



Environment

Water Community



Solution Exchange for the Water Community Consolidated Reply

Query: Making Rural Sanitary Marts viable and more effective – Experiences, Examples.

Compiled by Pankaj Kumar S, Resource Person and Ramya Gopalan, Research Associate

26 May 2007

From Ajit Saxena, UNDP, New Delhi

Posted 26 April 2007

While working as an engineer in the water and sanitation (watsan) projects in Madhya Pradesh, I have seen that successful implementation of watsan programmes depends on balanced use of both software and hardware components. Thus, in addition to successful behaviour change communications, hardware support for implementation of watsan programmes is crucial. This ideally includes low cost construction material such as toilet pans, pit covers, squatting plates, drains, and material for superstructure.

A crucial concept for making such material available is the Rural Sanitary Mart (RSM), for which about Rs. 35 lakhs per district has been earmarked under Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC). RSMs are to be set up by NGOs, cooperatives, local bodies, etc. and are to provide a range of sanitary items for the different economic classes in villages. In some cases, RSMs also serve as contact points for village people to contact masons for construction and quality control.

However, RSMs are currently facing a number of problems :

1. The initial surge in demand for sanitary material following Information, Education and Communication (IEC) programmes tapers off when villages surrounding the RSM are saturated. Also, RSMs have so far been focused on sanitary material and have not been able to diversify into other building products for sustainability.
2. RSMs are not able to meet the demand for support to Swajaldhara, where 5 to 6 motivators per Panchayat will be identified and trained for periodic testing of chemical and bacteriological contamination and for maintaining local structures for safe and cost-effective water provision.
3. RSMs are unable to provide technical support to school sanitation and hygiene education programmes, and for setting up technology for reuse of water.

In the above context, I request the Water Community to please share experiences and insights on the following:

1. Examples and learnings of successful RSMs in different parts of India, which have been able to achieve regular all-year-round production and a viable business model.
2. Information on the different schemes which can be dovetailed to RSMs, so that they can achieve an economically viable scale of production.
3. Suggestions for strengthening RSMs so that they operate sustainably, economically and provide all-year-round employment through mechanisms such as :
 - Social marketing of sanitary material
 - Product diversification (e.g. by using different building material such as cement concrete, fibre, mud-based products, etc.) and types of machines available that can make such diversification possible.
 - Using the same machinery for providing material for larger building industry (e.g. pressed bricks, tiles, etc.).
 - Functional diversification – providing a complete package of watsan services through a single-window (e.g. trainings and material for water quality testing, masons for new construction or for plumbing, credit linkages, maintenance support to schools, etc).

This information will help NGOs and other stakeholders to better replicate the concept of RSM and will make RSM an option for sustainable employment generation and providing sustainable watsan services.

Responses were received, with thanks, from

1. [Ramit Basu](#), UNDP, New Delhi
2. [Pramod Sharma](#), Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Ahmedabad
3. [Pankaj Kumar S](#), UN, New Delhi
4. [Debasish De](#), New Delhi
5. [Mona Chhabra Anand](#), Development Alternatives, New Delhi
6. [H.S. Rana](#), District Rural Development Agency, Chamba, Himachal Pradesh
7. [Nitya Jacob](#), Writeshop Infotech Private Limited, New Delhi
8. [S. Damodaran](#), WaterPartners International India Office, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu
9. [Gyanendra Mishra](#), UDAAN Society, Aligarh

Further contributions are welcome!

Summary of Responses

The query sought members' experience in making [Rural Sanitary Marts](#) (RSMs) effective and viable. The discussion brought out learnings in setting up and running RSMs from different parts of the country and gave suggestions to improve functioning and sustainability of these systems.

Discussing the objectives of setting up RSMs, members felt that given the lack of knowledge on construction and operation of sanitary facilities in rural areas, RSMs were envisaged to provide construction material (hardware) for various types of toilets in rural areas. Additionally, they were supposed to spread sanitation awareness (software) among rural population and thereby

enhance the demand for sanitation services. RSMs were also seen as a mechanism to provide links between rural entrepreneurs and households without toilets.

