

Sanitation Improvement Programme for Earthquake-Affected Transit Camps

Latur and Osmanabad Districts, Maharashtra (1993–1994)

Following the devastating Latur Earthquake of 1993, Maharashtra Social Housing and Action League (MASHAL) implemented a **Sanitation Improvement Programme** in temporary transit camps established for earthquake-affected families in Latur and Osmanabad districts.

The project was undertaken with financial support from Oxfam (USA) and focused on improving sanitation and hygiene conditions within temporary settlements established for displaced populations during the rehabilitation phase.

Project Background

The Latur Earthquake resulted in extensive destruction of housing and community infrastructure, leaving thousands of families homeless and requiring temporary shelter arrangements. Large transit camps were established to accommodate displaced households until permanent rehabilitation could be completed.

Given the high population density within these temporary settlements, inadequate sanitation facilities posed serious risks to public health and increased the likelihood of disease outbreaks. There was an urgent need to establish safe sanitation infrastructure to maintain hygienic living conditions and protect vulnerable populations.

Project Objectives

The project aimed to:

- Improve sanitation conditions in earthquake rehabilitation transit camps.
- Prevent the outbreak of waterborne and sanitation-related diseases.
- Promote hygienic practices among displaced communities.
- Provide safe and accessible sanitation facilities for affected families.
- Improve the overall health and well-being of camp residents.

Project Implementation

With support from Oxfam (USA), MASHAL worked closely with affected communities to plan and construct essential sanitation infrastructure within transit camps.

The intervention included:

Construction of Temporary Bathrooms

MASHAL facilitated the construction of temporary bathing facilities to improve personal hygiene and provide privacy for camp residents.

These facilities were designed to:

- Accommodate large numbers of users.
- Ensure accessibility for women, children, and elderly residents.
- Improve overall sanitation conditions within the camps.

Installation of Two-Pit Latrine Systems

To address the immediate sanitation needs of displaced families, MASHAL constructed two-pit latrine systems within transit settlements.

The technology was selected because it was:

- Cost-effective.
- Easy to construct and maintain.
- Environmentally appropriate.
- Suitable for temporary rehabilitation settlements.

The facilities significantly improved sanitation access and reduced the risks associated with open defecation.

Community Participation

The project adopted a participatory approach that encouraged camp residents to contribute to construction, maintenance, and hygiene promotion activities.

MASHAL conducted awareness sessions focused on:

- Personal hygiene practices.

- Safe sanitation use.
- Waste disposal management.
- Disease prevention measures.

These activities enhanced community ownership and promoted healthier living practices among displaced families.

Outcomes and Impact

The programme made an important contribution to safeguarding public health during the emergency rehabilitation phase.

Key achievements included:

- Construction of temporary sanitation infrastructure in transit camps.
- Installation of two-pit latrine systems for displaced families.
- Improved hygiene and sanitation conditions within rehabilitation settlements.
- Reduced risk of communicable diseases and health hazards.
- Enhanced dignity, privacy, and safety for camp residents.
- Increased awareness regarding sanitation and hygiene practices.

Project Significance

The Sanitation Improvement Programme demonstrated the critical role of sanitation interventions in post-disaster rehabilitation. By addressing immediate hygiene and public health needs, the project contributed significantly to improving living conditions for earthquake-affected communities during a challenging period of recovery.

The initiative also strengthened MASHAL's experience in emergency response, disaster rehabilitation, public health infrastructure, and community-based sanitation programming, laying the foundation for its future work in disaster risk reduction and humanitarian assistance.