



Gap Inc.

December 2018

Dear Partners,

I'm delighted to write you today reflecting on the progress made by the Women + Water Alliance (W+W Alliance) in 2018. Looking back on this year, I am so proud of how the USAID and Gap Inc. W+W Alliance partners have come together, aligned our efforts, learned more deeply about the communities we are impacting, and launched the programmatic work on the ground.

Year 2 of our five-year partnership marked a year of great progress:

- Completed robust WASH (Water, Access, Sanitation and Hygiene) Needs Assessments in the states of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, as well as the completion of our baseline in Madhya Pradesh, providing us with invaluable inputs to inform our program design and guide our implementation.
- In addition, Water.org established public and private sector partnerships with key organizations in the water and finance sectors including the Maharashtra State Rural Livelihood Missions, UNICEF, Sa-Dhan – a leading association of microfinance institutions, and Reckitt Benckiser; all that are expected to help increase WASH services and financing for communities in our target states.
- The Institute of Sustainable Communities (ISC) launched the W+W Alliance Advisory Committee, comprised of 15 national experts across a wide range of subject specializations, to help identify opportunity areas to pilot water stewardship best practices that can drive systematic change in the textile sector in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.
- And lastly, over 19,700 rural women across five districts in Madhya Pradesh graduated from the Gap Inc. P.A.C.E. program!

But most importantly, Year 2 marked positive change for the people whose lives we are focused on impacting through our collective efforts...

STORY OF CHANGE: NEHA

Neha is a 22-year-old woman from the village of Agera of Dewas, India. Neha lives with her husband, and 11 other family members, including her two children. Neha grew up very passionate about her studies and was able to complete her schooling until the 9th grade when she was married. Upon marriage, she stopped going to school and began to focus on her household as her primary responsibility. Neha's village is much more restrictive for women – women are not allowed outside without a veil (ghooghat), especially when in front of elder men/women. Married women in particular are subject to many restrictions on their movement and activities, making it challenging to continue schooling without the permission of the family. Neha is one such woman but she kept her dream alive of going back to school, she just needed to find the confidence to ask.

This past year, Neha learned about CARE and how they are organizing training programs for developing life skills of women in her area. She proudly joined the first learning group and learned new ways how to deal with situations assertively, negotiate and be more effective at communicating her needs and desires. She applied this learning while interacting with her larger family and her husband with the goal of sharing her dreams to go back to school. Initially, her husband was reluctant to allow Neha to go back, but after continuous persuasion, she succeeded in convincing him and she is now enrolling for admission!

Neha shares, ***"By being part of the (Gap Inc.'s) P.A.C.E. training, I have begun to gain knowledge which has not only helped me in realizing my dreams but also helped me in doing so while maintaining my relations. Now I am not only increasing my academic qualifications, but the combination of academics and life skills training I will be able to succeed in getting employment to earn livelihood for better life."***

We are moved by stories like Neha's and we look forward to sharing even more stories of change like this with you in 2019. To close, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to our implementing partners, [CARE](#), [Institute for Sustainable Communities](#) and [Water.org](#), for their ongoing commitment and passion to improving and sustaining the health and well-being of women and communities in India. Thank you for all that you do!



Photo credit: Gap Inc.

We look forward to sharing more in the coming months. On behalf of Gap Inc., USAID and the W+W Alliance, we wish you a healthy and happy 2019!

-Melissa

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Stay connected!

ADDITIONAL 2018 HIGHLIGHTS

- Gap Inc.'s [P.A.C.E.](#) (Personal Advancement & Career Enhancement) program delivered by [CARE](#) graduated 19,700 women in Madhya Pradesh in Year 2!
- As part of this program, Water.org and CARE trained P.A.C.E. participants on the Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) and Financial Literacy content to help participants learn more about water supply and sanitation (WSS) financing.
- Water.org is also contributing to the release of a nationwide circular by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation to district administrations to help promote water and sanitation lending.
- ISC completed research on water stewardship best practices to design potential pilots that will be implemented by the W+W Alliance in Year 3 at the textile-community nexus.
- Gap Inc. launched of the W+W Alliance management information system Goodera, started key performance indicator (KPI) reporting, and submitted our first annual summary report to USAID highlighting our learnings, successes, and challenges.
- And, finally, this past year, the W+W Alliance engaged more closely with key stakeholders at high-profile global events such as [Stockholm World Water Week](#), Textile Exchange and [GreenBiz](#)'s annual conference to raise awareness about this incredible work.