



PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION FOR PIPED WATER SUPPLY

A STORY FROM BARBATA VILLAGE IN BIHAR, INDIA

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Watershed
empowering citizens

ABBREVIATIONS

GP	GRAM PANCHAYAT
CSO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATION
WASH	WATER SANITATION AND HYGIENE
NGO	NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION
PRA	PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL
WIMC	WARD IMPLEMENTATION MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
SHG	SELF HELP GROUPS
VWSC	VILLAGE WATER AND SANITATION COMMITTEE
MDWS	MINISTRY OF DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION
VDC	VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE



PROJECT CONTEXT

Heading the list of BIMARU¹ States in India, Bihar has remained India’s poorest State between 1998 – 99 and 2015 – 16. Within the layers of poverty, the Dalit and Mahadalit² families remain the most deprived and vulnerable communities in the State. Few such communities benefit from the egalitarian development schemes of the government, as they are neither informed nor have capacities to access these programmes. With one of its key objectives of ‘social inclusion’, the Watershed programme in India selected 10 villages in Samastipur, one of the districts with the highest concentration of Dalits and Mahadalits in Bihar. Since 2016, Nidan, Watershed India’s landscape partner NGO, has been building capacities of the most deprived communities and CSOs in the region to advocate for their rights for better and holistic WASH services.

The Watershed project is a five-year strategic initiative of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS) that aims to build the capacities of local CSOs for using evidence-based advocacy, to influence government departments, for better access and management of sustainable WASH and WRM services. In India, the programme is being implemented in the States of Odisha and Bihar, in partnership with two local NGOs (Gram Uthan in Odisha and Nidan in Bihar) and coordinated by three Dutch organizations - IRC, Wetlands International (South Asia) and Akvo Foundation (South Asia). Barbatta, one of the landscape villages of the programme in Sarairanjan Block in Samastipur District of Bihar State, is located about 11km south of District headquarters in Samastipur and 76 km from State capital, Patna. Known to be one of the most economically vulnerable regions of the country, the two villages constituting the Barbatta Gram Panchayat³, are distinctive in their high proportion of the socially disadvantaged population.

In 2016, the Government of Bihar declared ‘Providing safe, piped water supply, to every household in the next four years’, as one of its seven policy resolutions (Saath Nischay)⁴ for development. In 2017, the ‘Har ghar nal ka jal’⁵ programme was introduced as an endeavor to provide clean drinking water in the homes of approximately 2 crore (20 million) households, through concerted co-operation of communities and their elected representatives, without any discrimination. The scheme strives to end dependence on ground (i.e. Hand-pumps) and other sources of drinking water such as ponds, unprotected dug wells, etc. and also ensure water quality as per national standards. This case study documents how the capacity building efforts of the Watershed India team has resulted in local Dalit and Mahadalit communities successfully advocating for and accessing piped water supply

¹ [BIMARU States in India](#) - A list of states in India with high poverty rates: Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh.

² [Dalit and Mahadalit communities](#) - Socially disadvantaged groups in Bihar, India.

³ [Barbatta Gram Panchayat](#) - A local self-government body in Bihar, India.

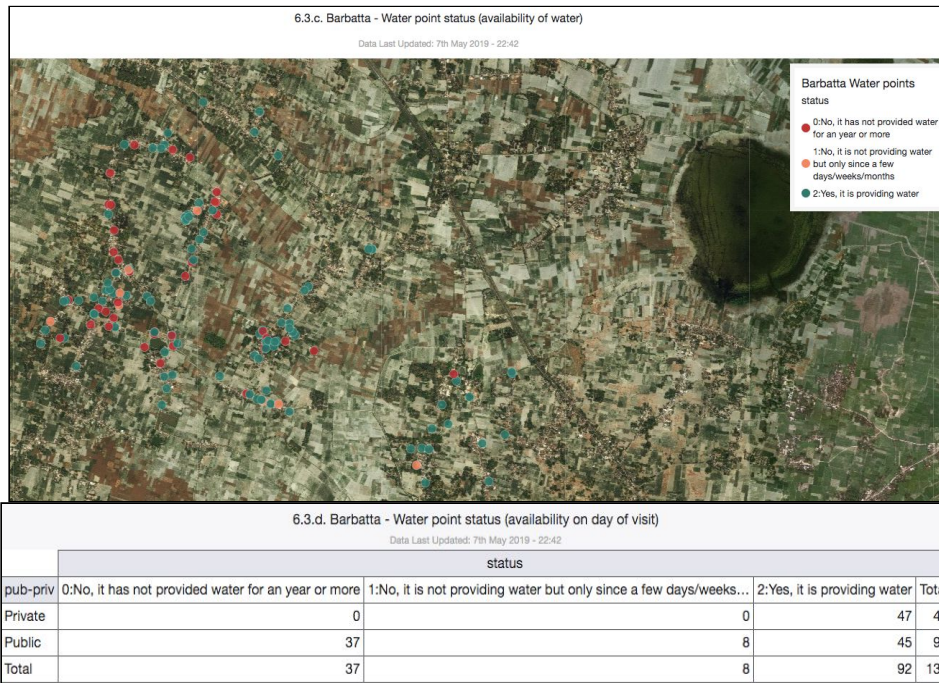
⁴ [Saath Nischay](#) - A government policy resolution in Bihar, India.

