

## People's Toilet

The occupants of the ITI campus temporary shelter in Nagapattinam are getting used to the 'one rupee toilet' system maintained by the community. Called 'people's toilet', the system is in operation for the last one month, i.e., from May 2006 onwards. The initial row of toilets put up in January 2005 along with the temporary sheds, got dilapidated, ran out of water and failed to ensure security for the ladies. Slowly people stopped using these toilets. Seeing the situation, EXNORA, supported by USAID, pitched in and constructed a row of new 15 toilets, in place of the previous ones. Before this, the approvals and cooperation from panchayat representatives was secured. It was decided that SHG women members would be responsible to coordinate maintenance of the toilet. Municipality staff responsible for the upkeep of temporary shelter helps the SHG members in maintaining the toilets in cleaning and maintaining the daily registers. The municipality staff would be available between 6 a.m and 12 p.m in the morning and between 2 p.m and 6 p.m. in the evening.



Altogether there are 15 toilets - 8 for ladies and 7 for gents. Of the 624 houses on the campus, families from 70 houses use the new toilets while the rest of the families keep using other old toilets located elsewhere in the campus. A 1000 litre sintex tank ensures availability of water throughout the day. The Municipality fills in the tank twice a day and drains the septic tank once in three days; sprays pesticides to ward off mosquitoes.

The SHG collects one rupee per family per day towards the maintenance of the toilets. Three women SHG members take care of this in turns. They help the municipality staff in cleaning as well as make sure that all the required cleaning agents are available.

The collected amount is deposited in a bank account every month. One part of the amount is used for maintaining the toilets, i.e., on the repair of taps, over head tank, buying cleaning agents (if not provided by the municipality) and the other part goes to the SHG account. A small part of the amount is given to the municipality staff towards refreshment expenses.

The SHG members say 'now it is very clean and good' and we feel proud of doing this. '*Namma ooru nallatharikanam* (our village should be good) that is why we took up the responsibility. The SHG members said that some people question about the money being collected and spent but the others understand how it is being spent.



People are happy with the facilities available and are ready to pay for it. They feel that if the municipality ensures enough supply of water they would pay more to also have a bathroom. The people who use it felt it very clean and secure and said '*oru roopa koduthalum parvayillai suthamayirikkum*' (do not mind paying one rupee since it is neat and clean).