



India



## Towards Health and Dignity: Improving WASH

Samarthan – Center for Development Support   

Samarthan empowers communities in the rural Sehore district to improve their water supply and sanitation and hygiene facilities through community-led total sanitation and training villagers on maintenance and repair of sanitation facilities.

Launched in 2014, Not-for-profit , South Asia: India

Partners: Water Aid and Madhya Pradesh Health Sector Reforms Projects (MPTAST).

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### Problem Addressed

In November 2013, Samarthan conducted a baseline survey of the Sehore District (population 937,000) and identified a few key WASH issues. First, there is limited access to drinking water through piped water supply schemes; only 20% of villages have them. Second, only 4% of villages have achieved open defecation free (ODF) status as per the Ministry of Rural Development guidelines.

Third, only 66% of villages have an active committee on the Gram Panchayat level addressing WASH issues, and committee members in the other groups are not aware they have been assigned to the WASH committee. Fourth, only 42.3% of households have toilets, and 7.5% of these toilets are defunct or not in use. Fifth, 90% of schools have toilets, but over 20% of these are defunct. Sixth, district residents rely on ground water for irrigation and drinking water, and this may not be a reliable future source of water.

### Innovative Approach

Samarthan works with government agencies and communities on the village, district, and state levels to ensure their program is sustainable over the long term, using the following innovative approaches:

- 1) Providing an end-to-end solution for addressing WASH issues with support of government involving different stakeholders. This included identification of gaps in delivery of WASH services supported by two-way communication for addressing those gaps.
- 2) Establishing linkages beyond the boundaries of the government system which included those with the existing private vendors as well as developing local vendors for improving the supply chain system for construction and usage of toilets.
- 3) Marrying technology with community processes. This included implementing mobile-based monitoring systems in a rural block called Iccahawar to know the existing sanitation condition which was supported by community-led processes like social maps to identify and mobilize people including women and children for the construction and usage of toilets.

Finally, since Samarthan works with government agencies, the government can scale up these types of programs to other areas more easily and quickly.

## Program Solution

With the assistance of international aid agencies, Samarthan aims to improve the quality of life of people in India through sustainable WASH services, by influencing behaviour change for safe water and household sanitation in rural areas of Sehore district. The project uses community-led approaches along with engaging block and district government agencies and elected representatives at a village level to address WASH issues. Samarthan's team is supported by community volunteers to implement these initiatives at a grassroots level.

At a systems level, Samarthan aims to demystify and simplify processes, including toilet demand generation, construction/repair and usage of toilets, and incentivizing beneficiaries in the construction of toilets, as well as in the monitoring information system with support of government. Various activities were undertaken to address issues related to the project, including community-led approaches, capacity building of masons, supporting frontline workers & grassroots institutions, education and communication for technology options, and strengthening supply chain management.