



Doing it Inside

Tales of Pride & Progress



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SWACHH Phase II
Supporting Women to Advance Cleanliness and
Hygiene in Households

Gunjiya Tasted a New Freedom at 55!

Ruchi Kumari, Peterbar, Jharkhand



Clean and covered toilets is something residents of Sosokalan Panchayat, in Gola block of Jharkhand, had barely witnessed so far. If one had to defecate, going to open areas with shrubs or boulders and finding out a nook was the option commonly availed. Since 2020, the local PRADAN staff had been reaching out to Sosokalan people to make them realise the need for using clean and covered toilets and maintain its hygiene. Rounds of meetings and awareness drives were conducted to promote the use of toilets and safe sanitation practices. If you visit Sosokalan today, you will find 85% of the residents there have toilets and are using them properly.

But, there was another layer to the problem. *"I am 55, but have developed a knee and lower back pain recently and squatting posture has become extremely painful for me. Whenever I have to alight myself, I seek help from my family members,"* shared Gunjiya Devi, in one of the meetings. And, Gunjiya was not the only person facing this. There were several other people with disabilities, pregnant women, children and the elderly, who were finding it very difficult to use the Indian style of toilets. We recognised the need and suggested Gunjiya and other families with similar problems to adopt 'accessible family toilets' (AFT). Rima Devi, a WASH mentor from

PRADAN, explained Gunjiya that an AFT toilet is more user-friendly as it will have a western commode along with an Indian pan. Gunjiya realised that the WC will help her defecate with utmost comfort.

With Rima's support, Gunjiya processed her loan application of Rs. 10,000 for constructing the AFT. Her family members were initially hesitant about spending more money on a new toilet, after all their newly constructed Indian toilet was just nine months old. But, looking at Gunjiya's health issues, they realised that similar anyone might develop similar problems so it's worth taking the loan and construct an AFT toilet. Gunjiya's loan application for Rs. 10,000 was sanctioned at her SHG, Shanti Mahila Mandal, for constructing the new toilet.

It took her a few weeks to complete the toilet, but once it was completed Gunjiya Devi's happiness knew no bounds. There was some uneasiness in the beginning, but Gunjiya's need was stronger. Soon, her comfort with the new system increased. Her biggest joy was she was no longer dependent on her family members to access toilet. *"I realised a new sense of freedom at this stage of life, when I am almost 60!"*, says Gunjiya with a radiant smile.



Gita Chose to Live a Life of Dignity

Shilpi Roy, Churchu, Jharkhand



“It caused a burning sensation, it ached. Most of the times urinating became so difficult, and I was not recovering from the problem. Some said it’s happening because I am not properly washing myself after defecating in the open, some said open defecation itself was the problem. But what could I do? Not that I could carry a lot of water to wash myself thoroughly, neither the toilet made with support from Swachh Bharat Mission was functional due to a faulty drainage. Whenever anybody used it and washed it, water would get clogged, causing a bigger mess. Visiting the local para-medics and buying medicines was a crushing burden for us. I thought this disease will kill me some day” recalls Gita Devi, who stays in Dumar village of Tatijharia block in Hazaribagh district.

When WASH mentor Shivani Devi began building awareness upon the importance of water, health and sanitation through various trainings and capacity building sessions under the SWACHH project, supported by Water.org, Gita Devi started connecting the dots and got convinced about the cause of her health issues. Shivani’s trainings propelled the village SHGs to farm-out loans to their members towards issues

related to potable and safe water, sanitation, and health. For Gita, it was a golden chance to stop the financial losses she had been bearing for so long on medicines and save herself from the harrowing experience of open defecation. Gita took a Rs.50,000 loan from her self-help group (Rakha Mahila Mandal) to build a toilet and a washroom in her household. And Gita received a wholehearted support from all her family members.

Answering nature’s call is no more a wee hour matter for Gita. She uses her toilet whenever she needs to and without having to endure the pain and uneasiness all through the day. *“I feel so proud of Gita today, she took such a wise decision to take the loan and construct this toilet for us. All of us are using it every day, and night”* says Hulash Prajapati, Gita’s spouse.

