I. Introduction and Context

Country Context

The Government of India (GoI) and the State governments spend about USD 2 billion per annum, through various programs, for improving access to rural water supply and sanitation (RWSS). However, only 31 percent of rural households have access to piped water and 31 percent households have access to sanitation (2011 Census). Apart from inadequate coverage, quality of service delivery has generally been an area of concern. India has yet to achieve operational and financial sustainability of RWSS services. Key issues include: (i) Reliability of Services: Many rural habitations have declining service standards and coverage, slipping to ‘partially covered’ status, mainly due to sources going dry, or systems working below capacity due to poor operations and maintenance (O&M); (ii) Financial Sustainability of Services: Rural schemes continue to survive on large operating subsidies provided by GoI and the states, mainly due to low cost recovery through user charges; (iii) Environmental Sustainability of Services: Depleting groundwater table and deteriorating water quality are threats to source sustainability; (iv) Affordability of Services: Inadequate O&M results in partially functioning or defunct schemes, so that rural communities have to bear huge coping costs and revert to traditional water sources that are often unsafe; (v) Sanitation Coverage and Demand: While expenditure on toilet construction has increased, there have been
significant ‘slippages’ in the sanitation coverage status, with toilet use and demand for new installations being low, coupled with a lack of understanding by rural households on the linkages between sanitation, hygiene practices and related diseases; (vi) Decentralization Process: While the 73rd Constitutional Amendment directs service provision to be decentralized to local governments (Panchayati Raj Institutions – PRIs), most of the work of designing, implementing and operating water supply schemes continues to be with state engineering agencies through top-down, engineering-based, ‘supply-driven’ approaches, and with limited, if any, involvement of PRIs and beneficiary groups in scheme design, implementation and management; (vii) Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Systems: M&E systems focus mostly on ‘infrastructure creation’ rather than on ‘provision of services’, providing data on the number of schemes and expenditures but less information on the quantity, quality and availability of the water and sanitation services provided.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

The main challenge in India’s RWSS sector is switching from a ‘build-and-rebuild’ approach to a ‘build-manage-and-expand’ approach where the Gram Panchayats (GPs) maintain their facilities and the states invest in expanding systems to meet growing population and increasing demand for better and sustainable services. Recognizing the need to improve the functionality and sustainability of schemes, GoI has launched significant sector reforms in the last two decades, including the Sector Reform Project (SRP) in 1999 and the Swajaldhara Program in early 2000 for decentralizing service delivery responsibilities. While these programs have been piloted in most states, they have yet to be scaled-up and reform policies to be fully adopted. With regard to sanitation, the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) and the Nirmal Gram Puraskar (NGP - an incentive program which awards ‘open defecation free’ villages) are effective steps by GoI for promoting sanitation facilities as well as eradicating open defecation practices in rural areas. However, the potential of GoI’s sanitation campaigns is yet to be fully realized: some fifty percent of all open defecation in the world occurs in India, and a recent study by the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) estimates that the Indian economy loses some 6.4% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in India, annually, as a result of the high levels of inadequate sanitation encountered throughout the country.

The Ministry of Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation (MoDWS) recently launched the National Rural Drinking Water Program (NRDWP), emphasizing the involvement of PRIs and communities in planning, implementing and managing drinking water supply schemes, along with providing support to capacity building programs and M&E systems. The MoDWS has also prepared its long-term strategic plan (2011-2022) for ensuring drinking water security to all rural households, aiming to cover 90% of households with piped water. The strategy emphasizes achieving water security through decentralized governance with oversight and regulation, participatory planning, and implementation of improved sources and schemes. Sustainable service delivery mechanisms are a central feature of the program, with the intention that State institutions and/or Zilla Panchayats (District PRIs) will implement and manage large multi-village schemes, delivering bulk water to villages in water stressed areas, and GPs will implement and manage the intra-village schemes. The strategy highlights source sustainability measures, water quality safety, monitoring and surveillance, convergence of different development programs, and building professional capacity at all levels. MoDWS has also recently restructured the TSC as the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA, the Clean India Campaign Program) for a GP-based ‘saturation’ approach to sanitation, with enhanced cash support to households for construction of toilets, along with emphasis on solid and liquid waste management (SLWM) programs for achieving clean villages. The NBA promotes an integrated approach for planning and implementing the sanitation and water schemes, along with convergence of local programs like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.
(MGNREGS), for achieving the long term goal of attaining universal ‘Nirmal Status’ (clean status) by 2022. One of the key challenges now faced in the India RWSS sector is how to achieve the effective implementation and scaling-up of decentralized water supply and sanitation approaches. The proposed Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project for Low Income States (RWSSP-LIS) will support participating states with below average indicators for water supply and sanitation coverage in designing, implementing and managing decentralized approaches to RWSS service delivery, as already successfully demonstrated around the country and especially through Bank-supported state RWSS projects.

