

## **Gramalaya – Tiruchirapalli**

### ***Gramalaya's approach to water, sanitation and community development***

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#### **Vision**

Gramalaya envisions a society in which all people will have equal rights and access to protected water, sanitation, health and improved income status without gender discrimination.

#### **Mission**

Gramalaya is an NGO dedicated to promote water, sanitation, hygiene and overall improvement of the rural, urban, coastal and tribal population in India whereby the empowerment of marginalized communities especially the women and children is ensured.

#### **Core values**

##### **Emancipation through Entrustment, Entitlement and Empowerment.**

Gramalaya ensures that all its projects reflect the above core values that encourage people to be emancipated from the cycle of poverty and deprivation through participation. Thus, communities are entrusted to work on the project and entitled by being part of its implementation process and its continued success through which empowerment of the people ensured.

#### **Guiding principles**

- Encouraging innovativeness and creativity
- Enabling a learning environment
- Evolving exit strategy and sustainability
- Encouraging community ownership
- Ensuring Accountability and Transparency
- Enhancing people's co-operation and participation

#### **Approaches**

##### **Water**

Water is life. Through safe water we can ensure a disease free life and improve the health status of the people. Gramalaya works to provide potable water to the communities who are in desperate need. Gramalaya will identify the needs of the community and based on that strategies would be worked out. Gramalaya enables the local communities to establish community based organizations to access safe drinking water to their households. Provision of household water supply will not only improve the

health status but also improve the income of the family. In turn, the local panchayat get revenue out of the water tax paid by the users.

Gramalaya believes in people's participation. Hence, we believe in participatory investment to establish infrastructures with their own initiatives. Hence, it is imperative for the community to invest its own money or borrowed money from the lending organizations like MFIs.

Our past experience has showed that colossal amount of water has been wasted and lot of productive man hours is wasted in collection of water. Further, wastewater stagnating street stand-posts pose health problems, difficulties in operation and maintenance of the water sources by the local government has led Gramalaya's thinking to provide potable water to every household in the community through piped water supply system. Gramalaya will work for area specific technology in providing drinking water facilities according to the local conditions.

- Individual household water connection will reduce drudgery of water collection by women and children
- Improved access to safe water
- Time saving and enhanced productive hours
- Reduction of waterborne diseases
- Children could devote more study hours
- Improved life status

## **Sanitation**

Sanitation is dignity. Sanitation is vital for human health. Lack of sanitation facilities lead to high incidence of diarrhea, communicable diseases and infant mortality. Majority of the people practice open defecation due to lack of toilets and financial resources to have on their own. Ignorance and poverty has forced them to use open spaces to ease their nature's call. This results in water pollution, poor environmental sanitation and waste of man hours. Lack of access to resources, technology and information on sanitation has led to poor toilet coverage.

Gramalaya plans to increase the coverage of toilets by awareness creation, motivation and hygiene education. Gramalaya through its community based organizations provide accessible sanitation to every household promoting low-cost technological option and also help the communities to avail financial assistance from lending institutions.

Where there is space constraint in the household, Gramalaya will encourage community toilet facilities provided by the local bodies and maintained by the communities. However, Gramalaya recommends for construction of household toilets in the urban areas using the underground drainage facilities or other low-cost models. In the rural areas, Gramalaya support the families for construction of individual latrines using different toilet types.

- Latrines gives social status and privacy for women and children
- Sanitation brings improvement in environmental conditions.
- Accessible sanitation facilities save time and increases working hours.
- Usage of latrines reduce incidence of diarrheal diseases and medical expenses.
- Sanitation improves income status.

## Hygiene

Hygiene education is an important component in water and sanitation program. Through hygiene education we can bring behavioral changes among the communities. Hygiene practices improve the health status of an individual and communities in a sustainable manner. Hygiene practices should start from the childhood. Hygiene education will include the seven components of sanitation beginning with hand washing practices till safe disposal of human excreta. Hygiene education for the communities as a whole would ensure long lasting hygiene behaviors.

Gramalaya believes in the importance of software component when hardware components like water and sanitation facilities provided to the communities. Mere provision of hardware facilities will result in non-usage of facilities and neglect of the community infrastructures. Hence, hygiene education and water and sanitation should go hand in hand.

Hygiene intervention strategies will include Child-to-child approach through school health intervention, children as health ambassadors, hygiene education through CBOs like Women Self-help groups, federations and peer educators/volunteers. The methodology will include inter-personal communication (one –to-one approach), focus group discussions, village meetings, awareness camps, cultural events, audio visual aids, films shows etc., Hygiene education tools like flip charts, flash cards, posters and other educational tools would be utilized. Efforts would be made that even after withdrawal of Gramalaya’s intervention, the communities will take over the follow up.

