

Innovation: Strengthening the delivery of WASH intervention in partnerships between MCGM and Community Volunteers with a facilitative support from NGO in Urban Informal Settlements

Background:

There is a rapid increase in the urban slum population due to various factors like better economic growth, social stability, increased job prospects, better health service providers etc. This rapid increase in the urbanization process poses a great threat to the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) scenario. People living in urban informal settlements are the most disadvantaged due to poor access to clean water, hygiene and sanitation conditions.

WHO and ¹UNICEF suggests that WASH directly contributes to an increase in under-nutrition, illnesses, and repeated infections in pregnancy, increased neonatal and maternal diseases, increase in stunting² and under nutrition in newborns and during the early childhood development period.

SNEHA is working in a vulnerable ward of Mumbai with the objective of improving mother and child health and nutrition. WASH is an essential component of strategies to reduce under nutrition, with a solid focus on the first 1000 days — from conception to a child's second birthday. Due to inadequate food hygiene practices and poor sanitation situations there is an increase in the levels of microbial contamination of food thus leading to diarrhoea and other child mortality conditions.

Major challenges of poor hygiene and sanitation conditions in urban informal settlements are:

1. Open drainage system
2. Irregular cleaning and maintenance of drains
3. Irregular collection of garbage
4. Lack of cleaning of the main drain lines to have a low waste water level in the drain lines within the community
5. Unauthorized construction over the gutter line pose a challenge in cleaning the drains
6. Waste disposal on the road side or in the drains
7. Drinking water pipe line is located within the gutter. Any leakage in the drinking water pipe leads to contamination and gastric infections in the community

Steps/Processes:

Following processes and steps were undertaken to address the concern:

¹ According to UNICEF report on strategy for WASH 2016-2030

• ² (Checkley et al., 2008). Long term exposure to faecal pathogens may also partially explain environmental enteric dysfunction (EDD) (Humphrey, 2009).

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1. **Understanding the felt need by the community for WASH problems:** Continuous dialogue was undertaken with the community volunteers to understand the need. This process was carried out through participatory and facilitative tools to define the problem and preparing a plan of action. A series of meetings was undertaken with different stakeholders like community volunteers, hygiene and sanitation department of the municipal corporation, maintenance department of the ward office, local ward corporators and hygiene and sanitation contractors assigned by the municipal corporation department to understand the roles and responsibilities of staff, different schemes like Swatchha Bharat Abhiyan and its implementation.
2. **Understanding the WASH scenario:** a micro planning exercise and transect walk was done to understand the community drainage system, issues related to washrooms and garbage management
3. **Creating in-depth understanding of drainage system:** with the help of all stakeholders, maps were created of each plot and the total number of drains in each plot and then in the entire area. We also tried to understand the flow of waste water and understood the reasons of waste water getting accumulated in many households. This also helped us to define the strategies to improve the situation.
4. **Engagement and dialogue with all stakeholders** - Regular meetings were undertaken jointly with volunteers and other stakeholders. This was done at 3 levels as follows:
 - **Engagement of Municipal corporation staff –**
 - Meeting with Municipal corporation staff especially the Head of Department (waste and sanitation department) and Assistant Commissioner to understand WASH related mandate, hierarchy and structure.
 - **Meeting with other officials** - such as Jr. Engineer, Sr. engineer, maintenance staff contractors, Duttak Basti Yojna team responsible for WASH to seek their support and understand their roles. **These continuous meetings led to -**
 - **JCB construction equipment allotment by the BMC authorities** - Initiation of internal and external drainage cleaning initiated to streamline water flow of gutters.
 - **Engagement of local Corporator :**
 - **Meeting with the ward Corporator** - 2 Local corporators played a major role along with municipal corporation sanitation department towards cleaning of gutters.
 - **Actively engaging community volunteers –**
 - 138 volunteers engaged and took action for WASH to address concerns
 - **Mapping of drainage by Community** - Transect walk to understand drainage situation and chronic spots in community. This was followed by preparing maps of internal and external drainage system

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- **Involvement and engagement of Community** - Plot wise identification of volunteers to work on WASH. Formation of core committee with volunteers and MCGM staff to facilitate discussions with different stakeholder
- WASH corner meeting conducted by volunteers to seek support for WASH from other community members and to increase their strength.

5. Engaging community for action and building ownership – Following activities were carried out jointly by all stakeholders:

- Meetings with ward commissioner to seek support and orient him about the intervention.
- Series of meetings, discussions and workshop facilitated by community volunteers to orient , discuss challenges related to WASH and plan future action
- Series of meetings with ward corporators by volunteers within the community to seek support for providing garbage bins (separate wet and dry waste), installation of big garbage bins at the chronic spots, details about the cleanliness staff.
- Regular core committee meetings to plan for future action and provide feedback for group
- Cleaning was done of main drainage line and peripheral drainage outlets with the help of maintenance department providing JCB's.
- Joint WhatsApp group was created where concerns raised by the volunteers were immediately managed by the Municipal corporation staff.

Results/Impact:

1. Regular cleaning of drainage gutter lines
2. Concerns raised by volunteers was immediately managed and corrected
3. Regular cleaning of peripheral drains by the maintenance team
4. Timely collection of garbage

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Challenges and Solutions:

1. Initially there was a poor support from the community towards municipal corporation workers. This was converted to proactive support once the drainage cleaning received momentum.

Key Takeaways:

1. It is possible to work on WASH intervention if there is community buy in.
2. Thorough understanding of the stakeholder's roles, mandate and hierarchical structure is critical to drive the WASH intervention.
3. Focused and result oriented facilitation, collectively aiming at building trust and transparency among all the stakeholders was one of the key drivers for the success of this program.

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