Sankuvanigunta Gram Panchayat (GP) shows us how schools can bring about behavioural change by influencing young students.

Sankuvanigunta is a part of Kotha Patnam Mandal of Prakasam District with 645 residents residing in 105 households. Though it attained the status of an Open Defecation Free village, sustainability remains a major problem as the GP suffers with constant water problems all round the year. With no sufficient water resources in the GP, the residents depend on a water resource situated 7kms away from the GP in an area called Mudunuru. Water is supplied by pipeline once in two to three days for about one to two hours.

This has created a situation wherein men in the GP began defecating in the open which now accounts for 5-10% of open defecation going on in the village.

Ms. CH. Lelavathi, a resident of the village says “whenever there is no water in the house, my granddaughter creates a lot of trouble. She says that she takes an oath in school every day about using toilets and not defecating in the open, but is forced to do exactly the opposite due to lack of water”. “Very soon she started demanding for water, for which I started requesting neighbours for a bucket of water” continues Lelavathi.
After learning the reason behind Lelavathi borrowing water, mixed comments raised in the neighbourhood. While some people appreciated the little girl of 10 years of age to be very aware of good sanitation practices, some others opined out that small children can defecate in open as there is a serious water problem.

Ms. Lelavathi decided to stop all negative comments on her granddaughter as the little girl’s demand is a genuine one. From then onwards she started storing a bucket of water for the little girl’s regular toilet usage.

Awareness definitely brings about a sustained change, specifically in the case of this child who stood for change. However the GP also indicates the intrinsic relation between water availability and sanitation practices, thereby indicating a demand for making water available in the GP.

This case show cases how awareness can lead citizens to bring out solutions to the challenges they encounter. This is a story of a school going girl who made construction and utilisation of toilet in her family possible only with her will to use it.