

Chapter-VI Conclusion and Recommendations

The Programme was launched with the primary objective of providing safe and adequate drinking water to the rural population on a sustainable basis. The 12th Plan aimed at providing all rural habitations, schools and *anganwadis* with safe drinking water by 2017 against which actual achievement of covering habitations was only 44 *per cent* and 85 *per cent* for schools and *anganwadis*. The Plan also placed emphasis on piped water supply with a goal of providing 50 *per cent* of rural households/ population with potable drinking water (55 lpcd) by piped water supply and at least 35 *per cent* of rural households with household connections by April 2017. The actual achievement (December 2017) against these deliverables was however only 18.4 *per cent* and 16.8 *per cent* respectively.

The planning and delivery framework was deficient with most States not framing Water Security Plans or comprehensive Annual Action Plans. The apex level National Drinking Water and Sanitation Council that was set up to co-ordinate and ensure convergence remained dormant during the period covered in the performance audit exercise. Other bodies critical for planning and execution of the Programme such as State Water and Sanitation Mission, State Technical Agency, Source Finding Committee, Block Resource Centres were also either not set up or were not performing their assigned functions. Thus, the Programme faced constraints both in terms of planning and delivery which subsequently affected achievement of programme goals and targets.

NRDWP is implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with cost being shared between the Central and State Governments. It was however noticed that availability of funds for the Programme decreased from 2013-14 to 2016-17. Moreover, even the funds allocated could not be fully utilised. The constraints of funds were accentuated by diversion of funds amounting to ₹ 358.59 crore towards inadmissible items of expenditure and blocking of funds of ₹ 304.02 crore with State Water and Sanitation Missions and work executing agencies.

Lack of proper site investigations and timely obtaining of requisite statutory and other mandatory clearances as stipulated in the codal provisions coupled with poor contract management and enforcement of contractual terms in cases of default by contractors resulted in works remaining incomplete, abandoned or non-operational as well as unproductive expenditure on equipment with an overall financial implication of ₹ 2,212.44 crore.

Ensuring water quality and sustainability was a principal element of the scheme. However, Community Water Purification Plants could be provided to only five *per cent* of quality affected habitations and sustainability plans were either not prepared/

implemented or not included in Annual Action Plans. There was inadequate focus on surface water based schemes and a large number of schemes (98 *per cent*) including piped water schemes continued to be based on ground water resources. Further, Operation and Maintenance plans were either not prepared in most of the States or had deficiencies leading to schemes becoming non-functional. As a result, incidence of slip-back habitations continued to persist. Further, lack of requisite number of States/district/sub-divisional level laboratories resulted in shortfalls in prescribed quality tests of water sources and supply thereby diluting the objective of providing safe drinking water to the rural population.

Lastly, institutional mechanisms for inspection, vigilance and monitoring were either not established or were not functioning in the manner envisaged and the overall monitoring and oversight framework lacked effectiveness.

Thus, the overall coverage of rural habitations increased by only eight *per cent* at 40 lpcd and 5.5 *per cent* at 55 lpcd even after incurring of expenditure of ₹ 81,168 crore during the period 2012-17.

Recommendations:

Based on the audit findings, we recommend as follows:

- ✓ In view of the fact that the institutional framework for planning and delivery as contemplated in the programme guidelines were either non-existent or non-functional in a large number of States, Ministry should review the feasibility and practicality of these mechanisms to ensure that they serve the intended purposes.
- ✓ Water security plans and annual action plans must be prepared with community participation to ensure that schemes are aligned to community requirements and ensure optimum and sustainable utilisation of water resources.
- ✓ Ministry must strengthen capacity building/IEC at block and village levels so that they are equipped and empowered to meaningfully participate in the planning, management and monitoring of scheme and programme.
- ✓ Planning should take into account state specific aspects and requirements and towards this end, Ministry should stipulate a realistic timeframe for preparation of State Specific Policy Framework and Annual Action Plans that may also be monitored by the Ministry.
- ✓ Allocation of resources for the Programme should be dynamic and based on a clear assessment of requirements and achievements under each component.
- ✓ Plans and schemes should be granted approval only after technical and sustainability aspects have been duly vetted and it should be ensured that all clearances are in place so as to ensure unimpeded execution of the works/schemes.

- ✓ Focus should be placed on effective works and contract management so as to ensure that works are completed in time as per the contractual terms. Any default on the part of contractors should be viewed strictly in accordance with the contract stipulations so as to penalise delays attributable to the contractors and enforce accountability.
- ✓ Focussed attention should be accorded to mitigating measures in all quality affected habitations to ensure availability of safe drinking water and infrastructure for testing water quality should be made effective so as to meet the objective of providing safe drinking water.
- ✓ Ministry should improve the effectiveness of all envisaged monitoring tools including Integrated Management Information System so that both Programme planning and implementation are strengthened.



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