

# PIPED POTABLE WATER ACROSS INDIA WILL AVERT 4,00,000 DIARRHOEA DEATHS, FINDS WHO

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About 62% of rural households have piped water connections; the rest have to find water from other sources. File | Photo Credit: The Hindu

“Were the Centre’s marquee Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), a nearly 3.6 trillion enterprise to provide piped potable water to all of India, it would succeed in averting close to 4,00,000 deaths from diarrhoea, a modelling study by the World Health Organization (WHO) and commissioned by the Jal Shakti Ministry,” reported on June 9.

Additionally, this would avoid 14 million DALYS (Disability Adjusted Life Years) from diarrhoea, save close to \$101 billion and 66.6 million hours every day of time that would otherwise have been spent — predominantly by women — collecting water, the authors of the study noted. A DALY represents the loss of the equivalent of one year of full health and are a way to account for the years of life lost due to premature mortality (YLLs) and the years lived with a disability (YLDs), due to prevalent cases of a disease or a health condition, in a population.

Currently about 12.3 crore rural households, or 62%, have piped water connections up from 3.2 crore or about 16.6% from 2019 when the scheme was launched. The Centre has claimed that it will achieve 100% coverage by 2024. A fully functional tap water connection is defined as a household getting at least 55 litres of per capita per day of potable water all through the year.

The WHO study is an extrapolation and doesn’t compute the number of diarrhoeal deaths averted, at the present levels of coverage. It also doesn’t account for the degree of contamination in the piped water now being made available, Dr. Rick Johnston of the WHO and one of the study authors told *The Hindu*. For the data required to arrive at its estimates, the authors used population data from the United Nations, the 2018 National Sample Survey and data on water quality collected by the JJM.

“Currently a potable water connection is being provided every second. Five states viz; Gujarat, Telangana, Goa, Haryana, and Punjab and 3 Union Territories — Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Daman Diu & Dadra Nagar Haveli and Puducherry have reported 100% coverage. Himachal Pradesh at 98.87%, followed by Bihar at 96.30%, are also poised to achieve saturation in near future,” Vinnie Mahajan, Secretary, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, said at an event to publicise the report. “Investing in water and sanitation results in many benefits, including economic, environmental, quality of life, and health. Every dollar invested in sanitation

interventions gives a \$4.3 return in the form of reduced health care costs.”

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