Spotlight on Scale
Small Water Enterprises: Transforming Women from Water Carriers to Water Entrepreneurs

Safe Water Network gratefully acknowledges the District Collector of Medak, the Government of Telangana, and donor Honeywell Hometown Solutions India Foundation (HHSIF) for their generous support towards this initiative.
ABOUT THE REPORT

Since publishing our first India sector review, Community Safe Water Solutions, in 2014, which assessed the service delivery gap in safe water supply and documented the potential for small water enterprises (SWEs) to provide sustainable safe water supply in quality-affected habitations in rural India, and subsequently publishing other publications on the market for SWEs in India, including Small Water Enterprises to Mitigate the Drinking Water Challenge in 2018, we have seen the model gain significant traction across the country.

Increasingly, SWEs have been recognized by the government, policy makers, and other stakeholders for the value and benefits they provide as a cost-effective, safe, affordable complement to piped water supply for addressing India’s drinking water crisis and contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6.1: “universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.”

This 2019 report, Small Water Enterprises: Transforming Women from Water Carriers to Water Entrepreneurs, part of our Spotlight report series that focuses on critical components for scaling SWEs, further advances the discussion and case for SWEs, zeroing in on how SWEs can benefit the lives of women and their families, not only by reducing drudgery and providing water security, but also by empowering women to play a role in water provision.

You will find in this report a description of a pilot initiative to empower women—as owners and operators—of SWEs. It describes the challenges and barriers facing women and the opportunities and solutions we have developed to enable their success as active participants in the SWE value chain.

This Spotlight report illustrates the complexity of the challenge, shares insights and tools developed, and provides case studies that illustrate successes and the importance of this effort.

We thank the District Collector of Medak, the Government of Telangana, and Honeywell Hometown Solutions India Foundation (HHSIF) for their generous support.
# Table of Contents

1. About the Report 1

2. Executive Summary 6-7

3. Introduction 11

2. The Gender Gap and Water 15-17
   - Gender Inequality Around the World 15
   - The Gender Scenario in India 16
   - Gender Inequality and Water 16

4. Engaging Women in Safe Water Provision Through SWEs 21-35
   - Safe Water Network’s SWE Model: iJal Stations 21
   - The Value Proposition for Women’s Empowerment Through SWEs 22
   - Alignment with National Policies for Women’s Empowerment 23
   - Adapting the iJal Model to Maximize Women’s Participation 24
   - Progress to Date 31
   - Comparative Performance by Management Type 32

5. Case Studies: Empowering Women in the iJal Model 39-47
   - Case Study 1: Self-Help Group Members as iJal Entrepreneurs 40-41
   - Case Study 2: Women as iJal Entrepreneurs/Operators 42-43
   - Case Study 3: SHG Member as Community WASH Mobilizer 44-45
   - Case Study 4: Women as iJal Field Executives and Cluster Coordinators 46-47

6. Summary and Next Steps 49

7. Annexures 51-52
   - Annex 1. Letter of Commendation from Padma Reddy, Government of Telangana 51
   - Annex 2. Program Design Framework 52

8. Acknowledgements 53

9. About Safe Water Network 54
FIGURES, TABLES, ANNEXURES & ABBREVIATIONS

FIGURES

Figure 1: Average Global Gender Disparity: Global and India (Percentage) 15
Figure 2: The Path to Gender Equality 17
Figure 3: iJal Women Empowerment Program Results Framework 22
Figure 4: National Policies for Women’s Empowerment 23
Figure 5: Challenges and Barriers 26
Figure 6: QUIT Strategy 27
Figure 7: Opportunities for Women in SWEs 29
Figure 8: Innovative Tools and Technology 30
Figure 9: Catalytic Impact of Participation in the iJal Value Chain 31
Figure 10: SWE Operational Performance: Volumes and Consumer Penetration 33
Figure 11: Station Operational Performance at 1.2 Yrs. 33
Figure 12: SWE Volume Breakdown: Onsite vs. Distribution 33
Figure 13: Total Contributions: Sustainability Fund and Service Fees (as percent of Revenue) 34

TABLES

Table 1: Framework for Understanding Barriers and Enablers to Women’s Participation in the iJal Program 25
Table 2: Comparative Analysis Summary 32

ANNEXURES

Annex 1: Letter of Commendation from Padma Reddy, Government of Telangana 51
Annex 2: Program Design Framework 52

ABBREVIATIONS

FSE Field Services Entity
GDP Gross Domestic Product
GoI Government of India
HHSIF Honeywell Hometown Solutions India Foundation
MEPMA India’s Mission for Elimination of Poverty in Municipal Areas
MSK Mahila Shakti Kendra
NRDWP India’s National Rural Drinking Water Program
NRLM India’s National Rural Livelihoods Mission
NSSO India’s National Sample Survey Office
SHG Self-Help Group
SOP Standard Operating Procedure
STEP India’s Support to Training and Employment Program for Women
SWE Small Water Enterprise

www.safewaternetwork.org
A wide range of personal, social, political, educational, and institutional obstacles restrict the participation of women in the Indian economy.
Women are grossly underrepresented in the Indian economy, making up only 26 percent of the workforce and contributing only 17 percent of India’s gross domestic product, as compared to the global average of 37 percent. A wide range of personal, social, political, educational, and institutional obstacles restrict the participation of women in the Indian economy. These include unfavourable business and regulatory environments, and lack of family support, knowledge, and links to high-value markets.

Lack of access to basic services in India, including safe drinking water supply, particularly impacts women as they are disproportionately burdened with the responsibilities related to water: collection, treatment, use for domestic chores, and caring for family members ill from waterborne diseases. In households that do not have access to drinking water on premises, 80 percent of the water is collected by women.

Small water enterprises (SWEs), social enterprises that provide safe drinking water to communities in need, can improve the well-being of women and girls by reducing the drudgery of water collection, freeing up time to pursue education and employment. These SWEs, as demonstrated through Safe Water Network’s iJal model, offer a strong value proposition that can increase women’s empowerment, providing a range of positive individual and collective impacts on economic participation, education, health, and political empowerment.

The iJal Women’s Empowerment Program, piloted in the State of Telangana’s Medak district with strong participation from the state lawmakers, district administration, and local government, sought to mainstream participation of women and promote female entrepreneurship and livelihoods, by expanding opportunities for the district’s self-help groups (SHGs), linking SHGs to a new source of income while also providing the community with access to a safe, affordable, reliable water supply. The program was developed and adapted with the input from women’s SHGs and lessons from experience in the field to address the formidable challenges we discovered—from fear of technology to lack of technical skills. (See Case Studies starting on page 39). Seven key components of the program (described in this report on pages 28-29) focused on addressing these barriers and challenges faced by women. Our understanding and program adaptation contributed to the ongoing success of the program.

Within a span of 14 months, there were 49 SHGs actively managing stations in Safe Water Network’s operational cluster in Medak. These stations provide nearly 150,000 people with affordable access to safe water supply. We are also applying program components to new and existing iJal stations owned and/or operated by female social entrepreneurs, who often face challenges similar to those faced by SHG members. Today, more than 170 women in total participate in the iJal value chain.

