



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: AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

The project team received some very disheartening news in a recent meeting with senior government officials: funding for the Community Toilets in Bhubaneswar has been drastically reduced. This budget cut translates to the construction for 34 of the 60 planned facilities being delayed indefinitely.

The timing of this news was especially difficult for the team as the tender documents for the 60 planned facilities had just been finalized and the release of the notice inviting bids from interested contractors thought to be imminent. Given the 15 months of effort that involved the close, often daily, interaction and coordination between numerous members of the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation and representatives of several consortium partners, this sudden change in budgets was incredibly deflating all-around.

The rationale behind the loss of funding to be allocated to Project Sammaan was rather vague, but this ultimately boils down to a case of missed opportunity. In 2012, when the project launched, it appeared as though there would be multiple sources of funding that would assist the BMC in its goal of building all 60 Community Toilets initially planned as part of Sammaan. As we reached the halfway mark of 2014, these options ceased to be in play. It is an unfortunate reality, but one we cannot escape from and are now adjusting to in an effort to keep the project alive and moving forward. Most disheartening though is the simple, brutal fact that literally thousands of people in Bhubaneswar's slums will be forced to continue relying on whatever sanitation options are currently available, if any.

The ever-shifting realities affecting Project Sammaan (e.g., turnover at the municipal corporations and within the project team, waste management considerations, issues finding qualified contractors for construction, etc.) have caused a lot of aspects of it to shift on the fly; we have had to approach this as a very dynamic and fluid experience. By and large, the challenges previously faced did not substantively alter the project. That, unfortunately, is not the case with this latest hurdle.

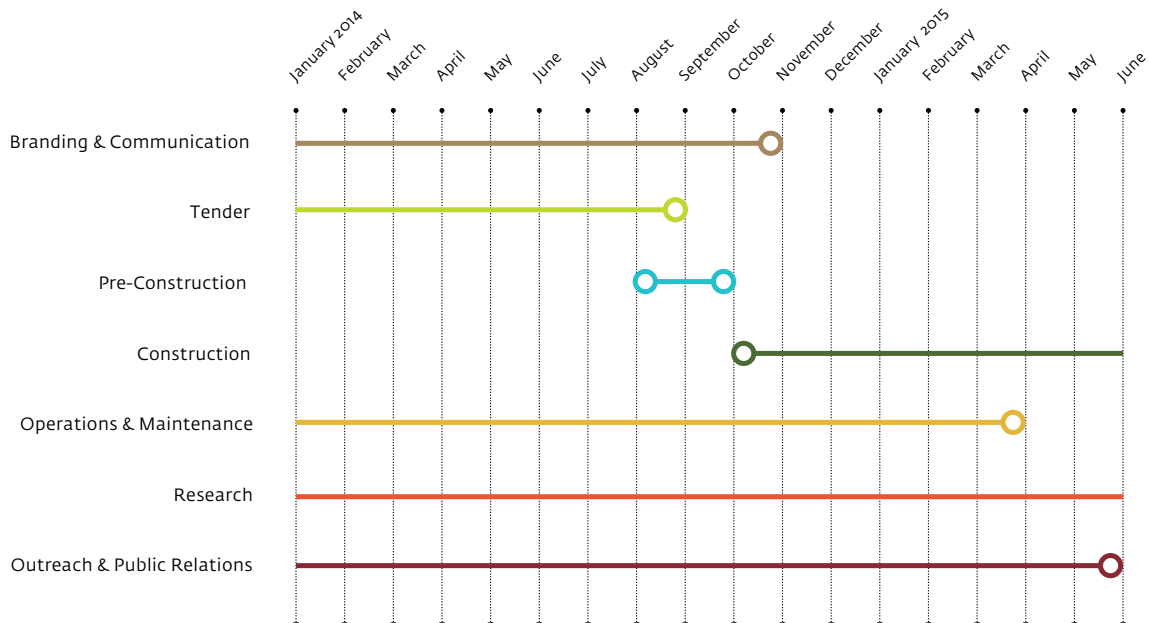
Project Sammaan is not just an infrastructure project. It is an experiment seeking to test the viability of various innovations and their overall impact on reducing instances of open-defecation. As such, there is a considerable research component to the project. While this research will still be valid and extremely valuable, reducing the sample size for any study is never a good thing. Beyond this, the simple, brutal fact is that months and months of work by all partners on the project, whether at the municipal corporations or within the consortium, is now

in jeopardy. There is still some optimism that additional funding will be secured for constructing the remaining 34 facilities, so all hope is not lost.

