

“Water ATM’s-Is Digitalization of water the solution?”**^{#1}Dr. Manju Chopra & ^{#2}Prof. Sheenam Gogia***^{#1} Director, International School of Management & Research, Pune**^{#2} Assistant Professor, International School of Management & Research, Pune.**Email- sheenam@ismrpune.edu.in***Abstract**

Water is the very basic requirement of all the lives existing on the earth. But, the ground issue and a harsh reality is that this very basic necessity is not easily accessible and available to everybody. Anand Shah, the founder of Primal Sarvajal gave a partial solution to it by the technological brainchild “Water ATM’s”. Water ATM’s are automated water dispensing units, which provide communities 24/7 safe water access. They are solar powered and cloud connected, thus enabling remote tracking of water quality. The program is aimed at achieving low-cost scalable solutions serving “Safe Water to All”. It uses Global system for mobile communications (GSM) technology and works on pay per use. The cost per liter of water through these ATM’s is 30 paise per litre thus, making this very affordable. It works on franchise model under which the cost of installation is around 9.74 lakhs per ATM.

The target audience is villages, slums, schools and public places. The pilot projects have been initiated in Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi, Assam, Chhattisgarh and many more. The main investors who are involved in this project are-L&T, HSBC, Nestle, Lupin, Honda, Cairn.

Though, many hiccups and questions still unanswered, but it taken forward with a healthy approach, Water ATM’s are the solution to rising and alarming water issues not only in India, but around the Globe.

*Keywords- Digitalization, Water, ATM***Water ATMs**

Water ATM’s are automated water dispensing units that provide people with 24/7 safe water. They are solar powered and cloud connected, thus enabling remote tracking of the water quality and works on pay per use transaction. It is an automated

water transaction machine that dispenses pure drinking water which is installed in urban and rural areas which do not have access to clean and pure drinking water. It works similar to an ATM; the only difference is that it provides water instead of money.

In India, **Water ATMs** are now considered as a consistent, reliable and affordable medium for providing safe water. Assam's Chief Minister inaugurated first **Water ATM** in Assam at Kodomoni in Dibrugarh. **The project had been started with** an aim to provide safe and clean water to the poor at a very low cost. The outlay for this project is Rs 9.74 lakh. The capacity of the plant is 10,000 litres per day that dispense around 500 jars of 20 litres each. The **Water ATM** will help to fill the gap between demand and supply of safe Drinking Water for the common people

Benefits of Water ATM's -

- Water ATM PROJECT had brought several advantages for the people: It dispenses safe and pure water 24/7 round the year and public can purchase water on the 'pay per use' basis as and when they want.
- These ATM's are mainly installed in – schools, hospitals, bus/railway stations or community meeting places.
- It helped in saving the time and efforts that people spend on travelling or standing in queues to fetch safe and pure drinking water.
- People learn as how to use water cautiously as they have to pay for it.

- It reduces the dependence of public on packaged drinking water

How Idea got generated and by whom?

Two thirds of the Indian topography has no perpetual river flowing through it, that had created overdependence on ground water. Even today three quarters of the Indian population still drinks untreated water, inadvertently leading to diseases and deaths. Thus, to overcome this problem, Sarvajal founder Anand Shah gave genesis to a program 'Water ATM' aimed at achieving low-cost scalable solutions serving "safe water for all."

Sarvajal" means "WATER FOR ALL"

Since the project of Water ATM was bound to be a multi-location affair with distributed operations posing a serious challenge to efficiently and effectively managing the project. Sarvajal team came with up with idea with the help of technology in order to reduce the use of contaminated water and all Indian Population gets safe drinking water supply.. It invested in community awareness activities while tapping into local entrepreneurial drive and resources by adopting a franchise model.

Target Audience-

"The basic objective of the water ATM is to provide safe and clean drinking water to

the poor people at a very low cost. The private hand builds and operates the water ATMs, and the community as well as the private operator benefit. The concept has totally reduced the financial burden of the government cost of the water infrastructure”, says Shekhar Moghe, Chief Engineer, PHED, Bemetara district, Chhattisgarh, but others differ in their opinion. The project mainly targets the following-

- Villages
- Slums
- School
- Public Place.

The Flag Bearers of Idea-

Piramal Sarvajal uses the latest technology in order to bring safe drinking water to the poor people who were facing the issues of safe drinking water supply.

Sarvajal is at the forefront of leveraging technologies with business practices in order to provide safe drinking water to the public. The project is based on purely market-based model sustainable in both rural and urban deployment conditions. Piramal Sarvajal innovates, demonstrates, enables and promotes sustainable water solutions for the public. They set up community level solutions that are locally

operated but centrally managed on a market based pay per use system.

Modus Operandi of Water ATM's -

Private Enterprise who want to make money are allowed to operate ATMs in their villages. They pre-pay Sarvajal for water, and pick it up to dispense into the ATMs that are located in their respective villages. Village People get their pre-pay water balances from the franchisee, who is allowed to keep all cash from home deliveries. If something goes wrong with any of the mobile network-connected ATMs, Sarvajal finds out immediately and fixes it, so that the public do not faces any issues of water.

Sarvajal's franchisee operating network is growing very fast. There are around 120 facilities in India serving more than 60,000 people. In remote areas where clean drinking water was impossible to come by before, this is more than just a luxury. People use a smart card, which can be recharged, to draw water from the kiosk.

A customer can draw up to maximum of 20 litres of water depending on his need and money is automatically deducted from the smart card, depending on the volume of water drawn from the ATM. One litre of water purchased from the kiosk will cost 30 paisa.

The Investors-

Various Indian as well as multinational companies such as DJB-Tata Power, Amrutdhara Water Services Pvt Ltd etc., are involved in this business. They currently provide drinking water to people in the range of 15 paise to 1 rupee per litre on a pilot basis. The main investors who are involved in the project are-

- L&T
- HSBC
- Pratham
- DLF Foundation
- Nestle
- NTPC
- HDFC Ergo
- LUPIN
- Cairn
- Michael & Susan Dell Foundation.
- Honda

Contribution towards Corporate Social responsibility –

It is a must for the companies to be involved in CSR initiatives and community Development. Thus, various companies went on a unique path and join hands with the foundation (Piramal) for setting up water ATM's in order to provide Safe Drinking water supply to the Rural

Population as most of the villages faced problem of highly contaminated water. The aim of the project is to provide safe and pure drinking water in order to save people from getting contracted to various diseases.

Water ATM's Challenges -

Since, the project had been taken forward with a healthy approach to provide safe drinking water supply to the people but, there are also enormous challenges ahead of this project. Setting up of ATM's requires significant relationship building throughout a given community. Many people opposed the concept of Water ATM's as they think ATM's were unable to cater their needs of both drinking and domestic water.

People also raised the issues that the cost of drinking water through these ATM's was way above what piped water costs. Also, it is threatening their fundamental right of 'RIGHT TO WATER' as clean water is and should a basic human right and people also raised questions regarding the commercialization and extraction of public water in an unregulated manner.

Consumer literacy is also the biggest challenge for the project as how to use the

prepaid cards for getting water from ATM's by the people.

Conclusion-

The innovative idea of Water ATM's has allowed the customers to collect the safe drinking water through ATM's by which many water-borne diseases have come down and a lot many changes observed in the healthy way . But, still the concerns of the people regarding the cost of drinking water and threatening of their Fundamental right 'Right to water' is to be looked upon by the Government. Also, extensive target outreach is needed in order to communicate the benefits of these services as; the basic necessity Water is not easily accessible and available to everybody.

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