Many villages have provided proper awareness regarding the advantages of using toilets and disadvantages of not using them which may lead to better utilization of toilets and improving sanitation. However it has been noticed that a few villages slip back to defecating in the open due to lack of planning exercises. A properly draw plan projecting future changes and continuous encouragement and awareness building activities at regular intervals can ensure success of sanitation without investing resources repeatedly on the same activity.

Santapeta Gram Panchayat (GP) of Lakkavarapu, Kota (L.Kota) Mandal in Vizianagarm District indicates a similar story. The GP was awarded Nirmal Gram Puraskar (NGP) in the year 2008 for 100% construction and utilization of toilets. However the village slowly slipped back into open defecation losing its status.

Why to go back for open defecation?

Any GP requires planning to ensure that the activity taken up by them is sustainable after a certain time. Santapeta GP also slipped back to open defecation as it was not able to address challenges and changes with respect to;

Planning for the availability of water for both domestic and also for use of toilets.

Ways to cater to increase in the number of houses in the GP due to migrations or division on joint families, Santapeta saw a growth in households who did not construct toilets.

It also included lack of follow up after achieving 100% construction of toilets by the Govt officials to understand any issues existing in the GP and providing appropriate solutions.
Regaining the status:

As a part of Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), Santapeta was selected by District officials as a potential GP to achieve Open Defecation Free (ODF) status. District and Mandal officials visited the GP and with the help of the Local GP team established that while 72 families need to construct toilets, most community members’ need awareness on utilization and general hygiene. Steps taken to achieve ODF status;

- Conducting awareness activities for motivating citizens and generating demand from the 72 households
- Bulk procurement of Material by Sarpanch for low income families to initiate construction
- Constructing Water-Tank to ensure availability of water and avoid slippage

The case of Santapeta Gram Panchayat clearly indicates the reason for double efforts in the GP to achieve sanitation is due to lack of planning for forecasting future needs and establishing solutions for sustaining the efforts. Enormous amount of time and money were invested for achieving NGP status and the same has been done under SBM. “The GP is in a better position to tackle future needs now and than it was 8 years ago, so hopefully a need for similar efforts will not arise in a few years” says the field assistant answering the question of about the preparedness of the GP for future needs.

Cyclone motivation

Many families were motivated to construct toilets as they could not go out of their homes during the Hood-Hood cyclone in 2014. The cyclone presented the citizens with the advantage of having a toilet within the house hold.

*It is important to understand and accept that this is the case with most of the NGP awarded villages and if the same is not to be repeated with the ODF villages under SBM, planning has to be emphasised and taken up as a crucial step.*