

Impact of Swacch Bharat Abhiyan on Sanitation and Cleanliness in India

Dr.P. Srinivas¹, Dr. M. Babu Rao², Avuala Roselin³

¹Assistant Professor & Head, Department of Economics, Vikrama Simhapuri University College, Kavali

²Lecturer in Economics, GVSM Government Degree College, Ulavapadu, SPSR Nellore District, A.P.

³M.A. Economics Final Year, Vikrama Simhapuri University College, Kavali

Abstract:

Cleaner and healthier environment is a basic requirement which defines a person's quality of life. Personal health and hygiene along with the surrounding environment plays crucial role in preventing diseases, abolishing social stigma, safety and security. Lack of adequate sanitation increases the spread of diseases like diarrhoea and other tropical diseases. Spread of such diseases, number of cases and deaths can be controlled with better sanitation facilities. Apart from it, better sanitation facilities can benefit people by reducing the medical costs and generating more working hours and also, reducing the number of days lost at school. Several reasons were attributed for poor sanitation and hygienic facilities in India and the most significant one is open defecation. According to WHO, in India nearly half of the population around 568 million people defecate in fields, forests, bodies of water and other public places. To overcome this India has implemented various schemes and policies and notable among them is Swacch Bharat Mission. The Government of India has been implementing Swacch Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) from 2014 to eradicate open defecation in both rural and urban India. During the first phase implementation of SBA (2014-2019) significant progress has been made. By 2019, the mission celebrated the construction of over 100 million individual household toilets, declaring more than 6 lakh villages Open Defecation Free (ODF) and aligning with Sustainable Development Goals Target 6.2. Apart from this, SBA also created massive awareness among the public towards sanitation and cleanliness. With these encouraging results, the Government of India has started the second phase on 1st October 2021 for 5 years. In this context, this research paper aims to examine the role of Swacch Bharat Abhiyan in improving sanitation and cleanliness in the country by using secondary data. It was found that implementation of Swacch Bharat Abhiyan helped to reduce open defecation substantially in India. National Family Health Survey (NFHS) taken up during 2019-21 reveals that the number households with no toilet facilities have been decreased to 19% due to implementation of SBA. It also found that SBA has brought significant behavioral change towards sanitization and cleanliness among the individuals?

Keywords: : Sanitation, Cleanliness, Open Defecation, Swacch Bharat Abhiyan, SDGs

1. Introduction

“Uncleanliness of the mind is more dangerous than that of the body. The latter, however, is an indication of the former.” This statement is given by Mahatma Gandhi in order to manifest the importance of sanitation and healthy body and how they are related. A Cleaner and healthier environment is a basic requirement which defines an individual's quality of life. Personal health and hygiene along with the surrounding environment plays crucial role in preventing diseases, eliminating social stigma and ensuring safety and security. Lack of adequate sanitation increases

the spread of diseases like diarrhoea and other tropical diseases. With the better sanitation facilities, spread of such diseases, number of cases and deaths can be controlled. In addition, improved sanitation facilities can benefit individuals by reducing the medical costs and generating more working hours.

India grapples with poor sanitation and hygienic facilities. Several reasons were attributed to this and the most significant one is open defecation. According to WHO, in India nearly half of the population around 568 million people defecate in fields, forests, bodies of water and other public places. The 69th Round Report of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) revealed that 59.4 per cent and 8.8 per cent of households in rural and urban India, respectively, had no latrine facilities (Business Standard, 2014). To overcome this, India has implemented various schemes and policies and notable among them is Swachh Bharat Mission. The Government of India has been implementing Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) from 2014 to eradicate open defecation in both rural and urban India. SBM has been able to accelerate India's progress in ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (SDG-6).

According to UNICEF, implementation of SBM helped 100 million rural households and 500 million individuals accessed to toilets, across 630,000 villages. Households in open defecation free villages (i.e. a toilet in every household) saved up to INR 50,000 every year and overall benefits exceeded costs by 4.7 times for these households (UNICEF, 2018). This tallied savings from everything related to reduced days of illness to time saved in waiting or traveling for treatment. Soil and groundwater sources in ODF villages were generally less contaminated compared to the villages that did not have 100 per cent toilet coverage (UNICEF, 2019). It was also estimated that an equivalent of 7.5 million full-time jobs had been created by SBM. As a result, access to sanitation has proven to be both economically and environmentally beneficial, generating spill over benefits to other SDG goals such as those promoting environmental protection and upward mobility for vulnerable populations. In this background, an attempt has been made in this research paper to examine the role of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in improving sanitation and cleanliness in India based on secondary data.

