

## **Investment Opportunities in India – From an International Perspective A Synopsis**

Two major international initiatives, the UN Global Compact and the UN General Statement on the Right to Water, provide a perspective from which to view investment opportunities in ‘water’ for the corporate sector in India. If to this are added the two major priorities of the Government of India, the protection and sustainability of water sources and the maintenance of water quality we have one of several frameworks within which to develop a programme of innovation and growth in the sector.

The UN Global Compact provides an orientation which urges the corporate sector to view investment from a **longer term economic perspective** which takes into consideration externalities like public health, a benign impact on the environment and a mutually supportive relationship with communities, rather than a short term financial outlook with its emphasis on immediate revenue generation. The implications for the corporate sector of the UN General Statement on the Right to Water are now being debated internationally, especially its relevance for situations with weak regulatory and compliance regimes as in India and many other countries. Both are attempts to broaden the current narrowly defined concept of corporate social responsibility.

If we now seek to apply these principles to the national priorities of water source protection and conservation and water quality then three somewhat overlapping areas, among many, suggest themselves as opportunities for further investment, which can provide a **long term return** from a water secure future.

For all industries but especially those industries which are water dependent for their products e.g. beverages, processing of paper, leather, textiles, electronic components etc investment in developing a zero water footprint system (incorporating rainwater harvesting, recycling etc) not only to ensure good public relations but improve plant efficiency and eliminate toxic effluents seems to suggest itself as an urgent priority. There are several good individual examples but this needs to be the norm supported and encouraged by organizations such as CII.

For organizations which are service providers of water systems, the development of efficient software tools for water systems management, performance monitoring and compliance to standards is an area of growth and future investment. To this can be added simulators for modeling, planning and training

For ‘enabling’ organizations which concentrate on components and technologies for use by the above categories (e.g membranes used so successfully in Singapore) there is a whole range of applications which call for newer and cheaper products in India but also more widely. These include the continued development of components and devices for water treatment (as space saving compact units for small town, rural and dense urban concentrations) and importantly for decentralized waste treatment (for villages, urban slum settlements and apartments) and disposal not only from domestic sources but from small and medium process industries, for water testing and for groundwater mapping.

With 23 million bore wells in India, opportunities surely exist for improvements in drilling technologies, casing design and efficient pumps and water storage units. Mandated Government policies on the promotion of rainwater harvesting offer further scope for a market for small rainwater filters at domestic and institutional levels.

With an estimated Indian Rupees 300 billion planned to be spent over the next 5 years on urban water and sanitation projects under various central Government of India schemes, there is enormous scope for investment.

One final area for investment in India is in knowledge institutions which provide the trained personnel, designs, technologies and systems for the future. This has been recognized by the IT sector in India. There is good reason for others to follow this example.

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