

Sughad: a community led cleanliness movement

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Core Constraints in Village-Level Waste Management

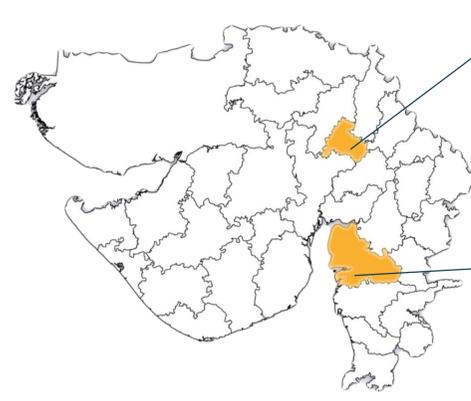
- Around 1.9 billion people globally lack access to waste collection services.
- In India, 65% of the total population, which lives in rural areas, continues to depend on open dumping and burning, posing serious health and environmental risks.
- Despite the Solid Waste Management Rules (2016), Gram Panchayats often lack the technical, financial and administrative capacity to deliver SWM services.
- The rapid influx of plastics and non-biodegradable waste has normalized unclean public spaces in rural areas.
- Weak governance, poor resource convergence and limited behavioural change mechanisms constrain effective and sustained service delivery.



Waste dumped and burned in storm water canal (left) and in open areas in the village (right)

Sughad- By the people, of the people, for the people SWM

- In response to systemic gaps in rural waste management, VIKAS Centre for Development (CFD) conceptualized and implemented Sughad - Clean, Green and Healthy Village Programme across seven villages in two contrasting contexts: the industrialized Vagra block (Bharuch District) and the agrarian Mansa block (Gandhinagar District) in Gujarat, India.
- At the core of Sughad is the Swasthya ane Swachhta Samiti (SSS) - a women-led village-level institution designed to strengthen local governance, enable convergence of resources and embed accountability in Solid Waste Management (SWM) service delivery.



Mansa Block, Gandhinagar District:

1. Vijaynagar
2. Kuwadra

Vagra Block, Bharuch District:

1. Lakhigam,
2. Luvara,
3. Jageshwar
4. Ambetha
5. Nandida

Institutional Design and Capacity Building

The SSS was structured to ensure inclusive and legitimate representation: 70% women (from different *faliyas* or hamlets), 15% local youth and 15% Panchayat representatives. Committees were systematically capacitated through trainings, exposure visits and participatory planning exercises that enable them to assume higher levels of responsibility gradually.



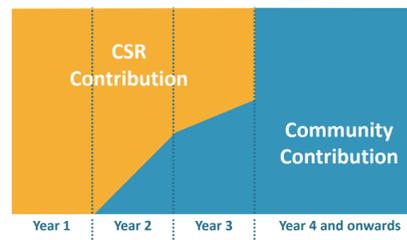
Roles and Functions

SSS members led awareness campaigns, planned garbage collection routes and supported dustbin distribution. Over time, they evolved into governance bodies overseeing service monitoring, wage disbursement for sanitation workers, user-fee collection and decisions related to outsourcing and worker recruitment. User fees were managed through joint bank accounts, with records publicly displayed, strengthening transparency and overcoming resistance to payment.



Key Features of the Sughad Model

Women-Led Governance: Women's leadership repositioned SWM as a planned, accountable and community-valued service. Youth-enabled technical coordination, combined with Panchayat representation, ensured institutional legitimacy.



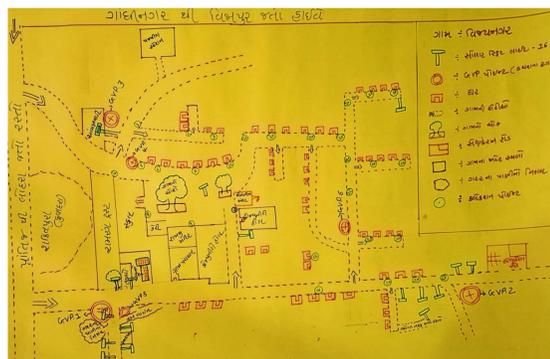
Behavioural Change and Institutional Sustainability: Continuous campaigns and social accountability mechanisms strengthened waste segregation, user fee compliance and service continuity, embedding SWM practices into everyday village life.



Convergence of Resources: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds were leveraged to establish and capacitate committees, District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) resources supported infrastructure and Panchayat and community contributions financed operations -creating a diversified and resilient funding model. CSR functions as a "venture fund" for an initial three-year period, after which ownership is shifted to communities and Panchayats.

Impact

- **Improved service delivery:** Waste collection became regular and predictable, transportation routes were optimised, segregation was actively monitored and disposal gaps will be further addressed through decentralised solutions such as household-level composting and our patented plastic pyrolysis processing.
- **Financial ownership and sustainability:** Our experience demonstrated that communities are willing to pay for services they value, with incremental increases in user fees and Panchayat contributions sustaining SWM operations after CSR withdrawal.
- **Shift in gender norms:** Initial resistance to women's leadership gradually transformed into trust and recognition, as women emerged as effective and accountable managers of village cleanliness.
- **Positive public health outcomes:** Village residents reported fewer cases of vector-borne and waste-related illnesses during the monsoon season, indicating early health benefits of improved waste management systems.



Map prepared with SSS in Vijayanagar Village



Key Takeaway

- Rural SWM cannot be sustained through top-down service delivery alone; it requires systemic investment in village-level democratic institutions.
- By embedding women-led governance, convergence of resources and local ownership, Sughad demonstrates a scalable, bottom-up pathway to strengthen rural WASH services.
- The model contributes to broader debates on institutional innovation, gendered governance and sustainable service delivery in the Global South.