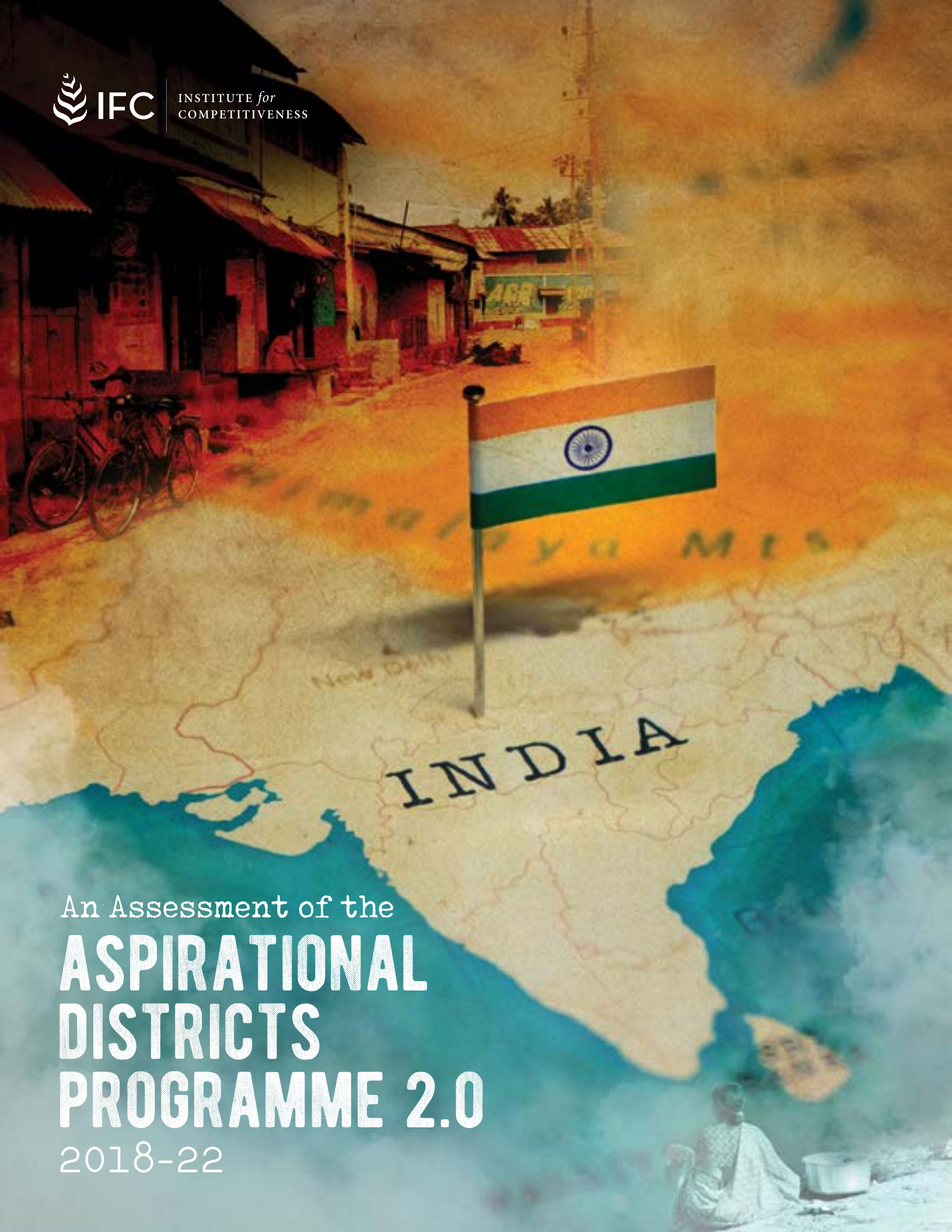




INSTITUTE for
COMPETITIVENESS



An Assessment of the
**ASPIRATIONAL
DISTRICTS
PROGRAMME 2.0**
2018-22

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**ASPIRATIONAL
DISTRICTS
PROGRAMME 2.0**

2018-2022

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Foreword

India is at a crossroads. A rising focus on competitiveness has produced a record of positive economic growth and pockets of prosperity. India now stands as the fifth-largest economy in the world. However, the uneven distribution of economic gains across regions and individual citizens has only served to highlight the need for a broader agenda aimed at inclusive growth and social progress. Income growth has been concentrated in a small number of individuals and regions. And, despite significant investments in infrastructure and social services, India stands in the 102nd position among 149 countries in the 2019 Social Progress Index. Going forward, India's progress should not be measured simply by its achievement of a certain level of economic growth, but whether India can realize its extraordinary potential when growth is shared across the widest number of individuals, and addressing India's most pressing social progress challenges.

True success requires the integration of improving competitiveness and social progress, which is the combination that unlocks inclusive economic growth.

The 2018 launch of the “Aspirational Districts” program (ADP) has been a bold and promising strategic step towards this new agenda. There has been a longstanding focus in India on the least developed regions across the country.

Yet, ADP marks an important shift from pursuing economic growth per se to focusing on achieving meaningful social progress ADP benchmarks in 112 less developed Indian districts, and enables partnerships among states in driving success. The program focuses on practical and measurable social progress outcomes, including Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion, Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure. Each of these are critical to expanding shared prosperity among all citizens.

By targeting a set of important but practical areas for improvement at the district level, ADP brings the promise of both inclusive development and a

reduction in regional disparity. And, the focus on enhancing each of these critical areas offers the opportunity for these regions to contribute to India's broader economic development as a whole, while raising economic growth itself over the long run.

The significant promise of the ADP depends on identifying the most leveraged areas for improvement, and developing a broad set of practical tools for enhancing India's overall development agenda.

This report, *An Assessment of the Aspirational Districts Program*, offers a timely yet systematic evaluation of the ADP and the gains realized to date. The report focuses on the most significant economic and social progress challenges facing the ADP districts, and evaluates the progress in these districts over the first two years of the program. The report also examines the role of the stakeholder-oriented model, in which public awareness, engaged public-private partnerships, and cooperation among multiple levels of government is utilized to enhance the success of individual initiatives.

Though still at an early stage, the findings are highly encouraging. Almost all districts included in the ADP program have made progress

on key development parameters as compared to the baseline, and are performing significantly better today than they were before the programme was initiated. Particularly notable are gains in Health and Wellness, and Basic Infrastructure. The ADP seems to not have simply maintained the districts along a pre-existing trajectory but materially improved the rate of improvement.

A striking finding is the impact of governance. Relative to a conventional top-down approach, the ADP supports active collaborations among multiple levels of governance within each ADP district, and the use of public-private partnerships. This stakeholder-oriented approach is driven by a shared understanding among the partners, and the use of a common language of outcome-oriented metrics and data. This study builds on this data collection and offers an interactive visualization tool that can be used by the various stakeholders, based on their own priorities and resources to make informed ADP strategy choices. To date, the ADP focus on both local economic development as well as social progress improvement is yielding positive gains. These early achievements will catalyse broader future gains, and accelerate Indian progress towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.

The experience of the ADP initiative to date also offers key lessons that can help galvanise and sustain the ADP program over time. Regional teams are guided by collecting streamlined outcome data in a timely way, and are structured so that leadership changes do not disrupt the successful execution of the program.

Partnerships across districts maximize the spread of key interventions, and can be expanded. Districts can sharpen their focus on the areas of greatest need, and work to formalize mechanisms to collaborate and learn from peers and better performing districts.

As the world continues to grapple with the fallout from the COVID-19 public health crisis, the importance of resilient, shared economic development combined with social progress have come into even sharper relief. This study offers a timely and insightful guide into how and why the ADP program is beginning to realize this promise in the neediest regions.

This report not only provides an early assessment of the ADP, but also has the potential to catalyse action throughout India. By focusing on “what works” in advancing inclusive growth and social progress, ADP has the potential to serve as a model for India’s future economic and social development strategy.

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01 Executive Summary

The Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) has its roots in the need to address significant developmental disparities among districts across India. It was launched in January 2018, as a transformative initiative to uplift districts that were lagging behind in key socio-economic indicators. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the programme during his Republic Day address, aiming to accelerate the development of these underperforming districts.

The government identified these districts, classified as “aspirational districts”, using a composite index derived from national databases and specific socio-economic indicators outlined in Table 1. This approach sought to instil a positive perspective on these districts and their potential for growth. The programme’s design is grounded in the 3Cs:



Convergence



Collaboration



Competition





01

Convergence entails the alignment of prevailing central and state government schemes and policies to amplify their influence.



02

Collaboration, on the other hand, spurs alliances among governmental entities, non-governmental organizations (development partner organisations), and diverse stakeholders to consolidate resources and expertise.



03

Competition fuels a positive competition among districts, stimulating them to draw inspiration from each other's achievements.

To enhance coordination, the programme calls for concerted efforts in converging central and state policies and programs. The NITI Aayog released a Primer titled, "Transformation of Aspirational Districts Programme: A New India by 2022" outlining guidelines for implementing relevant schemes under each indicator. This Primer serves as a comprehensive guide for district administrations, facilitating efficient ADP implementation.

*The programme's approach is distinctly data driven. It places high importance on real-time data for decision-making and governance. Data from 49 indicators spanning **Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion, Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure** are continuously monitored in target districts.*

This data is accessible via the Champions of Change dashboard maintained by the NITI Aayog. Regular updates ensure stakeholders can identify areas for improvement promptly.



Over the past four years, the interventions within the programme have significantly shaped positive outcomes in the aspirational districts, as highlighted in news reports. Notably, two comprehensive assessment reports on the ADP were conducted in 2020—one by the Institute for Competitiveness and the other by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Both these reports echoed a consensus that the inaugural phase of the ADP yielded notable improvements in the socio-economic indicators targeted by the programme. At this stage, it therefore becomes important that the impact of the ADP after four years of implementation be re-evaluated to critically assess and either corroborate or diverge from the previous findings.

This study is the second iteration of “An Assessment of the Aspirational Districts Programme” by the Institute for Competitiveness and it aims to assess the performance of the aspirational districts over the set indicators between 2018 (the baseline) and 2022. The study adopts various methods of analyses for the same. The Distance to Frontier analysis, computes the distance to the frontier (frontier being the benchmark target for each indicator) for each district, thereby identifying areas of notable improvement and those requiring further attention in comparison

to benchmark targets for each indicator. By categorizing districts into four tiers—Tier 1 representing those closest to the frontier and Tier 4 indicating districts farthest from the frontier—at two specific time points in 2018 and 2022, the Mobility Matrix helped study their performance trends across tiers since the programme’s inception.

Through these analyses, *Education emerged as the sector where the aspirational districts are making the most progress towards their targets, closely followed by Basic Infrastructure. Health & Nutrition secured the third spot in the order, trailed by Financial Inclusion and Skill Development. On the other hand, Agriculture & Water Resources remains the sector where the districts have the most ground to cover to reach their targets.*



The study also referred to other public databases of socio-economic indicators – National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) to examine the change before and after the implementation

of the ADP among the aspirational districts via hypothesis testing and 8 out of the 12 common indicators were found to be statistically significant. To further examine the status of the aspirational districts post-program implementation, the study referred to the Multidimensional Poverty Index¹ (MPI) and Social Progress Index² (SPI). It was found that the average MPI score for the aspirational districts in the year 2015-16 was 0.203. This decreased to 0.118 in 2020-21. Moreover, a correlation analysis between the latest MPI and SPI scores revealed that they have an inverse relationship with a correlation coefficient of -0.70. This negative correlation implies that districts that have made progress in social well-being have also experienced

improvements in reducing multidimensional poverty.

Additionally, the study also documents some of the best practices among the aspirational districts, emphasizing the significance of peer-learning. In sum, the ADP has demonstrated success in creating an ecosystem of government and non-government bodies resulting in consistent efforts towards driving change at the grassroots level. By focusing on key socio-economic indicators and regularly monitoring progress, the programme has helped identify areas that require immediate attention and allocate resources effectively. The engagement of development partner organizations and policymakers has further strengthened the programme's impact on the ground, facilitating the implementation of innovative policies and governance practices. The insights derived from this study hold considerable statistical significance for stakeholders, including development partner organizations and policymakers, enabling informed decision-making, and equitable addressing of regional disparities.



¹ The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is a comprehensive measure that evaluates poverty based on health, education, and living standards indicators. It assesses deprivations individuals face in multiple dimensions, providing a holistic understanding of poverty beyond income.

² The Social Progress Index (SPI) is a comprehensive framework that evaluates and measures a country's or region's social progress. It assesses various dimensions of well-being, including basic human needs, foundations of well-being, and opportunity, using a range of indicators. The SPI focuses on non-economic factors to provide insights into a society's overall quality of life and development beyond economic metrics.



022

Introduction

India has embarked on a more extensive growth journey compared to many, given its vast and diverse population, intricate socio-political landscape, and rich cultural intricacies. Despite facing challenges, India has remarkably positioned itself as one of the world's fastest-growing economies, consistently maintaining a growth rate exceeding 2% over the past three decades (Chung & Banerji, 2023). The nation's swift rebound to pre-pandemic growth levels and its achievement of surpassing the UK to secure the fifth spot as the world's largest economy in 2022 (Armstrong, 2022) have undoubtedly made a mark on the global stage.

Despite India's impressive status as one of the world's fastest-growing economies, the persistent specters of social inequality and exclusion hinder the realization of comprehensive progress that benefits all segments of society. The Social Progress Index underscores the multifaceted nature of inequality in India, with the lowest scores recorded in Environmental Quality, Inclusiveness, and Health and Wellness dimensions (Kapoor

& Green, Social Progress Index: States and Districts of India, 2022). Another challenge India faces in its pursuit of equitable development is the pronounced regional imbalances in economic growth and progress. Within India's landscape, the southern states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala have displayed higher levels of human development and economic expansion when juxtaposed with their northern counterparts such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. This contrast is vividly exemplified in the Human Development Index (HDI) rankings. Kerala, with an HDI score of 0.807, claims the highest position, while Bihar lags behind with a score of 0.584 (Conceição, 2022).

The underlying causes for these disparities in economic growth and developmental trajectories among regions can be largely attributed to historical and structural factors, encompassing critical elements like access to education, healthcare, and essential infrastructure.

The crucial question that arises is whether the current policy framework of the government is suitably poised to harness this momentum and translate it into sustained and inclusive prosperity within the new global order. As India's position on the global map becomes increasingly prominent, the effectiveness and adaptability of its policies will play a pivotal role in shaping its trajectory in the evolving landscape.

The New India Strategy @ 75 launched in 2018, emphasized on the importance of creating a "development state" by addressing development challenges and promoting balanced development across all regions and sectors. This development state is characterized by inclusive growth, policies based on evidence, and the well-being of all as a priority in both design and implementation (Strategy for New India @ 75, 2018).

With this background, the launch of the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) came about in early 2018.

The guidelines for the ADP, propose the transformation of the poorest performing districts in the country by improving public services and restructuring the implementation of existing state and central programs. The programme design of the ADP structure provides a plan for achieving a more inclusive India through the 3Cs –



Convergence



Collaboration



Competition

The programme combines the efforts of both state and federal governments in delivering public services and amenities, covering all sectors that are critical for the socio-economic growth. It is designed to be a collaborative and accountable system.

The current government has time and again, emphasized on the importance of “Sabka Sath and Sabka Vikas” – a collective effort towards progress and development, Jan Andolan or mass movement.





At the core of it, the ADP attempts to materialise “Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas” with clearly defined roles for all involved, data-driven governance aimed at addressing regional disparities, and increasing collaboration between the public and private sectors to improve the institutional delivery of public services. The programme enables systemic coordination and collaboration on development initiatives that support sustainable livelihoods, social aid, and infrastructure development. Entities working together at both the national and sub-national levels, involving a diverse group of stakeholders such as government, private sector, communities, academia, experts, and civil society organizations fit in this machinery aimed at fostering inclusive growth.



The first part of implementing the ADP was identifying the most disadvantaged districts in the country, based on a composite index (see Table 1 (Office Memorandum, 2017)) that considered factors such as poverty, poor health and nutrition outcomes, education levels, and inadequate infrastructure. The results were evaluated and discussed with key stakeholders, after which it was

mandated that at least one district from each state would be included in the programme. Initially, 117 districts from 27 states and one Union Territory (J&K) were chosen to participate, but five districts in West Bengal did not participate and the number of targeted districts then became 112 (Kapoor & Green, An Assessment of Aspirational Districts Programme, 2020).

Table 1: Datasets used for calculating the composite Index for selection of Aspirational Districts

Sector	Sector	Weight (%)
 Infrastructure	Rural Households without access to water (Ministry)	7.5
	Un-connected PMGSY village (Ministry)	7.5
	Households without individual toilets (Ministry)	7.5
	Un-electrified households (Ministry)	7.5
 Education	Adverse pupil teacher ratio (UDISE 2015-16)	7.5
	Elementary dropout rate (UDISE 2015-16)	7.5
 Health & Nutrition	Wasting in children below 5 years (NFHS -4)	7.5
	Stunting of children below 5 years (NFHS -4)	7.5
	Institutional delivery (NFHS -4)	7.5
	Ante-natal care (NFHS -4)	7.5
 Deprivation	Landless households dependent on manual labour (SECC D7)	25

The programme is led by the states and aims to maximize the potential of each district by identifying areas for immediate improvement, tracking progress, and ranking districts. It focuses on enhancing the ability of people to fully participate in the economy. The core areas of focus for the programme are Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure. (Transformation of Aspirational Districts Baseline Ranking & Real-time Monitoring Dashboard, 2018) In total, 49 indicators and 81 data-points across the 5 areas of focus are being tracked to calculate monthly performance scores of all the selected districts. These scores are then used to curate delta (incremental) rankings for the districts. The dashboard for accessing these monthly performance reports is NITI Aayog's Champions of Change.

The ADP approach marks a shift in governance strategies in multiple ways (Kant, The Financial Express, 2021)

Firstly,

It lays more importance on outcomes of the intervention as opposed to 'output'³. The programme envisions overall sustainable progress towards the attainment of targets under each of the sectors over a period of time rather than examining the progress on the set indicators in isolation.

Secondly,

The programme is heavily based on data, which is collected, analysed, and shared widely. The NITI Aayog has created a system to track progress in districts in real-time, which makes the latest district-level statistics publicly available. This is to incorporate greater transparency and accountability in the system while ensuring that policy decisions are supported by evidence.

Thirdly,

Through this programme the government is moving a step closer to recognising the advantages of cooperative federalism⁴ as a principle of governance. The states and districts are the main drivers

³ In the context of project management, monitoring and evaluation, or results-based management, "outcome" and "output" are two distinct terms that refer to different levels of results. Outputs are the direct and measurable results of activities or processes, while outcomes are the broader and more significant changes or impacts that result from those outputs. Outputs are the immediate products, while outcomes represent the ultimate goals and benefits.

⁴ Cooperative federalism refers to a model of governance and intergovernmental relations in which different levels of government, usually a central or federal government and subnational entities, collaborate, share responsibilities, and work together to address common issues and achieve common goals. This approach emphasizes cooperation, coordination, and joint decision-making among governments to efficiently manage public services, policies, and programs. (Watts, 2006)

of ADP, and the contention is that coordination at the local, state, and central levels in designing, implementing, and monitoring initiatives will significantly improve socio-economic indicators of development. Local entities are better aware of the district's particularities in terms of needs and challenges, and this is precisely why their involvement in the planning and execution of targeted initiatives is promising for the holistic development of the region.

Lastly,

The ADP relies extensively on a network of development partners - government entities, non-government organisations, and civil society to collaboratively drive this program. NITI Aayog works closely with organisations like the Piramal Foundation, Tata Trusts, IDinsight, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, L&T, ITC, MicroSave etc. in various capacities for the successful implementation of the programme (Kant, Hindustan Times, 2018).



NEED FOR THE ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME

The need for a programme like the Aspirational Districts Programme in India becomes increasingly crucial when we consider the prevailing regional disparities and socio-economic inequities that create a persistent cycle of poverty and deprivation. These challenges are deeply entrenched in the Indian socio-economic fabric, with intersectional oppression cutting across class, caste, gender, and religion, resulting in certain marginalized groups facing exclusion and limited access to opportunities in economic, political, and socio-cultural spheres.

Amid a global decline in human development, India's rank of 132 out of 191 on the Human Development Index (HDI) 2021-22 serves as a stark reminder of the urgency to address regional disparities within the country. This is particularly driven by a reduction in life expectancy, which has dropped by 3.5% to become 67.2 years, significantly impacting India's overall HDI score, which saw a decline of 1.8% to become 0.633 in 2021. The decline in health, education, and average income over two consecutive years reflects a broader trend observed

in 90% of countries, indicating a concerning reversal of progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN India Digital Library, 2022).

Moreover, income concentration at the top of the wealth distribution also exacerbates the forces of inequality, as indicated by the increasing share of the top 1% in total income, rising by 11% between 2017-18 and 2018-19, with a continued share of 6.82% in 2019-20 (Periodic Labour Force Survey). This reflects the vast expanse of economic disparities among the Indian population. To contextualise the effects of economic disparities on socio-economic factors affecting lives, we look at health statistics. The prevalence of anaemia among children under 5 years of age has alarmingly increased from 58.6% in 2015-16 to 67.1% in 2019-21 (National Family Health Survey 4, 5). Furthermore, the Global Health Index 2021, which positions India at 101 out of 116 countries with a score of 27.5, underscores the necessity of implementing targeted measures starting at the grassroots level to reduce disparities between rural and urban areas in providing

essential facilities and ensuring access to healthcare (Global Health Index, 2021). Ranked as the third objective within the array of Sustainable Development Goals, creating systems to ensure “good health and well-being” is deemed a vital aspiration to enhance overall welfare encompassing individuals of all ages and diverse segments of society. Addressing issues such as inadequate food supply, undernourishment, and child mortality due to hunger is pivotal.

These statistics necessitate the immediate need to focus on improving the socio-economic indicators across the country in the journey towards inclusive growth. In this context, the inception of an intervention like the Aspirational Districts Programme was essential. With the objective of addressing regional disparities within India, the ADP calls for targeted interventions to improve the quality of life in the most underperforming districts of the country.



OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

This study's overarching goals include evaluating the programme's overall performance and its effectiveness in improving the quality of life across the aspirational districts

01

Through the Distance to Frontier analysis, the study seeks to determine whether the initiative has accelerated the socio-economic development of these districts on the parameters regularly being monitored.

02

By way of hypothesis testing, the study assesses whether there has been a significant improvement on the socio-economic indicators compared to their pre-program trends.

03

By mapping ADP indicators to SDGs, the study assesses the level of localisation of SDGs through the ADP.

04

The study also assesses the performance of the aspirational districts over Multidimensional Poverty Index and Social Progress Index to further substantiate the findings of the other methods of analyses.

05

Finally, the study aims to document the institutional best practices employed by the districts to draw valuable insights for the program.

This assessment will shed light on the performance of aspirational districts under the programme, identify challenges and opportunities for future progress, and offer valuable lessons for stakeholders seeking to replicate similar interventions. Moreover, it can serve as a valuable resource for the Indian government during the implementation of the recently launched Aspirational Blocks Programme.



03 Core Tenets of the Aspirational Districts Programme

COMPETITIVE AND COOPERATIVE FEDERALISM

The primary focus of the ADP is to empower the aspirational districts and enhance their participation in the growing economy. The districts are encouraged to strive for excellence by catching up with the best district within their state and then aspiring to become one of the top-performing districts in the country. This is fostered through a spirit of competitive and cooperative federalism, where districts learn from and compete with each other.

Competitive federalism refers to a concept in governance and public policy that emphasizes the competition among different subnational entities (such as states, provinces, or regions) within a federal system (Watts, 2006). Cooperative federalism refers to a model of governance and intergovernmental relations in which different levels of government, usually a central or federal government and subnational entities, collaborate, share responsibilities, and work together to address common issues and achieve common goals. This approach emphasizes cooperation, coordination, and joint decision-making among governments to efficiently manage public services, policies, and programs (Watts, 2006).

Under the ADP, NITI Aayog collaborates closely with the relevant line Ministries and development partners to accelerate progress at the district level. *The District Magistrates serve as the foundation for the programme, and competition among districts motivates them to improve and learn from one another.* The goal of fostering a competitive spirit in federal governance is not only to compete, but also to collaborate and support the development of underdeveloped regions. The

ADP aims to promote a sense of competition and cooperation across various geographical and governance levels in the country relying on the federal nature of the state (Kapoor & Green, An Assessment of Aspirational Districts Programme, 2020). *The core of the cooperative federalism model that the ADP promotes is the sharing and replication of successful practices among districts.* Instead of each district having to independently come up with solutions to shared problems, the sharing of innovative ideas allows them to learn from each other and improve more efficiently. It is part of NITI Aayog's mandate to document and disseminate best practices implemented in the aspirational districts as was done in the report titled, 'Best practices Aspirational Districts Volume 1'. The programme also promotes the adoption of localised interventions for progress on the indicators and this, in turn, enables localisation of the SDGs.

Through the adoption and replication of best practices across various themes, the ADP aims to accelerate the progress towards meeting the SDGs.

THE 3CS - CONVERGENCE, COLLABORATION, COMPETITION

What makes the ADP unique is the 3C approach - Convergence, Collaboration and Competition. Convergence of the central and state schemes and policies at all levels of governance to ensure proper dissemination of all resources towards the beneficiaries. Collaboration among the government officers at the central, state and district level to ensure effective coordination on issues of importance. Competition among the various districts to work towards achieving better performance scores striving to be the best in the country (Transformation of Aspirational Districts Baseline Ranking & Real-time Monitoring Dashboard, 2018). The 3Cs are closely interconnected with one another.

