ODF - Story with a Gap

'Story with a Gap' is a simple exercise, but very much impactful to make communities think about ODF story in its entirety. This exercise helps identify the gap in ODF Story narrated by a Gram Panchayat. In other words, there might be missing elements in the 'ODF story', which the GP has ignored and self-declared as ODF. This/these 'missing element(s)' might be a vital indicator for a village to be called ODF in the real sense of the expression. Identifying that gap and taking action in order to fill in that gap is the purpose of Story with a Gap exercise. Before we get to know how to do this exercise, let us take a look at the definition of: ODF and ODF-Sustainability.

ODF: No visible faces found in the environment / village; every household uses safe technology options for the disposal of faeces.

ODF Sustainability: Safe disposal of human excreta is sustained post the attainment of ODF status.

Objectives of ODF Sustainability

a) Maintain the ODF status of the villages, Gram Panchayats, Blocks and Districts and States over a continued period of time
b) Ensure that people continuously use the toilets built and practice safe and hygienic behaviours
c) The assets created under SBM continue to remain functional and there is a decentralised operation and maintenance arrangement for upkeep and maintenance of assets.

Good sanitation practice can help address malnutrition, stunting, wasting and so on. Therefore, the focus under SBM-G is on establishing ODF communities rather than just toilet coverage.

Story with a Gap

To carry out this [Story with a Gap] exercise, a 'definitional ODF picture' is depicted in the table at page – 3. It has three columns. However, when we begin this exercise in a Gram Panchayat (Gram Sabha) we'd better open up a discussion asking the people a searching question in a

humble way. *Is our claim of 'ODF status' an honest reflection of what exists here, or... we have hastened up a little declaring ourselves ODF, when we are yet to reach 'the complete ODF stage'?* In other words, how honest are we, in calling ourselves an 'ODF village'? Do you think there are some gaps in our ODF Story, which we mute and leave unstated?

This will serve as the key question that open up discussions on the gaps – bit by bit. The procedure to carry out this exercise goes like this.

1. The third column is preset with vital ODF indicators. Please see the table at page 3.

2. The trainer asks the community to fill in the first column that puts across the 'Existing State' of the village with regard to OD/ODF status. This is done for each indicator at every row of column-3, and the response recorded in Column-1.

3. If the community members feel that the existing state is exactly in line with the ODF state, they give a tick mark under YES. Repeat it for every indicator in column-3 – one indicator at a time.

4. Where YES is ticked, that particular ODF-indicator has been fulfilled at the village in question. Where 'NO' is ticked, the community members have to discuss and fill in Column-2, what action needs to be taken so as to fulfil the requisites of this particular indicator.

5. That means in order to narrate the 'ODF Story' of that village as a completed story, what action needs to be taken. This decision is made during the exercise. The (i) action to be taken, (ii) date by which action is to be taken, and (iii) the person in-charge of completing and reporting to the PRI are resolved – and passed as resolution.

6. Thus, at the end of this exercise, Column-2 stands as a list of action to be taken so as to become eligible to truly declare ODF status.

This exercise unveils and exposes the gap in the ODF Story narrated by a Gram Panchayat. Then it prods action to be taken in order to tell the ODF story with a sense of completion and accomplishment. This also serves as a kind of ODF status verification exercise, or re-verification exercise.

Story with a Gap: Working Sheet

Existing State (1)		Fill in here actions to be taken to plug the gap and move from Existing State to ODF state (2)	ODF State (3)
Yes	**No**		
			Every household has IHHL toilet / or access to community toilet.
			100% of the toilets constructed are used (including community toilet)
			100% of the people use toilet. No one defecate in open
			Child feces are disposed into the toilet only.
			Fly-proofing of toilet. There is proper water seal in all the toilets
			All the toilets are twin pit toilets only with proper leach pits.
			Safe septage disposal is possible, by households that use septic tank
			Hand-washing before meals
			Hand-washing after using a toilet
			Availability of soap and water in or near the toilet
			No visible faeces found in the village / environment
			Functional school toilets with water (separate for boys & girls)
			Proper use of *Anganwadi* toilet
			Proper use and maintenance of community toilet /common toilet

The outcome of this exercise (i) brings out gap in the ODF story being narrated by the village in question; and (ii) it must prod action to plug the gaps in ODF story so that we narrate a credible ODF that is tenable.

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