

NATIONAL LEVEL STEERING COMMITTEE REVIEWS OVERALL PROGRESS OF ATAL BHUJAL YOJANA

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

The third meeting of the National Level Steering Committee (NLSC) of the Atal Bhujal Yojana was held today at New Delhi under the Chairmanship of Secretary, Department of Water Resources, RD & GR, Ministry of Jal Shakti. The meeting was attended by Senior Officers of 7 States where the scheme is being implemented as well as some line Departments. Special Secretary, and Joint Secretary, DoWR, RD & GR along with Principal Secretary, Uttar Pradesh and Secretaries from Karnataka and Gujarat were also present.

Atal Bhujal Yojana (ATAL JAL) is being implemented as a Central Sector Scheme since April, 2020 in 8220 water stressed Gram Panchayats of 229 administrative blocks/Talukas in 80 districts of seven States, viz. Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh for five year period (2020-25).

One of the key aspects of ATAL JAL is to bring in behavioral changes in the community, from the prevailing attitude of consumption to conservation & smart water management. It is imperative that this message is driven across all levels, especially at the grass-root level, so that the objectives of the scheme are achieved. Creation of awareness among the general public about the program objectives and creation of an enabling environment for scheme implementation at various levels through information, education and communication (IEC) is an important activity under this scheme. Awareness campaigns have been undertaken using different media of mass communication. The thrust of the campaign is at the GP level, where communication tools such as nukkadnataks (street plays), audio-visual clips, wall-writing, display boards, pamphlets and cable TV are being extensively used.

The Committee reviewed the overall progress of the scheme and directed the States to expedite convergence for the implementation of the interventions proposed under Water Security Plans. (WSPs). Completion of majority of the WSPs was praised by the Secretary and at the same time it was emphasized that this is a iterative process and the WSPs are to be updated annually in consultation with the community.

Secretary underscored that the sustainability of the drinking water sources are to be given utmost priority while taking up interventions under this Scheme. Further, since incentive money is an untied fund, it can be used for undertaking pilot projects in any of the Atal Jal Gram Panchayat in order to sustain ground water.

Since communities are at the forefront in this scheme, importance of capacity building of the communities was also emphasized. The Special Secretary, DoWR, RD & GR highlighted the importance of continued engagement with the community with a focus on the aim that the WSPs are to be owned by the Communities. For that regular IEC and awareness activities are to continue.

The NLSC Meeting followed by wrap up of Mid Term Review by World Bank, wherein Task Team Leader for the Scheme summarized the month long Mission in terms of overall and state wise progress and challenges. One of the main challenges which were highlighted was low convergence by the States as compared to what was expected. Since, convergence is the backbone of next round of incentives, it is important to speed this activity.

All 7 States also presented the best practices under Atal Bhujal Yojana which is happening in their respective State and how this scheme is bringing change in Ground Water Management.



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