



ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS

UNLOCKING POTENTIALS

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About NITI Aayog:

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog has been mandated to function as the premier think-tank of the Government of India.



“We are living in an era of immense possibilities which in turn creates opportunities. We need to identify existing aspirations in the districts and channelise them to create a ripple effect for transforming Aspirational Districts. The development of every village of these 115 districts is vital to our commitment to social justice.”

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

January 5th, 2018
Dr. Ambedkar International Centre
New Delhi



PREFACE

Aspirational Districts: Transforming India, One District at a Time

Amitabh Kant

CEO, NITI Aayog

It is a well-known fact that India is on a high economic growth trajectory. What was urgently needed however was the enhancement of the Human Development Index and reduction in the significant inter-state and inter-district variations in development. For this to happen, the Prime Minister felt that focused interventions were necessary where the need was greatest, and launched the 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' programme in January 2018.

The programme hinges on expeditiously transforming 115 districts that were identified from across 28 states, in a transparent manner. There are three core aspects that frame the structure of the programme – Convergence (of Central & State Schemes), Collaboration (of Central, State-level 'Prabhari' Officers & District Collectors), and Competition among districts. Driven primarily by the States and instituted for the States, this initiative focuses on the strengths of each district, and identifies the attainable outcomes for immediate improvement, while measuring progress and ranking the selected districts.

Operationally, officers at the level of Additional Secretary have been nominated to become 'Central Prabhari Officers' of each district, while States have appointed State nodal and Prabhari officers. An Empowered Committee under my Convenorship has been instituted to help in the convergence of various government schemes and streamlining of efforts. The districts were considered after consultation with State Officials, using a composite index of key data sets. The Prabhari Officers provide feedback and recommendations based on their findings, and the Empowered Committee will then make necessary amendments on an ongoing basis. This will ensure the effective utilisation of flexi-funds for districts under the programme.

To optimally utilise potential and ensure that a New India by 2022 is a part of every individual's vision, especially in the rural areas, this initiative focuses closely on improving people's ability to participate fully in the rapidly growing economy. After several rounds of consultations, it was decided that the baseline ranking for the 115 Aspirational Districts would be based on 49 indicators across five sectors that include health and nutrition (30% weightage) through 13 indicators, education (30%) through 8 indicators, agriculture and water resources (20%) through 10 indicators, financial inclusion and skill development (10%) through 10 indicators, and basic infrastructure (10%) through 7 indicators.

The districts were selected through a transparent process, with the capacity of States kept in mind. 50 districts are allocated across 12 Ministries. 35 districts that are in the Left Wing Extremist Areas are allocated to the Ministry of Home Affairs, and 30 districts have been allocated to NITI Aayog.

There will be an Annual Ranking of performance of districts. Objective & measurable indicators have been identified in focus sectors. These are going to be benchmarked with the best-performing districts in India. Since the progress will be captured on a real-time basis, a dashboard has been formulated that features a real-time monitoring mechanism. The assumptions underlying this strategy are as follows:- a) what is measured is expected to improve rapidly across states; b) a co-operative competition among districts is a vital strategy; and c) eventually, this initiative is expected to help fine-tune the implementation of Government programmes.

As of April 1st, 2018, districts have started entering data onto the dashboard. To help evaluate progress and the success of initiatives introduced by the Central Government in collaboration with the States, a ranking of these districts will be displayed every month from May 2018 on the dashboard, based on the incremental progress, or the delta, to be monitored on a real-time basis. To ensure transparency, the dashboard will be open to the public to monitor the progress of the Aspirational Districts. Among other benefits, senior officials have felt that the initiative will highlight the importance of convergence of the efforts of ASHA, ANM and Anganwadi workers, and that social capital can make a remarkable difference given the fact that 8,603 Gram Panchayats are covered in the Aspirational Districts.

This programme is non-partisan and completely unbiased. It is an all-India initiative meant to trigger equitable growth and development in every corner of the country. Simply put, it is an unprecedented achievement for e-monitoring, governance and productive use of real-time data through a participatory method that involves everyone. Something like this has never before been attempted let alone achieved, and this is the first step in ensuring a national inclusive development strategy that is broad-based and ensures that no district is left behind.

Don't mistake this merely as a name-and-shame module – this is far more than that. This is essentially a competitive federalism and synergy-enhancing module that will eventually give every corner of India – rural or urban – a chance to exceed its own aspirations, and a platform to be heard and where required, helped. The initiative is supported by prestigious partners in programme implementation which provide ground level support, like the Tata Trust, Piramal Foundation, ITC, and L&T, as well as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and IDinsight to conduct surveys. These partners will ably support the programme through leadership development, change management, technology integration and implementing various innovative practices.

NITI Aayog and all associated Ministries are working closely with the States towards a transparent, inclusive and accountable India. With a dedicated team committed to this project, this is an immersive initiative that will change the landscape of how India progresses through the vision of the Government of India. I must take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the NITI Team that has made the publication of this volume possible.

Our focus is to improve India's ranking in the Human Development Index, raising the living standards of its citizens and ensuring inclusive growth for all. Unless these districts are brought up to the parameters that each of us expects from our own lives, India will not be able to progress at the rapid pace that would otherwise be achieved from the Government's broad range of initiatives and development strategy. With this initiative great progress will be made towards equitable development. It is unquestionable that the 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' initiative envisioned by the Hon'ble Prime Minister is a giant leap towards transforming India for the New India 2022 vision. One district at a time.



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Chapter 1 | INTRODUCTION

Rakesh Ranjan and Sanjana Manaktala

India has been on a high growth trajectory for about three decades now. Within a generation, the lives of its multitude of citizenry have changed for the better. This achievement within a democratic framework is universally applauded. And yet, the country's spectacular growth story is incomplete. India fares rather modestly on the Human Development Index (HDI) released annually by UNDP to rank nations in terms of life expectancy, average income and years of schooling of its citizens. It was placed at 131 among 188 nations in 2016.

This is not acceptable in a vibrant democracy. The Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi has encapsulated the motto of his Government: Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas (Development for All). In an era where economic inequalities are rising in many parts of the world, India can emerge as a model of good governance, if it ensures that its growth process remains both inclusive and sustainable.

In a mixed economy like India's, there is no guarantee that, without intervention, the growth process and results of development would be shared by all. Hence, ensuring that the fruit of rapid economic development is equitably shared emerges as a key development challenge for India.

Fortunately, this is not difficult. The scourge of under-development is confined to certain pockets in this country. This makes it a challenge as well as an opportunity. Despite economic progress in the country, if these places have remained underdeveloped, it is because they suffer from a host of contributing factors. Relatively poorer endowment of physical resources, lack of infrastructure networks, poor social capital, low standards of health, nutrition, education and skill, and above all, inhabitants demotivated due to years of poverty and deprivation can be cited as some of these factors. Many of these are both causes as well as symptoms, creating a cycle of under-development.

At the same time, breaking this cycle presents an opportunity. As suggested above, there is indeed a spatial dimension to this problem. Across various social indicators, if one plots the areas with the least progress, a pattern emerges. The Aspirational Districts Programme ranks districts on the basis of a composite index comprising of health, nutrition, education, basic infrastructure and poverty. About 150-200 districts emerge which have shown relatively less progress across different sectors and thus, require focused policy attention.

The underlying idea is that if a concerted effort is made to improve the performance of these districts, a dramatic rise in HDI is achievable in a relatively short span of time.

At the outset, it is important to realise that there is indeed an issue of strategy here: critics may argue that if resource endowment is really weak, a better strategy to ensure that people in

these districts get a fair deal would be to invest in other areas with higher growth potential and encourage full mobility of labour. This counter-argument to the approach identified above also aims at ensuring that all citizens partner in this high growth, but outside their original area of domicile. While purely on theoretical grounds, there may be some merit in this argument, there are many reasons that still favour focused interventions in these districts. Firstly, the evaluation of availability of resources, especially from the perspective of long-term growth, is often subjective. Secondly, the ability of labour to migrate to growth centres may be constrained due to lack of awareness of the availability of livelihood opportunities or, despite awareness, other constraints or rigidity may hold them back.

However, the argument for focused interventions outlined above informs the strategy for rapid transformation of these districts, as discussed in detail in Chapter Two. The biggest challenge here is to jump-start rapid economic development in these regions, while simultaneously investing heavily in building human capital.

Anchored in NITI Aayog, the Aspirational Districts Programme intends to turn development into a mass movement, facilitated by Governments at different levels: Centre, State and District. Seen from this perspective, the architecture of this programme showcases the spirit of cooperative federalism in India. At the same time, this programme is also an attempt to unleash positive energy by challenging the people of different districts to compete with each other. This is, thus, an exercise in competitive federalism as well.

Chapter Two of the book outlines the approach and strategy adopted for its implementation. A warning is due here: readers who are looking for a grand unified design will be disappointed. India is a country of myriad problems and, perhaps more seldom realised – a land of myriad solutions. Attempts to implement a programme with a grand strategy, couched in terms of a one-size-fits-all approach is thus, ill-fitting for this vibrant context. This initiative also precludes launching a programme with a classic ‘top-down approach’. As democracy in India deepens, and people’s aspirations soar high, keeping the citizenry at the centre of any programme and in fact, involving them at every stage of development is a must.

A task of this nature would require appropriate institutional arrangements. This is more so when Governments at different levels are required to act together as a team. For this, alignment of objectives and effective coordination among different stakeholders is needed. The adopted strategy brings out an important innovation in this programme, where senior-level officers from Central and State Governments have come together to form a team and steer each district towards success.

Chapter Three of the book further builds on the approach of changing the development narrative which is the cornerstone of strategy adopted in the programme. Chapter Four briefly explains the approach adopted to select districts for inclusion in the programme. To many, it seems a simple task. There is a general impression that States in North Central, Eastern India, once rather insensitively nicknamed ‘Bimaru’ States, are relatively backward. Add the States of North East India and it is simple to shortlist districts. While western and south Indian States have indeed surged ahead in many sectors, it is grossly inappropriate to paint the whole State with the same brush. Every State has their share of successes and failures, and even within districts, significant variations in key development parameters exist

between sub-divisions, blocks and villages. In addition, while selecting districts, the implementation capacity of the local administration is also to be kept in mind. Further, it is desirable that the footprint of this programme spreads all across the country. As elaborated in Chapter Four, the process adopted for selecting districts has been objective, evidence-based and transparent.

If these districts have to progress rapidly, they need to make a realistic plan involving all stakeholders. While plans and targets in one form or another have existed in these districts for decades, this initiative requires the districts to make development a mass movement and draw up their plans in accordance with the shared vision of the people in the district. A massive exercise has been undertaken to determine the current status of districts across 49 carefully-selected indicators, having 81 data points in the following sectors: Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion and Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure, including rural household electrification and access to roads. The Aspirational Districts will aim to catch up with the best district in the State and later to be counted among the best districts in the country. Chapter Five briefly explains the guiding principles adopted in drawing District Action Plans.

An oft-repeated criticism of general approaches to governance in India has been that, while liberalisation unleashed competition in almost every sector of the Indian economy, the Government's experiments in this area have been rather inadequate. In fact, to many outside the Government, the emerging framework of competitive federalism may seem alien. A rather specious argument has been that in a welfare state paradigm, characterised by significant income inequality and its attendant manifestations, it makes little sense to introduce competition – the aim of the Government should be to tend to the weakest.

It is important to raise this point here as 'antyodaya', i.e. giving preference to the poorest of the poor in public programmes has indeed been a guiding philosophy in India, and rightly so. As Chapter Five explains, this initiative attempts to bring a competitive spirit among those who are part of the delivery mechanism at the District, State and Central levels. It is a competition where the goal is to maximise efficiency in reaching out to the weakest segments of the population. While around 15% of India's population resides in these districts, their percentage among the most deprived population is much higher. By setting up a real-time monitoring mechanism of Key Performance Indicators and placing its dashboard in the public domain, this initiative challenges government functionaries to compete and excel. Chapter Five introduces this theme and Chapters Six and Seven detail out the arrangements put forth for transition towards evidence-based decision making in these districts, that includes validation of data through household surveys.

The programme has a focussed approach: to improve performance across health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion and skill development, and basic infrastructure. Each of these sectors has its own challenges and requires a systemic approach to address them. Without being exhaustive, Chapter Eight examines some of the challenges in these sectors, as well as the evolving approach to complement the efforts of the district administration to make quick progress. Inputs for these chapters have been taken from our partner agencies: Piramal Swasthya, Piramal Education

and Leadership Foundations, Tata Trusts, ITC Social Investment Programme, IDinsight, and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

A major strategy in this programme is to build upon one another's strengths. Chapter Nine includes best practices and innovative measures that have been implemented in these districts. Their inclusion in this book serves two broad objectives. It dispels the notion that challenges in these districts are too daunting to address. Secondly, it makes a lot of sense to learn from each other, especially because such districts share comparable challenges. Finally, Chapter Ten summarises the broad conclusions.

This programme is a unique experiment in ensuring the transformation of under-developed pockets of India. This is a daunting task but not impossible. Above all, it is a fitting tribute to the vibrancy of our democracy, as it emerges as a model of inclusive development.

Chapter 2 | STRATEGY

Rakesh Ranjan, Arushi Malhotra and Upasana Sikri

Approach and Strategy

When the Hon'ble Prime Minister launched the Aspirational Districts Programme, he devoted a large part of his speech to emphasise that henceforth, these districts would not be termed as 'backward districts' any longer. They would be called 'Aspirational Districts'.

The change in the nomenclature perhaps summarises the broad approach implied in this programme. There is an explicit recognition that people are the most valuable resource to turn a district around. Years of under-development tend to give rise to a sense of defeatism that change is impossible. It is the mindset that needs to change. The nomenclature of aspirational district is not a symbolic gesture. It is much more than that.

At the same time, the task of transforming these 'Aspirational Districts' is clearly not easy or else these districts would not be lagging behind in many development parameters. Since development is multidimensional and needs to be holistic as well as inclusive to be truly meaningful, the strategy has to be multi-pronged. The familiar approach of identification of a problem in a sector and announcing a scheme with earmarked funds would have only a limited impact. Hence, for these districts, the strategy has to encompass all the sectors under focus and involve every stakeholder, the most important of whom are the people of the identified districts.

The broad contours of the strategy envisaged under this programme are as follows:

A. Addressing negativity by making development a mass movement:

Thomas Piketty, the famous French economist's excellent work on income inequality (*Capital in the Twenty First Century*, 2013) clearly shows that one of the key development challenges is to reduce income inequality. Since people ought to be focus of development as well as its main agent, it is important that they believe in themselves and do not get discouraged by being labelled as inhabitants of backward districts in India. In the programme architecture, the following elements address this issue:

- i) The districts are to be called 'Aspirational Districts.'
- ii) District officials should draw up a Vision and Action Plan for 2018-22, through public participation, to ensure that their district is a full-fledged partner in creating a New India by 2022.
- iii) Development should become a byword, a mass movement in the districts.
- iv) People should fully recognise their current status, their strengths and weaknesses. They should aspire to become the best district in the State and thereafter, to grow to feature among the better-performing districts in key performance indicators across the country.

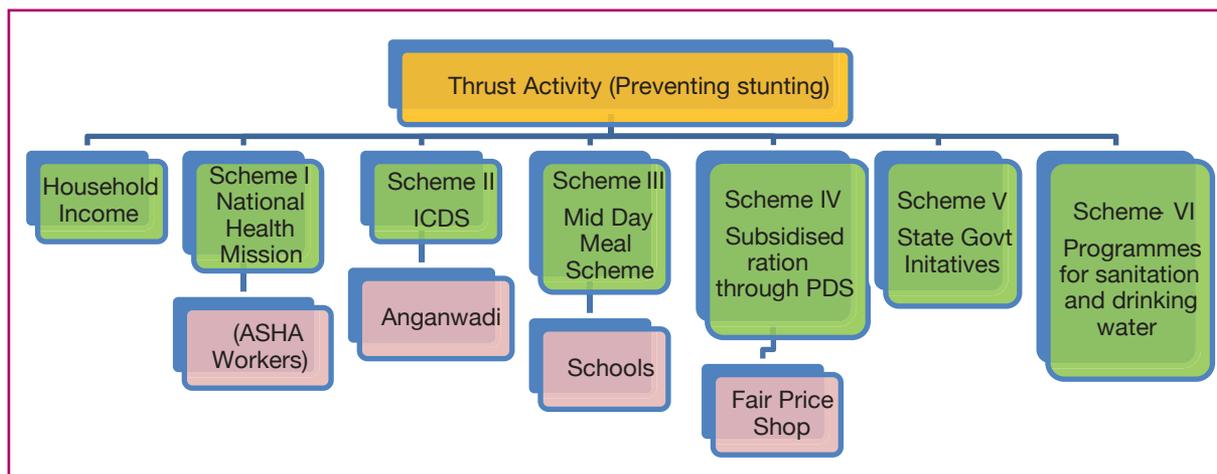
B. Identification of Champions of Change at District and Regional levels to make development a mass movement:

Setting off a virtuous cycle of growth in Aspirational Districts inter alia requires that people from all walks of life – especially those who have a track record of effecting change despite existing challenges – come together. Many of these would be elected representatives at the district, sub-division or ward/Panchayat levels. The scheme architecture encourages the States and District administration to give a lead role to such Champions of Change in turning this initiative into a mass movement. They are also envisioned to provide objective and real-time feedback to the district team for fine-tuning their strategy.

C. Convergence of Initiatives of the Central and State Governments:

The moment it is clear that people are the focus of development, it follows that convergence between different schemes and interventions across levels of government is necessary. This is because the quality of life and economic productivity of an individual may be impacted by a large number of schemes simultaneously. After all, a human life cannot be segmented into silos.

A major approach thus, under this programme, is to ensure convergence between different government schemes on the one hand, and on the other hand, to seek complementarity between public initiatives and the private efforts of a household (like choosing to attend a course on skill development). Public initiatives are manifold: in key social sectors, the Government of India has implemented well-funded Centrally Sponsored Schemes. At the State level, the higher devolution of funds after the 14th Finance Commission award has given States larger fiscal space to intervene effectively in these areas. For visible impact, such efforts should naturally converge. To achieve this, the action plan prepared by the District Collectors of the aspirational districts will identify the thrust activity, map the existing schemes and their respective implementation agencies, and then set targets for rapid improvement.



