



RESEARCH ARTICLE

URBAN HEALTH AND SANITATION ISSUES

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 29th March, 2020

Received in revised form

27th April, 2020

Accepted 19th May, 2020

Published online 30th June, 2020

Keywords:

Sustainable Sanitation, Health impacts, Awareness, Government responsibilities, Stockholm Environment Institute, SISS, REVAMP.

ABSTRACT

The Water Institute at University of North California in 2015 provided its data in terms of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Performance Index and stated that India ranked at the 95th position which is worst than many developing countries. It is surprising to note that 18.6% of urban households don't have proper sanitation and even the existing ones are not used properly. Inadequate sanitation facilities and improper disposal of human excreta leads poor personal hygiene. Thus, being educated it is our responsibility to address the concept of Sustainable Sanitation. The Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) has planned an initiative on sustainable sanitation (SISS) as well as produced a book for the same. Another interesting initiative by SISS was of REVAMP which is Resource Value Mapping. Government and various NGO's should take up the responsibilities of educating people of basic hygiene and sanitation facilities through awareness campaigns as well as construction of public toilets and sewage treatment plants. Thus, we should use more innovative methods and technical tools to fight the situation because it's rightly said everything has a price except health.

INTRODUCTION

Humans are very proud of the fact that we are social animals. They believe they have an edge over other organisms in this planet because they have a rational thinking brain. Thus, they have been exploiting every possible resource in the best amount of manner in the name of urbanization which is undoubtedly a boon but unfortunately is affecting our land. So, educating people about sustainable development has become an important issue because our endeavor should be that the economic development conducted should be without depletion of natural resources. In present times it would not be wrong to quote that people have more amount of mobile phones and other electronic gadgets that the amount of facilities for sanitation. The most astonishing fact is that this scenario is not only confined to the rural sector of the society but also is affecting the urban areas. The Water Institute at University of North California in 2015 provided its data in terms of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Performance Index and stated that India ranked at the 95th position which is worst than many developing countries. Thus, the need of the hour is to address the concept of Sustainable Sanitation which is basically an initiative that focuses on the productive sanitation for the social and environmental well being of the society. (Manjari Manisha, Sustainable sanitation in India: Need of the hour, Indian Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine (2016), 20(1): 68–69)

The Indian Scenario: It is surprising to note that alone 60 million people in urban areas lack access to proper sanitation facilities. Apart from this about two-third wastewater is let out in the water bodies' untreated leading to pollution and spread of other contagious diseases. (Kavita Wankhade, Urban Sanitation in India: Key Shifts in the National Policy Frame, Environment and Urbanization (2015). The survey in 2011 clearly showed that 18.6% of urban households don't have proper sanitation and even the existing ones are not used properly which were reconfirmed by the report given on 6th march 2012 by the WHO/UNICEF's Joint Monitoring Programme on sanitation for the Millennium Development Goals. The interstate tally in India highlights that Jharkhand rank 1st followed by Orissa and Bihar in having the least amount of toilets at home. (Aarti Kelkar-Khambete, The sanitation crisis in India - An urgent need to look beyond toilet provision, Indian Water Portal (2012). Thus, it wouldn't be wrong in stating that it's imperative India address the sanitation challenge in terms of full cycle.

“Sanitation is more important than Independence”

It is rightly said that adequate sanitation not only minimizes health and environmentally associated problems but in addition with good hygiene and safe water they are the fundamental tools for good health and better social and economic development. The better sanitation facilities not only improves the health sector of a country but also contributes in the business growth as less people fall ill, improved ecosystem services, benefits economy as we save about \$7 billion per year in health system.



