

# UNLOCKING POTENTIAL ~ FULFILLING DREAMS

water for people  
INDIA  
EVERYONE • FOREVER





Dedicated to:  
The people we work with,  
and the people we work for.

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## List of Acronyms

BDO	Block Development Officer
CDOT	Centre for Development, Orientation and Training
GP	Gram Panchayat
IHHL	Individual Household Latrine
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
JLG	Joint Liability Group
MFI	Microfinance Institution
ODF	Open Defecation Free
O&M	Operation and Maintenance
SHG	Self Help Group
VWSC	Village Water and Sanitation Committee
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WUC	Water User Committee
WATSAN	Water and Sanitation

## Water For People in India

Water For People initiated its India operations in West Bengal in 1996, with a program on arsenic mitigation in the district of North 24 Parganas and Nadia. Based on the lessons learned from the project, we expanded our initiatives from arsenic mitigation to integrated water and sanitation activities at the school and community level. By 2007, Water For People set up a local office (Water For People - India) in Kolkata, establishing a full-fledged country program to create models of sustainable water and sanitation solutions in five districts in West Bengal and two districts in Bihar. The footprint has recently expanded to a district in Maharashtra.

Water For People - India aims to increase sustainable access to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) services, consistent with Water For People's global vision and mission:

**VISION:** A world where every person has access to reliable and safe drinking water and sanitation services.

**MISSION:** To promote the development of high-quality drinking water and sanitation services, accessible to all, and sustained by strong communities, businesses, and governments.

Since its founding, Water For People - India has emerged as a pioneer in delivering programs that cater to the needs of communities, schools, and health care centres in the area of water, sanitation, and hygiene. Water For People - India is recognized widely for its holistic and integrated approach to designing solutions for quality sustainable water and sanitation infrastructure and services.

Water For People India Trust (WFPIT) was established in 2008 in alignment with the same global vision, mission, and strategic plan to provide improved access to water and sanitation in rural areas and urban slums in India, under the framework of Water For People's 'Everyone Forever' model. Everyone Forever lies at the center of our core mission



and values – that everyone deserves access to safe and sustainable water and sanitation services, forever.

WFPIT works through locally registered NGO partner organizations and civil societies and implements its programs directly.

*Water For People - India currently works in Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, and Maharashtra through a combination of both Water For People - India and Water For People India Trust programming.*



**Eleanor Allen**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Water For People

## Foreword



I am honoured to write about the India Country Program in this book, which reflects on how Water For People has brought about changes in the lives of the people through its interventions in water, sanitation, and hygiene.

Water For People - India started with a small arsenic mitigation project in Nadia and North 24 Parganas in 1996. Today, after 20 years of continuous service to communities and schools in West Bengal and Bihar, we have moved on to providing water, sanitation, and hygiene services in 185 Gram Panchayats, reaching 1.2 million adults and children in the states of Bihar, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

Over the years, I have been fortunate to visit the India Country Program on several occasions, hearing so many personal stories and seeing the impact of our partnerships. Children are taking charge of promoting good water, sanitation and hygiene habits in schools as WATSAN (water and sanitation) Committee members. They are so passionate about these issues that they spread their messages further by taking them back home to their parents and communities.

I was also inspired to see how women in rural India - once shy to speak up - are now vocal and confident members of Water User Committees, taking up the task of maintaining sustainable safe drinking water supplies within their communities. Their experiences has given them the confidence to come out of the confines of their homes and think about wider development issues affecting their families and village.

I extend my best wishes to the entire team of Water For People - India and all our program partners and associates, and congratulate them for their many achievements that have enriched so many communities.

We look forward to embarking on new journeys and sharing many more milestones toward achieving sustainable water and sanitation services for all. This vision is the guiding force behind our Strategy 2018 - 2022: Increase Our Impact X 20.

*Together, we won't stop until water and sanitation for Everyone Forever is a reality across India. Thank you for your dedication, compassion and partnership!*



**Meena Narula**  
Country Director  
Water For People - India

## Reflection



I am delighted that this publication celebrates the voices of people whose lives have been transformed through the basic needs of water, sanitation and hygiene. Here, we seek to unite their voices and share their stories, so that others can see how we can make a difference when we dream together, and work together.

The journey of capturing these stories has been enriching. We revisited our program areas as learners, and we were inspired by all that has been achieved:

**Heightened awareness:** A greater understanding amongst people on the value of water and sanitation has seen a phenomenal increase.

**Ordinary people with extraordinary potential:** Ordinary people have played such extraordinary roles, be it individual women and men, children, community-based organizations, women's collectives, or school teachers and headmasters. There is leadership within everyone, only requiring a catalyst to bring it out. Water For People - India is fortunate to have identified, groomed and nurtured these leadership skills and strengthened people's voices.

**Promotion of life skills:** People have dreams and aspirations. It was so heartening to hear about the dreams of the people who we have served. One wants to become an air hostess, the other a nurse. Yet another wants to be a researcher in physics, and another wants her school to be the best in the country. Providing communities with access to water and sanitation helps these dreamers acquire the life skills they need to pursue their goals. When people take part of an inclusive community process, they learn and develop skills such as financial management, record keeping, responsibility, ownership, public speaking, community engagement and even technical knowledge.

**Children are effective agents of change:** The involvement of children in water and sanitation activities has been outstanding. Children have taken their responsibilities seriously and followed the recommended hygiene behaviour. We have seen examples where children have influence through peer learning and child-to-parent learning. Children have taken home messages around water and sanitation, and have influenced the behaviour of their parents, neighbours and siblings.

**Creation of attractive and useful water and sanitation facilities in schools helps:** The school facilities are attractive and child-friendly. This helps ensure that water and sanitation facilities are properly cared for and in good working order. It has created pride and a sense of ownership.

**Helping in mid-day meals:** The availability of clean water has been a boost to mid-day meals. The hygiene lessons ensure that the food cooked and given to children is safe for consumption, thereby building a student body that is healthy and able to concentrate on their education.

**Processes are important:** It is not possible to just parachute one day into a village or school and tell people what needs to be done. Participatory processes are paramount for identifying, encouraging and nurturing leadership, and also help strengthen commitment, ownership and responsibility.

**Women are heroes:** Ambitious goals have been set by the women themselves. They have taken up responsible roles in water and sanitation and this has boosted their morale and confidence. Their involvement and learning have been amazing to witness. They just needed a little help in recognizing and igniting their spirit and strength!

**Facilitating water and sanitation for everyone requires sustained investment:** There are no short cuts to investing in human and financial resources. The journey will continue as the focus shifts to “Forever” and building sustainable systems.

**Looking beyond sanitation:** Oftentimes, sanitation requires addressing issues which, though intrinsically linked to it, may appear as beyond the mandate. So much of the work we do to protect and ensure safe water requires a robust sanitation strategy that will protect our gains.

**Importance of dedicated, skilled and committed staff:** It is important that Water For People - India and partners are sensitive, committed, and dedicated to make a difference. This work is hard and requires patience. It is so much more than a job – it’s a mission to create a better India for everyone. Each person whose life is made easier should instill pride in us and motivate us to reach even more.

**The journey must continue:** We must remain dedicated to building on our successes and lessons. There is still important work to do. As our focus shifts to ensuring “Forever” and building sustainable systems, we will need to make additional investments to reach the last mile. One example is the piped water supply to around 375 households in village in Digambarpur Gram that needs to cover the entire village.

The last story, *Epilogue: Being Blessed* is fitting. The eagerness of an aged lady to meet the Water For People - India staff, and the blessings extended for his prosperity, health and happiness leave us all with a warm feeling of having accomplished something so precious. While we may sleep easier knowing this, it also re-energizes us to fulfill our commitments tomorrow.

A number of water and sanitation experts have shared with me that our school’s initiatives are perhaps the best in India. While we are grateful to hear that, as it is a positive reflection on our partners, supporters, and most of all the school administration and the students themselves. We have perhaps just been the catalyst to unleash their potential and the good that comes with it.

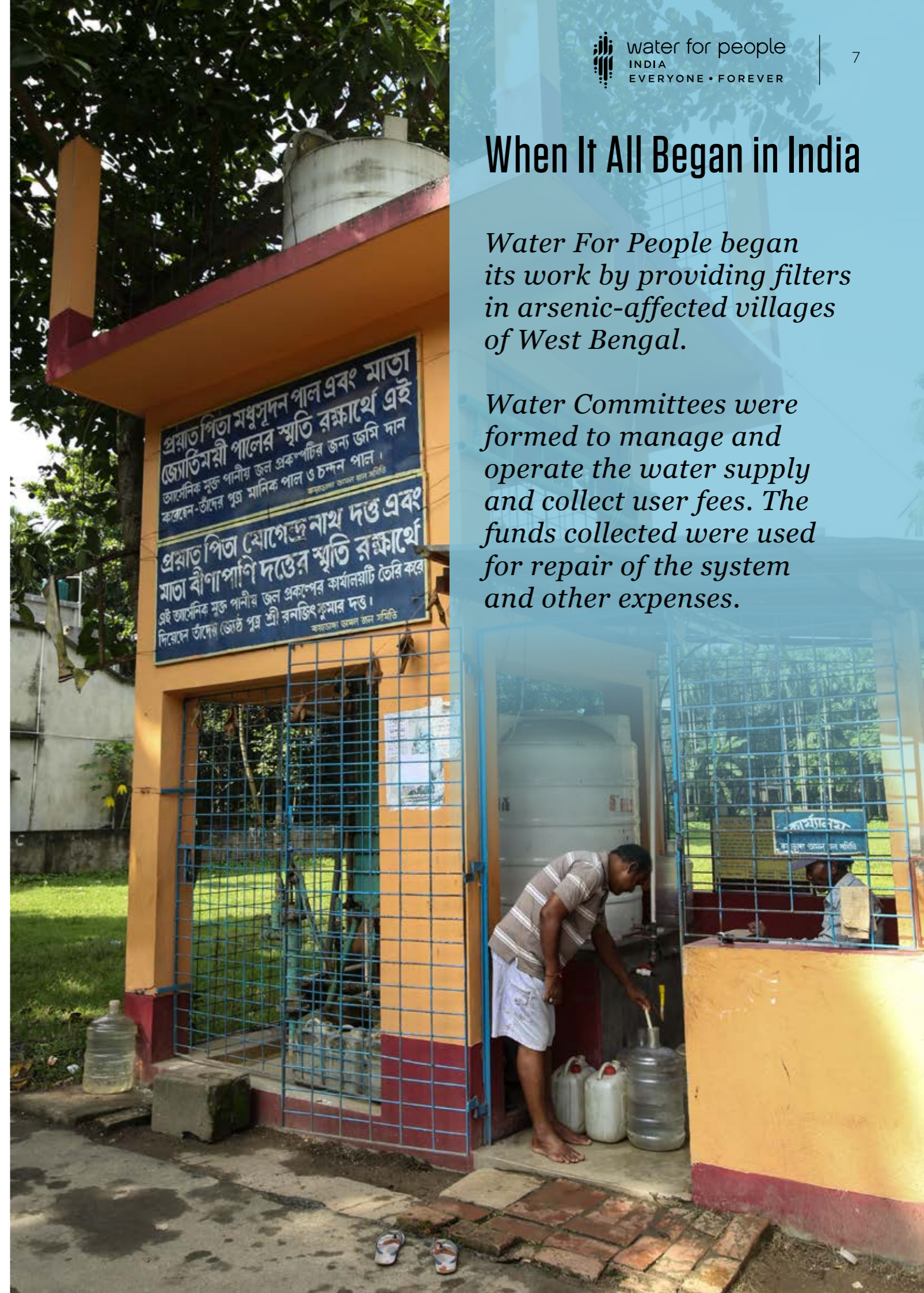
*I look forward to your comments, feedback and ongoing engagement.*



## When It All Began in India

*Water For People began its work by providing filters in arsenic-affected villages of West Bengal.*

*Water Committees were formed to manage and operate the water supply and collect user fees. The funds collected were used for repair of the system and other expenses.*





## Beginning of Change

*“In society, everything is related... It is important to understand the links that connect people to the available infrastructure. We must realise that health, sanitation, economics and general well-being of a community are interlinked. Water is fundamental to our existence. It gives us life. But the water we used to drink was killing us.”*

Sumitra Dey is the caretaker of the arsenic filter installed near the Daharhuba Club, in North 24 Parganas District of West Bengal. She earns Rs. 800 (US\$12.20) a month and is a member of the local women’s Self Help Group (SHG).

