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SELF-DETERMINING WATER FUTURE >>

Evolving an Inclusive and Reliable
Decentralized System

THE AMRAVATI WATER INITIATIVE COMMUNITY DEMAND-DRIVEN WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES



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The Amravati Water Initiative
Community Demand-Driven Water and Sanitation Services

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We would like to extend sincere thanks to all nodal partners for their support and collaboration. Without their support, and that of Water For People India Trust, this initiative would not have been completed. This collaboration has helped in getting data and information from the field and made the team understand grassroots level situations and their perspectives and has thus provided qualitative rigor to the study. In this duration, several meetings were held with community members, PRIs, and the district officials and staff of Water For People India Trust.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
AWW	Anganwadi Worker
CLAS	Community Led Approach to Sanitation
CLTS	Community-Led Total Sanitation
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DWS	Drinking Water and Sanitation
EEM	Education Entertainment Mobile
FSM	Fecal Sludge Management
GP	Gram Panchayat
GPDP	Gram Panchayat Development Plan
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
IHHL	Individual Household Latrine
JJM	Jal Jeevan Mission
LWRM	Local Water Resource Management
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
O&M	Operation and Maintenance
PHC	Primary Health Center
PHED	Public Health and Engineering Department
PLE	Pit Life Extender
PoP	Point of Purchase
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institutions

SABC	Social Art for Behaviour Change
SBA	Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign)
SBCC	Social and Behaviour Change Communication
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SHG	Self Help Group
SMC /SDC	School Management Committee/School Development Committee
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
ULB	Urban Local Body
VHNSC	Village Health Nutrition and Sanitation Committee
VWSC	Village Water and Sanitation Committee
VWSSP	Village Water Safety and Security Plan
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFPIIT	Water For People India Trust
WIMC	Ward Implementation and Management Committee
WUC	Water User Committee



Providing safe and adequate water is a fundamental issue in our country that needs initiative, which combines a set of activities addressing it in a multilayered manner. As the complexity of providing water and sustaining the supply in our country is accentuated due to non-uniformity on the level of awareness, poor water and sanitation-related social behavior, and stark economic variations among communities. In this context, a wider people-centric approach that addresses water and sanitation together improves awareness and educational levels, reduces poverty, and promotes healthy practices, is crucial as all these aspects interplay and govern perpetual access to safe water. Hence, participation, ownership, and active involvement of communities, institutions like panchayats, and other stakeholders from the very planning to the implementation phases, and the operation and maintenance phases of any water supply service are most essential. Considering that “The Amravati Water Initiative”, in its very conception, is founded on the operational principles of community demand-driven model, it is of great significance to study and understand the project’s inner workings, to inform policymakers, academia, government, donors, media and the public at large. Therefore, this document is an attempt towards capturing the learnings and essential practices instituted by Water For People India Trust (hereafter referred to as Water For People India) that led to the unfolding of communities’ potential to take collective action and ascertain self-determination towards securing their water future.





To develop an understanding of the project the team reviewed existing documents, like project reports, annual reports, and organized a brainstorming session with the project staff.

During these sessions, while tracing project progress, a deep analysis of activities, components, and project design was done. Subsequently, over a five-day field visit, a gamut of stakeholders was met to understand and capture firsthand: the context, challenges, modalities of implementation, and organizational practices are taken up to sustain the project outcomes on the ground. Field visits were done with Water For People India Trust project team to collect information to draft case stories, this included individual interviews. All the interactions during the field visit were duly audio logged after taking prior consent. The voices of community members, government officials, project field staff, and other stakeholders thus documented from the field have been incorporated in the case stories. The case stories reflect field learnings, that elucidate project impact, and succinctly encapsulate the translation of strategic concepts into effective practices on the ground. Further, a conscious attempt was made to prioritize stories that capture community strengthening, behavioral shifts, and the evolution of community institutions in actively owning the initiative – this being so critical to inform on sustainability and continuance of results. Thus, the case stories and testimonials from Amravati District of Maharashtra compiled as a compendium are to give a picture of The Amravati Water Initiative and its process, learnings, and progress thus far, since its inception in 2017.





The Amravati Water Initiative

Building on the existing relationship, experience, and impact in West Bengal and Bihar, during 2017, Water For People India and Colgate Palmolive (India) Limited jointly conceptualized the need for addressing the drinking water needs in the state of Maharashtra, a state with water scarcity issues. Groundwater is one of the state's most important natural resources: providing drinking water to rural as well as urban communities, supporting irrigation and industry, sustaining the flow of streams and rivers, and maintenance of wetland ecosystems. In building awareness among stakeholders, the initiative intends to bring about a cross-cutting behavior change, covering the aspects of water handling practices, hygiene, and, more importantly, to stake their involvement and commit to contributing to the upkeep of the system. Thus, alongside strengthening and capacity building of community institutions, Water For People India intends to capacitate and hand over the scheme to gram panchayats and the line department so that the installed facilities receive the required attention, and are maintained in partnership with village-level community institutions. Thereby collectively ensuring that the installed water supply scheme stays operational.

