MICROECONOMICS of COMPETITIVENESS
AN AFFILIATE NETWORK OF HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

IFC | INSTITUTE for COMPETITIVENESS

SOCIAL PROGRESS IMPERATIVE

AN ASSESSMENT OF

ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME

Foreword By

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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 finding 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 achievement 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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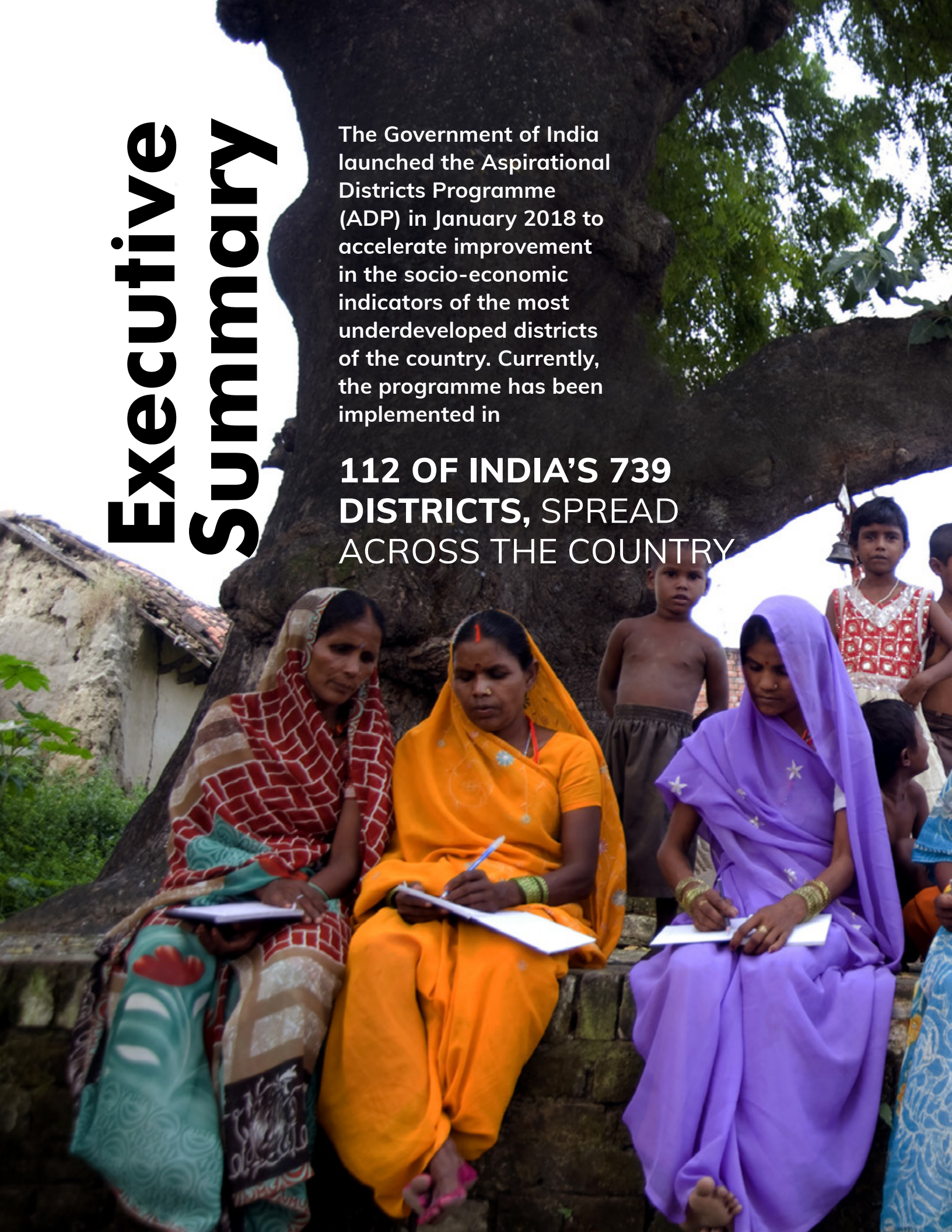
Executive Summary

The Government of India launched the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) in January 2018 to accelerate improvement in the socio-economic indicators of the most underdeveloped districts of the country. Currently, the programme has been implemented in

112 OF INDIA'S 739 DISTRICTS, SPREAD ACROSS THE COUNTRY



The ADP is a collective effort. At the Central level, NITI Aayog is anchoring the programme and individual Ministries have assumed responsibilities to drive the progress of the districts. Yet it is the state governments that are the main drivers of change. Each state has formed a committee under their respective Chief Secretaries to implement as well as track the programme. Moreover, for each district, a central Prabhari Officer of the rank of Additional Secretary/ Joint Secretary has been appointed to provide feedback and recommendations based on their local level findings.

The research in this study documents the social development outcomes in some of the most challenging regions of India. It examines institutional best practices, coordination frameworks across government bodies and other partners, and governance and leadership initiatives at the district level which can be used to replicate the success of this initiative not only in other districts of India, but also in other countries facing similar socio-economic challenges.

We find that there are several ways the project contributes to enhancing the social progress of the region.

FIRST,

by measuring the current state of various social parameters and highlighting the most pressing issues, the programme recognises that focusing solely on economic parameters will not lead to inclusive development in India. Moreover, these social challenges might hamper future economic growth as well.

SECOND,

by focusing on underdeveloped pockets of India it will help in addressing the issue of regional disparities.

THIRD,

by embedding partners within the institutional rubric of the government and encouraging them to integrate with the district administration instead of them functioning as external practitioners of development, the programme adopts a unique approach that can lead to maximum social and human development.

The assessment of the programme reveals insights that can provide direction to the programme leaders and implementing agencies about future focus areas; it can help in unlocking the full potential of the programme and can provide guidance for replicating the programme across different geographies.

01 Disparities across sectors are high

ADP COVERS 5 SECTORS:

- Health and Education are the sectors in which the districts are closest to achieving their targets. In health, the maximum distance of districts away from their targets is about 30 percent.

- Agriculture and Financial Inclusion are the main areas of concern for most aspirational districts as their average scores lie farthest away from the frontier. Most of the districts are 40-90 percent away from their targets.

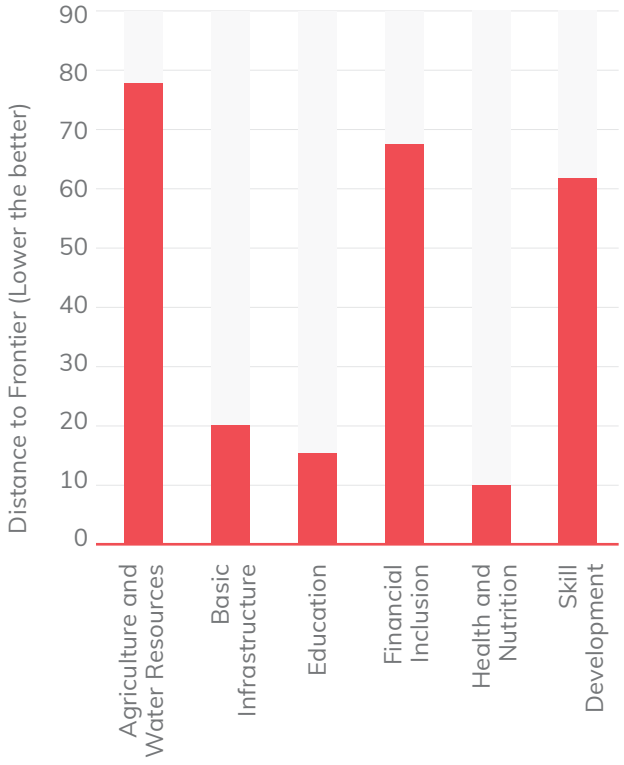


Figure 1: Average Distance to Frontier across Sectors

This analysis suggests that areas such as Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion, and Skill Development require greater attention in the ADP programme going forward.

The disparities can be also be seen by looking at a particular district. Figure 2 below shows the performance of Dahod district across sectors. It has overachieved its target in Health and Nutrition but lags behind its targets by significant margins in Agriculture and Water Resources, Skill Development and Financial Inclusion. These results suggest that there are no clear achievers or laggards across all sectors.

Basic Infrastructure
(Electricity, internet, roads, latrines, water, CSCs, and pucca houses

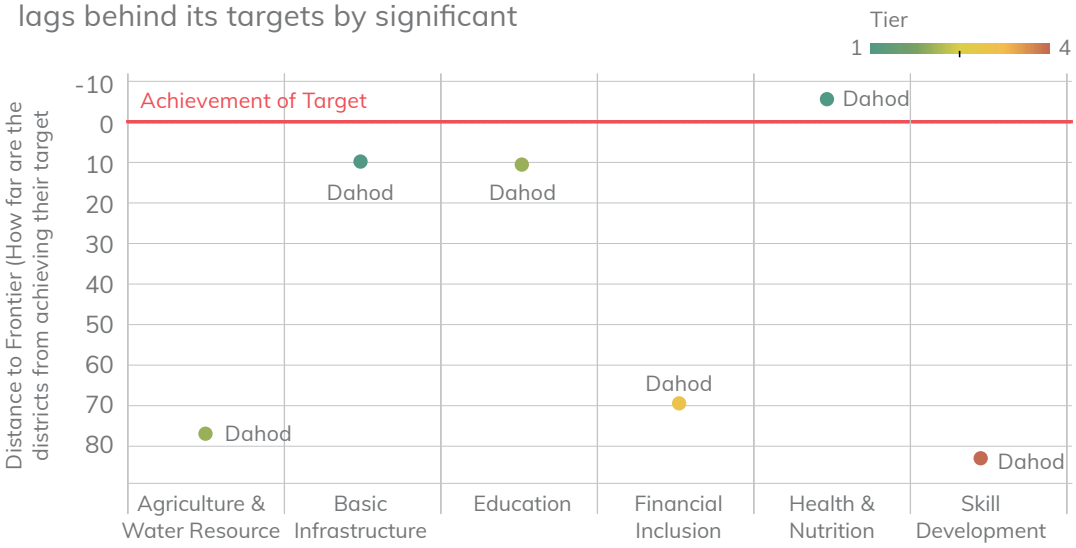


Figure 2. Disparities in the performance of Dahod across Sectors

02 Concrete best practices are emerging from the programme

Three key areas of best practice have emerged from the ADP programme:

a) Awareness: several districts have used awareness campaigns to reach out to populations which have been detached from the development process. Awareness raising campaigns help create a common platform for engagement, thereby helping with the integration of actors and beneficiaries.

b) Collaboration: ADP incentivises collaboration between tiers and agencies of government and with the private and civil society sectors. By leveraging assets and networks in a collective effort, ADP enhances the outreach capacity of the district administration in integrating the population.

c) Data-based interventions: the use of data to measure impact, locate nodes for improvement, as well as to identify policies and interventions that are driving the most change is critical to the success of ADP.

03 ADP is generating economic as well as social impact

This study also sheds light on the economic benefits that the country can derive by addressing social challenges. In Health and Nutrition, for example, the economic impact of reducing Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) among children is felt through the effects on productivity and lifetime learning. The overall economic impact for all the states (only looking at Aspirational Districts) of reducing SAM is estimated to be a mammoth

1.43 LAKH CR.

Similarly, the impact of providing household latrines is around

INR 400 CR.

These economic benefits can provide a strong rationale for the government in investing in programmes directed towards social benefits.

04 Streamlining data collection and ensuring effective feedback loop to update programmes based on relevant data insights is critical

There is significant diversity among the districts covered by ADP. The indicators of the programme also range from inputs through to outcomes. This suggests two opportunities to enhance data collection and analysis:

a) Survey methods should be adjusted to reflect the fact that not all ADP indicators show change at similar frequency. Output and outcome indicators that show change over the long-run should be assessed on an annual basis, while short-run input indicators can continue to be assessed on a quarterly basis. This would also improve survey reliability. Moreover, it would help ADP leaders to streamline the chosen group of indicators that form the basis of competition among the aspirational districts. For example, indicators like percentage of pregnant women taking nutrition and those having severe anaemia treated are heavily correlated (0.89); it would be ideal to resolve such duplication of assessment.

b) The study shows that districts that are at different levels progress at different rates. For example, districts at a lower level that are catching up will be able to progress faster than the most advanced districts. Therefore, it is suggested that districts are divided into peer groups based on their level of development, to facilitate relevant lesson sharing.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

3Cs	Convergence, Collaboration and Competition
AD	Aspirational District
ADP	Aspirational District Programme
APY	Atal Pension Yojana
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
CAG	Comptroller and Auditor General
CRC	Citizens' Report Cards
DALY	Death-Adjusted Life Year
DBT	Direct Benefit Transfer
DCs	District Collectors
DDU-GKY	Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana
DFIC	District Financial Inclusion Co-ordinator
DMs	District Magistrates
DTF	Distance to Frontier
EIA	Environment Impact Assessment
HMIS	Health Management Information System
HWCs	Health and Wellness Centres
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Service
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IFC	Institute for Competitiveness
IHHL	Individual Household Latrines
LDM	Lead District Manager
LWE	Left Wing Extremism
MAM	Moderate Acute Malnutrition

MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
NRDWP	National Rural Drinking Water Programme
PHCs	Public Health Centres
PMGSY	Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana
PMJDY	Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana
PMJJBY	Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana
PMKVY	Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana
PMSBY	Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
RFD	Results-Framework Document
RTE	Right to Education Act
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SAUBHAGYA	Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMCs	School Management Committees
TB	Tuberculosis
UDISE	Unified District Information System for Education

Introduction

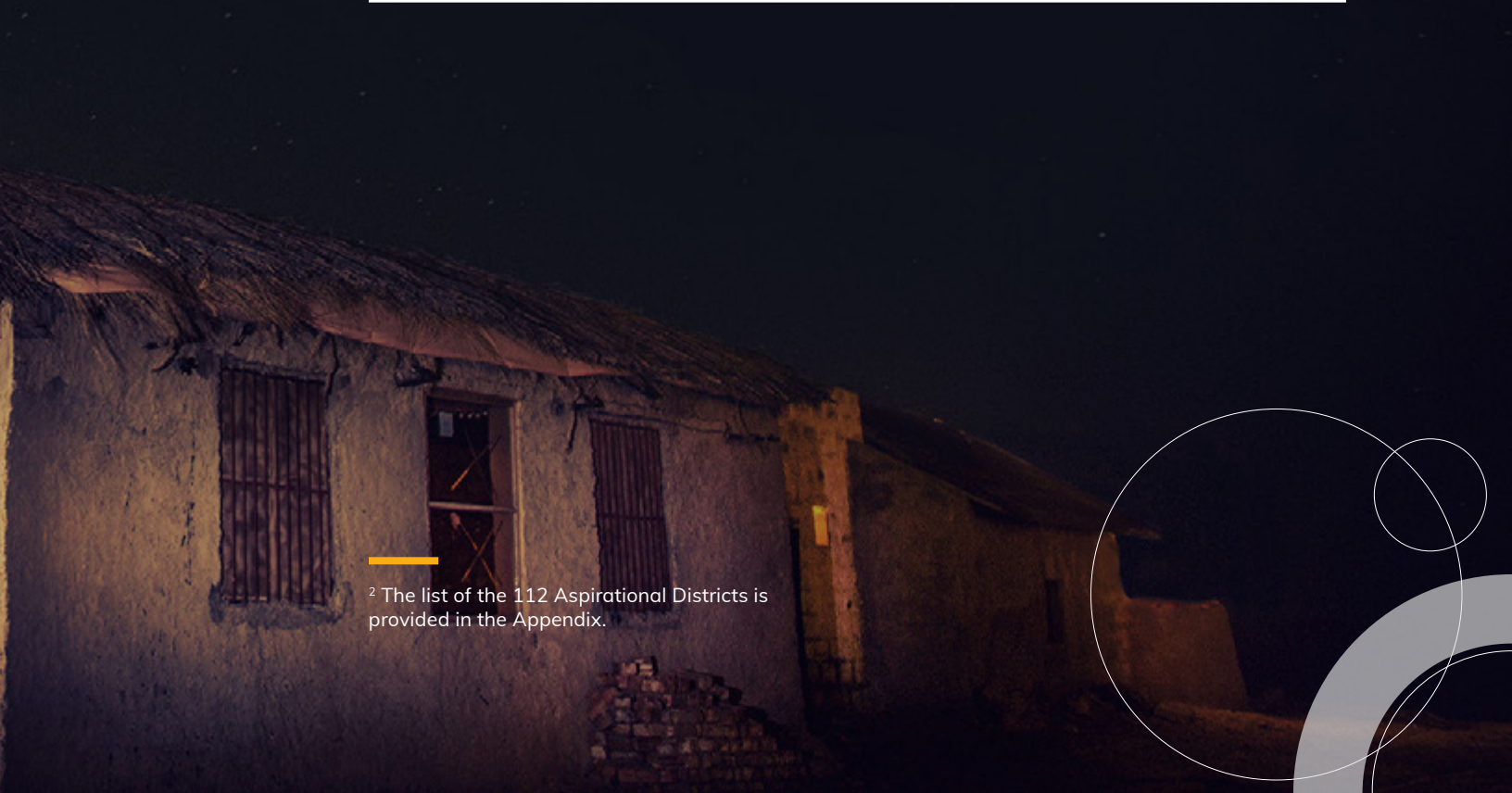
On several counts, India can be mistaken for a continent. Most notably these include the size of the land and the diversity of her people. Upon taking a closer look, such characteristics become evident in more granular aspects as well. The vast disparities in regional development across Indian states that stand at different stages of economic and social development is one such glaring trend that showcases its curious heterogeneity.

The economic contribution of the peninsular states is higher than that of hinterland states creating a north-south divide. For instance, the population of Maharashtra is almost half as that of Uttar Pradesh but the size of its gross domestic product (GDP) is almost twice as much. The gap is also widening over time. The per capita income of the richest five states, which was 145 percent higher than that of the poorest five states at the beginning of the millennium has risen to over 400 percent in 2018-19.[1]

These trends point to the fallacy of looking at development solely through the lens of economic growth and average statistical barometers like GDP or even per capita GDP. Such averages hide the deep inequities that are prevalent in the Indian life. The realities of one corner this continent-sized nation and nation-sized states are typically very different from another corner of the landmass.

[1] Data retrieved from Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Government of India.

Clearly, India's high growth over the last few decades has been slow to reach across all geographies. In order to set this skewed path of development aright, the government has launched the 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' Programme across the most backward districts of India in January 2018. The programme effectively aims to bring in expeditious improvements in the socio-economic status of 112[2] of the most backward districts in the country, including 35 Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected regions. The idea has been to focus on the regions that have faced challenges in bettering socio-economic outcomes and in narrowing the gap on key development parameters with the rest of the country. Once the seeds of development are sown in the least developed regions of the country, the country itself will witness rapid development in a more inclusive manner. As the COVID-19 pandemic ravages across the world and its effects are felt for decades to come on the socio-economic well-being of the people, the programme can help to address the regional inequality in development gains before they exacerbate and become cemented in time.



[2] The list of the 112 Aspirational Districts is provided in the Appendix.

NEED FOR THE PROGRAMME

The Transformation of Aspirational Districts programme is driven by the following ideas that signal a shift in the approach of the government towards policy and governance:

01 Moving Beyond Economic Measures of Success

The Transformation of Aspirational Districts programme is an effort to take the conversation on development beyond the narrow domain of economic advancement. Over the years, countries have relied heavily on traditional measures of economic development like the GDP to define success. India's development has also been celebrated on being able to drive its per capita income numbers by almost four times between 1988 and 2018.

However, India has not been able to fully transform its remarkable economic success into social development. According to Social Progress Imperative, India's rank on Social Progress Index remained constant from 2014 to 2018 at 103rd position with a marginal increase of 2.1 in its score. In 2019, India was able to move up the ladder by one rank. Similarly, if one looks at HDI India was able to improve its score from 0.640 to 0.647 in 2019. However, when its discounted for inequality HDI score falls by 26.3 percent to 0.477. This fall is slightly higher than the average loss due to inequality in "Medium HDI Countries".

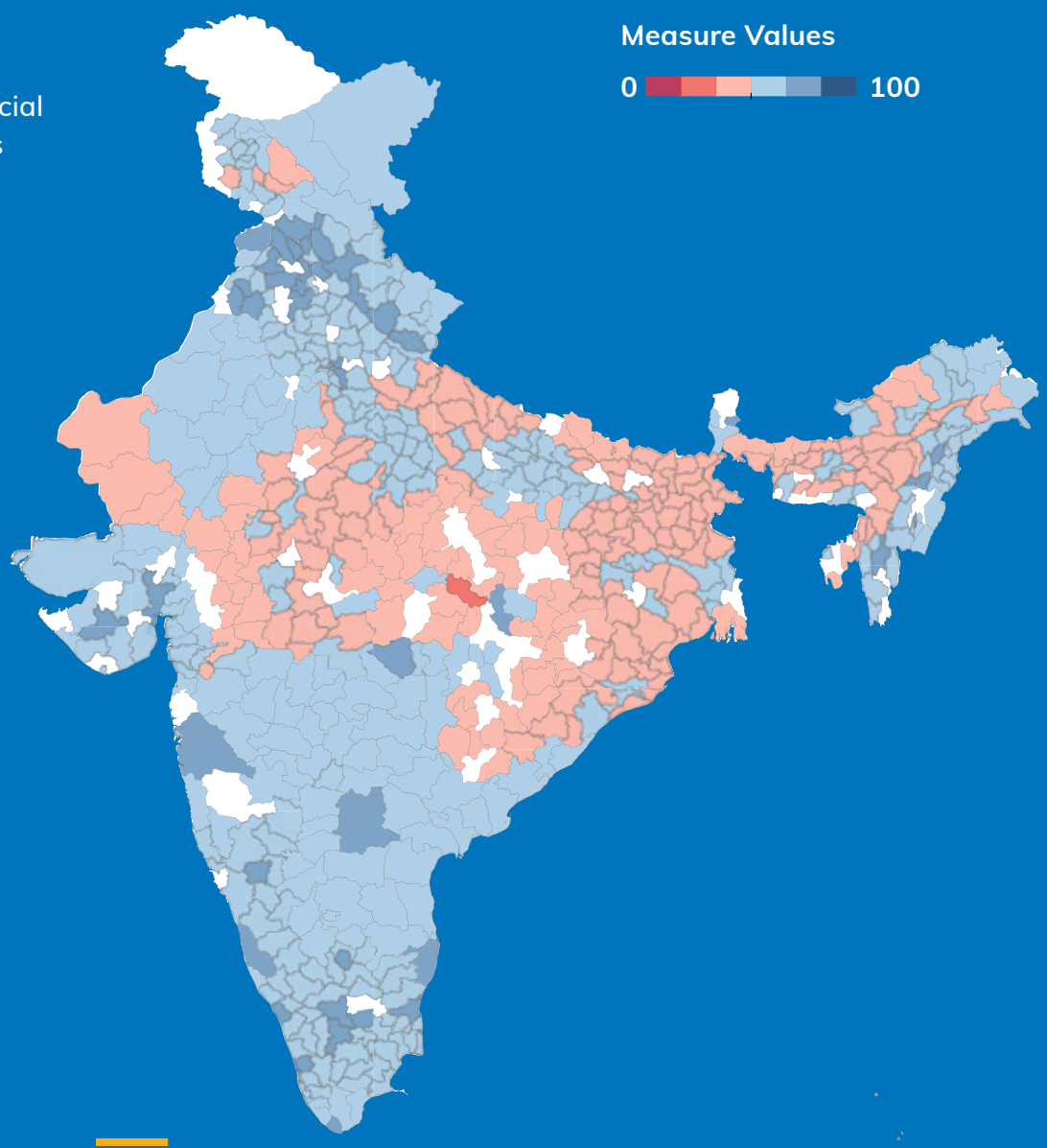
On some social parameters, India fares poorly compared to its neighbours. The infant mortality rate for India, which stands at 37.9, is not only higher than the world average but also than its low-income neighbors Nepal and Bangladesh. A baby born is India is nearly 1.2 times as likely to die during the first year of life as one born in Nepal. These social challenges might hamper India's economic growth in future as well. For instance, an unhealthy workforce would mean that the country is less productive compared to other nations. It is therefore important that we focus on social parameters along with traditional measures of progress.

THEREFORE, EVEN THOUGH ECONOMIC MEASURES ARE USEFUL GUIDES OF PROGRESS, THEY DO NOT ADEQUATELY REFLECT THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE PEOPLE. THE TRANSFORMATION OF ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME MAKES AN ATTEMPT TO ADDRESS THIS SHORTCOMING BY MONITORING PERFORMANCE ON THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS THAT DEFINE A GOOD SOCIETY LIKE HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE.

02 Enabling Equitable Regional Development

India is well known for its diversity. It presents endless varieties of physical features, cultural patterns, religions, languages etc. However, this diversity is not only limited to the physical characteristics of the country but is also highlighted in the development parameters. For instance, the maternal mortality ratio is 46 per 1,00,000 live births in Kerala vs 237 per 1,00,00 live births in Assam[3].

Figure 1: District Level Social Progress Index



[3] Data retrieved from NITI Aayog, Government of India.

This disparity does not only exist across states but percolates down to the lowest level of geographies. A recent Lancet study showed that among the 723 districts of India in 2017, the prevalence of stunting ranged from 16.4 percent to 62.8 percent, wasting ranged from 5.5 percent to 30 percent, and underweight children ranged from 11 percent to 51 percent.[4] The district level social progress index (presented in Figure 1) that measures the performance of districts across 12 facets of social progress including healthcare, education, personal rights etc clearly highlights this disparity that exists within Indian districts. The scores range from 28.6 to 76.8 on a scale of 0-100. Even states with high per capita GDP such as Maharashtra have some districts in the bottom tier, implying that having a high GDP doesn't translate into high social progress.

Therefore, if India must achieve comprehensive social and human development it has to ensure that its most under-developed pockets socially progress.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME IS A SIGNIFICANT STEP TOWARDS ADDRESSING THE REGIONAL DISPARITIES ACROSS THE INDIAN LANDSCAPE.

[4] Hemalatha, R., Pandey, A., Kinyoki, D., Ramji, S., Lodha, R., Kumar, G. A., ... & Laxmaiah, A. (2020). Mapping of variations in child stunting, wasting and underweight within the states of India: The Global Burden of Disease Study 2000–2017. EClinicalMedicine, 100317.

03 Driving Change through Cooperative and Competitive Federalism

The Aspirational Districts programme is a key governance initiative that is being driven in the spirit of driving development changes through the spirit of competitive federalism among geographies. The states are the main drivers of the programme where they work with the central government to identify and target development goals for these districts. The District Magistrates are the pillars on which the programme rests. The competition among different districts motivates them to outperform their peers and also learn from in the process.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME IS DRIVEN BY A SPIRIT OF COMPETITIVE FEDERALISM TO ENCOURAGE DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHIES TO WORK TOWARDS A COMMON GOAL OF DEVELOPMENT

The objective of imbibing a spirit of competitive federalism at all levels of governance is to not just about competition but also to work in partnership with the least developed regions of the country and help them transform, which is encapsulated in the idea of cooperative federalism. The combination of competition and cooperation across different levels of geographies and governance fuels the Transformation of Aspirational Districts programme.

MOTIVE OF THE STUDY: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

The Transformation of Aspirational Districts Programme has been running for over two years across 112 districts. Over this period, the programme has generated an impact at the ground level on the set of socio-economic parameters upon which it focuses. The study is being undertaken to develop an assessment of these transformations. The broad objectives of the study are to:

1. Conduct a holistic assessment of the programme and the performance of the districts in improving the lives of citizens.

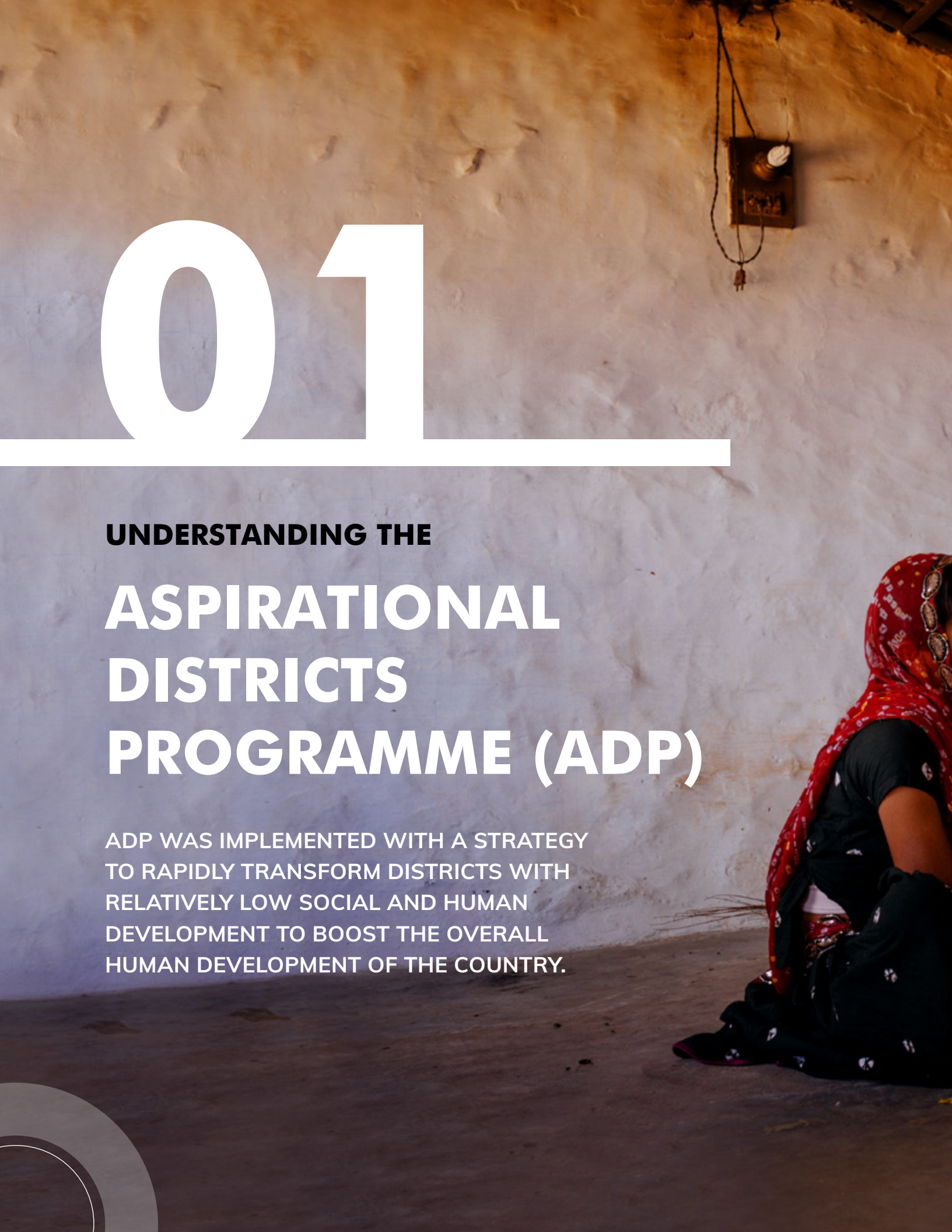
2. Assess whether the programme has accelerated the socio-economic development of these districts in comparison to their trends before the programme was implemented.

3. Documentation of the institutional best practices of the initiatives taken by the districts to draw learnings for the programme.

4. Analyse the vertical and horizontal coordination frameworks between government bodies and the partners engaged with the programme.

5. Develop actionable recommendations to enable the future transition roadmap for the initiative and help India progress towards its goals for social development.

The study will give a sense of how the aspirational districts have performed under the programme and what are the challenges and opportunities it presents moving forward. It will also provide learnings for countries that intend to replicate such interventions. Moreover, it can also help the Indian government in case the program is extended to other districts.



