

Improved sanitation facilities empower the elderly in Sedrana village

Tags: Open defecation | Sedrana village | Toilet construction

The lack of access to sanitation facilities in *Sedrana* village, Patan district, particularly impacts elderly individuals like *Amthiben* and her husband *Punjabhai*, who have suffered physical and emotional hardships due to open defecation. The lack of toilets and bathrooms during monsoons exposes them to waterlogged areas, the risk of injury on muddy paths, and embarrassment from field owners. The challenges include the need for strong political support from village leaders such as the Sarpanch, as well as effective motivation strategies. By addressing these issues, the project will be able to continue to uplift the community and relieve the agony caused by inadequate sanitation facilities.

The Environment Health Improvement program of the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH) seeks to enhance the quality of life in Sedrana village by boosting access to sanitary facilities and encouraging health and hygiene awareness, particularly among women. The local intervention by AKAH included inspiring and raising awareness among residents about the significance of sanitary facilities. They helped to build sanitation units by providing financial assistance and working with the Gramme Panchayat. AKAH primarily targeted women's sanitation access and dignity concerns. The initiative benefited from the Sarpanch's strong leadership and political support, who committed money and inspired the people. To effectively implement the sanitation project, AKAH's intervention focused on encouragement, financial assistance, community engagement, and good leadership.

The installation of sanitation units in Rohit Para, a community inside *Sedrana* village, is one example of AKAH's participation in the neighborhood. The choice of Rohit Para was based on the urgent demand for sanitary facilities and the people's willingness to support the initiative. Within six months, AKAH had achieved 100% coverage of sanitation units in Rohit Para, indicating the effectiveness of their intervention in addressing the unique requirements of that community.

This intervention has resulted in a significant improvement in *Amthiben* and her husband's quality of life. They no longer have to undergo the physical and mental rigors of open defecation now that they have access to sanitary facilities. The

presence of toilets and bathrooms has improved their dignity, safety, and peace of mind. They are no longer afraid of getting hurt on muddy trails or of being humiliated by field owners. This shift has enhanced their general well-being and given them a sense of independence and emotional well-being.

The transforming impact of giving access to sanitation facilities and encouraging health and hygiene knowledge is the overarching inspiration. It serves as a reminder of how much can be accomplished by addressing fundamental needs, empowering communities, and enhancing the overall well-being, dignity, and safety of people like *Amthiben* and her husband.

