

SANITATION AND TOURISM: EFFECTS OF SANITATION ON TOURISM

Synthesis Document: Providing sanitation is the best investment for promoting tourism in India

India Sanitation Coalition, IRC and Taru Leading Edge recently organized a new dialogue under the 'Insights' series to understand the significance and role of sanitation vis-à-vis tourism in India.



SPEED READ

- IMPACT OF POOR WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES ON TOURISM AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY
- UNDERSTANDING AND EVALUATING THE CURRENT SANITATION PRACTICES IN POPULAR TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN INDIA
- ASSESSING THE SANITATION METHODS EMPLOYED IN INDIAN CITIES THAT ATTRACT TOURISTS
- DELIBERATIONS ON POSSIBLE STEPS TO AUGMENT SANITATION MEASURES IN TOURIST FRIENDLY LOCATIONS IN INDIA

FOR TOURISM TO THRIVE, ACHIEVING HYGIENE AND SANITATION IS CRITICAL
This includes efficient use of water, wastewater management and pollution control along with appropriate safety measures. Inconsistent sanitation standards at tourist places have a negative impact on both, tourism and the local community. As a consequence it is equally vital to develop infrastructure and effective systems for monitoring to make sure that hygiene and sanitation standards are maintained all across the value chain.

sustainable
sanitation
alliance





THE CONTEXT

SANITATION AND ITS IMPACT ON TOURISM

Tourism has rapidly grown in India and this surge is evident with both domestic and international tourists. The average growth rate of international tourist arrivals from 2003 to 2006 rose by 17.7% per year (Ministry of Tourism, 2008). In 2016, around 8.8 million foreign tourists arrived in India and brought in INR 155 billion of foreign exchange. Domestic tourism in India accounted for approximately 1.4 billion tourists from different states (Ministry of Tourism, GoI 2016). With these numbers India's share of world's tourist arrivals is only rising. The increased inflow of tourists contributes to greater revenue; however, to sustain this growth ensuring amenities and access to adequate public facilities is imperative. These aspects are directly or indirectly related to water and sanitation infrastructure of a city.

If the visiting tourists are dissatisfied with sanitation facilities in a country they are likely to not visit again and discourage other potential tourists as well. As a consequence of inadequate sanitation some of them also suffer from health related issues. This results in the loss of tourism earnings due to inadequate sanitation. Tourism-related economic losses from inadequate sanitation are estimated to be 12 billion¹ (\$266 million). Of these, 45% (\$5.5 billion, \$121 million) are from loss of tourism earnings, and 55% (6.6 billion, \$145.6 million) are from losses due to gastrointestinal illnesses among international tourists. There is enough evidence to demonstrate that sanitation and tourism are inextricably link and addressing these issues is critical for India.

For tourism to thrive, achieving hygiene and sanitation for all is vital. This includes efficient use of water, wastewater management and pollution control along with appropriate safety measures. Inconsistent sanitation standards at tourist places have a negative impact on both, tourism and the local community. As a result it is essential to develop infrastructure and effective systems for monitoring to make sure that hygiene and sanitation standards are maintained all across the value chain.

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DIALOGUE ON THE ROLE OF SANITATION IN TOURISM

The dialogue was held in Goa on February 20, 2018 as part of the SuSanA's sharing platform. The discussions were focussed on the role of sanitation in tourism and was conducted a day before the SuSanA India Chapter Meeting.

Goa being one of the biggest tourist hubs in the country, served as the perfect location for the panellists to gain tremendous insights on the impact of tourism. The discussions explored if the different stakeholders were able to understand the relevance, implications and the linkage between sanitation and tourism. In this session, the panel members considered the various issues that affect sanitation and the discussion concentrated on issues like health, hygiene, access and its effect on the economy from a tourism perspective. This engaging discussion was moderated by Sanjay Gupta (Independent consultant for Water and sanitation) and had active participation from Vinay Kumar (Executive Engineer, Mysore), Jaikant Shroff (General Manager, Vivanta By Taj Panaji, Goa) and Tallulah D'Silva (architect and activist, Goa).

Currently, tourist places like Goa rely on its water-based tourism that can have serious consequences for the economy. Human waste is most often discharged into waterways; landfills or storm drains because of the lack of proper infrastructure, thus leading to contamination of water sources and consequently this poses a potential threat to human health and environment. The panel, with reference to sanitation pointed out that the reliance on water-based tourism can be hazardous for the economy.

