

## Transformation of Aspirational Districts Programme

*Remarkable progress in Uttar Pradesh Aspirational Districts – Amongst top 10 best performing districts in the country; Five in UP*

(NITI Aayog)

January 05, 2022

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

Prime Minister Narendra Modi<sup>1</sup>

### Background<sup>2</sup>

India is on a high growth trajectory that is expected to lift millions out of poverty. However, presently the quality of life of many of its citizens is not consistent with this growth story, a fact reflected in [UNDP's 2020 Human Development Index](#)<sup>3</sup> wherein we are ranked 131 out of 188 countries. A closer look at the data reveals high heterogeneity in the living standards in India. There are significant inter-state and inter-district variations. By uplifting the districts which have shown relatively lesser progress in achieving key social outcome, India can move ahead in the human development index. **The ‘Transformation of Aspirational Districts’ initiative aims to remove this heterogeneity through a mass movement to quickly and effectively transform these districts.**

### Introduction

The Aspirational Districts Program was launched by the Honourable Prime Minister, Sh. Narendra Modi in January 2018, with the objective of expediting the transformation of [112 most backward districts across 28 states](#) through the convergence of government programmes and schemes. The districts were chosen by senior officials of the Union government in consultation with states officials. To



Narendra Modi  
@narendramodi

The Government of India is actively working on the aspirational districts. These districts have their own challenges, which we are overcoming with practical and people-friendly solutions.



3:01 PM · Mar 10, 2018 · Twitter Web Client

[Source](#)

<sup>1</sup> <https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/Aspirational-Districts.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2018-12/AspirationalDistrictsBaselineRankingMarch2018.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/library/hdr/human-development-products/human-development-report-2016--human-development-for-everyone.html>

shortlist states a composite index of deprivation was constructed using a range of socio-economic indicators.

The [‘Transformation of Aspirational Districts’](#)<sup>4</sup> initiative envisions New India by 2022 where the focus is to improve India's ranking under Human Development Index, raising living standards of its citizens and ensuring inclusive growth of all.

The broad strategy of the Aspirational Districts Programme includes:

- **Convergence** - between Central and State Schemes
- **Collaboration** - between Centre, State, District Administration, Development Partners and Citizens
- **Competition** - between Districts

### **Focus Areas**<sup>5</sup>

The Government is committed to raising the living standards of its citizens and ensuring inclusive growth for all – “**Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas**”. To enable optimum utilization of their potential, this program focuses closely on improving people’s ability to participate fully in the vibrant economy. Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure are this programme’s core areas of focus.

### **Themes**

A total of **117 Aspirational districts** have been identified by [NITI Aayog](#)<sup>6</sup> based upon composite indicators from **Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion and Skill Development and Basic Infrastructure** which have an impact on the Human development Index.

Weightage has been accorded to these districts as below:

Theme	Weight	Data-points
Health & Nutrition	30%	31
Education	30%	14
Agriculture & Water Resources	20%	12
Financial Inclusion	5%	6
Skill Development	5%	10
Basic Infrastructure	10%	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>81</b>

[Source](#)

### **Methodology**

The [objective of the program is to monitor](#) the real-time progress of aspirational districts based on **49 indicators (81 data-points) from the five identified thematic areas**. With the latest available data from the ministries concerned, Niti Aayog has completed a baseline ranking of 101 districts. Data was normalised, and a composite score was calculated. Going

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nhm.gov.in/index1.php?lang=1&level=2&sublinkid=967&lid=587>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2018-12/AspirationalDistrictsBaselineRankingMarch2018.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.niti.gov.in/>

forward, districts will be ranked based on their progress on a real-time basis. Niti Aayog will subsequently calculate the ‘distance to frontier’ – i.e., the distance of each district from the states and nation’s best.

