

Community-led Water Management

Part 1 - Understanding Your Village



What need does the playbook address?

Large swaths of the country are facing severe water stress, largely due to over-exploitation of groundwater and surface water resources. Lower water availability leads to unequal distribution of water resources, lower crop yields during dry months, and issues of salinity and aridity of the soil. Addressing this issue requires community participation and behavioral change.

Rather than designing top-down schemes for agrarian water use, DSC emphasizes on community planning of water resources. The design of field assessments, community mobilisation, village-level water budgets, water recharge structures, monitoring and the participatory approach to water security planning best exemplify this.

Who can use this playbook?

Practitioners, Trainers, Community Resource Persons, Progressive Farmers, Subject Matter Specialists, Local Governance Representatives

This playbook is designed using the expertise of **Development Support Centre (DSC)**, which works on participatory water management and judicious use of water in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra.

These solutions by DSC have been designed and pioneered under the leadership of Anil Shah, founder chairman; Mohan Sharma, executive director; and Sachin Oza, former executive director. These community-empowering participatory technical and social processes in DSC's 30-year journey led to the evolution of the approach to promoting community-led water security.

Today we have gathered to talk about the water situation in our village. Let's see how deep is the water.

Did any of you notice that the soil is getting arid because water is saline?

How many of you had lower crop yields in this dry season?

Did some of you feel you received less water than your neighbouring regions?



If we manage our water properly we can solve these problems of irregular water supply and quality

In this book you'll learn to

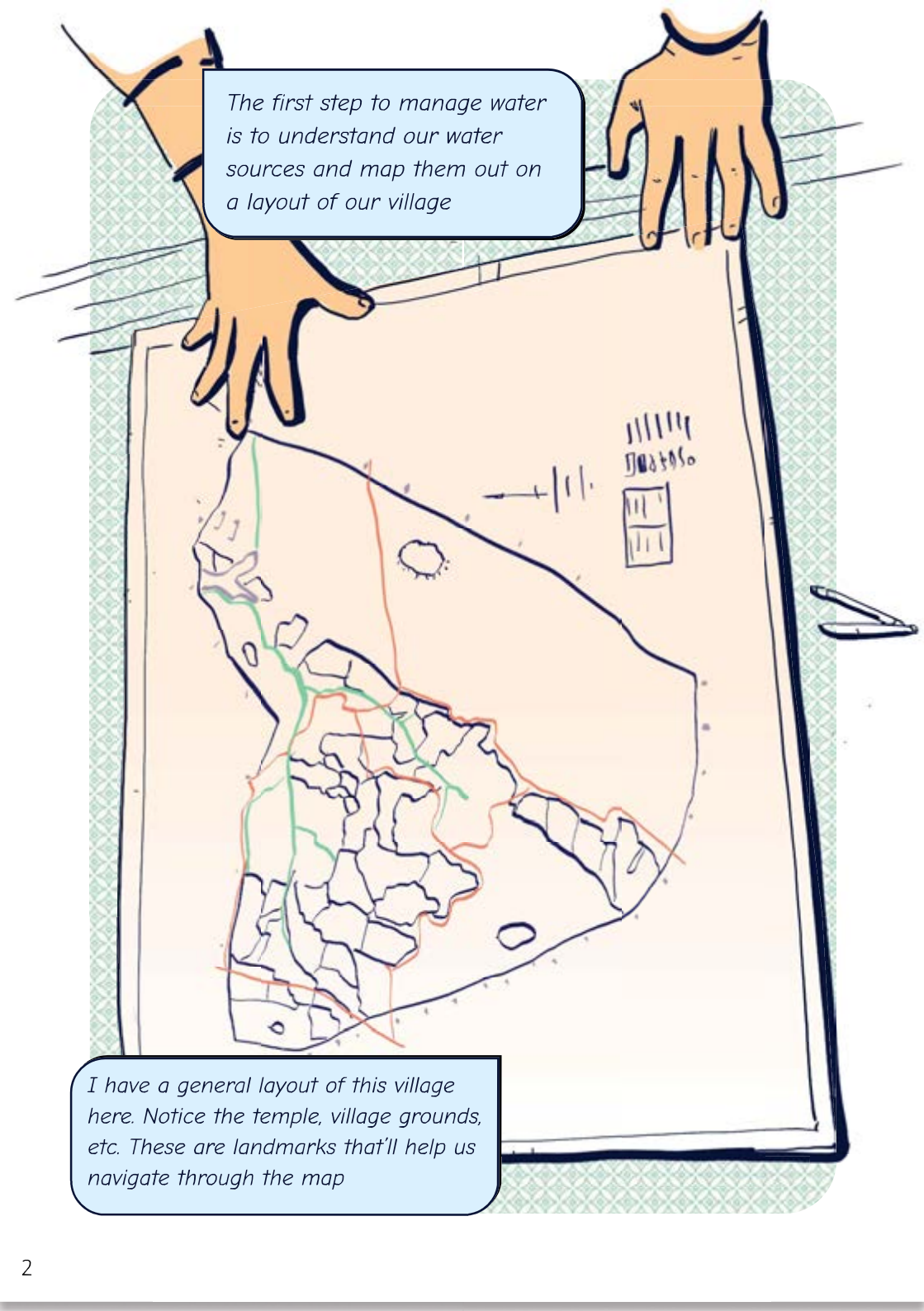
- Understand your village's water needs and resources
- Get involved in water management
- Prepare water budgets
- Plan for water security
- Replenish groundwater by building recharge shafts
- Monitor water resources
- Cooperatively manage irrigation

