

**Unveiling the Drivers of Success & Failure in Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen:
A Comparative Study of Indian States**

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1. Unveiling the Drivers of Success & Failure in Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen

With approximately 48% of the population, or 59.4 crore individuals engaging in open defecation, India has one of the highest rates of the practice worldwide. (UNICEF India, n.d.) This implies that half the population dumps almost 6.5 crore kilos of human waste daily in fields, forests, open water, and other public spaces. (UNICEF India, n.d.) Open defecation contributes to a vicious cycle of disease and poverty, and the nations with the highest rates of it also have the worst rates of malnutrition, poverty, and infant mortality. (World Health Organization, 2023) Given this situation, India's largest behavioural change initiative, Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (SBM-G), was created to end open defecation and enhance sanitation conditions in rural areas. (UNICEF India, n.d.)

The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) campaign has caused 55 crore people in rural regions to modify their behaviour and begin using toilets, and the programme has made significant achievements in the sanitation sector. (PIB, Ministry of I&B, n.d.) But open defecation is still prevalent in India, especially in the rural north Indian areas that are severely underdeveloped and heavily inhabited. Universal access to clean sanitation is still a work in progress there. (Behera et al., 2021) Thus, the SBM-G is of the utmost importance in addressing sanitation challenges in rural India.

This paper seeks to understand the reasons for the success or failure of the SBM-G. We start by posing a seemingly simple but frequently disregarded question – why do rural areas of India still struggle with open defecation despite the availability of cost-effective sanitation solutions? This question casts doubt on the widely held belief that the problem is limited to a shortage of toilets or an inadequate sanitation infrastructure. Instead, it forces us to acknowledge

that some part of the Indian population consciously chooses not to use the available sanitation options, and their decision considerably impacts the open defecation crisis.

Next, we thoroughly analyse the SBM-G by applying the agenda-setting framework in policy-making to understand the interplay of the problem, policy and the political stream in the mission's inception. (Chaqués-Bonafont et al., 2020) The focus of our investigation then shifts to understanding the particulars of the implementation strategy of the SBM-G in select states. To do this, we employ a causal case comparative analysis among selected Indian states. (Beach, 2020) In particular, we look at state governments' strategies to combat open defecation. We evaluate their effectiveness, shortcomings and real-world effects. Through this evaluation, we attempt to discern strategies that work and further understand why they work. By establishing a link between improved sanitation and better health indicators, we substantiate why eliminating open defecation is crucial for India's future and not merely a sanitation issue.

Ultimately, as we proceed through the following sections, we hope to shed light on the way towards a healthier and more prosperous India, where open defecation is a thing of the past.

2. Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

While the SBM-G has been a leading endeavour in tackling India's rural sanitation issues, the majority of the literature in circulation focuses on its policy goals and outcomes. However, the underlying causes of its success or failure are the subject of a glaring lack of scholarly research. Although the program's general objectives are well known, little is known about the policy-making procedures and contextual factors influencing its results.

Prior research lacked a theoretical framework to evaluate the dynamics of agenda-setting in the context of this objective, leaving a crucial knowledge gap in policy analysis. Additionally,

there is a lack of empirical research using causal case comparative analysis to derive essential insights from implementation discrepancies among particular Indian states. This knowledge gap highlights the need to thoroughly examine the SBM-G, utilising the agenda-setting framework and a comparative case study approach to uncover the intricate interplay of factors impacting its success or failure.

It is crucial to close this gap since doing so not only advances knowledge of the processes involved in developing and implementing policies but also offers vital information to those working in development who want to improve the efficacy of future initiatives. By conducting a causal case comparative analysis among a few selected Indian states and systematically analysing the mission's policy trajectory and results within the framework of agenda-setting theory, this study aims to close this gap and shed light on the complex dynamics at work in the field of rural sanitation policy.

3. Analysing the Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen through the Agenda-Setting Framework

The Government of India's flagship programme, Swachh Bharat Mission - Grameen (SBM-G), aims to manage solid and liquid waste, build community- and household-owned toilets, and encourage widespread behaviour change. (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, n.d.) We must comprehend how the problem, the policy, and the political stream interacted at the outset of the mission to analyse the SBM-G utilising the agenda-setting framework in policy-making. Each stream is broken down in the following manner. –

Problem Stream

The problems that policy-makers believe need to be addressed are referred to as the problem stream. In SBM-G, improper sanitation practices in rural India were the problem stream, resulting in adverse health effects and deterioration of the environment. (Curtis, 2019)

Policy Stream

The formulation of remedies for the issues noted in the problem stream is called the policy stream. In the context of SBM-G, the policy stream entailed creating an all-encompassing programme to build toilets, manage solid and liquid waste, and influence public behaviour towards improved sanitation practices. (Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation, 2017)

