

Inviting Ideas for Next Phase of Rural Sanitation

1. Solid Waste Management

"We should set up a waste collection center in every gram panchayat. If villagers bring in their dry waste or plastic, they should receive rewards like organic compost, mobile recharge coupons, or small discounts on monthly rations. This incentive-based model will encourage people to actively participate and manage waste on their own."

"Rather than enforcing a total plastic ban in rural and village markets, a better approach would be to promote eco-friendly alternatives. Leaf plates (made from Mahua or Palash) and jute bags crafted by local Self-Help Groups should be made mandatory and highly affordable. This will drive sustainable change while supporting local livelihoods."

2. Operation & Maintenance - O&M

"On the lines of the 'Bank Sakhi' model, women-led Self-Help Groups can be tasked with the operation and maintenance of Community Sanitary Complexes (CSCs) and waste collection vehicles. By allowing them to collect a nominal monthly user charge of ₹10–20 per household, this system can become entirely self-sustaining while ensuring long-term cleanliness."

"Every government school student should be assigned a practical project focused on keeping their home and immediate surroundings clean. Leveraging children is often the most effective way to drive behavioral change among parents and families."

3. "Solutions for Peri-Urban Areas (Rapidly Growing Large Villages)"

"Setting up multi-crore, centralized sewage treatment plants (STPs) like cities do is highly impractical for rural areas. Instead, we should opt for DEWATS (Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Systems). This technology requires zero electricity, relying entirely on gravity and natural reed beds to treat wastewater, rendering it fit for agriculture and construction purposes."

"Rapid construction of homes and commercial shops in peri-urban areas has led to a massive pile-up of construction and demolition (C&D) waste along the roads. To tackle this, gram panchayats should mandate a designated collection site for all debris. This collected waste can then be crushed and recycled to pave village roads and walkways, creating a perfect circular economy model at the local level."

"Stormwater drains in these areas are heavily clogged by urban-style plastic waste, such as bottles and polythene bags, which ultimately chokes the entire drainage network. Installing iron mesh screens or 'plastic traps' at critical bends can effectively intercept this waste. This ensures that plastic is trapped at designated points, allowing sanitation staff to clear and collect it with minimal effort."

4. Ancient Wisdom

"In traditional Indian agriculture, human excreta was naturally treated and recycled as 'Son-Khad.' We can replicate this sustainable concept under modern FSM practices. By processing septic tank septage through natural drying beds and vermicomposting, we can safely convert it into nitrogen-rich bio-fertilizer for farming, closing the nutrient loop effectively."

"Traditionally, villages in both hilly and plains regions managed surface runoff and wastewater by channeling it into small, slope-based ponds or pits called *Chaal* or *Khaal*. This time-tested practice should be integrated into modern greywater management frameworks. Instead of allowing runoff, focusing on localized groundwater recharge will significantly replenish local wells and improve the overall water table."