---

2 SWEs are locally-owned and -operated water treatment plants that expand access to safe affordable water for communities of ~3,000-5,000 people.
3 Safe Water Network’s iJal model provides safe, reliable water at an affordable price (Rs. 5/10Liters, or USD 0.07/20 Liters) to communities of approximately 3,000 people. Operating in three States in India (Telangana, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh), start-up investment is approximately $15/person and uses reverse osmosis to address chemical contaminants, in particular fluoride.
4 An independent entity that provides ongoing professional technical support, and maintenance and repair services to iJal stations, paid for through monthly fees from stations.
The performance of SHG-run SWEs is not without challenges, but to date certain aspects of these SWEs have 
exhibited promising trends. SHG-run stations face two still-to-be-addressed issues that have impacted performance: 
women tend to be unable to set up distribution of water to nearby hamlets, impairing overall volumes. In addition, 
the SHG-run stations required that the Field Services Entity\(^5\), perform extra services (such as cleaning tanks), at an 
additional cost.

**Individual women’s successes demonstrate the potential of this program.** In our case studies, we share the 
experiences of women who have become field executives, cluster coordinators, entrepreneurs, and operators, and 
the impact on their lives and communities (see page 39). These stories and insights gained from this pilot suggest the 
importance and potential of expanding initiatives like the iJal Women’s Empowerment Program.

**Going forward, there are several opportunities to further build on and improve the program, leveraging the 
insights, tools, and frameworks we developed for Medak.** As a next step, we are applying the program framework 
to other locales, e.g. Maharashtra, and continuing to adapt and optimize the program to realize success. We seek to 
develop distribution pilots for SHG-run stations to determine the optimal approach, and explore how the Field 
Services Entity could be streamlined and adapted to better service SHG-managed stations. Last, we encourage the 
sustained efforts of government, policy makers, and funders to accelerate women’s inclusion and empowerment 
as it relates to both access to and provision of water.
The role of women’s empowerment has been widely recognized as a fundamental requirement for economic growth and poverty reduction; as such gender equality has become an overarching development goal of many countries.
A woman carrying a container of water from an jal station.
INTRODUCTION

The role of women’s empowerment has been widely recognized as a fundamental requirement for economic growth and poverty reduction. As such, gender equality has become an overarching development goal of many countries. Women’s empowerment has five components: women’s sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally. This puts a strong emphasis on participation in political structures and formal decision-making and, in the economic sphere, on the ability to obtain an income that enables participation in economic decision-making.

One of the major factors that prohibits women from fully participating and benefiting from economic, political, and social activities is the lack of convenient access to affordable safe drinking water. Water-related obligations (i.e. collection, transport, etc.) rob women of economic opportunities, preventing them from participating in the workforce and financially contributing to their families, thereby locking them in an eternal cycle of poverty. They also limit the benefits that societies would otherwise receive from gender equality and full workforce utilization.

Women’s empowerment in India is vital to addressing the gap in women’s labour participation and achieving greater economic growth. Indian women constitute nearly half (48.5 percent) of the country’s population; however, female labour force participation has fallen from 36.7 percent in 2005 to 26 percent in 2018. This gender gap has resulted in acute under-utilization of a large portion of the nation’s human resources.

This report examines the relationship between small water enterprises (SWEs) and women’s empowerment by exploring Safe Water Network’s iJal model which uses an inclusive and participatory approach to provide safe and affordable drinking water.

Small water enterprises (SWEs) are decentralized safe drinking water kiosks that sustainably provide access to affordable and reliable drinking water to communities to improve public health. SWEs also help reduce women’s drudgery and provide water security.

Further, this report describes how Safe Water Network overcame traditional barriers to women’s participation in water provision in India, and details the process used to mainstream women into the entrepreneurial and operational roles required to manage these SWEs. Safe Water Network’s initiative to engage women in the SWE value chain was piloted in a district in the Indian state of Telangana (see Annex 1) with iJal-branded water stations, but has since been expanded to other districts, as well as other Indian states, transforming women from water collectors to water entrepreneurs.

Safe Water Network is a non-profit organization focused on improving public health through locally owned and operated SWEs that provide affordable and safe drinking water to communities. Our vision is of thriving communities, each managing their own safe water source with inclusive and equitable water distribution.

---

1 United Nations Population Information Network, UN Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with support from the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) [https://www.un.org/popin/unfpa/taskforce/guide/iatfwemp/gdl.html]
3 Statistical Year Book India 2017, “Table 2.1 Area and Population by States [Census 2011],” Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India
5 SWEs are also known colloquially as “safe water stations” or with respect to Safe Water Network’s model, “iJal stations.” For further perspective on SWEs see: The Untapped Potential of Decentralized Safe Drinking Water Enterprises, Dalberg Global Development Advisors, July, 2017. www.safewater.enterprises
A more gender-balanced world enables economies and communities to thrive. Improving women’s participation in the economy is viewed as a critical component for boosting gross domestic product (GDP).
THE GENDER GAP AND WATER
MOTHER AND SON CARRY A CONTAINER OF WATER FROM AN iJAL STATION
THE GENDER GAP AND WATER

Gender Inequality Around the World

A more gender-balanced world enables economies and communities to thrive. Improving women’s participation in the economy is viewed as a critical component for boosting gross domestic product (GDP). The McKinsey Global Institute Report suggests an additional $12 trillion can be added to global GDP if all countries could match the progress in attaining gender parity\(^\text{10}\). Furthermore, if we were to achieve equal economic participation of men and women, we would see a 26 percent increase in net GDP by 2025.

Yet gender disparity remains a global challenge, inhibiting economic growth in countries across the world. Over the past two years, the gender gap has been reduced by only 0.03 percent, and since 2006 by only 3.6 percent. The World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report 2018 measured the gender disparity of 149 countries across four thematic dimensions: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment (as seen in Figure 1\(^\text{11}\)). While the countries included in the report performed relatively well on the health and education sub-indices, the average gap for political empowerment and economic participation remained disturbingly large.

\(^{10}\) The Power of Parity: Advancing Women’s Equality in India, (September 2015), McKinsey Global Institute
\(^{11}\) Global Gender Gap Report 2018, World Economic Forum
The Gender Scenario in India

The situation in India is even more troublesome than the situation around the world: India ranked 108th out of the 149 countries in gender empowerment. Women are grossly underrepresented in the Indian economy, making up only 26 percent of the workforce. McKinsey estimates that only 17 percent of India’s GDP is contributed by women (as compared to the global average of 37 percent)\(^{12}\).

India’s National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) reported in 2017 that female labour participation is low in both rural and urban sectors: 36 percent of women are engaged in income-generating activities in the rural sector, as compared to 21 percent in urban areas. In addition, across both sectors, women tend to be engaged in less productive jobs, with only 38 percent of professional jobs performed by women\(^{13}\). The International Labour Organization’s Global Wage Report has indicated that the hourly wages of India’s women are 34 percent less than those of men, as compared to the global average of 16 percent\(^{14}\). Finally, despite the national willingness for entrepreneurship (83 percent versus 53 percent globally\(^{15}\)), the proportion of female entrepreneurs in India remains dismally low at 13.76 percent (8.05 million of the total 58.5 million entrepreneurs\(^{16}\)). If the country were to succeed in reducing the gender gap, McKinsey projects that $2.5 trillion could be added to national GDP by 2025\(^{17}\). A wide range of personal, social, and political barriers inhibit participation of women in the Indian economy, including unfavourable business and regulatory environments, and lack of family support, knowledge, and links to high-value opportunities.

