**Nadri Foundation**

**“Lack toilets put rural women’s health and safety at stake”**

For generations rural India has lived without toilets and open defecation is still a norm in many poor, backward rural villages.

Women and young girls from households without toilet have to wake up before dawn to attend to their nature’s call. Otherwise, they have to hold their bladders and bowls till dusk to venture into the fields to relieve themselves.

With failing crops and continuous deforestation, women have nowhere to hide and men can see them from all sides. Therefore, women are forced to wait for the darkness to fall to attend to their nature’s call. The dignity of women in rural villages is put to stake.

With open defecation in darkness puts the health and safety of women at risk. There have been ample number of reported cases of women and female children subjected to eve teasing molestation, gang rape, death due to snake bite when they had ventured into dark to relieve themselves.

Open defecation is a serious crisis in rural villages which contributes to disease, diarrhea, childhood malnutrition, loss of economic output and violence against women and children. Construction of toilets in the rural households will put an end to the menace faced by women and children.

Women and female children’s health and safety are the key driving forces behind the Central Government’s push for sanitation in the villages. The present Government at the Centre has launched the **Swachh (Clean) Bharat Mission** on 2nd October, 2014 to put focus on sanitation and achieve universal sanitation coverage. Under this scheme, the government provides an incentive amount of **Rs. 12000** to construct individual household latrine. It is available for all Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Above Poverty Line (APL) households restricted to SCs/STs, small and marginal farmers, landless laborers with homestead, physically handicapped and women headed households.

The construction activities should be taken up individual beneficiaries themselves. The incentive is given to the beneficiaries only on completion of construction and usage. Many poor households are unable to avail the scheme as they do not have the necessary financial sources to construct the toilet. Secondly, the incentive amount Rs. 12,000 is not sufficient for construction of one unit of individual household toilet and provide for water storage for hand-washing and cleaning of the toilet.

The minimum amount estimated for constructing one individual household toilet unit with water storage facility is **Rs. 25,000.** For the poor households this is a too big an amount to afford. As a result, they continue to adopt open air defecation. Women and children are the most affected by lack of toilet at home.

Under such prevailing conditions, Nandri Foundation has been strongly motivating the Nandri Mothers to construct toilet at home making use of the Government’s **Swachh (Clean) Bharat Mission** scheme. Many of our mothers have reported that the incentive from the government was not enough to construct the toilet. Many are willing to construct individual household toilet if the additional amount could be arranged by way of a loan (Rs. 10,000) which they will pay in ten months.

* The proposed estimate for the construction of one household toilet unit is **Rs. 25,000.**
* The Government share for individual household toilet construction is **Rs. 12,000**
* Organizations’ share (which will be in the form of a loan) is **Rs. 10,000.**
* Beneficiary share is **Rs. 3000.** The beneficiary share will be calculated in terms of labor during the construction.

Among various needs, toilet is one of the top priorities for women and children for their own safety and security. Access to toilet at home and improved sanitation is as important as obtaining justice and restoring their dignity and self respect.