

34th WEDC International Conference, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2009

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE:
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND MULTISECTORAL APPROACHES

**‘Nirmal Gujarat’: An integrated approach
to total sanitation in Gujarat**

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REVIEWED PAPER 269

‘Nirmal Gujarat’ is a new initiative of Gujarat government for achieving total sanitation facilities in rural and urban areas of Gujarat to improve sanitation and hygiene for a clean environment while accelerating overall development in the state. In the past, expected results in terms of long-term sustainability could not be achieved because of a range of issues ranging from inappropriate technology selection to low levels of people involvement, etc. TSC and Nirmal Gujarat have tried to overcome these shortcomings by extensive community engagement. A key concept of TSC and Nirmal Gujarat is to encourage the active participation of women in all aspects of sanitation implementation. The realization of these concepts has led TSC & Nirmal Gujarat to begin working with communities to increase women’s involvement in sanitation projects. The strategies have been thus designed to address these factors to achieve benefits and an equitable impact for all communities.

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi had once remarked that “*Sanitation is more important than independence*”. The man affectionately called “Bapu” was born in a sleepy town on the south-western coast of Gujarat. Bapu had the vision to put the focus on sanitation long before it became a major international concern. He was candid about the lack of sanitation in our society. “*A sense of national or social sanitation is not a virtue among us. We may take a kind of a bath, but we do not mind dirtying the well or the tank or the river by whose side or in which we perform ablution*”. His efforts in sanitation were linked to the distress he felt for ‘untouchables’ who used to carry out the inhumane task of scavenging ‘night soil’.

Though Bapu was unquestionably the architect of modern sanitation movement in Gujarat but the history of it goes a long way back by about 5000 years. It can be witnessed in the 100 or so Indus valley sites that are scattered all across the state. The most prominent of these sites are Lothal situated in Saurashtra and Dholavira in the Great Rann of Kutch.

Harappans gave sanitation its due importance is borne by the fact that drains were made of kiln fired bricks while houses of simple mud bricks. Dholavira and Lothal, the two prominent sites dating to that period excavated in Gujarat exhibit a striking commonality – their highly developed water and sanitation system that sets them apart from other Indus valley sites. Excavations at Dholavira in the desert sands of Kutch have yielded surprising finds. The site measuring more than 100 hectares is the largest in Gujarat and has 16 water reservoirs within the fortifications. Most of the houses had individual wells, bathrooms and drainage that connected to the city drains. Very elaborate storage arrangements were made but not to store food but to store something much more precious to them – Water.



Photograph 1. Simple practices can go a long way to promoting sanitation

It has to be understood by everyone that the significance of Sanitation is not just in constructing a clean toilet. Sanitation along with clean drinking water is perhaps one of the most vital constituents to a healthy and vigorous society. In an millennium opinion poll the humble toilet was regarded by the readers of Time Magazine as the most important invention of this century – more significant than the Ford Model-T or the Concorde Jet or the Personal Computer or even the venerable I-Pod. A toilet is perhaps one single stodgy invention that makes us civilized humans truly civilized. It could even be argued that sanitation civilizes men and all great ancient cultures gave a high regard to it.

Total sanitation campaign (TSC) in Gujarat

Gujarat has adopted programs targeted towards Individual and School sanitation since 1984. Initially “Total Sanitation Campaigning” was made operative from April, 1999 in five districts as a pilot project. The 10th five year plan was adopted on the 21st of December, 2002. This was one of the first policy documents of the Government to recognize that economic growth is not the only goal worth obtaining and over the years developmental objectives have been defined on a much broader basis to promote human welfare.

The implementation of TSC was formally kicked off in the state (Gujarat) on 2nd October, 2005 on the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. It has now been extended to all 25 districts of the state and is being implemented with fresh guidelines, which emphasize on demand generation through IEC (Information Education & Communication) activities and capacity building under people centric approach. A TV broadcast on Sanitation was made on 27th of January, 2006 and carried live across all 18,000 villages of the state. It featured many prominent speakers including the Chief Minister of the state Shri Narendrabhai Modi, Minister of Rural Development-Government of India and speakers from diverse fields like sports, religion and politics. Morari Bapu who is a widely respected spiritual leader in the state remarked on the occasion that “sanitation is the first step to godliness”. The Spiritual leader has also organized many Kathas (discourses) attended by thousands in tribal areas of the state to spread the message of sanitation. Active harnessing of spiritual leaders led to involvement of reluctant families and communities leading to a boost in construction activities.

