

Note on Rural Sanitation and Rural Drinking Water for Economic Editors Conference

Rural Sanitation

The Government of India has given utmost importance to rural sanitation. In the last 5 years, the allocation for rural sanitation have increased nearly 6 fold compared to the previous 5 years. This has resulted in rural sanitation coverage more than doubling from 27.35% in 2004 to 58.49% at present. This is the result of highest level of political commitment to ensure that all households have sanitation facilities and are able to live with dignity and health.

The political commitment at the highest level can be gauged from the fact that the Third South Asian Conference on Sanitation held in November, 2008 in New Delhi was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India who while inaugurating the Conference said "Sanitation should be a birth right to every citizen". The Third SACOSAN was attended by more than 1500 delegates from over 23 the world. In the Delhi Declaration adopted at the Conference all the South Asian country delegations committed themselves to achieve the national and international goal of complete sanitation within the prescribed time lines. The success of SACOSAN has spread throughout the world bringing the subject of sanitation to the foreground as a prime determinant of good health, dignity and educational outcomes.

India having a largest number of households resorting to open defecation in the world, has the central role in achieving the United Nations endorsed Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people not using safe sanitation by 2015. India has set itself a more ambitious goal to ensure 100% coverage of all rural households by 2012.

Its efforts in this direction are providing valuable experiences to other developing countries in their efforts to achieve total sanitation. In the last two years, 148 delegates from more than 20 countries have visited India in order to learn from India's experiences in the sanitation field under International Learning Exchange Programme of UNICEF.

The major Govt of India programme for universalizing rural sanitation is the Total Sanitation Campaign started in 1999. The provisions under TSC district projects, which are of 4-5 year duration, are going to the villages not merely for construction of individual toilets for which Rs. 7536 crores have been approved, but also for school toilets for which Rs.2288 crores, for anganwadi toilets Rs. 216 crores, for sanitary complexes Rs. 436 crores and for Solid and liquid waste management Rs. 1090 crores has been approved. Out of the total approved outlay of Rs. 14014 crores, the Central share is Rs.8823 crores of which -----crore have been released to the States since inception of the programme.

TSC achievements have been varied among the States. Sikkim, Mizoram, Tripura and Kerala have achieved 100% sanitation household coverage in their States while West Bengal, Haryana, Tamilnadu, Manipur, Nagaland and Himachal Pradesh have achieved more than 75% However a few States are lagging behind like Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Rajasthan which have achieved less than 40% coverage. Under the sanitation campaign, all schools and Anganwadis are also to be provided toilet and urinals. As against the goal of 11.85 lakh toilets in schools, 7.51 lakh toilets have been constructed under TSC. Some States have reported 100% coverage in construction of school toilets like Mizoram, Sikkim, Haryana, Gujarat have done very well in school sanitation while Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu Kahsmir, Manipur , Meghalaya , Nagaland, and West Bengal have completed less than 40% of the targeted school toilets.

TSC goes beyond mere toilets to ensure maximum impact. Schools have to set up children health committees to address the special needs of adolescent girls like distribution of sanitary pads. Some schools have set up incinerators in their campus for safe disposal of sanitary pads. Special needs of women, disabled children and infants are being addressed under the programme. Disabled friendly toilet designs for schools have been prepared and disseminated to the States for use during construction.

The Nirmal Gram Puraskar incentive given under the TSC is a highly acclaimed model for tackling the difficult problem of sanitation. Cash incentives ranging from Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 5 lakhs are given to Panchayats which achieve 100% sanitation coverage of households, schools and Anganwadis and ensure cleanliness in the village. Her Excellency the President of India Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil graced three Nirmal Gram Puraskar award distribution functions. The first in Hisar, Haryana on 17th October, 2008 where about 3528 awardees received the NGP, the second in Guwahati on 20th October, 2008 when about 1225 awardees received the NGP and the third in Pune on 8th December, 2008 when about 7516 awardees received the NGP. In Pune, Sikkim State also received a Gold medal and plaque from the President of India on becoming the first State to achieve universal sanitation. In her speech while giving away the Nirmal Gram Puraskar awards, the President of India has given a call to all elected Panchayat Presidents, “ I would call upon all the Sarpanchas and Pradhans to take keen interest in making their village 'Nirmal Gram' which will ultimately lead India to become 'Swachh Aur Nirmal Bharat'.

NGP has contributed enormously to the rapid expansion of sanitation coverage in the last 5 years. Since the NGP started, more than 18000 GPs having a population of 7.72 crore have received the awards.

