



VILLAGE ADHYAN

Toolkits for Community Engagement and Rural Transformation

Toolkit Series -5

Village Adhyan : Entitlements and Social Assistance Support

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA)

SEG-Capacity Building, Strategy for Convergence
and Implementation of Various Govt. Schemes



National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj

(Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India)

Rajendranagar, Hyderabad – 500 030

www.nirdpr.org.in

Preface

Village Adhyan Toolkits: Connect the Dots to Find the Flow

The **Village Adhyan Toolkits** are designed as **practical field guides** for learners engaging with villages. They are not meant to be read like an academic manual, but to be *used*—during field visits, community interactions, and reflection. From the outset, this series makes a deliberate choice: *perceived usability matters more than intellectual completeness*. The purpose is to support learning that actually happens on the ground.

Village Adhyan treats field learning as one journey supported by many pocket guides. No one carries an atlas into a village; they carry only the route needed for the day. In the same spirit, this Toolkit is arranged as **seven Learning Series**, each focusing on a distinct theme of village life, yet connected to the larger whole.

Each toolkit is modular, focused, and field-friendly, helping the learner clearly answer:

- *What shall I do with this toolkit?*
- *What should I observe?*
- *What should I ask?*
- *What should I reflect on?*

The likely insights at each stage are presented as **concise nuggets**, meant to be retained as **mental models**—simple ways of seeing connections, patterns, and flows in village realities.

Instead of a single bulky compendium, Village Adhyan is intentionally designed as a **Toolkit Series**. In a way, it works like a Netflix series rather than an 800-page textbook. Learning is broken into focused “episodes” that can be taken up one at a time, revisited when needed, or even skipped depending on context. This makes each toolkit psychologically approachable, clearly finishable, and easy to share, print, or update.

By presenting Village Adhyan as seven Learning Series—with a common structure and flow—the toolkits reduce cognitive load and invite use rather than hesitation. The pages that follow explain how each Learning Series supports this journey of exploration, helping learners gradually see villages not as isolated problems, but as interconnected systems.

R Ramesh
NIRDPR, Hyderabad

SEG-Capacity Building, Strategy for Convergence and Implementation of Various Govt. Schemes

Village Adhyan Toolkit Series

Toolkit – 1: The Overall Framework

Learning through Exploration: This toolkit introduces the core approach of Village Adhyan. It focuses on how to ask exploratory questions—questions that are not meant to extract quick or isolated answers, but to trace pathways: from cause to consequence, from policy intent to field practice, and from individual experience to systemic patterns. Village Adhyan is about learning to connect, sequence, and relate—to see village realities as flows rather than isolated dots. This toolkit helps students de-learn fragmented thinking and cultivate inquiry that leads to deeper understanding.

Toolkit – 2: Rural Infrastructure

Foundations for Human Development: This toolkit focuses on understanding rural infrastructure systems such as health infrastructure, education infrastructure, Anganwadi centres, drinking water supply, sanitation, housing, roads, electricity, and digital connectivity. Students learn to examine not just physical availability, but functionality, access, quality, and maintenance, and how infrastructure shapes outcomes in health, education, livelihoods, and dignity.

Toolkit – 3: Rural Livelihoods, Skilling and Entrepreneurship

How Rural Households Earn a Living: This toolkit examines farm and non-farm livelihoods, skilling, entrepreneurship, and emerging livelihood opportunities. It emphasizes livelihood enhancement and diversification, seasonal vulnerability, income stability, and the link between livelihoods, skills, assets, local ecosystems and how empowerment emerges through productive engagement. Students are encouraged to see livelihoods as dynamic strategies, not static occupations. It also introduces relevant schemes of the Ministry of Rural Development, and Ministry of Small, Micro Enterprises.

