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Chapter

3.1 Introduction

With a view to promote more holistic approach based on river basin as the unit of planning and institutional redesign for the implementation of schemes/ programmes for Rejuvenation of River Ganga, Government of India created the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA)²⁴ in February 2009. Government of India dissolved NGRBA with its order of October 2016 and created National Ganga Council as apex body at the Central level for overall planning and superintendence. National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), which was created in August 2011, continued to be the implementing agency for Ganga Rejuvenation.

Integrated Ganga Conservation Mission *Namami Gange* aims to promote comprehensive and coordinated interventions. Its implementation is as per the NGRBA Programme Framework, suitably amended from time to time.

The present Chapter deals with planning mechanism envisaged under NGRBA, as amended from time to time, for implementation of Ganga Rejuvenation programmes. Audit findings are discussed in succeeding paragraphs.

3.2 Annual Action Plans

As per NGRBA framework, a State level annual planning meeting was to be organised by SPMGs in early September every year with all their relevant Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Executing Agencies (EAs) participating, to prepare the draft Annual Action Plans (AAPs) for the State. The AAP was to be approved by State Executive Committee (SEC). SPMG was to submit the AAP by the end of September to NMCG for the next financial year.

We found that in the States, AAPs were not prepared during 2014-17 as per NGRBA framework. In Uttar Pradesh, AAPs for 2014-17 were prepared but there were delays ranging between four to 10 months in submission of AAPs to NMCG. Moreover, the information relating to preparation and approval of AAPs by SPMGs/ NMCG was also called for from NMCG but reply was not received, indicating that proper annual planning was not being done at NMCG's end also.

²⁴ On 20 February 2009, under Section 3(3) of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986

NMCG replied (August 2017) AAPs would be prepared with SPMGs as tentatively NMCG has identified the projects and their deadlines. The AAPs will be finalized soon with SPMGs and EAs.

3.3 Ganga River Basin Management Plan

As per NGRBA Notification (February 2009), NGRBA shall take measures for development of the river basin management plan to promote inter sectoral co-ordination and address the issue of Ganga Rejuvenation in a comprehensive manner. As per the Cabinet approval (May 2015), *Namami Gange* programme intended to introduce convergence of various schemes under Government of India relevant for Ganga Rejuvenation, enhance the size and scope of interventions under overall framework and other initiatives arising out of recommendations of Ganga River Basin Management Plan (GRBMP), through intensive coordination with other Ministries.

3.3.1 Delay in preparation and non-finalisation of GRBMP

Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with a consortium of seven Indian Institutes of Technology²⁵ (July 2010) and sanctioned the work for preparation of GRBMP with the objective of maintenance and restoration of wholesomeness of the Ganga system and improvement of its ecological health. GRBMP was to provide action plans with specific projects, policy interventions, and management actions along with financial implications. MoEF&CC sanctioned the work (August 2010) at a cost of ₹ 16 crore comprising of 37 deliverables to be completed within a period of 18 months from date of agreement i.e. by January 2012. As per Utilisation Certificate furnished by IIT, Mumbai, against an amount of ₹ 13.69 crore released for the project, an expenditure of ₹ 14.64 crore was incurred till 31 March 2016.

NMCG granted extensions four times, as depicted in the Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Details of extension granted for preparation of GRBMP

Number of extensions	Date of sanction	Period upto which the extension was given
1 st extension	September 2012	December 2013
2 nd extension	March 2014	June 2014
3 rd extension	July 2014	December 2014
4 th extension	March 2015	31 March 2016

NMCG received the first draft of the GRMBP (January 2015) which included extended summary, main plan document and seven mission reports after 54 months of Memorandum of Agreement.

²⁵ IITs at Mumbai, Delhi, Guwahati, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Chennai and Roorkee

However, NMCG neither circulated GRBMP to different Ministries/ Departments for consultation and seeking their opinion, nor finalised the GRBMP for initiating the long-term intervention on the Ganga.

NMCG could not finalise the long-term action plans even after more than six and a half years²⁶ of signing of agreement with the consortium. As a result, NMCG does not have a river basin management plan even after a lapse of more than eight years of NGRBA notification leading to delay in initiation of long-term intervention for Ganga Rejuvenation based on river basin approach.

