URBAN WATER FUTURES

Learning from Cities Facing Too Little, Too Much, Too Dirty

CitiesWithWater
A Joint Initiative by the World Water Council and ICLEI

Supriya Biswas, Untitled — Kolkata, India

WORLD WATER COUNCIL

ICLEI
Local Governments for Sustainability

FOREWORD FROM THE PRESIDENT OF ICLEI

Katrin Stjernfeldt Jammeh

President, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability
Mayor of Malmö, Sweden

Water connects every aspect of urban life. It shapes our health, our economies, our ecosystems, and our collective future. Yet in cities around the world, water increasingly reveals the pressures of our time—too little, too much, or too dirty. As the climate crisis accelerates and urban populations grow, mayors and local leaders find themselves at the forefront of an era defined by water.

Through the CitiesWithWater initiative, ICLEI and the World Water Council have come together to highlight the leadership of cities that are tackling these intertwined challenges head-on. This collaboration, rooted in the values of partnership and shared learning, reflects the conviction that local action drives global progress. It demonstrates how visionary governance, community engagement, and cross-sectoral cooperation can turn water risk into water resilience.

At ICLEI, we see urban water not only as a technical issue but as a matter of values, connections, and investments. **Values** - because access to clean water and sanitation is a human right and a cornerstone of equity. **Connections -** because resilient water systems depend on collaboration across boundaries: between upstream and downstream, between governments and communities, and between nature and the built environment. And **investments** - because achieving long-term resilience requires mobilizing finance for infrastructure that is sustainable, inclusive, and nature-positive.

As we look ahead, let us build on these experiences to deepen cooperation among local and regional governments, national authorities, development partners, and the private sector. The path to water security is a shared one - anchored in solidarity, creativity, and leadership from the local level upward. Together, we can ensure that every drop contributes to cities that are equitable, resilient, and thriving.

CITIES ARE WATER ACTORS

Loïc Fauchon

President, World Water Council

Water is the foundation of life and the future of our cities. As world urbanization is growing and demographic growth is accelerating, while climate pressures is intensifying, water has become a challenge “to preserve, reserve and serve”. Cities today are on the front line, facing the consequences of “too little,” “too much,” or “too dirty” water. But they are also where the most promising solutions are emerging, solutions driven by leadership, innovation, and collaboration.

Through the CitiesWithWater initiative, the World Water Council and ICLEI have joined forces to amplify the voices of cities and local governments who, every day, turn ambition into action. These exchanges remind us that capacity to adapt is not built in isolation: it depends on innovation, shared governance, blended finance, through dialogue and cooperation, bridging sectors, regions and nations.

This publication, *Urban Water Futures: Learning from Cities Facing Too Little, Too Much, Too Dirty*, is both a reflection of these efforts and a call to action. It showcases the creativity and determination of urban leaders who are rethinking water management for a more secure, equitable, and sustainable future.

As we look ahead, the World Water Council reaffirms its commitment to supporting these local champions, because well-prepared and adaptive cities mean stronger, healthier societies. Together, we can ensure that every drop of water contributes to efficient infrastructure and services, for urban development.

THE WORLD WATER COUNCIL (WWC)

The World Water Council (WWC) is an international multi-stakeholder platform established in 1996 to promote awareness, build political commitment, and catalyze action on critical water issues at all levels, including the highest decision-making spheres.

The WWC unites governments, international organizations, academia, civil society, and the private sector to advance sustainable water management. Its mission is to place water at the heart of global development by fostering dialogue and cooperation across sectors and regions.

Through initiatives such as the World Water Forum, the WWC advocates for strong water governance, financing mechanisms, and innovative partnerships to secure water for all in a changing world.

ICLEI - LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability – is a global network of more than 2,500 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development.

Founded in 1990, ICLEI drives local environmental and climate action worldwide. The organization provides technical expertise, capacity building, and platforms for collaboration that enable cities to implement low-emission, nature-based, equitable, resilient, and circular solutions.

