



पंचायती राज



Report

of the Committee on Enhancing

The Quality Of

Gram Panchayat

Development Plan



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FOREWORD

The Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) is a key instrument of decentralized governance and participatory planning in India, enabling Gram Panchayats to translate local priorities into development outcomes aligned with national goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

While the GPDP process has been widely institutionalized, variations in quality, inclusiveness, and effectiveness continue to persist. To address these challenges, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Shri S. M. Vijayanand, Former Secretary, to examine existing gaps and recommend measures for strengthening the process.

Based on extensive consultations, the report highlights critical issues such as limited community participation, inadequate use of local data, weak convergence, and gaps in accountability. It proposes a set of practical and forward-looking recommendations to make GPDP more inclusive, evidence-based, and outcome-oriented.

Importantly, the report introduces a set of 15 measurable indicators for assessing the quality of GPDPs, covering aspects such as Gram Sabha participation, inclusion of vulnerable groups, convergence of schemes, sectoral balance, use of own source revenue (OSR), and transparency in planning and implementation. These indicators provide a simple yet robust framework for improving planning practices at the grassroots level.

The recommendations emphasize strengthening institutional mechanisms, deepening convergence, leveraging digital platforms such as e-GramSwaraj, and promoting community-led planning through institutions like Self-Help Groups.

I am confident that the adoption of these measures, along with the use of the proposed indicators, will significantly enhance the quality of GPDPs and further empower Panchayati Raj Institutions as vibrant units of grassroots democracy.

I place on record my appreciation for the contributions of the Committee and all stakeholders involved in this consultative process. I hope this report will serve as a useful guide for strengthening decentralized planning and advancing inclusive rural development.

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Foreword

The Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GDP) has become a key instrument of participatory governance at the grassroots. Its framework — grounded in constitutional principles, aligned with the localisation of Sustainable Development Goals, and guided by the Panchayat Advancement Index — is well established. The priority now is to translate this into action through plans that are meaningful, inclusive, and owned by communities.

The Committee's findings offer useful insights. While many States have made progress, there remains scope to strengthen the process by making better use of local data, deepening convergence with departments such as Health, Education, Agriculture, and Women and Child Development, and expanding the resource envelope beyond Finance Commission grants to include scheme funds, own source revenues, and State Finance Commission flows. These are important opportunities to improve implementation on the ground.

The recommendations are practical and focused. Strengthening Gram Panchayat Plan Formulation Teams, setting up district helpdesks, and deploying mobile support teams can address capacity gaps. Greater involvement of Self-Help Groups in planning, facilitation, and monitoring can further strengthen community ownership.

The 15 indicators proposed in this report provide clear, actionable checkpoints on participation, inclusion, sectoral balance, resource mobilisation, and convergence. Their consistent use can help shift the focus from compliance to quality. States are encouraged to integrate them into their monitoring systems.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has further enhanced the GDP portal by integrating these indicators into a dedicated tool. This enables Gram Panchayats to generate quality scores for their GDPs on a concurrent basis. As a result, they can identify weak areas, focus on necessary improvements, and enhance the overall quality of their plans before final submission.

I commend the Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri S. M. Vijayanand for the rigour and depth of this consultative exercise. I am confident that with the focussed implementation efforts by States, SIRDs, and district administrations, these recommendations can significantly improve the quality of GDPs on the ground.


(Sushil Kumar Lohani)



The Report of the Committee

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) is a critical tool for decentralized planning and participatory governance at the grassroots level. Introduced systematically in 2015-16, GPDP serves as a roadmap for socio-economic development tailored to the specific needs and aspirations of each village. The process emphasizes inclusion, participation, and accountability, enabling Gram Panchayats to function as effective institutions of local self-governance.
- 1.2 With the adoption of a thematic approach to localize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), significant improvements have been made to the GPDP process. However, concerns remain regarding the quality, inclusivity, effectiveness, and relevance of the GPDPs being prepared across the country.
- 1.3 Recognizing the need to address these gaps, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) constituted a Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri S. M. Vijayanand, Retired Secretary, MoPR, to examine the current state of GPDPs and suggest actionable measures to enhance its quality.

