



PREVENTABLE HEALTH PROBLEMS DUE TO INADEQUATE SANITATION

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ABSTRACT

Sanitation does not cost much to implement but lack of sanitation costs a lot to economy in health related costs. It was estimated that inadequate sanitation cost Indian economy more than 5% of GDP. However it took Indian Government more than 70 years after independence to achieve 100% Open Defecation Status. There are many nations of world that are still not 100% Open Defecation Free. This paper is an attempt to ring an alarming bell on costs of lack of sanitation

KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION

India's Father of Nation Mahatma Gandhiji said – "Sanitation is more important than Independence" India's first Prime Minister said – "The day every Indian has a toilet to use I will consider India to have reached pinnacle of development"

V S Naipaul, Nobel Laureate Indian Writer said – "Indians defecate everywhere! Mostly they defecate besides railway track!! But they also defecate on beaches; they defecate on hills; they defecate on river banks; they never look for cover" One would have thought when such great Indians had emphasized the importance of sanitation so much, India would have fixed its sanitation problem soon after Independence. But No!

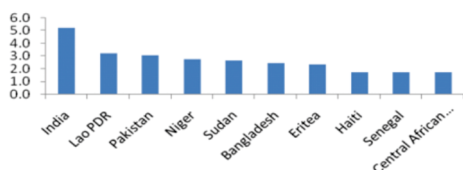
It took India more than 70 years after Independence to fix up its sanitation problem. It was only by 2019, that with Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission) that India could fix up its sanitation problem. In 5 years of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan(Clean India Mission) from 2014 to 2019 almost 10 crore toilets were constructed and while in 2014 almost 70% of population defecated openly by 2019 India was declared Open defecation free. This shows that ability to achieve Open Defecation Free Status is matter of political will and not lack of resources. This paper is a warning signal to other nations of the world on health costs due to inadequate sanitation

Inadequate Sanitation Cost a Lot

A 2006 study revealed that inadequate sanitation cost India almost 6.4% of GDP[1]. A recent WHO study indicates that in 2012 in WHO's South-East Asia Region, 123 300 diarrhoea deaths were estimated to be caused by inadequate sanitation and 131 500 by inadequate hand-washing practices [2]. Inadequate sanitation costs economies of the world a considerable amount as a loss to percentage GDP. A 2011 report published by Water Aid says that sanitation access lowered the odds of children suffering from diarrhoea by 7-17 per cent and reduced the mortality rate of children under the age of five by 5-20 per cent. Water Aid is an international organisation dealing with water, health and sanitation.[2]

The economic burden of poor sanitation is the heaviest in Asia-Pacific, which is almost 77 per cent of the total amount. Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa each account for approximately 10 per cent of the global cost.

Percentage share of national GDP lost due to poor sanitation



The above figure captures percentage of GDP lost due to poor sanitation in various nations of world.[2] According to World Bank, inadequate sanitation costs 71.7% in health costs, almost 20% in access time and 7.8% in water and 0.5% in tourism.[3]

Broad Category	SubCategory	Cost in Billion Dolalrs
Health	Mortality	29
	Productivity Loss	4.8
	Healthcare	4.7
Water	HH Treatment Drinking Water	2.4
	Bottled Water	0.13
	Piped Water	0.4
	Cost of Fetching Water	1.2
Access Time	Household access	10.5
	School Access	0.06
	Workplace Access	0.13
Tourism	Lost Tourism Earnings	0.1
	Tourist Illness	0.15

World Bank Documents[3]

Clearly above information reveals that inadequate sanitation costs a huge amount to economies. While the study has focused on India more than other developing nations of world, what is applicable to India, is equally applicable to other developing nations of world.

Sanitation Is Still A Problem In World In 2022 According To World Health Organisation

According to World Health Organisation almost 494 million people still defecate in open. Almost 1 billion people do not have access to sanitation services such as toilets and latrines[4].

In 2020, 54% of the global population (4.2 billion people) used a safely managed sanitation service; 34% (2.6 billion people) used private sanitation facilities connected to sewers from which wastewater was treated; 20% (1.6 billion people) used toilets or latrines where excreta were safely disposed of in situ; and 78% of the world's population (6.1 billion people) used at least a basic sanitation service.[4] That still means almost 20% of world's population does not use any sanitation service. Sanitation offers many benefits:[4]

- a. Reducing spread of Intestinal Worms, Schistosomiasis and such tropical diseases that cause suffering to millions
- b. Reducing Severity and Impact of Malnutrition
- c. Promoting Dignity and Safety of Women
- d. Promoting School Attendance of Women
- e. Reducing Spread of Antimicrobial resistance

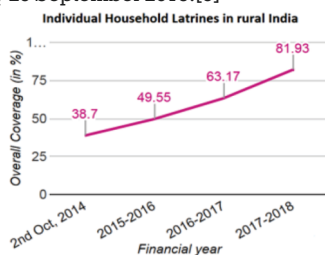
A WHO study in 2012 calculated that for every \$ 1 invested in sanitation there was a return of \$ 5.50 in lower health costs, more productivity.

A WHO study in 2012 calculated that for every US\$ 1.00 invested in sanitation, there was a return of US\$ 5.50 in lower health costs, more productivity and fewer premature deaths and more productivity.

In 2013, the UN Deputy Secretary-General issued a call to action on sanitation that included the elimination of open defecation by 2025. The world is on track to eliminate open defecation by 2030, if not by 2025, but historical rates of progress would need to double for the world to achieve universal coverage with basic sanitation services by 2030. To achieve universal safely managed services, rates would need to quadruple.[4]

### Swachh Bharat Abhiyan(Clean India Mission)

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan(Clean India Mission) was Government of India initiative launched in 2014 to reduce Open Defecation within 5 years. India's performance on sanitation was pathetic to put it mildly before 2014. However within 5 years Swachh Bharat Abhiyan reduced Open Defecation from around 40% of population to less than 5%. [5] More than 500 million Indians defecated openly in 2014 and by 2019 less than 50 million Indians defecated openly. In 2017, the national sanitation coverage rose to 65% from 38.7% on Oct 2, 2014 before the start of the campaign. It was 90% in August 2018. 35 states/Union Territories, 699 districts and 5.99 lakh (599,000) villages were declared Open Defecation Free(ODF) by 25 September 2019.[5]



India's initiative in reducing Open Defecation within 5 years must be commended and deserves approbation and celebration.

### CONCLUSION

The fact that India could drastically improve sanitation within 5 years should be lesson to the very few nations of the world that still have to achieve adequate sanitation. The fact that India did within 5 years what it could not do in 50 years is testimony to the fact that achieving total sanitation is matter of political will and not resources.[5]

What is being said here is obvious but bears repetition. Sanitation imposes huge costs on economies of developing nation. And it is very easy to achieve adequate sanitation with minimum investment and maximum gain. All that achieving adequate sanitation even in most developed nations of the world requires is political will.

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