



drishti

The ABCEDF of implementation of SBM

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This article is based on "**The ABCEDF of implementation**" which was published in The Indian Express on 02/01/2020. It talks about the issues related to policy implementation.

Recently, **NITI Aayog's Sustainable Development Goals Index for 2019** was released. At the aggregate level, India's composite score has improved from 57 in 2018 to 60 in 2019.

Much of the improvement taking place due to progress on five goals clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; life on land, and peace, justice, and strong institutions.

The improvement on these parameters, in part, stems from the beneficial impact of various government programmes (**Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan- SBM**, Ujjwala scheme etc).

However, the index also reflects the regional divide in basic livelihood goals such as in areas of health, nutrition, basic infrastructure, quality of education, eradication of poverty etc. On two goals in particular — gender equality and zero hunger — far greater attention is required as the country's score on both is less than 50.

Reasons for Dismal Performance

Implementation Deficit:

Governments have designed the right policies and development schemes. However, over the years, many such well-designed schemes failed to make a significant difference.

- While the focus on design and policy architecture may have been well-meaning, there may not have been a strong enough focus on ensuring that these policies translate to effective implementation on the ground.
- This was highlighted when the former prime minister of India (**Rajiv Gandhi**) famously in the 1980s said that, of every rupee spent by the government only 15 paise reached the intended beneficiaries. This underlines the issues on the policy implementation front.

Socio-Economic Causes:

- It is hard to tackle **a social problem with a political solution**.
- Gender inequality, the hierarchical structure of society (based on caste, religion etc), may act as a roadblock in the success of a policy.

How to address these issues?

In the past five years, rural India has seen a massive transformation in access to basic services like electricity, cooking fuel, toilets, houses and bank accounts. The successful journey of SBM has highlighted six important guiding principles which can be applied to any large transformation scheme

- **A — Align:**
 - Different people at different positions may have competing priorities. A goal congruence has to be achieved across the administrative ecosystem.
 - Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation ensured that SBM's message percolated down to the chief ministers, 700 district collectors and 2,50,000 sarpanches.
 - The three layers of the PM-CM-DM model working in cohesion is the first and most important step towards policy translating into real delivery.
- **B — Believe:**
 - People were made to believe that the goal of SBM is achievable.
 - SBM achieved this by bringing a unique blend of young professionals and experienced but driven bureaucrats, at the centre and in the states, and each person quickly became a believer.

- **C — Communicate:**
 - Communication at all levels, above and below the line, mass and inter-personal, was fundamental to the SBM.
 - For SBM an army of trained grassroots volunteers called Swachagrahis were created, who went from door to door to communicate the message of swachhata.
 - And then the SBM attempted to make sanitation essential by engaging extensively with the media, leveraging popular culture, and associating Bollywood stars, sportspersons and other influencers to promote the message of sanitation.
 - And lastly, through regular, large-scale events like **Swachh Survekshan**, sanitation stood on top of public discourse.
- **D — Democratise:**
 - The SBM became a Jan Andolan or Mass Movement.
 - It nudged people to realise that sanitation is not an individual good, but a community good, as its full benefits accrue only when it is universal.
 - People constructed their own toilets and motivated others, communities planned activities and monitored progress, villages declared themselves open defecation free (ODF).
 - Even corporates, NGOs, civil society organisations and other government ministries and departments played a role in mainstreaming sanitation.
- **E — Evaluate:**
 - SBM encouraged third-party monitoring of progress and evaluate outputs, outcomes and impacts to reinforce the credibility and keep the implementers motivated.
 - Organisations such as the World Bank, UNICEF, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and WHO conducted various assessments of sanitation coverage and usage, successes and areas of improvement, as well as the health, economic and social impacts of the SBM.
 - India became the global laboratory for sanitation. Lessons from these studies were incorporated into the programme in real-time.
- **F — Follow-through:**
 - Recently, the government released a forward-looking 10-year sanitation strategy, articulating the goal of moving from ODF to ODF Plus.
 - This post-delivery follow-through is critical to ensure that the change becomes the norm and that things don't reset to what they used to be in the past.

Conclusion

Thus, the ABCEDF of implementation of SBM is worth emulating across the spectrum of government schemes as final delivery of the public service remains the only metric of success of the public policy.

Drishti Mains Question

Welfare policies in India are good on paper but they are marred by the implementation deficit. Discuss.