

## **Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana**

On India's Independence Day, the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, made a commitment to launch the Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAANJHI). Holding true the commitment made, he is launching the Scheme on 11th October, 2014 - Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Ji's birth anniversary – at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

The goal is to develop three Adarsh Grams by March 2019, of which one would be achieved by 2016. Thereafter, five such Adarsh Grams (one per year) will be selected and developed by 2024.

Inspired by the principles and values of Mahatma Gandhi, the Scheme places equal stress on nurturing values of national pride, patriotism, community spirit, self-confidence and on developing infrastructure. The SAANJHI will keep the soul of rural India alive while providing its people with quality access to basic amenities and opportunities to enable them to shape their own destiny.

The Scheme is unique and transformative as it has a holistic approach towards development. It envisages integrated development of the selected village across multiple areas such as agriculture, health, education, sanitation, environment, livelihoods, etc. Far beyond mere infrastructure development, SAANJHI aims at instilling certain values, such as people's participation, Antyodaya, gender equality, dignity of women, social justice, spirit of community service, cleanliness, eco-friendliness, maintaining ecological balance, peace and harmony, mutual cooperation, self-reliance, local self-government, transparency and accountability in public life, etc. in the villages and their people so that they get transformed into models for others.

The Members of Parliament (MPs) are the pivots this Scheme will run on. Gram Panchayat would be the basic unit for development. It will have a population of 3000-5000 in plain areas and 1000-3000 in hilly, tribal and difficult areas. In districts where this unit size is not available, Gram Panchayats approximating the desirable population size may be chosen. The MP will identify one Gram Panchayat to be taken up immediately, and two others to be taken up a little later. Lok Sabha MP has to choose a Gram Panchayat from within his/her constituency and Rajya Sabha MP a Gram Panchayat from the rural area of a district of his/her choice in the State from which he/she is elected. Nominated MPs may choose a Gram Panchayat from the rural area of any district in the country. In the case of urban constituencies (where there are no Gram Panchayats), the MP will identify a Gram Panchayat from a nearby rural constituency. Primarily, the goal is to develop three Adarsh Grams by March 2019, of which one would be achieved by 2016. Thereafter, five such Adarsh Grams (one per year) will be selected and developed by 2024.

The MPs will engage with the community, facilitate the Village Development Plan and mobilise the necessary resources. The Development Plan will place a special emphasis

on enabling every poor household to come out of poverty. Prior to the plan formulation, there will be a systematic environment creation and social mobilisation, which will be led and guided by the MP himself/herself. The planning process in each village will be a participatory exercise coordinated by the District Collector. The MP will play an active facilitating role in this exercise.

The MPs will also directly support activities at village level like health camps, organising grievance redressal camps, community mobilisation etc. They will give a direction to holistic development and our ingenuous villagers will pave their own path through their hard work and entrepreneurial skills. Some of the crucial features of the SAANJHI are highlighted below.

SAANJHI gives focus to community participation. Social mobilization of village community can trigger a chain of other development activities in the village. For instance, reducing risk behaviours like alcoholism, smoking, substance abuse (drugs/tobacco/gutka etc) among all age groups of population.

Strengthening of local democracy through strong and transparent Gram Panchayats and active Gram Sabhas and facilitating good governance is also an important objective of SAANJHI. Women participation in the decision-making process will be encouraged. In fact the Scheme envisages holding Mahila Sabhas and Bal Sabhas to discuss women and children specific issues and concerns. E-governance will also be given a push.

Ensuring universal access to education facilities, adult literacy, e-literacy are also important goals of SAANJHI. In addition to this the Scheme also pays attention to providing infrastructure in schools like toilets, libraries, and supporting smart schools. It is important for our young generation to inculcate a sense of confidence and values such as respect for women, martyrs and elders, good hygiene, respect for the environment, good reading habits etc. Apart from education, these villages will have quality health care. The outcomes will include 100% immunization, 100% institutional delivery, reduced IMR, MMR, reduction in malnutrition among children etc.

To create vibrant and harmonious society within the village activities like honouring village elders, folk art festivals, having a village song etc. will be promoted. Personal development through sports, regular physical exercise, balanced nutrition, personal hygiene is another unique aspect of the Scheme. Adoption and adaptation of technology and introduction of innovations are critical to this programme. This will include use of space application and remote sensing for planning, mobile based technology for monitoring, agriculture technology for increasing productivity etc.

Since the SAANJHI has activities cutting across different spheres, in order to implement the Scheme successfully close coordination and convergence will be required across different Ministries, departments, Schemes of the Government of India, MPLADS, State Government and the private sector. Tied and untied funds for e.g. untied resources of the Gram Panchayats like own revenue, Central and State Finance Commission grants

etc must be used to optimise implementation. Ministry of Rural Development will be nodal Ministry coordinating and monitoring the Scheme closely to ensure its efficient implementation. In order to operationalize the strategies the central sector and centrally sponsored schemes along with the state schemes will have to be implemented in a convergent and integrated manner to generate maximum synergy. The Ministries/Departments concerned will take appropriate action to make suitable changes in the Guidelines to enable priority to be given to the Adarsh Gram.

At the national level, a separate, real time web based monitoring system will be put in place for the scheme covering all aspects and components. The Ministry will put in place a specially designed capacity building programme for Government functionaries at different levels including Gram Panchayats. In addition to preparing detailed handbooks for operationalizing the Scheme, the Ministry will also be conducting orientation workshops for MPs over the next few months. The Guidelines of the Scheme are a blueprint for implementation and provide a broad strategy and expected outcomes. At the state level there will be an Empowered Committee headed by the Chief Secretary consisting of the relevant Departments and including experts, as required with at least two Civil Society representatives. The Secretary of the Rural Development Department of the state will be the member convenor. The district Collector will be the nodal officer for implementing the SAANJHI. He will conduct a monthly review meeting with representatives of the participating Line Departments. The Members of Parliament concerned will chair the review meetings.

It is also proposed to have a mid-term evaluation of performance through a competent independent agency. Also a post project assessment of performance and outcomes would be similarly undertaken.

Four kinds of awards have been decided to be given in the following categories:-

1. Best Practices
2. Best Charge Officers
3. Best District Collectors
4. Best Adarsh Grams.

It is hoped that the Adarsh Grams will be replicable and sustainable models. In the days to come there would be hundreds of innovations and stories of success from these model villages.