

Clean Water, Brighter Futures: Supporting Families with Integrated WASH Access in District Tharparkar

Final Report



For the last four years, droughts in District Tharparkar, Pakistan, have cost lives, brought illness and disease to its people, and triggered numerous hardships for this already impoverished community. Those who have survived this ongoing crisis face severe malnutrition (especially children), devastation of agriculture, death of small animals vital for livelihoods, and the spread of waterborne diseases. The scarcity of clean water sources has forced many of its residents, mostly women and girls, to travel long distances to fetch clean water, at great personal risk.

One of these women is Malookan, who lives in the village of Juryo Beel. She described to us her experience collecting water before this project:

"I used to collect water from a dug well 5 kilometers from my home. The well was really far and I was scared of snakes and scorpions biting me along the way. The water I was collecting was filled with bugs and dust. It was dirty but my family and I had to drink it, even though it made us sick."

Unfortunately, the predicament Malookan faced is common in this region, and four droughts since 2012 have exacerbated already dire economic and health situations.

The aforementioned scenario made Juryo Beel an ideal village to target for IDRF's *Clean Water, Brighter Futures* WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) project in District Tharparkar. A year after starting this project, Juryo Beel now has 2 functioning hand pumps that produce clean water to meet the average resident's daily needs. In addition, the village now has a latrine for private use.

Project Objective

This expansive, integrated water access strategy addressed a multitude of barriers to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene access, by installing sustainable facilities and promoting creative public health messaging in over 30 villages of Tehsils Diplo and Islamkot, Union Council (UC) Jhirmario, Manjathi and Dhabro in District Tharparkar. The project started on September 1, 2015 and ran for 12 months, and exceeded its original objectives. The inspirational nature of the project gained significant attention, and within the lifetime of this project we were able to serve a few more villages as a result.



Project Accomplishments

This project saw numerous accomplishments and exciting developments occur in District Tharparkar. Some of the more notable ones are as follows:

- **Installation** of 69 deep hand pumps and 140 shallow hand pumps in 34 villages. These hand pumps are serving 21,206 people.
- **Construction** of 80 latrines in 32 villages. These have improved sanitation conditions for 19,386 people.
- **Reduction** in the average distance travelled and amount of time spent collecting water: prior to this project, 92% of beneficiaries travelled upwards of 1.5km to access water, which took anywhere from 2 to 5 hours. Now, the majority of beneficiaries travel less than 100m, and water collection takes an average of 20-30 minutes.
- **Formed** 34 Village Development Organizations (VDOs), lead by both men and women, who will now ensure proper maintenance of the new WASH facilities and monitor hygiene standards.
- **Trained** 32 villages on the risks associated with open defecation and improper sanitation practices. Following the success of the project, the local government has now declared these 32



villages to be “Open Defecation Free” (ODF) zones and the Union Council Secretary has issued ODF certificates to the community. This is a significant advancement for community public health.

- **Organized** 33 theater shows in targeted villages to use entertaining strategies to increase awareness on hygiene and the importance of eliminating open defecation.
- **Improved** community public health and hygiene by holding 360 sessions on Personal, Household, and Community Health and Hygiene practices.
- **Broadcast** numerous messages promoting health and hygiene through local FM radio to compliment health messaging.
- **Provided** 160 skilled and unskilled workers dignified short-term employment through cash-for-work construction jobs installing latrines and hand pumps.
- **Distributed** shoes for children which prevented their feet from burning in summer.



Malookna, who now has a hand pump and latrine located in her village, perfectly captures the profound human impact of the project activities:

Now, it is very easy to get water from the new hand pump. Children take baths on daily basis. I can work while my husband is getting water from hand pump very easily. We are very happy.