MoWR, RD&GR signed another MoA with IIT Kanpur (March 2016) for providing continual scientific support in implementation and dynamic evolution of the GRBMP for an annual budget of ₹ 9.60 crore over a period of ten years. NMCG released an amount of ₹ 9.60 crore as advance (October 2016) to IIT Kanpur. NMCG did not explore other options and ignored the delays in preparation of GRBMP by IIT consortium.

NMCG agreed (August 2017) that due action would be taken on GRBMP.

3.4 Approval of Detailed Project Reports

As per NGRBA framework, NMCG would evaluate the Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) submitted by SMPGs within a maximum period of 60 days. The evaluations would include third party appraisal, site visits and public consultations, as required. The possible decisions are either (i) recommend approval of DPR, or (ii) send back to the SPMG for modifications.

We ascertained the status of 154 DPRs pertaining to the period 2014-15 to 2016-17 and observed that 71 DPRs were approved out of 154 DPRs. Of these 71 DPRs, 70 DPRs were approved after delays ranging from 26 to 1,140 days. Out of remaining 83 DPRs, 54 DPRs were pending at NMCG level for periods ranging from 120 to 780 days. Of these 54 DPRs, 26 DPRs of WAPCOS, eight DPRs of NBCC, 10 DPRs of EIL, one of EPIL, one of SPMG West Bengal, four of SPMG of Bihar and four of SPMG of Uttar Pradesh were pending for approval at NMCG level.

Out of the 83 DPRs, 29 DPRs were returned by NMCG, with delay ranging from 11 to 840 days. Of these 29 DPRs, 23 DPRs were returned to the SPMGs during May-June 2017 (17 of West Bengal, five of Uttar Pradesh and one of Bihar) after 90 to 840 days. On the other hand, it was found that all DPRs (15) of SPMG of Uttarakhand were approved.

²⁶ Since signing of agreement in July 2010

NMCG did not maintain any record for dates of receipt and sanction of DPRs, because of which Audit could not fully evaluate the diligence with which NMCG followed the timeframe prescribed in the NGRBA framework.

This indicates that the support provided by NMCG for preparation of DPRs as mandated under *Namami Gange* is not adequate and effective in making a shelf of DPRs ready for project execution, which may prolong Rejuvenation of Ganga and endanger its ecology.

NMCG stated (August 2017) that in view of technicalities involved, considerable time is required for approval of DPRs. Further, SPMGs have also been submitting many DPRs, as per their own priorities without consideration in the annual planning meet of the States and without obtaining its consent. NMCG further stated that since February 2017, it has been ensuring that DPRs are normally being appraised and approved within the time frame.

3.5 Creation of Ganga Knowledge Centre

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved (April 2011) the setting up of Ganga Knowledge Centre (GKC) at NMCG to be completed up to March 2013. GKC was to be a State-of-art centre to provide knowledge and technical analysis support services to achieve the aims of the NGRBA. The Group of Secretaries in their 'Action Plan for Ganga Rejuvenation' (August 2014), also observed that there was a need to develop a comprehensive knowledge bank by expanding the scope of GKC and utilise the same for further research, innovations and development of future strategies and setting up of a dedicated institution of learning on Ganga and its tributaries. Moreover, River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities Order, 2016 also emphasised setting up of such centres.

3.5.1 Tardy progress in the implementation of activities of Ganga Knowledge Centre

NMCG sanctioned the proposal of setting up of GKC in two phases in (September 2013 and March 2014) at an estimated cost of ₹ 48.54 crore. GKC was proposed to be set up at Central level in Delhi which was to be linked with five thematic sub-centres in the States. The scope of work in GKC included developing a high quality web portal for the River Ganga, an integrated information base (MIS) on projects, a state-of-the-art e-library, a comprehensive Geographical Information System (GIS)- based mapping system of the Ganga basin, processes for supporting research, pilots and new ideas and processes for engaging stakeholders through forums, events, publications, interactive models.

We found that:

- Out of ₹ 48.54 crore sanctioned by NMCG towards setting up of GKC, only ₹ 1.43 crore (which was three *per cent* of the amount sanctioned) had been spent as of 31 March 2017.
- Various activities under GKC i.e. framework for data collection and management within NMCG, setting up of e-library, high quality GIS- based web portal with integrated MIS, comprehensive mapping of the Ganga Basin, etc. were yet to be taken up.
- The recruitment of 13 key personnel positions for GKC was to be completed in a period of two years (by September 2015). However, only four personnel were working in GKC (April 2017).
- NMCG had signed MoUs with University of Dundee (UK), The Energy and Resources Institute, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), World Wildlife Fund-India and VA-Tech Wabag Ltd. to conduct collaborative research on various themes of interest to NMCG but it was yet to identify and finalize areas of research as of date.
- NMCG had also not constituted a Research Advisory Committee (RAC) for recommending proposals for research and send them to Empowered Steering Committee for approval.
- The activities of the GKC were to be regularly monitored by the Mission Directorate, NMCG. However, only one meeting (April 2017) was convened by NMCG to take stock of the activities initiated in respect of establishment of GKC.

