

Engaged Citizens- Responsive City Stories of Change



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Engaged Citizens Responsive City is a four-year long intervention supported by the European Union which focuses on strengthening civil society of the urban poor to participate in planning and monitoring of sanitation services. The project works across 3 cities in India (Ajmer in Rajasthan, Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh, and Muzaffarpur in Bihar). It primarily engages the urban poor through capacity building activities to enable them to become active citizens, and to use the new skills learnt to participate in planning (at city level) and monitoring (at the ward level) of sanitation services.

Partners in this change include urban poor and middle-class residents, with leadership of young women and men; mayors, elected councillors and related government departments; traders and market associations; civil society, academia and media; and women sanitation workers.

These stories of change document the process of engaging the urban poor, organising them through Settlement Improvement Committees (SICs) in each informal settlement, training young women and men SIC members to take leadership and generating city-wide community-led data of sanitation services. The consequent demand by citizens has resulted in their municipalities becoming responsive to their needs.

1 “We help each other resolve our problems”

Settlement Name

Dadiyapura

Ward

45

City

Jhansi, UP



Dadiyapura is marked by the fervour of its residents, who are putting great energy into their efforts to have their needs and grievances addressed. A strong sense of solidarity and determination has emerged, with residents growing more passionate and conscious of the importance of maintaining sanitation standards, taking action and demanding accountable governance by the day. Residents attribute this to the formation of the SIC, which has allowed them to find a platform to collectivise their efforts and draw on each other for strength. While the process of getting returns on these community investments can be long and frustrating, the Dadiyapura SIC is aware of the need to remain resolute.

‘Jo bhi kuch cheezein hum log kar rahe hai, ye sab apne apne paise se, sab chanda jor karke karte hai.’

‘Pehle thoda-thoda (safai) karte the. Jab se hum log mein jagrukta pada hui hai, tab se hum log (achhe se) karne lage.’

‘Whatever we do, we do it with our own money, we pool our contributions together and do it.’

‘Earlier, we used to clean a little bit, but ever since we have become more aware, we have started doing it in a bigger way.’

Dadiyapura was a settlement without drainage, sufficient water supply, or toilets. This state of affairs was compounded by a lack of knowhow and community togetherness. In the words of Deepak, a resident, 'Humein yeh nahi pata tha ki kisse baat karna hai aur kaise baat karna hai.'

The result was predictable: water-logging, garbage strewn everywhere and an extremely unhygienic living environment for all.

Against this background, one of the most transformative aspects of the change in Dadiyapura has been the way in which the formation of the SIC, on May 13, and building awareness about sanitation and hygiene galvanized them to clean the settlement.



Two events helped solidify the commitment of the residents to keeping their surroundings free of water and waste. The first was the event organised by them in celebration of Independence Day, for which a thorough cleaning of the entire settlement was undertaken on August 14. They are defiantly proud of the fact that they have undertaken all cleaning efforts on their own, without any assistance.

The next day the settlement participated in flag-raising and the distribution of sweets; the experience led to an unspoken resolve to keep the settlement clean through regular efforts and to work together for the community's interests.



To this end, the residents of Dadiyapura have built their own drains, with the result that water-logging has ended, as can be seen in the picture on the right. They have also doubled their efforts to keep the settlement free of waste, which they instead dump at a nearby ground. This is not an ideal solution, but it is indicative of a growing consciousness about the need to maintain a community standard of cleanliness.

The second event was the awareness programme held in the settlement on Global Handwashing Day by PRIA. Approximately 25-30 children gathered on October 15 to learn about the importance of washing their hands and have made their learnings a part of their daily routines.

The sense of unity fostered on August 15 has been evident in various other efforts since, including the applications that the residents have submitted under the Swachh Bharat Mission and the Pradhan Mantri Shahari Awas Yojana, for the construction of toilets and houses respectively. The initial apprehensions of the SIC regarding how to approach the authorities have given way to the realisation that strength lies in numbers and unity.

Accordingly, about 150 residents travelled together to Lucknow to submit their PMSAY applications. This is a powerful statement of community intent, determination and solidarity that SIC members and other settlement residents alike are proud of.



The strong awareness about hygiene and sanitation that has been instilled in Dadiyapura has taken hold of the youth of the settlement in a big way. Nazim Hussain proudly asserts that he attends all meetings and accompanies the SIC on all their visits to municipal offices.



Majjoo, Deepak and Farooq (L-R) are active members of the Dadiyapura SIC, who strongly believe that the formation of the committee has been responsible for activating the residents and getting them to work for the betterment of the settlement, particularly its cleanliness.

2 “We will dedicate ourselves and keep at it”

Settlement Name
Hansari
Ward
2
City
Jhansi, UP



With the paving of the main pathway that leads into the settlement, Hansari has undergone a facelift. The fact that a substantial portion of the settlement is now free of the problems associated with mud paths has given the SIC hope that communicating their needs to the concerned authorities in the correct manner is the way to resolve their issues. A consciousness about the need to keep their surroundings clean has taken shape among the residents. They have also benefitted from the repair of a handpump that had not been functioning for a long time and are looking forward to continued development in the settlement

‘Aega badlav, kyu nahi aega? Jab itna ho gaya toh aage aur bhi hoga.’

(‘Change will come, why not? If we can do this much, we can do more.’)

‘Mil gaye hai, jud gaye hai, toh vishvas hai ki aage kuch kaam hoega.’

(‘We have come together now, so we believe that we will be able to achieve something.’)

The three issues that have dominated the SIC meetings at Hansari have concerned access to electricity and water and the need for a road in the settlement. The handpump that residents drew water from had been in a state of disrepair for a long time and the dirt roads turned into a huge inconvenience in the event of rain, which muddied up the settlement, inevitably led to water-logging and provided little incentive to keep the environment clean.

In the five months since the formation of the committee on July 4, two of these problems have received the attention of local authorities due to the efforts of the SIC.



As can be seen in the photos, the process of paving the roads of Hansari is underway, starting from its outer limits, where it meets the main road. This has altered the appearance of much of the settlement and carries with it the promise of a complete transformation as it continues.

Getting this process started involved a series of meetings with the Ward Councillor, during which the SIC apprised him of the residents' reasons for demanding concrete roads and solicited his assistance. The Councillor was responsive to this proactive pressure and mobilised his resources to get the work done.

Apart from the obvious benefits that will be enjoyed by the 20-25 households in the area covered so far, there have been two other positive developments as a result of this initiative. Firstly, it has considerably reinforced the relationship between residents and the Councillor and the SIC. *"Vo sunte hai humari baat, hume vishvas hai ki (unko batane se) kaam ho jaega."* (He listens to us. This has given us the belief that telling him about our problems will get work done.)

Secondly, it has instilled optimism in the SIC members. They have come to believe in the effectiveness of working together to increase pressure and ensure timely delivery of services.

The second problem to have been addressed was that of water supply. The SIC was informed that it would have to approach the Jal Sansthan to apply for repairs. Four SIC members took it upon themselves to do so. The handpump was fixed soon after and is supplying water to the settlement now, something from which all its residents can benefit. This, too, has reinforced the point that knowing who is responsible for action in a particular area and proactively approaching them is the best way to get problems addressed.



Shanti, a member of the Hansari SIC, wants to go beyond cleaning the roads and increasing access to toilets.

She pointed out that most residents throw trash into a pond behind some of the houses (pictured on the right) and expressed a keen desire to clean up this area. This is a sign of a strong consciousness about sanitation taking roots in the community.



3 “Nowadays, we regularly meet our elected representative”

Settlement Name
Karguan
Ward
29
City
Jhansi, UP



The formation of an SIC in Karguan, Jhansi, has been a tremendously catalysing factor for the women of the settlement. They have come together and found strength and unity in a big way since their meetings began in June 2016. Young and old alike are vocal about their problems and determined and resolve them, as is evident from the way in which they tirelessly pursue PRIA officials when they need support or guidance. Filling out applications and submitting them to concerned authorities, they have had three electricity poles erected, two handpumps repaired and the foundations of four toilets installed in the settlement through applications. They are also raising new issues, such as the need for roads and organised garbage collection at every meeting. They even organise some of these meetings independently and are supported by the men of the settlement. Their story is one of transformation, from and a lack of awareness about what to do and how, to confidence, resolve and hope.

‘Meeting mein jo log nahi hai, hum unke ghar pe jaake bolte hai ki aaj meeting mein yeh hua. Har baat ki soochna dete hai hum, ghar-ghar jaake.’

We go to the houses of those who are not present for meetings and tell them about what happened at the meeting. We go house-to-house and share every detail.

‘Karna chahe toh kuch bhi kar sakte hai.’

If we really want to, we can do anything.

“Kisse kahenge, kaise karenge?” says Kalpana. Whom shall we speak to, and how? She is referring to the past and her words capture the helplessness with which the residents of Karguan had to bear persistent water shortages, lack of access to toilets and basic sanitary needs and unavailability of electricity.

While it would be easy to blame all of these problems on the fact that the settlement is situated on a hill, the SIC’s efforts have shown that this is by no means an insurmountable obstacle. Five months

since the SIC was formed, it is not the pessimism or resignation of the settlement that stands out, but a striking sense of determination and purpose, prominently among its women. This has been the result of a series of concrete improvements and positive steps towards ensuring their basic needs.

The most significant of these has been access to water. Prior to the formation of the SIC, they had been dependent on a water tanker for which they had to walk many kilometres from their settlement. In the initial post-SIC period too, meetings were disrupted by the arrival of the tanker, which caused everyone to rush immediately to fill their buckets. Minor scuffles would break out over who was first or next in line. *'Peene ko mehman aa gaye agar toh ghar pe nahi hai pani, toh ek dusre ke ghar se botal mangte the,'* says Janaki. *We had to go around asking for water from other houses when guests came over.*

The primary reason for this state of affairs was that the two handpumps in the settlement had not been working for about a year. Talking about their problems in SIC meetings made the women realise that fighting amongst each other was not the solution to a common problem. Instead, they appealed to PRIA for assistance, took the helpline number of the Jhansi Jal Sansthan and called on that number to have repairs organised. The work was done within 3-4 days and the entire community now has daily, round-the-clock access to water from the handpumps.



This simple, quick remedy instilled confidence in the women about discussing their problems collectively and about the responsiveness of institutions and representatives to collective demands. Having applied for the construction of toilets under the Swachh Bharat Mission before the SIC was formed, they decided to use the SIC to ensure that there were no obstacles in the way of timely delivery of money into their accounts. This entailed going to the Nagar Nigam in groups to meet with the responsible officials.



Shakti estimates that she made around 10 trips, with groups of up to 7 SIC members.

The soakpits that have been constructed in 4 households during this period are each testaments to the success of these efforts.

The women of Karguan were motivated to begin seeking out policies and schemes on their own and following up by asking PRIA for information and support. When Janaki learned about the Pradhan Mantri Shahari Awas Yojana, she first rushed back to the settlement to inform everyone else and then called PRIA to request assistance in filling out and submitting the application forms. As a result of this, 19 households were able to send in their applications for housing subsidies and 5 have received their first instalments.

They carried this confidence into ensuing interactions with their Ward Councillor, with the result that their demand for the installation of electricity poles, something that had lain dormant for 2 years, came to fruition. Earlier, they had had to set up wooden sticks on their own to mount electric cables on. These would invariably collapse in the wind or during storms and have to be re-erected by them every time. The renewed and persistent efforts of the SIC, however, turned out to be the game-changer: the Councillor has had three poles installed in the lower reaches of the settlement, benefitting 20-25 households and approximately 60-75 people.

