

LAUNCH OF PROJECT ON “EMPOWERING GRAM PANCHAYATS FOR IMPROVED PLANNING AND DELIVERY OF WATER & SANITATION SERVICES IN GAJAPATI DISTRICT” ON 22ND JANUARY 2009 AT GOSANI BLOCK

“ We all should feel proud that Sobara Gram Panchayat is selected for this pilot intervention. This is the first project of its kind in the state. We all should work hard and make it a success. I will extend all possible support from the block office to this initiative,” promised Mr. Sudhakar Sabar, the Block Development Officer of Gosani block, during the launch of the project on “Empowering Gram Panchayats for Improved Planning and Delivery of Water & Sanitation Services in Gajapati District”. The workshop was organized on 22nd January 2009 in the Block Development Office of Gosani block.

Sobara, a Gram Panchayat in Gosani block of Gajapati District, is a partner for the two- year project. The Gram Panchayat covers 11 villages and hamlets having 749 households and a total population of 3217. The Gram Panchayat is considered backward with 60% of the population categorized as Below Poverty Line (BPL). Nearly 37% of the population is adivasi, 15% dalit and 43% other backward classes (OBC). The literacy rate is around 41%. Out of the 11 villages, 7 villages suffer from water scarcity. Institute of Women Development (IWD), a local NGO, working with the Gram Panchayat since 2005, is the partner responsible for the capacity building aspects of the project.

The project is managed by Intercooperation and financially supported by Arghyam Trust, a Bangalore based public charitable foundation setup with a personal endowment from Mrs. Rohini Nilekani.



A project has an overall goal of empowering elected local bodies (Gram Panchayats) with skills and resources to plan and implement local development initiatives for poverty reduction. The project uses the Water Use Master Plan (WUMP), a participatory planning tool with a very strong focus on water, as the basis for convergence of programmes of different Government line departments. The project uses the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach for addressing issues related to sanitation in the Gram Panchayat.

The project was formally inaugurated by a ceremony of lighting candles by participants, comprising Sobara Gram Panchayat members and staff, IWD staff, Intercooperation staff and block officials. A theme song on decentralization and panchayats was sung to mark the occasion.

Brief introduction to Intercooperation’s and Arghyam’s work were shared next. The expectations from the project and the responsibilities of different stakeholders were discussed at length in the meeting. For Arghyam Trust, this is the first experience of working directly with a Gram Panchayat and also of working in Orissa.

Subsequent sessions dealt with project concepts wherein the project goals & objectives, roles & responsibilities of different stakeholders and the key project processes, namely CLTS (community led total sanitation) and WUMP (Water Use Master Plans) were shared.

The participants finalized the qualifying criterion for village selection for initiating project activities as follows:

- Plastic free village.
- No roadside defecation in the village.
- No roadside garbage in the village.
- SHG and VDC members from each household in the village.
- Village members agree to do *shramadan* – contribute cash and material for rural sanitation.
- The village community maintains cleanliness of roads and drains.
- The village community maintains cleanliness of wells and bathing places.
- Stop sale of illicit liquor and use of illicit liquor by Gram Panchayat members in the village.

Sobara Gram Panchayat agreed to pass a resolution on their acceptance of the project in their next Gram Panchayat meeting.



Apart from Mr. Sudhakar Sabar, other speakers included Mr. Khageswar Rao, School Inspector, Mrs. Minati Padhi, Mr. Natabar Padhi and Mr. Ajit Kumar Sahu from IWD and Mr. Devanshu Chakravarti from Intercooperation.

DC
19.03.2009