

The background image shows a rural landscape. In the foreground, a well with a concrete structure is visible, with water being drawn. In the background, several people, some wearing colorful saris, are working in a field. The scene is set in a dry, hilly area with some trees and a clear sky.

Strengthening India's Community Leadership Architecture For PGWM: Learnings from Atal Bhujal Yojana

**Suchiradipta Bhattacharjee, IWMI | Alan Nicol,
IWMI | Pankaj Papnoi, CmF**

KEY FEATURES

ATAL BHUJAL YOJANA [ATAL JAL]



Sustainable Ground Water Management with community participation



Inculcation of behavioral changes to promote judicious water use



Implementation in identified water-stressed areas.



Convergence with ongoing Central & State Program



Improve ground water sustainability in the target areas



Contribution to goal of doubling of farmers' income

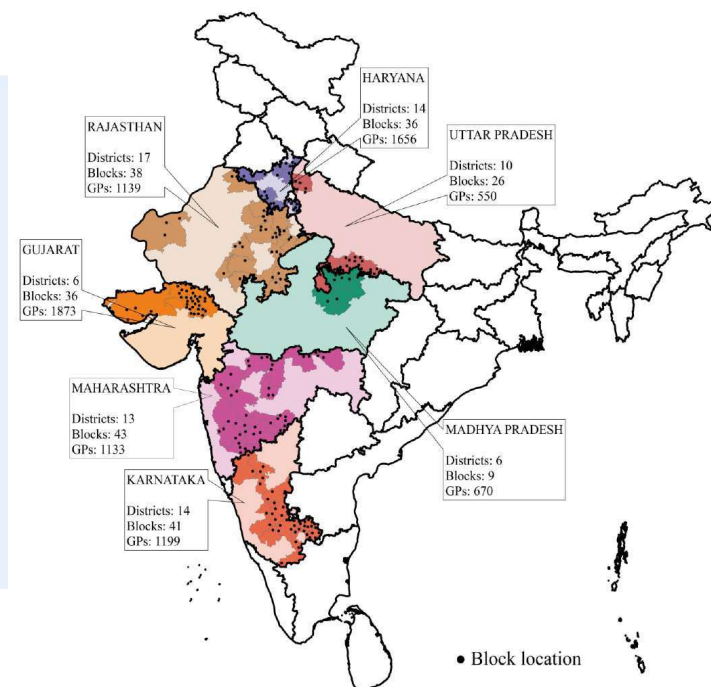


Source sustainability for interventions under Jal Jeevan Mission

EXPECTED BENEFITS



Inculcation of behavioral changes to promote judicious water use



National Project Management Unit



State Project Management Unit



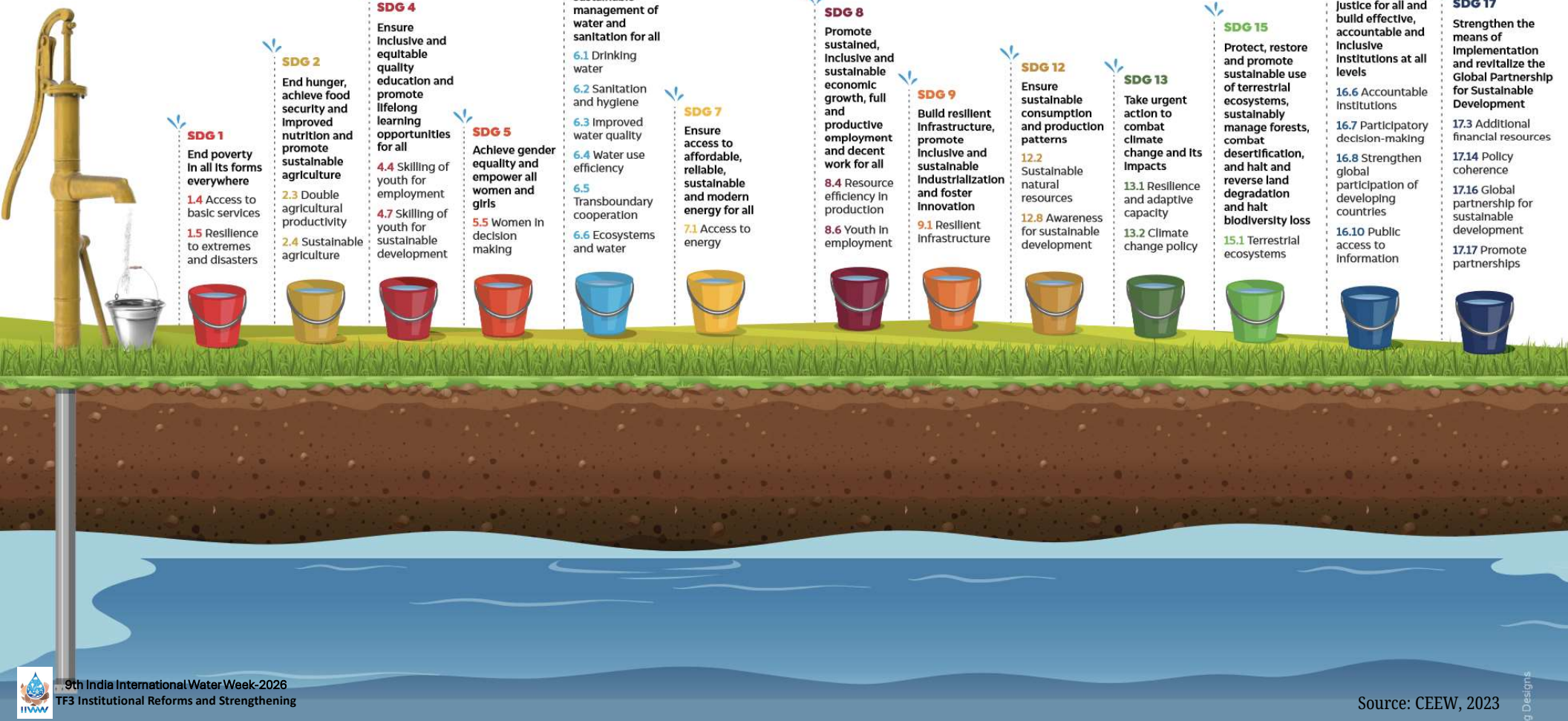
District Project Management Unit / District Implementation Partner



GP level - Bhujal Jaankars, Communities



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Institutional Strengthening & Capacity Building



