

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) was launched in August 2019 with the vision *viz.*, ‘Every rural household has drinking water supply in adequate quantity (minimum 55 litres per capita per day (lpcd)) of prescribed quality on regular and long-term basis at affordable service delivery charges leading to improvement in living standards of rural communities’. JJM is a decentralised and community-managed programme.

Some of the broad objectives of the Mission are (i) to provide Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) to every rural household, Schools, *Anganwadi* centres and other public buildings, (ii) to prioritise provision of FHTCs in quality affected areas, etc., (iii) to monitor functionality of tap connections and to ensure voluntary ownership through local community contribution, (iv) to assist in ensuring sustainability of water supply system including source, infrastructure, Operation and Maintenance (O&M) and (v) to bring awareness on various aspects such as significance of safe drinking water.

Whenever a particular Administrative Unit *viz.*, Village Panchayat (VP)/Block/District achieves 100 *per cent* coverage in providing FHTCs, the Unit is termed as having achieved ‘*Har Ghar Jal*’ (HGJ) status.

For every household, JJM funding is provided for one tap out of three delivery points (taps), *viz.* kitchen, washing & bathing area and toilet. The Centre-State funding pattern for implementation of the Mission is 50:50 for Coverage i.e., infrastructure in terms of FHTCs provided to rural households and 60:40 for Support Activities including Water Quality Monitoring and Surveillance (WQM&S). Community contribution of up to 10 *per cent* of the capital cost in cash and/or kind or labour is collected from households for in-village piped water supply infrastructure and the remaining cost will be shared in the above mentioned ratio.

In Tamil Nadu, the implementation of JJM is done by the Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage (TWAD) Board for water supply schemes that cater to multiple villages/Schemes. In cases where the scheme caters to a single VP or if the source is available within the VP, then the implementing agency is the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RD&PR) Department.

Considering the importance of the mission in ensuring piped water supply in rural areas, CAG took up this Performance Audit covering the activities during 2019-2024 in six selected districts. The objectives of the Audit was to assess whether the institutional framework for planning and implementation of the scheme was effective in achieving the desired objective, funds were utilised economically and assets created and water security are sustainable.

Major Audit findings

Out of 1.25 crore households in the State, only 21.76 lakh households (17.37 *per cent*) had tap water connections at the start of the Mission. At the

time of Audit (2024), the achievement was 1.05 crore (83.94 *per cent*) with 10 districts recording 100 *per cent* achievement in coverage. However, we noticed that 50 *per cent* rural households in the selected districts that were provided with tap connections were not supplied with sufficient quantity (55 lpcd) of water. A majority of FHTCs provided (96 *per cent*) were outside the house in contravention of the Guidelines.

Audit noticed that no baseline survey was conducted to confirm need assessments for inclusion in the Village Action Plan and the District Water and Sanitation Mission did not conduct the prescribed number of meetings during 2019-24 which impacted the implementation of the scheme. Test-check of JJM works sanctioned in Ramanathapuram District revealed that in one selected block, out of 12 works taken up in September 2021, eight were cancelled prior to commencement. The remaining four works were halted subsequently due to objections raised by the local community. In another instance, despite requests from the local community not to construct open wells as the groundwater in the designated area was salty and non-potable, three open wells were constructed. These wells ultimately remained unused by the Village Panchayat.

The in-village components were not taken up in synchronisation with the works executed by TWAD Board resulting in infrastructure created not being used owing to non-completion of source works, non-availability of water sources, etc. There were lapses in tendering procedure for JJM works. Issues were noticed in execution of works by TWAD Board such as delays in site identification, non-obtaining of permissions from line departments and delayed execution, etc. In respect of works executed by RD&PR Department, no penalty was levied for the delayed execution. Due to defective planning, water storage structures were constructed in habitations that had already attained sufficiency, instead of places with shortage.

With regard to the supply of the prescribed minimum quantity (55 lpcd) of water under JJM, we noticed that in the test-checked districts, none of the habitations in Nagapattinam district were supplied with 55 lpcd of water. Although Coimbatore district reported 100 *per cent* achievement in providing FHTCs, only 8.67 *per cent* of its habitations were supplied with water in accordance with the prescribed quantity norms.

We also noticed that (i) four district water testing laboratories functioned without NABL accreditation; (ii) infrastructure and equipment were found to be lacking in all the 18 laboratories (including State laboratory) at various levels across the selected districts; (iii) Water quality testing for all the 13 prescribed parameters was not adequately done by TWAD Board; (iv) there was no mechanism for referring samples that tested positive for contaminants to higher level laboratories and (v) Field Testing Kits were not utilised in any of the selected districts.