Gender Inequality and Water

Lack of access to basic services, including safe drinking water supply, affects men and women differently, with women facing negative social, economic, and physical impacts at a much higher rate. Women and girls living in water-stressed communities are disproportionately burdened with the responsibilities related to water: collection, treatment, use for domestic chores, and caring for family members ill from waterborne diseases. 80 percent of water is collected by the women in households that do not have access to drinking water at their premises\(^{18}\), and globally, women spend more than 200 million hours collecting water every day\(^{19}\).

Dependence on women and girls for water collection, and the resulting repercussions on women's time and resources, is widespread. In fact, the low contribution of women in India’s economy is largely attributed to the significant amount of time and resources spent on unpaid domestic work. In India, women spend on average 352 minutes per day performing unpaid domestic work, versus 52 percent minutes per day spent by men. Further, on average, 66 percent of women’s work in India is unpaid\(^{20}\). Much of this effort could be reduced by providing women and households with access to basic amenities, including safe drinking water, as well as sanitation facilities and clean-energy cooking fuels.

Safe Water Network has seen first-hand how access to water changes the community—and reduces domestic burdens on women. Results of consumer research in villages with our safe water supply are telling: our consumers report improved health of their families, reduction in medical expenses, reduction in children and elders falling sick, and reduction in school absenteeism. Additionally, in the communities with our water supply, water collection is overwhelming carried out by men!

\(^{12}\) Ibid.
\(^{13}\) Data retrieved from National Sample Survey Office, Government of India.
\(^{15}\) Global Workmonitor Q1 2017, Randstad
\(^{16}\) Sixth Economic Census released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
\(^{17}\) The Power of Parity: Advancing Women’s Equality in India, (2015), McKinsey Global Institute
But the link between water and women’s empowerment does not stop with access. When women are involved in decision-making and actively participate in the management of water resources, there are benefits that go beyond their role as water users. Increasing both safe water access and women’s participation in its provision has strong implications for the improved well-being of families, women’s expanded economic opportunities, and enhanced female empowerment. This advances progress on the path towards gender equality (Figure 2).

**FIGURE 2**  The Path to Gender Equality

- **WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT**
  - Able to make strategic life decisions
  - Self-confidence and self-efficacy
  - Access to resources
  - Access to employment and income

- **WELL-BEING**
  - Welfare outcomes
    - Health and nutrition
    - Lifespan
    - Income

- **GENDER EQUALITY**
  - Shifts in institutions, norms, power, relations
    - Societal shift in decision making
    - Changes in political systems
    - Shift in roles and power relations

*A man collecting water from an iJal station*
Lack of access to basic services, including safe drinking water supply, affects men and women differently, with women experiencing far greater negative social, economic, and physical impacts than men.
ENGAGING WOMEN IN SAFE WATER Provision THROUGH SWEs
URBAN RESIDENTS LINING UP TO RECEIVE WATER FROM A TANKER, WHICH MAY POSE WATER QUALITY RISKS
ENGAGING WOMEN IN SAFE WATER PROVISION THROUGH SWEs

SWEs are social enterprises that provide safe drinking water to communities in need. SWEs have the potential to play a significant role in communities, boosting job creation and fueling sustainable development, and improving the well-being of women and girls by reducing the drudgery of water collection—freeing up time to pursue education and employment.

Safe Water Network's SWE Model: iJal Stations

Safe Water Network's SWE model is anchored by the iJal station, a decentralized, locally owned and operated water treatment plant that provides safe and affordable drinking water access to ~3,000-5,000 people in a community. Stations generate enough revenue from daily water sales to cover local operating and maintenance costs. These iJal stations are supported by a local Field Services Entity (FSE) for maintenance and repair to ensure reliability of services. The FSE is financed through monthly service fees from individual stations. iJal stations also contribute to a Sustainability Fund for long-term asset renewal.

Safe Water Network has in the last decade developed standard operating procedures (SOPs) for setting up our iJal-branded stations. Stations are implemented by a dedicated team armed with a defined training and capacity building program and a suite of modules and tools to support new stations. This includes: i) process documentation with defined indicators to mobilize the community, activate consumers, and select new entrepreneurs; ii) standard operating procedures for plant construction; iii) modules for operator training; iv) modules for operations and management with key performance indicators; v) a bookkeeping system; and vi) a monitoring and evaluation system. Training on different aspects of day-to-day operations and management are offered at the time of inception of the iJal station and a refresher course is conducted twice a year.

While Safe Water Network implements iJal stations through different operating models (i.e., community-managed, social enterprise, entrepreneur, etc.), they have been traditionally launched and managed by male social entrepreneurs from the community. In 2016, Safe Water Network began rolling out a new approach to its SWE implementation to expand the role of women, beyond safe water consumer to entrepreneur and operator.

Safe Water Network’s women-focused program creates economic empowerment opportunities to women as entrepreneurs, operators, distributors, and community mobilizers, shifting their role from water carriers to water entrepreneurs and managers.

A typical iJal station

---

21 Water sold for US $0.08/20L

www.safewaternetwork.org
The Value Proposition for Women’s Empowerment through SWEs

Safe Water Network’s field-validated iJal model offers a strong value proposition that can be leveraged to increase women’s empowerment leading to positive individual and collective impact.

Safe Water Network developed the **iJal Women’s Empowerment Program** (Figure 3) to mainstream participation of women and promote female entrepreneurship throughout the iJal value chain. Access to water and women’s participation in water provision realizes benefits in all four dimensions of gender equality in the Global Gap Index.

**FIGURE 3**  
**iJal Women Empowerment Program Results Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUB-INDICES</th>
<th>OUTPUT/OUTCOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Participation</strong></td>
<td>Increased participation in small business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Opportunity</td>
<td>Improved employment opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breaking of gender roles and stereotypes around women’s labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased level of self-efficacy and work efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Attainment</strong></td>
<td>Entrepreneurial and management skills developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial literacy and operational knowledge increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased availability of capacity building courseware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training efficiencies created through innovative digital training and tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health and Survival</strong></td>
<td>Improved health, especially for pregnant women and lactating mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduced drudgery of water collection for women and girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduced incidence of waterborne diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Empowerment</strong></td>
<td>More women in decision-making positions in water committees and boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District- and block-level leadership skills developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Representation and voice in local governance institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy engagement at national and local level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alignment with National Policies for Women’s Empowerment

The Government of India (GoI) recognizes the economic benefits and social value of policies and programs that create opportunities for women's participation and empowerment. These include comprehensive national laws, policies, and programs that support livelihood generation, empowerment, and facilities like water supply to provide access to basic services and the improvement of women’s lives. Some of the GoI’s schemes and initiatives to empower women at various levels can be seen in Figure 4.

