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TRANSFORMING RURAL INDIA THROUGH SWACHH BHARAT MISSION (GRAMIN): A PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) is one of the largest sanitation and cleanliness campaign launched by the Government of India on 2 October 2014. The mission aimed to eliminate open defecation, improve solid and liquid waste management, and promote hygiene practices across rural and urban India. This research paper examines the progress of the Swachh Bharat Mission, its significance, objectives, achievements, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. The study is based entirely on secondary data collected from government reports, journals, policy papers, and official websites. The findings reveal that SBM significantly improved sanitation coverage and public awareness regarding hygiene, though issues related to sustainability, waste management, and behavioural change still remain.

Keywords: Swachh Bharat Mission, sanitation, hygiene, ODF, waste management, WASH, SDG 6, India.

INTRODUCTION

The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), also known as the Clean India Mission, was launched by the Government of India on 2 October 2014 with the vision of achieving a clean and open defecation free India. The mission was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's dream of cleanliness and sanitation. It consists of two major components: Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G) for rural areas and Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) for urban areas.

Before the launch of SBM, India faced severe sanitation problems including open defecation, poor waste disposal systems, and lack of awareness regarding hygiene. The mission focused on toilet construction, behavioural change, solid and liquid waste management, and citizen participation. By 2019, India declared itself Open Defecation Free (ODF), with more than 100 million toilets constructed across the country under **phase I.**

SBM PHASE-II ODF PLUS (2020-21-2025-26)

In March 2020, the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation launched Phase II of SBM-Gramin which will focus on ODF Plus, and will be implemented from 2020-21 to 2024-25 with an outlay of Rs 1.41 lakh crore. ODF Plus includes sustaining the ODF status, and solid and liquid waste management. Specifically, it will ensure that effective solid and liquid waste management is instituted in every Gram Panchayat of the country. Under the phase II government established the MRF shed with Compost pits for the management of solid waste

WASH and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

WASH refers to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, which are essential components of public health and sustainable development. The Swachh Bharat Mission plays an important role in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6, which aims to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

SBM contributes to SDG 6.2 by promoting access to adequate sanitation facilities, ending open defecation, and encouraging hygiene practices. The mission also supports other SDGs such as good health and well-being (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), and climate action (SDG 13).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study is significant because sanitation, hygiene and waste management are important for public health and environmental sustainability in India. The Swachh Bharat Mission aims to eliminate open defecation, improve waste management and promote cleanliness and hygiene practices among people. The study helps in understanding the progress and effectiveness of SBM in improving sanitation infrastructure and public awareness regarding hygiene and cleanliness. It also highlights the role of the mission in promoting WASH activities and achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 3 and SDG 6.

Further, the study identifies challenges such as poor waste management and maintenance issues. The findings and suggestions of the study may help policymakers, local authorities and researchers improve sanitation programmes and promote sustainable rural development in India.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the progress of the Swachh Bharat Mission in India.
2. To study the significance of SBM in improving sanitation and hygiene.
3. To analyze the achievements and challenges of the mission.
4. To evaluate the role of SBM in achieving WASH and Sustainable Development Goals.
5. To provide suggestions for improving the implementation of SBM.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature and is based entirely on secondary data. The data for the study has been collected from: Government reports and policy documents Ministry of Jal Shakti publications Swachh Bharat Mission official portal Research journals and articles Reports of WHO, UNICEF, and United Nations Newspapers, magazines, and online databases

