

YOJANA SUMMARY

PANCHAYATI RAJ

NOVEMBER 2021

### **DIGITAL PANCHAYATS: eGRAMSWARAJ PFMS INTERFACE**

- To strengthen e-Governance in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), **eGramSwaraj** has been developed. It is a Simplified Work-Based Accounting Application for Panchayati Raj.
- It has been developed by amalgamating the functionalities of currently available applications in the e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project (MMP). It was launched on National Panchayati Raj Day on 24 April 2020.
- **eGramSwaraj (eGS, Work Based Accounting Software):** eGS is a 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).
- **eGramSwaraj-PFMS Interface (eGSPI)** – It was launched in 2018 for enhancing transparency and accountability. For this, 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 **Gram Panchayats (GPs)** to make real-time payments to vendors/service providers.

### **MAKING GRAM SABHAS VIBRANT**

- The Gram Panchayats (GPs) are the lowest tier in the Panchayati Raj. It provides opportunities to the rural population to participate in the governance process at the local level, through the institutional platform of Gram Sabhas.
- They have been vested with the powers for direct supervision of the rural programmes and projects, and to ensure accountability of GPs.

#### **Functioning of Gram Sabhas (GSs)**

- GSs provide citizens a **direct say in the decision-making process** out of respect for their villages.
- However, functioning of GS is often criticised due to lack of regularity and transparency, low participation, irregular Gram Sabha meetings, absence of a coherent Gram Sabha agenda, etc.
- Also, 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 and reduces Gram Sabhas to mere symbolic platform.

#### **Gram Sabha in States**

- Respective States have the mandate to decide on the powers and functions of the GS. A **variation is seen in the mandatory number of GS meetings** to be held in a year, across the States.
- Apart from the mandated GS 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 etc.

The idea is to utilise these special day meetings to deliberate upon the various Central Schemes.

### Need & Relevance

- GS is a unique institution which would enable the citizens to **highlight grass-root level problems** and **build consensus** on possible solutions.
- Various flagship programs of the government require **large scale mobilisation and people's direct participation**. GS provide an ideal platform for this.

### Gram Sabhas: Effective Functioning

- The allocation of Finance Commission's Untied Grants is a major step towards strengthening such autonomy.
- The following recommendations have been made for effective functioning of GS:
  - **Ensuring periodic Gram Sabhas**
  - **Formulating and distributing Agenda/Action taken Report**
  - **Preparing Annual Calendar for GS meeting** for spreading information about the annual schedule and the nature of discussions in the various meetings.
  - **Effective Scheduling** to enable the limited resources of District/Block administration to optimise efforts towards conducting the GSs.
  - **Organising Sabhas at a convenient time** to enable the village population to attend in large numbers.
  - **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**.
  - **Augmenting people's participation in Gram Sabhas**: 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** 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

## JOURNEY OF PANCHAYATS

### Constitutional and Legal Frameworks

- **Article 40 of Indian Constitution** talks about organisation of village panchayats. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, promulgated on 24 April 1993, has inserted as Part IX that enjoins the States to establish panchayats.
- A separate legislation "**Provisions for Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act**" (PESA) was passed by the Parliament in 1996.
  - PESA extended Part IX of the Constitution to the areas listed under the Fifth Schedule, subject to certain exceptions and modifications.
- These legislations contain provisions 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 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment is the **first one in India that mandated women's reservation**.

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.

- Subsequently, the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR)** was established on 27 May 2004.
- Panchayats being a State subject, their functioning is guided by respective State/UT Panchayati Raj Acts.

### Elected Representatives (ER)

Units	No. Of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) in 2020
District Panchayats	659
Intermediate Panchayats	6829
Gram Panchayats	255487

- 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.

A total of **21 states have made provisions of 50% reservation for women in PRIs** in their respective State Panchayati Raj Acts.

- The number of ERs is more than 31 lakhs in 2020.