Safe Water Network’s program to increase the prevalence and improve the performance of women-operated and -managed SWEs is well-aligned with India’s national goals for women empowerment. In particular, transforming SHGs into iJal station managers requires the development of entrepreneurial skills, resonating with the government’s STEP scheme to strengthen and improve women’s small business skills and generate employment opportunities. Similarly, increasing the community engagement of rural women through SWEs complements the Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK) scheme, which aims to empower rural women through community participation and seeks to create an environment where women can realize their full potential.

Adapting the iJal Model to Maximize Women’s Participation

To ensure that the program was responsive to the needs and preferences of the target population, women were included right from the initial design phase (see Annex 2). In addition, Safe Water Network carried out gender equality and social inclusion assessments. These efforts in the design, inception, and implementation of the iJal Women’s Empowerment Program laid the groundwork to overcome widespread social and economic barriers and enable active female participation in the water sector.

Safe Water Network’s journey to establish women-led iJal stations was not easy. Despite years of experience of setting up hundreds of successful locally owned and operated enterprises and a ready-to-use and proven methodology that had been codified, increasing female participation required overcoming a number of obstacles, including cultural norms, male dominance over decision-making, and lack of confidence, education, skills, and financial independence among the target group women.

As the program took shape, Safe Water Network used a framework of questions and indicators around gender equality and social inclusion to guide design and understand the working behaviour, learning capability, retention abilities, and emotional intelligence of the target female population (Table 1).
### TABLE 1  Framework for Understanding Barriers and Enablers to Women’s Participation in the iJal Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers Issues Concerns</th>
<th>Participation Access Control</th>
<th>Success Skills Productivity Income</th>
<th>Self-Confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Permission from male members to step out of house, to talk to other people</td>
<td>• Number of women willing to participate in program and in which roles</td>
<td>• Efficacy of the existing training programs</td>
<td>• Confidence in public speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reprimanding from male members for wasting time and not working in traditional roles</td>
<td>• Number of women who were influenced/motivated to work for the program</td>
<td>• Enhanced self-efficacy, ability for demonstration</td>
<td>• Confidence to deal with day-to-day issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Complaints from elders about neglecting the home</td>
<td>• Reason for dropout after being selected as entrepreneur/operator</td>
<td>• Acquisition of new skills</td>
<td>• Enhanced confidence to contribute to family decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rejection/exclusion by society for entrepreneurship</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Enhanced control on business operations, planning, reporting, and troubleshooting</td>
<td>• Enhanced power and confidence for operations and maintenance (O&amp;M), budgeting, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of education, skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>consumer management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Under-confidence that “I cannot work alone because I am a woman”</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Financial independence and livelihood generation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fear of technology and machinery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Work Efficacy Self-Efficacy                                                             |                                                                                             |                                                                                                    |                                                                                 |
| • Managing business performance and sales                                               |                                                                                             |                                                                                                    |                                                                                 |
| • Dealing with the operators/consumers/distributors on day-to-day basis                  |                                                                                             |                                                                                                    |                                                                                 |
| • Ability to give feedback and stand one’s own ground                                    |                                                                                             |                                                                                                    |                                                                                 |
| • Capacity to lead a group or committee                                                 |                                                                                             |                                                                                                    |                                                                                 |
| • Ability to guide children/siblings in education                                       |                                                                                             |                                                                                                    |                                                                                 |

| Social Influence                                                                       |                                                                                             |                                                                                                    |                                                                                 |
| • Assuming greater responsibilities at personal, social, and business level              |                                                                                             |                                                                                                    |                                                                                 |
| • Ability to communicate with people                                                   |                                                                                             |                                                                                                    |                                                                                 |
| • Enhanced public speaking                                                              |                                                                                             |                                                                                                    |                                                                                 |
| • Recognition as role model amongst community                                          |                                                                                             |                                                                                                    |                                                                                 |
Using the results of discussion and iterative feedback from women already active in the SWE value chain, as well as prospective program participants, we were able to summarize the challenges that were limiting women’s participation in water provision through SWEs (Figure 5).

With a deeper perspective of the immediate and long-term challenges, we began adapting our existing methodology to better facilitate the growth of women-owned and -operated stations. However, as we launched the program in new communities, we were faced with significant resistance from the SHGs to embrace the operational and leadership roles required to implement an iJal station. It was difficult to change member’s attitudes and win their trust. To address this, we applied the “Question, Undo, Involve, Trust” (QUIT) engagement strategy\(^\text{23}\) to motivate and mobilize women, so that they could undertake proactive roles in water supply through SWEs.

QUIT is a unique, rigorous strategy that encourages women to step out of their comfort zones, helps them acquire new behaviour, and builds confidence—enabling and motivating them to play new roles, e.g. manage SWEs. (See the Case Studies starting on page 39). Men also play an important role in this initiative.

---

\(^\text{23}\) Strategy to mobilize women’s participation in the SWE - iJal program developed by Safe Water Network in partnership with experiential marketing agency Dialogue Factory and IMRB International, a market research agency
The QUIT initiative involves four key steps:

i) **QUESTION (Q)**  Question dominant patriarchal roles.
Establishes an environment where women feel safe discussing and questioning established gender roles. Women are encouraged to come out of their homes, discuss their apprehensions and fears about their own and patriarchal roles, and interact with women peers and leaders who have overcome these shackles. Local leaders and administration functionaries are invited to address these meetings.

ii) **UNDO (U)**  Undo women’s sense of inertia about beliefs, and encourage behavior change for men and women.
Addresses and dispels entrenched age-old attitudes, behavior, norms, and traditions among women and men through mentoring and educating both women and men. Urges men to give freedom to the women in their households to step outside of the home and work, encouraging men to break through behavior norms, e.g. not to be bullied by other males in their community for allowing women in their household to work outside the home. Men’s alignment is essential to ease the path for women’s advancement.

iii) **INVOLVE (I)**  Involve women in developing empowerment, embed new behaviors and skills, instill confidence.
Provides confidence building measures and approaches so women can handle questions from home and community. Trains women in setting up SWEs providing skills in operations, consumer activation, water quality, bookkeeping, and monitoring.

iv) **TRUST (T)**  Trust your skills and stay in control. Be empowered.
Encourages women to believe in their competencies and to play a role in guiding and mentoring their fellow women, e.g. addressing local meetings. A refresher training course is provided to those who fall out from the program due to lack of confidence in SWE management skills.
Key Components for Success of the iJal Women’s Empowerment Program

With strong participation from the state lawmakers, district administration, and local governance, we launched the iJal Women’s Empowerment Program to systematically improve women’s participation in iJal station implementation and management. Safe Water Network partnered with the Medak district in the State of Telangana to expand opportunities for the district’s SHGs, linking them to a new source of income for their members and other community activities, while also providing the community with access to safe, affordable, reliable water supply. The District Collector24 (on behalf of the district government) provided the official contribution of infrastructure (land and building), and works with Safe Water Network to assess and identify a local SHG to be responsible for managing the station.

