

**GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (GESI)
GUIDELINES FOR AMRUT 2.0**

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List of Acronyms

AMRUT	Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation
BCC	Behavioral Change Communication
CBO	Community Based Organization
DPR	Detailed Project Report
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GIS	Geographical Information System
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
MoHUA	Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NULM	National Urban Livelihoods Mission
OBC	Other Backward Classes
PDMC	Project Development and Management Consultants
PHED	Public Health and Engineering Department
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PPCP	Public Private Community Partnership
PPP	Public Private Partnership
SBM	Swachh Bharat Mission
SC	Scheduled Caste
SCADA	Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SHG	Self-help Group
ST	Scheduled Tribe
ULB	Urban Local Body
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

1. Introduction

1.1 Context and Background

The strengthening institutional capacity for sustainable urban development and service delivery under Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT 2.0) aims to improve access to basic urban services by accelerating policy actions and reforms.

The structural urban reforms are linked to improving water supply and sanitation service delivery outcomes and local revenue under AMRUT 2.0 with the aim of making cities water secure through circular water practices including water source conservation, rejuvenation of water bodies, ground water management and reuse of treated water.

One of the important facets of this mission is to build capacities of states and the urban local bodies (ULBs) to manage, implement, monitor, and evaluate AMRUT 2.0 program while ensuring that all the processes and measurement guidelines addresses and encompasses cross-cutting issues like climate change and mainstreaming gender equality and social inclusion (GESI).

1.2 About AMRUT 2.0- Sector Focus

AMRUT 2.0 Mission was launched on 1 October 2021. Its main aim is to provide basic urban services to households and build amenities in cities for improving the quality of life for all especially the urban poor and disadvantaged people as a national importance with the foremost priority of making cities water secure. Mission envisages providing assured supply of 2.68 crore new household tap water connections and universal household coverage of sewerage/septage services in 500 AMRUT cities with 2.64 crore new sewer connections. Other important priority areas include rejuvenation of water bodies, development of well-maintained green spaces and parks to increase the cities' amenity value and urban aquifer management. Moreover, the Mission has a **reform agenda** centered around strengthening the ULBs and in making cities water secure. These reforms include areas like reduction in non-revenue water, utilization of treated and recycled water to meet city's water demand, 24x7 water supply, rejuvenation of water bodies, geographical information system (GIS) based master plans of the cities etc.

1.3 AMRUT 2.0 and GESI Commitment

The Mission Operational Guideline suggests that the earlier mission initiated in 2015 could decrease disease load and improve quality of life for all especially amongst women beneficiaries. Moving forward, AMRUT 2.0 focuses on achieving functional outcomes through project implementation. In doing so, the mission has a specific focus to ensure services to households of informal settlements and low-income groups in admissible projects. Furthermore, the mission's commitment to women, youth and the poor households is through its **operational, delivery and monitoring emphasis**, aiming to:

- co-opt with women and women self-help groups (SHGs) in water management (including water quality testing, water demand management and water infrastructure operations etc.) which will be incentivized.
- co-opt with women and youth for concurrent feedback on services' functional outcomes as a way of ensuring community participation.
- build capacities by training women in water quality testing in all cities through implementing agencies like Public Health and Engineering Department (PHED) and water/sewerage boards.
- to be a recipient of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities and Behavioral Change Communication (BCC) targeted approach within the wider cohort of citizen participation especially from economically weaker sections of the society.

However, to achieve empowerment of GESI groups in the water sector in the true sense, one would require concerted efforts in addressing their needs and interests at all the stages of project cycle and have them represented in strategic decision-making positions.

1.4 Progress Made So Far

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) launched AMRUT 2.0 in 2021 articulating a national program making access to water supply and sanitation gender and socially inclusive especially in the poor and slum areas. The outcome-based interventions through AMRUT's implementation will be well valued by the citizens particularly women and those living in informal settlements.

Although AMRUT mission commits to benefit the urban poor and disadvantaged groups, there is presently no concerted and exclusive GESI related policy guideline, roadmap, or a standardized framework to mainstream GESI aspects in the mission's urban service delivery and implementation. Nor there are any standard GESI safeguards practices that are adopted

by the ULBs with which the AMRUT admissible projects are scrutinized and approved. Despite this, the following is a snapshot of all GESI policy level commitments and progress made so far towards integrating GESI elements in AMRUT 2.0.

1. **Operational Guidelines for AMRUT 2.0:** The formulation of mission's operational guidelines sets the policy commitment to achieving water secure cities and envisages it to be a *Jan Aandolan* (people's movement). The operational guidelines suggest adopting a gig economy model wherein the mission will co-opt with women and youth and engage with women SHGs in water demand management, water quality testing and water infrastructure operations, amongst other reforms.
2. **Participation of Women SHGs in water demand management, water quality testing and water infrastructure operations:** MoHUA prepared a women's participation note to encourage community participation with focus on Women SHGs. This note enlists all the women SHGs as per the city water action plans that can be engaged in several ways towards an active participation under the mission. Highlights of this note is presented in the table below:

Table 1: Women Self Help Groups for AMRUT 2.0	
Highlights	Scope of Engagement
Total SHGs- 1598	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Demand Management • Water Quality Testing • Construction and Asset Management of Water Infrastructure • Awareness Building • Community Mobilization • Water Champions
States- 24	
ULBs- 1089	

Source: MoHUA

Identifying and enlisting these SHGs suggests the readiness of MoHUA to work in convergence mode with National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM). MoHUA would require shaping and formalizing the nuances of such convergence to help in institutionalizing it as a GESI reform that can be demonstrated in the projects.

3. Dialogues with the ULBs, Parastatal Bodies and Mission Directorates:

The constructive dialogues with the ULBs, concerned parastatal agencies (like Jal Nigam, PHED, Sewerage Boards), other concerned departments and mission directorates has helped in sensitizing the key stakeholders to the requirements of their GESI target audience, knowledge sharing on some emerging case studies in their jurisdiction, cross-learning from other states with on-ground projects reflecting innovative GESI practices, and other doable options that can be adopted by the ULBs given their local socio-cultural contexts.

4. Present Gaps:

These consultations also suggest a prevailing gap in the understanding and implementation of some GESI centric perspectives and concepts in the program due to near absence of gender sensitization trainings, low representation of women in technical, leadership and decision-making positions in the departments. There are other institutional day to day challenges that impede the uptake of GESI in planning, design and implementation of AMRUT admissible projects including lack of budgets earmarked for GESI related resources including budget for ECWD design features, no priority based identification of GESI target groups; and insufficient coordination with other departments for possible convergence.

5. Situational Analysis of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene concerns of Low-Income Settlements, Women and Discussions with Affinity Groups

Surveyed interactions¹ with GESI target groups especially urban poor women and migrants suggest service delivery gaps calling for improvement in access to better quality and supply of water, requirement of awareness building, and community participation etc.

Likewise, consultations with prominent women centric NGOs, think tanks and other research and advocacy groups provide valuable insights on broader citywide concerns related to the gaps in access and delivery of urban basic services along with their willingness to collaborate with ULBs in a range of service provisions for fulfilling the policy mandate of AMRUT 2.0 including outreach and IEC activities, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector livelihoods, water quality testing, and advocacy etc. The ULBs were also signposted to these organizations to seek such synergy with the program through appropriate empanelment procedures.

1.5 Purpose and Scope of this Document

This document puts forth the importance of employing a GESI in water and sanitation sector and highlights both practical and strategic concerns affecting women and disadvantage groups residing in low-income settlements. The objective of this document is to present a GESI responsive guideline with recommendations for identifying and leveraging GESI entry points in AMRUT 2.0. In doing so, the document is expected to sensitize states, ULBs and other concerned parastatal bodies and build their institutional capacities.

2. GESI Perspectives in Water and Sanitation Sector

2.1 What is Gender Equality and Social Inclusion?

¹ Random sample surveys and focus group discussions were carried out with women and young girls in some slum settlements.

Gender Equality refers to a situation where all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by strict gender roles such that different behaviors, aspirations, and needs of gender groups (men, women and the third gender) are considered, valued, and favored equally. Gender equality means equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for all people of all genders so that they can realize their full potential and exercise their human rights in any organization or society irrespective of their gender identities. This concept includes both binary and non-binary gender identities including men and women; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual community and ever-expanding understanding of gender and sexual identities.

Social Inclusion is a process by which individuals and groups can take equal part in society and its processes of improving their ability, accessibility, opportunity and dignity irrespective of their vulnerabilities and disadvantages based on their belief system, identity, physical, cultural, social and economic status, geographical location etc. Social Inclusion ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the recognition, opportunities, and resources, they need to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they can participate more in decision making on matters that affect them and gain equal access to the resources, opportunities, and services they need to enjoy their fundamental rights.²

Put together, a gender equal and socially inclusive society is the one that empowers local communities to hold the government and their actions accountable by participating in city's decision-making processes. Thus GESI are intertwined concepts to achieve equal and improved access to goods and services, opportunities and resources for all. The GESI approach to development focuses on the need for action to re-balance these power relations and ensure equal rights, opportunities, and respect for all individuals regardless of their social identities like their occupational background, domicile status and inter-state movement (as in the case of migrants) and sexual orientation.

Moreover, it is essential for city managers and project implementation staff to understand GESI from a wider intersectional approach since there are several interconnected and overlapping factors that contribute to multiple acts of discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion of any individual or a group. This can include factors like race, gender, socio-

² A Common Framework for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, International Development Partners' Group, Nepal, GESI working Group.

economic status, age, religious and faith-based affinities, disability, sexual orientation, geographical locations and migrant status etc. These interconnected factors intersect to create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination. For example, migrant women residing in urban slums and precarious tenements are more vulnerable to an unreliable WASH delivery system and susceptible to climate change than an economically independent woman living in a secured housing. Such migrant women have to often prove their urban citizenship status with requisite documentation to avail urban basic services and thus would thus require more handholding support than others.

In the long run, employing a GESI approach in projects and programs is beneficial for both the beneficiaries and the government. While it empowers local and marginalized communities through participatory city-wide decision-making processes to hold the government accountable of their actions; it is also a powerful tool to consider for the government functionaries while planning and implementing projects, developing policies and strategies and allocating budgets etc. which have shown to reap far reaching and effective outcomes.

GESI approach also addresses unequal power relations between different gender groups and social groups giving a scope for all stakeholders to participate unanimously in the development processes. Applying a GESI approach in AMRUT 2.0 context, would mean to address and remove all intended accessibility related barriers that women and disadvantaged groups face; improve services and facilitate their user experience. More importantly, GESI approach also suggests having inclusive and responsive policies and enabling environment that increases the participation, decision making and leadership related roles of women and disadvantaged groups in AMRUT 2.0 relevant interventions. The following section presents various transversal points between GESI and the water and sanitation sector which is of relevance to this mission.

2.2 GESI Perspectives in Water and Sanitation Sector and AMRUT 2.0

A. Impact of Inadequate WASH Facilities on Women and Girls' Drudgery and Time Poverty:

Women and men draw differential needs from the WASH sector, with women being the primary collectors and managers of water in many developing countries which is also true for India. This is mostly driven by their practical needs and interests in basic urban services that closely influence the nature of their work and household needs. UN Women statistics suggest

that it is mostly women and girls who are entrusted for water collection in 80% of the world's households that do not have direct access to water in their premises.³

This is especially true for urban slums and low-income settlements. Inadequate tap connections or distantly accessed water sources especially amongst poor urban households relates to drudgery of women and girls in collecting water and adds to their time poverty. Such inadequacy and irregularity in service provision also impacts women's income poverty due to time spent on water collection, especially as loss of labor-days and absenteeism at schools amongst young girls. In absence of water in slums especially during peak summers, women and girls' dependency on urban lakes, ponds, and other water bodies for domestic chores like bathing, washing utensils and laundry becomes manifold. In many instances, these water bodies are poorly maintained, contaminated and infested. This dependency thus runs a high health risk amongst them and their children thereby increasing their primary care giving responsibilities and associated unpaid roles at the intra-household level.

