CASE STUDY

January 2016/No. 13

Open Defecation Free without Government Subsidy

Introduction

Bagnara Gram Panchayat consists of three villages Pandritarai, Bhurbhusi and Bagnara, in Ambagarh Chowki block of Rajnandgaon district. The Gram Panchayat is situated 5 km from block headquarters and 55 km away from the district headquarters. This Gram Panchayat has a large population of tribal and is surrounded by forests. Total population of the Gram Panchayat is 1700 which comprises of 321 households. The major source of livelihood is agriculture and related activities. Though there are a few houses which have toilets, people in general defecate in open. Lack of poor sanitation facilities and defecation in open was a major concern and serious health risk for the villagers. It was found that several toilets which have been constructed earlier were found to be in dilapidated condition, either dysfunctional or incomplete, communities were not willing to invest in sanitation; which showed that subsidy driven support had failed, rather it was felt by the development practitioner that there is a need to empower communities to collectively change their sanitation situation.

“One of the Ward member said we are practising open defecation since time immemorial..... it is difficult to change one’s behaviour, But I have seen that due to this traditional habit women, Children, People with disabilities & old aged person are suffering more”

This is the story of change; attitudinal and behavioural change, an example of how collective decision making and action could bring desired result within the targeted period.
Inclusiveness, Multifaceted approach and leadership of the Gram Panchayat

During the initial days the community was unaware of the connection between sanitation and health, due to this lack of knowledge and unawareness they were of the opinion that sanitation was not a cause for poor health, but the approaches under Swachh Bharat Mission changed the whole scenario.

When the block under Swachh Bharat Mission invited Gram Panchayat for complete elimination of open defecation, they accepted it wholeheartedly, then a Gram Sabha was organized on 2nd April 2015 where all PRI members and other staff of Gram Panchayat under the leadership of Sarpanch were present, a resolution was passed in the meeting that all possible efforts will be initiated to eliminate open defecation in the Gram Panchayat. A survey was conducted to know the situation of sanitation status in the Gram Panchayat and accordingly planning was done to reach out to greater objectives. A major decision was also taken in the meeting that all key functionaries of the Gram Panchayat i.e. all PRI members, GRS(Gram Rozgar Sewak), all FLWs, Prerak and Village Mukhia will build their own toilet and make use of it immediately. In the beginning separate meetings were held with school teachers, FLWs, SHG members, among youth, village leader (Gaon Mukhiya) in particular and community at large in general which was supported by the local NGOs and government functionaries. It was realized that SHGs are the potential stakeholders of this initiatives; so house to house visits were made to develop an understanding about the ill effects of open defecation and how people spend their hard earned money on treatment due to lack of knowledge.

At School level different programmes i.e. Essay, Debate, Drawing competitions were organised to generate awareness among the students. Meetings were also conducted with the SHG and non- SHG members collectively and oath was taken “that everyone will build their own toilets and ensure proper use of it both at Household and community level”

As the literacy level of the community members was not high, role play, street play, wall paintings were also made in the public places to sensitize the community. Efforts were also made regularly to clean all public places like School, AWC, road, drain, temple etc. to inject a sense of health seeking behaviour among the larger community.

In this process, several meetings were also conducted at Village and Gram Panchayat level to form different committees i.e. Navratna and vigilance committee who were closely monitored the commitment made by the community to be declared as open defecation free. On various occasion Janpad CEO and the ZP CEO visited and had discussions with the community about the progress and the way forward.

Efforts made by local NGOs cannot be ignored as they have relentlessly worked with the community to fulfil their commitment.

Toilets were built successfully in 321 households and ensured usage by the community members and ODF celebration was held on 13th May 2015 which was attended by district level and block level government functionaries. It is a true reflection of collective community effort involving all stakeholders without support of subsidy from the government.

“It was only possible due to collective efforts, and community understood the issues and build toilet by themselves, without depending on the government subsidy”

-Jugal Kishor Sinha, Panchayat Secretary

We took it as a challenge, initially we faced certain difficulties but when we get support from all the stakeholders, collectively taken the oath and kept our commitment which indeed gives us immense pleasure and satisfaction

-Mr. Ghanshyam Bhuarya, Sarpanch

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