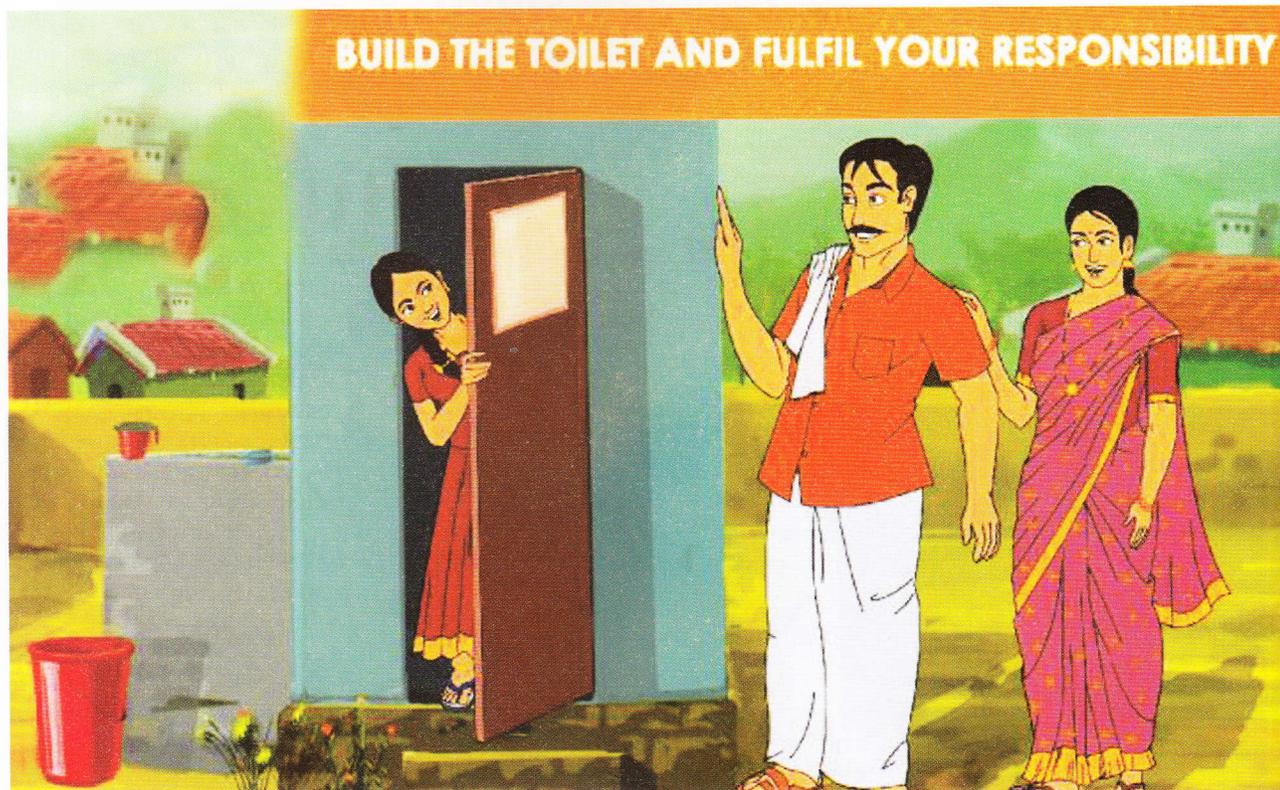


# Sanitation Revolution: Implementation at Scale

*Parameswaran Iyer*



*The SBM is 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 and ensuring that behaviour change communication in all its forms is the only tool for sustainable change*

**A**s a country, India presents a magnificent diversity with 29 states and 7 union territories and a population of 1.3 billion people, almost 70 per cent of which live in 600,000 villages, within 700 districts. However, as was the case until 2014, juxtapose that snapshot with 600 million people (approximately 60 per cent of the world's open defecators) practicing open defecation across the country. Imagine the spread of diseases, loss of productivity time, risk of violence especially for women and children, and the lack of basic human dignity.

Everything changed, however, on August 15, 2018, when, in his

first Independence Day speech the Prime Minister of India, took to the ramparts of the Red Fort and put India on a historic journey – the journey for an Open Defecation Free (ODF) India, a Swachh Bharat.

