

# **Community Participation Cum Social Assessment of Clean India Program and Sustainable Development Goals: A Study Based on Amritsar District in India's Punjab**

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## **Abstract**

A massive campaign, 'Clean India Program' 'Swachh Bharat Mission' (SBM), a national flagship program of India's federal government is underway since October 02, 2004 and it is to be accomplished by 2019. India is faced with an ever-increasing problem of waste generation in the country. The SBM mission launched by Government of India (GOI) is to solve the problem of waste management, make India a clean state by focusing upon sanitation, ensure hygiene all across the nation and achieve number 06 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This paper carries out a social assessment of Clean India program (SBM) and identifies challenges of SBM implementation in Amritsar. It undertakes a stakeholder analysis to identify issues related to access and equity of cleaning services. The study found that SBM goals and objectives cannot be achieved without community participation. All residents had the knowledge about proper segregation of solid and liquid waste and their proper disposal. However, there is still the need for new methods to be found for their sustenance. It was found that villages, towns and cities have experienced significant improvement in facilities in sanitation, waste management, community living, and safe drinking water and also that the perception of the community on hygiene and health factors has a strong influence on the practice of hygienic living. It is recommended that

stakeholders must be involved by government agencies at all levels of the program implementation.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Development Goals, Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), Clean India, Sanitation, Cleanliness, Community Participation

## **Introduction**

The '*Swachh Bharat Mission*' SBM is one of the most ambitious, national flagship programs of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government in India. The SBM initiative (Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation Report, 2014) has drawn attention of several international agencies besides having received enormous support from its people, government agencies, media, NGOs, educational institutions and corporate houses for turning this program into a reality (Sengupta, 2014). The movement has been so intense that it has set the country for ushering into one of the historical socio-economic revolutions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century India. The success of cleanliness revolution demands comparison with success of the past two revolutions in India; first, 'green revolution for food self-sufficiency' in decades of 1970s-80s and second, 'white revolution for milk sufficiency' in mid 80s onwards. It could be argued that Clean India Program '*Swachh Bharat Mission*' SBM (Swachhbharatmission.gov.in, 2017) under implementation may enable India in achieving another desired goal of '*Swasthh ewam Samrudh Bharat*' (Cleanliness leading to health and prosperity). In recent decades, other programs of the government had never witnessed such direct support of the people.

In a developing country like India, issues of clean drinking water, sanitation and waste management have always remained on the national development agenda. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Health

Organization (WHO) and other reports of international agencies have highlighted the prevalence of problems such as lower life index, higher infant and maternal mortality rates, poor sanitation facilities, poor public health and hygienic issues in India. The Government of India in the past had been implementing policies and programs under Five-Year Plans (FYP) for achieving goals of 'Total Sanitation' and 'Health for All', but the results had not been a total success. The Millennium Development Goals Report in 2015 suggests an above average improvement in sanitation and drinking water facilities in India as part of meeting 8 targets under Millennium Development Goals-MDGs till 2015 (Millennium Development Goals India Country Report, 2015). Whatever that is left unfinished is expected to be achieved under new 17 goals and 169 targets planned as part of SDGs to be achieved by 2030.

Post MDGs 2015, the SDGs 2030 which are under implementation, have 17 goals and 169 targets. It is the 6<sup>th</sup> SDG that states 'Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for All'. India's SBM-Clean India Program is synchronized with 6<sup>th</sup> SDG. The SDGs 2030 (Sustainabledevelopment.un.org, 2019) continue to act as a road map for reducing poverty and hunger, ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all in addition to saving children and mothers from premature death, providing sustainable and dignified livelihoods, and saving the environment for future generations. The United Nations SDGs emphasize that there are important synergies among the SDGs - acceleration in one goal often accelerates the progress in others.

India's SBM- Clean India Program is on the verge of completion because of both national and international obligations. As per GOI, the objective of SBM mission (Swachhbharatmission.gov.in, 2017) is to help India, to solve the

problem of waste management and make India a clean state, ensuring hygiene all across the nation. Scholars of sustainable development have always emphasized on three themes: Environment, Economy and Equity/Empowerment. However, the present paper uses a framework of Equity/Empowerment perspectives of sustainable development goals.