Key components that contribute to the ongoing success of the program include:

1. **Securing Institutional and Government Support.**
   Securing significant support from the District Collector, government, medical doctors, and the local lawmaker to: fund and facilitate the infrastructure requirements of the new iJal stations; help identify the SHG (there may be 12-18 in any given village); and advocate the importance of safe drinking water (rather than free water) throughout the community. Before we partnered with the District Collector in Medak, it was very difficult to engage government leadership to participate. Once launched, the district administration coordinated and facilitated meetings and discussions with women, local governance, and village elders; and also attended the launch of new stations. This was critical for normalizing the SHGs’ role in water supply and system management, and driving initial consumer enrolment and penetration. Now bureaucrats are actively promoting the program.

2. **Delivering Flexible Training and Capacity Development.**
   Delivering social, technical, and data reporting skills and capacity development activities through pictorial, audio-visual, and practical hands-on training; content is in the local language, can be self-driven (at an individual’s own pace), and is complemented by refresher courses.

3. **Expanding Role of Field Services Entity.**
   Expanding the role of the local Field Services Entity, wherein its staff of field executives provide additional support to SHG members and offer an extended period of direct hands-on support in the community.

4. **Expanding Women’s Roles.**
   Purposefully seeking to engage women in all the roles of the iJal value chain; beyond the individual station level, this also includes field executives and cluster coordinators who deliver customized training, and support the improved performance of groups of stations (Figure 7).

5. **Securing Complementary Resources.**
   Identifying resources that could take on particular responsibilities: for example, arranging for external vendors to carry out tank cleaning, a monthly task that women were not comfortable or able to complete on a regular basis.

6. **Taking Remedial Actions.**
   In cases when selected SHGs were not taking adequate responsibility of maintaining good financials, engaging consumers, and/or efficiently managing the day-to-day operations of the station, providing additional training to SHG members, and if necessary, transferring management of the station to another SHG in the same village.

24 District Collectors are the local government officers in charge of revenue collection and administration for the district.
Leveraging Innovative Tools and Technology.

Leveraging innovative tools and technology and integrating customized training into station design, and monitoring and sales processes to ease the demands of station operations and allow women to balance their work and domestic responsibilities (Figure 8). For example:

- **Automatic dispensing:** Facilitating 24/7 water sales by installing “anytime water machines” (ATMs) at stations and providing consumers with RFID cards for e-payment, which allow consumers to access and pay for water without any station personnel onsite; this provides female operators flexibility in their schedules and reduces the amount of time they need to be available at the iJal station.

- **Remote monitoring system (RMS):** Deploying an upgraded RMS to reduce the time and resource burden of operational and financial monitoring and reporting, wherein input from SHGs is regularly integrated into the design.
Innovative Tools and Technology

**Remote Monitoring System (RMS)**
- RMS, a cloud-based technology for parametric monitoring, provides 24/7 visibility of plant performance, consumer participation, and treated water quality.
- It assists predictive maintenance and spare requirements in advance of technician visits, before plant functionality is threatened.

**RFID Cards**
- Consumers use prepaid “smart” (RFID) cards for daily water purchases, easing petty change problems and allowing for water purchases in the absence of an operator.
- It provides valuable information related to consumer identification and purchase practice, easing reporting requirements.

**Water ATMs**
- iJal stations are equipped with water ATMs, allowing water to be purchased and dispensed at any time.
- It allows purchases through RFID cards, or single servings (0.5L or 1L) using coins.

**TRAINING MANUALS**
- Training modules in local languages using audio-video format enables self-directed learning at a working iJal station.
- Training is provided on women’s empowerment, consumer activation, operations, bookkeeping, monitoring, and repairs and maintenance.

**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**
- Capacity-building activities on bookkeeping and account management are prioritized to improve overall financial literacy, improving a station’s financial sustainability.
- Monthly checks and feedback from field executives and cluster coordinators help to verify financial books with individual vouchers.
Progress to Date

By building a conducive ecosystem to address sociocultural barriers, bridging skill and knowledge gaps, introducing automation to water treatment and dispensing, and creating networks for collaborative action in support of women in water supply, Safe Water Network is creating a flourishing environment for women-led iJal stations, primarily through SHG engagement. Within a span of 14 months, there were 49 SHGs actively managing stations in Safe Water Network’s operational cluster in Medak. These stations provide nearly 150,000 people with affordable access to safe water supply, approximately half of whom are women.

Against key financial and operational metrics, these 49 stations are performing as follows:

- Average rate of downtime: < 2 percent
- Percentage that covers monthly local operating expenses (including service fees): 100 percent
- Average percentage of local operating expenses covered: 100 percent
- Average monthly contribution to sustainability requirements: $49 / INR 3,351 (using 2018 average exchange rate)

In addition, we are applying program components to new and existing iJal stations owned and/or operated by female social entrepreneurs, who often face similar challenges to SHG members. Today, more than 170 women in total participate in the iJal value chain.

These women are proving to be competent water managers, and are keen to learn both technical and managerial skills. By increasing the self-reliance and independence of SHG members and other women in the community engaged in the value chain as entrepreneurs, operators, retailers, and community mobilizers, the program is increasingly seen by government, development agencies, civil society, communities, and local leaders as a catalyst for empowerment (Figure 9).

**Figure 9** Catalytic Impact of Participation in the iJal Value Chain

1. Engagement of women
2. Enhanced self-efficacy
3. Ability for demonstration
4. Enhanced power and confidence in O&M, budgeting, and customer management
5. Enhanced control over business operations, planning, and troubleshooting
6. Financial independence
7. Improved livelihood

---

25 This includes the Service Fee for the Field Services Entity and the Sustainability Fund.
Women’s engagement in the iJal Women’s Empowerment Program, and the SWE sector more broadly, also presents a unique opportunity for women to embrace technology and take on management roles, shifting away from traditional livelihoods centred on agriculture and artisanship. As women are becoming more technologically savvy, we expect to see attitudinal changes in society that lead to increased opportunities for women in more skilled sectors. In addition, the improved social status and financial independence from increased economic opportunity grants women greater authority to make decisions for themselves and their children.

By integrating women more actively into the iJal value chain, we are seeing a cascade of benefits for both female consumers and female suppliers of safe water through SWEs.

Comparative Performance by Management Type

Safe Water Network has implemented iJal stations managed by community groups, individual male and female social entrepreneurs, and SHGs. Analysing data from 154 stations managed by male entrepreneurs, 18 stations managed by female entrepreneurs, and 49 stations collectively managed by SHGs (on operational and financial performance to understand the scale potential for SHG-managed stations), we find results as shown in Table 2 below. The table lists the metrics used for the study and the summary of results, with additional insights.

