it identified systemic challenges including unreliable supply, inadequate treatment, and climate-inappropriate infrastructure. The presentation emphasized that infrastructure without contextual alignment to governance, culture, and environmental conditions leads to system failure. It concluded that integrated, context-specific, and climate-responsive approaches focusing on reuse and closing resource loops are essential for building sustainable WASH systems in emerging urban centres.

Ms. Dhvani Shah and Mr. Omkar Kane's (*CWAS-CRDF-CEPT University*) presentation analysed methane emissions across sanitation systems, identifying them as a significant contributor to national emissions. Using field-based measurements, the study found that actual emissions are often higher than standard estimates due to local conditions such as poor sludge management. It highlighted that only a limited number of treatment plants currently capture methane. The presentation emphasized the potential of

methane recovery as a resource for energy generation and stressed the importance of improving desludging practices, scaling

capture technologies, and integrating emission monitoring into sanitation systems to enhance climate mitigation and resource efficiency.

Technical Sessions 2: Governance and financing for climate resilient WASH

This technical session brought together perspectives from India, Africa, and other Global South contexts to examine how governance systems and financing mechanisms shape climate-resilient WASH outcomes. The session highlighted that while significant progress has been made in expanding infrastructure, persistent gaps in institutional capacity, financing for operations and maintenance (O&M), and integration of climate risks continue to undermine service sustainability. Climate-induced shocks—including floods, droughts, cyclones, and temperature extremes—are intensifying these challenges, particularly in vulnerable and low-capacity regions. Across the presentations, a clear consensus emerged that resilience is fundamentally a governance challenge, requiring stronger institutional coordination, decentralized capacity, inclusive planning, and innovative financing approaches.

Ms. Shanthi Maduresan (*DHAN Foundation*) highlighted the critical gaps in rural WASH governance, emphasizing that despite improvements in infrastructure coverage, long-term service sustainability remains weak due to inadequate focus on operations and maintenance. Drawing on experiences from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka, the presentation demonstrated how limited financial autonomy and technical capacity of Panchayats constrain effective service delivery, while over-centralized systems reduce local accountability and innovation. The role of community institutions, particularly SHGs, was emphasized in sustaining services and strengthening accountability. The presentation concluded that achieving climate-resilient WASH systems requires a shift from infrastructure-centric investments to service-oriented governance, supported by empowered local institutions, financial convergence, and community ownership mechanisms.

Mr. Benny Filumba (*Catalyst Development, Zambia*) presented the challenges of achieving inclusive sanitation in rapidly growing urban

and peri-urban areas, particularly in informal settlements. The presentation highlighted how climate risks exacerbate existing inequalities in access to sanitation services and emphasized the need for governance reforms anchored in the Citywide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) approach. It stressed that financing mechanisms must prioritize vulnerable populations through blended models combining public, donor, and community resources. The discussion underscored the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration and community engagement in ensuring sustainable outcomes. The presentation concluded that inclusive and climate-resilient WASH systems require integrated governance frameworks that align financing, planning, and accountability with the needs of underserved communities.

Mr. Sujoy Chaudhury (*Centre for Sustainable Solutions*) examined sanitation challenges in climate-affected coastal regions, particularly in the Sundarbans following Cyclone Yaas. The presentation highlighted that post-disaster recovery frameworks often neglect sanitation restoration, leading to prolonged service

disruptions, increased health risks, and erosion of dignity. Field evidence showed that damaged sanitation systems forced communities back to unsafe practices, while contaminated water sources further aggravated vulnerabilities. The presentation emphasized that existing policies inadequately integrate disaster resilience into sanitation planning and called for “build-back-better” approaches. It concluded that governance frameworks must ensure rapid, equitable, and climate-resilient restoration of sanitation services through stronger coordination between disaster management and WASH systems.

Mr. Agoha Basil's (*Nigeria University*) presentation highlighted the impact of rapid urbanization and weak governance on WASH systems in Owerri, Nigeria. The discussion emphasized issues such as inadequate funding, environmental degradation, and growing sanitation challenges, including open defecation. It proposed community-based governance models as a pathway to improve service delivery, supported by climate-responsive urban planning approaches such as rainwater harvesting and green infrastructure. The presentation concluded that sustainable urban WASH systems require stronger institutional coordination, integration of ecological principles into planning, and active community participation to address both environmental and service delivery challenges.

Dr. Snehalatha (*Administrative Staff College of India*) emphasized the importance of embedding climate resilience into WASH governance and financing frameworks. The presentation highlighted that climate risks are increasingly affecting water and sanitation infrastructure, necessitating long-term planning, sustained investments, and cross-sector collaboration. Decentralized governance, data-driven decision-making, and community awareness were identified as key

enablers of resilient systems. The presentation concluded that strengthening institutional capacity, improving funding mechanisms, and integrating climate adaptation strategies into policy frameworks are essential for achieving sustainable and climate-resilient WASH service delivery.

Mr. Edmond Clark's (*MEDD, Madagascar*) presentation showcased an innovative community-based financing model through Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) to support watershed protection and drinking water security. The case study from Andapa demonstrated how linking upstream ecosystem conservation with downstream water users can mobilize local climate finance while strengthening governance and community ownership. Contributions from households supported reforestation, water infrastructure, and livelihood generation. The presentation concluded that PES models offer a scalable pathway for integrating ecological conservation with WASH financing, provided they are supported by institutional frameworks, transparent fund management, and stronger policy backing.

