



The Water and Sanitation Program is an international partnership for improving water and sanitation sector policies, practices, and capacities to serve poor people

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Case Study

Sanitation in Alandur

Community Response Energizes Work

Alandur Municipality in Tamil Nadu is improving sanitation services to slum dwellers through an inclusive approach that benefits all segments of the township. The effort demonstrates how services can be improved where there is strong political commitment coupled with effective communications, transparency, and partnership with community-based organizations. Nearly 8,350 of the 23,000 households that paid for the service are now connected to a sewerage network (2005). These include 500 slum households from a total of 7,000. A large number (43 percent) of slum dwellers have opted and paid for individual sewerage connections.



At the heart of the project's success so far lies a well-planned communications strategy that has evoked a strong and positive community response.

The Challenge

Till 2000, Alandur, a municipality in a residential suburb of Chennai, had no sewerage system—a majority of its households had septic tanks. The sewage, disposed outside the municipal limits, posed immense health hazards as a breeding ground for mosquitoes and diseases, besides affecting groundwater sources.

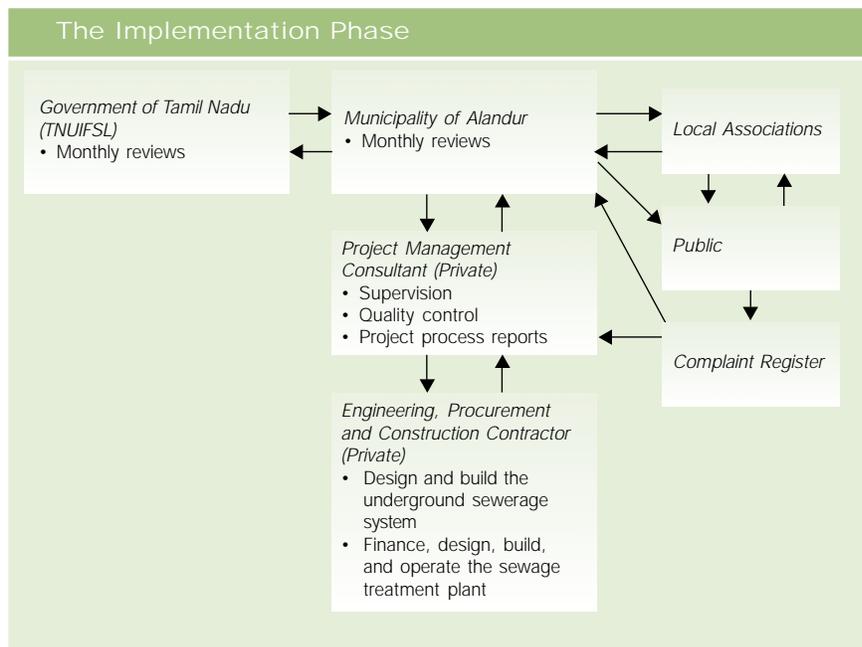
The risks for the town—with a population of 147,000, of which slum dwellers constituted nearly 23 percent—were high. The situation was even worse in the 33 slum areas where almost 7,000 families resided.

The Way Forward

To address these problems, a project to build an underground sewerage system was initiated by the chairman of Alandur Municipality.

At the heart of the project's success so far lies a well-planned communications strategy that has evoked a strong and positive community response. Willingness to pay among almost 97 percent of the people surveyed was another factor that helped it become a multi-stakeholder project involving the municipal authorities, the private sector, community-based organizations and, most significantly, the people themselves. These partnerships manifested themselves in various aspects and stages of the project.

As part of another initiative, care was also taken to ensure that the poorest people, who could not afford private sewerage facilities, were not left out. Provision had been made for community toilets for these segments.



Project Approach and Design

The project, designed to provide essential and basic facilities to all the residents, included:

- Sewerage network consisting of the main sewer line, branch sewer line, and manholes.
- Construction of a sewerage pumping station.
- Laying of pumping mains.
- A sewage treatment plant.
- Low-cost sanitation.

Institutional Arrangements

Private sector participation was considered important for the project. Accordingly, a private partner, the Tamil Nadu Urban Infrastructure Financial Services Limited (TNUIFSL), was nominated to coordinate the investigation and to structure the finances for the project.

The project was structured such that an engineering, procurement, and construction contractor not only designed and built the underground sewerage system, but also financed, designed, built, and operated the sewage treatment plant. An independent project management consultant controlled, supervised, and reported on the project; Alandur Municipality organized the public mobilization and frequently reviewed the project. The Government of Tamil Nadu and TNUIFSL also reviewed the project regularly.

A special committee, which was formed to monitor the operation of the accounts, brought transparency to financial transactions.

