

REPORT OF A ONE-DAY SHARING, LEARNING AND PLANNING WORKSHOP OF THE SWACHH BHARAT MISSION – GRAMIN IN VARANASI DISTRICT

This report presents the main discussions, conclusions and recommendations of the one day workshop on learning, sharing and planning in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh on 9th November, 2017. The workshop was convened by the District Sanitation Committee, Varanasi facilitated by Water Supply & Sanitation Council (WSSCC) and Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK. The 45 participants included District Magistrate, Chief Development Officer, Deputy Director, Panchayat, Varanasi Division, Gram Sachiv, Swachhagrahi, Champions, ADOs, BDOs from the 8 blocks of Varanasi took part.

The workshop process included brainstorming session and group work on challenges, problems and bottlenecks being faced by district officials, possible solutions, sharing of innovations and planning for next six months to make Varanasi district Open defecation free with quality and sustainability. The workshop was exploratory to enable sharing and cross-learning between blocks on participatory principles leading to block-wise action planning.



The Objectives of the workshop were to:

- Understand the challenges, difficulties and bottle-necks faced by each of the 8 blocks in driving SBM (G)-Varanasi
- Cross-sharing and learning inter-block successful/good practices, innovations/solutions to combat OD that other blocks could replicate
- Evaluate applicability and scaling up the workshop in other districts of the Varanasi-Mirzapur Division and other districts of Uttar Pradesh and India

Methodology of the workshop:

The methodology of the workshop was exploratory in nature and based on participative approach and principles.

- 1) The problems and challenges faced by the blocks in becoming ODF were brain-stormed and discussed in each block. Members presented the challenges one-by-one to the house. The frequency of each across all blocks was recorded on a flip chart all could see.
- 2) The major problems were clustered into five. A fishbowl method was used to discuss solutions to each cluster in turn. In a fishbowl, participants sit round a central area with often four chairs. Anyone with a solution or wanting to discuss one sits on a chair and talks to those on the other chairs. When finished they leave and others take their place.
- 3) The blocks then brainstormed and listed their innovations and good practices that they considered others might find useful to adopt
- 4) Blocks were then split into groups each with one person from each block to share innovations
- 5) Participants reassembled as Block teams with what they had gathered and prepared Block plans of action which were presented and briefly discussed in plenary
- 6) An evaluation sheet was completed.



Challenges faced with frequency across blocks:

- Insufficient fund flow from district to village with respect to demand created in the village for the toilet (x4 blocks)
- People's mentality to defecate in the open and not construct toilet until provided with government subsidy (in spite of being capable to) (x3 blocks)
- Lack of interest among people to involve in government's mission (x2 blocks)
- Water scarcity (x5 blocks)

- Inactiveness in Nigrani Samiti (monitoring committee) due to lack of administrative and logistical support (x4 blocks)
- Pradhan is nodal for toilet construction in the village but is biased to provide benefits first their vote bank. The real needy are then lack the subsidy. Caste based discrimination in distribution of toilets also occurs (x2 blocks)
- Interference of anti-social elements in the work of Nigrani Samiti (1 block)
- Low acceptance and demand for twin pit by beneficiary (x2 blocks)
- Lack of space to construct toilet (x3 blocks)
- No provision for penalties for defaulters and trouble-makers (x3 blocks)
- Lack of community toilet leads to OD on construction and brick-kiln sites (x3 blocks)
- 'One toilet big family' leads to at least one member practising OD (1 block)



Solutions to challenges

The major challenges were clustered into 5 categories as follows:

- No Collective behavior change
- Issues relating to Nigrani Samiti (monitoring committee)
- Technological issues relating to twin pit versus septic tank
- Caste based discrimination prevalent in the village
- Lack of resources to mobilize the mission



Major points shared by the participants were:

- ***No Collective behavior change:***
 - In GPs where women are leading the mission, behavior change is visible
 - Need of Inter-departmental convergence of Front Line Workers (ASHA, Anganwadi, Teachers, Police) and facilitating ODF planning and team work at village level
 - During pre-triggering, mandatory presence of all Front Line Workers (FLW) was recommended
 - During triggering (FLWs) to ensure compulsory presence of minimum one woman from each house in the village/hamlet was emphasized
 - Compulsory contribution in any form (monetary or effort) from the beneficiary towards toilet construction to increase ownership was advocated across all blocks

- ***Issues relating to Nigrani Samiti (monitoring committee):***

Strengthen Nigrani Samiti by

 - organising it at the habitation/hamlet/village level
 - assuring Zero Tolerance policy of district administration towards anti-social elements who disrupt their role and work
 - creating an identity (through branding) and respect towards their contribution

