



NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2016



Message from the CEO

According to a report, around 595 million people, which is nearly half the population of India, defecate in the open. Deeply ingrained traditional culture, total acceptance of open defecation by the Indian society, lack of adequate water, sometimes space, and construction of toilets being seen as the responsibility of the Government, are reasons why people do not wish to invest in toilets. Not only that, in many cases new toilets are put to alternative uses, such as store houses or washing areas for clothes.

The report says that the system is prevalent in both rural and urban areas. Even when people are aware of the health risks related to poor sanitation, they continue with the age old practice.

Efforts are underway to build toilets and improve sanitation in the villages as well as in the urban slums. This has happened earlier too. However, we have seen, past efforts to address this problem have had little success.

The only way forward perhaps, is to motivate people sufficiently to use toilets. For this, the cultural and behavioural patterns have to be addressed. General public have to see the advantages of using toilets, only then will this project be successful. Different Government and private agencies, including the World Bank, have put their might behind improving sanitation and Swachh Bharat movement. But experience shows that such projects often get embroiled in bureaucratic red tape and corruption, while people continue their centuries old practice, and not much change happens on the ground.

The point is, such projects will be successful only when it is demand driven. For that efforts have to be made to educate the population on cleanliness and sanitation. Demand will be stimulated only when social and behavioural communication elements are integrated in programmes such as Swachh Bharat mission.

In this edition of our newsletter, we have shared the risk factors involved in open defecation.

Anupama Jha
CEO

Open Defecation : A Dirty Picture

-Yogita Rathore, Intern, FRNV

Ram, an 8-year-old, starts his morning on the Kirti Nagar railway tracks in New Delhi. It's just another morning but today, something does not feel right. It has been four times he has come to the tracks since 5 in the morning and the vomits just don't stop. Later in the evening, the doctor declares that Ram has diarrhea. Sadly, every third or fourth person is a Ram in the slums. The extent of open defecation in India presents a major health and safety issue. Worldwide, there are one billion people who do not have a toilet and Indians make up 60% of this number. Of this 60%, the majority comes from rural and urban slums. Activists and the government have advocated for the building of shared community toilets as a solution to the problem, but ingrained social norms and attitudes stop people from using them.

Secondly, most people from rural areas have shown an unwillingness to discontinue their habits of open defecation even if they are given toilets. Many people who already have toilets in their house forgo its use in favor of defecating in the open. In 40% of households that had a toilet, at least one member chose not to use it at all. They believe that defecating in the open is more natural and healthy and building a latrine in the house brings impurity to it. Community toilets also have the added problem of being—by nature—shared and people from different castes, religions, and economic status aren't willing to use the same toilet, even if they come from the same village.

It must be noted that open defecation not only poses a huge health risk but also safety risk as there have been hundreds of cases of women being raped as they leave their homes after dark. One in three women around the world are victims of violence at least once in their lifetime. The connection between toilets and violence against women may not initially be obvious but consider a woman without access to a toilet in her home. When travelling to and from public toilets, using the toilet, or venturing from her home to defecate openly, she is vulnerable to violence. This vulnerability is becoming increasingly recognized and capitalized upon. Women experiencing regular discrimination express fear of assault/rape when having to leave the house to use the toilet. Reports of attacks or harassment near or in toilet facilities as well the areas where women defecate openly are common. The consequences of such violence against women are both physical and psychological for the victim and extend to families and communities that continue to live with gender inequalities and lost the economic potential of victims.

The two young girls from Uttar Pradesh, India, raped and murdered this year while looking for a toilet aren't forgotten. While it's important to recognize that lack of access to toilets was not the cause of this violence, not having a safe place to go to the toilet facilitated the act. While poor access to toilets is not the cause of violence against women, it surely increases their vulnerability towards it.

While the statistics and instances paint a very shabby picture, there's still some hope if people like Lavanya exist. Lavanya, a ninth grader in school, staged a 48-hour hunger protest to demand a toilet in her home. Just like everyone else in the village, this teenager used to rush to the open fields to answer nature's call. A perfectly normal, biological process was a source of everyday embarrassment as she would try to defecate without being seen by anyone and menstrual days used to be worse. And then, one day she could not take it anymore. Her insistence for a toilet caused a mini revolution in the village of Sira Taluk, Karnataka, resulting in not just one toilet being built at her home, but also inspiring others in the community to get one.

News and Events

To improve the current condition of sanitation and cleanliness, FRNV held a meeting with Shri Somnath Bharti, MLA, AAP to discuss the installation of mobile toilets in Kumar Colony, Malviya Nagar, Delhi.

In addition to this, FRNV also wrote to the Chairman of Delhi Development Authority (DDA) for the same.

