

Hue and Cry for drinking water! - Major struggle for Nature's Call!

This is the situation in Rural Karnataka!

Whether it is North Karnataka, South Karnataka or Central Karnataka, the situation is the same as far as drinking water or toilet facility is concerned. There is a large hue and cry for drinking water and a long wait until darkness to go to the toilet.

The statement made by the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister Shri. Jagadeesh Shetter indicates that there is a need for the construction of 52 lakh more toilets in Karnataka. Total Sanitation Campaign, Nirmala Grama Award, Suvarna Gram- all these programs have failed to fulfill the dreams of rural development. The situation of women waiting for darkness to go the toilets is still not altered. This is the sad story of our state.

To get a clear picture of the drinking water and toilet facility in Karnataka, Udayavani visited 8 Gram Panchayats of the 6 Districts of Karnataka. Except 1-2 villages there was no sight of 'Nirmal Grama' at all. The existing situation of drinking water is also very dismal.

Some key aspects related to villages and gram panchayat functioning are covered here:

Grants: The Center and the State Governments have released a lot of grants to the Gram Panchayats. However, the grants released under Category A for administrative purposes pose a big problem. Overall each Gram Panchayat receives a grant of Rs 6 lakhs. There is a general complaint from all the GPs visited that most of the funds are being utilized in paying up the electricity bills to KPTCL. Thus the grants are not reaching the Gram Panchayats.

Government says that electricity bill should be paid from the amount collected from water bills, rent from the shops and other taxes. The dream of 'power to Villages' had taken its shape about 27 years ago. But even today it remains a dream- not converted into reality. The concept of 'economic Independence' is only in the paper. The Gram Panchayats are not able to generate enough revenue to pay its own bills.

If drinking water supply is proper and adequate, villagers are willing to pay water bills at the scheduled time. However, there is no sufficient supply of drinking water, partly due to the absence of 3-phase power even for 1 hour per day. Therefore the people end up not paying the bills properly. Thereby, the Gram Panchayats do not get sufficient income. Moreover, the electricity bill is not being sent to the concerned Gram Panchayat. Instead it is submitted to the Taluka Panchayat by KPTCL. The Gram Panchayat may not even be aware of the bill amount. Due to lack of funds, several Gram Panchayats find it difficult to pay salaries of the waterman. Naturally the waterman shows negligence in the regular supply of drinking water and motor maintenance. The Gram Panchayat Secretary expresses that this results in irregular supply of drinking water even though there is sufficient drinking water.

Gram Panchayat members opine that the Government should release grants on the basis of the number of members in the Gram Panchayat. It is not correct that a Gram Panchayat of 7 members and a Gram Panchayat of 27 members get the same grants.

Toilets: The Central Government is giving a grant of Rs. 3000 to construct toilets to all the BPL families. There is an opinion that these funds are not at all sufficient. The Government is being pressurized to give similar grants to even the APL families in the village.

The Government awards those villages with Nirmal Gram Puruskar (NGP) which have toilet facilities in all houses, schools, anganwadis, etc and where people do not use the open fields for toilet purposes. Even among the villages who have been awarded the Nirmal Gram Award, there exist 2-3% of the houses without toilet facility. Even in houses where toilets are constructed, they are converted into bathrooms or godowns for storing wood. There are people who say that they will construct the toilets only once the government releases the funds. For a few other Gram Panchayats it is the problem of space to construct toilets. A major reason for not constructing toilets is that there is no sufficient water supply. Electricity, water and sanitation are all interlinked. Toilets have been constructed in Malnad areas. But in districts like Tumkur, Mandya, Belgaum, and Gulbarga, one has to search for the existence of toilets.

Drinking Water: Except in some parts, wells in all villages of Malnad have dried up and people depend on bore wells (underground water). Due to this dependence on bore wells, power supply determines water supply. There are few programs to develop and strengthen alternate sources of water and for protecting underground water.

Drinking water in most of the villages is contaminated with Fluoride and bacteria. Despite this, people consume the water, due to absence of other drinking water sources.

Government has provided kits to test the presence of bacteria in drinking water by spending Rs. 1000 to every Gram Panchayat in the state. But it appears that most of the Gram Panchayats have not even opened the kits. In most cases, the GP members and staff do not know how to operate the kit.

Where and What?

Arghyam – a public charitable foundation from Bangalore conducted ASHWAS - A Survey of Household Water and Sanitation - in 172 Gram Panchayats across 28 districts of Karnataka (all except Bangalore Urban). The findings of the survey were presented before the Government and also put forth before the 172 Gram Panchayats. Arghyam, through its NGO partners, facilitated discussions in the GPs to help them arrive at action steps to address issues emerging from the survey.

Given this background, Udayavani had come forward to have a look at these Gram Panchayats closely. Udayvani report visited the following Gram Panchayats for the study: Gama from Shikaripura Taluka and Kolur from Sagar Taluka of Shimoga District; Kodigehalli from Kunigal Taluka and Nagavalli from Tumkur Taluka of Tumkur District; Hinkal from Mysore Taluka, Mysore District, Bharatipur Cross from K.R. Pet of Mandya District; Ravoor from Chittapur Taluka of Gulbarga District and Raibag from Raibag Taluka of Belgaum District.

Gulbarga-Belgaum

Waiting for darkness to go the toilets, not able to get clean drinking water at least once a year in some of the villages, no drainage, no proper roads ... To get a glimpse of all these you should visit places in Gulbarga and Belgaum districts of North Karnataka.

Arghyam- a public charitable foundation based in Bangalore had conducted ASHWAS – A Survey of Household Water and Sanitation – across 172 Gram Panchayats in 28 districts of Karnataka, including Gulbarga and Belgaum. The findings of the survey were shared with the members of the Gram Panchayat and subsequently Arghyam, along with its NGO partners, also facilitated action planning based on the findings of the survey. The same has been presented to the higher officials of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department.

Based on this report, Udayavani had visited Ravoor Gram Panchayat of Chittapur Taluka, Gulbarga District and Raibag Gram Panchayat of Raibag Taluka, Belgaum District.

Ravoor: There is the Gram Panchayat building but a look into it shows no signs of any administrative activity. One has to depend on mineral water if clean drinking water is required. There are no toilets, no fresh air. The whole village has a foul smell of the toilet. Pits with dumped waste are found everywhere in the village, as a result of which even drinking water is getting contaminated with Fluoride and bacteria. Other than that one cannot get water even to wet the lips –leave alone washing of the body parts.

Ravoor Gram Panchayat is adjacent to Wadi of Chittapur Taluk, Gulbarga District which has well known cement factories. Business, in this place, runs in crores. Yet the Gram Panchayat appears to be in the pre-independence era. There is no development of any kind here. Even though there is a clear mention of water being contaminated in the Arghyam report, the Gram Panchayat has not bothered to take any kind of action. This is because majority of the bore wells have dried up and the little left is the only hope for drinking water. Even the wells are dried up. There is no electricity problem here as it happens to be an industrial area. Water problem persists here because of the low underground water level.

According to the Nanjundappa report, Gulbarga is a backward district. Accordingly, the GP has been allocated additional funds. As per the GP members, even though the Gram Panchayat has the plan of action ready for a budget of 1.8 crores, the Zilla Panchayat is not passing it, thus being responsible for the water crisis in the area. People of the village seem to have lost faith.

Majority of the people do not know about toilets. Even those who know cannot use the toilets because of water problem. The people also feel uncomfortable and dirty to have toilets attached to the houses. Those who live in huts do not have a roof of their own. So it is difficult to expect them to have their own toilets.

Major problem here is that of constructing toilets which require at least Rs. 25,000 and a lot of digging. As soon as digging goes up to 1 ½ pits length, they come across large rocks which require the use dynamite to break them. Government provides only Rs. 3000 to construct a toilet. The villagers say they cannot have a toilet in this meager amount. Except that of the Gram Panchayat President's house none of the members have their own toilets. There is problem of finance on one hand, and issue of space on the other. The Gram Panchayat claims that it has built drains and also cleans them. But one has to search for the drains here. Thus the dirty water gets accumulated near the drinking water taps.

Raibag: There arises a doubt whether any Gram Panchayat exists in the Taluka as soon as one enters the town. Taluk Panchayat adjacent to the Gram Panchayat has a water tank in front is covered by contaminated and dirty water. It seems years have passed since the drain was cleaned. There are wastes dumped in the pits throughout the place. If this is the situation in the Taluka Panchayat one can very well imagine the condition of the Gram Panchayat!

