

Serving the Unserved
Consolidation of WatSan Success in CHT

Volume-II
Catalyzing the Community

Introduction

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), comprised of the three hill districts of Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban, is the south-eastern part of Bangladesh. Full of hills, ravines and cliffs covered with dense vegetation (trees, bushes, creepers), the area is the sharp contrast to the rest of the country. There are twelve ethnic communities including Chakma, Marma, Tanchangya, Bawm, Chak, Khumi, Khyang, Lushai, Murong, Pankho, Tripura and Mro in the area, each have their own distinct culture, religion and language. The British rulers annexed the area in 1860 and gave the area a special status acknowledging the distinct identity of the indigenous population.

Like many other drawbacks, the scarcity of safe water and lack of sanitation facilities have been hindering the development process in the CHT. The people have very limited sources of safe water. Their perceptions about safe water, ability to create safe sources, government's attention to the scarcity, geo-physical barriers i.e. rocky soil texture in ground and so on have kept people within the situation. The sanitation and hygiene situation is also very poor. Hence, the health situation is pitiable.

Following the changed atmosphere in the CHT a many of national and international NGOs have stepped there to complement government as well as creating the space of working of their own for the deprived indigenous people. Some local NGOs also have evolved to accelerate the process aiming at developing their own communities utilizing their own capacities and potentials. NGO Forum in partnership with some local NGOs have paid attention to the water and sanitation issues and started intervening with a view to making people aware about safe water, sanitation and hygiene practices, sensitizing the relevant stakeholders and identifying and demonstrating suitable alternative sources of safe water and creating sanitation facilities.

Socio-econo-cultural Context

The indigenous people of the CHT lead very natural life. They grow their own crops through *Jhum* cultivation and wear their garments made from cotton that they produce. Both men and women work in the fields and become busy with their own affairs. They did not have the ideas of heaping foods and other commodities more than they need in a year. They work and earn their bread in their own ways expecting no assistance of the externals. They love to live in an agrarian and self-reliant society. They do all their day to day work by themselves, from agriculture to weaving clothes. Most of the indigenous communities make their abode in particular places with other families of their communities. Traditionally it is maintained that a place for living is chosen keeping the two things in minds- large hills for *Jhum* cultivation and availability of water sources for drinking and using for other purposes at home.

The indigenous people of the CHT practice Buddhism, Hinduism and animist beliefs. Culturally they are well-knit society practicing their religion and traditions. They seek spiritual guidance from their ancestors. They have a love for nature and believe in a world of spirits which exercise control over nature and their lives. Most of the indigenous people of the CHT believe that all the rivers, lakes and canals were at one time human beings. It is for helping Mankind that they sacrificed their lives to become rivers, lakes, springs and canals. Many of them believe in the water sources as of their *Jalodevis* (water-goddess) who provide them water for drinking, bathing and other domestic uses. Traditionally they, therefore, depend on the natural sources for water.

Prejudiced by their belief, they never express negative attitudes towards using water from the natural sources found in the CHT like *chhara*, *khal*, *jhiri*, river, spring, etc.

Almost all the indigenous communities in the CHT believe in the natural recycle of human excreta which helps feeding other creatures and it is supportive to the nature. They think that natural scavenging process is consistent with their lives. Since most of the ethnic groups are nomadic and face forced or involuntary eviction, establishment of sanitary latrine never came up in the social agenda.

Traditional Practices on WatSan

The community people in the CHT do not have any idea about safe water, sanitation and hygiene. They are not also oriented to the necessity of using safe water, sanitary latrines and maintaining hygiene behaviors. They suffer from many water-borne diseases but they do not know the link between the diseases and lack of knowledge and practices of using safe water, sanitary latrines and maintaining hygiene principles.

The people especially the women collect water for drinking and using for domestic purposes from the natural sources. For getting seemingly translucent water, they dug well beside the *chharas*. Water drops gather into the well and the women fill up their pitcher compromising with a lot of patience. They have to cross arduous hilly paths walking for miles to reach the sources to collect water for their everyday's uses. When the wells go under water in rainy season, they collect water from the *chhara*, *khal* or rivers and use or drink after getting it filtered with pieces of clothes. They take their bathes and wash clothes in the water of *chhara*, *khal*, river, etc. The women use the same water in washing dishes and foodstuff before cooking.

The indigenous people of the CHT do not have idea about the system of defecating in a particular place. They usually defecate in open spaces beside the hills or in jungle. But they never defecate in or beside the natural water bodies. Their belief in *Jalodevis* has driven them practicing it. They use leaf only after defecation.

