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REACHING THE UNREACHED: CHALLENGES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Intensive sanitation project, Kamrup: an experience

B.P. Sarma and Biren Bhattacharyye, India

KAMRUP DISTRICT IN Assam which is situated in the Brahmaputra Valley with an area of 4345 sq.m and with a total population of 20,00,071 has been selected for the project as the UNICEF sponsored Tara Handpump Scheme is being implemented here.

Status of sanitation

The status of sanitation in the district of Kamrup is not at all satisfactory. As per 1991 census, the status of access to toilets of rural population in the district was found to be 26.4 per cent. But all these latrines are not sanitary latrines. Lack of awareness, age old habit and non-availability of low cost options of different kinds of sanitation facilities still induce the rural population to go for open air defecation.

Features of ISP, Kamrup

Keeping these in mind, an intensive sanitation project, Kamrup was launched in the year 1993. This is purely a self help sanitation project. The major thrust of the project is to identify, demonstrate a system and to establish a viable sustainable self help sanitation programme, where the activities would not be limited only to providing safe excreta disposal facilities but to create a better and safe environment for improved living through a package of safe sanitation measures. The package sanitation included personal hygiene, home sanitation, safe water, garbage disposal, excreta disposal, waste water disposal, smokeless chullah etc. Accordingly KAP study and baseline survey was carried out in some block of Kamrup District.

As such self help sanitation package is promoted to construct household latrine, soakage pit, garbage pit, smokeless chullah, bathing platform etc. in the villages.

Objectives

- To reduce water borne diseases.
- To make people aware.
- To introduce low cost appropriate technology.
- To develop and test an appropriate model for rural sanitation.
- To make sanitation a felt need.

Approach

The basic and primary approach in implementing the self help sanitation package is to secure active participation of the community in all aspects of the project, so that they can no longer remain as passive recipient.

Strategy

Demand for different kinds of sanitary facilities is to be created by way of extensive awareness generation. Different kinds of low cost affordable models of sanitation facilities are then offered to the villagers. The villagers are to bear the actual cost of different sanitation facilities and there is no provision for any subsidy.

To achieve these objectives, the strategy adopted is as mentioned below:

- Extensive awareness generation and motivation involving NGO / voluntary organization both in village and block level for generation of demand.
- Establishing an appropriate delivery system by creating infrastructure for production of sanitary hardwares at block level.
- Establishing a network of trained village motivators and village masons.

Technology options

Normally the villagers prefer the two pit waterseal latrine instead of a singe pit advocated by ISP, Kamrup. Therefore the time required for construction of one such latrine is more. Also Kamrup is a flood affected district of Assam and the ground water level is also very high here. Therefore some R&D is required to study the pollution travel in the ground water.

ISP Kamrup has undertaken lot of training programme for developing human resources to utilize them in the implementation process. Several training programmes for village motivators with an aim to provide one trained motivator in each village has been carried out. Similarly several village mason training programme and seed mason training programme has been conducted.

Further training of field functionaries, project personnel and orientation of different NGO's and even reorientation of trained mason and motivators have been carried out by ISP Kamrup.

Achievement

Till the end of May 1996 ISP Kamrup has been able to construct only 5092 Nos of household latrine. The trend of progress is rising.

Constraints

Inspite of best efforts the no of household latrines so far constructed is very less. There are certain reasons for poor

demand generation inspite of advocacy and training programme conducted by ISP, Kamrup.

- Ineffective NGO / voluntary organization except one or two.
- Duplicacy of programmes i.e. co-existence of subsidized programme under CRSP alongwith self help programme.
- Still less priority / negative motivation.
- Ineffective motivators.