

# MAKING SANITATION A WAY OF LIFE FOR RURAL INDIA - AMBUJA CEMENT FOUNDATION

## • Background

Sanitation is the priority for Ambuja Cement Foundation (ACF) in its endeavour towards building a healthy community. ACF understands that sanitation can have rippling effect on one's life and therefore its impact should not be seen in isolation. Poor sanitation heightens the possibility of health disorders and diseases that can severely hamper the productivity of people and can therefore lead to social and economic misery.

Lack of toilets is also a big concern for women's safety. Limited awareness on improved sanitation practices, poor economic conditions, lack of decision making power for women, are some of the factors fuelling the poor sanitation in rural communities.

ACF, currently working in 11 states and 22 locations, has adopted a holistic approach to make sanitation an integral part of the rural communities. With people's participation at all stages of the project, the focus is on creating a demand for healthy lifestyle rather than building mere infrastructural facilities. Through the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), ACF ensures an active involvement of the community in achieving better sanitation practices.

## • Location, Date

Maharashtra, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab; 2011

## • Areas

Rural

## • Stage/Scale

Implementing in 11 states and 22 locations

## • Objective of the assignment

To energise, involve and enable communities to realise their potential.

## • What was done

ACF's sanitation programme is being implemented at two different levels:

- **Efforts to create open defecation free villages:** ACF has been consistently driving the household sanitation initiative by mobilizing community with the focus of bringing behavioural change and making OD as totally unacceptable. The ACF team has been driving the household sanitation through *awareness drives, toilet construction and strengthening the Village Health and Sanitation Committees (VHSC)*. ACF has specifically identified women and children as the frontrunners of the sanitation drive who are actively steering behavioural change and generating demands.
  - Women's Federations in *Chandrapur (Maharashtra) and Kodinar (Gujarat)* have played instrumental role in encouraging people to construct toilets in their households. The two Federations, with 488 SHGs and over 6124 members are driving communities to adopt hygienic practices. With the help of financial

agencies, the Federations have been supported with the revolving fund of approximately INR 4.5 million. Loans applied for toilet construction are given prime importance and disbursed on priority. This initiative had proved that though a non-returning investment, people do account for a sanitation loan responsibly.

- In *Darlaghat (Himachal Pradesh)*, ACF has elicited the support of young children from the community by making them responsible to ensure an open defecation free village. Known as *“Swachata Doot” (Messengers of Cleanliness)*, these children spread the message by demonstrating hygiene and cleanliness in their allocated area.
- ACF has built sanitation parks in Rabriyawas (Rajasthan), Kodinar (Gujarat) and Chandrapur (Maharashtra) with low cost and durable prototypes for household toilets. Sanitation parks demonstrate low cost toilet models made by fly ash bricks and concrete blocks.

Apart from construction and use of toilets, ACF is also mobilizing communities on solid and liquid waste management by promoting use of soak pits, biogas, community dustbins and systematic drainage system. Additionally, the Foundation is also planning to initiate household solid waste collection in collaboration of PRI in Ropar.

- **School Sanitation:** Lack of sanitation in schools is one of the major causes of school dropouts, especially girls. The school-wise survey conducted in 231 core villages identified the need to build/repair toilets in 267 schools. ACF promotes school sanitation by forming vigilance committees of school children, creating awareness on improved sanitation practices and regular follow-ups. Apart from toilet construction and repair, there is strong emphasis on its maintenance. School children themselves play an active role in maintaining the school toilets.
  - In Chandrapur, children from government schools have set an innovative model. Here children, along with teachers and parents have set up vegetable and flower gardens in schools. They sell the produce in local market and parts of the returns are used for maintaining toilets in schools.

### ACF MODEL



## • Impact

In 2014, ACF conducted a baseline survey in its 232 core villages in 15 locations that showed only 57% households had toilet facility, several of which was left unused. Today, more than 70% households in villages neighbouring Ambuja Cement have toilets and 64 villages have achieved total sanitation with 100% toilet coverage.



**School Sanitation:** ACF covered 176 schools with new toilet blocks constructed in 88 schools and toilet blocks repaired in 75 blocks and water facility created in 13 schools.

## • Challenges and Issues

- Open defecation (OD) is perceived to be an acceptable and harmless practice. Unlike SEDI or micro irrigation, sanitation is not perceived as an investment which would create revenue. Making people realize it being an uncompromising necessity was really challenging.
- Another major challenge in fighting open defecation in rural areas is the deep rooted belief that a toilet construction is a costly affair. To overcome this challenge, low cost and durable prototypes for household toilets parks were constructed.

## • Innovation

- Low cost and durable prototypes for household toilets were developed for people believed that a toilet construction is a costly affair.
- Revolving funds are given to the women's federations for providing loans for toilet construction. Loans applied for toilet construction are given prime importance and disbursed on priority.
- Self-sustaining systems were developed. E.g. - In Chandrapur, children from government schools have set an innovative model. Here children, along with teachers and parents have set up vegetable and flower gardens in schools. They sell the produce in local market and part of the returns is used for maintaining toilets in schools.

## • Lessons learnt

Adopting a holistic approach by creating a sense of ownership amongst community members thus bringing about behavioural change was the major learning. Through strategic adoption of bottom-up approach ensuring active participation from the community, ACF today has been able to make sanitation a vital part of rural lifestyle. There is a demand created for clean and hygienic surroundings and supportive infrastructure is therefore made best use of. Further, women and children playing crucial roles in the project, sanitation is more of community driven initiative. For ACF's community, toilet is not an expense but an investment that pays off in terms of good health, reduced medical expenditure, women's safety and dignity.

## • Financials

Revolving funds are given to the women's federations for providing loans for toilet construction. With the help of financial agencies, the Federations have been supported with

the revolving fund of approximately INR 4.5 million. This initiative had proved that though a non-returning investment, people do account for a sanitation loan responsibly.

- **Economic sustainability/Revenue Model**

- ACF model focuses on creating ownership by awareness building and strengthening institutions for long term sustainability.
- At some places, self-sustaining systems were developed. E.g. - In Chandrapur, children from government schools have set an innovative model. Here children, along with teachers and parents have set up vegetable and flower gardens in schools. They sell the produce in local market and part of the returns is used for maintaining toilets in schools.

- **Implementer Contact Persons**

Not Available

- **Sources and References**

- Study Submitted by Ambuja Cement Foundation
- Company Website