

ENABLING  
AUTONOMY:  
**Gram Vikas's Role in  
Nurturing Self-Managed Systems**

In 2022-23, Gram Vikas initiated the “Learning from the Past, Reading the Present, Planning for Future” (LPRPPF) initiative to reflect on its legacy and chart a roadmap for the future. This four-phase exercise began with workshops to frame hypotheses about how change happens, followed by in-depth reviews and community interactions. We commissioned three independent studies that evaluated the intergenerational outcomes of Gram Vikas’s education programme, the resilience of self-managed water and sanitation systems, and advancements in production systems in rural Odisha. The study findings document Gram Vikas’s programmes, highlighting evidence and narratives that illustrate its role in fostering long-term social change in Odisha.

## Summary Report

### Enabling Autonomy: Gram Vikas’s Role in Nurturing Self-Managed Systems

July 2024

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Gram Vikas commissioned this study as part of its “Learning from the Past, Reading the Present, and Planning for the Future” (LP-RP-PF) exercise. This report, one of three in the Learning from the Past series, provides a historical perspective, contextualising Gram Vikas’s journey within the broader landscape of its time.

Gram Vikas is a rural development organisation partnering with Odisha’s marginalised communities since 1979, driving sustainable change and impacting the lives of over five million people in more than 8,000 villages.

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## FOREWORD

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Gram Vikas initiated the Learning from the Past, Reading the Present, and Planning for the Future (LP-RP-PF) exercise as an opportunity to reflect, convene, and design. Often, when you are in the thick of things, responding to needs as they emerge, you are implicated in the needs yourselves. Reflecting, as Gram Vikas did, over a 40+ year timeframe, allowed some distancing from its own involvement in the situation. So, the exercise purposely chose to look back in a way that allowed Gram Vikas to see its place in the context of what else was happening at that time.

This meant one had to turn an open, inquiring mind to the context. What else was happening at that time? How did the Gram Vikas approach really stack up against that? What does that say about this aspect of its legacy that it may want to hold and embed more strongly, as it goes into the next phase of its work?

Gram Vikas believed that it was **ahead of time** – in the content and process of its interventions, in the way these were conceptualised and executed, and that it stayed honest and accountable to the achievement of development outcomes for its partner communities. This assumption was examined through a detailed study of its water and sanitation programme, undertaken by a team from Nous Consultants between May to December 2023.

The insights of the team from the review of data and immersive discussions and interactions with village communities have enriched the study.

The team looked at the evolution of water and sanitation-related policies and programmes, and compared the programme outcomes with related global benchmarks.

The study concludes that Gram Vikas's intervention in water and sanitation was initiated two decades before the national government started its mission to end 'open defecation' in villages. Gram Vikas's experiences from Odisha contributed to the formulation of the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, precursor to the Swachh Bharat Mission.

This benchmarking shows that Gram Vikas supports village communities to build the highest service levels for drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene (JMP, UNICEF 2023). The data on results for aspects of safely managed piped water connections and sanitation and bathing facilities were all significantly higher in villages under Gram Vikas's intervention. These have led to better health and hygiene outcomes for households and had positive implications for improved menstrual health of women and girls.

Community-based water and sanitation systems, as supported by Gram Vikas, seem to provide an opportunity for all people, irrespective of their caste, class, and educational levels, to take part in decision-making related to the programme's functioning. This is particularly significant when compared with evidence on the differential patterns of access to public water bodies on account of ideas of purity and pollution, among others.

There is a second important aspect to looking back. What does this tell us about the legacy of the work? What must Gram Vikas carry forward?

In an early workshop with associates and older staff, some of the metaphors associated with the Gram Vikas legacy were a 'self-generating forest' and an 'asha badi' (a stick that supports self-reliance). Gram Vikas believed that it partners with communities to establish self-managed systems.

