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YOJANA



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Panchayati Raj



LEAD ARTICLE

Making Gram Sabhas Vibrant

Sunil Kumar

SPECIAL ARTICLE

Journey of Panchayats

Dr Chandra Shekhar Kumar

FOCUS

Financial Devolution

K S Sethi

Gram Panchayat Development Plans

Rekha Yadav

AZADI KA AMRIT MAHOTSAV

SVAMITVA Scheme

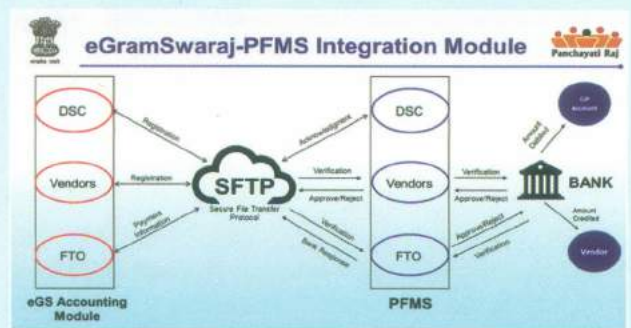
Alok Prem Nagar



DIGITAL PANCHAYATS: eGramSwaraj PFMS Interface



eGramSwaraj Features



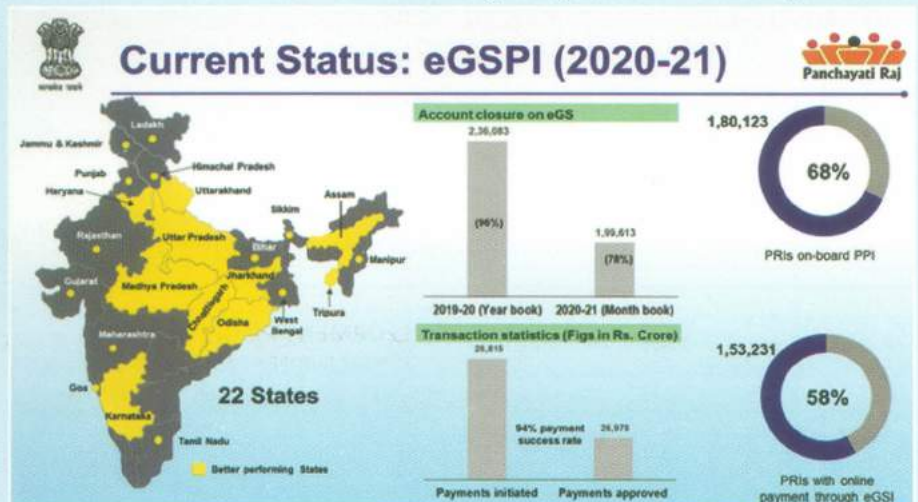
eGramSwaraj-PFMS Integration Module

To strengthen e-Governance in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), eGramSwaraj, a Simplified Work-Based Accounting Application for Panchayati Raj, has been developed by amalgamating the functionalities of currently available applications in the e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project (MMP) and was launched by the Prime Minister on National Panchayati Raj Day on 24 April 2020. The application subsumes the e-FMS applications comprising of PlanPlus, ActionSoft, PRIA Soft and National Asset Directory (NAD), along with the Area Profiler Application with Local Government Directory (LGD) forming the base for the system along with the Public Financial Management System (PFMS).

Software for PRIs, providing a single platform for all planning and accounting needs including various other aspects of Panchayat functioning (monitoring, asset management).

- eGramSwaraj (eGS, Work Based Accounting Software): eGS is a Work-Based Accounting

- eGramSwaraj-PFMS Interface (eGSPI), launched in 2018: For enhancing transparency and accountability, integration of accounting module of



Current Status of eGSPI (2020-21)

Annual Progress in eGramSwaraj

Financial Year	Total No. of GPs	No. of GPs with Activities	No. of Activities taken up	No. of GPs Onboard eGSPI	No. of GPs with Online Payments
2017-18	2,49,102	1,37,051	12,56,876	-	-
2018-19	2,53,465	1,12,747	15,16,764	1,68,245	256
2019-20	2,55,714	1,14,361	14,80,526	1,69,951	1,03,961
2020-21	2,56,777	1,66,859	20,05,434	2,24,362	1,52,640
2021-22	2,55,354	3,77,163	3,29,935	2,23,923	1,46,557



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Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides
Rig Veda

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DECEMBER ISSUE - ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT



Number of pages: 88

Details of the Sales Outlets of the Publications Division on Page 64

YOJANA is published in Assamese, Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.



Diverse Topics

I have been following the Yojana magazine for more than a year now. I am amazed by the diversity of topics that it brings to the attention of the readers on a monthly basis. It is apparent and appreciable that all the topics are chosen keeping current developments in mind, and all the articles in the magazine are well curated. Speaking of the September 2021 issue, the articles by Anshu Gupta and the detailed report on the state of women in PSUs were particularly eye-opening. The article named "Women in Uniform" was inspiring. Some of the articles could've been better in quality. The article named "Women excelling in Sports: Psychological Aspects", was neither impressive nor informative.

A magazine of as much popularity and esteem as Yojana needs to do better than to just be a resource for UPSC aspirants. Given the diversity and relevance of the topics that the magazine deals with, it could be a staple read in every Indian household, and its readership could span across all age demographics.

It provides the best information that a small investment of Rs 22 per month can provide. The editors and publishers have done a tremendous job in devising this magazine and making it available to the public at large.

– **Meghna Mandal**
Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal

Dynamic Themes

Yojana magazine has become a part of my preparation strategy. I, as an aspirant consider it an important part of my whole preparation. The topics published are very useful for essay writing as well as for mains, as it covers all important dynamic topics which are quite informative. At the end of every month, it is beneficial to read this and boost up my preparation. Thank you Yojana team.

– **Ankit Kumar**
Ranchi, Jharkhand

Addressing Taboos

All the articles in the September 2021 issue of Yojana titled 'Nari Shakti' comprehensively present the issues faced by women in various fields and the contributions they make. The goal of equality could be achieved through normalisation. With the advent of the New Education Policy which aims to bring a holistic approach in education, sex education should also get priority for both the genders to make students aware about the same with government and NGOs providing necessary resources. The knowledge about why our body goes through changes and the topics regarding hygiene during the different stages like menstruation will go a long way. Thus, we have to normalise it, saying that it's not a taboo and are processes which are taking place since beginning of human kind.

– **Sriyanshu Mishra**
Bhubaneswar, Odisha

Empowering Women

The September issue of Yojana magazine is conspicuous since it is a special edition to recognise and promote the power of women as all-time entrepreneurs. The various articles are an indication that the inherent potential that a woman possesses is not fully realised or utilised, and perhaps Atmanirbhar scheme conceptualised by the present government has a long-term plan and commitment to make her self-reliant in all the fields. It is time that women go an extra mile to explore the opportunities available for them so that India reaches another milestone in unleashing their potential for the world to notice.

– **Nalini R Magal**
Hassan, Karnataka

Thought-provoking Articles

I was in a search of good and authentic content which would further enhance my speaking, communicative, and



thinking skills, and I think Yojana magazine is fulfilling in all that I actually need. I'm reading this monthly magazine since last 4 months and I feel improvement in myself which will help me flourish further. The issues which the magazine takes up are really the ones which the society needs to tackle with. The data and facts provided are authentic. In this age of technology and social media where the fake news starts to spread like forest fire, having the real information or news is very difficult and for this, one can blindly trust this magazine. I would like to express my gratitude for publishing such thought provoking articles which will really help the civil services aspirants like me to score good marks in both mains and interview.

– Nita Mishra
Asansol, West Bengal

Informative and Helpful

I recently came across the Yojana magazine and I am really amazed to find such an informative magazine at such an affordable price. The August 2021 issue related to "Public Administration" was very informative. The articles on the 'Historical Perspectives', 'Dynamics of Civil Services' and 'Reforms in the Civil services' were enlightening and informative. The Yojana magazine is very helpful to know about the various policies of the Government. I would like to thank the entire Yojana team for bringing out such valuable content every month.

– Dr Akshaya Raju
Chennai, Tamil Nadu

IEC Display Boards

IEC for development can be done by panchayats, blocks, zila parishads, district, and state administrators. Hence the need for a single display board for public awareness on appropriate sites with the following in English and local languages:

1. Sustainable Development Goals.
2. WCD Schemes with Anganwadi Centres with Scale of Supplementary Nutrition Rations for pregnant, lactating women, and malnourished children.
3. Vaccination Schemes as per Indradhanush-2.
4. Prevention and Control of Diseases like Malaria, Dengue, Typhoid, Anemia under NHM for Rural, Urban areas.
5. Advantage of organic foods, vegetables, and fruits for health.
6. Bad effects of pesticides on health.
7. Importance of kitchen gardens.
8. Guidelines to upgrade ecology, environment by reduce, reuse, and recycle.
9. Gender equality.
10. Points for co-existence of communities for peace and harmony.

– Lt Col Daya Singh (Retd.)
Bathinda, Punjab

Broad Spectrum of Subjects

Dear Team Yojana, being an ardent reader of Yojana magazine for quite a time, I must appreciate the broad spectrum of subjects the magazine covers. The Special Issue on 'Science and Technology' was quite insightful. To my delight, the article on 'Drone Policy' was right on the business. As a nation, we have a huge potential to harness this area, provided with the new relaxed drone policy, inviting private players would be like icing on the cake. Needless to say, reading Yojana is a monthly-bliss for me, in a ghastly era of rumours and fake news- Yojana is one such medium that can be trusted without an iota of doubt.

– Zahinuddin
Mumbai, Maharashtra



Jan Bhagidari

Fanishwarnath Renu, a renowned name in Hindi literature, brought out a short story called 'Panchlait' in 1950s. Set in the context of the then rural society, the story depicts an era with no electricity in most of the rural India, having a single kerosene-lit lamp in the entire village. Being a luxury in itself, the lamp was usually bought by the panchayats to be kept at the centre, illuminating the otherwise dark villages at night, hence the name *Panchlait* (Light of the Panchs/Panchayat) was carved. The story subtly touched upon the prevalent caste equations, inequality, and power dynamics of that time, when all villages were working in silos to such an extent that they did not call anyone for help from the adjacent villages and caste-based *tolas*, even when the entire village failed to light the newly-bought lamp. Eventually, the only person who knew how to light the Panchlait, Godhan, a migrant who was outcast by the villagers, saved the 'pride' of the village by lighting the Panchlait, and was reinstated in the society. The story picturises villages of those times that were living in the darkness of resources, infrastructure, and education. It displays how the institutionalising of the Panchayati Raj System changed the face of rural India.

Today, panchayats are the grassroots institution of governance. The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution in 1993, laid the foundation of the panchayats as we see them today. The democratic three-tier system of local governance aims at devolution of powers, funds, and responsibilities to the panchayats, for economic, community, and social development of the villages. They are provided funds through the Centre and States to sustain financially. Mahatma Gandhi's vision of 'Gram Swaraj' to make villages self-reliant and decentralised is taken care of in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). These institutions facilitate the participation of the people in the process of planning and development. They ensure identification of locally-available resources and address local needs of all communities through participatory planning and convergence.

Panchayats have a significant role to play in the effective and efficient implementation of flagship schemes on subjects of national importance. There are many reforms such as the recently-launched SVAMITVA Scheme for land ownership, which are adding to financial benefits and better management of resources.

The optimal utilisation of technology is also changing the rural landscape of our country. The project of automating over 2.5 lakh rural bodies through e-Panchayats is fetching meritorious results and there are remarkable achievements of the transformation it has brought in. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is striving towards strengthening PRIs and accomplishing objectives of local self-governance towards an inclusive, community-driven, and holistic planning process.

During the first and second waves of Covid-19, panchayats played a vital role in containing the spread of the virus among rural population, despite the reverse migration from cities. With 65% of the country's population residing in villages, their role was indispensable in managing the widespread catastrophe the virus had been leading to. Gram Panchayats have implemented a comprehensive set of measures, calibrated to their capacity and context, to slow down the transmission and reduce the mortality rate associated with the virus. Through Jan Bhagidari and effective local governance, they have been working at the forefront in providing necessary health facilities and ensuring timely vaccinations. The pandemic has highlighted how improving functions of PRIs for better delivery of services is essential for the well-being of rural population, which aids rest of the country dependent upon them for basic amenities. Bringing transparency, responsibility, and accountability in panchayat functioning and its functionaries too is consolidating their role as engines of socio-economic growth in the rural areas.

This special issue of Yojana brings together the vision and idea behind the Panchayati Raj System, initiatives taken in decades that have helped strengthen this System, and the success stories on ground from various regions. It applauds the journey of our villages towards being Atmanirbhar and derives an inspiration for all. □





Making Gram Sabhas Vibrant

Sunil Kumar

The Gram Panchayats, which are the lowest tier in the Panchayati Raj, have been envisioned to provide opportunities to the rural population to participate in the governance process at the local level, through the institutional platform of Gram Sabhas. These Gram Sabhas, being the direct representative platform, which includes all the voters of the village/Gram panchayat, have been vested with the powers for direct supervision of the rural programmes and projects, and to ensure accountability of GPs.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions have been pivotal in strengthening grassroots-level democracy in India. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment has provided a strong foundation for citizens' participation at the local level in the form of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

Functioning of Gram Sabhas

Gram Sabhas (GSs) provide citizens a direct say in the decision-making process out of respect for their villages. It provides a public platform for the citizens to elaborate on their problems, along with the felt needs and aspirations of the local community. However, the functioning of the Gram Sabhas has not been smooth and they have come under criticism due to a lack of regularity and transparency. Issues such as low participation, irregular Gram Sabha meetings, absence of a coherent Gram Sabha agenda, etc., have been some of the major hurdles in their effective functioning. In various instances, it is seen that the vulnerable sections of the village community hesitate to voice opinions due to inhibitions on account of their financial and social standing. The elected representatives of the Gram Panchayat, especially the Sarpanch, exercise significant powers which often prevents their criticism in

Article 243: Defines Gram Sabha as 'a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of panchayat at the village level'.

Article 243A: A Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the Legislature of a State may by law provide.

Gram Sabhas, and reduces Gram Sabhas to mere symbolic, instead of functional and vibrant platforms of democratic local governance.

Gram Sabha in States

Considering the large size of the Gram Panchayats, in some States like Karnataka, Kerala, Bihar, and West Bengal, etc., statutes have provided for additional structures like Ward Sabhas, meetings of which will be held prior to the Gram Sabha meetings. In some States/UTs (Chhattisgarh, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, UP, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Andaman & Nicobar, Daman & Diu, Lakshadweep), the respective Panchayati Raj Act has also provisioned for convening of special Gram Sabhas on the request of a specified number of voters from the Gram Panchayats.

As respective States have the mandate to decide on the powers and functions of the Gram Sabha, a variation is seen in the mandatory number of Gram Sabha meetings to be held in a year, across the States. Currently, the mandatory number of Gram Sabha meetings in a year to be held varies from a minimum of 1 meeting (in Tripura) to maximum of 6 (in Chhattisgarh and Telangana); with most of the other States/UTs, the range for these mandatory meetings is 2 to 4.

Range	Frequency of Gram Sabhas	States
Max	6	Chhattisgarh, Telangana
Min	1	Tripura
Average	3	Remaining States

Present status of frequency of Gram Sabhas in the States

The author is the Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, GoI. Email: secy-mopr@nic.in

Apart from the mandated Gram Sabha meetings as per the respective States' Panchayati Raj Acts and rules, these meetings are also conducted on the days of national importance, namely, Republic Day, Ambedkar Jayanti, Labour Day, Independence Day, and Gandhi Jayanti. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has advised the States to utilise these special day meetings to deliberate upon the various Central Schemes so that the citizens are made aware about their beneficent aspects. In addition to the above, Gram Sabhas are also organised on various campaigns like Constitution Day, Covid Awareness Campaign, Fit India Campaign, International Yoga Day, etc.

It is important that Gram Sabhas are organised regularly as it would further instil confidence among villagers in the institution of Gram Sabhas. Besides, irregular conduct of Gram Sabhas also results in the poor participation and turnout. The limited participation of villagers as well as critical stakeholders such as elected representatives, government officials, line departments, and subject experts have been observed in several States. This in fact, has been a major hurdle for the State Governments in convening Gram Sabhas effectively.

Need and Relevance

The Gram Sabhas were envisioned as unique institutions which would enable the citizens to highlight grassroots-level problems and build consensus on possible solutions. The decisions of Gram Sabhas being open and transparent, in real-time provide universal acceptance.

The Government of India is bringing several flagship schemes such as Health, Education, Nutrition, Water

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Supply and Sanitation— envisaging large-scale mobilisation and people's direct participation to propel acceptance and effective implementation. Gram Sabhas provide the ideal platform for these schemes to leverage the direct contact with the citizens to make them more accepting and become eager to participate.

Dadera Gram Panchayat, Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh

Over the years, some States have effectively used Gram Sabhas in promoting people's participation and

successfully addressing local problems. One such case is of Dadera Gram Panchayat, Pura Block, Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. In 2019, with the call of the Prime Minister of India, the citizens realised the need for conservation of water and rainwater harvesting. The citizens raised their concerns about abandoned wells, and neglected dirty water, clogged drains, etc., which were present in the villages, in Gram Sabha on water conservation. A decision was taken regarding the need for focused measures towards water conservation and rainwater harvesting. Followed by the Gram Sabha, 'Jal Shakti Abhiyan' was started in the Gram Panchayat under which different initiatives were taken including digging of pond, greywater harvesting by utilising the wastewater of hand pumps, rainwater harvesting in public buildings, etc. These measures not only fulfilled the agricultural needs of villages, but also replenished the depleting groundwater levels. These measures also created new Own Sources of Revenues (OSRs), as the Gram Panchayat sold the soil excavated during the creation of pond and started exploring fish and duck farming in the pond.

Thus, the Gram Sabha was utilised by the villagers to highlight a problem, propose a solution, and build



Creation of new pond



Greywater harvesting

consensus amongst the villagers. These proactive measures also contributed to the generation of new Own Sources of Revenue, which in turn empowered the Gram Panchayat. The decision was thus, utilised for making the Gram Panchayat self-reliant and created sources of employment for villagers. Several such instances could be seen across the country, which further substantiated the importance of the Gram Sabhas. However, considering the number of Gram Panchayats and their respective Gram Sabhas, the impact of the latter has been limited. Thus, there is a need for enhancing the standing of Gram Sabhas as functional institutions to address the local issues highlighted by the citizens.

Gram Sabhas: Effective Functioning

To ensure transparent and progressive functioning of Gram Panchayats, it is critical to convene Gram Sabhas effectively and periodically. Towards making them vibrant, the efforts should enable Gram Sabhas, greater functional autonomy at the local level. The allocation of Finance Commission's Untied Grants which can be utilised to suit the local needs amongst the various functions devolved to the panchayats, is a major step towards strengthening such autonomy. MoPR has been mandated to promote devolution of funds, functions, and functionaries to the PRIs across States/UTs. With greater devolution, the Ministry also aims to empower the Gram Sabhas by providing them with necessary resources to carry out their mandated functions properly. The Ministry has recognised the role of Gram Sabhas, and held several discussions with State Panchayati Raj Departments to understand challenges faced by the Gram Panchayats at the grassroots-level. Based on the challenges faced

by the States, the following recommendations have been shared with the States/UTs:

i. Ensuring periodic Gram Sabhas: The Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the States/Union Territories should hold Gram Sabha meetings at such a frequency, so as to have atleast 6 to 12 meetings every year. The frequency may be decided after consideration of factors such as presence of Gram Panchayats with relatively smaller populations; administrative requirements for organising large number of Gram Sabha meetings, etc.

ii. Formulating and distributing Agenda/Action Taken Report (ATR): The agenda for the upcoming Gram Sabha meetings should always be prepared and must include regular practices like confirmation of minutes of previous meeting, ATR on previous minutes, approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plan, etc. The agenda of the Gram Sabha must include discussions on proper selection/ sanction/ monitoring of progress of infrastructure works, identification of the correct beneficiaries for welfare schemes, and performance review of village-level functionaries.

iii. Preparing Annual Calendar: An annual calendar ought to be developed by all the Gram Panchayats in the States, for Gram Sabha meetings. The preparation of such a calendar would facilitate in spreading information about the annual schedule of all Gram Sabhas and the nature of discussions in the various meetings. The presence of annual calendar would enable active participation from villagers and facilitate proper scheduling of committee meetings of the panchayats. A sample calendar has been shared with the States in this regard indicating

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the thematic areas for action by Gram Sabhas, during the months of the year. The same is available on the website of MoPR.

- iv. **Effective Scheduling:** The Gram Sabha meetings should be convened alternately, so that only Gram Panchayats in the selected clusters go for Gram Sabha meetings on a particular day. This would enable the limited resources of District/Block administration to optimise efforts towards conducting the Gram Sabhas. The repetition of Gram Sabha meetings for a cluster of Gram Panchayats in the District/Block may be fixed on a specific day (like first Wednesday of the month). Other clusters in the District/Block would have other days of the month as their Gram Sabha meeting day.
- v. **Organising Sabhas at a convenient time:** The timing of the Gram Sabhas should be convenient for the village population to attend in large numbers. These Gram Sabhas may also have preceding Mahila Sabhas/Ward Sabhas/Bal Sabhas, etc., as required or as provided for in the respective statutes/rules of the State. There should be a fixed routine of the Gram Sabha meetings so that citizens have prior information about the timing of the next meeting which they are to attend.
- vi. **Administrative presence:** The District administration should ensure attendance of Group A and B officers in all the Gram Sabha meetings. With administrative presence in Gram Sabhas, grievance redressal is bound to become a part of the effort. A separate facility to register the complaints and a predictable resolution mechanism would help the Gram Sabha to focus on its core functions.
- vii. **Augmenting people's participation in Gram Sabhas:** Efforts should be made to ensure maximum attendance of all eligible citizens in the Gram Sabha meetings. The minimum quorum for the meeting should be 10% of the members out of which at least 30% should be females. Digital/virtual means of citizens' participation like video-conferencing systems through mobile applications, etc., wherever possible and permissible, may also be considered. The services of elected representatives, SHGs, ASHA workers, Rozgar Sahayaks, etc., should be utilised to create awareness about participation in the Gram Sabhas. To improve participation in Gram Sabhas, various events like medical check-ups, demonstrations of rural technology projects, inspection visits to schools/

To improve participation in Gram Sabhas, various events like medical check-ups, demonstrations of rural technology projects, inspection visits to schools, health centres, awards for exemplary performance of citizens etc., could be considered for being accompanied with the Gram Sabha meetings.

health centres, awards for exemplary performance of citizens etc., could be considered for being accompanied with the Gram Sabha meetings.

- viii. **Incentivising Ward Members/Elected Members:** All the ward members/elected representatives of the Gram Panchayats should invariably be made members of these sub-committees, with each ward member not occupying the position in more than two sub-committees. A suitable remuneration to the ward members/elected representatives for their services must be provided from

the State Government funds/Own Source of Revenues (OSRs) of the Gram Panchayats. It is also important to constitute the necessary standing sub-committees for the effective functioning and monitoring of the programmes and schemes implemented at the GP level. In most of the States, Gram Panchayats have constituted standing committees including Finance and Planning Standing Committee; Education and Public Health Standing Committee; Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Standing Committee; Industry and Infrastructure Standing Committee; Women, Child Development and Social Welfare Standing Committee. The constitution of necessary sub-committees formed in the Gram Panchayats is also bound to bring greater vibrancy to the Gram Sabhas.

To ensure effective functioning of the Gram Panchayats, it is important to revitalise the Gram Sabhas as an assembly of the village. Bringing transparency, responsibility, and accountability in panchayat functioning and its functionaries, would go a long way in creating Gram Panchayats as engines of socio-economic growth in the rural areas. Vibrant Gram Sabhas could also chart ways for achieving India's Sustainable Development Goals by facilitating their localisation to the Gram Panchayat level. The suggested recommendations such as increasing the frequency of Gram Sabhas, formation of Agenda and Action Taken Report, awareness generation, etc., are bound to provide momentum to the functioning of Gram Sabhas. Moreover, MoPR is in the process of developing an integrated, real-time online system which would not only facilitate effective scheduling of Gram Sabhas, but also exhort the citizens to utilise Gram Sabhas to participate in decision-making process. By facilitating participative democracy, the Gram Sabhas will not only contribute to the socio-economic development of the villages, but also create collective transformational change in the rural areas of the country. □

Journey of Panchayats



Drone flying under SVAMITVA



Dr Chandra Shekhar Kumar
Dr Mohd Tauqueer Khan

"The future of India lies in its villages."

- Mahatma Gandhi

The Part IV of the Constitution of India contains Directive Principles of the State Policy in which Article 40 is provisioned for organisation of village panchayats. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, promulgated on 24 April 1993, has been inserted as Part IX in the Constitution, that enjoins the States to establish panchayats. It lays down that "the State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government."

A separate legislation "Provisions for Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act" (PESA) was passed by the Parliament in 1996 to extend Part IX of the Constitution to the areas listed under the Fifth Schedule, subject to certain exceptions and modifications. This legislation has not only extended the development, planning, and audit functioning to the Gram Sabha (GS) but has also endowed it with the management and control of natural resources and adjudication of justice in accordance with traditions and customs.

