

Selected Practical Actions Shared by Participants in the 11-13 January 2018 Varanasi workshop

Throughout the workshop many ideas were shared from across the 7 Districts. The list below is an edited selection of some of the most practical, scalable and/or promising that Districts had already used.

1. Re-surveying the Baseline

Context: It became clear that some households who should have been registered did not appear on the baseline survey list, some that were on the list did not exist and others appeared more than once.

Actions taken: A team was created to go door-to-door and re-survey. The original list was then modified based on newly collected data and results presented back to communities making the actions taken more transparent.

Challenges faced:

- Some people were unwilling to answer survey questions as they have been asked to take part in surveys many times without any benefits.
- Some households who did not need support in toilet construction gave false information.

2. Block-Level War Rooms

Context: In Mirzapur District each of the 12 Blocks has created its own war room. In these block-level war rooms all Gram Panchayat information is held in one place and consolidated. This has increased efficiency by speeding up monitoring and the flow of information between Blocks and the District.

Actions taken: The Additional Development Officers (Panchayat) office was converted into a war room. Different Safaikarmi's (village level sanitary workers) were assigned different responsibilities. These included:

- Activities at village level
- Enquiry desk
- Computer operator
- Block coordinator
- Monitoring of follow-up
- Construction
- Management Information System (MIS)
- Complaints and grievances

Corporate Social Responsibility fund has been used to purchase 2 computers and 1 projector for each block war room.

From the war rooms they conduct daily and weekly reviews of their activities. A weekly award is presented for good workers and their photograph is used for the block SBM whatsapp group for that week.

Challenges faced:

- Selecting staff members to work in war rooms

3. Decentralisation of IEC Funds

Context: Most IEC activities are organised at the Gram Panchayat and Block level. To maintain the smooth flow of funds from District to Block, Varanasi has decentralised their IEC funds directly to blocks.

Actions taken: One lakh rupees is transferred to each block into a joint account shared by the Joint Development Officer and Additional Development Office Panchayat. Any IEC activities at Block and GP level utilise these funds. After the funds are finished another one lakh is transferred after submission of a signed Utilisation Certificate.

Challenges:

- Untimely and irregular transfer of funds

4. Compressed Demand

Context: After re-surveying it was found that more people should receive the incentive than the number listed in the baseline survey. The district used compressed demand to counteract the lack of funds.

Actions taken: Those entitled to the incentive were only given 50% of the incentive and 70% in villages next to the Ganga.

5. Special Days and Swachhta

Context: Special occasions have provided good platforms to talk about and discuss toilet use and cleanliness.

Actions taken: On special days (Global Handwashing Day, International Yoga day etc.) IEC funds have been used for to print banners, pamphlets and stickers and distributed, combined with people pledging to end open defecation.

Religious celebrations have also been used, for example Rakshan Bandhan where brothers are encouraged to gift sisters with a toilet.

Cleanliness drives have been conducted on such days, with regular cleaning up of villages.

Challenges:

- Bringing everyone together.

6. Range of Champions

Context: Across districts religious leaders, caste leaders, Pradhans, boatmen, masons, Block Development Committee Members and others have become sanitation and solid and liquid waste management champions and motivated and inspired people.

Actions taken:

Pradhans using toilets themselves; writing inspirational letters to Pradhans of neighbouring villages when they've become ODF; converting their own vehicles into sanitation vans used to create awareness; organising exposure visits to neighbouring villages which have become ODF.

Caste Leaders (Mukhiyas) being involved in triggering and efforts towards ODF.

Sanitation workers (Bal Swachhta Raths) in teams of five had been deployed to visit every school and Anganwadi to inspect toilets them and clean them if required. They also take photographs of the toilets before and after cleaning.

Boatmen were identified and trained to create awareness among the people as single boat ferried 800 people on a daily basis. Boats were branded with SBM and boatmen would tell people about segregation of waste and its disposal.

Masons are asked to be Swachhagrahis and help motivate villagers to construct a toilet themselves alongside helping with construction.

Religious leaders have been discussing toilet usage.

Challenges:

- Maintaining motivation
- Motivating people outside their own Gram Panchayats.
- Resistance of some to discuss sanitation and cleanliness, for example religious leaders who do not link the programme messaging with worship.
- The use of the Pradhan can be counter-productive in politically fractured communities.

7. Engagement of Children as Change Agents

Context: Children can play a vital role in campaigns.

Actions taken: Children have been in Swachhta rallies, writing slogans on walls. Awareness programmes have been conducted in schools with children asked to write letters to their parents urging them to construct toilets and stop open defecation.

School children are also involved in cleaning school premises and toilets.

Challenges:

- Irregular attendance of students results in discontinuation of the tasks.

8. Felicitation of Champions

Context: Champions put in a lot of effort and time in this campaign. After a while this leads to lessened motivation and zeal. To keep them moving with same energy, every now and then they are felicitated for their good work. This also encourages others to do better than they are doing

Actions taken: People's pictures are displayed as the display picture on whatsapp for a limited period of time. At the Gram Panchayat level Secretaries, Pradhan's and Swachhagrahis are praised on special occasions like Republic Day, Independence Day or Gandhi Jayanti in presence of District Magistrate, Chief Development Officer, District Panchayat Raj Officer and local media.

Challenges:

- Selecting who deserves recognition on a daily basis is a challenge.

9. Strengthening and Incentivising Nigrani Samitis

Context: It is important that the Nigrani Samiti is representative of all in a village and remains motivated.

Actions taken: In the Nigrani Samiti, local leaders of all religions and castes are represented. Women and children are also given special importance when forming it. It can also be strengthened by involving Panchayat functionaries like Ward members.

To maintain motivation Corporate Social Responsibility funds have been used to purchase blankets for Nigrani Samitis while IEC funds have been used to gift saris and tracksuits.

Challenges:

- People initially opposed working together with people of different castes.

10. School Toilets

Context: Building and maintaining school toilets as well as ensuring usage by all is essential in creating ODF communities.

Actions taken: Model school toilets have been constructed using 14th Finance Commission. Kits have been distributed containing cleaning agents and brushes. Running water facilities have been provided by Gram Panchayat for school toilets. One District reported Pradhans taking the lead and cleaning school toilets weekly.

Challenges:

- School toilets are frequently damaged
- Kits get stolen.

11. Disadvantaged

Context: Importance and priority have been given to disadvantaged sections of society including: the poorest, those with disabilities, transgender women, widows and women.

Actions taken: District consultants and district-level government officials have gifted toilets at their own expense to disabled people. In addition, accessible toilets have been built in schools for disabled students.

Leaders of transgender community have been triggered. They have then constructed toilet, urinal and water tanks for their community.

Local media have been used to advertise that women and the disabled will be given priority for the incentive and are encouraged to apply. Applicants were then verified by the Block after which toilets were constructed.

Challenges:

- Unavailability of designs, guidance and trained masons for disabled-friendly toilets
- Unavailability of funds in time
- Linking the name of beneficiaries with baseline survey data
- Unorganised information at the block level