

Total Sanitation Campaign: A Success Story of Village Aasgaon in Maharashtra, India.

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Abstract

The work of water supply and sanitation is very important for the healthy survival of human society. The efforts are being made to achieve a remarkable success in these fields by active involvement of local people particularly in rural areas. The present paper highlights a case study of village Aasgaon in Maharashtra as a role which has attracted many national and international groups with its success story due to its social transformation by active participation of local people in general and by women in particular.

Key words: Sanitation, Clean environment, Solid waste disposal and Waste management.

Introduction:

Longstanding efforts are being made by the various levels of government and communities for improving water supply and sanitation coverage in India. The situation is slowly improving. One of three Indians has access to improved sanitation facilities (including improved latrines) which is much better than the situation in last decade. The share of people with access to an improved water source is much higher and continuously improving at the faster rate than for sanitation (86%). The success rate of water supply and sanitation programme can be increased by putting role models of improved villages. This can boost the interest of the other villagers and may provide guideline to work effectively and efficiently. In the present work, efforts have been made to highlight the success story of a village "Aasgaon" as a role model in the field of water supply and sanitation work.

Study Area:

The village Aasgaon was selected for the present study. The village Aasgaon is located at the distance of 14 km away from the Satara District Head Quarter and Satara Block. It is at the distance of 275 km from Mumbai, the capital of Maharashtra State. Moreover, Aasgaon is situated at the distance of 14 km away from National Highway No. 4 and is 2 km away from the Satara-Lonand State Highway.

Material and methods:

The present data has been collected from the reliable official sources like village panchayat, government offices and non-government organizations working with water supply and sanitation department and personal visit to the concerned village for insuring the available data. The personal interview of necessary motivators and leaders in present work was conducted for collecting and insuring the real facts.

Local Population:

According to the Population Census of 2001, the total population of the village Aasgaon is 1032 with 478 men and 554 women. There are total 217 households with 217 families. Amongst these families, there are 18 BPL (Below Poverty Line) families and the remaining 199 families are APL (Above Poverty Line). The population of this village includes 143 people of Scheduled Caste, 21 people of Scheduled tribes, 36 people of other Backward Castes. The remaining 832 people belong to open category. Literacy count figures up to 71% in the village.

Situation and challenge before the village Aasgaon:

Aasgaon village is rehabilitated village of displaced people in Satara District of Maharashtra. Being a rehabilitated village, the work of allotting farmlands to these families is not complete yet. So, the main occupation of villagers in Aasgaon is farm laboring. The total area of this village is spread into 22.5 hectares. The area is mainly waste-land due to which the cultivable farmland of the village is scattered into 14 other neighboring villages.

Apart from this, there are only Anganwadi, primary school up to 7th standard and no secondary school in the village. The village is also lacking in clinical facilities for animal healthcare. The most important problem to be considered is of safe and sufficient drinking water. The villagers have overcome this problem by constructing a water supply scheme from the water source located at the distance of 3.5 Kms. from the village. The village was dependent on the water supply by tankers for consistent 17 years. State transport bus is the only means of transport available to these villagers. These were major challenges before the village to make it free from open sanitation and self-dependent in water supply.

Social Transformation in Aasgaon Village:

Being a social animal, man has been ever evolving and ever changing nature. Entire hilly and barren land with not a single tree and water source was allocated during rehabilitation of this village during the phase of its early settlement by rehabilitation. The villagers endured this apathy and injustice for many years with sheer silence.

