

Valmiki Colony Gets Water After a Long Wait



Valmiki Colony is a notified settlement located in Ward Number 51 of Moti Dungri Zone of Jaipur Municipal Corporation. There are 287 Households in this slum with the majority of the population belonging to Scheduled Castes and minority community.

The key occupations of the both men and women living in this settlement are health workers and sanitation workers of the Jaipur Municipal Corporation or are employed as domestic workers in nearby apartments and houses.

Access to safe and pure water as a key challenge:

During the Focus Group Discussion (FDG) with elderly, baseline survey and Community Management Committee, Single Window Forum members meetings in December 2019, January 2020, the community have brought into notice that the key source of water supply is ground water. There are two bore wells located in the settlement, from where the water reaches the huge black tanks located in the lanes. For domestic use, people need to fetch water from these tanks which are placed far from the houses. This is a huge risk and task for the elderly, persons with disabilities, and people living with chronic diseases. At the same time, the water quality is poor with nitrate and fluoride traces. The residents had been consuming this contaminated water for years as they were unaware of the quality resulting diseases and frequent illnesses. Only one or two lanes receive water from Bisalpur line but that water, too, gets contaminated due to the frequent leakages of the sewer lines.

In January 2020, the same issue has been brought to the notice of Mr. Satish Kumar Jain, Superintendent Engineer, South, Jaipur – 2 during the key informative interview session. He had said that he would discuss the issue with the Head of the Department for a solution where PHED can stop contamination of water, and also constructing water lines across the settlements so that Bisalpur water reaches every household.



As a follow up process, the Single Window Forum members on 27 January 2020, visited the PHED office and submitted a letter of request quoting the issues persisting in the settlement due to lack of proper water supply and contamination of water.

Government Response:

It took almost four months for PHED to respond and work on the issue and that too after several visits and pleas from the Community Management Committees and Single Window Forum members of Valmiki Colony. In mid-May, in the extreme summers when the community was faced with issues to access to water, the PHED started laying water lines which reaches to each lane of the settlement so that Bisalpur line water can be supplied and the issue of access to safe water to all can be solved. Water supply has already started in few lanes and the rest will be covered in a phased manner.

In August 2020, the Single Window Forum members, along with CMC members, visited the PHED office to thank them for their response and, at the same time, impress upon them to take up the remaining work.

In response to the request, the PHED in September 2020, approved the laying of metal pipe lines for water supply to avoid water contamination, and the work was also started on 16 September.

How it all Happened?

Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR) conducted a baseline survey of the slum cluster where shortage of pure drinking water emerged as the major issue. This was followed by another meeting with the residents to work out a solution for this problem.

Madhu Devi: I am a literate person but having lived in this basti for the past 30 years, I know we used to get water supply in all 6 lanes of the basti from Bisalpur line until eight years ago. But now for the past six years only first two lanes get the water supply because there is no water in the pipeline.

Yadram: When water supply stopped from the Bisalpur pipeline, the men from the basti met with the local corporator and the government officials who got four borewells dug. The borewells supply water to four lanes but we know this water is not good. However, there is nothing we can do about it. We need water for daily needs.

Issues with water:

- 1) Water is hard
- 2) It does not taste good
- 3) Milk goes sour while making tea
- 4) A white later collects on metal utensils if we store water in them
- 5) People complain of knee pain
- 6) People complain of skin diseases
- 7) Hair fall and early greying

Rakesh Nakwal: We have approached the Department several times with these issues but our pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

On January 8, 2020 another meeting was held in the basti where Beena Devi said women should have a greater role in the development of the basti following which a community development committee and single window forum was established and women trained on how to ensure their smooth functioning.

Members of the committee: Pappi Devi, Beena Devi, Kali Devi, Muni Devi, Sheela, Manju, Sunita, Raju Devi, Poonam, Prem Devi, Madhu Devi



Single Window Forum members: Beena Devi, Madhu Devi

Community Development Committee and Single Window Forum: The committee will oversee the facilities provided the government. In case of any issues such as choking of sewer lines or water shortage, the committee will ensure these are addressed, and if there is any facility that needs to reach the basti, it will be facilitated by the committee. The committee will hold meetings from time to time and all issues that come up during discussions will be taken up with the Department with the help of Single Window Forum. The follow up with the Department will be done by the Forum and committee informed about it.



