

Understanding the impact of the presence of Bathing Spaces on the lives of rural women



A Research jointly undertaken by
Vikas Anvesh and BAIF team



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VAF
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Executive Summary

A study to understand the impacts of having a bathing space on the life of a rural woman was undertaken by VikasAnvesh Foundation. Previous studies by VAF have shown that the need for a bathing space is not felt in the Indian rural communities. BAIF under the Bharat Rural Livelihoods Foundation (BRLF) project had facilitated the construction of bathing spaces in two villages; Baretha and Shitaljhiri. These bathrooms are three-walled structures with cement flooring. The wall height is so that a woman can bathe easily while sitting down. The bathroom is built in such a way that they can be extended to the full walled structures. The villages were visited to interact with the women who used the bathing spaces and understand their views about the bathing space and if they perceive any benefits from the bathroom.

The women in the two villages earlier bathed near hand pumps or temporary arrangement near their homes. These bathing areas did not provide privacy, and often the women used to bathe in a hurry with wet clothes on their body. After the intervention, the women have perceived changes in their lives in the way of comfort, privacy, convenience and better health. Women have said that they can now bathe in privacy with clean water. Women across age groups regularly use the bathrooms. Women have reported a reduction in the body pain, discomfort during menstruation. They can now practice better menstrual hygiene practices. However, the responsibility of filling the water for use in the sanitation structure, cleaning and maintenance of the sanitation structure were shouldered by women. The sanitation structure increased their drudgery.

Given the reported benefits, the study has identified bathing as an essential WASH need for women. The bathrooms, coupled with toilets and water supply provided by the company, have enabled the women's privacy and dignity, improved health, wellbeing, social status.

Summary points to be taken from the study are -.

- Under this intervention, the latrine cost was covered under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan scheme where each family who builds a toilet gets an incentive of Rs. 12000. Rest of the cost was borne through the programme. The agency adopted methods of collective material distribution, masonry trainings to reduce the costs..*
- Half walled bathrooms were built under the programme. The bathroom is built in such a way that they can be extended to the full walled structure..*
- The agency had adopted a women group approach. They formed SHGs before the programme started, conducted meetings with the women of the SHGs, gave them trainings and included them in the construction of the bathing space. This gave the women a sense of ownership towards the sanitation structure and therefore, an impetus towards using the structures for its purposes..*
- Along with sanitation structure, the agency also facilitated the restoration of old water structures and construction of new water structures like handpumps and wells. This reduced the drudgery involved in carrying the water..*