

On the way to a “clean India”: 2 years of Swacch Bharat Mission (Gramin/rural) Thematic Discussion Series Synthesis (29th July- 21st August 2016)

SuSanA’s Thematic Discussion Series

The Thematic Discussion Series is an initiative from the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA) to engage actors from interconnected areas of expertise in discussions which are organised and focused on a thematic area, and led by experienced practitioners of the field.

Each thematic discussion is held for 3-4 weeks on the SuSanA Discussion Forum platform. The discussion is guided and led by thematic leads, who will provide background information on the topic, respond to and lead the ongoing discussion with the support of a coordinator. More information can be found at www.susana.org/resources/thematic-discussion-series



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To contact the thematic leads, coordination, or participants, please either join in the discussion or contact SuSanA through email

Since it was launched 2nd October, 2014, Swacch Bharat Mission (SBM) has been one of the Indian government’s flagship programmes. The percentage of the eligible rural population with toilets has increased to 56% from about 39% in 2012, according to the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS), that runs the mission for rural India.

In urban India, the Ministry of Urban Development is the nodal agency. While coverage is substantially better, at about 91% but there are major inequities in the collection and treatment of sewage, other liquid effluents and solid waste.

1. SBM Rural

A major challenge has been to ensure everybody uses toilets all the time to make communities free from open defecation (ODF). Since SBM Rural was launched, the annual achievement against targets for construction of toilets have been higher than the earlier Total Sanitation Campaign and Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, as shown in this table:

FINANCIAL YEAR	Household toilets		
	TOTAL	Below Poverty Line	Above Poverty Line
2010-2011	45.50%	50.50%	41.35%
2011-2012	50.60%	56.51%	45.09%
2012-2013	36.84%	46.57%	26.85%
2013-2014	49.50%	57.47%	43.25%
2014-2015	46.64%	47.88%	45.37%
2015-2016	44.69%	41.24%	47.24%
2016-2017 (till September)	36.1%		

Source: MDWS

In six months of the current year, 36.1% of the target has been met. This indicates faster construction of toilets. This is achievement against the overall annual implementation targets for construction on individual household latrines as compiled from the AIPs of 30 states from the website of MDWS.

The utilisation of funds has, however, been much higher as shown in this table:

Financial Year	Total Available Fund (In Lakhs)	Expenditure (In Lakhs)	% Utilization of Funds Released
2010-11	412900.11	179654.98	43.51
2011-12	445058.8	201653.84	45.31
2012-13	547779.97	210650.08	38.46

2013-14	646347.47	286689.68	44.36
2014-15	716681.06	437960.05	61.11
2015-16	963316.32	1013596.41	105.22
Source: MWDS			

This means the states have used funds more efficiently and there has been an increase in construction. A large part of the increased expenditure is also due to the increase in the incentive amount in 2014-15. The national figures hide huge state level variations. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha remain the laggards while Kerala and Sikkim have become ODF. Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh are nearly there. There are state specific factors for this, governance and education being two of them.

Though it is necessary that the construction of new toilets has to continue, mere creation of infrastructure will not be the sole mean to achieve the government's target to make India ODF until 2019. An innovation is the use of concurrent learning, called Rapid Action Learning Units, to help in course correction and sharing information.

To ensure that the constructed and functional toilets are also used, behaviour change is key. Information, education and communication (IEC) efforts are increasingly important to change the people's mindset and spreading knowledge about the adverse health impact of open defecation. In fact, a study shows a strong correlation between the use of IEC funds and the construction of toilets.

And there is more to the picture. Looking only at the number of constructed toilets, dismisses the whole sanitation chain, which includes containment, emptying, transport, treatment and disposal. A shift towards toilets that are used, maintained, and faecal waste is properly disposed, is needed.