Two factors can be identified as the lynchpins of this change: on the one hand, increased awareness about government policies and bureaucratic procedures and, on the other, the twin realisations that they have to be active in order to improve their own conditions and that they must work together. Expecting change to come and responding individually to each problem was a recipe for disappointment.



Significantly, this newfound awareness and solidarity has had the beneficial effect of ending the profiteering of “agents” in Karguan. These agents would present themselves to the residents as middlemen and take large amounts of money in return for the promise of communicating their grievances or needs to the concerned authorities and arranging action. Jyoti, a young woman who believes the SIC can solve its own problems, believes that extortion by such agents has come to an end with the increase in the awareness levels and proactivity.

4 “Earlier we had no hope... now there are possibilities”

Settlement Name

Pichhor

Ward

29

City

Jhansi, UP



In Pichhor, we have an example of entrenched disillusionment and apathy turning gradually into expectation and involvement. From having had almost no experience of interacting with the municipality or any other local authorities or service providers, they have had two handpumps repaired and submitted forms under a number of government schemes. Their levels of confidence and empowerment will rise as the benefits of these initiatives accrue to them, something they too have come to believe.

‘Hum toh chale jaenge saath,

Earlier we didn’t discuss things like this. This started when the meetings began.

‘Jab daurenge, bhatkenge, tabhi toh kuchh hasil hoga.’

(‘It is only when we take the initiative

In the tribal-dominated settlement of Pichhor, community leader Lakkhan Rai felt that change was difficult to think about when everyone was constantly in search of employment to meet their day-to-day needs. The formation of an SIC has brought a number of problems to the fore, but one took priority over all others for the residents. For nearly a year, they had had to cross the highway in front of their settlement and travel several kilometres every day to collect water, for drinking as well as household and other purposes. This was a great inconvenience for the entire community.



On August 12, the root cause of this problem emerged at an SIC meeting: it was learned that the handpumps in the settlement had stopped working many months ago. The residents did not know what to do about this and had simply reconciled themselves to their privations ever since.

As with many of the issues related to local governance, the solution to this problem was a matter of knowing who to contact. The Pichhor SIC was given a municipality complaint helpline number the next day. Although initially they were afraid that they would be shouted at by the municipal officials, they were quickly convinced that they would have to call to find out how the authorities would react. Steeling himself, Lakkhan Rai made the call, was asked about the details of the handpump's condition and promptly assured that men would be sent to repair it within the next two days.



Two days later, the handpump was fixed and the water problems in the settlement came to an end.

This success, which benefitted the entire settlement, instilled in Lakkhan Rai a belief in the responsiveness of municipal authorities. Thus, when three months down the line the handpump once again failed, it was with confidence that he said, "*Likhke dena padega. Kal banaenge, parso de denge.*" *We will have to submit a written complaint. We will write it tomorrow and submit it the day after.*



Encouraged by this, the Pichhor SIC has undertaken other efforts to engage with the municipality to improve their lives and the conditions of the settlement. They have applied for the pathway into the slum to be paved, for subsidised LPG stoves under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana and for houses to be built under the Pradhan Mantri Shahari Awas Yojana. They have also submitted a complaint regarding the fact that no money has come into their accounts under the Swachh Bharat Mission. About 40 people in total from the settlement have submitted these applications.

While none of these efforts has yielded any tangible results yet, they represent positive steps for a community that earlier had no knowledge about government schemes, inclination to engage with the authorities or belief in their ability to change their circumstances.

5 “Our settlement has progressed”

Settlement Name
Talpura
Ward
12
City
Jhansi, UP



The transformation of Talpura has occurred at two significant levels. At the more visible level, the settlement has undergone a sea change in its attitude towards cleanliness, with residents taking the initiative to have a dirty lane cleaned and paved and, further, to have underground piping installed to ensure waste from the terraces of the houses lining the lane does not accumulate on it again. They have even demanded that the community toilet on that lane be made available for public use and have received a commitment from the Nagar Nigam that the construction work will be complete in 3 months. At another level, the relationship between the settlement and its Ward Councillor has been strengthened considerably. The latter has become increasingly involved since the formation of the SIC, responding to its appeals and applications and giving a heartening speech during the Independence Day celebrations that were organised in the settlement, for the first ever time.

‘Pehle aisi baat nahi hoti thi. Jab se meetings hone loge, tab se baat hone lagi.’

Earlier we didn’t discuss things like this. This started when the meetings began.

‘Safai ke liye bahut koshish ki hum log ne.’

We have worked very hard on cleanliness.

It is said that a picture speaks a thousand words. In the case of Talpura settlement, two pictures capture the essence of its story since an SIC was formed here 5 months ago:



The lane on which the community toilet was being constructed by the Nagar Nigam. As is clearly visible, it was teeming with filth, more so as waste from the terraces of the houses lining the lane would end up accumulating on it. Residents claim that they could not bear to walk through this area and that it had turned into an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes.



The same lane today. An unbelievable makeover for which the credit goes to the residents of the settlement. First, they got the stretch cleaned through an application to the Commissioner of the municipality. Then they met with the Ward Councillor to get the road paved. After this, they arranged among themselves for the construction of pipes (visible in the background) connecting the terraces to the drain running along the side of the road. This will ensure that the waste does not pile up on the road but is discharged directly into the drain.

The fact that this lane provides access to the community toilet added another dimension to the SIC's efforts, in that they submitted an application to the Nagar Nigam demanding that the construction of the toilet be completed now that the path to it had been cleared. In response, the Nagar Nigam has committed to a 3-month timeline for the completion of the toilet. This will be a step towards ending the practice of open defecation that is still prevalent in Talpura.

The whole process described above took about 3-4 months of persistent efforts. It featured multiple aspects of what is understood as participatory success: evidence of the community's own desire to see its settlement cleaned, the strengthening of channels of communication with local authorities by the SIC to get the work done, and a tangible result that can serve as a great example of what collective consciousness and action can achieve.

The commitment of the SIC to promoting cleanliness in the settlement was manifest in the pledge taken by them on August 15, to work together to keep their settlement in clean. For the community to celebrate Independence Day in this manner was itself a first, with decorations organised through contributions and a flag-hoisting ceremony.

Even more heartening, however, has been the follow-up. Fareeda, an SIC member, says that residents are now sweeping the areas in front of their houses regularly. Dustbins have been placed at several places and although there is no garbage collection in Talpura, residents carry the waste to a nearby dumping site themselves instead of leaving it lying around in the settlement.



According to Anand Sahu, the Ward Councillor, the change in the behaviour of the settlement's residents has been unprecedented. Their insistence on meeting him to communicate their needs necessitated up to three visits to the settlement by him on certain days. He regards the Independence Day event as symbolic of the newfound unity and revitalisation and was motivated to get the SIC to participate in a health camp organised in the ward. The awareness that they have gained has had ramifications beyond sanitation as well: "Children have realised the importance of education and are expressing the desire to study."

6 “Change has come after the SIC was formed”

Settlement Name
Pokhriya Pir
Ward
32
City
Muzaffarpur, Bihar



The situation in Pokhriya Pir had left the settlement’s residents with little hope for change or improvement, but two instances of swift action after the formation of the SIC have changed the face of the settlement. The cleaning of the main lane in the settlement, which was waterlogged with drainage and garbage throughout the year, and the building of a concrete, covered drain through an alley have stood out as examples of what can be achieved if a community unites and collectivises its problems.

‘SIC ke madhyam se kaam bhi hua hai aur jaankari bhi mila hai. Progress ho rahi hai.’

‘Through the medium of the SIC, work has been done and awareness has been raised. Progress is happening.’

‘SIC ke karan hum mil-jhulke mohalla vikas ke liye baat bhi kar rahe hai aur kam bhi.’

‘Because of the SIC we are sitting together and talking about developing the settlement and taking action as well.’

In Pokhriya Pir, the residents were fed up of living conditions that showed no signs of changing – the fact that they had no roads in their settlement, nor any drains or ownership of land. In fact, because they occupied private land belonging to someone else, there was no possibility of government intervention to improve infrastructure, facilities and services. This, to them, was especially unjust because they had lived on that land for generations.

The settlement had become a site of neglect and disrepair. Alcohol and gambling addictions kept the men occupied after their work and the women had to take care of their households. Under the circumstances, they could not tend to the settlement as a whole, as a result of which many lanes were full of garbage and sewage with no arrangements for their disposal.

Over time, residents of Pokhriya Pir had lost the drive to change their circumstances. With the formation of the SIC, this was the first thing that was addressed. Getting together to speak about their issues, collectivising those issues to create a pool of common needs and goals and mobilising each other to be aware and share relevant information was a significant early achievement for the SIC.

Due to the growing awareness among the residents, they began to take concrete action. They made appeals to their Ward Councillor as a united body, and the pressure they were able to mount bore results. The first of these was that main lane of the settlement, which was waterlogged with sewage and garbage throughout the year, was cleaned. This was a huge improvement and changed the face of the settlement.



The second action was the building of a concrete drain through the settlement, connecting its makeshift drains to the main drain of the ward and providing an outage for the settlement's waste. The alley through which this drain was built had earlier been fraught with danger because, while waste flowed through it, there was nothing to close it off or protect residents from it. Children often fell in and it was a breeding ground for disease. With the construction of the covered drain, this has been addressed.



A lot remains to be done in Pokhriya Pir, but with the formation of the SIC, residents have begun to feel that their unity serves a purpose and can bring about change. They have been motivated to form a parallel community committee that will pool in funds to undertake small-scale development work in the settlement. These baby steps show the emergence of a collective consciousness and commitment to improving their conditions.

7 “Use personal examples to motivate... it feels good”

Settlement Name
Soda Godown
Ward
45
City
Muzaffarpur, Bihar



In the period since July, the establishment of a Settlement Improvement Committee in Soda Godown has helped to instill unity in the residents and the confidence to act and to demand action from the Nagar Nigam. As a result of this, the main open drain running through the settlement has been cleaned and cleaning of the surrounding drains is also underway, garbage is being collected regularly, houses have been numbered, and two community taps have been built through the contributions of the settlement dwellers. The members of the SIC feel more aware and empowered, which comes across most clearly in their description of the flag-raising event they organized (for the first ever time in the settlement) to celebrate Independence Day:

‘Bahut achha laga, bahut.’

It felt good, very good

‘Desh ke liye hum log khada hue. Desh azaad hua us din, isi ke liye humne itna kuch kiye. Bahut khushi mili hum logon ko.’

We celebrated on behalf of the country, because the country became independent on that day. This gave us great happiness

‘Apne ko bhi achha rehna hai aur doosron ko bhi achha rehne ke liye bolna padta hai. Hum achhe rahenge toh aap bhi achha rahiye. Aap bhi kuda-vuda mat lagaiye.’

