Impact Assessment Report
Lake Restoration Program

Implementing Partner - Environmentalist Foundation of India (EFI)

FY 24-25

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Acknowledgement

This impact assessment report is the result of the collective efforts and cooperation of multiple stakeholders who contributed their time, knowledge, and perspectives throughout the assessment process. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to HDB Financial Services for commissioning this study and for its continued commitment to promoting environmental sustainability through initiatives focused on restoring urban and peri-urban water bodies. The organisation's guidance and support at various stages of the assessment helped shape both the scope and analytical direction of the study.
We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Environmentalist Foundation of India, the implementing partner for the Lake Restoration project, for its consistent cooperation and openness during the assessment. The team facilitated field visits to restored lake sites, shared project documentation, supported stakeholder interactions, and provided valuable insights into the operational and contextual aspects of programme implementation. Their on-ground experience and willingness to engage candidly with the assessment team greatly enriched the quality of findings and analysis.

We are especially grateful to the community members and local stakeholders living around the restored lakes who participated in discussions and interactions during the field visits. Many of them shared their observations, experiences, and concerns related to the condition and use of these water bodies. Their perspectives form the core of this assessment, grounding the analysis in local realities and highlighting the broader environmental and social significance of restoring freshwater ecosystems. We also acknowledge the support received from local representatives and civic stakeholders who shared their perspectives on lake conservation, ecological restoration, and the importance of maintaining public water resources.

The assessment would not have been possible without the dedication of the field investigators and research team members involved in site verification, ecological observations, data validation, analysis, and report preparation. Their diligence, sensitivity in engaging with communities, and commitment to maintaining data quality ensured that the findings presented in this report are robust and credible.

Finally, we thank all individuals and organisations who contributed, directly or indirectly, to this assessment. Their collective support has enabled the documentation of important insights and learnings that can inform future environmental restoration initiatives.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Form
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EFI	Environmental Foundation of India
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GP	Gram Panchayat
KII	Key Informant Interview
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
SBM	Swachh Bharat Mission
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
ULB	Urban Local Body

Executive Summary

Waterbodies across India have experienced significant degradation due to siltation, waste dumping, invasive vegetation, and unplanned development, reducing their capacity to store water, recharge groundwater, and support ecosystems. In this context, restoration of traditional waterbodies has emerged as a critical approach to strengthening local water security and environmental resilience.

The lake restoration initiative, implemented in partnership with the Environmental Foundation of India, covered multiple waterbodies across Vadodara (Panjrapole), Vembakkam (Chengalpattu), Nagpur and Gurugram, focusing on restoring ecological and functional integrity through desilting, waste removal, weed clearance, bund strengthening, and improved water retention, alongside community engagement. The intervention collectively enhanced water storage potential and usability, benefiting nearby communities through improved access, environmental conditions, and ancillary livelihood support.

The assessment evaluated the programme across OECD-DAC criteria—relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability—drawing on primary research with 45+ community respondents, 3 Sarpanch interviews, stakeholder consultations, focus group discussions, and field observations across 3 sites, complemented by secondary data review.

Findings indicate that the programme addressed a clear and locally relevant need. Waterbodies that were previously polluted and underutilised now show visible improvements in water retention, cleanliness, and accessibility. In Gurugram, restored ponds contributed to reduced waterlogging and improved usability of surrounding areas; in Vembakkam, enhanced water retention supported local water availability; while in Vadodara, improved site conditions led to increased community usage and cleaner surroundings.

The programme demonstrates strong effectiveness in delivering tangible environmental improvements. A majority of respondents reported improved water storage, cleaner surroundings, and reduced flooding, alongside increased community interaction with restored spaces. Early behavioural shifts, particularly reduced waste dumping and greater awareness, were also observed, though these require continued reinforcement.

Sustainability remains an evolving dimension. While there is a shared sense of responsibility among communities and local institutions, long-term outcomes will depend on consistent maintenance, stronger waste management systems, and continued community participation.

Revived waterbodies led to improved water security, cleaner environments, and renewed community interaction with these spaces.

Key findings and impact

The programme has improved the ecological condition and usability of waterbodies across locations. By enhancing water retention, reducing pollution, and improving surroundings, it has strengthened local water security and supported needs such as groundwater recharge, livestock, and agriculture. The approach combines technical restoration with community engagement, demonstrating the potential for sustained environmental and social value.

Way Forward

The assessment highlights the importance of strengthening long-term sustainability mechanisms to ensure that restoration gains are maintained. Regular maintenance, including periodic cleaning, weed removal, and monitoring, will be critical to sustaining pond functionality. Strengthening waste management systems and preventing dumping through improved infrastructure and enforcement can further protect restored sites.

Continued community engagement will be essential to build ownership and encourage responsible use. Awareness initiatives, local participation in maintenance activities, and clearer accountability for upkeep can support long-term stewardship. In addition, small enhancements such as plantation, improved fencing, and better monitoring systems can further improve ecological outcomes and community value.

Together, these measures can help transition the initiative from restoration-focused efforts to sustained, community-driven management of waterbodies.

