

Steering Change through Innovation in Rajasthan

How Dhoomkheda made a 'clean sweep'

Mahasatiyon ki Madri is the name of this Gram Panchayat (GP) in Rajsamand block of Rajasthan which has seven villages and 11 wards. The total number of households is 1336 and the population is approximately 6855. The name of the Sarpanch is Kusum Kunwar Rajput and he is an agriculturist by profession. The gram panchayat (GP) has 9 government schools and 7 Anganwadi kendras.

Geographical Layout: Mahasatiyon ki Madri GP is located 11 km away from the head office of Rajsamand Block in the Rajsamand District of Rajasthan.

Socio-Economic Status: The primary occupation of the villagers is agriculture, however, with growing population and decreasing land, the villagers are forced to migrate to nearby cities of Udaipur or to the state of Gujarat for earning their livelihood. Due to lack of land for agriculture and education, the economic condition of this GP is not good. Around 60% of the population live below poverty line (BPL). But their poor economic condition has not stopped them from leading a culturally rich life. The villagers celebrate all festivals together and there is a lot of harmony amongst them.

Cleanliness Drive: The FINISH team, with the support of **JK Tyre & Industries Limited** conducted a baseline survey. The findings of this baseline survey showed that out of 1336 households only 735 had toilets, of which only 459 were functional and in use. The team immediately called for a meeting with Sarpanch, Wardpanch, Anganwadi workers, school principal and other progressive farmers of the communities. The agenda of the meeting was to make the villagers realize the poor health condition due to open defecation and unhygienic practices. But the villagers replied saying that cleaning was the job of the government and that they were not responsible for the poor state of affairs. The FINISH team decided to conduct CLTS trainings for all the villagers including the Sarpanch and other officials of the GP. The training sessions made a huge impact in their attitude towards sanitation and hygiene, and they got inspired to keep their village neat and clean.

The Sarpanch of this GP Mrs. Kusum Kunwar Rajput ordered meetings in every ward where the FINISH team decided to talk about the importance, need and government willingness and support to keep the communities and houses clean. Dhoomkheda village was one of the first villages of Rajsamand having 205 households where this meeting was held. The team visited the village and made them realize how dirty their environment is. But most of them were not able to understand this as it was part of their daily life. One of the villager leaders Mr. Narayan Gurjar Jamnalal came forward and said that if all the villagers will defecate in open then he will go and cover their shit everyday with mud. This message spread like wildfire in every village of the GP, and this marked a new beginning of sanitation and hygiene in the GP.

Toilet to instil self-pride

Santu Bai lived with her husband Deva Ji and they did not have any children. She badly wanted a toilet in her house but her husband was not ready to construct one. Since they had no children, her husband said that there is no need to invest in a toilet. Whereas, Santu Bai believed that that is exactly why they needed a toilet in their house; since there will be nobody to help them in their old age. A toilet in the house will be of great help, she felt.

One day when Deva ji went out of the village for some work, Santu Bai started toilet construction work in her house. Seeing her courage, FINISH (through JK Tyre) provided financial support and the Nigrani

Committee of the village helped in construction of a toilet in her house. Santu Bai, aptly named her toilet "Izaat Ghar," and life changed due to her perseverance and conviction.



Barmer RDO-Finish & Vedanta-Cairn team

Leaving their sanitation footprints in the sandy desert of time

It is no mean task to leave lasting footprints in the sands of time, but the RDO-Finish team has done exactly that, in Barmer, one of the most backward districts of Rajasthan. Overcoming odds and excelling in adverse conditions have become the hallmark of RDO-Finish's sanitation interventions. Over a period lasting three years, (2015-2018) RDO Trust in concert with Cairn Oil & Gas has constructed 4000 toilets and facilitated the setting up another 16000 during the course of its intervention in the **Gida & Bayatu blocks** of Barmer district. Known for its sandy tracts and hostile terrain, traversing daily over 100 kms from Barmer town to the Dhanis (small clusters) that are spread across large tracts of lands can put off the most committed field staff. The Dhanis are near their farmlands and thus separated from each other by long distances. Nature is harsh to these people with scant rainfall, desert and hilly terrains with very limited availability of water. These problems are compounded by lack of roads, transportation facilities, electricity and communication modes as well as a general lack of education/awareness

Changing face of Barmer: Ever since Vedanta-Cairn India began its oil exploration in Barmer in 2001, this border town has witnessed boom time.



