With the initiation of Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) in 2014, construction of toilets has been going on in a rapid way. There have been many innovations to accelerate construction of toilets for eg. Preparing a list of toilets to be constructed in the Gram Panchayat (GP) and undertaking bulk constructions, constructing community toilets etc… Konuru Gram Panchayat of Garividi Mandal in Vizianagaram district adds to the list of innovative practices in the field for achieving sanitation by 2019.

Konuru’ sanitation Story

A survey conducted in the GP by the Panchayat team revealed that 502 out of 580 households did not have a toilet. After conducting motivation and awareness activities, 114 families came forward and completed construction of toilets. However remaining families who did not initiate any construction did not do so because few wanted to resolve Vasthu Issues, few were uncomfortable to build toilet in house premises and few did not have adequate finance despite their interest to construct toilets.

The Sarpanch and district level officials in the process of solving various challenges hindering construction identified a contractor named Mr. Srinivas to take up bulk construction for 23 families with financial constraints. These families were to pay the contractor back with the incentive money that SBM provides.

Mr. Srinivas has worked as a contractor for various Govt. schemes and carries an in depth experience of construction. He put his knowledge on construction material and methods to good use to complete construction of toilets.
New method of construction:

Mr. Srinivas utilized “fly ash bricks” or Eco-Bricks for construction of toilets. This has reduced the time needed for construction, reduced the amount of motor/cement necessary for sealing the bricks together. In addition, the cement rings used in construction of leech pits are being manufactured in the village itself. “These bricks are new in the market and have a great durability in comparison to normal clay brick that we use. I have lately been using these bricks in all my constructions and companies like L&T also emphasise on using these bricks because of their advantages” Mr. Srinivas said (see Box-1 for advantages of fly-ash bricks).

There have been challenges with respect to availability of labour in the village. “Labours in the villages migrate to places where they find work. It then becomes difficult for us to take up construction” Mr. Srinivas said. To solve this issue he employed migrants from the neighbouring district of Odisha.

Labour was given training on utilizing the new material “using this new material needs some training of how to use the material, what to do and what not to. Because the construction process with red clay bricks and fly ash bricks is slightly different” said the contractor explaining the reason behind conducting trainings.

To construct a toilet with bathroom with standard dimension, it was observed to cost Rs. 16,500 with the new material. Families agreed to bear a burden of an additional Rs.500-Rs.1500 for a completed toilet.

The contractor also feels that if a few masons can be trained about the process of construction who in turn can train their labour, construction of toilets that are durable and usable can be completed in a rapid way utilizing new materials now available in the market. The Gram Panchayat team of Konuru are very happy with the way Mr. Srinivas is taking up the job handed over to him. They have also supported the labour by providing stay and other facilities in the GP premises. Further, proper co-ordination between GP team, Mandal and District level officials is ensuring the timely release of incentives to be paid to the contractor.

Though the constructions of toilets by Mr. Srinivas are not yet completed, the materials used by him and the process is worth exploring to reduce costs, time and effort. Similar to this GP’s process, if cement rings can be manufactured within the GP and bulk construction be handed over to an experienced contractor, costs can be reduced further without any burden on the families.

**New innovations in materials and methods of construction could be identified by the district level officials and encouraged at the GP level on the lines of Konuru.**