

The Mission

Providing basic services (e.g. water supply, sewerage, urban transport) to households and build amenities in cities which will improve the quality of life for all, especially the poor and the disadvantaged is a national priority. An estimate of the funds required over a 20 year period, at 2009-10 prices, was made by the High Powered Expert Committee (HPEC) during 2011. The Committee estimated that Rs. 39.2 lakh crore was required for creation of urban infrastructure, including Rs. 17.3 lakh crore for urban roads and Rs. 8 lakh crore for services, such as water supply, sewerage, solid waste management and storm water drains. Moreover, the requirement for Operation and Maintenance (O&M) was separately estimated to be Rs. 19.9 lakh crore.

Learnings from the earlier Mission have shown that infrastructure creation should have a direct impact on the real needs of people, such as providing taps and toilet connections to all households. This means that the focus should be on infrastructure creation that has a direct link to provision of better services to people and this was explicitly stated by the President of India in his speeches to the Joint Sessions of the Parliament on 9 June, 2014 and 23 February, 2015.

Therefore, the purpose of Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) is to (i) ensure that every household has access to a tap with assured supply of water and a sewerage connection; (ii) increase the amenity value of cities by developing greenery and well maintained open spaces (e.g. parks); and (iii) reduce pollution by switching to public transport or constructing facilities for non-motorized transport (e.g. walking and cycling). All these outcomes are valued by citizens, particularly women, and indicators and standards have been prescribed by the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) in the form of Service Level Benchmarks (SLBs).

However, the pursuit of better outcomes will not stop with the provision of taps and sewerage connections to all (universal coverage). Other benchmarks will be targeted following a step-by-step process after achieving the benchmark of universal coverage. Such a gradual process of achieving benchmarks is called “incrementalism”. This does not mean that other SLBs are less important, but that in the incremental process SLBs are achieved gradually according to National Priorities. In the case of urban transport the benchmark will be to reduce pollution in cities while construction and maintenance of storm water drains is expected to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, flooding in cities, thereby making cities resilient.

Earlier, the MoUD used to give project-by-project sanctions. In the AMRUT this has been replaced by approval of the State Annual Action Plan once a year by the MoUD and the States have to give project sanctions and approval at their end. In this way, the AMRUT makes States equal partners in planning and implementation of projects, thus actualizing the spirit of cooperative federalism. A sound institutional structure is the foundation to make Missions successful. Therefore, Capacity Building and a set of Reforms have been included in the Mission. Reforms will lead to improvement in service delivery, mobilization of resources and making municipal functioning more transparent and functionaries more accountable, while Capacity Building will empower municipal functionaries and lead to timely completion of projects.