Newsline 002/2023

EMPOWERING FUTURES: SAFE WATER ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING FOR YOUTH AND WOMEN IN TELANGANA

India's skill development policy targets youth and women empowerment, but the water sector lacks support for grassroots technicians. Bridging this gap requires involving women and youth in water management, quality testing, and infrastructure operations. Despite challenges, efforts are underway to address the water crisis affecting over 600 million people in the country. Decentralised water purification systems, run by women entrepreneurs, offer a cost-effective solution. Despite stereotypes, training initiatives by organisations like Safe Water Network India aim to debunk myths and enhance women's skills in providing affordable and reliable access to safe water through iJal Stations.

The initiative, "*Vocational Training Program in Safe Water Enterprises (SWEs) for Grassroots Youth and Women in Telangana*," led by Safe Water Network India (SWNI) with support from India Water Partnership (IWP) under Global Water Partnership-South Asia (GWP-South Asia), focused on enhancing the skills of women (above 25 years) and youth (16-25 years). It aimed to develop expertise in water system operation, maintenance, and repair, water quality testing, entrepreneurship, and soft skills. SWNI trained a diverse group, including Safe Water Station operators, Self-Help Group members, youth association members, and semi-literate women. The overarching goal was to cultivate social entrepreneurs in safe water enterprises, contributing to improved public health.

Empowerment
Increase employability of women and youth in managing water enterprise

Incubation and support
Help create water enterprises and link these to entrepreneurial schemes

Facilitation
Transmit the knowledge from industry experts to creating enterprises

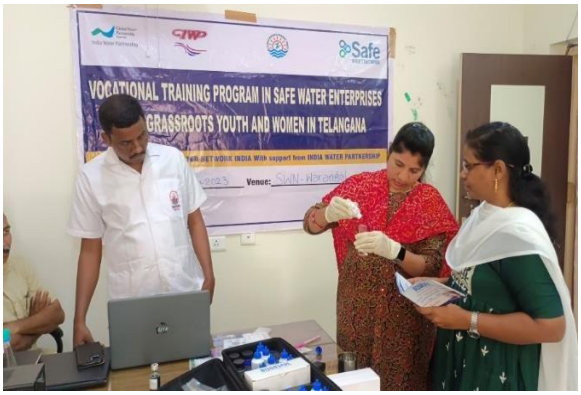
Testing
Train them in water quality testing

The training project aimed to empower women and youth by creating entrepreneurship opportunities, securing livelihoods with incomes of 6,000 to 8,000 rupees. Focusing on public health and improved water practices, it supported Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of household connections under JJM and contributed to national water security goals. The project, aligned with SDG 6.1, provided mentoring, toolkits, and training covering entrepreneur development, water safety, and quality testing.

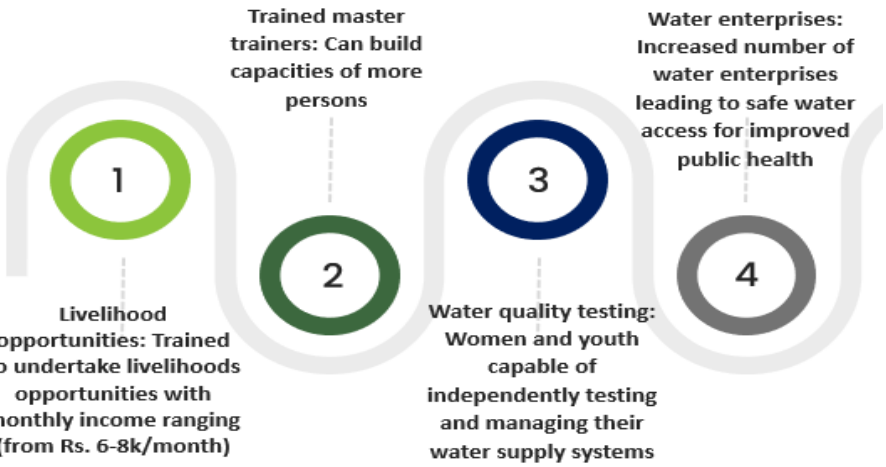
By utilising SWNI's modules, quizzes, and certificates, the initiative sought to make a meaningful impact on individuals and communities. Certificates were awarded to technicians who completed the refresher training course in October and November 2023, officially recognising them as "Trained Technicians."

Providing women with training in the use of field test kits for water quality assessment

The project trained stakeholders in 10 villages in Medak, Telangana, emphasising water quality testing with field test kits (FTKs). Village Water and Sanitation Committee (VWSC) women learned to identify deviations and their roles as water quality managers. The community received awareness programs, and FTKs were distributed for independent testing. The program impacted 900 people, empowering grassroots women in water quality testing. Participants, including 50 VWSC members, 500 community members, 200 school children, and 100 panchayat raj institution members, were introduced to the Water Quality Management Information System (WQMIS) portal for uploading test reports, promoting their involvement in program implementation and replication.

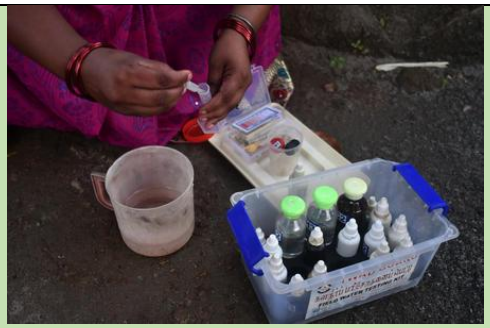


Program outcomes



Introduction to water	Water Quality & WQMS	Practical session: FTK test demonstration	iSWEET Toolkit for Safe Water Enterprises	Entrepreneurship and soft skills
• Fundamentals: Water basics and water cycle • Drinking water & its importance • Water contamination causes & effects • India's water status • Water conservation methods	• Safe water, UN-SDGs, and India – JJM • National Drinking Water Standards (BIS-10500: 2012) • Water contamination • Residual Chlorine • WQ assurance at water ATMs • WQMIS: Escalation matrix	• Water Treatment Technologies: Traditional/Modern, Pre/Post, Membrane/Non-membrane-based, Slow Sand Filter Water Treatment	• SWEs: Site Selection and O&M • Community mobilisation - IEC • O&M of water ATMs • Maintenance & Repair • Regulatory compliances • Financial management	• Basics of entrepreneurship • Business models: building blocks • Enterprise Funding

Training modules



FTKs and Toolkits Procurement

Local sourcing funded by IWP provided two FTKs and 26 toolkit boxes for training on portable, multi-parameter kits assessing physiochemical contamination in drinking water. After the second round of training in September, 2023, five certified female technicians are conducting water quality tests in 50 Telangana villages in 2024, addressing pre- and post-monsoon assessment to ensure adherence to BIS 10500 standards. Identified quality gaps are being reported for remedial action, benefiting over 150,000 people and enhancing overall health.

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This Newsline has been prepared based on a project supported by India Water Partnership and implemented by Safe Water Network India (SWNI) on Vocational Training Program in Safe Water Enterprises (SWEs) for Grassroots Youth and Women in Telangana.