

No Looking Back for Beldanda

Ganesh Timilsina
NEWAH Central and Western Regional Office
Bhratpur Chitwan
Project funded by: WaterAid Nepal



A problem faced by generations of Beldanda residents of Gorkha district since the past 18-19 years ended with much relief. The people did not have to bear the burden of fetching water from far off anymore since an integrated drinking water, health and sanitation project completed in 1990-91. The project was financially and technically supported by WaterAid Nepal¹ in this community situated in Ward No. 6 of Gankhu Village Development Committee (VDC), north of the district headquarter of Gorkha. People were also able to acquire knowledge and awareness on health and hygiene through *tole* (cluster) education programme run by the project. Taps could be found within the proximity of the community, (although temporary) there were toilets in each and every household, this quite raised the image of Beldanda at the time.

The problem resurfaced after a flash flood in 2004 destroyed the source intake. The temporary toilets started collapsing and good hygiene behaviour practices could not be well sustained in the community. Gradually, instead of toilets people started resorting to their old ways of defecating in open fields and forests. The community people connected a temporary pipe from the source to bring water to the community with much effort; however, water was not adequate like before. Because permanent toilets could not come up and due to the scarcity of water, they could not embrace sanitation as part of their life.

Around this time, water, health and sanitation projects started being implemented in various wards of Gankhu VDC with the support of NEWAH. Side by side with drinking water, sanitation was greatly emphasised in these projects.



Improvement in life of Beldanda people due to the access of water facilities

Source of Inspiration Crumbling Down

Beldanda was a source of inspiration for the neighbouring communities, because at one time this community which had become an example for water supply and sanitation had attracted the other communities towards these facilities. That's why the neighbouring communities made efforts to bring drinking water and sanitation projects to their communities and were able to make noteworthy progress in these areas. When these communities had already declared 'No Open Defecation' in their area, Beldanda was in a state where people had to cover their nose while passing by through the pathways.

Damage of the intake, no mechanism to organise sanitation awareness refreshers and unconcern to transform the temporary toilets into permanent ones among the community people were mainly behind such condition of Beldanda. Eventually, the Beldanda residents started showing concern to improve this condition of the community. The users committee requested for NEWAH's facilitative support in the rehabilitation work of their water supply and to declare 'No Open Defecation' in the community.

Revival of Beldanda

A survey took place to initiate a rehabilitation programme in this community comprising of 69 households and a population of 3 hundred 89 people. The process moved ahead through the concept of basic sanitation and in no time the community could declare 'No Open Defecation' (NOD) status. Permanent toilets were constructed in 62 of the households. Seven households already had toilets. Boards with sanitation messages were put up in the community. A new intake was constructed with the financial and technical support of NEWAH. Nine new taps were installed, some old ones were maintained. Presently, one can observe the



Increasing kitchen gardening practice through the use of waste water

¹ Only since 1992-93 NEWAH started implementing projects in communities. Prior to this WaterAid Nepal played this role.

increasing practice of kitchen gardening through the use of waste water from the taps. People can now easily consume fresh vegetables, in the mean time this can also be a source of income for them.

All the community members played an active role to declare NOD in the community. They solved the problems that arose along the way on their own. Child clubs and womens' group were formed to make the community basic sanitised and they supported the users committee from their level. As a result NOD was declared in the community on 7 March 2009.



Beldanda now a No Open Defecation area

As this is moving ahead to contribute to the sanitation campaign of the VDC, a feeling of healthy competition has evolved among the people of this area. People seem sensitive not only towards toilet construction and its use but also towards all kinds of activities and practices to keep themselves clean and healthy. Things like covering food and water, drying the dishes in the dish rack, disposing off their garbage in a specific area etc. is now part of their daily routine. Now they are committed not to let the sanitation condition of community deteriorate at any cost.

"The diarrhoea incidences reduced after the community became clean. The condition of having to carry the sick to hospital does not exist anymore," says Kashiram Patamagar, the teacher of local Hanuman Primary School. Although the sanitation condition of Beldanda was not satisfactory in the past, expressing his commitment to transform the community into a model

one in the days to come, Rudra Bahadur Bogati, Chairperson of Beldanda Water, Health and Sanitation Users Committee says, "Now there is no looking back for Beldanda."

February 2009