However, respondents agreed broadly that RSMs were not making the visualised progress and listed the major reasons for unviability of RSMs as follows:

- Higher production cost and poorer quality of sanitaryware RSMs vis-à-vis the market
- Inadequate quality control in RSMs
- Lack of technical innovations to adapt to local conditions
- Lack of awareness among community on construction material quality

To illustrate the above, members cited case studies from Sirmour and Karnal districts, [Himachal Pradesh](#), where RSMs units were closed down due to unviability. In Betul District, **Madhya Pradesh**, RSMs were promoted as “show pieces” by implementing NGOs. Examples from Balrampur District, **Uttar Pradesh** and Tonk District, **Rajasthan**, showed how RSMs were restricted to stocking and selling sanitary material, but did not provide additional sanitary services; training in construction, plumbing, maintenance of sanitary infrastructure and technical support for siting or design of soakpits.

Discussants shared examples of successful RSMs from various parts of India. In [West Bengal](#), the RSM Unit had focussed on schools, along with supporting a massive motivation and advocacy campaign while in Aligarh, [Uttar Pradesh](#) RSMs also promote force lift hand pumps. In [Tamil Nadu](#), instead of setting up a new RSM unit, an NGO trained cement fabricators to produce construction materials, and ensured a sustainable supply of these material. Another successful example members mentioned was that of a [UNICEF](#) project in Alwar, [Rajasthan](#), where an entrepreneur increased his viability by reducing production cost through on-site fabrication. In Chamba district, **Himachal Pradesh**, the budget for the RSM was used as a revolving fund to purchase sanitary material from sanitaryware producers in other districts, thereby bypassing the whole issue of production. Additionally, in [Maharashtra](#), the RSM functioned as a [Rural Sanitation Park](#) to disseminated viable technology options and developing financing mechanisms for village people.

The discussion gave a range of ideas for improving the viability and efficacy of RSMs:

- Integrate rural sanitary material with product line of construction material sellers
- Train local fabricators in making sanitation material
- Provide additional services such as masons, plumbing, etc.
- Provide technical support for site selection, credit for construction of toilets, etc.
- As Demonstration Centres/ Technology Parks (a few in a district)
- Use money allocated for RSM as revolving fund to source material from other producers
- Diversify products sold in RSMs to include soaps, water purifiers (for fluoride), etc.
- Support to school sanitation in construction and maintenance of toilets
- Develop skills to promote innovations in watsan such as playpumps and forcelifit pumps
- Train local artisans in hardware and software of sanitation
- Subsidies for households and incentives for artisans
- Use RSMs for water quality monitoring

Thus, members suggested that RSMs be looked at as Resource Centres for rural water and sanitation, rather than merely as shops to sell sanitary material. This would enable better promotion and accuracy of sanitation programs and facilities. Diversifying the services that RSMs provide, and treating them as fore-runners in integrating watsan into local entrepreneurship, as well as leading local innovations in sanitation technology could be effective ways of ensuring long-run stability of RSMs, felt members.

Comparative Experiences

Rajasthan

Recruiting Persons for Promotion of Sanitation, Alwar District (from [Pramod Sharma](#), Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Ahmedabad)

In the pilot phase of this UNICEF assisted project a person was recruited and given minor support for infrastructure near Rajgarh. The modus operandi, successfully used was to take bulk orders from villages through personal contact for construction of toilets for BPL families and then carry material and skilled manpower to construction sites as a mobile team where activities like squatting platforms and their curing was done on site. Prior orders helped lower costs.

Maharashtra

Rural Low Cost Sanitation Park, Wardha District (from [Ramit Basu](#), UNDP, New Delhi and [H.S. Rana](#), District Rural Development Agency, Chamba, Himachal Pradesh)

Centre of Science for Villages' Building and Sanitation Division built this park with UNICEF's support, disseminating low cost and low water-requiring sanitation and housing technologies to remote areas in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh and developing innovative financing mechanisms for villagers. Simple, costless and environment-safe techniques with local materials is used. Training to villagers is provided, favoring creation and sharing of local know-how.

Himachal Pradesh

From [H.S. Rana](#), District Rural Development Agency, Chamba, Himachal Pradesh

High Costs Making RSMs Unsustainable, Simour District

District authorities had initially started the RSM unit, running it by employing two technicians with the responsibility of importing appropriate technologies for making pans and sustaining the unit by selling pans to local communities at a profit, after meeting costs. However, production costs were high and pans could not compete by price or quality in the market. Therefore, the pans for which the RSM was established could not be produced and it closed down after three years.

