

## **ROLE OF PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN SWACHHA BHARAT MISSION IN INDIA**

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### **Objective:**

The main objective of this paper is to study the Role of Panchayat Raj Institutions in Swachha Bharat Mission (SBM) in India.

### **Research Methodology:**

This research paper is mainly based on secondary sources of data. Data are collected randomly from secondary sources like books, research papers, journals, articles from different government non-government websites, and government reports. And paper is prepared with the help of descriptive and explanatory research design.

### **Introduction:**

Mahatma Gandhi was the first to grasp the importance of sanitation. He performed scavenging work to show that without clean and healthy surroundings, we would not develop a nation. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is one of the important flagship programmes of the Government of India that has been initiated by our Hon'ble Prime Minister to fulfill Mahatma Gandhi's dream of a clean and hygienic India. It was launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister on the 145th Birth Anniversary of the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi on 2nd October 2014 at Rajghat, New Delhi. It is aimed to make India a 'Clean India' by 2nd October 2019 i.e. 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The current population of India is 1,415,940,641 as of Monday, February 27, 2023, based on Worldometer elaboration of the latest United Nations data. To cater to the basic needs of this population is the real challenge, in order to address this huge problem of sanitation, the Government of India has launched a nationwide Clean India Program "Swachhata Abhiyan". Poor sanitation has been related to a number of economic and social problems. According to the Water and Sanitation Programme Report, inadequate sanitation resulted in a loss of 53.8 billion US Dollars accounting for 6.4 percent of India's

gross domestic product (GDP) in 2006. (Water and Sanitation Program, 2011). Nearly 72 percent of this effect was attributed to health-related causes. The social consequences of poor sanitation have not been effectively investigated. Most of the evidence on the social consequence of poor sanitary conditions appears to be poorly documented and inadequately explored (Chu, 2013).

In India, nearly 650 million people lack toilet facilities. Efforts toward addressing this massive problem of sanitation appear to be bi-pronged involving both the government and the Non-Governmental Organizations. The government programs have focused mainly on community campaigns. The main goal of this is to eliminate open defecation by 2017 through peer pressure and to reward communities, which achieve 'open defecation free' status. The current government has initiated a 'Mahatma Gandhi Clean India Programme', to clean up nearly 1000 towns and to put an end to the practice of manual scavenging. The success of this program and in particular, its sustainability is likely to depend upon its coherence with the social structural forces, which drive poor sanitary conditions. Social-structural and multi-variable methods towards improving levels of sanitation. The current campaign in India such as the Total Sanitation Campaign and Clean India Program focus on eliminating public defecation by providing individual household latrines. Such campaigns are founded on the assumption of an unmet need for flushing toilets and pit latrines.

Under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) now the National Health Mission, Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committees (VHSNC), are envisaged as platforms for 'local action' on health at the community level and serve as key program components of communication, across the country. Overall, the success of VHSNCs in

building community-level collective action has been mixed. While states like Chhattisgarh and Odisha, have made effective use of this platform for community-level monitoring of service delivery and processes, not only health but all social determinants of Health, a large number of states across the country have not been able to activate the VHSNCs which is reflected in low expenditures of the VHSNC united funds. The proposed campaign – ‘VISHWAS’ (Village-based Initiative to Synergise Health, Water and Sanitation) - VHSNC Campaign Initiative for Swachhta and Swasthya -will be carried out under the leadership of VHSNCs and will build a collective initiative at the community level, for improving Water, Sanitation and Hygiene situation and its impact on Health and quality of life. It will also strengthen convergent action in integration with various initiatives under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), and will also build the institutional capacity of VHSNCs to fulfill their roles as visualized in the original design.

The key strategy of this campaign will be to organize eleven monthly campaign days in every VHSNC village, which will be led by its VHSNC, and thereby build a systematic community action on key components related to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. The objective of Swachhta Campaign is Create awareness on Water Sanitation & Hygiene and their impact on Health and create a platform for local action on these issues.  $\frac{3}{4}$  Empower communities to participate in the planning and implementation of the program  $\frac{3}{4}$  Build the institutional capacity of VHSNCs to fulfill their roles as visualized in its original design, by undertaking the monthly campaigns. Role of VHSNC as a platform for ‘community action’ VHSNCs are an important mechanism for community participation of all stakeholders at the community level; families and community at large as target of promotive and preventive health efforts and the receiver of services, health providers who deliver the services and community representatives as well as general community members who have a dual role to support as well as monitor the services. The

VHSNCs also enable local planning by creating community level dialogue, and by building convergent collective action on social determinants and public services directly or indirectly related to health. NHM also envisages that by building local level planning processes, VHSNCs would support the process of Decentralized Health Planning. Thus the committee is envisaged to take leadership and provide a platform for improving health awareness and community’s access to health services, address specific local needs and integrate it all into community-based planning. One of the key objectives of VHSNCs is to also empower Panchayats to play their role in the governance of health and other public services and to enable communities to take collective action for the attainment of a higher health status and improved quality of life in the village.

