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Community washing machines a boon to women in Dharavi homes

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Mumbai: You've heard of BMC constructing toilets, bathrooms and providing drinking water in slum communities, but did you know that it also provides community washing machines? In the narrow lanes of Dharavi, stands 'Suvidha Centre' set up about two years ago that houses 10 washing machines.

The centre has been set up by Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) in public-private partnership with BMC at a two-storey facility with 111 toilet seats and bathrooms with the washing facility on the ground floor of the structure. Women come here to wash heavy clothes — bedsheets, bed covers and fancy wedding garments — that are cumbersome to launder at home for a fee of Rs. 60 per load.

Anisa Khan (50) who lives in Naik Nagar slum pocket said that for bulky clothes it's not just about washing but also drying which is difficult in her tiny home. "We spend mo-



Najma, a local, said the facility is helpful as it also dries 'huge' clothes

ney for 'machine washing' as it ensures that clothes dry quickly," she said.

Mumisa Khan (40), another local, said she has a semi-automatic washing machine at home. "Here, the machine is fully automatic which means there is no need to move clothes from one tub to another... they are washed and dri-

ed at one go," said Khan.

Lavanya Ediga (34), who manages the laundry area, told TOI, "We never allow clothes of two people to be mixed and washed. One load of machine that runs is for one person only. The buckets too are numbered here so one knows well in which bucket is his/her clothes are taken in

and brought back. We get many bachelors who work in small-scale industries here who bring their clothes on weekends for washing."

An officer from G-North ward said that the demand for such facilities in slum pockets is definitely growing. "There is dignity attached to such slum pockets as toilet facilities are clean and washing of clothes can be done fast. People are encouraged to invite guests homes too as they know there is a toilet facility close to them. However, we have heard instances of people arguing to pay for washing of clothes which needs to be handled tactfully by the centre manager," said the officer.

HUL has set up 12 Suvidha centres with 11 centres in partnership with HSBC and BMC. Dharavi has two centres with another coming up soon. More than 3 lakh people have access to sanitation through the project. On June 22, HUL and JSW signed a partnership to establish 10 new Suvidha centres.