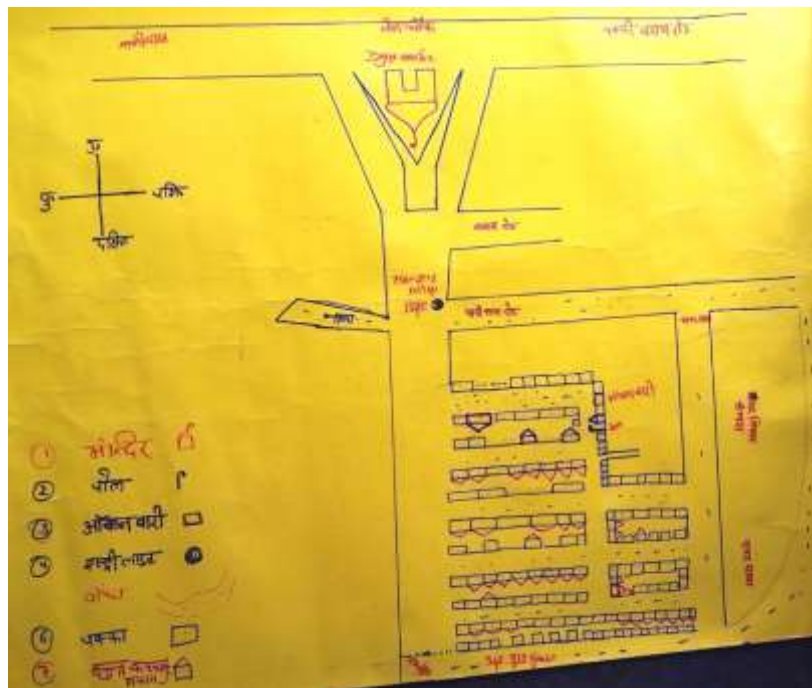
We should try to live well and to convince others to live well, too. We should use our example to spread the message. Don’t litter or pollute your surroundings

When PRIA began interacting with the residents of Soda Godown, the first priority was to build their trust, which had been worn thin due to their disappointing experiences in the past with NGOs. Participating in Muzaffarpur’s Nagar Sahbhagita Samvad to familiarise the residents with the Smart Cities project helped with this, as did establishing that taking or giving money was not on the agenda.

These efforts culminated, on July 18, 2016, in 45-50 people from the settlement gathering in an Aam Sabha where everyone was briefed on what an SIC is and how they stood to gain from it. Discussions and deliberations led to 10 representatives being nominated from the assembled gathering to form the SIC. After a transect walk through the settlement, chart paper and sketch pens were handed out and the residents drew a map of the Soda Godown and pointed out the problems that ailed different parts.

What is an SIC?

Settlement Improvement Committees are voluntary community organisations that serve as a forum for the residents of settlements to broach and share grievances, discuss solutions, and plan actions to improve their conditions. Residents choose 10-15 representatives, with equal weightage to men and women and a premium on young members. Through regular SIC meetings, they are able to build unity and solidarity among themselves and present their appeals to the concerned bodies/authorities together, with self-belief deriving from strength in numbers.



It became clear that the entire community, comprised largely of Scheduled Caste and Muslim residents with little or no education, dealt with overflowing drains, lack of access to water and vast piles of garbage on an everyday basis. The sanitary condition of the settlement was shocking; there was no space for children to play.

Their complaints about all this had yielded no results over the years. They had resigned themselves to the way things were because they did not know how to register their complaints or demands with the municipality. This prevented them from coming together to find strength and comfort in openly sharing their problems, discussing their options and putting more pressure on the authorities to address their infrastructural and sanitary needs.

The exercise gave them a sense of oneness. Building on this, the SIC decided to take up some of the significant issues requiring attention in the settlement and find more effective ways to address them together.

To get the drains cleaned, SIC members wrote an application to the *anchal adhikari*. When this failed, they went to the *jimmedar* with photos of the state of the settlement. These photos had to be used to refute claims that the settlement was being cleaned as per the duties of the municipality.

The proof was undeniable. The drains of Soda Godown were cleaned within a week. This happens regularly now.



Soon after this, on August 15, the SIC organised an Independence Day celebration at which the Indian flag was raised in the settlement for the first time. This event was made possible through contributions from the residents. This symbolic event made Soda Godown feel a part of the national community, that that they needed to be vigilant about their civic rights and duties for the betterment of that community.



The next major problem tackled by the SIC was the lack of government facilities for water supply in Soda Godown. They had submitted an application regarding this but had got no response.

To work around this, the SIC pooled funds to have two collectively owned private taps installed in the settlement. Now they use the taps to access water during three time slots every day: 6am-10am, 12pm-2pm and 4pm-8pm.

These strengthened the position of the SIC and the solidarity and self-belief within the community. The direct benefits have been cleaner surrounds and access to water for *all* the residents of Soda Godown. This transformation is captured in the words of Rina Devi and Deepa Kumari: “Sab jhel lenge, sab milke. Khud se museebat ka hal nikaal sakte hai hum log. Ye hum log ke atmavishvas hai.”



Rohit, a young boy, is convinced that the work of the SIC has had positive effects on his life and the lives around him. A class topper, his assurance when he speaks about the changes reflects his involvement and sense of purpose. With young leaders like him and Deepa emerging, the roots of an activated community and citizenry can be seen taking hold in Soda Godown and it is increasingly evident that this is the prerequisite for institutional accountability.

8 “Change is inevitable with awareness and working together”

Settlement Name
Bairwa basti
Ward
67
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



The SIC members of Bairwa Basti have succeeded in organizing the construction of a cement concrete (CC) road leading to the community and the construction of a new drainage system. The most significant success is the determination of SIC and community members to create significant change through their actions. The entire community has benefited from the efforts of the SIC thus far.

‘Hum apne samasya pe charcha kar rahe hai evam samasya ko lekar aage ja rahe hai.’

‘We are discussing our problems with each other and working towards resolving them.’

‘Humari committee bani tab se kam ho raha hai, safai ho rahi hai, light bhi lagi hai, evam nali aur chabutara bani hai.’

‘Since the SIC was formed, work has been happening, cleaning has been happening, lights have been installed and drains and a plinth have been constructed.’

The road leading into the Bairwa Basti was a very poorly maintained one, hindering easy access into the community. In addition, the drains alongside the road were not functioning properly, causing blockages and water overflow. The poor road and drainage created both functional and sanitary problems within the community. The SIC members agreed on the urgent need for a new road entering the community.



They made a request to the Ward Councillor about constructing a CC road, as well as a new set of drains alongside the road. The request by the community members was accepted and a CC road with new drains was constructed.

The SIC members are happy with the work that has been done, but they are not content; they are determined to resolve more issues in the community that have been disregarded for too long. The two major projects that the SIC members are working on have to do with toilets and water.

Currently, none of the households in Bairwa Basti has a toilet. The settlement has access to a set of community toilets, but they are located outside the community, right beside a large open drain filled with contaminated water and an abundance of garbage. Furthermore, many of the pipes hooked up to the toilet structure are broken, and the toilets themselves are in poor condition. The waste from the toilets is emitted directly into the open drain flowing alongside the building.

The SIC members conveyed this situation to the Ward Councillor, who then applied for the construction of a new set of community toilets. Due to space limitations, the municipality has decided to renovate a near-by building and construct toilets there. The community toilets will be more functional and in closer proximity to the settlement than the ones that are currently being used. The municipality has ensured that construction will begin as soon as possible.



The SIC has also requested that the large drain (pictured) be cleaned. The open drain is detrimental to the air quality and overall sanitation standards of the community. It has been poorly maintained, and is often used as a garbage dump by passersby.

The SIC members have decided to assist the community in applying for individual toilets through the Swachh Bharat Mission; approximately 60 forms have been filled out that are awaiting a response. In addition to toilet applications, the SIC has also started filing pension forms for community members; three forms have been filled so far.

In the future, the SIC would like to see the instalment of streetlights in the community, as the community is congested and difficult to navigate during the night. The dark streets also pose specific safety problems for women and girls who have to leave home to use the toilet.

The next priority of the SIC is in relation to solid waste management. The community members have taken it upon themselves to clean the drains and sweep the roads; the community members share the responsibility and alternate tasks throughout the week. However, the community members are busy, and the cleaning does not always happen as planned. The SIC has spoken to the Ward Councillor about arranging a sweeper for the community, but nothing has transpired. The SIC plans to approach the Ward Councillor again with more urgency, and additional plans will be made from there.

There is also a concern regarding water, as there is no pipeline connecting to the community houses. There is a water connection near the entrance of the settlement that community members often connect their own piping too, but their pipe often breaks, and the connection is not efficient to supply the entire community with water. The SIC members have asked the Ward Councillor to approach the Municipality about providing a proper water connection to the settlement.

9 “The SIC has given us a way to work together”

Settlement Name
 Bangla No 5
Ward
 45
City
 Ajmer, Rajasthan



The four-month-old SIC of Bangla No 5 has worked hard to get an electricity pole installed in their settlement. They have submitted applications for the construction of a road and provision of piped drinking water to the settlement. While the municipality is yet to act on the applications, the SIC notes that its efforts have resulted in visits from junior engineers of the PHED. This is a significant development for a settlement that has not received any such visits in the past. It has given the SIC hope that persevering together is the way forward for them.

‘Raasta mila hai, aage janne ka.’

‘We have a way forward, to know more.’

‘Sabhi koshish kar rahe hai, sab mil ke.’

‘Everyone is making an effort, all of us together.’



The residents of Bangla No 5 speak of their settlement as one that requires a lot of attention. In the past, they had been unsuccessful in their efforts to bring about the changes they want to see and this had left them dispirited and resigned. '*Kya maloom, kyu nahi hota* (who knows why nothing happens here),' says Ghulam Muhammad, expressing the feeling that the development narrative of the city has sidelined them.

Although the settlement cannot be described as transformed yet, the formation of the SIC on August 28 has given residents hope of better times to come. Small physical changes are evidence of significant progress in comparison to the past. An example of this is the installation of a utility pole in the settlement after a number of phone calls to the Nagar Nigam and a request to the Ward Councillor. It was the Councillor who got the work done. In addition to supporting power cables for various houses in the settlement, the pole also has a streetlight attached to it. The SIC had submitted an application for streetlights to the Nagar Nigam, and this represents the first step towards fulfilling that requirement.

Their biggest problem has been that of drinking water, for which they rely on water tankers throughout the year. They have written to the PHED about this, requesting that the pipelines that will connect the main water line to the houses in the settlement be laid down. This process had begun but was interrupted midway by logistical issues. While the request is yet to translate into action for budgetary reasons, the pressure sustained by the SIC did result in visits by junior engineers from the PHED to assess the situation. Residents assert that this was a first.

Another problem in the slum is the prevalence of open defecation. Many of the households belong to the BPL category and do not have toilets. On October 18, they applied to the Nagar Nigam for toilets under the Swachh Bharat Mission.

The Bangla No 5 SIC attributes the limited successes that they have had to increased awareness and determination, deriving from the collectivisation of their distresses. Despite the slow pace of change, they value this newfound sense of purpose and togetherness and the baby steps it has precipitated.



Rooksana (L, in yellow) and Najma (R, in green) are aware that the disillusionment that has settled into the settlement over the years will not be easy to shake off, but they also believe that the way in which the SIC is working, with all of them coming together and discussing their options on a regular basis rather than letting their problems die down, is the way forward.

10 “We got organised... and now everything looks better”

Settlement Name
Durga Colony
Ward
29
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



The face of Durga Colony has changed after its SIC's efforts have resulted in the cementing of its roads, regularisation of the municipal sweeper's visits and repair and cleaning of its drains. The SIC has taken shape as an active and effective platform for discussing the distresses of the residents of the colony. This was missing earlier and the unity it has brought about is regarded by SIC members as crucial to their success in improving their surroundings. They have plans for future actions as well and convey a strong sense of optimism regarding these.

Jo bhi ho raha hai, sahi tareeke se hi ho raha hai.

Whatever is happening is good and happening in the right manner.

Karya karne se hi badlav aega.

Only taking action can bring about change.

Pehle hum sangathhith nahi the. Ab ho gaye hai.

