

# SWE COMMUNIQUE

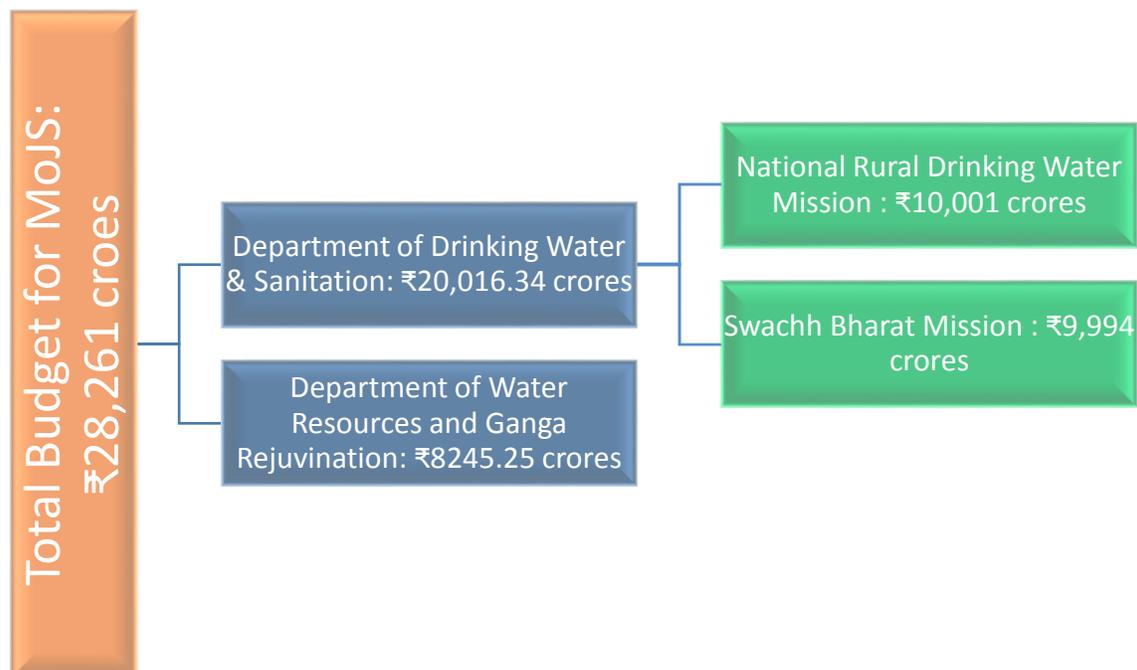
*Insights from SWE Alliance*

2019 Volume III

2019 Volume III

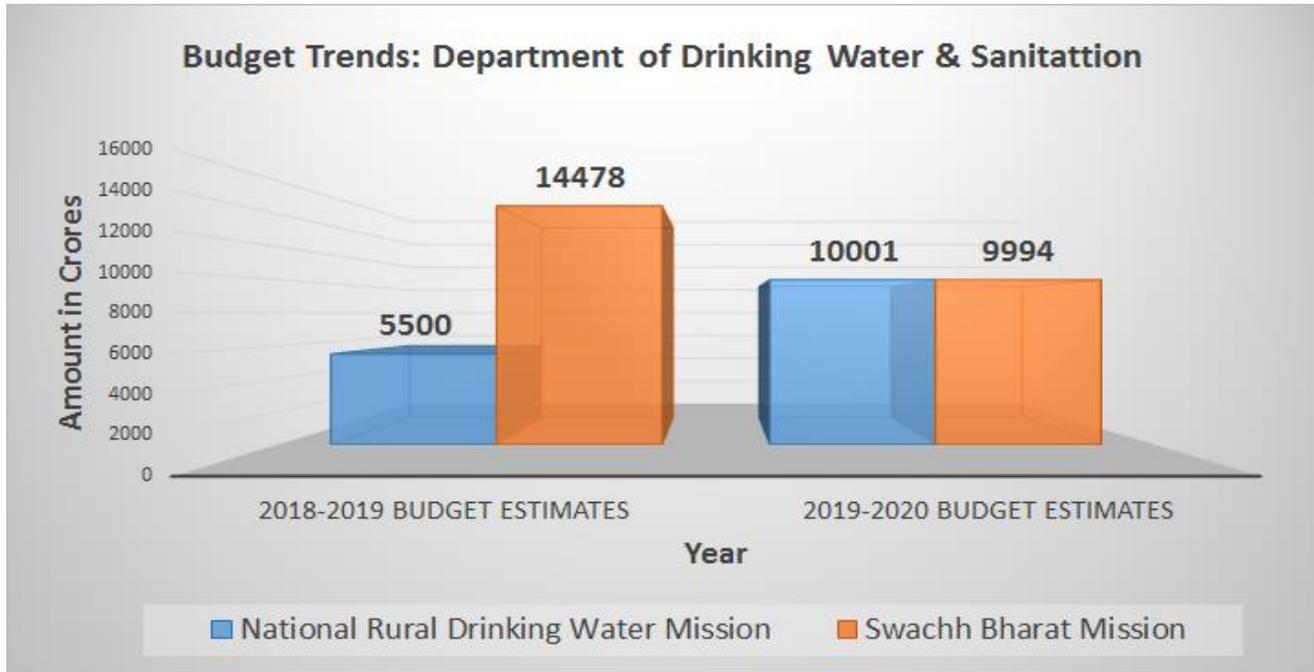
## India's New Water Policy and the Ministry of Jal Shakti

A major change in the governance of water in the country was initiated during the second term of the NDA Government. Three major water-related ministries, the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation and the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation were merged to form a new 'Jal Shakti Ministry' fulfilling the electoral promise made in the 'Sankalp Patra' (election manifesto) for the 2019 General Elections. The purpose of bringing together these ministries under a single umbrella was to implement all water-related works in an integrated manner. The establishment of the new ministry also called for close coordination with other ministries, particularly the Ministry of Urban Development and the Ministry of Agriculture which manage the demand for water resources. The Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS) was allocated ₹28,261 crores in 2019-2020 Union budget. The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation received ₹ 20,016.34 crores and the Department of Water Resources and Ganga Rejuvenation received ₹ 8245.25 crores.



