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PRIA

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Community and Panchayat Engagement in Governance and Management of Water *Experience of Korba District of Chhattisgarh*

(A Joint Initiative of PRIA, SROUT And ARGHYAM)



1. Korba District: water challenges of tribal areas

Korba is a tribal district situated in the north- central part of Chhattisgarh. It has 5 divisions and 352 panchayats. As per 2011 census, with a population of 12,06,563, 63.02% population of Korba district lives in rural areas, with a sex ratio at 971 per 1000 male. The main occupation of the people is agriculture, with principal crops being paddy, wheat, pulses and Tiwada. Due to limited irrigation facility, and dependence on the rains, single crop based agriculture is followed by most farmers.



Tribal constitute majority (51.67%) of the total population, with main scheduled tribes being Pahadi Korwa, Gond, Raj Gond, Kavar, Bhaiyana, Dhanuhar etc. The tribal communities are depended on the forest for fuel, firewood, medicines, food, implements and housing material. Many coal mines like Gevra Area, Dipka Area and Kusmunda area and power plants like CSEB East-West, NTPC and Balco located in the district. Other important mineral found in this area are Bauxite, Granite and fire resistance clay.

In Korba district water from hand pumps, the open wells, tanks, dhondhi, streams and ponds are utilised for domestic and drinking purposes, while canal and river water has been used for irrigation. The district has only about 13% of the net sown area as irrigated area. Small water storage tanks (dabrees) constructed in cultivated fields store rainwater for irrigation. In addition ponds, wells, streams and structures like check dam and stop dams are other sources to draw water for irrigation purpose. Hasdeo Bango Reservoir is the major irrigation scheme in Korba district, and in addition there are 36 minor irrigation projects.

Problem of fluoride and iron in the hand pump water is a growing area of concern. Further despite having 1287.6 mm of normal rainfall, lack of effective measures to conserve the rain and surface water, and rampant

exploitation of ground water is leading to depleting ground water levels and enhanced water scarcity especially during summer seasons.

2. The water journey...

On January 2012 PRIA, in collaboration with partner NGO SROUT, and with the support of Arghyam Foundation, Bangalore, initiated a two year pilot intervention to enhance community engagement in governance and management of Water in Korba district of Chhattisgarh.

Chhattisgarh being a Scheduled V areas, this initiative was in keeping with the provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (also known as PESA), which have provided Gram Sabha in scheduled V areas a central role in managing natural resources, which fall within their village purview.

5 panchayats of Korba Block were selected to undertake a pilot initiative to demonstrate successful model of community engagement in water management. The panchayats covered in the Korba block were Jambhar, Sonpuri, Chuhiya, Songurha and Dondhru. The selection of the 5 panchayats was based on the past work of SROUT in those panchayats, and the existence of water problems in those panchayats.

3. Expectations from the pilot initiative

The main objective of the intervention was to demonstrate, through the help of a pilot initiative in 5 panchayats of Korba district, the engagement of gram sabha and gram panchayats in management of water resources in their panchayat.

Building on that pilot initiative, the programme aimed to build pressure on the government of Chhattisgarh, through studies, campaigns and consultations, to ensure community, as well as panchayats' active participation in water management in scheduled V (tribal areas), thus implementing the PESA 1996 Act's provisions in practice.

4. Success so far!!

Main achievement of this pilot intervention in Korba district till date has been:

- **Mobilisation of approximately Rs 1,30,00,000 by the panchayats, to effectively implement the water management plan prepared in a participatory manner.** Of the planned work of Rs 4,14,29,000, across the 5 intensive panchayats, water infrastructure related work of nearly Rs 1,30,00,000 has already been sanctioned, from different government and industry schemes. They include the following structures:
 - Farm ponds (dabri) digging and deepening-29

- Wells construction: 14
- Ponds digging /deepening: 4
- Stop dam and mini stop dam construction: 7
- Sanction of piped water supply scheme for two panchayats
- Cleaning of traditional dhondi and building platform around it -1 panchayat

In addition PHED has given commitment of putting iron filters in the hand pumps and cleaning of the wells in Bhatgaon village

- **Creation of water structures with active panchayat and community participation, to address the access and quality aspects of water through water conservation, storage recharging measures:** Many planned activities of the 2013-2014 annual water plans developed in the 5 panchayats have been undertaken, with active participation of the panchayat representatives. Work on others is underway. They include revival of traditional water conservation structures like dabri, wells, ponds, dhondi, as well as building of stop dams. Across 5 panchayats these include construction of:

- 13 farm ponds (dabri)
- 9 wells
- 4 mini stop dams
- 1 stop dam

- **Ensuring sustainability of water structures and process through active participation of gram sabha members and panchayats during each stage of water cycle:** The active involvement of the gram sabha members, especially women, and gram panchayat members in undertaking the visioning and planning exercise, raising issue of water in gram sabha meeting, monitoring the implementation of the plans has energized the gram sabha and the panchayat as an entity. Their commitment in maintaining and sustaining the water sources as well as structures has been built.
- **Multi stakeholder engagement on addressing water issues in tribal areas:** There is growing recognition by the government on the relevance of multi stakeholder engagement to address water issues. The stakeholders include the district administration, government officials of the different line departments related to water, the panchayat representatives of the three tiers, the gram sabha representatives, especially the women, the industry and CSR representatives and the civil society organisations.