Health Situation and Economic Losses

The health risk is acute in the CHT areas. The common diseases in the CHT areas include worm infection, dysentery, diarrhoea, scabies, tuberculosis, malaria, etc. The concentration of malaria and diarrhoea is massive. Lack of safe water and sanitation facilities, unhygienic practices and filthy environment cause the diseases. It is evident that the people in the CHT especially who lack the basic services and information also lack the ideas about safe water, sanitation and hygiene as well. If sometimes heard, they cannot understand the necessity of using safe water, sanitary latrines and maintaining hygiene principles. They very often suffer from the water and vector-borne diseases but cannot find out the link between the intensity of the diseases and their traditional practices of using unsafe water, open defecation and unhygienic practices.

Shantimoy Chakma, Rangamati Correspondent of The Daily Star informs that the people in the CHT areas still have to use water from *chhara*, well, *khal*, etc. They have the practice of defecating in open spaces. They leave the human wastes for pigs or dogs. They never think of keeping their surroundings clean. They hardly use water after defecation. They use leaf instead of water. They suffer from the diseases and face the consequences but do not seek for the health

services that might be available at the Upazila Health Complex. They do not even have the ideas about the services.

The children suffer most from the diseases. Of them, the school-goers cannot attend their school regularly. On the other hand, the bread earners also get affected to the diseases. They cannot work then for their families rather they need to spend for treatment.

In order to implement the Programme in the CHT, NGO Forum built partnership with 12 local NGOs. With technical assistance from NGO Forum, the NGOs have been implementing the programmes in 72 poor communities in the CHT areas i.e. in Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban districts.

Community Mobilization towards Safe WatSan

NGO Forum's Community-managed Water and Sanitation Programme in the CHT has contributed in strengthening the capacity of the local NGOs and member of the community groups in order to provide and maintain safe water supply and sanitation facilities and encourage behavioral change in hygiene practices in the underserved rural areas of the CHT. In order to achieve the target communities have been taken into attention for mobilization by the partners aiming at creating awareness among the community people about safe water, sanitation and hygiene and internalizing the practices of using safe water, sanitary latrine and maintaining hygiene principles at personal and household levels. The mobilization process has first targeted the community people to update their knowledge and attitudes on safe water, sanitation and hygiene with a view to leading people to adopting the promotional messages in their regular practices.

Organizing promotional activities

It has been emphasized on making the community people oriented to the messages and principles of safe water, sanitation and hygiene so that they can be motivated to drive demand for alternative safe water sources and create sanitation facilities and adopt the hygiene principles in their regular practices. The partner NGOs have facilitated the promotional activities in the communities. They have motivated the community people through facilitating meeting with female groups, meeting with male groups, child focused discussion group, contact with local community allies like school teachers, students, religious leaders, community leaders, members of local Union Parishad and so on. The community people have been also motivated through organizing hygiene promotion rally, cultural performances, mobile film-show, etc.

Using BCC & IEC materials

Different types of BCC & IEC materials i.e. poster, leaflet, flip-chart, stickers, etc have been developed and used in the process of community mobilization. Relevant pictures with promotional messages have been used in the materials. The faces and styles of the indigenous community people have been followed in the pictures and the messages of the materials have been drawn with a reflection of the culture of the indigenous people, and reality of water and sanitation situation in the CHT.

The purpose of disseminating the promotional messages among the community people is to motivate them towards the practices of using safe water, sanitary latrines and maintaining

hygiene measures. To attain the purpose, the messages have been disseminated to create improved knowledge and attitude on safe water, sanitation and hygiene among the community people in the CHT.

In the posters, leaflets, flip-charts and stickers, the messages have drawn attention on various germs found in the water of wells, streams, *chhara*, river and lake. The materials have advocated for drinking water of the natural sources after boiling or purifying by alum to prevent diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera, typhoid and many other diseases where any safe water point is absent. It has also been stated in some materials that the water of Ring-well, Dug-well, RWHS, GFS is safe to use in drinking and cooking. Some materials have suggested for washing hands and pitcher before collecting water, covering the pitcher after collection of water and keeping it in a hygienic place.

The materials have stated that defecation beside *chharas*, hill basin, jungle or in other open places can cause diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera and many other diseases. Use of pit latrine has been suggested. It has been stated that building latrine by rings and slab is more safe and hygienic. Making sure of using latrine by all family-members and motivating neighbors have been emphasized in some materials. The materials have also advised to use sandal in latrine, sufficient water in latrine after defecation and wash two hands properly with soap or ash after defecation. It has been indicated that the excreta of the babies is also harmful and can spread diseases. Therefore, making them habituated to use latrine and rinsing them properly with soap after defecation and washing hands after washing child after defecation have been emphasized. It has also been said in the materials that open human wastes can spread germs through flies, ducks, hen, dogs, pigs, etc and it is harmful to health. Washing hands properly with soap and safe water before eating and serving food to others, covering foods with lids, avoiding open, stale and rotten food, taking bath everyday, using soap at least two times a week and keeping the clothes and beds clean and tidy have been penned and visualized in the materials.

