Key Takeaways

• Municipal governments award tenders to third parties for construction and maintenance of toilets.
  ▪ Most contracts are held by local or regional nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that undertake either toilet construction plus operation and maintenance (O&M) or only O&M.

• Typically, generic, nonbranded toilet cleaning products are procured from wholesale markets, distributors, or directly from small- or medium-sized manufacturers. Branded cleaning products are seldom used to clean community and public toilets.
  ▪ O&M contractors select cleaning products in their local market based on cost, hygiene, and efficacy.

• O&M contractors are responsible for purchasing toilet cleaning products and providing them to the maintenance officers who will clean the toilets.

Management Models for Community and Public Toilets

In India, O&M for CPTs is often outsourced to a third party by municipal governments. The most common O&M models for public toilets include public-private partnership, public management, and private management.

• Public-Private Partnership (PPP) – O&M tenders are awarded to NGOs or private cleaning companies, and toilets are built using municipal funds.
  ▪ The cost of maintaining these toilets (including cleaning products, water, electricity, etc.) is subsidized through the tender. However, these toilets usually charge a user fee between Rs.2 (US$0.03) and Rs. 5 (US$0.07) per use to supplement local government payments to the contractor.
  ▪ This model is most common in urban areas where NGOs such as Sulabh International use a “pay & use” model to offset costs to the urban local bodies (ULBs) for maintaining community toilets.

• Public Management – Toilets owned and maintained by a municipal agency.
  ▪ Typically, toilets are free for users and the caretakers conducting O&M are directly employed by the municipality.
  ▪ This O&M model is still used in some places, particularly in smaller cities. However, the number of toilets maintained under this arrangement has decreased in recent years in favor of a PPP model.

• Private Management – Toilets funded, constructed, operated, and maintained by the private sector, usually on land leased from the municipal government.
  ▪ A user fee is charged that varies based on the location of the toilets.
  ▪ Ownership of the premises is transferred back to the municipality when the lease period expires, typically after 5 to 7 years.
  ▪ This is the least common O&M model in use in India today.
**Stakeholders and Decision Making**

Public toilet O&M involves a range of stakeholders, including municipal governments, cleaning product manufacturers and distributors, and cleaners. Each stakeholder serves a crucial role, as shown in Figure 1.

First, a notice or tender is floated by the government in the form of a request for proposal (RFP) for O&M of public toilets from reputed NGOs or cleaning businesses. A typical RFP includes the terms of reference, a technical proposal, a financial proposal, and an agreement, all of which need to be submitted to bid for the tender.

Upon award of the tender, the O&M contractor employs cleaners to regularly maintain the toilets. Most NGOs that serve as O&M contractors have a local focus, serving around 40 toilets each.

Maintenance standards are often set by the respective ULBs; however, no established or recognized procedures exist for daily cleaning of CPTs. Cleaning is done as needed, based on the best judgement of the maintenance officer/cleaner.

To maintain the toilets, cleaning products are procured by the contractor. Additionally, contractors are responsible for distributing these products to the maintenance officers/cleaners employed by them. Sanitary officers – members of the municipality responsible for ensuring the cleanliness of public toilets – may recommend products to contractors to ensure that maintenance cleanliness standards are met.

Ultimately, CPTs only fulfill their purpose if they are used by the general public. The funds users provide offset the O&M contractor’s costs, and the willingness of users to return to a given toilet motivates the contractor to keep it clean and working. Status of the toilets (and other publicly funded or subsidized facilities) is one factor the public considers when deciding to support or oppose the municipal government, exerting pressure back on the municipality to ensure they select O&M contractors that will fulfill their obligations.

**Cleaning Products Used in Community and Public Toilets**

The scale-up of CPTs across India and a nationwide campaign to increase use is driving growth in the toilet-related products and services market. The products used to clean toilets range from liquid bleach to phenyl to bleaching powder to acids and detergents. Products are selected based on hygiene, cost, and cleaning efficiency (generally associated with a strong chemical smell). Informal discussions with O&M contractors suggest that liquid bleach is the preferred cleaner given its low cost and ease of use.

Additionally, the cleaning product market is fragmented, with market share distributed among multiple small local manufacturers and large multinational companies. Typically, O&M contractors buy their products through distributors and wholesalers, some of whom offer bulk discounts. Others may have relationships with small cleaning product manufacturers and procure their products directly. Most O&M contractors favor nonbranded products from small- and medium-sized manufacturers and purchase them from local markets where they can receive a discount.

**Conclusions**

CPTs will continue to be an important factor in improving access to sanitation in India. Currently, fragmentation is the defining characteristic of the market, both in terms of the organizations conducting O&M of CPTs and those providing the cleaning products used to maintain them. This leads to significant variation in the CPT user experience, with cleanliness and odor remaining an issue. As the market matures, a combination of regulations, consolidation, and public pressure will help accelerate the adoption of new solutions.

**To Learn More**

To learn more about the CPT market or the transformative sanitation technologies that can improve the experience for all, please contact us at info@stepsforsanitation.org.

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