

Access To Clean Drinking Water And Hygiene Is Not Only A Necessity, But The Right Of Every Citizen

The Government has been stressing on the importance of health, cleanliness, sanitation and access to toilets for all. The Hon'ble Prime Minister of the country made a clarion call for a 'Clean India' in 2014. The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) with an aim to achieve Open Defecation Free (ODF) was launched on the birth anniversary of our Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi on 2nd October, 2014.

Women have been at the receiving end of lack of toilets, for decades. From dropping out of school when they hit puberty to health problems that develop over time due to restrictions on when women can go out and relieve themselves in the open, the impact of lack of hygiene and sanitation on women goes far beyond just lack of toilets. Swachh Bharat Mission has greater relevance than only cleanliness and sanitation, it also ensures women's safety. Studies have shown that women who use open defecation sites are twice as likely to be sexually assaulted.

Another big initiative of the Government is the removal of GST on sanitary napkins which shows the importance given by the Government on women's health and hygiene. To address the need of menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls residing primarily in rural areas, Government of India is supporting the Menstrual Hygiene Scheme, under which, funds are provided to States/UTs through National Health Mission for decentralized procurement of sanitary napkins packs for provision primarily

In order to ensure health and nutrition of women and young girls, Hon'ble Prime Minister launched the POSHAN Abhiyan a flagship programme to improve nutritional outcomes for children, pregnant women and lactating mothers for all 640 districts of the country with the goal of making India malnutrition-free on International Women's Day in 2018.

With a view to safeguard the health of women & children by providing them with a clean cooking fuel – LPG, the Government launched the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana on May 1st, 2016. In India has more than 24 Crore households out of which about 50% households relied on firewood, coal, dung – cakes etc. as primary source of cooking. The smoke from burning such fuels causes alarming household pollution and adversely affects the health of women & children

causing several respiratory diseases/ disorders. Ensuring women's empowerment, especially in rural India, the connections are issued in the name of women of the households. The scheme acted as one of the biggest catalyst of socio-economic change in the status of women in the country.

The Government with a clear focus on health has taken historic steps to ensure affordable health for all by launching the world's largest health insurance scheme Ayushman Bharat for ensuring quality universal health services for all. The Government also called for radical reforms in the healthcare system in relation to national healthcare programs and delivery, especially the National Rural Health Mission called for an overhaul of medical education and training and financing of healthcare to create a holistic care system that is universally accessible, affordable and effective.

In March 2017, the government adopted the National Health Policy, 2017, Initiate the 'National Health Assurance Mission', with a clear mandate to provide universal healthcare that is not only accessible and affordable, but also effective, and reduces the OOP [out-of-pocket] spending for the common man. Launched the Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana, which is a scheme based on a health insurance model that offers Rs 5 lakh cover per year per family to 10 crore families.

With the aim to utilise the ubiquitous platform of mobile phones for healthcare delivery, the government set up the 'National eHealth Authority' to leverage telemedicine and mobile healthcare for expanding reach and coverage and to define the standards and legal framework for technology driven care.

In addition, Digital Information Security in Healthcare Act or DISHA that will enable the digital sharing of personal health records with hospitals and clinics, and between hospitals and clinics has been launched by the government.

In order to universalize the emergency medical services – 108, the government launched an Emergency Response Support System with a pan-India single emergency number – 112 – with funding from the Nirbhaya Fund. The 112 helpline integrates helpline number of the police (100), fire (101) and women safety (1090).

The Government is focusing on four main pillars of universal health—preventive health, affordable healthcare, supply side interventions and mission mode intervention by introducing healthcare schemes and legal reforms.