

# The Power of **COLLABORATIVE ACTION**

Journey of the  
NFSSM Alliance in India

Vision

**7,900+**

*cities in India safely  
manage their human  
waste by 2030*

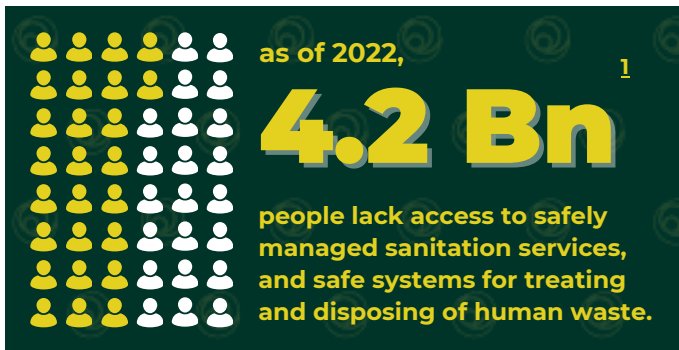






# Sector at a Glance

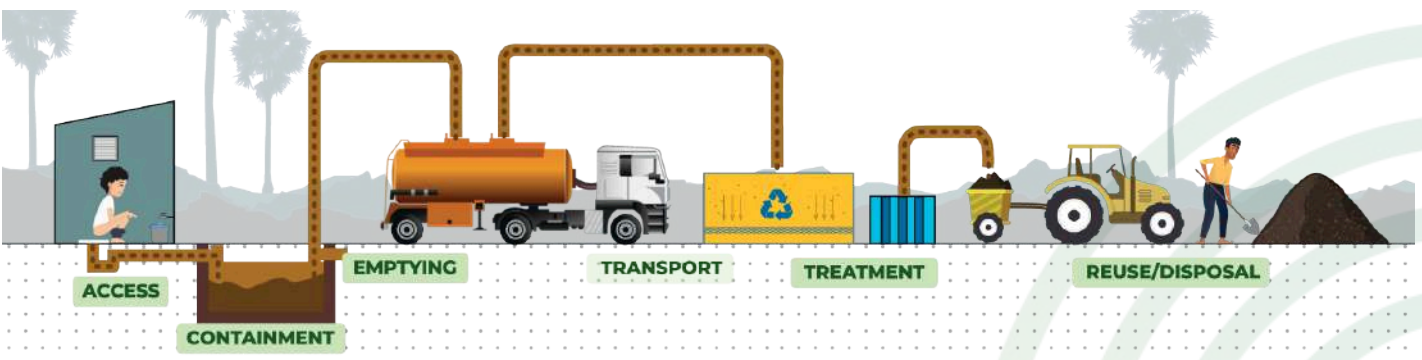
The global sanitation sector faces a critical challenge in meeting **SDG 6**, which calls for universal access to clean water and sanitation by **2030**. While progress has been made, the scale of the challenge remains expansive:



The absence of safe systems for faecal waste disposal contaminates water resources, disproportionately affecting vulnerable and low-income communities. Addressing this issue can boost the quality of life in these communities, paving the way for a healthier and more equitable future.

Improved sanitation systems can also prevent diseases like diarrhoea and cholera, which claim over 564,000 lives annually while protecting liveable habitats and fostering community resilience. With determined efforts, this challenge can become an opportunity to drive transformative progress in global health and well-being.

Sanitation is not just a public health issue, it is central to environmental sustainability and human dignity. **Climate change** further magnifies these challenges, with increased flooding overwhelming fragile sanitation infrastructure, leading to the spreading of untreated waste and escalating public health risks.



## Sources:

1. World Health Organization (WHO). (2019, June 18). UNICEF and WHO. Retrieved from [who.int](http://who.int)
2. World Health Organization (WHO). (n.d.). Sanitation. Retrieved from [who.int](http://who.int)
3. UN-Water. (2018, September). Water facts: Water and wastewater. Retrieved from [unwater.org](http://unwater.org)

Moreover, poorly managed sanitation systems contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, exacerbating climate instability. As rapid urbanisation and climate pressures intensify, resilient, sustainable sanitation systems are essential to safeguard health and dignity and build climate-resilient communities.



