

Standing Committee Report Summary

Swachh Bharat Mission- Gramin in States/ UTs

- The Standing Committee on Rural Development (Chair: Dr. P Venugopal) submitted its report on the ‘Swachh Bharat Mission- Gramin in States/ UTs’ on July 19, 2018. The Swachh Bharat Mission- Gramin (SBM-G) was launched on October 2, 2014 to accelerate efforts to achieve universal sanitation coverage, improve cleanliness, and eliminate open defecation in India by October 2, 2019. Key findings and recommendations of the Committee include:
 - **Sanitation coverage and behavioural change:** The Committee is of the view that sanitation coverage figures may not reflect the actual progress of the Mission on ground. It stated that even a village with 100% household toilets cannot be declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) till all the inhabitants start using them. It recommended that the government needs to take adequate steps to bring about behavioural change in rural India and inculcate a sense of hygiene among the inhabitants. This should be done through mechanisms such as extensive awareness campaigns.
 - **Quality of toilets:** The Committee stated that it is aware of the low quality of raw materials being used in the construction of toilets under SBM-G. It raised serious concerns over this issue and urged the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation to ensure that the standard quality raw materials are used for construction of toilets.
 - **Availability of water:** Construction of toilets without adequate availability of water will be an impediment to achieving 100% sanitation coverage in rural areas. The Committee recommended that provision of water availability should be prioritised along with construction of toilets to attain ODF status across all villages.
 - **Data accuracy:** 77% of households in rural India have access to toilets, and about 93% of them use toilets regularly. However, the Committee noted that in the past, the fall back rate of ODF declared villages was very high, either due to: (i) filing of wrong information regarding attaining of ODF status, or (ii) non-sustainability of toilets. This has led to ODF villages going back to open defecation, while as per records, they remain ODF. The Committee recommended that information on ODF declared villages must be collected accurately on a continuous basis, either through an institutional mechanism or through resurveys.
- **Unspent balances:** In 2017-18 and 2018-19 (as of May 2018), Rs 4,197 and Rs 9,890 crore is the unspent balance under SBM-G. Several states, including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh have large unspent balances. The reasons responsible for unspent balances include: (i) inadequate capacity building at grass root level, and (ii) existence of revolving funds and leveraging other sources of credit, among others. The Committee recommended that unspent balances be liquidated by strengthening the implementation constraints and through strict monitoring. In case the State Implementing Agencies are not utilising the normal allocation, the government may frame state specific action plans to liquidate the unspent balances.
- **Release of central share:** The Committee advised that installments of central share should be strictly released in accordance with the guidelines of SBM-G, only after: (i) ascertaining the veracity of Utilisation Certificates (UCs) received by the central government from states, and (ii) use of unspent balances within stipulated time frame by states.
- **Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM):** SLWM has traditionally represented unique challenges in rural areas, due to the practice of open defecation and indiscriminate dumping of solid and liquid waste. The lack of waste segregation and dispersed population further creates roadblocks in bringing economically viable market-based solutions.
- To create clean villages, it is essential that Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) interventions under the Mission focus on creating awareness about SLWM. The Committee recommended that the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation should devise new and effective strategies for yielding better results for SLWM under SBM-G.

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