



United they stand

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COMMUNITY-MANAGED PROGRAMME implementation is a new concept in the development arena of Bangladesh. Unlike other development agencies, NGO Forum for Drinking Water Supply & Sanitation follows the community-focussed and community-managed approach instead of target group approach. In the Community-managed WatSan Programme approach of NGO Forum a Village Development Committee (VDC), formed with the participation of the respective village people, works in the focal point for ensuring the successful implementation and sustainability of WatSan services.

In the Community-managed WatSan village, the WatSan programme is implemented with the direct supervision of VDC at community level with assistance from the NGO Forum, and under the guidance of the Forum's respective partner organization. NGO Forum provides support for capacity building of the partner organizations, VDC members as well as other community groups who finally play the active role in effective implementation of the WatSan programme.

South Datinakhali, union Burigoalini under Shamnagar thana in Satkhira district was selected as an unserved village under the Community-managed WatSan Programme of NGO Forum in January 2000. The Nowabenki Gonomukhi Samobay Samiti, a partner organization of NGO Forum assisted the villagers to implement the WatSan programme through forming Village Development Committee (VDC).

Geophysical characteristics of the village

The South Datinakhali village is located under the saline tidal floodplain of Satkhira district. The coastal tide in the floodplains and excessive salinity are the main characteristics of this village that affect the development initiatives specially in the WatSan sector. The groundwater cannot be used for drinking, cooking and bathing, because of its brackish taste. The groundwater is also contaminated with excessive iron and arsenic. South Datinakhali faces all these challenges.

Most of the people use surface water from pond and river, and traditionally collected rain-water for drinking and cooking which are not safe. Tidal surges, cyclones and many other natural calamities hit each year, which wash away the latrine set-up. There is also lack of materials of sanitary latrines, because of communication problems and remoteness of the community.

Socio-economic condition of the village

Almost eighty percent of the people of South Datinakhali live hand to mouth and are dependent on resources of the Sundarbans reserve forest and shrimp fry collection, honey collection, trading of shrimp fry and day labouring. The rest of the villagers are involved in shrimp farming and agriculture.

Social dimension of the region is adverse to the people's participation, especially of women, in development activities. Alongside this the attitude of the villagers towards NGO activities is very negative, restraining them from participation in socio-economic activities. However, the situation has been changing gradually after intervention of NGO and government development programs.

Formation of the VDC

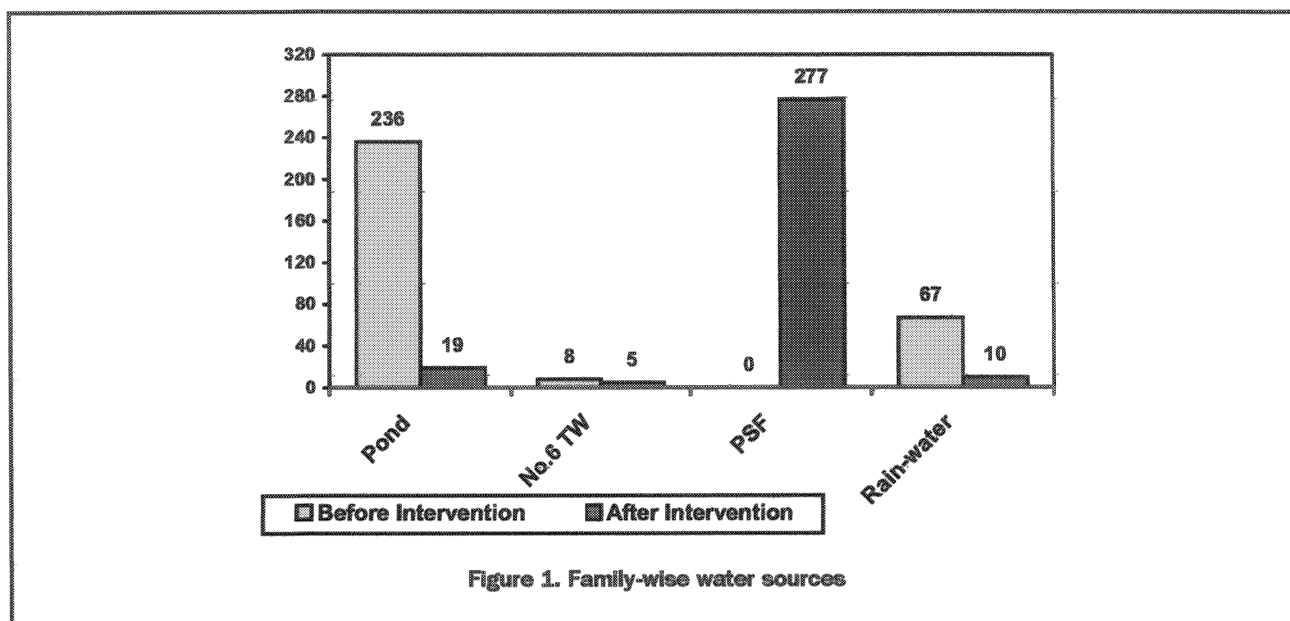
The villagers, with the guidance of Nowabenki Gonomukhi Samobay Samiti, formed the Village Development Committee in January 2000 for ensuring the progress of village development activities with particular focus on WatSan.