Sumitra’s responsibilities as a caretaker include cleaning the water filter every day, scheduling recharge dates for the filter, and overseeing the daily withdrawal procedure.

In addition to her role as caretaker, Sumitra participates in the local SHG’s activities.

She is also one of 15 members of the Water Management Committee that meets monthly and oversees the funds generated by the filter.

Over the last year, with the funds generated, the



Committee has:

- Organized an annual sports-event for women;
- Supplied the local school with free clean drinking water; and
- Built a small meeting area for locals

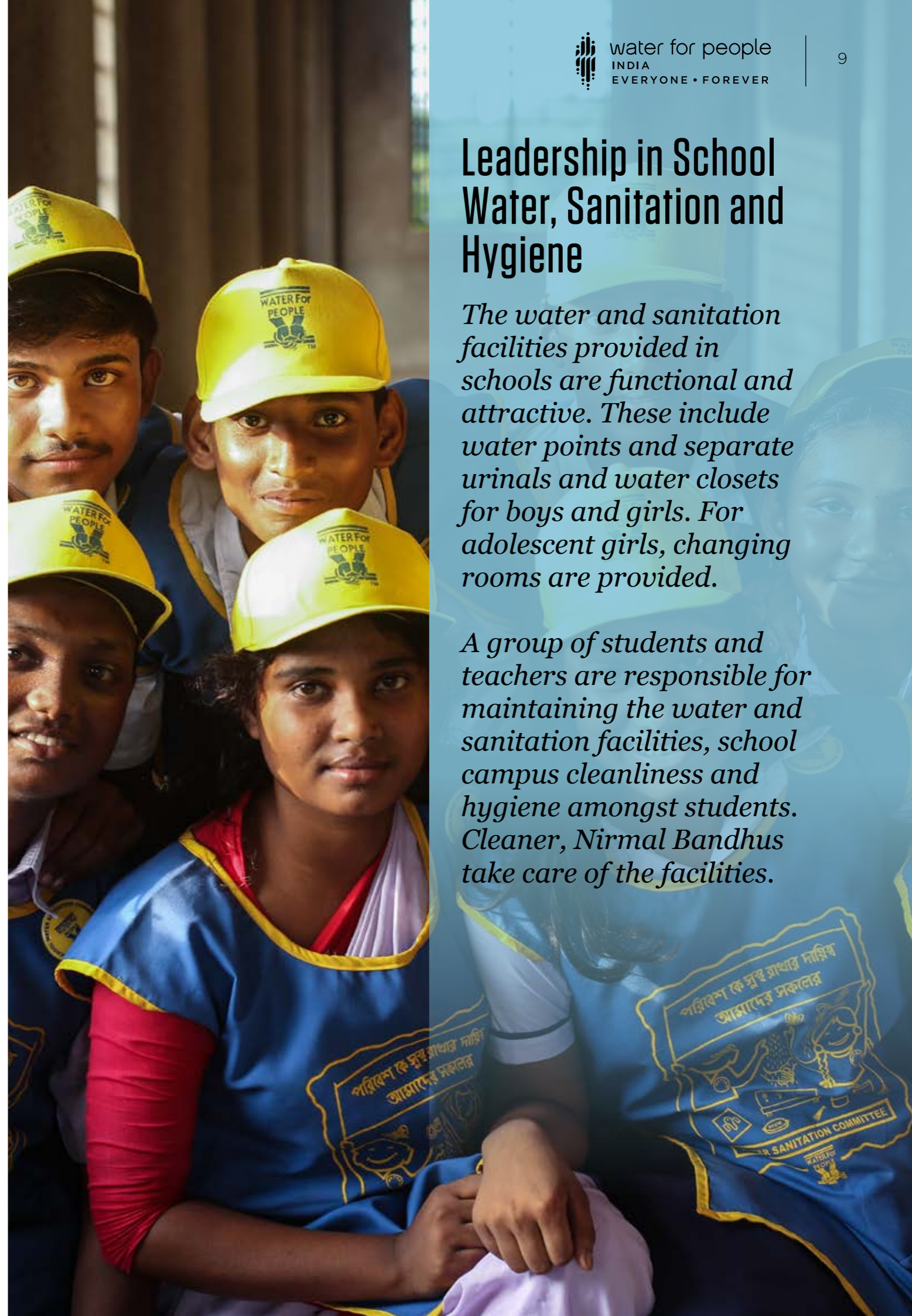
The women in the SHG wanted to build latrines for locals on a cost-sharing basis. However, it cost Rs. 6,300 (US\$ 96) to build a latrine. Women were offered a loan of Rs. 5,000 (US\$ 76) from the fund and 25 women have already applied for a loan. “It’s our money,” says Sumitra. “We should have the right to use it for our own development”.

In the next few months, the Committee plans to expand the capacity of the filter by installing an overhead tank.

## Leadership in School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

*The water and sanitation facilities provided in schools are functional and attractive. These include water points and separate urinals and water closets for boys and girls. For adolescent girls, changing rooms are provided.*

*A group of students and teachers are responsible for maintaining the water and sanitation facilities, school campus cleanliness and hygiene amongst students. Cleaner, Nirmal Bandhus take care of the facilities.*





## Real Learning: Building Leadership Qualities in Future Generations

*The child-like enthusiasm of the Headmaster triggers a chain of positivity in Hooghly District, West Bengal.*

Headmaster Amiya Ghosh is inspiring and tireless in promoting a vibrant learning environment for the primary school children in his charge.

Natungram Panchanan Das Primary School is in Mogra I Gram Panchayat of Chinsura Mogra Block in Hooghly District of West Bengal. Hooghly has been declared by the government of India as an Open Defecation Free district, which means that 90% of all households have access to toilets.

There are 181 students in the school, including two children with special needs, and there are 81 boys and 100 girls. School enrolment is gradually increasing every year due to the water and sanitation initiatives under the leadership of the Headmaster.

With support from Water For People - India and from ITC Limited's Mission Sunehra Kal initiative, the school now boasts adequate and child-friendly water and sanitation facilities. There are



separate toilet blocks with two water closets, a urinal and hand basin for the boys, and a water closet, two adapted urinals and a hand basin for the girls. Teachers have separate facilities. Headmaster Amiya Ghosh, says, "The provision of these facilities has been a great boon for us. Earlier all the children shared common facilities and had to draw water from a hand pump."

The school campus is neat, clean and informative, with creative messaging on hygiene spread over the compound area.

The Child Cabinet (an adapted form of the Cabinet in government) in the school comprises six boys and seven girls. The members of the Cabinet are vocal and informed about their roles and responsibilities. The Prime Minister of the Cabinet, Arnab, informs with a sense



of importance. "The Cabinet includes health, food, education and environment, and sports and culture ministers. Along with the Cabinet members, I need to ensure that the school is clean, monthly meetings are conducted and that any problems are solved."

The Child Cabinet Health Minister is responsible for the cleanliness of the toilets and monitoring that children maintain personal hygiene including washing their hands after using the toilets and before meals.

The Education and Environment Minister sees that there is no garbage on the premises by making sure students use the dustbins provided by Water For People - India.

The Child Cabinet has a busy schedule outside of school hours. They take home messages around safe handling of water, importance of washing hands, and not defecating in the open.

Children come to school with clean uniforms, neatly combed hair, and cut nails as part of the key hygiene behaviours the school promotes with support from Water For People - India.

The Cabinet members confess that there are times when "mischievous children" litter the compound. If their requests to keep the premises clean fall on deaf ears then they inform the Headmaster.

The Natungram Panchanan Das Primary school is the proud first prize winner of the State and second prize winner of the Central Nirmal Vidyalaya Puruskar.

The Child Cabinet also shares messaging during meetings of the Mother Teachers Association. They also organise rallies around hygiene and conduct door-to-door campaigns to promote the use of toilets.

Parents love the school and the fact that there are child-friendly drinking water and sanitation facilities. As adequate finances for their maintenance and upkeep is a challenge, the mothers commit to providing some ready cash. "We will each eat one egg less and contribute the Rs. 5 saved towards maintenance," says Meeta, a parent and member of the Village Education Committee.

"The children are sincere in their efforts to inform the elders on adopting hygienic practises," the Headmaster proudly says with a smile. "Many parents have lauded their efforts."

Aromas floating from the mid-day meal kitchen indicate that it's almost time to eat. Running water facilities are also provided for the cooks, who laughingly rattle off the hygiene practices they maintain before, during and after preparing the meal.

Meanwhile the Headmaster continues to tirelessly work towards increasing the knowledge of children on water and sanitation related issues, through posters, games and other means as evident in the numerous citations and prizes that the children have won.



## Bringing Safety to Numbers

### *Addressing WASH requirements for 1,700 students in Hooghly suddenly appears easy*

Dr. Partho Pratim Mukhopadhyay, Headmaster of the Bagati Ramgopal Ghosh High School is categorical in his praise for Water For People - India's work as part of ITC Limited Mission Sunehra Kal Initiative. "These two organizations have supported the construction of improved water and sanitation facilities in the school, and enabled a learning environment. I am deeply indebted to the organizations," he states upfront and he is clear about why.

"Water, sanitation and hygiene are critical for the physical and mental development of children," he explains. "Mental development is linked to physical development. Water contamination causes diseases. With the drinking water facilities now available, we can deliver potable water. Girls did not have changing rooms and there was no incinerator. With the presence of comprehensive sanitation facilities, the students are more comfortable and as a result attendance has shot up considerably. This again positively influences mental development." The availability of a nutritious mid-day meal only adds to the physical and mental development. There is a



drinking water station and handwashing facility available where the food is cooked.

The Bagati Ramgopal Ghosh High School has around 1,700 students. Between Class V-X there are only boy students, numbering around 1,150. The remaining students are girls admitted to Class XI and XII only.

The improved water and sanitation facilities, with separate toilet blocks for girls and boys with running water, change room with incinerator for girls, and separate drinking water and handwashing stations, were completed in 2016. A 50-member Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) Committee comprised of only boys has been recently formed. This is a new concept for the school.



The Committee comprising students and a teacher is responsible for monitoring the facilities and personal hygiene of the students. Facilities include four water closets and 13 urinals for boys and two water closets, three urinals and one changing room and an incinerator for girls. There is one drinking water station with running water and one handwashing station for the mid-day meal cooks. Members meet once a month to resolve any issues. An account in the name of the WATSAN Committee was opened in January 2017, in which the annual operations and maintenance (O&M) fees of Rs. 20 per student is deposited. Presently there is a total of approximately Rs. 10,000 in this account to pay for cleaning material, soaps for handwashing, etc.

