

Case Story of Devpura Village

A Journey from Struggle to Sustainable Water Access

Devpura village, located on the western edge of Barwala taluka in Gujarat's Botad district, holds a unique place in the region's history and geography. The village was established as a resettlement site after the original inhabitants of **Golatalav**—then located near the coast in Dhandhuka taluka—were displaced due to the encroaching sea. As seawater gradually submerged their ancestral land, the government facilitated their relocation near Hebatpur village, where this new settlement came to be known as **Devpura**.

Socio-Economic and Educational Challenges: Devpura is primarily inhabited by the OBC Koli community and a small number of pastoralist families. Despite its historical resilience, the village remains economically and socially marginalized. Education levels are remarkably low, with only one young man having completed a Primary Teacher Training Certificate (PTTC). His education was made possible through a loan from a women's collective (mahila mandal) formed by the Mahiti Trust. He now serves as a teacher in the neighbouring village of Ratanpur. This isolated instance of educational attainment underscores the wider gap in access to quality education and the severe lack of opportunities for rural youth in the village.

Geographical challenges further compound the village's hardships. The land is saline, and groundwater is brackish, rendering it unsuitable for drinking and limited in agricultural potential. Farming is rainfed, restricting villagers to a single cropping season annually. These constraints make agriculture an unreliable source of income, leading many residents to seek seasonal migration.

Migration and Livelihood Insecurity: Approximately 30–40% of Devpura's population migrates seasonally to the Surat district for soil-related labor. Additionally, a group of women travel to the Kutch district for coal crushing work. This outmigration, driven by economic necessity, has a direct impact on the upbringing and education of children, who are often left behind without proper care or guidance. Pastoralist families in the village face seasonal migration as well. With limited water availability during the harsh summer months, they are compelled to relocate for up to 8 months annually to sustain their livestock.

Severe Water Scarcity and Health Risks: One of the most critical issues Devpura has faced is the chronic shortage of potable water. Until recently, the village relied on two main sources: a seasonal village pond and an unreliable pipeline connection from the government water supply. During the dry summer months, when both sources failed, villagers—especially women—were forced to walk up to **8 kilometres to fetch drinking water from Navda village**. The village lacked a comprehensive internal water supply infrastructure. A single open sump at the village's tail end served as the main distribution point. This inadequate setup often led to chaos and conflict, particularly among women who would gather at the sump in large numbers. Water disputes frequently escalated, involving male members and even reaching legal forums, disrupting village harmony and affecting mental well-being.



During the dry summer months, when both sources failed, villagers—especially women—were forced to walk up to **8 kilometres to fetch drinking water from Navda village**. The village lacked a comprehensive internal water supply infrastructure. A single open sump at the village's tail end served as the main distribution point. This inadequate setup often led to chaos and conflict, particularly among women who would gather at the sump in large numbers. Water disputes frequently escalated, involving male members and even reaching legal forums, disrupting village harmony and affecting mental well-being.

Catalyst for Change: The Role of the Mahiti Trust: Persistent advocacy by the Mahiti Trust and the village's women's group proved to be the turning point. Through continuous representation to government authorities and mobilization of community voices, a breakthrough was achieved under the Swajal Dhara Scheme. The **government approved a direct pipeline connection from the Navda Water Distribution Point**. Subsequently, household tap connections were installed across Devpura, transforming daily life in the village. Access to clean drinking water at home eliminated the need for women to spend hours fetching water and put an end to water-related disputes. The social fabric of the village strengthened, and women could now engage in income-generating activities and focus on their children's education. In addition, the Mahiti Trust extended efforts to support the pastoralist community by ensuring water availability near their hamlet. This significantly



reduced the burden on women who were previously responsible for carrying water for both household and livestock needs.

A Resilient Community Moving Forward:

Devpura's journey reflects the strength and resilience of marginalized rural communities in the face of adversity. From forced displacement to a prolonged struggle for basic amenities, and finally, to securing household water connections, the transformation was made possible through collective action, women's leadership, and sustained civil society engagement. The success of the Jal Jeevan Mission in Devpura is more than a story of water access; it is a powerful narrative of empowerment, equity, and local development. The villagers, especially women, now express deep gratitude to the Information Trust and the government for turning what was once a painful struggle into a story of dignity, opportunity, and hope.



Sustaining the Water Supply: A Way Forward: Despite the new infrastructure, challenges persist. The village pond, an essential local water source, still requires restoration and deepening. Investing in the installation of a UV water purification system at the pond would further enhance the quality of stored water and serve as a critical backup during pipeline service disruptions. As groundwater remains saline and unsuitable for well development, this pond remains the village's only viable local drinking water source.