These legislations have institutionalised the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and provided for setting up of three tiers of panchayats (only two tiers in case of States or Union Territories (UTs) having population less than 20 lakhs), which paved the way for reform in local governance in the country. This Amendment contains provision for devolution of powers and responsibilities to panchayats for both preparation of plans for economic development and social justice,

utilising resources available with them (Article 243G) and implementation of the schemes and programmes related to twenty-nine subjects listed in the 'Eleventh Schedule' of the Constitution. The 73rd Amendment is the first one in India that mandated women's reservation, and this made it a landmark piece of legislation.¹

Subsequently, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj was established on 27 May 2004, with the primary objective to oversee the implementation of Part IX of the Constitution and PESA Act 1996. 'Panchayats' being a State subject, their functioning is guided by respective State/UT Panchayati Raj Acts. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) works in partnership with States, principally to achieve the constitutional aspirations pertaining to the functioning of panchayats primarily through policy guidance, advocacy, technological support, capacity building and training (CB&T), persuasion, and financial support.

Since its establishment in 2004, MoPR is constantly working for strengthening the PRIs and local self-governance through the above-mentioned interventions.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj was established on 27 May 2004 with the primary objective to oversee the implementation of Part IX of the Constitution and PESA Act 1996. 'Panchayats' being a State subject, their functioning is guided by respective State/UT Panchayati Raj Acts.

India is predominantly a rural nation, wherein about 65 per cent of people and 70 per cent of the workforce lives in rural areas that contribute to about 46 per cent of the economy as shown in Table 2.1 and Table 2.2.

In view of the increasing rural population, the number of administrative units- PRIs have been increasing over time. Expansion of rural residential areas, creation of

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Table-2.1: Rural Population

Units	1991	2001	2011	2020 (Estimated)
Rural Population (in crore)	62.9	74.2	83.3	89.7
Proportion of Rural Population	74%	72%	69%	65%

Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

Table- 2.2: Share of Rural Areas in India's Economy and Workforce

Units	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-2005	2011-12
Economy	54.3%	48.1%	48.1%	46.9%
Workforce	77.8%	76.1%	74.6%	70.9%

Source: NITI Aayog, 2017

Table-2.3: Number of PRIs

Units	2005	2010	2015	2020
District Panchayats	539	584	594	659
Intermediate Panchayat	6103	6312	6332	6829
Gram Panchayats	233886	238054	248154	255487
Total	240528	244950	255080	262975

new districts, Tehsils, blocks, etc., are other contributing factors. The number of PRIs has increased from 2.41 lakhs in 2005 to 2.63 lakhs in 2020 as shown in Table 2.3.

PRIs are represented by the ERs, including Elected Women Representatives (EWRs). Reservation for women in PRIs and subsequent increase in the quota by States has brought an unprecedented and huge number of women in the governance arena in India. The number of ERs was 27.82 lakhs and EWRs were 10.42 lakhs (37.46%) in 2005, which increased to more than 31 lakh ERs in 2020, of which more than 14 lakh (46%) are EWRs, as presented in Table 2.4.

Table-2.4: Number of Elected Representatives

Year	ERs in Lakh	EWRs in Lakh	% EWRs
2005	27.82	10.42	37.46
2010	28.51	10.48	36.75
2015	29.17	13.42	46.00
2020	31.65	14.53	45.91

MoPR has played an important role in women empowerment through enhanced women's participation in PRIs and emphasis on their capacity building. A total of 21 States, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal, have made provisions of 50% reservation for women in PRIs in their respective State Panchayati Raj Acts.

The States/UTs have also made good progress in providing basic infrastructural facilities to the panchayats such as Gram Panchayat Bhawans, computers, internet, and Common Service Centres (CSCs). The progress over the year is shown in Table 2.5. These infrastructural facilities have been created from various schemes of the Government of India and the State's own resources.

E-Governance Mechanism in Panchayats

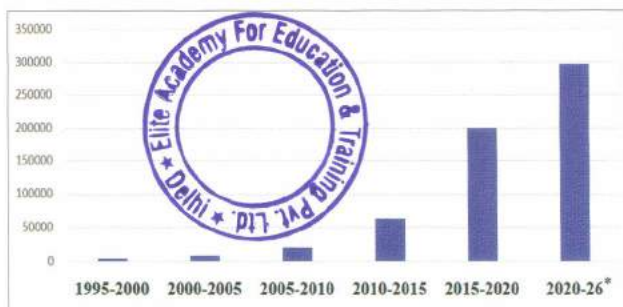
Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) serve around 65% of the country's population. Improving functions of PRIs for

Table-2.5: Basic infrastructure in GPs

Year	Number of GPs	GPs with Panchayat Bhawans	GPs with Computer	GPs with Internet Connectivity*	Common Service Centres (CSCs)
2005	233886	NA	NA	NA	NA
2010	238054	164483 (69.09%)	53568 (22.50%)	97392 (40.91%)	85000 (35.70%)
2015	248154	196822 (79.31%)	166827 (67.23%)	132539 (53.41%)	147798 (59.56%)
2020	255487	198637** (77.75%)	201741 (78.96%)	136693 (53.50%)	240592 (94.17%)

* GPs Service ready /Broadband enabled. The remaining PRIs are availing internet services through local arrangements.

** More than 25,000 Gram Panchayat Bhawans are at different stages of construction, which will substantially reduce the gap.



*Includes Rs.60,750 crore recommended by XV FC in its interim report for 2020-21.

Figure 1: Central Finance Commission Grants to Rural Local Bodies (X to XV FC)

better delivery of services is essential for the well-being of rural people. The Ministry has developed a rich suite of applications over the year, to address various aspects of panchayats' functioning- such as decentralised planning, budgeting, accounting, implementation and monitoring of plans, fund transfer, etc., in addition to a large number of service delivery applications like the issue of certificates, licenses, etc. Now the applications have been unified in a single and simplified portal called eGramSwaraj. The progress over the years on various applications has been shown in Table 3.1.

The user-friendly interface of eGramSwaraj, improved position of ICT infrastructure and manpower are among various reasons for enhanced adoption of eGramSwaraj portal. A total of 2,50,077 Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) for FY 2021-22 have been uploaded on the portal. Around 2,25,153 GPs have adopted eGramSwaraj for the purpose of accounting in FY 2021-22. Further, 2,22,815 PRIs have onboarded eGramSwaraj- PFMS Interface for carrying out online transactions.

Bottom-up Planning

Provision of basic infrastructures, emphasis on e-governance, capacity building of PRIs, focused information, education, and communication (IEC) campaign

are some of the main activities undertaken by the Ministry and States for strengthening the PRIs; utilising Ministry's budgetary allocation and States' resources. These are prerequisites for effective planning by PRIs in consultation with local people organised by the Gram Sabhas.

Backward Regions Grant Funds (BRGF) Scheme was implemented from 2006-07 to 2014-15 in 272 identified backward districts to bridge critical gaps in local infrastructure and other developmental requirements along with the capacity building of PRIs. Preparation of the district plan was an important part of BRGF. In course of nine years, Rs 27638 crores were provided to the States, which was utilised on a large number of projects.

Further, planning at the grassroots level was strengthened with the acceptance of the recommendations of the Fourteenth Finance Commission (XIV FC) to utilise grants worth Rs 200292.20 crores, that emphasised the preparation of a holistic plan at the GP level. The flow of funds over various Finance Commission Grants has been shown in Figure 1.

The Fifteenth Finance Commission (XV FC) in its interim report for 2020-21 and final report for 2021-2026 recommended an amount of Rs 60750 crore and Rs 236805 crore respectively for all three tiers of panchayats, also necessitated preparing their respective plans at all tiers for effective utilisation of grants. Accordingly, Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) is being prepared since 2015-16, and Block Panchayat Development Plan (BPDP), and District Panchayat Development Plan (DPDP) from 2020-21.

Capacity Building of PRIs

The availability of CFC grants in addition to the flow of funds from other schemes and States' Own Resources to the PRIs, necessitated adequate capacity building and training of elected representatives and other stakeholders for effective planning and implementation. Accordingly, a new scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)

Table-3.1: Adoption of e-Gov Application

Year	GPs uploading GPDP	GPs on-boarding PFMS	GPs with audit report generated	GPs registering for Citizen-Charter
2019-20	2,50,077	1,69,951	86,178	--
2020-21	2,48,925	2,22,815	4,043*	1,19,961 (GPs with citizen charter approved)

*Audit for 2020-21 is in progress

Table 5.1: Training Achievement of PRIs

Component	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Number of ERs and other stakeholders trained under RGSA	43.05 lakh	33.98 lakh	33.34 lakh

was launched for implementation on 1 April 2018, to develop and strengthen the capacities of PRIs to become more responsive towards local development needs.

Training is conducted on various themes such as—constitutional and statutory provisions on the functioning of PRIs, e-Governance, financial management, commitments on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and livelihood troubles, and so on. This helps PRIs in preparing participatory plans that leverage technology, efficient and optimum utilisation of available resources, for realising solutions to local problems linked to SDGs. The training is facilitated by the National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR) and the State Institute of Rural Developments (SIRDs) in association with large number of institutions. The progress over the years is shown in Table 5.1.

Further, panchayats are also being incentivised through awards and financial incentives in recognition of their good work for improving planning and delivery of services. This motivates the awardees to do innovative tasks and creates models for others to follow. It creates an ecosystem for overall good governance at the local level and has become a medium for creating awareness and sharing of knowledge across a large number of PRIs. Further, IEC activities are also being carried out with the aim at better and more effective communication through all the available media platforms for advocacy, awareness, and publicity to build capacity within, and enhance the performance of panchayats. Achievements on these have been shown in Table 5.2

Devolution of Funds, Functions, and Functionaries (3Fs)

MoPR has been continuously working with the States to realise the aspirations of constitutional provisions on various aspects of devolution of 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule to accomplish the goals of local-level governance in a true sense. The progress made by the States is quite varied in terms of the devolution of subjects. Various studies have highlighted that in some States the extent of devolution is robust; in others still, it is a work in progress. Devolution Study conducted by the Ministry in 2015-16 through TISS prepared an index of devolution in practice, which analyses the actual devolution happening in the field. The indicators chosen reflected on actual control of panchayats over transferred institutions, functions, functionaries, financial autonomy, and utilisation of development funds along with the status of infrastructure and administrative systems in place. The weightage of these parameters is shown in Table 6.1.

On the subjects mentioned above, the engagements of the Ministry with the States/UTs and PRIs will continue, as untapped potentials are yet to be realised. Additionally, in view of structural changes in rural areas and increasing aspirations of people, panchayats need to re-orient towards areas as mentioned.

Table 5.2: Data on Incentivisation and IEC

Year	Number of Panchayats Participating in Competition (approx.)	Number of awards	Number of audio-visual and print documents prepared
2019	40,000	246	15.4 lakh
2020	58,000	306	2.7 lakh
2021	74,000	326	15.6 lakh

Table 6.1: Weightage of Parameters

Indicators	Sub-Indicators	Weightage
Operational core of Decentralisation (90)	Transfer of functions	10
	Transfer of functionaries	15
	Transfer of finances	50
	Autonomy of PRIs	15
Support systems for devolution (10)	Capacity Building	2
	Operationalising Constitutional Mechanisms	5
	Systems for accountability and transparency	3

Table 7.1: Progress on SVAMITVA

Drone survey completed in number of villages	Property card distributed in number of Villages	Number of Property cards distributed
56,224	7332	8,27,231

Ensuring the property rights of rural inhabitants is essential for and inclusive social and economic development of the country. The Ministry has launched a scheme named 'SVAMITVA' to prepare property records of rural people of their houses using drone surveying technology. The goal is to cover most of the more than six lakh villages in the next five years. The present progress is shown in Table 7.1.

In view of the increasing significance of SDG goals mainly related to poverty alleviation, food security, education, health, nutrition, drinking water, and sanitation; the panchayats need to increasingly engage with these agencies working at the village level and commensurately improve their capacity.

As per a paper presented by NITI Aayog², a noticeable structural change is happening in the rural economy. Employment opportunities are shifting from the agriculture sector to construction, manufacturing, and service sectors. Also, there is a huge potential for Agro-processing industries and MSMEs in rural areas. Panchayats need to appropriately include these in their



Capacity Building Exercise of ERs and other stakeholders

planning and work with relevant agencies and stakeholders for their implementation. So, an emphasis on skilling of rural population and promotion of rural entrepreneurship is needed in these sectors.

As per a report prepared by KPMG³, there is huge untapped potential for the growth of financial services such as credit, insurance, and digital payment facilities in rural areas. This is another frontier on which panchayats need to engage with various types of financial institutions, build women entrepreneurship, and promote product customisation for the rural population.

Effective implementation of various new initiatives of the Ministry under e-Panchayats needed- such as eGramSwaraj, PFMS integration for online payments, citizen's charter, online audit, social audit, etc., for enhancing efficiency, transparency, and accountability of the PRIs.

Panchayats have also strengthened and are now equipped to handle disasters/ natural calamities. They have played an active role in mitigation and management of Covid-19, which is reflected in the dashboard created by the Ministry to monitor real-time activities in this direction.

Panchayats need to be empowered to levy and collect taxes, tolls, fees, user charges, etc., along with other activities to enhance their Own Source of Revenue.

The Ministry has selected 34 GPs across States for holistic planning using spatial technology considering the availability of various types of resources, potential growth sectors, and requirements of people. This can be scaled up in the coming years with resource convergence of key ministries.

Panchayats also need to consider climate action plan as an integral part of planning and harnessing renewable

energy should be an integral part of the plan. Odanthurai GP of Coimbatore district in Tamil Nadu has shown pioneering effort by harnessing wind energy, and selling to the grid, and earning Rs 19 lakhs annually. Progressive devolution of Functions, Funds, and Functionaries (3Fs) to the PRIs requires dedicated attention of all stakeholders to accomplish the goals of responsive and empowered local self-governance as mandated in the Constitution. Flagship programmes of Central and State Governments should clearly lay out the role of panchayats in their guidelines.

MoPR has travelled a long journey towards strengthening PRIs and accomplishing objectives of local self-governance. A lot of Panchayats are now equipped with the basic infrastructure but gaps still remain across the States. In order to fill the gaps, the saturation approach needs to be adopted as announced by the Prime Minister on 75th Independence Day. Representation of women in PRIs has substantially increased but effective participation requires appropriate training and exposure visits of these elected representatives. E-Governance mechanism has finally reached distant PRIs, although substantial room for improvement exists. The planning process has been streamlined with the preparation of plans at all tiers of panchayats, but these are needed to be made more holistic and inclusive through democratic functioning of GPs, with active functioning of Standing Committees and ward members, and effective functioning of Gram Sabhas and participation of key stakeholders.

Further, progressive devolution of Functions, Funds, and Functionaries to PRIs through activity mapping ought to be ensured to accomplish mandated activities and to achieve the objectives of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in order to ease the life of around 65% of the country's population living in rural areas. □

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Financial Devolution



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The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act provided the constitutional status and institutional framework to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to strengthen grassroots-level democracy through the medium of elected self-governing local bodies in the rural areas of the country. This provided the basis for good governance like people's participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, equity, efficiency, and accountability in PRIs of all the States/ Union Territories.

In the past four decades, globally, there has been an increasing trend towards greater devolution of political, administrative, and fiscal authority to the grassroots or lower levels of the government. India has also kept pace with this trend through its landmark 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. The Constitutional Amendment also emphasised the functional and fiscal devolution of powers to the PRIs.

The legislature of the State has been provided the powers to authorise the PRIs to levy, collect, and appropriate certain taxes, duties, tolls, fees, etc., and also assign to them the revenues of certain State-level taxes, subject to such conditions as are imposed by the State Government. The PRIs may also be provided with grant-in-aid. In support of these requirements, Article 243-I of the Constitution mandates setting up of the State Finance Commission (SFC) every five years, which is required to make recommendations towards improvement of panchayat finances through fiscal devolution comprising of share of State taxes, assignment of tax handles for Own-Source Revenues (OSRs), and provision of grant-in-aid.

Under the Article 280(3) (bb) of the Constitution which was inserted vide the 73rd Amendment Act, 1993, Central Finance Commissions are required to make recommendations to augment the Consolidated Fund of the State to supplement the resources of the panchayats in the State based on the recommendations made by the Finance Commission of the State.

Central Finance Commission Recommendations

Recommendations for devolution to the Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) began from the Tenth Finance Commission onwards (period 1995-2000). Up to the Twelfth Finance Commission (period 2005-10), nominal amounts of devolution were made to the RLBs on a lumpsum basis. Thirteenth Finance Commission (XIII FC), in a radical departure from awarding a small lump sum to the PRIs, has awarded a percentage of the divisible pool, i.e. (a) Basic Grant amounting to 1.5% of the divisible pool, and (b) Performance Grant, which will be payable for a period of four years starting from 2011-12 at the rate of 0.5% of the divisible pool in the first year, and 1% of the divisible pool in the remaining three years. The Commission had also recommended an annual separate Special Area Basic Grant of Rs 20 per capita carved out of the total Basic Grant, in the award period for Fifth and Sixth Schedule Areas and the Areas exempted from the purview of Part IX and IXA of the Constitution. For these areas, it had also recommended a Special Area Performance Grant of Rs 10 per capita for 2011-12 and Rs 20 per capita there onwards carved out of the total Basic Grant. Out of the total allocation of Rs 65160.76 crore of the XIII FC, Rs 58256.63 crores were released to the States.

Fourteenth Finance Commission (XIV FC) has recommended an amount of Rs 200292.20 crore to the Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country constituted under Part IX of the Constitution, at assistance of Rs 488 per capita per annum at an aggregate level. Out of this,

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Utilisation of Grants for Improving Status of basic services

Rs 180262.98 crores were Basic Grant and Rs 20029.22 crores were Performance Grant for 26 States. Non-part IX areas where panchayats do not exist, had not been recommended the grants. The allocations by XIV FC were more than three times that of its predecessor, XIII FC. On a different stand, the XIV FC adopted a trust-based approach and recommended that the devolutions be made directly to the GPs without any share at the levels of other tiers, as they are responsible for the provision of basic services to the rural citizen. The Grants provided were intended to be used to improve the status of basic services including water supply, sanitation, septage management, sewerage, and solid waste management, stormwater drainage, maintenance of community assets, maintenance of roads, footpaths and street-lighting, and burial and cremation grounds, and any other basic service within the functions assigned to them under relevant legislations. For the XIV FC award period 2015-20, Rs 183248.54 crores (91.49% of the allocations) have been released to the RLBs.

Fifteenth Finance Commission (XV FC) has recommended devolution to all tiers of the Panchayati Raj including the Traditional Bodies of Non-Part IX States and Fifth and Sixth Schedule Areas. XV FC grants are provided in two parts, namely, (i) Basic (Untied) Grant (50% for 2020-21 and 40% for 2021-22 to 2025-26) and (ii) Tied Grant. (50% for 2020-21 and

60% for 2021-22 to 2025-26). The basic grants are untied and can be used by RLBs for location-specific felt needs, under the twenty-nine subjects enshrined in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution, except for salaries and other establishment costs.

The tied grants are to be used for the basic services of (a) sanitation and maintenance of ODF status, and this should include management and treatment of household waste, and human excreta and faecal sludge management in particular, and (b) supply of drinking water, rainwater harvesting, and water recycling.

The Grants provided were intended to be used to improve the status of basic services including water supply, sanitation, septage management, sewerage, and solid waste management, stormwater drainage, maintenance of community assets, maintenance of roads, footpaths and street-lighting, and burial and cremation grounds, and any other basic service within the functions assigned to them under relevant legislations.

The XV FC Grants allocation to the Rural Local Bodies are Rs 60750 crore for the period FY 2020-21 and Rs 236805 crores for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26. The XV FC Untied and Tied Grants released by the Centre are distributed to all the tiers of the Panchayats/Rural Traditional bodies by the States on the basis of the criteria pre-decided on the stipulations of XV FC and firmed up by the respective State.

Out of the allocation of Rs 60750 crores for 2020-21, grants amounting to Rs 60640.25 crores (99.81%) have already been released to the States. The Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance has, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) released an amount of Rs 8923.8 crores to 25 States as Grants to RLBs as the first

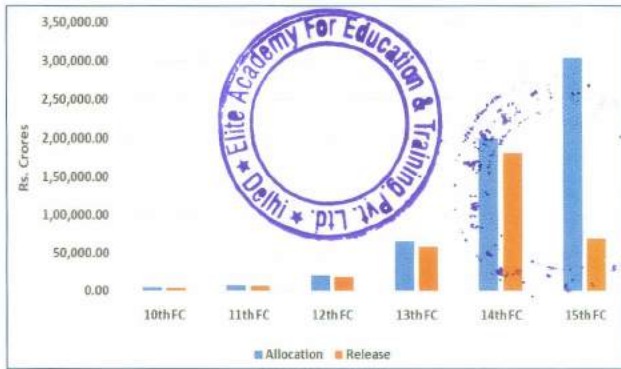


Figure 1: Per Capita Devolution by SFCs to RLBs

installment of the Fifteenth Finance Commission (XV FC) Basic (Untied) Grants for FY 2021-22 in May 2021, which could be utilised among other things for various prevention and mitigation measures, needed to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the Ministry of Finance has, on the recommendation of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, released Rs 13385.70 crores as 1st installment of Tied Grant for FY 2021-22 to 25 States in August 2021, for carrying out water and sanitation-related activities by Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) in rural areas.

Recommendations for RLBs

As per Article 243-I, the State Finance Commissions (SFCs) are mandated to review the financial position of the panchayats and make recommendations on the principles that should govern:

- i. The distribution between the State and the panchayats of the net proceeds of taxes, duties, tolls, and fees leviable by the State, and their distribution between the panchayats at all levels for such proceeds;
- ii. The determination of the taxes, duties, tolls, and fees which may be assigned to, or appropriated by the panchayats;
- iii. The grants-in-aid to panchayats from the consolidated fund of the States;
- iv. The measures needed to improve the financial position of the panchayats;
- v. Any other matter in the interest of sound finance of the panchayats.

SFCs are being constituted in all the States which have been making recommendations towards improvements in the tax base of panchayats and sharing of the State's net tax receipts to the RLBs. They have also been recommending various types of grants-in-aid to be provided by the State

governments to the panchayats. These grants may be in the form of general-purpose grants, conditional block grants based on some criteria, or specific purpose grants for schemes, etc.

SFCs have adopted varying criteria towards proposing devolution out of States' net tax pools/States' own revenues to the RLBs in the States. The details of the latest SFCs' recommendations for devolution to the RLBs in the States are listed in the following table:

In general, successive SFCs have been proposing an increase in the devolutions to the RLBs in the States. There has been a doubling of the per capita devolutions made by the SFCs to the RLBs from Rs 599.04 during 2010-15 to Rs 1179.63 during 2015-2020 at an aggregate level.

Own Sources of Revenues (OSRs) of RLBs

As the scope for devolution had been left open to the State governments, devolved functions and taxation powers to RLBs in the States have large variations. While the three tiers of the panchayats have been provided with own revenue generating powers, the Gram Panchayats in general are empowered to levy the most number of taxes and non-taxes within their jurisdiction. There are some variations with respect to levying of tax/non-tax by panchayats across States. In most States, tax on house, building, and land are obligatory with some exceptions in a few. The major variations across States are also in the collection of user charges such as water rate, lighting rate, sanitary rate, drainage rate, etc.