The Gram Panchayat members do not know about the budget the GP has been allotted. When asked they say that they were not informed about this by the Gram Panchayat Secretary. The Village water and Sanitation committee is non-existent.

The Gram Panchayat President does not have a toilet of his own. The Gram Panchayat member- Mr. Ramlingappa Belashi, who has been elected thrice as a member says "Why do we need a toilet? We have fields. We will go there only." Some of the villagers had come forward to construct toilets for their families as they get govt. aid. However, due to the shortage of funds even this has not been given. Because of this others also have backed out. Those who have their own toilets are using them as godowns to keep pickaxe, spades, store wood, etc.

There are instances where several bills are produced for the same toilet. Villagers complain that Gram Panchayat President and the members have not given necessary attention regarding the water and sanitation situation. As a result the problem still persists. Gram Panchayat administration is ignorant about the solid waste management and water purification. Then how can one expect it to be a clean village?

Mysore-Mandya

If Hinkal Gram Panchayat of Mysore District is an example for complete rural development because of the effective implementation of the Government Circulars and Programs then Bharatipur Cross Gram Panchayat of Mandya district stands out as an example for the most under developed village because of lack of support of the locals and negligence of the Government officials.

Arghyam- a public charitable foundation based in Bangalore has conducted ASHWAS – A Survey of Household Water and Sanitation – across 172 Gram Panchayats in 28 districts of Karnataka. Arghyam did not stop at the report itself. It went a step forward to present it before the peoples' representatives of the Gram Panchayats covered in the survey, and helped them to come out with a plan of action. It also presented the same before the State Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department.

Based on this report Udayavani visited Hinkal and Bharatipur Cross and saw in reality, rural development in the former and lack of development in the latter.

Hinkal: Hinkal Gram Panchayat, which is adjacent to Mysore City, has the Village Water and Sanitation Committee in place and working efficiently according to the Government circulars in the Gram Panchayat. May be, the whole village is not spotless clean. But it has been able to create a system of maintaining cleanliness everywhere, problem free water supply, well-built roads, and good drainage. The village has the credit of receiving the Nirmala Grama Puruskar (NGP) award, as all the houses possess toilets here. This is also due to the fact that this village is adjacent to Mysore city, and therefore, does not have the privilege of using open fields for toilet purpose. While all the houses have attached toilets, we can still find some houses using the toilets to store junk of the house, or as bathrooms or not being used at all.

All the roads in the village have tars and drains are constructed. But some drains are still dirty and full of garbage. However, the specialty of the village is that through out the village and on all major buildings one can find boards and hoardings with messages on the importance of toilets, pure water, cleanliness and payment of tax. The Village Water and Sanitation Committee here is quite strong and efficient as compared to the dummy bodies elsewhere. Similarly, the task of cleanliness of the village is being carried out continuously and successfully. The Gram Panchayat has improved to such an extent that a vehicle has been allotted to collect the garbage – a facility usually seen in the cities. The Villagers here feel that with the emergence of sanitation committee the cleanliness of the village has improved up to 80%.

The interrupted power supply poses a problem on the supply of drinking water. Some people of the village opine that the water committee is handling the issue better. However, women of the village complain that water supply to the village is not adequate.

Bharatipur Cross: Situated in a corner of K.R.Pet Taluka of Mandya District, Bharatipur Cross gives one an experience of having visited North Karnataka. Not even a single program has been implemented here. Not even 5% of the houses in the village have toilet facility. Some villagers expect that Government should provide for the complete expenditure for construction of toilets. Moreover, there are instances of misuse. Some people have taken toilet basin from the government for sale

Of all the Gram Panchayat members who are supposed to spread awareness on the use of toilets only 2 members have toilets in their houses. Even if toilets are provided, there is a ready answer from the Gram Panchayat members for not using them. They say

there is water problem. Those who have built toilets in their houses have converted them into bathrooms by removing the toilet basin.

Arghyam survey has found that most of the taps of this village have Fluoride content and bacteria, and there are no other sources of water. Gram Panchayat Secretary puts the blame on Zilla Panchayat that it does not permit to dig new bore wells.

Since there is no 3-phase power supply, there is problem in the supply of water. For this reason people do not water bill. All these are inter-linked. Further it is also found that there are people who steal the taps, pipes, stands, etc. Gram Panchayat Secretary says that there is no budget/ fund to replace them.

The people of the village take no responsibility for cleaning of drains. Gram Panchayat members strongly feel that it is the duty of the Secretary to take care of all this or else why is he there for? One can clearly understand that people of this village point out at the government fro every thing.

SHIMOGA REPORT

Shimoga district, which has the credit of doing exceptional work under the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC), is also the Chief Minister's native. But a visit to these villages still showed lack of hygiene and still prevalent practice of open defecation. When this correspondent visited the Nirmal Grama Puraskar (NGP) winning villages Gama and Kolur, which happen to be in the CM's constituency, the lack of hygiene was visible. It is mandatory that the villages eligible for Nirmal Grama Puraskar of the Union Government should fulfill certain conditions. There should be toilets in each and every house as well as in all the schools and Anganwadis. Open defecation should be zero level.

But the two conditions are not fulfilled in the villages which have been awarded the NGP. Even the ASHWAS (A Survey of Household Water and Sanitation) survey conducted by Bangalore based public charitable Foundation - Arghyam, corroborates this finding. It appears that despite efforts by the officials, various incentives and even threats, the villagers have not been convinced to build the toilets. In some cases they continued the habit of open defecation even after having toilets in their homes. There are instances of using toilets as bath rooms and in some cases store rooms for firewood.

The Village Water and Hygiene Committee (VWSC), a sub-committee of the GP, mandated to look after water and sanitation issues, are not to be found in the two GPs. It came to the notice of Udayavani that the test kit provided by Rural Development and Panchayat Raj department to detect bacteria in the drinking water was not at all used by these two GPs, even though they were present in the GP offices.

Gama (NGP): Toilets were built in almost all the houses, which appears to be due to the efficiency of Taluka Panchayat Executive officer Rajappa. And now there are only eleven houses without toilet. It has already been planned to build toilets for them under different projects by the year end.

Villagers say there is no drinking water problem. Water supply is disrupted only because of erratic power supply and low voltage. They blame the government for this. In the ASHWAS dissemination meeting, as per the Village Health Worker, in Shimoga district, chickungunya fever was first reported from village Gama. Fortunately the village is almost free of it because of regular usage of toilets, clean hygiene surroundings and clean drinking water.

Kolur (NGP): In the Nirmala Grama Kolur in Sagara Taluka, there are 658 houses and only 65 households do not have toilets. However, people do not seem to be using the toilets. In the morning the first thing they do is to go out in the field. It serves them many purposes. Open defecations is only one of them! Some of the people blame the government that while it provides incentives to build toilets, there is no water facility. In the group housing scheme the problem is much more severe. If they use the toilet, they should pour at least one bucket of water. Due to the water crisis, they prefer the open defecation. They are more comfortable with the open defecation rather than the toilets, said the villagers.

The GM nodal officer, ZP Assistant Secretary (Development) Mr. Subramanian says that by the end of this financial year the Grama Panchayat aims to provide toilets to every house. However, the question is 'what is the time by which all people will use their toilets!' This question in turn is not just related to people's habits, but also persisting water problems..

TUMKUR REPORT

Tumkur (Kodigehalli-Nagavalli): There is no need to walk around the village to know about the scarcity of water, unhygienic public toilets and overflowing dustbins. It is more than enough if you visit Gram Panchayat office. You will come face to face with all the problems!

Water testing kit is unknown here. Manure pit and stagnant water are by the side of the drinking water taps, heaps of garbage here and there, clogged drains not cleaned for years, are common features here.

Udayavani team was eye witness to the dismal condition of public toilets and drinking water supply units at Kodigehalli of Kunigal taluka and Nagavalli of Tumkur rural taluka.

Watermen of both the villages are not ready to work as they have not received their salary for the past 6-7 months. Most of the grants sanctioned to Gram Panchayat is spent on paying the electricity bill. There is no money to pay the salary of the staff. The Government order to deduct power bill amount at the source while releasing the Government Grant to the Gram panchayat has made them very weak. They are almost sick for want of grants for day to day expenses. Water quality testing kits costing about Rs.3000 are stacked in the store room along with scrap and waste material. Awareness about the quality of drinking water is not at all there among the people. Water tanks are not cleaned since years, allege the villagers.

