



Project Sammaan

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project Sammaan is an urban sanitation initiative dedicated to redesigning and improving facilities for slum communities across India. The initiative is being piloted in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack with the aim to replicate it in other cities, if successful.

The objective is to rethink the current models of sanitation facilities and design a new programmatic infrastructure and physical structure that instills a sense of dignity while addressing issues affecting sanitation practices in India and encouraging community members to stop defecating in the open.

Over 100 of the re imagined facilities will be built and a dedicated research team will analyze the qualitative and quantitative impact they have on the communities in which they're built. The results of this intensive research will be shared in an open-sourced toolkit that will allow for replication in cities across India and beyond.

Project Sammaan was born out of the research conducted for the Potty Project, an in-depth design research study focused on all aspects of the current sanitation models employed in urban slum communities throughout India.

FEATURE: CONSTRUCTION IMMINENT?

There has been a great deal of activity on the tendering and construction front the past several weeks, and there is building optimism that this work will lead to facility construction finally commencing in the coming months. Interest in constructing all of the Sammaan facilities there is currently funding for (32 Community Toilets in Cuttack, 26 Community Toilets and 27 Public Toilets in Bhubaneswar) has been expressed by National Buildings Construction Corporation (NBCC) and the requisite approvals are now pending review at the H&UD department.

There is a palpable sense of optimism amongst team members, if cautioned. The tendering process has been the focal point of activities for several consortium members for nearly a year-and-a-half now, and the past few months have been especially challenging, with repeated tender attempts failing to secure any interested or qualified bidders. The excitement at having finally gotten the tenders released at the end of last year and beginning of this year quickly faded with each failed attempt, and the team was left to contemplate what the next steps would be.

Committing to re-tendering ad infinitum was simply not feasible, financially or otherwise. The process for each tender release (and subsequent review of related documents and submissions) was taking upwards of three months, delaying activities on other workstreams while simultaneously driving up overall project costs. Considering the stringent budget the project is operating under, this latter point was particularly disconcerting.



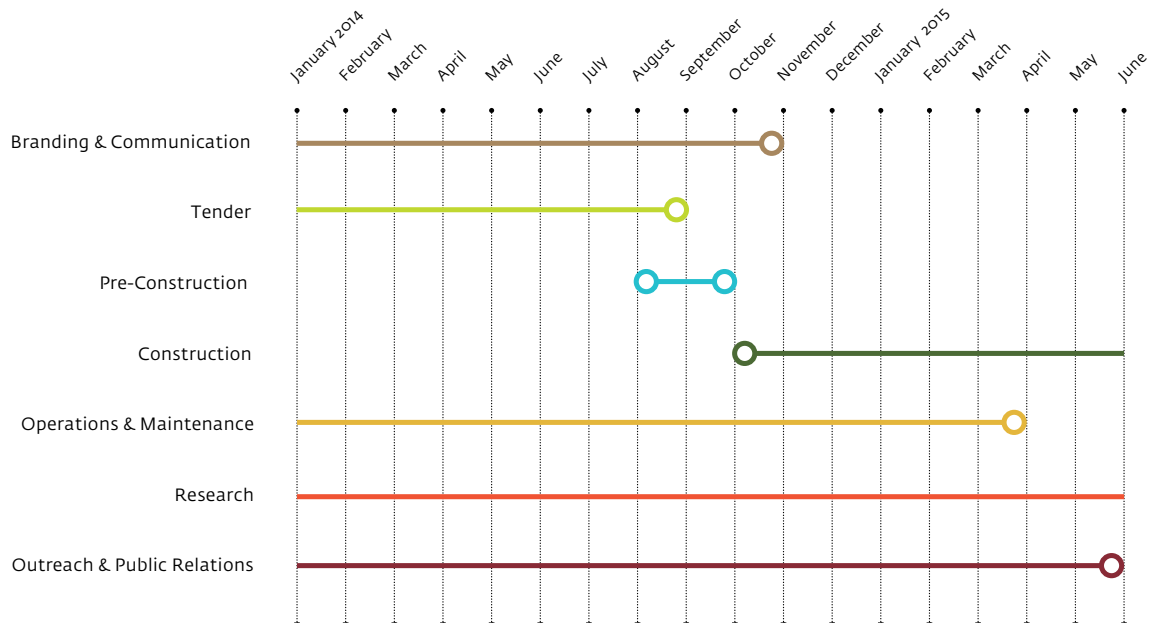
This all may be resolved, though, if NBCC is approved to be nominated to build the Sammaan facilities. Established more than 50 years ago, NBCC is a top-rated organization under the Government of India's Ministry of Urban Development and provides a litany of construction-related services. Though a project like Sammaan is