A World Bank Study has identified that the legislations of the States have provided to the RLBs as many as 78 types of taxes, surcharges, cess, user charges, and fees as below:

Type of levy	Number
Taxes on movable and immovable property	13
Other Taxes	14
Surcharge and Cess	10
Fees and Licenses	29
User Charges	12
Total	78

It can be seen that a variety of taxes have been devolved to different tiers of panchayats. The terminology and the proportional importance to the different tiers of panchayats of these taxes vary from State to State. Property tax, cess on land revenue, surcharge on additional stamp duty, tolls, tax on professions, tax on advertisements, non-

Basis of Devolution to Rural Local Bodies adopted by State Finance Commissions									
Share of Own Net Tax Revenue (Net of Cost of Collection)	Assam- 5 th SFC 15.5% in 2015-16, 16.15% in 2016-17, 14.50% in 2017-18, 14% in 2018-19, and 13.5% in 2019-20	J&K- 1 st SFC 12.5% of the State's tax proceeds net of the cost of collection.	Kerala- 5 th SFC 20% of the state's net OTR in 2016-17; for subsequent years increases by 1% every year	Punjab- 5 th SFC 4% of net total tax revenue of the State.	Sikkim – 5 th SFC 4.5% of State's own tax revenue 2020-2025;	Uttarakhand- 4 th SFC 11% State's net own tax revenue.	Tamil Nadu – 5 th SFC 10% of State's own tax revenue 2017-22.	West Bengal – 4 th SFC 2.5% of the State's net own tax revenue.	
Share of Own Net Tax Revenue (Net of Cost of Collection & other taxes and charges)	Bihar – 5 th SFC 8.5% of State's net own tax revenue in 2015-16 and 9% in 2016-17 to 2019-20.	Chhattisgarh- 2 nd SFC 8% of net tax revenues	Haryana- 5 th SFC 7% of State's own tax revenue net of the cost of collection, VAT and 2% of Stamp duty and Registration fees collected on behalf of urban bodies	MP – 4 th SFC 7.5 % of State's net own tax revenues for 2015-16 (9%) for remaining 4 years.	Odisha – 4 th SFC 3% of net own tax revenue of the State.	Rajasthan – 4 th SFC 5% of the State's net own tax revenue.			
Share of Total Revenue Receipts	Gujarat – 2 nd SFC 10% of the State's total revenue receipts.		Manipur – 3 rd SFC 10% of the State's own tax revenue, non-tax revenue, and share in the central taxes.			Goa – 2 nd SFC 2% of the States own revenues.			
Share of Own revenue receipts	Karnataka – 4 th SFC 48% of Non-loan net Own revenue receipt (NLNORR) inclusive of GST compensation but excludes 14 th FC grants		Maharashtra- 4 th SFC At least 40% of the State's own tax and non-tax revenue			UP – 4 th SFC 15% of the State's tax and non-tax revenues net of collection cost.			
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AP – 3rd SFC Devolution by way of per capita grants and assignment. This works out to 6.77% of total tax and non-tax revenues of State including share of central taxes for 2004-2005 		HP – 5 th SFC Adopted a gap-filling approach. Funds to be devolved derived by including salaries of staff, the honorarium of members, office expenses, TA/DA expenses			Tripura – 3 rd SFC Adopted a gap-filling approach. Computed the Pre-devolution gap by assessing the requirement of establishment expenditure, maintenance expenditure, and development expenditure of the RLBs.			

motor vehicle tax, user charges, and the like contribute the maximum to the OSR. Yet these OSR amounts manage to meet only around 10 per cent of the total expenditure of the



Figure 2: OSRs provided by States to the RLBs

panchayats. In most States, the property tax generates the maximum revenue. However, this tax, mostly based on the annual rental value of assessment, remains inelastic and adds to the inefficient ways of its administration. A few progressive States like Karnataka have reformed the tax structure and are using the unit area method in determining the tax base.

Way Forward

The RLBs are, by and large, responsible for delivering basic services like sanitation, drinking water, primary health, street lighting, roads, etc. to the rural citizens. Though they are empowered to collect certain tax and non-tax revenues, in most cases, a considerable gap exists between their own resources as compared to their expenditure requirements. Hence, the RLBs are largely

"Success Story of OSR of Gram Panchayat"

Budhannoor is a village in Chengannur block, in the Alappuzha District of Kerala State and has 14 wards. Budhannoor Gram Panchayat covers an area of 19.2 km² with a population of 18,563. There are 6,564 households in this panchayat and commendably, literacy rate of this GP is 96.7%. GP is focusing primarily on earning its own sources of revenue through tax collection.

In its direction, this GP has collated its efforts through the activities such as the constitution of the Standing Committee on Finance; enlisting all the institutions, persons, and traders liable to pay taxes; advising the defaulters; engaging Kudumbashree volunteers and employees for door-to-door collection of taxes; organising tax collection camps, etc. As a result of all these efforts of the panchayat during the year 2016-17, it collected Rs 3343925 through taxes, Rs 44700 Rental income, Rs 250141 through fee and user charges, Rs 78800 through the sale and hiring charges, and Rs 25949 through other sources.



Discussions being held regarding tax collection in Budhannoor Gram Panchayat

dependent upon financial support from the State and Central Governments.

MoPR being the nodal ministry for overseeing the implementation of the recommendations of the Central Finance Commissions has created many enabling digital mechanisms like eGramSwraj and AuditOnline towards ensuring effective utilisation of the grants by the RLBs. While eGramSwraj enables the RLBs to take up the entire process of planning, execution, accounting, monitoring

and control of the works, and financial transactions through real-time digital means, AuditOnline enables online audit of their accounts towards transparency and accountability.

The Constitution provides that the Central Finance Commission should suggest measures to augment consolidated funds of States based on the recommendations of SFCs. However, all Central Finance Commissions have been constrained due to the non-availability and non-synchronisation of the SFC reports for the relevant

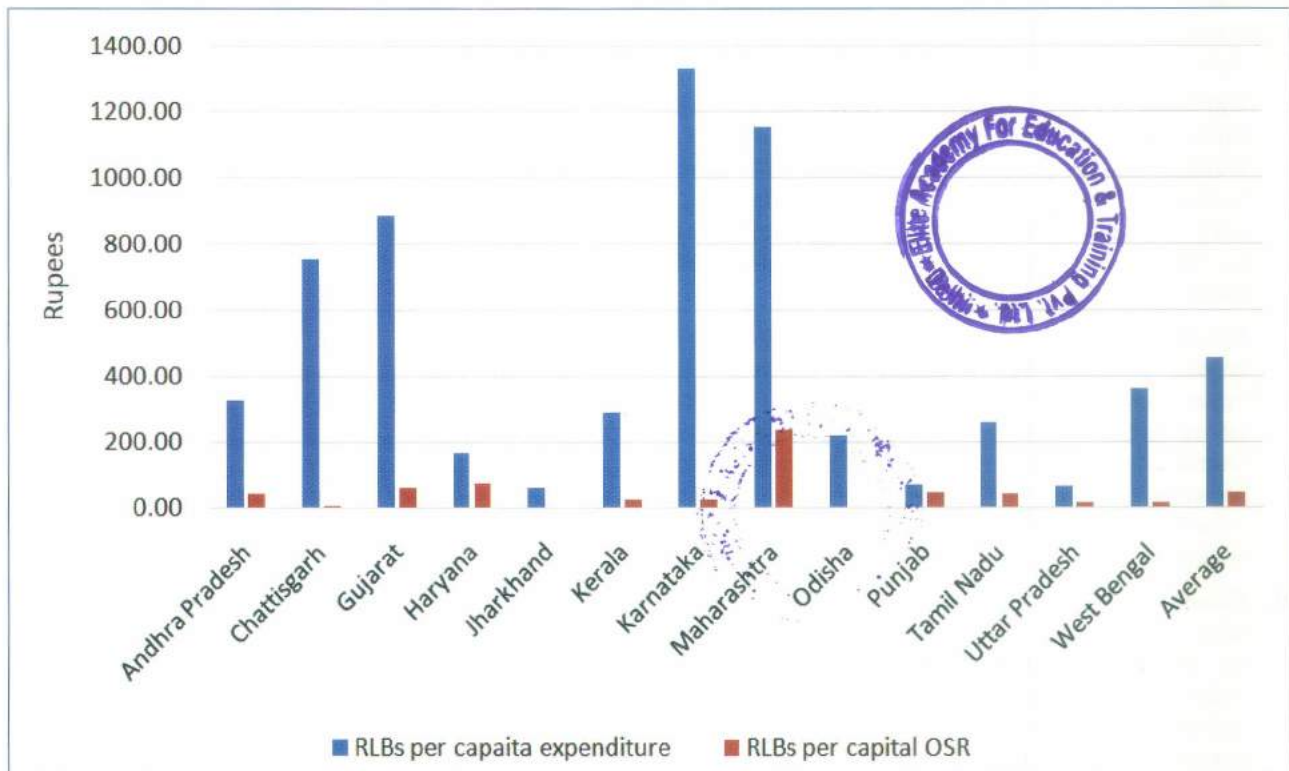


Figure 3: RLBs per capita OSR Performance

periods, as the States have been constituting SFCs at different times and with varying regularity. At the State level, it has often been observed that adequate attention is not paid to the principal recommendations of the SFCs. In several cases, the recommendations are rejected without assigning reasons or they are accepted through the Action Taken Report (ATR) but not implemented, as enabling Government Orders are not issued. In some cases, despite the issuance of these orders, funds are not released. As the XV FC has now made it an eligibility requirement for the drawl of its grants by the States, MoPR will be working in tandem with the State Governments towards streamlining the functioning of SFCs and also implementation of their recommendations by the State Governments.

In order to contribute towards the greater fiscal freedom of RLBs, their OSRs too must be enhanced. Improving Own Sources of Revenues will also strengthen the link between revenue and expenditure-related decisions of the panchayats, which is essential to promote efficiency as well as accountability in services-related provisions. The following actions in this direction are contemplated:

- i. **Updation of PRI Acts/Financial Rules and making them available:** PRI Acts along with Financial Rules, Government Orders (GOs)/Notifications, with regard to change in tax and non-tax levy, rate structure, etc., to be updated/simplified and brought in public domain so that PRIs are enabled to exercise the devolved taxation powers.
- ii. **Better assessment of properties required for levying Property Tax:** Property tax constitutes a major source of OSR for the PRIs. For levying this tax, an assessment of the market value of properties is required. Of different methods that are being followed presently, classified plinth area-based valuation seems to be the most scientific, transparent, and user-friendly method.
- iii. **Relook on various exemptions:** The taxation laws/rules of PRIs have a large number of exemptions for various categories of tax-paying citizens/entities, which may have outlived their utilities. A detailed analysis is to be carried out in the States to have a relook on these exemptions and do away with them, however possible.

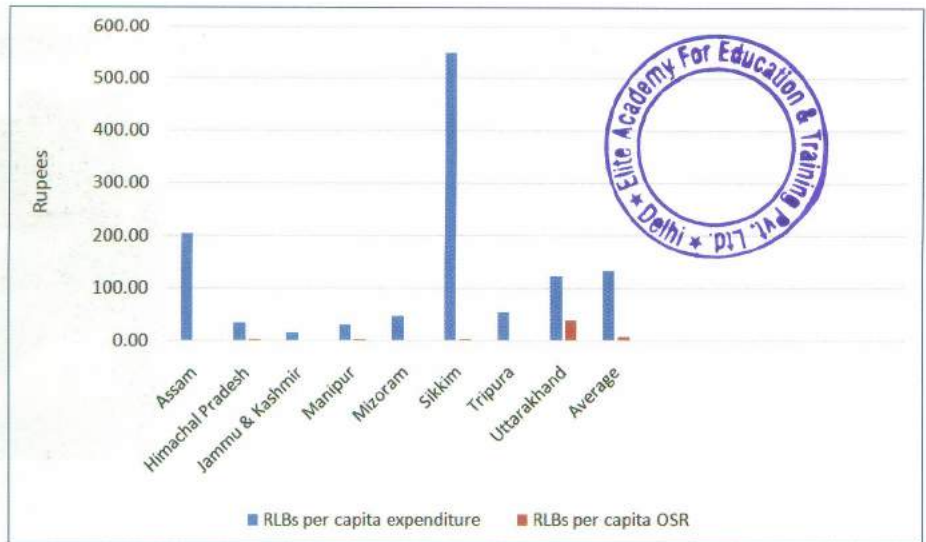


Figure 4: RLBs per capita OSR Performance - North Eastern and Hill States

- iv. **Augmentation of Tax Administration Structure:** The PRIs, particularly the Gram Panchayats, are presently having only a skeleton staff for administration in most of the States and this highly affects their tax administration efficiency. Considering this major constraint, tax administration and enforcement may be outsourced to Self-Help Groups (SHGs) or other agencies. Incentives may also be built in the various stakeholders, to enhance the OSR generation as well as achievement of targets.
- v. **Technology-based Tax Administration:** Online systems and applications may be developed at the State level and provided to the PRIs for digital means of tax collection, especially for large-scale universalised taxes like Property Tax and collection of charges for issuance of various certificates to the citizens. This may also be further expanded to cover even utility charges like water, street lights, sanitation charges, etc.

Conclusion

The PRIs play an important role in the economic development of rural populations and adequate fiscal devolution to them towards fulfillment of their responsibility as an essential requirement. It is envisaged that increased roles being assigned to these local self-governance institutions is bound to substantially increase the quantum of panchayat finances. In the medium-term, it is expected that at least 10-20% of the public expenditure would be in the realm of the panchayats with their own sources of revenue covering at least 25% of their budget at an aggregate level. Such a development would go a long way towards the major roles to be played by these institutions in the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, for which our country stands fully committed. □



Incentivisation of Panchayats

Dr Bijaya Kumar Behera

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has been incentivising best performing Panchayats/States/UTs through National Panchayat Awards, including financial incentives ranging from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 50 lakh, across the country through awards annually under the Incentivisation of Panchayats Scheme on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day celebrated on 24 April every year. This incentivisation encourages awardees who make special efforts, and create models for others to follow. It brings public attention to awardees' performance, which encourages all panchayats/RLBs, States, and UTs to excel. This creates an ecosystem for overall good governance at the local level.

Awards have always been a strong source of inspiration. Thus, towards this endeavour and also to motivate States for greater devolution, MoPR introduced Panchayat Empowerment and Accountability Incentive Scheme (PEAIS) during the year 2005-06 for States/UTs towards their performance on the extent of devolution carried out by them. Thus, PEAIS acted as a centralised intervention for decentralisation by States through devolution.

Despite constraints and limitations, there are many outstanding performers among panchayats all over the country. Therefore, under PEAIS, a second component to incentivise panchayats was introduced in the year 2011-12 to put in place an accountability and performance system at the local government level.

To provide panchayats with adequate technical and administrative support, strengthen their infrastructure and e-enablement, promote devolution, and improve their functioning, centrally sponsored scheme of Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan (RGPSA) scheme was approved and launched during the year 2013-14. Accordingly, inter-alia, erstwhile schemes of MoPR including PEAIS were subsumed in the scheme of RGPSA. Component of incentivisation of panchayats was operating under RGPSA scheme. For a more focused approach, incentivisation of panchayats is now funded under an independent scheme- Incentivisation of Panchayats as Central Component of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan with effect from 2016-17.

National Panchayat Awards

In the year 2008, a National Convention of the Chairpersons of the Zila Parishads and the Intermediate Panchayats was organised by MoPR from 22-24 April 2008 to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the enactment of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 with effect from 24 April 1993. The 15th Anniversary Charter on Panchayati Raj focusing on "Inclusive Growth through Inclusive Governance" was adopted during the Convention and the then Prime Minister addressed the National Convention of District and Intermediate Panchayat Presidents on 24 April 2008. This became a foundation stone for celebrating National Panchayati Raj Day (NPRD) on the same day every year. The National Panchayat Awards under the Incentivisation of Panchayats scheme are conferred annually on this date. This event highlights the winning panchayats as role models for others as an inspiration.

Categories of the Awards

1. **Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar (NDRGGSP)** was instituted in the year 2010 to incentivise, appreciate and encourage the Gram Panchayats of the country, for outstanding performance, through effective Gram Sabhas, especially in respect of creating improvements in the social and economic structure of the village. The main objective of instituting this award is to strengthen the institution of Gram Sabha and to highlight it as the institution for people's participation, collective

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decisions, and social audit. This award is given to one GP/Village Council (VC) in each State/UT with award money of Rs 10 lakh each.

2. **Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar (DDUPSP)** was introduced during the year 2011, given to best performing panchayats (District, Intermediate, and Gram) in recognition of the good work done for improving the delivery of services and public goods. DDUPSP is given for general (for all PRIs) and 9 thematic categories (only for GPs). The thematic categories are as follows:

- Sanitation
- Civic services (drinking water, street light, infrastructure)
- Natural resource management
- Serving marginalised section (women, SC/ST, disabled, senior citizen)
- Social sector performance
- Disaster management
- CBOs/individuals taking voluntary actions to support gram panchayats
- Innovation in revenue generation
- e-Governance

This award is given broadly in proportion to the number of panchayats/Rural Local Bodies in the State/UT. Under this Award, an incentive money of Rs 5-15 lakh per Gram Panchayat (GP) [as per population], Rs 25 lakh per

Block/Intermediate Panchayat, and Rs 50 lakh per District Panchayat is given.

Tier of Panchayat	No. of Panchayats in State/UT	Tentative number of awards
District Panchayat	<50	1
	>= 50	2
Intermediate Panchayat	<500	2
	500-1000	4
	>1000	6
Gram Panchayat	Total number of GPs	0.05% of the total number of GPs (Subject to a minimum of 3 GPs in each State. In very small States like Goa, Sikkim, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Manipur, the number of GPs to be awarded may be restricted to 2)

Criteria for selection of the number of awards

i. **Gram Panchayat Development Plan Award (GPDPA)** was introduced during the year 2018, this award is conferred to best performing Gram Panchayats (GPs) across the country which has developed their GDPDs according to the State/UT specific guidelines prepared in line with the model guidelines issued by MoPR [or adopted as such]. This award is given to one GP/VC in each State/UT with award money of Rs 5 lakh each.

ii. **Child-friendly Gram Panchayat Award (CFGPA)** was introduced in the year 2019 for best performing GPs/VCs keeping in view that the basic component of social development is creating a conducive atmosphere for the healthy growth and development of children. This award is given to one GP/VC in each State/UT with award money of Rs 5 lakh each.

iii. **e-Panchayat Puraskar** is given to incentivise States/UTs to adopt and implement the Panchayat Enterprise Suite (PES) Applications/State specific Applications, automate the internal workflow processes of panchayats and equivalent Rural Local Governments, enable electronic delivery of services making them more transparent, accountable and effective as organs of decentralised self-governing institutions through adoption and implementation of the e-Panchayat Applications. There is no financial incentive under this award.

Selection Modalities

Detailed questionnaires for Awards have been developed by MoPR by utilising various criteria/indicators to measure the accountability system and transparent functioning of Panchayats. The nomination of Panchayats for awards is done by assessing and evaluating the information provided by the Panchayats based on detailed marking schemes at various levels like Block Level Committee, District Level Committee, State Panchayat Performance Appraisal Committee, and State Field Verification Teams. The nominations from States/UTs are invited online through a dedicated portal to reduce the

The Ministry continues to endeavor for incremental participation of panchayats in awards across the country. Taking cognizance of the fact that there are more than 2.5 lakh Panchayats across the country and also that it is important to highlight the winning panchayats as role models for others, a broad range of publicity of awards and awardee panchayats is done at the local and national levels through electronic, print, and social media platforms.

turnaround time in the overall process. Thereafter, a National Screening Committee for Panchayat Awards constituted in MoPR makes the final selection of panchayats for awards. The number of awards conferred depends upon the submission of nominations by the State Governments/UT Administrations.

The award money is to be utilised for public purposes by the awardees especially livelihood support, assets creation, civic amenities creation & maintenance, and bridging the gaps in the funds received from Union/State Governments for various projects.

Outreach

Encouragingly, National Panchayat Awards have become a medium for creating awareness and sharing of knowledge across the country about the achievements of the Panchayats/States/UTs thus raising the level of commitment of all stakeholders benefiting the nation as a result.

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Achievements of the Scheme

Improvement and refinement of criteria for awards is a continuous policy intervention adopted by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj from time to time. Major achievements/improvements made over the years under the scheme are as follows:

- i. **Introduction of thematic categories under DDUPSP:** From FY 2015-16, nine thematic categories were introduced under DDUPSP to focus the attention of Panchayats on socially vital issues
- ii. **An impetus towards greater transparency and efficiency:** For a more efficient, transparent, and speedy processing, the entire process of filing nominations by Panchayats/Councils up to the final recommendation by States/UTs to Ministry of Panchayati Raj was made online with effect from the Award Year 2016.
- iii. **Institution of Gram Panchayat Development Plan Award (GPDPA):** To encourage Gram Panchayats

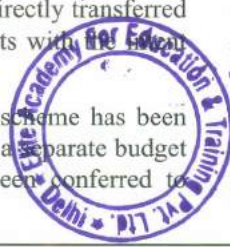


which have developed their GDPDs according to the State/UT specific guidelines prepared in line with the model guidelines issued by MoPR (or adopted as such), a new award namely, GPDPA was instituted during the year 2018.

- iv. **Incremental participation from Panchayats under National Panchayat Awards:** As a result of vigorous efforts for creating greater awareness and motivation among Panchayats across the country for National Panchayat Awards, the level of competition has increased over the years as the total number of participants for the Award Year 2021 reached around 74,000 which is an increase of 28% over the previous year. This portrays an extensive outreach of National Panchayat Awards across the country.
- v. **Direct transfer of award money to awardee Panchayats:** As an initiative with effect from the award year 2021, award money is directly transferred electronically to awardee Panchayats with a view of eliminating any delays hitherto.

Since the year 2016-17, when the scheme has been in operation as a separate scheme/under a separate budget head, a total of 1,519 awards have been conferred to Panchayats/States/UTs.

Over the period, various initiatives/improvements have been taken for these awards by the way of making the entire process of filing nominations by panchayats online, the introduction of new award categories/themes to focus on specific areas/sectors, and socially important issues, etc. Although, criteria for evaluation of various categories of awards have been developed over the years through extensive deliberations, however, improvement and refinement in the award system is a continuous policy intervention in tune with time keeping given shifting priorities for the attainment of new goals. Previously mostly the emphasis was laid on processes-based awards such as the conduct of Gram Sabha, preparation of development plans with little association with its outcome. These performances are often subjective and difficult to assess accurately. It is, therefore, envisaged to alter the qualitative aspect of measuring performances by bringing in outcome-based parameters and themes which align with the core essence of concrete development. The other important aspect of the revamping of the award system is to holistically address the roles played by the Panchayats in the attainment of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and thereby incentivise them for their targeted performance. This aspect is receiving greater demand and thus attention. □





Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
Government of India



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THREE GOLDEN RULES





Always wear a mask



Wash hands thoroughly and frequently with soap and water



Maintain 2 meter distance from others

For Information related to COVID
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SVAMITVA Scheme

Alok Prem Nagar

One of the vital factors in land resources-led economic growth is the ownership of the properties, especially in rural areas. It is observed that ownership of land in rural areas is based on physical possession of the property and lacks sufficient documentary evidence of ownership, which can be used to leverage the property to avail loans and other financial benefits. Before independence, land surveys taken by various agencies have focused on agricultural land in India, resulting in many key aspects of land like ownership rights, boundary, and any pending disputes left unsettled.

Land is an essential resource for most economic activities aimed at the creation of economic growth in the world. The management of land resources, therefore, is considered an important component of the economic policies of any country.

In the absence of a legal document, the owner of the property in the rural areas is not able to leverage it as a financial asset acceptable by the banks to provide loans and other financial assistance. These residents are left with no other option but to avail loans from non-institutional creditors who may charge them steep interest rates; lack of awareness among the uninformed rural populace leads them into a spiralling debt trap, leaving them at the mercy of the moneylenders. For example, when it comes to access to institutional credit, as per the Household Assets and Indebtedness Survey 2013 conducted by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), about 20% of households have reported outstanding credit with non-institutional lenders, while the same number is at 10% for urban India.

As far as non-agricultural property rights in rural India are concerned, very few studies exist that provide statistical estimates of record of rights for residential land in rural India as the surveys like the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) or India Human Development Survey (IHDS) take into account either the agricultural land or all land without segregating the inhabited (abadi) land.

These issues matter in India because an average household has 77% of its total assets in real estate (which includes residential buildings, buildings used for farm and

non-farm activities, constructions such as recreational facilities, and rural and urban land). This number is 40% for the USA, 60% for China, 50% for Thailand, and 35% for UK.¹

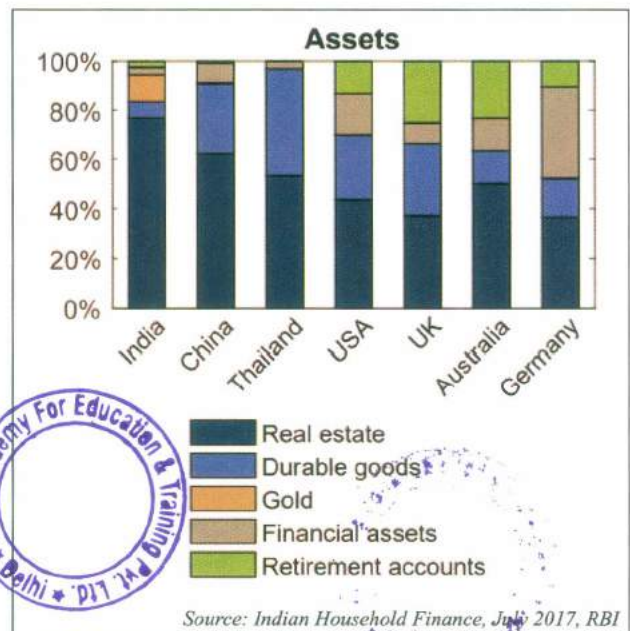


Figure 1: Assets in percentage

This lack of Record of Rights (RoR) in the rural inhabited areas in India results in a low level of land governance², presumptive ownership of properties, long pending property-related disputes, and illiquid land market in rural areas.

Considering the lack of Record of Rights (RoR) and absence of survey of inhabited (abadi) areas in villages, there was a requirement to provide RoR in the form of Property Cards to village household owners utilising the latest drone survey technology across 6.62 lakh villages of India, leading to conceptualisation of SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages Abadi and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas) Scheme.

The Scheme aims to provide the 'record of rights' to village household owners possessing houses in inhabited rural areas and issuance of property cards to the property owners. This would facilitate monetisation of rural residential assets for credit and other financial services.

Broad objectives of the SVAMITVA Scheme include:

- Leveraging property as a financial asset by the citizens of rural India
- Creation of accurate land records for rural planning
- Provide an integrated property validation solution for rural India
- Serve as a means of reduction in property-related disputes
- Facilitate with the determination of property tax
- Creation of survey infrastructure and GIS (Geographic Information System) maps that can be used by any department or agency

Traditional chain-based, cross-staff, and theodolite-

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based surveying techniques generally require line-of-sight between the instrument and the ground and a clear vision of the whole area to be surveyed. Also, the surveyor has to move with measuring instruments from one place to another for demarcating property parcels. This methodology of land survey is laborious, time-consuming, expensive, and prone to human as well as instrumental errors.

