



INSIGHTS

A WASH Dialogue & Partnership Forum

FSSM Matters: Looking Forward

Synthesis Document: Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (FSSM) in the Sanitation Value

Held on 28th of July in the city of Lucknow, this was 5th in the series of dialogues organized by the Indian Sanitation Coalition, IRC, and TARU Leading Edge



FSSM MATTERS: LOOKING FORWARD

Faecal Sludge and septage management has been increasingly acknowledged as a major challenge in India. Most of the country is dependant on septic tanks and pits for disposal of septage. But in such options, limited attention is accorded to construction, operation and management of septage generated. Therefore creating and building solutions to challenges of Faecal Sludge Management finds an important place in the sanitation value chain.

In this context, specifically for the state of Uttar Pradesh the Insights Dialogue on “FSSM Matters: Looking Forward” was held on July 28th, 2017 in Lucknow. This was the fifth in the series

of dialogues organized by the Indian Sanitation Coalition, IRC and TARU Leading Edge. This deliberation was organised in association with Water Aid India and the focus was on the absolute need to educate citizens and sanitary workers in the FSSM space to end manual scavenging and attain the goal of putting an end to open defecation in Uttar Pradesh by 2019. Significant contribution has to be made towards the state’s objective towards sustainable development of providing safe water and sanitation for all by 2030

DIALOGUE ON FAECAL SLUDGE & SEPTAGE MANAGEMENT

FSSM execution is not just managing faecal sludge from septic tanks but also entails safe collection, transportation and treatment of faecal sludge or septage from pit latrines and all other onsite sanitation facilities.



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Moreover, it is recognized that In the absence of 100% sewerage network connectivity just managing the sludge component would be an incomplete solution. FSSM is not an urban phenomenon but requires full attention in small and big towns alike. In the big towns of Uttar Pradesh, FSSM poses a big challenge as these places are highly congested. The Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) in the state covers 61 towns, out of which 41 towns have committed funding and are working towards establishing faecal sludge treatment plants (FSTP). The remaining 20 towns would soon be covered under the AMRUT scheme.

The panellists discussed the current scenario in the very populous Uttar Pradesh and were of the serious opinion that there is a dire need for establishing a sustainable faecal sludge and septage management system. However, for such sanitation related reforms the challenges are enormous and to achieve this goal there needs to be a continued dialogue between the government, private sector, civil society and citizen groups. A concerted and co-ordinated effort among all the stakeholders is absolutely critical for successful FSSM implementation in the state.

CREATING A REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Faecal Sludge Management has largely been overlooked and needs immediate attention in order to address the huge gap that currently exists within the state. The discussion was centred on the need for a state wide perspective on FSSM along with a far-reaching policy, advocacy and operational guidelines. The National Policy on Faecal Sludge and Septage Management unveiled in February 2017 aims to create an enabling ecosystem for sustainable and safe FSSM. Uttar Pradesh also necessitates a state-wide programme with well laid out operational ground rules, which would display commitment to tackle this issue in the sanitation value chain. Although, there is a proposed launch of an FSSM

policy by the state, it is being developed to showcase UP's standpoint and also facilitate an environment that allows for successful implementation all across the region.

The panellists strongly felt that a state level policy must be formulated with detailed strategic and operational guidelines that would serve as a reference guide for all actionable points. This has to be in concurrence with the National FSSM Policy, which stipulates that each state should develop and propagate FSSM planning guidelines and implementation strategy. This initiative should provide a framework that outlines the objectives, timelines and clearly communicates the implementation approach to the ULB's. It is imperative to create this policy, as this will enlist the requisite and necessary action points for pursuing it on-ground, it will also provide clarity and help maintain consistency across all FSSM activities.

ROBUST DATA FOR PLANNING

Apart from the focus on regulations, it is vital to gain understanding of the ground realities. Policy makers before developing a comprehensive sanitation strategy must gather preliminary data. This is important because gathering information on the number of households with septic tanks will allow them to frame guidelines for choosing the dimensions of the septic tanks or deciding on the frequency of household desludging. Similarly, without adequate information on private operators that are involved in desludging, it would be challenging to bring them under any regulatory framework.



