

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE UNDER JAL SHAKTI ABHIYAN

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‘Water’ being a State subject, the aspects related to water resources, including its conservation, are studied, planned, funded and executed by the State Governments themselves as per their own resources and priorities. The Central Government supplements the measures and efforts being taken up by the State Governments.

The Ministry of Jal Shakti launched the Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) in 2019 as a time-bound, mission-mode water conservation campaign in 256 water-stressed districts of the country. The Hon'ble Prime Minister launched “Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain” (JSA: CTR) in 2021 with the tagline “Catch the Rain – Where it Falls When it Falls” across the country, including the North Eastern States. The JSA: CTR 2025 was launched with the theme “Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari: Jan Jagrukta Ki Or” emphasising community participation and water conservation awareness. The Abhiyan emphasises Jan Bhagidari by involving local communities in the identification, execution and maintenance of water conservation works.

The campaign emphasizes convergent financing from various schemes of the Central, State and local bodies like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), Per Drop More Crop, Repair, Renovation and Restoration Components under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY), Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) and Finance Commission grants.

To further enhance outreach, the National Water Mission (NWM) collaborated with the Department of Youth Affairs, leveraging the extensive network of Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) and its youth clubs to mobilise grassroots participation in water conservation efforts under the Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain (JSA: CTR) campaign.

The Ministry of Jal Shakti, through the Swachh Sujal Shakti Samman initiative, celebrates and acknowledges the exemplary contributions of women in promoting water conservation, sustainable sanitation, and hygiene practices. This recognition highlights the crucial role women play in leading community-driven efforts toward water conservation and its sustainable use. A monthly “Water Talk” series has been in place since March 2019, wherein Water Talkers, including women, grassroots practitioners, experts, representatives from NGOs, and individuals from diverse walks of life, are invited to share their best water conservation practices.

Moreover, under the ongoing Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain (JSA: CTR) campaign, several innovative models of groundwater recharge and water conservation are observed across various regions, showcasing the diversity of locally adapted and community-driven solutions. A separate outreach

initiative, “Dialogue with DMs”, has also been organised since August 2020, where District Magistrates/ Collectors/ Deputy Commissioners share their field-level innovations and experiences in water conservation, fostering cross-learning and inspiring replication of successful practices.

“Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari” (JSJB) initiative was launched in Surat, Gujarat, on 6 September 2024 to further strengthen the Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain (JSA: CTR) campaign. The JSJB initiative focuses on intensifying community action and mobilisation to build low-cost rainwater harvesting structures in low-cost and saturation mode. The initiative leverages community funds, individual donations, Corporate Social Responsibility Funds and others for the construction of low-cost structures like borewells, recharge shafts, recharge pits, using locally available material, to harvest rainwater, to boost the groundwater level and provide a local tailor-made solution to water issues. The objective is to ensure that every drop of water is conserved through collective efforts, following a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach. By fostering community ownership, the initiative seeks to develop cost-effective, local solutions at the micro level for water conservation and groundwater recharge. The JSJB initiative is guided by the 3Cs principle—Community, CSR and Cost, ensuring effective convergence and maximised outcomes. The Government promotes the JSJB initiative in partnership with State Governments and local authorities to ensure its widespread reach and awareness. The initiative aims at forging partnerships with stakeholders such as NGOs, trusts, civil societies, and educational institutions to engage the broader community effectively.

Under the JSJB initiative, several innovative models of groundwater recharge and water conservation are observed across various regions, showcasing the diversity of locally adapted and community-driven solutions. A few of them are given below.

- i. The “Karmbhoomi se Matribhoomi” Model reflects contributions made by individuals working in Gujarat towards recharge projects in their native states, such as Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar. This voluntary and emotional investment has enabled cross-state support for sustainable groundwater recharge.
- ii. The Gir Ganga Trust model in Gujarat showcases a philanthropic and community-led approach to water conservation. Local communities have actively contributed through both in-kind labour and resources for the creation, operation and maintenance of recharge structures, thereby fostering a strong sense of ownership and long-term sustainability. This model demonstrates how civil society partnerships can play a transformative role in scaling groundwater recharge efforts.
- iii. In Maharashtra, the Jal Tara Model involves farmers systematically constructing standardised recharge pits measuring 4 ft × 4 ft × 6 ft across agricultural land. This low-tech but impactful intervention significantly enhances infiltration and supports the recharge of shallow aquifers, thereby benefiting both crop productivity and groundwater sustainability.
- iv. The 5% Model from Korea district in Chhattisgarh illustrates how terraced recharge pits constructed on 5% of cultivable land can significantly improve local aquifer recharge. This model integrates water conservation directly into land-use planning and agricultural practices, resulting in improved soil moisture retention and enhanced groundwater levels. On each farmland, a shallow terraced recharge pit is constructed in a "pit within a pit" design, with farmers voluntarily contributing 5% of their cultivable land.
- v. In Banaskantha, Gujarat, a large-scale initiative has focused on the construction of low-cost artificial recharge structures in arid regions. This intervention was made possible by leveraging Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding and the active participation of farmer cooperatives. The model demonstrates how public-private collaboration can effectively address regional water stress, offering a scalable and replicable solution for water-scarce areas.

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) play a central role in mobilising communities, facilitating local-level planning and ensuring participatory implementation and monitoring of water conservation works. Women Self Help Groups (SHGs), youth, students and local community groups are actively involved in awareness generation, behaviour change communication and social mobilisation, thereby strengthening grassroots participation and ownership. IEC activities, community meetings and field interactions are undertaken to enhance awareness, technical understanding and participatory implementation at the grassroots level.

The National Water Policy (2012), formulated by this Ministry and forwarded to all state Governments/UTs, including the North Eastern States, inter alia, advocates conservation, promotion and protection of water and highlights the need for augmenting the availability of water through rainwater harvesting, direct use of rainfall and other management measures. Further to mitigate the impact of water scarcity, it inter-alia, advocates for institutionalization and strengthening Community based water management, scientifically planned conservation of rivers, river corridors, water bodies and infrastructure through community participation, recycle and reuse of water, including return flows, encouragement and incentivization of water-saving methods in irrigation such as aligning cropping pattern with natural resource endowments, micro irrigation (drip, sprinkler,) automated irrigation operation, evaporation-transpiration reduction.

The information was provided by **THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR JAL SHAKTI SHRI RAJ BHUSHAN CHOUDHARY** in a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha today.

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