The programme aims to bring together central and state government schemes and initiatives towards similar policy objectives by first, improving cooperation between civil society and government officials, including the Prabhari Officers, and second, fostering competition among districts through the use

of a monitoring dashboard and a monthly ranking system (Kapoor & Green, An Assessment of Aspirational Districts Programme, 2020). The programme involves the participation of central, state, and district government authorities, as well as collaboration with knowledge partners such as Tata Trusts and IDInsight for monitoring and data collection, and various development partners to assist district administrations in improving key performance indicators. These partners include Piramal, BMGF, Tata Trusts, Microsave, IDInsight, ITC Ltd, CSBC, Lupin, Bharatiya Jain Sangathan, Vedanta, Plan India, Save the Children, L&T, CII, and NSE Foundation. *This highlights how while converging various schemes across sectors at the central, national and district levels, the model also allows for effective collaboration with non-government organisations to create an ecosystem where all participants in the programme work in cohesion towards achieving the socio-economic indicators of development (Aspirational Districts Programme: An Appraisal, 2020).*

3Cs



Convergence

Under the ADP, the aspirational districts are supported by a team of sectoral experts in identifying and formulating appropriate project proposals for filling critical gaps and in effectively utilising all available sources of funds: central schemes, state schemes, additional allocation by the NITI Aayog, district mineral funds (in mining districts) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds. The efforts of respective central ministries are also aligned—some have especially made short and long-term plans for the aspirational districts with time-bound targets. Such a multipronged support mechanism allows the districts to capitalise on all available sources of funding while channelising them in key gaps areas, like building healthcare capacities and improving learning outcomes of students (Kant, The Financial Express, 2021).

Convergence under the ADP is highly relevant in the context of India's governance structures, where compartmentalization is a common challenge. In a vast and diverse country like India, governance often involves multiple agencies and departments working independently, which can lead to fragmentation and hinder effective policy implementation. The ADP seeks to address this issue by

promoting convergence among various stakeholders to ensure that citizens' needs and concerns are interconnected and well-addressed. *In the decentralized approach of the ADP, the focus is on localized governance, where local authorities and communities play a crucial role in identifying and addressing developmental challenges. By encouraging convergence, the programme aims to break down silos and foster collaboration among different government agencies, departments, and development partners.* The isolated functioning of various agencies and departments can lead to duplication of efforts, inefficiencies, and suboptimal outcomes (Local Governance: An inspiring journey into the future, 2007). Convergence is essential to bring together the collective expertise, resources, and efforts of various stakeholders, resulting in comprehensive and effective solutions to the complex challenges faced by the aspirational districts. By breaking down silos and fostering convergence, the programme promotes the adoption of policies, projects, and initiatives that are designed and implemented with a comprehensive understanding of the local context and citizens' needs.



Collaboration

The ADP operates on a three-tier collaborative model to facilitate the convergence of ideas and funds for each aspirational district. There is a Central Prabhari Officer, a State Prabhari Officer, and the district administration working with development partners on various development parameters. Many districts face unique problems that require targeted and sustained efforts. Especially, districts in challenging geographies such as in the North-Eastern states or those affected by left-wing extremism offer complex challenges that require nuanced solutions. The development partners play a crucial role in formulating these solutions. With their extensive experience on the field and deep understanding of the needs at the grassroots, they work in tandem with the district administrations for efficient implementation on the ground (Kant, The Financial Express, 2021).

The programme recognises the development partners are as external knowledge resources embedded in the state bodies and not as external agencies that exist outside of the ADP ecosystem. This is important to point out because the presence of development partners in this capacity allows for

timely identification of problems in governance and service delivery in the aspirational districts. Given that the targeted regions are the most underdeveloped in the country, identifying structural challenges in this way aids the process of implementation. *The development partners offer technical expertise on governance and service delivery while also actively working towards bridging critical gaps* (Kapoor & Green, An Assessment of Aspirational Districts Programme, 2020).

The role of the development partners is not just limited to technical support. They have also contributed to data validation required to ensure quality checks on the data reported for monitoring the progress of the various districts under the ADP. Most development partners have specially curated teams for the ADP that are responsible for field surveys and act as additional support to the government bodies at each level. These teams ensure accountability for the reported data and in this way, the inclusion of validation partners in the programme design is unique. Over time, the development partners have become integrated into the broader institutional framework of

the programme, leading to the creation of informal knowledge networks between the partners and district administration. Additionally, the knowledge and expertise brought in by the partners allows the district administration to expand their capacity in areas that were traditionally handled by other public institutions (Kapoor & Green, An Assessment of Aspirational Districts Programme, 2020). The role of the development partner organisations is further elaborated in the later sections of the study where we present insights from several stakeholder interactions undertaken for the purposes of this research.



Competition

In the context of the ADP, peer learning plays a crucial role in driving positive change and promoting a culture of continuous improvement. *The programme's emphasis on data-driven governance and the use of the Champions of Change dashboard facilitates peer learning among districts. The dashboard publicly ranks districts based on their performance on key indicators, creating a competitive environment that encourages districts to learn from each other's successes and challenges.* By presenting complex data in a simplified manner, the dashboard allows individuals from various backgrounds to comprehend and analyse district performances easily. The use of delta rankings on the dashboard reflects the progress made by districts over time, providing a clear picture of their improvement journey. *This feature enables*

districts to track their performance regularly and identify indicators that require attention for further development. The objective here is to invoke a sense of competition among the aspirational districts as they strive to attain the benchmark target for each indicator and consequently work towards improving their overall rank on the dashboard. The dashboard specifies the benchmark target for each indicator across the six sectors in focus. This encourages the districts to actively engage with the data to enhance their governance strategies.

By way of the rankings on Champions of Change dashboard, the ADP attempts to recognise those who excel as well as motivate those who lag behind. This sense of competition, essentially, strives to bridge the gap between the best and worst performing districts by

promoting targeted interventions across the socio-economic indicators. The peer learning approach in the ADP streamlines coordination among districts and facilitates data-driven policymaking. By learning from successful models and practices implemented in other districts, governments can identify effective solutions and tailor them to their local context.





04

The Structure and Components of the ADP

The structure of the ADP is such that it enables the tracking of real time progress across five sectors



Health &
Nutrition



Education



Agriculture &
Water Resources



Skill Development
& Financial
Inclusion



Basic
Infrastructure

This progress is reflected in the form of monthly performance scores and delta rankings of the selected districts across the six sectors mentioned above. The Key Performance Indicators for all the sectors are predetermined based on their impact on quality of life and economic productivity. The readily available data on their performance across the six sectors makes identification of gaps in the process easier and ensures newer ways of working towards improving the indicators are sought for. This way the programme exercises the principles of cooperative and competitive federalism among the districts (Kant, The CSR Journal, 2021)

NITI Aayog is responsible for 30 districts, while other central ministries are in charge of 50 districts, and the Ministry of Home Affairs is responsible for 35 districts affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE). A committee led by the CEO of NITI Aayog oversees the coordination of government programs and efforts (Transformation of Aspirational Districts Baseline Ranking & Real-time Monitoring Dashboard, 2018). *Each state has established a committee led by the Chief Secretary to oversee implementation and track progress. Additionally, a Central Prabhari Officer of the rank of Additional Secretary/Joint*

Secretary has been appointed for each district to provide feedback and recommendations based on local findings. NITI Aayog is steering the programme at the central level, and individual ministries are also taking responsibility for driving progress in their respective districts. The programme is designed to be decentralized, allowing for local experimentation in the selected districts based on a thorough understanding of local realities.

The local government institutions, working in partnership with the central and state governments, are able to implement measures to bring about socio-economic change at the ground level.



The programme aims to capitalize on the strengths and address the challenges of each district, to enhance human development through competition, convergence, and collaboration (Kapoor & Green, An Assessment of Aspirational Districts Programme, 2020).

The programme focuses on six sectors assessing the socio-economic progress in the targeted districts. Health & Nutrition is assigned weightage equivalent to 30% of the overall composite score. There are 13 identified indicators covering 31 data points on antenatal care, postnatal care, gender parity, health of new-borns, growth of children, contagious diseases, and health infrastructure. Education accounts for 30% weightage of the overall composite. There are 8 identified indicators covering 14 data points on learning outcomes (measured using figures on transition rate from primary to upper primary, transition rate from upper primary to secondary schooling, average scores in mathematics, language etc.), soundness of infrastructure (measured using figures on toilet access for girls, drinking water, and electricity supply) and institutional indicators on RTE mandated pupil-teacher ratio and timely delivery of textbooks.

Agriculture & Water Resources is assigned a weightage of 20% weightage of the overall composite score. There are 10 identified indicators covering 12 data points on outputs (measured in terms of yield, price realisation etc.), inputs (measured in terms of quality seed distribution, and soil health cards) and institutional support (measured in terms of crop insurance,

electronic markets, artificial insemination, animal vaccination etc.)

Basic Infrastructure accounts for 10% weightage of the overall composite score. There are 7 identified indicators covering 8 data points focused on availability of individual household latrines, drinking water, electricity, and road connectivity. Additionally, the number of internet connected Gram Panchayats and panchayats with Common Service Centres are also tracked. Lastly, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development accounts for 10% weightage of the overall composite score. There are 6 identified indicators for Financial Inclusion covering 6 data points focused on measuring the progress of central government schemes like Atal Pension Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana etc. and the reach of institutional banking measured in terms of number of accounts opened under Jan Dhan Yojana and ease of institutional financing for small businesses measured in terms of disbursement of Mudra loans. For Skill Development, there are 5 identified indicators covering 10 data points focused on measuring the progress in skilling of youth, employment, and the skilling of marginalized youth (Transformation of Aspirational Districts Baseline Ranking & Real-time Monitoring Dashboard, 2018).



05

Role of Development Partner Organisations in the Aspirational Districts Programme

The Aspirational District Programme has a unique policy framework that views development partners not as external funders or isolated agencies, but as external knowledge resources integrated within state institutions. The goal is to bridge critical gaps in governance and citizen service delivery in underdeveloped regions of the country. Development partners are expected to improve governance at the grassroots and enhance the district administration's capacity to deliver citizen services, either through personnel training or collaborative policy interventions.

ADP embeds development organizations, NGOs, and non-profit organizations within the government's institutional apparatus to achieve three key objectives:



Bridge knowledge and resource gaps to expand citizen services through collaboration and convergence.



Facilitate open performance management by validating social outcomes achieved.



Promote policy innovation at the grassroots to overcome niche challenges and ensure inclusion of citizens in public services.

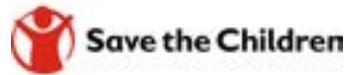
The integration of validation partners within the policy design enhances performance management and accountability. The programme's design feature of assimilating partner organizations into the broader institutional framework enables organic connections to develop between the administration and partners over time. This approach fosters collaboration, promotes competition among districts through data validation, and creates informal knowledge networks between young professionals of the partner ecosystem and district

administration. Overall, ADP's integrated design sets it apart from other policies and programs in promoting inclusive development and fostering partnerships between the government and external knowledge resources. There are numerous partner organisations embedded in the ADP network across the aspirational districts. However, an exhaustive list of those organisations was not publicly available. The following is a list of development partner organisations collated based on general research about the programme.

Table 2 / Indicative list of development partner organisations engaged in the Aspirational Districts Programme

HEALTH & NUTRITION	
Development Partner Organization	
SKILL DEVELOPMENT	AGRICULTURE & WATER RESOURCES
Development Partner Organization	Development Partner Organization
FINANCIAL INCLUSION	EDUCATION
Development Partner Organization	Development Partner Organization
MULTIPLE DOMAINS	BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE
Development Partner Organization	Development Partner Organization

The study undertook multiple interviews with some of the stakeholders representing Save the Children, L&T, Piramal Foundation, ITC and Tata Trust to further explore the involvement of development partner organisations in the Aspirational Districts Programme.



Save the Children's involvement in the aspirational districts has been crucial in addressing key issues related to children's well-being.

They operate in three districts: *Gumla and West Singhbhum in Jharkhand and Gaya in Bihar*. Their focus areas encompass education, health, nutrition, child protection, and child poverty. Save the Children employs two interventions: building innovative solutions at the field level and scaling them up through strategic government collaboration. Their integrated model involving Early Child Care & Education (ECCE) and nutrition has been instrumental in influencing government initiatives. Challenges lie in the time it takes to see the impact of education and nutrition interventions, however, Save the Children employs tailored curriculums and monitoring methods to track progress. Scaling up interventions depends on the government's operational system, involving guidelines, financial norms, and support systems. The district administration plays a pivotal role, and a shift in attitude is necessary to mobilize resources effectively. Integrated planning between NGOs, partners, and civil societies, along with an innovation fund for district administrators, can further enhance the program's success and ensure sustained progress.





L&T has been actively engaged in the aspirational districts since August 2018, primarily focusing on the Skill India Mission through an MoU with NITI Aayog.

They have set up Feeder Centers in five districts to train underprivileged youth in basic construction skills, followed by advanced training at Construction Skill Training Institutes (CSTIs). L&T also serves as a knowledge partner, supporting several ITIs in different states. By participating in the Aspirational District Programme, L&T has been able to address unemployment challenges and socially engage dropouts to quite an extent. *L&T has allocated 12 crores over four years for this program and targets to train 6000 personnel from Feeder Centers and 6000 personnel from various ITIs.* To enhance the entire ecosystem, motivation at different levels is crucial, and strong collaboration between the central and state governments can further streamline the process. With grassroots and top-level motivation, the program's success can be maximized.



Piramal Foundation partners with NITI Aayog in 25 aspirational districts, operating in the domains of health and nutrition, education, and water through Piramal Swasthya, Piramal Foundation, and Piramal Sarvajal, respectively.

With around 600 personnel engaged at the block, district, and State levels under the Piramal Group, their impact in aspirational districts is significant, leveraging government departments and budgets to drive positive change. *Piramal Swasthya's focus on capacity building, camaraderie engagement, facility establishment, and effective scheme implementations led to a notable 20 to 30 percent improvement in health indicators in the initial two years. Their efforts have touched the lives of 43 million people in these districts, creating a better ecosystem for beneficiary engagement and enhancing awareness of government health services.* The program's structure includes dedicated transformation managers and analysts at district and block levels, with state-level support to facilitate seamless service delivery. Strengthening the program requires addressing challenges

in underperforming districts and focusing on human resource capabilities, along with promoting convergent service delivery and understanding local ground-level challenges. Furthermore, reassessing district performance and including tribal districts from Central and North Eastern states can help expand the program's reach and impact. However, challenges with frequent district collector transfers need to be addressed to ensure continuity of leadership and smooth functioning of the initiatives.



ITC was chosen as a partner for the Aspirational District Programme (ADP) due to its well-known expertise in agriculture and commendable initiatives in doubling farmer's income.

The organization operates in 27 districts across states like Assam, UP, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, and Maharashtra, with a primary focus on three key activities. Firstly, ITC provides essential training to farmers, which is often lacking in government departments like ATMA and KVK. They train block-level officers, who, in turn, educate village-level resources responsible for training the farmers directly. Over 15 lakh farmers have already benefitted from this program, with a focus on adopting basic agricultural practices thoroughly. Secondly, ITC diligently informs farmers about various agricultural schemes offered by the government. They have meticulously mapped out these schemes, aiming to improve their effectiveness and outcome. Additionally, they prepare a scorecard for E-NAM, an electronic platform for trading agricultural produce, present in the 27 districts. Thirdly, ITC simplifies the process for farmers to avail the government schemes. They undertake essential activities like printing forms so that farmers do not have to travel long distances to access them. By doing so, ITC contributes to achieving the Champions of Change dashboard's indicators.



The reports prepared by ITC are shared both with NITI Aayog and the district administration office to ensure transparency and effective communication. An important finding from ITC's farmer field schools in 50 villages of each district shows a significant improvement in yield (10 to 12 percent increase) and a reduction in costs (6 to 10 percent), resulting in enhanced farmer income.

TATA TRUSTS

Tata Trust plays a crucial role in 85 aspirational districts, engaging in performance evaluation and deploying fellows under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Indicator selection in the Aspirational Districts Programme involved periodic rankings, emphasizing process indicators for visible outcomes.

The operational structure includes district and block coordinators alongside trained local youth for data collection. However, challenges arise from mismatched district MIS, addressed through district factsheets and reports to drive improvement. Flexibility, enhanced District Action Plans, and Village Development Plans are recommended for better integration and convergence. Tata Trust believes the aspirational districts

program pushes district administrations to focus on vital development parameters, with growing attention to data importance. Nevertheless, there remains ample room for program refinement. Tata Trust emphasizes strengthening district information architecture through training and capacity building, acknowledging the critical role of skilled personnel and regular data updating. Overall, program fosters targeted development efforts but warrants continuous efforts to address unique challenges and ensure sustainable progress.



STRENGTHENING THE INVOLVEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Development partner organizations can significantly contribute to improving the success of the Aspirational Districts Programme by adopting strategic approaches and leveraging data-driven insights. To begin, selecting the correct domain and region requires careful analysis and alignment of partner and district goals. *The use of data-driven insights can aid in identifying the most appropriate points of intervention, maximizing the potential impact of the partnership. The Distance to Frontier analysis section of this study presents a list of districts under each of the six sectors, where partner organisations could engage more for better implementation of the programme. These districts requiring special focus were identified based on their Distance to Frontier scores in the year 2022* (Refer to Methodology for further explanation). The aim was to identify districts which are the farthest away from the targets and require greater intensity in partner organisation engagements. Therefore, districts with the worst scores are grouped under four categories - Very High Intensity

Engagements, High Intensity Engagements, Moderate Intensity Engagements, and Low Intensity Engagements. The Distance to Frontier analysis of each sector, thus, helps select the domain and region where alignment of partner and district goals is needed for the furtherance of this programme.

To ensure sustained positive outcomes, partner engagements should be designed with a focus on institutionalizing their activities within the district administration. This approach ensures that the benefits of the initiatives continue even after the specific engagement is completed, creating lasting change in the targeted areas.

Creating information symmetries within the ecosystem is another crucial step in magnifying the effects of partner engagements. By promoting convergence and peer-to-peer learning, partners can facilitate the scale-up of best practices within India and globally, maximizing the program's impact across regions.

To strengthen the information structure and capacity of district officials, development partners can play a pivotal role in promoting the presence of human and knowledge resources at the districts. This enhancement enables better performance management, fosters healthy competition among districts, and facilitates convergence of efforts to achieve common goals.

The insights derived from this study, including the Distance to Frontier, Mobility Matrix, Z-test, and additional analyses on MPI and SPI, hold paramount importance for stakeholders, particularly development partner organizations and policymakers. By leveraging these findings, they can effectively pinpoint regions that require immediate attention and support, as well as identify areas that have exhibited noteworthy progress.



006

Methodological Note

The methodology section of this study provides a comprehensive overview of the approach employed to analyse and assess the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP). This section outlines the data collection, processing, and analysis procedures undertaken to derive insights into the programme's impact and progress.



DATA EXTRACTION

As mentioned earlier, the NITI Aayog's Champions of Change dashboard serves as the data repository for indicator-level data in this program. Indicators are measured at different periodicities—monthly, quarterly, half-yearly, and yearly—varying by sector. Most indicators in all six sectors are available on a monthly basis on the dashboard. A few quarterly indicators are found within the Health & Nutrition sector, while Agriculture & Water Resources features some half-yearly indicators. Additionally, Agriculture & Water Resources, Education, and Health & Nutrition feature indicators measured annually. For the purpose of this research, data extraction entailed referencing the dashboard to collect indicator-level data across all sectors from July 2018 to December 2022.



DATA CLEANING

For each month, each sector, the raw data was in the form of a spreadsheet with indicator-level data for all the target districts. The data cleaning process involved organizing the individual spreadsheets into a master spreadsheet for each sector where all indicators under that sector are clearly presented for all the months in consideration. This process also involved identifying the indicators with missing values and outliers, the treatment of which is the next step.



MISSING VALUE TREATMENT

The study followed the methodology as specified in the “Second Delta Ranking of Aspirational Districts” by NITI Aayog for imputing missing values of monthly indicators. The guidelines in the above-mentioned document specified that if an indicator value is not available for say March, 2019, then the suggested approach is that February, 2019 value be taken as the required value. However, this was only possible for indicators that were recorded as monthly indicators. To impute the missing values for all other types of indicators, the study employed linear interpolation using STATA. Linear interpolation refers to the process of approximating a missing value by connecting data points sequentially with a straight line. In essence, it involves estimating the unknown value by following the

ascending sequence of preceding values (Huang, 2021). Moreover, for instances where a district consistently lacked information on indicators over consecutive months, employing the mentioned imputation methods wasn't optimal. Consequently, for such districts, the minimum value within the dataset was allocated as the replacement.



OUTLIERS TREATMENT

An outlier is a data point that significantly deviates from the rest of the dataset. This aberration can exert a substantial influence on the final results. Thus, addressing or rectifying outliers prior to analysis becomes crucial to avert distortion (S, 2006). The study utilises the Winsor technique to correct the data for outliers using the software STATA. Winsorization is a technique to mitigate the impact of outliers in the data by assigning the outlier a lower weight or adjusting its value to align with other values in the dataset (Dixon, 1960).



STANDARDISATION

After having treated the data for missing values and outliers, the dataset is now fit to use for further calculations. As noted earlier that the indicators differ in their measurement periodicities, they also differ in their units. Some are measured in percentages while others in absolute numbers. To make these values comparable, the data for each indicator is standardised over their mean and standard deviation. It's important to highlight that prior to standardizing the values, a Utopian scenario (representing the benchmark target for each indicator as outlined on the Champions of Change dashboard) and a Dystopian scenario (indicating the worst possible outcome, which is the minimum of the dataset) are established for each indicator dataset. The range encompassing these best and worst possible values is incorporated into the calculation of mean and standard deviations. Standardization then makes all indicators dimensionless by rescaling, aligning the mean with zero and the standard deviation with one. This was done for each indicator across the six sectors.



SCORING

Finally, the standardised values were transformed onto a scale of 0 and 100 to arrive at indicator level scores for each district across all sectors. The formula used for the same is as follows:

$\{(X_j - X_{\min}) / (X_{\max} - X_{\min})\} * 100$, where X_j is the standardised value, X_{\min} is the minimum of the regional dataset, and X_{\max} is the maximum of the regional dataset.



DISTANCE TO FRONTIER SCORES

The scores calculated using the formula above are then subtracted from 100 to achieve the final Distance to Frontier scores. The following section elaborates further on the Distance to Frontier analysis.



DISTANCE TO FRONTIER

The research measures the 'Distance to Frontier' (DTF) of each aspirational district on indicators across the six sectors. The study draws heavily from the Ease of Doing Business report by the World Bank in terms of the assumptions made for the calculation of distance to frontier scores. The distance to frontier score aids the assessment of the absolute level of performance of a district on a particular indicator and also the change over time. The score measures the distance of each district to the 'frontier', which represents the benchmark target or in simple words, the best performance across all the districts for that year (Doing Business: Reforming to create jobs, 2018).

The basis for each frontier is the benchmark target listed against each indicator on the Champions of Change dashboard, dedicatedly maintained by NITI Aayog for the Aspirational Districts Programme. The details for each indicator are listed in the later sections of the study that delve into the analysis of each sector. However, for some indicators, a corresponding benchmark was not available on the portal. For those indicators, the frontier was assumed to be 100 if it was a positive percentage indicator, and in other cases, the frontier was assumed to be a national standard based on other government sources relevant to the indicators in consideration.

HOW TO READ THE DTF SCORES?

The distance to frontier scores are in the range of 0-100. A DTF score of 0 implies fulfilment of the target for that indicator, in other words, the distance to the frontier has been covered. Conversely, a DTF score closer to 100 implies an immediate need for attention as there remains a lot of distance to be covered to meet the frontier. For instance, if the transition rate from primary to upper primary for Araria is 60%, the DTF score is 40, 100 being the frontier.



The distance to frontier score underscores the gap between a particular district's performance and the best performance at any point in time. It highlights the achievements and challenges for each district across all sectors.

The Champions of Change dashboard maintains a repository of indicators over different periodicities (monthly, quarterly, half-yearly and yearly) depending upon the nature of the indicator. The raw data⁵ for each district was extracted from the dashboard from July'28 to December'22. Each indicator differs in their definition and hence, there was a need for standardising the data across all units to arrive at comparable figures in the range of 0-100. The

study computed the distance to frontier score in two ways – 1) for each indicator across all sectors, and 2) for a sector as a whole. *While the indicator-level score reflects the performance of the districts on each indicator and helps identify the number of districts with saturation⁶, the sector-level score provides insights into the performance of the districts on a sector as a whole. The distance to frontier scores and rankings of each district varies, often considerably, across indicators, indicating that a strong performance by a district in one area can coexist with weak performance in another. One way to assess the variability of a district's performance is to look at its distance to frontier scores across sectors.*

⁵ The raw data from the Champions of Change dashboard was treated for imputing the missing values and correcting for the outliers. The study uses linear interpolation method to impute the missing values and Winsor method to correct the outliers. The statistical tool used for the same was STATA.

⁶ A district is said to have attained saturation on an indicator when the Distance to Frontier score for that indicator is 0. The implication is that the district has met the target for that particular indicator.



MOBILITY MATRIX

The research utilizes the ‘Distance to Frontier’ (DTF) analysis to categorize districts into four tiers based on the quartiles of their sector-level DTF scores. This categorization helps identify leaders and laggards across different sectors. The study emphasizes state-level representation in these quartiles to better understand policy convergence and collaboration in bridging the gap with benchmark targets.

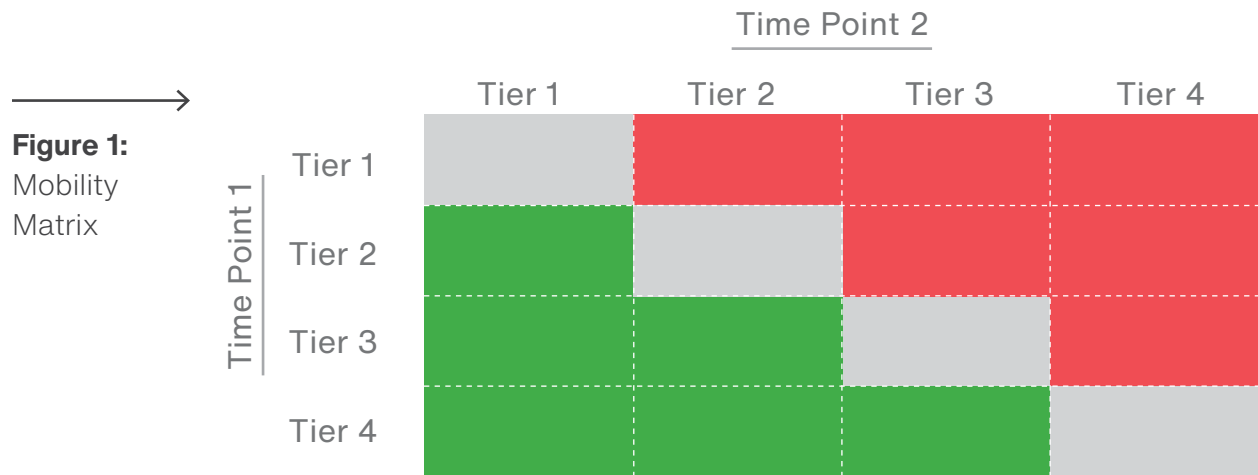
The DTF analysis provides a static assessment of districts’ progress relative to targets, offering valuable insights for policy recommendations to address areas of lagging performance. However, it does not show the improvements made by the districts. To understand progress over time, the study selects two specific time points: the baseline being 2018 (the year of inception of the ADP) and 2022. DTF is calculated for both time points, and districts are classified into Tiers accordingly. Tier 1 is the top tier comprising of districts that have attained scores closer to the targets whereas Tier 4 is the bottom tier comprising of districts have much scope for improvement. The results are

presented in a “Mobility Matrix”, which goes beyond the static DTF analysis by capturing the dynamic movement of districts over time, reflecting their progress and improvements across sectors.

