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A Healthy Community in Nepal

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Introduction

A community in central Nepal was declared as a healthy (total sanitation) community on 19th June 2012. Bagbazzar, a community of Sharadanagar VDC (village development committee) in Chitwan district has now safe drinking water and improved sanitation facilities. People are practicing better hygiene practice, managing waste properly and have better kitchen management. An integrated improvement in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) has reduced water borne diseases especially diarrhoea and smoke related diseases in the community. Sharadanagar VDC was declared ODF (open defecation free) in 27th June 2010 with the support of SWASHTHA project. Practical Action South Asia Regional Office in financial support of European Union and UNHabitat and in partnership with ENPHO (Environment and Public Health Organization), MuAN (Municipal Association of Nepal) and local authority has implemented the project in 7 municipalities, 3 small towns and 2 VDCs of Nepal from 2009 till 2012. Bagbazzar is one of the communities among 21 project communities of the project.

Material and Methods

As per the Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan (2010) of Nepal Government, after the declaration of ODF in Sharadanagar VDC, the project worked on post ODF activities in a community. A poor community was selected for post ODF activities in coordination with VDC. It also supported the district campaign of total sanitation as District Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Coordination Committee (D-WASH-CC) of Chitwan also targeted for the total sanitation district after ODF declaration of the district on 23rd September 2011.

Point of use (PoU) of water and its safe handling and storage was trained to the community people. Household water treatment options like boiling water, filtration, chlorination and SODIS were promoted in the community. The project also supported to construct concrete washing platforms, chang (dish drying rack), improved cooked stoves and cattle shed improvement. Further, local change agents like female community health volunteers (FCHVs) and mother leaders were trained and mobilised to increase awareness on point of use of water, importance of sanitation, hygiene and kitchen management.

After the post ODF activities, the project team, members of D-WASH-CC and media people monitored the community to inspect whether it is ready to declare healthy community or not on 24 January 2012. Although, the WASH situation of the community was found satisfactory, members of D-WASH-CC recommended to develop a set of indicators for its evaluation and conducting an independent survey so that a basis is formed for such declaration.

A set of indicators and check list were developed to evaluate WASH situation of the community. Sanitation and hygiene master plan of Nepal Government and sanitation strategic planning document of Chitwan district were the main guiding documents to prepare those indicators. Mainly indicators focused on use of toilet, hand washing practices, handling and treatment of drinking water, personal hygiene, waste management and kitchen management. WASH situation of a nearby school as a public institution was also considered for the evaluation.

D-WASH-CC approved the evaluation indicators and recommended to conduct the evaluation process. Finally, after the evaluation, District Development Officer (LDO), Chairperson of D-WASH-CC declared the community as a healthy community on a formal organized programme.

Results and Conclusions

The household as well as surrounding environment of Bagbazzar is significantly clean now. All 80 houses have individual water seal toilets. The community have a rule to penalize if anyone defecates openly. This is the indication that community is constantly monitoring the environmental cleanliness. People from different parts of the country and even from outside the country had visited the community to observe the change and see the community engagement for creating healthy community.



Healthy community declaration ceremony at Bagbazzar

Community people are experiencing better health, especially diarrheal episode in children have decreased significantly. It can also be triangulated with the consumption of Jivan Jal (oral rehydration salt) in the community. FCHVs reported that the consumption of Jivan Jal is reduced visibly. Similarly, there is a significant decrease in ARI and eye related diseases because of better kitchen management.

The role of VDC and D-WASH-CC is equally important to promote and scaling up such models. Integrated efforts or the partnership of stakeholders including communities, local authorities are necessary to create such models. More importantly, the change was possible because of the community people. These people were constantly involved in design, implementation, revisions and monitoring of every intervention. Even after a year of the declaration, the community is still cleaner and experiencing healthy environment. The temporary superstructures of toilets are gradually changing to more permanent type and people are maintaining the infrastructures themselves. These are actually the sign of community ownership which ultimately help to sustain their own endeavours.

References

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