- Personal hygiene improves the lifestyle of an individual
- Systematic hygiene education will ensure long lasting behavior changes
- Good hygiene habits reduce the incidence of diseases
- Hand washing in crucial hours will help the individual to prevent feecal-oral transmission of diseases
- Gramalaya hygiene education strategy include seven components of sanitation
- Hygiene education will ensure proper usage and maintenance of water and sanitation facilities
- Hygiene education will help the project for sustainability

## CBOs - Community Based Organisations

Community based organizations are the backbone of Gramalaya in all its programs. CBOs include women self-help groups, panchayat-level federations, AWASH committees, children self-help groups, SHE – Teams ( Sanitation and Hygiene Education

Teams) , Village Water and Sanitation Committees(VWSC), Village Development Committees etc.. These CBOs who are one of the important stakeholders of the project, given orientation and entrusted with the responsibilities of planning, implementation, monitoring and follow up of water and sanitation programs. The leaders of these CBOs are working as the community change agents in their respective areas.

CBOs are formed, stabilized and given capacity building training through various training programs, exposure visits, hygiene education sessions, leadership training and other interactions by the staff of Gramalaya. The CBOs are serving as a bridge between the NGO, Government and the communities. The CBOs are the real implementing agencies at the field-level where the role of Gramalaya as a the facilitator and catalyst. The CBOs will work as the watch-dog in the community in terms of monitoring and follow up of the project activities implemented. After the implementation phase, the CBOs will take over the project for sustainable aspect which would be the exit strategy of Gramalaya.

These CBOs are given adequate representation by different sectors of the communities with gender aspects. These CBOs are either informal or registered depending upon the necessity of the project. The CBOs are engaged in community monitoring of other nearby projects implemented by Gramalaya and serve as the role model for neighbouring communities. So as to ensure bottom-up approach, people centered projects; Gramalaya will engage the CBOs in project planning, formulation, implementation and monitoring of the projects.

- CBOs play a key-role in the project
- CBOs are entrusted with the entire responsibility of field project implementation
- CBOs ensure sustainability of the project
- CBOs are capacitated to handle other developmental activities
- CBOs are the community change agents
- CBOs are having good faith and status among the communities

### **Sustainability**

Successful continuation of the project activities by the communities will result in sustenance of the project. Gramalaya's sustainability plans include CBOs formation and strengthening, training and capacity building, involving them in implementing stages, impact assessment study, exit strategy, end line survey etc. Passionate involvement of the community during the project period helps to sustain. Capacity building processes are aimed at involvement of different stakeholders during the project period to make the project sustainable.

Sustainability will ensure more participation of the communities and community ownership. Well motivated and dedicated, community based organizations with clear vision and strategy, training and exposure will ensure sustainability of the project. This is

possible when the organization is working in a transparent manner in all stages of project implementation including administration and finance and other decision making process.

- Sustainability will be achieved only with people's participation
- Sustainability will be ensured only when the project is the necessity
- Role model projects are the indicators for sustainability
- Transparency and accountability will ensure sustainability
- Good rapport among the communities will ensure sustainability
- Sustainability will bring credibility to the organization
- Sustainability leads to self-sufficiency

### **Technological options for water and sanitation**

Gramalaya will adopt different technologies depending on locale of the project in water and sanitation program. Technology promotion will be based on the affordability, acceptability and accessibility of the beneficiaries. Appropriate, low cost, locale specific, replicable and sustainable models will be promoted. Successfully demonstrated design and types will be developed using the locally available materials.

Gramalaya will develop in consultation and participation with the beneficiaries the technological options relating to coastal, tribal, rural and urban terrain. Technological options for Water and sanitation will vary according to the water logging, water starving, and rocky terrain, hard soil, clay soil, coastal, rural and urban areas.

### **Technology for water**

Gramalaya's current project areas are provided with good water coverage in terms of piped water networks, hence individual water connections promoted among the target communities. However, Gramalaya is advocating safe drinking water supply through hand pumps installation, **gravity flow system in the hilly region**, rain water harvesting structures in the water scarcity areas and through open well in the coastal areas. Funding and technical support will be provided to the communities for establishing the drinking water source at the household on loan basis.

Gramalaya advocates individually maintained water sources for drinking water and other domestic needs. These services could be locally made using the piped water supply system of the local government either the bore well source or the combined drinking water supply from river sources using the over head tanks and main pipelines for connecting wayside villages or single village. For inaccessible areas where piped water system is not possible, it is suggested to go for deep bore wells with hand pumps. In the case of tribal areas where natural springs are available, it is suggested to go for gravity water flow system.

### **Technological options for drinking water supply include,**

1. Individual tap water connections for the families.
2. Hand pump drinking water sources for the families or communities
3. Bore well with motorized pumps with or without OHT or water tub facilities
4. Gravity flow water system in the hilly terrains using natural springs
5. Roof top rain water harvesting for drinking water

### **Gramalaya would ensure**

- Appropriate, affordable and acceptable technology in water
- Locale specific and need based technology
- Successfully demonstrated models
- Replicable models

### **Technology for Toilet**

Gramalaya lays emphasis on low-cost, location specific, acceptable technologies and type design which will be created by the people on their own according to their socio-economic status with the little support from the field staff working for project. The technologies promoted by Gramalaya would be mostly field tested and successfully implemented models among the communities. Whatever, Gramalaya learnt from the communities over years of intervention would be taken as models nearby communities interested but maintaining excellence and innovation at every community and at every stages project completion.