However, more than 90% of the total area in the state is non-porous as it is underlain by Deccan volcanic traps, which makes it difficult for recharge-related activities. Though the extent of groundwater development in the state is 53%, cultivation of water-intensive crops and contaminated groundwater is causing scarcity of water, especially in the rural areas. The Water Initiative, implemented at Chikhaldara block of Amravati district in Maharashtra, aims to support the availability and accessibility of drinking water and water for sanitation in Anganwadi centers, schools, Ashramshalas (residential schools), and households from some of the most vulnerable and excluded communities in the project area.



3.1. Geography and People

Amravati district is part of the larger Vidarbha region, located on the east side of Vidarbha region at 20°32' and 21°46' North latitudes and 76°37' and 78°27' East longitudes. The district is surrounded by Nagpur and Wardha districts in the east, Yavatmal district in the south, Akola and Washim districts in the west, and Betul, Burhanpur, and Chhindwara districts of Madhya Pradesh in the north. The average elevation of the district is around 343 m, falling towards the Tapi basin, with two other major tributaries of the Tapi River (Poorna and Chandrabhaga) flowing through the district. The total area of the Amravati district is 12235 km², receiving an average annual rainfall of 924 mm (IMD). The long-term average annual rainfall shows that there has been a slight decrease in the rainfall in Amravati in the last 116 years (IMD), with a 29% variability in the rainfall observed during the last century. The district is divided into 14 talukas: Achalpur, Amravati, Anjangaon Surji, Bhatkuli, Chikhaldra, Chandur Bazar, Chandur Railway, Dhamangaon Railway, Daryapur, Dharni, Morshi, Nandgaon Khandeshwar, Teosa, and Warud. The district's population is 28,88,445, which is 2.57% of the state population. 18,51,158 people (64%) reside in rural areas out of the total population.

The per capita income of the Amravati district is about 50% of state per capita income, indicating a low standard of living in Amravati district. More than 29% of families live below the poverty line. There are 1992 villages in the districts, under 845 Gram Panchayats, with 6,44,922 households spread over 1,598 habitations in the district. The Chikhaldara taluka has the maximum number of Gram Panchayats (196) in the district, followed by Achalpur (171) and Chandur Bazar (169). The Chikhaldara block has a large proportion of tribal people and forms part of the larger Melghat tribal region, where 'Korkus' are one of the prominent tribes, constituting about 90% of the population. Other 10% of tribal groups include Dhanwar, Pardhi, Gond, and Rajgonds. While the Human Development Index (HDI) of Amravati is 0.7, the same for the Chikhaldara block is lower compared to other blocks in the district. The instances of extreme poverty and hunger are widely prevalent among the community, in addition to a high degree of malnutrition, making them one of the most vulnerable populations in the country.

Why Amravati?

Water For People India engaged ACWADAM to undertake a study for determining the most vulnerable districts in Maharashtra, which led to the final selection of Amravati District. The study followed a systematic, stratified multivariate analysis. Firstly, a rapid feasibility study of 15 districts was conducted, which concluded into shortlisting five districts (Bhandara, Amravati, Buldhana, Jalna and Osmanabad). The second stage constituted a detailed situation analysis of five districts using more than 50 parameters, across four broad categories of: (a) socioeconomic conditions of the population; (b) water related issues; (c) sanitation and; (d) issues pertaining to external operating environment.

This comprehensive exercise facilitated Water For People India to gain deeper insights into the ground situation and appropriately design the initiative.

3.2. Overview of the Initiative

Goal:	To improve the quality of life among the most marginalized and excluded communities in Maharashtra through inclusive, sustainable development.
Objective-1	Increased access to a more diverse set of safe and sustainable drinking water resources at the community level to strengthen the capacities of the populace and reduce dependency on groundwater.
Objective-2	Access to water for drinking and sanitation in select Anganwadi centers, schools, and Ashramshalas (residential schools).
Objective-3	Collaborations with local government and stakeholders to leverage resources and ensure the implementation of high-quality projects.
Program Strategy -1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage local population, especially special population groups, sub-groups in all program stages, and Capacity Building and Influence. • Engage local population, especially special population groups and sub-groups, in all program stages
Program Strategy -2 Innovations Processes and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement (innovative) demand-driven, safe, and adequate water systems (household, community, institutions), such as one or more of the following: (i) household connections (ii) wastewater recycling and waste composting (kitchen/school gardens)(iii) aquifer management (iv) surface-based drinking water (v) groundwater recharge (vi) drudgery reducing technologies (vii) WASH in institutions. • Orientation and training, skill-building, and operations and maintenance (O&M) for sustainability.
Program Strategy -3 Social Capital-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) awareness activities targeting barriers and stereotypes; management and use of WASH services; and adoption of key hygiene behaviors. • Inclusive Village Water Safety and Security Plans (VWSSP). • Influence through representation/engagement with coalitions, networks, and the local Engineering College.
Program Strategy -4 Knowledge Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose and seek funding support to launch an Incubation Fund: Seek, implement and document innovative ideas from the youth and in-country expertise. • Baseline and Endline evaluations (through micro-assessments), case story documentation, and visual documentation. • Learning events

04

CHAPTER

The Deep Crisis, Demand, and Self-Determination

4.1. Drudgery, Darkness, and a Ray of Hope

“For our generation, life was tough. We did not have any wells in or near our village. We would go to the river every day to fetch water. It was a back-breaking task as we would walk for hours through dense forests inhabited by wild animals like leopards and bears. We feared for our lives,” shared sixty-year-old Aji Baa while discussing the issue of water scarcity in her village Pipadari in Chikhaldara block of Amravati district in Maharashtra. Lovingly addressed as ‘Amma’ (mother) by the villagers, she explained how her generation faced tremendous hardship adding how not much had changed as she saw her younger generation struggle for water in the recent past.