- **restructuring it make it inclusive with representation from all castes and religions in the village to combat caste based abuses**
- ensuring timely logistical arrangement and honorarium for their efforts
- ***Technical issues- twin pit toilet versus septic tank toilet***
 - More and proper awareness campaign regarding utilization of contaminated water by septic tank as cause of diseases in the village was highlighted
 - On-Site mason-training found to be more impactful and should be further adopted across all villages
- ***Caste based Discrimination***
 - Further adopting door to door communication to ensure inclusiveness of every community in the mission
 - Re-orienting Pradhans and involving Gram Sabha in major planning and decisions about triggering and preparing beneficiary list through open meetings with presence of all communities in the village



- ***Lack of resources***
 - In order to avoid dependency on district team to distribute logistics for Nigrani Samiti like torch, whistle, cap, jacket, saree etc, money should be transferred to the village level contingency fund in parallel with the construction process (given by Divisional Director). Currently, IEC money contingency of 3.5% created by the GP in the process of construction of toilets in the village is held at the district. This contingency money should be transferred in parallel to the ongoing construction

directly to the GP to procure the logistics every 3 month, thus keeping the momentum alive in the Nigrani Samiti and ensuring sustainability in ODF mission.

Good Practices and Innovations shared by the 8 blocks

- To embarrasses the OD practitioners, Nigrani Samiti distributed flowers to the defaulters
- Honour certificates from administration were given to acknowledge the families who constructed twin-pit toilet in their houses on their own without government subsidy
- Brothers gifted toilets on the occasion of Raksha-bandhan (Hindu festival signifying brother's promise of safety for their sisters)
- Created awareness regarding maintenance and cleaning of toilets using salt and other natural ways
- A block flags-off motor-cycle rally on the 1st of every month that goes to every Village and does awareness on different issues
- Public shaming of OD practitioners by writing their names on a wall
- Model toilets were constructed in the village to show villagers the right technical design
- Local folk songs used to trigger the community
- A woman sold her goats, the only source of her livelihood to construct her toilet. Another woman sold her gold ornaments for the same purpose
- One block video-documented their efforts to combat OD practice in a village as a success story. Using this local video film for awareness in nearby villages was found to be very effective
- One block did a massive awareness campaign for installing doors that open outwards. This led to more usage of the toilet by the family
- One block installed dustbins in all the houses of a Gram Panchayat

Highlights of Block Action Plans

Major points for action hunted and gathered from other Blocks and included by one or more Blocks in their Action Plans were to:

- During 5 day CLTS triggering and follow up in the village, make it mandatory for the triggering team to stay in the village
- Target the lower hanging fruits i.e. the villages where the target is less should be focused first to attain ODF status
- Adopt on-site mason training in the villages through master masons already trained
- Fine families who do not use toilet

- Involve women's Self Help Groups of the NRLM (National Rural Livelihood Mission) in the CLTS programme for ensuring better results and sustainability. SHGs were seen to have major potential spot for achieving collective behavior change.
- Ensure participation of all departments in the mission at the gram panchayat
- Make it a responsibility of teachers in government schools to ensure school children mandatorily use school toilet during the school hours
- Conduct Block and District level ODF verification of villages with more seriousness

In addition following suggestions by facilitators were favorably received by Blocks for action:

- To identify leach pits which have one pit ready with composted faecal sludge and to dig the compost out with a team of champions to further break the stigma associated.
- To emphasize that 'To litter in a twin-pit is an investment'
- To recognize that though menstrual hygiene and women's dignity are a primal reason for toilet construction this is no excuse for men to open defecate.
- To consider how old women can be mobilized to interrupt men from open defecating.

On their evaluation forms participants indicated that in addition they took back key lessons on the priority of behavior change, the importance of women's participation, the representation of all castes on the Nigrani Samiti, and the importance of pre-triggering in CLTS which needed much more attention.



Participants' reactions and feedback

Towards the end of the workshop, participants were given an evaluation form containing 6 questions designed to assess the effectiveness of the day-long activity. Inter block problem sharing and collective 'solution-finding' activities were especially appreciated. Similar workshops were seen as a means of strengthening the SBMG and driving it forward. Organized every 6 months they could be an excellent means of self-evaluation and gathering solutions to commonly faced problems at the field level.

Participants said that they took away with them key lessons on behavior change and on the importance of women's participation and the representation of all castes in the Nigrani Samiti, Pre-triggering was neglected and required much more attention in CLTS sequences.

Such workshops can be further improved through inclusion of BDCs, women from SHGs, Nigrani Samitis, Anganwadi workers, ASHAs and other departmental workers to strengthen convergence. Many felt that although a lot was covered within a day, such workshops could be spread over at least 2 or 3 days for facilitation of in-depth discussions and other interesting participatory activities.

Ways forward and follow-up

Representatives of other Districts of the Varanasi and Mirzapur Divisions who took part and observed the workshop felt a need for similar workshops in their Districts. In discussions after the workshop it was planned that these should be held soon in all Districts in the two Divisions in December. In addition, Divisional-level discussions with Divisional Commissioner explored the proposal that the 7 Districts should schedule a divisional level workshop in the month of January, 2018.