

## Ordinary women as users

### *Sudadharo Moti village - Kutch*

Sudadharo Moti village in Kutch has women in the majority in the Pani Samiti. These women believe that since water is their 'problem', they should be included in managing this resource. In fact, the locals say that with the inclusion of women, they feel more comfortable in talking about their problems. Although the Pani Samiti is a part of the village Panchayat, the general feeling is that this sub-committee is more participatory and less political than the Panchayat.

### *Varli village - Kutch*

Recalling the adverse times faced by the villagers due to water shortage, Bhalbai a member of the Pani Samiti of Varli village says, "From the wee hours of the morning till afternoon we used to be engaged in collecting water from 'virdas' in the village pond and often we were unable to even take care of our children's needs. The water shortage was very acute and posed problems particularly during social functions like marriages etc. It was very difficult for us to even perform last rites for the people who passed away."

Although the villagers were skeptical about the community contribution and participation concept initially, their confidence was gained as the work progressed. The tradition bound women who found it difficult to participate in community issues, have gradually opened up and become more confident. Bhalbai says, "The situation has changed with the implementation of water supply and sanitation programme in the village. We get adequate water at our doorsteps now and are spared of performing the back-breaking task of fetching the water from afar. Although the women of the village are not literate they are able to understand the duties and responsibilities of Pani Samiti as well as importance of sanitation and good health."

### *Mamsa village - Bhavnagar*

Babyben of Mamsa village says, "All responsible work in the village is looked after by males, women's view is never taken seriously. But with WASMO's intervention everything has changed. Women now monitor even the construction work of water supply structures apart from being active in all meetings and decision making." All this could be possible due to a series of training and exposure visits arranged for them to learn from observing the changes that took place in

nearby villages and districts. Babyben says, "It is not that we have never faced any difficulties, but we are together now and that strength helps us overcome all the difficulties."

### *Aanda village– Jamnagar*

Women Pani Samiti members of Aanda village of Jodiya taluka, Jamnagar, have always been a great support to complete all the procedural work of programme implementation. Active participation in discussions and meetings is synonymous with the women Pani Samiti members. Noteworthy is the fact that it is not only the Pani Samiti members who are active, but other women are also as active as Pani Samiti members.

#### **Taking Initiative for Self-help**

### *Alang village - Bhavnagar*

Alang village of Bhavnagar district is a small coastal village and also known as Asia's largest ship breaking yard. It faced problems of water scarcity and salinity for several years. A few Darbars owned tankers, and water was supplied without charges to their own households and those of the neighbours. The inhabitants from lower castes were excluded and had to spend long hours on the road, waiting for some tanker to arrive.

Although Alang was covered under the Ghogha project, it was difficult to begin construction for as long as two years. The men were reluctant to raise the community contribution. The issue was discussed at the Gram Sabha where the women silently witnessed the reluctance of the men. The next day, ten women met at the village temple. They reasoned that if men could raise Rs.7 lakhs to construct a temple, then it was certainly within their means to raise Rs.30,000 for solving their water problems. Despite their logic, solutions were not that simple. The women had never set foot outside their homes without their husband's consent. Yet, determined, they went ahead to raise money from their village. For one of the women, who had come to Alang as a bride and had lived there for 12 years, collecting the contribution gave the opportunity to step out of the house and she saw the entire village for the first time. Within few days, the women collected the stipulated amount and entrusted it to the men to pay the contribution for the project.