B. Impact of Lack of WASH Facilities on Women and Girls' Productivity and Education:

Deficiency in WASH infrastructure, especially in low-income settlements, are directly linked to women's health, hygiene as well as physical security leading to incidences of gender-based violence. The burden of unpaid WASH duties implies several missed opportunities including increase in school dropout rates amongst young girls, limited engagements of women in realizing their productive and community led gender roles and in other socio-cultural activities. This makes the WASH sector an engendered concept. On the contrary, improved WASH services guarantee an improved quality of life for women and their families.

C. Gendered Division of Labor in WASH Sector in Unpaid and Paid Work:

Unpaid work which is often observed in developing countries is also translated as time poverty where women have to compensate for the absence of inadequacy of public infrastructure and basic urban services including water, sanitation, transportation etc. WASH sector is a classic case of gendered division of labor where women and girls shoulder most WASH duties as primary procurers, collectors, managers, and users of these basic services in their households. Such direct interplay of daily WASH duties makes women and young girls the prime insurers of health and hygiene in their homes. These 'invisible' and 'unpaid' responsibilities borne by women and girls encroaches on their basic human right for access

³ UN Women (2018), SDG Report Fact Sheet- Eastern and South-eastern Asia

to WASH services, which in turn impinges on their well-being and perpetuates gender inequalities.

Literature indicates a prevailing gender divide in economic opportunities within WASH related livelihoods, enterprises, and professions. Men dominate the economic landscape of WASH sector with only 10% women engaged as professional WASH staff.⁴ A gender gap is also prevalent in the low paying WASH sector jobs with a bulk of women representing lowly paid roles. Moreover, women have low bargaining power in negotiating paid roles resulting in poorly paid low level sanitation jobs. More importantly, while women stand engaged in lowly unpaid sanitation jobs, the sector encourages sanitation enterprises that are mostly led and managed by men.

D. GESI Related Issues in WASH Planning, Design, Participation and Decision Making:

Women's practical needs and strategic interests for WASH infrastructure is often influenced by the nature of their household engagements, lack of asset ownership, and poor decision-making power in family investments and spending. Given such differential needs and interests; gender responsive designs and technology becomes imperative to meet such requirements. Studies reveal that several water and sanitation design and fecal management practices do not factor in women's daily roles and struggles of collecting water, emptying waste, and maintaining sanitation on an unpaid basis.

Studies suggest that WASH services designed and delivered without the involvement of women and their differential needs especially from low-income groups turns out to be costlier interventions in the long run.⁵ Yet, women and girls are often excluded from planning and decision-making processes about their WASH service requirements. Even certain community mobilizing roles for adopting safe WASH practices and behavior change activities volunteered by women in their localities remains largely unrecognized, under paid or poorly incentivized. Women headed households and other disadvantaged groups especially migrants, disabled persons and poor households often find it challenging to commit to a water user fee and tariff that is established in absence of a prior consultative process. They are also left out from important decision making and consultation processes on operation and maintenance of 'pay and use' facilities. This trend underplays their productive, managerial, and decision-making roles in their communities.

⁴ Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2017), Gender and the Sanitation Value Chain: A review of the evidence

⁵ Ibid, 2017

It is observed that urban water bodies are lifelines for women, girls and children residing in slums with no water connection. Their use of pond water for daily purposes like bathing, cleaning, and washing can be conflicting to the interests of the urban local bodies during beautification and rejuvenation activities until they are connected to secured piped connections within their premises. Hence it is pertinent that women and girls are well consulted and provided with sufficient water tap arrangements prior to such development activities.

Likewise, it is crucial to determine special needs of other target groups like the elderly, children and disabled persons while accessing public infrastructure like open spaces, parks and rejuvenated water bodies in urban areas and make necessary user-friendly arrangements for a barrier free and safe user experience. Innovations in design particularly for children, nursing mothers, disabled and the elderly have demonstrated to reduce the time burden from women in their care giving roles with accessibility features like ramps, railings, separate toilets, benches, recreational area for children, canteens, nursing stations, and CCTVs etc.

Cities in India are mandated to undertake certain basic civic functions like water supply, roads, drains, street lighting and sanitation since many of these functions are seen as a state subject. While the ULBs concentrate on the provision of service delivery, the social and livelihoods-oriented aspects of service delivery were traditionally sought by the local communities, especially migrants. However, with rapid waves of migration since the mid-70s and an increased rate of slum development made the state and city functionaries to divert their attention to the burgeoning needs of the urban poor including livelihoods, social inclusion, health and security through in-situ slum rehabilitation initiatives within municipal limits.

It is equally vital to address the concerns and needs of migrant population requiring basic amenities including water, sanitation, and housing etc. These are important considerations while planning and implementing all basic services that will cater to the ease of their stay experience. Although water and sanitation are not the primary deciding factors for people undertaking migration; many people are still impacted by climate change and face incidences of floods and droughts. Such climate induced *water refugees*⁶ can again end up in cities' underserved areas where access to basic services at their destination is not well guaranteed. Climate change induced movements and influx of seasonal, semi-skilled and unskilled migrant labor imply that they have lower wages and low power to pay user fees while accessing basic services in times of inadequacy and total absence.

⁶ The World Bank (2021) Going with the Flow: Water's Role in Global Migration.

Influx of seasonal migrants, short term and long-term migrants, and day to day floating population also put an increasing stress on city's existing water infrastructure. Having improved WASH services in destination areas are indeed a pull factor for successful migration when settling in the cities since it shapes other factors including jobs, hygiene, food availability and living standards. However, many such migrants are still settling for lower levels of WASH services when they are constrained by their economic conditions, inadequate documentary proofs and poor knowledge on accessing services that they are compelled to stay in under-served areas of the cities.⁷ Long term absence of such services, poor housing conditions, constant exposure to climatic vagaries and hostile social environments are well documented to bring more crisis and conflicts in their lives.

Prevailing social and gender norms⁸ also disadvantage communities including women, third gender, migrants, PWDs and other vulnerable groups in terms of their access to services, resources, opportunities, and decision making. Therefore, a GESI approach is a fundamental tool to ensure that development interventions are inclusive, equitable, and empowering for the communities.

Understanding and challenging some negative norms are vital for urban transformation programs like AMRUT 2.0 which is envisaged as a peoples' movement. Many communities have a collective perception that household chores including WASH duties are primarily women's responsibilities while underplaying their role as decision makers in WASH infrastructure. Moreover, such harmful perception restricts careful targeting and participation from men and boys in WASH discourse for a collective cause in their communities.

AMRUT 2.0 aims to engage with communities for a range of purposes. The mission seeks to co-opt women and youth for concurrent feedbacks about its progress. The mission has a specific objective to involve Women SHGs in water management, water quality testing and water infrastructure operations as well as local governance structures. However, meeting this objective will require active participation and development of local leadership skills amongst women and their agencies. Hence AMRUT 2.0 will require transformative steps in awareness building and capacity building activities in the cities for challenging prevailing negative social and gender norms on women's participation.

AMRUT 2.0 targets to achieve access to clean water for all urban citizens with an increased coverage of sewerage and septage management. One of the mission's reform agenda is to

⁷ Jobbins et al (2018), Water and Sanitation, Migration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

⁸ Social Norms shape collective behavior of communities and society as a whole while gender norms impact communities especially women's participation in decision making processes.

recycle treated used water to meet at least 20% of the total city demand and 40% for industrial water demand at State level. Many communities in India in urban, peri-urban or rural areas still have a collective mistrust and rejection for recycled water. This can be a roadblock for any local governance authority showing interest in sewage recycling. Success in such an intervention will thus require a soft approach through behavior change campaigns, public acceptance, and willingness to pay.

E. Institutional Mechanism and GESI in the WASH Sector

WASH Sector institutions and regulatory policies governing them are critical for the water and sanitation performance in a country as they are meant to accommodate physical, economic, institutional, and political aspects of durable and reliable infrastructure and service delivery.⁹ Planning and implementing equitable and quality driven GESI responsive WASH infrastructure and service delivery requires cooperation between several actors including the government, local partners and the civil society especially when catering to the most vulnerable dwellers and deprived areas of the cities. Seeking opinion and involvement of such stakeholders is equally vital for providing feedback for future policy improvements and reform agenda especially for inclusive outcomes.

Local Urban Bodies and State Jobs: A known institutional gap in WASH sector is the low representation of women, especially in technical and decision-making roles in many towns. Resultantly, women account for only 17% of country's labor force in WASH sector with only a handful of them working in managerial and technical roles.¹⁰ A growing evidence suggests that women's participation in local governance decision making through reservations has led to several benefits including transforming social norms and greater investments in public services for local area development including expansion of drinking water infrastructure and sanitation especially in India.¹¹ In this regard, some laggard cities can take heed from more progressive states where gender reservation of 50% has been prescribed for ULB roles.¹² Likewise, there is presently no national level policy provision for women's reservation in central and state government jobs yet some states like Punjab, Gujarat, Tripura and Madhya Pradesh has reserved a 30% to 33% quota for women candidates in state government jobs.

⁹ Chopra and Ramachandran (2021), Understanding Water Institutions and their Impact on the Performance of the Water Sector in India, Water Policy 23.

¹⁰ P Sewak (2022), How Water ATMs Breathe New Life into Women Empowerment in India, The Times of India

¹¹ A Basu and S Bhaduri (2015), Role of Women Elected Representatives in Local Area Development: A Case Study of Kolkata Municipal Corporation, International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies Volume 2, Issue 6, June 2015, pp 53-62.

¹² R Jha (2021) Impact of Gender Reservation in Indian Urban Local Bodies, Observer Research Foundation, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/impact-of-gender-reservation-in-indian-urban-local-bodies/>

Local Governance Structures: Local governance structures and neighborhood groups are strategic links in the WASH institutional mechanism. These structures hold an important interface with local government functionaries and ward councils. Such structures include slum welfare associations, *mohalla samitees / nagrik parishads*, resident welfare associations, etc. Women especially from slums and low-income settlements representing dynamic leadership positions in such structures have a multiplier effect that encourages other young women and girls from their localities. These governance structures have successfully demonstrated their contribution in community mobilization, awareness building, monitoring of municipal services, and micro-planning initiatives including undertaking remedial measures for concerns on sanitation, drinking water quality, etc. in the states like Kerala, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, etc.¹³

Some states have made provision for organizing women from slums and urban poor households into neighborhood groups to look after health concerns of local communities under other women centric central schemes. Additionally, some cities have successfully resolved localized concerns on drinking water, sanitation and development of slum areas for urban basic services through *mohalla samitees* and *maha-mohalla samitees*, which is an informal federation of 30 *mohalla samitees* by being the 'eyes and ears' of the municipal body and ward councilors.¹⁴

In addition to these formal and informal governance structures, individuals like community leaders, SHG federation leaders, frontline workers (health workers, *Anganwadi* workers, etc. who are predominantly women), opinion leaders, local artistes, etc. are another important tier of community influencers for triggering and monitoring several crucial WASH activities in their localities especially in remote hard to access settlements. AMRUT 2.0 stresses the importance of engaging such local actors as water warriors for spreading behavior change messages on use of treated water, significance of rejuvenation of water bodies, rainwater harvesting, etc.

Likewise, routing WASH livelihoods and WASH asset management through WHGs are equally vital and have been well demonstrated to bring practical and strategic benefits to women and their collectives in many progressive cities in convergence with state led initiatives and with partnership from women centric agencies and trade-unions etc. One of the core focus for AMRUT 2.0 is to co-opt with NULM-Women SHGs, women and the youth to spearhead several income generating and awareness building activities in the sector. This is one of the progressive features of the mission through which effective linkages between asset creation

¹³ PRIA (2005), Engaging Mohalla Vikas Samitis available at https://pria.org/knowledge_resource/Engaging_Mohalla_Vikas_Samitis.pdf

¹⁴ WaterAid, India.

and asset management can be secured through women's agencies. In doing so, basic urban services to the wider communities and poor households can be effectively maintained and sustained.