01

UNDERSTANDING THE

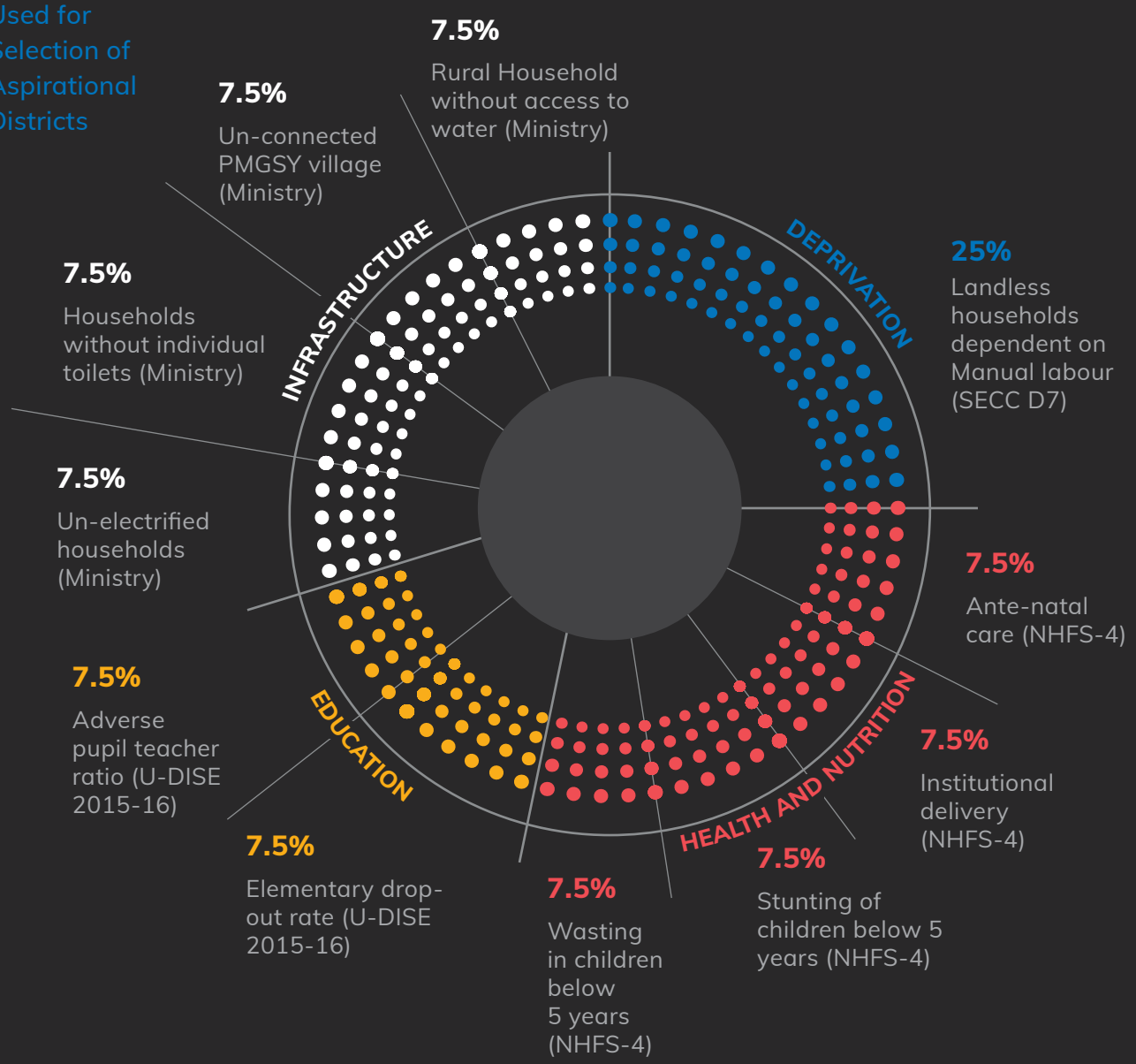
ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME (ADP)

ADP WAS IMPLEMENTED WITH A STRATEGY TO RAPIDLY TRANSFORM DISTRICTS WITH RELATIVELY LOW SOCIAL AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT TO BOOST THE OVERALL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY.

SELECTION OF THE DISTRICTS

ADP began with the selection of the least developed districts in the country. The selection of the districts was based on a composite index consisting of challenges faced by the districts in terms of the poverty of their citizens, relatively poor health and nutritional outcomes, educational status, and deficient infrastructure[5]. Table 1.1 shows the list of indicators and the weightages used to calculate the index.

Table 1.1. Framework Used for Selection of Aspirational Districts



[5] Transformation of Aspirational Districts, A New India by 2022, Page 2

The results of the index were analysed and after deliberations with all the key stakeholders, it was decided that at least one district should be included from every state keeping in line with the spirit of competitive federalism. Initially, 117 districts from 27 states and 1 Union Territory (J&K) were selected to be a part of the programme. However, five districts of West Bengal did not join the programme and now the programme comprises 112 districts from 26 states and 1 Union Territory.

THE 3C APPROACH

The programme is based on three core principles, which are encapsulated in the 3Cs Approach – Convergence (of Central and State schemes), Collaboration (among citizens and functionaries of Central & State Governments including district teams), and Competition (among districts). The 3Cs are themselves interconnected with each other. The programme aims to create a convergence between the central and state government schemes and initiatives directed towards similar policy goals by, first, improving collaboration between the civil society and the functionaries of the state and central government, including the Prabhari Officers and, second, by developing a spirit of competition among the districts using the monitoring dashboard and the monthly ranking system.

CONVERGENCE

Create convergence among State and Central Government initiatives at the district level to overcome constraints

COLLABORATION

This implies forging of cooperation between the civil society and the functionaries of Central & State Governments including district government bodies.)

COMPETITION

Promote competition among states and districts using the “Champions of Change” monitoring dashboard

BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAMME

The programme is a collective effort of the Central and State governments; however, States are the main drivers of change. The States have either formed a committee under their respective Chief Secretaries or appointed a nodal officer to implement as well as to track the programme. At the Central level, NITI Aayog is steering the implementation of this initiative. Additionally, individual Ministries have assumed responsibilities to drive the progress of the districts. The structure of the programme is classified further into:

1. For each district, a Central Prabhari Officer of the rank of Additional Secretary/ Joint Secretary, and a similar State Prabhari Officer at the level of the State Government has been nominated to create policy convergence and promote collaboration across all levels of the government.

2. An Empowered Committee which has been set up under the chairmanship of the CEO, NITI Aayog is expected to ensure convergence in schemes and address specific issues and challenges that are raised by the Prabhari Officers nominated for each district.

The structure of the programme has allowed for decentralisation that has enabled local experimentation in the selected districts based on a firm appreciation of ground realities. The local government institutions, working in collaboration with the Central and State government, are in a position to ensure that different measures are undertaken to bring in socio-economic changes at the ground level. And this greater participation of the local and state governments is an essential driver of change in the ADP.

The structure of the programme is reflective of cooperative federalism, wherein the local, state and the central governments are working together to attain growth at a micro-level. The idea being that the programme aspires to harness the uniqueness of each district in terms of the strengths they possess as well as the challenges they face to enhance better human development for its citizens through competition, convergence, and collaboration.

THE PROGRAMME METRICS

ADP focuses on five main themes – Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure. These five identified thematic areas are further broken down into 49 indicators. The distribution of these indicators is shown in Figure 1.1.

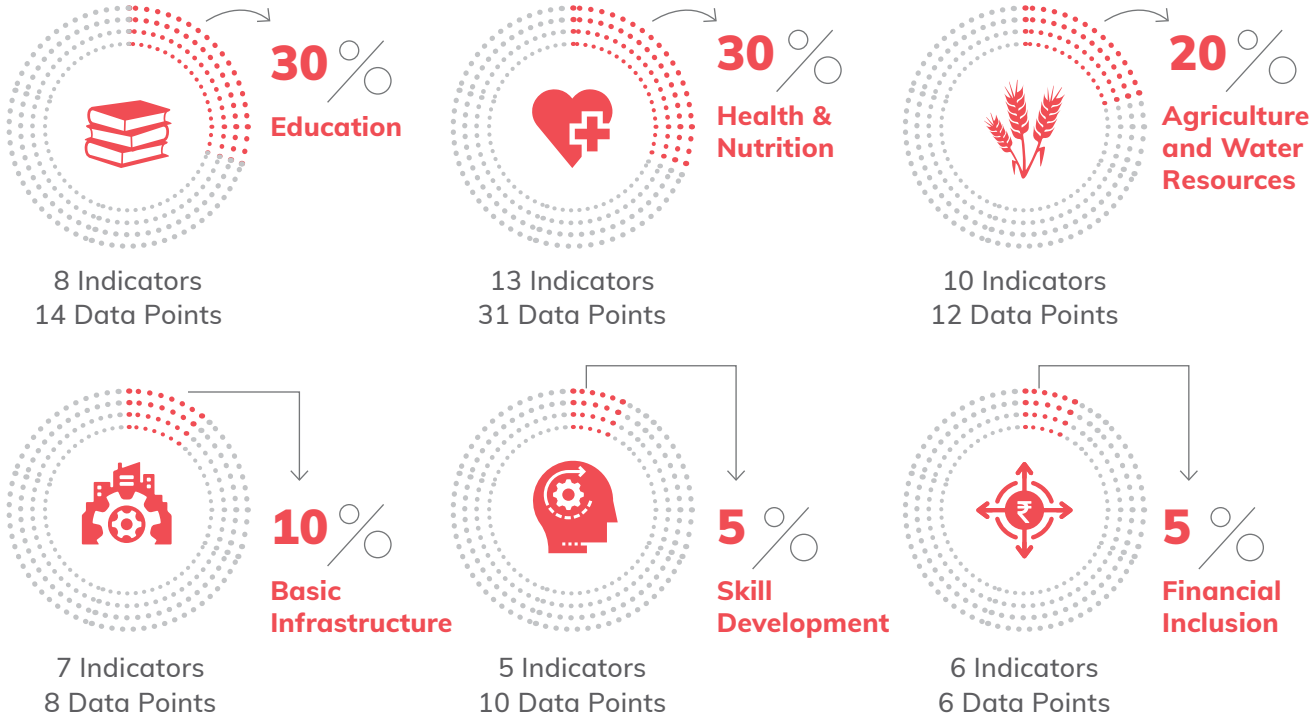
The reason why the programme includes these particular themes is that they directly impact the quality of life as well as the economic productivity of citizens. The salient feature of this programme is that NITI Aayog in collaboration with the Planning Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh has created an accessible dashboard, where 81 data-points are tracked regularly.

Aspirational Districts Programme Focus Areas

Figure 1.1. The Key Focus Areas of ADP

ADP MONITORS 81 DATA POINTS FOR 49 INDICATORS

Monitoring Indicators



Broadly, dashboards are expected to display data integrated from multiple sources and exhibit the same in an easy-to-comprehend manner. This allows any individual to understand complex information in less time than it would take to read through an entire report. At the same time, dashboards are self-contained in explanation. For example, in the context of ADP, the dashboard tracks key indicators with real-time visibility of how the districts are performing and the distance of them from their targets. The districts have been responsible for entering the data since April 1, 2018. It should be kept in mind that districts only fill the data for the indicators that are collected by them locally. They play no role in entering some indicators such as the ones in Financial Inclusion.

Based upon their entry, they are ranked based on progress made on a real-time basis. There are two types of ranking that emerge from this database:

- **DELTA-RANKING – WHICH CAPTURES THE CHANGE IN DISTRICT RANKINGS OVER TIME AND ARE SHOWN ON THE DASHBOARD AND ARE PUBLISHED AS REGULAR REPORTS BY NITI AAYOG**

- **BASELINE RANKING – WHICH CAPTURES THE DISTRICT PERFORMANCE COMPARED TO THE BASELINE YEAR AND WAS PUBLISHED AS A COMPREHENSIVE REPORT BY NITI AAYOG.**

The dynamic system of ranking acts as a tool that is enabling the districts to identify indicator specific challenges and help them to immediately take corrective measures. The entire process of an incremental ranking system is expected to inculcate a sense of positive competition among the districts in their endeavour to not only become the best within their state but also within the nation. This is an endeavour to create an atmosphere of competitive federalism.

Furthermore, the dashboard is available to the public to monitor the progress of the aspirational districts. This is particularly important when we view it from the point of accountability as well as maintaining transparency to the public. Such efforts have been a highlight of the current administration as exemplified in the implementation of programmes like Direct Benefit Transfer and Jan Dhan-Aadhar-Mobile (JAM). The idea, which perpetuates from the ADP dashboard initiative, is that such platforms allow the public to participate in the process of governance, aside from ensuring accountability and transparency. Hence, the creation of the dashboard to track the progress of the programme as well as to disseminate data grounded in evidence has been an important step.

AT ITS CORE,ADP SEEMS TO HAVE PRIORITISED PROMOTING A CULTURE OF PRODUCING RELIABLE AND ACTIONABLE DATA POINTS AND ENSURING AN INCREASE IN THE USE OF DATA TO CLOSELY MONITOR THE PERFORMANCES OF THE DISTRICTS.

The uniqueness of the program is reflected in two ways[7]

1. The programme has effectively managed to shift the focus from outputs to outcomes, such as evaluation of socio-economic measures of malnutrition, skilling and learning, among others. An outcome-based evaluation is expected to answer essential questions such as, “What is the extent to which the programme has achieved its intended result?”, “What difference did the programme make?” and “How did the participant benefit from the programme?”. ADP provides the opportunity to assess the programme in terms of these questions because they have managed to disseminate data effectively. This leaves scope for impact evaluation to assume an important role in the context of ADP.

   The monitoring of the data has further provided an incentive to government officials to deliver results in a timely and expert manner. Performance evaluation of the programme is sure to act as a motivation to the local government officials to improve their performances.

2. The programme has managed to actively encourage collaborations with international development

[7] Hemalatha, R., Pandey, A., Kinyoki, D., Ramji, S., Lodha, R., Kumar, G. A., ... & Laxmaiah, A. (2020). Mapping of variations in child stunting, wasting and underweight within the states of India: The Global Burden of Disease Study 2000–2017. EClinicalMedicine, 100317.

organisations and civil society to create a better impact. The knowledge partner of NITI Aayog, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) in partnership with ID Insights and Tata Trusts has carried out three rounds of household surveys in all the Aspirational Districts beginning in June 2018 and covering more than 1,00,000 households. These surveys were used to validate 20 self-reported data-points and estimate nine further data-points for which district-level data is usually not readily available at regular intervals.

Each of these initiatives has been a significant step away from the existing state of affairs in governance today, or in other words, a step away from the status quo. The programme has created an opportunity to ensure sustained institutional processes of impact evaluation by easing access to data and creating the ability to accurately measure the performance of the programme. Therefore, it is critical to carefully document and to learn from the experiences of this programme. This report is an attempt towards ensuring the same.

LEVERAGING THE PARTNER ECOSYSTEM

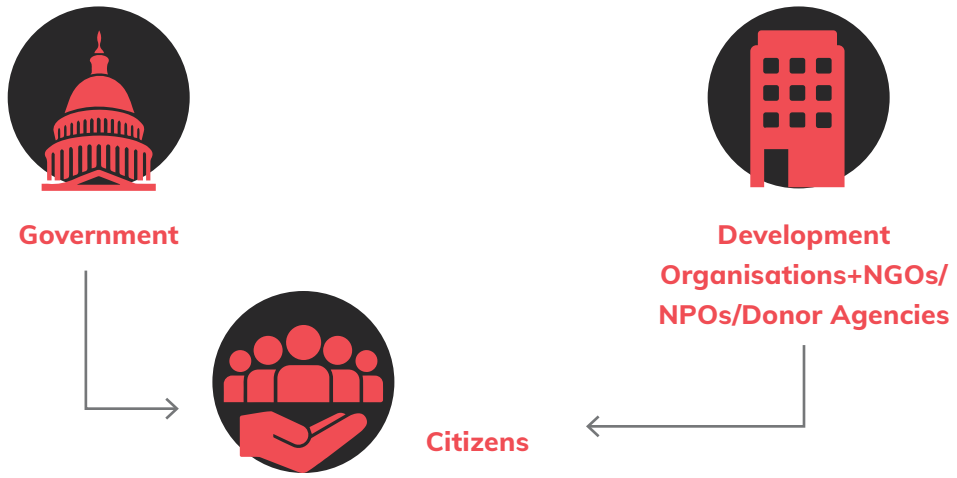
ADP, by design of its policy framework, does not recognise the development partner as an external funder or an agency that "supplements and complements" the work of the government in isolation. The development partner is predominantly identified as an external knowledge resource integrated within the state institutions to bridge critical gaps in governance or citizen service delivery that may arise owing to niche and/or structural challenges that are prominent in some of the most under-developed regions of the country. The partners are expected to improve the quality of governance at the grassroots and also to augment the capacity of the district administration to deliver citizen services by overcoming any structural challenges prevalent in the district. This is achieved either by creating capacity in personnel (such as partner initiatives to training government officials) or by creating innovative policy interventions in collaboration with the district administration (such as establishing community kitchens to improve access to nutrition for children in a predominantly tribal district of Maharashtra).

ADP Approach to Partner Ecosystem

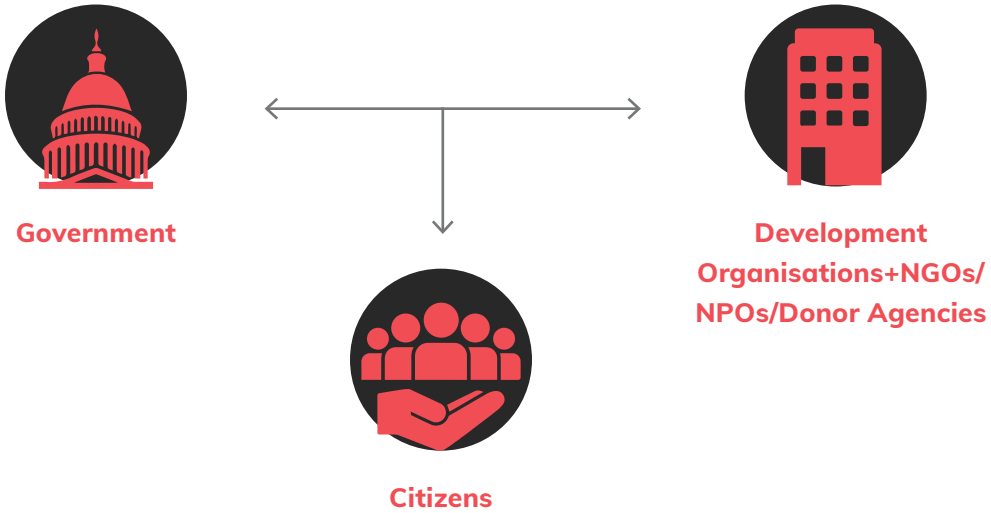
Figure 1.2. Aspirational Districts Programme has been able to effectively integrate the development partners within the institutional rubric of the government.

UNLIKE TRADITIONAL PARTNER ENGAGEMENT APPROACHES, THE GOVT HAS INTEGRATED PARTNERS INTO THE ADP FRAMEWORK

Traditional Engagement of Development Partners



Partner Ecosystem under ADP



Under the Aspirational District Programme, the development organisations and NGOs/NPOs have been embedded within the institutional apparatus of the government to:

1. Bridge the critical knowledge and resource gaps to expand the scale and scope of citizen services through convergence and collaboration;
2. To facilitate open performance management by validating the achieved social outcomes; and
3. Promote policy innovation at the grassroots to overcome niche challenges in districts that leads to exclusion of citizens from public services.

In the initial phase, the perceived role of development partners was primarily restricted to the 3rd C of the 3C model under ADP. They were expected to collaborate with the respective district administrators to promote efficiency and innovation in public service delivery systems, as indicated by one of the stakeholders interviewed within the scope of this research.

The other critical role being played by the partner ecosystem relates to the aspect of data validation. The data validation partners, who conduct field surveys to check the quality of reported data under ADP, ensure performance management and accountability, which promotes “competition” amongst districts. The aspect of social audit of public policy or other government programmes is

not a new phenomenon. However, the integration of the validation partner within the policy design of a programme is a progressive policy move that is seen within this programme. Very few policies or programmes show such an integrated design feature.

Gradually, the assimilation of the partner organisations within the broader institutional framework of the programme also enabled some informal and organic connections to develop between the administration and the partners. For instance, in the interviews conducted, one partner revealed that the district administration connected with their young professionals to brainstorm on issues that are not within the direct scope of the organisation. This indicated that the partner ecosystem was also able to create informal and organic knowledge networks within the administration. These knowledge networks of young fellows or personnel present within the office of District Collectors (DCs) or District Magistrates (DMs) enable them to create innovative policy actions to overcome niche challenges by "convergence". Effectively, the partner ecosystem does not only cater to 3rd C but all the 3Cs of this programme. It drives collaboration. The data validation partners help in promoting competition. The informal knowledge networks created between the young professionals of the partner ecosystem and the district administration promotes convergence to overcome niche challenges wherever applicable.

Furthermore, the "new" knowledge brought in by the partners allows the district administration to expand its capacity in areas that were traditionally catered to by other public institutions. For instance, banking-related institutions traditionally catered to financial inclusion in any district as the DC/DM Offices did not have experts or line-officials to drive financial inclusion. The Lead District Manager (LDM) of the banks and some other institutions providing relevant microfinance services primarily did this. However, under ADP, several districts have partnered with development partners who have domain expertise in microfinance services and financial inclusion. This has enabled the district administration to expand its capacity in an area which was traditionally not within their scope but was crucial to their work as most of the citizen services and benefits are gradually coming under the framework of Direct Benefits Transfer (DBT) which makes financial inclusion critical for delivering citizen services.

To sum up, the partner ecosystem under ADP considers development partners or development organisations as external knowledge resources that help the state to bridge critical gaps. Instead

of being outside the institutional rubric of the state, this has emerged as one of the very few programmes where the development partners have been integrated within the district administration. This has led to several development partners to establish representatives working in the office of the district and block administration in an Aspirational District. Instead of supplementing and complementing the work of the government, these organisations are now actively enhancing the impact of government policy by improving governance and creating state capacity at the grassroots.

02

LITERATURE REVIEW

IMPACT EVALUATION OF PUBLIC PROGRAMMES

LITERATURE REVIEW

WHAT ARE IMPACT EVALUATIONS?

Impact evaluations measure the impact of direct participation in a programme or intervention[8] on its participants (for instance, districts in case of ADP). The role of an impact evaluation study is not only limited to quantifying the programme's impact. The study moves on to explain why they occurred (or did not), and the policy implications that arise from the evaluation. An impact evaluation does more than merely detect programme effects – it also examines the programme process, reasons for observed outcomes, and cost-effectiveness. The process of a good impact evaluation, therefore, helps to clarify the programme plans, improving communication among partners, and gathering the necessary feedback needed to improve and be accountable for programme effectiveness.

[8] Blomquist, John. 2003. Impact evaluation of social programs: a policy perspective, Washington, DC: World Bank. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/386851468140967391/Impact-evaluation-of-social-programs-a-policy-perspective

Figure 2.1:
Role of Impact
Evaluation

01

Detect Program Effects

The first and foremost objective of an impact evaluation study is to understand the effect of the government program and interventions.

02

Examine the Program Process

It also helps to clarify the program plans, improving communication among partners, and gather the necessary feedback for improvement.

03

Evaluate the reason for observed outcomes

A proper impact evaluation is supposed to include not only the quantitative estimates, of pragram impacts, but also is expected to explain why they occured, and the policy implication that arise from the evaluation

04

Evaluate cost-effectiveness

The examination of cost helps in designing future developement aimed at fostering similiar outcomes of interest.

IMPACT EVALUATION PRIMARILY SERVES TWO PURPOSES.

THE FIRST PURPOSE

is accountability to ensure that the development programmes or interventions lead to development outcomes.

THE SECOND PURPOSE

that evaluation serves is learning. This mainly aims to suggest an evidence base for choosing and designing development interventions that are likely to be effective in fostering similar outcomes of interest[9].

However, there are undoubtedly significant considerations to be taken into account before conducting an impact evaluation of a particular programme[10]. The first one involves selecting a specialised evaluator, preferably someone external to the government or any other implementing agency. This preference is to ensure objectivity and independence. Additionally, the World Bank mentions that specialised skills and expertise are necessary to conduct a quantitative impact evaluation.

The second one involves selecting an appropriate quantitative method to estimate impacts. There are two kinds of designs available for the same – experimental and non-experimental. Experimental estimates compare the outcomes of the participants with those that arise from a randomly assigned control group. The control group is otherwise eligible for the programme and similar to the participants or the treatment group but did not receive program benefits. If we were to contextualise this for ADP, it would imply taking into consideration the districts that have been selected under this programme and comparing them with a control group of districts who are eligible but did not make it to the programme. An experimental design is usually preferred on methodological grounds. This

[9] *Impact Evaluation of Development Interventions: A Practical Guide, H. White, David A. Raitzer, ADB, 2017*
[10] *Blomquist, John. 2003, Impact evaluation of social programs: A policy perspective, Washington, World Bank, http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/386851468140967391/Impact-evaluation-of-social-programs-a-policy-perspective*

minimises the effects of pre-existing differences that exist between the participants (or, the treatment group), and the comparison group that can be, otherwise, confounded with the impacts of program participation (or, selection bias). In case a random assignment is not being taken into consideration, it may still be possible to estimate impacts reliably using non-experimental methods. Multivariate regression models, matched-comparison methods, double-difference, and instrumental-variables methods can attempt to control statistically for sources of selection bias.

Most recent impact evaluations in developing countries have relied upon non-experimental methods due to cost constraints and data availability considerations. Therefore, it has become increasingly crucial to integrate qualitative methods and permit a grounded analysis of the underlying causes of outcomes. They allow a deeper understanding of the programme processes, external conditions, and individual behaviours. The methods are open-ended, relying on semi-structured interviews in an individual or group setting and on the interviewer observations.

The availability, as well as the quality of the data, is the most critical factor affecting the quality of impact evaluations. New surveys are frequently required to retrieve substantial information on programme participants, including baseline and follow-up surveys.

ROLE OF IMPACT EVALUATION IN PUBLIC PROGRAMMES:

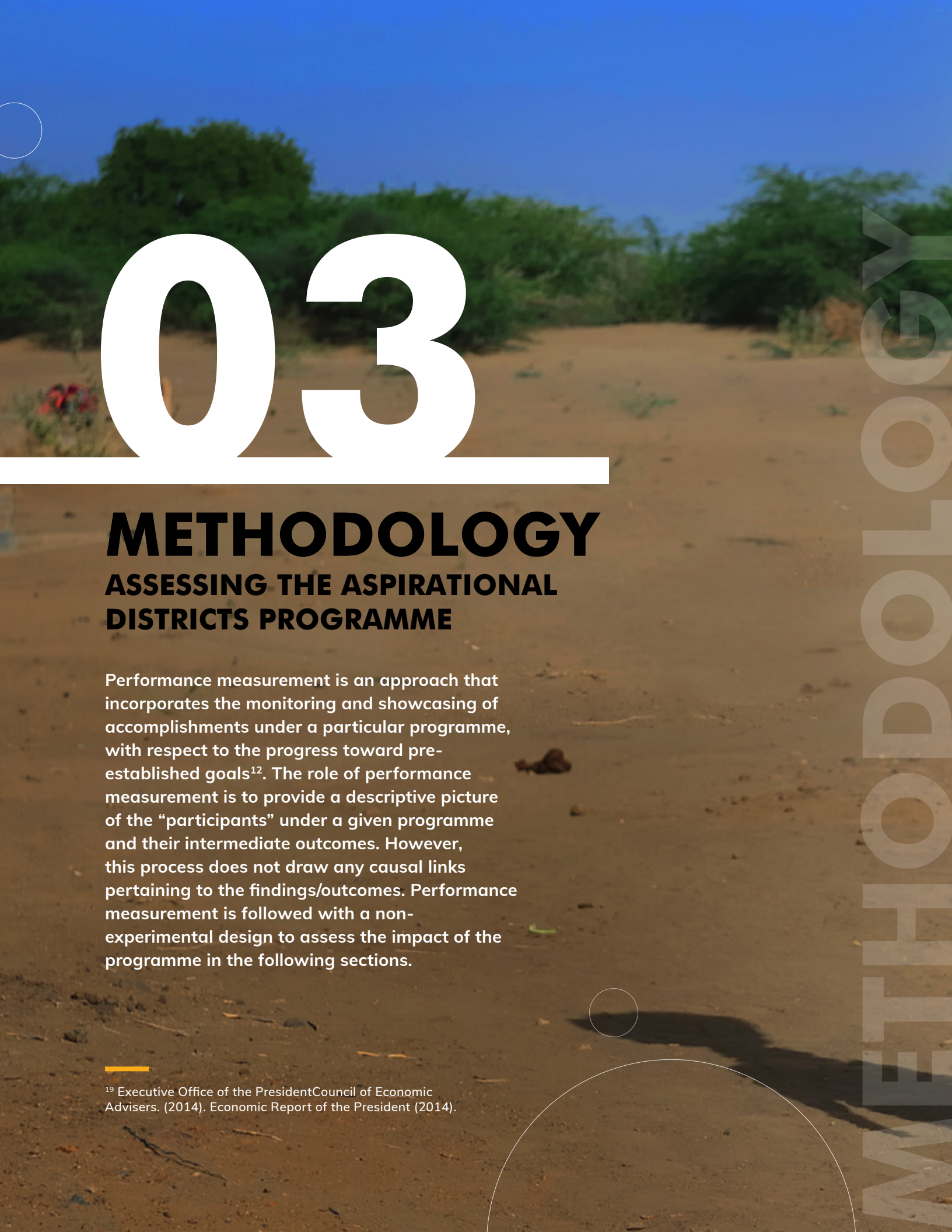
Governments around the world introduce many programs and interventions to address different developmental challenges within their countries. But, how do we know that the programme is working the way it was intended to since its conception[11]? If the interventions are not effective, and even if they are, how can they be improved upon to make them? All of this has led to a growing trend towards the better use of impact evaluation to understand and improve the practice of using the same. Evaluating government programs and interventions to understand their impact and developing the prerequisite infrastructure to support a sustained level of high-quality evaluations should, therefore, be a priority. The systematic use of evaluation may lead to solving of the problems posed by the aforementioned questions and help governments identify the challenges and scopes of their programmes.

IN GENERAL, AN IMPACT EVALUATION SEEKS TO ASK QUESTIONS AROUND THE FOLLOWING:

1. **Implementation:** Are the activities of the programme put into place as originally intended?
2. **Effectiveness:** Is the programme attaining the goals and objectives that it was intended to accomplish?
3. **Efficiency:** Are the activities of the programme being produced with optimal use of resources, which include budget as well as staff-time?
4. **Cost-Effectiveness:** Is the benefit of attaining the goals and objectives of the programme significantly higher than the cost of producing the same?
5. **Attribution:** Can the success of achieving the goals and objectives be related to the programme, or assigned to other interventions that are in place at the same time?

All of these questions are asked to document programme progress, demonstrating accountability to funders, policymakers and the civil society or identifying ways to make the programme better. It can also depict how those outcomes differ among different populations and what factors are responsible for those outcomes.

[11]"Recommended Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health Practice," B. Milstein, Scott Wetterhall, and the CDC Evaluation Working Group.



03

METHODOLOGY

ASSESSING THE ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME

Performance measurement is an approach that incorporates the monitoring and showcasing of accomplishments under a particular programme, with respect to the progress toward pre-established goals[12]. The role of performance measurement is to provide a descriptive picture of the "participants" under a given programme and their intermediate outcomes. However, this process does not draw any causal links pertaining to the findings/outcomes. Performance measurement is followed with a non-experimental design to assess the impact of the programme in the following sections.

[19] Executive Office of the PresidentCouncil of Economic Advisers. (2014). Economic Report of the President (2014).

METHODOLOGY

Performance measurement, as a concept, in most of the developed nations is attached with budgetary procedures. However, in both developed and developing economies, it has been gaining ground in the domain of public policy. There are three key reasons why such a measurement has become essential for comprehensive public management[13]:

- **To efficiently utilise limited resources,**
- **To improve the decision-making process and to reduce the information asymmetry across various levels of administration; and**
- **To promote accountability and transparency.**

[13] Delorme, P., & Chatelain, O. (2011). Policy Steering-The Role and Use of Performance Measurement Indicators. Aid Deliv. Methods Program.

Indian policymaking has also adopted such performance measuring procedures to accurately assess the progress of programmes while maintaining transparency across various tiers of stakeholders. In 2014-15 the Performance Management Division under the Cabinet Secretariat issued the notice to prepare a department-level Results-Framework Document (RFD)[14]. This document served two key purposes. The first purpose was to shift the focus of all departments from process-orientation to result-orientation. Second, to provide an objective and fair basis to appraise a department's overall performance at the end of the year.

Similar policies were also observed across other lower-rungs of policymaking. For instance, a Citizens' Report Cards (CRC) was introduced by many Municipal Councils and Ward Committees to measure the satisfaction of the concerned public group with the performance of the service providers[15]. CRC led to an open discussion on service provision and the limitations attached to it. This helped the policymakers to visualise the objectives and targets to address such challenges. It also acted as a good public accountability mechanism[16].

IN THIS STUDY, WE UTILISE THE "DISTANCE TO FRONTIER" (DTF) ANALYSIS TO CAPTURE THE PERFORMANCE OF DISTRICTS UNDER THE ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME.

Given the real-time updated data available through the Aspirational Districts dashboard and the targets set by districts at the beginning of the programme, Performance Measurement can shed light on the progress of the programme.

[14] Guidelines for Results-Framework Document (RFD) 2014-2015
[15] Nallathiga, R. (2007). Performance Measurement as a Tool for Public Accountability: A Review of Experiments with the Report Cards in Indian Cities. Indian Journal of Public Administration, 53(1), 1-20.
[16] ibid.

