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TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE  
AND RESILIENT WASH SERVICES

## **The genesis of ODF Koppal in India: contextualising leadership and innovations to achieve sanitation at scale**

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*From what was once the most hard to reform district in terms of sanitation coverage, to declaring itself Open Defecation Free(ODF) in March, 2018- Koppal district stands as a testimonial to Leadership & Innovations in WASH sector. The Koppal-KRISH project managed to turnaround the facets of low-WASH coverage, usage and scalability, even when it struggled with tough-terrained topography and poor human development indicators. Project initiatives like imparting leadership & change management trainings to field functionaries & devising nationally awarded, innovative prototypes for institutional WASH, catapulted the district forward as a model case for sustainable & resilient transformation. Through this paper, we examine multiple verticals of sustained innovation and leadership excellence in WASH that can help deliver sanitation success at scale, when coupled with CLTS and other behaviour change approaches. Also, this paper highlights the efficacy of using practical, context specific and multiple approaches for WASH when shrouded with local constraints.*

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### **Background and context**

*“A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.”- John C. Maxwell.*

Little would have Maxwell known that decades after he shared this roadmap for leadership, one small and remote district of India would actually set itself apart by walking on those lines. Recognizing the importance and impact of water and sanitation on public health outcomes and socio-economic development, Government of India launched the ‘Swachha Bharat Mission’ (Clean India Mission) on October 2nd, 2014 with an ambitious vision to achieve 100% household toilet coverage in the country by 2019. The state of Karnataka registered a splendid 49.72% increment in rural sanitation coverage since October 2nd, 2014, while surging ahead with rural household sanitation coverage of 88.70% as of March, 2018 ([Format A03]). But North Karnataka region of India continues to lag behind in terms of human development and reports heightened levels of socio-cultural taboos and prejudices. The region faces many challenges in terms of low literacy rate, cultural barriers and economic constraints.

Koppal was one of the least served districts of North Karnataka in terms of water, sanitation and hygiene services, with a total population of 1.19 million spread across 2,34,128 households in 4 administrative blocks, 153 Gram Panchayats (village level administrative unit), 587 villages and more than 700 habitations. More than 70% of Koppal’s population resides in rural areas with a population density of 216 per sq km (District Fact Sheet, NFHS 4). As per Baseline Survey (2012) estimates of Clean India Mission, around 90.48% rural households of the district were not having Individual Household Latrine (IHHL) coverage ([Format A03]). The district also struggles with geographical issues of sheet rock terrain and drought prone topography. Over the course of last 15 years, 11 were declared as years of drought in the district. Nevertheless, Koppal made remarkable progress since the inception of Clean India Mission, with 88.84% increase in coverage of households with toilets. By 31st October 2017, around 82% individual households were using toilets and on International Women’s Day 2018, the district registered a 100 % coverage status in the central ministry’s management information system ([Format A04]). This paper elaborates on the practical interventional experience of the project and summarises the key lessons learnt. By examining and

analysing various sustained and innovative behaviour change & Inter Personal Communication (IPC) practices adopted, it tries to emphasize on the importance of local leadership and the critical role that a District Administration can play in achieving ODF outcomes. One approach can not sufficiently cater to the needs of challenging environments and behaviour change methods need to evolve with local constraints. Through this paper, key factors which may help in contributing towards positive outcomes at scale are highlighted, while addressing the key question- What has been the role of institutional environment & administrative leadership in building capacities that led to sustained and scalable success?

### **Project description**

The project, was implemented with the objective of improving sanitation coverage and behaviour change outcomes in the district at household level. Dedicated teams, with a campaign mode momentum, were set up at the administrative, functional and community level for management and co-ordination of project deliverables (Figure 1). Implementation of interventions was led by the district administration through these teams. Nodal officers were appointed for every Gram Panchayat to review the progress and block level mason trainings were also conducted. The total scale of the project stood at approximately INR 188.50 crore or US \$ 29 million. For the year 2017, the project paced up immensely and garnered a financial contribution of US \$ 3.3 million from Government of India and US \$ 37,000 from UNICEF. A special focus was kept on how to reach the most vulnerable sections of community such as - Below Poverty Line (BPL) families, small and marginal farmers, landless labourers and families dependent on a woman breadwinner.

