

Editorial

Improving consumer voices and accountability in Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin



*Dr Meena Nair,
Head of Research*

The target of [Sustainable Development Goal 6](#) is to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. The Government of India's [Swachh Bharat Mission](#) that succeeds the previous Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan aims to address this target by committing to an

Open Defecation Free (ODF) India by October 2, 2019 the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhiji. While the relevant departments are working actively towards achieving this ambitious goal, questions are increasingly being raised on the process and quality of construction of toilets, its sustainability for long-term usage as well as the issue of usage itself.

It is in this context, that PAC focused on six districts each from Odisha and Tamil Nadu, to assess ground realities related to the implementation of the Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G), and also to advocate change using evidence collected through its repertoire of Social Accountability Tools (SATs). The application of the major SATs to help 'close the loop' included:

- [Citizen Report Cards](#) (CRCs) to collect user and provider feedback at the beginning of the project and completion of two years
- [CRC+](#) exercises to understand any discrepancies in internal fund flows and functional responsibilities within the system
- [Community Score Cards](#) (CSCs) to create platforms for communities and providers to work together and generate joint action plans using scoring exercises.
- With inputs from continuous [review of sanitation policies](#) at the national/state level.

The CSCs carried out in selected Gram Panchayats in each of the selected districts in Odisha and Tamil Nadu brought home the point that no development programme can be implemented in the same manner across the entire country. This has to be driven by the people themselves as per their needs considering the socio-cultural, economic and political environment that they live in. In the case of Tamil Nadu, the communities were clear – they wanted their village motivators [members



[VPRC members take an oath to keep the village clean](#)

of the Village Poverty Reduction Committee (VPRC), Panchayat Level Federation (PLF) and Self Help Groups (SHG)] to be trained to build proper toilets in the future to include sustainability of these toilets in terms of maintenance and usage. This was done in close coordination with NGO partners located in each of the districts so that project learning and action plans remained within the district for future use.

The communities in Odisha, in the absence of foot soldiers or 'Swachhata Doot', voiced their need to be given information directly to the community members to em-



[Wall Painting in Odisha](#)

power them to demand proper toilets. Thus, a unique 'media mix' campaign was launched which included presenting information relating to the application and construction processes and usage of toilets through paintings on the walls of public buildings; 'demonstrate' the information to the community; and carry out a quick 'consumption evaluation' to assess the understandability of the messages so that corrective measures could be taken. This was done in partnership with local CBOs so that this could be taken forward by them as and when the need arose.

Interview



Mr M. Subburaman, Managing Trustee of Society for Community Organization and Peoples Education (SCOPE)

Can you briefly say something about SCOPE-when and why was it established?

[Society for Community Organization and Peoples Education](#) (SCOPE) is a non-profit, non-Government Organisation was established in 1986 to work towards integrated socio-economic development of disadvantaged and under-privileged communities in Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu. Since 2000, it has focused on the issue of sanitation. SCOPE has so far constructed about 100000 toilets in [Musiri](#), [Thuraiyur](#) and various parts of Tamil Nadu under the [UNICEF](#), [Water Aid](#) and [Total Sanitation Campaign](#) (TSC) programmes. SCOPE has been appointed by the [Department of Water and Sanitation](#) of Government of India as a Key Resource Centre (KRC) for providing training in various aspects of sanitation and toilet models and masonry training.

Could you share something about yourself?

I completed my graduation with a Bachelor's degree in Science and underwent training as a social worker in a reputed Village Reconstruction Organisation founded by Fr. Wendi of Belgium, and worked in diverse capacities in different parts of India. In 1986, SCOPE was established in Trichy District. During this period I acquired adequate knowledge on community/issues related to women and low-cost housing techniques, rural sanitation.

What were the learnings and key takeaways from the PAC-SCOPE partnership journey towards assessing the implementation of the Swacch Bharat Mission-Gramin programme?

While the association with PAC was useful some of the highlights include:

- The project initiated Village Level Committees and a similar concept is adopted by the Tamilnadu Government requesting other villages to establish Village Level Committees, Block Level Committees and District Level Committees for sustainable ODF.
- This project also enhanced the coordination between Block Development Officer (BDO) Office and Panchayat Level Federation (PLF).
- Procedures to include submitting applications for

constructing toilets, receiving subsidies from BDO office have now been established.

- The establishment of village level sanitation committee is very useful for sustainable Open Defecation Free (ODF).

What according to you are the key issues that stop Tamil Nadu from being an Open Defecation Free State? How can we overcome these issues?