We were not united earlier. Now we are.

Change has come to Durga Colony in a big way since the activation of its residents through the formation of the SIC. To speak to the members of the SIC is to sense great optimism and momentum, as the discussion and communication of their grievances and problems has brought about multiple interventions from the municipality. As a result of these efforts, the settlement has undergone a visible transformation in terms of cleanliness.

The first and most basic of these changes is that the sweeper has begun to come daily. This is a marked improvement on the earlier situation, which was characterised by the complete absence of any sweeping or cleaning in the settlement. The SIC submitted an application to the Ward Councillor and the Nagar Nigam demanding that this be addressed.

Two subsequent actions were the cementing of the roads and the repair of the broken drains. These were taken care of within 6 weeks of the applications being submitted. The prompt response of the authorities in handling these various grievances has made the settlement a cleaner place and solidified residents' faith in the efficacy of making appeals as a community to their local representatives.



Attached to the neighbourhood is a piece of land that has become a swamp over time due to the accumulation of drainage from other settlements at a higher altitude. Not only does this carry a very real threat of disease, it leads to flooding in the settlement during the monsoons and is a major cause of distress. Until the SIC came into being, the residents of Durga Colony did not have any response system in place for this, having reconciled themselves to having to endure the annual calamity. Now, however, they have submitted an application demanding that the accumulated water be drained out. The process has begun.



Premchand (L) and Kishore Kumar (R) are two prominent members of the Durga Colony SIC. They had formed a committee in the past to address the colony's problems, but found it to be completely unsuccessful. The key difference between their efforts then and the efforts of the SIC has been awareness and perseverance, which were lacking earlier. Riding the optimism that has their successes have generated, they hope to convince the municipality to build a road connecting their colony to the main road outside despite having been told that the land belongs to the Indian railways and cannot be altered.

11 “We now feel we have no problems”

Settlement Name
Shivaji Colony
Ward
31
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



The SIC of Shivaji Colony is brimming with positivity as a result of the changes that it has brought about in just over three months. Although it is still a young SIC, its members are largely senior citizens, but they are active, enthusiastic and conscious of the need to work together to demand action from local authorities. They have improved their colony’s sanitary conditions by getting the safai karamchari to start coming regularly, having drains constructed, and securing better water supply. Having achieved these objectives, they have focused their attention on expanding the drainage network further and getting dustbins installed as well.

‘Safar karamchari abh aati hai, par hum bhi lagate hai jhaaru.’

‘The municipal cleaner comes now, but we sweep the areas around our houses too.’

‘Humko bahar ki jaankariyan mile; pehle humko pata hi nahi padta, abh sab pata padta hai.’

‘We learned about things that are happening outside our colony; earlier we had no clue.’

Drains, garbage and general cleanliness – three issues that held great significance for the residents of Shivaji Colony. The roads of the colony were constantly water-logged due to the fact that no drains had been built in the colony in 17 years, the residents estimate. No dustbins had been installed either. Vehicles were often trapped in the resultant mess; there was no way out through the dirty water and the accumulated waste.

To them, the promise of ‘development’, the promise every political representative, activist and voluntary organization swears by, has long revolved around these issues. They had tried to address the issues themselves by visiting local authorities, but had given up after the first couple of attempts when they found that their efforts were not rewarded. Seeing ‘development’ work in colonies nearby their own led to a kind of resignation among them – ‘it will happen when it happens’ became their motto.

But today, the roads are clean and dry. This indicates two fundamental changes: drains have finally been built and a safai karamchari has begun visiting the colony once every 3-4 days. It has also been accompanied by improvements in water supply. All that remains for Shivaji Colony to have its basic sanitation requirements in place is the installation of dustbins.



How did all of this happen? The residents are unanimous in their opinion on this: the formation of the Settlement Improvement Committee on September 4, 2016, has been the catalysing factor in transforming the face of Shivaji Colony. The SIC has met twice a month since then, with up to 30 representatives from the colony coming together.

As members of the SIC, they began discussing the issues they had been facing, which had lain dormant for some time. These issues were documented in the form of applications and conveyed to their Ward Councillor, who in turn relayed the grievances to the relevant departments of the Ajmer Nagar Nigam. This line of communication ensured rapid action by the municipality, with drains serving 100 households being constructed in 15 days. The regular visits of the safai karamchari, which benefit all the households of the colony, are a major improvement, given that the colony was completely neglected earlier.



These developments have had several larger ramifications. The members of the SIC have been made more aware about the importance of sanitation. Several members attest that they take extra efforts to keep the colony clean even now that the safai karamchari comes regularly. They have also become more aware of government policies and schemes as well as the role of their local representatives in ensuring that basic services are provided to them.

For the SIC members of Shivaji Colony, many of whom are senior citizens and have had to live there without basic services since 1991, their experience since September has cemented their faith in direct, responsive local government.

12 “The pace of change motivates us to continue”

Settlement Name
Trilok Nagar
Ward
15
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



The SIC of Trilok Nagar has taken several steps in the last six months to address the issues of the settlement’s residents. Their concerted efforts have yielded the following results: the safai karamchari sweeps the settlement regularly now, trash is collected every day, a community toilet near the settlement was opened for public use and drainage construction has taken off in multiple parts of the settlement (and been completed in many of them). They have also applied for the installation of sewage lines and are expecting work on that to begin soon. A consciousness about the importance of coming together as a community to find solutions to common problems has been awakened among the members of the SIC.

‘Jo bhi samasya hai, hum batate hai. Fir humein jankaari milti hai, kaha jaana hai, kya karna hai. Fir hum jaate hai.’

‘We speak about our problems. Then we are told about where to go and what to do about them. We then do it.’

‘Pehle sab alag-alag the, ab milke karte hai. Aise kaam chalta rahega tu sab log mil-jhulke kaam karenge.’

‘Earlier we were disunited, but we are now working together. If we continue to get results like this, our unity will grow.’

The Settlement Improvement Committee (SIC) of Trilok Nagar has worked in solidarity to create significant change within their community. The SIC has connected with the Ward Councillor and the Nagar Nigam so as to have the community toilet block unlocked and accessible for the residents. Further, the SIC has supported 10 households in filling out the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) toilet application forms that are now pending. The SIC has initiated the construction of new drains, as well as the initial stages of sewerage application. Lastly, there have been 30-40 pension forms for the elderly and widowed filled out and sent.

There is a community toilet block near the community of Trilok Nagar; however, the municipality locked the toilets under the supposition that they were not being used. The SIC members decided to approach the Ward Councillor and demand that the toilets be unlocked so that the 10 households without individual toilets could use the toilet block rather than practice open defecation. In addition, a community hall is located near the toilets; therefore, during special occasions and events, the entire community benefits from the toilet block. The Ward Councillor agreed to have the toilets unlocked for community use; however, the residents of Trilok Nagar had to ensure that the toilets were in fact being used.



The SIC has directly approached Nagar Nigam about installing a sewer pipe connection to the community. A municipal official has visited the community and prepared a list of households that want a sewerage connection. The Nagar Nigam is currently processing the information that was collected of the community.

The third success of the SIC in Trilok Nagar was the filling out of pension forms by the elderly and the widowed. Although the residents held legal standing to demand and receive pension, the majority of community members were unaware of how to do this. Thus, the majority of elderly and widowed community members of Trilok Nagar were left with minimal support from the government. The SIC members recognized this as a pervasive problem that had a relatively simple solution, and with the suggestion and support of PRIA staff members, the SIC helped community members demand a right that is theirs by filling out approximately 35-40 pension forms.

Altering the mindset of residents on the topic of open defecation and sanitation became a necessary step toward ensuring the community access to basic services. After having the toilet block unlocked, the SIC members recognized the importance of taking initiative, demanding rights, and creating change through their own efforts. Thus, SIC members, along with the support from PRIA staff, decided to take further initiative and have any willing resident of Trilok Nagar apply for individual toilet construction through the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). There are ten households that currently do not own an individual toilet, and all of these households have now applied for toilet construction.

In relation to toilet construction, the SIC members were aware that the community was in dire need of proper drainage and sewerage, especially once the construction for individual toilets begins. The drainage system that had existed in the community was unsatisfactory, and was prone to blockage and backup. The SIC members discussed the need for proper drainage with the ward councilor, who

then relayed this information to the Ajmer Municipal Corporation. In October 2016, Ajmer MC started constructing a new drainage system within the community that the entire community will benefit from once completed. Half of the slum has been covered so far and blockages have come to an end.



13 “ Working together gives us satisfaction”

Settlement Name
Vivekanand Colony
Ward
29
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



The formation of an SIC in Vivekanand Colony was the cue for the settlement’s first direct interactions with its Ward Councillor. The establishment of this link has been instrumental in bringing about a series of positive developments for the residents, with the installation of a hand pump, the laying of a pipeline for clean drinking water and the construction of a concrete cement (CC) road in quick time addressing long-standing problems and building the faith of the SIC members in the effectiveness of making their issues known to local representatives. They are confident that their continued efforts will improve the access to necessary basic services in their community.

‘Pehle humari pahuch bahut kam thi. Ab hum sab committee vale apne samasyaon ko lekar nagar nigam aur adhikariyon tak pahuch pa rahe hai.’

‘Earlier we had no reach, but now we take our problems directly to the municipality and concerned authorities.’

‘Basti mein paani ke pipeline ka kaam ke liye hum sab milke kaam karenge.’

‘All of us in the community will work together to get a water pipeline installed in the community.’

The inaccessible nature of the Vivekanand Colony, combined with its non-notified status, has delayed the proper installation of drains, sewerage, clean water facilities, community toilets, and paved streets in the settlement. In the initial SIC meetings, members emphasised several needs: a community waste bin, functional drains, paved roads, household toilets, Labour Cards, and lastly, a working hand pump to replace the defective hand pump currently existing in their community.

On September 7, the Ward Councillor attended the SIC meeting, marking the first time that a higher official met directly with the community and openly listened to what they had to say. The SIC's efforts were geared toward resolving the most prevalent challenges faced in their community. The first issue that the SIC raised with the Ward Councillor pertained to the deficiency of accessible water. Upon hearing about the dysfunctional hand pump, the ward official immediately arranged for the pump to be repaired, which took place on the same day.

In addition to access of water, the SIC wanted to ensure that the quality of water was up to par with safe and clean drinking standards. The SIC decided to speak directly with the Public Health and Engineering Department (PHED) about constructing a pipeline facility within their community. The PHED agreed to the demands of the SIC members, and assembled a pipeline for safe drinking water along the main road of the community.



The third issue that the SIC took action on was that of road infrastructure. The settlement had previously made a request for the construction of a cement concrete (CC) road but it had been pending for nearly a year. The SIC discussed this hindrance with the Ward Councillor, who assured them that the construction of a road would begin within the next few days.

In the first week of September a CC road was paved in Vivekanand Colony, allowing for easier mobility and more accessibility.

The fourth issue raised by the SIC concerned the paucity of household toilets. Many of the community members expressed a sense of disempowerment regarding their capacity to solve this issue. But after awareness-building and support, members decided to apply for toilet construction through the Swachh Bharat Mission. The next step was a discussion between the SIC and the Nagar Nigam to ensure that the complete funding for toilet construction would be received.



Lastly, the SIC members were concerned about the fact that many of their Labour Cards were not being recognised by the Nagar Nigam. The SIC requested the municipality to look into this discrepancy, upon which, the municipality discovered that many Labour Cards had not been linked online and were therefore operating as defective. They quickly resolved the problem by linking the issued Labour Cards to the online system.