2. Nationwide Sanitation programmes prior to Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

According to the Census, the rural sanitation coverage in India was merely 1% in 1981. The first nationwide programme with a focus on sanitation was the Central Rural Sanitation Programme (CRSP), which was started in 1986 aimed at providing sanitation facilities in rural areas. Later, in 1999, CRSP was restructured and launched as the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC). While CRSP was a supply-driven infrastructure-oriented programme based on subsidy, TSC was a demand-driven, project-based community-led initiative organized around the district as the unit. By 2001, only 22% of the rural families had access to toilets. It increased further to 32.7% by 2011. In 2012, TSC was revamped as Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA) to accelerate the sanitation coverage in rural areas through saturation approach and by enhancing incentives for Individual Household Latrines (IHHL).

Compared to rural sanitation, fewer programmes were implemented to address the deficiencies in urban sanitation. During 1980s, the Integrated Low-Cost Sanitation Scheme provided subsidies for households to build low-cost toilets. Furthermore, the National Slum Development Project and its successor initiative, the Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana launched in 2001, were programmes that aimed to construct community toilets for slum populations. In 2008, the National Urban Sanitation Policy (NUSP) was launched to manage human excreta and associated public health and environmental impacts.

3. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan was launched on October 2, 2014 to fulfill the vision of a cleaner India by October 2, 2019. The objective of the Mission was to eliminate open defecation, eradicate manual scavenging, and promote scientific solid waste. Swachh Bharat Mission comprises two components such as Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G) and Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U). While the rural component of the Mission is implemented under the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, the urban one is implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Mahatma Gandhi's spectacle- Official logo of the mission

3.1. Progress of Swachh Bharat Mission – Gramin (SBM-Gramin)

Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) aimed to attain universal sanitation coverage and eliminating open defecation in rural areas. Key activities include the construction of individual household toilets, community sanitary complexes, and implementing solid and liquid waste management systems. The mission also emphasizes behavior change through Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaigns and Human Resource Development (HRD) activities. This massive undertaking successfully mobilized nationwide participation, marking it as the largest behavioral change movement in the world. By 2019, the mission marked the construction of over 100 million individual household toilets, declaring more than 6 lakh villages ODF, a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th birth anniversary and aligning with Sustainable Development Goals Target 6.2.

Figure 1 illustrates the expenditure made by the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation on Swachh Bharat Mission – Gramin. The expenditure towards Swachh Bharat – Gramin saw a consistent rise from 2014-15 (Rs 2,841 crore) to 2017-18 (Rs 16,888 crore) followed by a decline in the subsequent years. Moreover, during 2015-18, the expenditure of the scheme exceeded the budgeted amount by more than 10%. However, every year since 2018-19, there has been some under-utilization of the allocated amount.

Figure 2 illustrates that the toilet coverage for rural households in India during 2014-19. It shows that the access to toilets by rural households is 43.8% in 2014-15, which has been increased to 100% in 2019-20 due to implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission – Gramin.

Figure 1: Expenditure on Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin during 2014-22

Note: Values for 2020-21 are revised estimates and 2021-22 are budget estimates. Expenditure before 2019-20 were from the erstwhile Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.

Sources: Union Budgets 2014-15 to 2021-22.

Figure 2: Toilet coverage for rural households in India

Sources: Dashboard of SBM (Gramin), Ministry of Jal Shakti.

Thus, remarkable progress has been achieved under Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin through massive construction of individual household latrines leading to drastic reduction in open defecation in Rural India. With encouraging results under SBM-G Phase-I, the SBM-G Phase II was launched in 2020-21 with an outlay of Rs 1.41 lakh crore with the objective of sustaining the ODF status and managing solid and liquid waste to bring about visual cleanliness by 2024-25 and transforming all the villages from ODF to ODF Plus.

3.2. Success stories of SBM-Gramin

Success stories of SBM-Gramin have emerged in a host of villages across India. For instance, Koraput village in Odisha, despite all the challenges, has been able to declare itself Open Defecation Free (ODF). It was local governance and active participation from citizens that led to

the community's commitment to eliminating open defecation. In Gujarat, seven villages constructed household toilets and thus reached their ODF status. These success stories are the result of community involvement and the prioritisation of sanitation by local leaders.