**Rs. 1400 Crore
budgetary outlay**



Equipment:
Rain-Gauge, Eco-sounder,
Piezometer, Water Quality
Testing Kit



Infrastructure



**100k + trainings
completed**

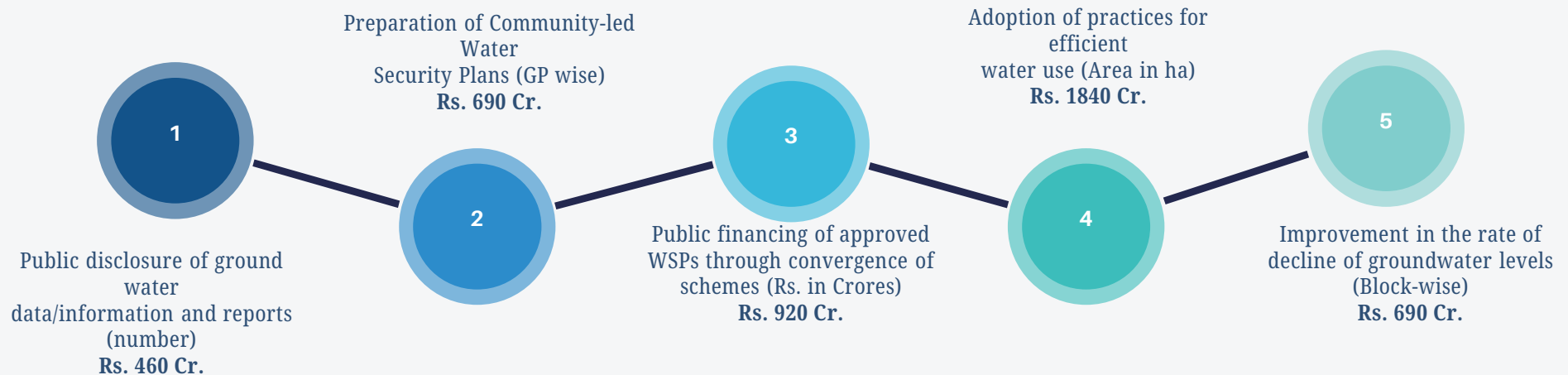


**Lab and data
centres**

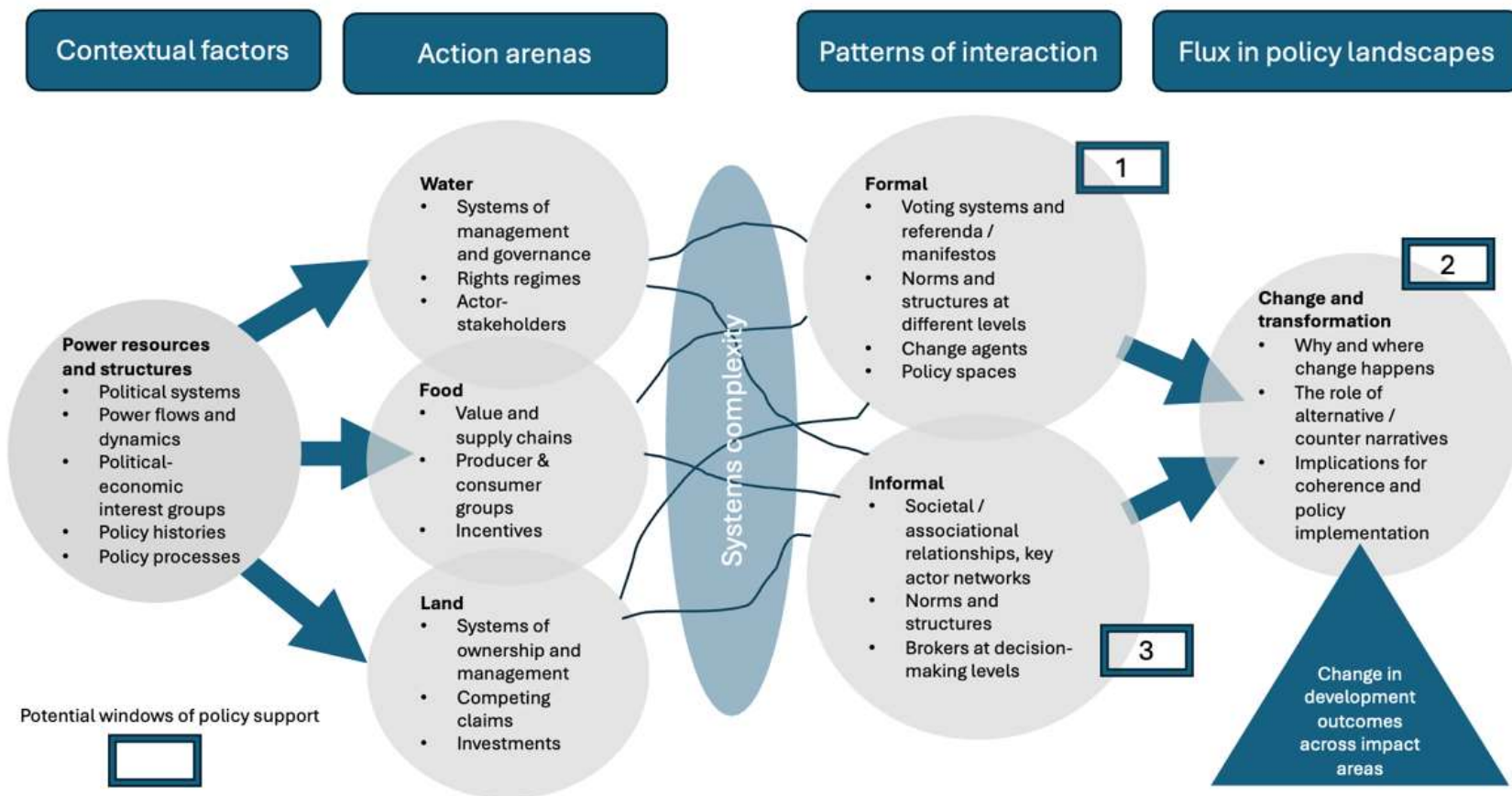


**Information Education &
Communication (IEC)**