The Village Development Committee was the outcome of a course of activities that continued through a process. The whole community of the village sat together in cooperation with the NGO Forum's partner Nowabenki Gonomukhi Samobay Samiti, and discussed on the existing problems of the village and possible role, which the Village Development Committee could play in solving those.

The Village Development Committee of South Datinakhali was formed consisting of 15 members including one chairperson, two vice-chairmen, one member secretary, one treasurer and 9 general members. The VDC was formed with participation of different section of people of

Table 1. VDC member by occupation

Occupation	Nos.
Shrimp Farmer	2
Imam	1
Honey Collectors	2
Shrimp Fry Collectors	2
Shrimp Traders	3
Village Doctors	1
House Wives	3



the village including 4 women members who were involved in different occupation. The representative of the partner organization who has been working in the Datinakhali village has been involved in the VDC as the member secretary.

Objectives of VDC formation

- Ensure the active participation of representatives from all levels of people in the village in the planning and implementation stage of the development activities specially the WatSan programme in Datinakhali.
- Ensuring the progress and sustainability of the development activities by transferring the responsibility of the overall development of the village to the Village Development Committee.

Functioning of the VDC

The VDC concentrated operating activities under the Community-managed WatSan Programme for promoting the overall development of the village including WatSan. After formation of the VDC, the members started massive social interaction with different section of the village people. They conducted participatory rural appraisal in the village to understand WatSan situation, problem identification and prioritisation. Among identified problems drinking water, sanitation, and communication were identified as the most striking ones in the village. After identification and ranking of those problems, the VDC members in association with the villagers prepared village profiles and conducted a need assessment through participatory exercises. They also prepared a village development plan with special emphasis on the water and sanitation coverage.

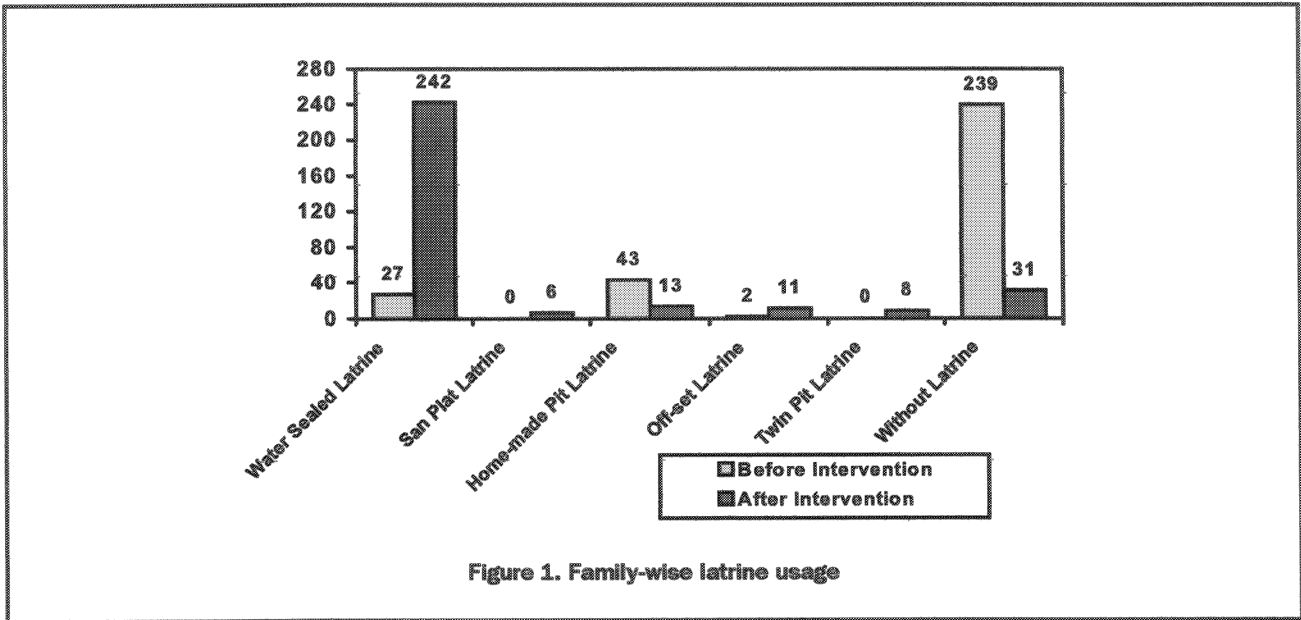
The VDC in association with the villagers identified that very urgently they needed a safe water source in the