Water Associations and Sanitation Committees Since AMRUT 2.0 aims to draw synergy between rural and urban areas, the role of Water User Associations (WUAs) and Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSCs) can be equally significant in managing WASH related concerns in admissible projects that are encompassing peri-urban and rural areas in their area of influence with governance structures including *Nagar Panchayats* and municipal councils. The WUAs are cooperatives formed in several states like Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Jharkhand, etc. under the state acts for participatory involvement of farmers in O&M and management of water infrastructure and services including irrigation system management as emphasized in National Water Policy 2002. There are presently 85,000 WUAs across 24 states.¹⁵ Likewise, VWSCs are a core group of *Gram Panchayats* entrusted with promoting community participation, awareness building, management of water supply schemes, and training in water and sanitation. It is formed with 50% women members and has adequate number of backward class representatives.¹⁶

Third Sector Partners: Inadequate inter-agency cooperation within WASH sector also bears a negative impact on the participation of women and disadvantaged groups. This includes low engagements with the third sector partners in WASH delivery. NGOs and Community-based Organizations (CBOs) have undoubtedly played an important role for humanitarian response during water crisis situations, in bringing behavior change amongst communities and in triggering localized community led innovative WASH practices. Such agencies are also vital for assisting service providers in all field activities by handholding and supporting the needs of a range of service-users especially 'hard to reach' communities including women and disadvantaged groups from underserved parts of the cities. Likewise, prominent women and WASH centric academic institutes and think tanks have provided essential research, innovation, and policy level impetus to the sector from time to time which must be capitalized by the states.

F. Gaps and Opportunities in Community's Participation within State and ULB Sanctioned WASH Projects and Decisions:

¹⁵ A.P Kaur, Laishram P and Tusoiing A.H.H (2022), Water Users Association and its Role in Irrigation Management in India, Agri-India Today, Vol-1, Issue 7.

¹⁶ V Upadhyay (2012), Beyond the Buzz: Panchayats, Water User Groups and Law in India-with Specific Studies on Participatory Irrigation Management, Rural Water Supply, and Watershed Development.

There are other multi-layered factors that have a disproportionate impact on the lives of women in the WASH sector. Women from poor households, slum communities and migrant population often feel restricted in accessing services from the ULBs relating to lack of knowledge on administrative and legal requirements in getting a water connection. These include barriers to having adequate documentation and proof on land tenure, low control over land ownership status and intra household spending along with inadequacy to pay connection fees due to low or inconsistent incomes.

Furthermore, biases and discriminatory work practices still exist in casual labor involved in civil works and construction of WASH infrastructure affecting more women labor than men. Despite a range of labor laws and initiatives, the construction industry remains male dominated. Women are discriminated against and are often offered lower wages and poorer working conditions, along with incidences of gender-based violence in host communities. The health and safety concerns of women and children are often overlooked in construction sites. Adherence to social safeguards and attention to social risks and vulnerabilities are both intended to bolster the security of poor and vulnerable individuals, households, and communities against various undesired outcomes.

Likewise, women in formal employment catering to the WASH sector face skill and training gaps in comparison to their male colleagues. Social attitudes and norms, prevailing gender stereotypes, etc. limits the participation of women and poor residents in technical, managerial, and leadership positions in municipal governance structures and within their own communities. Lack of agency amongst such groups limits their influence on important decisions regarding resource allocation and budgets for water security and sanitation projects.

Despite this trend, there is a promising opportunity of including women agencies like collectives and self-help groups in addressing WASH related challenges especially in India. In this regard, AMRUT 2.0 envisages bringing women self-help groups to the forefront of urban transformation through WASH sector by involving them in water management practices including water testing, meter reading and demand generation roles.

The focus on gender in WASH sector has a multiplier and intergenerational impact including (i) economic benefits by better access to WASH facilities and diverting women's water collecting time to income generating productive activities; (ii) Benefit to children especially young girls through uninterrupted education with better hygiene and freedom from drudgery of water collection, (iii) Empowerment of Women through their involvement in WASH project activities and productive resources (like credit, income generating skills and capacity building trainings). Likewise, from social inclusion outcomes point of view, AMRUT 2.0 aims to achieve:

- greater inclusiveness and equity in access to services, resources, and opportunities
- greater empowerment of poor and marginalized groups to participate in social, economic, and political life; and
- greater security to cope with chronic or sudden risks, especially for the poor and marginalized groups.

In this regard, it should be recognized that poverty, social and institutional factors critically affect project success and sustainability. Without a comprehensive analysis of these aspects, project benefits might fail to reach the people for whom they were intended, be captured by those with money and power, or produce unexpected negative effects for others. Given these views presented above, it becomes imperative for WASH service providers and local stakeholders to be well sensitized and capacitated in such nuances to make concerted efforts in mainstreaming gender in government flagship missions like AMRUT and its admissible projects.

2.3 International Commitments to GESI in Water and Sanitation Sector

The Government of India is committed to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals agenda of Leave No One Behind and Do No Harm sentiment. Water and Sanitation priority sectors through government's initiatives includes several such alignments with relevant SDGs as presented below with the primary one being Gender Equality.

Sustainable Development Goal 6 envisages availability and sustainable management of water for all by 2030.¹⁷ The reform agendas of AMRUT 2.0 is geared toward water security by reducing NRW, meeting 20% of water demand through recycled water, water body rejuvenation, groundwater management, and toward ensuring financial sustainability through annual revision of user charges, property tax reform, ULB credit worthiness enhancement, and urban planning reforms.

¹⁷Guidelines for Urban Water Conservation, Jal Shakti Abhiyan, MoHUA

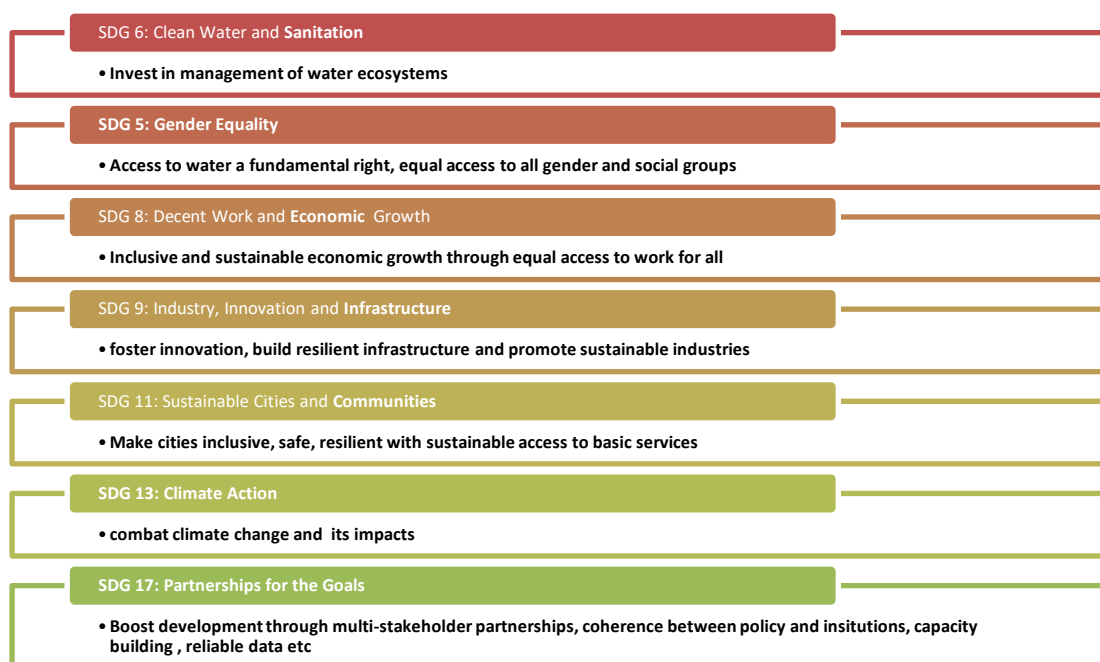


Figure 1: Relevant SDGs to AMRUT 2.0 Priority Areas

2.4 National Commitments- Policies and Programs in Water and Sanitation Sector including GESI Perspectives

Table 2: National Policies, Guidelines and Programs in WASH Sector with GESI Focus

S. No.	Policy/ program	Key Features
1.	National Water Policy, 2012 Ministry of Jal Shakti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take cognizance of existing water situation for a national action plan including recycle, reuse and recovery treatment of water. • Emphasis on incentivising least water intensive sanitation and sewerage systems with decentralised sewage treatment plants to remove water supply disparities in urban and rural areas. • Local governing bodies (municipalities, water user associations) to participate in projects planning that addresses unique needs and aspirations of SC/ST, women, weaker sections, etc.
2.	Guidelines on Gender Issues in Sanitation, Swachh Bharat Mission (Rural)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets out government's intent on universal and inclusive sanitation in the scheme. • Selection priority to beneficiaries (Below poverty line, SC/ST, women headed households, people with disabilities etc) • Recognises special concerns of women and young girls i.e., menstrual health management, special access needs of elderly women, BCC for men and boys. • Mentions women & transgender as 'Cleanliness Champions.'
3.	Draft National Water Framework Bill, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial water management to reduce industries' water footprint through rainwater harvesting, reuse and recycle. • Prioritises people centred water management.

S. No.	Policy/ program	Key Features
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve non-discriminatory working relationships between community institutions and local governance for water related activities. • Calls for appropriate treatment and use of wastewater and its gainful utilisation through government institutions run economic models. • Promote sustainability of recycle-reduce-reuse of water resources while adhering to principles of equity
4.	Guidelines for Improving Water Use Efficiency in Irrigation, Domestic and Industrial Sectors, 2014, Central Water Commission and Central Ground Water Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action points and measures to improve efficiencies of water use through water conservation procedures, minimising of water losses and prevention of water wastage in irrigation, domestic & industrial sectors. • Domestic sector guideline - water audit of potable water supply, bulk metering system, water reuse, institutional policy reforms, trainings of ULBs, mass public awareness, participation from communities especially women. • Industrial sector guideline-mandates water recycling and effluent treatment for industries and preparation of water management plans, etc.
5.	The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibits construction/maintenance of insanitary latrines, and employment of any person for manual scavenging or hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks • Employer to fulfil obligation of providing protective gear, safe cleaning devices to workers in mechanised sanitation; ensure observance of safety precautions as prescribed by the law when exposed to toxic gases from sewers and septic tanks
6.	National Action Plan for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulated under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment suggests a convergence with AMRUT, NULM and <i>Swachh Bharat</i> Mission (SBM) in the ULBs for modernisation of sewer systems, procurement of equipment and machinery for mechanised cleaning of sewers and septic tanks. • Aims to enumerate and upskill sanitation workers across 500 AMRUT cities. • Collectivise sanitation workers in SHGs to run sanitation enterprises and livelihood assistance subsidies to workers and SHGs including women beneficiaries.
7.	National Mission on Sustainable Habitat, under Nation Climate Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims to make cities sustainable through improvement in energy efficiency, recycling of material, urban waste management including waste-water use, sewage utilisation and other recycling options.
8.	The Smart City Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims to promote cities with core infrastructure, clean, sustainable, and inclusive environment and apply smart solutions in waste management and water treatment resulting in a decent quality of life. • Core infrastructure elements for smart cities include adequate water supply, sanitation, safety, and security of citizens, particularly women, children and the elderly.
9.	Jal Shakti Abhiyan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mission mode water conservation campaign, with focus in water stressed districts of India through implementation of targeted interventions covering:

S. No.	Policy/ program	Key Features
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - urban waste-water reuse for industrial and agricultural purposes, municipalities to pass by-laws on separation of grey and black water; - Catch the rain campaign for saving and conserving rainwater with states and stakeholders to create rainwater harvesting structures through people's participation; - Renovation of traditional water bodies; and - Awareness campaigns on asset creation, with focus on youth.
10.	Swachh Bharat Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National flagship programme on making India Open Defecation Free (ODF) for cleanliness, hygiene and a better quality of life. Under ODF, urban component encompasses faecal sludge and septage management. • Special focus on including women and women agencies.
11.	Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces poverty and vulnerability of urban poor households by enabling them access gainful self-employment and skilled wage opportunities through grassroots and pro poor institutions especially women led SHGs and federations. • Convergence between NULM and SBM for sanitation-oriented livelihoods especially for marginalised communities including women, poor households and sanitation workers.

