

# Chapter 15

## **ODF India: A Goal Yet to achieve**

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### *Introduction*

The United Nations General Assembly introduced 17 Sustainable Development Goals in the year, 2015 with an aim to achieve a healthier and better future for all. Among the 17 goals known as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in this research paper, we shall be focusing on Goal no. 6, i.e., Clean Water and Sanitation. It aims to improve water and sanitation facilities. The official wordings being: “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.”<sup>171</sup>

The United Nations believes that access to better water and sanitation is a fundamental right of the people. SDG 6 has eight targets, the second target being: “By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the requirements of women and girls and also those in vulnerable situation.”<sup>172</sup> This research paper shall focus on open defecation, the problems it poses and how shall it be eliminated. We shall also throw some light on the progress made so far by the Government of India to achieve an ODF India.

To have a world free from open defecation, there has to be provisions for toilets and other schemes to be implemented by the governments and behavioral change amongst the people. Therefore, there is a need of cooperation between the government and the people so as to achieve the Target 2 of SDG 6 i.e., an open defecation free (ODF) world.

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<sup>171</sup> “Goal 6: clean water and sanitation” UNDP, 28 September 2015

<sup>172</sup> “Goal 6 Targets” United Nations Development Programme

## Open Defecation (OD)

The practice of defecating in the open instead of a toilet is called open defecation. People go to the open in forests, fields, canals, bushes, near water bodies, railway tracks, parks etc. for the purpose of defecation. As per 2015, over 520 million people in India used to defecate in the open, which is the highest in the world.<sup>173</sup> Open defecation leads to several diseases like diarrhea, schistosomiasis, soil-transmitted helminth and various other infectious diseases. It poses a serious threat to the lives of children in India. Every day, almost 400 children under five die from diarrhea linked to poor sanitation and hygiene. Poor sanitation is the reason behind the stunted growth of 38% of children under five.<sup>174</sup>

Open defecation poses a threat not just to women health but also safety and dignity. Defecating in open makes women more prone to rape and harassment. In addition to the shame in defecating in open, there is always a constant fear of being harassed, physically and psychologically. This leads to dropping out of schools on the onset of menstruation. Around 39.4 % of adolescent girls of the age 15-18 years drop out of schools.<sup>175</sup> For girls and women, toilet not only provides for hygiene and menstrual sanitation but also lowers the risk to harassment.

Open defecation adversely influences the environment. Defecating near the riverside pollutes the river as well as contaminates the surface and the underground water. The contamination in river water leads to increase on the toxicity level of the water. This affects the marine ecosystem. It contributes to disturbance in the marine life and causes eutrophication, which form an algal bloom resulting in cutting down of oxygen and light supply to the marine life below.

SDG target 6.2 thus emphasizes on equity, dignity, gender and sustainability.<sup>176</sup>

In a survey held in 2014, in the village of Badarpur, it was revealed that financial constraint (88.40%) is one of the key reasons as to why people still practice open defecation. Around 50.72% were still waiting for government support, 23.18% were habituated of defecating in the open. In contrast, a 2017 survey in the same village reveals that the reason behind defecating in the open was space constraint (86.27%), followed by lack of financial support (67.64%) and being accustomed to the old habits (50.98%).<sup>177</sup> The people often link toilets to dirt, owing to the social norms. In spite of being provided with toilets by the government, people don't believe in using them due to social and religious beliefs. Despite the Government's efforts to make India Swachh (i.e., open defecation free) by October 2, 2019

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<sup>173</sup> World Bank Open Data. 2015, Washington, D.C.: The World Bank

<sup>174</sup> [www.teamswachbharat.in/get-the-facts.php](http://www.teamswachbharat.in/get-the-facts.php)

<sup>175</sup> National Colloquium Report, NCPCR, 36 Janpath, New Delhi.

<sup>176</sup> WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme. Progress on Sanitation and Drinking Water—2017 Update and SDG Baseline; World Health Organization: Geneva, Switzerland, 2017.

<sup>177</sup> National Centre for Biotechnology Information. Open Defecation-Free India by 2019: How villages are progressing? –Jay Patwa and Niraj Pandit

will only be fulfilled if the government spreads the awareness about the benefits of toilet and the vices of defecating in the open.