Dear readers,
FRNV invites stories from its readers on deep-rooted values that have helped us in our everyday lives. Some of these stories will be featured in the next issue of our newsletter. So put your thinking caps on, recall the values integral to your life which you cherish and write to us at shilpi@valuefoundation.in

Lavanya's dedication is a reflection of her understanding about the importance sanitation. Every year, 200,000 children in India die from diseases caused by fecal contamination. Although open defecation has been reduced by 31% since 1990, millions in India still don't have a choice, out of which about 300 million are women and girls. Imagine trying to squat in a saree, while holding a cup of water to cleanse and keeping an eye out for rapists. But then again, even if there is one Lavanya in hundreds, the problem can be countered. All it takes is to just embrace the elephant in the room and start working towards it in your own little way, be it by following Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi's Swachh Bharat Movement or installing a Moving Toilet Vehicle in a locality in need like FRNV is trying to do for Kumar Colony, Malviya Nagar.

The need of the hour is to act as advocates of proper sanitation and zero open defecation for all and being such advocates, it is also our obligation to consider protection of women against violence in all aspects. All it takes is a little spark for a movement to start. The picture indeed is **dirty** but all it takes is one person to start the **unearthing** process.

INDIA IS POLIO-FREE (BUT FOR HOW LONG?)

- Mitali Gupta, Intern, FRNV

Rukhsar Khatoon is about seven years old. She lives in Shahpara, a village located near Kolkata, in the Indian State of West Bengal. Her life is rather ordinary –her father works in the *zari* industry, her mother stays at home, and she has two siblings. Despite her ordinariness, there is something special about Rukhsar –not only is she infected with Polio, but she was also the last in India to be.

If you have grown up in India in the 1990s, like I have, you simply could not have missed the huge banners with Amitabh Bachchan's face looking out at you and telling you about the 'two drops of life'. We were regularly vaccinated, perhaps as frequent as one Sunday each month. With chalk, volunteers would write the date of vaccination outside houses. Each doorbell was rung and children below the age of five were asked for.

Until the 1990s, Polio was hyperendemic in India; it affected a whopping two to four million people each year. In 1985 alone, there were 1,50,000 reported cases of Polio in the country. It was only with the introduction of the Polio Vaccine in the late 70s that India called a war on the epidemic. In the 90s, the country took to a mass immunisation drive, entered into multiple health treaties and agreements on an international level, and acknowledged the problem of sanitation. The country became a pioneer in the research and development of vaccines and for once, united in the battle against the epidemic. In 2011, at the young age of eighteen months, Rukhsar became the last Polio victim in India. In 2013, India completed three years without a single reported case of Polio.

According to international standards the country was declared Polio free. A celebration of sorts commenced thereafter –we had together achieved a feat that had been deemed impossible. Indeed, victory over Polio was and is something to rejoice about.

However, there exists another side to the floor; a side too ugly to admit. According to the World Health Organization, one billion people worldwide defecate in the open. Among these one billion people, more than a whopping 595 million people are in India, making India the country with the largest number of open defecators. In India, statistically, more people have an access to mobile phones than toilets. 65% of the rural population do not have access to toilets while 80% of child faeces are thrown into the garbage or are disposed of openly and are not disposed of properly. The numbers are alarming.

Perhaps what is even more alarming is that this lack of sanitation does not only emerge as a consequence of poverty. Despite being resourceful, many people in the country lack the willingness to adopt toilets as a mode of sanitation. They consider open defecation as 'comfortable', 'healthy', and 'bio-degradable'. While a lack of infrastructure can be tackled, it is relatively harder to tackle open defecation when it is an accepted mode of lifestyle. Why is defecating in the open so bad? When one defecates in the open, the faecal matter gets direct access to ground water. This means that drinking wells and agricultural produce are often contaminated. In many places in the country, this has become the key reason for poor nutrition and health conditions.



Merely one gram of faeces contains 10,000,000 viruses, 1,000,000 bacteria, and 1,000 parasite cysts. Imagine the kind of infection spreads each day when more than 595 million people defecate in the open.

How does open defecating concern Polio at all? The faecal-oral route is an important polio transmission pathway. In this manner, open defecation increases the risk of polio infection in the community. While Polio has been tackled, there are full chances that the disease may relapse. This becomes more of a possibility in a country like India, where hygiene-related diseases, most notably diarrhoea, intestinal worm infections, typhoid, cholera, hepatitis, and trachoma, are common.

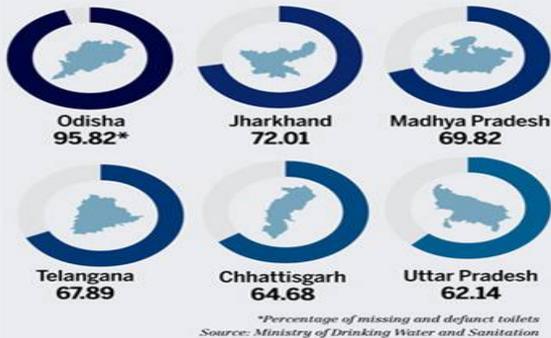
To tackle the existing diseases and to ensure that the menace of Polio does not resurface, it is impertinent that India unites yet again, and this time to defeat the peril of defecating in the open.

The good news is that the Indian Government had recognised the problem of open defecation early on. In 1986, the Government launched the Central Rural Sanitation Programme (CRSP). In 1999, the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA) was launched. These policies evolved steadily and aimed at increasing allocation of funds for individual households. They were primarily directed towards poorer households.

