

## TNUSSP PRACTICE BRIEF #3

# BREAKING THE TABOO ON SANITATION: A BEHAVIOUR CHANGE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY



## Creating a Supportive

Currently, a range of behaviour deficits exist along the full cycle of sanitation — at the stages of capture, containment, emptying, transport and reuse/disposal. However, communication strategies in the sanitation sector have been largely limited to promoting hygiene behaviours such as handwashing or stopping open defecation by promoting the use of toilets. While these efforts are important, there are several other behaviour modifications along the full cycle of sanitation that need similar, if not more attention. These include people defecating in the open despite having toilets at home, infrequent de-sludging, indiscriminate disposal of septage, and use of untreated fecal sludge in agriculture.

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Interlinked with these behaviours are deficits in the full cycle of sanitation, such as *poorly constructed toilets and septic tanks, limited coverage of sewerage or underground drainage (UGD), unregulated de-sludging operations, lack of information on treatment, inadequate treatment facilities* and so on, which are barriers to achieving the vision of total sanitation in Tamil Nadu.

TNUSSP seeks to address these multiple behaviour deficits through diverse approaches and communication strategies aimed at different stakeholders across the sanitation value chain. The BCC strategy, consisting of campaigns, events and materials, forms an important part of the 'Muzhu Sugadharam' agenda.

## CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO BEHAVIOUR CHANGE IN SANITATION

There are several taboos associated with the issue of sanitation, deeply rooted in cultural and social norms:

1. Sanitation and/or septage is "impure" and "dirty"
2. Fecal waste stays underground and is therefore, "out of sight". Until there is a leak or visible exfiltration, sanitation remains "out of mind", as well
3. Lack of knowledge on sanitation, which includes not knowing what to do with fecal waste

These perceptions and the stigma associated with sanitation negates any meaningful gains made across the full cycle of sanitation. Therefore, any BCC campaign on sanitation must

be geared towards addressing these taboos, in a segmented and targeted manner for specific stakeholders, across the sanitation value chain.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE BCC STRATEGY

Based on the understanding of barriers, attitudes, and deficits, the TNUSSP BCC strategy has aimed to put in place a set of campaigns and communication initiatives. The objectives that guides these activities are:

1. Sanitation has to be brought out of the closet and a supportive environment must be created to get rid of the taboo and stigma associated with the idea of sanitation
2. Consumers must have agency and an increased sense of ownership and responsibility towards the larger sanitation outcomes in their home, neighbourhood, city, district and state
3. Institutions such as Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), should be strengthened to recognise and embrace the full cycle of sanitation and septage management as the new mantra

## WHY BCC AND NOT IEC?

The BCC strategy of TNUSSP made a departure from the conventional Information, Education and Communication (IEC) approaches, which focus on providing information for behaviour change without actually creating the supportive environment needed to facilitate this. Based on key learnings from global IEC campaigns and the objectives of the Muzhu Sugadharam campaign, the BCC strategy of TNUSSP was designed to focus on effecting changes in existing behaviour by creating this supportive environment.

## DESIGNING THE BCC STRATEGY

The BCC strategy has been conceptualised to include segmentation and targeting of those who tend to embrace changes and newness (innovators and early adopters), evoke the benefits of new behaviour and the cost of current unsanitary practices, as well as promote a positive, aspirational positioning to evoke adoption of the 'new way'. The strategy proposes:

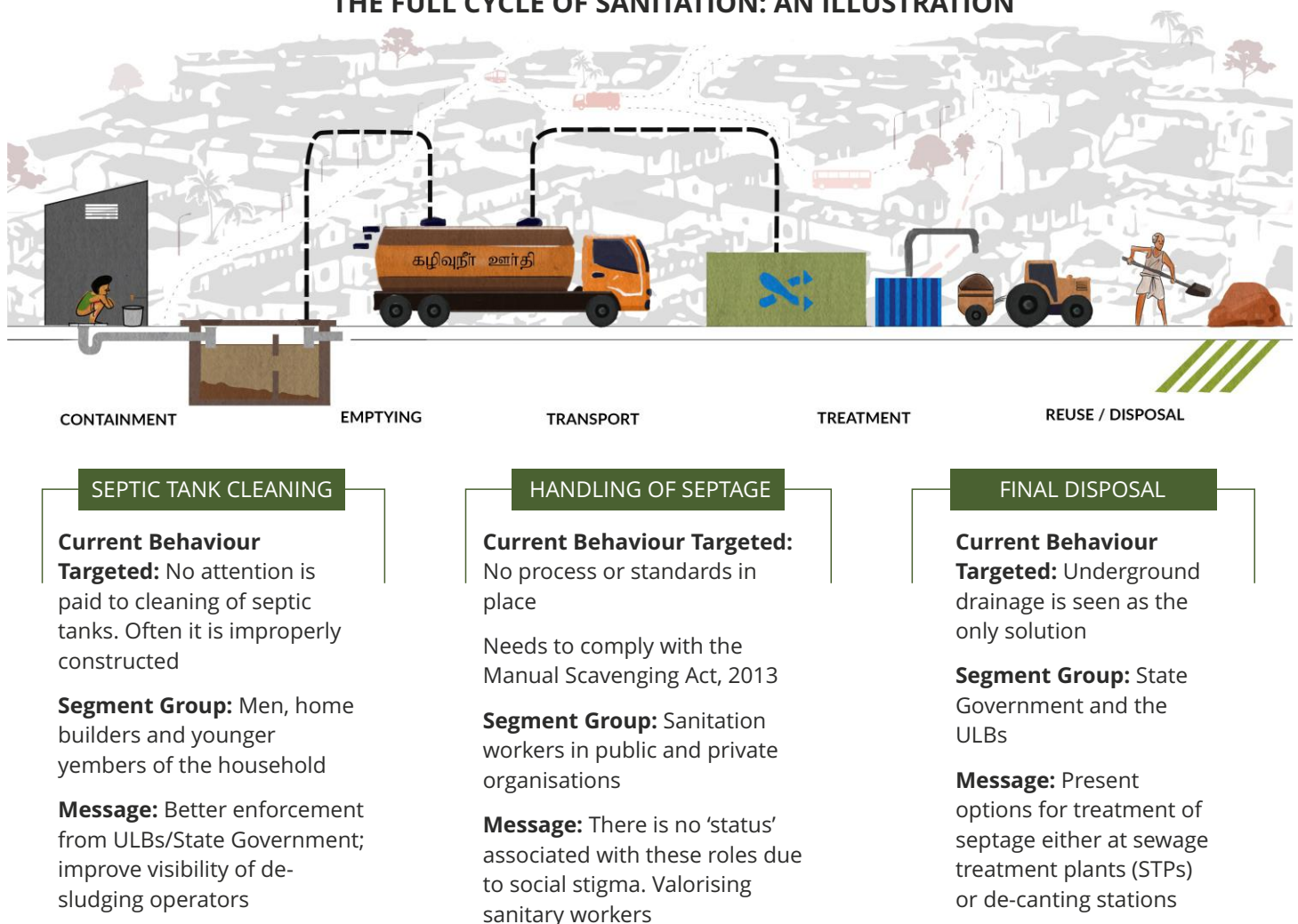
- **An open, positive and fun approach** to communicate messages of good sanitation practices. This includes highlighting the issue of sanitation and valourising it. This method is quite contrary to other BCC methods, often used in

sanitation, such as shaming, ascription to social status and the use of fear-mongering.

- **Segmenting and targeting of different stakeholders**, by identifying the deficits along the full cycle of sanitation, current behaviours that need modification, the target audience and the messages.
- **Adopting a systematic approach** that includes material development, pre-testing, implementation and impact assessment.

An illustration of the segmentation of behaviour changes needed to address deficits across the full cycle of sanitation is represented below.

### SEGMENTATION OF DEFICITS AND CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR NEEDED ACROSS THE FULL CYCLE OF SANITATION: AN ILLUSTRATION



Similarly, the communication campaign targets key stakeholders across the sanitation value chain by identifying barriers that slowed the achievement of behaviour change objectives (*Table 1*).

TABLE 1: TARGET AUDIENCES, BARRIERS AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE OBJECTIVES		
TARGET GROUP	BARRIERS TO CHANGE	OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Masons</li> <li>• Builders</li> <li>• Contractors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of any certification process or Professional Code of Standards</li> <li>• The household (client) either accepts whatever is done unquestioningly or dictates the specifications needed regardless of the mason's judgement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construct sanitary toilets</li> <li>• Explain to the households (clients) what exactly they have built</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sludge Operators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Money / funds / owners' mindset / habit</li> <li>• No designated places to dump, no dis-/incentives to not dump indiscriminately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a positive lexicon (e.g. 'tank recharge' instead of 'sludge removal')</li> <li>• Wear protective gear while handling the material</li> <li>• 'Do not dump anywhere or everywhere'</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanitary Workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caste-driven mindset, marginalised, poorly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand better equipment and occupational environment</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontline personnel</li> <li>• Mid-level supervisory</li> <li>• Planners, Engineers and Executive Officers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The topic of septage is less understood and discussed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valourise sanitary work and workers</li> <li>• Start thinking about septage management (apart from sewerage/UGD)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal Commissioner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of knowledge and credible demonstration of septage management approaches.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a strong case and story for septage management</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanitary Inspectors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overworked</li> <li>• Lack of priority to septage management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repositioning them from 'regulator' to 'facilitator'</li> </ul>

Detailed table can be accessed from the BCC strategy available on the TNUSSP website.

