

Promoting the 'Swachh Bharat Mission' through Village Councils in Three Villages of Mewat

Estefania Martinez

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Florida

Background: The "Swachh Bharat Mission" aims to improve the quality of life of rural community residents of India by promoting sanitation and hygiene and eliminating open defecation. With the collaboration of the Sehgal Foundation (SF) and Nourish International (NI) Research team at the University of Florida, students provided health and hygiene education in three villages of the district of Mewat, Harayana, India.

Methods: The NI research team worked with three groups in each village. Two groups focused on Women's Councils and School Management Committees in each village. Meetings were conducted with these groups in order to promote community engagement and knowledge about health hazards due to open defecation. The third group targeted elementary school children in the villages. In schools, team members engaged students in activities so that they could learn about the importance of hand sanitation and hygiene to reduce disease spread due to open defecation.

Outcomes: A total of 30 women council members, 15 members of the School Management Committee, and 60 elementary school children were trained. Each training session was tailored for the group needs. Team members encountered challenges due to language barriers and low literacy levels in the communities.

Implications: Due to these training sessions, Women's Council members, School Management Committee members and elementary school children can apply the acquired knowledge to practice to reduce health hazards caused by open defecation. These training sessions offered a way to empower and enforce collective responsibility as well as spread knowledge about the Swachh Bharat Mission.