

PROJECT WELL

DRINKING WATER

FOR WEST BENGAL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
RUDI DUNDAS
AND CHRIS MAJORS



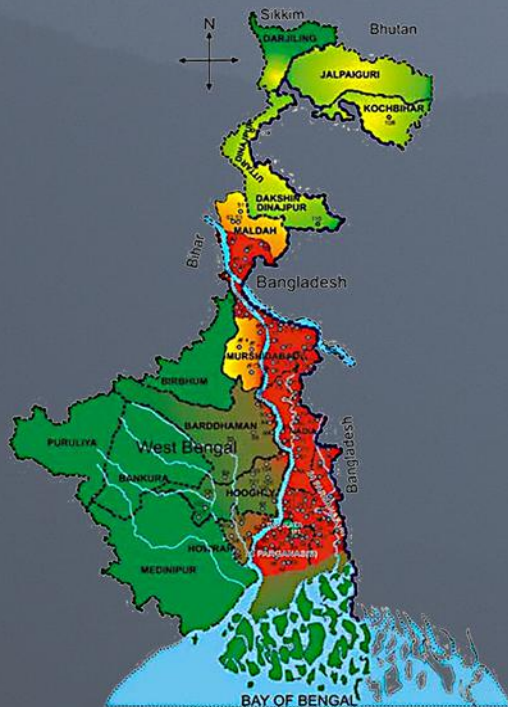


**THE WATER CRISIS IS NOT JUST
ABOUT SCARCITY.**

**INDIA HAS A LOT OF WATER,
BUT SO MUCH OF IT
WE CANNOT DRINK...**



AS THE HIMALAYAS HAVE ERODED
OVER MILLIONS OF YEARS, THE
GANGES AND BRAHMAPUTRA RIVERS
HAVE CARRIED ARSENIC-FILLED
SEDIMENTS INTO THE VALLEYS OF
BANGLADESH AND WEST BENGAL.



GROUNDWATER ARSENIC IN WEST BENGAL

SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

(JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY, INDIA)



6 MILLION PEOPLE

**ARE NOW DRINKING ARSENIC-
CONTAMINATED WATER IN THE NINE
AFFECTED DISTRICTS OF WEST BENGAL**



From 1960 onward, deep borewells were built all over India to improve the sanitary conditions of the drinking water. No one tested for arsenic. In 1983, it was discovered that people were getting sick and dying from drinking arsenic-tainted water.



Since then, studies have shown that arsenic causes liver, lung, skin, bladder and kidney cancers, as well as other diseases such as respiratory illnesses. Children exposed to arsenic develop serious problems in childhood and later in life.



AWKHIL PRAMANIK

Awkhil Pramanik is 67 years old and lives in the village of Bishnupur in West Bengal.

Awkhil is a rickshaw driver and a farmer. He has a small field of his own, but sometimes works for others as a daily laborer.

In 1982, Awkhil became very sick from many years of drinking water from the community borewell. Awkhil was very weak and in constant pain, with cracked palms and lesions on his skin. His brother was also showing signs of disease. Awkhil finally had to stop working.

Awkhil's wife died and his son and daughter had to stop going to school in order to support the family. Awkhil received treatment from a charitable clinic because he could not afford medical treatment from the hospital located in the city, 60 km away. His eldest son is 22, his daughter is 20 and his youngest son is 18. None of them have been able to return to school.



AJINA BIBI

Ajina Bibi's husband had his fingers amputated after gangrene set in during the later stages of cancer. They had been drinking arsenic-contaminated water from their borewell for many years. Her husband eventually became too sick to walk and could no longer drive the rickshaw he had used to support the family. Their children had to drop out of school to earn money.

Since Project Well constructed modern dugwell #PW17 near them in 2004, Ajina Bibi's husband has gotten better and their children have gone back to school. The children do not show any signs of arsenic exposure.

MEHERUNISSA BIBI

Meherunissa Bibi, from the same village as Ajina Bibi, was not so fortunate. Her husband died from arsenic exposure in 2002 after suffering lesions on his hands and fingers. Her children had to drop out of school when their father died, and they now sell firewood in the market.