ICLEI emphasizes that sustainable water management is central to urban resilience, linking local policy with global agendas such as the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

INTRODUCTION

Water is more than a resource; it is the lifeblood of our cities, communities, ecosystems and economies. As urbanization accelerates, climate-related hazards intensify, and the demand for equitable and sustainable services grows, **cities and local governments find themselves at the frontline of both water risk and water resilience.** Recognizing this reality, a global collaborative initiative was launched by ICLEI and the World Water Council, to unite leading stakeholders, share learning across local governments and highlight innovative scalable solutions.

The CitiesWithWater webinar series, a partnership between the World Water Council and ICLEI, was designed to highlight **how cities are addressing the triple challenge of water scarcity, flooding, and pollution.**

Framed under the themes **Too Little** (scarcity and resilience strategies), **Too Much** (flooding and stormwater management), and **Too Dirty** (sanitation and wastewater innovations), the first three webinars showcased innovative practices, shared experiences and **lessons learned from cities** around the world.

The series brought together mayors, local officials, water professionals, and policy makers to explore how local action can support global water resilience and will culminate with a high-level roundtable discussion between local government leaders and international development organizations on the partnerships needed to finance urban water resilience.

Arpan Basu Chowdhury, *Hope Digs Deeper* — Kotlai, Purulia, India»

Henzon Estrada, *Miles for a Sip: Resilience on the Bridge* — Tanay, Rizal, Philippines

PART 1 TOO LITTLE

The first webinar, Too Little, held on **26 March 2025**, explored the reality of urban water scarcity and how cities **can prevent reaching "Day Zero"** — the point at which water supplies are no longer sufficient for residents' daily needs. With global demand for water expected to increase by over 50% by 2050, the discussion focused on how cities can adapt to rapidly rising populations, changing climates, and aging infrastructure.

Case studies from **Cape Town** (South Africa), **Barcelona** (Spain), **São Paulo** (Brazil), and **Marrakech** (Morocco) demonstrated that innovation, communication, and governance are essential to avoiding crisis and ensuring long-term sustainability. At its heart, avoiding Day Zero requires an **all-of-society-approach.**

Kevin Ochieng, *Digging Deep* — Lagdera, Garissa, Kenya
Winner of the CitiesWithwater International Photography competition, in the "Too little" Category

CAPE TOWN
A CITY THAT AVERTED DAY ZERO

Speaker: Thembisa Gqamane,
Senior Professional Officer, Water and Sanitation Directorate, City of Cape Town, South Africa

Ms. Thembisa Gqamane has over 20 years of management experience across public and private sectors, with over 10 years in water and sanitation. She specializes in water demand management, conservation, social marketing, and behavioral change, including off-grid sanitation pilot projects. She led Cape Town's drought communication strategy and programs such as the Extended Public Works Program (EPWP), promoting job creation, skills transfer, and responsible water use.

THE CHALLENGE

Cape Town, South Africa, faced an unprecedented water crisis between 2015 and 2018, when severe drought threatened to leave the city without water — a potential outcome called “Day Zero.” On that day the piped municipal water supply would be shut off for most residents and business, leading to the collapse of the sewage network, rapid job losses, school closures and a public health emergency.

ACTIONS

Through a combination of innovative management, public communication, and citizen cooperation, Cape Town transformed a crisis into a model of resilience. The city reduced its water consumption by more than 50% within a year, thanks to a transparent data-driven approach that empowered residents to act responsibly.

A central pillar of success was communication. By maintaining open and continuous dialogue with citizens, Cape Town built trust and avoided misinformation. Collaboration across sectors — involving academia, religious institutions, and community leaders — ensured that awareness campaigns reached all social groups.

KEY LESSONS

- Transparent communication was instrumental in changing public behavior.
- Cross-sector collaboration prevented negative narratives and strengthened citizen ownership.
- Proactive infrastructure development and early planning were vital to avoid future crises.

