Problem – Decision support system (Toilet construction costs information and design system)

Investment in construction of a toilet can be very high, especially for a poor household. Particularly, in rural India, there are no fixed prices for components (toilet seat, pipes) and material (cement, bricks, slabs, tiles) required to construct a toilet. Thus, often the poor pay an exorbitant price when they are unable to haggle for cheaper prices at the supply shops. They are also hampered by lack of information on the current price of a particular component or construction material. They are also unaware of the prices paid by other consumers in a particular area or prices charged at a particular supplier/shop.

Description of envisioned solution:

It is proposed to develop an application that allows suppliers of components and construction material to upload their offer prices for these products. It also allows a consumer to upload price(s) which s/he has paid in the recent past, including information such as date of purchase, amount paid and the name and contact details of the supplier/shop in the nearby area. The application could be designed to allow uploading and searching based on the name of a block within a particular district. This would create a downward pressure of prices and help the rural poor construct toilets more cheaply.

The application could also offer some common design prototypes that allow its user to determine the approximate cost of a toilet based on the design s/he prefers by using the costs information from nearby suppliers/shops. It is recognized that most poor may not have the right type of electronic device to access such information but with the help of intermediaries such as NGOs and officials of the Sanitation Mission, they could access such services.

Intended audience and Devices:
Householders - rural and urban.
Mobiles, Smart phones, tablets

Idea development: Sanjay Gupta and Rohit Gawri (World Bank)