The paper carries out a social assessment of SBM-Clean India program in two blocks of Amritsar District of India's Punjab and analyses prospects and challenges of SBM implementation and undertakes a stakeholder analysis to identify issues related to access and equity of cleaning services. Finally, this study analyses the impact of SBM- Clean India Program upon behavioral and attitudinal changes on part of average citizens of Amritsar District. The assumptions are that citizens in India continue to look toward government agencies for ensuring cleanliness of their areas. The implementation of SBM program will be affected by financial constraints and new methods which ought to be found for their sustenance. None of the national flagship program like SBM can ever be accomplished in a country of India's size and population without the participation of multi-stakeholders.

## **Methodology**

This study used a survey to identify the responses of the people about the community participation. A social assessment was done to find out the impact of the mission on behavior and attitudinal changes of participants including perception, participation and practice for health and hygiene purposes. Data was collected through questionnaires and an interview was conducted in two blocks namely, *Attari* and *Majitha* of Amritsar District of Punjab state. A random sample survey was conducted covering 25 households in urban locality and another 25 in a rural setting in *Attari* and *Majitha* blocks of

Amritsar District each. A total of 100 respondents from *Attari* (urban-25 and rural-25) and *Majitha* (urban-25 and rural-25) participated in the survey. Necessary reports of international agencies cum Government of India and other documents/resource material through physical and web mode were used.

### **Important Features of SBM- ‘Clean India Program’**

The SBM mission has the potential for helping India in achieving its SDGs with a sense of satisfaction by 2019 itself to coincide with 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of the ‘father of nation M K Gandhi’, much before 2030 meant for SDGs completion (Swachhbharatmission.gov.in, 2017). The completion of SBM- Clean India Program was scheduled for 2019 much before the completion of SDGs period. A problem that aggravates the lack of cleanliness in India is the weak approach towards the waste management problem and in the coming decades, the problem of waste management in India will assume serious proportions. Reports of the United Nations (UN) and Government of India (GOI) have identified several factors responsible for the ever-increasing problem of waste generation in the country such as faster population growth, mass migration towards cities, and haphazard growth of cities, poor administration by city /urban governments, inadequate public awareness and poor funding for projects. Many cities in India have faced with the challenge of waste handling and management. A leading national newspaper reported that, “In the last two decades, Indian cities have seen a rising tide of waste that’s disposed of in open dumps. For example, Bengaluru produced 200 tons of garbage a day in year 2000, and fifteen years later, the quantity rose to 3700 tons, which is a 1750 percent increase. Delhi produced 400 tons a day in year 2000, and fifteen years later it rose to 8,700 tons a day in 2015-a rise of 2,075 percent” (The Times of India, 2017). It indicated that urban bodies in most of the cities of India continue to a lack infrastructure for collection, storage,

segregation, transportation, processing and disposal of solid waste. The problem has already assumed monstrous forms on lack of availability of landfill sites in India.

### **Prime Minister's Direct Appeal to Citizens of India**

Undoubtedly, the government should get credit for adding the issue of 'cleanliness' on to the agenda of common masses on a war footing and getting it added to public discourse at all levels of country's governance set up. Another remarkable thing about the SBM mission has been that the issue of cleanliness was brought out of homes, schools and colleges and it was brought to the center stage, and it successfully pulled people around the agenda of cleanliness by substantially enhancing community participation, which perhaps was never witnessed in India in the last 3-4 decades. People have shown their highest interest in getting the SBM Clean India Program. The people's movement and their participation have been so intense that the topic of cleanliness even caught the attention of film producers/directors and as a result a very popular movie got made in India titled "*Toilet Ek Prem Katha*"- "Toilet: A Love Story".