## *Open Defecation Free (Odf)– Government Schemes, Policies And Progress So Far*

The Government of India has defined ODF as follows:

“ODF is the termination of faecal-oral transmission, defined by

- a) no visible faeces found in the environment/ village; and
- b) every household as well as public/community institutions using safe technology option for disposal of faeces.<sup>178</sup>

Government of India in collaboration with UNICEF is taking up the challenge to make India “Open Defecation Free” by 2019 and UNICEF is a key partner in Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), Government’s flagship programmed. SBM aims at bridging the gap between people of India and hygiene and sanitation by providing the people with access to toilets. UNICEF provides the Government with strategies to develop and implement. It also aims at improving WASH in schools and health centers. UNICEF and the Government have teamed up for various campaigns such as Sanitation and Hygiene, Advocacy and Communication Strategy (SHACS), Global Interfaith WASH Alliance (GIWA) and Poo2Loo campaign which address the young minds to create an awareness and sensitize them towards the plight of open defecation and that how every youth must advocate for the need of toilets. NGOs such as Waste Warriors, The Ugly Indian and Swachh Pune have been working towards the ideals of the Swachh Bharat Mission.

SBM is a nationwide campaign launched on October 2, 2014 that seeks to achieve a cleaner and healthier India by 2019. SBM aims at eliminating open defecation by constructing toilets for the people and monitoring the use of it. It aims to achieve an ODF India by October 2, 2019 which would also mark as the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. As per the statistics, since October 2, 2014, 9.98 crores of households had been provided with access to toilets, around 5.82 lakhs of villages have been declared ODF with 5.20 lakhs verified ODF. A total of 639 districts have been given ODF status.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Swachh Bharat Mission (G). *Definition of Open Defecation Free*. Ministry of Drinking water & Sanitation, New Delhi.

<sup>179</sup> <https://swachhbharatmission.gov.in/sbmcms/in> Retrieved on 11 August, 2019.

The Swachh Bharat Mission has been backed with Rs. 620 billion.<sup>180</sup> The Government has provided Rs.12,000 for each toilet to be constructed.<sup>181</sup> The World Bank had provided the Government with a loan of US\$1.5 billion and \$25 million in technical assistance in 2016.<sup>182</sup> SBM has roped several public figures to communicate the concept.

In a big step to eradicate the practice of open defecation, the Finance Minister announced the launch of Galvanizing organic Bio-Argo resources Dham (GOBAR-DHAN) scheme in the February 2018 budget speech. The scheme forms a major part of the SBM Garmin. The scheme aims at influencing villages to achieve cleanliness and use the organic waste to generate energy and improve rural livelihood and income.

Swachh Sarkisyan is an expansive survey of sanitation conducted across India to check the progress and impact of SBM. It is commissioned by the Ministry of Urban Development and the functions are carried out by Quality Council of India. World Health Organization (WHO) has mentioned in its reports that India has prevented at least 1,80,000 diarrheal deaths since the inception of SBM.<sup>183</sup>

## WASH

It is a term introduced by Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council for water, sanitation and hygiene and then was adopted by all the organizations worldwide.<sup>184</sup> WASH is interdependent on each other if one is present other has to be there, these three are the core issues which are grouped together to determine a growing sector. Adequate water, proper sanitation and hygiene can improve health, gender equality, life expectancy, can reduce various diseases and many other important issues of international development. For basic survival and development of children clean water, good hygiene and basic sanitation practices are essentials. According to the data approximately 2.4 billion people do not have access to proper and improved sanitation facilities, and around 663 million people are surviving without clean water and water resources.<sup>185</sup> WASH being the subject of the targets in Sustainable Development Goal (6) is in itself a testimony how fundamentally important role does it plays in public health and development of the nations. The program is connected to many other sectors: WASH and Health, WASH and Livelihood, WASH and Education. According to the 2017 annual report of WASH by UNICEF around 113 countries are the part of the programmed for betterment among which India is also the part.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> "Swachh Bharat: PM Narendra Modi Launches 'Clean India' mission" *Zee News*. Retrieved 2 October 2014.

<sup>181</sup> "MDWS Intensifies Efforts with State to Implement Swachh Bharat Mission" *Business Standard*, 18 March 2016

<sup>182</sup> "World Bank signs \$1.5 billion loan fact for Swachh Bharat Mission" *The Economic Times*, 30 March, 2016.

<sup>183</sup> "How Swachh Bharat transformed the way public hospitals function" *Hindustan times*, 29 September, 2018.