“Be it day or night, our minds were obsessed with water. We would wake up early to fetch water from the well. At times, we started as early as midnight. It took us two to three hours to get just two vessels of water. This affected our work,” rued Mamta Katre, who lives alone in the Dhomanbarda village of the same block. Even pregnant women had no option but to go and fetch water for their families. “Women in their third trimester were compelled to carry heavy pots over their heads on undulating paths. Sometimes, babies were delivered while women were on their way to fetch water. All of us would feel helpless,” added Mamta.



Even though they are the worst affected, the problems were not limited to women. Elderlies and children suffered as well. Chetan from Dhomanbarda village said, “The elderlies living alone also had to walk and fetch water from the far-off wells. We could fetch water for them once or twice but fetching water every day was not possible.” Children also suffered as they could not attend school on time.

Things, however, changed after Water For People India, which aims to provide clean water, sanitation, and hygiene to their communities intervened. Understanding the severity of the issue, it started implementing water supply projects in many villages of Chikhaldara block in 2017. As part of this initiative, Water For People India repaired and built water tanks wherever necessary and provided tap connections to each household in the villages. Not only houses, to ensure smooth functioning of government-funded institutions, but they have also provided the Anganwadi Centres and schools with individual water tanks and drinking & handwashing stations. Their projects are inclusive and holistic because of their ‘Everyone Forever’ Approach. Mamta says, “Water For People India brought content and happiness in our lives. By solving the water crisis in our villages, they have made our lives better.”

Women and children do not have to get up early now, nor do they have to think about water all the time. They receive water from the taps installed in their household every day for one hour in the morning. The elderlies of the village also said that because of the regular supply of water, people are now able to bathe and wash their clothes regularly, which has led to a more hygienic lifestyle. The time saved is utilized now in the fields or for other works. With water as the least of their worry now, today the villagers can focus on their development. They all are content. Praveen, a member of the Gram Panchayat of Kesharpur village, said, “The first time we received water supply, it felt like a festival. The happiness in the eyes of the villagers, especially women as they saw water coming from the taps in their houses, was priceless.”



4.2. Ripening of Time, Enabling Policy and Meeting of Minds, Material, and Money

The hardships of the people of Chikhaldara needed immediate and sustainable intervention. Several interventions failed to produce a sustained and long-term impact in the region. People’s concerns remained unaddressed, and they started losing trust in such interventions. It was a huge challenge for Water For People to regain that trust.

Understanding the trust the rural communities have in the government, Water For People India started working in Chikhaldara in close coordination with the Local and District Administration. Their knowledge of regional issues and relationship with the locals supported Water For People’s endeavors in the region.

“When we had started our operations in Amravati district, the then-District Collector had suggested we work on improving the availability and accessibility of water. He was the one who had advised us to begin our work from the Chikhaldara block as it’s a remote tribal area. At the same time, the Jal Jeevan Mission which aims to provide safe and adequate drinking water through individual household tap connections by 2024 to all households in rural India, was also launched. It turned out to be a win-win situation for both Water For People India and the administration,”

– Hemant Pinjan, State Program Lead, Water For People India.



Jayant Babre, Block Development Officer (BDO), Chikhaldara, while talking about the relationship between the administration and Water For People India, said,

“

There is a dearth of human resources within the administration. Water For People India has helped us with its much stronger on-ground presence and understanding of people’s concerns. Through their interventions, they have been supporting us in meeting the objectives of the central government’s ambitious ‘Jal Jeevan Mission’ scheme, which aims to provide Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) to every household by 2024. They have also made plans at village levels regarding the demand and supply of water.

”





According to him, the dedication with which Water For People India has been working in the region is quite commendable. “I have visited a few villages like Pilya and Jaitadehi where they have implemented their projects, and I am impressed by the quality of their work. They also create awareness among the community members regarding the benefits of our schemes,” he informed. The District Administration has provided a letter of recognition to Water For People India for their successful intervention in this remote region. Not only that, impressed by how Water For People India mobilized the rural inhabitants of Chikhaldara to participate in their activities, District Administration has recommended the government to felicitate the organization with awards and accolades.

The District Administration also recognizes the work done by the organization in bringing behavioral change among the villagers. “Earlier, people did not know the importance of water, but due to the knowledge and information imparted to them by Water For People India, they have become more responsible towards conserving water. They now know how conserving water will help conserve lives! Secondly, they have now become aware of the concept of water quality – they now have the skills to test and improve the water quality,” informed the BDO.

While speaking about the cooperation with the administration, Malta, the Community Mobiliser of Water For People India Trust, said, “The District Administration appreciates and supports the work we are doing. In 2019, while giving the tour to the BDO at Jaitadehi village, I called his attention to the pathway leading to the school, which was filled with animal dung and how it can impact the health of students.” Within two months of this incident, the District Administration had built a cement road to the school and had cleared the area of dung. The school and its surroundings are now clean.