■ Thrust Activity ■ Schemes/Programmes ■ Implementing Agencies

*Adapted from Aruna Sharma: Mainstreaming of Resource Convergence in Policymaking, Programme Design and Execution. (December 2013)

The chart above is an example to indicate that for every thrust activity identified, such as stunting exemplified here, there would be many schemes addressing the issue, which in turn would have different implementing agencies.

This conceptual exercise helps in converging resources and using them more efficiently. For these districts, such mapping of resources also serves another important purpose: clarifying the total sum of funds available to address an issue. Implementing schemes in silos can lead to the error of assuming a paucity of resources – budgetary and administrative convergence of different programmes can illustrate that adequate resources are, in fact, available to achieve significant progress on key performance indicators.

D. States are the main drivers: Appropriate institutional mechanisms to ensure teamwork between Central, State and District Administration:

Shri J.P. Nadda, India's Health and Family Welfare Minister, summed up the idea of teamwork at a meeting in Chamba District in Himachal Pradesh, in January 2018. He marked the fact that Central Government, State Government and District-level functionaries were meeting under the same roof that day, to strategise towards the rapid transformation of a remote district in India.

Indeed, harnessing and creating synergies among the efforts of different stakeholders is the backbone of the programme. While States are the main drivers and District magistrates are the fulcrum on whom the programme rests, a major innovation here is the emphasis on team formation. Senior Government of India officials at the rank of Joint Secretary/Additional Secretary have been appointed as 'Guardians' (or 'Prabharis' in Hindi) for a district.

This is a nuanced strategy: the officers of All India Services, including the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), are allotted a State cadre at the start of their service, where they spend a large part of their careers. The Prabhari Officers appointed under this programme are from the same State cadre and are thus, already familiar with the districts in question. Their role then becomes to act as a bridge between the Central and State Governments.

Setting up of Empowered Committees of Secretaries of Government of India to supervise and solve problems: Inter-ministerial convergence is best achieved when the challenges are posed to an Empowered Inter-Ministerial Committee. At the Centre, Committees have been constituted including the Secretaries of key Ministries/Departments that are implementing schemes in the social sector. Their mandate is to fine-tune the existing programmes and improve their impact.

E: Evidence-based decision-making and competition among districts

A major lacuna in the implementation of programmes has been the lack of good quality data on a timely basis. This highly constrains strategy-making, especially when it comes to selecting those segments of the population that most critically require government assistance. Lack of data also prevents any objective assessment of the impact of a programme, forcing the Government to confine itself to expenditure-tracking. However, tracking the amount of money spent pales in comparison to the importance of measuring outcomes, or whether the programme has actually achieved its objectives or not. This is what matters most to the ordinary people of the country.

Evidence-based decision-making is a cornerstone of the programme strategy. Across the sectors in focus, 49 key performance indicators with 81 data points have been identified, after extensive consultation with Central Ministries and Knowledge Partners. A dashboard allows for the tracking and display of data on a real-time basis.

The availability of such data facilitates the ranking of districts. However, when many data points exist and they indicate performance across different sectors, a key policy question is how to prioritise among them. The approach adopted is to assign weights to these indicators.

Assignment of such weights is essentially a subjective exercise, albeit informed by a policy focus. For this programme, following weights have been assigned:

Health and Nutrition	30%
Education	30%
Agriculture and Water Resources	20%
Financial Inclusion and Skill Development	10%
Basic Infrastructure	10%

The relative importance assigned to different sectors is based on an important principle: the programme is people-centric. While the importance of other enabling factors in improving quality of life is indisputable, this programme focuses on key social sectors. Health, nutrition and education on one hand themselves determine the quality of life, and on the other, they are also important factors determining economic productivity and therefore employability of a person. They have thus been assigned the highest weightage.

Among the economic sectors, weight has been assigned to agriculture and water due to the high prevalence of agriculture, animal husbandry and horticulture in the economy of these districts. Needless to add, optimal utilisation of water is emerging as an important parameter of governance and hence the weight assigned here.

Another factor that has influenced the assignment of weights has been the desirability of spurring the sense of competition among districts. Creation and maintenance of infrastructure, though important, is largely in the hands of the State and Central Government, rather than the district offices. Similarly, the role of district-level functionaries in opening bank branches or ATMs etc. is relatively limited, as compared to their key role in improving the health, nutrition and education conditions.

There are two broad approaches to rapidly transforming an under-developed area. The first is to ascertain the availability of resources for each sector through different sources, assess the critical gaps, and set periodic targets to achieve them. The other approach is to rank the performance of districts by capturing the percentage change in key indicators on monthly or quarterly basis and put these numbers in public domain.

In this programme, a combination of both approaches has been envisaged. Drawing up of district plans, identification of critical gaps, and deciding targets for transformation through public participation are the recommended steps for District and State administrations.

At the same time and perhaps more importantly, ranking of districts on the basis of performance makes it clear that sloppy work cannot be hidden any longer and that good work will be noticed at an all-India level. A great deal of interest was shown by the common people and the media during the release of the baseline ranking, which put Vizianagram, Andhra Pradesh, and Mewat, Haryana, at the top and bottom of this ranking, respectively. This makes it amply clear that the approach of name-and-applaud or name-and-shame is quite effective.

F. Partnering with expert organisations with demonstrated competence and building on the strength of each other:

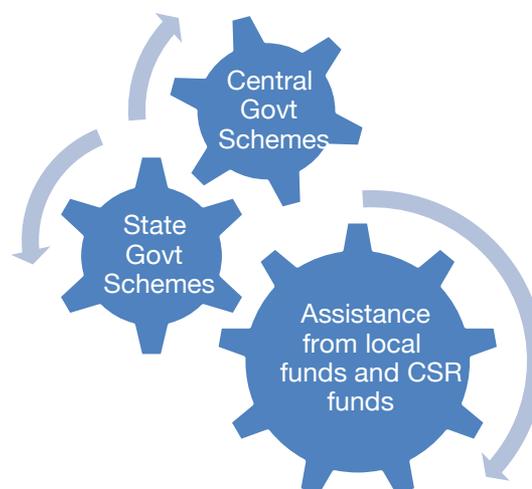
While data-based objective ranking and consequent competition among districts is a major element of the strategy, the programme itself is much larger than that. If, for example, teachers are untrained, or there remain significant vacancies in schools, or there is a severe mismatch between infrastructure created and operationalised, rapid improvement is impossible. Secondly, even a well-funded programme may not yield results if constrained by a lack of cutting-edge capacity. Above all, unless the functionaries at the grassroots level are motivated, even a programme with robust architecture and adequate funding is bound to fail.

There are some pertinent questions here. India's track record of improving infrastructure in elementary schools has been impressive, thanks to resources committed by States and supplemented by the Central Government under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan. However, improvement in learning outcomes has been relatively modest. To take another example, many districts in India have succeeded in quickly raising the percentage of institutional deliveries out of total estimated deliveries. However, breast-feeding within one hour of birth, considered to be crucially beneficial for the child, has remained very low.

Such problems are persistent and would require a professional team to assist the District team. Fortunately, there are a large number of organisations that have demonstrated both the will and the capacity to herald change and join this movement for development. For instance, NITI Aayog has partnered with Piramal Swasthya, ITC Social Investment programme, Piramal Foundation (Education and Leadership), Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation etc. to work in specific sectors in districts under this programme.

G. Funding for the programme:

Surprising as it may sound, if the assistance at the district-level from different sources is aggregated, and the principle of convergence is applied to a particular activity, there is no paucity of funds. The programme, therefore, relies on convergence of existing schemes for its funding. In addition, funds and other resources made available by the private sector under Corporate Social Responsibility, and some local funds like the District Mineral Funds are to be utilised for critical gap funding. Key Central Ministries have also prioritised these districts in their respective programmes.



Conclusion:

It is amply clear that it is not a lack of funds but improper governance that is the critical constraint to achieving rapid development in these districts. As discussed above, the programme strategy is woven around this core belief, and places people at the centre of development. It addresses governance issues using a combination of approaches: a Vision and District Plan, adequate institutional arrangements, convergence in all stakeholders' efforts and above all, ranking-based public competition among the Districts by setting up a real-time monitoring mechanism.

Chapter 3 | SHAPING THE DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVE

Devashish Dhar

The battles of policy narratives are fought at all levels. No ground is beyond reach – from water-cooler conversations to mass rallies, and from editorial debates to closed-door meetings. The narrative of development in India has had its own share of watershed moments. Mahatma Gandhi's Quit India Movement was one such moment. The movement changed the narrative on independence struggle and India's idea of development. It stands out because it mobilised the country like nothing else in the past had by striking the British Empire at its core. It signalled self-reliance, self-rule and the finality of India's resolve.

Later, during independent India's history, the narrative on development underwent many changes. A majority of such narratives focused on how the Indian Union would undertake the responsibility of delivering development to all parts of India. This narrative turned bolder with the 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitution. These legislations made development a decentralised activity, but had limited impact on the ground.

India's development story continued to be studied at the national and regional levels. The acronym 'BIMARU' – representing Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh – was a relic of such a narrative. However, over the past few years, many of these states have outperformed their counterparts. Therefore, this narrative of state-level development has outlived its utility. We are now at the early stage of a new narrative on development – one that focuses on district-level challenges and corresponding sector-level interventions. This Government has launched the 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' programme for 115 districts across all 28 states.

The program was launched in January this year by the Hon'ble Prime Minister. Before getting into the details of what this program entails, a small anecdote deserves mention here. In the run-up to the launch, this program was called 'Backward Districts' – to highlight the plight of ground challenges in these districts. The PM himself intervened to request a change of title from 'Backward' to 'Aspirational'. This is how narratives are influenced. This small nudge in the right direction in terms of word selection will go a long way. The nomenclature now shows how far these districts can go instead of the earlier connotation of how far these districts are left behind.

Three aspects of this scheme are bound to make this scheme a mass movement. First, it focuses on evidence-based interventions. The process of defining the baseline and completing the first ranking has been conducted in consultation with all stakeholders. Wherever the data was not available at the district level, appropriate agencies were mobilised to gather data. Data, at this frequency and level of granularity, has never been collected in India before. Second, the 115 districts cover all states and include even 35 Left Wing Extremism hit districts. Together, they cover over 200 million people – the size of Brazil. This scheme is going the last mile and delivering interventions that are required at the third tier of

governance. Third, the program is empowering State and district administrations to identify the right set of interventions. A dashboard has been developed to track the progress of all districts. The districts are encouraged to take measures on sectors on which they are lagging behind.

Given the considerations above, it may not be far-fetched to say that this new programme will become another watershed moment in the history of the Indian development narrative. The idea of mobilisation, ranking, data-gathering and interventions around districts is a new but a historic moment. It will spur an entire new ecosystem of stakeholders, institutions and ideas that will enable districts achieve their potential. So far, the focus was largely limited to regional and state level development. Therefore, there is a clear and sharp departure from the previous narratives on development in India.

This broader narrative is also an aggregation of critical sub-narratives of convergence, collaboration and competition. First, the programme's single focus is on development of districts. This can only be achieved through the convergence of Central and State Schemes to derive synergies and direct resources in an appropriate manner. Second, the Programme has mobilised administration at all levels – Central, State and District. So far, all three administrations have shown commendable and impeccable collaboration to figure out the needs of districts and how best to address them. All tiers of the administration are active stakeholders. They recognise the need for collaboration and are channelising their expertise and resources to deliver on this task. Third, the idea of competitive federalism is taken a step further to foster competition between districts. Any sort of ranking spurs competition. Here, the competition is towards a greater goal of taking development to the last corners of India. It is now widely recognised that governments perform better when they face competition – internally and externally. This internal competition between districts is a positive turn for India. Once this Programme makes significant progress, there is a possibility that States may rank their districts for such monitoring or at the national level we rank all districts in future.

It is healthy for the Indian democracy that the battles around narratives are continued to be fought at all levels. For decades, the people in the least-developed districts of India have assumed that things will never change. It is to be hoped, for their sakes, that the programme on 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' will transform the discourse of development narratives in India.

Chapter 4 | SELECTION OF DISTRICTS

Lipi Budhraj

The 115 districts were identified from 28 States, at least one from each state, in a highly transparent manner by a Committee of Senior Officers to the Government of India, in consultation with State Officials using a Composite Index.

Of these 115 districts, 35 districts have been identified by the Ministry of Home Affairs, on the basis of the density of violence. Central Ministries of Government of India have selected 55 districts on the basis of severe deficiency or sensitivity in the district. The remaining 25 districts, spreading across 10 States, have been picked by NITI Aayog.

Development of a Composite Index

The Composite Index has been developed by examining the published sources of district-wise data available in the core sectors of poverty, health & nutrition, education and basic infrastructure. Given that poverty has a multi-dimensional impact on the overall well-being of the society as a whole, it has been given the maximum weight in the Composite Index.

Serial No.	Database	Source	Sector	Weight in the Composite Index
1.	Landless households dependent on manual labour	Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 – Depreciation (D7), Ministry of Rural Development	Poverty	25.00%
2.	Medical care during pregnancy - 4 visits for Antenatal Care (ANCs)	National Family Health Survey (NFHS - 4), 2015-16	Health & Nutrition	7.50%
3.	Institutional delivery			7.50%
4.	Stunting of children below 5 years			7.50%
5.	Wasting in children below 5 years			7.50%
6.	Elementary Dropout Rate	Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE 2015-16)	Education	7.50%
7.	Poor Student Teacher Ratio			7.50%
8.	Un-electrified households	Rural Electrification Corporation, Ministry of Power	Basic Infrastructure	7.50%
9.	Rural households without individual toilets	Swachh Bharat Mission, Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation		7.50%
10.	Un-connected habitations under Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana	Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana, Ministry of Rural Development		7.50%
11.	Rural habitations without access to the minimum prescribed quantity of water	Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation		7.50%
Total				100.00%

Methodology of Calculation of the Composite Index

The Composite Index is a weighted average of all 11 indicators, taken as negative indicators and ranked on the basis of highest score to the lowest. The higher the score, more backward is the District.

- Uniformity: All 11 data sets were converted to denote a negative indicator.
- Scaling of Data: The data sets were normalised using the formula given below:

$$\text{Scaled value} = \frac{(\text{Maximum Value} - X_i)}{(\text{Maximum Value} - \text{Minimum Value})}$$

- Calculation of the Composite Score: The scaled values of indicators were multiplied with their respective weights to calculate a weighted average score, using the formula give below:

$$\text{Composite Score} = \frac{(\sum W_i * S_i)}{(\sum W_i)}$$

Chapter 5

PREPARING DISTRICT VISION DOCUMENTS & ACTION PLANS

Lipi Budhraj

*“Let us forge a model of cooperative, competitive federalism;
chart a common course to progress and prosperity.”*

- Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister

Addressing regional disparities is not only a goal in itself, but is also essential for maintaining the integrated social and economic fabric of the country. For India to develop as the world's biggest economic power, the chariot of development needs to run on two wheels of regional equality and real-time monitoring.

Bridging Regional Disparity through District Planning

District Planning is a form of perspective planning that involves participation of local agents at the district-level in implementation and monitoring of Central, State and District-level schemes. It is a critical instrument for directing resources towards districts and areas that need special attention – including border areas, areas affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE), hilly areas, areas with high forest cover, and areas with high tribal/SC/ST population. The district planning as envisaged in this book refers to both the preparation of a five-year development plan, and the preparation of annual action plans.

One of the important roles of district planning is to win the support and confidence of the local population by bringing transparency in all aspects of development planning and execution. This ensures that the information regarding flow of funds at each level, the choice of schemes and their locations, tendering process, stage of implementation, etc. is available to everybody.

Resource Mapping & Convergence of Schemes

Fiscal transparency in allocation of budgets to each planning unit is the starting point for decentralised planning. This involves – a. Reforming the governance system related to administrative and financial clearances; b. Mapping of resources flowing from various sources; and c. Convergence of schemes with overlapping developmental goals.

Convergence of schemes enables efficiency and effectiveness in the utilisation of funds available. On the other hand, proliferation of schemes results in thin spread of resources, adversely impacting the desired output. Thus, a sound understanding of the flow of funds and the roles of all layers of governance is a prerequisite for the development of a comprehensive plan.

Stock-taking, Visioning & Preparation of Vision Document

Any planning process starts from taking a stock view of the current situation. Thus, before districts start envisioning their growth paths, they need to ascertain the current condition of

infrastructure services in the district, data on important socio-economic indicators and the availability of natural resources.

Once the District Stock-taking Report is prepared, the next most crucial step is to prepare the body of the District Planning exercise, i.e. the 'District Vision Document'. A district vision document should be guided by national and state goals, based on the current trends in the district, strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

At this stage of planning, the most important and yet the most neglected step is to develop a Communication Strategy. This helps in sharing the district vision and the expected amount of funding likely to be received with each planning unit. This will not only create a sense of transparency in the system but will also assist these units in setting priorities and allocating funds at their levels.

Real-time Monitoring & Social Audit of District Plans

Monitoring and auditing is the key to the success of any plan in a decentralised set-up. A devolution-friendly monitoring system that involves participative planning, faces two major challenges – one, to regularly update data regarding implementation, and two, to design and provide a simplified visual interface for data interpretation.

The only way to effectively capture the nuances of planning and implementation in a monitoring system, while simultaneously meeting the challenge of regular updating and presentation of data, is to automate it to the fullest extent possible.

Invoking the principles of cooperative and competitive federalism and for the purpose of strengthening the monitoring process at the District level, NITI Aayog in partnership with the Government of Andhra Pradesh has created a dashboard for monitoring the real-time progress of districts. This will enable public access to a real-time view of progress at the district level, and will serve, both, to reward the performers and inspire those lagging behind. This being the corner of the strategy, the next two chapters are devoted to this theme.

Chapter 6 | THE USE OF REAL-TIME DATA TO TRANSFORM ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS

Rama Kamaraju and Atisha Kumar

“If you can't measure it, you can't improve it.”

– Prof. Peter Drucker

Governments across the globe have increasingly been incorporating data to inform policies on a large scale. Until now, many such efforts have been limited in scale and scope, especially in developing economies. With the Aspirational Districts Programme, India is massively expanding the use of data to drive development. No other developing country has undertaken a programme that focuses on holistic development of a large share of its population. Current statistics on health and nutrition, education and other dimensions of development enhance the credibility of policy interventions. Through this programme, data is advancing policymaking by strengthening analysis and continuously monitoring progress, improving transparency and accountability and taking into account the heterogeneous conditions across the 115 districts and States.