Similarly in Navlewadi, Maharashtra, the government helped the village in laying pipelines for fresh water and water tanks to alleviate the continuous problem of water scarcity. The government not only helped in the construction of toilets but also ensured that the families had a good quantity of provision of clean water to maintain proper hygiene. Success has been achieved by SBM mainly through community participation in rural areas. In Darora village in Uttar Pradesh, children below the age of ten years took brooms to clean their village, encouraging people to join the efforts and connect with them.

An innovative cluster-level plastic waste management system was a novelty under SBM Phase II in Sasewadi Gram Panchayat, Pune district, Maharashtra. It will not only help in managing plastic waste but also contribute to achieving ODF+ status. Community meetings were organised to educate the residents about waste segregation and its management. Soon, it evolved into a community movement where every individual claimed ownership of the sanitation initiatives.

3.3. Observations in implementation of SBM-G

Despite the remarkable progress, there are some observations made by the elites in implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen. The 15th Finance Commission (2020) observed that the practice of open defecation is still prevalent, despite access to toilets and highlighted that there is a need to sustain the behavioural change among individual for using toilets. The Standing Committee on Rural Development raised a similar concern in 2018, noting that “even a village with 100% household toilets cannot be declared open defecation-free (ODF) till all the inhabitants start using them”. The Standing Committee also raised questions over the construction quality of toilets and noted that the government is including non-functional toilets, leading to inflated data.

The 15th Finance Commission also observed that the scheme only offers financial incentives to construct latrines to households below the poverty line (BPL) and also to the selected households above the poverty line. It highlighted that there are considerable exclusion errors in finding BPL households and recommended the universalisation of the scheme to achieve 100% ODF status.

3.4. Progress of Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban (SBM-Urban)

SBM-Urban aims at making urban India free from open defecation and achieving 100% scientific management of municipal solid waste in 4,000+ towns in the country. Table 1 illustrates the number of toilets constructed under Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban as on 30th December 2020. It indicates that the mission made a target of constructing 66 lakh individual household latrines (IHHLs) by October 2, 2019. However, it could achieve only 59 lakh IHHLs by 2019 and by 30th December 2020 about 63 lakh toilets have been constructed.

Table 1: Toilet construction under Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (as of December 30, 2020)

Targets	Original Target	Revised Target (revised in 2019)	Actual Constructed
Individual Household Latrines	66,42,000	58,99,637	62,60,606
Community and Public Toilets	5,08,000	5,07,587	6,15,864

Sources: Swachh Bharat Mission Urban - Dashboard.

Figure 3: Expenditure on Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban during 2014-22 (in Rs crore)

Note: Values for 2020-21 are revised estimates and 2021-22 are budget estimates.

Sources: Union Budget 2014-15 to 2021-22.

Table 2 presents waste management under Swachh Bharat Mission-urban in terms of Door to Door waste collection, Source segregation (involves separating waste at the point of generation (homes, businesses, etc.) into different streams, typically wet (biodegradable), dry (recyclable), and hazardous), and Waste processing as on 30th December 2020. It shows that the mission has achieved 97% target in door to door waste collection while it has achieved 78% in source segregation. It also shows that only 68% progress has been achieved in waste processing.

Table 2: Waste management under Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (progress as of December 30, 2020)

Targets	Target	Progress as of March 2020	Progress as of December 2020
Door to Door Waste Collection (Wards)	86,284	81,535 (96%)	83,435 (97%)
Source Segregation (Wards)	86,284	64,730 (75%)	67,367 (78%)
Waste Processing (in %)	100%	65%	68%

Sources: Standing Committee on Urban Development (2021).

SBM-Urban Phase-I witnessed an impressive progress in achieving the target of 100% urban India as ODF. The second phase of SBM-U was launched on 1st October 2021, for a period of 5 years (till October 2026) The vision for SBM-U 2.0 is to achieve “Garbage Free” status for all cities by 2026 and institutionalizing ‘Swachh’ behavior amongst the citizens.

3.5. Success stories of SBM-U

SBM-U has brought remarkable changes in several cities in India, wherein Indore and Surat have emerged as role models for maintaining cleanliness and efficiently managing the municipalities' scientific waste. The city of Indore has topped the ranking in Swachh Survekshan and has been accorded the status of India's cleanest city for many consecutive years. This is due to the comprehensive waste management system, which involves waste collection from door to door, segregation at source and proper composting. Hence, Indore is one among the 3,547 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) that have been declared as Open Defecation Free Plus (ODF+), featuring functional and hygienic community and public toilets. The local authorities have imposed a hefty penalty for littering, in addition to raising public awareness about adopting sustainable practices.