2.5 Road Map for Coverage of Women and Slum Settlements with Water Supply and Sanitation for AMRUT 2.0

1. Identify and Regularly Map GESI Beneficiaries for Priority Setting

AMRUT prioritizes households of informal settlements and low-income groups while formulating admissible projects for achieving functional outcomes. However, such settlements are ever evolving demographically; and not necessarily well mapped. Moreover, many small towns and cities with high bulk of tourists and floating population are ever expanding geographically bringing peri-urban and rural areas to newly defined city limits. GESI groups including poor women, women headed households, migrants, social identity groups, disabled persons, elderly, nomadic and de-notified communities, pastoral communities, people with different sexual orientation, etc. and those living in slums tend to remain invisible in official statistics for many cities.

The Census of India and similar such surveys enumerates important data sources like total female households in urban areas (classified by source and location of drinking water and availability of electricity and latrine) and (classified by availability of bathing facility and type of drainage connectivity for wastewater outlet), etc. These datasets are often either outdated references or do not indicate the on-ground reality due to the dynamic nature of low-income settlements with new waves of migrants arriving regularly. In addition, many slum dwellers, especially tenants on rented spaces, are observed to possess inadequate documentary proof

about their residential, social and economic status. This inadvertently impacts their entitlements to basic urban service provisions like tap connections and in-situ toilets, making them more marginalized in the process. Resultantly, while some settlements are recorded as 'notified' and 'identified' slums, other settlements and small clusters remain unaccountable for service provisions. It becomes imperative to:

- i. Undertake or commission **special local household profiling surveys** to constantly identify and map such underserved areas of the cities on a regular basis.
- ii. Make use of Participatory mapping tools like the Participatory Identification of Poor¹⁸ and Participatory Vulnerability Mapping¹⁹ which are well tested methods for identifying poor households and their vulnerabilities. These tools, which are well utilized in some government programs and several third sector agencies can be employed along with surveys.
- iii. Maintain a **mandatory GESI Atlas** of such settlements at each ULB or city level.
- iv. **Involve local governance structures** like Slum Welfare Associations, *Mohalla Samitis*, Resident Welfare Associations and NGOs in conducting enumeration and aid in providing necessary documentary proof support especially to new migrants.
- v. **Cross-validate slum households with beneficiary lists** prepared and verified by other women centric schemes like *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana* (PMAY), SBM, NULM, etc.
- vi. Record and analyze surveyed data at **GESI disaggregated level** and utilize findings at the time of formulating admissible projects and when providing connections.
- vii. Commit to a **preference/ priority criterion for women and disadvantage groups** in admissible projects for possible waivers, concessions, incentives, and levy of user charges for safeguarding interest of most vulnerable. Mission may explore and contextualize the preference especially for migrants, poor, widows, PWDs, SC/ST and OBCs.
- viii. Consider targeting preference and priority for those poor households having **inadequate documentation** and living in precarious settlements or housing conditions **who cannot willfully access and apply for services** from the ULBs and parastatal

¹⁸ Participatory Identification of Poor is a process adopted by some government led rural programs like National Rural Livelihood Mission that helps in identifying and organizing poorest of the poor communities in a participatory manner. Such schemes have successfully identified vulnerable households of SC/ST (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups), single women, women headed households, PWDs, landless, migrant laborer, isolated communities, minority communities, communities living in difficult areas (flood prone, drought prone, Naxal affected, etc.). The participative identification of poor process involves steps like community mobilization, identification and consultations with key respondents, transect walks, social mapping, triangulation, ratification of household lists.

¹⁹ Participatory Vulnerability Mapping has several practical applications including analysis of communities' vulnerability for disaster risks and climate-change adaptation, housing stock and habitat vulnerability and access to basic services and resources like education, livelihood opportunities and health etc.

agencies like refugees, migrants, deserted women, persons with protection concerns, etc.

2. Evaluate Detailed Project Reports with a GESI Lens for All Potential Benefits in the Admissible Projects

The Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) are the corner stone of determining projects under City Water Action Plans and State Water Action Plans for AMRUT 2.0. The DPRs that are currently being prepared by the states do not have a standard practice of screening the project with a GESI lens; thereby losing all potential community and GESI driven benefits that are otherwise possible to achieve in local contexts (See Box 1). It is thus recommended that all nuances that can positively impact local communities and socially integrate them manifold must be declared at the very onset in the DPRs ensuring greater buy-in from the cities and States.

- i. States adopt a standardized practice of detailed project report (DPR) screening with a **mandatory criterion** on enlisting all possible GESI related inclusive and transformative outcomes. The DPRs can then be scrutinized with a **screening checklist** before they are finalized.
- ii. The DPRs dedicate a section detailing all localized gender and social nuances and a **GESI analysis** through which potential benefits can be recognized and leveraged in the projects.
- iii. Declare GESI commitments at the very onset in DPRs for greater buy-in from the cities and the communities alike.
- iv. Train and sensitize stakeholders like Project Development and Management Consultants, State Mission Management Units, City or City Cluster Mission Management Unit and concerned ULB departments, Project Implementation Units on GESI related concepts and tools.

Box 1: Rejuvenation of Paltan Pukhri Pond, Tezpur- Assam

The DPR for a pond rejuvenation project in Tezpur suggests a necessity criterion of bringing ‘*benefit the people of the city after execution of the scheme which will give relief to the residents of the town*’.

However, the pond has a much larger cultural, historical and heritage significance for its residents including possibility of local livelihood linkages with women SHGs than just benefitting people as a relief measure. Moreover, the pond is surrounded by a lush plantation of **100 plus years old litchi trees** that have recently earned a **Geographical Indication** tag.

The Tezpur ULB is presently involving a third-party contractor for picking, packing, and marketing of the litchis. These plantations have a great potential to provide livelihoods to local women through NULM - Women SHGs. The ULB may consider contracting a prescribed share of litchi picking, packing, and marketing work. Additionally, some women SHGs in the city have received professional training in fruit processing and preservation under NULM that can be well leveraged for converting the GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION tagged litchi produce for making fruit preservatives, jams and squashes.

3. Formalize Partnerships with GESI Centric Third Sector Partners

AMRUT 2.0 puts emphasis on involving NGOs, RWAs, CSOs, etc. primarily for outreach activities and is envisaged as a *Jan Andolan* (People’s Movement). However, third sector partners like NGOs and CSOs including women centric trade unions, grass root organizations, *Yuva Mandals*, Think Tanks, academic institutions, etc. can play a far more pivotal role in the successful implementation of AMRUT mission especially in identifying ‘hard to reach’ marginalized communities given their local presence and understanding of the underserved and demographically dynamic areas of the city.

Third sector partners can also be leveraged as on-field assessors for enlisting all households still awaiting water connections and sanitation improvement. Some recommendations in the involvement of third party to ensure a reliant coverage of such services include:

- i. Formalize partnerships with the third sector through an **Empanelment Guideline** with prescribed criteria and scope on their engagement.
- ii. Synergies where NGOs can be utilized includes:
 - (a) identification and social mobilization of beneficiaries requiring water connection and sanitation services.

- (b) Handholding migrants, women and other slum dwellers in the **consensus building process** of availing tap connections and sanitation services including those with weak identification proofs.
 - (c) **Service contracts** for maintenance and rehabilitation of community water and sanitation systems, handpumps and routine repairs for household taps.
 - (d) Support poor households in seeking **low interest loans** under slum upgrading funds or similar credit and saving scheme provisions for one off payment for new connections, extension of pipeline etc.; motivate defaulters to pay and help in revenue collection in remote hard to reach geographies for continued service supply.
 - (e) Provide water quality testing support and train willing candidates especially women and women SHGs.
 - (f) Conduct awareness and behavior change events amongst slum settlements, women and other GESI groups on safe water, sanitation, and hygiene practices.
- iii. Partner and learn from successful **NGOs active in rural and peri-urban areas** under the mission's Rural-Urban synergy commitment; especially where such networks are absent or weak especially in small and medium towns which are frequently sprawling and adding rural and peri-urban areas to their urban boundaries.

4. Make Collection and Analysis of Data at a GESI Disaggregated Level a Standard Practice

A thematic cross-sectional assessment of gender mainstreaming in selected centrally sponsored schemes by the NITI Aayog suggests that generating gender disaggregated data around women's ownership of assets and utilization of basic amenities and their migration etc. is crucial especially for urban transformative programs like AMRUT where such data is needed to be tracked and monitored.²⁰ It suggests that collecting gender disaggregated data aids in effective implementation of programs across states and districts.

The mission gives due consideration to universal coverage of AMRUT sanctioned projects to all citizens with emphasis on slums and low-income settlements. Urban transformation from AMRUT will benefit all citizens including women. However, in absence of gender disaggregated data assessing exact magnitude and impact of the scheme on GESI groups especially women beneficiaries and migrant dwellers becomes challenging. This narrows the

²⁰ Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office, NITI Aayog (2022), Gender Mainstreaming in Governance, Government of India. The report calls for the government provisions made for collecting gender disaggregated data, including (i) Gender Budgeting Act that should legally mandate all data collecting institutions to analyze and publish gender disaggregated statistics and (ii) the Draft National Policy for Women, 2016 that has proposed to mandate collection of gender disaggregated data under all schemes and programs.

scope for learning lessons and course correction thereby potentially hindering monitoring and evaluation functions. Some recommended with illustrative examples on data include:

- i. **Sensitize and build staff capacities** in capturing and analyzing Gender Disaggregated Data
- ii. **AMRUT MIS, templates and dashboards** to make robust provision for GESI disaggregated data capture and analysis.
- iii. Total number of **beneficiaries benefitted** directly by AMRUT based on their **gender and social profiling** especially from the slum and low-income population through the sanctioned projects.
- iv. Total number of **women SHGs benefitted** and collaborated with for asset management, water demand management, etc. through permissible projects.
- v. Total number of **women and/or disadvantaged community groups owned enterprises partnered** with (as relevant) through PPP mode, etc.

5. Strengthen Communities' Link with the ULB's Redressal System for Resolving WASH Related Concerns

Women and disadvantaged communities have little say in decision making matters including funding for water connections, participatory setting of water charges, toilet retrofitting and maintenance, and setting complaints on faulty connections, and compromised quality of services especially during episodes of water supply crisis. It thus becomes pertinent that their link with the ULB's redressal system is strengthened both internally and externally. Some recommendations that can foster better feedback on services and improvements especially for women and poor households include:

- i. ULBs to undertake monthly or quarterly **service audits** through community consultations and on-spot solutions by addressing concerns of women and disadvantaged communities on priority.
- ii. Engage third sector partners to work as an **advocacy link** between the ULBs, local governance structures, and the citizens especially women and poor households in resolving longstanding and persistent water and sanitation concerns and conflicts.
- iii. NGOs, grassroot organizations etc. to **build awareness and educate communities** on the benefits of offline and online redressal facilities.
- iv. ULBs to ensure a toll-free helpline number for redressal in **local vernacular** to promote ease of usage.
- v. Mandate recording of complaints and its resolution at a **GESI disaggregated data level for Pay Jal Survekshan** including indicators:

- (a) Percentage of complaints received via helpline number and online mode provided by the ULB (Indicator no. 1.7 A).
- (b) Redressal of Complaints- Percentage of Complaints resolved in 72 hours (Indicator no. 1.7 B).
- vi. Expand the **role of Water Champions** (either selected locally or through women SHGs) in resolving water and sanitation related concerns and issues.
- vii. Train women SHG members and frontline workers to be the **first point of contact for communities** for consumer grievance redressal.

6. Engage more men and boys in WASH Concerns for Gender Transformative Outcomes and for Challenging Gender Norms

While women are entrusted with day-to-day WASH duties, it's the men who control the family's decision making especially on household spending and financing WASH related services.²¹ Paying user charges is also seen as a domain of men and boys who can threaten to opt out of the services when felt economically burdened. Their support is thus crucial in improving access to such services in the lives of women and girls thus increasing their coverage in the slums and low-income settlements.

