

Parting Ways with Tradition

Ramgarh - Jharkhand

In 2014-15, toilet coverage in the district of Ramgarh in Jharkhand was barely 15% and around 98,000 toilets were required to provide access to sanitation to all people.

A multi-pronged approach to include awareness building, capacity building, supply chain management, and school-led sanitation, amongst other programmes, brought a turnaround in attitude in the erstwhile military district of the British regime, making it Open Defecation Free (ODF). Ramgarh was finally declared ODF on April 5, 2017. However, there were several challenges in the ODF journey of the sparsely populated region.

Considering that open defecation was an accepted traditional behavior in Ramgarh, the District Administration organised an interaction programme with the community on the need of clean water and appropriate sanitation facilities. In this regard, various community awareness campaign initiatives were held.

District Administration organised Ratri Choupal at village level to address the hurdles in making the village ODF. Ratri Vishram camps were organised in villages, where District Collector and other senior officers stayed overnight, had dinner with the people of the village and discussed about the ill effects of open defecation and its consequences on the community.

Schools were viewed as an important gateway to promote clean sanitation habits. School children were motivated on health hygiene and sanitation. The *Swachhta Shapath* (cleanliness pledge) was made mandatory during daily school assemblies.

CHALLENGES FACED

- Traditional behaviour of community going for open defecation
- Lack of interdepartmental convergence and a strong, reliable monitoring system
- Absence of grievance redressal system and trained and capable manpower on community approach
- Addressing slip back cases, mobilising rich and capable people for construction of IHHLs, and a weak supply chain management





FINAL OUTCOMES

- 77,000 IHHLs constructed during the campaign of 10 months
- 125 Panchayats and 326 villages declared ODF
- Quality toilets with RCC roof constructed
- Swachhta ki Pathsala and cleanliness drives initiated by Panchayats are organised periodically

Saturdays were observed as *Swachhta Shaniwar*, under which various awareness campaigns, meetings and competitions on water and sanitation were held at every school, anganwadi centre, primary health centre and various offices.

Gaddha Khodo Abhiyan (Dig a pit), a unique campaign initiated to dig a leach-pit for toilet construction by all officers including Block Development Officer, Deputy District Collector, Deputy Commissioner to create awareness on acceptance of twin leach-pit toilets in the community.

Community led total sanitation (CLTS) approach was used to motivate people for desired behaviour change and to generate the demand of

Individual Household Toilets (IHHL).

A mass awareness campaign was launched to motivate the community to adopt better sanitation practices. Schools were involved in *Swachhta rath*, street plays, *kala jatha*, human chain, school rallies, and *prabhat* ferry.

After becoming ODF on April 6, 2017, the district initiated other activities relating sanitation (ODF+) under which all government schools were provided with hand washing units. Global Hand Washing Day was celebrated in all schools, where a total of 1,96,844 students and children participated from 1,048 schools and 1,032 Anganwadi Centers to learn and practice proper and effective hand washing habits with soap.