**Global Scaling Up Sanitation Project**

# Benchmarking Local Government Performance on Rural Sanitation: Learning from Himachal Pradesh, India

April 2010

## INTRODUCTION

Open defecation is a traditional behavior in rural India. Conventional rural sanitation programs have been based on the assumption that people defecate in the open because they are too poor to afford the cost of constructing a toilet. Therefore, subsidies for upfront capital costs were provided to generate demand for "sanitation," interpreted narrowly as a pour-flush toilet. These programs increased the reported coverage of household toilets but had a poor record with respect to toilet usage, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability.

To address the shortcomings of conventional rural sanitation programs, the Government of India launched the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) in 1999, with the goal of achieving universal rural sanitation coverage by 2012. TSC advocates a demand-driven approach with significant involvement of local governments, promotes informed choice on technology options, and provides fiscal incentives for achievement of outcomes. The Water and Sanitation Program's (WSP) Global Scaling Up Sanitation Project (also known as Total

Sanitation and Sanitation Marketing or TSSM) leverages the TSC framework and resources. TSSM combines Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) with sanitation marketing to help local governments effectively use their funds to end open defecation and achieve sustainable impact.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Measuring and monitoring performance on total sanitation and using the results from these measurements to build sector capacity is critical to the development of the rural sanitation sector in India. However, the present monitoring system in the Indian rural sanitation sector focuses on inputs and outputs (e.g., budget spent and toilets constructed). Outcomes in the form of open-defecation free (ODF) communities are captured through the monitoring system for the fiscal incentive (Nirmal Gram Puraskar (NGP) or Clean Village Prize), but this is not linked to the monitoring of inputs and outputs, making the analysis of linkages and measurement of efficacy difficult. In addition, in the TSC online performance monitoring system, states and districts are listed in

## Key findings

- Performance benchmarking enables districts to understand their performance and motivates them to improve. It helps to flag areas of strength, areas that need improvement, and linkages between them.

- Through performance benchmarking, inputs, outputs and processes can be linked to outcomes in monitoring rural sanitation sector performance in India.

- The use of performance benchmarking weighted scoring is designed to put heavier emphasis on, and therefore encourage, achievement of outcomes.

- Benchmarking should enable policy makers and nodal agencies to monitor performance on a rational basis and thereby channel resources and efforts on the basis of identified strengths and weaknesses.

- The comparison of performance provides an incentive to be on the "top of the league table."

- Periodic monitoring helps to flag gaps in data accuracy and timeliness of data reporting.

- Benchmarking needs to be linked to an incentive in order to drive performance improvement.

wsp
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alphabetical order, rather than by performance rank, making it difficult to make inter-district or inter-state comparisons.

## ACTION

In India, TSSM has developed a performance monitoring and benchmarking model to strengthen outcome-based management of the rural sanitation sector. This model has been adopted by the Government of Himachal Pradesh to monitor performance across all 12 districts in the state in relation to rural sanitation and to benchmark the same on a monthly basis.

The model was designed to meet the following objectives:

- Benchmarking performance should enable comparison. On the one hand, this helps to motivate poor performers to come up in a league table. On the other hand, it acts as encouragement for the better performers to maintain and improve their position.
- Benchmarking should enable policy makers and nodal agencies to monitor performance on a rational basis and thereby channel resources and efforts on the basis of identified strengths and weaknesses.

### How to Measure Performance

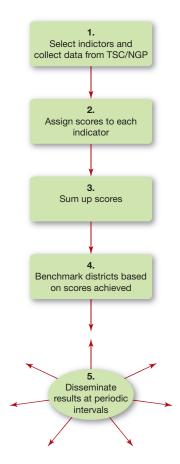A comprehensive performance-benchmarking model should:

- Use objectively verifiable data on performance that can be triangulated,
- Assign weights to best practice indicators in such a way as to prioritize areas for improvement,
- Present data in a user-friendly way, and
- Be undertaken regularly and shared widely.