Never before had a Prime Minister put sanitation at the forefront of the national development agenda. From being a major cause of the world's sanitation crisis, with about 600 million people defecating in the open, about 500 million people now have access to toilets through a sanitation revolution which has taken place over the last four years. Today, India has a rural sanitation coverage of over 95 per cent - a percentage that we could not have ever envisaged in

The author is Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Government of India.



our wildest dreams 4 years ago. After building a phenomenal 87 million individual household toilets, as many as 5.1 lakh villages, 529 districts and 25 States and Union Territories are now open defecation free. Further, a recent, independent large-scale household survey under the World Bank support project found that 93 per cent of the households surveyed which had toilets used them, confirming the behavior change focus of the Swachh Bharat Mission.

In this entire process, the Swachh Bharat Mission has become a household name with people from all fields – students, teachers, corporates, civil society and the government contributing to making this country clean and green. Even more significant is the fact that the movement has led to inclusive development, catering to all sections of the society – irrespective of age, caste, gender, religion and physical ability.

How did India move from being the largest contributor to open defecation to implementor of the largest behaviour change campaign in the world? Over the years, global experts on sanitation have repeatedly emphasized that the key strategy to achieve behaviour change was to use techniques such as the Community Approach to Sanitation (CAS) and Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS); yet in 2014, it was clear that

although some of the aforementioned tools were necessary, they were not sufficient when one of the major challenges was the sheer size of the problem.

The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), therefore, had to change and amplify strategy, in order to address, what we like to call, the challenge of the 4 Ss.

**Scale.** To meet the need to change the behaviour of 600 million people, the SBM had to acknowledge the scale it was dealing with and respond with a national Team Swachh Bharat with the caliber to change the behaviour of the individual, as well as the community. This team today includes 120 million school students, 1 million masons (of which 100,000 are women), 500,000 swachhagrahis, 250,000 Sarpanches, 700 District Collectors, 400 Zila Swachh Bharat Preraks, 20 prominent brand ambassadors; all lead by the single Communicator-in-Chief, the Prime Minister of India.

**Speed.** A sense of urgency needed to be created to kick start and roll through the campaign. The Prime Minister's clarion call also set a sunset clause, October 2, 2019, for the Mission, in order to avoid a drip-drip approach, and gave impetus to India's sanitation campaign.

Speed was also required in setting up the team, which is only as good as its

weakest link. By creating the team from scratch, the SBM had to first ensure each individual in the team believed. This was true behaviour change in the very leadership which would take the Mission forward and gave rise to the PM-CM-DM-VM model. The Prime Minister gave the vision of an ODF India by October 2019, the Chief Ministers led at the State level, District Magistrates prioritized sanitation and put the focus on the SBM, further empowering the Village Motivators, the swachhagrahis, to partake in interpersonal communication, and lead behaviour change in the villages.

**Stigmas and Myths.** The SBM could not set forth in its objective of changing behaviour and attitudes of the masses without acknowledging the stigmas and myths held for generations by the different communities. There were various common myths in rural India regarding sanitation – toilets are only required for women and children, having a toilet within the premises of one's home is impure, cleaning the toilet is not one's own duty, and many more.

Along with addressing these on the ground, at a central level, mass media campaigns were launched, each with their own messages and myth busters. The Darwaza Band campaign, starring Bollywood icons Amitabh Bachchan and Anushka Sharma, moved beyond access to toilets and communicated the need to use toilets, not just by women and children, but by each and every member of the household. The media buzz caught on with popular culture as was with the release of Toilet Ek Prem Katha, a blockbuster film starring Akshay Kumar, which gave a holistic picture of the troubles, obstacles faced mainly by women, and the eventual achievement of safe sanitation practices in the community.

**Sustainability.** With the sanitation revolution gaining momentum, the SBM also maintained its parallel focus on sustaining the jan andolan and the progress being made on the ground. The following were key elements of the sustainability strategy:



initiative was Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2018 under which an independent sanitation survey was conducted across 6980 villages in 698 districts of the country.