The Mobility Matrix visually represents the progress and improvements observed in different pillars across districts between Time Point 1 (baseline) and Time Point 2 (2022). The matrix consists of cells, with each cell indicating the number of districts. The green portion of the figure represents positive movement, showing districts that have shifted from lower tiers to higher tiers over the tested period. On the other hand, the red portion indicates the number of districts that have regressed across tiers during this time. Grey cells signify a lack of movement across tiers.

For instance, X number of districts have shown significant improvement, moving from Tier 4 in Time Point 1 to Tier 1 in Time Point 2, indicating their top-tier performance compared to other districts. Tiers represent the relative position of districts in a particular time period, with Tier

1 representing the top tier. The Mobility Matrix offers valuable insights into the dynamic progress and achievements of districts, providing a comprehensive understanding of their development over time.



HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The null hypothesis is a statement in statistical hypothesis testing that assumes no effect, difference, or relationship between variables. Researchers start with this assumption and then collect data to determine if there is enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis in favor of an alternative hypothesis, which suggests a specific effect or relationship between variables. The goal is to either support the alternative hypothesis or fail to reject the null hypothesis based on the evidence from data analysis. The null hypothesis is denoted by H_0 and the alternative hypothesis by H_A (Davore, 2012).

To accept or reject the null hypothesis, a decision rule is established before conducting the test and is typically determined by the chosen significance level (α). The decision rule for hypothesis testing is a predefined criterion used to determine whether to accept or reject the null hypothesis based on the results of a statistical test. It is based on the critical region(s) or critical value(s) of the test statistic. The critical region is the range of values that, if the test statistic falls within it, will lead to rejecting the null hypothesis. The critical value is a specific value that separates the critical region from the non-critical region. If the calculated test statistic falls within the critical region, the

null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis. If the calculated test statistic falls outside the critical region, the null hypothesis is not rejected, and no significant effect or difference is detected. The decision rule determines the test statistic and the confidence interval to be used for hypothesis testing (Davore, 2012).

For the purposes of this study, a two-tailed Z-test is performed at a 5% significance level, implying that the test can confidently determine with 95% certainty whether the programme has resulted in any deviation from the secular trends of the tested indicators. The hypothesis will be rejected if the absolute value of the calculated Z-score is less than

the critical value $Z_{\alpha/2}$. This allows the test to assess the statistical significance of the difference in incremental changes under the Aspirational Districts Programme.

The study proposes a hypothesis that states that the yearly improvement in indicator performance prior to the implementation of the Aspirational Districts Programme is equivalent to the yearly improvement observed during the programme's execution.

→
Figure 2:
Assumptions
for two-
tailed z-test

Hypothesis	$H_0 : \mu = \mu_0$ $H_A : \mu \neq \mu_0$
Test Statistics	Calculate the value of $Z = \frac{\bar{X} - \mu_0}{\sigma / \sqrt{n}} \sim N(0,1)$
Acceptance Region (A.R) and Rejection Region (R.R) of H_0	
Decision	We reject H_0 at significance level α if $ Z < Z_{\alpha/2}$

In this study, the use of statistical tests is determined based on the sample size. Since the sample size i.e the number of aspirational districts, in this research is greater than 30, a z-statistic test is applied rather than a t-statistic test, which is used for smaller sample sizes. Furthermore, a two-tail Z-test is chosen over a one-tail Z-test because there are two possible outcomes after implementing the Aspirational District Programme – either an increase or a decrease in the indicators. This type of test allows the researcher to assess any change in either direction and reject the null hypotheses accordingly.

Though other types of Z-tests, such as upper-tail and lower-tail Z-tests, are used when predicting specific increases or decreases, the two-tail Z-test is preferred in this study. This is because the research does not hypothesize a particular direction

of change; rather, it focuses on identifying any change, whether it's an increase or a decrease in nature. By employing the two-tail Z-test, the study can effectively evaluate the indicators and discern the trajectory of change brought about by the program, irrespective of its direction. This approach is crucial because the implementation of a new policy intervention program can lead to various possible outcomes – an increase, a decrease, or no change – and the two-tail Z-test accommodates these possibilities.

The next section presents an in-depth analysis of the impact of the ADP over the last four years since its launch in 2018. The performance of each district across the five sectors is studied thoroughly using the publicly available statistics from the Champions of Change dashboard to critically determine the success or failure of the ADP in fulfilling the vision it sought out to materialise.



07

Distance to Frontier Analysis



EDUCATION

The education sector accounts for 30% weightage in the composite score of the districts under the Aspirational Districts Programme. The key performance indicators on education as defined in the programme Primer⁷ are 8 in number with 14 datapoints. They are defined such that regular monitoring and evaluation of student learning outcomes; school infrastructure and other facilities is possible. The following is the list of indicators mapped to their corresponding schemes as mentioned in the Primer.

Table 3 / List of indicators under Education

Indicator No.	Indicator	Schemes
1a	Transition Rate from Primary (Class V) to Upper Primary (Class VI)	SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan)
1b	Transition Rate from Upper Primary (Class VIII) to Secondary (Class IX)	(i) SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan); (ii) RMSA (Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan)
2	Toilet Access: Percent of schools with functional girls' toilets	(i) SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan);
3	Per cent schools with functional drinking water facilities	(ii) RMSA (Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan)
4	Learning outcomes	(i) SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan); (ii) CSSTE (Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Teacher Education)

⁷ Transformation of Aspirational Districts: A New India by 2022

Indicator No.	Indicator	Schemes
4a	Mathematics Performance in Class 3	(i) SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan); (ii) CSSTE (Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Teacher Education)
4b	Language Performance in Class 3	
4c	Mathematics Performance in Class 5	
4d	Language Performance in Class 5	
4e	Mathematics Performance in Class 8	
4f	Language Performance in Class 8	
5	Female Literacy (15+ years)	Scheme of Adult Education
6	Percent schools with functional electricity facility at secondary level	
7	Percent Elementary Schools Complying with RTE specified Pupil Teacher Ratio	SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan)
8	Percent schools providing textbooks to children within 1 month of start of the academic session	SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan)

It should be noted that data on the following indicators were not available on the Champions of Change dashboard and hence those have not been studied for this analysis.

4. Learning outcomes:

- a) Mathematics performance in Class 3
- b) Language performance in Class 3
- c) Mathematics performance in Class 5
- d) Language performance in Class 5
- e) Mathematics performance in Class 8

- f) Language performance in Class 8

5. Female Literacy (15+ years)

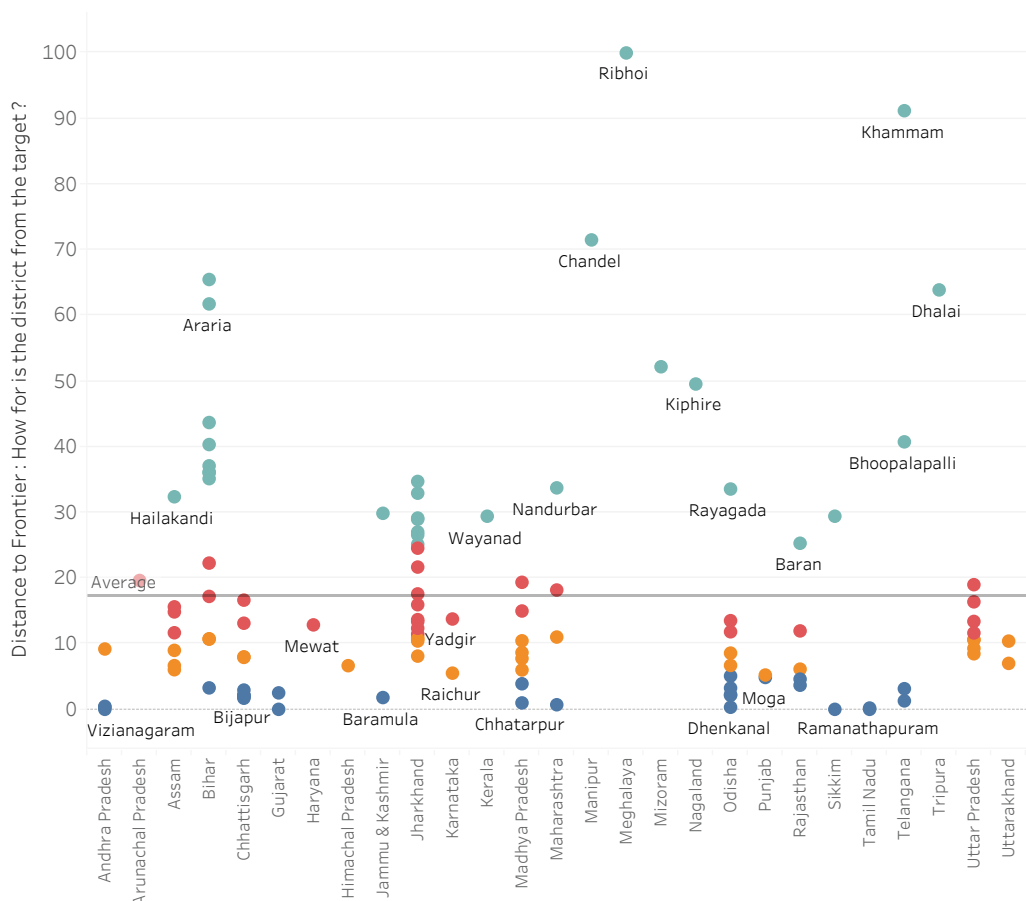
For the Distance to Frontier analysis, the frontier set for each indicator is listed as follows. The benchmark target listed on the Champions of Change dashboard for each indicator is the frontier for this analysis. For some indicators the frontier is assumed to be 100 given the fact that the dashboard did not mention any benchmark target corresponding to them.

Table 4 Benchmark targets for Education

Indicator	Periodicity	Frontier	Source
Toilet access: percentage schools with functional girls' toilets	Monthly	100	Champions of Change
Percentage of schools with functional drinking water facility	Monthly	100	Champions of Change
Percentage of schools with functional electricity facility at secondary level	Monthly	100	Champions of Change
Percentage of elementary schools complying with RTE specified Pupil Teacher Ratio	Monthly	100	Champions of Change
Transition rate from primary to upper primary school level	Yearly	100	Best Possible Value
Transition rate from upper primary to secondary school level	Yearly	100	Best Possible Value
Percentage of schools providing textbooks to children within 1 month of start of academic session	Yearly	100	Best Possible Value

Figure 3: Distance to Frontier scores in 2022 for Education

- Tier 1
- Tier 2
- Tier 3
- Tier 4



A DTF score of 0 reflects that the benchmark targets for all indicators in consideration are fulfilled whereas a score closer to 100 implies slow progress towards the frontier.

Dahod (Gujarat), Virudhunagar (Tamil Nadu), Vizianagaram (Andhra Pradesh), West Sikkim (Sikkim), Ramanathpur (Tamil Nadu), and Dhenkanal (Odisha) performed exceedingly well with 0 as DTF score in 2022. Ri Bhoi (Meghalaya) is the worst performing district on this sector with 100 as its DTF score in 2022 followed by Khammam (Telangana) with 91.20 as the score. Chandel (Manipur) and Khagaria (Bihar) are the also in the bottom 5 districts in this sector.

The average DTF score for Education

18.76

2018 (baseline)



This saw an improvement in 2022 with the average DTF being

17.27

78 districts attained a DTF score within the range between 0 and 17.27. This implies over 60% of the targeted districts have moved closer to the frontier over the last four years since the inception of the programme.



One of the most apparent reasons for high DTF scores is inconsistency in data reporting. For example, Khammam and Chandel have failed to provide indicator level data on the dashboard regularly. The missing values for those indicators were then filled using the minimum of that dataset for each indicator.

To further study the performance of the Aspirational Districts on Education indicators, assessing the movement of the districts on each of these indicators is essential. From the table below, *the indicator with the maximum districts with saturation is percentage of schools providing textbooks to children within 1 month of start of academic session with 104 districts with their DTF score as 0. This is followed by percentage of schools with functional electricity facility at secondary level with 94 districts with their DTF score as 0. Indicators that need significant improvement are transition rate from primary to upper primary school level, transition rate from upper primary to secondary school level and percentage of elementary schools complying with RTE specified pupil teacher ratio.*

Table 5 / **Number of Districts with saturation on Education indicators**



62

Toilet access: percentage schools with functional girls toilets



69

Percentage of schools with functional drinking water facility



94

Percentage of schools with functional electricity facility at secondary level



32

Transition rate from primary to upper primary school level



25

Transition rate from upper primary to secondary school level



104

Percentage of schools providing textbooks to children within 1 month of start of academic session



28

Percentage of elementary schools complying with RTE specified Pupil Teacher Ratio

At this juncture, it is imperative that one examines the performance of the aspirational districts over the years since the inception in 2018. For this purpose, the mobility matrix helps trace the movement of districts in 4 tiers over two time points – the baseline year i.e. 2018 and 2022. Based on the quartiles of the DTF scores, the aspirational districts were categorised into 4 tiers. Tier 1 represents the best performing districts while Tier 4 represents the worst performing districts.

Table 6 / Mobility Matrix: Education

		2022			
		Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Baseline	Tier 1	17	7	3	2
	Tier 2	6	12	8	3
	Tier 3	4	7	11	6
	Tier 4	2	3	6	18





Balangir (Odisha), and Sukma (Chhattisgarh) are the two districts that have moved up from Tier 4 to 1 whereas Baran (Rajasthan) and Khammam (Telangana) slipped from Tier 1 to Tier 4 over the said period. Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Punjab have all their districts in the top tier. Ribhoi (Meghalaya), Khammam (Telangana), Khagaria (Bihar), Araria (Bihar) and Dhalai

(Tripura) are the bottommost districts in Tier 4. As can be seen from the following table, 17 districts maintained their position in tier 1, 12 in tier 2, 11 in tier 3 and 18 in tier 4 in both the years. 7 districts from Bihar and others from North-Eastern states like Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Sikkim form the bottommost tier in both the time-points in consideration.

Overall, more districts seem to have moved up the tiers than have slipped from top tiers to the bottom ones.

Based on the DTF scores for Education in 2022, the study identifies the following districts where partner organisations could strengthen their efforts. The districts under the Very High Intensity Engagements category are the bottom 5 out of all the target districts.

Table 7 / Partner Engagements required in Education

 Very High Intensity Engagements	 High Intensity Engagements	 Moderate Intensity Engagements	 Low Intensity Engagements
Dhalai	Bhoopalapalli	Jamui	Hailakandi
Khagaria	Sheikhpura	Muzaffarpur	Sahibganj
Chandel	Kiphire	Sitamarhi	Rayagada
Khammam	Mamit	Purnia	Nandurbar
Ribhoi	Araria	Gaya	Purbi Singhbhum





BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE

This sector accounts for 10 per cent weightage in the composite score of the districts under the Aspirational Districts Programme. The Champions of Change dashboard monitors 7 indicators under this sector covering 8 datapoints. The focus here is basic infrastructural facilities – access to potable water, sanitation, electricity, and road connectivity. The following is the list of the said indicators mapped with their respective schemes as mentioned in the Primer.

Table 8 / **List of indicators under Basic Infrastructure**

Indicator No.	Indicator	Schemes
1	Percentage of Rural habitations with access to adequate quantity of potable water - 40lpcd drinking water in rural	National Rural Drinking Water Programme
2	Percentage of households with Individual Household Latrines	Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin)
3	Number of pucca houses constructed for households which are shelter-less or have one room with kuchha wall and kuchha roof or have 2 rooms with kuchha wall and roof	Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (Gramin)
4	Percentage of households with electricity connection	
5a	Percentage of habitations with access to all weather roads under PMGSY	Pradhan Mantri Grameen Sadak Yojana
5b	Cumulative number of kilometres of all-weather road work completed as a percentage of total sanctioned kilometres in the district under PMGSY	
6	Percentage of Gram Panchayats with internet connection	
7	Coverage / establishment of Common Service Centres at Gram Panchayat level	

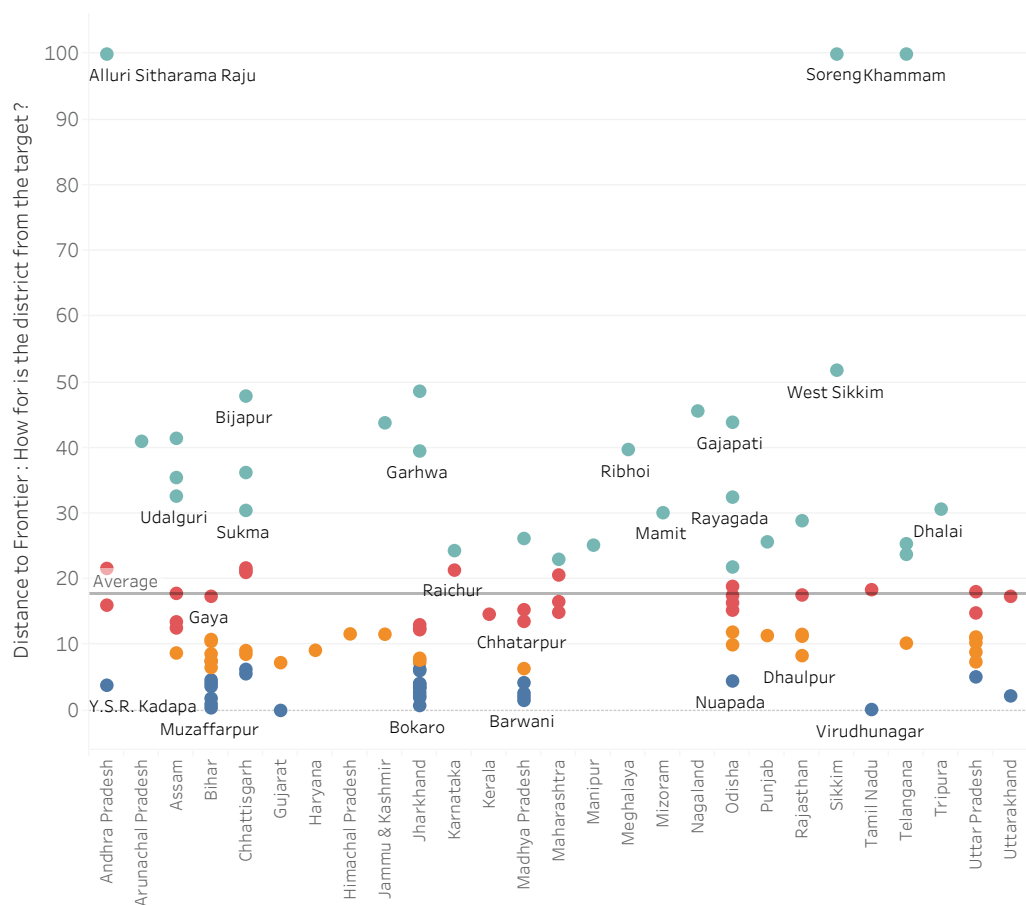
As mentioned in the previous section, to perform an analysis assessing the Distance to Frontier on each indicator for each district in the time period between 2018 and 2022, the frontier is set as the best possible performance. The benchmark targets for each indicator are listed on the Champions of Change dashboard and for those that are not, 100 is assumed as the frontier.

Table 9 / Benchmark targets for Basic Infrastructure

Indicator	Periodicity	Frontier	Source
Percentage of gram panchayats with internet connection	Monthly	100	Champions of Change
Percentage of habitations with access to all weather roads under PMGSY	Monthly	100	Champions of Change
Cumulative number of kilometres of all weather road work completed as a percentage of total sanctioned kilometres in the district under PMGSY	Monthly	100	Champions of Change
Percentage of households with individual household latrines	Monthly	100	Best Possible Value
Percentage of rural habitations with access to adequate quantity of potable water (40 lpcd) drinking water	Monthly	100	Best Possible Value
Percentage coverage of establishment of Common Service Centres at Gram Panchayat level	Monthly	100	Champions of Change
Percentage of pucca houses constructed for households that are shelterless or have one room with kuchha wall and roof or have 2 rooms with kuchha wall and roof	Monthly	87.61	Champions of Change

Figure 4:
Distance to Frontier scores in 2022 for Basic Infrastructure

■ Tier 1
■ Tier 2
■ Tier 3
■ Tier 4



From 28.81 in 2018 to 17.66 in 2022, the average DTF score for Basic Infrastructure recorded a decrease of 11.15 points.

Additionally, 76 of the districts attained a DTF score in the range between 0 and 17.66. This implies that over 66% of the targeted districts in 2022 have moved closer to the set targets under this sector. The graph above also corroborates this by clearly depicting the position of the Aspirational Districts on the basis of their DTF

scores in 2022. Dahod (Gujarat), Virudhunagar (Tamil Nadu) and Muzaffarpur (Bihar) emerge as districts that have achieved the targets with 0 as their DTF for the year 2022. On the contrary, Alluri Sitharama Raju (Andhra Pradesh), Khammam (Telangana) and Soreng (Sikkim) are the worst performing districts with 100 as their DTF score for Basic Infrastructure in 2022.

These districts have consistently failed to report data on the indicators under this sector and hence were allotted the minimum value of the dataset for each indicator. This is one of the reasons why they rank low in

terms of their performance on the said indicators.

To delve deeper into the performances of the Aspirational Districts in this sector, the following table presents the number of districts with saturation on each of the indicator under Basic Infrastructure. 102 districts achieved a DTF score of 0 on Percentage of households with individual household latrines. This is the indicator with the maximum number of districts achieving saturation in this sector. This is followed by Percentage of habitations with access to all weather roads under Prime Minister Gram Sadak Yojana

(PMGSY) where 37 districts have achieved saturation. The areas that require immediate attention are Cumulative number of kilometres of all-weather road work completed as a percentage of total sanctioned kilometres in the district under PMGSY , Percentage coverage of establishment of Common Service Centres at Gram Panchayat level and Percentage of pucca houses constructed for households that are shelterless or have one room with kuchha wall and roof or have 2 rooms with kuchha wall and roof where only 1 district has attained a DTF score of 0.

Table 10

Indicatorwise number of districts with saturation on Basic Infrastructure indicators



31

Percentage of gram panchayats with internet connection



37

Percentage of habitations with access to all weather roads under PMGSY



102

Percentage of households with individual household latrines



1

Cumulative number of kilometres of all-weather road work completed as a percentage of total sanctioned kilometres in the district under PMGSY



1

Percentage of pucca houses constructed for households that are shelterless or have one room with kuchha wall and roof or have 2 rooms with kuchha wall and roof



8

Percentage of rural habitations with access to adequate quantity of potable water (40 lpcd) drinking water



1

Percentage coverage of establishment of Common Service Centres at Gram Panchayat level

To further analyse the performance of the districts, they have been categorised into 4 tiers on the basis of the quartiles of the DTF scores.

11 districts from Jharkhand and 6 from Bihar are in the first tier. Soreng (Sikkim), Khammam (Telangana), Alluri Sitharama Raju (Andhra Pradesh), West Sikkim (Sikkim) and Dumka (Jharkhand) are the bottommost in tier 4.

One reason why Alluri Sitharama Raju, Khammam and Soreng are the bottom three is the non-availability of data on those districts. For the purposes of this analysis, they were assigned the minimum of the dataset as their values. The following

mobility matrix helps gauge the performance of the districts in Basic Infrastructure since the inception of the programme.





13 districts have maintained their position in tier 1, 11 in tier 2, 6 in tier 3, and 15 in tier 4 in both the years. Khandwa (Madhya Pradesh), Khammam (Telangana) and Ferozpur (Punjab) have slipped from tier 1 to tier 4 in 2022. On the other hand, Nuapada (Odisha), Purnia (Bihar), Aurangabad (Bihar) and Sitamarhi (Bihar) have drastically improved their performance by moving up to the top tier in 2022 as opposed to being in tier 4 in 2018. All North-Eastern states except Tripura feature in Tier 4 in both years, accounting for seven districts in the bottom tier.

Table 11 / **Mobility Matrix: Basic Infrastructure**

		2022			
		Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Baseline	Tier 1	13	8	5	3
	Tier 2	7	11	10	1
	Tier 3	5	7	6	10
	Tier 4	4	3	7	15

Based on the DTF scores in 2022, the study identifies the following districts where partner organisations could strengthen their efforts. The districts under the Very High Intensity Engagements category are the bottom 5 out of all the target districts.

Table 12 / **Partner Engagements required in Basic Infrastructure**

 Very High Intensity Engagements	 High Intensity Engagements	 Moderate Intensity Engagements	 Low Intensity Engagements
Dumka	Barpeta	Darrang	Mamit
West Sikkim	Baramula	Dakshin Bastar Dantewada	Sukma
Alluri Sitharama Raju	Gajapati	Garhwa	Dhalai
Khammam	Kiphire	Ribhoi	Rayagada
Soreng	Bijapur	Namsai	Udalguri





HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Like Education, Health also accounts for 30% weightage in the composite score of the districts under the Aspirational Districts Programme. There are 13 indicators with 31 datapoints covering maternal care (antenatal care, availability of supplementary nutrition under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme etc.), childcare (Severe Acute Malnutrition, Moderate Acute Malnutrition etc.), and healthcare infrastructure (First Referral Units, anganwadis with buildings etc.) under this sector. Numerous government initiatives targeting health and nutrition are mapped to these indicators in the Aspirational Districts Programme Primer. The following table lists the same.