In 2012, the current Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, launched the Swachh Bharat Campaign. The campaign intends to support a strong emphasis on collective behaviour change.

NO PLACE TO GO

The worst offenders in India's great toilet trick



In the Constitution of India, since sanitation is a subject in the state list, states have a lot of flexibility to decide on how to proceed with monetary allocations for sanitation infrastructure. This flexibility is checked to a great extent by the Swachh Bharat Campaign that aims to build over one hundred million toilets by 2019. Although these policies are highly encouraging, we cannot overlook the fact that addressing the issue of toilets is not enough. Although building sanitation infrastructure is impertinent, it is only a short-term answer. There is a need for a programme that aims at long-term sustainability. As discussed above, it has to be kept in mind that often toilets are not used out of choice – there are seen as filthy and inconvenient. Open defecation is preferred because it is considered to be safe and viable. Simply providing toilets are a half-measure that is doomed to fail.

The first challenge to tackling open defecation is a lack of awareness. According to a study held according to the UNICEF guidelines, 89% of the respondents said that they built latrines for reasons of comfort and convenience and only 26% mention perceived health benefits. This indicates a lack of awareness – people are unaware of the health problems associated with open defecation. Thus, awareness regarding hygiene needs to be spread. Community interventions along with seminars and workshops can be held in various parts of India. The best way to make people aware about the problems emerging out of open defecation is to tell them.

Another challenge is regarding the cleanliness of the community toilets. Public latrines are more often than not dirty. They tend to become the breeding ground for various diseases. There is thus a need for training regarding the cleaning and maintenance of public and community toilets. The issue of sanitation must be brought up in the community. Organisations across the country need to take up the task of disseminating this message. We need advertisements, billboards, and seminars that speak on the importance of flushing the toilet and keeping it clean.

We have to aim at breaking the acceptance of open defecation as a mode of lifestyle, and that can only be done by bringing a change in the mindset. Open defecating needs to be overtly portrayed as a dirty and disgusting manner of sanitation. It needs to be reiterated in the community that tackling sanitation problems are extremely important. If we do not tackle open defecation, Polio relapsing will be the least of our worries.



Musings from Our Friends and Members

Embracing Science for Toilet Innovation

- Ingrid Moysset, Friend, FRNV

Not that much has happened with toilet innovation since the flush toilet was invented. Is there some feeling of cleanliness or privacy when we send our poop far away from us? Are we uncomfortable with the thought of making use of the residues in our nearby environment? There might be a lot of opportunities in overcoming the psychological barrier of using nontraditional toilets. It could be time to trust science for technology and toilet innovation.

If I am not mistaken, the movement towards solving the sixth millennium United Nations goal on sanitation is strong in India. Gujarat recently announced 6 000 villages had become open defecation free and joint forces are putting this goal as a priority in their CSR expenditures. The UN claims targeting this goal will have horizontal effects on child mortality, maternal health, education, gender equality and extreme poverty. Investment in sanitation, it is further said, pays back four times.

At the same time as more than half of India's population is in need of a solution to open defecation, water management is becoming a greater challenge. The UN is encouraging systems that save water, as shortage risks to lead to future conflicts. The investments and efforts should help to build a stronger resilience at national level.

It might be the time to reconsider our preconceptions of what a toilet should be and look like if both these issues are to be solved in the years to come.

For a toilet renaissance, here are a couple of ideas worth considering for product development :

- Combustion. The Cinderella toilet is an electric toilet which can be run by solar energy. It claims to be the most "innovate and environmentally friendly toilet solution". Ashes is its' only residue and can easily be handled by nature as they are totally free from bacteria. One week's use for a family results in one cup of ashes. It is independent of the water system. The toilet is now used in secondary residences, boats, trains, caravans and motor homes in northern Europe. This solution has been used for 15 years and is now starting to be marketed towards southern European countries.

-Anthropologists, education (?). Peepoople is a bag solution specifically targeting open defecation problems. The user makes her/his needs in it, then closes it and puts it in an assembly place. The bag contains enzymes which break down the bacteria; it can then all be used as a fertilizer. Currently, the Peepoople solution is up and running in Kenyan slums, where it is highly appreciated by its' users. The solution might need some try outs before working within the culture of the Indian slums. Could education on health benefits of good sanitation be of any help for slum inhabitants to adopt this idea?

-Distillation. A group of researchers at Gent University, Belgium, claim to have found a way to convert pee in potable water and fertilizers. The experience was made during a music festival where the research was marketed as "Pee for Science". The urine was kept in a solar panel heated reservoir and then filtrated to separate water from nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. To take the experiment further, a new goal has been set: to put bigger versions of these machines in arenas and airports.

Yet another experiment on the use of pee was made at the Glastonbury festival where it was transformed to electricity that could keep the facilities lit. Studies from Junagadh University claim to have found, amongst other elements, traces of gold and silver in the urine of Gir cows. In addition to the tremendous benefits of proper sanitation facilities, the people enjoying a new dignity might get some unexpected, positive side-effects.

Sources: UNICEF, UN, Livemint, UNDP, Times of India, Gent University, News Security Beat, Science Daily, DeccanChronicle, the Cinderella homepage.