### Five-Step Process

In supporting the Government of Himachal Pradesh to introduce a performance benchmarking system for rural sanitation, the following five steps were followed (see Figure 1):

> **Step 1: Select indicators and collect data from TSC/ NGP.** For a balanced measurement across inputs, outputs, processes and outcomes, the team finalized eight indicators in consultation with the Government of Himachal Pradesh (Table 1).

**Figure 1: Five-Step Performance Benchmarking Process**



| Table 1: Selection of Indicators | | |
|---|---|---|
| # | Variable Measured | Indicator Type |
| 1 | % Rural Sanitation Budget Spent | Input |
| 2 | % Household Toilet Coverage Target Achieved | Output |
| 3 | % School Sanitation Coverage Target Achieved | Output |
| 4 | Financial Efficiency (cost per ODF community) | Process |
| 5 | Success Rate of NGP Applications | Process |
| 6 | No. of ODF Panchayats | Outcome |
| 7 | No. of NGP Panchayats | Outcome |
| 8 | % NGP Panchayats | Outcome |

| Table 2: Indicator Scoring | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| # | Variable Measured | Indicator Type | Max. Score | Min. Score |
| 1 | % Rural Sanitation Budget Spent | Input | 5 | 0 |
| 2 | % Household Toilet Coverage Target Achieved | Output | 15 | 0 |
| 3 | % School Sanitation Coverage Target Achieved | Output | 10 | 0 |
| 4 | Financial Efficiency (cost per ODF community) | Process | 15 | 0 |
| 5 | Success Rate of NGP Applications | Process | 10 | 0 |
| 6 | No. of ODF Panchayats | Outcome | 20 | 0 |
| 7 | No. of NGP Panchayats | Outcome | 15 | 0 |
| 8 | % NGP Panchayats | Outcome | 10 | 0 |
| | **CUMULATIVE PERFORMANCE SCORE** | | **100** | **0** |

**Step 2: Assign scores to each indicator.** Each indicator was assigned a weighted score. A higher priority was given to outcomes and processes relative to inputs and outputs. Therefore, the number of NGP *Panchayats* (local government) is given a higher score than the percentage of TSC budget spent on toilets constructed. Each indicator was assigned a maximum and minimum range for scoring purposes, and the total score was capped at 100 (Table 2).

**Step 3: Sum up scores.** Individual scores on each indicator were added to arrive at a *Cumulative Performance Score*, out of a maximum of 100.

**Step 4: Benchmark districts based on score achieved.** Districts were ranked in descending order on the basis of the Cumulative Performance Score achieved. The scores were divided into four color-coded performance bands based on the scores received. The scores were then presented as a graph and a map showing district performance relative to each other (Figure 2).

**Step 5: Disseminate results at periodic intervals:** On the 10th of each month benchmarking results are sent out to all districts by the Rural Development Department of the Government of Himachal Pradesh. In addition, at the end of each quarter, a cumulative performance trend analysis is sent to capture progress over time. Similar reports are prepared at six months, nine months and annual intervals.

## KEY LEARNINGS

Although still in its nascent stages, a few emergent learnings from the benchmarking experience to date can be noted. These include:

- *Benchmarking can improve performance:* Benchmarking enables districts to understand their performance and motivates them to improve. Providing an analysis of inputs, outputs, processes, and outcomes at a glance helps to flag areas of strength, areas that need improvement, and linkages between them. Unlike the present system of monitoring, it puts a spotlight on the efficacy of resources being invested and the corresponding results on the ground (e.g., by comparing spending across districts per ODF local government).

A case in point is the performance of Solan, Bilaspur and Mandi districts over the first three quarters of 2009. All three started out as top performers. By the end of the third quarter, Bilaspur district maintained their lead but Solan and Mandi did not. Bilaspur district is slowly but surely moving towards the superior performance band. A consistent performance can be attributed to steady improvement over a period of time across most of the benchmarking indicators (Figure 3).