Table 13 / **List of indicators under Health & Nutrition**

Indicator No.	Indicator	Schemes
1a	Percentage of Pregnant Women receiving four or more antenatal care check-ups against total ANC registration	(i) National Health Mission, (ii) PMSMA: Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan, (iii) PMMVY: Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana;
1b	Percentage of ANC registered within the first trimester against Total ANC Registration	(iv) BBBP: Beti Bachao Beti Padhao; (v) Implementation of PC-PNDT (Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques) Act
1c	Percentage of Pregnant Women (PW) registered for ANC against estimated pregnancies	(vi) Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (vii) Janani Suraksha Yojana
2	Percentage of pregnant women taking Supplementary Nutrition under the ICDS programme regularly	(i) JSSK: Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (ii) JSY: Janani Suraksha Yojana
3a	Percentage of Pregnant Women having severe anaemia treated against PW having severe anaemia tested cases	(i) MAA-Mother's Absolute Affection (ii) HBNC (Home Based Newborn Care); (iii) PMMVY (Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana)
3b	Percentage of Pregnant Women tested for Haemoglobin (HB) 4 or more than 4 times for respective ANCs against total ANC Registration	(iv) JSY (Janani Suraksha Yojana); (v) Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI); (vi) Navjat Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (NSSK); (vii) JSSK: Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram

Indicator No.	Indicator	Schemes
4a	Sex Ratio at birth	(i) JSSK: Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (ii) JSY: Janani Suraksha Yojana (iii) Implementation of the Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994
4b	Percentage of institutional deliveries out of total estimated deliveries	
5	Percentage of home deliveries attended by a SBA (Skilled Birth Attendance) trained health worker out of total estimated deliveries	(i) Anganwadi Services under Umbrella ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services); (ii) National Iron Plus Initiative; (iii) National De-worming Day
6a	Percentage of newborns breastfed within one hour of birth	(i) National Health Mission; (ii) IMNCI (Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illness) - Facility, and Community; (iii) Intensified Diarrhoea Control Fortnight (IDCF)
6b	Percentage of low birth weight babies (Less than 2500gms)	
6c	Proportion of live babies weighed at birth	
7	Percentage of underweight children under 5 years	(i) Anganwadi Services under umbrella ICDS Program (ii) ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) Program; (iii) Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres (NRC)
8a	Percentage of stunted children under 5 years	(i) Anganwadi Services under Umbrella ICDS Program (ii) ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services); (iii) Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres (NRC);
8b	Percentage of children with Diarrhoea treated with ORS	
8c	Percentage of children with Diarrhoea treated with Zinc	(iv) IMNCI Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illnesses (v) Mission Indradhanush; (vi) HBNC (Home based Newborn Care); (vii) IGMSY-Conditional Maternity Benefit (CMB); (viii) PMMVY-Maternal Benefit Program; (ix) ASHA Incentives
8d	Percentage of children with ARI (Acute Respiratory Infection) in the last 2 weeks taken to a health facility	

Indicator No.	Indicator	Schemes
9a	Percentage of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM)	Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program
9b	Percentage of Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM)	
10a	Breastfeeding children receiving adequate diet (6-23 months)	(i) Ayushman Bharat; (ii) National Health Mission
10b	on-Breastfeeding children receiving adequate diet (6-23 months)	
11	Percentage of children fully immunized (9-11 months) (BCG+DPT123/ pentavalent123 + OPV123+Measles / MR)	(i) National Health Mission - Mission Indradhanush
12a	Tuberculosis (TB) case notification rate (Public and Private Institutions) as against estimated cases	(i) National Health Mission; (ii) Umbrella ICDS program; (iii) Swachch Bharat
12b	TB Treatment success rate among notified TB patients (public and private)	
13a	Proportion of Sub centres / PHCs converted into Health & Wellness Centres (HWCs)	(i) Anganwadi Services under Umbrella ICDS Program; (ii) NHM (National Health Mission)
13b	Proportion of Primary Health Centres compliant with Indian Public Health Standards	
13c	Proportion of functional FRUs (First Referral Units) against the norm of 1 per 5,00,000 population (1 per 3,00,000 for hilly terrain) against IPHS norms	
13d	Proportion of specialist services available in District hospitals against 11 core specialist services (including women and child specialists)	

Indicator No.	Indicator	Schemes
13e	Number of Anganwadis Centres / Urban PHCs reported to have conducted at least one Village Health Sanitation & Nutrition Day / Urban Health Sanitation & Nutrition Day / respectively in the last one month	(i) Anganwadi Services under Umbrella ICDS Program; (ii) NHM (National Health Mission)
13f	Proportion of Anganwadis with own buildings	
13g	Percentage of First Referral Units (FRU) having labour room and obstetrics OT NQAS certified (i.e. meet LaQShya guidelines)	

The frontier or the benchmark target for the indicators under Health & Nutrition are listed in the table below. Some of these benchmark targets were assumed and sourced from other government sources as they were not available on the Champions of Change dashboard.



Table 14 / Benchmark targets for indicators under Health & Nutrition

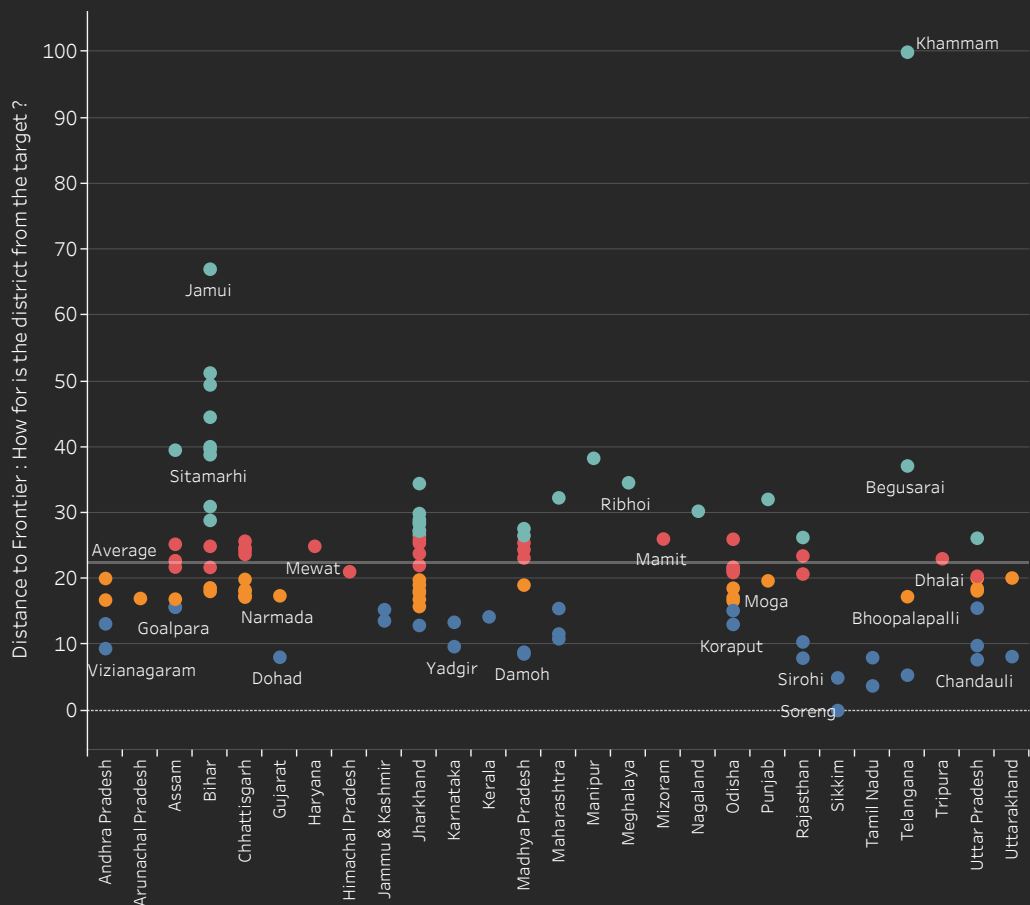
Indicator	Periodicity	Frontier	Source
Proportion of sub-centres/PHCs converted into Health & Wellness Centres (HWCs)	Quarterly	100.00	Best Possible Value
Percentage of Primary Health Centers compliant to Indian Public Health Standards	Quarterly	100.00	Champions of Change
Proportion of functional FRUs (First Referral Units) against the norm of 1 per 500,000 population (1 per 300,000 in hilly areas)	Quarterly	100.00	Best Possible Value
Proportion of specialist services available in district hospitals against IPHS norms	Quarterly	100.00	Champions of Change
Percentage of Anganwadis/UPHCs reported to have conducted at least one Village Health Sanitation & Nutrition Day / Urban Health Sanitation & Nutrition day outreach in the last one month	Quarterly	100.00	Best Possible Value
Proportion of Anganwadis with own buildings	Quarterly	100.00	Best Possible Value
Percentage of pregnant women receiving 4 or more antenatal care check-ups to the total no. of pregnant women registered for antenatal care	Yearly	83	Champions of Change
Percentage of pregnant women tested for Haemoglobin 4 or more times in respective ANCs to total ANC registration	Yearly	74.2	Champions of Change
Percentage of ANC registered within the first trimester against Total ANC Registration	Monthly	98.26	Champions of Change

Indicator	Periodicity	Frontier	Source
Percentage of pregnant women (PWs) registered for ANCs to total estimated pregnancies	Monthly	100	Health Management Information System
Percentage of children fully immunized (9-11 months) (BCG+ DPT3 + OPV3 + Measles1)	Monthly	100	Champions of Change
Tuberculosis (TB) case notification rate (Public and Private Institutions) as against estimated cases	Monthly	99	Champions of Change
TB treatment success rate among notified TB patients (public and private)	Monthly	95	Champions of Change
Percentage of pregnant women regularly taking Supplementary Nutrition under the ICDS programme	Monthly	100	ICDS Scheme
Percentage of Pregnant women having severe anaemia treated, against PW having severe anaemia tested cases	Monthly	100	National Iron+ Initiative
Sex Ratio at birth	Monthly	1000	Champions of Change
Percentage of institutional deliveries to total estimated deliveries	Monthly	100	Champions of Change
Percentage of deliveries at home attended by an SBA (Skilled Birth Attendance) trained health worker to total home deliveries	Monthly	33.4	Champions of Change
Percentage of newborns breastfed within one hour of birth	Monthly	80.5	Champions of Change
Percentage of low-birth-weight babies (less than 2500g)	Monthly	0	Champions of Change
Percentage of live babies weighed at birth	Monthly	100	Champions of Change
Percentage of underweight children under 6 years	Monthly	5.8	Champions of Change

Percentage of Severe Acute Malnourishment (SAM) in children under 6 years to total children under 6 years	Monthly	0	Best Possible Value
Percentage of Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) in children under 6 years to total children under 6 years	Monthly	0	Best Possible Value
Percentage of First Referral Units (FRU) with labour rooms and obstetrics OT NQAS certified (meet LaQShya guidelines)	Monthly	100	Best Possible Value

Figure 5:
Distance to Frontier scores in 2022 for Health & Nutrition

- Tier 1
- Tier 2
- Tier 3
- Tier 4



The mean DTF decreased from 25.71 in 2018 to 22.29 in 2022 for Health & Nutrition. 68 districts attained a DTF score in the range between 0 and 22.21. Sikkim emerges as the best performing state with Soreng achieving 0 as its DTF in 2022 and West Sikkim closely following with 4.96 as its DTF. Virudhunagar (Tamil Nadu) placed second in the list with a DTF score of 3.96 in 2022.

The district with the worst DTF score is Khammam (Telangana). Jamui, Araria and Gaya from Bihar are the bottommost districts in this sector in terms of their distance to the frontier.

To take a closer look at the indicator level performances of the districts, a DTF score for each district was calculated over 2018 and 2022. Proportion of functional FRUs (First Referral Units) against the norm of 1 per 500,000 population (1 per 300,000 in hilly areas) is the indicator with the maximum number (82) of districts achieving

saturation under this sector. Next in line is Proportion of specialist services available in district hospitals against IPHS norms with 48 districts attaining saturation. These indicators mainly are a measure of health infrastructure facilities and from the table below, it can be seen other health infrastructure indicators also noticed many districts achieving saturation. Moreover, multiple indicators on maternal and childcare also reflect improvement in performance of aspirational districts. 27 districts achieved saturation on Percentage of pregnant women regularly taking Supplementary Nutrition under the ICDS programme, 45 on Percentage of live babies weighed at birth, 28 on Percentage of pregnant women receiving 4 or more antenatal care check-ups to the total no. of pregnant women registered for antenatal care, and 21 on Percentage of pregnant women tested for Haemoglobin 4 or more times in respective ANCs to total ANC registration. Although, there are about 16 indicators overall where majority of the aspirational districts failed to achieve saturation.

Table 15

Indicatorwise number of districts with saturation on Health & Nutrition indicators



1

Percentage of ANC registered within the first trimester against Total ANC Registration



1

Percentage of pregnant women (PWs) registered for ANCs to total estimated pregnancies



1

Percentage of children fully immunized (9-11 months) (BCG+ DPT3 + OPV3 + Measles1)



1

Tuberculosis (TB) case notification rate (Public and Private Institutions) as against estimated cases



1

TB treatment success rate among notified TB patients (public and private)



27

Percentage of pregnant women regularly taking Supplementary Nutrition under the ICDS programme



1

Percentage of Pregnant women having severe anaemia treated, against PW having severe anaemia tested cases



1

Sex Ratio at birth



1

Percentage of institutional deliveries to total estimated deliveries



1

Percentage of deliveries at home attended by an SBA (Skilled Birth Attendance) trained health worker to total home deliveries



1

Percentage of newborns breastfed within one hour of birth



45

Percentage of live babies weighed at birth



31

Percentage of First Referral Units (FRU) with labour rooms and obstetrics OT NQAS certified (meet LaQShya guidelines)



1

Percentage of low-birth-weight babies (less than 2500g)



1

Percentage of underweight children under 6 years



1

Percentage of Severe Acute Malnourishment (SAM) in children under 6 years to total children under 6 years



1

Percentage of Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) in children under 6 years to total children under 6 years



13

Proportion of sub-centres/ PHCs converted into Health & Wellness Centres (HWCs)



18

Percentage of Primary Health Centers compliant to Indian Public Health Standards



82

Proportion of functional FRUs (First Referral Units) against the norm of 1 per 500,000 population (1 per 300,000 in hilly areas)



1

Percentage of Anganwadis/UPHCs reported to have conducted at least one Village Health Sanitation & Nutrition Day / Urban Health Sanitation & Nutrition Day outreach in the last one month



48

Proportion of specialist services available in district hospitals against IPHS norms



1

Proportion of Anganwadis with own buildings



28

Percentage of pregnant women receiving 4 or more antenatal care check-ups to the total no. of pregnant women registered for antenatal care



21

Percentage of pregnant women tested for Haemoglobin 4 or more times in respective ANCs to total ANC registration

The following is the mobility matrix for Health & Nutrition based on the quartiles of the DTF scores in 2018 and 2022.

16 districts maintained their position in tier 1 in both the years, 12 in tier 2, 10 in tier 3 and 16 in tier 4.

Jammu & Kashmir (Baramula, Kupwara), Karnataka (Raichur, Yadgir), Kerala (Wayanad) and





Tamil Nadu (Ramanathpura, Virudhunagar) have 100 per cent representation in the top tier. Khammam (Telangana) and Sheikhpura (Bihar) slipped from tier 1 to tier 4. Bihar and Jharkhand have more than 50 per cent representation in tier 4. On the other hand, Fatehpur (Uttar Pradesh), Guna (Madhya Pradesh) and Soreng (Sikkim) have shown tremendous improvement by moving up from tier 4 to tier 1.

Table 16 / **Mobility Matrix: Health & Nutrition**

		2022			
		Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Baseline	Tier 1	16	6	5	2
	Tier 2	6	12	9	2
	Tier 3	4	6	10	9
	Tier 4	3	5	4	16

Based on the DTF scores in 2022, the study identifies the following districts where partner organisations could strengthen their efforts. The districts under the Very High Intensity Engagements category are the bottom 5 out of all the target districts.

Table 17 / **Partner Engagements required in Health & Nutrition**

 Very High Intensity Engagements	 High Intensity Engagements	 Moderate Intensity Engagements	 Low Intensity Engagements
Khagaria	Chandel	Firozpur	Nawada
Gaya	Sitamarhi	Nandurbar	Ranchi
Araria	Udalguri	Sahibganj	Chatra
Jamui	Banka	Ribhoi	Kiphire
Khammam	Aurangabad	Begusarai	Sheikhpura





FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Financial Inclusion accounts for 5% weightage in the composite score of the districts under the Aspirational Districts Programme. The Champions of Change dashboard tracks 6 indicators that are updated monthly under this sector. The areas of focus here are disbursement of Mudra loans, and insurance and pension schemes. The following is the list of indicators with their mapped schemes as mentioned in the Primer.

Table 18 / **List of indicators under Financial Inclusion**

Indicator No.	Indicator	Schemes
1	Total Disbursement of Mudra Loan (in rupees) per 1 Lakh population	Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana
2	Number of accounts opened under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana per 1 Lakh population	Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana
3	Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana: Number of Enrolments per 1 Lakh population	Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana
4	Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana: Number of Enrolments per 1 Lakh population	Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana
5	Atal Pension Yojana (APY): Number of Beneficiaries per 1 Lakh population	Atal Pension Yojana
6	Percentage of accounts seeded with Aadhaar as a percentage of total banking accounts	

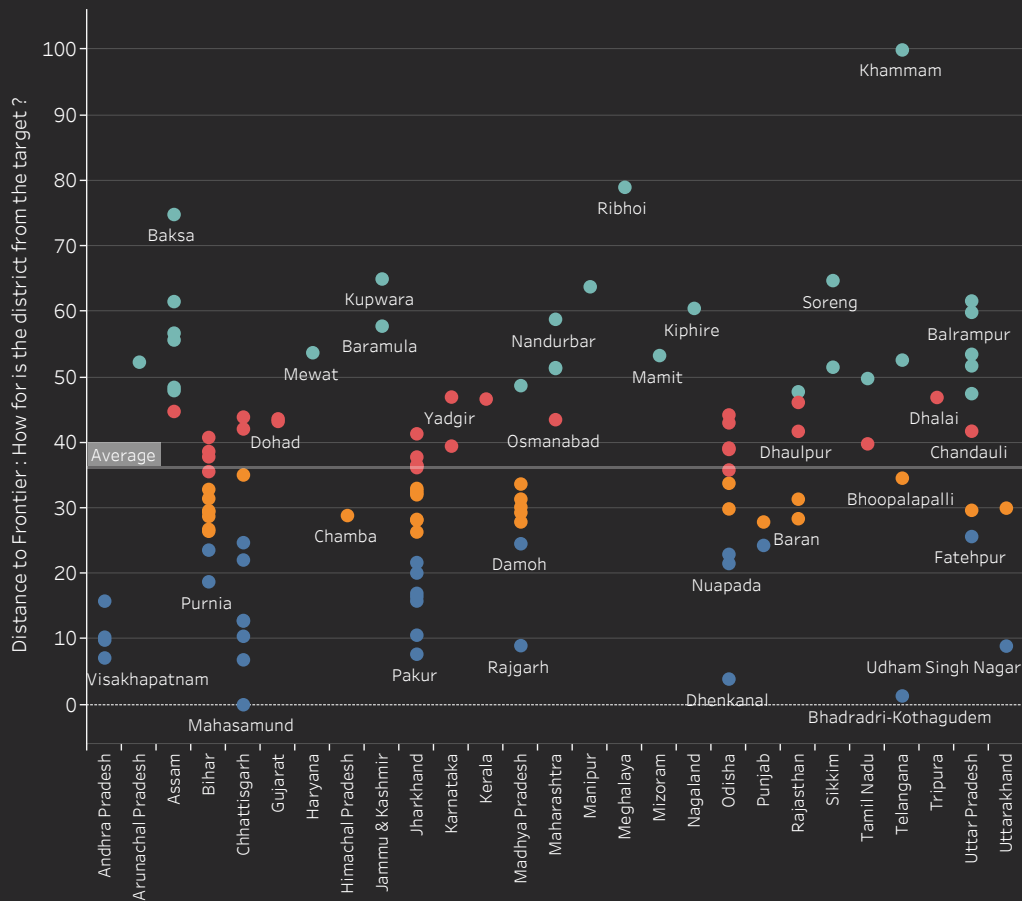
The benchmark targets or the frontier for each indicator studied for the Distance to Frontier analysis under the Financial Inclusion sector are as follows. The source for the same is the Champions of Change dashboard.

Table 19 / **Benchmark targets for indicators under Health & Nutrition**

Indicator	Periodicity	Frontier	Source
Total disbursement of Mudra loan (in Crore rupees) per 1 lakh population	Monthly	43.67	Champions of Change
Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY): number of enrolments per 1 lakh population	Monthly	9669	Champions of Change
Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY): number of enrolments per 1 lakh population	Monthly	37841	Champions of Change
Atal Pension Yojana (APY): number of beneficiaries per 1 lakh population	Monthly	3969	Champions of Change
Percentage of accounts seeded with Aadhaar to total bank accounts	Monthly	97.3	Champions of Change
Number of accounts opened under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana per 1 Lakh population	Monthly	82246	Champions of Change

Figure 6:
Distance to Frontier scores in 2022 for Financial Inclusion

- Tier 1
- Tier 2
- Tier 3
- Tier 4



The Distance to Frontier analysis for Financial Inclusion revealed that the average DTF score decreased by 9.46 from 45.50 in 2018 to 36.04 in 2022. To understand the performance of the targeted districts in comparison to the average DTF score, it was found that 61 districts attained a DTF score between the range of 0 and 36.04.

This implies that more than 50% of the aspirational districts have shown significant improvement on this front. However, it should be noted that Mahasamund (Chhattisgarh) is the only district to have achieved its targets in this sector attaining a DTF score of 0 in 2022. This is closely followed by Bhadradi-Kothagudem (Telangana) with 0.41 as its DTF score in 2022. The aspirational districts that rank lowest under Financial Inclusion are Khammam (Telangana), Ri Bhoi (Meghalaya) and Baksa (Assam) with their DTF score in the range of 74-100.

Indicator level DTF scores under this sector revealed that for all the 6 indicators being monitored under the Aspirational Districts Programme, the number of districts that attained saturation is 1. Bijapur (Chhattisgarh) achieved saturation on Total disbursement of Mudra loan (in Crore rupees) per 1 lakh population. Begusarai (Bihar) achieved saturation on Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY): number of enrolments per 1 lakh population. Mahasamund (Chhattisgarh) achieved saturation on Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY): number of enrolments per 1 lakh population. Fatehpur (Uttar Pradesh) achieved saturation on Atal Pension Yojana (APY): number of beneficiaries per 1 lakh population. Alluri Sitharama Raju (Andhra Pradesh) and Y.S.R. Kadapa (Andhra Pradesh) achieved saturation on Percentage of accounts seeded with Aadhaar to total bank accounts. Dhubri (Assam) achieved saturation on Number of accounts opened under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana per 1 Lakh population.



Table 20 / **Indicatorwise number of districts with saturation on Financial Inclusion indicators**



1

Total disbursement of Mudra loan (in Crore rupees) per 1 lakh population



1

Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY): number of enrolments per 1 lakh population



1

Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY): number of enrolments per 1 lakh population



1

Atal Pension Yojana (APY): number of beneficiaries per 1 lakh population



1

Percentage of accounts seeded with Aadhaar to total bank accounts



1

Number of accounts opened under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana per 1 Lakh population

To illustrate the performances further, the following mobility matrix depicts the movement of districts across tiers in the two time points – 2018 and 2022.

18 districts have maintained their position in tier 1, 13 in tier 2, 11 in tier 3 and 21 in tier 4. Chhattisgarh has 7 districts in the top tier.





Asifabad (Telangana) and Khammam (Telangana) have slipped from tier 1 to 4. Alluri Sitharama Raju (Andhra Pradesh) and Begusarai (Bihar) showed tremendous improvement by moving up from tier 4 to tier 1. 6 districts from Assam, 3 from Uttar Pradesh and 3 from Maharashtra are those who have remained in the bottom tier in both the years.

Table 21 / Mobility Matrix: Financial Inclusion

		2022			
		Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Baseline	Tier 1	18	5	4	2
	Tier 2	9	13	7	0
	Tier 3	0	11	11	6
	Tier 4	2	0	6	21

Based on the DTF scores in 2022, the study identifies the following districts where partner organisations could strengthen their efforts. The districts under the Very High Intensity Engagements category are the bottom 5 out of all the target districts.

Table 22 / Partner Engagements required in Financial Inclusion

 Very High Intensity Engagements	 High Intensity Engagements	 Moderate Intensity Engagements	 Low Intensity Engagements
Soreng	Balrampur	Mewat	Siddharthnagar
Kupwara	Kiphire	Hailakandi	Namsai
Baksa	Dhubri	Goalpara	Asifabad
Ribhoi	Shrawasti	Baramula	Mamit
Khammam	Chandel	Nandurbar	Bahraich



SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Skill Development accounts for 5% weightage in the composite score of the aspirational districts. The mandate for the aspirational districts here was to regularly report data on 5 indicators with 10 datapoints on the Champions of Change dashboard. However, during the data collation process for this study, it was found that the dataset for about 5 of these datapoints cannot be used for any analysis. For instance, the raw data for Number of people certified under Recognition of Prior Learning /Non formally skilled workforce, was reported in different units like percentages, ratios etc. as opposed to it being an absolute number as defined in the Primer. This issue of discrepancy in the units of the raw data was also prevalent in four other data points that are listed as follows.

- Number of youth certified in short term and long term training schemes / no. of youth in district in age group 15-29
- Number of Apprentices completing / Total number of trainees registered on the portal
- Number of Vulnerable/ Marginalized youth certified trained under short term and long-term training
- Differently abled - certified trained) / Total Number of youth certified trained.

Therefore, the indicators listed above were not included for the purposes of analysis. However, the schemes and programmes mapped with each of the indicators under this sector are listed below to provide an overview of the key focus areas being monitored under the programme.

