

Innovative Sanitation Solutions and Best Practices of LEAF Society

A. Problem Context

In India 626 million people defecate in open and 780 million people in India do not have access to



proper sanitation facilities. India is global capital of open defecation with more people practising open defecation than all other countries combine. More than 1000 children die every day due to poor sanitation practices and yet the budget allocation by the government is hardly 0.01% of the GDP. In Tamilnadu more than 76% of the rural population practice open defecation and poor sanitary practices are the biggest source of water contamination and pollution. A recent study by the Water and Sanitation

Program of the World Bank estimates that inadequate sanitation costs India the equivalent of 6.4% of it's GDP or Rs.2.4 Trillion or US\$.53.8 billion, whereas the allocation of GDP on sanitation is mere 0.01%. Poor sanitation practices kills a child in every 20-second and each gram of human feces can contain 10,000,000 viruses, 1,000,000 bacteria, 1,000 parasite cysts, 100 parasite eggs. Open defecation contaminate and pollute water sources in the villages and are the major reason for many waterborne infections and disease like diarrhea, cholera, jaundice, skin disease, etc. LEAF Society's baseline shows that more than 95% of houses in Tamilnadu have more than one cell phone, TV & cable connection. Festival expenses of poor families are around Rs. 6,000 – 8,000 per year along with mobile recharging expenses of Rs. 3,000 – 6,000; but they never willing to make any investment on sanitation or toilet. Lack of attitude & willingness is the biggest problem in addressing sanitation conditions of India. Our research and working experience very clearly demonstrate that, lack of attitude, poor behavioural patterns, gender imbalances plays a crucial role in adopting safe sanitation, personal & menstrual hygiene practices. Poverty mixed with illiteracy and limited exposure or sensitivity towards safe sanitation makes this issue, deeper, wider and stronger among marginalized and vulnerable communities. The situations of women are worst in the villages.

B. . The innovation / best practice

To address this issue, LEAF Society has adopted innovative four square approach. This approach is aiming to bring the desired changes in the attitude, behaviour patterns and interpersonal communication of vulnerable communities towards safe sanitation & personal hygiene behaviour patterns. LEAF Society believes, if children's attitudes, habits &



behaviours fine-tuned towards safe sanitation and personal hygiene patterns, we are sure they will try to influence their siblings, parents and peers at schools. Children's components are one of the most successful behaviour modification methods adopted by LEAF Society. Apart from children, we are also promoting women's water & sanitation society's, which exclusively promote savings towards creating hygiene assets. These women societies practice savings and thrift towards hygiene and provide loans for toilets, water, rainwater harvesting, incinerators, etc. Children & women are the two squares and remaining two are, creating innovative behaviour modification tools & techniques, IEC, Interpersonal communication tools, short films, games, booklets, pamphlets, CDs, DVDs, folk arts, etc. With these tools, we are trying to sensitize the village communities and trying to generate more demand for toilets. The final square of the approach is to meet the generated demand through adequate credit or grant facilities. If, these four squares are adopted properly, we are sure, we will be able to bring the desired change in the attitudes and habits & behaviours of communities.

With the above mentioned approach LEAF Society has a target of constructing 10,000 units within five years out of which nearly 2000 units have been completed and 1000 units are under progress. We also have available opportunities to construct an additional 8,000 units in Namakkal district.

C. The innovative approaches of LEAF Society are,

C.1 Convergence of MNREGAS & NBA schemes of Government of India.

LEAF Society was, in fact the first Organisation to suggest the convergence and also capitalized the opportunity to converge both these schemes. We have the potential to construct 8,000 toilets in Namakkal district converging both MNREGAS & NBA schemes & have completed 800 units and 1500 units are under construction. We are utilizing Rs. 4500 or 26 working days for toilets under MNREGAS and are also help the families to claim Rs. 5,700 under NBA.



This is one of the most successful schemes as, we are capitalizing as much as we can. By this component, we are extremely happy that, government's funds are properly utilised and converted as household permanent asset.

C.2 MFI's linkages for Toilet construction:

LEAF Society has mobilized nearly Rs. 60,00,000 as loans from MFIs towards constructing individual latrines and our leverage of funds are increasing day by day. We have completed more than 500 latrines through MFI loans and 200 more under progress. We are also trying additional resources through various sources like MFI's, banks and other formal financial institutions. We have plans to mobilize additional funds of nearly Rs. 10 crores to meet the target of our 10,000 units in a district.