### TABLE 2 Comparative Analysis Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUANTITATIVE INDICATOR</th>
<th>QUALITATIVE INDICATORS</th>
<th>HIGHLIGHTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volumes</td>
<td>Station Hygiene</td>
<td>• Female-entrepreneur-managed stations perform better that male-entrepreneur-managed stations in terms of volumes; they are equal in consumer penetration. However, male-managed stations have higher distribution at 29 percent, versus 3 percent at women-managed SWEs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Penetration</td>
<td>Troubleshooting or Complaints Filed</td>
<td>• In comparison to female-entrepreneur-managed stations, SHG-managed SWEs show slower growth in volumes and consumer penetration, and have lower average monthly revenues. They also virtually lack distribution, due to a lack of capital and interest. However, SHGs contribute more towards the Service Fee and Sustainability Fund, as they do not commit any upfront investment on fixed infrastructure. In addition, station plant hygiene is better, and SHGs are able to engage with local governance to troubleshoot raw water deficiency and availability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Fee Contribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Fund Contribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*12-months of data was reviewed (April 2018 to March 2019); all stations analysed were operational for a minimum of one year.*
We also compared average station performance by analysing the data on volumes and consumer penetration (based on 20L cans/day), as seen in Figure 10. Female-entrepreneur-managed stations had 22 percent higher volumes than male-entrepreneur-managed stations (212 vs. 174 cans/day); this was despite the high percentage (29 percent) of volume from distribution achieved by male-managed stations. All three management models showed similar levels of consumer penetration, despite the lower average life27 of SHG-managed stations.

Comparing volumes sold by each of the three different management models at 1.2 years after station launch (a period selected based on the length of time that SHG-operated stations were operational), as shown in Figure 11, we see that female-entrepreneur-managed stations sold 180 cans/day; male-managed stations 136; and SHG-managed stations 76. This suggests the need for consumer activation campaigns to boost volumes of SHG-managed stations, so they can realize the target of 170 cans/day after 2-3 years of operation.

Analysing data on the proportion of water distributed (i.e., water sold beyond walk-in consumers at the iJal station kiosk), we find that men-entrepreneur-managed stations have far higher water distribution sales (29 percent of volume) than both women-entrepreneur-managed stations (3 percent) and SHG-managed stations (0 percent), as seen in Figure 12. Although the locations/operational areas covered by women-run, men-run and SHG-run stations may not be exactly the same (e.g. density may vary), it is clear that we need to explore solutions to the distribution challenge at both women-entrepreneur and SHG-managed stations.

---

27 Time that the station has been operational and selling water.
Comparing the proportion of contributions towards Sustainability Fund requirements (Figure 13), we see that both women- and men-entrepreneur-run stations were at par in terms of contributions for financial sustainability, at 13 percent and 15 percent respectively, whereas the SHG-managed SWEs, despite low monthly average revenues, contributed 29 percent towards the Sustainability Fund. In addition, SHG-run SWEs paid 12 percent of revenues towards the Service Fee for regular repair and maintenance of the plant, versus 5 percent paid by male- and female-entrepreneur-run stations. (Note: The higher percentage of SHG-run SWEs is partially a function of the lower average revenues at these stations; nevertheless, it still illustrates the financial discipline prevalent among the SHGs.)
Insights
The above comparison of three different types of models provides a strong basis for us to better understand the advantages and disadvantages of each, and enables us to focus on opportunities to realize greater success for all the models. Preliminary conclusions related to SHG-managed stations include:

- The lower revenues of SHG-managed stations today present challenges to financial sustainability. We ascribe this to:
  - Lack of co-investment, and a consequent lack of a sense of ownership, whereas entrepreneurs may have more personal financial incentives to improve sales and performance.
  - Absence of a distribution network and related loss of volume. Distribution requires additional investment in a vehicle, as well as the ability to carry multiple 20+ kg water cans to households at varying distances from the station. While SHGs could organize third-party distribution through an external agency, to date they have not exhibited a willingness to do so.

- SHG-managed stations have the advantage of few administrative roadblocks or bottlenecks with respect to regulatory oversight, e.g. water quality inspector, ground control board, revenue officer, etc.

- SHG-managed stations exhibit strong financial discipline as evidenced by a high percentage of payments to the Sustainability Fund.
The iJal Women’s Empowerment Program gives women the capacity and opportunity to become active leaders in the iJal value chain.
WOMEN INSPECTING PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL AT AN IJAL STATION
CASE STUDIES: EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE iJAL MODEL

The case studies described in this section serve as examples of the impact that Safe Water Network’s iJal Women’s Empowerment Program has on women entrepreneurs, as well as SHGs and their members, in the provision of safe water in Telangana’s Medak district and beyond.

When the Medak District Collector and Safe Water Network set up the first SHG-managed iJal station at the local hospital in Medak, SHG members were not only eager to shift from traditional rural livelihoods, they were keen to interact with more advanced technology and prove themselves in acquiring the skill sets required to run an effective and efficient local business, including operations, maintenance, monitoring, and bookkeeping.

The iJal station at the Medak Hospital became the “lighthouse” initiative to drive the iJal Women’s Empowerment Program with many more iJal stations following in its footsteps, giving capacity and opportunity for women to become active leaders in the iJal value chain as entrepreneurs, operators, field executives, and mobilizers in the provision of safe water (see Key Components for Success starting on page 28).
The iJal Women’s Empowerment Program helped to link SHGs with new sources of income, expanding women’s role in the provision of a community’s access to safe, affordable, and reliable water, while elevating their social status in their communities. One success story is that of Bhoolaxmi, Suvarna, and Saraswati, leaders of the Manikanta SHG, who run the iJal station in the village of Jammikunta, 100 kilometres from Hyderabad, the capital city of Telangana. This station provides safe water to approximately 1,200 households.

In Jammikunta, groundwater is contaminated with fluoride, nitrates, salinity, and iron contaminants, and this has affected the village for generations. This troubling scenario began to change in January of 2017, when Bhoolaxmi, Suvarna, and Saraswati first learned of Safe Water Network’s approach. Skeptical of the SWE model at first, these women began to see how a new iJal station could help to significantly reduce waterborne illnesses in their community.

Though the members of Manikanta were relative novices when it came to running a business venture, they understood that the key to generating demand for safe water began with changing old ways of thinking. In a village like Jammikunta, where the local population competes for free, but untreated, groundwater, generating demand for safe drinking water represented a significant challenge. To address this, Manikanta launched an awareness program to educate villagers on the need of consuming safe drinking water.

When Manikanta first started working with Safe Water Network, the group found it challenging to communicate the benefits of clean drinking water amongst themselves, let alone in front of an audience. But after completing a rigorous training program on plant operations and water purification processes, Manikanta was able to more effectively communicate with their fellow villagers. The trio now conducts electrolyser demonstrations, door-to-door campaigns, specialized programs for pregnant women, and awareness programs at village meetings, schools, and anganwadis (government-run nurseries).

For Bhoolaxmi, Suvarna, and Saraswati, the iJal station is not only a means for making a living, but it also serves as a way of connecting to the community with a social cause. One example: as women, Manikanta recognizes the many challenges faced by pregnant women, and therefore provides them with free drinking water. They also provide safe drinking water free-of-charge during festivals and village meetings, as part of a broader marketing strategy to attract more regular consumers to their iJal station.

