Many sanitation programmes that have been operating under different names for six decades now did not realise the goal of achieving complete sanitation. The reasons for this failure have been many ranging from improper motivation to lack of funds and inferior quality constructions etc...

One other commonly observed constraint despite having necessary money is the lack of space. Many families live in houses without extra space for any further construction or extension. In such cases it is definitely difficult to take up construction of a toilet as it needs space not only for the room, but also space to fit in pits below the ground to collect all the waste.

However an individual came up with a solution for this issue. This individual is not a scientist or an engineer or even a mason, she is just someone who understood the need and importance of hygiene. Her will to get a toilet in the limited space of her one room house and a very small sitting space outside her house, led her to a solution that many would not think of and no one would agree to.

Her story...

“I have been living alone all my life, now that I am getting older I feel that walking long distances for defecation might not be possible” says Appala Narasamma while narrating her story. “When our Srpanch conducted meeting about sanitation and having toilets in our houses, I was very motivated to build one, but there was absolutely no space for any more construction in my house premises” she says pointing towards the single room in which she has been living for over four decades now.
After thinking in the direction of getting a toilet irrespective of the situation, she came up with an idea of constructing a leech pit (or tank for storage of waste) under her bed in the only room she owns. The room for a toilet was planned outside her house, where there were steps to enter, which had just enough space for a toilet.

The Sarpanch immediately approved of her idea and immediately supported her to carry out construction. Soon, one after another, households in the village who perceived space as a constraint incorporated her idea and constructed toilets. Narasamma stood as an inspiration to nearly 20 houses in the village to construct toilets.

In the endeavour of building the toilet, she also faced a major challenge of having a open pit inside the house for about 15 days. Since she had only one room, there was no alternative to where she could sleep or cook. Despite the situation Narasamma never backed out. Her will power motivated the masons to finish construction as soon as possible also without compromising on the quality.

Narasamma’s determination reached Mandal and District officials who appreciated her for the initiative. Her story indicates that sanitation is a basic necessity and is beyond the constraints if one has the will.