### Indicators for Sector-wise rankings based on themes

- **[Health & Nutrition](#)**<sup>7</sup> - with 30 per cent of the overall weight allotted, health & nutrition has 31 data-points. They focus on **antenatal care, postnatal care, gender parity, health of new-born, growth of children, contagious diseases, and health infrastructure.**
- **[Education](#)**<sup>8</sup> - the education sector accounts for 30 per cent of the overall index. 14 data-points have been identified focusing on learning outcomes (transition rate from primary to upper primary, and subsequently to secondary schooling, average scores in mathematics and languages etc.), as well as infrastructural (toilet access for girls, drinking water, electricity supply) and institutional indicators (RTE mandated pupil-teacher ratio, timely delivery of textbooks).
- **[Agriculture & Water Resources](#)**<sup>9</sup> - agriculture is the backbone of India, with more than 50 per cent of our workforce engaged in cultivation and allied activities. 12 data-points have been identified for the 20 per cent weight allocated to agriculture. The **focus is on outputs (yield, price realisation etc.), inputs (quality seed distribution, soil health cards), and institutional support (crop insurance, electronic markets, artificial insemination, animal vaccination etc.).**
- **[Financial Inclusion & Skill Development](#)**<sup>10</sup> - together, these two themes account for 10 per cent of the overall index. 6 data-points have been identified in financial inclusion to measure progress in take-up of important central government schemes ([Atal Pension Yojana](#),<sup>11</sup> [Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana](#)<sup>12</sup> etc.), reach of institutional banking (number of accounts opened under Jan Dhan Yojana), and ease of institutional financing for small businesses (disbursement of Mudra loans). 10 data-points have been identified in skill development to keep track of the progress in skilling of youth, employment, and the skilling of vulnerable/marginalized youth under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)
- **[Basic Infrastructure](#)**<sup>13</sup> Housing for all with water, electricity, and road connectivity is the priority of the Government. 8 important data-points have been identified including availability of individual household latrines, drinking water, electricity, and road connectivity. Districts are also tracked for the number of internets connected Gram Panchayats, and panchayats with Common Service Centres.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2018-12/FirstDeltaRanking-May2018-AspirationalRanking.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2018-12/FirstDeltaRanking-May2018-AspirationalRanking.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2018-12/FirstDeltaRanking-May2018-AspirationalRanking.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2018-12/FirstDeltaRanking-May2018-AspirationalRanking.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://financialservices.gov.in/pension-reforms-divisions/Atal-Pension-Yojana>

<sup>12</sup> [https://financialservices.gov.in/insurance-divisions/Government-Sponsored-Socially-Oriented-Insurance-Schemes/Pradhan-Mantri-Jeevan-Jyoti-Bima-Yojana\(PMJJBYP\)](https://financialservices.gov.in/insurance-divisions/Government-Sponsored-Socially-Oriented-Insurance-Schemes/Pradhan-Mantri-Jeevan-Jyoti-Bima-Yojana(PMJJBYP))

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2018-12/FirstDeltaRanking-May2018-AspirationalRanking.pdf>

## Institutional Arrangement for the Programme<sup>14</sup>

- The Aspirational Districts Programme is a product of collective effort in which States are the main drivers.
- At Government of India level, the programme is anchored by NITI Aayog. In addition, individual Ministries have assumed responsibility to drive progress of districts.
- For each district, a central Prabhari officer of the rank of Additional Secretary/Joint Secretary has been nominated.
- An Empowered Committee under the convener-ship of CEO, NITI Aayog has been notified to ensure convergence in schemes and address specific issues brought out by Prabhari officers.
- States have been requested to form a committee under Chief Secretary to implement the programme.
- States have also nominated nodal officers and also State level Prabhari officers.

## Delta ranking<sup>15</sup>

This program focuses on the strength of each district, identifying low-hanging fruits for immediate improvement and **measuring progress by ranking districts on a monthly basis**. The ranking is based on the incremental progress made across 49 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) under 5 broad socio-economic themes - Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development and Infrastructure.

The delta-ranking of Aspirational Districts and the performance of all districts is available on the [Champions of Change Dashboard](#).<sup>16</sup>

On the 29<sup>th</sup> June 2018, Shri Amitabh Kant, CEO, Niti Aayog [released the first Delta rankings \(incremental progress\) based on self-reported data of districts between March 31, 2018 to May 31, 2018](#) and mentioned that “the purpose of this ranking is to spur a sense of competition among the dynamic teams in the districts. Since these districts face many challenges including legacy, unexploited or weak resource base, deficit of manpower at different levels due to difficult living conditions etc, the ranking is also a tool to identify sectors and indicator specific challenges so that Team India, which is driving this programme, can take immediate corrective measures.”

