

## **SWACHCH BHARAT: MY HOME, MY SCHOOL**

### **Enabling upper primary students to understand the water and sanitation situation in their home and school**

#### **Background**

With a country of more than 1.31 billion people, 65% of whom are under 35 years of age, India has one of the youngest populations in the world. It is often stated that India's record on sanitation is perhaps one of the most unsatisfactory, with more Indians defecating in the open than anywhere else in the world. The Census 2011 reported that about 69% of rural households still do not have toilets within the household; while NSSO in their Swacchta Status Report 2016, recorded that only 45.3% of rural households have sanitary toilets and still 55.4% of rural households contribute to open defecation. Swacchta Status Report 2016 also reported that only 42.5% of rural households have access to water for use in household toilets, inside the house. 44% of our villages still doesn't have a drainage system.

A rapidly increasing population, together with increased industrialization and agricultural activities since independence, and unplanned urbanization over the last 4 decades has also led to a severe strain on water resources of the country. Ground water table is fast depleting and water sources are getting polluted. In addition, practices for safe handling of potable water are not widely known.

Both these issues - sanitation and water - have serious implications for social wellbeing.

Every year since 2009, the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) has recorded the availability of drinking water and toilets in schools across the country. ASER data shows that in 2016, nearly three quarters of all surveyed schools had functional sources of potable water. In a separate initiative by ASER Centre/Pratham, a survey of several dimensions of human development was conducted in 2010. This initiative called PAHELI (People's Audit of Health, Education and Livelihoods) was conducted in 8 districts indicated that the potable water in as many as half the schools surveyed in these districts was contaminated with bacteria. Similarly, almost three quarters of households were found to be drinking bacterially contaminated water.

Successive governments have made various attempts to redress these problems. The current government announced two important initiatives in 2014: Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) for urban and rural areas and Swachh Bharat Swachh Vidyalaya (SBSV) for clean schools. The main stated objectives of SBM rural are 'promoting cleanliness, hygiene and eliminating open defecation in rural India' and 'to accelerate sanitation coverage in rural areas to achieve the vision of Swachh Bharat by 2nd October 2019'. SBSV on the other hand seeks to 'ensure that every school in India has a set of functioning and well maintained water, sanitation and hygiene facilities'.

Many steps are being taken under these schemes. Often the primary activity is the construction of toilets. However, physical facilities by themselves do not solve the problem – this is only one step. Attention to issues such as availability of water, an understanding of why and how water can be clean, regular maintenance of facilities, drainage of toilet waste matter and most importantly attitudinal change towards usage of toilets are necessary to ensure that the facilities provided can actually be used by their intended beneficiaries. Together with these, a host of other issues such as judicious usage and conservation of water, safe ways to dispose of waste water, and hygienic ways to handle potable water also need to be understood widely.

Over the years Pratham and ASER Centre have evolved substantial expertise in capacity building programs, assessment activities, as well as direct action to engage communities in evidence-based action.

Based on the experiences of ASER and PAHELI and other subsequent pilots, a workshop module, intended for school children (especially those in upper primary grades), has been created by Pratham/ASER Centre. The tools for this workshop module are based on government policy documents of Government of India, such as SBM-G, SBSV and NRDWP and aims to help children understand the major issues related to water and sanitation in their community, in their homes and schools. The objective is to build this understanding and then use it to act to improve the conditions in their schools, homes and neighbourhoods. **The purpose of this exercise is to make the children agents of behavioural change to improve upon the prevailing water and sanitation conditions of our society.**

The workshop module is designed to interact with children for 6 hours over 3 days (2 hours a day), where the children are not only taught how to gather information on the current water and sanitation conditions of their [school](#), [household](#) and neighbourhood, but are also shown films, and to engage in many interesting activities related to water and sanitation. The children are also shown how to conduct water tests like the ‘faecal coliform’ test, which they carry out in their school, and in homes. Towards the end of the workshop, the classroom facilitators of this training module help the children compile the data that they collect and help them understand their own findings. The three-day workshop not only builds awareness among children and their families about water and sanitation but also improves skills of data gathering and aggregation. Discussions about the status of water and sanitation enables children to communicate and comprehend and above all the entire set of interactions will hopefully result in desire to improve the situation.

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