



## Sanitation Challenges in Indian District Courts

**For Prelims:** [Supreme Court](#), [District Court Sanitation](#), [Swachh Bharat Mission](#), [WHO Water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\)](#), [Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation \(AMRUT\)](#)

**For Mains:** Sanitation and Hygiene in India, Government Policies

**Source:** TH

### Why in News?

A recent report published by the Centre for Research and Planning of the [Supreme Court of India](#), titled '**State of the Judiciary**,' has brought attention to disparities in gender-specific facilities within district court complexes across the country.

- The report sheds light on the **inadequate provision of separate toilets for women**, the lack of **sanitary napkin** vending machines, and the absence of toilets for transgender persons.

### What are the Key Findings of the Report?

- **Inadequate Women-Friendly Facilities:**
  - Nearly **one-fifth of district court complexes** lack separate toilets for women.
  - Only 6.7% of women's toilets have **sanitary napkin vending machines**.
- **Challenges in Existing Washrooms:**
  - Existing washrooms often have broken doors and face issues of irregular water supply.
  - Shared washrooms for male and female judges raise **concerns about privacy and equality**.
  - Judges personally engage sweepers and cleaners to ensure cleanliness in court toilets.
    - For instance, In Peren district of Nagaland, no maintenance facility was engaged to clean the toilets. Staff members themselves had to ensure the upkeep of the washrooms.
- **Lack of Inclusive Facilities:**
  - Most district courts do not have toilets for **transgender persons**.
  - Emphasized the need for "**gender-inclusive toilets**" in every court complex.
    - In Kerala, washrooms for transgender persons are shared with persons with disabilities.
    - Uttarakhand has only four washrooms for transgender persons across the state.
    - Tamil Nadu offers such facilities in only two districts — Chennai and Coimbatore.
  - Using washrooms that do not align with their gender identity may cause **discomfort and harassment to transgender persons**.

### What are the Challenges Posed by Inadequate Sanitation Facilities?

- **Health and Hygiene Risks:**
  - Insufficient toilet facilities may result in unhygienic conditions, posing health risks for

women, including the increased likelihood of infections and diseases such as [cholera](#), [typhoid](#), and [dysentery](#).

- Lack of separate toilets can contribute to safety concerns for women, especially in poorly lit or secluded areas, making them **vulnerable to harassment or assault**.
- **Pregnant women and elderly individuals** may face challenges accessing shared toilet facilities, impacting their comfort and mobility.
- **Violation of United Nations Human Rights:**
  - The UN Human Rights state that the **right to sanitation entitles everyone** to have physical and affordable access to sanitation, in all spheres of life, that is safe, hygienic, secure, and socially and culturally acceptable and that provides privacy and ensures dignity.
- **Violation of Fundamental Right:**
  - The Supreme Court, in ***Virendra Gaur vs State Haryana (1995)***, emphasized that [Article 21](#) **protects the right to life**, extending it to **sanitation for the enjoyment of life with dignity**.

## How can Sanitation Facilities be Improved in Courts?

- **Allocate Dedicated Resources:**
  - Budget sufficient funds for sanitation upkeep and allocate staff responsible for cleaning and maintenance. Consider appointing hygiene champions within the court to raise awareness and monitor standards.
    - As suggested by the former CJI, a dedicated institution, the **National Judicial Infrastructure Authority of India (NJIAI)**, could be established to serve as a central body for mobilizing funds for sanitation improvement projects in courts.
- **Upgrade Existing Facilities:**
  - Renovate bathrooms to **ensure cleanliness, functionality, and accessibility** for people with disabilities. Install proper ventilation, lighting, and hygiene supplies like soap, paper towels, and sanitary bins.
- **Develop Sanitation Guidelines:**
  - Set **national standards for sanitation facilities in courts**, ensuring consistency and quality across different states and court levels. This could include guidelines for minimum amenities, accessibility requirements, and hygiene protocols.
- **Encourage User Feedback:**
  - Create mechanisms for **court users to provide feedback on sanitation facilities**, identify issues, and propose improvements. This could involve suggestion boxes, surveys, or public meetings.
    - Ensure swift and timely action on suggestions and complaints.

## What is the Status of Toilet Facilities in India?

- Sanitation is a **State subject**, and hence the task of providing toilets, initiating behaviour change activities, providing **Solid and Liquid Waste Management arrangements** and sustaining the various activities vests with the states.
- According to the [National Family Health Survey \(NFHS\)](#), **69.3% of households have access to improved toilet facilities** or those that are not shared.
  - **8.4%** of households have **access to shared toilet** facilities and **2.9%** have access to **unimproved facilities**.
- The report by NFHS showed that **80.7% of urban households and 63.6% of rural households** have access to improved toilet facilities, while the percentage stands at 63.6 for rural households.
  - A total of **19.4% of Indian households did not use any toilet facility in 2019-2021**.
    - In **urban regions**, [open defecation](#) is practiced in **6.1%** of all households while that number shoots up to **25.9% for households in rural areas**.
- Among states and union territories, access to a **toilet facility is lowest in Bihar** (available only in 61.2% of households). Bihar is followed by Jharkhand (69.6%) and Odisha (71.3%).
  - **Lakshadweep** reports **100% household access to toilet facilities**.

## Initiatives Related to Sanitation

- [Swachh Bharat Mission](#)
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\) Water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\) - India](#)
- [Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation \(AMRUT\)](#)
- **Swachhata Abhiyaan App:**
  - The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has launched it to capture the data of insanitary latrines still existing and manual scavengers associated with their cleaning.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### **Mains**

**Q.** “To ensure effective implementation of policies addressing the water, sanitation and hygiene needs the identification of the beneficiary segments is to be synchronized with anticipated outcomes.” Examine the statement in the context of the WASH scheme. **(2017)**

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