One can draw on many frameworks in development literature to sketch this out. The LP-RP-PF exercise wanted to privilege learning from experience. Village Development Committees (VDCs) that have survived, even thrived, over the last 20-plus years have earned their stripes as self-managed systems. What can we learn about self-managed systems when we unpack their experiences? This constituted the second part of this study.

The Nous team listened to 11 VDCs across the state, which represented diverse contexts. The team visited them during the peak summer of 2023. The study report, including detailed cases of the 11 villages, gives valuable insights for the future work of Gram Vikas, particularly in promoting water secure gram panchayats.

It seems that the primary purpose of VDCs is to ensure the continued availability of safe piped drinking water for the entire community. Sanitation is not expressly mentioned by the VDCs as a concern, but its continued use shows that it is probably an important, unacknowledged aspect of this core purpose – this is reflected through their articulation of dignity and pride. In sustaining these systems, the VDCs are moved by a social responsibility towards the next generation, to ensure that they have the same level of, or even better, facilities.

The self-managed systems indicate that the intervention builds on existing social capital – the leadership of individuals who mobilised their communities and liaised with Gram Vikas, such as Laba Biswal (Dengapadar), Subhan Mandal (Anusahi), and Rabi Babu (Angarpada). Villages like Dengapadar and Angarpada had mandalis or existing community initiatives which helped galvanise this effort.

One has to note the significance of inspiration. Many of these systems have either been inspired by others (Tarava by the adjoining village Buruding; and Gramdebati by Nuasahi and Terigocha), or have inspired others in turn, like Dengapadar. Nine of 11 habitations in Dumerjore and all 11 wards in Angarpada panchayat have community-based water and sanitation systems.

The study noted the many instances of water connections being extended to new households in all the villages and that the original soak pits were still in use. The approaches to achieve this are diverse. There are VDCs that have kept operational costs very low and simple, yet effective norms for operations; there are also VDCs that have relatively high operational costs and that have developed more evolved systems for their functioning. In both scenarios, they have evolved systems for the collection of charges and the supply of water and are largely able to pay their electricity bills (Angarpada, Kanamana), or have found a way to control them (Dengapadar).

The VDCs tend to tackle problems as they arise, deploying diverse responses. In some instances they are proactive or have planned ahead, as seen in Dengapadar (1997), where the VDC invested in a generator, standby motors, and even a spare water tank. In Tarava, the entire village goes for one 'assignment' of labour, the earnings from which are used for their immediate needs.

In six of these villages, new water sources have been added over time by the VDCs to cater to the additional water needs of the village. Self-managed systems seem to liaise with external agencies through diverse mechanisms to address their need to augment the water supply or address shocks such as breakdowns.

The experience of self-managed systems shows the kinds of roles VDCs are expected to take up. Besides keeping the system running and liaising with external agencies, it appears that VDCs are expected to propose solutions and generate consensus within the community on challenges being faced. The approaches they take seem to challenge our traditional notions, or perhaps our expectations as external development actors, on how things 'ought to be'.

Older members continue to take the lead in many villages, though younger men and women are also taking greater interest. Trust in the leadership seems to be vested in a few, with changes in VDCs being slow or externally facilitated. Water stress is not faced evenly across all hamlets. Rules are developed, but not always enforced. Facing the increasing 'privatising' of water supply by members building pumps and storage at the household level, the VDC of Angarpada has developed a fine to dissuade this practice; even if it is not enforced, it signals an alertness. It shows the complex web of relationships that bind these committees with the communities and their own desires for keeping the system going, with equitable access for all.



## In this context, which of Gram Vikas's stances have helped?

The work done by Gram Vikas introduced some foundational processes, such as bookkeeping, transparency through general body meetings, and most importantly, a value framework of inclusion and equity. This can be seen in the space for women in the committees, a focus on the inclusion of all, self-managed systems, and, particularly, the leadership women tend to take for early redressal when piped water supply is disrupted.