Perceived Improvement in Waterbodies

83%

reported improved water storage, cleanliness, or usability

Water Security & Livelihood Linkages

81%

reported benefits to agriculture (soil moisture, crop yield, reduced damage)

Increased Community Use & Interaction

70%

noted increased usage of pond areas (livestock, daily activities, recreation)

Reduced Environmental Risk

65%

respondents reported reduction in flooding / waterlogging in surrounding areas

Community Satisfaction

89%

respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with restoration outcomes

Sustainability Outlook

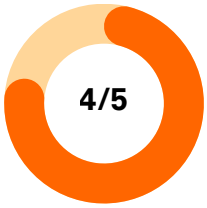
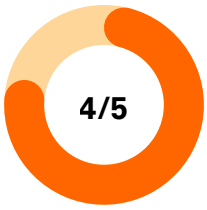
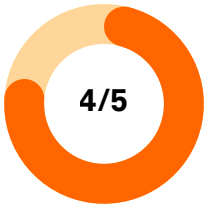
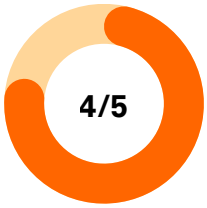
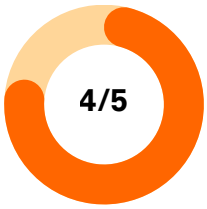
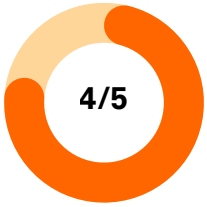
78%

respondents expressed confidence that the waterbody will remain in good condition with regular maintenance

SDGs Covered

SDG	Target	Contribution Pathway
	6.6 – Protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including lakes and wetlands.	Through activities such as desilting, debris removal, bund strengthening, and inlet–outlet repair, the programme contributes to the restoration and long-term sustainability of urban and peri-urban freshwater ecosystems.
	11.7 – Provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces.	By reviving degraded lakes and improving the cleanliness and safety of surrounding areas, the intervention enhances the ecological and recreational value of public water bodies for nearby communities.
	13.1 – Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards.	By improving water retention capacity and restoring natural ecosystems, the programme supports urban climate resilience and contributes to improved water management.

Program Ratings - Pond Restoration Program

PARAMETER	KEY OBSERVATIONS	SCORES
Relevance	Addresses a clear need, with a majority reporting improved water storage, cleanliness, and usability. Restoration of degraded waterbodies aligns with local priorities on water security and environmental improvement.	
Coherence	Aligned with priorities on water conservation and groundwater recharge. Outcomes such as improved water retention, reduced waterlogging in some areas, and increased community use reflect strong local alignment.	
Effectiveness	Majority reported improved water storage (89%) and cleaner surroundings (83%), with enhanced usability. Field observations confirmed visible improvements, with some variation across sites.	
Efficiency	Timely implementation with visible outcomes across sites. Effective use of resources, though convergence with government schemes can be strengthened.	
Impact	81% reported increased community use, and 83% noted improved environmental conditions. Among farmers (n=15), 67% reported reduced crop damage, with gains in yield (40%) and soil moisture (33%).	
Sustainability	Early signs of ownership and behavioural change observed. Long-term impact depends on maintenance systems, waste management, and institutional accountability.	
Overall	Strong performance across relevance, effectiveness, and impact, with clear environmental and community benefits. Sustainability systems remain key to long-term success.	

**Ratings are based on the OECD-DAC five-point performance rating scale, where 5 = Very High and 1 = Very Low. For detailed rating methodology, refer to the OECD-DAC Framework section on Page 15.*

Introduction

Context Setting

As per national estimates, India has over 5 million waterbodies, many of which are affected by siltation, pollution, and encroachment, reducing their effectiveness in supporting water security and ecological balance.

Waterbodies such as lakes and ponds have historically played a critical role in sustaining local ecosystems and community livelihoods, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas. They support groundwater recharge, provide water for domestic use, livestock, and agriculture, and help regulate local hydrology by mitigating flooding during monsoons. In addition, these ecosystems contribute to biodiversity, microclimate regulation, and overall environmental health.

However, over time, a combination of rapid urbanisation, unplanned development, weak governance, and poor waste management practices has led to widespread degradation of these waterbodies. Many have experienced reduced depth due to silt accumulation, proliferation of invasive vegetation, and increased dumping of solid and liquid waste. As a result, their capacity to store water, recharge groundwater, and serve community needs has significantly declined. This has contributed to a growing imbalance, where communities face water scarcity during dry periods and waterlogging or flooding during the monsoon.

KEY CHALLENGES IN WATER BODY MANAGEMENT

The degradation of waterbodies is closely linked to systemic and behavioural challenges. Limited routine maintenance, unclear ownership and accountability, and weak enforcement of regulations often result in neglect and encroachment. In many cases, absence of effective waste management systems leads to continued dumping, further deteriorating water quality.

> Over 60% of India's waterbodies are estimated to be degraded or under stress, affecting their ability to support water security and ecological balance.

Additionally, community engagement with waterbodies has declined over time, reducing collective responsibility for their upkeep. While these resources are shared assets, lack of awareness and structured participation mechanisms often limits local stewardship. These challenges not only affect the ecological health of waterbodies but also constrain their ability to deliver sustained benefits to communities.

EMERGING FOCUS ON INTEGRATED POND RESTORATION

In response, pond restoration has emerged as a key strategy to address both environmental degradation and local water security challenges. Restoration efforts focus on reviving the ecological and functional integrity of waterbodies through interventions such as desilting, waste removal, weed clearance, strengthening of embankments, and improving water retention capacity.

There is increasing recognition that sustainable outcomes require moving beyond one-time restoration to a more integrated approach. This includes strengthening community awareness, enabling local participation, and aligning restoration efforts with local governance systems to ensure continued maintenance and protection.

Such approaches reflect a broader shift towards ecosystem-based management, where technical restoration is complemented by social processes that build ownership and accountability. By combining physical improvements with community engagement, pond restoration initiatives have the potential to create long-term environmental, social, and livelihood benefits.

About the Program

Phase wise implementation

Phase 1

Mobilisation and Baseline:
Site selection and assessment of pond condition and community use.

Phase 2

Restoration Execution:
Desilting, waste removal, weed clearance, and structural strengthening.

Phase 3

Ecological Improvement:
Improving surroundings through plantation and site development.

