

# 35% of govt. schools, anganwadis have no tap water

Jal Jeevan Mission fails to meet goals 10 months after 100-day campaign was launched

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Over a third of government schools and anganwadis still do not have tap water access even 10 months after the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) launched a 100-day campaign to provide the facility. There has been minimal progress since a Parliamentary Standing Committee pulled up the JJM in a March report, pointing out the importance of repeated washing of hands as part of COVID-19 safety protocols for schools to reopen.

However, the Jal Shakti Ministry considers the current progress an achievement. “Big boost to children’s health & hygiene in the country!” said a tweet from Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Sunday, linking to an official statement from the Ministry. “PM



Of the 2,146 anganwadi centres, only 247 have access to tap water under the JJM in Kalaburagi district of Karnataka.

@narendramodi ji’s desire to see all centres of learning provided with clean water has resulted in 66% schools & 60% anganwadi centers across the nation getting FHTC [Functional Household Tap Connections] through the #JalJeevanMission in just 10 months,” he added.

The 100-day campaign to

achieve 100% coverage, and provide potable piped water supply for drinking and cooking purposes as well as tap water for hand washing and in toilets in every school, anganwadi and ashramshala or residential tribal school, was launched on October 2, 2020. At the time, about 40% of schools and anganwadis already had tap water ac-

cess. From 4.1 lakh before the campaign started, the number of schools with taps rose to 6.35 lakh by February, according to the JJM dashboard. For anganwadis, the increase was from 4.3 lakh to 6.3 lakh.

In its report on the demand for grants submitted to the Lok Sabha in early March, the Parliamentary Standing Committee for Water Resources deplored the slow rate of progress, pointing out that “children are more susceptible to water-borne diseases, more so, when there is also a need for repeated washing of hands as a precautionary measure during the COVID-19 pandemic”. The Jal Shakti Ministry told the panel that “some States/ UTs have indicated that they need more time to complete the task and sustain the efforts” and said the

campaign had been extended till March 31, 2021.

Almost four months after that extended deadline, the JJM is yet to achieve its goals. In fact, it has only added tap water access in about 50,000 schools and 40,000 anganwadis since that time. In its statement on Sunday, the Ministry said the progress came “despite Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown”.

In fact, there is widespread disparity among States, with a few laggards pulling down the national average, despite the fact that nine States and Union Territories have already achieved 100% coverage. In Jharkhand and West Bengal, less than 15% of schools and less than 10% of anganwadis have tap water access. On the other hand, 80% of the schools in Uttar Pradesh have access to tap water.