2. Constitution of the Committee

- (i) Shri S. M. Vijayanand, Former Secretary, MoPR, Chairman
- (ii) Shri Sushil Kumar Lohani, Additional Secretary, MoPR, Member
- (iii) Shri Vipul Ujwal, Director, MoPR, Member Convener
- (iv) Ms. Aditi Singh, Director, Ministry of Rural Development, Member
- (v) Dr. Sandeep R. Rathod, Secretary, Department of Panchayati Raj, Govt. of Tripura, Member
- (vi) Shri Gaurav Dahiya, Additional Development Commissioner, Department of Panchayati Raj, Govt. of Gujarat, Member
- (vii) Shri Surendra Kumar Meena, Director, SIRD Odisha, Member



In addition, the following experts were co-opted by the Committee:

- (i) Ms. Uma Mahadevan, Additional Chief Secretary, Panchayati Raj, Govt. of Karnataka
- (ii) Dr. Joy Elamon, Former Director General, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA)

3. Consultative Process Followed



3.1 Initial Discussions

The first meeting of the Committee was held on 2nd January 2025, during which the existing GDP format and processes were reviewed. It was decided to seek suggestions from States/UTs, State Institutes of Rural Development (SIRDs), Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), and grassroots organizations.

3.2 Stakeholder Consultations

A series of virtual consultations were held with States/UTs to gather feedback and suggestions. Key inputs were received from both government officials and practitioners on the ground. To enrich the deliberations with grassroots insights, feedback was also solicited from several SIRDs and NGOs, including:

- (i) SIRDs from Assam, Sikkim, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Himachal Pradesh
- (ii) NGOs: PRADAN, TRI, Teesri Sarkar, India Panchayat Foundation, Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), Setu Abhiyaan, and Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD)



These discussions focused on identifying bottlenecks, understanding on-ground challenges, and generating innovative ideas to strengthen the GPDP process.

4. Key Observations and Challenges Identified:

- (i) GPDP is more than a development budget and a listing of programmes. It is envisaged as a product of intensive participatory planning with special focus on inclusion of vulnerable groups and activation of the Gram Sabha. It also calls for the active functioning of the elected Panchayats as an organic entity with special involvement by the elected women representatives and those from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.



The Sarpanch/ Mukhiya/ President is to act the first among equals in the set up. While the picture is varied across the country, there is a widespread feeling that the processes are weak and often participation is quite low.

- (ii) Though the complete resource envelope is supposed to be known to the Gram Panchayats and through it into the Gram Sabha, in practice it seems to be limited to the Union Finance Commission Grant.
- (iii) Any planning must base itself on local data available and understood and owned by the community. The GPDP does not seem to use much local data and relies on impressions.
- (iv) Though a long process is envisaged including three months of intensive people's planning, it is seen that the real Plan is put together in a hurry just before the deadline. Also, LSDGs was a welcome step expected to take decentralized governance to a higher level, in many places its operationalisation seems to be mechanical by selecting themes without detailed discussions based on people's priorities validated by local data.



- (v) For the planning to be effective, GPDP requires a functional support system particularly from outside the Gram Panchayat as the human resources of the Gram Panchayat are very weak in most parts of the country. GPDP envisages the assignment of responsibilities to officials of other departments at the local level, and more so at the block level and also to co-opt the services of voluntary experts especially from educational institutions through the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan. Later this was institutionalized in the Gram Panchayat Plan Formulation Team (GPPFT). Though the Teams have been constituted their co-ordinated and effective functioning is not much in evidence.
- (vi) Over the last two to three years, there is increased emphasis on developing a partnership between the SHG network and the Panchayats especially Gram Panchayats. Though all States have initiated action the pace is rather slow and needs to be speeded up.
- (vii) It has been pointed out that there is a huge delay between the approval of the Plan and starting of works after sanctions from above. This often kills the enthusiasm of the local people and the elected representatives. After the preparation of the Plan there is no Plan publicity among the local people.
- (viii) In respect of accountability provisions related to the planning and implementation, process is quite weak. Though social audit has been mandated for GPDP, it is being carried out only in a few States and that too without much effectiveness. Also, monitoring of Plans at different levels is found to be quite weak and there have not been many evaluation studies.
- (ix) A common criticism is that the Plans are heavily infrastructure oriented with focus on cement concrete roads. Even though the Fourteenth Finance Commission allowed taking up of any of the seven civic services this variety was not seen in the final Plan especially in the implemented Plan. Similarly, the use of the untied 40% in the Fifteenth Finance Commission Grant has not been very innovative touching sectors like Health, Education, Livelihoods, etc. Similarly for the 60% tied to water and sanitation, the focus has been more on water supply rather than on watershed management which is the most important need of water sector.



- (x) One of the major issues in GDPD relates to the role of line departments especially in getting involved in the planning process and identifying needs and priorities of the Gram Panchayat and later responding to them and specifically indicating what would be implemented in the Panchayat. This convergence is missing.