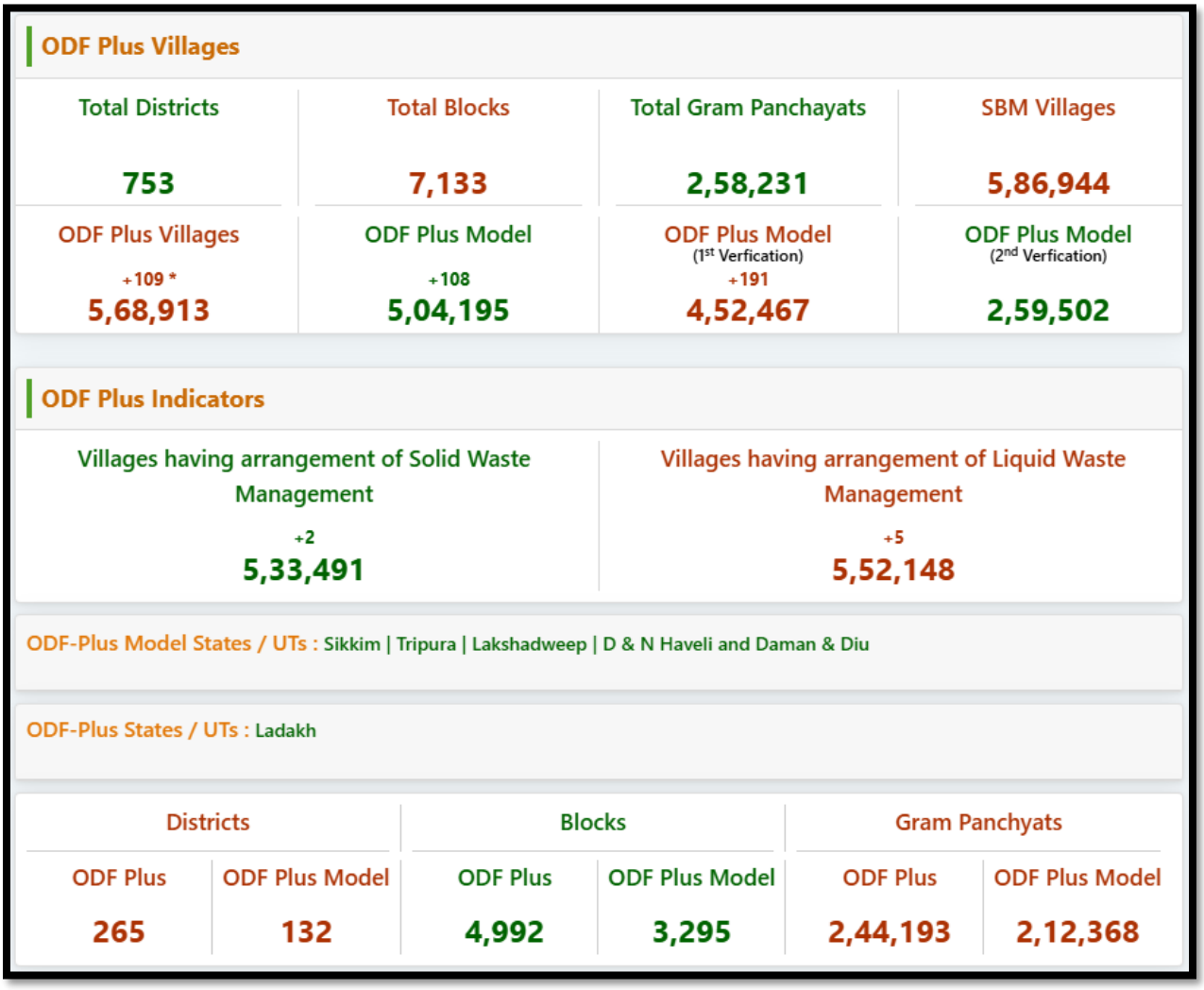
Method of Analysis

The collected data has been analyzed using descriptive methods, tables, percentages, and comparative analysis to understand the progress and impact of the Swachh Bharat Mission.

PROGRESS OF SWACHH BHARAT MISSION IN INDIA

Toilet Construction and ODF Achievement One of the major achievements of SBM has been the construction of household toilets across rural and urban India. More than 100 million toilets were built under the mission, benefiting millions of households. India declared itself Open Defecation Free (ODF) in 2019, with over 6 lakh villages being declared ODF.

