Impact Assessment Report

Renovation of 50 Community Toilets Across 4 Cities in Tamil Nadu

FY 24-25

Implemented by:
Gramalaya

sgs.com

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Acknowledgements

SGS would like to place on record its sincere appreciation to HDB Financial Services Limited for providing the opportunity to undertake this impact assessment of the Community Toilet Renovation and WASH Initiative implemented by Gramalaya. We acknowledge the trust placed in us and the consistent support extended throughout the assessment process. The project's focus on improving access to safe and functional sanitation facilities in urban slum communities provided a strong foundation for examining meaningful outcomes related to hygiene, dignity, and public health.

We also wish to acknowledge Gramalaya, the implementing partner, for their cooperation and facilitation during the assessment. The team's support in sharing project documentation, explaining implementation processes, coordinating site-level interactions, and enabling stakeholder consultations was critical in developing a holistic understanding of the project's design and execution across multiple city contexts.

We express our gratitude to the municipal authorities and sanitation officials from the participating cities for sharing their perspectives on urban sanitation needs, maintenance systems, and integration of renovated facilities within local sanitation frameworks. Their inputs provided valuable insights into system-level coherence, operational responsibilities, and sustainability considerations beyond project completion.

We are particularly thankful to the community members, user groups, caretakers, and beneficiaries who participated in surveys, interviews, and group discussions. Their willingness to share lived experiences, challenges, and observed changes following the renovation of community toilets added depth and authenticity to the assessment. Their voices remain central to understanding how improved sanitation infrastructure translates into better hygiene practices, safety, and dignity at the community level.

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Executive Summary

In many urban settlements, the challenge is no longer the absence of sanitation infrastructure alone, but whether existing community toilets remain usable, safe, and well maintained for everyday use. In this context, HDB Financial Services Limited, through its support to Gramalaya, undertook an intervention to improve the usability of existing community toilets and strengthen sanitation access for communities dependent on shared facilities. The project focused on restoring existing units that had become difficult to use because of poor condition and weak serviceability, while also supporting hygiene promotion, community engagement, and attention to maintenance-related aspects. It covered 50 community toilets across Madurai, Tirunelveli, Salem, and Namakkal, representing an estimated reach of 39,391 beneficiaries

This impact assessment was undertaken by SGS to examine the project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The assessment adopted a mixed-methods approach combining review of project documents with primary data collection across visited sites, and the analysis was guided by the OECD-DAC evaluation framework.

Key insights:

Findings indicate that the project was highly relevant to local sanitation needs. The assessment shows that sanitation access in the selected areas was already closely tied to shared and community-level facilities, making renovation of existing toilets a practical and need-based response. This is also reflected in user perception, with 78.4% of respondents stating that renovation of the existing community toilet was needed in their area. The intervention therefore appears to have aligned well with how communities in these locations normally meet sanitation needs.

The intervention demonstrates strong effectiveness in restoring toilet usability. 78.4% of respondents reported daily use of the renovated toilets, while the remaining respondents reported occasional use, indicating that the facilities have been re-established as a regular sanitation option within the community. In addition, 79.5% said the condition of the toilet is much better than earlier. The strongest gains appear in core usability features such as water, lighting, and working toilet fixtures, suggesting that the intervention improved both the functionality and acceptability of the facilities.

In terms of efficiency, the project appears to have made sanitation access easier and more predictable for users. 87.5% of respondents reported that the toilets are generally accessible when needed, and waiting was either absent or limited to short periods. In addition, 67.0% said sanitation had become much easier for their household after renovation, indicating a reduction in the day-to-day inconvenience associated with accessing and using sanitation facilities. This suggests that the intervention improved not only toilet condition, but also the practical ease with which households are able to meet routine sanitation needs.

The project has also generated meaningful behavioural and user-level impact. Overall, 71.6% of respondents reported that their sanitation situation had improved a lot after the renovation. The strongest reported changes relate to reduced open defecation (96.6%) and better hygiene practices (90.9%). Improvements in comfort, dignity, and safety were also widely noted, especially for women. IEC and awareness activities appear to have reinforced these outcomes by encouraging more regular toilet use, better attention to cleanliness, and improved hygiene behaviour around the renovated facilities.

> **Renovation of existing sanitation infrastructure has proven to be a practical and context-appropriate solution, particularly in areas where shared facilities already form the primary mode of sanitation access.**

From a sustainability perspective, the findings are broadly positive. 86.4% of respondents felt that the toilets are likely to remain functional in the coming years, and overall satisfaction with the renovated facilities was high. However, the assessment also suggests that long-term sustainability will depend on consistent cleaning, timely minor repairs, water reliability, and continued local monitoring, particularly in high-use locations.

Project documents and assessment findings; NFHS-5 (2019–21), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare; Swachh Bharat Mission–Urban ODF+ Protocol, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs; UNICEF India (2024).

Way Forward

Looking ahead, the findings suggest that the project has created a strong foundation for improving shared sanitation access in underserved urban communities. The next phase of focus should move beyond renovation alone and place stronger emphasis on post-renovation maintenance systems. Priority areas include regular cleaning, timely minor repairs, checking water availability and leakages, and maintaining basic hygiene-support facilities such as bins and handwashing materials. These are the areas most likely to influence long-term usability and user satisfaction.

Community toilets renovated

50

community toilets were renovated across Madurai (15), Tirunelveli (15), Salem (18), and Namakkal (2), restoring usability of existing sanitation infrastructure.

Estimated Beneficiaries Reached

39,391

people are estimated to benefit from improved access to functional and usable community sanitation facilities.

