

HALF – YEARLY REPORT

**MOVEMENT AND ACTION NETWORK FOR
TRANSFORMATION IN RURAL AREAS**

A collaboration between Gram Vikas and BHP Billiton



October 2006

The collaboration between Gram Vikas and BHP Billiton was finalised to provide sanitation and water supply systems to 2000 households. The duration of the project is from 1st April 2006 till 31st March 2007.

The context

Orissa, one of the poorest states in India, has a population of close to 37 million of which 86% live in rural areas (Census 2001); over 60% of the population is below the poverty line, defined as Rs.12,000 (\$240) per family per annum. According to a survey conducted by Gram Vikas in 2004, of 4399 households in 49 villages across 9 districts of Orissa, less than 1% had access to piped water supply.

In the early 1990s, Gram Vikas conducted studies and found that over 80% of the cases of morbidity and mortality in rural Orissa could be traced to poor quality of drinking water, which was to a great extent, as a consequence of the callous attitude towards human waste disposal. Human waste, in its raw form, found its way to the same water bodies, people are dependant upon.

In the absence of proper mechanisms for sanitation, women have to bear the terrible indignity of defecating in the open. In order to achieve some level of privacy, women rise before dawn and have to endure the humiliation of searching for discrete locations to defecate.

Women spend a better part of their day fetching water for household needs. This drudgery is more acute during summers, when women have to spend hours together, traversing nearly four to five kilometers to fetch water. In most villages, the women would also take along with them, their girl children to fetch that extra little water they could carry. This meant that sending girls to school was given lower priority and as a result, attendance figures for girl children were abysmal.



In the absence of a protected enclosure where women could take a bath, they are forced to bathe in the common village pond. In these ponds, due to the presence of men on the other side, women are mostly forced to resort to only insufficient cleaning of their bodies. Moreover, in summers, communal bathing in turbid waters of a shallow pond was an instant recipe for the spread of skin diseases.



Groups of women bathing in the village pond – an usual sight in rural India (above)

Animals being washed along with people – men, women and children (below)



Social exclusion: The experience in Orissa showed that exclusion – of *dalits*¹, *adivasis*², lower castes, widows, and women in general – is the bane of rural society. This has grown into a deep-rooted hegemonic system, where the excluded now believe that it is their fate to be excluded and those excluding them, believe that it is their right to do so. To achieve an improvement in the health status and a better quality of life in rural areas, Gram Vikas felt strongly that a process where communities go through an experiential learning of social inclusion, is absolutely necessary.

Gram Vikas' response

In MANTRA, every household in the village constructs for itself, a toilet and bathing room, with 24-hour piped water supply to both the toilet and bathing room as well as to the kitchen of the house. The water is supplied from an overhead water tank constructed on the basis of estimates of per capita consumption of water (of 40 liters per day), projected for a population twenty years hence. This is done so that every household can have 24-hour running water supply on their taps.

In the community-based sanitation and water supply programme implemented by Gram Vikas, water and sanitation forms an entry point activity, aiming to improve the quality of lives of rural areas, demonstrating as to how a socially inclusive, gender equitable, people friendly and financially viable model of sustainable and holistic development can be constructed, where everybody is a winner. Those who had been previously excluded from most development activities, now become a part of the progress that the entire community is making. Even those who have been excluding others from different spheres of society benefit in this instance, since, from the point of view of environmental sanitation, it is in their interest that every single individual in the village has access to a means of safe disposal of human waste.

PROGRES REPORT

The main activities undertaken in the reporting period (April 2006 to Sep 2006) include:

?? Selection of beneficiaries for MANTRA:

27 villages, covering a total of 2011 households have been identified for this project. These villages have been chosen after the entire village (without even a single exception) agreed to be a part of the programme. The villages also had to make a clear financial commitment of raising a corpus fund, with an average of Rs. 1000 being raised from every household.

