

Issue Brief

July 2026
No: 526

**Employment Opportunities
For Agniveers In Disaster
Relief Organisations**

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Employment Opportunities For Agniveers In Disaster Relief Organisations

Abstract

The Agnipath scheme, introduced by the Government of India in 1922, for induction of Agniveers into the Armed Forces has brought about a major change. While earlier the selected personnel would serve as permanent incumbents, however, under the Agnipath scheme, the assured employment is only for four years and thereafter the Services will offer permanent enrolment to only 25% of the Agniveers. The biggest challenge thereafter is generating suitable employment opportunities for the Agniveers not retained in Services. While the Centre and many State Governments have announced a number of options, one important opportunity that has not been exploited is employing them in Disaster Relief Organisations. The authors bring out how the Agniveers on account of their military training and experience are best suited for these tasks and utilising them in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief would be one of the ideal options for their re-employment.

Keywords: Agnipath, Agniveer, Armed Forces, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief, Disaster Relief Organisations, NDRF, SDRF

Introduction

On 14 June 2022 (Indian Army E-Book, 2026), the Government of India announced the Agnipath scheme with an aim to enable the youthful profile of the Indian Armed Forces (PIB, 2022). The youth, labelled as Agniveers, are enrolled in the Indian Armed Forces under the respective Act (Army / Navy / Air Force as applicable) for a period of four years only. This new process therefore, marked a major departure from the erstwhile recruitment process wherein the selected personnel would be permitted to serve in the Armed Forces as permanent incumbents.

As per the scheme, on completion of four years of service, based on the organisation's requirements and policies promulgated by the Services, Agniveers would be offered an opportunity to apply for permanent enrolment in the Indian Army / Indian Navy / Indian Air Force. As per the available information, the applicants would be considered in a centralised manner based on objective criteria including performances during their four-year engagement period and up to 25% (Indian Army E-Book, 2026) of each specific batch of Agniveer will be enrolled in regular

cadre of the respective Service. This invariably leads to the resultant challenge of generating gainful employment opportunities for the vast majority of Agniveers who would not be retained in the Services. The connected issue however is that these military personnel have been exposed to training and handling of arms and ammunition.

In order to address the issue of providing suitable employment opportunities for Agniveers, who would not be retained in Services, it was decided that, at the end of engagement period, a detailed Skill-Set certificate (Indian Army E-Book, 2026) will be provided to the Agniveers highlighting the skills and level of competency acquired by the personnel during their engagement period. Other benefits for the Agniveers, who fails to be part of the Services are listed as follows: -

- Those who quit the armed forces after four years will get a financial package of ₹12 lakh.
- Agniveers who aspire to be entrepreneurs will get priority under bank loan schemes.
- Those wishing to study further will get a Class 12 equivalent certificate and bridging course (of choice) for further studies.
- Agniveers who wish to work after completion of their service, will be given priority towards employment in Ministry of Defence {The Telegraph, India} (including Indian Coast Guard, Defence Public Sector Undertakings - 10% reservation), the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs - 50% reservation {Singh, V. 2025}), police and allied forces in several states including Uttar Pradesh (20%) {PTI, 2025}, Rajasthan (The Economic Times) and Delhi (20%) {Verma, A. 2026}. Besides, the Indian Railways (10 to 20%) {PIB, 2026} and the State Governments (The Hindu) of Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have also announced reservation to facilitate absorption of Agniveers.

Overall, the Agnipath scheme has introduced a major change towards the induction of soldiers in the Armed Forces, as compared to earlier wherein the soldiers, sailors and airmen were recruited and enrolled for at least 15 years, thus fulfilling the minimum requirement for pensionable service. This plan was introduced ostensibly to reduce the age profile of the soldiers in the three Services, thus generating better ‘teeth to tail’ ratio.

Opportunities for Agniveers not Retained in Services

Since, the Agnipath scheme involves retention of only a certain percentage of the Agniveers as regular Servicemen after completion of four years of service, therefore, the biggest challenge of this programme remains the absorption of trained military personnel, in similarly aligned professions or any other gainful employment, after they are not approved for further retention. The underlying issue here is ensuring the total absorption, as youth with extensive training on handling arms and ammunition, cannot be permitted to languish into unemployment and resultant disgruntlement.

Although, reservation in induction plans for the Agniveers who would not be retained in Services after four years, have been notified by the Government of India and certain State Governments, there has also been an effort to quantify the skills acquired by them during their training and service in the armed forces and mapping them with relevant jobs in the civil sector (Lok Sabha, 2026). However, notwithstanding all these openings, the high rate of exodus in very large numbers, especially from the Indian Army, needs to be given due consideration and their seamless subsequent induction into befitting gainful professions needs to be monitored and followed up continuously. As the Government of India and other agencies continue to explore additional avenues for gainful absorption of Agniveers, one option that needs to be added there is the induction of former Agniveers in the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Forces (SDRFs).