Revolving Fund for RSMs, Chamba District

Given the large number of manufacturers producing low cost, lightweight and quality pans it was felt that existing products should be sought, rather than invest in production, without experience in entrepreneurship, marketing, etc. Therefore fund money was used to acquire varieties of low cost, low weight, unbreakable and fire-proof toilet pans, based on the demand of village people. The decision to use the fund for good quality/low price products was considered the best option.

West Bengal

From [Nitya Jacob](#), Writeshop Infotech Private Limited, New Delhi

Intensive Sanitation Project, East Midnapore District

This [UNICEF](#) project in co-operation with Central and State Governments was implemented by RKMLP and developed 12 options of toilets at affordable rates in efforts against open defecation. The results include toilets for all 783,623 households in 25 blocks of the district compared to 4.74 percent in 1990, all schools have at least one toilet unit comprising of separate urinals for boys and girls. The goal is to have two units, one each for boys and girls in schools by March 2007.

RSMs Monitor Water Quality, East Midnapore District

When blocks in the district were saturated with establishing toilets RSMs offered an additional service, namely to test water samples for bacteriological, arsenic and fluoride contamination. The RSMs charged Rs. 275, forming part of a network of water quality testing laboratories. The initial two years of this venture was supported by UNICEF. Read [more](#).

Tamil Nadu

Training Cement Fabricators to Substitute RSMs, Tiruchirappalli District (from [S. Damodaran](#), *WaterPartners International India Office, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu*)

[Gramalaya](#) encouraged local cement fabricators to produce their own quality construction material, giving them training and orientation on low cost toilet techniques. The concept has taken off and anyone can purchase toilet construction materials within a radius of 10 kilometers in three blocks of the district. The cement fabricators also arrange masons for construction and give credit for local NGOs, panchayats, and women's SHGs thereby ensuring sustainability.

District Supply and Marketing Society instead of RSMs (from [Ramya Gopalan](#), *Research Associate*)

[DSMS](#), the marketing wing of District Rural Development Agency, since already engaged in marketing of Rural Products DSMS undertook running of RSM's at two places one at Pudukkottai and another at Aranthangi districts. DSMS arranges to procure sanitation materials in bulk and distribute to rural people with a small margin. So far, DSMS has distributed sanitary materials worth of more than 3.00 Lakhs.

Uttar Pradesh

RSMs Promoting Force Lift Hand Pumps, Aligarh (from [Gyanendra Mishra](#), *UDAAN Society, Aligarh*)

Here RSMs are used to maintain supply chain and also promote force lift hand pumps (a modified handpump used to lift water up to 40 feet without electricity). This technology is beneficial in providing water supply to school toilets thereby enhancing the utility of the school and Anganwadi toilets. Apart from this, using RSMs for supply of hollow bricks, smokeless chulhas, as water-testing labs and as a place to train masons, village motivators, etc is also being planned.

International

Africa

Pumps Linked to Children's Merry – Go – Rounds (from [Pankaj Kumar S](#), *UN, New Delhi*)

Playpumps are a similar innovation, which RSMs could fabricate, install and maintain. These systems are innovative, sustainable, patented water pumps powered by children at play. Installed near schools, the system doubles as a water pump and a merry-go-round for children. While children have fun spinning on the Play Pump merry-go-round, clean water is pumped from underground into a 2,500-liter tank, standing seven meters above the ground. See [Details](#).

Related Resources

Recommended Organizations

Rural Sanitary Marts/Production Centres (from [Prmod Sharma](#), *Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Ahmedabad*; [Debasish De](#), *New Delhi* and [Pankaj Kumar S](#), *UN, New Delhi*)

Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC), Department of Drinking Water Supply (DDWS), Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)

http://ddws.nic.in/tsc-nic/html/rural_sani_marts.htm

A strategy of TSC to meet sanitary ware and services demand, functioning as a hub for providing Alternative Delivery Mechanism in terms of low cost sanitary items and services

UNICEF, New Delhi (from [Pramod Sharma](#), Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Ahmedabad; [Pankaj Kumar S](#), UN, New Delhi and [Nitya Jacob](#), Writeshop Infotech Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi)

73 Lodi Estate, New Delhi 110 003, Tel.: +91-11-24690401/24691410; Fax: 91 11 24627521/24691410; newdelhi@unicef.org

<http://www.unicef.org/india/wes.html>

Recommended for experiences in setting up Rural Sanitary Marts (RSMs) and initiatives supported with regard to additional services RSMs could perform in rural areas