Reduced Open Defecation

96.6%

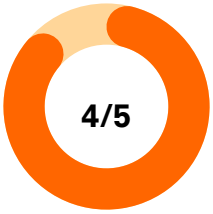
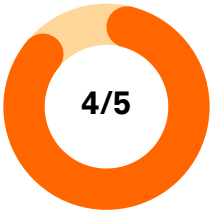
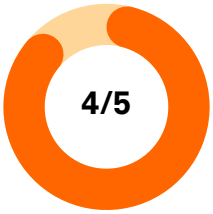
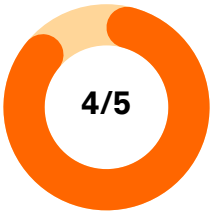
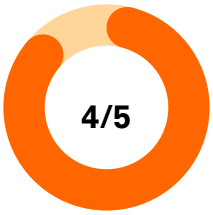
of respondents reported reduced open defecation after using the renovated toilet, showing strong behavioural change at the community level.

Improved Toilet Condition

79.5%

of respondents said the condition of the toilet is much better than earlier, reflecting clear improvement in usability and overall functionality

Program Ratings

PARAMETER	KEY OBSERVATIONS	SCORES
Relevance	The project was strongly aligned with local sanitation needs in areas where shared toilets remained central to daily use. This is reflected in user perception, with 78.4% of respondents stating that renovation of the existing toilet was needed in their area.	
Coherence	The intervention aligned well with existing municipal sanitation responsibilities and local usage patterns. Coordination with municipal authorities, caretakers, and community actors helped position the project within existing sanitation systems rather than as a parallel effort.	
Effectiveness	The project demonstrated clear improvement in toilet usability and condition. 78.4% of respondents reported daily use of the renovated toilets, and 79.5% said the toilet condition is much better than earlier. Core usability features such as water, lighting, and working toilet fixtures were also reported to be strong.	
Efficiency	The renovated toilets improved convenience and ease of access for most users. 87.5% of respondents reported that the toilets are open at convenient times, indicating that the facilities are generally accessible for daily use. Some crowding and minor operational issues, however, remain in high-use locations.	
Impact	The intervention generated strong behavioural and user-level change. The most significant reported outcomes were reduced open defecation (96.6%) and better hygiene practices (90.9%). Improvements in comfort, dignity, and safety were also widely reported, especially for women.	
Sustainability	Sustainability prospects are broadly positive. 86.4% of respondents felt that the toilets are likely to remain functional in the coming years. At the same time, continued functionality will depend on regular cleaning, timely repairs, water reliability, and local monitoring.	
Overall	Overall, the project performed strongly across the OECD-DAC dimensions. It demonstrates high relevance, visible usability gains, and meaningful behavioural impact, while long-term outcomes will depend on consistent upkeep and monitoring.	

SDGs Allignment

SDG	Target	Contribution Pathway
	3.9 – Substantially reduce the number of illnesses from unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene	By improving access to cleaner and safer community toilets, handwashing facilities, and hygiene awareness, the project supported better sanitation practices and reduced exposure to unhygienic conditions.
	6.2 – Achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all, with special attention to women and vulnerable groups	By renovating existing community toilets and improving water, lighting, privacy, and usability, the project strengthened access to safer, more reliable, and more dignified sanitation facilities for vulnerable users.
	11.1 – Ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable basic services and upgrade slums	By restoring shared sanitation infrastructure in underserved urban settlements, the project improved access to a basic service, reduced open defecation, and supported cleaner community surroundings.

https://sdgs.un.org/goals

Introduction

NATIONAL SANITATION CONTEXT

India has made substantial progress in sanitation access over the past decade. According to NFHS-5, the share of the population living in households using an improved sanitation facility increased from 49% in NFHS-4 to 70% in NFHS-5, indicating notable improvement in sanitation coverage. At the same time, the sanitation agenda in India has moved beyond toilet construction alone to the continued functionality, cleanliness, and sustained use of sanitation infrastructure. This broader shift is also reflected in national urban sanitation frameworks, which increasingly emphasise not just access, but the quality and upkeep of sanitation services.

This shift is clearly reflected in the Swachh Bharat Mission–Urban framework. The ODF+ protocols emphasise that public and community toilets should be functional and well maintained, recognising that infrastructure can only create sustained benefit when it remains usable in practice. UNICEF India has also noted that India's sanitation journey should not be seen only as a toilet construction story, but as one linked to dignity, empowerment, well-being, and safer living conditions. In this sense, sanitation outcomes depend not only on availability of facilities, but also on whether they remain safe, clean, and accessible for the people who rely on them.

URBAN SHARED SANITATION CONTEXT

In many urban and peri-urban locations, community and public toilets continue to remain important for people who do not have adequate household-level sanitation access or who depend on shared facilities because of space, settlement conditions, or livelihood patterns. In such settings, the mere presence of toilet infrastructure does not ensure meaningful sanitation access. Toilets that are damaged, poorly maintained, unsafe, or water-deficient often become underused, limiting both their public health value and their contribution to dignity and convenience.

This makes restoration and upkeep of existing community toilet infrastructure an important urban sanitation strategy, particularly where toilet structures are already present but no longer usable in practice. Restoring such facilities can help improve day-to-day sanitation access more quickly than creating entirely new infrastructure, while also supporting cleaner surroundings and more dependable public use.

