Meet city’s ‘Toilet Missionary’

This woman has devoted her life to mobilise the community for building toilets.

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AGRA: A joint effort by Water Trust, a UK based NGO, and London Metropolitan University along with the help of a US based NGO, USAID, has been changing the scenario of a locality of the Taj city.

Kachhpura, a locality in the background of Taj, is also known for its ‘Toilet wall’. Till now, this ‘Toilet wall’ has taken initiative of building 47 toilets in this small locality.

Meera played an important role in mobilizing the community for toilets. No resident was ready to have a toilet in his or her house due to bad odour and traditions. But Meera took this responsibility and it is due to her hard work that a street in Kachhpura locality is known as svachh gali (Clean street), said Rajesh Kumar, Project Manager.

Meera, also called ‘Toilet wall’, was born in Belanganj, Agra.

She was the only girl in her family. After marriage, Meera reached a rural community where she was not able to adjust. The unavailability of a toilet was a major trouble. Meera was not ready to go in open area. At last, her husband got ready to build a toilet in her home.

“I was shocked when my brother-in-law (husband’s brother) started demanding for distribution of property. He also wanted the toilet to be in his share of the property. Finally, the toilet was given to him,” said Meera.

“That was the time when the community got a chance to tease me. They used to say, Dekho, toilet wall a gaiyya! (see, meera is coming.) I was very depressed and wanted a toilet at any cost,” said Meera.

At the same time, USAID started a project to build toilets in the locality. Students of the Metropolitan University were trying to build toilets for proper sanitation but the residents were not ready to have toilets built in their homes due to their kitchens. Meera joined the project as a facilitator to mobilize the community. After some time, the project manager suggested her to build the first toilet in her home. She accepted this proposal within a second.

In the evening, the NGO asked her to dig out a hole for the toilet chamber because, on the next day, the head of the NGO was coming to inaugurate the first toilet. Meera and her family members kept digging the whole night and till early morning they completed the work.

“When my toilet was being constructed, the residents would come one by one to see the toilet. In the three days of the toilet construction, more than 30 people came to me and said that they also wanted to have toilets in their homes. It was a big thing for me,” said Meera.

Now the girls and women don’t go to open areas. They have their own toilets in their homes.