SVAMITVA Scheme uses the combination of Survey Grade Drones and CORS network (Continuously Operated Reference Stations) to accurately survey large areas in a very short span of time. The 1:500 scale maps generated through the drone survey are of very high accuracy i.e., 3-5 cms, which the conventional methodology does not provide. Moreover, editable and geo-tagged maps are produced at a fraction of the cost without the need for line-of-sight.

The high resolution and accurate image-based maps facilitate the creation of the most durable record of property holdings in areas with no legacy revenue records. Such accurate image-based maps provide a clear demarcation of land holdings in a very short time compared to on-ground physical measurement and mapping of the land parcels. Further, these maps are free from measurement errors to a large extent, which is not the case with traditional methodology.

The pilot phase of the Scheme was rolled out on 24 April 2020 in six States namely Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.



Drone-based survey and CORS station

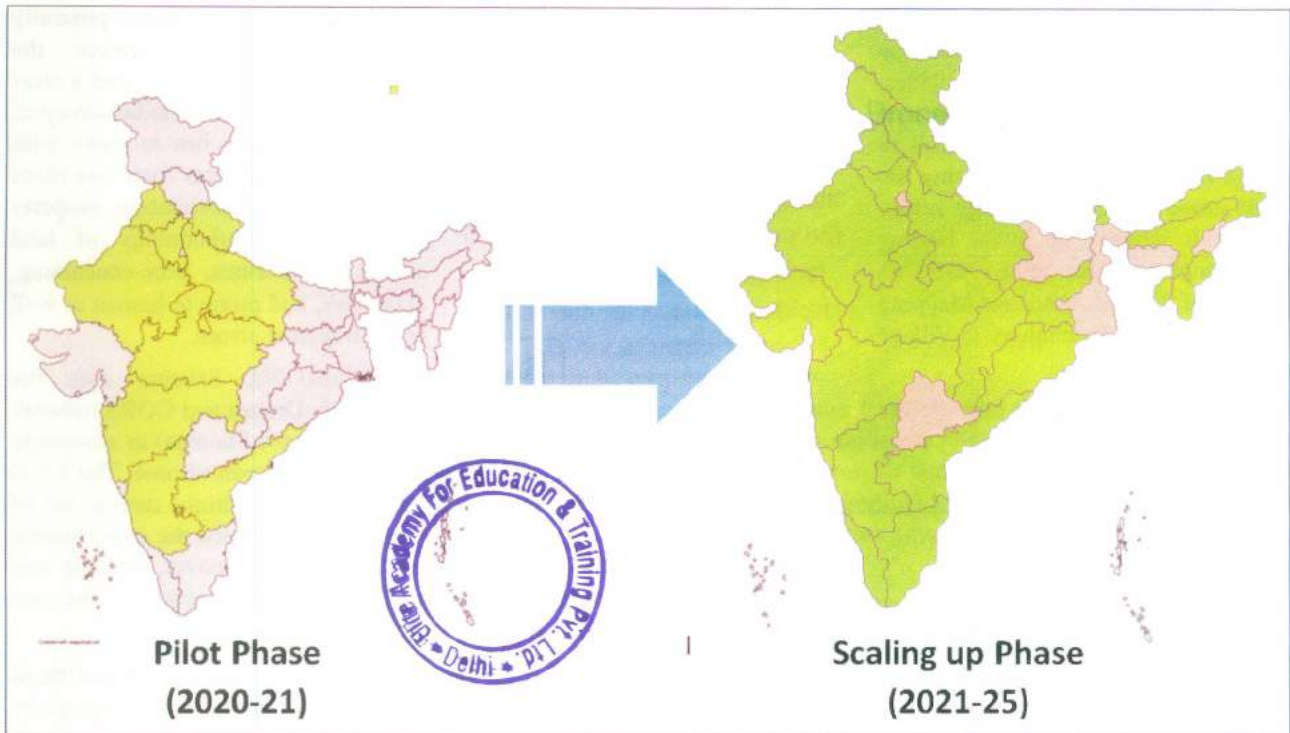


Figure 2: SVAMITVA Scheme coverage of States – Pilot phase and scaling-up phase

Later on, villages of one border district of Punjab and Rajasthan and few villages of Andhra Pradesh were also added in the pilot phase of the implementation. During the pilot phase, 210 CORS stations are being established in the States of Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, and Rajasthan.

Based on the successful implementation and outcome of the pilot phase, the Scheme was rolled out for implementation across all States/UTs on 24 April 2021. So far, 28 States and UTs have signed MoU with Survey of India for implementation of SVAMITVA Scheme in their States/UTs. The State of Tamil Nadu is in the final stages of signing MoU for pilot villages.

Based on Socio-Economic and Caste Census-2011 (SECC-2011) estimates of rural areas in India, the number of households expected to be benefitted from the Scheme is approx. 13.13 crores (Based on the number of households that have reported owned houses in rural areas of 29 States/UTs).

Engagement with DFS

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has also engaged with the Department of Financial Services (DFS) in an endeavour to provide legal validation to the property cards for examination of title deeds/property cards by the bank authorities so that

the same are recognised by the banks for loans and other financial benefits. The Department consulted banks on providing loans against the property card format issued by the concerned State department to the property owners for monetising their assets. As a result, States have amended their respective State Acts/Rules for provisioning of property cards as a valid legal document of ownership and engaged with banks for formulating formats of property cards acceptable for mortgage purposes.

Many success stories have emerged wherein property owners have availed loans, received compensation for land acquisition owing to property ownership, and settlement of long pending property-related disputes.

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Key Achievements

As of 16 September 2021, drone flying has been completed in 59,145 villages across nine States. Also, drone flying has been completed in 51 districts of the States of Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. As of 8 September 2021, property cards have been distributed in approx. 17,000 villages across the States of Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Punjab to nearly 17 lakh property owners.

Many property owners have also started availing of loans through property cards for constructing houses or setting up small businesses. There have also been instances of settlement of long pending property disputes among residents of villages during the implementation of the Scheme.

Property owners in rural inhabited areas can download the Aadhaar authenticated property card on their mobile phones through the DigiLocker application.



The house of Rambharose Vishwakarma, who lives in Abgaon Kalan of Harda district, was acquired in the four-lane project. Due to the prevailing legacy rules, he was not able to receive compensation owing to lack of documents related to the ownership of the land. But after evaluation in the SVAMITVA Scheme, he was not only able to receive the ownership of the land but also get a compensation of more than Rs 21.14 lakh through land acquisition.

Ramgopal, Chandrabhan and Harishchandra, village Vaghera, Tehsil Tahroli of Jhansi District of Uttar Pradesh

The disputes pertaining to their ancestral land have been pending for many years. The efforts made in the past to settle the dispute were not successful and demarcation of the ancestral land could not be done. Through SVAMITVA Property Cards (in Gharauni), demarcation of land was successfully done leading to the settlement of long pending dispute among them.

Pawan, village Handiya, Tehsil Handiya of Harda District of Madhya Pradesh

Pawan had a kutch house and the only source of income for the family was through a modest footwear shop he owned in the village. Through SVAMITVA Scheme he was able to get the Adhikar Abhilekh (Property Card) of the house and use it to avail bank loan of Rs 290000 for renovation of the house and further augment his business.

Way Forward

There are several other benefits to the Gram Panchayat as well as to the other stakeholders through the creation of accurate maps. The creation of accurate land records and GIS maps will support Panchayats in the preparation of a better-quality Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).

Through the accurate determination of properties and transparent land titles, Gram Panchayats will be able to

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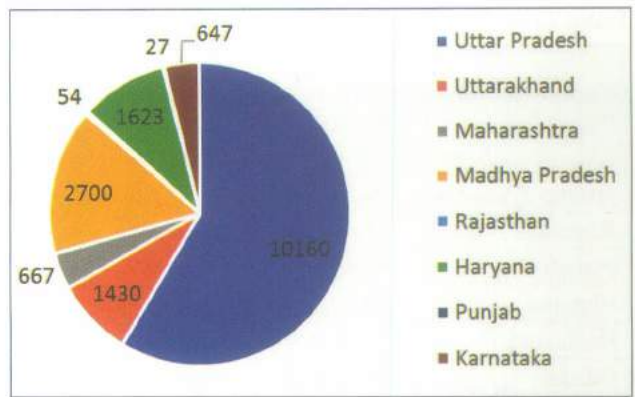


Figure 3: Number of villages where property cards have been distributed

streamline their property tax determination and collections in States in which they are devolved to them, thus leading to the generation of their own sources of revenue which could be gainfully utilised for various developmental works.

CORS network provides unprecedented opportunities for innovation and all land surveys. The establishment of 567 CORS network as a public infrastructure over the course of the Scheme will further facilitate geo-positioning services and other developmental activities being taken up by any department or agency.

The CORS system can overhaul the system of land measurement. The Chain, Compass, or Plane Table survey methods could now be replaced with accurate geo-location-based methods, with the help of hand-held rovers and antenna. In the interim, it will provide an opportunity to geo-reference existing cadastral survey records provided that the challenge of reconciliation with legacy records can be met.

The Scheme has also given an impetus to the drone ecosystem in the country. Currently, there are nearly 119 drones deployed in various States for conducting drone surveys and the number will soon increase to 300. This is being nurtured through drone manufacturing, pilot training, and drone as a service model which will provide a boost to the skilled manpower requirements and open avenues for startups and MSMEs. The Production-Linked Incentive

(PLI) Scheme of the Ministry of Civil Aviation is a timely opportunity- there is a steady demand for drones on one hand and incentives to enrich the supply on the other.

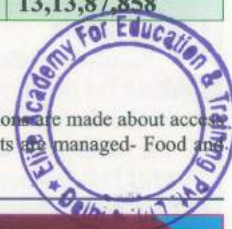
Thus, SVAMITVA Scheme aims for holistic development of Gram Panchayat through the empowerment of villages and their residents which will eventually make rural India Atmanirbhar.

Status of number of households reporting owned house as per SECC-2011:

Code with States/ UTs Name	Total Households	Number of Households with house ownership status as Owned	Code with States/ UTs Name	Total Households	Number of Households with house ownership status as Owned
Jammu & Kashmir	16,01,606	15,83,548	Uttar Pradesh	2,60,15,592	2,56,02,680
Himachal Pradesh	12,63,756	11,98,405	Chhattisgarh	45,40,999	43,90,858
Punjab	32,69,467	31,65,651	Madhya Pradesh	1,12,88,946	1,08,71,075
Haryana	29,69,509	28,71,873	Sikkim	88,723	72,242
Jharkhand	50,44,234	48,09,680	Arunachal Pradesh	2,01,842	1,67,487
Odisha	86,77,615	83,82,606	Manipur	4,48,163	4,29,433
Rajasthan	1,02,23,073	99,29,125	Mizoram	1,11,626	98,228
Gujarat	69,20,473	64,83,857	Tripura	6,97,062	6,53,549
Maharashtra	1,38,41,960	1,25,19,500	Assam	57,43,835	52,79,167
Goa	2,20,731	1,95,198	Daman & Diu	31,795	11,478
Andhra Pradesh	93,44,180	85,65,496	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	45,352	30,947
Karnataka	80,48,664	73,75,290	Lakshadweep	10,929	9,018
Kerala	63,19,215	59,39,546	Puducherry	1,15,249	97,684
Tamil Nadu	1,00,88,119	92,32,452	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	68,481	46,799
Uttarakhand	14,79,742	13,74,986	Total	13,87,20,938	13,13,87,858

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YE-1666/2021

Gram Panchayat Development Plans



Rekha Yadav
Kunal Bandyopadhyay

Proponents of decentralisation have studied and shown that devolution of power and authority at a local level can enhance systems of local governance in several ways. India has a rich history of community governance. The Panchayat System has been evolving into institutions of local self-governance. Over the last two decades, several initiatives have been taken by the states and the central governments to realise the Constitutional mandate. Since then, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has been striving for capacity building of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) through multiple initiatives including promoting decentralised participatory planning in a convergent and effective manner.

The theory for democratic decentralisation is founded upon the notion that greater participation of the community in local affairs will improve the quality of services provided by the Government, particularly ones aimed at improving the lives of poor and marginal groups in society. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment has created a formal three-tier structure of decentralised local governance for rural India with special emphasis on the inclusion of women, SCs, STs, and other marginalised communities as partners in governance. Article 243G of the Indian Constitution mandates economic development and social justice through an inclusive, community-driven, and holistic planning process of the Panchayat System, thereby evolving into institutions of local self-governance.

Since its inception, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has been striving for capacity building of PRIs through multiple initiatives like promoting decentralised participatory planning in a convergent and effective manner. Following the spirit of the Constitutional mandate on devolution of sufficient powers and authority to panchayats enables them to function as institutions of local self-government with respect to the preparation and implementation of plans for economic development and social justice for rural areas of the country. Over the past few decades, there have been significant developments in the devolution of powers to Gram Panchayats (GPs) to realise this

mandate and allow more control over development to people through elected GPs.

GPDP: Comprehensive Planning

As a vehicle for comprehensive and convergent development planning, the preparation of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) was institutionalised during the FY 2015-16. GPDP process facilitates decentralised planning by the community members of the village. The convergence of resources available through various schemes of the Government of India and respective State governments as well as 'Own-source Revenue' provide the opportunity to the Gram Panchayats to chart their own need-based development plans through active involvement of the Gram Sabha. In due recognition of the importance of grassroots-level planning at the Gram Panchayat level, Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC) allocated Rs 200292 crores to Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) for providing basic services in their areas for the period of five years between 2015 and 2020.

Further, the Fifteenth Finance Commission (FC-XV) has allocated Rs 236805 crores for RLBs in 2021-26 of which 40% of the recommended grant will be allocated to untied grants and the remaining 60% as tied grants. Untied grants can be used for felt needs under the 29 subjects enlisted in the XI Schedule, except for salaries and other establishment costs. Regarding Tied Grants, 30% of the total grants be utilised for drinking water, rainwater

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Subjects/Sectors under the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution

harvesting, and water recycling, and 30% of the total grants to be utilised for sanitation and maintenance of Open Defecation Free (ODF) status. FFC has recommended RLBs grants to all the tiers of Panchayats and also traditional bodies of the V & VI Schedule. In alignment with the goal of good governance and socially inclusive development, this huge untied fund flow to the panchayats has necessitated a renewed focus on decentralised planning at the village level in all States.

Broad Objectives of GPDP:

- a) To ensure integrated and inclusive development of the rural areas governed by Gram Panchayats, which is not only geared towards infrastructure-oriented development but also social, economic, and community development.
- b) To enable and engage the community in participatory planning and decision-making processes.
- c) To ensure identification of locally available resources and addressing local needs of all communities through participatory planning and convergence.
- d) To ensure inclusion and welfare of the Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, and other marginalised communities, Other Backward Communities, women and children, vulnerable groups, people with disabilities, etc., in the formulation and implementation of the GPDP to ensure the provision of basic social goods and a life of dignity.
- e) To improve efficiency and efficacy in public service delivery in local areas.
- f) To strengthen accountability measures at the local level.

GPDP – Convergence of Schemes and Sectors

The GPDP planning process has to be comprehensive which involves convergence with schemes related to 29

The convergence of resources available through various schemes of the Government of India and respective State governments as well as ‘Own-Source Revenue’ provide the opportunity to the Gram Panchayats to chart their own need-based development plans through active involvement of the Gram Sabha.

subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution.

Panchayats have a significant role to play in the effective and efficient implementation of flagship schemes on subjects of national importance. In the context of the large distribution of funds to Gram Panchayats by the Finance Commission, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has made the preparation of GPDP a mandatory activity by Gram Panchayats (GPs). The Ministry had framed Model GPDP Guidelines in 2015 and

subsequently, the new restructured comprehensive GPDP Guidelines 2018 were put in place. Along with the revised guidelines, special emphasis was given by rolling out the People’s Plan Campaign for greater emphasis on GPDP preparation. With renewed focus through multiple initiatives, more than 95% of GPs (2.56 lakh of the total 2.69 lakh GPs and TLBs) participated in the planning process and uploaded their plans on eGramSwaraj portal (<https://egramswaraj.gov.in/>).

Over the years, Gram Panchayats are using schemes from different Central Government and State Schemes

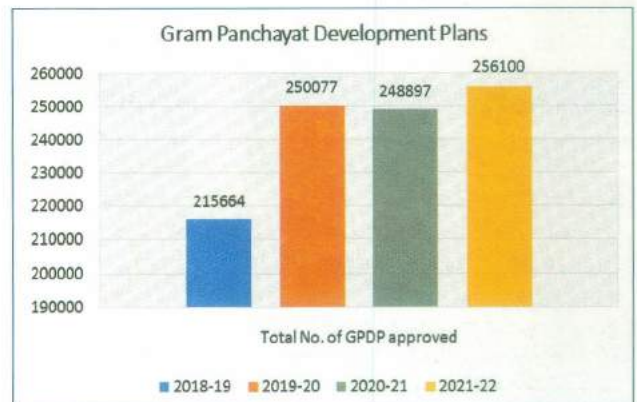


Figure 1: Number of GPDPs approved



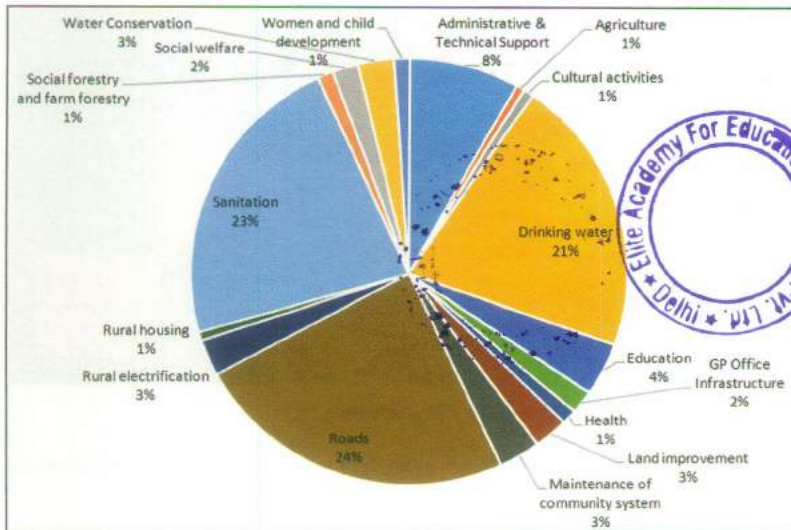


Figure 2: Sectoral Fund Allocation (percentage) in GPDP (2021-22)

for preparing more convergent and participatory plans. Studies have shown that collaboration between public agencies and available resources can produce 'synergistic' outcomes in delivering public goods for the citizens. However, despite attempts and respective orders from Central and State Governments, convergence from several Centrally Sponsored Schemes is not reflected in the GPDPs over the years.

The sectoral fund allocation for GPDP is limited to few areas where core funding is provided either from Central or State Finance Commission Funds and Schemes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). Allocation in the areas of road construction, water, and sanitation is comparatively higher in percentage to other sectors. It clearly shows that there is a greater need for Gram Panchayats to converge

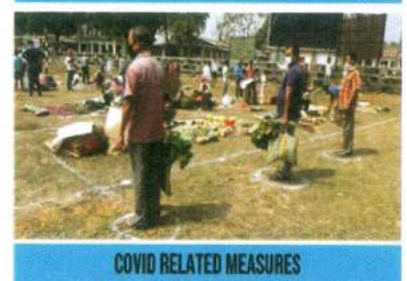
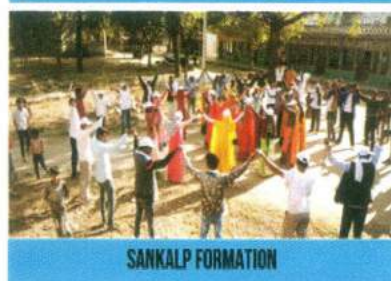
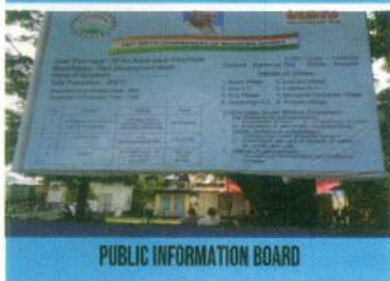
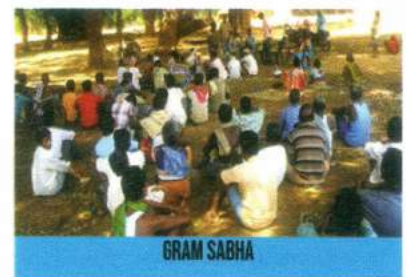
resources available from other Schemes or programmes related to these sectors. However, this analysis should not lead to a conclusion that the sectors where fund allocation is showing a lower percentage do not receive adequate funding at the local level. Several government departments implement developmental programmes at the GP level, but often the programmes are run by individual departments so there may be duplication of efforts, hence the need for greater convergence is a necessity.

The guidelines of all the Centrally Sponsored Schemes which are implemented at GP level such as MGNREGA, DAY-NRLM, SBM(G), POSHAN, etc., clearly insist on the preparation of plans at the GP level. Since GPDP is an integrated plan

document, it should ideally encompass a holistic view of the panchayat in all its facets. All plans of the line departments including labour budget shall emanate from GPDP, though implementation of the approved activities may be done by the respective line departments. Such an integrated plan helps to absorb more funds from different sectors and also through increased local resource mobilisation, thereby facilitating improvement of service delivery. The convergence of all plans and schemes of different line departments through GPDP will avoid duplication, reduce the financial burden, and accelerate the achievement of desired results.

Need for Capacity Building

In a bid to strengthen local democracy and people-led development, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and State Governments are continuously trying to innovate and



Glimpses of GPDP Preparation during People's Plan Campaign

engage a large section of stakeholders into the planning and development process. As part of this process, MoPR lays great emphasis on Capacity Building and training of Elected Representatives (ERs) and other stakeholders through its flagship scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan launched in 2018. In the last three years, it has trained 110 lakh ERs and stakeholders. Nearly 57,89,185 persons have been provided training related to GPDP. Since 2018, this large-scale exercise of GPDP preparation has been taken up in a mission mode through the People's Plan Campaign (Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas) annually across the country. This campaign is an intensive and structured exercise for planning by the Gram Panchayats, through special Gram Sabhas with active support from the officials of different line ministries/departments. The gaps based on Mission Antyodaya Surveys are brought forth to address the same in the next round of planning; information regarding various schemes of different ministries is shared to enable informed planning.

Case Study: Ibrahimpur, Telangana

Ibrahimpur village in Narayanaraopet Block in Siddipet district has been getting attention recently owing to the Gram Panchayat's efforts to provide excellent delivery of services like safe drinking water with minimum charges, 100% sanitation facility, water conservation, organic manure, mosquito-free village, and solar lights for village households. With a population of 1119, this village is located about 25 km from the district headquarter of Siddipet. The GP has won several awards including Nirmal Puraskar Award and Best Gram Panchayat Award for the development activities over the last few years.

Till a few years ago, the Gram Panchayat had poor infrastructure with no significant development in areas like health, sanitation, drinking water, etc. However, due to intensive community involvement of youth, women SHGs, and active Gram Sabhas along with an extensive awareness generation, Ibrahimpur transformed into a model village for sustainable development.

With a door-to-door visit for awareness, construction of toilets with the convergence of SBM(G) and MGNREGS, the GP has become an ODF Panchayat and thus reduced the pressure of health expenditure on citizens. Under SBM(G), initiatives were taken for Solid and Liquid Waste Management with a door-to-door waste collection for dry and wet waste segregation. The waste has been transformed into manure which is used for farming. The Gram Panchayat has banned the single-use of plastics for keeping the village area plastic-free.



'Any Time Water Machine'



Solar Street Light

The GP has also installed an 'Any Time Water Machine', which allows locals to fill up 20-litre cans at least two to three times a day after they swipe a card that can be recharged. The Gram Panchayat is powered with three kilowatts of solar energy and over 50 houses in the village are using solar energy for their household chores.

On the social front, 100 per cent enrolment of children in schools ensured proper implementation of Mid Day Meals. Classrooms are constructed with modern facilities for digital/online classes. A 100% immunisation targets were achieved with zero maternal and infant mortality rates. Ibrahimpur has ensured 100% institutional delivery and regular medical facilities for pregnant women in convergence with Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM).

The Gram Panchayat has also created an impact in generating the livelihood opportunities of wage seekers by providing employment through multiple opportunities through convergence. Under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), 60 milch animals were provided at subsidised rates to villagers. With support from Gram Panchayat, villagers are selling milk and sustaining their livelihood. Due to convergence of multiple Central and State schemes viz. MGNREGS, SBM(G), DAY-NRLM, etc., several developmental activities including cattle

The Ministry has taken several initiatives including developing capacities of elected representatives, functionaries, stakeholders through continuous training and capacity building, and promoting community engagement through PRI-SHG convergence for more sustainable and inclusive GPDP.

hostels for animals, vermicompost unit are constructed and members of SHGs and villagers are benefitting from the initiatives. Ibrahimpur has exemplified how activities can be scaled up. The manure from the cattle sheds have been used as raw material for composting, and the vermicompost, then both being sold in the local market and used for the village nurseries and plantation under the State Haritha Haram programme. The GP has also constructed a village park and crematorium with the objective of environment-friendly and sustainable village development. In the



Community shed for Cattle

village, SHG members are participating in different semi-skilled and skilled works, again leveraging the different government schemes.

