

CASE STUDY

2016/No. 58



Nellore District Approach

ATHMAGOWRAVAM



Photo Credit: Nellore Athmagowravam Team

It is very exciting to see that the SPSR Nellore District in Andhra Pradesh has recently conducted Open Defecation Free (ODF) celebrations for achieving 100 ODF Gram Panchayats in the district within a span of two months. The district administration took up drive with the title “ATHMAGOWRAVAM”. After the achievement of the target, felicitation was carried out by the district administration to the persons who played a key role in making their Gram Panchayats ODF under SBM like few natural leaders in the village, members of vigilance Committees, Elected Representatives etc. The walk of pride in each village has been carried out as a part of these celebrations. By taking the inspiration of initial achievement, the district administration is working towards making the entire district ODF by December 2016 by involving all functionaries (Government & Non government officials) at the division, Mandal and village levels through Athmagowravam.

ATHMAGOWRAVAM (Self respect & self dignity of women) is an initiative launched on 8 March 2016, on the eve of International Women’s day by the then District Collector Smt. Janaki. IAS, SPSR Nellore. The aim of the initiative is to make SPSR Nellore district ODF by March 2017 by gearing up construction & usage of toilets in a phased manner through Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach under SBM. The initiatives took up by adopting the CLTS approach and the results were good. Before initiating, there were hardly 8 ODF Gram Panchayats out of total 940 GPs in the district. Toilet construction was only the aim in all 8 ODF GPs. The CLTS had been in implementation since March 2016. Within two months of its implementation, 100 Gram Panchayats have achieved ODF status in terms of construction and 100 percent usage by all households. It is quite interesting to know the achievement of ODF in 100 GPs within a short span of two months. In other districts, this kind of progress is not seen even in one year. In this pursuit, by the end of June 2016, cumulative 141 villages have achieved Open Defecation Free status and the district administration is heading towards declaring another 109-Gram Panchayats as ODF by 2 October 2016.

There are many factors, which accelerated the processes in the GPs with collective action right from the district level to the village level.





Launching of Athmagowravam

Photo Credit: Nellore Athmagowravam Team

Success factors:

The following key activities under the initiative are contributing to the achievement of ODF Gram Panchayats:

1. **ATHMAGOWRAVAM Cell at district level:** The district administration has created a dedicated cell called "ATHMAGOWRAVAM CELL" in the premises of Rural Water Supply & Sanitation department to coordinate activities and support the district administration in implementing the activities under CLTS approach. A group 1 rank senior Mandal Parishad Development Officer coordinates the over-all activities of the cell under the guidance of district collector, CEO ZP, and Superintendent Engineer and with the support from DWSC consultants and secretarial staff (2 Nos) appointed for this purpose. The cell is equipped with necessary infra facilities such as Computers and Printers. In addition four NGOs are identified and trained in CLTS and are working as district resource agencies to support the cell in conducting CLTS activities.
2. **Mandal & Village level Athmagowravam Cells:** Constituted Mandal & village level Athmagowravam cells with Mandal and village level officials, Elected representative of Panchayat Raj, Community based organizations (SHGs) and others. These cells shall plan, implement and coordinate activities towards construction and usage of toilets and post ODF follow-up.
3. **Appointment of Special / Task Force Officers and weekly reviews:** The district administration appointed division and district level officers as Mandal level special officers to hold weekly review meetings at Mandal level on every Wednesday. Natural leaders from the GPs, Village level Cell and Mandal level officials attend these reviews.
4. **Orientation to Athmagowravam cells:** The district administration with the support from district cell conducted orientation trainings on SBM and Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach and Activities (CLTS). These cells rolled out CLTS activities in their GPs.
5. **Phase wise selection of GPs:** GPs have been identified in a phased manner based on population (GPs having low households) and potential Natural Leaders. The 100 GPs have been selected in the first phase to achieve ODF.

Conclusion:

Despite the above issues, the district administration through ATHMAGOWRAVAM, a focused drive with Constructive and robust activities could achieve 100 ODFs within a short duration. The same initiative with the CLTS approach may be replicated in other districts to speed up the processes and reach the goal of sanitation for all.

6. **Triggering activities:** The Mandal level officers and special officers with the support of resource agencies conducted triggering activities in the GPs. During the triggering, identified members for constituting village level vigilance committees.
7. **Vigilance Committees:** Village level vigilance committees were constituted with members identified during triggering in the GP. One of the key responsibilities of the committees is to watch, monitor open defecation areas (In the mornings and evenings), sensitize and demotivate people who practice open defecation.
8. **Observance of the Athmagowravam day (Night Stays):** Every Wednesday is observed as Athmagowravam day. On the day, the special officers appointed holds night stays in the GPs to sensitize and guide village level cell and people.
9. **Monthly & Weekly reviews by the Collector:** The Collector holds monthly review meetings with Special/ Task force officers and Mandal Praja Parishad Development Officers (MPDOs). A weekly tele-conference is held with Natural leaders and officials by the Collector to review the progress and encourage the Natural leaders.
10. **Third Party Construction:** Wherever individuals expressed inability, third party (Individuals, Natural leaders, Agencies, Sarpanchas etc.) constructed toilets in the GPs.
11. **Threaten of stoppage of Ration and Pension:** Despite sensitization activities, some households remained rigid. Officials and GPs threatened and in some cases temporarily, stopped ration and pension.

Issues and resolutions:

1. **Shortage of Material & Masons:** As there was rapid and bulk construction were happening simultaneously in most of the villages, shortage of material & mason had been a constraint for the timely work in the district. The district administration had overcome this by procuring material & mason from other districts.
2. **Local political leaders interference & criticism:** - why not my GP? Why others in the first Phase? Why stoppage of ration? : The district officials conducted orientation sessions with all political leaders at the district level and described the rationality (Low households and Potential Natural Leaders so that, quick progress could be made and other GPs can get motivated by witnessing the success) behind choosing GPs in a phased manner. The purpose behind stopping / threatening of stoppage of ration and pension was also clearly explained and finally overcome the obstacle.
3. **Delay in receipt of funds from the State Government:** This has been one of the obstacles faced; otherwise, the district would have achieved more ODFs.
4. **Shortage of Panchayat Secretaries at Panchayat level and incapable Mandal functionaries:** The services of Field assistant and saksharabharati coordinators are being used to overcome the shortage of manpower at Panchayat level and special orientation trainings for those Mandal officers organised
5. Lack of leadership and ownership in the villages.