"We engage with the students as they enter Class V and get into Class VI. This gives us ample time to influence hygienic practices," informs the Headmaster.

The attractive, clean, and functional facilities have inspired a sense of ownership among the students who now maintain their cleanliness. "The students are acting as a bridge to communicate hygiene messages to their homes and villages," shares the Headmaster.



The mid-day meal is managed by a group of eight cooks, who have been rigorously trained on how to manage the meals. There is a separate water station for the kitchen. The school organized a training on 'taste and nutrition' for cooks from other schools in the block in 2015.

Class XI girl students have some suggestions on personal hygiene. "There is a need for more awareness on menstrual hygiene so that all students have a common understanding," suggests Shweta. "Some simple training to use the napkin vending machine would be useful," chips in Mousumi. "We also need to know how to manage pain during menstruation," suggests Nisha.

The Headmaster appreciates these inputs and smiles. "We have just begun the journey with our partners. Together we will address these issues to ensure a comfortable environment at school and lessons that can also help at home."







## Responsive Leadership

*Sheer determination and cooperation led to the creation of adequate school WASH facilities, improved personal hygiene and attendance.*

Rajkiya Madhya Vidyalaya is a school in Bansi Pachara Village of Sonbarsa Gram Panchayat, Tariyani Block in Sheohar District of Bihar. It dates back to 1890. In 2017, the school turned 127 years old.

Unfortunately, the school always suffered from sanitation and hygiene-related issues. Students defecated in the open, female students and teachers had no option left than taking leave or early departure during menstruation or when in need of a toilet. The girls also suffered from hygiene related illnesses.

“It was good thinking that we could provide water and sanitation facilities to our children,” recalls Sanjay Singh, the Headmaster of the school, who was instrumental in getting the facilities. “Earlier we had only one toilet for both boys and girls, which was highly inadequate.” No disputing that: in 2017, there were 500 children in the school and 12 teachers.



Mr. Singh continues, “In 2013 we visited the neighbouring school, Bishanpur Fakira, and saw the sanitary complex constructed by Water For People - India with good water and sanitation facilities. We then contacted the NGO instrumental for this and requested they support us as well. In keeping with the co-financing principle, we suggested the conversion of the spare room in our school into toilets.

Even though the room was used to store junk, the villagers objected, stating, “Where will the students go?” We then organized a School Education Committee meeting and explained the proposition to the parents who immediately agreed. In addition to providing the room, the school contributed Rs. 16,000 (US\$250) for construction.

The school now has five toilet stalls for girls and one changing room. For the boys, there are three latrines and three urinals.

The infrastructure was ready by early 2015, but was not used as expected. As the school had no boundary wall, the villagers would enter the school campus, use the toilet and water point and dirty it. The school authorities discussed this with the villagers and a solution was found. The villagers could use one of the water points but only after school hours.

All this led to increased collaboration between the villagers and the school administration. Villagers now keep a watch on people from other villages and stop them from dirtying the facilities. Villagers have now been motivated to send their children regularly to school.

“There is a marked difference for us,” informs Nutan Kumari, the Hindi and English teacher. “Earlier we would drink less water and were thus prone to infection. While the girls tried to use the existing facilities, the boys would go out. This is no longer the case.”

NGO staff trained school children and teachers on the importance and means to maintain personal hygiene. Children learned about proper usage of toilets, brushing of teeth, cutting of nails, bathing, wearing clean uniforms and other hygiene practices for a healthy life.

The school’s Water and Sanitation Committee is made up of four girls and four boys, who are responsible for the upkeep of the WASH infrastructure and the personal hygiene of the students. “We hold classes for girls to explain healthy menstrual hygiene practices. There are napkins available in the changing room and a disposal system,” they shared.

This Committee is also trained on operations and maintenance issues of the WASH infrastructure. The school has been linked to a Nirmal Bandhu, a local cleaner, who takes care of the cleanliness of the toilets.

He shared that every month, all the 12 teachers contribute their own money to cover the expenses of his cleaning services and the cost of cleaning supplies. He is paid Rs. 450 per month.

The Committee is leaving no stone unturned to instill hygienic practices amongst the students. During the morning assembly, members of the committee check uniforms, nails and hair. After assembly, they go to each class in groups of 2-3 to conduct five-minute sessions on hygiene. Their efforts have reaped dividends, as now, almost every student comes to school in clean uniforms, with nails cut and hair combed.

According to the school records, after the implementation of the program the overall attendance has increased from 60% to 75%. The increase has been more marked in the case of girls: up to 25%, from 55% to 80%. Early departure numbers of students have declined and the numbers of female teachers leaving school during menstruation has also gone down.

In August 2015, when the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, the school submitted its nomination for the “Nirmal Vidyalaya Puraskar” award for Sheohar and won it! This annual award is given to one school, which fulfills the criteria of being best in cleanliness, attendance, education, infrastructure, and overall management.

“I have no words to express my happiness of being awarded with the prestigious ‘Nirmal Vidyalaya Puraskar’ for being the best school, among the 500 plus schools of the whole Sheohar District,” says Mr. Sriram Prasad Gupta, the current Headmaster. The school faculty and students credited Water For People - India for this award. According to them the efforts of Water For People - India were instrumental in providing WASH infrastructure and improving personal hygiene.

For seventh grader Rupali Kumari, the journey has only just begun. “I will not rest until my school becomes the best school in the state and the country,” she says with determination.

## Women Leadership

*Women play a significant role in assuring that their families and community have access to clean drinking water, sanitation and hygiene.*

*The inherent leadership qualities in women emerged – even in the most remote locations – as they confidently took on their responsibilities.*

*The women have encouraged the demand for toilets through raising awareness while also contributing to the construction and management of drinking water systems.*



### Converting Rs. 5 Lakh (US \$7,840) Into Assets Worth Rs. 30 Lakh (US \$47,000), And Counting!

*Purnima Roy, Treasurer of the Self Help Group (SHG) Cluster in Howrah, Kolkata, achieves what few could have even dreamt of: construction of 300 Individual Household Latrines (IHHLs) in only seven months.*

Juargori is a Gram Panchayat (GP) in Uluberia II Block of Howrah District of West Bengal. The Juargori Narimilan Sanga SHG Cluster comprises of Groups from 11 villages. In late 2016, the Cluster was approached by the staff of Water For People - India to construct IHHLs in their Gram Panchayat (GP) with support from the Block Officials under the ITC Limited Mission Sunehra Kal Initiative. Purnima's answer was an emphatic "No."

"How could this Cluster even dare to take on such a responsibility," Purnima explains. She is one of the SHG members. Undeterred, Water For People - India and ITC discussed the opportunity with the Cluster's Up-Pradhan (President) who, in turn, encouraged and offered support to the Cluster. The Cluster then agreed.



Work began with a survey of households in Ambaberia Village in this GP, where it was found that only 39 households had individual latrines. Doubts resurfaced in earnest. "The task seemed humungous. How would we women be able to bring it all together? We'd need to involve the labour, get the hardware material, get trained masons for the construction," recalls Purnima, who then outlined the support she got from Water For People - India. A workshop was organised wherein the Block government officials explained the technological steps needed and provided information on what was required to build an IHHL. Another workshop for masons was conducted where 25 people from the SHG Federation were trained to construct the latrines. This four-day training, also attended by the Gram Pradhan, was facilitated by Nirmal Sahayak, and a GP engineer. The women



constructed a model toilet within three days of the training.

The Cluster had already selected the recipients for the latrines and construction began within a week. Prior to this, the households were visited by the Swachhta Doot (Community Volunteer) and a contribution of Rs. 900 (US\$14) was collected from each household. To further support the initiative, a Rs. 5 lakh (US\$7,840) loan was provided under the project as a revolving fund to the Cluster.

The documentation was properly prepared and receipts of the contributions were given to the beneficiary, the SHG Cluster and the GP. Material was provided to the households and receipts given. A No Objection Certificate was submitted along with a copy of an identity proof and the construction was supervised by the five-member Core Committee comprising of SHG members.

Simultaneously, discussions and meetings were held with the villagers to inform them of the importance of using toilets, the need for an environment that is open defecation free (ODF) and toilet maintenance systems. These efforts bore fruit, as the construction of 300 toilets was completed by March 2017.

The work of this SHG Cluster has been widely appreciated at the block administration level. 'To work towards a Nirmal or ODF block,

the GPs have been allocated to different stakeholders to facilitate 100% coverage and an ODF environment.

In our review meetings, the Joint Block Development Officer (BDO) often tells the other lagging groups, "Look at this group of women who have achieved what they have set out to do. You people are forever making excuses. Learn from them."

The Joint BDO of Uluberia II, Bishwajit Chakraborti candidly admits, "I was a bit hesitant to assign this responsibility to the SHG Cluster. However, consultation with my seniors and meetings with both Water For People - India and ITC Ltd. instilled the confidence that results would be delivered. The SHGs have done a great job. By April 2017, we had already reimbursed the funds for the construction for 142 toilets. The rest will be reimbursed as the documentation is completed. From all the agencies working here, I have no hesitation in saying that the support provided by ITC Ltd. and Water For People - India has been the best."

Chakraborti is also clear about the road ahead. "After coverage, the focus needs to shift to usage and people need to be intensely involved so that the desired behaviour change takes place."

This experience has helped the SHG Cluster gain credibility. "The Pradhan has complete trust in us since our paperwork is complete and transparent," informs a proud Purnima. "The quality of work executed by this group is very good," endorses Tanushree Singh, the Gram Pradhan.

Purnima jokingly recalls, "We would have arguments with Water For People - India almost daily in the beginning. But without their encouragement and technical support, we would not be here today."

The Juargori Narimilan Sanga SHG Cluster, is not resting on its laurels. It has been asked to construct 120 IHHLs for the adjoining Baniban GP. The women are all geared up for this and are raring to go.



## A Journey From Shame to Prestige

*Women in Godhan Village make sanitation their mission.*

"Every month we used to spend around Rs. 2,000 of our hard-earned money on doctor's fees, mostly for preventable diseases. We simply lacked knowledge of hygienic practises," shares Safina Khatun, 35-year old member of Godhan Village, Surgahi Gram Panchayat in Tariyani Block of Sheohar District, Bihar. Safina is a peer hygiene educator for her community. She is also the proud owner and user of an individual household latrine that was constructed in July 2016.

With 350 households, the village consists of a largely poor and mixed population of caste and religion. Men migrate to other states to work as agricultural labourers and women take care of their families while working hard to earn some money. Savings are next to none.

As part of the Sheohar, Bihar Program managed by Water For People - India and supported by One Drop, a Social Art Field Facilitator visited the village to conduct a survey and create awareness on hygiene. Social art is a form of



behaviour change communication through local artists that activate, inspire, and sustain behaviour change by connecting with people at an emotional level. Most of the women the Facilitator met were unaware about basic hygiene practices. They consumed uncovered food and water, and rarely washed their hands or brushed their teeth. Their teeth and nails were stained, and stomach-related complaints were common. Trash was everywhere in the village.

As the women were keen to learn about hygiene practices, a multi-disciplinary show focusing on sanitation and hygiene was organized and meetings were conducted with Panchayati Raj Institution members and community leaders. In a follow up visit, the facilitator noted the women's eagerness to learn, and the 18-member 'Khushbu Sanitation Group' was formed to



strengthen their hygiene knowledge and help them become peer educators for others.

