



Awareness through "Paani ki Paathshala" amongst children in Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh

Development Alternatives initiated awareness generation campaign in Gautam Buddha Nagar district, Uttar Pradesh. This was part of the Tank Rejuvenation and Biodiversity Conservation project. Under this campaign six sessions were conducted with local children. Total 328 children of the age group 7–10 years participated from four villages. During the session following key topics were discussed:

1. Alarming situation of degrading traditional water bodies i.e. tanks
2. Causes of tank degradation
3. Effects of tank degradation on humans and environment
4. Water borne diseases
5. Ways to conserve tanks and tank water.

Social awareness through interactive sessions was planned across four project villages namely, Dujana, KacheraVarsabad, TalabpurHathipur and Bishnoli.

Intervention and approach

The main aim of this activity was to address the problem community people face on regular basis with respect to their surroundings. It created a sense of realisation among people regarding the cause of the problems, and help them vision for betterment and change they can bring in their lives irrespective of the difficulties and hardships of societies and communities.

The objectives of this campaign was to educate community on water – its use, sources and quality, raise awareness on different methods of water conservation, engage with the community on managing their water resources, develop ownership of the community towards managing and protecting their traditional tanks.

The concept of “Paani ki Paathshala” was especially built for children. Young population brings about the biggest changes in the world. Their ability to understand the present and future conditions and make them reach to the elder generation is their biggest strength and that is why they are called “Pioneers of Change”.

The session began with an ice-breaking activity with children to make them comfortable and interactive. They were excited and showed curiosity to know what was the aim for us to be there in the school with them. When they were introduced to the objective of the visit, they started interacting with more enthusiasm. Children were well aware about the tanks present in their village and also have monitored them very closely as they play around the tanks. When they were asked totell what all things they see in and around the tank, many answers came to it such as trees, plants, garbage, plastic, bottles, fishes, tortoise, etc. And to our surprise they were able to tell which things were good to be there in tank and which ones are not.

During the session they were told about how the tanks that have been degraded over the time and how the use of tank water has been decreased. They were able to co-relate the issues. While interacting with them, children shared about the dangerous diseases such as dengue, malaria, etc. which can happen due to degraded water in tank and unhealthy tank surrounding.

After listening to all this, students realised the critical situation of tanks in their village and pledged to not to throw waste and garbage in tanks. Also, they assured about stopping villagers from doing this, aware people about the significance of conserving water tanks.

The sessions were completely interactive, as students were asked questions frequently, share their views and participate in activities. At the end of the session, children were divided in groups and were asked to make a poster or to write slogans based upon their understanding of the session on tank conservation. This activity was an interesting one!

Words of change by children:

Pari , a student of 5th standard from Dujana Primary School said, ***“I pledge to keep the tanks of my village clean. I will stop people from throwing garbage in it spread the word of hygiene for the safety of generations.”***

Sonu, a student of 5th standard from Dujana Primary School shared his views and said, ***“I feel that it is our moral duty in the villages to keep the tanks and the surrounding clean and healthy. I will aware my friends and family about this serious issue of tank and tank water degradation.”***

Khushi, a student of 7th standard from MD Public School, Bishnoli shared her views on need of water conservation and said, ***“Nothing is as precious as water on our planet Earth. Without water there is no life for anyone. We must stop polluting our tanks in villages as they are the prime source of water for humans and animals.”***