The distance implies the current position of an Aspirational District vis-à-vis its benchmark or the best performing district in the respective State. There are two ways prescribed under the Champions of Change Dashboard that successfully tracks the Distance to Frontier for Aspirational Districts:

BENCHMARK TARGETS

These targets intend to maximise the growth potential under each indicator for Aspirational Districts. Generally, the highest possible target for districts is 100% (i.e. completion of the desired objective under an indicator).

BEST IN STATE

The dashboard, along with depicting the district level data, also presents the annual scores for the best performing district within a particular state for each indicator. The objective of such scores is to create competition at the State, District, and even the block level.

The Distance to Frontier (DTF) is measured at the district level for all the six sectors of the Aspirational Districts Programme. For district-level assessment, the average scores are deducted from the Benchmark Targets assigned for each district.

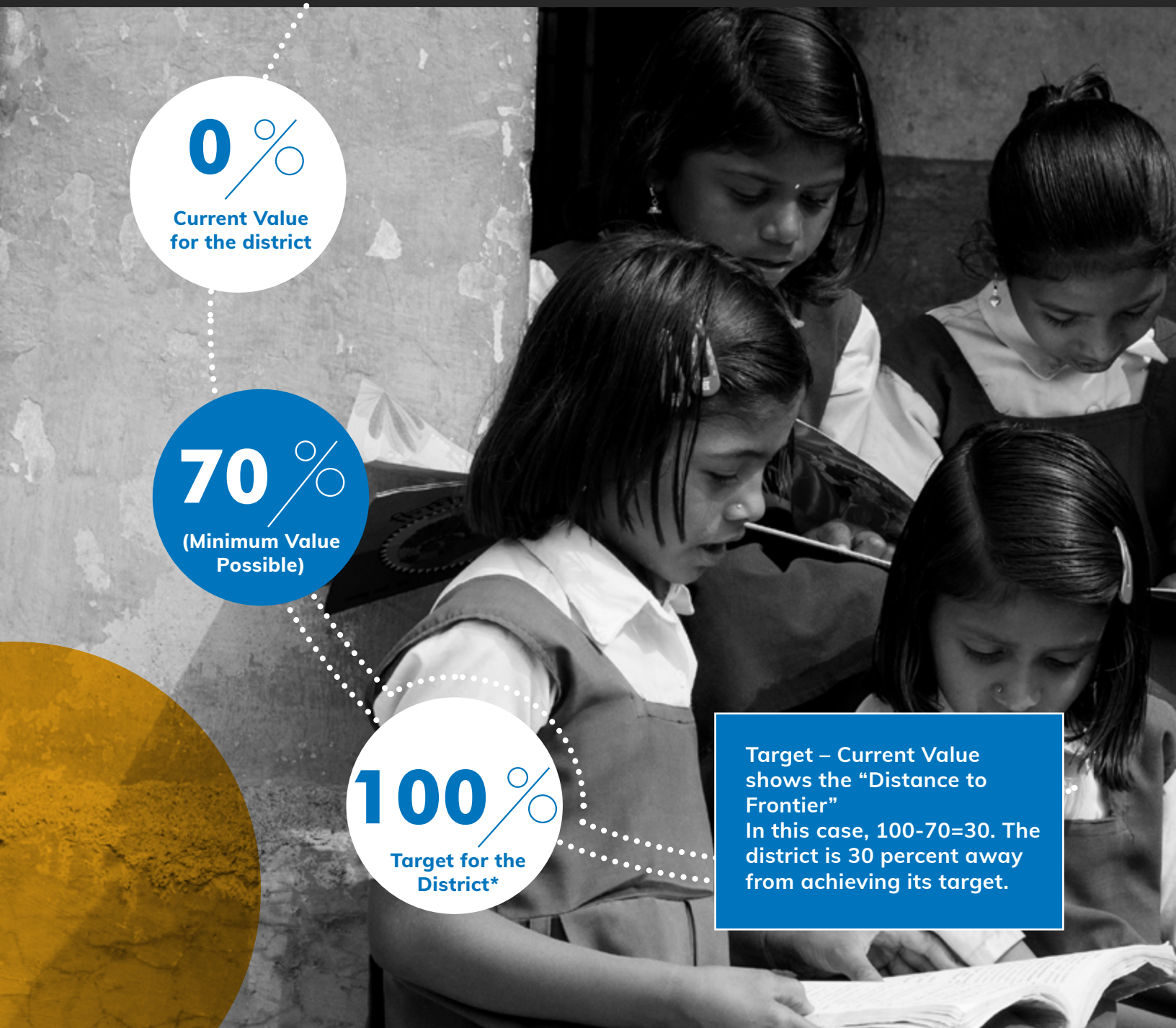
Distance to Frontier = Benchmark Target – Average Score$_{id}$

Where, i represents the indicator and d represents the district.

If the difference is zero, then the districts have achieved their respective benchmark. In other words, when the difference is zero, it means that the districts have achieved saturation in that particular indicator/sector with respect to these pre-determined targets. If the difference is positive, the districts are lagging in their targets and if the difference is negative, it implies that districts have overachieved.

The Distance to Frontier analysis shows how far are the districts from their set target. This is illustrated in the figure below for the indicator percentage of schools with separate toilet for girls. The indicator value for a district can lie anywhere between 0-100 (since it is in percentage terms).

PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS WITH SEPARATE TOILET FOR GIRLS



Distance to Frontier can take three possible values: positive, negative and zero. The box below represents the meaning of the three values by using the indicator: Transition rate from upper primary to secondary

TRANSITION RATE FROM UPPER PRIMARY TO SECONDARY

0 (Minimum Value Possible)

30 Value for District X

90 Value for District Y (Target Value Possible)

100 Value for District Z

Distance to Frontier for District X: 90-30= 60.
Implying that it is 60 units away from the target.

Distance to Frontier for District Y: 90-90= 0.
Implying that it has achieved the target.

Distance to Frontier for District Z: 90-100= -10.
Implying that has over achieved the target by 10 units.

Based on the DTF analysis, districts are divided into four tiers using quartiles. This helps in identifying the leaders and laggards across various sectors. In this study, state-level representation in the different quartiles/tiers is emphasised upon as this gives a better understanding of stronger policy convergence and collaboration in closing the gap with the benchmark targets.

The DTF analysis provides static analysis of the districts in terms of measuring their progress vis-à-vis the targets. While the results from the analysis are meaningful for drawing policy recommendations by looking at the areas where districts are lagging, they do not provide any insights about the improvements that the districts have made.

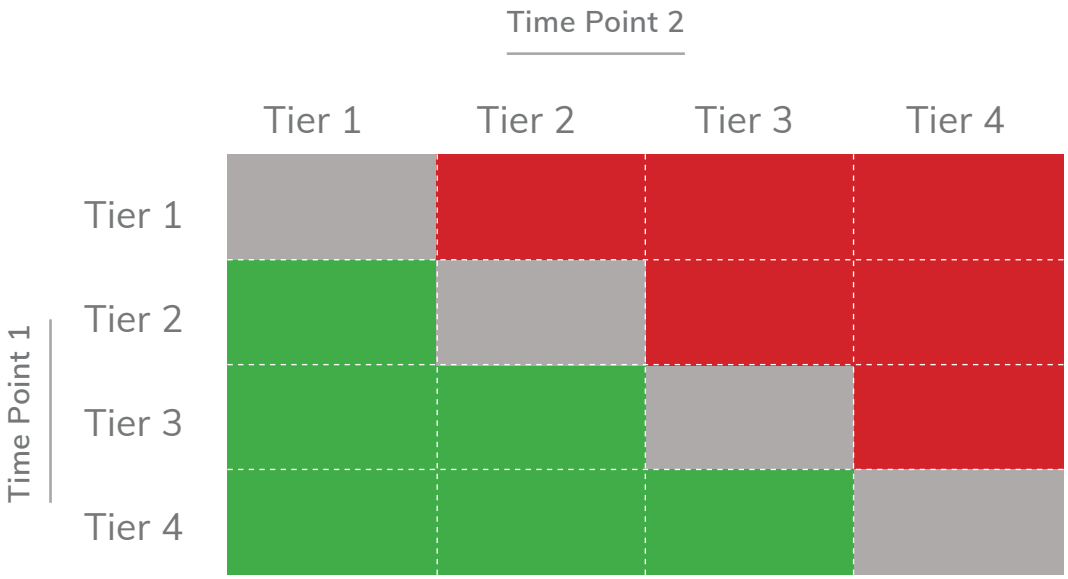
Therefore, to understand the improvements made across all the sectors in terms of progress, it is crucial to pick out two comparable time points. For this study, two specific points have been taken. The first-time point is the baseline value from the year 2018 (presented under the column "Data As on 31/03/2018" in the Champions of Change Dashboard). The second time point comes from the quarterly average for the calendar year 2019. The DTF is calculated for these two-time points and districts are divided in Tiers for both the periods.

THE RESULTS ARE PRESENTED IN THE FORM OF A "MOBILITY MATRIX".

It goes beyond the DTF analysis by taking into account the progress of the districts over time. While DTF is a static representation of the district performance, the mobility matrix represents their dynamic movement.

HOW TO READ THE MOBILITY MATRIX?

- The more the districts will be shifting from lower tiers to upper tiers between Timepoint 1 (baseline) and Time Point 2 (average for 2019); the better the improvement that has been observed in that particular pillar.
- The green portion in the figure signifies positive movement of districts from lower to higher tiers over the tested period of time.
- The portion in red will show the number of districts that have shown regressive movement with time across tiers.
- The grey cells show a lack of movement across tiers.
- Each cell will carry the number of districts.



04

RESULTS

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

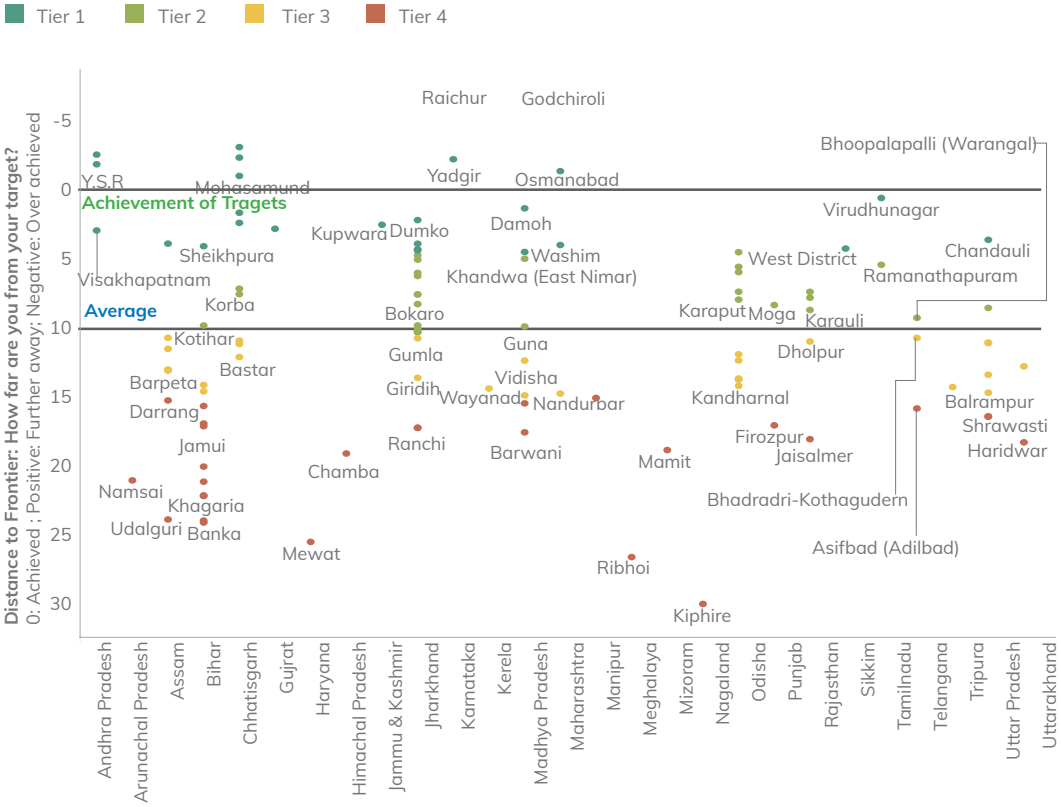
The Health and Nutrition sector covers indicators related to maternal care such as provision of antenatal care, availability of supplementary nutrition under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme etc.; aspects of childcare such as presence of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM); availability of healthcare infrastructure such as First Referral Units, anganwadis with buildings, etc. and health outcomes such as sex ratio.

In the DTF analysis, Health and Nutrition have delivered some impressive results as around 10% of districts have managed to meet their respective benchmark targets. This sets the right precedence for the rest of the districts as health is one of the most important sectors under the programme and commands 30% weightage. Hence closing the gap with their benchmark targets would reflect in the districts' enhanced monthly scores and rankings.

How to read the figure?

The dark green colour represents Tier I districts i.e. the districts that have either achieved their target (with zero value or negative) or are close to achieving it (0.5 percent away from the target).
The light green colour represents Tier II districts that mostly lie in the range of 5-10 percent, depicting that they are only 5-10 percent away from their target and a small intervention can help. Most of these districts be in Jharkhand, Odisha and Rajasthan. The yellow colour represents the Tier III districts that are 11-15 percent away from their target.
The red colour represents Tier IV districts that are 15-30 percent away from their set goals. They require immediate attention by the government.

Figure 4.1: Distance to Frontier Analysis: Health and Nutrition



The mean distance between the frontier targets and the average achievement of the districts in 2019 is only 10.23 percentage points across the sector. This is the lowest average gap across the sectors between the targets and the achievements making Health & Nutrition probably the best performing sector within the ambit of the programme.

Districts such as Dahod (Gujarat), Baramulla (Jammu and Kashmir), Gadchiroli (Maharashtra), Raichur (Karnataka), Bijapur (Karnataka), Bastar (Chhattisgarh), Yadgir (Karnataka) have been able to exceed their set targets. Bastar, Chattisgarh has been offering free health check-ups, free medicine, and free nutritious food and counselling of malnourished children under the 'Suposhit Bastar Abiyaan'. The first health and wellness centre was launched in Bijapur, Chattisgarh, and was inaugurated by the Prime Minister. Since then, 15000 health and wellness centres have been launched to facilitate comprehensive healthcare. These initiatives based on

data driven policies help in bringing significant change in the remote areas.

Andhra Pradesh (3 Aspirational Districts), Gujarat (2 Aspirational Districts), Jammu and Kashmir (2 Aspirational Districts), Karnataka (2 Aspirational Districts) and Sikkim (1 Aspirational District) have 100% representation in the first tier implying that districts have either achieved the targets or are close to achieving it. This depicts a holistic improvement in their health-related statistics.

Kiphire (Nagaland), Ribhoi (Meghalaya), Mewat (Haryana), Banka (Bihar), Udalguri (Assam) are the bottom five districts. Districts of Bihar and some of the North-East States mainly form the bottom tier. States that have 100% representation in the bottom tier (4th quartile) include Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore, there is a long way to go for them to meet their benchmark targets. On the other hand, Assam has districts in Tier I, Tier III as well as Tier IV. The bottom tier districts of Assam as well as other North-East states can draw learnings from Hailakandi (the top tier district in Assam). It has been innovative in addressing the nutrition concerns, promoting biodiversity, as well as securing education through the awareness campaign. The practice involves gifting 5 saplings (coconut, litchi, assam lemon, guava, amla) to the parents of a new born girl child. The rationale being that the fruit from the trees can be used to feed the child, which would help in building immunity and warding off malnutrition. The sale of the produce could also be invested in educating the child.

The mobility matrix shows that most of the districts (71 percent i.e. 20 out of 28) that were in the first tier during the baseline have retained their position while 29 percent of them slid down to Tier 2. Similarly, 17 out of 28 districts in the bottom tier maintained their position while 10 of them moved up one tier.

Figure 4.2: Mobility Matrix for Health and Nutrition

Baseline data	Data for 2019: Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Tier 1	20	8	0	0
Tier 2	6	12	8	2
Tier 3	2	7	10	9
Tier 4	0	1	10	17

Most of the changes have been observed within the second and the third tier. Two districts namely, Adilabad and Darrang moved down from Tier 2 to Tier 4. Both of them have moved away from achieving their targets and thus require immediate attention. On the other hand, Kupwara and Sheikhpura showed remarkable change in their health scenario and moved two tiers up.

In a nutshell, the results help us in identifying the districts that are close to achieving their targets and also highlight how the bottom tier districts can draw learning from them. These results can also be utilised by the partners to identify the districts that require engagements in the health domain. The table below shows the districts requiring interventions categorisation on the basis of scope and scale of partners.

Figure 4.3: Future Engagements in Health and Nutrition

Very High Intensity Engagements	High Intensity Engagements	Moderate Intensity Engagements	Low Intensity Engagements
Kiphire	Rajgarh	Hazaribagh	Chhatarpur
Ribhoi	Nandurbar	Garhwa	Khunti
Mewat	Balrampur	Latehar	Purbi Singhbhum
Banka	Begusarai	Guna	West District
Araria	Wayanad	Katihar	Sheikhpura

These improvements in healthcare outcomes are crucial as ill-health harms productivity and adversely effects human capital. It also impacts the job prospects of people and their lifetime earnings. To understand the repercussions, the study will analyse the economic impact arising from the diminishing rates of Severe Acute Malnutrition amongst children aged between 6 months and 6 years.

01 Indicator: Percentage of Severe Acute Malnutrition

SAM is a critical indicator to evaluate the wellbeing of a child. Improving maternal health and decreasing child mortality are heavily linked with the rates of malnutrition. Malnutrition is responsible directly or indirectly for 35% of deaths among the children aged 5 or below[17].

Therefore, ADP through its strict monitoring and evaluation nudges the districts to bring down the rates of both Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM). As per the WHO guidelines, SAM is defined by very low weight for height (subject to prescribed median and standard deviation) of a child below the age of 5 years.

India has shown a high prevalence of SAM and surprisingly, the National Family Health Survey-4 reported a higher rate of severe wasting (7.5%) compared to its previous iteration (6.4%)[18]. Such a significant rate of malnutrition amongst children has prompted a large number of studies that have tried to evaluate sample sizes across the nation. Studies from states such as Uttar Pradesh[19] and Bihar[20] have shown significantly higher rates of severe wasting amongst children.

Thus, the role of ADP becomes bigger than ever in addressing these challenges. While malnutrition can have fatal implications, it also leads to arrested mental and physical growth in the long run, which diminishes the overall productivity of the concerned person. Given SAM accounts for malnutrition amongst children aged between 6 months and 6 years; a quicker and efficient intervention could easily help in reducing these rates. WHO guidelines have also highlighted that the case-fatality rates for SAM can be reduced by 55% in hospital settings and other community measures such as provisioning of ready-to-use therapeutic foods[21] can also bring down these rates.

[17] www.who.int/nutrition/topics/malnutrition/en/
[18] IIPS, I. (2015). National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4).
[19] Singh, K., Badgaiyan, N., Ranjan, A., Dixit, H. O., Kaushik, A., Kushwaha, K. P., & Aguayo, V. M. (2014). Management of children with severe acute malnutrition: experience of Nutrition Rehabilitation Centers in Uttar Pradesh, India. Indian pediatrics, 51(1), 21-25.
[20] Burza, S., Mahajan, R., Marino, E., Sunyoto, T., Shandilya, C., Tabrez, M., ... & Mishra, K. N. (2015). Community-based management of severe acute malnutrition in India: new evidence from Bihar. The American journal of clinical nutrition, 101(4), 847-859.
[21] Briend, A., Akomo, P., Bahwere, P., De Pee, S., Dibari, F., Golden, M. H., ... & Ryan, K. (2015). Developing food supplements for moderately malnourished children: lessons learned from ready-to-use therapeutic foods. Food and nutrition bulletin, 36(1_suppl1), S53-S58.

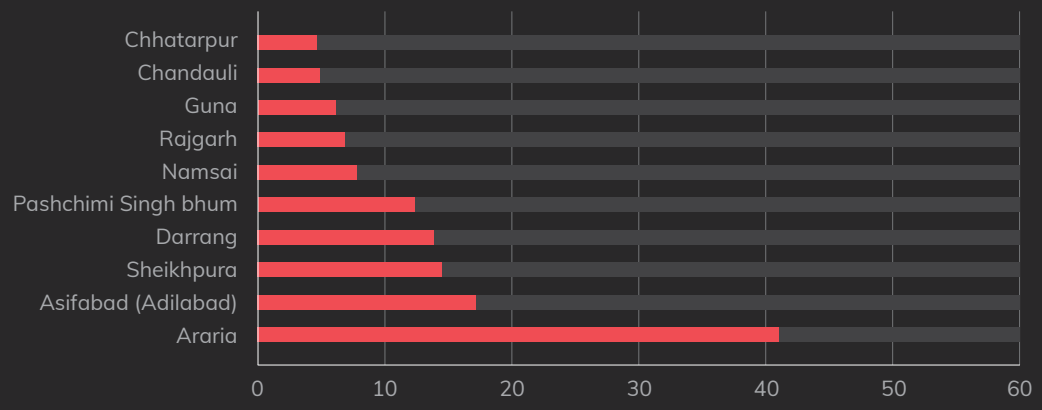
02 Impact Measured Across Aspirational Districts

Although no 'Benchmark Target' has been prescribed under the Champions of Change dashboard, it is quite clear that the districts would aim to reduce the malnutrition rates (both SAM & MAM) down to 0 per cent.

To accurately assess the performance of the districts, indicator values for the year 2019 were compared with their respective baseline values. In the last calendar year, i.e. from January 2019 to December 2019, around 58% of the districts have managed to reduce the SAM rate significantly.

Improvement in reducing SAM (%) for 2019

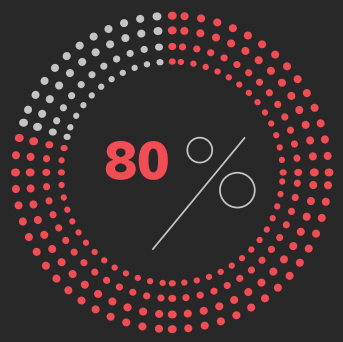
Figure 4.4: Top ten districts with the most improvement in SAM in 2019



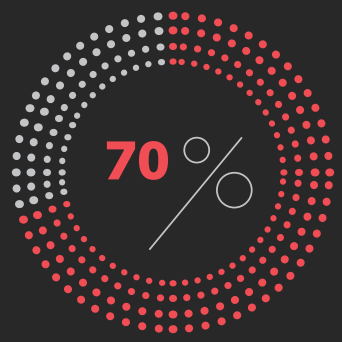
The above graph shows the long and tremendous leap these districts have taken in reducing the SAM rates since their baseline values were recorded.

ARARIA, A DISTRICT FROM BIHAR BEING THE OBVIOUS LEADER IN REDUCING SAM HAS RECORDED AN IMPRESSIVE 68% CHANGE WHEN COMPARED TO ITS CORRESPONDING BASELINE FIGURE.

The subnational-level analysis shows that many states with two or more Aspirational Districts have recorded significant positive changes since their baseline position.



Chhattisgarh



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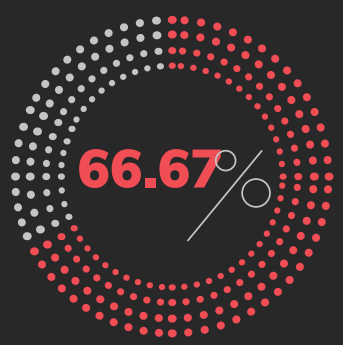
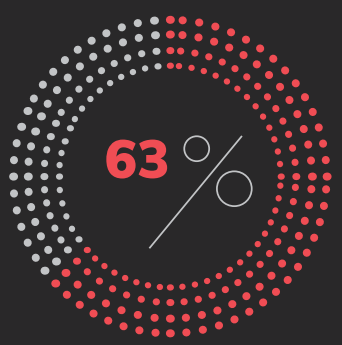


Andhra Pradesh



Jharkhand

have a healthy representation for Aspirational Districts with this positive change.

However, it is a major concern that states such as Rajasthan, Punjab & Uttarakhand have zero districts that have shown any positive change. Since their baseline values were recorded, all the districts in these states have regressed during the concerned period. Thus, a holistic approach is required in such a case, where the Anganwadi Centres (responsible for recoding the information and supplying the appropriate nutrients), district government and the state government need to focus on successful policy convergence and collaboration.

03 Illustrative Economic Impact through Health and Nutrition

To measure the economic impact, it was crucial to consider the long-term implications of SAM on children. As mentioned above, malnutrition of any form has long-lasting effects on mental and physical well-being that ultimately reduces the productivity levels of an individual. The objective of this impact evaluation is to measure the lifetime economic gains that can be made by averting any kind of disability or death pertaining to malnutrition.

While it is difficult to assign any particular value for gain in lifetime economic gains owing to lower malnutrition, policymakers across the world go for the "rule of thumb". This rule is based on valuations of health investment made by nations under specific income categories[22,23]. Therefore, for lower-income nations generally, value is quoted to be $1000/Death-Adjusted Life Year (DALY) and for middle to higher-income nations it close to $5000/DALY[24]. Therefore, the potential economic gains that can be made by reducing the rates of SAM are always going to be massive which incorporates its long-term benefits.

Another crucial factor that has been taken into account is for the loss of productivity. According to a Lancet study from India, malnutrition has a strong influence in reducing the productivity of an individual. The study suggested that a person could lose approximately 17.3 years of his healthy life due to long-term implications of malnutrition[25]. Hence, the economic impact that has been computed also measures the prevented loss in the healthy life of an individual.

The overall economic impact for all the states comes out to be a mammoth 1.43 Lakh crores. This is the impact that ensures that not only there is a significant fall in the SAM rates but it also leads towards healthy and productive lifetime earnings. The possible number of beneficiaries for such an impact was 1.2 crore children enrolled in the Anganwadi Centres across the 112 districts.

[22] Mill, A. and S. Shillcut, 2004. Communicable Disease. In B. Lomborg (ed.) Global crises, global solutions. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
[23] Stokley, N., 2004. Expert Comments. In Bjorn Lomborg (ed.) Global crises, global solutions. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
[24] Horton, S., Alderman, H., & Rivera, J. A. (2008). The challenge of hunger and malnutrition. Copenhagen Consensus, 3-4.
[25] Swaminathan, S., Hemalatha, R., Pandey, A., Kassebaum, N. J., Laxmaiah, A., Longvah, T., ... & Gupta, S. S. (2019). The burden of child and maternal malnutrition and trends in its indicators in the states of India: the Global Burden of Disease Study 1990–2017. The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health, 3(12), 855-870.

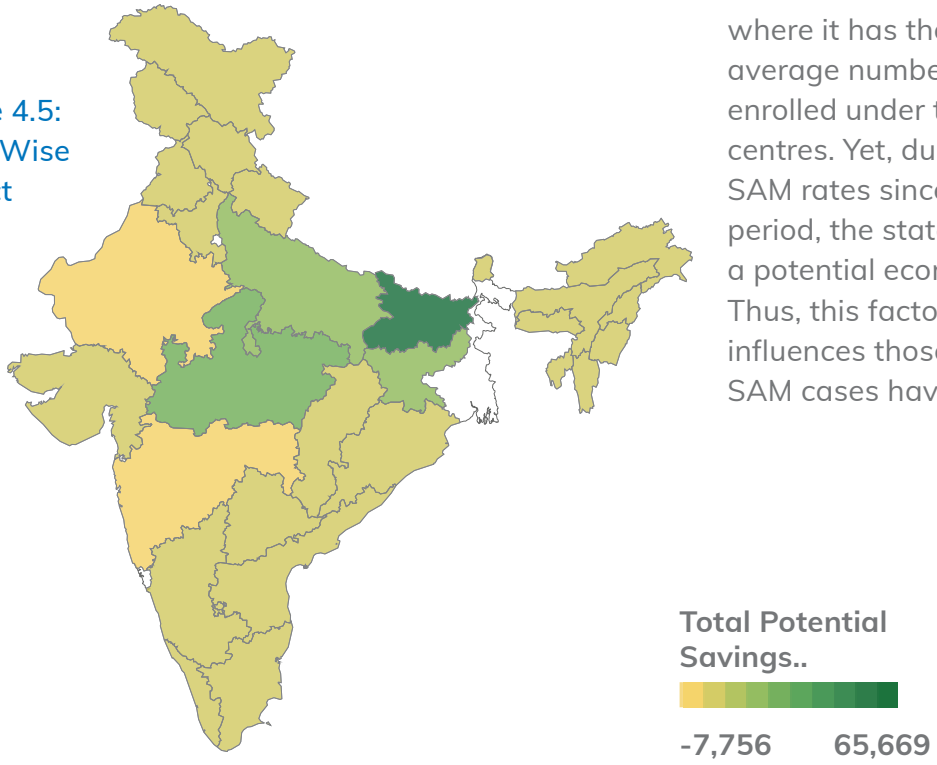
Apart from the obvious reason of percentage of prevailing SAM, other factors could influence the overall impact values for the States/ Districts:

- Number of Aspirational Districts: As seen above, those states that have more Aspirational Districts would tend to enjoy more cumulated economic gains. Thus, states such as Bihar (13 districts), Madhya Pradesh (8), UP (8) have such high numbers. Yet, there are states such as Haryana, Manipur, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh that have one Aspirational District each but also have managed to oversee a sizable reduction in SAM rates along with strong potential economic gains.

- However, it was observed that Rajasthan is an exception. The state has 5 districts yet all of them regressed in terms of the prevalence of SAM since its baseline values were recorded. This means that even if the state has more districts, its cumulative impact will be lower than those with fewer districts and those with lower prevailing SAM rates.

- Number of Children enrolled in an Anganwadi Centre: This indicator targets children aged between 6 months and 6 years, which is a big pool of possible beneficiaries. As a result, the base for computing economic impact favours those states that have more children enrolled in Anganwadi Centres. However, one interesting case can be observed in Maharashtra, where it has the fourth-highest average number of children enrolled under the Anganwadi centres. Yet, due to its regressing SAM rates since the baseline period, the state has witnessed a potential economic loss. Thus, this factor only positively influences those cases where SAM cases have been low.

Figure 4.5: State Wise Impact



The overall economic gain arising from lowering the SAM rates is so high that it should be a signal for all the stakeholders. Better coordination between Anganwadi, district and state-level stakeholders could not only prevent fatality amongst children but could potentially pave the way for them to lead a healthy and productive life.

As far as lifetime earnings are concerned, the above figure is only computed for the progress made by the districts in the year 2019 and how it compares with their baseline values. However, for better and even more accurate valuation, longitudinal studies are required which could further shed light on the nature of education received, training acquired, and the professional route taken by the beneficiaries. This could reform the way stakeholders can plan the social development of an individual by positively influencing their lifetime earnings.

EDUCATION

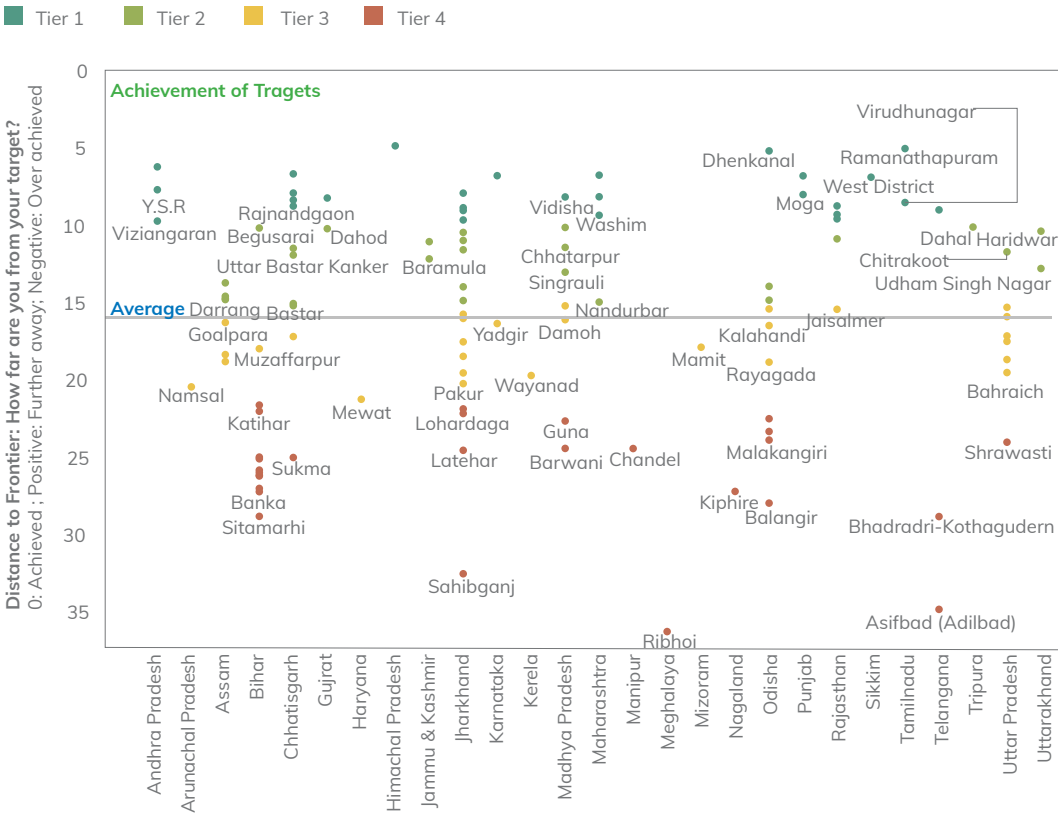
The education sector focuses on learning outcomes (transition rate from primary to upper primary, and subsequently to secondary schooling, average scores in mathematics and languages and so on) as well as infrastructural (toilet access for girls, electricity supply, drinking water, etc.) and institutional indicators (pupil-teacher ratio, timely delivery of textbooks, etc.). Considering the importance of education in enabling development, it commands a weightage of 30 percent – similar to that of health.

