



16th CIVIL SERVICES DAY
APRIL 21, 2023

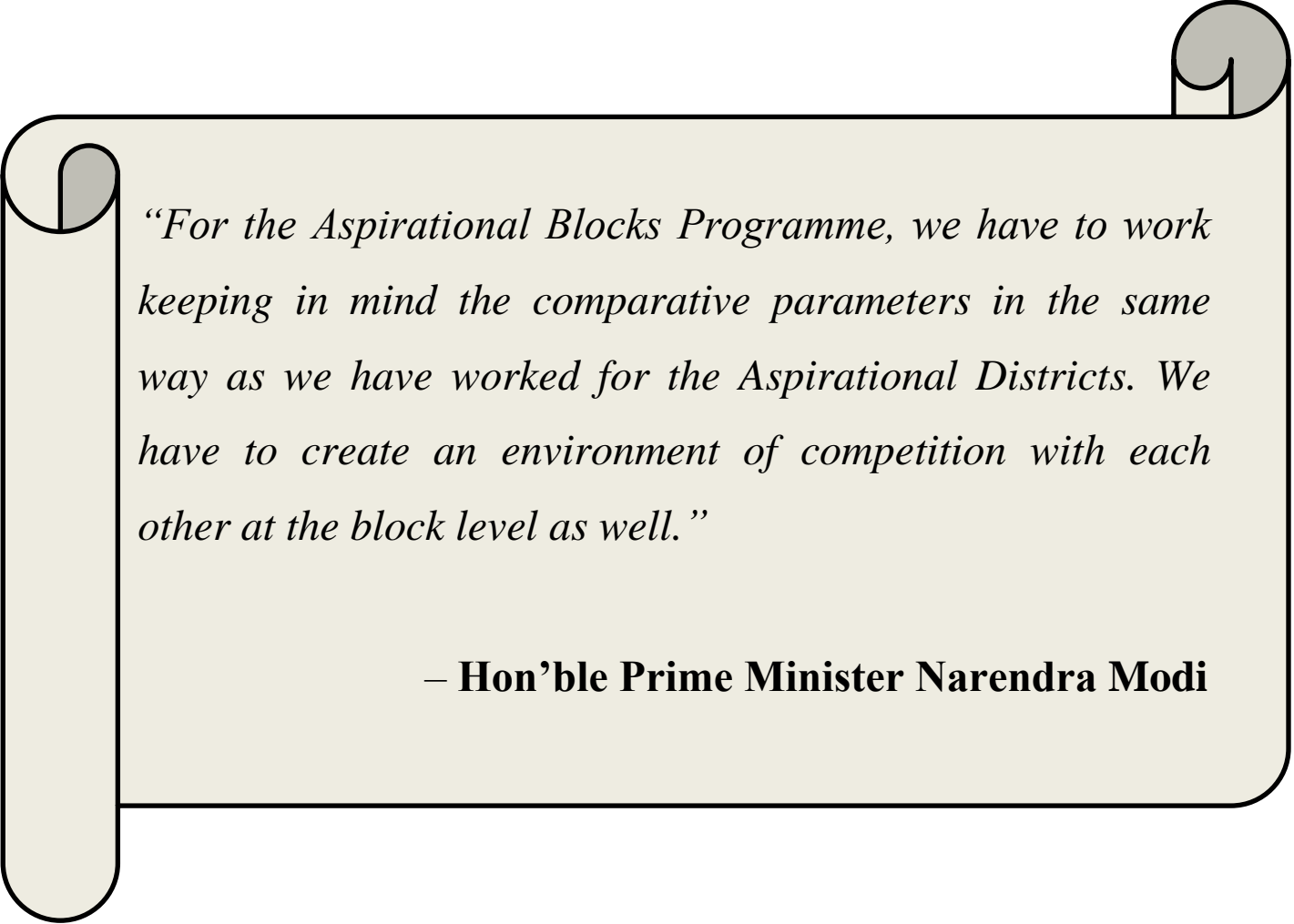


PRIME MINISTER'S AWARDS

**ASPIRATIONAL
BLOCKS PROGRAMME -
REACHING THE LAST
MILE**

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“For the Aspirational Blocks Programme, we have to work keeping in mind the comparative parameters in the same way as we have worked for the Aspirational Districts. We have to create an environment of competition with each other at the block level as well.”