“For the last five months, I have not visited the para-medics – why should I? The need itself doesn’t exist anymore! My monthly medical expenses have become zero. And, more importantly, I don’t have to bother about the discreet onlookers any more. I had to save my own dignity and that of my kids’.”



Salmaith’s ‘Basic’ Necessity

Ruchi Sinha, Gumla, Jharkhand



Salmaith Devi, a septuagenarian, lives alone in a small village called Telaiya, in Raidih block of Gumla district. Her spouse passed away ten years ago, and her sons live separately. Her frail body doesn't let her toil in the fields to grow crops any more. Income has stopped. She is dependent on her monthly pension and 10 sacks of paddy that other farmers who grow crops on her land, give her.

Over the last couple of years, Salmaith started facing challenges related to drinking water and open defecation, especially at night with weakening eye-sight. Moreover, Salmaith Devi became aware of the health problems and risks associated with open defecation through SHG meetings. With each passing year, her health was becoming fragile, but she had no option to build a washroom given her financial situation.

By the end of 2021, Salmaith Devi was hoping for some solution to this problem. In one of the village meetings a session on WASH was conducted by the local mentor from PRADAN under the project SWACHH funded by Water.org. The discussions helped Salmaith understand nuances of sanitation and hygiene practices and the procedure of taking a loan from SHG to build a bathroom under 'Swachh Bharat Mission', Government of India's flagship programme. Salmaith got an incentive of Rs. 12,000 for the construction of a toilet from the Mission's fund.

Her neighbours helped her through Shramdan (voluntary physical labour) in constructing the washroom. Also, with the initiatives of PRADAN and Gram Vikas in Teliya to make water available in each household, Salmaith got a piped potable water connection at her home. Stepping out during the wee hours of the day has finally become a matter of history in her life. But that's only half of the story. Her next wish is to have a water filter at home and her SHG

members are figuring out options to pool in resources and help Salmaith buy a water filter.

"If I don't have to bring water from outside or go out to defecate then it's a big savior for me. I could never imagine that a day will come when I will get water from the tap and use the toilet at home. These are very basic things I needed at this age to live a comfortable life" shares a satisfied Salmaith.



The Taste of Pure Water

Sayantani Chakraborty, Jainamore, Jharkhand



Dashami Murmu was married at the age of 14 years and came to her in-laws place in a small village of Hisim Panchayat in Kasmar block of Bokaro district. Dashami is a subsistence farmer, who despite the best of her efforts, could never enough to send the children to good schools. Additionally, health expenses had been a constant burden. The residents of Hisim have always defecated in the open, drank contaminated water and ended up spending more on health than on any other aspect of life. And almost everyone would depend on the local quacks to recover from water-borne diseases as the nearest Primary Health Centre is 11 kms from the village.

Hisim never had adequate ponds and wells and therefore lacked proper sources of drinking water. Dashami would walk down two kilometers, each way, to a nearby stream to wash herself, clean utensils, and defecate. Small earthen wells in the low-lying agricultural fields constructed years ago, were some of the sources of drinking water for the community.



Contamination of these wells and water-logged streets used to hamper the drinking water facilities of the village. Toilets were there but none would use them, instead choose to defecate in the open. The villages became breeding grounds of many water and insect borne diseases like typhoid, diarrhea, malaria and alike, impacting children and elderly the most.

Dashami is a member of Riya Mala Zyad Gauta Mahila Samuh of Hisim Ajeevika Mahila Gram Sanghathan (village organization or VO). During one of the VO meeting, Jhalki Devi the local wash mentor shared how open defecation leads to contamination of water and soil, which then leads to a cyclical process of diseases.

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With the slogan “*Aao chale hum sab milkar apna gaon ko khushal banayenge, Swachhta aur swasth ko ghar ghar apnayenge*” Jhalki along with Dashami and some more women from the VO started hygiene awareness drives, under the SWACHH project, supported by Water.org, to promote drinking filtered water, keep the sources of drinking water like tanks clean, throw non-biodegradable and biodegradable waste at segregated places, construction of soak pits to restrict the flow of dirty water and repair of toilets. The VO took responsibility of granting loans to the needy who do not have the money to spend for all these cleaning and construction activities.



