



# MAHILA HOUSING SEWA TRUST

## Bringing Sanitation to Jaipur

As one of India's most popular tourist destinations, Jaipur is frequently lauded for its brilliant forts and soothing pink hues. The regularity of its street network—an anomaly in comparison to most Indian cities—is praised by urban planners and tourists alike. Yet, behind the splendor and wealth of Jaipur, there is a darker, more complex city—one that forces its residents to live in inferior quality living conditions.

According to a recent survey, nearly 23% of the Jaipur's population or 4,87,000 people live in slum areas. The majority of these residents immigrated to Jaipur from rural villages in search of work and a life free from the hardships of rural poverty. Instead, what they found was urban poverty.

### Introducing Bandha Basti

The bustling Bandha Basti stretches haphazardly along the foothills of the Amber Fort in Jaipur. Home to nearly 14,754, the Basti spans 1,797 acres. The earliest inhabitants to this once heavily forested area arrived almost 40 years ago in search of work. Most of these early residents cut down trees, leveled land, and built basic jhuggi jhopris or "huts" for their families. Eventually, over time, residents replaced their jhuggi jhopris with stone that they found and cut from the sides of adjacent hills. While many residents incrementally invested in upgrading their homes from kutchra or "informal" houses to semi-pukkha or

*This case was written by Janaki Kibe of the Affordable Housing Institute (AHI). All mistakes and inaccuracies are the author's and are unintended.*

"semi-permanent" ones, they lacked the funds to build

individual toilets. Straddling forest land and Nagar Nigam ("Municipal Corporation") land, the Government passed a notification that squatter houses built on the forest land would not receive any basic services.

With neither a community toilet nor an individual toilet, most residents would walk for 20 to 30 minutes through mounds of dirt and forest to find some semblance of privacy to relieve themselves. As the neighborhood became more populated the distance residents had to walk to get privacy grew. As Jayadi, a sari maker living in Bandha Basti, recounted,

*"I would have to walk 30 minutes up a hill behind my house to go to the bathroom. I was worried and scared—especially if I needed to go to the bathroom at night. Sometimes, I would be so scared to go walk outside at night that I would simply hold my urge. That would make my bladder hurt."*

Poor sanitation conditions had severe health implications for the Basti. Many women, like Jayadi, avoided going to the bathroom at night, resulting in a spike in bladder and kidney-related problems. Additionally, open defecation pollutes ground water, contaminates agricultural product, and helps the spread of diseases such as diarrhea and



cholera.

In 2008, the Mahila Housing SEWATrust (MHT), an affiliate of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), with a focus on improving the housing and infrastructure conditions of poor women in the informal sector, began helping slum residents in Jaipur finance individual toilet loans. MHT's activity has radically improved the living conditions of many women living in the Bandha Basti in Jaipur.

## Improving sanitation through toilet loans

A socio-economic survey of Bandha Basti's A Block conducted by MHT in August 2008 confirmed the acute need for improved toilet facilities in the community. Most residents were walking up to ½ kilometer in search of privacy to relieve themselves. The survey also demonstrated the economic strength of the community, where the average monthly household income is Rs. 12,000. Confronted with demand for better toilet facilities and a potential to pay for this facility, MHT decided to offer toilet loans to the women of Bandha Basti Block A.

### Joint liability groups (JLGs) as a mechanism for disbursing toilet loans

In the Bandha Basti, MHT has been disbursing Rs. 10,000 sized loans for toilet construction through joint liability groups (JLGs). In order to receive a toilet loan, women must abide by the following terms and conditions:

- Women must form themselves into groups of four to six women who know and trust each other.
- All JLG members must take out a loan of the same

size and incur the same repayment schedule.

- All JLG members must sign a contract that states that they accept liability not only for their own individual loans, but also for the loans borrowed by other members of their JLG.
- All members of the JLG should reside in the same area.

Joint liability groups that meet the conditions listed above are eligible to apply for a Rs. 10,000 toilet loan from MHT.

The process of loan disbursement is outlined below:

1. JLG is formed.
2. JLG members apply for Rs. 10,000 loans for individual toilet construction from MHT. Application includes beneficiaries' address and identity proof (voting card, ration card, pan card, aadhar card, government health card, patta copy, nagar nigam certification, driving licences, etc) and a security deposit of Rs. 1200 per person.
3. MHT conducts assessment of physical space of JLG members' houses to ensure that there is sufficient space to build a toilet.
4. MHT evaluates repayment capacity of JLG members.
5. MHT approves toilet loan and photographs site pre-construction.
6. MHT disburses first check to JLG members and verifies construction progress.
7. If progress satisfactory, MHT disburses second (and final) loan disbursement. MHT verifies progress.

J LG members are required to pay Rs. 1,000 a month as their loan installment plan. The financing offered by MHT is considerably cheaper than other financing options (e.g. moneylenders). After 10 months of paying monthly installments, the loan is paid off.

