A case study on Bhakta Kabi Madhusudan School, Dumdama, Bhubaneswar

"Water is the most critical resource issue of our lifetime and our children's lifetime. The health of our waters is the principal measure of how we live on the land."
~ Luna Leopold

Introduction

Water and sanitation-related issues remain one of the most significant child health problems worldwide. In India, acute water shortage as a result of uncontrolled extraction of ground water and limited recharge of river water has led to limited availability of clean drinking water. Hence, access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities at home is simply not enough which leads to health problems. In this scenario, it's imperative that the availability of WASH facilities and proper knowledge generation at school level is of utmost importance to achieve complete behavioral change. Access to WASH facilities for the marginalized schools in Bhubaneswar is limited where hardly any non-government organizations (NGOs) have previously been able to intervene. Availability of water is questionable and whatever is available is severely contaminated by sewage and agricultural runoff.

Against this background, TERI along with Bharti Infratel Ltd has successfully initiated a program titled– Project FLOW that aims to provide safe drinking water facilities to 60 marginalized schools across 7 locations along with building capacities of students, communities and teachers on WASH issues.

The following case highlights some of the tools and mechanisms adopted in Bhakta Kabi Madhusudan School, Dumdama, Bhuaneswar.

Bhakta Kabi Madhusudan School, Dumdama, Bhuaneswar: The situation then

Bhakta Kabi Madhusudan School, Dumdama, Bhubaneswar is one of the member schools of Project FLOW. Before TERI's interventions, the school had no access to safe drinking water and students were dependent on community resources to draw water which was also in a very deplorable state. Not only this, the school also lacked water purification system and any sanitation facilities. Students were not aware of the components of WASH nor have they

received any training on related issues. Due to lack of piped water supply, even communities in the vicinity drew water through tube wells.

With the initiation of Project FLOW in 2015, context-specific hardware technologies, such as drinking water platform along with purifiers, rain water harvesting unit, and piped water system within the campus were installed to address socio – political and environmental barriers to water supply. In addition to these hardware interventions, awareness generation was another component that was addressed to create attitudinal change amongst the students and teachers with respect to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.

A definite change

The project interventions ensured access to safe drinking water in the school premises and communities around for approximately 800 people. It solved the problem of hundreds of students who would have no option but to run to their homes to fill water after every 2 hours before. In addition to this, the issue of lack of piped water supply was solved with the installation of rain water harvesting unit. This enabled rainwater to get collected in a storage tank which is connected to the toilets, ensuring proper sanitation facilities.

Construction of safe drinking water infrastructure

Students are willing to take care of the infrastructure and educate their peers about its safety. The school has formed a School Steering Committee which comprises of School Principal, a school teacher, 5 students and 2 parents to ensure safety and security measures. They are also responsible for maintaining the same on monthly basis.

In the course of the project, apart from the knowledge workshops that were organized on a periodic basis for students, special attention was paid to building capacities of the teachers, through training of teachers programme. The programme helped the teachers to mainstream WASH related discussions with other subjects which was never done previously. Not only this, teachers and students also came to know the ways to test water quality through TERI's unique water testing kit.

Building for the future

In year 2, special emphasis is being laid to involve parents and communities to the programme along with students and teachers. The idea is to involve them in the process of change by way of building their capacity on realizing WASH to be an important element of life for them as well as for their children. The methodology adopted for the communities will be very engaging and will encompass activities like street play, campaigns, folk tales, informal meetings, etc. on the said issue to ensure collective consciousness amongst the stakeholders.