It is also observed that men and boys do not share much WASH related duties at home due to the prevailing social and gender norms. Handling such duties alone by women and girls especially in the absence of direct tap connections have systematically disempowered them. Social norms also prevent many women venturing into water related skills and trades, which are male dominant. Hence, engaging more men and boys in WASH discourses and such activities will steadily change their inter-generational influences, behaviors, attitudes, and skills in supporting more women in their communities on resolving WASH related concerns, accepting women into non -traditional livelihoods like plumbing and meter testing, and willingly accepting women and their agencies in leadership and decision-making roles in local governance structures and in their communities. Following recommendations include:

- i. Consider BCC campaigns that **promotes families and couples** adopting positive WASH behavior change as **role models** in their own communities where both men and women practice WASH tasks equally.
- ii. Engage male government duty bearers for WASH services in **capacity building trainings** with focus on integrating GESI considerations in planning, policies, budgeting, and regulations at all levels of governance along with women staff.

²¹ S Cavill et al (2022), Engaging Men and Boys for Transformative WASH, Part-2, Institute of Development Studies

- iii. Provide **supportive community spaces** for families especially men and boys to gather greater understanding of gender differential WASH issues faced by women and girls including health and hygiene behavior, incidences, and vulnerabilities of gender-based violence while accessing public toilets, etc.
- iv. Conduct **learning and dialogue seeking workshops** with stakeholders including government, NGOs and communities on WASH and gender topics with emphasis on male panelists sharing personal and professional gender transformative WASH experiences.

7. Bring More Women to Leadership and Decision-Making Roles for Achieving Water Secure Cities

Although women are the primary users and managers of water and sanitation services at the domestic front, there is a prevailing gender gap in their representation in decision making processes at a varying degree including tariff setting and water demand management, water related policy and strategy frameworks, water resource management, technological pursuits etc. Likewise, representation of other disadvantaged groups like disabled persons, elderly and migrants often goes amiss from crucial decision-making processes in WASH sector, thus ignoring their collective voices for special needs and requirements.

Moreover worldwide, women are poorly represented in water utilities, city water departments, as well as municipal and community governance structures. In India, women account for only 17% of the country's labor force in the water, sanitation, and hygiene sector with only a fraction of them representing roles in managerial, policy making, regulating and technical expertise.²² There is now growing evidence that having women in decision making and leadership roles within national, local governance and community structures have ensured more investments and efficient resource allocation in achieving regular and improved water and sanitation services thereby transforming social norms. This suggests that water security is more than just providing good quality and reliable water services and would require a more engaging decision-making process involving women and disadvantaged groups.

AMRUT suggests co-opting with women SHG members and working in alliance with local governance structures. Some recommendations for appointing women and empowering them in leadership and decision-making roles in the benefit of water secure cities include:

- i. Make mandatory appointment of women in AMRUT's three tier institutional structure for mission implementation and SWAP approval including:
 - a. Appoint **at least 1 woman officer in the State Level Technical Committee** for technical appraisal of DPRs and bid documents.

²² P Sewak (2022), How Water ATMs Breathe New Life into Women Empowerment in India, The Times of India

- b. Appoint **at least 1 woman officer/field expert in the State High Powered Steering Committee** for a range of responsibilities including approval of SWAPs, administrative support, capacity building, reform implementation, etc.
 - c. Appoint **at least 1 woman officer as a GESI focal point in the National Apex Committee** in a decision-making role.
- ii. Make a mandatory appointment (permanent or contractual post, preferably woman candidate) for a **GESI Coordinator** in the ULB's AMRUT cell for dedicated and concerted day to day coordination on all GESI related matters, due diligence and on-ground implementation in admissible projects.
- iii. Promote and seek appointments of deserving women candidates in **local governance structures** including Slum Welfare Associations, Mohalla Samitis and other neighborhood governance structures that are working on AMRUT related matters in city's low income settlements.
- iv. Mentor and groom women ward committee members where appropriate for taking strategic decisions during project designs and implementation work.
- v. Build technical and managerial capacities of the appointees based on their competency and expertise to exert influence in their area of work.
- vi. Sensitize and train communities on gender equality themes for welcoming and supporting women as leaders and influencers representing their areas.

3. ULB Level Participation and Engagement Framework

The standard GESI module suggests preparing a ULB level participation and engagement framework for women and slum communities in 4 identified areas (water resource management, citizen feedback, BCC, IEC). This framework in GESI module is expected to take care of the said support to the ULBs and para-statal organizations like PHED, Water and Sewerage Boards, etc.

This is an indicative framework that can be customized as per the local requirements and contexts. The desired level of commitment ranges from mandatory, essential to desirable; with mandatory are those actions that are being spelt in the operational guidelines or is a bare minimum commitment towards GESI expected from the ULBs.

Table 3: PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR URBAN LOCAL BODIES IN AMRUT 2.0

1. WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT			
Barriers and Challenges	Operational Guidelines	GESI Entry Points and Processes	Commitment Level
<p><i>Poorly managed water resources, water supply system, urban aquifers, city ponds and lakes, etc. increase the vulnerability of residents residing in low-income settlements with higher incidences of diseases, exposure to repeated climatic and seasonal changes, increased incidences of flooding, drought like conditions and other disaster related risks.</i></p> <p><i>Lack of awareness and inadequate supporting practices for water conservation, reuse, etc. impacts the demand side of water management impacts the quality and periodicity of water supply that leads to drudgery and time poverty of women from low-income settlements and impacts the communities at large.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building will be taken up for elected representatives, ULB functionaries, contractors & their staff, and citizens. The purpose of capacity building is to enhance functional knowledge and improve the job-related skills of targeted groups. Build capacities of elected representatives and municipal functionaries in recycling / reuse of treated used water, rejuvenation of water bodies and RWH. Build capacities of citizens including women and SHGs in water quality testing, management of water demand, feedbacks on functional outcomes. 	<p>CAPACITY BUILDING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide capacity building training to duty bearers of AMRUT cell on circular water economy including recycle, reuse, RWH, water conservation with GESI intersectionality. Record proceedings and participation rate of these trainings at a gender disaggregated data level Provide capacity building trainings, demonstrations and dry runs to citizens including residents of low-income settlements, women and women SHGs in water quality testing, water demand management, asset management. Determine a minimum mandatory percentage criterion for participation from women and women SHGs in trainings. Record proceedings and participation rate of these trainings at a gender disaggregated data level 	Mandatory
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make cities water secure through circular economy including water source conservation, rejuvenation of water bodies and wells, recycle/reuse treated used water and rainwater harvesting by involving communities. Green buildings At least one project's operation and maintenance of AMRUT/ AMRUT 2.0 in each city may be considered for deployment of well-trained SHG. 	<p>INVOLVEMENT IN ASSET CREATION AND MANAGEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensitize project contractors to involve GESI target groups including women workers in asset construction activities especially in construction of RWH structures, tertiary treatment plants etc. leak detection in water supply pipelines and explore the possibility of engaging women plumbers in last mile HH connectivity Seek convergence with NULM - Women SHGs and hold consultations with interested Women SHGs for O&M functions. Frame a standard operating procedure for terms of engagement with NULM-Women SHGs including modalities like activity-based incentives, provision of water quality testing kits, O&M functions. Identify and groom at least 1 well trained Women SHG in O&M functions and on-board them 	Essential
			Mandatory

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission will encourage smart elements like SCADA to be incorporated in every project. All water and sewerage projects will have smart elements. • Mission to have a sub-scheme for GIS based master plans for class-II towns with population of 50,000-99,999 (Small and Medium Towns) with three components (geo-database creation, formulation of GIS based master plans and capacity building). • Build capacities of town planners in GIS based master plans, other form based and local area plans. 	<p>SMART ELEMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and recruit qualified women workforce in smart technologies including SCADA and GIS mapping operations through new applications and skilling existing women staff. • ULB to publish such job announcements as equal opportunities employer with nondiscriminatory text with some preference for women candidates. • Ensure participation and sponsorship (where required) of women town planners on priority in capacity building trainings on GIS based master plans and other associated technologies. 	<p>Desirable</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build capacities of plant operators, plumbers, workmen and Women SHGs on O&M of water supply and sewerage networks, treatment of plants including aspects of plumbing, and plugging leakages, RWH and NRW reduction. • The ideal target for nonrevenue water of any ULB will be 20%. The ULBs that adopt and implement a mobile application for leak detection and reporting will be incentivized through this reform. 	<p>NRW REDUCTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and ensure participation from women workers, jalsakhis, women plumbers (rani mistris), Women SHGs etc. in capacity building trainings for O&M of water supply and sewerage networks, treatment of plants including aspects of plumbing and plugging leakages, RWH and NRW reduction. • Record proceedings and participation rate of these trainings at a gender disaggregated data level • Deploy Women SHGs and women workers in leakage detection, identification of damaged pipes and in mobilizing communities for regularizing illegal connections • Train communities especially Women SHGs, women workers, youth on ULB developed mobile application for leakage detection and reporting as an incentive-based activity linked to income generation or money saving in way of user charges exemption etc. 	<p>Essential</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects amounting to at least 10% of total project allocation for all cities with population above ten lakh (million plus cities) in a State 	<p>PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AND PROCUREMENT PROCESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and consider PPP opportunities with women owned enterprises, start-ups run by disadvantaged groups, etc. as 	<p>Desirable</p>

	<p>will be mandatorily taken up in PPP mode.</p>	<p>franchisees for water resource management routine tasks including meter reading, billing, consumer information, complaint redressal on helpline numbers, water quality testing labs, reporting and data analysis, other maintenance tasks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical inputs in the form of SCADA operators may be explored for women too. 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine flexible procurement clauses and waivers to encourage applications from women collectives, GESI centric NGOs, businesses, start-ups owned and run by women and other GESI target groups, Women SHGs etc. Laboratories owned and run by women. • Publish tender opportunities at most popular and easily accessible online sites and print media. • Provide offline information on these opportunities at the ULB helpdesk. 	Desirable
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief contractors on their responsibilities for equitable pay and nondiscriminatory working conditions • Include minimum mandatory GESI targets in concessional agreements for participation of women, migrant workers, SC/ST, etc. at different skill levels in temporary employment arising through project construction work and in O&M asset management. 	Essential
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-treatment of sewage/septage from nearby villages in spare capacities of STPs will be explored by ULBs. To facilitate this, National, State and ULB level committees on water/sewerage/river/water body coordination shall be represented by members of rural and peri-urban areas. • There will be a capacity building convergence between urban-rural where possible 	<p>RURAL-URBAN SYNERGY FOR WATER REUSE AND TREATMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve existing Water User Associations (WUAs) and/or Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSCs) in ULB level committees with representation from rural communities especially from marginalized backgrounds including women, SC/ST population on matters related to co-treatment of sewage/septage, their alternative use and awareness around acceptance of such use through relevant IEC activities which will appeal to the target beneficiaries. • Utilize WUAs and VWSCs as mobilizers and facilitators of capacity building programs where possible. 	Desirable

	Not included in the operational guidelines	<p>PARTNERSHIP WITH THIRD SECTOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner and empanel NGOs and CBOs to: Identify and map areas of vulnerable population living in precarious conditions and risks, local census of HHs in low-income settlements and HHs with most marginalized GESI groups (WHHs, elderly, PWDs, transgender, etc.) Identify recently settled urban poor families and migrants. Mobilize communities for participating in trainings. provide water quality testing trainings, demonstration kits to the communities and Women SHGs. conserve and clean eutrophied water bodies especially women collectives converting water hyacinth to income generating handicrafts and other utility items that can be marketed locally and internationally as well. manage and preserve wells and urban aquifers with local communities working as community mobilisers and asset managers in difficult geographies, slums and other difficult to reach vulnerable population. Awareness campaigns through schools for instilling positive behavior amongst children, youth, and parents. 	Essential
2.CITIZEN FEEDBACK			
Barriers and Challenges	Operational Guidelines and Compliances	GESI Entry Points and Processes	Commitment Level
<i>GESI target groups (women, migrants, poor households, transgender etc) are under-represented in municipal processes including voicing out their common concerns on quality of urban basic services like water and sanitation especially in underserved parts of city.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Pey Jal Survekshan</i> is a mandatory assessment and monitoring tool for mission's performance and progress. <i>Pey Jal Surveskhan</i> Toolkit ²³ suggests citizen's and municipal officials' feedback through a set of focus areas and parameters on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure and establish toll free helpline numbers, grievance redressal systems, feedback surveys and other online and offline feedback complaint mechanisms as appropriate to the ULB and vernacular context. 	Mandatory
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen link of GESI target groups (especially women) with established redressal system. generate awareness on redressal system and its significance amongst communities especially low-income settlements. imbibe practice of recording feedback and complaints at a gender disaggregated level during routine rounds of consultations in such areas. 	Essential

²³ The *Pey Jal Survekshan* 2022 Toolkit has been developed as a guiding document to assess and rank AMRUT cities on water security parameters and is available at <https://peyjal-india.org/>.