Moving forward, the SIC of Vivekanand Colony has prioritised several more challenges that continue to disrupt their quality of life. SIC members have recognised further road infrastructure in their community as a top priority, as many streets remain unpaved and

difficult to navigate. Additionally, members have decided that stairs must be constructed on the dangerously steep paths so as to avoid accidents. One such stairway has been constructed.

Other plans include requesting the Nagar Nigam to provide consistent sweeper services, as well as community waste bins; installing street lights and lamp posts throughout the community; implementing pipeline facilities in the less accessible areas; and constructing a community hall for members to gather during formal meetings, celebrations, and festivals.



The SIC of Vivekanand Colony has experienced several communal successes through their dedication to work in solidarity to resolve the challenges that they face.

14 “Response from municipality to our demands ensured positive results”

Settlement Name
Ambedkar Nagar
Ward
56
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



Ambedkar Nagar has been transformed by the efforts of its SIC, which has thrown itself into clearing surrounding areas of waste that had accumulated over the years. Moreover, a new community toilet and a path along the banks of the adjacent Ana Sagar Lake have been completed. The latter provides the 291 residents of the settlement with better access to the main road and also protects them from flooding. Their relationship with the municipality has improved in the process and has given the SIC confidence about the future of their settlement.

Safai ho rahi hai evam sarvajanik shauchalay ka nirmaan hua hai aur uska upyog kar rahe hai. Vikas samiti se 40 log jude hue hai aur vikas kamon ke liye prayas kar rahe hai.

Our settlements is being cleaned now and community toilets have been built and are being used. The SIC consists of 40 members and they are all working for the settlement’s development.

Basti ke paas mein road ban gaya hai aur shauchalay nirmaan ho gaya hai. Isse sabka suvidha hui hai.

A road has been constructed next to our settlement and a toilet has been built, too. Everyone has benefitted from these developments.

The Ambedkar Nagar community has recognized the vital importance in initiating an interconnection between themselves and their municipality. Community members have been motivated by the physical evidence of progress so far, and the SIC is determined to initiate more projects to better their community as a whole.

The initial topics of discussion for the Ambedkar Nagar SIC included the proper disposal of garbage, and domestic violence. The community organized the placement of dustbins, and supplemented this with conversations around behavioral change, emphasizing the importance of active involvement by all community members in keeping their streets clean.



The SIC identified two challenges as being the most prevalent and requiring immediate action; that is the lack of functional communal toilets and proper road infrastructure surrounding their community. The structure that functioned as a communal toilet was out of commission due to deterioration and poor maintenance. Consequently, there were eight households that did not have access to a toilet and therefore relied solely upon open defecation as a means of relief. The SIC members focused on this issue and expressed an urgent need to replace their dysfunctional communal toilets with a new set of usable communal toilets.

The lack of road infrastructure was another heightened concern for SIC members due to the community's close proximity with Ana Sagar Lake. Previously, the area between the community and the lake was muddy with lake water and polluted with solid waste. The community took initiative in cleaning this area and planting trees, transforming the space into a community park. However, the community remained susceptible to significant flooding, especially during seasons of heavy rain; this posed numerous sanitation, mobility, and basic functionality problems for community members. The SIC members collectively agreed upon the necessity of a paved and raised road in place of the provisional park. The road would surround their community and allow for an increase in accessibility, in addition to providing a protective barricade from the intruding water levels of the adjacent lake.

The SIC approached the ward councilor and disclosed their concerns and suggested solutions. The members who worked as sweepers and cleaners for the Municipal Corporation used this connection as an opportunity to follow up with officials about the concerns that had been relayed to the councilor. After several weeks of persistent action, the voiced concerns of the SIC and Ambedkar Nagar as a whole were recognized and acted upon by the municipality. As a result, the unusable toilet structure has been demolished and the construction of a new set of communal toilets has commenced – the building will contain four separate toilet stalls.

In addition, the municipality began constructing a road that would surround the community and allow for increased mobility and accessibility. In response to the concerns raised by the community, the raised road will also function as a protective barrier from persistent flooding. It has been completed.

Overall, the formation of an SIC has had positive impacts upon the community and its relationship with the municipality. The Ambedkar Nagar SIC remains focused on cultivating further development, including the installation of streetlights and more garbage bins, as well as a more responsive relationship between the community and their municipality as they move forward. The SIC has also dedicated significant efforts of engagement toward creating behavioural change in order to enhance the participation in the planning and monitoring of basic sanitation services within their community.



15 “The SIC will continue to work for our community”

Settlement Name
Bhopo Ka Bada
Ward
46
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



A settlement in which many sweepers who work for the municipality live, Bhopo Ka Bada had poor drainage and lacked cleanliness. The SIC worked to improve drainage and has now begun to address behaviour change in community members to ensure their settlement remains clean. Garbage collection has started, and is regular. The SIC will continue to liaise with the municipality to get better services in Bhopo Ka Bada. But it doesn't forget, that each individual member of this community must also do their part.

Abhi to pakka nala banwane ki baat ho rahi hai, likhkar diya hai. Aage bhi ispar milkar kam karenge

Nala banane ki baat aage tak ki hai. Showchalye ke liye application di hai

There are talks to make a pucca drain... we have the commitment in writing. We will continue to work on this

Talks to construct a drain are positive. We have also given an application for a toilet in the basti

Harijan Basti in Bhopo Ka Bada is a non-notified slum located in ward 46 of Ajmer. Many of the residents work as sweepers or cleaners for the municipality and the women work as maids.



An official Settlement Improvement Committee (SIC) was formed in May 2016, with 5 female members and 9 male members. SIC members meet once or twice per month to organize and structure future plans regarding maintenance of sanitation and basic services. Community members of Bhopo Ka Bada are supportive of the SIC. With their support, the SIC has been able to orchestrate positive changes in the form of improved sanitation for their community. The SIC

initiated the construction of a new drainage system throughout the settlement, as well as the demolition of an illegally built wall that had been blocking the flow of water within the settlement.

Community members in Bhopo Ka Bada recognized the need for a proper drainage system, as contaminated water often flowed over the drains and into the streets. However, they felt the issue of a wall that had been blocking water flow and causing the flooding had to be addressed first. The wall had been built illegally, and although the community members had noticed it, most were unsure of whom to approach and how to confront the problem. They decided to approach their SIC.

In their meetings, the SIC deliberated on the form of action to be taken. It was decided that the SIC members would approach the owner of the property directly and request that the wall be removed. The property owner disregarded the request of the SIC, and the wall remained. The members took further action by approaching the ward councilor in addition to reporting the encroachment to the police station. The ward councilor and police constable oversaw the demolition of the wall shortly after the SIC reported it.

After the wall had been demolished, the SIC began to focus on fixing the drains in the settlement. The SIC felt more comfortable in approaching their ward councilor, as a rapport had now been established. The SIC explained the unsatisfactory conditions of the current drainage system, and the overall effects that this had on sanitation standards in the community. The ward councilor agreed that a new drainage system was necessary, and relayed the details of the situation to the Ajmer Municipal Corporation.



This has resulted in new drains being constructed in Bhopo Ka Bada. As the drains are being constructed, the SIC will continue to address the behavioral aspect of sanitation. The SIC hopes to motivate community members to participate in administration and maintenance of sanitation services within the community. For example, the SIC has facilitated discussions about the importance of keeping drains free of garbage and built up waste. Although the SIC plans on arranging sweeping services, it emphasises that each individual member of this community must do their part in using garbage bins. For this, bins have been distributed and a garbage collector/sweeper has been arranged to collect the garbage from each bin.

Bhopo Ka Bada is on its way to becoming clean, with help from the SIC and its community.

16 “We have developed inner strength and courage”

Settlement Name
Fakira Kheda
Ward
21
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



The Settlement Improvement Committee (SIC) of Fakira Kheda has worked toward making significant changes in the sanitation conditions of their community. The efforts of the SIC have resulted in the installment of a hand pump, the construction of a water pipeline, and the completion of 15 Swachh Bharat Mission toilet application forms and 25 pension forms of elderly and widowed residents. The SIC plans to further strengthen their relationship with local stakeholders, and they will continue to work towards achieving community successes in the form of access to basic services and fundamental human rights.

‘Jab se meeting karne lage, tab se hum sab log jagruk hue hai. Itne saal baad paani ki pipeline aayi hai! Hum jude rahenge aur kaam karenge.’

Since we started participating in the meetings, we have become more aware. Pipelines have been installed in our settlement after so many years! We will continue to stay associated with the SIC and keep up the work.

‘Hume taakat mili hai aur humara hausla badh gaya hai. Hum naali aur sadak ke liye koshish karenge.’

We have developed inner strength and courage. We will focus on getting drains and roads constructed in the settlement next.

Fakira Kheda is situated on the outskirts of Ajmer on steeply hilly terrain. It is therefore difficult to access this settlement, especially due to the poor quality of road infrastructure surrounding the settlement, and within the settlement itself. Thus, those without access to water would have to travel a significant distance away from home. The SIC approached the Ward Councillor to discuss the water deficit that the community faced, emphasizing the fact that the settlement had previously been promised water facilities, but was yet to witness any action.



The Ward Councillor agreed that something must be done immediately, and he organized for a hand pump to be placed in a central area of the community so as to broaden the area of reach. There are approximately 50 households that have benefited from the hand pump.

The SIC members were motivated by the reaction that their demands received, and decided to focus their

attention on another water-related issue, which, if resolved, would allow for better distribution of safe-quality water. The issue was the lack of a pipeline connecting to the settlement. The settlement illegally inhabits forested land, which in the past has been an insurmountable hurdle to receiving basic rights, such as connection to a water pipeline. However, the settlement falls under the Ajmer Nagar Nigam, and therefore must be provided basic services, regardless of land tenure.

With the confidence from their previous success, the SIC approached the Ward Councillor again. The Ward Councillor took action by requesting the Nagar Nigam to provide suitable water connectivity to Fakira Kheda. As a result, in the last week of October 2016, after a long history of neglect, the SIC was proud to witness the beginning stages of the pipeline construction that will eventually reach the least accessible areas of the community, benefitting roughly 105 households.

While the issue of water was being dealt with, the SIC members also supported 15 households in filling out toilet request forms through the SBM, as the majority of households in Fakira Kheda do not have access to a toilet. Most of the community members practice open defecation in the surrounding forest area. However, the women and children have stated that these areas do not feel safe for them, and so they must travel in pairs. The SIC members are well aware that the change must begin with the community, and they have initiated conversations about the sanitary importance of having access to a toilet, in addition to the safety of women and children.

Lastly, the SIC members decided that pension forms for the elderly and widowed should be completed. This realization has led to the filling out of pension forms for 25 elderly and widowed residents of the settlement, which have been sent to the municipality.



Buoyed by these successes, the SIC plans to create better transportation between the community and the inner parts of the city. Currently, the closest bus connection is located one mile from the nearest part of the community, with the hilly terrain making it a challenging trek.

Additionally, the SIC members have spoken with the MLA and state Women and Child Development Minister to advocate for a childcare facility to be constructed near the community. This would ease the heavy load of responsibilities that falls on the shoulders of the women.

17 “More work is needed... We will involve men in the process”

Settlement Name
Indra Colony
Ward
29
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



The efforts of the Indra Colony SIC have resulted in the construction of new drains, the guarantee of sweeping service in the community, the implementation of a hand pump, and drafted plans for a community toilet. All of the households residing in Indra Colony have benefited from these. The SIC has helped in equipping community members with the skills to plan and monitor their own sanitation facilities. The sanitation results thus far have encouraged SIC members to continue using this platform to initiate change.

