

Swachhata Hi Seva campaign is seeing large scale: Parameswaran Iyer

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INVC NEWS New Delhi, Over 100 journalists, development agencies and community workers attended a National Media Consultation on the Swachh Bharat Mission in the Capital. The Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Parameswaran Iyer, presided over the consultation. In his opening remarks, Shri Iyer shared details of the nation-wide mass mobilization drive, "Swachhata Hi Seva", which follows an impassioned call by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, ahead of the 3rd anniversary of Swachh Bharat Mission that falls on 2nd October. He said that the Swachhata Hi Seva campaign is seeing large scale mobilization of people from all walks of life to undertake shramdaan for cleanliness and construction of toilets, and cleaning up of public and tourist places. The participation has already begun in full swing, and has ranged from the President of India to the common citizen, involving Union Ministers, Governors, Chief Ministers, legislators, celebrities, faith leaders, and corporate leaders spearheading the campaign in their respective areas of influence. He particularly appreciated the tremendous efforts being made by school children, central police services and defence personnel. The Secretary also shared a snapshot of the progress made by the Swachh Bharat Mission so far, mentioning that 5 States, nearly 200 districts and nearly 2.4 lakh villages across the country have already declared themselves as Open Defecation Free. 1.5 lakh villages have ranked themselves on the Village Swachhta Index based on the solid and liquid waste management in the villages. He also quoted an independent survey conducted across 140,000 households by the Quality Council of India, which found household toilet usage to be 91%. He concluded by calling upon the media to spread the message of sanitation and cleanliness during the fortnight and beyond. Mr Nicolas Osbert, Chief, WASH, UNICEF India, in his welcome address, spoke about the impact of lack of sanitation on the health and growth of small children. He said that it was heartening to note that, with the Swachh Bharat Mission and the personal leadership of India's Prime Minister himself, concrete action is happening on the ground with respect to changing old habits through genuine focus on behavior change. He also shared with the media present, the results of an independent survey conducted by UNICEF across 10000 households in 12 States of the country, to measure the economic impact of sanitation at a household level. He said the survey found that, in fully ODF communities, considering the medical costs averted, value of mortality averted, and the value of time savings, an average family that invests in a toilet will save Rs 50,000 per year. The cost-benefit ratio of a household found in the study was 430% in fully ODF communities. This meant that a single rupee invested in sanitation, allows a family to save Rs 4.30. He added that these benefits are the highest for the poorest quintile of the population in a community, which was encouraging as it established that improved sanitation helps the poorest of the poor the most. Swachh Bharat Champions from the grassroots, Ms. Madhu Chauhan (Sarpanch, Bijnor district, Uttar Pradesh), Shri Rajneesh Sharma (Primary School Principal, Meerut district, Uttar Pradesh), and Ms. Deepa Joshi (ANM supervisor, US Nagar, Uttarakhand), also shared their experiences with the media on the occasion.

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