

## **Brief Description of the proposal**

Open defecation was one of the most prominent problems of the slum areas of Bhopal which was proving to be challenging as the mindset of the people was rigid. Building toilets in their homes was associated with beliefs like eating where you shit and other myths that regarded it as impure.

'Doctor Apke Dwar' was formulated keeping in mind the fact those superstitions among the areas of slum areas in mind and busting the myths.

After a lot of research of many slums of Bhopal, the problem was identified and it was found that most of the people went out for defecation and that was the major reason for them falling sick now and often. A peculiar trend was observed and it was found that the people of slums were daily wagers and fell sick often and instead of taking general medicines they frequently visited the nearby doctor for prescription.

The fact that a doctor was an important figure in their lives turned out to be an advantage for the members of Bhopal Municipal Corporation to execute the concept of 'Doctor Apke Dwar'. The members of Sanidhya Samiti Bhopal came up with the idea of promoting health and hygiene with the help of doctors, making them visit the people of the slums at their homes to make them see the impact of hygiene in keeping healthy.

As a result, many free check-up camps were conducted in the identifies slum areas where some prominent doctors counseled the people, tackling them by asking about their daily routine and habits of defecation. Once the patients queued up to see the doctor, the particular doctor inquired about their eating habits, how often did they fall ill, how frequently they visited the doctors and if they had a toilet at home.

When most of the patients affirmed defecating in the open the doctor brought to light how they were indirectly consuming the germs from their feces as the germs were brought back to their homes through clothes, dirty nails and hands, foot-wears and by children playing in the mud, near the drains. This led to a growth of number of disease causing bacteria and viruses in their kitchen that ultimately were consumed by them through food and made them fall ill.

When the message was conveyed to them by a doctor, their trust in a 'specialist' made them realize the gravity of the matter. A member carrying the forms of the 'Individual Household Latrine(IHHL) application forms was present with the doctor and as the doctor convinced the slum dwellers to get toilets constructed in their homes, the member of Sanidhya Samiti Bhopal got their forms filled and asked them to deposit the token money of Rs 1300/-.

The 'Doctor Apke Dwar' campaign conducted **at 19 Zones and 84 wards** of Bhopal. A total of **314 camps** with participation of more than **20,000 slum dwellers** were done and as a result, **32,200 toilets** were construed through the IHHL scheme.

## **Context of implementation**

The problem that affects almost 70% of slum dwellers, around 10 % of total population(around 23,000 people) of Bhopal residing in **388 slums of the city** area is a challenging one. Changing the mindset of so many people in one go is not an easy task. This was one of the reasons why 'Doctor Apke Dwar' was conceived in the first place.

Since most of the people living in slums are uneducated and do not know the relation between health and hygiene, the first step was to make them aware of it and initiate a change in attitude towards open defecation and encourage them to build toilets at homes with the help of the IHHL scheme.

The problem was addressed with the help of doctors and finally when the people were convinced, they were made to fill the IHHL application with the minimum amount of token money. After conducting a number of camps 32,000 toilets were built in the slums of Bhopal and the number, with the number getting higher with each count.

After conducting a number of surveys and spreading awareness among the people and construction of toilets in houses of slum-dwellers, the campaign of Doctor Apke Dwar expanded to include - women safety and sanitation (WSS) and Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) to promote sanitation during mensuration among women.

It has been found in many surveys conducted in the country that many cases of harassment and rapes occurred during the time a woman went out in a secluded area to relieve herself during dawn or dusk. Keeping in mind the increasing number of crimes against women, it became an important aspect to stop open defecation.

Women in the slums have no idea about the how and why of mensuration and instead of looking at it as a biological process, they relate it to impurity and religious biases towards bleeding girls makes the situation more complicated.

Doctor Apke Dwar was expanded to cater to the needs of the women dwelling in slums to educate them about their bodies and bust the myths related to mensuration. Lady doctors were called in to take session with girl students of government schools and their mothers, hence educating two generations at the same time.

Gynecologists explained the process of puberty and hormonal changes in the body that lead to mensuration and how it was a sign of a healthy female body. They busted the orthodox myths for mothers and daughters alike. Along with clearing their doubts they also gave them advice to eat healthy and maintain proper hygiene during the three days of the menstrual cycle, keep their private parts clean, change pads and dispose them off away from their homes to prevent the growth of bacteria.

Construction of toilets with proper supply of clean water has helped many such women to lead better lives with the help of Doctor Apke Dwar campaign.

It is now being planned to take the campaign further and include 'sex-education' to give adolescents the idea of the hormonal changes and development of their bodies. Many children, especially boys, who do not get the right guidance during puberty end up watching porn, and get a wrong idea of sex. Their treatment of women then reflects in their behavior that they acquire through pornography and adult magazines.

### **Details of Solutions**

Doctor Apke Dwar is a practical campaign that works to promote health and hygiene among slum-dwellers by conveying the message to them by involving doctors whom the uneducated and poor people can trust.

It was realized that the impact a doctor's words had on the people was deeper than ordinary people canvassing the same message. This is the basic idea behind the 'Doctor Apke Dwar' campaign. Some issues catered by the campaign are-

**Engaging doctors-** In order to address the issue of open defecation, local doctors were roped in as volunteers to explain how unhygienic practices like open defecation led to the spread of diseases.

**Management of community toilets-** Many communities had common toilets which were not well maintained and properly cleaned. NGOs were engaged in the effort to ask people to maintain the community toilets to prevent diseases. The slum dwellers were further encouraged to get toilets constructed in their homes under the IHHL scheme.

**Educating women about sanitation and menstrual hygiene-** The campaign promoted awareness about sanitation and menstrual hygiene among women to help them understand their bodies better. The awareness was spread by gynecologists who volunteered for the campaign and educated mothers and their adolescent daughters, targeting two generations at the same time. Construction of toilets also made it easier for women to rest and maintain cleanliness during the time of the month.

**Preventing infectious diseases-** The percentage of diseases like cholera, dysentery, STDs and other diseases caused due to infections bacteria and viruses have seen a tremendous fall among slum-dwellers, helping them lead better and healthier lives and earn more wages for their family. The money that they earlier used to pay to the quacks in the slums is also being utilized for better purposes. (Please give figures/ percentage if available)