The team now is tasked with moving forward in identifying what sites will be built, and, consequently, what communities will receive a sanitation facility, and which will not. The team will now work with representatives from the BMC to do just that, and then submit the final list for what we are referring to as the "first round" of tenders.

Interestingly enough, this budget cut did not affect the number of Public Toilets to be built as part of the project. In fact, not only is funding for all 27 Public Toilet facilities assured, but there may even be a surplus of funds for these facilities. Thankfully assurances were made that any savings in funding for the Public Toilets will be reallocated to help fund construction of additional Community Toilet facilities, though no formal agreement on such has yet to be reached.

TIME LINE



MILESTONE OVERVIEW

To date

- Public Toilet tender release in Bhubaneswar
- Community Toilet tender release in Cuttack

Upcoming

- Tendering of Community Toilets in Bhubaneswar
- Finalizing facility branding and identity
- Pre-construction dialogues with communities in Cuttack to commence
- O&M Tendering

July calendar of events

- Submission of O&M Detailed Project Report to various government partners
- Sharing the final facility identity and branding with BMC and CMC partners
- Opening of the CT tenders in Cuttack
- Commencement of site clearances in both Bhubaneswar and Cuttack

BLOG HIGHLIGHT:

“BRIDGING THE GAP” BY ANURAG PANDA



Project Sammaan is a highly innovative and demanding project, and one of the major concerns involves dealing with government policies and process. As one of the Interface Managers, my major responsibilities revolve around acting as a bridge between the Project Sammaan team and the government partners. I am also responsible for weighing in on decisions, both large and small, in such a way that risk is controlled and uncertainty minimised for the project.

My day-to-day activities include risk assessment, representing the project's interests, enhancing relationships between the government and non-government partners, and maintaining awareness of the project's needs and parameters so that any bumps along the way does not interfere with the project's implementation too greatly. More importantly, I also work to ensure that the project strategy is clearly defined and communicated to the government and confer with all project team members on strategic or technical issues to ensure the project is successful and that it meets specific goals in a timely manner. The most challenging part of my job is to communicate the team's thoughts to the government officials, as they can be very rigid in their approach; government officials are often hesitant to adapt to changes.

As the medium between Project Sammaan and the Government, CTRAN has been part of several significant milestones. We have facilitated liaising with the Government and other project partners (especially Quicksand and J-PAL) and have been actively involved in all activities such as validation of documents, navigating the tendering process, and coordinating with CMC/BMC officials to keep them abreast of project progress.

In thinking about the challenges that have been faced to this point, they all tend to involve the same issue: clearly conveying to the government officials the importance of

Project Sammaan and how its' innovations will improve the lives of thousands of citizens in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. The BMC and CMC partners are oftentimes busy with numerous other infrastructure projects, and many of these much larger in terms of cost, so underscoring the impact Sammaan will have on the health and well-being of its users was critical in keeping people's attention focused on our initiative. Doing so involves spending a great deal of time interacting with the various officials to ensure the relationship remains cordial and that Sammaan stays at the forefront of their minds.

The challenges in achieving all project-related milestones are numerous, though most can be boiled down to the simple matter of time: there is a stipulated, stringent timeline for the project and internal and external pressures for the project and its partners can cause delays. Currently, the project is at a very critical juncture. The tenders have been floated for Cuttack's community toilets and Bhubaneswar's public toilets, but progress has stalled on both fronts as no qualified bidders have been identified, meaning that the tenders have to be re-floated; the review of documents for Bhubaneswar's community toilets is still underway, so the floating of those tenders is still pending. Once the contracts have been awarded, the next major challenge will be the facility construction; sites will need to be cleared, provisions made for temporary toilets, community engagement activities will need to be conducted, and the team is racing the monsoons as the upcoming rains will severely impact construction. Personally, I am most looking forward to moving beyond the review phase and getting into the actual construction of these facilities. I want this sanitation dream to be a realistic dream.

