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Project Report: 2nd Edition of the National Conference on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) 2025

Theme: *Transforming WASH into a Right, Responsibility & Resilience Strategy*

Date: 24th – 26th June 2025

Venue: St. Joseph Training Centre, Lonavala

Organized by: Auxilium Skills Academy (ASA)

Supported by: FMA-INB Province, Mumbai

1. Introduction

The second edition of the National Conference on WASH 2025, hosted by Auxilium Skills Academy, brought together over 50 delegates, including WASH experts, community leaders, youth representatives, policymakers, NGO heads, academic professionals, and grassroots activists from across India. The three-day conference served as a collaborative platform to explore innovative, inclusive, and sustainable WASH solutions, particularly in the context of gender and urban marginalization. This landmark event reaffirmed the role of WASH as a transformative force for public health, dignity, and resilience.

2. Inaugural Ceremony



The conference was inaugurated by **Rev. Sr. Meenakshi D'Silva**, Provincial of the Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco, FMA-INB Province, Mumbai. She highlighted the importance of WASH in ensuring dignity and human rights, especially for marginalized communities. **Dr. Deepak Raut**, Chief Guest, Medical Superintendent at MGM Medical College and former Director of NIPHTR, delivered the keynote emphasizing WASH as a pillar of preventive healthcare. **Dr. Ajit Salvi**, Guest of Honour and Director at RCUES–AIIILSG, shared valuable insights on infrastructural innovation and public accountability in urban action.



3. Panel Discussion: *"Implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0: In Context with Gender and Urban Marginalization"*

This session was chaired by **Mr. Anand Jagtap**, former Officer on Special Duty, Slum Sanitation Programme, MCGM. Panelists included **Dr. Sulochana Pednekar** (Goa University), **Ms. Rosy Joseph** (Senior Faculty, NIPHTR), and **Mr. Aditya Joshi** (Founder, Qutcast Trust). The discussion explored how SBM 2.0 can address the specific sanitation needs of women, urban poor, informal workers, LGBTQIA community and differently abled individuals. Key insights emphasized inclusive design, community-led monitoring, and intersectional sanitation planning.



4. Workshop: “*Legal Frameworks on WASH*”

Facilitator: Advocate Dhanpal Solanki, Bombay High Court & Law Officer, Maharashtra Police

This workshop unpacked the legal landscape governing WASH in India, including constitutional rights (Article 21 – Right to Life), legal duties of urban local bodies, Right to Information Act for demanding services, and relevant laws like the Manual Scavengers Act and Environment Protection Act. It helped participants, especially students and community leaders, understand their legal entitlements and tools for accountability.



5. Workshop: “*Building Public Health Leadership in WASH*”

Facilitator: Ms. Rosy Joseph Pullan, Public Health Expert, NIPHTR

Ms. Rosy Joseph’s engaging session focused on how leadership in WASH can be built at all levels—from youth leaders to community health workers. The session used real-life case studies and role-plays to teach participants skills in communication, planning, and inter-sectoral collaboration. The workshop also discussed health promotion strategies and how WASH can reduce the burden of disease.

6. Workshop: “*Gendered Dimensions of Sanitation and Care Work in Informal Settlements*”

Facilitator: Dr. Sulochana Pednekar, Goa University

This thought-provoking session highlighted the invisible burden of care work and the gendered experiences of sanitation in informal settlements. Dr. Pednekar showcased her research and community interventions in Goa to illustrate how access, privacy, and safety concerns deeply affect women and girls. The session concluded with a participatory dialogue on co-designing gender-sensitive WASH infrastructure.



7. Workshop: “*Community Challenges in WASH*”

Facilitator: Mr. Anand Jagtap

Drawing from decades of experience, Mr. Jagtap facilitated a hands-on workshop that mapped common WASH challenges in slums—such as poor maintenance of community toilets, lack of water supply, social taboos, and waste management failures. He introduced a participatory tool called “Problem Tree Analysis” which allowed participants to identify root causes and develop community-specific action plans.



8. Workshop: “*Design Your Own WASH Campaign*”

Facilitator: Dr. Ajit Salvi, RCUES – AIILSG

This interactive workshop guided youth and community leaders through the process of designing impactful WASH campaigns. Participants developed campaigns around menstrual hygiene, water conservation, and plastic reduction using behavior change models and local storytelling techniques. The facilitator emphasized the importance of messaging, local champions, and monitoring outcomes.



