

# UNLOCKING PARTNERSHIPS TO ACCELERATE SANITATION AND LIVELIHOODS

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognises the critical role of multi-stakeholder partnerships in achieving the set SDGs. In fact, one of the goals (SDG 17) is dedicated to encourage multi-stakeholder partnerships to "mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources" (UN, 2020) to advance sustainable development. This case study explores a bespoke partnership between private sector, an Urban Local Body, and a Self-Help Group (SHG) as they address the sanitation and livelihood needs in the municipality of Puri, India.

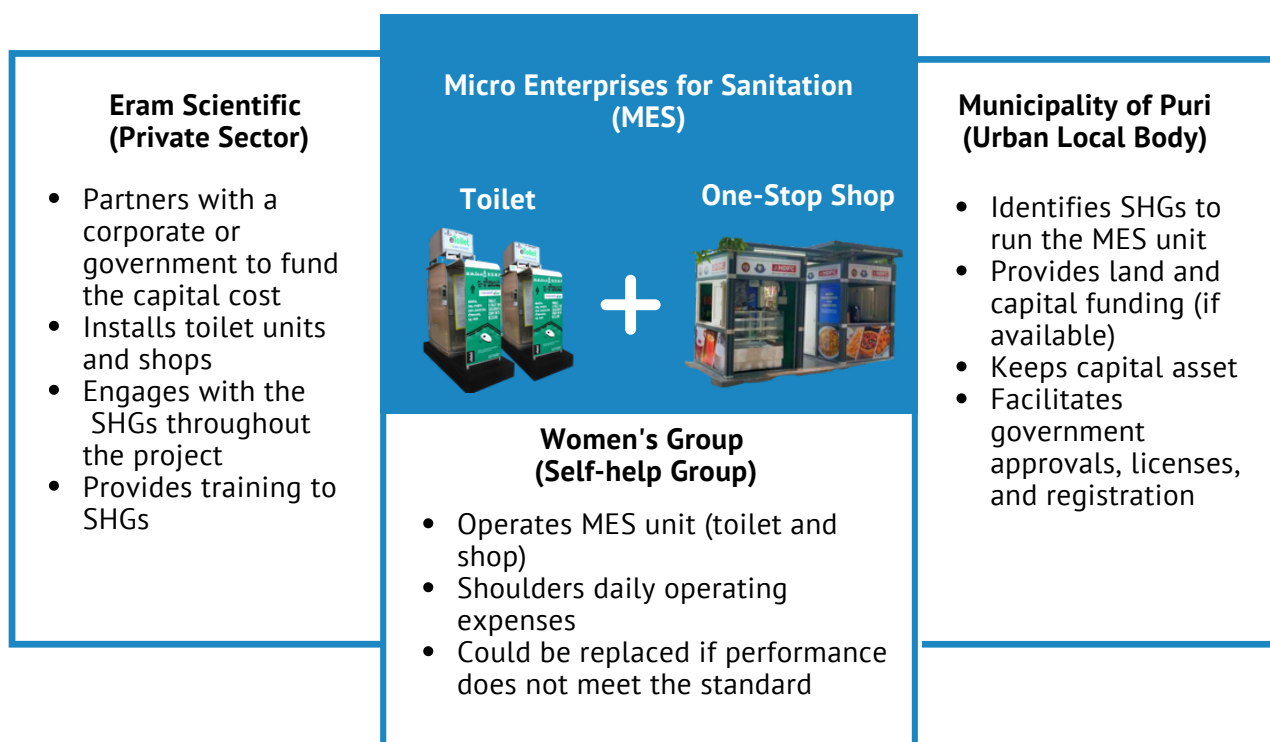
## THE PROJECT

Eram Scientific Solutions (Eram Scientific) is a research and development (R&D) social enterprise, known for its breakthrough innovations and solutions, operating primarily in the water and sanitation sector. They introduced and install technology-integrated toilets to address the pressing need for access to sanitation in India. Always looking for growth opportunities, Eram Scientific noticed the huge crowd around public toilets and saw an opportunity for market growth. Eram Scientific hereby launched the Micro Enterprises for Sanitation (MES) model, a livelihood toilet facility model that provides self-help groups (SHGs) in India with opportunities to earn daily income.

The MES model synergises the private sector, Urban Local Bodies, and SHGs to capitalise, manage, and operate a toilet as well as a one-stop-shop. Under this model, a shop is attached to a toilet facility, providing both sanitation services and livelihood opportunities to the community.



