

In the year 2003,

Naandi Foundation was instrumental in reviving 85 defunct Lift Irrigation schemes in Mahboobnagar District. This project converted a group of desperate farmers into confident, empowered agricultural entrepreneurs.

As remarked by Dr. Tushar Shah, The empowered farmers, enabled with the right capacities - took responsibility to manage and maintain the scheme which was a marked departure from the prevailing irrigation policy that reserved the rights within the State functionaries itself.

True Empowerment

is not restricted to one area of life or one particular scheme. The freedom of making a choice, conjoined with success would pervade in all spheres of life and decision making. One such confident farmer- assumed the voice of the village and asked the then founding chairman (Naandi Foundation) Dr. Anji Reddy-

“

It is good that we now have control over agricultural water?

Can we not take control of our drinking water in the same way???”

Far Across the Globe

in the Berkeley National Laboratory, USA, a scientist by name Ashok Gadgil was disturbed beyond words by the 1992 cholera out-break in west Bengal that led to the death of thousands of people in India or the fact that between May to August 1994 – nearly 2200 people lost their lives to the disease. From 1993 to 1995 he relentlessly worked on a technology that could purify water at a minimal cost for the underserved.

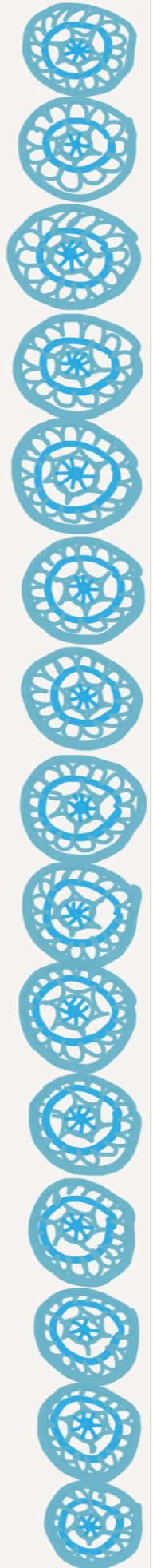
The technology first moved to Ghana and was undergoing it's first stage of scale and development by Water Health International, USA

The Spirit of Humanity

*knows no borders. It was not about the farmer's instigating question – Dr. Anji Reddy in his own words said – **“It has always pained me to note that five star hotels in our country boast of potable water in their toilets when millions of home cannot”***