Kodigehalli: Water problem is very acute in Kodigehalli, 20 kilometers from taluka head quarter, Kunigal. Villagers lament about their plight of not getting even 2 pots of water a day. They question the very logic of collecting water tax when the supply is so irregular. It is a regular practice to stand and shout at the officials of Panchayat every day. There is some water in the open wells thanks to the just ended rainy season. But it is not fit for human consumption. So there is heavy dependence on mini water supply units. Theft of starters, motors and pipes used for lifting the water from the bore well are perpetual problems for the Village Panchayat. Moreover, the Secretary is always worried about adjusting the amount to replace the parts of the water supply units in the absence of Funds.

We are unaware of cleaning of the water tank, say the villagers. We have no funds even for that, laments the secretary. House flies and mosquitoes are thriving on stagnant waters and clogged drains. The need of toilets in the village is visible for even the outsiders. Government releases Rs3000 for the construction of toilets but the amount is not sufficient, we need more funds, demand the villagers. Of course, there are people who feel lack of toilets is not a problem as it is a rural area.

Nagavalli: Time and again the Health Department has warned that all the sources of water in four villages under the jurisdiction of this Gram Panchayat are contaminated. "We have written to Gram Panchayat with regard to this. But nothing has happened so far," says Health Education Officer. "No one knows about water testing kits. After procuring them, they were simply dumped in the store room without opening their covers. Even the president and members of Gram Panchayat do not know anything about them. The water problem of the village is not solved as village waterman and bill collector do not listen to village secretary because the post is held by a woman. There are many issues facing the GP. There is severe water crisis in the villages, complain villagers. Rs.37 lakhs is due for the power bill. The Panchayat can pay Rs.2.25 per meter to clean drains. It is very low. The government has to pay for this-says President Timmappa.

When the President was elected (three years back) all the drains were cleaned. However, since then, the cleaning is not done. It has become the source of infection blames the villagers. Ph is very high in the water of Sopena Halli. Large no. of bacteria is present in the drinking water. Polluted water pits exist near the bore well.

In the four villages under this GP, only 20% houses have toilets. Moreover, only women use toilets and the men practice open defecation. Despite this, the GP wants to qualify for Nirmala Grama Puraskar! The GP and ZP have plans to build toilets in every house. The Panchayat has dug pits over night in Lakkena halli leading to some cows falling in the pits. Till now the pits are lying open, say the villagers. Rs. 7 lakhs have been sanctioned as incentive to the Gram Panchayat to build toilets in 860 houses in the village. By the end of this year every house will have its own toilet, promises the GP President Timmappa.

BOX

'If we provide the money to the villagers they won't build the toilets. They say the money sanctioned to build toilet is not enough. Because of this reason the ZP is mediating to buy the material needed for building the toilet in wholesale. The district has decided to eradicate the practice of open defecation in 112 talukas. For this I am visiting each and every Gram Panchayat and meeting the Sthri Shakti groups' said the ZP CEO, Tulasi Maddineni.

Case Study 2

Governance – Officials and Elected Representatives make a critical difference

- Cases from different GPs visited

The Panchayat Raj system was first introduced in Karnataka on an experimental basis in 1984, under the stewardship of Chief Minister Mr. Ramakrishna Hegde. The then Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister Mr. Abdul Nazir Saab gave a clear dimension to it with a thrust on rural development.

The Taluk Development Board, Zilla and Taluka Administration, which were then under the jurisdiction of the District Collector, were put into a system. Karnataka was the first state in the country to create the system 4 key organisations - GP, Taluka Panchayat, Zilla Panchayat and Legislative Assembly. Some years later, the GP was converted into Mandal Panchayat and its President became the *Pradhan* and *Upa-Pradhan*. Later it was again transformed into GP. The changes in the structure of the Panchayat appeared with each new political party coming to power.

The Late Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi took the step of introducing the Panchayat Raj system in the whole nation – based on the success of the Karnataka experience and model. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's government brought about an amendment in the constitution and implemented PRIs in all the States of the country. The Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister, Mr. Mani Shankar Iyer of UPA Government further strengthened the system. Both the Central and State Governments have several programmes to support and carry forward the Panchayati Raj system.

Arghyam, a public charitable foundation, based in Bangalore, has made an attempt to assess status of water and sanitation in selected GPs of Karnataka, through ASHWAS- A Survey of Household Water and Sanitation. The survey covered 28 districts out of 29 districts (except for Bangalore urban district), spread across 172 GPs with a sample size of 17200 households.

This report focuses on governance and highlights the fact that active participation of officials in implementation of the programmes has led to development whereas a weak administration has led to more disintegration of the already crumbling structure in some GPs.

Good governance

The situation in districts like Shimoga clearly demonstrates the role of proactive officials in addressing shortcomings and obstacles. Officers like Mr. Bharat Lal Meena, Mr. Shivaram, Mr. S.M.Jamadar, Mr. Gaurav Gupta, and Dr. Byregowda have served here and brought good results in the district. Therefore, most of the villages in Shimoga show signs of growth and development. Gama of Shikaripura Taluk and Koluru of Sagar Taluk are also a good example of this. The work of the Zilla Panchayat and Taluk Panchayat officers is clearly visible here in terms development.

Taluka Panchayat officer Mr. Rajappa of Shikaripura Taluk has put in a lot of effort in the Taluka. The main schedule in his daily activity is to visit all the villages to see the progress of the implementation of the Government programmes. When the study team visited Gama for the GP meeting, Rajappa was present. Such is his rapport with the villagers that he can identify

villagers by their names. He has personally visited all the households in the village and motivated them to construct toilets. As a result most of the households have toilet facility. For very poor households mass toilets have been constructed. "He attends every Gram Sabha, interacts with the people, listens to their problems, and assures them of solutions," say GP President, Mr. Muralidhar and GP members in his appreciation.

When the first chikungunya case was reported from Shimoga district, it was from Gama. Mr. Rajappa took up the village cleanliness and sanitation on a priority basis by cleaning up the drains and by seeing that water does not stagnate in these places. Since then not even a single case of chikungunya has been reported. Roads are well maintained. Even though financial problems continue, diverting the funds from different programmes has made rural development possible here. It was seen that both GP President and Secretary had taken interest in the development of the village.

Though Koluru village of Sagar Taluka is one of the backward villages with minimal transport facility, our team found the village clean when they visited it. Development in this village is possible because the GP President, Mr. Indudhar Gowda and other members have taken up their responsibilities seriously. But it has its own set of problems. Most of the houses are situated in the farms and fields and people prefer to go to open fields for defecation.

Taluk Panchayat Officer of Gama executes his duties actively, but it is the reverse in Koluru village. "The Taluka Panchayat Officer, Mr. Vasanth Kumar does not show his face at all," say the GP members. However, Nodal officer of Sagar Taluk and Zilla Panchayat Joint Secretary, Mr. Subramanya frequently visit the villages and make efforts to implement the Government programmes. GP President Mr. Indudhar Gowda says that Mr. Subramanya has given importance to drinking water, toilet, and sanitation facilities and got the work done.

Even though the Gama GP was awarded the "*Nirmala Grama Puraskar*", not all the households in this village have toilet facility. As most of the houses are attached to the farms and fields, most of them prefer the open fields for toilet purpose. The opinion of the villagers is that they prefer going to the open fields. They can do work related to fields and also attend to the nature's call. So they do not feel the need for construction of toilets.

Drinking water problem comes up during summer but they have a plan to resolve this problem. The aim of this GP is to make the village free from open defecation. For the GP activities to speed up, demand of members and citizens is that the officers have to visit the villages/GP at least once a month.

In Shimoga District, officials have made this possible. Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive officer, Mr. Hemachandra has taken greater interest in the development of the village. This is evident from his working style. He personally visits and looks into the problems and complaints from the villages.

Hinkal, which is near to Mysore city and is a suburb, has toilet facility in all the houses. Village Water and Sanitation Committee is active here. There are many evidences to show that Government programmes have been successfully implemented here. With Village Water and Sanitation Committee in place, the drinking water problem is not visible. Another speciality of this GP is that solid wastes are collected through the tractors. In all there are 40 staff members, out of which 24 workers are hired for waste collection through tractor. With so much effort, ensuring all villagers put their wastes in the tractors still remains a challenge.

Tax collection is somewhat streamlined in this GP. Even with 40 staff, paying salaries is not a problem due to prompt payment and timely collection of taxes. However, there is Rs. 20 Lakh electricity bill pending. GP Secretary Mr. H.C. Suresh says, "This is because of the lack of funds and the bills directly goes to Taluka Panchayat, so we miss the amount to be submitted. As it is adjacent to the city, people of this village expect similar facilities as that of the city." Since GP does not have income (taxes) as that of the city, it is difficult to provide such facilities.

