



16th WEDC Conference  
Infrastructure for  
low-income communities  
Hyderabad, India 1990

Sanitation a way of life

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sanitation is generally understood as providing hardware components for use. It may be partially true. But the other aspects of sanitation, which involves the entire life and the thinking process of man is rather not given importance. The target oriented programmes followed in India and other third world countries to reach more people in shortest possible time may have some logic, but in a hurry to do so an important point is missed. That is the change of mind of the people as well of the functionaries. Without that the change of life style from insanitation to sanitation can not be expected though there may be sanitary facilities. It was thought before launching of schemes that people will automatically change their way of life towards better sanitation once some facilities are provided to them free of cost. This did not happen automatically in all cases. The reasons for that are many and varying.

The interesting aspect is that some of the functionaries at Government and non-govt. levels working for the programmes have also not been properly and adequately motivated though efforts have been made in that direction.

The success of low cost sanitation projects depends on various factors. Both favourable and unfavourable factors awaits us in the field, which are integral part of a society and system in which we operate. It depends on us how best or how worst we function so as to lead us to success or failure. But one thing is sure that these factors are to be identified and analysed before and during the operation of any project. An effort has been made in this article to reflect some of the important experiences gained in the field in last four years in Orissa State.

## 2. OBSTACLES ON THE WAY

There are various factors which are responsible for putting obstacles on the way of smooth implementation of sanitation schemes. A few are discussed below basing on actual field experiences.

### 2.1 Unfavourable human factor

One of the important factors which stands on the way of smooth implementation of sanitation programmes is unfavourable human factor. The reactions to any new ideas and programmes are different, sometimes diametrically opposite, in case of different people who are guided by their own life philosophy and the situation in which they live.

The level of perception may also vary from person to person basing on educational and social background, which affects the functioning of any scheme. The unfavourable human factor is more prominent in societies having low literacy rate and backwardness where people are not generally interested for improvement and change.

### 2.2 Priority factor

The items which have top priority with authority may not have same priority with people. It may also vary from person to person and area to area. So any scheme launched with top priority by the authority may not find favour with people who may have other problem in their priority list and the scheme may suffer. For example, a water supply or school may be more essential and wanted in an area than sanitation facilities.

### 2.3 Socio-cultural-religious factors

Insanitation leads to diseases, bacteriae and viruses are causes of that. This is a scientifically proved fact for many of us, through our education and training, who are functionaries also. It might have been heard or read by a section of people also through various sources. It is a matter of conviction on our part and we plan and launch our schemes accordingly which may not be same with all people. Some people believe that the diseases and sufferings are due to their bad actions in previous life, which they are facing now. It has nothing to do with bacteriae or viruses.

Some people think night soil is inauspicious thing, which should be kept far away from places of residence so they oppose latrine

and favour open defecation. Other superstitions, like male members not using same latrines which are used by grown up girls, are bottleneck in sanitation project in some areas. The illiteracy is one of the most important factors which stands on the way of change of mind.

#### 2.4 Sub-standard works

This is one of the most important factors which is primarily responsible for failure of some sanitation projects. A sub-standard work not only denies the required services to the people to whom provided, but also repulses other people of the area and nearby areas for a considerable period of time, who might have been motivated or who might be very responsive to get some sanitation services. This negative action of low quality work spoils other such future projects in the area and around. Moreover sub-standard works may lead to pollution of nearby water sources thereby spreading diseases, if the sanitation facilities provided are some how used and subsequently become defective. A standard work may act like nucleus and have radiation effect attracting many towards the programme.

#### 2.5 Elitist arrogance

Some functionaries in various levels may not create required confidence in people and may not have good rapport with them inspite of their hard work and best efforts, which affects the functioning of the project badly. Knowingly or unknowingly their way of life, food, talk, dress and actions etc., may be responsible for the sorry state of affairs inspite of the fact that they are good workers. This may be termed as elitist arrogance, which affects the human psychology slowly and works silently.

### 3. OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Though we may have many unfavourable factors standing on the way of sanitation programme, there is bright sides of the case which has helped in launching and running the schemes successfully in some areas.