Involving the community allies

The community allies including community leaders like *Karbari*, Headman, religious leaders, school teachers, village doctor, members of local Union Parishad and other influential people in the community have been made close contacted to the Programme. They have been informed about the activities before taking these before the community people. Their cooperation has been sought in organizing the activities in their respective communities. They have been made motivating the people. The influential community allies have played an important role in the community mobilization process. They have motivated people towards using safe water, sanitary latrine and maintaining hygiene measures.

The Teacher Makes a Difference

“The girls of my school are now more regular in attending school as they suffer a lot less from stomach ailments and diarrhoea now”, says Baburshey Marma, Headmaster, Ghagra Girls’ High School, Kawkhali, Rangamati. The local NGO Progressive organized School WatSan Programme at this school which has mobilized the teachers and students to a great extent. As a conscious and enthusiastic headmaster, Baburshey Marma played a catalytic role in mobilizing his students and teachers. Under the School WatSan Programme Progressive in cooperation with the school authority organized debate, discussion, lecture on WatSan and hygiene issues. Baburshey Marma claims that he ensured the active participation of the students of all classes.

He also distributed prizes for best performance. Following the School WatSan Programme Baburshey Marma himself along with his teacher-staff continued motivating the students in the class on safe WatSan practices and personal hygiene. “I personally check twice a week whether the students are wearing sandals, cutting their nails, maintaining cleanliness, etc. It helps keeping the students in the right track as regards maintaining safe WatSan and hygiene”. The students not only themselves have become motivated, they have also been motivating their parents to install hygienic latrine, drink safe water and maintain personal hygiene. Baburshey Marma himself also discusses over these issues with the guardians and his friends and acquaintances.

This act of community catalyzing have been contributing a lot in improving the scenario at the locality. Baburshey Marma feels satisfied over the fact that he, as a conscious person, is trying his best to bring a change in the lives of his students along with their parents and others.

In order to establish a community-based management system to sustain the outputs of the programme, an 11-member community group named Village Development Group (VDG) has been formed in each community involving the local allies and other relevant group members including the females. After formation of the VDGs, the members have been oriented to the messages and necessity of using safe water, sanitary latrine and maintaining hygiene principles. Then they have been given some trainings on organizing meeting, project management and decision-making. The VDG members have been contributing much to mobilizing the community towards the practices of using safe water, sanitary latrines and maintaining hygiene measures.

Mobilizing the community

The Community Mobilizers have mobilized the target community properly. They have worked for disseminating the water, sanitation and hygiene messages among the community people to update their knowledge on safe water, sanitation and hygiene. The Mobilizers have tried a lot to bring about the changes in their knowledge, attitude and practices on using safe water, sanitary latrine and hygiene behaviors. They have motivated people citing relevant examples, seeking cooperation and utilizing the influences of the influential people in the community i.e. the community allies, showing causal analysis of the diseases, creating personal relationship with the community people. They sometimes tend to ask about their health situation, how they run their families, whether their children go to school or how much they produce this year, etc. Thus they have attracted their attention to their message and motivated them towards updating the knowledge on safe water, sanitation and hygiene as well as taking into the regular practices.

The Community Mobilizer Inflames the Community People

“I asked people what diseases affect them most. Most of them replied diarrhoea and dysentery. Then they were asked over the causes of it. They could answer nothing. I then asked them about their uses of water and sanitation practices. They responded that they usually use water collected from the well/*chhara* and defecate in open places. I gave explanation that the uses of *chhara*/well’s water and open defecation are the causes of the diseases. They could not understand the links. But finally I had been able to make them understood it citing many examples and giving causal analysis”, Gunakar Chakma (29), a Community Mobilizer of Human Resources Development Organization (HRDO) says at a stretch.

Gunakar has extended his hand as Community Mobilizer to Ganchban and some other villages in

Khagrachhari district. He always has tried to help people finding out the answer of relevant questions so that they could be motivated easily. He always invites them in the meetings. Ensuring their participation, he makes them spoken before the people about the necessity of using safe water in drinking and cooking, using sanitary latrine and adopting hygiene practices. They speak and it influences people a lot.