<p><i>Most of such residents have little access to information on municipal governance and procedures that can make the ULBs more transparent and accountable for their services.</i></p> <p><i>Marginalized women especially women headed households and women PWDs have no voice or influence within their communities and are seen to compromise on inadequacy of services.</i></p> <p><i>Consequentially, service delivery mechanisms to such groups continue to operate without a participatory approach.</i></p> <p><i>Moreover, collecting user charges from citizens in low-income settlements, poor households, and migrant households etc. can be difficult if city users do not receive quality service delivery, are unable to see improvements in services or</i></p>	<p>health of water and service coverage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General conditions for release of project funds from central assistance are determined on the actual progress validated through physical/financial data, photos and videos obtained through citizen feedback and third-party assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set priority for women especially WHHs, PWDs and low-income settlement resident callers for complaint resolution (for indicator 1.7 b: percentage of complaints resolved in 72 hours) Involve NGOs and Water Warriors as advocacy links with citizens for long pending issues. 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly document GESI best practices and innovations achieved through ULB efforts for <i>Pey Jal Survekshan</i> focus area no. 5 (including best practices and citizen awareness activities indicators)²⁴ as best practices, lessons learnt, testimonies and success stories. 	Mandatory
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with NGOs and CBOs for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> third party assessments for reaching out ‘hard to reach’ GESI groups and mobilizing them for collective feedback consultations support in screening/ hiring deserving on-field assessors. ToTs – so that their knowledge base gets updated, and communications skills are refreshed from time to time. 	Essential
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider a minimum mandatory percentage criterion for engaging with GESI respondents (especially women and their agencies, migrants, other socially excluded groups) as a representative case reflecting in feedback activities including on-field validation assessments, feedback surveys, photo and video documentation and third-party assessments. 	Desired
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek and hire deserving candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds as on-field assessors with priority for women, Women SHG members, youth, migrants and PWD candidates hailing from low-income settlements. 	Desired
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orient and train field assessors on probing and capturing unique concerns and service delivery gaps (e.g., HH coverage, quality, quantity, and regularity of services) faced by socially excluded groups especially women in on-field assessments and feedback surveys. 	Essential
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine incentives/ fee structure for field assessors on equal pay ethics; provide mobility and safety support for assessors to 	Mandatory

²⁴The five parameters of PJS toolkit include a) Water Utility Services, (b) Used water utility services, (c) Water Bodies, (d) Non-Revenue Water and (e) Best Practices and Innovations.

<i>have to deal with persistent unresolved concerns.</i>		carry assessments in difficult to access areas having vulnerable population.	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and seek tie-ups with Women SHG led water testing labs or similar women/other GESI target group owned businesses in the city for regular water health testing 	Desired
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold community consultations and invite feedback especially from GESI groups when deliberating user charges reforms 	Desired
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create GESI forums and Sub-groups²⁵ as monitoring committees to seek feedback, consensus and resolve persistent service delivery concerns and document them for future use. 	Desired
3. BEHAVIOUR CHANGE COMMUNUCATION			
Barriers and Challenges	Operational Guidelines and Compliances	GESI Entry Points and Processes	Commitment Level
<i>Prevailing attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and socio-cultural expectations perpetuate discrimination, stigma and negative stereotypes which is a barrier in achieving a universal and GESI responsive WASH infrastructure.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavior Change Communication under AMRUT 2.0 is envisaged as a key strategy for spreading awareness on conservation of water and enhancing water use efficiency among the masses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design/adopt/contextualize and deliver GESI training module for sensitizing duty bearers, PDMC, PIU and other functionaries in AMRUT cell. Record proceedings and participation rate of these trainings at a gender disaggregated data level 	Mandatory
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IEC campaign shall target persuasion of people effecting Behavioral Change Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design a community awareness campaign and training to shift mindsets and move from apathy to pro-active social response by using various IEC medium and formats (interpersonal, print, electronic, folklore, storytelling etc.) Prepare BCC collateral with GESI responsive social messaging campaign inculcating positive gender and social attitudes and roles. Design/adopt/contextualize a training module for engaging with communities for BCC activities. Social messaging themes to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivate people for safe drinking water handling and sanitation practices, health and hygiene at individual, family and community level. Attention to unpaid care giving gender roles, WASH duties and time poverty etc. 	Mandatory

²⁵ GESI Forums and Sub-Groups will be an institutional monitoring committee to resolve concerns and collectivize feedback on service delivery from local representatives including neighborhood governance structures, local communities, ULB officials and NGO representatives etc.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community engagement using 'Train the Trainer' workshops Community young leaders at local level may be identified and trained in 'Train the Trainer' workshops at stage 1. These leaders may further train the communities at stage 2 and create sensitization among community in water related aspects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and determine a minimum mandatory percentage of participation from women, youth, and other disadvantaged groups for train the trainer workshops as future leaders (water warriors) for sensitizing communities. Partner with NGOs/CBOs for identifying aspiring candidates. Utilize current capacities of Women SHGs, ward committee members (especially women), ASHA and Anganwadi cadre for organizing and moderating training of trainers workshops. Explore incentive opportunities for these trainers who would volunteer willingly. 	Essential
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audio-visual anthem on AMRUT 2.0 may be created to effect behavioral change in people regarding water and sanitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make/commission and run an audio-visual anthem on a range of platforms with GESI responsive content and IEC intervention might be explored. 	Mandatory
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not included in the operational guidelines. Gap Identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build partnerships with NGOs and CBOs for BCC campaign and activities especially for 'hard to reach' target groups. 	Essential
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not included in the operational guidelines. Gap Identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build partnerships with schools, universities, other professional institutes, and Corporate Social Responsibility wings of private sector to participate, execute and fund high quality BCC campaigns in their area of influence with gender responsive element. 	Desired
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not included in the operational guidelines. Gap Identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentivize BCC uptake in communities by appreciation certificates and award functions celebrating local change makers and exploring ways to advertise or make them public so as to encourage others to join. 	Desired
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not included in the operational guidelines. Gap Identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure participation and recognition of AMRUT partnered women and GESI startups and collectives etc. in city's investment meets to give them the right platform for exposure and decision making. 	Desired
4. INFORMATION, EDUCATION and COMMUNICATION			
Barriers and Challenges	Operational Guidelines and Compliances	GESI Entry Points and Processes	Commitment Level
<i>Residents of low-income settlements, women and other GESI groups are often observed to have little knowledge on government</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mission envisages an IEC Campaign for <i>Jan Andolan</i>. MoHUA to prepare an outreach strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt and contextualize national level IEC campaign and outreach strategy through a ULB specific outreach action plan 	Mandatory
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively reach out to urban poor settlements, women, migrants, youth, PWDs, elderly and other socially excluded 	Mandatory

<p><i>schemes due to lack of awareness, further shaped by stereotypical behavior, socio-cultural norms, and ineffective content that fails to address such nuances. This leads to missed opportunities, quick exclusion, and lower visibility as beneficiaries. WASH sector presents differences in user preference, access and service utilization which is viewed differently by different social and gender groups, further requiring GESI responsive approach to cover the hard-to-reach citizens and constant BCC.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis on IEC requirement for water conservation, water efficiency themes 	<p>groups with regular outreach sessions, demonstrations and interface meetings to address persistent concerns in settlements</p>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some important themes for awareness building to include: Affirmative action for water conservation practices, efficient and optimum usage of water and wastewater, clean water bodies, ground water recharge, etc. Awareness on municipal services and procedures for new water connections, especially in low-income settlements. Application procedure, documents for new connection Knowledge of water tariff system and user charges. In case of any grievance, where to lodge and redressal system. 	Mandatory
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll out social media campaign on mission's objectives and provide recognition to Water Warriors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and run social media campaigns on a range of easily accessible platforms including WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc. that are mostly utilized by all without unintentional discrimination 	Mandatory
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create content and roll out local level activities to suit local culture, practices, and vernacular/dialect needs through diversity fairs, street plays, WASH melas, quiz competitions and nominal awards, community radios, jingles, etc. 	Essential
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify, recognize and celebrate local citizens as water warriors representing (as appropriate) ward committee members (especially women), ASHA and <i>Anganwadi</i> cadre, <i>mohalla samitees</i>, slums under PMAY-U, slum welfare associations with woman migrant labor, slum welfare associations, <i>Jalsakhis</i>, civil society groups, RWAs, NULM-Women SHG, youth groups, student councils, community and opinion leaders etc. 	Essential
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission/make docufilms on the mission and share success stories of water warriors in the campaign 	Mandatory
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted marketing of collaterals to be distributed to schools, RWAs, Slum Welfare Associations, Mohalla Samitis, academic institutions, health workers, key opinion leaders and beneficiaries, etc. Outdoor campaign may be done to reach out ULB offices, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure targeted marketing of collateral is well distributed and consumed amongst beneficiaries of low-income settlements and GESI groups on priority in residential, commercial and public spaces. 	Mandatory
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider and commit to a minimum mandatory percentage commitment on outreach to such groups for tracking effectiveness of these activities and document them. 	Desired

	schools, institutions, railway stations, bus stops, malls, markets, subways, inside and outside public transport buses, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide extra counseling and advocacy support for on-spot follow-up questions (preferably in local language /vernacular) on collateral and during outdoor campaigns through kiosks, information desks etc. 	Desired
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not included in the operational guidelines. Best Practices and Innovations is a parameter of PJS 2022 Toolkit but doesn't have GESI focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document emerging good practices and case studies, testimonies of impacts and outcomes through IEC especially on the lives of GESI target groups. 	Desired
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not included in the operational guidelines. Gap Identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empanel and involve NGOs/CBOs to facilitate community mobilization processes and commission IEC outreach activities including collateral designing 	Essential
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not included in the operational guidelines. Gap Identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore Corporate Social Responsibility funds for running city wide IEC campaigns and promotions with women forerunners wherever possible 	Desired

Note: The desired level of commitment includes mandatory, essential, and desirable. Mandatory commitment is based on those bare minimum commitments expected from ULBs as per the operational guidelines in the functioning of the mission.

4. Way Forward

The aim of this section is to provide some GESI centric policy recommendations for AMRUT 2.0 which the states and the cities can integrate and leverage.

1. Implement All Outreach Activities with a GESI Responsive Approach

The mission views outreach activities (IEC and BCC) as a key strategy for spreading awareness on water conservation and water efficiency amongst city dwellers. The mission envisages employing an IEC campaign and converting it into *Jan Andolan* by engaging with ward committees, RWAs, NGOs and civil society groups, SHG groups, youth, and students etc. The main purpose of IEC campaign is to inform, educate and persuade citizens to realize their roles and responsibilities in conserving water bodies, using water optimally, minimizing water wastage and for inculcating a sense of ownership of water supply infrastructure. Since an outreach strategy will be devised at the center and adopted at the state and ULB level it is imperative that it is designed to meet the requirements of most vulnerable residents of the cities, especially those living in the underserved areas. Some recommendations include:

- i. Use of appropriate **gender responsive content** and **nondiscriminatory social messaging** that inculcates positive gender attitudes and social behavior change.
- ii. Usefulness of IEC material and interactive activities based on **local cultural contexts**, traditional practices, vernacular and ease of dialect, local appeal etc. (i.e., fairs, wall painting, community level competitions, storytelling, and narratives etc.)
- iii. Establish IEC and BCC **guidelines and norms for all public events and meetings** to encourage active participation from local communities including considerations like barrier free accessibility for PWDs, elderly, children and pregnant women, suitable location and time for women and migrant workers to participate, safe spaces for GESI groups to share their views and concerns, advocacy, and counseling support.
- iv. Establish IEC and BCC **guidelines and norms for institutions** (schools, colleges, offices etc.) for targeting audiences of different age groups with requisite content and messages.
- v. Identify WASH champions (Water Warriors) from **local communities** especially women and the third gender as the face of the campaign and celebrate their contributions.
- vi. Consider a **minimum mandatory percentage commitment of outreach to GESI** target groups from low-income settlements in the outreach strategy.
- vii. Adopt a standard practice of **recording feedback and attendance** in BCC and IEC activities at a **GESI disaggregated level**.
- viii. Document all **lessons learnt, testimonies, good stories, narratives, etc.** on behavior change amongst GESI target groups achieved through outreach intervention.

