

Access to Household Toilets to Improve the Safety, Convenience, and Self-respect of Women in Rural India

After six successful years of the Swachh Bharat Mission – Gramin (SBM-G), the Ministry of Jal Shakti collaborated with United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), and Sambodhi on a study to understand how the construction of toilets has impacted women and men in rural India.

The study aimed to test the hypothesis – *'Increased access to household toilets contributes to improving the safety (Suraksha), convenience (Suvidha), and self-respect (Swabhiman) of women.'* and provide evidence around the following messages:

- The percentage of women in rural India who feel safer after getting toilets as a result of the SBM
- The percentage of women in rural India who feel an increase in convenience after getting to toilets as a result of the SBM
- The percentage of women in rural India who feel greater self-respect after getting toilets as a result of the SBM

A cross-sectional design was adopted to estimate these results. A 'pre-toilet construction' scenario was created based on the respondents' recall using a structured interview. A sample of 6993 households was drawn from the list of households with a toilet constructed after 2017 across 320 villages of five states – Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

The following categories of women were interviewed to develop a holistic understanding of the change in safety, convenience, and self-respect:

- Currently pregnant women (aged 15 to 49 years)
- Women with a child aged 0 to 5 years (aged 15 to 49 years)
- Older women (aged 60 to 80 years)
- Unmarried young girls (aged 18 to 30 years)
- Adult men (18 years and above)

Sambodhi analyzed qualitative and quantitative data to develop this understanding. The Ministry of Jal Shakti used the study's findings. The primary stakeholders of the results included the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Central and State Governments, and line ministries. Other stakeholders included national and international non-government organizations (NGOs), organizations working in similar areas, and academics. This report was also a guiding tool for similar interventions in other parts of the country and documentation of learnings for phase 2 of SBM-G.