

A NATIONAL STUDY ON

**LOW  
PARTICIPATION  
IN  
GRAM SABHA**

Across the States & UTs



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# GRAM SABHA

## Gram Sabha: The Constitutional Foundation of Grassroots Democracy

- The Gram Sabha, envisaged under Article 243A of Part IX of the Constitution of India, is the foundation of participatory democracy in rural India.
- It provides every registered voter of a Gram Panchayat with a direct platform to participate in local governance, deliberate on development priorities, approve plans, identify beneficiaries, ensure social accountability and strengthen community ownership of development.
- A vibrant Gram Sabha promotes transparency, accountability, inclusion and citizen-led decision-making, making it the cornerstone of democratic decentralization and effective Panchayati Raj.



*“Strong Gram Sabhas are the foundation of strong Panchayats, responsive governance and empowered rural communities”*

# THE QUESTION

## Why Does Participation in Gram Sabha Remain Low in many parts of India?

What prevents citizens from attending and actively participating in Gram Sabha meetings across the States and UTs?

- *Livelihood?* • *Awareness?* • *Accessibility?* • *Infrastructure?*
- *Trust?* • *Transparency?* • *Inclusion?*

# STUDY COVERAGE



## COVERAGE ACROSS 26 STATES/UTs



26

States &  
Union Territories



213

Districts



~400

Gram  
Panchayats



~7,800

Respondents



50

PESA Gram  
Panchayats



130

Women-Friendly  
Gram Panchayats

Field Survey Teams: State Level Sr.Consultants/Consultants of SoEPR and 250 Model GP Cluster project Team

# WHAT'S ANALYZED



1

## Awareness & Communication

Awareness of Gram Sabha  
Sources of information  
Procedural Awareness



2

## Participation & Inclusiveness

Attendance  
Representation  
Community Engagement



3

## Governance & Functioning

Agenda  
Decision-making  
Transparency  
Grievance Redressal



4

## Infrastructure & Accessibility

Venue, Seating, Water,  
Toilets, Sound System,  
Digital Facilities



5

## Barriers to Participation

Livelihood, Time,  
Migration, Trust,  
Political & Institutional Factors



6

## Citizen Suggestions & Best Practices

Community Recommendations  
Innovative Practices  
Policy Directions

# KEY FINDINGS

## 📢 Communication Effectiveness

**66.4%**

Communication systems were perceived as effective or very effective for mobilising citizens.

## 📢 Primary Communication Source

**67.32%**

Public announcements remained the primary source of information about Gram Sabha meetings.

## 📁 Key Agenda Items

Local Issues  
GPDP  
Welfare Schemes  
Beneficiary Selection

## ⚖️ Grievances Received

**86.78%**

Respondents reported that grievances are received during Gram Sabha meetings.

## ✅ Grievance Follow-up

**63.29%**

Grievances received are recorded and followed up after the meetings.

## 📖 SABHASAAR Usage

**48.9%**

Gram Panchayats reported using SABHASAAR for recording Gram Sabha proceedings.

## ➡️📱 NIRNAY App Usage

**53.0%**

Gram Sabha proceedings are uploaded on the NIRNAY App (Always + Sometimes).

## 📏 Physical Infrastructure

**61.9%**

Average availability of essential physical infrastructure for conducting Gram Sabha meetings.

## 💻 Digital Readiness

**48.2%**

Average availability of digital infrastructure supporting Gram Sabha functioning.

# KEY BARRIERS

## LIVELIHOOD & TIME PRESSURES



**Daily Work Pressure** 40–55%

Daily wage work, migration and household responsibilities limit participation.



**Agricultural & Seasonal Work** 30–40%

Sowing and harvesting often clash with Gram Sabha schedules.



**Inconvenient Meeting Timing** 6–12%

Meeting timings unsuitable for workers and farmers.



## AWARENESS & PARTICIPATION



**Poor Awareness & Communication** 25–35%

Limited understanding of Gram Sabha and its importance.



**Lack of Interest / Public Apathy** 20–30%

Meetings seen as irrelevant unless personal benefits are involved.



**Women Not Encouraged** 8–15%

Social norms and household responsibilities limit participation.



**Social Barriers & Exclusion** 6–12%

Caste, gender and unequal participation opportunities.



**Information Not Reaching Households** 5–10%

Weak dissemination of meeting notices.



## GOVERNANCE & INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES



**Lack of Visible Outcomes** 18–28%



**Meetings Seen as Formalities** 15–24%



**Lack of Trust in Decision-Making** 14–22%



**Lack of Transparency** 12–20%



**Poor Grievance Redressal** 10–18%



**Delay in Implementation** 10–17%



**Lack of Presence of Officials** 5–10%



**Political Interference** 3–7%



**Corruption Concerns** 3–6%



## ACCESSIBILITY & INFRASTRUCTURE



**Distance & Transport Issues** 4–9%

Accessibility challenges are more prominent in remote and dispersed habitations.