¹ *Dalits* were considered 'Untouchables' in the Hindu Caste system. During the struggle for Independence, Gandhi referred to them as '*Harijan*' or the Children of God. Today, they are designated as Scheduled Castes under the Constitution of India.

² *Adivasis* are the indigenous people, designated as Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution of India

The programme involves each and every family in the village without exception. 100% consensus ensures that even the poorest and most marginalized benefits from the same level of service, and has an equal say in deciding how the project should be implemented. This minimizes the chances of the systems established falling into disrepair or disuse.

Among the households covered, 68% belong to the BPL category. Further, 10% of the families are *dalits* and 41% are *adivasis*. The demographic details are in Annexure 2.

?? Formation of general body of all adult men and women:

In all villages, a village society was formed, with the elected representatives to the Executive Committee as members, which is registered as a legal body. This involved a series of interactions and discussions with village leaders, groups and the entire village community in all villages. The general body of each village constitutes the Palli Sabha and is the basic unit of the Panchayati Raj system in Orissa. The general body of every village elected a representative committee, with equal number of men and women, headed by the President, Secretary and Treasurer. The proceedings for the legal registration of the village bodies have been started and in 11 villages, the society has been registered.

The legally recognised status will enable communities to leverage development resources in a more effective manner. In these villages, the village committee represents the interest of all sections, and attempts are made to develop necessary capacities so that they are able to manage conflicts. The village committees have proportionate representation of all caste and class groups in the community. Gram Vikas stays three to five years to build capacities of women and the excluded, so that they can participate on an equal level. For the first time the poorest woman, the widow, or the *dalit* feels that s/he has a voice, which will be heard and which matters.

During the 3-5 years that Gram Vikas will remain in these villages after completion of the entry point activity of water and sanitation, communities learn how to deal with conflicts and act as pressure groups against vested interests within their village and outside. Villagers learn the ropes of maintaining public accounts, organizing the general body meetings and elections.

?? Formation of women's general body and savings groups:

To elicit greater participation from women, a separate general body for women is constituted in all villages. Here, women opened up and began to participate in the discussions pertaining to various issues of general concern. Considerable efforts go into the accompaniment of women general body members and executive committee members, before they could sit as equals with men at the same meetings and to express their opinions without any fear or inhibition.

Groups of women are also encouraged to start small savings. These fora are used to discuss issues of common concern, and gradually draw women to participate actively in community level decision-making.

Over time, women have taken over the responsibilities of maintenance and monitoring of water supply and toilets, in resolving conflicts, organising mass protests, enforcing programme codes in the village and in advocacy beyond the village. They are also confident and firm in their interaction with government officials, banks and other outsiders.

In 16 villages, women's savings and credit groups have been formed. These groups are facilitated by Gram Vikas at present and on completion of six months of regular transaction, will be linked to banks.

?? Raising resources for the sustainability of the water supply and sanitation systems:

Plans and estimates for water supply and sanitation have been made separately for all the villages, in consultation with the respective general bodies. A contract was drawn for each village with detailed plan for resources to be raised by the local community (corpus fund of Rs.1,000 per family and materials for construction), resources to be accessed from the government (under Swajaldhara rural drinking water supply scheme, local area development funds of elected representatives, and other government grants schemes), and resources to be contributed by Gram Vikas (sanitation subsidy, technical and supervision support) and the associated time-frame.

?? Formation of sub-committees:

Sub-committees have been formed in each village for monitoring construction, education and health in each village. The Education sub-committee ensures that the government primary school, within or near the village functions regularly.

Parents are motivated to send their children to school. Periodic Parent-Teacher interactions are also organized by the Education Committees. The Health sub-committee liaises with the local Anganwadi worker and Auxiliary Nurse and Midwife to ensure that there is proper antenatal and post natal care and that all eligible children are immunized on schedule. The construction sub-committee to ensure that construction materials are in place and that construction progress of all families is within the time frame.

