

From Darkness to Light

The **Khalore Gram Panchayat** (GP) under Bagnan-1 Block of Howrah district, is a densely populated area. The place is also known for the Bagnan railway station, one of the busiest railway stations in the South Eastern Railway Zone. Lakhs of people commute via this busy railway station daily. Although, the day-time situation of this area has been okay, it used to become difficult after dusk. People have been facing extreme difficulty in travelling from one place to another late at night as there was no street-light at the station as well as its adjacent areas. Local people had a long-standing demand for street-light.



Localites had strongly demanded for the installation of street-lights during the 2014-15 Gram Sansad Sabha but the plan could not be materialised owing to lack of fund. In 2015-16 Institutional Strengthening of Gram Panchayats Project (ISGPP) arranged for a special fund that enabled the GP to materialise their planning. Before this, Khalore GP had taken the initiative to install solar street-lights in some areas, but it failed to provide any suitable solution to the problem in hand as these lights were too few in number.

The GP had earlier decided to install LED lights on roads, but owing to certain changes in Government policy, the West Bengal Renewable Energy Development Agency was not installing street-lights in the locality at that time. The GP then decided to appeal to West Bengal State Electricity Transmission Company Ltd., seeking their help to install lights on the electric poles. They received the necessary assistance soon after. It was decided that the cost of illuminating these street-lights will be borne out of the GP fund in some cases. In certain other areas, the GP appealed to the Panchayat Samity for financial assistance. Panchayat

Samity finally agreed to the appeal after thoroughly evaluating the nature and gravity of the problem. In short, everybody stepped forward for solving the problem in question.

The scheme was drafted in November after doing several rounds in various areas and evaluating the market price of various materials required for the project. Tenders were invited in the month of December and work commenced by mid-January. Although issues pertaining to the delivery of products from WBSETCL posed some logistic challenges that deferred the entire process but in spite of this, installation of 94 nos. of LED street-lights was completed by mid-June. To finish this two-phase work of installation, an amount of Rs. 4,92,642/- and Rs. 5,12,911/- was spent respectively, adding up to a total of Rs. 10,05,563/-, out of a special grant of ISGPP for 2015-16. Additionally, the GP spent an amount of Rs. 35,895/- to increase the load capacity of the transformers as well as to install new meter boxes, which was not considered in the original cost estimation.

Street-lights have been installed extensively at every Gram Sansad under Khalore GP. 30,000 - 40,000 people, residing at Khalore and its adjacent areas, have been benefitted by this initiative. Everyone is pleased with



this noble initiative by the local GP. The women, especially, are very happy as they no longer need to worry while stepping out at night. People all around are thanking their GP & ISGPP wholeheartedly.

TAGS: Gram Panchayat, Gram Panchayet, Panchayat Samity, ISGPP, Howrah, Street-light, Rural, Rural Development, Rural Strengthening, Success Stories