“I wanted a filter for my household, discussed it with my spouse, Kalicharan, and asked my SHG for a loan of Rs.1000,” says Dashami. Health improved, the following monsoon cases of water-borne diseases dramatically decreased. Looking back at the days when her family used to drink from the dari, she realized how dangerous a life all of them were living!



Forty Never Looked So Good!

Saroj Kumar, Katoria, Bihar



Dabanti and her daughter would wake up before the rooster crowed. Before anyone else in the house or nearby houses in Bagra village of Chandan block, woke up. They will take a bottle of water each and head towards the nearby hedge to relieve themselves. Irrespective of the season and weather, this routine wouldn't change. Otherwise, one will have to wait till it's dark once again, after sun down. And enduring the pressure for the entire day is never easy. But her sons and spouse Arjun didn't have this problem. Of course, they would defecate in the open too, but almost at any time of the day!

Dabanti had been defecating in the open ever since she was a child, but was always very uneasy about it. And no suitable alternative was ever there, until a day came when she was a 40

plus woman, when while being in a community meeting a topic was introduced on water and sanitation in village. This meeting was organized by PRADAN with the 'rangoli' exercise which was meant to identify places of open defecation in Bagra village.

This was aimed to end open defecation in her village and promote the adoption of safe and hygienic defecation practices through toilets at every home. The real-life examples of other women who had constructed toilets at their homes in various other parts of Jharkhand was awe inspiring for Dabanti! None of these women have to wake up at wee hours of the day or remain constantly vigilant to save themselves from the nasty onlookers.



But ready availability of lumpsum cash to build the toilet soon turned out to be the biggest hindrance for Dabanti. But under the SWACHH initiative, supported by Water.org, all these problems were anticipated, hence solutions were also mapped out. Dabanti took a loan of Rs. 10,000 to build a toilet with help from Arjun and her two sons. Arjun brought all the materials required for the construction.

The toilet got completed and Dabanti felt a sense of pride and joy. She could now use the toilet in the privacy and safety of her own home. She no longer needs to worry about snakes or other animals lurking in the fields, or about the risk of being seen by others while defecating. Dabanti isn't alone. SWACHH Phase II has started turning the wheel, waking up thousands of Dabantis in rural nooks of Bihar.



A Loan to Clean

Anupam Anand, Chakai, Bihar



According to NFHS data published in The Hindu in May 2022, 19.4 percent of Indians are still practicing open defecation out of which 25.6 percent is rural and 6.2 percent is urban. For Bihar, the picture is grimmer. Anita Devi in her forties, living in Bagha village of Petarpahadi panchayat of Jamui district, Bihar was also one of this 25.6 percent before January 2023. She is a livestock farmer and takes major care of the agriculture work. Anita's spouse, Karmchari, is mainly a carpenter.

Just like any other woman of Bagha village, Anita was also struggling with the daily challenge of defecating in the open after sunset and before sunrise. The struggles would multiply if there was a stomach upset or if it were raining hard. Apart from these, presence of onlookers would make bathing in the open space very difficult.

Anita realised that if some solution to this age-old problem had to be arrived at, then her SHG members could be of some real support. Call it a matter of serendipity or coincidence, that PRADAN professionals along with the local WASH mentor started engaging with her SHG on basics of safe drinking water and sanitation practices. Anita started pro-actively attending each of the sessions, and participating in them. The sessions would be designed in a way, using short films, discussion sessions, rallies, to help

generate awareness and trigger thoughts of change in the minds of the villagers. Anita could start relating the problems with what she has been experiencing in her own life. In fact, there was an additional concern for her – Anita's daughter is 20, and so, her dignity and safety were aspects to be considered with more seriousness. Constructing their own toilet at home had become the obvious next step for Anita.

Money? She explored all possible avenues to collect money for the toilet, with Karmchari. But to no avail. Despite doing all kinds of calculations and adjustments the fund was not available. But help was actually not too far. In the next VO meeting she got to know about availability of a loan for this purpose. Anita's wrinkles on her forehead disappeared. She applied for a loan of Rs. 25,000.