Gram Vikas also built capacity through training local plumbers and masons who could attend to needs locally. In many villages, the same person has continued at the post for several years. Gram Vikas stepped in to support inclusion and helped build a new system or augment capacity where supply was weak or uneven in some parts of the habitation. Most importantly, it has been a friend over the years.

The complexity of this work is captured well by the team when they quote an elderly woman from Gramdehati, Ganjam, saying, "Each day we (women) had to go to fetch water from the dug well for household activities, and water was sufficient then. Now there is a whole system in place, but water is still not sufficient." There are stories such as Dumerjore in Sundargarh, where the self managed system functioned well and with enthusiasm, but is currently going through some difficulty.

In this, it seems self-managed systems can emerge and sustain, rooted in their desire to provide water and an improved quality of life for future generations. They are fuelled by a developing sense of pride within their villages ("our water is sweet"), in their management ("a lot of money has been spent in our village in the name of different schemes and programmes, but none of them have lasted the way the water supply and sanitation programme has; even now we get water on tap all through the day in our homes"), and in intergenerational improvement.

The *asha badi* – the stick that helps this system move along – seems to be the acts of leadership in these systems, like Enosh Mandal, who is the go-to person for repairs and new installations but does not charge. Gram Vikas seems to have had a role in setting them up for their work and then being an all-weather friend, a stance it can continue to hold.



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## SUMMARY

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A study of the outcomes of Gram Vikas's efforts in nurturing self-managed systems is relevant for Gram Vikas for the insights and learnings it provides on the work that has been done in community-owned and managed water supply and sanitation for over three decades, and for guiding their emerging work in building water secure gram panchayats.

Gram Vikas initiated work on community-managed water supply and sanitation in 1991, combining social mobilisation and techno-managerial approaches derived from its work in biogas promotion as well as community development with tribal communities of Odisha.

In any village where community-owned and managed water supply and sanitation has been undertaken by Gram Vikas, they have intensively engaged, on average, for 1-3 years. Subsequently, the village community, through the VDC, takes on the responsibility for operations, maintenance, and augmentation.



These self-managed systems are in evidence across the 1,431 villages with 99,776 households where Gram Vikas has practised its interventions (Gram Vikas, 2023).

## What does it take to build self-managed systems and what is the Gram Vikas experience?

This report aims to understand and analyse self-managed systems, which are steered and navigated by people who are also served by the system, based on team visits to 11 villages. These villages have the experience of running self-managed village development committees (VDCs) for 8–25 years. They operate in different socio-economic contexts – some are homogeneous with regard to caste groups, while others have people from different castes and religions. There are also different geographic and hydrologic conditions with diverse natural endowments.

The determinants of success include the ability to meet water supply expenses (including electricity for pumping water and motor maintenance) and operator expenses (relating to day-to-day operations and responding to minor wear and tear and repairs). Villages that are successful have written rules, and have the ability to revise these when necessary, including monthly fees, collections for lumpy repairs, timings of water supply, etc. They make efforts to make improvements in the infrastructure to ensure the supply of water to all throughout the year. Most importantly, there is the presence of active leadership and collective action.

What emerges from the study are some of the following common features of self-managed systems.



### COMPELLING CORE PURPOSE FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

'Water-on-tap' was clearly the biggest draw in bringing people together. People shared anecdotes of how there were disease outbreaks from waterborne illnesses, especially at the onset of the monsoons, before the piped water supply and toilets became operational. Piped water would begin only after all families of the habitation had built toilets and bathing rooms, forcing communities to come together and work for the 'individual and collective good'.



The process of involving all families in the village and building a corpus fund, with contributions of ₹1000 per family, as an indication of their commitment, helped build trust, evolve norms, and develop a common understanding among villagers about the process of working together. Different mechanisms have been adopted to raise the corpus fund, invest and use it, and bring new families into the fold as populations have grown. The corpus funds managed by the VDCs have more than doubled in many villages and is a source of financial security for the VDC.

