When a mission has a large framework and involves big goals, it is essential to work in coordination, as efficient teams. And deploying the community in the endeavours supported by the Government is a great way to inculcate a sense of ownership among people.

Kappaldoddi Gram Panchayat, with 832 households and a population of over 4000 people, has done just this. Apart from official meetings, the Sarpanch has appointed two people as Swacchata Doots (Ambassadors of Cleanliness) and their job is to go around the village collecting information and explaining to people about the benefits of the SBM scheme. The village has been declared Open Defecation Free in 2015. Construction of 240 IHHLs under Swachh Bharat and Sarpanch’s interest and active involvement led to achievement of this title. It is one of those villages where collective and coordinated efforts ensured quality work.

Interestingly, the Sarpanch chose gentle ways to convince the community. While the envoys of cleanliness were one among the villagers, officials who visited the village on any purpose were requested to talk about sanitation. The Sarpanch found another trick and utilised the common spaces where open defecation was prevalent to convey his message. He stopped getting those spaces cleaned, which were earlier cleaned twice a year. When no such activity took place during 2014-2015, community members approached
Sarpanch, complaining about the filth. The Sarpanch used this opportunity to educate the community regarding the SBM, the scheme and also the importance of having an IHHL.

In the beginning, less than ten members came forward to construct toilets. Later, once financial assistance started coming to the families who initiated construction, all other families came forward and got their IHHLs constructed except 20 households as they did not have space for construction of toilets.

In the case of these families, the Sarpanch has identified a place on the outskirts of the village that belonged to the Panchayat and had the Mandal officials sanction about 30 cents of land. Earlier, the place was used to be a place for open defecation. The Deputy Engineer (DE) and Assistant Engineer designed a community like sanitary complex with 20 independent toilets under a roof for 20 households thereby overcoming the problem. In this system, each toilet has been allotted to a household with a particular number as marking and subsequently will be given a lock and key to symbolise ownership of the household on their toilet.

Adequate water supply has also been ensured by construction of a hand pump in front of the complex. And the toilets, as well as paraphernalia such as buckets, mugs, are ready for handing over to the community.

While delay in payment was another constraint, the Sarpanch played a commendable role by collecting all the applications of households with pending bills and took them to the District Collector and submitted the applications along with a letter requesting him for clearance. Within a day, necessary action was taken by District officials and within one month all the dues were paid.

There were a few households who could not pool in enough resources for initiating toilet construction. In such cases, Sarpanch and the GP team together decided and activated local self- help groups (SHGs). The SHGs pooled in money and gave loans to households to start construction process. This loan was returned back to the SHG once fund was received from SBM. In addition, the Sarpanch also conducted meetings with Masons, Carpenters and other members involved in construction and assured the construction team that their money would be paid once money is received through SBM.

Wherever there were space constraints, the Sarpanch had an alternative design for smaller toilets and had them constructed with the help of DE and AE.

The Sarpanch and the GP are not yet resting on their laurels. They admit that school Sanitation in the village need to be improved, that there is need for greater awareness, and that usage, waste disposal and drainage systems are crucial elements to achieve total sanitation. The GP of Kappaladoddi is now in the process of achieving complete sanitation; for which the Sarpanch took up an initiative of distributing buckets, mugs and cleaning equipment to the households as a token of encouragement. “Motivation is required only till people get habituated to toilets, after that there will be no open defecation,” says the dynamic Sarpanch of Kappaladoddi.