Introduction

Approximately 1.2 billion people live in India – a sixth of the earth’s population. About half of them defecate in the open. With Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (“Clean India Mission”), the current Prime Minister Narendra Modi initiated a campaign to keep India clean, which is India’s largest cleanliness initiative ever. Officially launched in 2014, the Indian Government has declared the goal of making India Open Defecation Free (ODF) by 2019. In this endeavour, the government is actively seeking technical, capacity strengthening, and monitoring support. In response to the government’s call for action, various actors – NGOs, foundations, companies, individuals, etc. – have pledged support. To provide a collective and collaborative response to the WASH challenge, the India Sanitation Coalition (ISC) was formed. To further strengthen discussion on sanitation and support the Clean India Mission, ISC partnered with the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA), setting up SuSanA’s first regional chapter for India. Nitya Jacob from ISC talked to us about the work of the chapter and its contribution to “Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.”

Interview

SuSanA: Nitya, you work at the India Sanitation Coalition (ISC). Can you tell us more about the work of ISC and its objectives?

The India Sanitation Coalition (ISC) was formed with the objective of bringing all stakeholders in the sanitation field onto one platform where they can share information, learn from others, partner and collaborate. Today, the ISC has NGOs, donors, corporations, foundations, trusts and the government as partners, working together to create a larger impact, rather than each one working separately.

ISC has four task forces on (1) advocacy, branding and communication; (2) learning and knowledge management; (3) government engagement and; (4) partnerships and collaboration. Through these, the Coalition conducts its strategic businesses. Each task force meets regularly and the chairs and co-chairs interact at steering committee meetings to ensure inter-task force collaboration.

Each task force has defined objectives as reflected in its title. “Advocacy, branding and communication” develops material and reaches out to critical stakeholders such as the government. “Learning and knowledge management” seeks out case studies that can inform sanitation work in the private sector and the government. The “Government engagement task force” works with the central and state governments of Rajasthan and Maharashtra. The fourth task force reaches out to companies and other stakeholders in sanitation.

SuSanA: ISC is a key contributor and partner of the SuSanA India Chapter. When was the Chapter created and what motivated you to collaborate with SuSanA?

The Chapter was set up in May 2016 with the objective of both promoting knowledge building and sharing among sanitation practitioners and creating a network. It also disseminates relevant information from SuSanA that is relevant for India. This way, SuSanA adds tremendously to the current corpus of knowledge of ISC on sanitation and furthers the Coalition’s objective of being at the cutting edge of sanitation.

SuSanA: What activities have been taking place so far as part of the SuSanA India Chapter? And how have these supported you in achieving your goals?

Under the umbrella of the SuSanA India Chapter, the India Sanitation Coalition has organised six thematic discussions...
SuSanA: The India Sanitation Coalition serves as an umbrella for stakeholders in the field of sanitation. Who are your main collaboration partners with regard to your work for the SuSanA India Chapter?

The main collaboration partners are ISC members, which include companies and NGOs. The government is a major stakeholder as well and the list includes most senior government officials from the central and several state governments. Other major agencies engaged in sanitation such as UNICEF and the World Bank, and NGOs such as Ecosan Services Foundation, WaterAid, CARE, Save the Children, Oxfam, World Vision, Arghyam, Tata Trusts and Bharti Foundation are also members that are noteworthy.

SuSanA: As you mentioned, ISC has several task forces, including one on engaging the government. Can you elaborate on your work in this area? How has your work impacted the Government’s Clean India Mission, for instance?

Through ISC’s task force on government engagement, all of SuSanA’s synthesis documents have been presented to various government ministries. Additionally, they are circulated on the mailing list that includes officials from the Government of India and state governments.

White papers on the state of sanitation, corporate engagement and faecal sludge management have also been prepared, released and acknowledged by the Government. In addition, several ISC members have referred to these papers in their sanitation programmes and policies. These publications are based on the thematic discussions and secondary research. They have been prepared by the India Sanitation Coalition and disseminated actively by the Coalition at its meetings.

Thank you very much, Nitya, for taking the time to talk to us. We are looking forward to hearing more about your work with ISC and the SuSanA India Chapter.

Further Information

India Sanitation Coalition (ISC)
www.indiasanitationcoalition.org

SuSanA India Chapter

Concept Note of the SuSanA India Chapter

Thematic Discussion Series – India Chapter