

All women's Pani Samitis

Varshamedi village - Kutch

After lot of consultations in Gram Sabha the Sarpanch Shri Sajubha Jadeja expressed that if women of the village were ready to take up decentralised water supply programme in the village, he would hand it over to them. Few of the active women offered to be the members of the Pani Samiti, constituted an all women members Pani Samiti in the village and elected Sitaben as chairperson. Each hamlet had a representative and took up the responsibilities of collecting contribution from each household. The difficult task gradually moulded them in to an efficient team, and they not only collected contribution from each household but efficiently managed the office work including dealing with bank. They grew in confidence as the work progressed and ensured quality construction work, by active supervision. They are proud of their achievements, and enthusiastically show their work to Pani Samitis members visiting from other villages. Their example has motivated others. Sitaben says, "We have learnt to take lead in other development work, we are confident that we are building our children's future. We have changed the behaviour of men towards us."

Gelada village – Kutch

Gelada village also like other villages of Kutch district saw destruction by a massive earthquake that struck the area on 26th January, 2001. The rehabilitation process brought out discord in the village, and it was an uphill task for Vivekanand Research & Training Institute – an Implementation Support Agency (ISA) of WASMO – to introduce the community-managed water supply programme in this village. The Panchayat and its members were not interested in the programme. In one of the Gram Sabhas, the active Mahila Mandal took the lead and its chairperson Monghiba, inspired the women of the village to form a Pani Samiti, as the problem of drinking water affected them the most. They constituted an all women's Pani Samiti. Monghiba took up the lead and now she says, "In the beginning two members were active, but as we progressed, the team gelled together and took up the full responsibilities for supervision of works. The times when we had to run for collecting water at night have passed. Now we have adequate and regular water supply at our doorstep." She further says, "Women save at least two to three hours a day and that time is utilised in making 'papads', which gives us a regular income." The women say that, "This income has given us an opportunity to contribute for O&M of the systems, which ensures us regular water supply."

Bubvana village -Surendranagar

The women and other members of the Pani Samiti of Bubvana village were taken to Raj Samadiyala to interact with the villagers and get ideas on how to maintain village and household sanitation. The exercise proved fruitful and the women, inspired by what they saw, resolved to make Bubvana an ideal village. They met frequently to strategise on how to cope with waste and sewage. Every Sunday, between 2-3 pm, they decided to clean up the village. Every street was provided with discarded oil drums as dustbins, which were later replaced by dustbins provided by WASMO. Every household was also encouraged to construct soak pits and toilets. As fame of these women spread, they were invited by AIR Rajkot, to share their experiences in the 'Gam-no-choro' programme. Once a village where the community visited other villages to get inspiration, Bubvana soon became a source of inspiration for others to follow.

Khanda village - Vadodara

Swajaldhara, when introduced in Khanda village by Shroff Foundation Trust, was accepted as a programme, but they could not form a Pani Samiti as the community was divided on the choice of members. Failure on the part of male members to form a committee gave a chance to women of village to get together, and after a few consultations they were able to form an all women's committee. During the floods in 2006, their village got badly affected. So the Pani Samiti swung into action, and they used knowledge acquired from water quality surveillance trainings. Each house was visited by them and chlorination process of drinking water was demonstrated at household level. It was ensured that each woman does chlorination for next seven days. Surekhaben Padhiar, Pani Samiti member says, "Now we are determined and confident of getting Swajaldhara programme in our village, we will start collecting contribution soon."