In the year 2005 - The Power of Good Intentions

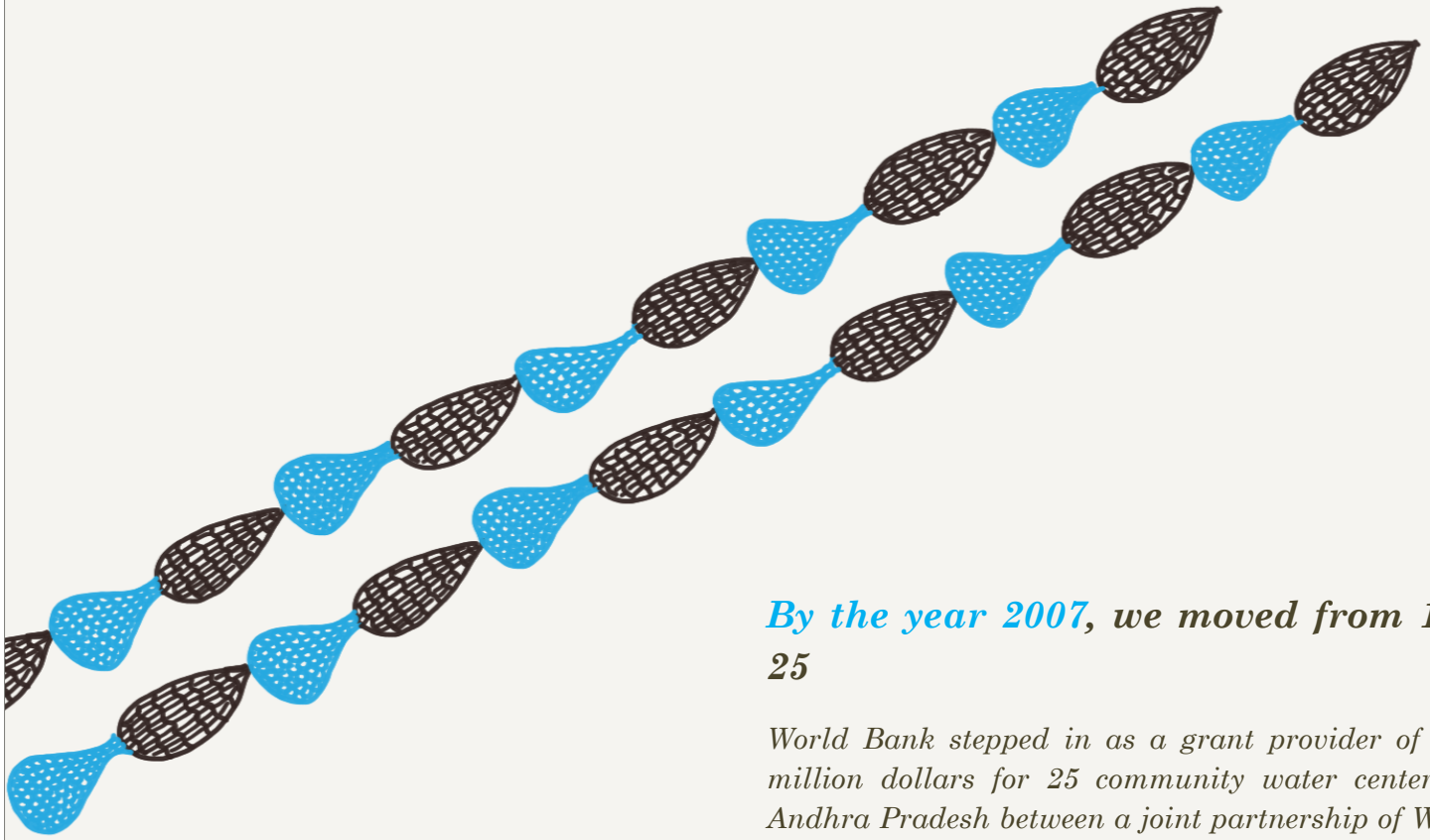
*Both these forces coincidentally - met by chance in a dinner party and they owed the meeting to the Power of Good Intentions. While WHIN had the technology – they wanted to team up with local organisations that understand language, culture and mostly wanted to partner with **organisations that people in the villages trust***



Born was a pilot in Bomminnapadu village that would eventually give access and control over safe drinking water to thousands of villages all over India. The model of involving the Gram Panchayats to give water and land, a donor to give funds for technology and project managed by an implementing agency that collects minimum user fee – would become ubiquitous

Some called it Output Based Aid, Some called it Tripartite model, some said it is a Built - Operate – Transfer mechanism or a beautiful demonstration of Public Private Partnership (PPP)

We Call it the Naandi Water Model !



By the year 2007, we moved from 1 to 25

World Bank stepped in as a grant provider of 0.85 million dollars for 25 community water centers in Andhra Pradesh between a joint partnership of Water Health International and Naandi Foundation.

By the results report on World Bank - Report No.ICR00001845, the project was accomplished successfully

Inspiring Entrepreneurs and State Governments alike

*In a very interesting note as other unintended outcomes – the report mentions **the Project has contributed to the development of a new “Sub Sector”** distributed off grid water supply in AP. As a result the State Government has taken interest in this mode of supply especially with areas in very high fluoride levels in the ground water.*

By 2008, we moved from 25 to 250

State Governments of Haryana and Punjab were much inspired and gave Naandi Foundation pilots to execute water centres in those places that are badly contaminated

Implementing Scale

Executing a Project involving 200 Gram Panchayats, a state Government flagship program and ensuring safe water taught us many lessons in community participation.

While we were subjected to the stringent eye of media in some cases, our senior team members still remember the love and affection some of the villages showered on us. For example a villager Gopal accepted to host our water purifying machine in his house for 45 days despite repeated rejections from his wife and father.

