

Reflecting the True Spirit of a Jan Andolan

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Safe sanitation and clean water are fundamental to a healthy population, and at the core of integrated human development.

Every year millions of people across the world, most of them children, die from diseases associated with inadequate clean water supply, and lack of sanitation and hygiene. Clean water and safe sanitation are critical to survival, and their absence can impact health, food security, and livelihoods of families across the world. As a basic requirement and a human right, sanitation campaigns have been rolled out by successive governments over the past few decades. These campaigns attempt to work towards safe sanitation on several fronts, such as achieving Open Defecation Free (ODF) status, Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM), etc. The Swachh Bharat Mission, is an unprecedented one – it is the largest behavioural change campaign in the world. The programme aims to achieve “Swachh Bharat” by 2019, by bringing about a general improvement in the quality of life in rural areas, accelerate sanitation coverage, motivate communities to adopt sustainable sanitation practices and focus on Solid and Liquid Waste Management, among others.

On Independence Day in 2014, the Prime Minister of India, from the ramparts of the Red Fort, made a clarion call to the nation for a Swachh Bharat by 2nd October 2019, to mark

the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. This milestone announcement set India on an incredible journey. The world’s biggest sanitation programme, the Swachh Bharat Mission’s resolution for a Clean and Open Defecation Free (ODF) India by October 2019, is unprecedented in history. When it was first launched, 550 million people contributed towards practicing Open Defecation in India (OD). That number, today, is down to an approximate of 200 million.

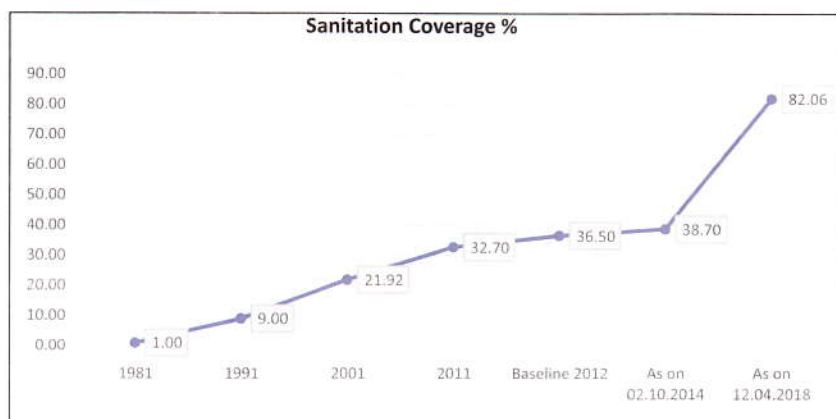
Arguably one of the most ambitious and bold declarations made by a head of Government towards cleanliness and sanitation in the world, sanitation has been squarely placed at the forefront of national policy and development. A 21st century India on the path to becoming a global economic super power should have no place for filth and open defecation. The Prime Minister decided to put his political capital behind sanitation and cleanliness and make it a national priority! And this is the biggest factor that sets SBM apart from its counterparts from earlier years.

Since 2nd October 2014, over 7.1 crore household toilets have been constructed; meaning that the rural sanitation coverage in India has more than doubled from 39 per cent in October 2014 to over 83 per cent today. To put this in perspective, the sanitation coverage has increased more in three and a half years than

The sense of solidarity garnered in the whole exercise strengthened the strong feeling of the community towards making India ODF. A step which further reinforces the whole essence of Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) – reflecting the true spirits of a Jan-Andolan! The Mission looks to setting an example for the rest of the world to move towards improving sanitation for all and achieving the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goal 6 in mission mode, ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

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Figure 1. Rural Sanitation Coverage since Census 1981



it did in the preceding 67 years since India's independence ! Over 3.6 lakh villages, 382 districts, thirteen States (Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim and Uttarakhand) and four Union Territories (Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Daman and Diu and Dadar and Nagar Haveli) have become Open Defecation Free (ODF). On track to achieve an Open Defecation Free India, rural India is poised to deliver on time, its resolution for a Swachh Bharat by October 2, 2019.

Such progress enabled by a building momentum has been a steady climb for SBM-G. Over the years, few aspects of the Mission have stood out to set SBM apart from its predecessors and place it on the path of instituting change. At the outset, the programme is led with the continuous support from the highest level to drive change. The Prime Minister himself is the communicator-in-chief, building a narrative on sanitation by engaging all stakeholders and making it everyone's business. The programme itself is built on initiatives which think scalability during the design process – to reach everyone, everywhere. Along with the stakeholders, it is critical the Mission dictates continuous and close engagement with the implementers, the States and districts to keep up the momentum and enable a steady line of communication across levels.

With the momentum built and the janandolan getting stronger everyday,

an important task for the Ministry at hand is to ensure quality and good housekeeping practices. For this, the Ministry has in place a comprehensive and robust online platform for the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin). Household level data with respect to sanitation facilities of all villages in the country is made available on the Management Information System (MIS) by State Governments on the basis of the Baseline Survey of 2012-13.

To further improve transparency and accountability, the Ministry takes stock of rural sanitation through large national sample based surveys conducted by third party agencies. The Quality Council of India (QCI) conducted a survey between May and June 2017, covering over 1.4 lakh households across 4626 randomly selected villages across the country, and reflected toilet usage at 91.29 per cent.

