



Sanitation promotion through rural sanitary marts

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UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO sanitation by the year 2000 is among the goals set at the World Summit for Children. Uttar Pradesh, the largest state of India in terms of population constitutes 16.50 per cent of the country's population. 21 per cent rural population is covered with sanitation facilities out of which 7 per cent is through government programmes and 14 per cent through private initiatives. In last three years, the coverage through private initiatives, has been six times that of the subsidy-linked government sanitation programme which is confined to selected areas in the state, leaving a large chunk of population out of its purview.

The Rural Sanitary Mart (RSM) is a marketing outlet mainly for materials required for the construction of sanitary latrines and other sanitary facilities in rural and peri-urban areas and also for all articles which relate to sanitation package. It is a commercial enterprise with a social objective and serves as a counseling centre for those interested in having not only latrines but also other sanitary facilities.

RSM sells the following categories of materials:-

- Category I : Materials for the construction of latrines of different types such as pans, traps, footrests, pit covers, pipes, doors, cement, sand, bricks, grit etc.,
- Category II : Items relating to home sanitation such as food safes, long handle ladles, long necked water pots, brushes, broomsticks, phenyl etc.,
- Category III : Items relating to personal hygiene such as soaps, nail cutters, footwear, toothpaste, toothbrush etc.,

The RSM concept was initiated jointly by the Government of Uttar Pradesh and UNICEF in the year 1991. UNICEF has supported 309 RSMs in 77 of the 83 districts

of the State since 1991. Of these over 80 per cent are of recent origin having been operationlised after 1996. RSMs in Uttar Pradesh are managed by the following: Panchayati Raj Department (PRD), NGOs, Private Entrepreneurs and Women Self Help Groups (WSHGs).

PRD, the nodal department of Government of Uttar Pradesh for Rural Sanitation is responsible for monitoring of all the RSMs in the state. Table I gives the agency-wise break up of RSMs in Uttar Pradesh.

UNICEF supported Rural Sanitary Mart Project in four hill districts viz. Almora, Chamoli, Bageshwar and Rudraprayag with the objective of promoting sanitation and providing sanitary items to local population of remote villages at their door-step.

The following activities were undertaken under the RSM project:-

- Identification of cluster of 25 villages for each RSM in all the 23 blocks and selection of sites for RSMs;
- Orientation of grassroot functionaries and Panchyat members at village level in all the catchment villages of RSMs;
- Training of 15 local masons for each RSM in construction of low cost latrines;
- Orientation of school teachers for sanitation promotion through schools;
- Intensive IEC campaigns/village contact drives through video films, puppet shows, folk songs, street plays, village meetings etc.,
- Wall paintings depicting messages on health and hygiene on main roads and prime market places;
- Display / distribution of IEC materials viz. Posters, pamphlets, brochures, booklets etc;
- Training of village motivators for awareness creation and demand generation;

Table 1. Agency-wise break up of RSMs in Uttar Pradesh.

AGENCY	NO. OF RSMs	PERCENTAGE OF RSMs
PRD	196	64%
Private Entrepreneurs	55	18%
NGOs	48	15%
WSHGs	10	3%
Total	309	100%

- Formation of Mahila Mangal Dals (women's group) in all the villages;
- Operationalization of 23 RSMs;

The project was implemented by VADHU the nodal NGO in collaboration with 13 local NGOs during October 1996 to September 1998. The following are the findings of the project:

- Sales on RSMs followed a seasonal pattern, with better sales during winter than summers because people have more time to undertake construction during winter;
- All RSMs have sold maximum latrine sets to private buyers;
- Most RSMs do not face any competition in their area because of the availability of wide range of products, various designs and models of latrines, availability of trained masons, technical know-how and estimated costs, and their strategic locations;
- Almost all the managers of the RSM have invested their own money besides the revolving fund amounting to Rs. 50000.00 provided by UNICEF at the time of Operationalization;
- All the RSMs are economically viable i.e. each RSM is capable of meeting its recurring cost and keeping intact at least goods worth Rs. 50,000.00 at any given time. Minimum monthly recurring cost of a RSM is around Rs. 1700.00 and for break even a RSM should do a

business of Rs. 12000.00 per month in an average. Turnover of Rs. 12000.00 per month means a gross profit of Rs. 1800.00 per month at a margin of 15 per cent, which meets the minimum recurring cost of the RSM. The average monthly turnover of a RSM is Rs. 15000.00;

- Since the inception of the project till March 2000 these RSMs have done a business of Rs. 1,43,37,794 with a gross profit of Rs. 2,86,6560.00. These figures indicate that all RSMs are doing well and are sustainable. These RSMs have sold total 9598 latrine seats to private buyers. If these units would have been constructed through government subsidized programme, the cost would have been Rs. 2,87,94000.00;
- RSMs are keeping spare parts for handpumps and ORS packets for diarrhoea management;
- RSMs are regarded as Resource Centres for hygiene and sanitation in their respective areas and demand for more RSMs is forthcoming;
- Subsequently six mini RSMs have been operationalised to expand the coverage of 23 main RSMs.

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