Village communities develop rules that they follow, and with active leaders steering collective action, the primary purpose of supplying piped drinking water to all households is ensured.



### CO-CREATING CONTEXTUAL RESPONSES, PROBLEM-SOLVING, AND SERVICE ORIENTATION

The solutions for sourcing water and piped supply to the households are arrived at after technical hydrogeological assessments by experts and inputs from the local community on their understanding of the water resources in the area.

It becomes clear from the studies of these villages that a one-time technical solution is unlikely to work. The solutions are responsive to locally available resources and are contextually designed. Generating financial and non-financial contributions from the local community, as well as financial support from the government, is critical.

The 'solution approach' is iterative, based on an understanding of the local ecosystem and responsive to variability in supply (water sources may fail or dry up over time) and increased demand (caused by population growth and increased need for domestic use). Most villages started with piped water supply throughout the day, but have resorted to fixed timings for the release of water each day. This has been necessitated by seasonal fluctuations at the water source and also the increased cost of electricity.

The VDCs have been able to extend the piped water supply to meet growing demand from population increases in the villages, demonstrating their service orientation. Their ability to respond to shocks, such as high electricity bills and motor breakdowns, is demonstrative of their agility and resilience. In each such instance, it is their task to propose solutions and generate consensus within the community. Women push for early redressal, since they are most affected when the piped water supply is disrupted. In Bandipahad Sadakpada, women took the initiative to settle the arrears in the electricity bills so that the water supply could be resumed.

Frequent motor breakdowns have resulted in several villages having backup motors to ensure the continuity of water supply, many of them procured with support from the Panchayat. The VDC of Dengapadar purchased a generator to pump water when there is no electricity. Other villages, like Angarpada, Kanamana, and Tarava have installed solar pumps to lift water, thereby reducing electricity costs.



### NURTURING ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP AND DOWNWARD ACCOUNTABILITY

The VDCs demonstrate distributed leadership and downward accountability in addressing issues or concerns of specific groups of people in the village, ensuring the various voices are heard, and the response time taken to address such issues is improved.

In Dengapadar (1997), one of the oldest villages, the committee now has only male members; all the other VDCs currently have 30–50 per cent women. Women dominate in the VDCs in Gramdebati Talasahi (2022) and Bandipahad Sadakpada (2015). All the VDCs in the 11 villages have been reconstituted at least once, and 9 out of 11 are now registered as Societies.

During the construction process, designated people were trained in keeping records of all kinds – stock registers, cash books, labour rolls, etc. Selected educated youth were also trained to keep records of village meetings, receipts, and expenditures.

Community participation, governance with documented policies and procedures, and accountability are demonstrated in various ways in these villages. There is transparency in decision-making and record-keeping, consensus-building for making decisions, reporting back on financial aspects, including the collection and use of funds, and addressing issues related to equitable water supply faced by the different groups in the village. The VDCs engage with the panchayats to get funds to augment the water sources and water storage facilities.

The self-managed systems we visited demonstrate a ‘mastery of human artisanship’: where the community is willing to maintain a certain level of collective action, and a core of local entrepreneurs exists to provide leadership and respond to shocks and changes, it is possible to build on the momentum introduced by the intervention.



### LOCALLY EMBEDDED TECHNICAL SKILLS AND CAPACITIES



In every village, at least one person has been trained in plumbing, to deal with ongoing maintenance and minor repairs of the water supply systems. This person(s) had worked alongside the plumber(s) from Gram Vikas during the process of laying pipelines, fitting taps, fixing valves, etc., and learnt how to operate and maintain the motor.



In almost all the villages, masonry training was conducted during the construction process, with up to 8-10 people being trained in some of the villages. Across the villages we visited, the biggest benefit of training local

persons in plumbing and masonry was that most repairs could be serviced within the village itself, people were accessible when needed, and at reasonable costs.