“Showing posters, flip-chart, promotional films, documentary, staging popular drama, etc have helped them pondering the necessity of safe water and sanitation. In this way, the demand for safe water option and sanitary latrines has been evoked in the community”, Gunakar says.

I have helped the community understanding that the cost-sharing for technologies would create their ownership feeling and this is necessary for the sustainability of the options. I have also sought help of the influential people. They have helped the community understanding the rationale and helped us collecting the community contribution. They have now safe water sources, sanitary latrines, adopted much of hygiene lessons. The water-borne diseases have decreased to a great extent. I feel happy to see the improved situation in intervened villages”, Gunakar concludes with a joyful gesture.

People’s Attitude towards Receiving the Messages

At first, people had very less attention, and they did not want to give time to hear the messages. They tended to avoid the meetings showing excuses of pressures in works. At the very beginning listening to the messages on safe water, sanitation and hygiene, the people used to reply saying that they have no problem with drinking water collected from *chhara*, well, *khal*, etc, they never believe in the necessity of using safe water and sanitary latrine. The Community Mobilizers tried their best. They afterwards tried to make ties with the community leaders and other influential people of the community. The CMs invited the allies in the meetings. They were sensitized to tell in the meeting about the messages on safe water, sanitation and hygiene. People used to pay respect to the community leaders, and, therefore, they started valuing the messages. In this way, the CMs have come up motivating community people. They have now positive attitudes towards using safe water, sanitary latrines and keeping environment clean and maintaining the hygiene measures. Bhubanjeet Karbari (55), a community leader in Chowdhurypara, Ghagra, Kawkhali, Rangamati informs that community people have clearly understood the necessity of using safe water, sanitary latrine and maintaining hygiene principles. Poster, film-show, theatre, etc have helped them creating the feeling. Amitav Tripura (45), President of Ganchban School Managing Committee, Bhaibonchhara, Khagrachhari says that people are now showing positive attitudes to the messages of safe water and sanitary latrine. They have realized the necessity. All of them are seen collecting water from the safe sources i.e. the water technologies. The people have collected rings and slabs from the VSC and are installing them. Mong Prue Marma (26), a beneficiary of a water point of Thowaingyapara village in Bandarban says, “We are drinking Ring-well water. We have shared the cost in terms of giving our labour”. “Every community gave their share in installing the alternative technologies. This was not possible if their attitudes were not changed and become positive”, says Gunakar, a CM of HRDO.

The Outcomes of Community Mobilization

The partner NGOs have mobilized the target community people so that the community can update their knowledge on safe water, sanitation and hygiene, create positive attitudes to the water, sanitation and hygiene messages and adopt the messages in their regular practices of using

safe water, sanitary latrine and maintaining hygiene measures. In order to find the community people mobilized properly towards the messages, a series of promotional activities were undertaken in the communities. Organizing meeting, rally, miking, film-show, theatre, using poster, leaflet, flip-chart, involving community allies and forming and strengthening VDG, the community were mobilized. The mobilization process has yielded remarkable changes in the target community in CHT areas.

Orientated community to WatSan & hygiene

Santosh Chakma (42), a villager of Nalchhara village, Bhaibonchhara, Khagrachhari says, “It is now clear that why we very often used to suffer from diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera, etc. We often drank water from *chhara* and river. We saw people dumping many wastes in the Chengi river. Population increases. They have forgotten the religious value of river. I see human wastes in river. But we used that water in drinking, cooking, and other works before”. Mita Chakma (38), a widow of the same village now understands the cause of her husband’s death because of diarrhoea and necessity of safe water. Rina Chakma (18), a BRAC school teacher at Nalchhara, Khagrachhari informs that her students also now understand that the water of *chhara*, *khal*, river are not safe. Aoishy Tripura (18), a student at Ganchban village in Khagrachhari says, “Flies can spread germs if we defecate in open spaces. We can be affected by diarrhoea, cholera, etc”. Sui Cha Ching Marma (18), a villager of Thowaingyapara, Kuhalong, Bandarban says, “We know now that *jhiri* water is unsafe and it can cause diseases. We now drink Ring-well water and it is safe”. Menu Prue Marma (30), a woman of the same village says, “We now drink Ring-well water, use sanitary latrine and keep us tidy. Diarrhoea, dysentery can hardly attack us”.

