



PRESS RELEASE

Sammaan Toilets Helping Preserve Dignity of Twin-City Urban Poor

The first innovative community toilet complex opened under Project Samman in Ghasia Sahi, Cuttack completes one year of operations.

Cuttack, May 29, 2018: Since the opening of the community toilets under Project Sammaan, the facilities are helping to preserve the dignity of some of the poorest communities in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack through provision of a viable alternative to open defecation.

While there is no shortage of sanitation initiatives being implemented today, Sammaan's approach is unique. The project aims to reduce open defecation by providing innovatively-designed facilities, developing a system for community management for operations and maintenance, and studying behavioural change processes through the collection of usage data.

The first such toilet opened a year ago today in Ghasia Sahi, Cuttack, and has been providing improved sanitation services to over 400 users from the surrounding community.

"Project Sammaan is an innovative sanitation project that involves the community in operations and maintenance of community toilets. The project is successfully providing user-friendly and financially sustainable communal sanitation facilities to the urban poor of Cuttack city" said Bikash Chandra Mohapatra, Municipal Commissioner of Cuttack Municipal Corporation.

Currently, 26 such facilities are in operation (10 in Cuttack and 16 in Bhubaneswar) and serve around 8,000 community members across these 26 communities. All of the 26 facilities in operation are managed by an elected management committee of three community members, called a Sammaan Ward Sanitation committee (WSC). These managers and the selected caretakers have been given comprehensive training on operations and maintenance by Project Sammaan before facility handover. These WSCs have also signed an MoU with their respective municipal corporations, formalising their position as guardians of the facility.

Though the mainstream focus has been predominantly on the construction of individual toilets (IHHL), community toilets are still a necessary aspect of urban sanitation strategy. Especially in cities such as Cuttack, lack of space to construct

IHHLs or the households' inability to finance construction can be a constraint. Project Sammaan is looking to fill this gap by providing high-quality sanitation services to some of the poorest urban areas of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.

"Over the past year, we've gained so many valuable insights into what it takes to run community toilets sustainably, and into the factors that drive behaviour change in users. We hope that these learnings will help these communities take on the challenge of becoming ODF, and will help inform sanitation strategy across Odisha and other urban areas within India" said Rashmi Bhat, Sammaan Project Manager.

Project Sammaan, partly funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), aims to increase the number of facilities to a total of 26 in Bhubaneswar and 32 in Cuttack. Other key partners include JPAL South Asia at IFMR, Center for Advocacy and Research, and TARU Leading Edge Pvt. Ltd. This ambitious pilot project has been possible due to the forward-thinking of the two municipal corporations of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack and is set to improve the sanitation scenario for the urban poor in the twin-cities.

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