



Making Swachh Bharat Mission A Reality

This editorial is based on [“The reality of the Swachh Bharat Mission”](#) which was published in The Hindu on 25/04/2024. The article elucidates various facets of the Swachh Bharat Mission, emphasizing its status as a state-owned initiative. However, it also points out certain challenges the scheme faces, such as its perceived role in the privatization of public health services and its perpetuation of caste discrimination.

For Prelims: [Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen](#), [Open Defecation Free Status](#), Gobar Dhan, Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan, Swachhata App, Garbage Free Cities (GFC)-Star rating, [Sustainable Development Goals](#), [United Nations](#), [Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Scheme](#). (GOBAR-DHAN).

For Mains: Issues and Challenges in the Implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)

India was ranked right at the bottom of 180 countries in the [Environment Performance Index \(EPI\)](#) in 2022. The EPI ranks countries on climate change performance, environmental health, and ecosystem vitality. It measures 40 performance indicators across 11 issue categories, such as air quality, and drinking water and sanitation.

For 10 years, the government has embarked on several campaigns of environmental health and development. These included the [Swachh Bharat Mission \(SBM\)](#), the [Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation](#), the [Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana](#), and the [National Clean Air Programme](#).

The SBM is meant to address the issue of [WASH \(Water, Sanitation, and Health\)](#). Likewise, the [Smart Cities Mission \(SCM\)](#) is supposed to deliver on the clean energy requirements of towns. However, what is witnessed is an increase in the vulnerability of the population owing to air and water pollution, among others.

What is Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)?

▪ About:

- It is a massive mass movement that seeks to create a Clean India by 2019. The father of our nation **Mr. Mahatma Gandhi** always puts the emphasis on swachhta as swachhta leads to healthy and prosperous life.
- Keeping this in mind, the Indian government has decided to launch the swachh bharat mission on October 2, 2014. The mission will cover all rural and urban areas.
 - The urban component of the mission will be implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, and the rural component by the Ministry of Jal Shakti.

▪ Swachh Bharat Mission for Urban Areas:

◦ Phase 1:

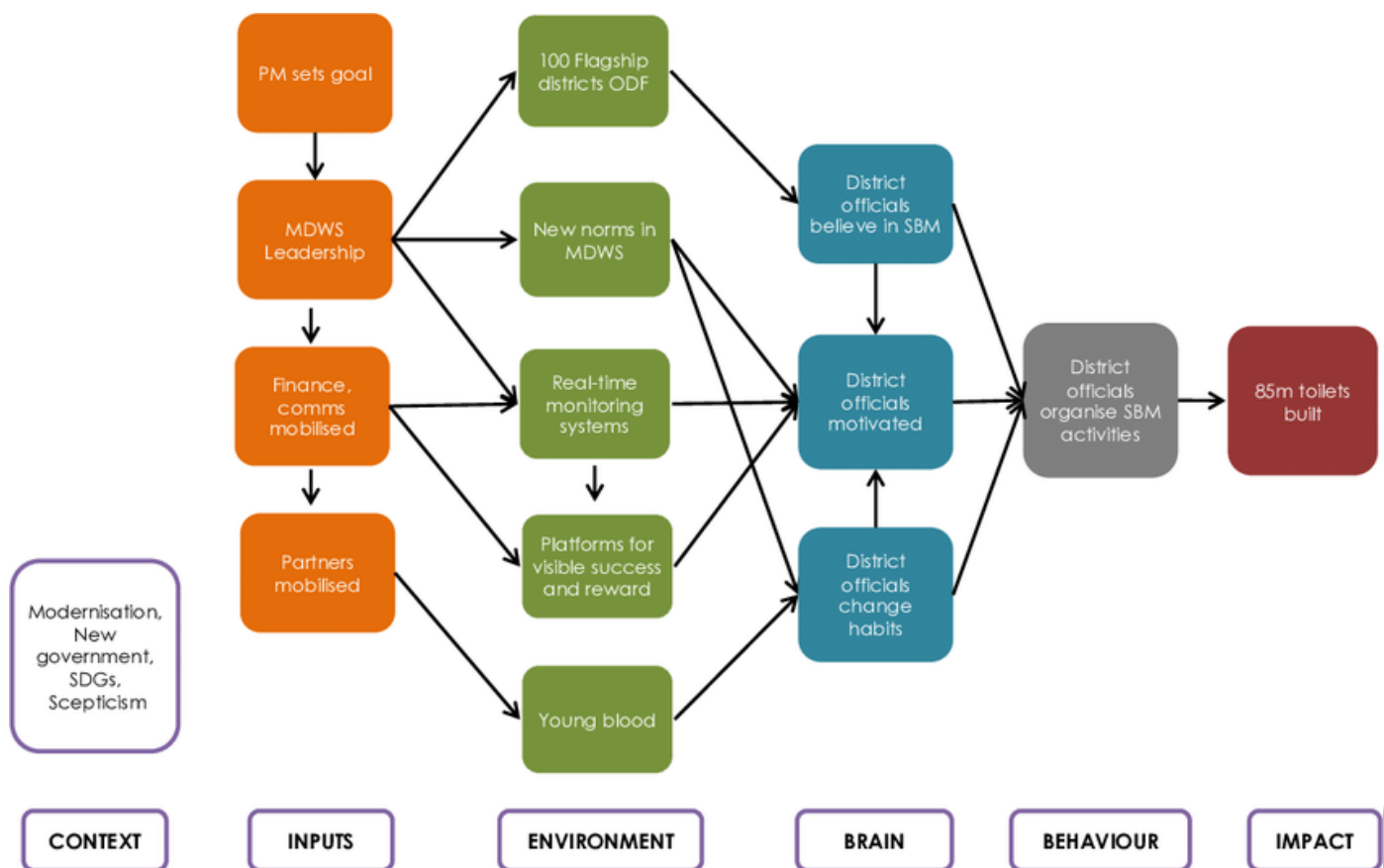
- The programme includes elimination of open defecation, conversion of unsanitary toilets to pour flush toilets, eradication of manual scavenging, municipal solid waste