Mr. Manish Karpe (*AIIISG*) presented a community-driven model for plastic waste management under the circular economy framework. The presentation highlighted the role of multi-stakeholder platforms, community engagement, and digital tools in strengthening waste segregation, recycling, and data transparency. Initiatives such as behaviour change campaigns, youth engagement, and digital dashboards were instrumental in improving accountability and monitoring. The presentation concluded that embedding circular economy principles into municipal systems, supported by institutional partnerships and decentralized implementation models, is essential for sustainable and climate-responsive waste management.

Mr. Rajib Das (*Centre for Advocacy and Research*) presented a governance-focused approach to climate resilience, emphasizing the role of forecasting, early warning systems, and community-led adaptation. Through interventions in Jaipur and Bhubaneswar, the presentation demonstrated how tools such as IVRS, community radio, and digital dashboards can strengthen preparedness and response systems. Institutionalizing standard operating procedures, performance indicators, and accountability frameworks enabled more responsive service delivery. The presentation concluded that climate resilience depends on governance systems that translate climate data into actionable responses, with strong community ownership and institutional accountability.

Ms. Diksha.R and Mr. Vinay.K (*Waste Warriors Society*) This presentation highlighted the critical role of operational expenditure (OPEX) in determining the sustainability of waste management systems. Based on evidence from Panchayats in Himachal Pradesh, the study revealed significant financial deficits due to high operational costs and low revenue recovery, particularly from low-value waste streams. The presentation emphasized that infrastructure investments alone are insufficient without sustained financing for daily operations. It concluded that improving OPEX sustainability requires cluster-based planning, enforcement of user fees, strengthening Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), and integrating operational financing into national WASH frameworks and funding mechanisms.

Dr. Jay Bhagwan (*Water Research Commission*) presented on enabling the adoption of climate-resilient and water-efficient sanitation solutions within global policy frameworks. He emphasized that sanitation planning must move beyond conventional criteria such as technical feasibility and financial viability to

include vulnerability assessments and climate adaptability. He highlighted that existing infrastructure—often designed using historical climate data—must be reassessed and retrofitted to withstand future climate variability. The Commission is demonstrating advanced Non-Sewered Sanitation (NSS) systems with high Technology Readiness Levels that integrate both mitigation (emission reduction, energy efficiency, resource recovery) and adaptation (performance under drought and flooding) components. The presentation stressed embedding climate scenario analysis into national sanitation strategies to avoid maladaptive investments.

Mr. Fanomezantsoa Giscard Pascal (*Rabemananjara Harona NGO*) highlighted governance and financing challenges in building climate-resilient WASH systems in Madagascar. He noted severe access deficits, with a large share of the population lacking safely managed water and sanitation services, compounded by recurring droughts in southern regions and cyclones along the eastern coast. Weak regulatory enforcement, fragmented mandates, limited community participation, and inadequate monitoring mechanisms were identified as major governance constraints. Financial challenges include heavy reliance on donor funding, low domestic resource mobilization, and limited access to climate finance. The session emphasized institutional reforms, decentralization strengthening, blended finance models, and improved budget tracking as pathways toward more resilient and inclusive WASH systems.

Mr. Tushar.C and Mr. Vasu (*Janaagraha*) discussed the persistent Operations and Maintenance (O&M) financing gap in urban Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS) services in India. While capital investments have expanded coverage, O&M financing remains structurally weak due to inadequate user

charges, poor tariff design, limited metering, and low collection efficiency. The presenters emphasized that user fees alone cannot bridge the cost recovery gap, particularly given affordability constraints. They proposed an integrated approach involving gradual tariff rationalization, improved metering, strengthened billing systems, and targeted intergovernmental transfers. Metropolitan Urban Local Governments (ULGs) should progressively move toward full O&M recovery, while smaller cities may require continued fiscal support to ensure service sustainability.

Mr. Shishir Gupta (*Centre for Social and Economic*) Progress examined whether higher spending alone leads to improved Solid Waste Management (SWM) outcomes. Through a comparative analysis of Gurugram and Indore, he demonstrated that financial allocations alone do not guarantee better service delivery. Despite similar starting conditions, Indore significantly improved its cleanliness performance due to stronger governance,

leadership, accountability systems, operational management, and citizen engagement. The study concluded that non-monetary drivers such as institutional capacity and behavioural change initiatives are decisive in achieving sustained service excellence.

Ms. Upasana.Y and Ms. Saubiya.S (*CWAS-CRDF-CEPT*) presented on financing climate-resilient WASH services. They discussed the complexity of accessing international climate finance mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund, which require accredited institutions and detailed proposal processes. Given these constraints, they emphasized making existing national flagship programmes and multilateral financing more climate responsive. The session explored innovative mechanisms including carbon credits, blended finance, green bonds, bundling of small-scale projects, and strengthening city creditworthiness and ESG readiness to attract climate-aligned investments.

Technical Sessions 3: WASH innovations in technology and service delivery

This technical session examined a wide spectrum of innovations in WASH technologies and service delivery models, highlighting how technological advancements, when combined with ecological principles, governance reforms, and community engagement, can significantly enhance climate resilience and service sustainability. The discussions emphasized that innovation in WASH is not limited to hardware solutions, but extends to digital platforms, decentralized systems, nature-based approaches, and inclusive governance models. Across both days, a strong focus emerged on contextual design, scalability, and integration of technology within institutional systems to ensure long-term effectiveness.

