



Resource Box

Interviews With Indian Women About Water & Sanitation

Chandrakala Macchinder

Nausuke

There is a problem with water and toilets. During the rains there are a lot of mosquitoes and water comes into the house. We have to stay up all night. We have to get water from a place 15–20 minutes away. We went to a tap in the *chawl* [tenement] outside and we would pay R50 per month for the water. People living close by sometimes do not give water to people from the slums. That is why we had to go elsewhere.

Sometimes from the highway, from the *chawl*. Even now we take water from here and there, maybe from a broken municipal pipe. There is no tap. We did not try for water because we felt that since we will be shifting to a building soon [it would not be worth it,] so we kept quiet.

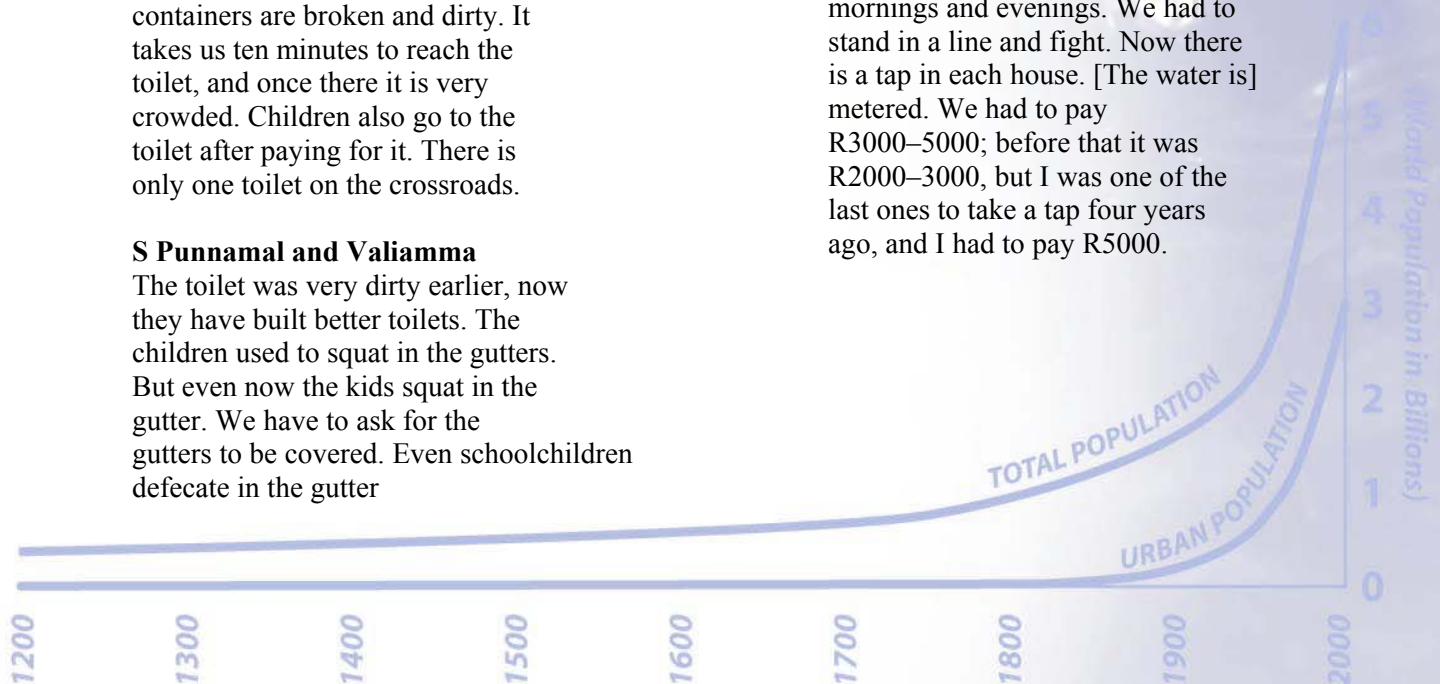
We have to go far for the toilets. We have to pay R1 per day. Every day we spend at least R2–3 on the toilet. There is water in the toilet but it is not clean. It is very dirty. The water containers are broken and dirty. It takes us ten minutes to reach the toilet, and once there it is very crowded. Children also go to the toilet after paying for it. There is only one toilet on the crossroads.

