

ANNUAL REPORT PAANI FOUNDATION'S ACTIVITIES IN 2016

Background:

Paani Foundation is a not-for-profit organization which has been the brainchild of Aamir Khan and Kiran Rao. The organization was registered in early 2016 in order to work towards creating a drought-free Maharashtra. The idea originated from the television show Satyameva Jayate which was being anchored by Aamir Khan, addressing various social issues. One of the crucial issues that strongly came up was the water scarcity in Maharashtra which was mainly due to the topographical pattern of large areas in existence which are drought prone and face serious lack of rain every year.

India is classified globally as a water-adequate nation. It has neither abundance nor scarcity. It has enough for its needs. Yet, increasingly, more and more people do not have water to drink, more and more farmers face drought and starvation, and more and more industries shut down or cannot grow because of a shortage of water.

The reason for the Water Crisis:

The crisis is largely man-made and has four key causes:

- 1. Pollution:** We have polluted our lakes and rivers.
- 2. Over-Exploitation:** We have recklessly pumped out ground water without bothering to recharge the groundwater table resulting in a catastrophic fall in its level.
- 3. Irrational Water Management:** Can be described well with the example of highly water-intensive sugarcane cultivation in drought-prone areas.
- 4. Climate Change:** Rainfall is getting compressed in both space and time. The number of rain days is decreasing. Rainfall is concentrated in small areas with vast land masses subject to drought.

The Solution:

The heart of the solution is to locally harvest rain water by reducing run-off and losses due to evaporation by recharging the ground water table. In other words, the solution is watershed management.

This solution is inexpensive and has been used with great success but only by a few hundred villages in different parts of India. The challenge is to take the solution to scale to ensure that every single village, town and city become aware of the techniques of harvesting rain water. The solution obviously also requires a rapid stop to water pollution and irrational use of water.

Activities of the Foundation:

The foundation has undertaken to work only in Maharashtra.

The Government of Maharashtra had launched the ambitious Jalyukt Shivar Abhiyaan to work on watershed management at the village level. Several NGOs and corporates have adopted villages and are constructing facilities for local water conservation. While all of these activities are extremely important, Paani Foundation is approaching the challenge from a diametrically different direction.

Paani Foundation believes that it is the people themselves, who have the greatest power and capacity to solve the problem of water. If people are convinced and motivated, they will find the land, money, the know-how, labour and everything else that is required to conserve water. This approach offers the real possibility of a mammoth and rapid scale-up of the effort to solve the water crisis.

Paani Foundation believes that the solution to our water crisis lies in decentralized watershed management and rainwater harvesting. We aim to motivate, train and empower people for this purpose.

Our immediate mission is to make Maharashtra drought-free and we believe this can only be achieved when millions of people from different walks of life join this movement.



The Foundation is working on three major fronts:

- 1. Motivation:** People must be convinced that localised rainwater harvesting and watershed management is the way to ensure water security. All walks of Society, in rural

and urban areas, citizens of every walk of life – adults and children – will have to be part of the movement. Every person must be convinced that he or she has a role to play in this and that this role can be played easily and joyfully. The Foundation aims to use every form of mass media and digital media to motivate people by entertaining them, educating them and emotionally drawing them into this movement.

2. Training: The Foundation is working towards training five persons per village in 30,000 drought-prone villages in Maharashtra to work on watershed management. This will entail training nearly 1.5 lakh people totally. This training will have two key components. The first is the technical aspects of watershed management and the second is the leadership challenge which, at heart, is the challenge of getting people together and united for this task.

3. A Platform for Resources: The Foundation aims to create a digital platform that will enable people to:

- Access technical information from peers and from experts.
- Access funds through crowdsourcing.
- Access help from the government.
- Access mentors and volunteers.



In a nutshell, the Foundation's focus is to motivate, train and empower people to solve their water crisis through their own efforts.

Pilot Project:

It was decided that a Pilot project will be undertaken at the beginning to assess the success of the watershed management methods. It was decided to train the villagers on the

methods and then conduct a competition amongst the villages to determine the best performer.

The Satyamev Jayate Water Cup was announced in February 2016 by the honourable Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Shri Devendra Fadnavis, and Aamir Khan at a press conference held at Mumbai. The three districts chosen for this pilot run were Satara, Amravati and Beed with one taluka in each of these districts. Villages from each taluka were encouraged to submit their applications to take part in the competition. The applications had to be approved by the gram sabah so that all the people of a village were involved in the decision. An overwhelming response was received in the three regions.

Satara - Koregaon - 54 villages
Amravati - Warud - 63 villages
Beed - Ambajogai - 45 villages

Each village had sent 5 participants for training. There was a good participation from women.



As a part of the training process, a manual for the trainers and motivational videos were developed. Training centres were selected in a village Hivre in Satara, village Nalaudaywadi in Satara and Hivre Bazar in Ahmednagar. These villages had done watershed work and were green, water sufficient with 3 crops a year. Preparations were

made to host the villagers coming there for training. The people of these villages opened up their homes to accommodate everybody

A live model, one for each training center, was constructed for the participants to learn the process of conservation of what happens to rain water when it touches the ground, how it percolates into the aquifers, how structures help to raise the water table etc etc. A phrase was coined which said - **let us make running water walk, walking water stand and standing water percolate.**

Watershed Management Trust (WOTR) was appointed as knowledge Partners for Technical training and social trainers were selected from SPARSH after a rigorous 4 day residential workshop.

The first batch of training began in March 2016. The training consisted of observing structures and how they work, playing fun games that actually brought about a self-realization which was the best way to learn.



By April 165 people were trained from Warud, 173 people from Ambajogai and 217 people from Koregaon. They went back to their villages and started working in full force to make their water plans and budgets. Shramdaan happened with full gusto. Celebrities from Marathi and Hindi entertainment industry went to Warud and Koregaon to do shramdaan and be with the villagers. ABP Mazha, a Marathi news channel, did a weekly show on

