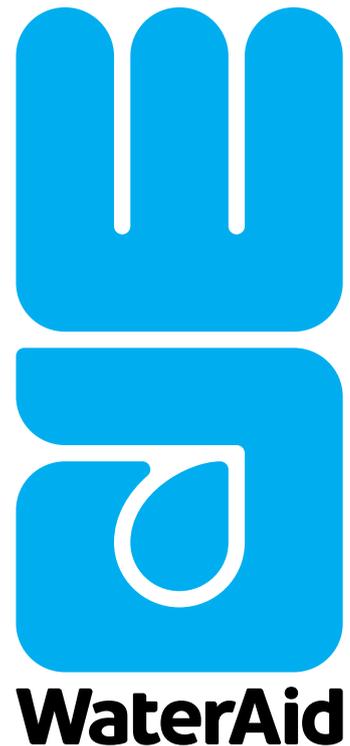




Jal Shakti Abhiyan

Analysis and learnings



Context

In order to address the rising problem of water scarcity through water harvesting and conservation measures, the Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS), launched the Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) on 1 July 2019. To begin with, the campaign was launched in 256 districts and 1,592 blocks across the country identified as water stressed. Besides the rural centres in the districts, total 756 urban local bodies (ULBs) had also been identified under the campaign. As a result, the campaign has led both the Ministry of Jal Shakti and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) to participate in the Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) and convert simple water conservation measures into a people's movement.

The Abhiyan has the following three reporting areas.

A. Core intervention areas:

1. Water conservation and rainwater harvesting
2. Renovation of traditional and other water bodies
3. Reuse and recharge structures
4. Watershed development
5. Intensive afforestation

B. Special intervention areas:

1. Block and district level conservation plans
2. Number of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Melas organised

C. Outcome intervention areas:

1. Number of details uploaded under the five 'core intervention areas'.

The first phase of the programme ran through the monsoon season, from 1 July 2019 to 15 September 2019 while second phase from 1 October 2019 to 30 November 2019 for States and Union Territories receiving retreating monsoon.

To encourage the states and districts to focus on Jal Shakti Abhiyan, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS) launched an MIS platform for projection of water conservation interventions, and publicised periodical and final district rankings based on the progress achieved against the planned as well as unplanned interventions during the campaign. The ranking assessed the performance of districts against five focus intervention areas under the campaign as well as special and outcome interventions by the districts. With the closure of Phase 1, the JSA district scorecard indicates that Gaya (Bihar) with a score of 80.96 per cent was the top performing district followed by Mahabubnagar (Telangana) and Kadapa (Andhra Pradesh).

Jal Shakti Abhiyan

A quick review to derive learnings for next phase

The JSA Year 1 comprised of two key components i) implementing JSA on ground; and ii) reporting the ground level interventions on Ministry's portal. Ground experiences suggest that the focus on planning and implementation of programmatic initiatives were weaker in many districts, while a lot of focus was accorded to reporting and publicising the achievements. The competitive spirit inducted without adequate preparations at the district and ground level diverted the attention away from the Abhiyan's central objective, which is to make water conservation a *jan andolan* or people's movement.

Some crucial observations, which are essential to feed into the planning for next year are highlighted below. The observations are based on the responses received from the ground level functionaries working on water and sanitation issues from nine districts across India:

1. Need for a participatory approach:

The participation of local community, in the various campaigns planned under JSA was reported to be weak. As community mobilisation was either missing or limited to the staff of grass-root level non-government organisations, JSA became an administration-led and district-driven intervention. As the campaign was launched during the monsoon season, it coincided with the Kharif season or the

summer cropping season, which further limited the participation of key target communities.

2. Timely planning:

JSA Phase 1 plan period spanned from July to September 2019 and coincided with the monsoon season where heavy rains, as reported in some districts, interrupted the progress of the planned work especially in the construction phase. A crucial measure here could be to revise the Abhiyan's timelines, which instead of spanning from July-September should actually begin with the dry season.

3. Need to develop capacities of functionaries and the community:

The announcement of JSA triggered greater competition among 256 water stressed districts on reporting interventions in water conservation. In between the announcement and the reporting, no orientation on the design of JSA, quality of interventions and online reporting mechanism was held for the participating districts and states. Similarly, the districts were equally ignorant about executing the campaign leading to minimum levels of planning, training and target setting. The districts that had capacities and technical know how, or had technical partners to support, could design training for district officials but the reach out to the communities was still weaker.

