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Madurai ward meets drinking water needs through RO plant

MADURAI: Even when many areas in the city struggle to get quality drinking water regularly, residents of Iravathanallur ward in Madurai Municipal Corporation (MMC) gets purified drinking water without fail. Even before its incorporation to the city corporation as ward 55, the people here had the foresight to invest in a reverse osmosis (RO) plant. Even when other wards in Madurai city struggle to get water, every family in Iravathanallur gets two pots of purified water for a meagre Re 1.50 round the month.

Though, MMC refuses to provide any maintenance funds, the residents operate the plant with support from ward councillor, residents said.

Two RO plants were established in Iravathanallur and Vadivelkarai panchayats in 2009 with joint funding from Madurai district administration and the local panchayats. Both the plants are maintained well mainly because of public support. When Iravathanallur became part of Madurai city, locals had feared that the plant may be discarded. "We insisted on running the plant. The corporation has refused to maintain the plant, but the local councillor took it up and run it through a women's self-help group," said V Sivaraman, one of the residents. "After the area

was annexed, the corporation installed plastic tanks and assured to provide water through tankers. But water was rarely filled in the tanks. We would have come to the streets demanding water, if the plant was abandoned," said M Pandiarajan, another resident.

Iravathanallur residents don't spare any effort to make the unique water project a success. Every family in Iravathanallur is given an identity card to get the water. Every month, they punch the card to collect their quota of purified water. "We are charged Rs 45 a month for two pots of water and the identity card can be obtained only after providing proof of residence," Pandiarajan said.

"It is true that there is no funding from corporation for maintenance, but it has allowed us to continue running the plant. Recently, the corporation provided a generator to run the plant even during the power cuts," said Kamatchi Muthukumar, the ward councillor. She says the funds mobilised from the public are inadequate to operate the plant which needs regular repairs and change of equipment. "Luckily my husband owns a brick kiln and makes man and machinery available whenever required. The RO plant serves the drinking water needs of the people despite water crisis in other places," she said.

Now, people are planning to install another plant in the locality. "We are working out the plans to install another smaller plant in Periakavianur in the same ward," Kamatchi added.