### **Intense Use of Electronic Media and Social Media Tools & Techniques**

The GOI has adopted a multi prong approach at all possible levels for the implementation of SBM-Clean India Program so as to prevent it from becoming a policy failure (Swachhbharatmission.gov.in, 2017). As a result of this multi prong approach, Modi's government directly linked the Clean India Program with the economic health of the nation. The government discussed this issue with people of the country by approaching them directly and seeking promises from every citizen of the country for achieving the goals of 'clean India' through Prime Minister's famous radio program known as '*Mann Ki*

*Baat'* (<http://pib.nic.in>) which is broadcasted at the end of every month. The GOI launched several smart phones based Apps and Web/Android enabled cleanliness surveys like '*Swachhta-Survekshan*' (<https://swachhsurvekshan.org>). Government went further and started making annual declarations of 'Best Clean City' of the country which further enhanced community participation in keeping their cities cleaned. The Government also gave away awards to the best clean villages that galvanized everyone across the length and breadth of the country. This approach of the government made a huge impact upon the average masses across the country. The citizens of the country took pride in directly participating in the government launched cleanliness surveys every year for ensuring that their city was chosen as the best clean city and constantly worked for keeping their cities clean throughout the year. Citizens could upload any pictures or videos depicting dirt in their areas on a website so as to initiate prompt actions in their respective areas.

### **Intense Involvement of Youth/Students for Devoting 100 Hours to Cleanliness Annually**

The Prime Minister's Office ensured that youth of the country was involved in this mega cleanliness mission under implementation. All schools, colleges, universities and other institutions were roped in for the fulfillment of SBM-Clean India Program on a continuous basis. Prime Minister Modi even sought the support of all legislators and celebrities of the country for ensuring the success of this mission. He made several appeals to the entire youth/students of the country for devoting 100 hours every year to cleanliness. The GOI mobilized students studying in universities/colleges who are also registered as volunteers of National Service Scheme (N.S.S.) and National Cadets Corp (N.C.C.) by 'Fortnight Cleanliness Camps'- '*Swachhata Pakhwaaras*'. The author organized several such 'Fortnight Cleanliness Camps'- '*Swachhata*

*Pakhwaaras*’ in the past five years at Guru Nanak Dev University Campus, Amritsar, India and undertook this study to assess the community participation and carry out social assessment of the SBM mission.

Not only the Indian government has laid emphasis on the sanitation program, rather it has also laid emphasis on solid waste management including waste water management too. As a result of this initiative, separate toilets for boys and girls were provided in every school in the country by 15 August, 2015. In the light of the above facts and figures, the SBM- Clean India Program (<http://pib.gov.in>) as one of the flagship programs of GOI has been expedited in turn, nearing the process of achieving the 6<sup>th</sup> SDG in urban as well as rural areas of the country. On the whole, this kind of community involvement or peoples’ participation in getting an official policy implemented was never seen in the last several decades in India. The findings of the survey discussed later ascertained this fact. One can say with all conviction and on the basis of field survey that PM Modi’s aura and charisma helped the government in turning this SBM mission into a popular people’s movement. During all public speeches of PM Modi, people chanted ‘Modi-Modi’ non-stop and blindly followed him and this direct connectivity of the prime minister with masses made this silent revolution into a reality. It is this strength of the Prime Minister which led people’s movement to a change in perception, participation and behavior towards practice of cleanliness and hygiene.

### **Linking of SBM- ‘Clean India Program’ with Economic Incentives**

The Prime Minister could spread the idea of Clean India Program to ordinary masses that ensuring cleanliness in the country can contribute to GDP growth, increase the tourists flow to India, provide a source of employment and reduce health costs, thereby connecting to an economic activity. Prime Minister’s



personal involvement made sure that people are regularly informed about the importance of day to day things like cleanliness. People could also realize what cleanliness meant in terms of economic and health benefits. It became clear to masses that the idea of clean cities would lead to promote tourism and make India more attractive and tourism-friendly globally. Invariably, the Prime Minister on a regular basis encouraged people of the country to ensure that India's top 50 tourist places maintained the highest standard of hygiene and cleanliness, thereby, leading to a change in the global perception about India. He emphasized that 'Clean India' can bring in more tourists, thereby increasing the revenue of the government (<http://pib.gov.in>). Intense cleanliness campaigns resulted in a change of habits and increase in higher civic sense to keep their surroundings clean and make the maximum use of dustbins for putting trash. One can experience on a more frequent basis that more and more people have started making use of identified urinals instead of passing urine into the open. All over India, conditions of public toilets have improved considerably and more than one million of new toilets have been constructed. People have phone based apps which tell them the location of nearby toilets in case of an emergency.

