# CAG Survey Report on School Toilets

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## Why in News

**The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG)** has flagged irregularities in the construction of toilets in schools by Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) in an audit report tabled before Parliament.

## Key Points

- **Physical survey:**
  - There are **10.8 lakh** government schools in the country. Overall, more than **1.4 lakh toilets** have been built by **53 CPSEs,** with significant support coming from **power, coal** and **oil companies** as part of the **Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan.**
  - The CAG audit conducted a physical survey of a sample of **2,695 toilets** built by these companies in 15 States.

- **Issues Found:**
  - **No functional toilets:** Out of the **1,967 coeducational schools** surveyed, 99 schools had no functional toilets while 436 had only one functional toilet, meaning that the **objective of providing separate toilets for boys and girls was not fulfilled in 27% of the schools.**
  - **Maintenance and Sanitation:**
    - **75%** of toilets did not follow the norm for daily cleaning at least once a day.
    - 72% of constructed toilets had no running water facilities inside, and 55% had no hand washing facilities at all, an even greater necessity in **Covid-19** affected times.
  - **Construction Issues:** Out of the sample of 2,695 toilets, CPSEs identified but did not construct 83. Another 200 toilets were reported to be constructed, but were non-existent, while 86 toilets were only partially constructed.
    - Thus, almost 40% of toilets were **non-existent, partially completed or unused.**
    - The audit also noticed cases of **defective construction** of toilets, non-provision of foundation, ramp/staircase and damaged or overflowed leach pit, which led to ineffective use of toilets.
    - **Prefabricated structures** were used for constructing many toilets leading to **extra expenditure, dilution in durability** and **non-compliance with direction.**
- **Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan:**
  - It was launched by the **Ministry of Human Resource Development** (now Ministry of Education) in September **2014.**
  - The aim is to meet the **Right to Education** Act's **mandate that all schools must have separate toilets for boys and girls.**
  - In order to **effectively change the behaviour of students,** the programme norms required the **CPSEs** to build toilets with running water and hand washing facilities, and to maintain the toilets for three to five years while charging the **annual expenses to their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) budgets.**

- **Importance of School Toilets:**
    - **Constitutional Promises:** As mandated by the **Right to Education Act**, all children are required to spend **six hours** in school every day. During this period, they would want to use the toilets.

        The Act mandates that all schools must have **separate toilets for boys and girls.**
    - **Health & Nutrition:** The provision of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in school secures a **healthy school environment** and protects children from **illness and exclusion.**
        - Hygiene in school also **supports school nutrition.**
        - The simple act of washing hands with soap before eating the school mid-day meal assists to break disease transmission routes.
    - **Enrolments & Dropouts:** Lack of toilets for girls, is a reason for dropouts. A school latrine generally increased female enrolment more than male enrolment.
    - **Child as a Change Agent:** Having a clean school fosters a child's pride in his or her school and community.

        It enables every child to become an agent of change for improving water, sanitation and hygiene practices in their families and within their community.

**Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009**

- The RTE Act aims to provide **primary education to all children aged 6 to 14 years.**
- It enforces **Education as a Fundamental Right (Article 21-A).**
- The act mandates **25% reservation for disadvantaged sections** of the society where disadvantaged groups include:
    - SCs and STs
    - Socially Backward Class
    - Differently abled
- It also makes provisions for a non-admitted child to be admitted to an age appropriate class.

## Way Forward

- Regular monitoring is essential for the success of such a programme related to basic facilities.
- In addition to an adequate provision of funds, cleaning, sanitation training, maintenance of toilets and other things, the issue of fixing accountability must be addressed. Else we will keep visiting the basic issues over and over again, reformulating strategies and recommissioning funds.

**Source: TH**