

HelpYourNGO VISIT REPORT

NGO Name: Aga Khan Agency for Habitat, India (AKAHI)

Date of visit : Friday, 10th March 2023

Visit conducted by : Mr. Nishant Parekh and Mr. Tushar Hemrajani

Location : Nagale-Vasai, Palghar district

About the NGO:

Aga Khan Agency for Habitat India (AKAHI) works towards improving society's quality of life through suitable habitat activities in a secure and resilient environment, thereby generating a sense of belonging and promoting increased interaction between individuals and the larger community.

AKAHI undertakes interventions spanning across rural and urban planning, natural hazard mitigation, construction of water and sanitation infrastructure, solid waste management, water provision, housing design and construction, and other programs that improve living conditions.

About the Program:

Rural Health Improvement Program (RuHIP) aims to mobilize families from the marginalized tribal communities to improve their quality of life by establishing a sustainable community-led integrated system for water management, sanitation and health & hygiene promotion. The objective of this program is to facilitate the construction of sustainable individual household and school sanitation units, thereby ensuring their future maintenance and upkeep. AKAHI improves the local self-governance of the villages to be able to sustain the efforts by promoting hygienic behaviour in all age groups, livelihood, and sustain sanitation resource supply through formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

HelpYourNGO Intervention:

Quantum Advisors Private Limited, HelpYourNGO's CSR client, have been supporting AKAHI's RuHIP program since FY18. Through their support, 400+ household sanitation units have been constructed, solar lanterns distributed, school sanitation units renovated, and 8 Rooftop Rainwater Harvesting Structures (RRWHS) have been installed in villages of Poman, Palghar and Vasai.

In FY23, 50 household sanitation units are constructed through community participation at three project locations in the Nagale Gram Panchayat of Vasai – Phanas Pada, Divekar Pada, and Dongri Pada. Equal number of solar lanterns are distributed to the beneficiaries of these sanitation units, and 2 rooftop rainwater harvesting structures are constructed – one each at the Divekar Pada School and the Poman Gram Panchayat office.

HelpYourNGO Visit:

The HelpYourNGO team visited the project site of Nagale Gram Panchayat with Ms. Hiral Kanani and Mr. Ketav Chaphekar, representatives from the donor organization Quantum Advisors Private Limited. It was indeed a privilege to experience first hand the incredible work being done by the AKAHI team at the ground.

The visit commenced by a visit to the Gram Panchayat office where Mr. Sachin from AKAHI delivered a presentation on the impact RuHIP has created over the years and the future plan of action. This was followed by a short felicitation ceremony by AKAHI and the local community, lead by the Sarpanch, as an expression of gratitude.



Felicitation of Donors



Felicitation of Donors

We then proceeded towards the backyard where the RRWHS was installed and Sachin explained how the same will tremendously benefit the local community.

Note: Nagale GP is a region which, even though it receives heavy rainfall, experiences dry summer months since the land doesn't retain water.

We then proceeded towards Mahajan Pada, where sanitation units were constructed in FY20, to interact with the beneficiaries and understand the change having a sanitation unit in their vicinity had made in their lives. All beneficiaries were appreciative of the work done by AKAHI and the women beneficiaries especially were happy that they now did not have to defecate in the open.

Our next stop was Divekar Pada where 50 household sanitation units are constructed in FY23. It was an eye-opening experience interacting with the beneficiaries, where we were apprised about the challenges they would face while defecating in the open like snake bites and attacks by leopards.

We also visited the Divekar Pada school to see the RRWHS installed during the year.



Beneficiary interaction



Solar lantern being charged



Newly constructed Household Sanitation Unit

We then visited the Sashtekar Pada Government School, where Quantum had supported construction of sanitation units in FY20. Little girls welcomed us with handcrafted artificial flowers that they had created, after which we engaged with the students and teachers to learn about their challenges and experiences. The sanitation units were well maintained by the school management, which has helped them to develop better hygiene and overall good health.



Students at Sashtekar Pada School



RRWHS at Sashtekar Pada School

The AKAHI team was kind enough to also take us to Tilhar village to give us a first-hand experience of their interventions in the areas of livelihood for the villagers, namely honeybee keeping and kitchen garden.



Kitchen Garden



Honeybee keeping unit

Beneficiary Feedback:

Based on the interactions with the villagers, it was observed that construction of the sanitation and rain water harvesting units in those areas has made a positive impact on their life and has improved their hygiene and general well-being. The work done by AKAHI to build sanitation units was highly appreciated by the women, who said they now no longer had to fear for their safety while attending nature's call.

Conclusion:

The fact that the villagers had voluntarily taken a day off from work to meet us and express their gratitude in-person indicates the kind of strong rapport AKAHI has developed and maintained with the beneficiary community. In the process of achieving its goal, AKAHI has made significant impact in the areas of Safe Water, Adequate Sanitation and Improved Habitat by providing innovative, affordable, and sustainable solutions for the most-needy families across all sections of society.

After a long productive day, we left the project site with a deep sense of satisfaction knowing that all our efforts, of the past several years, and more of our partner NGO AKAHI, had borne fruits. The smiles on the faces of the beneficiaries said it all!