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Rural Sanitation

Changing Mindsets: Restoring Human Dignity

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Focus on Rural Sanitation

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Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

- The goal of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is to provide access for every person to sanitation facilities including toilets, solid and liquid waste disposal systems, village cleanliness and safe and adequate drinking water supply.
- It has two sub-Missions viz – Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural) and Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban). The rural mission comes under the purview of Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation and the urban mission comes under Ministry of Urban Development.
- The timeline for the programme is to achieve its goals by 2019, the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Objectives:

- To completely eradicate open defecation in India.
- To remove the system of manual scavenging.
- To generate awareness among the people about the need for healthy sanitary systems.
- The programmes also focuses to bring about change in the behaviour of people – Towards accepting and using toilets.

Funding:

- Budgetary allocations
- Swachh Bharat Kosh (funded via Swachh Bharat Cess) Corporate Social responsibility (CSR)
- Funding assistance from multilateral sources

Major components of the goal:

- Construction of individual sanitary latrines for households below the poverty line.
- Conversion of dry latrines into low-cost sanitary latrines.
- Construction of exclusive village sanitary complexes for women providing facilities for hand pumping, bathing, sanitation and washing on a selective basis where there is not adequate land or space within houses and where village panchayats are willing to maintain the facilities
- Total sanitation of villages through the construction of drains, soakage pits, solid and liquid waste disposal

- Intensive campaign for awareness generation and health education to create a felt need for personal, household and environmental sanitation facilities.

The Government's initiative if adequately supported by officials at various levels of administration and local community, would help in transforming the country into an open defecation free nation by 2019.

Challenges of cleaning rivers

Many of our rivers have been polluted to such an extent that, they have become unfit for human use. Growing industrialization, urbanisation and construction of dams have robbed our rivers of their natural flow and purity. They have dried up to a level that they appear to be carrying only sludge and effluents.

Namami Gange:

- Being implemented by Ministry of water resources, river development and Ganga rejuvenation.
- Will cover 8 states, 47 towns & 12 rivers under the project.
- All Gram Panchayats on the banks of Ganga to be made open defecation-free by 2022.
- Several ministries are working with nodal Water Resources Ministry for this project includes – Environment, Urban Development, Shipping, Tourism & Rural Development Ministries.
- People living on the river's banks will be actively involved in this project.
- Urban Local Bodies and Panchayati Raj institutions will be actively involved in this project.
- Setting river centric urban planning process to facilitate better citizen connects, through interventions at Ghats and River fronts.
- Expansion of coverage of sewerage infrastructure in 118 urban habitations on banks of Ganga.
- Enforcement of Ganga specific River Regulatory Zones.
- Development of rational agricultural practices & efficient irrigation methods.

Organic farming and conservation of Ganga:

- Pollution by Chemical fertilizers washed away from fields adjacent to the river, is a major cause of worry.
- This will be managed by utilizing the help of SHGs, awareness programmes and mobile applications designed to create awareness among the farmers and also to promote use of organic farming techniques.

Agreements with other ministries:

- The Ministry of water resources, river development and Ganga rejuvenation, has entered into agreements with other involved ministries, namely – Shipping, Human resources and development, Rural development, Tourism, AYUSH, Youth affairs and Sports and Drinking water and sanitation.
- This will facilitate smooth co-ordinated implementation of the project.

Ensuring the continuity of flow:

- Construction of various dams across Ganga (totalling 54), has led to loss of bacteriophage and silt in the downstream areas of the river. Thus, the self-cleansing mechanism of the river is adversely impacted.
- Continuous flow of rivers should be ensured by interlinking the small streams.

Controlling waste dumping:

- Waste dumping the catchment areas of the rivers is particularly harmful because, here the carrying capacity of the river is very low and hence, more prone for blockage and diversion.
- NGT has imposed a fine of Rs.50000 on instances of ritual related, construction related and other type of waste disposal in Yamuna.
- NGT has also directed CPCB to take measures to prevent industrial units from discharging untreated effluents into rivers.

Learning from foreign lands:

- All major rivers, including the Thames of London and Rhine of Germany have been polluted to the maximum levels in the past.
- But the sustained and the co-ordinated efforts of the Government and the local community has resulted in rejuvenation of these rivers.
- Thus India can benefit from learning from the Global experiences in river pollution management.

