

Third-Party Evaluation Study of the Civic Action Programme (CAP) in areas other than NE and J&K

Executive Summary

The Civic Action Programme (CAP), implemented by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), represents a critical pillar of India's people-centric internal security and border management strategy. Conceived as a community-oriented, welfare-driven intervention, CAP seeks to bridge developmental and psychological gaps between the State and citizens residing in sensitive, remote, and border regions. By enabling Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) to undertake targeted civic and developmental activities alongside their operational mandates, the programme complements conventional security measures with trust-building, outreach, and socio-economic support.

This Third-Party Evaluation examines the design, implementation, financial performance, outreach, and outcomes of the Civic Action Programme in areas Other Than the North Eastern States (OTNE) and Jammu & Kashmir (J&K). The evaluation covers CAP initiatives undertaken by the Border Security Force (BSF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) across border regions adjoining the Indo-Pakistan, Indo-Bangladesh, Indo-China (Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand sector), and Indo-Nepal borders. The study assesses the relevance and effectiveness of CAP interventions in addressing local welfare gaps, strengthening community engagement, and supporting broader border management objectives.

Scheme Context and Design

Introduced in 2003-04 as a centrally sponsored scheme, CAP in OTNE areas aims to improve the quality of life of border populations and foster peace, normalcy, and trust in regions characterised by remoteness, difficult terrain, and limited access to public services. The programme operates through a centrally guided yet decentralised architecture, wherein MHA provides policy oversight, financial allocations, and monitoring frameworks, while CAPFs plan and implement activities at the field level based on local needs and operational contexts.

CAP does not function through formally notified sub-schemes; rather, it comprises flexible functional components, including community welfare and outreach, health and sanitation, education and child support, youth and sports engagement, women and vulnerable group support, awareness and capacity-building, and trust-building measures. This design enables

forces to tailor interventions to diverse socio-economic and geographic realities within their respective Areas of Responsibility (AoR).

Operational Coverage and Implementation

The programme remains fully operational in OTNE regions and is implemented by BSF, ITBP, and SSB across their respective border jurisdictions. Activities are undertaken in border villages and habitations under Border Out Posts (BOPs), police station areas, and development blocks along international borders. Implementation intensity varies by terrain, seasonal accessibility, and security considerations, reflecting the programme's adaptive and context-responsive nature.

- **BSF** implements CAP across western and eastern borders, covering states such as Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab, West Bengal, and Assam, with a focus on large-scale community outreach, infrastructure support, health services, human resource development, and skill-oriented interventions.
- **ITBP** undertakes CAP in high-altitude and remote areas of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, integrating civic action with sustained force presence. Interventions emphasise healthcare, veterinary support, renewable energy, water infrastructure, and livelihood assets suited to mountainous contexts.
- **SSB** implements CAP in densely populated Indo-Nepal border areas of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal, focusing on health, veterinary care, youth development, vocational training, sanitation, and social awareness initiatives.

Across forces, CAP implementation is characterised by decentralised planning, integration with routine deployment, flexible financing, and internal monitoring through existing command structures.

Financial Performance and Resource Allocation

An analysis of budgetary allocations and expenditure patterns for the period FY 2021–22 to FY 2025–26 highlights strong financial discipline and absorption capacity. Annual utilisation rates exceeded 99 per cent in all completed financial years, indicating effective planning, streamlined fund flow, and timely execution at the field level. Variations in allocations over the years reflect broader fiscal considerations rather than implementation constraints, underscoring the programme's operational readiness.

Force-wise allocation trends demonstrate a deliberate and proportional resource distribution aligned with operational scale and population interface. BSF received the largest cumulative allocation, followed by SSB and ITBP, consistent with their respective geographic coverage and engagement intensity.

Outputs, Outcomes, and Field-Level Impact

The evaluation finds that CAP interventions have delivered tangible welfare and trust-building outcomes across OTNE regions:

- **Health and Veterinary Outreach:** Medical and veterinary camps emerged as core interventions across forces, addressing critical gaps in human and livestock healthcare in remote border villages and supporting livelihood security in agrarian and pastoral communities.
- **Infrastructure and Basic Services:** Early years saw substantial investment in basic infrastructure, water supply, sanitation, and renewable energy solutions, particularly solar lighting, improving living conditions in off-grid habitations.
- **Human Resource and Skill Development:** There has been a clear transition over time from infrastructure-heavy and relief-oriented activities towards human capital development, including vocational training, tailoring, beautician courses, driving training, agriculture-related skills, and women-centric livelihood support.
- **Youth Engagement and Social Awareness:** Sports activities, career counselling, pre-recruitment coaching, and national campaigns such as Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan have enhanced youth participation, social cohesion, and positive engagement with security forces.

Field visits and beneficiary interactions confirm that CAP activities have contributed to improved income stability, enhanced skills and confidence, greater community participation, and strengthened trust between local populations and CAPFs, particularly in sensitive border areas.

Key Challenges

Despite its relevance and achievements, CAP implementation faces several systemic and contextual challenges:

- Persistent poverty and livelihood insecurity limit beneficiaries' sustained participation in training programmes.

- Geographic inaccessibility, difficult terrain, and dispersed habitations constrain outreach, supervision, and monitoring.
- Limited communication and transport infrastructure hampers information dissemination and follow-up.
- Socio-cultural norms restrict women's participation in certain areas.
- Delayed fund release and compressed implementation windows reduce planning flexibility.
- Budgetary allocations are often insufficient relative to the scale of coverage required across large AoRs.

These challenges are largely cross-cutting and affect all implementing forces to varying degrees.

Strategic Relevance and Alignment

The evaluation affirms that CAP is closely aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) notably SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, and 16 and with the Viksit Bharat @2047 vision. By strengthening last-mile service delivery, promoting inclusion, and enhancing state citizen trust in border regions, CAP contributes to balanced regional development and long-term national security.

Conclusion and Way Forward

Based on comprehensive evidence from financial analysis, activity data, and field observations, the evaluation concludes that the Civic Action Programme in OTNE areas remains highly relevant, effective, and strategically significant. The Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) strongly recommends the continuation of CAP in the forthcoming Finance Commission cycle, with refinements to enhance flexibility, adequacy of resources, skill-to-livelihood linkages, and durability of assets.

Strengthening village-specific planning, timely fund release, expansion of permissible activities under updated guidelines, and greater post-training support will enable CAP to deliver deeper and more sustainable socio-economic impact, while continuing to reinforce trust and cooperation between border communities and the State.