5. How did we get there?

These successes were possible through a number of initiatives undertaken through the period. The critical ones included:

Capacity building of the Panchayats: February 2012

- Orientation of the PRI elected representatives and gram sabha

representatives was undertaken on the significance of their participation in effective management of water

- Insights on methodology and principles of participatory planning were provided

Baseline Study: March-April 2012

- A baseline study was undertaken in the 5 intervening panchayats, as a starting point for undertake the visioning exercise around water.
- It was facilitated with the help of PRA methods like social and resource mapping and questionnaire.
- The baseline report provided information about demographic, local governance strictures, development facilities, and status of water in the panchayat.

Sharing of Base Line Report: June 2012

- Baseline report was shared with panchayat and gram sabha members of the 5 intervening panchayats.
- The report findings were verified by the participants and active discussion on the water issue took place.
- Baseline report given to Sarpanch for their record.



Preparation for Visioning Process

- The date, time & place for meeting were decided in consultation with Sarpanch & other ward panchs of the panchayat.
- Formal letter from Sarpanch was given to all ward panch, panchayat secretary, Rojgar Sahayak, and field level functionaries of PHED, WRD and Agriculture department.
- Information about the visioning exercise shared by having notices pasted in important places of the panchayats/villages, beating drum through the Kotwar, and by visiting each household.

Visioning process at gram panchayat level: July 2012

- Village level meetings were organized for developing panchayat's vision on water management
- Active participation of the gram sabha (GS) members and village panchayat

representatives was facilitated

- Verification of the Baseline report on water was done by the participants
- Identification and prioritisation of problem areas related to water by community
- Facilitation of a discussion on Strength, Weakness, and Opportunity & Threats (SWOT) of the panchayats on water management issues
- Developing vision for their panchayat after five years on water management issues



Engagement of Technical Support group: July 2012

- Formation of Technical Support Group (TSG) to strengthen engagement with relevant line departments, and incorporate technical aspects in the planning process
- TSG included members of panchayat elected representatives (ERs), Gram Sabha member, Panchayat secretary, Rojgar Sahayak, ground level staff from PHED & Agriculture department and Sub-Engineer of Panchayat
- During TSC meeting vision statement and annual plans of panchayat finalized



Sharing panchayat vision and proposed annual activities in the gram sabha: August 2012

- Gram sabha mobilisation activities facilitated for the mandated August gram sabha of the state
- Inclusion of discussion on water issues in the gram sabha agenda and sharing of the vision and proposed activities for next financial year
- Special gram sabha organised in one panchayat to hold specific discussion on the issue of water.



- Panchayat vision and one year plan on water approved in the GS meeting

Ownership of water vision documents by panchayats: September 2012

- The visioning and planning process was compiled in the form of 5 panchayat vision documents by PRIA and SROUT
- Vision documents included: panchayat details, the water sources available, water problems, SWOT of the panchayat; the vision and one year plan of the panchayat.
- Annual action plan of water management and vision statement approved during the Gram panchayat meetings Vision documents handed to Sarpanchs of the 5 panchayats



Preparation of Budget of the Panchayat's Annual Plan of Water: October 2012

- Elected representatives of panchayats coordinated with Sub Engineer of Zilla panchayat Korba for the preparation of budget.
- The Sub Engineer prepared the budget, by visiting the site and undertaking measurement
- Annual water budget of each panchayat plan ranged from **Rs 21 lakhs** of Sonpuri panchayat to nearly **Rs 2 crores** of Donduru panchayat (as per the water works specified)

Janpad (Block) Panchayat Level Sharing of Vision document & one year action plan for water management: Nov 2012

- Meeting attended by representatives of president and member of Janpad Panchayat, Government officials, ERs of respective 5 GPs, representative from CSOs and media
- Sarpanch of all respective Gram Panchayats shared their one year plan for water management, followed by discussion on each aspect of water management plan.
- The vision document and one year plans submitted by the respective Sarpanchs to the President of Janpad Panchayat for implementation.



District Level Consultation on Water Management in Korba: November 2012

- District level consultation was organized in collaboration of zilla panchayat at meeting hall of Zilla Panchayat, Korba.
- Planned with the objective of developing vision and strategy of effective water management for Korba district
- 50 participants representing the line departments like Agriculture department, Horticulture department, CSR representatives from NALCO, AFPRO, PRI elected representatives from the intervening panchayats, Block and District panchayat, and Civil Society Organisations were part of the intervention.
- District consultation reinforced the need for active engagement of the gram sabha and community in management of water resources.
- It helped to explore the desired status of drinking and irrigation water in Korba district after 5 years and the possible strategies to reach that desired status.



Interface meetings and consultations between panchayat, line departments and Industry to get panchayat planned activities implemented: Jan- March 2013

- Partner NGO SROUT and panchayat's representatives contacted the MGNREGA officer, Janpad Engineer, PHED, Irrigation Department and officials of BALCO and AFRO, on an ongoing basis and shared the plans with panchayat water plans.
- Most of the work of the Panchayat annual work plan has been included in the *activities of MGNREGA*.
- NABARD-BALCO agreed to include some *dabri, well and stop dam* work under their Watershed Project and later on those works have been implemented.

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