

Improving safety of Sanitation Workers in Wai, India

Frontline Workers during COVID

Sanitation workers continued to perform their role during Covid. However, they were found vulnerable as unlike health workers, they lacked proper PPEs. It was considered important to provide them access to appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and monitor its usage.



Study to understand PPE access and usage

CEPT University's Center for Water and Sanitation (CWAS) has been working with Wai Municipal Council for city sanitation planning. A study was conducted focusing on access and usage of PPEs by the sanitation workers in the city.

Worker profiles



- 95 workers – govt. employed and private contractual
- Low PPE usage
- Contract documents did not have PPE related clause
- Employment benefits

Review of available guidelines



- Advisory on Community & Public Toilets, 2018
- Standard Operating Procedures for cleaning of Sewers and Septic Tanks, 2018
- Swachh Bharat Mission: Municipal Solid Waste Management Manual, 2016

Qualitative discussion



- Lack of awareness on health impacts of not using PPE
- PPE not activity specific
- PPE not user friendly – workers reported discomfort as reason for not using

Supplier interview



- Options for user friendly gear
- Comparing costs
- Vendor availability

Evaluating monitoring, replacement regime



- No systematic monitoring mechanisms
- Not replaced timely
- Supplied once under SBM

Interventions and CWAS support to Wai Municipal Council

Contract clauses

Inclusion of appropriate PPE related clauses in all contract documents of the sanitation department

PPE Procurement

Procurement of PPE based on activity profiles – sweeping, desludging, toilet maintenance, treatment plant operations, solid waste management

Training and sensitization

Training workshops, health camps, and counselling sessions were conducted to sensitize on the importance of using PPE

Monitoring systems

Both paper based and digital tools were made available for easy monitoring and ensuring regular use of PPE

Programme Impacts and context of COVID

- Sanitation as essential service during COVID - increased usage of PPE by all
- Workers now demand replacement of worn out PPE
- Privately employed workers also provided PPE by labour contractor according to revised contract
- San workers are more aware of their overall health and well being
- Procurement tender now included PPE according to type of activities and gender. Replacement also considered