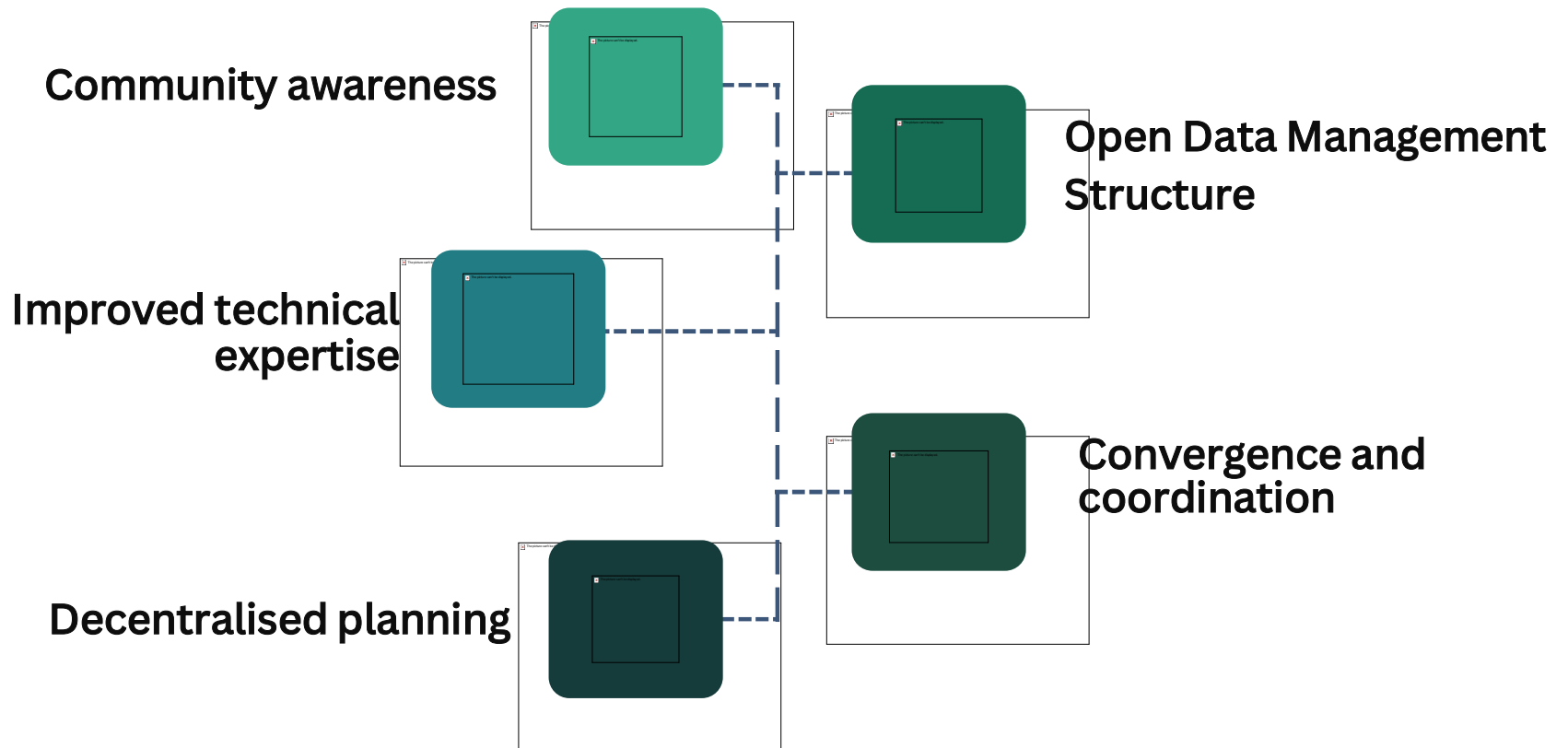
Incentives and Convergence through DLIs



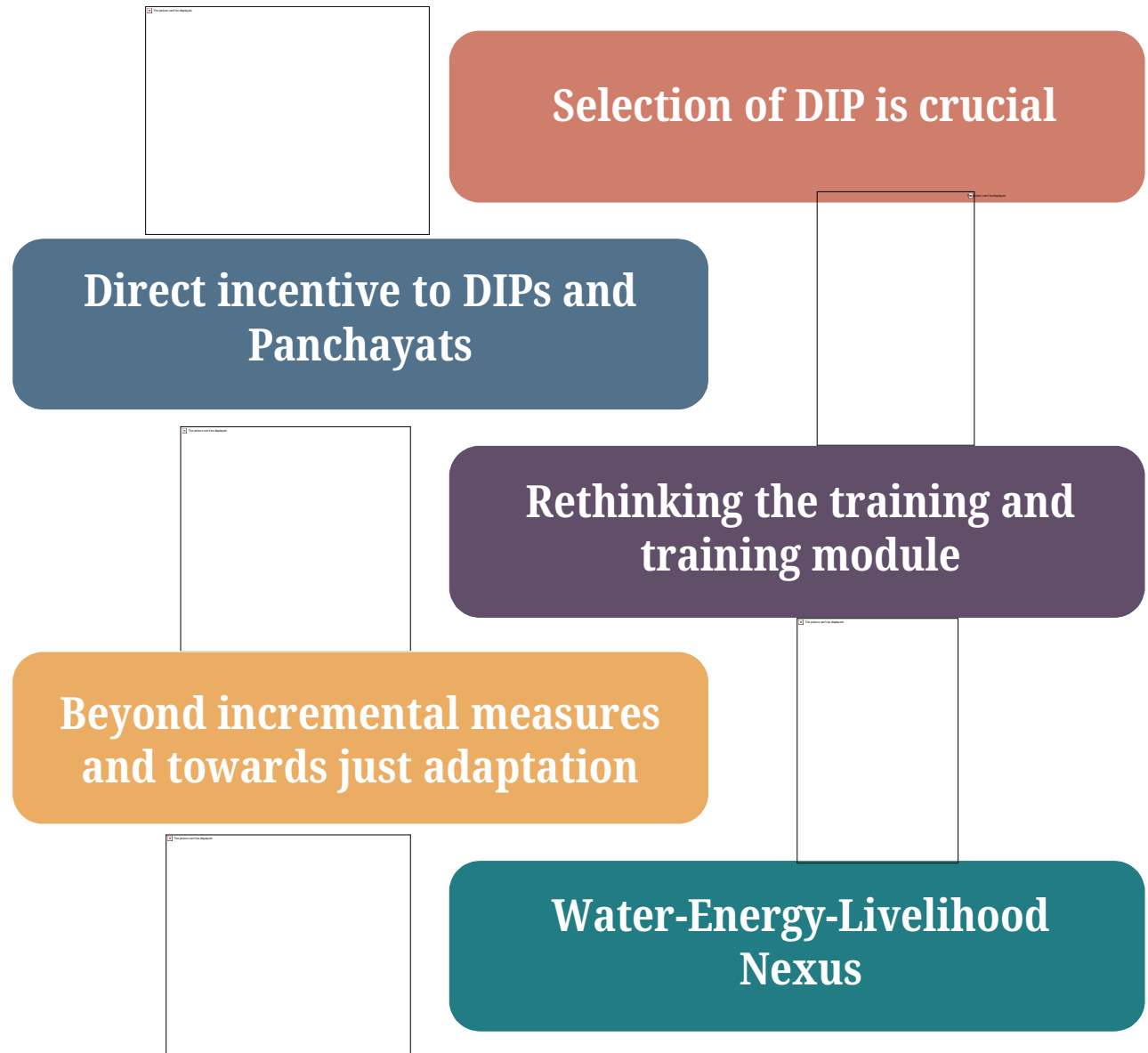
Political and Institutional Landscape Analysis (PILA) Framework



