Safe Water Trader Jhantu on the Verge of Success: A Story from Sagordari Horipara Village

Location: Sagordari Horipara, Keshabpur Upazila, Jessore District, Bangladesh

A Farming Community's Hidden Crisis

Sagordari and Komorpur, two neighboring villages in Sagordari Union of Keshabpur Upazila, are home to nearly 1,600 families. Known for their agricultural productivity—betel nut, paddy, and a variety of vegetables—this region appears prosperous on the surface. However, beneath this agricultural success lies a silent health crisis: salinity and arsenic contamination in drinking water.

Most families in the villages depended on shallow tube wells, unaware of the arsenic and bacterial contamination. With no nearby deep tube wells due to salinity and poor infrastructure, households were forced to walk more than 30 minutes to fetch safe water, often resorting to unsafe alternatives. As a result, many community members suffered from gastric issues, diarrhea, dysentery, and other waterborne diseases. Alarmingly, four individuals—Ananda Debnath, Pralahad Debnath, Tarun Mukherjee, and Kanika Debnath—were diagnosed with arsenicosis just two years ago. According to WASH inventory conducted through the project, there found only 24% safe drinking water coverage.

One Entrepreneur's Dream for Arsenic Safe Water

Witnessing the suffering of his neighbors, Jhantu Hari, son of late Ananda Hari, took a bold step in December 2022. With limited means but great determination, he invested approximately BDT 700,000 to install a Mini Reverse Osmosis (RO) Water Plant in Sagordari. Priced affordably at only 70 paisa per liter, the plant had the potential to revolutionize access to Arsenic safe water in the area.

But there was one major obstacle—awareness. Initially, daily water sales hovered around just 50 to 60 liters. The community was hesitant to change long-standing habits. Jhantu's dream was on the brink of collapse.

Turning the Tide: Project Intervention

During Community Situation Analysis (CSA) in early 2024, the project team observed the underutilized water plant. This finding spurred a coordinated response from the Project Team, together with CBOs, the team launched a series of targeted interventions:

- Community mapping and sensitization
- Training for Community-Based Organization (CBO) members

- Household visits and behavior change communication
- Courtyard sessions on safe water and WSP
- Orientation for Water User Groups
- motivated to under-served households for contaminated water source switching
- Organized water Entrepreneur group training with motivation.

Gradually, change began to take root. Families started purchasing safe water from Jhantu's plant for drinking and cooking. Trust and awareness grew.

A Transformation Realized

By mid-2024, daily water sales at Jhantu's RO plant skyrocketed to over 1,000–1,100 liters, signaling a profound shift in community behavior. More importantly, the community began to take ownership of their health and environment.

Local leaders have committed to supporting such entrepreneurs and Thanks to GOB-UNICEF and EPRC for bringing such meaningful change to their community."

The Ward WATSAN Committee Chairman echoed the sentiment: "We will continue to support local entrepreneurs like Jhantu. Our goal is to declare Sagordari an Arsenic Safe and ODF community by December 2024,"

Jhantu's journey reflects how **local innovation, supported by targeted WASH interventions**, can lead to lasting health and environmental impacts.