

PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS (PWC)

• Background

Children in urban India comprise 30% of the total population, yet their needs are not included in urban planning. Particularly those from disadvantaged sections are susceptible to illnesses and urban disasters, have poor access to water, sanitation and education, and lack protection. It all started with a finding from a study titled 'Forgotten voices of the world of urban children in India'. The study found that where sanitation facilities are poor the absenteeism or dropout rate, especially among the girl students between the age of 12 and 17, is higher. This finding led PwC India Foundation to pilot a good school: AS+ model. It chose Ajmer for the pilot project as the city has a stark disparity between the haves and the have-nots. Ajmer is known to be an education hub and yet its schools lack basic sanitation facilities.

With the government's focus on empowering girls (Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao) and providing them with sanitation facilities in the country (Swachh Bharat), PwC India Foundation, in partnership with FINISH Society, started a cohesive programme in Ajmer to address infrastructure problems in girls' schools and their operation and maintenance (O&M), and to create awareness among the students.

The two-phased project saw 11 Government Schools from this Smart City being provided with child friendly WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) facilities that included handwashing stations, supporting Operations & Maintenance (O&M) of these facilities for a year, running a 90-day hygiene curriculum to promote safe hygiene practices, refurbishing existing toilets and building new toilet complexes. Addressing all aspects of sanitation, phase I looked at six schools while phase II covered five schools, impacting over 9,000 girl children.

Jaivir Singh, Vice Chairman of PwC India Foundation said, "The feedback from Phase I has been extremely positive. While students and teachers took the onus of managing these facilities, we had few students who didn't have toilet facilities at home, demand the same from their parents after learning the benefits of safe hygiene at school that we facilitated. Our NGO and the schools supported this initiative of the students wholeheartedly. For us, this was a huge mind-set change. Our girls are valuable and deserve a private, safe and hygienic environment to manage their bodily functions, including their period without fear and embarrassment. With the completion of the Second Phase, we are optimistic of the changes that our girls will experience with these new facilities in place."

The closing ceremony of the programme was launched by Vasudev Devnani, Minister of State for Primary and Secondary Education,



Rajasthan, and Satyavati Berera, Chief Operating Officer, PwC India, in the presence of students, teaching staff and school management committee.

- **Location, Date**

Ajmer, January 2016

- **Areas**

Urban

- **Stage/Scale**

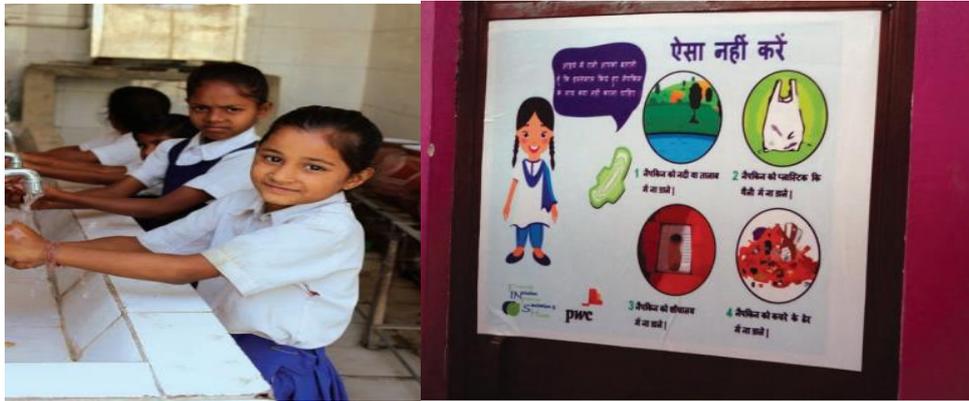
This project was initially launched in few schools, as the focus was not only on creating infrastructures alone, but also the rather difficult aspects of operation and maintenance and sustainability of the infrastructures and systems. Together with the government's education department, it identified government girls' schools having more than 9,000 students. The project was rolled out from January 2016 and in the first phase, it covered six Ajmer city based girls' senior secondary schools.

