

## Case Study

# Rampur's Journey to Eliminate Open Defecation

The Government of Bihar (GoB) is committed to provide access to safe water and sanitation to the entire population. Despite several efforts, 77 per cent of state's population (Census, 2011) defecates in open. In order to further improve the quality and sanitation service levels, the State has renewed its commitment under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) (SBM (G)) to support rural communities of the State to adopt safe hygiene and sanitation practices by 2019. For a holistic coverage, GoB complements SBM (G) with the State sponsored Lohiya Swachhata Yojna (LSY), to incentivise the left out families. The State has launched the programme as 'Mission Swachh Bihar'

Mission Swachh Bihar emphasises collective behaviour change to adopt safe sanitation practices. The behaviour change is triggered through Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach, adopted by the State. The State with support of UNICEF has initiated capacity building of the state team through intensive training and capacity building. About 600 resource persons are being trained on the CLTS.

The first workshop in Begusarai, where a team of resource persons from Khagadia participated, has triggered the process of supporting the communities in attaining open defecation free living. The journey started with the Rampur Gram Panchayat of Gogri block.

### The Journey of Rampur towards Open Defecation Free Living

Rampur is the first Panchayat to declare itself Open Defecation Free. Since the launch of Mission Swachh Bihar, 2819 households of Rampur achieved the collective behaviour change within a period of four months. During initial three months, the team spent most of the time, validating the baseline and supporting individual households to build and use toilets. The District Coordinator made all efforts to bring the focus of the district



leadership and other district water and sanitation committee members towards the importance of supporting the communities adopt safe sanitation practices.

Until the participation of a group of seven resource persons from the district in a CLTS training-cum-workshop in towards end June, the approach relied more on motivating individual households and ensuring payment of incentives. During this period, only about 100 households had built the toilets. The community members irrespective of access to sanitation facilities continued open defecation.

During the CLTS training, the team realised that instead of focussing on toilet construction and supporting individual households, they must adopt collective behaviour change strategies.

On the fifth day of the training the resource persons, under the leadership of Mr Bishwanath Jha, District Coordinator, prepared an action plan to target Rampur GP for collective behaviour change.



The team shared the action plan with Mr Rajeev Raushan, District Magistrate, who appreciated the strategy and assured his full cooperation and support. Once the proposal was approved by the DM's office, the District Coordinator started one to one counselling and group interaction sessions with the villagers and Panchayat members. The team then decided to camp in the Gram Panchayat till the entire community adopts safe sanitation practice. The team regularly met different groups of people, such as women and children, men, elderly, families belonging to different religions, families of migrant workers, etc.

The team however, felt constrained to respond to the queries of the community relating to the adoption of new behaviour. Immediately picking up the challenge, the District Magistrate reached out to the UNICEF Patna field office for further support. UNICEF together with Feedback Foundation (CLTS training agency) deputed two dedicated resources to mentor the team.

The joint team conducted triggering sessions in various habitations of the GP. These sessions sensitised and created a buzz amongst the villagers about the necessity of living in an ODF environment. The villagers formed vigilance committees (*Nigarani Samitees*) and started early morning and evening follow-ups. In the initial phase, the open defecators were requested to cover the shit with soil or ash. The Nigrani Samitees first started the vigilance from 4:00 AM, soon the villagers changed the defecation timing to 3:00 AM or even earlier. *"Some people proved to be difficult, to handle them, we decided to undertake shifts in two hours shifts throughout the night,"* says Geeta Devi, Nigarani Samitee member.

The District Coordinator recounts his experience, *"These meetings opened up people's mind towards building toilets, we discussed everything frankly. I did my best to remove their doubts, but some people had genuine concerns regarding funds for the construction."* Eventually, to address the financial constraints to build the toilets, the team facilitated a Rural Sanitary Mart (RSM)



in local school's compound. The RSM allowed willing villagers to buy toilet construction material on credit.

Men and women alike guarded open fields through the dark hours to ensure that no one defecated in open. Those who did not have toilets were encouraged to use a neighbour's facilities.