4. Addressing gaps in MIS:

There was a need to define indicator-based targets to be able to assess the districts' performance objectively. However, this in contrary was based on self-determined targets set by the districts themselves, leading to potential gaps in comparability of outcomes. Also, performance was ranked on quantitative reporting by districts. So, district Kadapa which reported 4,22,670 activities undertaken under 'water conservation and rain water harvesting', became the leading district under that specific intervention for this phase. Similarly, Tirunelveli, with 1,49,166 reuse and recharge structures, became the leading district under that intervention area. In this respect, a better way to ascertain the quality of the interventions could have been to record the ground water levels at the start of the intervention and monitor the changes post interventions.

5. Appropriate budget planning and allocations:

JSA is being promoted as a community-driven programme, for which no separate funds have been allocated by the centre or the state. Over the past few years, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been the main driver of water conservation efforts across rural India. However, districts where prior payment of workers under MGNREGA was not released, witnessed reluctance to take up further work. Urban centres also reported paucity of funds as a major reason for not planning fresh interventions.

6. Develop a review mechanism to cross-check reporting by districts:

Based on the feedback provided by local sources, a top ranking JSA district from northern part of the country had apparently reported old programmes undertaken prior to JSA, as JSA-led activities. This led to higher number of interventions been reported than were actually undertaken during the campaign period. Likewise, in a district down south, activities planned and conducted under an already functional government programme were later reported under Jal Shakti Abhiyan. Moreover, as evident from the MIS of JSA reporting portal, extremely high progress has been reported under the five core intervention areas of JSA, like over two crore samplings being planted or over a lakh rainwater harvesting structures being made in a short span of three months. Apart from the five core components of JSA, reporting was also being done on special interventions and outcome interventions by each district. Special intervention measures included Water Conservation Plans uploaded and number of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Melas organised. In this respect, some districts have reported more than 15,000 KVK melas being organised in just three months, which is incredible given that most districts in India, on an average, have one KVK each to oversee agriculture extension activities. There is a need to address such issues carefully during the next phase of the campaign.



7. Making afforestation initiatives realistic and sustainable:

Under afforestation measures, districts were going in for reckless plantation campaigns. However, in the absence of measures to ensure the sustainability of the saplings planted, these campaigns, like many others, are likely to fizzle off soon resulting in little improvement in the green cover of the district. Rather, the district authorities should maintain a database of the new saplings planted, which will help citizens or civil society organisations to monitor and assess the survival rate of saplings.



Experiences from similar initiatives

Banda (Uttar Pradesh) and Kanker (Chhattisgarh)

Prior to the launch of Jal Shakti Abhiyan in July 2019, WaterAid India successfully experimented with a district-wide water conservation campaign in two of its intervention areas, namely, Banda in Uttar Pradesh (February-March 2019) and Kanker in Chhattisgarh (June-July 2019). Both these campaigns were launched by the district authorities with technical support of WaterAid India and its partner organisations Akhil Bharatiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan (ABSSS) in Banda and Samarthan in Kanker.

Some of the features common to both the programmes that could feed in to the next phase of JSA are:

- i. Leadership role of the district level authorities
- ii. Well defined programme objectives with timelines
- iii. Training at district and sub-district levels on technical and human development component of water conservation
- iv. Preparing programme specific training manuals and other communication materials
- v. Convergence with various departments at the district, block and panchayat level for both human and financial resources
- vi. Keeping community at the heart of the intervention

Banda, Uttar Pradesh: Bhujal Badhao, Peyjal Bachao (Increase groundwater, save drinking water)

