
Campaign on Condition of Water Bodies: Jharkhand Mobile Radio

November 2012



December 2012

Gram Vaani Community Media Pvt. Ltd.

1. Introduction

Jharkhand Mobile Radio (JMR) has since the last one year emerged as a popular platform for the people of Jharkhand to express their views, share their experiences and address their queries/questions/doubts on a myriad of issues they encounter on a day to day basis in their lives. In this capacity the callers and listeners of JMR have actively taken up issues pertaining to gaps in the service delivery systems of various government schemes, lack of awareness on social issues, better understanding of agricultural practices and others issues.

In the month of November one such campaign was initiated on condition of traditional water bodies: their maintainance and renovation. The campaign shaped up as a joint effort by JMR and Panchayat Nama, where the latter covered the campaign in their weekly Suno-Suno page. The campaign aimed to collect stories and experiences from the JMR callers on the condition of traditional water bodies in their respective villages. Following were the major objectives that we set out to achieve:

- Document the condition of traditional water bodies in the villages
- Document the kinds of usage of these water bodies
- Reasons behind the sorry state of these water bodies, if at all
- Awareness about government schemes and provisions for maintenance
- Villagers' stake in their maintenance

JMR received significant participation from 11 districts, shedding crucial light on the condition of water bodies, along with their usage and reasons for non-maintainance. A significant insight was that while government schemes such as MNREGA had been successful in reaching out to the people and creating projects, but either their maintenance or planning was poor, thus reducing their effectiveness. Very few of the water bodies were actually used for agriculture or pisciculture or drinking, and villagers had instead devised other more innovative mechanisms to meet their water needs. Annual creation of *kaccha* check dams since the last several years had helped people channelize water to their farms, and consequently raise the water table levels. MNREGA funded water bodies on the other hands were not useful in their current state, and require more deepening or de-silting work.

Stats related to the campaign:

Duration – 19th November 2012 to 22nd November 2012 (4 days)

Number of items published – 23

Number of active contributors - 16

Number of users who heard these items – 544

Media partner – Panchayat Nama, Jharkhand

Districts from which callers participated –Dhanbad, Giridih, Bokaro, Ramgarh, Ranchi, Latehar, Khunti, Deoghar, Gomia, Palamu and Chatra

2. Campaign process

Survey-questions

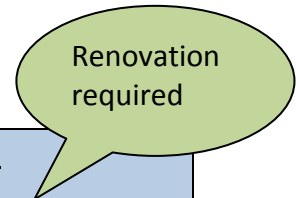
To facilitate the discussion on conditions and maintainance of water bodies in the village, we asked six questions to the listeners of JMR. They are as follows:

1. How many community owned water/bodies are there in your village?
2. Is the water in these water bodies drinkable? Or do you or anyone you know drink water from these water bodies?
3. In the last five years has there been any intervention from any government department towards the maintenance of the water bodies? If yes do you know under which scheme that happened?
4. How many water bodies in and around your village needs to be renovated owing to their bad state?
5. What are the reasons for which the condition of the water body has deteriorated?
6. Is pisciculture practiced in these water bodies?

Feedback/comments/experiences from community

Number of water bodies per Panchayat?	6.5
Drinkable water?	None. Used for bathing, washing clothes, water for animals
Were some water bodies funded under MNREGA?	Yes, each village had at least one MNREGA funded body. Around 30% of the water bodies had been funded under MNREGA and RRR
Renovations required?	Yes. But no maintenance funds had been sanctioned by the government
Used for pisciculture? Agriculture?	A few small scale setups for pisciculture, but none of the bodies are perennial and hence not suitable for pisciculture and agriculture

A few indepth comments from the listeners of JMR are outlined below.



Kailash Giri from, Bokaro District, Chandrapura Block, Taranari Panchayat

There are three water bodies in the village among which one is big and two are small. Two water bodies have perennial water supply while one dries up every year during the summer and remains dry till the next monsoon. As a result, the villagers are able to practice pisciculture in two of the water bodies. These water bodies are used for bathing purposes and the villagers do not drink water from these, rather wells and tube-wells are used to drink water from. One of these three water bodies require renovation as its depth has been reduced due to year of siltation. During the last five years three new water bodies were constructed under MNREGA, but none of them have water round the year, due to lack of enough depth. Owing to these condition, in spite of the existence of 6 water bodies in and around the Panchayat, their utilization is limited to only bathing mostly, while if they are deepened they can aid the villagers in irrigation and also in livelihood activities through sustained pisciculture.