**Poor Meeting Infrastructure** 4–8%

Inadequate seating and meeting facilities reduce participant comfort.



*Note: Percentage ranges are indicative estimates derived from thematic coding of qualitative responses and field observations. They represent the relative prevalence of recurring themes and should not be interpreted as exact survey percentages.*

# AN EMERGING CHALLENGE

## Gram Sabha Participation Fatigue




- The gradual decline in citizens' motivation to attend Gram Sabha meetings when they repeatedly experience discussions without visible action or meaningful outcomes.
- Over time, meetings may be perceived as routine exercises rather than effective platforms for solving local problems.



### FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO GRAM SABHA PARTICIPATION FATIGUE



# PROBLEM SOLUTION MAP

| PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED   |  | % OF PROBLEM RESPONSES | MAPPED SOLUTION (Citizen Expectations)  | % OF SUGGESTION RESPONSES |
|---|--|------------------------|---|---------------------------|
|    | Livelihood and Time Constraints              | 55.0%                  |  Flexible & Convenient Meeting Timing              | 10.6%                     |
|    | Poor Awareness and Communication             | 16.1%                  |  Stronger Awareness & Communication                | 48.2%                     |
|    | Lack of Interest and Public Apathy           | 9.8%                   |  Make Meetings Interactive & Citizen-centric       | 7.0%                      |
|    | Lack of Visible Outcomes                     | 8.3%                   |  Ensure Implementation & Visible Outcomes          | 5.0%                      |
|    | Poor Grievance Redressal                     | 4.9%                   |  Responsive Grievance Redressal                    | 4.2%                      |
|    | Governance and Transparency Issues           | 3.9%                   |  Transparency & Accountability                     | 5.3%                      |
|    | Women Participation Barriers                 | 3.2%                   |  Strengthen Women Participation                    | 4.7%                      |
|   | Dominance by Limited Individuals             | 2.3%                   |  Ward Sabha & Wider Representation                | 3.4%                      |
|  | Weak Service Delivery & Absence of Officials | 2.6%                   |  Presence of Officials & Better Service Delivery | 3.4%                      |
|  | Logistics and Accessibility Constraints      | 2.9%                   |  Better Facilities & Accessibility               | 6.2%                      |

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

01



## NATIONAL GRAM SABHA AWARENESS & MOBILISATION MISSION

Sustained nationwide awareness & mobilisation through multi-channel IEC and outreach.

02



## CITIZEN RIGHTS & GRAM SABHA AWARENESS HANDBOOK

Simplified handbook on rights, powers, procedures, GPDP, grievances and accountability.

03



## MANDATORY HOUSEHOLD MOBILISATION BEFORE GRAM SABHA

Structured door-to-door mobilisation through local institutions and community networks.

04



## LIVELIHOOD-SENSITIVE GRAM SABHA SCHEDULING

Flexible timing avoiding agricultural peak periods and working hours; community-consulted schedules.

05



## PARTICIPATORY & INCLUSIVE GRAM SABHA MODEL

Strengthen Mahila Sabha, Ward Sabha, Youth Sabha and inclusion of all communities.

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

06



## GRAM SABHA ACCOUNTABILITY & OUTCOME FRAMEWORK

Action Taken Reports, public review of resolutions and visible follow-up.

07



## TRANSPARENCY & PUBLIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Advance public disclosure of agenda, budgets, works and progress through notice boards and digital systems.

08



## STRENGTHENED DEPARTMENTAL CONVERGENCE & SERVICE DELIVERY

Ensure regular participation of line department officials for better service delivery and grievance redressal.

09



## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION INCENTIVE & DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

Participation-linked engagement systems with exemptions and travel support for remote, tribal & hilly regions.

10



## TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED GRAM SABHA COMMUNICATION & PARTICIPATION SYSTEMS

Digital alerts, e-notices, hybrid participation and transparent attendance systems.



**STRONGER PARTICIPATION. GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY. BETTER OUTCOMES.**



# WAY FORWARD

## *Towards Vibrant Gram Sabhas*

- Build trust through visible implementation of decisions.
- Move from attendance to meaningful participation.
- Empower citizens through procedural literacy.
- Institutionalize inclusion of women, youth and vulnerable groups.
- Make Gram Sabha responsive, transparent and accountable.
- Strengthen community ownership of local development.
- Leverage technology without replacing face-to-face participation.
- Promote continuous citizen engagement, not just quarterly meetings.

*The future of Gram Sabha lies not merely in conducting meetings, but in creating institutions where every citizen feels heard, every decision is acted upon, and every meeting strengthens public trust.*

**THANK YOU**

