

Water project revives rural community in India

Novartis is aiming for water neutrality in our own operations by 2030. In India, we are contributing to this goal through a project near Hyderabad with a nonprofit organization. By tackling both water scarcity and the deprivation it causes, the project has revived the community.

Photos: Bjoern Myhre, Novartis

Jan 31, 2024



A pond in Sollakpally that was restored as part of a project managed jointly by Novartis, whose Indian headquarters is nearby, and the National Agro Foundation (NAF), a nonprofit organization dedicated to water sustainability and prosperous rural communities in India. Launched in 2021, the project is helping communities in Sollakpally and Turkpally, in Telangana state, to store and manage water sustainably for agriculture, drinking and sanitation. It has increased water supply by building ponds, dams and tanks.

Year after year the ground water level is rising,” said D. Kumarvelu, a senior director at NAF. “The water is flowing well and the people are enjoying it a lot. They are now using it to get two crops [per year]. Before, it was difficult for farmers to get a second crop. They are getting more compared with traditional methods. So people are earning good money because of the water that we store here. It’s a real time of economic growth in the villages.



K. Balamani (right) and her husband Malesh in their rice field in Solakpally. Farming incomes have also benefited from training in sustainable farming techniques provided through the project.

Because of the construction of these dams, our pits have more water,” said K. Balamani. “They have also tested the soil for us and they showed us how to farm without adding chemicals. They have shown us how to do farming at a low cost.



K. Balamani (right) training young women in her sewing workshop. Novartis is funding training and loans for small businesses set up by women. Balamani borrowed money for a new sewing machine to expand her business as a seamstress.

I can make sarees and blouses and I can do more business now. I'm also teaching other young people to make clothes using machines. I'm earning extra income by teaching. I'm happy with this. And I also want to educate my children. I'm doing well by using the sewing machine. I want to educate them to grow better and have a good life by doing hard work.



Children washing their hands at their school in Imam Nagar. Drinking water and sanitation facilities have been installed at local schools as part of the project to improve access to safe and clean drinking water.

Before the water wasn't good," said D. Kumarvelu of NAF. "It wasn't filtered or boiled. Now, with the water filter, it is helping the children keep good health and they are not getting sick. The students are really happy.

Water

Health and water are closely interconnected. For Novartis, responsible water management means using water efficiently and safely throughout the lifecycle of our products, including in our supply chain, and avoiding potential risks related to pharmaceuticals reaching the natural environment. We aim to be a water steward wherever we operate, working to achieve water sustainability and helping ensure sufficient and safe water.

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List of links present in page

1. <https://prod1.novartis.com/stories/water-project-revives-rural-community-india>
2. <https://prod1.novartis.com/tags/category/discovery>
3. <https://prod1.novartis.com/esg/environmental-sustainability/water>