A study to assess the status of rural water supply and sanitation programme under Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission in Varanasi district

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■ **ABSTRACT :** The rural population of India is growing rapidly and exerting considerable pressure on rural services. It is evident that rural infrastructure has been unable to keep pace with the growing population. A great challenge for Indian villages is to make villages livable by providing every citizen with basic services of acceptable quality. Rural water infrastructure typically includes water collection and storage facilities at source sites, water transport via aqueducts (canals, tunnels and/or pipelines) from source sites to water treatment facilities; water treatment, storage and distribution systems; wastewater collection (sewage) systems and treatment; and rural drainage. In order to understand what needs to be done to improve the provision of basic services, we need to know the level of provision of these services. It is for this reason I commission a study to assess the Status of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program under Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission in Varanasi district.

■ **KEY WORDS :** Water, Water management, Water consumption, Conservation of water, Sanitation

Water, a gift of nature, is a prime necessity for human survival and sustenance of civilization. Water is the most vital natural resource and is becoming scares. Drinking water supply and sanitation are state subjects, included in the eleventh schedule of the constitution among the subjects that may be entrusted to Panchayats by the States. The Government of India supplement efforts made by the States by providing financial and technical assistance under the two centrally sponsored programmes namely, the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP) and the Central Rural Sanitation Programme (CRSP). Substantial investment to the tune of about Rs.50,000 crore has been made in the rural water supply sector alone by the Central and State Governments since 1st Five Year Plan in approx. 37 lakh hand pumps and 1.45 lakh piped water supply schemes, crediting the country with one of the largest rural drinking water supply networks in the world. While significant achievement has been made in terms of providing access to potable drinking water – with 95.34 per cent rural habitations fully covered and another 4.28 per cent partially covered, the

sanitation coverage in rural areas continues to be a challenge, with only 22 per cent of the rural population having access to basic sanitation, as per the 2001 Census. A national water supply and sanitation programme was introduced in the social sector in the country in 1954. The Government of India provided assistance to the States to establish special investigation divisions in the Fourth Five Year Plan to carry out identification of problem villages. Taking into account the magnitude of the problem, and to accelerate the pace of coverage of problem villages, the Government of India introduced the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP) in 1972-73 to assist States and Union Territories with 100 per cent grants-in-aid to implement drinking water supply schemes in such villages. The entire programme was given a Mission approach when the Technology Mission on Drinking Water Management, called the National Drinking Water Mission (NDWM), was introduced as one of the five Missions in social sector in 1986. NDWM was renamed as Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission (RGNDWM) in 1991.Presently, Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water