Mr. G. Ramkumar (*RWH Eco Terrain Based Solutions*) presented a decentralized approach to urban water management through distributed rainwater harvesting and shallow aquifer recharge. The presentation emphasized that urban flooding and groundwater depletion are consequences of disrupted natural infiltration processes. Low-cost interventions such as gravel pits

implemented across institutional and residential spaces demonstrated improved groundwater recharge and reduction in saline intrusion. The presentation concluded that restoring natural hydrological processes through decentralized recharge systems is essential for enhancing urban water resilience and addressing climate variability.

Dr. Gandhi (*MG Science Institute*) highlighted challenges related to microbial contamination of drinking water, particularly recontamination at the point of use due to insufficient residual chlorine. The presentation introduced a mercury-free UVC-LED-based disinfection system designed for decentralized applications, offering improved environmental safety and operational efficiency. With effective microbial inactivation at low flow rates, the technology presents a sustainable alternative to conventional disinfection methods. The presentation concluded that water treatment innovations must balance safety, efficiency, and environmental sustainability to ensure reliable access to safe drinking water.

Mr. Manish Kulkarni (*CWAS- CRDF-CEPT*) presented action research from Palghar, Maharashtra, where high rainfall variability and low aquifer storage capacity lead to seasonal water scarcity. The study proposed a dual strategy of decentralized storage and groundwater recharge through low-cost rainwater tanks and community-managed systems. Emphasis was placed on community participation, local operation, and water quality monitoring. The presentation concluded that decentralized, context-specific solutions can significantly improve water security in rural and climate-vulnerable regions.

Ms. Triani (*Environmental Agency, Jakarta*) presented an innovative approach to WASH governance by integrating small-scale food businesses into environmental management systems through the “Eco Act – Green Culinary Initiative.” The initiative combines awareness-building, technical support, and stakeholder collaboration to address wastewater and solid waste challenges. The presentation concluded that engaging informal and small-scale actors within formal governance systems can

enhance inclusivity, accountability, and sustainability of WASH service delivery.

Ms. Malhotra (*Urban Management Centre*) highlighted the critical issue of sanitation worker safety, emphasizing the high incidence of fatalities in septic tank operations. The presentation advocated for mechanisation of desludging and sewer cleaning processes, supported by lifecycle-based procurement and governance reforms. Tools such as the Swachh Mech platform were introduced to guide cities in assessing mechanisation needs. The presentation concluded that ensuring worker safety must be central to WASH innovation, requiring systemic changes in planning, procurement, and regulatory enforcement.

Ms. Makfie Farah's (*GWSC, Bangladesh*) presentation demonstrated the use of an Integrated Municipal Information System (IMIS) to address fragmented data and weak governance in urban sanitation systems. The open-source, GIS-based platform integrates data across sanitation, drainage, water supply, and taxation systems, enabling evidence-based planning and improved service delivery. The implementation in Lakshmipur municipality showed significant improvements in efficiency, accountability, and data management. The presentation concluded that digital public infrastructure could transform municipal governance by enhancing transparency, operational efficiency, and citizen engagement.

Mr. Kelvin Darko's (*Regional Water and Environmental Sanitation Center, Kumasi*) presentation explored the concept of urban waterscapes in Sub-Saharan Africa, where formal and informal water systems coexist. Rapid urbanization and climate variability have increased flooding risks and groundwater depletion. The proposed framework

emphasized reclaiming natural hydrology, hybrid governance models, and centering community experiences. The presentation concluded that equitable and climate-resilient water systems require integrated approaches that address both formal infrastructure and informal service systems.

Ms. Uzra Sultana (*Arghyam*) presented a comprehensive assessment of greywater generation and reuse potential in rural India. The study highlighted that a significant proportion of wastewater remains untreated, posing health risks while also representing an opportunity for reuse in agriculture and groundwater recharge. Challenges include inefficient system design, lack of water quality monitoring, and limited scalability of treatment technologies. The presentation concluded that improving design integration, strengthening monitoring systems, and promoting reuse can enhance water efficiency and reduce pressure on groundwater resources.

Ms. Tsitsi Prudence (*University of Zimbabwe*) This presentation demonstrated the use of satellite-based data and GIS tools to assess groundwater storage trends and vulnerability to water insecurity. By integrating climate data and population dynamics, the study identified high-risk regions requiring targeted interventions. The presentation emphasized the importance of data-driven planning and capacity building for local institutions. It concluded that integrating geospatial tools into WASH planning can enhance climate resilience and support evidence-based decision-making.

Ms. Apoorva Jeenal (*Atharva Planning and Research Centre*) This presentation examined Ahmedabad's solid waste management system through a circular economy lens, highlighting the role of the informal sector in material

recovery. Despite high collection efficiency, weak source segregation and lack of local processing infrastructure limit resource recovery. The presentation emphasized the need to formalize informal sector contributions, improve segregation practices, and strengthen local recycling systems. It concluded that transitioning to a circular economy requires systemic changes in waste management practices, policy frameworks, and institutional arrangements.

Dr. Kaushik Ghosh (*Netaji Subhas Administrative Training Institute*) presented bioengineering approaches using nature-based solutions such as bioremediation and phytoremediation to improve water quality and enhance ecosystem resilience. The presentation highlighted benefits including flood control, biodiversity conservation, and pollutant removal, while also addressing challenges related to plant survival and environmental conditions. The presentation concluded that nature-based solutions offer sustainable and cost-effective alternatives for integrating climate resilience into WASH systems.

