

# Swachh Bharat Mission

## A Catalyst for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development

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Launched in 2014, the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) has generated widespread public awareness about the vital link between hygiene, health, and overall well-being, and has evolved into a Jan Andolan or People's Movement. It has achieved significant transformative success in expanding sanitation access across India, particularly in rural areas, while fostering lasting cultural and behavioural change towards cleanliness and improving quality of life. However, SBM remains a work in progress and requires sustained efforts and further expansion to encompass broader swachhta dimensions such as waste management, clean water, and environmental sustainability. Recognised by UNICEF as the world's largest public cleanliness movement, the mission has transitioned from a focus on toilet construction in Phase I to an emphasis on solid and liquid waste management and sustained cleanliness in Phase II, reflecting the Government's commitment to prioritising people's well-being and contributing to the vision of *Viksit Bharat* by 2047.

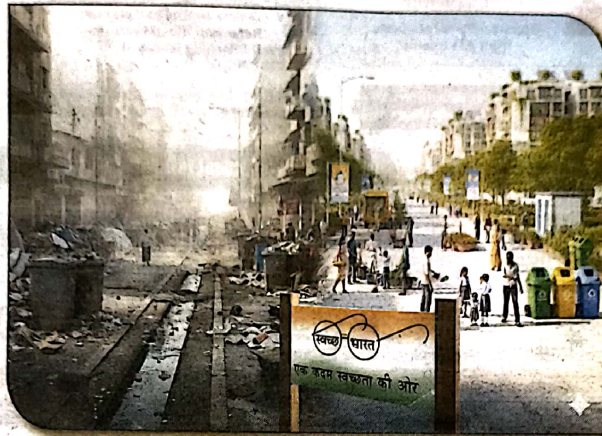
Although initially conceived as a cleanliness mission, the Government is now positioning the Swachh Bharat Mission as a strategic instrument to harness India's demographic dividend by improving health and quality of life, thereby enhancing workforce participation, productivity, and economic efficiency, and ultimately advancing overall socio-economic development.

### SBM (Grameen): Achievements and Social Impact

Launched in October 2014, the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) mobilised nationwide participation and, by the end of its first phase (2014-2019), led to the construction of over 100 million household toilets and the declaration of more than six lakh villages as Open Defecation Free. The mission delivered measurable health, economic, and environmental benefits, including improved safety and dignity for women, with significant reductions in diarrhoeal deaths, substantial household savings on health expenditure, and a greater sense of security among women.

### SBM Phase II (Grameen): Sustaining Gains and Addressing Gaps

Phase II of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) (2019-2026) seeks to sustain ODF status and implement comprehensive solid and liquid waste management across rural India to achieve *Sampoorn Swachhta*,



supported by an investment of Rs. 1.40 lakh crore. However, challenges persist, including gaps between toilet construction and usage due to water scarcity and poor quality, risks to ODF sustainability, and underdeveloped waste management systems in rural areas and small towns.

### From ODF to ODF Plus: Waste Management and the Circular Economy

As India moves beyond the achievement of Open Defecation Free (ODF) status, the focus of the Swachh Bharat Mission has expanded to ODF Plus, with an emphasis on effective waste management and the transformation of waste into wealth. As underscored by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the cleanliness campaign is a continuing journey that now places greater responsibility on improving solid and liquid waste management across both urban and rural areas. Rapid population growth and urbanisation have intensified the challenges of domestic and industrial waste generation, making waste management a central pillar of Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0.

In this context, SBM-Urban seeks to convert waste into opportunity by strengthening systems for waste collection, processing, and resource recovery, thereby promoting environmental sustainability and inclusive development. The Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016, which envision "zero waste to landfill" through recycling, reuse, and biomining of legacy dumpsites, have driven a significant expansion in waste processing capacity—from 16 per cent in 2014 to over 81 per cent today. Supported by a growing network of material recovery facilities, composting plants, construction and demolition waste facilities, and waste-to-energy units, India is steadily transitioning towards a circular economy.

Simultaneously, large-scale remediation of legacy dumpsites under SBM-Urban has reclaimed vast tracts of degraded land, transforming them into productive and eco-friendly spaces. These efforts collectively advance the goal of "Garbage-Free Cities" under SBM-Urban 2.0 (2021-2026) and reinforce the mission's shift from waste disposal to sustainable resource utilisation.

### SBM and Progress on Sustainable Development Goals

India has also made partial progress towards four key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). Although global gains have been recorded in reducing child and maternal mortality, many countries continue to fall short of achieving all SDG targets by 2030, largely due to the pandemic, which slowed the pace of reforms. At the same time, the pandemic underscored the critical importance of personal hygiene in mitigating health risks, thereby enhancing public awareness and participation in cleanliness initiatives.

### Health Outcomes and Regional Disparities

In India, under-five mortality declined significantly from 48 to 28 per 1,000 live births between 2015 and 2023, while neonatal mortality fell from 28 to 17 per 1,000 live births, outperforming both regional and global averages. This progress represents an important milestone towards achieving the targets of SDG 3. Nevertheless, critical gaps persist in areas such as non-communicable diseases, mental health, and universal access to quality healthcare services. Moreover, inter-state disparities

remain pronounced, with some states advancing far more rapidly than others, underscoring the need for more balanced and inclusive progress.

### Challenges in Water, Urban Sustainability and Consumption Patterns

Despite significant progress over the past decade in expanding access to improved drinking water and sanitation under SDG 6, India continues to face critical challenges in water quality, wastewater treatment, and the long-term sustainability of sanitation services, with many regions still lacking safe wastewater disposal and reliable piped water supply. Recent tragedies, such as those in Madhya Pradesh, highlight the human cost of these gaps. Performance on SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)



and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) has been mixed. Urban sustainability has improved through initiatives like the Smart Cities Mission and state-level urban development programmes, which have strengthened infrastructure, waste management, and planning. However, rapid urban population growth, expanding informal settlements, and persistent gaps in service delivery continue to hinder full achievement of SDG 11. Progress on SDG 12 has been slower, with sustainable production and consumption practices—such as waste reduction, recycling, and efficient resource use—still in early stages. Although policies like extended producer responsibility and plastic waste rules exist, their implementation is uneven across states, and urban waste management systems remain constrained by limited capacity, insufficient enforcement, and infrastructural gaps.

### Cleanliness as a National Culture and Way of Life

The Swachh Bharat Mission has evolved far beyond its initial symbolic emphasis. What began as a call for cleaner streets has now significantly influenced India's approach to public

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