So far more than **134 members** and **Rs. 13,40,000** have been disbursed in Bandha Basti with a 100% repayment rate.



Members of JLG group in Bandha Basti stand in front of their houses.

## CASE STUDY

### SEBNEM

#### BORROWER PROFILE

Name: Sebnem

Occupation: Needlepoint for saris

Husband's occupation: Tailor

Household income: Around Rs. 8,000 / month

Household size: 7

Shebnem moved to Bandha Basta in 1991 with her husband from a village outside of Jaipur. Her husband, a tailor, had gotten work out a shop near the Basti. When they first moved to Bandha Basta it was a jungle. "Houses were far apart, there were mounds of dirt everywhere. The ground was very uneven. You had to climb over dirt, over rocks. There were very few people living here—houses were spaced apart. There weren't any big shops here, only small kiranas or "small family-owned shops selling basic groceries and other sundries."

For 20 years, the seven members of her household trudged across mounds of dirt and rocky ground to go to the bathroom. For Shebnem, who sewed needlepoint for saris from her house, every journey to relieve herself would represent lost earnings.

"I was always walking half a kilometer to and from the hillside to go to the bathroom. Because I work from my house, the time I was away meant less earnings for my family."

About a 1.5 years ago, Shebnem heard that MHT was offering loans for toilet construction in her Basti. She formed a joint liability group with 4 other women who lived on her lane and they jointly applied for toilet loans. Shebnem knew the other members of her JLG well,

"We are all neighbors, we always help each other. I've known them for many years. And we were all facing the same problem of having to walk far distances to go to the bathroom."

With the support of her family and the other members of her JLG, Shebnem took out a Rs. 10,000 loan to construct a toilet inside of her house. After paying a security deposit



Sebnem in front of her newly built toilet

of Rs. 1200, Shebnem has contributed Rs.5000/- of her own for constructing toilet bath. She hired external masons to complete the work. After 10 months of paying a monthly installment of Rs. 1,000 to MHT, Shebnem and her JLG successfully paid off their toilet loans.

The impact of the new toilet has been transformative for her family:

"I am no longer wasting time walking to the forest to go to the bathroom. We are not scared to go to the bathroom—we can go anytime. It has changed our lives."



Members of Sebnem's JLG group

## CASE STUDY

### Waqilaben



Waqilaben standing in front of her 2-room house, which she shares with 9 other family members

#### **BORROWER PROFILE**

Name: Waqilaben

Occupation: Sari sewer

Husband's occupation: Owner of small dhabha

Household income: Around Rs 7,000 – 8,000 per month

Household size: 10

Waqilaben has been living in the Basti for 18 years. Her husband and their children's families live in a crowded 2 room sandstone house in the Basti. While she has thought of getting a toilet loan before, she never had enough money to build one and was afraid of the high interest rates and weekly collection methods demanded by most lenders. That all changed, however, when Waqilaben heard about MHT's toilet loans. Unlike other lenders, MHT offers Rs. 10,000 loans through a JLG structure, supervises work, and collects repayments on a monthly basis.

In July 2012, Waqilaben decided to form a JLG with five other women from her lane and take out a Rs. 10,000 toilet loan. So far she has paid 5 installments of Rs. 1,000 per month. Everyone in her JLG has paid the monthly installment on time. The women help each save money each month and keep track of the repayment schedule.

*“Before, when we didn't have a toilet, the girls in my house would have to go far distance, outside. They would often feel scared—especially at night. Now, we feel calm. We feel at peace.”*

MHT's role as a hand holder—ensuring that women

understand the nature and requirements of their loan—and a technical assistance provider—evaluating the physical feasibility of constructing a toilet—has helped facilitate the process of loan application, repayment, and end use.

## CASE STUDY

### Ruksana

#### **BORROWER PROFILE**

Name: Ruksana

Occupation: Toymaker

Husband's occupation: Toymaker

Household income: Around Rs 9,000

Household size: 7

Ruksana has lived in the Basti for 15 years, the majority of them without an individual toilet. Ruksana had never tried to take a loan before, but when she heard about MHT's toilet loans she decided to apply. She formed a JLG with 4 other women who live in the Basti. Her husband was supportive of her decision to take out a housing loan. They both recognized the potential impact of having a toilet inside of their house.

No other lenders had offered them a toilet loan before. She trusted the members of her Joint Liability Group and the MHT staff women who she had met. In October 2009, Ruksana took out a Rs. 10,000 toilet loan. After ten months of repayments, the members of her JLG paid off the toilet loan.



Having a toilet in her house has multiplied her daily comfort level.

“It feels good to have a toilet because previously at night we would walk ½ kilometer to go to the bathroom. That was the worst. I lived in this basti for 15 years, 13 of them without a toilet. Now my life has changed, not just for me but for my family as well. We are much happier, prouder, and calmer.”