

District Rural Development Cell
Uttar Dinajpur

APONAR JONNYA

A joint venture of the Election Commission of India, District Rural Development Cell and SHG Clusters of Uttar Dinajpur District.

It became a golden opportunity before the District Rural Development Cell and its whole network of Self Help Groups to be linked up directly with the election process when the District Magistrate of Uttar Dinajpur pioneered the idea of the project, named “Aponar Jonnya”. Project *Aponar Jonnya* was designed to engage the SHG Clusters to provide Bed-Roll kits to the polling personnel of General Parliamentary Election 2014. The bed-roll, consisting one mosquito net, one air-pillow, one bed sheet and one “Dhokra” (local name of hand made jute-mat prepared by the SHG women) all in a Carry Bag, were handed over to the polling personnel including Sector Officers and Micro Observers. The holistic approach was engineered to lessen their extra head-ache of carrying bedding materials from their home. The *Aponar Jonnya* was a unique initiative in the country where the service of the women Self Help Groups was rendered @ completely free of cost.

At the time of training itself, the information about the project was percolated among polling personnel and other officials connected with the election process. Well ahead of the time of poll day, required number of kits was accumulated at the DCRC in separate rooms. Also, sufficient SHG members were given hand-hold training to distribute and receive these bed-roll kits and a counter-wise list was prepared. On the very P-1 day, SHG members were gathered at the DCRC counters with required no. of kits. The lists of polling parties were also supplied to them by the District Election Cell. There were two members at each counter – one was to get a signature of the Presiding Officer of polling party and keep a record and other member was for handing over the kits with a request to check the materials before leaving the counters. There was a separate counter for Sector Officers and Micro Observers.

After completion of the poll on P-day, the concerned SHG members were again deployed at their respective counters of DCRC. At the receiving counters, it was made mandatory to hand over the Bed- Roll kits to the SHG members before handing over other election materials. While receiving, one member was for collecting and checking the kits and another one for getting signature with proper record. The other election

officials, engaged at the counter, were instructed by the District Administration to strictly maintain the sequence of receiving. It was made compulsory to pay a requisite amount against any missing article of bed-roll and the rate was as under:

Cost of Mosquito Net- Rs. 100/-
Cost of Bed Sheet- Rs. 100/-
Cost of Air-Pillow- Rs. 60/-
Cost of Dhokra- Rs.180/-
Cost of Carry bag- Rs.50/-

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TOTAL Cost - Rs. 490/-

District Administration was very much strict about the above policy and NO polling party was released without proper handing over the bed-roll kit or the cost of any missing article. However, to monitor and supervise the whole show, District Officers were engaged exclusively for this programme, through out the period.

In fact, the duty-bound SHG members and their tireless involvement and also the sincere co-operation of the election officials in the whole process were the pivot of the project. By doing a well structured work-out and strict adherence of policies, the APONAR JONNYA ended successfully with a big bang in the country.

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