<sup>184</sup> <https://knowledgpoint.org/en/question/3663/who-invented-the-term-wash-for-water-sanitation-hygiene/>

<sup>185</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/wash/>

<sup>186</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/publicpartnerships/files/2017\\_UNICEF\\_ARR\\_WASH\\_ADVANCE\\_COPY.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/publicpartnerships/files/2017_UNICEF_ARR_WASH_ADVANCE_COPY.pdf)

## *WASH in India*

India, a second largest populated country where around 60% of the population lives in the urban areas which is increasing in a rapid rate, putting stress on clean water, basic sanitation and proper hygiene. According to the data recently in 2014 approximately 40% of the population defecated in open because of lack of safe toilets in the country, making India the country having the highest number of diarrhea related deaths among children below five-years of age.<sup>187</sup> Along with Swachh Bharat Mission of Government of India many NGOs have adopted the WASH program which are all interlinked with each other. In past 15 years various WASH policies have been formulated by the Central and the State Governments further according to the data it was found that the policies formulated by the state government have less impact as compared to the central policies, policy making by the state government have to be strengthened.<sup>188</sup> India partnered with many organizations to improve the facilities faster and make the city clean.

## *Water*

Our ancient History shows how pure water is important for maintaining good health and maintaining clean environment. According to Abhati<sup>189</sup>, the water which is contaminated cause various water borne diseases pertaining to digestion, throat infection, skin related diseases, cough, goiter, fever etc. In present scenario, the ancient theories are coming true, children below five years of age are dying because of water borne disease, there is no clean water to drink and survive. Major rivers like the Kaveri, Ganga and Yamuna flows through highly populated areas of the country which therefore pollutes them to a high extent. According the data, the content of bacterial pollution is very high which lead to death of around 40 million people each year due to fatal illness.<sup>190</sup> Lack of safe drinking water and water for farming has become the major issue as the presence of Fluoride has increased to high amount making the water toxic. Because of open defecation the presence of coliform ranges to 500 to 100,000 MPN/100 ml but instead it should be below 104 MPN/100 ml.<sup>191</sup> 45% of children in India are stunted and, in a year, around 600,000 children below age of five die due to improper water.<sup>192</sup> 2 billion people worldwide uses water which is contaminated by faces.<sup>193</sup> Presence of faecal bacteria indicates the presence of other pathogens especially *Escherichia coli*<sup>194</sup> and this same water is used for cooking food,

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<sup>187</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/india/water-and-sanitation>

<sup>188</sup> <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/States-need-to-buck-up/article16906629.ece>

<sup>189</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3331376/pdf/ASL-7-1.pdf>

<sup>190</sup> <https://www.omicsonline.org/open-access/indian-waters-past-and-present-2157-7587-S10-001.php?aid=58185>

<sup>191</sup> <https://www.omicsonline.org/open-access/indian-waters-past-and-present-2157-7587-S10-001.php?aid=58185>

<sup>192</sup> <http://unicef.in/PressReleases/30/Water-in-India-Situation-and-Prospects>

<sup>193</sup> [https://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/water-quality/en/m](https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/water-quality/en/m)

<sup>194</sup> <https://water-research.net/index.php/fecal-coliform-bacteria-in-water>

washing clothes, for drinking and cause serious diseases like cancer, blue syndrome, for women during the time of pregnancy it has large effects as they are exposed to harmful chemicals which could lead to low weight and fatal health problems, diseases related to cardiovascular etc.

## *Sanitation*

A fact that around 75% of population of India account for open defecation.<sup>195</sup> Sanitation is not just mere usage of toilets, it is about providing clean environment, reducing exposure of humans to various diseases, changing behavior and providing basic technology. According to the reports in 2012 around 59% of Indians defecated in open they didn't had access to proper toilets and mostly people lived in rural areas.<sup>196</sup> The term 'Basic Sanitation' includes components like clean and healthy environment, privacy and dignity. The most dangerous component of all in human excreta is the faces. According to studies around 10% global diseases is correlated with poverty and infancy.<sup>197</sup> The major faecal transmission due to lack of sanitation is through fluids, fields, flies, fingers which there by goes in our stomach through food which we eat and when it mixes with fluids there is no chance the water is pure and safe to drink. It is a myth that only adult faces have harmful bacteria's and infants' faces is safe according to the study the infant faces have 23% higher chances to cause diarrheal diseases they shouldn't be disposed of carelessly<sup>198</sup> which shows that both the faces of adults and infants should be managed properly. Proper sanitation helps not only socially but economically also. There are various technologies to increase better sanitation from simple latrines to improved sewage systems like basic traditional latrines but improved, septic tanks, pit latrines etc. Main objectives for proper sanitation systems should be to promote health, to protect environment, to use cost effective technology, should be acceptable by the different cultures. Sanitation is not only vital for health but is also a very vital component of sustainable development goal. According to the research if all the sanitation services are used in India it could result to 14 million more years of healthy life.<sup>199</sup> India's proper participation in the initiative has increased more than 13% as estimated to be 2% per year.