As a model for local self-government, Ibrahimpur GP has been following the participatory governance model with the regular conduct of Gram Sabha where citizens discuss their needs and ways to address challenges. GP Committees function democratically by regularly consulting with community-based organisations viz. SHGs and other voluntary organisations. Ibrahimpur is committed to becoming a poverty-free village with a judicious allocation of resources in planning for improved livelihood development, enhanced family income, food security for all, improved nutrition, quality education, marketing of village products to nearby towns using NRLM network, capacity building of elected representatives, and stakeholders of development in panchayat area, etc.

The Gram Panchayats are increasingly recognised as the best available alternative for the implementation of developmental programmes through comprehensive planning, implementation, and monitoring. Effective local governance not only refers to the process of governing at the local level through the government institutions but also collaboration and collective action between local communities and the local authorities. The participation of people in the governance of the nation is the essence of democracy.

As indicated above, more than 95% of Gram Panchayats are preparing GDPs across the country. However, now is the time to shift the focus from 'numbers' to 'quality' of planning, to transform the GDPs from mere wishlists to informed, actionable plans followed by due monitoring.

Taking note of the existing challenges, MoPR has

taken several initiatives including developing capacities of elected representatives, functionaries, stakeholders through continuous training and capacity building, and promoting community engagement through PRI-SHG convergence for more sustainable and inclusive GPDP. As part of this process, special provision for integrating poverty reduction plans into GPDP has been initiated. A framework for localising Sustainable Development Goals is under process for integrating targets for sustainable development into GPDP process. Various system interventions at village-level gap report in Mission Antyodaya parameters, Panchayat Decision Support System, Dashboards, Gram Manchitra, Social Audit, etc., are paving way for more informed planning and execution.

In conclusion, with convergence in planning and implementation of development programmes and integration of community-based organisations, Line Ministries with the democratic institutions, and people-centred approach of the development plans will lead to building up of physical, financial, social and capital, and long term sustainable development at the village level. □

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Waste Management & Rural Planning

Muzammil Khan

Palle and Pattana Pragathi are initiatives in the State of Telangana to involve public participation in the holistic development of the villages. This includes planning for waste management, sanitation, and developing infrastructure to make villages self-reliant and encourage a sustainable living.

To achieve holistic development of the State's villages and towns, Palle Pragathi and Pattana Pragathi were launched in Telangana in the year 2019. Developmental objectives assigned under various phases fall within the broad verticals of sanitation and solid waste management, providing basic infrastructure, greening, and climate change management, education on fiscal prudence, and fiscal self-sufficiency along with the deepening of public participation and inclusive governance. Achievements made under these defined objectives sought to provide a healthy physical, social, and psychological environment to the State's rural population.

The Solid Waste Management (SWM) initiative firstly includes the creation of a DRCC (Dry Resource Collection Centre) and compost shed along with the purchase of a tractor and trolley for exclusive use by the panchayat. Both these initiatives sought to tackle the problem of irregular collection of household waste by sanitation workers, unscientific disposal in landfills, and a gap in awareness on modern methods of solid waste management among the general population. Over the four phases of Palle Pragathi Programme, a drive to educate every citizen on the household segregation of dry and wet waste and reduction of single-use plastics has been implemented, leading to the achievement of between 70-80% segregation at source being achieved and sustained. Lessons from the field have also led to the implementation of behavioural nudges such as the physical segregation of mixed waste by sanitation workers at the doorsteps of those providing unsegregated waste and catchy slogans being disseminated from the waste collection vehicles (a popular example being that 'all wet waste comes from things provided by nature and dry waste is man-made'), leading towards better adherence

to source segregation by the target populations.

Similarly, emphasis was laid on the timely and regular collection of household waste, designation of specific days for the collection of dry and wet waste, and the dissemination of information along with names and phone numbers of the local sanitation teams through wall paintings (titled 'parichayam' or introduction) in every ward, while also ensuring that every village adheres to the 1:500 norm for the recruitment of sufficient sanitation workers (designated as MPWs or multi-purpose workers). Together, these efforts have led to a human rights-based approach to waste collection.

Furthermore, the issue of rearing of animals within the village habitation was dealt with through the construction of the cattle and goat shelters under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). These animal



Demonstration of composting at the DRCC

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Wall painting of the ward 'parichayam' committee



Vaikunta Dhamam (Crematoria)

hostels have been constructed away from the village habitation by pooling the lands of individual beneficiaries and ensuring economies of scale. Such an endeavour has meant that the human resources allocated to the cleaning, maintenance, and guarding of these hostels have been minimised while also simplifying the vaccination and health check-up drives of the concerned veterinary officers. The health outcomes of untangling historical human/animal settlements have also been immense in terms of a more sanitary environment, and reduced chances for enteric dysfunctions to occur.

In the next stage, the village tractor is used to transport waste to the DRCC and compost shed, where the wet waste is composted using vermicomposting and the dry waste takes segregated form into various components. A dedicated staff is deployed at the DRCC to monitor the creation of compost, and segregate dry waste as it arrives,

as a part of the proceeds from the recovery of glass and plastic waste going towards their salaries. Several GPs have also provided uniforms to the staff deployed at DRCCs, not only boosting their morale but also providing them with a sense of ownership and dignity. Initiatives such as these have also led to a change in the public mindset towards waste generation and processing, going from waste being seen as a nuisance to now being seen as an asset waiting to be capitalised upon.

Secondly, under the component of basic infrastructure, a crematorium/burial ground has been created in every GP in the State. These structures include a waiting room, separate washrooms for men and women, burning platforms, and a 'Smriti Vanam' or garden of remembrance. A degree of social re-engineering is also being incorporated into this effort as members from all religions/castes are being encouraged to use the same facility for the performance of



Rejuvenated Anganwadi centre





Palle Prakruthi Vanam (Village Park)

last rites for the departed souls to provide dignity in death to all people. Similarly, hearses designated as 'Vaikunta Ratham' are similarly being deployed in all Mandal Headquarters for free use by anyone requesting them.

Further, a programme for upgradation of existing social infrastructure such as Anganwadis and Primary Health Centres (PHCs) was also taken up with a special emphasis laid on a public-art programme. The objective was not only to create more usable and robust facilities but also to inject new energy into the daily life of rural populations through facilities that are regularly used but have been seldom made to look vibrant and welcoming.

Alongside these initiatives, great emphasis was also placed on the repairing and construction of CC drains and soak pits, repair of roads and maintenance, and upgradation of electrical infrastructures such as poles, wires, and transformers. Collectively, these efforts have led to better health, energy-saving, and fiscal outcomes. As one example of a positive externality, there has been a steep drop in documented cases of the incidence of dengue and other vector-borne diseases in the State since the commencement of the Palle Pragathi programme. It would



Multi-Layer Avenue Plantation

also be worth recalling that the State had already achieved its ambitious plan to deliver piped drinking water to every household under the flagship programme of Mission Bhagiratha.

Under the third vertical of greening and climate change management called 'Haritha Hāram' or green garland, the State has allocated targets for plantation to every district and department of the government, with the allocated target for 2021-22 being the plantation of over 20 crore saplings. A primary focus under this programme is to carry out MLAP (Multi-Layer Avenue Plantation) in a saturation mode, along every major road, village approach road, and internal roads in the State, with the explicit objective of creating aesthetic, and shaded avenues, and implicitly to reduce noise and air pollution in the villages lining the roads in consideration.

Similarly, the programme envisages the creation of 'Palle Prakruthi Vanalu' or village parks of 1 acre or more, in every GP. These parks include a walkway, dense Miyawaki plantations and spaces for leisure, and not only have come to the focal point of social gatherings and recreation in the villages but also have formed the green lungs of the village. Coupled with the foresight to create these parks on degraded or barren land, this has simultaneously led to the reclamation and greening of these hitherto underused assets.

Pattana Prakruthi Vanalu (BPPVs) or mandal-level village parks are the latest in the Palle Pragathi programme. These parks have been created on parcels of land of 10 acres or more and comprise over 30,000 plantations per site. Largely situated in the mandal headquarters, BPPVs aim to not only create sprawling sites for rural afforestation, but strategically being situated in government lands also fulfills the objective of protecting these lands from encroachment.

The fourth component under this vertical is the distribution of 6 plants per household in every village in



Rural Miyawaki plantation in Siddipet District

the State under the drive to achieve plantations in homesteads. Innovations such as the naming of plants, distributed for various members of the recipient's family, has not only added an incentive towards ensuring the survival of the distributed plants but has also led to a rise in social awareness and a rediscovery of the intimate connections between our ecology and society.

Under the vertical of fiscal discipline, the disbursement of funds to GPs has been rationalised with every village receiving their entitled grants by the 1st of every month; this information is also displayed transparently on the walls of the Panchayat Office and is updated regularly. This regularity in fund disbursement has been coupled with the preparation of annual and 5-year development plans wherein the Gram Sabha identifies, prioritises, and allocates timelines for the implementation of developmental schemes, leading to better planning and monitoring outcomes.

Secondly, the regular collection of property taxes has been mandated under the Act with a stipulation to rectify assessments and demand regularly, and the overall objective of collecting 100% of the demand levied.

Similarly, items such as the payment of electricity bills, loan repayments (especially towards the loan taken to purchase village tractors), salaries, and sanitation expenses have been classified as charged expenditure and regular payments under these heads have not only been mandated by the Telangana Panchayat Raj Act, 2018 but is also strictly enforced by the concerned officials. Furthermore, the Act includes defined punitive action that is invited when the above charges are not paid for on time, while also stipulating that the irregular conduct of statutory audits is sufficient grounds for the disqualification of the Sarpanch and Panchayat Secretary.



Gram Sabha and Standing Committee meeting

Together, these initiatives have not only led to increased awareness of public finances and their transparent utilisation, but have also led to the adherence to fiscal responsibility and discipline, one of the core objectives of efficiently functioning local bodies.

In the same spirit, an audit on resources, energy consumption, and water utilisation has also been conducted across villages to identify inefficiencies in resource allocation and the resulting market failures. For example, energy audits have led to all streetlights being replaced by energy-efficient LED bulbs, and in addition to a rationalisation in the wattage of deployed lighting has led to cost savings between 15-20% in several villages.

Together, these initiatives have not only led to increased awareness of public finances and their transparent utilisation, but have also led to the adherence to fiscal responsibility and discipline, one of the core objectives of efficiently functioning local bodies.

The final vertical of enhancing public participation in developmental activities has received the greatest focus during the latest phase of the programme of Palle Pragathi. The Telangana Panchayat Raj Act, 2018 requires the constitution of 4 Standing Committees in every village, each supervising the facets of sanitation,

It further states that these committees should be apolitical bodies meant to increase public engagement with governance. In the same spirit, these committees have been constituted in all villages and their recommendations are placed before the monthly meeting of the panchayat and the bi-monthly meeting of the Gram Sabha, as has been mandated under the Act. In practice, it has been found that the supervision by members of these committees has led to better outcomes in the implementation of developmental programmes and the incubation of grassroots innovation, for example, costly fencing has been avoided at DRCCs and crematoria, and has instead been replaced with the planting of natural thorny hedges on the recommendation of the Standing Committee of one village, and subsequently, this innovation has been scaled up to all villages in the district, leading to savings to the GP collection.

SHGs have also actively co-opted for these committees, leading to active debates on social issues being conducted on various fora, which might have been more passive in the discussion of socially important, but often neglected issues, such as waste management and fund allocations towards healthcare.

Together, these initiatives aim to achieve what has been stated in the letter and spirit of the 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution, ultimately leading to a rural landscape consisting of dynamic, democratic, healthy, and progressive villages. □





Localising SDGs for Panchayats

Sukanya KU
Joy Elamon

Dashboards are intended as a tool for governments and other stakeholders to measure progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to highlight gaps in both implementation and data. The interactive dashboards provide a visual representation of countries' performance by SDGs to identify priorities for action.

The Sustainable Development Goals were agreed upon in September 2015 to energise the world and to show direction for its priorities and actions for the next 15 years- to radically reduce poverty and inequality. These ambitious goals aim to end poverty, tackle inequality once and for all, and find lasting solutions to the environmental challenges faced by the world. As a part of this effort, the data revolution for Sustainable Development has gained momentum to improve the identification of the world's needs and to enhance the targeting of the resources towards development. Harnessing the data revolution is a crucial enabler for driving action to achieve the Global Goals by 2030, by supporting data-driven decision-making, evidence-based policies, and mutual accountability for development programmes and investments by the government at various levels and other stakeholders.

The 'data revolution' refers to the transformative actions needed to respond to the demands of a complex development agenda using data. It also refers to radical improvements of how data is produced, accessed, and used. In many governments, data collection is done by an agency of the national government from a pre-designed sample of the population and is then analysed using complex scientific methods to yield national aggregate estimates. Data collection and analysis has been a highly specialised field that has excluded most citizens and government officials - some of whom are only able to consume reports at best. It is in this context that there is a need for decentralising the data revolution where the panchayats manage data for development.

At the panchayat level, the data revolution enables the community to identify and design targets and indicators that make sense specifically in their context. It provides a platform to track the progress that the community makes in achieving its goals. Most importantly, it ensures that everyone gains a voice on development matters. Anyone can examine the panchayat's data as well as generate citizen data that can be used to improve advocacy of their issues based on their realities.

The transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in September 2015 by all the UN Member States, sets an ambitious agenda to protect people and the planet, and achieve prosperity for all. While these goals are global and universally applicable, countries are expected to prioritise and localise SDG targets guided by the ambition and spirit of the agenda but taking into account national and local circumstances. This process of "localising the SDGs" requires tools and policy guidance for States, provinces, and panchayats.

Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) is an autonomous organisation working under the Local Self Government Department, Govt of Kerala. It has been primarily engaged in the capacity development programmes for the staff and elected representatives of the Local Self Governments (LSGs). Along with that, KILA is actively involved in action-research, publications, seminars and workshops, consultancy, documentation, hand-holding, and information services.

In this context, KILA has developed a training toolkit for SDGs for Local Self Governments (LSGs). Training toolkit is a searchable database from the local level to the State level; this supports the efforts to improve the quality,

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reliability, availability, and comparability of data, which helps all the stakeholders to create their own data in their respective areas. This ultimately helps the LSGs to review, analyse, and modify their status with respect to each indicator and helps to identify the gaps in each sector, and plan accordingly for the betterment and transformation of the society to address the challenges of achieving SDGs and to ensure a more coherent and convergence between SDGs, State policies, State Five Year Plan, and the Local Self Government Development Plans.

Steps to a Successful LSG Level Data Revolution

1. Prepare the Ground

It is important that the ground is prepared for a good Local Data Revolution process-

- Develop strong communication channels with the community and various department functionaries.
- Develop a culture of holding community meetings to discuss community issues where the community gradually is comfortable to speak out.
- Develop a strong relationship with various levels of government functionaries.
- Review experiences if any, the community has had while collecting data from any sources and the community's perceptions of those experiences.

2. Organise the Community

Identify and organise community opinion leaders and volunteers who would be willing to serve the community by working with the local government officials on a panchayat-level data initiative. Building a relationship with them- one of trust and commitment will go a long way to aiding an efficient process. This also means organising other stakeholders' involvement.

3. Build Capacity

- Provide training on the SDGs- what they are, why they are in place, what they mean for the community, what are the targets and indicators.
- Provide training on Data- what it is, how it is useful to the community, how it is collected and analysed.
- Provide training on using smartphones as a tool for data collection.
- Provide training on various data collection tools- Paper Surveys, Mobile Phone Applications.
- Have a conversation and identify the most relevant SDGs for the community.

- Review the targets and indicators in the context of the community.

4. Collect Data

Develop a survey based on the goals and indicators that the community reviewed. There are numerous ways to collect the data. These include:

- Secondary data
- Paper surveys that the community members in all the households fill
- Mobile phone survey apps (where smart mobile phones are available). These include ODK Collect (Open Data Kit), etc.

The important thing with regard to the data collection is to try and make sure that the data is collected from everyone concerned (every household). In the case of paper surveys, it is valuable to ensure that the data is digitised into a manageable format to aid better analysis.

5. Receive Feedback on the Data Collection Process

The community must feel comfortable with the process of data collection. Often, there is a need to revisit the survey or application design to simplify the process further.

6. Analyse with People

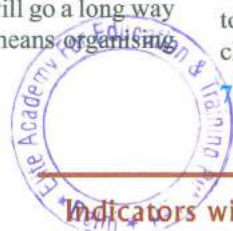
Community data is considerably easy to analyse because it tends to concern every member or at least a majority of the households. Collating the narratives that arise out of the data and discussing it together enables the community to appreciate the situation the data is addressing even more and ensures that they can begin to structure advocacy talking points and appreciate their challenges and needs.

Build Linkages for Development

Based on the narratives, it is recognised that most local government officials do not have the resources to implement development activities for the people. However, the data can be used to build linkages with other relevant government departments, development partners, and even the community themselves.

Data Revolution: The Role of Indicators

Indicators will be the backbone of monitoring progress towards the SDGs at the local, national, regional, and global levels. A sound indicator framework will turn the SDGs and their targets into a management tool to help countries and the global



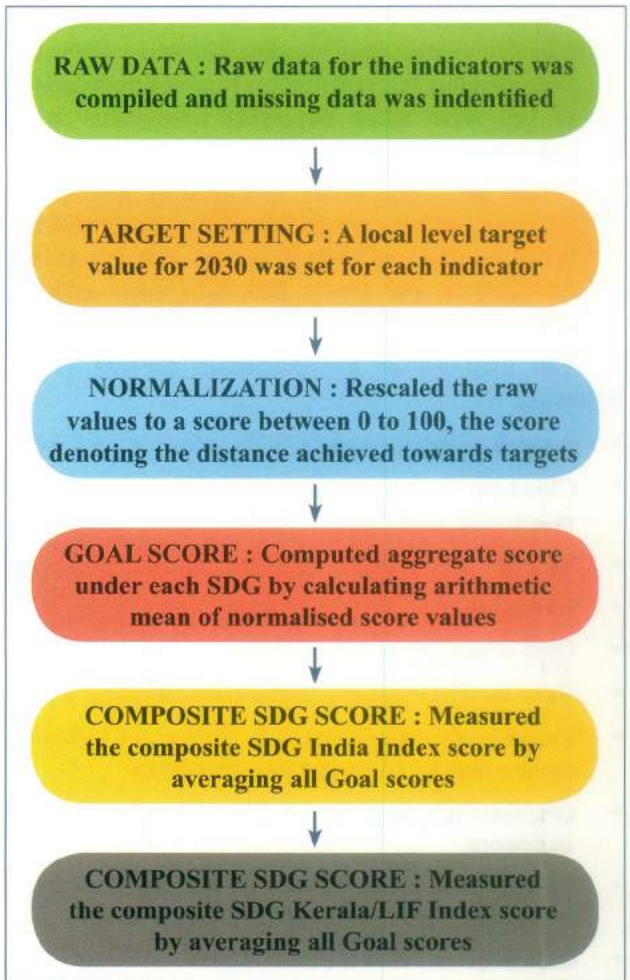
Indicators will be the backbone of monitoring progress towards the SDGs at the local, national, regional, and global levels. A sound indicator framework will turn the SDGs and their targets into a management tool to help countries and the global community develop implementation strategies and allocate resources accordingly.

community develop implementation strategies and allocate resources accordingly. They will also serve as a report card to measure progress towards sustainable development and to help ensure the accountability of all stakeholders for achieving the SDGs. This can be operationalised by developing an LSG-level dashboard for monitoring indicator framework for SDGs.

Dashboard for Panchayats

As a monitoring mechanism for localising SDGs, decision-makers, policymakers, and service providers need accurate and timely information and data in order to improve the quality of their services. Access to such information and resources helps to react appropriately to existing issues including planning and allocation of resources and also enables the plan for preventive actions in the future.

- Through this dashboard, the State, District, and local functionaries can develop targets, and track and monitor the progress on the attainment of SDGs.
- Even the public can access this platform in the future, and guide self-assessment and support efforts towards an improved understanding of the collection, analysis, and sharing of data from local to State level.
- The dashboard helps to identify innovative sources of data at the local level on a variety of themes, including environment, health, education, agriculture, employment, industry, and energy, etc.
- Monitoring progress towards the SDGs at the local and State level.



SDG- Construction of the Dashboard



Data Dashboard

- A data dashboard is a tool that provides a centralised, interactive means of monitoring, measuring, analysing, and extracting relevant insights from different datasets in key areas while displaying information in an interactive, intuitive, and visual way.
- Online data visualisation is a term to describe the process of extracting datasets and presenting them in a visual, graphic way while exposing historical patterns, correlations, and trends that help users generate actionable insights in an online environment.

The front-end of the Dashboard consists of the following:

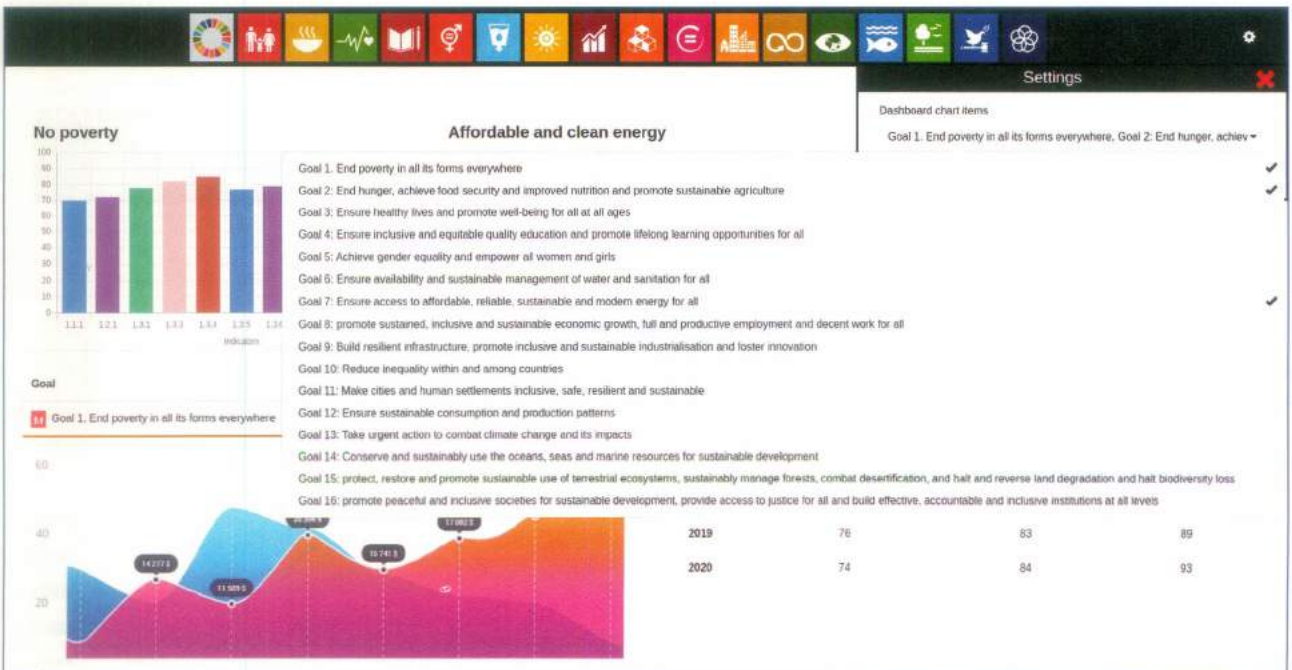
- A quick search for various SDG Indicators by Goals
- Cloud-based Open-source SDG reporting and monitoring solution
- Targets
- Indicators
- Goal-wise performance analysis
- View the SDG indicator performance thematically
- Expand and Collapse the Goals, Targets, and Indicators to view data by LSGs and its performance
- Graphical representation of each goal with targets and indicators
- Customisable charts to view the select indicator and its stratifier by the time period in various charts
- Customise and view the multi-dimensional data over a time period in an animated chart

- Customise and view the ranking/status of the LSGs by indicators
- Generate SDG monitoring report for the LSGs
- Download the charts and share them on social media
- Register and view your data on the dashboard
- SDG Interactive Data Dashboard can be customised at Regional, National, Sub-national, and Panchayat levels or even for a specific Sustainable Development Goal.

Planning and Monitoring SDGs

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) platform is developed to help track, monitor, and report on the SDGs and Panchayat Development Plans, and other frameworks. It is a user-friendly and web-based digital platform, which will improve communication and coordination gaps. Using cutting-edge communication approaches will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Panchayat Development Plans' rollout and implementation, including communication of SDGs and national results, and significantly affect the monitoring and evaluation phase through establishing advanced communication channels and enhanced transparency, and openness of the implementation process. The platform keeps everyone engaged as a one-stop-shop where people can find the latest information and content.

In the expanded view it shows the goal-wise analysis with respect to years with national and State value. And also we can see the year-wise status regarding each GP, BP, DP level.