A village was ready to contribute 1.5 lakhs for providing a reachable perennial source.

Winning over Community was not that easy

The Villages of India are filled with unseen fences that transcend generations. In many cases, to get the acceptance of all people irrespective of caste, creed and religion affected our operations a lot.

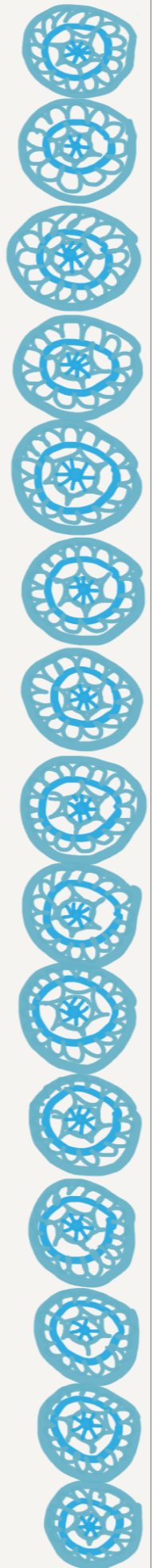
For instance, in one village in Harayana people refused to accept the scheme since the Serpanch was from a backward community. It took the entire PHED set up to intervene and get acceptance of the scheme

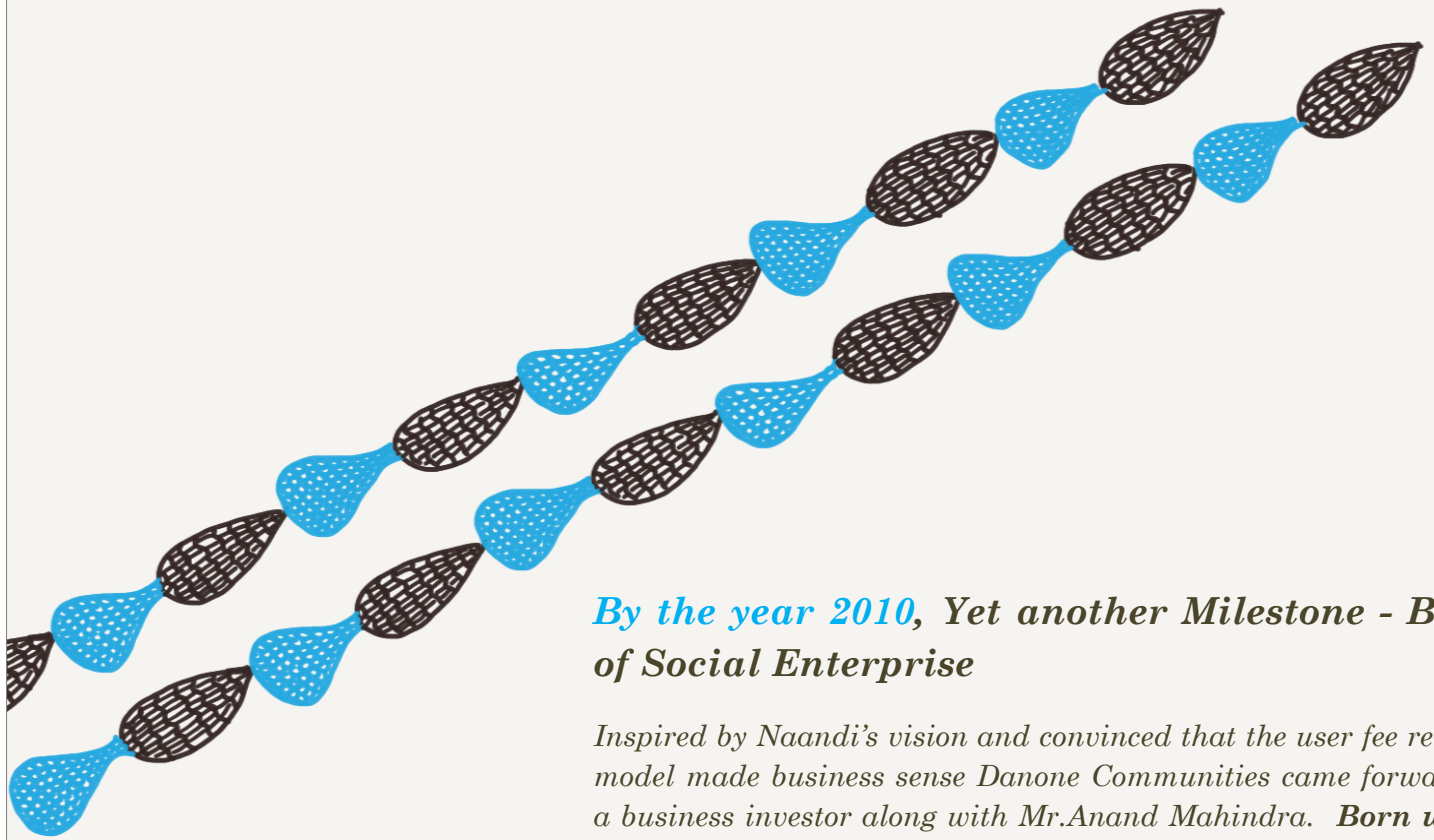
Paying a User Fee for Water

We take pride in the fact that – for the first time in many villages we introduced the concept of minimum user fee for water- so that people become more accountable and are enabled to understand the system of water supply.

After all we don't demand quality for something that is coming for free.

What we would also like to highlight at this juncture is users pay only to meet the drinking water purification expenses. Neither the raw water costs nor the apparatus installations costs are charged in the user fee





By the year 2010, Yet another Milestone - Birth of Social Enterprise

*Inspired by Naandi's vision and convinced that the user fee revenue model made business sense Danone Communities came forward as a business investor along with Mr. Anand Mahindra. **Born was a new entity – Naandi Community Water Services Pvt. Ltd.***

Though the wall of Berlin fell in 1989, civil society India was very hard and fixed with its definitions. 'Society' meant something and 'Private Ltd'. meant something else. "Could Business be doing good?" is a question that many civil society thinkers still ponder about.