This context fits well with the current report flow, where the Introduction page is intended to establish the broader sanitation need before the project itself is described separately on the next page

TAMIL NADU CONTEXT

Tamil Nadu is one of the more urbanised states in India, with 48.4% of its population classified as urban in Census 2011. This makes urban service delivery, including sanitation infrastructure and its maintenance, especially important in the state. In dense settlements, worker-dominated localities, and other urban pockets where many residents continue to depend on shared sanitation access, the usability and upkeep of public and community toilets becomes a practical service concern.
The NFHS-5 Tamil Nadu Fact Sheet shows that 72.6% of households in the state and 82.8% of urban households were using an improved sanitation facility. At the same time, the continued relevance of shared sanitation facilities remains important in locations where vulnerable and underserved populations still depend on public and community toilets for regular use. This is also reflected in official urban sanitation data, which show that Tamil Nadu had completed 92,744 community/public toilet seats under SBM-U as of April 2025.

Within this broader sanitation landscape, the intervention focused on improving the usability of existing sanitation infrastructure in locations where community toilets continue to play an important role in daily life.

NFHS-5 (2019–21), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare; Swachh Bharat Mission–Urban ODF+ Protocol, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs; Census of India 2011

About the Project

Phase wise implementation

Phase 1

Need assessment and site selection were undertaken to identify community toilets requiring renovation based on condition, usage need, and local sanitation gaps.

Phase 2

Renovation works were carried out to improve toilet infrastructure, restore usability, and address basic facility gaps across the selected units

Phase 3

Hygiene awareness and community engagement activities were conducted to promote proper toilet use, cleanliness, and sanitation-related behaviour.

Phase 4

Follow-up support emphasised upkeep, local coordination, and maintenance arrangements to help sustain the functionality of the renovated toilets.

The WASH – Public Sanitation Units project, supported by HDB Financial Services Limited and implemented by Gramalaya, was designed to improve access to functional and usable shared sanitation infrastructure in urban locations where community toilets continue to remain important for daily use. Rather than constructing new facilities, the project focused on renovating existing toilet units that had become difficult to use because of poor condition, inadequate maintenance, and weak serviceability. This approach helped restore already available sanitation infrastructure in a practical and need-based manner.

The intervention covered 50 community toilets across four cities in Tamil Nadu: Madurai (15), Tirunelveli (15), Salem (18), and Namakkal (2). As per the beneficiary list shared for the programme, these toilet units together represent an estimated user base of 39,391 beneficiaries.

The intervention therefore combined infrastructure restoration with substantial community-level sanitation reach across the selected urban locations.

The project went beyond renovation alone and adopted a broader WASH-oriented approach. In addition to improving the physical condition of toilet facilities, it also included hygiene awareness efforts, community engagement, and attention to systems for cleaning and upkeep. This helped position the intervention not only as a repair activity, but as an effort to improve sanitation access, promote better hygiene behaviour, and support cleaner and safer community environments.

Through this integrated approach, the project sought to improve day-to-day sanitation access for communities relying on shared toilet infrastructure and to support more dignified, functional, and sustainable sanitation use in the selected locations.

City	No. of Toilets Renovated
Madurai	15
Tirunelveli	15
Salem	18
Namakkal	2

About the Organizations

HDB Financial Services Limited

HDB Financial Services (HDBFS) is a leading non-banking financial company (NBFC) in India and a subsidiary of HDFC Bank. Incorporated in 2007, the company provides a wide range of secured and unsecured lending solutions to individual and business clients across the country. With an extensive branch network spanning multiple states and union territories, HDBFS serves milions of customers, particularly focusing on underserved and emerging segments of the population. Through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, the organisation supports programmes that promote healthcare access, environmental sustainability, community development, and livelihood enhancement for vulnerable communities across India.

Gramalaya

Gramalaya is a Tamil Nadu-based non-governmental organisation working in the field of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). Established in 1987 by Mr. S. Damodaran, the organisation focuses on promoting safe sanitation, water access, hygiene, and the overall improvement of rural, urban, coastal, and tribal communities, with particular emphasis on the empowerment of women and children. According to its official website, Gramalaya envisions a society in which all people have equal access to protected water, sanitation, health, and improved living conditions without gender discrimination. The organisation is also recognised as a Key Resource Centre / National Key Resource Centre by the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India, and has been engaged in WASH-related training, sanitation promotion, and community-based development initiatives across multiple geographies

https://www.hclfoundation.org/
https://neurosynaptic.com/

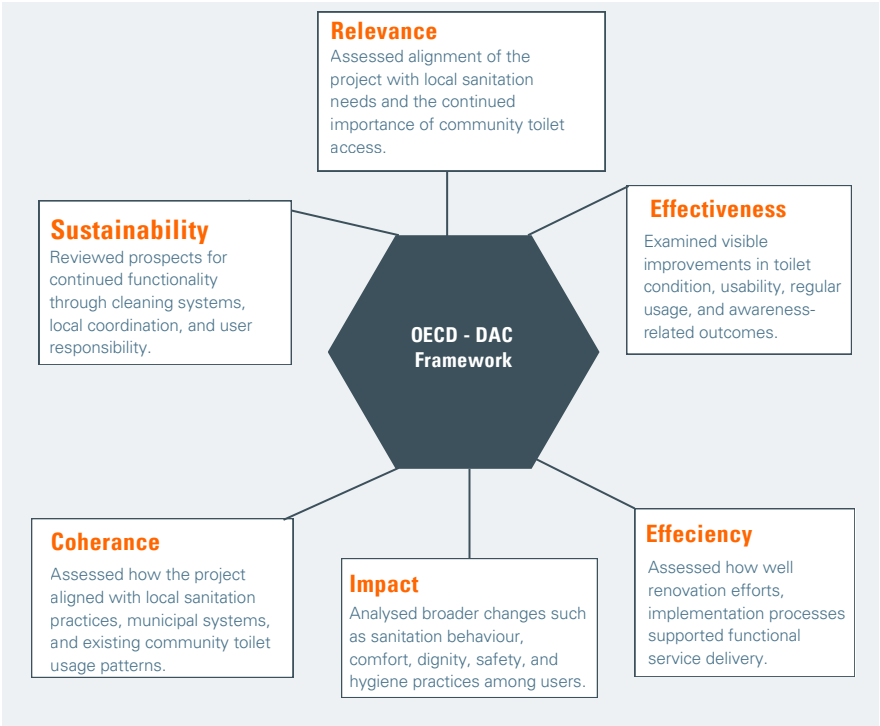
APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

Approach & Methodology

The impact assessment of the Public Sanitation Units Renovation Project was undertaken using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to generate a comprehensive understanding of project implementation and outcomes. The assessment focused on examining how renovated sanitation facilities are being used, the extent to which usability and access have improved, and the changes experienced by communities after the intervention.

