



The Transformational Journey of Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen)

A Swachh Bharat, Swasth Bharat with empowered communities contributing to nation-building, is an integral part of the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. These communities safeguard public health by sustaining sanitation assets, reducing disease burden, and promoting healthier living environments. SBM(G) proudly and steadfastly continues to power the transformative journey of our villages and Bharat towards a cleaner, healthier and more empowered Viksit Bharat 2047.

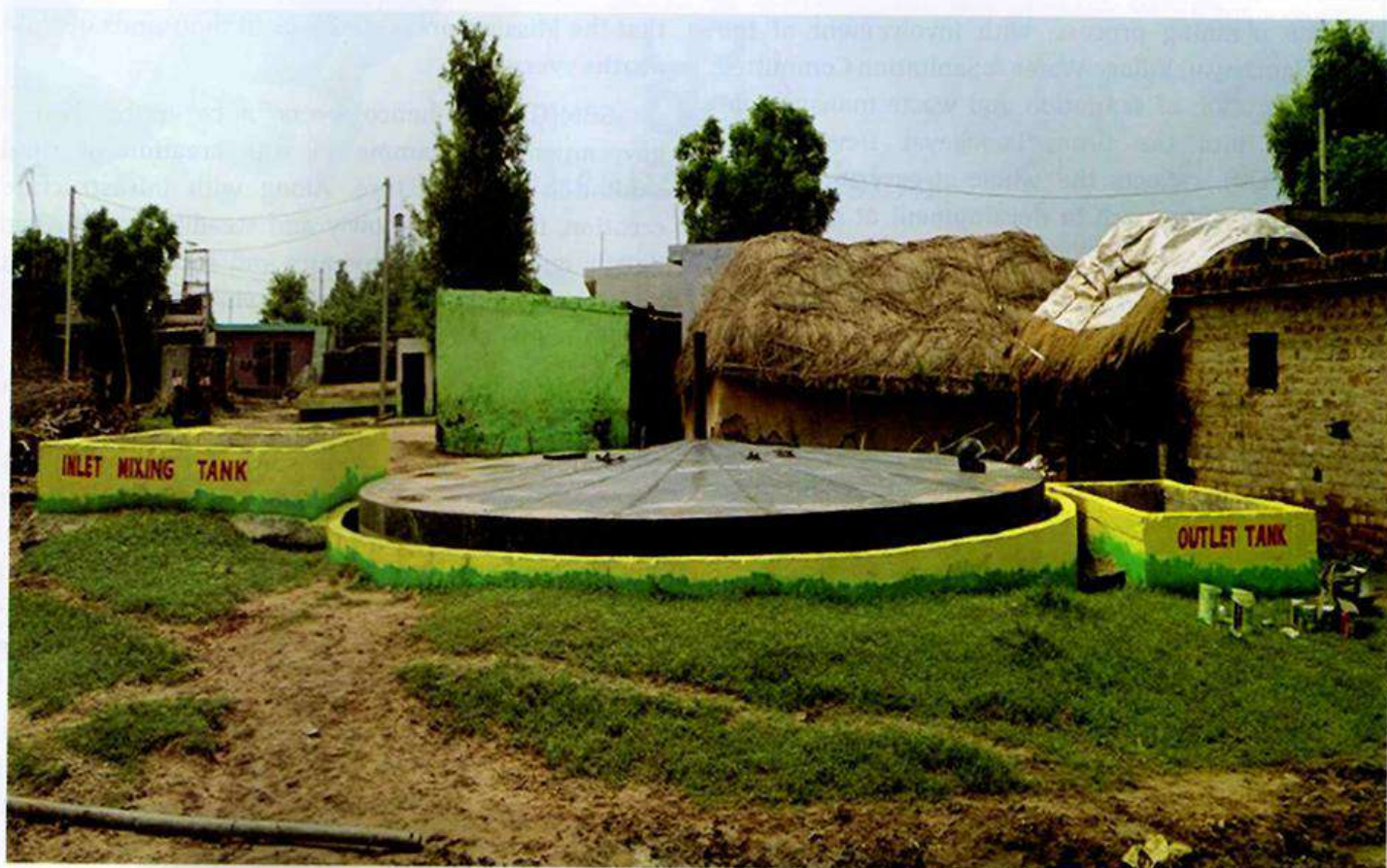
The year 2014 was special in many ways, particularly for India's public health and sanitation. In his visionary address on 15 August 2014, the Prime Minister spoke of the grave health risks and indignity faced by our mothers and sisters due to defecating in the open, of the bodily torture faced by poor womenfolk of villages while they waited for the night to go out and defecate, of the dignity of women being our collective responsibility and of the need to build toilets. With the launch of Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) [SBM(G)] on 2 October, 2014, the nation embarked on this ambitious, aspirational and motivating journey that in the last twelve years has not only transformed our rural sanitation scenario but also brought dignity to crores of women in rural areas. The Mission has empowered crores of women while reducing diarrhoeal diseases, improving child nutrition, and safeguarding maternal health.

The evolution of Swachh Bharat Mission demonstrates how political will, inclusive policy-making and whole-of-government approach, coupled with focused implementation and Jan Bhagidari, can transform a national programme into a Jan Andolan where citizens, including even children, become active partners in development and nation-building.

During the period 2014-2019, over 10 crore household toilets or Individual Household Latrines (IHLs) and more than 67 thousand Community Sanitary Complexes (CSCs) were constructed under SBM(G) across rural areas in the country. These facilities ensured safer sanitation, breaking the cycle of faecaloral transmission that had long contributed to malnutrition and poor health outcomes. Rural sanitation coverage, which was around 39 per cent in 2014, rose to 100 per cent in 2019. As of 2 October 2019, all districts across Bharat declared themselves as Open Defecation Free (ODF).



