



DO No. No.J-11060/4/2019-RE-VI(e-366816)

April 24, 2020

Dear Chief Secretary,

We are writing to you in the context of the impending monsoon this year and the preparations to be done for Water Conservation and Recharge which is of utmost importance for our country. Last year, we had implemented the Jal Shakti Abhiyan in order to create awareness and bring together all stakeholders – State Governments, Central Government, Civil Society Organisations, Panchayati Raj Institutions and Communities – in a mass movement to conserve water. The Abhiyan covered 256 water stressed districts across the country.

2. Officers from Central Government, Central Water Commission, and Central Ground Water Board had gone to the Districts to work with the District administrations to strengthen and support their water conservation efforts.

3. The Abhiyan had a nationwide impact. More than six and a half crore people became part of the Abhiyan. More than seventy five lakh traditional and other water bodies and tanks were renovated and more than a crore water conservation & rainwater harvesting structures were created, to mention just two of the identified focus areas. Many States proactively extended the Abhiyan to all their districts, going beyond the water stressed districts that were selected initially.

4. Encouraged by the response, we had planned a wider and more intensive Jal Shakti Abhiyan this year. However, because of the current situation caused by the spread of Covid-19, we will not be able to deploy Central Government Officials this summer. It, however, must be ensured that all available resources be optimally deployed to catch the rain during the monsoon this year and preparatory activities must be taken up accordingly.

5. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India vide Order No.40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 15th April, 2020 have allowed to take up MNREGS works during the lockdown with priority to be given to irrigation and water conservation works. Central and State sector schemes in irrigation and water conservation sectors have also been allowed to be implemented with suitable dovetailing with MNREGS works. The works are to be taken up with strict implementation of social distancing, use of face covers/masks and other necessary precautions. Subsequently, detailed instructions were issued by Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India vide Letter No.J-11060/4/2019-RE-VI(e-366816) dated 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2020, in this regard.

6. Apart from the water conservation and irrigation activities allowed under MNREGA, a number of related activities are taken up under other schemes being implemented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti and Department of Land Resources. These include augmentation of existing water source(s), ground water recharge, rainwater harvesting and **grey water management for reuse and recharge (construction of community soak pits/leach pits/waste stabilisation pond), repair and restoration of water bodies, watershed management under WDC-PMKSY**. Under Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) - SBM-G, for grey water management activities e.g. community soak pits/leach pits/waste stabilisation ponds etc, conveyance of grey water from the household to the point of treatment/disposal, wherever required, have also been envisaged from the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission grants to Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) in convergence with MGNREGS.

7. Rejuvenation of traditional water bodies (irrigation tanks, old stepwells, Baolis, old ponds and other water bodies, etc.) for community are permissible works under MGNREGS. Districts may therefore undertake a quick and comprehensive Census of such traditional water bodies with details of their present status. Subsequently, removal of encroachments in the water bodies' boundary/spread area can be taken up by the relevant Revenue authorities. Thereafter their renovation including desilting, construction/strengthening of inlets/outlets, catchment area treatment (afforestation, etc.) can be taken up o priority. Similarly, rejuvenation of small rivers through community driven River Basin Management practices may also be initiated. Such activities would ensure water source sustainability in rural areas and would strengthen the ongoing

Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) being implemented by Ministry of Jal Shakti. For effective implementation of such works close consultation /collaboration with the Departments of Irrigation/Water Resources/Drinking Water and Sanitation of the respective States/UTs is essential.

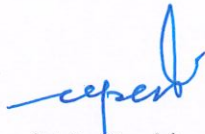
8. In addition, Regional Offices of Central Ground Water Board and State Level Nodal Agencies (SLNA) of WDC-PMKSY Programme will be able to provide technical support to select suitable locations for construction of suitable water harvesting/ ground water recharge structures. They will also provide guidance to ensure optimal designs for new structures as well as for modification of existing structures to improve ground water recharge.

9. You are therefore requested to issue directions to the District authorities, so that all available resources by converging available programmes may be used for water conservation.

10. We sincerely hope and believe that with your personal efforts to lead and monitor these convergent efforts, there would be a significant positive impact in the area of water conservation and water management in the country. All the processes and guidelines of MGNREGS should be adhered to during implementation.



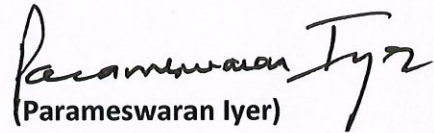
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Chief Secretaries of all States/UTs