Short Report

GETTING TO SWACHH BHARAT GRAMIN FASTER THROUGH

RAPID ACTION LEARNING AND SHARING

A Rapid Action Learning and Sharing Workshop on Innovations in Rural Sanitation

Organized by

The Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Government of India
in collaboration with

The Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council[1] & the Institute of Development Studies[2]

This note summarizes outputs, conclusions and follows up actions from this workshop. The full report has an executive summary, valuable additional detail and an annexe with 35 case studies (annexe 5 to annexe 39 with full report) of innovations.

The workshop was convened by the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council and Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex in association with the Government of India and held at the Hotel Palash Residency, Bhopal, from August 18th to 19th 2015. The 93 participants included Smt. Vijaylaxmi Joshi, Secretary Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Government of India, Mr. Nipun Vinayak, Director, SBM, Government of India, Dr. Aruna Sharma, Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Madhya Pradesh, Mr. Deepak Sanan, Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Himachal Pradesh, Secretaries and Directors in charge of Sanitation and representatives from 21 States and 28 Districts including District Magistrates, Zilla Panchayat CEOs and Sarpanches, 9 Natural Leaders from Madhya Pradesh, and 16 multilateral/bilateral /development /technical support agencies' representatives.

The workshop was conceived and planned with the Government of India. Against the background of the enormous scale, diversity, complexity, obstinacy and urgency of the problem of rural sanitation and poor hygiene behaviour, and the failures of earlier programmes, innovation was seen as vital and rapid action learning and changing as a promising way forward for getting to Swachh Bharat faster and better. The purposes of this workshop were:

1. To learn from experiences and provide space for the sharing of promising innovations, methods, processes and approaches.
2. To collect and make available case-studies of what has worked, and to reflect on challenges and lessons learnt

---

[1] Archana Patkar and Vinod Mishra
[2] Robert Chambers, Vijeta Rao and Jamie Myers

3. To enable States to assess the potential of rapid action learning and decide on follow up actions they may wish to undertake.
4. To learn through the workshop process itself more about how innovations and learning can be identified, harvested and shared.

The three stage design was as follows: **First,** the proactive search for innovations that can accelerate progress: for this a template was prepared. State secretaries/Directors from all 29 States and 6 Union Territories under Swachh Bharat Mission, 56 District Magistrates or CEO, Zilla Panchayat, multilateral/bilateral agencies working on rural sanitation in India ,development partners and natural leaders, Sarpanches and Swachhata Dhoots from selected states were invited to document their experiences and learning in this case study template. **Second,** this two-day workshop for participatory sharing and learning was held. The **third phase** to which this note and the longer report are early contributions, is documentation, dissemination and follow up.

 Workshop process

In her opening address, the Secretary posed the challenge:

> *to achieve scale, saturation and sustainability, and to do this with speed.*

 With this in mind, the workshop process included brainstorming, card listing and sorting for expectations, group presentations on the case studies, rotating sessions with four stations, group learning on methods, approaches and innovations, a demonstration of triggering for collective behaviour change, a knowledge sharing by Natural Leaders, presentations by seven innovating champion District Collector/Magistrate/ZP CEOs, contributions and reflections in plenary and groups from UNICEF, WSP, World Bank, Plan-international, Wash United, WaterAid, Water for People, Save the Children , FANSA, GSF-NRMC, CLTS Foundation, PRIA, Arghyam, Knowledge links, Feedback Foundation, WASH Advocates, others in personal capacities, and Federal and State Government officers. The process and facilitation were designed to be participatory, responding to emerging priorities and opportunities. Discussion throughout was informed, lively and constructive.

Key factors identified by participants as essential for achieving ODF:

- Focusing on sustainable behaviour change
- Triggering different primary, secondary and tertiary stakeholders keeping in mind local and cultural sensitivities
- Planning and preparation pre-triggering
- Rewards and recognition for good performance
- Capacity development of government and community level workers
- Making materials available for quality construction
- Linkages with other government schemes
- Transparency and efficiency in disbursement of incentives

- Consistent IEC material
- One on one interaction for behaviour change
- Regular and systematic follow-up and visits with consistent IEC material
- Use of local knowledge and local adaptability

Key challenges identified by participants for achieving sustainable ODF:

- Keeping the sense of unity alive in the community
- The incentive – transparency and flow of funds
- Availability of masons and supply of material
- Collective behaviour change – lack of homogenization of different stakeholder groups
- Achieving full coverage – How to include both APL and BPL?
- What to do with defunct toilets?
- How to institute legal/social regulation to maintain ODF?
- Finding champions who can sustain activities needed
- How to create new champions to take SBM to scale?
- How to unlearn what will not work - coverage first, use and maintenance later is a failed approach.
- Solid waste management – is a linked challenge that must be addressed.

Key Themes

Eight themes emerged and commanded widespread agreement as priorities. Within each theme there have been innovations. Participants said there are many more 'out there'.   Documenting and sharing these effectively to enable faster lesson learning to accelerate progress is urgently needed.