Another basti level committee has also been set up comprising of all members of the community development committee and some senior/experienced members from the community who have knowledge of the basti and are capable to taking up the issues with the government.

The members of this committee are:

Rakesh Nakwal, Yadram, Madhu Devi, Pappi Devi, Premlata, Raju Devi, Rajesh, Beena Devi, Sunita

Prem Devi, Sunny Nakwal

Steps taken by the Committee:

- 1) Sunny Nakwal has made a list of 150 families who are using water from the borewells. The focus is on the vulnerable sections whose health has been impacted the most including elderly, pregnant women, persons with disabilities and adolescents.
- 2) An application was drafted with the help of CFAR and it has been decided to submit it to the PHE Department.
- 3) Members of the committee will follow it up with the Department
- 4) Another application will be submitted with the Department for laying of Bisalpur pipelines.
- 5) Two Committee members – Manju and Poonam—will be given the responsibility of telephonic follow-up with the Department.

6) Forum members will assist all other members.

Manju and Poonam were given the responsibility of telephonic follow-up as they knew people in the Department.

It was on the recommendation of CFAR that Single Window Forum members met the senior officers of the Department and it was after this that the report of water testing was obtained which clearly said that it had high levels of nitrate.



On February 12, another meeting of the basti was convened where everyone was informed about the water report, and it was unanimously decided that the Department would be asked to supply water through tankers that would be used only for drinking purposes while the borewell water would be used for other household activities.

The Department was approached and asked to supply water through tankers at this basti. The water tankers started coming from February 18. Though water tankers started coming everyday, it led to a huge rush of people coming to collect

water which became an issue in the wake of Coronavirus pandemic as it was difficult to ensure physical distancing. To overcome this, a water committee was constituted to ensure social distance when the water tanker arrived at the basti.

Members of the water committee: Sunny Nakwal, Pappi Devi, Madhu Devi, Sunita Devi, Lakhan Beniwal

On April 8, 2020, the water committee informed the Single Window Forum about the need for two additional water tankers as the available supply was not adequate to meet the needs of all the families. This was taken up with the Department and two additional tankers have started coming to the basti every day. This water is used for drinking while water from the borewell is used for other needs.

To ensure that there was equitable distribution water, the water committee members were given the responsibility of three lanes where the tankers supplied water.

However, there were challenges in even this with influential people of the basti using the tank water to fill their tanks, stopping the supply and not allowing water to pass through the lanes if water pipes passed through their lanes. However, the members did not give up.



The next major issue was how to ensure laying of Bisalpur pipelines because of restricted entry into government offices in the wake of Coronavirus infection. Hence, it was decided to follow up with the Department over telephone. This responsibility was given to Pappi Devi, Sunny Nakwal and Yadram who would call up the office by turns.

A reminder was also sent to the Department with help of CFAR during the lockdown. The work on laying of pipeline was resumed on June 1.



Manju Devi now says she is happy that she had contributed in the laying of pipeline. She said while she was encouraged as member of water committee, there were some who also ridiculed her saying that it was not meant for women. However, she did not give up.

Now she know the diameter of the pipeline, whether the bend is at the right degree. It was got checked technically and found that the bend was not at the right angle, and it was got corrected.

Sunita said she was appreciated for her work on keeping a vigil while the pipelines were being laid though some even ridiculed her.



Madhu Devi said there was another hurdle while the pipeline was being laid. At some places the diameter of the pipe was 8 inches, at other places it was only 6 inches. We had to get the work stopped until this issue was resolved. The Junior Engineer was called who said they did not decide on the size of the pipe and since the lane was narrow, the pipes had to be of different size. Hence, the work was resumed.

Yadram and Raju Devi said the work of laying pipeline on the main road was completed on April 27 but no pipes were laid inside the lanes. When the issue was taken up with the Department, we were told the old pipes would be used to supply water in the lanes and if there was any issue, these would also be replaced.

From July 8, the piped water supply started in the entire basti and water tanks stopped coming from July 10. The entire basti of 150 households is very happy now.