village. During the orientation programme in the village, the villagers learnt that NGO Forum was providing Pond Sand Filter (PSF), but that needs cost-sharing from the community. After village development planning, VDC members started motivational activities among villagers to participate in the programme and to share the cost for the safe water sources installation in the village. Simultaneously, they also motivated the people to buy sanitary latrine at the cost price. Both male and female members of the village took active part in those activities. Different type of promotional activities were also conducted to make the villagers aware about the water and sanitation programme and its benefit.

Increased WatSan coverage

The facilitation of the Community-managed WatSan Programme created a positive attitude towards the safe WatSan promotion among the villagers of South Datinakhali. Because of effective and active performance of VDC, the villagers became motivated and realized the importance of hygienic latrine. This has helped to raise the coverage of sanitary latrine in the village. In January 2000, out of 311 households only 72 i.e. 23% of them had sanitary latrine, but this reached to (280 households) 90% in December 2001.

With the direct supervision of the VDC, one Pond-sand Filter and five Rain-water Harvesting Systems have been installed in the village with support of NGO Forum. After installation of the PSF and RWHS 94% of the households are now getting safe water for drinking purpose. Liakot Ali, a shopkeeper in the village said, "The villagers were to visit doctors frequently that has been reduced after the use of PSF water and sanitary latrine". Hazrat Ali another VDC member said that before start of the Community-managed WatSan Programme only about 5% people were habitu-



ated to hygiene practices like hand washing with soap or ash after defecation that had reached at least 40%. All these indicate that attitudinal changes have occurred among the villagers in relation to safe WatSan and personal and domestic hygiene practices.

Other development initiatives

Alongside WatSan activities, the Village Development Committee in South Datinakhali has been operating various types of development activities like road construction, adult education, raising funds to establish a primary school, etc., in the village with its own initiatives. The VDC has started construction of a kacha road with self-help initiative, because in the rainy season the villagers face a great problem due to lack of roads in the village. Side by side, considering the problems of schooling of children, as there is no school in the village, the VDC has taken an initiative to establish a school. The VDC members have requested Nowabenki Gonomukhi Samobay Samiti to help the VDC in linking their initiative with concerned officials of thana and district administration for materializing their vision. The VDC has also been conducting Adult Education programme in the village. Abu Daud an unemployed person and a VDC member said, “Before formation of VDC and starting the WatSan programme we could not think about such development activities, but fortunately the VDC mechanism has given the villagers a push to take initiatives to solve many of our problems”.

Changes in socio-cultural systems

With the implementation of the Community-managed WatSan Programme both the male and female members are now working together and sitting in VDC meeting for reviewing their village development initiatives. Alongside,

through these activities women are becoming capable of identification and prioritisation of the problems for immediate action. Nurjahan Begum one of the vice-chairmen of the VDC said, “The women could not even think about participation in meetings and to be involved in development activities with male members of the village. Now women are participating in VDC meeting, taking decision side by side of the male members on different activities. They are organizing Courtyard Meetings and making the villagers aware of the health education and hygiene behaviour”. However, the VDC has brought community people including male and female, rich and poor in a single platform to combat the evil things of sound health and sound environment as well as initiating development activities.

Sustainability of the services

Though most of the people of the South Datinakhali village are very poor, but the VDC has mobilized them and introduced a system of token cost-sharing to bear the cost of maintenance of the PSF. They have fixed a rate of Taka one/month from households who collect water from the PSF. The villagers have also installed the hygienic latrines in their households collecting those with full cost. The VDC members expressed that the objective of this initiative is not merely the cost bearing but also for introducing a system of cost-sharing and establishing ownership over the services. The VDC members viewed that this will ensure sustainability of the system as well as services.

The institution building process has shaken the community and the partner organization staff largely. It has been found that VDC members organize the schedule meetings, review the activities of previous months, set action plan and set agenda for the next meeting by their own initiatives. The villagers consider that the VDC is a village-based institu-

tion and they abide by the decisions of it. This has been possible due to the participation of community people in the development process. From the self-realization and understanding about the existing situation of the village, members of VDC are committed to continue their role as an institution, which will put forward the issue of sustainability of their development initiatives and achievements.

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