Toolkit – 4: Entitlements and Social Assistance Support

Social Protection and Resilience: This toolkit focuses on entitlements and deprivation, including social assistance for the aged, persons with disabilities, widows, destitute households, and vulnerable groups. It also covers income support, insurance, and resilience-building measures, particularly for those engaged in informal work, rural arts, crafts, and traditional livelihoods. Students learn to distinguish between eligibility, access, delivery, and dignity in welfare systems.

Toolkit – 5: Last-Mile Service Delivery

From Coverage to Saturation: This toolkit examines the challenges of last-mile delivery and the pursuit of saturation of key development indicators—such as ensuring every child attends an Anganwadi, full immunization, freedom from malnutrition and anaemia, universal SHG inclusion for poor women, and smooth transitions from secondary education to higher secondary, technical education, or skilling pathways. The emphasis is on understanding why gaps persist despite schemes, and how coordination and follow-up matter.

Toolkit – 6: Creating Model Villages

Model Villages: This toolkit focuses on the idea of Model Villages, emphasizing that a Model Village is rooted in inspiration, not perfection. A Model Village does not mean a village that is perfect in every sphere of development. At its core, a Model Village demonstrates how focused effort, collective action, and smart use of available resources can bring visible and measurable transformation. It puts across that development does not have to begin everywhere at once. It can begin in one critical area and then naturally spread to related areas, improving overall quality of life. Model village is about ‘inspirational ripple’.

Toolkit – 7: Creating Smart Villages for Vikshit Bharat 2047

Smart Villages: This toolkit focuses on the idea of Model Villages and Smart Villages, emphasizing the creation of a digitally empowered rural citizen—the “Techno Rural Person.” It explores how Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) can enable seamless Government-to-Citizen services, improve transparency, access opportunities, and support inclusive development. This toolkit connects village-level transformation with the larger vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Each **Village Adhyan Toolkit** is designed to be used independently while also fitting into a coherent whole. Together, they encourage students to move from observation to exploration, from fragments to flows, and from understanding problems to imagining pathways for transformation. Elements such as technology, gender, inclusivity etc. can go cutting across all these categories.

Toolkit Series - 5

Transformational Change and Last Mile Service Delivery

Understanding Transformational Change

Transformational change in rural development is not merely about improving averages or reporting incremental progress. It is about ensuring that **every single person—especially the poorest, most marginalised, and voiceless—is reached in real time, with dignity**. This is where the idea of **last-mile service delivery** becomes central.

For decades, rural development followed a slow, incremental path. Take rural sanitation as an example. From 1986 onwards, toilet construction progressed gradually. After nearly 28 years, only about one-third of rural households had access to toilets. While progress was visible on paper, the pace was painfully slow for families who continued to suffer daily indignity, health risks, and exclusion. For the poorest household, “eventual coverage” meant **endless waiting**—a wait that undermined the very purpose of public service delivery.

A decisive shift occurred in 2014, when sanitation was taken up in **mission mode**. The government declared a clear, non-negotiable goal: *every rural household must have a toilet by 2 October 2019*. This was not just a policy target; it was a commitment to **reach the last household in the last village** within a fixed time frame. The focus moved from averages to **saturation**, from “most households” to **every household**, from slow expansion to accelerated completion. As a result, in about 60 months, India could declare itself Open Defecation Free. What moved at a snail’s pace for decades was transformed once last-mile delivery became the priority.

The same logic underpins the **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)**. Providing a Functional Household Tap Connection is not merely about infrastructure—it is about ensuring that **the last house on the edge of the village**, often inhabited by the poorest family, receives safe drinking water at home. A tap connection delayed by years means continued drudgery for women, health risks for children, and inequality in daily life.

That is why JJM is framed as a time-bound mission, now moving toward full saturation—because **a poor household cannot wait indefinitely for a basic service.**

This idea of last-mile delivery extends across sectors:

- the **last house** to receive an electricity connection,
- the **last family** to get an LPG cylinder,
- the **last child** to be fully immunised,
- the **last eligible household** to receive housing support, pension, or social security,
- the **last person** to be brought into the formal financial system.