Sui Cha Ching Marma (18), a villager of Thowaingyapara, Kuhalong, Bandarban says, “We drank *jhiri* water in the earlier periods. It is now well-known to us that *jhiri* water is unsafe. We have now a Ring-well. We can now drink safe water of Ring-well”. Nana Chakma (42), a housewife of Ganchban village, Bhaibonchhara, Khagrachhari informs that they drink now safe water from Rain-water Harvesting System (RWHS). “We have no problem in drinking Rain-water. It tastes well”, she says. Pakhi Tangchangya (41), a housewife of Bogapara village, Ghagra, Kawkhali, Rangamati says, “We no more drink *chhara* water. We drink Ring-well water. It is safe”. Suchita Talukder (40), a school teacher living in Dewanpara, Ghagra, Kawkhali, Rangamati informs that all families in their village are now aware of the necessity of drinking safe water. They do not now drink *chhara* water. Sui Cha Aung Marma (50), a community leader of Purba Monaipara village, Betbunia, Rangamati informs that all people now collect water from Ring-well. They think it safe for their health. Priyolal Chakma (45), a UP member of Bhaibonchhara union under Khagrachhari Sadar upazila says, “I find all people of Ganchban village collect water from Ring-well and RWHS”.

Sonali Tripura (16) of Ganchban village, Bhaibonchhara, Khagrachhari informs that her father has installed a latrine. All of the family members use it. Bimala Chakma (47) of Nalchhara village, Bhaibonchhara, Khagrachhari informs that they have made a pit latrine instructed by the CM of PBM. “We all our family members use it. We use sandal in it. Wash hands with ash after defecation. Rehana (a CM of PBM) has acquainted us with it showing many pictures”, she says. Mong Way Marma (34), a villager of Tambuchipara, Gaidhya, Rajasthali, Rangamati says, “The activist of Ashroy Angon advised us to use latrine. We used to defecate in open places before. We now use latrine”. Mong Prue Marma (36) of Thowaingyapara village, Kuhalong, Bandarban says, “We have installed latrine to protect excreta-borne diseases. Open defecation can spread germs of various diseases. Now it is known to us. We are now using latrine. We use

sandal in latrine. We pour much water and wash our hands with ashes after defecation”. Shanti Moni Chakma (33), a UP member of Ghagra union, Kawkhali, Rangamati informs that all the people of the villages where the Progressive has been working are using latrine now. “We found stools here and there in the past. Now you will not find human wastes anywhere”, he indicates.

VDGs on upholding the issues

“I always arrange the sitting place of VDG meeting, serve water to the participants and interpret the messages among the members of Marma community. I sometimes meet other people in the community and give the messages. I do all these for other people in my community”, says Maye Ching Marma (47), a VDG member of Thowaingyapara village, Kuhalong, Bandarban. Like Maye all other VDG members feel the same. Sajal Chakma (38), President of the Dewanpara VDG, Ghagra, Kawkhali, Rangamati says, “We discuss in our meeting about the people’s practices of using safe water, sanitary latrines and maintaining hygiene principles. If any household is found disobeying the messages, we visit them and motivate towards using safe water, sanitary latrine and obeying the messages”. Nirod Baran Chakma (55), President of the Nalchhara VDG, Bhaibonchhara, Khagrachhari says, “I could not convince a family to install latrine and drink rain-water from RWHS. One day a baby of this family got affected by diarrhoea. I visited it and reminded what I told them before. They understood then and became convinced. Thus we motivate people in our community to use safe water, hygienic latrines and maintaining hygiene principles”.

A Dedicated VDG Member

Maye Ching Marma, aged 47 from Thowaingyapara village under Bandarban Sadar upazila is honored by her fellow villagers now. She is a member of the Village Development Group (VDG). “The villagers honor me. They often listen to me patiently without getting annoyed. Because I have been able to make them understood, whatever I say is for their betterment”. A widow and mother of a 20-year old son, Maye is a *Jhum* cultivator. The involvement in the VDG has brought a change in her life and outlooks.

It has been around two years the local NGO Bolipara Nari Kallyan Samity (BNKS) started implementing water and sanitation programme in the village. Previously the situation regarding access and use of safe water, sanitation practices and personal hygiene practices was despicable. People used to drink water from unsafe natural sources like *chhara* and wells. They used to defecate in the bushes and open places. Although these were causes of concern, yet like most people Maye was not much concerned over these factors. “When BNKS pointed out the concerning factors regarding water, sanitation and hygiene, I realized how much harm can be inflicted by lack of safe water, hygienic sanitation and hygiene behavior. I became a member of the 11-member VDG and started getting involved in various activities to mobilize the community towards safe water, sanitation and hygiene”, says Maye. She is full of enthusiasm about motivating the community towards behavior change. She takes active part in organizing different promotional activities in the community. She has received training on Programme Management and Decision-making from NGO Forum. She believes, “The training has made me more confident and provided specific directions towards managing different activities at the community level. Maye Ching along with the other VDG members sits at VDG meetings 2-3 times a month and decides on the roles and responsibilities they have to bear to mobilize the community. “I motivate people not to go to the bushes for defecation and to use hygienic latrine.