Primary data collection formed the core of the assessment. This included beneficiary surveys, focused group discussions, key informant interviews with community representatives, implementing partners and local authorities, and on-site observations of renovated sanitation units. These were complemented by a review of project documents and programme records. Data was triangulated across sources to ensure robust, balanced, and reliable findings.

OECD DAC Dimensions



OECD–DAC Framework

The impact assessment was guided by the OECD-DAC evaluation framework, providing a systematic lens to examine the project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. To support consolidated judgement, the assessment also uses a five-point performance rating scale, with each criterion rated independently out of 5 based on triangulated evidence from student surveys, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, field observations, and document review. This allows a concise, comparable, and evidence-based summary of program performance across all evaluation dimensions.

Theory of Change

Inputs

- Existing public sanitation units identified for renovation
- Financial support for infrastructure upgradation
- Technical expertise for sanitation design and repairs
- Coordination with local stakeholders and communities

Activities

- Assessment and selection of sanitation units for renovation
- Structural repairs and upgradation of facilities
- Restoration of water supply, lighting, doors and locks
- Orientation on usage and basic maintenance practices

Outputs

- Renovated and functional public sanitation units
- Improved water availability, cleanliness, and safety
- Enhanced accessibility and usability for daily users
- Sanitation facilities ready for community use

Outcomes

- Increased and regular use of public sanitation units
- Improved comfort, dignity, and safety for users
- Reduced reliance on unsafe sanitation practices
- Better hygiene behaviour at community level

Impact

- Improved access to safe and dignified sanitation services
- Enhanced public health and well-being in urban settlements
- Contribution to sustained sanitation outcomes
- Alignment with Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) objectives

The Theory of Change outlines how investments in renovating public sanitation units, combined with improved functionality and community use, translate into better access to safe and dignified sanitation services. By addressing usability, safety, and cleanliness of shared facilities, the project supports sustained sanitation practices and contributes to improved hygiene and public health outcomes in urban communities.

Assessment - Deep Dive

TABLE 2 Stakeholder Coverage and Methods Used

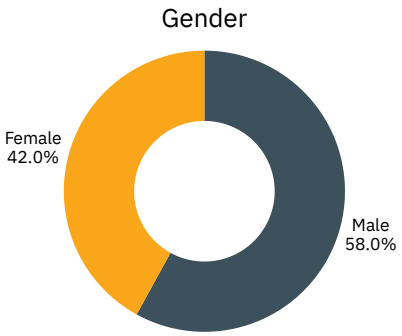
STAKEHOLDER GROUP	PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENTEL	METHOD USED	SAMPLE / COVERAGE
Beneficiaries	Capture usage patterns, satisfaction, and facility condition	Surveys	88
Beneficiaries	Understand perceptions, challenges, and suggestions	Focused Group Discussions	2 FGDs covering 10 Beneficiaries
Community Representatives / User Groups	Assess maintenance practices and operational challenges	Key Informant Interviews	1
Implementing Partner Team	Team Understand implementation processes and challenges	Key Informant Interviews	1
Municipal Authorities	Capture system integration and maintenance perspective	Key Informant Interviews	2

Beneficiaries for the assessment were selected from locations where community toilet renovation had been implemented. Respondents included regular users of public sanitation units across project cities. Surveys and discussions were conducted at the site level to capture immediate user feedback on access, safety, cleanliness, and continued usage of the facilities.

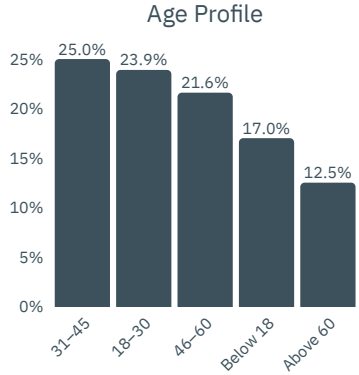
Assessment Findings & Analysis

This section presents the key findings of the impact assessment based on beneficiary surveys, focus group discussions, stakeholder interviews, and field observations across the assessed project locations. Fieldwork covered 10 toilet sites across Salem and Namakkal - Steel Plant Road (Jeeva Nagar), Meyyanur, Ammasi Nagar, Panchangi Eri (Indira Nagar), Karungalpatty, Auto Colony Zone 3 (Ammapet), West Vinayagar Kovil Street (Hasthampatty), Kallangadu, Sollapalam, and MGR Nagar. The assessment captured 102 stakeholder interactions

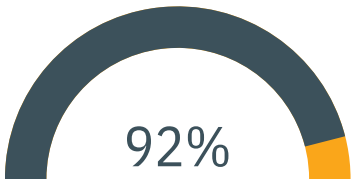
The analysis highlights how the renovated community toilets are being used, who they are serving, and what changes are visible in terms of access, usability, hygiene behaviour, and community sanitation conditions. It also draws upon qualitative insights to interpret the survey patterns and provide a more grounded understanding of project relevance and early outcomes.



