

'Samajhdar' in North East India

Adaptation of behaviour change communication campaign

Analysis of findings from fields visits comprising of focus group discussions & interviews

Writing of the final report and recommendations

Development of character sketch for the new campaign

The brief was to adapt a behaviour change communication campaign for water, sanitation and hygiene by a prominent social organisation developed for rural villages in Gujarat, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand, within the context of the local realities of the North East.

Being from the region, the assignment resonated strongly with me – I was glad of the opportunity to not only analyse the findings and pen the final recommendations, but also develop the character sketch and script for the 'local face' of the campaign. I was able to bring to the table a deeper perspective – which cannot always be captured with time-bound, curated discussions – that helped my team understand local sensibilities, aspirations and motivations that were critical in informing the campaign's adaptation for maximum appeal and effectiveness.

Adaptation of the 'Samajhdar' Behaviour Change Communication campaign for North East India (NE)

Tata Water Mission

Objective

Based on the findings of the evaluation of the Phase 1 campaign in the context of the local realities of the north-east (conducted in two districts, Tuensang in Nagaland and Aizawl in Mizoram), the campaign will now introduce modifications to the existing communication materials. These modifications will be centred on the introduction of a new character who will be positioned as an influencer or an agent of change developed within the local context.

Character development

Choices of influencers

A variety of choices emerged as the target audience's pick of people they believed would be influential in bringing about a change in behaviour around drinking clean water and sanitation, in their communities. While within a family, the mother as well as both parents was the top choice, in the community, it was the village elders, the church leaders, ASHA workers, school teachers and youth leaders.

Church leader/pastor/priest: While the Church plays a pivotal role in effecting social change in the target communities, choosing a priest/pastor/church official as the occupation/identity of the NE campaign influencer would bring in religious overtones and also highly risk alienating the several non-Christian communities and ethnic groups in the region.

ASHA health worker: ASHA workers work directly with mothers and women who are primary influencers within their homes, making them ideal influencers for behaviour change within a community. However, the protagonist/narrator of the campaign films is the daughter of the *Samajhdar* family who is a doctor by profession. Having an ASHA worker as the influencer is therefore not recommended because: a) a doctor is perceived as a higher authority when compared to a health worker, hence, diluting the latter's impact as the primary influencer, and b) ASHA workers are women and since we already have a female voice in the form of the doctor, it would be ideal to bring in a male voice as a primary influencer.

Youth leader: The region has a strong and vibrant presence of youth organisations, clubs and informal groups, such as the Young Mizo Association which play a key role in bringing about social change among the younger people. While the idea of a youth leader as the primary influencer would

work with the younger people, this would alienate the older generation who traditionally look up to older figures of authority.

Parents/village elders: The current campaign already builds upon the idea of a *Samajhdar* family led by parents who know what is best for their children. Having another parent as an additional influencer would be redundant.

School principal/headmaster/teacher

The most effective among the influencers is the school teacher, preferably the principal, who is the highest figure of authority in the establishment. Our rationale behind this is as follows.

1. **Fits the aspirational, progressive motive:** The primary aspiration of every parent and every older sibling among the target communities is a better life for them and their children/younger siblings. This better life is achieved through a sound education and a secure and respectable job (preferably in the government sector). Education is clearly respected and valued, thus, putting the school in a community at the centre of this aspiration. Ipso facto, school teachers are highly regarded not only as aspirational professionals but also as the agents of change who guide children – and the society at large – towards progress.
2. **Schools are either government-run or affiliated to the church:** Most schools in the rural communities among the target audience are either government-run or affiliated to the church. There are two clear motivations towards this: a) government agencies are held in high regard and are influential centres of change, while government jobs (any job working at the school) are a symbol of security, prestige and power in society, and b) affiliation to the church/church body garners respect and following among significant numbers of the population in the region (without bearing overt religious overtones).
3. **Provides the opportunity to introduce a male voice of influence:** With the daughter of the *Samajhdar* family as the film's protagonist, introducing a male voice into the opening narrative will strengthen the appeal among all segments of the target population.

Samajhdar* Mr. Mongba Delsih

Mr. Mongba Delsih is the principal of a senior secondary school in _____ village. He is 51 years old and has four children – three sons and a daughter. His wife is a senior clerk at the Block Development Office. Their oldest son is an engineer with the Department of Roads & Bridges, while his second son is studying to become a teacher. His younger son and daughter are in school. Mr Delsih lives in a three-bedroom house which has two bathroom-cum-toilets with washbasins.

Mr. Delsih is highly committed not only to the well-being of his family but the well-being of his school and the students. He is passionate about teaching and teaches Mathematics to 9th & 10th graders, along with his administrative responsibilities. In his 10 years of heading the school as its principal, he has initiated a number of initiatives that profess his strong sense of civic duty and responsibility towards the school. He started the weekly cleaning drive at the school since the last six years, which is carried out entirely by the teachers, support staff and the students. He also sought funds under a government scheme and constructed new toilets for girls.

