

YES Bank to set up community water purification systems at railway stations

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CSR initiative will focus on railway stations that see lower footfalls, lesser earnings

New Delhi, February 2:

Private sector lender YES Bank has joined hands with the Railways and committed to set up community water purification systems at 1,000 railway stations across India over the next three years.

This is in sync with the Government's vision to make safe and clean drinking water accessible to everyone and its resolve to modernise railway stations.

An unique aspect of this initiative is that the rollout will only happen at 'D' and 'E' category railway stations (those with daily footfall of less than 1,000 and annual earnings less than ₹ 4 crore, with an existing water connection), Namita Vikas, Senior President and Country Head, Responsible Banking, YES Bank, told *BusinessLine*.

In the first phase of the intervention, YES Bank has committed to provide access to safe and clean drinking water at 100 railway stations (D & E category), primarily in the Konkan region, by March-end, she said.

"In today's day and age, business of business is far more than business. You can't just stand on profits and ignore the community. You have to look at long-term sustainability through such interventions," Vikas said.

Best model

Vikas said that YES Bank was keen to look at areas where community mobilises — railway stations and bus stands. "Railways is a more organised set up. That was the best model for us," she said.

Asked as to why YES Bank opted for 'D' and 'E' category railway stations, she said this was decided after undertaking a need assessment. "Larger stations have water sellers. The population that comes to larger stations is better in terms of economic power than those who do at stations that have lower footfall. And we did not want to get into seller vs free issues. Sellers might object as it is business for them," she said. In 2014-15, YES Bank had provided access to safe and clean drinking water to 62,500 individuals through 9,000 household water purification systems and 5 community water purification systems across rural Maharashtra.

"We are now focused on larger systems at the community level, rather than households, to ensure higher social impact," she said.

CSR spend

In 2014-15, YES Bank had spent 0.86 per cent of its profits on CSR. For the current fiscal, the target is pegged at 1.46 per cent. Vikas highlighted that compliance was not about meeting the 2-per cent level, but was more about reporting of what a corporate has done.

In the coming days, YES Bank will continue to focus on water, energy efficiency and employability training for its CSR spends.

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