S Punnamal and Valiamma

The toilet was very dirty earlier, now they have built better toilets. The children used to squat in the gutters. But even now the kids squat in the gutter. We have to ask for the gutters to be covered. Even schoolchildren defecate in the gutter

opposite my house. They don't listen. Four or five years back they built toilets for us, 10–12 for the ladies and separate ones for the gents.

Before that we used to go the *chawl* and squat. Everybody went there and dirtied the place. There is no problem about water. There is a tap in each house. Before that there was a tap in front of the Bank. We had to go there for water. It took a very long time, [there were] so many people and there used to be fights. We have water in the evenings for 2–3 hours, and a little in the morning. Before that, a man would shout 'water is here' and everybody would run to fill [containers]. This was 25 years ago. Then gradually taps came. We had meetings and everybody signed forms and went to the office, then each *gulli* (lane) was given a tap. [There was] one tap [shared] between 10 or 15 houses. It was a problem. [The water came out in] a very thin stream and [was only available] from time to time [in the] mornings and evenings. We had to stand in a line and fight. Now there is a tap in each house. [The water is] metered. We had to pay R3000–5000; before that it was R2000–3000, but I was one of the last ones to take a tap four years ago, and I had to pay R5000.





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Safikunnissa

I have been here for 40 years. For water we used to come to the municipal tap in Kalyanwadi. There were fights at the tap. We used to stand in line and get maybe one or two *handaa* [an urn that can hold 3–5 litres of water], and that after fights. Then we took a meter for ourselves. 10–12 people took the taps, so the total cost came to about R35,000. Each house paid about R2000–2500. Then the bills came: R2000, R1500, R1000. Then we would collect the money to pay the bills. Our pay was R2000–2500; what to eat and what to spend! There was a lot of waterlogging during rains, sea water also used to come in. We had to raise the level of our hut every year. In this manner we passed 30 years. Now we have some relief because this building was built. We came here four months ago. Before that they moved us to the colony.

Sahin Bano

I have been here for seven or eight years. In the beginning it was very dirty, there was no place to walk. We had to go to the toilet in the company compound. The municipal toilet was very dirty. If we went there we wanted to vomit. The toilet in the company compound was not far, just two minutes away. Water was a big problem. The tap was in a trench. We had to fill water [containers] by the number system – whatever we could get – two, four or six *handaa* [containers], depending on the water. We had to take water from outside also. We did not pay for water. We would ask somebody for water, and if they had water they would give it.

Asmaa Bano

I have been here for ten years. [Before that] I lived in a village and came here occasionally. The village was much better. [Before the recent improvements] even the children did not like it here. It was so dirty here and there were mosquitoes. My village is Zilla Pratapgarh, and there each house has a tap. We had to go into the fields in the night to defecate. Here we had to go to the toilet like everybody else. Rains were a problem when walking along because of waterlogging. The children would fall sick because of the mosquitoes. The room would get waterlogged and every year we would raise the floor level. We never had enough drinking water because it was such a big *chawl*. Then the children would scrounge around and [find] water. We did not have to pay for water since the people around us would allow us to take some. Two years back we got taps in the house, and then we moved to the colony. There was no problem with the toilets and water in the colony, but the people were not good. We were not together. We were given houses when they were available. Now we are in the building, we are OK, although there are still some problems with light and water.

Source: This is drawn from a series of interviews undertaken by the NGO SPARC (Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres) in various Indian cities in 2002 that are to be published in the October 2003 issue of *Environment and Urbanization*.

For further information, please contact¹: Mr. Sharad Shankardass, Spokesperson, or Ms. Zahra Hassan, Press & Media Liaison, Press & Media Relations Unit, Tel: (254 2) 623153/623151, Fax: (254 2) 624060, E-mail: habitat.press@unhabitat.org, Website: www.unhabitat.org

