

Why is West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh is on the Top?

Getting highest number of Nirmal Grama Purshkar Awards in Andhra Pradesh has become a habit of District Water & Sanitation Mission, West Godavari District. Since 2007, the district is the topper in the state. Mr P Srinivasa Rao, Coordinator, District Water & Sanitation Mission (DWSM) shared the secret behind this success with MV Rama Chandrudu, WASSAN on 16th Feb 2010. The journey and various factors that influenced the success of the district are narrated here.

Setting the Goal

Following the state policy, the District Water Sanitation Mission (DWSM) is registered under Societies Act, in 2003. Zilla Parishad Chairman is the chairman of the Mission. An executive committee functions as part of this mission and District Collector is the chairperson for this committee. Typically there was high concentration on hardware component of sanitation initially. However, the thinking process changed after receiving the first “Nirmal Grama Purashkar” award for only a single village in 2006 (an award for “Zero-Open-Defecation” of “Open-Defecation-Free” villages, introduced by Government of India). Inspired by this small achievement, DWSM decided to make it big. Dr Karumuri Nageshwara Rao, (Chairman, Zilla Parishad), (2007-08) Mr Luv Agarwal, District Collector (2006-2007); Fr.Moses, Chairman, NGO Network (Patchima Samakhya) and other members of DWSM put together a plan for the district. The goal was to achieve first position in the state...

Putting together a team that works...

Typically, DWSM has staff of the department. Though there are policy directions for strengthening the DWSM with professionals, it was not practical for a small town like Eluru, the district head quarters. To resolve this issue, initially a team of five district resource persons was constituted to take the agenda forward. Even after a great deal of hard work, the mission could reach out only 100 villages in the district. The agenda required a large team..... Small team of staff within DSWM is not adequate for realizing the goal. DWSM took major decisions in establishing an innovative institutional design based on partnership models.

Partnerships with NGO Networks

The DSWM benefited from the partnerships with Paschima Samakhya, a network of 100 local NGOs. This network is coordinated by Fr Moses, Director Social Service Centre. The DWSM could overcome in initial apprehensions related to the role of and partnership with NGOs through a series of meetings and discussions. Several NGOs might think that they are above the system and autonomous. It was important to orient the chief functionaries of the NGOs on the needs and goals of the DWSM. How to communicate with the rural communities was the main concern. After such consistent efforts, the partnership between NGOs and DWSM started yielding good results.

Annual Action Plans for IEC....

The District Annual Action Plans for Information, Education and Communications is prepared to provide direction. This plan is approved by the District Collector in a single approval and there is no need to taking day to day approvals. The initial period of the plan is dedicated for achieving physical targets and remaining part is dedicated for ensuring sustained use and practices. The villages are categorized into “focus” villages and “preparatory” villages. The inputs and strategies are fine tuned the needs of these two categories.

Total Sanitation Campaign to Community Led Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC to CLTSC) – A Decisive shift in the strategy and approach:

The need and importance of trainings and capacity building support inputs were well recognized in the agenda. Mr. Kullappa, Sanitation Expert motivated the members of DWSM to shift from TSC to CLTSC. He built the capacities of the facilitating teams/ resource persons on various tools/ methods/ facilitation skills during the training programs. Facilitating triggering events; fecal matter calculation; illness calculation are some of these tools that instigated thinking and action among communities. These inputs helped the team to gain new levels of confidence and developed conviction among the team members on the agenda and goal.

32 resource persons participated in this training program. Some of them were District Literacy Mission and part time workers. 8 members from this pool were placed at mandal level as District Resource persons. This strategy helped in reaching out to a large number of villages and developing a mandal level pool of resource persons. The mandal coordinators identified village sanitation motivators from each village and trained them on the processes and goals of CLTSC. Now the district has 640 village sanitation motivators, covering all Grama Panchayati in the district.

Now the district has a large pool of resource persons consisting of a variety of persons – ASHA workers; Grama Panchayati Secretary; village youth; anganwadi teacher; others... These members work on the agenda of sanitation and support the mission... The interesting point is that these members work on a voluntary basis and the mission does not pay any fees to them.



Training of Master Trainers under CLTSC (5 Days residential at Eluru) with support of WSP-SA. Mr. Kullappa, State Coordinator is participating in the Training

The First “First Position” in the state set the trend...

