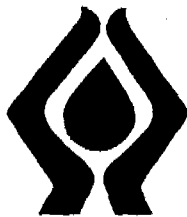


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Safe Water 2000

**THE GLOBAL CONSULTATION ON SAFE WATER
AND SANITATION FOR THE 1990s**

NEW DELHI, 10 - 14 SEPTEMBER, 1990

**REACHING WATER TO INDIA'S VILLAGES —
PERFORMANCE SO FAR AND OUTLOOK FOR THE NEW DECADE**

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REACHING WATER TO INDIA'S VILLAGES — PERFORMANCE SO FAR AND OUTLOOK FOR THE NEW DECADE

It has been estimated that two billion people all over the world drink a type of water that the well-to-do sections would not use even to wash their cars while another 1.2 billion people wish they had at least that water to drink. This shows the tremendous disparities that exist in the provision of this very basic need. It goes without saying that the worst affected are the people living in the poorer regions of the world — the Third World - and within these countries, the poorer sections of their populations mostly living in the rural areas. It was this recognition that prompted the Government of India to accord a very high priority in its national plan for the provision of drinking water to India's villages through the **Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP)** supplemented by the state governments through the **Minimum Needs Programme (MNP)**. In the Decade of the eighties which was dedicated internationally as the "**International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (IDWSSD)**" for providing this basic need to people, India achieved considerable progress in the sector. India operated the world's largest rural water supply programme in physical and financial terms with the outlay for the sector averaging over 800 crores of Indian Rupees annually (1 crore is 10 million) - roughly 500 million dollars per year. The droughts that recurred in the Decade were converted into opportunities for enhancing the rural water supply with India recording an installation of over 1,50,000 handpumps in the single year of 87-88.

The high financial outlay for the sector in successive plans bears testimony to the political backing this programme has received over time and continues to receive.

Statistical Profile

Due to concerted effort, of the 5,83,003 villages of India the number of villages without a safe source water now stand reduced to only 8,439 villages. The thrust that began to be given to this programme commencing from the Fifth Five Year Plan with the incorporation of Rural Water Supply into the Minimum Needs Programme (under the Basic Needs approach) was further accelerated in the Sixth (80-85) and Seventh (85-90) Plans.

Total number of villages in India	=	5,83,003
Total number of villages covered upto 1.4.1985	=	4,21,281
Villages that remained for coverage as on 1.4.1985	=	1,61,722
Villages covered in the 7th plan	=	1,53,283
Villages remaining for coverage as on 1.4.1990	=	8,439

As far as investment went, India spent 2.34% of its total public sector outlay on rural drinking water sector in the 6th plan and 1.97% in the 7th plan. In actual terms investment (by centre & states) in the 7th plan were :

	MNP (Investment by State Govt.)	ARWSP (Investment by the Govt. of India)	Total
(in crores of rupees)			
1985-86	412.89	297.43	710.32
1986-87	470.37	322.13	792.50
1987-88	505.85	385.99	891.84
1988-89	537.62	437.86	975.48
1989-90	540.11	462.71	1002.82

The proposed outlay for the Eight Plan (90-95) for the sector is 7300 crores.

Major New Initiatives

During the last decade and especially in the 7th Plan, apart from extending reach, several new initiatives were taken by the **National Drinking Water Mission** in the following areas :

- (a) Scientific Source finding to reduce costs.
- (b) Emphasis on water quality by setting up water quality testing infrastructure.
- (c) Launching of specific submissions to tackle chemical and bacteriological contamination :
 - (i) To eradicate guineaworm through supply of safe water.
 - (ii) To remove excess flouride through setting up of deflouridation plants.
 - (iii) To remove excess iron through excess iron removal plants.
 - (iv) To remove salinity through setting up desalination plants.

In each of these, technologies which until then existed only in the laboratories in India were transferred to the shop floors and then on to the field.

- (d) Pioneering an integrated approach to water management in 55 selected mini mission districts emphasising sustained supply and management. Under this rain water harvesting and water harvesting structures have been promoted.
- (e) Promoting low cost technologies especially the handpump. The India Mark II pump which was installed in large numbers in the Decade has proved a very reliable pump and is now imported to over 40 countries.
- (f) Standardising Rural Water Supply activities/inputs through manuals prepared by the Bureau of Indian Standards.
- (g) Creating a Management Information System and Computerised Rig Monitoring.
- (h) Promoting community participation by greater involvement of panchayats, water user committees, increased participation by NGO's as well as experimenting on a community based O&M model in selected areas.
- (i) Attempting to enhance the role of women in the management of water supply by recognising the critical role they play as catalysts to convert water supply investment into improved health status at the community level.
- (j) Creating a role for communication and social mobilization in the water supply programme to bridge the software gap.

Review of Performance

A review of performance reveals significant strides as well as areas that remain to be addressed. In statistical terms there has been phenomenal progress in coverage - something any developing country can be justifiably be proud of. Reaching safe water to India is no more a distant dream - the task is almost completed.

But mere physical provision of the asset goes only half way. The maintenance of this system and its utilization so that optimal impact of the programme on health and productivity is achieved remain critical issues. This calls for urgent action on the **demand side** making people aware of safe water, water - handling practices, putting community based maintenance systems in place and ensuring sanitation without which this investment does not generate adequate returns. This calls for a reorganization of institutional structures. These are the major challenges for the nineties. This would also involve a certain de-bureaucratization of the sector and greater involvement of people through democratically elected

political structures and private effort in general. Community mobilization cannot take place unless the community takes charge of the sector and makes decisions. The Rural Water Supply sector in India as it moves from the decade of the eighties to the decade of the nineties is moving over from an infrastructure-creation phase to a consolidation phase. The latter needs people and people's institutions as much as hardware and monetary resources. If the eighties was a decade of pumps and pipes in the sector, the nineties will be more a decade of collective human effort. To harness people's resources effectively would be the major challenge before the planners of the new decade.