

A Ten Point Practical Strategy for Rural Sanitation in India with Community-led Collective behaviour Change (CCBC)

Background discussion note for the Nainital workshop

Executive Summary

To achieve a Nirmal Bharat by 2022, the ideal would be to follow Nepal, Indonesia and many other countries like Zambia which are moving rapidly ahead of India through CLTS combined with a no subsidy policy. Given current policy, however, ten thrusts are proposed for consideration:

1. ***Withhold incentive payments until communities are credibly verified as ODF***
2. ***Identify and augment CLTS training and implementing capability***
3. ***Deploy that capability strategically where it can have most impact***
4. ***Identify and support champions and ensure continuity in post***
5. ***Remove the MGNREGA bottleneck by delinking it from NBA***
6. ***Transform monitoring and reporting systems***
7. ***Collate and share experience of campaigns with CLTS***
8. ***Make local-level budgets and expenditures transparent and encourage use of the RTI***
9. ***Activate and support rural sanitation with and as women's movements***
- 10 ***Initiate field-based in depth action learning across all activities above, with fast and accurate feedback to policy***

In support of the above, key actions would be to:

- Strengthen the NBA guidelines to stress that incentives will **only** be paid when a whole community is credibly verified as ODF (1 above).
- Set up a dedicated unit of champions, with a strong champion leader, in the Ministry as a CLTS and NBA support team to monitor, supervise and strategically deploy CLTS resources, and to assure continuity of champions in their posts (2, 3 and 4 above).
- Delink NBA and MGNREGA (5 above)
- Transform monitoring and reporting systems (7 above).
- Set up a small and alert support and learning group for being in touch and up-to-date with monitoring and research on field realities, and for supporting and sharing innovations,

experience, promising developments, and women's movements. The aim would be fast and accurate learning and feedback to policy makers and others at both Union and State levels on what is really happening at the grass roots with both NBA and CLTS (most critically 1 above, and also others such as 6, 8, 9 and 10 and more)

MAIN TEXT

Rural sanitation in India is one of humankind's greatest and gravest problems. In recent years the percentage of open defecation (OD) in the world to be found in India has risen from 55 to 60 per cent. The undernutrition of children (one third of those in the world who are stunted) is closely linked, as is much deprivation for women. OD in India has proved resiliently intransigent, with the cards heavily stacked against its reduction. The failure of the TSC, with census data showing more rural households doing OD in 2011 than in 2001, the much cited 60 million missing toilets, and the skewing of the limited benefits of the programme towards the better off and against the poor, all point to the enormity of the problem and the built in barriers to doing better. But the other side of the coin is vast scope for enhancing human wellbeing through finding practical ways to improve performance.

Reviewing the CRSP, TSC and NGP experience, major impediments have been:

1. Disbursement and supply driven, top-down, hardware subsidy implementation (despite community-led rhetoric) and related incentives and disincentives
2. Misleading monitoring and reporting
3. Local-level corruption

Reviewing those successes in which CLTS has played a part (Himachal Pradesh, a few districts temporarily in Haryana and Maharashtra, Budni and Guna blocks in Madhya Pradesh, Namkhana Block in West Bengal, parts of Meghalaya etc, and others listed in the Ministry's landmark publication *From Dreams to Reality*), five conditions have been prevalent

- **Incentives to households or communities either withheld or effectively postponed until communities have been credibly declared ODF.** This is the crux.
- Resolute determination to implement CLTS demand-driven approaches (Over half the cases in *From Dreams to Reality* are CLTS)
- Champions who are committed, resolute and defy pressures, and who stay in post for some time (B.C. Khatua, Deepak Sanan, Amit Agrawal, Nipun Vinayak, Ajit Tiwari....)
- Securing and using some of India's hyper-scarce quality CLTS training capability
- Broader campaigns of which CLTS is one part

Any way forward that is to be at all effective has to neutralise or reverse the three impediments and optimise and maximise the five conditions.

With this in mind, a ten point programme of mutually supporting actions is proposed:

1. ***Withhold incentive payments until communities are credibly verified as ODF***

This is the most important, the linchpin. The resolute withholding of payments until ODF has been achieved has been a key to success in Himachal Pradesh and elsewhere. This is critical for the collective behaviour change of CLTS. Actions:

- ✓ Reinforcing instructions to be issued that incentive payments can **only** be disbursed when whole communities are credibly verified as open defecation free (ODF) and States to follow these rigorously, recognising them as critical for CLTS
- ✓ Review and implement strict and credible verification of claims of ODF status, drawing on wide national and international experience
- ✓ Any delayed disbursements resulting from giving incentive payments on credible achievement of ODF conditions at the community level should not to be penalised but recognised as positive