**80%** of global wastewater is discharged untreated, polluting vital ecosystems like rivers and lakes.

**Service delivery across a robust sanitation value chain** is key to driving this transformation, ensuring that faecal waste is safely collected, treated, and disposed of, or repurposed to support healthier communities and a more sustainable planet. **City-Wide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS)** is a transformative approach that ensures everyone in urban areas, especially the underserved, access safely managed sanitation services.

By integrating diverse sanitation solutions such as decentralised on-site systems, sewer networks, and wastewater treatment facilities, CWIS addresses the unique needs of different communities. It emphasises **equity, sustainability, and safety** as key aspirational outcomes for public services such as sanitation, and prioritises strengthening of critical functionalities such as **accountability, responsibility and resource allocation**.

This holistic approach fosters collaboration between governments, service providers, and citizens. **Adopting CWIS enables cities to close service gaps, and create a robust foundation for sustained quality service delivery.**

# State of Sanitation in India

India, undergoing rapid urbanisation, is projected to have **around 40% of its population** living in cities by 2036,<sup>4</sup> accompanied by an expansion of vulnerable living habitats such as slums. However, **urban growth has outpaced sanitation infrastructure**, particularly in low-income, informal settlements, leading to severe service delivery gaps.



## On-Site Sanitation (OSS)



60% of urban households rely on OSS systems<sup>5</sup> many of which lack proper infrastructure and access to treatment facilities, resulting in unsafe desludging practices and heightened health risks.

## Economic Burden:



Poor sanitation costs India over \$53.8 billion annually<sup>7</sup> disproportionately impacting urban-poor communities, including the 65 million people in urban slums often without basic services.<sup>8</sup>



Image credit: The New York Times

## Water Contamination:



73% of wastewater is untreated,<sup>6</sup> leading to contamination of drinking water, with especially densely populated areas facing the brunt of increased waterborne diseases.

To address these challenges, India must adopt resilient, adaptable, and inclusive sanitation systems in urban planning. Solutions that focus on:



**Equitable Services** reaching the **last mile** with reliable, safe, and sustainable sanitation service delivery.



**Sustainable services** by building systems that can **withstand natural disasters and scale efficiently**.



**Strengthening responsibility and accountability** to advance **public health, climate resilience, and sustainable urban development**.

## Sources:

- World Bank. (2024, January 30). Gearing up for India's rapid urban transformation. Retrieved from [worldbank.org](https://www.worldbank.org)
- Centre for Policy Research (CPR). Unearthed: Facts of on-site sanitation in urban India. Retrieved from [cprindia.org](https://www.cprindia.org)
- UN-Water. (n.d.). SDG 6 data: India. Retrieved from [sdg6data.org](https://www.sdg6data.org)
- World Bank. (2011, January 13). The cost of inadequate sanitation in India. Retrieved from [worldbank.org](https://www.worldbank.org)
- Ritchie, H., & Roser, M. (n.d.). Sanitation. Our World in Data. Retrieved from [ourworldindata.org](https://ourworldindata.org)



# Journey of the NFSSM Alliance

The NFSSM Alliance is a **collaborative, multi-stakeholder platform driving transformative change in India's sanitation sector**. It is a **national working group comprising 30+ organisations and 120+ experts** across India. By harnessing **collective knowledge, fostering strategic partnerships, and nurturing innovation**, the Alliance works to create an enabling environment for universal, equitable, and inclusive sanitation for all.



Established in **2016** with support from the **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation**, the Alliance was created to address a critical gap in India's sanitation landscape: the safe and sustainable management of faecal waste across urban areas.

Since its inception, the Alliance has worked in close collaboration with **national, state, and city governments**, as well as key ministries and missions such as the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE), Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DWS) under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM), Central Public Health and Environmental Engineering Organisation (CPHEEO), NITI Aayog. The Alliance has also worked with state departments such as Govt. of Odisha, State Finance Commission of Haryana among others.



A defining achievement of the Alliance has been its instrumental role in shaping the **National Faecal Sludge and Septage Management Policy (2017)**, a landmark initiative that prioritised faecal waste treatment, human health, and dignity across the sanitation value chain. This policy has established Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (FSSM) as a vital component of urban governance, driving systemic improvements in sanitation infrastructure and service delivery.

The Alliance's unique strength lies in its ability to foster collaboration across diverse stakeholders spanning civil society organisations, academia, and think tanks. Through evidence-based knowledge, peer-reviewed insights, and on-ground partnerships, its efforts have ensured that solutions are human-centric, equitable, and responsive to the needs of the most vulnerable communities.

Building on its strong foundation and in pursuit of nationwide impact, the Alliance has recently expanded its reach to new geographies with support from the **Viega Foundation**, aiming to deepen its impact across Indian states. Recognising the growing intersection of **climate resilience and sanitation**, it also prioritises innovations in systems and processes, geographic contextualisation, and strengthening local institutions to ensure sustainable planning and service outcomes.



Guided by the vision of ensuring that **all 7,900+ cities in India safely manage their human waste by 2030**, the Alliance continues to **drive discourse, build evidence, facilitate cross-learning, inform policies, and support governments at all levels** to advance action on the ground. By leveraging its partnerships and insights, the NFSSM Alliance is steadily advancing towards a future where safe sanitation is not just an aspiration but a reality for every community across the country.

**Collaborative Action and Partnerships** drive the Alliance's efforts to foster a sustainable and inclusive sanitation ecosystem in India addressing the pressing need for climate-resilient sanitation solutions for all.



**30+**

**member organisations** working collaboratively towards advancing **inclusive sanitation**



**20+**

**states and UTs** where the Alliance is driving learning opportunities towards **scaling inclusive sanitation**



**60+**

**knowledge products** developed towards evidence generation & best practice sharing



**4500+**

instances of **cross learning within India & beyond** to scale & replicate inclusive sanitation best practices

**SDGs Supported**



**Member Organisations:**



\*UT - Union Territories  
\*Map not drawn to scale

# Our Priorities & Ways of Working

The NFSSM Alliance collaborates nationwide across sanitation and allied sectors through its three dedicated task forces, each driving progress on key priority areas:



## Enabling Institutionalisation of Inclusive Sanitation

The NFSSM Alliance's goal is to embed CWIS principles into policy, frameworks, guidelines etc. at the national, state, and local levels. By collaborating and driving targeted initiatives, the Alliance strives to ensure safe and equitable services throughout the sanitation value chain, while promoting inclusive sanitation.



## Climate & Sanitation Linkages for Urban Resilience

Recognising the vital intersection of climate & sanitation, the Alliance aims to prioritise service delivery that is resilient to climate stressors. By creating an enabling environment for circularity, used water management (UWM) and reuse, the Alliance aims to inform sanitation sectoral priorities with a climate lens that serves communities and safeguards the environment.



## Innovation & Technology

By creating an enabling environment for systems innovations and technological advancements, the NFSSM Alliance is working towards ensuring access to safe and scalable sanitation solutions across India's urban landscapes.

## Informing Policy & Government Engagements

The NFSSM Alliance has played a pivotal role in shaping and informing sanitation policies while actively driving discourse at national, state, and city levels. Over the years, the Alliance has worked with central departments such as the Central Public Health and Environmental Engineering Organisation (CPHEEO), NITI Aayog, and state departments like the Housing & Urban Development Department, Govt. of Odisha, and the State Finance Commission in Haryana, among others, to strengthen sanitation systems and guide the creation of state-specific strategies promoting inclusive and sustainable outcomes.

### Key achievements include:

#### ***Strengthening the Focus on the Treatment of Faecal Waste***

##### **Government Declaration towards FSSM**

In August 2016, the Alliance co-hosted a first-of-its-kind event with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), bringing together 102 city officials to prioritise FSSM as the central agenda. The conference culminated in a declaration advancing FSSM and Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) goals, signed by representatives of all 102 city, the national government's Joint Secretary, and all Alliance members.

##### **Rapid Assessment Tool & Primer for FSSM**

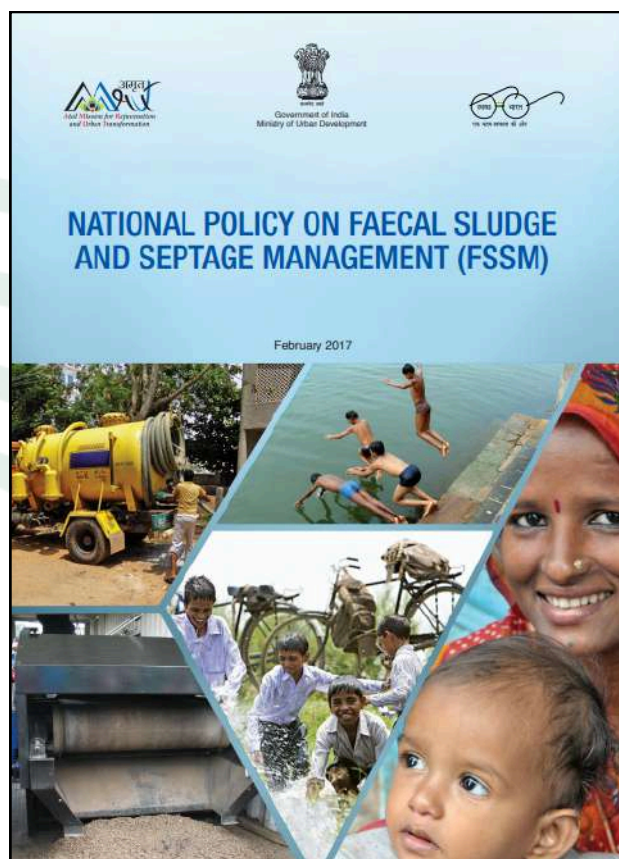
In its initial years, the Alliance extended support to MoHUA and Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), in developing a primer and rapid assessment tool for FSSM budgeting which was used by urban local bodies (ULBs). This raised awareness about prioritising FSSM in ULBs and equipped city officials with tools for planning and implementation.





## National FSSM Policy (2017)

Played a pivotal role in the development and launch of the ground-breaking National Faecal Sludge and Septage Management Policy - a landmark effort to set the direction and facilitate implementation of FSSM services in all urban local bodies across the country.



24+

**24 out of 36 States and Union Territories** have adopted the policy, and **12 have also introduced their own FSSM policy**, leading to a national gain in momentum towards decentralised sanitation practices.<sup>9</sup>



700+

**By 2020, more than 700 cities and towns** across India were actively implementing FSSM strategies, signalling growing adoption nationwide.<sup>10</sup>



1200+

The immense momentum gained has **led to 1200+ FSTPs being operational across India**, ensuring last mile service delivery to varied geographies.<sup>11</sup>

## Fifteenth Finance Commission Recommendations

In 2019, the XV Finance Commission **accepted six recommendations from the Alliance**, ensuring the inclusion of FSSM in grants and strengthening the monitoring of sanitation services.



सत्यमेव जयते  
**Fifteenth Finance Commission**

### Sources:

9. Press Information Bureau (PIB). (2021, January 11). Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) achieves its goal of making urban areas of 35 states/UTs ODF. Retrieved from [pib.gov.in](http://pib.gov.in)

10. NITI Aayog & NFSSM Alliance. (2021, August). Report on sanitation in India. Retrieved from [niti.gov.in](http://niti.gov.in)

11. Based on estimates from Alliance members who support National and State governments in technical implementation.





एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

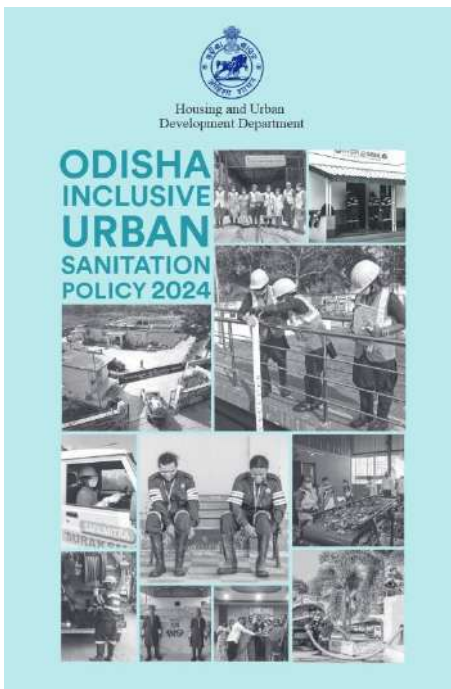
## Strengthening Swachh Survekshan Indicators

The Alliance's inputs on decentralised faecal waste management, worker safety and taking a holistic value chain approach, have been integrated into the Swachh Survekshan indicators.