### **Project achievements, innovations and key insights**

#### **Capacity building- coupling leadership and change management skills with CLTS**

Koppal topped the state list during the year 2013-14 by constructing around 40,000 IHHLs. The district had shown signs of sustained leadership and acceleration towards sanitation coverage. Consequently, trainings were provided in order to institutionalize the efforts of local administration and to build the capacity of block development officers and field functionaries, towards a more focused scaling up strategy. In the year 2015, UNICEF supported the district to train all the 146 Panchayat Development Officers (PDOs), 43 District Officials, and 96 Child Protection officials through Change Management and Leadership Excellence (CMLE) training. Also, UNICEF has been supporting capacity building interventions through community approaches to sanitation (CATS/CLTS) methods since the commencement of the project. This training helped PDOs' and district officials to inculcate exemplary managerial and leadership skills that gave impetus to their work at community level and catapulted towards the achievement of ODF villages at scale.

Specific objectives of the CMLE trainings were:

- Mentor PDO's and district officials to be mentally, emotionally and psychologically fit and to perform better in vocational and social sphere.
- Guide PDO's and district officials to change their mindset and work with the community to achieve ODF villages.
- Inculcate managerial and leadership skills amongst PDO's and district officials so as to alter their perspective towards open defecation situation among masses.

#### **District communication plan & strategy- Innovations in Social & Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC)**

The SBCC and Information Education Communication (IEC) interventions employed in the district spanned across a unique combination of technical innovations, mass media and strategic messaging via:

##### ***Postcard campaign***

1, 26, 000 postcards were written by students who did not possess a toilet, to promote IHHL construction among their parents. Postcards were sent to their parents with positive & emotive messages that hinged on the benefits of stopping open defecation. Going forward, as part of an effective follow up strategy, school children who were instrumental in getting a toilet constructed at their homes were acknowledged and rewarded with caps, badges and wrist bands which were imprinted with a positive SBCC message- '*My Toilet, My Pride*'.

### ***Human chain for Clean India, Clean Koppal***

As part of the 72nd Independence day celebrations, Koppal project team organised the formation of a 15 km long circular human chain involving more than 10,000 people from all walks of life, including school children, religious and political leaders, elected representatives, media people and officers and staff of various departments (Photograph 1). Periodic meetings were held to closely monitor and plan the event. The event served as an effective SBCC tool and started with an oath taking ceremony where everyone pledged to build toilets in their respective houses and discourage others from defecating in the open. A live coverage of the event through FM radio gave a lot of visibility to the ODF project and the progress was accelerated further in the district with heightened public vigour and mass momentum.

### ***Street plays***

With the underlying aim of conveying the need for toilets, the health benefits of their usage, and their effect on dignity and empowerment of women, Koppal roped in street artists who were quite effective in passing on the message and were able to connect with the people at a deeper level. The plays performed by these artists conveyed toilet FAQ's in a conversational manner with skilfully written poetic scripts that combined humour with real life situations. A baseline survey conducted in rural Karnataka in 2012 helped identify villages that had 25% or less coverage of individual household latrines (IHHL) and these were targeted through sustained IEC by the publicity department. Several teams were formed to perform in as many as 400 villages in the first year and subsequently covering all the 587 villages and 153 gram panchayats. This approach was lauded as a short film titled '*Message- street plays of Koppal*', among the five short films launched by the Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, on the Clean India people's movement titled- *An Open Mind*.

## **Institutional sanitation and maintenance - Innovations in technology and toilet design**

### ***Low cost school urinals for boys***

In more than 1000 schools of the district, local teachers and officials from the Koppal district administration came together and installed low cost urinals made out of waste water cans (20 litre capacity). A unique brainchild of Koppal District's current Chief Executive Officer, the idea was proposed to all the district school authorities, given the fact that toilets in government aided schools of the district were found to be unhygienic and unclean. The unbearable stench and poor sanitary conditions of the toilets often led to low pupil attendance in the schools. With a novel 'Child to Community' approach employed by the project, a ripple effect of triggering a sense of ownership among students and behavioral change among people was created. Training sessions on making the urinals were organized by using a '*Do It Yourself*' approach with school kids. The project drew vast attention at a Cleanliness Hackathon (Swachhathon 1.0) competition conducted by Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Government of India in the month of September, 2017 at Delhi. 57 projects were selected for semi-finals out of 3000 entries and low cost urinals were one amongst them. Finally, the innovation made it to the finals under the "Operation & Maintenance" category.