Examples of negligence:

During the visits to Kodigehalli GP of Kunigal Taluka and Nagavalli GP of Tumkur rural in Tumkur District, the extent of negligence on the part of the officials was clearly visible. In both the places, Taluka Officials do not seem to step out of their offices at all. Both the places are chock-full with problems. In every GP, for the purpose of supervision, Taluk level Sericulture and Agriculture department officials have been appointed. In these two GPs, the officials have restricted themselves to only putting the signatures in the register when they visit the GP.

Kunigal Taluka Panchayat Executive officer Mr. Ravikumar believes, "Government has made people lazy by giving them grants. If this fund flow from the Government is not there, then everything will improve."

In Kodigehalli, there is a major problem of water and sanitation. Every Grama Sabha meeting ends in people fighting physically and abusing the GP for the lack of any initiative towards solving their problems. There are instances of chairs being thrown during the Gram Sabha meetings. This behaviour is evident from the fact that all drains are blocked, there are garbage pits surrounding the water taps and there is no proper supply of water. People are not paying taxes as there is lack of water supply and this has resulted in not paying the waterman, as there are no funds. The situation of toilet facilities is very poor. The village people feel, "Government should provide the financial support to construct toilets and water supply for use in the toilets." But at the same time people say, "Those who have constructed toilets do not use them because of scarcity of water."

Nagavalli GP is no different from Kodigehalli. The GP office is on the Tumkur- Hassan highway and a look at the toilet in the GP office gives a picture of the situation in the whole village. The foul smelling toilet is an indicator of the dismal cleanliness state in the village. Solid wastes and dirty water have accumulated near the drinking water taps just near the GP office. The kits provided for water testing have been dumped in the godown and members are not even aware of their existence.

The GP Secretary Mrs. Rajamma is a woman, and the waterman and the bill collector do not listen to her. The village people question, "Why a woman should be given power? If their subordinates do not listen, do not cooperate with them, how can they bring development to the village?"

Zilla Panchayat and Taluka Panchayat officials of this area do not visit the GPs. The lack of planning and vision by the officials leads to the programmes implementation going wrong. In Lakkenahalli village, the Taluk Panchayat Executive Officer came forward to provide toilets to all the houses. Lakkenahalli resident, Mr. Srinivas says, "50 pits were dug overnight. The very next day there were incidents of cattle falling into the pits. The officer wanted the programmes to be implemented overnight and did not plan to implement it systematically."

President of the GP Mr. Thimmappa says, "At least the villagers should show interest but they are also not interested. I am interested in development but the GP members themselves do not

attend the Gram Sabha meetings and show no cooperation. Then how can development take place?”

Ms. Tulasi Maddineni has recently taken over the charge as Chief Executive Officer and is concerned about the development of the village. But there is no Taluk Panchayat officer who can match up to her pace. She wants to make all the villages free from open defecation. Ms. Tulasi Maddineni is aware of the fact that even if people are given money to construct toilets they do not do so. Therefore, she has come up with the idea of the Panchayat itself constructing low cost toilets and procuring material in bulk to reduce cost for the people of the village.

Accordingly, materials necessary for constructing the toilets such as roof for the toilets, basin, doors, bricks, closure for the pits, etc. are to be procured by calling for tenders. Contractors should be motivated to provide the materials at a cheaper rate, as volumes will be high. This is one of the good examples, which shows that if the officers are enthusiastic then development is possible. This is also an instance which shows that women officers may sometimes better understand the problems related with needs of women.

Complete Negligence

Visits to Bharatipur Cross GP of K.R.Pet Taluka of Mandya District, Ravoor GP of Chittapur Taluk, Gulbarga District and Raibag GP of Raibag Taluk, Belgaum District show how GPs with completely negligent officers become a victim of under development.

Krishnegowda from Yalaadahalli says, “Even though there are several Government programmes not even a single programme has reached here. Then how will development occur?”

Extreme poverty, no houses at all, no income in the GP to provide facilities – are the major problems seen here. Only 7% of the houses have toilet facilities. GP has washed off hands its responsibility saying that the people have stolen taps and the pipes installed for drinking water purpose. Cooperation level from citizen is very low. Even though fluoride and nitrate content is high in the drinking water, the GP has made no alternate arrangements.

Secretary Jayaram says, “The Taluka Panchayat officials does not visit even once a year. Despite repeated requests to provide grants for drinking water, it has not been heard.” Says another, “the living space is small and there is no space to construct toilets. So the people have not constructed toilets.” He further adds, “The GP premises itself does not have a toilet. The aim of having toilet in every house is still a distant dream.” While another member feels, “As the village is located on the boundary of the district, no officials take the trouble of visiting this village.”

The situation in Ravoor of Gulbarga District is no different. Even though there is 24-hour power supply, there is no water supply at all. People use contaminated water for drinking. “Under ‘*Jal Nirmal*’ programmes, implementations of water supply schemes have been planned at the cost of Rs.1.8 crores. But the programme has not taken off, as Zilla Panchayat has not given permission,” says the GP secretary. GP President Mr. Ramachandra Laxman Rathore questions, “What can be done if the Zilla Panchayat members do not perform their duties?”

GP member Mr. Lal Ahmed complains, “Permanency of the post is important to the GP Secretary and there is always fear of being transferred.” He adds, “As the Taluka Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat officials do not visit the village at all, the feeling of uncertainty looms large. Even if GP members are concerned about development, there is no support / motivation from the officials.”

The Zilla Panchayat Joint Secretary (Development) Mr. Mohammad Yousuf says, "We function according to the priorities. It is not possible to visit all the GPs. However, proper instructions are given for each GP."

Along with this, the economic backwardness of the region is also an obstacle for the development of the village.

After understanding that even after giving money and constructing the toilets, people do not use them, Ekroop Kaur, CEO, has come up with a programme called 'Triggering' for people to compulsorily construct and use toilets. The triggering team comprises of 5 different officials of the Taluk, including women. The team visits a village daily from 5 pm in the evening to 6 am in the morning. The team follows those who go to the open fields for toilet purpose with torch in their hands. They do not allow them to defecate in the open.

"Earlier we had tried to make the people understand by giving them money. But it did not work out. So with the guidance and support of World Bank officials, 'triggering' is being experimented here. This programme has made it inevitable for the people to construct and use the toilets," explains Ekroop Kaur.

To see inactive officials, one has to visit Raibag GP. As Hinkal is adjacent to Mysore, similarly, Raibag GP is attached to Taluka head quarters. Just looking at the dirty surroundings of the GP office, one can understand the abysmal level of cleanliness and sanitation in the village. The drain in front of the Taluka Panchayat office has not been cleaned since ages. The garbage pits surrounding the drainage are overflowing. The water tank in front of the Panchayat office is surrounded by dirty water. Since contaminated water stagnates here, and the water comes from the bore well, there are all chances of the dirt being produced by the garbage pits getting mixed up with the underground water.

The roads in the village are in bad shape and drains are blocked. When questioned about the situation, Mr. A. M. Patil, Taluka Panchayat Executive officer says, "The attitude of people here is equally bad. They do not understand how much ever you tell them. How much can a Government do alone, it requires cooperation."

The weakness of GP administration is visible from the fact that the GP member who has been elected thrice (15 years) does not have a toilet at his house. 92% of the households do not have toilet facility. GP Secretary sarcastically says, "When GP members have the habit of going to the open field, then how you can ask the people of the village to construct toilets?" When asked why the Government programmes have not been implemented, he says, "There are no funds".

Conclusion:

In the villages where the officials, elected representatives like GP members and Zilla Panchayat members are active and action-oriented, sufficient developmental activities have taken place. When both have joined hands and worked together, the village has become model villages. Development is like a wheel and is a two way process. It is not sufficient if only the Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive officer is active and dynamic. The Taluka Panchayat and GP officials must show equal interest. Even the village people should join hands. Only then village development can happen. From this case study we can conclude that only when everybody joins hands '*Gramrajya*' can be achieved.

Case Study 3

Views on the ASHWAS Report & problems faced by GPs

Gandhiji had said, "Villages are the heart and soul of our country." But modernization and globalization have shaken the soul of our country. Villages are transformed into old age homes as students, adults, middle aged people are moving to the cities and villages are left with only those who are very old and are not able to do anything by themselves.

