

India's Sanitation Journey

Mains: *GS II - Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health*

Why in News?

Recently, World Toilet Day is observed to raise awareness about the global sanitation crisis and the importance of safe toilets for all.

What is world toilet day?

- **Observed on** - **November 19** of every year.
- Officially designated as a United Nations observance in 2013.
- **Importance** - It highlights toilets as vital for health, dignity, equality, and sustainability.
- **Supports SDG** - It directly supports Sustainable Development Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, aiming for universal access by 2030.

What is the importance of proper sanitation?

- **Basic need** - Access to safe toilets and proper sanitation is essential for public health, dignity, and environmental sustainability.
- **Disease reduction and environmental protection** - Improved sanitation reduces waterborne diseases, enhances productivity, and safeguards the environment.
- **Promotes equality** - It also empowers women and children by providing safety, privacy, and better educational opportunities.
- **Ensures dignity** - In today's era of climate change, rapid urban expansion, and persistent inequality, secure sanitation continues to be a foundation for human dignity, community well-being, and sustainable progress.

What are the schemes and programmes in India to promote sanitation and hygiene?

- **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)** - It has been the flagship program, aiming to eliminate open defecation and provide universal toilet access in both rural and urban areas.
- India has seen a transformation in its sanitation drive since the launch of the Swachh Bharat Mission, which transformed access to toilets and hygiene facilities across rural and urban areas.
- **Launch of Swachh Bharat Mission (2014)** - Announced on 2nd October 2014, the mission aimed to eliminate open defecation and improve solid and liquid waste management.

- **2 components:**
 - **SBM** – Gramin (rural)
 - **SBM** – Urban (cities and towns).
- Under this initiative in October 2019, all villages, districts, and states were declared Open Defecation Free (ODF).
- **Outcomes of SBM Phase I**
 - **Health Gains** – WHO estimated 300,000 fewer diarrheal deaths in 2019 versus 2014, linked to improved sanitation.
 - **Economic Savings** – Households in ODF villages reduced health-related expenses by nearly INR 50,000 each year.
 - **Environmental Protection** – ODF regions recorded notable declines in groundwater pollution levels.
 - **Women's Safety and Dignity** – With expanded toilet access, 93% of women expressed feeling safer within their homes.
- Building on these milestones, SBM (Gramin) Phase II focuses on sustaining ODF outcomes and advancing integrated solid and liquid waste management to achieve '*Sampoorn Swachhata*'.
- **Phase II of SBM (Gramin)** – It was introduced in 2020 to guarantee universal access to household toilets and effective waste management, with the objective of transforming villages into ODF Plus Models.
- **Key objective** – To sustain the ODF status of villages and to improve the levels of cleanliness in rural areas through solid and liquid waste management activities.
- To make all villages ODF Plus Model, which includes ODF Sustainability, Solid and Liquid Waste Management, and Visual Cleanliness.
- **ODF Plus Village** – It is defined as a village which sustains its Open Defecation Free (ODF) Status, ensures solid and liquid waste management and is visually clean.
- **There are 3 progressive stages** of ODF Plus villages:
 - **ODF Plus Aspiring** – A Village which is sustaining its ODF status and has arrangements for Solid Waste Management OR Liquid Waste Management.
 - **ODF Plus Rising** – A village which is sustaining its ODF status and has arrangements for BOTH Solid Waste Management and Liquid Waste Management.
 - **ODF Plus Model** – A village which is sustaining its ODF status and has arrangements for both Solid Waste Management and Liquid Waste Management; observes visual cleanliness, and displays ODF Plus Information, Education & Communication (IEC) messages.
- India's progress in sanitation under the Swachh Bharat Mission reflects a clear shift from access to sustainability.
- In rural areas, villages have steadily advanced from being declared open defecation free to achieving ODF Plus and ODF Plus Model status, showing strong community participation in maintaining facilities.
- Urban centers, meanwhile, have surpassed targets for household and public toilet construction, ensuring that sanitation infrastructure keeps pace with growing populations.
- **ODF Plus Plus** – It refers to an area where there is no open defecation and all toilets are functional and well-maintained, and all faecal sludge and sewage are safely managed and treated without being discharged into open drains or water bodies.

Rural Sanitation (SBM-Gramin)
• Over 95% of villages in India were declared ODF Plus.
• ODF Plus villages grew by 467% — from 1 lakh in December 2022 to 5.67 lakh villages.
• ODF Plus Model Villages increased to 4, 85,818.

Urban Sanitation (SBM-Urban)
• 4,692 cities are ODF, 4,314 have achieved ODF+, and 1,973 have reached ODF++ status.
• Individual Household Latrine: - Construction Achieved - 108.62% - Constructed - 63,74,355 - Mission Target - 58,99,637
• Community & Public Toilet: - Construction Achieved - 125.46% - Constructed - 6,38,826 - Mission Target - 5,07,587

India's Swachh Bharat Mission is often highlighted by the UN bodies such as UNICEF as one of the largest sanitation drives globally, showcasing how national action can contribute to global goals.

- **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)** - It was launched in 2015, focusing on the development of basic infrastructure in urban areas, in the sectors of water supply, sewerage, and septage management.
- **AMRUT 2.0** - It was launched in 2021 in all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)/Cities.
- Providing universal coverage of sewerage and septage management in 500 AMRUT cities is one of the major focus areas of AMRUT 2.0.
- **Jal Jeevan Mission** - It was launched in August 2019, apart from providing safe and ample drinking water to all rural households, also focuses on sanitation & maintenance of open-defecation-free (ODF) villages.

What lies ahead?

- India's sanitation journey reflects a transformation from addressing open defecation to building sustainable systems of hygiene and waste management.
- Through initiatives like the Swachh Bharat Mission, AMRUT, and the Jal Jeevan Mission, the country has moved beyond infrastructure creation to ensuring dignity, inclusivity, and long-term cleanliness.
- With observance of important events like International Toilet Day, these efforts not only strengthen public health but also align with global commitments under Sustainable Development Goal 6, positioning India as a leader in advancing safe sanitation for all.

Reference

[PIB| Sanitation in India](#)

