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The power of edutainment for social change: Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon Season 3

Background

It is estimated by the World Health Organization that every year over 800,000 people in low- and middle-income countries die as a result of inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene. The UN General Assembly in 2010 recognised access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right, and called for international efforts to help countries to provide safe, clean, accessible and affordable drinking water and sanitation. According to the National Family Health Survey-4 (2015-16), almost 52% households were not using improved sanitation facilities. As per WHO estimates of 2016, India accounted for 59 percent of those practicing open defecation in the world, and 90 percent of those in South Asia.¹ According to the Swachh Bharat Mission's estimates, the economic impact of poor sanitation for India is at least USD 38.5 billion every year in terms of cost to health, education, access time and tourism.²

A 2017 World Bank Study conducted in India concluded that merely building toilets won't make Indians use them. The study found that around 40 per cent of people who have toilets in their houses did not use them. Many of the respondents associated toilets with *gandagi* (dirt). People's beliefs were closely linked to their perception of what others believed. This meant that social norms had a big say on individual attitudes. Behaviour change is the cornerstone of preventive and promotive practices for health and wellbeing and deeply entrenched social norms that inhibit health behaviours.

The Swachh Bharat (Clean India) Mission – SBM – was launched in 2014 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in order to accelerate efforts for universal

sanitation coverage and to focus on safe sanitation. The objectives of the Mission included improving the quality of life in rural areas by promoting cleanliness, hygiene and eliminating open defecation, accelerating sanitation coverage in rural areas and motivating communities and Panchayati Raj Institutions to adopt sustainable sanitation practices and facilities through awareness campaigns.



Poster of Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon used for promotions

As against earlier initiatives on improved sanitation, SBM recognised the need to work on behaviour change in order to sustain use of toilets and positive sanitation practices. As stated in the guidelines of SBM – Gramin, "The Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) is not about constructing toilets but aims at behaviour change of the masses to adopt better sanitation practices. Therefore, information, education and communication (IEC)

¹ Estimates by the [Joint Monitoring programme of the WHO and UNICEF](#) Last Accessed May 18, 2016

² [Guidelines for Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin](#)



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strategies, planning and their effective implementation is the key to the success of Swachh Bharat. Thus, IEC activities are not to be treated as 'stand-alone' activity as a 'component'

of SBM-G, but the SBM-G is largely about effective IEC to nudge communities into adopting safe and sustainable sanitation practices."

Initiative: *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon* – A transmedia behaviour change communication initiative of the Population Foundation of India



Characters discuss sanitation related issues on community radio station Pratapvaani, in a still from the show

[Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon \(MKBKSH – I, A Woman, Can Achieve Anything\)](#) is a behaviour change communication initiative that uses entertainment-education to improve people's awareness and promote shifts in social norms related to women's health, empowerment and family planning. Conceptualised and launched by Population Foundation of India, MKBKSH ran **two successful seasons (131 TV and radio episodes) of broadcast on Doordarshan and All India Radio (AIR - 216 stations) between 2014 and 2016.**

At the core of the initiative is a television series directed by leading Hindi film and theatre director Feroz Abbas Khan. The programme has transmedia extensions on radio, on-ground community outreach, an Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS), and social media. Millions of viewers have been reached through the broadcast episodes on Doordarshan and AIR. The serial received approximately **1.7 million calls** from viewers on its IVRS platform. Season 1 & 2 are currently hosted on the popular digital platform [Hotstar](#).



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To support the government's Swachh Bharat campaign, in 2018 PFI launched **Season 3 of Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon (MKBKSH) with funding support for 26 episodes from the REC Foundation**. The story in the first 26 episodes of Season 3 focuses on the efforts of the protagonist Dr. Sneha in mobilising people of her village to change behaviours and adopt healthy sanitation practices. The initiative is part of the intensive investments in IEC (Information Education Communication) carried out for the SBM, and is mentioned in the Whitepaper 'An assessment of the reach and value of IEC activities under Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen)'.³

Approach and process

Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon (MKBKSH) used Entertainment Education (EE) to trigger shifts in people's perceptions related to the use and maintenance of toilets. This approach is used widely for social and behaviour change communication (SBCC), as the EE format allows audiences to understand, accept and imbibe positive behaviours without feeling challenged or tutored. Television is a very powerful medium of entertainment and despite inroads of digital media, the reach and hold of television continues to grow in India – it's a community of 835 million viewers who have access to television.⁴ PFI's partnership with India's public broadcaster Doordarshan, which provided free airtime for the serial, has ensured that it reaches the farthest corners of the country. MKBKSH is a well-established television programme with a strong viewership and following, especially among rural audiences.

The development of Season 3 began with **formative research**, which included desk review of existing materials related to people's attitudes and norms regarding use and maintenance of toilets. In addition, a **positive deviance enquiry** was conducted in three states to discover the latent and hidden positive practices and wisdom in communities to feed into the storyline. The

study was guided by Prof. Arvind Singhal of the University of Texas in El Paso, who is a scholar and global authority on entertainment education and has guided PFI on *Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon* since its inception. The **Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation**, the nodal ministry for implementation of the Swachh Bharat Mission – Gramin, **supported the research and development** of the story with technical inputs.