Convergence with other programmes: We are emphasizing convergence with National Rural Health Mission by setting up Village Health, Water and Sanitation Committees. The use of ASHA workers for motivation for construction of new toilets and paying them incentives to them is also being done. Inclusion of diarrhea cases for evaluation of NGP criteria, and water quality testing for bacteriological contamination of drinking water are also done at village level. Convergence with SSA is done by providing health and hygiene education in school curriculum, setting up of School Committees to ensure cleanliness and hygiene in the school. With Mid Day Meal Scheme we have taken up advocacy of good hygienic practices like handwashing before and after taking food and after defecation. All houses constructed under Indira Awas Yojana are to be compulsorily provided with a toilet. Convergence is also being done with SGSY to help women SHG s take up sanitary pan and sanitary napkin production, give their members mason training, provide loans for construction of toilets etc. For sustainable garbage disposal and drainage schemes in villages, funds under NREGS, BRGF and 12th Finance Commission are being used alongwith TSC funds.

Rural Water Supply

Highest priority is accorded to the provision of potable drinking water supply to the rural people. According to an estimation by WHO/UNICEF, our country has already achieved 86% coverage of rural population with safe drinking water against MDG goal, Target 7c of achievement of coverage of 86% of population using improved drinking water sources by the year 2015.

Despite substantial investment made in the rural water supply sector i.e. Rs. 8,564 crore in the 8th Plan, Rs. 16,524 in the 10th Plan and Rs. 39,490 in the 11th Plan, the problem of availability as well as quality in the distribution of drinking water is still rampant in various areas across the country. In order to ensure that substantial

investment made in the rural water supply sector continues to ensure not only sustainable water supply but also gives good economic value for this investment, there has been a paradigm shift in the recently approved revised rural water supply guidelines. This includes moving away from over dependence on single source to multiple source through surface water, ground water and rainwater, focus on achievement of household level drinking water security through formulation of village based water security plan and convergence of all water conservation programmes at the village level. There is increased thrust on moving away from adoption of high cost water quality treatment technologies to household level simple to use technologies such as terracotta filters, solar desalination plants and dilution techniques for tackling chemical contamination in drinking water.

The Department has revisited some of the parameters with regard to water supply programme by looking at the problem areas and finding specific solutions. For North-Eastern States and Jammu & Kashmir, the Government has changed the funding pattern by making it easy for resource starved regions to provide for State share thereby making available more resources to them. The Twelfth Finance Commission grant provided to panchayati raj bodies has emphasized in its guidelines that the first priority for spending these grants will be the maintenance of water supply and sanitation assets created in the villages. In order to ensure that sustainability of drinking water is a part of every drinking water supply project, it has been decided to incentivize the programme by granting 100% subsidy to all the State Governments as opposed to 75:25 funding pattern earlier.

The emphasis on ascertaining the efficacy of all the programmes in terms of coverage of Partially Covered and Uncovered habitations is to be replaced by insistence on coverage of every household whenever and wherever there is need. There is an emphasis on the States for entering of data on water sources in the villages

on-line as also investments made in regard to creation of assets in the villages so as to create a computerized data-base on water supply programme. This will remove the chance of repeated investment in certain villages to the exclusion of others where no investment has been made thereby bringing in more transparency in the Rural Drinking Water programmes.

The Government has brought in convergence with the Department of Science and Technology and other Scientific and Technology bodies to introduce better technologies for supply of quality water to the people suffering from various water quality related diseases. This year the Government has started a school water supply programme known as “Jalmani” which ensures that school children receive water of reasonably good quality and quantity by using simple to use water treatment technology at the consumption point at the village level. The programme has been launched from 14.11.2008 i.e. Children’s Day. Under the scheme Rs. 100 crore has been distributed to States based on the criterion of rural population (2001 census). After conducting detailed impact assessment through independent evaluators after one year, the programme will be scaled up to reach vulnerable sections of rural population such as anganwadis, community centres, pregnant and lactating mothers etc. apart from rural schools.

Under Bharat Nirman Programme which is going to end in March, 2009 we have already covered/ addressed majority of targeted habitations with potable water and it is hoped that we will be able to complete the remaining habitations also within the stipulated period. Under National Rural Water Quality Monitoring and Surveillance Programme (NRWQM&SP), five persons from every village are being trained for monitoring and surveillance of water quality at the village level. ASHA workers, village school children, ex-serviceman are being selected as part of the teams as they are the natural leaders in the villages.

In order to involve the community in bringing in quality and sustainability in the village level drinking water supply systems and for rewarding and recognizing in appropriate manner along the lines of Nirmal gram Puraskar of the community, an award namely Sajal Gram Puraskar has been approved this year. The scheme will be implemented from 2009-10. Any village panchayat which has achieved the distinction of drinking water security for the last 3 years without any incidence of water borne diseases and is a Nirmal Gram village is eligible for this award.

The problems of Island States, hilly, backward and difficult areas are given utmost importance by the Department in the monthly review meetings. The Department had also sent special teams of experts to States such as Tripura and A&N Islands for evolving of action plan in regard to the development of water supply & sanitation infrastructure in these States.
