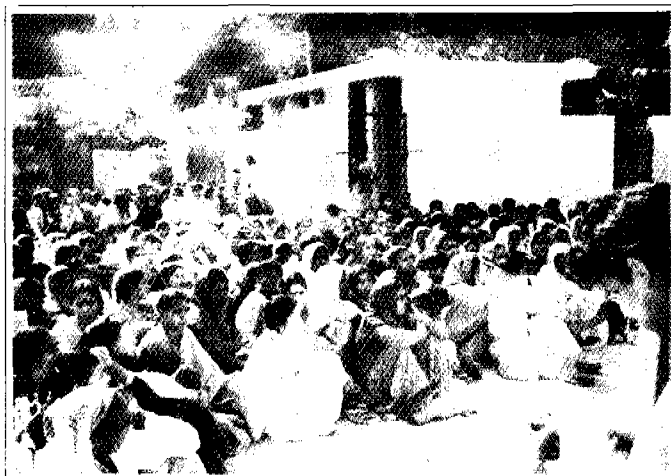


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People's Participation in Improving Sanitation

A Case of Kanpur Slums



Ministry of Urban Affairs & Employment
Government of India



Regional Water & Sanitation Group-South Asia
UNDP / World Bank Water & Sanitation Program

CONTEXT

1. Kanpur, the industrial city of Uttar Pradesh (UP) State is situated on the banks of the river Ganges. Several decades ago, an extensive railway network was laid to facilitate movement of raw materials and manufactured goods for several textile mills. A large number of poor migrant workers settled along the railway tracks and in vacant lands around the industries. Most of these settlements are currently regarded as unauthorized and are denied basic civic amenities. Today, it is estimated that about 700,000 people (over 20 percent of Kanpur's population) live in 300 to 350 slums with little or no access to civic services. In the midst of such a dismal scene, the Kanpur Slum Dwellers Federation (KSDF), a community Based Organisation (CBO), has started mobilizing the community to solve its own problems. During the last two years about 5,000 people living in seven slums, started making efforts to build and operate community toilets.

OBJECTIVE

2. The overall objective of KSDF is to improve the quality of life for poor people living in the slums of Kanpur. This case study focuses on one of KSDF's immediate objectives which is to promote people's participation in construction, operation, and maintenance of community toilets in Kanpur slums.

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

KSDF as an intermediating CBO

3. KSDF provides a platform through which Kanpur slum dwellers can reveal their demand for improved civic services and facilitates community mobilization in enforcing shared commitments and accountability among individuals. It all started with several visits by a few Kanpur slum leaders and a highly motivated social worker, Mr. S. Tiwari, to Bombay to learn about the activities of the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF)¹,

Mahila Milan² (another community based group), and a NGO the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers (SPARC)³. NSDF, Mahila Milan, and SPARC work together as a single force. Once convinced of the need for a forum, these leaders formed KSDF in 1992 and began their first task of enumerating slums of Kanpur city. They collected basic information such as the number of families, land ownership, access to safe water, sanitation, health and



A view of Burma Shell settlement

¹ NSDF is a Bombay based loose network of several city level slum dwellers federations.

² Mahila Milan, sister organisation of NSDF, is an association formed by women living on pavements and slums to bring economic equality for women and empower them to take community leadership.

³ SPARC is a Bombay based NGO started in 1984 by some social workers and professionals to help urban poor to organize themselves and provide a space (emotional and social) to pool their human resources and learn from each other. Area resource center is the term coined to describe such a 'space'. SPARC provides professional support to NSDF and Mahila Milan. They work together as a single force.

CASELET 1

earn more than Rs. 10,000 during one year. Now the community plans to use the monthly savings, deposited in a Bank, to replace the existing asbestos roof with a concrete roof and construct a community center. *Note: Sangam theater is a special case where the toilet attracts large number of outsiders. KSDF and other slum communities (Shiv Hatra and Burma Shell) where toilets are under construction are aware of this fact and therefore will be charging Rs. 10 p.m per family.*

Demand from other settlements and KNMP's response

11. Considering the success of KSDF's Sangam experiment and demand from other poor settlements, KNMP decided to support KSDF's initiatives by (i) allotting municipal land for construction of seven ten-seat community toilets; (ii) subsidizing the construction costs, by reimbursing 50 percent of the cost subject to a maximum of Rs. 25,000 per toilet (KNMP changed its earlier position not to extend financial assistance to KSDF as they are not a registered society); and (iii) agreeing to provide water and sewer connections to all future toilet constructions by charging a one-time fee of Rs. 6,000 per toilet. KSDF has started working in all the seven settlements. While construction is almost complete in two settlements (Shiv Hatra and Burma Shell), community mobilization is taking place in other five settlements. In all these cases, communities are willing to fully bear operation and maintenance costs but not capital costs. They are willing to pay only 10 percent of toilet construction costs (Rs. 50 per

family) and the rest 90 percent comes as subsidy from KNMP (50 percent) and NSDF (40 percent).

