Integrated WASH Response for Building Resilience in Drought-Affected Desert Areas of District Umerkot, Sindh

CASE STUDY

“Action speaks louder than words”
Introduction:

The humanitarian crisis in Taluka Umerkot has been deteriorating as a consequence of the recurrent drought which is in continuation since 2014. Umerkot district has two distinct geographical portions: i.e. the irrigated area in the north and west and the desert in the south and east. 25 sub units of union councils (Dehs) are officially declared as Drought affected area in district of Umerkot. Access to portable water remains of high concern and is intensified by the needs of livestock animals. Moreover, recurring dry spells have forced communities to travel long distances to access water for drinking. Continuous lowering of water table, non-functionality of dug wells and hand pumps, people’s limited capacity of repairing them and absence of any water schemes from Government in these remote and desert areas of Umerkot has aggregated humanitarian crisis. According to the National Disaster Consortium (NDC) assessment 2019, around 3 to 4 million people are affected in Sindh which forms almost 40% of the population in the affected districts. The Humanitarian Country Team through allocated Pakistan Humanitarian Pooled Fund (PHPF) has announced to provide urgent humanitarian assistance for drought affected communities in district of Umerkot and Tharparker in sectors of WASH, Nutrition, Health and Food Security. The proposed project aims to contribute and concentrate on increased access to portable drinking water through installation, rehabilitation and restoration of damaged water sources.

Background:

The Village namely Ratnore Samero is situated in desert area of union council Seekhro, District Umerkot, it is 40 kilometer away from district headquarter, there are 140 households in this village. Mr. Samero Mal is a laborer, he is married and of 50 years, he has 05 children. Mr. Samero shares that in our village there is unavailability of basic needs, infrastructure, remoteness from urban areas and scarcity of water, the education ratio is low, the main source of income is seasonal rain cultivation and livestock while few villagers moved/migrated to barrage areas and big cities of Sindh for labor. Due to drought day by day people are going to be poor of the poorest and unable to meet their daily expenses because their maximum expenses is on food ration and for drinking water.

Before Intervention:

Mr. Samero shares that due to drought there is continuous lowering of water table, damage condition of water reservoirs, non-functionality of dug wells and hand pumps, people’s limited capacity of repairing them and absence of any water schemes from Government in this remote and desert area of Umerkot has aggregated humanitarian crisis. The most vulnerable groups of affected...
population are ultra poor families who have no ownership/access to portable quality drinking water. Under ultra poor category, minority groups are most affected community more vulnerable to time, energy and money consumption. Moreover, due to financially weak position in the society, the villagers are not able to rehabilitate existing water reservoirs therefore they have to wait for their turn after all women well off families fetch water from dug well and hand pumps. Since the many of the hand pumps and dug wells are dysfunctional due to lowering of water table. Villagers share that due to scarcity of water we have been facing so many issues because we have Dug well as a water resource, to get water from deep dug well we have camels and donkeys as we have damaged water reservoir and it has not capacity as well as its floor was totally damaged therefore we are unable to store the rain water. (in drought condition there is shortage of livestock fodder, therefore we expense the money to buy fodder from urban area) 02 persons from each household are reserved to get water from dug well as well as we have practice to rent the tanker for bringing drinking water from urban areas of Umerkot, it expenses a lot we pay 8 thousands to bring tanker of water on weekly bases for that we have groups of 08 households to get water through tanker collectively and discriminate water equally, we have this practice on weekly bases therefore we have maximum expenses are on drinking water therefore we are unable to meet other expenses like: food ration, education and health. Due to scarcity of water the death ratio of livestock animal is increased and day by day we have been lasting the source of income and had a dire need to overcome it.

**After Intervention:**
Mr. Samero shared that SAFWCO launched its WASH interventions in remote areas of district Umerkot with support of UNOCHA. SAFWCO is implementing the project entitled as “Integrated WASH Response for Building Resilience in Drought-Affected Desert Areas of District Umerkot, Sindh.” In this context SAFWCO contributed and concentrated on increased access to portable drinking water through installation, rehabilitation and restoration of damaged water sources. The project increased Rehabilitation of Existing Water Reservoirs to store the water in the villages where the need is quite dire for poor & ultra-poor community. Community local water reservoirs repaired for storage of water aimed at both human and livestock animals. In this pain staking situation of drought affected area of district umerkot to heal the people regarding their basic need of portable water for drinking purpose as well as for animal identified 06 villages where the existing water reservoirs were not in useable condition (damaged or partially damaged) the technical team of engineers visited these villages
for verification and further consideration and process that the water reservoirs are on suitable location and have capacity to restore water for approximately 4 to 5 months after seasonal rain. As well as in these villages there are numerous villages in catchment areas can cover and benefited direct and indirect targeted population. After WASH intervention and rehabilitation of existing water reservoirs wastage of rain water is decreased, the time, energy and money is saved because before it they had to get water from remote areas as well as they had practice to rent the tanker of water from urban areas and they were not able to meet their other needs like food ration, health and education of children due to expenses on drinking water. The main source of income in desert area is seasonal cultivation and livestock due to scarcity of water death ratio of livestock was increased and it became root cause to migrate to barrage areas with their family and livestock. People are very happy because their main problem of drinking water is resolved they have been owning water reservoir with full of ownership.