TOILETS FOR PEACE IN URBAN SLUMS OF INDIA

Project proposal by Aarti Reddy, University of Richmond, Class of 2015

Micro-franchise program to offer slum dwellers access to basic toilet services on a sustainable basis

Background: “Sanitation is more important than independence” – Mahatma Gandhi
Conflict and peace are often associated with war-torn areas. Rarely do we realize the extent to which conflicts affect lives in visibly stable and growing economies like India. Conflict, due to lack of access to a basic necessity such as toilets, may sound bizarre. However, in the urban slums of India, where one toilet is shared by over 1400 people, getting a few minutes of relief at a clean toilet can be the foundation for “peace of mind” for millions of people. Toilets govern aspects such as dignity, self esteem, personal hygiene and public health that can prevent urban conflicts.

Sanitation, including access to toilets, is one of the several social challenges that the Indian government and NGOs are struggling to find sustainable solutions for. It is estimated that over 1.5 million people, about 40% of the population of Pune City, India, live in slums with very little access to public utilities and sanitation facilities. The local public bodies such as Slum Boards, Housing Authorities, City Development Authorities and Municipal Corporations which are responsible for building and maintaining toilets in slums can barely cope with the huge needs.

Hence, market-based solutions are vital for tackling such social challenges on a massive scale. Micro-franchising is an emerging development tool that leverages the basic concepts of traditional franchising to create opportunities for the poor to own micro-businesses that offer goods and services at an affordable price within their communities.

This project will be a milestone in the management of urban conflicts in India. It will pilot the establishment of a Micro-franchise program, to offer slum dwellers access to basic toilet services on a sustainable basis. Based on the success of this pilot project, the model will be replicated in several cities of India.

Overview of the Project “TOILETS FOR PEACE IN URBAN SLUMS OF INDIA”:

Who: With 10 “pay for use” toilet blocks in the pilot project and an estimated 200 users per block, a total of 2000 slum dwellers are expected to benefit. 5 of these toilet blocks will be exclusively for women.

Why: To promote peace, public health and community development - by securing basic sanitation needs as a basis for breaking poverty cycles, as well as safety for girls and women during the vulnerable periods of attending to “nature’s call”.

Where: High density locations where land (required to build regular public toilets) is limited - in the urban slums of Pune, India (specific sites to be identified in cooperation with 3S – Shramik, the implementation partner and local NGOs).

How: Micro-franchisees will operate the toilet blocks on a commercially sustainable basis from the user fees expected to be USD 3 per family per month. The maintenance and cleaning will be taken care of jointly by the micro-franchisee and 3S - Shramik in the interest of each one’s enterprise, which is the key to sustainability. 3S - Shramik will clear toilet waste regularly, for a fee of USD 20 per month from the micro-franchisee, using their existing system of waste evacuation tankers.

The Model:
The pilot project will result in a scalable and commercially sustainable model to provide slum dwellers access to toilets at an affordable cost. The long-term sustainability of the model is based on a 3-way support system. (Pictorial representation is provided in Annex 1 on the Budget Sheet):

1. **3S-Shramik** (Social Enterprise): will provide organizational expertise and infrastructural support for installation of toilets and training for micro-franchisees. In the interest of each one’s enterprise (key to commercial sustainability), 3S-Shramik and the micro-franchisee will jointly maintain the toilets. 3S-Shramik has indicated that their toilet waste evacuation tankers will clear the waste regularly and clean the cabins with high pressure systems for a fee of USD 20.0 per month from the micro-franchisee, which can be covered from the toilet user fees collected. 3S-Shramik will also lead future initiatives to adapt the latest developments in low cost toilets to Indian slums and thus reduce micro-franchisee’s and users’ costs. ([http://xrunners.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/brochure_xr_oct2011_2.pdf](http://xrunners.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/brochure_xr_oct2011_2.pdf))

2. **NGOs** e.g. Ecosan Services Foundation ([www.ecosanservices.org](http://www.ecosanservices.org)), SPARC ([www.sparcindia.org](http://www.sparcindia.org)) etc.: already working in the potential areas will provide a good understanding of community dynamics and rapport with residents & stakeholders. Their role includes awareness creation and recycling toilet waste into fertilizer and biogas etc.