management and bringing about a behavioural change in people regarding healthy sanitation practices.

- The mission aims to cover 1.04 crore households, provide 2.5 lakh community toilets, 2.6 lakh public toilets, and a solid waste management facility in each town.
 - Under the programme, community toilets will be built in residential areas where it is difficult to construct individual household toilets.
 - Public toilets will also be constructed in designated locations such as tourist places, markets, bus stations, railway stations, etc. The programme will be implemented over a five-year period in 4,401 towns.
- The expected assistance for construction of community toilets - Central Government will contribute upto 40% of the cost of construction of community toilet as a **Viability Gap Funding (VGF)**/ outright grant. As per SBM guidelines, the States/UTs shall provide an additional 13.33% for the said component.
- The North-East and **special category states** shall be required to contribute 4% only. The balance shall have to be arranged through innovative mechanisms by the urban local body. The approximate cost per seat for a community toilet is Rs 65,000.

◦ **Phase 2:**

- SBM-U 2.0 envisions to make all cities 'Garbage Free' and ensure grey and black water management in all cities other than those covered under AMRUT, make all urban local bodies as ODF+ and those with a population of less than 1 lakh as ODF++, thereby achieving the vision of safe sanitation in urban areas.
 - The Mission will focus on source segregation of solid waste, utilizing the principles of **3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle)**, scientific processing of all types of municipal solid waste and remediation of legacy dumpsites for effective solid waste management. The outlay of SBM-U 2.0 is around Rs 1.41 lakh crore for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26.
- This will be a continuation of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban), with the following components for funding and implementation across all statutory towns, viz.
 - Sustainable sanitation (construction of toilets)
 - Wastewater treatment, including fecal sludge management in all ULBs with less than 1 lakh population (this is a new component added to SBM-U 2.0)
 - Solid Waste Management
 - Information, Education and Communication, and
 - Capacity building.



