

SANITATION THROUGH SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

An experiment by Vikas Bharti Bishunpur, Jharkhand



Sanitation, a part of the whole puzzle:

Since its genesis in 1982, Vikas Bharti has been working with the most vulnerable communities in Jharkhand in some of the most remote areas, under the leadership of **Shri. Ashok Bhagat (Founder and Secretary of the Organization)**. He was awarded **Padma Shree in 2015**, for his contribution in the field of development. Most of the communities with whom the organization is working are socially excluded in terms of their access to opportunities, basic amenities and facilities by virtue of their socio-economic status or geographical location. The vision of the organization has been to ensure improved human development indices for these vulnerable and excluded communities through an integrated development model anchored by the local self governance system. The integrated development package includes – health, nutrition, education, livelihoods, housing, water, sanitation, infrastructure facilities, financial inclusion, access to information and their cultural recognition. Therefore, **for Vikas Bharti, Sanitation is one of the building blocks within the whole package of intervention for improving the lives of the people.** However it is an integral component of the whole because of its ability of influence other components like health, nutrition, livelihoods, safe drinking water and even education to a great extent. The whole philosophy is the fact that – healthy human capital will be productive not only for the household, but for the nation as a whole, and therefore sanitation is a means to achieving the end of ‘poverty-free communities’.

A programmatic approach to sanitation:

It was much before the arrival of the major government flagships like – Total Sanitation Campaign or Swaccha Bharat Abhiyan, when Vikas Bharti was actively involved with the local communities and village level institutions in improving the overall cleanliness of the village.



The key objective was to address health issues arising due to poor sanitation, especially water borne and water related diseases like – diarrhea, cholera, malaria, jaundice, etc. **Post-monsoon sanitation drive in the rural areas** of Jharkhand has always been a regular feature in the organizational activities since more than two decades now. Every year this campaign is being rolled-out in around 12,200 villages spread over 24 districts of Jharkhand, influencing more than 5 lakh households. This includes **sprinkling of bleaching powder in and around drinking water sources; cleaning of places having water stagnation; cleaning of places around drinking water sources for addressing sanitary risk to these sources and cleaning or garbage dumping sites within habitations.** The programmatic approach of Vikas Bharti in Sanitation has always been a holistic approach much beyond mere toilet construction and making efforts to ‘close the sanitation loop’ through low cost and innovative technologies, which the communities can manage. The bio-gas initiative out of human excreta for village lighting way back in early 1980s illuminated the lives of around 2000 families in and around Bishunpur, when nobody else was taking about it. Along with it the organization has also laid emphasis on continuing with a massive campaign on behavior change of these communities, for whom sanitation has never been a priority. Various ways and means have been adopted to mobilize communities, especially youths, who can then join hands in the sanitation drive. **Events organized for youths** every year, like – football tournament, marathon race (*Swacchata Daur*), cycle rally, various competitions at the schools and colleges, has proved to be an effective tool to mobilize and channelize the youth force into nation building, including sanitation campaigns. Vikas Bharti has been constantly **working with Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), especially Asurs and Birjiyas**, in Gumla district for improving their development indices.



One of the major development issues of these communities is their sanitation and hygiene behavior which has caused major health problems and even deaths. To resolve this problem, the organization is working with them in close proximity, making them aware of the recommended hygiene behavior and practices. Sustained efforts have resulted to positive changes in these communities leading to a healthier life style and improved health indicators.

Seeking behavior change, not infrastructure:

The **Ganga Dashara** is one such occasion, when the organization took-up the cleaning of the banks of the rivers. This was an occasion when communities were mobilized across the state in 120 locations, where they worshipped the river and carried out cleanliness drive along its bank. The communities also took oath to keep their rivers clean and free from contamination. Organization has been leading the movement on **Harmu Nadi Bacchao Andolan**. Vikas Bharti facilitated a process of bringing citizens and social organizations of Jharkhand together to draw a road map for rejuvenation of the Harmu River. Seminars and consultations area also being organized from time-to-time on the issue of rejuvenation of Harmu River, inviting academicians and experts to give their views and advocate for implementation of the action plan. The movement has led to a situation where now the Honorable High Court of Jharkhand is monitoring the execution of the Harmu Nadi Action Plan. This has been a classical example of how a citizen’s movement can lead to the rejuvenation of a river. The focus of this movement is primarily on cleaning of the *Harmu* River and removing of the encroachments in its catchment. Another key forum for **creating awareness on WASH (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene) is the schools and ashrams** run by Vikas Bharti. Sanitation is very little about infrastructure and more about behavior change.



