

AABHA SAKHIS IN MADHYA PRADESH– ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO TAKE LEGAL ELECTRICITY CONNECTIONS

In a nutshell: The Aabha Sakhis are encouraging people to take up legal electricity connections and pay their electricity bills on time. Along the way, they are also changing the way society views women.

Nodal agency: Madhya Pradesh Madhya Kshetra Vidyut Vitran Company Limited (MPMKVVCL) and National Rural Livelihood Mission

The Madhya Pradesh Madhya Kshetra Vidyut Vitran Company Limited (MPMKVVCL) and the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) collaborated with the Self-Help Group (SHG) Didis at the village level to work towards electricity bill reading, bill distribution and recovery of revenues. The SHG Didi are known by the name 'Aabha Sakhi' and act as representatives of the distribution company at the panchayat/village level. A total of 10 Aabha Sakhis work in two blocks across 30 villages.

Distribution of electricity bill and creating awareness among the people of the villages is done by the Aabha Sakhis. They also have the responsibility of ensuring that the bill payment is made on time. For this, the Aabha Sakhis go door-to-door, collect the amount, and submit it in the office. In case a family refuses to pay on time, the Aabha Didis create awareness about the importance of timely payment of bills. The Aabha Sakhis also spread awareness about the different government schemes among the people.

They are transforming the lives of the villagers in many ways.

- By making people aware about various government schemes, so that rural people can enjoy the benefits of the schemes.
- Informing people about the consequences of the malpractices.
- Assisting them to take readings from the meters and providing support when the meters stop functioning.

Impact on women:

- Aabha Sakhis receive a monthly stipend, allowing them to be financially independent.
- Their decision-making capacity has also increased, and they have also started enjoying a respectful position within their family.
- Aabha Sakhis are becoming role models for rest of the women in the village.
- Since the minimum educational qualification for an Aabha Sakhi is 10th standard, this has had a positive impact on the educational level of the women, with more women enrolling in schools.
- This has ensured the overall empowerment of women in society.

Outcome

- 230 new connections have been established.
- 45 illegal connections have been transferred to legal connections.
- 57 Households are paying electricity bills on time, recovery percentage has been increasing.
- A total of 1,859 connections have been set up at village level by Aabha Sakhis, and people are now paying their bills on time.
- The distribution company's financial burden has reduced considerably as people have started paying their bills. This has also led to a reduction in conflict between the officials and villagers over power cuts due to non-payment of bills.
- More people are coming out to take legal electricity connections.
- People are also benefiting from schemes such as Sambal Yojana.



Aabha Sakhis at work