

Water track at Livelihoods India Summit



Jan 17-18, 2024, New Delhi

A. Track introduction

Title: Catalyzing Rural Prosperity through Sustainable Water Management

India's water crisis, characterized by a stark imbalance between its vast population and limited water resources, presents a critical challenge and an opportunity for transformative action. Home to 18% of the global population but with only 4% of the world's freshwater resources, India faces a precarious situation exacerbated by climate change and erratic monsoon patterns. This crisis, affecting both urban and rural landscapes, from inadequate infrastructure to over-extraction of groundwater, underscores the urgency for sustainable solutions. The socio-economic impacts are also widespread, affecting women's daily lives, public health, agricultural productivity, and overall economic growth.

In this context, the track curated by Arghyam delves into the potential of sustainable water management as a lever for enhancing rural livelihoods. It aims to discuss how government investments through various programs are not only creating physical infrastructure but also fostering new livelihood opportunities that are created for the maintenance of said infrastructure, ensuring water quality, and the sustainability of water sources.

By highlighting innovative models where water management has led to the enhancement of livelihood opportunities, the track will inspire a shift towards a more holistic approach to water governance. It's a dialogue about reimagining water not just as a resource to be conserved but as a vital element in ensuring the long-term resilience and prosperity of India's rural communities.

B. Panel Discussion – 1

Title: Decoding the Impact: JJM and SBM's Role in Empowering Rural Livelihoods

This panel delves into the transformative impact of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) and Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) on rural livelihoods. Launched in 2019, JJM has made significant strides, covering about two-thirds of rural households to provide Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) and ensure a regular supply of quality water. Focusing on service delivery rather than mere infrastructure creation, JJM has shown substantial potential in generating employment across various implementation phases.

The panel will explore how JJM and SBM are creating new opportunities in water and sanitation service delivery. With an emphasis on decentralized governance and community engagement, these missions are pivotal in generating both direct and indirect employment. A recent study showed that the construction phase of JJM alone has the potential to generate an average of 6 million person-years of direct and 22 million person-years of indirect employment, while the operations and maintenance (O&M) stage can add 1 million person-years of direct employment annually. This significant employment generation spans various roles, from engineers and valve men to pump operators and managerial staff, during the construction phase, and includes watermen, pump/valve operators, supervisors, and watchmen for O&M. The panel will also explore the challenges faced in sustaining these employment opportunities.

This panel will not only highlight the transformative role of JJM and SBM in rural employment but also engage in a discussion on innovative operating models across India, focusing on how they contribute to fostering liv



C. Panel Discussion 2

Title: Charting the Future: Sustaining Water and Livelihoods in Rural India

This panel addresses the critical issue of water availability and security in rural India, particularly in the context of the country's significant reliance on groundwater. With extraction rates exceeding those of the US and China combined, and about 70% of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) schemes dependent on this resource, the challenge is to sustainably manage these sources to meet the growing aspirations for consistent piped water supply.

The discussion will explore the complexities of groundwater management, underscoring the vital role of village institutions in effective water governance. A key focus will be on agriculture, India's largest consumer of groundwater, and its role in improving water use efficiency. This includes potential skill development in water-efficient agricultural practices, opening new livelihood opportunities for rural communities. Simultaneously, the panel will discuss the strategic role of MGNREGA in bolstering source sustainability, highlighting how it can be leveraged for both employment and skill-building in sustainable water resource management.

The panel will explore a diverse range of strategies and innovative models, emphasizing the crucial role of frontline stakeholders in bridging the gap between policy and practical implementation. By examining various approaches, the session aims to illustrate that source sustainability depends on the sustainability of the livelihoods it enables. This complex interplay highlights the need for integrated resource management, where the convergence of various sectors, schemes and stakeholders becomes key. The discussion will thus focus on creating a synergy between water resource management and the enhancement of livelihood opportunities, ensuring a sustainable future for both the environment and the people who depend on it.