

SANITATION FOR LIFE (S4L) – ACC Limited

- **Background**

There has always been a big gap between sanitation requirements and the ground situation of sanitation levels in India. The situation in rural areas is particularly poor. In addition, access to good quality building material, at competitive prices either for affordable housing or building toilets/sanitation units has always remained a challenge.

Situation in ACC plant neighbourhood villages was not much different. Regularly conducted health camps for the communities in ACC plant neighbourhoods revealed that prevalence of certain diseases, generally attributable to poor sanitation, such as Diarrhoea and Malaria, are some of the most common diseases in these areas. Since the need for sanitation in rural areas, where most of ACC's fourteen plant operations are located, is huge, ACC, as part of its commitment to better quality of life for its host communities, geared up to develop a national level project with pragmatic sanitation solutions.

In this perspective, work was initiated to develop cost effective quality sanitation solutions for different geographies and it was felt that there would be a simultaneous need for having decentralised quality building material production centres to effectively reach out to distant rural pockets. Since cement is ACC's area of expertise, in-house knowledge on producing high quality, environment friendly building material came naturally with it. ACC initiated an innovative inclusive business project in the form of Green Building Centres (GBC) to help produce high quality, environment friendly building blocks like bricks, blocks, panels, tiles, door frames, window frames etc.

Like any other inclusive business project, this project has also created a win-win situation for the community as well as the business by aiming to reach the economic as well as social targets outlined in the business sustainability road map.

- **Location, Date**

Though the project has been implemented in many states across India, following is a case example of S4L project in Alwar district (Rajasthan); 2013

- **Areas**

Rural

- **Stage/Scale**

Though in the long run the project is meant to reach out to sanitation deficient areas across the country, presently the initiative is particularly focused on 200 villages having a population of 0.6 million, located primarily around company's fourteen plant operations.

- **Objective of the assignment**

To address sanitation challenges in rural India through rural sanitation entrepreneurs.

• What was done

The whole project was divided into three stages:

1. Review of sanitation market in selected geography

In the first phase “Review of Sanitation market and business opportunities”, the Ecosystem Mapping research was conducted that focused on exploring a range of issues relating to the overall market context for sanitation products. This helped to understand the overall Sanitation context and develop the elaborative and concrete plan for the succeeding phases.

2. Design & Prototypes development

Under the “Design and develop prototypes” stage, the focus was on identifying and prototyping sanitation products to address different segments. For this purpose, sanitation parks were set-up. In this phase, design manual, marketing catalogue and other appropriate communication materials were also developed. Subsequently, feedback of key stakeholders, on the various prototypes developed in the two sanitation parks, was gathered.

3. Business and marketing support with handholding to the selected entrepreneur

In the third and final phase, “Support the entrepreneur”, support was provided to entrepreneur in undertaking intensive marketing of various toilet models directly to rural households through innovative van campaigns and direct marketing campaigns. Support was also provided to develop business and marketing plans and effective communication materials, developing Management Information System (MIS) and other documentations to track their overall sales.

ACC’s partner NGO working with the community generated awareness and triggers the community towards safe sanitation practices. Various participatory methods such as: Nukkad-natak, transect walk in village, walk of shame etc. were undertaken for behavioral change communication. The village sanitation committee was revived and their capacity building process was undertaken. Further, sanitation champions were identified from each hamlet, who further helped to facilitate the process of sensitization in the village. A sanitation micro-plan was made for the village and, in close coordination with Panchayat and block officials, individual households were identified for Individual Household (IHHL) construction. Emphasis was given to ensuring water availability for sanitation units. Pre-identified micro credit organization provided individual households with soft loans. Awareness and trigger based sensitization was done much before the construction of toilets so that the community readily accepts toilet usage. To maximize reach, ACC then started GBCs across India.

• Impact

- The project engaged and supported Srijan (NUS) Buildmat Pvt. Ltd. (the local entrepreneur) in strengthening its sanitation business by conducting marketing campaign activity, providing technical assistance and implementing proper operational and management activity.
- It constructed different prototypes of Total Toilet Solutions (TTS) at GBC, Narayanpur and ACF, Rabariyawas and captured feedback of various stakeholders on these prototype designs. This exercise was very helpful to further innovate and refine the marketable products as per local cultural and geographical requirements.