Figure no. 1 **Overview of Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) 2.0 of India**



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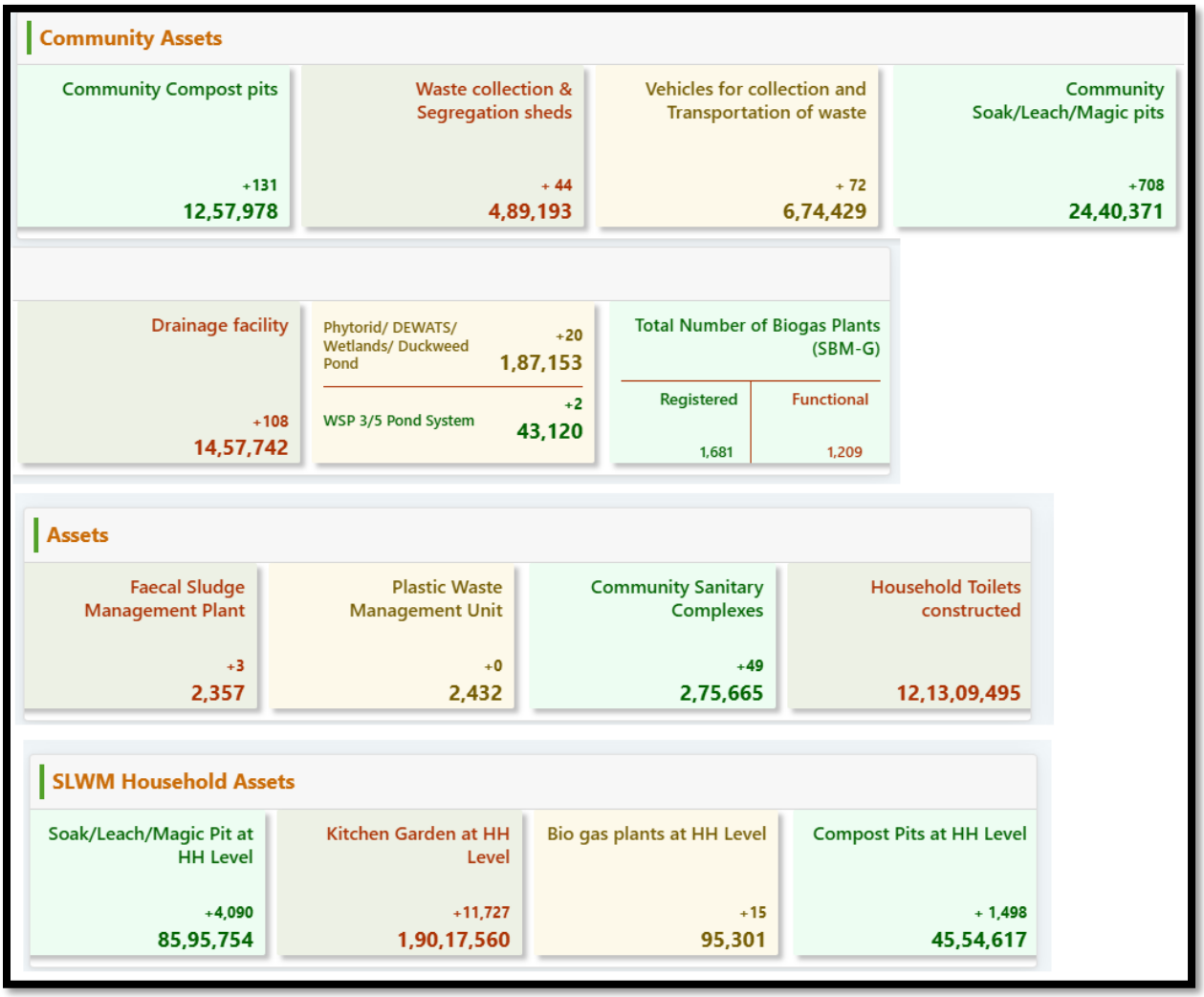
The figure 1 shows the progress of the Swachh Bharat Mission under the ODF Plus programme in rural India. It highlights that 5,68,913 villages achieved ODF Plus status out of 5,86,944 SBM villages. These villages maintained open defecation free conditions and developed waste management facilities.

