

# Workshop on Converging Strategies towards Open Defecation Free India



**Madurai Symposium 2015**

Venue: Thamukkam Grounds, Madurai

September 15, 2015

*Organized by*



**Sustainable Healthcare Advancement (SUHAM) Trust**  
(A Healthcare Initiative of DHAN Foundation)

## Current Scenario – Open defecation and Sanitation

Sanitation is the hygienic means of promoting health through prevention of human contacts of hazards of wastes which can be physical, biological, microbiological and chemical agents of diseases. Globally, in 2012, 89 per cent of the global population used an improved source of drinking water and 64 per cent used an improved sanitation facility. 116 countries have already met the Millenium Development Goals (MDG) on drinking water target and 77 have already met the MDG sanitation target. Despite increases in sanitation coverage, 205 billion people do not have access to improved sanitation facilities. There are still 45 countries including India where less than half the population has access to an improved sanitation facility. (Source: *Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation – 2014 update – WHO & UNICEF*).

As per the report of UNICEF on Elimination of Open Defecation, only about 22% of the rural families had access to toilets in 2001. With the efforts put into the Total Sanitation Campaign/Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA) this has gone up to 32.70% as per Census 2011. Further as per NSSO 2012, 40.60% rural households have toilets and around 595 million people, which is nearly half the population of India defecate in the open. As per the Base line survey 2012, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, in India, 61.22 per cent of households not having toilets, 38.78 per cent households only have toilets. Out of the households having toilets, only 79.42 per cent are functional and 20.58 per cent dysfunctional.

As per the Census 2011 report, in Tamil Nadu, 48 per cent of the households have access to latrine facilities within premises and five per cent of households use public latrines against the all India average of 47 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. But in the State, it is as high as 45.72 per cent

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households resort to open defecation against the average of 49.84 per cent households at the national level. In rural areas, this proportion is 73.27 per cent which is higher than the rural India average of 67.33 per cent. In Urban areas too Tamil Nadu's share of households practicing open defecation is 16.21 per cent against 12.63 per cent in India. While the access to household amenities like vehicles, television, mobile phone is better, the poor access to sanitation is a cause for concern. The Vision of Tamil Nadu 2023 focus on the provision of world class infrastructure to all the residents of Tamil Nadu irrespective of their economic status, which include the social infrastructure in terms of universal access to Housing, Water & Sanitation, Energy, Transportation, Irrigation, Connectivity, Healthcare, Education. Tamil Nadu which had achieved considerable progress in the household access to sanitation has been ranked among the worst 10 states in India and is the worst performing state in southern India. *(Source – Workshop on Open Defecation Free Tamil Nadu – State Planning Commission – 5th July, 2013)*

To accelerate the efforts to achieve universal sanitation coverage and to put focus on sanitation, the Prime Minister of India launched the Swachh Bharat Mission on 2nd October, 2014. There were vast regional disparities in key parameters of development across various regions of the state. In order to correct such regional imbalances, 100 most backward blocks and backward urban local bodies were identified based on indicators in sectors like health, education, gender related indicators and other indicators like per capita income, incidence of poverty and unemployment. For this purpose, Government of Tamilnadu constituted State Balanced Growth Fund (SBGF) to address the identified issues to bring it to the district average on health and sanitation aspects.

## Issues related to Open Defecation

According to UNICEF, open defecation is the practice of people defecating infields, urban parks, rivers and open trenches in close proximity to the living space of others. The behavior may be due to traditional cultural practices or lack of access to toilets or both. It is due to the lack of sanitation and hygiene in general which is a major factor in causing various diseases most notably diarrhea and intestinal worm infections but also typhoid, cholera, hepatitis, polio, trachoma and others. This led to 0.7 million deaths in children under five years old in 2011 and 250 million lost school days. This also leads to malnutrition and stunted growth in children imparting the learning abilities of school going children. Open defecation poses a serious threat to the health of children in India. The practice is the main reason in India reports the highest number of diarrheal deaths among children under five in the world. Children weakened by frequent episodes are more vulnerable to malnutrition, stunting and opportunistic infections such as pneumonia. Poor sanitation also cripples national development implicates on workers produce less, live shorter lives, save and interest less and are less able to send their children to school. The State contributes to six per cent of Open Defecation in the country. Every year 1.5 million children die due to diarrhea caused by the combined effects of inadequate sanitation, unsafe water supply and poor personal hygiene.

In addition to tradition and the communication taboo, the practice still exists due to poverty in which many of the people will not prioritize toilets and besides many are living in rented houses without toilets. Society does not view the lack of a toilet as unacceptable, Building and owning a toilet as aspirational. Construction of toilets is still seen as the government's responsibility rather than the individual's responsibility. The major challenge is to

motivate people to see a toilet as fundamental to their social standing, status and well being. The existence of gap in the knowledge and practice among people still persists even though they are aware of the high risks to poor sanitation. Open defecation in urban areas driven by a number of reasons including lack of space to build toilets in high density settlements. But in the rural areas, open defecation is prevalent among all socio-economic groups. One of the major challenges faced in the addressing the issue is inadequate human resource base for sanitation. There is lack of availability of dedicated frontline workers to promote and implement sanitation strategies. Another key requirement is to integrate Social and Behaviour Change Communication elements into the government programmes, local governance to stimulate demand for toilets.

### The Workshop

The workshop on “Converging Strategies towards Open Defecation Free India” intends to discuss the identified gaps as factors hindering in accelerating the focus on open defecation free India and also working out the converging strategies and mechanisms for achieving the same. The workshop focuses on arriving the strategies and mechanisms with action points and policy prepositions for achieving the safe sanitation scenario. There will be presentations from the NGOs who are working for open defecation free block under State Balanced Growth Fund from State Planning Commission and other expertised NGOs. There will be a panel of 2-3 eminent personalities to deliberate the presentations to action areas.

### Objectives of the workshop

- To understand the present status of sanitation in each presented context

- To consolidate the experience of each stakeholder in addressing open defecation problem in various contexts
- To build the convergence strategies and mechanisms towards open defecation free India

### Participants

**Participants:** officials from District Planning Cell and District Rural Development Agency, Block Development Officers, Panchayat presidents, NGO representatives, Consultants, professionals working in women SHG and farmers federations, community leaders and health workers who are actively involved in addressing the open defecation issues.

**Panel members:** Officials from State Planning Commission, District Rural Development Agency & district planning cell and eminent personalities.

### Date & Venue

The workshop will be held on Tuesday, 15th September, 2015, at Thamukkam Grounds, Madurai from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm

For further information, please contact

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