1. *   **Celebrating learning processes.** Two cases set a good example by describing where early 'failures' had been opportunities to learn, innovate and change, leading to much better performance. These were approaches with SBM(G) in Malda District, West Bengal, and Solid Waste Management in Sikkim. Treating 'failures' openly and honestly in this way was stressed by many participants, seeing it as vital for Swatchh Bharat. More such examples were needed and should be celebrated.

2. **IEC related to local culture, sensitivities and priorities.** The cases showed that aspirations and drivers of household level behavior change (such as dignity and pride in Rajasthan) need to be understood and taken into account. To appreciate these and inform campaigns for collective behavior change may require innovations in rapid learning and formative research at an early stage. One priority for sustainability is to understand factors that affect emptying of twin pit toilets.

3. **Collective behavior change.** Participants repeatedly reinforced the point that collective behavior change is the objective, not building toilets. The target from the start had to be not toilets

constructed but communities achieving ODF status. As one Collector put it: *If you focus on ODF, the toilets will take care of themselves'*.

4. **Champions and capacity building.**   Repeatedly, and at all levels, champions were noted as key for success, and vital for going to scale with quality.   Capacity building to create champions was repeatedly raised.   How to inspire, multiply and mentor champions at all levels was crying out for innovations which can be taken to scale.

5. **The key role of the District Administration.** Committed leadership from the District Administration was a central element in the cases presented, with the Collector as initiator, convenor and enabler of campaigns to facilitate, trigger and support change. Triggering and sensitization of senior officials, other stakeholders, and junior field staff were seen as essential for going to scale with quality.

6. **Campaigns with multi-stakeholder engagement and many initiatives.**   Many innovations were shared of engagement of a great range of stakeholders who could be involved, including all government departments, Gram Panchayats, natural leaders, spiritual leaders of all faiths, political leaders of all parties, anganwadi workers, swachhata doots, associations of professionals such as doctors, the private sector including sanitation marketing, all branches of the media including social media, schools and teachers and NGOs, these and others combining in an inclusive common team approach rising above other divisions. Many innovations had been used in District campaigns, for instance higher prices for milk from ODF communities, name plates on the houses of women with toilets, empowering communities to use sanctions against open defecators, rewards and recognition for good performance, communities achieving instant ODF by using the cat method (burying faeces) immediately after triggering, community procurement committees, pledging and signing in public to stop OD, stunts and special occasions, and many more.

7. **Creative uses of the incentive.**   Practices vary. How the incentive is managed can inhibit community action and collective behavior change. There was a strong view in the workshop that incentive payments were best delayed until after OD and that in all approaches transparency and timely fund releases were essential. Further rapid action learning about the field realities of different approaches is an urgent need.

8. **Golden principles.** Brainstorming elicited golden principles from participants
    - Flexibility (also stressed by the Secretary)
    - Delegation and decentralization
    - Conviction and commitment
    - Having faith in people and communities and ensuring their ownership
    - Enabling not providing, facilitating not teaching
    - Affordability and adaptability of solutions
    - Ownership by community
    - Focus on outcomes (ODF communities) rather than outputs (toilets)
    - Attention to the needs of the marginalized, poor, weak and disabled
    - Rewards and recognition for good performance: Sanctions for violations and non-use or misuse

Feedback and Follow up

The workshop was itself a source of rapid action learning about such workshops. Participants noted topics for future attention such as the supply chain, hygiene and hand washing, and verification. They also pointed out that workshop participants were those performing well and not those struggling. They observed that people were willing to discuss successes but less so challenges and what had not worked: they saw a need for transparent honesty and the celebration of learning processes.

Four priorities for future proactive action learning, innovation and documentation stood out:

1. Capacity building and how to inspire, multiply, support and ensure continuity of champions at all levels

2. Finding, developing and spreading more approaches and methods to take to scale beyond the islands of success represented at the workshop (some can already be culled from the cases)

3. Recruiting and capacity building for committed and competent knowledge management staff to support and promote action learning and sharing

4. Rapid Action Learning Units (RALUs) (section 4.10 of the Guidelines) as an option for States and Districts to take rapid action learning into their own hands

In their feedback, almost all participants said that they had learnt new ideas and innovations and planned to share these in various ways. They also stated that there are many other innovations being tried and tested across the country which were not all mentioned or represented in the workshop and which need to be identified, documented and shared. Rapid action learning and sharing on a much wider scale is then a priority for vigorous follow up.

Immediate follow up actions identified included:

State-level rapid action learning workshops. States identified their needs for similar learning and sharing workshops at State level. West Bengal, Telangana and Madhya Pradesh intended to hold these shortly. A brief note on the facilitation of such workshops is being prepared by the IDS/WSSCC team and will be shared with those States.

State-level RALUs. Learning and sharing at Central and State levels requires full time dedicated staff with appropriate experience, commitment and enthusiasm. Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh were considering their own state-level RALUs.

Development partners. Development Partners were supportive. While this workshop was not a forum for commitments, there was scope and willingness to provide support if requested.

Government of India . The role of the Centre was not a topic for this workshop but the discussions provided insights, raised issues, and presented opportunities for consideration by the Ministry. The facilitation team hope this summary note and the fuller report will be useful at all levels including Central Government, State and District.

The WSSCC/IDS team thank to Government of India and participants for the opportunity and learning of this workshop