2. ***Strategically identify and then augment CLTS training and implementing capability***

There are very few good CLTS trainers in India. 'Good' means with good track records of inspiring others, and of triggerings and follow up which have led to ODF conditions. Such good trainers are a critically scarce national resource. Actions:

- ✓ Seek out and informally list those with good track records
- ✓ Concentrate their expertise on triggering and on mentoring others to become like them, i.e. hands-on training of trainers and facilitators and continuing support for them
- ✓ Ensure that to the extent possible such trainers are full-time on training and mentoring to multiply good trainers [draw on the experience of successful Zambian innovations]

3. ***Deploy that capability selectively and strategically where it can have most lasting impact***

It is not enough simply to multiply trainers and facilitators. They must be deployed strategically where conditions are favourable – where there are champions to support them, together with political support. This may mean also, as in Himachal Pradesh, that within campaigns they and those they train are used strategically, for instance, with communities which are slow to change. Actions:

- ✓ Encourage and enable trainers to work flexibly in different States or Districts wherever conditions are favourable (political support, champions in post, follow up on triggering reasonably assured....etc)
- ✓ Ensure adequate continuity – single one-off training of trainers and facilitators on a turn-key basis is often useless and even irresponsible. (Familiarisation exposure and training is

different). It is where there is continuity of presence and activity of good trainers that enduring progress can be made, either with and through government, or with support from NGOs [for going to scale it has to be Government]

- ✓ Mentor those who have been trained, and monitor their progress. Work to enable the better among them to be deployed full time – whether freelance, in consultancy organisations, in NGOs, or most critically and importantly, in Government which has to take the lead

4. ***Identify and support champions and ensure continuity***

Almost all Government champions have had their impact limited by lack of continuity in post. The frequent transfers of IAS officers have repeatedly meant that short –term gains have not been sustained. Expectation of transfers also induces hurry and speed and a drive for short-term rather than sustainable long-term gains. A champion may also attract much of the scarce high quality training capability in the country to a single site which is unlikely to be their best use. This recurrent problem has to be confronted and mitigated. Actions:

- ✓ Convene an informed brainstorming to identify measures that might be taken. This should include known past champions Some measures that might be considered are:
 - Allow IAS officers who are convinced and committed to identify themselves as a temporary specialised cadre and apply for transfer immunity for at least 2 but preferably 3 years
 - Trigger and involve political leaders so that they too are committed and recognise the political gains (especially from women’s votes) that can follow good CLTS
 - When a champion is to be transferred, ensure that the new incumbent is also familiar and committed. If this is not feasible, ensure a hand over which includes a field triggering and familiarisation with CLTS
 - Deploy past champions at State level, at the Mussoorie Academy, and elsewhere in a part-time roving capacity, to monitor progress, to mentor and encourage new champions
 - Set up a dedicated group of past and present CLTS champions with a strong leader charged with working full-time in the Ministry as a CLTS and NBA support team, to monitor, supervise and strategically deploy CLTS resources and to assure continuity of others in their posts in the field.
 - Follow up on all those who have been trained in CLTS at Nainital to find those who have been sparked by the experience and are potential champions.
 - Map the location and details of all those who are actual or potential champions

5. ***Remove the MGNREGA bottleneck***

The MGNREGA provision or requirement in the NBA is reported to have complicated administration and delayed action, not least because in most States NBA and MGNREGA are in different ministries. At the local level the MGNREGA provision has evidently served to slow action. It is a disincentive for the self-help action in a CLTS mode which is vital for sustainable sanitation: people delay action, waiting until they can be paid for their labour. It hinders the community-led and people-centred approach of the NBA. Actions:

- ✓ Release the bottleneck by delinking MGNREGA from NBA.
- ✓ Reduce the high level of incentive by the MGNREGA amount of up to Rs 4,500

6. ***Radical reform of monitoring and information systems***

The monitoring, information and reporting systems of the TSC were grossly distorting. Even in Himachal Pradesh, despite considerable achievements, the 2011 census found only 67 per cent of rural households had toilets, when the impression had been that the entire State was close to being ODF. The system of inferring toilet coverage from disbursements reported has to be consigned, if it has not already been, to the dustbin of history. New systems with multiple cross checks are essential. This requires new thinking and may need new staff. If new systems have already been devised and introduced what follows may not be needed. Actions:

- ✓ Abandon the flawed TSC reporting system, if this has not already happened
- ✓ Review the range of ICTs available and assess their costs, benefits and corruptibility or incorruptibility. Recognise that ICTs are not a magic wand¹.
- ✓ Introduce rigorous random checks on reported achievements
- ✓ Do not judge States or Districts by how much of their budgets they have spent. Recognise that low expenditures can be an indicator of participation and CLTS self-help
- ✓ Consider awards for realistic reporting, including reporting low achievements