Front-end of the Dashboard



Figure 1: SDG Dashboard - Expanded View

Goal with National Indicators

Figure 1 shows the performance level of each goal with national and State level value:

- To rank the performance of panchayat based on their achievements across SDGs. For every goal, all panchayats are ranked. A composite score is also calculated, which ranks the States/UTs based on their overall performance across multiple goals.
- To promote healthy competition among the States/UTs in their journey towards achieving the Global Goals.
- To support the States/UTs in identifying areas that demand more attention.
- To enable the States/UTs to learn from the good practices of their peers.
- To highlight data gaps in the statistical system of the States/UTs and identify the sectors in which robust and more frequent data need to be collected.

Utility of the dashboard

The Dashboard will play a key role in driving the SDG agenda in Kerala. The results of the ranking will be highly publicised through the dashboard. It will raise awareness on SDG on many levels – within government, media, researchers, and civil society organisations. Some government institutes with high-level committees might oversee SDG adoption. The dashboard will also push SDG localisation in some States/ UTs to the next level where district-level monitoring was initiated, thereby promoting healthy competition among the districts.

One can view their National SDG performance by goal, target, and indicator:

- Identify data gaps, compare and analyse SDG indicators relevant to LSGs,
- Support the assessment of SDG data availability and gaps, design and develop regional, national, sub-national, and Panchayat SDG data monitoring dashboards and reports,
- Where the GP stands vis-a-vis National and State average,
- Plan for actions through GPDP,
- Add new indicators if required for each LSG by themselves,
- Set local targets for each by themselves,
- Annual update can be helpful in monitoring,
- All these can be done by people at the Panchayat level,
- The assessment can be projected in Gram Sabhas,
- Dashboards can aid Planning and Monitoring of SDGs. □

Endnotes

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ISO Certified Gram Panchayats

Mathew Andrews

The State of Kerala has a strong local governance system. Local Self Governments (LSGs) are closer to the lives of common people than the State and Central Governments. As a grassroots governing system, the felt needs of the people are addressed through the LSGs. This has significantly improved service delivery, accuracy in the submission of applications, speed of file processing, RTI response time, record retrieval, and ultimately, citizen satisfaction.

The Local Governance System is playing an important role in successfully supporting the daily life of common people. It is fulfilling the development and welfare needs of the people. As the local self-governments play a significant role in the lives of the citizens, the quality of service delivery must be improved continuously.

Several significant quality improvement initiatives have been undertaken at the LSG level. The most recent and successful initiative is the ISO 9001:2015 certification of all Gram Panchayats in Kerala. International Organization for Standardisation (ISO) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). ISO 9001:2015 is one of the most popular ISO standards for developing and certifying Quality Management Systems in an organisation. It can be used by any organisation, large or small, regardless of its field of activity. The certification validity is 3 years with Surveillance Audit conducted every year to ensure the quality of the system developed. Studies show that ISO 9000 certification directly affects organisational performance.

The ISO certification project is intended to develop a quality management system that ensures citizen satisfaction through good governance and delivery of high standard quality services. It is with this vision, local self-government department has initiated the ISO 9001 project and successfully certified 939 Gram Panchayats, 152 Block Panchayats, 8 District Panchayats, and the office of the Director Panchayats. The entire training and consultancy support for the project was given by the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA). This project has significantly improved service delivery, accuracy in the submission of applications, speed of file processing,

RTI response time, record retrieval, and ultimately, citizen satisfaction.

Timeline of ISO 9001:2015 Certification in GPs

In 2010, Kumbala Gram Panchayat in Kasaragod District achieved the ISO 9001:2008 certification and became the first local self-government in the State to achieve international recognition for its quality management system. Later, other Gram Panchayats started trying to achieve ISO recognition by following the example of Kumbala Gram Panchayat. A guideline for obtaining ISO 9001:2008 certifications through the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) to assist the Gram Panchayats in carrying out ISO activities was issued by the government. Later, a study conducted by KILA in ISO 9001:2008 certified Gram Panchayats found that the ISO project emphasised more on improving infrastructural facilities than service quality. Based on the findings of the study, a note was submitted to the government by KILA for modifying the guidelines to address the issues. Accordingly, the government has issued a revised guideline for ISO 9001:2008 certifications through the implementation of TQM in the Gram Panchayats.

KILA appointed District Coordinators with professional qualifications in all the districts to coordinate the activities of the certification. Under KILA consultancy, through rigorous training, capacity building, and onsite support, Gram Panchayats started achieving ISO 9001:2015 certification in 2019. Inspired by the change happening in Gram Panchayats, Block Panchayats also initiated an ISO certification project under KILA consultancy and achieved ISO certification for all the 152 Block Panchayats in

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Kerala by the end of 2019. The major milestones of the ISO certification project is depicted in the Figure 1.

ISO Certification: An Overview

Among the various series of standards offered by ISO, the series that KILA adopted was ISO 9000. ISO 9001:2015 sets out the criteria for a quality management system that helps the organisation to satisfy its customers, meet regulatory requirements and achieve continual improvement. This standard is based on seven quality management principles that an organisation can apply to ensure quality services and continuous improvement. They are as follows:

1. Customer focus
2. Leadership
3. Engagement of people
4. Process approach
5. Improvement
6. Evidence-based decision making
7. Relationship management



This ISO certification project insists on doing various activities in the organisation, based on quality management principles. A few are listed below:

Customer Focus	Citizen Survey, Feedback Form, & Complaint Resolution
Leadership	Quality Policy Formulation, Assigning Clear Roles, and Responsibilities in Quality Management System (QMS)
Engagement of People	Quality Circle, Employee Training
Process Approach	Front Office Management, File Management, ISO Documentation including Quality Manual and Procedure Manual
Improvement	Quality Objectives, Internal Audit, Management Review
Evidence-based Decision Making	Record Management System
Relationship Management	Identification of interested parties and their requirements, Supplier Assessment

The objective of this is not just to obtain an ISO certification, rather focus on developing a quality management system that is capable of delivering quality service to the customers/citizens. The major activities related to the process are listed below:

- **Status Assessment:** To implement a quality management system, it is important to know the



Figure 1: ISO Certification Project Timeline

present system and resources in the institution. The interaction with top officials and employees along with analysis of reports can help to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the system.

- **Awareness related to QMS and ISO:** The awareness regarding the ISO process and concept of a quality management system needs to be imparted to every single employee in the institution. Quality Circle is formed and convened to ensure employee participation and Employee Training is conducted at least once every month for skill development. The clear roles and responsibilities of employees in the implementation and improvement of QMS are assigned and well-defined.
- **Record and Document Management:** A systematic and standardised system for managing records and documents needs to be set up, or improved. The records need to get sorted, set, and standardised so that the record retrieval time does not exceed more than five minutes.
- **Customer/Stakeholder-related Activities:** The ultimate objective of QMS is customer satisfaction. Citizen Charter that discloses the services, delivery time, and requirements is published every year.

The present activities to collect customer feedback, citizen survey, citizen survey report, citizen feedback form, and citizen complaint resolution need to be assessed and improvements if any, need to be suggested.

- **Documentation (Quality Manual, Procedure Manual, ISO files):** Documentation is an integral part of QMS which includes Quality Manual, Procedure Manual, and ISO files. Every aspect of QMS needs to be clearly documented.
- **Development of Quality Policy and Quality Objectives:** The organisation/institution needs to develop quality policy and quality objectives as part of its QMS. All employees must be aware of this policy and objectives.
- **Internal Audit and Management Review:** The mechanisms for improvement of QMS namely, Internal Audit and Management Review need to be implemented and conducted every six months. This ensures the sustainability of the system established.

A systematic and standardised system for managing records and documents needs to be set up or improved. The records need to get sorted, set, and standardised so that the record retrieval time does not exceed more than five minutes.

• **Pre-assessment Audit:** Once the QMS is implemented, an assessment of the same will be carried out by the consultancy agency before facing the external audit by the certified audit agency.

• **Resolving Audit Findings:** The corrections provided by the external audit need to be resolved to fulfill the requirements of external audit for getting ISO certification.

• **Surveillance Audit:** The ISO 9001 certified institution has to go through a surveillance audit for three years and the auditors need to be satisfied with the sustainability and improvement in QMS implemented.

Major Benefits/Outcomes

Major benefits/outcomes by implementing a QMS are listed below:

1. **Front Office System:** ISO certification ensures a proper front office system that includes facilities for the public, information boards, and front office counter that delivers quality services to the public. Various



Front Offices before ISO Certification



Front Offices after ISO Certification



Mullurkara Gram Panchayat Office in Thrissur District, Kerala



Record Keeping System before ISO Certification



Record Management System after ISO Certification



facilities for the public such as a ramp, safe drinking water, feeding room for breastfeeding mothers, wash rooms, etc., are mandatory for certification.

2. **Record Management System:** A proper record management system has been set up in all the LSGs. This ensures speedy delivery of services to the public and improves the efficiency of the staff.
3. **Infrastructure:** Though the prime focus is not to develop infrastructure, the certification ensures that the office is neat and appealing to both public as well as the employees. The clean and spacious office environment has significantly improved employee satisfaction as well as their productivity.
4. **Service Delivery:** The major focus of the ISO certification project is to ensure timely services to the public as per the citizen charter published by each LSG. This system is monitored by the front office monitoring committee, which ensures that there are no pending files.
5. **Citizen Satisfaction:** Citizen satisfaction has increased multi-fold. Citizen feedbacks collected on a regular basis show that citizen satisfaction is very high in Gram Panchayats in Kerala.
6. **Quality Culture in Organisation:** The mandatory

activities such as internal audit (employees audit each other) and management review (Panchayat Committee reviews the quality initiatives in the panchayat) have encouraged the engagement of both employees and elected representatives in continuous improvement of services.

7. **Employee Participation and Satisfaction:** The initiatives like a quality circle (a friendly group of employees formed formally) have ensured the participation of employees of all levels. An efficient record management system has reduced the workload of employees which has ensured quality service delivery.
8. **Skill Development:** The quality management system insists on conducting atleast one employee training every month. This improved the skill set of employees as well as efficiency of front office functioning.

ISO 9001 certification of Gram Panchayats was a step forward towards ensuring the world standard quality in services for the public. It does not end with just an ISO 9000 certification, rather it is the beginning of many other quality initiatives. The initiatives to develop an indigenous quality management system for LSGs, which will include standards for every process of the local governance system and service delivery is in the discussion. This could serve as a benchmark for every LSG across the nation. □



Digital Local Governance

Mayank Kharbanda

The e-Panchayat is one of the Mission Mode Projects (MMP) under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), to completely transform the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)-making them more transparent, accountable, and effective as organs of decentralised self-governing institutions. The project aims to automate internal workflow processes of more than 2.5 lakh panchayats across the country, benefitting approximately 30 lakh elected members and about 10 lakh PRI functionaries. It is meant to improve local governance and make the working of democracy effective at the grassroots level.

Technology has propelled us into a tremendously interconnected world. Frontier technologies are continuously synergising the economic and social development goals of a country. India has set an ambitious target to become a USD 5 trillion economy in the next few years, however, it can only be achieved by transforming our villages into self-sustaining centres of economic development, with a technology-driven local governance framework.

The Government of India has been leveraging technological interventions to address the challenges posed by the pandemic, and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have played a pivotal role in responding to the transmission of Covid-19 in rural areas. The pandemic has established the key role of technology and data-driven decision-making. Hence, it is important to upscale the national efforts towards the adoption of frontier technologies in the government functioning, to the lowest level. Being at the interface of rural citizens and governance structure, the panchayats are an effective vehicle to induce mass ICT culture at the local level.

The Timeline of e-Panchayats

In 2009-10, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj commissioned a comprehensive study covering all States and UTs to identify all the Information and Services Needs of the stakeholders viz. Central Ministries, State Departments, panchayats, and its citizens. This led to the identification of 12 Core Common Applications that addressed all aspects of panchayats' functioning viz. from internal core functions such as Planning, Monitoring,

Implementation, Budgeting, Accounting, Social Audit, etc. to citizen service delivery like the issue of certificates, licenses, etc.

Together, these applications constituted the Panchayat Enterprise Suite (PES). These software applications were

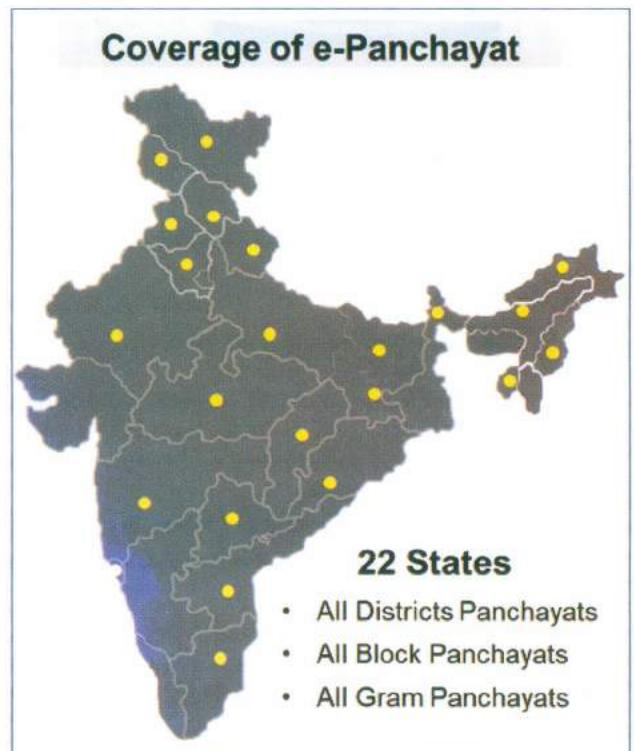


Figure 1: e-Panchayat

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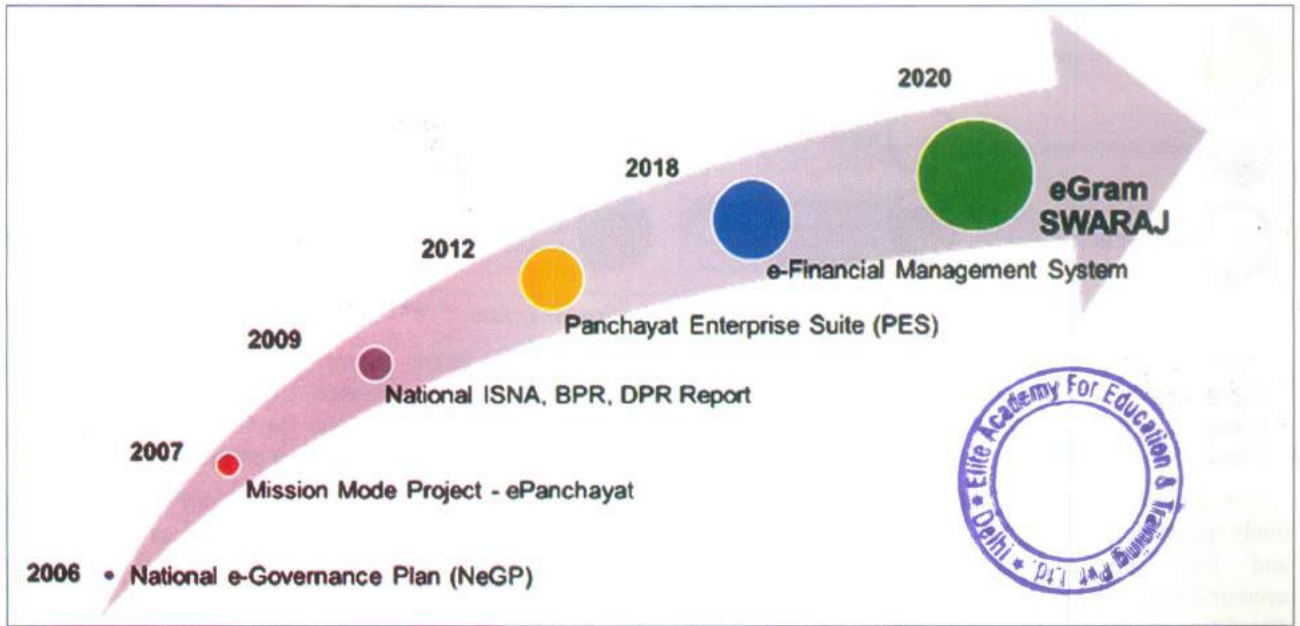


Figure 2: Journey of e-Panchayat

based on open-source technologies that conform to all the e-Governance Standards and were also fully interoperable, saving end users' efforts of making multiple data entries. They also accommodated all State-specific needs to ensure acceptability and adoption by States. Challenges like delimitation (change of panchayat boundaries) and decentralised integrated planning were being addressed by these applications.

The e-Panchayat suite of applications was launched by the Prime Minister on 24 April 2012, celebrated as National Panchayati Raj Day.

Further, to strengthen e-Governance in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), eGramSwaraj, a Simplified Work-Based Accounting application for Panchayati Raj has been developed by amalgamating the functionalities of currently available applications in the e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project (MMP). The application subsumes the e-FMS applications comprising of PlanPlus, ActionSoft, PRIASoft, and National Asset Directory (NAD) along with the Area Profiler application, and Local Government Directory (LGD) forming the base for the system with the Public Financial Management System (PFMS).

e-Governance and ICT interventions

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is committed to using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to facilitate Panchayats in functioning effectively and empowering the

panchayat functionaries to utilise technology in their day-to-day operations. It is further realised that there is a strong need to build a "digital inclusive society" where large sections of the rural population can benefit from new technologies; can access and share information and services freely, and can participate in the development process more effectively. MoPR has consistently brought different ICT interventions to promote convergent delivery of services for the citizens. Some of the major interventions are given below:

- **eGramSwaraj (eGS, Simplified Work-Based Accounting Software):** eGS is a Simplified Work-Based Accounting Software for PRIs, providing a single platform for all planning and accounting needs including various other aspects of Panchayat functioning (monitoring, asset management). This application is developed with an aim for tracking every expenditure incurred for each of the activities proposed under the Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs). eGS reduces the number of data entries that Gram Panchayat users perform and eventually eases the complexities involved in e-Governance Applications. It also brings in a more user-friendly interface with ease of navigation that makes it hassle-free for the GPS to track, monitor, and modify their Action Plan. The application brings in transparency, accountability, and real-time monitoring of the GPDP. A mobile app was also launched,

The pandemic has established the key role of technology and data-driven decision-making. Hence, it is important to upscale the national efforts towards the adoption of frontier technologies in the government functioning, to the lowest level. Being at the interface of rural citizens and governance structure, the panchayats are an effective vehicle to induce mass ICT culture at the local level.



Figure 3: Panchayat Enterprise Suite

providing various information such as (i) Elected Representative, (ii) Panchayat activities (total works, ongoing works, completed works), and (iii) Receipt and Expenditure details for respective panchayats.

A mobile App for facilitating ready access to panchayat information and promoting transparency and accountability has also been launched. The following information is available through the mobile app:

- ER data of the selected panchayat
- Panchayat activities (Activity name, scheme name, and amount)
- Receipts and Expenditure (consolidated) for selected FY
- eGramSwaraj-PFMS Interface (eGSPI) launched in 2018: For enhancing transparency and accountability, integration of accounting module of eGS and Public Financial Management System was carried out to provide an interface for the Panchayats

to make online payments viz. expenditure incurred under Central Finance Commission. eGSPI is a one-of-its-kind interface for GPs to make real-time payments to vendors/service providers.

Till now, 2,55,994 GPDPs for 2021-22 have been prepared; with 1,54,098 Gram Panchayats having done online payments worth 42137 crores cumulatively through eGramSwaraj PFMS Interface (eGSPI).

eGS reduces the number of data entries that Gram Panchayat users perform and eventually eases the complexities involved in e-Governance Applications. It also brings in a more user-friendly interface with ease of navigation that makes it hassle-free for the GPS to track, monitor, and modify their Action Plan.

- **Geo-tagging of assets:** As a part of effective planning and monitoring, it is also imperative to have field-level monitoring and monitoring of the physical progress of works. Further, supplementing to strengthening the system; geo-tagging of assets (on completion of work) is of utmost importance. MoPR has developed mActionSoft– a mobile-based solution to help in capturing photos with Geo-Tags (i.e. GPS Coordinates) for the works which have the asset as an

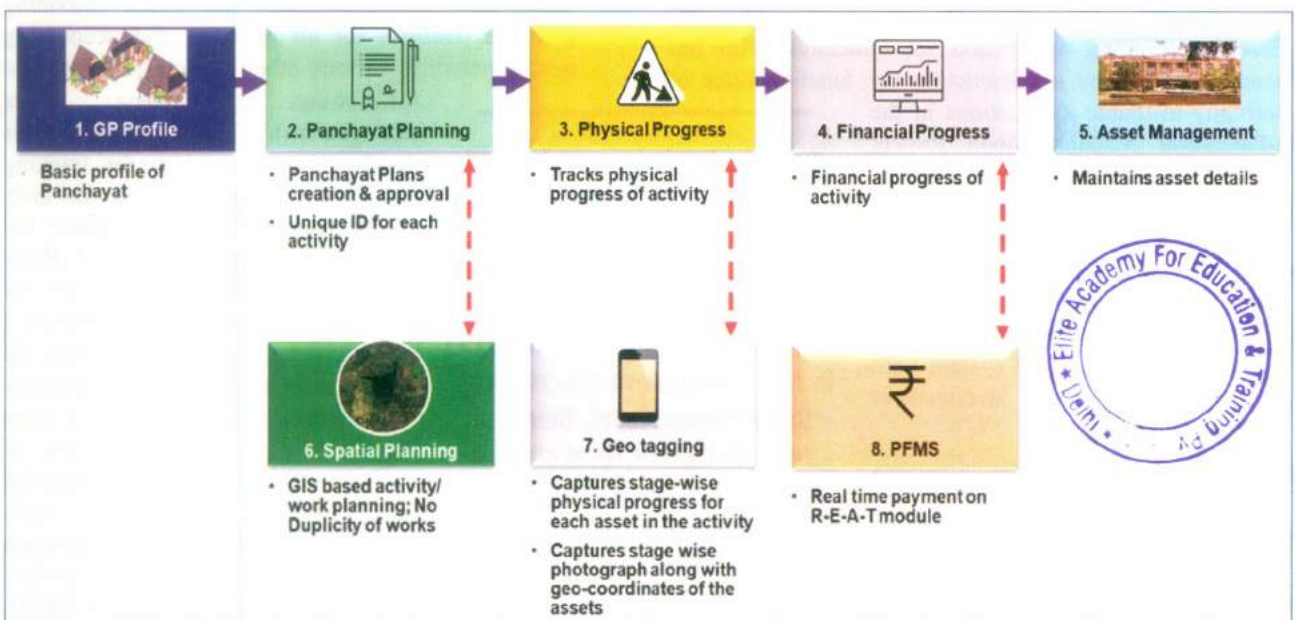


Figure 4: Local Government Directory

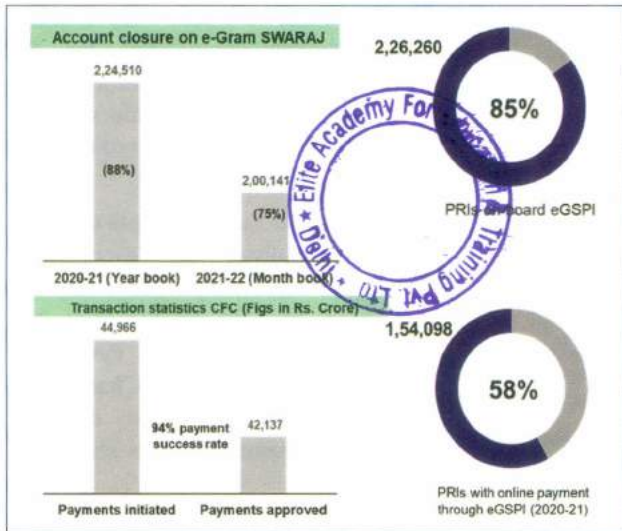


Figure 5: Finance in PRIs

output. Geo-tagging of the assets is done in at least three stages viz. (i) before the start of the work, (ii) during the work, and (iii) on completion of work.

This would provide a repository of information on all works and assets related to natural resource management, water harvesting, drought proofing, sanitation, agriculture, check dams, and irrigation channels, etc.

- Gram Manchitra (Geo-spatial planning application):** Gram Manchitra was launched in October 2019, as a spatial planning application for facilitating and supporting GPs to perform planning at the GP level with the use of Geo-spatial technology. The application is being integrated with spatial and non-spatial data from various Ministries viz. District hospitals, Sub-district hospitals, CSCs, PSCs, and sub-centers (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare); Banking amenities like Bank branches, ATM, banking correspondence, etc. (Ministry of Finance); Postal Facilities (Ministry of Communication); Schools (Department of School Education & Literacy); Fair Price Shops (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution); Drinking Water Sources (Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation); and MGNREGA assets data (Ministry of Rural Development). This application is also linked with Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) report, Mission Antyodaya (MA) and MA gap analysis, and Resource Envelope allocated to the Gram Panchayat. All this information is available in one window, which will support/

MoPR has developed mActionSoft– a mobile-based solution to help in capturing photos with Geo-Tags (i.e. GPS Coordinates) for the works which have an asset as an output. The Ministry aims to elevate the eGramSwaraj portal as a comprehensive platform that could not only bring transparency, but it could also bring ease in financial planning and utilisation at the Gram Panchayat level.



