



GRAM PANCHAYAT DEVELOPMENT PLAN STATUS IN SELECTED STATES OF INDIA

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Abstract

Plans for grassroots economic development and social justice must be planned and carried out by the PRIs. Gram Panchayats are required to create a Shelf of Projects over the course of five years, which entails identifying, ranking, and preparing development projects. Rs. was allocated by the XIVth Finance Commission of India. 200,292.2 Cr to the panchayats and a pressing need for gram panchayats to be empowered to plan and carry out projects to meet the basic needs of rural people. It is known as the GPDP, or Gram Panchayat Development Plan. The GPDP must be prepared by all 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats based on local issues, conditions, and resources. Sadly, however, the GPs face issues such as a lack of support staff, adequate knowledge, planning skills, and so on. This paper attempted to examine the capacity gap and GPDP preparation status. A field study in five states—Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Bihar—led to the creation of this study.

Keywords : Economic development, Gram panchayat, development, process, status

Introduction

In the development of Indian democracy, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 regarding the Panchayat Raj was a significant milestone. The amendment granted the Panchayati Raj Institutions the necessary authority to function as institutions of local self-governance. Plans for grassroots economic development and social justice must be planned and carried out by the PRIs. Gram Panchayats are required to create a "Shelf of Projects" over the course of five years, which entails identifying, ranking, and preparing development projects. The Gram Panchayat must have a thorough understanding of the obstacles to social and economic development in terms of access and infrastructure in order to prioritize projects that will improve rural accessibility. The Gram Panchayat must complete the following three main types of tasks in order to produce the "Shelf of Projects": Mapping and data collection, locating issues and their causes, and preparing projects are all included.

Following the constitutional provisions, the government's Panchayati Raj Ministry Through the XIVth Finance Commission for the Gram Panchayats, India has created a huge opportunity for responsive local governance. It set aside Rs. 200,292.2 Cr to the panchayats and a pressing need for the empowerment of the gram panchayats in order to enable them to fulfill their mandate of providing basic services in an ethical and effective manner. Additionally, the panchayats receive approximately 50,000 crores annually from the MGNREGS, the ministry of rural development's most significant flagship program. Additionally, the panchayats receive SFC grants, Own Source Revenue, and funds from state government schemes.

A comprehensive development plan at the GP level would be one of the fundamental requirements for managing funds of this size. The GP development plan will have to have clear components of addressing the vulnerabilities of poor and marginalized people and their livelihood opportunities through an integrated poverty reduction plan that converge with the labor budgeting and projectisation exercises under MGNREGS as well. This plan must also ensure the mandates of social justice and economic development as mentioned in Article 243G. In the context of the Constitutional mandate, this plan must be a participatory plan that involves the community, particularly the gram sabha, in the formulation of priorities and However, in order for this to take place, significant preparatory and capacitative efforts must be made at the GP levels.

Review of literature

Kainth (2011) analyzed a variety of issues pertaining to credit accessibility and financial inclusion in rural Punjab. The author asserts that financial inclusion will empower individuals and facilitate their participation in the socioeconomic scenario. Depending on the rural population and BPL count, the sample includes 18 villages from 9 blocks in 6 districts. The workers in rural areas did not have a lot of savings to deposit, according to the study; Additionally, there was a lack of financial expertise. There is no doubt that there are a lot of people with bank accounts, but there aren't many people putting money in them. The banks are removing bottlenecks on the supply side, but people need to be more aware of the demand side. The problems with connectivity are the ones that need to be fixed; Banks should focus on people's basic needs, have a good delivery system, have the right infrastructure, and even open branches in remote areas. The institutional structure should change, and people's attitudes toward the banking system should change as well.

Kaur et.al (2015) examined the employment pattern and variation in livelihood in rural Punjab in a study. This study used both primary and secondary data. 40 households were included in the sample, which was divided into four categories based on the size of their landholdings: landless, small, medium, and large farmers. From each category, an additional ten farmers were selected. Simple statistical tools were used for the analysis. The study concludes that agriculture has long been the primary occupation and continues to provide the majority of employment, despite a structural shift in the state's rural workforce. The number of female workers in rural areas has decreased over the past decade. In rural areas, the unemployment rate has increased. Due to rising costs and constant outputs, the green revolution's success has declined since the

1990s. The study suggests that infrastructure, investment in skill development, and links require greater attention.

Kaur (2017) investigated the various factors that influence Punjab's financial inclusion. The author has utilized a district-level Financial Inclusion Index (FII) for this purpose. Considered are the main factors that influence financial inclusion: District GDP, literacy rate, and proportion of working-age population are all factors. All of these factors, with the exception of the last, were found to have a positive correlation with financial inclusion in the study. The only factor that had a significant impact on the districts' financial inclusion was urbanization.

