

OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL OF INDIA

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CAG's Audit Report on Construction of toilets in schools by CPSEs presented

The Standalone Compliance Audit Report no.21 of 2019 of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on "Construction of Toilets in Schools by CPSEs" was presented in Parliament here today. Norms and standards for a school under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 (RTE Act) prescribed separate toilets for boys and girls. There were gaps in achieving this objective mainly due to poor maintenance of toilets, lack of dedicated funds and poor water availability inside toilets. To achieve the objective of separate toilets for boys and girls within a year, Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD) launched (1 September 2014) Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan (SVA) and sought cooperation of other Ministries to impress upon the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) under their administrative control to participate in the project for construction of toilets in government schools.

53 CPSEs participated in this project and constructed 1,40,997 toilets as per MHRD. Ministry of Power (MoP), Ministry of Coal (MoC) and Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (MoPNG) extended significant support through CPSEs under their administrative control. Seven CPSEs of these three Ministries constructed more than 5,000 toilets each and 1,30,703 toilets in total, at a cost of ₹2,162.60 crore. Audit examined the records pertaining to construction of toilets by these seven CPSEs {NTPC, PGCIL, NHPC, PFC, REC, ONGC and CIL (seven subsidiaries)} and also conducted physical survey of a sample of 2,695 toilets across 2048 schools in 15 States. Main Audit findings are as under :

- **Non-existing and partially constructed toilets**

Out of 2,695 toilets in the audit sample, the CPSEs did not construct 83 toilets though these toilets were identified by them for construction. In respect of remaining 2,612 toilets which were reported by CPSEs to have been constructed, 200 toilets were not found constructed in the respective schools and 86 toilets were found to be only partially constructed. The non-existing and partially constructed toilets constituted 11 *per cent* of toilets surveyed.

Out of 1,967 coeducational schools surveyed by Audit, 99 schools had no functional toilets while 436 schools had only one functional toilet. The objective of providing separate toilets for boys and girls was not fulfilled in these 535 schools (*27 per cent of 1967 Schools*).

- **Toilets constructed, but not in use**

Out of 2,326 constructed toilets surveyed, 691 (30 *per cent*) were found not in use mainly due to lack of running water, lack of cleaning arrangements, damages to the toilets and other reasons like use of toilets for other purposes, toilets locked up etc.

- **Lack of running water and other facilities**

As per the Handbook on SVA, the toilets were required to have running water, hand washing facilities and proper/ regular maintenance so as to effectively change the behaviour of beneficiaries. During the survey, 1,679 (72 *per cent*) out of 2,326 constructed toilets were found without running water facility inside toilets. Further, hand washing facility was not available in 1,279 (55 *per cent*) out of 2,326 constructed toilets. Audit also noticed cases of defective construction of toilets, non-provision of foundation/ramp/staircase and damaged/overflowed leach pit, which led to ineffective use of toilets.

- **Maintenance arrangements for toilets**

The Administrative Ministries directed the CPSEs to maintain the toilets constructed by them for three to five years and book the annual expenses to their CSR budget. During the survey, Audit noticed that proper maintenance/ sanitation was not available in 1,812 out of 2,326 toilets. 715 out of 1,812 toilets were not being cleaned. 1,097 toilets were being cleaned twice in a week to once in a month whereas, the norm was for daily cleaning at least once. Thus, 75 *per cent of* selected toilets were not maintained hygienically. Cases of non-provision of soap, bucket, cleaning agents and disinfectants in toilets and inadequate cleanliness of pathway were also noticed.

- **Inadequacies in identification of schools**

The CPSEs were required to conduct the survey in identified schools before starting construction of toilets. PFC and CIL (Subsidiary-SECL) did not conduct the survey while other CPSEs which conducted the survey did not cover all the schools identified by them. As a result, CPSEs were not able to construct the required number of toilets and resources were not optimally utilised.

- **Reporting of completion of toilets**

MoP/ MoC/ ONGC declared construction of 1,30,703 toilets by the selected seven CPSEs on time (i.e. 15 August 2015). However, as per MHRD data and the Swachhta Status Report (2016) of the National Sample Survey Office, under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the CPSEs constructed all the approved toilets as of 1 March 2016 and the number of toilets completed by these seven CPSEs was 1,19,530. Comparison of the two reported figures indicated that the figures for number of toilets completed was overstated to the extent 11,173 toilets by MoP/MoC.

- **Completion of toilets constructed by CPSEs**

Though the CPSEs reported completion of toilets, completion certificates were not provided to Audit in 60 *per cent* of cases. In the remaining 40 *per cent* where completion certificates were provided, only 33 *per cent* of these cases had toilets completed within the due date. Audit noticed that the award activity by the seven CPSEs could be completed only by May 2015. Since, construction time of four months was needed, compliance of Government directive to complete all toilets by 15 August 2015 could not have been ensured by the CPSEs. The CPSEs had nevertheless reported completion of all the toilets by 15 August 2015 which was not actually the case.

- **Absence of basic amenities in toilets designed by CPSEs**

As per the Handbook on SVA, a toilet unit should have one water closet and three urinals. The toilets were also required to have hand washing facility. MHRD had asked the CPSEs to ensure running water in the toilet. NHPC, PFC, ONGC and CIL (Subsidiaries-other than CCL) planned for these basic amenities but NTPC, REC, PGCIL and CIL (subsidiary-CCL) did not plan for one or more of these basic amenities, in the toilets.

- **Use of prefab structures for building toilets**

MoP/ MoC instructed the CPSEs that the toilets constructed under the Project be of either conventional (brick and mortar) or precast (concrete slabs) technology. MoP further directed the CPSEs to ensure that no prefabricated structures be used for constructing toilets. Yet, PFC, REC, NTPC and CIL (Subsidiary-NCL) used pre-fabricated structures in 42 *per cent* of the toilets constructed by them, which involved an extra expenditure of ₹150.46 crore, dilution in durability of toilets and non-compliance with Ministries' direction.

- **Award of Contracts on nomination basis with higher implementation charges**

As per directions of CVC, the award of contracts on nomination basis was to be resorted to only under exceptional circumstances. MoP/MoC also directed (21 November 2014) their CPSEs that the work be awarded following competitive bidding process only. Four CPSEs viz. PFC, PGCIL, ONGC, and CIL (subsidiaries NCL, CCL and SECL) outsourced the Project implementation work, including award of contracts, to other agencies while REC entrusted the work to its wholly owned subsidiary. The appointment of implementing agencies was done on nomination basis which was not in accordance with CVC/MoP/MoC directions. Further, the agencies were paid implementation charges at 10 to 15 *per cent* of completion cost which were high as compared to 2.5 to 3 *per cent* paid to State Government Agencies (SGAs) and involved an extra expenditure of ₹49.30 crore.

The following are the recommendations of C&AG of India to the CPSEs/ Ministries:

- The Ministries may look into the issue of non-existing/ incomplete toilets, which were claimed as constructed. The misreporting regarding timely completion of toilets and discrepancies in figures of completed toilets may also be examined to ensure availability of required toilets.
- The CPSEs/Ministries may address absence of basic amenities in the toilets like running water, hand wash facility, urinals, drainage of waste water, etc.
- The CPSEs/Ministries may sort out the issue of regular maintenance of toilets to ensure their sustained usability.
- During execution of such projects, monitoring may be done through Geo tagged photos.
- Since Audit survey covered 2 *per cent* of total toilets, the CPSEs are advised to review/survey the remaining 98 *per cent* toilets and take appropriate action for rectification of deficiencies.

BSC/SS/TT