SACOSAN VI

Side Session

12 January 2016

Swacch Bharat Mission

Convened by: Government of India, CLTS Foundation and World Bank

The SACOSAN VI was held in Dhaka from 11 through 14 January 2015. The side session on Swacch Bharat Mission was convened jointly by The Government of India, The CLTS Foundation and The World Bank . The Panel was introduced by Sri Nipun Vinayak. Dr Kamal Kar moderated the session while Additional Secretary, Sri Saraswati Prasad chaired the same. Initial remarks by Dr Kamal Kar were made to set he tone for further discussion who moderated the entire session in an interactive manner. Very interestingly, Dr Kar remarked, that the South Asian Region has done well in the recent decade except for a somewhat sluggish progress of India despite the importance that is being given to sanitation in the country. Despite the struggle of the past decade and a half and the amount of money generated and allocated for the purpose, the progress has been remarkably slow as compared to the rest of the region. However, there are certain examples that need to be learnt from and emulated from the different states of the vast country, he opined. There are shining examples of brilliant champions who have led their districts into ODF zones, he said and the session saw these CLTS champions from different states of India, share their experience and journey toward attaining the status.

The first speaker from Chhattisgarh, Dr M. Geetha, The Mission Director of SBM shared her experiences and achievements with CLTS in Chhattisgarh also outlining the challenges that are ahead of them. Chhattisgarh accounts for 10 percent of the Scheduled Tribes in the country and about 50 percent of the state is comprised of the ‘Dalit’ Population. The region is not the easiest to work in considering the ‘Left Affected Areas’, which are vulnerable and challenging zones being affected by the Left Wing Extremism. Of the 44 Lakh total households existing in the state, 26 lakhs are without toilets and 17 with them. The challenge however is not just a lack of toilets for the latter number but the fact that 10 lakhs of the existing ones are not in use. This is a big challenge; it is a challenge of saturation, scale and sustainability. The aim, she outlined, is to engage the community as a whole. Hard to reach areas and sparsely populated areas are equally prioritized as the rest of the state. The idea is to generate a demand among the communities to create an ODF environment for themselves and to reach each remote area of the state in order to attain scale and sustainability through behaviour change. For instance the region of Tamnar in Raigarh was a district where demand to create an ODF environment was created and expressed as a matter of “Pride” for them. The cluster approach has also been an important way to target blocks to become completely ODF as opposed to just villages as a target unit.

The whole concept of “constructing toilets” – ‘*Bana kar dena-lena’* , was abolished. The individual household level unit was not termed as a “beneficiary” -  ‘*hitgrahi*’, anymore. They were addressed as “owners” – ‘*maalik*’ now.

Sustainability has been looked at in two aspects; one is of the superstructure and other behavioural change. Instead of the approach where penalization is the result of default in continued behavioural change found through vigilance, Dr Geetha opined that truly sustained behaviour change is one which prevails despite the fear of punishment. The role of Natural Leaders (NLs) and partner organizations has been crucial. The main causes of concern and the challenges are the LWE areas and the unused 10 lakh toilets apart from availability of water. The way forward for Chhattisgarh would be to engage, enable and facilitate the communities. The right way Dr Geetha affirmed- “is CLTS”!

The session saw its second speaker from the state of West Bengal, Manmeet who spoke about the West Bengal effort in the past three years in the state. The Government of West Bengal (GoWB) has created 2.57 Million Household toilets of which 1.1 Million were made as recently as the last one year. Only 55% of the state was ODF according to the BLS (Base Line Survey) as compared to a 72% now, she expressed. Out of 38,131 ODF villages in India, 7938 villages belong to West Bengal. Being the District Magistrate- District Collector of North 24 Parganas which is an extremely large area both in terms of population and geographical area the situation has been challenging as, most of this area is urban and semi-urban. The Nadia district  in West Bengal alone has created 3.56 lakh toilets over the past one year where trained women, through self-help groups (SHGs) have constructed toilets and managed the supply management chain. In Hoogly the masons were identified by the Gram Pradhan’s for being trained as masons which also ceated livelihood opportunities. This became a constant source of skill development within their villages. The challenge remains that, beyond the BSL, there are several homes that claim to be eligible under the SBM and the Government is yet to take a call on this. Secondly, being unplanned and semi-urban areas, there are added challenges and little scope of solid waste management. The focus however, has been on community-led initiatives all through the process and relying on community strenght is rewarding. Communiities that become ODF shall undergo re-verification through a third party and are then provided incentives for further development actions.

