

Consultation on Public Financing for Water and Sanitation

Lecture Room II, India International Centre (Annexe), Lodhi Road, Delhi

March 25, 2019 (1.00 pm - 4.00 pm)

Concept Note

Access to safe water and sanitation has been recognised as a human right by the United Nations General Assembly in 2010. Goal 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasises on the quality and sustainability of water and sanitation facilities. In addition to these, several national initiatives have been undertaken to ensure availability and accessibility of water and sanitation facilities. In order to assess the progress and challenges in this sphere, it is essential to scrutinize budgetary commitments for water and sanitation at all levels of the government.

Recent changes in the federal fiscal architecture of the country have put more focus on the State and local government in delivering social services including water and sanitation. The Fourteenth Finance Commission (14th FC) recommended a higher devolution to the States, and also provided a greater magnitude of funds to local bodies (both rural and urban local bodies). The State Governments and urban and rural local bodies are hence supposed to play a more prominent role in delivering social sector programmes in general and more particularly the programmes meant for WATSAN. Hence, planning and budgeting process in the States for WATSAN sector in the recent year needs to be examined.

In collaboration with partner organisations working on WATSAN issues at the district level, CBGA, IRC and WaterAid India are carrying out an action research project focussing on two districts each in Bihar and Odisha. The partners are Nidan and PGVS in Bihar and Gram Utthan and RCDC in Odisha. This collaborative process aims to build capacities of CSOs and members of PRIs and SHGs in the select districts to engage with public financing for WATSAN. As a part of this project, WATSAN budget tracking exercise has been carried out in the districts and Gram Panchayat (GP) level of Ganjam and Nuapada in Odisha and Samastipur and Gaya in Bihar for the most recent financial years. The budget tracking work has generated very useful insights on policy and procedural hurdles for WATSAN in this domain.

In this backdrop the Consultation aims to:

- Facilitate a discussion among key actors on the current scenario of public financing for WATSAN services focussing in particular on the role of the State Governments and Panchayati Raj Institutions
- Highlight the policy and procedural hurdles in this domain that are constraining financing of WATSAN.
- Develop policy positions for public financing for WATSAN that can inform the policy agenda of the 15th FC and the Union and State Governments.

This Consultation will bring together representatives of grassroots level organisations, national and international development organisations and government representatives who are engaging with Water and Sanitation policy and interventions. The Consultation would be held on March 25th, 2019 (Monday) at Lecture Room II, India International Centre (IIC), Annexe, Lodhi Road, New Delhi.