Money spent but
now lie useless

J.M.Rangila from, Bokaro District, Nawadih Block, Gunjadih Panchayat

There are twelve water bodies in Gunjadih Panchayat, though half of them remain dry for most months of a year. Among the 12 water bodies, 3 newly constructed water bodies are privately owned. The villagers are allowed to bathe in them, while cattle drink water from them. None of the villagers drink water from these water bodies. Pisciculture is practiced in these privately owned water bodies, though not in a large-scale or for economic gains. During the last five years four new water bodies were constructed under MNREGA, in which only one stores enough water round the year. However, even this particular water body does not have enough water that could either be used for irrigation or pisciculture. The remaining water bodies have not been renovated in last five years. Hence, in spite of the existence of 12 water bodies in the Panchayat, none of them serves any purposes in helping livelihood activities or for drinking water. Around 4 lakh rupees was spent for constructing the water bodies under MNREGA, but they lie useless. While it is clear that corruption reigns high in planning and implementing the activity but the villagers will still be happy if the water bodies are deepened to at least help them in their day to day activities.

Invented our
own solutions

Farkeshwar Mahato from, Dhanbad District, Topchanchi Block, Chaita Panchayat

In our village Kherabera, we have only one commonly owned water body that serves the purpose of bathing. One more water body has been constructed during 2012 though MNREGA, but it's in an incomplete stage due to issues with payment of the labourers. So it does not serve any purpose. There are around 10 tube-wells in the village which are used for drinking water purpose. Jamunia river flows near the village, and the villagers every year build *kuchcha* check damn to channelize water and use them for irrigation purpose. It has been noticed that after years of channelizing the river water and storing them in the channel has also replenished the water table to certain extent, as now the channelized river water does not dry up as easily as it used to be earlier.

Payments still due

Ritlal Prasad Verma from, Giridih District, Birni Block, Jaridih Panchayat

There are 10 existing water bodies in the Panchayat, none of whose water is drinkable. Two among these water bodies have water round the year, while rest gets dry during summer months. Pisciculture is practiced in these two water bodies but they are generally for personal consumption, rather than as an economic activity. Two water bodies from among these ten were constructed under MNREGA, but none of them serves as perennial source of water for the villagers. Further, they are also not fully complete since the payments of the labourers are still partially due. Even after repeated appeals for renovation, Block officers donot take any step towards that.

Major findings and observations

- All the people reported that more than one community-owned water bodies exist in their respective villages
- None of the respondents mentioned that the water of these water bodies are used for drinking purposes, while 30% of them particularly mentioned that the water in these water bodies are not in a condition to drink owing to pollution and contamination
- All of the respondents confirmed that in the last five years new water bodies were created in their villages, mainly through the two schemes of MNREGA and RRR (Repair, Renovation and Restoration of Water Bodies, a scheme by Ministry of Water Resources)
- All of them also confirmed that none of these water bodies provide for a perennial source of water, hence not catering to the need of irrigation or pisciculture. Most of these water bodies are either used for bathing, drinking water source for animals or washing cloth.
- 20% of the respondents mentioned that pisciculture is practiced but not at a large scale or as a major livelihood activity by the villagers, rather they are more for personal consumption
- None of the respondents replied in affirmation regarding maintainance of these water bodies by either the administration or by Elected Representatives (ERs).