▪ Swachh Bharat Mission for Rural Areas:

◦ Phase 1:

- The Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan has been restructured into the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin). The SBM(G) was launched on 2nd October 2014 to ensure cleanliness in India and make it **Open Defecation Free (ODF)** in Five Years.
 - It seeks to improve the levels of cleanliness in rural areas through Solid and Liquid Waste Management activities and making Gram Panchayats Open Defecation Free (ODF), clean and sanitised.
- Incentive as provided under the Mission for the construction of Individual Household Latrines (IHHL) was available for all **Below Poverty Line (BPL)** Households and Above Poverty Line (APL) households restricted to **SCs/STs**, small and marginal farmers, landless labourers with homestead, physically handicapped and women headed households.
- The Incentive amount provided under SBM(G) to Below Poverty Line (BPL) /identified APLs households was up to Rs.12,000 for construction of one unit of IHHL and provide for water availability, including for storing for hand-washing and cleaning of the toilet.
 - Central Share of this Incentive for IHHLs was Rs.9,000/- (75%) from Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin). The State share was Rs.3,000/-(25%).
 - For North Eastern State, and Special category States, the Central share was Rs. 10,800/- and the State share Rs.1,200/- (90% : 10%). The beneficiary was encouraged to additionally contribute in the construction of his/her IHHL to promote ownership.

◦ Phase 2:

- Having achieved the milestone of an ODF India in a time bound manner in the last five years from 2014 to 2019, the work on sanitation and the behaviour change campaign has to continue to sustain the gains made under the programme and also to ensure no one is left behind and the overall cleanliness (Sampoorn Swachhata) in villages as well.
 - In February 2020, the Phase-II of the SBM(G) with a total outlay of Rs. 1,40,881 crores was approved with a focus on the sustainability of ODF status and Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM).

- SBM(G) Phase-II is planned to be a novel model of convergence between different verticals of financing and various schemes of Central and State Governments. The programme will be implemented in mission mode from 2020-21 to 2024-25.

▪ **Different Components of SBM:**

◦ **Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan:**

- The Ministry of Education has launched Swachh Vidyalaya Programme under SBM with an objective to provide separate toilets for boys and girls in all government schools within one year.
- The programme aims at ensuring that every school in the country must have a set of essential interventions that relate to both technical and human development aspects of a good Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Programme.
- The Ministry financially supports States/Union Territories inter alia to provide toilets for girls and boys in schools under [Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan \(SSA\) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan \(RMSA\).](#)

◦ **Rashtriya Swachhata Kosh:**

- The Swachh Bharat Kosh (SBK) has been set up to facilitate and channelize individual philanthropic contributions and **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** funds to achieve the objective of Clean India (Swachh Bharat).
- The Kosh will be used to achieve the objective of improving cleanliness levels in rural and urban areas, including in schools. The allocation from the Kosh will be used to supplement and complement departmental resources for such activities.
 - To incentivise contributions from individuals and corporate, modalities are being considered to provide tax rebates where it is possible.

◦ **GOBAR-DHAN:**

- [Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Scheme \(GOBAR-DHAN\)](#) scheme was launched by the Ministry of Jal Shakti in 2018 and aims to augment income of farmers by converting biodegradable waste into [compressed biogas \(CBG\).](#)

What are the Different Issues Being Witnessed in Implementation of SBM?

▪ **Persistent Traditional Beliefs Regarding Sanitation Work:**

- Sanitation and waste management in India are associated with the wide prevalence of caste. Historically, the subjugated castes have been forced to carry out sanitation work. The SBM tried to create a narrative that sanitation is everyone's job. Instead, it has ended up continuing the same old caste practices.
 - The SBM is allegedly successful project; as no Opposition party or community has raised objections to it. While the entire project is governed and monitored by state agencies, the design makes it clear that large capital-intensive technologies are promoted. However, still those practices continue to hog the limelight.

▪ **No Universal Access to Toilets:**

- The Union government claims that India is open defecation-free, but the reality is different. A **Comptroller and Auditor General** report in 2020 raised many questions about the government's claims over the success of the SBM on this front. It indicated the poor quality of construction of toilets under this scheme.
 - A few urbanisation studies pointed out that in some metros, communities in slums still do not have access to public toilets. Even in rural India, toilet construction has not been linked to waste treatment.
 - In peri-urban areas, the faecal sludge generated is tossed into the environment. Septic tanks are cleaned by manual scavengers and the sludge is thrown into various water systems.