Year 2000 provided a golden opportunity to the villagers. This year gifted the villages in Maharashtra with "Sant Gadge Maharaj Village Cleanliness campaign. Since 1976, the village Aasgaon was settled on a barren hill. Open defecation was the prevailing and dominant practice in the village. It resulted into water borne infections giving rise to water born epidemic diseases, sickening students, women and working force resulting into educational and financial losses. All these problems were inflicted perfectly on the minds of the villagers by the village secretary (Gramsevak) Shri.N.B.Pawar. The villagers readily agreed and responded positively to his healthy advice and showed willingness to work on solution to overcome the problems. This revolution was headed by the very son of soil, Shri. Bapusaheb Shinde. The motivation and convincing for the participation of women resulted into their willingness for active involvement. This tremendous women participation power of the village made the base for this campaign. Even, ex-Sarpanch Shri.S.B.Shinde and Hon'ble Captain Parabati Shinde gave their valuable guidance to this movement. The result was also very appreciating one.

In the year 2000-01, as a result of dedicated efforts of the villagers with active participation of women, Aasgaon village bagged third prize at block level. Keeping up their efforts, they won third prize worth 2 lakh rupees at district level in the year 2001-2002. Year 2004-05 raised up a step further as a milestone. The village Aasgaon won second prize of worth 3 lakh rupees at the district level and a special prize for effective implementation of family planning Abasaheb Khedkar Award at Division level.

Success in Nirmal Gram Programme:

The villagers got encouraged by the self-involved work satisfaction and achievements in the form of awards and prizes. The next stage of this social transformation was the "Nirmal Gram" programme. The village secretary, Shri. N. B. Pawar informed and explained detailed idea of this concept in the village meeting (Gram Sabha) on 14/08/2003. All the villagers unanimously agreed to participate and involve to work under the leadership of Sarpanch Shri. R.S. Gurav. The work was initiated to make the village free from open defecation. The people accessed various financial organizations for individual loans to construct their own toilets. This tremendous task was accomplished in a successful way and a board

display showing “Cash reward for one who shows open defecation!”. The display board was installed at the entrance of the village. Aasgaon was the first village in the entire district to have such board. Such active participation in Nirmal Gram programme and its submission of proposal and success was first in the district. His Excellency, Mahammed Fazal Sir, the Governor of Maharashtra, visited Aasgaon in the year 2003 and appreciated the work of villagers.

Results and Discussion:

The village Aasgaon became free from open defecation with the participation and efforts of self-motivated villagers. After becoming the village free from open defecation, common illnesses completely got eradicated from Aasgaon, resulting in the saving of finances on medical treatment. Apart from this, the strain of drainage system was much reduced and public off or “dry-day” for water supply began keeping a weekly break in water supply of village. It disrupted the breeding cycle of mosquitoes, thereby reducing chances of malaria cases to a very low or to zero percent.

Public participation and improvements:

Today the Aasgaon village is oxygenated and covered by a greenery of about 14000 planted trees. These trees like tamarind, mango, custard apple and other vegetable cultivations are assisting the poor and needy families and contributing for the uplifting of their economic condition. It is a resultant of people’s participation for improving the health, water supply and sanitation. Nirmal village was not the task of any single person. Sarpanch, women, SHG’s, youth clubs, water supply and sanitation committee, everyone from younger to elders, men and women everyone was a part of this revolution.

Today the primary school and the Aanganwadi have their own toilet units. Even, water conservation efforts as roof water harvesting structures have been constructed in the primary school toilettes. During this period, 162 individual and 24 communal seats were built up. Entire village imbibed the habit of using toilets regularly, resulting into the visits of many dignitaries. Hon’ble Governor, teams from Indonesia, UNICEF, Chattisgarh have visited this village. Nearly 250 various teams have visited this village.

Role and dream of women:

Women are the main soul of this campaign in Aasgaon. Women of Aasgaon used to say that before the campaign, women had to compulsorily wait for dawn or dusk for the natural call, resulting in humiliation and stomach ailments. Their own toilet and latrine and the village free from open defecation was just a dream. But today their problems have been solved by their active participation and dream of Nirmal village has come true in form of self-respect and dignity!

Conclusion:

People’s active participation, effective and continuous dedication has socially transformed the previously barren and problematic village Aasgaon into a self-sufficient and respectable village.

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