-
- The principle issues highlighted for non-maintainance and deterioration of the existing water bodies are identified as follows by the callers:
 - Siltation from banks and adjoining *kuccha* roads
 - Improper implementation of schemes leaving the newly-constructed water bodies incomplete
 - Lack of enough depth in the water bodies to hold water round the year
 - Pollution and contamination from coal sedimentation, washing clothes and irregular cleaning
 - At times construction of new roads besides the water-bodies accounted for polluting their water and reducing depth
 - Corruption in implementation of the schemes resulting in incomplete water-bodies
 - Lack of initiative from concerned government departments or the ERs

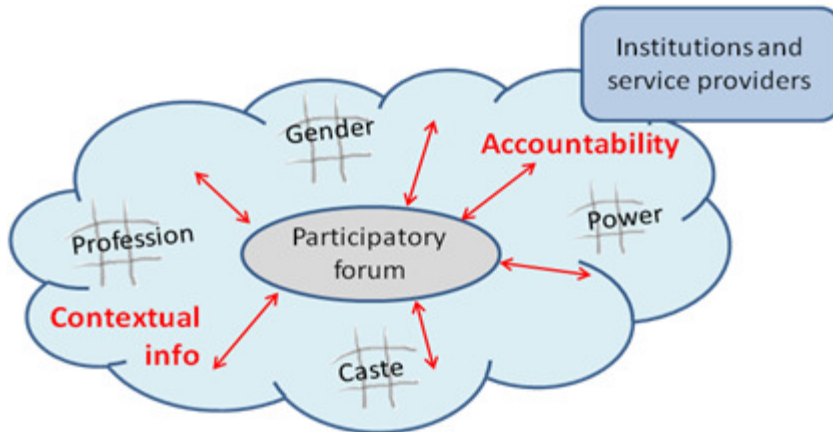
7. Media and partnerships

The campaign was covered in every detail by Panchayat Nama through its weekly Suno-Suno page, where the comments and experiences shared by the callers of JMR were featured along with their names and locations. Many of the reported experiences have been taken up by the field-level volunteers of JMR and are in the process of being followed up for effective service-delivery.

In the future, significant offline activity will also be conducted via partners, to hold FGDs, interviews of people from the field, and bring active partnership from organisations working on these issues. This will not only help collect more detailed information but also bring greater and more intensive outreach.

8. Theory of change: Bringing impact through community media

The figure below captures our theory of change of using participatory communication to enhance two community level dynamics, that is, access to **contextual information**, and sustained **accountability loops**, which leads to social change.



Jharkhand Mobile Radio aims to enable just these information and accountability loops

We know that rural communities are segmented based on caste and power dynamics, with some segments being more aware than others, and able to avail more services than others. This becomes a vicious cycle that we claim can be broken through equitable access to community media forums. These forums allow communities to share information which helps them learn from each other by hearing stories in their own context, and thus improve awareness of their rights and entitlements significantly more than traditional forms of externally originated broadcast communication. This increased awareness helps create demand for services, which is transparently shared on the same forum and improves accountability by allowing communities to cite deficiencies and gaps in service delivery. This also helps generate critical data on service delivery that can be used by policy makers to understand problems and arrive at data-driven objective solutions.

9. About Gram Vaani

Gram Vaani [meaning 'voice of the village'] is a social technology company based at IIT-Delhi. We started in 2009 with the intent of reversing the flow of information, that is, to make it bottom-up instead of top-down. Using simple technologies and social context to design tools, we have been able to impact communities in significant ways - more than 2 million users in over 15 Indian States, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Namibia and South Africa. More interesting than this are the outcomes of what we have done: Thirty rural radio stations able to manage and share content over mobiles and the web, corrupt ration shop officials in Jharkhand arrested due to citizen complaints, Women Sarpanches in Uttar Pradesh sharing learnings and opinions, citizen monitoring of waste management in Delhi. Our work has won several awards:

- International Knight News Challenge, 2008
- National Level Manthan Award for technology for development, 2009
- Economic Times Powers of Ideas, 2010
- Profiled in the top-10 innovative companies of India by Fast Company, 2011
- mBillionth Award in the news and journalism category, 2012
- Canada Rising Stars in Health award, 2012
- Finalist in Ashoka Changemakers 2012 and Vodafone Mobiles for Good 2012 contests

Contact Us

Website: <http://gramvaani.org>

Phone: +91-99100-12946 (Aaditeshwar Seth)

Email: contact@gramvaani.org

Delhi office: TBIU Unit 9, Synergy Building, 2nd Floor, IIT Delhi, New Delhi 110 016.