typically too small (in terms of budget) for the likes of NBCC, the executives there felt the social importance of this initiative merited their involvement and will look at this through the lens of Corporate Social Responsibility. Should matters progress and NBCC be approved for this work, construction on the first facilities can commence in the next 2-3 months.

This positive news comes on the heels of several disappointing setbacks. The budget for Community Toilets in Bhubaneswar being drastically reduced, the latest round of tenders for the Community Toilets in Cuttack failing to elicit any bids from interested contractors, and sites in Bhubaneswar lost to encroachment, are but a few of the hurdles the team has faced since June.



TIME LINE



MILESTONE OVERVIEW

To date

- Tenders for Bhubaneswar's Public Toilets and Cuttack's Community Toilets released
- All sites in Bhubaneswar revisited to verify any encroachment issues

Upcoming

- Decision on NBCC as contractor for all remaining facilities
- Baseline survey and pre-construction dialogue activities in communities to commence
- Pre-construction dialogues with communities in Cuttack to commence
- O&M Tendering

August calendar of events

- Moving forward with nominating a PSU for construction or re-tendering
- Interactions with communities to prepare them for construction
- Commencement of site clearances in both Bhubaneswar and Cuttack

BLOG HIGHLIGHT:

“REVISITING BHUBANESWAR’S SITES” BY KEVIN SHANE



The drastically reduced budget for the Community Toilets in Bhubaneswar will only allow us to build only 26 of the originally planned 60 facilities. This meant that the team had to decide which communities would receive a facility and which would be forced to keep their fingers-crossed in hopes that sometime in the future their needs will be met. Doing so was no small task, and one that required the participation of virtually all those working on the initiative. Further complicating matters was the two-week deadline mandated by the government to complete the work.

The first step in this process was visiting all proposed sites to identify any encroachment issues. As the land was identified and allocated to the project nearly 2 years ago, there was serious concern that many of the sites would no longer be open and available for construction. In fact, some members of the Land Department at the BMC guessed that most, if not all, sites would have encroachment issues prior to commencing with the visits. Needless to say, such a suggestion made for a very anxious mood amongst the partners.

It took every bit of the two weeks in order to complete the site visits due to prior obligations by the partners at the BMC on other projects. The Amins at the Land Department would spend the entire day working on a drainage project in Bhubaneswar, and then accompany the other project team members for Sammaan site visits each evening. The critical nature of the work, along with the mandated deadline, also led to visits being conducted on Saturday and Sunday to ensure all were completed on time.

The constraints on the time the Amins could dedicate to this work was a cause for concern for the project team, so an independent evaluation of the sites also took place simultaneously, with a few team members photographing every site in case such evidence was needed to verify if a site was encroached or not. This proved to be a redundant

exercise, though, as we were able to finish the work alongside the Amins in time. That said, it speaks volumes to the level of commitment the team has in ensuring every aspect of work is completed in as rigorous and timely a manner as possible.

Thankfully, these fears proved largely unfounded as each day progressed and more sites were visited. There were encroachment issues in some places, ranging from minor instances in which community members had appropriated some of a plot for their own personal uses (ironically, and telling, enough, we found makeshift toilets on a few sites) to major issues such as a concrete home being built on one of the sites. All told, of the 60 “treatment sites” (i.e., plots of land for Sammaan facilities to be constructed on), less than 20% had issues serious enough to prevent inclusion in the initial round of tendering. This figure may sound high, but given the expectations before starting this exercise, the team was very relieved that it was this low.