Goal/vision 2010

The state has set itself the ambitious target of bringing every household in each and every village under the coverage of sanitation by the year 2010. This will be achieved by the vigorous implementation of “Nirmal Gujarat” and Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) and realization of the following Vision for the year 2010:

- a) Elimination of practice of open defecation, b) No visible solid or liquid waste, c) A toilet for all

Strategies adopted

- a) Community involvement through advocacy for sanitation and highlighting its benefits
- b) Capacity building and strengthening of village level and Panchyati Raj Institutions
- c) Adoption of a demand driven approach
- d) Providing financial incentives for individual household latrine units to the poor
- e) Entry point awareness creation amongst school children through personal hygiene & sanitation
- f) Technology improvement to meet the needs, preferences, resources and local requirements of people
- g) Intensive IEC campaign by involving village level elected institutions (Panchyati Raj), village cooperatives, women groups, self help groups, non governmental organizations
- h) Involving organizations, religious groups and spiritual leaders and also notably, political leaders of the state
- i) Mass involvement to bring relevant behavioural changes and creation of suitable environment for change
- j) Creation of rural sanitation marts and promotion centres for easy availability of materials, technology choices etc. to suit local practices and resources
- k) Provision of easy and interest free credit

A people-centric approach to sanitation led by community

- a) Demand driven approach was adopted with emphasis on awareness creation and demand generation for Toilet facilities in rural areas
- b) Capital subsidies for construction of toilet has been replaced by incentive for adoption of sanitation
- c) Sanitation and hygiene education in rural schools and education institutions is prioritized
- d) Technology options to meet customer preferences and affordability
- e) Intensive mobilization campaign involving gramsabha (local government) institution,
- f) Involvement of Dairy cooperatives, women groups, NGO's and others organizations
- g) "Nirmal Gram Puraskar (clean village awards)" to recognize and encourage achiever communities

Others drivers for achievements

- a) Political will and creation of enabling environment
- b) Capacity building and right communication strategies
- c) Proper monitoring and evaluation focussing on process compliance rather than target achievement only
- d) Involvement of spiritual leader in an advocacy role
- e) Capitalizing on local leaderships at the grass roots level

Role of the community in sanitation

Since sanitation is needed not just for personal hygiene and health but also has a great role in overall community development it should be accessible to all. Lack of sanitation forces people to use other options in rural areas leading to open defecation, soil and water pollution and spread of dangerous disease. Human excreta must be properly disposed off in order to avoid contamination of water and food.

Past experience reveals that projects/missions do not yield desired outcomes primarily because they lack effective community engagement in such programs and a lack of sense of ownership among the users. Unless people are involved from the very beginning and are given appropriate opportunity to contribute to decision making, implementation, operation & maintenance and they also pay towards part of the cost of the project their involvement will be only of a passive nature.

The issue of sanitation is highly gender allied as women are more concerned about family health and their views and opinions must be fully reflected in the decision making and implementation of the project. Women are the main victims of lack of sanitation and are more affected by lack of these facilities in rural areas. In this context women's self help groups known as Sakhi Mandals have taken a lead role in the state. Nearly 73,000 such groups having a membership and support of over 962,000 women exist across the state. These groups are involved in various socio economic activities in rural Gujarat and they have also played a key role in involving women in sanitation issues in their communities by getting involved in IEC and advocacy activities for sanitation and are also facilitating construction of toilets.

Lot of efforts have been made to harness people's participation in sanitation. The "Nirmal Gujarat Campaign" was envisaged to mobilize community resources which were manifold greater than Government input for the purpose of individual household's toilets.

Rajsamadhiyala & Fatehpura – A case study on the impact of people centric approach

Rajsamadhiyala Village in Rajkot district has the distinction of being the first village in the state to receive the prestigious **Nirmal Gram Puraskar** (Clean Village Award of Government of India). It was a moment of pride for people of the entire state when Sarpanch (elected village headmen) of the Village, Shri Devashibhai Kakadia, walked up to the President of the nation Dr. A P J Abdul Kalaam to be handed the award in a lavish state ceremony held on the 24th of February in New Delhi.

“It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness” is surely the dictum of residents of Fatehpura - a small village of 214 households in Mehsana district of North Gujarat. It was during a meeting with district officials that the villagers first came to know about various provisions made in the 11th plan for them. “Immediately a Gramsabha (elected village assembly) was convened and it was decided that a sewerage system was needed” says the Sarpanch, Jaysinghbhai Chaudhari. Every household was to contribute towards the beneficiary component and encourage capacity building of the Gramsabha.

The village had a very profitable milk cooperative and the villagers decided that they would use some of the profits generated by it over the years to pay for part of the contribution. The village Navratri Group which collects funds for organizing Navratri festival every year also came forward and offered its surplus funds.

The village headman confesses that all things happened due to people participation and capacity building strengthened these activities. “After all these steps we could mobilize funds of around Rs 4.5 lakhs” the Sarpanch says with pride.

On completion of this scheme womenfolk (sakhi mandal members played a pivotal role in advocacy for sanitation) of the village raised the issue of a sanitation complex in the village anganwadi and school. No one could deny that this was also a pressing need as important as the sewerage drain and soon people came forward with their contributions. All these successes created a huge confidence amongst villagers in their Gramsabha.