Village people are not scared of hard work but the need is to provide them with solutions to the basic problems of life, which they face in day-to-day life. Instead of solutions what is seen is that people are struggling to even get clean water to drink. The main responsibility of ensuring basic facilities in the village rests with the local governments i.e. Gram Panchayats. Gandhiji had said, "When **Gram Swaraj** is achieved in its real sense, then there will be 'Ram Rajya'."

Center and State Governments are spending crores of money in many programs and schemes but is it really reaching them, is the question. There is no yardstick to check this. About 15 years ago Former Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had made a statement, "Only 16 paise of Re.1 that the Government provides is reaching the rural people." How true, and the situation has not improved even after a decade and a half, rather it may have become even grimmer.

The 2008 report submitted by Auditor General of India to the Central government states that it is not known where the funds of Rs.55000crs crores allotted for agriculture, rural development and farmers, have gone. This amount was equivalent to last year's Karnataka budget. If we do not have the track of such a huge amount, how can one know how much of this would have reached the intended beneficiaries?

In this backdrop, ASHWAS -A Survey of Household Water and Sanitation, conducted by Arghyam, an organization from Bangalore is a right step to understand ground level realities in the sector of water and sanitation which is an integral part of rural development sector and where in huge investments are made by the government.

Arghyam conducted the survey in 172 Gram Panchayats of the state of Karnataka. This case study is a report of the collective opinions of the village people, Panchayat members, Secretaries, Taluk Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat officers regarding the scope and limitations of the study.

In addition to this, the actual problems faced by the Gram Panchayat administration are noted in this report. Several issues have come to light during the study, which otherwise would have not come in open. The report is also a mirror to the politicians and policy makers so they cannot turn their backs to the problems. The ASHWAS report has also tried to document these issues.

Views:

Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Hem Chandra of Shimoga Zilla Panchayat expresses, "It is a good report. Zilla Panchayat administration has taken it seriously. Such attempts by the NGOs help to understand the problems and limitations of the administration. However

there are some limitations,” However, he has not elaborated much on the limitations of the report.

Mysore Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Ms. Manjula said, “Arghyam has made a good effort. I have read the complete report.”

Tumkur Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Ms. Tulasi Maddineni said, “If there are villages without toilet facility, there are also villages like Amruthuru and Holavanahalli with toilet facility. Not all the villages in the district are the same. There is a plan to make all the villages free from using open fields for toilet purposes. It is difficult to accept the survey information completely.”

Belgaum Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Ms. Ekroop Kaur says, “ASHWAS report is good. Some more information should be incorporated in the report. There are several programs planned to implement the ‘*Nirmal Grama*’ program in Belgaum. ‘Triggering’ is also a part of the program with the guidance and support of World Bank officials.”

She further added that, “The triggering team comprises of 5 different officials of the Taluk including women. The team visits a village daily from 5 pm in the evening to 6 am in the morning. The team follows those who go to the open fields for toilet purpose with torch in their hands. They do not allow them to defecate in open.”

Gulbarga District Zilla Panchayat Joint Secretary Mohammad Yousuf told, “I have not seen the report, CEO must have seen it. Surveys like this greatly help those who plan the actual programs and also helps in understanding the short comings.

Mandya District Chief Executive Officer Ravindra says, “I have gone through the report. More and more such attempts have to be made.”

Gama Gram Panchayat:

Executive Officer of Shikaripura Taluk Panchayat, Mr. Rajappa says, “Officers in charge do not come to know many of the problems/issues facing the villages, such reports helps in highlighting the problems. However, through such reports only minor problems come to light. Water, health, improvement in administration and implementation of various programs are discussed during our meetings. The progress of the programs is evaluated at the official level. It is good to take feed back of the village people. However random surveys do not reflect the opinion of the whole population. Efforts are good.”

Nagaraj, a village resident says, “Everything is fine. But if the report does not talk about the government grants, on what activities it is spent, is it enough?”

Gram Panchayat President Mr. Muralidhar says, “The report had to include the extent of cooperation on the part of the village people. At least we are now aware that drinking water needs to be tested before providing it to people.”

Shivananda Gowda, a village resident says, “Until and unless corruption is stopped, villages will not change, no matter whatever the reports say. The report does not talk about this aspect.”

Kolur Gram Panchayat:

Ramakrishna and Ramesh, villagers say, "Since there are geographical differences from one village to another, all the villages cannot be assessed on the same lines. ASHWAS survey has not gone into this. The condition of Malnad villages is different from villages of dry land areas. Such differences are not taken into consideration in this report."

Gram Panchayat President Mr. Indudhar says, "The report has not questioned whether the Gram Panchayat grants are enough. Lack of funds, lack of labor force, no power supply, and no income to the Gram Panchayat etc are some of the aspects which have not been looked into."

Asha, Member of Sthree Shakti Sangha says, "The report could have collected more information about women."

Shimoga Zilla Panchayat

Zilla Panchayat Joint Secretary Mr. Subramanya says, "We have seen many surveys being conducted and reports written. But the specialty of ASHWAS report is to bring it back to people and Gram Panchayat, to make future action plan after the report is written and printed. This is a constructive development."

Tumkur

Tumkur District, Kunigal Taluk Panchayat Executive Officer Mr. Ravikumar says, "The responsibility of collecting taxes for the Gram Panchayat to be given to Sthree Shakti Sangha is being discussed. This has been initiated to solve the problem of pending electricity bills as reported in the study report. Still I want to say that it does not mean that all the information in the report is correct. It is a random survey. Isn't it?"

Kodigehalli Gram Panchayat Secretary Mr. Suresh says, "We did not know that drinking water had to be tested regularly. Report created the awareness for us. As mentioned in the study report, the garbage pits surrounding the water sources will be removed."

Watermen of the village Ramanna and Devaiah said, "They do not have money to give us salaries. Therefore we do not feel like supplying water as per schedule. ASHWAS report should have taken our opinion also."

Gram Panchayat President Mrs. Chikkamma says, "Grants are given only to the BPL families for toilet construction. But the public opinion is that grants must be provided to APL families also. The report has not highlighted this aspect. In the same way the report has not questioned whether the grants given are sufficient."

Nagavalli Gram Panchayat President Mr. Thimmappa says, "As the post of President and Vice President is on rotational basis, they cannot work on any program with continuity even if they are competent. They are in the position for 10/20 months. The survey does not contain information on whether power should be given for the whole tenure or not and also regarding the working style of the Secretaries."

GP Secretary Rajamma says, "The shortcomings or drawbacks of the administration have been identified. But the opinion of the village people regarding grants, cooperation of the Gram Panchayat members and income sources has not been included."

Raibag (Belgaum)

Gram Panchayat Vice President Abdul Mustak Latkar says, "Irregular power supply is mainly responsible for irregular water supply. The report does not say this at all."

Gram Panchayat Member Ramalingappa Belashi says, "Such survey report if conducted regularly helps to identify the problems..Gram Panchayat administration gets speeded up."

Village resident Saku Bai says, "I do not understand anything about the report."

Hinkal (Mysore)

Gram Panchayat Secretary Suresh says, "The problem of insufficient grants that the Gram Panchayats face is not highlighted in the report. In view of the fact that money is utilized in paying the electricity bills, the grants are not at all enough. The report has not looked into this aspect. Most other aspects of the report are fine which helps in better understanding of the GP."

Village Water and Sanitation committee Treasurer Mr. Basave Gowda says, " The report gives information on whether the committee is existent or non existent in the village. But it does not talk about who is responsible for keeping it working and running. However, the survey has incorporated some good aspects of drinking water and sanitation situation. Nevertheless if they had visited every household the report would have been complete."

Gram Panchayat Member Raju says, "Such reports help taking corrective steps. For e.g., when we came to know that there is nitrate content in water, all such bore wells were immediately closed. Still the survey should have thrown more light on the opinion of GP members about GP grants."

Bharatipur Cross (Mandya)

Gram Panchayat Secretary Jayaram says, "The report is all right. But it should have focused on the non-cooperation of the village people and lack of funds. Still it has opened our eyes by showing us the actual picture."

Gram Panchayat President Yashodamma says, "I cannot understand the report. But grants are not sufficient. You need to write about this also."

Member Krishne Gowda says, "The grants have to be allotted according to the size of the population and the wards. If all the Gram Panchayats are given 6 lakh rupees, how is it possible to carry on the administration? If the report is submitted to the Government, it may be useful."

Ravoor (Gulbarga)

Gram Panchayat President Ramachandra Rathore says, "It was necessary to ask about the cooperation of the village people and the work management of Secretary in the report. The report should have highlighted on the grants also." He further added that, "Electricity bill are given to Taluk Panchayat and the Gram Panchayats does not come to know what the bill amount is. This should have been included in the report."

