



SAFE DRINKING WATER SUPPLY IN KARNATAKA – A STUDY

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ABSTRACT Supply of clean drinking water is the responsibility of the state. Drinking water, in adequate quantity and safe quality, is a basic requirement for life and a determinant of standard of living. Poor or no access to safe water supply can result in many diseases. These ailments potentially constrain human resource development and productivity, especially of the poor. The National Water Policy 2002 reflects the significance attached to drinking water by stating, “adequate safe drinking water facilities should be provided to the entire population both in urban and rural areas. Irrigation and multipurpose projects should invariably include a drinking water component, wherever there is no alternative source of drinking water.

Karnataka being an progressive and accommodative state has always strived hard to provide benefits to people at large setting the party politics. Karnataka tops in management of rural drinking water schemes reports Nagesh Prabhu associated with leading news daily The Hindu. Karnataka has emerged top performer in the country in management of rural drinking water schemes and devolution of powers to **Panchayatraj** institutions (PRIs).

KEYWORDS : Water Conservation, Safe Drinking Water, Rural water supply, Multi village water supply

Water is an most significant natural resource without which no living organisms can survive. In the ancient time people settled on the banks of rivers and flourished. Earlier there was no scarcity for water but over a period of time Providing safe drinking to people became the responsibility of a welfare state. Supply of clean drinking water is the responsibility of the state. Supply of clean drinking water is the responsibility of the state. Drinking water, in adequate quantity and safe quality, is a basic requirement for life and a determinant of standard of living. Poor or no access to safe water supply can result in many diseases. These ailments potentially constrain human resource development and productivity, especially of the poor. The National Water Policy 2002 reflects the significance attached to drinking water by stating, “adequate safe drinking water facilities should be provided to the entire population both in urban and rural areas. Irrigation and multipurpose projects should invariably include a drinking water component, wherever there is no alternative source of drinking water.

Due to expansion of population and urbanization and Industrialization the natural resources came under threat. Due to infrastructure development the forest was cut and this led to scanty rainfall and rivers became dried up. According to State of the Environment Report 2003 G.O.K, Degradation of forests, siltation and inadequate rainfall has reduced the supply capacity of surface sources like rivers, lakes, reservoirs and tanks. The general neglect in conserving rainwater and discharge of untreated sewage into the water bodies also has lead to depletion and deterioration of water resources. Apart from the supply and demand driven factors, lack of operation and maintenance of water supply schemes (a matter of management and governance) is a major cause of inadequate drinking water supply. Other management related issues include leakage in distribution network and power fluctuations which make water supply schemes suboptimal. In the backdrop of this it is attempted to understand the efforts of government of Karnataka with regard to supply of Safe drinking water to its people at large.

On the lines of National Water Policy adopted in April 2002, Karnataka drafted its water policy, the same year. The state’s policy talks about re-prioritising the water distribution to help better water management. Government of Karnataka gave priority for decentralization of water management. The policy also talks about the need to conserve water. It states that “The efficiency of utilization of water will be improved and awareness about water as a scarce resource fostered. Rainwater harvesting (RWH) and water conservation will be encouraged.” Groundwater is the major source of drinking water in the state and in rural areas over 90 percent of the drinking water supply schemes are based on ground water. Of the 208 urban local bodies under the Karnataka Urban Water Supply and Drainage Board, 151 depend on river water whereas 47 depend on ground water. Supply of adequate and safe drinking water to all the 59,575 rural habitations of Karnataka is given utmost importance in order to improve the living standards of the rural masses. It is programmed to provide 40-55 litres of drinking water to each person per day. Potable drinking water is being supplied

to rural areas through various schemes like Bore wells fitted with hand pump scheme and saraljal, Mini water Supply Scheme, Piped water supply Scheme and Multi-Village Supply Scheme.

The Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR) has finalised a comprehensive scheme for supplying purified drinking water to all villages, given the fact that nearly 60 per cent of diseases afflicting the rural population is waterborne. Over 1,000 water purification plants are to be set up with each village having a plant to serve a population of 5,000 to 10,000. Karnataka being an progressive and accommodative state has always strived hard to provide benefits to people at large setting the party politics. Karnataka tops in management of rural drinking water schemes reports Nagesh Prabhu associated with leading news daily The Hindu. Karnataka has emerged top performer in the country in management of rural drinking water schemes and devolution of powers to Panchayatraj institutions (PRIs). Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, which evaluated the performance of all States in the implementation of rural drinking water schemes based on Management Devolution Index, ranked Karnataka as the top performer among 28 States in “rural population managing rural drinking water supply schemes”. Says the Hindu report. The Union government had evinced interest in the rural development programme chalked out by Karnataka and promised financial support. Of the total plan outlay of Rs. 8,250 crore for RDPR, the State government receives nearly Rs. 4,500 crore from the Union government.

The Department of RDPR is also implementing several other rural water supply schemes, Centrally sponsored Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme, Sub-Mission Projects for rural habitations with water quality problems under the Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission and Externally Aided Projects with the assistance of World Bank and Danish International Development Agency (Danida). Thus Karnataka is now on the threshold of giving a total facelift to the quality of life in rural areas and in what is described as the first such attempt in the country, all households in villages will be provided with access to clean drinking water and sanitation within a given timeframe

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