BARCELONA

BUILDING A RESILIENT METROPOLITAN WATER SYSTEM

Speaker: Dr. Fernando Cabello,
Director of Water Cycle Services, Barcelona Metropolitan Area, Spain

Mr. Fernando Cabello has over 20 years of experience promoting environmental sustainability, currently serving as Director of Water Cycle Services for the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, managing water supply, sanitation and reuse for 36 municipalities and over 3.1 million residents. Previously, he was Director of the Environment at the Maresme Regional Council, supporting 30 local municipalities with environmental services.

THE CHALLENGE

Barcelona, located in Spain's Mediterranean basin, faces regular droughts aggravated by climate variability and a dense population concentrated in a small area which rapidly increases during peak tourism periods. Climate change has resulted in a prolonged the dry season and shorter, heavier rainfall events.

ACTIONS

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area, serving over 3 million residents, developed a sophisticated approach to urban water resilience, integrating infrastructure modernization, demand management, and alternative water sources. Today the city's water network losses are among the lowest in Europe, thanks to continuous monitoring and rapid response systems. During drought periods, Barcelona relies heavily on desalination and reclaimed water. Its indirect potable reuse system releases reclaimed water into river sources upstream of treatment plants, providing safe and reliable drinking water even in the driest months.

KEY LESSONS

- Barcelona reduced water losses to only 5% through continuous monitoring and maintenance.
- Reclaimed and desalinated water supply account for more than half of drinking water during droughts.
- The integration of technology, governance, and citizen engagement ensures long-term resilience.

SÃO PAULO

MANAGING CRISIS THROUGH GOVERNANCE AND INNOVATION

Speaker: Prof Benedito Braga,
Former CEO, SABESP, the Sanitation Company of São Paulo, Brazil

Prof. Benedito Braga, President of the Latin-American Water Council, has led major water and sanitation institutions, including Sabesp and the State Secretariat for Sanitation and Water Resources in São Paulo. A long-time professor and former President of the World Water Council, he has combined academic expertise with leadership in public service and international water governance.

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THE CHALLENGE

São Paulo, Brazil's largest metropolis, has experienced repeated droughts due to high climate variability in the last 3 decades. During the 2014–2015 water crisis, the Cantareira System, which supplies nearly half the metropolitan area, reached critically low levels.

ACTIONS

The government and SABESP implemented an emergency strategy combining economic incentives, technical improvements, and political coordination.

The plan introduced financial rewards for reduced consumption, optimized transfers among treatment systems, and decreased night-time water pressure to minimize leakages. Crucially, infrastructure projects initially planned for 2027 were expedited, and dead storage in one of the Cantareira System reservoirs was mobilized to maintain supply.

KEY LESSONS

- Economic incentives effectively reduced household consumption.
- Political leadership and early engagement were essential for success.
- The crisis demonstrated the value of proactive investment in infrastructure.

MARRAKECH

REUSING WATER TO SUSTAIN A SEMI-ARID CITYZERO

Speaker: Mohamed El Idrissi,
1st Vice President, City Council of Marrakesh, Kingdom of Morrocco

Mohamed El Idrissi is the First Vice President of the City Council of Marrakech, leading initiatives on environmental planning and circular water economy.

THE CHALLENGE

Marrakech, situated in Morocco's semi-arid region, faces rapidly rising water demand driven primarily by the growth of the tourism industry and the expansion of agriculture in the surrounding area. Climate change has exacerbated the situation; longer dry periods are now followed by heavy rains, with much of the runoff lost to evaporation in the surrounding desert.

ACTIONS

With 89% of water allocated to farming, the city turned to non-conventional resources to secure its future water supply. A wastewater treatment plant now purifies sewage to a 95% purity level, providing Class A water suitable for irrigation.

This reclaimed water irrigates golf courses, palm groves, and green spaces, reducing pressure on freshwater reservoirs. The approach embodies the concept of a circular water economy, where treated wastewater supports economic development while preserving drinking water resources.

