

STORIES OF CHANGE



Mamta Bundela: An Inspiration

About a decade ago, the village of Punawli Kalan, Jhansi in Bundelkhand was battling with long and frequent periods without water. Its population of 2,900 depended only on 22 hand pumps, most of which had become dysfunctional. The water in open wells was unsafe for consumption, comprising high levels of iron and mineral salts. Women and girls had to walk long distances each day, in the scorching heat, to fetch water. This not only harmed their health, but also forced the younger ones to drop out of schools.

Mamta Bundela – the President of Sahyogini Mahila Mandal, a federation comprising 2,500 women Self-Help Group (SHG) members decided to take charge of addressing the community's water woes. She mobilised an 11-member committee to own and operate a renewable energy based model for drinking water supply at households. Collecting an installation fee of INR 500 per connection, the committee got

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a water tank and solar pump installed. Through 113 secure connections, water now reaches every doorstep. The committee is also responsible for decision making, monthly collection of service fee, and periodic water quality testing and purification.

Inspired by Mamta Bundela, the women of Punawli Kalan have emerged as local agents of change. Realising the need for better sanitation, water conservation and household waste management, they are now mobilising the local government to install toilets and wastewater treatment facilities. Today, many of them are confident speakers at Gram Sabhas, and active participants in local governance and planning processes.