5. Recommendations for Enhancing the Quality of GDPDs

The Committee's recommendations aim to transform GDPD into a more inclusive, effective, and accountable planning tool for grassroots governance. They focus on systemic reforms, capacity building, use of technology, and stronger community engagement.



A. Systemic and Institutional Strengthening

A.1. People's Plan Campaign (PPC) and Development Reports

- A five-year plan may be prepared in an elaborate People's Plan Campaign lasting at least six months (Ideally in the year before the next Union Finance Commission Grants are released). These could be collated into a Development Report. Thereafter, every year the PPC may be held for a limited period of 45 days from First of January to pull out the Annual Plan from the Five-Year Plan with provision to make additions wherever required based on emerging needs.

A.2. Social Justice and Inclusion

- Funds may be allocated in proportion to SC/ST population; earmark 5% of the GPDP budget for persons with disabilities.
- Promote gender equity by ensuring plan components originate from Mahila Sabhas.
- Flexible fund allocations for activities for development of women and children.
- Use a dedicated digital tab in e-GramSwaraj to capture women's and children's priorities.

A.3. SHG-Panchayat Partnership

- Institutionalize SHG participation in needs assessment, Gram Sabha facilitation, community monitoring, and implementation.
- Integrate the Village Prosperity and Resilience Plan (VPRP) into the GPDP, with SHGs prioritizing contributions under MGNREGS, GPDP, and departmental schemes.
- Ensure joint SHG-PRI planning meetings and assign community resource persons for planning and implementation.

A.4. Synchronization with Labour Budget

- Integrate MGNREGS Labour Budget with GPDP to ensure aligned employment generation and asset creation, based on Gram Sabha priorities.



A.5. Inter-departmental Convergence

- Mandate convergence of schemes across all 29 Eleventh Schedule subjects.
- Departments must provide annual scheme projections to Panchayats, enabling better integration.
- Quarterly multi-departmental review meetings at the Panchayat level should be institutionalized.

B. Technological Reforms and Capacity Building

B.1. Strengthening Digital Platforms

- **Redesign e-GramSwaraj to reflect:**
 - o Full planning lifecycle from community demand to final project implementation.
 - o State-specific customization and freedom for innovation.
 - o Geo-tagging, visual dashboards, progress tracking, and integration with GIS.
- Avoid restrictive dropdown menus; include “any other” options for flexibility.

B.2. Use of AI and Video Tools

- Use AI-driven systems for community broadcasts and agenda dissemination.
- Host video tutorials and user manuals on a dedicated portal for easier access.

B.3. Support Ecosystems

- Strengthen the Gram Panchayat Plan Formulation Team (GPPFT) and establish district help desks.
- Create Voluntary Professional Support Teams from civil society, retired officials, and academia (e.g., Unnat Bharat Abhiyan).
- Mobile teams should assist GPs in situ.



C. Planning, Monitoring, and Accountability

C.1. Enhanced Planning Process

- A comprehensive checklist of activities to be undertaken at each stage of GPDP preparation process. This will ensure completion and documentation of all the steps viz data collection, community consultations.
- Allow supplementary plans to adapt to emerging needs.

C.2. Accountability Mechanisms

- Mandate formal Social Audits, public disclosures, and painted boards listing projects.
- Facilitate community-based monitoring by SHGs and oversight by CSOs/ educational institutions.
- Establish Grievance Redressal Systems and SahayataKendras (Citizen Service Centres).

C.3. Transparency in Plan Changes

- All project changes post-approval must go through the Gram Sabha.
- Software should log the rationale and evidence for each modification.

D. Strengthening the Gram Sabha

- Ensure widespread publicity and SHG mobilization for Gram Sabha meetings.
- Train SHG members as facilitators using Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques.
- Conduct parallel Bal Sabhas and integrate children's priorities into planning.
- Facilitate hybrid Gram Sabha meetings to include migrants and diaspora virtually.
- Gram Panchayats should have full autonomy in deciding their priority within this framework and there should not be any direction from the District, State or Union Governments.



6. Indicators of Quality GDP and scale to assess the plan

Based on the deliberation with the members and the stakeholders, following indicators were identified

- (i) Attendance in Gram Sabhas
- (ii) Organic convergence with MGNREGS, Swachh Bharat Mission and Jal Jeevan Mission
- (iii) Significant contribution from the OSR of Gram Panchayats and State Finance Commission Grants.
- (iv) Coverage of soft sectors especially Health, Education, Nutrition
- (v) Allocation for Social Justice
- (vi) Significant no-cost low-cost activities
- (vii) Organic link with VPRP
- (viii) Less than 20% change in the Plan at the implementation stage.
- (ix) Convergence with line departments especially of Health, Education, Women and Child Development, Social Justice, Agriculture, etc.
- (x) Focus on Governance.