- Each urinal unit was built from two plastic cans and a soak pit structure, with a cost ranging from Rs. 800 to Rs.1, 200 or US\$ 12-18 (Photograph 2).
- The urinals were built and installed in more than 1,000 schools, in a span of 1 month.
- Every urinal is connected with a sustainable single soak pit disposal system.
- The soak pits attached with urinals have multiple layers of pebbles and stones through which the liquid waste is absorbed when passed, without contaminating the groundwater.

### **Construction at scale - Mission 200 Hours: 20,000 toilets in 200 hours**

An ambitious aim to construct 20000 IHHLs in 200 hours starting from 8<sup>th</sup> September to 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2017 was set up in the district. Nodal officers were appointment for follow up and bulk work orders were generated. This approach stands as a testimonial to initiative and leadership excellence of trained district officials. Prior planning and execution was done by dedicated district teams to procure construction materials in bulk and mobilize masons and contractors. Sustained leadership by the CEO through constant monitoring with field visits further added to the momentum of such a wide scale campaign mode construction. Involvement of women self help groups in terms of initial financial support for construction was solicited and funds upto the tune of US \$ 1.5 lakh were mobilized. The next stage of the mission- "*Operation Antaah*" (symbolising 'Closure' or 'drawing to a close'), was planned for achieving 100% toilet coverage by International Women's Day- i.e. by 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2018. The operation's SBCC approach was to

nudge the community to never look back towards open defecation. For scaling up toilet coverage in schools, the district went a step ahead and mobilised funds upto the tune of Rs.15000 or US \$230 per school toilet from 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission funds.

### ***LED trucks for mass SBCC***

During ‘Operation Antaah’, the district stipulated one truck for each Gram Panchayat, which disseminated positive SBCC messages through animated videos during evenings- evenings being the most ideal time to gain the community’s attention. The strategy was to draw attention of the community through a novel mixed media approach. The messages were designed to be socially sensitive and hinged on a three pronged strategy that focussed on:

- Health – Emphasising on the low medical expenditure & health benefits of having a toilet & stopping open defecation
- Pride – Symbolising toilets with pride, self respect and dignity of the end user.
- Security – Equating the benefits of toilet usage with physical security of the end user, whether women, children, elderly or adults.

### **Impact of inter personal communication and individual leadership initiatives**

#### ***Case of Mallama***

Mallama, a 16 year old adolescent girl, studying in a high school of Gangavathi block, staged a Gandhian Satyagraha (hunger strike) for 3 consecutive days against her own family, just so that she could convince and motivate them to build a toilet. Mallama was moved by the agony that arose from the lack of toilet, after IPC campaigns on health and hygiene awareness were conducted by teachers in schools. The family was unable to construct a toilet because of poverty and space constraints, but the district administration and community at large came forward to help them construct a toilet. Such was the impact of her initiative, that Prime Minister of India publicly applauded her effort in his fortnightly country wide citizen engagement talk.

#### ***Case of Sharanamma***

In order to motivate peers in her community, a 45 year old vegetable vendor- Sharanamma Devi, has been giving away 1kg tomatoes free of cost - to each and every home that has built a toilet in Dhanapur village of Koppal district. As of March 3, 2017, 227 households out of Dhanapur’s 579 homes were yet to have access to sanitation facilities. Today 100% of the households in Dhanapur have IHHL coverage.

### **Challenges and lessons learnt**

- Koppal has come out as a model case where imbibing leadership skills in order to counter challenging constraints and mindsets has delivered success at scale. Sustaining these skills among the local leadership champions and district officials for a long term is one challenge to be countered, so that the results achieved remain sustainable for decades to come.
- The major challenge foreseen in the context of Koppal lies in sustaining usage behaviour, especially when the district is vulnerable to water scarce conditions owing to a drought prone geographical area.
- Tough progress on behaviour change due to illiteracy levels, cultural issues and caste barriers have been huge bottle necks in attaining scale. Yet, the district managed to overcome these and it will be a continuous effort to ensure that these factors don’t emerge again as causes for slip-back.
- Since sanitation schemes in India are incentive driven and are not populist or remuneration based schemes, it is more challenging to garner motivation levels in the community & among elected representatives at grass-root level for IHHL construction.
- Sanitation being a topic associated with Social Taboos, people often feel uncomfortable in engaging in a dialogue about something they consider to be a private affair, making it more difficult to change norms.