A total of 88 beneficiaries participated in the survey, representing regular users of the renovated community toilets. The respondent profile shows that the facilities are being used by both men and women, with 58% male and 42% female respondents. This suggests that the renovated toilets are serving a mixed user base, while also indicating meaningful female usage of shared sanitation infrastructure.



The age distribution shows broad usage across different population segments. This suggests that the facilities are being used not only by working-age adults, but also by children, adolescents, and elderly residents, reflecting their importance as a shared community asset.



Established Resident Base (5+ Years)

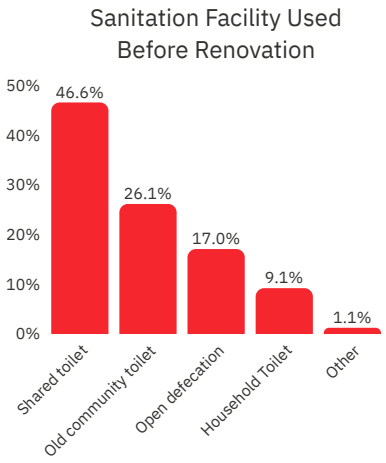
The residency profile further strengthens the relevance of the findings. A substantial 92.0% of respondents reported living in the area for more than five years. This indicates that most respondents were long-term residents and were therefore well placed to comment on local sanitation conditions and the changes brought about after renovation.

Qualitative interactions further suggest that the renovated facilities are being used by a socially and economically diverse group of residents, including daily wage labourers, local working adults, women managing household responsibilities, elderly users, and children. In locations such as Salem and Namakkal, the toilets were found to be particularly important in settlements with low-income households and labouring communities, where dependable shared sanitation infrastructure continues to be a basic necessity

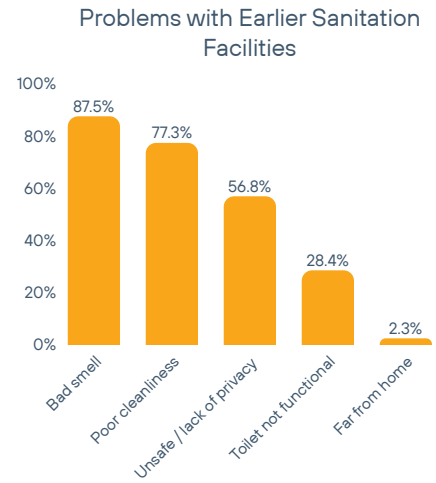
Relevance

This section examines whether the project responded to an existing sanitation need in the selected locations, and the extent to which the intervention aligned with local sanitation practices, infrastructure gaps, and community requirements.

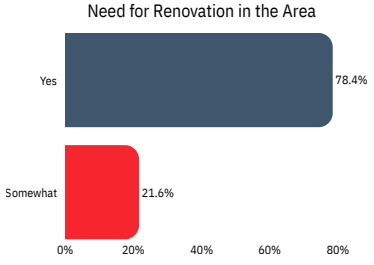
Before renovation, respondents were depended on shared toilets and old community toilets for meeting their sanitation needs. This indicates that shared sanitation infrastructure already formed an important part of daily life in these areas, making the renovation of existing community toilets a relevant response to local need.



Qualitative inputs support this pattern. In both Salem and Namakkal, FGD participants shared that many residents earlier relied on open spaces, roadside areas, fields, or poorly maintained old community toilets, especially when existing facilities lacked water or were difficult to use



The earlier sanitation facilities were affected by multiple usability-related gaps. The most commonly reported issues were no water supply, bad smell, and poor cleanliness. More than half of respondents also reported concerns related to safety and privacy. These responses show that the sanitation challenge in the selected areas was not only about access, but also about the poor condition of the available facilities.



A large majority of respondents stated that renovation of the existing community toilet was needed in their area. This reflects a clear perceived need for improving the condition of the existing sanitation infrastructure.

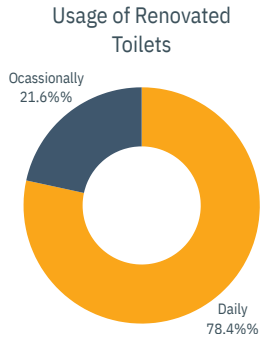
A similar view was also reflected in the stakeholder interactions, where renovation was seen as a practical way to restore already available facilities in locations where sanitation need was high

> “Before the project, most community toilets were in poor condition with broken doors, lack of lighting, poor ventilation, and damaged infrastructure

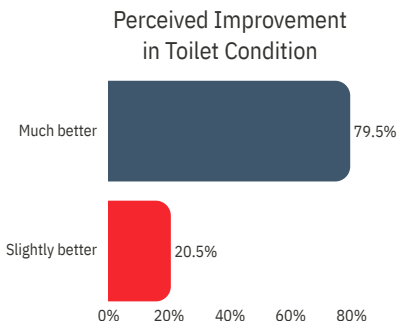
Beneficiary FGD

Effectiveness

This section examines the extent to which the renovation improved the condition, usability, and day-to-day functionality of the community toilets in the selected locations.



Survey findings show that the renovated toilets are being used regularly by a large share of respondents. This suggests that the renovated facilities are not only visible assets, but are being actively used as part of everyday sanitation practices.

