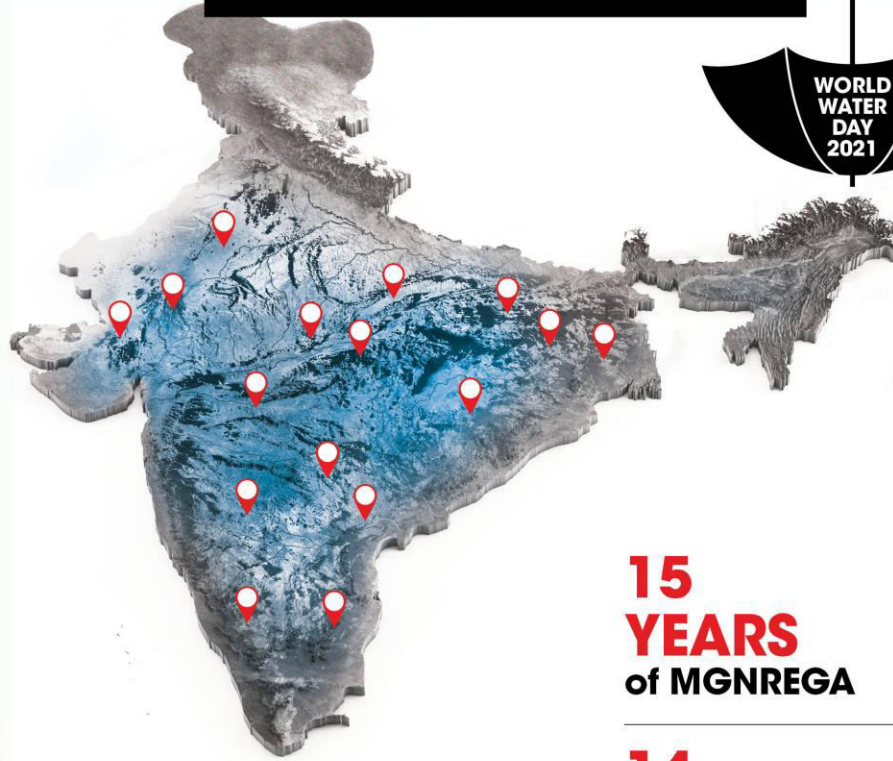


#MGNREGA: India's Jal Jodhas

WORLD
WATER
DAY
2021



THE CHASE AND THE CHANGE

To probe

How districts that
implemented MGNREGA
first in 2006 performing on
water conservation

**15
YEARS**
of MGNREGA

14
reporters

**16,000
KM**
journey

**16
VILLAGES**
in 15 states



...but why

MGNREGA is more than a manual employment generator

By law, it has to devote 60% of all works to water-related structures

In last 15 years, 30 million water conservation-related works; or 50 works/village

Potentially, these structures conserved 28,741 million cubic metres of water



Water is **determinant** of our present and future, we know that

But with climate change; **increased heat; increased variation in rainfall**, water management will be our make or break

Water security is also crucial for **livelihood security**

It builds **resilience and ability** to cope with weather adversities

MGNREGA is **world's largest** social security; climate risk management programme

But **does it work?** We check and bring back the news..



BANDLAPALLI

Ananthapuramu dist., Andhra Pradesh

“Our village has evaded the curse of drought”

**The first village to roll out MGNREGA
in the country**

2006

Recurring drought; migration; managed under
desert development programme

2021

900-odd water harvesting structures

It is drought-proof now;

was not impacted in 2018-19 when the dist.
reported its least rainfall in a century

Residents are into cash crops,
dairy, and migration has stopped

Village has used MGNREGA;

invested in water security to build livelihood security



BARMANI

Sidhi dist., Madhya Pradesh

**“We have become
food surplus”**

2006

When DTE first visited this village it was
abandoned and distressed

Then it invested in water security under MGNREGA

By 2021

Revisit by DTE we found:

7 big ponds;

39 dug wells revived with year-round water

All residents are established farmers;
spend 10 months/year

Women don't spend time
to fetch water

The village gives priority
to water in its 5-year-plan



POOKKOTTUKAVU

Palakkad dist., Kerala

"Women revived a river"