### **Making India 'Open Defecation Free' (ODF) Under SBM**

One important objective of SBM- Clean India Program has been to emphasize upon the construction of sanitary latrines for every household in the country on a compulsory basis after identification with the financial assistance from federal government for people living below the poverty line and to completely stop the practice of using dry latrines by converting them into sanitary latrines thereby completely ending manual scavenging in the country. This mission was to ensure construction of public toilets in both rural as well as urban areas. Local governments (*Panchayati Raj*) are supposed to maintain them in rural

areas and municipal bodies in urban areas. The mission is also expected to generate awareness on the part of masses about health, hygiene and environmental sanitary toilets. The overall objective of this entire campaign is to ensure that India becomes an ‘Open Defecation Free Society’ (ODF) as required under SDGs. Getting the perception of masses changed towards the construction of latrines has been one of the biggest challenges for the government in the recent years. It is expected to ensure that rural India is declared ‘Open Defecation Free’ (ODF) and that every single citizen of the country makes use of a toilet.

### **Cleanliness Surveys ‘*Swachhta-Survakshan*’ 2016, 2017 and 2018**

In order to get the involvement of people living in urban areas, the government of India proposed ‘Cleanliness Survey’ conducted in 2016, 2017 and 2018 covering all parts of India by giving awards to the best clean city of the country. People’s participation in all three *Swachhta-Survekshan* was satisfactory. The 2017 survey was carried out by the Quality Council of India, which had deployed 421 assessors for on the spot assessment of 17,500 locations in 434 cities and towns. Another 55 people regularly monitored the survey process in real time. The criteria and weight ages for different components of sanitation-related aspects used for the survey were: a) Solid waste management including door-to-door collection, processing, and disposal, ODF (open defecation free) status etc. These carried 45 per cent of the total 2,000 marks. b) Citizen feedback – 30 per cent. c) Independent observation-25 per cent (The Financial Express, 2017).

With the involvement of peoples’ participation, a similar cleanliness survey was conducted for the year 2016 i.e., ‘*Swachh-Survekshan*’ 2016, which covered 73 big cities of India. In early 2018, GOI conducted the third round

of '*Swachh-Survekshan*' covering all 4041 statutory towns in India (Swachhta-Survekshan Tool Kit, 2018). This initiative of the GOI is equally appreciable that it has been able to reach up to 4041 towns of the entire country. People living across the country had the facility to participate in this national level drive by downloading the '*Swachh-Survekshan*' App on their mobile phones and participating in the survey. The huge participation in the survey reflected attitudinal as well as behavioral changes on the part of masses. More and more people were found taking interest in keeping their cities, towns, and villages filth/garbage free. People took pride in maintaining the necessary vigil for ensuring that no littering took place in the open. They had developed a sense of competition with residents of other cities and towns for ensuring that their town or city did not lag behind others on the India basis ranking. The exercise has been actively operated in cities to build their capacities and improve their service delivery for '*Swachh-Survekshan*'.

### **Budgetary Allocations for *Swachh Bharat Mission 2018-19***

The budget allocation for the *Swachh Bharat Mission* (SBM) has witnessed a little reduction in the current year's budget of 2018-19. A sum of Rs 178.43 billion (INR) has been allocated for the program against the allocation of Rs 192.48 billion according to the revised estimates of the last year's GOI 2017-18 budget. Out of the total budget allocated to SBM, Rs 153.43 billion has been allocated to rural areas while the rest has been given to the urban areas. According to the budget documents, the government aims at building 18.8 million individual household latrines in the financial year 2018-19. Among the medium term deliverables, the document enlists reducing open defecation from 20% to 10%. The other enlisted aim is to improve the solid liquid waste management of *gram panchayats*. Another budget document titled, "Status of implementation of budget announcements, 2017-18" claims that out of

8,02,054 habitations in Open Defecation Free (ODF) declared villages, 4,22,305 habitations have been provided Piped Water Supply Schemes (PWSS) up to 01.01.2018. According to the Economic Survey of 2017-18, 296 districts and 307,349 villages have been declared open defecation free. Eight states and two Union Territories Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Daman & Diu and Chandigarh have been declared completely open defecation free (The Indian Express, 2018).