In my opinion in the villages, many toilets are constructed but due to poor quality, people are unable to use them. Moreover, people are unaware of the importance of toilet usage. Also, there is no water facility in many areas including schools and anganwadis.



VPRC briefing in Tamil Nadu

How can we overcome these issues?

There are many ways that can ensure the usage of toilets:

- Inspection and monitoring of toilets by local citizens and officials can be done once a week.
- Planting Tulasi saplings (Holy Basil) or Tulasi seed balls in the periphery of toilets will ensure hygiene
- The Sanitation Committee should ensure that all members in the households are using the toilets and ensure that the toilets are functioning efficiently.
- Regular inspection of Integrated Women and Men sanitary complexes (IWSC), school toilets and anganwadi toilets to ensure they are functioning with adequate water supply, lighting and aeration. The treatment facility should also be inspected regularly.
- The Block Development Officer (BDO), Education Department Officials, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Officials should pay special attention to ensure the functioning of the toilets in their own institutions.
- Panchayat-Level Federation (PLF)/Village Poverty



VPRC training in progress

Reduction Committee (VPRC) members should pay special attention to maintain the ODF status by monitoring the Panchayats for ODF.

- PLF / VPRC members who are assured of incentive for construction and usage should be paid regularly.

What kind of a role do you think Civil Society Organisations (CSO) such as PAC and SCOPE can play towards making India Open Defecation Free?

While there are several aspects, I firmly believe that the role of CSOs must include but not be limited to including convening meetings for all the districts, strengthening Panchayat Level Federation (PLF)/ Village Poverty Reduction Committee (VPRC) and Cluster Level Federations (CLF), ensuring the toilets constructed are technically correct and of good quality. CSOs can also recommend schools to maintain a register to capture the usage of toilets by children at their respective homes. Furthermore, CSOs can work towards bringing together Health Department, village health nurses and doctors to propagate sustainable ODF.

Does SCOPE have any specific plan to improve the work in sanitation awareness across the state of Tamil Nadu?

Some of the key activities under SCOPE's specific plan towards sanitation awareness include providing training in various aspects of sanitation and toilet models and masonry, publicising case studies/success stories of individuals or Panchayats in ODF campaigns through media to motivate others and enable best practices to be replicated. Additionally, SCOPE promotes Solid Waste Management using source segregation methods at household levels, and encourages Industries, Engineering and Arts Colleges, within the Block to adopt schools in villages.



Achievements



Total Households - 891



Existing toilets - 325



New toilets built - 530



Community toilets built - 10

Data from Billanakuppam village in Krishnagiri district, Tamil Nadu

PAC's intervention in Tamil Nadu has helped the state officially declare 12 villages as Open Defecation Free (ODF).

Internspeak

"I must thank the team at PAC for their support during my internship. They were very kind and helpful and were open to my ideas and suggestions. My suggestions were also incorporated into the report that we developed which makes me very happy. Overall, my experience at PAC was very positive."

*Nikhila Vijay,
Intern,*

Institute of Management Technology, Ghaziabad

Upcoming Events

The 2018 [Public Affairs Index](#) (PAI) will be released in June and will have 100 indicators as compared to the previous one that considered 82 indicators to measure the performance of states in the field of governance. PAI 2018 will also include a new study focusing on the 'Children of India'.

Good Reads

[Water Aid 2017 report on Drinking Water and Sanitation: Status in India](#)

[National Policy Review on the Swachh Bharat Mission](#)



Engagements



Dr C K Mathew, Senior Fellow, PAC, was invited by NHRC to make a presentation on business and human



Dr Annapoorna Ravichander, Communication Consultant, PAC at the South Asian Regional Meeting of the Think Tank Initiative in Bangladesh.



Basil Liongs, Deputy Administrator, PAC, was felicitated during the CMAK's Best Practices Catalogue Release and Award Function for being part of the expert panel on choosing the best Urban Local Body in the state in Bengaluru.



PAC staff conducting a training on the Methodology of HP-DGGI Project for the District Statistical Officers 12 districts of the Himachal Pradesh.



Akash S Vadan, Communication Officer, PAC, and Udita Dutta, Programme Officer, PAC, presented the Public Affairs Index at the Communications and Advocacy workshop organised by CSTEP and KIVU International in New Delhi.



Dr. Meena Nair made a presentation on 'Evidence-based advocacy in water and sanitation in rural India' in a global think-shop and collaborative planning forum ('Strengthening research, knowledge & practice for accountability on water') held in Dar es Salaam from 27-29th March 2018.

From the Editor's Desk

Public Eye will be published in May, September and January. Do send us your comments/feedback to pec@pacindia.org. If you wish to unsubscribe please click [here](#).