

Information and Communication Strategies for Education

Sanjay Joshi*

Abstract

Sustained access to water and sanitation ensures a better quality of life and enhanced productivity. Stand alone technical interventions succumb to neglect and misuse. Water and sanitation then seems a perennial problem. Technological solutions need to be backed up and supported by accurate information leading to action. The foundation for this educational intervention is engaging communities in a continuous dialogue - focusing on critical processes that help sustain water and sanitation systems.

The Current Educational Initiative

Excess salinity due to ground water mining lead to the initiation of the “Community Managed Ghogha Regional Water Supply and Sanitation Project” (CMGRWSSP) which is funded by the Netherlands Government and the Government of Gujarat, India and is implemented by the Water and Sanitation Management Organization (WASMO). The project covers 82 villages in Bhavnagar District, Gujarat.

CEE’s Role within the Project

CEE has been working as an Implementation Support Agency (ISA) since 1999 with 28 villages. CEE primarily focuses upon community participation through village institution building for planning, monitoring, implementing and later operating and managing the in-village water and sanitation systems.

*Center for Environment Education, Ahmedabad, India
sanjay.joshi@ceeindia.org

Innovative educational strategies have been initiated in these 28 villages. Capacity building of Village Water Committee members involves group work and exercises to help members share, discuss and learn from each others experience. Conflict management and its communication processes have been critical. Local political and caste dynamics have been used positively for village development.

Special educational interventions have focused on women and children. Hamlet level meetings, Self Help Groups, exposure visits, celebrating World Days, women using cameras to highlight the need for cleanliness, a sanitation and hygiene campaign with A Day In a Village approach, Village Video sharing the work and the concerns of the village community and transmitted through the disc locally, children's fairs such as Balmelas, farmers and teachers meets and finally federating the individual village water committees into one Jalsankalp Samiti, are all part of the CEE initiative.

Each educational intervention has been documented for lateral sharing and learning. Educational material such as posters on hygiene, school labels, banners and hoardings and a mobile WATSAN shop have added value to the educational processes. The experiences have also been modularized and other projects and teams have been trained and supported in the field.

Background

Sustained access to water and sanitation are key areas that ensure a better quality of life and enhanced productivity. Technical interventions have always been propagated. But these stand alone interventions succumb to neglect and misuse. Water and sanitation then seems a perennial problem.

Technological solutions need to be backed and supported by right information which is communicated in a manner that it translates into action. The foundation for this educational intervention is engaging the communities into a continuous dialogue -- focusing on critical processes that help sustain water and sanitation systems.

The Current Project

The “Community Managed Ghogha Regional Water Supply and Sanitation Project” (CMGRWSSP) is funded by the Netherlands Government and the Government of Gujarat, India and is implemented by the Water and Sanitation Management Organization (WASMO). The project covers 82 villages in Bhavnagar District, Gujarat.

As the district is bounded by the Gulf of Cambay, excess salinity due to ground water mining lead to the formulation of this project. The critical aspect of the project is that it aims to develop local water sources to ensure sustained water supply while giving importance to sanitation so that communities give it due priority.

CEE’s Role within the Project

The Centre for Environment Education (CEE) has been working as an Implementation Support Agency (ISA) since 1999 with CMGRWSSP. The overall project has strategically decided to involve the communities as partners. CEE primarily focuses on community participation through village institution building for planning, monitoring, implementing and later operating and managing the in-village water and sanitation systems. CEE works with 28 villages in two blocks of the 82 project villages. Two other NGOs work as ISAs covering the other 54 villages.

Project Cycle

It was envisaged that the entire project from planning to implementation would be completed in an 18-month project cycle so that the focus of the project was not lost. But the project cycle did not happen as planned. This meant innovation and new challenges to sustain the interest of the participating communities. A fixed educational strategy had to be modified, else the communities would have lost faith in their role and community participation as a concept would have been defeated.

Educational Intervention

As stated earlier, CEE's role as an ISA was to ensure community participation based on the principles of transparency, equity and gender-sensitive programming.

A. Assuming that the Project Cycle of 18 months had actually happened CEE's role would have been limited yet there were innovations introduced.

Area	Activities assigned by the Project	CEE's Intervention	Innovations
Project Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Information meeting wherein village leaders are met, preferably a village meeting is called and the project details communicated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Such meetings were organized, especially during the night. In all, 28 meetings in 28 project villages were organized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In socially fragmented villages, school activities were conducted and the message of the meeting transmitted through children. • Video films were screened to attract and motivate maximum number of community members to attend the meeting.
Formation of Village Water Committee (VWC) (Pani Samiti)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRA would help build a rapport as well understand the village better. • Sample survey to know some key information about homes. • Village meeting to choose the Water Committee members. • Select the VWC based on the community's choice. • A resolution mentioning the names selected by the village as VWC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These activities were conducted in all the 28 villages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEE did a house-to-house survey. This helped to convey the project information to all the houses. It also enabled to identify leaders from all the castes and know the village's socio-political-economic dynamics critical for engaging the community in a dialogue and attaining the project objectives. • Special efforts were made to invite women to the meeting that would choose the VWC. • All caste representation and at least three women members on each VWC was insisted upon.
Site Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting sites for the overhead tank (ESR), stand posts, cattle troughs and washing, bathing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The selected VWC members would be called 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care was taken that the village <i>Talati</i> – a government revenue employee who holds and knows all the land records was always kept when sites were selected. This person knew the location

