

## Building Climate Resilience through Promotion of Ecosystem Restoration Services in Bundelkhand

Climate change has emerged as one of the biggest threat globally to livelihood and food security for countries across the world. India is particularly vulnerable to this and is likely to have varied impacts owing to its geographic diversity, stronger dependence on agriculture, and increasing exploitation of natural resources coupled with population growth and socio-economic challenges.

The resource-starved region of Bundelkhand, which includes 7 districts of Madhya Pradesh and 7 districts of Uttar Pradesh, has faced back-to-back drought years which has resulted in high water stress conditions, unsustainable farming practices, consequently resulting in farmer distress, high migration, unemployment, and poverty rate. In the last few decades, the water conservation ecosystem is threatened by various problems such as deforestation, urbanisation, overexploitation of resources, industrialisation consequently leading to increasing variety of chemical pollutants and biodiversity depletion.

Scarcity of water has become one of the major problems of this region. This has in turn created unprecedented challenges for millions of people already burdened by poverty and oppression. The worst impacted are the women and poor farmers who are majorly at the receiving end of these unprecedented consequences.

Development Alternatives (DA), a premiere social enterprise, has been working from the last 35 years in the Bundelkhand region, focusing in the sector of natural resource and watershed management and livelihood generation.

From decades, DA has been leading the discourse on climate resilience and ecosystem restoration that particularly focuses on integration of nature-based solutions to address the interconnected challenges of climate change, ecosystem degradation, biodiversity loss, and livelihood vulnerability. The solutions support the communities, especially in semi-arid and water scarce region of Bundelkhand, in adapting to such challenges and lead to better well-being for all.

### Initiatives Towards Building Resilient Bundelkhand

DA being a pioneer organisation in the field of promoting Climate resilient technologies and methodologies has consolidated its efforts to enable the communities in the Bundelkhand region which has been battling with water drought for years now.

Due to global warming induced changing weather patterns, the farmers in the region need to be equipped with appropriate knowledge and skills. At DA, we have worked at all levels i.e., to make communities aware through our Radio Bundelkhand, impart knowledge & handhold on climate resilient farming and build a positive ecosystem through watershed management approach. The three major thrust areas that DA has been working in Bundelkhand are:

- **Natural Resources Management:** Solutions focussing on strong practice-to-policy connect with on-ground demonstration of resilient models and improved practices for land and water management such as pond rejuvenation, construction of water conservation structures, e.g., check dams, LOCO models etc.

- **Climate Adaptation and Resilience:** Solutions focussing on climate change communication either through radio program or citizen science, enabling community to adapt to climate change by adopting nature-based solutions. We have our flagship model, a community radio station called Radio Bundelkhand 90.4 FM, established in 2008 and is the first radio station in Madhya Pradesh and second in India. It has emerged as a people’s radio station that provides them with a platform to air their aspirations, concerns and showcase their talent. It’s participatory and collaborative approach empowers and builds consensus for change. Today Radio Bundelkhand directly covers 150 villages, reaching out to over 400,000 people in Bundelkhand and to many more through its mobile application.
- **Sustainable Agriculture:** Solutions focussing on linking farmers especially smallholder farmers, to appropriate eco-technologies, providing technical support, and conducting farmers training through promotion of WADI model, adoption of climate resilient farming practices, building resilient farming systems. etc.

Our interventions majorly revolve around land and water management, afforestation, clean technology-based livelihood options, capacity building of local institutions, enabling communities to fulfil basic needs of drinking water, sanitation, shelter, and energy, supported through enterprise development, and skill development for job creation.