Kumar et.al (2019) conducted research in the four Punjabi districts of Mansa, SAS Nagar, SBS Nagar, and Amritsar to examine the demographic and socioeconomic circumstances of rural households. The schedule was used to collect the primary data from 591 sample households in 23 villages. The usual statistical techniques were utilized. First and foremost, the study revealed that three-fifths of the families have a non-agricultural primary source of income. Female heads of house are extremely rare. It was discovered that three-fourths of the sample households were literate, and the literacy rate was also higher among the households that had substantial farm landholdings. A fifth of the population lives below the poverty line. Only a few households had wards receiving scholarships to attend school. Only a small number of households were receiving any pension benefits at all. The study suggests that health and education facilities must be made more accessible and of higher quality by the government. The gender ratio should also be improved by the government. There is a need for increased government investment in rural households' socioeconomic development.

Objectives of the Study

1. In preparation for the GPDP, to investigate the status, guiding principles, and implementation of guidelines.
2. To investigate People Participation, the process of GP level planning, with an emphasis on the role of disadvantaged groups and the issues they face in the GPDP.

Methodology

The states were grouped together into four groups: the group of states that followed the GPDP preparation mechanism, use of GPDPs that are based on a plan plus Software for the State Specific Plan, GPDPs. The data reported in the Plan Plus Software - planning and monitoring web portal developed and maintained by the Ministry of the Panchayati Raj, Government of India, served as the basis for these classifications. Two states were chosen from the first group: one with a higher percentage of GPDP completion and a better "Devolution Index" (developed by the MoPR), and another with the lowest percentage of GPDP completion and a better devolution Index. Since the first group encompasses more than half of the nation's states, Arunachal Pradesh and Punjab were considered for selection. After that, one state from each of the other

three categories was chosen. As a result, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Bihar were chosen from each group to participate in the field study. After that, two districts and two Gram Panchayats were chosen for the study from each state.

Tools and Techniques

The study used a desk review of the guidelines and a survey method to collect data from a variety of stakeholders from selected gram panchayats. It covered elected members, officials, planning core groups, panchayat committees, and gram sabha members' perceptions and opinions. The study included up to 10% of Gram Sabha members and 50 percent of elected representatives, officials, and various committee members for in-depth analysis. The "study focus" and objectives were followed, and a structured interview schedule was created and used to cover all of the topics.

Findings of the Study

The major findings of the study are discussed in relation to a number of parameters that are crucial for preparing the GPDP. The field data gathered from the ten Gram Panchayats chosen from five states serves as the foundation for these findings.

Demographic profile

The study included 62 percent males and 38 percent females. 80 percent of respondents to the study are literate. The occupational statuses reflect 48.4 percent farmers, 30.2 percent laborers, 13.4 percent self-employed individuals, and approximately 8 percent government employees. Over 75% of households reported having less than Rs. 80000 as a family's annual income. With an annual income of less than Rs.60,000, approximately 37% of households fall into the poorest category.

Participation of GP Committees in Planning Enquiry:

Only a small number of households had or have the opportunity to participate as a member of Gram Panchayat committees. In Uttar Pradesh, it was reported at 13.3%, in Haryana at 15.9%, and in other states, around 20%. The vast majority of committees are inactive. The committees were established for official mandatory need in the majority of GPs, but members are unaware of their purpose or functional responsibility.

Views of Respondents on the Gram Sabha and Participatory Planning Process

Only 59.6% of respondents participated in the gram Sabha meetings once or twice, with a high percentage of respondents coming from Arunachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab, while only 43% of respondents came from Bihar. However, the attendees were unaware of role clarity, and it was unclear to them whether the meetings were for Gram Sabha or for any other purpose.

It was reported that it was difficult to mobilize one tenth of the electorate. As a result, around 100 people were mobilized, and ward members were given the mandate to bring at least 10 to 15 people from their ward.

More than 62% of households reported, and representatives from all sections attended gram sabha meetings. In contrast, this did not take place in Bihar; instead, elected representatives sat down and chose the works and beneficiaries. Even in Haryana, elected officials made fewer efforts or showed less interest in mobilizing people from all social classes.

Most of the time, it was found that members of the dominant caste or the Mukhia (Village President) decide who gets what in the panchayat. Even in monocaste villages, the wealthy and powerful used to control others and have an impact on local decisions.

According to the study's responses, economically and socially disadvantaged groups have fewer opportunities to speak out on public issues in the states of Bihar and Haryana. The situation was much better in other states like Uttar Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Punjab. It could be because those states have a high literacy rate and have a religious system without castes.

Sixty percent expressed an interest in participating in the panchayats' development efforts or had previously done so. Women, in particular, face numerous restrictions regarding their ability to appear in public and participate in any government or private gathering. In general, members of marginalized and weaker social groups have less interest in participating in public events. According to the female respondents to the study, social stigma against women, particularly Muslim women, and lower social status prevent SCs and STs from participating in public life.