Phase 4

Community Engagement and Sustainability:
Awareness, community participation, and support for long-term maintenance.

The pond Restoration Program supported by HDB Financial Services was designed as an environmental and community-focused initiative aimed at improving the ecological health and functional capacity of traditional waterbodies. The project was implemented across multiple locations, including Vadodara (Panjrapole), Vembakkam (Chengalpattu), and selected ponds in Gurugram, each representing different local contexts and water management challenges.

The project adopted an integrated restoration approach, recognising that technical interventions alone are insufficient without sustained community involvement and local stewardship. Accordingly, the initiative combined scientific restoration methods—such as desilting, waste removal, weed clearance, and structural strengthening—with efforts to improve surrounding environments and build community awareness.

Through this approach, the project aimed to restore the natural functions of waterbodies, enhance water retention and groundwater recharge, and improve their usability for community needs such as livestock, agriculture, and local environmental benefits. At the same time, the initiative sought to promote community ownership and responsible usage, contributing to the long-term sustainability of these shared natural resources.

About the Organizations

HDB Financial Services

HDB Financial Services (HDBFS) is a leading non-banking financial company (NBFC) in India and a subsidiary of HDFC Bank. Incorporated in 2007, the company provides a wide range of secured and unsecured lending solutions to individual and business clients across the country. With an extensive branch network spanning multiple states and union territories, HDBFS serves millions of customers, particularly focusing on underserved and emerging segments of the population. Through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, the organisation supports programmes that promote healthcare access, environmental sustainability, community development, and livelihood enhancement for vulnerable communities across India.

Environmentalist Foundation of India (EFI)

Environmentalist Foundation of India (EFI) is a conservation organisation dedicated to the restoration of degraded freshwater ecosystems across India. The organisation focuses on reviving urban and peri-urban lakes and wetlands through scientific restoration methods including desilting, debris removal, strengthening of lake bunds, and repair of inlet–outlet systems. EFI also emphasises community engagement and ecological awareness to ensure the long-term protection and stewardship of restored water bodies.

Pond Restroration Program

The pond restoration initiative by HDB Financial Services (HDBFS) is a focused environmental intervention aimed at reviving degraded ponds and lakes to improve local water security and ecological health. Implemented in partnership with the Environmental Foundation of India, the programme targets waterbodies affected by siltation, waste dumping, and neglect, which have reduced their capacity to store water and support surrounding communities. The initiative adopts a comprehensive restoration approach, including desilting, waste removal, weed clearance, and bund strengthening to enhance water retention and structural stability. These technical efforts are complemented by site-level improvements and community engagement to encourage responsible use and prevent re-contamination. By restoring the functional and ecological integrity of waterbodies, the programme seeks to improve water availability, support groundwater recharge, and enhance usability for activities such as livestock and daily needs. The initiative reflects a practical, replicable model that combines ecological restoration with community participation to generate sustained environmental and social benefits.

APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

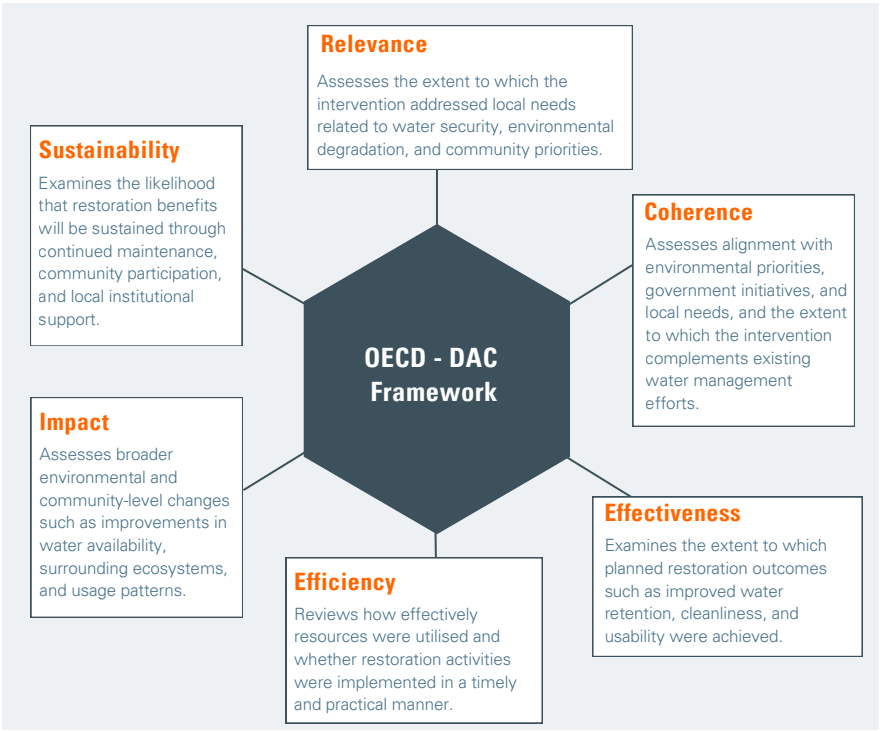
Approach & Methodology

The impact assessment of the pond Restoration Program was undertaken using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to capture a comprehensive understanding of implementation and outcomes. The assessment focused on examining how restoration activities were carried out across sites, how communities engaged with the restored waterbodies, and the extent to which the initiative contributed to improvements in water availability, environmental conditions, and usability. Emphasis was placed on triangulating findings from multiple sources to ensure balanced and credible insights.

Both secondary and primary data sources informed the assessment. Program documents, restoration records, and site-level information were reviewed to understand design, scope, and implementation across locations. This was complemented by field visits, community surveys, focus group discussions, observation checklists, and interviews with implementing partners and local stakeholders to capture on-ground realities, community perceptions, and sustainability considerations. Detailed tools and analytical approaches are presented in the study deep-dive section.