The District Administration is also aware of the role Water For People India is playing in promoting COVID-19 appropriate behavior such as handwashing with soap, promoting the wearing of masks, and maintaining social distancing through their Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities. The collaboration between District Administration and Water For People India is one of the major reasons behind the successful execution of planned activities in these villages. The real winners of this cordial relationship between District Administration and Water For People India are the people of Chikhaldara!



BUT WHY CHIKHALDARA BLOCK IN AMRAVATI?

“

There was a study conducted by Advanced Center for Water Resources Development and Management (ACWADAM) and IIT Bombay in 11 districts of Maharashtra. Based on several parameters, 5 districts were selected, and Amravati district was finalized after critical evaluation. After several meetings with the District Collector, the Chikhaldara block was chosen because of its geography, geology, remote location, demographics, and the issues related to water scarcity.

– Vinay, Water Resource Management Expert

”



05
CHAPTER

The Cause, Commitment, and Collective Action



5.1. Everyone Forever – The Journey of Making It a Ground Reality

Water For People started operating in India from West Bengal in 1996, and in 2008 they developed a locally registered arm. Since then, Water For People India has established its presence in four more states - Bihar, Maharashtra, Assam, and Odisha. In 2017, it started its operations in Maharashtra's Amravati district. Stationed at Paratwada, the state team is led by Hemant Pinjan and comprises a technical team headed by Vinay - the Water Resource Management Expert, and a social team headed by Vijay Singh Bhadoriya - the Program Coordinator.

The villages in the block were selected after the recommendations by the District Administration.



“ Water For People India supports the administration in fulfilling the objectives of the Jal Jeevan Mission scheme in Chikhaldara block. During block-level meetings, villages are allocated for intervention to government and Water For People India, separately. ”

While describing the action plan, Vijay explains, “We start by providing access to safe drinking water to every household. This is followed by a specific focus on sanitation – done by promoting toilet usage among villagers and teaching them the importance of maintaining cleanliness. Drinking and handwashing stations have been installed in schools and Anganwadi centers to inculcate good hygienic practices among children. In Ashramshalas (residential schools), we have provided a drinking water station and handwashing station near the kitchen area. Along with physical infrastructure, we have also conducted Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) training for adolescent girls and have provided incinerators in these residential schools for the proper disposal of pads . At the village level, we have formed Water User Committees (WUCs), ensuring the sustainability of the project through regular operation and maintenance. We have also provided training to mobile water mechanics so they can do plumbing work. A list of water mechanics is also provided to local government institutions to increase their employment avenues.”





This synchronized planning process has led to effective coordination among the administration and Water For People India leading to promising results. Some villages are considered for intervention if the Water For People India team receives requests from the community members of that village.

The transformation in the Chikhaldara block is clearly visible – not just physical but also at the level of knowledge and behavior. **“Three years ago, during my field visits, I would meet women who started crying as soon as I started talking to them regarding water. They were tired of the challenges thrown at them by water scarcity in their villages,”** shared Bhavna, Community Mobiliser, Water For People. **Women were the worst affected as they were responsible for taking care of their family’s water needs.**

After Water For People India’s successful intervention, women in the project villages now have access to safe drinking water at their doorstep. Not just that, women have become more vocal in village meetings.

Improved water and sanitation facilities in schools have also improved school reputation, Neeta Yadav, Principal, Tembrusonda Ashram School shares, **“There has been an improvement in student enrollment, in 2019 there were around 700 girls whereas we have enrolled 950 girls in 2022. Guardians have shared that they have come to know of the improved water and sanitation facilities here”**

With improved water facilities and continuous hygiene sessions held in the community, there has been a noticeable improvement in the handwashing practices among the community people.

Water For People India has also, at a smaller scale, generated employment among the community people. Water For People India’s team has advocated with the government representatives to compensate the Shramdaan work through MGNREGA.

After seeing the changes they have brought, the Water For People India team is content with the pivotal role they have played and is proud to be a part of such a significant transformation.

Water For People India now strives to expand its reach. **“We have a concept of Destination 30. It is a target that we plan to achieve by 2030. Water For People India has the vision to reach two billion people by 2030 with clean water and sanitation globally. In Amravati, we work with the approach of ‘Everyone Forever’. We aim to reach everyone, and when the project becomes sustainable, the forever aspect is fulfilled, we head on to another block. That is our vision,”** explained Hemant.

Kudos to the team!

5.2. Shramdaan – Labour of Commitment, and the Pride of Joint Ownership

“Water For People India values our participation and looks at us in a dignified way,” shared 28-year-old Sachin Chimote, Sarpanch of Badnapur Gram Panchayat in Chikhaldara block, Amravati. His words reflect community ownership which is one of the major components of the project framework.

The ‘Everyone Forever’ approach that strives to make sustainable WASH services accessible to every individual relies on the participation of villagers, women, men, children and the elderly participate equally in these initiatives.

To encourage community ownership, the concept of ‘Shramdaan’ plays a significant role. It means a voluntary contribution by the person towards community welfare involving physical effort and has been prevalent for a long time in India.

“Water For People India, during their first meeting, explained the value of joint efforts for solving the water crisis of our village. They divided responsibilities at the beginning of each task. For example, we were given the responsibility of excavation – our ‘Shramdaan’— while Water For People India took charge of getting water from the source and supplying it to each household,”

– Explained Sachin



Explaining to people about ‘Shramdaan’ is not as simple as it appears. They think that all the work involving physical labor should be covered under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005¹. “To help address their concerns, I organize meetings in which I explain that these activities are for our benefit, and we need to work together for it,” shared Sachin.