For example, the state of Goa is visited by an estimated 6.8 million (68 Lakhs) tourists, of which 0.6 million are foreign tourists (Goa tourism, 2016). With such large number of visitors to the state, there is an obvious need to provide the floating population access to public toilets

and other amenities. This also has a direct impact on the water consumption for the purpose of providing leisure activities and other associated facilities. For instance, a guest staying in a hotel on an average uses 30% more water than a local inhabitant of the state (European Environmental Agency [EEA], 2003). A tourist in a five-star hotel is likely to use 450 litres of water per guest, per night, whereas a four-star uses 290 litres and a three-star 190 litres of water per guest per night respectively (<http://www.investinginwater.org/>). The service water that is used in toilets, showers, and washbasins accounts for between 38 and 86% of a hotel's total water consumption.

This water consumption results in enormous volumes of sewage discharge, some of it gets treated in sewage treatment plants or is just let into the seas and rivers. The water bodies are naturally able to treat up to a certain amount of faecal or biological load, but when in excess it can pose a serious health hazard in the

managing faecal waste untreated sewage and dumped waste is a matter of serious concern. Like in many other cities across the country, more than of the sanitation facilities are onsite and it is hence imperative that the pits, septic or holding tanks have to be emptied from time to time.

Research conducted by the Centre of Responsible Tourism, Goa has highlighted the impact on ground water pollution because of inadequate and unsafe containment of faecal waste by small and medium size hotels or guesthouses. The problem is being further compounded by the widespread pollution of Goa's rivers, groundwater and wells from untreated sewage and waste to which the tourism sector is a significant contributor. However, for the bigger and popular chain of hotels and resorts like the Taj properties, there are strict environmental audits. They have to adhere to stringent norms and are subjected to scrutiny from other international bodies like EarthCheck that certify



long run. This has a particularly detrimental impact on not only on tourist facilities but also the local communities, which are located in isolated areas and are not connected to the water treatment networks. In any case, if wastewater is not treated, recycled, or disposed correctly, it will cause pollution, will be highly risky and over a period of time become undesirable for sustainable tourism.

According to the report of the Goa Pollution Control Board, most water bodies in Goa have been detected with high levels of E coli. Although this is not an obvious problem for the tourists or the local citizens and communities who seem to be unaware of it, in the long-term if this issue is not addressed and resolved by the governing bodies, the pollution of water bodies with faecal waste will prove to be a huge deterrent for the tourists that visit Goa. These issues threaten the sustainability of Goa as a tourist destination as well as the well being of the local communities. Though the popular tourist spots provide some access to toilets in Goa, there are several gaps along the sanitation value chain. The lack of adequate planning and investment for

large hotel chains to ensure that they provide safe and healthy options for visitors. The inequities of water access and availability between resorts or large hotels on one hand, and local communities and small-scale tourism entrepreneurs on the other, are starkly played out.

Tourists in many areas indeed contribute to water scarcity and inequity, through the appropriation of public water supplies, over-exploitation of aquifers, lowering of groundwater tables, and contamination of freshwater by saltwater and sewage. This leads to conflict and resentment among local people, and threatens the sustainability of tourism, which in turn damages the economy of the cities. Therefore, for tourism to be sustainable in countries or areas with water stress there is a need for its activities to be carefully managed so that it improves local conditions, instead of adding to the problems of the local community. The sanitation issues encountered are not restricted to Goa alone and plague other cities that depend mainly on tourism as the mainstay of their economies. It is absolutely critical that such cities make the right investments and adopt safe management of sanitation services to retain the constant flow of tourists.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The panel concluded that cities that have attracted tourists in the country have been able to do so because of the following reasons:

1. Political Will
2. Strict Audits of standards/norms as per law
3. Citizens take pride to preserve their surroundings and value nature

The panellists evaluated other popular tourist destinations in India and the current state of sanitation facilities. Mysore and Visakhapatnam were cities that have over the years built good sanitation systems and continue to make investments in improving access and infrastructure.