Sanitation has always been a major concern in India. Besides mobilizing the mass media to give adequate coverage to such a serious issue, there is a need for involvement of NGOs and community-based organizations, and communities themselves, to tackle the crisis of India's sanitation failure. The foremost thing we should do is to educate the public on how better sanitation can improve their lives while providing functional facilities to reduce the dependence by so many millions here on open-defecation. Once the public understands the need, and utilities are provided for their sanitation needs, it will be far easier to make the sanitation dream a reality.



WORKSTREAMS

A. Liaising & Capacity Building

The letter-writing campaign has kept the interface management team on its toes as numerous visits to the municipal corporations, and elsewhere, are required to not only deliver the correspondences but to obtain feedback from the various government officials on the same. The constant interactions, whether through these letters or the regular in-person meetings between government officials and Sammaan team members, has born fruit though, as one really gets the sense that progress is being made. These activities will likely continue unabated until the construction on the project's facilities begins.

Activities in July include:

- Working with the CMC partners in re-tendering the CTs
- Helping to facilitate the floating of tenders for Bhubaneswar's CTs

B. Research/Operations & Maintenance

The J-PAL team worked with both the Quicksand and BMC teams to visit all of the Bhubaneswar CT sites in order to curate the final list of sites for the initial round of tenders in light of the revised, and reduced, budget. We then worked with the Principal Investigators to randomize the site list based on the current budget level and submit this in a report to the BMC Commissioner. Moving forward, visits to control sites to ascertain if there are any encroachment issues affecting them will need to be conducted.

Activities in July include:

- Visits to control sites
- Interfacing with the municipal corporations regarding O&M

C. Tender & Construction

Uncertainty remains with the tendering process as those in Cuttack have yet to yield any interested bidders, and the budget for the Community Toilets in Bhubaneswar was cut just before the tenders were released. The team is naturally feeling a bit deflated by both, but there remains enough optimism that these challenges will be addressed as effectively as possible to keep activities apace. The coming weeks and months will really shape the future of Sammaan, though, as we come to terms with the impact a reduced number of facilities has on the project's viability.

Activities in July include:

- Reconfiguring the approach to the tender process for Bhubaneswar's CTs in light of the budget cut

- Interfacing regularly with the BMC and CMC partners to facilitate the award of contracts

D. Architecture & Design

All of the drawings for both the Community Toilets and Public Toilets for both cities have been completed. Beginning in May, and likely to continue through the coming months, these drawings are being reviewed by an independent engineer to address any minor changes that need to be made to ensure the facilities are of the highest quality possible.

Activities in July include:

- Review and amend architectural drawings with a third party

E. Outreach & Public Relations

There was limited outreach activity in the month of June as the primary focus of the month's work was in addressing the budget cut for Bhubaneswar's CTs and the associated work with revising the tender documents and visiting sites for encroachment purposes. However, there were some significant improvements to the website done in the month that should make for a more engaging user experience. Features such as an image gallery, search function, and a map featuring the locations of all sites, have all been added.

Activities in July include:

- Updating blog and social media channels
- Continued updates to the Project Sammaan website

F. Branding & Communications

Work continued between the Codesign and Quicksand teams in an effort to finalize the facility signage. This activity has been much delayed due to a regular back-and-forth regarding the copy to be featured on the signs themselves, but there is optimism that this work will be completed soon. This is the final pending piece of branding work for Sammaan.

Activities in July include:

- Making necessary adjustments to the facility signage based on direction from the Quicksand team





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



Change has been a constant with Project Sammaan, and the last month on the initiative has been no different. Previous hurdles and challenges have paled in comparison to the new reality this month brought though: that the project will have to move forward with significantly fewer Community Toilet facilities in Bhubaneswar due to an ill-timed budget cut. News of this budget shortfall led to a flurry of related activity, with the team scrambling to visit all sites in order to curate a final list for tendering and then revising the just-finished tender documents to reflect this new reality. The dust has yet to settle, so to speak, so the impact of this news isn't yet fully felt, but there is a palpable, undeniable sense of regret at the missed opportunity, and more than a little anxiety about what the future holds for Sammaan and, more importantly, the end users of its inevitable facility, irrespective of how many are ultimately constructed. Hopefully the month of July brings with it better news, if not additional funds to make up for the current shortfall.