The Sanitation Project, The Centre of Science for Villages (from [Ramit Basu](#), UNDP, New Delhi and [H.S. Rana](#), District Rural Development Agency, Chamba, Himachal Pradesh)

<http://wdatech.free.fr/CSVTECH/csvsanitation.htm>

Enabled setting up the Rural Low Cost Sanitation Park and other successive interventions aimed at disseminating low cost and low water-requiring sanitation technologies

Gramalaya, Tamil Nadu (from [S. Damodaran](#), WaterPartners International India Office, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu)

12, 4th Cross, Thillainagar West, Tiruchirappalli 620 018, Tamil Nadu; Mobile: 91 9443161263; Fax: 91 431 4021563/4220263; gramalaya@hotmail.com

<http://www.gramalaya.org/toilettechnology.html>

Organized local cement fabricators and encouraged them to set up production centres of sanitary materials in different locations the district, and also constructed model toilets

District Supply and Marketing Society (DSMS) (from [Ramya Gopalan](#), Research Associate)

Tamil Nadu Rural Bazaar, Directorate of Rural Development, Panagal Building, Saidapet, Chennai 600 015, Tamil Nadu; Tel.: 91 44 24321405; ruralbazar@tn.nic.in, drd@tn.nic.in

<http://www.ruralbazar.tn.gov.in/dsms.asp>

DSMS has the additional responsibility of functioning as an RSM providing sanitary materials and other services in Pudukottai and Aranthangi Districts in Tamil Nadu

Playpumps International, South Africa (from [Pankaj Kumar S](#), UN, New Delhi)

24 Homestead Road, Rivonia 2128, Johannesburg, South Africa; Tel.: 27 (0)11 807 4280/1; Fax: 27 (0)11 803 1639; info@playpumps.org

<http://www.playpumps.org>

Introduced the PlayPumps concept which helps improve the lives of children and their families by providing easy access to clean drinking water and enhancing public health

Recommended Documentation

Low-Cost Toilets Put Bengal on Path to Total Sanitation (from [Nitya Jacob](#), Writeshop Infotech Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi)

Nitya Jacob, November 2006

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/environment/cr/res26040701.doc> (Size: 37.5 KB)

Article contains information on how Rural Sanitary Marts work, in the blocks of East Medinipur district and their continued efforts after the block was saturated with toilets.

From [Ramya Gopalan](#), Research Associate

Success in Rural Sanitation

Shipra Saxena, India Together, July 2003

<http://www.indiatogether.org/2003/jul/hlt-sanitmart.htm>

Accounts Midnapore's strides in implementing a government and UNICEF sponsored rural sanitation scheme, in West Bengal involving the setting up of Rural Sanitary Marts

Rural Sanitation

Chapter 27, Centrally Sponsored Rural Sanitation Programme (CRSP), MoRD

<http://rural.nic.in/book00-01/ch-27.pdf> (Size: 162 KB)

Discusses the use of sanitary marts to encourage households to buy facilities and to stress on software namely IEC, development of backup services through the marts

Sanitary Marts To Be Set Up

The Hindu, Tamil Nadu News, Pudukottai District, Wednesday, 28 April 2004

<http://www.hindu.com/2004/04/28/stories/2004042804710300.htm>

Details plans of the district administration to establish production centre-cum-sanitary marts initially in eight out of 13 blocks in the district at the rate of one per each block

Rural Sanitary Mart

District Supply and Marketing Society, Tamil Nadu Rural Bazaar

http://www.ruralbazar.tn.gov.in/dsms_act_Rural.asp

Provides details on the DSMS being already engaged in marketing of Rural Products, also undertook running of RSM's at two places one at Pudukkottai and another at Aranthangi.

