

Transgender in sanitation campaign- An initiative

Madhya Pradesh (India) is implementing sanitation campaign for making villages open defecation free by using community mobilization and communication methods to sensitize the community to build and use the household toilets. To trigger the mindset of community to get their leadership and ownership in the campaign, districts engage trained motivators. In India, Transgender are more often dissociated with the mainstream society and earn their bread and butter through blessings activities at the time of marriage and child birth. They are skilled to communicate through songs and dance. MP government recognized them as third gender (Kinner) abiding by the order of Supreme Court of India. Minister of Panchayat and Rural development of the state (State Water and Sanitation Mission comes in this ministry) decided to associate the transgender to sensitize the community. He took a meeting with the heads of 4 reputed trans-



genders worked earlier in socio-political field to get their consent. They agreed to associate with the sanitation campaign and thus a new experiment of community mobilization started along with creating space to involve those who were earlier never involved in any of the government program.

To motivate and mobilize the community with behavior change communication methods and to orient them on the sanitation program guidelines, two days training session was organised by the state team. Then a process draft describing their working area, type of activities, honorarium amount, logistics etc. was prepared and was communicated to all concerned. To experiment it, we started first with Bhopal group of transgender led by Sanjana in Block Berasia from 19th November and then with the Sagar group led by Kamla Jan, a transgender who was



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Mayor of the city earlier, in block Rehli from 4th December. The thought that motivated the trans-genders to come forward in the words of Kamla Jan was that “the God has showered his blessings by giving birth to all of us as a human being, so we should motivate people to lead their life on the path of health, pride and prosperity, which can happen only when people adopt proper sanitation & hygiene behavior as their basic *Sanskar*”.

After training, Kamla Jan and Sanjana with their team of 3-4 transgender, started visiting the selected villages assigned to them in Sagar and Bhopal respectively to create opinion within the village community to get rid of historical practice of open defecation under the guidance of MPTAST, already associated with sanitation campaign in the state. Their attractive personality and communication methods in local language attract people to gather around and listen and respond them easily. They more often use trigger of mother and child relationship to ignite the sense of sitting mothers in audience. They communicate easily how open defecation



is linked with the health of mother and child both and how easily it can be stopped by making a good toilet and how they could get the fund if they are poor. After their one two triggering sessions with the community, a team of men and women come forward to associate with the cause voluntarily and thus start the campaign of using and constructing the toilets in the village. A village, where toilet and sanitation was an individual responsibility and the responsibility of local self-government now it become the responsibility of community. This resulted in the optimum utilization of government resources and community consensus to ensure the practice of non-open-defecation.

The efforts of these committed motivators are giving good results and within 3-4 months, eighteen villages became ODF. Madhya Pradesh government has decided to take their services on regular basis for community mobilization and also as resource person to train the newly selected motivators for the campaign. This is a learning project for state government to involve transgender community in social work and provide them the opportunity to show their ability with equality and dignity.