

Preface

Despite the priority accorded to sanitation programmes by central government through successive five year plans, the reality on the ground is extremely unsettling. Substantial funds have been spent on sanitation programmes by the central government. The conceptual framework was also modified successively. The core issue has, however, remained removal of open defecation, a practice which is not only a blot on the image of our nation, for the way it adversely impacts public health, but is also repugnant to the human dignity.

This all India audit assesses the status of rural sanitation and attempts to analyse the reasons as to why government failed on this crucial socio-economic indicator leading to a relatively adverse global ranking of India even when compared with its neighbours. The programme which is running in mission mode for nearly three decades has not succeeded in evoking the required missionary zeal in various government agencies, participating NGOs and corporates. The coordinated approach necessary for success of the programme i.e. harnessing resources - money, men and materials, raising awareness among the target populations, putting in place an effective MIS and monitoring mechanism is mostly missing. If programme has to succeed, these flaws in its implementation need to be fixed.

We hope that this Report prepared for submission to the President under Article 151 of the Constitution of India will throw up certain pointers to the planners and administrators involved in this task of utmost national importance.