

## Action Research in Lucknow & Kanpur

### How Finish is changing the ODF eco-system: Some Case Studies

Finish Society has been constantly trying to help India to become ODF. Taking recent initiatives into account, there are some insights that need to be shared. Soon after Finish Society-backed Harmen Leijnse's toilet tour of North India, a Spain-based researcher is asking people in Lucknow & Kanpur, if they are willing to pay (WTP) to use a toilet? Alex Armand, Associate Researcher at the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), UK, is precisely asking this question to community toilet users. He is presently in Lucknow to conduct a rigorous impact evaluation of 'Community Toilets in Slums: Willingness to Pay for and Usage of Community Toilets' in selected communities of Lucknow & Kanpur.

Giving details of the project helmed by Finish Society, IFS & Morsel, Armand shares: "The study will try and understand how we can improve slum dwellers' sanitation practices and understand the behavioral aspects of users and operators. Our aim is to promote regular usage through increasing awareness and improving the quality of the community toilets. The purpose of the study is to break a vicious cycle by making community toilets more attractive, increase profits and usage and improve environmental quality and health in slums."

This joint initiative of Finish Society, IFS & Morsel, will take place between January 2018 and January 2019. Approved by the University College London (UCL) Research Ethics Committee (Project ID Number: 2168/012) it is funded by the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie).

It may be mentioned that IFS is a premier economic research institute based in London, and specializes in public policy. It is Britain's leading independent microeconomic research institute and has gained a worldwide reputation for academic rigor, and contributes to the development of academic scholarship.

## Firozabad Cluster, Uttar Pradesh

In Firozabad cluster, Finish Society is a quasi-KRC along with UNICEF helping the area become ODF. Here are two powerful case studies of Swachhagrahis who are making a change

**Name: Varsha**

**Date of Birth: 10.01.1991**

**Education: Pursuing B. Ed**

**Resident of: Village Nagla Mandir**

**Gram Panchayat: Kabirpur**

**Block: Araon,**

**District: Firozabad**

### **If Varsha could buy a smart phone, she could change more lives**

If Varsha had her way, her Swachh Bharat Mission could spread to every corner of Kabirpur Gram Panchayat. She feels if she had the money to buy a smart phone, she would find her job that much easier. Coming from a poor family, she hails from Nagla Mandir village, in the Kabirpur Gram Panchayat of Araon block of Firozabad district. Right since childhood, Varsha developed an intuitive understanding of cleanliness being next to godliness. Little did she know at that point in time, that it will become her calling in life. All through her formative years, she motivated and inspired the village folk to adopt to hygienic practices so that they could keep diseases at bay. Once the Swachh Bharat Mission took off in the year

2014, Varsha got deeply involved in triggering activities to construct toilets. Her persuasive skills helped her make Nagla Mandir villagers understand the benefits of building toilets in order to live a clean and healthy life.

Around 18 months ago, when she was appointed as a Swachhagrahi, she knew it was destiny calling. It was during this period that she got trained in the scientific concepts behind Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS). Armed with this knowledge, she along with her team members convinced villagers to construct toilets in their homes. She made sure that the women in the village became change agents for constructing toilets and ensure people use them on a sustained basis. Her patience and strong communication skills became effective tools for her to impact the thinking of the menfolk. Varsha shares that “in the beginning, men were not willing to lend me an ear. It was only when they realized that I was highly educated and was a teacher to boot, that they began to give me a chance. Once, a couple of male thought leaders in the village were convinced, the change process was set in motion.”

A graduate who is pursuing her Bachelor in Education, she realized the virtues of patience and how communication tools need to be used strategically to bring about behaviour change. While all the villagers don't have a SBM toilet, she has managed to get more than 75 toilets constructed, even though plastic sheets or used clothes make for doors which are yet to be installed. However, the toilets are in use and she feels that once proper doors are in place, more people will follow suit. Her never say die spirit is evident from the fact that she has enthusiastically participated in the geo-tagging activity which is presently underway in her GP. Her inspiring story has earned her the sobriquet of Teacher sahiba.

**Name: Rashid Ali**  
**Education: M.A in Geography**  
**Resident of**  
**GP: Sivsinghpur, Newada**  
**Age; App. 58 years**  
**Block: Mainpuri**  
**Distt: Firozabad**



#### **Meet Rashid Ali, Pied Piper of Mainpuri block**

For Swachhagrahi Rashid Ali, age is just a number. All of 58, he is seen on a daily basis, working in two different GPs, namely, Sivsinghpur Newada & Sikandpur, in Mainpuri block of Firozabad. He gets his daily rush of adrenalin by convincing villagers to construct toilets, so as to improve their quality of life. He is better known as the Pied Piper of Mainpuri block, since he believes triggering behaviour change is best done by exercising his vocal chords as a musician. His singing is a big attraction in the area, as he says, “music cuts across religious and social barriers, bringing in its wake, peace and harmony. Not one to give up when people refuse to change their ways, he uses different ways to win their confidence and trust. “I motivate people in whatever way I can. While I tell my Muslim brothers that cleanliness is a way of life spelled out in the Quran, I invoke the slogan, Swachhtha hi seva hai, (Cleanliness alone is service) to motivate my Hindu friends.” Known to help residents in every which way, he can be seen filling up ration card forms online or helping the infirm Veena Pal to get her a wheelchair.

When Rashid Ali completed his post-graduation in Geography, in 1985, he was hoping to land a government job. However, that was not to be. He takes immense pride in the fact that it was he who was asked to conduct the baseline survey in the two GPs in 2011. “The job was assigned to me because of my honesty and transparency.” Sivsinghpur Newada has a population of over 2000 residents, and he has got built 178 toilets. Soon after, the GP was declared ODF and this only motivated him to shift focus to

Sikandarpur. Here too, of the 240-odd toilets that need to be constructed to declare the GP ODF, Rashid has single-handedly got 204 toilets constructed. He says that getting a toilet constructed is a challenge. How is he a Swachhagrahi for two GPs, Rashid proudly says that he has helped the government in achieving its cleanliness goals. He goes on to share that his education has helped him a great deal in making people yield to his line of thinking. Rashid bhai is the most popular figure in the two GPs and says, "men, women & children all listen to me, because of my age and education." He is unmarried but doesn't like to talk about it. He instead says "I am married to the concept of ODF sustainability and will continue to bring about change even after the Swachh Bharat Mission draws to a close.