**Observation of Cleanliness Fortnight-I-‘Swachh Bharat Pakhwaara’ at GNDU, Amritsar, Punjab, India as National Service Scheme (NSS) Program Officer**

The NSS Unit-I and II of the Guru Nanak Dev University observed cleanliness fortnight in which 200 students/volunteers carried out various cleanliness activities for 4 hours daily for two weeks in August 2017 as follows:

- A. A mass anti polythene campaign by the NSS Units was organised in market places, malls, within the university adjoining school campuses and adopted villages.
- B. Lectures were delivered in the University adopted village Raniyan, near Lopoke, regarding the benefits of hygiene among students of GSS School, Raniyan. Students were told about washing their hands with soap after using the toilet; and after and before eating any meal/or anything on a regular basis.
- C. A mass cleanliness drive was organised in the University adopted village Raniyan, near Lopoke by involving the villagers led by their village head-Sarpanch and disseminated information regarding the help given by the government for the construction of toilets in their houses.

- D. Since there were no wells nearby, the places of hand pumps and nearby drainages were cleaned. The streets were cleaned and all trash which was collected from streets was disposed into dug pits. In certain areas, bleaching powder was used for disinfecting the areas.
- E. Volunteers also visited the child care centre- ‘*Aanganwaadi-center*’ for communicating with females regarding the advantage of using sanitary napkins and maintaining hygiene on the part of grownup females and newly wedded women.
- F. All volunteers were made to take a pledge on “mygov.in” to keep their surroundings clean to mark the occasion.
- G. Volunteers also participated in a rally in nearby areas for spreading the awareness about cleanliness among the masses.
- H. Volunteers visited different departments, their corridors, classrooms, auditorium, libraries, parking places, canteens, bank and the health centre. They informed residents and students about the uses of two colour dustbins; Green for wet waste and Blue for dry waste.

**Observation of Cleanliness Fortnight-II- ‘*Swachh Bharat Pakhwaara*’ (2<sup>nd</sup> Phase)**

The second phase of ‘*Swachh Bharat Pakhwaada*’ was observed by the NSS volunteers in October 2017. During this drive, a number of cleanliness activities were undertaken on the university spread in 500 acres, covering all departments, the administrative block, the health centre, canteens, the shopping complex, the bank and parking areas.

- A. The university’s Main Library building having four floors scattered over different sections was cleaned by 200 volunteers.
- B. The NSS volunteers cleaned all parks of the university by picking up wrappers, plastics and dry leaves in a large quantity.

- C. A special lecture on 'Anti-Tobacco' was given by a doctor in the Health Department on spreading the awareness of oral cancer because of the use of tobacco by workers or sometimes students.
- D. Students were informed of about the dangers of liquor and drug consumption among the youth.
- E. A very important drive regarding the spreading of awareness about 'Road Signs' and Road Safety was undertaken inside the university and leaflets were distributed among the common people regarding road safety measures in front of the university gate with the help of the Traffic Police Department.
- F. Volunteers also checked the availability of covers for every overhead tank in different buildings of the university and ensured their cleanliness.
- G. During the second fortnight observation, all NSS Volunteers had a discussion regarding the benefits of cleanliness and hygiene with orphan students in an orphanage at Putilighar.
- H. Students also undertook a plantation drive in the newly constructed sports complex, boys hostel and UBS complex. Several hundred saplings were planted in order to make sure that air pollution remains under control in and around the campus.

## **Analysis and Discussion**

A survey has been used to evaluate the people's response towards community participation. Data was collected through questionnaires and an interview schedule was administered in two blocks i.e., *Attari* and *Majitha* of Amritsar District of Punjab state. The data collection was done by University students registered as volunteers with National Service Scheme (NSS) who undertook internships in these blocks/villages during their summer break in June 2018.

