



World Water Week and Jal Jeevan Mission

For Prelims: [World Water Week](#), [Jal Jeevan Mission](#), [Accelerated Rural Water Supply Scheme](#), [Panchayati Raj Institutions](#), [Har Ghar Jal program](#), [Cauvery River dispute](#), [Central Pollution Control Board](#).

For Mains: Present Status of the Jal Jeevan Mission, Current Challenges Related to Water Resource Management in India

Source: DTE

Why in News?

[World Water Week](#), taking place from **20th to 24th August, 2023** is the yearly global water forum organized by Stockholm International Water Institute. This year's theme, "**Seeds of Change: Innovative Solutions for a Water-Wise World**," spotlights innovation in addressing current water challenges.

- In line, [Jal Jeevan Mission](#), launched in 2019, is envisioned to **provide safe and adequate drinking water** through individual household tap connections by **2024** to all households in rural India.
- This ambitious initiative aims to learn from the shortcomings of past programs and rectify their failures.

How do Past Rural Water Supply Efforts and Challenges shape the Jal Jeevan Mission?

- **Historical Attempts and Shortcomings:**
 - **Initial Efforts (1950s-1960s):** The priority of supplying basic water to rural areas was established during **India's first five-year plan (1951-56)**. However, focus was limited to easily accessible villages.
 - **National Rural Drinking Water Supply Programme (1969):** [United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#)'s technical support led to the digging of borewells and piped water connections, but coverage remained uneven.
 - **Changing Approaches (1970s-1980s):** Different initiatives like [Accelerated Rural Water Supply Scheme \(ARWS\)](#) and Minimum Needs Programme were introduced but faced challenges in implementation and coverage.
 - **Evolution of Mission Approach (1986-1996):** ARWS transformed into **National Drinking Water Mission** and later **Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission (1991)**.
 - [Panchayati Raj Institutions](#) were assigned responsibility for water supply.
 - According to a report released by the [Comptroller and Auditor General of India \(CAG\)](#), in most years between **2002 and 2007**, stated that the existing schemes **could cover only about 50% of the target habitations**.
 - Initiated in 2017, the [Har Ghar Jal program](#) was introduced by the government to provide piped water supply to every household for safe drinking water.
 - However, by April 1, 2018, according to the **Department of Drinking Water and**

Sanitation's data, merely 20% of rural households were successfully linked to piped water.

▪ **Principal Shortcomings of Previous Schemes:**

- **Unsustainable Water Source:** Reliance on groundwater led to depletion, making some initially covered villages lose access over time.
- **Lack of Community Ownership:** Inadequate sense of ownership among communities resulted in poor maintenance and defunct infrastructure.
- **Lack of Transparency:** Insufficient public awareness and involvement hindered progress and sensitization efforts.
- **Mismanagement of Funds:** Despite substantial investments, the water supply problem persisted due to inefficiencies in fund allocation and utilization.

▪ **Jal Jeevan Mission: Learnings from the Past:**

- **Diverse Water Sources:** The mission allows for tapping into both surface water and groundwater, focusing on recharge and protection.
- **Community Engagement:** The mission emphasizes sensitizing communities and implementing officers at all levels, encouraging active participation.
- **Information Sharing:** A central dashboard publicly shares progress data, fostering healthy competition and encouraging action.
- **Holistic Approach:** The program encompasses disaster preparedness, bulk water transfers, technological interventions, and greywater management.

What is the Present Status of the Jal Jeevan Mission?

▪ **Objective:**

- **Jal Jeevan Mission (Rural):** The goal of this mission is to **provide 55 litres of water per person per day** to every rural household through **Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC)** by 2024.
 - It comes under the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**.

Note: Government of India also launched [Jal Jeevan Mission \(Urban\)](#) that complements JJM(R) and has been designed to provide universal coverage of water supply through **functional taps in all 4,378 statutory towns of India**

▪ **Current Status:**

- As of **January 3, 2023**, the count of rural households having access to tapped water connections had risen to 108.7 million, **equivalent to 56.14%**.
 - Consequently, the Mission is faced with the task of extending its coverage to an extra 76.3 million rural households (**47.3%**) **within the upcoming two years**.
- As reported by the program's dashboard, so far, the **Har Ghar Jal status**, which involves the provision of tap water supply to all rural households, has been attained by **9 states and Union Territories:** Haryana, Goa, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Puducherry, Daman and Diu and Dadra Nagar Haveli, Telangana, Gujarat, Punjab and Himanchal Pradesh.

What are the Current Challenges Related to Water Resource Management in India?

- **Groundwater Depletion and Urbanization:** While the focus is often on surface water sources, groundwater depletion is a significant challenge.
 - **Rapid urbanization** leads to increased demand for water, causing overexploitation of groundwater.
 - As cities expand, they **cover soil surfaces with impermeable materials, reducing groundwater recharge**.
- **Interstate Water Disputes and Federalism:** Interstate conflicts over water-sharing agreements, such as the [Cauvery River dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu](#), highlight the tensions between state autonomy and national interest.
- **Water Quality and Health:** Beyond quantity, water quality is a grave issue. Contamination due to industrial discharge, agricultural runoff, and inadequate sanitation leads to the prevalence

of **waterborne diseases, impacting public health, especially in rural areas.**

- **Gender Dynamics and Water Collection:** In many rural areas, women and girls bear the responsibility of fetching water.
 - This not **only limits their educational and economic opportunities** but also puts them at risk of harassment and violence during long walks to distant water sources.
- **Climate Change and Glacial Retreat:** The Himalayan glaciers, which serve as a major water source for several Indian rivers, are receding due to climate change.
 - This can lead to **water shortages in the long term**, affecting millions who depend on these rivers for irrigation and drinking water.
- **Lack of Efficient Wastewater Management:** With water resources in short supply in India, **inefficient wastewater management** is crippling the country's ability to make the most economic use of it.
 - According to a recent report published by the [Central Pollution Control Board \(March 2021\)](#), India's current water treatment capacity is **27.3%** and the sewage treatment capacity is **18.6%**.

Way Forward

- **Localised Water Resource Management:** The Jal Jeevan Mission's role must be viewed from a dual perspective, **emphasising both supply management and sustainability of water resources, as Jal Jeevan itself symbolises the life of water.** The healthy life of mankind can only be imagined when it is in harmony with the healthy life of water.
 - Therefore, there is a **need to deploy effective watershed management plans at city level and rain water harvesting** should be made mandatory for all the households.
- **Water Footprint Labeling:** Implement a **water footprint labeling system for products, similar to carbon footprint labels**, to raise consumer awareness about the water used in producing goods. This can drive demand for water-efficient products.
- **Water-Energy Nexus Management:** Integrate water and energy management strategies to optimize resource use.
 - For example, **using treated wastewater for cooling in power plants** and using excess heat from industrial processes for water purification.
- **Hydro-Responsive Urban Planning:** Implement hydro-responsive urban planning by designing cities to adapt to water availability.
 - Incorporate flexible infrastructure such as **movable flood barriers, adaptable drainage systems, and modular buildings** that can be adjusted based on changing water levels.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. With reference to 'Water Credit', consider the following statements: (2021)

1. It puts microfinance tools to work in the water and sanitation sector.
2. It is a global initiative launched under the aegis of the World Health Organisation and the World Bank.
3. It aims to enable the poor people to meet their water needs without depending on subsidies.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q1. What are the salient features of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan launched by the Government of India for water conservation and water security? **(2020)**

Q2. Suggest measures to improve water storage and irrigation system to make its judicious use under the depleting scenario. **(2020)**

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