Basti mein log jagruk hone lage hai. Aage bhi ek saath milkar basti ke vikas ke kaam karna hai.

Humaari basti ki taraf dhyaan dene lage hai. Kuchh kaam hone laga hai par aur kaam karna hai. Hum purushon ko bhi jodenge aur meeting karenge.

Residents of the settlement have started to become more aware. We will continue to work for the development of the settlement.

We have started to pay attention to the requirements of our settlement. Some work has been done, but more is needed. We will involve the men in the process as well!

The select members of Indra Colony who represent their community in its SIC identified the problems in the settlement that were most in need of attention. With the completion of this exercise, SIC members set out to resolve the issues of dysfunctional drains, lack of a community sweeper, and water deficiency within the community.



The problems of dysfunctional drainage and lack of sweeper correspond, as excess solid waste blocks the drainage system, creating an overflow of contaminated water sitting in the open drains. SIC members got in touch with the Ward Councillor, who responded to their concerns by assuring them that the drainage system would be restructured and that a sweeper would visit the community daily. These promises were carried out.

In addition to this, SIC members have been advocating for the better maintenance of solid waste by individual households. Although this is a work in progress, the SIC members have nonetheless created an awareness about solid waste management and about the ways that community members could practice it on a daily basis.

Simultaneously, the SIC members began discussing and devising solutions to the water deficit that the community faced. The community has a water pipeline connection; however, supply is inconsistent, meaning that water is only available two to three times per week. The SIC members decided that a hand pump would be the most efficient solution to this problem, as it could be installed quickly.

After having approached the Ward Councillor on previous occasions, the SIC members felt confident about raising concerns with a recognized authority. The Councillor agreed to speak to the Nagar Nigam about having a hand pump installed. SIC members were pleased to witness the installation of a hand pump that is near completion.



Lastly, the SIC has approached the Ward Councillor about the need for community toilets. The use of community toilets would not only benefit the 15 families without toilets, but would also benefit the community as a whole, especially during special events of large gatherings. The Councillor sent an application for community toilet construction to the municipality, who has since approved the application. The residents have to choose the location for the community toilet before the construction can begin.



Moving forward, the SIC has begun work on distributing Swachh Bharat Toilet application forms; 15 have been filled out so far. The SIC is impressed with the changes that have been made in terms of solid waste management and the use of garbage bins. Community members have made a noticeable effort in keeping the streets clean of excess waste, and have refrained from relying solely on the service of sweepers for maintaining improved sanitation standards.

The SIC will continue to work on sustaining these habits, while fostering a new mindset and dedication toward the active participation in accessing and using basic sanitation services.

18 “Joining the SIC has strengthened our resolve”

Settlement Name
Lohar Basti
Ward
42
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



The SIC of Lohar Basti has allowed residents to work in unison in order to develop a solid platform from which to facilitate and maintain sanitation services in the community. Despite the fact that the settlement has received an order to move from the municipality, the SIC has been successful in arranging electricity and dustbins for the community. Additionally, the SIC has pressed the Ward Councillor for the construction of community toilets and was assured that the same would begin within a fortnight. SIC members assert that they will continue to function as a vehicle for change in the community, with the common goal being land security and the proper distribution of basic services.

‘Itne saal se hum log khule mein shauch kar rahe the. Iss mobile toilet se humari samaaj ke logon ko suvidha hui hai.’

For so many years, we’ve been defecating in the open. The mobile toilet has really benefitted our community.

‘Basti mein light ki suvidha ho gayi hai. SIC se judkar humara hausla badha hai.’

Electricity has come to our settlement. Joining the SIC has strengthened our resolve.’

The residents of Lohar Basti had been living without consistent connection to electricity before the SIC was created. The SIC declared this as a pressing matter that required immediate action. Due to the non-notified status of the settlement, the community had faced challenges in receiving sufficient basic services. With the help of PRIA, the SIC approached the Ward Councillor and demanded that electricity poles be installed in the settlement.



The Ward Councillor spoke with the Nagar Nigam to see if anything could be done about the situation. The response was positive, and an electricity pole was installed shortly after the request had been made, giving 105 residents access to electricity. The community has benefited from electricity in more ways than one: children have been able to study and read later into the night, residents who own television can now watch the news more often and keep up to date on current events, and the majority of iron workers in the community are able to produce more using electric machines.

When it came to solid waste management, residents of the settlement were at a loss for what to do about with their garbage. There were no dustbins located near the settlement, and the community had no access to services. Thus, residents would resort to simply littering on the street and in nearby public spaces or burning their waste. The SIC members agreed that having dustbins near their settlement would reduce the amount of garbage littering the streets and surrounding areas.



Once again, the Ward Councillor and municipality were approached by the SIC members asking for dustbins to be placed near the community. The municipality agreed, and there are now three dustbins located on the same street as Lohar Basti. A similar approach resulted in the advent of a mobile toilet in the settlement, which until then had practiced open defecation.



Unfortunately, the residents have received an order to move, which they are in the process of fighting. The municipality has arranged for a separate location for the residents to resettle to, however, this location is far from Lohar Basti, and would require the residents to rebuild their business statuses, local connections, school arrangements, etc. Furthermore, the residents of Lohar Basti have been living in their settlement for approximately 35 years – their roots, memories, and social connections are

deeply tied to the homes that they are currently living in. The major deterrent against the settlement receiving notified status is the fact that the community resides beside railway tracks, and therefore is situated on railway owned land. In this case, the municipality has less authority to notify the settlement and therefore ensure land security.

That said, the work that the SIC has been doing in implementing pucca structures and basic services helps in legitimising their position. The SIC members have stated that although they are proud of the work that has been accomplished, without land security, the accomplishments feel temporary. Over the time since they have enhanced their ability to negotiate with higher stakeholders, and they are hopeful that this newly acquired knowledge will be helpful to the settlement moving forward. In addition, the SIC will continue to engage in discussion with other community members about the importance of sanitation maintenance within the community, which requires active participation from all members, specifically meaning sweeping, usage of dustbins, and usage of the mobile toilets.



Mobile toilet is installed in Lohar Basti with the efforts of SIC

19 “Lights and toilets in our settlement, thanks to the SIC”

Settlement Name
Masooda Nadi
Ward
12
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



The efforts of the SIC in Masooda Nadi have resulted in significant changes thus far – streetlights have been installed, roaming cattle have been collected and tied up, and a sweeper has been arranged for cleaning purposes. The entire community has benefited from the overall functionality and sanitary improvements that have been achieved thus far. SIC members have recognized the power of enhancing their capacity to engage with higher stakeholders and discuss changes in their community. They are devoted to establishing a functional and responsive relationship between themselves and the municipality, including the Ward Councillor and other recognised officials.

Basti mein light lag gaye, shauchalay theek karaya gaya hai, lekin abhi bahut saare kaam hai. Logon ke mazdoor diary banvaani hai.

The settlement has seen lights being installed and toilets repaired, but there is still a lot of work to do. We must prepare *Mazdoor Diaries* for the labourers in the settlement.

The initial success of the Masooda Nadi SIC occurred when the members made the uniform decision to directly approach higher stakeholders. The SIC members wanted to create efficient change in the community, and felt that bridging the gap between the community and higher authorities was a vital step. The SIC members have formed functional and responsive relationships with both the Ward Councillor and the Minister of Women and Child Development. In doing so, the Councillor and Minister have become familiar with the community, its members, and the deficit of basic services.



The community is located in the urban centre of Ajmer, and is composed of narrow streets that become exceptionally difficult to navigate when congested with cattle. In addition, there is a community hall situated in a central area of Masooda Nadi where community members gather for special events such as weddings and festivals. The SIC members explained the challenge of

accommodating large sums of people for these events, as the area directly in front of the hall is often crowded with an overabundance of cattle.



The SIC members decided to talk with community members about having them tie up their cattle. After several negotiations between and amongst the community members, it was decided that the cattle owned within the community would be tied up during the day in order to avoid overcrowding of the narrow streets.

The SIC members have discussed constructing a fence to enclose the cattle into a more segregated space. The decision to tie up the cattle was a short-term solution to a problem that the SIC is continuing to deliberate, as its members remain concerned about pollution from cow dung that litters the streets and drains, especially considering the congested living space in the community. Having the cattle in one space will make it easier to

maintain.

In terms of toilet construction, the SIC members have approached the Ward Councillor about renovating the male community toilet, as it is in poor condition. The renovation constructions were set to begin in the last week of October, and recommenced after a short break for Diwali. The female toilet remains in good condition and is utilized by community members on a daily basis. There are 15 households that are devoid of individual toilets, which rely on the community toilets.

In addition, the SIC members have encouraged residents to apply for individual toilets through the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) forms. Each of the 15 households without toilets has filled out and

sent in an SBM form, for which they are now awaiting a response. The SIC will continue to host conversations around the topic of open defecation and sanitation. They believe that in order for changes to be made, social practice must also change.

The long and narrow streets of the community were exceptionally difficult to navigate during the night, as there were no streetlights set up. The dark streets also posed safety problems, and many community members chose to avoid leaving their homes during the night. However, for the members who do not own individual toilets, avoiding the streets at night is not as feasible. These members would have to walk in the darkness to the community toilets located in the centre of the settlement, attached to the community hall. The lack of lighting was especially challenging for the women and children in terms of safety, forcing them to travel with fellow members during the night.



The SIC presented this problem to Ward Councillor, and asked that streetlights be put in near the community toilets, and also throughout the streets. The Ward Councillor responded by arranging the instalment of streetlights through the Nagar Nigam. 10 streetlights have been dispersed throughout the community, including the central area where the toilets are located, to meet the needs of the 216 residents.



20 “Benefits of coming together are visible to all”

Settlement Name
Banjara basti
Ward
44
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



Residents of Banjara Basti feel they have learnt a lot through the process of organising for change. Community driven solutions and positive relationships between all stakeholders in the community have resulted in successes. This motivates them to continue working together for further development of their settlement

Banjara Basti is located near Topdada area of Ward 44 in Ajmer. The name of the settlement is no surprise – it is inhabited mostly by members of the Banjara community. In this 70-year-old settlement most households have a pucca house, and only 6 of the 71 households do not have individual household toilets. Carpenters, construction labourers and daily wage earners live together. Many women work from home, making flower garlands.

With so many individual household toilets, Banjara Basti should be a swachh urban informal settlement. But lack of repair of the common septic tank has resulted in leakage and a foul smell. Blocked drains and no facility for garbage collection adds to lack of sanitation. The walls along the nallah also cried out for repair.

The initial phases of community mobilisation helped identify community leaders. Communication and interaction between the identified leaders was established. Efforts were also made towards building rapport with the ward councillor. Community members were motivated to come together to seek change. Belonging to one community primarily (the Banjara community) helped them feel a sense of togetherness.



The Settlement Improvement Committee (SIC) in Banjara Basti, with 22 members (17 males and 5 female), was formed in July 2016. The SIC took forward the rapport that had been opened with the ward councillor. It also facilitated meetings with the community to help identify common issues and decide priorities.

The first priority identified was to improve sweeping of the *galis* and cleaning of drains. With the help of PRIA animators, the SIC wrote an application and submitted it to their councillor. The ward councillor responded immediately to the application and initiated arrangements for regular sweeping of the streets in Banjara Basti.

