



Project Sammaan

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NEWSLETTER : SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2014

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: INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Any long-term engagement requires a certain level of institutional knowledge in order to be sustainable and ever forward-moving. This becomes especially poignant the longer and more complex the initiative. Given Project Sammaan's scope and long-term focus, this level of understanding is simply not an option, but rather an absolute must if we are to be successful.

There are many ways in which the project is structured to ensure that the decisions made that define the project are documented as they happen, and this information is disseminated to project partners or in the very least made readily available. Communications efforts span from this newsletter to the blog; from presentations and related updates to regular meetings and conference calls between project partners, including those at the government. Further redundancies are built into the manner in which project-related materials are stored, with multiple parties having access to any pertinent files for easy access and, more importantly, the assurance that nothing is lost along the way.

Despite all of this, the challenge of turnover within the teams is not easily overcome, and the necessary re-group to bring any new team members up to speed will absolutely lead to delays, it's just a matter of mitigating how significant these setbacks are. There are several project briefs that the team relies on to introduce Project Sammaan, but condensing the complexities of an initiative seeking to re-imagine and improve community sanitation for India's urban slums to a matter of a few pages or bullet points is not only impossible, it is a disservice to effort.

While turnover within the non-government partners has been minimal, and largely addressed by the constant presence of senior team members has helped with the new transitions we have had, the same cannot be said at the government level. Compounding this is the fact that the turnover at the government agencies has tended to be at the more senior levels; there have been six Commissioners at the CMC and three Commissioners at the BMC since the project kicked-off in January 2012. Given the busy schedules of senior officials, there has, in the case of Sammaan, been little opportunity for detailed project-level briefings from one official to his or her replacement.

Government partners, particularly at the engineer level within the Municipal Corporations, do a good job of bringing new senior officials up to speed on pending initiatives, there are simply too many projects to go into too great of detail on them all. It is therefore the project

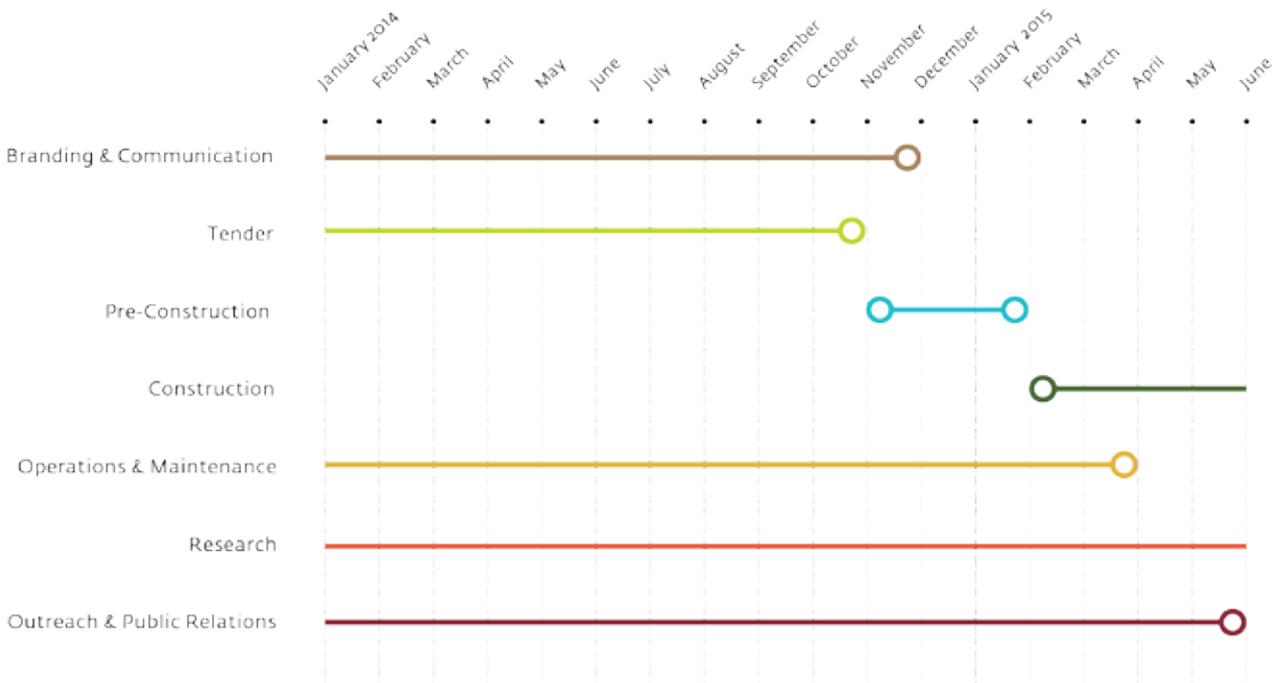
team's responsibility to provide that detailed debrief. It is oftentimes these occurrences that can lead to prolonged delays as the past must be revisited, and in detail. Years' worth of decisions are reviewed and scrutinized, with many of the same issues that were thought put to rest re-emerging, and requiring justification.



