



# CURRENT AFFAIRS



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## CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AMRUT SCHEME

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AMRUT SCHEME". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "POLITY AND GOVERNANCE" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

### Why in the News?

The World Bank projects that India will require an investment of approximately \$840 billion over the next 15 years to cover the essential urban infrastructure requirements. This funding is crucial to adequately support the rapidly expanding urban population, anticipated to reach 600 million by 2036, constituting 40% of the total population.

### WHAT IS THE AMRUT SCHEME?

The Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) is a national urban renewal initiative launched by the Government of India in June 2015 under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

### Objectives of AMRUT Scheme

- **Water Supply and Sewerage:** Ensure every household has access to a tap with a reliable water supply and a sewerage connection.
- **Green Spaces and Parks:** Enhance city aesthetics by promoting greenery and maintaining well-kept open spaces, including parks.
- **Non-Motorized Urban Transport:** Reduce pollution by encouraging public transport use and developing facilities for non-motorized transportation like walking and cycling.

### Components of AMRUT Mission

- **Capacity Building:** Focuses on enhancing urban governance and services through capacity building and urban reforms.
- **Water Supply and Sewerage Management:** Ensures adequate water supply and sewerage connections in urban areas.
- **Stormwater Drainage:** Improves stormwater drainage systems to reduce flooding.
- **Urban Transport:** Develops infrastructure for footpaths, walkways, sidewalks, foot over-bridges, and non-motorized transport.
- **Green Space and Parks:** Creates green spaces and parks with unique features catering to different age groups and people with disabilities.

## Progress and Funding

- **AMRUT 1.0:** By June 2021, 10.5 million household water tap connections and 7.8 million sewer/septage connections were provided. Additionally, 8.8 million streetlights were replaced with energy-efficient LED lights, saving 1.93 billion units of energy and reducing the carbon footprint by 8.46 million tons.
- **AMRUT 2.0:** Launched in October 2021, it aims for universal water supply coverage through functional taps for all households and effective sewage/septage management in 500 cities. The total projected outlay for AMRUT 2.0 is ₹2,99,000 crore, including ₹76,760 crore from the central government over five years.



## SIGNIFICANCE OF AMRUT SCHEME

- **Improving Quality of Life:** AMRUT aims to elevate urban living standards by providing essential civic amenities such as water supply, sewerage systems, stormwater drainage, green spaces, and facilities for non-motorized urban transport.
- **Ensuring Water Security:** A key goal of AMRUT is to ensure every household has access to a reliable water supply and a sewerage connection, addressing urban water scarcity.
- **Promoting Sustainable Development:** The scheme fosters sustainable urban development by creating green spaces and parks, enhancing the aesthetic appeal of cities.

- **Reducing Pollution:** AMRUT aims to lower pollution levels by encouraging the use of public transport and establishing infrastructure for non-motorized transportation like walking and cycling.
- **Capacity Building:** The scheme enhances urban governance and services through capacity building and urban reforms.
- **Addressing the Urban Infrastructure Gap:** The World Bank estimates that \$840 billion in urban infrastructure investment will be needed over the next 15 years, and AMRUT is essential in closing this gap.
- **Improving Health and Sanitation:** By prioritising water supply and sewerage management, AMRUT helps improve health and sanitation, addressing the issue of inadequate hygiene that causes around 200,000 deaths annually in India.
- **Promoting Cooperative Federalism:** AMRUT embodies cooperative federalism by involving states as equal partners in project development and execution. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) approves the State Annual Action Plan (SAAP) yearly, allowing states to authorise and oversee their own projects.

### MAJOR ISSUES WITH AMRUT SCHEME

- **Project-Oriented Approach:** The scheme was criticised for focusing on individual projects rather than a comprehensive strategy, resulting in limited participation from elected city governments and a bias towards private interests.
- **Governance Structure:** The governance framework was seen as overly bureaucratic, with key decisions made by non-elected officials, contrary to the 74th Constitutional Amendment. This lack of involvement from elected representatives impeded effective implementation.
- **Water Management Issues:** The approach to water management under the scheme failed to adequately consider climate variations, rainfall patterns, and existing infrastructure, causing inefficiencies in sewage treatment plant designs and water management strategies.
- **Urban Planning Concerns:** Urban planning under the scheme often became synonymous with real estate development, leading to the disappearance of water bodies, disrupted stormwater flows, and insufficient drainage systems. There were calls for adopting nature-based solutions and a more people-centric approach, along with empowering local bodies for better implementation.
- **Financial Constraints:** The scheme faced financial limitations, with a total budget of ₹50,000 crore over five years (FY 2015-16 to FY 2019-20), which was inadequate to address the extensive urban infrastructure needs.
- **Lack of Monitoring and Evaluation:** There was a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, making it difficult to track progress and identify areas needing improvement.
- **Inadequate Capacity Building:** The capacity-building efforts were insufficient, resulting in a shortage of skilled professionals and resources necessary for effective project implementation.
- **Mechanical Implementation:** The scheme was implemented in a rigid manner, without sufficient consideration for local conditions and city-specific needs, leading to inefficiencies and unsustainable outcomes.

### MEASURES TO BE TAKEN FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF AMRUT SCHEME

- **Adopt a Holistic Approach:** Rather than focusing on individual projects, the scheme should embrace a more comprehensive approach to urban development. This would include increased participation from elected city officials and a focus on solutions centered around the needs of the people.

- **Strengthen Governance Structure:** Reform the scheme's governance framework to ensure greater representation of elected officials following the 74th Constitutional Amendment. This would enhance accountability and improve implementation effectiveness.
- **Improve Water Management:** The scheme should incorporate a climate-sensitive approach to water management, considering factors such as rainfall patterns and existing infrastructure. This would lead to the design of more efficient sewage treatment plants and better water management strategies.
- **Promote Nature-Based Solutions:** To address urban planning issues, the scheme should advocate for nature-based solutions and empower local bodies to create people-centric urban plans. This includes preserving water bodies, ensuring effective stormwater drainage, and developing more green spaces.
- **Enhance Financial Resources:** To meet the extensive urban infrastructure needs, the scheme should be allotted more financial resources. This could involve innovative financing mechanisms, such as public-private partnerships and municipal bonds.
- **Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation:** Implement more robust monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress and identify improvement areas. This involves setting clear targets and indicators and regularly assessing the impact of interventions.
- **Invest in Capacity Building:** Increase investment in capacity-building initiatives to ensure sufficient skilled professionals and resources for effective project implementation. This includes training local officials, promoting knowledge sharing, and fostering innovation.
- **Convergence with other Schemes:** AMRUT and the Swachh Bharat Mission aim to enhance sanitation and hygiene in urban regions. Integrating these two initiatives can result in more holistic sanitation and hygiene solutions. While AMRUT concentrates on creating water supply, sewerage, and stormwater drainage infrastructure, the Smart Cities Mission focuses on developing digital and smart infrastructure. Combining these efforts can lead to more comprehensive urban development.

### Prelims Based Question

**Q1. Consider the following statements with reference to AMRUT Scheme:**

1. It is a flagship scheme of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, launched in 2018.
2. The primary objective of AMRUT scheme is to develop sustainable urban infrastructure.

**Choose the correct answer using the codes given below:**

- (a). 1 Only
- (b). 2 Only
- (c). Both 1 and 2
- (d). Neither 1 nor 2

**ANSWER: B**

### Mains Based Question

**Q1. Critically analyse the implementation of AMRUT Scheme. How did the scheme perform over a period of time, and what measures should be taken to improve the functioning of the scheme?**