

NEW INDIA NEW RULES BUDGET 2012

# SANITATION DRIVE: A POLICY MISMATCH

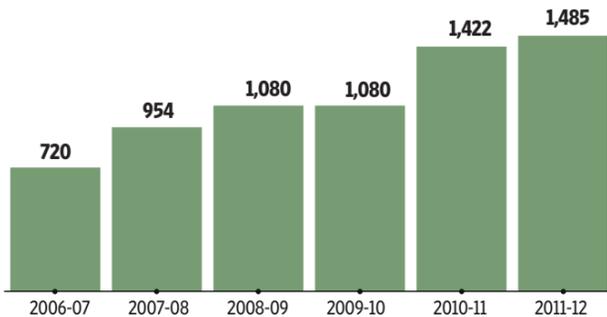
Twelve years into the government's Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) there has been improvement, but at a slow rate. Although the number of rural households without toilets has dropped from 78% in 2001 to 27% as of 2 February 2012, usage remains a problem. A review, using government data from the TSC website, of the programme by the Accountability Initiative, Centre for Policy Research, in Delhi shows no correlation between the amount of funds being spent in a state and improvement there. This is the first of a four-part series leading up to the Union budget due on 16 March.

mint SERIES-I

Allocations

The increase in allocations to TSC between FY11 and FY12 was just 4%. Budgetary allocation for the sanitation programme accounts for a mere 0.02% of India's GDP.

(Figures in ₹ cr)

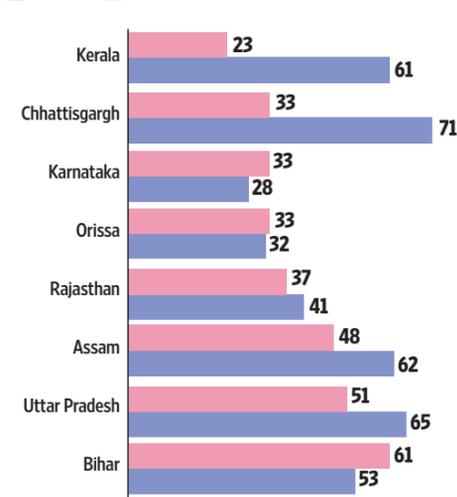


Trends in state spending are uneven

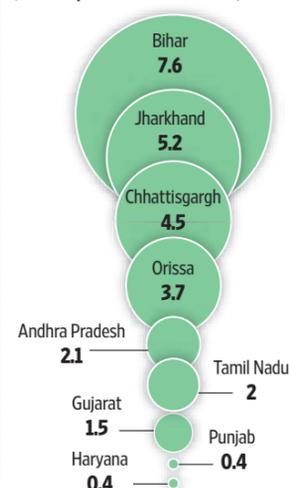
Spending in many states slowed between 2009-10 and 2010-11. While some states such as Chhattisgarh and Kerala saw a decline of 38 percentage points, Bihar and Karnataka spent more. To meet its target, Bihar will need to spend at seven times the current levels.



Percentage expenditure of available funds per state



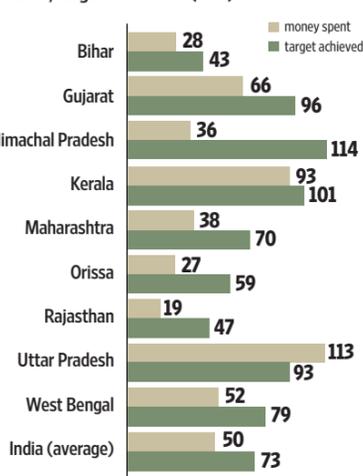
Expenditure needed after 2010-11 to meet targets for BPL toilets (in multiples of current levels)



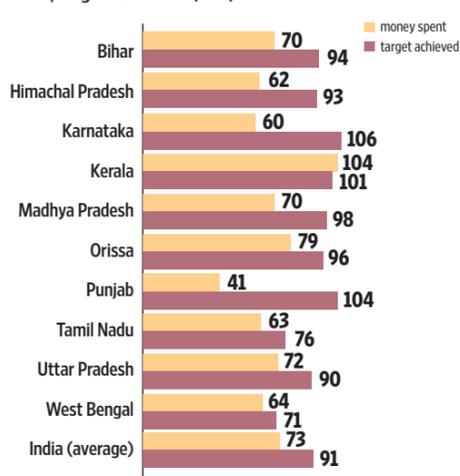
Delivery is irregular among states

No correlation was found between the coverage achieved and the amount of funds spent per state. For example, Himanchal Pradesh spent 36% of its approved funds meeting its target for the BPL households, but Bihar spent 28% and achieved just 43% of its target. On average, India spends ₹1,528 on each basic, low-cost toilet for the BPL households. However, states spend anywhere between ₹171 (Punjab) and ₹3,338 (Sikkim) per unit.

Expenditure on BPL toilets out of approved funds/targets achieved (in %)



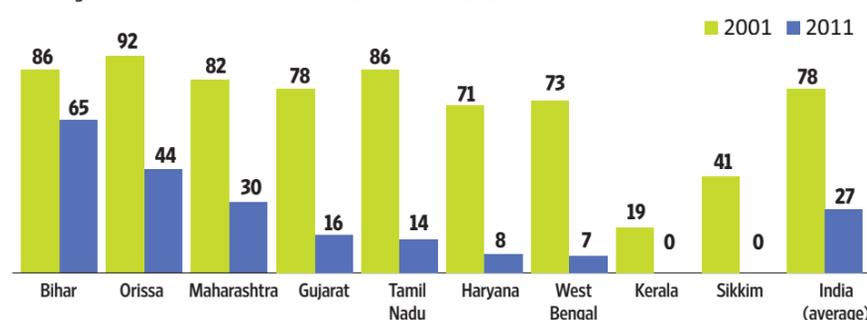
Expenditure on school toilets out of approved funds/targets achieved (in %)



Sluggish improvement in targets

Sikkim and Kerala are the best performers, ensuring 100% access to toilets. However, access does not always equate to usage, which is likely to be much lower.