The World Bank has been engaged in the RWSS sector in seven states in India during the last two decades, with USD 1.4 billion benefitting more than 25 million rural population. The Bank’s main contributions to the RWSS sector over the last two decades, as captured in the recent report ‘Review of World Bank Support to the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Sector In India (1991-2011)’, covers a wide array of project activities and achievements across the following sectoral themes:

- Designing and implementing PRI-based decentralized institutional models for the design, implementation and management of RWSS services;
- Demonstrating inclusive, community-based, participatory, demand-responsive approaches to RWSS service delivery;
- Building the capacity of state RWSS departments, sector institutions, local governments, support organizations, local private sector and communities;
- Integrating governance and accountability aspects into project designs;
- Improving sustainability—financial sustainability of programs, water source sustainability, service delivery sustainability—and increasing community satisfaction;
- Designing and implementing consistent sector-wide approaches at the state and district level to scale-up reforms; and
- Enabling the achievement of ‘open defecation free’ villages through effective sanitation programs, advancing the household sanitation agenda and starting to tackle a next generation of sanitation challenges related to community-centric solid and liquid waste management.

The report also highlights the residual challenges of the RWSS sector that are currently encountered in those states where the Bank is engaged – challenges which are also present in the states to be targeted under the proposed project. The report recommends that on-going technical and institutional improvements should continue to be incorporated into the next generation of World Bank-supported projects. Of key importance are issues surrounding appropriate models for MVS, and how to link GPs/VWSCs into higher levels of government to support system sustainability. Current activities linked to water security planning also feature strongly as part of this technical/institutional improvement program. However, the single most important challenge for the RWSS Sector in India is institutionalizing and scaling-up proven policies and strategies that have been demonstrated through the various Bank-supported projects. While scaling-up of this approach is essential to the provision of sustainable water supply and sanitation facilities, it has been difficult to achieve. Building capacity at the community level and changing the role of parastatals from implementers to facilitators is not simple. Yet, not achieving this scale-up places the sector at risk of continued underperformance, inefficient investment, and inadequate and unsustainable service delivery.

Context of the Project States
MoDWS’s strategic program for piped water coverage has a special focus on eight so-called ‘Low Income and Lagging States’ – Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh (UP) and West Bengal – which currently have indices showing very low coverage of households with tap connections and sanitation facilities. MoDWS has requested World Bank support for improving piped water and sanitation coverage in these states, initially through a USD 1
billion first phase program for four of the states (Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand and UP). The existing status and other key features of RWSS in the four states is given below.

RWSS Coverage. Water Supply: Although data shows high levels of ‘fully covered’ habitations (Assam 56 percent; Bihar 90 percent; Jharkhand 95 percent; and UP 94 percent), most habitations are being catered for by community hand-pump schemes. Access to household piped water is extremely low (Assam 6.8 percent; Bihar 3.7 percent; Jharkhand 2.6 percent; and UP 20.5 percent). These figures imply that households spend many hours of time in pumping and fetching water, resulting in drudgery for the rural communities and a burden for the poor in general and for women and girls in particular. Furthermore, the shallow hand-pumps used are often associated with pathogenic groundwater contamination problems. In addition, arsenic, fluoride and iron contamination affect up to a fifth of the habitations across the four states. Sanitation: Access to household toilets is generally extremely low (18 percent in Bihar; 8 percent in Jharkhand; and 22 percent in UP). Although Assam has higher coverage, with 60 percent of households having access to toilets, about half of these are insanitary. The usage of toilets is also of concern in the four states (19 percent in Bihar; 8 percent in Jharkhand; 23 percent in UP; and 62 percent in Assam) resulting in a situation in which the majority of the population continue to defecate in the open. NGP coverage is on the low side, strongly indicating serious issues of sustainability. Environmental Sanitation: Village-wide cleanliness is a major challenge, especially in UP and Bihar. Various water-borne diseases including Japanese Encephalitis (JE) and Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES), are particularly severe in the eastern part of UP and are linked with insanitary village conditions, mostly due to inadequate management of solid and liquid wastes. In addition to these specific conditions, there are also the full spectrum of water-related and excreta-related diseases affecting the morbidity and mortality of the rural populations in the four states. Regular access to, and quality of, institutional/public sanitation facilities (including school toilets) also remain a huge challenge. All four participating states report high incidence of infant mortality and malnutrition.