- **Objective of the assignment**

- The broad objectives of this intervention have been to support improved sanitation and hygiene facilities as essential components of a Child Friendly School (CFS), design and construct innovative school toilet blocks which can be replicated as a model. The project aims to create an inclusive environment in schools that promote and safeguard health and hygiene, contribute towards increasing the enrolment and retention of children in schools and empower girl children to be change agents.
- Generating a positive attitude and spirit of ownership among the prime stakeholders- school students, teachers and support staffs.

- **What was done**

- Toilets and urinals in these schools were dilapidated and hardly usable. Hand-washing facilities were non-existent. Moreover, although all six were senior secondary schools for girls, nobody ever had any formal and proper discussion about menstrual hygiene. Primary tasks for this project were: To identify the schools to pilot the model in and to identify a competent agency to implement the pilot programme at grassroot level. Together with the government's education department, 11 government girls' schools were identified for implementation of the project. Two major criteria for selecting the schools were (a) very poor WASH facilities and (b) secondary girls' schools to focus more on the increased and additional needs of girl students and improving attendance.



- With participation of all stakeholders, the project adopted a comprehensive package. This included infrastructure development, practice of a solid operation and maintenance mechanism and advanced hygiene access through a 90-day long hygiene education curriculum. In the first year of intervention in six schools, the project facilitated construction of 65 new student friendly toilets and urinal facilities. A total of 44 existing toilet and urinal facilities which were in bad shape were renovated. All these toilets used bio-digesters to integrate solid waste management and the water discharged from the toilet is reused.
- Menstrual hygiene has been neglected for long. The project gave special emphasis to that. The toilet complexes in the schools included incinerators for safe disposal of sanitary pads. Besides toilets and urinals, the project created 15 new hand-wash units, with five taps each. All these facilities were provided with continuous water supply with addition of overhead storages. The toilets, urinals and hand-wash facilities were given a colourful look with catchy messages. All the six schools have very good WASH infrastructure and students have developed a sense of pride and ownership over the infrastructure and systems.

• Impact

- Before implementation of this project by PwC India Foundation, it was a taboo for Rane- a student of the Government Girls' Senior Secondary School in Adarsh Nagar locality of Ajmer, Rajasthan to talk about maintaining safe and improved menstrual hygiene in public. Now she delivers fluent lectures on the subject to her fellow students in school and to girls in her locality. Hundreds of girls like her, studying in six senior secondary schools for girls in Ajmer, have acquired such knowledge and skills about water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) through intensive interventions of PwC India Foundation in their schools.



- Besides students and teachers, the project also made conscious efforts to involve other important stakeholders such as local government institutions, Municipal Corporation, education department and school management at all stages of interventions.
- The progress of the first phase was promising. Students set a high standard for themselves post implementation of this project. Attendance improved from 87 per cent in January 2016 to 90 per cent in June 2016.
- These girls have not restricted their newly acquired knowledge and confidence to school. They have taken that to their houses. Fulkumari of Government Girls Senior Secondary School in Faisagar has now set a hygiene routine for her whole family. “My family is happily following my instructions,” says a beaming Fulkumari.

• **Innovation**

- Students, teachers, parents and management were much happier and motivated. Although the PwC Foundation took responsibility of managing the toilet and systems for a year, the students and teachers started looking beyond that period.
- The project started its second phase of intervention in five more schools of which two are rural schools in a neighbouring area of Ajmer city and one of them is a school for the visually challenged.

• **Lessons learnt**

Sustainability will be possible when all are involved leading to better subsequent institutionalisation and replication of the pilot programme.

• **Financials**

Not available

• **Economic sustainability/Revenue Model**

The project had trained and developed a team of sweepers to clean the infrastructure in a safe and mandated manner. They reported to the principals of the schools. Initially the project paid for them. But the schools and their students were prepared for the future. The schools were mobilising money for upkeep of the toilets through contributions from students and the school administration. Students and teachers were careful and knowledgeable about safe water and hygiene.

• **Implementer Contact Persons**

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• **Sources and References**

- <http://www.pwc.in/pwc-india-foundation/my-experience/ajmer-volunteering-experience.html>
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