Percentage of rural households without toilets in 2001 and 2011



EXPERT VIEW

YAMINI AIYAR

Respond to this column at [feedback@livemint.com](mailto:feedback@livemint.com)



## LESSONS FOR THE REVAMP

Budget 2012 is set to give rural sanitation a much-needed impetus. Rural development and drinking water and sanitation minister Jairam Ramesh, who rather appropriately characterized the total sanitation campaign (TSC), the country's flagship rural sanitation programme, as a "failure that is...neither total nor sanitation nor a campaign," is now seeking to revamp the scheme with an enhanced budgetary allocation of approximately ₹6,700 crore.

This revamp has been a long time coming. Data on rural sanitation in India is rather depressing. In 2008, Unicef estimated a mere 21% of rural India was using improved sanitation compared with 52% of rural Bangladesh. No surprise then that India contributes 58% of the world's population defecating in the open. Now, as the government proposes to expand its sanitation programmes and revamp implementation, it is worth analysing some of the factors that contributed to TSC's failure to ensure that mistakes are not repeated and the enhanced allocations translate into improved outcomes.

Delivering sanitation is a complex task. Sanitation experts have long argued the greatest impediment to sanitation is not access to toilets but the absence of demand for using toilet facilities, fuelled, in turn, by a limited understanding of the links between poor sanitation and disease. Efforts at improving sanitation thus need to emphasize behavioural change, which the TSC has failed to do effectively. According to TSC data, toilet coverage in rural India has increased from 22% in 2001 to 73% in February 2012. But usage and waste management remain a problem. The TSC and its companion programme, the Nirmal Gram Puraskar (NGP)—a financial award to *panchayats* (village councils) that achieve total sanitation—were designed to generate demand for sanitation and ensure usage. Why then have the schemes failed to meet with much success?

First, the role of the *panchayat* in TSC was ill-conceived. By design, the programme placed responsibility for demand creation with the *panchayat*. However, the instruments to fulfil this responsibility—finances, staff and technical know-how—were not provided. In practice, the TSC was run by the line department. Funds, including the toilet construction subsidy, the largest component of the TSC budget, were routed through the administration. TSC staff took all expenditure decisions and supervised toilet construction. The *panchayats'* role was limited to raising awareness and assisting TSC staff in toilet construction. This severely compromised the demand-generation and local ownership required for a successful sanitation programme. Consequently, subsidies became the primary driver of the programme and toilet construction the target.

The proposed revamp seeks to address this problem by devolving toilet construction subsidy directly to *panchayats*, thereby removing bureaucratic intermediaries. This is a positive move. However, for sustained *panchayat* engagement, the ministry will need to develop a more holistic strategy. For one, funds and powers to *panchayats* will need to go beyond the toilet construction subsidy.

*Panchayats* should first be provided financial and technical support to develop a holistic sanitation plan, including solid and liquid waste management for their regions. Further, financing ought to be based on this plan rather than merely on toilet construction requirements. To enable *panchayats* to effectively plan and implement their strategies, technical expertise is essential. The TSC should focus on training and developing a pool of engineers from district colleges that *panchayats* can hire. These engineers would then be accountable directly to *panchayats* and free them from being dependent on overworked government administrative staff.

Crucially, TSC's efforts must converge with the broader mandate for strengthening local governments being promoted by the 13th Finance Commission and the *panchayati raj* departments. Public health, of which sanitation is an essential element, is a core function that every state government has devolved to *panchayats*. Under the 13th Finance Commission, *panchayats* are expected to receive significant sums of money to perform these core functions. Moreover, efforts are under way to strengthen *panchayats'* revenue generation capacities. TSC ought to leverage this and work with *panchayats* to encourage them to draw on these funds and even use revenues generated, at least in richer *panchayats*, to promote the sanitation agenda.

The second limitation with TSC was its excessive focus on monitoring infrastructure. For all its demand generation rhetoric, the TSC only measured toilet construction-related indicators. Even the NGP was primarily measured in terms of numbers of toilets constructed and awards received and the scheme soon deteriorated into a numbers game rather than a reward for sustained behaviour change. Not surprisingly, many NGP villages slipped back to open defecation.

If the revamped TSC is to succeed, the ministry must build systems for regular measurement of outcomes. There is now a body of innovative practice among NGOs to involve ordinary citizens in monitoring implementation processes and outcomes at scale. These include efforts such as the annual PAISA and ASER report (disclosure: I work closely on these reports) in elementary education. Arghyam, a Bangalore-based NGO, in 2009 implemented a programme called ASHWAS—a citizen-led effort to assess the status of water and sanitation in Karnataka. TSC will do well to draw on these experiences and build similar monitoring systems at scale. Only then will the outcomes agenda take root. After all, to borrow a cliché, what gets measured, gets done!

Yamini Aiyar is director, Accountability Initiative, Centre for Policy Research. Data collected and analysed by Avani Kapur and Anirvan Chowdhury, also from Accountability Initiative, Centre for Policy Research, Delhi.