Recommended Upcoming Event

Lok Awas Yatra (from [Mona Chhabra Anand](#), *Development Alternatives, New Delhi*)

Contact: Mona Chhabra Anand, Sustainable Habitats, Development Alternatives, B-32, Tara Crescent, Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi 110016; Tel.: 91 11 26800398

Exposure trip on habitat development with 6-7 halts across the country over 9 months, includes house construction, access to watsan and habitat based enterprises like RSMs

Responses in Full

[Ramit Basu](#), UNDP, New Delhi

The very first example which comes to my mind is the Rural Low Cost sanitation park and successive interventions by the Building and Sanitation division of the Centre of Science for Villages, Wardha, Maharashtra. With support from UNICEF, they have been able to disseminate low cost and low water-requiring sanitation and housing technologies to remote areas in Maharashtra, Gujarat (post earthquake) and Chhattisgarh. They have also developed innovative financing mechanisms for village people. For further details, see following web link:

<http://wdatech.free.fr/WDACSV.HTM>

[Pramod Sharma](#), Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Ahmedabad

A successful example of RSM was done in the pilot phase of UNICEF assisted project in Alwar, Rajasthan. The basic strategy adopted was to recruit a person to work for promotion of sanitation. This person was given a small support for infrastructure at a place near Rajgarh. The modus operandi, which was successfully used by him, was to take bulk orders from villages through personal contact for construction of toilets for Below Poverty Line families and then carry the material along with skilled manpower to the construction sites as a mobile team. Most of the construction activities like construction of squatting platforms and their curing was done on site. As this person had prior orders, he was able to lower his costs.

Such mobile units are also being tried by an entrepreneur with support of district TSC team in Tonk district of Rajasthan. Most of these people are in construction business and have diversified to meet the demands created by TSC.

Pankaj Kumar S, UNDP, New Delhi

I agree with you about the path that needs to be taken to make Rural Sanitary Marts sustainable. A number of RSMs which I saw as part of an evaluation team of the Child Environment Programme of UNICEF (along with Pramela Gupta and others) faced similar problems. We covered a number of villages in 4 States – Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. What we saw in various villages was:

1. RSMs were promoted as “show-pieces” by the implementing NGOs, and were forced to stock only sanitation material.

In villages where a sanitation programme was nearing completion, the demand of such material had reached a plateau. One particular RSM in Betul district, which I visited, had started stocking detergents, soaps, plastic pots, etc. and was in the way to increasing his product list to household grocery items. However, he shared this information reluctantly, as he had been given the message that it was “wrong” to keep things other than sanitary material in an RSM.

2. RSMs were relegated to the function of stocking and selling sanitary material, but were not linked to providing sanitary services or training in construction, plumbing, maintenance of sanitary infrastructure.

Getting services for construction, plumbing, maintenance appeared to be a major lacuna in most village we studied. Simple things like siting of soak pits often requires technical support. In one village in Balarampur district, a major row had erupted between two neighbours as the water from the soak pit of one household was leaking into the mud wall of a neighbour’s house.

In Rajasthan, in Tonk district, the size of the soak pit was so small (1 feet X 1 feet X 1 feet) that village people felt that it would get filled up in a couple of days, and therefore refused to use it.

In Orissa, in Puri district, villagers related how in the times of flood, soak pits got flooded and excreta from these soak pit started floating and spreading to other parts of the village.

The above are small technical aspects, for which support could be easily made available if RSMs were looked at as Resource Centres for rural water and sanitation, rather than as shops to sell sanitary material.

3. Lack of integration between School Sanitation and Hygiene Education and RSMs

In most village schools we visited, lack of toilet facilities for girls was a major impediment in girls attending school. The major reason given by teachers for lack of using these toilets was the lack of water availability for keeping the toilets clean.

However, force-lift pumps are a useful innovation, as for every 1 litre of water that is pumped out of the school handpump, about 300 ml is pumped into the overhead school tank. Again this is an innovation that is ripe for support and expansion by the RSM.

A similar innovation, which RSMs could fabricate, install and maintain in schools is called Playpumps (pumps linked to children's merry-go-rounds) and has been used in Africa.

The website promoting the same says, "The Play Pump systems are innovative, sustainable, patented water pumps powered by children at play. Installed near schools, the Play Pump system doubles as a water pump and a merry-go-round for children.....While children have fun spinning on the Play Pump merry-go-round, clean water is pumped from underground into a 2,500-liter tank, standing seven meters above the ground."

For further details, please see :

<http://www.playpumps.org/>

Debasish De, New Delhi

It is true that now-a-days, RSM has been given the shape of stocking sanitary hardware. Even large non government organisations and voluntary organisations like Ramakrishna Mission, SEWA, and Seva Mandir have taken good efforts for helping respective Gram Panchayats for implementation of the programme along with Panchayat members and Block Development Officers.