Ms. Priyadarshini.C, Arwa.B, Dipti's (*CWAS-CRDF-CEPT*) presentation focused on addressing urban water insecurity through integrated planning, transition to continuous water supply, and implementation of nature-based solutions. Pilot projects in Maharashtra and Gujarat demonstrated the role of groundwater recharge, rainwater harvesting, and geohydrological assessments in improving water availability. The presentation concluded that achieving water security requires a combination of technological innovation, institutional strengthening, and community participation.

Mr. Satish Jung's (*UN-Habitat, Nepal*) presentation outlined Nepal's efforts to establish a regulatory framework for WASH

services, focusing on service quality, financial sustainability, and accountability. The framework includes licensing systems, tariff regulation, and performance monitoring across governance levels. The presentation concluded that strong regulatory systems are essential for improving service delivery and ensuring long-term sustainability in the WASH sector.

Ms. Aditi Dwivedi and Ms. Jigisha. J's (CWAS-CRDF-CEPT) presentation explored the application of digital technologies such as AI, GIS, IoT, and remote sensing in WASH systems. These tools enable real-time monitoring, predictive management, and improved operational efficiency. However, challenges such as limited data availability and digital readiness in smaller cities were highlighted.

The presentation concluded that successful adoption of digital technologies requires strengthening data systems, institutional capacity, and governance frameworks.

Ms. Anjali Wagle (TIDE) presented decentralized WASH solutions implemented in small towns in Karnataka, focusing on modular systems, IoT-based automation, and community-led service delivery. The approach demonstrated improvements in operational efficiency, cost reduction, and service coverage. The presentation concluded that decentralized systems offer flexible and scalable solutions for small towns, particularly in addressing climate variability and infrastructure constraints.

Technical Sessions 4: Inclusive and Climate-Resilient WASH

This technical session examined how inclusivity, equity, and climate resilience can be embedded within WASH systems through governance innovations, community participation, digital tools, and policy alignment. The session brought together diverse case studies highlighting the importance of last-mile service delivery, gender inclusion, worker dignity, climate-responsive planning, and technological integration. Across both days, a consistent theme emerged that achieving resilient WASH systems requires not only infrastructure and financing, but also socially inclusive and institutionally integrated approaches that address systemic inequalities and vulnerabilities.

Mr. Anurag Antony (UMC) presented the Jal Saathi model from Odisha, which leverages women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) as intermediaries in urban water service delivery. The model addresses gaps in billing, revenue collection, and citizen engagement by enabling trained women to undertake meter reading, bill generation, grievance redressal, and leak reporting. The initiative has been implemented across over 100 cities, improving revenue efficiency while strengthening accountability and customer interface. It also creates livelihood opportunities for women,

contributing to both social and economic empowerment. The presentation concluded that community-based service delivery models can significantly enhance operational efficiency, financial sustainability, and inclusivity in urban WASH systems, provided they are institutionalized within municipal frameworks and supported through training and policy integration.

Ms. Srijana Karki (Batabaraneya Sundar Nepal Pvt. Ltd.) presented a women-led enterprise model operating across multiple cities in

Nepal, demonstrating how inclusive public-private partnerships can strengthen waste management systems. The initiative integrates waste collection, segregation, composting, and recycling while engaging communities through awareness campaigns. With women comprising a significant proportion of the workforce, the model emphasizes worker safety, equitable participation, and livelihood generation. Challenges related to financing, procurement systems, and gender biases were also highlighted. The presentation concluded that women-led enterprises can play a transformative role in building inclusive and climate-resilient waste systems, but require stronger policy support, financing mechanisms, and institutional recognition for scalability.

Mr. Xerxes Rao (*UMC*) presented a framework for integrating WASH systems into climate-responsive urban planning using GIS-based tools and Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) methodologies. The approach combines hazard mapping, infrastructure analysis, and stakeholder inputs to identify high-risk zones and prioritize interventions. The case of Chennai demonstrated how spatial data can inform both macro-level policy planning and micro-level implementation strategies. The presentation concluded that data-driven planning, supported by strong institutional coordination and political commitment, is essential for mainstreaming climate resilience into WASH systems and ensuring long-term urban sustainability.

Dr. Anuj Ghorpade (*Ajivam Water Pvt. Ltd.*) presented innovative hydraulic isolation structures aimed at improving equity and reliability in urban water distribution systems. The approach addresses inefficiencies in conventional distribution networks, ensuring more uniform supply across different zones. While details were limited, the presentation highlighted the importance of engineering

innovations in addressing systemic inequities in water access. It concluded that technological interventions in network design can significantly enhance service reliability and equitable distribution in rapidly urbanizing contexts.

Ms. Vanshika Bajaj (*NIUA*) presented findings from a study on sanitation workers in Uttarakhand, highlighting critical gaps in occupational health, safety, and social protection. The study revealed low levels of formal recognition, inadequate access to protective equipment, and high incidence of work-related health issues. Informal workers, particularly waste pickers, remain largely excluded from formal governance systems. The presentation emphasized the need for improved data systems, institutional convergence, and policy interventions to ensure worker safety and dignity. It concluded that inclusive WASH systems must prioritize formal recognition, safety standards, and social security for sanitation workers as a fundamental component of service delivery.

