

# PRIVATE FUNDS NEEDED FOR SWACHH BHARAT

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

Sordid state: Garbage clogging a drain near the Seelampur area in New Delhi. R.V. Moorthy

With the Centre claiming that 99.2% of rural India is now open defecation free, the next big goal on the Swachh Bharat journey is the 100% safe and scientific disposal of solid and liquid waste, according to the Economic Survey 2018-19.

However, it emphasises that the large resources needed to reach this milestone will need to be met through crowd and corporate funding, private partnerships and innovative financing mechanisms along with government allocations.

## 'Positive impact'

Progress in the first phase of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, focussing on toilet construction and use, had a positive impact on the health, economy and environment of rural India, said the report, citing a number of studies. However, these benefits will not be sustainable if solid and liquid waste management is ignored.

"Currently, many States are not concentrating enough on this aspect which could pull us back to where we were a few years back. Scientific techniques for the safe and effective disposal of waste should be the next on the agenda for this mission," says the survey.

According to it, the scientific disposal of waste has a noticeable impact on "social development", referring to the sanitation workers and manual scavengers who now work to dispose of waste, mostly in unscientific and unsafe ways.

Some of the areas which must be dealt with in this next phase are sewer construction and water availability, scientific techniques for waste disposal, treatment of industrial effluence, drain bio-remediation, river surface cleaning, sustained rural sanitation and monitoring of villages, says the survey.

"As the resource requirements are large, there is a need to facilitate and sustain innovative financing mechanisms by exploring the suitability of various financial instruments in specific contexts and interventions," it says.

Some examples are micro-financing, concessional loans, private partnerships, corporate social responsibility, and crowd funding aligned with local government financing.

While these can ensure a smooth flow of funds for the procurement of various scientific technologies for waste disposal and mass awareness, governments must also "assign significant weight to the allocation of adequate resources as improvement in sanitation is one of the key determinants for the wider economic development," says the survey.

## Mindset change

Apart from financial resources, mindset change is the other major ingredient required for sustained progress in sanitation. The swachhagrahis or village level ambassadors who have already been recruited for Phase 1 of the programme are key to maintaining momentum, it says, in keeping with its thrust on leveraging behavioural economics.

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