All the villages reported regulating the timings of the water motor, and the release of water from the overhead water tank at specific times. There are habitation-level monitoring mechanisms to oversee storage, wastage, and excess drawing of water. Metering is being considered in some villages to monitor water use.

The VDCs keep a tab on cleaning of water tanks; in most villages this is done through voluntary labour, in some it is through paid contractors. In recent years, water samples have been sent to labs for testing. In some villages, local youth are trained to test for water quality, which is a paid service they provide to the village.

Village 'lekha mitras' have been recently introduced – they are locally trained persons who periodically update and audit the books of records and finances of VDCs.

In addition to the regular household-level collections, many VDCs have introduced innovative community-level resource mobilization efforts from ponds, labour contributions, etc., to meet the costs of regular operations and periodic maintenance of the water supply system, as well as emergency expenses.



### CREATING SPACES FOR WOMEN AND FOSTERING DIGNITY AND PRIDE

There is a sense of pride and confidence in communities where there are self-managed systems, especially among women. Water-on-tap and the use of toilets are emblems of modernity, with facilities equalling or bettering those in towns. Women expressly shared how their time has been freed up with the assurance of water on tap, and the dignity and safety of using toilets. Their continued and growing engagement ensures improvements at the individual and collective levels in health, education, and income levels. The interest of new brides to seek alliances where there are similar facilities came up in many conversations. Above all, women, through self-help groups and village committees, play significant roles in the village community.

## How do WASH-related outcomes of Gram Vikas's interventions in Odisha compare with global benchmarks?

Over the years, the work done by Gram Vikas across villages in Odisha has been evaluated and documented by international research agencies and organisations. There is also data from extensive Status Assessment Surveys (SAS) conducted by Gram Vikas across villages where it has worked. In 2018, 846 villages were surveyed, and in 2020, 626 villages. In the survey, 31,255 households existed from Gram Vikas's first interventions, while 10,331 households (25 per cent) came into being after the interventions.

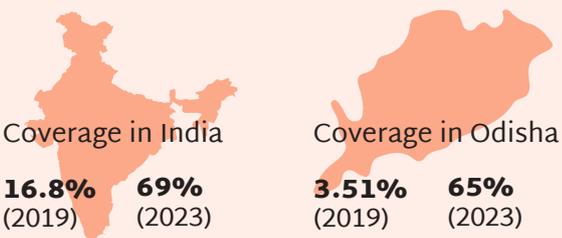
In terms of the parameters defined by the World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund's Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP), Gram Vikas supports village communities in building the highest service levels for drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene.

The sustainability of the outcomes was assessed by correlating the quantitative data from villages in Odisha where Gram Vikas has its interventions, with global and national data on water, sanitation, and hygiene.



Among the households studied by Gram Vikas in its SAS, 75 per cent continue to have safely managed piped water connections. This is significantly higher than the national average of 31.7 per cent households with piped water connection in 2020 and 42 per cent households at the global level (JMP, 2020).

Jal Jeevan Mission data on rural populations receiving safe and adequate drinking water within their premises through piped water supply indicates an increase in coverage of households from 2019 to 2023.



**43%** of the world's rural population had access to safely managed sanitation services (JMP, 2020)

**50%** rural population had safely managed sanitation facilities in India (JMP, 2020)

**79%** households, the population with improved sanitation facilities was higher in villages covered in Gram Vikas's intervention, compared to the global and national coverage (Gram Vikas SAS, 2020)



**58.7%** population having bathing facilities at home across India (JMP, 2023)

**75%** households having access to separate bathing room with piped water in Gram Vikas's area of intervention (GV SAS, 2020)

Separate bathing rooms contribute to better hygiene outcomes and have positive implications for improved menstrual health of women and girls.

Qualitative outcomes through WASH interventions in communities include disease and morbidity reduction, drudgery reduction, and community inclusion. Evidence from external studies conducted in villages where Gram Vikas has worked in Odisha has been juxtaposed against comparable global evidence from studies on similar parameters.



