



Communication approaches in sanitation promotion

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THOUGH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME for rural sanitation has been operational in Bangladesh since early sixties, yet the rate of progress has not been satisfactory. After 20 years in 1980 the sanitation coverage was only two per cent which was increased to a level of six per cent in 1985 to 13 per cent in 1990. A gradual change in the project component with more and more inclusion of soft issues was noticeable since 1990. Promotion of home-made¹ latrines, a low cost technology and incorporation of social factors have increased the sanitation coverage to about 30 per cent by 1994. In the context of this an intensive sanitation and hygiene promotional activities under a project were undertaken in seven thanas², Babuganj, Bakerganj, Rajapur, Dashmina, Bamna, Bhandaria and Bauphal in southern Bangladesh during April 1994 to March 1995. A national NGO was responsible for overall supervision of the project in collaboration with DPHE and other government agencies with financial assistance from UNICEF. The NGO's activities were withdrawn after the project was over. In August 1995 an evaluation study was carried out to weigh the impact of the promotional activities.

Socio-economic characteristics of the project area

The project area consists of 435 villages in seven thanas under Barisal Division located in the southern coastal region of Bangladesh. The average holding size (5.9) was slightly higher than the national average (5.7). About 56 per cent of the total population were found to be literate corresponding to a national figure of 37 per cent. Among the females 59 per cent were literate. Only two per cent of the head of the households were female. Of the head of households 39 per cent were engaged in agricultural farming, 15 per cent were service holders, 13 per cent businessmen, nine per cent day-labourer and five per cent skilled labourer. The mean monthly income of the households was found Taka 1704 only and annual per capita income was Taka 3466 only. Regarding landholding pattern, roughly 50 per cent of the households were functionally landless having a maximum landholding of one acre or less, nearly 18 per cent were totally landless.

Project intervention

The main objective of the project was to increase sanitation coverage throughout the seven thanas.

Primary responsibility of implementing the project was assigned to a National NGO. Apart from support from

local partner NGOs additional personnel, one Thana Coordinator, three Field Supervisors and 20 Field Extension Workers (FEW) for each thana were engaged to supervise, monitor and coordinate the activities of the project.

The strategy adopted by the project was awareness building on sanitation among communities with the help of appropriate communication media.

Pre and post project situation of sanitation

Pre project

A baseline survey was conducted before the project intervention in April 1994. About 72 per cent of the latrines in the project area were found to be insanitary, either hanging or surface latrines. Only 28 per cent of the households used to defecate in some kind of sanitary latrines. As regard washing hands after defecation 29.75 per cent of population were found to follow unhygienic practice and 70.25 per cent were found to use soap or ash or soil while washing. Regarding usage of latrines, either sanitary or insanitary, by all members of the family, it was observed that about 63 per cent of the households used latrines while 37 per cent of the households reported that their children below the age of five years did not use latrine. Though 85.4 per cent of the population were using tubewell water for drinking purposes but most of them (90 per cent) depended on river, canal and pond water for other domestic needs. About 69 per cent of the population knew the cause of diarrhoeal diseases.

Post project

Field survey carried out in August 1995 in support of the evaluation exercise revealed that a great majority (90.54 per cent) of the households now possess some kind of sanitary latrines of which 61.14 per cent and 29.4 per cent are water seal and home-made latrines respectively. As regard hand washing people were advised to use soap or ash or soil while washing their hands after defecation. It has been observed that majority (97.6 per cent) of the people now wash their hand after defecation hygienically of which 27.3 per cent, 27.0 per cent and 43.2 per cent use soap, ash and soil respectively. The improved post project situation is clearly visible from the evaluation survey data regarding usage of latrines and 83.20 per cent of the family members were found to use latrines. The post project situation indicates a significant improvement where about 98.5 per cent population were found to

depend on tubewell water for drinking purpose. The degree of knowledge of the causes of diarrhoea is an important parameter to assess the effect of dissemination of knowledge to the community through programme activities. After the project period about 96 per cent of the population of the project area were found to know the cause of diarrhoeal diseases. Table 1 shows a comparison of pre and post project situation of various sanitation parameters.

Communication approaches of the project

The following communication approaches were adopted by the project and were found instrumental in motivating the people in the project area.

Household visits

A strategy of interpersonal communication through visits to each household was undertaken to motivate and educate members of the communities of the project area on improved excreta disposal, personal hygiene practice and use of safe water for all domestic purposes. The programme was designed to cover every households in 7 thanas.