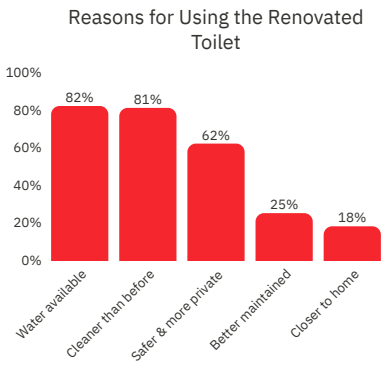


The perceived condition of the toilets has improved strongly after renovation. No respondent indicated that the condition had remained the same or worsened. This points to a clear improvement in the physical and functional quality of the facilities. Field observations also indicate that in some high-use locations, issues such as cleaning consistency, minor leakages, and upkeep gaps were still present, highlighting the importance of regular maintenance in sustaining the overall user experience.

Availability of Facilities in the Renovated Toilets		
Facility	**Yes**	**No**
Water supply	94.30%	5.70%
Doors & pans	97.70%	2.30%
Lighting	90.90%	9.10%
Clean floor & pans	67.00%	33.00%
Handwashing facility	84.10%	15.90%

Respondents reported that basic facilities such as water supply, lighting, doors with locks, and handwashing provisions are available and functional. This marks a clear turnaround from the pre-renovation situation, where lack of water and damaged infrastructure were the dominant causes of non-usage.

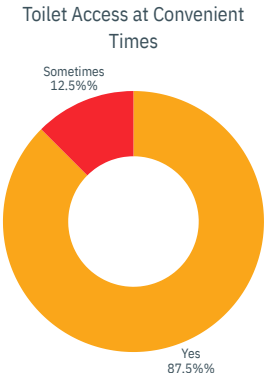
Effectiveness in this context is driven by restoration of core functionality. The presence of water and functional doors directly supports usability, while lighting improves safe access during early morning and evening hours. Field observations confirm that these facility-level improvements have translated into more consistent use across locations.



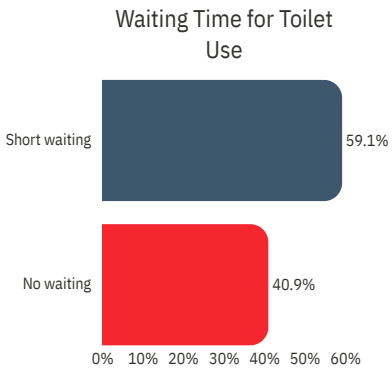
Users are now choosing the renovated toilets mainly because they find them more usable in practical terms. Water availability, improved cleanliness, and better privacy appear to be the key reasons behind continued use. This suggests that the intervention’s effectiveness lies not only in improving the physical condition of the facility, but in making it acceptable and reliable enough for everyday use.

Effeciency

This section examines ease of access, waiting time, and whether the renovation has simplified daily sanitation routines for households.



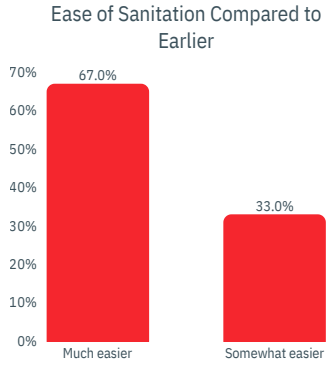
87.5% of respondents reported that the toilets are accessible when needed, indicating that the renovated facilities are generally available for routine use. This suggests that the intervention has improved practical access to sanitation and reduced dependence on less suitable alternatives.



Waiting time does not appear to be a major constraint, with users largely reporting either no waiting or only short waiting periods. This suggests that the existing infrastructure is broadly adequate for current usage levels, though some crowding may occur during peak hours.

Field observations also noted crowding in a few high-use locations, indicating that while access is manageable, usage

pressure varies by location and may require responsive management.



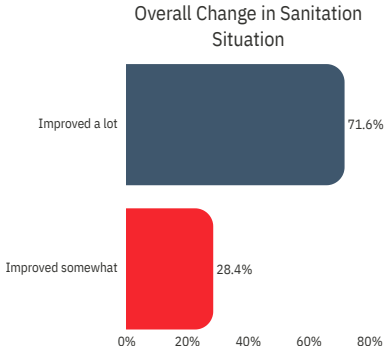
The majority of respondents reported that sanitation has become easier after the renovation, with 67.0% stating it is much easier. This indicates that the intervention has reduced effort and inconvenience associated with accessing sanitation, making it more practical for daily use.

> Yes, using the toilet has become easier due to improved cleanliness, better infrastructure, proper lighting, and reliable water supply.

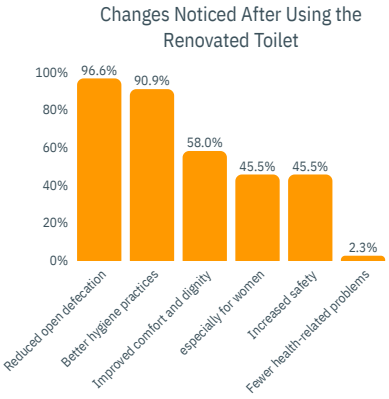
Beneficiary FGD participant

Impact

This section examines the broader changes perceived by users after renovation, particularly in terms of sanitation behaviour, hygiene practices, comfort, safety, and the role of IEC in reinforcing positive use

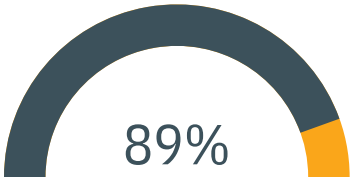


Survey responses show that sanitation conditions have improved substantially for users after renovation, with most respondents indicating a noticeable improvement rather than a marginal change. Users perceive a clear difference between pre- and post-renovation conditions, indicating that renovation addressed fundamental issues affecting usability and trust in community toilets.



The strongest changes are visible in reduced open defecation and better hygiene practices, suggesting that the intervention influenced behaviour as well as infrastructure use. Improvements related to comfort, dignity, and safety also point to a more secure and acceptable sanitation environment, especially for women and other regular users.