	<p>facilities for women.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A resolution with a site map for technical verification. 	<p>for a meeting and the various sites discussed and located.</p>	<p>and status of public lands for such structures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites selected by men were cross-checked with women through hamlet meetings. Sites in public places were changed as these were difficult to access due to the prevalent <i>purdah</i> system.
Area	Activities assigned by the Project	CEE's Intervention	Innovations
Pre Construction Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building of VWC members to monitor the construction of water and sanitation systems to be built in the village. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training programmes for VWCs organized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical sessions helped understand the making of concrete, quality assessment of cement, sand, grit, gravel, steel and bricks, while workmanship and curing helped VWC members understand the importance of quality. • VWC members were also helped using simulations, dramas and role plays to make them understand that their responsibilities as VWCs were that of monitoring and not policing. Village presentations were also organized. • Video demonstrations of work carried out in other villages exemplified the difference between good and poor quality work.
Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Cost Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The VWC was responsible for collecting Rs.150.00 (\$3) per household towards 6 months O&M. • Money to be deposited in a bank account and used for O&M after the scheme is operationalized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to VWCs for a house-to-house collection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller meetings with caste leaders for collecting O&M. • Using the public distribution system's ration shop to collect O&M. • Accompanying and motivating women to collect O&M where men did not show interest. • Using the local vernacular media to highlight a VWC's effort of collecting O&M – motivating or challenging other VWCs. • Attending marriages, religious functions with the message of collecting O&M.

The Lull and its Challenges

All the above mentioned activities were happening in all the villages and were at varied levels of progress. Meanwhile, the site maps submitted were then technically verified and the technical designs were ratified by the communities. Changes were suggested by communities such as

changing the sites of stand posts or cattle troughs or adding stand posts to localities that were either missed out or were not shown on the technical map.

Once this process was completed, group tenders were floated by the government department and the construction work was given on contract. The VWCs began monitoring the pace and the quality of the work of the contractors. Poor quality material and inferior construction work became a major area of conflict. Contractors paid little heed to VWC interventions and obeyed only the government engineers. The ISAs and the VWCs had little control or influence over the approving and sanctioning authorities. As conflicts grew, VWCs began to lose interest, and communities resigned themselves to yet another construction phase – that would deliver poor quality structures which would last for a very short time. But even this construction phase was extremely slow. The contractors had seen their own convenience – no work began in villages that had collected the requisite O&M while villages with low O&M got their work launched. This added to the conflicts further. This was a challenging situation that required innovative information and communication strategies.

Innovations – Beyond the Project brief

Assessing the situation, it was apparent that the 28 villages were at different stages of the project. Some already had a trained VWC, had collected their requisite O&M, had a bank account, and were battling with contractors because of poor and slow construction work. Some villages were still dealing with the aspect of O&M collection while others were yet undecided about the VWC and the tough task of O&M collection. Discontent was brewing all around. VWCs were losing interest; women were not ready to attend meetings to learn about water care or sanitation and hygiene and teachers and students too shied away. The initial momentum was losing ground.

Innovation	Brief Description
Cluster Meets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an operational strategy, CEE had divided the 28 villages into 3 clusters. It was necessary that VWC members from these villages meet, share and learn from each other. Strategies to form VWCs were shared, ideas to collect O&M were given by VWCs and problems of quality of material and construction work were also discussed – especially the monitoring role of VWCs and the support that it should get from the government engineers. • These cluster meets brought village VWCs together and the sharing began to happen even though they were informal meetings at the block offices, bus-stops or at social functions.
Self Help Groups (SHGs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women members of VWCs as well as other women were reluctant to learn about water care or sanitation or hygiene as the water systems were yet not in place. SHGs focusing on a small monthly saving were introduced. This helped women to attend monthly meetings as they had a purpose – of depositing their savings and having access to small loans at low interest rates. • Women now meet regularly, keep their own accounts, have opened a bank account, learnt about banking and its

	<p>operations, work together as a group, share their pains and joys more openly and have benefited from the latest information that is added to the SHG's monthly meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Today, SHGs have taken up the task of loaning for latrines amongst the members.
Women and Camera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To further involve the women in the village cleanliness drives and campaigns, women were trained to use a digital camera and even an SLR camera. They were asked to take pictures of good and bad practices in their village focusing upon water care, sanitation and hygiene. Nearly, 80 women participated and their pictures were then taken as a presentation to the men of the VWC to take up the initiative to clean the village.
World Women's Day Celebrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apart from SHGs, women VWC members and those interested were invited to the World Women's Day celebrations on March 8, to share their work, concerns and future plans. • Photographs of women whose work was exemplary were displayed to motivate others to clean up their own village.
Exposure Visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VWC members were taken to three key areas to gain exposure to water conservation, governance and management aspects showcased by certain villages. Women too joined these visits which were largely introspective and enabled the VWC members to look for newer ideas and strategies to deal with their own problems in their villages.