Malta Mohurle, the Community Mobiliser, Water For People India, informed that the tribal population in the villages work on daily wages and earn a meager amount to run their families. In such cases, foregoing one day’s wage for ‘Shramdaan’ is a daunting task. Even though they want to participate, extreme poverty poses a challenge. Taking note of their situation, Water For People consulted the District Administration, and Chikhaldara block Government organized excavation work, for laying pipeline, etc. under MGNREGA.

¹MGNREGA is an Indian labour law and social security measure that aims to guarantee the ‘right to work’. It aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to at least one member of every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.



As the community members put in more sweat, they started taking more ownership of the asset, and actively participated in Water User Committee meetings. Community members' active participation helped address the operating cost of the created assets ensuring sustainability. Village leaders informed that Gram Panchayat meetings now have more community participation, improving the governance process.

Besides 'Shramdaan, community members' participation is also sought during the planning stage. They provide suggestions on the location of the new overhead tanks and actively participate in developing the 'Village Water Safety and Security Plan' (VWSSP). So far, 33 VWSSPs have been created, of which 28 have been incorporated in the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).

Together with community members, Water For People India has constructed eight new overhead water tanks covering 22 villages, while 14 overhead water tanks have been repaired and upgraded. 500-liter water tanks have been provided to 33 Anganwadi centers. Five Ashramshalas and thirty schools were provided with drinking water and handwashing facilities along with 800-liter water tanks.

What started as an intervention by Water For People India has transformed into a program effectively owned and managed by the community members.

Another factor that stopped people from participating in Shramdaan was their poor experiences with some of the non-profit organizations.

“Several organizations had promised to solve the water crisis, but there was no result. This had made villagers skeptical, and they were not coming forward to participate in ‘Shramdaan’ activities,” explained Praveen, member of the Gram Panchayat of Kesharpur village. Today, one member from each household in these 50 villages contributes to ‘Shramdaan’.







Measure of Sustainability – Nurturing Learning and Unleashing Leadership



6.1. Water User Committees – Collective Knowhow, Institutional Memory, and Shared Leadership

To promote inclusivity and sustainability, Water For People India follows the 'EVERYONE FOREVER' model. EVERYONE means that every family, clinic, and school in a district has water and sanitation services, while FOREVER means that these services are sustainable and local districts and communities can maintain them for generations to come. This concept is reflected in each step taken by Water For People India.

“Our endeavors should stay forever. They should continue to benefit communities even after the project is completed,” shared Hemant, Water For People India’s State Program Lead in Maharashtra, while explaining the concept behind the formation and strengthening of Water User Committees in their project villages.



Since 2017, Water For People India has been working with local communities and farmers in 50 villages of Chikhaldara block in the Amravati district of Maharashtra to address their water, sanitation, and hygiene challenges. Today, it is not only supplying water to each household in this water-scarce region but also installing water tanks and drinking water stations at schools and Anganwadi centers.



Community members volunteer to be a part of these committees. ***“We are responsible for the maintenance of the water tank, the pipelines, and the taps,” informed members of the Water User Committee of Pipadari – a remote village in Chikhaldara block of Amravati district. These committees are involved right from the planning stage and function through the implementation and post-implementation stages. Water For People India supports the formation of Water User Committees in villages where piped water schemes are implemented. These Water User Committees are then provided with orientation training focusing on their roles and responsibilities towards the sustainability of the scheme. Chetan, the water mechanic and a member of the Water User Committee of Dhomanbarda village said, “During the implementation of the project, we were also responsible for creating awareness about ‘Shramdaan’ among villagers and ensuring that people own this initiative by contributing their labor.”***

Each committee has evolved its own operating procedures. Some levy fixed taxes from the community members and use that money to pay the electricity bills, water mechanics, and maintenance of the built infrastructure. The members of the committee said now they do not have to rely on the Gram Panchayat for minor maintenance and have become self-reliant over the years. Some committees, on the other hand, have an understanding of the Gram Panchayat that pays for the maintenance work. All the procedures are decided in a village meeting attended by all the community members, making the process open and inclusive; women form an important part of these committees as they contribute equally to the decision-making process. The Dhomanbarda Water User Committee,

which is also a model Water User Committee because of its successful operations in the village, has 13 members, of which 6 are women.

The committees organize monthly meetings in which villagers share their problems regarding water, sanitation, and hygiene. The committees then make a plan to address these issues. The entire process has made villagers capable of continuing the activities even after the completion of the project in the region.

Water User Committees have instilled leadership skills in the community members, as indicated by their increased participation in the Panchayat and other village development meetings. Rahul, a young member of the Water User Committee of Keshavpur village, said, ***“I volunteered to be a part of the committee as I felt responsible for the sustainability of the assets. The Water User Committee has united us by making us more responsible towards our own needs and the assets in the village. The constant efforts of Water For People India have made us self-sufficient. I am thankful to the organization for trusting me and making me capable of contributing to the project.”***

6.2. Child Cabinet –Future Leaders in Making

“By education, I mean an all-around drawing out of the best in the child; body, mind, and spirit.” ~Mahatma Gandhi

“Earlier, there were several challenges related to the availability of safe drinking water and sanitation in our school,” shared Sandhya, a student of Class 12 at all-girls Ashramshala (residential school) in Tembhrusonda village of Chikhaldara block in Amravati. “There was only one small drinking water station with three taps for 675 girl students of our school. We would make a queue at the station and wait for our turn to drink water,” she added.