Unlike health, none of the districts have managed to achieve their set targets on an average in the education sector. All of the Tier 1 districts, however, were merely 5 to 10 percent away from their respective targets over the last year. The States of Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Sikkim, and Tamil Nadu have all of their districts in the top tier.

How to read the figure?

The dark green colour represents Tier I districts i.e. the districts that have either achieved their target (with zero value or negative) or are close to achieving it (0.5 percent away from the target).
The light green colour represents Tier II districts that mostly lie in the range of 5-10 percent, depicting that they are only 5-10 percent away from their target and a small intervention can help. Most of these districts be in Jharkhand, Odisha and Rajasthan. The yellow colour represents the Tier III districts that are 11-15 percent away from their target.
The red colour represents Tier IV districts that are 15-30 percent away from their set goals. They require immediate attention by the government.

Figure 4.6: Distance to Frontier Analysis: Education



The districts in this tier have been undertaking some unique interventions to improve education among the children. Rajnandgaon in Chattisgarh has ensured access to sanitation facilities for every girl child, for which toilets were installed in schools. This helped in reducing the drop-out rate of girls enrolled in government schools. Similarly, in Dantewada, Chattisgarh, the government schools adopted ICT models to boost the quality of education. Meanwhile, in Baran, Rajasthan, volunteer generation campaign was organised to strengthen student-learning outcomes in schools, and a capacity building workshop for 617 volunteers was conducted.

On average, across all aspirational districts, the DTF on education remains at 15 percent. Evidently, the distribution of districts in the bottom tier is more spread out when compared to the top three tiers.

STATES LIKE BIHAR, ODISHA, TELANGANA, MANIPUR, MEGHALAYA, AND NAGALAND HAVE SUBSTANTIAL VISIBILITY IN THE BOTTOM TIER.

But it must be noted that some of the districts that lie in this tier and are, thus, farthest from achieving their targets have been putting in considerable efforts to climb up the ladder.

Banka in Bihar has launched a programme, 'Unnayan Banka – Reinventing Education using Technology', which is an effort to leverage technology to improve the learning environment. The Prime Minister has even presented an award to the district administration for the initiative. In another instance in Sharavasti, Uttar Pradesh, School Management Committees were formed in 1289 schools for a tenure of 2 years. These SMCs with collaboration from Education Department make school development plans and look after building capacity.

One of the striking features of this sector is the intra-state outliers that emerge across some of the states. For instance, Sahibganj district in Jharkhand appears to be significantly lagging as compared to the rest of the districts in the State when it comes to performance in the domain of education. Similarly, Sukma districts in Chhattisgarh is the only district in the state that appears to be in the bottom tier while all the other districts are in the top 3 tiers of the sector. Ribhoi in Meghalaya appears to lag behind even when compared to other districts in the North East and may need critical partner support moving forward.

While the DTF analysis delineates the static position of the districts based on their averages across the last year, the mobility matrix highlights the movement of districts across tiers over time. Surprisingly, **more districts (32 over 26) have slipped to lower tiers with time on the education parameter than have improved during the same period.**

Figure 4.7: Mobility Matrix: Education

Baseline data \ Data for 2019	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Tier 1	20	7	1	0
Tier 2	5	10	12	1
Tier 3	3	6	8	11
Tier 4	0	5	7	16

However, five districts – Garhwa (Jharkhand), Hailakandi (Assam), Kupwara (Jammu & Kashmir), Rajgarh (Madhya Pradesh), and Singrauli (Madhya Pradesh) – have moved from the bottom-most tier in the baseline year to Tier-2 over the last year. A unique initiative undertaken by Singrauli to bring about such progress over this time was a four week-long attendance campaign, which resulted in a 10% increase in student attendance across three clusters.

The analysis presented here shows how the aspirational districts have performed with respect to education and the outcome seems mixed. It shows that there remains immense scope for further intervention on this front. None of the districts have been able to achieve their targets but appear to be on course to achieve/ mostly achieve them by 2022. Partner interventions in this sector can again be guided by the logic of converging scale and scope of the partner engagements and the needs of the district as highlighted in the DTF analysis. Their preferred engagements depending on the scope, scale, and the agenda of the respective partner organisation can be chosen from Table X, which is mapped to the bottom five districts from each Tier.

Figure 4.8: Future Engagements in Education

Very High Intensity Engagements	High Intensity Engagements	Moderate Intensity Engagements	Low Intensity Engagements
Ribhoi	Mewat	Bastar	Vizianagaram
Asifabad (Adilabad)	Namsai	Bijapur	Ramgarh
Sahibganj	Pakur	Nandurbar	Sirohi
Bhadradri-Kothagudem	Wayanad	Giridih	Washim
Sitamarhi	Dumka	Nuapada	Baran

FOCUSED INTERVENTIONS WITH HIGHER DEGREES OF INTENSITY ARE REQUIRED IN THE NORTH EASTERN PART OF THE COUNTRY OWING TO ITS SPECIFIC NICHE CHALLENGES. EVEN WITHIN STATES THAT ARE PERFORMING RELATIVELY WELL, DISTRICTS THAT ARE LAGGING BEHIND BY SOME DISTANCE SHOULD BE GIVEN EXTRA ATTENTION TO ENSURE THAT NO DICHOTOMIES EMERGE IN THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE UNDER THE PROGRAMME.

Some of these districts, as seen in the case of Health & Nutrition, do face niche challenges ranging from a lack of school infrastructure to extremist violence, which may impede the functioning of educational institutions in these regions reflecting the relatively poorer performance compared to other districts in the same state. Digital tools, especially mobile-based solutions, could emerge as possible measures of bridging the gap between isolated districts and the rest of the state.

Therefore, education remains a sector that can be a focal point of higher engagement by all stakeholders in the programme given its scope for improvement and its vitality for development.

FINANCIAL INCLUSION

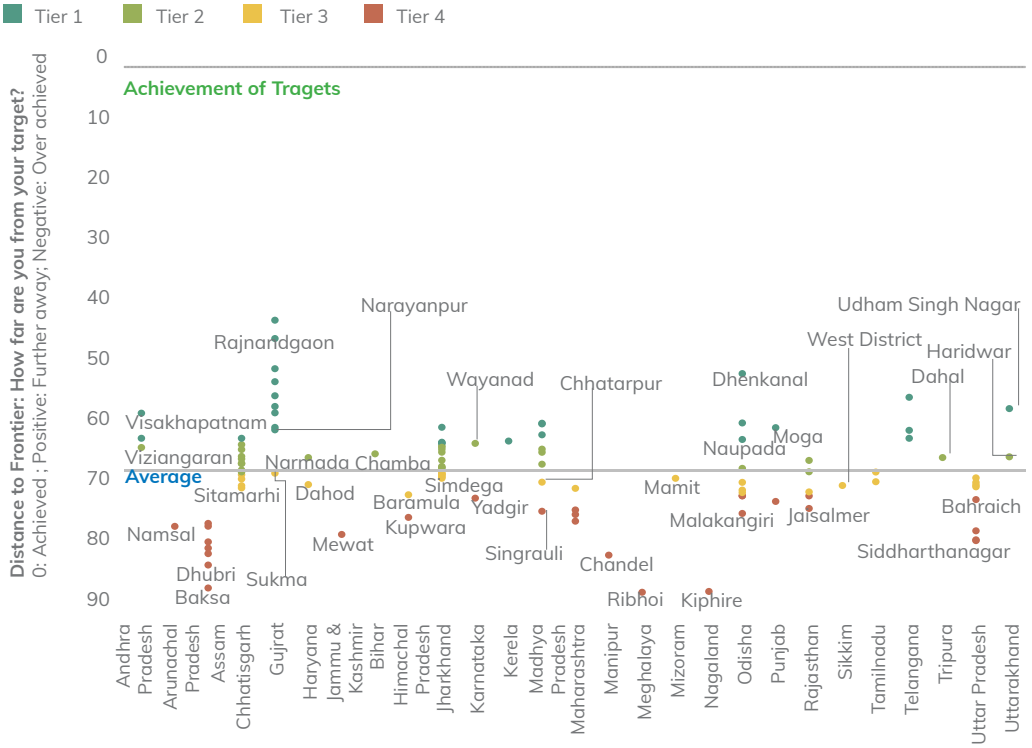
The Financial Inclusion domain covers the availability of bank accounts through government schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY); pension beneficiaries through Atal Pension Yojana; and affordable and easy access to financial loans disbursements through Mudra. It is an important area of this programme as indicators under this sector ensure the self-dependence of the beneficiaries. Having a bank account and enjoying social safety nets such as insurance and pension are crucial factors for the subsistence of normal life and thus protects the beneficiaries from potential risks.

In the DTF analysis, it is evident that the potential for improvement remains high despite the best efforts of the government over the last few years. The district closest to the target i.e. Mahasamund from Chhattisgarh is 42 percent away from achieving the goals set for the financial inclusion sector while the farthest away is Ribhoi from Meghalaya that is 87 percent away. This range (42-87 percent) within which all the districts fall reflects India still has to put in a lot of effort to climb the financial inclusion ladder.

How to read the figure?

The dark green colour represents Tier I districts i.e. the districts that have either achieved their target (with zero value or negative) or are close to achieving it (0.5 percent away from the target).
The light green colour represents Tier II districts that mostly lie in the range of 5-10 percent, depicting that they are only 5-10 percent away from their target and a small intervention can help. Most of these districts be in Jharkhand, Odisha and Rajasthan. The yellow colour represents the Tier III districts that are 11-15 percent away from their target.
The red colour represents Tier IV districts that are 15-30 percent away from their set goals. They require immediate attention by the government.

Figure 4.9: Distance to Frontier Analysis: Financial Inclusion



The two states that have shown encouraging performance relative to other regions are Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. In Andhra Pradesh, two out of three districts are in the top tier while the third one is in Tier II. In Chhattisgarh, nine out of ten are in the first tier.

The results also clearly depict disparities within states. States such as Odisha, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh have representation in almost all tiers. For instance, Dhenkanal (Odisha) is in Tier I with 50 percent distance from the target while in Malkangiri (Odisha) the distance between the target and the current value is 74 percent. Moreover, there are no states in this sector that have achieved 100% representation in the top tier.

The trend is similar to the Health and Education sectors where one can see the North Eastern states lag in comparison to the rest of the country. Topographic challenges and lack of quality internet connectivity have emerged as two main constraints in driving financial inclusion in the North East. Tripura has emerged as the only state in the North East to have its district in the top 2 tiers of the cohort.

The Mobility Matrix shows the majority of the districts in the first tier have remained in the same tier for 2019 as well. In the second tier, Yadgir (Karnataka) has worsened its performance and moved to Tier IV in 2019. During the baseline data collection, it was 58 percent away from achieving its target while in 2019 it is 71 percent away. While 21 out of 28 districts retain their position in the bottom tier, two districts, namely Nuapada (Odisha) and Bhadradri-Kothagudem (Telangana) have made a major improvement to jump to the top tier for the year 2019.

Figure 4.10: Mobility Matrix: Financial Inclusion

Baseline data \ Data for 2019	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Tier 1	20	8	1	0
Tier 2	6	14	7	1
Tier 3	0	6	16	6
Tier 4	2	5	5	21

However, there are a lot of steps being taken by the districts currently that can help them in providing access to financial services to their citizens. Sonbhadra in Uttar Pradesh organised Financial Literacy camps which resulted in 650 enrolments for PMJDY and other Social Security Schemes such as PMSBY, PMJJBY and APY from 46 villages in the district. Another step comes from Gajapati, Odisha. The district is tribal-dominated and was devastated by the cyclone Titli in October 2018. What started as challenges in transferring direct benefits to beneficiaries in remote places due to lack of bank branches, laid the foundation for opening mini banks under Odisha Livelihood Mission. To facilitate this, an MoU was signed with the State Bank of India and Utkal Grameen Bank. The banks opened mini banks in panchayats that did not have banking facilities. These mini banks also functioned as common service centres. Quick enough, 15 banks started functioning in the district, and bank accounts of 27,463 SHG members were opened, while 23000 were linked with Adhere. However, the results show that these steps are not enough, and the government will have put in a lot of other steps for enhancing the financial services in these regions.

Figure 4.11: Future Engagements in Financial Inclusion

Very High Intensity Engagements	High Intensity Engagements	Moderate Intensity Engagements	Low Intensity Engagements
Ribhoi	Baramula	Aurangabad	Khunti
Kiphire	Gajapati	Sirohi	Pakur
Baksa	Dhaulpur	Jamui	Sahibganj
Dhubri	Kandhamal	Rayagada	Wayanad
Chandel	Osmanabad	Purbi Singhbhum	Nuapada

The fact that there is only one partner – Microsave – that is currently working in the domain of Financial Inclusion, shows there is immense potential for partners to engage with the districts in this particular sector. Before the engagement of the development partner Microsave India, the district administration had no nodal officer in the domain of financial inclusion. This often meant that the district administration was heavily dependent on external banking and micro-finance institutions to drive financial inclusion and access to the credit in the districts. Under the framework of ADP, Microsave India along with NITI Aayog has been able to place District Financial Inclusion Coordinators (DFIC) at the designated districts driving the agenda of financial inclusion from within the district administration.

AGRICULTURE AND WATER RESOURCES

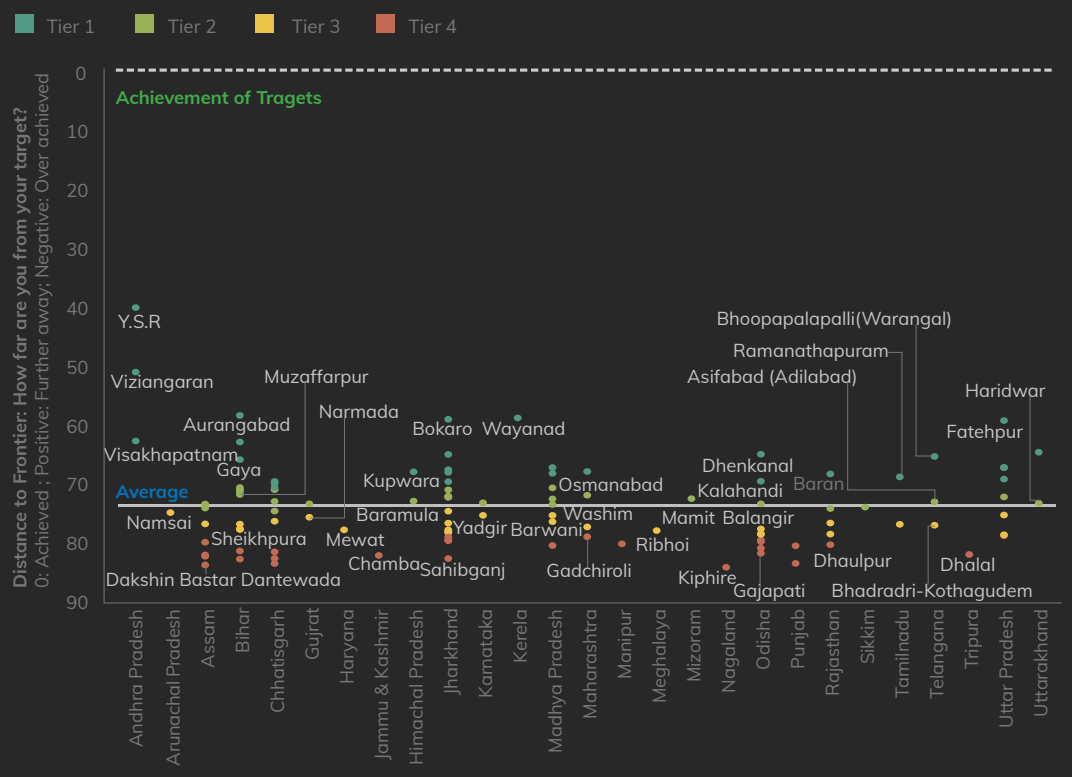
It was crucial to incorporate data points assessing the state of agriculture and water resources because the sector forms a critical aspect of development, especially among the aspirational districts. It has a weightage of 20 percent and focuses on output (yield, price realisation, etc.), inputs (soil health cards, quality seed distribution, etc.), and institutional support (crop insurance, animal vaccination, electronic markets, etc.).

Agriculture is a sector where the districts are the farthest away from the set targets so much so that it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between leaders and laggards. This is also driven by the fact that the elements of its indicators have a longer time frame for improvement. The results show that there is immense scope for improvement as the average distance from frontier is 80 percent. The potential gains from interventions in this sector are exceedingly high.

How to read the figure?

The dark green colour represents Tier I districts i.e. the districts that have either achieved their target (with zero value or negative) or are close to achieving it (0.5 percent away from the target).
The light green colour represents Tier II districts that mostly lie in the range of 5-10 percent, depicting that they are only 5-10 percent away from their target and a small intervention can help. Most of these districts be in Jharkhand, Odisha and Rajasthan. The yellow colour represents the Tier III districts that are 11-15 percent away from their target.
The red colour represents Tier IV districts that are 15-30 percent away from their set goals. They require immediate attention by the government.

Figure 4.12: Distance to Frontier Analysis: Agriculture and Water Resources



Unlike most sectors, the tier-1 districts in agriculture are the most spread out as seen in Figure 4.12. Andhra Pradesh and Kerala are the only states that have all of their aspirational districts in the top-most tier. On the other hand, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh are states that have all of their districts in the lowest tier. However, considering the distance of all districts from the frontier, there is immense scope for improvement across all tiers.

Kupwara in Jammu and Kashmir, which is one of the districts in the top tier introduced high density farming to improve agricultural productivity and make optimum utilisation of resources. The traditional seedling-based orchards were converted into high density orchards. This gave the producers success in cultivation of crops such as apples and walnuts and increased the harvest by up to three times. Such efforts by districts can substantially improve the state of agriculture and water resources across aspirational districts.

Another notable story comes from the district Virudhunagar, Tamil Nadu. The farmers in Virudhunagar have adopted cost-effective water harvesting techniques such as micro irrigation, drip irrigation, water trenches, and reservoirs, thereby overcoming water deficiency. This was in response to the Prime Minister's call of 'Per Drop More Crop'. Innovation has brought to the district concepts like 'Apni Mandi' where the farmers come and sell their produce directly to the consumers. The farmers have also embraced processing of harvest such as drying agricultural produce using solar energy, and poly-house cultivation. These have enabled the farmers to have a stable income.

Meanwhile, the mobility matrix of the sector shows that there has been considerable movement across tiers over time. In fact, among all sectors, the agriculture and water resources sector has recorded the most changes in the position of the districts across tiers. Figure 4.13 shows

42 DISTRICTS THAT HAVE SEEN AN UPWARD MOVEMENT AND HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GET CLOSER TO THEIR TARGETS AT A FASTER RATE THAN THEIR PEERS.

On the other hand, 40 districts have either moved further away from their targets than they were during the baseline period (2018) or have recorded smaller improvements compared to other Aspirational Districts.

Figure 4.13: Mobility Matrix: Agriculture and Water Resources

Baseline data	Data for 2019: Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Tier 1	8	6	8	6
Tier 2	7	7	7	7
Tier 3	5	11	6	6
Tier 4	8	4	7	9

THE 8 DISTRICTS THAT MOVED FROM TIER IV TO TIER I BELONG TO BIHAR, ASSAM AND CHHATTISGARH.

Bihar and Assam have used targeted measures for the conservation of environment. Goalpara, Assam has taken an exemplary step by using green technologies for construction of all-weather roads. And in Bihar the 'green army' of school students were encouraged to judiciously use water resources.

Figure 4.14: Future Engagements in Agriculture and Water Resources

Very High Intensity Engagements	High Intensity Engagements	Moderate Intensity Engagements	Low Intensity Engagements
Kiphire	Balrampur	Kondagaon	Rajnandgaon
Barpeta	Malkangiri	Karauli	Bijapur
Dakshin Bastar Dantewada	Sirohi	Dhubri	Giridih
Firozpur	Koraput	West District	Mahasamund
Purnia	Ramgarh	Khandwa (East Nimar)	Kalahandi

In conclusion, it can be said that there remains immense scope for improvement on this front. The partners can choose to intervene to improve the state of agriculture and water resources in aspirational districts to reap the maximum developmental gains. Based on their level of engagements and choice of region, the possible locations for investment are depicted in Figure 4.14.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Approximately 70 million additional individuals of working age (15-59 years) are expected to enter the country's labour force by 2023 and by the same estimation model, it is also predicted that the total workforce will include approximately 404.15 million people[26]. The rising workforce in India and the low employability of the current population[27] requires the country to focus on improving the skill set of its population. The government has launched a lot of programmes in this domain such as Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) that aim to not only provide relevant skills to the workforce but also help them with employment opportunities.

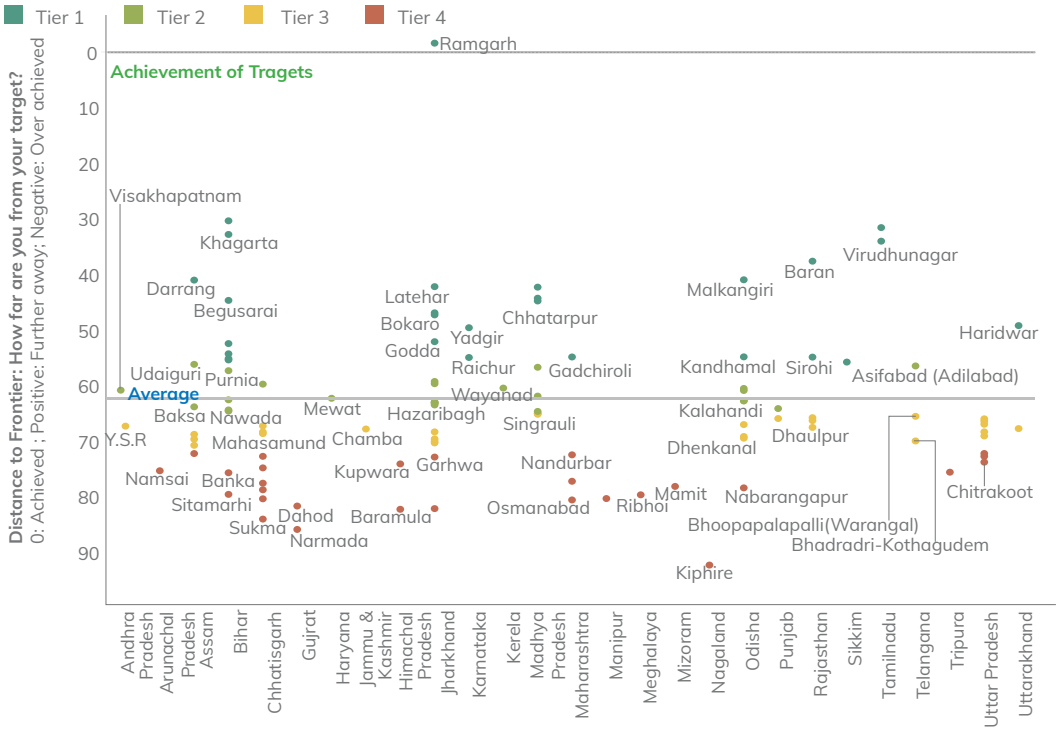
A note of caution needs to be added for the data related to skill development. The programme only captures skill formation but does not effectively track employment or improvement in earnings. This can be improved within the programme moving forward.

The DTF analysis results shows that skill development is a unique sector as it has clear leaders at both district and state-levels. However, it is difficult to pick laggards as the average scores in the third and fourth quartile have limited divergence.

How to read the figure?

The dark green colour represents Tier I districts i.e. the districts that have either achieved their target (with zero value or negative) or are close to achieving it (0.5 percent away from the target).
The light green colour represents Tier II districts that mostly lie in the range of 5-10 percent, depicting that they are only 5-10 percent away from their target and a small intervention can help. Most of these districts be in Jharkhand, Odisha and Rajasthan. The yellow colour represents the Tier III districts that are 11-15 percent away from their target.
The red colour represents Tier IV districts that are 15-30 percent away from their set goals. They require immediate attention by the government.

Figure 4.15: Distance to Frontier (DTF): Skill Development



[26] The 3 challenges to skill development in India and how to tackle them, WEF (2019)
[27] India Skills Report, CII (2019)

Karnataka and Sikkim are the best performing states with 100% representation in the 1st quartile. While Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Odisha are the states in which the performance of some districts is commendable. Giridh and Ramgarh, two districts from Jharkhand have even achieved saturation in this sector with an impressive average score.

The bottom quartile is mainly formed by some districts of Chhattisgarh – Sukma, Bijapur, Bastar, Korba, Kondagoan; two districts from Bihar – Sitamarhi and Banka; two districts from Jharkhand- Gumla and Garwa; all the Aspirational districts from Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Gujarat and Nagaland.

Figure 4.16: Mobility Matrix: Skill Development

Baseline data	Data for 2019: Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Tier 1	4	10	12	2
Tier 2	9	8	3	8
Tier 3	7	6	5	10
Tier 4	8	2	10	8

It is observed from the Mobility Matrix that similar to Agriculture and Natural Resource sector, Skill Development has also witnessed drastic changes in the position of districts within the two time periods. 50 districts have seen an upward movement and have been able to get closer to their targets at a faster rate than their peers. One of the districts – Gajapati that moved from Tier IV to Tier II had started enrolment of people for skill development under Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) after the Titli cyclone hit the district. As a result of the efforts, 11,600 candidates were mobilised, and over 450 were trained in different crafts. Some of the candidates have got placements, which reflect the effectiveness of the initiative.

On the other hand, 45 districts have either moved further away from

their targets than they were during the baseline period (2018) or have recorded smaller improvements compared to other Aspirational Districts.

In terms of partner engagement, even though the programme encourages skilling of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), there are no partners currently engaged in this domain. The district administration could take steps to reach out to partners to bridge critical gaps in skilling PWDs. It would enhance and support the districts to not only achieve the targets stipulated under the programme but also allow districts to positively impact the socio-economic welfare of PWDs in some of the most challenging geographies of the country.

Figure 4.17: Future Engagements in Skill Development

Very High Intensity Engagements	High Intensity Engagements	Moderate Intensity Engagements	Low Intensity Engagements
Kiphire	Dhubri	Vidisha	West District
Narmada	Pakur	Guna	Katihar
Sukma	Purbi Singhbhum	Nawada	Muzaffarpur
Baramula	Bhadradri-Ko-thagudem	Jamui	Raichur
Gumla	Barpeta	Moga	Sirohi

In skill development programmes it is not only important to look at the skills imparted by the government under these programmes but is also critical to study whether these skills have enabled people to obtain new jobs and how these new job opportunities have impacted their income. In this study we analyse the indicator "Number of certified youth employed/ number of youths trained under short-term and long-term training". This is arguably the most important indicator as it evaluates the final performance of the training programmes. The higher the possibility of employability of the candidates, the better the training programmes are.

01 Illustrative Economic Impact through Skill Development

Indicator: "Number of certified youth employed/ number of youths trained under short-term and long-term training"

The competitive labour and job markets have made it even more difficult for individuals to find their preferred option of jobs/ career options. As a result, skill development becomes a viable option that could help in addressing these problems.

India has been riddled by the problem of "Skill and Job Mismatch". This means that India faces a dual challenge where:

- The workers suffer from skill-deficit, which leaves them unemployed.
- The workers might be over-skilled and with limited suitable jobs available

In such a case, those who are over-skilled reach for those jobs, which need lower levels of education or skill. This leads to overcrowding for the already limited number of jobs and further reduces the chances for those workers who are untrained/unskilled. Skill development, thus, can address at least half of the abovementioned challenges.

ADP has compiled a comprehensive list of indicators that could monitor the progress made by the districts to train the workers. By monitoring the rate of skilled candidates, each district can produce a pool of workers that will be prepared for future-oriented jobs.

02 Impact Measured Across the Aspirational Districts

Recent efforts by the Government have ensured that a wide variety of training programmes are available that would help in skilling the young members of the workforce. Especially, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) has been a major guiding force in creating an emerging batch of the workforce that would be prepared for the challenges that the labour market could throw in the future.

There are definite economic benefits attached to the skilling of the workforce. It has been noted that employment post-training programmes often lead to a significant jump in the wage and hence, positions the beneficiaries in an advantageous situation in the labour market. This has been backed by a recent World Bank Study, which shows that the acquisition of new skills could potentially boost income by 21 per cent and training programmes can spur the employment rate for women more than men[28].

03 Assumptions and Methodology

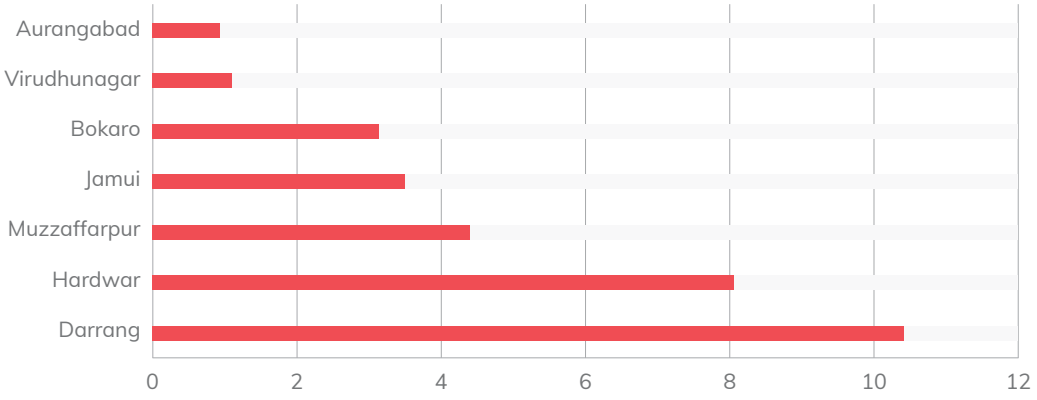
For impact evaluation, the increase in income will be computed for three months of employment, going by the assumption that the candidates will be employed for a minimum of 66 working days[29]. For monthly income, we refer to the most updated monthly per capita income for India in Rupees[30].

[28] economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/skill-development-programmes-can-boost-income-by-21-but-not-all-of-them-beneficial-world-bank/articleshow/48106307.cms?from=mdr
[29] One working month= 22 working days
[30] www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-s-per-capita-income-rises-6-8-to-rs-11-254-a-month-in-fy20-120010701269_1.html

04 Analysis

The results of the analysis show a positive result. Ten districts covering around 45,000 candidates have already managed to achieve saturation, thus showing the rapid pace that progress could be made for this indicator.

Figure 4.18: Potential Economic Gains due to Skill Development in INR Crores



The above graph represents the potential economic gains made by seven out of the aforementioned ten districts (data for those districts with 1000+ candidates). Successful implementation of relevant central skill development schemes has ensured that candidates in these districts will not only be employed but will also find themselves in an advantageous position as compared to other workers who might be either unskilled or semi-skilled.

At the other end, there could be two major reasons, as to why districts are not able to maximise the economic gains arising from skill development. First, districts have been unable to make any progress under this indicator during 2019. This is evident from Namsai's (Arunachal Pradesh) and Kiphire's (Nagaland) performance, as both have achieved 0 as their annual average. The second reason could be attributed to the fact that there are not many candidates that either avail or have been enrolled under specific skill development schemes. This is notable for two districts Sheikhpura (Bihar) and Malkangiri (Odisha). Both these districts have achieved 100 per cent success under the given indicator; however, both also have less than 100 candidates available to train. As a result, while the implementation has been strong in this case, due to the beneficiary base being small, the overall economic gains also fall short.

05 Looking Forward

Skill development is an interesting sector under the ADP. It is probably one of the few components that not only can monitor an individual's skills, but can also trace the trends that exist in the present-day labour and job markets. More priority could be given to those training programmes that command a higher share of labour demand and similarly, help in revising those programmes that are on their way to redundancy.