Table 23 / List of indicators under Skill Development

Indicator No.	Indicator	Schemes
1	No. of youth certified in short term and long term training schemes / no. of youth in district in age group 15-29	(i) PMKVY (Prime Minister Kaushal Vikas Yojana); (ii) DDUGKY (Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana)
2	No. of certified youth employed / No. of youth trained under short term and long term training	(i) PMKVY (Prime Minister Kaushal Vikas Yojana); (ii) DDUGKY (Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana)

Indicator No.	Indicator	Schemes
3	Number of Apprentices completing / Total number of trainees registered on the portal	(i) NAPS (National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme); (ii) NATS (National Apprenticeship Training Scheme)
4	No. of people certified under Recognition of Prior Learning / Non formally skilled workforce	PMKVY (Prime Minister Kaushal Vikas Yojana)
5	Number of Vulnerable/ Marginalized youth certified trained under short term and long term training	(i) PMKVY (Prime Minister Kaushal Vikas Yojana), (ii) DDUGKY (Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana); (iii) Schemes of Minority, Social Justice, WCD and Differently abled departments
5a	Women - certified trained,	
5b	SC - certified trained	
5c	ST - certified trained	
5d	OBC - certified trained	
5e	Minorities - certified trained	
5f	Differently abled - certified trained) / Total Number of youth certified trained	

Out of the above-mentioned indicators, only 5 were examined for this analysis. The benchmark targets corresponding to the datapoints are listed below.

Table 24 / **Benchmark targets for indicators under Skill Development**

Indicator	Periodicity	Frontier	Source
Percentage certified trained: women	Monthly	100	Champions of Change
Percentage certified trained: SC	Monthly	97.92	Champions of Change
Percentage certified trained: ST	Monthly	100	Best Possible Value
Percentage certified trained: OBC	Monthly	78.15	Champions of Change
Percentage certified trained: minorities	Monthly	100	Best Possible Value

From the indicator level DTF scores for the 5 indicators examined under this sector, it is seen that not more than one district has been able to achieve saturation in 2022.

Siddharthanagar (Uttar Pradesh) attained saturation on Percentage certified trained: women, Asifabad (Telangana) on Percentage certified trained: SC, Kiphire

(Nagaland) on Percentage certified trained: ST, Sukma (Chhattisgarh) on Percentage certified trained: OBC and Kupwara (Jammu & Kashmir) on Percentage certified trained: minorities.

Table 25

Indicatorwise number of districts with saturation on Skill Development indicators

1

Percentage certified trained: women

1

Percentage certified trained: SC

1

Percentage certified trained: ST

1

Percentage certified trained: OBC

1

Percentage certified trained: minorities

The mobility matrix for Skill Development constructed over two time points 2018 and 2022 shows that 8 districts remained in tier 1 in both the years, 7 in tier 2, 8 in tier 3 and 10 in tier 4. Four districts from Jharkhand (Lohardaga, Paschimi Singhbhum, Hazaribagh,





Dumka) slipped from tier 1 to tier 4. Additionally, five out of the 10 districts in the bottom tier are from North-Eastern states namely, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Tripura. Overall, the number of districts that have moved up the tiers is more than those that have slipped to the bottom tiers.

Table 26 / **Mobility Matrix: Skill Development**

		2022			
		Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Baseline	Tier 1	8	5	7	9
	Tier 2	5	7	10	7
	Tier 3	10	7	8	3
	Tier 4	6	6	7	10

Based on the DTF scores in 2022, the study identifies the following districts where partner organisations could strengthen their efforts. The districts under the Very High Intensity Engagements category are the bottom 5 out of all the target districts.

Table 27 / **Partner Engagements required in Skill Development**

 Very High Intensity Engagements	 High Intensity Engagements	 Moderate Intensity Engagements	 Low Intensity Engagements
Begusarai	Dhenkanal	Jamui	Baksa
Bhoopalapalli	Visakhapatnam	Jaisalmer	Katihar
Khammam	Sheikhpura	Dumka	Uttar Bastar Kanker
Soreng	Chamba	Sitamarhi	Lohardaga
West Sikkim	Baran	Vizianagaram	Osmanabad



AGRICULTURE & WATER RESOURCES

Agriculture & Water Resources as a sector under the Aspirational Districts Programme accounts for 20% weightage in the composite score of the aspirational districts. The Champions of Change dashboard monitors 10 indicators with 12 datapoints. The key focus areas here are output (yield, price realisation, etc.), inputs (soil health cards, quality seed distribution, etc.), and institutional support (crop insurance, animal vaccination, electronic markets, etc.). The following is a list of all the said indicators along with their mapped schemes as mentioned in the Primer.

Table 28 / **List of indicators under Agriculture & Water Resources**

Indicator No.	Indicator	Schemes
1	Water Positive investments and Employment	Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY)
1a	Percentage of net sown area under micro-irrigation	
1b	Percentage increase in water bodies rejuvenated under MGNREGA	MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act)
2	Crop Insurance - Percentage of net sown area	Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)
3	Increase in Critical Inputs usage and supply	Interest Subvention Scheme for short-term crop loans
3a	Percentage increase in agricultural credit	
3b	Certified quality seed distribution	(i) Krishi Unnati Yojana; (ii) Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY); (iii) National Food Security Mission (NFSM); (iv) National Mission for Oilseeds & Oilpalm (NMOOP)
4	Number of Transactions in District Mandi linked to e-National Agriculture Market (e-NAM)	e-National Agriculture Market
5	Percentage change in Price Realization (defined as the difference between Farm Harvest Price (FHP) and Minimum Support Price (MSP))	(i) Integrated Scheme for Agricultural Management; (ii) Price Support Scheme (iii) Minimum Support Price

Indicator No.	Indicator	Schemes
6	Percentage share of high value crops to total sown area in district	Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture
7	Agricultural productivity of two major crops	Multiple of schemes of Ministry of Agriculture
8	Percentage of animals vaccinated	Livestock Health and Disease Control Scheme
9	Artificial Insemination coverage	National Livelihood Mission
10	Number of Soil Health Cards distributed in II Cycle as compared to I cycle	Soil Health Card Scheme

Agriculture & Water resources is one such sector where the indicators have three different periodicities depending on the nature of the indicators. There are 5 datapoints that are measured monthly, 7 that are measured yearly and 6 that are measured half-yearly. For the Distance to Frontier analysis on this sector, the benchmark targets (frontier) for 11 of the datapoints here were sourced from the Champions of Change dashboard. For 6 of these data points, the benchmark targets were set as 25% more than the maximum value in the dataset for those indicators given the fact that there were no corresponding benchmark targets available on the dashboard. The following table lists the same.

Table 29 / Benchmark targets for indicators under Agriculture & Water Resources

Indicator	Periodicity	Frontier	Source
Artificial insemination coverage	Monthly	100	Best Possible Value
Number of Mandis in the District linked to Electronic Market	Monthly	6	Champions of Change
Number of Soil Health Cards distributed	Monthly	1063486	Champions of Change
Percentage of animals vaccinated	Monthly	100	Champions of Change
Percentage of area under micro-irrigation	Monthly	18.1	Champions of Change
Crop Insurance - Kharif: Percentage of net sown area under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)	Yearly	97.57	Champions of Change

Indicator	Periodicity	Frontier	Source
Crop Insurance - Rabi: Percentage of net sown area in Rabi under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)	Yearly	87.36	Max + 25%
Percentage share of high value crops to total sown area in district	Yearly	138.58	Champions of Change
Agricultural productivity of Major Crop1 in Kharif	Yearly	7177.00	Champions of Change
Agricultural productivity of Major Crop2 in Kharif	Yearly	4913.00	Champions of Change
Agricultural productivity of Major Crop1 in Rabi	Yearly	6375	Max + 25%
Agricultural productivity of Major Crop2 in Rabi	Yearly	7062.5	Max + 25%
No. of water bodies rejuvenated under MGNREGA during this period	Half-yearly	7486	Champions of Change
Percentage increase in agricultural credit	Half-yearly	9.87	Champions of Change
Certified quality seed distribution	Half-yearly	82100.00	Max + 25%
Wheat: Percentage change in Price Realization (defined as the difference between Farm Harvest Price (FHP) and Minimum Support Price (MSP))	Half-yearly	18.75	Max + 25%
Paddy (Common): Percentage change in Price Realization (defined as the difference between Farm Harvest Price (FHP) and Minimum Support Price (MSP))	Half-yearly	219.58	Champions of Change
Paddy (Grade A): Percentage change in Price Realization (defined as the difference between Farm Harvest Price (FHP) and Minimum Support Price (MSP))	Half-yearly	51.25	Max + 25%

of the aspirational districts are progressing towards the frontier.

As per the sectorwise DTF analysis for this sector, Vizianagaram (Andhra Pradesh) appears to be the only district with 0 as its DTF score in 2022 followed by Vidisha (Madhya Pradesh) with 24.29 as DTF score. The difference between the best and the second best is 24.29 points and that reflects the immediate need for improvements in this sector. This need further emphasised by the DTF scores of the lowest ranking districts. Dumka (Jharkhand) is the worst performing district with 100 as its DTF score. Sukma and Dakshin Bastar Dantewada are also in the bottom three with 93.19 and 93.84 as their DTF scores respectively.

Moving on to the indicator level performances of the districts in terms of their DTF scores, Crop Insurance - Kharif: Percentage of net sown area under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), Agricultural productivity of Major Crop1 in Kharif and Agricultural productivity of Major Crop2 in Kharif are the indicators with the maximum number (13) of districts with saturation. On the other hand, the indicators that need greater focus for improvements are Artificial insemination coverage, Number of Mandis in the District linked to Electronic Market, Number of Soil Health Cards distributed, and Percentage of area under micro-irrigation with the number of districts with saturation being 1 for all.



Table 30

Indicatorwise number of districts with saturation on Agriculture & Water Resources indicators



1

Artificial insemination coverage



1

Number of Mandis in the District linked to Electronic Market



1

Number of Soil Health Cards distributed



3

Percentage of animals vaccinated



1

Percentage of area under micro-irrigation



13

Crop Insurance - Kharif: Percentage of net sown area under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)



10

Crop Insurance - Rabi: Percentage of net sown area in Rabi under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)



9

Percentage share of high value crops to total sown area in district



13

Agricultural productivity of Major Crop1 in Kharif



13

Agricultural productivity of Major Crop2 in Kharif



11

Agricultural productivity of Major Crop1 in Rabi



9

Agricultural productivity of Major Crop2 in Rabi



4

Certified quality seed distribution



7

No. of water bodies rejuvenated under MGNREGA during this period



9

Percentage increase in agricultural credit



12

Paddy (Common): Percentage change in Price Realization (defined as the difference between Farm Harvest Price (FHP) and Minimum Support Price (MSP))



8

Paddy (Grade A): Percentage change in Price Realization (defined as the difference between Farm Harvest Price (FHP) and Minimum Support Price (MSP))



6

Wheat: Percentage change in Price Realization (defined as the difference between Farm Harvest Price (FHP) and Minimum Support Price (MSP))

Tracing the movement of districts across tiers between the baseline (2018) and 2022, the following mobility matrix based on the quartiles of the DTF scores in 2018 and 2022, helps infer the progress of the aspirational districts in this sector. As can be seen from the following table, 21 districts maintained their position in tier 1, 9 in tier 2, 1 in tier 3 and 3 in tier 4. *Despite of the poor average DTF score, this is the only sector to have 21 districts in tier 1. This is the maximum number of districts in tier 1 across all sectors*





under the Aspirational Districts Programme. Also, another positive is that none of the districts have slipped from tier 1 to tier 4 in this sector over the period of 5 years. On the other hand, 14 districts have moved up from tier 4 to tier 1. Chhattisgarh, Assam and Bihar form the majority of the districts that have moved from tier 4 to tier 1. Namsai (Arunachal Pradesh), Mamit (Mizoram) and Chandel (Manipur) are the three districts in tier 4 in both the years.

Table 31 / Mobility Matrix: Agriculture & Water Resources

		2022			
		Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Baseline	Tier 1	21	8	0	0
	Tier 2	17	9	2	1
	Tier 3	20	6	1	1
	Tier 4	14	11	1	3

Based on the DTF scores in 2022, the study identifies the following districts where partner organisations could strengthen their efforts. The districts under the Very High Intensity Engagements category are the bottom 5 out of all the target districts.

Table 32 / Partner Engagements required in Health & Nutrition

 Very High Intensity Engagements	 High Intensity Engagements	 Moderate Intensity Engagements	 Low Intensity Engagements
Rajnandgaon	Wayanad	Washim	Rayagada
Yadgir	Vizianagaram	Simdega	Sirohi
Y.S.R. Kadapa	Sonbhadra	Shrawasti	Udalguri
Ribhoi	Sitamarhi	Ramgarh	Visakhapatnam
Sheikhpura	Vidisha	Ramanathapuram	Virudhunagar





Crossing Traditional Growth Trajectories

The current focus of the analysis is on determining if the ADP contributes any additional value as a policy intervention across several sectors or if the aspirational districts would have displayed comparable development trends even without the programme. The task now is to check if the programme has a favourable impact on the growth trajectories of the said indicators relative to their typical trends using statistical techniques. If this is shown, the study will be able to conclusively attest to the social impact of the Aspirational Districts Programme and help establish whether the aspirational districts are crossing traditional growth trajectories.

To achieve this goal, the study examines indicators related to Basic Infrastructure, Health & Nutrition, and Education, which collectively contribute 70% of the weightage in the programme. The aim is to assess whether the programme has effectively caused these indicators to deviate from their usual trends, making a substantial impact within its scope.

The study utilizes established public databases such as the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) for basic infrastructure and health and nutrition indicators, and the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) for education indicators. The attempt is to map indicators that are available on these databases and those that fall under the purview Aspirational Districts Programme framework. This comparison is conducted for two distinct phases with similar time periods, namely before and after the implementation of the Aspirational Districts Programme. By examining changes in these shared indicators over the same time intervals, the study seeks to assess the program's impact.

A total of 12 indicators common in both the Aspirational Districts Programme framework and the public databases mentioned above were studied for this exercise. As

mentioned in the methodological note, the method employed here is a two-tailed z-test. The report proposes a hypothesis that states that the yearly improvement in indicator performance prior to the implementation of the Aspirational Districts Programme is equivalent to the yearly improvement observed during the programme's execution. The study specifically examines the annual progress immediately before and after the program's implementation for certain indicators.





HEALTH AND NUTRITION

For this exercise, data on 7 indicators common in both National Family Health Survey and the Aspirational Districts Programme framework were collated from the National Family Health Survey Report 4 (2015-16) and 5 (2019-20) for the aspirational districts to study the changes in these indicators since the inception of the programme in 2018. Out of the 7 indicators, 4 have registered significantly higher improvements

under the Aspirational Districts Programme. The P values for the same are listed below. These 4 indicators address specific metrics on antenatal care and childcare. The results reflect that the change on these metrics due to the ADP has been extremely positive. When comparing the mean values of these indicators, it was found that the new mean was greater than the original for all 4. The direct implication here is



that the incremental improvement under the programme is higher for the 4 indicators that registered a statistically significant change over the period between 2018 and 2022.

The remaining 3 indicators namely - Percentage of home deliveries attended by an SBA (Skilled Birth Attendance) trained health worker out of total home deliveries, Percentage of new-borns breastfed within one hour of birth and Sex ratio at birth, have registered no change under the programme at 5% level of significance for the z-statistic test. To understand this better, percentage change in these indicators over the base year NFHS 4 (2015-16) and NFHS 5 (2019-20) was checked for each of the 3 above-mentioned indicators. It was found that not all aspirational districts registered a positive change in their numbers over the said time period. This is one of the plausible explanations for them to be statistically insignificant in the z-test analysis. However, to this end, several government initiatives are being implemented with a special focus on improving antenatal, maternal and childcare.

Table 33 / **Z-test Results: Health & Nutrition**

Indicator	Is there a significant difference due to the programme? $\mu_1 \neq \mu_0$		Incremental improvement under the programme is higher	Mean Before (μ_0)	Mean After (μ_1)	Source
	P Value	Acceptance	$\mu_1 > \mu_0$			
Percentage of Pregnant Women receiving four or more antenatal care check-ups against total ANC registrations	0.00	Yes	Yes	37.1	51.56	NFHS
Percentage of ANC registered within the first trimester against total ANC registrations	0.00	Yes	Yes	47.47	65.87	NFHS
Percentage of institutional deliveries out of total estimated deliveries	0.00	Yes	Yes	64.13	80.52	NFHS

Indicator	Is there a significant difference due to the programme? $\mu_1 \neq \mu_0$		Incremental improvement under the programme is higher	Mean Before (μ_0)	Mean After (μ_1)	Source
Breastfeeding children receiving adequate diet (6-23 months)	0.00	Yes	Yes	7.63	11.22	NFHS
Percentage of home deliveries attended by an SBA (Skilled Birth Attendance) trained health worker out of total home deliveries	0.58	No		6.36	5.86	NFHS
Percentage of new-borns breastfed within one hour of birth	0.12	No		42.09	39.28	NFHS
Sex Ratio at birth	0.11	No	Yes	917.5	934.95	NFHS

The Government of India has implemented various initiatives to support pregnant women, including those from economically weaker sections, during their pregnancy and delivery in government hospitals. The Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) is a conditional cash transfer scheme to encourage institutional delivery. Additionally, the Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (JSSK) provides free delivery and other necessary provisions in public health institutions. The government has also taken steps to ensure accessible facilities for pregnant

women, especially in remote areas.

Other government initiatives aimed at ensuring higher standards of antenatal, maternal and child care include strengthening over 25,000 delivery points, establishing Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Wings, functionalizing First Referral Units (FRUs), providing free transport services, setting up Birth Waiting Homes, implementing Surakshit Matratva Ashwasan (SUMAN), Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA), Obstetric High Dependency Unit (HDU) & Intensive

care unit (ICU), LaQshya initiative, monthly Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Day (VHSND), information campaigns, microplanning and preparedness, distribution of MCP Card and Safe Motherhood Booklet, and organizing outreach camps to reach marginalized areas (Press Information Bureau, 2022). These efforts aim to promote institutional deliveries and ensure maternal and child care across the country.



EDUCATION

For this analysis, data on 3 indicators namely - Toilet access: percentage schools with functional girls' toilets, Percentage of schools with functional drinking water facility and Transition rate from primary to upper primary school level was collated from UDISE for two time points, 2017-18 and 2021-22 to understand the change in these indicators before and after the implementation of the Aspirational Districts Programme.



Out of the 3 indicators mapped with UDISE, Percentage of schools with functional drinking water facility and Transition rate from primary to upper primary school level appear to have registered significantly higher improvement under the Aspirational Districts Programme as is reflected by the P values listed below. However, the indicator 'Toilet access: percentage schools with functional girls' registered a P value of 0.09 at 5% level of significance. Though the new mean for this indicator was greater than the

original reflecting a positive change, the P value cannot be accepted as significant given that this is out of the 0-0.5 range of acceptance. Further analysis was performed by separating the districts into the bottom and top 50% by the DTF scores in the year 2018. The results revealed that there was a significant improvement in the bottom 50% of the aspirational districts.

Table 34 / Z-test Results: Education

Indicator	Is there a significant difference due to the programme? $\mu_1 \neq \mu_0$		Incremental improvement under the programme is higher $\mu_1 > \mu_0$	Mean Before (μ_0)	Mean After (μ_1)	Source
	P Value	Acceptance				
Percentage of schools with functional drinking water facility	0.00	Yes	Yes	51.45	92.95	UDISE
Transition rate from primary to upper primary school level	0.00	Yes	Yes	86.98	91.33	UDISE
Toilet access: percentage schools with functional girls' toilets	0.09	No	Yes	88	90.01	UDISE

The z-test results for the indicator 'Toilet access: percentage schools with functional girls' toilets' make one think more about the focus on sanitation in schools in the country to understand if there are any directed interventions ongoing to improve the levels of sanitation in schools. The Swachh Vidyalaya Initiative was launched by the Ministry of Education in response to the Prime Minister's call to provide toilets in all schools, especially for girls, to prevent dropouts (Press Information Bureau, 2022). It resulted in the construction of a number of toilets in schools across the country. The success of this initiative led to the introduction of the Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar, recognizing schools for their efforts in water, sanitation, and hygiene and encouraging further improvements. The guideline document for the Swachh Bharat Swachh Vidyalaya recommends separate toilets for

boys and girls with menstrual hygiene management facilities (Swachh Bharat Swachh Vidyalaya: A National Mission, 2015). National programmes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya also aim to bring convergence to improve sanitation in schools. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan provides measures for water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities in new schools, while the mid-day meal programme promotes handwashing with soap. Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan focuses on secondary education with improved infrastructure, including toilets and drinking water facilities. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya provides quality education to girls from disadvantaged groups with proper facilities. These initiatives aim to enhance education and sanitation in schools (Swachh Bharat Swachh Vidyalaya: A National Mission, 2015).



BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE

As mentioned in the earlier sections of the study, basic infrastructure holds 10% weightage in the composite score for aspirational districts. Two indicators namely - Percentage of households with electricity connection, and Percentage of households with Individual Household Latrines were the only common indicators in both the National Family Health Survey and the Aspirational Districts Programme framework. Hence, the data on these two indicators for the aspirational districts were collated from the NFHS 4 (2015-16) and NFHS (2019-20) to assess the change before and after the implementation of the ADP.



The ADP Primer lists the steps to ensure progress towards achieving the benchmark targets for these indicators. For percentage of households with Individual Household Latrines, multiple measures like ensuring the presence of skilled masons and plumbers, supplying construction materials and water for toilets are covered under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen). Additionally, the programme also tracks the number of individual household toilets sanctioned and completed in comparison to the target. For percentage of households with electricity connection, the programme strives for continuous 24x7 availability and automated online feeder monitoring. It is evident from the table below that the P values for both these indicators fall well within the

range of acceptance. This implies that these indicators under Basic Infrastructure have registered significantly higher improvement under the ADP. When comparing the mean values of these indicators, it was revealed that the new mean was greater than the original, essentially implying that the incremental improvement under the programme is higher. This improvement is also validated by the progress under the Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen. The primary aim of Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (Phase 2) was to maintain the Open Defecation Free (ODF) status in all 6 lakh rural villages and enhance cleanliness by achieving ODF Plus status through effective solid and liquid waste management by 2024-25 (National Informatics Centre, 2023). Over 50% villages achieved ODF Plus status under phase II of the Mission.

Table 35 / Z-test Results: Basic Infrastructure

Indicator	Is there a significant difference due to the programme? $\mu_1 \neq \mu_0$		Incremental improvement under the programme is higher	Mean Before (μ_0)	Mean After (μ_1)	Source
	P Value	Acceptance	$\mu_1 > \mu_0$			
Percentage of households with electricity connection	0.00	Yes	Yes	74.74	94.31	NFHS
Percentage of households with Individual Household Latrines	0.00	Yes	Yes	30.13	60.15	NFHS



09

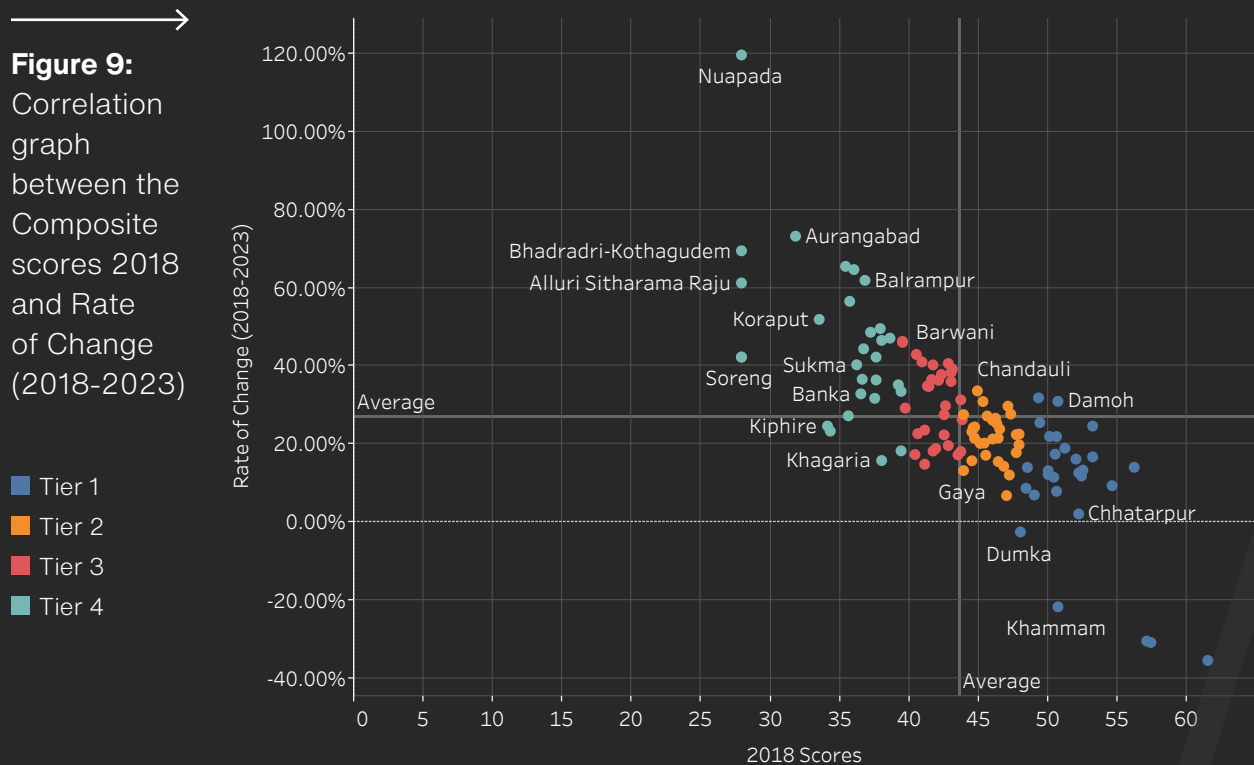
Overall Performance of Aspirational Districts

The central theme guiding this programme is to uplift socially underdeveloped districts, thereby enhancing India's overall human development. This analysis delves into whether districts that lagged behind during the baseline survey caught up with the leaders or if the disparities remained constant. The districts were divided into four categories based on baseline scores. The first quartile includes districts with the lowest 25% scores in 2018, while the fourth quartile comprises districts with the highest 25% scores.

Observing Figure 9, the first quartile districts demonstrated an impressive 46% average growth rate, surpassing the fourth quartile's modest 9% growth rate. This implies that while Tier 1 districts are still improving, their progress is relatively slower compared to Tier 4 districts.

This suggests that initially lagging districts drove the most significant change under the program. While leading districts also showed improvement, their proximity to saturation led to a slower rate of change.