Ms. Aditi. D and Ms. Aishwarya. M's (*CWAS-CRDF-CEPT*) presentation showcased the use of satellite imagery and machine learning models for monitoring urban lake health in cities such as Ahmedabad and Vadodara. The system enables tracking of water quality parameters, detection of pollution sources, and forecasting of vulnerable lakes through a digital dashboard. By supporting evidence-based decision-making, the tool enhances urban local bodies' ability to prioritize restoration efforts and strengthen regulatory protection. The presentation concluded that digital monitoring systems can transform lake management from reactive interventions to proactive and data-driven governance, contributing to climate-resilient urban water systems.

Ms. Evangelin Joy (*College of Engineering Trivandrum*) presented a sponge city-based framework for managing stormwater in flood-prone urban areas. The approach integrates nature-based interventions such as permeable pavements, rain gardens, and bioretention systems to capture and treat stormwater at source. The framework demonstrated how such interventions can reduce peak runoff, improve water quality, and complement existing grey infrastructure. The presentation concluded that integrating sponge infrastructure into urban design can enhance flood resilience and support sustainable stormwater management in dense urban environments.

Dr. Alejandro Jimenez (*IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute*) emphasized the need to position WASH systems within broader climate policy and financing frameworks. The presentation highlighted that climate-resilient WASH systems must be understood as socio-ecological systems involving infrastructure, institutions, and ecosystems. A key focus was on developing a “climate rationale” to access global climate finance, including integration of WASH into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), climate risk assessments, and policy alignment. The presentation concluded that aligning WASH strategies with national and international climate commitments is essential for mobilizing resources and ensuring long-term sustainability.

Poster presentations:



*The poster exhibition at GSAC 2026 featured **43 poster submissions**, presenting diverse research and practice-based insights from across the Global South. The posters complemented the technical sessions by showcasing emerging evidence, innovative approaches, and field-based experiences addressing the interlinkages between WASH and climate change.*

*A significant focus was on **climate vulnerability and risk assessment**, with studies using geospatial tools, remote sensing, and community-based methods to identify localized impacts, particularly in small towns and climate-sensitive regions. Several posters highlighted **decentralized and nature-based solutions**, including rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, and greywater reuse, emphasizing adaptive and locally appropriate approaches. The exhibition also underscored **inclusive service delivery**, with contributions focusing on informal settlements, gender inclusion, and the role of community institutions such as SHGs in improving access and accountability. In parallel, the use of **digital technologies**—including GIS, machine learning, and real-time monitoring systems—emerged as a key area for strengthening planning, efficiency, and transparency. Additionally, posters addressed*



governance and financing challenges, pointing to gaps in institutional coordination, O&M financing, and access to climate finance, while highlighting the need for innovative funding mechanisms and stronger local capacity.

*Overall, the posters reflected a shift toward **integrated, context-specific, and interdisciplinary approaches**, reinforcing the importance of combining technology, governance, and social inclusion to build climate-resilient and sustainable WASH systems. **The posters were reviewed by the jury members—Prof. Subhranshu, Mansi, Prof. A.K., Prof. Ravi, Gargi, and Sidh Doshi—and select posters were awarded special recognition through mementos.***

| S No. | Poster Topic | Presenting author | Organization |
|-------|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Paani Aane se Hone Tak: The social life of water infrastructure in a slum resettlement colony in Bengaluru | Yashna Arora | Independent Researcher |
| 2 | Community-Managed Resilient Drinking Water Supply System: A Case Study from Kalitar Community, Godawari, Nepal | Anand Gautam | WaterAid Nepal |
| 3 | Climate resilient water security for rural Maharashtra | Kasturi, Jinal, Aarya, Harish | Center for Water and Sanitation (CWAS), CRDF |
| 4 | Reimagining Urban Sanitation and Water Access: Community-Led Climate-Resilient Innovation in Mukuru kwa Njenga Slum, Kenya | Jokastah Kalungu | Climate Action for Women and Vulnerable Communities |
| 5 | Sughad: a community led cleanliness movement | Dixita Pariaker | Vikas Centre for Development |
| 6 | Examining Built Environment, Climate, Health and Well-being of Weavers of Sualkuchi, Assam | Rushabh Shah | Sarvajanik University, IDPT-SCET |
| 7 | Climate resilient waste management services for small and medium towns in India | Viral, Mansi, Mayuri, Sagar, Devanshi | Center for Water and Sanitation (CWAS), CRDF |

Felicitation of Poster Presenters Awarded Special Recognition:



Reflections and Vote of Thanks

The concluding session of GSAC 2026 brought together the collective energy, insights and reflections from two days of intensive deliberations, reaffirming the importance of sustained engagement on the intersections of climate change and WASH. The session encapsulated the spirit of collaboration, knowledge exchange and action-oriented dialogue that defined the conclave.

Mr. Aasim Mansuri reflected on the conclave as an engaging and fruitful platform, expressing optimism that the discussions would translate into tangible actions in advancing climate-resilient WASH systems. Participants' reflections echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the value of grounding solutions in grassroots realities, adopting systemic approaches and continuing collaborative efforts beyond the conclave. Mr. Dhruv Bhavsar highlighted that the enthusiasm and depth of engagement witnessed across sessions reaffirmed the relevance of such platforms in shaping discourse and fostering innovation. He noted that the conclave not only facilitated critical discussions but also contributed to building a shared understanding of pathways towards a climate-resilient future. The reflections from participants indicated that the conclave successfully met its objectives of enabling cross-learning and strengthening the evidence base for WASH and climate linkages. The session also underscored the broader positioning of GSAC as a Global South-led platform, generating context-specific knowledge and solutions that hold relevance beyond regional boundaries.