Mobilization and Communication

Effective and timely communications to involve key partners and, importantly, the people themselves in the initiative, formed a key part of the project,



especially in the initial phase. Alandur Municipality made a strong and concerted effort in spreading awareness about the project. An election-style campaign was launched—officials and councilors traveled about in auto rickshaws to inform people about the project; local cable TV networks were roped in; pamphlets in English and Tamil were distributed; door-to-door canvassing was done with municipal sanitary workers joining hands with senior municipal staff to spread the message. Active use was made of the local press. In addition, on-site meetings were held with residence associations and the public to explain the scope and benefits of the project. The concerted awareness and mobilization campaign led to formation of associations from which two persons were chosen to work part-time to collect deposits and connection fees from the residents. The money was deposited into an account, and status updates were communicated to the public every month. There was thus full transparency regarding the financial aspects.

Community Toilets: Reaching the Unreached

Even as the underground sewerage project of Alandur rolled on to provide sewerage connections to slum households, many poor households that could not afford to pay for these services were left out of this program.

The Inclusive Approach

To ensure that the poor or the unreached are not excluded from the benefits of this sanitation project, Alandur Municipality has made provision for community toilets.

Where a need is identified, either by slum dwellers or by Alandur Municipality, public toilets are provided by the Municipality on municipal land. When located relatively close to the sewerage network, the toilets are connected to it, otherwise septic tanks are used. The facilities are also provided with water and electricity.

Partnership for the Poor

This initiative involves civic authorities, community-based organizations (CBOs), and the final beneficiaries or slum residents. To manage the public toilets, women's groups have been formed with support from Alandur Municipality. The Municipality trains the CBOs on managing the facility. The CBO establishes a member register, fixes and collects the monthly fees from the households, and maintains the toilets.

Alandur Municipality finances the construction and connection, while the CBO finances the maintenance and repairs. There is no connection fee, but a repair fee of Rs. 200 (US\$4) per connection is collected from each member household. The monthly fees are fixed by the local CBO and the charges range from Rs. 20 (US\$0.44) to Rs. 50 (US\$1.12) per family. Non-members also pay a charge fixed by the CBO, in most cases around Re. 1 (US\$0.02) per visit.

Progress So Far

In 2005, 14 toilets had been constructed to serve poor clusters in the Municipality based on demand articulation by the people.

The communication has continued during the implementation phase as well, in the form of a feedback and grievance redressal system. Members of the public can voice their concerns through a complaint register which is reviewed daily by the project management team and twice a week by the municipal commissioner. People can also contact the Municipality directly if problems arise. This two-way communication seeks to ensure the

project's transparency, accountability, and effectiveness.

Project Costs and Sources of Finance

The total project cost is estimated at Rs. 340 million (US\$8 million).¹ Alandur Municipality has raised funds from the TNUIFSL and the Tamil Nadu Urban Finance Infrastructure Development

¹ US\$1 = Rs. 44.54 (as of December 15, 2006). Conversion rates from www.xe.com. All conversions from Rs. to US\$ are approximate.

Table 1: Means of Finance

Category	Amount in Rs. million (US\$)	% of total
Grants		
TNUIFSL/Gap funding by GoTN	30 (673,552)	9
TUFIDCO	10 (224,517)	3
Loans		
TNUIFSL	40 (898,069)	12
TUFIDCO	160 (3,592,277)	47
User contribution		
Deposits (estimated*)	80 (1,796,138)	23
Interest from deposits	20 (449,035)	6
TOTAL	340 (8 million)	

* User contribution so far: Rs. 150 million
Source: Alandur Municipality

Table 2: Fees and Charges

Connection charges (non-refundable deposits)	Amount per connection in Rs. (US\$)
Domestic (before 01.02.2000)	5,000 (112)
Domestic (after 01.02.2000)	6,000 (135)
Commercial	10,000 (224)
Industrial	10,000 (224)

Corporation (TUFIDCO), an agency channelizing the funds from the Government of India and Government of Tamil Nadu for infrastructure projects. The project also received deposits from the town's residents.

Progress So Far

The ongoing project that began in 2000 had in 2005 connected, in its first phase, nearly 8,350 of the 23,000 households that paid for

Highlights

- A well-planned communications strategy has led to good community response to the project.
- A 'Willingness to Pay' survey showed that about 97 percent of the people wished to have the sewer connection and would like to pay for it.
- People who were unable to pay the deposits on their own were given the option of loans from local banks on nominal interest rates.
- People were also given the choice to pay in two installments over a year.
- The construction of community toilets was taken up after need assessments by Alandur Municipality or on demand from slum dwellers. This option helped extend sanitation services to the poorest segment of the population which could not afford the non-refundable deposit and could not connect to the system.

the service. Nearly 500 slum households of the 7,000 had a sewerage connection. A large number (43 percent) of slum dwellers have opted and paid for individual sewerage connections.

References

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