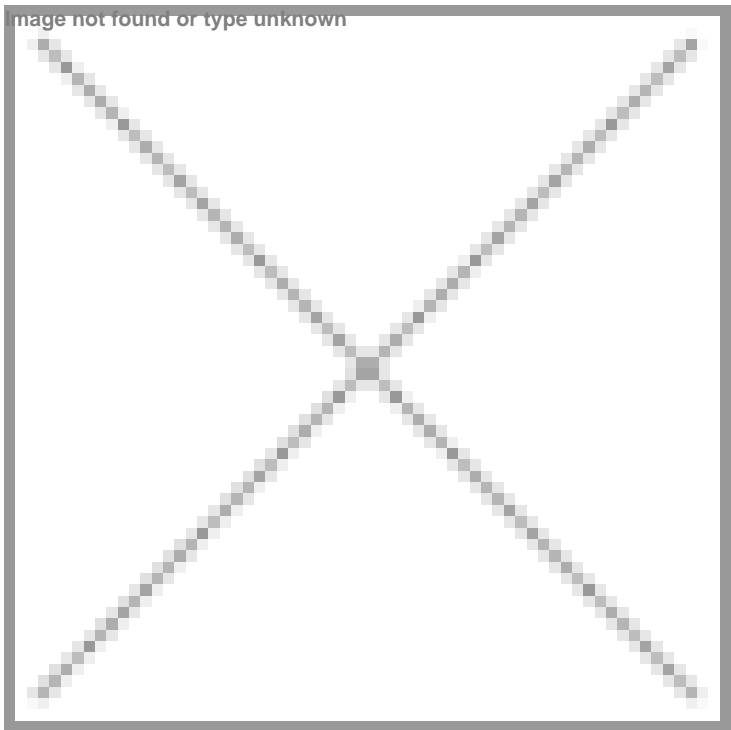


Social media intervention puts a spotlight on urban sanitation challenge in India

07 May 2019 | News

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BBC Media Action has launched a bold new social media initiative #FlushKeBaad (#NoFlushAndForget) to encourage public discussion of issues related to faecal sludge management (FSM).

This is one of the few social media behaviour change communication initiatives on FSM in the world. BBC Media Action, supported by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has been addressing sanitation issues in India through creative communications since 2015. This latest initiative seeks to tackle the critical issue of FSM, and its impact on the environment and people's health.

According to UNICEF, more than 1,600 people die every day due to diarrhoea which is closely associated with lack of sanitation. While India has made considerable progress in building and using toilets, according to the Central Pollution Control Board, 70% of the sewage generated from urban India is not treated. This is dumped indiscriminately in water bodies, empty spaces and agricultural lands. It then comes back to us via water, food and even air, posing a serious health hazard. Most recently, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has decided to set up a sub-mission to work towards the management of faecal sludge in cities and census towns.

FlushKeBaad uses entertaining content to create awareness and generate conversation about risks people face every day from untreated faecal sludge. It focuses on the idea that "what goes comes right back to you". The centrepiece of the initiative

is a digital film that can be viewed here. The musical medley literally makes a song and dance about what happens after you flush the toilet. Using different genres such as Qawwali, opera, vintage Bollywood and rap, it features two types of people facing off against each other: those who know and care about what happens #FlushKeBaad, and those who do not, and are sceptical about treating it as a 'real issue'.

Since the launch of the initiative on 29th March 2019 on Facebook, the campaign has reached 7.7 million unique users, with 2.7 million total views. The audience engagement rate for the campaign on Facebook so far is 11% and 8.2% on Twitter. Celebrities including Aamir Ali and Randeep Hooda have amplified the digital film through their social media handles.

Speaking about the social media intervention, Radharani Mitra, Global Creative Advisor, BBC Media Action said, "One gram of poo has more than one million pathogens – I didn't know that before I started working on the issue. The #FlushKeBaad musical sawaal-jawaab (question-answer) has been crafted to start a conversation that's well overdue, given the magnitude of the FSM challenge in urban India."

Madhu Krishna, India Country Lead, WSH, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation said, "For safe sanitation, we need to stop any untreated faecal sludge from going into the environment. That can only happen when every citizen understands what happens #FlushKeBaad. This musical is a smart route to creating that understanding and engagement."

"The digital film which is at the centre of the intervention will be complemented by other online posts like vox-pops, star videos and informational factoids to create risk perception from open discharge and indiscriminate dumping of faecal sludge. The idea is to make #FlushKeBaad everyone's business", said Soma Katiyar, Executive Creative Director of BBC Media Action, India.

The social media intervention also complements BBC Media Action's television drama series on urban sanitation – Navrangi Re!(Nine to a Shade) which is being broadcast on Colors Rishtey. This initiative is being funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation via the Centre for Social and Behaviour Change, Ashoka University, who are also evaluating the initiative.