If even one eligible person is left out, service delivery remains incomplete. True transformation occurs only when **no one is left behind.**

From the perspective of **Village Adhyan**, identifying such *unfinished agendas* is critical. Students and field teams must learn to ask:

- Who is still waiting?
- Which household has been missed?
- Why has the last mile not been reached here?
- What administrative, social, or logistical barriers are causing delay?

Taking these last-mile gaps to the **finish line**, through convergence, local problem-solving, and mission-mode follow-up, is what converts schemes into outcomes and policies into lived change.

In essence, **last-mile service delivery is the test of transformational change.** It reminds us that development is not successful when most people benefit, but only when **every eligible person—especially the poorest—receives timely, reliable, and dignified services.**

Why the Saturation Approach Matters

Incremental change is comfortable but slow. It carries the attitude of *“We will get there someday.”*

Transformational change, in contrast, says, *“We will achieve this within a defined time frame.”*

The **saturation approach** represents a new mindset of professionalism and urgency in rural development. It brings discipline, speed, and accountability to governance. It acknowledges a simple truth: *someone who is thirsty cannot wait for years to quench their thirst*. People are waiting for clean water, sanitation, housing, roads, and digital access—these cannot be delayed endlessly. Delayed delivery only earns frustration, not faith.

By adopting a saturation approach, we commit to **specific, measurable, time-bound goals**, ensuring that development is not partial or selective but *complete and universal*. It's about improving lives within the timeframe we set—so that achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals by 2030** and realizing a **Viksit Bharat by 2047** become real, not rhetorical. *Focus on one indicator and take it to the 'finish-line'*.

Building Blocks of the Saturation Approach

1. **Set Clear and Measurable Targets** – Define block-wise and village-wise goals with fixed timelines.
2. **Mobilize Communities** – Involve PRIs, SHGs, youth groups, and local champions to build ownership.
3. **Ensure Convergence** – Align all departments, CSR partners, NGOs, and academic institutions for collective action.
4. **Communicate Effectively** – Use local media, wall paintings, and stories that connect emotionally with the people.
5. **Monitor and Adapt** – Use dashboards and regular reviews to track, learn, and make course corrections.
6. **Recognize Achievers** – Celebrate successes, highlight role models, and sustain motivation across teams.

When systems align and communities take charge, *true saturation is achieved*—not as a bureaucratic target, but as a social movement that transforms lives.

Two Critical Dimensions of the Saturation Strategy

While these building blocks define the operational side of saturation, two deeper elements make it a truly transformative strategy.

1. Distance to Saturation – Targeting the Low-Hanging Fruits

In any large-scale development mission, it is both logical and efficient to start with the low-hanging fruits—those Gram Panchayats (GPs) or Blocks already close to

achieving saturation. These are the areas where just a small additional effort can lead to complete coverage.

For example, under the Jal Jeevan Mission, when the national average for Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) has already reached 81%, it makes sense to first motivate and support GPs that have crossed or are close to this level. Quick wins here not only demonstrate success but also create powerful examples for others to follow.

At the same time, GPs that are lagging can be encouraged to first reach the national average — a target that is realistic and within sight. This *incremental push within the larger saturation framework* keeps morale high and shows continuous progress.

Hence, ‘distance to saturation’ becomes a crucial metric — helping planners visualize where each GP or Block stands, prioritize action, and allocate resources more effectively. It transforms decision-making from intuition to evidence.

2. Fostering Healthy Competition Across Administrative Levels

The second vital dimension is the spirit of healthy competition that the saturation strategy naturally generates. When progress data is visible and comparable — between GPs, Blocks, Districts, and States — it builds a positive sense of rivalry and pride.

This competitive environment drives officers and frontline workers to innovate, share best practices, and find locally suited strategies that accelerate progress. Peer learning and recognition become powerful motivators. One GP’s achievement becomes another’s aspiration.