The MES model solves various issues in a community: 1) it engages them to take ownership of the toilets and keep it clean and hygienic; 2) it gives women the confidence to use the toilets because they feel safe; 3) and it gives them livelihood," said **Srija Santosh, Head of Sustainability at Eram Scientific Solutions.**



# KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

The MES model showcases the following key features and implementation arrangements that made it uniquely successful:

## MASSIVE SUPPORT FROM THE PARTNER ULB

The immense support from the ULB stirred the speedy and smooth implementation of the project. From the ground support to finding the location and acquiring necessary licenses (water, sewage, and electricity), the ULB did not hesitate to lend a hand. The ULB also provided the land through a lease agreement with Eram Scientific and pre-selected the SHGs to be involved in the project.



The strategic value that MES brings is the seamless integration of community intelligence in the sanitation business. Each community is unique and MES acknowledges that.

**Venugopal Gupta**  
Managing Director  
Toilet Board Coalition



## CONTINUOUS INVOLVEMENT OF THE URBAN LOCAL BODY (ULB)

Eram Scientific provides monthly reports to the ULB to apprise them of updates about the project. In case certain standards are not met by the SHGs, Eram Scientific raises it with the ULB and discusses if replacement is needed. At the moment, Eram Scientific is in talks with the ULB to initiate upskilling and provide more technical training for the SHGs.

## SUPPORT AND MENTORSHIP FROM THE TOILET BOARD COALITION

Eram Scientific graduated from the Toilet Board Coalitions' Accelerator in 2021. The Coalition made invaluable contributions to the project in terms of strengthening the value proposition, business model, location evaluation, investments and partnerships.

## FULL COOPERATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE SHGS

When the MES model was introduced to the SHGs, they received the idea positively and perceived the sanitation work (i.e. operating toilets and shops) a decent job. When COVID19 hit, many of the SHG members became unemployed and sought other sources of income. The MES turned out to be their glimmer of hope to recover from their job loss.



"The MES is a good model and should be replicated in other places so that women like us can benefit and in the process be able to access clean, safe, and hygienic toilets."

**Sandhya Rani**  
Sarbamangala  
MES Model Operator

## CLOSE MONITORING OF THE OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE OF THE MES UNITS

Eram Scientific instituted specific standards for SHGs to ensure consistency and commitment. Some of which are standard business processes such as bookkeeping and billing. Eram Scientific implemented online systems and conducted training on how to use them. It also requires the SHGs to generate sales reports to check if the shops are financially sustainable.

Eram Scientific also prohibits the sale of harmful products and promotes sustainable products. SHGs may also order products from Eram Scientific, which the latter facilitates with its partner supplier - Unilever, whom Eram Scientific met through the 2021 Accelerator.

## STRONG SHG ENGAGEMENT BEFORE AND DURING THE PROJECT

Eram Scientific conducted a series of activities to generate awareness and ensure full participation.

- Municipality provides a list of SHGs.
- Eram Scientific conducts workshops with all the SHGs.
- If the SHG is interested, Eram Scientific sets up a meeting with SHG.
- Once approved and final, Eram Scientific conducts training with SHG.



## ABOUT THE SHG

Sarbamangala is a 20-member group in Puri that has been operating an MES model at a bus stand for the last 9 months. Two (2) of their members take shifts to run the model on a rotational basis.

Before this, they used to take up odd jobs such as tailoring to make a living, but found that it was not a steady source of income. They were then called to attend a meeting led by the Puri Municipality and came to know about the MES model. They expressed interest and did not mind cleaning toilets and operating the kiosk as a job as they provide a steady income.

They were then trained by Eram Scientific in maintaining the toilets (e.g. cleaning the toilets) and managing the kiosks (e.g. customer service, sales, and bookkeeping).



**Sandhya Rani**  
Sarbamangala  
MES Model Operator

## CONCLUSION

The MES model highlights the importance of continuous government involvement and SHG acceptance and engagement in implementing a sanitation and livelihood programme. This also proves that the private sector can be a strong and collaborative partner that the ULBs can activate to address its city or municipality needs. In this model, Eram Scientific demonstrates a successful balance of managing a multi-stakeholder partnership while ensuring that it meets its commitments and quality standards.

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With thanks to our leaders:

