



# A Neighborhood in Change

## Rajivgandhi Nagar, Pune

The slum Rajivgandhi Nagar has changed a lot since Shelter Associates initially approached the settlement. Many of its residents used the construction process of individual toilets, which was introduced by Shelter Associates, to renovate other parts of their homes too. Gradually, front walls made of metal sheets have become brick walls, and kutcha houses have become semi-pucca houses. Not only have outer appearances of homes changed, but the community cohesion has grown too. The residents have regained pride and dignity through this development.

The slum Rajivgandhi Nagar, located in Sangamwadi, Pune, used to be in a pitiful state. Most houses were simple kutcha houses (constructed only of metal sheets) without individual toilets. The existing community toilet block (CTB) is very dirty and partly damaged. It contains only four seats for women and three for men. During the busiest times in the morning, the capacity of the CTB does not meet the demand of the seventy-six households located in the slum. For these reasons, most residents used to defecate in the open.

When Shelter Associates approached the settlements' residents, most households quickly agreed to construct an individual toilet in their house, even though most houses are rather small and space is scarce. Shelter Associates provided

### Rajivgandhi Nagar Settlement in Numbers

Households: 76

Residents: 297

Individual toilets built: 69

Average cost of mason's work: Rs. 2,000 - 4,000

Average time to construct a toilet: 4 - 7 days

the necessary material for a highly subsidized price, but left the toilets' construction up to the local community. This scheme is preferable over the simple distribution of money, since, in many cases, slum dwellers would use the money for more current needs.

As a result, sixty-nine of a total of seventy-six households built individual toilets; some households went even further and reconstructed parts of their homes too. Apart from toilets, they also built new kitchens and changed

### Masons who were interviewed and examples of toilets built by them



Mr. Kamble

Age: 42 years old

Number of toilets built: 6, including 1 toilet for himself



Example of toilet

Average price: Rs. 3,500

Average time: 5 days



Mr. Khandagabe

Age: 31 years old

Number of toilets built: 11, including 1 toilet for himself



Example of toilet

Average price: Rs. 2,500

Average time: 4 days

Please Turn Over



room arrangements. Furthermore, quite a few households constructed new front walls made of bricks, replacing the metal sheets that had previously served as walls for their home. Step by step, the neighborhood's appearance has changed. Mr. Kamble, a resident and working mason from Rajiv Gandhi Nagar, sees the settlement becoming a small society. Mr. Eknatb, a neighbor from a nearby village, describes the change as a big improvement. Before the construction process began, the housefronts protruded unevenly into the street, which left a messy impression. Now the housefronts are in one line and look nice and neat.

As a community, Rajiv Gandhi Nagar had an advantage in the process of constructing individual toilets because many of its residents work as masons. Of the masons who were involved in the construction process, seven out of eight were residents. Accordingly, masons were easily available for toilet construction, and would even charge a discounted construction fee for their neighbors. For example, Mr. Kamble, a mason in the slum, would sometimes charge the discounted fee of Rs. 300 for a day's work for households that could not afford to pay more; this is in contrast to the typical fixed price of Rs. 600 charged to households outside of the community. Mr. Khandagabe, another mason from the settlement,

would allow some of his customers to pay by installment if they could not pay the total fee at one time.

Shelter's approach is highly regarded by masons and residents alike. They highlight the material's good quality and steady supply. Moreover, Shelter's approach has provided employment opportunities for local masons, who sometimes have a shortage of customers.

Furthermore, Mr. Nikam, a local politician, supports these developments in the settlement. He says that he has witnessed cooperation between the residents in order to improve their situation. Despite all social and cultural constraints, they have helped each other (sometimes even at night after work) to build the toilets. In the end, the process not only improved the physical environment in the settlement, but also created a stronger community feeling among residents. This can be also seen in the newly founded committee which was introduced by Shelter to represent the residents' demands. One could summarize that Rajiv Gandhi Nagar's residents not only got new toilets but gained dignity, too.

*The mason's work covers the whole construction process, from toilet seat, building to tiles, door setting, and connection to drainage line. Often, it also included the construction of a new front wall.*



#### SANITATION