Similarly, the city of Surat has made significant progress in managing its waste and sanitation. Innovative strategies of waste management have transformed it from one of the most polluted cities into one of the cleanest cities. Surat utilizes technology for tracking waste collection and disposal, as well as its processing at various waste processing plants. The city is one among the 1,191 ULBs that have achieved ODF+ status, signifying complete faecal sludge management. According to local authorities, public awareness related to sanitation has increased manifold, with individuals participating as volunteers in cleanliness drives and community activities. Testimonials from residents in Indore city highlight a new civic pride in cleanliness; many residents speak of an improved quality of life. These success stories in Indore and Surat illustrate the potential of the Swachh Bharat Mission to create a cleaner and healthier environment in cities by efficiently managing their waste and engaging the community.

3.6. Observations in implementation of SBM-Urban

Even though, impressive progress has been made under SBM-Urban, the Standing Committee on Urban Development observed in early 2020 that toilets constructed under SBM-Urban in areas including East Delhi are of very poor quality, and do not have adequate maintenance. Further, only 1,276 out of the 4,320 cities declared as open defecation free have the toilets equipped with water, maintenance, and hygiene. Additionally, it also highlighted in September 2020 that inconsistent allocation of funds for solid waste management across states/UTs needs to be corrected to ensure fair implementation of the programme.

The Standing Committee on Urban Development (2021) also raises concern about the slow pace in achieving targets for source segregation and waste processing. Their target achievements are stood at 78% and 68% respectively of the goal established under SBM-Urban during 2020-21.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of SBA made significant impact on mental, social and physical well-being of the population. The recent study published in the renowned science journal 'Nature' indicates that implementation of SBA has prevented 60,000-70,000 infant deaths annually. There is a direct link between illness and open defecation. It is a known fact that contaminated water and food often leads to repeated infections, malabsorption of nutrients and dehydration. National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data shows that over the years, there has been a fall in households with no toilet facilities. It has been 19% in the 2019-21 survey under the subsidized provision of toilets at scale under the Swachh Bharat Mission. Thus it is evident that Swachh Bharat Mission has helped to improve the sanitation and cleanliness in the country which enable the individuals to lead a healthy and quality life.

References

1. Chaudhary, A. (2017). Swachh Bharat Mission - Need, Objective and Impact. International Journal for Research in Management and Pharmacy, 6(2).
2. Ganesh KS, Sitanshu KS, Animesh J (2011). Health and environmental sanitation in India: Issues for prioritizing control strategies. Indian J Occupational and Environmental Med. 2011;15(3):93-6.
3. Government of India. Swachh Bharat Mission - Gramin. 2015. Available at: http://www.nic.in/archives/rdpri/downloads/guidelines_Swachh_Bharat_Mission_Gramin.pdf
4. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Government of India. National Family Health

- Survey-5, 2019–21 [Datasets]. <https://dhsprogram.com/data/> (2022).
5. Rao and Subbarao (2015). Swachh Bharat: Some Issues and Concern, International Journal of Academic Research ISSN: 2348-7666 : Vol.2, (4). October-December, 2015
 6. Report of Fifteenth Finance Commission for 2021-26, <https://fincomindia.nic.in/asset/doc/commission-reports/XVFC%20VOL%20I%20Main%20Report.pdf>
 7. Report of Standing Committee on Rural Development, 2018, Ministry of Rural Development and Panchayatraj, GOI.
 8. Report on Standing Committee on Urban Development, 2020, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, GOI.
 9. Singh, S. L. (2018). Impact of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in Indian Society. International Journal of Home Science, 4(1), 215-219. 2.
 10. Suman Chakrabarti et. al (2024), Toilet Construction under the Swachh Bharat Mission and Infant Mortality in India, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-024-71268-8>
 11. Thakkar (2015). Swachh Bharat [Clean India] Mission – An Analytical Study, Renewable Research Journal, Volume 3(2), Page 168
 12. World Health Organization. UN-water global analysis and assessment of sanitation and drinking water (GLAAS) 2014.
 13. 2011 census report
 14. <https://sbmurban.org/>
 15. <https://swachhbharatmission.ddws.gov.in/>