



India's Water Challenges and Har Ghar Jal Scheme

This editorial is based on [“Clearing the water: on piped, potable water to rural households”](#) which was published in The Hindu on 04/07/2023. It says that while some success of schemes like the Har Ghar Jal mission, the access to clean tap water remains scarce in rural India; a large portion of the population lacks this fundamental necessity.

For Prelims: “Har Ghar Jal” mission, [Jal Jeevan Mission](#).

For Mains: Significance of rural water connectivity.

Access to potable tap water is a **fundamental necessity** for every household for ensuring **basic health** and **hygiene**. However, in rural India, a significant portion of the population still lacks this essential amenity.

Out of the approximately **25 crore households** in India, **rural areas** account for around **19.5 crore households**. Unfortunately, the availability of a **tap water connection** that can deliver **55 liters** of **clean drinking water per person per day (envisaged under Har Ghar Jal Scheme)** is a **rarity in rural regions**.

This scarcity of access to **potable tap water** has several implications for the rural population. It hampers daily activities such as **cooking, cleaning, and personal hygiene**. Communities often have to rely on alternative sources like **wells, hand pumps, or water from natural sources**, which may not always meet the **necessary standards of cleanliness and safety**.

Effective implementation of the **“Har Ghar Jal Mission”** is needed to resolve the Challenges of **India's Rural Water Connectivity**.

What is Har Ghar Jal Scheme?

- **Har Ghar Jal Scheme** is part of the [Jal Jeevan Mission](#) undertaken by the **Ministry of Jal Shakti** in India. It aims to provide every household in the country with access to **pipled water connections**.
 - The term [“Har Ghar Jal”](#) translates to **“water in every home”** and reflects the mission's objective.
- The **“Har Ghar Jal” scheme** has resulted in a significant rise in the percentage of households in India that now have access to piped water connections, reaching **64%**, indicating a **substantial progress** since the mission was launched.
- In addition to providing **pipled water connections** to households, the scheme also includes the installation of water connections in **village schools, [anganwadis](#), and community buildings**.

What are the Achievements of the Har Ghar Jal Scheme?

- Since **2019**, around **nine crore households** have gained exclusive access to **piped water**.
- Some larger states, such as **Gujarat, Haryana, and Punjab**, have reported **100% compliance** with the "**Har Ghar Jal**" mission.
- According to the information reported by the states, **1,68,157 villages** have been designated as '**Har Ghar Jal**'.
 - Out of the reported '**Har Ghar Jal**' villages, about **35% or 59,000 villages** have been officially '**certified**'.
- By **April 2024**, it is projected that only **75%** of rural households in villages will have **access to taps providing drinking water**.

What are the Challenges Associated with Har Ghar Jal Scheme?

- **Covid-19 Pandemic:** The global pandemic has had wide-ranging impacts on various sectors, including infrastructure development projects like the "**Har Ghar Jal**" mission.
 - The restrictions have **affected the availability of necessary materials** like pipes and other construction resources resulting in further delays, hindering the pace of implementation.
- **Water Contamination:** Certain regions, such as **West Bengal and Kerala**, face ongoing issues with **water contamination, posing obstacles** in ensuring access to **safe drinking water**.
 - Besides, there is also a shortage of **skilled workers** for **constructing tanks, cisterns, and water connections** of satisfactory quality in various states.
- **Implementation Delay:** In some cases, work on providing tap connections to households under the **JJM** has not even begun, resulting in delays in achieving the targets.
 - Out of the approximately **19.5 crore households** aimed to be covered by the scheme, around **1 crore households (~5% of total)** have yet to commence any work.
- **Certification and Connectivity:** While there has been progress in increasing the number of tap connections in states like **Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan**, the **certification and full connectivity of villages still remain low**, indicating the need for further efforts.
 - Majority of villages fall short of having **all households fully connected**. Instead, these villages have achieved somewhere between **half or three-fourths** of their households being connected with **piped water**.

What Steps can be Taken to Make Har Ghar Jal Scheme More Effective?

- **Strengthening Skilled Workforce:** Efforts should be made to **address the shortage of skilled manpower** by providing training programs and **promoting skill development in the construction and water management sectors**.
- **Water Quality Monitoring:** Implementing **robust water quality monitoring systems** and measures to **mitigate water contamination issues**, including regular **testing and treatment**, can ensure the delivery of **safe drinking water**.
- **Accelerated Implementation:** Expedite the implementation of the **Jal Jeevan Mission** by focusing on the **villages and households** where work has not yet commenced, ensuring **timely execution to meet the targets**.
- **Certification and Connectivity Drive:** Increase the number of **certified and fully connected villages** by **streamlining the certification process, promoting awareness among communities**, and providing **necessary infrastructure to enable access to tap water connections**.
- **Monitoring and Verification Processes:** It is crucial to ensure **robust monitoring and verification processes** to ascertain the **accuracy** of the **reported figures**.
 - **Independent assessments, evaluations, and audits** can be employed to verify the **progress of the mission and enhance transparency**.
- **Establishment of Transparent and Reliable Information Mechanism:** The central government should establish a **mechanism** to provide **transparent and reliable information** about the progress of the mission.
 - This would enable stakeholders and the public to have a **clearer understanding** of the **mission's achievements, challenges**, and areas that require further attention.

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Discuss to what extent has the Har Ghar Jal Scheme been effective in addressing the water challenges faced by rural areas in India, and what are the key strategies employed by the scheme to ensure sustainable water connectivity?

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year's Question (PYQs)

Mains:

Q. What are the salient features of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan launched by the Government of India for water conservation and water security? **(2020)**

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/india-water-challenges-and-har-ghar-jal-scheme>