A month and several training sessions later, these women were ready to carry forward the hygiene initiative. They conducted meetings with villagers and informed them about the benefits of simple hygiene practices such as covering food, bathing daily, washing hands at critical times, and cutting their fingernails.

The story does not end there. Another important challenge before them was the absence of household toilets. Whenever they went alone in the field for defecation, they were taunted. The village leaders expressed helplessness saying, "Either you built an individual latrine in your home or ignore the eve-teasing." A few days later, they heard about a child dying due to a snake bite while defecating in the open. The very same day, the women began conversing with male members of their family about the construction of toilets. The men cited the lack of money and mentioned that there was no harm in going out for open defecation as this was an age-old customary practice.

However, the women saw a ray of hope when the Facilitator informed about the availability of a sanitation loan from a local microfinance institution (MFI). Their spouses agreed to take out the loan on one condition: the women would pay the loan on their own. The women willingly agreed.

In early July 2016, a Loan Officer from Water For People - India's MFI partner, Centre for Development, Orientation and Training

(CDOT), visited the village to inform the women about the sanitation loan terms and conditions, and to provide support in accessing the loan for the construction of latrines.

The Loan Officer also informed about the loan process and the need to form a Joint Liability Group (JLG) of five, all-women members. Fifteen women, including Safina and her acquaintances, Khushbu and Manju, and other like-minded females formed three separate groups and named them Khushbu Mahila Mandal, Safina Mahila Mandal and Manju Mahila Mandal.

After the due diligence process, each member received a loan of Rs. 10,000 on an agreement to repay in twelve installments of Rs. 955 per month. The toilets have since been constructed and the repayments are being made.

The commitment of the women to spread hygiene awareness continues. When Safina goes out to sell bangles or Manju is present in her grocery store, they spend five to ten more minutes with every customer and explain to them the importance of including good hygiene practices in their lives and encourage the construction of household toilets.

The members of the JLGs conduct hygiene classes for children and motivate women and children on latrine construction and use. To adolescent girls, the women also teach menstrual hygiene.

According to one such adolescent girl, when there were no toilets at home, in addition to the challenge of open defecation, they faced embarrassment during menstruation. There was no privacy possible, so napkins were changed less frequently leading to poor menstrual hygiene and subsequent health implications. Personal hygiene levels have also increased among adolescents due to improved practices and access to the latrines.

"We no longer have to give money to doctors. We are now able to focus on hygiene and our children's education," smiles Sheela Devi.



## Sharing and Caring

*A little hand-holding and dogged persistence pays. It also leads to sharing with the have-nots.*

Meet 30-year old Krishna Devi, a home-maker and mother of three children living in Basant Jagjeevan Village, a community of farmers and people belonging to Schedule Caste social group in Purnaiya Block of Sheohar District in Bihar. There are seven people living in her house and though she is illiterate, she sends all three children to school - first-generation learners in the family.

Krishna recalls how it all began in April 2015, when a Social Art Field Facilitator from Water For People - India visited Krishna's village to create awareness around hygiene. Krishna and other women in the village shared that they walked over two kilometres to fetch drinking water from the neighbouring village, as the water source they had close by was pulled from a shallow aquifer that provided yellow (and possibly heavily contaminated) water. The consumption of this water stained their teeth, nails, clothes and even affected the rice they cooked. They also suffered from gastritis and other stomach ailments.

The women needed help to gain access to safe



drinking water and learn how to respond to their community's hygiene challenges.

As part of the Facilitator needs assessment on the main barriers and determinants to key hygiene behaviours, the problem identified was that none of the households had a deep source of drinking water. People were unaware about the health problems caused by water from a shallow source.

To address this issue, Water For People - India organized a multi-disciplinary show to generate awareness on the importance of using water from a deep source, as well as improved sanitation and hygiene.

The goal was that this new awareness would change behaviour and generate demand for a deep drinking water source. In addition, a few



meetings were conducted with Panchayati Raj Institution members, and community leaders.

During this time, Krishna Devi decided to install a deep hand pump in her home as a private water supply. She talked with her husband who vehemently opposed the idea initially. Krishna continued to persevere, hopeful of convincing him.

She finally gave him an ultimatum: if he did not get the hand pump installed, she would leave to stay at her parent's house where they had a hand pump from a safe water source. Her husband finally agreed and after spending Rs. 15,000 got the hand pump installed.

Krishna and her family's health improved as gastric infections and skin rashes declined. The food was not stained anymore. Krishna saves almost two and half hours every day by not walking for water. The irritation she earlier felt due to lack of energy has all but vanished and has been replaced by a healthy and positive attitude.

Just like Krishna, the other women had become aware of the importance of an improved drinking water source to lessen their ailments. They wanted to have a deep water source in their homes. However, due to limited funds they were unable to get one installed.

Observing this, Krishna began to share the water from her personal hand pump with her neighbours. Since then, between 10 to 15 households are accessing her water and benefitting from it. Now, households are faced with less of a decision-making burden – do they spend their limited income on medicines or on their children's education?

Krishna shared how earlier she would hide her sicknesses from her family, as she did not want to spend money on medicines because she wanted to spend it on her children's education instead.

Krishna explains, "Our health has improved, and now we don't have stomach problems. The money saved on medicines is now being used on my children's education. Many times, my husband and I talk to the people who come to his shop about the benefits of clean drinking water and we motivate them to fetch drinking water from a deep and clean source."

Life has changed for Krishna and her family. One of their most basic needs – clean drinking water – has been taken care of. The family has access to safe drinking water at home.

This change has not only benefitted her family but also increased Krishna's own confidence. Earlier Krishna was too shy to speak a word in front of others, but now she participates in community meetings to talk about the importance of potable water.



## Inspired and Inspiring

*An all-women Water User Committee (WUC) in a remote island manages their drinking water supply system.*

Women of the Sunita Williams Self Help Group (SHG) formed in 2007, are members of the all-women WUC, Ganga Mahila Sanirbhar. Brishnupur is a village in the Ganga Sagar Gram Panchayat of Sagar block on Sagar island. There are 30 households in this village.

Water For People - India took the decision to work in Brishnupur for a reason. The community was residing in a geographically remote area with few freshwater sources on the island – only tube wells drilled to depths between 900 to 1,000 feet. There was a dire need for fresh drinking water.

Women in this village had a tough task to meet their drinking water requirements. "We would walk two kilometres to Chandipur, the nearest village to fill our pot of water," recalls Sadhana Patra, Secretary of the WUC.

"The journey became even more risky during the monsoon season. The rains would pour down on us and the roads would become slushy. We would have to wade through wet and sticky



mud up to our knees to get to the hand pump." The local Gram Panchayat office gave Water For People - India a list of villages facing water shortages where there was no nearby drinking water, and where pond water was used for cooking, washing utensils and bathing. As a result, skin and eye infections were the norm.

Excited at the prospect of a solution, the community chipped in whatever their capacity allowed. They contributed their labour, towards building the shed over the hand pump and electricity for lighting the water point.

The functional hand pump was inaugurated amongst great revelry in March 2015 in the presence of the Gram Pradhan.

Malati Giri, Treasurer of the WUC says, "This



hand pump is a boon for us, especially during the monsoon. We now have more time to ourselves.” Purnim Godei adds, “With water now available close by, we save on time and the incidence of disease has declined.”

The WUC meets once a month to collect Rs. 20 monthly tariff and go over any issues with the daily operations and maintenance of the water point. “The men chip in if repairs are required,” informs Malati.

During the meeting, they clean the platform as a part of best practice to keep the water point hygienic. The Committee visits each house to inform members on hygiene practices as every household has an individual toilet.

Malati is proud of her Bachelor in Arts degree and is the Secretary of the Sunita Williams SHG formed in 2007. She is a district-level trainer for other SHGs and often visits other blocks to deliver training.



The Group is involved in fisheries, horticulture, and plant nurseries. The climate is conducive for the cultivation of potato, leafy and other vegetables, rice and a host of fruits.

Malati notes that the 20-member SHG has more than Rs. 2 lakh in their bank account. Each month, the members willingly deposit Rs. 150 each.

The collectivization of these women on these two platforms: SHG and WUC has empowered them and led to solving several community-level issues such as domestic violence and alcohol abuse.

The WUC visits each house and informs on hygiene practices. Being an active member of two collectives, the women are an example of how their learning and growing confidence has benefitted their community.



## Reactivating Group Initiatives

*Reviving Self Help Groups (SHGs) for sanitation in Ganjam District of Odisha yields preliminary results.*

Under ITC Limited Mission Sunehra Kal Initiative in Hinjilicut block in Ganjam district of Odisha, SHGs are being revived and supported to promote sanitation.

When Water For People - India partnered with ITC to provide Individual Household Latrines (IHHLs), little did they know the gap between records and facts on the ground. The approach agreed upon was to tap the potential of the SHGs and through a revolving fund, adequate training and close support, facilitate the construction of latrines.

In December 2017, Water For People - India approached the Hinjilicut Block Development Office where the Block Junior Engineer gave the names of 721 SHGs in the block. However, an in-depth analysis of the list indicated that several of the SHGs were in different stages, with some lying dormant and others having been closed. Water For People - India shortlisted those that were still active, and contacted four SHGs that were encouraged to resurrect themselves. Water For People - India then worked to provide an



updated list of SHGs to the Block Development Office.

Previously, under the sanitation program, contractors were responsible for the construction, community ownership was weak, and the quality of work was suspect. Water For People - India convinced the SHGs to take up this task so that there was stronger ownership and quality assurance. The ten-member Maa Godeshwara SHG of Sompur Village in Pochilima Gram Panchayat of Ganjam District was the first of the four SHGs to take up the task. Under the program, SHGs were supported with a Rs. 15 lakh (US\$23,500) revolving fund for the construction of 125 IHHLs.

During the initial interactions, the SHG members were skeptical and reluctant. Belonging to vulnerable and excluded social groups, their

self-esteem and confidence levels were very low. To address this, regular meetings between the SHG members and the project team were maintained. Gradually they shed their layers of doubt and agreed to get going by starting on the construction of toilets for Group members. The rationale was that once this happened, other villagers would ask for the construction of latrines for themselves. To assist them, Water For People - India provided mason training to the SHG members.

However, remnants of doubt persisted and the group was reluctant to move forward. Water For People - India worked with them to set a smaller initial target of 20 IHHLs, so that members would not be overwhelmed with the scale of constructing 125 IHHLs. A smaller revolving fund of Rs. 6.60 lakh was disbursed. The SHG was linked to an organization that supplied building materials (barring stone and sand) at a low cost of Rs. 1,960 per IHHL to their doorstep. For any latrine built, the SHG is eligible to submit a claim to the government for a reimbursement of Rs. 12,000 towards the construction cost.

The SHG visited Puri and Narsingpur District to understand the details of the sanitation program there and this exposure proved to be a game changer. The women returned with greater confidence after interacting with other SHG members who were instrumental in making Puri an Open Defecation Free district. They could share concerns, experiences and solutions. Sasi Gouda, President of the SHG highlighted, "This visit coupled with the triggering activity was a turning point for us. It made us believe in the critical need for eradicating open defecation. And more importantly, it made us believe in ourselves." Pratima Da, Secretary of the Namaskar SHG discussed how their visit to Puri and Narsingpur was eye-opening. "We learned so much from them in terms of how they function, toilet construction and usage. We decided to make toilets for our members first so that others will follow suit," informs Pratima.