Member Rajappa says, "The survey should have included the opinions of the Gram Panchayat members. It should also have included how the Taluk Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat members handle their responsibilities but all this is missing."

Problems faced by Gram Panchayats

Interaction with many Gram Panchayats gave me opportunity to understand the problems they face. Following provide insights to the workings of GPs, along with some suggestions which people offered. These may help in design of any survey or intervention with these bodies.

1. The administrative cost of Rs 6 lakhs given to the Gram Panchayat is not enough. A Gram Panchayat of 7 members gets the same grant as that of a Gram Panchayat with 33 members. There is an opinion that development can take place if the grants are provided on individual basis to the Gram Panchayat members like that given to the Ministers, MLAs and MLCs. Another suggestion is that it will be helpful if the grants are released on the basis of the population size.
2. Taluk Panchayat holds back nearly 60% of the Gram Panchayat grants for paying to ESCOMs (includes BESCO, MESCOM, GESCOM etc), the electricity bills and therefore Gram Panchayats receive only part funds.
3. Lack of regular power supply has affected the income of Gram Panchayats. Since there is no regular supply of water, people are not paying water tax. If there is 3-phase power supply for at least 4-5 hours per day then water supply will be proper.
4. Since water tax is not collected regularly, waterman is not given his salary. Because he is not paid, he does not supply water properly. All these factors are interlinked. For all these reasons Gram Panchayats have not been able to become economically independent.
5. The Gram Panchayat Secretaries do not stay in the villages either because of the lack of facilities in the villages or because of their children's education. They stay in the nearby towns and taluka places and as such they are not able to respond to the problems of the village people.
6. After the implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee program Gram Panchayat Secretaries spend more effort in this program than the Panchayat activities. They spend more time in billing, sanctioning and distribution of wages and so Gram Panchayat activities have taken a back seat.
7. There is a rule that Gram Panchayat budget should also be presented in the same way as Municipality and Municipal Corporation annual budgets are presented. But it is not followed.
8. There was an official order in 2006 to establish Village Water and Sanitation Committee (VWSC). Even though the tenure of Gram Panchayat is over, in majority of the Gram Panchayats VWSCs have not come into existence.
9. Gram Sabhas and Children's Grama Sabhas are not conducted regularly.
10. Zilla Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat members have more power than Gram Panchayats, which hinders the functioning due to interference. Development will be possible if Gram Panchayats are given powers to handle their functions independently. For e.g., the Taluka Office has powers to provide the most needed ration cards, caste certificates and income certificates to the people. But the responsibility of collecting water tax, house tax and construction of toilets is put upon the Gram Panchayats.
11. The tenure of the GP President and Vice President is only 10-20 months as members assume these positions on a rotational basis. Unlike most states, GP President is not directly elected by people, but from the GP members, which leads to the rotation norm. The short tenure affects pace of development in the GPs.

12. When there is scarcity of drinking water, providing water for toilet use is difficult. Toilets and water supply are interlinked. If people go to the open fields they only need a mug of water or can also use pond water.

13. People have the attitude of enjoying going to open fields, forests, and deserted areas for toilet purposes. They, however, feel uncomfortable with the idea of having toilets attached to the houses. The process of changing this attitude is very slow.

14. APL families expect Government to give them grants to construct toilet like the way they are giving grants of Rs. 3000/- for the BPL families. Hence majority of them have not constructed toilets.

A majority of the Gram Panchayat Secretaries and Presidents feel that the Government should make it mandatory to pay the house tax and water tax to procure ration cards, caste certificates and income certificates. Then all the problems will be solved. Gram Panchayats are in a helpless condition being not able to collect taxes from the people forcibly. The period of Gram Panchayats is coming to an end. Now fresh election will be taking place. Gram Panchayat members wish that elections should take place and the newly elected representatives should work for the improvement and development unlike the earlier representatives.

Y.G. Jagadeesh
Reporter, Udayavani
March 2010

Case Study 1

Understanding differences in performance levels of GPs in the drinking water and sanitation sector

A close look at 8 GPs

Like differences in the classification and physical environment, a similar difference can be seen in the 5680 GPs in the state of Karnataka. While the development grant as well as the Finance Commission grant released for all the GPs in the state are same, the tenure of the GP members is the same throughout, there is a marked difference in growth and development of each Panchayat.

This difference is largely due to the economic security, population size, commitment of officers and elected people's representatives. Geographical/physical diversity, development in agriculture, industry and handicrafts, proximity to the city contributes to the growth and development of some of the villages where as, in other cases the same has resulted in problems.

Arghyam, a public charitable trust, from Bangalore, conducted a survey on rural water and sanitation situation in 172 GPs of Karnataka and published a report, ASHWAS – A Survey of Household Water and Sanitation. Approximately after one year of this survey, a review of selected GPs was made to assess the status. Meetings were held with the community, citizens, GP members, Secretary, Nodal officers, Taluk Panchayat Executive Officer and Zila Panchayat Chief Executive Officer and other related officers.

Field visits were made to 8 GPs in 6 districts in 4 regions of the state for the study. Every GP had a uniqueness of its own, advantages, problems and hurdles. In spite of economic problems, harassment from the truant GP staff, non-cooperation from the GP members, some GPs have demonstrated development and progress whereas in other cases, the GPs have not shown the desired results.

Assessment:

For the purpose of the case study, the GPs have been classified into –

- 1) Developed GPs and
- 2) Under-developed GPs

The GPs were selected on the basis of the status of drinking water, drains, toilets, importance given to cleanliness, water purification, basic facilities like roads, opinion of villagers and GP members.

Despite shortage of funds, irregular power supply, limited administrative power with GPs, Gama GP of Shikaripura Taluk of Shimoga District and Hinkal GP of Rural Mysore District have been recognized as the best and are considered as 'Model GPs'. Koluru GP is slightly behind these, but together the 3 GPs show much higher standards as compared to the other Panchayats of North and Central Karnataka.

Developed GPs:

Gama: Gama is a dry land area where the bore wells have sufficient water and hence do not to pose any problem related to availability of water. The people face water problems

because of irregular supply of power. If regular power supply is ensured, then there will not be any problem in the supply of drinking water. Majority of the houses in Gama have toilet facility. Only 11 houses, mostly the poorest, do not have toilets. For this reason, grants by the GP were given to construct public toilets. By the end of this financial year (2009-2010) it is expected that all the households in the GP will have access to individual toilets.

While every household in Gama has built a toilet with the help of Government funds, the actual status and use of toilets may still not be perfect. After 5-6 months of release of funds, the Taluka Panchayat Executive Officer of Shikaripura Taluka, Mr Rajappa, visited Gama GP to see the toilets and wanted to visit each and every house in the village. There were instances when the GP member and Secretary tried to show him the photographs of the houses with the toilets, instead of the actual houses. However, at the insistence of the EO, all toilets were shown, which led to understanding some irregularities.

The EO also took immediate action in case of any irregularity. At one of the houses where the toilet was converted into a bathroom, he called up the mason and got the bathroom converted into a toilet by fixing the basin. In some cases, families had dug the pits and shown photographs of the toilet of the neighbors to get their bills passed. In this case, it appears that the EO's perseverance played a key role in the GP achieving 100% toilet coverage.

This does not mean that there are no problems at all in Gama GP. While the GP Secretary says that water supply to the village is sufficient, Eramma, a woman from the village complains, "No, we get drinking water once in 2 days just for an hour."

Nagaraj says, "They have constructed roads and drains. But the water does not drain off properly because it is not sloped properly. The water stagnates and becomes a breeding place for mosquitoes."

Village Water and Sanitation Committee is in place but it is not active. The Government has supplied kits for testing of drinking water, which are not being used. However, on the other hand Health Department officials are regularly submitting reports on the testing of water.

Huchappa Gowda says, "There is a pit around the pump set which supplies water. So the water collects there. There is a constant fear of the stagnant water leading to various diseases." GP President Mr. Muralidhar says, "It is not surprising that the first chickungunya case detected in Shimoga District was from this village." However, due to the cleanliness drive that was taken up by the GP along with the villagers, mosquitoes have been reduced and more chickungunya cases have not been reported. As a result, more importance is given to the cleanliness of the village. The drainage system in the village is much better and garbage pits are not found in and around the taps and the wells.

