



Northern India, Rajasthan – Water for the Desert

Rajasthan, the second biggest federal state on the subcontinent is located in Northwestern India. There on the border to the Thar desert, near Pakistan, is the Churu district, an extremely dry area. The key problems here are the lack of water, food and infrastructure, the limited school education and environmental devastation. In order to improve the living conditions of the rural population German Agro Action is supporting the project "Sustainable Agriculture and Management of Natural Resources in Churu" of its Indian partner organisation SCRIA (Social Center for Rural Initiative & Advancement).

Most people in Churu are small farmers, who live from agriculture in extreme environmental conditions and are consequently dependent on the rainy season, the monsoon. If it comes too late or is only weak, the harvest is severely affected throughout the whole year. The desert expands and the groundwater table sinks. This has a negative impact on the drinking water supply. Erosion and periods of drought have also leached the soil. The consequence is that people suffer from hunger.

With an annual income of less than 24,000 rupees – equivalent to approximately 430 euros – many of the inhabitants of this region belong to the poorest of the poor, and most of them are also from disadvantaged castes. A strict patriarchal society has contributed to the fact that women and girls, who are traditionally disadvantaged in India, bear the brunt of the problems.

Together with SCRIA German Agro Action supports about 6,000 families in 32 villages, in order to break through the vicious circle of poverty, hunger and debt.





The villagers learn how to sustainably manage the environment and change it to their advantage. Here the old traditions are being reintroduced: rain water is collected with so-called "Johads". The positive result is that the groundwater table is rising, the soil humidity lasts longer and the harvests have become more secure. A "Johad" is a reservoir or pond that has been created with earth walls surrounding it in the shape of a crescent moon. It is situated in the

landscape in a located that enables it to collect vital rainwater from the monsoon during the rainy season from rivulets in a large catchment area. The earth walls prevent the precipitation being washed away before it can be used.

In addition to improving the agricultural situation the SCRIA also supports the people in self-confidently standing up for their rights. For this purpose self-help groups and initiatives, or "Sangathans", are founded. The women have also begun to organise themselves in such initiatives: Thanks to SCRIA they receive education and training in income-generating measures. Initial successes are already evident: through producing craft trade products, printed fabrics or woven carpets they can improve their monthly income. SCRIA organises the sales and cooperates here in "Fair Trade" programmes with local and European organisations.



Here you can help:

German Agro Action supports their partner organisation SCRIA

For instance, the cost of:

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| • a training package for founding a self-help group is | 60 euros |
| • seed stock and nursery plants for reforestating one hectare of land is | 150 euros |
| • a large "Johad" with 500,000 litres of storage capacity is | 3,000 euros |

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