When this spirit is nurtured through acknowledgment, awards, exposure visits, and public appreciation, it leads to a culture of excellence and continuous improvement. Progress then becomes a shared ambition — not imposed from above; but owned and celebrated locally.

The Spirit of Transformational Change

Transformational change is not about working with desperation — it’s about working **with a sense of urgency, purpose, and measurable impact**. It’s about redefining what professionalism means in rural development: delivering outcomes within time, completeness, and with empathy. A thirsty person needs a glass of water **at the moment of need**, not after years of waiting, nor as an unfinished promise passed on to the next generation. If the water does not arrive in time, the system has failed—regardless of how sincere the intent or complex the process. In public service, timeliness is not an accessory to delivery; it is its very essence.

Let's make the *incremental approach* outdated. Let's lead with a *saturation mindset*—one that delivers services promptly, improves the quality of life, and engages citizens in celebrating the change they experience. This is about leading India's transformational journey. It's about converting promises into results, and results into pride.

Village Adhyan – Field Checklist for Identifying Last-Mile Service Delivery Gaps

Purpose:

To identify households and individuals who are *eligible but still excluded* from essential government services, and to understand *why the last mile has not been reached*.

A. Identify Who Is Still Left Out

Tick ✓ wherever applicable.

- Any household without a **toilet**, despite SBM-G coverage being reported as complete
- Any household without a **functional tap water connection** under JJM
- Any house without **electricity connection**
- Any eligible family without **LPG connection**
- Any eligible person without **pension / social assistance**
- Any child not fully **immunised** or not enrolled in school
- Any household without **bank account / financial inclusion**

Note the exact location of such households (hamlet, street, edge of village).

B. Understand the Profile of the Left-Out Household

Observe and record:

- Very poor / landless household
- SC / ST / minority hamlet
- Single woman-headed household
- Elderly, disabled, or chronically ill members
- Migrant, nomadic, or socially isolated family
- House located at village periphery or difficult terrain

Ask: Are the same types of households being left out repeatedly?

C. Identify the Reason for the Gap (Last-Mile Barrier)

Discuss with household, neighbours, and local functionaries.

- Not identified in survey / baseline list
- Documentation issues (ID, land record, bank account)
- Technical constraint (water source, electricity pole, space)
- Financial constraint (contribution, connection cost)
- Social exclusion / discrimination
- Lack of follow-up by local system
- “Waiting for approval” for a long time
- Household has given up hope or stopped demanding

Record how long the household has been waiting.

D. Time Sensitivity Check (Critical Question)

Ask yourself:

- Is this a **basic service** required for daily dignity and survival?
- Has the household been waiting **months or years**?
- Would delay here mean continued hardship, risk, or exclusion?

*If yes, this is a **last-mile priority**, not a routine case.*

E. Check for Convergence Possibilities

Explore whether the gap can be resolved by convergence:

- SBM-G + GP funds for toilet completion
- JJM + MGNREGS for water source / pipeline support
- Electricity + housing scheme coordination
- Social assistance + documentation support camps
- GP resolution or follow-up with block officials

Ask: Which existing scheme can close this gap fastest?

F. Action-Oriented Conclusion (Mandatory)

For **each last-mile gap identified**, write:

1. **Who is left out?** (Household / person)
2. **What service is missing?**
3. **Why is it missing?**
4. **Which authority or scheme can resolve it?**
5. **What is a realistic time frame to close the gap?**

Core Village Adhyan Insight (to remember)

Development is incomplete until the last eligible person is reached. Last-mile gaps are not marginal issues—they define whether transformation has truly occurred.

Village Adhyan Toolkit Series

Toolkit – 1: The Overall Framework

Toolkit – 2: Rural Infrastructure

Toolkit – 3: Rural Livelihoods, Skilling and Entrepreneurship

Toolkit – 4: Entitlements and Social Assistance Support

Toolkit – 5: Last-Mile Service Delivery

Toolkit – 6: Creating Model Villages

Toolkit – 7: Creating Smart Villages for Vikshit Bharat 2047

