

## Theme Paper

Water is one of the key ingredients for life to exist on earth and yet less than 1% of the world's fresh water (or about 0.007% of all water on earth) is readily accessible for direct human use. According to *Nature* (2010), about 80% of the world's population (5.6 billion in 2011) live in areas with threats to water security.

India is the largest groundwater user in the world, with an estimated usage of around 230 cubic kilometers per year, more than a quarter of the global total. With more than 60 percent of irrigated agriculture and 85 percent of drinking water supplies dependent on it, groundwater is a vital resource for rural areas in India. Reliance of urban and industrial waste supplies on groundwater is also becoming increasingly significant in India.

Traditionally, India has been well endowed with large freshwater reserves. In terms of provision of safe drinking water, India has covered more than 90 percent of the rural households, according to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) 65th round survey 2008-09. In the course of implementation of rural water supply schemes since the launching of the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP) in 1972 and Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission (RGNDWM) in 1986 and the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) in 2009, a large number of successful models of providing sustainable and safe drinking water have been tried out throughout the country. Despite these initiatives, the increasing population (1.21 Billion, 2011 with population growth rate projected at 1.58%) and overexploitation of surface and groundwater over the past few decades has resulted in water scarcity in many regions of the nation. Growth of the Indian economy is driving increased water usage across sectors.

The state of Rajasthan, the largest State of the country has also one of the most critical status of water. Rajasthan with more than 10.4 % of the country's geographical area, supporting more than 5.5% of the human population & 18.70 % of the livestock has only 1.16 % of the total surface water available in the country. 2/3rd part of the State is a part of the Great Thar Desert and out of the total 142 desert blocks in the country, 85 blocks are in the State of Rajasthan. The per capita annual water availability in the State is about 780 cubic meter (Cum) against minimum requirement of 1000 Cum. It is feared that the availability would fall below 450 cum by the year 2050. Thus increasing population coupled with erratic rainfall further aggravates the water crisis.

With a scenario such as this, it is imperative to approach the issue with innovative methods and "social entrepreneurship" is one of the ways to address the crisis. Social entrepreneurs function as the agents of change, questioning the status quo, grabbing the new yet overlooked opportunities, and changing the world for the better. The popularity of SE is growing at a very high pace in India. In the last three years more and more youth are developing interest in this field including those from prestigious Stanford, MIT and Oxford. This new evolving field has also got early venture capitalist interested in funding with many seeking out such enterprises that hold out huge potential. With the increase of interaction between the social and the private sector, both have begun to realize that just one approach either pure philanthropic or pure capitalist is inadequate to build sustainable institutions.

**Objective:**

- Innovation: Encourage social entrepreneurs to initiate innovative sustainable models in the water sector.
- Improve understanding of impact: Build an appreciation among key stakeholders of the economic impacts of water, both negative (from lack of access) and positive (when access is achieved).

- Increase donor engagement: Incentivize overseas Indian philanthropist to participate in sustainable water projects.
- Resource mobilization: Explore resource mobilization techniques that can be implemented at the community level for sustainability of the projects or initiating community lead projects.

### **Desired Outcome:**

- Greater social investment to address the issue of water crisis in India
- Creating a new pool of social entrepreneurs in this area.
- Greater involvement of overseas Indians in projects addressing water needs in area of agriculture and portable drinking water.

### **Sources:**

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