"Our toilets are more user friendly," informs SHG member Promila Padhy, "We are providing for more space and ventilation. Construction

quality is good and is monitored by us. To change behaviour, we are informing our villagers about the disease perils of open defecation and the revolting fact that we are ending up eating each other's faeces."

"Some of the households are adding more investment to increase the size of their latrine and provide for bathing space," informs Sasi Gouda. "Looking at the quality and pace at which we are constructing toilets, the contractor is reinvesting in the toilets he constructed by repairing them, so that these can be used. This is a good thing," laughs Sasi.

Gradually, confidence levels are growing and the women are intensely involved in interpersonal communication. They are convincing other women to practice hygiene and get a toilet constructed.

For behaviour change, local art forms such as *daskathia* (a mythological performance in the form of poem narrated by two men - the singer and his assistant. A unique and indigenous musical instrument called 'Kathi' is used during the performance to narrate good hygiene practices and promote construction of latrines and its usage) and *bharat leela* (skit performance by an artist through which hygiene messages are imparted) are being used. Dignity (toilet) is a big issue for women here.

The Namaskar and the Jai Sri Ram SHGs have been convinced to construct toilets in Pochilima village in the same Gram Panchayat. Sukuri Das, President of one SHG informs, "We have revived the Jai Sri Ram SHG. Again, bank saving is becoming a habit and we have opened a new account for our sanitation work."

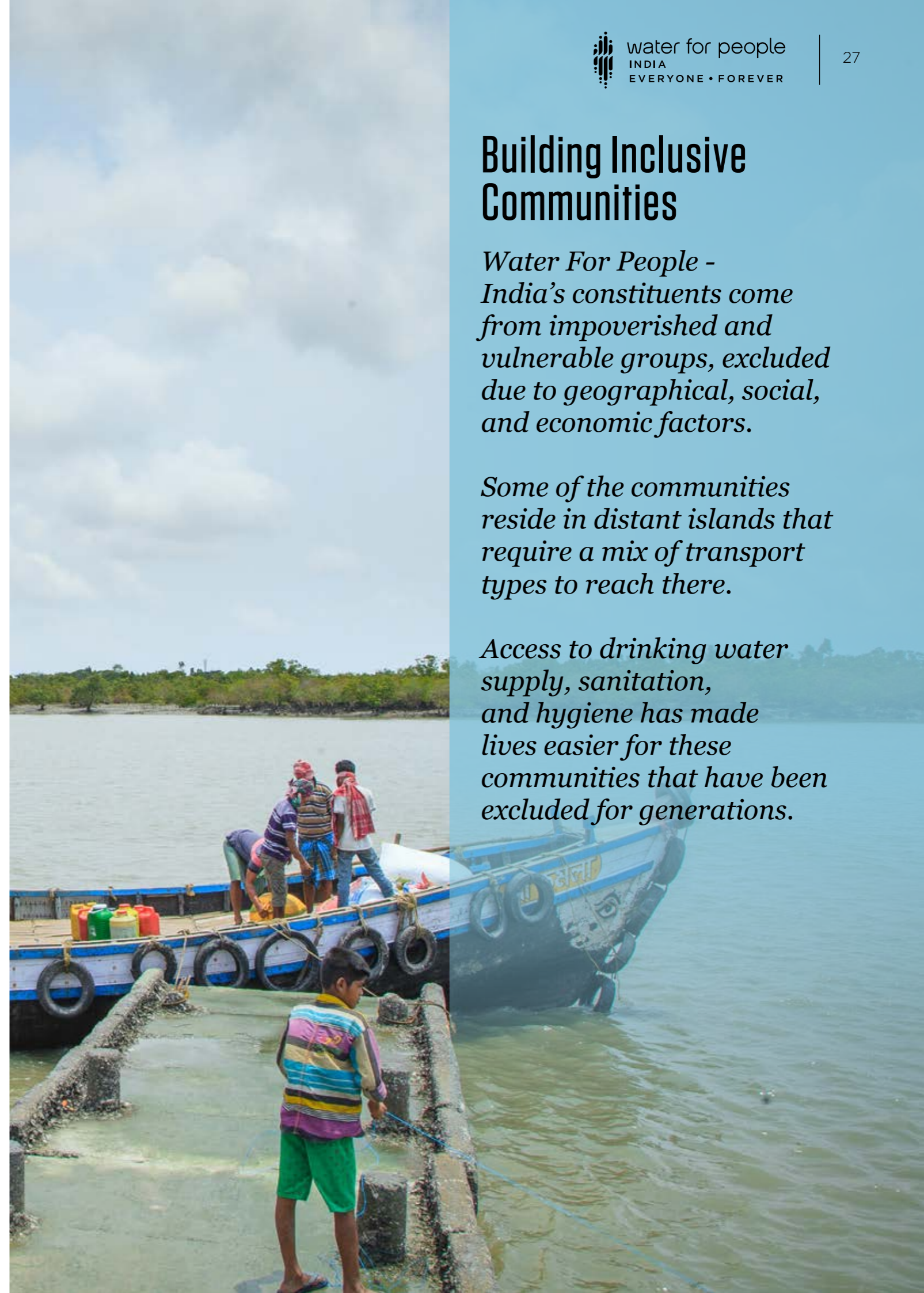
To assist with the construction, two masons were trained. Informs a confident Haribol Nayak, "I can now impart training to others. Up to March 2017, 125 IHHLs have been constructed by all four SHG clusters."

## Building Inclusive Communities

*Water For People - India's constituents come from impoverished and vulnerable groups, excluded due to geographical, social, and economic factors.*

*Some of the communities reside in distant islands that require a mix of transport types to reach there.*

*Access to drinking water supply, sanitation, and hygiene has made lives easier for these communities that have been excluded for generations.*





## Reaching Out to Everyone

*In keeping with the “Everyone Forever” approach of Water For People - India, the needs of the most marginalized are looked after.*

Paswan Tola, a Mahadalit community in Ward No. 12 of Sarsaula Khurd Village is a rural area in Sheohar District of Bihar. Residents here have faced water-related issues for many years. There was not a single source of safe drinking water in this hamlet that comprised of 40 households and 250 people. The community was dependent on a pond one kilometre away for all its domestic water needs, including drinking water. Though there was a water point in the neighbouring hamlet, the people from Paswan Tola were not allowed to fetch water from there due to discrimination. The Mahadalit community is the most vulnerable and excluded in the social hierarchy.

With the men migrating to the cities in search of work, the women shouldered the responsibility of taking care of the family. In the absence of any alternative source of water, women and girls were forced to go to the pond to fetch water, often making multiple trips in a day. With their mothers taking care of other household chores,



girls often ended up going to fetch water, which frequently made them late for school. With the fear of being punished for being late, girls were often reluctant to go to school at all and many ultimately dropped out. Parents were also reluctant to send girls to school to begin with, as they were a big help in managing the house, especially when the men of the household were absent. Since these girls and women were from the Mahadalit community, they were often further discriminated against and often at times harassed.

There were health implications as well. Since the pond was also used for bathing and washing, the water quality decreased, making it further unsuitable for drinking and cooking. Community members used to fall ill frequently, but they had no other option for potable drinking water.



The community of Sarsaula Khurd, came to know about the Water For People - India project in the neighbouring hamlet of Ward No 13. They approached the NGO, requesting the installation of a community water point.

The needs assessment undertaken by Water For People - India revealed that potable drinking water was not available in the community and they were unable to afford the cost of installation independently. Additionally, external financial support would be required.

Subsequently, a suitable piece of land for the waterpoint was identified, as well as options for community contributions for co-financing. An issue concerning the lack of space was solved when one community member donated his land for the construction of the water point. The community contributed 350 bricks (worth Rs. 2,565) and labour (worth Rs. 1,000) - a major accomplishment given the Mahadalit community's significantly low economic status.

The community formed a Water User Committee, opened a bank account, and deposited Rs. 2,000 to cover the operations and maintenance costs. The community water point was completed in June 2016.



The community has managed the water point successfully, organizing regular meetings and staging street plays to influence behaviour change. Now community members collect water only for cooking and drinking purposes from the community hand pump.





## Securing the Future

*One man's quest to ensure a water-stress free life for his children.*

For Bimal Samanta, 45, a resident of Sagar Island, South 24 Parganas District in West Bengal, reliable access to potable water is a new reality. For as long as he can remember, he walked three kilometers every day to fetch water. He even went on to raise his two sons with summers spent fetching water, and rainy seasons marked by knee-deep mud and submerged wells.

"The struggle for water was our life," he recalls. "My wife and I grew up and got married under the same struggle."

In 2015 Water For People - India partnered with the local government to rehabilitate the broken tube well in the community with a raised platform to prevent flooding. Today it is the primary water source for over 160 people.

"This water source is our lifeline," says Samanta. "Now, we can confidently think about our economic development, without the niggling headache of arranging for safe and accessible



purified drinking water, free of water-borne diseases."

Samanta is so committed to making potable water a reality for everyone that he joined the Water User Committee to help maintain the water point and collect tariffs. Even though the committee was new, they are already collecting a monthly tariff of Rs. 2 from each household. "Each member of our committee is committed to protecting the water point forever," he says, "So that our grandsons and daughters don't face the same problems like we did."

For Samanta, investing in potable water means investing in a brighter future. "I think the next generation is safe. With the assurance of purified accessible drinking water, they can grow up and achieve a life worth living."



## Breaking the Chain

*Madhuri Devi took a loan so that her daughter-in-law would not suffer from the same shame that she did.*

Thirty long years is what it took for Madhuri Devi, resident of Mahuwariya Village, in Sheohar District of Bihar to become the proud owner and user of an Individual Household Latrine (IHHL) that she constructed in May 2016.

"My daughter-in-law will not have to suffer the shame which I have gone through," ensures 50-year-old Madhuri Devi. She is the mother of 25-year-old Deepak.

Recounting her story, she states that it was not as simple as it seems today. Her story dates back to 30 years, when she got married to Ganesh, a farmer and a priest by profession, and came to this village as his bride. She found that like any other village of Sheohar, Mahuwariya's population is a mix of upper and lower castes, Dalits and other marginalized people, where men used to go to other states to work as migratory labourers and women worked in others' fields as daily labourers to earn their living. Her village consists of 200 households



with mostly first-generation learners. Though a middle school was established long ago, girls only started going to school recently. They lived in mud houses with no access to electricity or toilets at home. Like other women she too went to the fields for open defecation.

Madhuri's life came to a grinding halt when her husband died after only a few years of marriage, leaving her alone with a six-year-old son. To make ends meet, she worked multiple jobs like tending to fields, stitching, and knitting, through which she managed to earn up to Rs. 50 a day.

With tears in her eyes she shared, "Before my husband's death, everyone was respectful. After his demise, thugs began harassing me." Whenever she went alone in the field for defecation, they taunted her with abusive



In mid-December 2015, on her way to home, Madhuri saw her neighbours forming a crowd and talking to someone.

As she approached the group, she found that a Loan Officer from Water For People - India's Microfinance Institution (MFI) partner had come to the village to create awareness about using toilets and advising on how to access loans to construct IHHLs.

It was like a dream come true for Madhuri! Replying to her query about the loan process, the Loan Officer told her about forming a Joint Liability Group (JLG) consisting of five, all-women members. She formed the group and named it Ganesh Mahila Mandal Group.