This was a much-needed bit of good news coming off of the budget cut that necessitated this unplanned for, but vitally important, activity. Unfortunately, this sense of relief was tempered by the fact that more than half of the communities we visited would not receive facilities due to a lack of funding, at least for the near future. This was the first time that many of us had visited the actual communities we plan on building in. Due to the research component of Sammaan, we’ve limited our basti visits to those outside the project.

It was incredibly difficult to spend each and every day for two weeks engaging with community members knowing full well that we would be letting down more than half of them, especially considering the conditions that many of these communities are forced to endure. As we’ve said before though, and as many of us still believe, this shortfall of funding is only temporary and there is still optimism, and expectation, that the remaining facilities will be built in due time. It’s just that such thoughts are of little consolation when one sees the harsh realities of daily life in most of these bastis, where few if any toilet facilities were seen.



WORKSTREAMS

A. Liaising & Capacity Building

The possibility of a PSU being nominated for construction of the remaining Sammaan facilities, and the numerous conversations amongst various government partners required before taking a decision on such, led to a busy month of July for all of CTRAN, and August is shaping up to be just as active. Meetings were held between senior project and government officials in early July to propose nominating a PSU rather than continue tendering. Following this, several approvals were not only needed, but needed quickly. CTRAN took the lead on facilitating these interactions and regularly following up on all letters and reports to help ensure their review, and approval, was expedited.

Activities in August include:

- Liaising with BMC, CMC and other government officials to expedite review process of NBCC
- Facilitating interactions between government and non-government partners

B. Research/Operations & Maintenance

With the news that a contractor may be in place to build the Sammaan facilities comes a great deal of activity for the research team. The baseline survey that will help quantify the impact of the Sammaan facilities has to be completed before any pre-construction activities (e.g., even conversations with the communities about toilet facilities being built) can take place. Given the possible two-month time-frame for ground-breaking, this means research field activities will need to begin as soon as MoUs between the contractor and the municipal corporations are signed.

Activities in August include:

- Conducting baseline research in the communities receiving Sammaan facilities

C. Tender & Construction

Coming off of extremely disappointing news out of both Bhubaneswar (i.e., reduced budget for construction of Community Toilets) and Cuttack (i.e., no interested bidders for the latest round of tenders), was the potentially great news of possibly moving forward with a PSU as the contractor for all remaining facilities. Doing so would drastically speed up the commencement of construction; this could start in as little as two months. August will be busy with various meetings in pursuing approval for such. If successful, pre-construction activities will need to kick off this month.

Activities in August include:

- Potentially finalizing the agreement to bring on NBCC as contractor
- Initiating pre-construction activities within the communities

D. Architecture & Design

All of the drawings for both the Community Toilets and Public Toilets for both cities have been completed. The review process of these drawings is under way to address any minor changes that need to be made to ensure the facilities are of the highest quality possible. Site surveys of the facilities with G+1 (i.e., ground floor plus housing unit) are being finalized to spot check soil bearing capacity data to ensure that no tweaks to the structural designs are needed.

Activities in August include:

- Review and amend architectural drawings, if needed

E. Outreach & Public Relations

The hope that a contractor has been identified and construction activities could soon commence also brings with it plans to roll out a more robust media plan for Project Sammaan. Updates were made to the website/blog to feature more information touch-points for site visitors in preparation for this, such as adding an image gallery, sharing site locations on a map, and creating a repository for project-related collateral that visitors can download. Once construction begins and the project is in the public space, additional documentary films will be shot and interactions with the media are expected to be considerable.

Activities in August include:

- Updating blog and social media channels
- Documenting pre-construction field activities

F. Branding & Communications

An illustrator is being brought on-board to finalize the family of characters that will communicate messaging to end-users on facility signage; this individual will work closely with the Quicksand and Codesign teams for this. The Quicksand team is working to complete the nomenclature for these signs, which will be presented in both English and Oriya within the facilities.