Gradually, every household took cognizance of the efforts made by the resource team, Panchayat members and some pioneering villagers. Soon after the resource team came to the village, the toilet construction picked up, but to ensure that everyone follows through, the Panchayat set a deadline of 30 July 2015 and warned that defaulter will be fined and subjected to public humiliation. *“However, even after the deadline, 15-20 households were found unable to build toilets due to severe economic constraints. These families were further motivated to understand the utmost importance of toilets and were given assistance through an extended credit line on the construction material. The aid worked, some of these families even went to the extent of selling their cows or mortgaged jewellery to build toilets,”* says Mr. Krishna Yadav, Panchayat representative.



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By 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2015 each household had a toilet and was using it, however on their-own initiative, the GP took five days to reassure themselves before the declaration on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 2015. These five days were used by a group of young adults from Bhagat Singh Tola to clean the rotten faeces from the surroundings including streets, pond side areas and the village entrance. Meanwhile, Nigrani Samitees continued to monitor the fields to ensure that every member of GP is committed to the cause of ODF. They did not even allow people from neighbouring villages to defecate in the fields adjoining to Rampur and requested them to use toilets. On 10 August, 2015, Rampur Gram Panchayat's Mukhiya Smt. Nirmala Devi publicly declared - **Rampur Gram Panchayat is 100 per cent open defecation free.**



*Left: Rampur Gram Panchayat Mukhiya, Smt. Nirmala Devi declaring her GP ODF; Right: Deceleration certificate submitted by Rampur Mukhiya to the Executive Engineer of PHED,*

Recognising the efforts of the GP, the Principal Secretary Mr. Shishir Sinha issued appreciation letters to the key players, i.e. the District Magistrate, the Executive Engineer and the District Coordinator. The achievement has enthused the Rampur community to pick up new development avenues like building sheds for cattle in the village, so that the streets and houses can stay clean and hygienic.

Ms Nirmala Devi, the Mukhiya and Village Sarpanch are beaming with positive energy. They are taking the message to the surrounding villages, *“If the government will ask us to go and assist neighbouring villages become ODF, we will all participate wholeheartedly, we do not want anyone to practice this disgusting habits anymore,”* says Mr. Bahudev Sahani, 75-year-old, Sarpanch, Rampur Village. The success of Rampur GP has ensured that the entire Khagaria District is on the fast track of becoming ODF. The DM requested additional support to the BSWSM and UNICEF to conduct a special CLTS training session and train resource teams from 20 Gram Panchayats on the banks of the Ganges under the Namami Gange project.

The news of Rampur’s success has also motivated other CLTS trainees and mentors from various districts. The district resource teams deployed in other regions within the state are now realising the strength of community-led behavioural change approach. The Principal Secretary Mr. Sinha has also asked other districts to study the Rampur case and attempt to build a similar momentum in the respective communities to drive positive change.

## Champions of Change

### Imam and Sanitation Champion



*Rampur Gram Panchayat has 65 per cent Muslim population, but when the Imam of the local Masjid Md. Zakir, 42, decided to make it a point to include sanitation issue in his Friday lectures at the mosque, the entire village became audience. The Panchayat set up special speakers so that the whole village, regardless of caste and religion, can benefit from the positive messages of total hygiene and sanitation preached at the mosque.*

## Tea Vendor and Sanitation Champion



*“I have decided not to sell tea to people who defecate in open, my business has gone down ever since, but I will rather contribute to my village’s welfare then worry about a few rupees,” Anil Saah, local tea vendor, Rampur.*

## Polio Patient and Sanitation Champion



*“The team of specialists who visited Rampur told us that Polio virus also spreads through open defecation. Ever since I heard this, I have pledged to not let anyone defecate in open. I will not allow anything that may give this crippling disease to another human being,” Dheeraj Kumar, 28, competitive exams aspirant, Rampur. Dheeraj was the first to volunteer for the Nigrani Samiti.*

## Housewife and Sanitation Champion



*“When a bride comes home, we give her blessings and token money to show her face, but next day in the morning, she is forced to show her naked body to the public, while defecating in open. People need to decide, what is more important? fancy cars and clothes or protection of family’s honour?” quips Geeta Devi, team leader, Nigrani Samiti, Rampur*

## School students and Sanitation Champions



*13-year-old Pooja, Aanchal and Diya are students in Class 8 in local government school in Rampur Gram Panchayat. Their school has recently been provided with the facility of toilet just like rest of the village. “We feel very proud to be the residents of the first ODF gram Panchayat,” says Diya. Aanchal feels that a toilet in the school is very important, she shared that they have already made a committee to make sure that school toilet will be regularly cleaned and used responsibly.*