I tell them to drink water from Ring-well, not from unsafe sources. I go from house to house to motivate people. I motivate people in Marma language so that they can easily understand and get motivated. I translate different motivational messages in Marma language”, says Maye.

Maye feels that she is serving society for the sake of bringing a positive change. She feels happy as people welcome her initiatives and listen to her. She is hopeful that the people of Thowaingyapara will conform to improved behavior as regards water, sanitation and hygiene.

Allies serving as catalyst

The community allies comply with that the promotional activities and the messages are very effective to change the knowledge and practices of community people. Priyolal Chakma (45), an UP member of Bhaibonchhara union, Khagrachhari says, “I realize that it is my duty to create accessibility of people to safe water and sanitation services. We need to work on the issues in more remote areas. Government cannot do alone. The NGOs should extend their services in the areas since their works are effective and necessary”. Baburshey Marma, Headmaster of Ghagra Girls’ High School, Kawkhali, Rangamati says, “We are sensitized that we have the duty to contribute to the hygiene promotion. We make sure that the students obey the principles of hygiene at their everyday life and disseminate the messages among their families and friends”. Shanti Moni Chakma (33), an UP member of Ghagra union, Kawkhali, Rangamati says, “I personally applied the Zilla Parshad for ring-wells for the people in my ward. For awareness building, I seek helps of the NGOs because their promotional activities are very effective in changing the knowledge and practices”. Sui Cha Aung Marma (50), a village *Karbari* of Purba Monaipara, Betbunia, Kawkhali, Rangamati always translates the messages in Marma language to make the messages clear among his community. “It has been my duty to raise the issues among the people gathered in religious and social events in our community”, he says.

Leading the Common Purpose

Sui Cha Aung Marma, a village *Karbari* of Purbo Monaipara, Betbunia, Kawkhali, Rangamati talks about the benefits of safe water, hygienic sanitation and maintaining personal hygiene during arbitration, in the pagoda, at the monthly meetings of school committees, among the common people anytime he gets an opportunity. “I often motivate people for adoption of safe water, sanitation and hygiene whenever I get a chance. I even go from house to house to motivate people”, exclaims fifty year old Sui Cha. The village resided by 95 households was in a very poor WatSan situation. Sui Cha was concerned over the scarcity of safe water and unhygienic practices of the villagers. “The recurrent attack of diarrhoea, dysentery, typhoid was a common phenomenon. Because people drank water from the *chhara* or wells dug near beside the *chharas*. Alongside severe water crisis, the sanitation situation was terrible. People used to defecate in the open. People were not aware of the health hazards related to unsafe water and unhygienic practices”, Sui Cha recalls.

The local NGO Social Advancement Society (SAS) started implementing WatSan and hygiene programme in the village. Many promotional activities were organized to motivate people which include meeting, film-show, rally and so on. Since Sui Cha is the *Karbari* of the village, his role was very important in these events. Through VDG Meeting, Para-based Meeting, etc Sui Cha in collaboration with the Community Mobilizer of SAS explained to people about the root causes of different water and excreta-borne diseases i.e. lack of awareness on the use of safe water, hygienic sanitation and hygiene practices. He used to motivate people towards adoption of safe

water, sanitation and personal hygiene. He translated the messages projected by SAS, depicted in posters, flip-charts, etc in Marma language to make people internalize those. It worked very well. Now the villagers drink Ring-well and Tubewell water. They have come away from indiscriminate defecation. Around 40-50 households now have sanitary latrines. Even the children are not defecating in the open places. Most people wash their hands properly with soap or ash and water after defecation. They use sandals during latrine visit. Sui Cha gives the credit to the intensive community mobilization activities of SAS in the locality. SAS staff have been in good terms with him and they often seek his advice, invite them to different activities organized by them. Sui Cha feels this is his duty to cooperate with SAS since these activities are meant for people's benefit. Sui Cha has the vision of an ideal village with improved WatSan facilities and hygiene practices by all people. He feels there is yet a lot to do to improve the lives of the poor villagers and he is dedicated to bring the changes in the traditional practices of people. "Now people suffer less from different diseases. They do not need to frequent the visits to doctors. But yet it is necessary to bring those under improved WatSan and hygiene practices, who are still lacking the facilities and not practicing safe WatSan and hygiene. I will do the needful to make the changes happen", spells out a dedicated Sui Cha.

