

# NORMS HELP TRANSFORM

## ..... A Journey of Mylaram Village

*Conservation of water resources is largely motivated by potential irrigation benefits. Watershed development projects are also dominated by this thinking. After conserving water in watershed development projects, the competition for drilling bore wells is so high that the entire augmented water is exhausted in no time. Ironically, several villages face acute drinking water shortage after watershed development projects are implemented, as each individual farmer is free to drill a bore well and exploits the augmented ground water. But not all villages are like this. Mylaram stands apart. They established social norms and ensured that water is available for irrigation and WASH services also. The journey of Mylaram is a lesson for balancing both uses of water.*



**M**ylaram is a village in Chinnakoduru mandal of Medak district, Andhra Pradesh. This is 120 kms North of Hyderabad. In the year 2002 there were about 190 families in the village. There were about 135 open wells in the village out of which only 12 were functional. There were 109 borewells out of which only 56 had water and the rest dried up. The average rainfall for the area is 750 mm. However, the village is on the ridge part and there is no scope for storing water in tanks and lakes. Hence, the rain water would get drained away from the region. The people had problems of irrigation and

drinking water. They also did not have sufficient work. The women used to go as far as 3 to 4 kms to the neighbouring villages in search of work. Despite such efforts they would get a measly Rs.35/- as daily wages. The men used to migrate to Mumbai and Pune. In such a situation the villagers were not aware of hygiene and sanitation and they were not using toilets for defecation.

### A new initiation with Watershed works

In the year 2002 Nava Jyothi, a Voluntary Organization, was implementing watershed works in the neighbouring village. The women

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members of the thrift groups in Mylaram attended some of the meetings conducted in that village. Seeing the benefit of the watershed works they requested the organization to take up similar works in their village also. The organization informed them that in order to get the programme to their village they have to be united and each family has to contribute 4 days of voluntary labour. The women communicated the same to the panchayat. The panchayat met the organization and got more details about the watershed programme.

The panchayat organized a meeting with all the villagers. They informed them about the watershed programme and identified a field 2 kms from the village to undertake voluntary labour work. The technical person from the Nava Jyothi organization was also a party to this selection process. While some of the villagers contributed by physical labour, those who couldn't do so paid Rs.250/- to the village panchayat. The cash received in this way was used to hire a tractor to transport the mud to the top of the bund. As a result of these collective efforts, the village was sanctioned a watershed development project by NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development). After the watershed

programme was sanctioned to the village the farmers groups were formed. With 9 representatives of these farmers groups a Watershed Committee was constituted. The Committee plays an important role in monitoring the watershed works, providing wage employment to the landless poor and making timely payments for the work done.

### Promoting the use of Sprinklers

Before the watershed programme the cultivated area in the village was 785 acres. Out of this area paddy was cultivated in 100 acres. The rest of the area was rainfed. The groundwater also was very scarce in those areas. After the watershed activities there was an increase in the level of the ground water. The area under paddy cultivation increased to 250 acres. In the remaining area dry crops and irrigated-dry crops were cultivated. In this process the digging of borewells



and open wells increased. As there was increased use of ground water due to increase in the paddy area the ground water levels have gone down once again. At one point of time the ground water levels went down from 120 feet to 500 feet.



This was the time when the representatives of the Centre for World Solidarity (CWS) visited the village along with Nav Jyothi team.

They informed the villagers that if the ground water is used at the current rate they would face drastic situation in the near future. They also told the villagers that they can earn higher revenues by cultivating crops that do not require large quantities of water. In the process they can also save the valuable water. The organization conducted trainings necessary for this shift. They were taught about water saving mechanisms and use of sprinklers. Use of sprinklers was agreed by farmers for saving water precious groundwater. Every farmer who has a bore well wanted a sprinkler set for oneself. This was not possible as there is no adequate fund for supplying sprinkler sets to each

farmer. Apart from this, only bore well owners would benefit from the sprinkler sets and other farmers would not get any benefit. To make equitable distribution of water resources, CWS and Nava Jyothi team further proposed that a farmer with a borewell has to share the water with two neighbouring farmers who do not have borewell of their own. For enabling such sharing mechanism, that group would get a set of sprinklers as an incentive. Not willing to share the water with other farmers no one came forward, initially.

However, in the year 2004 seven bore well owners agreed to share water with their neighbors (who do not have bore wells) and formed seven groups with 21 farmers. One sprinkler set was given to a group of three farmers. For every sprinkler CWS provided a subsidy of Rs. 3500/-, while the Government provided a subsidy of Rs. 7000/-. The three farmers contributed Rs. 3500/- as their share. Inspired by this, next year 30 farmers came forward, who were formed into 10 groups. This time the CWS subsidy and the farmers share was Rs. 4000/- each and the Government subsidy was Rs. 8000/-. In the year 2007 22 groups were formed with 66 farmers who were willing to share the ground water.

This time around the share of the CWS, farmers and the Government was Rs. 4500/-: Rs. 4500/-: Rs. 9000/-. There are more farmers willing to be part of this system of sharing water but they could not provide the sprinklers as there was no further subsidy from the Government. However, the majority of the community agreed to share with each other and enforce regulations of ground water use.