NDRF and SDRFs

Presently, the NDRF comprises of 16 Battalions drawn from the CAPFs viz, BSF, CISF, CRPF, ITBP, SSB and Assam Rifles. Each battalion is composed of 18 self-sufficient specialised search and rescue teams, consisting of 47 members each, encompassing structural engineers, technicians, electricians, canine units, and medical/paramedic personnel. All 16 units are proficiently equipped and trained to handle any type of natural and manmade disasters. The dispersed locations of these units ensure their prompt deployment anywhere in the country in case of any contingency. Since the NDRF Battalions are manned by personnel drawn from CAPFs, they would be there only for a certain number of years, therefore there exists a continuous requirement of initial as well as continuity training for a large number of personnel to maintain operational effectiveness. The SDRFs have personnel from State Police, Homeguards, Fire Services as well as certain personnels from the Revenue Department. Their level of training,

equipment as well as their effectiveness to tackle disasters differ from state to state and is largely dependent upon the interest and support provided by the respective State Governments. It has also been noticed that during contingencies, most of the State Governments seek immediate assistance from the closest armed forces establishment, especially at remote locations; with the SDRFs plays supporting role.

The Agniveers, on the other hand, are able bodied men and women who have been trained in well reputed military institutions and have been subsequently exposed to the tough operational and training routine followed in the Services, which at times includes exposure to Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations. Therefore, the Agniveers who cannot be retained in the three Services, their induction in NDRF and SDRFs will be beneficial to NDRF /SDRFs. Their suitability for permanent roles in NDRF / SDRF is discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

Benefits of Military Training

Agniveers go through military training aligned to their services. Moreover, it is a well-known fact that, military training is most comprehensive and produces well trained, highly disciplined and physically fit individuals who have performed demanding tasks as a team with coordination and skill, even under pressure.

Additionally, the presence of personnel, having background of serving in different Services as well as Arms would be extremely beneficial for NDRF / SDRF as it brings distinct competencies which would be beneficial to any organisation. For instance, Agniveers with a naval background would play a crucial role HADR during floods or at sea. Similarly, Agniveer of IAF background could play an important role in quick and safe movement of NDRF / SDRF personnel as well as loading / offloading of aircraft. Similarly, personnel having a background of signals / engineers / communication would help in operating the latest equipment as well as maintaining the same in NDRF / SDRF. For the NDRF and SDRF to be effective under pressure during HADR situations, they have to train regularly in optimal exploitation of highly advanced rescue gear. Considering that the existing NDRF personnel are drawn from CAPFs and are placed there for a fixed tenure, there exists a need for continuity training whenever these personnel are rotated. Having a permanently assigned strength would be beneficial for these organisations as well ideal second career for Agniveers, as besides bringing distinct skills to the organisation, the requirement for initial as well as continuity training would reduce substantially. Additionally, the increased

familiarity with their equipment, on account of doing away with fixed tenures, would contribute towards its optimal utilisation during contingencies.

Agniveers are sourced from all across the country; their presence in NDRF and SDRF especially close to their home or state would provide ideal opportunity to the sons and daughters of the soil. Their familiarity with the local terrain, customs, traditions and language would be a force multiplier during contingencies. Moreover, our experience in HADR shows that the presence of local personnel in rescue agencies would be more acceptable to the people requiring humanitarian aid.

The high-altitude terrain along the Himalayas poses a different kind of challenge in higher reaches. Any requirement of HADR in these areas necessarily involves acclimatisation of at least 48 hours for the rescue teams, post arrival at the site of disaster. This is also the most precious time for conducting HADR. The presence of suitably trained Agniveers, in the SDRF rescue teams of the affected states, would be a gamechanger during such contingencies, as these can be deployed post haste.

Agniveers in NDRF / SDRF

The permanent induction of Agniveers in NDRF / SDRF would strengthen these organisations. Besides, providing permanent incumbents for manning the rescue teams, the reduction in training costs, driven by the necessity to rotate the manpower, would reduce substantially. Having a job of a permanent nature also provides more flexibility for their rotation between the various Battalions as driven by operational necessity. It would also contribute towards better utilisation and upkeep of the latest equipment possessed by the rescue teams.

Considering that Agniveers encompasses both men and women, their induction in NDRF and SDRFs would bring in the much needed gender sensitivity which becomes crucial while providing relief to female residents at remote locations, thus speeding extraction work and therefore overall relief response. Moreover, having sons and daughters from the same state and general area helps in better communication on account of diversities in our country. Additionally, for the affected population in need of disaster relief having men and women from their own area ensures better acceptability and thus speedier response.

In terms of manning, an incremental approach is suggested— we can start with releasing up to 25 % of vacancies in NDRF for the Agniveers, the same can be increased gradually in a calibrated manner so that the operational efficiency is not compromised. For the SDRFs, the

induction can start with 50 % strength as their equipment does not require training of a very high order.

Conclusion

All Agniveers need to be provided with suitable gainful employment of befitting stature. This would ensure that they continue to contribute towards nation building. While the opportunities for those who are not retained in Services are still evolving, we need to ensure that all the available opportunities are identified and suitably exploited.

Thus, providing employment opportunities to Agniveers in NDRF and SDRF would not only add a suitable opportunity, but also result in gainful utilisation of their skills, knowledge and ability to execute tasks as a team while working in high pressure situations. Additionally, the distinct experience of their background in different Services and environment will create value addition in any organisation involved in HADR.

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