



Besides rallies and padayatras were organised in all schools on the occasion of Republic Day. An elaborate school sanitation awareness strategy was chalked out and it was decided to make awareness campaigns a regular affair.

A Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Park-cum - Training Centre is being set up on half an acre land where various low cost models of toilets and water supply will be displayed. Masons, field engineers and opinion makers can also be trained by experts. WaterAid, an international NGO, has come forward to help DWSM, Cuttack in setting up the park.

### Miles to Go

We have made a beginning. A lot more remains to be done. Hope, with the active cooperation of everyone working in the field and with the participation



Students' Rally

of the community, we shall soon achieve the objective of the making our countryside free for open defecation.

*Devendra Pradhan, President, Zilla Parishad and Chairman, DWSM, Cuttack*

## DIGNITY TO WOMEN: A SUCCESS STORY FROM MAHARASHTRA

In our rural areas, people are habituated to relieving themselves in the open. This age-old practice is deeply ingrained in our behaviour and it is difficult to free ourselves from its hold. However, proper planning, correct strategy, effective implementation, and active community participation can change this behaviour pattern. People of Yavatmal district of Maharashtra have made it possible.

Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) was launched in Yavatmal district in March 2001. Initially, it was difficult to motivate the community to construct household latrines because of their reluctance to invest money and labour in this. It became necessary to rework the strategy to ensure the active participation of people. It was decided to propagate the idea of a community-level women sanitary complex. Lasina, a tribal village situated on state highway, was identified for implementing this programme on pilot basis. Though a few households had individual household latrines, most of those were not in use. Villagers were used to defecating on roadside. It was very inconvenient for women for they had to wait till daybreak or nightfall before venturing out in the open. They had to walk a long distance bare-footed to find a

suitable place for the purpose. Before the implementation of TSC, diseases such as malaria, intestinal disorder and ringworms were the most prevalent ones. In the Gram Sabha, about 120 women expressed their problem. It was decided in the meeting that a community sanitary complex would be constructed in the village. The proposal was sent to the Zila Parishad and was quickly sanctioned. The community complex was constructed and put to use on 15th October 2002. Bhimalpen Mahila Mandal took up the responsibility of its maintenance. A sum of Rs.10/- per month was collected from every family towards its maintenance charges. Gram Panchayat looks after the water supply arrangement.

The construction of the women sanitary complex brought a new dimension to this programme. It inspired 178 out of a total of 198 families to construct individual household latrines. Regular use of toilets has a remarkable impact on the health status of the villagers. No longer does the inhospitable smell of human excreta greet a visitor. The village is now free from open defecation.

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