

State Consultation

Sustainability Of Jal Jeevan Mission Through Community-Based Management

April 16-17, 2025, Bhopal





Introduction

A two-day state-level consultation was organized in Bhopal to deliberate on the sustainability of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) through community-based governance and management practices. The program saw participation from over 100 stakeholders including government officials, civil society organizations (CSOs), Gram Panchayat members, Jal Sahelis, pump operators, technical experts, and academia. The discussions spanned issues related to functional tap water coverage, challenges in operations and maintenance (O&M), water quality, and sustainability of water sources.

The consultation highlighted ground-level realities, identified operational gaps, and explored collaborative strategies for strengthening water governance. The importance of empowering local communities, particularly women, enhancing technical capacity, and institutionalizing social audits emerged as critical themes.



Day 1 Highlights

Atal Bihari Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis, Bhopal

Opening Remarks and Inaugural Session

Yogesh Kumar, Executive Director of Samarthan, opened the consultation with a welcome note emphasizing the evolving challenges in piped water supply in rural Madhya Pradesh. He stressed that increased coverage brings forth new issues in sustainability and service quality.

Principal Secretary P. Narhari reported that around 85–90% of households had received connections. He acknowledged that operational issues peak after scheme handover to communities and affirmed the importance of involving women in managing systems.



Chief Secretary Anurag Jain praised the 300 km Jal Yatra, encouraging stakeholders to document handover deficiencies and advocate for source sustainability. He underscored the role of local skills in long-term maintenance and advocated for water governance reforms including solar solutions.

V.K. Madhavan, CEO of WaterAid, emphasized national challenges such as declining trust in public water quality, the need for clarity in scheme transfer processes, and separation of technical and quality management responsibilities.



Community Experiences

Testimonies shared by field workers illustrated the transformative impact of piped water supply. Jal Sahelis and Sarpanches from districts like Panna and Dhar described initiatives to fix leakages, collect user tariffs, train local operators, and address community grievances. These experiences underscored the need for decentralized maintenance systems and local engagement.

Technical Session 2: Water Quality

Discussions revealed the gaps in bacterial contamination testing and the lack of community-level understanding of water safety. Stakeholders called for regular availability of testing kits, better communication of results, and actionable responses to contamination findings. WaterAid and UNICEF stressed the role of trained women teams in local testing.

Technical Session 1: Community-Led O&M Models

Samarthan presented findings from an 11-village study in Panna district, pointing out irregular repair mechanisms and financial disincentives. A three-tier model for O&M—village, cluster, and market level—was proposed to address complexity-based maintenance needs. Community speakers highlighted their experiences in self-managed O&M and water conservation efforts.

Technical Session 3: Water Security, Source Sustainability, and Greywater Management

Experts presented successful watershed management and water harvesting case studies. Speakers advocated Ridge-to-Valley watershed treatment, color-coding of borewells, greywater reuse for agriculture, and using traditional ponds and wells.

Day 2 Highlights

RCVP Noronha Academy of Administration, Bhopal

Summary and Community Reflections

Yogesh Kumar set the stage for day two by recapping key issues from the previous day. V.K. Madhavan emphasized regular monitoring, equitable distribution, and women's leadership. Representatives from Jal Sahelis, SHGs, and Gram Panchayats shared village-level efforts such as resolving low pressure issues, managing community tanks, and collecting tariffs online.

Government and CSO Perspectives

V.S. Chaudhary Kolsani (MD, Jal Nigam) explained how water billing through Panchayat Darpan ensures transparency. He acknowledged concerns around pipeline routing and tank height. K.K. Songariya (PHED) reinforced that 15th Finance Commission funds can be used for O&M enhancements such as purchasing motors.

CSO representatives presented digital tools for water quality monitoring and examples of greywater management through soakage pits and kitchen garden irrigation. FES and Parmarth shared their models of natural resource committee federations and decentralized grievance redress.



Concluding Panel and Recognition of Best Practices

The final session included a presentation of emerging recommendations and recognition of successful village-level initiatives. The role of CSOs in scaling innovative practices, formalizing social audits, and fostering inter-panchayat collaboration was emphasized. The vote of thanks underscored commitment to joint monitoring structures.