Therefore children can be the best target group where we should invest our resources and efforts to bring about a positive behavior change at an early age. Moreover, children can easily be groomed into change agents within their communities. Vikas Bharti has a direct outreach to around a lakh student through the schools and ashrams that it runs. Besides that, the organization is working with Sarva Siksha Abhiyan in various other parts of the state for hygiene promotion initiatives. It has been proved that only hand washing at critical times can reduce the prevalence of diarrhea by at least 40 per cent. With this premise in mind, **group hand washing practice has been promoted, along with provisioning of hand washing facilities in all the schools and ashrams** run by Vikas Bharti. These children are also imparted hygiene education through specialized hygiene educators, trained by the organization. Vikas Bharti is also working on **addressing maternal and child nutrition problems** in Jharkhand. In this context as well, the organization is focusing a lot on the sanitation and hygiene aspects (like hand washing practice, food hygiene, storage and handling of safe drinking water, use of slippers, etc.), as they have a huge bearing on the nutritional status of an individual. Therefore the efforts are to ensure food security in its holistic sense, which include food availability, access and absorption.

Partnering Swaccha Bharat: Ensuring confluence of Gandhi's philosophy & Modi's strategy:

It would be right to say that the current push to the Sanitation agenda by none other than the Honorable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, under the Swaccha Bharat Abhiyan (SBM), has actually provided strength to Vikas Bharti's mandate of making a clean & healthy society. The campaign became more streamlined and helped the organization to pull resources required by the communities to build environment & facilities.



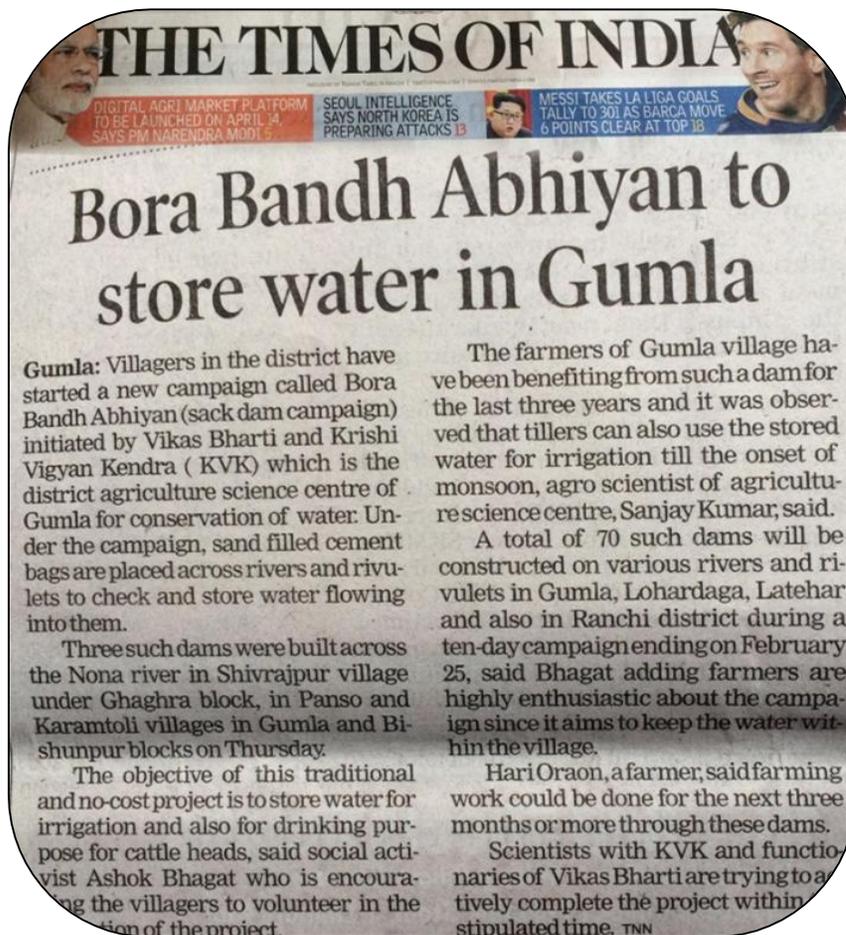
Vikas Bharti has also been working as a technical resource partner and a facilitating agency for the Drinking Water & Sanitation Dept., GoJ. Vikas Bharti was also made the **Block Resource Centre for all the blocks of Ranchi district**. Though the state government has discontinued the BRC initiative in the state, however Vikas Bharti continues to play the role of a technical support agency for the state government. The organization is partnering with the state towards effective implementation of Swaccha Bharat Abhiyan. The key emphasis is on mobilization of the communities in generating genuine demand for toilets; handholding them to access the resources available under SBM(G) and handholding the PRIs and VWSCs in ensuring quality dimensions of the toilet facility. Besides that the organization is also supporting district administration in identification of the potential Community Based Organisations (CBOs), who can take-up the implementation work of the toilet construction at the grassroots and doing a robust monitoring of the work in progress and facilitate proper documentation of the work for future audit purposes. As a result of this community mobilization strategy, it has been found that the communities are not only investing their own resources and creating innovative technology models, but also the use of the toilets are relatively higher as compared to the other parts of the State. **Ramgarh district became the first district in Jharkhand to be declared as Open Defecation Free (ODF) district** by the state government. Vikas Bharti was the facilitating technical partner for DWSD in Ramgarh district. Who can forget the folklores associated with **Byasi Panchayat in Ranchi district (1st ODF panchayat) and Dulmi block of Ramgarh district (1st ODF block)**? In all these achievements of the state government, Vikas Bharti was the partner agency who worked at the grassroots with the communities and the local self-governance units to make this happen.