The data further show that 5,04,195 villages achieved ODF Plus Model status, reflecting better sanitation and cleanliness standards. About 5,33,491 villages arranged solid waste management, while 5,52,148 villages developed liquid waste management systems.

The data also indicates that Sikkim, Tripura, Lakshadweep and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu achieved ODF Plus Model status, while Ladakh achieved ODF Plus status.

Overall, the data reflects major progress in sanitation, waste management and WASH-related activities under the Swachh Bharat Mission in rural India.

Figure no. 2 **Overview of Assests under Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) 2.0 of India**



The figure 2 shows the development of sanitation and waste management assets under the Swachh Bharat Mission. It highlights that a large number of community compost pits, waste collection sheds, drainage facilities and soak pits were created in rural areas to improve sanitation and cleanliness.

The data also show the construction of household toilets, community sanitary complexes and plastic waste management units under the mission. Further, assets such as household compost pits, kitchen gardens and biogas plants were developed to support solid and liquid waste management.

Overall, the data reflects significant progress in WASH activities, sanitation infrastructure and sustainable waste management practices in rural India under the Swachh Bharat Mission.

Table 1.1

State/UT-wise and year-wise progress of IHHLs constructed in rural areas under SBM(G)

S.No.	State/UT	2014-15 (2-10-14 to 31.3.2015)	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
1.	A & N Islands	0	0	941	17594	0	1926	1704	340	219	15
2.	Andhra Pradesh	160512	337901	727784	2151448	518695	253369	84233	4121	2819	14533
3.	Arunchal Pradesh	85665	16036	41077	50472	16795	2490	11194	3520	3194	1743
4.	Assam	109958	479836	1001641	773988	888403	303349	422561	82150	115305	29186
5.	Bihar	111334	325096	736935	2342610	6395224	1323550	385430	16397	841255	635085
6.	Chhattisgarh	20344	299556	1335039	1336737	215819	112590	34918	59800	54174	50192
7.	D & N Haveli and Daman & Diu	0	0	0	20358	0	0	714	1447	43	0
8.	Goa	0	28508	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1783
9.	Gujarat	216692	904190	1543818	474928	101469	540745	327158	109090	30504	56819
10.	Haryana	47733	130396	97551	353877	31900	12334	4604	11128	11072	15380
11.	Himachal Pradesh	25982	61813	83185	10	15	146	93	21282	15247	9317
12.	Jammu & Kashmir	8492	51521	65235	401050	522192	38788	82033	14767	48667	30465
13.	Jharkand	63871	288415	793033	1151951	1084001	192915	513091	25507	25322	23969
14.	Karnataka	697454	545228	700529	1633464	752211	195969	209228	88245	15712	46148
15.	Kerala	19212	12351	194536	0	2	636	9298	5104	4794	1891
16.	Ladak	944	1903	3885	9538	0	1798	0	971	1082	1877
17.	Lakshadeep	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18.	Madhya Pradesh	235014	989775	1822188	2390360	991468	332465	173785	235361	194294	197532
19.	Maharashtra	332224	881290	1828001	2317157	370704	729164	252029	123971	12768	94306
20.	Manipur	21566	48062	41624	57177	79530	11989	4070	3980	6362	1924
21.	Meghalaya	18362	50525	47463	91960	1	9688	31201	29540	19657	3428
22.	Mizoram	461	3677	4785	23876	2664	673	2370	6347	0	2095
23.	Nagaland	0	15807	8003	51410	51060	1151	3285	8950	3472	1832
24.	Odisha	93064	1162145	1211180	723037	2237283	1314759	249168	132827	127463	66119
25.	Puducherry	0	0	2257	7227	18060	265	667	609	158	204
26.	Punjab	7688	60474	103815	70211	47191	101124	64826	13559	16506	13002
27.	Rajasthan	492685	1904377	2394502	1956767	143520	688464	306406	144951	168000	90315
28.	Sikkim	937	3674	0	0	2129	622	1729	3488	3809	2119
29.	Tamil Nadu	195223	775949	968639	2610397	755888	153638	88122	100676	46934	48144
30.	Telangana	70218	230453	517415	1485528	462311	239319	112864	9085	154	0
31.	Tripura	23112	55369	46502	32680	137261	79509	53492	12099	13075	12344
32.	Uttar Pradesh	420114	618244	1579133	4241557	9629665	3769390	946897	752524	366601	1484071
33.	Uttarakhand	28333	60115	322571	44521	20511	19831	3927	11993	9027	8634
34.	West Bengal	587440	1532393	2307901	1046940	678590	670232	5097860	21330	456443	189191
	India	4014634	11875079	20531168	27868827	2615462	11102888	4888957	2247159	2727132	3133663

