

An App for Finding Toilets

Hoshiarpur - Punjab



The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) has multifaceted implementations across various sectors. One of the important missions under the Swachh Bharat Campaign is construction of toilets to prevent open defecation and related health and personal hazards. In addition to rural areas, access to public toilets in urban dwellings was also listed as an important factor under the SBM. The underutilisation or lack of information about existing toilet facilities stood in the way of achieving the goals of SBM of a cleaner India. Thus, a mechanism was required wherein centralised information could be made available to the public.

The Deputy Commissioner of Hoshiarpur in Punjab, Vipul Ujjwal upon brainstorming concluded that if one could collate the



presented to the Ministry of Urban Development. Upon receiving the approval, the android based mobile application was devised to help users navigate to toilets with utmost ease using the Google Maps feature. Along with the core app, a supportive app called SBTL Admin was also created for the authorities. The SBTL Admin app would help the appointed ULB officials and sanitation inspectors collect, collate, geo-tag and verify the data of the existing toilet facilities to

CHALLENGES FACED

- To challenge unhygienic mindset and practices
- Maintenance of existing toilets

FINAL OUTCOMES

- Across 106 Indian cities, 21,758 toilets are searchable as of March, 2018
- The number is expected to increase exponentially

geo-data of the existing toilet facilities and make it instantly available to the users, it would help those in need to locate the toilets anytime, anywhere. In addition, the system could also provide information regarding the sanitation condition of the toilets so that they are clean and safe to be used by anyone.

The first step towards realising this initiative was to make people aware about the needs of using a toilet instead of urinating or defecating in the open. Keeping this in mind, an innovative app for android phones was created. This app, known as the Swachh Bharat Toilet Locator (SBTL) or Google Toilet Locator, was developed with an entrepreneurial group, 'August Communications'. A working demo was

ensure that it is genuine and usable.

The next step involved the partnership with Google to strengthen the 'user parameter' feature of the app to enable users to find toilets within the required parameters. Ministry of Urban Development roped in Google to make the geo-data searchable on Google to ensure that the public could utilise the facilities of SBTL without actually having to download the app. The Google Toilet Locator was launched on December 22, 2016. The app not only eases the problems of open urination and defecation but is also a big step towards women empowerment as it allowed women to step outside their homes without having to worry about where to answer nature's call. The listed toilets are generally free-to-use and are categorised for facilitating gender specific search.

Citizens can also submit location of new toilets and rate all the existing ones. The app supports public ratings based on hygiene, infrastructure and safety, which gives users an accurate picture of the status of toilets. It also encourages the user to provide feedback and submit new toilets for public use. All these toilets are physically verified with a detailed description including images, to help the user choose and reach the exact location. Users can also filter the available toilets based on user ratings, reviews or type, i.e. western or Indian. The app's navigation system also tells them whether to reach the toilet by foot or vehicle.