



India



Ahmedabad Sanitation Action Lab (ASAL)

UMC  

ASAL provides technical assistance to the municipal government to strengthen community engagement, improve operational and management processes for provision of water-sanitation services, and design a targeted behavior change communication campaign.

Launched in 2014, Not-for-profit , Policy & Governance , Behavior Change , South Asia: India

Partners: Government of Gujarat, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, Mahila Housing Trust, MICA, Theatre Media Centre.

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Problem Addressed

Despite continued efforts by Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) to improve water and sanitation in key focus areas (slum and slum-like), there are challenges to streamline operational and management systems and for water-sanitation services. There are also inadequate efforts to change behaviour of the urban poor towards demanding and sustaining use of safe water-sanitation services.

Despite AMC's efforts to improve sanitation in slum areas, many slum dwellers are unable to benefit from the improvements, the key reasons being, absence of micro-level planning to identify and improve sanitation infrastructure in vulnerable areas; administrative and procedural issues in accessing clean water and sanitation facilities such as exhaustive paper work; poor operation and maintenance of water and sanitation facilities and inadequate behaviour change activities to support the infrastructure improvements; financing alternatives; and innovative technological solutions.

Even with the initiation of WASH activities in municipal schools of Ahmedabad, due to lack of complementing infrastructure in the municipal schools and the living neighbourhoods around the schools, the targeted impact of WASH has not been fully achieved.

India has a high exposure to health risks on account of its poor sanitation infrastructure. The government struggles to provide basic hygiene and sanitation services effectively, because it has poor data about the needs and habits of the residents and very little information on the existing infrastructure (plumbing, sewage lines, etc.). There is also a need for behaviour change among communities to make them understand the health problems caused by open defecation.

Innovative Approach

UMC fills in the gaps in institutional frameworks, by providing the government and relevant stakeholders the means to improve the uptake and availability of sanitation. It does this through leveraging its expertise in urban planning and architecture, while engaging the expertise of relevant stakeholders to assist it in behavior change endeavors. The convening of stakeholders towards a common goal - with defined roles laid out for all - is also a key innovation of the program.

Program Solution

UMC leads the Ahmedabad Sanitation Action Lab (ASAL), a 3 year initiative (2014-2017) for implementing innovative solutions to sanitation problems in municipal schools and informal settlements in Ahmedabad. UMC's program model is as follows:

-Needs Assessment: UMC conducted a baseline survey of the municipal schools in Ahmedabad to evaluate the adequacy and quality of existing water and sanitation infrastructure.

-Technical support: UMC provides technical assistance to the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation and partner organizations within the ASAL, to enable them to build toilets and strengthen community engagement in and around the municipal schools. This support is in the form of architectural blueprints, work plans, policy design etc. As part of the program, four leading architect firms from Ahmedabad have provided pro-bono services to create a master plan for six schools in order to "reimagine municipal schools".

-Behavior Change Communication (BCC): As the core of its interventions, UMC provides BCC and hygiene education to students, who in turn bring WASH learning to their homes and neighborhoods. The organization appoints a "Swachhata Brigade," comprising a team of students, in each school who receive training for WASH. The Swachhata Brigade then spreads messages of importance of sanitation and safe hygiene practices within their school. "Swachhata Brigades" have been operationalized in 150 schools across Ahmedabad.

-Operation and Maintenance (O&M): UMC works with the AMC to create a comprehensive plan for the maintenance of the WASH infrastructure. As part of this intervention, UMC advocates for an increase in the maintenance budget for sanitation facilities, and the salaries of the workers who maintain them. Additionally, UMC works to activate school management committees formed under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan, and enables them to take responsibility for monitoring cleanliness in schools.

Please visit this program profile at:

<https://washinnovations.r4d.org/program/ahmedabad-sanitation-action-lab-asal>