

# Water Quality Surveillance and Monitoring in Rural Telangana

## Rationale

*Most of India lives in villages. About 69 percent of population is found in rural India (Census 2011). Despite clear policy commitment and huge central allocation to address WASH services, still there are bottlenecks in its implementation. Most of the villagers still suffer from inadequate water and sanitation facilities and lack technical and financial means from local governments. To gear up the coverage of Water and Sanitation (WATSAN), GoI has launched the Swachh Bharat Mission, Gramin (SBM) and National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP). As per Government of Telangana guidelines, Village Water and Sanitation Committee (VWSC) has a major role in implementation of these flagship programmes namely SBM and NRDWP. VWSCs were formed under constitutional provisions of Panchayat Raj and rural development department through G.O. Ms. No. 63 & 64 as a part of GramJyothi program. But the roles and responsibilities of VWSC members were not clearly stated discussed during the committee formation due to the disturbances during the gram sabha as it was held on the same day. Technical support and guidance was provided to local government and community in order to strengthen the VWSCs.*



Picture 1 VWSC revival at Jalalpur

## The Issue

The Sector Reforms Project (SRPP) was a success programme in Nizamabad. However, in the long run, VWSCs started to defunct due to various reasons like change in government policies, poor coordination, participation, inclusion etc. VWSC as per new government policy guidelines play an important role in implementing WASH activities. Furthermore, open defecation is a common sight along the drains and fields in all theselected villages. Health is affected on account of both contamination of ground water and spreading of infections due to poor sanitation facilities.

## **Implementation of Water and Sanitation committee:**

SaciWATERs as a part of water quality surveillance and monitoring projects supported the Gram Panchayats (GP), in facilitation of VWSCs, in 16 villages of Nizamabad district, Telangana.

In view of the fact that Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS) and State Water and Sanitation Mission (SWSM) are nodal agencies for implementing WATSAN activities, these departments were first approached to support VWSC revitalization. Moreover, the support and suggestion of the Nizamabad Collector was sought in the whole revival process.

To empower villagers along with GP members, SaciWATERs took up IEC activities on a regular scale. Programmes for awareness generation were planned in the form of street plays - Kalajatha, door to door campaign, wall paintings, group discussions and other programmes. The programme brought community awareness through street play - Kalajatha. Kalajatha is the popular traditional art form of folk drama. These street plays created an effective impact, because people identified themselves with the characters being displayed and the messages resonated among the target audiences. Later WASH activities were demonstrated through wall painting and door to door campaign.

Gram Panchayats were supported in facilitating and promoting VWSCs with the coordination of RWSS department. These villages were strengthened by providing technical support and team generated awareness on the necessity of VWSC through group discussions, community level meetings etc. In the pre-revival process preliminary meetings were conducted with GP Members, Village Leaders and communities. After stakeholder consultation, VWSCs were revived as per GO.MS.NO. 63 & 64 issued by the RWSS. Gramsabha was also facilitated with the involvement of the sarpanch (elected head of the GP), RWSS department, GP Members. To propagate Gramsabha, TOM TOM (traditional village announcement system with drums) was used as a medium to communicate to villagers.

Under the constitutional provisions of G.O. Ms. No. 63 & 64 as a part of GramJyothi, VWSC consists of 6 or more members comprising of elected members of Panchayat and women with due representation. The main objectives of GramJyothi was to improve the service delivery in all core sectors covering Drinking Water and Sanitation Sector, Health and Nutrition Sector, Education, Infrastructure, Natural Resources Management, Agriculture, Social Security and Poverty Reduction. The Sarpanch the Chairman of the VWSC and one or two ward members, self help group (SHG) leader, local NGO member, retired Government Servant of GP with relevant experience and Concerned Gram Panchayat level / Mandal Level Officer -Convener would be the part of the committee. With a view to decentralise the implementation and management of water and sanitation programmes, funds would be transferred to the VWSC accounts by state government.

During the VWSCs revival, participation of competent authority (concerned RWSS Engineer), line departments of WASH and all VWSC members was ensured. The roles and responsibilities of VWSC members were explained in detail to the GP.VWSC meetings are conducted at least twice a month to regularise and understand the ground reality. Post-revival process includes training of VWSC members and networking with community to know the problems and issues related to WATSAN. After the frequent discussions and consultations with community and GP members, the minutes are circulated to all the line departments for dissemination of information. Additionally, community mobilizers ensure that panchayat secretary circulates the minutes of meeting to all the concerned departments for further communication.

In this whole process of revitalization, unremitting trainings are conducted for GP members and communities. In the second stage the VWSC members would be to be trained at mandal level on their roles and responsibilities, about WASH, facilities and linkages with the concerned departments. VWSC members were exposed to the best practices of peer states and districts. Monitoring monthly targets and achievements in water and sanitation activities also formed part of the meeting.

### **Challenges**

There has been considerable delay in implementation of the programs due to political involvement. Individual members of the committee had to be consulted and convinced at a later stage to support the further programmes. Initially, community was also reluctant to share information; however after the frequent group discussions masses were persuaded.

Despite the fact that team faced strong resistance and lack of co-operation from panchayats and communities, yet through these campaigns they could convince the masses and elected members.

### **Achievement**

The uphill task of stimulating the communities and panchayat members have made them consider the importance to WATSAN. Initiations were taken up by all GP members in support with SaciWATERS team in listing households without individual Sanitary Latrine (ISL).