Life has changed for the better and as Dheera Ram, Block Coordinator, RDO-Finish team shares: A plot of land that sold for Rs 5 lakh 15 years is now worth Rs 5 crore. This phenomenal change has brought in its wake, rising demand for a better quality of life and it is here that we have made a difference. Further, having worked in the seismic survey earlier with the Cairn team, what started as a small oil exploration has today burgeoned into a huge exercise. It said that soon 30 per cent of India's oil needs will be fulfilled from Barmer. Today, we find that over 2.75 lakh barrels of crude oil is being produced"

Background: Barmer incidentally, has the unenviable distinction of being the most economically laggard district in the State of Rajasthan. The total population of the district is about 20 lakhs with a literacy rate of 59%. Almost 67% of the population is unemployed

According to the Human Development Report 2007 (Directorate of Economics and Statistics), Barmer ranked 21st out of the 32 districts of the state. Despite being the largest gypsum source in the country, enterprises in Barmer have not been able to leverage the natural resource for industrial gains.

Cairn India: According to a background report presented by Cairn, it is the largest corporate operational in the area with maximum investments both in terms of its business operations as well as in terms of its commitment to the society.

Triggering Behaviour Change: People in the area were not open to the idea of building toilets considering hygiene and sanitation were not high on their agenda. RDO-Finish Team Project Manager Rajesh Gupta had to use a mix of tools to trigger the behavior change activities. If intensive meetings were held to give them the basic scientific premise to build toilets and practice hygienic practices, hand wash activities in schools proved a great fillip to their field initiatives. The beneficiaries had to be coaxed, cajoled and persuaded to make a difference to the quality of life by building toilets under the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). The icing on the cake was the Vedanta-Cairn initiative to offer an additional Rs 2500 per beneficiary. This worked wonders, says Rajesh and many villagers loved the idea of getting this bonus directly to their bank accounts. Since, this was in addition to the Rs 12,000 given by the Rajasthan government under SBM, it helped the RDO-Finish team to convince the fence-sitters, shares Rajesh.

How Naga Ram changed the sanitation eco-system in Gida Block

He oozes confidence and his bright sparking eyes serve as a beacon of light for the uneducated farmers of the region. Naga Ram, 62, is a prized field motivator who almost single-handedly pioneered the toilet revolution in Gida Block.



A health volunteer, he is a forward-looking farmer who believes in the adage that God resides in a clean environment. When he saw that the field staff of the SBM were not taking any active steps in making the village open defecation free, Naga Ram came out of retirement and decided to work as a catalyst to ensure change. He sat down with the local residents and painstakingly explained the benefits of constructing toilets and soak pits, and how they would change the dynamics of the village. When the men-folk were a little hesitant, he trained his guns on the women of the area. Being a village elder, the women were more receptive and slowly the winds of change began to blow in the area.

With the active help of the RDO-Finish team, toilet construction began to gather steam and today over 250 toilets have been built. Sporting a huge gold pendant which serves as his insignia, Naga Ram's face lights up when you ask him why he sports this pendant with Lord Hanuman sketched across: Lord Hanuman is our family deity and it is because of his blessings that even at this age, I am able to convince people toward s a great cause like hygiene and sanitation. This is part of our family heirloom, and the gold pendant has been passed on to me for generations. I am now fifth in the line."

When asked as to what motivates him to convince people so patiently, he says: "I had retired from active life and the way the RDO-Finish team persuaded me to come out to make a change, made me realize that if nothing else, I will find myself back in circulation and revive old contacts among the villagers."

