



## Determined to bring a change, when all options are closed



Staying in big cities is attractive because that is where most of the country's productive employment has shifted, and yet staying in the city has its repercussions for low income families, and more so, for women. Suman's story is no different.

69 year old Suman Tanaji Thorat, is native to Nashik and has stayed in and around Mumbai most of her life. She stayed with her uncle in Mumbai till the age of 18 and got married to a man staying in the slum settlement of Shastri Nagar, Thane. Her husband left her a couple of years into the marriage, when she was 3 months pregnant for another woman and this is when she decided to go back to Nashik. Suman, however, returned to

Mumbai after 9 years so that she could earn enough for herself and her daughter. She initially worked as a domestic worker till she got a cleaning job with the Municipal Corporation.

Suman has faced many problems while accessing a place for defecation in Mumbai. Her slum does not have group toilets or a community toilet block. There is a chawl nearby that has a common toilet for the community, but that is out of bound for outsiders like her. She thought of constructing an individual toilet, but was unable to do so - there was no drainage line close to her house that she could connect to and buying a septic tank would double the costs.

Suman was left with no choice but to go in the open for defecation. Even the open space they could find for defecation belonged to the Military that would punish slum residents defecating there. Despite the already difficult sanitation situation, Suman had to face the added stress of men trying to take advantage of her when she went to the defecation spot. Suman's daughter and granddaughter stayed with her which only increased her insecurity of harassment from having to resort to open defecation.



**Suman Thorat with her daughter & grand daughter**



**Toilet facilitated by SA**

Determined to solve her sanitation problem, Suman took the subsidy offered by Shelter Associates (SA), a non profit organisation working actively towards providing safe sanitation through the facilitation of individual toilets to the urban slum families of Maharashtra.

SA not only provided her with all the material to construct the toilet free of charge, but also planned with the Municipal Corporation to lay drainage lines in the slum and take care of Suman's problems and those of fellow-residents in the same boat as her.

