Publisher’s Note

On the occasion of World Water Day, GUTHI observed the month as Water Action Month to promote the theme ‘Water and Jobs’. According to UN Water, almost half of the world’s workers — 1.5 billion people — work in water related sectors and nearly all jobs depend on water and those that ensure its safe delivery. Yet the millions of people who work in water are often not recognized or protected by basic labour rights. In Nepal, people are still unaware on how water sector can create better jobs and better opportunities. There is a huge scope for youths to start their enterprises in rainwater management being it still a new concept for Nepalese society. In this issue we have linked on how less quantity of water impact negatively on productivity of women to their jobs in Liwali IDP Camp.

Water for Better Education

The issue of water, sanitation and hygiene has been one of the emerging challenges to Viswa Niketan Higher Secondary School (VNHSS) after the main building that incorporate rainwater harvesting system collapsed in the 2015 earthquake. Water supply system was badly affected as existing well-got dry due to lack of recharge. Poor water supply directly affected the sanitation of toilets resulting unhygienic behavior in the school.

To create awareness about the importance of water and sanitation, GUTHI conducted awareness sessions to hundreds of students in March at VNHSS.

In the month, total ten sessions were carried out with a total participation of 469 students.

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Students from different classes actively participated in the session. The session helped to aware the students about the importance of sanitation and several factors that need to be considered for quality sanitation.

“After destruction of the building, VNHSS lacked toilets and water to clean existing toilets that directly affects on the health of students,” said Bimala Gurung, Program Associate at GUTHI, adding that they needed awareness about the water and sanitation. “In these trainings, we taught students about importance of rainwater, clean toilets, hand washing techniques and threat of unhygienic behavior,” she explained.

Each awareness sessions were divided into presentation on respective topics of rainwater, sanitation and hygiene followed by group discussions. During the discussions, students shared the status of water and sanitation in their school.

They further raised questions and highlighted the role of an individual for maintaining quality sanitation in their school, family and community. They also demonstrated their knowledge from the sessions through drawings and writings.

Students were excited to be a part of the sessions. They were motivated towards taking the awareness program further and adopting the technology in their home as well.

“I would like to thank GUTHI and our school for providing an opportunity to learn and share our view regarding rainwater harvesting technology. Like in our school, I hope to see such sustainable technology in other places as well so that future generation can experience a better life than us,” says Sunita Shrestha, grade 11, VNHSS.

“Being users of toilets, we, students should use toilets properly and be accountable for maintaining health and sanitation in the school,” said Bishal Kharel, grade 11. Citing that theoretical knowledge should be implemented practically, he said, “We can carry awareness session and teach our juniors about it to improve sanitation and hygiene of the school.”

Another participant Rupesh Shrestha, a grade 11 student said, “The session was fruitful to me as I learned that we should be self-conscious about our own activities to reduce waste from the source.”
AGENDA

Water for Better Opportunity

In patriarchal Nepalese society, women are focal persons to look after all household chores. Due to less availability of water, women are not able to actively involved in economic activities. Water woes are even subtle for people who are living in temporary shelters after the 2015 massive earthquake. As Liwali Internally Displaced People’s (IDP) Camp lacks supplying of freshwater, most of their time spends in non-productive activities such as household chores, fetching water queuing up for long hours and walking long distance, taking care of children and old age care, et cetera.

“I have to walk till my mother’s home to fetch single pot of water,” said a 41-year Nhuchha Laxmi Basi residing in temporary shelter at Liwali. She further said that the water from nearby well couldn’t be used for drinking purpose so she has to walk half an hour to her mother’s home to fetch drinking water.

“Water comes in every three days and many times I have to take leave only to fetch water during working hours,” she stated in her disappointment, adding that there is no other option for drinking water.

Nhuchha Laxmi is just an example who has to take leave for fetching drinking water. Total 64 families living in temporary shelters face same problem of drinking water. Not access to drinking water resulted in spending more time in water fetching than focusing on other potential activities especially for women.

Shikha Shrestha, Advocacy Manager at WaterAid Nepal, “Even though literacy rate of women has increased statistically still the number of women enrollment in job has not increased especially in the South Asian countries.” According to her, there is a need to recognize the role of woman and make water easily accessible.

Easy access to water is not only about saving time rather it is about utilizing time for other productive activities. Hence it is compulsory to ensure accessibility of water for better opportunities to women.
Woes of Bleeding

Nabina Miya, Grade 11 student at Vishwa Niketan Higher Secondary School unwillingly misses her classes every month during her menstrual cycle. Not only her, her other friends also prefer staying home than going school in their periods. Why? Because the school has no proper management of water, sanitation and hygiene facility.

“I have no option than missing classes every month during my menstrual cycle as there is no facility of sanitary pads, water and proper sanitary pad disposal bins in school,” says Nabina. She further says, “Menstruation is natural process and we girls need to give special care to our personal hygiene during the time. However, lack of basic facilities in school for hygiene, we prefer staying home.” She complains that the school administration is not open towards such issues and providing facilities to girls.

Echoing with Nabina, Khusbu Gupta another student at grade 11, shares, “Poor sanitation facility in school is main reason for absentee for girls.” She says that though they know that flushing toilet after every use is compulsory to keep toilets clean, as there is no water they can’t help it.

Stating that used sanitary pads are also thrown haphazardly in toilets, she says, “The school administration should manage bins to dispose sanitary pads and students have to aware about using toilets properly and keep it neat and clean for better health.”

A study showed that the number of adolescence girls school dropout rate is higher than boys. The reason is lack of clean and safe toilets to change their sanitary napkins or towels while they are menstruating. Due to fear of humiliation and discomfort, girls prefer staying at home than going to school. In Nepal, it has been documented that girls have lower literacy rate than boys because of not attending schools. Awareness about sanitation and hygiene including students, teachers and non-teaching staffs to improve sanitation facilities is required in order to minimize absence of girls.
VOICES

The World Water Day on March 22 was celebrated in Nepal with the theme ‘Water and Jobs’ highlighting how quantity and quality of water can change workers’ lives and livelihoods. The governmental and private organizations conducted various programs including workshop, seminars and conferences to mark the day and water week. Team GUTHI has caught up with stakeholders working in the field of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector to take what they had to say about the situation of WASH in the country. Here what they had to say.

Lajana Manandhar, Executive Director, LUMANTI

Prioritizing inclusive WASH is still a far cry in Nepal. There is a lack of access to water, sanitation and hygiene for women, children and differently able population. Hence, we should join hands towards prioritizing inclusive WASH to all.

Shreerendra Pokharel, President, The Sewa Nepal

Water is considered as our life. People are not assured about the water quality that they use in their daily life. To cope with water scarcity, the government and stakeholders should focus on wastewater treatment and their usage. Adopting rainwater-harvesting system is another sustainable way to minimize water problems in the valley.

Manorath Bajgain, Senior Lab Technician, ENPHO

Human being has close relationship with water. Therefore, we should be careful with the water that we drink. Clean water may not be drinkable every time. Appropriate purification system should be adopted for safe drinking water.
Anil Sthapit, Programme Coordinator, Freshwater Action Network South Asia (FANSA)

The Water Action Month is celebrated to aware people about how to use available water sources to cope with the water scarcity. Using water for economic activities is major concern of this year. There is a need to manage water resources to access available water enterprise through joint effort of the government and private sectors. Management of water resources when integrated with the creation of job opportunities could be sustainable one as it motivates people to use water wisely.