With this amount she made a proper toilet and a separate bathroom and installed a pump with water storage tank for an automatic flow of water. *"Now I don't feel hesitant or afraid anymore about defecation. After all these years, I have been able to put full-stop to our open defecation and ensured a secure place for me and my daughter to take bath and clean ourselves properly"* claims Anita with her eyes sparkling in joy.



A Toilet, that Helps One to Get 'Relief'

Shakti Anand, Shikaripara, Jharkhand



I am Chhaya Mandal, a resident of Gamra village, in Shikaripara, where we run a breakfast shop. Unlike many others in these kinds of villages, I took a loan from my SHG and got my toilet built few years back. It was a commonly found Indian system. But one day, in one of our SHG meetings, there was a discussion around various life-stages of people accessing toilets. Some people from PRADAN were facilitating this discussion, and they talked about the cost involved in building various types of toilets. But, are our toilets suitable for all of them and the various kinds of health conditions? It struck an alarm!

“

Is my toilet comfortable for all of my family members, under every circumstance?

My son is getting married in a few days.

There will be an addition of a new member in our family of four.

When my daughter-in-law gets pregnant, she might have a lot of trouble defecating. Very similar ones that I faced during my pregnancy and this should not be repeated with my daughter-in-law.

”

These were some of the concerns that started brewing in my mind, even in my sleep.

I decided to make my toilet useful in all circumstances. I have two toilets, one with an Indian pan and the other with a western commode. I started thinking about installing a ramp and grab-bars in the toilet. With support from PRADAN staff members, I contacted a local construction supplier to get the ramp and grab-bars made. I also managed to get a loan of

Rs. 11,000 from a microfinance institution named Utkarsh and paid it to the local construction vendor. In the next two days these were installed in my toilet and it became an accessible toilet for everyone, under every possible situation.

Because of the grab bar in both the toilets I am finding it more convenient than ever to use the toilets. Also, with the help of the ramp, my old mother-in-law and father-in-law are also getting support while using the toilet. It's not only a matter of happiness or relief for me, but I think this has made me feel proud about my contribution to the household!



“WATER IS LIFE”
...errr...When PURIFIED

Surbhi Mahatma, Torpa, Jharkhand



"In our Kamda, Kuda Toli, a small hamlet of Torpa block in Khunti district, we have an open well. It is accessed by almost every family of the hamlet for drinking water. There are insects, frogs, and many germs found in that water. But, people like me, Dulari Gudiya, never had a suitable alternative to procure drinking water. And in monsoon, the well will flood, contaminating the entire water. Diarrhoea, Typhoid, Jaundice were so common among most of the families. At the same time, we were compelled to go to the open pond, or the small canal for bathing. The water is filthy there and all of us who went to these places to take bath or wash our clothes, would invariably suffer from various kinds of skin infections. No ointment, no medicine could cure, and the itchy, burning rashes will be there on various parts of our bodies, all round the year.

Sometime during the beginning of 2023, in one nippy morning, we had gathered at our regular meeting place in the village to conduct our weekly SHG meeting. I saw staff members from PRADAN had also come. They were there to and talk about various water borne diseases and how one source of water, which is primarily the well in this case is spreading diseases to the whole

village. We all started sharing our own agonies related to drinking the bad water. But what could smallholder farmers, who often find it difficult to manage two sumptuous meals a day at several points in a year, do to address this problem? But, PRADAN staff never come to us without the possibility of any solution. They told us that all the stomach related diseases can be stopped at once if we start using water filters. Not only it will give your relief from all these ailments, but will also stop the constant drain of money caused by expenses on medication.

"We applied for loans to purchase sand filters, as suggested in the meeting. I took Rs. 2000 and added Rs. 1000 from my own kitty, to purchase one filter for my home. No stomach related complains during the past 3 months!"

Just like in hundreds of other villages, SWACHH project in its Phase II, supported by Water.org is helping Kamda, Kuda Toli break free from waterborne diseases and the medical expenses that come with it. Bio Sand water filters are making a difference in the lives of this community. Trainings on better sanitation and hygiene coupled with drinking filtered water is making a clear difference in the lives of these communities.



Glimpses of SAWCHH Phase II at Mahagama, Jharkhand



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