Source: Data reported by the States/UTs on online IMIS of SBM(G)

The table 1. shows the data of construction of individual household latrines in the different states, union territories of India. Gujarat, Karnataka Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh were the leading states in 2014-15

regarding IHHL construction. Punjab constructed large number of latrines in 2021 to 2024 compared to other years. Overall, India constructed the IHHL on large scale in 2017-18 than other years.

MAJOR CHALLENGES TOWARDS SWACHH BHARAT MISSION GRAMIN

Despite the remarkable success of the mission in increasing rural toilet coverage and reducing open defecation, several challenges continue to affect the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G).

1. Behavioural Resistance and Continued Open Defecation

One of the biggest challenges is changing traditional sanitation habits in rural areas. Many households constructed toilets but continued practicing open defecation due to social beliefs, lack of awareness, and preference for open spaces.

A Quality Council of India survey found that although toilet access increased significantly, ensuring regular toilet usage remained difficult. The survey reported that 91.29% of households with toilet access used them regularly, indicating that some families still preferred open defecation. Research studies also highlight that behavioural change is harder than infrastructure creation because sanitation practices are deeply linked with social norms and cultural habits.

2. Inadequate Water Supply

Lack of sufficient water in rural households is a major obstacle to toilet usage and maintenance. In many villages, toilets remain unused because families do not have regular piped water supply.

Studies on SBM-G observed that poor water availability discouraged toilet use, particularly in drought-prone and economically weaker rural regions. This challenge is particularly severe in states facing groundwater depletion and seasonal water shortages.

3. Poor Construction Quality of Toilets

In several regions, toilets were constructed quickly to meet targets, resulting in poor-quality infrastructure. Common issues include: incomplete toilets, damaged pits, poor ventilation, lack of drainage systems, toilets constructed far from houses. Research has shown that poorly constructed toilets reduced user satisfaction and increased abandonment of facilities.

4. Sustainability of ODF (Open Defecation Free) Status

Maintaining ODF status after declaration remains a major concern. Some villages declared ODF later witnessed a return to open defecation because of: damaged toilets, poor monitoring,

migration, weak follow-up activities. WHO/UNICEF estimates indicate that although India significantly reduced open defecation, around 7% of the population still practiced open defecation in 2024, with rural areas contributing nearly 11%.

5. Weak Solid and Liquid Waste Management

Phase II of SBM-G focuses on "ODF Plus" villages through scientific waste management. However, rural waste management infrastructure remains weak in many states.

Recent reports revealed: poor waste segregation, insufficient waste processing, lack of treatment facilities, improper garbage disposal. For example, Punjab reported only 36.1% village coverage under solid waste management initiatives.

Similarly, several rural districts continue facing garbage accumulation and open dumping due to lack of machinery and trained staff.