Political Stream

The political environment in which policies are formulated and rolled out is called the political stream. Regarding SBM-G, the political movement was distinguished by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dedication to promoting hygiene and sanitation. (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, n.d.) This dedication served as the program's catalyst and inspired more than a billion individuals to work towards a prosperous, safe, clean, and healthy future for their country's residents. (Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation, 2019)

Policy Window

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dedication to promoting cleanliness and sanitation served as the policy window for the establishment of the SBM-G mission. (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, n.d.) This dedication was the program's catalyst and inspired more than a billion individuals to work for their country's future. The Swachh Bharat Mission was designed as a Jan Andolan (nationwide campaign) with the goals of building toilets that are owned by households and communities, encouraging the use of these facilities, and managing solid and liquid waste.

(Swachh Bharat Mission - Gramin (SBM-G) - Schemes Dashboard, n.d.) The Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan's incorporation into the Swachh Bharat Mission expanded the policy window even more, as it facilitated improved collaboration amongst stakeholders and streamlined the implementation process. (Swachh Bharat Mission | IBEF, n.d.)

4. Why Do Rural Areas of India Still Struggle with Open Defecation?

In rural India, open defecation persists despite the availability of affordable sanitation technologies for several reasons, including –

Cultural Norms:

In certain segments of Indian society, open defecation is deemed culturally acceptable and even deemed beneficial and healthy by rural Indians. (Dinnoo, 2014) (India: The Problem of Open Defecation - World Food Prize Michigan Youth Institute, 2017) It is also a socially acceptable practice. (Spears & Thorat, 2019)

Beliefs about Ritual Purity and Pollution:

Various Indian communities hold distinct cultural interpretations regarding the concepts of ritual purity and pollution. (Coffey & Spears, 2017) For example, some cultures consider it 'unclean' to defecate near a home, even in a toilet. (Coffey & Spears, 2017) According to this belief system, people who use toilets usually need huge (and costly) pits to collect their waste to reduce the frequency of emptying. (Coffey & Spears, 2017)

Lack of Awareness:

Many people in rural areas are unaware of the health risks associated with open defecation, such as the spread of hepatitis and diarrhoea. (Spears & Thorat, 2019)

Lack of Infrastructure:

The lack of infrastructure and toilets in rural areas significantly hampers the elimination of open defecation. Despite efforts by the Indian government, these resources remain scarce.

(India: The Problem of Open Defecation - World Food Prize Michigan Youth Institute, 2017)

Gender Inequality:

Open defecation poses a greater threat to women as it increases their risk of sexual assault. (Dinnoo, 2014) Due to the lack of access to facilities, women are discouraged from using toilets, especially in remote areas where the possibility of attack is higher.

Lack of Focus:

Due to a lack of focus, the techniques that have been implemented so far may not yield the desired results. (Dinnoo, 2014) Achieving the goal of eliminating open defecation in rural areas requires better coordination and more concentrated efforts.

After considering all the factors, it is clear that open defecation in rural areas of India is a complex issue that demands a comprehensive solution, considering gender inequality, cultural norms, lack of awareness, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient attention. Despite the efforts made by the Indian government to tackle this problem, much more work is required to make India a clean and healthy country.

5. Key Aspects of the Swachh Bharat Mission's Implementation Strategy

From 2020–21 to 2024–25, the SBM–G programme is run in mission mode. The programme implementation strategy's primary components are as follows: –

District as the Base Unit:

To establish Open Defecation Free (ODF) Gramme Panchayats (GPs), the district is suggested as a base unit for the implementation of SBM-G. (Ministry of Drinking Water &

Sanitation, 2017) The program's district-level implementation is the responsibility of the CEOs, magistrates, and collectors of Zilla Parishads. (Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation, 2017)

Plan Appraisal:

The District Implementation Plans will be combined into one State Implementation Plan by the State Mission Authority. (Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation, 2017) To make sure that the plans adhere to the program's criteria and objectives, a plan appraisal is required.

(Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation, 2017)

Twin Pit Toilet Technology:

Twin pit toilet technology is encouraged to be used by rural homes as it is an affordable, low-maintenance, and environmentally responsible option. (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, n.d.) With this approach, two pits are built and used alternately, allowing one pit to break down while the other is in operation. (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, n.d.)

Financial Resources:

Both the national and the state governments contribute to the program's funding, with the national government contributing 60% of the total and the state governments contributing 40%. (Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation, 2017) The money goes towards building restrooms, communicating behaviour changes, and managing both liquid and solid waste. (Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation, 2017)

Community Participation:

All parties involved in the programme are encouraged to participate, including the community, NGOs, local government agencies, and the commercial sector. (Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation, 2017) The community's sense of ownership and accountability for the program's goals is intended to be fostered by the initiative.