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

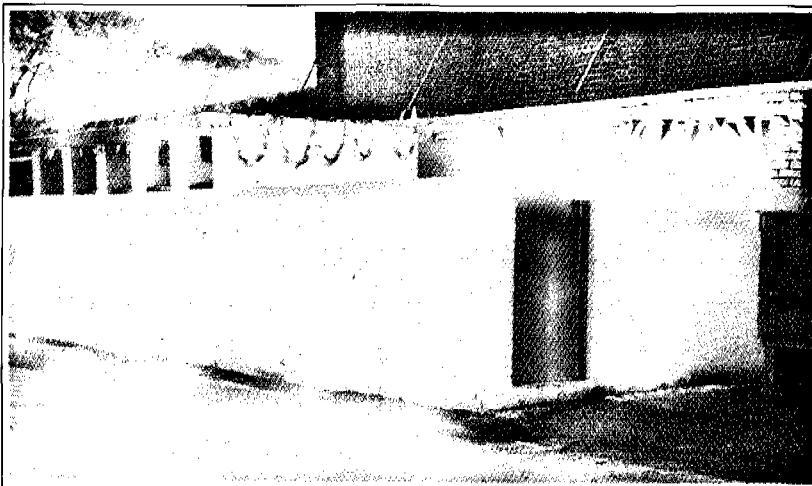
Cost sharing and agency problems

12. Parallel, free government programs, like UBSP or the Ganga Action Plan, in other slums create a negative influence against mobilizing the communities to pay for construction costs. Recent closure of several textile mills rendered many slum dwellers jobless. The incomes of several families have come down significantly, and some families have migrated to other towns. Most people are not willing to contribute more than Rs. 50 per family. On an average, with 100 families paying for a ten-seat toilet, people's contribution comes to about 10 percent of construction costs.

13. Political interference — local political leaders feel threatened by community self-help initiatives, as they are afraid that their support base will be eroded. To gain political benefits, they influence the community not to pay for these services by (i) spreading the message that it is government's responsibility to provide free services to poor, and (ii) channeling services to influential sections of the community. Should formal institutions be more transparent about their policies and actions in providing services to poor?

14. In the absence of adequate funds, KSDF is unable to expand its activities. How long can KSDF's initiatives be sustained with its dependence on NSDF for funds? Can NSDF continue to provide financial support forever?

15. KNMP's contribution (50 percent subsidy) toward capital (construction) costs comes as reimbursement of expenses incurred by KSDF to a maximum of Rs. 25,000 per toilet. As a result, KSDF fully depends on NSDF for toilet construction funds. How can this be sustained in the long run? One possible approach could be to set up a revolving fund for community toilet construction, to be managed by KSDF. This fund could then be used to extend loans to cover the



Community toilet ready for inauguration

and (ii) settlements are in the middle of densely populated areas and not much land is available for individual toilets.

Community mobilization for construction, operation, and maintenance of community toilets

8. KSDF, assisted by NSDF and SPARC, plays a facilitating role in community mobilization for construction, operation and maintenance of community toilets. As women are the most affected, due to ever shrinking space for open defecation, Mahila Milan leaders played an important role in mobilizing the community. The following paragraphs describe the process followed in one of the instances.

9. Construction : In early 1993, Sangam Theater Railway Line settlement dwellers (about 150 families) decided to construct a ten-seat community toilet. NSDF organized a visit by some leaders/dwellers to Bombay and trained them in construction, operation, and maintenance of toilets. A toilet committee, consisting of slum leaders and a representative of KSDF persuaded KNMP for permission to construct the toilet in the nearby municipal land. The community decided to collect Rs. 50 per family (based on their affordability and willingness to pay) toward the construction cost. As only Rs. 4,500⁷ (about 10 percent of the total cost) could be collected, NSDF contributed the rest. To keep costs to a minimum, the community decided not to employ a contractor but to build the structure themselves. While no rigid rules for community participation were framed (except that only masons from the same community will be employed), many people provided free labor. The total construction cost was only around Rs. 50,000, as compared to Rs. 86,000 when built by KNMP. This represented an investment saving of

about 40 percent, of which the major savings are due to absence of profit and overhead costs of a contractor/formal institution and some amount of free labor from the community. The toilet was formally inaugurated on 15 August 1993.

10. Operation and Maintenance : The community decided to operate and maintain the toilet on a 'pay-and-use' basis. It employed two persons (one part-time caretaker and one "safaiwala" – a cleaner) from the community. The part-time caretaker is a community member who runs a cigarette shop next to toilet. His job is to collect money from outsiders and residents, supervise the cleaner's work, and maintain accounts. The safaiwala cleans the toilet twice a day. Initially user charges were Rs. 10 per month (p.m) per family and Re. 1 per use for outsiders. About 5 percent of families are very poor, and they are allowed to pay whenever and whatever they can afford. The poorest of poor therefore gain access to service. However, as the toilet is located close to a commercial area, income from outsiders' use turned out to be significant (about Rs. 1,800 p.m.). Total monthly income was more than double the expenditure (Rs. 200 p.m paid to the caretaker; Rs. 500 p.m for safaiwala; and Rs. 300 p.m on an average for maintenance), and as a result, the community decided to reduce the monthly charge for residents to Rs. 5 p.m. Even after 50 percent reduction in charges, the community was able to



Community members constructing the toilet

⁷ Rs. 31.20 = US \$1 approx.

education services. KSDf is now active in thirty slums either directly or indirectly through government programs such as Urban Basic Services Program⁴ (UBSP) as well as small groups engaged in improving the living conditions of slum dwellers.

