

CAG Audit Report Summary

National Rural Drinking Water Programme

- The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India submitted its report on 'National Rural Drinking Water Programme' on August 7, 2018. National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) was launched in 2009. It aims to provide safe and adequate water for drinking, cooking and other domestic needs to every rural person on a sustainable basis. The audit was conducted for the period 2012-17. Key findings and recommendations of the CAG include:
 - **Underperformance of the scheme:** By 2017, NRDWP aimed to achieve certain objectives. However, by December 2017, these objectives were not completely attained. It aimed to provide all rural habitations, government schools, and anganwadis access to safe drinking water. Of this, only 44% of rural households and 85% of government schools and anganwadis were provided access. It also aimed to provide 50% of rural population potable drinking water (55 litres per capita per day) by piped water supply. Of this, only 18% of rural population was provided potable drinking water. It also sought to give household connections to 35% of rural households. Of this, only 17% of rural households were given household connections.
 - **Planning and delivery mechanism:** The CAG noted deviations from the programme guidelines in the planning and delivery framework established at the centre and states. 21 states had not framed water security plans. Deficiencies were found in the preparation and scrutiny of annual action plans such as: (i) lack of stakeholder and community participation, (ii) non-inclusion of minimum service level of water in schemes, and (iii) absence of approval of State Level Scheme Sanctioning Committee for schemes included in the plans. The apex level National Drinking Water and Sanitation Council set up to co-ordinate and ensure convergence remained largely non-functional. State level agencies important for planning and execution of the programme, such as the State Water and Sanitation Mission, State Technical Agency, and Block Resources Centres were either not set up or were under-performing.
 - The CAG recommended that the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation should review the feasibility and practicality of the planning and delivery mechanisms to ensure that they serve the intended purposes. It also suggested that the water security plans and annual action plans must be prepared with community participation. This will ensure that schemes are aligned to community requirements and utilise water resources in an optimum and sustainable manner.
 - **Fund management:** Between 2012-17, total allocation of Rs 89,956 crore (central share of 43,691 crore and state share of Rs 46,265 crore) was provided for the programme. Of this, Rs 81,168 crore (90%) was spent during this period. The availability of funds declined during 2013-14 and 2016-17 due to reduced central allocation and inability of states to increase their own financial commitment. The CAG noted delays of over 15 months in release of central share to nodal/implementing agencies in states. It recommended that allocation of resources should be dynamic and based on a clear assessment of requirements and achievements under each component of the scheme.
 - **Programme implementation:** NRDWP failed to achieve its targets due to deficiencies in implementation, such as: (i) incomplete, abandoned and non-operational works, (ii) unproductive expenditure on equipment, (iii) non-functional sustainability structures, and (iv) gaps in contractual management, with a total financial implication of Rs 2,212 crore.
 - There was inadequate focus on surface water based schemes and 98% of the schemes, including piped water schemes continued to be based on ground water resources. The CAG also noted that operation and maintenance plans were either not prepared in most states or they had deficiencies in them. This led to schemes becoming non-functional. The CAG recommended that focus should be placed on effective works and contract management to ensure that works are completed in time as per the contractual terms. Delays attributable to contractors should be penalised and accountability should be enforced.

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