Programme objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To sensitise, mobilise and incentivise people in rural Banda covering 471 village panchayats towards treating ground water as a common property resource • To adopt participatory ground water management approach through simple recharge measures for rain water harvesting
Timelines	February to March 2019
Trainings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training included the following components: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. to construct contour trench around hand pumps and water wells ii. Jal Choupal or peoples’ discussion forum on water in each Gram Panchayat for water security, measuring and recording the water level and total dissolved solids in the well • A cascade model of training was followed where trainings were conducted at district, block and panchayat level for approximately 35,000 community members
Role of district authorities	<p>The district administration took lead in conceptualisation and implementation of the campaign. The district authorities for running the campaign formed a district level core group. The core group comprised of Chief Development Officer, District Development Officer, District Panchayati Raj official, officials from Minor Irrigation Department, Jal Nigam and Land Development Department and development partners like WaterAid India, Peoples Science Institute (PSI) and ABSSS.</p>
Information, education and communication (IEC) materials and training for communities	<p>The Gram Panchayats and Jal Mitras trained the community in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • construction of trenches • recording the location of dug wells through GPS enabled smart phone and measuring its water level and total dissolved solids • distribution of brochures and training material for construction of trenches for rain water harvesting
Leveraging finances	<p>The district administration leveraged MGNREGA finances for this initiative. WaterAid India, ABSSS and PSI contributed towards IEC and training at district, 8 blocks and 71 nyay panchayats’ level while remaining 400 gram panchayat level trainings were conducted by the district administration.</p>
Outcomes and impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The campaign spread across 471 panchayats in the district and witnessed participation of 35,000 community members who were trained around water budgeting or estimating water requirements and water conservation measures • The campaign mobilised the officials and frontline functionaries to construct over 2,605 trenches around total 2,443 hand pumps and wells • Water conservation capacity of 3,930 kilo litres was created

It is also to be noted that prior to the Bhujal Badhao, Peyjal Bachao Abhiyan, the district had undertaken massive community mobilisation through a process called 'Jal Chaupal' in all villages of the district, wherein it had components such as participatory vulnerability assessment, water budgeting and water security.

Kanker, Chhattisgarh: Comprehensive water conservation measures

Programme objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To undertake water conservation measures through ground water recharge, source strengthening, storm water management and grey water management • To improve ground water quality in 110 panchayats of 3 fluoride affected blocks - Charama, Kanker and Narharpur
Timelines	10 June - July end (on-set of monsoon)
Trainings	<p>Campaign planning was followed by trainings on various models of rain water harvesting. Trainings were organised for the following rural departments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Development and Public Health Department • Public Health Engineering Department <p>At the urban level, training was organised for ULB members and engineers. Total 432 participants were trained at the district and block level. For the Panchayats, cluster level trainings were organised for the community.</p>
Role of district level authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Collector office roped in Zila Panchayat, Rural Engineering Services, Public Health Engineering Department and Urban Local Bodies to participate in the rainwater harvesting campaign • Monitoring committees were formed at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District level headed by the Additional District Collector • Block level headed by a Nodal Officer • Aspirational district fellow played a key role in monitoring the programme and reporting block level activities at the district level • Chief Municipal Officer was the Nodal Officer at the urban local body level
Role of communities	<p>People were encouraged to participate in the campaign by adopting low cost rain water harvesting models at their houses ranging from INR 3,000 -25,000. In Narharpur block, a habitation constructed rain water storage cum recharge structure through equal contribution by the community and the Panchayat. The higher cost rain water harvesting structures were constructed using Panchayat resources.</p>
Leveraging finances	<p>Financial resources were mostly leveraged from 14th Finance Commission. In some Gram Panchayats, MGNREGS funds was also utilised for conservation measures.</p>
Conservation measures across districts	<p>Six kinds of models were built during the campaign:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rooftop rainwater harvesting with storage facility and recharge • recharge trench • recharge shaft with and without injection bore • dug well recharge • low cost recharge pit using drum and soak pit for grey water management • groundwater recharge through defunct wells and borewell
Outcomes and impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign has been successful in creating mass awareness on the issue of depleting ground water, water quality and benefit of rainwater harvesting • Over 3,500 rain water harvesting structures were constructed under the campaign in the district covering individual households and institutions like schools, anganwadis, hospitals, and government offices like Collectorate, Public Works Department, Janpad Panchayat, Electricity Department, Fisheries, Veterinary and Public Health Engineering Department • District Collector has issued an order mandating rain water harvesting in all government buildings



Key steps to strengthen Jal Shakti Abhiyan

While district Banda and Kanker designed and led water conservation measures based on their own requirement and capacities, it is noteworthy that in both the districts, the interventions were executed much before the Ministry of Jal Shakti started to build its focus on water conservation under the JSA. Efforts at conservation, restoration, recharge and reuse of water were planned and implemented within a span of three months with community participation in a comparatively well organised way than what was planned and implemented by the water-stressed districts under the JSA in the same period without community acceptance. Both these districts provide lessons that inform the Ministry of Jal Shakti, towards tracing the reasons for the

specific gaps during phase 1 of JSA, in order to strengthen the campaign for the next phase.

