

BUNDELKHAND JAL SAHELI MANCH

Title/ Name of work undertaken	BUNDELKHAND JAL SAHELI MANCH
Location	Chhatarpur, Bundelkhand
Organisation/NGO/Persons responsible to undertake the work	Bundelkhand Jal Saheli Manch (Water Friends)
Type of intervention	<p>Sirkoo, a 39 year old woman in Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh, walked 8 km every day to fetch water. As a woman, it was obviously her responsibility to ensure the household's water availability. This put an additional stress on her already depleted health as well as time--until she decided to tackle the issue head on.</p> <p>Three years ago, she and a few other women came together to form an informal water committee or 'Paani Panchayat' to work on water issues which is what affected them the most. Their agenda was simple – ensure water availability for all through the creation and conservation of water resources in their villages, so that water was available as a basic right. With the help of a local organisation called the <u>Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sansthan</u>, they began to take steps in this direction.</p> <p>The '<i>Pani Panchayat Sanghatan</i>' nominated two women as '<i>Jal Saheli's</i>' or 'water friends'. They now meet, discuss and decide on how to tackle local water related problems, have a say in where a new handpump should be constructed, how to revive a dying '<i>talaab</i>' or village pond and also where check dams are needed for better irrigation. All this work is done through the village panchayat and at the block level .</p>
Outcome	<p>Today, nearly 500 Sahelis are distributed across 7 districts of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. And they do not stop just at meetings but ensure that their voice reaches the state level officials. They have even written a letter to the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh for the renovation of water bodies that were in dire need of repair.</p> <p>Sirkoo recalls,"Rainfall had decreased, there was always a problem of clean water. So, water became our priority They have built check dams with government allocations and '<i>shramdan</i>' or voluntary contributions by the community. The '<i>panchayat</i>' considers the village Water</p>

Security Plan (WSP) or the '*Jal Suraksha Karya Yojana*' prepared by them before any major decisions on water.

Dressed in blue saris, they flaunt their 'water' purpose to change the world or in their own words '*Badenge Zamana*'. Watch these gritty women tell their story.

Photographs





The women repairing a tubewell

