

## **RECHARGING THE DANG**

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The Flow Partnership is starting an ambitious project to build approximately 110 water bodies in an extremely ecologically degraded area in and near the ravines in Rajasthan, India. These ravines spread across more than 300 sq km, much of which is unchartered, dangerous territory, in the grip of extreme erosion (which can be halted).



***This project is a new and innovative approach to finding solutions to multiple global challenges which occur often due to lack of water- especially reversing migration and halting criminal activities in favour of farming.***

The **Recharging the Dang** project will cover approximately 35 sq kms of this region, in the 32 villages and their numerous hamlets of the Sarmathara Wadi Basedi, Tehsil of Dholpur, Eastern District of Rajasthan, which is called the entire Dang area. 75% people there have agricultural land which is unfarmed due to lack of water. Even today there is no electricity in these villages.



Lack of water in the region over successive years has forced the local male population (and in some cases, the women as well) to give up farming and either migrate in search of menial labour jobs or become small time robbers and bandits. Our work with local NGO TBS has many stories of the impact of returning the water to that region and **thereby returning the *bandits* back to becoming farmers again.**

This area is deprived of even basic facilities for the people living there. Amongst other realities, bringing back the water will bring back the following :

- Providing adequate rainwater harvesting and water in the non-seasonal months for year-round use.
- It will stop the land from getting lost to the ravines and remain productive farm land (please see film for an illustration of this).
- Farmers will start farming again instead of engaging in crime to feed their families
- Schools will become functional again providing education in the villages
- Women can look forward to gaining self-employment opportunities (dairies, animal husbandry, sewing etc)
- Efficient water use techniques will be learnt and farmers will be able to access improved seeds for higher yields leading to self-sufficiency in food and nutrition
- A social fabric will get re-woven with many more marriages and full, prosperous communities living in the area again

Learning from our experience of periodic work in that region over the last few years, **we know this project will prove conclusively, the impact of lack of water on out-migration, social unrest, crime and ecological degradation and the mitigation of these same problems that happens with the return of the water.**

## **IMPACT**

A short film of the impact of this work on the other side of the same ravines in the state of Madhya Pradesh (filmed by Down to Earth):

**Reclaiming the Badlands:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IloaSddrz4Q>

## **The project will work in the following phases:**

**Phase 1:** Social, ecological and hydrological survey of a region of approximately 35 sq kms in the area to assess the ground water situation, water availability, requirement and capacity of water holding structures, location, dimensions of proposed water bodies, estimated costs and the population of the region that will return to farming once the water comes back.

A fully substantiated project report for building the required number of water bodies in the region will be an outcome of this phase. The data and detailed information gathered at this stage will inform Phase 2 **(6 Months)**

**Phase 2:** Construction of the identified water bodies needed in that region. Approx 110- exact number to be determined after Phase 1 **(5 Years)**

**Phase 3:** Monitoring and Evaluation **(6 years/ starting simultaneously from year 2)**

## **BACKGROUND**

### **The Ravines of Chambal**

Technically, ravines are formed when the upper layer of vegetative cover is not strong enough and the roots of trees are unable to hold and bind the soil together. Constant rainfall erodes the soil and washes away the crust of the earth.

Consequently, the water flow turns into drains, creating cracks.

In time, these cracks erode further and become large ravines. The Ravines or 'beehads' of Chambal derive their name from the Chambal River, and they have been a safe haven for gangs of dacoits for decades to live and operate.



In the **Sarmuthara Wadi Basedi, Tehsil of Dholpur**, Eastern District of Rajasthan, 75% people there have agricultural land which is not yet encroached by the ravines but lies unfarmed due to lack of water. There are no factories or businesses and most of the people there are unemployed. Some employment is available for young men to do illegal mining work with rogue contractors, who give them very low wages.

Along with this work comes the risk of getting silicosis, **a long-term lung disease caused by inhaling large amounts of crystalline silica dust**, due to which they die early and in pain at the young ages of 35 to 40. Women with young children often become widows by the age of 40.

### **Water**

From the months of July to December, a small amount of water is found in nearby wells and ponds. After this source dries up, the villagers have to fetch the water from a distance, going alone through the forests to the far away hills in search of a pond or a spring. There is a pipeline to supply drinking water from the Chambal river, but water flows in it for barely a couple of months. Additionally, if somewhere along the way this water pipeline breaks, then of course there is no water even in those months and to get the pipeline repaired is a very difficult task and not to mention, a costly affair. If a pond exists, its water holding area is very small and it breaches almost as soon as it starts filling.

Due to this water crisis, to eke a living, people have to wander from place to place for 5 to 6 months in the year to graze their animals and or to do manual labour. The young men take their livestock out to rivulets in the area, while the women, the elderly and the children stay at home. During this period if someone falls ill, they are unable to access a hospital. People often die of even curable illnesses because of this lack of access to basic medical facilities.

### **Food**

Their main food is millet and wheat and their main crops are mustard, gram, wheat, sesame, millet and paddy, all these crops are rain-based because no one has done rain water conservation here yet, which the elders had done earlier.

### **Electricity**

Electricity wires have reached all the villages but due to lack of maintenance and due to non-payment of electricity bills on time, the connection is broken from many villages, condemning them to live their lives in the darkness.

### **Education**

Education in this area is negligible - schools are empty with no teachers willing to live there and no attendance by the children as they have to assist their families in gathering fodder, fetching water or foraging for food.

### **Transport**

There is no transport to go to these villages- people either walk or try and catch lifts from passing private vehicles.

### **Crime**

Because of this crisis of livelihoods, people often join the bandits and become dacoits. The biggest reason for this is the water crisis. If they had adequate water and were able to farm, they all say they would return to their families and become farmers once again. We have documented

stories of that happening in some cases from this area. There are few marriages here because of all this. No one wants to come and live in this dangerous area full of deprivation.

### **Summary of the Project**

In this Dang area of Eastern Rajasthan, approximately 110 ponds need to be made for adequate water supplies to last the whole year, give them enough water for farming, recharging the underground aquifers and the surface. The proposed water bodies will also arrest the encroaching ravines and formation of the Badlands in a much wider area than the 35 Sq kms.

**And the return of the water will return the local bandits to farming again.**

The project will start with an in-depth geographical, hydrological and technical survey of the region and proposed project area. Local men will be employed to carry out the survey work under the guidance of the project lead. In addition to the detailed survey doing the baseline study of the water history & behaviour in the region, GIS Mapping, gathering ecological and hydrological data, we will also collate information on the underground water situation in the area, the population that will be impacted, water uses, how many water bodies need to be built, the exact locations for these proposed water bodies, dimensions and capacity of the proposed waterbodies and their estimated cost. The survey will also locate any existing water bodies in the area – record the state they are in and identify those that can be repaired in the first instance- a solution that can give quick relief.

The estimated cost of this project over 6 years will be in the region of £850,000.

**For now, we need £15000 (Fifteen thousand pounds only) for Phase 1 of the project to be completed during the winter months of 2021 in order that Phase 2 can begin before the onset of the monsoons in 2022.**

**Funds Update: £1400 raised as of 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2021**

**Deadline: 1st Nov 2021**

**Support the Project [HERE](#)**

Thank You

**MINNI JAIN/Director- Operations**

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