Smt Manju Chamoli- Sarpanch from Dehradoon, Uttarakhand in India was the third speaker at the side session. She spoke of the immense contributions of the Swajal Department, which improved the access to drinking water throughout the region. The contributions are innumerable and life altering, she added. Construction of public toilets throughout the state has also been a significant contribution. Here the aim is beyond mere construction of toilets, maintenance of the same is just as crucial, she mentioned.

The next speaker- State Coordinator of the State of Punjab, Md Ishfaq, made his presentation on Swasth and Swacch Punjab. The focus has been on reduction of open defecation and creating access to safe water supply apart from having a good quality delivery systems with community participation. Rapid Surveys before beginning the groundwork had yielded extremely disturbing figures. About 77-78% of the population in Punjab had individual household toilets as was believed. Post the survey it was found that of these figures, a mere 87% females use these toilets while a whopping 44% of the men, who actually have toilets at home continue to defecate in the open either regularly or otherwise. The issue of migrant labourers defecating in the open is another major challenge.

The state is now considering behaviour change as the key factor to meet its challenges, which was not the case earlier where focus was on construction of toilets through contractors. No prescriptions are being made and funds are being transferred directly to bank accounts of the beneficiaries without any involvement of the contractors, he said. Within six months of actions on the field certain extremely promising results have been witnessed and the process is community-led. CLTS workshops are held constantly and Natural leaders are being created and involved increasingly. Access to water is also being focussed upon apart from creating ODF villages. The aim is achieve an ODF Punjab within the next two years!

The next speaker of the session was the Mission Director -Ms Vasuki from the state of Kerala. The state is one of the most advanced states in India in terms of access to sanitation, which has achieved almost 97-98% toilet coverage. The challenges now are mostly second generational. She mentioned that solid and liquid waste management is an important concern for the state at present. There have been lots of failures and learnings in the process. Unless the key message of “My Waste, My Responsibilty” is imbibed deep within the citizen’s minds, no real outcomes will be possible. The state is driving campaigns for responsible waste management being driven straight from the individual level to the state, slowly turning into a ‘movement’! In order to showcase the model, The National Games hosted by the state in January 2015 was used a platform where prevention of waste generation was ensured and highlighted. Local Body Elections in Kannoor and Calicut saw the concept of “Green Elections” which was novel and exemplary. Home composting systems have been another innovative and useful process that various parts of the state are practicing, she mentioned. The aim is to declare Kerala as an ODF state by the end of 2016 and a model for solid waste management in the next two to three years she added.

The second last speaker of the session was Mr Nayak from the newly formed state of Telangana. There are several challenges and targets for the state. The flag-ship programme is the “Gram Jyoti” Programme via creation of 7 managing committees in each village. The state is witnessing newly formed ODF villages in several parts of the state despite several challenges like the severe impacts of low ground water levels, as has been the recent case.

The final speaker of this side-session, Mr Frank Odiambo from Unicef made his presentation on an optimistic note in reference to the state of sanitation in India. Right from the community to level to the National political and administrative leadership are all convincingly ready to make a change. The speaker made three important points, the first of which was ‘professionalization of service delivery programmes’. The system of service delivery needs to work in order to ensure that Champions are evolving and delivering miraculous results as a ‘routine’. Institutional development and embedded service delivery being a solid behaviour change component is to be ensured. Secondly, capacity building is an important factor to achieve change at scale, he opined. The third important issue is that of Finance, he concluded.

The session was concluded by the summing up of important points from the different presentations by Dr Kamal Kar, followed by words from Dr Nipun Vinayak. The states have gained momentum in creating ODF communities very rapidly in various ways. Summing up the discussion points made in the different presentation, he spoke of the different success stories and achievements trigger more such developments in other parts of the vast country. There still remain challenges for which we are better equipped than before. We need more champions to create an ODF future for ourselves, he concluded.

Mr Saraswati Prasad concluded the side-session by saying that the challenges are many but there also are tremendous opportunities to learn from each other. The different experiences and approaches should be utilized well in order to achieve sanitation goals.