2. Make Pey Jal Survekshan a GESI Centric Assessment Exercise

The *Pey Jal Survekshan* is an important service monitoring and accountability tool for AMRUT 2.0 to assess the compliance of service level benchmarks especially health of water and household coverage of services in urban areas and other services covered under the mission. The *Pey Jal Survekshan* is central to citizen's and municipal officials' feedback through a set of parameters elaborated in the *Pey Jal Survekshan Toolkit 2022*.²⁶ The mission views *Pey Jal Survekshan* as a platform for showcasing awareness and perception of citizens through their active participation. Although there are five well defined focus areas²⁷ for survey score allocation; these parameters are yet to embrace an assessment from a GESI lens. Some recommendations that can make *Pey Jal Survekshan* a GESI oriented assessment includes:

- i. Introduce a **GESI centric sub-indicator** in the 'Best Practices and Innovation' Focus Area²⁸ for assessment of all quantitative and qualitative impacts it could create in the lives of most vulnerable and socially excluded groups on relevant service level parameters.
- ii. Mandate sub-indicator 5.2: Citizens Awareness Activities 5.4: Best Practices to have a **dedicated assessment on GESI related impacts** with GESI disaggregated data analysis.
- iii. Consider a **minimum mandatory percentage of representative feedback and responses from women beneficiaries and Women SHGs** in on-field validation assessments for citizen feedback surveys.
- iv. Encourage and award ULBs for applying **innovative community owned practices and solutions** in their projects especially for GESI groups for outcome-based results and funding.

3. Consider a Minimum Mandatory Commitment for Employing Women in AMRUT's Admissible projects in Well Paid Technical Jobs

AMRUT 2.0 encourages states to identify and scope out various projects under reforms that will utilize GIS based master plans and automation processes for water supply projects. The projects will utilize smart solutions like SCADA especially for providing universal piped water supply with household water tap connection in all statutory towns, and for universal coverage of sewerage and septage management in 500 AMRUT cities. Likewise, mission guidelines suggest state governments to formulate GIS based master plans and geo-database either in-house or through out-sourcing. Given this, the role of automation and smart features is likely to become prominent in AMRUT admissible projects in all states including monitoring of wastewater treatment plants, WTPs and STPs. However, due to a prevailing gender gap in

²⁶ The *Pey Jal Survekshan 2022 Toolkit* has been developed as a guiding document to assess and rank AMRUT cities on water security parameters and is available at <https://peyjal-india.org/>.

²⁷ These Focus Areas include, (a) water utility services, (b) used water utility services, (c) water bodies, (d) non-revenue water, and (e) best practices and innovations. The assessment will happen through a range of activities including validation through water testing sampling, feedback surveys, on-field assessments, etc.

²⁸ The best practices and innovation focus area has 6 sub-indicators with the total score of 300 points. This includes: (5.1): 24x7 water supply, (5.2): Citizen awareness activities, (5.3): Training of ULB staff, (5.4): Best practices, (5.5): Development of District Metered Area, and (5.6): Source of Water Supply- surface/ground/both.

STEM fields; these technical processes are globally male dominant and often misperceived as field oriented and tiring jobs for women²⁹ leading to their low representation. Similar scenario is expected in GIS related applications. Some recommendations include:

- i. States to consider a **minimum mandatory commitment** for employing qualified women candidates **in technical roles** including application of smart solutions in admissible projects.
- ii. States and ULBs to publish such job announcements as equal opportunities employer with nondiscriminatory text.
- iii. States to mandate ULBs/ para-statals to invest in technical trainings of its teams including women staff and women town planners.

4. Widen Scope of PPP Mode to Include Partnerships with Community Based Organizations, Women Owned Enterprises and Start-Ups

The Mission aims to develop water secure cities and mandates implementation of 10% worth of funds allocated to million plus cities under PPP mode which can be identified in the CWAPs. Projects with focus on selling treated water to industries and other users can be potential projects for implementation under the PPP mode. Furthermore, CWAPs are expected to ensure that 20% of the city water demand is met through recycling / reuse of treated used water. It is recommended that:

- i. Broaden the scope and term of PPP mode to include **Public Private Community Partnership (PPCP) models** where projects are undertaken by local communities as one of the implementing partners. These models will include partnerships with reputed community-based organizations, NGOs and women owned social enterprises.
- ii. Establish a system with which **Women SHGs can procure and sell treated water** to the industries including women owned enterprises as appropriate.
- iii. The PPCP model can also be explored for establishing **third party water quality testing labs** with women owned enterprises and start-ups or through third sector alliances.
- iv. Expand the role and scope of Women SHGs and CBOs in water testing and water quality monitoring activities to include drinking water supply, wells, aquifers, and urban water bodies for their rejuvenation and maintenance.

5. Establish Gender Responsive Budgeting for Effective Planning and GESI Dedicated Resource Allocation in AMRUT 2.0

²⁹ GE Digital Gap Blog, Women in IIoT: Bridging the Gender Gap. One SCADA Screen at a Time.

AMRUT does not include any gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) provision. One of the known challenges of adopting GRB in traditional sectors like water and sewerage is that it is often considered gender indivisible despite having a significant impact on women and girls especially those residing in low-income settlements.

Uninterrupted water supply, sewerage services, and related affordable tariffs in such initiatives are viewed at the household level rather than addressing women and girls' specific needs on priority in planning and design facets. Likewise, the third gender community is also left behind if not appropriately addressed in crucial planning activities including new connections, reliable services, awareness building campaigns and IEC. All these factors lead to an ad-hoc application of GRB in even well-intended programs.

- i. States under AMRUT may thus consider employing **GRB as a transformative reform** to their planning processes while determining resource allocation.
- ii. The program can cross-learn from other centrally sponsored schemes where possible including **minimum mandatory commitment of 30% resource allocation** for women and disadvantaged groups. For example, schemes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, National Food Security Mission and Mid-Day meals programs mandates 30% resource funds to women and girls beneficiaries as their priority groups.

6. Plan and Allocate Budgets for EWCD Friendly Features During Design and Planning Phase for Admissible Projects

Further to the recommendation presented above, determining resource allocation is design and planning phase for EWCD friendly features would be pertinent in admissible projects. This is especially true for rejuvenating urban water bodies and revamping public green spaces to give a satisfying, inclusive and barrier free experience to all users. Despite having well earmarked budgets for O&M and other beautification elements including benches and solar lighting, there is presently no defined budget for barrier free features which are crucial for certain users including elderly, women, children, and persons with disability in the submitted DPRs. Due to this inadequate commitment in the DPRs, the CWAP template for water body rejuvenation is not capture information on EWCD friendly features. It is thus recommended that:

- i. ULBs and DPR consultants include such GESI commitments at the very onset in DPRs to reflect them well in the CWAP.

- ii. Under the parks and green space development component, the CWAP template captures information on *Divyang* friendly features.³⁰ This aspect can be broadened to capture EWCD assistive design features including adequate seating arrangements, barrier free ramps etc. while for women friendly features need safety features like adequate lighting, safe spaces for child nursing, CCTV cameras and toilet complex.
- iii. Likewise convergence with horticulture department including local nurseries including women groups can be taken on priority as important feature.

7. Sensitize ULBs, Project Staff and Leaders on GESI Issues

If GESI related issues are not addressed in prominent nationwide missions, it will limit the trust and engagement of the communities it serves. This will eventually undermine the effectiveness of the program. Many a times there is a tendency to view WASH projects and their implementation mostly from technical and engineering lens without realizing that WASH is a matter of basic human right and social development. On the contrary, committing to equal access to WASH services especially in cities' most challenging and isolated areas requires informed staff and GESI transformative leadership which empowers communities especially women and disadvantage groups through careful planning and decision making. It is thus recommended that

- i. Prepare and roll out a **training module on GESI and WASH** for the states and ULBs as a mandatory capacity building procedure for all relevant ULB staff, including PDMC staff, PIU staff and those in leadership positions.
- ii. Decide for training material to be well accessible by all staff in online and offline formats and in regional languages.
- iii. Contextualize training content to match local resources and conduct refresher training with the staff depending on their acquired learning and translation to their work.
- iv. Make the manual a mandatory part of orientation pack when inducting new staff.

8. Map and Pilot a Range of Community Led Climate Smart Livelihoods and Skilling Opportunities for Women and Disadvantaged Groups under AMRUT 2.0

The AMRUT mission presents several opportunities for women and Women SHGs to seek a range of livelihood opportunities within the WASH sector through water demand generation and management, water quality testing, O&M of WASH infrastructure, community awareness etc. The mission also has a focus on gig economy whereby women and disadvantaged groups

³⁰ The National Policy for Persons with Disability calls for barrier free features to support independent working of individuals especially in public spaces. The Persons with Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, provides for education, employment, creation of barrier free environment, social security, etc.

can get a number of assured workdays and wages through construction and maintenance of WASH infrastructure (including rainwater harvest structures) under the admissible projects. Going forward, the mission may include community led enterprises and climate smart livelihood opportunities within its working with special preference to women, disadvantaged groups, and women's agencies. The mission may pilot test such interventions in some cities and then incentivize states to upscale them based on the outcomes backed with requisite skill trainings. Some recommendations include:

- i. Strengthen capacities and skills of communities including women and Women SHGs in **water resource and catchment area management** including water conservation, NRW management, and resource recovery from sanitation and wastewater.
- ii. Encourage and create **community owned or women led sanitation enterprises** as small businesses in promoting and selling organic by-products including bio-fertilizers from fecal sludge management for the use of agriculture, horticulture, kitchen gardens, nurseries, social forestry, etc.
- iii. Encourage and provide trainings to women collectives and community-based organizations to **clean and conserve eutrophied urban water bodies** with apt trainings on converting water hyacinth to income generating handicrafts and utility items especially in water surplus cities.
- iv. Encourage and train Women SHGs and small water enterprises (water entrepreneurs) in **decentralized water management** through water kiosks and ATMs with smart user-friendly features especially in water deficit cities and in underserved dwellings.
- v. Seek synergy with women SHGs, Water User Groups, Village Water and Sanitation Committees and CSOs from surrounding peri-urban and rural areas of permissible projects and initiate **small local climate smart irrigation schemes**, decentralized solar powered water supply systems,³¹ aquifer recharge management, etc. to regulate water resources and utilize permissible treated water for downstream use.
- vi. Provide capacity building and leadership trainings to Women SHGs, local governance structures, frontline workers, ULB staff and the wider communities especially women and disadvantaged groups to actively participate in locally tailored **WASH safety planning**,³²

³¹ As per UNICEF, solar powered water systems are observed to be effective in reducing the impact of declining water levels and in extreme weather events especially catering to larger population and institutions like schools, health care facilities, etc.

³² The GoI through its Swajal initiative (Community Led Approach to Rural Piped Drinking Water Supply) prepared water safety plans for rural areas with guidelines providing flexibility to the states to tweak their design and implementation as per their local requirements with a community demand driven process. The WASH safety planning in urban areas proposed here would need to move beyond the 'end of the pipe' testing to include water quality compliances, monitoring and surveillance in the entire regulation, operations, and management of water supplies. Such plan may include analysis of (i) probable health risks in a particular area through estimated contamination levels in the existing water systems, (ii) willingness/ability to cover costs from the communities, (iii) community satisfaction and their acceptability levels on water quality standards including public health

climate and disaster related vulnerability assessments and adaptation planning especially in cities mostly affected by floods, droughts, and rapidly changing rainfall patterns.

