



"Groundwater: Diminishing & Stressful Resource"

WaterAge, 22 March 2022



Subhash Sethi

Chairman, SPML Infra Limited

India with second largest population in the world and very high agriculture practices – uses more water than many other countries. It is the largest freshwater users in the world and also the largest user of groundwater. It uses an estimated 230 cubic kilometers of groundwater per year – over 25% of the world total. More than 60% of irrigated agriculture and 85% of drinking water supplies are dependent on groundwater.

Around 65% of India's total water demand is being met from groundwater sources which plays an important role in shaping the nation's economic and social development. Therefore with growing demand for water and depletion of the available resources, assured supply of good quality water is becoming a growing concern in the country.

Groundwater in India is a critical resource. However, an increasing number of aquifers are reaching unsustainable levels of exploitation. If current trends continue, in 20 years about 60% of all India's aquifers will be in a critical condition says a World Bank report. This will have serious implications for the sustainability of agriculture, long-term food security, livelihoods, and economic growth. It is estimated that over a quarter of the country's harvest will be at risk. There is an urgent need to change the status quo. SPML Infra Limited has been promoting sustainable water use practices and created robust water supply infrastructure in the country that has helped in providing clean drinking water facilities to over

50 million people per day in the country thus reducing their dependence on groundwater sources.

The stress on scarce water supplies is continuously widening and according to Niti Aayog, 21 major cities are racing towards zero groundwater levels and over 600 million people in India have already started facing extreme water distress. Big cities like Chennai, Mumbai, and Delhi faces regular water crisis especially during summers.

In the country, there are almost 135 million households that still lack access to clean drinking water facilities at their premises. And this is the highest number of people lacking the basic facilities as per the report by United Nations. Government of India has realised this major issue and the initiatives taken under the Jal Jeevan Mission to provide 'har ghar jal' (water to every household) is an ambitious plan to provide clean drinking water to everybody in the country.



68 MLD WTP, Hubli Dharwad, Karnataka

Meeting these challenges requires extremely focused and strategically planned efforts considering water use efficiency, future needs and sustainability measures with complete wastewater treatment and reuse programs. Water infrastructure both above and below the ground needs careful assessment, restoration and restructuring in line with growing population and future demands with the help of latest technological intervention, smart water management, capability enhancement, robust processes and following with best practices on the required timescale.