Source: [indiabudget.gov.in](http://indiabudget.gov.in)

The 2019-20 budget estimates suggest a clear shift in the priorities of the government. Until last year, the focus of the government was on sanitation, however, this year the focus has moved to the provision of drinking water. The National Rural Drinking Water Mission was allocated ₹ 5500 crores in 2018-2019 revised budget estimates which have hiked up to ₹ 10,001 crores in the 2019-2020 budget. Whereas, Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) received ₹9,994 crores in the budget, down from ₹14,478 crores in 2018-2019. The National Rural Drinking Water Program received ₹9150 crores, an increase from ₹5391 crores in 2018-2019.



Source: Open Budgets India

## What was the need for a New Ministry?

So far the water management was under several government entities. The Ministry of Water Resources, River Development, and Ganga Rejuvenation was the apex body which formulated the water-related policies and administered the river development activities and was in charge of the cleaning of River Ganga. The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation was the central ministry responsible for policy formation, planning and coordination of projects pertaining to drinking water and sanitation. Besides these two Ministries, there are other ministries which administered and are still administering water-related policy and governance in different capacities. The Ministry of Forest and Environment works towards the conservation of many rivers in the country. Urban water supply is managed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the micro-irrigation projects fall under the aegis of the Ministry of Agriculture. Besides, water is a state subject and multiple local agencies are involved in water management at ground level, including the state ministries and urban local bodies. All water projects are complimentary hence for effective management convergence and unification was essential.

National Institute for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, the policy think tank of the Government of India (GOI) professed that India is facing her worst water crisis ever with millions of lives at stake. 600 million Indians face water stress resulting in over two hundred thousand deaths every year. 70% of the groundwater in the country is contaminated and barely 18 % of the country is covered by piped water supply. The situation is bound to worsen in the years to come if corrective measures are not taken to fix the incumbent water-related problems. The Aayog also declared that data systems which aggregate water-related data in the country are limited both in number and scope. The available data is not adequately represented which prevents the policymakers from making informed decisions. Further, the data is collected in silos with limited scope for sharing of pertinent information between the center and the states and between individual states. The

inability to share this data efficiently adds to the decision making complexity. The plenary body has also called for better cooperation among the states and between the center and states across the extended water ecosystem. The Aayog observed that non-cooperation between the administrative bodies has resulted in disputes and limited the coordination in the policy-making processes.

The Government of India realized these challenges and the woes arising out of them in implementing the plans. To create policy consistency and facilitate timely implementation of water projects, the government merged all the central water-related functions in a single ministry. The new ministry aims to integrate the management of all the water resources of the country to create uniformity and ease in the policy formation and implementation process. Based on the recommendations of NITI Aayog, the ministry envisions better coordination between center and state to ensure the provision of piped water supply to every household by 2024 under the flagship 'Jal Jeevan Mission'. One of the major priorities is to create a local infrastructure to support demand, supply, storage, and management of water at the local level. The ministry will also work on critical sustainability programs such as harvesting of rainwater, recharging the groundwater and recycling the household water waste for agricultural use. A dedicated campaign called 'Jal Shakti Abhiyan' has been launched on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019 to facilitate water conservation in 1592 water-stressed blocks spread over 256 districts. The formation of the new ministry will create integrated data systems and will be useful in identifying stage of process lapses and monitoring progress.

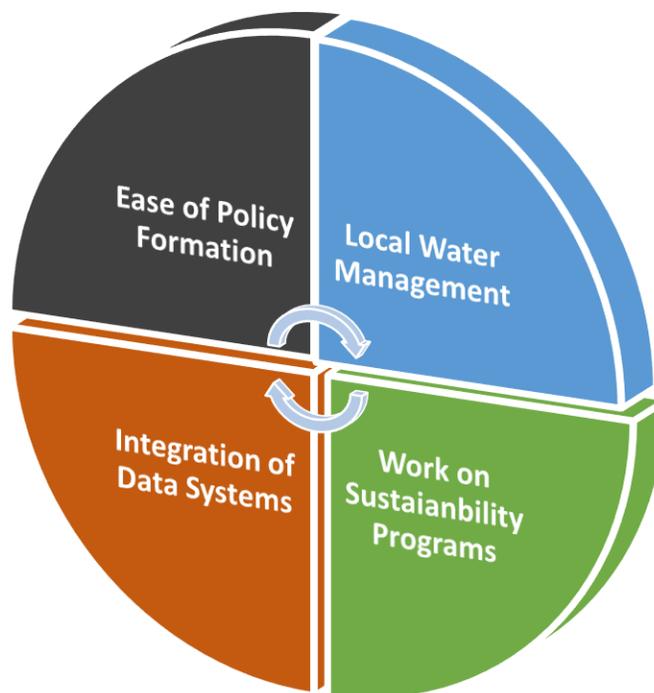


Figure: Objectives of MoJS

## The road ahead...

The establishment of MoJS is a step in a positive direction. This initiative will boost the local water infrastructure and expand reach of piped water supply. However, the states would also need to align their ministries to benefit from the MoJS formation. There is still an overlap of ownership and responsibilities within the central ministries. The water supply for urban transformation is still being managed under AMRUT scheme which falls under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. The micro-irrigation projects are being managed by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Jal Shakti Abhiyan is being managed as a joint effort by the three ministries.