Toilet Tales

A Survey of Public Toilets and Community Toilets

in Ajmer, Rajasthan
About the Study

- A critical aspect of the Swacch Bharat Mission (Urban) is provisioning of toilets. Not just individual household toilets, but Community Toilets (CTs) that serve the needs of communities, and Public Toilets (PTs) that serve floating populations and citizens.
- PRIA conducted a baseline of 59 toilets (as per a list of toilets provided by the Ajmer Municipal Corporation) and 103 Urinals in Ajmer. The baseline included the functional status of these toilets and geo-tagged locations.
- PRIA assisted the AMC in utilising this data to provide easy access to users by tagging these toilets on Google Maps.

Methodology

- PRIA created a detailed questionnaire with inputs from communities and users of these toilets.
- The study was conducted in partnership with The Central University of Rajasthan (CURAJ) between October 2017, and May 2018.
- During the study, 11 out of 59 toilets were found to be locked, awaiting inauguration, or under construction. Therefore, some of the findings are based on 48 toilets.
- An Arc-GIS based tool was used for forecasting and suggesting locations where new toilets were required in the city.

Location of Toilets and Identification of Gaps

- Map 1 shows the location of 59 toilets enumerated in Ajmer. The toilets in maroon are CTs (41) and those depicted in blue are PTs (18).
- 56% (33) toilets have been constructed in informal settlements (slums). 22% (13) are located close to public roads. 14% (8) are located in markets. The remaining toilets are located near bus stops, monuments, and stations.
- As evident, many areas do not have sufficient coverage of toilets. A total of 29 wards do not have any toilets.
- Toilet norms suggest provisioning of toilets at every kilometre. In order to address this gap, a total of 45 additional PTs are proposed alongside main roads with possible approximate locations. These are depicted in green.
- Using the open defecation spots identified from PRIA’s earlier ‘Sanitation for All’ city-wide surveys, CTs have also been proposed. These are depicted in red.
Map 1: Location of Public Toilets and Community Toilets in Ajmer
Availability of Facilities and Provisions in Toilets

- 58 out of 59 toilets had separate sections for men and women. However, one CT was built without separate sections. Eighteen toilets did not have adequately distance between sections. This leads to a lowered sense of safety, security and privacy, particularly for women.
- None of the toilets had separate provisions catering to people with disability. Where possible, separate provisions can allow easier access and a larger space to easily accommodate wheelchairs. Railings also enable easier movement. In the survey, only two toilets were found with ramps.
- Amongst 48 toilets, 20 had provisions for urinals. A total of 67 urinals were counted. 58 of these did not have flushing mechanisms leading to a discomfort in use, foul smell, and risk of disease and infection.
- Across 48 toilets, 388 cubicles were found. 218 for men and 170 for women. Only 4 cubicles were found with no source for flushing.
- Three out of 48 toilets were found with outlets connected directly to drainage. The discharge of untreated wastewater poses serious hygiene concerns for the city.
- 204 out of 218 men’s cubicles and 166 out of 170 women’s cubicles had doors and latches. 100% provisioning leads to secure and private usage, as well as enhanced safety.
- Out of 48 toilets, 26 lacked adequate lighting contributing to an insecure environment. Presence of cigarette stubs and alcohol bottle were also an additional factor.
- Across 48 toilets, hand washing provisions were available in 37 men sections and 29 women sections. In many cases, taps were found to be missing or dysfunctional. In other locations, there was no water available in these taps.
- Bathing facilities were found in 24 out of 48 toilets. A total of 58 bathrooms for men and 39 for women were available.
- Full time caretakers were found only in 24 toilets. All caretakers were male and belonged to contracted private agencies. The provision of full time caretakers ensures safety and privacy, cleanliness, as well as maintenance. In toilets without caretakers, cleaning schedules were erratic and toilets were often used for nefarious activities.
- Neither ICT solutions, nor complaint books were found in toilets. This prevents citizens from highlighting grievances and does not allow governments to gauge feedback and improve provisioning.
Map 2: Existing Public Urinals in Ajmer
Availability of Facilities and Provisions in Stand-Alone Urinals

- Map 2 depicts the spread of urinals in Ajmer city. A total of 103 urinal blocks were located and surveyed in the city. Predominantly, 64 blocks were found near public roads, and 24 near markets. Others were located near bus stops, parks, stations, and informal settlements. As evident, many wards have insufficient coverage.
- Inadequacy of urinals is exacerbated by the fact that facilities for women were found only in 19 of these 103 blocks. In these blocks, a total of 243 urinals were found. Of these, 217 urinals were for men and only 26 for women. Facilities for people with disability were not found.
- 208 out of 243 urinals had no source of water for flushing leading to a foul smell, unhygienic use conditions and a heightened risk of infections.
- 96 out of the 103 urinal locations were connected to drainage lines, which exacerbated the unhygienic environment for the city.
- 42 of the 103 urinal locations had visible damage to urinals, highlighting lack of maintenance.
Key recommendations

- Construction of additional CTs is pivotal to ensure easy access for residents of informal settlements where population density is higher. In such settlements, construction of individual household toilets is often difficult due to space constraints. These toilets should be constructed in locations that are easily accessible to residents, and take into account safety and security.
- In addition, 45 additional PTs are proposed to meet the needs of Ajmer’s floating population, as well as the public. PTs, CTs, as well as urinals should have reliable water supply arrangements and safe disposal of sewerage. In addition, where possible bathrooms should be constructed as well. These toilets should also be able to cater to people with disability and should include railings, ramps, and clear signage.
- Safety and security, especially for women, has emerged as a critical area. Steps must be taken to ensure that women are able to use toilets without any fear. To meet this goal, men and women’s sections should be adequately distanced and demarcated. All cubicles should have secure doors with latches, and adequate lighting.
- The provision of a caretaker at each toilet is pivotal for maintenance, as well as safety and security. This also prevents the use of toilets for other nefarious activities.
- All toilets and urinals should have functional flushing mechanisms, and sanitary outlets for sewerage disposal.
- Regular monitoring of toilets and urinals is a responsibility that needs to be carried out by the agency in charge. Such monitoring should be conducted at random and should include aspects like cleanliness, adequacy of water, electric points, and disposal. An alternate model is to seek assistance from NGOs, communities, as well as users through feedback mechanisms such as ICTs, as well as through a transfer of ownership of toilets to communities.
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