*It was the sheer courage and conviction of the founders that Naandi Water embraced a new dimension available in development organisations. In the words of Mr. Anand Mahindra **"Social impact investing is one of the most satisfying forms of making a contribution"** and he originally joined the foundation because of its work on water*

Way before in year 2010 we choose the Social enterprise route

It meant that the day to day operations of hundreds of villages was not completely dependent on external funds/ charity which were in turn dictated by external financial cycles and personal interests of large donors. The 2010-12 Great Recession indeed loomed a shadow on our workings and we responded with a SOCIAL ENTERPRISE model

The Spirit of Entrepreneurship continues

In an article in the New York Times "Liter by Liter – Indians get cleaner water" there is a special mention of how – Surendar Singh – who began his career as a distribution agent to the NCWS village Chudanni - turned a safe water entrepreneur for the near-by village, Rewari Khera

iPURE water therefore for us means ...

*The first of it's kind water – that enabled villages to
take control of their drinking water set up in a
tripartite model*

*A decentralised model of water purification
that pioneered in displaying the proof of
quality to its users*

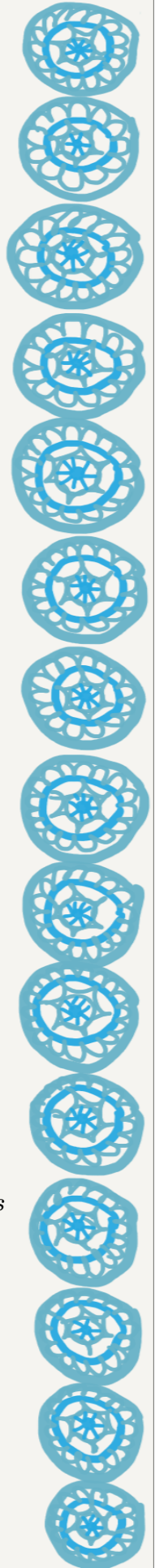
*Is safe water that questioned the notion of
– giving entitlements for free for a limited
period of time - Drinking water definitely
needed a more sustainable approach.*

*A result of a social enterprise that neither
limits its responsibility towards society to
2% nor is strangled by complete dependence
on external funding agencies to deliver basic
needs like water*

