

*An attempt to combat water woes in Bundelkhand by Rejuvenating village water bodies*



## Cutting the Gordian knot

Access to clean drinking water is an elemental right. It is coterminous to Article 21 of the Indian Constitution which is about right to life. Further, the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 6 elaborates about access to clean water and sanitation to all in the world

### RESTORATION OF WATER SOURCES AT BUNDELKHAND



**126**

**Hand pumps restore**



**23**

**Drinking water wells renovated**



**01**

**Public water supply  
schemes which runs  
on Solar Energy**



**02**

**Public water supply  
well restore**



## **Commitment to the cause in normal times.**

With the onset of summer, when water scarcity takes a heavy toll in the villages there is a growing dependency on the community handpumps and wells. Most of the hand pumps in the villages are non-functional for the want of simple repairs. As a result, the entire community depends on one or two hand pumps, and as a result, large gathering at the water sites is a normal scene. The absence of parapet at the water collecting sites often becomes dangerous for adolescent girls who come to collect water on the public or private water supply wells. Due to lack of resources and traditional caste dominated social fabric in the village, marginalized communities face multiple forms of discrimination while getting access to drinking water from the functional handpumps installed well within the locations where there are thickly populated settlements. Private wells nearer to habitation or village are owned only by the families which are dependent on these wells for the irrigation of their farms. After utilizing the water for their field irrigation and domestic use, other families can fetch the water for their domestic use. Such are the everyday struggles to access water by the villagers.

As water sources are drying up, while many sources which are already existing in the villages are defunct, BIWAL with its partners has been identifying and mapping those resources which are then repaired and restored for a continuous supply of water. Minor repair work, by engaging community and panchayat, not only restored these sources but also ensured that communities have better and safe access to clean drinking water.



With the commencement of the work, the gram panchayat and the communities were briefed about the process by the BIWAL partner organizations. Based on the nature of repair work needed communities identified the local labor and drew an estimate of the cost along with the gram panchayat. The community's contribution not only came in monitoring and supervising the work but also in form of labor.

## Policy Issues:

Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis (IGG), Bhopal, the Knowledge Partner for the SRIJAN's initiative, BIWAL (Bundelkhand Initiative for Water Agriculture and Livelihoods) has conducted a diagnostic study on BIWAL interventions in association with Bundelkhand Development Authority. The IGG has published the following four reports

1. [Operational Guideline on Revival of Traditional water bodies](#)
2. [Strategy for Revival of Traditional Water Bodies in Bundelkhand](#)
3. [Process Document of Revival of Traditional Water Bodies in Bundelkhand](#)
4. [BIWAL Baseline Report](#)

**Govt of MP issued letters to district administration across Madhya Pradesh for tank rejuvenation. The circulars are as below**

S.No	Govt of Madhya Pradesh Circulars No.	Link
1	Letter No. 611 Dt. 10.06.2020	<a href="http://bit.ly/LetterNo611">http://bit.ly/LetterNo611</a>
2	Letter No. 613 Dt. 10.06.2020	<a href="http://bit.ly/LetterNo613">http://bit.ly/LetterNo613</a>
3	Letter No. 615 Dt. 10.06.2020	<a href="http://bit.ly/LetterNo615">http://bit.ly/LetterNo615</a>
4	Letter No. 617 Dt. 10.06.2020	<a href="http://bit.ly/LetterNo617">http://bit.ly/LetterNo617</a>
5	Letter No. 619 Dt. 10.06.2020	<a href="http://bit.ly/LetterNo619">http://bit.ly/LetterNo619</a>
6	Letter No. 621 Dt. 10.06.2020	<a href="http://bit.ly/LetterNo621">http://bit.ly/LetterNo621</a>
7	Letter No. 623 Dt. 10.06.2020	<a href="http://bit.ly/LetterNo623">http://bit.ly/LetterNo623</a>
8	Letter No. 625 Dt. 10.06.2020	<a href="http://bit.ly/LetterNo625">http://bit.ly/LetterNo625</a>
9	Letter No. 627 Dt. 10.06.2020	<a href="http://bit.ly/LetterNo627">http://bit.ly/LetterNo627</a>
10	Letter No. 629 Dt. 10.06.2020	<a href="http://bit.ly/LetterNo629">http://bit.ly/LetterNo629</a>

## Government of UP:

SRIJAN was invited to present the work being done under BIWAL on the successful closure of the "Groundwater Week (Bhujal Saptah)" program organized by the Ground Water Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh, in presence of Dr. Mahendra Singh, Cabinet Minister, Jal Shakti Department. The programme was chaired by Shri Yogi Adityanath, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Government of Uttar Pradesh.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sljqBGARAz8>



