



Water for All, All for Water: People, Panchayats & Jal Jeevan Mission

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Ensuring safe drinking water supply requires infrastructure such as pipelines, pumps, and storage structures. Yet beyond these networks of steel and concrete, water systems are sustained by the people who keep them running every day. Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, elected representatives, frontline workers, members of self-help groups, trained volunteers, and technical personnel come together at the rural level to operate, monitor, and maintain local water supply systems, supporting the delivery of safe drinking water to rural households.

Launched in August 2019, the **Jal Jeevan Mission** aims to provide **every rural household with safe and adequate drinking water** through a **Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC)**. At the start of the programme, only 3.23 crore rural households had tap water connections. As of 3 March 2026, more than **15.82 crore rural households** across the country are reported to have tap water supply in their homes reflecting India's continued commitment to universal rural drinking water coverage. The Union Budget 2026–27 has proposed an allocation of ₹67,670 crore for the Mission, which has also been extended until 2028. This rapid expansion of rural drinking water infrastructure across the country has been supported by the efforts of thousands of individuals working at the grassroot level.

Across villages, these efforts are reflected in the dedication of people who oversee water systems, monitor operations, and safeguard water quality for their communities. To celebrate and encourage such contributions, the President awarded distinguished individuals for their role in strengthening rural drinking water governance during the **Jal Mahotsav 2026**. The nationwide campaign is being organised from **8 March to 22 March**, promoting Jan Bhagidari under the Jal Jeevan Mission. The following stories offer a glimpse into the journeys of some of the individuals and the role they play in sustaining rural drinking water services in their communities.

Sustaining Village Water Systems through Local Participation

In Mankuwar Gram Panchayat in Chitrakoot district of Uttar Pradesh, the functioning of the village drinking water system reflects the role that local participation can play in sustaining rural infrastructure.

Under the leadership of Gram Pradhan Rachna Devi, the Mau Rural Drinking Water Supply Scheme ensured Functional Household Tap Connections for all 340 households, serving nearly 1,971 residents of the village. Alongside the creation of infrastructure, efforts were made to ensure that the system continues to function effectively over the long term.



To support the operation and maintenance of the village water supply system, households contribute a monthly user charge of ₹50. The village currently collects around ₹5,275 every month, which is used to meet routine operational needs.

Regular meetings of the Village Water and Sanitation Committee review billing, revenue collection and service delivery. These meetings help ensure transparency and collective oversight in the management of the water supply system. Rachna Devi has also encouraged the participation of women and members of Scheduled Caste communities in the committee, strengthening inclusive water governance at the village level.

Keeping Water Flowing in the High Himalayas

In the high-altitude terrain of Matho village in Leh district of Ladakh, maintaining a reliable drinking water system requires continuous technical effort and coordination among local institutions and field staff.



Public Health Engineering lineman Tsering Dorjey has played an important role in supporting the installation and maintenance of the village's drinking water infrastructure. Working in challenging terrain and harsh weather conditions, he contributed to ensuring that households in Matho village receive reliable tap water connections under the Jal Jeevan Mission. Also, along with the collective efforts of the community members, the expansion and functioning of drinking water services in the village have been supported and illustrate how administrative and technical personnel contribute to the implementation of rural water programmes.

Women Safeguarding Water Quality in Gujarat

In **Manekpor village of Gandevi taluka** in Navsari district of Gujarat, water quality monitoring is supported through the active involvement of Village Water Quality Team. **Falguniben Sanjaybhai Rathod**, a member of the Village Water Quality Team, regularly conducts testing of drinking water using the Field Test Kit to ensure that safe water is supplied to households in the village under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

Over the past three months, she has tested 19 water samples at the household level, ensuring that samples are collected from all habitations of the village. Alongside testing, awareness activities on water quality and disinfection practices such as home chlorination are promoted within the community to help maintain safe drinking water.

She also ensures that the results of water quality testing are shared with the community. In case of any concerns regarding water quality, the samples are verified through laboratory testing as per established protocols. An elected member of the Gram Panchayat, Falguniben is also associated with the Self Help Group Bhulku Mahila Bachat Mandal and works as an ASHA in the village, contributing to public health awareness and community mobilisation.



Through her involvement in water quality monitoring and community engagement, she contributes to strengthening safe drinking water management in the village.

Community Leadership Driving Self-Reliant Water Management in Sikkim

In **Sikkim**, two women Sarpanches have helped villages move towards self-reliant water management. When the government's rural tap water initiative reached their villages, **Shela Subba and Puspa Cintury** joined the effort early and began working closely with residents.

They visited households and wards across their villages, explaining the importance of reliable drinking water and the need for community participation. As villagers became involved in discussions and planning, they developed a shared understanding of maintaining the system. This made it easier for households to contribute user charges, helping the villages sustain their own water supply systems.



In **Rumbuk GPU under Daramdin Block**, Sarpanch **Shela Subba** has encouraged active public participation in managing the village water supply system. Through regular meetings and awareness programmes, villagers take part in planning and maintenance activities. Today, all households, along with schools and Anganwadi centres, have tap water connections. Community participation also helps ensure smooth operation and quick resolution of any disruption in supply.

In **Upper Thambong GPU**, Sarpanch **Puspa Cintury** has focused on strengthening financial sustainability of the village water supply system. Households contribute user fees regularly, and the collected funds are used transparently for maintenance and repairs. With disciplined financial management, effective use of available resources and active community participation, the village has been able to maintain a reliable drinking water system.

Expanding Tap Water Access across Villages

In Kanchanpur Gram Panchayat in Jharkhand, efforts to expand rural drinking water access have reached several villages under the leadership of Mukhiya **Pinki Rana**.



During her tenure, the Panchayat achieved 100 percent Functional Household Tap Connection coverage across multiple habitations. The expansion reached 670 households in Kanchanpur village, 384 households in Hethlag and 357 households in Govindpur.

With this achievement, the Panchayat has been recognised as a **Har Ghar Jal Panchayat**, reflecting the successful expansion of piped drinking water services across these villages. Efforts have also been made to encourage households to contribute user charges regularly. These contributions help support the

operation and maintenance of the water supply system over time.

Sustaining Rural Water Systems through Community Participation

Examples from Ladakh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim illustrate how the functioning of rural drinking water systems depends on the combined strength of infrastructure and local participation. Alongside the infrastructure created under the Jal Jeevan Mission, the involvement of Gram Panchayats, frontline workers, women's groups, trained volunteers and technical personnel contributes to the day-to-day functioning of these systems at the village level. Through such participation, communities support the operation, maintenance and monitoring of rural water supply infrastructure, helping ensure that drinking water services continue to reach households across the country.

References

Ministry of Jal Shakti

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