2006

A water scarce village with 2,300 mm annual rainfall

2021

India's largest group of women well diggers; planning
200 wells to become water surplus

Hundreds of water harvesting

structures to recharge groundwater

Drying water streams

come back to life

Women take

the lead



HIMMATPURA
Jalaun dist., Uttar Pradesh



"Income increased by 10 times"

2006

One check dam

2021

Every house harvests rooftop water; three dug wells ensure drinking water to all

Reporting

reverse migration

No more dependence on rainwater
as enough conserved

All farm lands irrigated;
income has gone up by 10 times



NADIA

Tikamgarh dist., Madhya Pradesh

"A network of 55 tanks"

2006

Only 30% farmland under cultivation; 40 droughts in 45 years; another village we saw and reported on

2021

Revival of 55 traditional water tanks

Each tank irrigates

4 Ha of farm

90% of farmland

under irrigation now

Income has gone up

by up to 400%



BHUANPADA
Balangir dist., Odisha

"Jobs round the year"

2006

One of India's highest migration rate; perennially drought-affected

2021

A set target of creating 5,000 farm ponds and multipurpose tanks

Residents contributing land
for community tanks

Digging wells
to harvest recharged water

During pandemic,
most of returning migrant workers got employment



VELLAPALLAM

Nagapattinam dist., Tamil Nadu

"Fighting post-tsunami affects using MGNREGA"

MGNREGA data cards

2006

The 2004 tsunami left large tracts of land infertile due to salinity

2021

Took up desilting of ponds to make lands fit for agriculture

Men migrated out

leaving behind women

MGNREGA recruited them

to desilt ponds to fight salinity

Groundwater recharged;

people resumed farming



JHENAGARIA
Pakur dist., Jharkhand

"Fourfold rise in farm yield"

2006

Started building 5 ponds and 12 check dams for the next two years

2021

Groundwater level has improved; farm yield reports fourfold increase

Upkeep of ponds
and check dams done by community

The village doesn't take
govt. helps anymore

Those who use water
from these sources contribute labour to maintain them



BIRBANDH

Bankura dist., West Bengal

"The 30x40 model of prosperity"

2006

Undulating terrains led to quick drain out of rainwater

2021

25 water harvesting structures to arrest run off

Designed the 30x40 model
of rainwater harvesting

It harvests water 30 metres below
a higher slope and deposits in a 40 mts
horizontal tank for recharge

Water level has risen
by about 1.7 mt in 2018-2020



BATKA PHALA

Dungarpur dist., Rajasthan

"Both drought- & flood-proof"

2006

Infamous for drought and distress migration

2021

Took up large-scale trenches on hill slopes to recharge rainwater

Recharge rainwater

on hill slopes through trenches

The overflowing water stored

in a masonry check dam on a river

Groundwater level has risen

by 15 mts in the vicinity

This dam also saved

the village from flash floods



RAMDURGA

Chitradurga dist., Karnataka

"Putting life into livestock economy"

2006

One of driest districts in the country;
groundwater level at 200 mts

2021

First built community ponds; currently focus on
private assets like farm ponds

The livestock-dependent village

first built a community pond for goats

This ensured water and fodder

for goats; one resident sold 50 goats during the
pandemic earning Rs. 4 lakh

People now take up horticulture

to add on to income



BAROKHAN
Sirsa dist., Haryana

"Upcycling the MGNREGA"

2006

MGNREGA didn't have many takers

2021

Uses labour to build systems to recycle grey water for irrigation

Has built 3-pond system

to treat waste water from kitchens and bathrooms

Use the water
for irrigation

Save up to 66%

on water charge and also reduce dependence on groundwater



JAMUNWAN
Kaimur dist., Bihar

**“Bringing memory
of Magadha
Kingdom alive”**

2006

Started with earthen dams but were not tenable

2021

Has revived the ages old *ahar-pyne* system of irrigation

The village has kilometres
of irrigation channels

These retain water
during drought while flush out in floods

40% of village's farms
are currently irrigated



TUPEWADI

Jalna dist., Maharashtra

"A village that has witnessed two employment guarantee schemes"