Students taking messages home

Baburshey Marma, Headmaster of Ghagra Girls' High School, Kawkhali, Rangamati informs that his students were oriented to the water, sanitation and hygiene issues under School WatSan Programme at school. "We have learned that they usually talk to their families, friends about the messages. I can find that their attendance in school is satisfactory now. Because a change in their health situation has taken place", he says. Md. Idris Mia, Assistant Headmaster of Bangal Halia High School, Rajasthali, Rangamati informs, "The promotional film show at school has contributed to changing the behavioral pattern of the students. I have marked that the students are using soap after using latrine that was not imagined in the previous periods. They do not leave the wastes or litters here and there". Rina Chakma, a BRAC School teacher in Nalchhara, Bhaibonchhara, Khagrachhari informs that most of her students now wear sandal at school. She sometimes asks them about their practices of using water, sanitary latrines and hygiene behaviors. The students at class replied to the author that they use sandal during latrine visit, wash hands with soap or ash after defecation and before eating. Numang Ou Marma, a student of class five at Thowaingyapara Govt. Primary School, Kuhlalong, Bandarban says, "I do not remain bear-footed. Because dust can make my foot dirty. It might cause diarrhoea".

Film-Shows Shaken the Students

Students receive the messages easily that can be projected before them in different ways. They always tend to absorb the attractive ones and try to disseminate it to their families and peer groups. Taking the lesson into attention, Ashroy Angon, a partner of NGO Forum working in Rajasthali, Rangamati showed some promotional films in February 2007 on water, sanitation and hygiene to the students of Bangal Halia High School, Rajasthali, Rangamati. With a view to getting the messages internalized in the mind-set of the students, Ashroy Angon organized a test on the show in cooperation with the teachers of the school. Examining the performance of the students, 50 best performers were awarded.

Khyai Mra Ching Marma, a student of class VIII of the school says, "We are now well-oriented that we should wash our hands properly with soap and safe water before eating and getting back from latrine". Her classmate Taposhi Tanchangya recalls, "The films have helped us learning

that we should always drink safe water. We should not defecate in open spaces. Because open defecation pollutes water and environment”. Mee Sing Marma, a student of class VII recalls, “We have learned that we should keep our surroundings clean and maintain hygiene principles like wearing properly washed clothes, bathing everyday properly, washing hands before eating with safe water and soap to keep our health well”. Urmee Nandi, another student of class VII expresses her realization, “We must drink safe water from Ring-well or Tubewell and use sanitary latrine to prevent diarrhoea, dysentery, etc”. Champa Tanchangya, a student of class IX recalls from a film that the women in the hilly areas collect water from *chhara*, well, *khal* and river from a far distance crossing very rough paths. But the water that they collect is not safe. The people defecate in the open, and this is harmful for the environment and health of people. Her classmate Athwe Ma Marma recalls that the people of hilly areas very often suffer from diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera, etc since they do not drink safe water, sanitary latrine and maintain hygiene practices. Basing Mong Marma, a student of class X expresses, “We should be conscious enough about our health. We need to make the people aware who are unaware and do not drink safe water and defecate in open places”.

Lokan Chandra Barua, a senior teacher of the school informs that the films have impressed the students a lot. They have shared the lessons of the films with their parents and friends. Makbul Ahmed, another senior teacher of the school says that the students have taken the messages very positively. They have marked that their personal hygiene behavior has changed. “The students are now using soap after using toilet and they leave the litters in a particular place”, informs Md. Idris Mia, Assistant Headmaster of the school. Uhala Ching Marma, a student of class X informs that they have shared the films with their parents and friends. Baby Tangchangya, a student of class VI informs, “I have told my father that a sanitary latrine can be made with 100 taka only”. Her classmate Ukra Ching Marma says, “I always suggest my mother to cover the foods with lids to protect flies and germs. We have learned these messages from the video film-show”.

Improvement of health and socio-economic situation

Pakhi Tanchangya (41) of Bogapara village, Ghagra, Kawkhali, Rangamati says, “Diarrhoea and dysentery do not attack us as much it affected in the past. Because we are now using Ring-well water, use sanitary latrine and keep everything clean”. Chitra Prue Marma (27) of Purba Monaipara village, Betbunia, Kawkhali, Rangamati says, “We use Ring-well water in drinking, cooking and even in bathing. Diseases cannot attack us now”. Mey Nue Prue Marma (30), a community school teacher of Thowaingyapara village, Kuhlalong, Bandarban says, “All people in our *Para* drink Ring-well water, they are using sanitary latrine. All are seen tidy and their clothes clean. I see they are not affected now by the water-borne diseases”. Kya Prue Marma (50), a community leader and Baidya of Taingkhali para village, Rajbila, Bandarban, informs that the community people of his village maintain the messages on using safe water, sanitary latrine, keeping clean, using sandal in latrine, washing hands, etc. This has decreased the water-borne diseases. Amitav Tripura (40), President of Ganchban School Managing Committee in Bhaibonchhara union, Khagrachhari says, “The people of our community have understood the necessity of safe water, sanitation and hygiene. They are now maintaining the messages. All of them are using Ring-well water. Some of them are poor who are not likely to afford for latrines. Except them, most of the families are using latrines. The water-borne diseases have been decreased to great extent in our community”.