Institutional change and behavioral impacts of Atal Jal



Ideas for future



Possible capacity development needs for sustained PGWM

Stakeholders	Capacity development needs
Communities	- Hands-on training on water budgeting through water games - Understanding of technical information gathered from line departments for WSP - Increased awareness of necessity of GWM
DIP	- Conducting water games for better community awareness and engagement - Methods of mobilization of communities on PGWM - Principles and methods of andragogy for more efficient selection of trainees
Training institute	- Customization of training modules/materials based on local needs ("Trainings are good, but when there's no water, what will we save?")



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Leadership Development for Participatory Groundwater Management (PGWM) in Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABY)



INITIATIVE ON
National Policies
and Strategies

Purpose and Target Group of the training module

Purpose

- Motivate community members to assume leadership roles
- Design an effective exit strategy for ABY

Target Group

- Previous ABY training participants
- Frontline workers (Gram Rojgar Sevak, ASHA workers, etc.)
- SHG leaders

Panchayats members	3-4
Other participants	5-6 members per panchayat, including VWSCs/CRPs/SHG leaders
Total Participation	Maximum 25 members

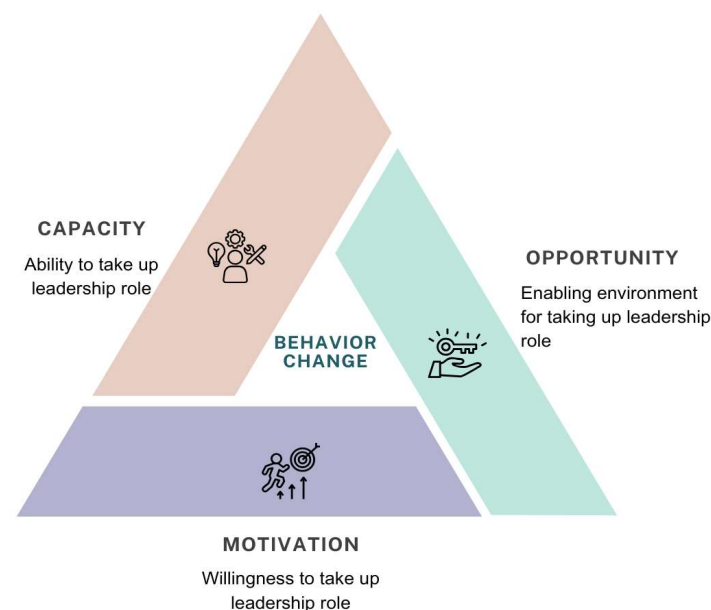


Learning Objectives and Theory of Change

Learning Objectives

- Lead community members in decision-making
- Active engagement with VWSCs on various activities
- Ensure timely completion of approved activities

Theory of Change



The participants are engaged to **realise and enhance their capabilities**, **explore the opportunities**, and **inspire and motivate them** to engage in groundwater governance leadership

