

WHO thumbs up for Swachh Bharat's rural component

It is estimated that the Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (SBM-G) will result in preventing more than three lakh deaths due to diarrhoea and protein-energy malnutrition between 2014-October 2019, notes a World Health Organisation (WHO) report released on Friday.

The progress report on potential health impact from increased sanitation coverage through the SBM-G, conducted by the WHO for the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, said India's rural sanitation coverage escalated to 89.07% till August 2.

The report notes that under the SBM-G, 19 States and Union Territories were declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) and 7.9 crore toilets were built, while 421 districts were declared ODF. Also, more than 4.9 lakh villages in the country were declared ODF.

The WHO study showed that before the initiation of SBM-G, unsafe sanitation caused 199 million cases of diarrhoea annually and that by 2019, the initiative aims to achieve 100% sanitation coverage.

Union Health secretary Preeti Sudan, speaking at the release of the report, said, "WHO has only highlighted what we have known and are working towards. Sanitation and health are deeply related and the Ministry has several schemes running parallel to ensure good health coverage reaches all."

Risk assessment

The report further estimated that 14 million Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) can be avoided between 2014 and 2019. WHO estimation of health impacts is based on comparative risk assessment (CRA) methods.

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