

MAKING THE CASE

India

Case Studies on Inclusive Economic Development



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Background



1.1 Executive summary

Universal access to safe and adequate water and sanitation services is a basic human right.¹ It is indispensable for building 'peaceful and prosperous societies' that enable inclusive growth and development.² Unfortunately, unsafe sanitation continues to be responsible for 829,000 deaths in low- and middle-income countries each year.³ Poor access to sanitation services puts millions of individuals at risk of infectious diseases and limits their ability to live fulfilling lives. To ensure everyone has the right to safe, accessible and affordable sanitation, the central government in India launched the Swachh Bharat Mission in 2014. Through applying Mastercard's Built for All framework, this case study explores how equitable access to health and sanitation infrastructure for the most underserved members of society can promote inclusive growth for all.



1.2 Context: About Swachh Bharat Mission

India has been deemed as one of the fastest growing economies of the world and has been able to bring an astounding 273 million people out of poverty in the last ten years.⁴ However, the country continues to face serious developmental challenges, including open defecation and unsafe access to sanitation. Until 2013, only 38.7% of India had access to sanitation infrastructure.⁵ To address these barriers to sustainable growth and development, the central government announced an initiative titled the Swachh Bharat Mission ('Clean India Mission', also known as the SBM) in 2014 to eliminate the practice of open defecation and improve access to sanitation for all.⁶ The programme is aimed at improving the quality of life of households in the rural areas through promoting improved hygiene practices and expanding the sanitation coverage of previously underserved areas.

Before the initiation of the programme, 550 million Indians lacked access to toilets.⁷ This particularly affected women and girls, who disproportionately experience the threat of violence and restricted mobility in the absence of safe toilet access and sanitation services. In a survey conducted by UNICEF, Sambodhi, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 80% of women reported feeling vulnerable while finding a place to defecate.⁸ Moreover, up until 2014, 5.18% of deaths in India were attributed to unsafe sanitation.⁹ As such, the SBM is India's campaign to address this fundamental right as outlined in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁰

The first phase of the Mission began in October 2014 with the chief objective being to build toilets and increase access to sanitation services at the household and institutional levels in India. Phase 1 of the programme has since led to the construction of 100 million toilets and initiated participation in safe sanitation behaviour for approximately 300 million individuals.¹¹ The SBM is currently undertaking Phase 2, which will run until 2025 and aims to uphold the fundamental goal of making India open defecation free, as well as improve the management of waste and the lives of sanitation workers. As of March 2020, usage of toilets built by SBM exceeded 95%, and open defecation had been eliminated in more than 600,000 villages in rural India.¹²



Built for All: Applied



The Mastercard Built for All framework offers the opportunity to expand our understanding of what a truly inclusive economy looks like. Analysing the SBM study through the lenses of Built for All could offer lessons and opportunities for enhanced economic inclusion that allows the 'flourishing of all people and the planet'.¹³

2.1 Pillar One: Equitable access to resources and opportunities

Through providing equitable access to safe and clean toilets, both within the public and private sphere, the SBM's vision most aligns with Pillar One of the Built for All framework.

Improving access to education, particularly for girls: Without proper sanitation resources, girls tend to find it difficult to attend class while menstruating, resulting in a 30% decrease in enrolment rates as they begin secondary school. When girls are not attending school, it increases their chances of early marriages and teen pregnancies, which reduces their ability to join the workforce and gain economic independence.¹⁴ Thus, access to a toilet at school is vital for increasing enrolment rates, particularly amongst young women.

Promoting health and safety: Proper access to toilets also improves health outcomes across various indicators. Individuals are less likely to avoid consumption of food and water to reduce the number of visits to an open defecation site, thereby improving their nutritional well-being. Proper sanitation resources also lower the risk of contracting waterborne diseases and infections.¹⁵ Promoting health and safety is therefore vital to ensuring that individuals are able to fulfil their economic potential without being hindered by poor health.