– Hon’ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi

COMPOSITION OF SESSION

Breakaway Session	Aspirational Blocks Programme - Reaching the Last Mile
Chair	Shri BVR Subrahmanyam CEO, NITI Aayog
Panelists	Ms. Lazima Bhatta Deputy Resident Representative UNDP Shri Swatantra Kumar Member Secretary, Planning Madhya Pradesh Shri Ravishankar Shukla District Collector Dumka, Jharkhand Shri Lingraj Panda District Magistrate Gajapati, Odisha
Rapporteur	Ms. V Radha Mission Director Aspirational District Programme NITI Aayog

INTRODUCTION

The success of the Aspirational Districts Programme has prompted the Government of India to extend the template for the rapid development of underdeveloped blocks. This aligns with the vision of the Hon'ble PM of ensuring the saturation of essential services in the country's remotest corners so that India has an inclusive growth trajectory. NITI Aayog has been taking up this with States. As a result, many States, such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, Jammu & Kashmir, Tripura, etc., are instituting robust monitoring arrangements for their backward blocks.

To ensure that this is further strengthened and implemented by all States, NITI Aayog, through an Inter-Ministerial Committee and in consultation with States, identified 500 backward blocks based on selected socio-economic indicators. While choosing these blocks, the Committee also gave weightage to the population and the mean distance between the State per capita GDP and the national per capita GDP so that more blocks are selected from poorer States.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee also recommended taking up critical indicators across health, nutrition, livelihood, education, agriculture & water resource, and basic infrastructure, on which the performance of blocks should be measured. Additionally, since Blocks in different regions are expected to have diverse challenges, a provision has been kept for the States to add their specific indicators. Following the launch of the Aspirational Blocks Programme by the Hon'ble PM during the Second National Conference of Chief Secretaries on 7th Jan 2023, NITI Aayog has been working with all States to ensure focus on these blocks. Once this programme gets momentum, the same template can be used for other Blocks.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the Aspirational Blocks Programme are:

- **Holistic Development of Underdeveloped Blocks:** The programme aims to bring about a comprehensive transformation in the socio-economic indicators of the underdeveloped blocks by focusing on key thematic areas.
- **Convergence of Central and State Schemes:** The programme seeks to converge various central and state government schemes and programmes to achieve maximum impact and optimal utilization of resources.
- **Capacity Building:** In addition to trainings and workshops, the aspirational officers will be taken for exposure visits to facilitate peer learning which would benefit in scaling the works of development in these blocks.
- **Community Participation:** The programme aims to involve local communities in the development process by creating a platform for their involvement and empowerment.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The programme aims to establish a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism to track progress and ensure accountability.
- **Innovation and Learning:** The programme would encourage innovation and learning by providing a platform for sharing knowledge and collaboration among stakeholders. It provides a common platform for all block administrations to showcase their best practices and learnings.

Overall, the Aspirational Blocks Programme aims to bring about a positive change in the lives of its citizens by addressing the socio-economic challenges and empowering local communities to participate in the development process.