KEY LESSONS

- The city's treatment treats wastewater to 95% purity, allowing safe irrigation.
- Reuse strategies protect drinking water and sustain tourism and agriculture.
- Circular water management has become a cornerstone of Marrakech's development strategy.

Henzon Estrada, *Grains Beneath the Flood: A Farmer's Fight for Survival* — Baras, Rizal, Philippines

PART 2 TOO MUCH

Dikye Ariani, *Silent Witness to the Sinking of Jakarta* — Penjaringan, North Jakarta, Indonesia
Winner of the CitiesWithWater International Photography Competition in the "Too Much" category

The second webinar, Too Much, held on **18 June 2025**, addressed the growing challenge of flooding and the excess of water in cities. Climate change has altered hydrological cycles, resulting in more frequent and intense rainfall events, often following dry spells. Since 2000, **flood-related disasters** have increased by 134% globally, affecting millions of urban residents worldwide. The discussion focused on how cities can anticipate and adapt to water abundance through nature-based solutions, integrated planning, and community preparedness.

Case studies from **Kumamoto** (Japan), **Lusaka** (Zambia), **Ningbo** (China), and **Larissa** (Greece) showcased how cities can transform flood risk into an opportunity for resilience and sustainability.

KUMAMOTO

COMBINING GROUNDWATER PRESERVATION AND FLOOD MANAGEMENT

Speaker: Kazufumi Onishi,
Mayor of Kumamoto City Government, Japan

Mr. Kazufumi Onishi is the Mayor of Kumamoto City, currently serving his third consecutive term since 2014. With prior experience in both the private sector and government, he has shown strong leadership and dedication to public service and community development.

THE CHALLENGE

Kumamoto stands out as the only major city in Japan, that relies entirely on groundwater for its drinking supply.

ACTIONS

The city has developed an integrated approach linking groundwater preservation with flood-risk reduction. One of its most remarkable initiatives involves intentionally flooding agricultural fields to recharge aquifers — an ecosystem-based practice that both secures water and reduces flood pressure.

To address intensifying rainfall, Kumamoto has strengthened its flood forecasting systems, green infrastructure, and land-use planning. The city also invests in disaster preparedness: residents are trained to react quickly during emergencies using methods such as virtual-reality simulations for flood evacuation. Kumamoto's dual strategy — preserving groundwater while mitigating floods — provides a model for other cities facing the twin threats of scarcity and excess.

KEY LESSONS

- Groundwater preservation and flood-risk management can be integrated for long-term water resilience.
- Nature-based aquifer recharge is accelerated through intentional flooding of farmland.
- Citizen training using virtual-reality simulations has improved preparedness for flood events.

LUSAKA

ADDRESSING FLOODS THROUGH HEALTH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Speaker: Bwalya Funga,
Senior Community Development Officer, Community Engagement Coordinator and Resource Mobilization
Chairperson, Lusaka Water Security Initiative, Zambia

Ms. Bwalya Funga, has over a decade of experience in climate change, urban planning, and community empowerment. She has led key projects on water security, climate adaptation, and resilience, contributing to major urban strategies such as the Lusaka Water Security Action Plan and the city's Integrated Development and Climate Energy Plans.

THE CHALLENGE

Lusaka faces recurring floods that endanger both housing and public health. Around 70% of its population lives in informal settlements, which are particularly vulnerable to flooding and waterborne diseases such as cholera.

ACTIONS

Ms. Funga highlighted that managing “too much” water is not only about drainage but also about strengthening social systems that reduce vulnerability.

The city has linked disaster preparedness to health and infrastructure improvements — building sanitation facilities, providing safe housing, and relocating families from high-risk zones. Through a “cash-for-work” program, residents are employed to clear blocked drains, earning income while protecting their neighborhoods. Lusaka also focuses on long-term solutions, such as planting trees to protect recharge areas and raise environmental awareness.

