

Swachh gaon: Example from Haryana

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The journey of Kalwari¹ village in Mewat district of Haryana towards sustained sanitation practices inspires and has much to be learnt from. Almost 90 percent constructed toilets in individual households, close to zero open defecation practice, proper drainage and garbage disposal system for waste management have helped to give residents a healthy and dignified life. The success is especially significant in the milieu of a dismal sanitation status in the district of Mewat.

According to Census 2011, sex ratio and literacy rates though are unimpressive, use of banking services and mobile telephony in Mewat is remarkable. Yet the percentage of households without toilets in Mewat is as high as 65 percent. The sanitation status of Mewat is very poor as compared to 75 percent sanitation coverage² achieved by 2013 in Haryana. Only 20 villages are declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) at the gram panchayat (GP)/village level³. 76 percent households approximately practice open defecation and 50.12 percent do not have any drainage facility.

Despite such poor indices of the district, the village of Kalwari located in Tauru block, which once struggled with the sanitation issue as do hundreds of other villages, serves as an example for creating *Swachh Gaons* (clean villages) across Mewat and other districts in Haryana.

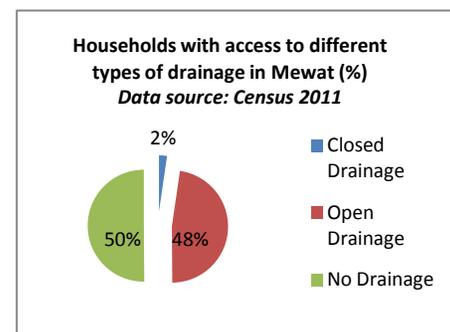
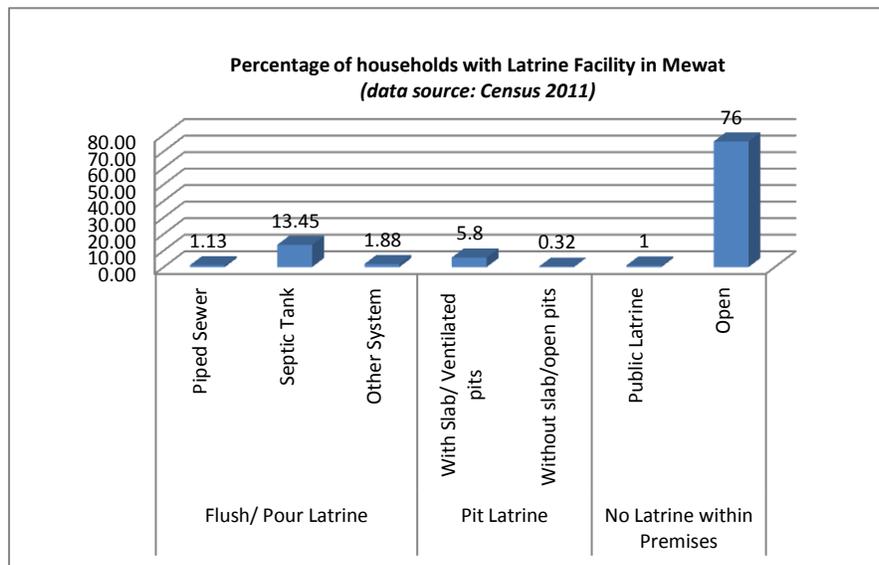
| | Indicators | Numbers |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Mewat | No. of villages | 439 |
| | Total Population | 1.1 |
| | Sex Ratio | 907 |
| | Literacy Rates (%) | 36.6 (female) & 56.1% (male) |
| | Number of girls married before 18 (%) | 10.6 |
| | Family Size | 6.8 |
| | Institutional Deliveries (%) | 51.2 |
| | Children fully vaccinated (%) | 27.3 |
| | Access to Banking services (%) | 40.84 (households) |
| | Use of mobile phones (%) | 68.35 (households) |

Source: Census 2011

¹ Kalwari is located at border of Mewat and Gurgaon, 24 kms from Nuh district headquarters and 8 kms from Tauru block headquarters. It has two government schools, four anganwadi centers. Primary occupation includes agriculture and government jobs.