The Loan Officer visited their homes and determined that they had sufficient space for the construction of toilets. In January 2016, once the verification process was complete, the group collected Rs. 260 and paid it to the MFI partner as insurance and loan processing fee.

Each member received a loan of Rs. 10,000 upon agreeing to repay the loan in 12 installments of Rs. 955 per month. Madhuri's IHHL was finally constructed in May 2016.

Although Madhuri completed her goal of constructing a toilet, she didn't stop there. Every day, after the evening prayer, the members of her JLG group meet at the community temple and promote the construction and usage of IHHLs to other women in the village.

As Madhuri had silently promised herself, she got her son married in July 2016, only after the construction of the toilet.

"Today, I am proud that my daughter-in-law is not going through the pain of humiliation and shame which I have faced. Their family will not suffer from waterborne disease, because we have stopped defecating in the open and we are protecting our water source," she says with pride.

words. When she complained about it to the village leaders, they expressed helplessness suggesting, "Either build your latrine or ignore the harassment."

Realizing that she was on her own, she started saving two rupees a day and pledged that one day she would construct a household latrine for her family.

Her dream received a boost when she saw the first toilet her landowner constructed in their house. It was the first constructed IHHL in the village.



## Pumping Up: From Bane to Boon

*Mohisamari is a small quiet village in the Gangasagar Panchayat of Sagar Island in South 24 Parganas District, West Bengal.*

Most of the people living here depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. When Water For People - India conducted a baseline survey in March-April 2015 for a community water point, there were no hand pumps in the Paschim Para hamlet. The nearest water point was two kilometres away and served almost a hundred families from two villages. During the summer months, most of the water bodies in the island dried, the water levels went down. Consequently, the water levels in the hand pumps diminished significantly.

Water For People - India intervened and installed a hand pump in Mahisamari village in May 2015. This reduced the community demand on the existing hand pump by 50%. Now the people in Mahisamari do not have to walk long distances for safe water. Mr. Vimal Paik, a resident of the hamlet, readily gave his land for the installation of the hand pump for the welfare of the community. The community members, all happy to have a hand pump close to their homes, also contributed labour and Rs. 50 per family to support the construction.



Water For People - India also formed a Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) Committee comprised of nine members, five of whom are ladies, to ensure regular operations and maintenance of the water point. The community members contribute Rs. 30 per quarter per household. The committee also has an account in the bank that now holds savings of Rs. 750 to take care of the water point. There are also two designated Jalabandhus who take care of the hand pump when repairs are required.

Mrs. Kabita Barik, WATSAN Committee member and one of the beneficiaries says, "I am very satisfied and happy with the installation of the hand pump in the village. I do not have to walk long distance to fetch water, which was a difficult task especially during the monsoon season. Also, since water quality testing has been done, I am assured that this water is safe for me and my family."



## A Safe Source of Drinking Water Gives Women More Time With Their Families

*Rakash Khali is a small village in Brajabalabpur Gram Panchayat in South 24 Parganas District, West Bengal.*

With about 45 households the biggest challenge for the village was getting water for household consumption from the nearest community hand pump which was almost a kilometer away. In addition, this hand pump was the only source of water for the adjoining villages and almost 80 to 100 families were dependent on this single water source.

Rinku Samanta, one of the residents, recalls her challenges during the monsoon season when she had to wade through knee-deep water to fetch drinking water for her family. There were no pukka roads. There was so much water in the road that it was hard to differentiate between the road and the fields. Since there were so many families dependent on this single water point, Rinku had to wait for nearly 20 minutes for her turn to get water. To make matters worse, the water pressure was also low.

Since the installation of the new community hand pump in 2015, with the support of Water For People - India, things have turned around for villagers like Rinku. Now there are only 45 to 50 households that share this community hand pump. There is a Water User Committee of 12 members looking after the operations and maintenance of the community water point.

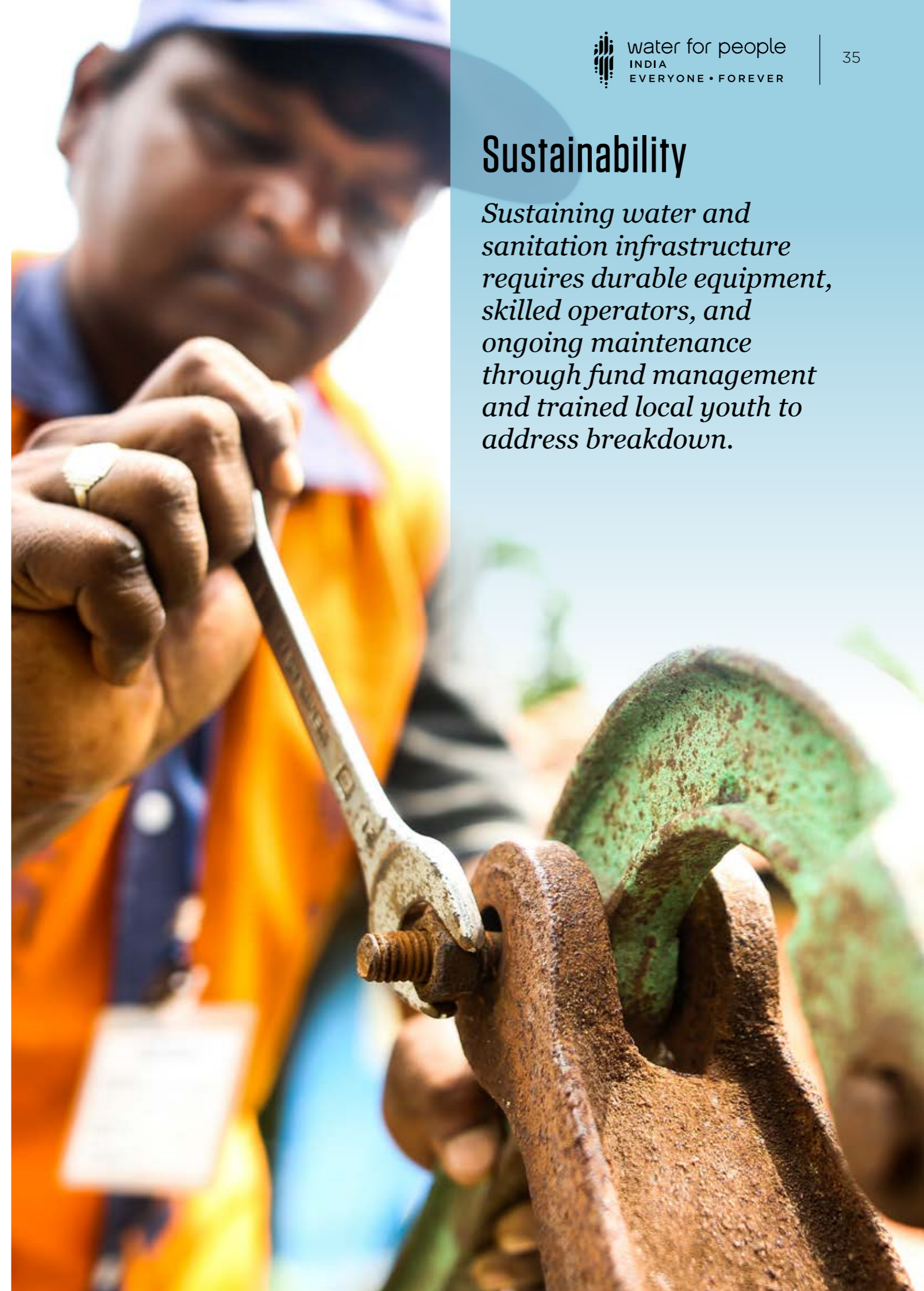
Every family contributes around Rs. 60 per month to support the upkeep of the hand pump. The community water point was made possible through a co-finance model, with a contribution from the community (Rs. 12,000) and from Gram Panchayat (Rs. 40,000).

The community also contributed in terms of labour, food for the workers, and transportation of building material. In addition, a member of the Jalabandhu (mobile hand pump mechanics) group has been linked with this Gram Panchayat when maintenance or repairs are needed

Today, these families have safe drinking water close to their homes. They regularly contribute towards the tariff to ensure the operations and maintenance of the hand pump. And this new safe source of drinking water give mothers like Rinku more time to spend with their families.

## Sustainability

*Sustaining water and sanitation infrastructure requires durable equipment, skilled operators, and ongoing maintenance through fund management and trained local youth to address breakdown.*





## The Journey from an Agricultural Labourer to a Jalabandhu

*Pramod Kumar, 35 years old, a resident of Ward No. 7, Shahpur Khotha Village of Khairwan Darp Panchayat in Sheohar Block is a “Jalabandhu” – a mobile hand pump mechanic.*

Pramod shared that his father passed away when he was just 10 years old. At that time, the impact of his loss was not yet clear. Later, he experienced the consequences of a hard life. Being the eldest among six siblings, he had to shoulder the responsibilities of the entire family. Though he was a good student, he was forced to leave school to support his mother who started working as an agricultural labourer to make ends meet. However, there were still many days when his mother and sister had to go to sleep hungry.

In order to earn extra money to support his family, Pramod helped his uncle repair cycles and carry out plumbing work. While helping his uncle, Pramod gained the skills of repairing PHE6 hand pumps. During his plumbing assignments, Pramod gained more and more skills in repairing hand pumps. The villagers



regularly had to get mechanics from outside the Block to get hand pumps repaired. This resulted in increased downtime (even up to 24 days in some cases) as well as greater expense. Pramod noticed this and started thinking about how he could address this challenge.

Pramod's ideas came to fruition when Water For People - India initiated its Jalabandhu flagship program in 2011. Through this initiative, Water For People - India aimed at reducing the downtime of defunct hand pumps and keep them functioning. Pramod participated in the technical training program on repairing different types of hand pumps and also took part in the subsequent follow-up training.

He was also given a toolkit and linked to various water points installed in the Gram Panchayats. The Water User Committees (WUCs) of these



water points were able to contact Pramod in case a hand pump needed to be repaired.

To establish his credibility, Pramod proactively reached out to the WUCs. During this interview, he recalled that he received the first phone call from a lady, asking him to come and repair the hand pump in their village. His first earning was Rs. 150 which he got for his first service.

Today, Pramod is one of the most successful Jalabandhu working in Sheohar. Besides repairing the hand pumps, which is the prime source of drinking water, he also handles the drilling work for installation of new hand pumps in the communities and schools, earning between Rs. 10,000 to 12,000 per month. He used to repair 25 to 30 hand pumps every month. His efforts have reduced downtime from 24 days to 1.5 to 2 days.

“To date I have drilled more than 350 hand pumps,” Pramod said. “And I have participated in various awareness programs organised by Water For People - India, talking to the community members about the importance of safe drinking water.”

He continues to share “I am better able to take care of the needs of my family today. I have paid off the loan that my mother had borrowed after my father's death. I aspire to give good education to my children and fulfill all their needs”.





## Game for Change

*A sarpanch's hunger for development helps pilot a household-level metered piped water supply.*

Rabindranath Bera is always up to the challenge of taking on new ideas and innovations, but with a caveat: it should benefit the people of his area. Rabindranath is the Gram Panchayat (GP) President and the Village Water and Sanitation Committee (VWSC) Chairman of Digambarpur, Patharpratima Block of 24 South Parganas District of West Bengal. One big feather in his cap is the installation, operations and maintenance of a metered, domestic piped water supply scheme that provides groundwater to 375 families. Previously, families were getting their drinking water from hundreds of individual hand pumps.