Skill focus and learning styles



Problem-solving



**Critical thinking and
Decision-making**



Emotional Intelligence

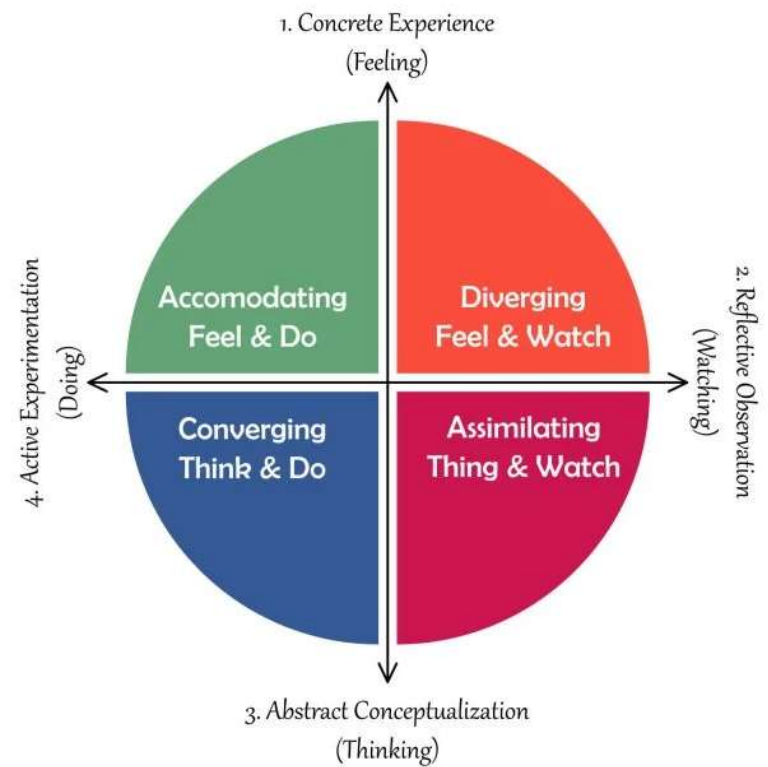


Adaptability



Self-motivation

Kolb's Learning Cycle



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Activity	Objective	Duration (minutes)	Methodology	Kolb's Learning Style	Skill focus
1. Familiarising the training program	To provide clarity regarding the purpose of the training	5	Lecture	-	Active Listening Self-motivation
2. Mapping entry behaviour	To map the pre-training knowledge and behaviour of the participants	10	Game	Reflective observation	Critical thinking
3. Developing and broadening the vision	Instil confidence in participants for community behaviour change and demonstrate the results of local leadership and collective action	30	Interactive video	Concrete experience	Critical thinking, Problem-solving, Conflict resolution, Self-motivation
4. Importance and qualities of a leader	To engage the participants in a discussion about their understanding of the importance of leadership for PGWM and the qualities of a leader necessary for the role	30	Game, Group Discussion	Abstract conceptualization	Self-awareness, Teamwork, Active listening, Critical thinking
5. Who is a Champion?	Introduce the participants to the qualities of a leader and explain why a champion or a leader is needed	20	Group discussion	Reflective observation	Active listening, Critical thinking,
6. Roles and responsibilities of a leader	Develop an understanding of the role of a champion in carrying out water security-related activities	30	Group Discussion	Abstract conceptualization	Communication, Active listening, Critical thinking, Problem-solving
7. Challenges in becoming a leader	To discuss the challenges (real and perceived) faced by a leader and the effort required to overcome the obstacles through collective action	30	Open discussion	Abstract conceptualization	Active Listening Communication
8. Khooni Khel	To understand the implications of the generational depletion of water levels and their adverse effects	15	Game, Lecture	Active experimentation	Self-awareness, Active listening, Critical thinking
9. Developing empathy	To develop participants' understanding of how to grasp subject-related issues of an individual or community	20	Game	Active experimentation	Empathy Emotional Intelligence
10. Revisiting the Water Security Plan (WSP)	To help participants develop a comprehensive understanding of the respective WSP prepared for the village	25	Creative visualization exercise (group)	Abstract conceptualization	Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork
11. Connecting WSP and long-term sustainability	To motivate leaders to develop a future action plan for a water-secure village	40	Group Discussion	Reflective observation	Delegation, Self-awareness, Emotional intelligence, Influence
12. Water Safety Pledge	To motivate the participants to take forward the learnings of the training	10	Group activity	-	-
13. Closing the Training	To serve as a platform to reflect on the learnings To receive participants' feedback to understand if any behavioural change has been inspired by the training.	10	Game	Reflective observation	Critical thinking
Total duration				215 minutes (4 hours)	

Community members trained (2024)

States	District	Date	Participants		
			Men	Women	Total
Rajasthan	Dausa	18-19 July, 2024	32	22	54
	Chittaurgarh	22-23rd July, 2024	19	19	38
	Rajsamand	25-28 July, 2024	17	20	37
	Alwar	29-30 July, 2024	18	31	49
Madhya Pradesh	Chhatarpur	22-24 July, 2024	11	9	20
	Panna	22-24 July, 2024	13	10	23
	Damoh	21-23 October, 2024	15	5	20

Master trainers trained (2025)

Total Master trainers trained	CSO/NGO representatives	Rajeevika Master Trainers	Watershed Department officials
58	32	19	7

What the pilots tell us

1

Fit training to local routines

Short, accessible sessions timed around farming and work.