Community members during Focus Group Discussions in Vadodara

OECD DAC Dimensions



OECD–DAC Framework

The impact assessment was guided by the OECD–DAC evaluation framework to ensure a structured and widely accepted approach to assessing programme performance and outcomes. The framework provided a systematic lens to examine the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the pond Restoration Program. Using these dimensions, the assessment reviewed the design and implementation of restoration activities, as well as their contribution to improving water availability, environmental conditions, and community use of restored waterbodies.

Theory of Change

The Theory of Change for the Handicraft Cluster Development Programme is centred on building organised production systems and strong market and institutional linkages. By forming functional clusters, strengthening local groups, standardising production processes, and connecting artisans to formal markets, the programme aims to transform traditional skills into sustainable, market-linked livelihoods and integrate artisans into stable value chains

Inputs

- Financial support from HDB Financial Services
- Technical expertise of implementing partners
- Engagement of field teams and community stakeholders

Activities

- Site identification and baseline assessment
- Desilting, waste removal, and weed clearance
- Strengthening of bunds and water retention structures
- Improvement of surrounding areas and ecological conditions
- Community engagement and awareness generation

Outputs

- Restored and structurally improved waterbodies
- Enhanced water storage and cleaner surroundings
- Improved accessibility and usability of sites
- Increased community awareness and participation

Outcomes

- Improved water retention and groundwater recharge
- Reduced flooding and waterlogging in surrounding areas
- Increased community use for livestock, agriculture, and local needs
- Improved environmental conditions and local biodiversity

Impact

- Strengthened local water security and resource availability
- Improved environmental resilience and ecosystem health
- Reduced dependence on external water sources
- Enhanced community ownership and management of waterbodies

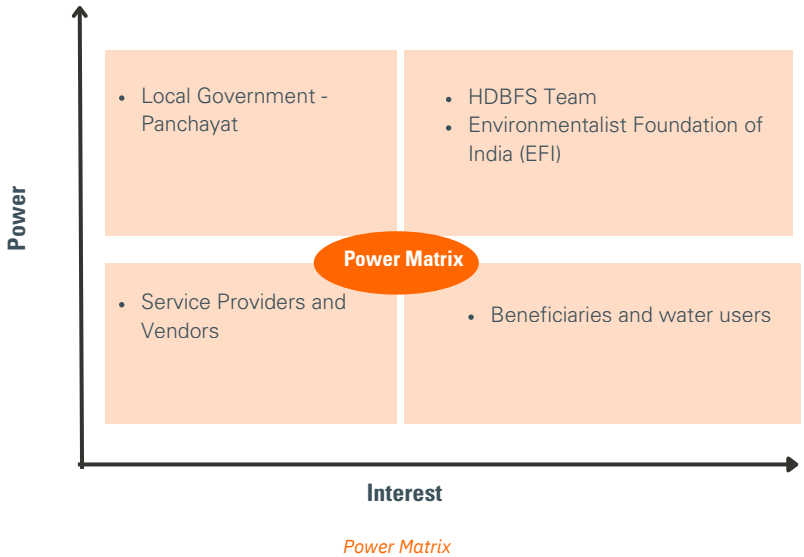
Restored pond in Haryana

Stakeholders Involved

The pond Restoration Program involved multiple stakeholders operating at different levels, ranging from community members to institutional and implementation partners. Each stakeholder played a distinct role in planning, execution, maintenance, and community engagement. The stakeholders have been grouped into micro, meso, and macro levels based on their proximity to the waterbodies and their role in implementation and oversight.

TABLE 1 Stakeholder Mapping

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	ROLE
Members / Water Users	Primary stakeholders; use the waterbodies for daily needs and contribute to upkeep through responsible usage and local participation
Local Communities / Village Institutions (Panchayats / RWAs)	Support protection, maintenance, and local coordination; play a role in ensuring long-term sustainability
Implementing Partner (Environmental Foundation of India)	Led planning and execution of restoration activities, including technical design, desilting, waste removal, and community engagement
Field Teams and Site Coordinators	Facilitated on-ground implementation, coordinated with communities, and supported monitoring and follow-ups
HDB Financial Services	Provided financial support, strategic direction, and overall programme oversight



Power Matrix

The Power–Interest Matrix was used to assess the influence and engagement of different stakeholders in the project. Stakeholders with high power and high interest, such as HDB Financial Services and the implementing partner, played a central role in project design, decision-making, and execution. Stakeholders with high interest but relatively lower power, such as community members, were closely involved in usage, upkeep, and day-to-day interaction with the waterbodies. Local authorities and governance bodies played a critical intermediary role in enabling maintenance and long-term sustainability. This mapping helped clarify roles, strengthen coordination, and support more effective implementation and stewardship across stakeholder groups.

Assessment - Deep Dive

TABLE 2 Stakeholder Coverage and Methods Used

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT	METHOD USED	SAMPLE / COVERAGE
Beneficiaries (Community Members)	Capture community perceptions on pond conditions, usage, and changes post-restoration	Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussions	45
Sarpanch	Understand local governance perspectives, maintenance practices, and community engagement	Key Informant Interviews	3
EFI Team	Document implementation approach, technical processes, and programme oversight	Key Informant Interviews	1
Pond Site Visits	Observe physical condition, restoration quality, and on-ground utilisation of waterbodies	Observations	6

To understand on-ground implementation and outcomes of the pond restoration initiative, the assessment adopted a focused, field-based approach. It combined community surveys, focus group discussions, site observations, and key informant interviews to capture changes in ecological conditions, usage patterns, and community perceptions.

