

Renovation of PSF in Safe Water Scarce Costal Area: A Multi-Stakeholder Coordination

Mitra Tentulia is a village in Kadakati Union of Assasuni Upazila under southwestern climate vulnerable coastal district Satkhira of Bangladesh. Safe water is highly scarce in that area due to arsenic contamination in groundwater and saline intrusion in surface water where microbial threat is as well. Though during monsoon rainwater is one of the safe sources for drinking and cooking but in dry season most of the households (HH) rely on purchase water from reverse osmosis based local vendors. Ironically, those who cannot buy water are forced to drink unsafe pond or tube-well water.

To address safe water scarcity problem, a Pond Sand Filter (PSF) was constructed at the premises of the government primary school of Mitra Tentulia village in 2020 with the technical and financial support from Bangladesh Government and UNICEF Bangladesh. Along with the construction of the PSF, management committee was formed and caretaker was also assigned, from where 45 families of that village would fetch water



regularly for cooking and drinking purposes. But within a year the well functional PSF turned into abandoned due to damaged pond connection line during the road construction and negligence of duties and mutual blaming among the management body that influenced the caretaker too for not playing his roles as he committed. As the whole facility was out of care, thus the solar panel, battery and the electric motor was stolen gradually and the system left as abandoned. As a result, the community again forced to use unsafe water from existing tube-wells and ponds for drinking and cooking. Therefore, waterborne diseases among the children and aged people were to increase in that area.

Fortunately, the GOB-UNICEF project has started their activities for strengthening community



capacity and arsenic mitigation initiatives to ensure drinking water safety for all in Mitra Tentulia village in November 2022 by Environment and Population Research Centre (EPRC). As the part of their regular job, EPRC team visited that PSF site, explored the relevant local stakeholders who can contributed to renovate and operate it for longer period. As such they discussed it with local community and Union Parishad (UP), the local government bodies how to proceed, who will do

what and how to generate fund for renovation and afterwards management cost. At this stage, the UP Chairmen agreed to take lead and bear the overall renovation cost and the community offered to physical labor and to purchase electric motor. EPRC agreed to provide technical support and community mobilization. Combining all of the efforts and logistics support the renovation work started on

January 01, 2023, where UP contributed BDT 16,000.00 (Sixteen Thousand). Apart from the renovation works, new management committee formation and assignment of a caretaker under UP Chairmen monitoring, strengthen their capacity including importance of management and creating ownership mind simultaneously done. It was decided that each user HH will pay 30 taka per month and this money will be deposited to the cashier. From the deposited money, monthly electricity bill and salary of the caretaker will be paid and the remaining money will be utilized for further maintenance of the system.

After completion of renovation and management related works Chairman of Kadakati UP formally inaugurated the PSF system on January 18, 2023. He told to the community that though the PSF has been renovated through multi - stakeholder initiative but you have to own it, it is your own asset; if you people suffer again for safe drinking water no one will come forward immediately. You are lucky that you have got support from GOB -UNICEF and EPRC, but they will not stay here after a while. Thus, its operation and maintenance roles and responsibilities are solely to yours, UP is beside you. Till now 152 people from 47 HH are drinking and cooking water from this PSF. People of the Mitra Tentulia communities are very happy for this great initiative. Community people realized their own mistakes for that they suffered a lot when the PSF was nonfunctional. They have taken lesson from that failure case. So, they committed never to close it again. From now on they will pay for water use regularly and clean as well as maintain the PSF as required. All the people of the community and UP Chairmen thanked to all concerned including GOB, Unicef and EPRC for their cooperation to get them rid of severe safe water scarcity.