2006

Was under the state's Employment Guarantee Scheme

2021

MGNREGA helped big to increase the village's water capital

Recharged wells by harvesting

rainwater through compartmental bunding of fields around

The Gram Sabha plans

how to use MGNREGA labour

Income from agriculture

has increased by 300%

#MGNREGA: India's Jal Jodhas



MANCHAL

Ranga Reddy dist., Telangana

"A level playing revival"

2006

Started with levelling undulated lands for cultivation

2021

400 farmers have levelled their lands

In the first few years farms <2 Ha
were levelled to make agriculture possible

Farmers get to plant teak tree
on farm boundary for future financial security

Area under cultivation
has more than doubled



VASNA

Sabarkantha dist., Gujarat

"Migration has reduced by 40%"

2006

Started with small dams/ponds

2021

Has extensive irrigation system using water from these dams

Was completely
rain-dependent

The new ponds/tanks
ensure surface water for 10 months

Farming is back
as the main occupation; annual family saving up to Rs. 2 lakh



What these villages teach us

**More than drought relief;
relief against drought**

**Water conservation is the key
to economic growth**

**It is possible to regenerate
the land; it needs minimal
investment**

**But it needs community
involvement; people must be
part of this effort**

**In these villages, employment
is important, but what drives
change is the investment in
ecological asset**

**MGNREGA is
world's largest
adaptation
programme**



**Climate change will increase risks
of weather shocks**

More rain, less rain

**Needs all efforts; all hands on
deck, to improve water security**

**MGNREGA uses labour to build
ecological assets**

**Builds resilience and coping
abilities – need to do more of this
and in every village**

**Use water conservation as starting
point for livelihood security**

#MGNREGA: India's Jal Jodhas



Water secures economic opportunity

**Every tank/pond is an
economic opportunity**

**Every village has shown
how migration has been
reduced; how wealth
and wellbeing have been
secured**

**This is the opportunity;
the promise of water
conservation**



MGNREGA

counting number of works not as important as measures of sustainability

**We could not find
these villages in any
government record**

**MGNREGA still
counts only number
of assets created**

**But what is more
important is to track
and monitor the
impact of the work**

**Measure water
conservation; measure
village incomes**

**Need durable assets;
need village leaders/
communities to be part
of this transformation**

**Will not work without
people taking control of
their village plan; their
natural resources**



Water security is about:

Deepening democracy

**Making every raindrop
count**

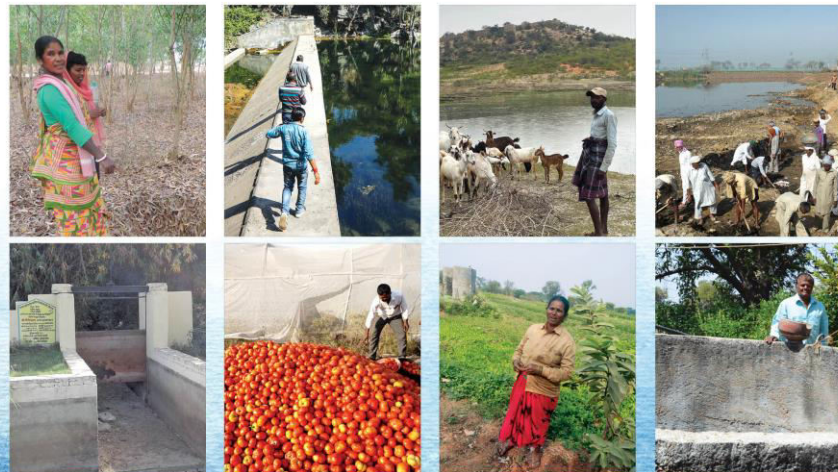
**Maximising the value
of the raindrop**

**Building livelihoods;
building futures**

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RAINMAKERS ARE OUR CHANGEMAKERS



www.downtoearth.org.in