KEY LESSONS

- Effective flood management was linked to sanitation and housing improvements.
- Community-based “cash-for-work” programs enabled more efficient, decentralized drainage maintenance.
- Tree-planting initiatives and environmental awareness campaigns ensure the long-term protection of recharge areas.

NINGBO

A SEVEN-AXIS SYSTEM FOR URBAN FLOOD RESILIENCE

Speaker: Wenwu Yan,
President of Ningbo Water Conservancy & Hydropower Planning and Design Institute, China

Mr. Wenwu Yan, is a senior engineer with over 40 years of experience in water resources and hydraulic engineering. A pioneer in “Smart Water Conservancy,” he has led national flood management initiatives and earned multiple awards for his contributions to China’s water sector.

THE CHALLENGE

Ningbo, a low-lying coastal city, is highly exposed to typhoons and heavy rainfall. Protecting residents and critical infrastructure from frequent extreme weather is a pressing challenge.

ACTIONS

Ningbo has built a modern and comprehensive flood-control and disaster-reduction system structured around seven principles: blocking, diversion, storage, detention, drainage, intelligence, and infiltration. This system ensures that each measure — from flood barriers to AI monitoring — contributes to an integrated safety network.

By combining watershed-level coordination, green infrastructure, and smart technology, Ningbo has increased its resilience to extreme weather. The city successfully withstood Typhoons In-Fa (2021) and Muifa (2022) with zero casualties and minimal economic losses, proving the efficiency of its adaptive approach.

KEY LESSONS

- The seven-axis flood-control system balances engineering and natural processes.
- Satellite data and AI were used for smart monitoring and forecasting.
- The city’s resilience was proven during major typhoons with minimal damage.

LARISSA

LEARNING FROM STORM DANIEL TO BUILD FUTURE RESILIENCE

Speaker: : Maria Nikolaidou,
Head of Sub-department of Planning, Department of Operational Planning, Municipality of Larissa

Speaker: : Michail Tsiaras,
Head of the Department of Civil Protection, Municipality of Larissa, Greece

Maria Nikolaidou is responsible for the coordination and support of the city's strategic planning and resilience efforts as well as the integration of sustainability into local policies.

Michail Tsiaras is overseeing disaster preparedness and emergency response systems. With extensive experience in risk management, he leads efforts to strengthen the city's capacity to prevent and respond to natural hazards and other emergencies.

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THE CHALLENGE

Larissa, located in central Greece, experienced devastating flooding during Storm Daniel (2023), which revealed weaknesses in the region's flood-prevention infrastructure. Mr. Nikolaidou explained that fragmented responsibilities and lack of coordination among institutions exacerbated the impacts of the disaster.

ACTIONS

The city has since prioritized governance reform, disaster preparedness, and resilience planning. Protecting both human lives and essential infrastructure — such as housing and utilities — has become central to its approach. Clear communication, cooperation across agencies, and community awareness are now recognized as critical for reducing future risks.

KEY LESSONS

- Strengthening governance and coordination is essential for effective flood responses.
- The city built long-term resilience through disaster preparedness and planning.
- Critical infrastructure was identified and protected to reduce post-disaster impacts.

Mawuli Adjabeng, *Wounded Veins: The Struggle of River Pra* — Twifo Praso - Central Region, Ghana

PART 3 TOO DIRTY

Gerdie Hutomo, *Cleaning up the Shore* — Muara Angke, Jakarta, Indonesia
Winner of the CitiesWithWater International Photography Competition in the "Too Dirty" category

The third webinar, Too Dirty, held on **16 September 2025**, examined the challenge of water pollution in urban areas. Polluted water not only threatens biodiversity but also endangers human health, spreading waterborne diseases and contaminating vital resources.

Case studies from **Andong** (Korea), **Istanbul** (Türkiye), **Durban** (eThekwini, South Africa) and **Stockholm** (Sweden), illustrated how cities can clean, protect, and manage water through technological innovation, community engagement, and policy coordination.