The remaining 44% of respondents were compelled to attend the meetings due to a lack of quorum by ward members or the President of the GP, while 53% of those who participated in the GS meetings did so out of self-interest. With the exception of Bihar, between 50 and 60 percent of respondents in every state participated voluntarily.

Discussion pertaining to the GPDP

While approximately 52% of individuals are aware of the GPDP, nearly equally as many individuals are unaware. Higher levels of awareness were reported in Arunachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, as well as approximately 50% in Punjab, among the states. The majority of people in states like Bihar and Haryana were unaware of the GPDP. Even those who stated that they were aware of GPDP explained that they understood the term "plan of the panchayat" to refer to the listing of activities that met people's needs.

The state governments have not done much to educate the public about the GPDP's fundamental components. 61.4 percent were unaware of the GPDP's goals, which hinders participation and the overall development vision. Sadly, even elected representatives are unaware of the panchayat development plans' significance.

With the exception of Uttar Pradesh, neither the planning process nor the quality of the plans are being monitored. As a result, states instructed GPs, and as a mandatory function, gram panchayats also held gram sabha meetings to finalize and prepare GPDPs.

The majority of respondents, according to the study, were unaware of the GPDP preparation process. As with any other panchayat meeting, the Gram Sabha meeting was called to order and resolutions were ceremoniously passed and approved.

In the name of the GPDP, all of the sample general practitioners, including advanced states like Uttar Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh, always prepared a list of activities and an estimate of the budget for repairing or building infrastructures like drinking water, roads, street lights, drainage, sanitation, and office buildings. There is no holistic development theory.

According to the findings of the study, the state of IEC activities regarding GPDP reflects a lack of efforts to disseminate information, with approximately 45% of respondents not being aware of the IEC activities carried out by physicians.

A smaller percentage of people join the panchayats voluntarily because they lack self-interest and motivation. This scenario was discussed with respondents, of whom 70% reported supporting panchayat efforts to mobilize the community. The percentage of people who attend gram sabha meetings would be less than 10% of the panchayat's total population, as further discussion revealed.

Processing of GPDP

With the exception of the state of Bihar, the study reveals that panchayats conducted a successful household survey. The majority of the gram panchayats rely on census data, which is only published once every ten years and may not have the necessary dimensions. As a result, they are lacking in data.

The majority of gram panchayats lack basic information about resources, capacity, persistent issues, sector production and productivity, etc. They only have information about the population, households, literacy, and a few other things. As a result, vital information for developing village development plans and ensuring the well-being of the populace is lacking.

It is interesting to note that the majority of respondents in the study region (66.2%) reported using PRA exercises like a transect walk, social mapping, and resource mapping to identify the gram panchayat's issues and opportunities. However, a close examination of the interactions revealed that PRA were not carried out in full spirit with the intention of identifying issues and requirements; rather, they were carried out for the purpose of documentation.

Sixty percent of responses were negative when it came to putting needs and problems in order of importance. According to the responses, it would be difficult to choose projects because the majority of the projects carried out by panchayats are subject to scheme-bound guidelines regarding items and areas of expenditure.

In all of the study states' gram panchayats, visioning for the GP is completely absent. The term "Visioning" is not known to elected representatives, officials, or anyone else in any category. There is a lack of long-term development thinking in any of the GPDP.

The panchayats are acting as an agency for putting state and central government schemes and projects into action because they lack the necessary expertise and technical know-how. Technical experts are needed for visioning and resource inventory in order to take the panchayats to a certain level of development in the long run.

The majority of respondents from the study area reported noncompliance with the GPDP guideline, with the exception of Uttar Pradesh.

The process of creating a long-term development plan is hampered by a lack of planning capacity, vision, and personnel.

With the exception of Uttar Pradesh, 73% of the plans that were developed were not comprehensive. The majority of the plans are budget estimates and wish lists of two to three pages that were approved at the panchayat meeting by the secretary or sarpanch.

Conclusion

Discussions and actions regarding development in India place a greater emphasis on democratic institutions and good governance. Poor people's needs for better living can be effectively met by democratic governance that is fully accountable to the people and allows everyone to effectively participate in all debates and decisions that affect them. Motivation, leadership, attitudes toward development, and ongoing capacity building are all necessary for elected representatives to improve the status of GPDP preparation. To prepare a real GPDP, a suitable administrative mechanism with technical inefficiency in data collection, digitalization, and management is also crucial. Diverse trainings are required to energize inactive working groups. Lastly, the quality of GPDP will change as a result of institutional partnership and the inclusion of subject specialists, planning experts, and department representatives in the planning core group.

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