



SWACHH BHARAT MISSION - GS III MAINS

Q. How does the Swachh Bharat Mission helps in achieving India's commitment to universal sanitation and meeting SDG targets? Discuss the challenges faced by the mission at the ground level. (15 marks, 250 words)

News: *The reality of the Swachh Bharat Mission*

What's in the news?

- India was ranked right at the bottom of 180 countries in the Environment Performance Index (EPI) in 2022.
- The EPI ranks countries on climate change performance, environmental health, and ecosystem vitality.

Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM):

- The Swachh Bharat Mission is a government initiative launched in 2014 aimed at eliminating open defecation and improving waste management practices across India.
- It includes initiatives to build toilets and promote sanitation.

Objectives:

1. Cleanliness Promotion:

- The campaign focuses on promoting cleanliness habits among citizens through awareness campaigns, education, and behavioral change initiatives.

2. Elimination of Open Defecation:

- One of the primary goals is to eliminate open defecation by constructing millions of toilets across rural and urban areas and encouraging the use of sanitary facilities.

3. Solid Waste Management:

- Swachh Bharat Abhiyan aims to address the issue of solid waste management by promoting proper disposal, recycling, and management of waste to maintain cleanliness and environmental sustainability.

Achievements of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan:

1. Sanitation Coverage Surge:

- Under the Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G), sanitation coverage in India skyrocketed from 39% in 2014 to 100% in 2019, achieving Open Defecation Free (ODF) status.

2. ODF Plus Goals:

- SBM aimed to transition to ODF Plus status by 2024-25, with approximately 85% of villages already achieving this milestone.



3. Toilet Access:

- According to the National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS) Round 3, 95% of India's rural population now has access to toilets, with 79% owning their own facilities, significantly reducing open defecation and associated diseases.

4. Public Toilets:

- Over 6 lakh community and public toilets have been constructed across India, enhancing sanitation infrastructure and accessibility.

5. Waste Management Improvements:

- Door-to-door waste collection, segregation, and scientific processing have improved in several cities and towns, aided by bimethanation plants and material recovery facilities, addressing India's waste management challenges.

6. Behavioural Change Campaigns:

- The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan launched mass awareness campaigns promoting behavioural change, fostering cleaner practices among citizens and bringing sanitation to the forefront of public discourse.

7. Competition for Cleanliness:

- Initiatives like Swachhta leagues and city rankings have spurred positive competition, motivating towns and cities to enhance cleanliness systems and practices, leading to rising public satisfaction.

8. Investment in Waste Management:

- Over Rs 20,000 crores have been mobilised for investment in solid and liquid waste management systems, bolstering urban infrastructure development across the nation.

Key Challenges Related to Swachh Bharat Mission:

1. Poor Quality of Infrastructure:

- Reports suggest inadequate construction quality of toilets under the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), raising questions about the effectiveness of the initiative.

2. Inadequate Access to Sanitation Facilities:

- Despite government claims, communities in slums and peri-urban areas still lack access to public toilets, contributing to sanitation challenges.

3. Lack of Waste Treatment:

- Toilet construction in rural areas is not linked to waste treatment, leading to improper disposal of faecal sludge and environmental contamination.

4. Ineffective Waste Management Technologies:



- Large, capital-intensive waste management technologies have failed to meet expectations, resulting in health crises and the need for additional resources to fix them.

5. Privatization of Public Health Services:

- The outsourcing of sanitation work to private contractors, often employing subjugated communities, has led to the privatization of public health services and perpetuated caste discrimination.

6. Insufficient Human Resources:

- Shortage of sanitation inspectors and inadequacy in recruitment efforts hinder effective monitoring and management of sanitation programs at the local level.

Way Forward:

1. Focusing on Vulnerable Sections:

- Despite significant progress in sanitation coverage, marginalised groups such as female-headed households, landless individuals, migrant labourers, and people with disabilities still lack access to toilets.
- Supporting these underserved populations is essential from both human rights and public health perspectives, given their existing lack of access to basic services and associated health challenges.

2. Robust Waste Management Systems:

- Scaling up waste processing and emphasising source segregation, collection, storage, transportation, processing, and disposal are essential for achieving comprehensive waste management nationwide.

3. Enhanced Quality Assurance:

- Implement stricter quality control measures to ensure the construction of toilets meets prescribed standards. Regular inspections and audits can help identify and rectify any construction deficiencies.

4. Targeted Infrastructure Development:

- Prioritize the construction of public toilets in slums and peri-urban areas to improve access to sanitation facilities for marginalized communities.

5. Integrated Waste Management:

- Integrate toilet construction with waste treatment facilities in rural areas to ensure proper disposal of faecal sludge.

Hence, India has made significant strides in achieving SDG 6 through increased toilet access under SBM. However, it must also consider environmental safety and disease transmission, particularly for



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children's health. Addressing the complexities identified in SBM will demonstrate India's commitment to universal sanitation and meeting SDG targets, setting an example for other nations.



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