Using the Nath tradition to promote sanitation

The Nath community at Gida in Rajasthan, still provide life and color to the sanitation activities in the region. Today, they are innovatively used by the RDO-Finish team to pass on the message of hygiene and sanitation through music and dance. This traditional nomadic community has long abandoned its traditional role of being snake charmers. Today, they are also part of the sanitation revolution and have decided to bid goodbye to their past.

Ganga Nath, a singer and harmonium player, says "the profession of catching snakes and playing the 'been' left us in penury. So, our parents, decided to move on. Today, we play the harmonium and sing and dance during festivals and marriages. Even the Nagin dances for which we have been famous for, have become a rare occurrence."

A notable feature of this community of monks is that most of them are itinerant, moving from one monastery or location to another, never staying in the same place for long. Many of them form floating groups of wanderers, where they participate in festivals together, share work and thus form a collective identity. They gather in certain places cyclically, particularly on festivals such as Navratri, Maha Shivaratri and Kumbh Mela. Many walk very long distances over a period of months from one sacred location to another, across India, in their spiritual pursuits.

The Nath monks wear loin cloths and *dhotis*, little else. Typically, they also cover themselves with ashes, tie up their hair in dreadlocks, and when they stop walking, they keep a sacred fire called *dhuni*. These ritual dressing, covering body with ash, and the body art are, however, uncommon with the householders. Both the Nath monks and householders wear a woolen thread around their necks with a small horn, rudraksha bead and a ring attached to the thread. This is called *Singnad Janeu*. The small horn is important to their religious practice, is blown during certain festivals, rituals and before they eat. Many Nath monks and a few householders also wear notable earrings.



Social impact on the RDO-Cairn hygiene-sanitation intervention

- Health indicators have improved over the three-year period in Barmer
- Traditional communities like carpenters (Suttars) have shifted back to the villages because living conditions have improved
- School dropout rate among girls has come down because of toilets being constructed
- Marriageability of those living in the better sanitation zone has improved and girls from peri-urban areas are willing to stay with grooms in Barmer
- The RDO-Cairn initiative has resulted in better rainwater harvesting prospects in the area
- Better drinking water projects and initiatives have brought about lower stomach-related ailments.

Singing Swachhata Song in Darbhanga, Bihar

Gita Devi, a change agent at 50

Meet Gita Devi, 50, who turned a new leaf at the age of 50. Recently appointed as Swachhagrahi from Barratha panchayat of North Singhwara block of Darbhanga district she is fast becoming a role model and motivator for her villager. As of date, the village is grappling with the problem of open defecation. The fact that she is an unlettered woman who has a married daughter and two grandchildren has not deterred her from working on herself. This once shy woman known for her honesty and childlike innocence, has acquired a newfound confidence and a spring in her steps. Just when she thought life had passed her by. Her passion to see her village become Open Defecation Free (ODF) instilled in her a sense of purpose, and brought to the fore her superb communication skills. When Finish Society team members along with SBM officials from Darbhanga gave her a lowdown on the benefits of constructing toilets and living a 'clean' life, she decided to become a volunteer. With the help of the administration she was appointed Swachhagrahi and life turned full circle. The three-day Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) workshop is where it all began. When the workshop was drawing to a close, one of the trainers asked if any of the women undergoing training would like to share their feedback on the mike. There was a stunned silence. As time went by, two women raised their hands. One was of our own Gita Devi and the other Manju Devi. They both strode down to the stage and hesitantly began talking. Gita had held a mike for the first time in their lives, and recalls that her hands were trembling. Manju Devi said she took the name of God and decided to engage with the 50-strong audience assembled there. Soon, both of them were talking fluently and passionately about making their area ODF. Once their interaction ended, there was a discernible transformation in Gita. After that day, she was able to deal with even men who were not willing to construct toilets citing cultural issues. Gita's patience and convincing skills has paid her rich dividends. She says today more than 50 per cent of the toilets in the area (with over 2700 families) have been constructed and before long, she says she will make sure others follow suit. "I am a moorkh (fool) who can only sign my name. But today, I feel empowered because I am here to make a change in the lives of my people."