The assessment prioritised direct engagement with local residents, Panchayat representatives, and implementation teams to validate observed changes and understand operational processes. This mixed-methods approach enabled triangulation of findings, capturing both quantitative trends and qualitative insights related to water availability, environmental improvements, and community interaction.

Beneficiaries were selected from active project sites across restored waterbodies. This enabled the assessment to capture real-time feedback from community members, directly experiencing changes in pond conditions and usage, thereby reducing recall bias and reflecting current implementation outcomes.

Local vendor in conversation with enumerator in Vadodara

Ethical Considerations

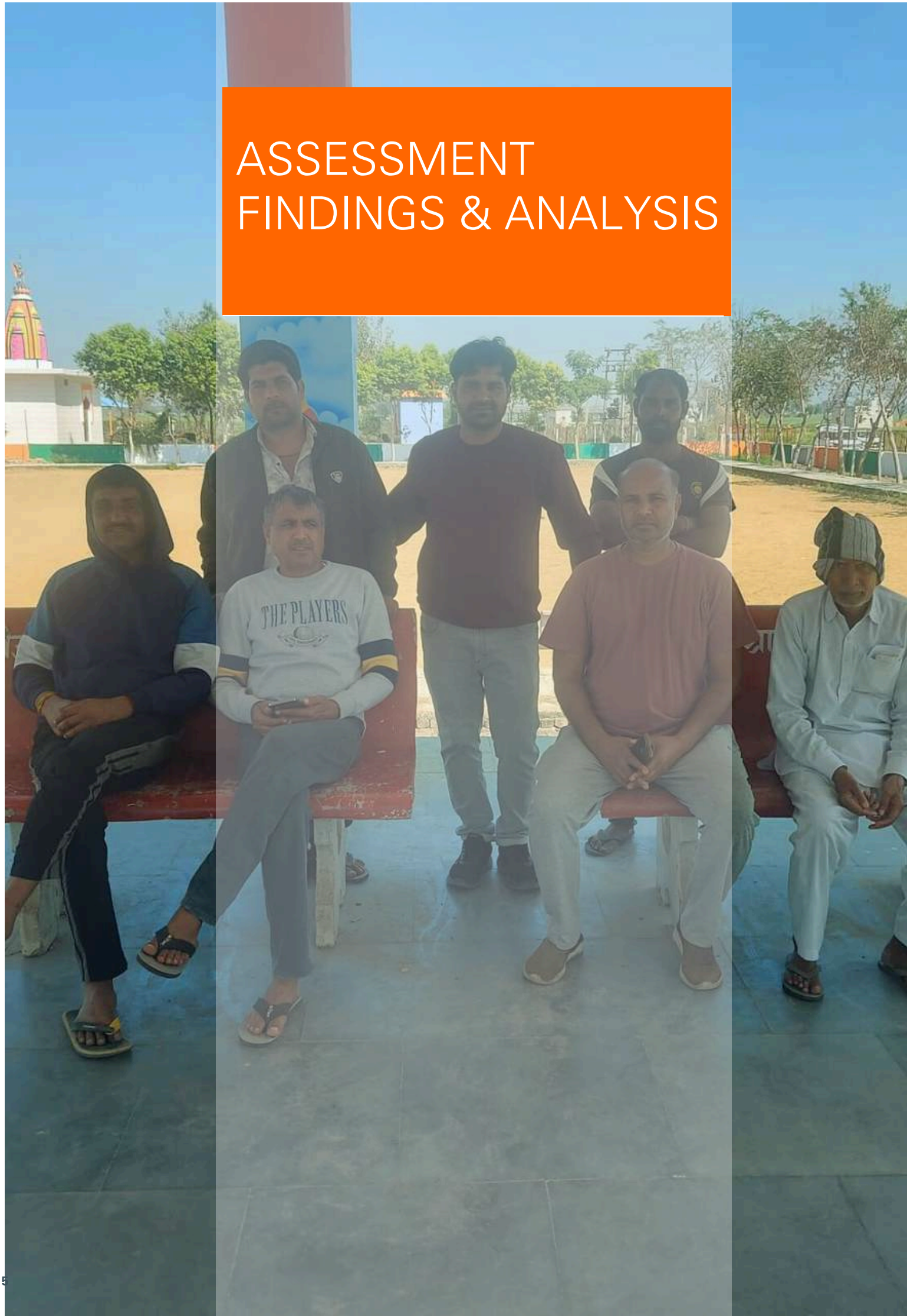
- The purpose of the assessment was clearly explained to all respondents, and verbal consent was obtained before surveys, discussions, and interviews.
- Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to skip questions or withdraw at any stage.
- All personal information was kept confidential, and no identifying details were included in the report.
- Findings were presented in aggregated form to protect individual privacy.
- During site visits and observations, care was taken to avoid disruption of routine services and maintain respondent confidentiality.

Study Challenges

- Seasonal variations: In some locations, water levels were affected by seasonal conditions, with a few waterbodies observed in a dry or low-water state during field visits, influencing assessment of usage and impact.
- Dependence on self-reported data: Certain insights, particularly related to perceived changes in water availability and benefits, are based on community feedback and may involve minor variations despite cross-verification.

Restored community pond in Gurugram

ASSESSMENT FINDINGS & ANALYSIS



This section presents the key findings of the impact assessment and analyses how the pond restoration initiative has influenced environmental conditions, community usage, and local perceptions across project locations. The analysis is structured around the OECD–DAC evaluation dimensions—relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability—and draws on a combination of community surveys, field observations, focus group discussions, and stakeholder consultations.

Together, these findings provide an integrated understanding of programme performance, quality of implementation, and the nature of changes experienced at the community level, highlighting both the strengths of the intervention and areas requiring continued attention.

