New journey, new beginning

Gram Panchayat Zafrabad is located 22 km from Morena district headquarter and is surrounded by Chambal canal from both the sides. Total population is around 3100 and the main occupation of Zafrabadi villagers is agriculture and dairy. The socio-economic condition of the GP is relatively better due to abundance of water, fertile soil and adequate land for cultivation. Major crops cultivated are mustard, wheat and vegetables. Almost every household has at least one cow and one buffalo.

With the advent of Swachh Bharat Mission, sanitation work started in the village but was very slow as there was many apprehensions and lack of clarity among villagers. Meanwhile, JK Tyre partnered with FINISH Society to promote sustainable sanitation programme in Zafrabad. They conducted a baseline survey and found out that only 122 households have toilets and rest 300 households have no toilets. They planned a meeting with the Sarpanch Mr. Rambharoshi Yadav and discussed about going ahead for making the GP open defecation free. Sarpanch was more than happy to contribute and support the JK Tyre team and so he ordered a Panchayat meeting calling ward members, anganwadi workers, asha workers, local leaders, school principal and teachers. JK Tyre and FINISH team explained about the programme in detail and asked the participants to share their thoughts and ideas. It was decided that Swachhata Chaupal will be organized at each and every ward with support of ward members, anganwadi workers and asha members and it will be supervised by Sarpanch himself.

At ward level, the situation was not very good, it was seen that all across the streets garbage and feces were left unattended. People threw garbage in almost every nook and corner of the village. Swachhata Chaupal was organized in one of the wards and it was attended by 70 males, 50 females and 20 children. The team talked about the health and hygiene practices that were lacking in the village. They were told how open garbage and defecation leads to diseases like diarrhea, intestinal worm infections, cholera, typhoid, etc. Some of the women took the responsibility of cleaning their village. Nigrani committee was formed with volunteers both men and women and they were given the responsibility to see if all the villagers have started constructing toilets and stop defecating in open. People started constructing toilets but Sarpanch was not happy with the progress of the programme as it was still slow.

They decided that youth should also be made part of this swachhta drive to make the programme an overall success. So, a cricket match was organized in the village where in almost all the young boys participated and enjoyed. After the match, both the teams received cricket kit as a token of appreciation from Mr. Kulkarni, General Manager, JK Tyre and Morena Janpad Panchayat Chief Secretary Ms. Srishti Bhadauriya. This gave a lot of thrust to the programme as youth of the village participated in forming Nigrani committee and swachhata rallies were conducted by school children with support of teachers.

Sarpanch looked satisfied with the participation of his villagers in the programme, he also took the responsibility of cleaning and removing garbage piles from public places through JCB and tractors. The villagers took the responsibility to clean the other parts of the village and canals. This way a new wave of cleanliness and harmony flourished in Zafrabad.
As the toilets were being constructed, people were still practicing open defecation as they had no safe place. So, they were asked to hide their feces with soil so that flies won’t sit on them and contaminate their food and water and at the same time it will lessen air pollution.

JK Tyre supported FINISH Society to conduct mason training to orient them on the correct technology of toilet construction. Simultaneously, Sarpanch declared that the household who will not coordinate and construct toilet will not be supported by Panchayat in future. But toilet construction was not the only challenge, it was equally important to provide water supply to those toilets so that they can remain usage and sustain for a long time or forever. So, JK Tyre provided with water tank, wash basin, pipes, tap and other sanitary fitting items to 285 households in the GP as the remaining 15 households already constructed toilets on their own through self motivation.

The village witnessed the most power packed three months that resulted in Zafrabad being declared Open Defecation Free GP. The victory trumpets went into the ears of Chairman and Managing Director, JK Tyre Mr. Raghupati Singhania; he along with his entire team visited Zafrabad GP. He was accompanied with Whole Time Director, Mr. Anshuman Singhania and President Mr. Rajiv Prasad. They visited the GP to examine the work done by FINISH Society and the entire villagers of Zafrabad. They were delighted to see the progress and congratulated Sarpanch and his people for starting a new phase of their lives.

The little solder

One day, FINISH project officer Dharmendra Mishra went on a regular follow up visit to Government Primary School in Zafrabad Gram Panchayat. He met the principal and teachers of the school and introduced himself and informed them about the JK Tyre’s safe sanitation programme. A session was arranged for him to interact with the students where he told them about safe sanitation practices, health and hygiene including hand washing. He stayed there till the lunch time and saw that children were jumping over the food without following any que and without washing their hands. He asked them to make a line, follow the que and wash their hands before taking the food. They were taught about the different steps of hand washing and were asked to practice every day before and after meals and after using toilets.

Again, after few days Dharmendra went on a surprise visit to the same school just before lunch time to see if the children were doing hand washing before lunch or not. Also, to check if the teachers are monitoring them on making a line or not. To his surprise he saw that the children were washing their hands and standing in a line in disciplined manner.

Dharmendra was awestruck by one of the little champions who was sincerely following all the steps of
hand washing and seemed to be completely engrossed in it and having fun while doing it. He smiled and asked the little boy to come to him and tell him his name. He smiled back saying Dhananjay Yadav. Dharmendra asked him how he managed to remember all the hand washing steps to which he replied grinning cheerfully that he loves to dip his hands in foam. He follows all the steps to prolong the hand washing game. 😊 This is the beauty of innocence and piousness of honesty. He said that he memorized all the steps instantly when Dharmendra demonstrated during his last visit to the school.

That was the beginning for the six year old Dhananjay to become a little solder marching across schools, meeting and teaching children the hand washing steps. He has become a role model for the entire village. Vice President JK Tyre Morena Mr. Sanjay Bandil and Chief Manager CSR JK Tyre Mr. Anupam Vajpai visited Zafrabad and were astonished to see Dhananjay doing hand washing steps confidently. Later on, when Chairman and Managing Director, JK Tyre Mr. Raghupati Singania, Whole Time Director Mr. Anshuman Singania and President Mr. Rajiv Prasad visited Zafrabad, they appreciated the little master and his parents and asked the entire village to salute the spirit of Dhananjay. We wish every school has at least one Dhananjay.