Even more recently, the National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey



(NARSS) 2017-2018 was conducted under the World Bank support project to the SBM-G, with a sample size of over 92,000 households across 6,136 villages. The Independent Verification Agency (IVA) presented their findings to the Expert Working Group (EWG) constituted for oversight of NARSS, comprising representatives from organisations including the World Bank, UNICEF, Water Aid, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, India Sanitation Coalition, Sulabh International, Knowledge Links, NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The EWG noted the satisfactory completion of the survey, which pegged toilet usage at 93.40 per cent. The survey has also re-confirmed the ODF status of 95.6 per cent of ODF verified villages.

An output indicator of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) is toilet usage and limiting Open Defecation. One gram of faeces contains 10,000,000 viruses, 1,000,000 bacteria and 1,000 parasite cysts. Unless a village achieves a completely Open Defecation Free status, the oral-faecal contamination route continues. Thus, the path to a healthier tomorrow is not an individual one but the community must work together and resolve towards new habits.

These past few years, the Swachh Bharat Mission has already demonstrated significant health and economic impacts at the grassroots. In a report 'The Financial and Economic Impact of SBM in India (2017)' UNICEF estimates that a household in an ODF village in rural India saves Rs. 50,000 every year. In another

study released by BMGF, data shows significant improvements in diarrhoea prevalence and stunting among children in ODF villages, compared to otherwise similar non-ODF villages.

With the entire movement built on people's participation, villages are declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) when all members come together and make a resolution to that effect at an Aam Sabha. Members of the village then form "*Nigrani samitis*" to ensure that no one breaks the new norm of using a toilet. The ODF status is then verified by third parties at block, district or state level. All the data is maintained in a robust database down to the household level, available to the public on the SBM-G website.

Another important component of SBM-G is Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLRM). To implement SLWM initiatives economically and efficiently, ownership at grass root level and community involvement at all stages is critical. One initiative for the same is the rolling out of a comprehensive self-assessment tool called Village Swachhata Index (VSI) developed to measure cleanliness. The VSI arrives at a Swachhata score based on percentage of households with access to safe toilets and usage, littering around the households and public places, and stagnant waste water around the households. The democratic self-assessment is made in Gram Sabhas by the village people themselves. As of April 2018, more than 4 lakh villages have reported their VSI.

It has been observed repeatedly that when the community invests its own resources (especially financial resources) in sanitation interventions, the interventions are much more sustainable. Considered the toilet business, the Swachh Bharat Mission goes beyond mere construction and bases its foundation in behaviour change. The importance of changing behaviour is something that has been consistently referenced by the Prime Minister in his speeches on SBM-G. As said in his speech in 2016, "Cleanliness cannot be achieved through Budget allocation. Behavioural change is the solution. It should become a mass movement".

While behavioural change is intrinsic to India's Swachh dream, it also remains the biggest challenge. To roll out behaviour change at such a large scale, India's diversity, complexity and differentiation must be taken into account. There are a number of programmatic innovations taking place under the Mission. Two practices have been shown to work the most. One is pre-triggering. The success of triggering behaviour change depends a lot on the quality and thoroughness of preparation made through pre-triggering. This involves collecting information about the village and its inhabitants, establishing contact with them and preparing officers and the village for triggering. In the community approach to rural sanitation, triggering is used for all sections of society. We deal with one community as a unit so it may understand the importance, take responsibility and accountability for the cleanliness of their village.

These 'triggerings' are one of the many initiatives led by SBM's boots on the ground - Swachhagrahis, a community-level army of 'foot soldiers' and motivators who implement the Community Approaches to Sanitation (CAS) at the village level, and are key to driving progress towards achieving an ODF nation.

Swachhagrahis are often natural leaders who have been engaged through existing arrangements like the Panchayati Raj Institutions, co-operatives, ASHAs, Anganwadi workers, women groups, community-based organisations, Self-Help Groups, etc. They are usually already working in the GPs and some have volunteered their services specifically for the purpose of sanitation. There are 4.3 lakh Swachhagrahis registered on the ground today. The Mission aims to have one Swachhagrahi in every village, that is, an army of at least 6.5 lakh Swachhagrahis by March 2019.

With the Ministry trying to keep the buzz of the janandolan running at a macro level, April 2018 saw a mega event focusing on Swachhagrahis, like never before.

Mahatma Gandhi launched the Champaran Satyagraha over a century ago, on April 10, 1917, taking several

steps to improve the condition of people in Bihar, including basic education, skill development, women empowerment and cleanliness. April 10, 2018 marked the end of the centenary year celebrations of the Champaran Satyagraha and was celebrated through the "Satyagrah se Swachhagrah" campaign. To commemorate this event, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, in coordination with the Government of Bihar, worked to spread the message of Swachhata across the country by initiating the "Satyagrah se Swachhagrah" Campaign, from April 3-10. More than 10,000 Swachhagrahis from different parts of the country gathered in Bihar, where they worked with 10,000 Swachhagrahis from Bihar to "trigger" behaviour change throughout the 38 districts of the State and build momentum of the janandolan further.

The mass triggering started with great enthusiasm and zeal. The presence of outside Swachhagrahis in the villages in Bihar made the audiences even more receptive of the sanitation messages. The outside Swachhagrahis broke language barriers with help from their local counterparts and local officials and technical staff. Their interventions proved highly beneficial and rendered a great sense of competition and cross learning amongst the various groups.

The four challenging States - Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Jammu and Kashmir, together saw the addition of 30.91 lakh toilets between 13th March and 10th April, of which 14.82 lakh were in the week from April 4-10.

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