“The maintenance and repair of 200 hand pumps that supplied water to the residents was an expensive affair,” Rabindranath explained. “To simplify management, we formed local Management Committees for maintenance of the hand pump and opened bank accounts for them to reduce the dependency on the Panchayat. However, in some localities hand pumps continued to remain dysfunctional due to lack of repair. We then decided to explore having



a single source of water, which we thought would make the drinking water supply more reliable.”

It was around this time that Water For People – India approached the Panchayat to pilot a household pipedwater supply system that would be metered, tariffed and managed by the users themselves. The courageous leader that he was, Bera realised the value of this opportunity and immediately agreed.

The work began in August 2015, and was completed in September 2016, at a hardware cost of Rs. 1.56 crore. The process included: (a) site finalization in discussion with the Block officials and the GP; (b) a feasibility study and detailed project report; (c) budget and proposal finalization; (d) design and estimates finalization; (e) soil testing; (f) initiation of

construction – earth excavation, boring work, earth filling, construction of overhead tank, boundary wall and pump house, and laying of pipe; (g) formation of a piped water operation and maintenance committee; (h) electrification; (i) installation of standpoints at household level along with metering system; and (j) sensitization and community mobilization for tariff collection.

The villagers were forthcoming with their contribution to co-finance the piped water scheme. The land for the elevated reservoir and the pump house were donated by a member of the village. Villagers also contributed to the digging of trenches and other earth works. They named the operation and maintenance committee “Bhogini Nivedita Water Supply Welfare Society” which has 23 members.

### WATER SUPPLY DETAILS

**Capacity of elevated reservoir:**  
200,000 litres

**Water supply hours:** Twice in the morning and once in the evening

**Tariff:** Rs. 50 per household per month for 200 litres per day supply

**Cost of operators:** Rs. 6000 per month

**Electricity bill:** Rs. 12, 000 per month

**Registration fee (one time):** Rs. 500

With more than 6,000 households in the GP, 375 households are currently connected. Rabindranath notes, “We do have more demand for connections, but we need resources. Now that the hardware is taken care of, some support will go a long way in reaching the rest of the households. This being a pilot, we are capturing lessons from what we have achieved. We are in the process of going solar for pumping the groundwater to the tank. Costs are high since we are charged industrial rates for the electricity, which are also erratic.”

The villagers say that the major benefits of joining the piped scheme is the decline in waterborne disease, and skin and eye infections. For the women particularly, it has been a significant saving of time, freeing them to devote time for other works or for themselves. “This water supply has been a boon for our health and hygiene,” says Puspa Giri. “We used to bathe in the pond water, which was causing all kinds of allergies and infections.” Adds Sohini Giri, “Our visits to the doctor have declined.” Sapana Bera, VWSC member, explained, “Earlier, no one wanted to pay the registration fee, thinking that what was being proposed was next to impossible. Slowly, with cajoling, people began to pay, often in installments of Rs. 100. Now they have confidence. Personally, this has been a great boon for me. I can now work uninterrupted in my fields. Any time I am thirsty, I just go to my house which is nearby and quench my thirst. It’s that easy!”

As for Rabindernath, his quest for the development of his GP continues. The 16 primary schools, the upper primary school and the middle school, all have drinking water supply and sanitation facilities. “We have begun our work on solid waste management. Our streets are cleaned once a week. We are focusing on hygiene and GP infrastructure development,” Rabindernath shared.

Another initiative he is proud of is the supply of liquid petroleum gas cylinders with fire extinguishers for 19 Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) centres, which are government established pre-schools. “Women must work in a smoke free environment. We are the first in the district to create a smoke free environment for women.” This is an achievement of which he is extremely proud.

There is a sense of determination when he shares his immediate dream: to bring organic cultivation to the GP. Already, bio-fertilisers and bio-pesticides are being promoted, leading to a decline in the use of chemicals for rice, fruit, and vegetable cultivation. As Rabindranath signs off to attend local religious festivities, the journey of the Panchayat’s development continues.



## Linking Sanitation to Livelihoods: Experiences from the Om Kisan Club

*Ensuring sanitation and hygiene through a livelihood approach bears fruit.*

Marginal farmers often do not have the resources to invest in individual household latrines. Through the Sheohar Program managed by Water For People - India and supported by One Drop, these livelihood issues of marginal farmers are addressed, giving them the space to engage on sanitation issues.

Water For People - India has integrated One Drop's ABC (Access, Behaviour, and Capital) Tripod approach into its "Everyone Forever" model. The approach has three components:

**A:** To provide **access** for drinking water and sanitation for all in Sheohar

**B:** Bring about **behaviour** change for the adoption of hygienic practices through social art

**C:** Provide for **capital** for enhancing agri-based livelihood options of the farmers.



The 30-member Om Kisan Club comprising of small and marginal farmers, whose income has increased, now practice good hygiene, and now own and use their individual household latrines (IHHLs). The Club is in Meenapur Balha Village of Piprahi Block. Previously, investments on agricultural inputs, mainly chemical fertilizers and pesticides, were high. This left people with little money to take care of their essential household requirements. Although most of these families had the necessary space to construct a toilet, investing in latrines was not on their priority list.

One of the biggest challenges faced was the farmers' unwillingness to adopt new farming practices that focused on organic and biological controls. They believed that only chemical pesticides and fertilizers could increase crop production. Given how tight their profit margins



were, Water For People - India had to first gain their trust and show them that the proposed interventions would work. Through regular meetings and capacity building sessions facilitated by scientists of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (a government body), Water For People - India and local partner Kanchan Seva Ashram convinced the villagers to form the club in January 2016.

Around April 2016, technical training sessions for these farmers started. The sessions covered topics such as preparing low-cost and no-cost organic pesticides like *Kanchan Amrit*, vermin compost, and using coordinated compost pits for making organic manure. Farmers were also trained on multi-layer farming, rice intensification systems, and the use of a greenhouse nursery for increasing crop productivity. The Farmer's Club was also provided with assets such as rain-gun, sprinklers, and bore-well pumps for the frugal use of water during irrigation of their fields. Many of the women in the village make the organic bio-pesticide *Kanchan Amrit*, for their own fields and for selling to others. Poonam Devi shared, "We sell the product at Rs. 30 per litre. There is a good market for this because it is effective." Through the adoption of these techniques, the farmers have increased their incomes and reduced input costs which has added to the farmers' savings.



Meanwhile, multi disciplinary shows, street theatre and screening of short films amongst the farmers were carried out, which created awareness on the importance of WASH, and the need for an IHHL. These same messages were reinforced during their monthly meetings. The villagers acknowledged that they were suffering due to lack of sanitation facilities. The women and adolescent girls had to go out only when darkness descended. Young children defecated around the house. Illness led to loss of productivity and absenteeism. Medical bills were high. Initially, they were unaware of the relationship between some of the negative impacts and open defecation. Water For People - India helped bridge the knowledge gap and facilitate access to finance for better sanitation facilities.

The Om Kisan Club opened a bank account where farmers began to deposit at least Rs. 50 per month for the maintenance of the assets provided to the club, the purchase of new equipment, and to meet other operating costs. In February 2017, Rs. 26,000 had been deposited in the account. Water For People - India also facilitated the linking of farmers with PRI members to take advantage of the government's reimbursement scheme for households that constructed a toilet. All the construction work was done under the government's Swachh Bharat Mission program. The female farmers' club members were also motivated to form Joint Liability Groups to access sanitation loans through the Centre for Development Orientation and Training (CDOT).

What is heartening is that farmers from the adjoining village have requested the support of Water For People - India to get water and sanitation infrastructure for their village. This provides a great opportunity to scale the program and expand to other areas.



## Protecting and Sustaining Interventions

*Ensuring sustained drinking water supply often requires continued efforts.*

In 2006, Water For People - India supported the development of a drinking water system for residents of Banashyamnagar Gram Panchayat (GP) on the island of the same name in Patharpratima Block of South 24 Parganas District in West Bengal. Today, this system continues to meet the drinking water needs of the community.

Initially, the community had difficulties accessing assistance, given its remote location. Reaching the island entails a 4-5 hours drive from Kolkata to reach the coast, and then another 45-minute journey by boat. On landing, it is an hour's drive to the village. There are no cars on the island, and few two wheelers. Although almost every household has a small pond used for rearing fish, washing clothes, livestock, and domestic use, it is difficult to find non-brackish, potable drinking water. Tube wells are the safe source of water and must be installed to a depth of between 900 to 1,000 feet. Some of the drinking



water points have a space for bathing as well. Water For People - India began constructing such wells in 2006. Prior to this, there were only two tube wells catering to a population of about 20,000. With this inadequate source, people were resorting to using pond water.

Working with the GP, Water For People - India installed ten new tube wells. Unfortunately, in the absence of community engagement, the water sources were not being cared for adequately. There was little knowledge on how best to manage water sources. It was then decided to form Water User Committees (WUCs) to sustain the infrastructure, collect a tariff from users for operations and maintenance, and monitor the water quality. This forms a core piece of the "Everyone Forever" model that Water For People - India promotes at the community level.



The Committee is being strengthened to address operations and maintenance issues, and water quality testing. Already, the Committee has worked with Water For People - India to repair and deepen the well. Twelve Jalabandhus (mobile mechanics) have been trained on various issues around the water supply. These useful resource persons are being linked to the GP so that they can augment their income by providing services to others. There are now seven functional tube wells in the village.

Every year the community celebrates the anniversary of the tube well. Fresh paint is applied, the platform is cleaned, and sweets are shared after a brief celebration. A visit to this village reinforces what Water For People - India stands for: reaching out and supporting the most excluded, remote people to establish access to clean water. The investment in resources will ensure that there are many returns for local communities in the years to come.

The Bamunagheri WUC comprised 17 members. The Committee takes care of the waterpoint that supplies 25 households. Savitri Maitri, the Committee Secretary, shared, "Earlier we had to travel long distances to get a pot of water. Each trip cost us a valuable 50 to 60 minutes. During the rains, it is risky as the paths were slushy. Now we spend less than 15 minutes."

A WUC member, Aruti Maity adds, "We got the water source tested and were informed that our water quality is number one!" Savitri notes, "There has been a drastic decline in waterborne disease. We do not use the pond water for any consumption purpose such as drinking, cooking, washing hands and utensils or brushing our teeth."

The women acknowledge that the tube wells changed their lives and made it easier. There are less ailments, fewer skin and eye disorders, and healthier children.

The WUC opened a bank account and a monthly tariff collection of Rs. 2 per household was agreed upon. The Committee meets regularly to take stock of the conditions and service of the waterpoint, and then takes any necessary action. Records are diligently maintained.



## Epilogue: Being Blessed

We were almost two hours late when we went to interact with the villagers of a tola (hamlet) of 30-35 households in Parsaum Village, Kolvatha Gram Panchayat of Purnaiya block in Sheohar District of Bihar. We were so caught up in looking at the other work of Water For People - India that the time simply flew. There was so much to see.

Water For People - India's partner had already reached the hamlet on time. He informed the people about our impending visit. A little later, around 20 residents of the hamlet, including members of the Water User Committee (WUC), gathered in the shade near the waterpoint. Quickly a waterproof mat was put down, and the group chatted animatedly amongst themselves. Sarita Devi, an elderly lady of around 70 years old, kept looking at the road on which we would be arriving. She asked the NGO partner whether the staff from Water For People - India would be coming as well. When she was assured that we were on our way, she relaxed.

