

# Behaviour Change Communication for Improving Fecal Sludge Management in Bhutan

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# Context

## Total population

- 700,000 with 120,000 living in Thimphu, Bhutan (National Statistical Bureau, 2010)

## Urban growth

- With 7% annual growth, over half of the population will live in urban areas by 2020
- More demand for onsite sanitation services and proper management of septic tanks

## Current Situation

- Approximately 70% of households in Thimphu rely on onsite sanitation.
- Outside Thimphu, towns continue to promote onsite sanitation with an increasing use of septic tanks without de-sludging services.
- Growing environmental health issues around faecal sludge disposal with leaking tanks, infrequent and unsafe emptying in urban settings.

# Introduction

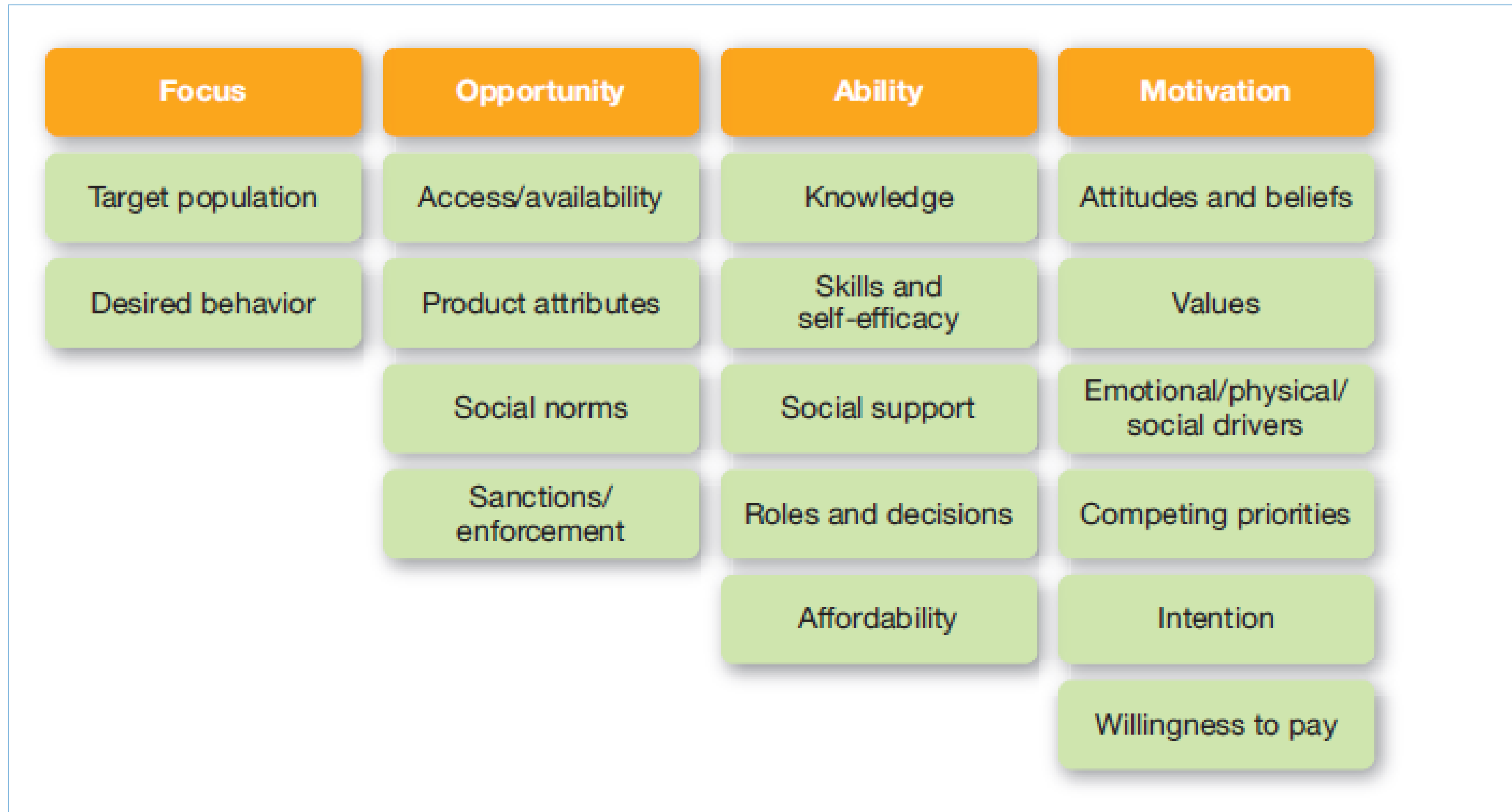
- Ministerial review of the legal and institutional arrangements guiding urban sanitation and hygiene in Bhutan in 2012 (Carrard and Omu, 2012) .
- Increasing the amount of faecal sludge that is safely collected, treated and reused for urban settlements in Bhutan.
- The Department of Engineering Services under the Ministry of Works and Human Settlements is working with SNV Bhutan and the Thimphu City Corporation to develop approaches to ultimately improve access to environmentally safe sanitation and hygiene practices in urban settlements.
- In 2012, formative research was undertaken to develop behaviour change communication strategies to improve hygiene and sanitation behaviours.