6. Lack of Public Participation

Community participation is essential for sanitation sustainability, but many villages show low public involvement in maintaining sanitation facilities. Studies found that poor maintenance and low community ownership resulted in damaged and unhygienic toilets, discouraging usage.

7. Financial and Administrative Constraints

Many states face delays in fund utilization and shortage of trained sanitation workers. Parliamentary reports have pointed out underutilization of SBM-G funds and weak implementation mechanisms in several states. Administrative issues include: inadequate monitoring, shortage of technical staff, corruption and data manipulation, pressure to achieve targets quickly.

8. Data Reliability and Verification Issues

Another challenge is the accuracy of sanitation data. Some local bodies and authorities reportedly exaggerated sanitation achievements to improve rankings or show rapid progress.

Investigations in some states found discrepancies between reported and actual waste collection and sanitation coverage.

9. Environmental and Health Concerns

Improper disposal of faecal sludge and untreated waste has created environmental challenges in rural areas. Open dumping of sewage and garbage contaminates groundwater and agricultural land. Recent initiatives such as faecal sludge treatment plants were introduced because untreated waste disposal had become a major health hazard.

10. Social Inequality and Inclusion Issues

Marginalized groups, especially poorer households, women, and remote rural communities, often face difficulty accessing quality sanitation services. Experts argue that sanitation problems are also linked with caste, poverty, and social exclusion, which limit equal access to hygienic facilities

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Strengthen Behavioural Change Campaigns

The government should strengthen behavioural change campaigns through education and awareness programmes. People should be educated about sanitation, hygiene, waste segregation and the importance of cleanliness through schools, gram sabhas, social media and community activities.

2. Ensure Proper Maintenance of Toilets

Regular maintenance of toilets and continuous water supply should be ensured in both household and community toilets. Proper maintenance is necessary for improving sanitation facilities and encouraging regular toilet usage in rural areas.

3. Promote Scientific Waste Management

Scientific systems for solid and liquid waste management should be promoted in villages. Proper waste disposal, composting and drainage systems can help reduce pollution and improve environmental cleanliness under WASH activities.

4. Increase Financial Support

The government should provide more financial assistance to panchayats and local bodies for sanitation and waste management projects. Adequate funds are important for maintaining sanitation infrastructure and cleanliness programmes effectively.

5. Encourage Public Participation

Public participation and community ownership should be encouraged in sanitation activities. Active involvement of villagers in cleanliness drives and waste management programmes can improve the success of sanitation schemes.

6. Strengthen Monitoring Mechanisms

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be strengthened to regularly inspect sanitation facilities and identify implementation gaps. Proper monitoring can improve accountability and effectiveness of sanitation programmes.

7. Promote Recycling and Composting

The government and local authorities should encourage recycling, composting and reduction of plastic waste. These practices can improve waste management and contribute towards environmental sustainability.

8. Introduce Sanitation Education

Sanitation and hygiene education should be introduced in schools and colleges. Students should be made aware about WASH practices, cleanliness and environmental protection from an early age.

9. Improve Safety Measures for Sanitation Workers

Proper training, safety equipment and health protection measures should be provided to sanitation workers. Their working conditions should be improved to ensure safe and dignified employment.

10. Encourage Digital Monitoring Technologies

Digital monitoring systems and smart waste management technologies should be introduced for better sanitation management. Technology-based monitoring can help improve efficiency, transparency and service delivery in sanitation programmes.

CONCLUSION

The Swachh Bharat Mission has emerged as a transformative sanitation movement in India. It significantly improved sanitation coverage, reduced open defecation, and increased public awareness regarding hygiene and cleanliness. The mission also contributed towards achieving WASH objectives and Sustainable Development Goals. However, sustaining these achievements requires continuous efforts in behavioural change, waste management, and infrastructure maintenance. With effective implementation, public participation, and strong policy support, SBM can continue to improve the quality of life and environmental sustainability in India.

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