

Sub-Theme: Inclusive and Equitable Water Governance

Topic: State Water Laws: Experience Sharing and Possible Reform Pathways in India

Background:

Apart from implementation of National Water Policy 2012 (NWP), Government of India has also undertaken several important initiatives aimed at strengthening water governance, improving water-use efficiency, promoting flood plain zoning, ensuring drinking water security, rejuvenating rivers, promoting groundwater sustainability, and encouraging data-driven planning and governance. Further, State Governments, primarily in whose domain the mandate of water resources lies constitutionally, have developed their own legal and institutional arrangements for management of water resources, in line with the local aspects. They have also undertaken a variety of reforms and innovative measures in the water sector, reflecting diverse experiences and institutional approaches. These efforts reflect a clear shift from fragmented, supply-driven approaches to integrated, risk-informed, participatory, and data-driven water governance, with greater focus on sustainability, equity, and resilience, and provide immense opportunities for mutual learning and knowledge exchange across States.

Objective:

- Provide a platform for sharing experiences on Water Laws and governance frameworks.
- Showcase good practices and innovative legal or institutional approaches adopted by States.
- Discuss how State laws align with the principles of the NWP and recent central initiatives.
- Way ahead to support sustainable, equitable, and climate-resilient water management.

Expected Outcomes:

- Dissemination for enhanced understanding, and possible replication, of the State Water Laws, including key gaps, overlaps, and implementation challenges.
- Identification of priority areas for legal and institutional reforms to strengthen water security, promote groundwater management, and support integrated river basin planning.
- Discussion on policy issues and actionable recommendations to guide States in harmonising their water initiatives with national priorities.
- Creation of a shared roadmap for capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and data-driven decision making in the water sector.