#### 3.1 Human factor - favourable

Contrary to the general believe that illiterate and backward people have little tendency for sanitation, it is noticed that some people of all sections of society have shown inclination for sanitation facilities. It is not the social, economic or educational status which guides their desire. It is their internal urge which has acted. Instances are not rare where rich

and educated people have not shown inclination for sanitary facilities where as poor and uneducated have spontaneously wanted to have it and have got it. This factor has helped a lot in pushing the schemes through in some project areas.

#### 3.2 Physical compulsion

A desire to get sanitary facilities has also been guided by another factor - physical compulsion. In very thickly populated big villages where open spaces are not available near residences and one has to walk a considerable distance to go to the end of the village for open defecation, the desire and demand for latrine is very strong and high and schemes have become highly successful in those areas provided the quality of work is up to standard also.

#### 3.3 Motivation and education

As 100 per cent coverage is not feasible under rural sanitation, motivation may not be necessary if the villages with ideal conditions having physical compulsions to opt for sanitary latrines, are selected and the beneficiaries who have internal urge for sanitation are picked up. This has happened in some cases. It may not be possible always with area-specific projects. Moreover it may take years to pick up such areas after detailed survey. So with specific areas and villages in view motivation is a inherent part of exercise in the programme to enlighten and convert the fence sitters. With dedicated workers at disposal and proper materials at hand, motivation and education has proved to be an effective tool to overcome the mental hesitation and other short comings of the beneficiaries at large.

#### 3.4 Training and orientation

The art of motivation and education depends on the skill and soundness of knowledge of the functionaries and workers about the programme. A good hard working officer may not necessarily be proficient in a particular programme unless he or she is trained and oriented properly and adequately. The technical personnels also require detailed training about the works. A number of sanitation projects has been completed successfully due to proper training of functionaries. Committed and dedicated trained functionaries with missionary zeal have done miracles in some projects. Some of the projects are not up to expectation due to untrained and unwilling functionaries at the helm of affairs. Moreover methodologies adopted in

the training, the standard and personality of trainers and type and quality of materials used in the training has a great bearing on the qualitative aspects of training which decides the fate of the projects.

### 3.5 Communication - an essential tool

Communication gap and faulty communication leads to confusion and convey unclear, often wrong, pictures and signals about the work to the people leading to distortion of whole affair and ultimately landing at trouble. Sound communication strategy selecting appropriate medias and materials of communication has paid rich dividends in some projects. But in this field some more are left to be done always and some other persons may have to say the last word; as this is now a highly innovative area of action added by modern science and high-tech communication techniques.

### 3.6 Monitoring and evaluation

Without monitoring no project is considered to be running in the track properly. Though some think monitoring as counting and summing up numbers of works and funds involved. Actually monitoring is the check and balances in the system, provided it is applied timely and sufficiently. No project is sound in itself with action plan only unless it passes through the hazardous path of implementation, when all shortcomings in the project comes to surface and obstacles are faced. Here the role of monitoring comes which set right the wrong and removes the bottlenecks making alterations and additions, if necessary, in the original scheme. Experience shows closely and properly monitored programmes have come with flying colours where as poorly monitored and neglected one has suffered like a sick child never coming up the ground. Projects monitored from various levels such as from block, district and State levels separately and independently have shown good results and projects not getting that opportunity have their share of misfortune. (Example - Sanitation Cells at various levels)

### 3.7 Involvement of beneficiaries

Involvement of the beneficiaries in the programme including construction process and their acceptance of the project prior to launching has helped a lot in successful implementation of the projects and subsequent maintenance of the services. Whereas implementing projects as a Government scheme only without or with

little involvement of them has landed the project in trouble. Projects having some beneficiary contribution (money, materials or labour) are 100 per cent success, where as projects with full charity are not so.

