

CHIEF MINISTER WRITES TO SELF HELP GROUPS

Madam,

I am happy that you have formed a Self Help Group and through this Group you are trying to improve the earnings and self-reliance of the members. I believe that women will get more respect and dignity in the family and society, if they are self-reliant and if they contribute to the family's earnings. Women can take a leading role in many other areas through the SHGs. One such area is Sanitation.

Every mother wants that all members of the family remain healthy and free from diseases. Most of the diseases, which spread in villages, often spread by the use of contaminated water and lack of proper sanitation facilities. Sanitation means keeping one's own house and village clean, using household toilets, and not roadside and fields, for answering the call of nature, and good hygiene practices.

Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) is going on in all the districts of the State now. The campaign aims at creating awareness among people to stop open defecation and keeping the villages clean. If all the families in a village understand the importance of sanitation, they will certainly come forward to install latrines in their own houses. I believe, if all the members of the Self Help Groups construct toilets in their own premises and also ensure that all family members use toilets, the entire village can be transformed into a clean village. You can choose the design of the toilet out of the many designs available. More information about the options and cost are available with the District Water and Sanitation Mission (DWSM). You may also consult the Government as well as Non-Governmental Organizations and Self Help Groups promoting the campaign as well as individuals who are involved in it.

If you wish, the group can take up construction and sale of sanitary materials as an income-generating activity. The group can earn profit by selling ceramic pans, soaps, phenyl etc. Interested members of the



Chief Minister Sri Naveen Patnaik

groups can be trained as masons. If you do all this, the people in the village can get sanitary materials at reasonable prices.

I strongly believe that finance will not be a constraint if the importance of sanitation is understood. Even then, if there is any problem of finance, the members of the Self Help Group can borrow money from the group fund or from a Bank. The investment, which is required for good sanitation, is not an unnecessary investment. It is to be understood that the expenditure for treatment of diseases could be much more than the investment on a toilet. Besides, young girls, women and small children benefit more if there is a household latrine.

Those Self Help Groups, which ensure that all the members of the group have toilets and also try to make the campaign successful in their village as well as in the neighboring villages, will be given suitable awards.

I urge you to take an active role in the Total Sanitation Campaign for making Orissa, which is backward in sanitation now, a forward State in sanitation.

With wishes,

Naveen Patnaik

(Abstract of the letter of the Chief Minister addressed to the President(s) of Self Help Group(s) on 01.12.2005)

