



Policy Brief **3**

Role of Tanks in Groundwater Management



Restoring Tanks for Groundwater Recharge

Executive Summary

Groundwater is precious, finite but a rechargeable resource. Effective rainwater harvesting measures have to be undertaken by people as was traditionally practised. Tanks play a dual role: they not only provide water for direct irrigation but also help in recharging the groundwater. Over a period of time tanks have not been taken care of sufficiently. Reasons are many: with the availability of free electricity and usage of electric pumps by the individual farmers, there is no incentive to maintain the traditional water bodies. The dependability on tank water is declining due to availability of groundwater and its easy extraction by using powerful electrical gadgets. Better-off farmers who can afford to have their own wells resort to pumping out more water from the tank command area, but other small and marginal farmers who are dependent only on tank irrigation are affected most

as the traditional tank management has become defunct.

There is an urgent need to restore the existing tanks to their former purpose and potential. Judicious use of groundwater and surface water should be advocated keeping in mind the long-term implication of over exploitation of groundwater. Short-term gains should not dictate the long-term ill effects of indiscriminate exploitation of groundwater. On the basis of successful tank rehabilitation programmes of DHAN Foundation across several districts that helped in restoring and recharging the groundwater and the subsequent seminar, which addressed many issues, many recommendations emerged which are discussed in this policy brief. The recommendations have been listed department-wise, which need to be deliberated further.