Mysore: in this city, the King built the basic services for water supply and sewerage in the early 1900s. This served Mysore well for several decades and also set the precedence for the civic authorities as well as the citizens to invest in sanitation systems. However, the challenge in Mysore is a tad different from other cities. There is a gap in providing the larger infrastructure that the city is trying to resolve. The issue of uptake of sanitation, as experienced in other urban and rural areas, has not been a problem here and this could be because of the ensured water supply that the city receives. The city, during its famed Dusshera festival addresses the sanitation issue by providing 200 mobile toilets in addition to the existing 100 public toilets. This ensures that tourists have easy and safe access to toilet facilities in the city.

Visakhapatnam: Like Goa, this city is also a coastal destination. The leadership, both political and administrative, in Visakhapatnam have invested heavily in sanitation over the last few years. They have been able to transform, gain public acceptance

and garner support to making Visakhapatnam as one of the cleanest cities in India within a few years and this has brought them great recognition for their good progress.

The effort of the ULBs in managing and monitoring wastes in the cities in Andaman and Nicobar islands was also briefly discussed.

It was observed that the Government of India's Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) has provided a much-needed impetus to the process of providing better sanitation facilities. Other infrastructure development projects such as the Smart City Mission, Metro project, etc. are also helping in realizing the need for public amenities through the project component. The Swachh Bharat campaign to



promote cleanliness and hygiene at tourist destinations is a welcome step in the right direction. However, for this initiative to become successful, there is a critical need to focus on promoting open defecation free and clean cities. This will be only possible when there is a clear leadership mandate at various levels:

STATE GOVERNMENT – for identifying gaps and creating requisite policies, strategies to address the problem

URBAN LOCAL BODY – to prioritise the problem, and ensure proper implementation



LOCAL COMMUNITY – Engaging and building ownership within the local communities. This is critical to ensure success of the initiative. For this to happen 60% of the population must follow the mandate and proper monitoring and penalising systems need to be put in place. 20% of the population would need counselling and convincing to adhere to the mission while another 20% may need more intensive multi-pronged strategies to ensure participation.

POPULATIONS WITHOUT ACCESS TO TOILETS AND SANITATION SYSTEMS

In most cities, it is the migrant workers who are often tenants do not have access to toilet facilities and as a consequence have to resort to open defecation. In some cases in rural Goa, there are concrete houses with cars but these households still prefer to defecate in the open. It is estimated that 72,000 toilets are required to make Goa Open Defecation Free. Constructing toilets is perhaps easy, but changing behavioural patterns and mindsets regarding the use of these toilets is the biggest challenge.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

A holistic effort will bring in the desired change in the sanitation value chain. The panellists were of the opinion that the following steps would ensure success in the long-term

Preparing a long-term vision plan for 20 years with participation from stakeholders

Collaborations to bring change - the ULB need to engage with civil society and stakeholders in the tourism sector to make an impact

Audit/Monitor and Penalise: Develop systems for effective monitoring to ensure that establishments maintain these standards across the board. There

is a dire need to move beyond plans and policies. The ULB's needs to monitor if the set norms/building codes are being followed, and take action where there is failure in compliance.

FICCI and CII: Support from these corporate bodies is necessary and they need to offer support and play a role in building awareness on laws and standards and assist in monitoring and penalising corporate that do not align with the set standards.

Inconsistent sanitation standards would have a negative impact. This would be unfortunate especially at a time when our tourism industry is poised for progress. The participants of this dialogue were of the view that the above-mentioned challenges can be addressed through active engagement and partnership between the government, the private sector and the development agencies. An enabling environment for sanitation and an active campaign to promote cleanliness and hygiene at tourist destinations is a welcome step in the right direction.



The efficient use of water in the tourism sector, coupled with appropriate safety measures, wastewater management, pollution control and technology efficiency can be key to safeguarding our most precious resource.

UNWTO 2015, Goal 6



Source:

#1: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/820131468041640929/Economic-impacts-of-inadequate-sanitation-in-India>

For more information on the “Insights” knowledge series visit the India Sanitation Coalition [website](#).

This document is a product of the Insights Series; developed by IRC, India Sanitation Coalition and TARU Leading Edge.

For further information, please contact:

Tarini Mathur, India Sanitation Coalition, tarini.mathur@fikki.com | Shipra Saxena, India Sanitation Coalition, shipra.saxena@fikki.com | Ruchika Shiva, IRC, ruchika@ircwash.org | Manu Prakash, TARU, mprakash@taru.co.in