



India



## Gramalaya

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Launched in 1987, Not-for-profit , Drinking Water , Hygiene , Menstrual Hygiene Management , Sanitation , Cross-sector , Cross-sector: Education , Women's Empowerment , South Asia: India

Partners: The Government of India through the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation are involved in the implementation. Gramalaya is approved as the National Key Resource Centre by the Ministry for providing training and capacity building to government officials and NGOs in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

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### Problem Addressed

India has a high exposure to health risks on account of poor sanitation infrastructure. In urban India, it is estimated that around 50 million people defecate in the open every day. The increasing rate of urbanization, with 7 million people migrating to urban India every year, further creates large unmanageable slums with no sanitation and hygiene infrastructure. The government struggles to provide basic sanitation and hygiene services effectively because it has poor data about the needs and habits of the residents and very little information on existing infrastructure such as plumbing and sewage lines. There is a need to move away from a top-down method and towards a community-led approach by encouraging communities to consider their sanitation practices and take ownership of improving their situation.

### Innovative Approach

One of Gramalaya's most innovative approaches is through Associations for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (AWASH), which are community-based associations that provide accessible sanitation to target households. They promote low-cost technologies and help the communities to avail financial assistance from lending institutions. The community-based organizations are formed, stabilized and exposed to capacity building through various training programs, exposure visits, hygiene education sessions, leadership training and other interactions by the staff of Gramalaya. In addition, the toilet technology center established at the Gramalaya Training Center is the first technology park with more than 24 toilet type designs.

### Program Solution

Gramalaya has successfully tested innovative sanitation models such as child friendly toilets, micro-finance for sanitation, community managed pay-and-use latrines and school health programs across 5 districts in Tamil Nadu. It forms Associations for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (AWASH) in communities, which work towards slum and village

improvement. A given association is operated by animators, or peer educators identified by Gramalaya. In order to equip AWASH members with skills, the organization conducts regular trainings, meetings and exposure visits. Adequate training is essential for the process of transitioning ownership directly to communities.

Gramalaya also conducts a needs assessment on school sanitation facilities and involves school health clubs in the process. Activities include the repair of existing infrastructure or construction of new infrastructure to ensure separate toilets for girls and boys, hand-washing stations, child-friendliness, access to safe drinking water and sanitary napkin incinerators.

With the financial support from UNICEF in Chennai, Gramalaya has selected 10 model villages to conduct intensive hygiene education sessions with village governments and community mobilization works. Low-cost leach pit toilets will be constructed at households utilizing support from UNICEF and the TSC program. Gramalaya has also constructed 335 eco-san toilets which are regularly used. They have also constructed community toilets in partnership with donors and the municipal government. To address maintenance, Gramalaya ensures toilets are maintained by Sanitation and Hygiene Education Teams (SHE - Teams) or AWASH Committees. In addition, the organization has constructed individual toilets and hand pumps.

Currently, Gramalaya is working in all the 186 slums in the Tiruchi city corporation limit where WaterAid, UK and Tiruchi City Corporation are supporting as collaborating agencies. Based on the community-led total sanitation approach, Gramalaya has so far helped local communities to declare 56 panchayats as open defecation free with the assistance from the district officials under Total Sanitation Campaign scheme in rural areas.