Emerging Action Areas from the State Consultation

Various action areas emerged from the state-level consultation organized jointly by Samarthan, Parmarth, and WaterAid India, requiring both policy attention and collective action by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in close collaboration with Government agencies involved in Jal Jeevan Mission in Madhya Pradesh. The most pertinent action areas are as follows:

1. Ensuring 100% Household Coverage with Piped Water Supply

Government officials reiterated their commitment to universal piped water access. In areas where handovers are pending, contractors should be pushed to ensure full coverage. Key steps include:

- Launching a CSO-supported campaign under Jal Jeevan Mission to survey 100–200 villages, identifying households with weak or no water supply despite existing infrastructure.
- Using additional funds to involve more CSOs in participatory surveys.
- Consolidating existing data to take swift action on uncovered households.
- Promoting citizens' right to safe water under the MP Service Guarantee Act, with updated timelines for rural piped supply.



2. Village Action Plan (VAP) for Uncovered Villages

Develop and implement a process for preparing VAPs in districts where CSOs are already active, especially focusing on the most complex 1/3rd of villages yet to be covered. These plans should explore both community-led and technologically sound solutions.

3. Exploring Surface Water-Based Solutions

In areas where groundwater is non-potable, pilot innovative solutions using surface water sources—such as dug wells, ponds, and natural springs. Provide suitable treatment options to safeguard against bacterial contamination. Considering the depleting ground water situation, there is a need to protect traditional sources of water and build a more sustainable strategy of water conservation.

4. Encourage Solar-Based Water Supply Solutions

Promotion of solar-powered water supply schemes for small hamlets and villages in MP will be a cost effective solution as a large number of villages have below 500 average population. Moreover, there is a need to develop cost-benefit analysis framework and explore sustainable management models to advocate for wider government adoption of these solutions.





5. Participatory Design of Operation & Maintenance (O&M) Policy

Engage with PHED, Jal Nigam, and the Departments of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development to initiate a consultative process for designing a community-responsive state O&M policy. CSOs may nominate members to a steering committee to submit an alternative draft. Similarly, policies related to solid and liquid waste management should be reviewed to address water quality concerns—such as handpump platform repairs, groundwater safety during the construction of recharge structures, etc.

6. Preparing for Community-Driven Model of O&M

With over two-thirds of households now covered by piped water, there's an urgent need for a community-driven repair and maintenance system for both single and multi-village schemes. A Samarthan study has categorized O&M tasks by complexity, enabling clear role division. A cluster-based approach is recommended—simple repairs at village level, complex ones at block level.

Skilling local youth and building local spare parts supply chains are key to creating a self-reliant O&M model. Pilot projects should be launched in select districts through partnerships between PHED, Jal Nigam, and the Panchayati Raj and Rural Development departments.



7. Community Demand for Safe and Adequate Water

Communities must be mobilized to demand not only adequate quantities of water but also safe and potable water.

- CSOs should design awareness campaigns, including the use of social media in local dialects, to educate rural populations about the health risks of unsafe water.
- CSOs should also monitor water quality data on the JJM portal and verify it against ground realities. Targeted monitoring in areas with known potability issues is essential. This includes tracking Field Testing Kit (FTK) usage at the Gram Panchayat (GP) level, ensuring chemical and resin validity, training local water technicians, publishing results at the community level, and ensuring GP-led actions in consultation with technical agencies.

8. Promoting Women-Centric O&M Management

Encourage women's leadership in O&M management by engaging community-level volunteers such as Jal Sakhis and Jal Mitras. The government-developed app for water tariff collection should be monitored to enhance functionality. CSOs should advocate for the Village Water and Sanitation Committee (VWSC) to have control over tariff collection as a core agenda.

9. Redefine Legal Provisions in Multi-Village Schemes

Legal challenges are emerging in the management of multi-village water supply schemes. There is a need to interpret the Panchayati Raj Act regarding the roles and responsibilities of GPs and VWSCs when overhead tanks serve a cluster of villages. Clearer guidelines must be developed on resource-sharing for O&M and water security planning in multi-village water supply schemes.

10. Water Security Planning for Multi/Single Village Schemes

- **Water Security in Vulnerable Regions:** Water security is becoming a critical challenge in several areas, particularly in Bundelkhand. Pilot projects blending technology with community wisdom should be implemented. Replicable, low-cost solutions should be developed in collaboration with agencies such as the Central Ground Water Board, Atal Bhujal Yojana, and others.
- **Basin-Level Water Security Planning:** Concerns have been raised about potential water crises in surface water-based schemes unless river systems are recharged. Basin-based water security planning is essential. It is necessary to influence Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDs) to promote cluster-level planning that ensures sustainable water availability across villages sharing a common water scheme.



