**INTRODUCTION**

Bhandi gram Panchayat is a part of Baikunthpur Block of Koria District. Koria district is situated in the north western part of Chhattisgarh. Koria district has a population of 6, 58, 917. Baikunthpur is the district headquarters as well as a block headquarter. Koria has a predominant tribal population and has a large forest cover. Koria is also home to a large number of people from the PTG, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (earlier they were called Primitive Tribal Group) the most backward among the tribal groups. Bhandi, gram panchayat has a population of 1304. There is a mixed population with people from all strata of castes, and it also consists of Pandoh Tribe (PTG) people. The village Sarpanch Shri. Shiv Balak Pandoh belongs to the Pandoh tribe.

After the initial Gram Panchayat meetings the CEO and the District Collector have personally visited the Gram panchayat to ensure the processes are followed. The Cluster coordinator, Block and the District Coordinator worked in tandem and to motivate the people through trigger and CLTS. It was then followed by door to door visits and cluster meetings. The people were still not coming forward to build toilets. The Sarpanch who was committed to the cause took a brave step to trigger change. He wanted to be a role model. So, he went ahead and built the first toilet in the village, with his own resources. People were
watching but they were still hesitant. The Sarpanch not only built the toilet but also demonstrated by practising, his family stopped open defecation and they started using the toilet. It became the talking point of the village gossip, Sarpanch and his family using a toilet.

The gossips not only increased their curiosity but people from higher castes felt shameful as they started realising that his family (Tribal) was using a toilet where as they were still defecating in public. So they started discussing and showing interest. Now the workers faced a challenge.

The population in the village is scattered and they are settled in clusters, in order to reach out to all the people, the workers were divided into groups of two who visit each cluster regularly. The workers include, Cluster coordinator, Secretary, Sarpanch, up Sarpanch, Ward Panch, Prerak, Rozgar Sahayak, Mitanin, Anganwadi workers and also teachers and others as the need arises. This has resulted in the message being communicated to one and all, resulting in successful implementation of the programme. With a renewed interest the Sarpanch and the rest of the team took this in the mission mode and started intensive campaign in the villages. The Bhandi village had some masons who were willing to help out in this mission. Some of them were trained and Individual Household toilets were built. In total there were 120 BPL and 126 APL people benefitted. For those who wanted the panchayat provided with trained masons.

The hard work of the team with the help from the government authorities and a committed and passionate Sarpanch who was a role model, Bhandi, gram panchayat was delared ODF on 1st September 2015. The Sarpanch and the community have made “nigrani” or watch groups to ensure that people don’t default on the usage of toilets.

I was riding along with the Sarpanch in his motorcycle. During a conversation I asked him what made him to do this, he said “Sirji, I wanted to bring a change in my community; I wanted to lead by being a role model for the community which put faith in me and elected me”

When I walked around the village I also met this older couple and asked them about their opinion. They said, Sir, Aap khud dekhiye, humne paani barkhe rakha hai, hum roz isko istamal karte hain, is umar me yeh hamare liye bahut zaroori hai, kyunki hum bahar nahi jaasakthe hain” (Please look for yourself that we have filled water for using in the toilets. We use it daily and at this is age it is important we have toilet because we can’t go out in the open to defecate).