

WATER CRISIS

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

Water being a State subject, steps for augmentation, conservation and efficient management of water resources are primarily undertaken by the respective State Governments. In order to supplement the efforts of the State Governments, Central Government provides technical and financial assistance to them through various schemes and programmes.

The Government of India, in partnership with States, is implementing *JaJeevan Mission-HarGharJal*, which aims at providing potable water in adequate quantity of prescribed quality on regular and long term basis to every rural household through tap water connection by 2024.

Government of India has launched *Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)* on 25th June, 2015 in select 500 cities and towns across the country. The water supply component includes new, augmentation and rehabilitation of water supply system; rejuvenation of water bodies for drinking water supply and special water supply arrangement for difficult areas, hills and coastal cities, including those having water quality problem.

Under *HarKhetKoPani (HKKP)* component of *PradhanMantriKrishiSinchayeeYojana (PMKSY)*, Repair, Renovation and Restoration (RRR) of Water Bodies Scheme was launched which aims to revive irrigation potential by improvement and restoration of water bodies by enhancing the tank storage capacity, along with other multiple objectives such as ground water recharge, increased availability of drinking water, improvement of catchment of tank commands etc. Under the Repair, Renovation and Restoration of Water Bodies scheme, since 12th plan onwards, 2,228 schemes are ongoing. Further, 1,549 water bodies have been reported to be completed upto March, 2021. Target irrigation potential restoration of these schemes is 1.89 lakh hectare and out of this, 1.31 lakh hectare is reported to be restored till March, 2021.

During 2016-17, ninety-nine (99) on-going major/medium irrigation projects (and 7 phases) under PMKSY - *Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP)* have been prioritized in consultation with States for completion in phases out of which AIBP works of 44 projects have been reported to be completed/almost completed. During 2016-17 to 2020-21, irrigation potential of 22.47 lakh hectare has been reported to be created by these projects in the country.

AtalBhujalYojana, a Central Sector Scheme, with focus on community participation, demand side interventions and convergence of ongoing schemes for sustainable ground water management is being implemented from 1 April 2020 in seven States – Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

National Water Mission had started a campaign "*SahiFasal*" to nudge farmers to favor agricultural crops which consume less water and to use water more efficiently in agriculture, as a part of demand side management.

National Water Mission, in a bid to draw attention to critical aspects of water, and to promote dialogue and information sharing among participants on variety of water related topics, has initiated a monthly seminar series - "*Water Talk*" on 22nd March, 2019, the World Water Day. The "Water Talk" is intended to create awareness, build capacities of stakeholders and to encourage people to become active participants in the conservation and saving of water. The "Water Talk" provides a platform wherein, among other Water Talkers (which include academicians, bureaucrats, activists, water experts), Sarpanchs and representatives of NGOs also participate and showcase the best practices in water sector in villages and cities / towns across the country.

Furthermore, Fifteenth Finance Commission (FFC) in its report for 2021-26, has earmarked 60 per cent for national priorities like drinking water supply and rainwater harvesting and sanitation, out of the total grants earmarked for Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI). For fifty Million - Plus cities, two-thirds of allocation of funds under Challenge Fund of Rs. 38,196 crore is meant for meeting service level benchmarks on drinking water supply, rainwater harvesting, water recycling, solid waste management and sanitation.

The FFC report also emphasises on sustainable and efficient water use and has suggested three ways to reduce and rationalise water use in agriculture: (i) by replacing free or subsidised power supply for agriculture with direct benefit transfers (DBT), (ii) encouraging use of new technologies such as drip, sprinkler, sensor-based irrigation to get more crop per drop, and (iii) by conserving and rainwater harvesting to increase the availability of surface as well as of groundwater. FFC has recommended incentive-based grants to States that maintain and augment groundwater stock and maintain a check on any fall in the water table.

Additionally, Renukaji Dam Project envisaged 498 MCM water to NCT of Delhi. Lakhwar Multipurpose Project envisages 33,780 Ha of irrigation along with 300 MW power generations and 78.83 MCM drinking & industrial water supply to Upper Yamuna Basin states including Delhi as per agreement signed by them. Kishau Multipurpose Project envisages drinking water supply upto 617 MCM, irrigation benefit of 0.97 Lakh Ha to Upper Yamuna Basin states. Also, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the State of Himachal Pradesh and NCT of Delhi on 20.12.2019 for usage of unutilized Yamuna water share of Himachal Pradesh by Delhi.

At the time of announcement of JalJeevan Mission, only 3.23 crore households were reported to have tap water connections. Since then, another 4.64 crore rural households have been provided tap water connections. As on date, out of 19.12 crore rural households, 7.87 crore households have tap water supply in homes.

As per Delhi Jal Board (DJB), Government of NCT of Delhi, to overcome water crisis and augment raw water resources in Delhi, DJB has laid water pipelines in large number of colonies during last six years leading to achieving an increase of 7,67,623 number of water connections. There are total 27,28,348 households with DJB water connection, including individual connections as well as group housing societies with bulk connections.

Some steps taken by the Central Government to control ground water depletion and promote rain water harvesting/conservation are available at the URL:

http://jalshakti-dowr.gov.in/sites/default/files/Steps_to_control_water_depletion_Feb2021.pdf

This information was given by the Minister of State for Jal Shakti and Food Processing Industries, ShriPrahlaad Singh Patel in a written reply in the Lok Sabha today.

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