Community Context and Baseline Conditions

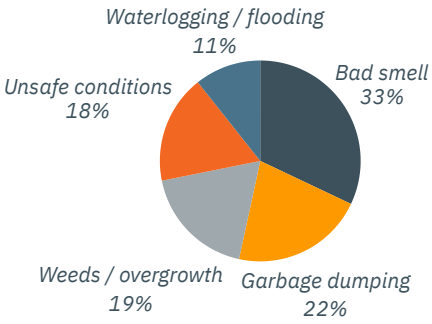
A significant proportion of respondents reported long-term association with the waterbodies, with many residing in the area for over a decade. This indicates that community perceptions are based on sustained observation of changing environmental conditions, strengthening the reliability of before–after comparisons.

Prior to restoration, waterbodies across locations were widely described as degraded and underutilised. Common issues included garbage dumping, foul odour, excessive weed growth, waterlogging, and unsafe surroundings. In some cases, waterbodies had become functionally unusable or were perceived as neglected public spaces. These conditions limited their role in supporting groundwater recharge, local ecosystems, and community use.

The baseline context highlights that waterbodies, despite their deterioration, remained important environmental and community assets. The persistence of these challenges across locations underscores the relevance of restoration efforts in addressing both ecological degradation and everyday community needs, including water management, environmental quality, and local usability.

Relevance

The assessment strongly indicates that the intervention addressed a critical and widely felt local need across all project locations. Prior to restoration, waterbodies were consistently described as degraded and underutilised, with garbage dumping, foul odour, weed infestation, and waterlogging emerging as the most common issues across geographies. In several cases, waterbodies had become unsafe or completely unusable, with some respondents noting dried or abandoned conditions.



Beneficiary Perception - Pre-Intervention Issues

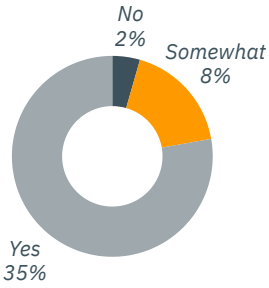
100% respondents across locations acknowledged the need for and importance of restoration, with most indicating that the intervention aligned well with local development needs. The high level of perceived importance reflects both environmental distress and dependence of communities on these water resources for multiple uses, including groundwater recharge, livestock, and local ecological balance.

> “Earlier, the pond was neglected and unusable, but now it has become cleaner, more useful, and beneficial for the community.

Babli Kumar, 43, Sarpanch, Turkapur Villages

Post-restoration responses show strong alignment between intervention design and local expectations. Improvements such as cleaner surroundings, enhanced water storage, and better usability directly correspond to the problems identified earlier. This indicates that the programme was not only relevant in intent but also appropriately designed to respond to context-specific challenges.

However, a small proportion of respondents expressed partial alignment or uncertainty, particularly in locations where visible improvements were limited or where expectations (such as recreational infrastructure or regular maintenance) extended beyond the scope of the intervention.



Alignment with Local Needs

The intervention demonstrates high contextual relevance, with strong alignment between identified community needs and restoration outcomes, forming a solid foundation for acceptance and utilisation.

Coherence

The assessment finds strong coherence of the programme with national priorities, local development needs, and complementary initiatives in water conservation and environmental management. The intervention aligns well with government-led efforts such as waterbody rejuvenation, groundwater recharge, and climate resilience, while also complementing local Panchayat-level priorities around water access, sanitation, and flood management.

At the local level, restoration efforts were found to be consistent with community needs, particularly in addressing water scarcity, unmanaged waste disposal, and underutilised common land. Across locations, restored waterbodies contributed to improved water availability, reduced waterlogging in some areas, and increased community use, reflecting alignment with diverse local needs.

> Majority of respondents reported that restoration outcomes align closely with both environmental and community priorities, indicating strong coherence with local needs and broader policy objectives.

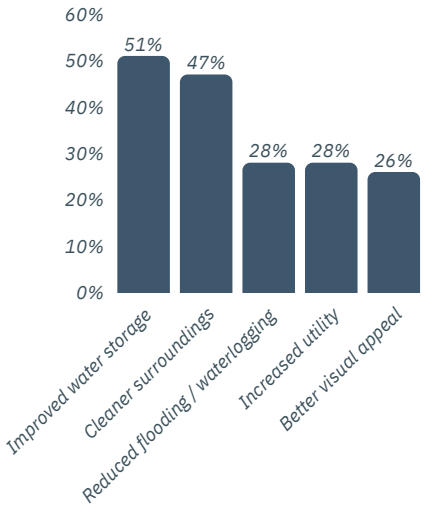
The programme also demonstrates internal coherence through its integrated approach combining technical restoration (desilting, bund strengthening) with community engagement ensuring that physical improvements are supported by behavioural change and local ownership. Additional opportunities to further strengthen convergence with government schemes (e.g., MGNREGA for maintenance, SBM for waste management) to enhance long-term sustainability.

Effectiveness

The programme has been largely effective in achieving its intended outputs and immediate outcomes. A significant proportion of respondents reported visible and functional improvements across waterbodies, particularly in terms of:

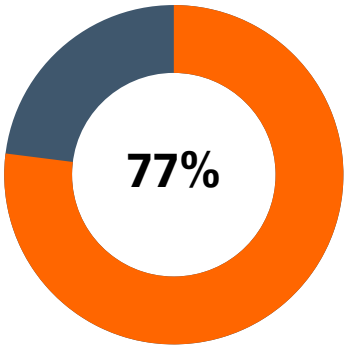
- Cleanliness and reduction in waste accumulation
- Improved water retention capacity
- Enhanced safety and visual appeal
- Increased usage of surrounding areas
- Increased usage of water in livestock feeding and agricultural activities

Across locations, cleaner surroundings and improved water storage emerged as the most consistently reported changes. In several cases, respondents also noted increased community presence and usage, indicating a shift from neglected to functional public spaces.