Special appreciation was extended to Dr. Meera Mehta and Dr. Dinesh Mehta for their leadership and guidance in shaping the conclave. The organisers expressed gratitude to all speakers, participants, partners and student volunteers whose collective efforts contributed to the success of the event.

The session concluded with a forward-looking note, inviting continued feedback and engagement to strengthen future editions of GSAC. It reiterated the commitment to nurturing a platform that enables young professionals, researchers and practitioners to collaborate, innovate and contribute to the evolving climate and WASH agenda. A call for action and way forward emerging from the conclave deliberations will be taken up in subsequent engagements, ensuring continuity of the dialogue and its translation into practice.



Annex

Annex 1: List of posters

| S No. | Poster Topic | Presenting author | Organization |
|-------|--|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Satellite-Based Assessment of Urban Environmental Stressors and Their Implications for WASH Sustainability | Mahi Patel | Silver Oak University |
| 2 | Assessment of Co-Benefits of Water Bodies in India | Tanay Chopra | CEPT University |

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| 3 | Water Challenges in Central Asia: Climate Risks, Transboundary Cooperation, and Water Diplomacy in the Context of Global Change | Christian Gessl | "Agroinnovatsiya" Public Association |
| 4 | The Impact of Water Pollution in killi river affecting the Microclimate in Thiruvananthapuram | Akshay SR | College of Engineering, Trivandrum |
| 5 | Restoring Ecological Corridors to River Yamuna in Delhi Through Floating Wetlands, Specialized Planting, and Natural Filtration Systems | Jai Rajwanshi | MBS SPA |
| 6 | Paani Aane se Hone Tak: The social life of water infrastructure in a slum resettlement colony in Bengaluru | Yashna Arora | Independent Researcher |
| 7 | Local Governance and Service Delivery: Emerging Lessons on Rural Water Governance in Odisha and Assam | Rajas Kolhatkar | International Innovation Corps |
| 8 | Wash Mitra | Krushna Avhad | Center for youth development and activities |
| 9 | Community-Managed Resilient Drinking Water Supply System: A Case Study from Kalitar Community, Godawari, Nepal | Anand Gautam | WaterAid Nepal |
| 10 | Exploring New Avenues of Financing Water Utility Operations | Kapil Dhabu | Arghyam |
| 11 | Smart self-balancing water distribution network with integrated leak detection system | Priyansh Singh | CEPT University |
| 12 | NBS solution for Budhabalanga Basin located in Odisha | Amogh Coca | CEPT University |
| 13 | SplashNet: A hydraulic Sneakernet | Kartikee Santosh Mahadik | CEPT University |
| 14 | Analyzing the Water Supply System for Small Towns in Gujarat | Charmil Prajapati | CEPT University |
| 15 | Solutions for Flood Resilience | Vaidehee P. | CEPT University |
| 16 | Climate resilient water security for rural Maharashtra | Kasturi, Jinal, Aarya, Harish | CWAS- CRDF-CEPT |

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| 17 | Exploring Algal Bacterial Consortium for Emerging Contaminant Removal from Wastewater Matrices | Ubhat Ali | IIT Jammu |
| 18 | The Hydro-Climatic-Sanitation Nexus: Assessing the Impact of Urban Flooding on Faecal Sludge Management and Diarrheal Disease Risk in Mazabuka, Zambia | Joseph Tuntepe | Independent WASH Researcher |
| 19 | INTEGRATING RESILIENT SANITATION SYSTEMS IN COASTAL REGIONS | Tania Mathew | College of Engineering Trivandrum |
| 20 | The unseen living conditions of women sanitation workers in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, Odisha | Amita Bhakta | Hidden WASH |
| 21 | Challenges of Extending Safely Managed Sanitation Services in Urban Kerala: A Systems Approach | Paresh Chhajer-Picha | IRC |
| 22 | Understanding the economics of BORDA-designed treatment systems in South Africa: The role of non-profit organisations in filling the sanitation financing and implementation gap | Zenani Dlodla | BORDA South Africa |
| 23 | Together for Better Sanitation: Decentralized Solutions for a Sustainable Future in Jordan | Namagembe Masitullah | Water Consults |
| 24 | Rethinking Greywater: Building a Research and Governance Agenda for Community-led Water Reuse in Rural India | Alokananda Bisoyi | International Innovation Corps |
| 25 | Reimagining Urban Sanitation and Water Access: Community-Led Climate-Resilient Innovation in Mukuru kwa Njenga Slum, Kenya | Jokastah Kalungu | Climate Action for Women and Vulnerable Communities |
| 26 | Sughad: a community led cleanliness movement | Dixita Pariaker | Vikas Centre for Development |
| 27 | Optimum utilization of resources through refurbishment/upgradation of existing sewage and faecal sludge treatment facilities, for scaling up sustainable used water management across Maharashtra | Sagar Patil | All India Institute of Local Self Government, Mumbai |
| 28 | Landscape Review and Strategic Roadmap for Used Water Management in Maharashtra | Ram Khandelwal | Urban Innovation Lab |