This study is a basic economic impact for trained candidates in the Aspirational Districts. While some common factors have been incorporated to simplify the analysis; there is a massive scope to study the longitudinal impacts arising from this sector. Subject to data availability, the analysis can be broken down into specific schemes, which will lay out district-level trends. Furthermore, the progress of the previous batch of candidates can help in tracing back the success of the programmes at the disaggregated level, which would better prepare the stakeholders in formulating the training course for future batches.

BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Since basic infrastructure is the minimum necessary condition that needs to be satisfied to enable development, it was crucial to incorporate indicators that provide a sense of infrastructural conditions. These include availability of individual household latrines, drinking water, electricity, and road connectivity. The districts are also tracked for the number of Gram Panchayats connected to the internet, and panchayats with Common Service Centres.
Apart from health and nutrition, basic infrastructure is the only sector where there are multiple cases of saturation and with the average scores skewing towards the benchmark point.

THE STATES OF GUJARAT AND KERALA EMERGE AS THE TOP-PERFORMING STATES WITH A 100% REPRESENTATION IN THE TOP TIER. THEY ARE CLOSELY FOLLOWED BY MADHYA PRADESH (5 OUT OF 8).

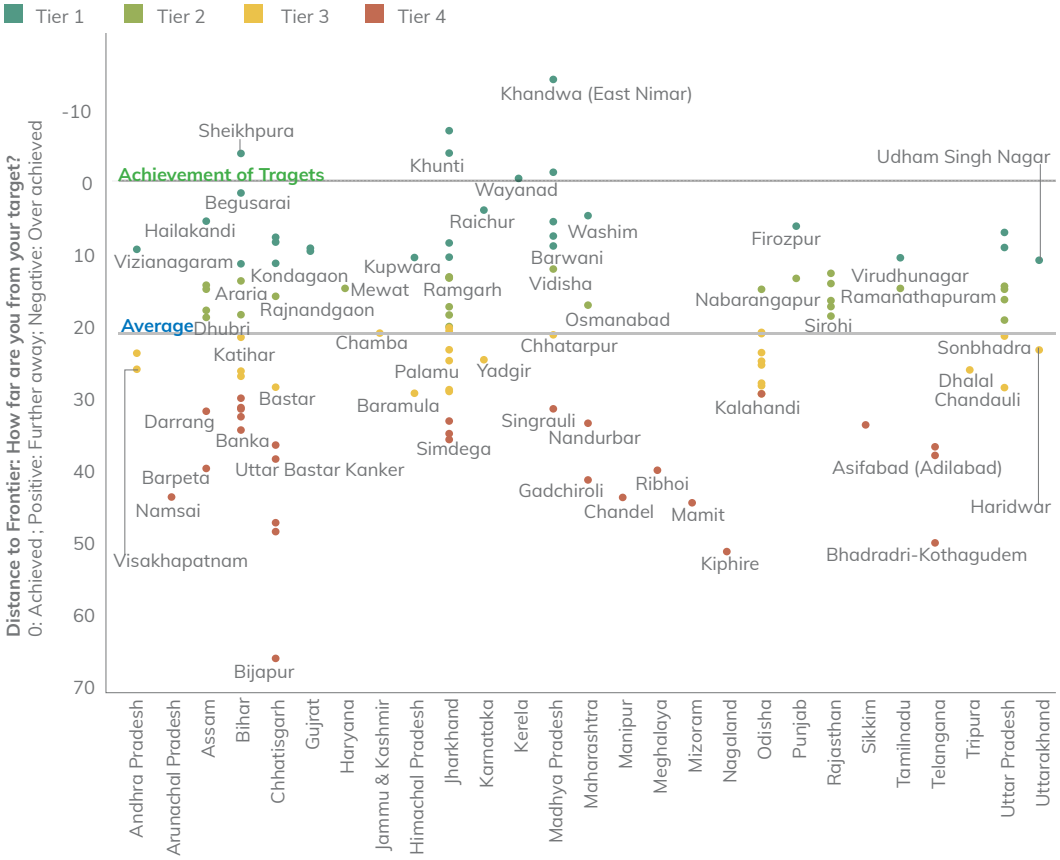
CURRENTLY, 6 DISTRICTS HAVE MET OR EXCEEDED THEIR PROGRAMME TARGETS AS OF 2019. KHANDWA (MADHYA PRADESH) HAS EMERGED AS THE BEST PERFORMER AND BIJAPUR, CHHATTISGARH IS FARTHEST FROM ACHIEVING ITS PROGRAMME TARGETS.

It is encouraging to see the first quartile formed by a mix of states, geographically and economically, representing that districts in most of the states have made considerable improvements. In fact, on the whole the districts are 20 percent away from their targets on an average. Meanwhile, Telangana and the North East states (except Assam) have full representation in Tier 4, the bottom tier. The aspirational districts in these states need focused attention under basic infrastructure.

How to read the figure?

The dark green colour represents Tier I districts i.e. the districts that have either achieved their target (with zero value or negative) or are close to achieving it (0.5 percent away from the target).
The light green colour represents Tier II districts that mostly lie in the range of 5-10 percent, depicting that they are only 5-10 percent away from their target and a small intervention can help. Most of these districts be in Jharkhand, Odisha and Rajasthan. The yellow colour represents the Tier III districts that are 11-15 percent away from their target.
The red colour represents Tier IV districts that are 15-30 percent away from their set goals. They require immediate attention by the government.

Figure 4.19: Distance to Frontier: Basic Infrastructure



One reason for districts exceeding, achieving, or nearly achieving their targets in the Basic Infrastructure sector stems from the fact that some of the indicators – such as Individual Household Latrines (IHHL) and household electrification – were driven by mission mode schemes such as Swachcha Bharat and SAUBHAGYA.

Among the districts in the top tier, in Kupwara, Jammu and Kashmir, a network of 176 water-harvesting tanks was strengthened. It has yielded double benefit, as it also aided in enhancing farmers income through water conservation.
In Dahod districts of Gujarat, a hundred households across five villages benefitted from the installation of solar powered community tube wells. The initiative was led by the Collector, Dahod, and helped in facilitating the availability of water at low cost for drinking as well as for irrigational purposes.

Since districts in a lot of states have achieved saturation in this sector, the Mobility Matrix shows considerable shift in the position of districts within tiers as expected. It can be seen in Figure 4.20 that two districts have fallen from the first tier in the baseline to the bottom tier in the latest year. These are Chatra in Jharkhand and Khagaria in Bihar. On the other hand, four districts from two states have climbed from the bottom tier in the baseline to Tier 2 in the latest year. These include Baksa (Assam), Dhubri (Assam), Giridih (Jharkhand), and Latehar (Jharkhand).

Figure 4.20: Mobility Matrix: Basic Infrastructure

Data for 2019

Baseline data	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Tier 1	14	8	4	2
Tier 2	10	12	5	1
Tier 3	4	4	10	10
Tier 4	0	4	9	15

The dominant presence of partners in basic infrastructure is in the domain of potable drinking water with Piramal Water, being the partner engaged in supporting the initiative. Sanitation has emerged as another area of engagement by partners across geographies.

This therefore leaves immense scope for other partners to engage in this domain to support different kinds of infrastructure requirements – such as internet connectivity for rural panchayats – which form an essential part of this sector.

Figure 4.21: Future Engagements in Basic Infrastructure

Very High Intensity Engagements	High Intensity Engagements	Moderate Intensity Engagements	Low Intensity Engagements
Bijapur	Kalahandi	Latehar	Muzaffarpur
Kiphire	Baramula	Bahraich	Kondagaon
Bhadradri-Ko-thagudem	Garhwa	Dhubri	Udham Singh Nagar
Narayanpur	Dumka	Sirohi	Virudhunagar
Sukma	Chandauli	Gumla	Kupwara

Even though the partners are actively engaged across the aspirational districts in this sector, Figure 4.21 shows the areas where further interventions can be made based on specific requirements.

01 Illustrative Economic Impact through Basic Infrastructure

To measure socioeconomic impact, two indicators namely in-house toilet construction and delivery of potable water have been selected. The objective here is to assess the role of water-availability and sanitation in improving the overall health of the beneficiaries. Previous studies have shown that sanitation and water are two of the key non-health factors that have a strong influence in determining the healthy lifestyle of an individual[31]. Inadequate water and sanitation have strong adverse effects on a healthy life such as:

- Premature mortality: Poor sanitation has had a direct impact on lost lives, especially those of children. India shares some of the highest-burden of disease caused by diarrhoea, which has led to a massive loss of DALYs in children under 5 years[32].

[31] Sanctuary, Mark & Tropp, Hakan. (2004). Making Water a Part of Economic Development: The Economic Benefits of Improved Water Management and Services.
[32] hgamapserver.who.int/gho/interactive_charts/phe/wsh_mbd/atlas.html

- Additional Costs: Lack of infrastructure to support water and sanitation provisions often lead to higher healthcare costs for individuals. The cumulative effect of such costs incurred also hurts the national economic prospect as it was reported in 2016, that poor sanitation cost India about 5.2% of its GDP[33].

- Productivity losses: This refers to the productive time lost due to illness and mortality. Productivity loss also includes productive time lost to look after the ill by the caregivers.

Thus, the following analysis intends to measure the savings made by the Aspirational Districts under each state by preventing loss of healthy lives through successful implementation of relevant central schemes. These central schemes include Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) and National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP).

Prevention of the loss of healthy lives is key for any governing body. Hence, curbing the cumulative DALYs must be a priority for the local governing bodies. From a policymaking point of view, it is crucial to understand DALYs as[34]:

- It highlights the aid required for setting health service (both curative and preventive) priorities and further, establishing health research priorities.

- It supports categorising disadvantaged groups and targeting of necessary health interventions.

- Delivers a comparable measure of intervention-based output.

Plenty of studies in the past have highlighted the importance of reducing the loss of healthy lives by ensuring the consistent provision of water and by implementing simple sanitary measures. Preservation of healthy lives in a defined region raises the productivity levels, which in turn boosts the economic potential that can be derived from that same region[35]. Hence, the same discourse could be replicated in the ADP. This could be attained by monitoring the progress made by the districts in terms of the annual rate of in-house toilet construction and delivery of potable water.

[33] LIXIL, WaterAid, Oxford Economics. (2016). The True Cost of Poor Sanitation.
[34] Murray, C. J. (1994). Quantifying the burden of disease: the technical basis for disability-adjusted life years. Bulletin of the World health Organization, 72(3), 429.
[35] Cylus, J., Permanand, G., & Smith, P. C. (2018). Making the economic case for investing in health systems: What is the evidence that health systems advance economic and fiscal objectives?

Indicator: Percentage of households with Individual Household Latrines (IHHL)

Under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), construction of household latrines has been a crucial component. Construction of in-house toilets is one of the first steps taken under this mission to undertake intensive behaviour change across the grassroots level.

The mission has also underlined the urgent need for such a drastic behavioural change as the costs incurred due to poor sanitation are huge and have long-lasting consequences on public health, environment and the economy:

Impact on Public Health: For this study, major emphasis will be given to the impact of poor sanitation on public health. Open and untreated human excreta can often interact with food through soil, water and crops. This creates a dangerous chain of the faecal-oral route. And according to a study conducted by the UNICEF, one gram of faeces can contain 10,000,000 viruses, 1,000,000 bacteria, 1,000 parasite cysts and 100 parasite eggs[36].

Furthermore, poor sanitation leaves children under the age of five highly susceptible to dangerous diseases due to their relatively weaker immunity. As mentioned before, under-5 child mortality based on diarrheal cases has crossed 1.9 million in developing nations[37].

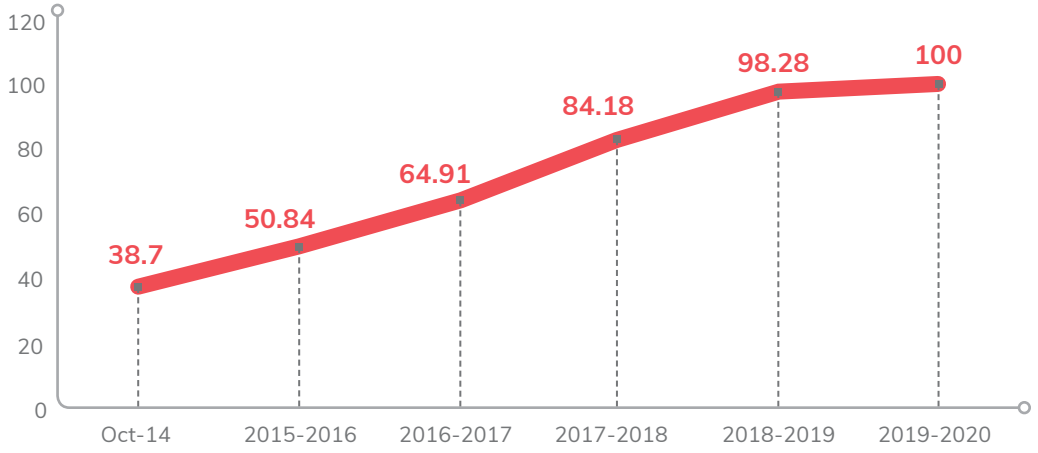
Role of the Mission and Aspirational Districts: Thus, as a part of Swachh Bharat Mission, one of the major objectives was to break the oral-faecal route by constructing toilets across all the rural households. This would be supported by other policy measures such as[38]:

- Encouraging communities and Panchayati Raj institutions to adopt other sustainable sanitation practices.
- Developing community-managed solid and liquid waste management systems.

[36] UNICEF. (2000). Sanitation for All: Promoting dignity and human rights.
[37] Vijaya Shankari, A., Kalpana, S., & Srinivas, G. (2019). Diarrhoeal Disease Among Under Five Children in India: A Brief Review. University Journal of Medicine and Medical Specialities, 5(4).
[38] www.prsindia.org/theprsblog/swachh-bharat-mission-gramin

And the results witnessed under the mission have been impressive. All the states have managed to achieve a 100% IHHL.

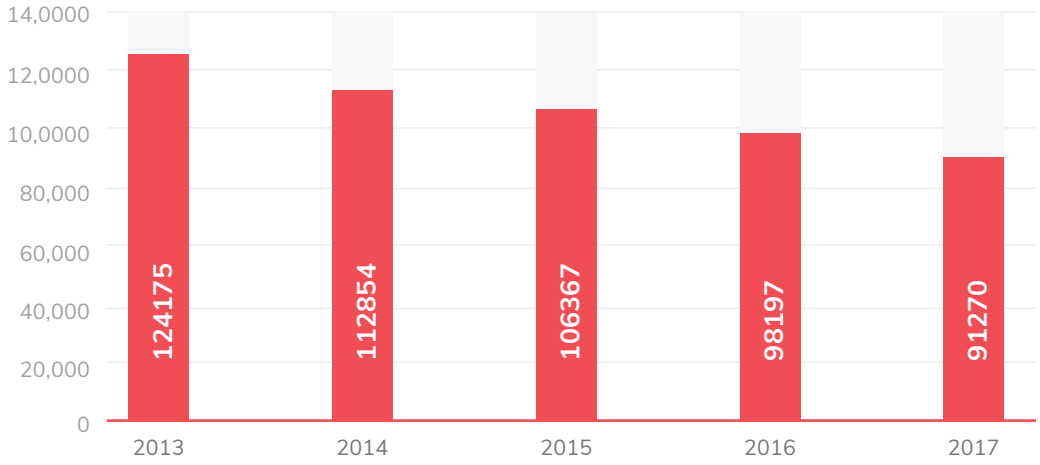
Figure 4.22. Coverage Status of IHHL across all States



(Source: Swachh Bharat Mission)

IHHL does create an induced impact in terms of fall in diarrhoeal cases[39]. This has been observed in India as well where the most vulnerable demographic group, i.e. 0-4 years; have seen a consistent decline in the cases for deaths arising from diarrhoeal diseases. Thus, IHHL has certainly played a major part in curbing these deaths across India with other factors such as public awareness programmes, delivery of safe drinking water and strict tracking of progress made under the Swachh Bharat Mission (both rural and urban).

Figure 4.23. Number of deaths due to Diarrhoeal diseases (0-4 Years) in India (2013-17)



(Source: Global Health Observatory Data, World Health Organization)

[39] UNICEF. (2018). Evidence Review Potential Impact of Sanitation on Health and Wellbeing. Final Report.

Thus, over the last few years, there has been a consistent fall in diarrhoeal related death cases amongst children as the Swachh Bharat Mission accomplished its objective of 100% IHHL in all the states. While National-level impact evaluation of the Mission is a must to understand the overall economic benefits; this study would like to present the situation at a disaggregated level through Aspirational Districts.

According to a study conducted by the World Bank[40]; successful policy interventions can bring in drastic socio-economic benefits in terms of costs per DALY saved. This includes hygiene behaviour change, which accounts for a savings of 26.42 USD[41] per DALY. IHHL falls under the ambit of Hygiene behaviour change as prescribed under the Swachh Bharat Mission. Thus, by assessing the rate at which the toilet has been constructed, a fair assessment can be made both at the state and the district levels to measure the potential socio-economic savings.

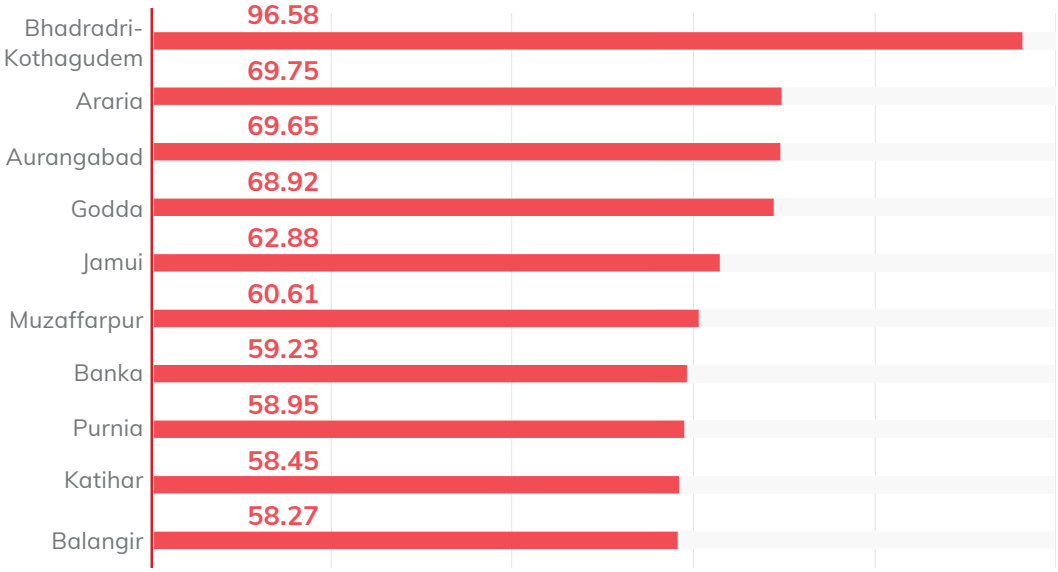
Savings on DALY is a crucial component of socio-economic savings. DALY includes the unit of time lost due to disability or premature mortality. And at the national level, it has been witnessed that the diarrhoeal related death cases are falling. Hence, it is fair to expect that more individuals will get the opportunity to live a healthy life, free from any insanitary-related disability or even premature death. This should translate into a more productive life where eventually these individuals will be able to contribute to the economy owing to their good health.

[40] Lvovsky, K. (2001). Health and environment (Vol. 1). World Bank, Environment Department.
[41] The value has been inflation-adjusted for the year 2019 (i.e. the year of impact analysis)

Potential Economic Savings from IHHL: Findings

According to the Champions of Change Dashboard, most of the Aspirational Districts have tremendously managed to achieve 100% IHHL as early as December 2018. And by the end of the year 2019, all the districts have now accomplished the same objective.

Figure 4.24. Actual Scores for 2019 (Difference between Current Scores and Baseline Scores)

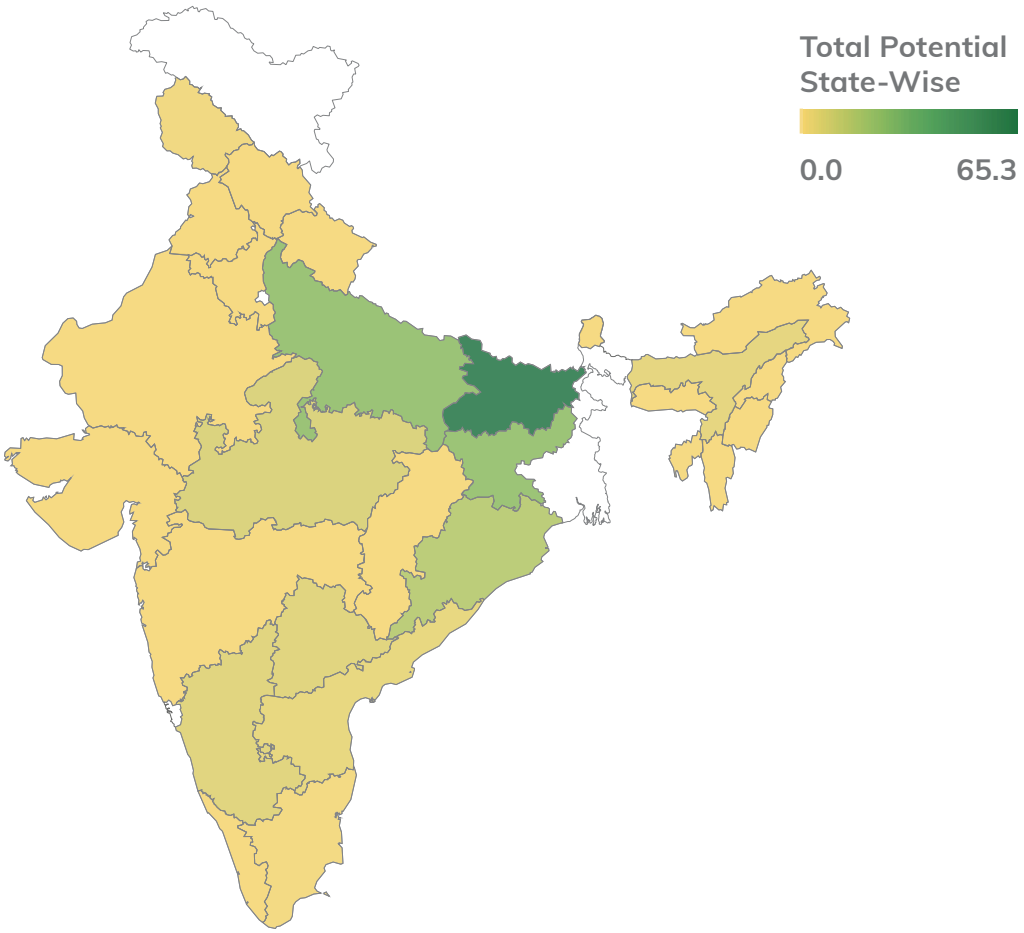


The above ten districts have ensured maximum difference between their current scores and their respective baseline scores. This shows the rapid progress that has taken place in just a year. Interestingly, seven out of ten districts here are from Bihar, thus highlighting a strong case for possible policy collaboration between the state and the district level stakeholders.

Following Bihar's example, a state-level analysis presents an interesting picture.

MANY STATES HAD ALREADY ACHIEVED CLOSE TO SATURATION LEVELS OF SCORES WHEN THEIR BASELINE VALUES WERE RECORDED. AS A RESULT, THEIR ACTUAL SCORES NOW COME OUT TO BE MINIMAL. WHILE IT MAY LEAD TO LOWER ECONOMIC SAVINGS, THIS IS A TESTAMENT TO THEIR STRONG POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN IHHL EVEN BEFORE THE ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME WAS IMPLEMENTED.

Figure 4.25. State-wise economic savings due to IHHL based on incremental progress during 2018-2019



The above map shows that for the year 2019, it was the Central and the Eastern states that made most of the progress. Most of the North East States and the Western States such as Rajasthan and Maharashtra had already achieved saturation during the baseline period. On the other hand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand were the biggest achievers in the year 2019 and as a result, managed to potentially make the biggest savings assigned with hygiene behaviour change.

These savings can be varied from state to state due to two important factors:

i. **The number of Aspirational Districts present in these States.** For instance, Jharkhand with its 19 Aspirational Districts will report higher savings as compared to Kerala that has only one Aspirational District.

ii. **The number of beneficiaries present in each Aspirational District.** Highly populated states will report more savings as compared to less populated states. For instance, both Katihar (Bihar) and Balangir (Odisha) have similar scores for the year 2019, however, the former's population is twice the latter's; thus, contributing more to the potential savings.

AFTER CONSIDERING ALL THE ABOVE FACTORS, THE OVERALL SAVINGS THAT THE DISTRICTS COULD ACCUMULATE WAS ABOUT INR 400 CRORES.

01 Way Forward

To further this study, a district-level assessment must be carried out that could measure the longitudinal impacts of construction of IHHL. This could be corroborated by a monthly change in child death rates owing to diarrhoeal deaths. Along with a health assessment, there must be a simultaneous Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that could scrutinise the frequency of untreated sewage mixing into local water bodies for all the districts. Finally, the scope of the study must be expanded to other sectors including Education, Tourism, etc. that could highlight the economic impacts owing to the presence of conventional sanitation measures such as IHHL.

Indicator: Percentage of Rural Habitations with Access to Adequate Quantity of Potable Water

The indicator data for the year 2019 shows that the Aspirational Districts have taken major strides to bring consistent improvement. More than half of the districts have above 90% annual average for the calendar year. This implies that strong potable water delivery services are available in these districts and soon will establish a proper network, which would ensure that all the beneficiaries receive an adequate amount of potable water. The rest of the districts are also not far behind as the overall average for all the 112 districts come out to be 78.62%, which is a tremendous achievement. Compared to this, according to a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report in 2017, it was found that less than half of the target was met at a national level under the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP)[42]. That

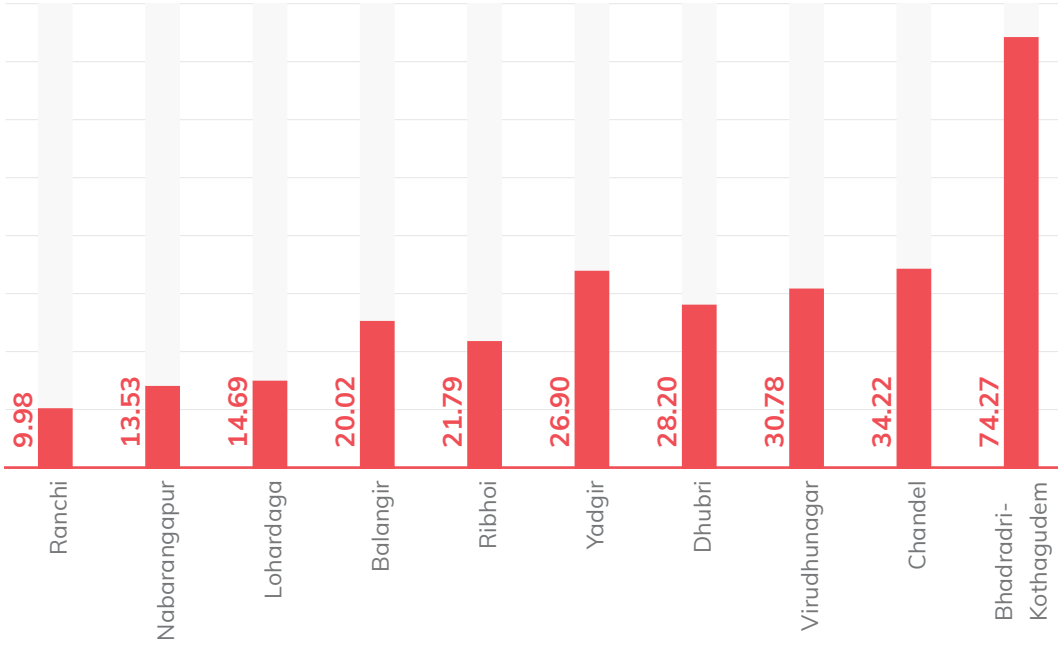
[42] www.bloombergquint.com/law-and-policy/national-rural-drinking-water-programme-failed-to-achieve-targets-government-auditor-heres-why

very audit report specified "poor execution" and "weak contract management" as two major reasons for the failure of the programme to meet its objectives. Thus, the progress made by Aspirational Districts has overcome those barriers and presents another example of successful policy convergence and collaboration across various tiers of stakeholders.

Potential Economic Savings due to Potable Water: Findings

Similar to the IHHL, many districts were closer to saturation during the beeline period. However, the scope for improvement under this indicator is much bigger. As a result, some of the districts have shown a tremendous jump and as a result, have increased their corresponding potential savings.

Figure 4.26 Actual Scores for 2019 (Difference between Current Scores and Baseline Scores)

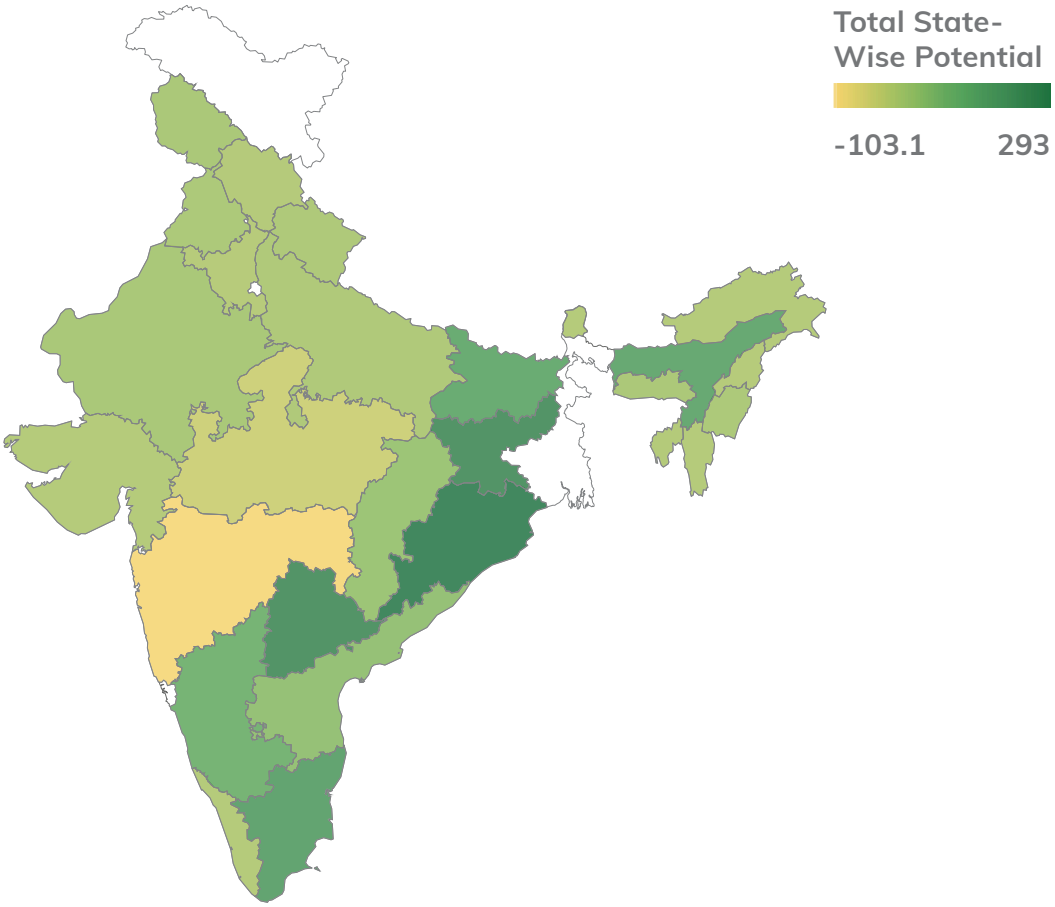


Unlike what was observed with the IHHL scores, districts from various States have made tremendous progress to ensure that potable water is made available for all. It was also interesting to note that North East districts such as Chandel (Manipur) and Ribhoi (Meghalaya) have improved significantly.

THE TOTAL SAVINGS, BASED ON THE ABOVE IMPROVEMENTS, THAT THE 112 DISTRICTS COULD MAKE CAME OUT TO BE A MASSIVE AMOUNT OF INR 1443 CRORES.

This figure accounts for the savings, all the districts can make by reducing the disability and fatality caused by delivery of unsafe water.