Half of lavatories barely functional

SURVEY

58%

say the public toilets under Swachh Bharat Mission are either barely functional or in 'terrible' state

25%

found public toilets so bad, that they went in but came out without using them

A study was conducted in India's 340 districts with over 39,000 respondents



15% FOUND TOILETS AT PETROL PUMPS USABLE

ODF FIGURES

4,355 urban local bodies declared Open Defecation Free (ODF). While

3,547 are ODF+ and 1,191 are ODF++. The category is based on availability of water, maintenance

■ Technology Not Acting as Alternative to Involvement of People:

- One thing the government intended to do via SBM was to reduce the involvement of people in waste management by replacing them with large, capital-intensive technologies. However, these installations have refused to live up to their promoters' promises, leaving town after town screaming for resources to fix them and, importantly, respond to the health crises emerging from badly managed waste.
 - Take, for example, solid and liquid waste management in cities. In most towns, the Union government is employing technological solutions in handling solid waste. Some of these solutions are in the form of [waste-to-energy plants](#) and biological methanation. But there are barely any success stories in either case.
 - In this scenario, the governments outsourced most of the work to private players, who employed the same subjugated communities to handle waste.

■ Making Sanitation a Profit Entity:

- City governments are being asked to buy more machines including road sweeping machines that cost no less than Rs. 1 crore, more vehicles to transport the waste from one corner to another with geo-tagging, and so on. Funds are made available to the city governments for such plans. However, all this work is being handed over to large contractors entering the city domains for making sanitation a profit entity.
 - Most of the workers employed by these contractors are Dalits. Hence, a **scheme fully owned by the state has become a toolkit for the privatisation of public health services and continued caste discrimination.**

■ Lack of Sanitation Inspectors:

- In March, 2024, in the Himachal Pradesh [High Court](#), the Urban Development Department said that there are just five sanitation inspectors in the Shimla [Municipal Corporation](#), which comprises 34 wards. Instead of recruiting more such inspectors, this cadre is being declared dead after they retire.
 - In a State where there are more than 50 municipal bodies, there are only 20 sanitation inspectors, which means that there are some municipalities that have no sanitation inspectors.

▪ **Lack of Water Supply:**

- Infrastructures for toilet are important, but cannot alone stand as pre-requisite to interrupt fecal-oral transmission of pathogens. In rural areas, lack of water supply is a key issue, only 42.5% of households had access to water for use in toilets, which increase toilet nonusage rates.
- Other challenges such as improper fecal sludge management, inappropriate toilet technologies, and inadequate human resources persist that endanger in achieving sanitation coverage in rural areas.

▪ **Open Defecation as a Habit Among Children:**

- Data suggest that open defecation has decreased by 12% from 2015 to 2019, which means that nearly half of the rural population still defecates in the open. Open defecation is traditional behavior in rural India and people perceive it to be healthier, cleaner, and sometimes “religiously acceptable.”
- This issue of open defecation is of greater concern and worrisome because government studies indicate, the proportion of children below 15 years of old is practicing open defecation more frequently than other age groups.

▪ **Challenges in Richer States:**

- Despite progress, wealthier states showed mixed performance and smaller gains in toilet use compared to economically poorer states, highlighting the need for tailored strategies in different socio-economic contexts.
- States like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Gujarat showed smaller progress in regular toilet use compared to economically disadvantaged states, indicating that the program did not have the same impact across all states.

What are the Various Ways to Improve the Effectiveness of SBM ?

▪ **Focussing on Vulnerable Sections:**

- While, India has made substantial progress in sanitation coverage, some individuals, households, and community belonging to disadvantage sections of the society such as female-headed household, landless people, migrant laborers, and disable people-still do not have toilets in their home or find the existing toilets not accessible.
- It is crucial to support these un-served populations both from human rights and public health perspectives because these marginalized sections are already without access to basic services and experience various health issues.

▪ **Integration With Public Health Infrastructure:**

- Educational institutions, child-care centers, hospitals, and other government facilities need further development in sanitation practices. Sanitation coverage disaggregated data in public facilities and among the government departments requires innovation to make it a long lasting and feasible option, which will be vital in public health infrastructure.