Information, Education, and Communication (IEC):

As per the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation's SBM-G standards, IEC must get 8% of the total national SBM-G allocation, with 2% going towards capacity building. (Ministry of Jal Shakti, n.d.)

Performance-Based Incentives:

Performance-based incentives will be provided to states and the agencies tasked with executing them. To maintain the state's open defecation-free (ODF) status and enhance solid and liquid waste management in rural regions, the performance will be evaluated against these three goals.

All things considered, the programme seeks to instil in the community a sense of accountability and ownership for the goals it has set forth.

6. Key Aspects and Outcomes of Swachh Survekshan 2019

In the most recent Swachh Survekshan Grameen, which took place in 2022, Telangana performed best. Assam came in worst, whereas Uttarakhand was a Mid-Performer. Every year, the states and districts are ranked using the primary quantitative and qualitative SBM-G metrics in the Swachh Survekshan Grameen (SSG). The ranking of states in the SSG is based on the following factors:

- Building of individual toilets for households.
- Garbage pickup from door to door.
- Generation of compost or energy from garbage.
- Forming Gramme Panchayats (GPs) with Open Defecation Free (ODF) policies.
- Dual-pit toilet technology is being used more frequently.

- The information, education, and communication (IEC) campaign raises awareness and modifies behaviour.
- Community accountability and ownership for the program's goals.
- National advancement towards mission objectives.
- The Village Swachhata Index is used to gauge how clean a village is.

Overall, the elements taken into account while ranking the states in the SSG emphasise the significance of community involvement, knowledge and behaviour modification, monitoring and assessment of the program's execution and impact, and sanitation and hygiene in rural regions.

7. Causal Case Comparative Analysis of the Swachh Bharat Mission Among the Selected Indian States of Telangana, Uttarakhand and Assam

A causal case comparative analysis of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM-G) among the selected Indian states of Telangana, Uttarakhand, and Assam reveals their performance with respect to each other when assessed based on a common implementation strategy. The implementation strategy is used for comparison in this paper as it will help discern the implementation strategies that work and further understand why they work. This exercise will help us unveil the drivers of success and failure in SBM-G. Below is a tabulated comparative analysis of the success or failures of the SBM-G implementation among the selected Indian states of Telangana, Uttarakhand, and Assam –

Strategies	Effectiveness	Shortcomings	Intended impact on-ground impact
District as Base Unit	The intervention worked well in Telangana	There were inadequate resources and expertise in Assam and Uttarakhand	Growth in the quantity of Open Defecation Free (ODF) Gramme Panchayats (GPs)
Twin Pit Toilet Technology	The intervention worked well in Telangana	In Uttarakhand and Assam, a lack of understanding and cultural opposition but Uttarakhand has been moving in the right direction in the last few years.	Twin pit toilet usage is on the rise
Finances	The intervention worked well in Telangana	Assam and Uttarakhand both are lacking in finances.	Sufficient funds and resources are being allocated for the project
Community participation	The intervention worked well in Telangana	While Uttarakhand has understood the value of community involvement and taken action to engage the community, Assam has not been able to focus on this area.	Community involvement and accountability have increased and are aligning with the program's goals
Information, Education and Communication (IEC)	The intervention worked well in Telangana	The underutilization of the IEC in Uttarakhand and Assam could be attributed to resource constraints.	IEC use can be associated with a rise in awareness and a change in behaviour.

Overall, the effectiveness of the strategies used in the implementation of the SBM-G in Telangana, Uttarakhand, and Assam varies depending on the state's capacity, resources, and cultural factors.

8. Conclusion

The SBM-G has achieved success in enabling Gram Panchayats (GPs) to become Open Defecation Free (ODF) in several states, leading to a reduction in open defecation. The program's Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaign has proven successful in promoting awareness and altering behaviour. The Swachh Survekshan Grameen (SSG) has been instrumental in encouraging healthy competition among districts and states to improve their service delivery to citizens and move towards cleaner villages. The monitoring and performance evaluation studies have shown that the SBM-G is very cost-effective.

The programme has achieved its objectives in several states, based on monitoring and evaluation data; nonetheless, challenges remain if the programme is to be successful nationally. To guarantee the program's success, these obstacles must be overcome, workable solutions must be maintained, and the program's monitoring and assessment mechanism must be strengthened.

The SBM-G has successfully improved rural areas' sanitation and hygiene, and it is expected that its ongoing efforts will result in more progress down the road.

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