### E-Governance Mechanism in Panchayats

- 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 etc.
- In addition to this, **a large number of service delivery applications** like the issue of certificates, licenses, etc. had also been developed.
- Now these applications have been unified in a single and simplified portal called **eGramSwaraj**.
- A total of 2,50,077 Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) for FY 2021-22 have been uploaded on the portal.

### Strengthening of PRIs

- Provision of basic infrastructures, emphasis on e-governance, capacity building of PRIs, focused IEC campaign are some of the main activities undertaken for strengthening the PRIs.
- **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.

### Fund Allocation

- 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 200292.2 crores, that emphasised the **preparation of a holistic plan at the GP level.**
- 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.
- It 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

- A new scheme of **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)** was launched for implementation on 1 April 2018, **to develop and strengthen the capacities of PRIs.**

- 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.
- Further, panchayats are also being **incentivised through awards and financial incentives** in recognition of their good work for improving planning and delivery of services.

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

- Devolution study conducted by the Ministry in 2015-16 through TISS prepared an index of devolution 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 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.

### Ensuring Property Rights

The Ministry has launched a scheme named 'SVAMITVA' to prepare property records of rural people of their houses using drone surveying technology.

### Way Forward

- As per a paper presented by NITI Aayog, 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 planning. Hence, an **emphasis on skilling** of rural population and **promotion of rural entrepreneurship** is needed in these sectors.
- 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 should focus.
- 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 for holistic planning using spatial technology. This can be scaled up in the coming years.

- 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.

## **FINANCIAL DEVOLUTION**

### Constitutional Provision

- States have 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.

- Under the Article 280(3) (bb) of the Constitution, 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) made a radical departure by awarding a percentage of the divisible pool.
- **Fourteenth Finance Commission** (XIV FC) has recommended an amount of Rs 200292.20 crore to the GPs in the country.
  - This amount was divided in **Basic Grant** (Rs. 180262.98 crores) and **Performance Grant** (Rs. 20029.22 crore).
  - It 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.
  - For the XIV FC award period (2015-20), Rs 183248.54 crores have been released.
- **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
  - **Basic (Untied) Grant** and
  - **Tied Grant**.
    - ✓ Regarding Tied Grants, 30% of the total grants be utilised for drinking water, rainwater harvesting, and water recycling, and
    - ✓ 30% of the total grants to be utilised for sanitation and maintenance of Open Defecation Free (ODF) status.
- The XV FC allocated Rs 60750 crore (50% untied and 50% tied) for the period FY 2020-21 and Rs 236805 crores (40% untied and 60% tied) for the period 2021-26 to the rural local bodies.

### Own Sources of Revenues (OSRs) of RLB

- The three tiers of the panchayats have been provided with own revenue generating powers.
- However, the GPs in general are empowered to levy the most number of taxes and non-taxes within their jurisdiction.

Property tax, cess on land revenue, surcharge on additional stamp duty, tolls, tax on professions, tax on advertisements, non-motor vehicle tax, user charges, etc. contribute the maximum to the OSR.
- Yet these **OSR amounts manage to meet only around 10 per cent of the total expenditure** of the panchayats.
- In most States, the **property tax generates the maximum revenue**. However, this tax, 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.

**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. This GP is focusing primarily on earning its OSR through tax collection.
- 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, it was able to generate sufficient revenue for itself.

**Way Forward**

- Updation of PRI Acts/Financial Rules and making them available to change in tax and non-tax levy, rate structure etc.
- Better assessment of properties required for levying Property Tax (classified **plinth area-based valuation** seems to be the most scientific)
- Relook on various exemptions to rationalise the taxes/levies
- Augmentation of Tax Administration Structure
- Technology-based Tax Administration may also be further expanded to cover even utility charges like water, street lights, sanitation charges, etc.

**INCENTIVISATION OF PANCHAYATS**

- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has been incentivising best performing Panchayats/ States/UTs through National Panchayat Awards.
- This includes financial incentives ranging from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 50 lakh through awards annually under the Incentivisation of Panchayats Scheme on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day celebrated on 24 April every year.