Small and large group meetings

There were two types of group meetings, small and large group meetings. The FEWs visited 40 to 50 households in a day and during these visits usually they met female members of the households. In most cases 5 to 10 grass-roots people participated in the small group meeting while the large group meetings were organized with the participation of female members of the households and sometime male members of the community also attended in these meetings. The sanitation and hygiene messages

were conveyed to the participants by the FEWs in these meetings.

Rally

Rallies were organized at the village level to create a mass awareness and to induce sanitation concept in the project area. These were participated by the members of all walks of life including school children, teachers, union council members, community organizers, government health workers, and others.

Street meeting

Street meetings were organized to facilitate dissemination of sanitation messages among a wide range of population of the society. Such gatherings can be organized in a short notice of time. The ultimate objective is to strengthen the hygiene education and promote sanitation movement. However, it has some limitations, as female members of the community do not find it convenient to attend street meetings.

Miking

This is obviously a strong tool to propagate message to the community members without bringing them to a specific place or venue. Another advantage of this tool is that message can be communicated to each individual without affecting their usual activities. Moreover, female members can get message from within their homesteads. During project period Miking activities were undertaken among the communities to provide messages regarding hygienic latrines and adverse effects of hanging and open latrines. It was reported that as a result of miking demolition of open and hanging latrines were expedited and in place sanitary latrines were constructed. It was a general feeling that Miking was very useful. People responded massively when they were called upon to demolish open/hanging latrines and replace those by hygienic latrines.

Postering

Another mode of communicating message is the use posters and leaflets. This approach has a very high potential in propagating message in a short span of time as it can play its role simultaneously in the entire project area. It does not require presence of community members and concerned people at a specific place at a specific time, such as for group meeting or street meeting. During the period communication materials like posters, leaflets and flip-charts were designed in collaboration with DPHE and UNICEF. These were used for motivating people and communicating messages on safe water use, sanitation and hygiene practices.

Documentary film show

Though this has some limitation from socio-economic context of rural environment in the country yet it is effective where it can be arranged. Community members receive correct message through Audio-Visual media as

Table 1. Comparison between pre and post project situation

Sl. no.	Sanitation parameters	Situation shown in per cent		Remarks
		Pre project April 1994	Post project August 1995	
1	Coverage of sanitary latrines	28.46	90.54	
2	Washing hands after defecation using soap/ash/soil	70.25	97.62	
3	Usage of latrines by all members of the family	62.10 ^a	83.2	Post project latrines are mostly sanitary
4	Use of tubewell water for drinking purpose	85.4	98.57	
5	Knowledge of the causes of diarrhoea	68.94	96.03	

a: Includes both sanitary and insanitary latrines

they see live pictures and practical demonstrations. During project period video shows were organized in the communities and schools of the project areas from time to time.

Conclusions

From field observations, consultative process, data analyses, and interpretations the following conclusions have been drawn:

- Selection of appropriate communication channels is very important for effective propagation of message to a particular community.
- Intervention from within community is more effective than external intervention. Selection of Field Extension Workers from the concerned locality was instrumental in ensuring successful community work.
- Interpersonal communication through household visits is more effective compared to other approaches.
- Women contribute much more in household sanitation than others and as such they are to be considered as the primary target group in communicating sanitation messages.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, interpretations and conclusions the following recommendations are formulated to optimize benefit out of such sanitation promotion efforts:

- In order to maintain the positive trends and sustain the achievements made a follow up programme is

suggested. This may be designed with cheaper options of communication processes.

- To the extent possible the community workers (Field Extension workers) are to be mobilized from within the locality for communicating sanitation messages.
- Since interpersonal communication through household visits, miking and posters are found relatively more effective, these approaches are to be further strengthened and standardized.
- Field personnel to be deployed for motivational and promotional efforts are to be given proper training and orientation. A brief course and module on communication of sanitation messages are required to be designed and standardized.
- The programme in general is effective and its replication is therefore recommended.

References

- Statistical Pocket Book of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1993.
- Shamsuddin, S.A.J., Evaluation of NGO Forum's Activities in Seven Thanas - Phase II, 1995.
- Socmob Project for Sanitation, Annual Report, NGO Forum, 1995.

¹ Home-made latrine is a simple covered pit latrine constructed by the members of the household

² Thana is a sub-district.