ANDONG

CLEAN WATER AS A DRIVER OF INNOVATION AND GROWTH

Speaker: Gi-chang Kwon,
Mayor of Andong, Korea

Dr. Gi-chang Kwon, holds a PhD in Science and has a distinguished background as Professor and Dean at Andong National University. His leadership combines academic expertise and public service, earning him multiple national honors for his commitment to sustainable local governance and cultural development.

THE CHALLENGE

Mayor Kwon has stressed that “clean water saves lives, but dirty water is not water at all.” Andong faces the challenge of maintaining water quality amid urban growth and environmental pressures. Ensuring safe, pollution-free water is critical for public health, ecosystem protection, and sustainable development.

ACTIONS

Andong plans to adopt advanced technologies to monitor and improve water quality, including systems modeled after the National Algal Bloom Control Center, which uses real-time data and robotic equipment to remove algae and contaminants. The city is also preparing to develop regional water-resource networks and dams to secure a stable supply, laying the groundwork for research, innovation, and sustainable “blue growth” that connects clean water with future economic opportunities

KEY LESSONS

- Technological innovation has improved algal-bloom monitoring and removal.
- Interconnected regional water-resource systems are key to stable supply.
- Clean water is both a public good and economic catalyst.

ISTANBUL

İSTANBUL'S WATER SUPPLY : CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Speaker: Ahmet Saatçi,
Senior Professional Officer of Water and Sanitation Directorate, Istanbul, Türkiye

Prof. Dr. Ahmet Mete Saatçi is the retired President of the Turkish Water Institute (SUEN) and currently serves as an advisor. He established the Environmental Engineering Department at Marmara University (Istanbul), which he led for over two decades.

THE CHALLENGE

Istanbul faces the dual challenge of managing complex interbasin water transfers while addressing the impacts of informal settlements, which often lack adequate sanitation and contribute to water pollution, putting residents at risk of disease.

ACTIONS

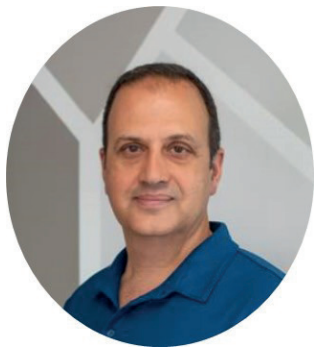
The MELEN project uses interbasin water transfers to secure Istanbul's future water supply. It combines large-scale engineering — namely 4-meter-diameter tunnels spanning 5.5 kilometers, 135 meters below sea level — with strategic policies to ensure equitable access to clean water and sanitation. Addressing informal settlements requires both technical solutions (namely the construction of new housing stock and wastewater treatment plants, discharging treated water into the Black Sea) as well as political commitment to improve public health and environmental outcomes.

KEY LESSONS

- Large-scale inter-basin transfer tunnels secured future water supply.
- Addressing pollution in informal settlements required a combination of policy, relocation and new housing construction.
- The city's approach integrated engineering solutions with social and political responses.

ETHEKWINI (DURBAN)

RIVER CLEANING FOR CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY



Speaker: Russell Stow,
Manager of the Transformative Riverine Management Programme (TRMP), eThekwini Municipality, South Africa

Russell works on transforming the human and economic relationship with rivers as part of a sustainable approach to restoring river health, addressing climate change vulnerability, and building urban resilience, uplifting communities and creating employment opportunities.

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THE CHALLENGE

Russel described how Durban faces worsening river pollution due to climate change, flooding, and the expansion of informal settlements.

ACTIONS

To address this, the eThekwini municipality created the Sihlanzimvelo River Cleaning Project, which evolved into the TRMP.

Through co-operatives of eight to ten community members, local residents were employed by the city to clean riverbanks to reduce damage to infrastructure by removing alien invasive plants, litter and rubbish, and report illegal dumping and monitor sewer leaks. This approach not only restores the river environment, but also generates employment and community upliftment. To date, approximately 106 co-operatives have been established, creating over 700 jobs. Durban's case shows how social cohesion can amplify environmental outcomes.