** This playbook is **Part 1** of a 7-part playbook series on cooperative water management. Find the complete set here: [link](#)*

1.

Understanding your Village

We start by understanding the water resources available to the village, collective assessment of the issues like quality and access of water in our village.

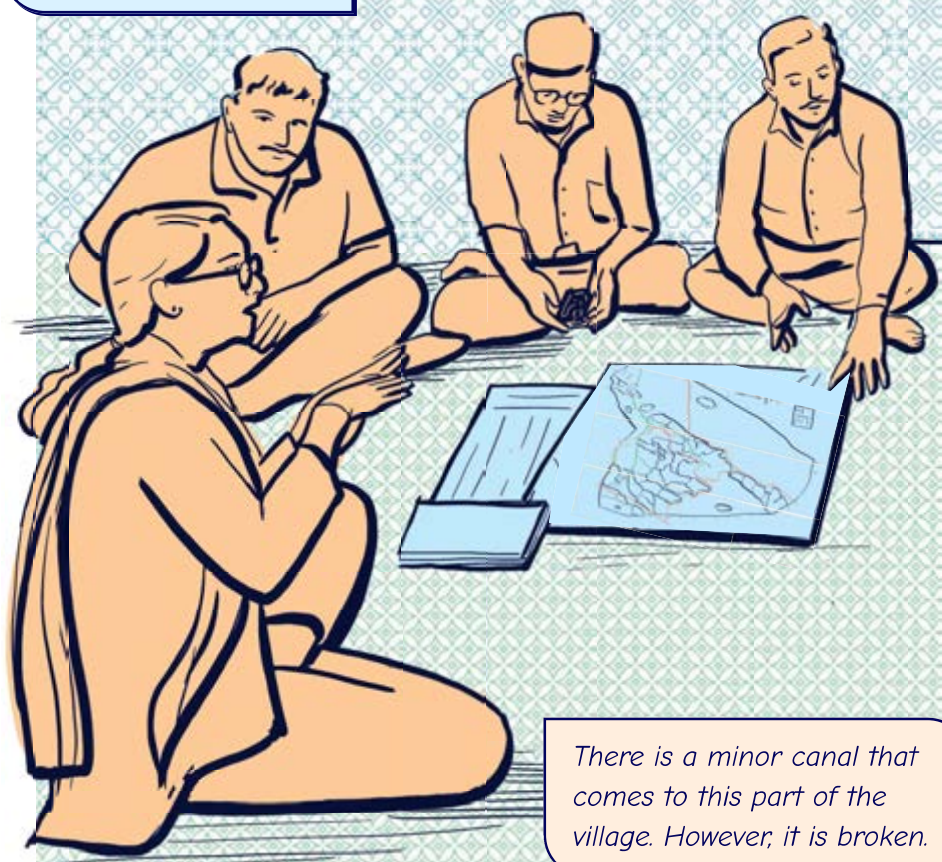
An illustration showing two hands holding a large map. The map is drawn on a light-colored surface and features a central area with a grid of lines, representing a village layout. A green line and an orange line run through the grid. To the right of the map, there is a legend with several symbols: a north arrow, a square with vertical lines, and a rectangle with horizontal lines. A compass is shown on the right side of the map. The background is a green patterned surface.

