

Reviving and restoring defunct water harvesting structures in Meghalaya

A step towards water conservation #janshakti4jalshakti

India is a water-rich country having 4 per cent of world's water resources (India-WRIS wiki 2015). Though India is one of the wettest regions in the world, still water scarcity contains to haunt various regions with varying intensity. Geographical variations result in floods in some areas and droughts in others. Water conservation is a bigger challenge in hilly regions of the country.

East Khasi Hills is one of the 11 districts of Meghalaya with a unique distinction of having an average annual rainfall of 12000 mm (Approx), amongst the highest in the world. Laitumiong, a small village located in Laitkroh block of East Khasi Hills, has a population of about 500 people in 98 households. The sad paradox was that on the one hand with the advent of monsoons, there was abundant water, while on the other hand in dry season there was acute water crisis. The unabated stone quarrying had led to choking of perennial streams. Increasing population, mismanagement of natural water resources and lack of water conservation strategies, added to water crisis of the area. Women and children were making several rounds to far off stress to fetch water, thereby sacrificing their productive time.



AROH Foundation, a leading national-level NGO, engaged with holistic rural development programmes in the region, stepped in to renovate, revive and restore a dysfunctional Rain Water Harvesting cum Check Dam structure constructed by the Forest Department in 1996. After conducting a feasibility study in consultation with the line departments, a detailed plan was drawn to renovate and re-dress the structure to ensure collection of rain water and manage in and out flow for maximum augmentation of water.

During the process of renovation, the 66 x 58.4 x 12 (46252.8) cubic feet structure was restored and supported with strong fencings. Proper extendable outlets were installed to facilitate easy access to water by the villagers. The structure is scientifically designed to harvest the purified rain water through a natural filter i.e. on one side double walls are



constructed and filled with sand, pebbles and stones pieces for natural filtration of water, which is finally stored in RWH structure for community use.

The renovated structure is a boon for the community as it has the capacity to store 1.3 Lakh litres which adequately provides for the need of the entire population of 500 people. A village development committee has also been constituted and trained to ensure timely

maintenance and sustainability of the initiative. The water situation of the village has changed dramatically in the village since water from the RWH is not just adequate for daily needs of the villagers, but also has helped in mitigating water crisis at their agricultural fields.



Women engaged in Stevia farming

Women no longer spend hours fetching water, instead they now engage in gainful and income generating activities. Livelihood and income avenues have been opened for them by imparting skill development in areas like handicraft training, poultry, piggery, commercial and organic farming, etc. For village children public libraries, smart learning centers, sports and cultural activities have been introduced to keep them engaged in meaningful activities and productive work.



Children engaged in Smart



Revival of existing water bodies, revamping water conserving structures is seen as the most economic, effective and fast measure in the water conservation drives. A thoughtful alliance of people, resources, systems and policy makers can come together in mission mode to mitigate the water crisis. We as a planet are already blessed with abundance on water with us. Just forethought and small efforts can help us mitigate water crisis at various levels and can create ripple effect towards the mission of water conservation. We should remember that now is the time and every bit shall count.



Before intervention picture



During Work Picture



After intervention picture