### 3.8 Associating the voluntary organisations

It is no doubt a Voluntary Organisation acts as a catalyst between the authorities and the beneficiaries. We have active support of voluntary organisations, woman organisation and individual volunteers (Man and Woman) in many projects. It would not have been possible to achieve good results without their help. Unfortunately the functionaries in some projects have acted differently and never thought to or could not manage to involve such organisations and ultimately have paid the prices.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Like other infrastructures for low income communities, sanitation facilities are also low cost infrastructure to bring a change from insanitation to sanitation to provide better health and ultimately to provide better life to the needy people. Sanitation facilities may be termed as a vehicle to move in the desired direction, but like other actual vehicles of movement it also require driver, fuel and lubricant and proper road with less obstacle and resistance. The functionary in Government and non-Government levels connected with sanitation projects are drivers of this vehicle who, like expert drivers for safe and smooth journey are also to be well conversant and trained in the line. Similarly the factors which contribute for successful implementation of schemes (such as physical compulsion, committed beneficiaries, motivation, education, training, orientation, monitoring standard work etc.) may be named as fuels, lubricants and better maintenance to run the vehicle. Also the unfavourable factors on the way (such as illiteracy, superstition, socio-cultural factors, sub-standard work, improper selection of villages and beneficiaries etc.) which retards the speed of work may be termed as bad road and obstacles on the way. So for smooth launching and running of sanitation schemes, overcoming the difficulties, the functionaries at all levels as well as their conducting of various programmes are to be at the best. Otherwise this programme may remain standstill or may not run smoothly without momentum like a vehicle without proper driver, fuel and maintenance.

This may be applicable to some extent to other low-cost schemes any where with similar circumstances and conditions. Provision of fund and thereby the hardware does not solve the problem automatically. Other timely and appropriate follow up measures; like proper survey and investigation before preparing schemes, ascertaining aspiration and priorities of people, views and acceptance of people about scheme and facilities to be provided, adequate orientation and training of functionaries, arrangement for bridging communication gaps by various means and materials, involvement of voluntary organisations, woman organisations and individual volunteers (both sex), etc. are must for any scheme to succeed, so also sanitation schemes.

Sanitation does not mean using a latrine or drinking safe water only. It is the total way of life with regards to entire physical and socio-cultural environment reflecting the overall fine culture of man or society or nation. It cannot be forced from within. Of course our programmes and efforts can help to guide, enlighten, inform and educate people with help of modern facilities which may not be within their concept and reach. It may be a slow long journey. We are to wait patiently if we want result as it requires change of mind and habit, not only possessing sanitary facilities only. Sanitation a way of life seems to be easy task, but actually it is one of the difficult tasks for any functionary, specially in third world countries with adverse socio-economic-cultural conditions.

Two statements are given below:

I. SANITATION PROGRAMME

- FUNDS AND HARDWARES (AS VEHICLE)
- FACTORS FOR SMOOTH RUNNING (AS FUEL AND LUBRICANT) - 'A'
- FUNCTIONARY AND WORKERS (AS DRIVER)
- OBSTACLES ON THE WAY (AS ROAD TO RIDE) - 'B'
- HUMAN FACTOR (FAVOURABLE)
- INVOLVEMENT OF PEOPLE
- PHYSICAL COMPULSION
- ECONOMIC FACTOR
- MOTIVATION
- TRAINING

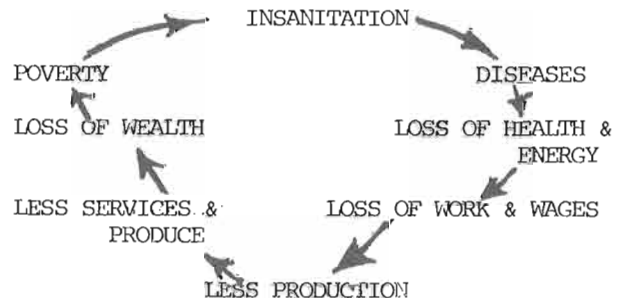
A

- EDUCATION
- ORIENTATION
- COMMUNICATION (EFFECTIVE)
- STANDARD WORK
- MONITORING
- EVALUATION
- VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS
- HUMAN FACTOR (UNFAVOURABLE)
- SUPERSTITION
- ILLITERACY
- WRONG PRIORITY
- SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTOR (ADVERSE)
- ECONOMIC FACTOR
- SUBSTANDARD WORK
- COMMUNICATION GAP
- UNWILLING FUNCTIONARY
- LACK OF SUPERVISION
- UNTRAINED FUNCTIONARY
- BENEFICIARY NOT TAKEN INTO CONFIDENCE
- SERVICES GIVEN AS CHARITY.

A

B

II. INSANITATION & POVERTY CYCLE



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