This is also reflected in the field observations, which noted increased toilet use, improved handwashing practices, and better privacy and safety in the visited locations.



IEC Awareness Supporting Behaviour Change

A large share of respondents (89%) reported exposure to hygiene and cleanliness messages at or near the toilets, indicating that IEC activities were widely visible. This visibility appears to have contributed to improved sanitation behaviour, including more regular toilet use, better attention to cleanliness, and improved hygiene practices. This suggests that IEC played a reinforcing role in translating infrastructure improvements into sustained behavioural change outcomes.

> The toilets are now clean, functional, and easy to use, with improved lighting, water supply, and privacy, making them more comfortable and safe for users, especially women.

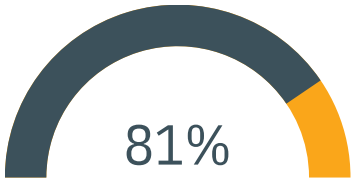
Beneficiary FGD participant

Overall, the project has generated clear outcome-level changes, reflected in reduced unsafe sanitation practices, improved hygiene behaviour, and enhanced comfort and safety for users, especially women.

Coherance

This section examines how well the intervention aligned with local sanitation practices, community toilet usage patterns, and existing municipal support systems

The assessment indicates that the project demonstrates strong coherence with both community sanitation practices and local institutional systems. In the selected locations, sanitation access was already largely dependent on shared and community-level infrastructure. By focusing on renovation rather than new construction, the intervention aligned well with existing usage patterns and the practical realities of space-constrained settlements.



Fit with Local Sanitation Needs

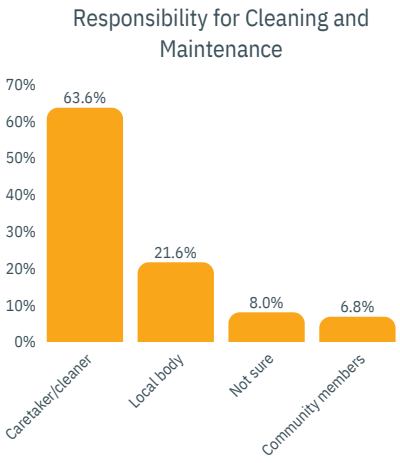
This is also reflected in user perception, with 81% of respondents reporting that the renovated toilet fits well with how people in the area meet their sanitation needs. The renovated facilities continued to serve the same user base, while improvements in usability, safety, and cleanliness appear to have strengthened their acceptance and regular use.

The project also shows alignment with municipal sanitation priorities.

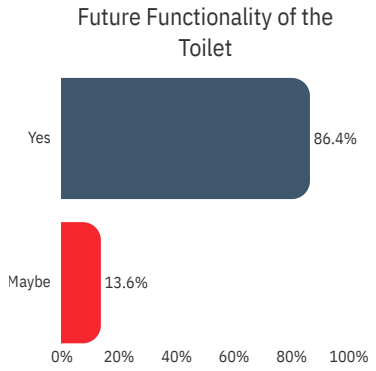
Stakeholder interactions suggest that the renovated facilities remained linked to existing local sanitation systems, with cleaning and upkeep responsibilities connected to caretakers, local bodies, and community-level arrangements. This indicates that the intervention complemented ongoing sanitation management structures rather than operating in isolation, which is important for both continued utilisation and long-term sustainability.

Sustainability

This section examines whether the renovated toilets are likely to remain functional over time, particularly in relation to cleaning systems, maintenance responsibility, and continuity of upkeep.

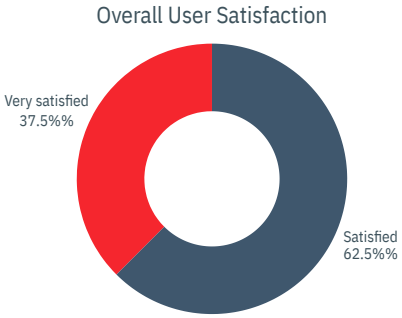


The findings indicate that routine cleaning and basic maintenance are being supported primarily through designated caretakers / cleaners, with local body support in several locations. Qualitative inputs further suggest that this is being managed through a mix of locally appointed caretakers, municipal arrangements, and in some places small user-fee systems that help sustain day-to-day upkeep. This indicates that maintenance responsibility is not entirely informal; rather, the renovated toilets appear to be linked to operational systems that can support continued functionality.



Most respondents expressed confidence that the toilets will remain functional in the coming years. This points to a broadly positive perception of sustainability and suggests that users see the renovation as more than a short-term improvement.

At the same time, qualitative insights and field observations indicate that this confidence is closely tied to whether cleaning remains regular, water supply continues reliably, and minor repair needs are addressed without delay.



Overall satisfaction with the renovated toilets is high, suggesting that the facilities are largely meeting user expectations in their present condition. However, the suggestions shared by respondents show that satisfaction is closely linked to continued upkeep, particularly regular cleaning, proper flushing, water availability, dry floors, handwashing support, and timely attention to leakages. This suggests that sustainability will depend less on additional infrastructure and more on the consistency of operational maintenance.

Key learnings & Reccomendations

Renovation is an effective entry point for strengthening urban shared sanitation systems

The project demonstrates that improving the usability of existing sanitation assets can rapidly strengthen urban sanitation access where shared toilets remain unavoidable. Rather than expanding infrastructure, focused restoration allows faster integration into daily routines. Future interventions should adopt renovation-first strategies as part of city-level sanitation planning, especially in dense or informal settlements.