In 2007, 28 villages in the West Godavari District got Nirmal Grama Purashkar Awards and for the first time the district stood in the first place in the state. This gave tremendous confidence to the district teams. During this period, State Government of Andhra Pradesh also introduced “Shubhram Awards” for clean villages. During the awards function, the then Chief Minister, Mr. Raja Sekhar Reddy challenged the then Zilla Parishad, Chairman Dr.K.V.Nageswara Rao not to get satisfied with 28 awards and motivated him to get 200 awards in next year. This challenge triggered a serious attention to the agenda of Total Sanitation in the district. Successive District Collectors Smt G.Jaya Lakshmi (2008-09), Smt A.Vani Prasad (June 2009 onwards) further supported and improved the strategies and support systems. The vision is broadened and common vision is established. Entire administration was involved in the agenda. Mandal Praja Parishads and their staff; Grama Panchayati and various departments became an integral part of this agenda. Since the political support is visible, the media attention also came along and the total sanitation agenda got the visibility.

By 2008, West Godavari District received 195 Nirmal Grama Purashkar awards and again stood first in the state. Now the district is more ambitious. They want to make the entire district – “Open Defecation-Free” district. The goal became bigger and the DWSM is determined. In 2009, the district again stood first the state with 86 Nirmal Grama Purashkar awards. Since this year had general elections, most of the year the DWSM could function to the fullest potential. Land is a scarce commodity in the district and land prices are high. This has implications on the construction of toilets. Several families could not construct individual sanitary latrines and the DWSM promoted Community Managed Toilets. Though these toilets are well managed, Government of India did not think so. Considering the overall experience of Community Toilets in the country (which are unsustainable in general), Government of India did not approve the candidature of 15 villages for Nirmal Grama Purashkar awards on the grounds that these villages have community managed toilets. As a result, the number of awards reduced for the district.

Change and Continuity

It is not an uncommon phenomenon to see that several good initiatives get discontinued after the leadership changes. In West Godavari District, the practice is different, at least in case of sanitation. Successive District Collectors not only continued the agenda but also helped to make it better. Mrs Jaya Lakshmi helped in streamlining the systems and evolved 10 Commandments that communicates the goals and non-negotiables of the initiative. She also helped in strengthening the team at

On the Compilation of Good Practices on WASH by WASHCost (India) Project

Mr P Srinivas Rao is highly appreciative of the efforts by WASHCost (India) Project in bringing out good practices in WASH Sector in Andhra Pradesh. He received a copy of the book “Nirmala Dhamalu Ee Aadarsha Gramalu” a compendium of good practices in WASH sector from WASHCost (India) Project and used it effectively. He shared his experience of using this book.

“...When I received this booklet – “Nirmala Dhamalu Ee Aadarsha Gramalu”, I was not aware that a story from our district is also part of this compilation. I started reading it and found that it is very relevant and useful for our purpose. The agenda of convergence meetings with Village Presidents; ANMs and others was a right opportunity to use them. I picked 6 best stories from this book, including the story of Marteru village of the West Godavari District and published them as booklet. During the convergence meetings, we distributed these books. The DWSM printed about 3000 copies of this booklet and distributed to the village president. The situation of each village was discussed and the relevant pages of this booklet were read out in the meeting. The processes, practice and lessons from these stories showed the way to the problems identified in each village. They also motivated the village leaders to explore new options.... 60% to 70% participants were very receptive to the ideas and lessons from the case studies of the compilation. The participants also liked the idea of reading the books (case studies) and exploring the solutions, instead of boring lectures, which is the usual way of communications in such meetings.... I should thank WASHCost (India) Project for publishing this booklet. I received this booklet in the right time. I took the liberty to reproduce the book (part of the booklet) without WASHCost (India) Project as I found this very relevant for our agenda. I request your continued support and engagement with our district in realizing our goals...”

DWSM by pooling staff from education department and others. The DWSM has a large team with full time members. This helped to provide software inputs and project management inputs in a systematic manner. Mrs Vani Prasad, current District Collector also made total sanitation as her priority and regularly visits the three to four



Smt. A.Vani Prasad, District Collector, Sri M.Seshu Babu, Chairman, Zilla Parishad and Fr.Moses, participated in Children's Day Celebrations by DWSM (14.11.2009)

villages per week and monitors the progress and processes of DWSM. She is also instrumental in promoting better communication strategies and outreach mechanism. This commitment from the leadership helped to keep the agenda alive and improve the efforts.

Challenges:

The path travelled is not without challenges. Some of them are the following.

- **Solid Waste Management:**
- Now the mission is working in 500 villages to promote CLTSC. The main challenge is to manage solid waste management.
- **Slipping Back:**
- After the euphoria is over, the award winning villages also tend to slip back to old practices, over a period of time. Such tendencies were observed in this district also. The assistant coordinators in the district regularly monitor the “focus” villages as well as those villages, which have already received the award. Test Check villages have indicated that about 70% of villages are continuing the sanitation practices in a sustained manner. In 30% villages, the tendency to “slip back” is observed. This is mainly due to the negligence of the community and local leadership. It is important to make efforts continuously...