Executive Summary

In order to address the water needs of the small towns of the country the Central Government made a provision in the Eighth Plan for the Accelerated Urban Water Supply Programme (AUWSP). The objective of AUWSP is to provide safe and adequate drinking water, improve the environment, quality of life and socio-economic conditions of the entire town having population of less than 20,000 (as per 1991 Census). According to the 1991 Census, the total number of towns having a population of less than 20,000 was 2151. Under AUWSP an effort have been made to provide safe drinking water @ 70 lpcd and adopt appropriate and cost effective technologies to supply drinking water to the small towns.

The Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation (now Ministry of Urban Development), Government of India, has approved a number of water supply schemes under the AUWSP in various states. The Ministry entrusted the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), to conduct an evaluation study for selected approved schemes in eleven towns located in five states namely Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Rajasthan.

To carry out the evaluation study NIUA prepared a proforma based on the study parameters. This was followed by interaction with the State implementing agencies, visiting scheme components and meeting the officials connected with the implementation and O&M of the schemes including ULBs, and interviews with the residents in order to assess the impact of the scheme. The information collected through field visits was analysed and the final evaluation report prepared.

The evaluation results indicate that:

- There is a delay in completion of most schemes. In 8 of the 11 schemes evaluated, the completion has been delayed. The delay ranges from one to four years or more. The reasons for delay ranged from non-availability of funds on time, transfer of concerned officials, getting electricity connection, to getting permission for laying pipeline across the railway line.
- In four of the five the states, in which evaluation has been done, it is the State agency (PHED/PHD) that has implemented the scheme. These agencies also do the O&M of the scheme. The provision of water supply in these states is not yet in the charge of local governments. Only in Punjab, the local governments are responsible for O&M of water supply system.
- There was no clear pattern that emerged with respect to the actual expenditure on the scheme as compared to the approved cost. There were schemes which had cost overrun, schemes which were completed at a lower cost than approved and also those where the approved and actual cost were the same. In 4 of the 11 towns, there has been either no cost variation or the variation has been within 5% (+ and -) of the estimated cost. In 5 towns, the expenditure on the scheme has been more than the estimated cost (> 5% variation). In 2 towns the expenditure was less than the estimated cost (> 5% variation).
- Schemes having surface/spring raw water source are more reliable and dependable than the tube well source as far as the sustainability of schemes (till the design period) is concerned except in Punjab where tube well water source is found adequate to sustain till the design period. Prolonged drought, particularly in Rajasthan, has had an adverse impact on the source as the water levels have fallen. Such extraneous and unpredictable factors have affected the reliability of the source.

- The quantity of water produced varies between 0.56 mld to 2.72 mld in the study towns while the quantity of water supplied varies between 0.52 mld to 2.09 mld. The variation between water produced and supplied ranges from 6% to 44%. This is because of system losses and UFW (leakage, illegal tapping etc.).
- Most of the schemes have not been able to cover the entire population with household connections (HSCs). Only 2 out of 11 schemes have reported 100% coverage of population by HSCs. In the remaining towns, except for Narnaud, the coverage by HSCs varies between 64% and 95%. In Narnaud the coverage by HSCs is only 24% while another 61% is covered by public standposts. However, the number of household connections has increased in all the towns after implementation of the schemes under AUWSP.
- The per capita supply in most of the towns was below the norm of 70 lpcd before the implementation of AUWSP scheme. However, discussions with the respective implementing agencies and the residents of the towns suggest that the per capita supply in most towns has increased after the implementation of the scheme.
- The domestic tariff has increased in most of the towns except in the state of Rajasthan, where it has not changed since the implementation of the scheme. The monthly charges for domestic water supply ranged between Rs. 10 to Rs. 20 per month before the implementation of the scheme and at present it ranges between Rs. 25 to Rs. 50 per month.
- None of the towns under study have been able to recover full cost of providing water supply except Sarwar where 100% cost recovery for O&M of the scheme has been reported. The shortfall in revenue for the other 10 towns is met either by the State Government (in the towns where the state agency manages the water supply service) or by the local body from the general revenues (in the towns where the service is managed by the local body). The cost recovery ranges from about 11% to about 84% in these towns. The actual revenue-expenditure gap ranges from Rs. 0.49 lakhs to Rs. 27.31 lakhs.
- While the staff strength of most of the O&M agencies has increased after the implementation of the scheme, in two towns the staff strength has remained the same and in another two towns the staff strength has reduced.
- The wastewater from all the towns, except Uchana, is drained into storm water drains and discharged into low-lying lands/ ponds/ open channels without treatment. Uchana is partially covered by sewerage network and has oxidation pond for disposal of wastewater.
- The water quality was reported to be potable in all the towns. The residual chlorine available was sufficient. No outbreak of water-borne diseases was reported in any of the towns.
- Overall, the agencies implementing the schemes and those managing the water supply systems in the study towns were satisfied with the scheme.
- The views of the community also indicated that they were satisfied with the scheme, though there were some local level problems (low pressure) in some parts of some towns.
- After the evaluation of the AUWSP schemes, a set of recommendations have been put forth for improving the implementation and effectiveness of the schemes. These recommendations are:
- Annual revision of the Schedule of Rates by the state agencies for realistic estimation of the costs at the design stage;
- Provision of adequate technical manpower to the urban local bodies before handing over the scheme to them;
- Periodic revision of tariff and improvement in revenue collection to ensure 100% cost recovery for O&M of the scheme;

- Providing flexibility to the implementing agency to revise the design year of the scheme due to changes in local conditions, after discussions with the Central and State governments;
- Additional water demand (for fairs, festivals, livestock etc.) should be considered separately, as most of these small towns are rural in character, and should not be a part of the regular drinking water supply scheme under AUWSP;
- Administrative approval for various components of schemes should be expedited by the State Governments to complete the schemes in time;
- Release of funds from the state governments should be expedited to ensure timely completion of the scheme; and
- Monitoring of schemes during implementation should look at all the bottlenecks and help in clearing them expeditiously.