

SLWM makes Sikkim's Regu district clean & healthy



Inspired by the Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (SBM-G), Mrs. Dawa Choden Bhutia Panchayat President, Lingtam-Phadamchen Gram Panchayat Unit (GPU) in Regu Block in Pakyong of East Sikkim district decided to work towards the creation of a healthy society by making her Gram Panchayat neat and clean.

Her enthusiasm in this regard intensified when she attended a training organised by Himalayan Cleanup on the significance of Swachhata. On completion of the training, she convened a meeting with the Block Development Officer, Panchayat members and staff and explained to them the benefits of waste management. This led to a special Gram Sabha where the entire community took a resolution to clean up their village with effective systems in place for solid and liquid waste management (SLWM).

With a population of 2554 individuals from 566 households, Lingtam-Phadamchen GPU that is spread across an area of 10.912 square kilometres has 3 non-residential premises comprising a school, an Anganwadi Centre and a Primary Health Centre, and 99 commercial establishments such as small shops, restaurants, hotels, and homestays, all of which are sustained by the flow of tourists.

The Gram Sabha decided to promote a sustainable means of livelihood by promoting tourism and make all efforts to contribute to a disease-free GPU.

A series of activities to promote visual cleanliness: There followed some intensive IEC programmes that included meetings with youth, SHGs and stakeholders. The community participated in cleanliness drives, the preparation of a village action plan, and identification and setting up of dry waste collection points where bins made of local bamboo were installed. In addition, door to door collection of waste including hazardous waste was started.

When SBM (G) Phase-II was started in 2020, the work of Solid Liquid Waste Management was intensified. Efforts were made to ensure systematic management of wet waste with the installation of 57 compost pits.

Given that Phadamchen was selected to be the model ODF plus Village, work began in all the 8 parameters that would help the GPU become ODF Plus, as per the SBM-G Phase II guidelines. To ensure proper treatment of greywater, a team headed by the Panchayat Sabhapati visited the village and they made a list of beneficiaries for allotment of soak pits, and this was passed in the Gram Sabha. As many as 34 soak pits were constructed.

Working towards Sustainability: To sustain the Solid Liquid waste Management systems and attain ODF Plus parameters, the GP has adopted the following strategies: Involvement of SHGs and youths in SLWM procedures; felicitation of cleanest household on Independence Day; preparation of model by-laws; collection of user charges; Rs.500 fine for those spotted defecating in the open or littering.



Additionally, to promote sustainable tourism, the practice of offering flower garlands or bouquets rather than items made of non-biodegradable material is being encouraged. While two Community sanitary complexes have been constructed in public spaces, the GP also distributed bins to households to promote segregation of waste at source. The GP has also imposed a ban on carrying packaged water bottles of less than 2-litre capacity by tourists and their vehicles. These systems in commercial establishments are monitored regularly.

Outcomes: As a result of such practices, the village is visually clean, the people healthy and the GP has been acclaimed as one of the best tourist destinations in the State.