All the above activities either could be supported through grant or loan system depending upon the project area and support available. In all places, more emphasis will be given for toilets with bathroom and water storage facilities using water saving rural pans.

### **Some of the successfully field tested models are provided below:**

1. Twin pit pour flush UNDP designed leach pit models in the hard soil areas.
2. Single pit pour flush leach pit models with honeycomb brick work or lined pits using local stones
3. Dry pit latrines in difficult areas like tribal belts and economically deprived communities
4. Eco-san toilets/compost latrines for water-logging, water-starving, coastal regions and rocky areas
5. Community latrines for urban slums/peri-urban/thickly populated areas where space is a constraint.

6. Individual toilets with bathroom facilities in the sewerage network or under ground drainage areas
7. Child friendly toilets for anganwadis, school toilet complexes

### **Financial support**

The financial support for the projects proposed by Gramalaya is mobilized from different stakeholders' contribution. The projects primarily planned to be executed with the communities' contribution while the capacity building and other support services are mobilized from outside the community like donors/voluntary contributions and other form grant assistance like from central and state government/quasi-government agencies. Gramalaya distinguishes two major financial supports as follows in all its projects.

### **Support for hardware components**

Support for hardware components includes the construction of infrastructure facilities for water and sanitation. As the project benefits go to individual families as beneficiaries, these facilities are mobilized by way of own contribution from beneficiaries or fund mobilization from the existing community based organizations. If the beneficiaries are not in a position to raise the funds locally for water and sanitation facilities, loan support would be made available from local commercial banks or Micro-finance institutions. In the case of large community owned infrastructures, efforts will be made to mobilize grant or financial support from government schemes.

### **Support for software components**

Support for hardware components include administrative and field costs involved for facilitation and execution of programmes with CBOs involvement. The administrative costs include support for office equipments, consumables and other overheads. Field costs include the project implementing staff salary, travel etc., Another major field cost include are the community mobilization, capacity building like training and exposure visits for CBOs including their formation and strengthening cost.

Gramalaya encourages support in the form of loan for construction of water and sanitation facilities with the tie up arrangements with local banks or MFIs – Micro Finance Institutions. In addition to the financial tie up arrangements, technical support with regard to skilled manpower, technology designs, mobilizing construction materials support are provided.

### **Transparency and accountability**

By maintaining accountability and transparency in all its operation, Gramalaya ensure the communities aware of each and every stage of the initiatives in their project and region. The bottom up approach and the top-down sharing of information from what was learned/shared from the communities as a part of planning and discussion process are documented widely and distributed to various stakeholders involved with Gramalaya. This approach and communities empowerment process makes the project more success.

As a result of the above approach, the community takes over the project ensured in addition to the exit strategy by Gramalaya.

### **Advocacy and lobbying**

While Gramalaya works in consonance with donor agencies advocacy and policy matters at macro-level, more importance would be provided to local-level advocacy especially motivating support from the local stakeholders who are closely connected project beneficiaries. Here, Gramalaya maintains think globally and act locally concept. In other words, Gramalaya expects advocacy and lobbying support at the top-level facilitated by the donor agencies/governmental departments, through routed advocacy the community support would be ensured after creating successfully demonstrated models, replicable and scalable models. This role model projects would enable other players in the concerned sector to easily adapt to their local situation based on the learning/models from Gramalaya but at the same time keeping the individual local specific project situations.

### **Documentation**

Documentation plays a major role in recording of events and processes in systematic manner in any developmental work that requires community participation and different stakeholders' role. Gramalaya gives more important both for documentation at the office-level, the systems and procedures followed in governance, administering the funds, accountability and transparency and at the field-level the process involved in eliciting community participation in planning, implementation, monitoring and community take over of projects for sustainability process. Gramalaya wanted to keep track record of the past projects profiles, experiences gained, success stories including the failures, difficulties and the learning out of the project implementation. The documentation system is mainly focused to ensure as a learning document for its own staff and for other interested agencies including the compliance to its donor's agencies and legal compliances as per the law.

### **Role model projects and replications**

Gramalaya in its every program either it may be a water and sanitation program or income generation program through micro-credit wanted to achieve excellence and sets example for other likeminded organizations and communities nearby. Gramalaya itself don't want to expand to more newer areas just because of funds available but create models locally and make the project more success by disseminating and motivating others to learn from the project experiences. The underlining principle here is that instead of spreading its wings every where, spread the wings of everybody so that macro-level project coverage and impact could be created. To achieve this, Gramalaya will provide technical and training support to other needy and likeminded organizations which would enable new organizations to enter and excel with confidence in the related sector.



## **Implementation and Expansion plan**

As clearly explained in the role model projects and replications section above, Gramalaya would work for facilitating newer organizations to enter into this sector by documentation, dissemination and sharing of knowledge and experiences gained, capacity building support, arranging exposure visits thereby increasing the confidence of individual and interested organizations to work for water, sanitation sector and community development works. Gramalaya strongly believes that with the creation of more role model sustainable projects and by process documentation, advocacy and lobbying, capacity building, large number of communities will benefit with more space for new players to come in.