Thus, the physical and financial progress was very slow which reflected the tardy progress of the work.

3.5.2 Non-achievement of the objectives of the project 'Ganga Gyan Dhara ' under GKC

One of the main activities envisaged under the GKC was to compile and collect legacy data²⁷ on the River Ganga. NMCG engaged (April 2014) Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) for 'Collection and Computerization of Legacy data on the River Ganga' with a fee of ₹ 87.18 lakh for a project duration of 12 months. IIPA was to collate all the existing information on the Ganga, screen the information for relevance and quality, organize and store the data to make it easily retrievable. The tasks assigned to IIPA included (a) searching and collecting implicit/ tacit knowledge with various stakeholders, individuals, institutions; (b) data codification, documentation and digitization; (c) transfer of data/ information to NMCG, etc.

²⁷ Legacy data referred to active as well as inactive data that is stored in physical or electronic format and which may or may not currently be understood, used or managed.

IIPA submitted the completion report (July 2015) without obtaining responses from 33 out of 41 Universities from whom information were sought. IIPA also did not download 77,700 number of reference items that were collected by it. Further, IIPA was to transfer data/information to NMCG in phases, as and when it was complete. Books/ journals readily available had to be transferred once they were codified/ digitized instantaneously and other data sets were to be transferred after the whole process was complete. However, the same was not done by IIPA. NMCG in its reply (July 2017) stated that digitization of some journals/research papers could not be done due to copyright matters. However, the reply was silent about the quantum of data/ information transferred to NMCG.

NMCG had not placed the information and reports submitted by the IIPA in the public domain even after two years of their submission. The website 'Ganga Gyan Dhara' was under maintenance (April 2017). Thus, the objective to organize and store the data to make it easily retrievable remained unachieved.

3.6 Communication and public outreach

As per NGRBA Framework, communication and public outreach strategy and plan was to be prepared to ensure effective abatement of pollution and conservation of the River Ganga through strategic communication and enhanced public participation and outreach. Further, under *Namami Gange* programme (July 2014), in 'short term activities', communication and public outreach were to be undertaken.

The Annual Action plan for communication and public outreach activities in Uttar Pradesh for 2015-16 and 2016-17 were pending in NMCG since July 2015 and April 2016 respectively. Resultantly, no Information, Education and Communication activities were performed.

3.7 Annual Report

NMCG has to prepare an annual report within three months of the end of every year. We found that NMCG has not prepared annual reports since its inception (2011).

NMCG stated (May 2017) that its activities were still at the stage of planning and annual report will be prepared in due course.

3.8 Status of River Conservation Zone

MoWR, RD&GR issued (October 2016) a notification, for constitution of authorities at Central, State and District levels to take measures for prevention, control and abatement of pollution in the Ganga and to ensure continuous and adequate flow of water so as to rejuvenate the river to its natural and pristine condition. Under this notification, the bank and flood plain of the River Ganga should be kept free from

construction activities to reduce pollution sources, pressures and to maintain its natural ground water recharge functions.

We found that River Conservation Zone were not identified in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal, till May 2017. In Uttarakhand, it was under progress.

NMCG accepted (August 2017) the audit observation.

3.9 Conclusion

NMCG has not finalized the Ganga Rejuvenation Basin Management Plan for initiating long-term intervention on the Ganga. Approval of DPRs for Ganga Rejuvenation suffered from inordinate delays. Ganga Knowledge Centre has not been established as of June 2017. River Conservation Zone were not identified in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

3.10 Recommendations

We recommend that

- i. NMCG may finalize Ganga River Basin Management Plan for implementation of long-term intervention on Ganga Rejuvenation on priority and implement it in a time bound manner.
- ii. NMCG may ensure appraisal of DPRs as envisaged in NGRBA framework in time bound manner.
- iii. NMCG may identify and declare River Conservation Zones on priority, in order to conserve the River Ganga from encroachment and construction activities.