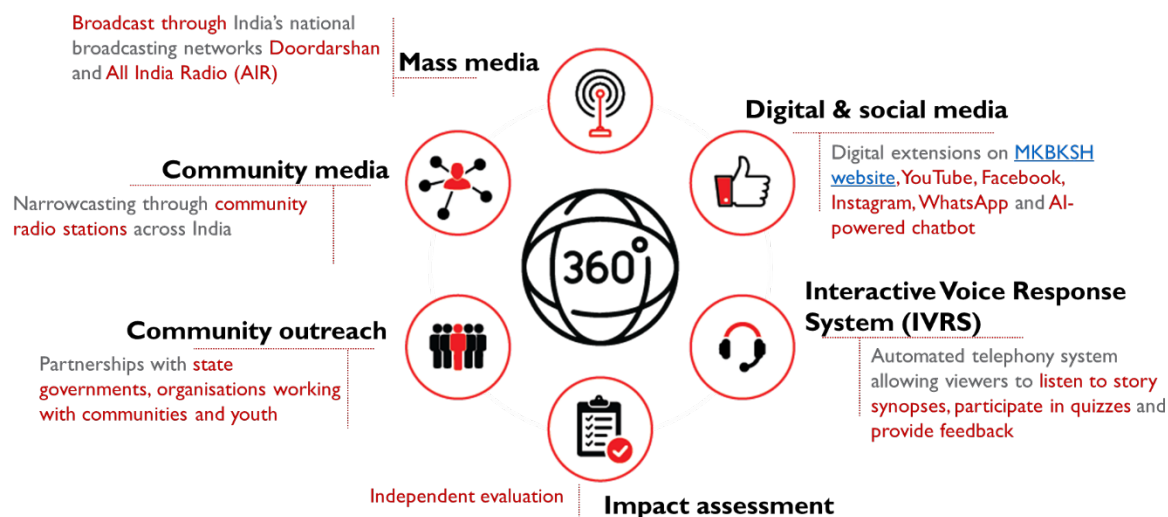
Through the positive deviance enquiry and the creative inputs of the serial's director Feroz Abbas Khan, the script converted messages on sanitation into catchy phrases such as '*jab soch badlegi, tabhi desh badlega*' (the nation will transform when we change our views), '*Swachhta Elaan*' (a pledge to adopt positive sanitation practices, '*zindagi chuno, gandagi nahi*' (choose life over filth) and '*apne khopdi ka mal dho*' (wash away the prejudices in your mind). These are **markers** for the key messages on sanitation which have been used in the serial to reinforce the messages and also use to track viewers' intention to change behaviour.

Season 3 of Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon went on air on 26 January, 2019. The serial was broadcast on DD National every Saturday and Sunday at 9.30 pm and repeat telecast every Monday and Tuesday at 11.30 am. Using a

³ https://jalshakti-ddws.gov.in/sites/default/files/201906_SBM_IEC_Whitepaper.pdf

⁴ Broadcast India Survey 2018

transmedia approach, the TV serial has been supplemented by **on-ground promotions** in three states, a **dedicated IVRS (92689 92689)** to gather viewers' responses as well as share messages, and **outreach through social media**.



Promotion



Audience at the concert in Siwan, Bihar

The serial was promoted through concerts with local artists in small towns across Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Haryana and in Ahmedabad. **About 35,000 people, a majority of them women, participated in the concerts.** In addition, a larger cross-section of people was reached through community radio stations in the three states.

In addition, a celebrity-led concert – **Lalkaar** – with top Hindi film stars including **Aishwarya Rai-Bachhan, Farhan Akhtar, Shankar – Ehsaan – Loy and Shaan** participating, was held in Mumbai. The concert was livecast on Facebook; it got **over 10 million live video views and reached more than 100 million on social media**. Apart from this, approximately 5,000 articles were placed in media, especially in regional press. This helped create a buzz around the serial as it went on air on 26 January 2019.

Short videos extracted from the serial were sent out as WhatsApp messages every week for 3 months to approximately 800,000 Self Help Groups in Bihar. The serial also used a **qawwali** based on a popular Hindi film song with sanitation messages. The qawwali **reached over 6 million viewers through social media** and has been widely shared on WhatsApp and got good response on the IVRS of the serial.



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Impact

The 26 episodes of the serial focusing on sanitation got cumulative viewership of 9.5 million and an average of about one million viewers per episode on Doordarshan⁵, India's public broadcasting channel. It also got more than 7.5 million views on YouTube and Facebook from January to April 2019. The overarching campaign hashtag on social media #SwachhtaElaan reached more than four million, with engagement by 60,000 users.

The IVRS received over 200,000 calls while the episodes related to sanitation were on air from January to April 2019. Apart from weekly quizzes related to the broadcast episodes, the IVRS ran outbound call and SMS campaigns, and invited viewers to contribute their own messages and pledges related to good sanitation practices. More than 27,000 unique listeners heard and contributed to the sanitation messages on the IVRS, with an equal share by women and men.

Independent evaluation of the impact of the serial on viewers' knowledge, attitudes and practices is currently under way. The final results of the evaluation are expected to be available by October, 2019.



Selection of social media posts on sanitation

Some caller's messages

"Humaare gaon mein log khule mein shauch karte hain, lekin humne unko bataya hai ki ek natak aata hai MKBKSH, jisse unhone seekh li aur apne ghar mein shauchalay banwaya" – People in our village used to defecate in the open. I told them about the serial Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon, which they were inspired by and built toilets in their homes.

"mujhe khushi hai ki mere papa ne double pit shauchalay ka prabandh kiya hai aur hum chahte hain ki saare gramvaasi bhi uss he tarah kare...mujhe khushi hai mere papa mera saath de rahe hain" – I am happy that my father built a twin pit toilet at home. I hope other people in the village do the same – I am delighted that my father supports me.

"pehle vichar tha ki nahi, shauchalay ka istemaal nahi karna hai lekin abb jagrukta phaili hai. Ye sirf aur sirf isi karyakram ke madhyam se mumkin ho paaya hai" – Earlier we didn't want to use toilets, but now there is more awareness because of the serial.

⁵ BARC viewership data