Figure 4.27: State-wise economic savings due to potable water based on incremental progress during 2018-2019



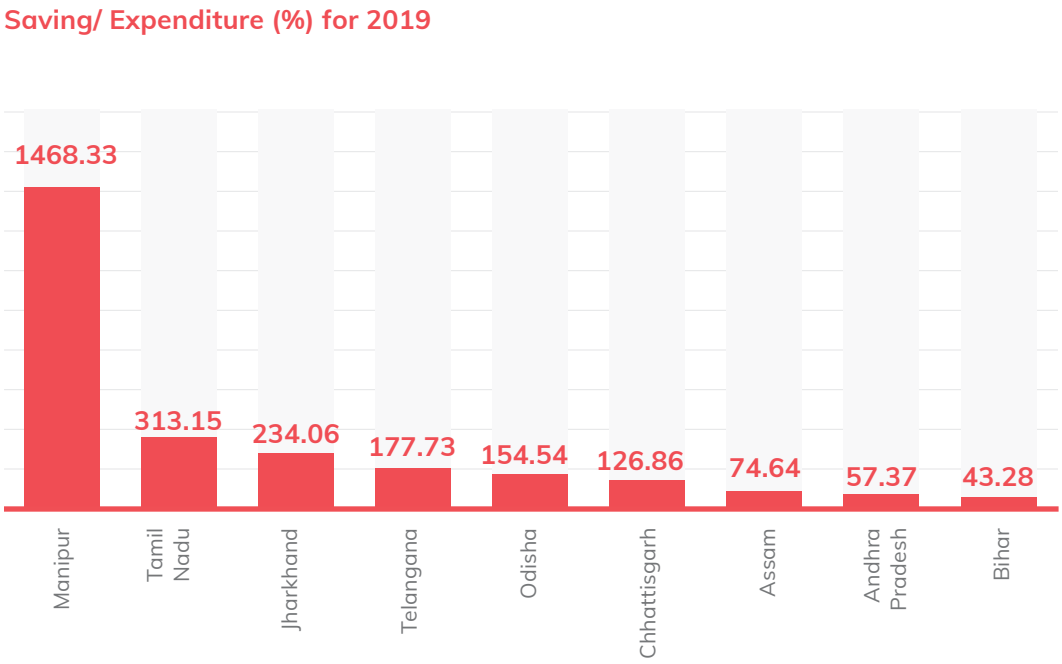
The above map shows that state-level savings vary significantly. Most of the Eastern and Southern states have ensured high savings whereas Central and Western states have struggled to achieve the same. Districts from both Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra were not able to create a distance between their actual scores for 2019 and their baseline values. This is an alarming sign, given that both the states suffer from severe water pollution[43] and most importantly, water deficiency[44].

[43] www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/water/can-ministry-of-jal-shakti-save-indian-rivers--65197
[44] indianexpress.com/article/explained/simply-put-5000-dry-villages-in-maharashtra-6500-tankers-5777789/

As far as the best performers are concerned; Odisha, Telangana, Bihar are some of the states with more than two Aspirational Districts that have recorded huge potential economic savings. Most of the districts in these states have a healthy gap between their current scores and their baseline values, thus paving the way for major improvement.

To further evaluate the efficacy of such savings, this study also looked at the funds that were allocated to the states by the Ministry of Jal Shakti for the financial year of 2019-2020. The assumption here is that all these funds will be used by the states to meet the costs for the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP).

Figure 4.28: Savings Over Costs for the Top 10 States in 2019



Savings by costs analysis, delivered some very surprising results. The state with the biggest return on costs was Manipur. Its only Aspirational District, Chandel, has been one of the biggest improvers in the year 2019 with respect to delivery of potable water. As a result, the district over-delivered by not just accomplishing its target for the calendar year but also by potentially providing better returns on the costs incurred for provisioning potable water.

Similarly, Tamil Nadu also with its two districts has given strong returns over the associated costs. This exercise goes to show that there is so much potential economic gains/ savings that can be made from selected districts, that they can help the state in overcoming the existing liabilities.

The above potential savings can be further strengthened for the majority of the districts and states, as they are yet to achieve 100% potable water supply. Hence, all the relevant stakeholders need to focus on meeting this target given the impending challenge of water shortage that would affect the world soon.

For future assessment processes, new parameters must be brought in regarding water management in Aspirational Districts. Along with successful water delivery, modes of water treatment must also be studied. This would ensure complete coverage of water provisioning both in terms of quantity and quality.

Furthermore, policy convergence observed across all the districts must cover the anecdotes on innovative means of water conservation.

Efficient utilisation would reduce the burden on our depleting water-sources. Thus, new and unique methods must be showcased that have positively affected the water supply at local levels. For instance, in the YSR Kadapa district in Andhra Pradesh, water conservation process has been a success through the construction of subsurface dams. These subsurface dams cost one-tenth of traditional dams and have benefited around 36 villages in the district area[45].

[45] niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2019-08/4_Presentation-for-PrincipalSecretariesPlanning.pdf

05

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The above section presented the improvements that districts have across sectors. The performance measurement of the aspirational districts depicts varied impacts across parameters. The observations for the Health and Nutrition sector suggest that 10 percent of the districts have already achieved their targets, whereas 90 percent of the districts have covered almost 3/4th distance to their respective targets. On the contrary, the observations for the Financial Inclusion sector suggests that none of the aspiration districts are close to their aspirational targets. All the districts are approximately 40 to 90 percent far from their targets.

In order to understand the reasons for such varied performance of sectors across districts, the observed outcomes were further examined in the following manner:

The identification of the indicators on the basis of who directly controls them drives this process. While we may qualify, that all data points are affected to a varying a degree by the effort of district administration, a few of them are directly affected. This could impact the decision-making capacities and the anticipated outcomes under the programme. Aiyar (2018) pointed out[46] the limited flexibility in such a decision-making structure could affect the implementation capacity of District Magistrates/ District Collectors. Therefore, indicators falling directly under the control of the District Magistrate/ District Collector were isolated, and the trajectories of the indicators were assessed on those specific parameters in this segment of the report.[47] This allowed the analysis to control those indicators outside the ambit of the District Magistrate/ District Collector and effectively gauge how well the programme has been able to impact the ability of the district administration to drive social impact.

By isolating indicators, the analysis is able to:

- Isolate the impact of other national/state schemes. **These indicators reflect the improved governance of the district administration** stimulated by competition, collaboration, and convergence under the Aspirational Districts Programme.

- **Inform the district administration** about the development trajectories of certain indicators – which indicators need short-term policy intervention strategies and which indicators require longer intervention periods to show results – allowing them **to create more effective intervention strategies** in the medium to long term.

[46] Aiyar, Y. (2018, May 15). Why the Aspirational Districts Programme may not change anything on ground. Retrieved from Hindustan Times: https://www.hindustantimes.com/columns/why-the-aspirational-districts-programme-may-not-change-anything-on-ground/story-Tnb22h2rMLWUI16MxmZ83J.html

ASSESSING THE RESULTS: OVERALL PERFORMANCE

By taking into account only the indicators that can be impacted by the DMs, the study reflects on two things. First, the assessment intends to highlight if there has been a tangible change within the districts as compared to their position at the baseline of the analysis. Secondly, it intends to understand which are the districts that have been able to drive the maximum change. It must be recalled here, as mentioned in the prior sections of this report, one of the major thematic ideas guiding this programme is to help the districts which have emerged as laggards in social development to the forefront improving India's overall human development. Therefore, the following analysis sheds light on whether the districts that lagged behind the most during the baseline survey have been able to catch-up to the leaders, or if the dichotomy among districts remains constant.

Figure 5.1. Relationship between rate of change (2018-2020) and baseline scores

- The graphs shows a negative relationship between the rate of change and baseline scores with a strong correlation of -0.66.
- This indicates that districts in the bottom tier are catching up rapidly with the high ranking districts.
- The average rate of growth of fourth quartile (Tier 1) districts is 8.2 percent while that of first quartile (Tier 2) districts is 25 percent.

For the ease of comprehension, the districts have also been divided into four categories based on their baseline scores. The quartiles are directly proportional to the baseline scores of the districts. Districts with the top 25 percent scores in 2018 have been categorised in the Fourth Quartile. Similarly, districts with the bottom 25 percent scores in 2018 have been categorised in the First Quartile within the ambit of this analysis.

In Figure 5.1., it can be seen that the average growth rate for the districts visible in the First Quartile is 25 percent. Similarly, the average growth rate for the districts in the Fourth Quartile is only 8 percent. This indicates that the districts that were initially lagging behind have been able to drive the maximum change under the programme. Districts which were initially leading, have also been able to drive change but at a much slower rate owing to their proximity to saturation. This means, under the Aspirational Districts Programme, districts that were initially lagging in social and human development indicators have been able to drive the maximum change and catch-up to the leaders. This is further bolstered by the strong correlation of -0.66 between the rate of change scores from 2018 to 2020 and the baseline score from 2018.

Using the above analysis, it can be depicted with clarity that the Aspirational Districts Programme has been able to create a positive social impact by improving social and human development indicators within a district. Furthermore, the effective performance management under the programme has facilitated those districts the most that were most deprived in social and human development at the initiation of the programme.

THE PROGRAMME HAS THEREFORE NOT ONLY BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN DRIVING SOCIAL IMPACT BUT ALSO IN DRIVING SOCIAL JUSTICE BY ENSURING THAT THE MAXIMUM BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAMME GO TO THOSE WHO NEEDED IT THE MOST.

ASSESSING THE RESULTS: STATE WISE*

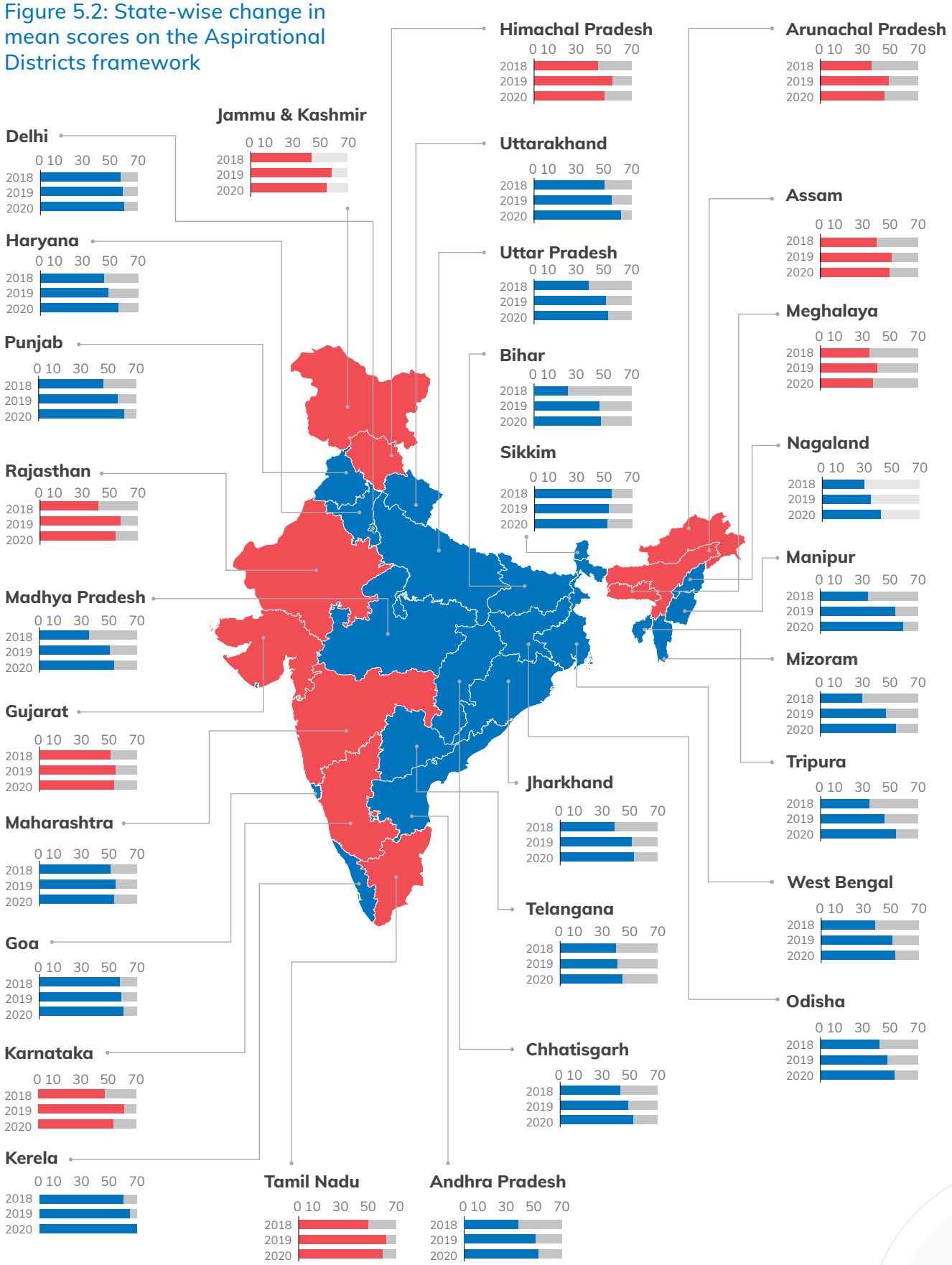
The performance of the states is analysed to assess any emerging patterns that may better inform the policy design aspects moving ahead. In other words, if any particular state has shown marked improvements or appears to lag across the parameters of the programme, special focus can be given to those Aspirational Districts to create more regional equity. It would ultimately lead to the overall success of the programme across the country.

The state performance analysis involves depiction of the change in mean scores of the Aspirational Districts within each state from 2018 to 2020. In Figure 5.2, the states have been portrayed on the basis of their performance in the current year of assessment, i.e. 2020.

The states highlighted in red (Figure 5.2) mark a dip in the current year of assessment. States registering lower mean scores should be given special focus moving forward to create better regional equity within the ambit of the programme. The discourse guiding the programme is one of regional equity. Regularly identifying states and districts that appear to fall behind would be a crucial step to ensure that the programme does not create a dichotomy of winners and losers but actually contribute to the overall regional equity within the country leading to better social and human development. Currently, Aspirational Districts in states with more visible white spaces – such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Telangana would require more focus moving forward compared to the rest of the country.

The results and recommendations from the state wise analysis must be understood very carefully keeping in mind the limitations of conducting a state wise analysis. The limitations arise as the number of districts in each state under the program varies.

Figure 5.2: State-wise change in mean scores on the Aspirational Districts framework

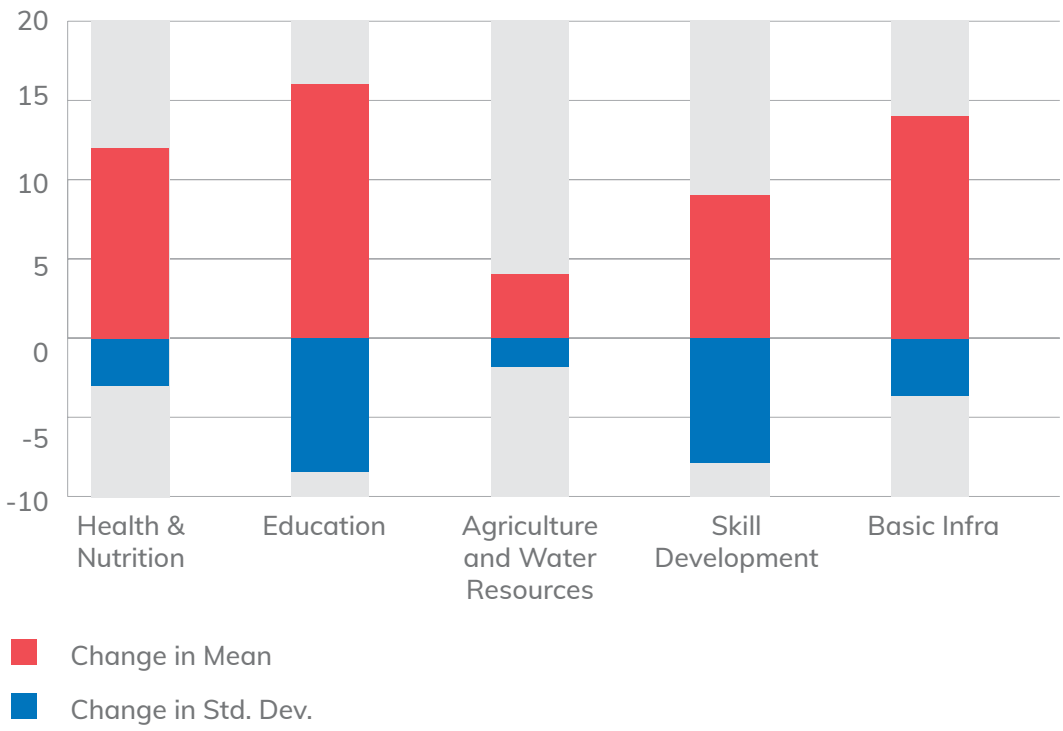


Note: Red indicates states where mean scores have fallen in the last year.
Blue indicates a general upward trend.

ASSESSING THE RESULTS: ACROSS PARAMETERS

Figure 5.3 portrays that the Aspirational Districts have shown the biggest improvement in the Education sector. The disparity among the districts has fallen the most in the Education Sector. On the contrary, Agriculture and Water Resources Sector indicates a lot of scope for improvement. The districts have also been able to reduce their respective disparities across the sectors of Health and Nutrition, Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure.

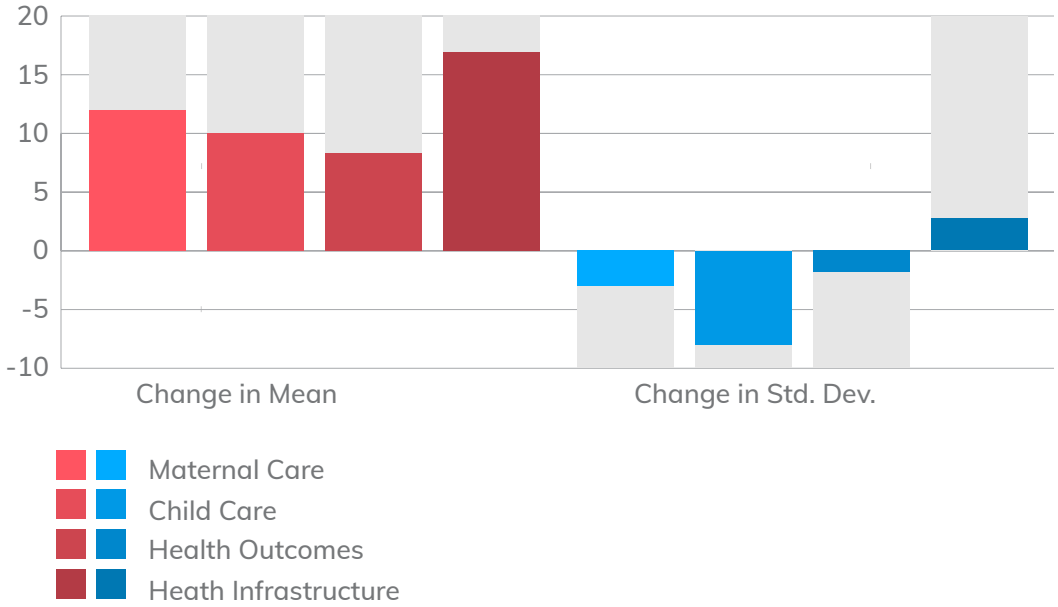
Figure 5.3: Performance of Districts across parameters



Among all the sectors considered within the ambit of the programme, the Health and Nutrition sector is noted to house the maximum number of indicators. Therefore, it has been separately analysed in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4: Performance of Districts in the Healthcare Ecosystem

Changes in the Healthcare Ecosystem



The total number of indicators under the Health and Nutrition sector accounts for 31 individual data-points. This is significantly high as it represents around 36% of the total number of data-points across the sectors. The data-points have been thematically categorised and subsequently analysed in Figure 5.4 to assess the key movements within this particular domain.

The detailed assessment of the Health & Nutrition sector showcases some interesting trends in policy impact. The maximum improvement in the domain of Health and Nutrition has happened within the Health Infrastructure domain. Disparities within districts have reduced the most under Child Care, which could be a result of focused policy initiatives to support child immunisation and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) across the country. Similar is the trajectory for aspects related to maternal care, which are often related. It must be noted here that the most encouraging inference from the analysis stems from the fact that all parameters across the sector have shown marked improvement. It must also be noted here that driving change in aspects of health care under any policy intervention is no mean feat that can be easily achieved. Often, these interventions require sustaining behavioural changes – like regular access to nutritious food for pregnant women – which may come with its socio-cultural baggage in the context of South Asia. The fact that the programme, along with its digital performance management mechanisms, has been able to achieve this change is in itself a positive social impact.

UNDERSTANDING THE INDICATORS IN MORE DETAIL

The indicators which can be most influenced by the District Magistrate have further been categorised into two additional aspects. In the first segment, the indicators are collated based on their ease of implementation. On the basis of secondary research and extensive field engagements undertaken within the scope of this research with district administrators, the indicators which can be most influenced by the district administration have been categorised into short-term indicators, medium-term indicators, and long-term indicators under the programme. This analysis is expected to help the district administration develop effective timeframes for policy interventions under the Aspirational Districts Programme, and reduce incorrect target setting exercises such as expecting to achieve targets of the long-term indicator within a short-term of policy intervention.

In the subsequent section, the indicators are further classified into impact and performance indicators. Such a classification based on the type and nature of the indicators enables the report to highlight whether the Aspirational Districts Programme has been able to drive any tangible change at the ground level or have been restricted in showing improvements across input intervention. It must be noted here that improvement in performance is often harder to achieve as compared to inputs since performance indicators can also demand behavioural change. If the programme has been able to generate a positive impact on the performance indicators, along with the impact indicators, it can be an indication of the positive behavioural change that is being driven within the districts by the Aspirational Districts Programme.

01 Ease of Implementation

The nature of indicators across sectors varies, and their outcomes may be visible across different points of time. While some indicators are comparatively easier to move owing to their implementation processes, other indicators may be more complex to administer by the District Magistrate/District Collector. Similarly, some indicators can be improved within a short time such as the indicator measuring the provision of textbooks under the Education sector. Others would require more time to reflect improvement and need interventions for longer durations. For instance, indicators measuring improvement in institutional deliveries under the Health and Nutrition sector would take more time to move owing to its scope and nature as compared to the previous example of textbooks.

Therefore, to address the varying nature and ease of achievability of the indicators, they have been categorised into three groups:

Short Term – comprising of indicators whose impact can be tracked in the short-term after any related policy intervention.

Medium Term – comprising of indicators whose impact can be tracked in the medium-term after any related policy intervention.

Long Term – comprising of indicators that require a long gestation period to show impact after any related policy intervention.

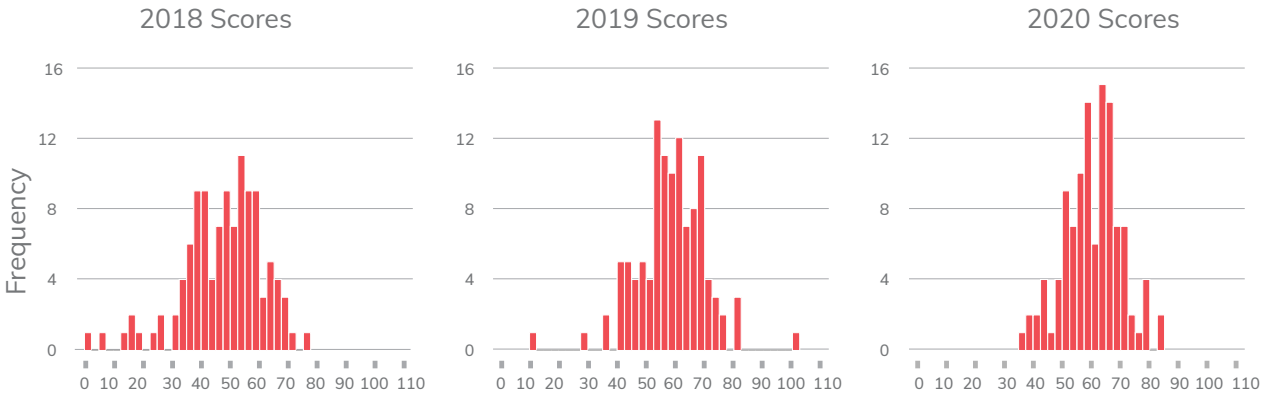
The analysis intends to study the rate of change for the indicators across these three categories.

THE HYPOTHESIS FOR THE ANALYSIS IS THAT THE RATE OF CHANGE OF SHORT-TERM INDICATORS WILL BE THE HIGHEST AMONG THE THREE. THE RATE OF CHANGE OF MEDIUM-TERM AND LONG-TERM INDICATORS WILL FOLLOW A SIMILAR TREND, THEREBY, REFLECTING THAT THE RATE OF CHANGE FOR ANY INDICATORS IS RELATIVE TO ITS EASE OF ACHIEVABILITY OVER TIME.

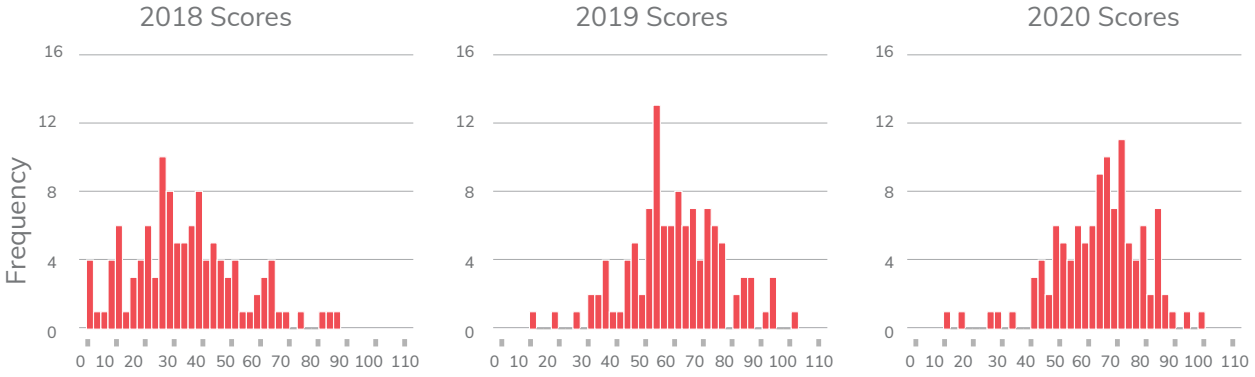
This analysis will be particularly useful for the district authorities to determine the “low hanging fruit” under the ambit of the programme, or the indicators that they may focus upon to see immediate gains. Furthermore, it will help the district administration better strategise their interventions with more information on the nature of the indicators, allowing them to come up with more effective timelines to achieve the determined targets under the ambit of the programme.

Categorization of Indicators by Ease of Achievement

Indicators achieavable in Short Term



Indicators achieavable in Medium Term



Indicators achieavable in Long Term

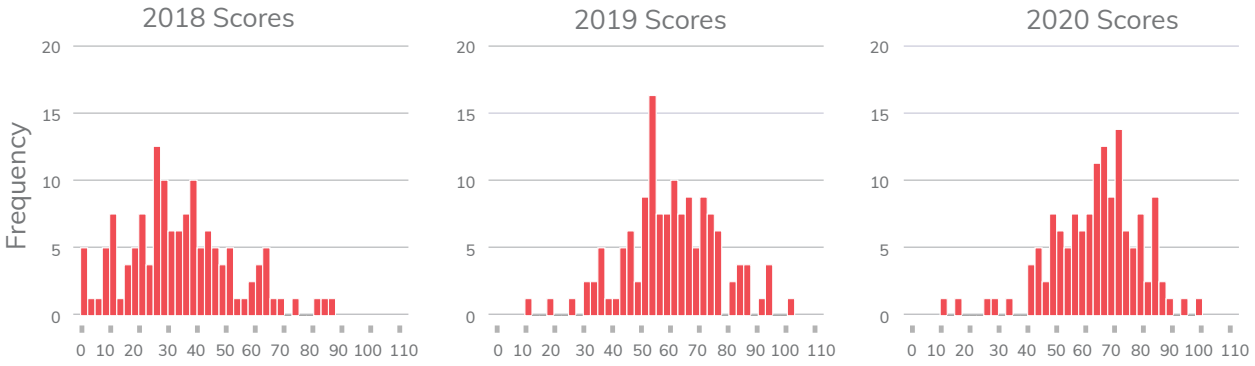


Figure 5.5: Comparison of Mean Scores for Short-Term, Medium-Term and Long-Term Indicators

While short-run indicators were already at a high mean score in 2018, their dispersion has reduced over time. The medium-term indicators had the lowest mean in 2018 but have shown the most improvement across the three years. Their dispersion is also the highest in 2020 across all levels. The long-run indicators were stickier across time, which is expected since the time-span assessed here is too short.

KEY INFERENCES

- **The short-term indicators** have been able to significantly converge around its high mean scores – that is to indicate that those districts which were lagging in 2018, have been able to catch-up with their peer districts.

- Though **the medium-term indicators** show the highest dispersion among the districts, they have been able to achieve the maximum change within the scope of the programme as the analysis; and,

- As believed, **the long-term indicators** have recorded little variation over time owing to the "sticky" nature of these indicators. They would require a sustained gestation period before related policy interventions can show traceable impact in these domains.

  The key learning is that the districts should develop goal posts based on the ease of achievement of the indicators.

02 Type of Indicator

Along with the ease of implementation analysis that will facilitate the districts to determine robust timeframes to achieving targets under the Aspirational Districts Programme, the report also expands the analysis to the nature of the indicators. By further categorising indicators into impact and performance indicators and studying their trajectories of change, the analysis would further help the districts to better strategise interventions within the programme leading to better social and human development in the districts.

This classification, relating to the type of the indicator, has been based on the defining characteristics of the sectors within the Aspirational Districts Programme. Indicators under each sector have been classified either as “impact indicators” or as “performance indicators” depending on its nature and scope of their effect. In other words, indicators that are predominantly dependent on input factors – such as provision of text-books – have been classified as impact indicators. Similarly, indicators that are more dependent on outcome factors – such as the prevalence of institutional deliveries within a district – have been classified as performance indicators within the scope of this analysis.

In other words, based on their distinct types, the indicators have been grouped as:

Impact indicators – Impact indicators measure a region's policies that are believed to create an impact on the outcomes. These may include indicators pertaining to infrastructure, such as the number of hospitals, schools, etc.

Performance indicators – Performance Output indicators directly measure the outcome of policies. For instance, a performance indicator may measure the quality of the infrastructure in place.

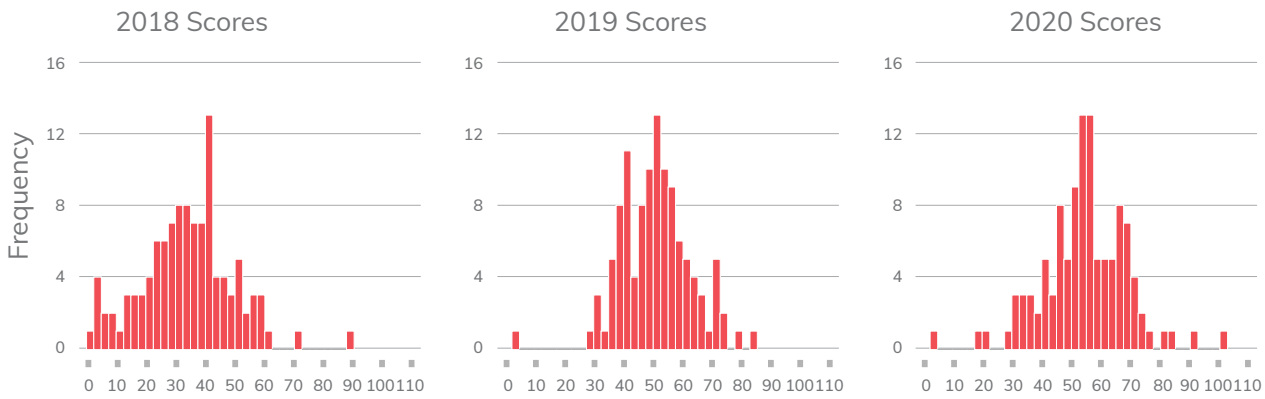
THE HYPOTHESIS UNDERLYING THIS CLASSIFICATION IS THAT THE RATE OF CHANGE REFLECTED BY THE IMPACT INDICATORS WILL BE HIGHER THAN THE RATE OF CHANGE DEPICTED BY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS.

The analysis of indicators based on their nature of achievement is similar to the analysis previously done for ease of achievement. The analysis highlights the following inferences within the scope of this report.

The distribution of aggregate mean scores for the impact indicators has improved across the three years. However, the extent of improvement varies from the performance indicators. One of the probable reasons could be that the required infrastructure to achieve improvement across indicators was available. The sufficiency of these infrastructural or policy provisions can be gauged from the depiction of improvement in performance indicators over time.