### DISEASE AND MORBIDITY REDUCTION

As compared to water from an unimproved source, the availability of better quality water on premises resulted in the reduction of diarrhoea by 52 per cent. Moreover, when water is treated at the point-of-use through filtration, solar treatment, or chlorination, it leads to a 50 per cent reduction in diarrhoea vis-à-vis when untreated water from an unimproved source is consumed (WHO, UNICEF & World Bank, 2022).

- An interrupted time-series analysis (Duflo, 2015) of nearly 100 villages where Gram Vikas has intervened shows that, as a result of the integrated water and sanitation intervention, there was a reduction of 30-50 per cent in episodes of severe diarrhoea. Formal tests for the persistence of results showed that the impact persists for more than five years.

It is essential to have access to sufficient safe water for managing morbidity associated with neglected tropical diseases like trachoma, schistosomiasis, and soil-transmitted infections. Safe water is required to reduce or stop the transmission of infection and prevent it from rebounding (WHO, UNICEF & World Bank, 2022).

- A matched cohort study (Reese, 2019) randomly selected 45 intervention villages from the group where the intervention had been completed five years ago and matched them to 45 control villages. Access to a household-improved toilet was almost five times higher in the intervention villages than in the control villages (85.0% vs. 17.7%). It was found that the prevalence of soil-transmitted helminth (STH) infection among children in the intervention villages was half as high as in the control villages. Intervention villages also saw a smaller proportion of stunted and underweight children under the age of five, compared to the control villages, and found evidence of the protective effect of the intervention on infection with any STH in children.



### DRUDGERY REDUCTION

When drinking water has to be collected from a distant source, women and girls bear a disproportionate burden of this arduous task. This adversely affects their health and safety. When girls are involved, it adversely impacts their school attendance and completion.

A national survey in India in 2018 found that water was being collected from off-premises sources by 40 per cent of rural households and 20 per cent of urban households. Households in rural areas reported making two to four trips for fetching water every day. Among the 64 million households where water was fetched by women

from off-premises sources, almost 50 million person-hours were spent by women to fetch water each day, and almost 90 per cent of this burden was borne by rural women (WHO, UNICEF & World Bank, 2022).

- In the matched cohort study (Reese, 2019), it was found that the 45 villages that had Gram Vikas interventions showed a positive association with minor improvements in round-trip time to the water source, even though it was with a higher prevalence of water intermittency, in all likelihood, due to greater dependence on the piped system in the intervention villages.
- Another study stated that, as a result of Gram Vikas's efforts, the availability of piped water within household premises eliminates the drudgery of women, who no longer have to spend 4–5 hours a day fetching water and can use the time to engage in economic activities (Pless, 2012).



## Overall analysis and conclusions

An analysis of these investigations bears out the following evidence:

- Rural communities have the willingness and capacity to sustain self-managed systems over long periods of time. The VDCs work with the core mandate of ensuring piped water supply to households in the community. This in itself presents a variety of challenges to which the VDC must respond in a timely and agile manner, with a service orientation to ensure that there is equity in the supply of water.
- The premise of 100 per cent inclusion is sustained to a large extent in terms of access to piped water supply and sanitation, even with the growth of population in the habitations. There is a growing demand for water, not just due to increases in population, but also due to changing behaviour, aspirations, and needs for water. This has to be matched with the reality of fluctuations in water supply due to seasonal and broader climatic factors, as well as to overall demands on water resources. The VDCs have been innovative in rule-making to match the demand with supply and made efforts to augment sources of supply as well. Where the piped water system fails, it fails for everyone.
- The VDCs are largely democratic and have leaders with conviction and management skills to manage complex processes. They make and enforce rules, have the capacity to adapt and respond to shocks, and make course corrections. Over the years, there have been transitions and a widening of the leadership base. Women have come to occupy a seat at the table, and play an active role in managing the system, and ensuring that water supply continues without disruption. The presence of local technical capacities to manage the infrastructure and troubleshoot when there are problems is a crucial factor in ensuring uninterrupted and well-functioning systems.
- The VDCs put in place and enforce mechanisms to raise financial resources through community contributions and leveraging from panchayats where possible. These resources are deployed to meet ongoing and emerging expenses.
- Self-managed systems are internal-facing, accountable toward the community, and have a service orientation. They are also external-facing, have capacities to network with relevant government departments, participate in and raise resources from the panchayat, and seek technical support where needed to ensure continuity of their systems.