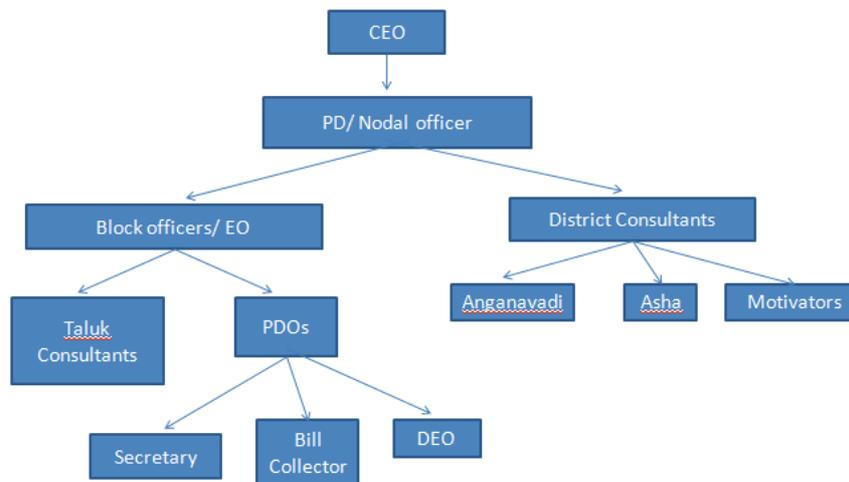
### **Conclusion and way forward**

- ODF Sustainability Plan for Koppal District- Going forward the district plans to educate first time toilet users on the why and how of using a toilet. Also, regular assessments on the requirements of IHHLs from time to time will be done. The district team has initiated work on a strategic sustainability plan in order to monitor usage through regular field visits. Monitoring committees have been set up at village

level in order to regulate observation by elected representatives and field officers. A sustainability assessment and action plan supported by UNICEF is also underway in order to track outcomes.

- The district would acknowledge and award the community’s support in maintaining open defecation free status at ward and village level. Exposure visits for natural and opinion leaders of the ODF villages to other ODF sustained villages across India are in pipeline, so as to boost cross pollination of knowledge and best practices.
- Hygiene components will be implemented in public places such as schools, child day care centres & public health centres among others. The district is strongly focusing on improving handwashing practices among children & frontline workers as well as community at large.
- One of the core targets would be to ensure household water connection so that people get affordable & accessible supply of water, available at all times.
- Keeping the needs of women in focus & to ensure more gender equity & inclusivity, the district will be rolling out a pilot intervention on Menstrual Hygiene Management and will train MHM sensitive leaders and officials.
- Also, models for waste segregation at source and solid waste management are being evaluated and the district plans to put them in place soon.

In conclusion, collective behaviour change can be accelerated rapidly through innovations which are tailored as per local context and when a policy shift in achieving sanitation at scale is supported by a vigorous and enthusiastic leadership at administrative levels. Despite several challenges, KRISH project has been successfully implemented at scale and the lessons learnt have been incorporated in informing future project activities. This paper can serve as a relevant guide for regions with similar contexts to use this replicable model and enhance the impetus of their work on shifting the paradigms of social norms.



**Figure 1. Organisational structure of Project Management Unit**

Source: District Administration, Koppal



**Photograph 1. More than 10,000 people strong human chain in Koppal**



**Photograph 2. Waste plastic cans recycled as low cost urinals**

### **Acceleration through UNICEF support**

In the year 2010, in order to improve access to WASH services, UNICEF had set up a Regional Communication and Capacity Development Unit (RCCDU) for 6 backward districts of North Karnataka and Koppal was among them. Through RCCDU, the districts were provided handholding support in formulation of a strategic plan to reduce Open Defecation. Under the UNICEF- RCCDU's, Koppal district was very progressive and active. Hence, further assistance was provided to build the capacity of the Village Development Officers and District officers. Going forward, UNICEF plans to further strengthen this support through ODF Sustainability & WASH in Institutions projects, upto the tune of US\$ 45,000 for the year 2018.

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### **Note**

This paper is based on an interventional experience and the views expressed herein are solely those of the authors. This work does not necessarily reflect the views, policies and opinions of Government of India, UNICEF, partner organisations at large or any other government body.

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