Based on this initiative, CWS started the Social Regulation Project in water management. The villagers and the Nava Jyothi staff were trained for two days on these aspects by the CWS representatives. The participants were taken an exposure trip to Hiwre Bazar and Pani Panchayat in Maharashtra. They were educated on how to make better

utilization of ground water. Importantly, they also learned that sanitation and drinking water management are integral part of water management. The people who went on the exposure visit shared their learnings' with the remaining villagers. With the assistance from the panchayath all the villagers

formulated certain regulations relating to water management (drinking and irrigation) and sanitation:

Due to these Social Regulations of Groundwater, there was savings in the ground water use and the ground water levels started rising. With the supply of sprinklers to the farmers the area under paddy decreased from 250 acres to 130 acres. The cultivation of irrigated-dry crops (vegetables, maize, cotton, sunflower, etc.) increased. The

### Regulating water use

- Drinking water should not be wasted
- After using the tap it should be closed
- Any person wasting tap water would be fined Rs. 100/-
- If the same habit continues after being fined for four times, fifth time around the tap would be disconnected
- New borewells should not be dug in the village.
- Owners of existing bore wells have to share ground water with farmers who do not have bore wells.
- Promotion of irrigated dry crops should be encouraged, instead of high water intense crops.



incomes rose without reducing area under cultivation. This entire initiative of “regulated ground water use” has considerable ramifications on WASH sector also.

### Impact on Drinking Water

Initially there were 5 handpumps in the village, which dried up and only one was functional. Observing the water level in the wells has increased after the watershed works, two borewells were drilled. While one of them yielded plenty of water, there wasn't much water in the second one. Both the borewells were connected together and tap connections were provided to the 162 families. Those who were in the low lying areas would get adequate water in the taps, but was a problem for those who were in higher altitudes. There were 45 poor families which did not have the tap connections.

There was severe water problem for the 20 families that were on the high altitude of the village. Hence, the panchayat constructed a mini tank with a capacity of 60,000 litres for them. This tank gets its water supply from the Siddipet-Pottur drinking water pipe line. Another tank of 4000 litres capacity was constructed for the benefit of 15 families staying in the low lying region.

The 45 families that did not have tap connections were provided with them through a Government scheme. CWS helped 5 families to get the tap connection. For providing the tap connection an amount of Rs.500/- was collected from each of the 162 families. The 45 poor families were provided with the tap connection without any charges. A water usage charge of Rs.20/- is collected per month amounting to a sum of Rs. 240/- per year. If this amount is not paid then that family does not get its monthly food ration from the fair price shop. An arrangement was made to pay the water charges at this shop itself.

After all the connections were provided a waterman was appointed by the panchayat. He is paid from the charges being collected from the villagers. His duty is to release water to the taps for the stipulated time. The water is released at the same time for all the villagers.

### Sanitation

In the year 2002 the village did not even have proper bus facility. The village was littered with waste material and drains. There was no proper drainage system. There were no latrines and the people would defecate in the open. The villagers would frequently fall ill what with





mosquitoes, flies and germs abounding. The Primary School in the village did not have toilets due to which the children had to face lot of problems. The Anganwadi centre was also located in the Primary School and the children would defecate and urinate in open public places.

The people who went on exposure visit to Maharashtra observed the sanitary conditions there. This aspect was also discussed in the meeting that was conducted after their return from the trip. They discussed about the aspects of maintaining sanitation in the village and adopted certain regulations in this regard. The CWS provided 6 dustbins for depositing the waste material. The CWS also provided a rickshaw to empty the dustbins and dispose the waste far away from the village. They constructed four drinking water tubs for the animals by utilizing the leakage from the Maneru pipe line. Out of these two were provided by CWS and

other two were financed by the village panchayat. At the same time about 60 to 70 families constructed individual latrines with help from a Government scheme. However, only some of these families were actually using them. In the school separate toilets were constructed for boys and girls. In the Indiramma Housing Scheme the provision for constructing latrines was not utilized properly.

In this situation the villagers adopted some regulations. The families were to throw the household waste in the dustbins only and not on to the street. The waste water from the houses should be used for kitchen garden and not let out on to the street. The stretch of the street in front of every house should be cleaned by that family. No one should defecate in the open, instead they should use the latrines constructed for the purpose.

If any family does not follow any one of the above regulations it would



be fined Rs. 50/-. Despite this, the regulations were not followed diligently by all. The Mandal Resource Person organized awareness meetings for the self help groups. Movies on sanitation were projected using CDs. Folk art programmes were also organized on the theme. People were told about the health problems that

would arise in unsanitary situations. As part of the voluntary labour they cleaned the streets and put the waste in the dustbins. The streets were cleared off bushes that were obstructing them. They told about sanitation to the households that were not maintaining it. These all round efforts brought in some change.

*Mylaram demonstrated a rare practice of extending conservation initiatives to governance systems. Various schemes and funds were harnessed to make required investments for resource conservation and infrastructure development. Support from committed NGOs to local institutions ensured sustainable and equitable delivery of WASH services and economic support systems.*

