

CASE STUDY

2016/No. 13



Komaravolu Gram Panchayat
Pamaru Mandal
Krishna District

One man army fights for A Swachh Komaravolu



Photo Credit: E. Manikanta Reddy, Program Officer, PRIA



The initiative of Venkata Krishna (Krishna Babu), a resident of Komaravolu village and his wife, Smt. Sasi, who is a Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency (ZPTC) member led Komaravolu to get the title of Open Defecation Free (ODF), Gram Panchayat (GP). In the year 2015 Komaravolu had a total of 547 households with a total population of 2260. As per a survey conducted by the GP team, 198 out of the total 547 households did not have toilets; of which only 106 households were eligible for toilets under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) scheme. It was found during the discussions that the rest of 92 households reside in encroached lands.

It was mentioned during the focus group discussion with the community that open defecation on the approach roads of the village was the usual practice by these 92 households as nearby agriculture fields were cultivated throughout the year and people hardly found any nearby open area for defecation. Defecating road sides is closely linked to timings. People had to control bowel moments and go out in the early hours of the morning or in the late evenings to secure privacy for open defecation as well as to avoid humiliation. If it is in the late morning, due to persons and vehicular movements, women had to take a stand up stopping forcibly the process of defecation. This caused a lot of troubles and the agony of these women and girl children cannot be expressed by words.

Babu, a local leader became sensitive to the above mentioned problem, and he wanted to bring some relief to those women and solve the problem of open defecation. But a way out of this drudgery was not clear to him. It was when Smt. Bhuvanewari, wife of Sri. Nara Chandrababu Naidu- the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh has adopted Komaravolu Gram Panchayat in Pamarru Mandal of Krishna district to develop the village in line with the Smart Andhra Pradesh, the initiative of the Government of Andhra Pradesh, he was ensured of the government's will to deal with the problem. With the aim of providing toilets to all those 198 households which didn't have a toilet. Babu interacted and motivated these household owners through volunteers from within the community to construct one. In the first phase, toilets were constructed for 106 eligible households under the financial assistance from SBM. For the remaining 92 households, Babu himself contributed Rs. 7000 for each house as the households are Below Poverty Line (BPL) and did not have adequate finance. Thus 92 households had constructed toilets with the help of Babu.



In yellow is a temporary toilet in the GP S. Geetha Krishna, Program Officer, PRIA

MOBILIZATION STRATEGY:

Mobilisation has been one of the challenges faced for which Babu used multi-pronged approach. In some cases he felt the need of bringing in people of authority to convince the community. He approached local police for the same, who frequently visited the households to motivate them through counselling. Police visits created embarrassment to the households which led to construction of toilets. Babu said that the technique of police visit had really worked well in mobilising the community.

Further some households had Vasthu and cultural believes as constraints. The placement of toilet in their house needed to be decided by the elders and pandiths. These issues were solved with the help of pandiths and elders who convinced these households to identify appropriate spaces to take up construction.

USING TOILETS, THE BIGGER CHALLENGE:

On October 2nd,2015, the GP team (the Sarpanch, Anganwadi workers, ANMs, field assistants) along with Babu and his wife announced through 'mic campaign' that, now that all the households in the GP have the facility of their own toilets the GP decided to ban open defecation completely. Through proper motivation and house to house visits the GP team conveyed to all persons in the GP that anybody who went for open defecation around the GP would have to pay a fine of Rs.500/ and in future the GP would cancel all the government facilities such as Ration Card and MGNREGS works, pensions. In the initial stages, these kinds of restrictions were taken up to motivate the households in the GP to use their toilets. In a period of time the people realized the importance of toilets and its usage. In the process of motivating households to use toilets, Babu started a "Swachh Bharat Nigha Vibhagam" with a team of 15 members. The team has a separate dress code, whistles, torch light and stick. The team divided the whole GP into 15 parts of places. In early mornings and evening times the team regularly takes rounds to monitor and control open defecation in the GP. This type of regular monitoring happened for 3-4 months to reduce open defecation in the GP and continues to happen to ensure sustaining ODF.

PUNISHMENT FOR DEFAULTERS:

When the situation did not improve even after warnings from the GP team, the individuals practicing open defecation were made to pick up their faeces and clean the area. This brought lots of humiliation to those who were defecating in open, forcing them to stop that practice immediately.

The village has achieved coverage of 100 per cent toilets and usage by all possible ways and means. The Swachh Bharat Nigha Vibhagam team had done its part to achieve the goal of Swachh Komaravolu.

Robust Monitoring mechanisms to check open defecation for few months have resulted in controlling open defecation. In addition, planning to sustain the ODF status in case of water scarcity or population increase is appreciable and needs to be replicated to avoid slippage to open defecation.