2

Facilitate, do not lecture

Use dialogue to connect PGWM concepts with lived experience.

3

Make learning practical

Games, water-use problems, and Water Security Plans keep it grounded.

4

Build legitimacy

Government and project-partner involvement helps local leaders act.

5

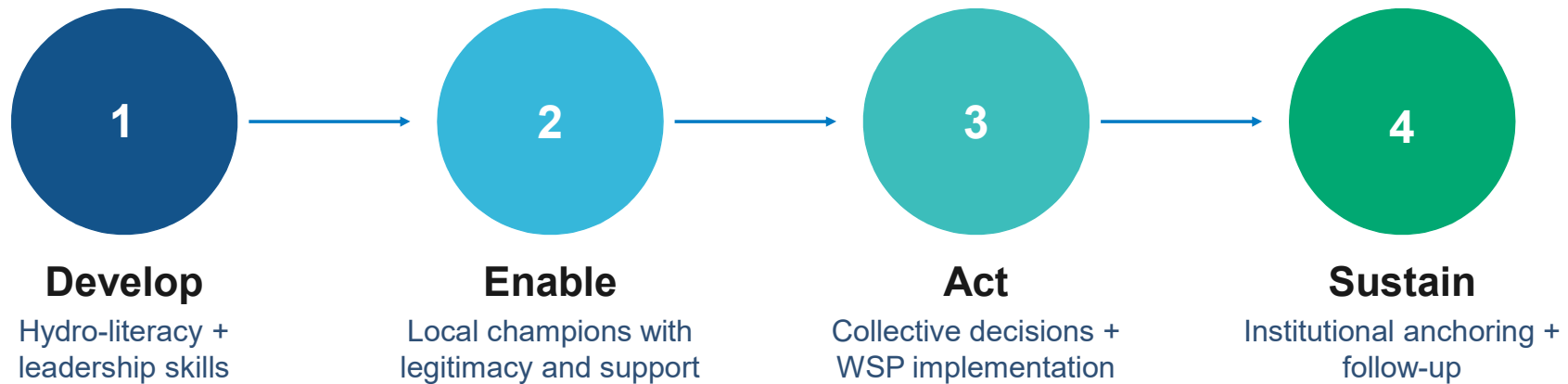
Plan for continuity

Recognition, mentoring, and refresher support matter after training.

The training is strongest when it is designed as a continuing leadership process, not a one-off capacity-building event.



From training to sustained PGWM



**For the
pathway to hold**

● Diverse cohorts

● Transparent selection

● Mentoring + refreshers



Institutionalization makes change visible

Evidence from CmF-supported work in Sirohi and Pali

When leadership models are embedded in local systems, change is no longer only a training outcome.

It shows up in how people own village-level developments, commit to better water practices, and build an everyday environment of water positivity.

1

Ownership

People see village water-security work as their own.

2

Commitment

Better practices are carried into homes and fields.

3

Water positivity

Awareness shifts everyday conversations toward saving and security.



From training to everyday practice

The real test is whether local leadership continues after the project moment.

More tomorrow: Data Driven Governance session | AI4WaterPolicy

Join if you would like to hear how community feedback and AI-enabled listening are making these changes visible.



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TECHNICAL BRIEF

Leadership Development for Fast-Tracking Participatory Groundwater Management (PGWM) in India

Suchiradipa Bhattacharjee and Anurag Banerjee

March 2025



Training Module

Soft Skill Development for Community Leadership in Participatory Groundwater Management

International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Centre for microFinance (Cmf),
People's Education and Development Organization (PEDO), and Professional
Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN)

November 2025



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Thank You!