

Case study on formation and strengthening TUG-an effective way to maintain DTWs established by CDSP

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Introduction

The Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) is one of five GoB agencies of CDSP. DPHE is the national lead agency for the provision of safe drinking water. As an implementing agency of CDSP, until 2018 a total of 3,229 Deep Tube Wells (DTWs) including test tube wells have been installed (Ref: DPHE DPP p. 4). During the CDSP B (AF) period 1,965 DTWs will be installed across all chars of CDSP I, II, III, and IV phases. Installation of DTWs and keeping them operational requires continuous maintenance for a sustainable supply of safe drinking water. Formation and strengthening Tubewell User Groups (TUG) has been found a very fruitful approach to keep DTWs operational.

Identifying suitable DTW sites and formation of TUGs

Identifying a suitable DTW site and formation of an effective TUG group is a challenging job for DPHE and a suitable NGO. The strategy is to have the selection of the DTW site by the NGO first and then formation of the TUG with the selection of 10-12 suitable households in the vicinity of the selected DTW site. Two caretaker families (CTFs) from the TUG members are trained on the maintenance and operations of DTWs, and a toolbox is given to each TUG group.

Selection of an effective TUG group

It is noted that CDSP is working with all five implementing agencies in the remote island of Urir Char which is under two district administrations - Noakhali and Chattagram. There was a boundary conflict between Companyganj Upazilla in Noakhali and Sandwip Upazilla in Chattagram. So CDSP IV was not be able to start its development work. Now, however, the boundary problem has been resolved and CDSP B (AF) has begun its development work in full swing. The selection of TUGs is the primary task for the installation of DTWs by DPHE.

Yeanur Begum, aged 35, wife of Abdul Mannan, and Josna Begum, aged 38, wife of Md. Kamal Uddin, are living at Baro Awulia Samaj, Urir Char, Char Elahi, Companigonj, Noakhali since 2000. Both of them are newly selected DTW caretakers and formed TUGs with eleven members in the vicinity of the proposed DTW site. This site of Bao Awlia somaj has been chosen with the general agreement of TUG members.



In 2000, the households of Baro Awlia came from Ramgoti, Laxmipur, and Bhola areas. All of them have lost their land due to river erosion. The areas where they arrived were in deep jungle and under the control of the Forest Department. There were no roads, bazar, or service-oriented institutions and service providers who can meet the basic needs of the people living there. The water crisis was very serious. They used to collect drinking water from Baroawolia Khal and from ditches. At many times, they were unable to fetch drinking water due to inclement weather and time. So they had to drink polluted water from rivers, canals, and ditches. As a result, incidence of water-borne diseases were common for each family, and the death risk was high. Yeanur said, most of the people in the area were unaware of health and hygiene issues. The extent of this water-poverty-human welfare problem suggests how water-related interventions can be used to improve the condition fate of this community.



The steps to address the problems

CDSP TA team members visited this community several times and met the community to address their safe water issues and demands. After getting assurances they formed tube well user groups (TUGs) with 10-12 households in the vicinity of each and selected tube well installation sites based on everyone's feedback. Each TUG has already deposited seven thousand takas for each DTW in the CDSP office as their contribution. They are expecting that within a couple of months DTWs will be installed and a decade and half of prolonged suffering without safe drinking water will be solved. There will be the end to fetching water from the canal and ditches and this chapter will be closed forever.

Expecting changes

Aleya and Josna have mentioned that they have heard that CDSP and partner NGOs have been working for more than 15 years to change char dwellers' socio-economic conditions. Upon hearing of the resumption of CDSP activities, they have heard that the group will receive training in health awareness and tube well repair. Josna said that if one DTW well is installed for every 10-12 HHs in all the relevant chars, families will then be able to use safe water. Needless to say, waterborne diseases will no longer occur in this area. As a result, socio-economic changes in the area will take place, and women will save time on water collection and more time will be spent on family development.