C.3 Credit for Creating Hygiene Assets

LEAF Society has convinced NABARD Bank of Government of India and mobilized loans for Rs. 15 lakhs towards construction of 150 toilets from vulnerable communities. This is given as revolving fund for LEAF Society, which being converted as soft loans to create hygiene assets among

vulnerable communities like toilets, water connections, incinerators, rainwater harvesting structures, etc. All the loans & assets created are being monitored closely and being made sure that, the assets are created and are being used by poor families. Under this scheme, we have provided loans for 250 units and are in the process of mobilising additional resources. We lend at 12% pa, which is the lowest rate of interest across India and people are really happy to take loan from us and convert the loans in to hygiene assets.

C.4 Promotion of Sanitation Society's:

As part of many innovations, we have created 15 women society's with membership of more than 220 poor women, who are practicing thrift & savings towards creating hygiene assets like toilets, bath rooms, water connections, etc. These women save minimum Rs. 100 every month and savings are being lent among group member to meet their various sanitation needs. LEAF Society is planning to federate this society's which will be first exclusive federation on sanitation. These societies maintain regular audited accounts with proper bank accounts. LEAF Society is trying to provide additional loans to these members.



D. Impacts of the innovation / best practice

One of the most significant achievements of the project is, we have mobilized an amount of Rs. 3.6 crores towards sanitation project.

Initially, we have never thought that, we would be able to mobilize such high capital for constructing toilets and we are happy to touch such a great milestone. This project has also mobilized employment opportunities for 13,739 people & all these toilets are being used by nearly 6,000 people. With constructed toilets, nearly 1500 Metric Tons of human waste have been disposed off in safe manner. If, these toilets were never constructed, such huge amount of human waste might have polluted local water bodies and natural resources and might have spread many diseases losing in productivity, employment and costing medical expenses.



The government fund, which is meant for toilets has been utilised to the maximum extent, as we have converted Rs. 11,200 under NBA scheme exclusively for each toilets. Government funds have been converted in to real assets, which are very vital to poor families. We were also able to stimulate local economy by investing- back in to purchasing raw materials for construction.

LEAF Society made thousands of school children to adopt safe sanitation practices through our JOYFUL LEARNING centres and school hygiene campaigns. We have covered most of government

schools in Namakkal district and trained them on safe hand washing, personal & menstrual hygiene management, solid & liquid waste management and school toilets managements. LEAF Society very strongly believes that, once, these children became adult or managing their own families, they will adopt to safe sanitation practices. LEAF Society is also intensively advocating for including safe sanitation & hygiene practices in school curriculums of Tamilnadu.

Sanitation project of LEAF Society has created much impact for most vulnerable communities like scheduled caste and Arundhathiyar communities. For the first time in their history, these vulnerable communities have been sensitised, oriented and trained on personal & menstrual hygiene, safe sanitation & drinking water practices, solid & liquid waste management, usage of toilets, etc. These communities are considered to be the lowest in the social strata and changing their behaviour patterns towards safe sanitation was one of the toughest tasks. These communities have constructed toilets and are happy to use them.

LEAF Society is now exploring possibilities of introducing business models based on sanitation activities like production of sanitary napkins, establishing a hallow blocks production units, training women leaders on masonry skills, etc. We are also thinking over experimenting producing bio gas from community based toilets in selected villages and are strongly advocating for Urine Diverted Dry Latrines (UDDL) or Eco San toilets for hilly locations.

E. Implications to mainstream practices and policies

LEAF Society was the first agency to initiate the convergence campaign in Tamilnadu and we have initiated this campaign way back in 2012 in Namakkal district. We have also motivated Village Presidents and Government officials on convergence campaign and are constructed hundreds of toilets in Namakkal district. We have a target of constructing 8,000 units in the district utilising the funds from MNREGAS & NBA schemes of government of India.

We have also able to influence the policy decision of NABARD bank of India to introduce sanitation product in their loan portfolio and we have successfully received loan cum grant from NABARD exclusively for sanitation. This has created way for many NGOs to apply for NABARD and seek loan cum grant for sanitation project. It's the first time that a bank, has given loan, which considered to be non-productive activity, as they only provide loans for income generation activities. LEAF Society was able to break that mind-set and created a policy platform conducive for sanitation projects.



LEAF Society was also able to influence many NGOs and schools to use 'PERSONAL HYGEINE DAIRY' designed & produced by LEAF Society. These tools were used by 15,000 school children in Tamilnadu during World Toilet Day celebrations and were able to influence their behaviour patterns towards safe hygiene practices. In addition to that, 25,000 cards are being printed, which will be circulated among schools children in Tamilnadu. LEAF Society is also influencing education department to introduce this tool and include sanitation as part of their curriculum.