Over a short span of seven months, Manikanta managed to attract a base of 450 families, who now buy between 100 to 120 20-litre cans daily. Beyond the positive health benefits their drinking water has produced, Manikanta has even managed to bring about positive environmental change: the reject water that the iJal station produces as a byproduct is now used for the cleaning of toilets and the watering of gardens at local government schools.

For Bhoolaxmi, Suvarna, and Saraswati, the iJal station is not only a means for making a living, but also serves as a way of connecting to the community with a social cause.
Members of the Manikanta SHG, Jammikunta iJal station, Medak district, Telangana
In 2016, Safe Water Network rolled out a new approach to its SWE implementation to expand the participation of women beyond the role of safe water consumer by focusing on recruiting women for different positions in the iJal supply chain. **Ramadevi**, an iJal station entrepreneur, saw an opportunity to leverage the trust and respect of her community to become an entrepreneur in order to actively deliver safe drinking water to her community.

Gollapadu is one of India’s most socially and economically disadvantaged villages. Similar to other neighbouring villages in the area, Gollapadu suffers from groundwater contaminated with high fluoride and salinity, which can lead to weak bones, joint pain, and skeletal deformity for those who consume it. With extensive experience in actively working on social programs—from the construction of toilets, to campaigns against open defecation, to rainwater harvesting—Ramadevi, newly married and pursuing a post-graduate degree, moved to Gollapadu and realized the potential for safe drinking water to improve the health of the community.

Upon learning about Safe Water Network and its mission to facilitate iJal stations for safe drinking water using a social franchise model, Ramadevi persuaded her husband to make the investment so that she could become the local entrepreneur. She was confident that she could convince the community to pay for safe water. She undertook extensive training on the technical and operational aspects of running the facility: financial management; water quality monitoring; and monthly reporting.

Friendly and passionate, Ramadevi worked tirelessly to enroll new customers. She approached them at home, at their work—which included farms and facilities producing beedis (thin cigarettes)—and attended various functions and SHG gatherings to explain the health benefits of safe drinking water. Case in point: during her demonstrations, Ramadevi compares the quality of groundwater with that of treated water from her station, using water quality test kits and an electrolyser test. She even installed an amplification system on her husband’s auto-rickshaw to create awareness of the iJal station and its safe water services. Ramadevi’s husband, meanwhile, uses the rickshaw to distribute water. Impressed with her work for the community, representatives of the local Panchayat and other local bodies seek Ramadevi’s advice while considering any major decisions for the village.

“I am very happy that my husband believed in me and invested in the iJal station. I operate the plant and make new customers. He distributes the water from his auto. We have respect in the village.”

- Ramadevi, Entrepreneur cum operator, Gollapadu iJal station, Khammam district, Telangana.
Ramadevi has been selling treated water from her family’s iJal station for the last few years, and is very proud of her achievements. Apart from selling affordable water, she provides free water cans to local schools and anganwadis. She is also passionate about engaging with pregnant women and nursing mothers to ensure that newborns and expecting mothers are healthy. Ramadevi feels that this initiative will go a long way towards meeting her goal of providing access to safe, affordable water as a means of improving health and bringing dignity to her community—now and in the future.

Meanwhile, in the nearby village Rangashaipet (located in Telangana’s Warangal district), Padmaja runs an iJal station that has earned her the title of “Water Aunty” among her neighbors—neighbors who have experienced the negative effects of water contaminated with fluoride. Managing and operating this water treatment plant has radically transformed Padmaja’s life. Her work has allowed her to enhance management and social skills, which results in a raised confidence to manage the station and an increased recognition throughout the village. Furthermore, it allows her to expand her caring nature beyond her family and among the wider community. Padmaja is very proud of the impact she has on the lives around her.

"Everybody in the village knows me now, everybody. Earlier, I was just a housewife, but now people call me the Water Aunty."

- Padmaja, Operator, Rangashaipet iJal station, Warangal district, Telangana

29 Government run nurseries
CASE STUDY 3: SHG Member as Community WASH Mobilizer

Community mobilizers are seen by communities and local leaders as catalysts for empowerment and change. Rani, the leader of a local SHG named Divya, understood the need for safe water and its health benefits in the community of Ambedkar Nagar, a small settlement in Medak district. As a young mother, Rani had seen her two young children frequently fall ill after consuming contaminated water. For many years, there was no water treatment facility in the village, and boiling and/or filtering the water failed to solve the problem. So when Safe Water Network began promoting the benefits of safe water, she urged her fellow SHG members to invest in an iJal station as a way to reduce waterborne illnesses in their community.

Rani saw the iJal station as a unique opportunity to educate her community on the relationship between water and health. Through an awareness program, she began talking to households, pregnant women, anganwadis (government-run nurseries), and schools throughout the village. Respected in Ambedkar Nagar, Rani leads excellent consumer mobilization programs, and hopes to enroll each and every member of her community. One can often find her passionately conducting water quality tests at the homes of her neighbors using field test kits and meters that test for total dissolved solids—all while tirelessly explaining the virtues of safe water, personal hygiene, and sanitation. To drive home her presentations, she compares the cost of monthly water purchases from the iJal station to that previously spent on doctors’ fees and medicine.

“I have seen how safe water changed the health of my family. Sometimes, I share my own experience or I explain how drinking safe water will reduce doctor bills.”

– Rani, Member of the Divya SHG and Community WASH Mobilizer, Ambedkar Nagar iJal station
Rani, a member of the Divya SHG and a Community WASH Mobilizer, Amedkar Nagar Jal station, Medak district, Telangana
CASE STUDY 4: Women as iJal Field Executives and Cluster Coordinators

Beyond the individual station level, women serving as field executives and cluster coordinators play a key role in the iJal value chain. This is the case with Kalavathi, who is an iJal field executive responsible for supervising 18 iJal stations and helping to improve their performance. Kalavathi was a homemaker like many other women living in the urban district of Warangal, who often faced acute water shortages, and relied on access from unreliable and unsafe sources.

“‘I am grateful to my family, my friends, and my employers who trusted me with this responsibility.’”

– Kalavathi Ponugoti, iJal Field Executive

Kalavathi started looking for better ways to obtain safe water at reasonable prices. She soon came across an iJal station and learned about the station’s community engagement activities, which promoted the consumption of safe drinking water. At one such event, she met a member of the Safe Water Network team, who happened to be seeking women to take on field-based roles. The Safe Water Network team member saw in Kalavathi a strong desire to contribute and a potential to liaise with entrepreneurs and promote the sustainable delivery of safe drinking water within underprivileged communities.

After extensive training, Kalavathi is now overseeing 18 iJal station operators and entrepreneurs, and is collecting data on volume of water produced, sales, operational issues, and water supply management. She is also interacting with consumers and key stakeholders to assess their satisfaction with the water service.
Vijaya Lakshmi, once an iJal field executive, now serves as an iJal cluster coordinator. Already a challenging position in rural and peri-urban India, her job as a field executive forced her to prove her mettle in a position that is traditionally reserved for male executives. She underscored the importance of performance above perceived gender roles and worked diligently with the iJal stations in her portfolio. She demonstrated leadership in the organizing of community-based activities and, in time, proved her unparalleled organizational skills that earned her a promotion to cluster coordinator. She now manages three field executives and a total of 56 iJal stations.

