

EVALUATION REPORT ON THE VILLAGE SANITATION SCHEME OF THE GANDHI SMARAK NIDHI IN MAHARASHTRA

1. The Study

The Village Sanitation Scheme launched in 1958, was one of the main activities of the Maharashtra Gandhi Smarak Nidhi (GSN). The main programme under the Village Sanitation Scheme was the construction of latrines in villages with a view to emancipate the scavenger class, to provide privacy for the call of nature to the members, especially the women-folks of rural households, to utilize night-soil for producing manure and to make the villages clean. The Programme Evaluation Organisation carried out an evaluation study of the scheme during 1970-71, the report of which was published in 1972.

2. Objectives

- i) To study the operation of the scheme and the extent of its adoption;
- ii) To find out the experience and reaction of the adopters;
- iii) To examine the factors which impeded the wider acceptance and adoption of the Scheme;
- iv) To bring out the problems in popularizing the scheme; and
- v) To assess the general impact of the Scheme.

3. Sample Size/Criteria for Selection of Sample

Out of the 24 districts in the state covered by the programme, 8 districts were selected on the basis of the number of latrines constructed. Thus, 3 districts having more than 2,000 latrines constructed under the Scheme, 3 having 1000 to 2000 latrines and the remaining 2 with less than 1000 latrines were selected for the study. Three villages having the largest number of latrines were then selected from each chosen district. In the next stage, seven adopters and three non-adopters were selected at random for interview from each selected village. Besides, a few full-time workers, including one at the supervisory level, were also interviewed in the sample villages. This multi-stage selection procedure resulted in an overall

sample of 24 villages, 173 adopters, 69 non-adopters and 12 GSN workers, spread over the 8 selected districts of the State.

4. Reference Period

The reference period ranged from 1965 to 1969-70.

5. Main Findings

1. The types of latrines popularized by the Gandhi Samarak Nidhi (GSN) were of two types i.e. Sopa and Naigaon. According to the estimates of the Nidhi, the cost of Sopa type of latrine upto the plinth level was about Rs. 100/- and that of Naigaon was Rs. 300/-.
2. The efforts of the GSN under the Village Sanitation Scheme gathered momentum in the late Sixties and reached its peak in the Gandhi Centenary Year i.e. 1969-70. By the beginning of 1970, over 21,000 latrines had been constructed in the State.
3. The project was planned by the headquarters of the State GSN at Poona. Besides the Organiser, the Divisional Supervisors and 14 GSN workers were engaged in the implementation of the Scheme. Specific areas for initiating the programme were located first and an intensive propagation and awareness programme followed. Once the programme was introduced, a field worker was left in the village to undertake the follow-up work. He made direct contact with the potential adopters with the assistance of the village-level officials, case and community leaders, etc.
4. The sample respondents expressed varied, but enormously positive reaction to the scheme. Nearly all respondents admitted that defecation in open was hazardous to health. About 83% of the adopters obtained information about the scheme from the GSN workers. About 51% of the respondents considered that the construction of latrines was useful for producing night-soil-manure. Only 17.1% of the respondents from 5 out of 8 selected districts detected defects in the construction and working of the latrines. A large number of non-adopters were contacted more than twice by the field workers. They were mostly convinced of the usefulness of the Scheme. The non-adoption was largely due to the high cost of construction and to some extent to the dearth of space and lack of interest.

5. A very large number of adopters felt that construction of latrines improved village sanitation and increased the convenience of women and children.
6. The programme depended entirely on the grants from the Gandhi Memorial Fund. The establishment cost together with the salary of the workers was the major expenditure item during 1967-68 to 1969-70. This was followed by the expenditure on the manufacture of latrine sets/parts.

6. Major Suggestions

The scheme should find out alternative sources of finance such as the funds from the State Government and local bodies, voluntary donations, etc. so that the programme can be extended to more districts and villages. The GSN should have enough funds at its disposal so that latrines are constructed at a subsidized rate for those villagers who can not afford to construct them but have enough space and facilities for their construction.