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Top: Community mobilization in Rabriyawas

Below: Dharma Ram



Energise. Involve. Enable.

Towards a Healthy Nation

In India, about half the population (most of them residing in rural areas), still do not use toilets. Open defecation is one of the main causes of diarrhoea and makes kids vulnerable to malnutrition and stunted growth. Lack of toilets also exposes women to the dangers of physical assault and molestation. Following the guidelines set by the “Swachh Bharat Abhiyan” driven by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, ACF is working with communities to improve access to toilets in rural areas. On the occasion of United Nations’ declared World Toilet Day observed on 19th November, let us applaud the sincere efforts made by ACF staff and community members who have joined hands to make their villages open defecation free. Sharing related stories in this issue.

Saving Personal Dignity and Pride

Lack of proper toilet facilities forces open defecation which is not only unhygienic but also brings humiliation to an individual. Dharma Ram, a small farmer from Rabriyawas village of district Pali (Rajasthan), experienced this same situation.

Dharma Ram, who worked as contract labourer in a factory, lost both arms to an accident in 2007. This brought a lot of emotional turbulence and financial inconsistency in his life. Unfortunately, for every small task, he was totally dependent on his family members, especially his wife. Lack of a toilet at Dharma's house increased his difficulties even further. He found it extremely embarrassing to be accompanied

by a family member whenever he wanted to relieve himself. People made fun of him and that made Dharma feel helpless and frustrated.

During a village survey conducted by ACF, Dharma spoke to ACF team members about his situation. The financial assistance provided by the government was not enough for him to get a toilet constructed in his house. Therefore, under the sanitation project, ACF decided to provide financial assistance to Dharma to get the construction completed, which happened very soon.

Although Dharma is still dependent on others for a lot of his daily chores, he is proud to be an active participant of the village sanitation drive. Most importantly, he doesn't have to face the tormenting situation as before.



Top: Federation members in a meeting

Below: In discussion with ACF team



Women Federation's Sanitation Drive

"Ekta Mahila Sangh", the women federation in Korpana block of Chandrapur district (Maharashtra), is inspiring many other women for its exemplary planning and execution.

This women's Federation started in 2009 with 25 SHGs. Presently, 67 SHGs are members of *Ekta Mahila Sangh*, with 1297 women from 30 villages associated with it. Over the years, women from this federation have gained confidence in their abilities and take all decisions by themselves. Women trust each other and regularly discuss their own problems as well as problems of the community in Federation's meetings.

It was during one such meeting that women members raised the issue of lack of toilet facilities in their villages and the impact of open defecation. To understand the need, women conducted a survey of the village households, which clearly indicated an immediate need for toilet construction in households.

With the help of Ambuja Cement Foundation, the Federation members collaborated with "Gruh Finance" (a financial institution), to generate a revolving fund of Rs. 10 lakh for the sanitation project.

The federation invited applications from its members who were in immediate need of toilets and needed financial assistance. A total of 91 out of 148 applications were sanctioned a loan at 1% interest rate. An amount of Rs. 10,000 for new construction and Rs 5,000 for repair and maintenance was sanctioned.

With meticulous planning and execution, all 91 toilets were ready in just four and-a-half months and women who had taken loans were also regularly repaying the amount.

This initiative led to more applications made to the Federation. With ACF's guidance, women are taking the project ahead with full fervour.
