

FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

Contributing to the cause of bettering lives through improved hygiene, clean water and sanitation, Sanchaita Gajapathi Raju is a young ambassador of the Swachh Bharat module. *Hi! Blitz* learns more about how she is doing it.





Sanchaita Gajapathi with the Google Impact Challenge award

plants. Working with both Indian and international organisations, SANA has been introducing hygienic practices and portable toilets to villages and slums where sanitation facilities are still absent. These bio toilets do not need septic tanks or sewerage and waste treatment plants. "When I was pondering on what project to start with at SANA, I realized water and sanitation were sectors that were most important. Diarrhoea can be eliminated only if children have access to clean drinking water. And even though sanitation isn't a sexy thing to deal with, it is something that determines health to a large extent. There are young girls dropping out of school because they don't have proper toilets in schools. Once they get their menses, they are kept back at home. Also most of these girls are sent to fetch drinking water. This means their studies take a beating. Hence, there was a need to use technology as an enabler to better the living standards of especially women and children," explains Sanchaita. In 2012 SANA set up Delhi's first solar powered water station that allocated five litres of water per child per day at some 1000 schools under the Delhi government's department of education.

In April 2015, Sanchaita was invited by the legendary Tina Brown and *The New York Times* to address the Women in the World Summit in the Lincoln Centre, New York and speak on her work. Among other speakers at the Summit, attended by women influencers and change-makers from around the world, were Meryl Streep and Hillary Clinton. Her project named 'Toilets and Taps transforming Lives through Technology' was one of the winners of the Google Impact Challenge. The prize money of half a million dollars was ploughed back into the organisation.



It was a fairly successful project. "We even trained the school children and staff to maintain the plant to increase the longevity of the project. Any project will be sustainable only when the beneficiaries know how to handle and run it. We design it, build it, but it's their property and they should know the nitty-gritty of it. This also increases their sense of responsibility towards it."

In 2013, SANA extended their work in East Godavari in Andhra setting up bio toilets and eradicating water wastage. This project named 'Toilets and Taps transforming Lives through Technology' was one of the winners of the Google Impact Challenge. The prize money of half a million dollars was ploughed back into the organisation to further the cause of social awareness and newer alternatives of good and healthy living. SANA is working today in 20 villages in Andhra Pradesh along with the district administration. In 2015 Oracle also reached out to SANA to fund them for

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projects. "These grants gave credibility and validity to the organisation. With the support of Oracle and the district administration, SANA is providing safe drinking water and bio toilets in 12 all girls schools in the tribal areas of Visakhapatnam. Sanchaita's holistic vision is supported by aggressive

capacity building, skill development and motivational workshops. This is the foundation of the success of her social initiative, which she monitors personally through regular social audits and mid-course corrections, to ensure, the social interventions are effectively implemented. In April 2015, Sanchaita was invited by the legendary Tina Brown and The New York Times to address the Women in the World Summit in the Lincoln Centre, New York and speak on her work. Among other speakers at the summit, attended by women influencers and change-makers from around the world, were Meryl Streep and Hillary Clinton. In September this year Sanchaita was invited to address IPDC talks at UNESCO in Paris and the enterprising lady floored the audience with her vision and dedication. "I have very normal passions and hobbies you know. Reading, movies, travelling and so on. But SANA is a big part of me. And it feels great cleaning and lighting up lives," says the lady with a million-dollar smile.



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There is a kind of sweet assurance about Sanchaita Gajapathi Raju. Not just a dreamer, here is a young lady who was determined and driven enough to give sturdy wings to those dreams. Dreams and aspirations to make a better tomorrow for the underprivileged women and children of our country. Confident of her vision, Sanchaita today has changed the way women and children live in the interiors of Vishakhapatnam and some of the rural outskirts of Delhi-NCR. When we meet her in her Gurugram residence, she has us gripped with the account of her journey with SANA (Social Awareness Newer Alternatives), her baby that is using alternative technology to enable steady progress and development.

SANA is a public charitable trust founded by Sanchaita in 2011 to protect and empower the marginalized section of society, working particularly in rural and urban India. As part of its social responsibility, SANA is also committed to sensitizing communities and promoting non-violence as a tool for conflict resolution. Says Sanchaita, "SANA is something that I felt deeply for and wanted to make it happen. After a stint with my father, Ramesh Sharma, who is well known for his activist films, in the interiors of Karnataka, I came back convinced that I would want to work in the non-profit sector."

Born and brought up in Delhi, Sanchaita also grew up watching her mother, Uma Gajapathi Raju, a Lok Sabha Member of Parliament making a mark in the field of healthcare with the project called Lifeline Express, a healthcare initiative in villages. "After my graduation I took a breather to figure out what I wanted to do. I joined my father in the media industry and travelled extensively with him. I pursued a degree in law as well. But somehow you know deep inside that these are none of what you want to do. Then at Gulbarga in Karnataka, where we were stationed to make a film on the use of technology in agricultural practices... It was a fabulous experience and I came back and told my parents that I would like to extend my work on those lines."

Her parents have always supported her and were kind enough to fund SANA's first project as well, till it found its footing financially. Sanchaita believes that simple things work best. Potable water, rainwater harvesting and eco-friendly portable loos are amenities that SANA has been facilitating in the interiors of the district of Vishakhapatnam. With the help of private-public partnerships, rural villages and urban slum clusters are getting potable drinking water of WHO standards by designing and implementing solar powered micro ionizing water treatment



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STERLING FEMMES

Born with a golden spoon, these young ladies prefer striving for a more compassionate social landscape rather than upping the fashion stakes. *Hi! Blitz* features some golden sweethearts who show the way to a better India.

TEXT: SHARMI GHOSH DASTIDAR

