Rentapalla Gram Panchayat (GP) in Sattenapalle Mandal in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh has attained ODF status with the collective action of all the people in the village and officials who assisted the functions of a village, besides major contributions from a trusted elderly person in the village.

The GP has 1376 households with 5308 population. Under the Swatch Bharat Mission (SBM), 243 toilets have been constructed and their coverage in the village reached 100%. Now, the thrust is more towards ensuring the usage of toilets and other aspects of SBM (Gramin) like Solid, Liquid Waste Management (SLWMM) by arranging tri-cycles for waste collection, putting up big dustbins in street corners and involving all stakeholders in achieving the same.

The Gram Panchayat shouldered the responsibility of making the village open defecation free with active support from Field Assistants, ASHA workers, ANMs, SHG members and a trusted member of the community.

One day, the Sarpanch convened a meeting on Swachh Bharat for the villagers where in certain aspects related to village sanitation status and the scheme were explained. Post meeting, the Sarpanch, ANMs and Anganwadi teachers together visited each household without toilet.

During these individual/household interactions, the major challenges such as crunch, the issue of availability of space for the construction of a toilet and various other cultural inhibitions faced by the community were brought to the notice of the Gram Panchayat.

“You should visit our village after six months to notice the developments in sanitation. We are continuously working on achieving complete sanitation and will keep doing so till we achieve it”

RamachandraRao
Another major activity undertaken by the Panchayat was a motivational drive with the help of “dandora” (trumpeting across the village) or motivation call in the mic throughout the village with the help of a drum to grab the attention of the people. During this motivational walk, the Panchayat members also advocated the cause.

The Panchayat then took the help of Ramachandra Rao, a person from within the community who had popularity amongst the people. He is well known and recognised for his community oriented goals and expertise of participating in various developmental programs for the village at the district level. He personally discussed with those members who were apprehensive about constructing toilet despite the motivational meetings, announcements and door-to-door campaigns.

He also personally visited all the households along with the Panchayat members to speak to and motivate the families who have not constructed a toilet. After the construction; he undertook a “mic campaign” to advocate the importance of the usage of toilet. He also started working in the direction of achieving total sanitation by putting up community and individual dustbins to ensure proper waste disposal. He is clear on his goal for the coming years; improving drainages, disposal of waste, individual hygiene are just some of the issues to be addressed.

Specific constraints in the efforts for construction of toilets in Rentapalla Gram Panchayat, like lack of space within the household for the construction of toilets in new households; identification of space for the existing houses that want to construct new; inability to invest the initial money handled in a comprehensive approach by the team of GP members supporting the initial expenditure for construction in some cases; field workers and masons that can help in giving appropriate solutions and Rao overseeing the overall task.

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