To know more about the Second Delta Rankings of Aspirational Districts, [click here](#).

## Champions of Change<sup>17</sup>

### *Dashboard to measure progress of Aspirational Districts Programme*

Champions of Change (CoC) is the backbone of the Aspirational Districts Programme. The new CoC digital platform now facilitates advanced data analytics, digitized project management workflow, and machine-learning capabilities.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2018-12/FirstDeltaRanking-May2018-AspirationalRanking.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.niti.gov.in/aspirational-districts-programme>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.niti.gov.in/aspirational-districts-programme>

<sup>17</sup> <http://championsofchange.gov.in/site/coc-home/>

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2021-02/Annual-Report2020-2021-English\\_0.pdf](https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2021-02/Annual-Report2020-2021-English_0.pdf)

In June 2021, [United Nations Development Programme](#)<sup>19</sup> (UNDP) in India [released an independent appraisal report on the Aspirational Districts Programme](#). The UNDP appraisal beautifully captures the significance of these indicators as well as the vibrant success stories and best practices resonating from across the country.<sup>20</sup>



India's Aspirational Districts Programme aims to ensure inclusive & all-round development in areas across our nation. Under this programme, many districts have witnessed holistic transformation. Glad to see the @UNDP report highlight its salient features. [pib.gov.in/PressReleasePa...](http://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePa...)

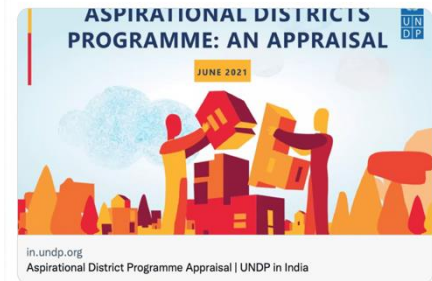
8:34 AM · Jun 12, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

4,972 Retweets 159 Quote Tweets 25.5K Likes

[Source](#)



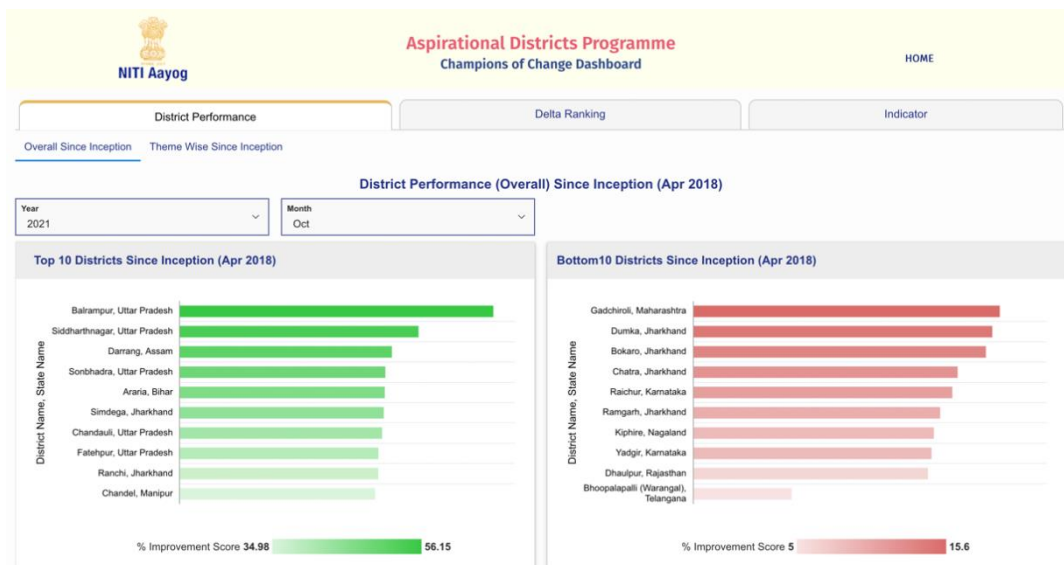
Removing regional disparities, Aspirational District Programme has brought holistic development across parts of the nation. Appraised by @UNDP, this model of governance will serve as an example for other nations.



