



# Water Aid's comments on Swachh Bharat "Out of Order"

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Water Aid has recently released a report entitled "Out of Order – The State of the World's Toilets 2017". This report quotes data from the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), which extrapolates sanitation data based on available data from past studies between 2000 and 2015. This means it misses out on most of the progress under the Swachh Bharat Mission which aims to eradicate open defecation from the country by October 2019.

Recognizing that such an unprecedented commitment to bringing so many people out of open defecation in such a short span of time has no parallels anywhere in the world, the JMP, in the same report, inserted a special section with high praise for the rapid results being seen under the Swachh Bharat Mission, and stating that their report does not capture a lot of the work done since 2015, and hence the data is not up to date.

## Egregious mistakes

However, this point has not been mentioned in the report by Water Aid, thereby misleading the readers into believing that this is the present status of sanitation in India. The disparity between the numbers mentioned in this report and reality is extremely stark. This report says that "355 million women and girls are still waiting for a toilet". This is a total departure from reality. The same JMP report confirms that as on June 2017, the total number of people defecating in the open in India has reduced to 350 million, and this has further come down to below 300 million people as on November 2017. The report also mentions that 56% of people in India lack access to safe sanitation, whereas the present number is down to about 28%. In fact, the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation maintains a detailed household level database of sanitation coverage on its website, which is also open to the public.

Such statements from an organization of the credibility of Water Aid are factually incorrect and irresponsible, especially since the Water Aid India team has been working closely with the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation and the Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin, and is fully aware of both the ground work, macro statistics and overall progress. It is unfortunate that these facts were not been communicated by Water Aid India to their global counterparts.

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