BASIC SERVICES AND THE URBAN POOR CHILDREN

a policy and practice brief on children living in urban poverty in Odisha

The policy and practice brief on 'Basic Services and the Urban Poor Children' has been published by Youth For Social Development with the purpose of improving physical environment and basic services for the urban poor children which is vital for their physical and emotional growth. We do believe this will provide important research and policy inputs to various stakeholders specifically the government, policy makers, service providers and think tanks to improve urban basic services.

Introduction

Bad sanitation, specifically outdoor defecation causes illness and affects the quality of life of people in general particularly the young children. Diarrheal diseases caused by inadequate sanitation and unhygienic conditions put children at multiple risks leading to vitamin and mineral deficiencies, high morbidity, malnutrition, stunting and death. At the same time dignity of life of the young girl/boy, fear of mugging of insects, sexual abuse and violence are worry among others.

Out of 3,55,823 people in Berhampur town (census, 2011), 33% (1,17,541) of people are living in urban poverty in slums. 59.5% of them are defecating in open air due to no access to individual and community toilets in the slums. Only 3% of the slum dwellers use community toilets. At the same time 15.1% of the non-slums households in the city are used to open defecation due to non-availability of individual toilet facilities. Traditionally significant populations in the city have been habituated to open defecation near the local water bodies and there are socially demarcated open areas for women, men and sometimes caste divisions also exist in sharing the area surrounding the ponds, which is still practiced in many of the areas in the city.

Due to lack of toilets in the slum, open defecation is prevalent. Slum dwellers go to nearby open ground to answer their nature's call. It was shocking to know that some of the grounds are about one to two kilometers away from the slums. Further, issues like women security, harassment of women create problems for women. At night women have to stop themselves and sometimes end up defecating in the open drains.

Toilets and Children in Slums

Young children are the mostly affected due to open defecation, diseases such as diarrhea, worm infestations, skin infections and chronically challenged immune systems are prevalent due to poor sanitary surroundings. This can lead to long-term effects like physical and emotional stunting among the children in urban slums. Long term solutions are needed to address these issues in which children are affected the most. Open defecation is a socio-economic problem and has an adverse impact on the dignity of life for the slum dwellers in general and the health of children in particular.

Major problems in Sanitation-Toilet

- Open air defecation in slum areas is highly prevalent (59.5%). 10,996 households in non-slum areas and 15,519 households in slum region defecate in open area.
- Only thirteen wards out of 40 have been covered with a meager 24 community toilets and 190 seats.
- Only 3% (788 households) of the slum dwellers use community toilets.
- Poor maintenance of existing public toilets with issues like lack of water supply, electricity and regular cleaning.
- Public toilets appear to be one of the low priority sectors with a budget allocation of only 0.44% during 2013-14 (BE).
- Low level of awareness among citizens on use of toilets particularly in the slum areas.
- Unhygienic conditions in slum areas due to open defecation.
- Diarrheal diseases caused by inadequate sanitation and unhygienic conditions mostly among young children.
- Open defecation is common practice near the ponds leading to unhealthy and unhygienic conditions turning the water bodies dirty and harmful to use.

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1 Toilet for Health, A report by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Nov. 2013
2 City Sanitation Plan, Berhampur, 2011
Sanitation in Berhampur

Though the responsibility to provide better sanitation and preventive healthcare services rest with the urban local body as per the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, Berhampur Municipal Corporation has failed to provide these services to the urban habitants. Government of Odisha has formulated the Odisha Urban Sanitation Strategy (O USS) on the lines of National Urban Sanitation Policy (NUSP) since December, 2008. To implement the strategy the Govt. of Odisha has undertaken to assist some 8 cities/towns in developing City Sanitation Plans (CSP) with funding support from Government of India, while National Institute of Urban Affairs acts the central coordinating agency.

Table 1: Household accessibility to toilets in Berhampur Municipal Corporation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total wards</th>
<th>Total HHs</th>
<th>Slum HHs</th>
<th>Total HHs connected to soak pit and septic tank</th>
<th>HHs connected to drain</th>
<th>HHs without access to toilet</th>
<th>Community toilets</th>
<th>% of slum HHs</th>
<th>% of HHs without individual toilets</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>66,818</td>
<td>26,212</td>
<td>35,655</td>
<td>4,754</td>
<td>26,403</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 24 community toilets exist and are limited to only thirteen wards out of 40. 190 seats are available in 18 community toilets. Inadequacy of toilets, more than half of them are defunct with regard to water facilities and irregular cleaning, no electricity facilities, poor maintenance and not functioning to its full capacity leads to discouraging people in use of community toilets.

There are six more public toilets that are completely defunct which is maintained by the Berhampur Municipal Corporation. While there are no new public toilets coming up, a few old structures are in a dilapidated condition in the city.

No action for community awareness on sanitation and no IEC plan and poor implementation have contributed to the worsening of the situation. Recent review of BMC development programme by the principal secretary, housing and urban development department, government of Odisha has prioritized to eradicate open defecation, construction of more community toilets and take steps to make Berhampur first open defecation free city in Odisha. But the steps taken by the municipal corporation continue to be insignificant and sluggish.