Categorization of Indicators by Year

Impact Indicators



Performance Indicators

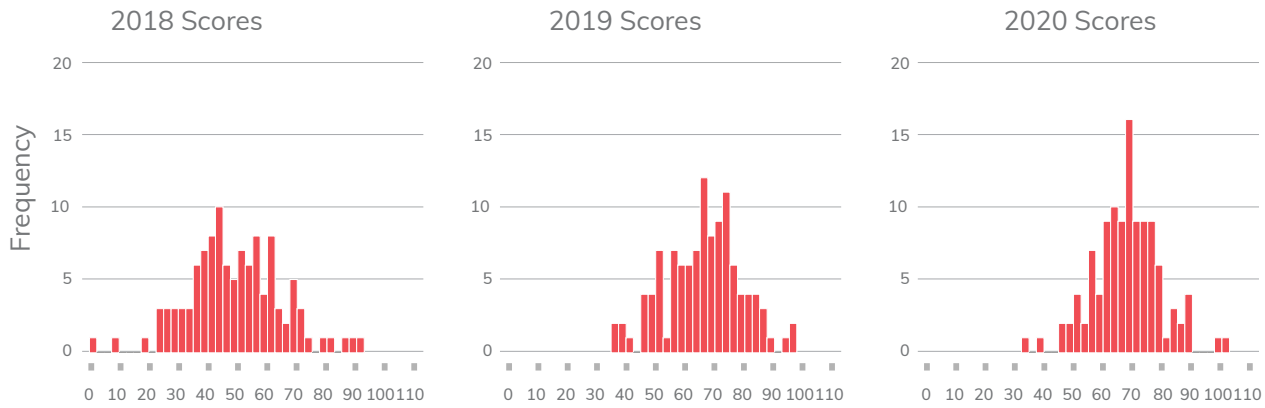


Figure 5.6: Comparison of mean score for impact and performance indicators

The improvement in aggregate mean scores can be seen in the distribution for performance indicators in Figure 5.6. The dispersion has also reduced across the years. The performance indicators have shown a visibly superior outcome over the impact indicators. This can verify the previous assumption and imply that the districts had the inputs in place. Therefore, social challenges could be addressed during the term. The monitoring mechanism of the programme could have incentivised the district administrations towards improving their performance parameters.

KEY INFERENCES

- **The impact-**indicators have shown improvement, but owing to the work already done in the districts under the various missions and schemes of the government vis-å-vis input infrastructure, the change in these indicators appears to be somewhat subdued when compared to the performance indicators.

- **The improvement in mean scores of the performance-**indicators in the analysis is more vivid over time. This can somewhat vindicate the previous inference. Since the input infrastructure was already present in the districts, the competition, collaboration, and effective monitoring undertaken by the Aspirational Districts Programme have probably enabled the districts to achieve positive outcome vis-å-vis the performance indicators.

06

IMPACT OF ADP

BEATING SECULAR TRENDS?

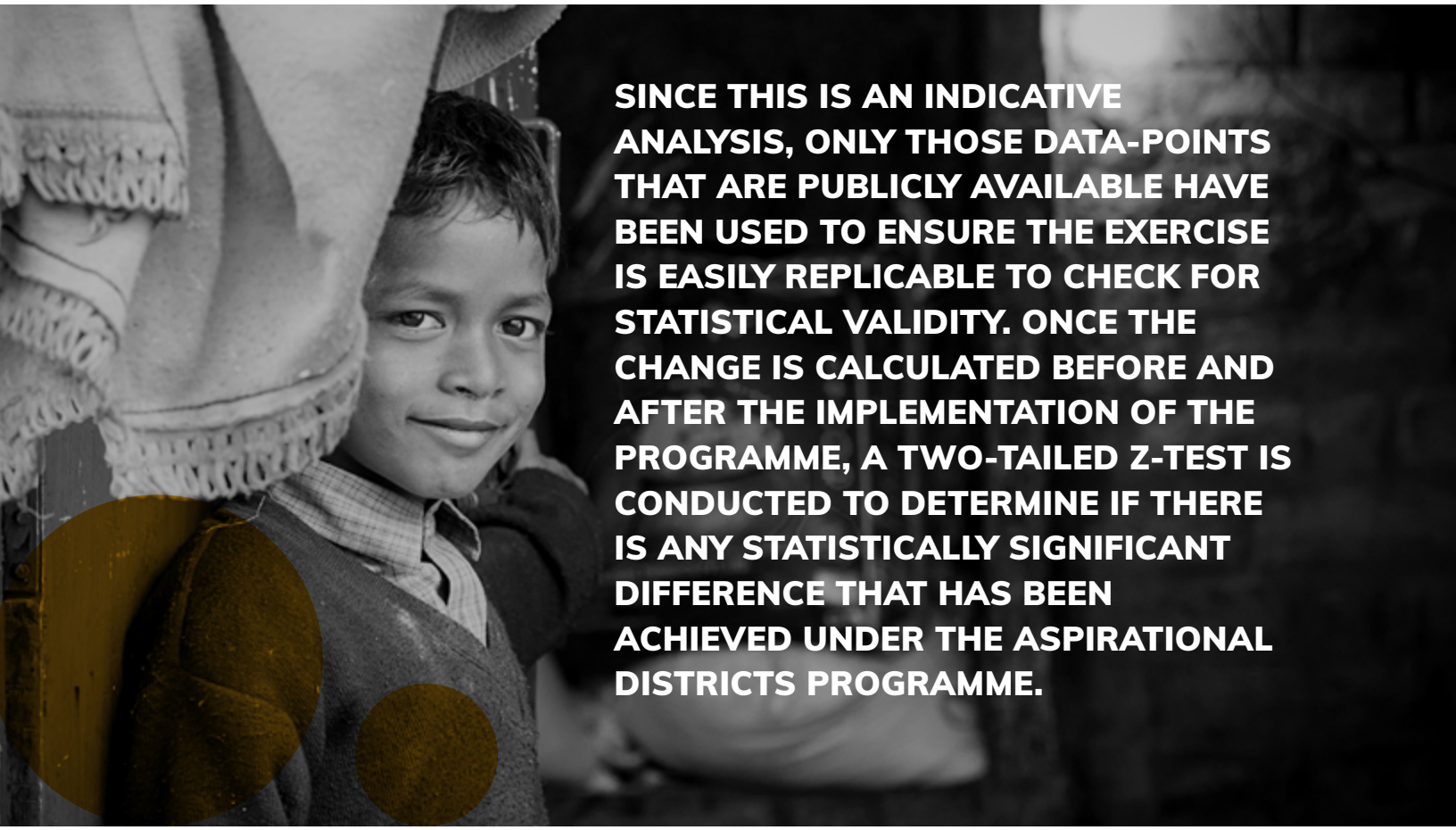
The analysis in the report until this section highlighted the performance of the Aspirational Districts Programme since its implementation in March 2018. In other words, the three previous sections – the DTF Analysis, the Mobility Matrix, and the prior section assessing the impact of governance across different districts focus on the transformations and social impact that has been created under the Aspirational District Programme from the baseline condition.

Each section highlights its distinct findings and showcases the impact that the programme has been able to create across different sectors and their respective indicators. To briefly sum up the programme has undoubtedly created some positive impact across the sectors even though the scale of the impact has been severely varied. It is generally observed across the analysis that sectors that have received a higher weight within the design of the programme, such as Health and Nutrition and Education, have shown comparatively more impact than other sectors

SECTORS SUCH AS BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE THAT ARE BEING DRIVEN BY MISSION MODE PROGRAMMES SUCH AS SWACHH BHARAT AND SAUBHAGYA, HAVE ALSO SEEN SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN THE ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS OF THE COUNTRY.

Based on these inferences, it is becoming obvious to investigate if the Aspirational Districts Programme does add any additional value as a policy intervention across the sectors or would the districts showcase very similar development trajectories even in the absence of the programme. If it can be comprehensively determined, using a statistical technique that the Aspirational Districts Programme does positively influence the growth trajectories of the indicators compared to their secular trends then the research can definitively attribute the social impact to the Aspirational Districts Programme itself. To achieve this, the research analyses indicators from the domain of Health and Nutrition and Education – which comprise of 60% of the total weight given to the sectors under the programme – to check if the programme has been able to create tangible impact within its scope by enabling these indicators to beat their respective secular trends.

In order to do this, existing public databases such as Health Management Information System (HMIS) (for Health and Nutrition indicators) and UDISE (for Education indicators) are used. In this, indicator level data for common indicators, that are indicators, which are present in the aforementioned public databases and within the scope of the Aspirational Districts Programme, are compared for two phases with similar time-period. It means that the changes in the common indicators over equal intervals of time are compared before and after the implementation of the Aspirational Districts Programme.



SINCE THIS IS AN INDICATIVE ANALYSIS, ONLY THOSE DATA-POINTS THAT ARE PUBLICLY AVAILABLE HAVE BEEN USED TO ENSURE THE EXERCISE IS EASILY REPLICABLE TO CHECK FOR STATISTICAL VALIDITY. ONCE THE CHANGE IS CALCULATED BEFORE AND AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME, A TWO-TAILED Z-TEST IS CONDUCTED TO DETERMINE IF THERE IS ANY STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE THAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED UNDER THE ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME.

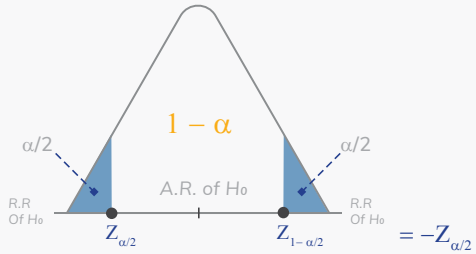
A two-tailed z test is used because there can be a worsening of district performance post-ADP. For accuracy, time-periods immediately before and immediately after the implementation of the Aspirational Districts Programme have been used as per the latest available data for the indicators.

The use of a two-tailed Z-test is of relative significance here. A Z-test is a well-established statistical technique used to test hypotheses of any experiment. In order to use the Z-test in the scope of this research, the report hypothesises that the annual increment in indicator performance before the aspirational districts programme is equal to the annual increment under the programme. As discussed in the previous paragraph, the annual increment immediately before the implementation of the programme and immediately after the implementation of the programme has been considered for select indicators. This data has been collated for all 112 Aspirational Districts within the scope of the programme.

Once the data for all the districts are collated, the mean and the standard deviation of the given sample is calculated, and a decision rule is established. A decision rule, in simple terms, refers to the choice of the test statistic and the confidence interval within which the hypothesis needs to be tested. Following this, a Z-test is run on a pre-determined level of statistical significance.

It must be mentioned here that for sample sizes less than 30, the convention dictates that a t-statistic test is used instead of a z-statistic test. Since the sample size, or the number of data points, is greater than 30 in this research – a z-statistic test is being used. Also, as there are two possible outcomes that one may observe after the implementation of the Aspirational District Programme, a two-tail Z-test is being used instead of a one-tail Z-test. A two-tail Z-test informs if a particular parameter being tested has shown any change – either increase or decrease – thereby enabling a researcher to reject the null hypotheses or the hypotheses that were created before the test was conducted. Apart from a two-tail Z-test, a Z-test can also be of two other types. An upper-tail Z-test and a lower-tail Z-test. An upper-tail Z-test is usually used when an increase is hypothesised. Similarly, a lower-tail Z-test is used when a decrease is hypothesised. The reason for this report to use the two-tail Z-test instead is because the research neither hypothesises an increase nor a decrease, but it simply hypothesises a change which can either be increasing or decreasing in nature. It is effective to test the indicators in such a manner as with the implementation of a new policy intervention programme, all three observations – an increasing, a decreasing, or an unchanged – trajectory of the indicators are possible. Using a two-tailed Z-test not only allows the identification of change but would also allow the identification of the trajectory of change – if any – that has been brought about by this programme

In the scope of this analysis, the Z-test is conducted at a 5 percent level of significance, which indicates that the test would be able to state with 95% confidence whether the programme has shown any change from the secular trends of the tested indicators. The test would reject the hypothesis if $|Z| < Z\alpha/2$. Thereby, it would be able to determine if the difference in the incremental change under the Aspirational Districts Programme is statistically significant or not.

HYPOTHESIS	$H_0 : \mu = \mu_0$ $H_A : \mu \neq \mu_0$
TEST STATISTIC	Calculate the value of : $Z = \dfrac{\overline{X} - \mu_0}{\sigma / \sqrt{n}} \sim N(0,1)$
ACCEPTANCE REGION (A.R) AND REJECTION REGION (R.R) OF H_0	
DECISION	We reject H_0 at significance level α if $\lvert Z \rvert < Z_{\alpha/2}$

In the scope of this report, nine indicators from the Health and Nutrition sector and five indicators from the Education sector were tested to determine if the Aspirational District Programme has been able to break the secular trends in these domains.

01 Health and Nutrition

Indicator	Is there significant difference due to the programme? $\mu_1 \neq \mu_0$		Incremental improvement under programme is higher $\mu_1 > \mu_0$		Incremental improvement before AD was higher $\mu_1 < \mu_0$	
Based on Z test (at 5 % level of significance)	p-value	Acceptance	p-value	Acceptance	p-value	Acceptance
Percentage of ANC registered within the first trimester	0.000	Yes	0.000		1.000	
Percentage of Pregnant women having severe anaemia treated	0.001	Yes	0.005		0.9995	
Sex Ratio at birth	0.002	Yes	0.001		0.999	
Percentage of institutional deliveries	0.000	Yes	1.000		0.000	
Percentage of deliveries at home attended by SBAs	0.000	Yes	0.000		1.000	
Percentage of new-borns breastfed within one hour of birth	0.000	Yes	0.000		1.000	
Percentage of low birth weight babies (less than 2500g)	0.408	No	0.796		0.204	
Percentage of live babies weighed at birth	0.058	No	0.029		0.970	
Percentage of children fully immunised	0.714	No	0.357		0.643	

In the Health and Nutrition sector, it is evident that five out of nine indicators tested have registered significantly higher improvements during the Aspirational Districts programme as compared to their secular trends. Three of the indicators considered did not show any significant change in their trend. **It must be noted here that it does not mean that the indicators have not improved; it simply means that the rate of improvement under the programme has not been faster than the secular trajectories.** One indicator tested, the percentage of live babies weighed at birth, showed a positive change at the 10% significance level but not at the 5 percent significance level.

It is important to note that one of the nine indicators tested has shown a curious trend wherein the development under the Aspirational Districts Programme has appeared to be significantly lower than the secular trend. The percentage of institutional deliveries has registered a slower growth under the Aspirational Districts Programme than before. However, this could be an outcome of the fact that this particular indicator had almost reached saturation around 2015-16 itself, as depicted in Figure 6.1. As witnessed in the previous section of this report, the closer an indicator gets to saturation its rate of change gradually reduces. This could be a possible explanation for the indicator to effectively show a slower rate of change under the programme than under its secular trend.

Percentage of Institutional Deliveries to Total Deliveries (2015-2016)

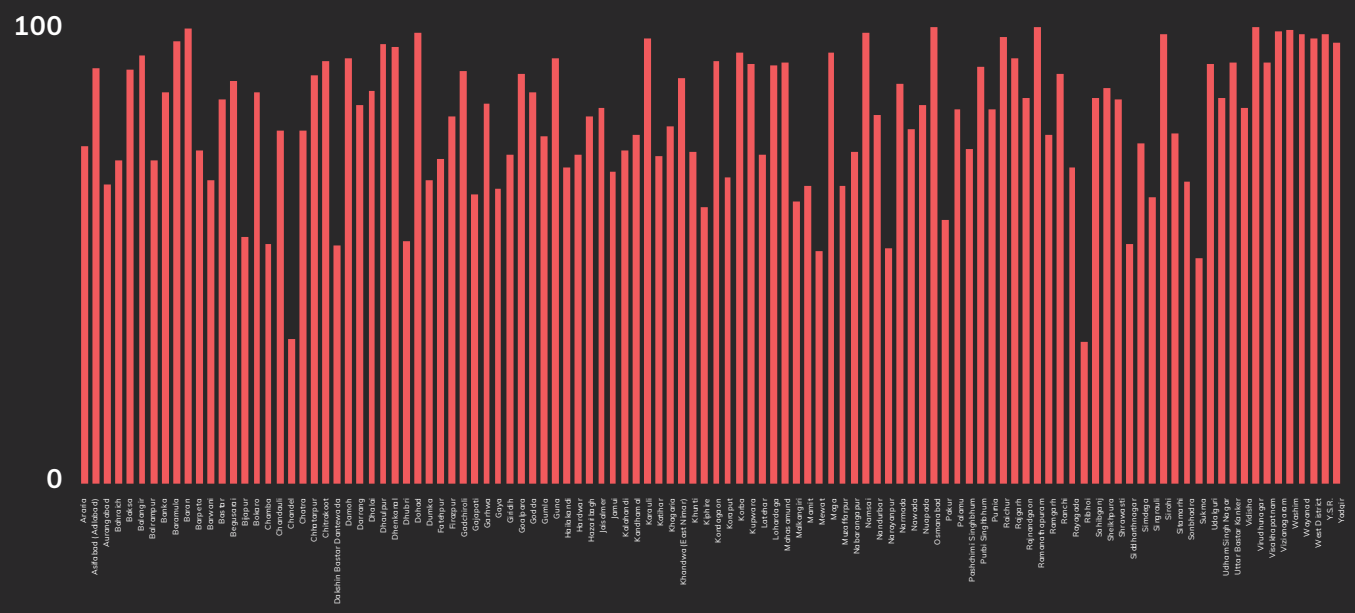


Figure 6.1. Percentage of Institutional Deliveries had almost reached saturation across most Aspirational Districts by 2015-16.

WITH FIVE OUT OF NINE INDICATORS POSITIVELY BEATING THE SECULAR TREND TO REGISTER IMPROVED GROWTH TRAJECTORIES AT 5% SIGNIFICANCE LEVELS, IT CAN BE STATED THAT THE ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME HAS INDEED BEEN ABLE TO BEAT THE SECULAR TREND IN IMPROVING HEALTH AND NUTRITION IN SOME OF THE MOST CHALLENGING AND UNDERDEVELOPED REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY.

02 Education

LIKE HEALTH AND NUTRITION, THE INDICATORS IN EDUCATION ALSO SHOW POSITIVE IMPROVEMENTS UNDER THE ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICT PROGRAMMES BEATING THEIR SECULAR TREND OF GROWTH. FOUR OUT OF FIVE INDICATORS TESTED SHOW A STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN THE DOMAIN OF EDUCATION UNDER THE ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME.

Indicator	Is there significant difference due to the programme? $\mu_1 \neq \mu_0$		Incremental improvement under programme is higher $\mu_1 > \mu_0$		Incremental improvement before AD was higher $\mu_1 < \mu_0$	
Based on Z test (at 5 % level of significance)	p-value	Acceptance	p-value	Acceptance	p-value	Acceptance
Transition Rate (Primary to Upper Primary)	0.000	Yes	0.005		1.000	
Transition Rate (Upper Primary to Secondary	0.000	Yes	0.001		1.000	
Percentage of schools with functional girls' toilets	0.015	Yes	0.007		0.993	
Percentage of schools with functional drinking water facility	0.468	No	0.000		0.766	
Percentage of schools with electricity facility (secondary)	0.000	Yes	0.234		1.000	

Only one indicator, the percentage of schools with functional drinking water facility, shows a slower rate of growth under the programme than the secular trend. Similar to the trend observed in the Health and Nutrition indicator, this particular indicator too was almost near saturation during 2015-16 across the districts. It could be one of the reasons for the indicator registering a slower rate of change under the programme as compared to its secular trend.

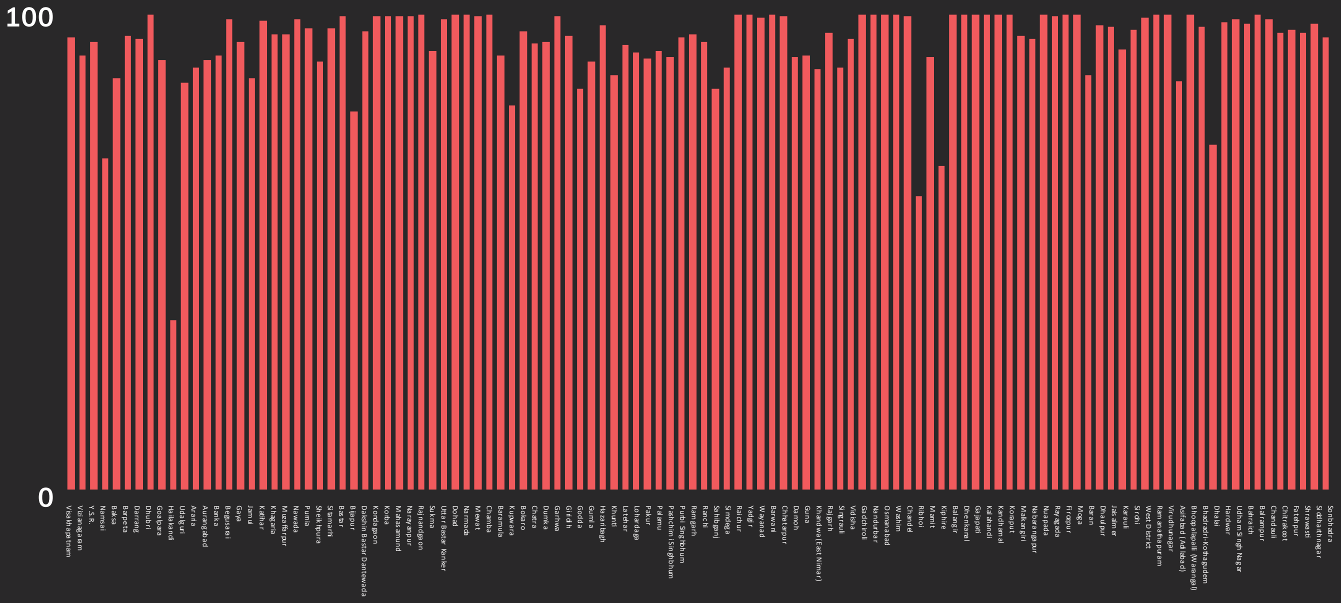


Figure 6.2. Percentage of Schools with Functional Drinking Water (2015-2016).

The indicator Percentage of Schools with Functional Drinking Water, like Percentage of Institutional Deliveries, had almost reached saturation across most Aspirational Districts by 2015-16. This reason could have possibly led to a slower rate of change under the programme as compared to its secular trend. With four out of five indicators, positively beating the secular trend, to register improved growth trajectories at 5 percent significance levels, it can be stated that the Aspirational Districts Programme has also been able to beat the secular trend in improving Education and its related indicators in the Aspirational Districts.

To sum up, the use of the Z-test enabled the research to identify if the improvements under the Aspirational Districts Programme were statistically significant or were broadly in tune with the secular trends that had existed before the implementation of the programme. In order to check this, select indicators from the domain of Health & Nutrition and Education were chosen to check the secular trend trajectories on the basis of publicly available data to make the exercise replicable. In this regard, matching indicators from HMIS and UDISE were chosen to test for secular trends.

It emerged that 9/14 indicators tested showed a statistically significant improvement, i.e. they were able to beat the secular growth trajectories under the Aspirational Districts Programme.

This could be an extremely encouraging sign for the programme as it is not only able to generate significant improvements within a very short span of time but is also doing so faster than the prior secular trend. One limitation of this analysis is that it is conducted for only 14 data points within the programme owing to constraints of data availability. Future research can further explore this aspect across more indicators of the programme to comprehensively identify the areas in which the programme has been able to beat the secular trends, thereby creating a significantly positive impact in some of the most challenging geographies of the country. Finally, the fact that competition, collaboration, and convergence can actually determine better policy outcomes compared to secular trends further testifies to the effectiveness of the fundamental discourse of this programme.

It validates the belief that improving the quality of governance can produce better social and human development outcomes – an idea that has the potential to be replicated globally.

07

IMPACT OF ADP ATTAINING THE SDGs

The Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) both emphasise on the provisioning of basic services through sustainable means to the most marginalised communities and people. As discussed earlier, the focus of ADP revolves around six domains:

- Health
- Education
- Agriculture and Water Resources
- Skill Development
- Financial Inclusion
- Basic Infrastructure

These domains cover a wide range of socio-economic issues that subnational policymaking has to deal with regularly. The original objective of ADP is to bring holistic development to the relatively backward 112 districts across India through Policy convergence and collaboration and by promoting competition amongst the districts. This objective aligns with the spirit of SDG 10 to reduce various forms of inequalities[48]. Aligning the objectives of ADP with that of SDGs is crucial to establish a time-bound assessment framework.

01 Need for a Framework

In the last two years, NITI Aayog has released the SDG India Index that assesses the progress made at the state level concerning the completion of all the seventeen Goals. Thus, a similar framework must be created to assess the same level of progress at the district-level. There are multiple ways in which such a framework could benefit the subnational policymaking:

- By tracking the SDG completion for aspirational districts, the State Government could assess the policy convergence at both state and district levels. This would further guide the States in pinpointing the areas where the progress of aspirational districts successfully aligns with that of its own.

- Evaluation of the above policy convergence/divergence; it could promote State-District level policy collaboration. Therefore, this would streamline the policymaking from sub-national to the next disaggregated level. Studies also reflect how strong collaboration results in the successful execution of policies, thus attributing to holistic regional development[49].

- Adherence to the framework could also prompt successful competitive federalism as envisioned by NITI Aayog amongst the Aspirational Districts. Healthy competition amongst the districts could result in large-scale regional development with long-term economic and social multipliers benefiting the most vulnerable sections of that region.

- Finally, states such as Bihar and Jharkhand, that did not fare well in the latest NITI India SDG Index could use this framework to nudge their Aspirational districts in improving their SDG-related indicators that in turn could improve their state-level performance.

[48] NITI Aayog. (2019). SDG India Index 2019.
[49] OECD. (2010). The Interface Between Subnational and National Levels of Government.

02 Methodology

The objective of this framework is to identify the key indicators common between the ADP and the SDGs. While all the indicators under both the programmes may not align, NITI Aayog has identified six SDGs (namely SDG 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10) that could be aligned perfectly with the indicators prescribed under the Aspirational Districts[50].

Thus, a list of indicators has been compiled to assess the progress of a district made under the ADP. This progress could then be linked with the rate of completion of SDGs for all such districts. For this framework, NITI Aayog's metadata has been referred to which finds the closest-possible SDG indicator that could be linked with an Aspirational District indicator[51].

THE ANALYSIS FOR SDGS IS ONLY DONE FOR INDICATORS THAT CAN BE MAPPED TO THE SDGS, CAN INTUITIVELY BE PROJECTED, AND WHERE SUFFICIENT DATA IS AVAILABLE.

ADP Sector	Number of Overall Indicators
Health	7
Education	3
Basic Infrastructure	3
	Total=13

Using the data for these indicators from the dashboard, projections are made to identify the year in which saturation will be achieved or districts will reach the SDG target. **These projections are made using moving average point change to capture the changes between the rate of growth of districts that start with a higher value and the districts that start with a low value.** It has been observed in the above analysis that districts that start at a lower value tend to grow faster as they have both, a lot of scope for success as well as learnings from other districts.

[50] NITI Aayog. (2019). SDG India Index 2019.
[51] NITI Aayog. (2018). Transformation of Aspirational Districts; National Workshop on Real-Time Monitoring Dashboard.

03 Results

In the graphs below we present the time taken for the mean scores of the districts on each of the indicators to reach their target, categorised by sectors.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THESE INDICATORS DO NOT SPECIFICALLY FALL UNDER SDGS BUT HELP IMPROVE DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS THAT HAVE A ONE-TO-ONE MAPPING WITH SDGS.

Health

There are seven indicators under the Health sector that can be mapped to the SDG goals. Most of them will be achieved within the target date of 2030 and will significantly contribute to helping India reach the set goals. One area of concern is the burden of tuberculosis (TB cases. India has a low notification rate for TB cases despite it being mandated for all patients. As per our projections, the notification rate will reach 100 percent for these districts only in 2038.

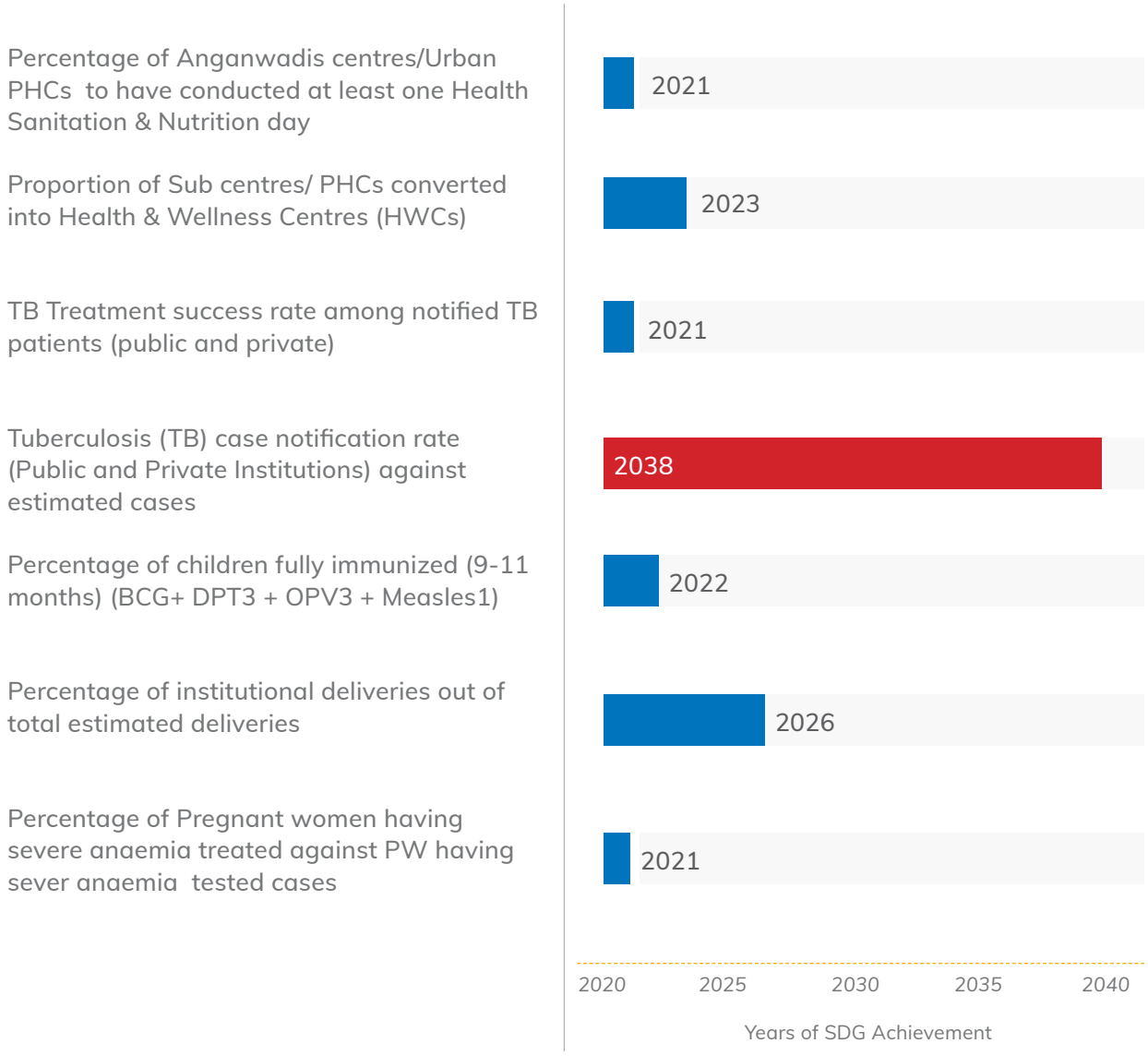
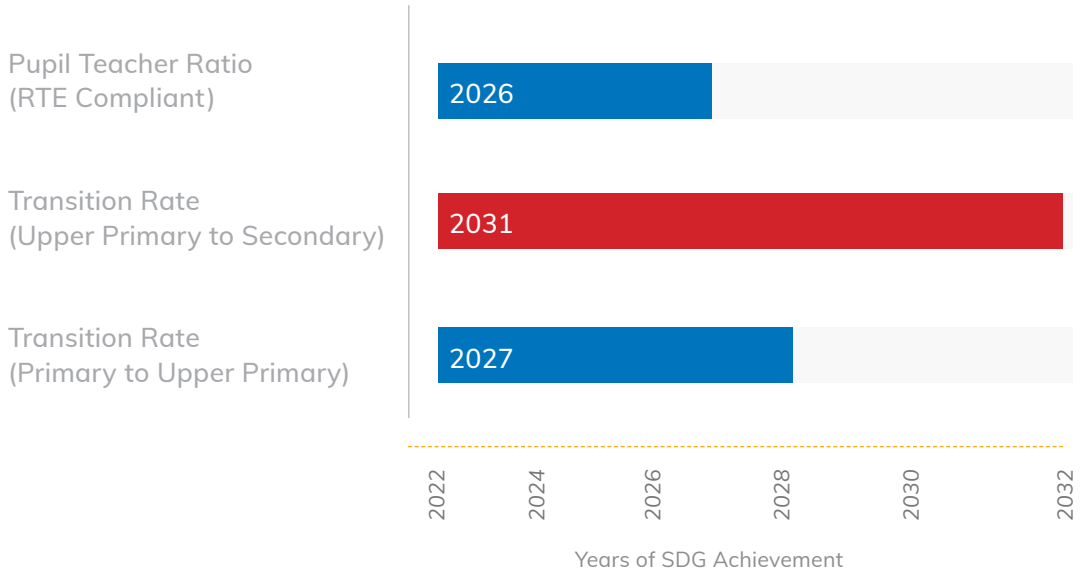


Figure 7.1. SDG Target Achievement for Health

Education

In the Education sector, we look at three indicators – the Percentage of elementary schools complying with RTE specified Pupil-Teacher Ratio, the Transition rate from upper primary to secondary school level, and Transition rate from primary to upper primary school level. The transition rate from upper primary to secondary schools is very low in the country indicating that children drop out after class 8. The target for this indicator will only be achieved by 2031.

