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Subject: Unnat Bharat Abhiyan - Partnership of Technical Institutions of Excellence with Rural Development programmes

As you are aware the Department of Rural Development has a very large plan outlay of nearly Rs. 90,000 crores a year. Under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) nearly Rs. 40,000 crores are spent every year on providing wage employment and creating durable assets for livelihood security. Under the Deen Dayal Antayodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM), 3 crore women in over 27 lakh Self Help Groups (SHGs) are part of the Mission with extremely useful social capital for community action.

2. Partnership with outstanding technical institutions can facilitate far better results from the investments being made by the Department of Rural Development. The Unnat Bharat Abhiyan launched by Ministry of Human Resource Development offers such an opportunity. I would like to make 4 very specific requests to technical institutions for engaging under Unnat Bharat Abhiyan with the programmes of the Department of Rural Development in selected village clusters. These 4 sectors are: -

- (i) **Water Conservation through Watershed Approach** - The Department of Rural Development spends nearly Rs. 25,000 crores every year in water conservation works under MGNREGS. Farm ponds, dug wells, community irrigation works etc. are currently being taken up. While financial resources are available in plenty for programme funds, these interventions require high quality technical professionals who can facilitate use of ground water and aquifer data, remote sensing based rain water runoff data, and Ridge to Valley planning of watersheds in a scientific manner under MGNREGS. While the Department has been making efforts to strengthen technical professionals for water conservation through cluster facilitation teams in selected Blocks, support under Unnat Bharat Abhiyan in water conservation through watershed approach with technical professionals and use of technological data will go a long way in improving the outcomes from these investments.
- (ii) **Use of new technology and local materials and designs in Rural Housing programme, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G)** - As you are aware 1 crore houses are being constructed in rural areas under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin in 3 years. The programme provides for region specific housing designs, use of local construction materials, adoption of green technologies and training of rural masons. While many of the technical institutions are involved at the State level in the housing programme, this is clearly an area where partnership under Unnat Bharat Abhiyan can really improve outcomes in housing sector.

- (iii) **Solid and Liquid Waste Management** - While the subject belongs to the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, experiments on large scale in solid and liquid waste management has been done through SHGs and with the use of MGNREGS funds. 9000 Gram Panchayats in Tamil Nadu have managed a very successful Solid Waste Management Programme through a house to house garbage collection, compost pits in the village itself and systems of transporting non biodegradable waste for recycling. This has been done through SHGs. Likewise in Telangana, over 4 lakh magic soak pits are coming up under MGNREGS. These household specific soak pits are a very successful liquid waste management initiative. There can be many other technological solutions using the social capital of SHGs for solid and liquid waste management.
- (iv) **Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY)** - As you are aware Hon'ble Prime Minister exhorted Hon'ble Members of Parliament to develop ideal villages by ensuring improvement in the quality of life with provision of basic infrastructure and services. Many Hon'ble Members of Parliament have done outstanding work under the SAGY. Since, the SAGY works in well defined Gram Panchayat area, it is an opportunity for the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan for geographical saturation and targeting to demonstrate the success of inclusive development in rural areas.

3. I would be grateful if Higher Education Institutions are encouraged to work in partnership with Rural Development programmes in identified Gram Panchayats and village clusters.

Yours sincerely,

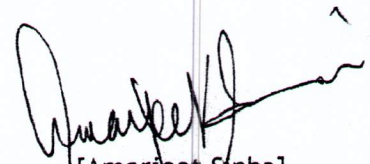
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