Community Engagement

The value of community engagement in this project cannot be overstated. Before we selected the villages for inclusion in this first phase of the project, field staff held meetings to educate community leaders on the activities that would be involved at each step. This led to support amongst the targeted population that welcomed the project staff into the selected villages. All 34 villages formed both men’s and women’s VDO groups, which would also ensure that water pumps were well managed. Initially, during the start-up of the project, some community members opposed women’s involvement in the councils, and that had to be negotiated as women’s involvement was critical to the success of the project. Eventually, through ongoing, respectful dialogue and the establishment of trust in the community, the idea of a women-led VDO earned the support of the community in all 34 villages.

Community Changes

When working in the WASH sector we often aim to transform how people live their everyday lives. The availability of handpumps has brought significant change to the community. Many households would previously send 2 members to fetch larger quantities of water; typically the women or girls of the family. However, families now more frequently send a single member (often the father), which allows women and girls more time to care for children or engage in other household or economic activities. One particularly exciting outcome of the project has been the launch of more community gardens, now that water is more readily available and that women have more time.



Tejan is a woman who has started her own garden. Tejan is 35 years old with and lives in Village Jhirmiryo with her eleven month old son.

Up to now, she has shouldered the responsibility of fetching water every day, travelling in excess of 1.5km to do so, and carrying it in heavy containers back home. However, since the installation of the new hand pumps, water is more accessible than ever, and Tejan has started to grow tomatoes, watermelon, and chillies in a home garden. She says that now, her family has a consistent supply of fresh food, thanks to the availability of water.

Other changes can be harder to bring about. Although we installed 80 latrines throughout 32 villages, we recognize that many people in these villages have practiced open defecation for years and did not think using a latrine was necessary or desirable. Some resistance to the latrines was expected, which is why we planned the theatre shows, public health broadcasts, and informational materials to share knowledge about the hazards of open defecation and poor sanitation, and how it leads to illness and contaminated water. This took a great deal of time and effort, but the effectiveness of this strategy is evident, as one of the project's more notable accomplishments has been that all 32 villages have been declared by local government as an ODF zone.

Some achievements were not anticipated, but pleasantly surprising. For instance, in addition to the gardens, this project created opportunities for younger residents to care for elderly members of the community and those with special needs. When conducting the Impact Assessment for this project, 97% of caregivers stated that the hours previously spent searching for water made it difficult to provide care for vulnerable

members of the community such as the elderly and those with special needs; however, they no longer have any problems fulfilling their responsibilities.

Conclusion

The *Clean Water, Brighter Futures* project met its goals and objectives with the timelines and budgets we established from the outset. Many factors led to success, including:

- 1) Generous donor support which allowed us to assist a drought-impacted region using a comprehensive WASH strategy;
- 2) Experienced partners with expertise in water and sanitation, as well as a long-term presence in Tharparkar;
- 3) The capacity of IDRF's local team to direct, monitor, and evaluate all project activities and make changes when necessary; and
- 4) Active community involvement with beneficiaries from the outset.

In our initial needs assessment, IDRF identified 90 drought-affected villages that urgently required improved WASH services. Ultimately, due to available resources, we selected the 34 that mostly closely met our Priority Criteria (villages furthest from fresh water points, and villages with high populations of women-headed households, persons with disabilities, and minorities). However, we gained valuable information on all 90 villages, and we hope to serve these villages in future projects, having now served nearly 38% of total need in this region.

Sadly, challenges in Tharparkar remain immense. According to The Assessment Capacities Project, in 2016 more than 190 children died and 22,000 were hospitalised due to drought-related waterborne and viral diseases. A UNICEF report from June 2016 states that extreme water scarcity in Tharparkar and District Jamshoro reduced harvest by 34-53% and livestock by 48%. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations corroborates this, and says that cereal production shortfalls and death of livestock related to the drought have worsened food insecurity and acute malnutrition.

Together, we have made an impact for a large number of people, and we are thrilled by this success. We know that further engagement is vital, and that a comprehensive regional WASH strategy will make a lifesaving difference for so many people in District Tharparkar.