When we reached the hamlet, we were welcomed with a bouquet and broad smiles. But Sarita Devi had eyes only for the Water For People - India member attending the trip. Grinning her toothless smile from ear-to-ear, she blessed him with health, wealth, happiness and a long life. Only then did she turn to the rest of the group and welcome us.

Sharing the story of the installation of a tube well and hand pump in the tola, Joginder Sah, a WUC member, informed us, "Before, we had no improved source of water. We used the pond water for bathing, cleaning utensils, cooking and drinking. Even the cattle used this water for their dip." As expected, disease was rampant. "We suffered from skin, eye and stomach disorders. Our teeth got stained. We came together and approached the NGO and requested for a water point for our tola. We were ready to contribute our part. Twenty households willingly gave a contribution of Rs. 250 while two households gave Rs. 500."

The hand pump was installed and a platform and shed constructed. The WUC is comprised of 20 women who collect a monthly user fee of Rs. 5 per household. By February 2017, records indicated that they had Rs. 750 in the bank and Rs. 800 cash in-hand.

"If there are pump breakdown issues, we get together and sort it out," confidently stated Mangri Devi, another WUC member. "I visit twice a day to check cleanliness at the water point," shared Ram Ayodhya Prasad Gupta.

"Illness has come down dramatically," said Sarita Devi. She has been quite a traveller, having accompanied her husband as he worked in the fruit and vegetable wholesale market in Delhi. She has been to Haridwar, Mathura, Vaishno Devi and other religious sites.

I jokingly asked her why she was so eager to meet the Water For People - India staff. She looked at me with amazement. "Oh, they have changed our lives dramatically! My grandchildren do not fall sick, and my daughters-in-law don't have to struggle for getting water for all of us now."

As we bid goodbye, Sarita blessed us. "We bless the people who took such effort for us to get clean water. Hopefully you will pay us a visit again soon." We all left with a feeling of accomplishment and warm thankful hearts in providing people with access to such a fundamental need.

We had the wonderful opportunity to interact with people who are leading longer, healthier, wealthier, safer and easier lives due to the efforts of Water For People - India, its program partners, donors, supporters, the government and the villagers themselves.

*Leadership can be found anywhere, and in anyone. All it needs is a nudge and a purpose.*

## What They Said

*We appreciate Water For People - India's efforts in implementing Nirmal Sankalp Project in Titagarh. They have introduced a pay-and-use sanitation model wholly managed by the beneficiaries themselves, which is a unique initiative towards sustainable community sanitation solutions.*

**Neepa Saha Sharmaa**  
Head - CSR, CESC Ltd.

*Water For People - India has been able to draw attention of government towards sanitation issues of school children.*

*There have been new dimensions added to the infrastructure support for schools by strengthening school sanitation committees and involving them to resolve sanitation issues.*

*The model that Water For People - India has introduced has greater focus on sanitation problems of high school girls, which definitely improves girls' attendance and protects them from becoming dropouts.*

**Kaushal Kumar Sinha**  
Tata Chemicals Society for Rural Development



## Glossary

**Jalabandhu:** A Jalabandhu (friend of water) is a mobile hand pump mechanic trained by Water For People - India to take care of the repair and maintenance of hand pumps installed by the organization in communities and schools. Water For People - India ensures that each water point in a community or school is linked with a Jalabandhu so as to ensure minimum downtime of broken down infrastructure.

**Mission Sunehra Kal:**

*ITC Limited's social investment program aimed at strengthening rural livelihood through:*

- ITC e-Choupal
- Wasteland Development through Social Forestry
- Soil & Moisture Conservation Programs
- Livelihood Development Initiatives

*Building skills and social infrastructure through:*

- Primary Education, Health and Sanitation
- Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality

**Mother Teacher Association:** Mother Teacher Association is a body of teachers and mothers at the Primary School level who undertake various decisions related to the school and education of the children in a participatory manner.

**Multi-disciplinary Show:** A multi-disciplinary show is a large-scale theatre show which is engaging and playful, grounded on local folklore and culture, targeting key problems of water and sanitation and more specifically water quality and the need for household contributions. The show adopts art forms like singing, dancing, puppetry with costumes, masks, light and sound effects for the presentation of the story.

**Nirmal Bandhu:** A person who is appointed and trained by Water For People - India for the cleaning of toilets in schools and health centres, as well as community toilets constructed through Water For People - India's interventions. Each toilet block in the school, health centre, or community toilet complex is linked with a Nirmal Bandhu who ensures the regular cleaning of the toilets.

**Nirman Sahayak:** Nirman Sahayak is a Gram Panchayat level engineer appointed by the local government to oversee the construction of toilets in rural communities. They are especially entrusted

with ensuring the quality standards of the toilets constructed through the government's incentive scheme.

**Sarva Siksha Abhiyan:** Sarva Siksha Abhiyan is an Indian Government program aimed at the universalization of elementary school education "in a time bound manner," as mandated by the 86th Amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory education to children between the age of 6 to 14 (estimated to be 205 million children in 2001) a fundamental right.

**Swachhta Doot:** Sanitation Motivator engaged by the government at every Gram Panchayat to motivate rural communities towards the construction and usage of individual household toilets. They are engaged by the local government and selected from amongst the communities.

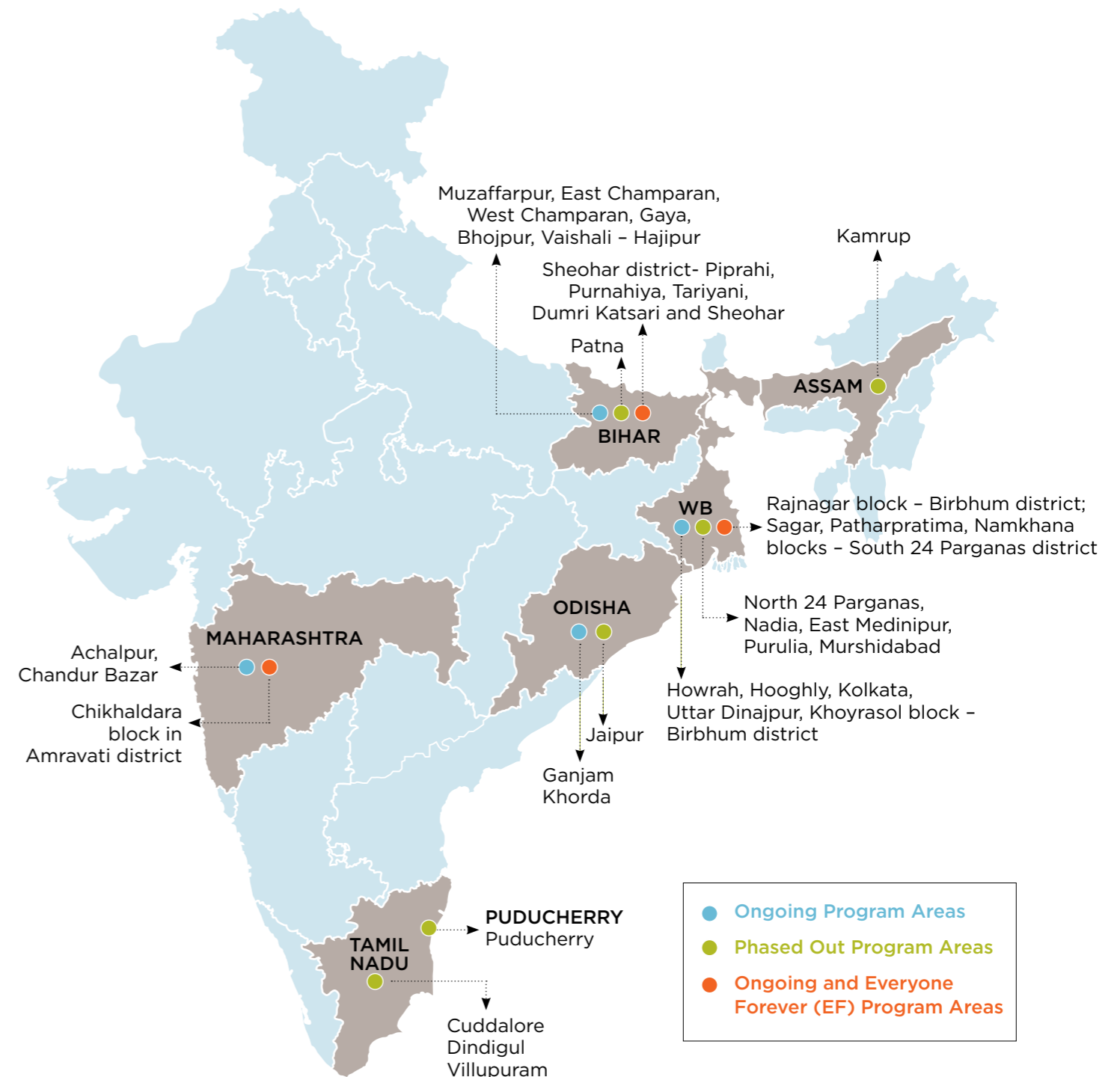
**Social Art:** Social art refers to a group of interactive performing or visual art activities designed within a specific cultural context to bring about social or behavioural change within a community or at the individual level.

**Village Education Committee:** A Village Education Committee (VEC) is a body formed of 6-14 members elected by the Gram Sabha, comprised of individuals interested in the promotion and development of education in the villages. The Village Sarpanch is the Chairperson and school headmaster is the Convener of VEC. The VEC is responsible for establishing a link between school and community and to create awareness about the importance of formal education. In addition, it is also expected to manage school affairs along with the school administration.

**Water and Sanitation Committee:** A body of selected students, headed by a teacher, formed by Water For People - India to care for the operations and maintenance of the school WASH infrastructure. The student representatives in the committee are selected for a period of one year.

**Water User Committee:** A body of 8 - 10 community members constituted at the village level by Water For People - India to ensure the sustainable operation and maintenance of the community drinking water and sanitation infrastructures.

## Our Geographic Coverage





## Our Funding Partners

- Arghyam
- Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation Limited
- charity:water
- Colgate Palmolive (India) Limited
- Ernst & Young Foundation
- ITC Limited
- METRO Cash & Carry India
- Metro Services
- Molson Coors Cobra India Private Limited
- N.M. Budhrani Trust
- National Stock Exchange Foundation
- One Drop Foundation
- Ramboll India (P) Ltd.
- RP Sanjiv Goenka Group
- Suez Foundation India
- Tata Chemicals Society for Rural Development
- Tata Steel Limited
- Xylem Inc.



## About Water For People - India

Water For People - India came into existence in 1996 with its initial operations in West Bengal through an arsenic mitigation program in North 24 Parganas and Nadia districts. By 2007, Water For People - India had established a comprehensive country program to create models of sustainable solutions for safe drinking water and sanitation services.

Programs are focused in the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra and Odisha. Covering 28 districts and peri-urban areas of these states, nearly 1.2 million people have been reached through community drinking water and sanitation projects, WASH facilities in public institutions, and market-led approaches to sanitation.

Today, Water For People - India is recognized widely for its integrated approach to designing quality, sustainable water and sanitation infrastructure and services. Our vision is that every household, community, and public institution (health centres and schools) have access to reliable and safe water and sanitation for generations to come - sustained by strong communities, businesses, and governments. We call this impact model 'Everyone Forever.'

Water For People - India is an active member of various state and national committees convened by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MoDWS) now the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Lohiya Swachh Bihar Abhiyan, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan and Mission Nirmal Bangla.



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