

Concept Note

A Policy Dialogue on Emerging Issues in Rural Drinking Water Governance in India

India's rural drinking water service provision regime has undergone a fundamental transformation with the National Jal Jeevan Mission (NJJM). Moving away from earlier blueprints that sought to extend drinking water provision through a variety of ways, the NJJM targets universal provisioning - through functional household tap connections - to all households by 2024. It has adopted many novel approaches in this endeavour which include solar powered piped water supply, emphasis on metering and functionality of taps, and focus on retrofitting existing infrastructure of single or multi-village schemes. According to Census 2011, 31% of households in India had access to drinking water through household tap connections. In the light of this fact, the endeavour to universalise rural drinking water provision by 2024 is an ambitious and challenging task¹.

Achieving the goal of FHTCs in all rural households needs overcoming a variety of challenges spread across the technical, social, institutional and financial realms. There is widespread consensus that decentralized governance of rural drinking water through community participation is crucial for achieving NJJM's objectives. Community Management, to that end, has been firmly established in Government programs in India, primarily based on a diagnosis provided by national and international experts arguing that the lack of community ownership leads to multi-dimensional failure of schemes. Despite the constant efforts of community centric institutional models for sustaining rural drinking water schemes, a high rate of slip back/failure (30% according to GoI) raises questions on the challenges encountered in the approach². For instance, there is overwhelming consensus at the global level that communities find it difficult to independently operate and maintain schemes – even the most technologically rudimentary ones - without external support³.

In this context, the proposed policy dialogue aims to explore a few critical questions pertaining to the ongoing National Jal Jeevan Mission (NJJM) [Day 1] and the constantly evolving terrain of community participation in rural drinking water service provision [Day 2].

1. On the Ongoing National Jal Jeevan Mission:

- What have been the challenges confronted by individual states, in the planning and implementation of schemes under the mission?
- What have been the state-specific strategies adopted to implement NJJM across the country?
 - How have states approached the two mission objectives that are at odds with one another - of extending functional household tap connections to all households at specific service levels and ensuring demand-based planning and management?

¹ It is also important to note that the shift towards provision through household tap connection began in 2013, when the GOI resolving to cover at least 80% of households by 2022. MDWS 2013. Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS). (2013). National Rural Drinking Water Programme, Rajiv Gandhi Drinking Water Mission, Movement towards ensuring people's Drinking Water Security in Rural India, Framework for Implementation

² Government of India. (2009). Report of Rajiv Gandhi National Rural Drinking Water Mission. New Delhi: Government of India.

³ Baumann, E. (2006). Do operation and maintenance pay? *Waterlines*, 25, 10–12

Lockwood, H. & Smits, S. (2011). Supporting rural water supply. Warwickshire, UK.: Practical Action Publishing.; Moriarty, P., Smits, S., Butterworth, J., & Franceys, R. (2013). Trends in rural water supply: Towards a service delivery approach. *Water Alternatives*, 6, 329–349.

- What have been the specific strategies adopted to ensure sustainability of sources?
- What (according to states) has been the approach of states to support activities (especially capacitating local governance institutions)? What are the best practices to emerge from across the country?
- How has the issue of financial sustainability been handled by states?

2. On Community Participation

- How is community participation defined? How diversely has it been understood by different stakeholders? Whether and how does it differ from professionalization of services?
- What role state can play in ensuring a good enough level of community management to avoid slippage? What can be learned from civil society experience to evolve institutions that could maintain the schemes in the long run?

Diversity of Service-delivery Models and Community Management

The idea of community participation might demand diverse institutional/organizational forms, as rural drinking water schemes have been developed, operated & managed by different institutions across the states in India. These include Public Health and Engineering Departments (PHEDs), Para-statal Bodies (such as Maharashtra Water Supply and Sewerage Board or Kerala Water Authority), multi-village bodies (committees) for schemes supplying water more than a single village, and single village schemes.

The possibility of rehabilitating community management as a viable strategy is dependent on ensuring the diversity of institutional models, specifically in a particular local or regional context. This might require understanding the history of previous interventions through the lens of the existing government schemes such as JJM and role the civil society actors could play. This also entails identifying cases, across the country in NJJM, which would help understand the challenges in adapting the generic frame provided by the NJJM in specific states or locale. Thus, the deliberations in this roundtable would focus on role of the state in diverse models of rural drinking water provisioning with a special emphasis on state-civil society interaction. The specific focus could be on cases on direct Provision by Community (including cost-recovery of operation and maintenance), as well as Provision by Community, with direct-support (Financial, Technical, and Administrative) from either a higher tier PRI institution (such as Zilla Panchayat) or professional support sought through a non-state agency. The discussions would also bring in the element of professionalization of the services, especially in the context of services by a non-state agency. Additionally, the policy dialogue would aim at critically understanding the relationship between local governments (constitutionally responsible for RDWS) and the 'communities' managing and operating RDWS. Community as a term can have diverse meanings and hence can have overlapping boundaries due to numerous socio-cultural and political contexts. Thus, conceptualization of community management and relationship between community and sovereign bodies such as *gramasabha* and Grama Panchayats needs to be revisited, especially in the context of everyday management of rural drinking water.

