Financial and Technical hurdles preventing realisation of ODF

Smart Village Smart Ward is the flagship program of the government of Andhra Pradesh. When Mr. Ravi Venkat Rao, a native of Yedurupadu Gram Panchayat (GP) in Zarugumil Mandal, adopted the village under this scheme, he wanted to achieve total sanitation in the village.

Despite continuous efforts, the village continues to be non-ODF. Major hurdles in the way of achieving an Open defecation-free (ODF) status boil down to two major problems, one is the curious case of “missing toilets” and the other is the non-disbursement of timely funds to the households eligible under the scheme.

Missing toilets...

There has been a certain confusion regarding the beneficiaries of the previous and the current schemes. About 150 households have applied for the incentives under the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) during the verification of which, it was found that these households appeared in the list of toilets constructed in earlier schemes but in the field there are no structures. This led to enormous confusion in sanctioning of toilets in new scheme, this situation highlights the problem of double-entries and missing toilets where the number of
actual beneficiaries cannot be established, further causing delay in getting the toilets sanctioned, construction and usage.

**Delay in Disbursement of Funds...**

Providing incentives for households that constructed toilets is an approach of the Government, encouraging its citizens to build Toilets. However, in Yedlurupadu it was observed that incentives work both ways, i.e., while incentives can encourage people, not receiving the promised incentives discourages the community members.

Another major problem affecting the status of construction was the same. A major lag in the flow of money to the beneficiaries led to utter chaos and confusion amongst the households which have not constructed a toilet. They did not come forward for construction under the scheme as they could not afford to pool in money from their personal sources in case the scheme money is not disbursed on time.

**Higher Interest Rates...**

Cashing in on the disadvantage of lack of funds with the people, the money lenders started charging high rates of interest on the money they lent for the purpose of construction of toilets.

**Solutions...**

Mr. Ravi played a key role here by coming forward to contribute financially towards the construction of toilets. He contributed material worth Rs. 5000 per toilet for the logical completion of the same. He was ready to help those who were willing to contribute from their end. The households had to bear the labour costs and have their pits dug to avail the benefit of free material provided by Mr. Ravi. He ensured cost cutting by procuring material in bulk quantities from Kandukur which is nearby village.

He helped bring the issue of double entry/missing toilets to the notice of the Mandal Level officials to ensure that these households are not deprived of their benefit under the SBM scheme. The MPTC ensured that this matter was brought to the notice of the local MLA who promised a solution for the same. Mr. Ravi did not leave it here, and further took up the matter to the notice of the district officials concerned.

**Way forward...**

Mr. Ravi wants to work even more seriously on the problems of disbursement of funds and the missing toilets to soon make the village realise the dream of achieving ODF.

Despite efforts towards sanitation, this GP is not able to realise even 100% toilet construction because of two major challenges:

1. Some households that do not have toilets were listed as houses with toilets in the previous schemes therefore sanction of such toilets under SBM has become tricky.
2. Incentive viewed as a subsidy resulting in lack of want to invest personal money.