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Innovation	Brief Description
Bal Melas (Children's Fairs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are important because they want to experiment and have fun while they learn. Children from all the village schools were invited. • There are stalls that conduct activities for children to experiment, and learn and have fun at the same time. Drawing, singing, slogan and poem creation, essay and elocution are other competitions organized for the children. • Children also present their dances and skits focusing on water care, sanitation and hygiene. • Initially, the project spent the money for the Bal Melas, but later communities financed, organized and managed the Bal Melas. • Other NGOs working with children are invited to such Bal Melas to share their learning with teachers and students. • Magic shows, performances by child artists are other attractions. • Media coverage is important to highlight the efforts of the VWCs, teachers and children.
World Water Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 22 is the World Water Day. Meetings of Presidents of the 28 VWCs, rallies and sharing meetings have been organized by a host village. A 28-village Water Awareness Campaign was taken up by the youth – focusing

Celebrations	<p>on water conservation using songs, skits and slogans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovators are invited to share their knowledge and expertise – be it governance issues or drip irrigation demonstrations.
Shop-owners as partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was apparent that shop-owners were conveying opinions about the project and its process along with the goods they sold. Nearly 116 shops in 28 villages were surveyed. To assess their level of knowledge about the project . • Shop-owners were called to a workshop. Correct project details, status of the work and its progress in each village were presented, problems faced within the village that hampered progress was also shared. • Model shops were created that were given a dust bin, a magazine rack, a translate and a black board to write messages and rates. • Shop-owners were put on the mailing list of free publications which were displayed and read at the shop. • Periodic information was provided to the shop-owners who realized that their opinions were at times harming the work progress of their village. • Film CDs related to water care, sanitation, hygiene and governance were given to shop owners . They attracted customers by screening a profusion of Hindi films, using a TV and a VCD . Slots to screen the CDs were planned by the shop owners.
All Stars all Castes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village video news was initiated in villages that had a dish antennae and cable connections to homes. • The work carried out in the village, opinions of villagers especially women, role of the VWC members, problems faced and solutions worked out by the VWCs were video graphed and transmitted that evening – directly to homes. VWC leaders got to know what the village opinion was about their work. Many improved while it also created rifts which were sorted out. The village video had a repeat value because it was the story and visuals of their own village.
Innovation	Brief Description
A Day In A Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was primarily a sanitation and hygiene campaign in each of the 28 villages. It meant spending a whole day from 8 a.m. till 12 midnight addressing sanitation and hygiene issues with children, teachers, women, VWCs and the entire community. • The day began with the village school. Village rally, slogans and songs, drawing, slogan and essay competitions, snakes and ladders, exhibitions for the school children and teachers. • A WATSAN mobile shop sold ladles, nail cutters, soap, sieves, and kites with messages. • Children were motivated to collect waste plastic and each child got a school label as a prize for a bag of waste plastic. • Afternoons were spent in dialogue with women in small groups. Flip charts and flash cards helped explain the

	<p>water care, sanitation and hygiene messages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A demonstration was used to show the importance of washing hands and using a ladle. Women were asked to wash hands in a bowl – this would be drinking water taken from a house the meeting was organized. Pouring the water in a glass, women realized that dirt is not seen but is there. Soap and ladles were sold on the spot. • In the evening a meeting with VWC members would be organized to highlight what happened during the day and the demands of the community. • Late night, a street play full of racy dialogues and song and dance entitled ” Kingdom of Pigs” would be enacted on a mobile stage. • Resolutions to make soak pits for waste water disposal and latrines have been coming in from VWCs.
Educational Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A newsletter was published that highlighted the project’s work and the opinions and experiences of the people. • School labels for children highlighting hygiene • Posters on water care, school cleanliness and water conservation • Hoardings on hygiene • Tattoos for children on hygiene
<i>Jalsankalp Samiti</i> (JSS) – An umbrella group of Presidents of VWCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustaining the educational efforts is critical and creating a local CBO equally important. A pressure group of Presidents of VWCs was created. • The task of JSS is to help and support any of the 28 VWCs to sort out their problems be it of sites, O&M, VWC formation, finance, management, material, or in liasoning with the government. • They have Rs.60,000.00 (\$1250) as seed money to work with at the moment. • Recently formed a consortium to jointly purchase material – saved more than Rs.10 lakhs (\$20833) as their negotiation power increased.

Socio-political dynamics are interwoven in every move made by the VWC. Yet today, all the VWCs have shouldered the responsibility of constructing their in-village water supply and sanitation systems. They now choose the contractor, make payments, keep financial and technical progress reports, attend meetings and forums to thrash out problems arising out of non-bending rules and support each other in their times of crises. The Jalsankalp Samiti now has a greater role to play in sustaining this effort.