



## Students of VCET, Madurai constructs rest rooms at low cost for villagers

### *Velammal students take forward the youth movement, construct toilets for villagers*

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IN the past few months, Tamil Nadu has learnt not to underestimate the power of youth. From cleaning water tanks to removing the invasive seemai karuvelam shrubs, youngsters have proved that the jallikattu agitation was not just a stir, but a movement. And now, taking it forward are the students of Velammal College of Engineering and Technology.

As many as 70 students, doing third year civil engineering at Velammal College of Engineering and Technology, have come to-

gether to construct 10 low-cost individual household toilets (IHHTs) at Kallambal village at Pannaiyur panchayat in Madurai district, with an aim to prevent open-defecation. While the concept was born last year, long before the jallikattu movement, the students began the ground work on Friday, by laying the leach pit.

Speaking to *Express*, M Ashok Kumar, a student, said, "We came up with the idea after attending a session organised by consulting civil engineer Ravi Subramanian. We thought of building the

IHHT as both the Central and State governments have been working to make the country open-defecation free (ODF) under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan initiative. We constructed a model of the low-cost IHHT in our college November last."

After building the model, the students met Additional Collector and Project Director of District Rural Developmental Agency B Rohini Ramdas, who had been working tirelessly to make Madurai open-defecation free.

"Rohini Ramdas liked the model and asked us to construct 100



such toilets in the district. Though the cost of construction of the model came up to ₹18,000, we would be able to bring it down to ₹12,000, if it is constructed in bulk numbers," Ashok said.

In order to analyse the cost of construction and the manpower required for the construction of 100 toilets, the students planned to construct 10 toilets initially and selected the Kallambal village for the pilot project, Ashok explained.

A Vimalanathan, another student, said, "While the IHHT constructed by the government is

built using hollow blocks, we follow a different design. We divided the work into two phases. The substructure (leach pit) of the IHHT was constructed on Friday and the superstructure — the walls and the roof — on Saturday. The size of the IHHT is 4x3 inches. Precast concrete columns would be used for the roof and toilet door."

While the Kallambal residents were initially skeptical about the new model, and wanted IHHT

similar to that constructed by the government in nearby villages, once the students explained to them about the durability of the toilet, the villagers agreed and even helped the students with the construction work. Most of the work was over by Saturday, except the construction of roof, which would be completed on Sunday. The project was funded by Velammal Educational Trust Chairman M V Muthuramaniam and Vice-Chairman Ganesh Natrajan. Once the subsidy is granted, the money would be given to the college management.



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