*One of those few brands that led to an
establishment of an entire sub sector*

*Is one of those models that was displayed as
a success by World Bank in the UN water
International conference, 2011 Spain*

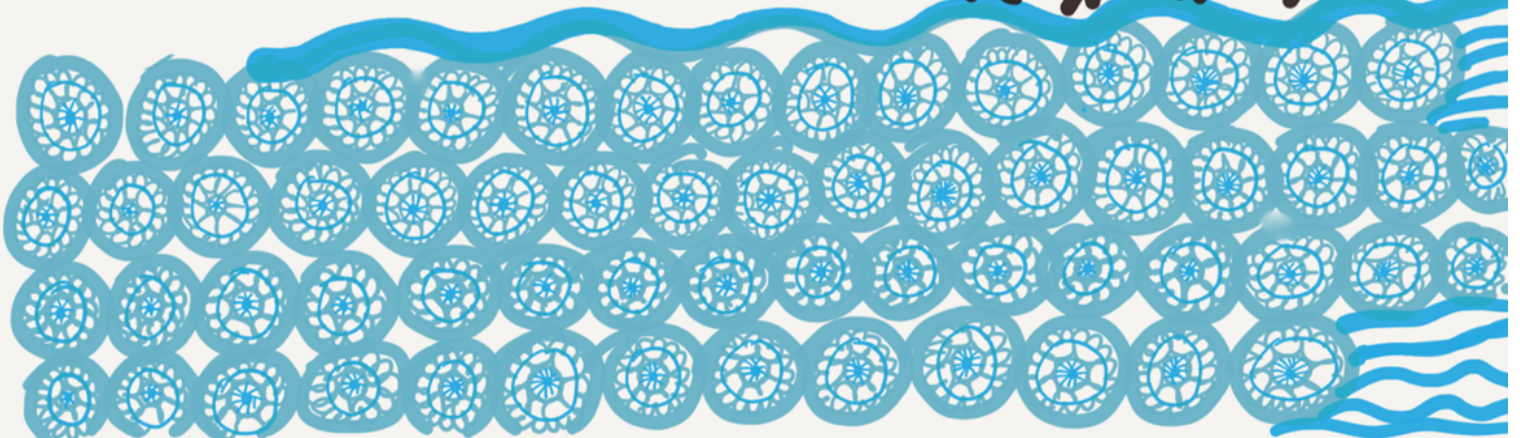
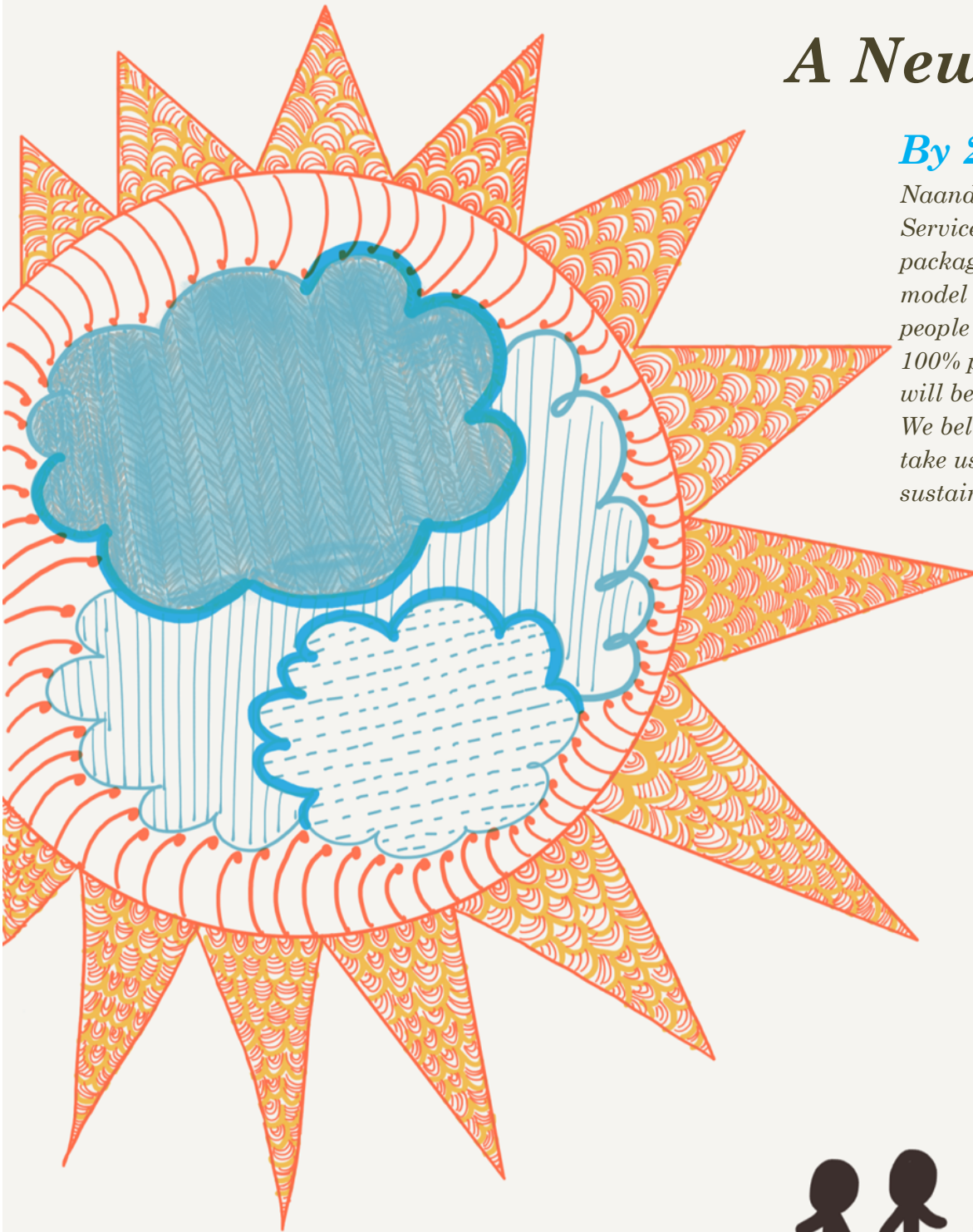
*Inspiration to some thousand entrepreneurs who
started operating water centers in the village*