As the program is launched, the government has collected baseline statistics on 49 indicators (or 81 data points) for each district. These data provide an initial benchmark for the districts. Over the coming months and years, they will help assess outcomes and monitor progress. The data have been used to construct rankings between districts, boosting competition, and promoting knowledge sharing between districts. Further, each district's performance and incremental progress will be compared to the best in that state as well as in the nation. As district collectors and state and central government officials drive the process of improving development outcomes, their progress will be monitored continuously through real-time data collection.

Key Performance Indicators

NITI Aayog has held consultations with stakeholders and finalised 49 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) across six themes: Health and Nutrition; Education; Agriculture and Water Resources; Financial Inclusion and Skill Development; and Basic Infrastructure. Each of these themes is weighted according to the government's commitment to inclusive growth and its aim of improving the living standards of its citizens.

Table A provides the break-up of weightage and the number of KPIs against each theme.

Thematic Area	Weightage	No. of Indicators
Health & Nutrition	30%	13
Education	30%	08
Agriculture & Allied	20%	10
Financial Inclusion & Skill Development	10%	11
Basic Infrastructure	10%	07
Composite Index	100%	49

Despite rapid economic growth, India continues to lag other developing countries in human development. India ranked 131 out of 188 in the UNDP's 2016 Human Development Index. Recognizing this, health, nutrition and education are priority areas for the government. Together, out of 49 indicators, 21 are for health, nutrition and education.

Health and Nutrition

30% of the overall composite score is weighted towards health & nutrition. The program has identified 13 indicators to focus on antenatal care, postnatal care, gender parity, health of new-borns, growth of children, contagious diseases, and health infrastructure.

Education

The education sector accounts of 30% of the overall index. Eight indicators have been identified focussing on learning outcomes (transition rate from primary to upper primary, and subsequently to secondary schooling, average scores in mathematics and language etc.), as well as infrastructural (toilet access for girls, drinking water and electricity supply) and institutional indicators (Right to Education (RTE), mandated pupil-teacher ratio programme, timely delivery of textbooks).

Agriculture and Water Resources

Agriculture is the backbone of India, with more than 50% of the workforce engaged in cultivation and allied activities. Ten indicators have been identified for the 20% weightage allocated to agriculture. The focus is on outputs (yield, price realisation etc.), inputs (quality seed distribution, soil health cards), and institutional support (crop insurance, electronic markets, artificial insemination, animal vaccination etc.).

Financial Inclusion and Skill Development

Together, these two themes account for 10% of the overall index. Six indicators have been identified in financial inclusion to measure progress in take-up of important central government schemes (Atal Pension Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana etc.), reach of institutional banking (number of accounts opened under Jan Dhan Yojana), and ease of institutional financing for small businesses (disbursement of Mudra loans). Five indicators have been identified under Skill Development to keep track of the progress in skilling of youth, employment and the skilling of vulnerable/marginalised youth.

Basic Infrastructure

Access to housing, water, electricity, and road connectivity are priorities for the Government. Seven important indicators have been identified including availability of individual household latrines, drinking water, electricity, and road connectivity. Districts are also tracked for the number of Gram Panchayats with internet connectivity and Panchayats with Common Service Centres.

Champions of Change: Real-time Monitoring Dashboard

The KPIs identified contain 81 data points involving inputs, outputs and outcomes for each of the five core themes. The data on inputs and outputs are captured on a monthly basis and the outcomes are collected through quarterly surveys at the district level by two agencies nominated by NITI Aayog.

NITI Aayog has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Planning Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh for the design, development and maintenance of the Dashboard for the Aspirational Districts. The domain name of the Dashboard is '*Champions of Change*'. This 24x7 web-based application will be publicly available and will facilitate measuring progress along core dimensions. That the data are easily accessible will promote greater engagement. At the outset, District Information Officers will collect and enter the data. Going forward, the data will be fetched through APIs from various Ministries of the Central Government. NITI has provided the State Best Value and Nation Best Value for each of the indicators in the system. In addition, the DM/DC can enter the Annual Target value to be achieved against each of the indicators.

The dashboard is dynamic in nature and when a data point is entered, the system calculates the delta ranking of performance of the district over the previous period. Thus, the ranking of districts keeps constantly changing i.e., moving upwards if improvements are shown or downwards if other districts outperform them.

The Aspirational Districts Programme leverages innovative data and the collective efforts of the Central, State and local governments to advance India's development. The real-time monitoring mechanisms are critical to measuring progress in improving the development outcomes of these districts.

Chapter 7 | SURVEYS & VALIDATION OF DATAPPOINTS

Alok Kumar, Arun Sudarshan and Divya Priyadarshini¹

The Transformation of Aspirational Districts Programme is the first attempt to continuously monitor districts' progress in important social indicators and data-points. Every month, districts enter the latest available data to be ranked on the progress they have achieved. Two issues are critical for the success of the programme. One, data must be available on a timely basis to modify interventions and policies. Two, the integrity of the programme depends on the integrity of the data entered. As the Government of India and NITI Aayog are determined to ensure the success of the programme, important social sector data-points will be collected on a regular basis, and critical data-points will be validated by reputed third-party agencies.

The Aspirational Districts Initiative emphasizes on outcome-based monitoring. As a result, the index is based on outcome indicators, and not just process indicators. Progress will be defined by achieving welfare targets, rather than budgetary ones. The conversation can gravitate to getting results for India's citizens, rather than input-oriented reports.

Methodology

This program follows the progress of districts based on 49 indicators and 81 data-points across five thematic areas – health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion and skill development, and basic infrastructure.

However, data for a total of 13 data-points (six from health and nutrition, seven from education) is made available once every few years. For example, data on learning outcomes is collected through the National Achievement Survey (NAS), which provides estimates for learning outcomes for Classes 3, 5 and 8 in Government and Government-aided schools. As data in these cases is collected through nation-wide surveys, results take time to be made available for analysis. Any corrective measures that may be required are, therefore, delayed.

In order to shorten the time taken to get data-reliable and relevant indicators, the Aspirational Districts Programme engages survey agencies to collect data every four months. These agencies will also validate key data-points from 28 key data-points out of the 81 data-points. Special emphasis is laid on health and nutrition, where 19 of 31 data-points account for almost a quarter of points² in the overall ranking. For example, consider the data-point “percentage of underweight children under five years”. The agency will conduct surveys³ among children under the age of five years in the district to check if the value entered by the districts are accurate. For an indicator on health infrastructure, say, “proportion of primary

¹ This chapter includes excerpts from the article Aspirational Districts initiative a breath of fresh air (Comment), published in Business Standard on April 11th, 2018, written by Alok Kumar, Neil Buddy Shah, and Ronald Abraham.

² 22.5% of the overall weight is on these 19 indicators that are being validated,

³ Approximately 1000 households in a district will be surveyed. These households are selected using a two-stage sampling procedure.

health centres/sub-centres converted to Health & Wellness Centres”, teams will visit the site and conduct a physical verification of the claim.

For the Aspirational Districts initiative, there are no top-down guidelines. Instead, the district collectors will be provided with evidence-backed recommendations based on best practices and incentivised to tailor solutions based on the specific contexts of their districts. They are also empowered to go beyond these suggestions and innovate and converge to reach the desired outcomes and targets through real-time data validation. This provides a rich laboratory of experiments and continuous monitoring of which will help in indentifying ideas that prove to be impactful and thus would rise to the top.

The Need for Third-Party Validation

The need for third-party validation in this programme is two-fold. One, the credibility and integrity of the data entered to the dashboard has to be maintained. Two, by working closely with the validation agencies, district administrations will acquire necessary skills and experience to improve their own data collection and validation techniques.

A results-based management approach is only tenable if the data vacuum is filled and monitored to have no discrepancy. The data vacuum also helps explain why policymaking is anecdote-driven rather than data-driven, and why last-mile implementation failures go largely unaddressed. Third party validation through constant real time exposure to data of all the districts would help in maintaining the reliability and verifiability of the information being fed.

Data Validation: Output-oriented

The Aspirational Districts initiative upends the lack of regular, high-quality, field-based granular data. NITI Aayog and its partners are setting up an independently-run data infrastructure with feet on the ground and technology-based management methods. This infrastructure will independently track household-level socio-economic data on health, education, financial inclusion, and many other sectors on a quarterly basis.

With a large sample of households in each district, this is a hitherto unmatched scope, scale and frequency of welfare measurement in the history of India's development journey. The data, to be provided on a public dashboard, will not only aid this initiative but also the work of public sector officials, development practitioners, and researchers more broadly.

Validation Agencies

Tata Trusts, Piramal Foundation, and IDinsight are NITI Aayog’s partners in collection and validation of data-points. All three organisations have a long and successful history of working on the ground to bring change.

Chapter 8 | SECTORAL FOCUS

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

*Ashwin Deshmukh and Dr. Shailendra Hegde (Piramal Foundation)
Urvashi Prasad and Ruha Shadab*

During the last 70 years, better access to health and nutrition services coupled with improvements in various socio-economic determinants has led to an increased life expectancy for Indian citizens. Several important accomplishments have been made including the elimination of Polio, Yaws, and Guinea Worm Disease as well as maternal and neonatal tetanus. The decline in key health indicators such as Infant Mortality Rate, Maternal Mortality Ratio, and Under-5 Mortality Rate has been better than the global average.

The rate of decline, however, has remained slower than that of countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, Cambodia, and Kyrgyzstan, countries that are at similar stages of development and levels of spending on health. As a consequence, despite economic growth and rapid urbanisation, India continues to rank 131 out of 188 countries on UNDP’s Human Development Index. The challenge is compounded by the fact that sharp differences exist between states (Figure 1) and between districts within a state with respect to the quality of service delivery as well as the status of health and nutrition outcomes. Moreover, while the country continues to grapple with communicable diseases (accounting for 33% of Disability Adjusted Life Years Lost), a rising morbidity and mortality cost is now attributable to non-communicable diseases (accounting for 55% of Disability Adjusted Life Years Lost).

One of the key reasons why the country has lagged behind on several health and nutrition indicators is due to the excessive focus on curative care as opposed to public and primary

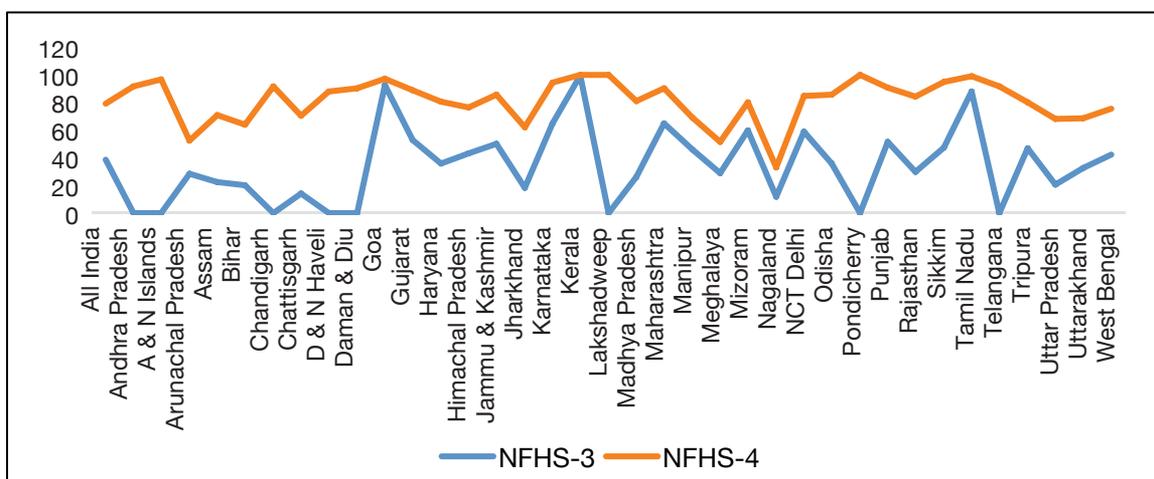


Figure 1: Inter-state Disparity Pertaining to Institutional Deliveries

health interventions. Primary healthcare has been limited to a narrow package of interventions focused on pregnancy care, childcare and certain services related to national health programmes, which represent only 15% of all illnesses for which people seek care. Other challenges with the primary health system include unevenly distributed infrastructure, lack of essential supplies and shortage of adequately motivated human resources.

Needless to say, economic growth without human development is meaningless. To accelerate the improvement in key health and nutrition indicators as well as to ensure that no district in the country is left behind, the Government of India has launched the Aspirational Districts Programme. Under the programme, 115 districts lagging in key health and nutrition parameters will be transformed by 2022.

This unique initiative entails elements of a shared vision, convergence of government schemes, replication of best practices as well as real-time and technology-driven data monitoring and analytics. It aims to bring local, state and national governments together for transforming the health system in the identified districts. Additionally, it seeks to go beyond government action to include local communities, civil society, and the private sector for mobilising a *Jan Andolan* for health in India.

One key partner in this effort is the Piramal Foundation, which is collaborating with NITI Aayog to support the district collectors of 25 Aspirational Districts across seven States in improving key health, nutrition, and education parameters. At the outset, Piramal Swasthya, an arm of the Foundation has conducted a baseline survey of health facilities in 25 districts across the seven States. The survey has highlighted some major gaps especially those pertaining to infrastructure (including equipment and drugs), human resources for health, service delivery (counselling, diagnostic services, etc.), and operations (supply chain management, flow of funds, etc.). The root causes for each of these gaps differs. For instance, in some health facilities the delivery of diagnostic services is sub-optimal due to non-availability of the necessary equipment or technicians, while in others it is due to the fact that insufficient attention has been paid to equipment calibration, thereby, rendering it unusable. Customised strategies will, therefore, need to be adopted for addressing these gaps in a phased manner.

During the first phase, a mapping of the entire district and its health facilities will be undertaken for identifying the existing policies and programmes that can be scaled-up or strengthened. In the subsequent phase, the emphasis will shift towards rolling out new interventions that can enhance the pace of change, in addition to the existing interventions. The new interventions will be adapted to the specific context of the district and will leverage previous implementation experiences in similar settings. A relentless focus on technology-enabled monitoring processes, putting in place clear data management and analysis protocols as well as fostering partnerships with relevant stakeholders will be maintained throughout the programme. The Foundation will deploy dedicated staff at the block, district, state and national levels to allow for seamless implementation of the interventions necessary for effecting the desired change.

EDUCATION

Pratishtha Ingale (Piramal Foundation) and Sigy Thomas Vaidhyan

The Indian Education System has evolved due to rigorous policy focus on expanding reach of education in recent years. An encouraging sign is that enrolment rates in primary schools are over 90%. However, poor learning outcomes and low movement to higher classes continue to be major challenges. According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2016, eight million children still do not get enrolled in schools, 80 million students drop out without completing basic schooling, only 48% students in standard V can read a Standard II level text, and only 26% students in Standard V students can do basic math. In addition, only one third of secondary school age children are currently in school.

Education is important not only for economic growth, but for improving the productivity of Indian youth. Quality education is essential to ensure equitable functioning of a democracy, along with ensuring adequate capabilities in a nation to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

The Aspirational Districts Programme is committed to synergising development strategies of local, state, and national governments, and that of civil society on transforming the education system of the selected districts. As a result, NITI Aayog has collaborated with Piramal Foundation to support District Collectors and State Governments in improving education and health outcomes. The Education Initiative of the Foundation currently works across 12 States and impacts 30,000 students, more than 4,500 principals, and over 40,000 education officials.

Under the Aspirational Districts Programme, NITI Aayog in partnership with the Piramal Foundation has initiated its intervention in a few selected districts. In February 2018, a diagnostic team interviewed 190 teachers and district as well as block level functionaries in primary education sector to understand the common challenges. These are summarised below:

- Low motivation, meaningfulness, and joy at work
- Multiple roles and conflicts of interest
- Lack of staff at each level, especially at the block-level and vacancies at DIET
- Insufficient job competencies and inadequate professional development opportunities
- Challenging school-community collaborations, alignment of groups, departments & institutions
- Topographic and socio-economic complexities in district

Broad contours of a suggested approach to education transformation in Aspirational Districts

Prime Minister's vision for a holistic approach to balanced development across the country, through effective implementation of government schemes, is expected to lead to an overall

improvement in the Human Development Index. For this, it is imperative that for Education Transformation all sections of the society come together, and development in these districts turns into a mass movement. While an exhaustive elaboration of this theme is not possible here, some of the suggested approaches are as follows:

1. **Public Ownership:** In Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, the District Collector initiated a mass movement called 'Apna Bacha Apna Vidyalaya'. For a district where enrolment had been declining for the last three years, the academic year 2016-17 saw an increase of 14%. This includes enrolment of around 6,000 girls. These joint initiatives that focused on public participation created positive momentum to improve the government education system. The principle will, thus, underlie the work in the districts.
2. **Shared Vision:** The educational transformation of an Aspirational District will be the shared responsibility of the public and the State. This means that the Government of India, State Government, Panchayati Raj Institutions, along with the various stakeholders in the education ecosystem (including teachers, parents, and local NGOs) are welcomed to formulate the vision. This will ensure that all challenges are equally expressed and that roadmaps are collectively planned.
3. **Scheme Convergence:** The District Collector, State Prabhari, and Central Prabhari will act like catalysts of the change process. They will deploy their expertise and networks to tap the potential of the range of government schemes and problem-solve factors impeding its maximum benefit. For instance, load on teachers to ensure opening of student bank accounts will be minimised through series of camp.
4. **Self-change to System Change:** The belief is experience and potential of every individual is valuable in the development process. It is possible to change a system, only if people are empowered to change one Self. Tools and frameworks will be made available for Education Officials (District, Block, and Cluster), Head Teachers and Teacher for self-assessment and professional learning. The teachers will have access to Virtual Field Support through Call Centres to co-create solutions for child learning.

BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Vaibhav Kapoor

India is a diverse and complex country with cultural diversity, demographic heterogeneity and growth disparity among regions. Some parts of India have been fortunate to enjoy the dividends that have come along with India's economic growth of the past few decades. However, some areas have experienced slow progress due to various internal and external factors. These factors could include difficult terrain, harsh weather conditions, local tensions, and extremist activities. This disparity in development between regions is particularly evident in their basic infrastructure. Basic infrastructure includes provisions for water, electricity, and road connectivity among others. The limiting factors mentioned earlier directly affect public and private investments into these areas. It is important to understand that true growth in any country is achieved only when its weakest components are uplifted as well. In India's context, the development of the least developed regions will be key in catapulting the country to the next phase of development.