Still, after visiting rural areas along the length and breadth of India, I feel that Rural Sanitary Mart do not make any mark. Total Sanitation campaign (TSC) was introduced to enhance information, education and communication activities for increasing awareness among rural population and generation of demand for sanitary facilities. RSMs are taken as resource centres for providing hardware and software (technology and awareness) support for the programme. One RSM typically covers a population of 25,000 and a successful RSM can sell 1500 - 2000 pans annually.

The rural population lacks basic knowledge of construction, maintenance and usage of low cost units in rural areas. It was thought that these RSMs would be an outlet where both the materials required for the construction of sanitary facilities as well as guidance for the most technologically and financially suitable options are provided. It would also provide the necessary support in the rural areas to make this programme a sustainable one. But, in the present scenario, RSMs are not doing this. Some enterprising RSMs sell drinking water purifiers for domestic use in arsenic prone areas. Some rural youth are given necessary training to construct RSM units in rural areas and also to help local people for installing the same.

I have seen that in rural Jharkhand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Haryana, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal and north-eastern states, RSMs are not functioning well, and some are even closed. Broken pans and sanitary materials were scattered everywhere and piles of sanitary pans stocked up. It is not the way we thought off. We need to help the rural organisations to implement the programme to the extent.

Mona Chhabra Anand, Development Alternatives, New Delhi

This entire discussion on making rural sanitary marts more efficient is indeed impressive, enriched by the practical experiences.

I wish to request members from some more additional inputs.

I am a part of the core team at Development Alternatives that manages the basin-South Asia Regional Knowledge Platform on sustainable habitats. In our search for "practical solutions" for habitat development, we are organizing a "Lok Awas Yatra " an exposure trip on habitat development with about 6 to 7 halts across the country over 9 months. The models would not only include house construction but also access to water, sanitation, domestic energy and power. In addition, habitat based enterprises such as building material production centres, sanitary marts, barefoot engineering support and other such institutions would be examined on ground for the learnings they provide. Targeting Panchayati Raj Institutions, government functionaries and CBOs, the yatra will cover different models such as owner driven, credit based, Panchayat based and enterprise based, to name a few, in different geographical and socio-economic contexts.

Although, the discussion so far has pointed to some interesting experiences, we would be grateful if members could help us identify projects / initiatives on RSMs around the country, that can provide the learnings we intend to facilitate participants of the Yatra to learn. We would appreciate any other comments or suggestions too.

Looking forward to your help.

H.S. Rana, District Rural Development Agency, Chamba, Himachal Pradesh

My agency works with the District Rural Development Agency in implementing the project namely, Total Sanitation Campaign in my district. We also have received Rs 35 lakhs for setting up the Rural Sanitation Mart (RSM) in the district. Prior to taking up this activity, I tried to collect some practical and real experiences from districts which had already implemented this program in Himachal, Punjab and Haryana. I visited Sirmour district of Himachal where a unit for production of toilet pans was established under Total Sanitation Campaign in 1999. I also paid a short visit to one block in Karnal district in Haryana to get some feed-back on the subject. After visiting these two places, I decided to write back to the Ministry of Rural Development for re-appropriation of funds allocated under this head, because I saw that setting up of these RSM units created many problems for the executing agencies.

In Sirmour, the district authorities had initially started set up the RSM unit and started running it by employing two technicians. These were given the responsibility of importing the most appropriate technology for making the pans and to make their unit sustainable by selling such pans to local communities on profit, after meeting all recurring and operating costs. But this philosophical idea could not click and production cost was not within desired limits. As a result the pans could not be sold at the desired rates and could not compete with the market both on cost and quality parameters. As a result, they could not produce the pans for which the RSM was established and it finally closed down after three years. The units at Karnal also met the same fate and now these units have been handed over to private entrepreneurs who are producing cement blocks there.

In Chamba district, we are using this money as a revolving fund for arranging for different varieties of low cost, low weight, unbreakable and fire-proof toilet pans, based on the demand for the same by village people. Since there are a large number of pan manufacturers engaged in production of low cost and light weight but quality products in different parts of country, we felt we should access these products, rather than invest in production, without experience in entrepreneurship, marketing and many other unfavourable factors in the countryside. Using the fund for RSM as a revolving fund for arranging the best quality products on a low price was the best decision that I took for my district.