He and his wife are active members of the local community, well-respected by all who know them. Mr. Delsih and his wife, along with the village committee president, have initiated a monthly meeting of the village to address civic issues pertaining to garbage disposal, cleanliness and sanitation. As a result of the awareness brought about by this initiative, the entire village works hard to keep their homes and surroundings clean.

*Note: *The name acts as a placeholder as one name will not work across the six states. Each state has a distinct language/dialect. When the script is translated into the six different languages, the name will need to be modified to a generic name among the target communities, to enhance its appeal.*

Script for film

Note: The opening narration by the new character is focused on setting the context for the film's 'Samajhdar' message for the target audience and deepening its relatability for them. The narration does not get into the details of the do and don'ts of the behaviour because that aspect is amply illustrated by the film.

Washing hands with soap

Hello (*appropriate greeting in each state/language*). My name is Mongba Delsih. I am the principal of this school. My students are now high ranking officers in the government, doctors, teachers and engineers. One of them is my son who is a senior government engineer. My second son is in college, and my youngest son and daughter are in school.

I am just like you. I work hard so my children have better lives. Before me, my parents worked hard for me. Now, my children work hard. Children emulate their elders. As a father and as a school principal, I have a responsibility to always do the right thing so my children do the right thing too. Good habits, like washing hands, are one of them.

Till about six years ago, children in our village used to fall ill often. Many of my students were among those who fell sick. After I became this school's principal, I started a weekly cleaning drive in the school. Also, for two hours every week, we have a special class on hygiene and sanitation awareness for the students, where they learn about the importance of washing hands with soap after using the toilet or touching dirt and before eating food.

Gradually, the students stopped falling ill so often.

Today, I am here to introduce you to a family, just like mine, who achieved success because they always did the right thing.

Note: The opening narration for this segment details out the need for better toilets in light of the modified message for this segment, which is to change behaviour towards building pucca toilets, and not merely build toilets since the target audience already use toilets.

Building better toilets

Hello (*appropriate greeting in each state/language*). My name is Mongba Delsih. I am the principal of this school. My students are now high ranking officers in the government, doctors, teachers and engineers. One of them is my son who is a senior government engineer. My second son is in college, and my youngest son and daughter are in school.

I am just like you. I work hard so my children have better lives. Before me, my parents worked hard for me. Now, my children work hard. Children emulate their elders. As a father and as a school principal, I have a responsibility to always do the right thing so my children do the right thing too.

Our village used to have lots of mosquitoes. We had frequent cases of diseases like malaria, especially during the rainy season. We then realised that the mosquitoes were breeding near our toilets. Our toilets were traditionally built from bamboo or cheap tin sheets. These temporary structures had no proper drainage or sewer outlet. Stagnant water and waste would collect for days. This meant that germ carrying bacteria, mosquitoes and flies were always in close proximity of where we ate, where our children played. We decided to build better toilets – which not only kept the rain out but also had a sewer outlet so the waste was directed far away from where we lived.

It worked! Our surroundings were cleaner, the incidence of malaria was drastically reduced and our children were safe once again.

Today, I am here to introduce you to a family, who just like the people in my village, did the right thing to keep its members safe.

Note: The opening narration for this segment details out the need for water filters in addition to the boiling method of purification as per our modified message for the target audience.

Clean, drinking water

Hello (*appropriate greeting in each state/language*). My name is Mongba Delsih. I am the principal of this school. My students are now high ranking officers in the government, doctors, teachers and engineers. One of them is my son who is a senior government engineer. My second son is in college, and my youngest son and daughter are in school.

I am just like you. I work hard so my children have better lives. Before me, my parents worked hard for me. Now, my children work hard. Children emulate their elders. As a father and as a school principal, I have a responsibility to always do the right thing so my children do the right thing too. Ensuring their wellbeing is one of them.

When my oldest son was four, he once fell ill for days. He had contracted dysentery. After the village healer could not help him, I used almost all my savings to take him to a doctor in the town. There, the doctor informed me that dysentery was very often caused by consumption of unclean water. I firmly told him that we always boiled the water before drinking. Then he told me that was not enough. I was shocked! While boiling method killed most of the impurities, our drinking water still contained many germ carrying bacteria which were harmful especially to children. He suggested that I start using a water filter to further purify the water we boil for drinking.

As soon as I got my next salary, I bought a water filter. It was expensive and spending that money meant that I would not be able to afford small luxuries like new clothes for the next six months, but the wellbeing of my children was more important. And if they were healthy, I wouldn't have to spend on the expensive doctor's visit again and again. Similarly, at school, I sought funds from the government and installed two water filters for the students so they too drank clean water.

Today, I am here to introduce you to parents, who just like me and my wife, did the right thing to ensure the wellbeing of their family.