

# Abstract

Inadequate sanitation is a significant global challenge, impacting the lives of billions of people. It has serious implications for human health and impedes progress towards development targets. Among the countries most affected, India stands out, having until recently recorded an especially low percentage of the population practicing hygienic sanitation. In response to previous underperformances of national-level campaigns, the Indian government launched the Swachh Bharat (Clean India) Mission in 2014, as the largest sanitation program worldwide, with the goal of eliminating open defecation by 2019. This dissertation project, initiated in 2016, aims to examine sanitation change in India. Through contextually sensitive case studies it analyzes national sanitation policies and trends in sanitation interventions. The research involved analyzing the situation in rural Jharkhand through repeated cross-sectional household surveys supplemented by qualitative interviews with the data collection conducted in 2016 and 2019. Additionally, the research included a qualitative study examining the perspectives of practitioners on a specific sanitation intervention and a comparative study of national sanitation policies implemented in India and Ethiopia. The research revealed that the Swachh Bharat Mission succeeded in rapidly increasing toilet coverage through subsidies for construction in the surveyed area, but it did not completely eradicate open defecation. Significant concerns also remain regarding the sustainability of the sanitation change achieved. This is attributed to technical and ecological constraints, such as toilets not being connected to piped water, and a lack of emphasis on education and behavior change to effectively raise awareness about hygienic sanitation practices. The context in which sanitation change takes place is also crucial and must be considered during sanitation interventions. This involves the analysis of whether and how sanitation inequalities interplay with structural inequalities and differences in psychosocial factors in a given context. The research also suggests that targeted subsidies are important and often necessary for reducing the impact of structural barriers on ensuring access to hygienic infrastructure. However, it should be supplemented by effective behavioral change approaches that go beyond simple messaging to involve appropriate awareness creation as well.

**Key words:** Sanitation, Toilet, India, Swachh Bharat Mission, SDG 6, Behavior change