

CASE STUDY

Keeping Women Safe through Access to Water, Sanitation



Access to water and latrines gives women privacy and safety. Photo credit: ADB.

Infrastructure that provides access to clean water and adequate sanitation frees women and girls from health and safety risks.

Overview

Deteriorating basic urban services and environmental degradation prevented the largest cities of the state of Madhya Pradesh in India from realizing their economic potential and prospects for future economic growth.

With funding support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Government of India and the State of Madhya Pradesh worked on ways to achieve better living conditions for its citizens – especially women and girls who suffered a lack of dignity and were exposed to safety risks due to a lack of access to water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities.

Project snapshot

Dates

- **13 October 2008:** Approval Date
- **24 June 2014:** Closing Date

Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$71 million: Total Project Cost
Institutions and Stakeholders	<p>Executing agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Admin and Development Dept, Government of Madhya Pradesh <p>Financing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Asian Development Bank</u>

Development Challenges

Baseline survey revealed widespread deficiencies in basic urban services across the Madhya Pradesh's six largest urban centers of Bhopal, Indore, Ujjain, Ratlam, Jabalpur, and Gwalior. On average, nearly 42% of households in these areas lacked water supply connections. The same number received water only on alternate days.

Women in these areas were adversely affected by this crisis as they were often responsible for collecting and managing household water.

Likewise, communities, especially the children, were at risk of waterborne and bacterial diseases as one in eight households was reportedly practicing open defecation while over 40% of households had no solid waste collection system and effective means of draining storm-water and controlling floods.

Context

Female members were responsible for water collection for over 60% of the households surveyed in the project cities. Unfortunately, dependence on water sources at distant sites forced them to spend long hours collecting and transporting water, therefore, leaving little time for community activities, personal development, and other household roles. This also made them vulnerable to health and safety threats.

Women and girls in the project areas were heavily dependent on open defecation sites that do not have adequate supply of water. Accessing community toilets also put them at risks due to their unserved locations and unsanitary conditions.

Solutions

“Project UDAY” or the ADB-funded Urban Water Supply and Environmental Improvement in Madhya Pradesh was implemented to provide the needed sustainable, basic urban infrastructures and services to all citizens of the target cities and to strengthen their capacities to plan and manage urban water supply and sanitation systems.

Rapid gender assessment helped identify the project priorities. At least 50% of all civil and small-scale community infrastructure activities incorporated in the microplans were based on the ones identified by women.

A gender-inclusive approach was integrated in the project’s Area Improvement Facilities and Community Initiative Fund allocations to ensure that there will be interventions for gender inequalities and women’s lack of access to water and sanitation.

Social mobilization became a core strategy. Community Group Committees were formed to respond to community concerns regarding water and sanitation and to actively participate in the construction, maintenance, and oversight of community toilets and other civic amenities at the slum level in four cities.

Actual Outcomes

Increased access to affordable water and sanitation

The project placed 2,447 kilometers of new water supply pipelines, constructed three new water treatment plants with a combined capacity of 525 million liters per day, and rehabilitated 12 old ones. This improved the city-level water supply and the access to clean water in poor and water-deprived slums. As women and girls are responsible for water collection, this freed them from the arduous task of filling water containers and carrying them home across considerable distances.

Improved sanitation and reduced safety risks

Risks associated with collecting water, bathing, washing, and open defecation were reduced as 3,607 individual household tap connections were enabled. Households were encouraged to construct individual toilets as the project provided infrastructure support with pro-poor focus. Community toilets were also designed and located while considering the safety of women and girls.

In Gwalior, household toilets were connected to sewer lines. The project built 317 kilometers of new sewage pipelines and rehabilitated sewage treatment plants capable of 75 million liters a day. Landfill sites were also developed.

More economic opportunities

The vocational training conducted under the project’s Community Initiative Fund supported market and

credit linkages and provided livelihood opportunities to men and women especially those in the slum areas. Women were able to earn additional income due to their productive use of time saved as a result of the improved and reliable water supply.

Encouraged women's participation and leadership

Sixty-five Community Group Committees were formed to promote gender-balanced local community-based governance. Of the 760 members, 556 (73.1%) are women. They have reported that the opportunities provided by the group improved their living condition and self-esteem.

Lessons

- There is no gender equality without access to water and sanitation. Information systems and data collection are important to better understand the scale of this injustice and to guide the implementation of relevant projects.
- Gender and social issues are interlinked and intersectional. Hence, caste, age, social status, marital status, and different abilities need to be taken into account when performing gender analysis before planning a project design.
- Participatory approach promotes people's sense of ownership and success, and this ensures sustainability of program initiatives. Raising the gender awareness of men and women within communities is necessary, along with additional training for implementing NGOs to ensure that this approach is fully and consistently implemented.
- Special measures are necessary to create a gender-friendly environment that gives women confidence to present their ideas in public discussions.

Resources

Asian Development Bank. 2011. Urban Water Supply and Environmental Improvement in Madhya Pradesh Project (UDAY). *Gender Mainstreaming – Case Studies India*. PP. 1-8. Manila.

ADB. 2015. *Gender Equality Results Case Study: India - Urban Water Supply and Environmental Improvement Project*. Manila.

ADB. 2016. *Completion Report: India – Urban Water Supply and Environmental Improvement in Madhya Pradesh Project*. Manila.



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Prabhjot is responsible for overall coordination, management, operational support, and oversight for effective implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies in ADB operations in India, for accelerating progress in gender equality.



Asian Development Bank (ADB)

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