

Punjab's mass construction drive results in CSCs in every GP



An infallible way of ensuring ODF sustainability in a Gram Panchayat (GP) was to setup community sanitary complexes (CSCs) in public spaces to cater to visitors and the floating population. Acknowledging this, the State Sanitation Committee of the Government of Punjab organised a mass construction drive, calling upon the rural communities to build CSCs and take up Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) initiatives to result in visual cleanliness of their villages.

Organised between November 7 and 28, 2020, the 21-day campaign called '*Chalo Sanjhe Pakhane Banayiye*' was carried out while following covid safety protocols. The awareness generation and mass construction campaign was also intended to strengthen capacity of PRI institutions on the various components of Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (SBM-G) Phase II.

Objectives:

- To reach the community at a mass level and mobilise them to contribute to building a visually clean village
- Enhancing community participation and conveying the importance of sanitation in one's life

- Gram Panchayat or Gram Panchayat Water Sanitation Committee of the village to take charge of construction of CSCs
- Guiding Gram Panchayats about Convergence with the Department of Rural Development and Panchayats and Utilization of 15th Finance Commission Grants.
- Ensuring inclusion of marginalized people, women and other key stakeholders and providing them with access to sanitation
- Provision of bathing facilities along with toilets in every CSC to ensure sustainability
- Providing access to sanitation to the floating population such as labourers who reside in the villages during sowing and harvesting seasons



The process: At the outset, all GPs had to pass a resolution during their Gram Sabha, resolving to construct a community sanitary complex. Thereafter, the GP needed guidance in selecting a suitable location, preferably near the village or the SC habitation area. Further, the GP was required to provide undisputed land, measuring a minimum 125 square meters in area to construct a CSC Block comprising of 2 toilets for men and 2 for women and incorporating accessories for the physically challenged.

As far as funding was concerned, the GP was required to construct the CSC utilizing Rs. 2.10 lakhs from SBM-G funds and Rs. 90,000 from 15th FC grants. Significantly, the GP and its community were given the liberty to select the design and accessories, while ensuring they were structurally and environmentally safe; and the building was to be completed with a stipulated period.

Mass Construction Drive: Commencing on 19th November, World Toilet Day, the construction drive began in full swing with 849 proactive GPs simultaneously beginning the construction of their CSCs in their respective villages with massive community participation.

All the CSCs were inaugurated by the Chairpersons of the Zila Parishad and Block Samiti and other key influencers in the presence of the GP members. Adhering to COVID 19 pandemic norms, small functions were organized at the construction sites, preceded by prayers, and concluding with the distribution of sweets amongst the community. At these events, it was

obvious that the community took ownership of the facility and welcomed the campaign wholeheartedly. Also, to acknowledge the efforts of these proactive panchayats, details of campaign were published in religious newspapers as also on social media pages of the State and the District.

Impact: The campaign had a huge impact on the rural community with each GP wanting to outdo the other and build a better facility. It contributed to a healthy competition. Many GPs invested more than Rs. 3 lakhs to construct a good quality sanitary complex.

What the village leaders said:

Sh. Surjan Singh, Sarpanch, Singhpura, Dera Baba Nanak, Gurdaspur: “Every year, our GP along with the adjoining GPs organizes a religious function for which many visitors come to participate. We were worried about catering to their sanitation needs but this facility is the solution. Our GP is incredibly grateful for this.”

Sarpanch, Village Ajrawar, Block Ghanour, District Patiala: “We are delighted to avail this opportunity to construct a Sanjhe pakhane near our village water works which is now converted into a beautiful park. The facility caters to the villagers who come for morning and evening walks.

Appreciating the efforts of the Gram panchayat, **Sh. Dharminder Sekhon, resident of village Chak Tamkot, District Muktsar,** said that the CSC to be constructed in his village had a unique design, while keeping to the requirements of the village community. “We will invest additional money to complete the construction as it is our village asset.”

“We are grateful to SBM (G) Phase 2 for this excellent facility. It is a step towards cleanliness of our village. Having utilized the empty space in our village where people normally threw garbage, the area has now been cleaned up,” said **Paramjit Kaur, Sarpanch from village Dhanoa, District Hoshiarpur.**

“Finding a suitable location for the construction of a CSC is important. I am happy that my Gram panchayat managed to find one near the Dharmshala and cremation ground. Anyone can use it at any time.” - **Smt. Balwinder Kaur, Sarpanch Saideke, District Faridkot.**

Smt. Saroj Devi, Sarpanch village Sangatpur, District Ropar: “All the households in my village have toilets and their usage is 100%. The CSC caters to the floating population, providing them sanitation access.”

Leading her GP from the front and considered one of the most proactive sarpanches when it came to constructing a CSC in the village, **Smt. Jaspal Kaur, Sarpanch, village Sukha Singh Wala, District Bathinda** appreciated the initiative of providing toilets, particularly to those congregating during religious occasions.