## Driving Discourse on Used Water Management

The Alliance played a pivotal role in shaping discussions on water security and circularity at the U20 Mayoral Summit, a flagship G20 engagement. By influencing the discourse on UWM, the Alliance contributed to a declaration endorsed by 105 cities across the world integrating circularity and sustainability into urban water strategies, marking a significant milestone in national and global urban policy.<sup>12</sup>



## Odisha Inclusive Urban Sanitation Policy 2024

The NFSSM Alliance, through its Odisha State Chapter, drove collective action and shaped a state roadmap that led to the creation of an inclusive sanitation policy, a first-of-its-kind in India.

The Odisha Inclusive Urban Sanitation Policy 2024, seeks to accelerate and strengthen inclusive, participatory, sustainable, and accountable sanitation systems.

***These efforts highlight the Alliance's ongoing leadership in shaping policies and engaging with governments to drive inclusive sanitation outcomes across India.***

### Sources:

12. Urban Update. (n.d.). Ahmedabad hosts U20 Mayoral Summit, hands over communique to G20 Sherpa with over 105 city endorsements. Retrieved from [urbanupdate.in](https://urbanupdate.in)

# Cross-Learning Initiatives

The NFSSM Alliance has been at the forefront of advancing knowledge-sharing and collaboration among dynamic stakeholders across states & UTs in India and beyond. With 20+ states & UTs learning from one another to scale and replicate best practices in inclusive sanitation, and with more than 4,500 instances of cross-learning, the Alliance has catalysed meaningful progress.



# 4500+

*instances of cross learning within India & beyond to scale & replicate best practices in inclusive sanitation*

Some of the key efforts include:

## ***Global Knowledge-Sharing and Showcase of India Story***

The Alliance plays a leading role in amplifying India's journey globally, creating opportunities for discourse and cross-learning through representation at key global forums.

### **International FSM Conference**

Anchored by the NFSSM Alliance, India's National FSSM Policy was launched at FSM-4 in Chennai, India, marking a pivotal milestone in the journey of collective action. This landmark policy not only laid the groundwork for integrating FSSM into national frameworks but also positioned India as a global leader in advancing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, setting a precedent for other nations to follow.

Held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, the NFSSM Alliance showcased India's sanitation progress through sessions and an interactive stall, engaging over 200 global stakeholders, including government representatives. Sessions featured leaders from India, Nepal, and Bangladesh, highlighting strategies and regional collaboration in scaling sanitation efforts. Discussions focused on India's advancements, the Alliance's approach in driving change, and strengthening service delivery systems across South Asia. The stall displayed knowledge assets like the Co-Treatment Manual and Municipal Strengthening Reports, attracting interest from global sector experts and international officials.





## IWA Water and Development Congress & Exhibition

The NFSSM Alliance brought together key stakeholders from Africa, Bangladesh and India to drive discourse and action towards intentionally integrating women and girls in planning and decision-making across sanitation service delivery.



The Alliance highlighted the importance of gender-intentional planning and decision-making in creating inclusive and sustainable sanitation services, while amplifying global stories of women leaders who overcame tokenism and resistance to drive change.

## World Water Forum

At the 10th World Water Forum the Alliance showcased India's progress in inclusive sanitation, engaging with South Asian nations to foster knowledge-sharing and advance collaborative solutions for sustainable sanitation.



The Signpost to Bali - a comprehensive consultative regional process amplified community voices on sanitation and resilience, focusing on inclusive sanitation, gender-sensitive DRR, and challenges faced by vulnerable South Asian communities. Recognising the importance of disaster preparedness in the face of climate change, especially in vulnerable regions, the Alliance also launched and leveraged its Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) framework for regional and global workshops.

## Manhole to Machine Hole Series with MoHUA

Engaged over 300 stakeholders, spanning government, public and private sectors to drive discourse on improving the safety, dignity, and well-being of sanitation workers. The series highlighted the importance of robust mechanisation, multi-stakeholder accountability, and recognising the critical role of sanitation workers in urban India.





## Collaborative Peer Learning in Hilly Terrain

The NFSSM Alliance facilitated an experience focused on inclusive, climate-sensitive water and sanitation practices, in Leh, Ladakh, bringing together stakeholders across sectors. The event paved the way for adaptable, sustainable solutions for hill cities.



In collaboration with the Parvat Manthan forum, this cross-learning instance saw a delegation across the states and UTs of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Ladakh, Nagaland, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, West Bengal in India and neighbouring countries of Nepal and Bhutan.