9. Workshop: “*WASH Problem-Solution Marketplace*”

Facilitator: Ms. Dahlia Ribeiro, PhD Scholar in Marketing, IIT Bombay



Participants were grouped and given real-life WASH challenges (e.g., resistance to handwashing, menstrual hygiene in schools). They worked in teams to ideate low-cost, community-friendly solutions, and pitched these to a panel for feedback. The workshop promoted design thinking, behavioural insight, and inclusive marketing in solving grassroots WASH problems.

10. Special Tribute: Mr. Shaji Zacharia Fernandez

A special moment during the conference was a tribute to **Mr. Shaji Zacharia Fernandez**, a seasoned social development consultant and champion of eco-social WASH integration. His work with ASA and other partners has shaped environment-linked skill development and sanitation planning across urban poor communities. He was felicitated with a memento and shawl by Sr. Meenakshi.



11. Outcomes & Impact

- Over 50 participants attended (NGOs, academic institutions, community leaders, youth).
- workshops and sessions conducted on legal, health, community engagement, gender, and campaign strategy.
- Multiple collaborations initiated between ASA and organizations like NIPHTR, Qutcast, Goa University, and RCUES-AIILSG.
- A panel declaration was drafted recommending gender-sensitive implementation of SBM 2.0.

12. Way Forward

The conference concluded with a participatory reflection circle, where delegates pledged to take forward WASH action in their respective contexts. Auxilium Skills Academy committed to launching 10 new WASH youth clubs and publishing a post-conference booklet capturing best practices and outcomes.

1. Expansion of Youth-Led WASH Initiatives

- **Establish 10 new WASH Youth Clubs** in colleges and communities across Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, and Karnataka.
- **Train 500 young leaders** through specialized WASH leadership modules and mentorship programs.
- Promote **youth-led campaigns** in schools, colleges, and slum communities, focusing on sanitation awareness, plastic waste reduction, and menstrual hygiene.

2. Research and Development (R&D) in WASH

- Undertake a **WASH Research & Development Programme** in collaboration with academic partners such as Goa University, Bharati Vidyapeeth, and NIPHTR.
- Undertake **community-based research studies** on gender and sanitation, sanitation access in informal economies, and WASH-related behavioral patterns.
- Develop a **digital research repository** to store and disseminate data, findings, and case studies.

3. Development and Integration of WASH Curriculum

- Finalize and publish a **comprehensive WASH curriculum** for upper primary and high school students with modules on water conservation, hand hygiene, menstrual health, waste segregation, and sanitation rights.
- Pilot the curriculum in 10 schools and 5 community centers by mid-2026.
- Organize **teacher training and facilitator workshops** for effective delivery of the curriculum.

5. Community Empowerment and Engagement

- Form **15 community-based WASH committees**, led by women and youth, to monitor infrastructure, awareness activities, and grievance redressal.
- Conduct **quarterly capacity-building workshops** for community leaders on topics such as hygiene promotion, WASH advocacy, and local governance.
- Integrate WASH into **existing community empowerment programmes** such as livelihood training, skill development, and women's self-help groups.

6. Integration of WASH into Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Resilience

- Develop and distribute a **WASH in Emergencies Toolkit** for urban slums vulnerable to flooding, heatwaves, and disease outbreaks.
- Train community volunteers to act as **WASH emergency response leaders** in their localities.
- Conduct **pilot projects** linking WASH to climate resilience, including rainwater harvesting and disaster-proof sanitation systems.

7. Policy Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships

- Present key learnings from the conference in the form of a **policy recommendation document** to be submitted to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and other relevant departments.

- Facilitate **multi-stakeholder dialogues** between academia, government, NGOs, and civil society to promote inclusive WASH strategies.
- Engage with **international platforms and consulates** to share best practices and scale up successful models with global support.

8. Knowledge Dissemination and Networking

- Publish a **WASH Best Practices Compendium** compiling the outcomes of the conference, field experiences, and grassroots innovations.
 - Host a series of **state-level roundtables and mini-conferences** in 2026 to maintain dialogue and collaborative action.
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13. Acknowledgements

We thank all our partners, facilitators, volunteers, and supporters who made this conference possible. Special gratitude to the **Provincial and Leadership Team of FMA-INB**, to **Dr. Deepak Raut** (Chief Guest), **Dr. Ajit Salvi** (Guest of Honour), and all the workshop leaders for their commitment to the cause of WASH.