Ignorance of open defecation and associated problems among the urban poor is an important reason for not having priority for a toilet though they can afford this. Some cases building temples in slums and donating for religious functions attain higher priority than a toilet. On the other hand discussion about toilets is associated with social and cultural taboos resulting in continuation of open defecation.

Physical verification of public toilets

Physical verification of few selected public toilets in the city has given one of the most horrifying picture. Issues range from no access to water and no electricity to unhygienic situation which made communities not to use these toilets thereby forcing them towards open air defecations. Unexpectedly few public toilets specifically meant for ladies have no doors, while most of them have no overhead tanks and sono water supply. One of the public toilets has a boundary wall in a dangerous condition that at any time it may collapse, while few public toilets are being used as garbage dumping yard in the city. Few public toilets are in dangerous condition to use as toilets with problems like dirty pans, no doors, small plants have grown inside the toilets. Further toilets are full of insects and some places poisonous insects have inhabited the toilets. Overall the infrastructure with most of public toilets is poor due to poor maintenance. At the same time the functional public toilets also have many issues ranging from broken pans, bad odor due to irregularity in cleaning, no water supply, no lights, dirty and unhygienic vicinity and surroundings. This gives a clear picture of poor maintenance which has pushed community members towards open defecations against their willingness.

Budget for Public Toilets

The budgetary provision of the BMC for maintaining public toilets is quite low as it is only Rupees 37 lakhs i.e. 0.44 per cent of the total budget (2013-14 DE). Sulabh International has been paid only Rupees 98.44 lakhs during 2000 to 2014 for the maintenance of 28 public toilets in the city.

Clear analysis of the budget shows that the percentage of public expenditure in public toilets (as compared to the total expenditure) has been inconsistent during 2000-01 to 2013-14. From 2006-07 there is consistent...
decrease, while from 2011-12 onwards it the public expenditure showed some increasing trends. On the whole from 2000-01 to 2013-14 shows public toilets as a very low priority sector for Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BMC). The table below depicts that apart from maintenance of old public toilets BMC has not allocated any budget for construction of new public toilets since 2000-01 to 2011-12. But during 2012-13 and 2013-14 BMC has allocated rupees 10 lakhs and 30 lakhs respectively.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Toilet</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintenance of Sanitation &amp; Urinals</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>7.13</td>
<td>6.62</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>26.93</td>
<td>7.84</td>
<td>7.46</td>
<td>6.35</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Expenditure</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>7.13</td>
<td>6.62</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>26.93</td>
<td>7.84</td>
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**BMC action for Public Toilets**

- Recent review of BMC development programme by the principal secretary, housing and urban development department, govt. of Odisha has prioritized to eradicate open defecation, construction of more community toilets and take steps to make Berhampur first open defecation free city in Odisha. But at ground level the steps taken by the municipal corporation appears to be insignificant and sluggish.
- During the post-Phailin period the central government has approved rehabilitation of 68 slums in Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BMC) area under the Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY). Under this 4,500 beneficiaries will be benefitted with new houses and some remodeled with provision of basic amenities like kitchen, toilet, etc.

**Immediate attention**

- Construction of new public toilets and rapid renovation of all old public toilets in all slums is one of the pressing needs of the time. It is important that BMC prioritizes this work with immediate effect.
- BMC should make mandatory laws and its implementation for every household, where toilet shall be mandatory for all kinds of constructions including private and government housing schemes.
- BMC needs to make immediate provision of water supply, electricity connection and regular cleaning and maintenance of public toilets in the city.
- BMC should implement ‘City Sanitation Plan, 2011’ in its full spirit and make adequate budget provision for its efficient implementation.
- BMC should take steps to declare Berhampur city as the first open defecation free (ODF) city in Odisha and accordingly take steps towards achieving that goal.
- Lack of community awareness on sanitation and poor implementation of the information, education and communication (IEC) plan as per the Uissa Urban Water and Sanitation Communication Strategy. This gap should be filled through designing programmes to build awareness.
- IEC plays a prominent role in promoting use of toilets and slum dwellers should be motivated to use toilets and its operation and maintenance through IEC.
- Local media plays a crucial role in building consciousness among community members and other stakeholders. Besides hardware constraints like land tenure issue, lack of space and resources for constructing household toilets in slums, factors that limit effective demand for sanitation especially those with behavioral roots need careful attention.
- Media also can influence policy makers, business leaders, advocacy groups, people's representatives and citizens as service users in improving standard of service delivery.
- It is essential for the BMC to form toilet users' group (TUG) in order to sustain the long term use of public toilets in terms of their hygiene, usage and maintenance.

**City Sanitation Plan, Berhampur-2011**

City Sanitation Plan provides an insight on the present sanitation practices situation in the city, sanitation deficiencies and provides a detailed planning for city wide sanitation for attaining the goal of open defecation free city.

- 989 individual toilets for both slum and non-slum areas
- 534 shared toilets being shared by two households
- 251 community toilet seats in 25 toilets suitably located within accessible distance of the targeted slum
- 105 public toilet seats in 21 toilets suitably located in the public places
- 40 public urinals with provision of two urinals in each facility
Condition of Public Toilets in Berhampur City

Haridakhandi
Lanjipalli
Pandav Nagar
Ainabandha Street
Old Berhampur
Ram Nagar

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