12:57 PM · Jun 12, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

[Source](#)

Amongst the aspirational districts of other states, the aspirational districts in Uttar Pradesh have shown remarkable improvement. UNDP India's appraisal report on the Aspirational Districts Programme released in June 2021, appreciated the delta rankings provided on the programme's Champions of Change dashboard. It mentions that, the competitive and dynamic culture fostered by it has successfully pushed several low performing districts (as per baseline rankings) to improve their standing in the past three years. Simdega (Jharkhand), Chandauli (Uttar Pradesh), Sonbhadra (Uttar Pradesh) and Rajgarh (Madhya Pradesh) were found to have progressed the most since the beginning of the programme.



[Source](#)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.undp.org/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.niti.gov.in/index.php/aspirational-story-transformation>

Furthermore, at least five districts of Uttar Pradesh made it to the list of top 10 best performing aspirational districts since the inception of Aspirational Districts Program. These districts include Balrampur, Siddharthnagar, Sonbhadra, Fatehpur and Chandauli.

Following are the 8 Aspirational Districts of Uttar Pradesh and key developments associated with these:

- **Bahraich**

- [Tata Trust in collaboration with the state government](#) is mobilizing its resources in 200 villages of 3 districts of **Balarampur, Bahraich and Shravasti**. With this type of participation, Jal Jeevan Mission is becoming a 'Jan Andolan'.
- On 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2018, the [Cabinet approved broad gauge railway line between Bahraich and Khalilabad](#) at a cost of [around 5,000 crore rupees](#). Briefing media after the Cabinet meeting in New Delhi, Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said, the line will be completed by 2024-25.



I have received my gas connection through Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojana. Earlier it was difficult to cook food but now I save a lot of time while cooking which I utilize to spend time with my family: Manisha from Bahraich, #UttarPradesh



12:56 PM · Dec 14, 2021 · Twitter Media Studio

[Source](#)

- **Balrampur**

- On 11<sup>th</sup> December 2021, PM Narendra Modi [inaugurated the Saryu Nahar National Project in Balrampur](#), Uttar Pradesh. Saryu Nahar National Project involves the interlinking of five rivers, namely, Ghaghara, Saryu, Rapti, Banganga, and Rohini that intends to ensure superlative usage of water resources of the region. With this project, the government has assured water for irrigation of over 14 lakh hectares of land, this, in turn, will benefit about 29 lakh farmers of over



PM @narendramodi inaugurated the Saryu Nahar National Project in #AspirationalDistrict Balrampur, UP today.

The project will play a vital role in ensuring optimum utilisation of water resources and benefit farmers across villages in eastern #UttarPradesh.



PMO India and 6 others

10:04 PM · Dec 11, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

[Source](#)

6200 villages. Nine districts of Eastern Uttar Pradesh namely – **Bahraich, Shravasti, Balrampur, Gonda, Siddharthnagar, Basti, Sant Kabir Nagar, Gorakhpur, and Maharajganj** will reap the benefits of this project.<sup>21</sup>



Enabling esp. the marginal farmers to get more from their land, trellis farming or machan kheti is transforming the manner in which the farmers of the **#AspirationalDistrict** of Balrampur look at multi-tier, sustainable, eco-friendly farming; Angrez Bhaiya's story's one of many:



9:58 AM · Dec 14, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

[Source](#)



**#VoicesOfChange:** 'Padhe Balrampur-Badhe Balrampur' campaign of DM **#Balrampur #UttarPradesh** involving local communities, teachers, collaboration b/w departments & rallies by students transformed education! 54747 new students enrolled & attendance improved! **#AspirationalDistricts**



PMO India and 5 others

8:54 PM · Aug 29, 2018 · Twitter for iPhone

[Source](#)

- **Chandauli**

- [Uttar Pradesh's Chandauli district decided to experiment with the cultivation of black rice](#), due to its high demand in global markets and good profit margins. The project was a success and high-quality black rice is now being exported to Australia and New Zealand.