The latest iteration of this reality is the proposal by members of the H&UD Department to shift away from NBCC's proposed nomination as contractor in favor of Sulabh International, a notion that was initially suggested and struck down in March 2013, and again in May 2014 by other members of the H&UD Department that have since moved on to other postings. After a series of meetings, it was made clear to the team that there were a few issues around some pending work that caused concern regarding NBCC and that, once addressed, the nomination could move forward.

The issues revolve around funding for NBCC's PMC fee and a few O&M details. Discussions around these have been taking place for several months now, but a new member working on the project would not have known this. Open, timely communication is the only way to overcome this drop in institutional knowledge, which means any and all new partners working on Sammaan, especially at the government, need to be brought into the fold as quickly as possible. Otherwise the retrograde motion of "two steps forward, one step back" will continue to affect the initiative, and further delay providing the Sammaan facilities to the community members counting on us to provide them.

TIME LINE



MILESTONE OVERVIEW

To date

- O&M Strategy document delivered to all government partners
- Land approvals granted for all sites

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

October 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:

“PUT THE POO IN THE NEW LOOS”

BY DEEPANI JINADASA



Project Sammaan, over the past 3 years, has been putting in immeasurable effort towards a single, immense: building great new community toilets. At some point in the not-too-distant future, 57 brand new, gleaming toilet blocks will come into existence, and it will be a major accomplishment for the project.

But then what? What happens next? Just because the new toilets exist, will people use them?

This is not as easy of a question to consider as it might seem at first glance. We might think, “Why wouldn’t I use a toilet?” But some community members might think, “Why would I?”

There are lots of parts in play here that affect a community member’s decision to use a new toilet facility. Take pricing for example. We will be asking community members to pay a user fee to use the new toilets. Will that be acceptable to them? If it is, at what price threshold will people no longer want to pay?

This is something we’ve been thinking about a lot on our end. On the one hand, users have to feel that they can afford the price that we’re asking them to pay, and on the other hand, user fees have to be able to entirely cover the costs of running the sanitation operation (operational costs will not be subsidized in any way, but the project will fully cover the costs of construction). There’s more to consider about setting prices too, which is that they have to adhere to government guideline rates for community toilets.

We’ve been developing a couple of different pricing models that incorporate these points. One model is a break-even model, the goal of which is to arrive at a price that will fully recover operations and maintenance costs, but no more. The other is a profit-maximizing the model, which

is designed to arrive at a price that will generate some amount of profit. Both of these are tricky though, because for the time being we can only estimate certain inputs for the model, such as user demand. If we end up charging too much, we could end up hurting user demand; if the price is too low, the facility won’t be able to sustain itself.

Another very important aspect that figures into the work of bringing new toilets is community engagement and behavior change communication. There are very good reasons why India has struggled with sanitation for so long. Lack of functioning toilets aside, we know from asking people that there is an ingrained belief that there are positive benefits to defecating in the great outdoors. The wind ruffling one’s hair, the sounds of birds chirping merrily in the trees, the scent of incense on the wind as one takes care of Nature’s call. Okay, well maybe that’s the Bollywood version, but nevertheless, open defecation is still appealing to many. It means you can do your business efficiently and walk away; no lines to wait in, nothing to pay, no one waiting for you to hurry up and finish, no foul smells (except for your own of course). So, just because some toilets appear in the neighborhood to be used, it doesn’t necessarily mean they will be, because the alternative – open defecation – is still an easy and familiar practice. It is therefore our job to convey to people the benefits of improved sanitation, and to motivate them to put their poo in the new loos, instead of leaving feces in the open near where people live, work, and play.

Let’s consider a last element here which could greatly affect toilet take-up – the user experience. We are putting in a great deal of effort to ensure that user experience is very positive, and this has come into consideration from everything from the facility design and layout, to ensuring women and girls’ safety and security, to high standards of operations and maintenance. But negative reactions from users may come from unexpected places. For example, we are planning to introduce digital technology for payments, meaning that we will ask users to swipe a card or have their fingerprint scanned when they come to use the toilet. It is possible that users perceive this as a burdensome hassle, and it may deter them from coming. Or, perhaps if lines build up at the facilities and users perceive that they will have to wait for a long time, they may skip the toilet and continue to open defecate instead.

