

## Monthly Newsletter – May 2020

### ❖ WASH AND COVID-19

#### Strengthening WASH practices to fight COVID-19



Water For People India in its program areas has been helping the communities in their preparedness and emergency response to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Living through a global pandemic, access to proper handwashing facilities as well as exposure to messages regarding effective handwashing has become critical. In Sheohar district, Bihar Water For People India and its partners are ensuring regular sensitization on safe WASH practices, social distancing, washing hands with soap and water (for 20 secs), using masks in public places and staying indoors as mandated by the government.

Water For People India team also managed to pool financial resources at local level through contribution and support from the communities and gram panchayats to distribute soaps and masks in villages. To tackle face mask shortage in Harnahi GP in Sheohar, women farmers are sewing masks for income generation and distributing it to the local communities aided by Water For People India partners. Pursuant to the various preventive steps, the COVID-19 cases in Sheohar are extremely less as compared to other districts in Bihar.



Water For People India team has been extending support to the Gram Panchayat in Khoyrasol and Rajnagar blocks in Birbhum district, West Bengal. In Khoyrasol, under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) panchayats are paying labourers for social forestry wherein trees are planted in barren lands whilst practicing social distancing. Water For People India staff are advocating key messages to the labourers to maintain personal hygiene, wear masks, handwashing with soap, and using personal protective equipments.



Hygiene sessions were also conducted in association with the police administration to reach communities in far-flung areas in Rajnagar. The community members were addressed on safe WASH practices, particularly handwashing with soap and clean water to be strictly followed and maintained to stop the spread of COVID-19 transmission. Till now 84 households in 4 villages namely Gobra (Gangmuri Jaypur

GP), Moulbuni (Rajnagar GP), Latultala East, and Latultala West (Tantipara GP) have been reached through mask and soap distribution with key messages and actions for COVID-19 prevention.

Making slum health a priority, distribution of masks for slum dwellers with focus on vulnerable age groups have been



facilitated by the WATSAN committee with support from the local government in Kolkata Municipal Corporation Ward No. 80. So far, 2500 masks have been distributed.

#### ❖ IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

##### Elite pits: Closing the loop in wastewater management



To address wastewater management and bad odour in toilets, Water For People India Trust in collaboration with NSE has implemented the construction of 'Elite Pits' (as dubbed by Water For People India team) in Anganwadi centres, schools and community water points in Birbhum district, West Bengal. The pit can be used as soak pits for safe disposal of urine from urinals reducing bad odour along with water recharging and wastewater management. The project implementation is being done in close coordination with the government officials and the pit design has been sent for approval for scaling and replication in government sanctioned projects through Gram Panchayat Development Plan in Rajnagar Block. As part of skill building, local masons have been provided onsite training and monitoring by the Project Engineer to construct the pits at the household level. Birbhum district now has a pool of trained masons with sound technical knowledge of proper soak pit designs.

#### ❖ OBSERVANCES

##### Menstrual Hygiene Day 2020: Periods in Pandemic



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. This year, MH Day was celebrated on the theme 'Periods in Pandemic' to drive home the message "periods don't stop for pandemics and it's time for action."

Water For People India Trust in collaboration with NSE observed MH Day with an interactive session including ASHA, Anganwadi workers, ANM, teachers and adolescent girls. The participants discussed the importance of menstrual hygiene to help them reach their full potential and the freedom to bleed to end period stigma. MHM topics were discussed with the help of IEC materials for indepth understanding. The participants actively engaged in making "Menstrual Hygiene Bracelet" containing 28 beads to highlight the period cycle.

Water For People India Trust under the ITC Limited flagship project *Mission Sunehra Kal* has been communicating with the WATSAN and Mohalla Committee members to alleviate period poverty amongst communities in Kolkata and in the slum areas of Howrah and Hooghly





districts in West Bengal. The team has been sharing key messages on intimate hygiene and ways to take self-care while menstruating during lockdown and to safely dispose the sanitary waste in the incinerator.

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