Through all these initiatives, access to improved sanitation facility was ensured to 75 thousand households, spread across 146 villages in the State. Vikas Bharti has also been supporting the state government during various state-wide sanitation campaigns under SBM(G).

Water and Sanitation go hand-by-hand:

Sanitation without water cannot provide sustainable solution. To ensure use of the toilets, it is essential to ensure source sustainability. Therefore water conservation and harvesting becomes an integral part of sustainable sanitation initiatives. Besides sensitizing communities on the importance water conservation and harvesting, it is also working with the PRIs and the district administration to create **water harvesting structures (called Borabandh)**. The *borabandh* initiative is to pack locally available materials in polythene sacks and use them to create small dams over local rivers. Innovative and appealing campaigns like '**Gaddha Khodo Abhiyan**', which encourage and mobilized communities to dig staggered contour trenches on waste lands for recharge of ground water; or '**Pani Bachao Jangal Bachao Abhiyan**', which focuses on protecting forests for rejuvenating water sources helps in mass mobilization and connecting to the masses. The water thus harvested is not only used for livelihood activities but also recharge the groundwater thus ensuring year round functionality of hand pumps and wells. Besides recharging of the water resources, the organization is also working on operation and maintenance of the water sources (especially hand pumps). In collaboration with the Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation, GoJ, Vikas Bharti has been carrying out massive drive for **repairing and maintenance of the existing hand pumps**. These efforts on water security, in turn ensures the use of the sanitation facilities and availability of adequate water for hygiene practices even during summers.



Start loving wastes, it can also be wealth:

Vikas Bharti believes that the problem of sanitation can only be resolved in a sustainable manner, only if when the community realizes that waste can be converted to wealth and can contribute substantially to their household income. The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) of Gumla district, run by Vikas Bharti is working extensively on **organic farming, especially on various composting technologies**. Through the promotion of NADEP and VERMI composting methods, Vikas Bharti has engaged 10 thousand farmers to do organic farming using composts instead of chemical fertilizers in around 2 lakh acres of land in and around Bishunpur. Currently around 10 thousand households in and around Bishunpur are using composts in their fields instead of chemical fertilizers. The waste water which stagnates around the drinking water sources, making them vulnerable to contamination, was diverted to the nearby homestead land to develop kitchen gardens. In this way the waste water which was earlier the cause of a sanitation problem was actually converted into a resource, addressing both health and nutrition issue.

Be the solution provider:

Therefore, Vikas Bharti has created a lot of models and developed pilots within its operational area, which are **community-based, community-led, community-friendly and community-owned**. To make this happen, the organization has been investing a lot on **building the social and human capital at the grassroots**. Social capital building involves the strengthening of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, Traditional Self-Governance Institutions and Community Based Organizations (like youth groups, women's self-help groups, village organizations, farmer's clubs, adolescent groups, *bal sansad*, etc.). The capacity building of these institutions and community leaders includes skill building as well as awareness building, thus empowering and enabling them to take-up the

development initiatives and sustain them without much external support. This presents a perfect recipe for low cost, sustainable sanitation which can be replicated at scale by the government. These efforts, under the inspirational leadership of Shri Ashok Bhagat, have been recognized at various levels in and outside the state. **Governor of Goa (Smt. Mridul Sinha) have honored Shri Bhagat, by nominating him as the Swacchata Doot for their state**. The organization thus has emerged as a learning hub and resource agency on sanitation for the whole state.



To know more & be a part of this sanitation movement, contact:

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