

Step towards self reliance

Rajpur village of Dhandhuka taluka is a very poor and isolated coastal village of Bhal region of Ahmedabad district. The village is situated at a distance of about 56 kms away from Dhandhuka taluka. Population of the village is 591 people residing in around 100 households. Rajpur is not only hit by the natural factor of saline ground water and inherent soil salinity, but have also been left out as far as development like roads, state transport, education and health are concerned. Agriculture, which is rain fed, is the main occupation of the people, giving way to large scale migration. Thus the earnings are low, leaving the village far behind on economic, social and educational front. As Rajpur is a coastal village, saline water is found at around 8-10 ft under the ground. There is a natural pond in the village which was used for domestic purpose like bathing and washing. Open defaecation is a rampant practice and Rajpur being located in low lying area diseases like dysentery, diarrhea and malaria are widespread due to water logging and contamination. Thus access to safe drinking water is a major issue. Women had to walk down for 5-7 kilometers in search of water and spend their entire day on collecting water.

Water supply scheme of GWSSB with capacity of 30,000 litres storage was established in the village. But the piped water supply was erratic and irregular during water scarce months of summer. Way back in 1989, rainwater harvesting plastic lined pond was constructed for storing water. Due to improper maintenance it got damaged. It has become old, silted with mud over the years and is damaged; making it useless for availing water. However, people use it for drinking purpose and for cattle during crisis. Families have constructed RRWHS with the support of Mahiti, which they use during crisis.

Considering the increasing population and harsh summer in the region, the present yield of water is not sufficient. Interactions with the villages also showed that in spite of existing regional water supply, Rajpur is more keen on strengthening their local water supply system. It was in these situations that in 2011 Mahiti took up the repairing of rainwater harvesting plastic lined pond in the village under the Conrad N Hilton Foundation support. Awareness generation about the activity and its impact was done through gram sabha, hamlet meetings, workshops and posters. The physical work of approximate 8.8 lakh was approved and community contribution of Rs. 30,000/- was collected from the community in cash and kind. The repairing work included brick pitching, protection wall around the pond, wire fencing, steps and de-silting. The other components were inlet structure, filter well, pumping machinery, pipe line and outlet system. De-silting of around 2700 sq. m. was done by local people through NREGA. Women also played an important role in taking up this work. The repairing work has brought smiles on the faces of people. They can now avail good quality drinking water. They are now able to store 27 lakh litres of water. Women are the happiest as they do not need to walk long distances in search of water.