That the mission has become the world's largest sanitation campaign is not an exaggeration. Indeed, it has transformed into a jan andolan with people at all levels working tirelessly to change behaviour and meet targets. Needless to say, the contribution of the women is by far the greatest – not only because the mission has afforded them the dignity and security they need; but also because it guarantees the well-being of their families and the community at large. And the women met the challenge head on – sacrificing their free time, taking on sanitation activities in addition to taking care of their families, standing up against authority, taking on roles that were predominantly for men, such as building toilets.

Our greatest sources of motivation in this ODF journey are the stories of behavior change – of people standing up, demanding their right to sanitation access: Here are a few instances of our SBM Champions:

- When mason's training was offered to women, Sunitha Devi enthusiastically joined the programme and learned to build twin pit toilets in the proper way. Seeing her skill, the district

- ODF-Quality (ODF-Q): Requires every toilet constructed under the Mission to be geo-tagged. All villages are subject to a double verification system, which includes self-declaration as well as third party verification. In case of any report of poor quality, rapid response of reports and actions is sought by the State governments.

- ODF-Sustainability (ODF-S): Ensures continuous behaviour change communication, to remain much after the achievement of ODF. Operation and Maintenance practices (O&M) are important for sustained usage, and the SBM further supports institutional mechanisms and financial incentives to keep the safe sanitation practices going. In addition, the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation is currently working on a Ten-Year Sanitation Strategy for sustainability post-SBM.

- ODF plus (ODF+): SBM goes beyond toilets and works towards clean villages by prioritizing solid and liquid waste management practices in ODF villages, as well as the prioritization on rural water supply for ODF villages, in coordination with the National Rural Drinking Water Programme.

non-government and semi-government agencies, corporates, NGOs, faith organisations, media and the rest of the stakeholders; thereby making Swachhata everyone's business and not only that of the sanitation departments. In this regard, a host of special initiatives and projects have been implemented.

Among these are initiatives such as Swachhata Pakhwada (where all Union Ministries/Departments take up swachhata related activities for a fortnight each), Swachh Iconic Places (a multi-stakeholder initiative focusing on cleaning up 100 places across India that are iconic due to their heritage, religious and/or cultural significance), Swachhata Action Plan (where 76 Ministries/Departments have earmarked funds worth 5248 crore for their Swachhata plans) and making villages along the banks of the Ganga River ODF. The most recent



## Success Story

### Murshidabad makes great strides in ODF-S

Slipping back of a community into the former practice of open defecation (OD) is very common among ODF (open defecation free) villages. To prevent this, the district administration of Murshidabad in West Bengal has planned massive ODF Sustainability and Re-verification activities.

Over the last few months, as many as 5000 volunteers comprising of government officials, community facilitators have visited all households, met people through a transect walk, checked the functional status of toilets of institutions and inspected former common open defecation areas. This exercise brought in a population of more than 80 lakh under review and recorded their behavioral changes.

Significantly, people were given the liberty to choose their toilet design, as long as they kept the sub structure as per the approved design. This helped a great deal in developing a sense of ownership among people towards their toilets. Today, as many as 388758 households have toilets, constructed through their own effort, money and according to their taste, culture and heritage. This is believed to be the biggest jump towards sustainability.

Significant initiatives undertaken by sanitation teams:

**Nazardari and Gandhigiri:** Nazardari teams were formed comprising of natural leaders and Self Help Group (SHG) members who visited OD prone areas morning and evening to check this.

**Toilets for all:** Community facilitators met with people from every single household and discussed with them the importance of toilet usage by every member of the family, including the elderly and children. To cater to the differently abled, solutions such as fixing a bar or ramp were suggested. Safe disposal of children's faeces of children was another focus area.

**Kachha Toilet Todo Abhiyan:** A week long programme, 'Kachha Toilet Todo Abhiyan' (Demolish the unsafe toilets) was observed across the district when thousands of insanitary toilets were demolished and areas cleaned.

**Focus on educational institutions and Anganwadi Centres:** Triggering was carried out at 2633 schools with the participation of nearly 8 lakh students with a view to changing their mindset. This exercise was so powerful that students started writing letters to their parents pleading for toilets.