Sonatan Chakma (47) of Nalchhara village, Bhaibonchhara, Khagrachhari says, “We very often suffered from water-borne diseases in the previous days. We are not facing now. People needed

to spend money for treatment. Sometimes we had to spend it from the money earned for our bread. It has decreased”. Sui Cha Aung Marma (50) of Purba Monaipara village, Betbunia, Kawkhali, Rangamati informs that water-borne diseases have decreased in his community since they are using safe water, sanitary latrines and obeying the hygiene principles. They need not to spend money for treatment. Pulushe Marma (28), a teacher of Thowaingyapara Govt. Primary School, Kuhalong, Bandarban informs, “The students from Thowaingyapara village did not come to school regularly. I asked them why. They replied they very often suffered from diarrhoea, dysentery and other diseases. I learn that BNKS has been working there. I have been marking for a year that the students of the village are coming to school regularly”.

The partners find the direction

Md. Abu Khaled, Executive Engineer, DPHE, Rangamati says, “The community people are now making demand for safe water option and sanitation facilities. This trend can help us understanding that they have been aware and mobilized towards using safe water, sanitary latrine and hygiene practices. The awareness raising programmes should be extended in the hilly areas”. Shantimoy Chakma, Rangamati Correspondent of *The Daily Star* says, “The NGOs can effectively provide the software services to the community people. Their activities are likely to improve the water and sanitation situation in CHT. They should extend their programmes”. Shanti Moni Chakma, an UP-member of Ghagra union, Kawkhali, Rangamati says, “The messages given through meeting, poster, miking, rally, film-show, etc can effectively motivate the people. Government cannot do it alone. Considering the needs, the NGOs should implement more programmes”.

People’s Representative at People’s Services

“It is difficult to provide with water supply and sanitation facilities to the people living in the hard-to-reach areas in CHT for government alone. This is appreciable that NGOs are working there to complement the government. Their awareness activities are very effective and important for the community”, says Priyolal Chakma (45), an UP-member of Bhaibonchhara Union Parishad (UP) under Khagrachhari Sadar upazila. He does his everyday’s duty at council office as well as his concerned ward. “The availability of safe water and sanitation coverage was very poor in my ward. From the UP, we tried to give some support to the people with Tubewell and sanitary latrines. But after a few months it was seen that the people were not using the latrine and the safe sources of water”, he mentions. Local NGO Human Resources Development Organization (HRDO) started working in a village of his ward on water and sanitation taking his suggestions.

He has cooperated in organizing programmes, forming Village Development Group (VDG), creating people’s demand for alternative water technology, etc. “We together identified the families who were suffering from lack of safe water sources and unaware of the necessity of sanitation and hygiene practices. We saw that the families living nearby the roads with communication facilities had been drinking water from safe sources like Tubewell and Ring-well because some government services reached there. But the remote hilly areas did not have any safe water options. They collected water from the *chhara*. We selected the villages as the working areas of HRDO. I helped them finding out the poor and disadvantaged households for making supports for them”, Priyolal said.

“I have come to understand from the programmes that motivation can bring changes in using

safe water, sanitary latrines and maintaining hygiene principles; not the hardware support lone. It has been my duty now to disseminate the messages to the people when I get contacted to them. I explain them what is the cause behind the diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery, etc. I request HRDO and other NGOs to extend their hands in providing support for safe water and sanitation in the communities where the UP fails to make support. The health situation of Ganchban village has improved significantly. Uses of safe water by all families, adopting latrines and hygiene practices have contributed to the situation”, says the member.

Prokriti Ranjan Tanchangya, Executive Director of Ashroy Angon, Rajasthali, Rangamati expresses that they should run water and sanitation programme in their locality to spread the outputs of the programme in other areas in the CHT where water and sanitation services have not yet reached. Durabadal Chakma, Executive Director of HRDO, Khagrachhari expresses that they have a plan to implement the programme in integrated approach in future. “There is a need to continue the services”, he says. Aung Shwe Sing, Executive Director of Tah Zing Dong says that they will take initiative to sustain the outcomes of the programme in the villages and also implement the programme in other unserved villages in the CHT in future.

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