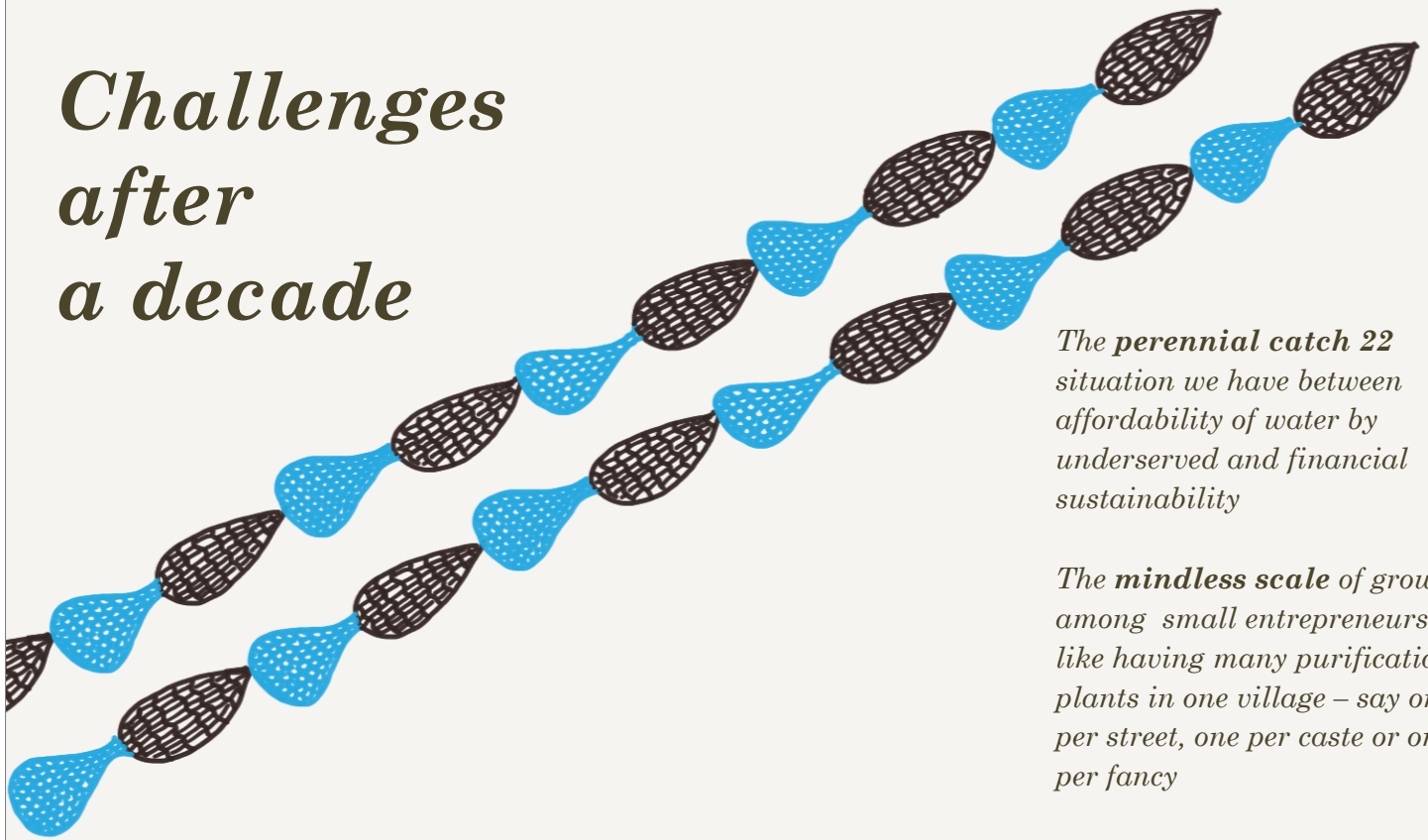
A New Dawn

By 2021

Naandi Community Water Services, established a packaged drinking water model iQuench for urban people with a mandate that 100% profits from iQuench will be diverted to iPure. We believe iQuench will take us one step towards sustainability



Challenges after a decade



The unimaginable mushrooming of local entrepreneurs created its own issues of price offerings to NCWS, however some of these players also follow insidious quality norms – like maintaining a count of 20 total dissolved salts- that is as good as drinking distilled water

This trend – coupled with the low awareness in villages about the purification set up (where any RO is considered safe) is playing a dangerous trend.

*In a culture of **deepening inequities**, We are not sure, how much we can still address the farthest sprung ST habitation, the Poorest of the Poor and other vulnerable sections. To recruit a backward caste water centre assistant is still a palpable challenge in some of the villages and there may be still thousands of villages without road or electricity*

Despite the Millions of losses – we have incurred in our quest to serve safe water to the rural masses, many funding agencies give us a chameleon kind of look not understanding the organisation principle of a social enterprise

*The **perennial catch 22** situation we have between affordability of water by underserved and financial sustainability*

*The **mindless scale** of growth among small entrepreneurs is like having many purification plants in one village – say one per street, one per caste or one per fancy*

***Times of Transfer** are for us a reality check on the Panchayat Institution. In few cases, some of the users would want NCWS to continue and in few cases – the water centres fall prey to the vested interests of the democratic institutions and the local vote bank politics*

“Neither being a Pioneer nor achieving social change was ever easy.

Hoping to overcome many more hurdles and being alive to the future hurdles that will evolve in our communities”

Sources

- 1. Naandi Foundation Annual Report – 2003 & 04*
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- 3. Breaking Free is Possible – Naandi Foundation Annual Report – 2010-12*
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- 5. Implementation Completion and Results Report – World Bank – Report No. ICR00001845*
- 6. New York Times article - on the project - <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/22/business/energy-environment/liter-by-liter-indians-get-cleaner-water.html>*
- 7. Media watch and the initial resistance for people to pay - <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2011/20110613/main3.htm>*