We collected water samples from 43 habitations randomly selected across six districts and had them tested in TWAD's District Water Testing

Laboratories. Of these, five samples from habitations in Coimbatore district and two samples from Ramanathapuram district did not meet the prescribed water quality guidelines (BIS 10500:2012 drinking water standards). During Joint Physical Verification in certain habitations of Viluppuram, Ramanathapuram and Theni, beneficiaries also expressed that the water supplied was not potable.

There was variance in the data on number of households as per JJM dashboard and the number of property tax assessments as per VP Tax portal. About 67 *per cent* of the community contribution were yet to be collected. Non-assessment and non-collection of water connection charges were also noticed, which would place an additional burden on the Operation and Maintenance of the asset. Inadequate monitoring and follow-up regarding maintenance of the Reverse Osmosis plants led to 55 *per cent* of the installed RO plants non-functional in three districts *viz.*, Ramanathapuram, Viluppuram and Salem, leading to non-achievement of the intended objective of providing safe drinking water to the targeted habitations.

Lapses in monitoring and verification processes of Third Party Inspection Agencies (TPIAs) were noticed. The Scrutiny Reports used by the TPIA was incomplete. Audit noticed that Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials remained undistributed/unused in the districts, despite a lapse of more than six months since their receipt. Geo-tagging of assets and linking of FHTCs with Aadhaar were incomplete. Social audit was not conducted in any of the six selected districts.

We conclude that though the State could achieve FHTC coverage of 84 *per cent* to the rural population, 50 *per cent* of the rural population were yet to get 55 lpcd. There was lack of synchronisation in taking up works resulting in non-utilisation of assets created. Further, four District Laboratories were functioning without NABL accreditation, testing was not conducted for the prescribed parameters and mechanism to take up the samples that tested positive for contaminants, to next level for further testing was not in place. Implementation of works was also affected with issues like delayed execution, defective planning etc. All the beneficiaries were not assessed for Water charges resulting in additional burden to the VPs on the O&M cost. We also noticed lapses in monitoring and verification processes of Third Party Inspection Agencies.

What we recommend?

Audit have made the following recommendations:

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND PLANNING

- The Government should direct the implementing agencies to take up works only after need assessments and should also ensure that estimates are prepared after taking into account the actual requirements.

- The Government should ensure effective synchronisation in works executed by the implementing agencies so as to avoid delays in utilisation of assets created in the in-village components.

IMPLEMENTATION OF JAL JEEVAN MISSION

- The Government should direct the Department to update in a time bound manner, the household data in the IMIS portal so as to ensure complete coverage in all districts.
- The Government should fix responsibility for the lapses in tender procedures and direct the Implementing agencies to ensure adherence to the relevant Act and Rules.
- The Government must direct the TWAD Board to ensure that all the necessary approvals have been obtained before commencement of works so that all the water supply works under JJM are executed without delay.
- The Government should direct the Department to rectify the deficiencies in the execution of work so as to ensure proper utilisation of all assets created, at the earliest for achievement of the intended objective.
- The Government should ensure that storage infrastructure are created only in needy habitations to avoid idling of the assets created besides optimum utilisation of valuable resources.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- The Government should ensure that the requisite community contributions as per the Operational Guidelines are collected from the beneficiaries.
- The Government should ensure that water charges be assessed and collected from all the beneficiaries so as to augment the revenue source of the VPs.

WATER QUALITY MONITORING AND SURVEILLANCE

- The Government must ensure renewal of accreditation of the water testing laboratories at the earliest.
- The Government should ensure that all equipment are purchased to make the laboratories fully functional at the earliest for comprehensive water testing in order to take timely remedial action.
- The Government must direct the implementing agencies to ensure optimum utilisation of the Field Testing Kits by conducting tests and recording the same.
- The Government should direct the Department to ensure the functionality of Reverse Osmosis Plants created for providing potable water.

POST OPERATION MANAGEMENT, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- The Government should direct the Department to ensure that payments are released to contractors only on receipt of verification Reports, complete in all aspects, from the Third Party Inspection Agencies.
- The Government should ensure strict adherence to the Mission Guidelines in the conduct of social audit and for geo-tagging of assets.

OUTPUT AND OUTCOME FRAMEWORK OF JAL JEEVAN MISSION

- The Government should take steps to bring in all the schools and *Anganwadi* centres within the purview of JJM so as to provide FHTCs to all of them.