The black spots that were on her sons' legs before the new dugwell was installed have not gotten worse since they started drinking safe water.



INSTALLATION



PROJECT WELL

THROUGH YEARS OF RESEARCH AND FIELDWORK, PROJECT WELL HAS DEVELOPED THE INFRASTRUCTURE TO INSTALL INEXPENSIVE BORE-DUGWELLS THAT PROVIDE ARSENIC-SAFE DRINKING WATER.



Nonprofit organization, Project Well, has worked with prominent geologists and engineers in India and the United States to develop an innovative system using PVC pipes to bore up to 27 feet into the earth, where arsenic has been oxidized to minimal levels.



One reason there is scarcity of drinking water in developing countries is poor project maintenance: organizations leave after building water projects, and the projects fall into disarray. Project Well has a local staff of trained field workers and engineers who supervise and help villagers maintain their own wells.



EDUCATION





The local field workers hold village meetings, distribute pamphlets and talk to villagers one-on-one to help them understand the importance of having their water tested for arsenic. They help communities apply for safe water wells and visit schools to teach children about arsenic exposure.

Educating the children is crucial to solving the problem of arsenic in West Bengal.



**Biswajit Karmakar, Dennis Baroi, Laltu Midya, Paramita Guha, Farida Bibi
and Asit Mondol**

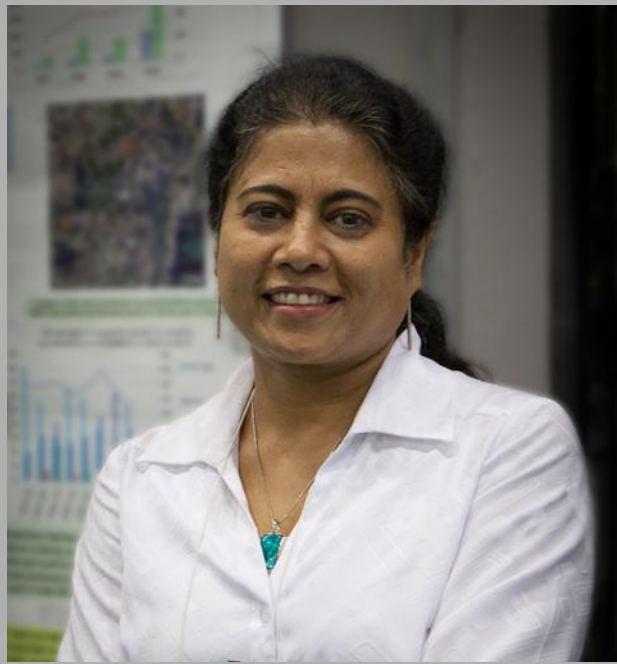
**AQUA WELFARE
SOCIETY**

**is Project Well's
partner in India**

Dear Well Wishers,

We are thankful to our major donor, Blue Planet Network and other private donors who have enabled us to provide safe drinking water to more than 3500 villagers in West Bengal, India. We would also like to acknowledge the continuous work and support provided by our partner NGO, Aqua Welfare Society, based near Kolkata.

Your tax-deductible generous contribution would make a big difference to those who live in the villages.



MEERA HIRA-SMITH, FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR

80% of all Project Well funds go directly to the villages and the rest goes to our local partner staff. Project Well does not have any administrative costs in the United States.

Not only does Project Well provide safe water, we also conduct educational programs to teach communities about water-borne diseases and proper sanitation and hygiene practices. Sponsors are acknowledged at the dugwell site with an embedded marble plaque.

Thanking you,

Meera M Hira-Smith



JANE LIAW, SECRETARY

Please make checks payable to:

PROJECT WELL

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**\$1000 IS THE COST OF A
BORE-DUGWELL
WHICH WILL PROVIDE SAFE
DRINKING WATER
FOR MORE THAN 100 PEOPLE**

PLEASE DONATE!

www.projectwellusa.org

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