Koluru: Situated in the deep forests of Malnad, Koluru is about 25-30 kms away from the district headquarters Shimoga. Koluru, the Panchayat headquarter has around 100 houses which are located close to each other. Houses are located within farms and fields. Occasionally there is a movement of buses, but other than that no vehicular movement is seen here. It lacks modern facilities and is a sparsely populated village.

The village is in Malnad area so there is no water problem. Wells are usually situated in individual houses. Forests and hills surround the area so water flows as spring. This water is used for drinking and other household purpose. For the 100 houses which are situated near the Panchayat, drinking water supply is provided through an overhead tank. However, since there is irregular 3-phase power supply, drinking water supply gets affected. Vanaja, a village resident says, "If there is power, there is no problem of water supply."

The village has a total of 658 houses of which only 65 houses do not have toilet facility. The villagers feel that this is largely due to the fact that extended and joint families are breaking up into nuclear families, and property is being divided. With independent houses coming up, they are sharing the same toilets and efforts are on to persuade them to go for new toilets. GP President, Mr. Indudhar feels that some families, which are very poor, do not feel the necessity of having toilets.

In some other cases, even though toilets are constructed, they are not used. Instead, families prefer to go to open fields or forest around their houses. "They say that going to open fields is convenient and makes them happy, as they do not like to sit in the close space". "Every morning they go to the fields to water the crops and do other field related works. Along with that, they also attend to the 'natures call,'" say Ramakrishna and Rameshappa, village residents.

This GP is a good example to demonstrate the impact of an efficient and good administration. In fact this can be also seen in the fact that this GP has no pending electricity bills, whereas throughout the state, the majority of GPs have bills pending to the amount of Rs. 20-30 lakhs.

Though there is no Village Water and Sanitation Committee in place, yet cleanliness is maintained. Dumping of liquid or solid wastes is not evident as in the cities. In the village, there is hardly any use of 'use and throw' materials unlike cities. Whatever waste produced, is put into the garbage pit. Water supply is sufficient and taxes are collected regularly.

Deputy Secretary to Zilla Panchayat Shimoga and Zilla Panchayat nodal officer to Sagar sub division Mr. Subramanya have taken special interest in this GP. They have visited it frequently and motivated people to use the toilets in their houses. With the support of the officers, GP President, and village people, this GP is definitely progressing for the better.

Hinkal: Hinkal GP is adjacent to Mysore city. This GP comes under the city limits and therefore the expectations of the village people are similar to their urban counterparts. The GP Secretary Mr. H. C. Suresh says, "The people pressurize us to provide similar facilities as that of the city when we go to them for tax collection."

The Village Water and Sanitation committee came into existence in 2005 and since then it is actively functioning which is clearly visible. First of all there is no water problem thanks to the committee as accepted by some GP members. This may be the only GP providing Kaveri water. This committee has taken up the major responsibility of water supply and sanitation, thereby reducing the burden of the GP.

An elderly person who is not a member of the GP has taken up the role of the treasurer and looking into accounts for water and sanitation. This is the only GP making use of

tractors for cleaning the garbage. For the purpose of cleaning it has employed 24 GP workers (*Pourkarmikas*). This GP incurs an expenditure of Rs. 1 lakh towards water management and sanitation.

90% of the houses have toilet facilities and along with Koluru and Gama it has received the '*Nirmal Grama*' Award also. Open defecation is not in practice, which can be attributed to the fact that Hinkal is close to the Mysore city limits and people are hesitant to use the open fields.

This model GP has put up hoardings and advertisements giving information on the importance of cleanliness, problems in using the open fields for toilet purposes, etc. Drinking water is being tested and chlorinated before being supplied to the households. Bore wells with large fluoride contents have been closed down.

Hinkal GP with huge population receives the same amount of grant for development as well as Finance Commission grants as that of any other GP. Still this GP has been able to manage huge population through efficient use of economic resources. This only goes to show that if the administration is efficient then a GP can achieve anything.

But this does not guarantee a 100% success rate. Citizens feel that drains and water sources are not at all clean. Village Sanitation Committee treasurer Mr. Basavegowda says that as far as possible importance is given to cleanliness of the village. Harsh Kumar, a shop owner says, "When drains are blocked and foul smelling in Bangalore city it self, it is not surprising to see the same in Hinkal."

Yashoda, from the village says, "They clean the garbage whenever they want. Hence mosquitoes breed in large numbers here. Even the water supply is not regular." "Throughout the village one can see dirty water surrounding the taps and water tanks." Some villagers add, "Some toilets have been converted into bathrooms and godowns and huge amounts of electricity bills are pending as the Sanitation Committee is not collecting taxes although it is responsible for the task.

The GP Secretary, Mr. Suresh says, "Since Hinkal is situated on the Mysore- Hunusur highway, which is full of industries, it faces the problem of solid and liquid wastes. The industry comes under the city limits but the industrial wastes are dumped in the GP limits. Since the industry comes under the city jurisdiction they cannot complain about the problems and demand for its closure. The main problem of this village is that of industrial pollution as it is very close to the city and we are unable to handle this problem."

However, on the whole, except for some drawbacks, Hinkal GP is a good example of model Panchayat. Another positive for this GP is that the number of women members in this GP is higher than other GPs. The members feel that the present GP is much better compared to the previous gram panchayats.

Underdeveloped Villages:

Wherever there is economic viability, active officers, support from the village, the villages have developed and improved. In the absence of above-mentioned factors what would be the condition of the villages? To see this, one can visit Nagavalli GP of Tumkur Taluka of Tumkur district or Northern districts like Gulbarga, Belgaum, or K.R. Pete of Mandya District. One can see the dismal state of the villages.

Nagavalli:

This GP is not in a remote village but is situated on the Tumkur- Kunigal highway. This is a marketing and trading center. Income generation activities are plenty. However, development is missing. The GP Secretary Mrs. Rajamma says, "Only 20% of households have toilet facility." Even the situation in the GP office itself is very dismal. It appears that the toilet in the GP office has not been cleaned since construction, "It smells so bad that one has to close his/her nose and mouth to enter in the toilet. If this is the situation in the GP office, one can easily imagine the situation elsewhere in the village. "

GP President, Mr. Thimmappa said, "As the Secretary is a woman, no member listens to her. Everybody acts as per his or her own wish. Bill collector is not functioning effectively. Even the Secretary has not been able to take all the GP members into confidence."

Rangappa, resident of the village says, "Since two and a half years drains have not been cleaned and are blocked." Secretary says, "No one is ready to do this work, as the Government charges are very low. It is just Rs. 2.25 per meter whereas labor charges elsewhere per day are Rs. 200 per day. Then why will any one take up this work? Because of the non availability of labor this work is not completed."

The villagers complain that the drinking water supply is not regular, it is common to see garbage dumped near the water tap and even water supply tank is also not cleaned regularly. The local health officer says, "Drinking water here is contaminated and not suitable for drinking purpose. In spite of continuous complaints for last 3 years to the GP, no action has been taken. It has fallen on the deaf ears. "

GP President, Mr. Thimmappa says, "The condition of the toilets is even worse. During the time of inspection, "the higher officials shout on the subordinates to get the work done but afterwards the officials turn their back towards the GP."

Ramaiah, a village resident says, "Zilla Panchayat officers came forward to provide toilets to Lakkenahalli village under Nagavalli GP. All of a sudden 50 pits were dug overnight to construct the toilets. But nothing happened after that and many cattle have fallen into the pits and died."

Kodigehalli:

Kodigehalli of Kunigal Taluk is in no way different from Nagavalli. Every day villagers assemble before the GP office demanding drinking water. They say, "Otherwise we will not get drinking water."

There was a huge '*galata*' regarding this during the Gram Sabha meeting. How badly the supply of drinking water is affected was amply clear when people threw chairs and showed their resentment. The GP secretary Mr. Suresh complains that, "Villagers have stolen the pump sets and starters and argues that how can the water be supplied in such a situation."

He further adds, "We do not have funds to pay the waterman and the bill collector... from past 9 months we have not paid the waterman. Grants from the Government are not

sufficient. Village people do not pay the taxes. Then how can one expect to supply sufficient water?"

On the issue of drinking water, Ramesh, a villager said, "We don't even get 2 pots of water everyday. How can we live? What difference does it make whether the GP exists or not."

There is no drainage system in the village. In front of the GP building, people have made garbage pits all along the road. Drinking water gets contaminated as the garbage pits are close to the bore wells. The GP Secretary, Mr. Suresh says, "People ask for a separate place to dispose the wastes when asked to clear the garbage from the main roads, what can we do?" GP member, Chikkamma is totally ignorant about the kits supplied by the Government for water testing. She says, "This information was not given to us by the GP Secretary. Secretary always says that there are no funds to clean the tanks."