**#AspirationalDistrict** Chitrakoot in **#UttarPradesh** has shown a notable 40% fall in Severe Acute **#Malnutrition** among children under five. Focus on infant & young child feeding, immunization and treatment of childhood infections are key interventions towards a healthier district



PMO India and 8 others

4:45 PM · Jan 30, 2019 · Twitter Web Client

- **Chitrakoot**

- Prime Minister had laid the [foundation stone of piped water supply schemes for the rural areas of 7 districts](#) viz. Jhansi, Mahoba, Lalitpur, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Banda and Chitrakoot in the Bundelkhand region in February 2019

<sup>21</sup> <https://newsonair.com/2021/12/11/the-nation-is-with-the-families-of-the-heroes-we-have-lost-pm-modi/>

- **Fatehpur**

- One medical college has been [sanctioned and inaugurated in Fatehpur](#), under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme for “Establishment of new medical colleges attached with district/ referral hospitals”

- **Shravasti**

- Topped the delta ranking of aspirational districts in December 2020
- Government is making several efforts for tourism and infrastructure development in this area
- The [New Railway Line between Bahraich and Khalilabad](#), will serve 5 districts of Uttar Pradesh including 4 aspirational districts (Bahraich, Balrampur, Shravasti and Siddharth Nagar) and Sant Kabirnagar

- **Siddharthnagar**

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi [inaugurated 9 Medical Colleges in Siddharth Nagar, UP](#). He said that **Siddharthnagar** has also given such a dedicated public representative in the form of Late Madhav Prasad Tripathi ji to the country, whose tireless hard work is helping the nation today. He added that to name the new medical college of **Siddharthnagar after Madhav Babu is a true tribute to his service.**

**NITI Aayog**  
@NITIAayog

Helping enhance digital literacy & coding skills! 🧑🏫

With the support of #NITIAayog's Empowered Committee, #AspirationalDistrict Siddharthnagar has established computer labs in five schools of the district to encourage e-learning.



PMO India and 6 others

5:00 PM · Sep 21, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

[Source](#)

**Narendra Modi**  
@narendramodi

Leaving for Siddharthnagar and Varanasi. Today, India's largest scheme to scale-up health infrastructure will be launched. Various medical colleges along with key development works will be inaugurated.



[Source](#)

- **Sonbhadra**

- Prime Minister had [laid the foundation stone for rural drinking water supply projects for Mirzapur and Sonbhadra](#) districts of Vindhyachal region. These are water-stressed areas.
- [13 new Medical Colleges are planned in the State](#) have been planned which will take the total number of medical colleges constructed in the State in the last two and a half years to 27. These medical colleges will be set-up in the districts of Bijnor, Gonda, Lalitpur, **Chandauli**, Bulandshahr, Pilibhit,



Kaushambi, Amethi, Kanpur Dehat, Sultanpur, Lakhimpur, Auraiya and Sonbhadra.

- Sonbhadra has become the first district of UP to use the traditional 'taanka' technique popular in the desert region of Rajasthan for rainwater harvesting and water conservation to deal with the water crisis. The first 'taanka' has come up at Kasturba Gandhi Girls School, in Bichpadi village.

**Hardeep Singh Puri** @HardeepSPuri

Congratulations to PM @narendramodi Ji on the success of Aspirational Districts Programme (APD).

Happy & satisfied that Sonbhadra, the aspirational district adopted by me is among the top performing districts since beginning of the APD in @UNDP\_India APD Report 2020.

ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS PROGRAMME: AN APPRAISAL

Data Driven Governance - The Key to Programme Effectiveness?

PMO India

7:43 PM · Jun 13, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

[Source](#)

**NITI Aayog** @NITIAayog

The #AspirationalDistrict of Sonbhadra, #UttarPradesh, has become the first district in the State to use the traditional 'taanka' technique for rainwater harvesting and water conservation.

hindustantimes.com

Sonbhadra gets first 'taanka' in Uttar Pradesh to harvest rainwater

The 'taanka' was inaugurated in a programme organised in the district over a week after PM Narendra Modi wrote a letter to village heads urging them to ...

12:01 PM · Jun 24, 2019 · Twitter Web Client

50 Retweets 3 Quote Tweets 182 Likes

[Source](#)

## Video Reference

- [In Focus: Discussion on Aspirational Districts Programme](#) dated 13<sup>th</sup> June 2021
- [DD DIALOGUE | Aspirational District Program: Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas Sabka Vishwas](#) dated Nov 20, 2020
- [PM Modi inaugurates 9 Medical Colleges in Siddharth Nagar in Uttar Pradesh](#)
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**AG/HP/RN/PK**