The first step to manage water is to understand our water sources and map them out on a layout of our village

I have a general layout of this village here. Notice the temple, village grounds, etc. These are landmarks that'll help us navigate through the map

Let's start by marking the ponds and the borewells.

There are four borewells here, of which two do not work, and one has hard and saline water.

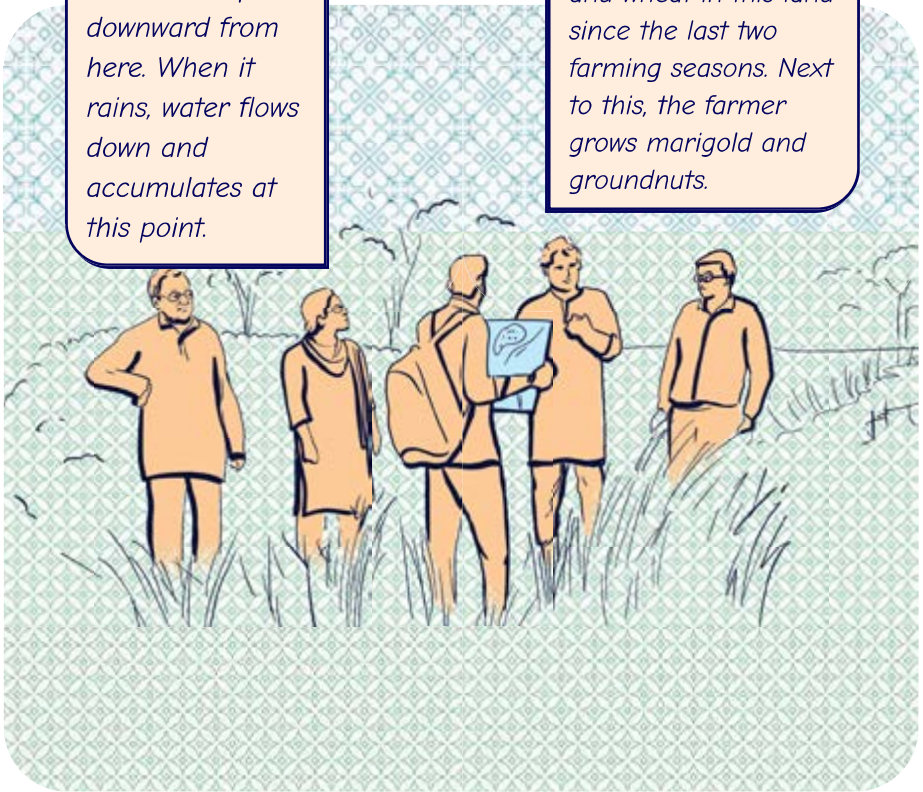


There is a minor canal that comes to this part of the village. However, it is broken.

On a walk through the village...

The land slopes downward from here. When it rains, water flows down and accumulates at this point.

They grow cotton and wheat in this land since the last two farming seasons. Next to this, the farmer grows marigold and groundnuts.



You know your village the best. So you are the best people to manage water issues here. With some training on scientific methods, you'll be ready to take charge of the water related issues in your village.



Building Rapport with Villagers as an Outsider

- Initial visits to the village should be informal to help villagers become familiar with us and our organization.
- Engage in general discussions, following up on any issues they mention, such as the canal system or irrigation.
- Understand the village's power structures and involve individuals from all communities in conversations.
- Approach the villagers as friends, avoid any sales-like tactics, and be patient as trust is built.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Activities

- PRA includes various practices to gather information in rural areas and typically takes 2-3 hours.
- Schedule PRA activities at convenient times for villagers, and identify 3-4 proactive individuals to help invite others. On average, an activity will take 2-3 hours. If an activity is incomplete, it can be continued later.
- Choose a venue that accommodates at least 30 people, ensuring it is not too open to avoid drawing a crowd and onlookers.

Making PRA Meetings more Inclusive

- Invite participants from all communities by selecting key individuals who can mobilize their peers.
- Include experienced farmers and village elders, both men and women.
- Aim for at least 15-20 participants representing different communities for activities like Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) and Mapping Exercises.

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