

Shreehari Paliath, Sachinkumar Rathod | November 22, 2019



IndiaSpend/Shreehari Paliath

Laxmisagar lake where treated domestic sewage water from Bengaluru first enters Kolar, to eventually fill 126 lakes and improve groundwater levels. The project envisages transferring 440 million litres a day under the Rs 1,342 crore Koramangala-Challaghatta Valley project.



treatment plant (STP) as part of a unique water-recycling experiment.

More than 300 million litres per day (MLD) of a targeted 440 MLD--nearly one-tenth the [water demand](#) of Mumbai or the capacity of 176 Olympic-size swimming pools--of this secondary treated domestic sewage water is being transferred from Bengaluru to the adjoining, parched district of Kolar and parts of Chikkaballapur through the Koramangala-Challaghatta (KC) Valley project. This water is then pushed into 126 lakes scattered around Kolar, many of them left dry by successive droughts.

The purpose of the project is to rejuvenate the depleted groundwater in the drought-hit Kolar region by allowing the treated water to percolate down from these lakes and tanks. This, said experts, will help farmers who are largely dependent on groundwater for irrigation and if successful, the project could be replicated in the other water-starved regions of India.

The [Rs 1,342 crore project](#) (\$187 million) launched in May 2016 was inaugurated in June 2018 and currently, [40 lakes](#) have been filled, as per data accessed by **IndiaSpend**.

“This can be a model for the country for sharing wastewater for agricultural use,” S Vishwanath, Bengaluru-based water conservation expert, told **IndiaSpend**.

The water reaching Kolar is strictly not for direct irrigation because once it reaches one lake, it has to percolate and through gravity-based flow, move to fill subsequent tanks. It benefits farmers only by raising the groundwater level in the region.

The experiment comes at a time when India’s estimated per capita availability of water by 2025 is estimated to be [1,341 cubic metre](#). (An [area](#) with an annual per capita availability of less than 1,700 cubic metre per person is considered to be water-stressed, and less than 1,000 cubic metre per person, water-scarce.) The current availability may further fall to 1,140 cubic metre in 2050, bringing India closer to scarcity, **IndiaSpend reported** on December 30, 2017, citing a 2017 assessment by the ministry of water resources. In the decade ending 2011, India’s water availability fell by 15%.

Further, India is the world’s largest consumer of groundwater, [extracting twice](#) as much as China, the world’s most populous country. India extracted 250 cubic km of groundwater in 2010--1.2 times the capacity of the world’s biggest dam--of which 89% was used for irrigation.

Experiments like the Kolar one are on elsewhere as well to make better use of recycled water and stave off scarcity. The Nagpur Municipal Corporation for example is expected



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