#### **Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions:**

As per the Indian Constitution’s 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act, 1992, Sanitation is included in the 11<sup>th</sup> Schedule. Accordingly, Gram Panchayats have an essential role in the implementation of the Swachya Bharat Mission (SBM). The Programme will be implemented by the Panchayati Raj Institutions at all levels. They will carry out the social mobilization for the construction of toilets and also maintain a clean environment by way of the safe disposal of wastes. Panchayat Raj Institutions may engage suitable NGOs for interpersonal IEC and training. Community Complexes constructed under the SBM will be maintained by the panchayats. Panchayats can also contribute from their own resources for school Sanitation over and above the prescribed amount. They will act as the custodian of the assets such as the Community Complexes, environmental components, drainage etc. constructed under SBM. Panchayat Raj Institutions can play a key role in promoting regular use, maintenance, and up gradation of toilets and inter-personal communication for hygiene education. Panchayats and NGOs who are in the frontline of implementation have a key role in ensuring that safety standards are being met with all components of SBM e.g. the

distance between the water source and a latrine-adhering to the minimum distance for school and anganwadi toilets and community sanitary complexes; regulating pit-depth, pit lining to prevent pollution, the collapse of pit, etc. The same will apply to key hygiene behaviour such as keeping the environment around hand pumps/water sources clear and tidy and free of human and animal excreta. Gram Panchayats must also play a role in the monitoring of the SBM program. Both block-level and District level Panchayat Raj Institutions must regularly monitor the implementation also with the concerned officials States may decide to channel the fund flow for activities at the GP level through the Gram Panchayat institution. Gram Panchayats working within the framework has to prioritize sanitation within their programs as follows:

a. The Gram Panchayats will participate in the social mobilization for the triggering demand, construction of toilets and also maintenance of the clean environment by way of safe disposal of waste.

b. Gram Panchayats can also contribute from their own resources for School Sanitation and Solid and Liquid Waste Management Infrastructure.

c. The Gram Panchayats will act as the custodian of the assets such as the Community Complexes, environmental sanitation infrastructure, drainage etc. constructed under SBM(G). GPs can also open and operate Production Centers/Rural Sanitary Marts.

d. Gram Panchayats can play a very important role in creating awareness and imparting hygiene education among the local population. Involvement of experienced and reputed NGOs, Village Level Motivators (Swachhata Doots/Sanitation Managers), and field functionaries like Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA), Anganwadi Workers, School Teachers, and Volunteers to carry out field-level activities can have a substantial impact.

e. Gram Panchayats can play a key role in promoting regular use, maintenance and up gradation of toilets, Agencies who are in the frontline of implementation have a key role in

ensuring that safety standards are being met with all components of SBM(G) e.g. the distance between water source and a latrine – adhering to the minimum distance for individual household latrine (IHHL) and Community Sanitary Complexes; regulating pit-depth, pit lining to prevent pollution, the collapse of pit etc. The same will apply to key hygiene behaviour such as keeping the environment around hand pumps/water sources clear and tidy and free of human and animal excreta.

f. Both Block level and District level PRIs must regularly monitor the implementation of the programme. Gram Panchayats must also play a role in the monitoring of the SBM(G) programme.

g. The Gram Panchayats organize and assist in organizing Social Audits of the Programme. Social audit meetings must be held in each GP once in six months. The DSBM(G) and the BPMU shall be responsible to ensure that this schedule adheres to.

h. The responsibility of the social audit of the programme shall be given to any specific village-level body/committee/SHG etc. which shall be carried out in coordination with the GP. Apart from this the Gram Panchayats will have a Swachhata Diwas (Sanitation Day) every month and will also convene periodic assemblies of Gram Swachhata Sabha (Village Sanitation Assembly) This will be used as means to strengthen the elements of transparency, participation, consultation, and consent, accountability and grievance redressal in the implementation of SBM.

#### **Conclusion:**

Sanitation is a virtue which comes from within – be it an individual, a society, and a Nation. It is reflected in our attitude towards our surroundings and what we wish to leave for our future generations. Any transformation in this regard would require an enormous behavioural change, a change in entrenched attitudes, which needs to be sustained through developing and maintaining adequate infrastructure, reinforcing healthy sanitation practices, sound leadership at all levels, public participation, and effective communication. The country is

witnessing a mass movement to address this challenge. Managing waste at all levels and of all types, rejuvenating water bodies, developing sustainable villages, cities, and public places require foot soldiers in each of us – be it Governments, institutions, schools, corporates, civil society organisations, RWAs, or Panchayats. This systemic behavioural change is a collective responsibility we must undertake towards building a healthier nation. Sanitation is vitally linked to human dignity. It is important to ensure dignity of labour of our tireless sanitation workers who need to be duly recognised for the service they are doing to the society by keeping our surroundings clean. They need to be unburdened with the sheer enormity of waste being generated by our societies. This issue of Yojana is a tribute to these countless, mostly faceless, sanitation workers who have been the force behind the Swachhata Jan Andolan. It is also a way to study in-depth the policy framework around the domain and to celebrate the stories of changes around us. These small footsteps will leave greener footprints for a better tomorrow.

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