7. ***Collect and disseminate experience of campaigns with CLTS in the form of a practical guide***

The prominence and spectacular nature of CLTS triggering has obscured the significance of campaigns. In Himachal Pradesh, for instance, CLTS was not applied uniformly all over the State: evidence suggests that it was deployed selectively, for example in communities which were slow to change. It was little if at all used in the flagship District of Mandi. Rather it was intense campaigns including, for instance, popular street theatre, that drove much of the change. High and intermediate level political and other

¹ For ICT monitoring, see Lilongwe Briefings on www.communityledtotalsanitation.org

support was also critical. Experience and a repertoire for campaigns – far more than traditional IEC – needs to be drawn on to encourage and inspire movements for total sanitation. Actions:

- ✓ Convene a workshop/writeshop of people with good experience and advice to put together a slim practical sourcebook of what can be done, with examples. This might start from the existing document on campaigns on the IDS CLTS website². This should include insights for political and religious leaders, and other non-official potential champions.
- ✓ Commission reflective research and analysis into the ethical boundaries, dilemmas and trade-offs over human rights and campaigns – drawing on experiences like those in Karnataka and recent debates on shame, disgust and behaviour change
- ✓ Explore and try to offset the distortions of reporting that can result from competition (between Blocks and between Districts) where there are widespread campaigns, including rewarding honest and realistic reporting by lower achievers

8. Encourage use of the Right To Information Act combined with the NBA social audits

Corruption has been a major factor in the failure of the TSC. Much of this originates in the large budgets for sanitation especially the hardware incentives, and a supply –led, hardware focused, approach with pressures to disburse and count toilets. With the NBA the scope for corruption was arguably increased by increasing the incentive (though this would be less with MGNREGA delinked). Unless corruption is tackled effectively, NBA can be expected to fail in much the same way as the TSC, with a looming spectre of 2022 repeating the ‘learning’ of 2012. Actions:

- ✓ Ensure and monitor the quality of the social audits
- ✓ Mandate transparency of budgets and expenditures at all levels. This requires much more than just sticking up notices. Budgets and expenditures must be open access on internet
- ✓ Engage civil society activists in monitoring and where necessary invoking the RTI to uncover corruption
- ✓ Prosecute corrupt officials and give the cases widespread publicity

9. Activate and support rural sanitation as women’s movements

All can gain from toilets, but women stand to gain much more than men – in privacy, safety, convenience, space for menstrual hygiene, bodily wellbeing through access at all hours, not having to hold it in and wait for dusk or having to go before dawn, and through time and energy saved and more sleep (e.g. less pressure to get up early, go out and then get children off to school in time). The Maryada Movement in Madhya Pradesh is pioneering women’s empowerment as a force for rural sanitation, and should have lessons for the rest of India. Actions:

² www.communityledtotalsanitation.org

- ✓ Study and document the history of Maryada (and other women's movements such as Mahila Samakhya which have engaged with sanitation and hygiene) to learn lessons. Sponsor cross-movement and cross-State visits for mutual learning and inspiration. Explore whether Maryada could be adapted and adopted in other States or become a national movement
- ✓ Pursue a deliberate and suitably staffed initiative to engage and involve other women's movements in campaigns for rural sanitation
- ✓ Sensitise political leaders to the political mileage from gaining women's support and votes from rural sanitation. Provide opportunities for political leaders who are convinced and committed to persuade other politicians to support women's initiatives

10. *Initiate field-based in depth action learning across all nine activities above, with fast and accurate feedback to policy*

There has been an astonishing dearth of good in-depth descriptive field level research on the realities of the TSC or of CLTS. Had more been known about the TSC and in the public domain earlier, some of the worst errors and misapplications of funds might have been mitigated. For CLTS, early feedback and learning about realities is vital for continuous learning, correction and improvement. Some of this has occurred in Bangladesh and several African countries. Routine questionnaires are of limited use for meaningful insights. Actions:

- ✓ Provide funds and set up an advisory group to commission research and feedback on grassroots realities
- ✓ One form this should take is participant observation of and inquiry into the administration of the NBA and how it plays out in practice on the ground at the community and household levels. Only two cases are known where this has been done, though there must surely be others
- ✓ Another form is action learning. This entails engagement with administrative and social processes, and intervening to test and assess adaptive innovations to improve performance.

Could these ten thrusts of practical action help bring about the vision of a Nirmal Bharat by 2022?