4. KSDf has ten full time staff, mostly field workers from communities where KSDf is active and a couple of dedicated social workers. Presently, KSDf's monthly expenses, averaging Rs. 25,000, are reimbursed by NSDF, and KSDf hopes that this arrangement will continue in future.

Work in select slums

5. KSDf decided to focus its activities on settlements along the railway tracks. The people are very poor, do not have access to basic civic services, and the settlements are not recognized by Kanpur Nagar Maha Palika (KNMP)⁵, due to land tenure problem (the land officially belongs to Railways). KSDf has slowly gained acceptance among slum dwellers by providing assistance in obtaining ration cards⁶ for every household and through its Mahila Milan credit scheme.

Demand revelation

6. KSDf mobilizes the community by organizing study visits for select slum leaders to other slums within and outside Kanpur, followed by small group meetings within each slum to assess the needs of its dwellers. Three basic needs, toilets, electricity, and drinking water emerged in almost all the slums. Contrary to the "normal" belief, people prioritized toilets over drinking water



Community meeting

because a few programs do exist to install free handpumps in slums. The residents access the program through local politicians or a municipal corporator. The handpumps are normally maintained by community; repair costs are shared by users, and the majority of pumps remain in operation. The absence of free toilet programs, and the ever decreasing space for open defecation has resulted in lack of privacy, particularly for women. This accounts for people's priority for toilets.

7. Once slum leaders show keen interest in solving their problems, KSDf conducts door-to-door surveys to collect detailed information, such as size of the families, income levels, sanitation and water supply service levels, etc. The findings of these surveys are then discussed in community meetings. This information sharing triggers a debate within the community(ies) on their problems, possible solutions, and strategies for solving problems. In small group meetings, community toilets usually emerged as the favored option because: (i) majority of dwellers are very poor;

⁴ UBSP is one of the Urban Poverty Alleviation programs of the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India. The focus is to organize communities by creating participatory community based structures and provide them an opportunity to formulate their own micro development plans.

⁵ Kanpur Municipal Corporation is known as Kanpur Nagar Maha Palika.

⁶ A ration card entitles the family to receive prescribed quota of food and fuel at subsidized price from the Government designated shops. Additionally, ration card is used as an official identity card for legal purposes like obtaining loans etc.

40 percent subsidy from NSDF (which could be recovered as part of monthly household contributions) to communities wanting to have toilets. Will KNMP or the government of UP or NSDF be interested in setting up such a fund? Will the community be willing to pay 50 percent of construction costs? What are their incentives?

16. KSDF is active in other areas of development also. How much of their resources are now spent for mobilizing the community for construction, operation and maintenance of toilets? When we add these transaction costs, will construction costs still be lower than KNMP's costs?

LESSONS

17. Poor are willing to pay for improved services. 'Pay-and-use' community toilets are financially viable in slums, when there is a demand and community members participate in construction, operation and maintenance.

18. Partnership initiatives of formal and informal institutions can provide gainful services to poor.

19. The following are some distinct advantages of a community-managed construction, operation and maintenance approach over a government/contractor-based approach:

- (i) Construction, operation and maintenance costs are significantly lower when the community assumes the total responsibility. The additional transaction costs incurred by a NGO or CBO in mobilizing the community, improves the chances of sustainability;
- (ii) Community-managed services operate with flexible rules and regulations, and, as a result, even the poorest of poor gain access to service; and
- (iii) Operation of 'Pay-and-use' toilets managed by community could become a source of income, particularly if it happens to attract outsiders, for community welfare activities. ■

CASELETS

India has numerous cases wherein efficient and sustainable water supply and sanitation services are provided by formal and informal institutions such as Non Government Organizations, Community Based Organizations and private agencies. In all these cases, several innovative and interesting institutional alternatives have been tried out successfully. RWSG-SA has started documenting these innovative approaches by preparing a brief note – "Caselets" on each of them for wider dissemination. Far from being a mere documentation of facts, these caselets will analyze the processes that led to their success and seek answers to what worked; what made them work; and what are the impediments in scaling up. 'People's Participation in Improving Sanitation – A case of Kanpur Slums' is the first in this series and the future caselets are :

1. Self-Financed Sanitation Project — Midnapore, West Bengal
2. Institutionalized Social Intermediation in Kerala Water Supply and Sanitation Projects
3. Universal Metering of Water Supply in Pusad, Maharashtra
4. Private Sector Participation in Municipal Wastewater Management Service Delivery – Madras Metro Water Supply and Sewerage Board's Experiences.

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