



## India's Aspirational District Program: Unpacking Public Health Guidance to Strengthen Government Health Systems

Oct 2026



### FACTS:

- The Aspirational Districts Programme was launched in 2018 and focuses on improving development outcomes through a data-driven governance approach and in 2023, Aspirational Blocks Programme was launched to extend similar principles to block-level governance.
- There is limited evidence on how complex multisectoral programmes are negotiated, adapted, and implemented in lower- and middle-income settings.
- This study will engage policymakers, programme managers, frontline workers, and beneficiaries across multiple levels of implementation.

### BACKGROUND:

- India's Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) aims to accelerate development in historically underserved districts through convergence, collaboration, and competition across sectors.
- While the programme has attracted national and international attention, limited evidence exists on how its vision is interpreted and implemented across different levels of governance.
- Understanding how public health guidance moves from national policy to local implementation can provide valuable lessons for strengthening government health systems and improving equity.

### AIM:

- To understand the history, evolution, and policy processes that shaped the Aspirational Districts Programme and Aspirational Blocks Programme.
- To examine how programme goals, guidance, and measures of success are adapted and implemented across national, state, district, block, and community levels.

### METHODS:

- This ethnography uses methods such as semi-structured interviews with policymakers, programme implementers, frontline workers, and intended beneficiaries across national, state, district, block, and community levels.
- The study also includes participant observation and secondary analysis of programme documents, policies, and monitoring systems.

### PROJECT CYCLE:

2024 - 2027

### PARTNERS:

Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHSPH)  
The George Institute for Global Health India  
Health Equity Action Lab (HEAL)

### SUPPORTERS:

National Science Foundation, United States

### PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS:

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### REGION:

India/Kerala: Wayanad, Palakkad, Idukki and Kasaragod

### IMPACT

- Generate practical lessons for policymakers and implementers on designing and managing large-scale, multisectoral development programmes.
- Improve understanding of how programme success is defined, measured, and experienced across different governance levels.
- Strengthen evidence for building responsive, equitable, and locally owned health and development systems in India.

### CONTACT:

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