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Gobardhan plant in Jammu District in J&K

The achievement of ODF status was a major milestone, and this journey was woven with innumerable stories of courage, tireless efforts and mass-scale public ownership of the programme, as evident through *Jan Bhagidari*. Community approaches to sanitation became the cornerstone of implementation, driven by behaviour change, community mobilisation and collective ownership. The programme saw *Bharat* coming together, in what is possibly one of the world's largest behaviour change movements, to ensure the dignity of our mothers, daughters, and sisters in rural areas and provide them access to safe sanitation.

Going ahead, SBM(G) 2.0 was launched in 2020 with a focus on ODF sustainability, solid and liquid waste management in rural areas with visual cleanliness, i.e. transforming villages from ODF to ODF Plus (Model) villages. The programme has been extended till FY 2026-27 with the same budgetary allocation. Today, looking at cumulative figures, over 12.17 crore household toilets and more than 2.78 lakh Community Sanitary Complexes have been constructed across rural areas since 2014 under the programme.

While we appreciate these numbers, we also need to remember that these are not just statistics. These

are as many womenfolk, if not more, in families in rural areas that have now been liberated from the pain and shame of having to defecate in the open. These are women now living with their heads held high.

SBM(G) 2.0 embodies a natural evolution, moving forward from sanitation infrastructure towards building sustainable solid and liquid waste management systems in villages. Initiatives like scientific waste management, at household and community levels, greywater, plastic waste, and faecal sludge management, GOBARDhan (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources – dHAN) and visual cleanliness are no longer viewed as separate interventions but are all interconnected components of the programme, in addition to toilets.

Sanitation being a State subject, and given the diversity of the country, the inherent design of SBM(G) 2.0 is a decentralised framework which gives flexibility to States/UTs to choose their preferred solutions as per local conditions, preferences, and other considerations while adhering to the scheme design and operational and funding norms. Along with this, *Jan Bhagidari* continues to be a major driving force of SBM(G) 2.0, making this a transformation driven by communities themselves.

The planning process, with involvement of the Gram Panchayat, Village Water & Sanitation Committee and integration of sanitation and waste management priorities into the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), reflects the whole-of-government and participatory approach to development at grassroots level.

The preparation and implementation of GPDPs with the eGramSwaraj portal has also strengthened local governance and citizen empowerment by helping Panchayats identify community needs, plan development activities, manage finances and monitor progress in a transparent and accountable manner.

Financial convergence with the Fifteenth/Sixteenth Finance Commission Grants and *Viksit Bharat* – Guarantee for *Rozgar and Ajeevika* Mission (*Grameen*) (VB-G RAM G) under SBM(G) 2.0 also makes it imperative for a Gram Panchayat to assess, plan and work holistically to address sanitation and waste management in their Panchayats.

Mandatory geo-tagging of sanitation assets, mobile-based verification, Public Financial Management System (PFMS), SNA-SPARSH, digital monitoring platforms and multi-level verification have enhanced transparency, accountability and real-time monitoring under SBM(G).

The programme has come a long way since its launch in 2020. As of 24 July 2026, more than 5.18 lakh villages have declared themselves ODF Plus (Model), which in itself is a significant achievement. Across rural *Bharat*, Panchayats, women-led Self-Help Groups, common citizens, youth, school children, *Swachhagrahis* and grassroots leaders continue to drive the programme forward and inspire behavioural change. National campaigns such as *Swachhata Hi Seva* and *Swachhata Pakhwada* reinforce the whole-of-government approach with people's participation, making *Swachhata* everyone's business and a collective responsibility.

Independent studies have reinforced the Mission's transformative impact. The World Health Organization estimated that nearly three lakh diarrhoeal deaths were averted between 2014 and 2019; UNICEF found that households in ODF villages saved close to Rs 50,000 annually through reduced healthcare costs and were significantly less likely to suffer ground water contamination from human faecal matter. Research published in *Nature* estimated

that the Mission prevented tens of thousands of child deaths every year.

SBM(G) has hence been much more than a government programme for the creation of rural sanitation infrastructure. Along with infrastructure creation, it has also slowly and steadily transformed deeply entrenched behaviours and social norms that had persisted for generations, while also impacting public health and the environment in a positive way.

Going forward in SBM(G) 2.0, another behaviour change goal is for the Gram Panchayats and rural communities to take ownership of the community assets being created and also participate in their Operation & Maintenance (O&M). This next step of *Jan Bhagidari* helps will ensure that assets being created by States/UTs in their villages remain functional, self-sustaining and financially viable, thereby ensuring sustained outcomes in the long run.

Under the visionary leadership of the Prime Minister, *Swachhata* has become a national priority and has also featured in the monthly address to the nation, '*Mann Ki Baat*'. This strong political will, coupled with stable political leadership and citizen engagement, has placed sanitation and *Swachhata* at the heart of public discourse.

SBM(G) demonstrates a transition to governance that is transparent, accountable, participatory and responsive to citizens' aspirations. It recognises that for sustained outcomes and lasting development, government programmes must be owned by the citizens. When citizens are seen no longer as just beneficiaries of a government programme, but become equal partners and stakeholders in implementation, in its O&M, in spreading the message of *Swachhata* as in the case of SBM(G), that is true citizen empowerment. This empowerment translates into healthier communities, safer water sources, and reduced risks of diarrhoeal and vectorborne diseases.

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