

ADITYA BIRLA CENTRE FOR COMMUNITY INITIATIVES AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

• Background

The Aditya Birla Centre for Community Initiatives and Rural Development provides the strategic direction, and the thrust areas for our work ensuring performance management as well. Their focus is on the all-round development of the communities around our plants located mostly in distant rural areas and tribal belts. Their partners in development are government bodies, district authorities, village panchayats and the end beneficiaries — the villagers. The Government has, in their 5-year plans, special funds earmarked for human development and we recourse to many of these.

At the same time, they network and collaborate with like-minded bilateral and unilateral agencies to share ideas, draw from each other's experiences, and ensure that efforts are not duplicated. At another level, this provides a platform for advocacy. Their rural development activities span five key areas and their single-minded goal here is to help build model villages that can stand on their own feet. Their focus areas are healthcare, education, sustainable livelihood, infrastructure and espousing social causes.

The vision is to actively contribute to the social and economic development of the communities in which they operate, in so doing build better sustainable way of life for the weaker sections of the society and raise the country's human development index.

• Location, Date

Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala

• Areas

Rural

• Stage/Scale

All these initiatives are currently underway as core programmes of the centre.

• Objective of the assignment

Build a better, sustainable way of life for the weaker sections of society and raise the country's human development index.

• What was done

- The footprint of their community work straddles 2,500 villages. In working with the communities, they gauge what their real needs are.
- Of the 2,500 villages that, they are engaged in, they have zeroed in on 300 villages, which they hope to morph into model villages. Making of a Model Village entails ensuring self-reliance in all aspects viz., education, healthcare and family welfare, infrastructure, agriculture and watershed management, and working towards

sustainable livelihood patterns. Fundamentally, ensuring that their development reaches a stage wherein village committees take over the complete responsibility and the teams become dispensable. It is against this backdrop that one will dwell on the Group's experience in sanitation.

- The Foundation has been providing water on a continual basis to the villages that are in proximity to their Plants. But this is for their basic needs. With water scarcity, open spaces seemed perhaps the only option to the villagers. Hence to tackle the issues related to sanitation, they had to first grapple with the challenge of tapping new avenues of water.
- For this, the Foundation evolved a multi – pronged strategy based on an integral development plan. Various schemes of the Government viz., Swajaldhara Yojana, Jalnidhi, Rajeev Gandhi National Drinking Water Scheme, and many more were used and these schemes enabled them to extend their reach as catalysts benefitting thousands of villagers.
- The second plank of our strategy entailed a massive awareness drive on cleanliness linking it with hygiene and sanitation. District Authorities and NGOs were roped in this endeavour to sensitize and persuade the villagers.
 - The Foundation recourse to 'Nukkad Nataks" (street level plays) and puppet shows to drive messages linking hygiene and good health to sanitation. It was highlighted how they could prevent water borne and sanitation diseases from occurring and spreading, if we were able to have toilets blocks in the villages.
 - In the last 5 years, the Foundation has set up over 10,000 toilets in villages in proximity to the company's plants across India. These include community complexes and at several schools as well. In doing so, they have helped provide sanitation facilities to nearly a million people in the villages that they work in, through collaborations and in an inclusive manner.



• Impact

- In the village of Devari (Renukoot, Uttar Pradesh), the campaign was started in a creative way. Using the platform of the Panchayat General Meeting, the Foundation began energizing the villagers by highlighting how Devari can be positioned on the map of UP, if it received the President's Award under the Nirmal Gram Yojana. The thought of acquiring this fame was a great booster. This did help, and a year down the line, the Devari Pradhan did receive this Award.

- Of the 300 model villages that the Foundation is engaged in, 60 have already reached the level of model villages and most of these have reasonable sanitation facilities. Of these have attained 100% sanitation.

- **Innovation**

Developing of model villages in a phased manner underpins the strategy of the organisation. Fundamentally ensuring that development reaches a stage where village committees take over the complete responsibility.

- **Lessons learnt**

- Having one year plans and three year plans for community projects with mile stones and measurable targets has enabled factoring in accountability and performance management in the projects.
- Working as a catalyst and networking with the government and other like minded bodies.

- **Financials**

The Group spends in excess of INR 250 crore annually, inclusive of the running of 18 hospitals and 42 schools.

- **Implementer Contact Persons**

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- **Sources and References**

- Company Website
- Corporate sector involvement in Sanitation by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), 2013