Protecting safety, dignity and self-respect: Proper sanitation for all is critical for promoting inclusive and sustainable growth, and every individual should have the right to safely relieve themselves with dignity. Women, in particular, should have the right to relieve themselves with privacy and be free from exposure to physical risks such as attacks from animals or harassment and assault from men.¹⁶ SBM protects these rights, as well as the dignity and self-respect of those who previously did not have access to a toilet.¹⁷

Lessons for action:

- Policies and programmes should **consider the needs of disadvantaged groups**, (e.g., women and girls) that are disproportionately affected by inequitable access to promote inclusive economic growth.
- **Improvements in how people feel** are equally important as improvements in other, more tangible indicators (e.g., enrolment rates).



2.2 Pillar Two: A level playing field for work and competition

Through enabling individuals to partake in economic activities, the SBM's vision most aligns with Pillar Two of the Built for All framework.

Creating opportunities to work: SBM has created 'an equivalent of 7.5 million full-time jobs', making sanitation access beneficial to promote upward mobility for vulnerable populations.¹⁸

Eliminating barriers to employment: The installation of toilets promotes equitable access to work opportunities for both men and women and affords them the fundamental right to safe and dignified sanitation at work.¹⁹ Equitable access to toilets and safe hygiene measures ensure that everyone is able to envision their future without the fear of getting sick or harassed. It also increases productivity of individuals due to reduced risks of diseases and improved financial well-being, for example by reducing medical costs by up to 8,000 INR for impoverished households.²⁰

Saving time, especially for women: The SBM gives time back to women who are overburdened with the responsibilities of care and unpaid labour. The absence of toilets disproportionately impacts women as they must walk further to find a discreet place to defecate.²¹ When women do not have to worry about challenges associated with open defecation, it allows them to make better use of their time. In a study by Sambodhi et al., one woman noted that 'We can go any time and do not even have to waste time in going. That saved time can be used for work now'.²² However, the journey to equal access to work is still long, as women are still using this saved time on household chores (80%) and leisure (11%), while 1% only consider occupation-related work. Therefore, this scheme would need to work with other complementary policies that promote gender equity and encourage women to enter the workforce.

Lessons for action:

- **Equitable access to rights to safe and affordable sanitation is vital to building enabling environments** and promoting greater labour-force participation.
- Economies would see a **greater participation of women in the workforce** if the programmes work on **addressing gendered behaviours and social norms**.



2.3 Pillar Three: Collective stewardship of shared resources for future generations

By improving sanitation practices and infrastructure, the SBM also promotes Pillar Three of the Built for All framework by benefiting the health condition of the next generation and improving ecological sustainability.

Protecting the health of future generations: The SBM protects the health of young children such that they grow up ready to meet their economic potential. The 100 million household toilets built as part of the SBM would improve the general public's health, especially for pregnant women and children,²³ and reduce the serious health risks associated with open defecation. Thus, the programme enables a generation of young people to live fulfilling lives through improved nutritional outcomes and physical well-being. In the broader context, this could promote greater individual, and thereby national, productivity.²⁴

Improving ecological sustainability: The SBM Phase 2 also aims to improve India's waste management infrastructure to make growth more ecological sustainable. There are three components of waste management strategies under the SBM project, including individual household latrines, community managed sanitary complexes, and solid and liquid waste management. Unlike existing urban waste management plants, which deal with about 170,000 tonnes of waste per day, or 62 million tonnes annually, rural areas do not have pre-existing infrastructure. Therefore the SBM plans include working with households to segregate dry, wet and liquid wastes. While the wet and liquid septic wastes can be dealt with at the household level, the dry waste is being recycled for manufacturing infrastructure, such as the plastic being used to construct roads.²⁵

Lessons for action:

- Improved access to fundamental rights of clean water and accessible sanitation can **improve generational health and development indicators**, promoting inclusive economic development.
- Policies that **include components of ecological sustainability**, like waste management infrastructure, can enable sustainable development.



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