

Signature Campaign for School Sanitation

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Rather an unusual kind of fervour prevailed in different schools of Baitadi district throughout the month of *Falgun* (February/March) 2009. This was because a signature collection campaign was ongoing in these schools to make the following appeal from the civil society - **'Make safe water and user friendly latrines accessible in all the schools for the girls and boys; let's create a proper school learning environment'**.

In this process, one thousand 537 signatures of students and teachers from five-five lower secondary and secondary schools each of Puchaudi Haat were collected. At the end of it, the signatures were handed over to the Local Development Officer (LDO) of the district and District Education Officer (DEO) amidst two different functions.

Accepting the signatures, Yadu Prasad Panthi, district LDO expressed that 'toilet for health' and 'water for life' was the prime necessity of the people. "Only if these services are available in the schools, the students and teachers can thrive in a healthy and disease free environment", he said and emphasised the need to allocate the VDC budget for school latrines in the coming days.

Likewise, Mahendra Bahadur Chettri, DEO informing about a government policy that directed construction of separate and appropriate toilets for girls and boys in schools, shared his strong belief that this kind of campaign would help to influence execution of this policy which so far has failed to take effect.

This signature campaign was taken forward collaboratively by Tribeni Swasthya Batabaran Samaaj of Baitadi Haat and NEWAH regional office in Nepalgunj.

Sanitation - everywhere and for all has equal importance. In fact, its relevance is higher in school areas where the students and teachers dedicate most of their time. However, it is most unfortunate that this service lacks behind in most of the schools. Although latrines are constructed they are not enough as per the students' ratio. The existing latrines are not user-friendly and appropriate for their use. Actually it's the girl students and female teachers who face the brunt of this problem. Especially, the adolescent girls are compelled to remain absent from school during their menstruation period due to the unavailability of proper services that meets their menstruation hygiene requirement.

The SACOSAN III held in November 2008 in New Delhi, India has declared, "Greater thrust will be placed on promoting adequate sanitation in schools e.g. separate facilities for boys and girls, supported by safe drinking water and with adequate child friendly facilities....." Hence, this campaign is an effort to pressurise and support

the government in fulfilling this declaration and achieving the national goal of universal sanitation coverage by 2017.



Crowd gathered for sanitation campaign



Student involved in signature campaign