Thus, the Aspirational Districts Programme empowered initially lagging districts to catch up with the leaders in social and human development indicators. The robust -0.77 correlation between rate of change scores from 2018 to 2023 and the baseline score further supports this finding. Consequently, the program effectively generated positive social impact and fostered social justice by prioritizing the most deprived districts during its initiation. Overall, these findings highlight the success of the Aspirational Districts Programme in bringing improvements in the lower-performing districts. The programme's targeted interventions seem to be yielding positive results, as evidenced by the substantial rate of change observed in the less-developed Tier 4 districts. As the programme continues, monitoring and support for Tier 1.



10

Comparing the Three Groups of Aspirational Districts

The Aspirational Districts Programme, a collaborative effort of NITI Aayog, the Ministry of Home Affairs, and various Central ministries, targeted 115 districts for comprehensive development initiatives. Spearheaded by NITI Aayog, it aimed to uplift 115 identified districts, with 30 chosen by NITI Aayog, 35 being Left Wing Extremism affected districts designated by the Ministry of Home Affairs, and 50 districts selected by various Central ministries. A comprehensive analysis of the performance of these districts from 2018 to 2023 reveals a scattered distribution of their composite scores⁸.

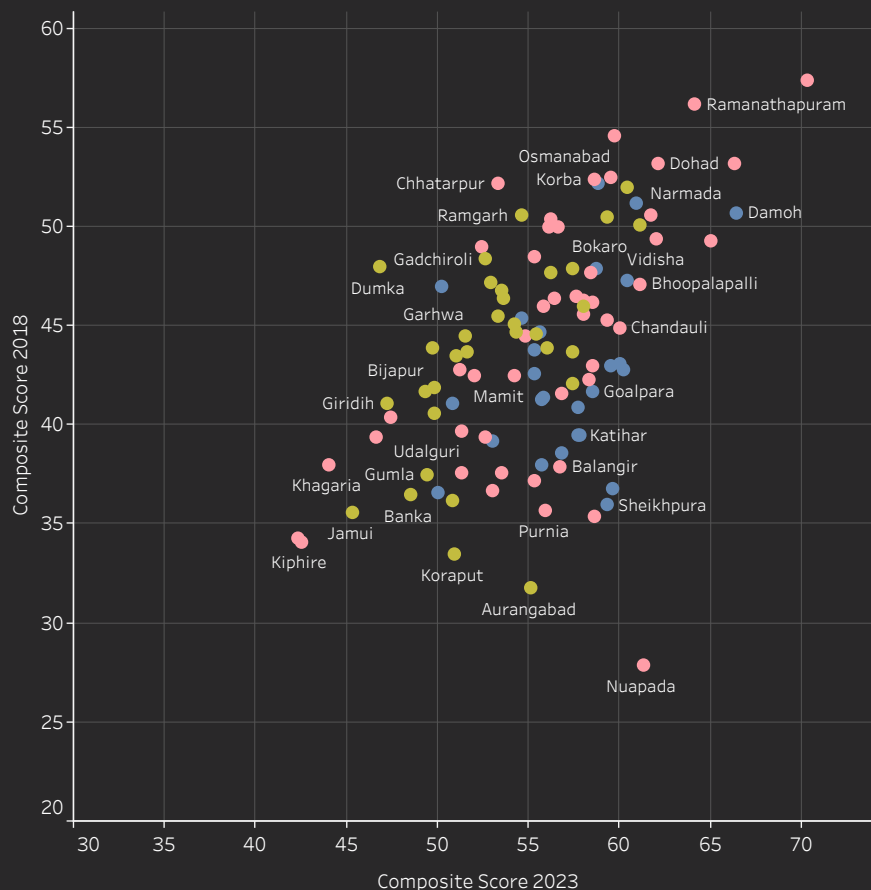
⁸ The Champions of Change dashboard releases monthly rankings of the aspirational districts based on their composite scores covering all the six sectors. The composite scores for July'18 and April'23 were utilised for this analysis.

The graph depicting the composite scores of these districts in 2018 and 2023 reveals a remarkable diversity in their performance. Notably, no specific group of districts emerged as clear frontrunners or laggards. Instead, districts from all categories showcased varied levels of progress and challenges, reflecting the unique socio-economic landscapes they operate in. The scatter plot below clearly depicts the varied levels of performances of the aspirational districts. The three groups of aspirational districts are represented using three colours – blue for NITI Aayog, pink for Ministries and green for MHA LWE. If any particular group showed similar levels of performance across the districts it constitutes, the graph would have revealed a cluster of districts in the same color. However, given that all districts across all groups showed diversity in their performance, the graph now shows all colors scattered throughout. This heterogeneity underscores the significance of region-specific approaches and localized interventions to drive inclusive growth.

Figure 10:
Comparison
of Composite
Score 2018
vs Composite
Score 2023
for the three
groups of
Aspirational
Districts

Department

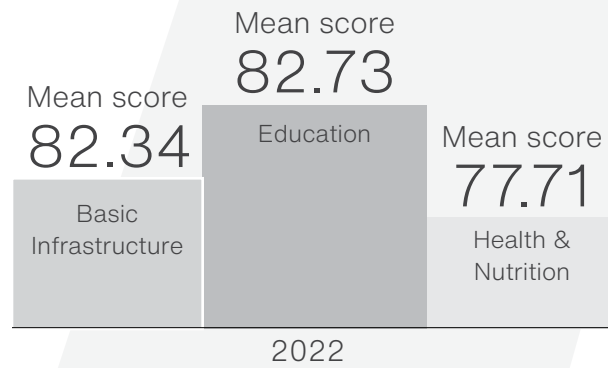
- MHA LWA
- Ministry
- NITI Aayag



11

Sectorwise Performance of Aspirational Districts

The in-depth analysis conducted in previous sections provided insights into the performance of aspirational districts at the indicator level. While this granular view helped identify specific areas of improvement and challenges, it was essential to assess the overall progress of each sector under the Aspirational Districts Programme. To this end, for the purposes of this research, sectorwise scores (in the range 0-100) were calculated for each of the six sectors under the Aspirational Districts Programme (which were also the basis of the Distance to Frontier scores).

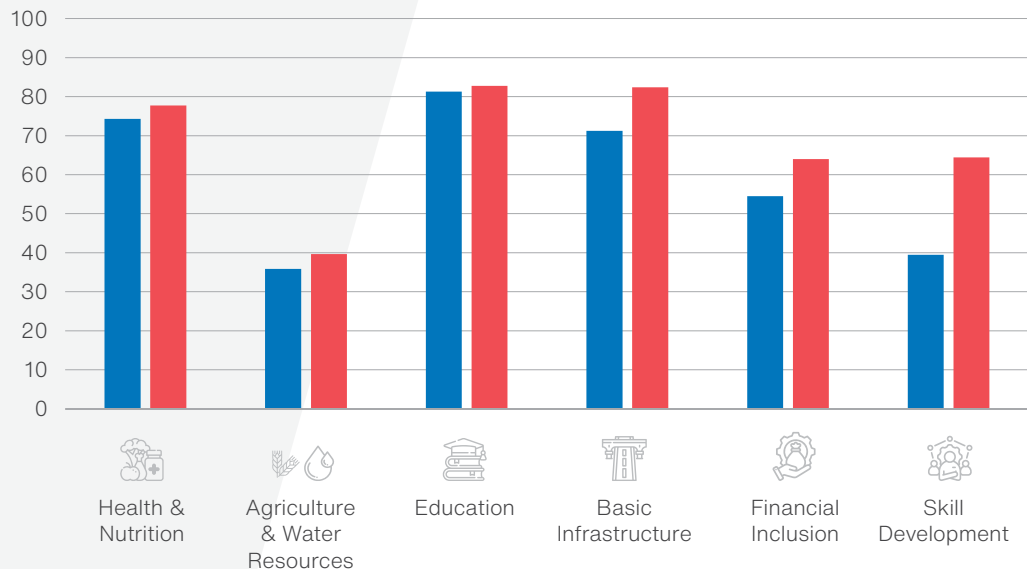


Education emerged as the top-performing sector, reflecting its significant strides with a sectorwise mean score of 82.73 in 2022. Basic Infrastructure closely followed, garnering a commendable mean score of 82.34, highlighting substantial advancements in this area. Health & Nutrition secured the third spot, boasting a mean score of 77.71, indicating commendable progress in this vital domain.

While Education, Basic Infrastructure, and Health & Nutrition showcased notable improvements, Skill Development and Financial Inclusion demonstrated comparable scores, standing at 64.38 and 63.96, respectively. This indicated consistent advancements across these sectors, but also underlined the potential for further targeted interventions to enhance performance.

Figure 11:
Change in Sectorwise Mean Scores 2018 vs 2022

■ 2018 mean
■ 2022 mean



Furthermore, examining the graphical representation of sectorwise mean score changes over the implementation period revealed some remarkable trends. *Skill Development displayed the highest rate of change at an impressive 63.04%, reflecting the program's effectiveness in driving significant improvements in this domain. On the other hand, Education demonstrated slower growth, increasing by a modest 1.83%. Health &*

Nutrition experienced a gradual but steady rise at 4.71%. For Agriculture & Water Resources, Basic Infrastructure, and Financial Inclusion, the rates of change ranged from 10% to 17%, showcasing steady progress across these sectors.

Overall, the comprehensive assessment of sector performance contributes to a holistic understanding of the Aspirational Districts Programme's impact. It highlights areas of success and also identifies where focused attention and strategies are required to drive further advancements in these vital sectors.





12

Performance of Aspirational Districts on Multidimensional Poverty Index

In the context of aspirational districts, the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) and the Social Progress Index (SPI) serve as vital human development indicators, assessing dimensions beyond economic growth. Non-economic development indicators play a pivotal role in unveiling disparities that economic measures alone might overlook. For instance, even in the presence of a high GDP, disparities in healthcare, education, and basic services might persist.

Non-economic indicators cast a spotlight on such inequalities, enabling policymakers to pinpoint areas necessitating interventions for achieving equitable development. Moreover, a focus on these indicators recognizes the multifaceted nature of well-being. Quality of life hinges on factors extending beyond financial prosperity—health, education access, social connections, and freedom of choice all contribute. Overlooking these dimensions risks crafting policies that fail to address the comprehensive range of human needs and aspirations. The MPI and SPI, collectively unveil a holistic picture of non-economic progress, emphasizing the significance of addressing multifaceted development challenges within aspirational districts.

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) definition considers overlapping deprivations in health, education, and living standards. It incorporates factors such as child mortality, housing conditions, water, and sanitation to assess multidimensional poverty. NITI Aayog employs specific dimensions related to health, education, and quality of living to identify multidimensional poverty, with an individual deemed multidimensionally poor if their

“deprivation score” exceeds 0.33. Notably, nutrition plays a pivotal role, contributing close to 30% to the overall MPI. Addressing nutrition deprivation is crucial in breaking the cycle of poverty for vulnerable populations (National Multidimensional Poverty Index, 2023).

India's efforts to address multidimensional poverty have yielded promising outcomes in recent years. The country has witnessed a notable decline in the proportion of individuals classified as “multidimensionally poor”, dropping from 24.85% in 2015-16 to 14.96% in 2019-2021. This decline indicates a positive trend in poverty reduction, with approximately 13.5 crore Indians escaping poverty during this five-year period (Press Information Bureau, 2023).

These improvements can be attributed to enhancements in essential indicators like access to cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, and bank accounts, contributing to an absolute reduction in poverty. However, challenges persist, particularly in areas such as nutrition and education, where indicators show only marginal progress. These challenges continue to impact one in seven Indians, keeping them multidimensionally poor. Additionally, a significant rural-

urban disparity exists, with rural areas experiencing the fastest decline in poverty, primarily due to improvements in certain states (Press Information Bureau, 2023). Several states have made commendable progress in reducing multidimensional poverty, with some even witnessing a doubling of people living with less than 10% multidimensional poverty between 2016 and 2021. States like Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh, despite having a significant proportion of their population living in multidimensional



poverty, have made remarkable strides in reducing their figures over the five-year period (National Multidimensional Poverty Index, 2023). These achievements emphasise the significance of targeted interventions, data-driven approaches, and equitable development initiatives in further advancing India's fight against multidimensional poverty.

To examine the levels of multidimensional poverty prevailing in the Aspirational Districts, Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) scores for 2015-16 (based on NFHS 4) and 2020-21 (based on NFHS 5) were extracted from the National Multidimensional Poverty Index released by NITI Aayog in 2019 and 2023 respectively. The study adopts the Mobility Matrix analysis for the two time points – 2015-16 and 2020-21, to draw insights from this data. The aspirational districts are first grouped into four tiers in the basis of the quartiles of their respective MPI scores for both the years. Tier 1 represents the districts with the lowest MPI scores whereas Tier 4 represents the districts with the highest MPI scores.

The MPI is represented on a scale of 0 to 1, with 0 denoting no poverty and 1 indicating severe poverty or deprivation in all dimensions. A score closer to 0 reflects higher

well-being and a lower proportion of the population living in poverty. Conversely, a score closer to 1 signifies greater deprivation and a larger proportion of the population living in poverty. When comparing MPI scores across different regions, countries, or time periods, lower scores signify better living conditions and less poverty, while higher scores indicate higher levels of poverty and deprivation.

The following is the mobility matrix created on the basis of the MPI scores of aspirational districts in 2015-16 and 2020-21. It illustrates the movement of districts across the four tiers

The average MPI score for the aspirational districts in the year 2015-16 was 0.203. This score reduced by 40% to become 0.118 in the year 2020-21. This indicates that efforts towards poverty alleviation among the aspirational districts have had a positive impact. 24 districts remained in Tier 1 in both the years, 19 in Tier 2, 16 in Tier 3 and 20 in Tier 4. Tier 1 has a mix of geography with no particular state dominating – ranging from southern states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh to northeastern states like Manipur, Mizoram, Assam. On the other hand, Tier 4 districts can be grouped mainly into Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh representing 17 out of the 20 districts.

Table 36 / **Mobility Matrix of ADP districts on MPI scores based on NFHS 4 and NFHS 5**

		2020-21			
		Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
2015-16	Tier 1	24	3	0	0
	Tier 2	2	19	5	0
	Tier 3	0	3	16	7
	Tier 4	0	1	5	20

However, to trace the change in the MPI scores of aspirational districts over these years, the rate of change of the MPI scores (2015-16 being the base and 2020-21 being the reference year) was calculated. Khammam (Telangana) registered a decrease of 75% from 0.058 in 2021 to 0.014 in 2023. Osmanabad (Maharashtra) and Mamit (Mizoram) follow closely with a decrease of 71 and 68 per cent respectively. Conversely, Firozpur (Punjab), Chamba (Himachal Pradesh) and Sahibganj (Jharkhand) are the bottommost in terms of rate of

change of MPI scores over the years. A possible explanation to this is the fact that these districts already had MPI scores closer to 0 in the base year – Firozpur at 0.03, Chamba at 0.04 and Sahibganj at 0.24.

In sum, the aspirational districts have registered a high average decline in the population that is multidimensionally poor. With greater focus on districts in Tier 2,3 and 4 in the future, these numbers can be further improved.

CORRELATION BETWEEN SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX AND MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX

The exploration of the correlation between the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) and Social Progress Index (SPI) in the context of Aspirational Districts holds significant implications for our assessment of the programme's effectiveness and impact. Both indices provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of development, delving beyond conventional economic metrics to encompass various dimensions of well-being. MPI measures overlapping deprivations in various dimensions, such as health, education, and living standards. SPI, on the other hand, assesses access to basic needs, opportunities, and inclusiveness.

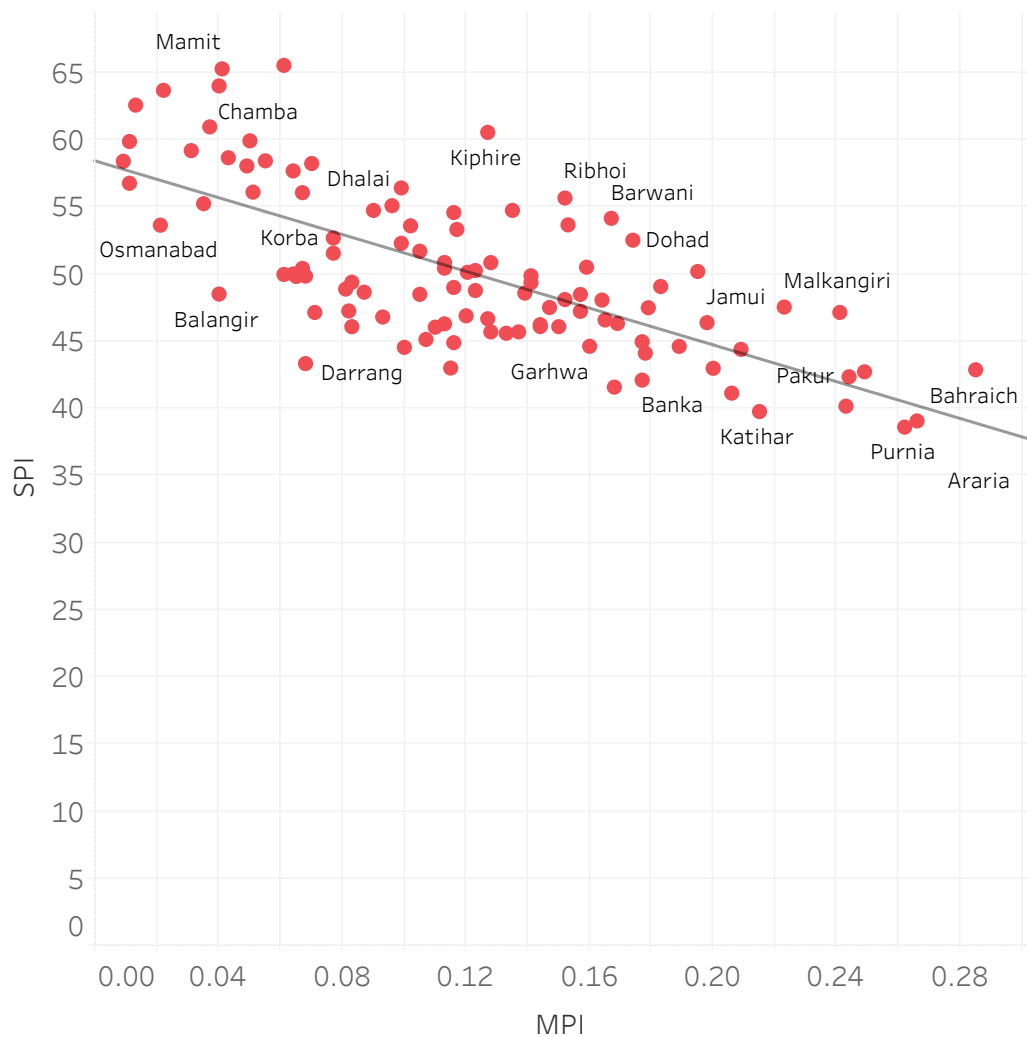
The Social Progress Index offers a comprehensive gauge of social development, drawing from an array of social and environmental variables. It goes beyond the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by introducing an alternative metric for measuring well-being. A basic idea is that just economic growth without social progress can bring about marginalization,

environmental harm, and social disturbances. This index quantified social advancement independently of economic markers. It evaluated the social progress of regions through three core dimensions: Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Wellbeing, and Opportunity. The first dimension, Basic Human Needs, assesses a population's capacity to secure fundamental necessities such as proper nutrition, essential medical care, clean water, sanitation, affordable housing, and personal safety. The second dimension, Foundations of Wellbeing, focuses on the accessibility of basic education, information, healthcare services, and an environment conducive to longevity. Lastly, the third pillar, Opportunity encompasses the freedoms and opportunities for personal rights, individual liberties, inclusivity, and access to advanced education collectively.

The MPI and the SPI diverge in their core objectives and dimensions of assessment. While the MPI is centered on measuring poverty and deprivation across dimensions such

as health, education, and living standards, the SPI focuses on gauging overall societal development and well-being, incorporating aspects like education, healthcare, and personal freedom. The MPI targets poverty reduction and vulnerable populations, whereas the SPI provides a broader understanding of societal progress beyond economic growth. While the MPI employs a “cut-off” approach, the SPI employs a composite index approach to encapsulate various dimensions into a single score. Both indices serve distinct purposes in guiding policy and evaluating different facets of development.

→
Figure 12:
 Correlation
 graph
 between
 SPI and MPI
 scores of
 Aspirational
 Districts



For this exercise, the SPI 2022 scores and MPI 2023 scores were collated for the aspirational districts. It should be noted that though the year of publication of these two indices differs, the database for both is the same. Both SPI 2022 and MPI 2023 are based on NFHS 5: 2020-21. Hence, a comparison of SPI and MPI scores for the aspirational districts is possible.

The correlation coefficient for this dataset was found to be -0.70. The negative correlation coefficient of -0.70 indicates an inverse relationship between the SPI and MPI scores in the dataset. In simpler terms, as the SPI scores increase, indicating better social progress, the MPI scores decrease, reflecting a reduction in multidimensional poverty. Similarly, as the SPI scores decrease, suggesting lower social progress, the MPI scores increase, indicating an increase in multidimensional poverty. This negative correlation implies that districts that have made progress in social well-being have also experienced improvements in reducing multidimensional poverty.

The strength of the correlation coefficient (-0.70) is relatively high, indicating a robust relationship between social progress and poverty reduction. It should be noted that there is an overlap in the indicators that both these indices examine, and they are based on the same database i.e. NFHS 5. This could be said to have resulted in this strong a correlation coefficient. However, it helps understand that addressing the dimensions of social progress, as measured by the SPI, can have a notable impact on reducing multidimensional poverty, as measured by the MPI.



13

Convergence of Schemes under the Aspirational Districts Programme

Through the convergence of state and central schemes, as well as collective efforts from various stakeholders, the Aspirational Districts Programme attempts to improve performances on key indicators examined under the programme.

The Primer document for the programme maps various central schemes to each indicator in an attempt towards informing the stakeholders of the possible ways of implementation. The same has also been listed in the earlier sections of the study under the Distance to Frontier analysis. To examine the rate of growth of these indicators, this section of the study presents a brief discussion on one indicator from each sector visually depicting the districts with the highest rate of growth for the same. This section of the study focuses on highlighting the substantial percentage increase in specific scheme-based indicators, which testify the positive outcomes achieved through the harmonization of resources, policies, and interventions.



FINANCIAL INCLUSION

The study looks at the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana to understand the extent of financial inclusion under the Aspirational Districts Programme. As a National Mission for Financial Inclusion, PMJDY aims to provide access to essential financial services such as banking, savings, remittance, credit, insurance, and pension in an affordable manner. The scheme operates on six fundamental pillars, with the overarching objective of extending banking services to the unbanked population. (Press Information Bureau, 2022) For the implementation of PMJDY in aspirational districts, the programme monitored the number of accounts opened under PMJDY since July, 2018. The Primer recommended structured monitoring at district level by activating District Level Implementation and Monitoring

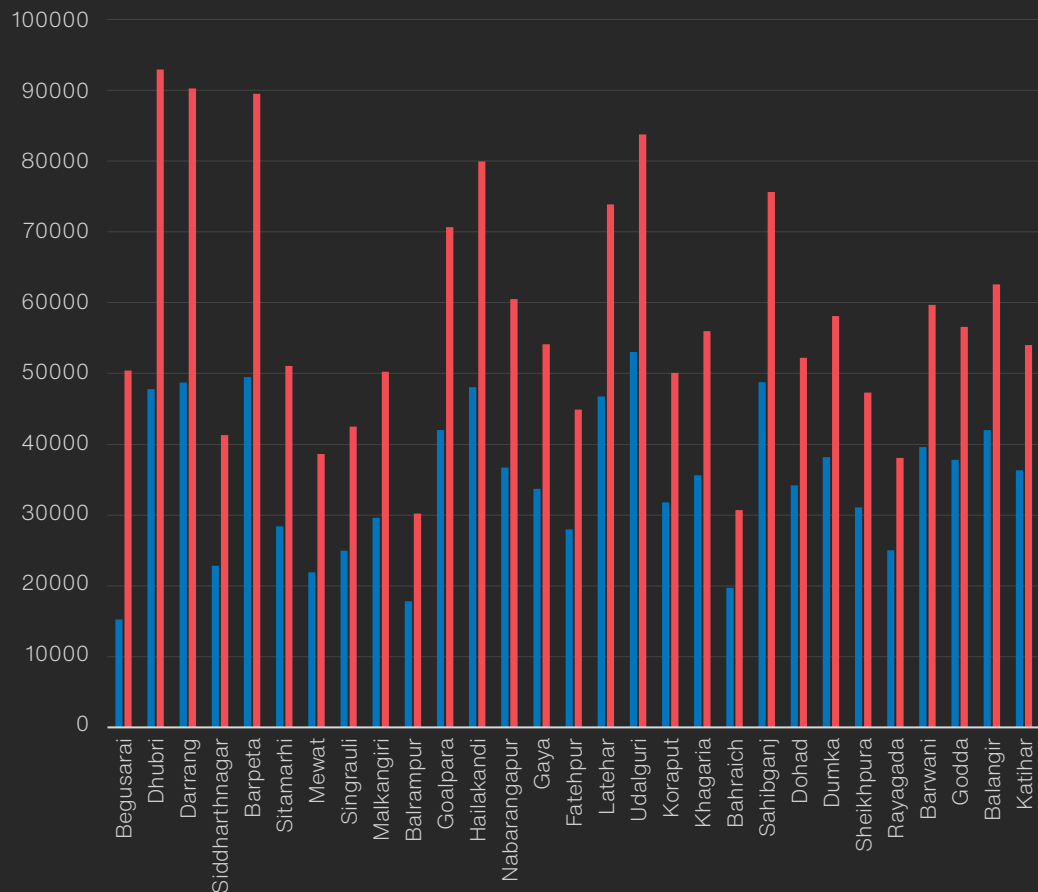
Committee (DLIC). Additionally, the district administrations were also expected to set up facility of call-centres and toll-free numbers. The mandate for account opening under the PMJDY was the use of Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AEPS). A qualitative assessment of whether these guidelines were followed thoroughly or not, requires a comprehensive survey of the aspirational districts, which is beyond the scope of this research. However, to visually assess the aspirational districts in terms of number of accounts opened under PMJDY, the following graph illustrates the percentage increase in enrolments in PM Jan Dhan Yojana in the aspirational districts between 2018 and 2022. Begusarai, Darrang and Barpeta appear to have registered the highest rate of growth.



