

In the Scorching June Sun

People of all ages standing along the dirt road with earthen pots in hand. This was the scene on that June day in 2022 in Sonai Lakha village (Rohat block) in Pali district, Rajasthan.

Sweaty people, including many children, waiting for the water tanker was a disheartening sight. The GLRs (Ground Level Reservoirs) installed by the PHED (Public Health Engineering Department) were in a dilapidated condition.

Upon entering the village, the community pond, commonly referred to as "nadi" in Rajasthan, also appeared in poor condition. Traditional methods of water conservation seemed to be disappearing with time. The catchment area of the pond had become a collective dumping ground.

When our organization, Karunalya Foundation's field team, spoke with the VDC (Village Development Committee) and the Panchayat committee, the village head, Mahant Kishan Bharti, mentioned that the lack of drinking water supply was causing even the death of cattle. Despite repeatedly informing the authorities in writing, the problem remained unresolved.

While touring the village, we saw some women going to fetch water from the percolation wells in the nadi in the scorching afternoon. Upon reaching there, we saw that the water level had dropped significantly, with some wells completely dried up. The little water left was not drinkable, yet the women were fetching it.



Women to fetch water from the percolation well in the nadi in the scorching afternoon

An elderly villager, Jogaram (name changed), shared that the entire Gram Panchayat, which includes 7 hamlets and one main village with a population of about 5,000 people and over 2,000 cattle (data supported by the village head), is currently dependent on just two water tankers. Every day, people line up waiting for the tanker. Due to this issue, people are not keeping cattle and are being forced to migrate. Various diseases are also emerging due to the contaminated water.

After assessing the situation, the Karunalya team took on the responsibility of renovating the main pond, receiving full support from the villagers. The pond structure was strengthened through excavation, and the catchment area was cleaned. The organization bore the excavation costs, while



the villagers collectively carried the soil out of the pond. At the end of this 10-day work, the technical team measured the water-holding capacity, finding 1.5 times increase, and about 15,000 cubic meters of soil was removed.

The villagers decided to plant trees around the pond, and the Panchayat implemented strict rules to keep the catchment area clean. The water supply issue in Pali district is evident as water is transported to many parts by train during the scorching summer days.

Seeing the positive approach of the villagers, the foundation also worked on another pond designated for cattle. As a result, both ponds were fully filled during the monsoon, providing clean water to both the villagers and the cattle.



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Today, Karunalaya's rejuvenation work of nadis has successfully covered over 90 villages across 5 districts, renovating 100 nadis, benefiting over 70,000 people.

Let us come together to preserve our cultural heritage and re-adopt traditional forms of water conservation.

"I do not know caste or creed; I am beyond color discrimination...
Sometimes I am a cool stream, sometimes I am a calamity.
Sometimes I am in the ocean, sometimes I dissolve into the sky...
You have wasted me, human, I am even in your eyes."

Yashwant Singh
Karunalaya Social Welfare Foundation, Jodhpur.