- Entrepreneur provided a range of TTS to rural households as per local cultural and geographical requirements. It started commercial production of various selected toilet models (Fly-Ask Bricks Models, Hollow Block Models) and was marketing them.
- The project encouraged and enabled the local entrepreneur to collectively supply materials for the construction of toilets in the assignment intervention district. Through intensive marketing campaigns, the project supported sale of toilets.

• Challenges and Issues

- Making sanitation accessible to all, even in distant rural settings, was the biggest challenge. Coping with such a geography and the attitude of people towards sanitation and bringing about behavioural change were also critical challenges.
- The local entrepreneur was facing issues related to realising payments for work done.
- There were issues pertaining to demand generation. There was a need to orient the local entrepreneur to think on scale in sanitation business.
- It was realized that in the district, the triggering coverage is very limited even in the target gram panchayats (GPs) of the given two blocks. So, this local entrepreneur found less demand for toilets in such GPs.
- Issues like very less sale of toilets during peak agriculture and heavy rain were also faced by the local entrepreneur.
- It was realized that many of the potential households lack ready cash to pay to entrepreneur upfront for their toilets and were mostly dependent on local moneylenders and relatives. Even entrepreneur found it difficult to invest in demand generation part and seek support of ACC. Even banks were reluctant to incur sanitation financing to consumers, which reflected lack of appropriate business model to encourage micro-finance institutions (MFIs) to finance sanitation products.
- Some existing entrepreneurs in the selected geography were marketing unsafe models (like Ring pit with more than 20 to 25 feet in depth). So, there was a need to promote designs which support the local hydrological and geographical context and train masons and other stakeholders to ensure quality and speedy construction through pictorial design manual and product catalogue.



Innovation

- All building materials are made of fly ash (no use of top soil) and cement which exhibit high strength.
- Setting up of GBCs, as production centres of building materials required to build toilets. They work as one stop solutions for toilets, including the provision of awareness, sensitisation and Behavioural Change Communication for each individual.
- The whole GBC is a community managed model wherein local NGO and SHG's are integral parts of the system. In some places, SHG cluster and local NGOs own the GBC. Community management and participation of Panchayat are integral to GBCs.
- Awareness and Triggering based sensitisation is done much before the construction of toilets. In addition, PRA tool based micro plan of each household of a village is done to ensure sustenance of positive behaviour and rewarding positive deviant families on sanitation.



Various marketing leaflets

Lessons learnt

- Behavioural Change Communication is the key to aspire for a toilet in rural India. ACC has observed that based on successful BCC on sanitation, villagers are constructing their own toilets without waiting for any subsidy.
- The other learning is that good quality of construction with hygienic interiors, comfortable spaces and the availability of water along with readiness for behavioural change are the key factors to ensure the successful usage of toilets.
- Sensitising school students also improves hygienic and healthy practices within the family.
- Late disbursal of SBM incentive discourages new households from giving orders. District Administration role is critical in awareness generation cum demand creation along with timely payment provision to households where toilets are ready and in use.
- Toilet designs must follow human centric approach and must offer upgradable toilet options to find wider acceptance by different segments. Even to market these valid toilet designs, interactive marketing catalogue is required to represent all the possibilities of latrine designs through various permutations and combinations possible with finalized option of superstructures, mid-structures and substructures.

Financials

Not Available

- **Economic sustainability/Revenue Model**

The project is an example of creating Shared Value project, which will ensure hygienic as well as high quality cement based toilets on a mass scale. To ensure provisioning of toilets to rural markets, “Green Building Centres” (GBCs) ensure the availability of high quality fly ash based products to construct toilets. As of year 2015, 15 such GBCs were ready in market with the capacity to build about 5000-10,000 toilets per month, with another 25 GBC’s coming up across different States of India to ensure hygienic and high-quality toilets for rural India.

- **Implementer Contact Persons**

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- **Sources and References**

- Study submitted by ACC Limited
- Company Website
- Sanitation for Life (S4L) – Final Project Report