The outcomes of these are seen in the continued access, the use and upkeep of the physical infrastructure, and the improved outcomes in villages in health, drudgery reduction, and community inclusion in other development activities. Women take an active interest in and participate in community processes. People take pride in their villages, and believe that their village rivals, and at times is even superior to, what is available in urban areas.

The qualitative and quantitative data in this regard show Gram Vikas's interventions in villages in Odisha have resulted in equivalent and, in many instances, better outcomes compared to global, national, and state-level benchmarks. More importantly, these outcomes are sustained for many years.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Gram Vikas has worked in partnership with the rural communities of Odisha for close to 45 years. Their intervention in community-based integrated water supply, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) spans almost three decades. At its core, this study is about listening to communities that have been part of this intervention, understanding their perspectives, and making sense of self-managed systems. Listening is not a one-off endeavour, since there needs to be trust, also patience, for people to be really able to share their experiences, about what worked, and more significantly what did not work, and how challenges were overcome. In the course of the study, we made an effort to build trust and listen, with patience and empathy and without judgement. Another part of the study relates to data aspects, on how WASH outcomes in the villages of Odisha, where Gram Vikas has worked, compares with global, national, and state-level data. This presents revealing insights into community-based self-managed systems.

This study was challenging and interesting, and being part of it has been a learning experience for us. In all the villages we visited, people were willing to engage with us, and spent several hours sharing their experiences and showing us around the village. We were visiting them in June, before the monsoons set in, the most vulnerable month in terms of the availability of water. Our sincere gratitude to the men and women in Angarpada, Anusahi, Bandipahad Sadakpada, Beheraguda, Dengapadar, Dumerjore, Gramdebati, Kanamana, Kudupakia, Tala Landusahi, and Tarava.

Our gratitude also to the field teams of Gram Vikas who supported us in course of the visits, organising the meetings and facilitating our stay – Damayanti Das, Basanti Devi, and Sabitri Ojha in Mayurbhanj, Kiran Kujur in Sundergarh, Biswajit Sahu and Sibaram Sahu in Jharsuguda, Jobin Thomas and Santosh Kumar Padhy in Kandhamal, Manas Samanta, Ramesh Chandra Naik, and Sarat Mohanty in Ganjam, Laxmi Narayan Panda and Abnair Raika in Gajapati, and Nirmal Mohanty for traveling with us in the early part of the study. At the head office, Gangadhar Panigrahi and Chandramohan Patnaik gave us useful background and helped us prepare for the study. Sangeeta Patra and Apurva Ghughey helped coordinate and plan for the study and gave us access to documents, and Lipika Verma provided data support in a timely and efficient manner – for all their support we are thankful. Varun Namineni helped us understand the data management system and Benstin Jenith gave us useful inputs about Gram Vikas's work in water resource technologies. We are thankful to Vartika Jaini and Liby Johnson for their inputs, feedback and guidance throughout the study.

Nous Consultants

In Kantajharia, a partner village of Gram Vikas in Odisha's Jharsuguda district, community-built toilet-bathing rooms stand behind households. With white walls and rosewood-coloured doors, they reflect the community's collective effort and progress in achieving water and sanitation outcomes. Constructed in 2016-17, these facilities continue to symbolise dignity and improved living conditions for the village residents.





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