## **Collection of Data**

According to the latest Census of 2011, Amritsar District has a population of 24,90,656. There are 7 cities and towns in Amritsar District. Amritsar city is just 25 kilometers away from Lahore city of Pakistan. Amritsar District is divided into nine development blocks. For the purpose of the study two blocks were chosen: *Attari* (urban) and *Majitha* (urban) and two villages (rural settings) Kathania in *Attari Block* and Chawinda Devi in *Majitha Block* were surveyed for the purpose of this study.

## **Demographic Analysis of the Sample (Blocks/Villages)**

A study was carried out for making aware of residents/participants from urban and rural settings about hygiene and sanitation. Out of 100 respondents who participated in the survey, 87 were residents, and only 13 were from local government (*panchayati raj*) representatives. Out of a total of 100 respondents, only 24 were males and 76 were females. So far as the caste was concerned, 47 were from marginalized sections of the society, 42 were from other backward classes and only 11 were from the general category.

Out of a total of 100 respondents, 39 belonged to the 21-30 age category, 27 belonged to the 31-40 age category, 25 were in the age of 40 years and above and only 9 were in the 18-20 age category. As far as the education of respondents is concerned, 33 were literate, 25 were up to the 8<sup>th</sup> standard, 20 were up to 10<sup>th</sup> standard, 13 were 10+2, and only 9 were graduates.

*Table 01: Peoples' Response on Participation, Awareness and Practices*

Items	Positive/Negative	Percentage of response
<b>House hold Schedule</b>		
<b>(Sanitation in the community)</b>		
Ownership of a Toilet/Shared	Yes	96
Availability of water	Yes	100
Discharge mode of the toilet	Open/Soak pit/Drainage	20/60/20
Any open defecation	NO	NIL
Availability of garbage bins	Yes	100
Members' awareness about SBM	Yes	90
<b>School Schedule</b>		
Availability of a toilet in school	Yes	100
Separate toilets for boys and Girls	Yes	100
Availability of water in toilets	Yes	100
Functionality of the toilet	Yes	100
Person responsible for its upkeep	Sweeper/Contract Worker	100
Students perceptions about Cleanliness of the toilets	Yes	80
<b>Hygiene Perception</b>		



Personal Hygiene:		
Unclean /unsafe water on health	Aware	80
Washing hand with soap	Yes	100
Safe Drinking water		
Source of drinking water	Piped Water	100
Contamination of water and water-borne diseases	Public Ponds	---
Safe disposal of Solid and Liquid waste		
Proper disposal of garbage	Yes	80
Useful disposal of garbage	Yes	100
Drainage of waste water		
Open/Soakpit/Drainage	Yes	20/60/20

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*Source: Field Data*

A survey was conducted to assess the peoples' response on participation, awareness and practices of SBM Clean India Program. As indicated in table 01, most of the responses were positive except for any open defecation.

About 90% plus residents knew about SBM activities through local government (Panachayati Raj) institution's officials and T.V. programs. Less than 20% of the residents allowed waste water to reach up to open space whereas, around 60% of the residents had got the soak pit prepared for such purposes. 20% used a drainage system for waste water disposal. Potable water

through pipeline had been the hallmark of villages visited by NSS volunteers. However, close to 40 percent of the residents used some form of water filter, in many homes Reverse Osmosis (RO) was also found.

Residents were aware about the harmful effects of contaminated water lying into a pool anywhere in village. Remarkable progress has been made with respect to construction of toilets and soaks pits in villages visited by the volunteers. A medium level of awareness on the disposal of solid waste was found among the residents. Around 80% of the residents threw garbage into the garbage pit. Less than 6% threw waste into the open. Most of the local government (Panachayati Raj) officials knew about making compost from waste. The villages visited by NSS volunteers could observe that the majority used their toilets in their homes and the villages were open defecation free.