OPERATIONAL MECHANISM

Taking a cue from the strategy adopted under the Aspirational Districts Programme, the following constitutes the primary strategy under the Blocks Programme:

- **Placing a robust monitoring system for the thirty identified Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** A dashboard is being developed on which every State would monitor the performance of their chosen blocks after ascertaining their baseline.
- **Ranking of Blocks:** Based on their performance in each quarter, States, with the help of NITI Aayog, would rank these blocks.
- **Incentives & Rewards:** The districts would be awarded an additional allocation based on performance and for incentivising innovative projects to meet critical gaps that may not be covered under other schemes. Additionally, non-monetary rewards to recognize officials and front-line staff who excel in their respective domains is also envisaged.
- **Working on the Potential of Blocks in States:** In the beginning, the Blocks would be requested to identify their challenges and strengths and make a road map for their improvement. For this, States have been asked to identify State-specific key performance indicators in addition to universal KPIs identified by NITI Aayog for all the blocks.
- **Youth Engagement:** States will designate Prabhari Officers and develop plans to integrate youth with this developmental initiative.

KEY FEATURES

The primary approach of the Aspirational Blocks Programme is modelled after the strategy employed in the Aspirational Districts Programme:

Role of NITI Aayog-

The role of NITI Aayog includes providing guidelines, strategies, and frameworks for the Aspirational Blocks Programme. Additionally, a dedicated portal will be established to serve as a decision support system for NITI Aayog, Line Ministries, States, Districts, and Block administrations. NITI Aayog will also establish a robust monitoring system for selected indicators, with every state using a dashboard to monitor the performance of their chosen blocks after ascertaining their baseline. States, with the help of NITI Aayog, will rank these blocks based on their performance each quarter. An amount of Rs 100 Crores per year will be allocated to incentivise good performance of various block-level functionaries.

The program's strategy significantly emphasizes on capacity building, particularly for improvement in governance and service delivery. Furthermore, a knowledge repository will be set up to disseminate the most effective practices and initiatives executed by field functionaries in the 500 Aspirational Blocks.

Role of States and Central Line Ministries:

- States would nominate Prabhari officers to guide and supervise the block and district administrations.
- States would collaborate with stakeholders such as development partners, civil society organizations, academic institutions, self-help groups and youth to support this developmental programme.
- The district and block administrations would be encouraged to assess their strengths and weaknesses and create a time bound action plan for improvement by exploring their potential.
- Central Ministries would develop targeted strategies to ensure the comprehensive provision of essential services in these regions, encompassing socio-economic domains.

STATE-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF BLOCKS

Sl. No.	States/Union Territories	Number of Blocks
1.	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	2
2.	Andhra Pradesh	15
3.	Arunachal Pradesh	3
4.	Assam	20
5.	Bihar	61
6.	Chhattisgarh	20
7.	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	2
8.	Gujarat	13
9.	Haryana	7
10.	Himachal Pradesh	6
11.	Jammu and Kashmir	10
12.	Jharkhand	34
13.	Karnataka	14
14.	Kerala	9
15.	Ladakh	2
16.	Madhya Pradesh	42
17.	Maharashtra	27
18.	Manipur	3
19.	Meghalaya	3
20.	Mizoram	3
21.	Nagaland	3
22.	Odisha	29
23.	Punjab	10
24.	Rajasthan	27
25.	Sikkim	3
26.	Tamil Nadu	16
27.	Telangana	10
28.	Tripura	3
29.	Uttar Pradesh	68
30.	Uttarakhand	6
31.	West Bengal	29
TOTAL		500

WAY FORWARD

Under the leadership of the district administration, the officers at the block level will improve critical last-mile service delivery. They will focus on improving the infrastructure at the block level to aid social welfare development. The Aspirational Block Programme will ensure that a larger than proportionate share of development reaches the marginalised and vulnerable sections of the population by building social and economic infrastructure. The programme will adopt customised approaches towards improving socioeconomic indicators based on the context of the region and the most emergent needs by bringing the decision-making process closer to the grass roots.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- What are the challenges in rolling out Aspirational Blocks Programme at block level?
- What role can Block Development Officers (BDOs) play in collaborating with the departments for implementation of the programme?
- Do they have decision making authority, sufficient resources and bandwidth in place for implementation of the programme?



सत्यमेव जयते

**DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND PUBLIC GRIEVANCES
MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**