

World Bank aid to improve Groundwater Management in select states of India

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Source: PIB

The Government of India and the World Bank signed a **\$450 million loan agreement to support the national programme (Atal Bhujal Yojana) to arrest the country's depleting groundwater levels and strengthen groundwater institutions**. The \$450 million loan, from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), has a 6-year grace period, and a maturity of 18 years.

Atal Bhujal Yojana

Aim

The Atal Bhujal Yojana intends **to strengthen the institutional framework for participatory groundwater management and encourage behavioral changes at the community level** for sustainable groundwater resource management.

Key features

- The programme will introduce a **bottom-up planning process for community-driven development of water budgets and Water Security Plans (WSPs)**.
- **Water budgets will assess surface and groundwater conditions** (both quantity and quality) and identify current and future needs.
- The WSP, on the other hand, will focus on improving groundwater quantity and incentivize selected states to implement the actions proposed.
- The Yojana can be **divided largely into two segments** –

one is in institutional capacity and the other involves incentivizing states.

- The Programme will support on-ground actions that are based on community ownership and judicious management of water resources.
- It is to be implemented over a **period of 5 years (2020-21 to 2024-25)**.
- The former will include **efforts to** increase the capacity for sustainable groundwater management, **strengthening of water user associations** etc.
- The latter will **reward states** for improved data dissemination on groundwater, preparing water security plans, converging multiple schemes and so on.
- The scheme is an **updated and modified version of the** Groundwater Management and Regulation scheme which is in force since 2013.

Implementation

The World Bank-supported Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY) – National Groundwater Management Improvement Programme will be **implemented in the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Haryana, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh and cover 78 districts**. These states span both the **hard rock aquifers of peninsular India and the alluvial aquifers of the Indo-Gangetic plains**.

Criteria for selecting these states

They were selected based on several criteria, including

- Degree of groundwater exploitation and degradation
- Established legal and regulatory instruments
- Institutional readiness, and
- Experience in implementing initiatives related to groundwater management.

Significance of the project

- The programme will, among others, enhance the recharge of aquifers and introduce water conservation practices
- Promote activities related to water harvesting, water management, and crop alignment
- Create an institutional structure for sustainable groundwater management; and
- Equip communities and stakeholders to sustainably manage groundwater.