

Pune Community Toilets Baandhani goes to Solapur

On 15th September 2000, the Baandhani/Shelter Associates team made a trip to Solapur at the invitation of **Collector Deepak Kapoor**.

In Solapur District they want to take up toilet building along the same lines as in Pune, where the communities take charge of their own toilet maintenance.

Mr. Kapoor invited the group to talk to all the council heads, corporators and some officers from the Municipal Corporation about the Pune toilet project and about the essential role that community members play in this type of project.

The members of Baandhani, a Pune federation of women slumdweller, presented their sangatana. Representatives of five different Pune slums made the presentation with Shelter Associates.

The slum women who talked about their experiences and inputs to the sangatana process. Women who have been part of the sangatana for a few years outlined the on-going work of the collectives. **Banoobi Patel** from **Kamgar Putla** spoke about the importance of savings groups, of everyday crisis savings and of housing savings. She stressed how important it is for people to come together in every community, and outlined the practicalities of getting a sangatana going, through surveys and meetings.

Laxmi Jadhav from **Chandramanagar** in Yerawada told the corporators and officers about infrastructure projects in her settlement, relating how the women had got together to build gutters, and to manage their wet waste with vermiculture.

Baidabai Pawar from **Ambedkar Nagar** in the fringe village of Dhayari spoke about how their sangatana had worked with Shelter Associates on the toilet project in their settlement. Since Baandhani was already strong here, the women were able to take charge of the construction process, dealing with villagers' opposition to the toilet, and ensuring that the work was good quality.



Usha Sarode from **Shanti Nagar**, Yerawada, told the audience how she had been very sceptical when SA arrived in their settlement to rebuild their toilet, to the point of being confrontational. She really didn't believe the new toilet was going to get built, she said, and thought they'd be living without the old toilets for a long time. As the work progressed she got more convinced, and by the time of the inauguration she was completely convinced and a keen Baandhani member.

She spoke about how the community had agreed that the new block should include some ladies' toilets, although the old block had been only gents': the women had battled this out with the men, because the surveys had shown a need for more ladies' toilets. She explained how the community has been looking after their new block for five months now. They decided on their own caretaker, and support him if people don't pay up. Since the caretaker already lives nearby, they are able to use the caretaker's room as the local Baandhani office. 'We've never had such good toilets', she said.

The Baandhani women fielded lots of questions from corporators and officers. There was a lot of interest, and there's going to be an official trip over to Pune to check out the work and toilet projects.

The Baandhani women later attended a press conference and were on the popular local cable network the next day.