Notable Changes across Sites

Satisfaction levels further underscore the programme's effectiveness, with most respondents expressing positive views on the current condition of the waterbodies. Improvements were not only visible but also experienced in day-to-day use, with many describing the overall environment as noticeably better than before.



Beneficiaries Satisfied with the Pond Condition Post Intervention

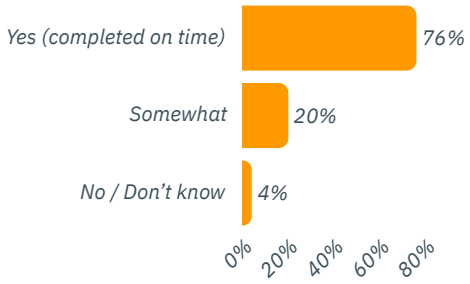
At the same time, a small proportion of respondents reported limited or gradual change in certain locations. These variations point to the influence of site-specific factors such as water availability, maintenance practices, and local usage patterns, highlighting the need for continued attention to ensure more consistent outcomes across all sites.

SGS Team conducting FGD with beneficiaries and Sarpanch

Efficiency

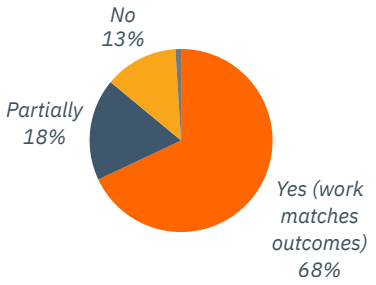
The programme demonstrates a generally strong level of implementation efficiency, particularly in translating technical inputs into visible and functional outcomes within a reasonable timeframe. A majority of respondents indicated that restoration activities were completed in a timely manner, with improvements becoming evident soon after implementation. This reflects effective planning, coordination, and on-ground execution across locations.

Efficiency is also reflected in the programme's ability to deliver tangible and immediate outputs, including desilting, waste removal, and structural strengthening, which directly improved water retention and usability. These interventions resulted in visible environmental gains without significant disruption to local communities, indicating well-managed execution processes.



Timeliness of Activity Completion

At the same time, some variation in responses suggests that perceptions of efficiency were not entirely uniform. A section of respondents reported being "somewhat" satisfied or uncertain about timelines and the alignment between work done and outcomes achieved. This points to the importance of strengthening last-mile communication and community visibility around processes, ensuring that implementation efforts are clearly understood alongside the results.



Alignment with Outcomes

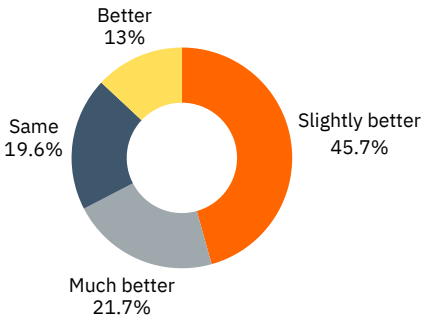
Overall, the programme reflects an efficient delivery model, where timely execution, practical interventions, and observable improvements have contributed to positive community perceptions, while also highlighting opportunities to further strengthen consistency and communication across sites.

Impact

The intervention has generated multi-dimensional impacts, extending beyond visible physical improvements to deeper environmental, social, and livelihood-related outcomes across project locations. Findings suggest that restored waterbodies are not only functioning better ecologically but are also being reintegrated into everyday community life in meaningful ways.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

A substantial proportion of respondents reported improvements in the ecological performance of the waterbodies. Enhanced water retention has contributed to perceived improvements in groundwater availability, with several respondents noting positive changes in wells and borewells. At the same time, reduction in flooding and waterlogging during the monsoon was observed in multiple locations, indicating improved water regulation capacity.

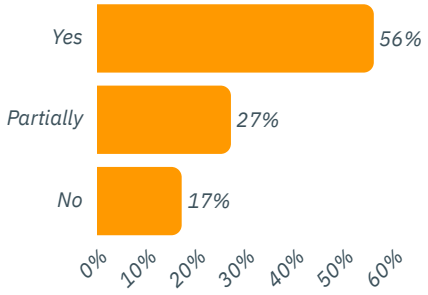


Perception of Environmental Condition

There were also early signs of ecological recovery, including increased presence of birds, aquatic life, and surrounding vegetation. While these changes are still evolving, they reflect a gradual restoration of natural systems and improved environmental conditions around the waterbodies.

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

The restoration has led to a visible shift in how communities interact with these spaces. Many respondents noted that waterbodies are now cleaner, safer, and more accessible, resulting in increased community usage and engagement. In several locations, restored sites have begun to function as informal community spaces, contributing to improved local environments.



Reduction in Encroachment or Dumping of Waste due to Fencing/Bunding

There are also emerging behavioural changes, particularly around reduced waste dumping and greater awareness of maintaining cleanliness. Although not yet uniform across all sites, these shifts indicate growing community ownership and a transition from neglect to more responsible usage.

LIVELIHOOD AND LOCAL BENEFITS

Beyond environmental improvements, respondents highlighted tangible livelihood-related benefits, especially in rural and peri-urban locations. Improved water availability has supported better soil moisture conditions, reduced crop damage in some cases, and contributed to more stable agricultural outcomes for farmers.

Farmers reported better soil moisture

Farmers reported better crop yeild

Farmers reported reduced crop damage

Additionally, reduced waterlogging has helped minimise disruptions to daily life and local economic activities. While these benefits vary by location, they point to the broader role of restored waterbodies in supporting local resilience, productivity, and environmental sustainability.

