**CASE STUDY**

December 2015/No. 1

**The power of Women masons**

**INTRODUCTION**

Tatkela gram Panchayat is a part of Bagicha block of Jashpur district. Jashpur is situated in the north eastern side of Chhattisgarh bordering Jharkhand. Jashpur has one of the highest tribal populations in Chhattisgarh. Bagicha has a population of 171711 of which almost 75% is tribal people and this has the highest percentage of tribal in Jashpur. Tatkela gram panchayat has about 324 households and a population of 1605. The main income source of the community is from agriculture. There is also a small hamlet of Shastri Nagar on the fringes of the village which is home to another 20 families who are migrants.

Initially it was not an easy task to convince the villagers on the construction of individual household toilets; however the village was visited by the block coordinator again and again. First they conducted gram panchayat meetings and it started with the preliminary gram panchayat meetings, which was followed by trigger events and CLTS. The panchayat leaders also visited door to door to make this a success. The villagers sat and planned for the construction of the toilets.

During the planning they also realised that there were not enough masons in the community, so they deliberated on various ideas. Tatkela Village also had...
10 Self-help groups of women. The enterprising women suggested that why can’t they take up the challenge of building the toilets themselves.

But then they also realised that they didn’t have proper training. There were 30 women from 8 SHGs who then approached another local organisation which can offer them training.

**Women Masons: An example of community women empowered through skill and taking up the challenge**

The 30 women relentlessly pursued their dream. They realised that the task was not easy however they accepted to the training of almost about three and a half months. Their training involved a lot of sacrifice from their part, the training was very extensive and they had oral training as well as practical training. Their training was for almost 4 hours a day. The training started bearing fruits and they slowly started realising their dreams.

The gram panchayat with the leadership of Sarpanch Smt. Kalara Minz decided to engage these women mason in building the toilets.

The women started building the toilets and now they have completed 102 toilets and there are another 88 toilets are yet to be built.

Mr. Neelkanth the block coordinator during a conversation informed that it was not an easy task to convince the community to build toilets; they also had to face the challenge of non-availability of enough trained masons in the community however the persistent efforts and various meeting it was possible. The training of women on masonry was an innovation and a very important factor in achieving this.

Mr. Samundar Sai Painkra, CEO Janpad Panchayat, Bagicha says that they are very happy about the women and their work in Tatkela and he is also proud that this is going to be the first village which will be declared ODF in Bagicha block.

**Some testimonies by the women:**

“We didn’t know how to plaster cement in the walls, but we did know through experience how to use our hands when we work in our houses using mud. Due to the training we eventually learnt how to plaster with cement.” Ms. Phulo Yadav.

“The mistry takes a long time but we can finish this off in 5 days to a week” Ms. Bharti Yadav

“Now that they are trained our women want to take up bigger challenges and big bigger buildings” Smt. Kalara Minz.

“Sirji, hum aapke liye ghar bhi bana sakte hain” Bharti Yadav.

Tatkela is an example for how the task of achieving ODF is successful when the community women are empowered and they take the lead, even in construction of toilets.