The first thematic online discussion of the India Sanitation Coalition (ISC) which is hosted by the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance, aims at creating a broader understanding of what is needed to provide sustainable sanitation in India and to make India ODF in the context of the Swacch Bharat Mission. The discussion was structured into four interlinked and sequenced sub-themes that were guided by thematic experts:

- 1. Policy and institutions:** What has changed for SBM to work the way it especially with regard to funds utilisation and construction? **Hosted by Naina Kidwai, Chairperson of the India Sanitation Coalition**
- 2. Open Defecation Free:** Is the existing definition provided by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation sufficient for sustainable and effective ODF? How can we ensure behaviour change leads to ODF and then ODF+? **Hosted by Sanchita Ghosh, Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council**
- 3. Sustainability:** How can we ensure that the focus from constructing toilets is shifted towards using and maintaining toilets as well as the safe treatment of human faeces – taking into consideration the whole sanitation chain? **Hosted by Sujoy Mojumdar, UNICEF India sanitation specialist**
- 4. Good Practices:** What are good practice examples of how SBM has effectively contributed to significantly improve sanitation in communities? **Hosted by Siddhartha Das, WaterAid's policy manager**

The following is a synthesis of the posts published during the discussions. The synthesis does not necessarily express all the standpoints expressed in the discussion nor can it take up all the issue raised during the three weeks of debate. If you are interested in participants' postings in closer detail, please refer to the full discussion on the SuSanA Forum.

a. Policy and institutions

Government Institutions

SBM is evolutionary, drawing on lessons from earlier versions such as the Total Sanitation Campaign and Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan. It has made a few significant departures at the Central Government and state government levels. At the Central level more staff have been inducted into the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation. From one joint secretary and director, the number of senior officials handling sanitation has gone up to more than five.

Some states effected this transition in the 2010s, some recently, and results are showing. Panchayati Raj – Rural Development Departments (PR-RDs) in most states have human resources on the ground that have been augmented by dedicated district and block coordinators in well-performing states. Many have embarked on addressing that shortage of trained motivators and masons through intensive training sessions. More and more District Collectors, CEOs and BDOs are being sensitised and are taking up the sanitation challenge. Possibly they see and recognise the sustained push from the highest level as a indication of sustained focus on sanitation.

Finance

Finance issues are being slowly sorted out as well. From payments by cheque to beneficiaries many states have started releasing the incentive through electronic transfers. This eliminates the need for multiple visits to block or district offices, kick-backs to some extent and speeds up the process overall. However, other paper processes remain hide-bound such as applying for a toilet, submitting photographs and other documents; these can also be done through the electronic seva centres (village computer kiosks) that exist in most panchayats (rural local government institutions) now.

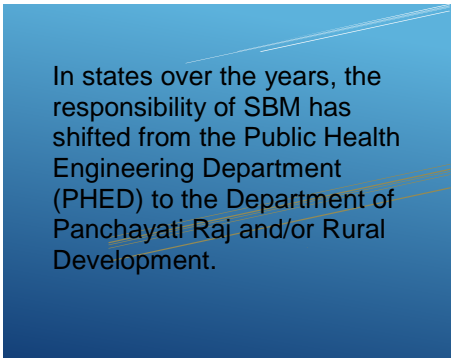
In each of these areas challenges remain, of uneven implementation, a general lack of understanding about sanitation-linked behaviour change, using the incentive as a lure, targets as opposed to outcomes, weak supply chains, scarce bridge finance and targeting the incentive. The quality of toilets is another area of concern that has been poorly addressed, even though masons are instructed to make the twin leach pit toilet.

Behaviour change

The quality of motivation is also questionable and anecdotal evidence seems to suggest it is poorer in districts that have set ambitious targets and where villages are large and heterogeneous. The proximity of toilets to water sources, especially handpumps and village ponds, is of concern and indicates poor quality of motivation and transfer of technically sound information.

Successes

What has gone home is the shift from making individual toilets to making communities open defecation free (ODF). By hook or by crook people are prevented from defecating in the open, and for this credit goes to villagers who take up the vanguard of behaviour change. Another major factor that is only occasionally mentioned is the shortage of space for open defecation as populations grow.



In states over the years, the responsibility of SBM has shifted from the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) to the Department of Panchayati Raj and/or Rural Development.