State Consultation Schedule

Day 1: 16 April, 2025

Time	Session Plan	Speakers
09:30 – 10:00		
10:00 – 11:00 (60min)	Inaugural Session: Sharing the experiences and progress of Jal Jeevan Mission in Madhya Pradesh and in India. Ground reflections and experiences of Pad Yatra in Bundelkhand Region Key Note Address from Chief Guest	Opening Remarks: Mr. P. Narhari (PS, PHED MP) National Perspective: Mr. V.K. Madhavan (CEO, Water Aid) Inaugural Address: Mr. Anurag Jain (Chief Secretary, Govt. of MP) Vote of Thanks: Director, AIGGPA
11:00 – 11:15		
11:15 – 12:30 (75 min.)	Technical Session 1: Community Led O&M Models	Chair: Mr. V.K. Madhavan (CEO, WaterAid) Moderator: Mr. Sanjay Singh (Parmarth) Presentation of O&M study findings: Mr Amit Anand, Consultant and Mr Devidas Nimje, Program Director, Samarthan Panellist: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Mr. VS Chaudhary Kolsani (MD, Jal Nigam)2. Community Voices – Community Representatives from Samarthan (Diya Sarpanch), Parmarth and WaterAid (Sunil)
12:30 – 13:30 (60 min.)	Technical Session 2: Water Quality	Chair: Mr. V.K. Madhavan (CEO, WaterAid) Moderator: Mr. Amar Prakash (Water Aid) Panellist: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Mr. Narendra Chouhan (UNICEF)2. Mr. Devidas Nimje (Samarthan)

Time	Session Plan	Speakers
13:30 – 14:30		
14:30 – 16:00 (90 min.)	Technical Session 3: Water Security & Source Sustainability, Greywater Management and Water Use Efficiency in agriculture sector	<p>Chair: Mr. R.K Gupta, Project Director, Atal Bhujal Mission</p> <p>Moderator: Dr Vivek Bhatt, WALMI, Bhopal</p> <p>Panellist:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr. Harish Hingurani (Rtd. ENC, PHED, Chhattisgarh) 2. Mr. Rakesh Singh (Senior Scientist, CGWB) 3. Mr. Yogesh Jadeja (ACT, Kuchh Gujarat) 4. Experiences of Jal Saheli/ community representatives on water security/revival of water bodies. (Saroj Yadav)
16:15 – 18:00 (105 min.)	Closing Discussion	<p>Chair: Sanjib Dey (WHH)</p> <p>Presentation on the emerging issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ms. Swapni Shah, State Head, Unnati, Rajasthan 2. Ms. Kriti Rani, Jharkhand <p>Moderators: Mr. Sanjay Singh (Parmarth) & Dr. Yogesh Kumar (Samarthan), Amar Prakash (WAI)</p> <p>Vote of Thanks: Mr. Manoj Jain (AIGGPA)</p>

Day 2 : 17 April, 2025

Time	Session Plan	Speakers
09:30 – 10:30		
10:30 – 14:00	<p>Inaugural Session:</p> <p>Emerging priority issues and way forward – Mr. V.K. Madhavan</p> <p>Community Perspectives on Water issues – Sanjay Singh (Reflections emerging from Pad Yatra selected Jal Saheli)</p> <p>Moderator: Dr. Yogesh Kumar</p>	<p>Special Invitees:</p> <p>Mr. VS Chaudhary Kolsani (MD, Jal Nigam) Mr. K.K. Songariya (ENC, PHED)</p> <p>Vote of Thanks: Shivani Singh</p>
14:00 – 15:00	Lunch	
15:00 – 16:30	<p>Concluding Session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognition of Community Led Best Practices• Future direction from community led action from CSO perspective.	<p>Moderator: Dr. Yogesh Kumar (Samarthan)</p> <p>Panellist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Sanjay Singh (Parmarth),• Sanjib Dey (WHH)• Mr. Amar Prakash (Water Aid)
14:00 – 15:00	Vote of Thanks, followed by Tea	

Abbreviations

PHED - Public Health Engineering Department

DoPR&RD - Department of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development

JJM - Jal Jeevan Mission

VWSC - Village Water and Sanitation Committee

GP - Gram Panchayat

CSO - Civil Society Organization

MGNREGA - Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

GPDP - Gram Panchayat Development Plan

O&M - Operation and Maintenance

VAP - Village Action Plan