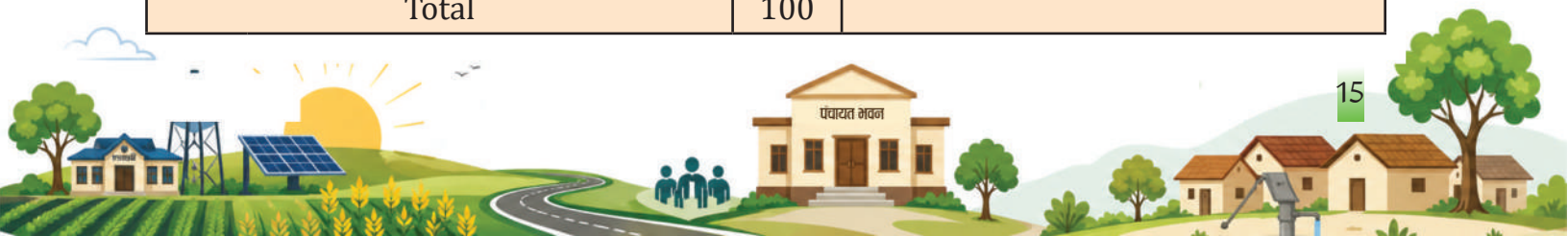


GPDP Effectiveness Indicators with Score Sheet

S.No.	Indicator	Total Score	Score card
i.	Has the quorum for Gram Sabha meeting been completed	2	2 for yes 0 for No
ii.	Community participation in Gram Sabha meetings	5	(i) 5-10% of the total voter population of the GP- 1 mark (ii) 10-15% of the total voter population of the GP – 2 marks (iii) 15-20% of the total population- 3 marks (iv) 20-25% of the total voter of the GP- 4 marks (v) More than 25% of voter of the GP-5 marks
iii.	Inclusion of SC/ST, women, specially abled and old age groups in planning process of GPDP	10	(i) Inclusion of SC-2 marks (ii) Inclusion of ST-2 marks (iii) Inclusion of representative from Women group-2 marks (iv) Inclusion of representative from specially abled group-2 marks (v) Inclusion of representative from old age group-2 marks
iv.	Bal Sabha and Mahila Sabha held prior to the Gram Sabha	5	2.5 marks for each Bal Sabha and Mahila Sabha to be held before gram Sabha
v.	Percentage of overall resources/ funds allocated in Sankalp theme/s	5	(i) 50% and above -5 marks (ii) 49-40%- 4 marks (iii) 39-30%-3 marks (iv) 30-26%-2 marks (v) 25%-1 marks
vi.	Whether the Sankalp taken as per the gap identified under PAI	5	Yes-5 marks No-0 marks (Marks to be given only if Sankalp is being taken as per the bottom three gap identified under PAI.)



vii.	Percentage of activities in GPDP from Sankalp theme	5	(i) 50% and above -5 marks (ii) 49-35%-4 marks (iii) 34-25%-3 marks (iv) 24-10%-2 marks (v) >10%-1 mark
viii.	Panchayat profile updated	5	Yes-5 marks No-0 marks
ix.	OSR as percentage of Central Finance Commission Grants	10	(i) If OSR is 10% or more of total revenue- 10 marks (ii) If OSR is 8-10% or more of total revenue- 8 marks (iii) If OSR is 6-8% or more of total revenue- 6 marks (iv) If OSR is 4-6% or more of total revenue- 4 marks (v) If OSR is less than 4%-2 marks
x.	Sectoral balance in planned activities (health, education, infrastructure, social justice, water & Sanitation)	10	2 marks for each sector. Maximum up to 10 marks
xi.	Flagship schemes covered under GPDP	10	2 marks for each Centre/State scheme. Maximum up to 10 marks.
xii.	Inclusion of available resources from other departmental Schemes	10	Whether taken up: [No (0 marks);Yes (5 marks)] If taken up, whether completed [No (0 marks);Yes (5 marks)]
xiii.	Planning / inclusion of activities to enhance Mobilization of own source revenue (OSR) in future	3	Yes-3 marks No-0 marks
xiv.	Number of activities proposed in GPDP from convergence of funds from different sources	10	2 marks for each activity of central/state flagship scheme. Maximum up to 10 marks.
xv.	Number of no cost activities included in GPDP	5	(i) More than or equal to 10 activities- 5 marks (ii) 8 activities-4 marks (iii) 6 activities-3 marks (iv) 4 activities- 2 marks (v) 2 activities- 1 mark
Total		100	





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