

## Interview Kamal Kar, Expert on Community Led Total Sanitation, Calcutta, India

Interviewer: Olivia McGrath, Deutsche Welle, Length: 4'08

Dr. Kamal Kar is a specialist in Livestock Production, Agriculture and Natural Resources who currently works as an independent specialist in social and participatory development. He works as a consultant and trainer to governments, donor agencies and NGOs throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. Through his work with poor people around the world, he came up with a new and innovative way to tackle the issue of sanitation in developing countries.

**In 1999, I could develop an approach called Community Led Total Sanitation. This I developed in Bangladesh and which has spread in 22 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.**

Community Led Total Sanitation, or CLTS, is an approach used for mobilising communities to completely eliminate open defecation. CLTS is characterised by participatory facilitation, community analysis and action, and there's no hardware subsidies. Kamal Kar, why is this so different from other approaches?

**The total thing was missing. And the second thing was that it was outside agency, outside institution-led. Everything came as a helping attitude. Outsiders mindsets and attitudes is on helping, donating, philanthropic you know – they're poor people, give them, help them all in charity. But today's CLTS it's shifted from there.**

And what is that shift?

**The shifts are – now it is total. It's not a question of counting any toilets – the number of toilets – but no one is defecating in the open. So it shifts from counting toilets to counting villages which are ODF, meaning open defecation-free, and then design: it's not outsiders or engineers' design but it's basically the community's own design. And a low cost design, appropriate designs using low cost, appropriate materials and all that.**

How successful have communities been with coming up with their own sanitation technologies?

**We have more than 35, 40, 50 designs of toilets. Low cost, no cost toilet designs have been developed by the poor people in different parts of the world and they cost two dollars, five dollars, ten dollars maximum. Equally good and very nice, so that is when we started working with a different assumption: that they are human beings, everybody is a human being, everybody wants to live a decent life. So naturally the question came, do you want to subsidise, or do you want to do something where the self respect of the people, you know, is considered as one of the most important elements.**

So how do you help people keep their self respect while helping improve their sanitation standards?

**That's the question you know, you don't tell them, you don't punish them, but you help them to analyse their own situation, and from there it comes up. And that's what CLTS is. It is community-led. This analysis you know, it's based on interactive participation and self mobilisation and it triggers the whole, the fire of collective local action which cleans up that whole village.**

So can you explain to me how villages using the CLTS approach has changed their community behaviour?

**Hygiene behaviour change from outside.... we can't just do anything and they themselves change this collective hygiene behaviour by training, by convincing people... sometimes by creating pressure. Sometimes by shaming people.**

Shaming people? How does that work?

**In many villages people give whistles to the children and all the children, they locate the what: if they see anyone defecating in the open they start blowing the whistles and every child in the village, immediately when listening to that noise, they all blowing whistles and the man runs. So there are so many kinds of things, community penalty, community reward... so it's not only convincing people and telling them and it's all good. There are community pressures also, but these are all friendly and they are all neighbours – they don't want to ruin their relationship – but they succeed in changing the hygiene behaviour you know, the collective hygiene behaviour, because it is insider-led, it is not outsider-led.**

Do you think it's possible to achieve the Millennium Development Goal to halve the number of people without access to basic sanitation by 2015?

**It is only possible if you could empower communities and continuously empower communities in areas, and use those natural leaders emerging from open defecation-free villages. Use them as agents of change and spread, systematically. Only then you will be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of halving this, you know, today's number.**

Mr Kamal Kar, thank you very much for your time.