Challenges

Despite these changes SBM, like its predecessors, remains a largely individual-driven programme. State missions are effective if the SBM director is; district missions are effective if the collector and CEO are committed; blocks are driven by enthusiastic block development officers and; panchayats are led by committed sarpanchs/pradhans. The institution of sanitation remains moribund and has not cranked up enough to complement individual efforts. Therefore, when an individual leaves or priorities change, sanitation often falls by the wayside.

The challenge is institutionalising sanitation processes so that the administration supports the process and local government institutions are able to plan and monitor it. Having permanent sanitation staff up to the block level is one way; safai karamcharis (sweepers) in panchayats is another.

Once a panchayat is ODF, their work will be to ensure usage of sanitary facilities, mechanised cleaning of full pits and maintaining public sanitation. Sanitation ambassadors need to look beyond their immediate campaigns-in-mission mode to a permanent system.

b. Open defecation free

ODF is the mantra under the SBM. This is a welcome change from merely making toilets towards behaviour change. The issue is who verifies, since methods existed earlier. The implementer and verification agency need to be different since otherwise there is a tendency to report inaccurately.

Recommendations

- Institutions need to ensure supply chains exist and do not exploit the spurt in demand for materials.
- Localised action, at the district or block level, is necessary here to secure material in sufficient quantities are the right prices and of the quality needed.
- Along with this, bridge finance for the really poor who cannot afford to pay for the masons or material is an essential prerequisite.
- Priority sector lending by banks can help here as many beneficiaries have bank accounts under various schemes.

According to MDWS' definition, this means

(a) No visible faeces found in the environment/village

(b) Every house as well as public/community institutions using safe technology option for disposal of faeces. Here, "safe technology option" means "no contamination of surface soil, ground water or surface water; excreta inaccessible to flies or animals; no handling of fresh excreta; and freedom from odour and unsightly condition".

Process

Panchayats should be made responsible and trained for reporting but not implementation as a way forward. The construction of toilets by panchayats known as the contractor model is already discouraged in many states. A better system for reporting is needed now to make it stronger and less prone to data fudging such as using GPS for marking coordinates.

In several states, panchayats declare themselves ODF but the block and district authorities wait a few months before conducting a verification visit. This allows them time to check if toilets are indeed being used continuously or the panchayat has 'slipped back'. Typically, encouraging use over a few months make the habit permanent. This is another welcome, subtle step in ensuring ODF sticks. The role of local Nigrani Committees are critical in ensuring sustainability of ODF.

Challenges

ODF itself is a means to an end, and should not become the end itself. While an important milestone, it is just that - a milestone towards improving the quality of life. The danger in making it an end, means it will become another target that should be avoided. Perhaps the end could be tangible such as a clean and green village where open defecation, drinking water and solid-liquid waste have been properly handled. The India Sanitation Coalition can provide a platform towards taking this concept further. MDWS has announced a Village Swacchatat Index that looks at four indicators and self-scoring by villages. This will lead to state and national ranking, and awards.

It has been found that significant health gains happen only when sanitation coverage and usage reaches a certain high threshold. While standards exist for provision of water for ablution, the actual consumption could differ (a low-flush would consume lesser water compared to regular flush toilet, for instance). So, water usage may not be the correct indicator. There is difference between indoor sanitation, ODF (defined in the guidelines as toilets + safe disposal) and the advanced stages of completing the sanitation chain (viz., treatment and waste recovery).

c. Sustainability

This is the first time sanitation programme guidelines have included sustainability as part of the project lifecycle. In earlier programmes action stopped after construction with the assumption that people will use toilets. As has emerged there is behaviour change and scale in sustainability. Everybody everywhere needs to have and use a toilet, possible only if scale and behaviour change go together.

In order to ensure sustainability of ODF initiatives we need to stratify the country based on three categories: identify districts where we have done badly as a priority to be accorded special attention. Second, identify the districts that have an average performance, and lastly the districts which have done well. There is a need to arrange a series of exposure visits to these places for coming out with practical solutions to solve the problems. Learnings from the good performers can be distilled into a model and used to guide others.

Further, members noted that dedicated motivators/NGOs to guide change are essential. Funds are never a constraint if people decide to have a toilet. Technology choices and options to build

Recommendations

ODF is defined to include safe technology option which means "no contamination of surface soil, ground water or surface water; excreta inaccessible to flies or animals; no handling of fresh excreta; and freedom from odour and unsightly condition".