Another option for using these funds in a most fruitful manner is to set up technology-parks on the lines of Wardha district of Maharashtra. In Dattapur in Wardha district, the Centre of Science for Villages has set up a technology demonstration park. They have also set up similar parks in different states of India recently. Recently, I visited Wardha and requested them to set up this kind of park in my district also. This Technology park carried more than 10 low cost options for individual toilets (including sub-structure & super structure), more than 5 options for Anganwadi and School toilets and many options for roof-rain water structures, vermi-compost pits and other kitchen waste-water managements systems. It is really worth-while setting up such parks in rural districts of India. The agency charges 5 to 7 lakhs (depending on the size of land) for setting up such technology parks.

Members can suggest that such parks can be set up in two to three districts in each state for larger benefit of the rural masses and in the interest of successful implementation of Total Sanitation Campaign in our country.

Nitya Jacob, Writeshop Infotech Private Limited, New Delhi

I had visited East Medinipur (Nandigram to be precise) in November 2006 and seen how the Rama Krishna Mission has promoted the Total Sanitation Campaign in the district. I am giving in the link below an article written for UNICEF based on the visit which contains some information on how RSMs work and what they have switched to doing once the block has been saturated with toilets.

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/environment/cr/res26040701.doc> (Size: 37.5 KB)

S. Damodaran, WaterPartners International India Office, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu

Many thanks for the responses received on the query on rural sanitary marts.

Setting up of RSMs varies from state to states under the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC). In Tiruchirappalli District of Tamil Nadu, NGOs are encouraged to set up RSMs in different Blocks where they are working. Here, RSMs are production cum training centres, where construction materials for low-cost toilets are available. People can access to RSMs for purchasing different construction material, including cement hollow blocks, leach-pit concrete slab covers, toilet pans etc.

Gramalaya, an NGO in Tiruchirappalli District, organised the local cement fabricators and encouraged them to commence production centres in different locations the district. Gramalaya did not want to sell the production material on its own, but encouraged and trained local cement fabricators to produce their own quality construction material. These cement fabricators were provided training and orientation on low cost toilet techniques during the fabricators' meet at Tiruchirappalli. The concept has taken off and now, anyone can purchase toilet construction

materials within a radius of 10 kilometers in three blocks of the district. Cement fabricators not only produce toilet construction material but also arrange masons for construction and give credit for local NGOs, panchayats, and women's self-help groups. Instead of setting up a new RSM unit in one place, here cement fabricators have been given a chance to produce these material and thereby ensure a sustainable supply of construction materials.

One can see the low cost toilet pans, ceramic and plastic toilet pans, hollow blocks, doors including panel doors, cement rings, pre-cast slabs, squatting slabs etc. in the production centres.

With regard to setting up of technology park on different toilet type designs, Gramalaya first constructed 22 model toilets in the Centre for Toilet Technology and Training. This was replicated in Tiruchi District Collector's office (DRDA campus) and many other parts of Tamil Nadu. The cost of the toilet parks range from between Rs.2 lakhs to 4 lakhs, depending on the layout and the information centre, etc..

The following links will provide more details in this regard.

<http://www.gramalaya.org/toilettechnology.html>

[Gyanendra Mishra](#), UDAAN Society, Aligarh

Heartiest congratulations for raising the issue of RSMs which are a useful tool for the successful implementation of Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) and for providing employment opportunities for the rural masses. You are right in your approach that RSM should not only be a place of supply of sanitary material, and that the location and energy of RSMs can be used on diversified fronts, if utilized properly.

In this regard, Aligarh is a place you will be pleased to look at to understand the strategy, which can be adopted for successful TSC implementation. Here RSMs are used not only to maintain supply chain but also for the promotion of force lift hand pumps (a modified handpump used to lift water up to 40 feet without electricity). This technology is beneficial in providing water supply to school toilets thereby enhancing the utility of the school and Anganwadi toilets. Being an engineer by profession, you will best understand the advantages of providing water supply in school toilets. Apart from this, we are also planning to utilize RSMs for supply of hollow bricks, smokeless chulhas, as water-testing labs and as a place to train masons, village motivators and many others who play an important role in TSC at district level.

Please contact us for more details about force lift hand pumps and other new initiatives taken here.

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Water Community in India at se-wes@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject heading "Re: [se-watr] Query: Making Rural Sanitary Marts Viable and More Effective- Experiences, Examples.. Additional Reply"

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