Teachers would also stand in the same queue or would go and fetch water from the water station in the hostel. In both cases, time was lost.

To address the issue, Water For People India, under its ‘Water Initiative’ project provided the Ashramshalas with clean drinking water and handwashing stations. Not only this, to inculcate healthy practices and awareness towards safe WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), the organization has introduced the concept of ‘Child Cabinets’ in these boarding schools.



Representatives from different classes volunteer to form these Child Cabinets. At present, there are 12 members in this cabinet, each having a different role.

“

As the Swachhata Mantri, I am responsible for cleanliness in the school premises, in the hostel, and kitchen area. My responsibilities include spreading awareness during the morning prayers and allotting duties to different classes to maintain cleanliness in specific areas.

– Sandhya



“

Now I am confident enough to come forward and speak with teachers and even assign duties to other students.

– Meera Rajaram



“

I am responsible for ensuring that the cooks wash their hands frequently, wash vegetables and pulses before cooking and maintain the overall cleanliness in the kitchen.

– Kumari Meena



“

The students feel much more confident now as they guide and support their peers. They now understand the importance of water and have the right knowledge about water conservation. This initiative has helped build their character following a holistic approach.

– Nita Haribhau Jadhav, Principal of Ashramshala



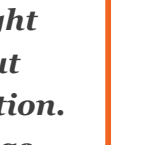
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We are thankful that we received training for proper handwashing in 2019, much before the COVID-19 pandemic had started. We were made aware of the importance of adopting cleanliness and hygiene behavior. All of us shared this knowledge with our family and neighbors. This awareness helped us follow the COVID-19 protocols.

– Kumari Meenakshi



“





Making Wise Choices, Shifting of Norms and Social Practices



7.1. Water and Adolescent Girls – Measures to Manage Menstrual Health

Menstrual Health Management Training for Adolescent Girls

Women, adolescent girls belonging to the remote tribal area of Chikhaldara resort to age-old practice during menstruation, repeatedly using cloth as sanitary napkins and drying of the cloth in shade. With customs preventing women to live free, the movement and activities of women and adolescent girls are restricted during this period. Coupled with the lack of WASH facilities, the condition of women is deplorable.

Fetching water is a women's job, and is done after attending cooking, cleaning, and working in the fields. With wells at a distance, fetching water is an ordeal. Priority of young girls shifts from education to helping their mother, spending long hours to fetch water, affecting education and health.

Poor awareness and stigmatizing menstruation limit complete knowledge among girls, especially those who are at the onset of puberty. With poor awareness, incorrect information is shared, affecting health.



Water For People tried to shift the mindset of the community and consider menstruation as a normal body process, like changing of voice, growing pubic hairs during puberty. Girls were encouraged to talk with peers and parents and were provided with correct and complete information.

Menstruation is a topic that is seldom spoken during village meetings. A group of adolescent girls from Dhomanbarda village in Chikhaldara block said, “When we dry the cloth used during the menstrual cycle in the open, boys look at it and even knowing what it is, they make fun of it. We have to then dry it inside the house in the bathroom, where there is no sunlight.” This is just an example of how unaware community members are and the repercussions these adolescent girls face because of these unhygienic practices. Chanda Zamarkar, the Anganwadi worker at Pipadari village, said, “Using old clothes during menstruation often leads to infections and stomach aches.” While speaking about the treatment meted out by some households during menstruation, the girls said that whenever their menstrual cycle begins, they are restricted to one area of the house and are not allowed to do anything. They cannot touch the water source, and limited food is given. They are not allowed to enter the main house, let alone the kitchen area.





Water For People India not only provides water connections to each household but also have been conducting training on Menstrual Health Management among adolescent girls. They are encouraged to use sanitary pads and are informed about the importance of properly washing and sun-drying if they use cloth. Along with the usage, information about proper disposal is also provided. When asked about their disposal method, the girls said, **“We were informed in the training that after using the sanitary pad, we should wash it properly and either burn it or bury it in a pit.”**

These girls have now spread the information they received in training to their mothers, sisters, and peers. When asked if there has been any behavior change they could see, they said that women and girls have now started to use sanitary pads, and they use cloth only in extreme cases. They further added, “Earlier we were hesitant to speak about menstruation, but now we can openly talk about it.

This initiative by Water For People India has started a small change that might grow into a larger behavioral change in the rural communities over the years.

“Munni Jawarkar, the ASHA worker at Pipadari village, along with Ms. Chanda said, “Earlier the girls used cloth, but now they use sanitary pads. They have also started to come to us for advice if they have any problem related to menstruation, for example, if they get late or if the period is prolonged. They are no longer hesitant.”

7.2 An Untenable Puddle or Useful Produce – Wastewater to Kitchen Garden

Kitchen Gardens- A Water Conservation Practice Leading to Healthy Nutrition

The state of Maharashtra faces the challenge of water scarcity being overdependent on groundwater to meet its water requirements. Besides being a major water source for irrigation, industry, and drinking needs of rural and urban communities, groundwater also sustains the flow of streams, rivers and maintains the wetland ecosystem.