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| 29 | Citywide inclusive climate-resilient WASH | Bhushan, Snehal, Arfaat | Center for Water and Sanitation (CWAS), CRDF |
| 30 | Transforming Urban Sanitation: A Water+ Strategy for Morbi's Sewerage and Drainage Network. | Pankaj Khandelwal | CEPT University |
| 31 | Examining Built Environment, Climate, Health and Well-being of Weavers of Sualkuchi, Assam | Rushabh Shah | Sarvajanik University, IDPT-SCET |
| 32 | Resilient Dwellings and Healthy Habits: Monitoring WASH and Climate Adaptation in the Mishing Settlements of Assam | Maaz Imran Multani | Sarvajanik University, IDPT-SCET |
| 33 | Developing Climate Resilient schools designated as cyclone shelters- Based on lived Experience of Bhadrak District Odisha, India | Sradha Das | WaterAid India |
| 34 | Urban Water, Sanitation, and Climate Change: The Role of School Education in Shaping Sustainable Cities" | Sangita Bose Das | Hooghly Chinchurah Municipality, West Bengal |
| 35 | Learning and Unlearning on Climate Action in Small Towns: Cases from India and Bangladesh | Anju Varghese | Bremen Overseas Research and Development Association (BORDA), South Asia |
| 36 | Climate-Resilient WASH in Nepal: Policy Alignment, Local Practices, and Service Provider Readiness | Anand Gautam | WaterAid Nepal |
| 37 | WASH and Public Health Linkages in the Slums of Ahmedabad | Yaamini R | Styka Studios, Hyderabad |
| 38 | Evaluation The Role of Blue-Green Infrastructure | Zeel Patel | CEPT University |
| 39 | Monitoring WASH Outcomes in a Changing Climate: Insights from Global Systems and Policies | Deep Chandraprakash Sharma | HK College of Pharmacy, Mumbai University |
| 40 | Virtual Platform for Capacity Building and Peer-to-Peer Learning: Moving Technology, Not People. | Ashish Kumar | Water For People India |
| 41 | Strengthening Accountability in Climate Adaptation Projects: Perspectives from Rural Farming Communities | Danley Colecraft Aidoo | University of Ghana |

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| 42 | Climate resilient waste management services for small and medium towns in India | Viral, Mansi, Mayuri, Sagar, Devanshi | CWAS- CRDF-CEPT |
| 43 | Climate resilient solid waste management for rural Maharashtra | Apoorva, Gautamee, Raju, Vishal | CWAS- CRDF-CEPT |

Annex 2: Conclave Agenda – Global South Academic Conclave 2026

Draft agenda | 6-7th Feb 2026 | CEPT University, Ahmedabad

| Time | Sessions |
|--|--|
| DAY 1 – 6th February, 2026 | |
| 8:00 – 9:00 CFP Passage | Registration |
| 9:00 – 10:00 BNB Hall | Inauguration and Welcome Address <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meera Mehta and Dinesh Mehta, CWAS, CRDF-CEPT University, India • Dhruv Bhavsar and Aasim Mansuri, CWAS, CRDF-CEPT University, India • Shalini Sinha, Faculty of Planning-CEPT University, India • Barjor Mehta, CEPT University and CRDF, India • Sakshi Gudwani, Gates Foundation, India • Medje Prahm, Viega Foundation, Germany |
| 10:00 – 10:45 BNB Hall | Keynote Address 1- Neeta Pokhrel, ADB, Philippines Introduction- Aasim Mansuri, CWAS, CRDF-CEPT University, India |
| 10:45 – 11:15 | Tea and networking break |
| 11:15 – 12:15 BNB Hall | Panel Discussion – Data driven actions and innovations for WASH and Climate Change Moderator: Sakshi Gudwani, Gates Foundation, India <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alejandro Jimenez, IVL, Sweden • Dinesh Mehta, CWAS, CRDF-CEPT University, India • Manvita Baradi, UMC, India • Martin Kalibbala, Kampala Water, Uganda • S.M. Vijayanand (Retd. IAS), India |
| 12:15-13:00 BNB Hall | Keynote Address 2 – Silver Mugisha, NWSC, Uganda Introduction- Darshan Parikh, CRDF-CEPT University, India |
| 13:00-14:00 | Lunch (South Lawn) |
| 14:00 – 15:00 BNB Hall | Panel Discussion- Water, Climate and Gender Moderator: Aasim Mansuri, CWAS, CRDF-CEPT University, India <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bijal Brahmbhatt, MHT, India • Jane Nabunnya Mulumba, IRC, Uganda • Neeta Pokhrel, ADB, Philippines • Nitin Bassi, CEEW, India • Pallavi Sobti-Rajpal, Utthan, India |
| 15:00-15:45 BNB Hall | Keynote Address 3- Patrick Moriarty, IRC, Netherlands Introduction- Dhruv Bhavsar, CWAS, CRDF-CEPT University, India |
| 15:45-16:00 | Tea and networking break |