## *Hygiene*

Hygiene cannot be separated from safe water and sanitation they go hand in hand. Hygiene have always been associated with public health. Hygiene includes not only handwashing but also menstrual and food hygiene. According to the studies, if hands are washed with

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<sup>195</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/wash/3942\\_43084.html](https://www.unicef.org/wash/3942_43084.html)

<sup>196</sup> <https://www.indiawaterportal.org/articles/sanitation-crisis-india-urgent-need-look-beyond-toilet-provision>

<sup>197</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2981586/>

<sup>198</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2981586/>

<sup>199</sup> <http://www.searo.who.int/mediacentre/features/2018/indias-commitment-accelerated-sanitation-coverage/en/>

soap and water daily it can reduce the chances of water borne diseases by 47%.<sup>200</sup> There is the lack of understanding among the people that how proper hygiene is linked with poor health, economic of the country and social outcomes. The major hygiene behaviors should be focused on washing hands with soaps every time, management of safety of water from the source to its consumption, use of sanitation facilities so that human faces can be dealt properly and safely. It's not true that if people are aware about the link between hygiene and health they will adopt into practice of safe hygiene.<sup>201</sup> It is more about behavior change and daily practice. According to the reports of UNICEF washing your hands with after the contact of excreta reduce the chances of diarrheal diseases by 40% and 30% chances of respiratory infections. Mortality rates can be reduced by 19% if birth attendants wash their hands before delivery and if mothers wash their hands before handling new born the chances of death I reduced by 4%.<sup>202</sup> Schools are the excellent means to spread the importance of hygiene to children and parents and hygiene practices in day to day life. In schools all across the country there is an urgent need to provide well maintained toilets, wash basins with soap for proper hygiene.

## *Conclusion*

Through this research paper we understand that Open Defecation Free is not just about building toilets all over the country. It is a task which requires continuous monitoring from every source available a change of behavior required among people to change their old habits and adapt to new and better ones. Open Defecation is not only linked with clean and healthy environment it is linked with clean water, proper sanitation and basic hygiene also. For example: human excreta on the land mixes up with the soil and pollutes it, the same soil mixes with the water and that same polluted water is used for washing clothes, hands, cooking food, drinking water and for taking bath which there by is the cause of death among children below 5 years, malnutrition, deaths related to diarrhea and many other harmful disease.

If all the links are managed and taken care properly then life expectancy can be increased to 14 million years of the age, as mentioned above in the paper. Open defecation, water, sanitation and hygiene are inseparable if one is handled then other has to be handled as well, if one is mismanaged other will also get affected.

After doing this research we realized that there is dire need of making laws on the issue. Though Government has already came up with various policies to reduce the habit. But

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<sup>200</sup> A. Mooijman, M. Snel, S. Ganguly and K. Shordt. (2010). *Strengthening Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools – A WASH guidance*

*manual with a focus on South Asia, IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, UNICEF, WSSCC*

<sup>201</sup> Appleton B and Sijbesma C (2005) *Hygiene promotion (Thematic Overview Paper/IRC)*, pp14-17. IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, The Netherlands. Available at: [www.irc.nl/page/27611](http://www.irc.nl/page/27611) (accessed 2 August 2012)

<sup>202</sup> <https://www.healthissuesindia.com/2014/02/05/sanitation-health-hygiene-india/>

still when we travel in train or go to a village, we can still see the people going and defecating in open. There are many NGO's which are working towards the cause and have adopted many slums and village to stop the practice through various means. Government can make a law that if a village or a slum has not stopped the practice of defecating in open and is adopted by the NGO or any other organization then the organization will be charged. Though Government has made many toilets and people also use them but after sometime due to various reasons like dirt, smell or pit getting full people stop using them the law should be made on this where by the organizations who takes the responsibility or is given the responsibility to clean the toilets and empty the pit should do it weekly and if not done then will be charged heavily. Strict laws should be made that all the schools in the country should educate students about not defecating in open, health issues related to it and proper hygiene practices and if the schools do not adhere to the same strict actions will be taken against them. A counselling session should be given to the communities twice in a month so that behavior change can take place. We think laws like these may increase the probability of a change which is highly required right now.