

# Water For People's Work Supports National Recognition of West Bengal Community

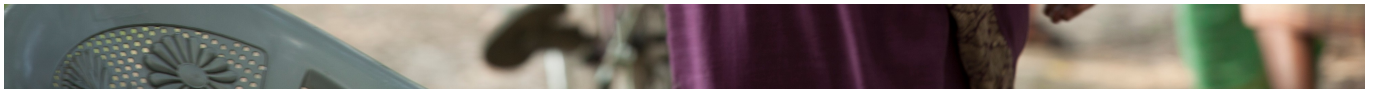


Water For People [Follow](#)

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One of the communities where Water For People works in West Bengal, India, has been recognized for its achievements to significantly enhance the quality of life for its residents. One of the three awards for Best Gram Panchayat (a governed area similar to a U.S. county) recognizes Digambarpur out of the 250,000 gram panchayats in India for its progress in improving conditions for the more than 34,000 people living there. This work has been carried out in pursuit of the Indian government's National Rural Drinking Water Program and Swachh Bharat Mission on water and sanitation, respectively. This was the first year this award was presented.





Water For People honors the successes and commitments of the gram panchayat leadership and the community members themselves, with whom Water For People has been working in partnership since 2006 to develop water and sanitation services. Digambarpur is open defecation free after establishing a program that provides every family with bins for household waste and schedules waste pick-ups every morning. This program costs families 10 rupees (\$0.15 USD) per month. For drinking water, every community in the Digambarpur Gram Panchayat has reliable water services. Families pay 50 rupees (\$0.75 USD) per month for water service. Initially, there was some resistance from families about paying for these services, but the gram panchayat held meetings and awareness campaigns explaining how payments contribute to the long-term sustainability of these vital services.







A Jalabandhu (local handpump mechanic) repairs a community water point in India

Water For People helped establish water users committees in communities, and water and sanitation committees in schools, to support the sustainability of these services. The gram panchayat was also instructed in monitoring levels of service, and *Jalabandhu* (Friends of Water) and *Nirmal Bandhu* (Friends of Sanitation) were trained to repair and maintain water and sanitation infrastructure. The gram panchayat highlights the key role women played in the transformation through building awareness about safe water and household sanitation practices.

“Since 2006, Water For People India has engaged with all eight villages of Digambarpur Gram Panchayat for implementing our Everyone Forever approach,” said Water For People India Country Director, Meena Narula. “This has meant engaging with local communities and institutions to build a strong foundation for sustained management of services, systems for drinking water and sanitation, and adoption of safe hygiene practices. The recognition of Digambarpur Gram Panchayat as the best in the country is a result of exemplary leadership of individuals, especially women, in a collective form and their spirit of enterprise and determination.”