



My Words.....

There lies an opportunity to begin afresh, on the foundation laid by the Western India Rainfed Farming Project that had concluded five years ago. Our follow-up visits to some of the project sites have revealed that the social institutions created during the project period have continued to nurture the structures and the systems to draw gains from them. The possible 'next steps' for horizontal and vertical scaling-up are currently under examination.

We are on the verge of exploring new possibilities of engaging with the society: step-well revival in Ratlam sounds a promising initiative with multiple implications. Departing from the earlier stand-alone project approach, the emphasis henceforth will be on developing a comprehensive framework wherein one intervention feeds into the next for creating a big picture impact. In the weeks ahead, we will report progress on this transition.

Dr. K. G. Wankhede
Chief Executive

Your Words.....

While appreciating your effort to keep me informed of your work, I wish to thank you for sharing useful information through your newsletter.

Dr. Indu Chandra Nagar
USAID-Afghanistan, Kabul

King Bruce and the Spider is an interesting connotation to development projects. Such projects should be replicated far and wide.

Syed Sajad Hussain Razvi
Forest Research Institute, Dehradun

The Water Users Committee of village Chhayan has set a great example in community participation for managing 'village commons'. It will be fair to say that the involvement of small, medium & landless people has been the strength of IFFDC in its development interventions.

Dr. Virendra Kumar
Ex-Chairman, IFFDC

MISSION

"To enhance ecological resilience through dignified collective action to combat poverty in its diverse manifestations"

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Reflections

Neglected Commons

There is a step-well at each step

Located amidst the central highlands, Ratlam could well be the 'bawdi town' of the country. With over 52 step-wells or *bawdi*, the salty snacks' capital of the country in Madhya Pradesh stands out for its water wisdom too. Ironically, little has so far been known about its rich cultural heritage that dates back to 250 years or more. The town with a population of around 200,000 has gone about business-as-usual at the cost of neglecting its incredible water wisdom.

While *Sai Bawdi* in Shastri Nagar locality has been turned into a garbage bin by the surrounding habitations, *Kashi Viswanath Bawdi* a few yards away has retained its glory under the leadership of Pandit Lalit Sharma. Not only has the *bawdi* been fenced, it is cleaned as often to rid it from falling leaves and such stuff. Says Pandit Sharma, 'Our three generations have continued to identify ourselves with this *bawdi*.'

The town must have had a rich history with *bawdi* at the centre of its cultural legacy. Neither is the city hospital without a *bawdi* nor is the police station bereft of one such structure. The irony is that most of these heritage structures have been taken for granted as waste dumps. The *Do-mukhi Bawdi* on the college road is over-flowing with garbage, earning the Municipal Committee flaks from the media and the public at large.

One gets to see a ray of hope for *bawdi* revival at the *Bhojra Bawdi*.



Do-mukhi Bawadi

Surrounded by households along its periphery, the *bawdi* should have long been dead had Subhash Sharma's family not taken it upon itself to protect it. So committed is the family that they have organised themselves into a *samiti* to raise awareness for protecting the step-well. In effect,

they have drawn out extensive plans for rehabilitating the centuries old structure.

IFFDC has initiated extensive documentation of the existing *bawdi* in the

town for the purpose of designing a long-term plan for revival of traditional wisdom. However, this would be part of the comprehensive Project Malwa that is being conceptualised not only to build upon the foundation laid by the Western India Rainfed Farming Project but to up-scale and diversify some of the past activities.



Kashi Viswanath Bawdi



HEIGHT DOES MATTER

It was a case of 'water, water everywhere' for some 38 farmers in *Khapa*, *Naulazhir* and *Parsgaon* villages in Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh. Built out of a legislature's fund, the *anicut* has been in existence for over 15 years. For lack of proper height of the structure, the gains could only be sub-optimally utilized all these years.

Thanks to IFFCO for providing financial assistance to increase in height of the structure by 3 feet at an estimated cost of Rs 193,000, the gains of irrigation have spread to wheat in 150, gram in 50, garlic in 20, peas in 25 and potato in 45 acres. The net economic worth is several times the cost of investment. Conservative estimate indicates that the annual gain has been worth Rs 57 lacs, which had eluded these farmers during the past 15 years.

The demand for raising the height of the structure has been under consideration, but for IFFDC it was an opportunity for social engineering of the structure into an institutional framework. Unless the intended beneficiaries made cash contribution and agreed to frame rules for water-sharing, the work would not be undertaken! No sooner had the farmers collected Rs 45,000 as their contribution, IFFDC engineers took up the task of raising the height of the structure. New height has increased the social and economic stature of the community.

Water Wealth Unlimited

Located about 80 km from Madurai is a place called Karaikudi, the epicentre for water revival in Shivgangai and Pudukottai districts of Tamil Nadu. Called *Kanmai*, a water tank or a lake has been in existence in every village since antiquity. Varying in length from couple of hundred meters to as long as three kilometers, *kanmai* has been the lifeline of villages in this part of the country. During the past five years, 97 lakh cubic meters of earth excavation has brought to life 147 *kanmai* with a command area of 17,611 acres. At an investment of Rs 3 crores by IFFCO, ten per cent of which was contributed by village panchayats, IFFDC has helped the benefits of this water wealth reach to as many as 18,132 families - at just Rs 1,654 per family.



Pandhakurani Kanmai before deepening



Pandhakurani Kanmai after deepening



Pudhuvayal Kanmai before deepening



Pudhuvayal Kanmai after deepening



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