One of the objectives of 'The Water Initiative' designed by Water For People India is to increase the availability and accessibility of water for drinking and sanitation purposes in rural areas by promoting water conservation practices. For example, building kitchen gardens using wastewater and natural compost. "We have a compost pit and kitchen garden at our center. We use wastewater for irrigation and fresh vegetables from our garden to make food for the children. During our monthly meetings, we advise village women to build kitchen gardens in their homes. They feel motivated looking at the kitchen garden at our center. We also inform them to use wastewater in their gardens to conserve water," informed the Anganwadi worker at Dhomanbarda village.



Vijay Singh, the State Program Coordinator for Water For People India, said

In Amravati, Chikhaldara block receives maximum rainfall but because of the hilly and rugged terrain, the groundwater development potential is poor. With no awareness of water conservation practices, locales could not benefit from natural water sources. Water scarcity in the region, over the years, had led to poor WASH practices impacting the nutritional health of the inhabitants.



Most villagers now have a kitchen garden in their backyards and use wastewater for irrigation. They grow brinjal, pumpkin, coriander, chilies, and tomatoes.

Such contributes to the provision of extra sources of vegetables to the poverty-stricken people, helping the neediest, infants, children in their adolescence, pregnant and lactating mothers.

By consuming the fresh, green vegetables grown in their kitchen gardens, villagers save time and money. Earlier, the villages donned a barren look, but now they look greener and prosperous. To a greener future!



Chanda Zamarkar, the Anganwadi worker at Pipadari village, said, “Earlier, we were so occupied arranging drinking water that the thought of building kitchen garden never crossed our minds. We would bathe and wash clothes at the river, so there was no wastewater. Now that we have water pipeline in every household, the wastewater can be used in kitchen gardens.”

Kitchen gardens provide fresh vegetables to the community members, especially the children at the Anganwadi centers.



08
CHAPTER

Indirect Yet Bearing Directly – Criticality of Support Systems for Sustaining the System ‘Forever’

8.1 Teachers Stewarding Young Minds and Fostering Behavioral Shifts

Teachers form an integral part of society. Besides the crucial role of educating people, teachers are required for the development and well-being of society. During its discussions with community members, Water For People saw teachers as great community influencers. Realizing the role teachers can play in assessing the needs of school students and their parents, Water For People started working in close coordination with them. Today, teachers participate in the planning and execution of awareness and training programs.

S. R. Mavaskar, who teaches Mathematics at the Ashramshala in Chikhli, said, **“Our students are elated to have a drinking water station and overhead tank in the school. They are hopeful that they will soon get another water tank on the other end of the school near the hostel. It will save time for both the students and the teachers.”**



Rupali Mankar, the Superintendent at the Ashramshala School (residential school) in Tembhrusonda, said,

“During the planning stage of installing the drinking water station in the school, all the teachers and students had helped to identify the location that was convenient for students and suitable for the water outlet.”

Teachers act as agents of change, especially when it comes to creating awareness on taboo subjects like menstruation. School teachers, along with ASHA and Anganwadi workers, participate in the Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) training conducted by Water For People India. They promote the use of pads and encourage adolescent girls to speak confidently about the challenges they face during their periods. They help young girls understand the correct ways of disposing of used sanitary pads. “For the disposal of pads, we have a manual incinerator provided by Water For People India. It is like a stove and requires wood or other fuel to burn. Girls use this equipment to dispose of their sanitary pads. They also burn or bury the used absorbent material,” informed Rupali, who believes that an electric incinerator will be easier for the girls to use.

During the first and most crucial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers had worked hard to create awareness among students and their parents. Groups of teachers were sent to villages along with a doctor. They were responsible for providing information on COVID-19 appropriate behavior, which included following safe sanitation and hygiene practices like handwashing with soap for 20 secs, wearing a mask while stepping out, and maintaining a social distance of 2 feet (6m). Clearly, these teachers went out of their way to support the villagers during tough times. As our President Ram Nath Kovind says, “Teachers are true nation-builders”.



8.2. Village Water Mechanics – Hyper-Local Solution to a Global Problem

Creating Employment Avenues

Most of the population residing in Chikhaldara belong to tribal communities, and the majority of the families rely on agriculture and animal husbandry for their livelihood. Many work as daily wage laborers either in and around their villages or migrate to nearby districts or states. Income from agriculture is also not very promising because of smaller landholding and water scarcity in the entire region. The hilly terrain doesn't support farmers' adoption of better agriculture practices. With high levels of poverty, employment opportunities are also less in this region. COVID -19 made the situation worse for the migrant laborers.



The team at Water For People India, while addressing the WASH needs of the community, realized how community engagement will not only provide a sense of ownership but will also address the issue of unemployment in the region. Today, these interventions have created several employment avenues for the local communities in their project areas.

With a clear focus on 'Shramdaan', some of the work, such as the excavation of pipeline, was done under MGNREGA. According to Praveen, a member of the Gram Panchayat in Keshavpur village, around 600 community members were provided employment under MGNREGA for a week for pipeline excavation work. Besides, **Water For People India has also provided training to at least one community member in each village to work as mobile water mechanics and do minor repairs and plumbing work. These water mechanics have also received a toolkit consisting of a drilling machine, cutter, plumbing equipment, etc. They earn money by doing the plumbing work in and around their villages.**

Naamdev, an elderly member of the village, has the responsibility to operate the water pump. He receives INR 800 per month from the water tariff collected by the Water User Committee of his village.