Understanding the significance of all-round development, the Hon'ble Prime Minister launched the Aspirational Districts Programme at a conference organised by NITI Aayog in Delhi in January 2018. Under this programme, targeted transformation is aimed in five key areas: Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion, Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure. Around 49 indicators across these five areas will be used to measure progress. Out of these 49, seven indicators are tracking the development of basic infrastructure as part of the Programme to cover the most essential features in this area. These indicators will track the availability of individual household latrines, drinking water, electricity, road connectivity, internet connectivity, and availability of Common Service Centres. Progress on these indicators will be sourced from the data repositories of different government departments or Ministries including the Ministry of Power, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, etc. Setting up the framework for collecting data and tracking the progress of indicators will provide transparency to the development process, add accountability for the district administration involved, and encourage healthy competition among districts.

Another effective tool that this programme intends to leverage is that of converging existing schemes. Many times schemes work in silos, and tracking their implementation and efficiency can be a challenge, given that they may be inter-related, or have overlapping goals. Under the Basic Infrastructure aspect of the programme, national schemes like the National Rural Drinking Water Programme, Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin), and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana will be leveraged. While these schemes are being effectively implemented individually, their convergence under the Aspirational Districts Programme will unlock various new synergies.

Lastly, to facilitate fast and effective implementation, the initiative lists out the key steps that will guide the implementing bodies as they work towards improving each indicator for their district. For example, to improve "the percentage of households with individual household

latrine”, it is recommended that focus should be laid on availability of trained masons and plumbers, supply of construction material, and availability of water in the toilets. This is one of the very few initiatives where specific steps have been laid out for the implementing agency, which, in this case is the administrative department of the district.

To conclude, the Aspirational Districts Programme is targeting infrastructure development in areas where it is needed the most. This will lay a strong foundation upon which the progress of these regions will be based for decades to come. As the programme evolves in its scope and scale, these aspirational districts will soon become an inspirational model of growth for the rest of the country.

AGRICULTURE AND WATER RESOURCES

Dr. JP Mishra, ITC Social Investment Programme and Ranveer Nagaich

Input-intensive agriculture, post-Green Revolution, transformed India from a food-deficit nation into a food-surplus one. However, the gains of technology were concentrated largely in the geographies with assured irrigation, leaving large tracts of the country far behind. Declining farm sizes, depleting resources, and escalating costs of inputs and farm labour have reduced the returns from farming. Based on Actual Consumption in 2011 National Sample Survey (NSS) Family Budget Survey, the projected demand of food-grains would be 280-285 million tonnes by 2021-22 and 340-355 million tonnes by 2032. Per capita availability of land, water and other finite natural resources will continue to decline as population increases. The growing demands of food and related commodities require a paradigm shift in agricultural planning, focusing on productivity, efficiency and moving away from food security to income security for farmers. The strategy to realise the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of doubling farmers' income by 2022 is centred on this shift. This new strategy revolves around knowledge intensive farming, an agri-business approach with modern value chains.

Against this backdrop, agriculture and water resources have been identified as critical sectors for the transformation of the Aspirational Districts. Carrying 20% weight, 12 sub-indicators under six core groups have been identified to measure agricultural advancement in the Aspirational Districts. This section explains the importance of each core indicator and the issues they seek to address.

Water Positive Investments and Employment

Water-use efficiency is critical to the agricultural economy, impacting farmer income and environmental sustainability. One component of the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) is aimed at increasing water-use efficiency and farm productivity through increasing coverage under micro-irrigation. Data suggests that there exists a substantial productivity gap between irrigated and non-irrigated farms. Therefore, it is imperative to increase irrigation coverage to boost productivity. Taking cognizance of this fact, one of the indicators under which districts will be ranked is the percentage of Net Sown Area (NSA) under micro-irrigation. The other indicators measure the percentage increase in water bodies rejuvenated under MGNREGA. With irrigation interventions having delivered results on the ground, the same objective is sought to be achieved by reclaiming ponds and other water bodies in rain-fed areas.

The increase in net irrigated area of 11.37 million hectare (mn ha) during the last decade was primarily dominated by tube wells (3.78 mn ha) and other sources (3.46 mn ha) followed by the canal network (1.94 mn ha). The share of canals in net irrigated area has decreased from 39.8% to 23.6% between 1951-2013. Rice and wheat together accounted for a 9.98 mn ha

of the increase in irrigated area, with pulses and oilseeds only receiving a marginal share. India's water use efficiency is much below international standards, as India uses two to four times more water than USA and China to produce one unit of major food crop. With limited scope for expanding created potential, the need to enhance Irrigation Potential Utilisation (IPU) is significant. Sustainability issues are also emerging through continuous groundwater extraction through tube-wells. Groundwater sources grew from 28.7% to 62.4% during 1950-2013. The schemes, thus, to address the issues related to water security in agriculture are PMKSY, and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

The role of the District Collector is critical for implementation of all interventions related to water development on ground. Their tasks may include ensuring timely preparation and implementation of District Implementation Plans (Annual Action Plan), effective identification of beneficiaries and area for micro-irrigation, establishing micro-irrigation targets in the district and fund utilisation, and facilitating credit linkages with banks.

Market Orientation

Markets are being increasingly recognised as an effective price realisation tool for farmers. The Government has taken active steps towards unification of fragmented agricultural markets. This core indicator comprises of two sub indicators – percentage change in price realisation, and district mandi linked to e-National Agricultural Market (eNAM).

Low price realisation by farmers has been a pressure point over the past year, culminating in farmer agitations. Market inefficiencies and information asymmetry have played a critical role in keeping the share of prices received by farmers low. Market inefficiencies, in turn, arise from an inadequate post-harvest infrastructure. Integrating eNAM into district mandis empowers individual farmers by providing the benefits of online auctions, better price discovery and timely payments, increasing their income as well as income security. The indicators attempt to address the issues of upgrade of mandis, inadequate storage facilities, roads, and other infrastructure through measuring price realisation. Key schemes in this regard are eNAM, Integrated Scheme for Agricultural Management, Price Support Scheme, and Minimum Support Price scheme.

For realising the vision of a unified market, the District Collector's cooperation is needed to facilitate linking Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Mandi with eNAM (if not linked yet), upgrading mandi infrastructure, ensuring electronic display of prices, awareness generation programmes, and creation of assaying, grading, and storage facilities. The collector should also ensure assessment of likely market surplus based on crop cutting experiments. To further strengthen market infrastructure, he/she should identify potential points of aggregation, promote establishment of new procurement centres in the district, identification of warehouses for storage of procured produce and early payment to producers through direct transfers.

Increase in Critical Inputs Usage and Supply

Quality inputs are critical to raising productivity in agriculture. With food-grains demand expected at 320-340 million tonnes by 2030-31, expanding the use of quality inputs is imperative. Critical inputs include fertilisers, seeds, pesticides and power among others. However, there is a need to promote efficient use of inputs in order to maintain the physiology

of plant-soil systems.

Seeds play an extremely important role in determining productivity. It has been highlighted that quality seed distribution needs to expand substantially for achieving the goal of doubling farmers' income. However, there is a lack of availability of improved varieties of seed with farmers as reflected in poor seed replacement ratios across regions. Inputs such as fertilisers and micronutrients are determinants of productivity as well. In order to promote judicious use of fertilisers and micronutrients, the Soil Health Card (SHC) scheme was introduced. The SHC scheme is designed to improve farm productivity by providing crop-wise recommendations on nutrients and fertilisers. Monitoring districts on seed and SHC distribution should ultimately lead to higher farm productivity.

Credit, an important enabler of modernisation, is disproportionately distributed across various levels. Geographic imbalances in the flow of credit exist at all levels, from states to villages. Regional imbalances in the term structure of loans have emerged as well. Even within agriculture, there exists a disparity between credit extended to crops sector vis a vis the allied sectors. Similarly, disparities exist across components of agricultural term loans. viz. irrigation development, farm mechanisation, land development, plantation and horticulture, hi-tech agriculture, amongst others.

This core indicator here comprises of three sub-indicators that measure percentage increase in agricultural credit, distribution of certified quality seed, and number of Soil Health Cards distributed in cycle II as compared to cycle I. The main central schemes here are Interest Subvention Scheme, Krishi Unnati Scheme, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), and Soil Health Card Scheme.

The District Collector has an enabling role in the implementation of activities to link farmers with credit facilities. He/She needs to ensure that NABARD's District Credit Link Plan is put in place, along with regular meetings of the District Level Bankers Committee. The Collector also needs to facilitate integration of local institutions such as Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) with banks. To ensure effective implementation of programmes related to seed disbursement, he/she should prepare a district seed plan, taking into account measures for deficit situations and availability at the block level.

Implementing SHC scheme requires the Collector to facilitate identification of lead farmers to help collection of soil samples, engage in review of Soil Testing Laboratory (STL) including availability of chemicals and technical manpower. Improved supply of water and electricity to STL will also enable effective implementation of the scheme.

De-risking Farming

Apart from enabling farmers to achieve higher prices for their produce, they must also be protected against the risk of failed produce. This is where the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) comes in. This scheme aims to protect farmers against yield losses, post-harvest losses and localised calamities.

The indicator, here, seeks to address issues concerning systematic crop cutting experiments

in the district as well as timely submission of weather-based data for assessment. There is a need to generate awareness among farmers about the claim structure under the scheme.

The collector, in this case, must ensure notification of crops under PMFBY and its publicity. He/she must review the work undertaken by the assigned district insurance agencies and bankers including on ground implementation and timely payout of previous claims.

Agriculture Productivity of Major Crops and Diversification

Meeting the projected food demand requires improving farm productivity. Diversifying to high value crops (HVCs) can lead to substantial increases in farmer incomes, as reflected in the high value of output from limited area under such crops, in comparison to cereal crops. Consequently, the indicator under productivity measures improvement in agricultural productivity in rice and wheat, and share of high value crops to total sown area in the district.

Diversification towards horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries and agroforestry are important to the goal of doubling farmers income given their high income potential. Improvement in these indicators will involve addressing the bottlenecks in development that include, but are not limited to, infrastructure support to animal husbandry, availability of high yield variety (HYV) seeds and adoption of modern technology. The schemes of interest, in this case are, Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY).

The Collector needs to ensure effective input management, including water, to enable improvement in agricultural productivity. He/She will also need to effectively anchor benefits available under MIDH and RKVY for facilitating planting material nurseries and creation of appropriate post-harvest infrastructure.

Livestock

Animal husbandry is a significant contributor to the economy as well as the socio-economic fabric of the country. In socio-economic terms, livestock and poultry are an integral part of farming systems in India, with farmers depending on these resources for additional income. Consumer preferences are also evolving to include more processed food, including meat. With rapid growth, the sector has immense potential for boosting farmer incomes. Vaccination coverage, along with artificial insemination coverage have been included as monitorable indicators under this programme.

The indicators seek to address the issue of low productivity of milch animals. Growth in this sector is further limited due to a lack of suitable breeds. For genetic upgradation of milch and other cattle, Artificial Insemination (AI) Centres will need to be upgraded, particularly for storage under liquid nitrogen and other facilities. The main schemes under this aspect are National Livestock Mission, Livestock Health and Disease Control Scheme, and Rashtriya Gokul Mission.

FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Hamant Maini

On August 15th, 2014, the Hon'ble Prime Minister announced the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY). The scheme has been designed to liberate the poor from the vicious debt trap, arising from the informal lending sector, and to create a safety net. It ensures access to financial services such as bank account, credit, insurance and pension. In effect, the government has accepted, both in spirit and in letter, the notion of *Sukhasya Moolam Dharma, Dharmasya Moolam Artha, Arthasya Moolam Rajyam* – a Sanskrit verse that means the onus is on the state to involve people in economic activity.

Background on Financial Inclusion

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) defines financial inclusion as the process of ensuring access to appropriate financial products and services needed by the vulnerable groups, weaker sections, and low income groups, at an affordable cost by mainstream institutional players.

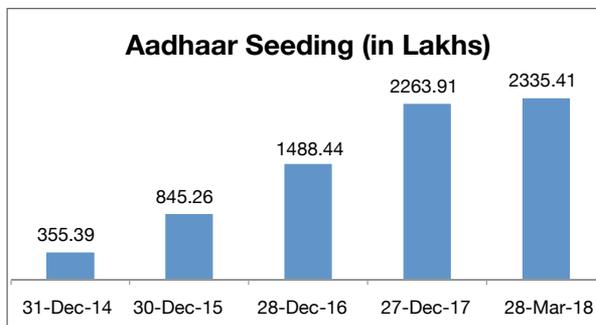
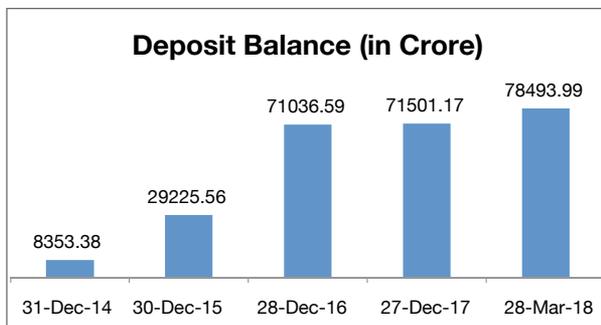
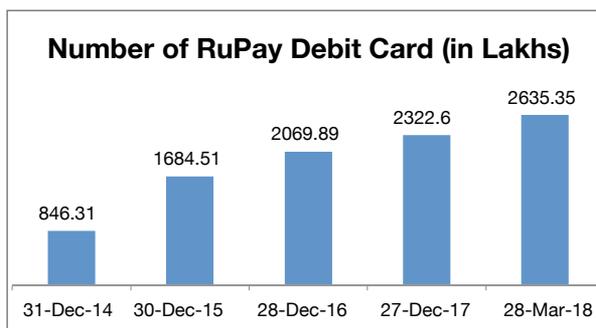
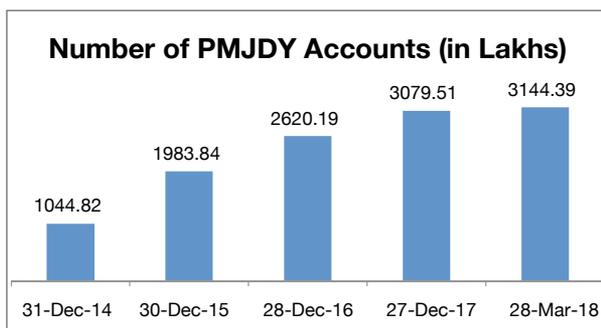
It has been well-established that financial inclusion is essential for the overall development, growth and prosperity of the society. The need for financial services arises from varying requirements of people. For example, a bank account provides safety to store money and enables easy access to the same in various forms. Through a savings account, one can earn interest on the deposit, thereby generating wealth. Credit allows fund movement into those areas that are facing a resource crunch. As a result, access to formal credit can facilitate expansion of businesses. Insurance provides financial security in critical situations, and pension assures beneficiaries to fixed periodic income upon retirement.

There has been a long standing history of measures adopted to broaden the reach and scope of financial inclusion, such as the rural cooperatives movement in early 1900s, nationalisation of commercial banks, setting up of regional rural banks, and, more recently, permitting banks to designate banking correspondents to increase their outreach. Collectively, these initiatives have increased banking penetration in the country.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana and Other Flagship Initiatives: Banking the Unbanked

The PMJDY aims to ensure universal access to banking facilities with at least one basic banking account for every household. In addition, other benefits include access to credit, and insurance and pension products. Since the launch of the PMJDY, the outcomes on financial inclusion have been transformative. Due to its household approach, the scheme has been able to cover the entire geography of the country and has provided unprecedented access to the banking and insurance services to the citizenry.

Resulting from the mission mode implementation, the Department of Financial Services, under Ministry of Finance, was recognised by the Guinness World Records for its achievement: Most bank accounts opened – 1,80,96,130 - in one week as part of its Financial Inclusion Campaign. Presently, under the PMJDY, over 31.42 crore beneficiaries have been banked and more than ₹79,012 crore balance in beneficiary accounts has been reported.



The story of Smt. Sunita Yadav, from Uttar Pradesh, has illustrated the benefits of financial inclusion. Being from an economically weaker section, she struggled with finances and led an extremely modest lifestyle. Upon opening her bank account under PMJDY, she started to save and access her RuPay card, which provides a beneficiary with overdraft provisions after fulfilling certain conditions. Consequently, she built a credible banking history that helped her obtain an overdraft facility, empowering her to open a general store in her village. From no income to earning ₹2,000 per month, Sunita has turned around her life of misery to that of dignity.

Securing the Unsecured

Moreover, the micro insurance and pension schemes linked with PMJDY have created a safety net for the people. At a cost of ₹12 and ₹330 per annum, individuals can obtain term life insurance - Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) - and personal accident insurance - Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), respectively. Further, the pension scheme – Atal Pension Yojana (APY) can give beneficiaries assured monthly pension income from ₹1,000 up to ₹5,000.

In times of great adversity, benefits of these schemes can provide critical support to get life back on track. For example, Smt. Urmila Diwakar, a resident of Moradabad district, was engulfed with grief at the time of her husband’s untimely demise and had no means to take care of her children. The insurance amount from her husband’s PMJJBY provided her with the necessary means to meet financial obligations and initiate livelihood activities. She has been able to successfully secure the needs of family and has set up a grocery shop to meet her family’s living expenses, preventing her children from dropping out of school.

Funding the Unfunded

The last element in the interwoven financial inclusion structure is the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) – a scheme launched to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem for the youth to become job creators instead of job seekers. Funding is provided through three categories, Shishu (loans up to Rs. 50,000), Kishore (loans between Rs 50,000 – Rs 5 lakh), and Tarun (loans between Rs 5 lakh – Rs 10 lakh), funding is provided to micro-enterprises. So far under the scheme, a record amount of credit has been sanctioned (Rs 4.72 lakh crore) with nearly 10.59 crore loans disbursed to micro entrepreneurs. The scheme, harnessing the energies of the youth, has spurred entrepreneurship at the grassroots level.