Activities in August include:

- Hiring an illustrator to complete work on the family of characters





The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) is a network of 70 affiliated professors around the world who are united by their use of Randomized Evaluations (REs) to answer questions critical to poverty alleviation. J-PAL's mission is to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is based on scientific evidence.

J-PAL is the primary grantee and the project's principal investigators and are designing and conducting the monitoring and evaluation for the facilities:

- » Business model development
- » Operations and Maintenance modelling
- » Project evaluation

A multi-disciplinary innovation consultancy that places user-centered design principles at the core of every innovation effort. The studio has successfully delivered on several new services, products, brands and developmental strategies, creating both measurable social and business impact.

Quicksand is responsible for project management as well as anchoring the hardware design process for the project:

- » User-experience research and corresponding hardware design
- » Design, branding and communication project management
- » Project toolkit and website development



The municipal corporations of the pilot cities Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. These entities are tasked with providing services in sectors such as Health & Sanitation, Slum Development, Urban Planning, and Waste Management to improve the quality of life of their respective citizenries.

The local municipal corporations are key partners in the project and aid in the facilitation of its various components:

- » Provide funding for construction and infrastructure
- » Site selection assistance
- » Identify contractors for construction
- » Ensure regular water, electricity, and sewerage facilities for the toilets
- » Manage sewerage and waste treatment systems
- » Oversee functioning of facilities through a PMO until capacity-building with the BMC is complete
- » Provision of temporary sanitation facilities
- » Ensuring long-term sustainability of the project

The Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR) is an Indian organization committed to working and partnering with marginal communities. It has expertise in conducting research, process documentation, capacity building and strengthening advocacy by leveraging media and networking to shape and impact policy issues related to urban poor.

CFAR is actively involved in facilitating community interactions in the field:

- » Social mapping of each slum
- » Community engagement and dialogue during design and construction phases
- » Facility management training for community members



CTRAN Consulting Manages large, complex development projects, providing the right mix of program management and technical assistance.

They are the one-point contact for interfacing with various government agencies:

- » Establish a Project Management Office within the two municipal corporations to ensure continued, and future, use and grievance redressal of the facilities
- » Facilitate meetings with government representatives
- » Assist in land approval process
- » Set up and operate the help line that ensures proper functioning of the facilities



An award-winning consultancy internationally recognized as amongst the top emerging practices in the world with a commitment towards delivering innovative, context specific designs that encourage sustainable lifestyles. Anagram Architects is a full spectrum spatial design consultancy firm that offers expertise in urbanism, architecture, interior design, and research.

They are leading the architectural design of the 119 facilities:

- » Provide site-specific architectural designs
- » Consult on waste management issues
- » Oversee facility construction

CODESIGN

A brand and communication design studio whose expertise lies in bridging the gap between product and service offerings and what end-users really care about, with communication that is meaningful and relevant.

Codesign is the communication and brand consultant for Project Sammaan.

- » Ensure facility related branding and communication is contextually relevant and encourages behaviour change and adoption
- » Develop the facility identity and corresponding collateral that promotes larger goals of sanitation and health for better life
- » Creating facility signage that is functional and facilitates access and experience

CONCLUSION



As the poet Alexander Pope famously penned, "Hope springs eternal..." It is with great hope that the partners on Project Sammaan anticipate the decision on nominating a contractor to finally translate the two-and-a-half years of effort into a brick-and-mortar reality that will undoubtedly improve the lives of thousands of people in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. The days of thinking in abstraction and for pushing through challenge after challenge with the singular thought that the ends will justify the means are drawing to a close, and the focus can now shift to the tangible implementation of the years of work of all project partners. No more will we have to satiate ourselves with "learnings" or "takeaways" that are only wins on the project by proxy; the real purpose of Sammaan will (hopefully) soon be realized and the lives of the community members we're working for will be significantly improved because of it.