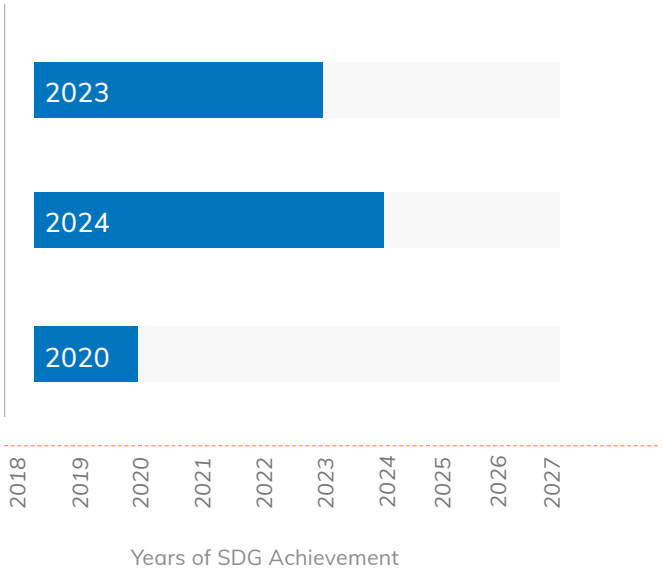
Figure 7.2. SDG Target Achievement for Education



Basic Infrastructure

All indicators that can be mapped with SDGs will be achieved even before 2025. The progress over the last few years on road building and electricity penetration by the government has yielded positive results. Meanwhile, the push for digital connectivity and falling internet prices have driven internet penetration into the aspirational districts as well.

Figure 7.3. SDG Target Achievement for Basic Infrastructure



08

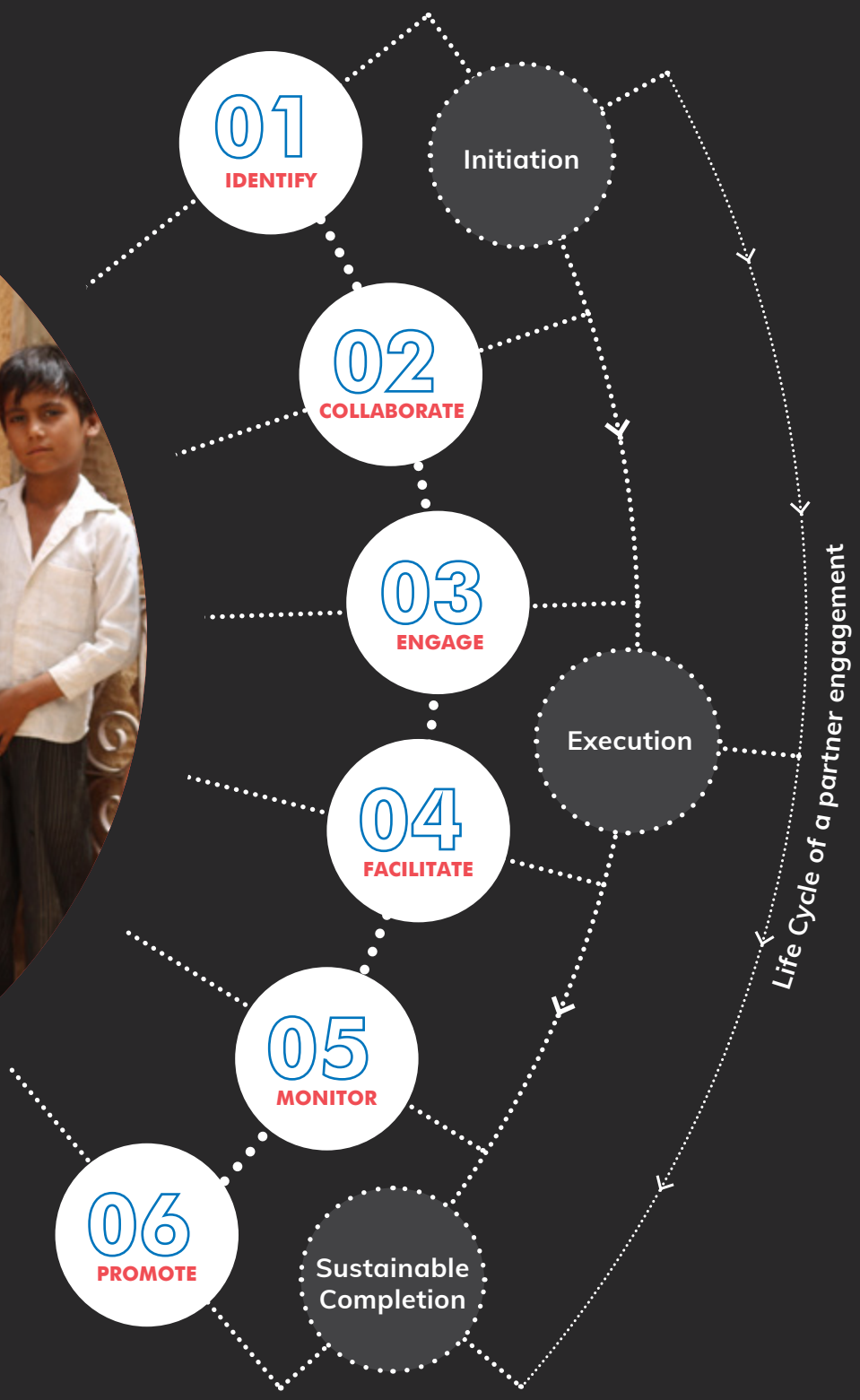
LEARNINGS

LEVERAGING THE PARTNER ECOSYSTEM

WHAT WORKS? FRAMEWORK FOR FUTURE PARTNER ENGAGEMENTS IN ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS

Based on the field interviews and the engagements undertaken by the team within the scope of this research, the report recommends a six-point partner engagement framework to leverage maximum social and human development outcomes from partner engagements. This framework recommends the key guiding principles and maps it to the identified challenges or best practices shared by the key stakeholders interviewed during the research.

Figure 8.1.
The 6-point
Engagement
Framework



Step 01 Identify

The framework is designed keeping the entire lifecycle of partner engagement in mind. **In the first stage of the framework, the challenge of identifying the right district based on the Aspirational District data is addressed.** Often, as discussed in the previous sections of this report, choosing the incorrect district to engage leads to the problem of either "too much" or "too little" for the partners. This may lead to undesirable social and human development outcomes. Whenever a partner intends to engage or expand their geographic scope within the Aspirational District Programme, the use of evidence-driven tools such as Institute of Competitiveness (IFC) Partner Connect, or any other tool on similar principles, would enable partners to choose points of intervention appropriately allowing them to leverage maximum social and human development outcomes within the scope and scale of their intervention. Finally, this also **allows NITI Aayog to clearly define the role of the partner once the engagement is identified** thereby avoiding any mismatch in the goals of the partner and the goals of the district where the partner is going to intervene.

Action	Utilize evidence based analysis such as DTF to identify the domain, region, and point of intervention. Assess if needs of the district are implementation oriented or innovation model oriented. Avoid problems of engagement mismatch.
Time Frame	At the initiation of the project.
Key Insights Incorporated	Dual nature of existing development partner engagements within the ecosystem – (i) program implementation engagements; and (ii) policy innovation engagements.
Challenges Addressed	1. Mismatch between the nature of engagement and the demands of the district. 2. Concentration of partners in some regions – ignoring others.
Risks	May not be possible to effectively gauge niche challenges within districts using CoC data – leading to incorrect assessment and incorrect identification.

Figure 8.2. The first step of the framework helps partners accurately identify their domain, region, and point of intervention.

Step 02 Collaborate

The framework is designed keeping the entire lifecycle of partner engagement in mind. **framework devices best practices for generating collaboration with the district administration.** In the scope of this research, it can be stated on the basis of the field engagements that partners are most effective in collaborating with district authorities when they are embedded into the institutionalised structure of the district administration; and, have subsequently been able to position a human resource within the office of the district administration. In this regard, the framework recommends that the partners – after identifying the appropriate district for engagement – collaborate with the nodal ministry or NITI Aayog to facilitate the institutionalisation of the partner organisation within the district administration.

Secondly, the framework recommends that wherever possible, the partners should facilitate the presence of a human resource within the district administration. However, not all partners need to position a human resource within the district administration if the scale and the scope of the engagement are limited. In case of high-intensity engagements over medium to long-term, the presence of a human resource within the district administration or collaborating with other partners who already have positioned a human resource within the district administration office is recommended.

Action	Collaborate with the nodal ministry or NITI Aayog to facilitate the institutionalization of the partner organization within the district administration. Seek possible convergence/ overlaps with other partner activities in districts.
Time Frame	After identification of districts.
Key Insights Incorporated	1. Institutional engagement reduces bureaucratic hindrances. 2. Convergence of partner activities lead to improved engagement outcomes and prevents crowding-in or overlaps.
Challenges Addressed	1. Resistance from district officials and line-departments to incorporate engagements within the practices of the district administration. 2. Avoids concentration of partners and re-experimenting in similar engagement practices.
Risks	Different nodal agencies – example NITI Aayog and MoHFW – allocate partners working in overlapping domains (Health). Difficult to collaborate unless such forums exists at national levels as recommended in the research.

Figure 8.3. The second step of the framework highlights effective collaboration strategies to overcome bureaucratic resistance.

Step 03 Engage

Moving forward, **the engagement strategy of the development partner should not be restricted to the district leadership but also percolate to the secondary and tertiary levels of officials, preferably percolating to the block/panchayat level.** This is another area where a representative present within the district administration encourages better results from the perspective of the partners as well as district officials. **The comprehensive engagement with the district and not just the District Collector/ District Magistrate allows better continuity and prioritisation of the program even in the case of leadership change.** This is critical, as it has also been highlighted in the previous section of the report that the transition in leadership can often adversely affect the continuity of partner engagements in a given district.

MOREOVER, THE GRANULAR ENGAGEMENT AT THE BLOCK/PANCHAYAT LEVEL FURTHER ALLOWS THE PARTNERS TO LEVERAGE BETTER SOCIAL AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES BY BREAKING DOWN NICHE CHALLENGES AT A SMALLER SCALE WHICH ARE RELATIVELY EASIER TO MANAGE, ESPECIALLY FOR VERY LARGE GEOGRAPHIC DISTRICTS.

Furthermore, engaging directly with front-line workers allows the partners to have a robust understanding of the capacity of the human resources responsible for delivering the partner engagement services once the resources of the partner are retracted from the district at the closure of engagement. Necessary strategies to create capacity – **especially in districts facing the challenge of vacant human resources at the front lines** – can be developed by the partners at this stage to ensure sustainable transition and institutionalisation of the engagement practices within the district administration.

Action	Allocate human resources within the district administration wherever possible. Ensure clear communication of engagement goals to front-line workers and intra-district functionaries. Get the buy-in of second-line district officials and Prabhari Officers.
Time Frame	On establishing collaboration and presence in district.
Key Insights Incorporated	1. Young professionals improve motivation of district administration. 2. Second-line officials facilitate continuity in cases of leadership change.
Challenges Addressed	1. Discontinued prioritization of engagement activities owing to leadership change in districts. 2. Low understanding of indicators and end goals among front-line workers.
Risks	Creating stakeholder engagement at the district level may be hindered by cultural differences, time-line commitments of an engagement, and lack of enthusiasm for partner priorities (as experienced in the case of some low weight indicators).

Figure 8.4. The third step of the framework highlights effective strategies for partners to create engagement throughout the district administration to help programme continuity and effective implementation of engagement objectives by front line workers.

Step 04 Facilitate

Once the partners have established a robust engagement across the district administration and have successfully operationalised solutions to bridge critical gaps within the districts.

The role of the partner can focus more on facilitating the operational changes using knowledge support to the district administration across levels.

Action	Map engagement activities with roles of officials within a district – such as encouraging ASHA workers to promote nutritious diet plans – and facilitate the incorporation of engagement activities within the district administration.
Time Frame	On successful engagement with all stakeholders within a district.
Key Insights Incorporated	Creating sustainable engagement practices would require the enthusiastic participation of the district administration and front-line workers.
Challenges Addressed	Possible discontinuity of positive engagement activities at the closure of partner engagements or the program.
Risks	Some critical activities – such as financial inclusion – cannot be mapped to existing roles as no such line-official exists within the district administration. Such activities are mostly conducted by banks/financial institutions in the districts.

Figure 8.5. Facilitating the incorporation of engagement activities within the district administration ensures that positive engagement activities continue even after the closure of the partner engagement.

Here, the partners are expected to tweak and innovate on the existing solution to address district-specific niche challenges. This would further help in the adoption of the evolved policy practices within the government institutions across all levels of the district. The role of the partner in this stage is expected to mostly be one of managing change and overcoming institutional resistance across the levels of the district administration. Again, the presence of a representative in the district may be helpful in navigating the change management aspects of the engagement across the district.

Step 05 Monitor

Embedding the engagement within the district administration, the partner can further roll back into **the role of monitoring the changed practices across the districts intervening only when there are hurdles or when operational feedbacks are needed by the district administration.** This allows the administration to gradually imbibe the changed policy operations and reduces the dependency on the resources of the partner.

This approach promotes the creation of behavioural change within the district administration by effectively establishing a positive feedback loop. Thus, the processes get disseminated throughout the district administration. Furthermore, incorporating monitoring within the engagement framework allows partners to overcome the issue of vacant supervisory positions within districts. These roles can now be bridged by the partner engagement leading to sustainable assimilation of the activities within the district administration.

Action	Once mapped to existing roles/institutions at the district level, actively monitor the engagement activities performed by the district administration with proper feedback loops to institutionalize the processes and practices across the board.
Time Frame	On successful mapping and facilitation of engagement activities to line-officials in a district. Strategy should be in place at the initiation of the project itself.
Key Insights Incorporated	Creating sustainable engagement practices would require the enthusiastic participation of the district administration and front-line workers.
Challenges Addressed	Inability to create behavioural change within the district administration to make partner engagement practices sustainable.
Risks	Imbibing practices of partner engagement may take additional time or capacity building mechanisms for line-officials as low capacity of officials have been identified as a challenge for partners.

Figure 8.6. Mapping partner engagement activities to existing roles/ institutions and monitoring them effectively can create lasting behavioural change in the district administration.

Step 06 Promote

Finally, when a district completely imbibes and institutionalises the policy operations that help them bridge the capacity and governance gaps within the district, the **partners may promote the practice as a "proof of concept" or "best practice" across districts** where similar strategies can then be imbibed and scaled up.

Action	Publish and disseminate the learnings from engagements to other districts and partners to induce similar best practices in other districts and global regions.
Time Frame	On successful institutionalization of engagement practices within the institutional structure of the district administration
Key Insights Incorporated	Scaling-up of partner activities by disseminating innovative models of intervention or best practices of policy implementation.
Challenges Addressed	Intra-regional and inter-regional disparities in partner engagements. Loss of knowledge resources that can promote change in regions facing similar policy challenges.
Risks	Some engagement practices can be context and institution specific within a given state/district holding little external relevance.

Figure 8.7. By promoting successful engagement practices new knowledge resources get created which help other districts overcome similar niche development challenges.

This would facilitate the reduction of intra-regional and inter-regional disparities in partner engagements as other districts – where the partner may not be engaging – can also replicate the best practices and achieve similar social and human development outcomes. **Furthermore, it would prevent the loss of several key informal learnings from the district that can be applicable to regions facing similar niche challenges.** The success stories also act as inspiration for other districts by creating a stronger resolve to drive change. This additional motivation can also bear a positive impact on driving change within the Aspirational Districts.

KEY INFERENCES: HOW TO EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE?

01 Choose the correct domain, region, and point of intervention by matching partner and district foals and orientation using data-driven insights as indicated by IFC Partner Connect.

02 Approach partner engagements with a framework to institutionalise engagement activities within the district administration so that the positive impact continues even after the closure of the particular engagement initiative.

03 Create information symmetries within the ecosystem to magnify the effects of the engagements by convergence, peer to peer learning, and scale-up best-practices within India, as well as at a global scale.

04 Promote the presence of human and knowledge resources at the districts to strengthen the information structure and capacity of the district officials to facilitate better performance management, competition, and convergence. Engage local youth wherever possible.

TOP CHANGE–MAKERS:
WHICH DISTRICTS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DRIVE THE MAXIMUM CHANGE WITH THE HELP OF PARTNERS?

In this section, the report identifies the top 10 districts that have been able to drive the maximum change from their baseline position till the end of 2019 and highlight their corresponding domain partners facilitating this change. In order to measure the change, the difference between the relative positions of districts vis-å-vis their targets from their baseline position and 2019 have been considered. This change has been transformed into a relative score of 100 for all the districts to better highlight the relative improvements per district from their baseline position. This means the district that has travelled the maximum distance towards its target from its base-line position has been given a score of 100. The other districts have been relatively scored according to the movement of this district.

A lower score indicates that the districts have been able to drive a lower degree of change. One limitation of such an analysis stems from the fact that districts that were closer to meeting their targets at the baseline would record lower scores as compared to the districts that were much further away, as the scope of movement is restricted for districts closer to their respective targets. However, the niche challenges for the districts which were further away from their targets at the baseline would conversely be steeper making it harder for them to achieve change. Once the districts have been scored, their development partners working in these domains have been identified.

Again, this is not a metric to gauge the relative performance of a partner organisation. This exercise is merely indicative of partners who have been engaged in districts that were able to drive maximum change within the given time frame under the programme. Since the partners have the advantage of tracking the field-level happenings in these change-making districts, they would eventually be better positioned to inform the whole ecosystem about the successful strategies employed by these districts to overcome challenges.

Sector

Health & Nutrition

In the Health and Nutrition sector, the top 10 districts that have been able to drive the maximum change have all been effectively supported by the presence of development partners within the districts. **Five of the ten districts in the top 10 have registered the presence of more than one partner in the Health and Nutrition sector.** One partner has been facilitated by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and the other partner has been facilitated either by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for LWE districts or NITI Aayog. Since it has already been mentioned that the Health and Nutrition sector has seen the best performance across all districts, it can be indicated with some degree of confidence that the partner ecosystem has been particularly effective in supporting the district administration in this sector. **It is also perhaps relevant to note here that almost 40% of all partner engagements within the Aspirational Districts Programme are related to the sector of Health and Nutrition.**

District	Score	Domain Partners Engaged
Ranchi	100	USAID/IPE Global, Tata Trust
Sukma	90.10	Tata Trust
Nuapada	83.38	UNFPA
Balrampur	80.24	Piramal Swasthya, UNICEF
Wayanad	79.72	UNICEF
Sheikhpura	79.52	BMGF, Piramal Swasthya
Barwani	76.69	Piramal Swasthya, Tata Trust
Siddharthnagar	75.73	BMGF, Plan International
Firozpur	72.75	USAID/IPE Global
Kupwara	72.45	NIPI

Sector

Education

In the domain of Education, eight of the top 10 districts that have been able to drive the maximum change are supported by development partners working in the same domain. **Four of these districts (Garhwa, Ranchi, Rajgarh, and Palamau) are LWE districts from the state of Jharkhand** that have made their place in the top 10 change-making districts in the domain of education. **All these districts are partnered by Tata Trusts that operates across multiple domains in these districts, including education. The other four districts are mentored by Piramal Foundation.** Moving forward, more partner engagement in the domain of education is desirable as the sector is given 30% overall weightage within the programme but accounts for only 10% partner engagements. However, it must also be stated here that several partners working within multiple domains – such as Tata Trusts and Lupin Foundation – are also engaging with the districts in the domain of education. Some of the best case studies documented in the field of education within the scope of this research come from the LWE districts of Jharkhand, where Tata Trusts has been executing innovative education initiatives such as "Project Smart Shala" and "Project Angan".

District	Score	Domain Partners Engaged
Jaisalmer	100	Piramal Foundation (Education)
Hailakandi	89.68	No Domain Partner
Balrampur	88.38	Piramal Foundation (Education)
Sonebhadra	87.52	Piramal Foundation (Education)
Singrauli	85.44	Piramal Foundation (Education)
Rajgarh	84.67	Tata Trust*
Garhwa	82.24	Tata Trust*
Ranchi	81.65	Tata Trust*
Kupwara	79.14	No Domain Partner
Palamu	74.96	Tata Trust*

Sector

Agriculture & Water Resources

Only two out of the top 10 districts that have been able to drive change in the domain of Agriculture and Water Resources have been supported by a development partner organisation. **The significant improvement of Andhra Pradesh is also visible in this analysis, as two out of its three Aspirational Districts have made it to the list.** On the whole, this indicates that there are a lot of opportunities for partners to engage in this particular domain as districts would require significant handholding to achieve their programme targets within this particular sector.

District	Score	Domain Partners Engaged
Y.S.R.	100	No Domain Partner
Bahraich	78.18	ITC Ltd
Vizianagaram	77.92	No Domain Partner
Fatehpur	75.75	No Domain Partner
Wayanad	75.50	No Domain Partner
Kupwara	73.71	No Domain Partner
Khunti	73.38	No Domain Partner
Siddharthnagar	71.82	No Domain Partner
Baran	70.12	ITC Ltd
Bokaro	69.70	No Domain Partner

Sector

Financial Inclusion

Financial Inclusion is another sector where there is significant scope for new partners to engage and for existing partners to expand their engagements with districts. As discussed within the scope of the DTF Analysis and the Key Insights section above, owing to its low weightage (5%) in the programme, Financial Inclusion is often not prioritised either by the district administration or by the partner ecosystem.

Only one development partner organisation is currently working in this domain. **Odisha and Chhattisgarh have emerged as two states that have been able to drive the maximum change in the domain of Financial Inclusion compared to all the other districts under the programme.** The top 10 change-makers in the domain of Financial Inclusion are as follows:

District	Score	Domain Partners Engaged
Nuapada	100	No Domain Partner
Bhadradri-Kothagudem	95.37	No Domain Partner
Nawarangpur	73.72	No Domain Partner
Mahasamund	50.45	No Domain Partner
Dhenkanal	46.34	No Domain Partner
Rajnandgaon	41.17	No Domain Partner
Kanker	39.78	No Domain Partner
Wayanad	35.04	No Domain Partner
Moga	34.99	No Domain Partner
Bastar	33.96	No Domain Partner

Sector

Skill Development

Like Financial Inclusion, several districts in the domain of Skill Development have a broad gap from their programme targets giving scope for more partners to engage in this domain. Districts supported by CII have done well under this sector. Four out of the 10 districts in the top 10 are supported by CII. However, it is important to note that the only two districts that have been able to achieve or exceed their programme targets in the country, Giridih and Ramgarh from Jharkhand, currently have no development partners attached to them. The top 10 change-makers in the domain of Skill Development are as follows:

District	Score	Domain Partners Engaged
Giridih	100	No Domain Partner
Ramgarh	89.04	No Domain Partner
Sheikhpura	82.38	CII
Ramanathapuram	81.09	No Domain Partner
Khagaria	80.18	No Domain Partner
Baran	75.59	Fuel, L&T, and CII
Malkangiri	72.84	No Domain Partner
Latehar	71.73	No Domain Partner
Barwani	71.65	CII
Damoh	69.85	CII

Sector

Basic Infrastructure

Five out of the top 10 districts are supported by development partners for Basic infrastructure. Of these, only one district is supported by a development partner dedicated to the domain of Basic Infrastructure, while the other four districts are LWE districts that are supported by Tata Trusts. Existing government missions – such as SAUBHAGYA and Swachh Bharat – have addressed this sector effectively. Moving forward, partner engagement in domains such as internet connectivity in panchayats and the creation of capacity among local youth to establish common services centres at the panchayat level can be considered. The top 10 districts that have been able to drive the maximum change under the programme are as follows:

District	Score	Domain Partners Engaged
Khunti	100	Tata Trust*
Baksa	98.68	No Domain Partner
Bhopapalli	97.72	No Domain Partner
Sukma	92.17	Tata Trust*
Giridih	91.99	Tata Trust*
Khandwa	91.06	Piramal Water
Godda	90.02	No Domain Partner
Rajgarh	89.78	Tata Trust*
Ribhoi	88.94	No Domain Partner
Sheikhpura	87.94	No Domain Partner

KEY INFERENCES: TOP CHANGE–MAKERS

01 The influence of partners is seen most significantly in the domain of Health & Nutrition.

02 Financial Inclusion, Skill Development, and Agriculture & Water resources remain the most challenging sectors to drive change.

03 Partners intending to support and expand can select some of the change-making districts which currently lack external support to further enhance their performance. The analysis in this report and the IFC Partner Connect tool can be useful in this case.

04 The ability of the districts to drive change irrespective of the support from external partner organisations in some cases may indicate that the competition, convergence, and collaboration within Aspirational Districts Programme is able to drive change in some cases irrespective of the support from the partner ecosystem. Partners can consider moving into such districts for short to medium term engagement in order to help these districts achieve saturation.

09

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are indicative of the way forward for the programme and includes several steps that are already being addressed, especially with the building of a new dynamic dashboard .

STREAMLINING THE SURVEY AND COLLECTION MECHANISMS

Recommendation	Detailed Steps
Narrow Pool of Indicators	There is immense scope of streamlining the chosen group of indicators that form the basis of competition among the aspirational districts. For instance, indicators like the percentage of pregnant women taking nutrition and those having severe anaemia, treated are heavily correlated (0.89). It might be ideal to resolve such duplication of assessment.
Adjust frequency of data collection based on type	Not all indicators show change at a similar frequency as seen in the study. So, taking this into account, survey methods should be adjusted accordingly. Indicators that present change over the long-run should be assessed on an annual basis while the short-run indicators can continue to be assessed quarterly. This would also improve survey reliability.
Digitalisation of data mechanisms	The districts would benefit from a more real-time mechanism of data collection and dissemination. Currently, there is a gap of a few months between survey collection and accessibility of the data by districts. This can be improved if the process is digitised and districts can access the data with a minimal lag.

UPDATING PLAN OF ACTION BASED ON NEW LEARNINGS

Recommendation	Detailed Steps
Peer Group Comparison	Districts can assess where they stand on different parameters and in which sectors have they achieved their targets. Based on that, they can plan their future course of action. By assessing which tier group do they lie in they can draw learnings from their tiers and those above them.
Relative Movement across Regions	An assessment presented in the Mobility Matrix provides them with the data on whether they have improved, worsened or retained status quo. These achievements/failures can be traced back to the policies to understand What Works.
Best Practices of Leaders	The study is supplemented with case studies on some of the best practices for the leading districts across sectors. The districts can modify the learnings made from these practices based on their local requirements across different parameters.

DRIVING TARGETED INVESTMENT THROUGH PARTNER ECOSYSTEM

Recommendation	Detailed Steps
Defining investment intensity through Distance to Frontier analysis	The partners should define their geography of investment based on their intensity of engagement. The appropriate geography can depend upon the length of their engagement. For instance, the partners that plan to engage for a longer period can choose districts that are farthest away from their targets based on the Distance to Frontier analysis.
Building partner engagement based on the 6 Point Framework	The study has developed a Six Point Framework across three major phases of partner engagement that can create better engagement outcomes for partners. The framework is targeted to be utilised by the development partners to leverage better engagement outcomes and promote institutionalisation of partner activities within the district administration.
Leveraging the IFC Partner Connect to drive engagement	Data visualisation and analytics can be utilised to create interactive dashboards, that can help in facilitating partner engagements and CSR in Aspirational Districts. IFC Partner Connect is one such interactive dashboard where partners can identify the domain, the region, and the point of engagement as per the requirement of the engagement profile. It also enables partners present in a district to identify potential areas of expanding their engagements.

LEVERAGING DATA TO DESIGN EFFECTIVE EVALUATION SYSTEMS

Recommendation	Detailed Steps
Defining Peer Groups	Assessment of districts should be done based on the standing of comparative peer groups. It has been seen that districts that start at a relatively low level on the development parameters show more rapid improvement over time since they have more opportunity to grow and also draw lessons from ideas that have been implemented elsewhere.
Conducting and Leveraging a Baseline Study	While extending the programme or replicating it across different geographies, it is instructive to conduct a baseline study and choose indicators that have scope for improvement. The study shows that indicators that had already attained near-saturation before the start of the aspirational districts programme show no significant boost in incremental change on introduction of the programme.
Examining the nature of indicators	While building evaluation mechanisms for projects like Aspirational Districts, the nature of the indicators should be kept in mind. The study shows that all the indicators do not grow at the same rate by using two categorisations: Ease of Implementation and Type of Indicators. It is observed that long-term indicators have low rate of growth compared to medium- and short-term indicators. Also, impact indicators are easier to implement as compared to outcomes.

ENGAGING IN CUSTOMISED LOCAL LEVEL INTERVENTIONS

Recommendation	Detailed Steps
Awareness Campaigns	It is observed that in many cases there is not enough demand for basic health and education infrastructure, or benefits of government programmes don't reach the actual targeted groups due to lack of knowledge. In such cases, awareness campaigns are useful as they aid in reaching out to the populations that have stayed aloof from the development process. They also facilitate a common platform for engagement, thereby, helping in integration of actors and beneficiaries.
Involving young professionals within grass-root administration	Given one of the major problems is continuity in leadership, it is important that many young professionals are engaged that work directly at the local level and act as a common link between the partners and local government administration. It not only promotes continuity of engagements but also improves the motivation of bureaucrats leading to higher social and economic development.
Collaborating with locals	Collaboration with the individual functionaries helps in leveraging the social network and enhances the outreach capacity of the district administration in integrating the population. It also opens the door for the introduction of community-based intervention models, which facilitates stakeholder participation. For instance, women-driven institutions such as Self-Help Groups and Anganwadis have been particularly crucial in the delivery of schemes.

APPENDIX

LIST OF ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS

State	Districts
Andhra Pradesh	Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, Y.S.R.
Arunachal Pradesh	Namsai
Assam	Baksa, Barpeta, Darrang, Dhubri, Goalpara, Hailakandi, Udalguri
Bihar	Araria, Aurangabad, Banka, Begusarai, Gaya, Jamui, Katihar, Khagaria, Muzaffarpur, Nawada, Purnia, Sheikhpura, Sitamarhi
Chhattisgarh	Bastar, Bijapur, Dakshin Bastar Dantewada, Kondagaon, Korba, Mahasamund, Narayanpur, Rajnandgaon, Sukma, Uttar Bastar Kanker
Gujarat	Dahod, Narmada
Haryana	Mewat
Himachal Pradesh	Chamba
Jammu & Kashmir	Baramula, Kupwara
Jharkhand	Bokaro, Chatra, Dumka, Garhwa, Giridih, Godda, Gumla, Hazaribagh, Khunti, Latehar, Lohardaga, Pakur, Palamu, Pashchimi Singhbhum, Purbi Singhbhum, Ramgarh, Ranchi, Sahibganj, Simdega
Karnataka	Raichur, Yadgir
Kerala	Wayanad
Madhya Pradesh	Barwani, Chhatarpur, Damoh, Guna, Khandwa (East Nimar), Rajgarh, Singrauli, Vidisha
Maharashtra	Gadchiroli, Nandurbar, Osmanabad, Washim
Manipur	Chandel
Meghalaya	Ribhoi
Mizoram	Mamit
Nagaland	Kiphire
Odisha	Balangir, Dhenkanal, Gajapati, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangapur , Nuapada, Rayagada
Punjab	Firozpur, Moga
Rajasthan	Baran, Dhaulpur, Jaisalmer, Karauli, Sirohi
Sikkim	West District
Tamil Nadu	Ramanathapuram, Virudhunagar
Telangana	Asifabad (Adilabad), Bhoopalapalli (Warangal), Khammam
Tripura	Dhalai
Uttar Pradesh	Bahraich, Balrampur, Chandauli, Chitrakoot, Fatehpur, Shrawasti, Siddharthnagar, Sonbhadra
Uttarakhand	Hardwar, Udham Singh Nagar

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