

Sujalam – Initiation to achieve water security

Rainwater harvesting is the accumulation and storage of rainwater for reuse on-site, rather than allowing it to run off. Rainwater can be collected from rivers or roofs, and in many places, the water collected is redirected to a deep pit (well, shaft, or borehole), a reservoir with percolation, or collected from dew or fog with nets or other tools. Its uses include water for gardens, livestock, irrigation, domestic use with proper treatment, indoor heating for houses, etc. The harvested water can also be used as drinking water, longer-term storage, and for other purposes such as groundwater recharge.

Rainwater harvesting is one of the simplest and oldest methods of self-supply of water for households usually financed by the user.

Kerala, a State known as 'Land of 44 Rivers' and with the entire western boundary made up of pristine shorelines, is currently facing a big issue of lack of water, not just any water, but potable water. Water scarcity is turning out to be a major cause for concern with Kerala being declared as a drought state in the year 2016. It is the worst drought to have hit the state in 115 years. From the year 1881 to 2000, there were 66 drought years in the state. But 2016 has been touted as the most severe.

The state with large number of perennial strings, streams, rivers and other water bodies and with an average 3000 mm rain fall yearly, the unique water resource problem in the Kerala is that per capita availability of water is lower than national average. This is a result of accelerated surface water runoff to sea, which leaves

little water for consumption and causes cycles of water abundance and water poverty.

Open wells form a critical part of domestic water supply in the state. Many of these wells run dry in summer. In order to augment the depleting groundwater resources, it is essential that the surplus monsoon runoff that flows into the sea is conserved and recharged to augment ground water resources. Rainfall is the major source of ground water recharge. Rainwater harvesting and artificial well recharge have now been accepted as cost effective methods for augmenting ground water resources and for reversing the declining trends of ground water levels.

Kudumbashree initiatives in Rain water harvesting:

‘Sujalam’ is a community based well recharge programme initiated by Kudumbashree which is a livelihood opportunity for Kudumbashree members. It is being initiated in two districts, Kannur and Kottayam and will be extended to all other districts.

In 11 blocks in the district of Kannur, 54 Kudumbashree CDSs participated in the project. Total 282 persons are trained in scientific well recharging in the district. 18 people in 3 CDSs have started working on well recharging and has completed 38 wells with a total income of Rs. 41429. A unit in one Panchayat has 5 to 6 persons and each person will get Rs.900 on an average per well. Total 60 Panchayats have allocated fund in the district at a rate of Rs.8000 per well. If the total cost exceeds the amount, the owner needs to bear the cost.

In Kottayam district, the program is started in Vazhoor Panchayat. In the 18 wards of the Panchayat, 28 Kudumbashree members are trained which includes 27 females and 1 male. 1860 wells are identified in the Panchayat in which 320 will be covered during the current financial year. 64 wells are already completed which earned a total income to Rs. 15936 to the Kudumbashree members.

Aiming towards Water Security:

Through convergence with local governing bodies and with the strength of community network, Kudumbashree has committed to the cause of water security. Rain water harvesting, the technological solution for sustainable water management, has been identified as a livelihood opportunity. Through technical guidance in developing rain water harvesting micro enterprises units, Kudumbashree is contributing in the national effort for conserve water resource for future.