Program

Day 1 – March 2, 2023

Time	Detail	Speakers/Panellists	Remarks
930 - 950 am	Welcome and Introduction	Prof. N C Narayanan, Head, ADCPS, IIT Bombay	
950 – 1000 am	Address and Launch of CPS Working Paper Series	Prof. K V K Rao, Deputy Director, IIT Bombay	
1000 – 1030 am	Key Note	Dr. Mihir Shah, Distinguished Visiting Professor, ADCPS, IIT Bombay	
1030 – 1035 am	Vote of Thanks	Prof. Amita Bhide, JJM Chair Professor, TISS	
1035 – 1045 am	Tea		
1045 – 130 pm	<p>Session 1: <i>NJJM: Scanning the Terrain - Experience from Select States</i></p> <p>[Three Presentations – Senior Administrative Official, Academician and Expert Discussant]</p>	<p><i>Maharashtra</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Hrishikesh Yashod, IAS – MD, SWSM, JJM, Government of Maharashtra • Mr. Yusuf Kabir, UNICEF, India • Jonnalagadda V. R. Murty, International Development Consultant, Mumbai <p>Chair: Prof. Amita Bhide, TISS</p> <hr/> <p><i>Kerala</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Gautam Ganapathy, IITB • Mr. S Haris, Deputy Chief Engineer (Retd), KWA <p>Chair: Dr Kurian Baby, IAS (Retd)</p> <hr/> <p><i>Bihar</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Rohit Kumar Prince, IITB • Mr. Mohammad Sahnullah Jawaid, Chief Engineer, PHED, Bihar • Mr. Eklavya Prasad, Megh Pyne Abhiyan, Bihar <p>Chair: Prof. Shishir K. Jha, IIT Bombay</p>	15 min for each speaker; 10 min Q&A
130 pm – 215 pm	Lunch		
215pm – 315 pm	Session 2: <i>Envisaging Sustainability in RDWS in the context of NJJM</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr. Shakil P. Ahammed, IAS, Principal Secretary, Water Resource Department Meghalaya (Community Participation) 2. Prof. Gopal Naik, IIMB (Utility Management) 3. Prof. Pranjal Deekshit, TISS (Governance) 4. Mr. Ashish Desai, ADCPS (Monitoring/Data) <p>Chair: Dr. Himanshu Kulkarni, Scientist Emeritus – ACWADAM</p>	15 mins to each speaker. 15 mins for Q&A
315 – 330 pm	Tea		

330 – 350 pm	Rapporteurs Reports'	Session 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maharashtra – Ayushi Jain • Kerala – Sruthi Pillai • Bihar – Kanishka Singh Session 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prerna and Arun 	
350 pm – 5 pm	Session 3: <i>Emerging Challenges in Rural Drinking Water Governance: A Panel Discussion</i>	1. Dr. Kurian Baby, IAS (Retd) 2. Dr. K J Joy, Senior Fellow, SOPPECOM 3. Prof. Amita Bhide, TISS Mumbai 4. Prof. N C Narayanan, IITB Moderator: Dr. Mihir Shah, Distinguished Visiting Professor, ADCPS, IIT Bombay	
5 pm	High Tea		

7pm – Inauguration of 'Living Lab Alleppey' and Dinner

Day 2 – March 3, 2023

Time	Detail	Speakers/Panellists	Remarks
09 30 – 10 00 am	Tea		
10 00 – 10 30 am	Welcome & Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Amita Bhide, NJJM Chair Professor, TISS Mumbai • Dr. Pranjal Deekshit, TISS Mumbai • Dr. Suhas Bhasme, TISS Mumbai 	
10 30 – 11 30 am	Session 1: <i>Voices from the community</i>	1. Mr. Pritam Nade, Sarpanch, Gorewadi, Osmanabad 2. Mr. Shiv Shankar Bauri, Dhanbad 3. Smt. Chhayaben and Smt. Bharti Ahir, Gujarat Moderator: Dr. Suhas Bhasme, TISS Mumbai	15 minutes for each speaker; 15 minutes for Q&A
11 30 am – 1 00 pm	Session 2: <i>Ideating on Community Participation in the context of Government Schemes</i>	1. Prof. Gopal Naik, NJJM Chair Professor, IIM Bangalore 2. Dr. Debashish Sen, Director, People's Science Institute 3. Mr. Divyang Waghela / Ms. Deepshikha Surendran – Tata Trusts 4. Mr. Harshvardhan, CEO – CDD India 5. Prof. Pradip Kalbar, IIT Bombay Moderator: Prof. Amita Bhide, TISS	15 minutes for each speaker; 30 minutes for Q&A
1 00 – 1 45 pm	Lunch		
1 45 – 3 15 pm	Session 3: <i>Issues in Community Participation in JJM in the context of PRIs</i>	1. Dr. Abhay Mahajan, IAS (Ex Mission Director, SBM-G) 2. Mr. Biswanath Sinha, Director – Policy & Technical Support, WaterAid India 3. Dr. Satyapriya Rout – Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad	15 minutes for each speaker; 30 minutes for Q&A

		4. Mr. Anurag Sharma, Gram Vikas Moderator: Dr. Sujith Koonan, NLU Odisha	
3 15 – 3 30 pm	Tea		
3 30 – 4 45 pm	Valedictory Address: <i>Resource Sustainability and Rural Drinking Water Security</i>	Dr. Himanshu Kulkarni, Scientist Emeritus – ACWADAM Chair: Prof. Manjula Bharathy, Dean, School of Habitat Studies, TISS	45 minutes for the speaker; 15 minutes Q&A
4 45 – 5 pm	Vote of Thanks		
5 pm	High Tea		