KEY LESSONS

- Community cooperatives were key to cleaning rivers and monitoring pollution
- Over 700 jobs have been created through the Sihlanzimvelo Programme and TRMP to date with intentions to expand the initiative across the city.
- The TRMP successfully integrated river management, social upliftment, and climate adaptation to aid in making Durban more resilient to Climate Change Impacts.

STOCKHOLM

RESTORING WATER QUALITY THROUGH INNOVATION AND AWARENESS

Speaker: Katarina Forslöw,
Project Leader in the Land and Water Administration, City of Stockholm, Sweden

Katarina Forslöw oversees initiatives on water quality, stormwater management, and habitat restoration. She and her colleagues are responsible for developing local action programs for the waterbodies in Stockholm and supporting other administrations within the city to implement the measures contained in those programs.

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THE CHALLENGE

Located between Lake Mälaren and the Baltic Sea, the city is exposed to both saltwater intrusion and stormwater contamination. Forslöw outlined Stockholm's three main challenges: eutrophication, pollutants, and altered aquatic habitats.

ACTIONS

In response, Stockholm has implemented measures aligned with the European Water Framework Directive — including sediment treatment, stormwater management, sewage upgrades, and new aquatic habitats. The municipality also prioritizes citizen awareness through campaigns such as "Your lake starts here", encouraging residents to understand their role in preventing pollution.

KEY LESSONS

- Water treatment and habitat restoration were integrated under EU frameworks.
- Public education campaigns effectively reduced household and urban pollution.
- Water quality measures relied on strong coordination between government, planning, and citizens.

Conclusion and perspectives

The **CitiesWithWater webinar series** — together with its accompanying photography competition — showcases how cities around the world are tackling three major water challenges: scarcity ("Too Little"), flooding ("Too Much"), and pollution ("Too Dirty"). While each city faces its own realities, shared themes emerge around governance, infrastructure, communication, nature-based solutions, and collaboration across local and global levels.

We extend our sincere thanks to all participants, speakers, city teams, and partner organizations for their valuable contributions to this collective learning journey.

Replays, reports, and speaker presentations are available on the CitiesWithWater website (https://citieswithnature.org/citieswithwater/) along with information about the photography competition. The final webinar **("Too Valuable"), on 21 January 2026**, is in a roundtable format on the theme "Financing Water Local Projects: Levers, Mechanisms, and Partnerships".

The insights and solutions shared throughout the series will serve as a foundation for the next steps of global dialogue between local and regional authorities, to shape the agenda of the **11th World Water Forum, in Riyadh in 2027.**

Co-hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the World Water Council, the 11th Forum includes a political process designed to engage key decision-makers in advancing global water security. Local authorities play a crucial role as they are closest to communities and directly manage many aspects of water, sanitation, and urban adaptation, ensuring that the Forum's political commitments remain grounded in local realities.

We look forward to continuing this collaboration and advancing together toward more sustainable and adaptive urban water management.

The International photo competition

Sujal Pandey, *Beneath the Bridge, Beyond the Waste* — Bagmati River, Lalitpur, Nepal
Winner of the CitiesWithwater International Photography Competition in the "Young Storyteller" category

All photos featured in this booklet were submitted as part of the **CitiesWithWater International Photography Competition.**

Launched on World Water Day 2025, in parallel with the webinar series, the competition showcased innovative local actions and individual agency in addressing water challenges and promoting urban water resilience. It demonstrated the power of **visual storytelling** to highlight diverse community perspectives, including those of younger generations, on urban water resilience and sustainable water management. The competition and its images proved immensely popular and provided graphic representation of the daily reality of billions of people living with water insecurity.

All shortlisted and winning entries of the competition can be found on the online exhibition page, accessible via the QR code below or the following link: https://citieswithnature.org/citieswithwater-photography-exhibition/

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