In the meantime, the SIC took on the issue of repairing the septic tank. They discussed their need with their ward councillor, who guided them that it could only be resolved at the municipal corporation level. Armed with this information, the SIC began pursuing the issue with the municipal authorities. They recently achieved success when work on repairing the septic tank began.

Community-led data collection had been facilitated in the settlement. The results of the survey were shared in a meeting, in which SIC and community members and the ward councillor were present.

In the meeting, the community resolved an immediate action plan to facilitate camps for voter ID cards, mazdoor diaries, and Aadhar cards. Accordingly, a voter ID camp was organised on November 26 and 27, 2016 and December 3-4, 2016, in which a total of 43 voter ID cards were registered. The mazdoor diary camp organised on November 24, 2016 saw a total of 45 mazdoor diaries prepared. Community members also applied for their Aadhar cards and registered to avail old age pension.

The survey data had shown that youth and women in the community needed some skills for employment. The Bank of Baroda Self-Employment Skill Centre was contacted and a camp organised in the settlement. Information on various courses being conducted by this centre and how to avail of this training was made available. Youth and other members from Banjara Basti are keen to learn new skills and have applied for various skill training courses at the Bank of Baroda centre.



The SIC remains active, pursuing other issues with the municipal corporation, such as rebuilding the broken wall of the nallah alongside the settlement to prevent flooding when the nallah overflows.

The community and SIC of Banjara Basti are happy with these activities and the resulting improvements in their settlement. The benefits of coming together and resolving to act positively are visible to all.

21 “ We shall overcome”

Settlement Name
Bheel basti
Ward
42
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



The SIC in Bheel Basti is fighting many odds to gain facilities and land entitlement for all households in the settlement. It has come a long way in this journey for rights, and is confident that success will be achieved in the near future

Sanghathan banane se hame nai shakti mili hai. Aur saath milne se, dusare sadhno tak pahunchne mein achchi maddat mil rahi hai

By organising we have gained strength. And by working together, we are gaining access to many facilities

Bheel Basti is located on hilly terrain near Gandhi Nagar Naka Madar in Ward 42 of Ajmer Municipal Corporation. The first settlers came to this area nearly 50 years ago and the settlement has since grown; today 125 people belonging to the Bheel community, which is a Scheduled Tribe in Rajasthan, live here in *kuchcha* houses. The forest department claims ownership of the land on which these houses are built, and hence the settlement is finding it difficult to acquire approved *patta* (land entitlement) and to register their households for government facilities and amenities.

The settlement lacks basic amenities like individual household toilets or a community toilet, sweeping facility, drainage and garbage collection. It lacks a primary health centre, an anganwadi and primary school. The community lives in the face of threat of eviction by the forest department.

In the absence of strong community organisation, they have been unable to put forward their case for patta to the competent authorities or demand facilities for their settlement.

Interaction with the community and its leaders helped build rapport. They were forthcoming and openly discussed their issues from the start. The community wanted to cooperate with each other to resolve common issues, and promised to stand behind their SIC to face the challenges ahead.

Capacity building of SIC members was undertaken along with members of an SIC from another settlement. Shared learning and interaction amongst the members, and hearing of successes other settlements have achieved through their SICs was encouraging for Bheel Basti SIC members.



A participatory survey was conducted in Bheel Basti and the survey results were shared with the SIC and community. Led by the SIC, an action plan and road map for improvements in their settlement was prepared and agreed upon by the community.

Community members have started applying for individual household toilet construction. When one household started building the toilet under Swachch Bharat Mission (SBM), forest department officials arrived and broke down the construction. The community member was, after all, building the toilet under a recognised government scheme, for which they had received sanction, so why was the forest department not allowing it, the SIC wanted to know. The community gathered and staged a protest in front of the Ajmer collectorate to highlight the unjust treatment and seek an answer from the city administration, and to raise their demands: patta and other facilities for Bheel Basti.



On the same day, they visited the office of the forest department and gave in an application for patta. Later that day, they visited Ajmer Development Authority (ADA) and asked for basic services like sweeping facility, drainage and garbage collection. The following week, ADA officials visited Bheel Basti to survey and measure land occupied by all houses.

In the meanwhile, SIC members have also been coordinating to get mazdoor diaries for community members and regularising the public distribution shop. They have helped the community fill in food security forms. Success has been achieved now that all community members are getting systematic supplies from the ration shop.

Bheel Basti SIC meets regularly to discuss issues and follow up on all these issues with the community. SIC members have gained enormous confidence, and now feel certain that their struggle for patta and basic rights will be successful in the future.

“Sanghathan banane se hame nai shakti mili hai. Aur saath milne se, dusare sadhno tak pahunchne mein achchi maddat mil rahi hai (By organising we have gained strength. And by working together, we are gaining access to many facilities),” says Mrs Gopal, echoing the sentiments of the residents of Bheel Basti.

22 “Organising has given us confidence”

Settlement Name
Ghughra Ghati
Ward
46
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



“Koi kaam nahi hoga kyunki yahan ke logon ke pass time nahin hai (No work can get done here, because those who live here do not have the time),” was Mamta’s opinion when we first visited Ghughra Ghati. Over the past year, overcoming their distrust, the community has found the time to come together, and the SIC has worked to resolve issues like construction of a drain in front of Bhairu ji temple, removal of electric pole, need for a garbage depot, proper drainage and new individual household toilets

SIC se judane ke baad humme bahut accha laga. Humara kai varshon tak atka hua kaam pooro hua aur humari pareshani ka samadhan ho gaya

Joining the SIC makes me feel good... issues that have been plaguing us for years have now been resolved

Ghughra Ghati, settled about 30 years ago, comprises 168 households in which over 800 people live. Comprising mostly pucca houses with connecting streets, it is situated on hilly terrain on the road leading to Jaipur, and can boast of an anganwadi centre and ration shop within the settlement. The settlement is surrounded by residential areas. Majority of the community works in the informal sector, dependent on daily wage work in construction. Ghughra Ghati Vikas Samiti, a community organisation, had been established in 2005, but was inactive. Perhaps that is why Mamta was so sceptical of any progress in her settlement through community organising.

Efforts were initially made to mobilise the earlier formed community organisation by talking to its active members. But they were disinterested in committing to working with the community to resolve common issues. Community members too expressed unwillingness and were resistant to getting organised. Despite these setbacks, an SIC was facilitated in the settlement in July 2016 that includes 6 men and 10 women members. It started to meet and discuss, even though some members were discouraged by the community from attending these meetings. The SIC members remained resolute and continued to meet, identifying issues of immediate concern for the welfare of their settlement.



Newly constructed drains in the settlement with efforts of SIC

The SIC decided to tackle the issue of electric wires hanging down from a pole, which was a hazard as there always a risk of electrocution by accident. They drafted an application and signatures of all residents were taken on the application. They waited for an opportunity to meet their ward councillor and present their application.

They invited the councillor to attend an SIC meeting. In this meeting, they spoke about many issues facing their settlement – from the electric pole they wanted shifted, to the drains which they wanted constructed and unblocked because overflow caused flooding. They presented a resolution of their demands to the ward councillor, who had listened carefully to the discussion and now promised to get the work done.

Seeing no action was being taken by the councillor, the SIC members continually followed up with him for their demands. Finally, the electric pole on the main road has been removed and a drains constructed, especially in front of Bhairu ji temple.

“SIC se judane ke baad humme bahut accha laga. Humara kai varshon tak atka hua kaam poora hua aur humari pareshani ka samadhan ho gaya (Joining the SIC makes me feel good... issues that have been plaguing us for years have now been resolved),” says Indira, a member of the SIC formed in Ghughra Ghati.

The completion of these works in the settlement has brought much needed confidence and resolve among the SIC members. They have shared their success with the community, who have now started to accept and understand the fact that constant collective efforts are needed to bring change. The SIC in Ghughra Ghati is now planning new activities like making of mazdoor diaries, regularizing PDS, making Aadhar cards and birth certificates for all those residing in their settlement. They are ready to work patiently towards the goal of a settlement where everyone has access to basic amenities.



23 “SIC has brought change in a short time”

Settlement Name
Gujar Basti
Ward
42
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



“In a very short time we see a lot of changes because of the SIC’s functioning. Now we have garbage collection services, water, a road ... the SIC has fixed up all this”

— Mukesh, SIC member, Gujar Basti, Ajmer

These changes in Gujar Basti have boosted the confidence of the community in their SIC. The SIC members are happy with the results of their efforts and are ready to explore new frontiers for their community.

It wasn’t always so in Gujar Basti in Ward 42 of Ajmer Municipal Corporation. The community lacked organisation and individually pursued benefits for their own self-interest. The settlement did not have drainage, a garbage collection system, a connecting road, or individual household toilets.

Things began to show change when the community came together and voluntarily formed a Settlement Improvement Committee (SIC). Regular visits to Gujar Basti had helped build rapport with the community to mobilise them and to get them to start thinking about their basic rights. Once the SIC was formed, meetings and discussions with the community around issues of immediate concern were facilitated by SIC

members. Problems were prioritised collectively, plans prepared and responsibilities shared among SIC members.

Residents of Gujar Basti had been suffering for a long time. Mud and garbage made it difficult for them to access the main road. The SIC's efforts were needed to improve liveability in the settlement. Working in unison, the SIC started interactions with their ward councillor, the municipal corporation and Ajmer Development Authority. They submitted applications for services that were due to them, and regularly followed up on the status of those applications.

These efforts yielded results and soon the authorities began to take notice. Applications for individual toilets were granted and 10 new individual toilets have been constructed. A connecting road was built in the settlement. "Agar aaj bhi yahan pucca road nahi bana hota or jangal jaisa hi hota, to kisi na kisi ko saap-bichchu jaroor kaat leta (This road could not have come sooner. Without it, walking through bushes, we always feared being bitten by snakes or scorpions)," says Soni Devi, a member of the SIC.



Gujar Basti has also received connections to the water pipe line, and the municipal vehicle visits regularly to collect household waste. Twenty-five new mazdoor diaries have been prepared and the supplies in the ration shop have been regularised. Meanwhile, adolescent young girls have applied for skill training programs and will soon be attending stitching classes in a camp organised for them.

● क्षेत्रवासियों में जागरूता का असर...

गुर्जर बस्ती में संपर्क सड़क का निर्माण



अजमेर (कासं)

नाकामदार स्थित वार्ड 42 की गुर्जर बस्ती में संपर्क सड़क का निर्माण किया गया है एवं कचरा प्रबंधन की जागरूकता के लिए अभियान चलाया गया।

गुर्जर बस्ती विकास समिति की अध्यक्ष शारदा देवी ने क्षेत्रवासियों की बैठक में यह जानकारी दी। इस अवसर पर सोसायटी फॉर पार्टिसिपेटरी रिसर्च इन एशिया प्रिया

की एनिमेटर साजिदा बानू ने कहा कि यहां दो सौ घरों की बस्ती है और मुख्य मार्ग से जोड़ने वाली संपर्क सड़क के निर्माण से आवागमन में सुविधा हुई है। पार्षद बीना टांक ने नियमित रूप से बैठके करके क्षेत्र की समस्याओं को दूर करने में प्रिया के सहयोग की सराहना की। उन्होंने बताया कि बस्ती में शौचालयों का निर्माण कराया गया है एवं नियमित रूप से सफाई हो रही है। एनिमेटर साजिदा बानू ने क्षेत्र में बदलाव को

स्वीकार करते हुए कहा कि इससे नयी चेतना भरी है लोगों में। उनका कहना था कि सक्रिय नागरिक क्रियाशील शहर कार्यक्रम के अंतर्गत प्रिया द्वारा यूरोपियन यूनियन के सहयोग से अजमेर शहर में स्वच्छता सेवाओं के नियोजन एवं निगरानी में शहरी गरीबों की भूमिका बढ़ाने का प्रयास किया जा रहा है। बैठक में पिकी गुर्जर, अनिता, माया, एनिमेटर रीना शर्मा, मंजू देवी आदि मौजूद थे।

24 “SIC has helped in bringing awareness and confidence in its members”

Settlement Name
Gurjar Dharti
Ward
34
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



“Pehle parshad ya nagar nigam ke kisi adhikari se baat karne ke liye 100 baar sochte the, lekin aaj SIC se judne ke baad, bina dar ke parshad aur kisi anya adhikari se aaram se baat kar sakte hain.”