Village institutions should be made more viable to sustain ODF.

Sanitation should rather be promoted as an integrated programme and not in isolation.

It can be extended to solid and liquid waste management expanding the ODF theme to a clean and green village where open defecation, drinking water and solid-liquid waste have been properly handled.

safe sanitary toilets need to be made available. For example, in rocky terrain, water-logged areas, places with water scarcity, etc., toilet options need to match the local conditions. This will address one of the weakest area in the campaign.

Recommendations

Once ODF is achieved practical measures should be taken to avoid slippages including regulation to ensure every new house build comes with a latrine

Sanitation needs to go beyond ODF and campaigning and monitoring should continue over time at all levels, from communities to the national level. Messages and frequencies can change but repetitions are necessary

All public institutions should have sanitation services

Toilets and technologies need to be localised and people need to be trained to avoid mistakes while making toilets, such as single-pit toilets, poor substructures, locating toilets near water points, etc

Community-led approaches are suggested for community level outcomes and for ensuring peer pressure acts as a deterrent to open defecation by any individual in future

Equity considerations dictate planning must include all sections of people, including Dalits, religious minorities, women, etc.

People's movement

A middle ground needs to be found in SBM where the government engages an NGO capable of working at scale to run behaviour change campaigns preceding and succeeding its construction drive. Other grassroots organizations such as the National Service Scheme, National Cadet Corps, Rotary and Lions clubs, Nehru Yuvak Kendras and religious leaders can be roped in as well. Information Education and Communication (IEC) funds can be used for paying the expenses incurred in both phases. NGOs can subsequently be engaged for monitoring, separating the roles of the implementing and monitoring agency. School students, local youth and women's engagement as 'change makers' in their community, is another strategy for awareness, information, education and communication, and for behavior change in their respective areas of influence.

A greater focus is required on issues arising post toilet construction and its usage as stipulated. There are families who have single-pit toilets which will usually get filled in 4 to 5 years – even quicker in the high water table areas. Here, suitable technical choices are needed. Hence, faecal sludge management and pit life extension are the two crucial factors to ensure the maintenance of ODF Status. The state governments need to adopt the sustainable sanitation service initiatives so that there is sustained toilet usage by everyone in a family.

Water

An issue that people often raise but that has not come up here is the lack of water for ablutions. This is a facetious argument and as Arti Dogra, a former collector of Bikaner in Rajasthan credited with making the district ODF put it, people fetch tens of litres of water for drinking, cooking and bathing; adding 2 litres to that load will not be a big deal. They carry a litre with them when they go to defecate outside to the extra water needed is only a litre a person. In other words, a shortage of water is not an argument for not using a toilet. But there is a

problem if it increases the burden of collecting and bringing water home on women. This is echoed by district project coordinators in other states, some of whom have not heard to Dogra. This aspect could be part of the behaviour change communications.

Recommendations

RALUs as a means of institutional learning have been proposed in SBM. These can help in systematically generating, organizing and using knowledge at the Central, state and district levels for better implementation. The processes need to be clear and governments need to own RALUs to be successful

Some case studies on how community-led approaches are working with or without incentives would be useful for district administrations

Use and adaptation of sanitation technology is another area where case studies are needed

Examples of districts that have achieved and maintained ODF would help others plan better. The India Sanitation Coalition has a system of collecting and curating case studies from its members and other stakeholders. People should take this opportunity to share their information

Behaviour change

Behaviour change is not a one-time or one-dimensional activity and hence it will require intense investments in terms of time, money and human resources. Even if the focus shifts to behavior change and a large mass of people are influenced to change their behaviours, there will remain a group of people for whom it may not be a matter of behaviour, but who may have different reasons/barriers to building and using a toilet. The reasons could range from lack of funds or lack of space, to rocky terrain, high water table, living in a rented space etc. These groups will require case by case stock taking and problem resolving in order to attain 100% toilet access and the subsequent ODF goal.