## **Government of India :**

Ministry of Jalshakti, The Government of India also issues an order on August 2019 to work on defunct/unused bore wells/ hand pumps, etc. and use them for groundwater recharge for improve the availability of groundwater resources. **Annexure I**

## **Paradigm of climate change, and how this is an effort to mitigate/ adapt to the emerging situation**

As agriculture is the mainstay of the economy in Bundelkhand, it is mostly dependent on seasonal rainfall which is becoming erratic over a decade. The crops in the season of Kharif which are blackgram, greengram, groundnut mostly rainfed. As the Kharif crops are getting impacted due to the splash rains with heavy intensity in a short span of time or delayed monsoon cannot fetch the required agriculture yield from the fields after taking all the necessary efforts and investing 'borrowed' money in the want of supportive irrigation. The situation worsens when the drought brings in the hardship for these farmers when annual average rainfall reduces drastically to half and which is spread over a long duration owing to the climate change situations. In such conditions, not only the survival of the agriculture-dependent livelihood becomes difficult but the survival of the human beings for the want of water required for the drinking and domestic requirement comes into danger.

The revival of the water bodies after removal of the silt will accommodate more water in case of splash rains and also improve the percolation which will recharge the groundwater. If the availability of the groundwater in the open wells is improved then the farmers shall not only benefit in Kharif but may take one more crop in Rabbi which will support their income. Increased access to the water will improve the income as well as there could be a substantial reduction in the drudgery of the womenfolk, who start their day with pots on their heads and continue to do so till night, for years together.

## **Commitment to the cause in adversarial times.**

When the world is gripped with the fear of Coronavirus, the people in Bundelkhand are perturbed about access to clean drinking water rather than the threat of Coronavirus itself. An extract from India Water Portal mentions that the grim situation of water may be best illustrated by one Bundelkhand saying *"Let the husband die but the earthen pot of water should not be broken"*. In the grip of the pandemic, safe and easy access to water has become an acute problem for the region. Waiting hours for their turn to fetch water is their first priority than embracing the safety and preventative measures of the pandemic. Reeling over an acute water crisis and the pandemic at the same time, the communities have set their own priorities. In the view of the emerging crisis of COVID-19, where social distancing has been greatly advocated, the gathering and crowding in villages struggling for water has posed a new kind of risk and challenges. The advisories pertaining to COVID-19 demands regular

washing of hands for 20 seconds and maintaining hygiene protocols indicating increased use of domestic water. Women who bear the brunt are exposed to long hours amidst large gatherings and struggling for their turn to fetch water. With changing village demographics with migrated population returning to villages and increased domestic demand for water, there is a strong gender connotation in Bundelkhand. For most people it is unsurprising, to see women carrying heavy loads on their heads and walking on an undulated path for several kilometers to fulfil their domestic needs of water. In order to respond to COVID-19 together, the rural communities were trained on hygiene protocol and how to stay safe while fetching water. Besides, the advocacy for use of face mask and maintaining physical distancing, time slots for collecting water were also prepared and implemented in order to avoid crowding at the water collecting sites.

### **Sustainable development - social**

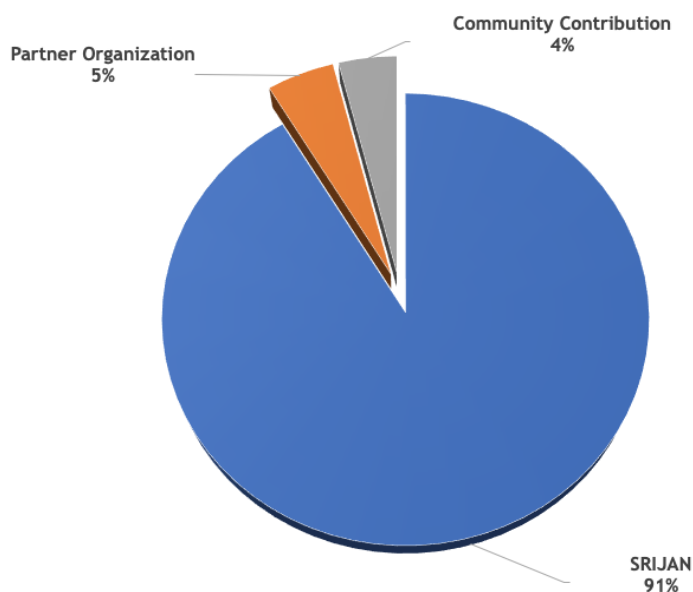
While struck with such a natural calamity, the initiatives under the program BIWAL led by SRIJAN, along with 6 other NGOs (Arunodaya Sansthan, Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan, Bundelkhand Sewa Sansthan, CARD, HARITIKA, and Yuva Koushal Vikash Mandal) are continuously working to address and ensure community's access to safe drinking water, especially during COVID. During the preparation of the planning of the water resources development work, the gram panchayat was consulted as the primary stakeholder. Under the aegis of BIWAL, minor repair work such as cleaning of well (drinking wells), disinfection of drinking wells, repair of connecting pipes, platform of well and handpumps, pulley in wells were undertaken. Further, to ensure the safety of women and young girls while collecting water from wells, parapets are being constructed.