Figure 1 Sustainable Sanitation a catalyst for development.
(Source- Stockholm Environment Institute on Sustainable Sanitation)

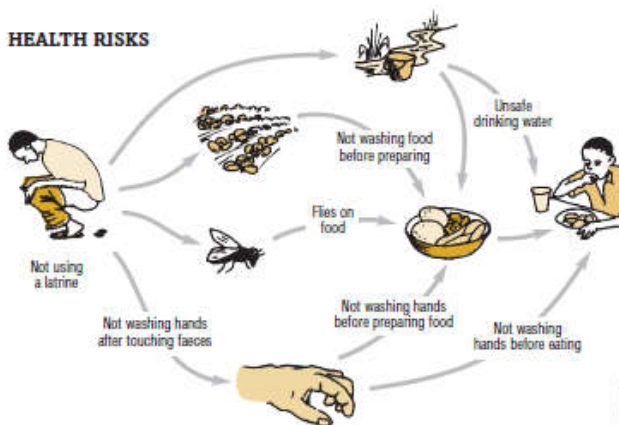


Figure 2. Health impacts of improper sanitation facilities.
(Source-Infonet biovision, Introduction to hygiene and sanitation).

Good sanitation practices also give a person sense of privacy and avoid embarrassment; household sanitation also protects women from any discomfort. (Duncan Mara, Jon Lane, Beth Scott, David Trouba, Sanitation and Health, PLOS-Medicine (2010). Proper sanitation facilities also help in social upliftment as it stops the practice of manual scavengers which is still prevalent in our country. It is surprising to note that out of 25 crore households in India, 13 lakhs in urban areas still depends manual Scavenging methods. (Aarti Kelkar-Khambete, The sanitation crisis in India - An urgent need to look beyond toilet provision, Indian Water Portal (2012)

Health Impacts: Inadequate sanitation facilities and improper disposal of human excreta leads poor personal hygiene which spreads diarrheal diseases in India. According to the data provided by World Health Organization states that about 30,000 people die unsafe drinking water and improper sanitation facilities. However, it is noticed that the areas where sanitation facilities have been improved has lead to reduction in the amount of pathogens responsible for spreading diarrheal diseases and resulted in reduction of the diseases by 40%. It is also noted that stoppage open defecation and proper hand washing prevents diarrhea by 30% each respectively. (Ganesh

S Kumar, Sitanshu Sekhar Kar, Animesh Jain, Health and environmental sanitation in India: Issues for prioritizing control strategies, Indian Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine (2011), 15(3): 93–96).

Solutions

- The first and foremost thing is that the government and various NGO's should take up the responsibilities of educating people of basic hygiene and sanitation facilities through awareness campaigns.
- The processing of sewage in sewage treatment plants should be done properly before releasing them in water bodies and it should be monitored regularly.
- The number of sewage treatment plants should also be increased.
- Construction of Public toilets is here but there usage should be monitored. There are many reasons for their improper usage. For example-Lack of water supply, improper drainage facilities, Absence of people to maintain these toilets etc.

Role of Government: The Ministry of Urban Development has taken appropriate steps to encourage urban local bodies to accomplish the task of total sanitation. So, for the same they have decided to award the Nirmal Shahar Puraskar or Clean Cities Award to the states who achieve this goal. (Source-Water and Sanitation Program). The government also launched Septage Management Advisory that highlights an area of neglect which needs more attention. In the 2014 election, the manifesto of Bhartiya Janta Party stated "Open Defecation free India" and for this they also launched a campaign Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). This indeed was a revolutionary step as people became aware about this problem and necessary steps were taken. (Kavita Wankhade, Urban sanitation in India: key shifts in the national policy frame, ENVIRONMENT & URBANIZATION (2015), Vol-27, No-2)

New Innovative Techniques: The Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) has planned an initiative on sustainable sanitation (SISS) which a mission to strengthen the momentum of sustainable sanitation across the world especially in developing countries through a planned strategy of research, knowledge and policies. The book titled "Sanitation, Wastewater Management and Sustainability produced by SEI and UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) was also published in august 2016. The aim of the book is to provide a conceptual framework for planning and investing more in sustainable sanitation and wastewater management and resource recovery. Another interesting initiative by SISS was of REVAMP which is Resource Value Mapping. This is basically a tool which is designed to calculate what products can be reused from the excreta, wastewater etc generated in urban areas. (Source-Stockholm Environment Institute on Sustainable Sanitation).

Conclusion

It's a very welcoming step that sanitation issues are getting the due attention which it deserves. The proper coordination between the political leadership and health sector can further improve the scenario and facilitate the required changes in the sanitation cycle.

Thus, the government should use more innovative methods and technical tools to fight the situation because it's rightly said everything has a price except health.

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