

Jharkhand women take on leadership roles



The best part of Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (SBM-G) is that it provided women legitimate shots at leadership roles in which many of them excelled, bringing about transformation, positive behavior and lasting change to their villages.

According to State officials, the success of the SBM-G campaign in Jharkhand rested on the leadership roles of women that enabled the state to attain ODF (open defecation free) status in a time bound manner with construction of quality toilets. Having successfully mobilized the community in all ODF activities, the women are currently working with the same determination to sustain ODF status.



Sonam Devi: The Chairperson of Village Organisation (VO)-Pragatishil Ajivika Mahila Gram Sangathan, (Federation of Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society) in Madhukarpur Panchayat (Kasmar Block, Bokaro district, Jharkhand); Sonam Devi has played a pivotal leadership role in the Mission. She motivated the community to go for self-construction of toilets, while making certain that they adhered to the quality requirements.

It was during communities meetings that she met with beneficiaries of the panchayat, motivating them to build

toilets on their own; promising that she would organize the Rs.12,000 incentive under SBM-G, which she did in due course. As for the economically disadvantaged, she got her VO to procure construction material and arranged for masons to get their toilets constructed.

All such efforts led to the ODF declaration of her panchayat. As many as 110 toilets were constructed in her village owing to her efforts and 27 were constructed for the economically backward families by her VO. Around 55 of them had attractive paintings on them as a part of the Swachh Sundar Shauchalaya Competition organized by DDWS.

But her work did not stop there. Today, she and her team ensure toilet usage and sustainability of the ODF status. Another focus is menstrual hygiene management (MHM) an integral part of the Swachh Bharat Mission— where adolescent girls and women of her panchayat are given awareness about MHM.



Minumita Devi and Manju Devi: The two women belong to Banhe Panchayat in Simariya Block of Chatra district in Jharkhand. While Minumita is the Chairperson of Mahila Samakhya Group SHG of Simariya Basti, Federation of Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society; Manju is the member secretary of the same SHG. Together, the two women have managed to mobilize finance for 500 individual household toilets with support of all stakeholders and got them built, ensuring they followed the specifications. Post ODF, they have been working to sustain ODF status by visiting homes to check usage and maintenance. They have been also playing a major role towards empowering women, enabling them to break the stigma attached to the natural biological process of menstruation.

Rani Devi: The fact that she belonged to an illiterate and economically disadvantaged family did not stop Rani Devi from demonstrating extraordinary courage in working towards transformation of her village from that of an open defecation village to an ODF free community. The woman from Sangrampur village in Mahagama Block of Godda district in Jharkhand has become an inspiration to other womenfolk in the area for the manner in which she led the SBM-G campaign.

At the outset, Rani was keen to help women in her village find alternate livelihoods so they could contribute to economic development of their families. Therefore, under the guidance of

Shrimati Mira Jhaa, she formed the Shiv Mahima SHG that began functioning well in collaboration with JSLPS (Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society).



Rani had attended a block level workshop organised by the Drinking Water and Sanitation Department of Godda district two years ago. Eager to support the SBM-G campaign and make her village and panchayat clean, she trained to become a Rani Mistri – a decision that changed her life.

Soon after DWSD-Godda transferred the money for construction of 75 toilets, she took charge of the campaign with the support of the village Mukhiya. Morning and evening saw her visiting homes and informing people about the need to build and use toilets. Pointing out that toilets would contribute to their health, well being and dignity, she persuaded them to practice safe sanitation practices.

To women and children in particular, she dwelt at length about the harm caused by open defecation and mobilized them to participate actively in the campaign. Sanitation slogans were pasted across the village with the message that toilets should be used by the entire family. The same topic was discussed at community meetings. Lack of money was not a deterrent as the SHG provided loans to select families whose names were on the Baseline survey.

Being a Rani Mistri herself, she contributed to toilet construction and inspired many other women to be similarly trained. While many of the toilets built in the first phase were built with the support of male masons, the ones built in the second phase were done entirely by women masons.

Subsequently, all homes had toilets and everyone began to use them regularly. The Rani Mistri also constructed 20 toilets for other families that did not have toilets.

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