

Accelerating Sanitation through Robust Supply Chain Mechanism

– The Dungarpur Story

During its intervention in Rajasthan, UNICEF realized that merely bringing about behavioral change would not help in achieving open defecation free status. Once the community had been convinced about the advantages of individual household toilets, it required a strong supply chain mechanism to meet the demand generation with timely supply of materials. Hence UNICEF invited FINISH Society to establish a sound Supply Chain Mechanism in Dungarpur. To meet this demand, the initiative was started in August 2013. Though the objective was to set up the supply chain mechanism, the project followed a holistic approach of creating awareness on sanitation, increasing demand for household toilets and creating a mechanism for the supply of materials and construction. Sustainable usage was also ensured.



Introduction

Dungarpur, with an area of 3,844 sq. km is the smallest district of southern Rajasthan. It comprises of seven blocks and each block has 48 Gram Panchayats, and 213 revenue villages. The population is predominantly Scheduled Tribe, at 65 percent. Typical of a (Central Indian) Bhil tribal way of life, the rural population has traditionally depended on three sources of subsistence- forest produce (flora and fauna), animal husbandry and seasonal agriculture.

According to the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (Flagship scheme on Sanitation by GOI) Rajasthan Rural Sanitation and Hygiene Strategy (2012-2022) open defecation is still widespread (87.5 percent) in rural Rajasthan. There is also widespread disparity both in terms of coverage and usage of toilets in the districts. UNICEF has been working in the area on many issues, sanitation being one of them.

Laying the Foundation

Bicchiwara block comprising of eight GPs and 43 villages was selected for Phase 1 of the initiative. Baseline surveys were conducted to assess the situation of sanitation and hygiene at the households and identifying the challenges like availability of water, terrain, socio-economic background, customs etc. The survey revealed that only 2 percent of the households had access to sanitation. So bringing about behavior change was crucial.

The community was entrenched in age old myths and misconceptions related to toilets-

1. Toilets were costly assets.
2. Twin pit toilets were not the right toilets. Septic tanks, as prevalent in cities were the right choice
3. Toilet pits need to be dug very deep.

Most of these challenges were related to the knowledge gaps of the masons and this had to be addressed. A model toilet needed to be built with minimum budget but maximum results to convince the community. The NBA scheme has very limited scope for the same and for sustainability, self reliance was important.

In Behavioral Change Communication, the normal procedure is to employ local unemployed youth as Motivators for demand generation. However, FINISH followed a new approach of using Masons who are well versed with the techniques of toilet construction as Motivators. It was a daunting challenge to convince the rural masses to own a leach pit toilet.

“Masons are involved in the construction of toilets and during the process of construction. They spend at least three full days in the household until the completion of the toilet. FINISH felt that if Masons also did the task of Motivators, in addition to toilet construction, they could also influence the community for demand generation and subsequent usage. Effective communication on usage of toilets and its benefits was done which is generally lacking in other interventions.. Hence, local masons with basic literacy were identified to work as Motivators. Four Masons/Motivators were identified per GP,” says Saurabh Agnihotri, Regional Director, FINISH Society.

Eight identified GPs were divided into two major intervention areas and two experts were identified to supervise the work in each of these areas. One more expert was identified to supervise the initiative as well as for documentation, liaison with Government, etc.

The Beginning

After completion of the preparatory phase, a five-day training Programme was conducted for the newly engaged Masons cum Motivators. As they were well-versed with construction techniques, the Programme focused more on various methods for triggering behavior change among communities.

Triggering is a technique adapted by Community Approaches Total Sanitation (CATS). This helps in stimulating a collective sense of self-analysis and realizing the grimness of the situation among community members as they confront the crude facts about mass open defecation and its negative impacts on the entire community. It helps the local populations to visualize the ways in which open defecation affects their health, dignity, pride, and future. It also demonstrates how feces come in contact with water and food that people eventually consume and how open defecation poses a risk to the dignity of women.

Later, Motivators were given the task of organizing meetings to do follow-up with the communities to change deep-rooted behavior patterns and create demand for construction of toilets.

During the process of community triggering, potential leaders who could be tapped to serve on Village Surveillance Committees were identified. These leaders could ensure regular follow-up with the community particularly during morning and evening hours when people normally

resorted to open-defecation. The identified leaders were apprised of their roles and responsibilities to make the village ODF.

