

WaterAid

Written by Ganesh Timilsina, WaterAid Nepal

No looking back for Beldanda

The beneficiary community is situated in Ward No. 6 of Gankhu Village Development Committee (VDC) which lies in north of the district headquarter of Gorkha district. A problem faced by generations of Beldanda residents of Gorkha district since the past 18-19 years was ended with much relief. People of this village did not have to bear the burden of fetching water from far off anymore since an integrated drinking water, health and sanitation project completed in 1990-91. The project was financially and technically supported by WaterAid Nepal.¹ People were also able to acquire knowledge and awareness on health and hygiene through *tole* (cluster) education programme run by the project. Taps could be found within the proximity of the community, and (although temporary) there were toilets in each and every household - this raised the image of Beldanda at the time.

The problem resurfaced after a flash flood in 2004 destroyed the source intake. The temporary toilets started collapsing before good hygiene behaviour practices could be well developed and sustained in the community. Gradually, instead of toilets, people started resorting to their old ways of defecating in open fields and forests.

The community people connected a temporary pipe from the source to bring water to the community with much effort; however, water was not adequate like before. Because of the lack of permanent toilets and due to the scarcity of water, they could not embrace sanitation as part of their life.

Around this time water, health and sanitation projects started being implemented in other various wards of Gankhu VDC with the support of NEWAH. Side by side with drinking water, sanitation was greatly emphasised in these projects.



The lives of Beldanda people have dramatically improved thanks to the access of water facilities

¹ Only since 1992-93 NEWAH started implementing projects in communities. Prior to this WaterAid Nepal played this role.

Source of inspiration crumbling down

When water, sanitation and hygiene project was completed in Beldanda village in 1900-91, Beldanda became a source of inspiration for the neighbouring communities. It had become an example of how water supply and sanitation could work, and thus attracted other nearby communities to these facilities. Neighbouring communities then began to make efforts to bring drinking water and sanitation projects to their own communities and were able to make noteworthy progress in these areas.

Lack of structure to organise sanitation awareness training and a lack of concern to transform the temporary toilets into permanent ones among the community people were mainly the cause of the deteriorated WASH condition of Beldanda. Eventually, the Beldanda residents started showing concern to improve this condition of the community. The users committee requested for NEWAH's facilitative support in the rehabilitation work of their water supply and to declare 'No Open Defecation' in the community.

Revival of Beldanda

A survey took place to initiate a rehabilitation programme in this community comprising of 69 households and a population of 389 people. The process moved ahead through the concept of basic sanitation and in no time at all, the community were able to declare 'No Open Defecation' (NOD) status. Permanent toilets were constructed in 62 of the households. Seven households already had toilets. Boards with sanitation messages were put up in the community. A new intake was constructed with the financial and technical support of NEWAH. Nine new taps were installed, some old ones were maintained. There was also increasing practice of kitchen gardening, through the use of waste water from the taps. People are now able to grow fresh vegetables to feed themselves, and this produce is also a source of income for them.



Increasing kitchen gardening practice through the use of waste water

All the community members played an active role to declare NOD in the community. They solved the problems that arose along the way on their own. Child clubs and womens' group were formed to make the community basic sanitised and they supported the users committee from their level. As a result NOD was declared in the community on 7 March 2009.

As this is moving ahead to contribute to the sanitation campaign of the VDC, a feeling of healthy competition has evolved among the people of this area. People are interested not only in toilet construction and its uses, but also all kinds of activities and practices to keep themselves clean and healthy e.g. covering food and water, drying the dishes in the dish rack, disposing of their garbage in a specific area, is now part of their daily routine. They are now totally committed to ensuring the sanitation condition of community does not deteriorate.



Beldanda is now a 'No Open Defecation' area

Kashiram Patamagar, the teacher of local Hanuman Primary School, states "The diarrhoea incidences reduced significantly after the community became clean. The condition of having to carry the sick to hospital does not exist anymore," Although the sanitation condition of Beldanda was not satisfactory in the past, expressing his commitment to transform the community into a model one in the days to come, Rudra Bahadur Bogati, Chairperson of Beldanda Water, Health and Sanitation Users Committee says, "Now there is no looking back for Beldanda."

- Ganesh Timilsina