

Swachhagrahis assume new responsibilities in Dhule



The versatile swachhagrahis of the Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (SBM-G) who brought new life to the sanitation campaign and contributed immensely to making their villages free from open defecation are now assuming additional responsibilities amid the COVID-19 pandemic. They have set up a grain bank through which they provide food grains to 14 needy families in the village.

Nearly 30 women – swachhagrahis, SHG members and ASHA workers of Hisale village in Shirpur Taluk of Dhule district in Maharashtra formed a Grain or Dhanya Bank which collected donations of various food grains from families across the village, according to Santosh B. Nerkar IEC Consultant, SBM-G Zilla Parishad-Dhule.

“The initiative was started because the women understood the problems of certain impoverished families in the village; and they wanted to help in some way,” Nerkar explained.

All participating women brought grain from their homes and their collection to the grain bank totalled to about one quintal and 15 kgs. This included 75 kgs of wheat and 40 kgs of rice. The collected food grains were distributed equally to 14 needy families in the village.

Among the women activists were Saira Ramjan Pinjari, Ranjana Ravindra Bhil, Vandana Chhagan Karankal, Manglabai Krishna Baisane, Manisha Shalik Wagh, Sonali Deependra Karankal and others.

More than anything else, their actions proved their commitment to solving social and economic problems of the village. “They are a source of inspiration to others,” Nerkar said.

To date, Dhule has 950 active swachhagrahis. Earlier, at the start of the pandemic, the state had provided training on safety protocols to follow during the outbreak. Through their mobile App, the swachhagrahis were trained in batches on ways to curb the spread of COVID-19. The need to use masks and hand sanitizers, practise social distancing and how to keep people in isolation were covered during the training. Also, the protective gear was given to them.



The swachhagrahis have worked in adverse circumstances earlier as well when communities were reluctant to change their sanitation behaviour. At that time, they had been on numerous house visits to build awareness about safe sanitation practices; and about the need to construct and use toilets. They had stressed the need for everyone to use toilets including the elderly and children and informed people about safe disposal of infant faeces.

Other issues the frontline workers addressed were menstrual hygiene management, proper disposal of used sanitary napkins, handwashing techniques, segregation of household garbage and composting and keeping houses and the environment clean.