² Baseline survey by Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation

³ Ibid



The story of Kalwari focuses on construction of sanitary facilities and their maintenance and usage with community ownership. The success of the village was captured through (I) group discussion with various social groups and village level institutions (VLIs) (II) interviews with key community leaders, teachers, and gram panchayat (GP) members and (III) transect walk with community leaders in the village. The villagers show that community led initiatives supported by public institutions and government department can do wonders in the life of rural masses.

| Kalwari | Indicators | Figures (Numbers & Percentage) |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| | Households | 519 |
| | Population | 2751 (1462 males; 1289 females) |
| | Literacy Rate | 78.38% (89.31% male/ 65.99% female) |
| | Sex Ratio | 882 |
| Source: Census 2011 | | |

Village level institutions (VLIs) and government departments set the ball rolling

The sarpanch and other gram panchayat (GP) members during 2010-2015 led the process of change in Kalwari by using wall paintings and community meetings to encourage toilet construction and generate awareness about good hygiene practices. The gram sabha served as a platform to discuss community sanitation issues. The GP, backed by community support, utilized all funds under Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA) and allocated by the Public Health and Engineering Department (PHED) and other government departments. Ninety percent of individual household-level toilets were completed in 2012-13. A monitoring committee consisting of GP members, community leaders, and ex-army men supervised toilet construction before the disbursement of funds. The GP installed water storage tanks in schools, two new government water supply connections, and approximately twenty hand pumps. The GP recruited two sweepers to maintain general cleanliness of the village. The GP constructs roads and drains, and ensures their maintenance, and submitted a proposal to PHED to build a water treatment plant for liquid waste management. Solid waste is accumulated in individual pits outside the village and used later as compost. In addition, the

GP selected a space about 500 meters away from the village as a solid waste disposal complex, which is expected to be functional in 2016. Ex-Sarpanch *Rekha*, during whose tenure maximum work on sanitation was done, opines, "If village level institutions lead from the front, changes in rural lives are bound to happen."

Roles of schools and *aanganwadi* centers in Kalwari to generate awareness and develop good hygiene habits among growing children are remarkable. School Management Committee (SMC) members monitored cleanliness of the school campuses. SMC meetings take up issues of sanitation and healthy environment with the teachers.

Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committee (VHSNC) members conduct awareness generation meetings on good hygiene practices at personal and household levels with villagers including women, young girls, and children. The VHSNC collaborated with the GP to utilize Rs. 30,000 allocated by the Health Department for constructing drains and using sprays to keep away flies and mosquitoes.

Support by district administration in monitoring and timely release of funds was significant. PHED installed seven government water supply connections in Kalwari to ensure water availability. Regular monitoring by government functionaries from the Additional Deputy Commissioner's office, PHED, Health Department in schools, and the block level Swachh Bharat Mission in charge (*gram prerak* or village motivator) checks on and motivates the VLIs and ensures compliance on part of the villagers.

Communities show willingness to adopt changes

Construction of toilets is easier than creating the habit of using them. Awareness generation drives on sanitation by central and state government is taken to the grassroots by VLIs, such as GPs, SMCs, VHSNCs, and nonprofit organizations using door-to-door visits, mobilization and training of women, and campaigns by school authorities. Community meetings of VHSNC and nonprofit organizations, such as Sehgal Foundation, had significant influence in mobilizing and empowering women, who gradually started giving up open defecation, cleaning toilets and kitchens, washing hands with soap, and properly disposing of garbage. Improved awareness levels among women led to the creation of a healthy environment as women, being managers at household level, have a higher stake in improving sanitation practices. Villagers could adopt these changes because of the high literacy rates and the desire to lead a healthy life. Awareness about the ill effects of filthy environments, which lead to diseases and untimely deaths, impacted the villagers psychologically and led to collective behavior change. Peer influence also worked as a binding force. The residents of Kalwari gradually moved to the desired behavior of toilet use and improved personal hygiene, maintenance and cleanliness of households, schools, *anganwadi*, and the village. *Rajbala*, a VHSNC member, observes, "Increase in awareness levels with greater dissemination of knowledge about good hygiene practices among women has changed the face of sanitation and created a healthy environment across households."

Combined efforts by all stakeholders, including communities, village level institutions and the gram panchayat, and district administration ultimately led over a period of five years to the creation of Swachh Gaon Kalwari. Election of competent local governance (GP) functionaries and the proactive role of the district administration in monitoring and timely

release of funds led to effective village development planning and fund utilization. Community monitoring mechanisms and government officers' regular visits ensured villagers' compliance with sanitation norms. Some preconditions, like the high literacy rate and community leadership groups created by training programs of Sehgal Foundation, promoted social capital leading to fast acceptance and sustainability of sanitary practices. The example of *Swachh Gaon* Kalwari shows how a joint pledge by communities and village institutions can improve cleanliness and attract villages across districts in Haryana as well as others states of India to learn and replicate these experiences.

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