

CASE STUDY:

Safe Resting Homes for Menstruating Women in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra

THE TIME & TALENTS CLUB PROJECTS COMMITTEE
IN COLLABORATION WITH:
YUVA PARIVARTAN (NGO)



WHERE: TUKUM VILLAGE, DHANORA BLOCK, GADCHIROLI, MAHARASHTRA

Gadchiroli, categorised as tribal, undeveloped, naxal affected, is one of the 250 most-backward districts in the country. with the lowest monthly household income ie Rs 6,572/- in the state of Maharashtra.

WHO BENEFITS: 133 TRIBAL WOMEN + KAIKADI SCHEDULED TRIBE

Women who were undergoing their menstrual cycle and were made to stay in unsafe and unhealthy conditions for the duration of their cycle.

WHAT WAS THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE OF CONCERN: UNSAFE, UNHYGIENIC “KURMA GHARS” (Menstrual Period Huts) WHICH RESULTS IN INFECTION AND EVEN LOSS OF LIFE.

Banishing menstruating women to Period Huts (Kurma Ghars) is an unhealthy practice amongst certain tribes in Gadchiroli. 98 % out of the 223 Period Huts surveyed, were found to be unsafe, unhygienic, unsanitary, uninhabitable shelters having no electricity, toilet /bath facilities, or adequate water supply, which resulted in untold infections, illnesses and sometimes even death amongst menstruating women. Women were losing their lives at “Kurma Ghars” every month.

HOW WAS THE SITUATION RESOLVED: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THAT NOT ONLY ENHANCES THE QUALITY OF LIFE, BENEFITS MORE THAN ONE SEGMENT OF SOCIETY, SERVES AS A PLATFORM FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER EMPOWERMENT, AND IS ALSO ENVIRONMENTALLY EFFICIENT, AND INTEGRATES VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY.



To bridge the resource gap, The Time and Talents Club pledged Rs 104,386.00 to construct the first Safe Resting Home for menstruating women; and the first of its kind using bottle bricks facilitating environmental protection and a movement against untouchability.

Kaikadi rag-pickers were rallied together and trained in safe disposable practices. This increased their income and socially acceptability in the community.

23,000 plastic bottles procured from them valued at Rs 110,500/- were recycled into “bottle bricks” (plastic bottles filled with sand) and used instead of red bricks to construct the Safe Resting Home for menstruating women.

In three (3) months, following social distancing and personal protection protocols, the Safe Resting Home was completed on the site available in the village where the dilapidated Period Hut stood.

The inner room, toilet, bath cum washing sections total 350 sq ft while the balcony is 180 square feet.

The resting home is now equipped with the following facilities:

- An inner room where women rest.
- Well fitted bath, toilet and washing sections.
- A balcony where women relax, and may learn and/or practise a skill.
- The inner room accommodates 8 beds cum mattresses (4 made with bottle bricks, 4 village movable cots), a water filter and a wash basin. It has two netted windows, five ventilators, two solar operated fans and lights.
- On one side, it opens out into the balcony while on the inside, it opens into a bathing and washing section. The loft houses the water storage tank powered by solar energy for lifting water, and solar batteries.
- The lower 4 feet of the balcony has been made using bottle bricks. It includes two sitting arrangements made of bottle bricks and two sewing machines for these women to learn and practice basic tailoring.



- 4 sewing machines are placed in a community centre where the women will be taught basic tailoring inclusive of handcrafting saree blouses, saree petticoats, baby outfits, face masks, reusable sanitary napkins and cloth bags.

This Safe Resting Home for menstruating women is set to serve as a model for many more such homes, paving the movement to keep menstruating women healthy, safe and comfortable. and saving precious lives.

In addition to these tribal women, there has been a **major shift in the way the community looks upon the Kaikadi ragpickers, who belong to a scheduled caste.** Kaikadi means “wild pig” and they faced considerable resistance and stigma within the community, **enhancing not only their social status but also their income.**

On May 6, 2020, The Safe Resting Home for menstruating women was formally inaugurated following social distancing and personal protection protocols. Lahu Tofa, the oldest man in the village cut the ribbon in the presence of the village women, the current Sarpanch Amol Gedam, previous Sarpanch Reshma Tofa, District Assistant Health Officer Vikas Kumbhare, Health Officer Dr Ananta Kannake, Health Worker Jaya Magaswar and KSWA's/YP's team.

THE RESULT:

TEN DIRECT OUTCOMES FOR BETTER SAFETY, SUSTAINABILITY, HEALTH & HYGIENE

1. Enhancing the health, safety and hygiene of the women of this community.
2. Generating awareness and empathy within the community about the needs of menstruating women.
3. Gender empowerment through skill development for the women of the community.
4. Recognition and awareness about the importance of recycling and social enhancement for the Kaikadi community.
5. Creating a pioneering initiative that will serve as a role model for other communities in the region.
6. Educating the community on the importance of environmental sustainability and using renewable energy such as solar power, and recyclable material such as bottle bricks that are made out of recycled plastic bottles.
7. Empowering the women to develop a life-skill i.e. tailoring, that they can use as a supplementary form of income.
8. Creating a platform for community development and interaction for the women of the community to come together and share both resources and experiences.
9. Creating awareness in the broader community about the Kumra Ghars and the stigma that menstruating women have to deal with, despite the fact that it's a basic biological process.
10. Using sustainable development methods and renewable energy resources to enhance the quality of life, in a cost-effective and time-efficient manner.

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