Many states like Odisha, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu are way ahead of other states and have in place FSSM policies with clear operational guidelines. In Odisha, some ULB's have additionally drafted their own operational guidelines and adapted it to benefit their local environs thus contextualizing it further.



ROBUST DATA FOR PLANNING (CONT.)

A good way to assess on-ground situations is through the use of rapid assessment tools. Development partners along with the Ministry of Urban Development have created this tool, which provides a preliminary on-ground analysis of the FSSM system. To understand nuances of the issue at hand, detailed studies can be undertaken. Such studies for instance, will help co-relate the frequency of desludging with the type of pit, whether it is lined or unlined or the outflow of faecal sludge is into drains or open land.

This multi-pronged approach to planning will resolve multiple problems and produce multiple benefits and hence support program sustainability in the long run.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The development of physical infrastructure is a major component of a successful septage management program. It is absolutely imperative that individual states in the country support their regulatory framework by creating adequate infrastructure. States like Odisha and Andhra Pradesh are trendsetters and are ahead, when compared to others. In Odisha, nine towns that are covered under AMRUT have almost completed the construction of treatment plants. Odisha has also procured cess pool vehicles that have been distributed among the ULB's and also undertaken several other tangible activities that have ably supported the regulatory policies.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Successful implementation of FSSM requires not only a guiding regulatory framework and

infrastructure but also capacity building activities for all stakeholders, which include households, officials and private contractors. The panellists opined that typically capacity building is often restricted to city officials and the workers engaged with FSSM do not get the benefit of training. The discussion stressed on the need to augment capacities of all stakeholders, which in turn would provide a better perspective and also strengthen compliance with the established regulatory framework.

The most important aspects of the capacity building initiative are to enhance communication and build awareness. This is absolutely critical along all points of the sanitation value chain. The capacity building exercise will educate individuals about their crucial role



Participants sharing key challenges from their experience

in FSSM management and motivate them to comply with the state regulations. Such activities at the household level will build understanding about the benefits and the impact of FSSM and encourage them to undertake tasks like desludging regularly. The resistance due to lack of knowledge on available technologies can also be tackled through information dissemination. Not only the panellists but also the audience that were part of this discussion echoed the massive benefits of capacity building.



Developing a public promotion program and engaging citizens is the way forward to ensure sustainable FSSM results. Hence, it was agreed upon that under the Swach Bharat Mission (SBM), regular programs and awareness campaigns on allied subjects like use of toilets and solid waste management will be a great initiative.

CHALLENGES

FSSM has a huge role to play in every city and it is mandatory that there is an established protocol for an efficient sanitation practice. However, there are several challenges in achieving and establishing an effective process. The panel identified the following issues:

- 1. A small percentage of households** in urban areas are connected to the sewerage network and most of them have on-site sanitation systems
- 2. Lack of adequate funds** for efficient storage and containment, transportation and treatment for faecal waste
- 3. Limited availability of land** has proven to be a drawback for setting up of faecal sludge treatment plants (FSTPs)
- 4. Inadequate capacities within ULBs** to plan and manage total sanitation. They face constraints with knowledge, technology manpower along with financial limitations.

Therefore, working on and building up solutions to challenges of Faecal Sludge Management finds a very important place in the overall sanitation strategy.

The discussion involved multiple stakeholders: the government, corporate sector and civil society. Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam and Uttar Pradesh Nagar Nigam represented the government. HCL Foundation and Ernst and Young were representations from the corporate and the participants from civil society included Practical Action, FINISH society, Vigyan Foundation, World Vision, NIUA, CDD society, RCUES, and Water Aid India.



This deliberation was highly valuable as it brought forward the achievements and various aspects of FSSM along with the issues that govern it. For successful implementation of FSSM, apart from the regulatory framework, there needs to be emphasis on citizen engagement, awareness and capacity building along with the use of technology.

The dialogues was efficacious in both, highlighting the issues that need attention and also showcasing the progress in the state of Uttar Pradesh.



For more information on the “Insights” knowledge series visit the India Sanitation Coalition [website](#).

This document is a product of the Insights Series; developed by IRC, India Sanitation Coalition and TARU Leading Edge.

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