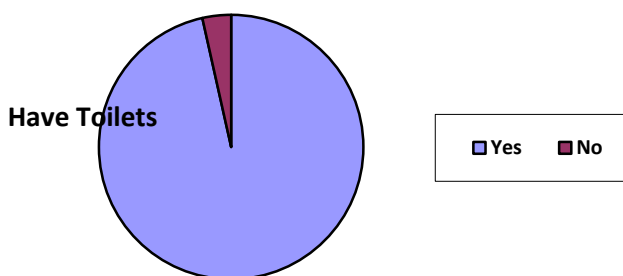
All schools in Attari and Majitha blocks visited by volunteers had separate toilets for boys and girls. Students did not face any difficulty in making use of toilets during their stay in schools. All schools had designated persons for maintenance and cleanliness of school toilets. All schools also had proper arrangements for safe drinking water. Majority of the schools in Punjab had Reverse Osmosis systems in place for providing safe drinking water to the students.

When considering the perceptions about hygiene, most of the residents had a fair knowledge on hygiene, sanitation and drinking water. Residents tried their best to make use of their knowledge into practice. It was seen that residents were fully aware of the benefits of safe drinking water and they had been receiving proper water into their homes through pipelines. Residents were fully aware about the spread of diseases like dengue because of the accumulation of water into old coolers, tires etc. All household members were in the habit of

making use of soaps before and after their meals and all used soap after using toilets.

A survey was used for getting peoples' responses on SBM implementation, involvement, community participation and the level of increase in the general awareness about cleanliness, health and hygiene on part of the residents of villages. NSS volunteers interacted with the respondents in both formal and informal manner and noted down their answers. They also made videos of their interviews.

*Figure 01: People having a toilet in their home.*

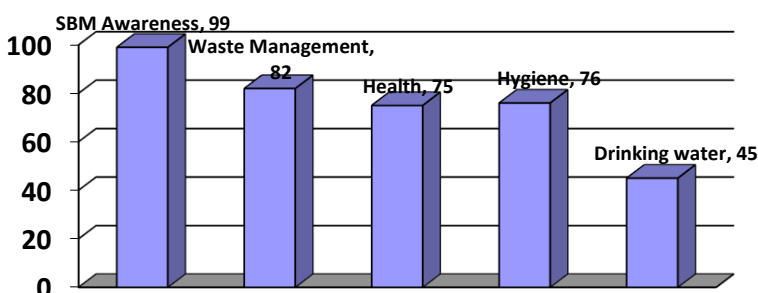


*Source: Field Data*

Figure 01 shows that 96% of the respondents have toilets in their houses whereas 4% do not have a toilet in the house. It is important to mention here that every single member of panchayati raj had toilets in their houses.

Irrespective of sex, caste and education, all villagers were aware of the SBM, a national flagship program of the incumbent Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. Many of them have even participated in some of the village level SBM activities.

Figure 02: Perceptions about Waste Management, Health, Hygiene, Safe Drinking Water



Source: Field Data

Figure 02 indicates that 99% of the respondents correlated SBM with the construction of toilets, 82% of them correlated with the safe disposal of solid waste, 75% of them correlated with health, 76% of them correlated with village hygiene and 45% of them correlated with safe drinking water. All residents had the knowledge about proper segregation of solid and liquid waste and their proper disposal. They also knew about the harmful effect of accumulated dirty water in any locality.

## Challenges and Criticisms

Despite the fact that SBM proved to be a landmark achievement on part of the federal government of India, some of the studies and media reports have cast doubt over the usage of toilets. A study of 2017 claimed that several open defecation free villages are not ‘open defecation free’ as claimed by the federal government. The study was done in three villages of Madhya Pradesh’s Sehore district, two of Uttar Pradesh’s Shamli district and three of Rajasthan’s Pali district. All of these villages were not only declared open defecation free but even verified so by a third party for the government. In all the surveyed

