Though sanitation as a necessity is well known to us, the habit seems to be a temporary one always. The practice of usage of toilets does not seem to have become a constant habit among many villagers. Sustainability of sanitation is thus one of the biggest challenges that administrators encounter while implementing sanitation programmes.

One of the reasons could be that the government programmes and policies are changing over a period of time, local representatives are changing, population is increasing and no Gram Panchayats (GP) has had any future-based sanitation plans. Gram Panchayats have been taking lead and working for so many years to achieve the basic sanitation. But sustainability remains a question. There are other reasons that are peculiar to some GPs such as being close to a highway, thus attracting a lot of the floating population.

Kolanukonda is a Gram Panchayat in Tadepalle Mandal, Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh state. It is on the border of Guntur and Krishna Districts. The GP is close to a National Highway. Almost 80% of the GP land is owned by the government and the residents are aware of laws and rules. In this context, from 2005 onwards, the GP started concentrating on sanitation issues. It started the construction of toilets with the help of various schemes.
and by themselves also. The State Government recognised the work done by the GP and gave them the “Shubhram” award along with Rs.30,000 cash prize in 2010. This amount has also been utilised for GP developmental activities. After achieving this award, the GP concentrated on Open Defecation Free (ODF) status. While achieving this target, the GP team started mobilization activities along with proper punishments. The GP ensured that the sanitation facilities are provided in government institutions also. To ensure that there is no open defecation, even Mandal-level officials have started monitoring in the early mornings. So all this process helped to achieve the ODF status in 2014. Same year the government declared NGP award for this GP with Rs. 1, 50,000 cash prize. This cash prize was also utilised for further GP developmental activities.

Ten years of hard work and mobilization created good knowledge among households to follow sanitation practices for better sustainability. Based on that all are using their toilets and the village is also practicing solid waste management on a day-to-day basis. In this two year duration, population has increased and six new houses have increased. Even the six houses also came forward and constructed their toilets under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) scheme. But, the GP is unable to sustain the habit and slipped back to Open Defecation.

One of the main reasons for the failure to sustain this programme is that the GP is attached to the national highway and the GP road is also connected to other villages through many roads that pass through. Many migrants and farm daily wage labourers pass through the village and often defecate by the road side. This affects the GP’s status. What to do and how to rectify these issues of sustainability are the major challenges right now.

Despite having toilets and a motivated community, the GP is facing issues of open defecation from migrant/daily wage labourers. This situation is a result of the GP being located on a National Highway and lack of solutions to curb open defecation by floating population.