Sixteen year old Romaben Gopalbhai stays at Saraniyavas Vatva since the last 12 years. She says, “Before the toilets were constructed and sewer line was installed in my chali, girls found it extremely scary and unsafe to defecate in the open. It used to be worse during menstruation. Construction of toilets has been a great respite for all girls! During the course of MHT’s intervention, I found there were many other young girls who were trained by the organization to voice their issues, write applications to the corporation office and demand their rights. I decided to join them. Initially my mother was hesitant to allow me to go out of the house but today she takes pride in seeing how collectively we demand good housing, sanitation and electricity for our houses.”

Muskan Jumman Sheikh, a class 8th pass young girl of 16 years has been working with MHT since December 2016 in Baba Lablavi Nagar. She shares, ”My elder brother is very strict and does not allow us (me and my sister) to study or go out for work. Inspite of so many restrictions, I have somehow managed to accomplish things which I could never dream of. I have conducted the MHT rapid survey in my area, also conducted the survey for collecting gender budgeting data. I have posted complaints and pictures on the Swachhta app, followed up with the corporation for toilet and sewer line, attended to official guests visiting my area and collected GPS coordinates of the constructed toilets. In addition, I have been regularly attending sanitation related meetings since last 6 months. I am proud to be a member of the Community Action Group (CAG) in my area. I am happy that I was able to push boundaries to improve living conditions of people in my slum! The joy is priceless and my new self that I have discovered in the process is amazing!”
We engage with adolescent girls to
- ensure that they have a voice in their family, school, and community
- empower them to have a say in local governance
- enable them to improve their habitats
- identify and design solutions for their hygiene needs
- enable them to identify indigenous and technical solutions for building resilience for climate change
- promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy
- build a collaborative eco-system that supports their development as empowered individuals who will bring intergenerational changes

"Targeting adolescent girls was a natural extension of our work with women. Adolescent girls bear the greatest brunt of poor sanitation and poor sanitation, in turn, adversely impacts menstrual hygiene management. We need to catch them when they are young. Empowering adolescent girls gives them a ‘voice’ not only in their immediate environment but also in local governance. Moreover building resilience in adolescent girls for climate change is also ‘futuristic’. All of it collectively has a long term intergenerational impact on their health status, economic productivity, their standard of living and their abilities to make their cities inclusive."

Bijal Brahmbhatt,
Executive Director, MHT
We engage with adolescent girls to ensure that they have a voice in their family, school, and community. We empower them to have a say in local governance, enable them to improve their habitats, identify and design solutions for their hygiene needs, enable them to identify indigenous and technical solutions for building resilience for climate change, promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy, and build a collaborative eco-system that supports their development as empowered individuals who will bring intergenerational changes.

MHT's three pronged operational strategy:

(a) MHT mobilizes and empowers adolescent girls and women, collectivizes them into Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and trains them so they can interface with Urban Local Bodies.

(b) With the support of CBOs, MHT demonstrates change through direct construction of water and sanitation infrastructure in slum through leveraging government and community funds.

(c) MHT builds the resilience of marginalized girls and women for climate change.

Participatory Urban Governance:

- Girls conduct ward level mapping exercise.
- Girls register complaints through Swachhta Application.
- Girls assist the corporation in verification process for beneficiary identification.
- Girls liaise with government for accessing services in their communities.
- Girls ensure quality of services delivered by government.

Sanitation & Service Delivery:

- Girls generate awareness on issues of open defecation through campaign at city level.
- They screen videos in communities to create awareness about the importance of proper sanitation.
- They use folk media for communicating messages and use wall paintings to create awareness.
- Girls and women identify sanitation issues in the slums and resolve them.
- Girls create awareness on Menstrual Hygiene Management by promoting environmentally friendly sanitary pads.
- Adolescent girls mark GPS location of toilet/sewer lines/ water accessed in slums.
Adolescent girls and women come together to create a strong network of Climate Saathis to serve as a knowledge hub at community level

Adolescent girls are trained on Vector Management and they lead the Vector Drive for larvae surveillance and demonstrate neem oil repellants and traps

They also undertake a water mapping and the water testing exercise

Adolescent Girls facilitate Plantation drives to develop resilience against heat stress

They administer Community Based Vulnerability Assessment Tool (CBVAT) in their areas

Adolescent girls and women adopt innovative communication strategies and indigenous knowledge to cope with environmental stress

"What makes our model unique is the fact that we work on non-traditional issues like increasing mobility of adolescent girls, enabling them to voice their issues not only in their families and communities but also with the government and we build entrepreneurs around sanitation who work as foot soldiers in their communities, directly empowering other adolescent girls and women to become change agents.”

- by Bijalben

Climate Change & Resilience:

Number of adolescent girls reached:

- 249 girls have been trained as CBO leaders now acting as barefoot planners, influencing local governance
- 200 Climate Specialists have been promoted who are helping more than 107 slum communities prepare local resilience/adaptation plans
- 49 girls have been working in 110 slum communities to create awareness on issue of Open defecation and to resolve them
- MHT conducted 60 education sessions with adolescent girls on safe menstrual practices, product choices and introduced them to re-usable cloth sanitary pads in schools and slum communities. More than 2000 adolescent girls were reached through these training sessions. Use of reusable sanitary pads has increased by 30% among girls
- The familiarity with technologies like smartphone has increased in adolescent girls by 45%

"I have become a radio reporter with Radio Nazariya and there are other girls who work as radio reporters too. We host programmes on Climate Change. There is a sea change in the way we communicate post our training at Radio Nazariya. It has been a very empowering experience!"

- Mayuri Muchadiya, 18 years old

Our pillars of success:

- Adolescent girls are partners and catalysts for change
- Adolescent girls work through a well-established integrated community development model for informed decision-making
- We have a strong relationship with urban local bodies
- The model is highly replicable, scalable and sustainable

The Catalyst herself undergoes change

I have knowledge about govt. schemes and policies related to housing, water and sanitation

I am able to negotiate with my parents

I understand my rights and demand better services from govt.

I can think critically and make informed choices

I am tech-savvy and can operate smart phone and computer

I can lead the vector drive in my area

I can mobilize communities and empower other girls and women

I have improved knowledge of menstrual hygiene management and have adopted hygienic practices

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