

FRAMING OF OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE POLICIES UNDER JJM

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To enable every rural household in the country to have assured potable water, since August 2019, Government of India in partnership with states, is implementing Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) - Har Ghar Jal. This initiative facilitates adequate quantity of prescribed quality water on regular and long-term basis, through tap water connection.

To ensure universal coverage through tap water connection, the Department has evolved a comprehensive multi-level and multi-format system of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of programme, linking AADHAR of the head of household for targeted delivery and monitoring of specific outcomes, subject to statutory provisions, including geo-tagging of assets created, third-party inspections before making payments, measurement and monitoring of water supply in villages through sensor-based IoT solution on pilot basis, etc.

In addition, to expedite the implementation and strengthening the existing monitoring mechanisms under Jal Jeevan Mission aiming at improving efficiency and effectiveness, steps like Village/ District Dashboards and linking Village Level Dashboards to eGramswaraj portal, District Collectors' Peyjal Samvad, Institutionalization of Role of National WASH Experts (NWEs) through IMIS module, Role of Third Party Inspection Agencies (TPIAs), strengthened collaboration with line Ministries, Decision Support System for strengthening Source Sustainability, Handbook on Community Managed Piped Water Systems, Unique ID for integrated Piped Water System, etc. have recently been taken up under JJM.

For long term sustainability, a comprehensive O&M policy including features such as, handing over of schemes to Panchayats/ VWSC, user charges, sufficient financing specially to cover expenses on account of energy bills, skilling, and deployment of local persons for O&M and water quality surveillance activities, is being put in place by States/ UTs.

For extending technical assistance, a draft framework for the comprehensive O&M Policy, consisting of 19 major components, has been shared with the States. Further, a diagnostic matrix has also been shared with States to assess readiness of the State/ UT to effectively/ efficiently operate, manage and sustain the rural PWSs against different anticipated incidents/ parameters of operation and maintenance phase. In addition, Department is also providing technical support to states to build capacity for policy formulation *inter alia* including organizing workshops, training programs, and seminars to educate state officials on best practices, financial management, and community engagement strategies in O&M.

So far, 23 States/ UTs (*Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, A&N Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, DNH&DD, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Uttarakhand*) have reported notification of their O&M Policy. The States of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu reported to have notified their O&M policy in line with the 19 components.

In consonance with 73rd Amendment of Constitution of India and to instill the sense of ownership among villagers, village level planning and community participation in all decisions pertaining to water supply systems have been envisaged under JJM through Panchayati Raj Institutions. Accordingly, Gram Panchayat or its sub-committee/ user group i.e. Village Water & Sanitation Committee (VWSC) or Pani Samiti has been empowered to plan, implement, manage, operate and maintain in-village water supply system.

Under JJM, NGOs/ Community Based Organizations (CBOs)/ Self Help Groups (SHGs)/ Voluntary Organizations (VOs), etc. are also being empaneled as Implementation Support Agencies (ISAs) to handhold and train VWSCs/ Pani Samitis in planning, mobilizing and engaging communities, disseminating information and encouraging women participation for ensuring long-term maintenance of the water supply infrastructure.

While preparing VAPs, dovetailing of resources available at village level under various programmes like Finance Commission tied grant for water & sanitation to RLBs/ PRIs, JJM, SBM(G), VBG-RAM-G, MP/ MLA - Local Area Development Funds, District Mineral Development Fund (DMDF), CSR Fund, community contributions, etc. is of paramount importance.

Further, for enabling the local village community to play their role shouldering the responsibility of operation and maintenance, Nal Jal Mitra Programme (NJMP) has been launched in collaboration with Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship to equip them with a comprehensive set of skills & develop “Nal Jal Mitras”, so that they can function as scheme operators and are able to carry out minor repairs and maintenance, including preventive maintenance, of the piped water supply scheme(s) in their village as skilled masons, plumbers, fitters, electricians, motor mechanics, pump operators, etc.

Government has approved extension of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) period up to December 2028 with enhanced outlay and restructured implementation focusing on structural reforms in rural drinking water supply sector under JJM 2.0. Accordingly, a uniform national digital framework, namely Sujalam Bharat has been instituted under which villages are assigned a unique Sujal Gaon / Service Area ID, digitally mapping the complete drinking water supply system from source to tap. To enhance transparency and promote Jan Bhagidari for sustainable and continuous service delivery, standardized Handbook on Community-Managed Piped Water Systems under Jal Arpan mandating a 15-day trial run involving GPs and VWSC members to ensure smooth handover and sustainable operations; district and Gram Panchayat dashboards have been launched and integrated with the Meri Panchayat platform for citizen feedback and grievance redressal and Jal Seva Ankalan has been initiated as a Gram Panchayat-led digital drinking water service functionality assessment tool.

To enable cross-learning amongst diverse stakeholders, Jal Jeevan Samvad has been initiated in the form of monthly magazine and knowledge platform covering JJM progress, ground stories/ best practices, focus articles by sector experts, updates on JJM activities, etc. Further, to build partnerships and work with various stakeholder institutions/ individuals, Rural WASH Partners’ Forum (RWPF) has also been established by the Department as a unified engagement platform for all development and sector partners working in the rural Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) for driving innovation, sharing thoughts, proposing policy initiatives, sharing & documenting best practices, suggesting implementation course correction, and facilitating progress under the Missions.

The information was provided by THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR JAL SHAKTI SHRI V. SOMANNA in a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha today.

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