Figure 13:
Percentage
increase in
enrolments
in PMJDY
2018-2022

Source:
*Champions
of Change
dashboard*

- Number of accounts opened under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana per 1 Lakh population_2018
- Number of accounts opened under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana per 1 Lakh population_2022

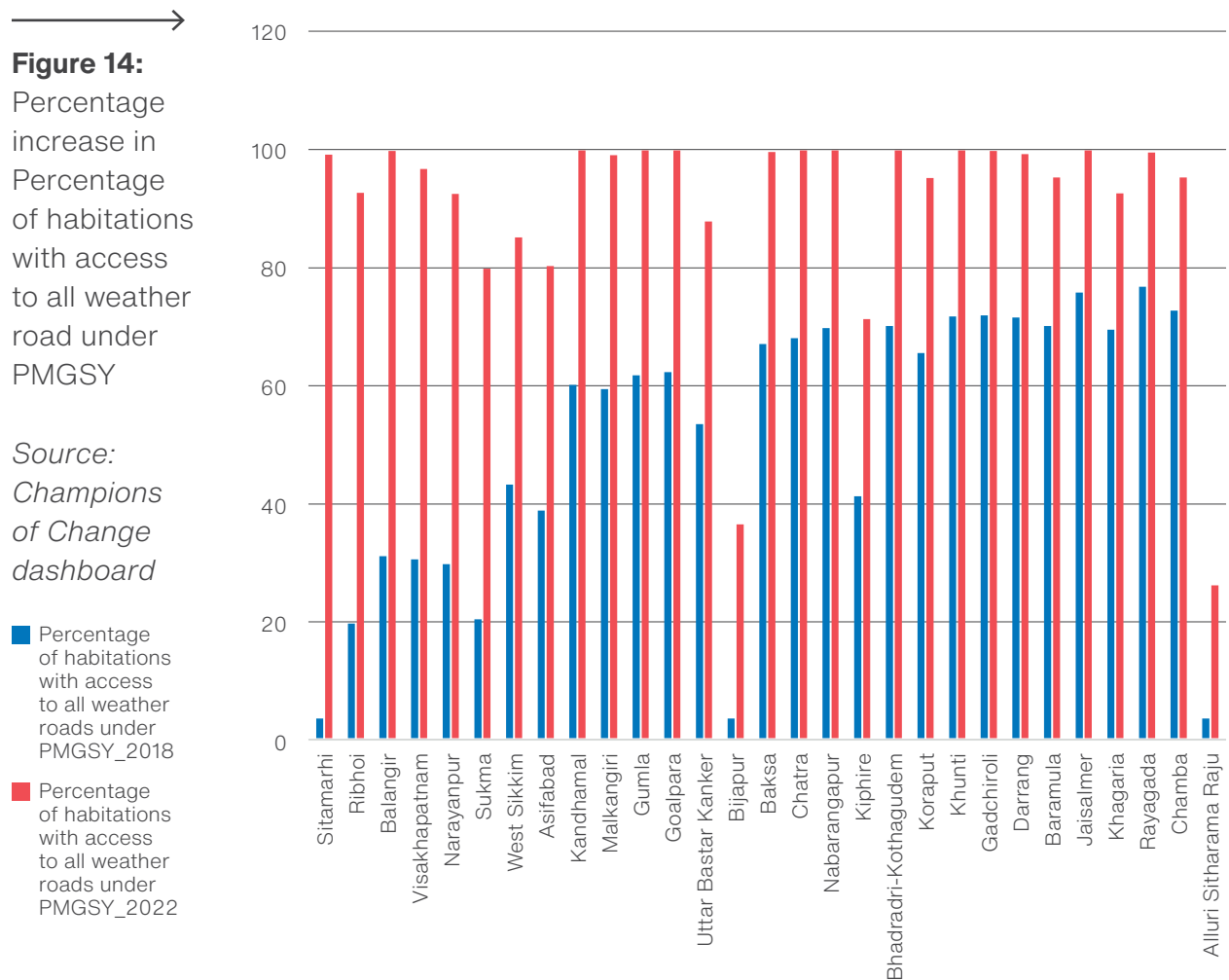


BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Under Basic Infrastructure, the study drives attention towards the Pradhan Mantri Grameen Sadak Yojana (PMGSY). The Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana is a scheme implemented by the Central government. Its main aim is to provide all-weather road connectivity to previously unconnected rural areas, ensuring that these areas have roads

equipped with necessary culverts and cross-drainage structures that remain operational throughout the year. The ADP monitors the percentage of habitations with access to all weather roads under PMGSY as an indicator of basic infrastructure. The Primer recommended regular meetings with by the District Collectors to monitor the progress of PMGSY

in the aspirational districts so as to facilitate fast-track project initiation under the direct supervision of the District Collectors. The following figure illustrates the rate of growth of aspirational districts on this indicator between 2018 and 2022. Sitamarhi, Balangir, and Narayanpur appear to have registered the highest rate of growth for the same.

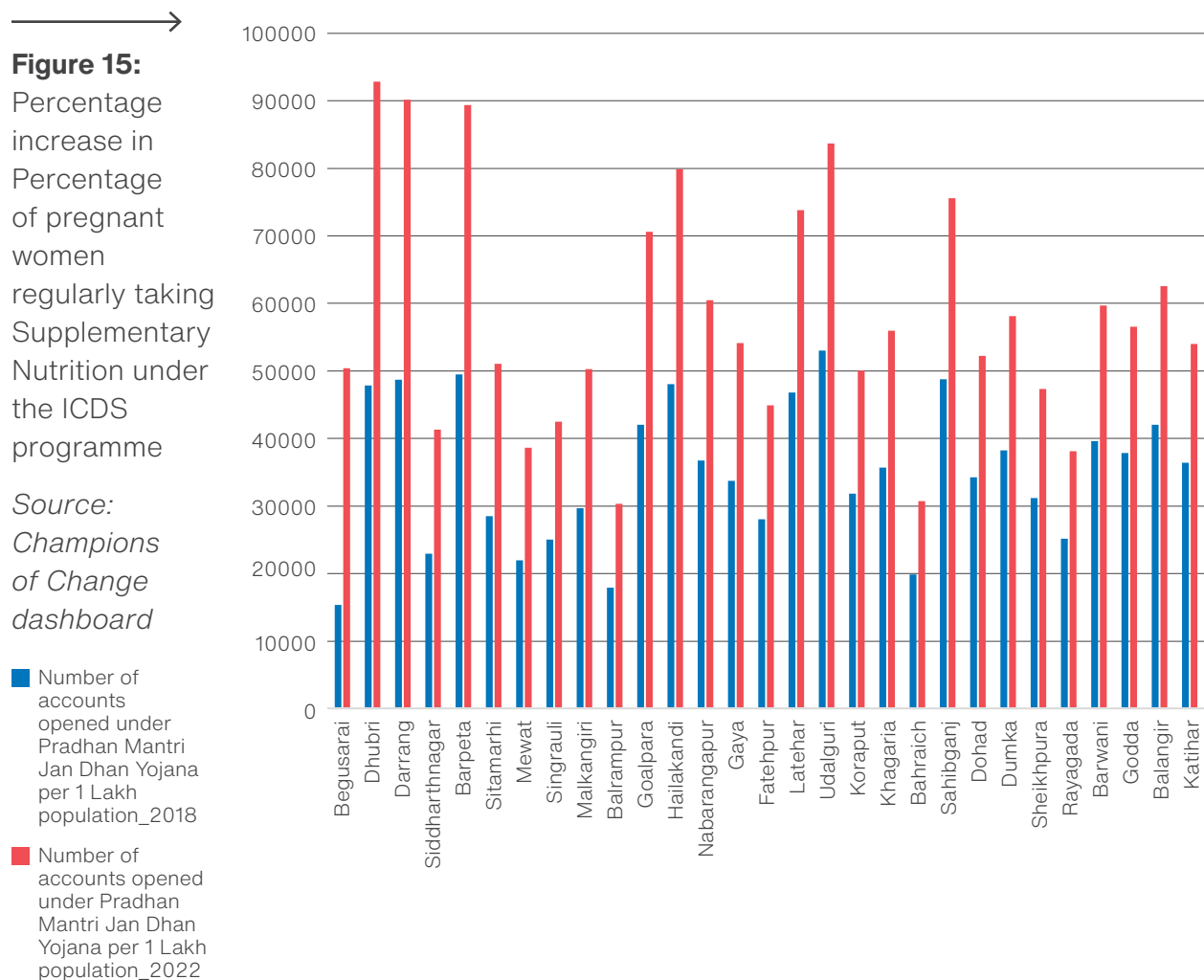


HEALTH & NUTRITION

For Health & Nutrition, we look at the Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (JSSK) and Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY). Janani

Suraksha Yojana (JSY) is a scheme that encourages institutional delivery through demand promotion and conditional cash transfers.

Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (JSSK) ensures that pregnant women have access to free delivery services, including caesarean sections, in public health institutions. Additionally, JSSK provides free transport, diagnostics, medicines, consumables, diet, and blood support for pregnant women. The ADP monitors percentage of pregnant women regularly taking Supplementary Nutrition under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) as an indicator of health & nutrition and the Primer maps it to JSSK and JSY. The Primer suggests that ASHA workers facilitate regular visits of pregnant women to Anganwadi Centres for check-ups. It also recommends that ASHA workers ensure regular intake of Iron & Folic Acid tablets for pregnant women. Additionally, it recommends that the ASHA and Anganwadi workers share the list of pregnant women in a village and keep track of it for better facilitation of aide. Looking at the following figure, it is evident that Soreng, Dhubri and Darrang registered the highest rate of growth on this indicator between 2018 and 2022.





SKILL DEVELOPMENT

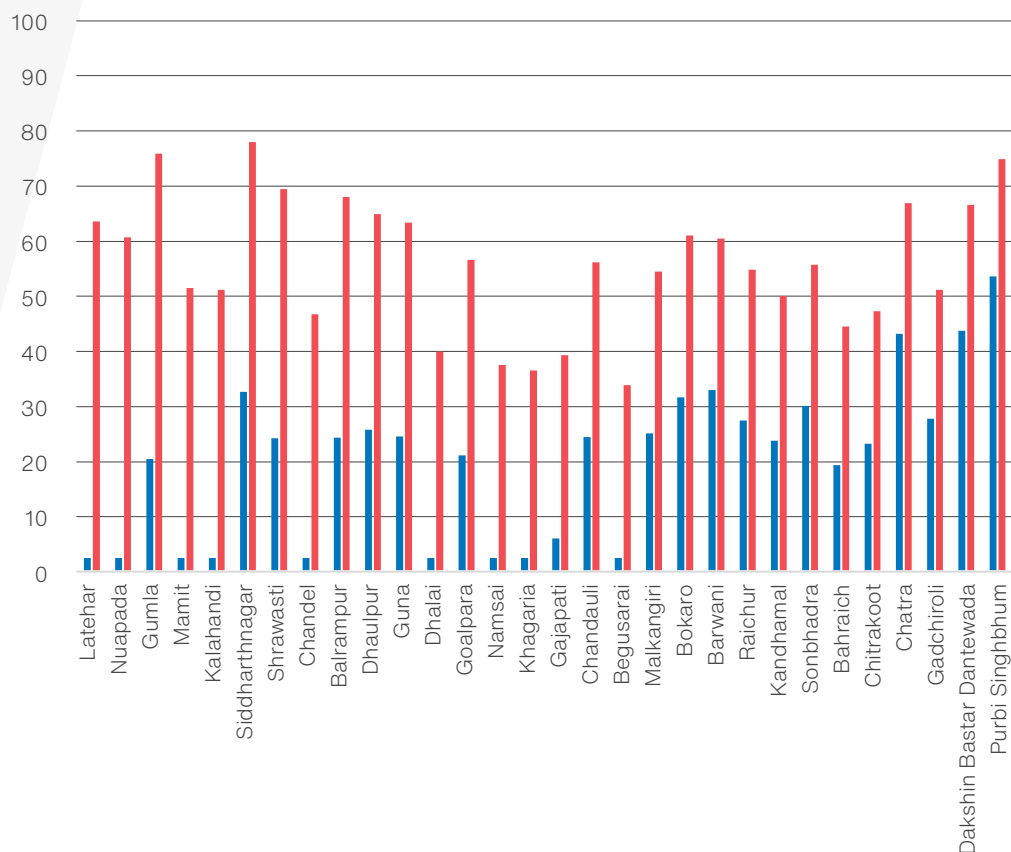
Under the Skill Development sector, we examine the change in the indicator – Percentage certified: women between 2018 and 2022. The Primer maps multiple schemes namely, PMKVY (Prime Minister Kaushal Vikas Yojana), DDUGKY (Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana) and Schemes of Minority, Social Justice, WCD and Differently abled departments to this indicator. Further, in terms of implementation, the recommendation is that the district administrations identify youth population in 15-29 age group for marginalized sections namely, SC, ST, women and differently

abled. The next step is involving community groups and Panchayats to ensure mobilization of resources and relevant counselling required for them to enroll for trainings. Additionally, mapping the local traditional occupations of these sections to the skill training courses would encourage greater participation.

As can be seen from the figure below, Lategar, Gumla, and Kalahandi have registered the highest rate of growth on the indicator: Percentage of certified women between the years 2018 and 2022.

Figure 16:
Percentage increase in Percentage certified: women 2018-2022

■ Percentage certified trained: women_2018
■ Percentage certified trained: women_2022



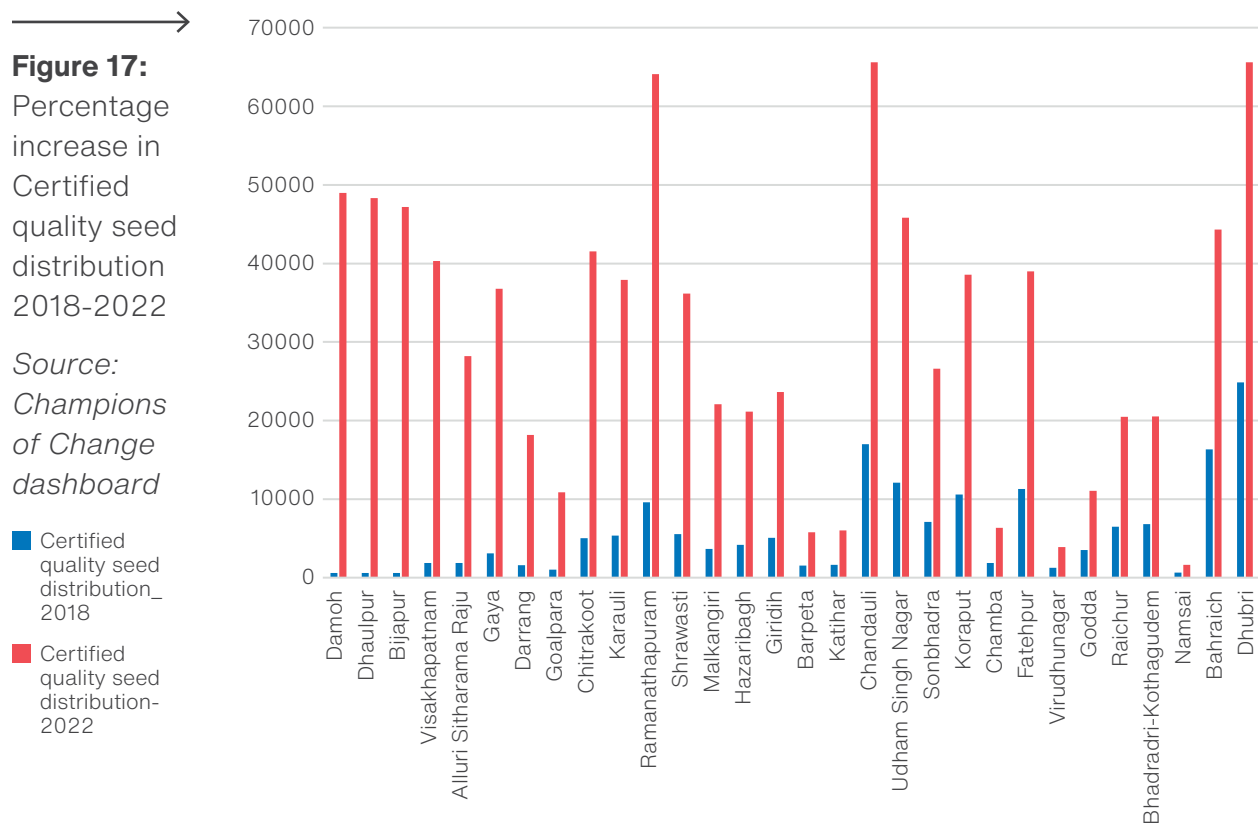


AGRICULTURE & WATER RESOURCES

For Agriculture & Water Resources, we look at the indicator - Certified quality seed distribution. The Primer maps this to multiple schemes namely - Krishi UnnatiYojana; Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY); National Food Security Mission (NFSM); and National Mission for Oilseeds & Qilpalm (NMOOP). As per the Primer, the district administration is expected to ensure implementation of Seed Plan in the aspirational districts, and conduct an assessment of seed availability in public and private agency. Also, there must be regular meetings

with private and public seed distributors to ensure compliance. In case of a deficit, the Primer recommends that there be tie ups with National/State corporation for adequate seeds. Lastly, there should be awareness campaigns targeted at the beneficiaries to ensure that they know of the incentives on seeds available in central and state programmes.

From the figure below, it can be noted that Damoh, Bijapur and Alluri Sitharama Raju registered the highest rate of growth on this indicator between 2018 and 2022.



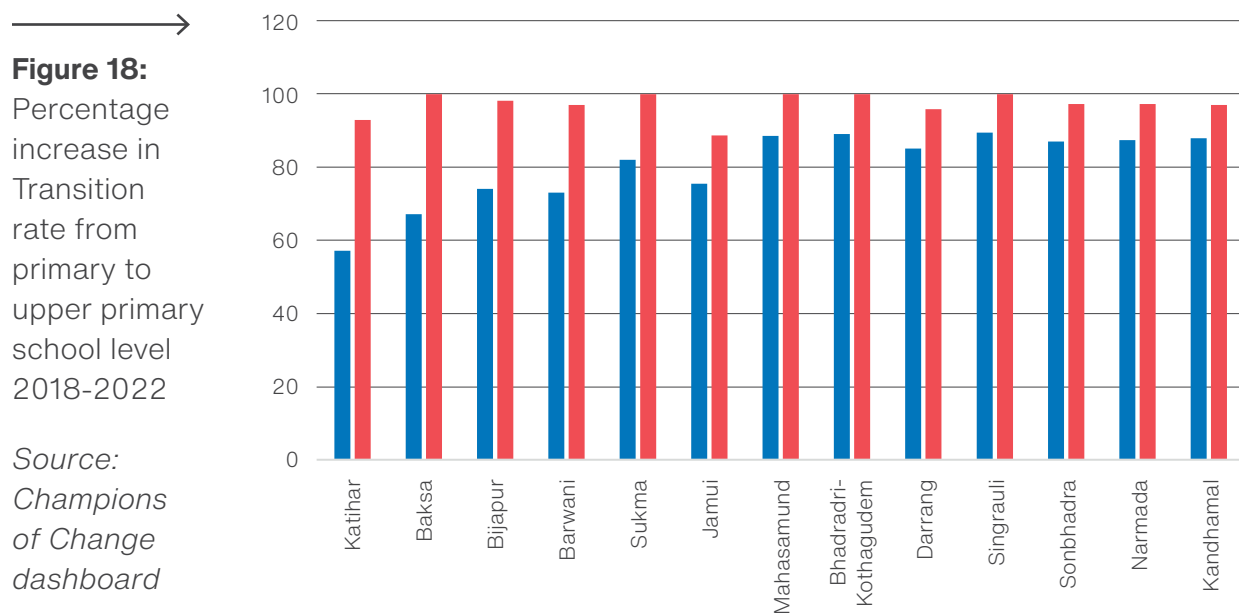


EDUCATION

For Education, the study traces the change in the indicator – Transition rate from primary to upper primary school level between the years 2018 and 2022. As per the Primer, this is to be monitored as part of the SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan). The first step is assessing the number of students in Class V in all schools in the district. The District Education Officer is expected to direct the teachers to assess the availability of seats in the upper primary school of the district after taking into account the number of students in Class V. The availability of seats is then informed to the parents to ensure prevention in student dropouts. The Primer also recommends that in case a student drops out, the Class V teach should go to their residence

to encourage them rejoin school in the next grade. To incentivize the teachers, the District Collector are advised to monitor the transition and recognize the efforts made by the school teachers. Katihar, Baksa and Bijapur appear to have registered the highest rate of growth in this indicator between 2018 and 2022.

In summary, the ADP represents a collaborative effort, combining state and central schemes to strengthen essential development indicators. This section allowed further examination of the potential for transformation by studying specific indicators. Across various sectors, the study reveals significant progress achieved through focused efforts.



Source:
Champions of Change dashboard

- Percentage certified trained: women_2018
- Percentage certified trained: women_2022

14

Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals through the Aspirational Districts Programme



The NITI Aayog's SDG India Index report 2019 highlighted that several ADP indicators closely align with the SDG goals, including Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being), Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities).


This alignment envisions that the efforts made under ADP directly contribute to achieving the relevant SDG targets. Following this, the study mapped 15 of the ADP indicators to the above-mentioned SDGs to examine the status of progress on the same. Table 37 provides the number of districts that have met their benchmark targets per indicator. It also shows the indicative SDG mapping done for the ADP indicators. These 15 indicators directly align with Goals 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 4 (Quality Education), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), and 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, the ADP may not have direct one-to-one mapping with Goals 8 and 10 of the SDGs. Goal 8 of the




SDGs aims to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. While ADP's indicators may not directly align with this goal, its approach of expediting comprehensive and sustainable development in disadvantaged districts across India fosters inclusive and sustainable economic growth. By targeting multiple sectors like health, education, agriculture, and infrastructure, ADP promotes holistic development. Additionally, interventions in skill development and financial inclusion enhance employability and create full and productive employment opportunities, aligning with the objective of Goal 8.

Similarly, Goal 10 of the SDGs aims to reduce inequality within and among countries. Although not directly mapped with ADP indicators, the program's stakeholder-driven model ensures active participation of local communities, authorities, and development partners, fostering inclusive development. By targeting disadvantaged districts for accelerated development, ADP seeks to bridge the gap between aspirational districts and the national average, contributing to reducing sub-national inequality. The convergence of government

sectoral schemes at the district level also promotes equitable resource distribution and benefits. In sum, while ADP's indicators may not directly correspond to Goals 8 and 10 of the SDGs, its ethos and approach align closely with the spirit of these global goals.