### **Sustainable development - environmental**

It was noticed that, in the hand pump water collection sites, the run-off water often gets accumulated at one place which poses a threat of becoming a mosquito breeding ground. Therefore, a soaking pit was constructed for arresting such runoff water.

### **Sustainable development - economic**

With a total investment of Rs. 15,00,300, 91% contribution came from SRIJAN, 5% from partner organizations, and community made a contribution of 4%, a total of 152 drinking water sources, spreading across 46 villages were restored in the districts of Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh,



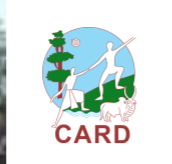
Niwari districts of Madhya Pradesh and Hamirpur, Mahoba, Lalitpur and Chitrakoot districts of Uttar Pradesh. It is believed that the intervention will tend to benefit 10,274 rural families.

***“BIWAL (Bundelkhand Initiative for Water Agriculture and Livelihoods), led by Self-Reliant Initiatives through Joint Action(SRIJAN) and its partners is an initiative to revive the traditional water bodies in Bundelkhand not only focuses on driving water security but also emphasises on resetting the cropping system. With Implementation Grant support by Hindustan Unilever Foundation, Institutional grant support from Axis Bank Foundation, Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives (APPI) and Mahindra Samridhi, Caring Friends, Arpan Foundation (USA), Walmart foundation, and necessary Government Convergence through MGNREGA and AIGGPA, Bhopal (Atal Bihari Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis) as the knowledge partner, the initiative has been protecting and conserving water sources while supporting the communities to adopt the new normal”***

### **An attempt to combat water woes in Bundelkhand by Rejuvenating village water bodies**









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D.O. No. T.40011/12/2019-GW Section

August 13, 2019

Dear

As you are aware, Ministry of Jal Shakti has launched Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2019 in 1592 water stressed blocks of 256 Districts in the country and is currently in progress. I would like to apprise you that a review meeting on JSA was taken by the Cabinet Secretary on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2019 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, which was attended by all the designated Nodal Officers and Technical Officers.

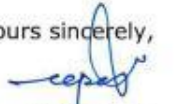
During the meeting the participants gave the feedback about the ground situation and suggested for certain corrective measures for success of the Abhiyan. One of the important points raised during the meeting was on the potential use of defunct / unused / abandoned Bore wells / Tube wells/ Dug wells/ Dug-cum Bore wells/hand-pumps etc. for the purpose of ground water recharge. This is also one of the identified intervention areas of the JSA.

You will agree that these existing structures offer a low-cost solution for ground water augmentation through rain water harvesting / surface runoff with minimal engineering interventions. All such defunct structures may be connected with surface run-off water, harvested through monsoon rainfall for easy and effective recharge of shallow aquifers. This type of intervention is likely to make some of the wells/hand-pumps etc. functional apart from improving ground water level of surrounding areas and may meet drinking water needs for the habitations. However, it is pertinent to mention here that necessary precautions to prevent contamination of the ground water may be taken while implementing such interventions. Technical advice in this regard shall be made available by Central Ground Water Board wherever needed by the State Government.

In view of the above, I would request you to kindly issue necessary directions to all the District Collectors in your State/UT, even beyond the JSA Districts, to establish appropriate mechanism to identify defunct / unused / abandoned Bore wells / Tube wells/ Dug wells/ Dug cum Bore wells/hand-pumps and use them for ground water recharge for improved availability of ground water resources in that area.

With warm regards,

Yours sincerely,

  
(U.P. Singh)

Chief Secretaries / Administrators of all States / UTs

जल संरक्षण - जीवन संरक्षण  
Conserve water - Save life