⁵ [Har ghar nal ka jal](#) - A government program in Bihar, India.

for their own villages. It also demonstrates how community groups, even from the most deprived backgrounds, once organized, can take ownership of their village infrastructure and successfully manage and sustain investments for WASH services.

BACKGROUND

In 2017, when the Watershed programme began operations in Barbatta Gram Panchayat (GP), only 2%⁶ of its households reported to be accessing piped water supply. The villages are dotted with hand pumps and a few standposts⁷, which are the main source of drinking water for 96% of the families. Bulk (65%) of these water sources are privately owned and reported to be discharging water. However, close to half of the public water points that the marginalized households depend on, were found to be defunct or providing water only intermittently.



Above and Below: The visualisation shows water point status (availability of water) on the day of the visit for baseline data collection, 2017

Link: <https://watershedsouthasia.akvolumen.org/s/8tDFnFJxD9U> and <https://watershedsouthasia.akvolumen.org/s/yHlhWZbZusw>

⁶ <https://watershedsouthasia.akvolumen.org/s/8tDFnFJxD9U>
⁷ <https://watershedsouthasia.akvolumen.org/s/yHlhWZbZusw>

active role in motivating the WIMC members and the Mukhia¹² to come together to locate and contribute a suitable space for sinking the borewell in the village.



Above: Nidaan staff in an interaction with Bikram ji, social worker

The responsibility of executing the water supply scheme rests on the local government and the WIMC with technical support being provided by the PHED¹³ and coordinated by the Block administration. Following the scheme guidelines that were shared by the Watershed (Nidan) team Bikram ji brought the WIMC members together to decide on an execution plan. The WIMC located a contractor for the job and approached the JE (Joint Engineer) at the Block to review the technical and financial estimates that were prepared. A total of 153 households were to be provided three tap connections inside their homes (kitchen, toilet and courtyard) with an hour of water supply, three times a day. The allocated budget with WIMC would range between INR 13 to 17 Lakhs.

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INCENTIVISING DRINKING WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION SCHEMES

As observed in the baseline data in 2017, only 26% of the families in Barbatta GP have toilets at home. The coverage in the more vulnerable Wards like No.7 is even less. Many of the families had limited /no space and resources to install a toilet. The piped water supply scheme had a provision under which connection will be provided in 3 locations including toilet. As a result of this, gap in toilet construction was also seen to be addressed in case of some households. The Ward members were advised to meet the Block Development Officer (BDO) and discuss the possibility of linking the households with the subsidy scheme for toilet construction (SBM)¹⁴ and installation of community toilets for those without land.

By the early 2018, all households in Ward no. 7 were connected with piped water. A monthly fee of INR 30/- was being paid by each family. However, it was soon realised that the tariff collected was not enough to pay the electricity bills to run the pump. Some of the villagers were also using the water for vegetable cultivation. It was time for the WIMC to intervene. A series of meetings were organised by the WIMC and the fee was revised to INR 50/- for each family. The fee hike would indeed be a stress on the poor families but the WIMC members along with Bikram ji were able to convince them. As per the BDO's advice a separate bank account was opened by the WIMC where all the tariff would be collected and tracked. Families misusing the water for agricultural purposes were warned that their connections would be cut if they continued.

CONCLUSION

Ward No. 7 of Barbatta village has become a model for spreading the scheme to other villages. Work has already begun in Wards 1, 2, 3, 10 and 13 where the monthly tariff of INR 50/- has been agreed upon. With growing confidence and familiarity with the government departments, the WIMC members have begun pursuing resources for other development work in their constituencies. Drainage schemes under the 'Nali Gali' programme are also underway in Ward No. 7.

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