

Leading with Skill Development: A Collaborative and Community Based Approach to Ending Open Defecation in Rural India via Computerized Technical Vocational Education and Training

Authors : Srividya Sheshadri, Christopher Coley, Roa. R. Bhavani

Abstract : India currently accounts for 60 percent of the open defecation that is practiced globally. While research in the domain of sanitation development makes it apparent that girls and women living in rural India are disproportionately affected, interventions to address this dilemma are lacking. An important but relatively unexplored connection with poor sanitation is that women living in rural India are not only the largest marginalized group without access to adequate sanitation facilities, they also represent a majority of India's unskilled workers. By training women to build their own toilets, through an approach that has demonstrated success in empowering marginalized communities through technical and vocational education and training (TVET), a collaborative dynamic emerges that can engage entire communities in the movement towards total sanitation. Designed and implemented by Amrita University, this technology-enhanced, community-based approach to skill development, known as Amrita computerized Vocational Education and Training (or Amrita cVET), has begun to show promise in addressing the struggle to end open defecation, and raise sanitation awareness, as well as strengthen personal and community development among women living in rural India. While Amrita cVET project, known as Women Empowerment: Sanitation, is currently in implementation in seven states throughout India, this paper will discuss early stages of the intervention in rural villages within the Indian states of: Karnataka and Goa, where previous sanitation efforts have failed to take hold.

Keywords : community based development, empowerment studies, sanitation in India, computerized vocational training

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