Financial Inclusion in Aspirational Districts Programme

In the Aspirational Districts Programme, financial inclusion has received considerable focus. In the selected 115 districts, the monitoring of the following indicators is being carried out on a real time basis:

- a) Accounts opened under PMJDY per lakh population
- b) Percentage of accounts seeded with Aadhaar
- c) Amount sanctioned under PMMY per lakh population
- d) Enrolments under PMJJBY per lakh population
- e) Enrolments under PMSBY per lakh population
- f) Enrolments under APY per lakh population

As described in the earlier chapters of the book, wherein a baseline ranking was carried out, under financial inclusion, Chhattisgarh has done a phenomenal job. Four aspirational districts of Chhattisgarh feature among the top five performers. In the State, enormous efforts have been put into formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs). For example, Project Shakti has embraced the formation of SHGs by setting out a target that at least one woman from each household should be part of SHGs, and each SHG should be linked to banks to secure loans. In Bijapur, education is provided to villagers through financial literacy camps for improved uptake of Mudra loans. In Kanker, there are initiatives taken to improve display and signage at banks. New accounts are being opened with direct linkage to Aadhaar. Overall, increased awareness among people has yielded positive results for the state in general.

Strengthening the Execution Framework

The implementation of the mission has resulted in ground-breaking results. Although, most of the interventions and functions remain under the purview of banks, the District Level Implementation Committee (DLIC), which is headed by the District Collector, is an effective instrument to provide impetus to execution and swift resolution of challenges. The DLIC comprises of senior most officers of banks in the district and NABARD, NRLM members, insurance companies, officers of district administration and local bodies. The functioning of DLICs can be further strengthened to improve outcomes in the domain of financial inclusion.

Additionally, examining the bouquet of services and the compensation structure of the banking correspondent and ensuring timely disbursement of their commissions can strengthen the banking correspondent network, a critical element to drive transformation at the last mile.

Lastly, the biggest constraint to financial inclusion is financial literacy. Several Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities need to be carried out to spread awareness and create financial literacy. To realise this objective, the functioning of financial literacy centers in the districts has to be strengthened, along with utilizing the Nehru Yuva Kendras, National Cadet Corps, and SHGs.

Initiatives to Improve Outcomes

In order to support the district administration in achieving outcomes on the listed parameters, NITI Aayog has collaborated with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). Among the interventions that are part of the Aspirational Districts Programme, the most crucial will be those related to reach the last mile. Therefore, an integrated strategy has been developed to enable deeper financial inclusion.

As a first step, the BMGF team will conduct in-depth interviews with district administration, bank branch management, and banking correspondents to identify issues at the district-level. BMGF will place a coordinator in each district of the 25 aspirational districts, for which NITI is responsible. The coordinator will provide technical assistance to assist the local administration in resolving the key challenges as revealed by the diagnostic study. The strategy will be focused to create awareness and increase the knowledge regarding the available financial services by involving regional civil society organisations. Lastly, to strengthen the measurement and monitoring, strong institutional supply and demand side mechanisms to track financial services access, usage and fraud will be deployed.

Financial inclusion in India till date has been driven using a top-down approach, whereby the RBI sets targets for the banks and banks are expected to deliver. Until recently, the district administration has not had a major role in driving financial inclusion. The structure of PMJDY and the targeted interventions through the Aspirational Districts Programme empower the District Collectors to bring about transformation in their districts. These efforts to strengthen inclusive growth will give a strong push to the current government's central philosophy of *Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas*.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Lakshmi Parvathy and Kanika Aggarwal

India is at the cusp of a demographic transition – thirty three per cent of the population is comprised of the youth. Government of India has launched a National Skill Development Mission for skilling, reskilling and upskilling 400 million people, both, already in labour force as well as the fresh entrants in the labour market by 2022. There is huge infrastructure in terms of ITIs, Polytechnics and private training providers. To improve relevance and quality of courses, Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) are involved in the curriculum upgrading, assessing, and certifying process. All courses are aligned to the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF). Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) has been introduced to ensure certification and bridge training of existing work force.

Low level of education, with 50% of the students dropping out before completing secondary education, creates a challenge of empowering them in new technologies in various sectors through lifelong learning in tandem with global standards. These changes also have connotations for the skill development ecosystem, as redundancies may be created in low-skilled jobs in the future. This challenge becomes enormous given that studies suggest that only about 41% of Indian professionals are found 'employable'. The informal sector that composes 93% of the workforce has limited skilling mechanism in place as skill development takes place on the job.

Challenges

The main challenges that are plaguing the skill development ecosystem in India have been summarised below:

- Mapping of skill requirements according to the various sectors and geographies
- Addressing qualitative and quantitative challenges related to physical and human resource infrastructure
- Integrating informal sector in the ecosystem and creating aspirations for skilling
- Involving the diverse industries for enhancing the relevance and quality of the skill development courses
- Putting in place a comprehensive and effective assessment and certification system

Current Interventions of the Government of India

Policy focus on skill development emerged for the first time in the Eleventh Five Year Plan with the initiation of Coordinated Action on Skill Development and formulation of a National Policy on Skill Development in 2009. States also set up the State Skill Development Missions and a large number of schemes were initiated in this regard. Systemic reforms such as developing a unified National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) and National Occupation Standards, setting up Labour Market Information System etc. were initiated to facilitate linkages between higher education and vocational education. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was also set up in 2009 for catalysing private sector participation in skill development. A landmark step in skill development, however, was the setting up of a Ministry

of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) in 2014, with the objective to make synergised and convergent efforts towards the goal of skill development. Since the announcement of the National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015, a number of measures have been initiated to scale and speed up quality skill development. This includes the National Skill Development Mission, New Skill Loan Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Pradhan Mantri Yuva Yojana, STRIVE, and SANKALP. Job creation and skill development have become the top priorities of the government with a mission of making India the Skill Capital of the world.

To synergise the implementation of skill development schemes across Ministries/Departments and States, MSDE has introduced Common Norms across all skill development schemes that are being implemented across the country. The outcomes of skill training programmes have been defined in terms of placement achieved in wage and self-employment, both for fresh trainees as well as existing workers who have undergone RPL. Since the common norms are aimed at being outcome-focused, the cost norms and fund flow mechanism for skill development programmes have also been linked to the achievement of specific outcomes. Cost norms include support for components like mobilisation of candidates, trainers' training, placement expenses, and post-placement tracking/monitoring, along with infrastructure costs. The State Governments are also encouraged to align their skill development schemes with the common norms so as to bring in uniformity and standardisation.

Partnering with L&T for Handholding the Aspirational Districts

L&T has come on board with NITI Aayog to handhold the aspirational districts and to improve the skill development ecosystem in these areas. Some of the areas where L&T will contribute to the Aspirational Districts Programmes are given below:

- Identify specific constraints in each district
- Collect data for feeding into the dashboard for better monitoring
- Prepare a district-wise strategy for better outcomes in skill development
- Factor-in youth aspirations into demand-supply matching
- Counsel the youth for employability
- Convergence across Centre and States schemes for better outcomes
- Strengthen existing interventions (LMIS, apprenticeship portal, SDMS etc., RPL, NSQF, and NQAF)
- Learn from Best Practices across States
- Design new interventions
- Promoting wage and self-employment
- Quality assessments and improving the quality of the trainers
- Factor-in IR 4.0 in training curriculum through industry participation

Chapter 9 | BEST PRACTICES

*Hamant Maini, Divya Priyadarshini, Arun Sudarshan
Upasana Sikri and Mukesh Kumar*

“Be the change, you want to see.”

- Mahatma Gandhi

It has always believed that change happens when it begins at the grass-roots. This belief led the Prime Minister to motivate the District Collectors of the 115 Aspirational Districts to innovate around ideas, strategies, practices and methods to bring about transformation in their respective districts. Launching this programme in January 2018, the Prime Minister addressed the District Collectors of all Aspirational Districts and gave a call for a concentrated effort to transform these districts.

These officers have put in their efforts to develop initiatives which would help effect change. The practices which were developed to address the specificity of the problem in their respective districts have not only helped in bringing about development and inclusion in their area but have also provided replicable models. The following section discusses some of the innovative practices, as informed by the concerned District teams, which have brought about visible transformation in these Aspirational Districts.



Astha Vidya Mandir
Dantewada, Chhattisgarh
Sector: Education

Background:

Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh has been affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE) for a very long time. Violence in the region has hindered the education of many children. To combat this situation, Astha Vidya Mandir was setup to target the disadvantaged sections of society by providing them safe and modern education facilities.

Intervention:

The district administration has set-up a completely residential, free of cost facility for 1,100 students adversely affected by LWE violence – Astha Vidya Mandir. At the residential learning center, English-medium CBSE curriculum is followed. Additionally, the students are provided with exposure to best pedagogical practices, such as incubation and Tinkering labs.

The district has employed innovative means to raise funds for the Astha Vidya Mandir by utilising resources from Corporate Social Responsibility programmes and funds available under District Mineral Foundation.

Impact:

Astha Vidya Mandir has been able to attract children from LWE affected areas of all seven districts of Bastar Division. Students from the Centre have won the IGNITE Award for Innovative Ideas awarded by the Hon'ble President of India.



Project Shakti
Dantewada, Chhattisgarh
Sector: Financial Inclusion and Skill Development
Year: 2014

Background:

In Dakshin Bastar Dantewada, the population is skewed towards women. The district has a male-female ratio of 1000:1023. Traditionally, women have contributed more than men in liveable income of the family. According to 2011 SECC data, percentage of households with monthly income of highest household member < ₹5,000 is 92.82%. Thus, Project Shakti was visualised to enhance income of women, with the belief that the most effective tool of development is the empowerment of women.

Intervention:

With the aim to promote women led micro-entrepreneurship, Project Shakti works as a multi-stakeholder, multi-departmental umbrella initiative. Women self-help groups, registered under various schemes of the Government such as ICDS, NRLM, are treated at par and are linked to diversified options of income supplementation.

Debt-free targeted assistance to the SHGs is provided and Corporate Social Responsibility Funds and District Mineral Funds are leveraged wherever necessary.

Skill training is given to the women and then further assistance is provided to them to invest in various income generating activities such as:

- Purchasing e-rickshaws;
- Construction of sheds and rearing of kadaknath chickens;
- Creation of bore wells and drip irrigation systems;
- Manufacturing of schoolchildren's uniforms for use in the district;
- Manufacturing of ready to eat nutritional supplements for Anganwadis;
- Bee keeping for production of honey;
- Catering and running of public canteens; and
- Running of Mini Rice Mills etc.

Impact:

By linking 950 SHGs and more than 10,000 women/families to income generating activities, Project Shakti has effectively helped counter the LWE propaganda of alienation and exploitation existing even deep within the rural, forested landscape. Project Shakti has been successful in significantly increasing household incomes. The Danteshwari e-rickshaw service, a model initiative emerging from the strengthen SHGs, facilitated plugging of a public transport service gap.



YUVA Rural BPO
Dantewada, Chhattisgarh
Sector: Financial Inclusion and Skill Development
Year: 2017

Background:

Recently in the IT sector, low-end Business Process Outsourcing jobs have become unsustainable in Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities. Noting this trend, the local administration invited interest from private firms, willing to set up BPO units in Dantewada to employ local youth who have been frustrated because of limited employment opportunities. As a result, YUVA Rural BPO was set up.



Intervention:

YUVA, a rural BPO, was set up in the Education City, Dantewada, to ensure creation of white-collar jobs, aiming at employing more than 1,000 youth of Bastar. These jobs are related to voice and non-voice BPO processes. In the future, such a set-up will help attract high-value IT/ITES jobs such as software development and knowledge outsourcing to this area. To make the proposition viable to the private player, the project was subsidised by providing interest-free loans through DMF funds.

Additionally, a residential facility has been provided at subsidised costs to the youth, hailing from areas such as Bijapur and Sukma, who are working in this BPO.

Impact:

At present, around 550 youth from Bastar Division are presently working on live projects/undergoing training in YUVA BPO. This number is to be increased to at least 1,000 by the end of June 2018. Apart from the direct jobs created, YUVA BPO has also created ancillary and support jobs in the areas of housekeeping, transportation, catering etc. The establishment of YUVA BPO has ensured that youth from Bastar Division are able to get white-collar jobs in Dantewada.



**ChittiGuruvulu – Sustaining Functional Literacy among Adults
Dwarappudi and Mugada, Vizianagaram Mandal, Andhra Pradesh
Sector: Education
Year: 2017**

Background:

2011 Census has indicated that 40% of the total adults in Vizianagaram district are illiterate. It is notable that 45.7% of women in the district are illiterate. This low literacy level has reflected on other metrics of development, from health to sanitation and livelihood status, which are very crucial with regards to the overall development of the district.

Intervention:

‘ChittiGuruvulu’ or Little Masters is an innovative program conceptualised and developed by Vizianagaram District to tackle the problem of adult illiteracy. It focuses on functional literacy among adults rather than limiting literacy to academic learning.

The program envisages high school children taking up the responsibility of teaching at least one adult at their homes or in the neighbourhood. It was found that parents and neighbours were more comfortable to be students of their own children.

Simplified teaching material in Telugu was prepared, and 61 students studying in 6th, 7th and 8th standards were trained to teach the prepared material to the existing adult illiterates in the village. Each student was mapped with 2-3 illiterate adults.

In order to encourage quick learning of Telugu letters, daily Telugu T.V. serial names, advertisements published on RTC buses, pictures exhibited against the government programs etc. were used as a tool.

Impact:

Following the enthusiastic efforts by the students, the Dwarappudi village turned 100% literate. Considering the success of ChittiGuruvulu at this village, district administration has extended the program to the entire Mandal of Vizianagaram with the help of 27,933 Little Masters in 585 schools across 34 Mandals, targeting 55,819 adult illiterates.

100% functional literacy at Dwarappudi has several visible positive impacts. The mandal is doing well in other developmental indicators such as health, infrastructure, sanitation etc. The village has the first digitally literate Panchayat and first cashless Panchayat in the District.

The program also increased the leadership qualities among high school students.



**“Five Hundreds” Initiative at Vizianagaram
Parvathipuram, Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh
Sector: Health and Nutrition
Year: 2016-17**

Background:

India has one of the highest occurrences of anaemia among women and children in the world. According to the national estimates, 48.1% of the women suffer from anaemia. The problem, however, is more acute in Vizianagaram district.

According to NFHS-IV (2015-16), 75.5% women aged 15-49, and 44.3% men in Vizianagaram are anaemic. Eight out of 10 children below five years of age are suffering with moderate or severe anaemia, majorly because they are born to anaemic mothers.

Intervention:

A major chunk of the district’s tribal population is part of the project in Parvathipuram. Considering the high anaemia occurrence, the following five items are distributed to the pregnant women for 100 days.

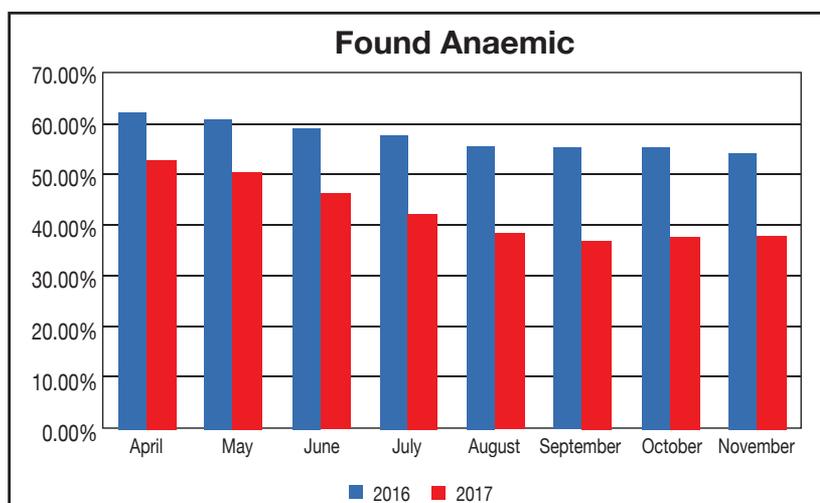
1. One iron tablet;
2. One calcium tablet;
3. Glass of milk (200 ml);
4. A banana fruit (for vegetarians) and a chicken egg (for non-vegetarians); and
5. Chikki (sweet made from jaggery and groundnuts)

In addition, all Anganwadi workers, lady supervisors, ASHA workers, village officers and sarpanchs were given training regarding the significance of healthcare of pregnant women and its impact on their children’s health.

Impact:

Following regular implementation of the programme, a blood testing campaign for pregnant women was conducted again after eight months. A notable reduction of 10% in numbers of anaemic pregnant women was found.

From the chart given below, it can be observed that there has been a significant reduction in the iron deficiency in the district.



**Reengineering Public Healthcare
Bijapur, Chhattisgarh
Sector: Health and Nutrition
Year: 2016**

Background:

Due to insufficient healthcare infrastructure in Bijapur, injured soldiers and general public facing complicated ailments were referred to either Jagdalpur (160km) or Raipur (450km). Poor tribal people who couldn't travel these long distances had to return to their villages seeking remedies from traditional healers (Siraah Guniya).

Prolonged lack of access to modern medical facilities has reinforced the prominence of these traditional healers. If sufficient healthcare infrastructure existed, the population of Bijapur would have received proper care and medical treatment.

Intervention:

Taking into account the existing challenges in healthcare, the district administration came up with an innovative Human Resource strategy, along with improvements in infrastructure and proactive outreach to community.

Infrastructure Improvement:

- A state-of-the-art district hospital was constructed with modular operation theatre, blood bank, pathology lab and Intensive Care Unit ward (ICUs).
- A 50-bed mother and child healthcare centre was setup.
- Centralised oxygen supply was provided to operation theatres and ICUs.
- Furnished accommodation and recreational facilities were provided for medical personnel.
- New Public Health Centres (PHCs) were built to reduce patient travel distance from 50km to 20km on an average and expand institutional outreach.

Recruitment and Retainment of Talented Human Resources:

- SOS campaign was run on WhatsApp and Facebook to reach out to specialists, doctors, and staff nurses. Salaries comparable to that of private sector, contractual appointments, and furnished accommodation with recreational amenities, jobs for spouses and school admissions of wards were provided.
- Internal reward systems and employee welfare policies were put into place.
- Skill trainings were provided for healthcare workers on the field.

Community Outreach:

- Haat Bazars were organised that proved useful to reach people from inaccessible Naxal affected villages.
- Sirah Guniya Sammelans (traditional healers meetings) were organised where traditional healers were educated towards referring patients to hospitals.
- Saas-Bahu Sammelans were organised to target the beneficiary and decision-maker for family planning to promote institutional delivery and nutritional services.