Yamuna in Delhi:

- Yamuna is the major tributary of Ganga.

- The river is highly polluted, once it enters the plains and Delhi and is a major source of pollutants for Ganga too. Hence, any clean up drive of Ganga is bound to fail, if pollution in Yamuna is left unaddressed.

Significance of river basins:

- Various small streams, small ponds and flora found in a river basin contribute to the flow of the river,
- Any plan to rejuvenate the river must essentially involve conservation of these contributing components of the river basin.
- All elements of a river basin have to be conserved comprehensively.

Way forward:

- Foremost reason of pollution of our rivers is discharge of waste into rivers.
- Next come religious practices, which demand the leftovers after every ritual to be consigned to flowing waters of a river,
- Bathing of humans as well as cattle, washing laundry and consigning remains of dead bodies etc., are the other contributing factors.

Controlling discharge of pollutants into rivers, is the foremost step that has to be taken to rejuvenate our rivers. Rivers have a biological capacity to cleanse themselves and this mechanism will reap benefits only when pollution levels are below the cleaning capacity of the river.

Swachch Bharat Abhiyan to end open defecation in rural India

Background:

- The UN-WHO joint monitoring programme for Drinking water supply and sanitation (2010) describes sustainable improved sanitation as an “improved” sanitation facility that hygienically separates human excreta from human contact.
- These include facilities that flush or pour-flush into a piped sewer system, septic tanks, or pit latrines, as well as ventilated improved pit latrines and pit latrines with slab or composting toilets.

Impact of inadequate sanitation facilities:

- Adversely impacts human health and dignity.
- Open defecation is the major cause for children suffering from diarrhoea and under child five mortality.
- Open defecation potentially exposes women to crime against them as they have to wait for darkness to set to relieve themselves.

PREVIOUS SCHEMES

Central Rural Sanitation Programme (1986):

- The programme envisaged provision of subsidies to encourage people to construct sanitation facilities.
- But a follow up study revealed the need to create awareness among rural people about sanitation rather just incentivising them by way of subsidies for construction.

Total Sanitation Campaign (1999):

- Aimed at massive awareness campaigns, promoting cost effective and appropriate technologies, expand sanitation coverage in rural areas and take the scheme beyond rural households to rural schools and public places.

Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan:

- Target for achieving total sanitation was fixed at 2022.
- In addition to the objectives of Total Sanitation Campaign, Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan focussed on development of community managed environmental sanitation systems focussing on solid and liquid waste management for overall cleanliness in the rural areas.

SWACHCH BHARAT ABHIYAN

- The contours of the scheme have been highlighted in the previous article.

Reasons for poor performance of sanitation schemes:

- Cultural and traditional reasons and lack of education contribute to this unhygienic practice.
- Sanitation is not a “felt need” for many of the BPL families and therefore they do not participate in the sanitation programmes.
- Lack of affordable sanitation technology and trained implementing agencies.
- Non availability of choice of toilet designs and area specific technologies. Inadequate supporting delivery systems and absence of trained masons, skilled workers and technical manpower.
- As per CAG, between 2009- 2014, only half the number of the planned toilets were constructed and about 1/3 of them became defunct.

Need for Strategic Actions:

- A massive campaign by employing all available means of communication has to be launched to make all people in a village including the school children, youths and women fully aware of the importance of using appropriate sanitation facilities.
- Safe sanitation and clean water make the population healthier together. They have to be considered as one sector, rather than as separate entities.
- No uniform design should be forced on user-beneficiaries. User of a toilet should be free to select design of his/her toilet. Ex. Sulabh International has prepared 46 designs.
- Implementation of programme will require significant efforts for social mobilisation on a large scale which will include people belonging to various groups. Elected representatives at grass root level have a critical role.
- Other measures include – higher investment for rural sanitation, aggressive social marketing, strong behaviour change communication, village planning, strong alternate delivery system, social mobilisation and mass

awareness at Panchayat level, development of strong partnership among implementing agencies, incentives and awards and time frame for implementation of the programme.

The thrust cannot be just to construct toilets, but to ensure their continued use keeping clean and maintaining properly, which of course, calls for behavioural change.