Ongoing RWSS Programs: Investment Programs: The majority of the infrastructure funding carried out in the four states is for target/supply driven programs, implemented through the respective state engineering agencies. Technology: Most of the water supply schemes are based on hand-pump technology. Piped water supply initiatives for single village schemes (SVSs) and multi village schemes (MVSs), based on ground or surface water extraction, are generally developed to address water quality problems. Solar powered schemes are being promoted in Bihar and UP to address the acute power shortages in these states. Institutional Arrangements: The state engineering departments currently have primary responsibility for managing RWSS services. However, as per recent GoI directives, each state has established a State Water and Sanitation Mission (SWSM) as its policy making body, supported by a Water Supply and Sanitation Organization (WSSO) as the capacity building agency, and District Water Supply and Sanitation Missions (DWSMs) as the district support agencies. In addition, various steps have been taken in the four states to form Village Water Supply and Sanitation Committees (VWSCs) under the GPs. However, the capacity of all of these entities has yet to be built and linkages between the state and district level institutions, and the village level committees, yet to be established. Community Participation and O&M Cost Recovery: Community participation is limited to a small percentage of schemes in the four states. In UP, the VWSCs are active in a few GPs which previously benefitted from an earlier Bank Project and which were subsequently involved in GoI’s Swajaldhara Program. O&M cost recovery is negligible in Bihar and at about 5-10 percent in other states. Jharkhand has recently instituted a minimum tariff of Rs 62/household/month for household connections, together with a Rs 310 connection charge per household. Assam is charging Rs 50-100/household/month for piped water connections.
Governance and Accountability Mechanisms: Power and authority is vested mostly in a single department in each of the states, with an absence of third-party oversight and quality checks, compounded by weak sector information collection systems and monitoring and evaluation systems.

Major Challenges: Although coverage and related issues vary widely, the following summarizes the major challenges faced in the RWSS sectors of the four states:

- Building capacity within the state and district level institutions and the PRIs for decentralizing RWSS service delivery responsibilities.
- Improving community participation in planning, implementing and managing schemes.
- Upgrading service levels from hand-pumps to piped water coverage for more than 90 percent of each state’s habitations.
- Introducing innovative technologies to address issues of limited power supply (with many villages experiencing only 4-6 hours of electricity service).
- Addressing water quality issues in up to a fifth of habitations across the four states, including the presence of arsenic, fluorides and iron.
- Addressing water scarcity problems, including overexploitation of groundwater in up to a fifth of villages, especially in the cases of UP and Bihar.
- Improving basic sanitation (construction and use of household toilets) and environmental sanitation (village-wide solid and liquid waste management, including improvement of lanes and drains for disposal of waste-water) coverage, including the employment of innovative IEC programs, and alternative technologies and approaches.
- Improving O&M cost recovery, especially from poor communities and in situations where there is an absence of a formal payment culture.
- Addressing weak governance and accountability mechanisms.
- Some of the four states contain districts which are affected by violence and insurgency, which could impact the smooth implementation of the project, especially in remote hinterlands.

A number of donor/partner agencies are working on RWSS issues in the four states (DFID, WSP-SA, the Gates Foundation, the Global Sanitation Program, Water for People and UNICEF, among others) – but mostly with an emphasis on household sanitation and hygiene promotion programs. Challenges nevertheless remain on the collective sanitation agenda: to accelerate the coverage and usage of household toilets; to increase and sustain Nirmal Gram Puruskar status; to advance technological improvements for high water table areas; and to promote innovative and effective behavior change strategies. Furthermore, the ‘next generation’ of community-centric sanitation challenges related to solid and liquid waste management are of growing concern in the four target states, as they are in other parts of the country.

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Relationship to CAS
The project supports the implementation of the World Bank India FY09-12 Country Assistance Strategy (CAS), especially the pillars related to ‘increasing the effectiveness of service delivery’, and ‘ensuring development is sustainable’. The project is fully consistent with the CAS focus on the creation of governance and institutional arrangements that promote an enabling environment (including demand-side accountability mechanisms such as beneficiary and civil society involvement), strengthening capacity for publicly-provided services, and enhancing private sector participation. The proposed project will build on the experience accumulated in designing and implementing Bank-supported state RWSS projects in India (in Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh) and in other parts of the world. Since 1991, the World Bank has supported these states in piloting and progressively scaling-up RWSS reform programs, based on ‘demand responsive’ models, shifting towards decentralized service delivery arrangements along with building capacity of the states, PRIs and the local communities. These Bank-supported state RWSS projects have demonstrated a number of service delivery models for piloting and scaling-up the decentralized service delivery systems, including sector-wide approaches (SWAPs). The proposed project will support the implementation of GoI’s RWSS policy reforms and approaches in the target states, as have already been successfully demonstrated in Bank-assisted RWSS projects in other states.

II. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s) (From PCN)

The development objective of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project for Low Income States is to increase access to improved piped water and sanitation services for selected rural communities in the target states through decentralized delivery systems.

Key Results (From PCN)

The key PDO level results indicators for the proposed project are the following: (i) number of rural households having access to piped water services; (ii) improvements in O&M cost recovery and collection efficiency; (iii) number of GPs with drains and lane improvements; and (iv) number of rural households adopting improved hygiene and sanitation practices.

III. Preliminary Description

Concept Description

The proposed project will support the design and implementation of a ‘ring-fenced’ National RWSS program in MoDWS for improving piped water and sanitation coverage in eight so-called ‘Low Income and Lagging States’. The Bank will support a USD 1 billion first phase of this program in the states of Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand and UP. The project will be implemented over a six year period through a special window of assistance under the on-going GoI Program, NRDWP. The project interventions will be at all four levels: National, State, Districts, and Villages (including Blocks, as appropriate). While the capacity building component will address the National and the State requirements more broadly, the demonstration projects for decentralized service delivery arrangements will be implemented in select districts, to be identified by each state. A district-wide RWSS program with uniform policies and institutional arrangements, irrespective of sources of financing, will be adopted for the identified districts under the project. Given that the different project states have low and varying capacities to absorb the funds available, and given that these are states lagging in implementation of ongoing RWSS programs and with below-average WSS indicators, a performance-based allocation mechanism is proposed under the Bank project in order
to link the annual allocation of project funds with each state’s implementation progress and reform achievements. Such a performance-based allocation mechanism is intended to improve competition between participating states and thus encourage timely implementation of the necessary reforms and efficient project execution and disbursements – with faster moving states being eligible to utilize more of the project funds.

Key Elements of the RWSS Project for Low Income States. The RWSSP-LIS will promote decentralized service delivery arrangements in the target states with increased PRI and community participation, improved financial sustainability and enhanced accountability at all levels. A major shift from the ‘business-as-usual’ model currently practiced in the four states will be the decentralization of RWSS service delivery responsibility to the DWSM and the Zila Panchayat (ZP – District PRI) for MVSs and to the GPs for SVSs and the intra-village elements of the MVSs. Another major focus is on strengthening policy and planning activities at the state and district levels, with clear accountability to the GPs and the beneficiary communities. The existing SWSMs, and the participating DWSMs, ZPs, and GPs, will be strengthened and their capacity built to allow them to undertake their respective policy, planning and review functions. An integrated approach to water supply, household sanitation and broader environmental sanitation, along with water source and system sustainability programs, will be supported by the project. Interventions for piped water supplies will be addressed through the implementation of SVSs and MVSs, taking into consideration the availability and quality of local water sources, along with catchment area management for improving source sustainability. Sanitation interventions will address household sanitation, covering personal hygiene and household toilets, and community sanitation requirements including soak-pits, drains and lane improvements for disposal of sullage and wastewater. Interventions related to sanitation will be dovetailed with NBA activities at the district level. ‘Software’ activities, including information, education and communication (IEC) programs, will support the above interventions. Healthy home/village surveys will be carried out periodically to assess improvements in hygiene practices.

The government is interested in exploring Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for improving efficiency and accountability, especially with regard to the management of MVSs. International experience from Brazil and elsewhere as appropriate will be leveraged for building capacity at MoDWS and, at the lower levels, on monitoring and evaluation systems, on optimal agglomeration of service delivery models, and on others areas of relevance.

Twinning arrangements will also be explored for the four target states so that they can directly learn from the advances and approaches of ongoing, successful Bank-assisted RWSS projects in other states in India. The proposed project will support the implementation of the sector reforms and approaches in the target states, as have been demonstrated in other states. The following are the key elements and approaches of the RWSSP-LIS, as discussed and agreed to date with MoDWS and the four states:

- Placing GPs and communities in a central role – supported by higher levels of PRI, by state governments, and by local NGOs and the private sector – for facilitating, planning, implementing, monitoring and providing a range of O&M back-up services.
- Using sustainable, community or local government managed models for intra-GP RWSS schemes and using State-PRI partnership models for MVSs.
- Putting water resources security as a core theme of the new model, including increased community management of scarce resources.
• Moving the RWSS sector to significantly increase the recovery of O&M and replacement costs, and initiating contributions to capital costs, while taking full account of affordability and inclusiveness and while taking into consideration possible O&M funding available from other sources.
• Promoting green technologies like solar powered pumps for piped water supply schemes.
• Moving towards 24/7 water supply where feasible (with bulk meters in all schemes and promoting the use of household meters).
• Promoting professionalized service provision management models and/or back-up support functions for different market segments, based on optimal agglomerations of scale.
• Integrating water supply and sanitation with effective sanitation promotion programs for achieving ‘clean villages’ and for responding to community-centric solid and liquid waste management challenges.
• Effective use of information communication technology (ICT) in planning, implementation and monitoring of RWSS schemes.
• Establishing M&E systems with independent reviews and social audits.

Governance and Accountability Mechanisms: The project will implement a detailed Governance and Accountability Action Plan (GAAP) to enhance governance and accountability measures, including providing clarity on policies and on roles and responsibilities, third party quality supervision, social audits at various stages of project implementation, grievance redressal systems, beneficiary assessments, financial and technical audits, and monitoring and evaluation systems.

Environment and Social Assessment: An Environmental and Social Assessment is being undertaken which will identify and detail issues related to the environmental impact of the proposed project’s activities and will draw up mitigation measures as appropriate. A Tribal Peoples Development Plan is also being prepared which will guide how the project should interact with tribal communities in order to maximize positive project benefits to the same.

Proposed Project Components: The following presents the proposed project components which have been identified to address the current RWSS challenges and needs of the four target states:

Component 1. Capacity Building (15%)
Capacity building activities will be carried out for MoDWS and the participating states:
(a) Capacity Building of MoDWS: Increasing the Ministry’s capacity for planning and managing its National RWSS program, including strengthening the National Resource Centre, establishing Training and Technical Institutions, strengthening M&E programs, and conducting independent reviews of the sector program.
(b) Capacity Building of RWSS Sector Institutions and PRIs: Addressing sector performance through: (i) improving operations: service delivery models according to size and scale of operations (SVS, MVS); (ii) improving finance: O&M cost recovery, financial management and reporting, etc; (iii) improving governance: policy development at the state level with clarity of roles and responsibilities at state, district, village levels; building capacity and strengthening the sector institutions; exploring feasible PPP options, social and technical audits, independent assessments, performance monitoring, etc. Training programs will complement the above activities. Twinning arrangements will be explored with successful, on-going Bank-supported RWSS projects from other states in India as well as with TA from elsewhere.
(c) Technical Assistance (TA) to States: Preparation of detailed RWSS program, covering various aspects of the investment needs, reform activities, institutional changes, and management and operational capacity improvements.

Component 2. RWSS Investments (80%)
Infrastructure investments for improving piped water and sanitation coverage: 
This component will support investments for improving water supply and sanitation coverage in the project habitations, including construction of new infrastructure or rehabilitation and augmentation of existing schemes, with safe disposal of wastewater. These investments would be made in an integrated manner to include: water source strengthening and catchment area protection activities, construction of household latrines, soak-pits, drain and lane improvements, community awareness programs for improving sanitation and hygiene practices, along with incentives for achieving ‘open defecation free’ status. The sanitation component will focus on increasing coverage of household toilets and household and community-centric solid and liquid waste management. Most habitations are expected to be served by SVSs using local groundwater sources. The MVSs, mainly relying on surface water sources, will be taken up for habitations where the local source is either not sustainable or not of acceptable quality.

In addition, pilot programs could include: 24/7 water supply provision in peri-urban villages/large MVSSs/large SVSs, and the introduction of new technologies, including the use of solar energy. The project will support the universal provision of household connections, with meters for bulk water supply in all schemes, and the promotion of household meters, where appropriate. The RWSS investments will be limited to predetermined districts within each target state.

Component 3: Project Management (5%).
Project Management Units will be established at the national level and at each of the participating states to implement and monitor the program:
(a) At MoDWS: A Program Management Committee (PMC) under the chairmanship of the Secretary MoDWS will provide overall guidance during project preparation and implementation. The PMC will be supported by a National Program Management Unit (NPMU) headed by the Joint Secretary, for project management, monitoring and reporting, financial management, and providing support and technical backstopping to the participating states. The NPMU will include a high-level Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for advising and reviewing the implementation of the RWSSP-LIS in the four states and for reporting to the PMC and the World Bank.
(b) At each State: A State Project Management Unit (SPMU) will be established as part of the SWSM/WSSO in each state for project preparation and implementation activities.

IV. Safeguard Policies that might apply

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