Figure 6: Gram Manchitra

assist the Gram Panchayat users in better visualisation of works during planning.

- AuditOnline:** Further strengthening financial management and transparency of Panchayats, AuditOnline was launched on 15 April 2020, subsequent to the recommendation of the Fifteenth Finance Commission. Central Finance Commissions time and again have emphasised ensuring the availability of audited accounts in the public domain. To begin with, it was decided to carry out the audit of 20% GPs in each State for Fourteenth Finance Commission accounts for the year 2019-20. However, there have been several States which have completed the audit of more than 20% of their GPs.

Conclusion

The rapid adoption of platforms such as eGramSwaraj, eGSP, AuditOnline, etc., by States, is a testament to the immense potential and demand for technological interventions in the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Over the years, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has collaborated with State Panchayati Raj Departments to improve the governance measures of the Ministry. Considering the emergence of frontier technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, the Ministry is in the process of bringing several improvements in the eGramSwaraj portal as well as better utilisation of existing platforms such as Gram Manchitra.

Since Gram Panchayats are mandated to plan and execute activities relating to twenty-nine focus

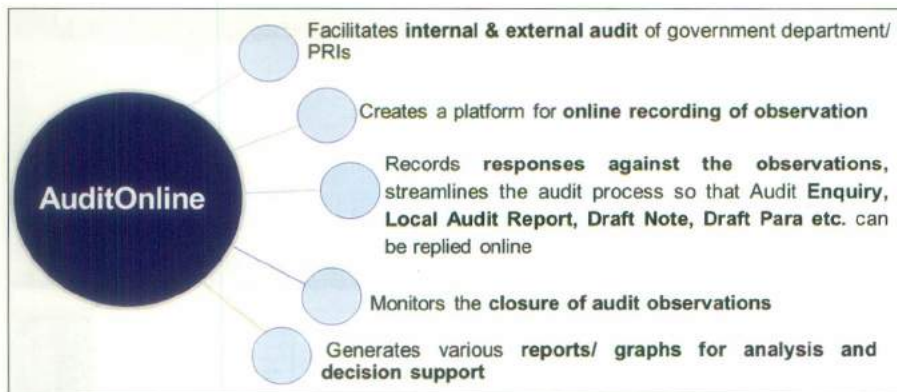


Figure 7: AuditOnline

areas listed in the Eleventh Schedule, an endeavour is underway to bring the scheme beneficiaries list of the eighteen departments that these map onto eGramSwaraj landing page. This will further enhance transparency in the Gram Sabha meeting.

The Ministry aims to elevate the eGramSwaraj portal as a comprehensive platform that could not only bring transparency, but it could also bring ease in financial planning and utilisation at the Gram Panchayat level. Several cutting-edge improvements such as the creation of Chatbots driven by Artificial Intelligence and Machine learning, for panchayat level users are being explored. The Gram Manchitra application of the Ministry is also being viewed as a tool for making geo-spatial-based decisions that supplement the Gram Panchayats in developing forward-looking spatial plans. Considering the successful integration of the eGramSwaraj with the PFMS platform, the Ministry is exploring the development of an integrated

developed.

In the post-Covid-19 era, the utility of having robust governance systems have been highlighted and the role of data collection and management has been widely recognised. The Gram Panchayats are uniquely positioned to collect reliable data at the grassroots level and thus, it is essential to leverage the underlying potential of Gram Panchayats. Platforms such as eGramSwaraj can strengthen the data collection and governance architecture in the rural sector, viz. eGramSwaraj application can serve as a unifying platform for sharing list of beneficiaries from other Ministry/department schemes. The aforesaid interventions are bound to enrich the local governance framework of the country and contribute to the technological prowess of the Panchayat functionaries. Consequently, the efficiency and effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions are bound to improve, contributing to India's goal of becoming Atmanirbhar in the upcoming years. □

platform with Government e-Marketplace (GeM) for the Panchayats, to avail various kinds of services from vendors/service providers to meet the requirement at the grassroots level.

Over the last couple of years, the Ministry has successfully established integrated systems that have brought transparency and accountability in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. A Chatbot for addressing the most common eGramSwaraj issues is also being

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People's Plan



Shlokarth Trivedi

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are prime instruments of democratic decentralisation at the grassroots level and provide an important mechanism for rural development and decentralisation of powers. As a phenomenon, rural development is an end result of transactions between various physical, technological, economic, socio-cultural, and institutional factors. It has also been seen that the process of decentralisation has been highly variable across the States.

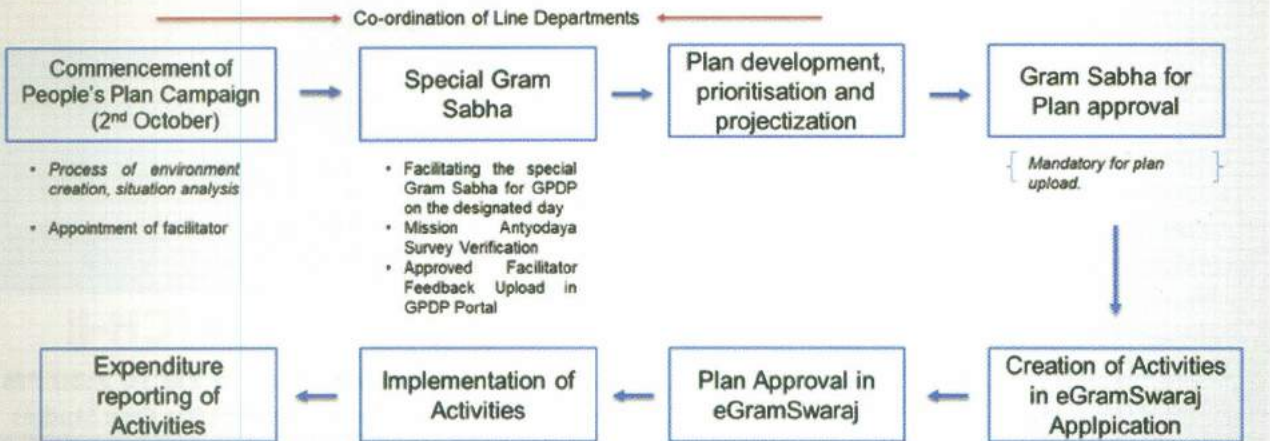
The Panchayati Raj System has come into existence through a long process of evolution and connotes decentralised democracy in India. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) may be viewed as institutions of self-governance that would facilitate the participation of the people in the process of planning and development. Development of rural areas with an objective to improve the economic and social well-being of life of the rural populace is a comprehensive and multidimensional concept, encompassing the development of agriculture and allied activities, socio-economic

infrastructure, community services and facilities, and above all, the human resource development in rural areas. The process of decentralisation has been highly variable across the States. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) partners with the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) to utilise the Mission Antyodaya Survey and identify critical gaps during the planning exercise.

The Ministry rolled out the first People's Plan Campaign as 'Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas' from 2 October to 31 December 2018. This year, the campaign commenced on 2 October 2021 and will last till 31 January 2022.

GPDP CREATION PROCESS

PPC is co-ordinated by Department of Panchayati Raj (DoPR) at State Level. DoPR shall process the implementation of following activities in time bound manner:



GPDP Creation Cycle

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INTERVENTIONS

COMMUNITY MOBILISATION

SDG 2.0 (HUNGER)

EVIDENCE BASED PLANNING

HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT



EVIDENCE BASED PLANNING

- Utilising GAP REPORT to assess and mitigate the development in critical areas.
- **Use of data:** Dashboards such as Panchayat Decision Support System (PDSS) and Planning & Reporting Dashboard have been devised for simplified analysis.



SELF HELP GROUPS & COMMUNITY MOBILISATION

- VPRPs to be discussed mandatorily.
- SHGs to help in improving social development.
- Targeted attendance @ 10 %



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL

- SDG to form the overall planning goal for this year.
- Emphasis on **NO HUNGER** goal.
- Mandatory addition of at least one **Sankalp** by GP for planning.

HOLISTIC PLANNING

- Plans to not just include 3 or 4 sectors.
- **Convergence:** All Central and State level schemes to be added in Resource Envelope

Intervention by MoPR for improved GPDP

Preparation of a single integrated plan, responsive to the local needs and prepared through the convergence of all the 29 sectors listed in the Eleventh Schedule, which are envisaged to be devolved to the panchayats and integrating various other schemes and programmes/initiatives by other line departments, as per local priorities is the final objective of the campaign. Since 2018, more than 91% of Gram Panchayats (GPs) have successfully created their Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) for the subsequent year. In 2020, MoPR achieved a record number of 95% GPs with GPDPs.

During the campaign, the Local Area Planning has been reinvigorated, and structured Gram Sabha meetings have been held at the grassroots level for preparing GPDP for the FY 2022-23. It has been an intensive and structured exercise for planning at the Gram Sabha level through convergence between PRIs and concerned line departments of the State. Some top-line departments that participate effectively in the campaign are the Department of Rural Development, Department of Education, Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Department of Health, and Department of Agriculture.

The plans cover all the economic, social, and physical parameters, and aim towards socio-economic transformation in the rural area. The GPDP planning process targets development challenges existing across three interrelated dimensions in rural India.

- Economic dimension:** To alleviate poverty and create employment opportunities. Providing both capacity and opportunities for the poor and low-income rural households to participate, and to benefit from the economic growth process of the country.
- Social dimension:** Social development of poor and low-income households and disadvantaged groups, eliminating inequalities in social indicators, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, and providing social safety nets for vulnerable groups.
- Political dimension:** Providing opportunities for the poor and low-income people in rural areas, including women and SC and ST communities to effectively and equally participate in the panchayat processes at the village level and beyond.

The Campaign has strengthened the role of 31 lakh elected Panchayat leaders and 5.25 crore women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) in a functional Gram Sabha. The Public Information Boards to be installed in the Gram Panchayats will lead to transparency regarding utilisation of funds placed at the disposal of Gram Panchayats for development under the various schemes. The ranking of Gram Panchayats based on social and economic development, as done for Mission Antyodaya Gram Panchayats, will help in identifying gaps at village

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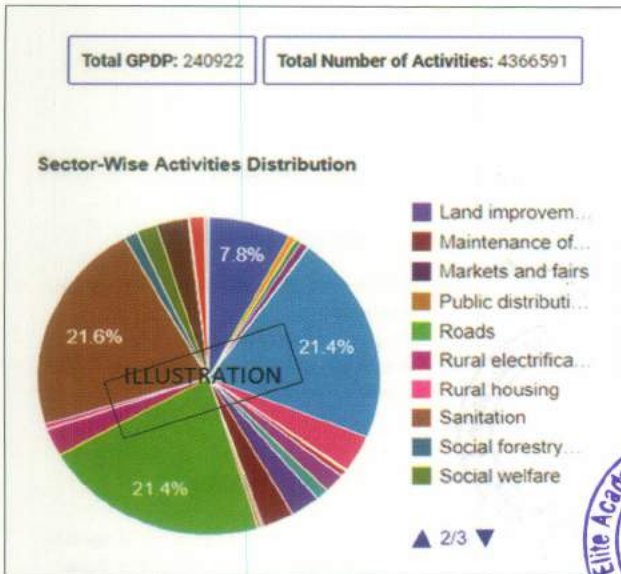
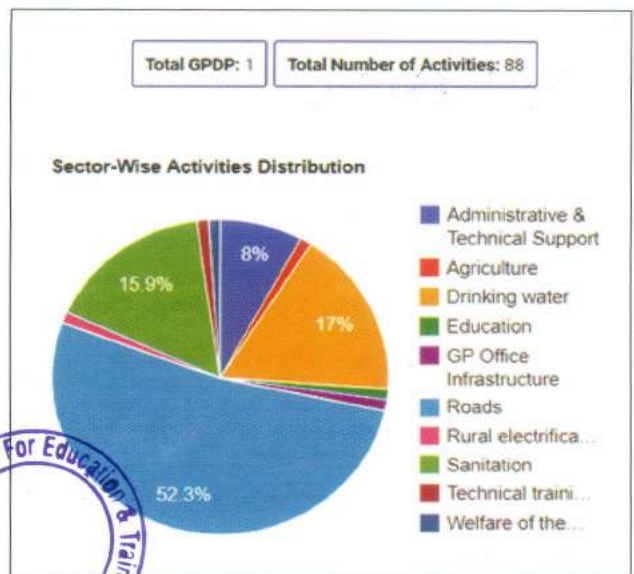


Figure 1: Analytical Report of Activity Distribution



Total funds in Resource Envelope: Rs.:27,607,243
Total funds in Resource Envelope: Cr.: 2.761

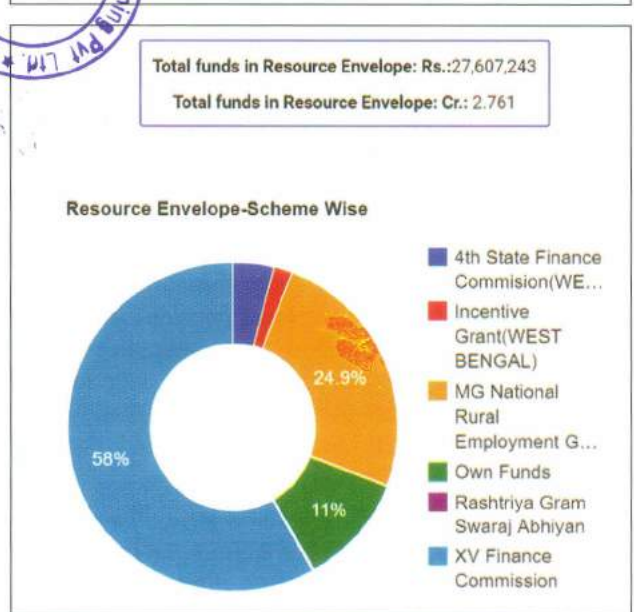


Figure 2: GPDP Sample, West Bengal

and Gram Panchayat level, and emphasise evidence-based planning and implementation for GPDP.

To support the upliftment of the rural population of India, panchayats have been mandated to choose at least one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as their 'Sankalp', thus taking up activities of development towards these goals. Also, a mandate has been issued to include Village Poverty Reduction Plans (VPRPs) in GPDPs. VPRPs are an integral part of the village development programme wherein activities are taken up to eradicate poverty-related problems. These problems are identified by the SHGs which later get discussed in the Gram Sabha. All GPs are mandated to conduct two Gram Sabhas during the campaigning period. Also, GPs are advised to effectively utilise social and print media to spread awareness and initiate mass mobilisation of citizens to attend Gram Sabhas. A minimum quorum of 10% has been advised for holding Gram Sabha meetings.

With a data-driven approach for sustainable development, Gram Manchitra, a GIS-based planning application, has also been adopted by all Gram Panchayats. Mandatory geo-tagging of assets has been enabled in eGramSwaraj application.

To analyse the position of planning in States, districts, blocks, and Gram Panchayats, several resources have been made available to the panchayats. With these analytical resources in place, PRIs can have a 360-degree view of the resource envelope and activities that are taken up in Gram Panchayats.

A sample GPDP for a village in West Bengal can be seen in Figure 2. The Gram Panchayat has added 88 activities for the FY 2021-22 in sectors such as Roads, Sanitation, Admin Support, and Drinking Water. The

resource envelope amount for this GP is INR 2.76 crores, comprising of Central Govt Schemes, State Govt Schemes, and Own Funds.

To ensure holistic planning via the inclusion of all Central and State level schemes, MoPR has mandated all Gram Panchayats to add the amount of funds received for the year. The districts have been advised to help and support their respective GPs in the same.

The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) has also been a collaborator with MoPR in providing capacity building and training support for PRIs. Training of Nodal Officers and Facilitators with a focus on leveraging and usage of data and convergence of schemes has been pushed throughout the training. □

Community Livelihoods Support



Susmita Chaudhury

The central focus of country's poverty reduction initiatives is livelihood development of the poor households (HHs) through adoption of sustainable practices. In the context of making poverty reduction measure more effective, the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India adopted 'Livelihoods Approach' for elimination of rural poverty and restructured Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) into National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) in FY 2010-11.

The NRLM encourages need-based intervention for the poor who belong to different occupational fields in diverse agro-ecosystems and expands the scope of evolving a sustainable model of extension services through involvement and leadership of women SHG-based institutions. Such comprehensive approach of NRLM is strategically significant for West Bengal to converge organisational strength of the poor families, traditional wisdom, skill, and choice of the farming community with service providers at different levels. SHG-based institutions have emerged with inevitable organisational strength, and the State appropriately utilised a scope to enhance its social capital in fulfilling the mandate of NRLM.

Current Challenges in Farm and Allied Sectors

West Bengal is a State which is unique in respect of geographical diversity and livelihood pattern of the rural community. The farmers of the State are predominantly marginal farmers with the subsistence farm-based livelihoods' pattern that depends on the multiple farm-related activities for sustenance. The State Focus Paper of NABARD (2017-18) indicates a number of issues which are quite relevant as backdrop of community-based intervention for livelihood opportunities. The predominant issues are increasing number of small and marginal farmers and decreasing land size, adverse impact on soil health and productivity due to imbalances in fertiliser application coupled with intensive agriculture, inadequacies of quality seed or plant material, etc. These are associated with increasing dependency on livestock challenges in augmenting productivity of livestock and poultry birds

on one hand, and existence of large areas of water bodies which still suffer from inefficient management and poor production on the other. With the increasing cost of cultivation and decreasing trend of labour absorption in agriculture, a large number of rural youth tends to shift from agriculture to more remunerative non-farming jobs within or outside of the State.

Under present situation, women of the farming families in the State are getting priority in production system due to their enhanced access to microcredit mobilising system through SHGs, and absence of migrant male partners of the families. It appears that West Bengal is truly in a position to resort to synchronising large section of landless or marginal farming HHs on one hand, and has huge potentiality in terms of manpower and unutilised natural resources on the other. To handle this crisis, capacity development of the SHG community and service providers is essential for improved access to modern knowledge and better management of resources, rather than depending on conventional system of extension. So, "Anandadhara" (West Bengal State Rural Livelihoods Mission-WBSRLM) sought to find out an effective model in collaboration with BRAIPRD (B.R.Ambedkar Institute of Panchayats and Rural Development) erstwhile SIPRD, the institute which took the leadership in designing the model and capacity development of the resource pool. The spirit of this collaboration was based on the principle of building efficiency of the system, for reaching poor farming HHs, and establishing an association between community's traditional wisdom, innovations, and amalgamation of logical application of appropriate technologies.

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Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture-extension model

Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture (CMSA) has been introduced under Anandadhara in 2015, to address the specific need of the poor farming community through improvement of farm-based livelihoods. The name CMSA itself implies that the initiative encourages and supports the “community” meaning SHG-based Institutions that are being promoted under NRLM in rural West Bengal as key stakeholders or changemakers in farm and farm-allied livelihood scenario. CMSA in West Bengal follows certain principles in fulfilling its mandate through participatory exercise. Following are the main features of CMSA:

- SHG-based Institutions (Sangha Samabay Samitis as it is called in the State) at the Gram Panchayat level have been considered as prime stakeholders of community-managed extension system in organising extension of sustainable practice, resource management, and transfer of technologies.
- Exchange of knowledge and transfer of skill for improved system are regarded as core principles for all the activities.
- For intensive facilitation, a team of trained Community Resource Persons (CRPs) is attached with these Institutions for certain period.
- Building capacity of those Community Resource Persons (CRPs) who can facilitate the process with the Institutions in different agro-climatic region.
- Focus on improvement of production system, mitigation of risk and cost through adoption of environment friendly, cost reducing technology, and use of unutilised natural resources.



Handholding Training on Construction of Rainshelter



Training on Preparation of Liquid Manure by CRP Team

- Convergence of input and services from line departments and research institutions is given utmost priority.

Methodology in Field Execution

CMSA is being implemented in West Bengal through a team of CRPs which is headed by one Sr CRP or team leaders. The team is handed over to a Sangha Samabay Samiti to arrange for their logistics of staying in the villages. The Samiti also identifies their area of operation and selection of HHs with whom they will work for a minimum period of 15 days in a month and for a period of one year without any interruption. Around 150 HHs are being identified by the Sangha Samabay leaders for each member of the team. The CRPs start acquainting themselves with the villagers, particularly with the HHs with whom they will work for a year. They get the relevant livelihood-related information from the villagers and plan for individual HH in participatory mode with both male and female partners. The plan includes their farm-based activities only. Accordingly, they plan for handholding training on the identified interventions viz. crop and soil nutrient management, non-pesticide management, system approach, and others. At the end of each round of 15 days, each CRP submits their work-done report to the Sangha Samabay. A season-based plan is prepared by the team in consultation with Sangha Samabay and credit is planned on the basis of the seasonal livelihood plan of the SHG members. The team also coordinates with the line departments for convergence of various Govt aided schemes. CMSA team is generally deployed for 3 consecutive years in a particular block. During this period, they work with 2500-3000 HHs. On completion

Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture (CMSA) has been introduced under Anandadhara in 2015, to address the specific need of the poor farming community through improvement of farm-based livelihoods.



of one year in each Sangha Samabay Samiti, the CRP team identifies Progressive Mahila Kisans (PMKs) capable to serve that area even after the team's withdrawal. Thus, livelihood community cadre is developed by SHG-based institutions. Table 1 depicts current status in respect of CMSA in the State.

Table: 1

Total number of CRPs	Total number of Community Cadres developed since 2015 (Including PMK)	Total number of Blocks covered since 2015
598	7163	128

The table shows that quite a large number of CRPs are engaged in the extension model which could successfully generate employment for atleast 15 days in a month. Among those CRPs, 53 are designated as Senior CRPs to lead the team of CRPs deployed in specific blocks. Out of 53 Sr CRPs, 24 are entrusted with two blocks to lead the team. More than 70 per cent of total CRPs are women. The team of CRPs identifies a group of PMKs from the trainees to whom they give continuous support throughout the year. The table shows that more than 7163 such PMKs are now providing support to Sangha Samabay Samitis after CRP team is withdrawn.

Field investigation reveals the level of effectiveness of the model in respect of coverage of HHs, transmission of need-based technology, and critical gaps in adopting eco-friendly technology by the farming HHs. Following observations are found to be common in almost all agro-climatic regions of the State.

- Involvement of Sangha Samabay Samitis makes it easier in identification of the poor HHs and covering large number of HHs within a short period.
- Physical presence of the team for 15 days with the community is effective in identifying strength and opportunities of individual HHs, and providing services at any point of time..
- Being farm practitioners, members of CRP team themselves are naturally equipped with better understanding of problems and potentials of the farm and allied activities, and prove to be effective in extension work.
- Household approach in CMSA is useful to ensure participation of both male and female members in any discussion on sustainable practices and adaptation of technology.
- Traditional practices of the community thus identified

On completion of one year in each Sangha Samabay Samiti, the CRP team identifies PMKs capable to serve that area even after the team's withdrawal. Thus, livelihood community cadre is developed by SHG-based institutions.

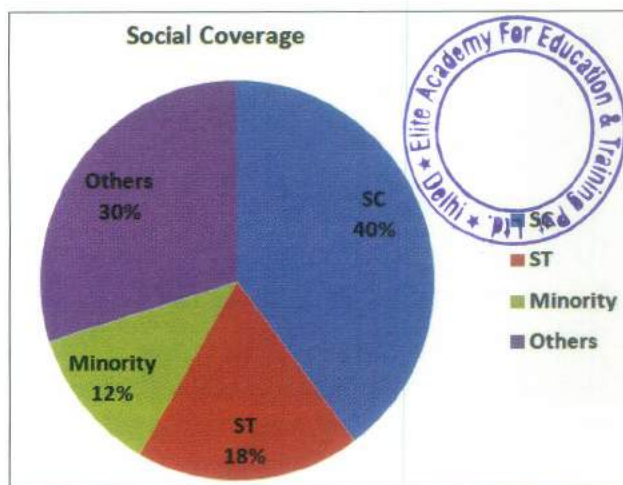
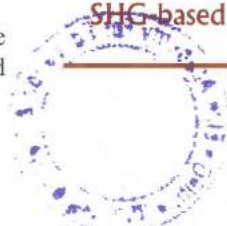


Figure 1: Distribution of HHs-CMSA initiatives during 2016-19

by the team enrich the knowledge bank for the practitioners.

- Network of the CRP team members can intermediate in supply of critical inputs like bio-inoculants, mushroom spawn, fish spawn, and other for the benefit of the farmers
- Services and supports from technical departments, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), and panchyats are converged successfully as CRP support is available for the farmers at every stage.

Farmers' Choice and Impact on Production

Interaction with CRPs and farmers reveals that there is a variation in acceptance of different technologies and new crops. Farming HHs are inclined to accept those concepts, technologies or crops which primarily reduce cost of farming including labour and input, provide scope of additional crop from fallow land, user-friendly, improve production, provide protection of crops, reduce loss, and give higher profit margin. One of the objectives of CMSA is promotion of eco-friendly practices among the rural HHs. There is a striking difference in levels of acceptance in use of organic material for cultivation. Field experience shows that reduction of chemicals in field crops has been made possible to a certain extent, particularly in case of crop protection. Non Pesticide Management (NPM) has become much preferred than any other measures demonstrated by CRPs.