Financing

Nirmal Bharath Abhiyan allots Rs. 4600 per household for the construction of a toilet but this is not sufficient for toilet construction. Hence the beneficiary also needs to meet the extra cost. However, seeking cash contribution always creates a negative impact in the community. Hence FINISH felt that physical contribution (*shramadan*) was a better alternative to the cash component. This way, demand could be generated. Digging a pit ensured the start of the supply to a household.

“People were motivated to construct and use toilets as a matter of pride, dignity, and health and not in order to obtain a government subsidy,” says Mr. Prakash, Motivator, Bicchiwara Gram Panchayat.

The Masons/Motivators informed the beneficiaries during the ‘triggering meetings’ that all the required materials would be provided by FINISH, only if there was a physical contribution from the beneficiary. To make the contribution uniform across villages, an individual who wanted to be part of this initiative was asked to contribute in terms of physical work by digging two pits and doing the brick /stone lining. Once a group of individuals were ready with the stone pits, the Motivator verified the same and placed the order for supply of materials.

Another problem that existed was that the beneficiary would often buy construction materials at the subsidized rate and divert it for construction purposes other than toilets. Monitoring by Motivators and Surveillance Committee helped in overcoming this problem.

Since availing MGNREGA funds for meeting the cost of labour for individual toilet construction was not assured, beneficiaries were requested to remunerate the labour costs to the masons. Motivators identified other masons in the village for the construction of toilets. While the work was under progress, Motivators were instructed to continuously talk to the masons and beneficiaries about the benefits of individual toilets such as health, hygiene and dignity. The objective was to ensure sustainable usage of the toilets. By employing other masons, more work and income was generated.

Establishing a Supply Chain Mechanism

An effective and reliable supply chain mechanism is essential to cater to the demand. The demand generated can be met immediately if a sound delivery mechanism exists. In the absence of a reliable supply chain, demand created fizzles out. Hence there was a strong need for establishing the supply chain mechanism.

The critical task was to enable the beneficiary to get the required material at a controlled price without compromising on the quality. Hence the challenge was to bring down the cost of material so that it appealed to the community.

The Government and FINISH Society have limited funds for providing subsidies; so, ways of reducing costs had to be devised. Certain materials, like pans, doors cannot be manufactured locally. For items that could be manufactured locally, local entrepreneurs who were looking for business opportunities were made aware of the possibility of transaction and profit. These entrepreneurs were provided handholding, interest-free revolving funds to start their business. They were also taken on exposure visits to Gujarat to see enterprises where bricks or blocks

were manufactured. All these efforts increased the confidence level and thus entrepreneurs came forward to start their businesses.

Later, a bill of materials that could be provided for Rs. 4600 was prepared. This was made known to the community. Once the community was convinced about the quality and quantity, the manufacturing began. Materials which could not be manufactured locally were purchased in bulk from bigger cities.

The quality and quantity of material that was to be delivered to each household was displayed at the Gram Panchayat office. As every family knew about the quality and quantity of materials that had to come to them, transparency was ensured.

As financial transactions were involved, it was important to take the *Sarpanch* and Secretary into confidence. Vested interests had to be met and no commissions could be paid. So, they were requested to provide tractors owned by them for delivering the materials to the households. This would be a source of income for them.

Dungarpur has a very hilly terrain, so individual deliveries were costly and time consuming. Hence, delivery of materials was done in clusters in tractors, thus saving time and money. Where the area was not accessible by vehicles, individual beneficiaries were requested to carry the materials from a designated area.

Once the toilet had been constructed, a Utilisation Certificate was prepared by the Motivator. This had to be signed by the *Sarpanch* and the Secretary and submitted to the Block Co-ordinator of the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, after which the money was reimbursed to FINISH Society who in turn, paid the vendors.

During the conceptual stages, the task seemed tedious and daunting. Strategy about how sanitation targets can be met through community involvement, transparency, cost control, robust delivery and tackling PRI members having vested interest has been demonstrated in this initiative. Achieving the targets for sanitation and hygiene poses a significant challenge and can only be accomplished if pro-active action is taken by all stakeholders.

Progress so far.....

The intervention is progressing at a rapid pace, with more and more families coming forward to embrace change. Within eight months, 20 villages have become ODF and more are in the pipeline.