—Yashoda, SIC member, Gurjar Dharati settlement, Ajmer

“SIC se judane ke baad mujhe sarkar ke dwara chalayane wali kafi yojano ke bare mein jankari mili aur meri jaguraktha badhi.”

—Madhu, SIC member, Gurjar Dharati settlement, Ajmer

“Earlier, we hesitated to talk to the ward councillor or any municipal officer. But now, after joining the SIC, we are confident and can talk comfortably with the councillor and or any other local authority officer.”

“My awareness about and information on various government schemes has increased after I joined the SIC.”

Gurjar Dharati has existed as a settlement for nearly 60 years ago. Situated along a nallah, the settlement is approached along a pucca path. People of all religions reside

here. While the men go out to earn a daily wage, primarily in construction work, the women work from home making bidis.

With an anganwadi, PDS outlet and a community hall, Gurjar Dharati appears to have access to facilities. But the sanitation condition of the settlement was very poor. The community toilet was old and damaged, there was no garbage dump and it lacked a functional drainage system. In the absence of a garbage dump, residents dumped their household waste in the nallah.

The community also lacked mutual understanding. While everyone complained about the poor sanitary conditions, they lacked the motivation to work together to bring change. A few natural community leaders when identified and encouraged were willing to become members of a Settlement Improvement Committee (SIC). Listening to successes other settlements have achieved after forming SICs motivated them. In September 2016, the Gurjar Dharati SIC was formed with 19 members (9 male and 10 female).



SIC Orientation meeting

Community issues were discussed in detail and priorities set by the SIC in consultation with the community. Everyone agreed the settlement lacked space to build individual household toilets. Why don't we rebuild and repair the existing community toilet, suggested the SIC. That seemed acceptable to everyone.

The members came to learn that the tender for reconstruction of the community toilet had been sanctioned, but construction was yet to begin. The SIC took up this issue as a priority and wrote a letter to the ward councillor. They visited the councillor's office and discussed the problems faced by the community because of the unusable community toilet. The

Councillor agreed that the delay was caused by the municipal authority. SIC members then went and met the Assistant Engineer in Ajmer Municipal Corporation to put forward their request for the community toilet to be repaired. The engineer informed them a contract had already been issued for this work, and asked the SIC to follow up with the contractor. SIC members followed this advice and got in touch with the contractor, wanting to know when he was going to start the work. The contractor promised to begin work at the earliest, but did not fulfil the promise. Undeterred, SIC members decided to talk to the contractor once again, recounting how difficult it was for their community, especially for women and

children, as they had to use a toilet located outside their settlement. Repeated visits to the corporation and the contractor's office finally paid off. Construction work to repair and rebuild the community toilet in Gurjar Dharati began in October 2016 and the toilet was ready for use in December.



Before and after situation of community toilet in Gurjar Dharati

गूजर धरती में बने आठ शौचालय

सिटी रिपोर्टर|अजमेर

स्वच्छता अभियान के तहत गूजर धरती स्थित वार्ड 34 में 8 शौचालयों का निर्माण कराया गया। जिसमें बस्ती विकास समिति की सक्रिय भागीदारी रही। समिति अध्यक्ष अशोक बुंदेल ने आयोजित बैठक में बताया कि बस्ती में भगतजी की लाइन में शौचालयों की आवश्यकता को देखते हुए पार्षद चंचल देवी ने नगर निगम से अनुदान दिलाया।

इसमें सोसायटी फॉर पार्टिसिपेटरी रिसर्च इन एशिया की कार्यकर्ता रीना शर्मा ने बस्ती वासियों को जागरूक किया। बस्ती में जगह जगह कचरा पात्र स्थापित किए गए हैं। क्षेत्र में सफाई व्यवस्था सुचारू जारी है और क्षेत्रवासी इसके लिए सजग हैं। बैठक में यशोदा देवी, मधु, लाल सिंह, मनोज कुमार आदि उपस्थित थे।

25 “Organised Unity Helped in Achieving Success”

Settlement Name
Kalbeliya Basti
Ward
41
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



SIC organised Independence day celebrations in Kalbeliya basti

Kalbeliya Basti SIC is committed and remains united. The SIC is confident that in future too it will be able to manage and resolve any challenges that the community will face.

Kalbeliya Basti, located on Shri Nagar Road in Ward 41, Ajmer, is a resettled colony. The Kalbeliya community was resettled in this present location from Madar Crossing in 2012. Kalbeliya is a Scheduled Tribe; their name derives from the traditional dance form that the community performs to earn a living. Kalbeliyas live a communal life, celebrating festivals and events together. A total of 64 quarters were allotted at the time of resettlement. The houses have individual toilets. The primary issue in this settlement was regarding entitlements and identity cards, water supply and education.

The Settlement Improvement Committee (SIC) in Kalbeliya Basti was facilitated in June 2016. In an orientation event, SIC members from Kalbeliya Basti met SIC members from another settlement, and shared lived experiences to learn from each other. It was also a platform for community leaders to express their views and make plans. By the end of

the orientation, the SIC had decided to celebrate Independence Day on 15th August in their settlement.

SIC members took the lead in organising the function. They mobilised resources for a sound system, a tent, and some chairs. They persuaded members of the community to perform cultural items. Organising this event was a turning point in SIC formation. Planning the event and mobilising resources helped the group come together strongly. It led to the SIC feeling confident that they could now take on the work to resolve the issues facing their community.



SIC training

The issues of lack of sweeping of the settlement streets and conditions of the drains were discussed in SIC meetings. Streets were not cleaned regularly and drains were blocked, which resulted in water and waste flooding the streets. The SIC pursued these two issues with the sanitation supervisor and ward councillor. Consistent follow up of their demands has resulted in regular cleaning of streets and intervention by the sanitation supervisor to organise cleaning of the blocked drains. These services are now regularly being monitored by the SIC and any dereliction by the allocated sanitation workers is reported to the sanitation supervisor and ward councillor.

The SIC also took on the issue of out-of-school children in Kalbeliya Basti. It started exploring and contacting various organisations that work on children's education. Following SIC facilitation, Dindayal Upadhyay Shiksha Yojana has started a centre in Kalbeliya Basti for the education of the community's children.

26 “Get organised and work... one day you *will* achieve success”

Settlement Name
Koli Basti Ramganj
Ward
20
City
Ajmer, Rajasthan



Pre and post situation of major drain in the basti

The process of coming together to form the SIC, transformed relationships within the community in Koli Basti and also with outside stakeholders. The settlement did not have the best of relations with its ward councillor. This relationship has since undergone a change once the SIC got active and began to put to use the negotiation skills they had learnt. It is a different Koli Basti today – with rebuilt roads, drains and a nallah wall. The SIC is now pursuing the construction of a community hall.

“SIC ka sadasya banne ke baad humne naitritva ke bare mein jankari prapt ki... ab hum kewal apne vikas ke liye hi nahi apitu puri basti ke vikas ke bare mein sochate hain.”

“It is only after becoming a SIC member, did I learn the strength of leadership... as a result we don’t think only of our individual wants, but work for the development of the entire community.”

— Geeta Devi, on becoming a SIC member in Koli Basti

“SIC se judane ke baad humme vishwas hua ki agar koi kaam sanghthan ke roop mein sabhi sath mil kar karre, to usme ek din safalta jaroor milti hai.”

“After joining the SIC, I now believe that if we come together and pursue a task as an organisation, we will definitely reap benefits one day.”

— Bheem Singh, SIC leader, Koli Basti

Koli Basti is located in a dense locality of Ramganj in Ward 20 in Ajmer. When settlement began 65 years ago on land that was formerly cultivated, people lived in huts and kuchcha houses here. Now, majority of the 140 households live in pucca houses. Situated along a nallah, surrounded by other residential colonies, Koli Basti has had access to basic services like water and electricity since 1980. There is also an anganwadi, a PDS outlet and a dispensary in the settlement. Men work as construction labourers while the women earn from bidi making at home.



Pre and post situation of roads and drains in basti

The community identified the issues in the settlement – a functional drainage system, repair of the roads and nallah wall, a community hall and individual household toilets. Absence of drainage was the most severe problem, as it resulted in water logging and the pathways between the houses became stinking, open drains. It was worst in the rainy season.

Mobilisation meetings convinced the community of the benefits of getting organised and forming a Settlement Improvement Committee (SIC), which would take leadership in negotiating with outside stakeholders to resolve community issues. The SIC in Koli Basti was formed with 25 members. Today, the SIC has 35 members (25 men and 10 women).

After the first meeting, organised on July 22, 2016, the SIC continued to meet regularly. SIC members invited the sanitation supervisor of Ajmer Municipal Corporation to their meetings and discussed their sanitation related issues with the supervisor. They requested quick resolution of their wants. In addition, SIC members wrote a letter to their ward councillor requesting for the construction of a drain and reconstruction of the road. The SIC submitted a copy of this application to the municipal corporation in September 2016.

The local authorities did not take any action. Neither did their elected representative, since the ward councillor thought the residents of Koli Basti had affiliations with other political parties. The SIC members did not give up in the face of such apathy. They kept sending regular reminders to their ward councillor and started visiting his office to share their demands. Finally, after pursuing the matter for a month, repair and renovation work of the drains and the road started in October 2016.

Quick on the heels of this success, the SIC took up the issue of repair and construction of the nallah wall. The broken wall resulted in garbage spilling on to the road. After pursuing the matter, the nallah wall has now been built.

The settlement had an old community toilet, which had been constructed above the nallah. The community had not been involved in the planning. The toilet faced the settlement. This made women users very uncomfortable as the doors opened in front of others' houses. Hence they never used the community toilet; it remained unused for many years. Meanwhile, Koli Basti residents wanted individual household toilets. They applied, were granted permission and had started construction. The community decided a community hall in place of the old community toilet would be welcome. The SIC pursued the matter with the councillor and local authorities. The municipality has finally accepted their appeal and has issued a tender to construct a community hall in Koli Basti.

These successes are a sum of small, but continuous efforts by the SIC. The residents of Koli Basti have confidence in their SIC, which remains passionate about bringing change to their settlement.

About PRIA

Established in 1982, PRIA (Participatory Research in Asia) is a global centre for participatory research and training based in New Delhi. Currently, PRIA has field offices in several states of India and partnerships with 3000 NGOs across the global North and South to deliver its programmes on the ground. Over 35 years, PRIA has promoted 'participation as empowerment', capacity building of community organisations, and people's participation in governance. Initiatives are undertaken in the overall perspective of 'making democracy work for all' – in the political system; democratic culture in families, communities, and society; and participatory democracy with active citizenship. PRIA's programmes on the ground focus on promotion of participation of the poor, especially women and youth, to claim rights and basic services.

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