Impact:

In a district, where there was only one specialist, 15 doctors, and 16 staff nurses, there are now 17 specialists, 30 doctors, and 116 staff nurses. They today serve patients 24x7, and have performed 1,444 major and minor surgeries. In addition, four new PHCs have been built at strategic locations to reduce the distance travelled from 50km to 20km (on an average). These PHCs have also expanded institutional outreach.

**Strengthening Mother and Child Healthcare through Community initiatives
Bijapur, Chhattisgarh
Sector: Health and Nutrition
Year: 2016-17**

Background:

Nearly 80% of Bijapur district's population is tribal. This includes various communities such as Mahar, Halba, Gond, and Telanga. These tribes and communities have different customs and traditions that influence healthcare practices of mothers and children. In order to address the negative effects of such practices, the following initiatives were undertaken:-

Intervention:

- *Stakeholder Engagement:*
Saas Bahu Sammelans were organised in Anganwadi Centers (AWCs) to enable open discussion with women from various communities regarding their customs, traditions, and beliefs and to educate them about self-care, nutrition, health, and hygiene.
- *Infrastructure and Capacity Building:*
Model AWCs were constructed to make them more accessible, hygienic, safe, and attractive. In addition, Anganwadi workers were trained to deliver better services and build relationships with beneficiaries.
- *Mass Campaigns:*
Hand Wash campaigns were conducted to educate mother and child of 6-step WHO hand wash process.

Impact:

These initiatives have led to a 68% increase in institutional deliveries, and a significant decrease in malnutrition levels, maternal mortality rate and infant mortality rate. Additionally, malnutrition levels among 0-12 month old children has decreased by 17% change and among 12-24 month old children about 8%. Attendance of 3-6 year old children at AWCs has increased. Lastly, community participation in various programmes organised by AWCs has increased.

**Nutritional Rehabilitation Centre Rural Hospital
Molgi Block Akkalkuwa, Nandurbar, Maharashtra
Sector: Health and Nutrition
Year: 2017**

Background:

Akkalkuwa and Dhadgaon blocks of Nandurbar district have the highest infant mortality rate in Maharashtra. As per NFHS 4, 15% of children in Nandurbar have Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM), compared to 9.3% in all of Maharashtra. In addition, 40% of the children in Nandurbar have moderate acute malnutrition. However, these children do not have access to quality treatment and a 24x7 facility.

Intervention:

Arising from the critical need a quality 24 x 7 facility in the area, a 10-bed Nutritional Rehabilitation Centre (NRC) was sanctioned at Rural Hospital Molgi. UNICEF provided staff support in the form of four staff nurses, one dietician, and one cook. All the appointments related to the NRC were done on priority by Civil Surgeon of Nandurbar. SAM children with medical complications (between the age of six months to six years) are admitted to the NRCs for a 14-day treatment period.

These children are identified through screenings done by medical officers during their monthly AWC health check-up. Anganwadi workers facilitate admissions to the NRC by counselling parents about the health of their children. Health department through its ambulances provides transport facility as well.

During the treatment period, parents are given wage loss compensation of ₹100 per day. This helps in motivating parents to keep their children at NRC. The dietician at NRC conducts sessions on preparation of nutritious recipes from the vegetables grown from the kitchen garden in the NRC.

Impact:

From May 2017 till January 2018, about 148 SAM children with complications were admitted at NRC RH Molgi. During this 14-day treatment stay at NRC, about 52 children had 15% weight gain. Four follow-ups of about 43 children for every 15 days after discharge have been completed. Daily sessions are conducted for mothers of admitted children to show preparation of nutritious food.



Animal Husbandry
Dahod, Gujarat
Sector: Agriculture and Allied Sectors

Background:

The residents in Bordi Inami village of Dahod in Gujarat have faced significant deficits in income from animal husbandry business. One of the reasons attributed to this was the lack of knowledge regarding the various aspects of animal husbandry. Smt. Rathod Chanchalben Balwant, a resident of the village, for instance, was not aware of good breeds of animals. In addition, she was not familiar with the measures required to treat sick animals. As a result, her income from the animal husbandry business was very low. In such a scenario, it was essential to improve the productivity of animal husbandry activities in Dahod so as to increase the income of the tribal farmers.

Intervention:

In order to diversify livelihoods in Dahod, the State Government has launched various subsidiary schemes so that more people can join in the pastoral profession and run their own livelihoods. Individuals belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes receive benefits from subsidised schemes, providing them with good business opportunities.

In order to improve awareness and enhance information dissemination on the various facets of running an animal husbandry business, officers from various departments of the government and from Gram Sabhas started visiting the beneficiaries frequently and provided access to better quality seeds, animal feed, veterinary assistance, and information on milk production.

Impact:

As an illustration of impact for individuals, the story of Smt Rathod Chanchalben Balwant Singh is of great significance: not only was she able to expand her operations, but she did so, profitably. From 8 cows in 2012-13, the total count was increased to 14 in 2015-16. Consequently, the production of milk increased from 11,761 litres to 28,562 litres representing an increase of 143%. Additionally, net profits from her business increased 141%.

**Irrigation – Construction of surface run off harvesting storage tanks
Kupwara, Jammu & Kashmir
Sector: Agriculture & Allied Sector
Year: 2017-18**

Background:

Kupwara district is water deficit as it does not have large scale glacial snow deposits to perennially feed hill streams/irrigation canals. The winter snow deposits do not normally last beyond June, causing a recurring annual water shortage cycle coinciding with the peak paddy irrigation demand beyond June.

Intervention:

To partly overcome this problem, scores of surface run-off harvesting storage tanks have been built at strategic locations along forest fringe line in natural ravines. The storage tanks for harvesting surface run-off have been constructed along the fringes of the forest at suitable contours encompassing natural ravines, especially in perennially water deficit areas. These tanks usually harvest surface run-off from upper catchment area from January to May and utilise same beyond July as per the agricultural demand. Presently there are such 150 operational tanks in the district.

Impact:

There is minimum impact on local environment. No locally existing water courses such as streams or springs are diverted, as only surface run-off is harvested. This is indirectly helping in ground water recharge, soil conservation, flood management, and development of fisheries. The operational tanks have provided access to water for agriculture in deficit areas at a low cost.

Sakhi Mandal – Rural Financing and Skill Development
Pakur, Jharkhand
Sector: Financial Inclusion & Skill Development
Year: 2017-18

Background:

The residents of the Pakur area face many challenges in availing financial services through mainstream banking system. Certain major challenges include banks' reluctance to provide credit and other financial services; location of branches at a significant distance from villages; under-staffed branches, and poor internet connectivity.

Intervention:

In the given backdrop of limited infrastructure and lack of access to banking services, the district administration provided a major thrust to build 'Enabling Environment for Rural Financing'. The initiatives include:

- Strengthening of the Sakhi Mandal (SM) programme, which empowers women in rural areas, enabling them to avail financial services
- Opening up of 8 Micro ATMs to provide doorstep banking services such as deposits, withdrawals and payment services
- Strengthening the banking correspondent model managed by community federations
- Promoting individual account opening among members and ensuring minimum balance to some extent

Impact:

The uptake of banking services has significantly improved in the region. There are over 50,000 members availing insurance schemes. In FY 17-18, 3,600 Sakhi Mandals were financed, receiving a cumulative amount of ₹36 crore - a major increase compared with the outcomes of previous 3.5 years, where 2,600 Sakhi Mandals were financed, receiving a cumulative amount of ₹13 crore. Moreover, a significant shift has also been noted in consumers' transaction behaviour as consumers are moving away from cash based transactions to account based transactions.

**Self Motivation Campaign
Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh
Sector: Health and Nutrition
Year: 2017-18**

Background:

According to NFHS-4, in Khandwa, 46.8% children under 5 years are under weight, 21.5% children under 5 years are wasted and 43.6% children under 5 years are stunted. As a consequence, deaths due to malnutrition have been prevalent in the region of Khandwa. Therefore, the objective of this campaign is to improve the nutritional status of 0-5 year old children and provide them with effective ICDS services.

Intervention:

As part of the programme, 162 Anganwadi Centres, which are self motivated to reduce malnutrition, were identified. A software-based tracking system was devised to monitor children under 5 years of age who are malnourished. The software automatically tracks the grading of each child into categories for normal weight (green), under-weight (yellow) and severe under-weight (red). This enables proper action to improve the nutritional status of children.

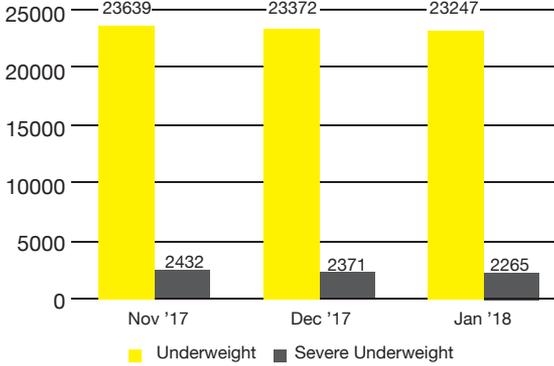
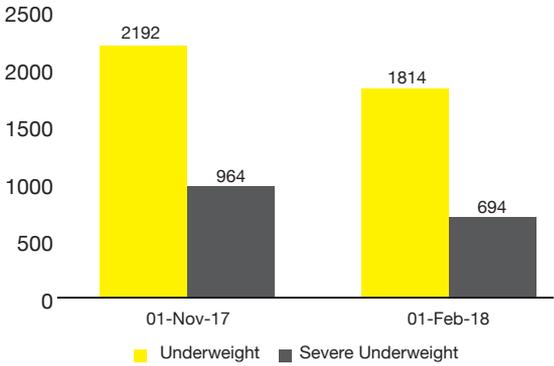
With the help of the above described data, targeted interventions were made to improve nutrition intake of the children.

- Each child will get full services of ICDS - mainly supplementary nutrition - regularly two times in a day.
- Each severely under-weight child will additionally get one Extra Meal.
- Convergence with Health department has enabled 100% immunisation, supplementation of IFA tablets, Vitamin A syrup and Deworming.
- Convergence with Public Health Engineering Department has ensured safe drinking water facility at these centers.
- Effective monitoring mechanism under ICDS has been instituted to track periodic progress.

Impact:

- Introduction of Self-Motivation model has reduced the number of malnourished children in 162 selected Anganwadi Centres by adopting a simple strategy to create synergy with other relevant departments for providing regular service and timely monitoring.
- Under Self-Motivation Campaign, percentage of children underweight have decreased by 17% and severe underweight children have decreased by 28%.
- In the district, percentage of children underweight have decreased by 2% and severe under-weight children have decreased by 7%.
- Child Tracking Software makes the analysis and comparison of each child at the district level effective and rectify any problem that occurs at the village level.

IMPACT



% Reduction Under Self-Motivation Campaign	
Underweight Children	Severe Underweight Children
17%	28%

% Reduction of Overall District	
Underweight Children	Severe Underweight Children
2%	7%

Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (Priority Project)
Bokaro, Jharkhand
Sector: Skill Development
Year: 2014

Background:

Bokaro is one of the key districts of Jharkhand and plays a major role in the economic development of the State. Known for its mining activities and steel plant, Bokaro district has carved its place as a critical impact creator among the industrialised cities of the country. However, despite industrial growth, most other sectors like health, employment, technology, etc. have recorded comparatively slow growth. The dearth of other employment opportunities pushes the youth towards illegal mining activities. Adverse effects have also been observed in the field of child health and nutrition. 50.8% children in Bokaro are malnourished, and Jharkhand also has a high rate of stunted children.

Intervention:

To address the factors hindering the growth trajectory of Bokaro, the District Collector initiated practices and schemes in different sectors to improve existing conditions. Under the provisions of Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana the district has worked concertedly to implement training programmes aiming at enhancing the skills of the youth and providing them with gainful formal employment opportunities. This started with mobilisation in five blocks, where the presence of Sakhi Mandals (SHGs), Village Organisations (VOs), and Cluster-Level Federations has built social capital. These blocks are Chas, Chandankyari, Jaridih, Peterwar and Kasmar. From these blocks, 1800 eligible candidates were identified, between April 2016 and December 2017, to receive training under Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDUGKY).

For successful implementation, the Gram Panchayat saturation model as prescribed and mandated in the Standard Operating Procedures of DDUGKY has been adopted as a mobilisation strategy. During this process, the district administration worked closely with District Mission Management Units (DMMU), Block Mission Management Unit (BMMU), Block Development Officers, Cluster-Level Federations, Village-level organizations, and Self Help Groups (Sakhi Mandal). District and Block Program Managers of the Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS) have also supported the process from mobilisation to pre- and post-placement.

Impact:

Out of the 1800 individuals identified between April 2016 and December 2017, so far 665 students have been trained from the district target. Out of these, about 572 students were provided with employment opportunities. Out of these 572, about 400 students have accepted the jobs, of which about 225 students have already completed their job tenure for more than three months. In this way, this initiative has mobilised and encouraged the youth to participate in training and eventually be placed. This programme has helped in reducing youth unemployment and engaging them productively.

Promoting Digital Payment: Diversification of Payment Systems and Financial Inclusion of all Households

Bokaro, Jharkhand

Sector: Basic Infrastructure

Year: 2016

Background:

Aligning with the Prime Minister's focus on digital payments and financial inclusion, the Bokaro District Administration developed a unique strategy that was implemented from the district level to individual households. This initiative has been brought into action to shift to cashless mode of payments and transactions.

Intervention:

A one-day workshop was conducted for all district officials to understand the nature of digital payments, and to analyse the current status of the district with respect to smartphone coverage, penetration of bank branches and ATMs, extent of average digital literacy and digital payments. A roadmap and a plan of action were created with the objective of increasing digital literacy and digital payments. Weekly review meetings at the district and block levels were conducted to monitor progress, and identify and address the gaps in the implementation. People at the district and block levels were trained in digital transactions and mobile banking as Master Trainers. A 'BHIM Sena' was created with a group of volunteers who wanted to take this mission forward. They would train at least 5 people at their respective blocks every day who would continue the training chain until a substantial number of people were trained in digital transactions.

One of the most successful experiments was the use of a novel technique to achieve the mandate assigned. Bokaro Administration conceptualised and implemented a Chai-Samosa training model based on the learning-by-doing principle. Each person in the training was encouraged to complete two cashless transactions of one rupee each, by swiping a card, using UIDAI-enabled Micro-ATMs or transacting through an e-Wallet. Many such public initiatives were taken up, in which the District Collector and senior officers also participated.

The services sector has also actively participated in enabling digital payments in the GPs, with digital payments being utilised at private schools and hospitals; ambulances, autos, buses and taxis; Common Service Centres; PDS shops; petrol pumps etc.

Impact:

All petrol pumps were digital payment-enabled by December 2016. By the end of July 2017, all government services in the district were being paid for through digital transactions. This resulted in a wide range of benefits, both to the citizens as well as the government. Common Service Centres or Pragya Kendras, which provide all public services, became a medium for citizens to experience the various benefits of digital transactions in real time. This has been borne out by the increase in the quantum of digital transactions from approximately 5.5 crores in August 2017 to over 6 crores in December 2017. This penetration at the village level is truly the greatest example of the success of the campaign by the district administration.



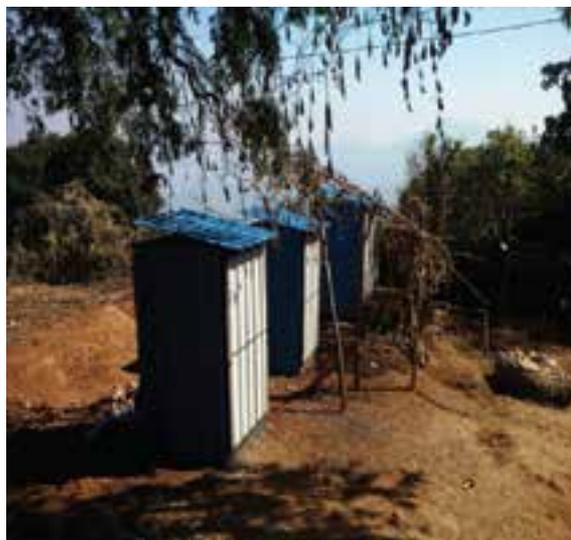
Swachh Sangram
Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh
Sector: Health and Sanitation
Year: 2016

Background:

Due to its poor performance on various national-level health and sanitation parameters, Vizianagaram has been rated as one of the most backward districts in the country. The National Family Health Survey 4 has highlighted the poor condition of child and maternal health in the region. It is indicated that poor literacy among women, open defecation and lack of antenatal care is greatly affecting maternal health, and the lack of 100% immunisation and prevalence of hunger is leading to high levels of stunting and wasting among children. Sanitation, too had received little attention in the district until recently. Till February 2017, no block in the district had more than 50% toilet coverage. Only 44 out of the 923 Gram Panchayats had achieved ODF status. Twenty-nine out of the total 34 blocks in the district had sanitation coverage of less than 30%. With a sanitation coverage of only less than 21.8%, the district ranked second last among 13 districts in the state.

Intervention:

The district administration strategically targeted this historically embedded issue of open defecation. The very first notable intervention in Swachh Bharat Mission is data purification. Data purification was a necessary step as it removed large amounts of ghost data from the IMIS database. This process gave the district administration a more accurate picture of the sanitation situation of the district. Thus, it was made easier to build a systematic plan to address the problem. One of the most significant initiatives in the district that actually triggered the large scale construction of IHHLs and made sanitation a mass movement was the famed 100 Hours Programme. In this programme, 10,000 Individual Household Latrines were constructed in a mere 100 Hours (March 10th to 14th, 2017) to declare 71 Gram Panchayats Open Defecation Free. The Andhra Pradesh Government's flagship programme Stree Nidhi Credit Cooperation provided timely, affordable and interest-free loans of ₹12,000 to each beneficiary for the construction of toilets. Bringing in Stree Nidhi ensured that all women-headed and single women's households had a toilet of their own by the end of the campaign.



Impact:

IHHL coverage in Vizianagaram grew between 2014 and 2018 from 11.42% to 73.37%. The district saw exponential growth in IHHL coverage in 2017, of close to 48%. Working efficiently with a combination of excellence in performance, sustainability and transparency, the district improved its rank from 674th to 217th in a short period.

Conservation of Palash forests of Palamu using sustainable livelihood model for its inhabitants.

