**CASE STUDY**

Toilets are not a Government’s Necessity; it is ours to build them

**INTRODUCTION**

“Sanitation is not just a government program, but a basic requirement for all. Everybody needs some basic awareness on community sanitation or at least on their individual household sanitation. If everybody decides not to pollute their surroundings, then we can find a sustainable society in India”. This is simple but deep thought comes from Gram Sarpanch Edhara. Rami Reddy.

Subbareddypalem Gram Panchayat (GP) is a part of Inkollu Mandal of Prakasam District with a population of 866 residing in 185 households. The community is largely dependent on agriculture and animal husbandry therefore has 139 cattle sheds. Shri. Edhara. Rami Reddy elected sarpanch for this GP though not very educated is very interested in developmental programs. He expresses, “we were very happy that the officials themselves approached us to carry these activities forward and we immediately agreed to do everything in our capacity. His interest led to the construction of 10 toilets thereby making Subbareddypalem the first Open Defecation Free (ODF) declared GP of the Mandal.

**WHAT WORKED**

The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) is supporting rural people to build their toilets and to stop the open defecation practices. In this process the sarpanch took an
initiative for house to house visit for toilets status in the GP. Almost 90% of the households already had toilets. Nevertheless a few individuals proposed construction of new toilets in two categories.

The first category was the households that already had toilets but were not in working condition. A few of them being joint families felt the need for separate toilets as population increases with future generations. As discussed earlier, community members of this GP largely depend on agriculture and bring in migrants to work in fields during agricultural season. These labourers live in cattle sheds or temporary houses made of tarpaulin. The second category was construction of toilets in few cattle sheds which also host agricultural labour who come and stay in the village for an average of 3-4 months during the year.

These toilets were constructed with the aim of being handy to both migrants and any other labour taking care of the cattle during the day or night times, in order to put a check on open defecation.

It was told that though these are the two categories preferred to build their new toilets, they decided not to depend on govt. and thus initiated construction with their own money as community had the financial capacity to do so in addition to awareness about sanitation. Wherever eligible, the community also utilized the fund, which was available for them. Speaking about this one of the community members said, “While government supported from one hand, we put another from our side and together got new toilets constructed wherever necessary”.

The community members also had to invest extra personal amount on constructing the toilets. At the initial stage to decide the right place for construction i.e., vasthu purpose pandits were called and paid a fee of Rs. 1000/-. In addition, the material was brought with personal preference of the household which also cost beyond the incentive under SBM. But the financial capacity of the community helped them in completing construction as they wanted. During discussions, community member pitched in to say “Why should the government give everything to you? God can also give in little quantities the rest people should work for, in same manner The Government will give some support for anything not completely and not for all things”.

This community which believes in arranging their day to day necessities by itself has also practiced what it preached.

**Way forward**

Awareness is the first and crucial step for any developmental programme, especially sanitation as it is an individual thing. Though not very educated, community members of this GP have been thinking about the future needs that are likely to arise in the GP. In addition to the latrines constructed in the cattle sheds for migrants, the community is now planning to construct Community Sanitary Complex to end open defecation completely. This community believes in awareness and thus is working on increasing awareness among the migrants in order to use latrines and end Open defecation. Simultaneously, there are plans for house to house waste collection, a dumpsite, roads and drainages in the GP.

Proper awareness about sanitation led the community to spend extra money and construct lasting toilets. The awareness was such that incentive money was not looked upon as a support but construction and utilization of toilets was viewed as a personal responsibility.