Photograph 2. President APJ Kalaam (center) giving away NGP to village headman of Fatehpura (right)

When residents of Fatehpura came to know about the NGP they were stirred by the hope that their village could also hope to win this Presidential award. Women took a key role in convincing their families about the need for sanitation as they had to suffer most in its absence. All unauthorized constructions in the village were removed. Everyone was asked to maintain sanitation and hygiene in their homes. No one was allowed to dispose waste in village streets or public places. Community dustbins were placed throughout the village.

In every house the housewives of the village ensured that a Ladle is used by the family members to draw water from pots and a latrine is constructed in every home lacking one. Open defecation was discouraged and a cleanliness drive was organized every week. Open defecation was a concern even before the launch of the drive but now it was resolved to eliminate it by constructing latrines. Fatehpura could achieve 100% sanitation coverage in a short span of time and all this was achieved not by any formal state machinery but by people and their democratic institutions working in harmony for the common good.

When quizzed about how they could motivate the whole village towards the goal of sanitation the Deputy Sarpanch Devjibhai Chaudhari replies “When we launched the sanitation campaign our womenfolk & Gramsabha members were one of the first to step out with a broom in their hands”. “It was such a celebration when we won the award” remembers the Sarpanch fondly, “We carried the award trophy in a procession and all the streets were lined with Tricolors”. Sanitation has now become a habit for the villagers. When nearby villages were affected from diseases like Chikunguniya and Malaria after monsoons, not a single such case was reported from Fatehpura.

Achievements and conclusion

Extensive IEC activities up to block & village levels were carried out which included publications, puppet shows, street plays (Bhawai) and other folk media, marches and rallies, use of Radio and Television, campaigns and workshops etc. As part of these awareness activities, Bal Adalats (Mock courtroom scenes for children) were organized and participants were encouraged to follow sanitation practices lest they be regarded as offenders in the eyes of law. Government of Gujarat also ensured secured water supply into villages to facilitate the sanitation program. A proper mechanism has been placed to build the capacity of the villagers through training and exposure visits including women group also to sensitize them about sanitation. Such activities involving incentivizing and linkages with various organizations led to a steep rise in achievements under TSC and Nirmal Gujarat. By Oct 2008, 65.56% IHHL’s have access to sanitation which is a steep rise from just 11.21% in 1998. All Schools & Anagwadis (Nursery) has been brought under sanitation in the state. Children are acting as ambassador of sanitation. Many villagers have adopted solid waste and composite liquid waste disposal management mechanisms. Several villagers are also using vermi-compost as a media to manage their waste. During initial two years of NGP i.e.2004-06 the numbers of villages that got Nirmal Gram Puruskar (Clean Village Awards) from the state was only 1 & 4 respectively. This has now seen a sharp rise from 2006-07 onwards in which 576 villages were declared Nirmal Grams in the state. During 2007-08, 739 villages won this award. Many more villages in Gujarat are aspiring for NGP and already more than 3000 villages are heading towards the goal of total sanitation by 2008-09.

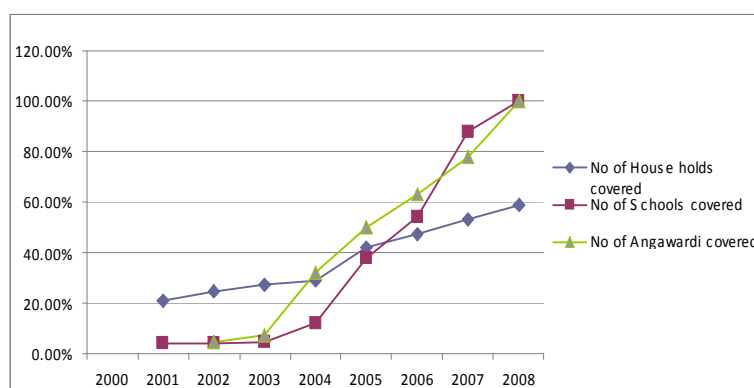


Figure 1. Sanitation coverage in Gujarat state, 2001 to 2008

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All these efforts have resulted in significant changes in the status of the individual household's sanitation particularly in sanitation coverage in rural Gujarat. In 2001, as per Government of India census report, Gujarat had sanitation coverage of about 21 percent and now it has reached to more than 65 percent in rural areas and studies have indicated a usages rate, which is higher than targeted. Regular monitoring is done at state, district and taluka level. The Chief Secretary of the state undertakes regular review of progress and initiates new strategies etc. The vast cooperative sector of the state has also been involved in the program and in some of the areas NRI families are also playing an active role by adopting villages for sanitation.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Jaipal Singh, IFS, CEO, Water and Sanitation Management Organisation (WASMO), Mr Basudev Roy, CGM (Project) WASMO for their practical information, comments and help about total sanitation and in preparing this paper.

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