“I never doubted that I could lead a team of male executives. All I needed was an opportunity. I am glad I got a chance to prove myself.”

– Vijaya Lakshmi, iJal Cluster Coordinator
A COMMUNITY MOBILIZER EDUCATES YOUNG GIRLS ON BEST PRACTICES PERTAINING TO WATER
SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Gender mainstreaming in the water sector seeks to balance the differences between men and women in several areas: access to information, control of resources, involvement in decision-making, and contribution to the economy. Owning, operating, and managing safe water supply through SWEs is a tangible way for women to transform their lives. Safe Water Network’s iJal Women’s Empowerment Program illustrates how such programs can improve the lives of women, providing livelihood opportunities and access to safe drinking water.

To accelerate women’s empowerment, realize gender mainstreaming through access to and provision of water, and achieve the Sustainability Development Goals, the following is required:

• Change the traditional top-down patriarchal approach to water provision, opening up opportunities for women to participate in income-generating roles, such as those of SWE entrepreneurs and managers, as described in this report. With capacity building and responsive tools, women can create their own futures and act as change agents in their communities.

• Capitalize on the power of collaborative action, with participation of multiple stakeholders, including men from within the community, to create a women-supportive ecosystem that provides opportunities to enable change. This requires engagement of:
  • Government to strengthen existing women’s empowerment initiatives
  • Financial institutions to facilitate easier access to capital for potential female entrepreneurs
  • Development agencies to influence the national policy and regulatory environment
  • Social enterprises to create opportunities, provide capacity development, and develop tools for women’s success

• Create an inclusive culture of active and productive involvement of women that bridges generational- and gender-related divides in an increasingly interconnected society.

Next Steps

The iJal Women’s Empowerment Program has shown great promise and potential. To take this work forward, we seek to pursue the following:

• Continue to optimize the SHG-managed model, including the following:
  • Conducting distribution pilots, e.g. “pink auto distribution,” to boost revenues for SHG- and female-entrepreneur-managed stations and determine the optimal approach
  • Exploring how the Field Services Entity and its ongoing technical support could be further adapted to better service SHG-managed stations

• Apply the iJal Women’s Empowerment Program framework to other locales, e.g. districts in Maharashtra, continuing to adapt the approach to strengthen impacts and monitoring performance to gain further insights.

• Capture and synthesize additional individual-level data from SHG members and female entrepreneurs to better understand the impact of the initiatives on their lives, abilities, and well-being, as well as the critical constraints that hamper the advancement of their role as managers and entrepreneurs.

• Facilitate the sharing of women-centric approaches and results among more SWE implementers operating in similar contexts in India.
A COMMUNITY MOBILIZER SPEAKS TO A CLASS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SAFE WATER
ANNEXURES

ANNEX 1. Letter of Commendation from Padma Reddy, Government of Telangana

M. PADMA DEVENDER REDDY
Deputy Speaker Legislative Assembly

HYDERABAD
10th October, 2018

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA

Telangana encourages women to contribute constructively to the nation building efforts. We want women to be self-reliant and economically independent. They need to have positive self-esteem and be active participant in various socio-political development endeavors. We have taken steps to increase representation of women in jobs, education and promoting small businesses.

Safe Water Network through their ‘Dal safe drinking water initiative, is nurturing women self-help group to operate and manage water treatment plants under approval from the local governance, gram panchayat. Thus, the ‘Dal initiative provides the local community with access to affordable safe drinking water equitably and inclusively through constructive partnership of local women and community as a whole. The women work as individual operators, entrepreneurs, mobilizers earning livelihood. ‘Dal initiative has broken the myth that women cannot operate machine and produce safe water or manage accounts. Literacy or its lack has not stood in their way and today they are economically empowered and independent. They are an inspiration to their fellow women and builders of equitable and healthier society.

SHG women have brought improved health, drinking water security and well-being to their communities. My best wishes to Safe Water Network India. We need many more such initiatives.

M. Padma Devender Reddy
Deputy Speaker in Telangana Legislative Assembly.
ANNEX 2. Program Design Framework

1. PRE-PROJECT
   - Baseline Survey
   - Assessing the Barriers to Women Involvement in SWEs
   - Navigating the Barriers
   - Mainstreaming Gender Equality

2. PROJECT DESIGN
   - Engaging Women in Program Planning
   - Mobilizing Community Involvement
   - Innovating Women Friendly Digital Tools
   - Engaging Key Opinion Leaders
   - Onboarding Local Leadership

3. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION
   - Providing Business and Livelihood Opportunities
   - Consumer Activation & IEC Programs
   - Flexibility in Work Timings
   - Training Programs in Local Language with Flexible Schedule

4. PROJECT OUTPUT
   - Enhanced Confidence
   - Financial Freedom
   - Recognition in Society
   - Skilled Women
   - Improved Access to Resource and Microfinance

Mainstreaming Gender Equality
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AUTHORS & CO-AUTHORS
Poonam Sewak, V. P. Knowledge & Partnerships
Pooja Singh, Head of Monitoring & Evaluation
Reena Kumari, Market Development Analyst
Garvita Chawla, Head of Finance
Vibha Hanaria, Monitoring & Evaluation Officer
Arvind Deshmukh, Market Development Analyst

REVIEWERS
Ravindra Sewak, Founding Trustee
Amanda Gimble, SVP Strategic Initiatives

PEER REVIEWED
Ramona El Hamzaoui, Deputy Mission Director, USAID

EDITORIAL
Gillian Winkler, Sr. Business Development Manager
Danielle A. Garcia, Planning & Sector Engagement

PRODUCTION
Jonathan McGrath, Communications & Engagement Manager

The SHG-operated Marepally iJal station in the Sangareddy district of Telangana.

The inauguration of the Thippanapally iJal station, located in the Bhadradri Kothagudem district of Telangana.
About Safe Water Network

Founded in 2006, Safe Water Network has been working alongside communities in Ghana and India to facilitate decentralized and locally owned community water purification systems that provide affordable, reliable, and safe off-grid drinking water.

Over the past decade, Safe Water Network India has established more than 280 small water enterprises (branded as iJal stations) in the Indian states of Maharashtra, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh, providing safe water access to more than a million people. Working with local governments (Panchayat Raj institutions), we support local communities, entrepreneurs, and self-help groups in implementing financially sustainable iJal stations. The communities buy safe drinking water at nominal rate of INR 5/20L.

Engaging with government and other stakeholders, our priority is to document the success of this approach and, working with other entities, reach millions in need of safe water through broad-scale replication.
INDIA
The Centrum, TB-3, 3rd Floor, 369-370
Main Mehrauli-Gurgaon Road, Sultanpur
New Delhi, India 110030
Phone: + 91 11 26 80 0884
Email: india@safewaternetwork.org

USA
122 East 42nd Street
Suite 2600
New York, NY 10168
United States
Phone: +1 212-355-7233
Email: info@safewaternetwork.org

GHANA
4 Odoi Beyeden Street
East Legon
Accra, Ghana
Phone: +233 302-544-255
Email: ghana@safewaternetwork.org