



Social map of Surajpur after declaring Open Defecation Free
Photo: UNHABITAT

First community to declare ODF in Gulariya Municipality

KATHMANDU, 31 December: Practical Action Nepal and UN-Habitat Water for Asian Cities Programme Nepal have been conducting various WASH related activities in urban poor communities of Nepal to contribute to sustainable improvement in health and well being of vulnerable population especially, women and children residing in urban and peri-urban clusters of Chitwan, Nawalparasi and Rupandehi, Kailali and Kanchanpur through Strengthening Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Treasuring Health (SWASTHA) project. As a part of this intervention, Open Defecation Free (ODF) communities are one of the achievements among many other results envisioned.

Surajpur is among one the poorest community of Gulariya Municipality with 75 households (2010). People in the community are migrated from near by hill districts like Dailekh, Jajarkot and Rukum due to natural disasters. Main occupation of the people is to collect firewood from nearby forest of India and selling in Gulariya bazaar.

Surajpur Tole Lane Organization (TLO) becomes first community to declare as an open defecation free (ODF) community out of 231 TLOs in entire Gulariya Municipality.

Before the implementation of SWASTHA project in 2009, almost all household of the community defecate openly in the bank of nearby Sarju River, fields, roads and forest. Only two households out of 75 have pit latrine. "We could see human faeces every where in the roads and could see people defecating in the fields while going to work in the fields", recalls Mr. Khamba Prasad Gharti, the situation of the community just one and half year back. Mr. Gharti is a resident of Surajpur and Treasurer of the TLO. Mr. Gharti also shared the situation when a guest comes to the community "If the guest's habit is also to defecate openly, then there is no problem but if not, we felt so embarrassed to tell them going out for toilet".

Community's first demand was "One House One toilet" when SWASTHA project started collecting demand. Initially, the project oriented and trained the people on better sanitation including personal, household and environment sanitation using various IPRA (Ignition Participatory Rural Appraisal) tools. After making the people aware on need and importance of toilet, Project Management Committee (PMC) comprising of community representative, project staffs and

Gulariya Municipality decided to support in building toilets. The project supported construction materials equivalent to NRs. 2500 and community people shared the insufficient amount to build their toilets. Majority of people invested small amount ranging from NRs. 750 to NRs. 1000 on top of project support and build the superstructures from locally available materials like bamboo, Khar (grass) and wood. Some has built toilets with bricks and metal roofing investing more than NRs. 10000.

Fining notice for open defecator Now, all 75 household has individual water seal toilet in Surajpur. The construction of toilets was done in three stages building 25 toilets in each stage. The users committee faced no problems in the first stage; however in second and third stage users committee faced a hard time to trigger people to build toilets. As triggering tools, users committee even applied social pressure like fining for open defecators and boycotting from TLO.

"This summer only two incidence of diarrhea is found in the community whereas it was a common problem before. Awareness level of community on sanitation has increased significantly. Roads and neighboring environment are cleaner and we don't need to hide in a bush for toilet". Mr. Gharti compares the situation of the community. Similar communities and Officials from Tikapur and Bharatpur Municipality also visited Surajpur to listen the success story which will further inspire the community to maintain ODF declaration in future. Surajpur TLO is also thinking to build a community urinal for passerby as hundreds of people travel to India via Surajpur.