

Inclusive accessible sanitation for people with disabilities and transgender persons

Authors: Biraja Kabi Satapathy, WASH Officer, Sweta Patnaik, WASH Specialist, Ajay Singh, Consultant, UNICEF Chhattisgarh

Earlier, I had no toilet in my house. Being handicapped, I used to face multiple challenges. I was selected for the inclusive sanitation pilot project under SBM-G Chhattisgarh. I now feel so happy and dignified by using my toilet at home.

- Mihali Khakhra, Bansbahar gram panchayat, Jashpur district

Introduction: People with disabilities and transgender persons face several physical, social and institutional barriers, which hinder their access to sanitation facilities, compromising their safety, privacy and dignity. The state of Chhattisgarh has achieved open defecation free (ODF) status with 100 percent toilet coverage in rural areas as per the targets under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) [SBM(G)] in 2019, however, some vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities and transgender persons, still face barriers and challenges in accessing safe sanitation facilities. In this regard, UNICEF partnered with WaterAid to advocate with the Rajya Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (RSBM-G), Department of Panchayat and Rural Development (DoPRD), to develop a policy framework for inclusive accessible sanitation in Chhattisgarh and venture for a pilot project of inclusive accessible toilets.

Conceptualisation and pilot of the inclusive accessible sanitation project: Discussion on this pilot initiative started in 2018, led by the RSBM-G with the technical support from UNICEF and WaterAid. Specific needs and challenges of people with disabilities and transgender persons were identified through various consultations with them



Bansbahar panchayat in Jashpur

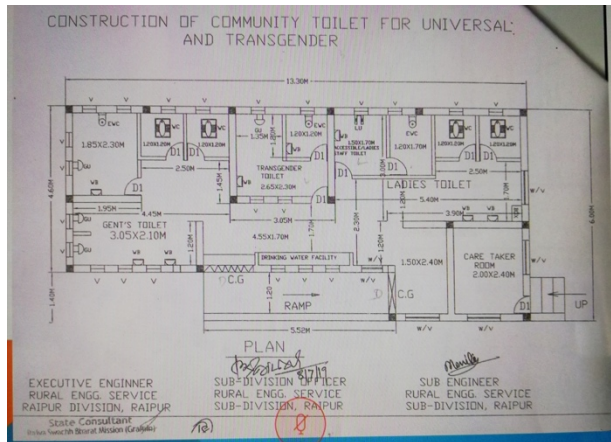


Image 3: Toilet design finalized with RSBM-G

and through assessment surveys. A rapid assessment to identify persons with disabilities and transgender persons for pilot locations was undertaken. Further, a detailed need assessment was undertaken by trained health workers with each of the identified persons with disabilities. An interface workshop between sanitation policy and programme experts, architects, persons with disabilities and transgender persons was organized to finalize user-friendly designs for the construction of new toilets, including the modification of existing toilets – both at

community level and individual household level. A series of trainings for masons and engineers on the construction of these accessible and inclusive toilets, addressing the diversity of needs and specific requirements was organized. **The pilot programme was planned to be implemented in 100 Gram Panchayats of 10 selected districts.**

Specific intervention for transgender persons: As per the Census of India 2011, there are 6,591 transgender persons in the state of Chhattisgarh. The inclusive and accessible toilets pilot programme aims to ensure safety, privacy and dignity for them all the time. This is in line with the 2014 order of the Supreme Court of India for creating separate toilets for transgender persons in public spaces. UNICEF Chhattisgarh also promoted and sensitized various stakeholders on the issue of transgender men as menstruators who often face discrimination due to their gender identity that prevents them from accessing the materials and facilities that they need for menstrual hygiene in such toilet units.

Convergence approach: There was a conscious effort by UNICEF Chhattisgarh to bring together concerned departments and targeted stakeholders to discuss and dovetail CSR funds for the project in the selected districts. Department of Social Welfare provided inputs during the conceptualisation and planning of the initiative. DoPRD facilitated the involvement of engineers from the Rural Engineering Services (RES) in understanding the design to be able to better monitor the installation and construction activities. The State Planning Commission, State Health Resource Centre and others supported the project at various stages in project conceptualisation, planning and assessment of needs. The South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL) provided financial support of Rs. 9.33 crore to demonstrate pilot project in five districts and to conduct social and behaviour change communication activities, through its CSR programme. The RSBM-G also took lead and funded Rs. 5 cores for this project in the other 5 districts using the World Bank Performance Incentive Grants. UNICEF Chhattisgarh brought all the stakeholders together, and

partnered with WaterAid, to provide technical support in organizing consultative workshops, developing the inclusive accessible toilet designs, drafting the policy document, building the capacity of various stakeholders, and in the provision of supportive supervision and knowledge management.

Status of the project: This year, the state is targeting to install 1100 Individual Household Latrines for persons with disabilities and construct 65 inclusive community toilets in 10 districts, out of which 7 community toilets have already been completed and others are in progress. The inclusive community toilet includes four toilets - one for persons with disabilities, one for transgender persons, one for women and one for men.

Toilets built for people with disabilities can be easily used by persons with 18 types of disabilities. Toilets have been decorated with attractive paintings and hygiene messages.

The gram panchayats play an important role in the operation and maintenance of these accessible and inclusive sanitation facilities. Each gram panchayat has deployed one full time person for the required operation and maintenance. The gram panchayats are also being encouraged to have periodic *gram sabhas* to take up the social audit and verification processes of the actual implementation of the project.

On 19th November 2020, World Toilet Day, the State Government recognized the community toilet at *Chaal* Panchayat of Dharmjaygarh block in Raigarh district as the best inclusive and accessible toilet model in the state, and awarded Rs. 2.5 lakh to the gram panchayat.

Inclusive accessible toilet facility in our village brought convenience to people like me. Its approachable with ramp and adequate space for movement. I feel blessed and thankful to Government for provisioning such Inclusive toilets in our village.

- Bhojkumar Sharma, Chaal gram panchayat, Raigarh



Image 4: Award winning inclusive community toilet in Raigarh district

Chhattisgarh, with 61 points, has been declared as a top performing state in India on the gender quality parameters of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as per NITI Aayog's SDG India Index report 2020-2021. There is significant improvement in the parameters from last year in which Chhattisgarh had scored 43 points and was ranked seventh in the country. Inclusive policy and programme initiatives such as the inclusive sanitation pilot are great steps to help Chhattisgarh sustain its position in the gender equality parameters and inspire more such efforts in the sector.



Image 5 and 6: Interface workshop, September 2018 (left), Collage of the consultative meeting with transgender persons (right)