

## Ensuring Water Security through Revival of Village Pond

The importance of traditional water bodies is being increasingly realized in the wake of water scarcity that has gripped many parts of the country. The local water bodies have been the source of water security in our villages from the times immemorial. They were instrumental also in recharging the groundwater. However, years of neglect and encroachment resulted in their deterioration leading to acute water shortage in some regions. It is an established fact that the revival of water bodies like ponds, ahars, pynes, wells etc. holds the key to achieve water security. The success of Jiao Talab Abhiyan in Banda district of Bundelkhand, one of the most water-deficit regions, speaks volumes of the significance of resorting to old ways of water conservation.

In this issue, we bring to you the success story of Bramhonon ki Sareri village in Bhilwara district of Rajasthan, which ensured its water security by reviving their traditional village pond *Dharmi Talav* through MGNREGA.

Due to climatic changes, the annual rainfall in the region dropped to less than 500 mm rendering the minor dams dry. The ordeal became most painful during summer seasons when women had to travel long distances to fetch drinking water in simmering heat. After facing acute water shortage for years, the villagers in 2017 sought the revival of their traditional pond - *Dharmi Talav* – which over the years had been filled with sand mounds making it unsuitable for any use. The growth of wild babul trees on the pond made matters worse.

The proposal for renovation of *Dharmi Talav* was approved by the Gram Sabha in August 2017 under MGNREGS at a cost of Rs. 35.08 lakh. The removal of sand mounds, bushes and deep-rooted babul trees from the channel carrying water to the pond was a daunting task. Trenches were dug inside the pond to increase its water retention capacity and help percolation of water to the underground aquifer. The local villagers were employed to do the work under MGNREGA.

Consequently, the pond came back to life and started serving the water needs of the local population of over 5000 people and nearly 2,500 livestock. The revival of pond also filled as many as 21 wells downstream, providing about 150 farmers with enough water to grow their *rabi* crops. The yield of wheat increased from 300-400 kg to 500-600 kg per acre. The irrigated area increased by 18.54 hectare. The pond now covers 9.84 hectare of land with an increased storage capacity of 108 lakh gallons of water. Due to enhanced soil moisture, 50 *bigha* of pastureland now has a vegetation cover throughout the year. An increase of 3-6 ft in water table in the nearby wells has reduced the plight of women also as they are no longer required to walk long distances to fetch water.

Sharing his joy, Shri Jamunalal, MGNREGA worker and farmer said: "Not only has the revival and deepening of pond increased the water availability round-the-year in the village, it

prevents our children from getting sick due to impure water, which was the case earlier. The suffering of our animals has also ceased with the revival of *Dharmi*."



