

THE DROP OF LIFE

How ISGPP assisted the Gram Panchayat overcome an acute water crisis



This story comes from the district of Cooch Behar, spread over an area of 3,387 sq. kms and home to over 28 lakh people. The area boasts of a literacy rate of 82%, significantly higher than the national average of 64.84%. Prantik is located near the northern tip of West Bengal, with Assam and Bangladesh as its immediate neighbours. Due to its geographical position, Cooch Behar was slow to develop in the years following the independence. However, it is no longer a backward district. With the assistance of the Institutional Strengthening of Gram Panchayats

Program (ISGPP), Cooch Behar today has emerged as a glowing instance of radical development. The ISGP Program has provided excellent guidance and assistance in helping the district solve many problems.

There was a time when the onset of the monsoon used to cause much worry and agony among the local populace, chiefly due to an acute crisis of drinking water and navigable roads. The livelihoods of countless people used to come to a halt. To add to the problem, health and education, would take a blow, too. This is exactly when ISGPP, Cooch Behar came forward as a veritable godsend.

In 2013, a team of representatives from World Bank came to visit the area. Upon their advice, the ISGP Program started generating awareness among the local Gram Panchayats about the prevailing crisis over the availability of safe, drinking water. A collective effort was initiated to reach a solution to the problem in hand. Under the guidance of a determined ISGPP Mentoring Team, along with the Gram Panchayats, it was decided to put an end to all cases

involving diarrhoea stricken children, nauseous mothers or a widespread want of purified water. In the presence of the ISGPP Mentoring Team, the quest for a solution began in the office of the KisamatDusgram Gram Panchayat in the Dinhata-2 subdivision, among the affected GPs. The Mentoring Team discussed the problem at length with GP members and the Assistant Engineer (NirmanSahayak) and a revolutionary solution was reached at the end of this significant meeting. Keeping in mind the epithet, 'Water Gives Life', the construction of a Water Treatment Plant began to provide purified water to the people. A 500 ltr. capacity reservoir was built at the 8thSangsad in front of the 'KisamatDusgram' Gram Panchayat office at an expense of Rs. 2,01,552. This also paved the way for increasing the Panchayat's own funds as it promised to provide 20 litres of purified water among the rural population at a cost of just Rs. 15. The crisis over drinking water was finally over. Financed by the ISGPP Fund for the financial year 2015 – 16, the successful construction of the reservoir made everyone joyful. According to the latest reports from the Health Department, the rate of incidence of gastronomic ailments in the region has reduced drastically.



The chronicle of ISGPP's noble endeavours does not end here. Gradually, the Program has gifted villages with solar lights, bituminous roads, market complexes, schools, bridges and much more. ISGP is determined to keep this wheel of progress & development spinning in the days ahead. It is the aim of the Program to make rural India the pride of the entire Nation, as well as making it a glowing example of the perfect union of tradition and modernity.

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