With no social security, no gainful opportunities for any source of income, impeding old age, lack of awareness or no understanding about the rights & entitlements,…the life of an elderly is full of physical, social, emotional, & financial insecurities…they suffered silently, they are so vulnerable & powerless that they cannot complain…

This is the story of an elderly woman who found a ray of hope through SBM (G), to fulfil her distant dream…

Geeta Dhurandar, aged around 70 years, lives in Bangoli village of Bangoli Gram Panchayat of Tilda block of Raipur district in Chhattisgarh, situated 28 km away from district headquarters. She was leading a happy life with her husband late Raghunath Prasad Dhurandar & five daughters. Due to the large family size, they were always going through severe financial crises. Now that all of her daughters have got married, and after the death of her husband, she faced difficulties to manage her livelihood & to do household work, as no one is staying with her, she felt lonely.
“to be able to construct a toilet, which I could not do in the past due to family burden & unawareness, gives me immense pleasure & satisfaction, It was possible only due to intervention of Swachh Bharat Mission”

Isolated from her kith & kin. She continued to arrange for two square meal a day through a small grocery shop.

In the meanwhile, she met with an accident 2 years back, After that she could not walk for a month, Although she was getting Rs.300/- under Social Security Scheme, her condition was miserable during that time of recuperation. Her problems became manifold as she couldn’t go outside & squat in the ground for defecation. Many a times, she faced difficulties to access the basic human necessities like safe drinking water & sanitation. As open defecation was a common practise for the villagers; even if families having toilet they preferred to go outside with their neighbours, up to a distance sometimes up to more than a km or so.

Although she could walk a little with the help of a walker, She was unable go outside for defecation, She had always wanted toilet facilities of her own which could help her.

One day she heard, that some people have come and are discussing about the ill effects on health due to open defecation and they were sharing about the Swachh Bharat Mission (G). She found that meetings were conducted in the public. With a hope she went to the Sarpanch & shared about her pitiful condition. As Sarpanch & all the PRI members were well aware of the situation, during the survey her name was included on a priority basis. The work completed within a span of 3 weeks.

She also contributed Rs.850/- for the purchase of commode. Panchayat also provided financial support and the engineer, Satish Tandon also provided technical guidance for construction of the specialised toilet.

Sarpanch of the Panchayat, Mr. Bhagbat Singh Nayak says, “The scheme of constructing IHHL is a good old concept since many years through different government programme but through Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) we were able to construct the toilets in almost every HHs especially for the needy, by the active community participation. Indeed, it has got a larger impact in our GP” He also shared that this initiatives has also been praised by district & block level government officials.

From the above story it has been evident that the condition of an elderly woman in any set up is very critical and it should be addressed with utmost importance. Issues concerning elderly women especially on accessibility of sanitation facilities cannot be ignored anymore. If ignored today, this may turn into a major social development challenge.