Tarp-lined lakes save rainwater in Bhal villages

Tarpaulin Prevents Incursion Of Saline Groundwater

Himanshu Kaushik | TNN

Pics: Himanshu Kaushik

Ahmedabad: Rainwater is as precious as life itself wherever groundwater is saline. People living in the Bhal region of Gujarat have devised a unique way to conserve this life-giving water. They have taken up the arduous task of lining their lakes with tarpaulin (tarp) to ensure that rainwater does not mix with the saline groundwater.

Officials of the Coastal Salinity Prevention Cell (CSPC), Ahmedabad, said that in Dholera, you get saline water at a depth of just eight feet. Every year ponds get filled up during rains but because of the seepage of the saline groundwater into the lakes, the water of these ponds cannot be used for drinking purposes. In fact, this water is not given even to the cattle to drink, said officials.

The CSPC, with the help of the farmers, took up a project under which the walls of a lake in Rajpur village as well as the lakebed were lined with tarpaulin. Even the lake's banks were covered with tarp. Further, sand was placed on the tarpaulin covering the lakebed and on its bank, the tarpaulin was covered with cement and bricks.

Gohar Bhima, resident of Rajpur village and member of

Pond has capacity of nearly three crore litres; (R) a villager stores water in a tank

the village water committee, said that earlier the village had a water crisis and had to depend on tankers for drinking water brought in from outside. Sometimes, the villagers had to go to places far away to get drinking water. However, the problem was solved after the village pond was lined with tarpaulin.

"We have taken a decision — and have also got the pond fenced for that purpose — that even cattle would not be allowed to drink water from the pond. One has to collect water from an outlet near the pond," said Bhima.

He further said that the pond has a capacity of nearly three crore litres of water which is enough to meet the drinking water needs of the village for the entire year.

Mansukh Solanki said there is no caste discrimination in allowing access to the lake water. Each resident is allowed to collect water according to his needs. The village also has a separate pond whose water is used for washing clothes and cleaning utensils.

Not just Rajpur village but

another hamlet, Jhanki, has got a pond lined with tarpaulin. Residents of the village said that these ponds are constructed in such a way that there is no encroachment around them. Devrajbhai Bariya, a resident of Jhanki, said that villagers make sure that flow of rainwater into the lake is never obstructed.

The villagers have also constructed a small well to ensure that villagers do not put their utensils directly into the tarpaulin-lined pond and thereby pollute its water.

Harvesting empowering villagers in region

Himanshu Kaushik | TNN

Ahmedabad: Not a raindrop that lands on a rooftop in Dholera is wasted — it is harvested and channeled into tanks. If these underground tanks are full, residents fill up other smaller tanks to take care of their domestic water needs for the year.

Savitaben Vasani of Khund village says "We have an underground water tank which stores 10,000 litres. This year, with the good rains, the tanks were filled early and so we fill up big barrels, which are normally used for diesel storage. She says the harvested water is enough for her day-to-day needs for drinking and other domestic use.

Karni Sartanbhai, also a resident of Khund says, "Our village has Narmada water supply but this is not adequate and irregular. Villagers use these under-

EVERY DROP IS PRECIOUS

ground water tanks to meet their drinking water needs." She said the water is filtered using nets and water from rooftops is channeled to the tank using pipes. We allow the first five minutes of water to flow away so the roof gets washed and the dirt doesn't enter the tank.

Ramaji Chauhan, a resident of Valindra, says, "Water in the tank is allowed to settle for three or four days and after the rainy season the tank is kept closed. The hand pump is on the tank means we don't need to put a vessel in to draw water." He said that they earlier had to depend heavily on water tankers or the women would have to go far away to fetch water. "These tanks have solved our drinking water problems."

Divyang Vaghela of Coastal Salinity Prevention Cell says, "We take up water conservation programmes in the area to make locals self-sufficient in their drinking water needs. CSPC supports all sections of society but we focus more on the economically backward and poor so that they don't have to depend on others. It is precisely this class which would have to walk far to get water as they don't have money to get tankers."