

Amla Ruia

Founder, Aakar Charitable Trust

Amla Ruia was born into a spiritual and literary family. Even as a child, the sense of giving back to the community was very strong. In 2003, she founded the Aakar Charitable Trust to address the two issues closest to her heart: education and water. For the first, the trust set up replicable schools from pre-primary to higher secondary in Ramgarh, Rajasthan with view to imparting high-quality education to villagers at minimum cost.

The Trust's work with water is far more elaborate. Ever since, it helped build 200 *kunds*, or underground water tanks, to provide drinking water in remote areas where that lack municipal water supply. (Twenty-five per cent of the cost was borne by the local villagers). One crore litres of water is harvested from the rains in these kunds every year. The trust then went on to build 206 large and medium-scale check dams in 200 villages, transforming over 2.5 lakh lives.

Ruia's organisation has also done water harvesting in the water-deprived and marginalised areas of Sikar, Jhunjhunu, Bikaner, Alwar, Dausa and Jaipur, in Rajasthan. Here, the check dams built by the Trust have helped the locals greatly and taken them to a new level of prosperity and self-sufficiency. They are maintained by the villagers who contributed 30-40 per cent of the cost of their construction. Ruia has now started similar projects in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. She says the advantages of building check dams can't be cited enough, as they increase cultivability of land, bring in extra animal husbandry income, relieve women of the burden of having to ferr water over long distances and bring relief from drought and floods. Owing to Ruia's vision, both nature and culture are getting a new lease of life.

For Being 'Water Mother' to a Hundred Villages



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I like to apply myself in service to rural areas. Water and education are two issues that need attention.”



The New Indian Express and The Sunday Standard have instituted the **Devi Award for the unsung Women of India** who have worked tirelessly for the betterment of the nation. To honor 15 such dynamic super-achievers the External Affairs Minister **Smt. Sushma Swaraj** had come to a function held in ITC Maurya in Delhi on 11.1.2016.