In addition to the key learnings as suggested above, some critical recommendations, which could lead the campaign to achieve timely, result oriented, and measurable outcomes are as follows:

1. Community participation and ownership:

Community participation carries the feeling of ownership and builds a stronger base for government intervention in any given society. It also brings in the wisdom and traditional knowledge in developing micro plans at the panchayat level. A bottoms up approach right from planning and implementation to monitoring and reporting would help adapt the campaign

to the local culture and context and simultaneously provide more human resource to it. For this, preparing the community and building their capacities is essential. However, the development of community capacity and their role in water-demand management or water conservation can succeed only with community buy-in to the ideas and approaches.

2. Timely planning at the district level:

The Jal Shakti Abhiyan being a water conservation campaign is primarily rainfall- dependent. Heavy rains in some parts of India during the campaign phase interrupted the construction of structures and thereby interrupted the entire drive. The alternative approach for the next year could be to develop state and district level plans from Jan-March while construct rain water harvesting structures from April-June so that the structures are put-up at the arrival of monsoon rather being constructed during heavy rains. During summer, not a cropping season, there is an opportunity to converge MGNREGA related activities under the campaign banner.

3. Adopting a knowledge-based approach to water conservation:

Though Jal Shakti Abhiyan aims at making water conservation a *jan andolan* through community participation, the lead in planning and training should be undertaken by a group of experts from the community and district-level departments comprising of hydrologists, para-hydrologists, engineers, and Village Water and Sanitation Committee (VWSC).

As knowledge includes both formal and informal, modern and traditional, the human resource involved in it should have sound knowledge and experience of water management practices. Small omissions, like the absence of filter media for an unpaved catchment area, bears the risk of contaminating ground water. Similarly, unpaved catchment also calls for soil testing to ascertain the presence of chemical contaminants, if any, and instead opt for rooftop or paved catchment harvesting.

4. Allocating dedicated budget:

Availability of dedicated funds for the JSA, besides funds from MNREGA or other departmental schemes, would enable the district to invest into capacity building, hiring technical experts, developing IEC and infrastructural requirements of the campaign. This becomes particularly important if the campaign is an annual event as year after year, community may lack the willingness to volunteer for the campaign.

5. Reliable reporting mechanism: Reporting in the portal by the districts should be outcome-based and not based on the number of structures constructed. For this, assessing the baseline situation and reporting intervention outcomes through end line survey, is crucial to evaluate the impact of the intervention. Moreover, the district ranking system should be brought to an end, as it is not a true indicator of the top performers rather leads to unfair tactics being used by the districts to secure top positions.



6. Robust monitoring mechanism:

Effective monitoring mechanisms in place for outcomes reported by the district will help the state keep track of the quality of work being undertaken within the stipulated time and thereby avoiding over reporting by the districts. The monitoring should be both of the outputs (water conservation structures renovated or created and trees planted) and of outcomes (capacity created for volume of water to be stored or recharged, increase in water levels), through an indicator based system. Geo-tagging, monitoring and maintenance should be done not only for afforestation but also to large, medium and micro scale recharge interventions. The lead in this can be undertaken by the non-government organisations or self-help groups or as decided by the state.

7. Choice to prioritise interventions by the district:

JSA has five core components build into it. If each district is given the choice to selects top 2-3 core intervention areas based on district requirement, instead of undertaking all five, it could plan more context appropriate activities and develop a focused action-plan prioritising key areas demanding urgent attention.

The planning and preparations for next phase of the JSA can take these critical learnings into account for achieving more realistic outcomes, including preparation of necessary guidance, planning standards, assessment criteria, revised reporting mechanism, and trainings.



Jal Shakti Abhiyan

Analysis of Year I and learnings for Year II

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