Combine infrastructure improvement with behaviour reinforcement

The project shows that toilet renovation is most effective when supported by IEC and community awareness efforts. Visibility of hygiene messages and user awareness around responsible use appear to have reinforced regular toilet use, cleanliness, and handwashing behaviour. Similar projects should continue combining physical renovation with behaviour-change communication

Sanitation outcomes are sustained through systems, not one-time upgrades

While physical improvements create immediate gains, long-term performance depends on how toilets are managed after renovation. The assessment indicates that continuity relies on predictable cleaning, minor repair response, and coordination with local authorities. Projects should emphasize post-renovation management responsibilities formally into local systems.

Conclusion

The assessment indicates that the intervention has made a meaningful contribution to improving the usability of shared sanitation infrastructure in the assessed locations. By focusing on restoration of existing community toilets, the project responded to a practical sanitation gap in settlements where shared facilities were already central to everyday sanitation access. The intervention combined infrastructure improvement with hygiene awareness, community engagement, and attention to maintenance systems, thereby addressing not only physical deterioration, but also the conditions required for continued use.

Findings show strong performance across the assessment dimensions. The intervention was well aligned with local sanitation needs and usage patterns, and it also complemented existing municipal sanitation arrangements. The renovated facilities appear to have become more acceptable and functional for routine community use, with the assessment pointing to improved usability, more regular use, better hygiene practices, reduced open defecation, and stronger perceptions of comfort, dignity, and safety. These gains are particularly important in the context of users who depend on shared facilities and for whom privacy, cleanliness, and reliability are essential to meaningful sanitation access.

At the same time, the assessment suggests that sustaining these gains will depend on the strength of post-renovation upkeep. Field observations and stakeholder inputs show that while the facilities are largely functional and in use, some locations continue to require more consistent cleaning, timely attention to minor repairs, and closer monitoring in high-use settings. This indicates that long-term outcomes will depend not only on the quality of renovation, but also on the continuity of maintenance arrangements and local accountability for upkeep.

Overall, the intervention demonstrates that improving existing sanitation infrastructure can generate visible and meaningful outcomes when physical renovation is combined with behaviour reinforcement and local system integration. The project therefore provides a practical model for strengthening sanitation access, user dignity, and everyday hygiene conditions in urban communities reliant on shared toilet facilities.

Case Study

Restoring Safe and Dignified Access in MGR Nagar, Namakkal

In MGR Nagar, Namakkal, the renovated community toilet has become an important sanitation facility for daily wage labourers and low-income households living nearby. The site was found to be functional, accessible, and actively used, showing that the intervention responded to a clear local need.

The most visible improvements were in water availability, handwashing access, lighting, and functional doors and locks. These changes made the toilet more usable and improved privacy and safety, especially for women and elderly users. Field observations also indicated increased regular usage and a visible reduction in open defecation around the area.

At the same time, the site also highlighted the need for more consistent cleaning and timely minor repairs to maintain these gains. Overall, the MGR Nagar case shows how renovating an existing community toilet can improve not only infrastructure, but also dignity, comfort, and dependable sanitation access for vulnerable urban communities.

Ethical Considerations

- The purpose of the assessment was clearly explained to all respondents, and verbal consent was obtained before conducting surveys, focus group discussions, and stakeholder interviews.
- Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to skip questions or withdraw from the interaction at any stage.
- Care was taken to ensure that no personal identifiers of respondents were disclosed in the report, and findings have been presented in aggregated form.
- Interviews and discussions were conducted in a respectful and non-intrusive manner, with due sensitivity to community context, gender, and respondent comfort.
- During field visits and toilet observations, care was taken to avoid disrupting routine use of the facilities and to maintain privacy and dignity of users, especially women and elderly users.

Study Limitations

- The assessment covered selected project locations visited in Salem and Namakkal and may not fully capture variations across all renovated toilet sites under the project.
- Beneficiary surveys were conducted with available users at the time of fieldwork, and therefore findings primarily reflect the views of active and accessible users of the renovated toilets.
- Some analysis relies on self-reported perceptions of change, which may be influenced by recall limitations or respondent bias.
- As the assessment was undertaken after project implementation, it draws on current user experiences and stakeholder perspectives rather than baseline observations collected before renovation.
- In a few high-use locations, temporary issues such as crowding, water leakages, or cleaning gaps may have affected user experience at the time of the visit, and these may not represent conditions uniformly across all sites.

Annexure

Annexure

Stakeholder Coverage and Methods Used

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENTEL	METHOD USED	SAMPLE / COVERAGE
Beneficiaries	Capture usage patterns, satisfaction, and facility condition	Surveys	88
Beneficiaries	Understand perceptions, challenges, and suggestions	Focused Group Discussions	2 FGDs covering 10 Beneficiaries
Community Representatives / User Groups	Assess maintenance practices and operational challenges	Key Informant Interviews	1
Implementing Partner Team	Team Understand implementation processes and challenges	Key Informant Interviews	1
Municipal Authorities	Capture system integration and maintenance perspective	Key Informant Interviews	2

Location Details of Visited Project Sites

Sr No	State	District	Name of Location
1	Tamil Nadu	Salem	Steel Plant Road – Jeeva Nagar
2	Tamil Nadu	Salem	Meyyanur
3	Tamil Nadu	Salem	Ammasi Nagar
4	Tamil Nadu	Salem	Panchangi Eri – Indira Nagar
5	Tamil Nadu	Salem	Karungalpatty
6	Tamil Nadu	Salem	Auto Colony Zone–3 – Ammapet
7	Tamil Nadu	Salem	West Vinayagar Kovil Street – Hasthampatty
8	Tamil Nadu	Salem	Kallangadu
9	Tamil Nadu	Salem	Sollapalam
10	Tamil Nadu	Namakkal	MGR Nagar

When you need to be sure

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