villages of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, the researchers found open defecation prevalent and even identified the areas of open defecation in a few of them. In one of the villages of Pali, where 900 households were surveyed, they found that the total current usage of toilets was only 1 per cent. This is very distressing. Such behavioral problems are often experienced on the part of certain nomad groups of the country. There are certain communities who every few months move from one place to another for the sake of their animals grazing. Since they do not stay in one place for very long, it is them who continue to defecate into the open. There is another group of people who avoid using toilets because of the lack of cleaning facilities in public toilets and hence due to fear of disease they will defecate in the open. A study by Institute of Development Studies also added that open defecation in two villages of Shamli, was 63 per cent and 16 per cent respectively. But when this report was used for discussion in the Indian Parliament in December 2017, the government dismissed it and refused to accept the new findings. Nonetheless, *Annual Economic Survey* cited by National Sample Survey Study (NSSO Annual Report, 2017) and Quality Council of India on the usage of toilets and claimed that over 90% of the individuals who have access to toilets are using them. *The Economic Survey* also cites several health and economic benefits of areas declared ODF ‘open defecation free’ as compared to non-ODF, quoting a study of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation done especially for this purpose (The Financial Express, 2017). The sooner India achieves the goal of open defecation free, the better it would be as it has implications for improving the health of millions of children and women. India may hope for getting its Infant Mortality Rate and Maternal Mortality reduced considerably after achieving the goals of open defecation free India.

Multiple media reports surfaced last year noted that local officials were using coercive methods to persuade villagers to use toilets. The Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation too had to issue letters to states saying that such practices must be avoided. It was found that the root of the problem lies in the fact that the government was investing much in building toilets and not on Information, Education and Communicative (IEC) activities to induce a behavioral change. According to expenditure details for FY 17-18 available on the government's SBM portal, the total available fund with states in terms of Centre's share was Rs 106.78 billion, out of which Rs 2.70 billion was spent on Information, Education and Communicative (IEC) activities, which is a meager 1.87 per cent of the total fund. This year too, the emphasis on Information, Education and Communicative (IEC) seems missing with no mention either in key deliverables section or the mid-term outcomes section of the budget documents (The Financial Express, 2017). The government along with responsible citizens of the country will have to undertake a massive awareness program, instead of merely spending money over the construction of toilets. An attitudinal change is a must on the part of masses for understanding the benefits of cleanliness and hygiene. The over-emphasis on cleanliness drive for the sake of tokenism or picture sessions alone should be discouraged and it should be made a part of peoples' overall lifestyles. These values must get instilled within minds and hearts of every single citizen of the country. India, during the past several decades has overcome several national problems of theirs' like overcoming of food grain shortage through green revolution, polio eradication, total literacy etc. Within the next few months, the country will succeed in overcoming this national problem on a permanent basis.

## **Conclusion**

It is after several decades of India's independence that such a mega civic drive is witnessed, involving the entire population of the country for getting the goals of total cleanliness achieved. Clean India Program- SBM has taken a magnificent form since it was launched in 2014 in India. The drive has completely shaken up a variety of stakeholders in the country. Indian state of Punjab always had higher living standards in comparison with most of the other Indian states. The rural areas and their residents are not worse than their counterparts in towns and cities. Villages, towns and cities have experienced a significant improvement in facilities related to sanitation, waste management, community living, and safe drinking water. However, there are certain projects like the underground sewage system in Amritsar's rural areas that need to be completed fast as they continue to languish because of administrative and financial delays while much more has to be done with regards to making the rural population aware of hygiene practices including the use of toilets. It can be concluded that the perception of the community on hygiene and health factors has a strong influence on practices of hygienic living along with the provision of sanitary facilities that have a significant impact on reducing the burden of diseases like cholera, diarrhea and typhoid etc. People of Punjab are fortunate to have toilets in their homes because of better living standards. Since the knowledge on health and hygiene is low among the rural mass, the behavior and practices are also a little lower. A lot needs to be done to make the rural population aware of hygienic practices including the use of toilets. Despite challenges, a complete facelift in the landscape of Indian cities and towns is being experienced. Railway stations, rail coaches, bus stands, public parks, public utilities and several other areas are wearing a new look. The author's university has been chosen by the federal

government as the 2<sup>nd</sup> best cleanest State University on country basis for two consecutive years i.e., 2018 and 2019.

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