## MUZHU SUGADHARAM LOGO

The Muzhu Sugadharam campaign logo has been developed with a focus on enhancing community engagement and working to embrace cultural connections through rich Tamil symbols and lexicons. In order to connect with the popular 'Kolam' art form, prominent in the State, the logo is based on a specific 'Kolam' design. This abstract visual symbolised the full cycle of sanitation, with the petals representing the different stages within it.





## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BCC STRATEGY

The BCC approach has proposed two separate campaigns, known as umbrella and specific campaigns, which are the cornerstones to creating a supportive environment for behaviour change and generate widespread impact.

### UMBRELLA CAMPAIGNS:

The umbrella campaigns are broad and address overarching issues like propagating septage management as a viable alternative to sewerage-based solutions, and bringing into public consciousness the role of the everyday sanitary worker by valourising his/her role. Examples of these were the films on septage management and the full cycle of sanitation. The former uses two ten-minute films—one directed at senior level decision-makers and UL8 leaders and



*Cross Sectional View of Septic Tank and Soak Pit*

another directed at the general public—to help embrace septage management as the new mantra. These films attempt to portray septage management as a credible option for small and medium towns, and as value-for-money complements to achieve 100% sanitation in larger cities where UGD does not cover the entire city. Humorous characters and popular Tamil film music featured in a six-minute film on the full cycle of sanitation, keeping in line with a positive and fun approach to BCC. The film takes viewers through the entire sanitation chain from containment to reuse, explaining each part of the chain in detail.

The film on full cycle sanitation has been pre-tested with select audiences including households, men, women, college students, masons, desludging operators etc. All the groups have found the film entertaining and informative, especially on links between sanitation and public health.

Another example is the promotion of hygiene and sanitation practices amongst school-going children, meant to create a supportive environment to enable behaviour change.



*School Sanitation Promotion*

Activities included various interactive learning sessions, quiz programmes, competitions, and cultural events in schools situated in the project locations of Periyanaicke-palayam, Narasimhanaicken-palayam and in Tiruchirappalli (also known as Trichy).



*School Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion Programme, Trichy*



*World Toilet Day Celebration 2016, PNP*

## SPECIFIC CAMPAIGNS:

Specific Campaigns are based on smaller, more specific topics within the Umbrella Campaigns. These are designed to complement those activities within the programme that require behaviour modifications. Some of the specific campaigns envisaged by the project are around activities such as:



Promotion of  
Open  
Defecation  
Free Cities



Building  
Regulations for  
Households,  
Contractors and  
the ULBs



Septic Tank  
Construction/  
Upgradation for  
Households, Masons,  
Plumbers etc.



Fecal Sludge  
Treatment  
Plant



Registration  
of Sludge  
Operators



Safety  
Gear for  
Sanitation  
Workers

Other examples of specific campaigns included a six-minute animation film explaining the design standards and regulations, public health impacts and good practices to be followed while constructing safe septic tanks. This film was targeted at masons and building contractors as they are engaged in the construction of septic tanks and need to be sensitised to standard designs and practices. The visuals, in the form of a demo explaining the standardised size and dimensions of the septic tank, helped the masons understand the correct way of building septic tanks and their functions. This film was

also targeted towards ULB officers who are authorised to ensure that the newly built septic tanks follow the standards. The film was screened during the masons' training programmes in Trichy and Coimbatore.

The assessment of the film by the masons suggested that they had not seen an engineering design of a septic tank presented as an animation film before. Similar experiences were shared by ULB officers, who suggested that the film be shown to general audiences including households.

**Reference:** TNUSSP, (2016), Behaviour Change and Communication Strategy, available at <http://tnussp.co.in/strategy-documents/>

**Citation:** This document is to be cited as TNUSSP, 2017, TNUSSP Practice Brief #3, Breaking the Taboo on Sanitation: A Behaviour Change Communication Strategy, TNUSSP, Chennai.

This practice brief is based on the report titled, 'Behaviour Change and Communication Strategy'. This brief has been produced as part of the TNUSSP knowledge product series. All practice briefs and the full reports are available in the resources section of the TNUSSP website.



What is  
TNUSSP?

The Tamil Nadu Urban Sanitation Support Programme (TNUSSP) supports the Government of Tamil Nadu and cities in making improvements along the entire urban sanitation value chain. The TNUSSP is implemented by a consortium of organisations led by the Indian Institute of Human Settlements (IIHS), in association with CDD Society, Gramalaya and Keystone Foundation.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT UNIT: