

WATER MATTERS, WATER RIGHTS

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Dear Friends,

The European Union (EU) is supporting six organisations for the implementation of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) in eight states of India - Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Gujarat and *** - both through direct assistance and through funding partner organisations. These projects, initiated at the beginning of 2011 in all the project areas, have now completed more than two years of existence. Over this period the various projects were internally monitored by the EU or its representatives in India. An external Result Oriented Monitoring (ROM) was also carried out by the Germany-based organisation, Viva Con Aqua. Both these monitoring exercises revealed the tremendous progress made by these initiatives, despite emerging challenges and local constraints.

To facilitate an exchange of good practices and learnings from these projects, the EU delegation decided to hold an inter-organisational exposure visit-cum-workshop. For this, two primary partners in Andhra Pradesh were identified to host the workshop with the various partner organisations participating together in an effort to share and learn from each other's experiences. After consultations were held with all six partners, the EU went ahead with the exposure visit-cum-workshop, which was held at Hyderabad from November 21-23, 2013.

The concluding session of this event saw the participants brainstorming together and coming up with ideas on learning and collaborating through partnerships. Among the approaches suggested were the setting up of an e-group, rotational annual review and planning workshops, and inter-partner exchanges of knowledge and skills. Major cross learnings, which could be easily replicable by all partners, were about water conservation technologies and community approaches to leveraging and lobbying on various concerns. In addition, partners requested the EU delegation to explore external funding sources from UN agencies as well as from governments. They also wanted the allocation of funds for innovation and building the institutional capacity of partners.

Apart from participating in this useful exercise in knowledge exchange, Parmarth organised a series of grassroots level orientation programmes on water literacy in all project villages and the schools located there to impart technical knowhow on water and sanitation. For this, Pani Panchayat members and students came together at a common location on the outskirts of their respective villages and were given a demonstration on sanitation practices, including best practices in terms of ensuring hygiene. A team of trained activists from Parmarth facilitated this participatory process making it more practical and interactive. In this way, a total of 414 Pani Panchayat members were introduced to WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) knowledge through 12 camps of this kind.



Parmarth Team

The Spectre Of Drought In Bundelkhand...

Bundelkhand has emerged as one of India's most backward regions largely because of distinct geographical and socio-economic reasons. The mismanagement of natural resources, including water resources, in the region over the decades has led to the rapid decline of its forest cover and traditional water sources. Furthermore, the region has had to face consecutive droughts. Scanty rainfall has led, in turn, to an endemic water crisis in the area. This has had tremendously adverse impacts for the people of Bundelkhand, who have been traditionally dependent on agriculture and livestock as their main sources of subsistence. Local communities here survive on a single annual crop and are crucially dependent on timely rains, given the lack of adequate irrigation facilities. These have been the main reasons why Bundelkhand has found itself in the grip of a food, fodder and fuel crisis every now and again.

Not many know that this region has been the site of around 4,000 traditional water conservation structures, some of which are as old as a thousand years. Even now some people here depend on these tanks for their irrigation and drinking water requirements. The Chandelas and the Bundelas were the two major dynasties which took a keen interest in conserving water in order to develop the region. They constructed these tanks to meet the growing water demands of the population. The tanks provided livelihood opportunities for the community by supporting fishing activities and helping to meet the water needs of cattle. Their maintenance was done by persons employed by the king and, in the case of smaller structures, the villagers collectively took up the responsibility of removing silt and repairing embankments in order to keep the local water infrastructure well-maintained.



From the late 19th century, the responsibility of looking after the bigger tanks was passed on to the state. After Independence the state's Irrigation Department took over the maintenance of water infrastructure and provided sluice gates and distribution canals for direct irrigation. Some new tanks were also constructed. The most obvious impact of these efforts can be seen in Tikamgarh district, which has innumerable old tanks, around 100 of which were used for direct

irrigation. The land area under canal irrigation in the district grew from around 3,000 hectares in the mid-1950s to about 20,000 hectares in the late 1990s. This was achieved mainly by extending and improving the network of canals and tanks because Bundelkhand is yet to see a large-scale irrigation project. There were also lift irrigation schemes linked to the tanks. Unfortunately, most of these structures are now in poor shape. They have either been demolished or have deteriorated because of human neglect.

While the government had taken steps to conserve these traditional water resources, its involvement in the maintenance of tanks and other rainwater harvesting structures has undermined the earlier sense of community ownership. In the process, the traditional Chandela, Bundela and Peshwa tanks, as well as the Haveli system of cultivation, fell into disuse since they could not be integrated into modern technologies. Simultaneously, new market-driven ways of agriculture production and the management of resources resulted in the accelerated pace of groundwater extraction. Inappropriate cropping patterns and the promotion of commercial crops like mentha only added to the problem. As a result, the wells, ponds and hand pumps in the region slowly started drying up. With the water table falling by an estimated 15 metres a year on an average in many parts of the region, most of the newly installed hand pumps have been rendered dysfunctional a year or two after their installation.

Thus, the indifference of the government and the apathy of the local communities in maintaining preserving their traditional sources of water have left the entire region vulnerable to recurring spells of drought. Since 2001, Bundelkhand has seen seven years of drought. And although such droughts are largely the outcome of the ecological vulnerability of the region, their severe impacts on the lives of people living here have arisen largely because of inappropriate policies on water management.

Sanjay Singh

Poor sanitation has been a "single biggest failure" of Indian society, says Rural Development Minister Jairam Ramesh, and links it to malnutrition among children. ...

!! The sanitation story is unfortunately depressing. At least two-thirds households (in rural areas) are indulging in open defecation," Ramesh said, releasing a report on rural development in Delhi. He said that physical infrastructure in rural areas has seen a significant transformation, but the story was not positive in terms of social infrastructure.

Ramesh observed that the situation with regard to availability of drinking water was better, but quality remained a concern. "The problem is not with availability, but quality of water," he said. Ramesh said one factor that has been ignored is the link between malnutrition and open defecation. "Sanitation picture is the single biggest failure not only of the Indian state, but also of Indian society," he said. Ramesh also said that the divide between rural and urban areas was decreasing. "Rural areas are becoming more and more urban; they retain rural governance, but have urban characteristics. We have no policies to deal with this," he said.

(Source: Jagran Post, 26 September 2013)



Include water security in poll manifestos: Rajendra Singh Magsaysay award-winner 'Waterman' Rajendra Singh on Wednesday asked political parties to make 'drinking water security' legal and include the issue in their poll manifestos.

"Water belongs to the community and their rights need to be ensured, just as the Central government made the Food Security Act for poor community," Singh, who has been heading Tarun Bharat Sangh (a water conservation society), said. Almost every political parties which comes to power, spends five years without considering potable water security for everyone or managing existing natural resources in villages and cities, Singh said. Policies to revive rivers need to be enacted and works need to be undertaken in accordance with these policies by the Centre, state governments, and municipal corporations, he added. Laws should be passed to enable the formation and functioning of community based river basin organizations, and the geo-cultural diversity of rivers should be respected, he said. When asked whether he proposed these points to political parties, Singh said that he had discussed the matter with Congress and BJP leaders, and had been assured that necessary attention would be given to water security in their poll manifestoes.



(Source: Dainik Jagran, 06 November 2013)

Banskar Women Step Forward To Create A Future For Their Children....

Tribal communities, because of their high levels of poverty and lack of mobility, have always been deeply dependant on forest resources, both for daily sustenance as well as for their livelihoods. Similar is the case of the Scheduled Caste Banskar community of Kotra village, which lies in the Talbehat block of Lalitpur district. The Banskar's are primarily dependant on cane and

bamboo out of which they create articles of everyday use, such as agriculture toolkits, buckets, chairs, tables and musical instruments. Given the close influence of culture and tradition on their lifestyles, Banskar's have generally opted out of the educational system. Continuing with the crafts making vocation of their ancestors, they have handed down these skills from one generation to the next. However, given their minimum social and political participation, even the local administration has paid inadequate attention to their human development entitlements. Consequently, the Banskar's ways of life have remained unchanged over the years and they themselves have been reduced to a marginal status.

Tragically for them, rapid industrialisation and urbanisation have also resulted in their crafted artifacts falling out of favour.

Plastic utensils have come to replace the cane ones that had been made by the Banskar's earlier, similarly electronic musical instruments have now taken the place of the handcrafted musical instruments of yore. This has resulted in a sharp decline in demand for the handcrafted products of these tribals leading to their further impoverishment.

The village of Kotra, situated 18 kilometres away from Talbehat town, has a sizeable population of Banskar's. It is surrounded by a rocky terrain and pockets of forests. Basic amenities necessary for survival are few and far between in this village and women here had to collect water for drinking and other household needs from an old dam, which is about 10 kilometres away. The women tried to put their problems before the village panchayat on several occasions, but the panchayat at Chaotra did not pay any heed to their demands. The panchayat leaders, who were largely from upper caste communities, merely noted down their requests but chose not to take any action on them.

This was the situation that prevailed when Parmarth began to associate itself with the village in order to bring about social change with the active participation of women in local governance through the Pani Panchayat. Despite being largely illiterate, the women of Kotra accepted the challenge. They convinced the men in their community to join them in exploring ways to overcome the problems they faced.

Empowered by new concepts and knowledge introduced to them by Parmarth, including information on integrated water resource management and self governance, armed with information on acts like



MGNREGA, RTI, PRI system, and trained in advocacy approaches, the Banskar women gained confidence to seek solutions to their problems themselves. They even travelled beyond the vicinity of their village to visit the divisional headquarters in Jhansi for the first time and meet with officials. Taking a cue from the initiative shown by the women, the entire community gathered at Chaotra to work on developing a water security plan for the village that would cater to every resident. To actualise the water security plan, villagers were urged to contribute in terms of their labour, while Parmarth committed itself to making a proportionate contribution in terms of funds. In this way, a rock lined well, 30-feet deep, was constructed at an easily accessible location in the village.

The panchayat leaders did not like the idea of women taking the initiative. But the entire village under the leadership of the Pani Panchayat went ahead with its water security plan. For the first time, the Banskar women could place their demand for a hand pump before the Gram Panchayat and ensure that it was installed at the centre of the village. Today it provides safe drinking water to 74 households. Chaotra has now become a junction for all community meets including monthly interaction conducted by the Pani Panchayat. The PRI leaders themselves have now realised the potential of this mobilisation and have provided additional finance for the water security plan from the general fund.

Most Banskars, for the last five years, have not been able to get more than 10-15 days of work under the MGNREGA, which should have guaranteed them 100 days of work per family. Although they are still dependent on their traditional sources of livelihood, they have now begun to send their children to school, thanks to Parmarth's interventions through the Pani Panchayat. The hope is that although the older generation continues to be dependent on traditional sources of livelihood, their children at least will be able to make new and better lives for themselves, even as they uphold Banskar culture and traditions.

Kamal Adhikary & Manvendra Singh

Baghauli's crisis: Canal seepage forces many to migrate for work

Baghauli village of Rampura block is located at the farthest point from the block headquarters, which is about ten kilometres away. As for Orai city, the headquarters of Jalaun district, it lies about 65 km away. Both these factors may have contributed to the stepmotherly treatment accorded by the district administration to Baghauli. For the last many years, the majority of the men of this village have

been forced to migrate to places in Gujarat and Maharashtra in order to earn a livelihood by vending pani puri. So why are the able-bodied men of Baghauli migrating? The answer to this question would explain the unfortunate fate of this village.

Seepage of the water from a two-kilometre long bund adjoining the village has destroyed Baghauli's agricultural prospects. At one time, around a decade ago, this village was a great producer of wheat, vegetables and seasonal pulses, thanks to a canal that was constructed about eight kilometres from this village. This proved to be a great blessing for the villagers of Baghauli, and they could cultivate an area of 104 acres throughout the year. In those days, nobody had any reason to migrate as they were earning a good income through their farming activities. Around seven or eight years ago, water logging was observed during the rainy season. It

persisted even during the winter that followed. When the water still did not recede as summer came, people here realised that they were up against a major problem: seepage of water from the canal. That year saw their entire crop damaged. It proved to be a huge shock for the farmers, because the lost harvest meant they could not pay their bank loans. This, in turn, forced them to look for new ways to earn a living and migration became the overwhelming reality for most of Baghauli's residents.

The seepage had other deadly consequences besides the loss of crops. For the last five years, increased seepage after each monsoon has resulted in around 20 houses being damaged. It has also led to the contamination of water sources. Presently there are 63 families residing in Baghauli which has a population of 322. Of these, 40 families belong to Other Backward Classes, and three families are from scheduled caste backgrounds. Since there are no sanitation facilities, the entire village defecates in three adjoining fields. Because of the seepage and flowing water, the faecal matter from these fields finds its way into drinking water sources. In 2012, two children died because of acute diarrhoea and vomiting caused by contaminated drinking water. The case was highlighted in the local media, following which District Magistrate (DM) and government officials inspected the village to assess the situation. The DM then instructed the relevant departmental heads to consider the village as a special case and address its problems. However, two years have elapsed since then and no action has been taken by the administration, apart from the building of a narrow concrete bridge over the canal.

Today, the village presents a picture of devastation. Its once fertile fields now lie fallow and water logged. For much of the year, most of the men in the village work outside the state, even as the women and children they leave behind try and cope with the many challenges of their daily life as best as they can.

Baghauli testifies to the apathy of the local administration. It is not difficult to put this village out of its misery. The eight kilometre canal that adjoins it has a stretch of two to three kilometres that needs to be repaired. But Baghauli is being overlooked because nobody cares about a single village of less than a thousand people. When will the administration learn that securing the basic rights of each and every citizen is its primary responsibility?

Santosh Kumar & Kamal Adhikary



NATIONAL WATER POLICY (2012)

A scarce natural resource, water is fundamental to life, livelihood, food security and sustainable development. India has more than 18 per cent of the world's population, but has only 4 per cent of world's renewable water resources and 2.4 per cent of world's land area. There are further limits on utilizable quantities of water owing to uneven distribution over time and space. In addition, there are challenges of frequent floods and droughts in one or the other part of the country. With a growing population and rising needs of a fast developing nation as well as the given indications of the impact of climate change, availability of utilizable water will be under further strain in the future with the possibility of deepening water conflicts among different user groups. Low consciousness about the scarcity of water and its life sustaining and economic value results in its mismanagement, wastage, and inefficient use, as also pollution and reduction of flows below minimum ecological needs. In addition, there are inequities in distribution and lack of a unified perspective in planning, management and use of water resources. The objective of the National Water Policy is to take cognizance of the existing situation, to propose a framework for creation of a system of laws and institutions and for a plan of action with a unified national perspective.

Conservation of river corridors, water bodies and infrastructure

1. Conservation of rivers, river corridors, water bodies and infrastructure should be undertaken in a scientifically planned manner through community participation. The storage capacities of water bodies and water courses and/or associated wetlands, the flood plains, ecological buffer and areas required for specific aesthetic recreational and/or social needs may be managed to the extent possible in an integrated manner to balance the flooding, environment and social issues as per prevalent laws through planned development of urban areas, in particular.
2. Encroachments and diversion of water bodies (like rivers, lakes, tanks, ponds, etc.) and drainage channels (irrigated area as well as urban area drainage) must not be allowed, and wherever it has taken place, it should be restored to the extent feasible and maintained properly.
3. Urban settlements, encroachments and any developmental activities in the protected upstream areas of reservoirs/water bodies, key aquifer recharge areas that pose a potential threat of contamination, pollution, reduced recharge and those endanger wild and human life should be strictly regulated.
4. Environmental needs of Himalayan regions, aquatic eco-system, wet lands and embanked flood plains need to be recognised and taken into consideration while planning.
5. Sources of water and water bodies should not be allowed to get polluted. System of third party periodic inspection should be evolved and stringent punitive actions to be taken against the persons responsible for pollution.
6. Quality conservation and improvements are even more important for ground water, since cleaning up is very difficult. It needs to be ensured that industrial effluents, local cess pools, residues of fertilizers and chemicals, etc., do not reach the ground water.
7. The water resources infrastructure should be maintained properly to continue to get the intended benefits. A suitable percentage of the costs of infrastructure development may be set aside along with collected water charges, for repair and maintenance. Contract for construction of projects should have inbuilt provision for longer periods of proper maintenance and handing over back the infrastructure in good condition.
8. Legally empowered dam safety services need to be ensured in the States as well as at the Centre. Appropriate safety measures, including downstream flood management, for each dam should be undertaken as a top priority.

(Reference: www.mowr.gov.in, Ministry of Water Resources, Govt. of India)

Major interventions under the project

Training on documentation and use of IT:



The Pani Panchayat leaders and project staff at Talbehat block in Lalitpur district, and Sarila block in Hamirpur district, attended training programmes aimed at strengthening their skills on record maintenance, reporting and use of information technology. In all, 83 participants attended and practiced training contents under the expert guidance of Ashok Kumar Sinha, an expert from New Delhi. The two-day sessions were held at Aashirwad Garden, Jhansi, and Mandapan Hall, Orai, on September 29-30 and October 1-2, 2013, respectively.

The trainings have helped improve and enhance the knowledge of the participants in recording and reporting on grassroots institutions and their approaches and strategies. Documentation and information on development programmes and projects are now accessible to any individual anywhere in the country. To ensure this it was

decided that social media networks be used for disseminating information on the organisation's actions and to showcase the project deliverables before a larger audience.

Painting and essay competitions and debates at schools:

Children are the best agents of behavioural change. Recognising this, Parmarth disseminated information on health, hygiene and sanitation practices among school students as part of its water literacy campaign. Under this, awareness camps were organised in schools and Inter colleges, followed by drawing and essay competitions as well as debates. Sixteen such programmes were held between October and December 2013. These events helped to build greater awareness about critical issues within the student community. Behavioural change communication materials, such as a resource kit developed as reference tools in Hindi and English, charts, brochures, pamphlets, posters, leaflets and newsletters, were disseminated among the students to bolster their understanding and know-how on health, hygiene and sanitation practices. The deprived and marginalised sections, including tribal and Dalit communities, were also given information on these issues.



Awareness campaign on MGNREGA:

The project gained from an action research study on MGNREGA in all the three project districts. Together with this a campaign to raise awareness about MGNREGA in 60 villages of the three project districts – Jalaun, Lalitpur and Hamirpur-under the project 'Establishing Women's First Right To Water Resources'- was conducted from November 10 to 17, 2013. The message of the employment guarantee scheme was put across in various ways, including through wall paintings, folk songs and posters. The campaign representatives also helped people fill out application forms for job cards as well as job applications. Altogether, this awareness drive directly benefitted 2,218 men and women. While 693 members applied for new job cards, 1,289 members applied for jobs. Women were the main beneficiaries with 1,509 getting work for 25 days each, 263 have received their wages and 119 Dalit women got their agricultural land leveled.

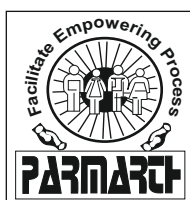


Water Literacy Camps:

A Series of Water Literacy camps were organized in this quarter in all three districts Jalaun, Hamirpur & Lalitpur of project area and These camps are led by Jal Sahelis by following the schedules & session as per guideline of Water Literacy kit (Jal tarang, Cam Module and posters and various pictorial cards) Key Pani Panchayat members and other women of village are showing active participation in these camps and have learnt about Water conservation & management practices, sanitary behaviours and also about better livelihood activities. Thus these camps are playing vital role in developing water literacy skills among them.



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