

Bollywood Power: Using films and celebrities to talk water

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Abstract/Summary

India faces huge water challenges. The growing population is putting a severe strain on the country’s natural resources. Most water sources are contaminated by sewage and agricultural runoff. India has made progress in the supply of water to its people, but gross disparity in coverage and quality exists across the country. But what also contributes to the problem is mismanagement and indifferent attitude of people towards water and its conservation. In an effort to get people talking and take action on these important issues using the powerful medium of film and the Hindi film industry, popularly called Bollywood, WaterAid India partnered with the Director and Producer of the Hindi film *Kaun Kitney Paani Mein* (KKPM). KKPM is a Hindi film which seeks to highlight the potential conflicts that can stem from lack of water scarcity, and the importance of water conservation. The film also highlights how measures like rainwater harvesting and using less water intensive crops can go a long way in saving water. Through the partnership, we undertook a series of activities involving both filmstars and politicians to help highlight issues around water conservation and get people thinking, talking, and acting on them.

Introduction

India is already feeling the impacts of water scarcity. More than 100 million people in India are living in places where water is severely polluted. Out of the 632 districts examined by India Water Tool (IWT) to determine the quality of ground water in 2015, only 59 districts had water safe enough to drink. Groundwater levels are declining across India. Of the 4,000 wells captured in the IWT showing statistically significant trends, 54 percent dropped over the past seven years, with 16 percent declining by more than 1 meter (3.2 feet) per year. Data from the Central Water Commission shows that water levels in the 91 major reservoirs in the country are currently at just 23 per cent of their storage capacity. Reservoirs of the west and south India have the least water, compared to normal levels. The 31 big reservoirs in the five southern states have only 15 per cent of their normal water, while the 27 in Maharashtra and Gujarat have just 18 per cent.

Kaun Kitney Paani Mein (KKPM) is a Hindi feature film directed by Nila Madhab Panda, set in a hypothetical village in India facing severe water scarcity. The film sought to highlight the conflicts stemming from water scarcity and the importance of water conservation. It was released on August 28, 2015 across the country. The film got an average three star rating and was appreciated for tackling serious issues through an unconventional story. The Indian film industry, known as “Bollywood”, had around 1,900 million cinema admissions in 2014. The partnership started when One Drop Foundation approached WaterAid to be their partner in India and help promote the film.

Since WaterAid focuses on access to safe drinking water for everyone, everywhere and Bollywood and its celebrities have a wide reach and influence on people in India, WaterAid India partnered with the Bollywood film *Kaun Kitney Paani Mein* (English title: *In Troubled Waters*) to highlight issues of water scarcity and water conservation in India.



Context, aims and activities undertaken

WaterAid India undertook a series of activities to promote the film, water conservation issues and use star power to get people talking about it. The outreach consisted of a series of activities:

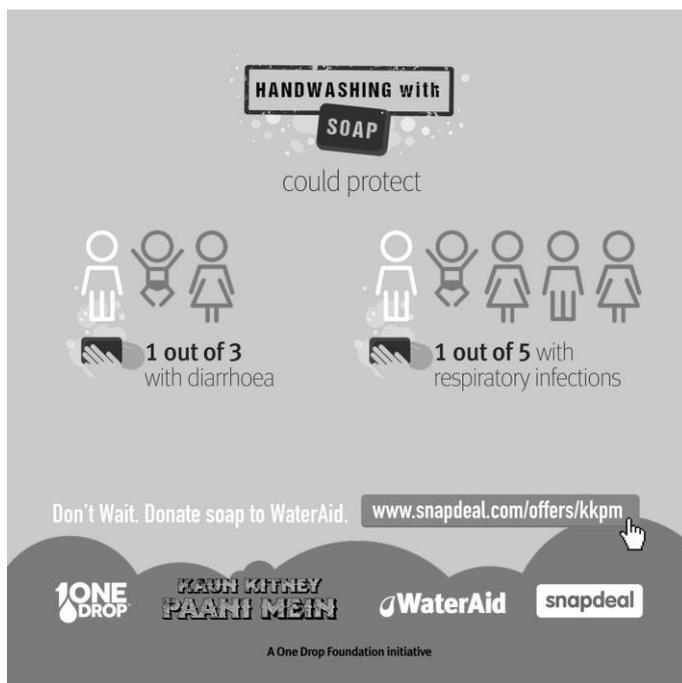
- Social media push through messages on water conservation and how KKPM promotes the idea of water conservation.
- Twitter chat named as #paanichat with the lead actor of the film Kunal Kapoor to highlight the issue in the digital realm and create a buzz?
- Social media contest for exclusive premiere passes.
- A special red carpet premiere of the film in New Delhi with the Delhi Chief Minister and Delhi Deputy Chief Minister attending the screening.

• We also partnered with India's leading online retailer Snapdeal. As part of this initiative, Snapdeal and WaterAid encouraged its customer base/supporters to buy and donate soap to WaterAid for use in our school WASH projects. There is also an insert at the end of the film urging viewers to donate soap to WaterAid through Snapdeal.



Main results and lessons learnt

The #paanichat (Twitter Chat) reached 367,701 accounts and had 6,457,763 impressions. The chat was able to bring to the forefront issues around water scarcity in India and why it is time to start thinking about water conservation. The Bollywood touch to the chat made the Twitter chat more reachable to the people and we were able to engage people quite effectively. This was one of the first Twitter chats in WaterAid's history.



The premiere which was attended by the cast of the film as well as the Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia of Delhi and over 400 people made the water issue more visible in the political circles. Both of them raised their concerns about the declining levels of water in the country and why it is time we must start thinking about it. The video by Chief Minister of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal calling for water conservation got around 5,000 views online.

The goal of the partnership was to effect changes in how water is managed at household and higher levels.

While the film helped people understand the issue of water crisis and conservation and drive conversation around this important issue, One Drop Foundation and WaterAid India are currently exploring the commissioning of a focussed research study to better understand the impact of the film in effecting long term and lasting behaviour change.

The Snapdeal partnership gave us the opportunity to push the need for handwashing to prevent diarrhoeal deaths to an urban audience. A set of special images and infographics were designed to ask the users to donate soap which were also used by Sanpdeal for promotion. Sanpdeal has around 3,661,333 likes on its Facebook page and 192K followers on Twitter. While people were donating they were also being sensitised on the need and importance of handwashing.

The partnership was one of a kind within the organisation and the use of an upcoming Bollywood film helped us create a buzz and get people talking about water issues.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The partnership with Kaun Kitney Paani Mein was an unique experiment of a non-profit joining a film and its crew and bringing on board political leaders together to raise awareness of the importance of water conservation and security.

We are now working with the producers of the film One Drop Foundation to commission a study on the impact the film has on people in terms of changing behaviours on water conservation.

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