

## THE STORY OF PAKELPADA

**P**akelpada is a fairly large village in Laikera block of Jharsuguda district. Surrounded by hills and sal forests, the village is situated at a distance of 60 kms from the district headquarters. One of the most backward areas of the district, the village is inhabited mostly by tribal people. Out of a total population 4508, as many as 2874 belong to the Scheduled Tribes and 621 to the Scheduled Castes. Most of the villagers are poor; 227 of the 350 families live below the poverty line. Most of the houses are mud huts. It is no wonder that these houses had no household toilets. People used to answer the call of nature on roadside, in the fields or in open fields. Little did they know that they polluted the atmosphere and contaminated water sources. As a result, they often suffered from water-borne diseases.

With the spread of education, a number of young men became conscious of the health hazards associated with open defecation. But they did not know how to solve the problem. A chance came their way when the Total Sanitation Campaign gathered momentum in Jharsuguda district. These conscious people often met and discussed their problems. They approached the Junior Engineer and wanted him to help them find a way out. It was decided to generate awareness among the

people belonging to all sections. Awareness campaign were organized. The Medical Officer of Mundrajore, the CDPO of Laikera block, anganwadi workers, teachers of different schools, members of the self help groups, Cluster Resource Centre Coordinators, Block Resource Coordinators took active part in the campaign. Three NGOs, namely Shramasena Club, Subhash Club and ASHA became associated with involved in the campaign. Mr. Akhil Kumar Rout, the Chief Executive of Srama Sena played a leading role in motivating people. Earlier, he had worked in the Sector Reform Pilot Project in Sundargarh district. Now he shifted to this village with his wife and took a small house on rent. After settling in the village, one of the first things he did was to install a household latrine in the premises, which he and the members of his families used. After a couple of days, he called a meeting of the people, which was attended by teachers, anganwadi workers, and village elders. He explained to them that a using a latrine was convenient and it saved him from embarrassment. This worked wonders, and with a little effort, the villagers of Pakelpada agreed to install household latrines.

Once the most difficult task of motivating people and creating demand was achieved, he called upon trained masons from the nearby Sundargarh district and constructed low-cost pans and rings of different models. In a few days, all the families installed their own household latrines. Toilets have also been set up in the two schools, Pakelpada UP School and Pakelpada Sevashram School and in the one anganwadi located in this village. The village has become free from open defecation. In recognition of this, the village was awarded Pioneer Sanitation Village Award on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti in 2005.



*Production Centre*

