

Campaign for one million soak pits in 100 days

Ministry asks States to set own targets

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The Jal Shakti Ministry has launched a campaign to create a million soak pits in villages across the country over the next 100 days, to help manage grey water and prevent the clogging of waterbodies. Though the Central government does not have any comprehensive estimate of the total number of soak pits needed country-wide, the States have been asked to develop their own targets.

“The household or community soak pit is the simplest solution for grey water management,” said Additional Secretary Arun Baroka, who heads the flagship Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). “With modernisation, people feel that the only solution is to have drains for waste water, which is then dumped in a common village pond. However, that is not the best solution for most villages which are generally dry, where grey water can be safely and inexpensively filtered through a soak pit,” he said. A household soak pit could be constructed for ₹3000-5000 in most cases, he noted.

The Swachh Bharat Mission’s first phase was to achieve open defecation free (ODF) status by constructing a toilet in every rural household and persuading all villagers to use it. The second phase, termed



Grey water can be safely and inexpensively filtered through a soak pit.

ODF+, aims to sustain and extend these sanitation gains by focusing on solid and liquid waste management.

‘Sujalam’ campaign

Unlike the toilet construction phase, however, where targets were uniform across the country, the second phase has required a more nuanced approach. In a letter to the States regarding the launch of the 100-day ‘Sujalam’ campaign on Wednesday, Mr. Baroka asked them to “develop ambitious and measurable targets” of their own. In regions such as Punjab where the water table was high, the soak pit would not be viable. So, there was no nationwide estimate of the number of pits required.

A dashboard would be made public within the next two weeks to enable proper monitoring of ODF+ work, he stated.