

Rackchham gets its act together on SWM

Inspired by the Swachh Bharat Mission, the people of Rackchham in Kinnaur District of Himachal Pradesh have been doing their bit to keep their village beautiful and clean. The residents and the Panchayat work together to efficiently manage their solid waste.

Open defecation is a matter of the past after all the 146 households began using their individual household toilets, way back in 2016 when the entire State was declared Open Defecation Free (ODF). It was no simple feat, given that the initial response to adopting safe sanitation practices was reluctance, even negative. Eventually, the consistent efforts of the panchayat paid off, as people understood the benefits of using their toilets.

As a first step towards managing their waste, the Panchayat provided bags and dustbins to every household. The bags served a dual purpose – of generating awareness with logos of Swachh Bharat and Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao printed on them; and encouraging people to segregate waste at the source. It also set a perfect example of convergence of schemes at the village level.

Solid waste collection: Every household now segregates their waste and places the same in a large movable garbage bin. When such bins are filled, they are moved into a large waste disposable shed built under the Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen programme near the village, where they are emptied before being put back in their original spot. While the organic waste is used for making compost, the other items are sent to recyclers. The entire supply chain of waste disposal is jointly managed by the panchayat and the households.

Street cleanliness: Several households in the village own cows that litter the village paths with their dung as they set off to graze in the pastures each morning. To address this, the panchayat has allocated the duty of cleaning of the paths to households owning the cattle on a rota basis, providing them brooms, gloves, etc. This has worked well, enhancing a feeling of ownership of public spaces among the people.

Behaviour change communication: The dream of a Swachh Bharat can only be attained if there is a change in attitude and behaviour among people. To bring awareness among people about safe sanitation practices and the need to keep their surroundings and villages clean, posters and message boards with key messages are displayed at public spaces such as temples and market places that are frequented by people.

Community Sanitary Complex: Each year, a large group of migrant workers arrive in the village to work in the apple orchards. To cater to this segment of people, the Rural Development Department allocated five community sanitary complexes to this village. Situated on the roadsides and public spaces they also serve the tourists who visit the Sangla valley and this village in large numbers.