The safe disposal of faeces is a second generation problem that will need to be addressed. The SBM guideline addresses this by recommending a twin pit design, but the fact is that in many places single pit toilets are being built and can sooner or later lead to overflowing pits, defunct toilets and even contamination of water sources. Improved training on appropriate technology/design for masons, education of users on this and better monitoring to prevent single pit toilets is the need of the hour. Faecal Sludge Management continues to be a missing link in the sanitation value chain and creative solutions need to be developed for this.

d. Good Practices:

Documenting, organising and sharing case studies or good practices has been the weakest link in most development activities, and WASH is no exception. As a result, we end up repeating mistakes and miss duplicating successes.

The few initiatives and networks working in this area have fragile institutional memories and certainly no systematic way to access or distribute their experiences. This activity remains peripheral instead of being mission critical.

The new commitments and drives under the SBM provide an opportunity to continuously learn from past and present governmental and non-governmental efforts to find out “what works and what does not”. Such learning could be possible only cross learning and sharing.

SBM since its launch has seen different people and institutions’ willingness to contribute and try out new and innovative methods. We have been seeing an array of new and interesting approaches by different government institutions, people’s institutions, committed individuals, NGOs and corporates.

One of the most important initiatives advised in SBM is setting up of Rapid Action and Learning Units (RALU) at national, state and district levels. These units are supposed to act as catalysts for facilitating cross learning and sharing especially focussing on what works and what does not work.

Operationalising RALUs has been one of the biggest challenges and various discussions on modalities of taking it forward has taken place. Recently the Government of India felicitated

25 district magistrates from 20 states for scaling up sanitation access in their respective districts. I am sure that these 25 districts can contribute different approaches and strategy for remaining districts in the country. A process documentation of these 25 district WASH champions will be of great help. District planning and OPEPs are being promoted in 67 districts. UNICEF is also supporting the development of Team Swacch Bharat with district guidelines and helping Collectors and CEOs.

Some of the potential best practises related documentation that could be taken up are:

Motivators Model to accelerate Sanitation in Rural India: Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan introduced swachhata doots (sanitation motivators who work in communities) as motivators for accelerate demand for sanitation facilities in rural India. However due to poor selection, lack of effective training, weak implementation and inefficient monitoring mechanisms swachhata doots did not contribute to the set objectives. During the Swacch Bharat Mission, CLTS-trained motivators are doing commendable work in many districts in India. One such example is from the Mugeli District of Chhattisgarh.

Providing Incentives to beneficiaries is a reality. Some districts have taken steps for faster disbursement of incentives. This has further motivated to speed up sanitation acceleration in many districts. However, in some states, delayed disbursement of incentive is one of the major hurdles to achieve universal access. Documenting some of these experience will surely help further.

One of the major hurdles for sanitation acceleration in the country, is myths about sanitation technology. Due to over exposure to urban areas, people in rural areas are opting for septic tanks than leach pit models. Successful implementation of leach pit models will help to improve sanitation coverage

Generally, data and reality might not match all the time. Declaring a district ODF does not mean this status holds forever. Some national campaigns have raised awareness for the sanitation sector, such as “no toilet, no bride”, but measurements of success and goal achieving as well as general information about the implementation of this campaign are missing. There are some studies on the efficacy of communications campaigns during NBA and SBM-G.

The following cities/initiatives were mentioned in the debate:

- a) Jambudiyapura Village near Baroda, Gujarat (Clearford India Pvt. Ltd.)
- b) Jaipur, Rajasthan (CFAR)
- c) Mandya district, Karnataka (Water Aid)

Nitya Jacob stressed that the India Sanitation Coalition would like to improve the knowledge and sharing of case studies.

Statistics of posts

Theme	Host	Replies in Forum
Policy and Institutions	Naina Kidwai	20
Open Defecation Free (ODF)	Sanchita Ghosh	14
Sustainability	Sujoy Mojumdar	11
Good Practices	Siddhartha Das	14

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The Thematic Discussion Series

The Thematic Discussion Series on rural sanitation finance was organised and hosted by the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA) on the SuSanA Discussion Forum Platform. It was facilitated by the India Sanitation Coalition.

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