

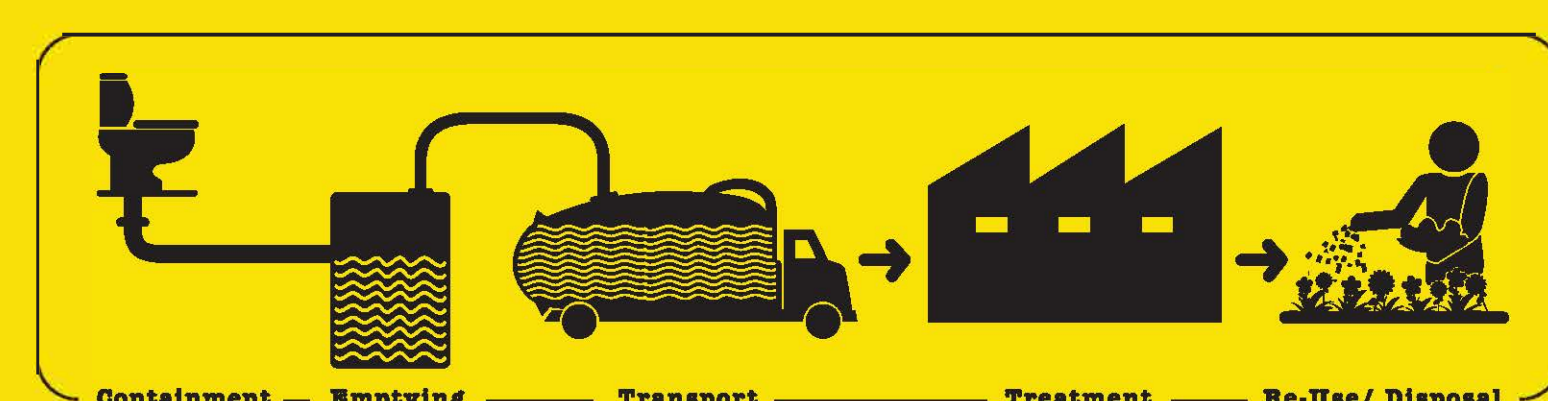


THE DEMON OF DEFECA

Making the invisible, visible

THE CONTEXT: Sanitation is one of India's biggest social challenges. It is estimated that 70 percent of urban India's sewage is untreated¹. While the Swachh Bharat Mission (Clean India Mission) has made considerable progress to promote the building and use of toilets, awareness of what happens once you flush remains low.

THE RESEARCH:



Findings along the sanitation value chain

78% believe a septic tank should be as large as possible

78% believe the government is responsible for desludging

63% are not aware where the desludger dumps the sludge

Research revealed there are aspects of sanitation that continue to be invisible among communities and are not considered as their responsibility.

THE INSIGHT:

Out of sight, and thus out of mind.

THE CHALLENGE:

How do we make the invisible, visible?

THE COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES:

- Heighten risk perception around faecal sludge contaminating water
- Build a sense of urgency to make people act towards positive sanitation outcomes

THE BIG IDEA: We needed a disruptive, media agnostic BIG idea that would not only make visible the threat but magnify it!

Malasur – the demon of defeca

Malasur was created to make the **threat of faecal sludge contaminating water sources** up close and personal. This demon of poo is a **visual representation of faecal sludge**, inspired by Indian mythology, with stories of good overcoming evil, of gods and demons. *Malasur* is the common enemy, that needs to be slayed.



A **360-degree** social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) intervention was built around *Malasur*. The intervention had three key specific focus areas:

- Septic tanks have to be built correctly
- They have to be cleaned/ desludged every three years
- Indiscriminate dumping of faecal sludge needs to be reported

If these three were not practised, the threat of faecal sludge contaminating water would be imminent.

PROTOTYPING: Following a pilot and user-testing, the communication around faecal sludge was further finetuned, strengthening the use of water as a pivot, in order to make the threat more up close and personal. Research proved that a **negative character like Malasur helped break the clutter**, made people take notice and understand the connection with water, making action seem more urgent.

FINAL OUTPUTS: The three key focus areas were supported by visuals of everyday household items, such as a bucket of water or a tube well, in the deathly embrace of *Malasur*. This proved to be a strong visual trigger in recognising faecal sludge as a threat. Our creative strategy was to build up this evil character till our audiences notice it and intend to capture and slay it.



SCALING UP MALASUR: The *Malasur* intervention included film, radio, digital outputs, and outreach materials, packaged in a comprehensive toolkit for implementers (government and non-government). Developed in 11 Indian languages, and despite the pandemic, *Malasur* was launched by over 500 local bodies across eight states. The toolkit, which included roll out and evaluation guidance and over 160 digital artworks, was launched on World Environment Day in June 2020 by the Government of India.



EVALUATION: *Malasur* was evaluated for reach, recall and effectiveness in two states where it was implemented. The effectiveness research in Warangal (1577 listings, 402 exposed and 330 unexposed) found that 52% of exposed audiences correctly recalled desludging frequency as every three years as against 22% among unexposed. Among those exposed to *Malasur*, over three in four people (76%) believed *Malasur* could be defeated through regular desludging, 70% intended to use the desludging helpline and 42% reported having called the number.

THE LEARNINGS:

- **Disruption works** A multi-media intervention needs a big, hairy, audacious idea that can break through the clutter in an overcrowded media landscape. Visualising a problem that did not exist in the public's consciousness is powerful.
- **A BIG idea creates a mediating and multiplying effect** It is optimal to use one BIG idea across platforms rather than have different communication interventions.
- **Faecal sludge is complex and people need simple, doable actions** Research showed that each piece of content needs to have a singular focus.
- **People need to connect personally with the problem or threat** Faecal contamination of water added a sense of urgency around action.
- **An interactive mechanism enables people to act** The link to the helpline added credibility to *Malasur* and helped people complete the Awareness-Interest-Desire-Action (AIDA) loop.

Aligning interventions with national level programmes: As faecal sludge management (FSM) outcomes become increasingly critical in improving the total sanitation landscape of a country, there is a growing realisation within the WASH sector, that social and behaviour change communication as well as demand creation are as important as investments in infrastructure. Learnings from *Malasur* show that a BIG idea can grab people's attention and move the needle towards safe water and healthier citizens.

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