

## Monthly Round-Up – May 2021

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

#### Promoting Safe Water, Good Hygiene to Combat COVID-19



COVID-19 is threatening all countries in the world, albeit to different extents and different ways. Ensuring good hygiene and appropriate WASH practices for everyone, everywhere, will help prevent transmission of COVID-19 virus, but will also reduce the prevalence of other infectious diseases and mitigate collateral damage, beyond public health. Amidst the second COVID-19 wave in India, Water For People India and its partners has been regularly taking meaningful and collective efforts for immediate response in the program areas to suppress the transmission of the virus and to assure WASH services for all; in particular in securing and sustaining access to WASH services to vulnerable households as well as in schools and

health care facilities.

In South 24 Parganas district (West Bengal), Water For People India and Development Research Communication and Services Centre (DRCSC) are working on the *'Everyone Forever'* model in three blocks namely, Sagar, Namkhana and Patharpratima for improving WASH services in schools, health centres & communities. Since implementation activities were stalled due to rise in COVID-19 cases, virtual meetings were held with Gram Panchayat and government officials to organize awareness campaigns by DRCSC field team among communities to disseminate safe WASH practices and to maintain social distance at community water points and while purchasing ration from public distribution shops. Wall writings in each block related to 'COVID-19 and WASH' were done in several Gram Panchayats.

On May 20, Maa Sarada Water User Committee organized an awareness generation activity related to COVID-19, health, and hygiene among communities using IEC materials. They also interacted with Self Help Groups and women in water user associations in Maharganj village.





A poster campaign was organized under Project *Swachho Nirapad Parivesh* (Clean and Safe Environment) supported by NSE Foundation in Khoyrasol Block, Birbhum district, West Bengal with pictorial messages related to safe water, sanitation and COVID-19, reaching 167 people. Around 20 volunteers from the community participated. Posters were created, displayed in communities, and circulated online via WhatsApp promoting good handwashing behaviour, hygiene, physical distancing, and regular use of face masks.

In Sheohar district, Bihar, Water For People India resorted to art and colour to generate awareness about COVID-19. Local artists created street art (*rangoli*) depicting COVID-19 as a 'demon' indicating the damaging effect of the virus with messages on "Symptoms of Corona", "Dos and Don'ts", "Stay Home, Stay Safe" and "Break the Chain." The communities were also educated by field facilitators on regularly wearing masks, maintaining physical distance, handwashing for 20 seconds, and the benefits of vaccination against Corona.

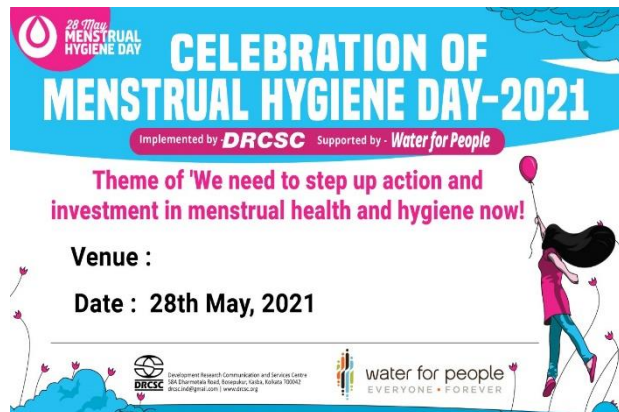
Amidst the COVID-19 lockdown hampering life and daily activities of the people, Water For People India Trust under *The Water Initiative* organized a training session on personal hygiene and awareness on COVID-19 at Ambapati and Pipadhari village in Chikhaldara block, Amravati district, Maharashtra. The training attended by 19 participants discussed the importance of promoting good hygiene, and the role of governments and WASH practitioners to enable and prioritize the provision of safe water, sanitation, and hygienic conditions for all during the COVID-19 outbreak, paying special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations and health care facilities. To avoid water related diseases, the training discussed the importance of water testing before the monsoon.



Water For People India team also extended support to Water User Committees in Khatkali and Kesharpur village in Chikhaldara block through a two-day training on April 27-28 to stop the spread of COVID-19 in villages, strictly follow the government norms of social distancing, and the importance of handwashing with demonstration steps. The training aimed to apprise the WUCs on the structure, functions, roles and responsibilities of the members and to develop sustainability mechanism at household and community levels. In addition, information was provided about the functional water supply scheme, water resources management, record keeping, tariff collection, and water quality management.

## EVENTS & OBSERVANCES

### Menstrual Hygiene Day 2021: Action and Investment in Menstrual Hygiene & Health



Menstrual Hygiene Day (MH Day), May 28, is an annual global event to advocate the importance of good menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and to raise awareness about the challenges women and girls face due to menstruation.