When we start to shift our thinking on this project from an exercise in building toilets to an exercise in building up enthusiasm for improved sanitation, we’re playing a whole new game.



WORKSTREAMS

A. Liaising & Capacity Building

Interactions with the government partners are now two-fold: continuing to follow up on NBCC's file until there is resolution and a contractor is named, and continuing conversations regarding Operations & Maintenance. The software and hardware teams have been jointly meeting with various officials to ensure there is no confusion amongst the team regarding project team representatives and associated responsibilities; moving forward, the hardware team will begin scaling back its involvement once a contractor is named. It is then that O&M will become the focal point, and remain so through the tendering process.

Activities in October include:

- Facilitating interactions and conversations regarding O&M
- Following up with H&UD Department regarding NBCC's nomination

B. Research/Operations & Maintenance

The software team has begun taking the lead in interacting with the government partners as the project's focus shifts from construction-related activities to those around facility Operations & Maintenance. A robust O&M strategy document, along with an executive summary of such, was distributed to all government partners towards the end of September in response to concerns voiced regarding NBCC's nomination. Following the holidays which start the month of October, the team will continue conversations around O&M and work towards the inevitable tender process.

Activities in October include:

- Conducting baseline research in the communities receiving Sammaan facilities
- Continuing conversations regarding facility O&M with the BMC and CMC

C. Tender & Construction

All activities related to construction and tendering are tied to the decision on awarding the contracts to build the Sammaan facilities on a nomination basis.

Activities in October include:

- Potentially finalizing the agreement to bring on NBCC as contractor

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.

Activities in October include:

- Review and amend architectural drawings, if needed

E. Outreach & Public Relations

Efforts on the blog, newsletter, and social media channels continue to be the forefront of the activities on this front. A detailed concept note regarding plans for a series of short documentary films has been circulated amongst the project team, and will be finalized in the coming months. This series of films will capture the pre-construction activities, construction, and the first few months following the opening of the Sammaan facilities.

Activities in October include:

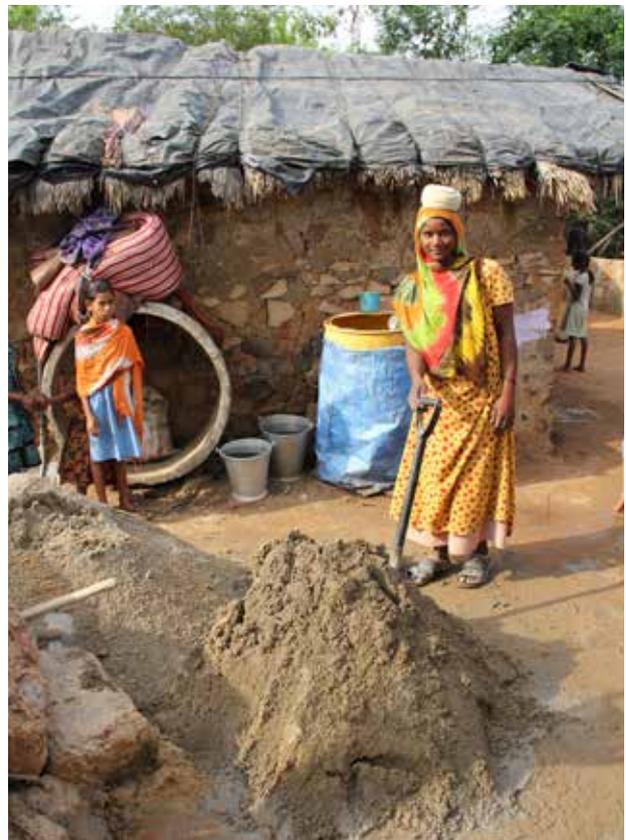
- Updating blog and social media channels
- Documenting pre-construction field activities, if initiated

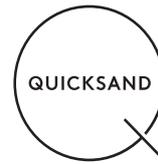
F. Branding & Communications

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 team 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 October include:

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



If ever one needed an example of why it is so vitally important to maintain open, honest, and timely lines of communication, this month's suggestion that NBCC be dropped from consideration in favor of Sulabh International is about as perfect as it can get. Issues will arise, no matter what, but they can be minimized, if not eliminated altogether, as long as we move forward as a team and share information accordingly. The need for clarity on a funding issue and aspects of facility O&M has had the ancillary benefit of exposing some of the communications shortcomings that apparently still persist. It is clear that greater efforts are needed to ensure all team members, especially at the government, are up to speed. This means the non-government partners need to do a better job of meeting and engaging with our government partners on a regular, if not daily, basis.