3. **Donor/Micro-finance organizations (“Projects for Peace”, in this case)**: to provide funding for: costs of building the toilets; training micro-franchisees; awareness creation regarding need for sanitation and disease prevention

Project tasks:
- Generating awareness amongst the slum dwellers and other stakeholders about the importance of toilets in disease prevention, public health safety and developing acceptance for “pay for use” toilets through:
  - Partnerships with public agencies and NGOs.
Use of the available print, digital resources and other creative methods
- Quick survey of Pune City slums to identify 10 strategic locations to implement the project.
- Prepare a Project Profile in Marathi language to attract interest from at least 30 potential micro-entrepreneurs.
- Develop the technical and business training program for the Micro-franchisees in cooperation with 3S – Shramik.
- In cooperation with local community leaders and NGOs chose 10 micro-franchisees as 3S – Shramik’s partners.
- Train the 10 chosen micro-franchisees using the developed technical and business training program.
- Evaluate the implementation experiences of the pilot project and modify the model to meet the practical requirements of the communities.
- Create project proposals to attract future donor funds for: awareness & initial support for micro-franchisees.
- Develop expansion strategy for the Micro-franchise program to replicate success of the model in other Indian cities.

Challenges and issues:
- Determining an appropriate rate to charge the users of toilets, such that it is:
  ✓ High enough to cover the maintenance, human resource costs and provide incentive for the micro-franchisee: Due to increasing employment opportunities in urban India, slum dwellers can afford small payments to use conveniently located toilets and save time (rather than walk long distances to find scarce open spaces). 3S-Shramik is already collecting monthly fees up to USD 6 for a family of 5, in slums of New Delhi. Further, Asian Development Bank Report (http://www.adb.org/documents/books/water_for_all_series/Indian-sanitation/Indian-sanitation.pdf) (pg.13) indicates that even poor households are willing to pay for sanitation. The following article indicates (pg.3) (http://www.wsscc.org/sites/default/files/publications/wsup_topicbrieficommunalpublictoilets_2011.pdf) the ‘pay per use’ model works in India.
  ✓ Low enough to generate sufficient demand and ensure regular usage.
- Difficulties in convincing the slum dwellers to change their habits of defecating in the open.
- Sustainability of the awareness creation program.

When: 21st May 2012 to 11th August 2012 (12 weeks) - Implementation Plan
- Preparatory tasks (During March-April 2012): With the assistance of 3S - Shramik and NGOs identify the specific slums and prepare a draft project profile to raise interest amongst potential micro-franchisees. Use the capacities of the NGOs to initiate the awareness creation activities and raise interest amongst slum dwellers for the “pay for use” toilets. Evaluate the waste recycling options and develop a long term strategy.
- Week 1: Familiarize with 3S - Shramik and NGOs. Visit the chosen locations for the Micro-franchising Program. Discuss and adjust the proposed model to accommodate practical issues.
- Week 2: Survey the identified areas with the partner NGOs and screen the potential micro-franchisee applicants to narrow down to 10 that 3S - Shramik will partner with.
- Week 3: Determine suitable locations for toilets in each chosen area and develop the specifics of the set up.
- Week 4: Finalize the awareness strategy for each location and begin activities with staff of the NGO.
- Week 5: Design a training program with 3S - Shramik staff for the micro-franchisees covering the set-up, operation & maintenance of toilets (financial management, hygiene and waste management). Awareness activities continue.
- Week 6: Train the 10 micro-franchisees using technical and business training program developed in week 5.
- Week 7: Physical set up and handover of toilet facilities. Inauguration event as an awareness creation tool for the communities. Technical support and familiarization with waste management process for micro-franchisee.
- Week 8 - 9: Initiate monitoring & evaluation including follow up on user response, revenue, maintenance etc.
- Week 10 - 12: Modify the proposed model. Prepare project proposal & presentation material for future use to attract funding from micro-finance organizations for: capital costs of the finalized micro-franchise model; and donors for awareness creation. Discuss and develop long term strategy for replication of model in other cities.

Assessment of the effectiveness of the project: The effectiveness of the project will be assessed by constant monitoring of the number of the slum dwellers using the toilets and the generation of sufficient income to sustain the micro-franchise operation covering the capital, maintenance and human resource costs.

Prospects of sustaining the project and creating future impact: The 3-way cooperation between Social Enterprise, NGOs and Micro-finance organizations / Donors secures the sustainable development of a Micro-franchisee Model to offer affordable sanitation services to urban slum dwellers. Further, by design, this model, when pilot tested and fine-tuned, will enable scalability by 3S – Shramik and replication by others all over India.

Project’s connection to the furtherance of “peace”: With the increasing conflicts for basic resources such as water and sanitation facilities, achieving peace in the urban slums of India is becoming a distant dream. This project will pilot a sustainable model of providing access to toilets in urban slums, as a first step towards resolving conflicts for day-to-day needs and furtherance of possibilities for peace and communal harmony.