?? Generation of maintenance funds:

Surveys were carried out in all villages to identify appropriate sources of community income. These include ponds, community forests and common agricultural land. Steps are being taken to develop these resources so that there are regular incomes to the community fund. This fund will be used to manage common assets and undertake other development activities. Villagers are being encouraged to bid for public works contracts in their village awarded through Panchayats and Blocks.

?? Emphasis on personal hygiene:

Gram Vikas staff engage with women to impress upon them, the importance of personal hygiene. Small, but instructive messages about using some form of soap (or detergent or ash) to clean the hands after one uses a toilet, bathing regularly and wearing clean clothes are passed on during the regular meetings. Due to the availability of a bathing room, women would find it easier to take care of their personal cleanliness and hygiene. In addition, children are repeatedly guided, in schools, about the importance of hand-washing, keeping their hair clean, keeping nails short and clean etc. Between the mothers and the children, there is often a mutually reinforcing cycle at work, making the need for personal hygiene an ingrained one.

?? Status of construction:

Nearly 50% of the households covered have completed all the brickwork of their respective toilets and bathing rooms. The detailed construction position can be seen in Annexure 3.

Arrangements are being made to secure funds under either Swajaldhara or RSVY (Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana), which are government schemes for establishment of the water supply systems. Either of these schemes would be availed to fund about 70% of the costs of establishing the water supply system.



A toilet and bathing room unit in Ginduruguda, completed in all respects, pending painting on the outside walls. This toilet block is already being used by the beneficiary, even before piped water has been supplied.



Toilet and bathing room units under construction, completed up to roof level (above and below)





Twin leach soak pits – drainage pipe from the toilet

Annexure 1: Activities and Desired Outcomes – Plan and Achievement

Objective 1	Outcome planned for Year 1 – by April 2007 ??	Achievement in first six months (April 2006 to Sep 2006)
Effective implementation and administration of the MANTRA Program	<p>?? <i>Gram Vikas staff engages intensively with the communities</i> to form committed groups wherein each and every family is represented. That 100% of families in the 25 designated villages agree to the preconditions and responsibilities of the MANTRA program prior to its implementation.</p> <p>?? <i>Formation of village committees:</i> Each village forms a registered village society with the elected representatives to the Executive Committee as members, which is registered under Societies Registration Act, 1860. The legally recognised status enables villages to leverage development resources in a more effective manner.</p> <p>?? <i>Raising the financial corpus:</i> Successful implementation of the intervention is contingent upon raising the ‘village corpus fund.’ The corpus fund is created with contributions of cash and kind from all families in the village, at an average of Rs.1000 per family, where the better-off pay more and poorer families pay less. The village committee invests the corpus in the local bank. The interest is to be used by the Village Executive Committee only for the purpose of partial subsidy for building toilets and bathrooms for new houses that may come up in the village in future, ensuring 100 per cent coverage at all times.</p> <p>?? Construction of toilets and bathing rooms</p>	<p>?? 100% families have agreed to be a part of the programme, with all its precondition and responsibilities in 27 villages, covering 2011 households</p> <p>?? In all villages, village general bodies have been formed and Executive Committees have been elected.</p> <p>?? In 11 villages, the registration of village societies has been completed. In all other villages, the application for registration has been submitted with the block level officials</p> <p>?? Corpus collection has been completed for all households - the amount has been raised in the form of materials.</p>

Objective 2	Outcome Year 1 – by April 2007	Achievement in first six months (April 2006 to Sep 2006)
Contribution of 43.75% towards the cost of materials and construction of individual toilets and bathing rooms for 2,000 families in 25 villages.	<i>Construction of one toilet and bathing room per family (including artisanal training):</i> The design and layout of toilets-bathing rooms, and water tank are done in consultation with the villagers. Gram Vikas provides technical support and training in course of construction.	Nearly 50% of the households covered have completed all the brickwork of their respective toilets and bathing rooms. The detailed construction position can be seen in Annexure 2.