# Objectives of the formative research

- To understand how current services are managed and gain in-depth knowledge of consumer preferences and their willingness to pay for improved services.
- To understand the behavioural determinants that would motivate households to call for services including knowledge of when to call for de-sludging services and the effect of sanctions/enforcement.

# Methodology

Figure 1. SaniFOAM Framework





# Findings: Opportunity

## Sanctions/enforcement

People feel imposing fine will increase the demand for services

- More aware of the services provided by Thimphu City Corporation
- However, *"If there is improved services from Thimphu City Corporation then imposing fine is not required or relevant"* ( Institution, Thimphu on 26.4.12).



# Findings: Ability

## Knowledge

### Enablers

- + All householders are aware of their septic tank location and water meter system
- + Most householders only look inside the "check chamber"
- + Most householders connected to water system know about existing services and process of de-sludging
- + Grey water should not go into the WC pan (toilet pot)

### Barriers

- Do not know that they need to check sludge level inside the septic tank
- Do not know when their septic tank is "full" (2/3 of septic tank)
- Don't know the new service /revisions made by Thimphu City Corporation
- Householders who have not used services do not know about the process of de-sludging services nor about related services.



# Findings: Motivation

## Attitudes and Beliefs

- Householders don't feel it necessary to empty their septic tank until it gets full
- Most householders are satisfied with the process of the services
- A few feel the process to avail services is time consuming.

*"The process of getting the services from Thimphu City Corporation is really time consuming for office people and waste of resources such as filling in the hard copy form"*

(Institution, Thimphu on 26.4.12).





# Findings: Motivation Cont...

## Emotional/Physical/Social Drivers

- Foul smell encouraged them to call for services
- Space to be maintained clean (school and office)
- A few householders mentioned their neighbour's complaining



## Willingness to pay

- Most are willing to pay the price charged by Thimphu City Corporation as far as the services are required
- A few householders find it expensive due to transportation costs.

# Outcomes

- The outcomes from the research were used to develop an evidence based behaviour change communication strategy for Thimphu city and Chukha District.
- The strategies included communication objectives focused on the prioritised behavioural determinants to reach the target audience
- The strategies are now in the process of implementation and will seek to improve access to services and improve faecal sludge management in these urban settlements.



# Improving services and demand

## Short term solutions through behaviour change communication

- Improve people's technical know-how to regularly check their septic tanks
- Update about new services provided for service users

## Long term solutions: Service delivery level

- Greater responsiveness in responding to requests for services
- Technical support on septic tank monitoring and management
- Improve Toll Free Service and prioritise emergency requests

## Institutional level:

- Develop long term sewage treatment options
- Fines could be implemented once people are clear of the benefits of compliance and the disadvantages of noncompliance

# Conclusion:

- SaniFOAM as a tool for understanding the determinants of sanitation behaviours proved a useful framework when applied in the urban context of faecal sludge management.
- Better understanding of issues from the perspective of consumers and end-users can enable the government and service providers to effectively target resources towards sanitation services that people want and are willing to pay for.
- It also helps develop appropriate targeted consumer awareness, education and behavioural change communications campaigns and parallel consumer support services.



A group of children in traditional Bhutanese clothing, with a young boy in the foreground smiling broadly. The text is overlaid on the image.

# Ka-drin-chey-la & Tashi Delek!

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