

**Third Party Evaluator's Opinion on
URBAN WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

Kuldip Nayar
Journalist
India

Relevance

India's need to increase water supply levels and coverage of sewerage waterworks is inexhaustible. The countryside where the 70 per cent of India lives does not have any such structure except in some areas which are semi-urban. There are no two opinions on the relevance of the project. I wish the government's contribution had been half, that is, instead of 40 per cent, 50 per cent.

Effectiveness

It is understandable that only 50 projects were planned because the funds delineated the outer limit. What is not understandable is why only 26 projects, approximately half, could be completed. It is apparent that there was stringency of funds because the 90 per cent of allocations were exhausted on 26 projects.

Unfortunately, no solid waste disposal project-- much needed in Rajasthan-- was finished. The shortage of technical hands may not be the complete answer. Did the project supervisors overspend or did those who made allocations go wrong on estimates. True, prices rose to 50 to 60 per cent. But there was still a leeway of 40 to 50 per cent. Where did the balance of 40 to 50 per cent of funds go? Probably, the construction of the two projects, requiring new Water Works System, exhausted more funds than anticipated.

Still, whatever has been achieved is not a small gain. I feel positive. Take the temple town of Tarputri in Andhra Pradesh. Nearly two thirds of households got new water connections. Only half of them felt satisfied but most of them were happy that water would make living more hygienic. In Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Indore the supply of water was stabilized.

The yardstick to measure the good done should not be how many projects were completed but how large were the gains to those who were covered. People on the whole were happy. Their lives have improved and their attitude towards life has become healthier than before.

There is no doubt that more funds would have given more people their basic needs of water and sewerage. But the effort should be made to raise money. I suggest that the panchayats (village councils) and municipalities in cities should be associated in raising funds. People may not mind paying even a cess for more water once they are convinced that it would reach them. Probably, the greatest need in India is the sewerage. More attention should be paid to that. At the same time, the country needs solid waste disposal projects.