Chetan, the water mechanic from Dhomanbarda village shares, “I have been trained by Water For People to undertake the repair work. I can also test the water quality. They have provided a toolkit and a water testing kit. In the last two to three months, apart from my village, I have done plumbing work in villages like Badnapur, Kalapani, Solamoh, Hirdamal, Baglinga, and Malkapur.” Arrangement for Hiranman, the young water mechanic of Pipadari village is slightly different. He receives INR 1000 per month from the Gram Panchayat for operating the water pump daily.

Vijay Singh, the State Program Coordinator, said that Water For People India has provided a list with names and contact details of all the water mechanics to the Gram Panchayats. These mechanics are a call away for any plumbing or maintenance work.

“The water mechanics have been informed to charge for the services they provide in and outside their village. As Water For People India provides water pipeline connections to more villages, water mechanics like Hiranman and Chetan have high hopes for the future,” said Malta, the Community Mobiliser for Water For People India.





It is evident that Water For People India, at the very foundation level, thinks and acts towards lasting solutions and inclusiveness to the extent that it emerges as the very cause of its existence. In its operations, this is articulated through the notion of 'Everyone Forever'. Considering the meticulous manner and depth of detail with which the initiative has been conceived in its design, planning of interventions, and execution on the ground, it deserves appreciation. It corroborates with the experiences of its project partners, chief among them, the local administration. Further, the analysis of stories under the initiative reveals a similarity in experience and content wherein a noticeable shift in attitude among community members is apparent, as a result of having seen things move by collective efforts. Not only has water come to their doorsteps, they are freed from the physical drudgery, have time on their hands which they now put to other socially and economically productive uses, but more importantly, they feel more secure about it.

Furthermore, the stories also revealed a sense of willingness to engage in collective action not just as a matter of obligation but of voluntarism out of their own volition to contribute, take responsibility, and lead. Imbuing the Everyone Forever spirit of engagement, especially in adopting approaches to address systemic issues through its training and capacity-building activities – Water For People India is geared towards making the communities truly self-reliant to care, lead and improve the services continuously, with a sense of ownership. Complementarily in alignment with Water For People India's ethos is the community's active engagement evident in the villages. The conscious and active leadership role of the community members shows up in their commitment to instilling water-sensitive social, economic, and, more importantly, normative shifts, which otherwise cannot be sustained without a deeper commitment to take collective action at the societal level.

Perhaps silently hoping for a breakthrough, an inherent demand within them existed, desiring to break free from such a binding chore – has found expression in the form of exercising their stake, committing to take action, stand accountable, and an observable determination among the village communities where Water For People India commenced its initiative. Considering that, for ages, the communities in Chikhaldara Block have been facing severe water woes, predominantly with women and children, especially girls bearing the burden of the situation, without any respite in their purview. Such a daily intensity of physical and mental drain on health and well-being would be unimaginable for many to bear with. Culturally as it has been the norm that women in the families hold the responsibility of providing water, it has been a daily practice to walk long distances – multiple times, at odd times of day and nights, to meet bare minimums of families' daily water requirements.



The Amravati Water Initiative

Water For People India Trust partnered with Colgate Palmolive (India) Ltd. in 2017 to design the program 'The Water Initiative'. It is a community demand-driven water supply program along the lines of the Swajal scheme based in Chikhaldara block, Amravati district, Maharashtra.

About Colgate Palmolive (India) Limited	About Water For People India Trust
<p>Colgate Palmolive (India) Limited is India's leading provider of scientifically proven oral care products with multiple benefits at various price points. The range includes toothpaste, toothpowder, toothbrushes, and mouthwash under the "Colgate" brand, as well as a specialized range of dental therapies under the banner of Colgate Oral Pharmaceuticals. The Company also provides a range of personal care products under the "Palmolive" brand name. Colgate has been ranked as India's #1 Most Trusted Brand across all categories consecutively from 2003-2007, and again from 2011 to 2017 by Brand Equity's Most Trusted Brand Survey.</p> <p>Colgate Palmolive (India) Limited imagines a healthier future for people and the planet and is committed to supporting several community programs in oral health, hygiene awareness, education, and water conservation. Water is a key pillar of its sustainability initiatives, and hence, it collaborates with local and global organizations to bring clean water to underserved communities.</p>	<p>Water For People India Trust, a public charitable trust (registered in 2008), exists to promote the development of high-quality drinking water and sanitation services sustained by strong communities, businesses, and governments. Water For People India programs have been implemented in 28 districts in the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra, Assam, Tamil Nadu, and Odisha, consistent with Water For People's global vision and mission. In all, nearly 1.2 million people have been reached through community drinking water and sanitation projects, WASH in public institutions, and market-led approaches to sanitation.</p> <p>Over the past decade, Water For People India Trust has emerged as a niche organization with focused water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programs. Water For People India Trust is a direct implementation agency supported by civil societies, local NGO partners, and entrepreneurs. Water For People India Trust is an affiliate of Water For People USA.</p>
<p>To know more please visit: www.Colgate.co.in</p>	<p>To know more please visit: www.waterforpeopleindia.org</p>



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