Palamu, Jharkhand

Sector: Financial Inclusion

Year: 2017

Background:

Palash is the State flower of Jharkhand. These flame-red flowers are a unique identity of Palamu forest. Due to the effect of LWE activities and drought, deforestation of these Palash forests has increased in the last 2-3 decades. For example, Kundari Lac Bagaan, spread over 421 acres, was once considered to be one of the largest Lac forests of Asia, but at present this dense forest had been reduced to scattered patches of only 60,000 Palash trees and 100 Kusum trees.

Intervention:

The Kundari Lac Bagaan was picked as the first part of the forest conservation project in 2017. The intervention aimed at increasing the total plantation area of Palash and Kusum trees. Palash flowers can be used to produce organic gulaal (Dry Holi colour). The District Collector along with the local population has initiated plantation drive of Palash trees. Also, to increase afforestation, the initiative has been linked to the livelihood of the local population. The intervention has resulted in cultivation of Lac Bihan (cultivation) with 20,500 Palash Trees by October 2017 (last counting), as well as establishment of innovative Herbal Gulaal manufacturing units. The unit is providing livelihood to thousands of women, and is in turn encouraging them to conserve and regenerate these forests. Cultivation of the Lac & Herbal Gulaal processing from dry Palash flowers were done under the technical supervision of IINRG (Indian Institute of Natural Resins and Gums), Namkum, Ranchi.

On the human-resource mobilisation front, the Forest Department has formed 27 Joint Forest Management (JFM) committees for conservation and



regeneration of this Lac Bagaan. This is being aided by a local cooperative society having 405 members. Members of Sakhi Mandal (SHGs) in the whole district have been motivated and trained for Lac production and Palash flower conservation during the months of February and March for the production of Herbal Gulaal.

Impact:

The initiative has led to Lac Bihan (cultivation) of the 20,500 Palash Trees by October 2017 (last counting). In the manufacturing units set up, Herbal Gulaal is being produced by grinding the dry Palash flowers. Since the processing unit has been established on 10th May 2017, around 400 kgs of Gulaal has been produced. In the first batch of production, 4000 packets (50/100 gms per packet) of these Gulaal packets were produced on pilot basis and these were supplied to JHASCOLAMPS for market linkage. This received great response from the consumers and has thus encouraged in more production which would further motivate the local population to plant more trees.

Presently, Sakhi Mandal (SHGs) are working under the supervision of Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS) under NRLM. All of them have already been linked with bank credit, and this number is continually growing. Also, the conservation of the forest has also led to replenishment of ground water. Therefore, this initiative has helped the districts on several fronts.

**Establishment of NATUECO models of organic crop production for nutritional security and BHUNGRU for rain water harvesting
Ranchi, Jharkhand
Sector: Agriculture
Year: 2017**

Background:

The agroclimatic conditions of Jharkhand results in high acidity of soil with drought-like condition in many areas. Undulating topography with minimal irrigation channels results in rain-fed farming in over 90% of the area under cultivation. The soil productivity has decreased resulting in very low earnings for farmers when compared with that of other states. Also, the Ranchi Gowshala at Sukurhuttu under Kanke block of Ranchi district was facing a huge water crisis for irrigation of its 100 acres of land. The changing climatic conditions have affected the agriculture and ground water of Ranchi adversely. Thus, the need to move ahead from the traditional methods of irrigation was observed.

Intervention:

The **NATUECO (Amrut krushi)** model of organic crop production and the BHUNGRU model for rainwater harvesting are two innovative initiatives taken up to tackle the issue of agricultural produce and water crisis. The Green Revolution ensured food self-sufficiency in the country but at the same time it also caused irreparable damage to the agricultural system. There are various alternative practices through which not only



can the yield level be either sustained or increased, but the quality of the products can be improved. Amrut krushi is one such practice, which eliminates the use of agrochemicals, thereby reducing soil, water and air pollution, while also improving the quality of the produce.

NATUECO is an innovative model of organic crop production which improves crop productivity, decreases cost of cultivation and increases profitability for farmers. The Business Planning &

Development Society of Birsa Agricultural University selected one hectare of land each, at Ranchi Gaushala Neyas at Sukurhuttu, Ranchi and at Ranchi Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Angara, of Ramakrishna Mission to set up a farmers' model. Along with this, ten Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBV) in Ranchi were also selected to set up organic kitchen gardens (Ganga Maa Mandal) in 750 sq. ft. area.

BHUNGRU is the name of an innovative technology that is used for top-level rainwater conservation. It is a well-tested, environment-friendly disaster-alleviation technology that purifies, inserts and reserves rain water, excess farm water or storm water below the surface of the earth for use during the dry period.

BHUNGRU requires a 3 feet x 3 feet surface area to allow excess rainwater to percolate into the suitable strata of subsoil using 6 to 10-inch diameter pipes to preserve rainwater. Each unit of BHUNGRU ensures adequate amount of water during lean period for domestic, agricultural and industrial uses, starting from one to five million liters of water each year depending upon geological condition of particular place. This technology provides two dimensions of support to farmers: first, it ensures more water for standing crops in summer, and second, it reduces flooding of the farmlands during the monsoon. BHUNGRU has various designs to suit different needs.

Impact:

Preliminary investigation has shown the productivity of crops, mainly vegetables, to have increased by about 20-25% from the very first crop after initiation of this model in a farmer's field. Generally, when a farmer converts his land from chemical farming to organic, his productivity declines in the initial few cycles and only after a certain lag period, productivity starts improving. But in this case, productivity starts increasing from the very first crop. This innovation differentiates **Amrut krushi** from other cropping systems, whether organic or chemical-based. BHUNGRU also plays a very significant role in the augmentation of ground water levels in a particular area, as each unit of **BHUNGRU** preserves enough rain water to irrigate 10-15 acres of farm land for 3-4 months during lean period, provided that the area receives annual rainfall of 500 mm. Delayed or insufficient rain as well as critical groundwater conditions often results in crop failure with big financial losses to farmers, leading to suicides or migration. BHUNGRU helps enormously in reducing the chances of these events.

**Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana
Chatra, Jharkhand
Sector: Agriculture
Year: 2016**

Background:

In Chatra, the changing climatic condition is having an adverse effect on the crop production pattern. Irregular and inadequate monsoons, severe winters and dry summers have all resulted in yield reduction or other adverse effects on the crop production. Farmers are incurring losses for unprecedented climatic disasters like droughts.

Intervention:

With the beginning of Kharif season in 2016, the Jharkhand government has ambitiously implemented the **Prime Minister Crop Insurance Policy** (Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana). To benefit the farmers under this scheme, district-level strategies were defined. District-level meetings were convened with the Coordination Committee under the chairmanship of District Collector, Chatra, and an action plan to promote the scheme amongst farmers was prepared. With the extensive use of pamphlets, posters, banners, wall writing, and advertisements in newspapers, the information was spread throughout the district. Employment assistants called Kishshak Mitra, Arya Mitra and Matsya Mitra were tasked to reach out to every household to spread the information and to motivate the farmers. Hoardings were placed at the Block and District headquarters, while the staff and officers helped in distribution of the insurance policies and also assisted farmers in filling them. Along with this, the staff was instructed to regularly monitor and facilitate cooperation between the



officers working at Panchayat and PACS level. Treasuries for crop insurance have been set up through Agriculture and Cooperative Officers at the district level. For a fortnight, farmer awareness programs were run by the State government. Camps were set up to pay the insurance amount to farmers for previous years and farmers were made to fill and submit new policy forms in order to start new insurance policies.

Impact

The State Government set a target of 46,000 beneficiaries for Kharif in 2016, against which 61,883 farmers benefitted from crop insurance, which is an achievement of 134.4%. In Rabi 2016-17, the State Government set a target of 5,500 farmers, against which 4,289 benefitted - 78% of the set target. In the year 2016-17, Chatra district secured first position in the State for PMFBY disbursements, and the district cooperative officer was awarded by the Joint Registrar, Cooperative Bodies, Northern Chota Nagpur Division, Hazaribagh and Joint Agriculture Director, Hazaribagh. For Kharif 2017, Chatra district set a target of covering 1,15,000 farmers under crop insurance. In total, there are 1,16,545 farmers in the district. Therefore, a target of around a hundred per cent coverage of farmers was set. Against 1,15,000 farmers a total of 1,01,285 farmers were insured which is 88.07% of the set target. Out of the total 1,01,285 insured farmers, 16,339 have availed loans and 84,946 are free from loans. This is an incredible achievement for the district.

**Aao Sawaaren Apni Shala
Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh
Sector: Education
Year: 2017**

Background:

Imparting education to all children up to the elementary level has become mandatory, and education has been recognised as a fundamental right. However, it is not being implemented to its full capacity in Jharkhand. In Singrauli district, to strengthen the functioning of schools, meetings with School Management Committees were held in the weakest performing schools based on the results of Pratibha Parv. During the course of these meetings and conversations with parents and students, it was realised that furniture plays a big part in the environment and the learning experience of students; it is just as important as equipment, buildings and other learning resources. A considerable number of children in the majority of primary and middle schools still study in poor conditions, making it harder for them to perform well.

Intervention:

To improve the perception of people about government schools, District Administration Singrauli planned to provide dual desks to all schools in addition to blackboards, boundary walls and roof treatment. Of the total 2013 schools, 507 Middle Schools were chosen for the first phase. Insufficient funds from Rajya Shiksha Kendra Bhopal was one of the problems faced during the initial stage of the initiative. Being an industrial District, Singrauli is affected by mining works and hence to work for the interest and benefit of affected people, the district has a District Mineral Fund. It was with the help of this fund, **Aao Sawaaren Apni Shala** initiative was successfully completed and expanded in other schools too. Another problem faced was that providing desks has never been a priority in terms of improving education. Though the advantages seem small initially, they go a long way in improving the interest and perceptions of the students towards their studies and school.

Impact:

Aao Sawaaren Apni Shala initiative has brought a positive impact on the learning of the children. The district administration saw an increase in the percentage of students coming to school. One of the many advantages is that now with proper seating arrangements for students, they can see the blackboard at optimum eye-level without constraint. This has also improved the body posture of the students while writing and reading, and encouraged students to work on their handwriting. It has a behavioural impact on the children, parents and teachers, as children feel more connected to the school and are more disciplined. Parents also express greater satisfaction when they see their children getting proper facilities. On the whole, it has greatly improved the perception of the government schools in the minds of people.

Ramgarh Swachhta Sangram
Ramgarh, Jharkhand
Sector: Health and Sanitation
Year: 2016

Background:

In 2014-15, toilet coverage in the district of Ramgarh in Jharkhand was barely 15% and around 98,000 toilets had to be built to provide access to sanitation to all people. Open Defecation was considered to be a traditional and acceptable practice in the district. Due to the influence of the elderly over younger generations, there was a reluctance to accept newer methods of sanitation.

Intervention:

In order to improve the sanitation condition of the district, mass mobilisation was taken up, along with large scale awareness programs that helped bridge the gap between the traditional and the modern. Ratri Choupals and Vishrams were organised by District Administration at the village level to address the hurdles in making villages ODF. The District Officials went to the villages and Panchayats, and stayed there for the whole night having dinner with the community. Officials discussed the ill-effects of open defecation and its consequences on the community. Lota Pani, Swachhta Shapath and Swachhta Shaniwar are some traditional ways to motivate the local population to move towards construction and use of toilets.

Impact:

It was an ideal opportunity for the district to showcase their commitment to the Swachh Bharat Mission. Ramgarh achieved ODF status on 6th April 2017. A total of 77,000 IHHLs were constructed during the 10-month campaign. 125 Panchayats and 326 Villages were declared ODF and more are being added. Quality toilets with RCC roofs were constructed and people are readily using them. A big change has been observed in the community behavior towards open defecation. PRI members and community leaders have come forward for ODF monitoring and sustainability.



Effective Control and Prevention of Japanese Encephalitis (JE) and Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) Outbreak in Malkangiri District.

Malkangiri, Odisha

Sector: Health

Background:

Severe Japanese Encephalitis (JE) and Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) outbreaks occurred in Malkangiri district in September and November 2016, spreading to 184 villages in all 7 blocks. The district has a 49.49% literacy rate, ST population of 57%, SC population of 21% and limited human resources. Mobility support, mobile connectivity, numerous unelectrified villages, several hard-to-reach areas and high prevalence of Left Wing Extremism further made controlling the outbreak a challenging task.

Intervention:

The district administration responded swiftly and strategically to control the outbreak, taking a multi-pronged approach to create synergies between all the crucial government departments, public representatives, Panchayat Raj Institution members, Civil Society Organizations, traditional healers etc. Stakeholders were brought onto a common platform and worked together as a team. Fogging was carried out in human dwellings and isolated pig pens to kill the mosquitoes. A population of 2.5 lakhs in 60,000



households in 817 villages were covered through 50 teams (100 operators). BTI (larvicidal) spraying was done in all the water-logged bodies to kill the mosquito larvae. A population of 2.29 lakh of 48,840 households in 590 villages were covered by 21 persons. Medical Relief Centers were opened in all the affected villages 24X7. Daily meetings were conducted in the affected villages by Nodal Officers, ASHA and Aaganwadi workers. Posters, leaflets, banners etc. were displayed and distributed.

Impact:

The Incidence of JE/AES in 2017 is zero out of total 36 suspected blood samples tested this year. There has also been a significant reduction in malaria (34%) in the district this year. A change in health-seeking behavior, particularly of tribal populations, was noticed. Tribal people's trust in hospitals has increased considerably and many are now shifting from traditional treatment methods to modern scientific methods, and visiting hospitals. This has also reflected in the rise of Institutional Deliveries from 65% to 80%. Further, the general sanitation of the village and health awareness of the communities has improved. People are able to identify risk factors and are now voluntarily taking up drives to eliminate mosquito breeding sources, clean their villages, cut bushes, use mosquito nets etc. They have also begun voluntarily reporting fever cases, using safer drinking water etc.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (G)
Suldung Kamling, West Sikkim
Sector: Basic Infrastructure
Year: 2016

Background:

Suldung Kamling is a village located in one of the most remote areas of the State of Sikkim. The area is predominantly a dry belt with an inhospitable and difficult terrain which has deprived its people of many benefits of development. In spite of the State Government's various housing schemes being aggressively implemented in these areas, there were lots of families who still needed intervention in terms of construction of pucca houses.

Intervention:

The scheme PMAY (G) has helped in filling this gap to a huge extent. The villagers, predominantly belonging to the categories of Backward Classes, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, were able to improve their living conditions and subsequently upgrade their social status within the village.

People have also been encouraged to move towards pucca housing by motivating them to work for their children. The field functionaries and the district officials have tried to leverage the trickle-down effect, wherein the model constructed by one household is used to create enthusiasm and motivation among others. All the protections offered by pucca housing against disasters and calamities were highlighted and constantly publicised.

Impact:

The most significant impact felt by the 28 beneficiary families after the construction of the PMAY (G) houses is that of safety during natural calamities. The area is well known for being affected by high velocity winds, causing kutcha houses to be blown away, exposing the families to harsh climatic conditions. The construction of these houses has also helped the beneficiaries save money from repeated expenditure on the repair of houses frequently damaged by wind, heavy rainfall and earthquakes.

The enthusiasm and drive to assist these families has motivated the field functionaries to take up the scheme in a concerted fashion. Also, the effective convergence of other schemes & additional financial assistance given by the State Government and District Administration has led to the construction of bigger and better houses for these beneficiaries. The flexibility in the scheme and the overall management system has done wonders in this village in particular, and the district in general.



**Lighting Abujhmad with Public Co-operation
Narayanpur, Chattisgarh
Sector: Basic Infrastructure
Year: 2016**

Background:

Orchha block, also known as Abujhmad block, is situated in Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh state. It has a spread of around 4,975.51 sq km with difficult hilly terrain and dense forests. It is well known for Abujhmadia tribes, who practice their traditional forms of living to this day. This region is affected with Left Wing Extremism as the geography provides a safe zone for Naxal activities. Since Independence, the Government has been trying to light the huts/houses of Abujhmadia tribes by providing electricity connections. But until April 2016, only 38 villages had a functioning electricity supply.

Intervention:

The district administration, Narayanpur, decided to light the houses/huts of Abujhmad. The state initiated the use of solar systems instead of conventional transmission and distribution line systems under Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojna (DDUGJY). These were aimed at lighting 112 Abujhmad villages which are more Naxal-sensitive and lie in dense forest with difficult access. Mass mobilisation was used to spread awareness about the advantages of lighting and solar systems, and to generate faith in the system. Under the scheme, the State trained local people in the installation and maintenance of solar system components and also encouraged the Abujhmadia local people to assist in transportation and installation of solar panels. The responsibility of installation of solar lighting system was given to CREDA (Chhattisgarh Renewable Energy Development Agency) Narayanpur branch as the nodal department with CSPDCL (Chhattisgarh State Power Distribution Company Limited) as a supporting agency.

Impact:

The initiative has succeeded in lighting 112 villages with 2,820 households of Abujhmad as on 31st December 2017. After 70 years of independence, these villages finally have access to electricity. Three 9W LED bulbs, one fan and one multipurpose socket connection have been provided to each beneficiary, through the installation of one solar unit. This initiative also opens up the opportunity for the Abujhmadia people to connect to the outside world through radio and television, which may have further positive impacts on their lives. Along with the satisfaction of electrification, villagers are content and the initiative is made sustainable, as they do not have to pay electricity bills. Also, since young men are being trained to install the solar panels, this is helping them develop their skills and creating employment.

**Patsendri: A Model Colony built on the aegis of PMAY
Mahasamund, Chhattisgarh
Sector: Basic Infrastructure
Year: 2017**

Background:

The District Administration of Mahasamund developed a model colony of 84 houses under the aegis of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and was able to reduce costs by way of convergence of various schemes. PMAY usually provides for a pucca house for beneficiaries, but it does not develop



these houses on the lines of a colony. Generally, the beneficiaries faced various issues like lack of documentation, uncertainty about their eligibility status due to lack of convergence. In Patsendri, various departments have come together to resolve such issues and have provided the facility of insurance, health checkups, labour registrations, developing Self Help Groups, etc. to the beneficiaries.

Intervention:

A model colony was developed under PMAY, at village Patsendri of the Mahasamund district wherein convergence is being sought between various physical work-related schemes and social sector schemes. First level of convergence is at the physical level, wherein the houses, community hall, drainage have been built under PMAY, toilets are built under NREGA, electricity connection is provided under the Saubhagya Yojana, transformer, poles etc. are being provided under the Mukhya Mantri Majra-Tola Vidyutikaran Yojana and water supply is been provided under the Nal-Jal Yojana by the Public Health Engineering Department.