Focus Areas for Future

The areas which need more focus are:

- Availability of inputs required for organic farming is a vital hindrance to the farmers in continuing eco-friendly practices. Plants useful



Integrated Farm of Jhinku Bibi, Mahila Kisan of Nakasipara



Light Trap at Rice Field - Natural Way of Crop Protection

for bio-farming need priority in social forestry programmes and plantation plan under MGNREGS.

- Poultry feed, routine vaccination of birds and animals, fish feed, processing of mustard and pulses, optimum utilisation of water bodies are major areas where improvement needs to be achieved.
- One year duration is inadequate for motivating all the HHs under Sangha Samabay Samitis to adopt appropriate practices for getting better results and experimentation on different practices.
- Considering vital need of the inputs like bio-inoculants, vermiculture, and other useful material, Govt needs to intervene to ensure availability of the material through establishment of bio-lab in decentralised mode, particularly utilising the infrastructure of KVKs.
- Huge potentiality of self-employment can be harnessed for input production and service delivery in farm and allied sector. Cottage-level establishment, if properly designed and financed, can absorb substantial number of educated youth in emerging sectors of employment.

Conclusion

Addressing heterogeneity and diverse need is a challenge for any development initiative in our country. Community-based institutions have been given priority for the last few decades to strengthen the institutional base for better management and effective delivery of services and above all, inclusion of the community wisdom in the entire process of innovation towards change. CMSA model, though initially designed in top-down delivery mode, undoubtedly widens a chance of developing a community's own strategy and internalising the necessity of linking credit requirement with training and extension. Now it is to see whether these Sangha Samabay Samiti

Field experience shows that reduction of chemicals in field crops has been made possible to a certain extent, particularly in case of crop protection. Non Pesticides Management (NPM) has become much preferred than any other measures demonstrated by CRPs.

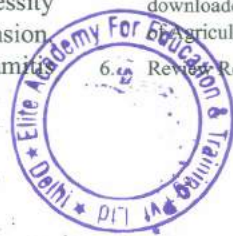
can assume a self-sufficient revenue model in future to extend these services to the member HHs with the help of the CRPs or PMKs. The success of CMSA in West Bengal confirms that developing and strengthening new generation rural extension team in farm and allied sector is the task ahead. This ultimately will satisfy greater objectives of NRLM which envisages reduction of rural poverty through institutional strengthening and livelihoods development.

Acknowledgment

Member of CRP Teams, Members of Core Technical Team of CMSA and team of WBSRLM-Anandadhara is deeply acknowledged for providing necessary data and field level information used in the article. □

End Notes

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IEC Activities in Panchayats



Alok Pandya

The Panchayati System has been an integral part of our culture and civilisation. Since ancient times, an ideal governance system has been functioning in Indian villages through the institution of panchayats and the justice delivered by 'Panch Parmeshwar'. It has strengthened our rural life and the economy so much that, even the most enormous upheavals and disasters in the world cannot affect it. Despite limited resources, these ancient panchayats also had their own system of information and communication.

In the post-independence period, through the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution, the Gram Panchayats have been vastly empowered by mandating the Panchayati Raj System and the basic infrastructure. Today, panchayats are the institutions responsible for economic development and social justice in rural areas and play an important role as agents of village transformation.

Panchayats are the final convergence point of all the schemes of the government. They play an essential role in taking all the plans and programmes of the government to about 65 per cent of the population of the country. Thus, Gram Panchayats play their part in disseminating information of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, and all the Ministries/Departments.

The last two decades have witnessed revolutionary changes in the field of communication. Now the information can be transmitted from one end of the country to another, instantly. Electronic means have brought about a sweeping change in the method of communication. Now, our villages also have access to the means of communication of the 21st century. Television, mobile, internet, and social media are now essential means of communication, even in rural areas. In the changing times, the state-of-the-art means of communications are now also the best means for Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, is engaged in creating, encouraging, and facilitating the information needs of Gram Panchayats to play an important role in issues of national importance. In today's information technology era, the number of panchayats

that come under the ambit of digital coverage is very high. The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are on the fast track towards the fulfillment of the vision of Digital India. The e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project launched by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj to implement and empower the e-governance system in PRIs is very effective and result-producing. While this step of the Government of India has made it easier to reach the last mile of society, this medium has proved to be a boon for disseminating information.

The state-of-the-art communication services are being extended to villages by connecting panchayats with optical fibre, to fulfill the objectives of Digital India. Under Bharat Net Scheme, the laying of optical fibre has been completed in 1,73,079 GPs so far. Now, panchayats are also working at a rapid pace in the field of information and communication for digital empowerment.

We have seen the most outstanding example of



Covid-19 Awareness through Wall Paintings

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Digital Literacy Centre by Dawan Gram Panchayat

creating public awareness through IEC (Information, Education, Communication) activities by Panchayati Raj Institutions during the Covid-19 crisis. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj, State Governments, and PRIs have played an important role in containing the spread of the Corona pandemic in rural areas by using a well-organised publicity system. With the onset of Covid-19 in March 2020, the Ministry prepared a strategic action plan regarding the same. The Ministry aimed to sensitise the villagers about the pandemic through panchayats and activate village health and sanitation committees at the village level.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the guidelines, instructions, and social health measures issued from time to time by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, were also disseminated by panchayats to reach the people in the villages. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj sensitised Sarpanches, other public representatives, and concerned officers of all panchayats of the country from time to time through bulk SMS and social media groups. The objective was to organise Gram Sabha meetings to prevent Covid-19 by lockdown, social distancing, use of masks, and sanitisers. Another advisory was issued on 13 March 2020 to all States/UTs requesting to facilitate Gram Panchayats and Panchayat Samitis to spread awareness on Covid-19 and Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Committees. Awareness material prepared by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare was also shared with the States/UTs for dissemination among the Gram Panchayats. Demonstration of information on Corona protocol, use of masks, and hand sanitisation through wall paintings, hoardings, banners in public places in villages proved to be an effective effort.

The IEC material sent to the panchayats has proven to be very helpful and useful in setting up quarantine centres in rural areas, providing first-aid to patients, and implementing Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan and Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, launched for the welfare of migrant workers and needy returning from the cities.

The social media platforms of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj have also been playing an active role in this regard. The best practices and innovations adopted by different panchayats during the Covid-19 period were also shared through social media for other panchayats to follow.

The steps taken by the panchayats for awareness creation have also played an important role in the successful implementation of the world's most extensive Covid-19 vaccination campaign. Initially, there was misconception, hesitation, fear, and opposition to vaccination in some rural areas. MoPR sent a message in this regard to all the States in January 2021. The IEC material prepared by the Ministry of Health was delivered to the panchayats.

Gram Sabha has been considered as the grassroots and decentralised unit of our democratic setup. It is essential for self-governance, transparent, and accountable functioning of Gram Panchayat. Gram Sabha is the forum that ensures direct, participatory democracy. Gram Sabha is defined by the Constitution (Article 243B) to include all registered voters of a village within the area of a Gram Panchayat. Gram Sabha is a powerful medium to convey the decisions of the government to the people. The panchayats are doing dissemination of IEC material through Gram Sabha.

A provision has been made in the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission (grant period 2015-2020) to use the grant fund to create the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP). In the last few years, efforts have been made to ensure maximum public participation in the formulation of GPDPs, and the suggestions for development plans have come through Gram Sabhas. Public participation in this vital field is being scaled up through IEC activities.

Online Dashboard is a powerful medium of information and communication in today's digital age. You can access real-time information of any place in the country, at your home. MoPR has also played a leading role in the development of Dashboards. Dashboards related to SVAMITVA Yojana, eGramSwaraj, Local Government Directory (LGD), Gram Panchayat Development Plan

Today, panchayats are the institutions responsible for economic development and social justice in rural areas and play an important role as agents of village transformation.

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(GPDP), AuditOnline, National Panchayat Awards, ServicePlus, and Gram Panchayat Citizens' Charter are operated by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. They facilitate making updates of the data and information of the related scheme accessible to the general public. In these dashboards, information about the implementation of the Scheme at the Panchayat level can be obtained.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has launched an online dashboard on 18 June 2021, to ensure the availability of real-time data/information on Covid-19 related measures and effective Covid management. This dashboard provides information through rural local bodies like Gram Panchayats, about the Covid containment and treatment measures undertaken by the Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committee (VHSNC). It provides data on the activities being carried out by the panchayat for awareness of Covid-19.

Gram Sabha is the forum that ensures direct, participatory democracy. Gram Sabha is defined by the Constitution (Article 243B) to include all registered voters of a village within the area of a Gram Panchayat. Gram Sabha is a powerful medium to convey the decisions of the government to the people. The panchayats are doing dissemination of IEC material through Gram Sabha.

The Computer Training and Information Center established by the Gram Panchayats is an exemplary effort. They are providing computer education to the children and making the information of various schemes of the government accessible to the people.

Gramoday Sankalp, a quarterly magazine published by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, is a powerful medium of communication, education, and information delivery to the panchayats. The magazine is published in 11 regional languages and Hindi and English. Gramodaya Sankalp makes the schemes of the

MoPR accessible to the masses in a simple manner besides publishing the activities of Panchayati Raj Institutions, innovations by panchayats, success stories, and best practices of Panchayats. This magazine is also available in digital form on the official portal of the Ministry. □

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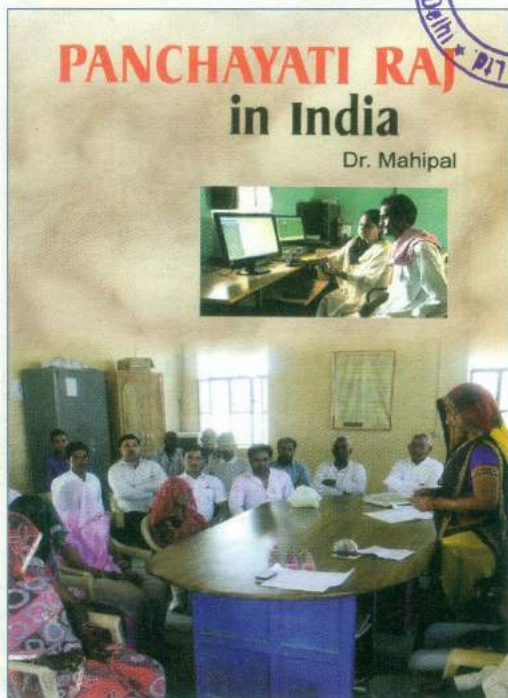
Panchayati Raj in India

Author: Dr. Mahipal

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It is believed that from the onset of recorded history, Panchayats had been the backbone of the villages- Indian in particular and South Asian in general. More than anyone else it was Gandhiji's dream to delegate power to each village, to make laws on subjects of their immediate concern.

The introduction of a three-tier Panchayati Raj System to enlist people's participation in rural reconstruction is the step towards that goal. This book looks at this system from varied perspectives. It systematically brings out the ground realities of the new Panchayati Raj System, its contribution to people's empowerment in general and its impact on rural development.

Dr. Mahipal, the author who has had firsthand experience into the workings of this system of rural governance brings vivid facts in the book. □

For more books on Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, visit: www.publicationsdivision.nic.in

Rural Management during Covid-19



Raminder Kaur Butlar
Yatika Hasija

The Government of India announced a nationwide lockdown on 24 March 2020, to curtail the spread of the Covid-19 virus. In Punjab, efforts to mitigate the spread of the pandemic were already in place when the nationwide lockdown was implemented. More than 65% of the population of Punjab living in rural areas with a total of 13262 Gram Panchayats and several villages found innovative means to fight the virus and sustain livelihoods.

To fight the battle against the virus in rural Punjab, the Department of Rural Development and Panchayats has been working at the forefront. The Departmental officials along with the members of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) played a key role in curbing the spread of the virus. Every Gram Panchayat has implemented a comprehensive set of measures, calibrated to their capacity and context, to slow down the transmission and reduce the mortality associated with Covid-19, ultimately to reach and maintain a steady-state of low-level or no transmission. The support of the villagers to the PRIs in fighting against the deadly virus is appreciable. To prevail against the pandemic, the Department of Rural Development and Panchayats, Punjab, in close coordination with PRIs, has taken many preventive measures to ensure the safety of the public at large. The Department ensured community-based services and primary-level health infrastructure in rural Punjab to manage Covid cases. It exhorted the villagers to strictly adhere to the health protocols and guidelines issued by the State government from time to time.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the regular fumigation of crops was undertaken by the Gram Panchayats. The fumigation was completed in 13230 villages by spraying 4.81 lakh litres of Sodium hypochlorite solution. Gram Panchayats encouraged the youth to come forward and provide free service in this regard. Consequently, fumigation was largely done without incurring any labour cost. The panchayats came up with an age-old concept of Thikri Pehra to check the influx of outsiders. The villagers entrusted themselves with the task of safeguarding the

residents by sealing the entry and exit points via the Thikri Pehras. Even the women Sarpanches stood round the clock and participated in the night patrolling.

Social distancing measures and movement restrictions were implemented to suppress the viral transmission and keep things under control. The Gram Panchayats were asked to identify the places where social distancing was to be observed. Circles were chalked out with white or red color at the distance of two meters at all public places to avoid close contact with the people. Daily announcements were made through Gurudwaras to request people to practice social distancing. Farmers and farm laborers, the backbone of the economic structure of the State, engaged in the harvesting process strictly observed social distancing guidelines and covered their faces with masks. At the harvesting site, proper arrangements were made to ensure a good hygiene setup.



Thikri Pehra by the Youngest Woman Sarpanch, Pallavi Thakur

Raminder Kaur Butlar is Additional Director (Panchayats)-cum-Head SIRD, Department of Rural Development and Panchayats, Punjab.
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Social Distancing being observed during harvesting



Van Mitras appointed under MGNREGA



Employment Generation through MGNREGA

The Department of Rural Development and Panchayats authorised Sarpanch/Panch of Gram Panchayats to spend up to Rs 5000 per day, up to a maximum of Rs 50000 from the panchayat funds for the basic subsistence of the underprivileged, especially the daily wage earners and for emergency Covid treatment.

Employment during Lockdown

The prolonged lockdown resulted in the loss of employment and income for daily wage workers. To cater to the humongous demand for work, the department played a pivotal role in employing the MGNREGA Scheme. Due to the relentless efforts of the Department, the number of man-days increased by nearly 10 times from 2.7 lakhs in April 2020 to 21.7 lakhs in May 2020. The total number of man-days generated in 2020-21 increased by 60% as compared to 2019-20. The total expenditure incurred in 2020-21 was 1241 crores (the highest so far).

To commemorate the 550th birth anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, 550 plants per village, i.e., 77 lakh saplings were planted and around 26000 Van Mitras were appointed. As a result, the overall green cover of the State has increased by 11363 hectares since 2017. This ensured a means of livelihood to the rural poor at the time of crisis and helped the lower economic strata to generate a source of income by nurturing these plants.

Ponds Cleaning Drive

The Department launched a drive for the cleaning of village ponds in the State. This drive was initiated to prepare the ponds for the monsoon season through de-watering and de-silting. Around 7851 ponds were de-watered and 3699 ponds were de-silted, generating 9.92 lakh man-days with a total expenditure of Rs 28.13 crore. This not only provided work to those who had lost jobs due to the pandemic but also rejuvenated the traditional ponds.

Mask making by SHGs in Rural Areas

Women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in Punjab have risen to the extraordinary challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic and turned the crisis into an opportunity. Amidst growing demand, the SHG members immensely contributed to Covid-19 prevention by manufacturing masks, aprons, and gloves at a reasonable price. Till date, under Punjab State Rural Livelihood Mission (PSRLM), 3838 SHG members have delivered 6.45 lakh masks, earning revenue of Rs 53.6 lakhs through the sale of masks. During the lockdown period, mask-making allowed these SHGs to earn their livelihoods and served the nation.

Awareness Drive under 'Mission Fateh'

The Department encouraged the Gram Panchayats to organise a massive door-to-door Public Outreach Campaign under 'Mission Fateh' to sensitise the people about mandatory medical protocols to be followed, to keep the pandemic at bay. It was termed as the Mission of the people, by the people, and for the people. The panchayat's Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and Anganwadi Workers, school teachers, youth volunteers, and health workers mobilised on a large scale

The Department encouraged the Gram Panchayats to organise a massive door-to-door Public Outreach Campaign under 'Mission Fateh' to sensitise the people about mandatory medical protocols to be followed, to keep the pandemic at bay.

to steer the Campaign. Earlier, the people in rural areas opposed sampling and vaccination. Hence, it was all the more important to make the communities aware of what vaccination is and what purpose it serves. The lack of such rudimentary information made rural people vulnerable to rumours and misinformation. An effective communication and awareness strategy was undertaken in rural Punjab to disseminate timely, accurate, and transparent information about the vaccination. This helped to fight vaccine hesitancy, alleviate apprehensions, ensure its acceptance, and encouraged more citizens to get jabbed.

Sensitising the Rural Masses

The Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities were carried with full vigour by the Department of Rural Development and Panchayats. Several social media groups with all Sarpanches of the State were created by the Department. A daily broadcast message is being sent to all Sarpanches of the State since April 12 2020 till date, regarding Covid-19 precautions and related measures to be taken at the level of Gram Panchayats. A daily awareness audio-visual message was also sent to the Department of Information and Public Relations for media release. The Department created official pages on social media platforms to spread its arena of IEC activities. This was also a step towards keeping fake news and rumors in check, to avoid any panic among the rural population. Further, pamphlets were prepared, distributed, and pasted at public places by Sarpanchs at the village level.

The e-learning material related to the virus was developed in the regional language and circulated to the Sarpanches and Panches, and families in villages to make them aware of the disease, its symptoms, and prevention. During the pandemic, the Department used a variety of online platforms to build the capacities of frontline workers to combat the pandemic and to snap out Covid hesitancy.



Covid-19 Door to Door Screening in Rural Areas



Ponds Cleaning Drive



Mask Making by SHGs

Isolation and Treatment

The Department motivated people to undergo testing even in case of mild symptoms and to get themselves vaccinated. Screening camps focusing on “test, track, and treat” were organised in Gram Panchayats. Community Health Officer (CHO) and Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs) were trained in performing Rapid Antigen Testing. The Department encouraged the Gram Panchayats to set up the isolation wards for constant monitoring of Covid patients. Gram Panchayats provided Utility Kits to the Covid-19 positive patients free of cost under the Mission Tandrust Campaign. Home-isolated patients were constantly being monitored and were given food kits comprising atta, chana, and sugar for each member of the family.

Incentivising Gram Panchayats

The Punjab Government is incentivising villages to give up vaccine hesitancy by giving a special development grant of Rs 10 lakhs to the first village of each Block, which achieves a 100% vaccination target under the Punjab government’s “Corona Mukht Pind Abhiyaan”.

The Department has directed the Panchayati Raj Institutions’ representatives and the officials to work in tandem, to prevent the likely onset of a third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Further, the Gram Panchayats have been advised to spend Untied component of the 15th Finance Commission Grant (XV FC) on improving the healthcare facilities in rural areas. □



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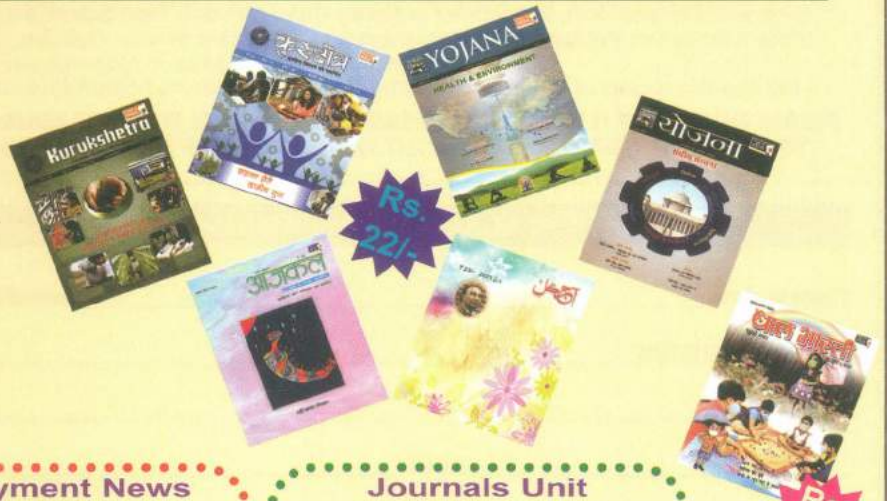
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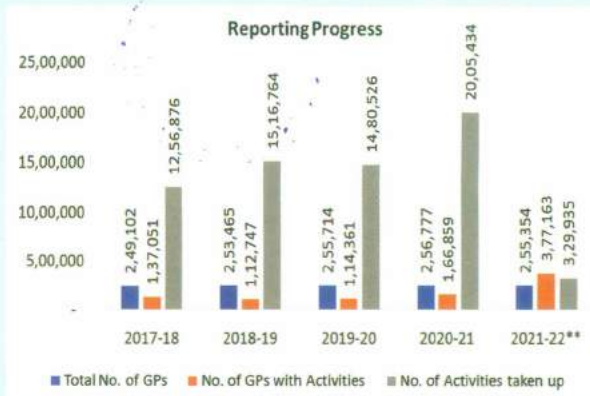


Figure 1: Annual Progress in eGramSwaraj

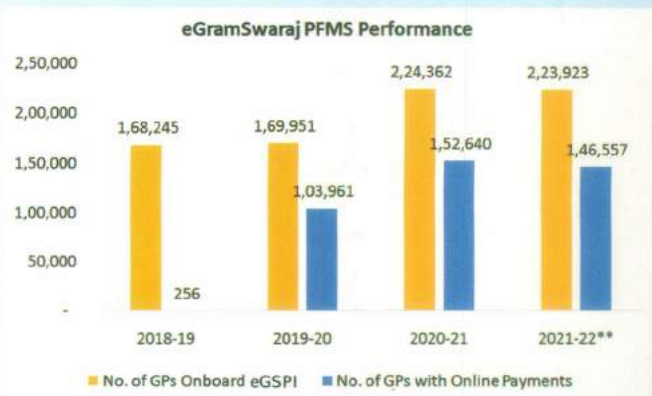


Figure 2: eGramSwaraj PFMS Performance

eGS and Public Financial Management System was carried out to provide an interface for the panchayats to make online payments viz. expenditure incurred under Central Finance Commission. eGSP is a one-of-its-kind interface for GPs to make real-time payments to vendors/service providers. It follows Model Accounting System (MAS) as prescribed by the O/o Comptroller and Auditor General of Accounts (CAG). It provides better credibility and strengthening of PRIs.

- **eGramSwaraj PFMS Integration** was achieved by enabling data sharing between eGramSwaraj, PFMS, and Core Banking System (CBS). Detailed data flow can be referred to from the given figure.

In the last Financial Year, more than 1.8 lakh

panchayats were on-boarded with more than 1.53 lakh panchayats using online payments across 21 States.

Achievements and Interventions

- More than 55000 crores worth payments have been successfully transferred by the panchayats to their respective beneficiaries/vendors,
- More than 2.28 lakh panchayats are onboard to make payments online via eGSP,
- More than 1.5 lakh panchayats made online payments in the last financial year,
- Receipt voucher to automatically be populated in eGramSwaraj,
- Reverse pushing/porting of grants from PFMS to eGS based on Treasury Integration for visibility of grants from State treasury to GPs,

Sample Plan

SECTION 2 : Sectoral View

S.No.	Sector	Planned Outlay							
		Scheme							
		Tied				Untied			
SC	ST	General	Total	SC	ST	General	Total		
1	Administrative & Technical Support	0	0	3600000	3600000	0	0	1728000	1728000
2	Agriculture	0	0	0	0	0	0	6791799	6791799
3	Drinking water	0	0	6270001	6270001	0	0	2022000	2022000
4	Fisheries	0	0	0	0	0	0	11773641	11773641
5	Health	0	0	0	0	0	0	684691	684691
6	Land improvement	0	0	0	0	0	0	5537903	5537903
7	Libraries	0	0	0	0	0	0	220000	220000
8	Maintenance of community system	0	0	0	0	0	0	370000	370000
9	Poverty alleviation programme	0	0	0	0	0	0	1727500	1727500
10	Roads	0	0	0	0	0	0	19085275	19085275

Sector Wise Planned Outlay (Tied+Untied)

Sample Plan- Sectoral View

- Inclusion of GST, TDS in eGSP for online payments,
- Mandatory geo-tagging of assets before making payments,
- Stringent SoPs in place for timely processing of payment files by PFMS/Banks,
- Creation of payment tracker mechanism for panchayats, banks, and MoPR users to track the status of payment files. □

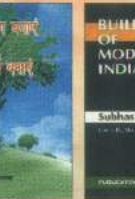
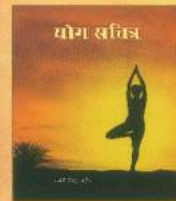
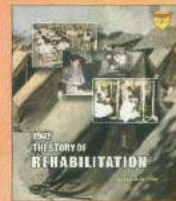
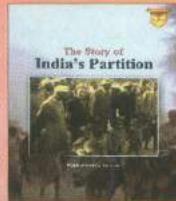
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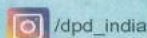
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