

New Delhi, India

Sulabh International Social Service Organisation

Founded with the purpose of emancipating manual scavengers, Sulabh International Social Service Organisation revolutionized the sanitation sector in India with an initiative combining technology, education and social reform.

Urban NEXUS Case Story 2014 - 21

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The project in brief

Sulabh International, a non-profit social organisation founded in 1970, works towards the emancipation of those employed in the practice of manual cleaning of human excreta from dry latrines. To address the problem, the organisation designed cost-effective, eco-friendly and socio-culturally acceptable toilets for households unserved by sanitation infrastructure, which do not require manual cleaning. The scavengers are engaged in social upgrading programs and given vocational training for employability. Sulabh Public School was established in 1992 to impart free education to the children of the under-privileged scavenger castes.

Sulabh has liberated over 60,000 manual scavengers and provided 11,000 residents with vocational training, including 5000 women. The organization employs over 50,000 associates, including technocrats, engineers, doctors, social scientists, planners etc, and is operational in 26 states of the country. In addition to having installed 1.3 million household toilets, Sulabh has also constructed 8,000 public toilet complexes in public places and in slums, which are maintained by the organisation and operated on a pay-per-use basis. Biogas plants designed by Sulabh have been installed at 200 public toilets, and the biogas produced is used for cooking and electricity generation. Sulabh does not depend on external agencies for finances and meets all financial obligations through internal resources. Through the establishment of a Sulabh International Museum of Toilets in 1994 and the Sulabh International Academy of Environmental Sanitation and Public Health in 2005, the organisation has made strides in eliminating the stigma surrounding sanitation to transform the sector in India.

What makes it "Urban NEXUS"?

Sulabh International approaches sanitation through an integrated NEXUS of design and technology, delivery models, institutions, communications and user behaviour to, improve the lives of manual scavengers and of reform the sanitation sector in India, through innovative and appropriate sanitation systems that eliminate the need for scavenging. Working at the household and community scale, the organisation designs self-sufficient, multi-scalar infrastructural and service systems, which make intensive use of the generated waste as a resource. The Sulabh toilet uses a two-pit system for households in areas without sewerage connections; over time, this generates a pathogen-free, odourless dry sludge which can be used as manure. In a similar manner, biogas plants are attached to public toilet complexes which use human waste to generate biogas, an alternative



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Date	1970-ongoing
NEXUS Sectors	Health-Waste-Energy
NEXUS Innovations	Design + Technology; Delivery Model; Institutions; Communications + User Behavior
Scale	Country-wide
Budget	n/a

Urban NEXUS Definition

The Urban NEXUS is an approach to the design of sustainable urban development solutions. The approach guides stakeholders to identify and pursue possible synergies between sectors, jurisdictions, and technical domains, so as to increase institutional performance, optimize resource management, and service quality.

It counters traditional sectoral thinking, trade-offs, and divided responsibilities that often result in poorly coordinated investments, increased costs, and underutilized infrastructures and facilities. The ultimate goal of the Urban NEXUS approach is to accelerate access to services, and to increase service quality and the quality of life within our planetary boundaries.

ICLEI / GIZ 2014

Further Reading

Sulabh International Social Service
Organisation official website <http://www.sulabhinternational.org/>

United Nations Development Program,
Case Study: India. Sulabh International:
A movement to liberate scavengers
by implementing a low-cost, safe
sanitation system: <http://www.sulabhinternational.org/admin/config/media/file-system/Summary%20of%20the%20Case%20Study-Sulabh%20International-A%20Movement%20to%20Liberate%20Scavengers%20by%20Implementing%20a%20Low-Cost%2C%20Safe%20Sanitation%20System-by%20UNDP.pdf> (20 Aug 2014)

GIZ and ICLEI, 2014, Operationalizing the Urban NEXUS: towards resource efficient and integrated cities and metropolitan regions, GIZ Study: www.iclei.org/urbanexus

source of energy used for cooking, lighting and electricity generation. This systemic NEXUS is enhanced through customised and resilient solutions designed using indigenous technologies, making them cost-effective, culturally acceptable and flexible enough to permit free-standing operation, while expanding sanitation infrastructure. Institutions established by the organisation, such as the Sulabh Public School, Museum of Toilets and the International Academy work towards the same objectives and strengthen the outcomes through education and social awareness; the social integration of manual scavengers is also facilitated through the institutional approach, through measures such as vocational training which support their assimilation.

Scope for improvement

The range of activities undertaken by Sulabh International exemplifies the Urban NEXUS approach, with a significant integration of scale, systems and services and social equity. The customised and resilient delivery of services has proven to be effective, as well as efficient. Greater involvement by the government and formal institutions could, however, significantly scale up the scope of the operation and expand infrastructural service systems, towards achieving 100% sanitation coverage in the country, in alignment with the Millennium Development Goals.

Replication

Sulabh International also holds a General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and has replicated its innovative systems in cities and towns across the country. In collaboration with UN-Habitat, Nairobi, Sulabh International has trained professionals from 14 African countries in capacity development towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals for sustainable development in water and sanitation. Having already implemented public toilets with biogas plants in Kabul, Afghanistan, the organisation has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Ethiopia to provide its expertise to improve sanitation, health and hygiene.

Acknowledgements

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On behalf of:



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