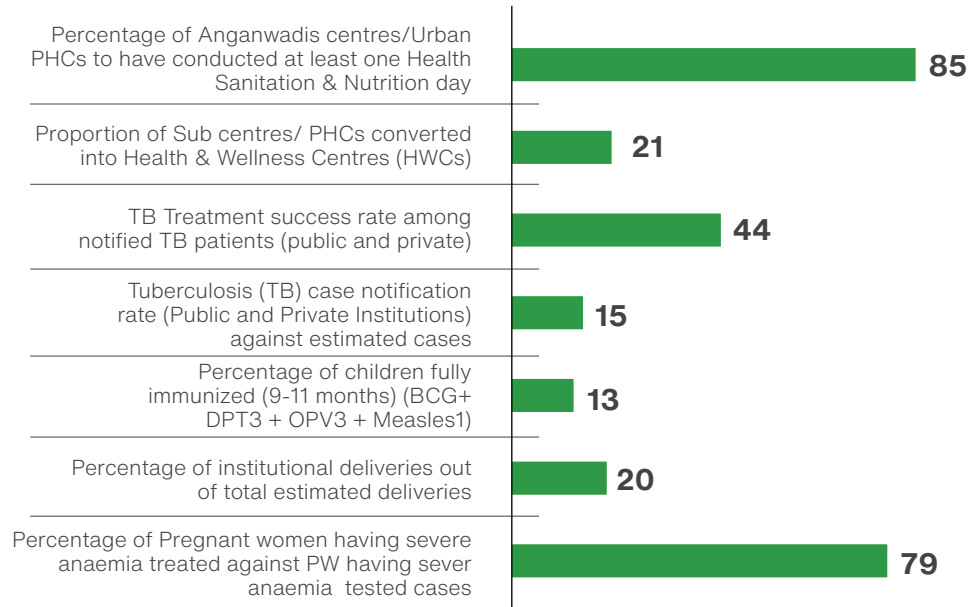
Table 37 / Indicative Mapping of SDGs with ADP indicators

SDG	ADP Indicator	No. of Districts with Saturation	Mean DTF
Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages 	Percentage of Anganwadis centres/Urban PHCs to have conducted at least one Health Sanitation & Nutrition day	79	15.66
	Proportion of Sub centres/ PHCs converted into Health & Wellness Centres (HWCs)	20	37.43
	TB Treatment success rate among notified TB patients (public and private)	13	25.87
	Tuberculosis (TB) case notification rate (Public and Private Institutions) against estimated cases	15	30.85
	Percentage of children fully immunized (9-11 months) (BCG+ DPT3 + OPV3 + Measles1)	44	19.57
	Percentage of institutional deliveries out of total estimated deliveries	21	33.11
	Percentage of Pregnant women having severe anaemia treated against PW having severe anaemia tested cases	85	11.68

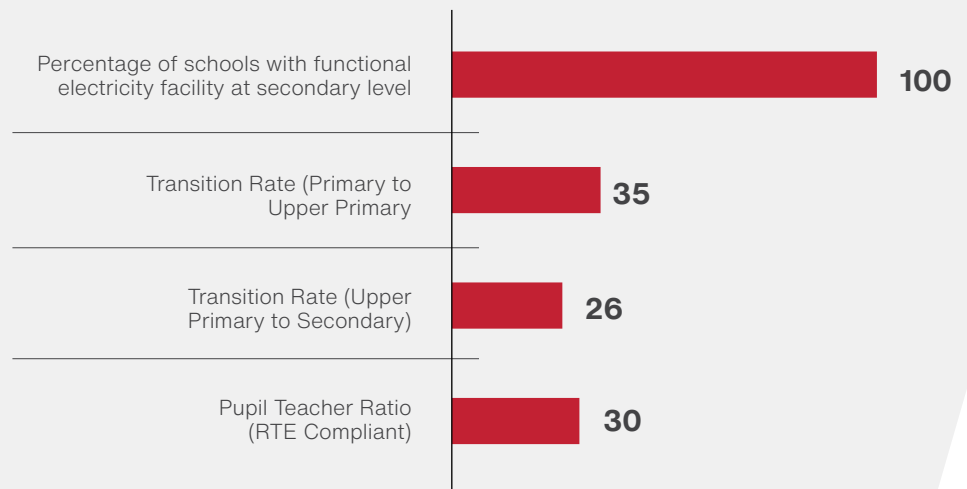
SDG	ADP Indicator	No. of Districts with Saturation	Mean DTF
Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all 	Pupil Teacher Ratio (RTE Compliant)	30	29.39
	Transition Rate (Upper Primary to Secondary)	26	25.77
	Transition Rate (Primary to Upper Primary)	35	26.17
	Percentage of schools with functional electricity facility at secondary level	100	7.01
Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all 	Percentage of rural habitations with access to adequate quantity of potable water (40 lpcd) drinking water	29	22.57
	Percentage of households with individual household latrines	115	0.00
Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation 	Percentage of habitations with access to all weather roads under PMGSY	71	9.46
	Percentage of Gram panchayat with internet connection	48	22.69



→
Figure 19:
 Progress of Aspirational Districts on SDG 3 in terms of number of districts attaining saturation on ADP indicators



→
Figure 20:
 Progress of Aspirational Districts on SDG 4 in terms of number of districts attaining saturation on ADP indicators



→
Figure 21:
 Progress of Aspirational Districts on SDG 6 in terms of number of districts attaining saturation on ADP indicators

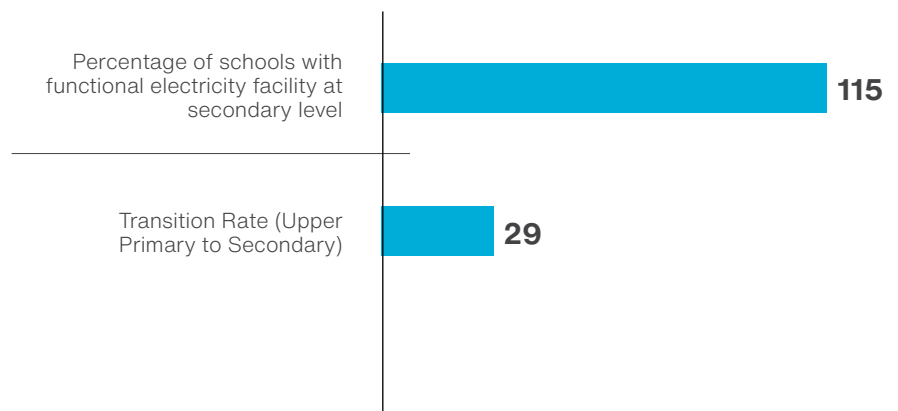
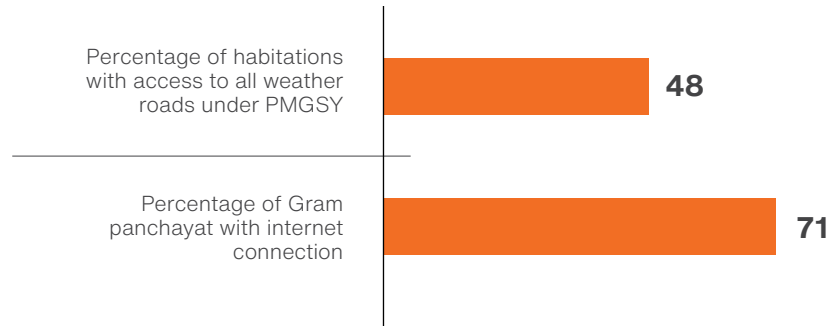




Figure 22:

Progress of Aspirational Districts on SDG 9 in terms of number of districts attaining saturation on ADP indicators



One of the key factors driving the successful localization of SDGs is ADP's emphasis on promoting innovation and sharing best practices. The programme encourages adaptive and context-specific approaches to development issues, empowering district administrations to think creatively and learn from successful practices within their own districts. These identified successful practices act as models that can be replicated in other regions, amplifying the impact of local development efforts and fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement. More on this in the next section of the study where some of the most innovative and impactful best practices in the aspirational districts are highlighted.

Another critical aspect of the ADP's contribution to SDG localization is its role in facilitating the convergence of various central and state/union-territory government sectoral schemes within the selected districts. By integrating resources and efforts from different schemes, ADP allows for multiple development aspects to be addressed simultaneously, leading to more efficient and

impactful implementation of SDG-related initiatives.

The ADP has also played a pivotal role in strengthening local governance structures. By empowering districts as the drivers of the program, ADP has devolved power and responsibility to the grassroots level, ensuring effective implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of SDG-related initiatives. This decentralized approach aligns development efforts with local needs and realities, making the localization of SDGs more effective and efficient. This way the increased sense of ownership and accountability among local authorities, furthers the commitment to achieving the SDGs within their respective districts.

Thus, the Aspirational Districts Programme has become a catalyst for the localization of the SDGs in India. The programme's localized and integrated approach has demonstrated that sustainable development is best achieved when tailored to the unique needs and contexts of different regions.

15

Best Practices across the Aspirational Districts



AGRICULTURE & WATER RESOURCES

In the aspirational district of Chandauli, Uttar Pradesh, an innovative initiative was launched to boost farmers' income through the cultivation of black rice.

This unique crop, not native to the area, was introduced to 300 farmers due to its high demand in global markets. The district administration actively promoted black rice and facilitated the formation of the “Chandauli Kala Chaval Krishak Samiti” for trading purposes. The branding and marketing efforts led to increased profits, significantly raising farmers' income per hectare. The success of this venture inspired more farmers to adopt black rice cultivation, resulting in higher incomes and reduced reliance on chemical fertilizers. The replicability of this initiative has led to its adoption in over 15 districts across different states, making a widespread impact on agricultural practices. For its outstanding contribution, Chandauli received the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration in 2020 (Best practices in Social Sector: A Compendium , 2023).

In YSR Kadappa, Andhra Pradesh, the Integrated Nutrient Management (INM) scheme was implemented to address soil micronutrient deficiencies, which were causing reduced crop yields and higher production costs for farmers.

The intervention provided training to farmers and fully subsidized micronutrients based on soil health assessments. By applying zinc and gypsum at specific stages of cultivation, farmers experienced a significant reduction in cultivation costs, going from 19,000 to 15,000 per acre. This led to an additional income of ₹17,800 per acre for the farmers. Furthermore, the crop yields increased from 900 kg per acre to 1,300 kg per acre (Aspirational Districts: Unlocking Potential, 2018). This successful implementation of the INM scheme has demonstrated the potential for innovative agricultural practices to improve farmers' livelihoods and boost agricultural productivity in the region.

In Kupwara district, Jammu & Kashmir, which faces water deficit due to limited snow deposits and recurring annual water shortages, an intervention was undertaken to construct surface run-off harvesting storage tanks.

These tanks, strategically placed along the forest fringe line in natural ravines, capture surface run-off from January to May, and the harvested water is utilized for agricultural demand beyond July, particularly for peak paddy irrigation. The implementation of this initiative has had minimal impact on the local environment, as it does not involve the diversion of existing water courses. Instead, it aids in ground water recharge, soil conservation, flood management, and fisheries development. With 150 operational tanks in the district, farmers now have access to water for agriculture in previously water-deficit areas at a low cost, improving agricultural prospects and resilience in the region (Aspirational Districts: Unlocking Potential, 2018). These examples of innovative practices in different aspirational districts demonstrate the potential of localized solutions to address unique challenges and promote sustainable development.



EDUCATION

Several innovative practices have been implemented under the Aspirational Districts Programme, furthering its progress and contributing to positive changes in education and development indicators.

In Dwarappudi and Mugada, Vizianagaram Mandal, Andhra Pradesh, the ChittiGuruvulu education program tackled adult illiteracy through functional literacy.

High school students took on the responsibility of teaching illiterate adults, achieving 100% literacy in Dwarappudi and subsequently extending the program to the entire Mandal (Aspirational Districts: Unlocking Potential, 2018). This initiative not only improved literacy rates but also had positive effects on health, infrastructure, and sanitation, making the village digitally literate and cashless.

The Piramal Foundation implemented a comprehensive approach in Chitrakoot district, Uttar Pradesh, to increase school enrollment and reduce dropout rates.

The initiative involved engaging all key stakeholders, including district officials, people's representatives, and on-ground staff, to mobilize the community for enrollment. Various activities such as rallies, plays, and awareness campaigns were used to encourage enrollment and reduce absenteeism. The strategy also leveraged existing poverty alleviation schemes to reach the most marginalized areas. As a result, the district witnessed a positive trend in enrollment, with figures rising from 1,33,227 in 2016 to 1,38,606 in 2018.



Additionally, the district achieved a 100% transition rate from class 5 to 6, effectively reversing dropout rates (Stories of Change: From Aspirational Districts, 2022).

In remote districts of Bihar, absenteeism in schools is a significant problem due to various factors like the need to work and lack of awareness about the importance of education. To address this issue, the Building as a Learning Aid (BaLA) initiative was launched to create an engaging and stimulating learning environment. The entire physical structure of the school, both inside and outside spaces, was utilized as a learning aid. BaLA adopts a human-centered design approach to make learning fun and easy for children, maximizing the educational value of the built space. The initiative has been implemented in several schools in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, resulting in a significant reduction in absenteeism rates, as children are drawn to schools that offer a joyful and activity-oriented learning experience (Stories of Change: From Aspirational Districts, 2022).

In Darrang district, Assam, an innovative school adoption initiative engaged college teachers as mentors for schools, providing academic assistance and support plans.

This led to improved attendance, better student participation, and increased conceptual clarity in subjects. The Samagrah Sikhsha Abhiyan in Jammu and Kashmir focused on community participation in school management, resulting in increased enrollment and improved infrastructure in schools (Best practices in Social Sector: A Compendium , 2023). These examples showcase the power of localized and innovative approaches in driving positive change in aspirational districts, highlighting the importance of tailored solutions and community involvement in achieving Sustainable Development Goals.





HEALTH & NUTRITION

In the aspirational district of Rajgarh, Mission Sanjeevani was launched to tackle the pressing issue of malnutrition, which was identified as a major hindrance to progress in the region.

The primary objective of this mission was to eliminate malnutrition and break the vicious cycle of malnourishment among children. To achieve this goal, the initiative involved several critical steps.

Firstly, extensive training was provided to Anganwadi workers and helpers to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to address malnutrition effectively. Additionally, malnourished children were identified and given personal attention, along with financial support for a period of three months. To ensure proper nutrition, children were provided with four meals a day, carefully designed to meet their nutritional requirements.

The initiative also included massages using ayurvedic oil for children, along with the provision of iron syrup to children aged 6 months to 6 years. To

ensure overall health, full immunization was made a priority. Moreover, the progress of each child was meticulously monitored through Sanjeevani cards, which allowed for accurate tracking of weight and grade changes.

The impact of implementing the action plan under Mission Sanjeevani was profound and evident in the significant reduction of malnourished children. In December 2017, the mission catered to 2,748 severely malnourished children and 26,489 moderately malnourished children. Within just 8 months of implementation, these numbers drastically decreased to 1,526 severely malnourished children and 10,013 moderately malnourished children. Such results signify a



successful improvement in the nutritional status of children in Rajgarh district (Best practices in Social Sector: A Compendium , 2023).

Similarly, in Jharkhand, the eSanjeevani OPD telemedicine model was introduced to provide free and accessible health consultation services to all individuals, particularly those residing in long-distance and hard-to-reach areas. This innovative system allowed for direct interaction between doctors and patients, thereby saving time and money for patients who no longer needed to travel long distances for treatment (Best practices in Social Sector: A Compendium, 2023).

The Health System Transformation Fellows (HSTFs) in Khunti played a pivotal role in ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of eSanjeevani OPD.

They conducted situational analyses, engaged various stakeholders, provided training to healthcare workers, monitored implementation, and facilitated review meetings.

While eSanjeevani OPD demonstrated promising results in providing timely and quality healthcare, it also faced some challenges. Issues such as health workers' multiple responsibilities, doctor availability, and technical difficulties required continuous attention and improvement to optimize the impact of the telemedicine system.

These innovative practices in Rajgarh and Jharkhand exemplify the power of localized and targeted approaches in addressing critical issues in aspirational districts. By involving the community, providing personalized care, and monitoring progress, these initiatives have made significant strides in improving the lives of people in these regions.



FINANCIAL INCLUSION

The introduction of behaviourally-informed SMS reminders to improve the performance of banking agents (BCs) in promoting financial inclusion was an extremely innovative initiative implemented by IDinsight across multiple aspirational districts.

These agents play a crucial role in enrolling customers for government financial schemes including Atal Pension Yojana (APY), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY). These schemes are targeted towards the unbanked rural population. However, the agents face challenges like poor management, heavy workload, and inadequate compensation, hindering their efforts to reach out to more beneficiaries. The SMS reminders were framed based on behaviour principles like supervision, prosocial behavior, and incentive framing. The reminders acted as both reminders and reinforcers, encouraging agents to educate customers about financial products and assist them in the enrolment process. This approach proved effective in motivating agents to overcome on-ground challenges and promote financial inclusion among rural communities (Best practices in Social Sector: A Compendium , 2023).

In Pakur, Jharkhand, the Sakhi Mandal program has played a vital role in addressing the challenges faced by residents in accessing financial services through mainstream banking systems.

To overcome issues like banks' reluctance to provide credit, distant branches, and poor internet connectivity, the district administration implemented various initiatives to create an enabling environment for rural financing. This involved strengthening the Sakhi Mandal program, empowering rural women to access financial services, and opening Micro ATMs for doorstep banking services. The banking correspondent model managed by community federations was also enhanced, promoting individual account opening among members. As a result of these efforts, there has been a significant improvement in the uptake of banking services in the region. Over 50,000 members are now

availing insurance schemes, and in FY 17-18, 3,600 Sakhi Mandals were financed with a cumulative amount of ₹36 crore, a substantial increase compared to the previous 3.5 years. Additionally, there has been a notable shift towards account-based transactions, indicating a positive change in consumers' transaction behavior, moving away from cash-based transactions (Best practices in Social Sector: A Compendium , 2023). These initiatives have made significant strides in improving access to financial services and promoting financial inclusion in the regions.



SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDUGKY) in Bokaro, Jharkhand, has been instrumental in addressing the district's growth challenges by providing skill development training and formal employment opportunities to the youth.

Through collaborative efforts with community organizations, such as Sakhi Mandals, Village Organizations, and Cluster-Level Federations, the initiative has successfully trained and employed a significant number of individuals, reducing youth unemployment and positively impacting the district's overall development. As a result of these initiatives, out of the 1800 individuals identified for training, 665 have been successfully trained, and about 572 have been provided with employment opportunities. Approximately 400 of these individuals have accepted the jobs, and 225 have completed their job tenure for more than three months (Aspirational Districts: Unlocking Potential, 2018).

Project Shakti in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh, focuses on empowering women and enhancing household incomes through women-led micro-entrepreneurship.

By linking 950 SHGs and over 10,000 women to income-generating activities, and providing skill training and financial assistance, the project has significantly increased household incomes in the region (Aspirational Districts: Unlocking Potential, 2018).

YUVA Rural BPO in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh, has been established to address the lack of job opportunities for local youth. Through subsidies from DMF funds and providing residential facilities, the BPO aims to provide white-collar employment to over 1,000 youth from the region. The initiative has not only created direct jobs but also generated ancillary employment in various sectors, contributing to the economic growth of the area (Aspirational Districts: Unlocking Potential, 2018).

As these initiatives continue to evolve and expand, they serve as inspiring examples for other regions to follow, creating a ripple effect of positive change and progress throughout the nation.





16

Scaling Up Aspirations: From Aspirational Districts to Aspirational Blocks

By encouraging competitive federalism, embracing inclusivity, and decentralizing governance, the Aspirational Districts Programme forges a path towards holistic progress. To summarise the discussion in the study so far, the principles encompassing the ADP framework are:

01

COMPETITIVE FEDERALISM FOSTERING PEER LEARNING

At the core of the ADP lies the spirit of competitive federalism, fuelling peer learning among districts. By nurturing healthy competition, the programme motivates districts to excel, striving to outperform their counterparts in various developmental indicators. This fosters an environment of knowledge exchange, where successful practices are shared, replicated, and scaled to accelerate progress nationwide.

02

COORDINATION BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE GOVERNMENT

The ADP recognizes that impactful change requires active collaboration between the government and civil society. Through coordinated efforts, the programme aims to channel resources, expertise, and community-driven solutions into the development process.

03

'LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND' PRINCIPLE

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the ADP upholds the principle of 'Leave No One Behind.' By prioritizing the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations, the programme seeks to uplift the underdeveloped regions and reduce disparities between different parts of the country. This inclusive growth approach addresses the unique challenges faced by each district, tailoring solutions to meet their specific requirements.

04

REDUCING REGIONAL DISPARITIES VIA SPECIAL FOCUS ON SOCIAL PROGRESS

The ADP directs special attention to addressing social progress in disadvantaged regions. By empowering communities with better access to education, healthcare, and basic infrastructure, the program endeavours to bridge the regional disparities, fostering a more balanced and sustainable growth trajectory.

05

DECENTRALIZATION OF GOVERNANCE

One of the foundational pillars of the ADP is the decentralization of governance. By empowering local leaders, authorities, and communities, the program aims to place decision-making power closer to the people. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, enabling solutions that resonate with the unique cultural, social, and economic fabric of each district.

06

ACCELERATING PROGRESS TOWARDS SDGs BY LOCALIZING THE TARGETS

With the overarching objective of achieving SDGs, the ADP recognizes the importance of localizing the targets to expedite progress. By aligning district-level plans with the global development agenda, the programme strives to create a sustainable impact that goes beyond immediate goals.

07

CONVERGENCE OF CENTRAL AND STATE SCHEMES AND POLICIES

The ADP champions a collaborative approach, fostering convergence between central and state schemes and policies. By aligning various initiatives towards common development goals, the programme leverages collective efforts for more efficient resource allocation and implementation. This unified approach strengthens the impact of individual interventions and amplifies the overall outcome of the program.



The Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP), thus, in many ways, highlighted innovative approaches to governance. The heavy emphasis on data-driven governance under this initiative enabled the creation of an ecosystem where each entity was working towards a common goal while being aware of their specific contexts. Following the considerable success of this programme, the Aspirational Blocks Programme was launched at the second National Conference of Chief Secretaries in Delhi on the 6th and 7th of January 2023 (The Indian Express, 2023). The foundation of this programme will be the principles that the Aspirational Districts Programme encompasses. While an official document on the guidelines and structure for implementation of the Aspirational Blocks Programme is yet to be released by the government, it will certainly be greatly informed by the Aspirational Districts Programme.

For the Aspirational Blocks Programme, an inter-ministerial committee collaborated with the states to identify 500 blocks covering 28 states and four union territories. The ABP

will concentrate on tracking 15 important socioeconomic indicators (KSIs), which are divided into key sectors like health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion and skill development, basic infrastructure, and social development. These focal points were selected to promote comprehensive development in each block, enabling governments to incorporate additional state-specific KSIs to successfully address regional issues. Real-time monitoring of the KSIs and regular publication of rankings in key subject areas will encourage healthy competition among the blocks and foster data-driven governance practices (Iyer, 2023). The initiative aims to drive progress at the block level through the active involvement of states and district administrations. It focuses on improving infrastructure and last mile service delivery to promote social welfare development. Different departments will work together to bridge administrative gaps and ensure sustained development. This holistic approach is aimed at contributing to the economic development and the achievement of SDGs among the targeted blocks (Iyer, 2023).

17

Way Forward

This research attempted to explore multiple facets of the Aspirational Districts Programme. The focus was majorly on quantitatively analysing the indicator-level data using statistical methods that allow one to draw insights on two levels – fulfilment of benchmark targets at the indicator level and performance of the aspirational districts on each sector. With the programme's emphasis on data-driven governance, it was essential to examine these Key Performance Indicators across the aspirational districts. The attempt has been to identify regions and domains where more directed interventions are required. The table under each sector's Distance to Frontier analysis lists the aspirational districts where development partner organisations and the respective district administrators could increase the intensity of their efforts towards the improvement of the socio-economic indicators that the ADP targets. The study also referred to recently published Social Progress Index and Multidimensional Poverty Index to analyse the performance of the aspirational districts over other socio-economic assessments by the government. Finally, the study concluded with the documentation of best practices across the aspirational districts also highlighting the role of the ADP in localising the SDGs.

This assessment of the ADP relied on data over two time points – 2018 and 2022. A longitudinal study assessing the movement of the aspirational districts every year, accounting for fluctuations in the indicator values, could be the next step. Finally the study presents a few suggestions aimed at enabling better implementation of a programme like the ADP.



Streamlining data collection processes, adjusting data frequencies, and embracing digitalization are imperative steps to ensure real-time access to dependable data in aspirational districts.



Learning from successful peers and benchmarking progress across regions can bolster district action plans, leading to more favorable development outcomes.



Strategically optimizing development partnerships, guided by data insights, can drive targeted investments and institutionalize partner activities for comprehensive development.



Effectively utilizing data for evaluation, defining peer groups, and categorizing indicators by nature can aid in identifying areas with potential for improvement and inform future program extensions or replications.



Lastly, customized local-level interventions, such as awareness campaigns, involvement of young professionals, and collaboration with local communities, will foster better engagement and integration among stakeholders, ultimately propelling the ADP towards achieving its objectives of uplifting the most underperforming regions in the country.

18

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Appendix

List of Aspirational Districts from Champions of Change

S.No.	District	State
1	Alluri Sitharama Raju	Andhra Pradesh
2	Araria	Bihar
3	Asifabad	Telangana
4	Aurangabad	Bihar
5	Bahraich	Uttar Pradesh
6	Baksa	Assam
7	Balangir	Odisha
8	Balrampur	Uttar Pradesh
9	Banka	Bihar
10	Baramula	Jammu & Kashmir
11	Baran	Rajasthan
12	Barpeta	Assam
13	Barwani	Madhya Pradesh
14	Bastar	Chhattisgarh
15	Begusarai	Bihar
16	Bhadradri-Kothagudem	Telangana
17	Bhoopalapalli	Telangana
18	Bijapur	Chhattisgarh
19	Bokaro	Jharkhand
20	Chamba	Himachal Pradesh
21	Chandauli	Uttar Pradesh
22	Chandel	Manipur
23	Chatra	Jharkhand
24	Chhatarpur	Madhya Pradesh
25	Chitrakoot	Uttar Pradesh

S.No.	District	State
26	Dakshin Bastar Dantewada	Chhattisgarh
27	Damoh	Madhya Pradesh
28	Darrang	Assam
29	Dhalai	Tripura
30	Dhaulpur	Rajasthan
31	Dhenkanal	Odisha
32	Dhubri	Assam
33	Dohad	Gujarat
34	Dumka	Jharkhand
35	Fatehpur	Uttar Pradesh
36	Ferozpur	Punjab
37	Gadchiroli	Maharashtra
38	Gajapati	Odisha
39	Garhwa	Jharkhand
40	Gaya	Bihar
41	Giridih	Jharkhand
42	Goalpara	Assam
43	Godda	Jharkhand
44	Gumla	Jharkhand
45	Guna	Madhya Pradesh
46	Hailakandi	Assam
47	Hardwar	Uttarakhand
48	Hazaribagh	Jharkhand
49	Jaisalmer	Rajasthan
50	Jamui	Bihar
51	Kalahandi	Odisha
52	Kandhamal	Odisha
53	Karauli	Rajasthan
54	Katihar	Bihar
55	Khagaria	Bihar
56	Khammam	Telangana
57	Khandwa	Madhya Pradesh
58	Khunti	Jharkhand
59	Kiphire	Nagaland

S.No.	District	State
60	Kondagaon	Chhattisgarh
61	Koraput	Odisha
62	Korba	Chhattisgarh
63	Kupwara	Jammu & Kashmir
64	Latehar	Jharkhand
65	Lohardaga	Jharkhand
66	Mahasamund	Chhattisgarh
67	Malkangiri	Odisha
68	Mamit	Mizoram
69	Mewat	Haryana
70	Moga	Punjab
71	Muzaffarpur	Bihar
72	Nabarangapur	Odisha
73	Namsai	Arunachal Pradesh
74	Nandurbar	Maharashtra
75	Narayanpur	Chhattisgarh
76	Narmada	Gujarat
77	Nawada	Bihar
78	Nuapada	Odisha
79	Osmanabad	Maharashtra
80	Pakur	Jharkhand
81	Palamu	Jharkhand
82	Pashchimi Singhbhum	Jharkhand
83	Purbi Singhbhum	Jharkhand
84	Purnia	Bihar
85	Raichur	Karnataka
86	Rajgarh	Madhya Pradesh
87	Rajnandgaon	Chhattisgarh
88	Ramanathapuram	Tamil Nadu
89	Ramgarh	Jharkhand
90	Ranchi	Jharkhand
91	Rayagada	Odisha

92	Ribhoi	Meghalaya
93	Sahibganj	Jharkhand
94	Sheikhpura	Bihar
95	Shrawasti	Uttar Pradesh
96	Siddharthnagar	Uttar Pradesh
97	Simdega	Jharkhand
98	Singrauli	Madhya Pradesh
99	Sirohi	Rajasthan
100	Sitamarhi	Bihar
101	Sonbhadra	Uttar Pradesh
102	Soreng	Sikkim
103	Sukma	Chhattisgarh
104	Udalguri	Assam
105	Udham Singh Nagar	Uttarakhand
106	Uttar Bastar Kanker	Chhattisgarh
107	Vidisha	Madhya Pradesh
108	Virudhunagar	Tamil Nadu
109	Visakhapatnam	Andhra Pradesh
110	Vizianagaram	Andhra Pradesh
111	Washim	Maharashtra
112	Wayanad	Kerala
113	West Sikkim	Sikkim
114	Y.S.R. Kadapa	Andhra Pradesh
115	Yadgir	Karnataka



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