
Bringing Springs to Life



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WATERAID INDIA

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Serajhar: Case Study

Prologue:

Nestled amongst the Satpura hills lies Serajhar, a village under Khamera Gram Panchayat, Bajad block in Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh. Located 70 kms from district headquarters, this tiny little village is home to the members of Baiga tribe – a vulnerable tribal group. Following a simple lifestyle, Baigas have been a self-provisioning, self-determining and nearly self-sufficient community residing in the resource rich highland forest regions in small hamlets for generations. The dense forest, its flora and fauna and water are the main sources of sustenance for this community. Rice and millets form their staple diet and they supplement it with seeds, grains, roots, leaves and fruits of numerous wild plants, which abound in the forest.

Baigas are a community who are historically known to settle in areas with flowing surface water nearby. Serajhar, in ancient times was also known as *Sheetalpaani* – because it has a perennial spring flowing at the foothills of surrounding hills. Village habitations are situated around 1.5 kms from this spring.

Basic Information:

Total Households: 86

Predominant Community: Baiga tribe and few members from Gond tribe

Water Source:

- 1. Spring 1 (catering to 55 HHs) – towards NW**
- 2. Spring 2 (catering to 31 HHs) – towards E**
- 3. 3 Handpumps (runs dry in summers)**



Problem:

As evident, the residents of the village were primarily dependent on 2 springs flowing at the foothills of the hills nearby for meeting their daily drinking water needs. Both these springs are located at a distance of around 1.5 kms from the village habitations and women and young girls often had to undertake multiple arduous journeys to and fro multiple times a day to meet the domestic needs. These trips were often risky as the roads are slippery and many a times women and girls would be injured in the process.

While 3 handpumps have been installed by the Public Health Engineering Department, the Baigas prefer springs as their preferred source of drinking water, because they feel it tastes better as compared to water from deep aquifers and also due to their traditional belief. Moreover, these handpumps would run dry during the summers. Also, the approach of protecting and conserving springs and their catchment as a preferred source of drinking water did not find many takers within the government. Hence, despite the risks associated - the community with no sustainable alternative at hand continued with fetching water from these springs.

Importance of safe drinking water and water quality was also a far cry as for the community – access to water at whatever risks associated was the only priority.

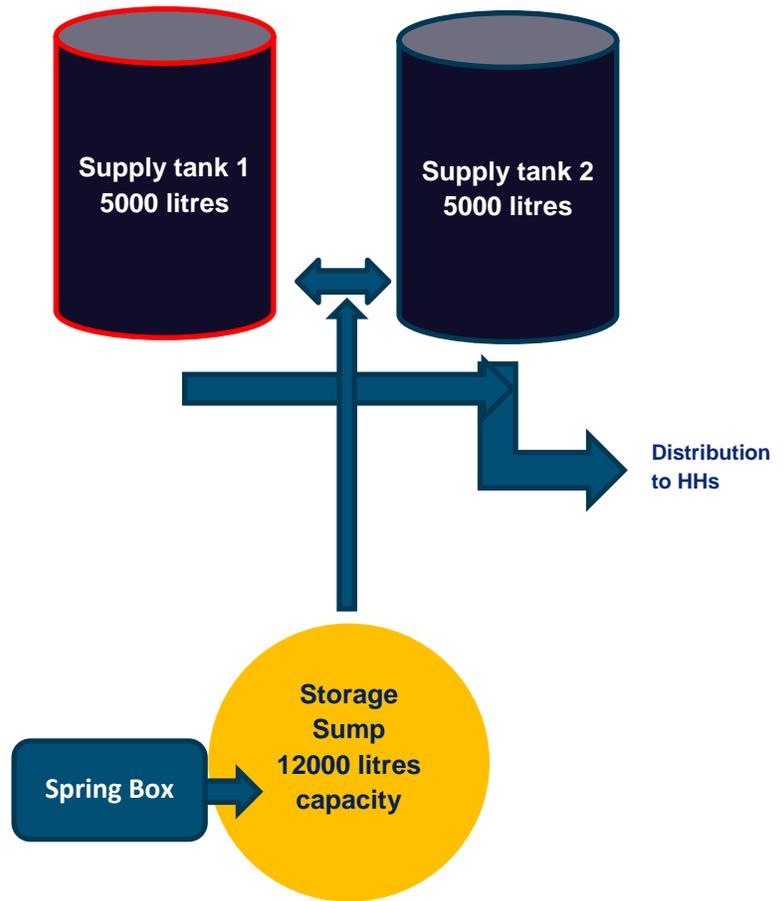
Our Intervention – The Process:

In a unique intervention by WaterAid, our team of experts strategized a way to ensure household supply of spring water to ensure access to safe drinking water in a sustainable manner to the community.

Extensive community interactions were undertaken to engage with the community and to explain and convince the members with firm traditional belief system as to how water from the spring can be made available at their doorstep with a little technical support.

A Village Water and Sanitation Committee (VWSC) was formed within the village with 50% representation of women in it. PRAs and social mapping of the village was done together with active members of the community (predominantly youth and women) and members of VWSC. Concepts and importance of safe drinking water and water quality testing was introduced to the members and water quality testing for 2 sources in the village (spring 1 and 2) were done.

Based on the results of water quality testing – through both FTK and Lab tests at Samnapur laboratory - spring 1 was selected to be final source through which households would be connected to through pipe water supply scheme.



Water from the source through gravity, was transported to collected in an underground sump with capacity of 12000 litres. From this sump water was raised to 2 storage tanks (500 litre capacity each) for onward distribution to the households. Initially there was a challenge faced with regards to the means by which water would be pumped against gravity to the storage tanks. This issue was resolved when the panchayat took upon itself to meet the expenses of using an electric pump to raise water to the storage tanks.

Of the total expenditure's community contributions amounting to around 1 lakh was leveraged in either cash or labor for the construction activities.

Impact:

1. Doorstep access to safe drinking water to the households in the village.
2. Routine water quality tests are being coordinated by members of the VWSC constituted in the village
3. VWSC members have developed a structured operation and maintenance plan for routine O&M of the system.



Construction of Sump



Storage Tanks



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