9. Establish a Convergence Framework Among Different Government Schemes with the Aim of Empowering Vulnerable Communities

Working in convergence mode is essential for the mission to achieve result-based outcomes. The mission aims to seek synergy with other nationwide missions including *Swachh Bharat* Mission 2.0, Smart City Mission, and National Urban Livelihoods Mission with common goals of livelihood generation, capacity building, behavior change, etc. of urban communities in water and sanitation sector. Convergence between missions will also give budget crunched ULBs a fair chance to plan and achieve AMRUT mission targets by sharing of resources. Enabling convergence with these missions will have a positive impact on women and women-SHGs, along with possible linkages with frontline workers and the youth across the WASH value chain including health workers, volunteers, *mohalla samiti* members, ward committees, and community mobilisers etc. Some recommendations include:

- i. Establish a **Convergence Framework** for AMRUT with well outlined commitments and **standard operating procedures**³³ for engaging with GESI target groups in a convergence mode for AMRUT activities.
- ii. Framework to include modalities on **O&M opportunities** and other **service contracts** prioritizing the engagement of GESI groups.
- iii. Detail out the structure and responsibilities amongst different stakeholders in the convergence including city mission management units, state directorates, ULBs, parastatal bodies, city level federations, other local governance structures, etc. and engagements with **community resource persons** including front line workers, volunteers, etc.

concerns and other benefits, (iv) reduction of NRW with focus on leakage detection, (v) constant and committed water pressure maintenance in the serviced areas, and (vi) communication pathways with the customers including information to communities on assets condition and management.

³³ See Annexure 5.3 on a case-study for Assam *Jal Sakhis* of Guwahati Water Supply Project in partnership with Guwahati Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board.

5. Annexure

5.1 Women's Participation in AMRUT 2.0 Mission- Note

Along with the agenda of water secure cities, AMRUT 2.0 mission encourages community participation with focus on woman self-help groups (SHGs). Women SHGs will be involved in water demand management, water quality testing and water infrastructure operations.

As per City Water Action Plans, below is the current snapshot of Women SHGs participation in the AMRUT 2.0 mission:

#	State/UT	No. of ULBs covered	No. of Women SHGs
1	ANDHRA PRADESH	51	56
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	4	7
3	ASSAM	3	3
4	BIHAR	61	177
5	CHHATTISGARH	118	147
6	GOA	12	28
7	GUJARAT	128	203
8	HIMACHAL PRADESH	12	17
9	JAMMU AND KASHMIR	1	1
10	JHARKHAND	33	36
11	KARNATAKA	51	76
12	KERALA	55	76
13	LADAKH	1	1
14	MADHYA PRADESH	89	155
15	MAHARASHTRA	86	98
16	MANIPUR	6	7
17	MIZORAM	10	10
18	ODISHA	75	95
19	PUNJAB	1	2
20	RAJASTHAN	16	36
21	TELANGANA	139	150
22	TRIPURA	7	17
23	UTTAR PRADESH	10	57
24	WEST BENGAL	120	143
Total		1,089	1,598

For ensuring more women participation, a concerted effort will be made to train women to test water quality in all the cities. As per AMRUT 2.0 guidelines, the training program will be spearheaded by PHEDs or water and sewerage boards under the overall guidance of urban development department at the State level.

To achieve women's empowerment in the water sector, women should get involved in the planning design, operations, and management of water supply at the Water Boards and PHEDs too. Women are needed at the technical and managerial levels in the water supply.

Different ways in which Women SHGs are helping AMRUT implementation:

1. Women's being influential within their community can help in better dissemination of knowledge on water quality, conservation and new government run initiatives. **SHGs shall launch simple water literacy program on the conservation of water** right from the household level to the community level, which shall help bring awareness among community members.
2. Women SHGs shall help in predicting the water demand management by **collaborating on conducting various door to door surveys** and spreading awareness on water use efficiency.
3. As a part of **Gig economy, Women labor force participation** are expected to help the employers/contractors in timely project completions. Their work in constructing and maintaining WASH infrastructure has built up capacity within the community while also generating income and livelihood for the settlement.
4. Being present locally, these women SHGs will help in **better level of project monitoring and assessment** of the activities under water infrastructure operations.
5. Women SHGs who have skills related to Water quality testing **can lead water quality testing in their ULBs** and further train other members of the community. This can also be leveraged for *Pey Jal Survekshan*.
6. Women's participation and leadership in construction of water structures and **regular monitoring, operation & maintenance of water sources**, tube well repair work, new water source development, water body rejuvenation, piped water supply, etc. can help the ULBs in achieving the desired project outcomes under AMRUT 2.0.
7. **Women-led SHGs groups shall facilitate community members'** linking with the poor and marginalized to access benefits from ongoing schemes and programs of water and sanitation and other social security programs of the government, such new tap water sewer connections.
8. It is planned to identify women working for SHGs as **Water Champions** for resolving any water related issues and also to spreading awareness.

Capacity building programs to improve Women SHGs skills:

To overcome the challenge of poor water quality, lack of hygiene, dysfunctional operation and maintenance of water sources, Women SHGs can undergo various capacity building programs like:

1. Water quality testing using Field Testing Kits
2. Reporting and surveillance
3. Water budgeting
4. Water security and Conservation
5. Community awareness and mobilization
6. Advocacy at the Panchayat level
7. Training of trainers on water, sanitation and hygiene and various water treatments etc.

5.2 Guiding Template for Embedding GESI Across Project Cycle

In addition to the ULB Participation and Engagement Framework, the following matrix is an indicative template for involving GESI perspectives and women and disadvantaged groups in all stages of an admissible project under AMRUT 2.0 which can be utilized and contextualized by the ULB staff as a guiding format as per the nature of the project under consideration.

Project Phase	Activities	Responsibility
Project Conception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize projects that will benefit local communities especially those in urban slums, low-income settlements, and geographically inaccessible areas. • Undertake GESI Analysis and Safeguards Assessment. 	ULB (PIU/PMU) Individual Consultant/ NGO/Firm (consultations and surveys in proposed sites)
Project Design and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutinize and approve DPRs from GESI lens and revise (as appropriate). • Provide and earmark budgetary allocation for EWCD design features. 	City and State Mission Cell ULB (PDMC and PIU/PMU) DPR Consultant
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek Consultations with Project Affected Persons and undertake GESI responsive mitigation measures, entitlements, livelihoods restoration, etc. as appropriate under national and state laws. 	ULB (PIU/PMU) External Consultant NGO/CBO
Project Construction and Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate GESI responsive clauses in tendering of all civil works. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>All contracts guarantee anti-discrimination policies and an inclusive working environment.</i> - <i>Core labor standards with equal pay for equal works and enforcement of zero tolerance for gender-based violence.</i> - <i>Provision for gender and disability friendly features (separate and accessible toilets, sanitation facilities in labor camps).</i> - <i>Safety training and personal protective equipment for all site staff and regular health check ups.</i> - <i>Maintain site registers with sex disaggregated data including disability (if any).</i> 	ULB (PIU/PMU)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and partner with NULM-Women SHGs and women collectives and NGOs for demand generation, water quality testing, asset management activities, etc. through standard operating procedures and terms of engagement with activity-based incentives 	ULB (PIU/PMU) with NULM-Women SHGs/NGOs/CBOs/ women collectives/women led start-ups, etc.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with and on-board WUAs and/or VWSCs (especially women, SC/ST members) for projects requiring co-treatment of sewage/septage in peri-urban and rural areas. 	ULB (PIU/PMU) with WUAs, VWSCs any other PRI
Project Monitoring and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish toll free helpline numbers, grievance redressal systems, feedback surveys and other online and offline feedback complaint 	ULB (PIU/PMU)

	mechanisms as appropriate to the ULB and in vernacular context.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hire deserving candidates from local communities as on-field assessors for PJS with preference for women, Women SHG members, youth, migrants and PWD candidates hailing from low-income settlements. 	ULB (PIU/PMU) with Women SHGs, local communities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and partner with Women SHGs led water testing labs or women owned labs for regular water health testing. 	ULB (PIU/PMU) with Women SHGs, women owned enterprises
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify emerging GESI best practices from Citizens Feedback and document results with gender disaggregated data. 	ULB (PIU/PMU) with ' NGOs/ GESI focal point/ External Consultant
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensitize project contractors to involve GESI target groups and local Women SHGs in asset construction works. Provide GESI sensitization trainings to Project implementation and monitoring staff. Capacity building and specialized technical trainings to town planners and technical staff in GIS master planning, SCADA, etc. ensuring participation and sponsorship to deserving female staff. 	ULB (PIU/PMU) with PDMC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with NGOs/CBOs, WUAs, VWSCs, Women SHGs for community mobilization and skill training activities where possible. 	ULB (PIU/PMU) with NGOs/CBOs, WUAs, VWSCs, Women SHGs
Information, Communication and Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt and contextualize national level IEC campaign and outreach strategy through a State or ULB specific outreach action plan. 	City and State Missions ULB (PIU/PMU)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and appoint Water Warriors from local communities including front line workers, local governance structures, ward committee members (especially women, PWDs, migrants etc.) and women SHG federation leaders, youth and students' council members, community leaders, activists, artistes, etc. 	ULB (PIU/PMU) NGOs, Frontline workers (ASHA and Anganwadi cadre), RWAs, Women SHGs, Mohalla Samitis, Slum Welfare Organizations, Ward Councils, Youth Organization, Students Council, local communities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake periodic outreach sessions and demonstrations in partnership with NGOs/CBOs, Women SHGs, Water Warriors, etc. for addressing local WASH concerns, awareness building, etc. in low-income settlements and slums. 	ULB (PIU/PMU) with NGOs/CBOs Women SHGs Water Warriors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish and spread awareness on GESI good practices adopted by the ULB through admissible projects through knowledge sharing workshops. 	ULB (PIU/PMU) Media Social Media Platform

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with schools and universities on social messaging and IEC activities on thematic learning including climate change, water conservation, respect of urban water bodies, reuse of treated water and waste) 	ULB (PIU/PMU) NGOs/CBOs
Project Administration and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine flexible procurement clauses, waivers and MoUs to encourage applications from women collectives, women start-ups, Women SHGs, trade unions, NGOs, etc. Identify or recruit a GESI focal point in the PMU/PIU for resolving all GESI related concerns in the projects. Recruit qualified workforce (with preference to women and disadvantaged groups) in smart technologies. Publish job opportunities with non-discriminatory job descriptions as equal opportunities employer through gender responsive HR practices. 	ULB (PIU/PMU)

5.3 Example of Convergence of NULM Involving *Jal Sakhis* in Guwahati Water Supply Project

The Guwahati Metropolitan Drinking Water & Sewerage Board was established in 2011 with a view to promote uninterrupted, hygienic, potable drinking water to the residents of Guwahati Municipal Area (GMA) along with the promotion of water supply and sewerage connections, meter-based consumer appliance and improvement of customer relationship.

In accordance with the Guwahati Metropolitan Drinking Water and Sewerage Board Act 2009, an MoU has been signed between the Guwahati Jal Board and Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihoods Mission to rope in women SHGs (*Jal Sakhis*) to facilitate house service connections and be the bridge between the communities and the Board for fast flow of information and public grievances redressal.

Prior to this, a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was developed under a JICA assisted Guwahati Water Supply Project, which outlined various activities for women-SHGs including commissioning trial runs for 8000 metered and tariff-oriented house service connection in 14 district metering areas (DMAs). The SOP proposes women-SHGs to conduct activities including: (i) public awareness and IEC programs, (ii) mobilization of consumer applications for house service connections, (iii) monthly water meter reading, collection and handing over the generated bills to consumers, (iv) helping consumers in on-the-spot collection of water bills through point of sale machine and bank payment gateway, (v) water quality testing on

periodic basis (vi) and be the first point of contact for communities for consumer grievance redressal for smooth communication. The SOP also elaborated on their induction, training, and incentive provisions for each proposed activity.

Through this initiative, the Guwahati Jal Board is now getting its revenue from the bill collection that is easily been done by the *Jal Sakhis* through their meter reading and bill generation activities. *Jal Sakhis* are also communicating regularly with the Board on matters related to public grievances and resolving them along with concerns like NRW leakages, thus bridging the gap between communities and the Board. In addition, *Jal Sakhis* are creating awareness amongst the masses on water supply project, and its facilities. Resultantly, the NULM-women SHGs are witnessing betterment in their social and economic life as *Jal Sakhis* through such gainful employment.