

DAMS THAT SAVE LIVES



Mann Deshi
Foundation



A WATER CRISIS

Mann Taluka is one of the most drought prone areas in Maharashtra, receiving just 4-5 inches of rainfall each year. Home to a large farming community, the families in the area migrate as far as 300km during the dry season to find work, often ending up as labourers in Mumbai and other cities. Migration interrupts their children's education, and the lack of food during droughts result in people resorting to selling their livestock, losing their long-term sources of income and remaining trapped in a cycle of poverty. These compounding factors have resulted in rural Maharashtra having one of India's highest farmer suicide rates.



CATTLE CAMP

In 2012, Mann Taluka faced one of its worst ever droughts. This is when a farmer from the area approached Mann Deshi and asked for a loan to buy water and fodder for her cattle. She was willing to go into debt to make sure her animals didn't suffer. This is when Mann Deshi stepped in and organized a cattle camp. The camp provides shelter, fodder and water for over 14,000 buffaloes, cows and goats throughout the drought which lasted for about 1.5 years. Farmers brought their cattle from as far as 40km away and many of them started living on the camp site with their families. Mann Deshi provided, water, food and fodder for the farmers and their cattle throughout this period. However, we knew this was not a permanent solution.



A DURABLE SOLUTION

In an attempt to find a long term solution to the severe drought in Mann Taluka the Mann Deshi Foundation completed the construction of nine check dams over the past 5 years. The dams have transformed the lives of rural farmers in the region increasing crop yields and soil fertility, leading to a dramatic reduction in suicide rates and rural to urban migration. Following the success of the initial dams, the Mann Deshi Foundation hopes to build two new dams each year to improve the livelihoods of even more farmers and residents in Mann Taluka.



SOCIAL BENEFITS

GREATER VARIETY OF CROPS YEAR - ROUND

Prior to the construction of the dams, farmers in the area grew a small selection of less water intensive fruits and vegetables and collected just one yield per year. However, since the dams were built, farmers are able to grow pomegranates, lentils, corn and other more water intensive crops. The variety allows them to grow crops and reap yields thrice a year, thereby increasing their annual income. Crop rotation also improves soil fertility of farmlands, improving the quality of crop yields.



JOB CREATION

As farmer income increases, they are able to buy and cultivate larger portions of land. For this, they hire wage labourers from within the village thereby creating jobs for non-farmers in the community. This further reduces rural to urban migration among even the poorest of the poor.



MORE SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

Fewer migrant families means more students stay in school for longer. Before the dams a majority of children would go to school for 3-4 months a year and then migrate with their parents in search of work. Since the dams, children in the area stay in school for the full year. New schools have opened and old ones have expanded to accommodate an expanding student body.



SOCIAL BENEFITS

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

In addition to more crops, farmers can now tend to both a larger number and a greater variety of animals. As such, the number of buffalo and cows in the region have increased as more and more farmers can afford to tend to these larger animals. Large animals bring a higher income through the sale of milk, curd and are able to make farm work more efficient.



EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Before the dams, women in the area had to walk an average of 5km each morning to fetch water for their families. Since the installation of the dams many families in the village have been able to get water directly to their homes, and the longest walk to water is no more than 15 minutes. This gives women more free time to engage in productive economic activities and contribute to their household income.



SWIMMING AND BOATING

Before the dams no one in Mann Taluka knew how to swim or had been on a boat. Now that there is a large supply of water nearby, most residents have taken to swimming as a form of exercise. Residents use boats to get around during the rainy season and girls and boys can be seen playing together in the water before school each morning. These joys provide the residents of Mann Taluka an essential respite from the hard work of everyday life.



ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

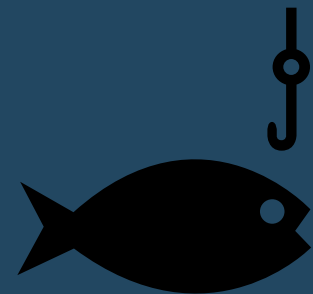
INCREASE IN BIODIVERSITY

The availability of water has increased the number of wild animals in the area. Since the dams, the population of wolves, hyaenas, foxes, monitor lizards and several species of snakes increased dramatically. The Jungle cat was introduced to the region and new species of water birds such as the yellow billed stork, grey hornbill, saddle billed storks, white kingfishers and black runner ducks have begun to frequent the area.



FISHERIES

The number and diversity of fish species in the area has increased dramatically. You can now find Catfish, Fresh Water Eel, Fresh Water Indian Salmon, Mango Fish and Fresh Water Shrimp in the local area. The increase is so large that currently around 30 families in Mann Taluka sustain their livelihoods entirely from fishing in the dams.



IMPROVEMENT IN SOIL QUALITY

The ability for farmers to rotate crops and regular irrigation of farmlands have resulted in softer more fertile soil, both on farmlands and in surrounding areas.



BETTER FARMING TECHNIQUES

Farmers in the area use micro drip irrigation techniques to water their crops while ensuring that there is enough water for the village to survive through the dry season. They are proud of their ability to use these advanced farming techniques and many are looking to expand their farms in the years to come.



TESTIMONIALS

"I have been farming in this area for most of my life and I can tell you that the dams have transformed this area for the better. Before we were hard pressed to find water, now our wells are overflowing with water all year long. All of this is thanks to Mann Deshi and we are ever thankful to the foundation for their work here."

- Vasant, Dnyanus Savant, Farmer



"My family and I used to migrate 300km away every year, for four months of the dry season to find work. But the dams change all that. We no longer move every year. We live here now. The newest dam that was completed 15 days ago will make our lives even better as water will be just 15 minutes away from my house."

- Kalpana Ramesh Bangar, Goat Header

"I can grow so many different types of crops now that we have an unlimited supply of water. Before the bandhara the government had to deliver water to us in a tanker every 6-8 days and even that was not sufficient. The dams have made us self sufficient as a community."

- Anil Maruti Savant, Farmer



"Before the dams, life here was very hard. It was even difficult to find a girl who would want to marry you and move here because no one wanted to walk 5km a day to fetch water every morning. The dams turned everything around. The suicide rates have dropped, farms are more prosperous and people are happier in general."

- Sainappa Lubal, Farmer