For capacity building of the residents, various social sector schemes have been converged to create a self-sustainable model for employment generation, and for the development & positive use of social capital, with a focus on the Patsendri community but which will also serve as an outreach center for the nearby areas.

Impact:

The impact was manifold. Building toilets, drainage, community hall, houses under PMAY resulted in improved health, helped build social capital, improved social status of the households and helped in reducing the spread of water borne diseases. Providing cooking gas under Ujjwala meant reduced deforestation and air pollution. Skill development aided in reducing poverty and provided financial stability. Establishment of a model Poshan Vaatika provided a source of income to SHGs and improved health of children in Primary Health Centres.

The development of PMAY houses on the lines of a model colony not only provides the beneficiaries with a pucca house, but also gives them an opportunity to live in a community. By activating the social capital present in the Patsendri beneficiaries, the government is witnessing a surge in awareness as witnessed by the rise in demand for various G2C services.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
Osamabad, Maharashtra
Sector: Education

Background:

The project was launched in the district of Osamabad in Maharashtra because of low birth rate of girl child in the district. Sex ratio was around 867 in 2011, which fell from 894 in 2001. The aim was to improve the sex ratio.

Intervention:

The first step was to spread information, educate the local population and communicate with them on the importance of the girl child. Publicity material like banners, brochures, electronic media, posters, and wall writings were used in the campaigns. Regular community level meetings were also held for this purpose. Awareness was also spread through mobile vans and conducting workshops.

Various campaigns were held to prevent child marriage. In addition, emphasis was placed on the education of girl child through these campaigns. Beti Janmotsav was celebrated on a grand scale where girls and mothers were felicitated. A Gudda-Guddi Boards was kept to record the number of births of guddas (boy) and guddis (girl). Gudda-Guddi Boards are fixed in all the functioning Anganwadi centres in the district. It shows monthly sex ratio of children up to the age of six years.

Impact:

As a result of the above-mentioned initiatives, sex ratio improved to 933.



School Improvement Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Telangana

Background:

The public school in Chinnaboinapally village of Eturnagaram block was in a very bad state. Only 16 students were enrolled with medium of instruction as Telugu. There was only one teacher and classes were from first to fifth standard. The school was on the verge of closure.

Intervention:

A 12 to 20 member committee, called as School Management Committee was formed by the parents of the children studying in the school. Five members from the committee and the school Headmaster opened a joint account in a bank. The power to issue cheques rested with these 6 members. All grants from the Government and companies, and contributions from parents were managed by these committees. This ensured that there were sufficient checks and balances and neither the SMC Chairman nor the Headmaster misused the funds. Once in a month, a parent-teacher meeting was arranged to assess the progress of the students; all the work done; amount spent by the School Management Committee was discussed with everyone present. Plans were also prepared for further activities to be taken up.

The parents and teachers were taken to the best private school of the District for an exposure visit and they studied the facilities available there. Based on this experience, they drafted a list of 57 items, necessary to take this Government school to that level. This was the vision/dream conceived by the parents for their children's school and they started working towards it, one step at a time. District administration sanctioned ₹10 lakh from available funds to the School Management Committee to take up developmental activities under community participation method.

Impact:

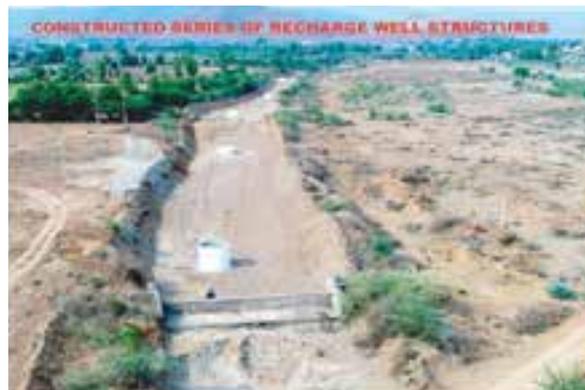
A reverse brain-drain from private schools to government schools began in Chinnaboinapally of Eturnagaram block and is likely to continue throughout the District. And the school is slowly and surely on its way towards the one dreamt of by the parents and teachers after the exposure visit to the private school. The following developments took place:

- Construction of additional classrooms in record (15) days (Cement/brick walls & AC sheet roof)
- Repairs to the existing classrooms
- Purchase of dual desks
- Borewell for drinking water
- School furniture and white wash with colours
- Classes – Nursery to seventh standard
- Number of teachers increased
- School strength increased from 16 to 240 in a month's time.

Construction of Recharge Well Structures YSR Kadappa, Andhra Pradesh Sector: Agriculture and Allied Services

Background:

Owing to the complex geology of the district, the rate of infiltration into the ground is not as per expectations, that is, it is not uniform. In spite of constructing several water harvesting structures, ground water was rapidly declining. The situation demanded recharging of freshwater zones in declining water table areas with artificial means to maintain the groundwater table at optimum levels. In order to resolve the problem, the district administration after examining different options, has decided to take up artificial recharging of the aquifers directly by drilling a borewell.



Intervention:

Recharge borewell (invert well) fills water into an aquifer using gravity, based on the transmissivity of the aquifer. By implementing the above concept, 16 recharge well structures have been constructed in Naravakati and Kothamadhavam villages of Vontimmita Mandal and are yielding good results in ground water improvement. In order to build a recharge well, potential aquifers are first identified. Drilling of recharge borewell is done and a casing pipe is inserted to required depth. A recharge pit is constructed around the borewell with filter media.

Impact:

The normal rate of infiltration is 60 litres per hour, but with construction of recharge well structures it is 31,000 litres per hour. With an investment of ₹35-40 lakhs for construction of 16 recharge wells, the expected returns are ₹138 lakhs per annum.

Integrated Nutrient Management YSR Kadappa, Andhra Pradesh Sector: Agriculture and Allied Services

Background:

The soil in YSR Kadappa is deficient in micronutrients which is one of the major reasons that crops have stopped responding to fertilizers leading to reduction in yields and increased cost of production. Micronutrients are those essential elements that are required by plants in very small amounts. Besides promoting plant metabolic activities and growth of the plants, they play a major role in improving quality, size, taste, input efficiency of fertilizers, water usage and disease resistance. As these nutrients are costly and required in very small amounts, their usage among farmers is low.

Intervention:

Given this context, the Department of Agriculture launched the Integrated Nutrient Management (INM) scheme in YSR Kadappa. Under this intervention, the department provided farmers with trainings along with a fully subsidised stock of micronutrients. This was based on the soil fertility status as ascertained through soil health cards. Farmers applied 10 kg of zinc per acre in basal and 200 kg of gypsum per acre at the pod formation stage through second inter cultivation.



Impact:

As a result of interventions, cost of cultivation came down from ₹19,000 per acre to ₹15,000 per acre. As a result farmers got additional income of ₹17,800 per acre. Yields increased from 900 kg per acre to 1,300 kg per acre.

**Open Defecation Free
Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh
Sector: Basic Infrastructure
Year: 2013-14 operational till 2017-18**

Background:

According to the Baseline Survey of 2012, out of a total of 15,396 rural households, only 8,983 had toilets. The need was felt to change the mindset for adaptation of holistic cleanliness.

In Arunachal Pradesh, the flagship programme, Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), is executed by the Public Health Engineering Department with the objective to improve the quality of life in the rural areas through accelerating rural sanitation coverage, encouraging cost effective and appropriate technologies, and reduction in the incidence of water and sanitation related diseases and change mindset of the people through awareness creation and health education.

Intervention:

A District Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), [DSBM (G)] was formed in Namsai to make the Swachh Bharat Mission a mass movement. Under this banner, components like construction of Individual Household Latrine (IHHL), Community Sanitary Complex (CSC), and Solid Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) were implemented in the field. An extensive awareness campaign was carried out as well. Various stakeholders (including the local administration, village water and sanitation committee (VWSC), SHGs, NGOs, Panchayats, public leaders and students) were involved in making the mission a mass movement. The awareness campaign began with inter-personal communication where the Block Coordinators accompanied by VWSC members visited door to door for the adoption and need of sanitary components.

Sanitation vans conducted month-long audio-video awareness campaigns across all the Panchayats to ensure complete coverage of the district. To strengthen the reach of SBM, the messages of SBM were placed in popular public spaces as well.

Impact:

Targets were completed well ahead of the stipulated date. On 24th December, 2017, the district had achieved 100% coverage of IHHL and achieved Open Defecation Free status a year ahead of the nation's target 2nd October, 2019.

**Organic Value Chain Development
Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh
Sector: Agriculture and Allied Services
Year: 2016-17**

Background:

The locally available sticky rice in the district of Namsai, popularly known as Khamti rice is popular for its delicious taste, along with its adaptability to local conditions. It is an indigenous variety of rice with distinctive features different from other varieties of rice.

Intervention:

In order to enhance its productivity, and to promote its commercial production, farmers are being encouraged to grow Khamti rice as an organic crop under Mission Organic Value Chain Development (MOVCD). MOVCD, a central sector scheme, was launched by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare in the North Eastern Region. It aims to develop certified organic production in a value chain mode in order to link the farmer with the consumer. The initiative supports the development of the entire process: starting from inputs, seeds, certification, to the centre of facilities for collection, segregation, processing, marketing and branding initiative.

A District Level Executive Committee (DLEC) under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner was formed to oversee the implementation process and monitoring on a regular basis. In its first meeting, DLEC identified the suitable area: Chowkham Circle covering 15 contiguous villages.

Under the scheme, 500 hectares of land had been identified and selected through GPS mapping for cultivation of the crop. Cultivation was carried under PPP model. Cultivation of paddy started with the land preparation for nursery sowing from the last week of April 2017 to the first week of May 2017. Thereafter, sowing of paddy in the nursery was done between June and July 2017. Demonstrations on organic seed treatment and timely liming of paddy fields were conducted in farmers' fields. Transplantation of paddy seedlings to the main field was carried out between July and August 2017. Harvesting of paddy crop started from the second week of November 2017.

Impact:

The villagers of the area, particularly the farmers involved in the MOVCD Scheme have realised the importance of new organic way of farming, which is different from their present way of farming. They have also become aware about the organic product in the market and the economic return from this kind of products through FPO.

The results show less investment compared to commercial farming of High Yielding Varieties thus lowering the cost of production. Many farmers in other commodity like, ginger, broiler, tea etc. are showing interest in this type of approach.



Education for Transformation
Khunti, Jharkhand
Sector: Education

Background:

The education sector in Khunti, Jharkhand, had several challenges to overcome. Even as enrolment rates were increasing, drop-out rates among the indigenous, minorities and linguistically disadvantaged groups were increasing. Learning achievements were also discouraging. The district administration identified that the gap between home and school language as the main reason. The second major challenge was to prepare students to face exam questions with greater confidence.

Implementation:

The District Administration launched 'Classroom without Fear' to increase the role of the mother tongue in school learning. Textbooks for lower primary classes (Classes 1 and 2) have been translated to five tribal languages (Santhali, Mundari, Karukh, No and Kharia). Classroom learning has been tied to their language and cultural context. Schools with higher percentages of tribal children were identified. Teacher allocation was rationalised to ensure that they knew the tribal languages and were given adequate training for teaching in mother tongue.

To counter exam fear, the district has launched 'Q-Gen', an innovative web portal for generating question papers for any exam, currently in operation for class 8 to 12. It can generate question papers intelligently keeping in view the class, syllabus, question structures etc.

Impact:

The district has seen substantial decrease in dropout rate and an increase in attendance to schools. Student participation and learning outcomes have also seen improvement. Q-Gen, on the other hand, has helped improve preparedness among children to face questions, and consequently improved their confidence while taking exams. This has also increased frequency of exams.

Focus Area Development
Purbi Singhbhum, Jharkhand
Sector: All Sectors

Background:

Purbi Singhbhum is one of the LWE affected districts in India. The Naxal insurgency has left the district behind in social, educational and economic aspects. The district administration has been working hard to improve the living conditions of citizens living in remote LWE affected villages. Several initiatives spanning across five thematic areas of the Aspirational Districts Programme have been implemented.

Implementation:

Education: Girls who dropped out were identified and enrolled in Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya. Girls who had a single parent or were orphans have also been enrolled in the school. Similarly, boys who dropped out were also identified and enrolled in residential schools run by welfare department.

Health & Nutrition: 66 health camps have been organised covering nearly 6,000 patients. The largest such exercise, a mega health camp, covered 1,250 patients.

Water Resources: 10 mini water supply and three rural water supply schemes were commissioned.

Skill Development: With the target of 295 SHGs in focus area, 299 SHGs have already been formed. 488 youth were selected for employment and placed in several sectors.

Basic Infrastructure: Six new roads of total 19.675 kilometres have been identified and the work is in progress. Over a 100 forest pattas have been distributed in focus area village.

Poshan Abhiyaan
Bokaro, Jharkhand
Sector: Health & Nutrition

Background:

In Bokaro district, 61% of the children under the age of five years are underweight, while 45% of them are stunted. In addition, more than 10% of all new born babies are underweight, while only 6% of breast-feeding children receive an adequate diet.

Implementation:

The district administration has developed and launched an application POSHAN that provides a multi-stakeholder and multi-layered approach to integrate the process of monitoring children's growth from grass root levels to the district office. The application is used for real-time monitoring of child growth in the Malnutrition Treatment Centres (MTCs), occupation status of beds in MTCs, and performance of lady supervisors.

Impact:

Since the launch of POSHAN, 585 children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) admitted in MTCs have been monitored using geo-tagging. Screening areas with high SAM cases has improved follow-up post-discharge of the children. Recorded data was analysed to capture symptoms of malnutrition as soon as they appear. Regular health check-ups are done to prevent complications of SAM.

Anganwadi Services under ICDS
Chamba, Himachal Pradesh
Sector: Health and Nutrition
Year: 2017-18

Background:

Only 61% pregnant women were registered for Antenatal Care (ANC) and Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) within the first trimester. However, once registered nearly 95% of the women get covered under SNP. The main challenge faced by the district was to ensure that more pregnancies are registered within the first trimester.

Implementation:

With the launch of scheme Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, a grant of ₹5,000 in three instalments is provided – aimed at improving health seeking outcomes of women during pregnancy. To ensure effective implementation of PMMVY, training was given to Anganwadi workers, special door-to-door awareness campaigns were conducted by them, along with tracking vulnerable groups.

Impact:

Since the launch of the programme, early registrations have gone up to 63.4%, and coverage of lactating mothers has gone up to 96.51%.

Baliraja Chetana Abhiyan
Osmanabad, Maharashtra
Sector: Agriculture
Year: 2015

Background:

Bhavani Shankar Agro Producer Company is led by 10 youths of the village of Barul in Tuljipur taluk. The mean age of the board members is only 30.1 years. The company consists of seven male and three female members. All members are educated up to secondary level or higher.

Implementation:

The agro-production company was supported by the Agricultural Technology Management Agency. They started with collectivisation of farm to mechanise. Farm equipment was purchased – tractor, harvester, sowing machine, spray machines etc. under ‘Baliraja Chetana Abhiyan’ the farmer-producer company applied for ‘revolving fund’ to start a diary business. Company members were trained by Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

Impact:

The program resulted in improved economic conditions for the members of the farmer-producer company. The employment generation opportunities of such ventures are noteworthy. Similar examples of farmer producer companies are ‘Om Raje Shektari Gat’, ‘Yuva Shetkari Gat’, ‘Jaikisan Shetkari Gat’, ‘Aadarsh Swayamsahayata Farmers Group’, and ‘Shri Tuljabhawani Shetwari Gat’.

Innovative Methods In Agriculture
Kadappa, Andhra Pradesh
Sector: Education
Year: 2015

Background:

Agriculture labour management is a major problem for farmers in terms of time and money. There's scope for farmer mechanisation. However, mechanisation is capital intensive. All of these challenges were in addition to high costs and low yields.

Implementation:

By encouraging collectivisation, farmer groups were prodded to buy new equipment with adequate subsidy provided. This equipment was also rented out to other poor farmers. Many farmers are now forming groups to avail the opportunity to mechanise their farms and increase yield and profits. To increase farmer income and yield, the district implemented several new and innovative methods of farming, irrigation etc. Zero Budget Natural Farming, rentals of machinery, Integrated Nutrient Management, Redgram with drip irrigation, rejuvenation of old orchards, banana and turmeric with drip irrigation, construction of sub-surface dams and recharge well structures are some of the new initiatives in the district. In addition, the Department of Agriculture provided training to the farmers on how to give adequate quantities of micronutrients.

Impact:

Cultivation cost came down to ₹15,000 from ₹19,000, and yields enhanced to 1,300 kg per acre compared to a mere 900 kg per acre before. Similarly, by adopting integrated pest management and nutrient management, the quality of the flowers and fruits improved as well.

Chapter 10 | CONCLUSION

Sanjana Manaktala

The Aspirational Districts Programme is a step towards the development and growth of some of this country's most ignored populations. It directs and focuses resources and action towards the districts identified as the most disadvantaged.

The programme is an attempt to combine a host of governance innovations to improve accountability through monitoring, convergence through concerted action and ownership through public ranking. The real-time monitoring system will track and measure progress both transparently and reliably, allowing stakeholders to hold each other accountable. Bringing together government functionaries at different levels and across silos into a single streamlined team is crucial. It will smoothen the process of implementation, keep development a key priority and build ownership for the programme amongst those responsible for implementing it. Ownership and accountability are further strengthened by the public ranking system, which leverages information sharing to include local communities as stakeholders in their own development. Thus, the programme has sustainability built into its very structure, and each of its features interlaces with the others to strengthen its core pillars of convergence, collaboration and competition.

This volume has sought to articulate the larger vision and rationale of the programme, while also addressing the nuts and bolts of its functioning. The thematic sections covering health, education, agricultural and water resources, financial inclusion and skill development have sought to outline, in broad strokes, some sector-wide approaches to improve these areas. The volume has also then brought together a collection of smaller initiatives in these sectors that have already seen success in the Aspirational Districts. These successes prove that transformation is indeed possible, and showcasing them serves to give often beleaguered district administrations a taste of positive incentivisation. Asking more of them – asking them to put the people of their districts at the centre of their work – can work wonders.

The programme is in its early days yet, but progress is good and signs for the future are hopeful. Committed and concerted action will be required from all those involved, from the Centre to the State to the district to the village, not to mention the various external partner organizations. Through this programme, the government hopes to deliver on the promise of better, freer lives for every citizen of this country.

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