

## **REPORT ON ORIENTATION PROGRAM AT MAJULI**

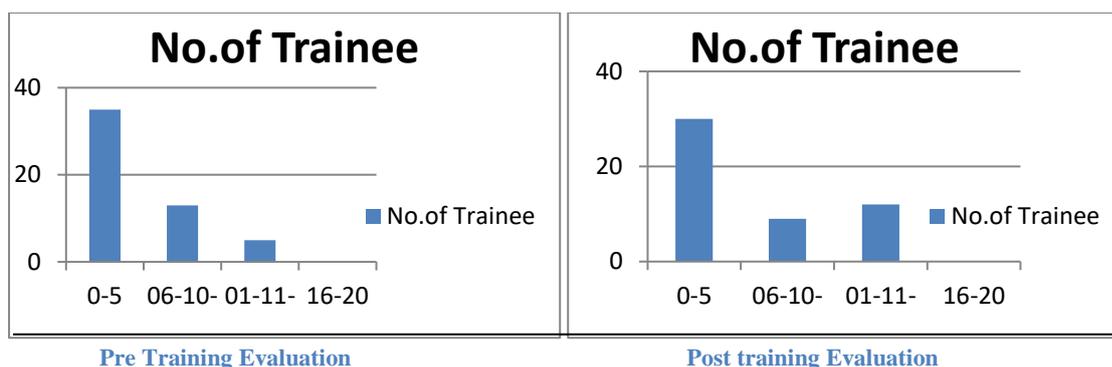
The problem of arsenic contamination in water in Jorhat district of Assam has been primarily reported from Titabar and Majuli sub-divisions of the district. Majuli, the river island which has recently been established as a new district of Assam (of the 33 total districts), also reports of arsenic contamination above normal ranges from tube-well water



Training program

samples, and nail, hair and urine samples.

Within this context, the Arsenic knowledge and Action Network (AKAN) and Safe Water Centre for Healthy Assam (SWaCHA) in collaboration with Piramal Swasthya Management and Research Institute and Majuli District Administration organized a two-day orientation program on safe water and health on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> October at the Conference hall of the DC office Majuli. The Majuli Deputy Commissioner inaugurated the training cum orientation program. Manish Maskara, Coordinator, Arsenic Knowledge and Action Network gave a brief presentation about the network and the experience of working in Assam. Nilutpal Das and Churamoni Saikia from SWACHA facilitated the program. There were 53 trainees from different government and non-government organizations. Dr. KK Majumdar from KPC Medical College, Kolkata spoke on, 'Identification of Health Effects of Arsenic: A Health Perspective' and made a presentation on diseases caused by arsenic contaminated water and their symptoms. Dr. R L Goswamee of CSIR-NEIST Jorhat spoke on, 'Arsenic and Water Quality in Assam: A technology perspective'. Dr. Mamata Goswami from Cotton University Guwahati made a presentation on 'Experiences from the field in Assam: A community perspective'. In the orientation program a pre and post evaluation session was also conducted on the basis of a questionnaire. In that pre-evaluation session, 35 trainees scored in the range of 0-5, 13 trainees scored in the range of 6-10 and only 5 trainees scored in the range of 11-15. But during the post evaluation session 30 trainees scored in the range of 0-5, 9 trainees scored 6-10 and 12 trainees scored in the range of 11-15. The following figure clearly shows the effectiveness of the training program.



There was an interaction session among the participants and resource persons. In this session participants raised different question related to arsenic, its mitigation and management. The participants asked questions about the sources of safe water, the relationship between food and arsenic, and about the period of exposure. The resource person suggested piped water supply and rain water conservation as alternative sources of safe drinking water. They also said that there is a strong relationship between animal protein, good nutritious food and the exposure to arsenic. Even though the period of exposure to arsenic differs from place to place but usually it takes 6-9 years to be affected by it. The participants also asked for different ways to motivate people to test their water in government or private laboratories. To this, the response was that people should be made aware of the different schemes and facilities that are available to them.

On the second day of the training program, A filed visit was organized. The team visited Sesusuk village of Namoni Majuli Block. The main objectives of the field visit were:

1. Understanding community perception on safe water and health, and understanding how they relate to the problem of arsenic contamination.
2. Learning about simple individual level and community led solutions including alternate/community owned indigenous means/sources for accessing safe water.



Field visit

### 3. Identification of manifestations of exposure to arsenic among the community.

The team visited 10-15 households and the accompanying doctor detected three suspected cases of Arsenicosis, with mild pigmentation in the body and hands of the individuals. Even though the water has been highly contaminated with arsenic, the team found very less visible cases of Arsenicosis. This could be an interesting topic for further research.

After the completion of the training program, certificates were distributed among the participants and Mr Mohananda Gohain, Piramal Swasthya Management and Research Institute delivered the vote of thanks.

Feedback of this training program was taken from the participants. The participants found the training useful and informative, and the trainers' professional. Some of the suggestions were to distribute IEC material on the topic extensively, discuss preventive and curative medicines for arsenic related diseases, practically demonstrate low cost technologies for removal of arsenic, include extended field work in the program, and to organize more such programs at block and district level.



**Distribution of Certificate**



**Group Photo of Participants**