The main idea behind marking this day is to change the social stigma associated with menstruation. The date May 28 was chosen to observe the day because on

average the menstrual cycle for most women is 28 days and the menstruation period for most women is for five days. Hence, the date was kept as 28/5.

This year, MH Day was celebrated on the theme '*Action and Investment in Menstrual Hygiene & Health*' to drive home the message why and how to invest in menstrual health and hygiene for the economic, educational, and health benefits of women and girls in low-and middle-income countries around the world. This is a part of a growing effort to advance gender equality and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

To break the taboo and raise awareness about the importance of menstrual hygiene, Water For People India Trust in collaboration with ITC Limited under Project *Mission Sunehra Kal* promoted online menstrual hygiene sessions in schools and communities in West Bengal and Odisha.



MHM topics were discussed with the help of IEC materials developed in consultation with stakeholders for reaching out to students, teachers, and communities for indepth understanding. The participants were educated about "Menstruation Bracelet" containing 28 beads, 5 of which are red to highlight the period cycle.

Water For People India Trust and DRCS celebrated MH Day in Fraserganj Gram Panchayat, Namkhana block, West Bengal with an interactive session including ASHA, Anganwadi workers, ANM, and ICDS workers. The team shared key messages on intimate hygiene and ways to take self-care while menstruating during the lockdown and to safely dispose the

sanitary waste in the incinerator.

The participants discussed the importance of menstrual hygiene to help them reach their full potential and the freedom to bleed to end period stigma. The session provided information on the menstrual cycle, managing menstruation hygienically, demonstration of cost-effective sanitary pads, and safe disposal. IEC materials were used to make the dialogue process interesting and interactive.



## CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

### Virtual Trainings – Mission Paani



Water For People India Trust in collaboration with Reckitt Benckiser India Private Limited (RB) is implementing a pilot initiative as part of *Mission Paani* campaign with a twin goal to “conserve and respect” water in two blocks - Achalpur and Chandurbazar - in Amravati district, Maharashtra. The flagship initiative aims to generate consciousness, action, and behaviour change to protect and conserve water resources while instilling a sense of respect and conservation habits within communities.

Under project *Mission Paani*, Water For People India Trust organized a virtual training on using Water Testing Kit in three villages in Chandurbazar and Achalpur block. Total 23 people participated in the training (2 male, 21 female) including Gram Panchayat members, ASHA and Anganwadi workers. Demonstration was provided using a simple and user-friendly Water Testing Kit to check water contamination and the presence of harmful bacterial pathogens and methods to keep water source safe before the onset of monsoon.

On May 7, an online training session on ‘Women’s Farmer Group’ was held at Gondwagholi village in Achalpur block. Total 15 participants attended the training to discuss the formation of farmers club/group, availing government schemes, and involvement of women to enhance their social and economic standing, achieve greater gender balance, expand their awareness of water management and contribute to better decision-making in the water institutions. The training highlighted how women are involved in farming and water management decisions jointly with men but not independently. Findings indicate that the views of women and men differ on many aspects, and so their inclusion is important. During the training, it was discussed how women groups can play an important role to monitor Electronic Water Level Indicator (EWLI) system, groundwater management, and irrigation activities in villages. A Q&A session at the end of training motivated the women participants to exchange their ideas and concerns regarding water-use efficiency and the need to adopt water-saving techniques by farmers for agricultural activities.

An online training session was held on May 12 on 'vermicomposting' at Upaatkhedha and Payvihir villages in Achalpur block. Total 7 people attended the training that provided detailed information about vermicompost which contains water-soluble nutrients and is an excellent, nutrient-rich organic fertilizer and soil conditioner. It is used in farming and small-scale sustainable, organic farming. Vermicomposting uses worms to decompose waste and make nutrient-rich "worm manure". The training also demonstrated the method to separate earthworms from manure, packaging of manure, and planning for the next vermi bed preparation.

### **Training on Groundwater for Improved Water Security**

A five-day online training session (May 3-7) was organized on the topic 'Groundwater for improved water security' concerning India's depleting groundwater scenario. The training organized by ACWADAM and Prasari Rajarhat aimed to develop a systematic protocol of groundwater management as a backbone to provisioning and managing drinking water supplies in a safe, equitable, and sustainable manner. Water security for drinking water supplies will not be comprehensive without the understanding of aquifers, based on the science of hydrogeology. Water For People India Trust Rajnagar team participated in the training to seek wide-ranging inputs on water challenges and solutions to improve drinking water security in the project areas.