There is no progress in the construction of toilets. Most of the villagers opine, "When there is so much of open space, what is the need for a closed toilet". The villagers have not been made aware of the problems of using open fields. It was clearly evident that Panchayat administration and Taluka Panchayat Administration have not given priority towards providing toilets. The village is poverty stricken, as irrigation facilities are not conducive to farming. As people are not economically well off, having toilet facilities inside the house is not so important to them.

Bharatipura Cross:

A visit to Bharatipura cross GP of K.R.Pete Taluk of Mandya district is like visiting the drought prone areas of North Karnataka, which are devoid of even the basic amenities. This is a poverty stricken village and there are no visible opportunities for daily wages. It seems that the government has not provided any grants for the programmes for these underdeveloped areas. It is a GP that appears to be neglected by the Zila Panchayat member and the local MLA. Thus drinking water situation and toilet conditions are abysmal.

The 20 taps installed by the GP from the regular Government grants vanished within a day. Motor and Starters have been stolen along with 18 G A pipes on the same day they were installed. GP Secretary Mr. Jayaram said, "When a complaint was registered with the police regarding the stolen things, not even a single villager came forward to give evidence. In such a village how can we provide sufficient water?"

He says, "Apart from this problem another hurdle is poor supply of power, which makes us helpless in providing drinking water. The 3-phase power supply is not available for even one hour in a day. Due to this, the pump set motor has to be repaired every now and then. This can become a huge burden to the GP."

Pankajamma of the village, said, "We do not get water at all. We have to collect water from the pump set in the fields. For bathing we can use the water from the wells, but drinking water is a real problem. There are high contents of fluoride and nitrate in water. But there is no water source other than this". She adds, "GP administrative staff says that they use tablets to chlorinate water, but there is no sign of the water being chlorinated and there appears no end to this problem."

Approximately there are more than 1330 houses in the village and only 62 houses have toilet facilities. "As space is limited, villagers have not constructed toilets and prefer open space. Those who have toilet facility fear that pits may be filled up and hence do not use at all, but go to the open fields," says Revanna, a villager.

Although there is no space problem near GP office, the GP office also does not have a toilet. Many of the GP members also do not have toilet facilities in their houses. GP president Yashodamma hesitantly said that there is no toilet in her house also. Many people have shown just the basin and got their subsidy sanctioned. In many other cases, people have not even purchased the basin and a few basins have gone round the village so people can get their subsidy sanctioned. This shows the sad state of affairs in the village.

Ravoor:

Ravoor GP is attached to Wadi Taluka of Gulbarga District. It is a very hot place. The dust from the cement factory has occupied the whole village. Power supply is there throughout the day since it is an industrial area. GP President, Mr. Ramachandra Rathore says, "Even though there is power supply, because of low underground water levels, the bore wells have dried up and water supply to the village has been affected."

"Nitrate and fluoride contents are found in water and it is also contaminated with bacteria and germs. People drink the same water even after knowing that it is affected. This is because there is no other water source to quench their thirst," says GP member Ravindra Nanuvinakere.

Under '*Jal Nirmal*' programme, a project has been planned at the cost of Rs. 1.80 crores. However, it is yet to get sanction from the ZP, says the GP Secretary.

When asked, Bheemavva, a village woman angrily answered, "Where do they supply water? They supply only when they want. But they promptly come to collect taxes." GP member, Lal Ahmed admits that water problem exists. "But people also do not know how to use water efficiently. They just open the taps and waste water."

Toilet facility, in this GP, is faced with 2 problems. "When there is water problem where do they get buckets of water for the toilet? If they go to open fields, all they require is a mug of water. At home they will have to pour sufficient water in order to avoid smelling of the toilets. Thus people are not using toilets," says GP President, Mr. Ramachandra Rathore.

GP members – Bheem Rao and Rajappa were asked why they do not have toilets, they replied, "Why do we need toilets sir? We have fields, even if we have toilets, we cannot use it because of shortage of water."

"Digging the pit for the toilet is another major problem here. The whole village is built on a rock and to dig a pit, dynamite is to be used to blast the rocks. The stone pits cost around Rs. 25,000/-. Even when people go in for the stone pit, it gets filled up with water like a water tank and cannot be used for toilet purposes," says GP President, Mr. Ramachandra Rathore.

Many villagers feel, "We can construct a small house from the amount of Rs. 25000/- for the pit and Rs 5000/- for the toilet construction. Anyway, we can think of a toilet only

when we have a house.” As a result even though Government has given grants of Rs.3000/- per household, no body has come forward to construct toilets.

When the water and toilet conditions are like this, one need not explain about the condition of drainage system. The main road has drains on either sides but the interior areas of the village do not have drains at all. Garbage pits being close to the water taps and tanks is a common sight.

Raibag:

Raibag GP belongs to Raibag Taluka of Belgaum District. GP office is situated in the premises of Raibag Taluka Panchayat office and is divided just by a boundary. To have a look at the sanitation condition in the village one does not have to travel throughout the village. One walk in the premises gives a sad picture of the sanitation situation of the village. Drains surround the Taluka Panchayat premises and they appear to have not been cleaned for ages. On one side of the Taluka Panchayat compound is the drain and on the other side there are garbage pits. A garbage pit surrounds the mini water supply bore well and water tank, which contaminates the water.

Even though it is very close to the Taluka Panchayat, 92% of the households do not have toilet facility. When asked why they do not have toilets in their houses, member of the GP for 3 times, Mr. Ramnigappa Belashi and the present President Mrs. Bomma Bai Chikkabeere immediately replied, “Why do we need a toilet when we have fields.”

The main reason for not constructing toilets in this village are the lack of space and absence of *pucca* houses as most of them live in huts. The villagers say, “if we have money for constructing toilets then we as well put some more money to set up a better hut.” Even though water supply is not a problem but the villagers complain, “because of irregular power supply, water supply is affected.”

L.S. Latker, a village resident says, “There are power cuts for at least 10 times a day. Then how will the GP provide water?” But ironically, the reporter could see water flowing from the water tank even in the afternoon hours.

GP is not aware of solid waste management or cleaning the drains. When asked about this the GP Secretary says, “The grants provided by the Government is just enough for the salaries of the staff, office administration and paying the electricity charges. Where can we think of cleaning the drains? We can take up the construction of new drains under NREGA. But we do not have funds for taking up the cleaning process.”

In most of the GPs water testing kits have been put in a corner or have become decorative pieces in the showcases. But village people in Raibag said, “The water was tested once in two months here.” It is quite amazing to see that the kits are being used in this Panchayat.

Abdul Munawar, a GP member says, “People do not want toilets. The Government is forcing them to have toilet facility and is providing them a grant of Rs. 3000/- also. But it is of no use. The people here first need awareness on the importance of the toilets.”

Conclusion:

Drinking water and toilet situation is different in all the 8 GPs visited. The successful GPs have their reasons for all the good work and if some could do it why not other GPs.

Therefore the need of the hour is to try and replicate the successful model GPs in the other places.

Problems of power supply, drinking water, and underground water, rainwater harvesting are all inter-related. If there is water there is no power, if there is power there is no sufficient underground water. Even though there are a number of programmes for the conservation of water sources, these programmes have not been implemented to the expected levels. All these problems are distressing our villages. Even in the successful GPs, there are specific reasons for not implementing some of the programmes.

It is clearly proven that giving funds for toilet construction is just not enough to make a village free from open defecation. Even if the villagers construct the toilets out of compulsion they do not use it. Most GP presidents, GP Secretaries and some GP members were of the view that instead of giving grants for toilets, the Government can make efforts towards creating awareness among them. In many cases, where GPs have succeeded in convincing people to construct and use toilets, they have used multiple strategies to convince people, in addition to awareness building programmes. For e.g., making existence of toilet in the household compulsory for getting ration cards, caste certificate, property certificates etc.

Politicians and policy makers have to pay attention to these issues. The need of the hour is to look into all the factors leading to safe drinking water, clean environment, toilet use awareness and power supply.

GPs visited to study the impact of the ASHWAS study:

Developed GPs
Shimoga
Gama –Shikaripura
Koluru- Sagar
Mysore Rural - Hinkal

Under Developed GPs
Mandya
Bharatipura Cross- K.R. Pet
Gulbarga
Ravoor – Chittapur
Belgaum
Raibag- Raibag
Tumkur
Nagavalli- TumkurRural
Kodigehalli -Kunigal