

Role of 'Swachhagrahis' in Swachh Bharat Abhiyan


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Introduction

“A clean India would be the best tribute our country could pay to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th birth anniversary in 2019,” said Prime Minister Narendra Modi as he launched the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) on 2nd October 2, 2014. Over the last years, the mission has picked up pace and as government says turned into a national movement, with people from all walks of life doing their bit. As part of the campaign, volunteers, known as *Swachhagrahis*, or "**Ambassadors of cleanliness**", promoted indoor plumbing and community approaches to sanitation (CAS) at the village level. One of the key successes of the Abhiyan are the Swachh heroes who have emerged across India. *Swachhagrahis*, as they are now famous as, are **swachh warriors** who are championing the cause of sanitation and hygiene in India and giving the much need impetus to the programme and help sustain it.

Swachh Bharat Mission aims to provide people with sustainable sanitation and hygiene services. As per the SBM (G) guidelines, *Swachhagrahis* are the foot soldiers of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) and the motivators for bringing about behaviour change with respect to key sanitation practices in rural India. Every village should ideally have at least one *Swachhagrahi*, with preference given to women candidates. A *Swachhagrahi* is a volunteer who can come from any background, including a local ASHA worker, ANM, Anganwadi worker, and staff, water line man, pump operator, member of NCO/CSOs, youth organisations or from the general public living in villages.

The role of *Swachhagrahis* remains critical even after the Open defecation free (ODF) declaration, as they play a crucial role in sustaining the ODF status of their villages. In this, the following have been found to be critical:

- Sustained engagement with the *Swachhagrahis*
- Systems for continued capacity building and motivation of *Swachhagrahis*
- Appropriate incentives for this sustained engagement

Role of Swachhagrahis

The range of activities being performed by *Swachhagrahis* can be grouped as per the phases of Swachh Bharat Mission –Grameen (SBMG) program:

- Planning
- Implementation
- Sustainability

1. Planning

During this phase, the role and responsibilities of the *Swachhagrahi* are:

- Undertake pre-triggering activities and prepare the community for triggering
- Facilitate community triggering sessions in assigned villages using Community Approaches to sanitation (CAS)
- Carry out participative mapping of the village's open defecation status and also record the sanitation status of all the households in the concerned village
- Participate in and support the Gram Panchayat (GP) in the preparation of a time-bound village level action plan to eliminate open defecation
- Facilitate formation of and strengthening of Nigrani Samitis in the triggered villages
- Conduct household visits to generate demand of toilet construction and use, and raise awareness about hygiene
- Support activities like assisting GPs to hold a '**Sanitation Day**' every month so that the GP achieves/sustains the ODFstatus
- Any other activity that supports village plan for attaining ODFstatus

2. Implementation

During this phase, the role and responsibilities of the *Swachhagrahi* are:

Facilitating Toilet Construction

- Assist the Gram Pradhan/Sarpanch and GP Secretary for ensuring the availability of sufficient number of trained masons and their effective deployment.

- Mobilise and support the community for the construction of Household toilets of good quality.
- Provide information on appropriate toilet technologies and support in supply chain management
- Monitor the quality of construction of toilets and support in training and coordinating with masons
- Ensure that the masons are adequately trained on the twin leach-pit technology toilet
- Canvass for the construction and sustainable operation and maintenance of institutional toilets such as toilets in schools, AWCs and Health facilities

Facilitating sustained behaviour change

- Coordinate with local stakeholders, GP, Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSCs),ASHAs, AWWs, Teachers, etc. for effective implementation of SBM(G) activities
- Interact with other locally available organisations like SHGs,youth organizations like Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS),Mahila Sangathans etc.
- Assist in developing and implementing capacity building plans for strengthening Nigrani Samitis at village/GP level.
- Conduct community mobilisation events and public meetings with the Nigrani Samitis, communitymembers and other key stakeholders including for events in schools and AWCs
- Organise Prabhat Pheris (morning walks); evening follow-ups and Ratri Chaupals (Night meetings)
- Provides support to document best practices for replication in other villages
- Assist the monitoring of the SBM(G) programme in his/her village as a support to block and district teams

3. Sustainability

Swachhagrahis are expected to support ODF sustainability in the following ways:

- Retrofitting and improvisation of assets

- Geo-tag the toilets constructed
- Assist in construction/retro-fitting of defunct or poorly built house hold and institutional toilets in the villages
- Communicate about financing options for use for the up gradation of sanitation, hygiene and bath facilities in homes so that Households can develop better quality facilities.

Reinforcing improved behaviours

- Conduct ODF verifications of the village: First verification, second verification and subsequent sustainability verifications
- Assist GP functionaries in organizing functions/ events to commemorate ODF status- regular ODF Days, celebration on Independence Day/ Republic Day
- Ensure continued functioning of the village Nigrani Samiti, organization of ratri chaupals, village meetings on the issue of cleanliness
- Ensure institutionalization of ODF approach in the village through ODF branding in the village, resolutions passed in Gram Sabhas, construction of Model toilets etc.
- Promote community-level water conservation to ensure availability of water for use in toilets
- Organise awareness programmes in institutions such as schools and AWC regarding the sustainability of ODF status of the village

Operation and maintenance

- Raise awareness about proper operation and maintenance of toilets (O&M) including correct ways of emptying compost from toilet pits by the members of the household themselves
- Operation and maintenance of toilets in institutional buildings viz. schools, PHCs, community toilets and sanitary complexes, Anganwadi centres

ODF+

- Hand washing with soap at homes and in schools and anganwadis before mid-day meals
- Develop plan and support implementation of SLRM activities viz. construction of covered drains, community soak pits, compost pits; maintenance of the assets thus created; schemes like GOBARDHAN, etc.
- Support villages in cleaning of water sources and public water bodies
- Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) activities including awareness generation among adolescent girls and safe disposal of sanitary waste

Conclusion:

The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan may have been introduced by the government but its success belongs to the citizens who contributed tirelessly for the well-being of their community, here are thousands of *Swachhagrahis* and throughout whose efforts towards propagating safe sanitation and hygiene got recognition.

REFERENCES & Bibliography :

- (1) The Swachh Bharat Revolution: Four Pillars of India's Behavioural Transformation, Parameswaran Iyer. Foreword by NARENDRA MODI . HarperCollins India.
- (2) www.swachhbharatmission.gov.in
- (3) www.pmindia.gov.in
- (4) www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com

Assignment Questions:

- ❖ Describe briefly roles of *Swachhagrahis* as 'Swachh Warriors' for the success of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.