## International Conclave on Urban Transformation in Odisha

The NFSSM Alliance's Odisha State Chapter supported the state in organising the International Conclave on Urban Transformation. As a first-of-its-kind event in Odisha, it reflected the state's commitment to transforming cities into hubs of growth and prosperity, based on three key pillars of 'Decentralised', 'Inclusive' and 'Community-led' development.



Drawing over 300 participants from 11 countries and 20 Indian states, the conclave offered an opportunity for national and international stakeholders to learn more about Odisha's unique journey and insights on inclusive sanitation.

***These initiatives highlight the Alliance's commitment to fostering collaboration, amplifying local knowledge, and driving scalable, sustainable sanitation solutions across India and beyond.***

# Building Knowledge and Evidence

The NFSSM Alliance drives knowledge codification, evidence generation, and best practice sharing to foster cross-learning across India and its neighbouring countries. Building robust evidence, the Alliance informs policy, shapes strategies, and fosters discourse on inclusive sanitation. The Alliance actively identifies knowledge gaps that hinder effective service delivery implementation. To ensure that these gaps are addressed with targeted, actionable insights, the Alliance curates knowledge products based on stakeholder needs.

By conducting thorough need assessments and engaging with stakeholders, the Alliance crafts tailored knowledge products designed to bridge these gaps. Recognising the diverse needs of target groups, the Alliance adopts a strategic dissemination approach that ensures the right information reaches the right audience. This includes creating user-friendly toolkits, detailed case studies, and training modules tailored for government stakeholders and sector practitioners. Through these efforts, the Alliance aims to empower stakeholders with the knowledge and resources they need to drive action towards impactful, inclusive sanitation outcomes.



# 60+

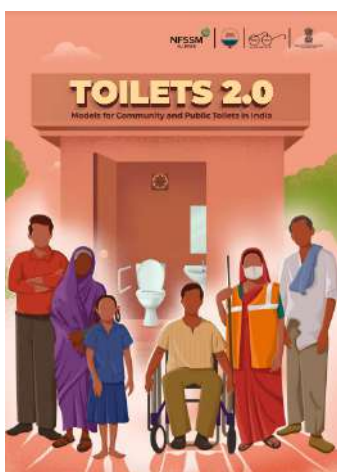
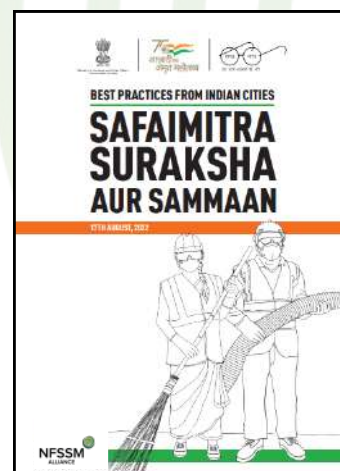
*knowledge products created in varied formats of case studies, videos, websites, toolkits, checklists, manuals, etc.*

## Some of the key knowledge products include:



### **Best Practices from Indian Cities– Safaimitra Suraksha Aur Sammaan**

In partnership with the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)**, this report highlights initiatives focused on sanitation worker safety and dignity, integrating safety protocols and inclusive practices into city-level decision-making processes.



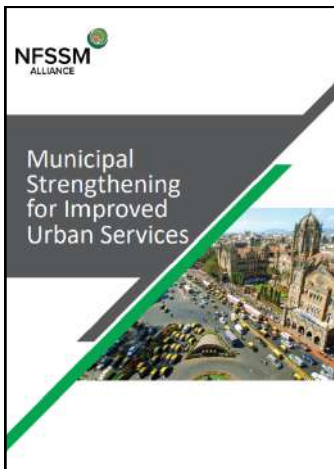
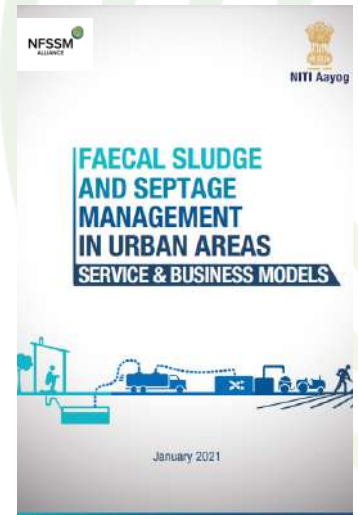
### **Toilets 2.0 Compendium**

In collaboration with MoHUA, this compendium highlights innovative public and community toilet models designed to be universally accessible, promoting hygiene and inclusivity in urban sanitation infrastructure.