**Gram Panchayat teams** were formed, consisting of natural leaders and teachers who carried out triggering at village and school levels with activities such as oath taking, role play and collective decisions which helped in building community solidarity.

**Sanitation Cards:** Sanitation Cards were issued to every household that was using toilets.

**MUKTI:** Under the Mukti project, the district identified places of open defecation and made plans to transform and beautify those places by land reclamation, plantation and greenery through MGNREGS.

**Child Cabinet:** Child cabinets were formed in all schools with representation of students to check hygienic practices among students and visit nearby villages and promote the continued use of safe toilets.

**Addressing flood prone areas:** During floods, it is common for people to take shelter in high schools or community halls. To address this, the district administration has started constructing sufficient toilet units for use during floods.

administration made her a master trainer who went from village to village, training other Rani Mistris. To date, she has trained over 1600 Rani Mistris.

- Not letting the responsibility of caring for her eight-member-family deter her, Shankari Maavi from Karji panchayat of Banswara district in Rajasthan became the mason and the labourer, as she constructed her own toilet. With tools in hand, she worked day and night, without seeking help from anyone. Her mobile search light was her torch at night and during the day she made time to take care of her crops. In this manner, she did justice to her regular agricultural work and fulfilled the need for cleanliness in her home by getting ready a toilet for use.
- Shamshal Begum, an active campaigner of the SBM-G was to get married. When she received a proposal from Tousef Reja Ahmed, a cellphone shop owner, she agreed, subject to certain conditions – including the setting up of a proper toilet in the groom's home in Murshidabad.

Encouragingly, as reported by the World Health Organisation (WHO), SBM will result in averting over 300,000 deaths related to diarrhoea and protein-energy malnutrition between 2014 and October 2019. This is attributed to the decrease in open defecation in the country and increase in toilet coverage. Meanwhile, a UNICEF study estimates that in an open defecation free community, considering medical costs averted, the value of time savings and the value of mortality averted, the financial savings for each household is Rs 50,000 per year; and the benefits are highest for the poorest section of the population.

In addition to the impact already being made, this incredible venture is imparting lessons for the overall development agenda in terms of how to implement large scale behavior change programmes at scale. From addressing the 4 Ss, the SBM has guided discourse

to lessons learnt in the form of the importance of the 4 Ps.

**Political Leadership.** Political will and leadership from the top are critical.

**Public funding.** Over Rs. one lakh crores have been committed by centre and states to the SBM to ensure no shortfall in funding.

**Partnerships.** Constant engagement with development partners, NGOs, the private sector, civil society, media, etc.

**People's Participation.** Sanitation is not a government programme, but a jan andolan.

Taking ownership of its own sanitation and surroundings, rural India is poised to deliver on time, its resolution for a Swachh Bharat by 2nd October 2019. The SBM is 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 and ensuring that behaviour change communication in all its forms is the only tool for sustainable change. This was duly acknowledged by the 59 Ministers for Sanitation from around the world who participated in the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention at New Delhi from 29<sup>th</sup> September to 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2018. The Swachh Bharat model of sanitation has led India into a sanitation revolution, the effects of which are reverberating around the world. □

(E-mail: param.iyer@gov.in)

### **SATAT initiative to promote Compressed Bio-Gas as an Alternative, Green Transport Fuel**

**A**n innovative initiative - SATAT - to set up Compressed Bio-Gas (CBG) production plants and make available CBG in the market for use in automotive fuels was launched recently by the Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas & Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, with PSU Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) inviting Expression of Interest (EoI) from potential entrepreneurs

Besides the potential to boost availability of more affordable transport fuels, better use of agricultural residue, cattle dung and municipal solid waste, the CBG plants will provide an additional revenue source to farmers, and 75,000 direct job opportunities and lakhs of indirect jobs. Currently 42 lakh households are getting PNG supply, and there is a commitment to cover 2 crore households in 300 districts.

SATAT is aimed at providing a Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation as a developmental effort that would benefit both vehicle-users as well as farmers and entrepreneurs. This initiative holds great promise for efficient municipal solid waste management and in tackling the problem of polluted urban air due to farm stubble-burning and carbon emissions.

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