

Setting right water woes

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Life became a lot easier for several citizens in Hubballi a few years ago, when Anu Shridharan (28) co-founded 'Next Drop', a service that sends SMS alerts about the exact time of water supply to specific neighbourhoods.



Next Drop made the hassle of waiting endlessly for water a thing of the past. Fast forward to 2015 and water supply woes have lessened for several citizens in the city, who have subscribed to this service.

"It all started with my friend Emily. She was studying water quality for research purposes and realised that people more often than not went without water or wasted too much of their day waiting for water. I was free at that time to help develop this service," says Anu Shridharan, adding that the service now covers parts of Bengaluru, Mysuru and Hubballi. Plans are in the pipeline to take the service to other parts of the State.



Anu Shridharan co-founded Next Drop, a service that sends SMS alerts about the exact time of water supply to specific neighbourhoods

The system is simple. Valvemen send direct alerts through an interactive voice response system about when the water valves are opening. This information is used to send SMS alerts. In turn, subscribers are also contacted to cross-check the accuracy of information received. Engineers are also able to keep track of utilities that need repairs.

Ms. Shridharan is now in the middle of developing an additional feature to the service, which will allow citizens to log complaints easily about other issues.

"Their complaints are then brought to the attention of the authorities. This way, the average citizen need not bother with the hassle of getting through to local authorities," she said, adding that here too they would tie-up with local authorities.

Working with the Karnataka government has been easy, she said. "The only draw back is the lack of facilities and technologies," she said. More tie-ups between government agencies and socially-motivated startups like ours could hold a solution, she said.

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