

“PEEING AT PEACE”

- ACCESS TO SAFE SANITATION FACILITY: STORY OF A GIRL FROM RURAL KERALA

One of the most important prerequisites for human health and wellbeing is having access to clean water, proper sanitation, and hygienic facilities. Sustainable Development Goal 6 addresses safe water, sanitation, and hygiene with a focus on ending open defecation and ensuring that everyone has access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene, with a particular focus on the needs of women, girls, and those who are in vulnerable situations.

Rema (name changed) is a 12-year-old girl studying in the 6th grade at a rural school. Rema belongs to a lower-middle-class family consisting of a father, mother, and younger brother. Her father is a mason, and his work life is erratic due to excessive alcoholism. Rema’s mother is a rubber tapper and the primary breadwinner of the family. Their family is dysfunctional due to Rema’s father’s excessive alcoholism and other forms of domestic violence. Their family’s subsystem and boundary setting were fragile and diffuse.

The parents were unable to provide Rema and her brother with a safe and secure childhood. They live in their ancestral home, devoid of a proper toilet and bathroom. Rema is a beneficiary of various projects of our NGO. During one of the house visits, the child was having menstruation. The family was unable to provide amenities for menstruation and personal hygiene. The child shared one of her daily worries with the team during a counselling session; she says, "My brother had already urinated in the cup we used to urinate in inside the house at night, so I was unable to urinate yesterday. My stomach hurt." At that point, our team of social workers realised the severity of the circumstance and found out that the family was unable to mobilise the required funds on their own to construct a toilet.



The team approached the local self-government institution (the grampanchayat) to explore the possibility of including the family in the beneficiary list of Suchitwa Mission, a government-sponsored scheme that offers financial assistance for toilet construction. Since LSGI had already finalised the list of beneficiaries for the current year, they expressed their inability to extend help to the family. According to them, the family had to wait another year to be included in the beneficiary list.

The team discussed the matter with the NGO and came up with a plan to mobilise funds through crowd funding. For this purpose, the team created and shared posters through social media and other channels. The NGO received brisk responses from numerous contributors who supported it with donations. Approximately thirty-nine thousand and five hundred rupees were mobilised through crowd funding.

The NGO team prepared an action plan outlining how they intend to use the entire amount to construct a decent toilet for the family. After speaking with civil engineers and masons, the team finally settled on a team of masons for the construction work. The social workers asked the child’s father to contribute manual labour during construction in order to build a sense of ownership and empower the family as well.



The construction work commenced on November 21, 2022. The team closely monitored the works, was involved in the purchase of construction materials, sought expert advice from the local plumbers and masons, and completed the construction work over a period of 23 days on December 12, 2022.



The success of crowd funding can be attributed to the assistance of all socially responsible donors. Through this environmental modification, we could lessen the child's vulnerabilities and risk factors. The NGO could secure the child's right to a better standard of living, which is one of the directive principles in the Indian Constitution (Article 47). The child after the intervention goes like, "I am delighted. Now that I have a toilet, I no longer have to argue with my brother about who gets to pee in my cup. I am grateful to all the kind-hearted people who donated and the NGO, FDA, without whose support it couldn't have happened. I am at ease".

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