- *Benchmarking is a management tool:* The benchmarking is undertaken by an agency one level above the level being benchmarked, typically the nodal agency for rural sanitation. The analysis and results enable the higher level
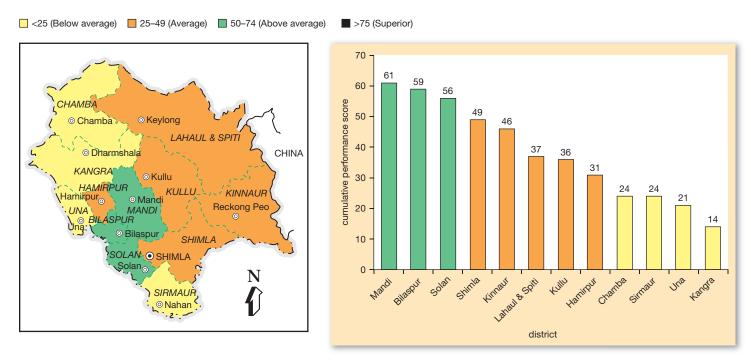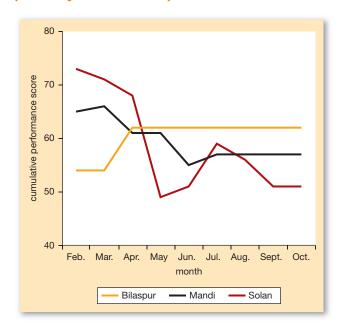
### Figure 2: Sample Results from Himachal Pradesh Inter-district Benchmarking



☐ <25 (Below average)   ☐ 25–49 (Average)   ☐ 50–74 (Above average)   ■ >75 (Superior)

**Benchmarking enables policymakers to gauge and compare district performance at a glance.**

agency to compare performance and channel resources to address any weaknesses, and to build on learning opportunities and strengths.

- *Benchmarking should be linked to an incentive:* In order to drive performance improvement, benchmarking needs to be linked to an incentive. In addition to the Clean Village Prize, TSSM is exploring the possibility of involving senior officials in the state to recognize the district that not only performs the best on the performance benchmarking but also the one that shows the greatest improvement.

- *Benchmarking can improve the base data:* A positive spin-off of this initiative is that it has helped to highlight the need for districts to submit monthly progress reports that are on time and as accurate as possible. Since the benchmarking is sent out on the 10th of each month, districts that fail to update their progress data before this date—or under-report their achievements—would find this reflected in the scores

### Figure 3: Sample District Performance Trends (February–October 2009)

obtained. Therefore, it motivates districts to submit progress reports on time and to report changes promptly and accurately. An example is the case of ODF coverage data reported by one district which appeared to be de-linked from related indicators, such as budget spent, and linked outcomes, such as school and household sanitation coverage. This concern was flagged in a benchmarking report and taken up by the nodal department with the district. Based on this input, a field verification team was sent to the district for verification of its ODF coverage claim. After the verification was completed the district's ODF coverage number was corrected to reflect actual performance achieved.

## WHAT ELSE DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

The benchmarking model has currently been adopted in one state in India, and advocacy is underway with other states and the national government to adopt the same. Within the three current TSSM project countries (India, Indonesia and Tanzania), Indonesia has developed a performance benchmarking system along the lines of the model conceptualized in India. Going forward, scaling up the model requires not only advocacy with clients to institutionalize the key principles but also state of the art technological support to manipulate data and store it in a format that is easy to retrieve.

—By C. Ajith Kumar and Upneet Singh

## About the project

Global Scaling Up Sanitation is a WSP project focused on learning how to combine the promising approaches of Community-Led Total Sanitation and Sanitation Marketing to generate sanitation demand and strengthen the supply of sanitation products and services at scale, leading to improved health for people in rural areas. It is a large-scale effort to meet the basic sanitation needs of the rural poor who do not currently have access to safe and hygienic sanitation. The project is being implemented by local and national governments with technical support from WSP. For more information, please visit www.wsp.org/scalingupsanitation.

## Contact us

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