## FSSM Service and Business Models in Urban Areas

In collaboration with NITI Aayog, this document presents multiple leading FSSM practices in urban India, identified across the sanitation value chain. The cases highlight state and city interventions, showcasing state-wide approaches, city initiatives, private sector models, and community participation to support stakeholders in understanding FSSM progress and opportunities.



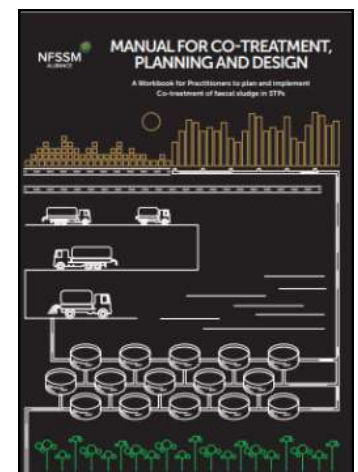
## Municipal Strengthening for Improved Urban Services

Focuses on building the capacity of municipalities to improve essential urban services. Emphasises the importance of strong municipal governance for sustainable urban development, enhancing institutional support at local levels.



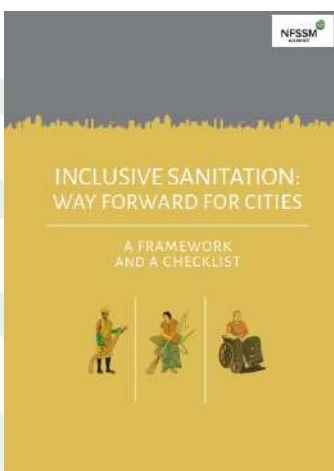
## Manual for Co-Treatment, Planning, and Design

Promoting integrated wastewater management for enhanced urban sanitation, this manual offers a step-by-step guide for municipalities to evaluate the feasibility of co-treatment in towns with Sewage Treatment Plants, to enhance the optimal capacity and efficiency of existing infrastructure.



## Inclusive Sanitation—Way Forward for Cities

This knowledge product provides a practical framework for making urban sanitation accessible and affordable, with a focus on ensuring equitable services for the urban poor and marginalised communities.



**To explore more such knowledge products,  
visit the NFSSM knowledge repository.  
Please scan here**





# Championing People, Empowering Voices

Recognising that services across the sanitation value chain are delivered by an often invisible community - spanning professionals to officials the Alliance emphasises human-centric narratives that amplify community voices, fostering empathy and inclusion in sanitation efforts. It also facilitates peer-to-peer networks to encourage collaborative learning, shared experiences, and collective problem-solving among diverse stakeholders.



## Sanitation Hall of Change

This rich repository hold stories of homegrown leaders that have championed transformation in the sanitation sector. Learn about their unheard stories, uncover their motivations, and delve into the innovative practices and models that have revolutionised sanitation outcomes nationwide [here](#).



## Tracing the Tracks



This documentary is an attempt to make visible the varied nature of sanitation work and captures the journeys, challenges, and triumphs of sanitation workers in Odisha and Tamil Nadu, narrated in their voices. To know more about Sanitation workers, and the different kinds of roles across the value chain, watch [this documentary](#).



## India for the World

This platform traces the sanitation journeys of Indian states that have shown tremendous improvement and commitment in sanitation values. Click [here](#) to learn more about the FSSM roadmaps developed since the inception of the Swachh Bharat Mission.



**Knowledge and evidence generation form the backbone of the Alliance's commitment to generating actionable insights, strengthening evidence, and driving knowledge-sharing across regions to advance inclusive sanitation and urban resilience.**



*The NFSSM Alliance remains unwavering in its commitment to advancing inclusive, safe, and sustainable sanitation for all. By fostering collaboration, driving discourse, and enabling cross-learning, the Alliance continues to catalyse impactful change across India's sanitation landscape, envisioning a future where equitable sanitation services reach the last mile.*



[nfssmalliance.org](https://nfssmalliance.org)