| Time | Sessions | | | | |
|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16:00 – 17:30 | Technical Session 1 "Monitoring WASH outcomes and climate impacts" (BNB Hall) Chaired by: Nitika Bhakuni, FP CEPT | Technical Session 2 "Governance and Financing for inclusive and climate resilient WASH" (FA 101a) Chaired by: Upasana Yadav, CWAS, CRDF-CEPT University | Technical Session 3 "WASH innovations in technology and service delivery" (Sagara Basement) Chaired by: Jignesh Mehta, FP CEPT | Technical Session 4 "WASH innovations in technology and service delivery" (FP Audi) Chaired by: Aditi Dwivedi, CWAS, CRDF-CEPT University | Technical Session 5 "Inclusive and climate resilient WASH" (CFP 307) Chaired by: Melissa Smith, FP CEPT |
| 17:30-19:00 | Partner Session 1 Sanitation for Climate Resilience and Inclusion: Securing Water Systems in a Changing Climate (Sagara Basement) NFSSM and Climate Rise Alliance | Partner Session 2 Integrating Inclusion Aspects in Urban WASH Curriculum (FA 101a) Global Sanitation Graduate School | Partner Session 3 Kutch Partners Meet: Advancing Last-Mile Access to Safe Drinking Water (CFP 307) DASRA (Closed room discussion) | Partner Session 4 Women in Water and Sanitation: Leadership, Pathways and Practice (FP Audi) ADB and CWAS | Partner Session 5 Stories from the field- Initiatives at CWAS (BNB Hall) CWAS, CRDF-CEPT |
| 19:00 onwards | Cultural program (Kund) and Gala Dinner (South Lawn) | | | | |

| DAY 2- 7 th February, 2026 | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 8:00 – 9:00 | Tea and Networking |
| 9:00 – 9:15 | Reflections from Day 1 |
| 9:15-10:00 Sagara Basement | Keynote Address 4 – Alok Majumdar, HSBC, India Introduction- Dinesh Mehta, CRDF-CEPT University, India |
| 10:00 – 11:00 Sagara Basement | Panel Discussion - Governance and financing for climate resilient and inclusive WASH Moderator: Dhruv Bhavsar, CWAS, CRDF-CEPT University, India <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aparna Dua, Blended Finance Company, India Hamanth Kasan, IWA, South Africa Harish Ahuja, Social Stock Exchange, India Meera Mehta, CWAS, CRDF-CEPT University, India Neha Kumar, Climate Bonds Initiative, India |
| 11:00-11:45 Sagara Basement | Keynote Address 5- Oswald Chanda, Former AfDB, Côte d'Ivoire Introduction- Meera Mehta, CRDF-CEPT University, India |
| 11:45-12:45 | Panel Discussion –Academic discourse on WASH climate and urban planning |

| Time | Sessions | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---------------------|---|---|---|--|---|
| Sagara Basement | <p>Moderator: Mona Iyer, Faculty of Planning-CEPT, India</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jagath Munasinghe, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka Kalimuthu Arumugam Pillai, WASHI, India Meenakshi Arora, University of Melbourne, Australia Rajul Gajjar, Gujarat Technological University, India | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12:45 – 13:45 | Lunch (South Lawn) | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13:45-14:30 Sagara Basement | <p>Keynote Address 6 –Kate Medicott, WHO, Switzerland</p> <p>Introduction-Arwa Bharmal, CRDF-CEPT University, India</p> | | | | | | | | | | |
| 14:30– 16:00 | <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Technical Session 1</th> <th>Technical Session 2</th> <th>Technical Session 3</th> <th>Technical Session 4 "WASH innovations in technology and service delivery"</th> <th>Technical Session 5</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>"Monitoring WASH outcomes and climate impacts" (U04-201) Chaired by: Anil Roy, FP CEPT</td> <td>"Governance and Financing for inclusive and climate resilient WASH" (Sagara Basement) Chaired by: Saswet Bandyopadhyay FP CEPT</td> <td>"Governance and Financing for inclusive and climate resilient WASH" (FA-101a) Chaired by: Rajiv Kadam, FP CEPT</td> <td>Chaired by: Kasturi Joshi, CWAS-CEPT, CRDF</td> <td>"Inclusive and climate resilient WASH" (CFP 307) Chaired by: Ravi Sannabhatti, FP CEPT</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Technical Session 1 | Technical Session 2 | Technical Session 3 | Technical Session 4 "WASH innovations in technology and service delivery" | Technical Session 5 | "Monitoring WASH outcomes and climate impacts" (U04-201) Chaired by: Anil Roy, FP CEPT | "Governance and Financing for inclusive and climate resilient WASH" (Sagara Basement) Chaired by: Saswet Bandyopadhyay FP CEPT | "Governance and Financing for inclusive and climate resilient WASH" (FA-101a) Chaired by: Rajiv Kadam, FP CEPT | Chaired by: Kasturi Joshi, CWAS-CEPT, CRDF | "Inclusive and climate resilient WASH" (CFP 307) Chaired by: Ravi Sannabhatti, FP CEPT |
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| 16:00-16:30 | Tea and networking break | | | | | | | | | | |
| 16:30-18:00 North lawn | <p>Open poster exhibition – Open Academic Forum</p> <p>Jury Members: Arjun Joshi, Gargi Mishra, Mansi Shah, Narendra Mangwani, Siddh Doshi, Subhramgsu Goswami</p> | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18:00-18:30 Sagara Basement | Concluding Session– Vote of Thanks | | | | | | | | | | |

Global South Academic Conclave

WASH and Climate Linkages

6th - 7th February 2026

CEPT University | Ahmedabad

REPORT BY -

Arwa.B and Gautamee.S

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The Center for Water and Sanitation (CWAS) is a part of CEPT Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) at CEPT University. CWAS undertakes action-research, implementation support, capacity building and advocacy in the field of urban water and sanitation. Acting as a thought catalyst and facilitator, CWAS works closely with all levels of governments - national, state and local to support them in delivering water and sanitation services in an efficient, effective and equitable manner.