



Story of the Month: November 2009

Killor Gram Pradhan leads from the front

The village of Killor is situated in a valley, surrounded by the hills of Kumaon. It is a small village, with no more than 27 households. Recently the Gram Panchayat of Killor formed a health committee to oversee and improve the public health of the community. These efforts have been within the larger context of the National Rural Health Mission, a central government scheme. Over the past seven months the health committee has drawn up an annual action plan, liased with the local government health system, and undertaken activities to improve the overall health of the village.

Madan Singh Negi (43), the Gram Pradhan of the village, and head of the health committee, has individually taken the lead in this process. He has been one of the most active Gram Pradhans in the area when it comes to health issues, participating in efforts that have restored Iron Folic Acid tablet and Vitamin A supplies to Ramgarh block, after an absence of several years. Madan *da* has taken the initiative to coordinate with the Primary Health Centre at Malla Ramgarh. He has also been a fount of motivation for other health committee members within Killor.

"If we look after the health of our village we won't have these problems. It's not just about mine [health], sickness spreads so we must look after everyone's" Madan *da* said after June's monthly meeting.

In a region where the traditional role of panchayats has been to address issues of physical development – the building of infrastructure, footpaths, and water tanks – it's a significant step for panchayats to focus their efforts on what is termed as "soft-development" issues. Indeed the health of any community is important, and when a participatory approach is undertaken there is much potential in what can be achieved. Certainly, in the short amount of time the Killor Gram Panchayat Health Committee has been active the interest and involvement of health committee members has increased.

"[In Killor] we have cleaned our village, cleaned our water sources using bleaching powder, held a camp to test haemoglobin levels, and received information from a theatre group who presented health issues to us. Right now, I'd say it's going well."

It has been particularly reassuring to see the priority women's health has received in this process, as leucorrhoea, anaemia, and maternal health, have been recognized as core issues that must be addressed. What is more encouraging is that men have been active in identifying women's health issues and pushing for them to be tackled. At this month's health committee meeting in Killor, the discussion covered many topics including increasing access to health facilities, cleaning water sources to prevent waterborne illnesses as the monsoon season approaches, and organizing a camp to treat leucorrhoea.

"In the future we need to have a leucorrhoea camp. We need to provide health tests. These facilities are necessary. Based on what interest there is, we can organize these activities on a cluster level."

Contributed by Gaurav Madan (Indicorps 2008-2009)