

Thousands of slumdwellers in Pune have no access to any kind of toilet facility, and those who do can hardly be called fortunate, having to put up with dirty unhygienic facilities that no-one would use if they had a choice.



Here's a typical Pune toilet block: not one you'd use by choice

Many of Pune's slum settlements don't have municipal sewage connections. In these areas, PMC toilets are based on the defunct system of aqua-privy tanks, which are usually blocked up and cracked, polluting the surrounding area.

Each block is meant to be cleaned up once daily by a PMC employee, but the numbers using the facilities are so great, and the situation already so bad, that there's not much hope of keeping the blocks clean this way.

Since the old PMC toilets just ignored the needs of little kids it's become an acceptable necessity for children to defecate outside the toilets, further contributing to the pollution of the area.

Typically, once the area around a toilet block is already dirty and malodorous, people start to dump their garbage here too... flies, mosquitoes and pigs are attracted, and this part of a settlement stays polluted and hazardous.



Once the area surrounding a toilet block is already dirty, people dump their garbage here...flies, mosquitoes and pigs take over.

People living in areas of poor sanitation are significantly more at risk of contracting diarrhoea and other diseases spread by the faecal-oral route. Better sanitation means less possibility of contact with faecal material at defecation sites, and less indirect exposure through water, insects or food. The large number of illnesses connected to diarrhoea count amongst the main causes of death in the world.



A polluted environment for everyone, and particularly hazardous for kids.



These little kids are playing near their homes, as all kids do. But for these kids, just playing can be hazardous, since they are playing in the dirt just a couple of steps away from a cracked old toilet block

Children are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of poor sanitation. They are exposed to a huge number of infectious agents and pollutants every day, during meals, play, at school, and so on, which can result in severe diarrhoea, caused by bacteria, viruses and parasites. Dangers to children are much greater in high-density areas, where it is almost inevitable that they play in contaminated areas.



Grim conditions inside an old block

Adequate sanitation is not only important for physical health, but contributes to improved mental health and well-being.

It is a question of basic human dignity to have access to a clean and enclosed toilet.

This is particularly important for women and girls, who often suffer from harassment when there is a lack of privacy. Where toilet facilities are inadequate and people have to use open ground as a toilet, women try to avoid going during daylight. Some use their mori (washing space) for urinating if they have an enclosed one.



Another grotty old block, spooky at night and unpleasant at the best of times.

Improved physical health means improved mental health. This is especially the case for women, who have responsibility for the household, spend more time in their settlements, deal with the dirty toilets, look after the health of their families, supervise their kids at play, and so on... This is why women must be centrally involved in any project which aims to improve sanitation conditions in their settlement.