

► TEAM H T PAREKH FOUNDATION ■ POOJA KAMATH

Shramdaan 2019

HDFC's Water Warriors join the fight against drought

India is facing the worst water crisis in its history. According to the Composite Water Management Index (CWMI) report released by the Niti Aayog in 2018, 21 major cities (Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad and others) are racing to reach zero groundwater levels by 2020, affecting access for 100 million people.

Considering the vital role water plays on the planet, it finds itself at an important cross-section of environment, society & economy. This calls for an all-rounded approach in tackling the issue - with focus on water conservation, source sustainability, storage, treatment and reuse.

Recognising the importance and urgency of the situation, H T Parekh Foundation through its initiatives has been taking up projects corresponding to different aspects of addressing this crisis.

Since it was set up in 2016, Aamir Khan and Kiran Rao's Paani Foundation (Paani) has been working on making Maharashtra water sufficient by harnessing the power of collective action.

The organisation seeks to empower rural communities using an experiential training programme that equips villagers with both technical know-how as well as leadership skills to tackle the issue of drought in their villages through watershed management. The training is followed by a 45 day inter-village competition called 'Satyamev Jayate Water Cup' (Water Cup) which was devised as a way to encourage villagers to apply their training.

Villagers build water conservation structures through Shramdaan (voluntary labour), raise money for machine work, test and treat soil, budget water usage, implement water saving technologies during the course of the competition. Winning villages are given cash prizes, which can be used for any development activity in the village in future. HDFC through the H T Parekh Foundation (Foundation) has been a key supporter of Paani's work.

Over its last three Water Cups, the work of Paani has grown and multiplied:

	Water Cup 2016	Water Cup 2017	Water Cup 2018
Talukas Covered	3	30	75
Number of Participating Villages	116	1321	2951
Number of People Trained	850	6,000	20,000
Water Storage Capacity Created (Cr Litres)	1,368	8,261	22,269
HDFC Employees Participation in Shramdaan	-	116	340

In 2019, Paani reached out to 76 Talukas & trained representatives from over 4,000 villages, and the results of the competition are expected to be declared in August. As city dwellers, we are often insulated from the gravity of the water scarcity that affects villages. To give city dwellers an insight into this cause, Paani organises a 'Maha Shramdaan' every year on May 01, which also corresponds to Maharashtra Day. Volunteers from across the state, work alongside villagers in allocated villages to create water structures. During the course of the day, volunteers interact with villagers and also understand that even as individuals they can make a contribution towards a change.





Representatives from villages being trained on watershed management

In addition to the financial support provided to Paani for the last three years, HDFC employees have been active participants in this flagship volunteering activity of Paani. A day away from the city's hustle, a sneak peek into rural life and the chance to contribute to a worthy cause were some of the motivating factors. We have been the largest corporate group of volunteers to participate for two years in a row.

On May 1, 2019, over 440 employees from HDFC Limited, Sales, Life, Ergo and AMC volunteered for Shramdaan in the following villages:

- Garade (Pune District)
- Dhondbar (Nashik District)
- Kharsoli (Nagpur District)
- Khandi Pimpalgaon (Aurangabad District)

At each of the locations, employees did different kinds of work like digging reservoirs, creating farm ponds, building bunds, check dams and trenches. In a complete departure from a regular day at office, employees worked tirelessly in the sweltering heat for over 4 hours as per the instructions of the villagers and Paani trainers.

This is just a beginning of a long journey towards creating water security for the state of Maharashtra. We hope that with greater awareness of the critical need to address water scarcity in the coming years, each of us will make a conscious effort to contribute towards making a difference. 🏠

Powering Research at the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras

Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IITM) is amongst the foremost institutes of national importance for higher technological education, basic and applied research in India. IITM has been at the forefront of technology development that addresses India's challenges in housing, water, energy, healthcare and education. As these strengths get recognised, large research centres focused on these areas are being created.



Mr. Deepak Parekh, Chairman, HDFC Limited in the Centre after inauguration along with IITM Director, Prof Bhaskar Ramamurthi and Ms Ziaa Lalkaka, Head CSR, H T Parekh Foundation

The first of such centres was envisaged to be the International Centre for Clean Water (ICCW), 2 years ago and we were approached by IITM to support the endeavour. ICCW proposes to conduct research on various technologies for production of sustainable clean water, and to take many of the research findings to market through an integrated incubation/ entrepreneurship ecosystem. The output from the Centre is expected to address prevailing issues in providing clean drinking water to society.

The research centre would be focussing on the use of nanotechnology to create affordable technologies for fluoride removal from water and monitoring water quality. The upcoming mechanisms in high efficiency atmospheric humidity capture devices will also be worked upon.

An important aspect of the ICCW is the 'Water Incubation Hub' to be co-created along with the development of the Centre, which will support 10 innovations each year from across India. Successful technologies from the Centre as well as the Incubation Hub will be field tested and then applied for commercial use, if proven successful.

ICCW has established ties with institutions in USA, Japan, Korea, Singapore, China, UK, Germany, South Africa, Botswana, etc so that a global alliance in the area is possible. The Centre has strong contact with industries across the country to take the technologies forward. Links with governmental and non-governmental agencies will make it possible to translate technologies to the people.

The first phase of the state-of-the-art research laboratory was inaugurated on April 22, 2019 by Mr Deepak Parekh, Chairman - HDFC Limited. Mr Parekh expressed his satisfaction at the Centre's progress and advised the team to work towards providing drinking water on tap for all 24x7. This has been taken as the vision for the Centre. 🏠