▪ **Promoting Adequate Behavioural Change:**

- For India to realize in achieving [sustainable development goal 6 \(SDG\)](#), i.e., “ensure access to water and sanitation for all” by 2030, a number of factors needs to be considered. Country like India, which is vast in her diversity, culture, and population, where 60% of total population resides in rural areas, only access to toilet does not ensure hygienic and safe sanitation practices.
- For instance, lesson from the India's first sanitation program “Central Rural Sanitation Programme” launched in 1986, stated that only toilet construction did not translate to usage of toilets.
- This program focused on the household toilets construction and promotion of the pour-flush toilets. However, this program lacks the focus on behavior change toward toilet use that led failure of the program. Therefore, promoting behaviourally sound practices are an urgent imperative.

▪ **Following the Holistic Path:**

- SBM must learn to resolve these issues by capitalizing political support, to pay subsidies directly to households through e-banking, strengthening monitoring system through technological platform and broadcasting the success of the program.
- Moreover, it should also focus to promote objectives through information, education, and communication campaign and to provide individual toilet facilities in all households to achieve the goal of ODF by October 2, 2019 – to honor the 150th

birthday of [Mahatma Gandhi](#).

▪ **Improving Sewer Infrastructure in Village Areas:**

- The absence of proper sewage systems posed a severe challenge when it came to implementation of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan Gramin scale. As the population went out to defecate, the areas lacked a working sewage system to treat the generated sewage.
 - Thus before constructing toilets, the government also had to address this problem. The village and rural segments also need to be integrated into the AMRUT programme of the government.

▪ **Robust Waste Management Systems:**

- With pollution levels in cities growing and the overflowing of landfills, there is an urgent requirement to reinvent garbage management in cities so that waste is fully processed and not landfilled.
 - The ministry should take steps to scale up waste processing in all states that are lagging behind and emphasise on segregation at source, primary collection, secondary storage, transportation, secondary segregation, resource recovery, processing, treatment and final disposal of solid waste to achieve 100% solid waste management in the country.

▪ **Supplementing Urban Local Bodies:**

- The strategies for providing basic services to the urban areas should be intensified and efforts should be made to improve the on-ground implementation of these schemes. Urban local bodies in India, which lack critically in infrastructure and capability, should be provided support and equipped with better resources and avenues to enhance citizen participation in the management of urban areas.

▪ **Addressing the Tax Burden:**

- While the focus of the government should be on ensuring that maximum waste in the country is processed, the increased tax burden under the [Goods and Service Tax \(GST\)](#) regime on the recycling and composting industry is not aligned with this 'noble' mission.
 - The increased tax slabs for recyclables is killing the recycling sector. The composting machines are now attracting 12% tax against the 8% previously. While on one hand, the government is trying to promote city compost, imposing 5% GST will have a negative impact on its production and promotion. Therefore, the GST rate should be rationalized to achieve the long term goals.

▪ **Adoption and Integration of Technologies:**

- The e-Governance Solutions need to be incorporated including Mobile Apps, MIS, dashboards APIs, developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), aim to track the progress of ODF Plus progress in different states.
- SBM-G e-governance solution should be a Robust, Interoperable, Scalable, Secure and Role-based system that enables user to enter all the assets of solid and liquid along with geo coordinates using mobile app.

Conclusion

No doubt, India has made rapid progress to achieve the SDG 6 by increasing nationwide toilet access under SBM. At the same time, India must scrutinize its success within the framework of environment safety and fecal-oral transmission of disease that help, especially to children to spend their childhood free from malnourishment or premature death. By doing so, and by responding to the complexities of SBM identified, will show India and other countries, the pathways of full-filling the sanitation agendas, by achieving universal sanitation for all and to meet the SDGs targets and objectives.

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the impact of the Swachh Bharat Mission on public health and sanitation practices in India. What are the challenges in its implementation?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q. As per the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 in India, which one of the following statements is correct? (2019)

- (a) Waste generator has to segregate waste into five categories.
- (b) The Rules are applicable to notified urban local bodies, notified towns and all industrial townships only
- (c) The Rules provide for exact and elaborate criteria for the identification of sites for landfills and waste processing facilities.
- (d) It is mandatory on the part of the waste generator that the waste generated in one district cannot be moved to another district.

Ans: (c)

Mains:

Q. What are the impediments in disposing the huge quantities of discarded solid waste which are continuously being generated? How do we remove safely the toxic wastes that have been accumulating in our habitable environment? (2021)

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)

Q. How could social influence and persuasion contribute to the success of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan? (2016)

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