

W-SHARP - Women-led Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Resilient Practices Project

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Background

UNICEF Maharashtra, in collaboration with the State's Disaster Management, Relief, and Rehabilitation Department, carried out a rapid assessment to measure the impact of drought and related consequences and coping mechanisms for communities, especially children and women in the Marathwada region in 2015-16. It was found that almost 50 percent of villages had only one source of water for drinking and other domestic purposes. 27 percent of the farmers did not have any water management techniques and during water scarcity, about 84 percent of families faced irrigation challenges.

Women were disproportionately affected by scarcity. This increased their burden in terms of household tasks as they need to travel further in order to search for water, fuel, and fodder. This has a direct impact on their sanitation, hygiene and nutritional outcomes, which also affect their next generations.

About W-SHARP

- In order to address the problem, **UNICEF along with the government of Maharashtra implemented 'Women-led Water, Sanitation, Hygiene, and Resilient Practices Project' or W-SHARP in 2018** in the region.
- **The Project sought to enhance water, livelihood and food security across 100 villages** which include 10,000 families in two drought-affected areas of the state.

- In order to build climate-resilient practices within most vulnerable groups, W-SHARP called for the **participation of women and vulnerable families as a core aspect of the project.**
- **The project positioned women as key change agents** who were responsible for mobilizing their communities, local bodies, and government institutions for shared causes.

Working of the project

- 100 most vulnerable households from about 100 villages were involved in the project. These households include homes of **marginal farmers, households headed by women and of landless labourers.**
- **Women community leaders or 'Arogya Sakhis' were selected and trained by UNICEF** and other implementing partners to promote hygiene, water security and climate-resilient agricultural practices in every village.
- These community leaders were responsible for engaging with the village people and raise awareness and knowledge on important issues.

Significance of the project

- The model proved to be effective in terms that it encouraged community participation in local governance and foster partnership with relevant government and civil society institutions.
- It was also effective in enabling the emergence of women leaders in these villages.
- The innovative approach by the Government of Maharashtra has opened up avenues for women empowerment while addressing water scarcity and disaster resilience.
- The project has ensured that women who suffer the most because of climate change and disasters caused by it, emerge stronger and provide solutions to rescue their community from its catastrophic impacts.