



Replicating the SBM Model

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This article is based on **“The next mission”** which was published in The Indian Express on 22/02/2020. It talks about the success story of Swachh Bharat Mission and how it can be replicated to deal with India’s water crisis.

Indian government prioritises the water and sanitation sectors as key pillars of broader rural development. However, India is facing a water crisis. **According to the Central Ground Water Board**, over 250 of 700 districts have groundwater levels which are “critical” or “over-exploited”. Also, India harbours **16% of the world’s population, but only 4% of the world’s freshwater resources**.

In order to deal with this water crisis, the Indian government has launched **Jal Jeevan Mission** (JJM). The mission aims at providing ‘Har Ghar Jal’ or piped water supply to all households by 2024.

However, achieving this target is an arduous task as it requires not only a lot of economic resources, political will at all levels, but also active & positive public response to it.

In this context, the success story of Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) can be emulated in tackling India’s water crisis.

Success Story of SBM

Until 2014, **approximately 60% of the world’s open defecators** (600 million people) were practising open defecation across India, but within five years of the scheme, the number of open-defecation cases came down significantly, and **now rural India has actually become open-defecation free**.

Reasons Behind Success of SBM

- **Mass Communication Campaign:** Swachh Bharat Mission, recognising the issue of social acceptability, launched a massive communication campaign to bring about a change in the social attitude. Reaching out to the masses effectively was one of the foremost foundations of this scheme.

The Prime Minister of India's leadership in SBM, became the key ingredient for success of Swachh Bharat Mission.

- **Clear Vision:** Swachh Bharat Mission had clearly defined national targets, the action plan and outlined the tasks and roles at each level of operation.
- **Use of Nudge Theory:** Majority of funds in SBM have gone towards incentivising the poor and marginalised households to construct and use household toilets, bringing about behaviour change, and building capacities of field functionaries.
- **Long Term Approach:** Achieving ODF status hasn't led to closure of the mission. Government under rural sanitation has declared to shift its focus on ODF sustainability, bio-degradable waste management, greywater management, sludge management and, critically, plastic waste management for all villages by 2024.

Multiplier Effect of SBM

- The returns on investments made in SBM, have been manifold, and their effects on the broader economy, markets and employment have been significant.
- **UNICEF** recently estimated that investments in sanitation in India are yielding a **400% return with each rural household in an open-defecation-free village** saving Rs 50,000 on account of avoided medical costs and time savings.
- The Toilet Board Coalition has estimated that the sanitation infrastructure and services market in India will be worth over **\$60 billion by 2021**, generating many new jobs, even in the most rural areas of the country, apart from reducing health and environmental costs and enhancing savings for households.
- Many people engaged in the business of manufacturing toilet related hardware accessories have reported huge growth in sales during the SBM period.

This has been corroborated by another recent study by UNICEF in which they have estimated that SBM has resulted in creating **over 75 lakh full time equivalent jobs over the past five years**, giving the rural economy a major boost.

After the success of SBM, the next critical basic service that the government ought to provide is water supply.

- **Decentralised Approach:** Union budget for 2020-2021 has commitment of Rs 3.6 lakh crore of central and state funds under this scheme.
 - However, there is a need to follow a more decentralised approach (engaging local bodies) as envisaged by SBM.
 - This will ensure that the gram panchayats and local urban bodies have responsibility to upkeep of their water and sanitation infrastructure, providing a boost to the sustainability of service delivery to people.
 - This approach will ensure that just like sanitation, provision of water supply and its upkeep will also become everyone's business.
- **Women in Leadership Roles:** SBM focused on ending the practice of open defecation, which directly benefited the women by restoring their dignity and basic health. This made women a flag bearer in the sanitation revolution.
 - In rural India, women have to walk long distances in unfriendly weather and treacherous terrain to fetch water for their families.
 - According to a report by the **National Commission for Women**, on average, a rural woman in Rajasthan walks **over 2.5 km to reach a water source**.
 - Providing piped water supply will provide women with the opportunity to use their time more productively and improve their quality of life.
 - Another scheme to conserve groundwater in regions with low water tables, the **Atal Bhujal Yojana** is based on community participation, a key component of this programme is the formation of water use associations, in which at least 50% of members are to be women.
 - These steps will provide a massive fillip to the **ease of living for women**.
- **Nudging the Farmer**
 - About 90% of India's water is consumed in farming. And that 80% of this irrigation is for water-guzzling crops — rice, wheat and sugarcane.
 - There is a need to diversify procurement operations, to include less water-intensive crops, like millets, pulses and oilseeds, especially in India's drylands.
 - However, changing the procurement process to less water-intensive crops requires a lot of political capital. Government can nudge the farmers to grow less water-intensive crops.

Drishti Mains Question

Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) has brought a jan andolan (mass revolution) in bringing a change in open defecation status in India. Can this success story of SBM be replicated in dealing with India's water crisis?