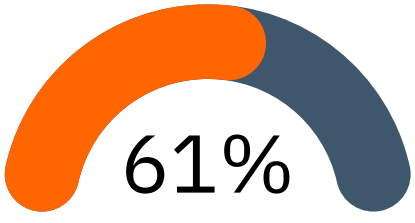
Sustainability

Sustainability emerges as an important and evolving dimension of the programme, with early indicators suggesting a foundation for long-term outcomes, alongside the need for continued strengthening of systems and ownership.

INSTITUTIONAL AND OWNERSHIP ASPECTS

The assessment indicates a shared understanding of responsibility for maintaining restored waterbodies, with respondents pointing to local government, community groups, and joint ownership models. This reflects a distributed ownership structure, where multiple stakeholders recognise their role in sustaining outcomes.

While this shared perception is a positive sign, it also highlights the opportunity to further formalise roles, responsibilities, and maintenance mechanisms to ensure consistency across locations. Strengthening coordination between local institutions and communities can help translate this intent into more structured and reliable upkeep systems.



Community members affirmed taking maintenance responsibilities - fully or partially

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

There are early but visible signs of community engagement, with some respondents reporting participation in clean-up activities, awareness efforts, and informal monitoring. In addition, behavioural shifts—such as reduced waste dumping and increased sensitivity towards cleanliness—indicate growing community ownership of these spaces.

However, participation levels vary across locations, suggesting that continued engagement and awareness efforts will be important to deepen and sustain these behavioural changes over time.

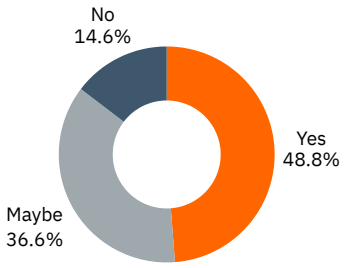
LONG-TERM VIABILITY OF OUTCOMES

Most respondents expressed cautious optimism about the future condition of the waterbodies, with many indicating that they are likely to remain in good condition if current efforts are maintained. At the same time, suggestions such as regular cleaning, tree plantation, fencing, and improved waste management highlight practical pathways for sustaining gains.

> If we continue to take responsibility and maintain it regularly, this pond will remain clean and useful for the community in the long run.

Jayapal, 62, Community Member, Vembakkam

However, participation levels vary across locations, suggesting that continued engagement and awareness efforts will be important to deepen and sustain these behavioural changes over time.



Condition of pond perceived to remain good in next few years

Overall, the programme demonstrates a balanced approach to sustainability, where technical restoration has been complemented by emerging community engagement. Strengthening maintenance systems, institutional clarity, and local stewardship will be key to ensuring that the observed environmental and social benefits are sustained over the long term.

Key learnings & Reccomendations

Deepen Community Ownership and Participation

The programme has initiated positive behavioural shifts; however, community participation in maintenance remains uneven. Structured engagement through awareness drives, local committees, and periodic clean-up activities can strengthen ownership and promote more consistent stewardship across sites.

Strengthen Post-Restoration Maintenance Systems

While restoration has led to visible improvements, long-term outcomes will depend on regular maintenance such as desilting, waste removal, and vegetation management. Establishing clear maintenance plans, supported by local authorities and community groups, can help ensure that restored waterbodies do not revert to previous conditions.

Restored pond in Gurugram

Conclusion

The assessment underscores that the waterbody restoration initiative has delivered clear and tangible improvements in ecological condition, water availability, and community use across project locations. By transforming degraded and underutilised waterbodies into functional assets, the programme has addressed critical local challenges related to water security, environmental degradation, and public space utilisation.

The initiative demonstrates strong relevance and effectiveness, with visible gains in water retention, cleaner surroundings, and increased community interaction. Emerging benefits for agriculture, livestock, and local environmental conditions further reinforce the programme's broader livelihood and ecosystem value. Early behavioural shifts, particularly around reduced waste dumping and improved awareness, indicate positive momentum towards sustainable usage.

A key strength of the programme lies in its integrated approach, combining technical restoration with community engagement. This has enabled not just physical transformation, but also improved ownership and utilisation of restored sites.

However, the long-term success of the initiative will depend on sustaining these gains beyond the restoration phase. Strengthening institutional ownership, ensuring regular maintenance, and reinforcing waste management systems will be critical to prevent regression. Continued community participation will play a central role in embedding lasting behavioural change and stewardship.

Overall, the programme presents a credible and scalable model for waterbody restoration, with the potential to deliver sustained environmental and social impact when supported by strong post-restoration systems and local ownership.

Restored pond in Gurugram

Conclusion

TABLE: Stakeholder Mapping

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	ROLE
Members / Water Users	Primary stakeholders; use the waterbodies for daily needs and contribute to upkeep through responsible usage and local participation
Local Communities / Village Institutions (Panchayats / RWAs)	Support protection, maintenance, and local coordination; play a role in ensuring long-term sustainability
Implementing Partner (Environmental Foundation of India)	Led planning and execution of restoration activities, including technical design, desilting, waste removal, and community engagement
Field Teams and Site Coordinators	Facilitated on-ground implementation, coordinated with communities, and supported monitoring and follow-ups
HDB Financial Services	Provided financial support, strategic direction, and overall programme oversight

TABLE: Stakeholder Coverage and Methods Used

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	PURPOSE OF ENGAGEMENT	METHOD USED	SAMPLE / COVERAGE
Beneficiaries (Community Members)	Capture community perceptions on pond conditions, usage, and changes post-restoration	Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussions	45
Sarpanch	Understand local governance perspectives, maintenance practices, and community engagement	Key Informant Interviews	3
EFI Team	Document implementation approach, technical processes, and programme oversight	Key Informant Interviews	1
Pond Site Visits (Vadodara, Vembakkam, Nagpur and Gurugram)	Observe physical condition, restoration quality, and on-ground utilisation of waterbodies	Observations	6

When you need to be sure

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