

A BRIEF REPORT ON SENSITISATION WORKSHOP ON ARSENIC IN DRINKING WATER AND IT'S MANIFESTATIONS ON HEALTH

Arsenic contamination in sources of drinking water has become a serious cause of concern for human life in Nalbari district. According to Union Government the permissible level of arsenic in drinking water is only 10 PPB. But, the State Referral Laboratory of PHED detected up to 152.72 PPB in the tubewells of Nalbari district and which is a very alarming conditions for public health. In this line of thinking, The Safe Water Centre for Healthy Assam (SWaCHA) in collaboration with Arsenic Knowledge and Action network (AKAN) and Fluoride Knowledge and Action Network (FKAN) organised a two day sensitisation workshop on 'Arsenic in Drinking Water and it's Manifestations on Health' at



Classroom Session

hotel Bordoishila, Nalbari on 27th and 28th November, 2017 among PHED worker, medical practitioners, civil society organisations. There were 68 trainees were participated in the sensitisation workshop. The Deputy commissioner of Nalbari was inaugurated the two days sensitisation workshop. Churamoni Saikia, Program Manager, SWaCHA facilitated the program. After the inauguration program, Mr. Vikash Ratanjee from FKAN brief about the emergence of SWaCHA. The sensitisation workshop was for two days i.e. 27th November and 28th November, 2017.

First Day: Class room session (27th November, 2017)

In the first technical session of first day, Er. A B Paul, Regional Director, INREM-Assam spoke about the measures for promotion safe drinking water in arsenic affected areas. The participants were given a technological perspective of the issue and giving solutions to mitigate the effects of arsenic.

Dr. Kunal Kanti Majumdar of the KPC Medical College presented about the medical management and identification of health effects of arsenic. He also mentioned about the relation between nutritional status, socio-economic condition and arsenicosis.

Mr. Ajit Patowary, Senior Journalist, Assam Tribune also spoke about the role of media in the prevention of water quality related issues and also shared his personal experiences in this field.

Dr. Ashok Ghosh from Mahavir Cancer Institute and Research Centre, Patna spoke about the relation between arsenic poisoning and cancer. He mentioned that arsenic exposure may lead to increase in cancer, heart disease and several other health problems. The cause that has led to this problem is the change in technology in drinking water, from surface water to ground water.

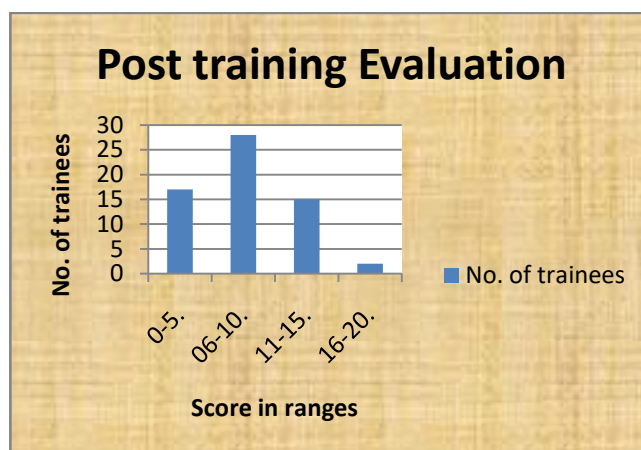
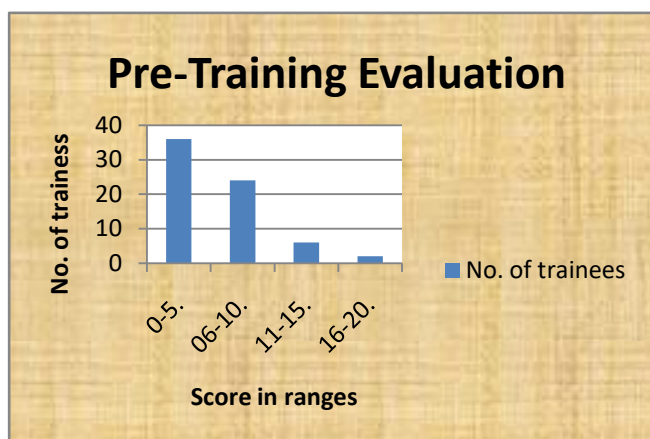


Class room session: Group Photo



Field visit: Group Photo

According to the suggestions of resource persons, a pre-post evaluation session also conducted on the basis of a questionnaire. In the pre evaluation session 36 trainee scored in the range of 0-5, 24 trainee scored in the range of 6-10, 6 trainee scored in the range of 11-15 and only 2 trainees scored in the range of 16-20. But during post evaluation session 17 trainee scored in the range of 0-5, 28 trainee scored 6-10, 15 trainee scored in the range of 11-15 and 2 trainees scored in the range of 16-20. One of the participants also scored 20 marks out of 20 in the post evaluation session. The following figures represent the above data:



Ms. Anshika John from AKAN documented all the sessions and had a brief reflection of the same. The first day sessions ended with a live discussion among the experts and participants. The participants raised questions about available safe water sources, mitigation of arsenic and the treatment of arsenicosis. And the resource persons shared their opinions and experiences about this. After the completion of the training program, certificate also distributed among the participants.

Second Day: Field Visit (28th November, 2017)

To get a practical knowledge of previous day sessions, the participants visited the Besimari Madhya Chupa near Kaithalkuchi Railway station under Madhupur Development Block of Nalbari district, from where reports of some suspected cases of arsenicosis have been received. The team was led by Dr. K K Majumdar, Dr. Ashok Ghosh and Er. A B Paul. The main objectives of



Field visit

the field visit were:

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

3. To identify manifestations of exposure to arsenic among the community/ health camp.
4. To access the awareness level among the community people about the contaminated water.



Field Visit

Due to the restriction of district administration the team randomly tested the health conditions of twelve persons at the village and found eight suspected cases of arsenicosis having raindrop pigmentation, mild keratosis, leuco melanosis. The hair and nail samples of the suspected persons have been collected and sent to the Mahavir Cancer Institute and Research Centre. The water samples from drinking water sources also collected for arsenic testing. Most of the people of that area have been used sand filter for the purification of water. The experts advised the residents of the village to collect water only from the safe sources like surface water, rain water etc and also about for the better nutrition. The expert also asked the health department to track the suspected cases and suggest the PHED department to improve the water supply facility and strengthening the users committees of the water supply schemes.