**Different Schemes**

- 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.

- 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 level.
- **Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan (RGPSA)** was launched during 2103-14 to provide panchayats with adequate technical and administrative support, strengthen their infrastructure and e-enablement etc.

Later, erstwhile schemes of MoPR including PEAIS were subsumed in the RGPSA.

- 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**

- The National Panchayat Awards under the Incentivisation of Panchayats scheme are conferred annually on 24 April, National Panchayati Raj Day.

- Categories of awards
  - **Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar** (started in 2010) - in respect of creating improvements in the social and economic structure of the village.
  - **Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar** (introduced in 2011) – in recognition of the good work done for improving the delivery of services and public goods. It is given for general (for all PRIs) and 9 thematic categories (only for GPs).
  - **Gram Panchayat Development Plan Award (GPDPA)**
  - **Child-friendly Gram Panchayat Award** for creating a conducive atmosphere for the healthy growth and development of children.
  - **e-Panchayat Puraskar** for implementation of the Panchayat Enterprise Suite (PES) Applications. There is no financial incentive under this award.

### **SVAMITVA SCHEME**

- 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.

As per the **Household Assets and Indebtedness Survey 2013**, conducted by MoSPI, about 20% of households have reported outstanding credit with non-institutional lenders, while the same number is at 10% for urban India.

### **Non-Agricultural Property Rights in Rural India**

- Very few studies exist that provide statistical estimates of record of rights for residential land in rural India.

This is because the surveys like the 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. This number is 40% for USA, 60% for China and 35% for UK.
- This results in a **low level of land governance, presumptive ownership of properties, long pending property-related disputes, and illiquid land market in rural areas.**
- Against this backdrop, **SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages Abadi and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas)** Scheme was launched.

### **SVAMITVA Scheme**

- It 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.
- Objectives:
  - 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

### Use of Technology in SVAMITVA

- It 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 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.
- Based on Socio-Economic and Caste Census-2011 estimates of rural areas in India, the number of households expected to be benefitted from the Scheme is approx. 13.13 crores.
- 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.

### Key Achievements

- As of 16 September 2021, drone flying has been completed in 59,145 villages across nine States.
- As of 8 September 2021, property cards have been distributed in approx. 17,000 villages to nearly 17 lakh property owners.

### Benefits

- The creation of accurate land records and GIS maps will support Panchayats in the **preparation of a better-quality Gram Panchayat Development Plan**.
- Gram Panchayats will be able to **streamline their property tax determination and collections**.
- The establishment of CORS network as a public infrastructure over the course of the Scheme will further **facilitate geo-positioning services** and other developmental activities.
- The Scheme has also given an **impetus to the drone ecosystem** in the country. This in turn will provide a boost to the **skilled manpower requirements** and **open avenues for startups and MSMEs**.
- 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.

## **GRAM PANCHAYAT DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

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.

### GPDP: Comprehensive 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.

### Broad Objectives of GPDP:

- To enable and engage the community in participatory planning and decision-making processes.

- To ensure identification of locally available resources and addressing local needs of all communities through participatory planning and convergence.
- To improve efficiency and efficacy in public service delivery in local areas
- To strengthen accountability measures at the local level

In the context of the large distribution of funds to Gram Panchayats by the Finance Commission, the Ministry has made the preparation of **GPDP a mandatory activity by Gram Panchayats (GPs)**.

With renewed focus through multiple initiatives, more than 95% of GPs participated in the planning process and uploaded their plans on eGramSwaraj portal.

#### Case Study: Ibrahimipur, Telangana

- The Gram Panchayat had poor infrastructure with no significant development in areas like health, sanitation, drinking water, etc.
- However, with intensive community involvement of youth, women SHGs, and active Gram Sabhas along with an extensive awareness generation, Ibrahimipur transformed into a model village for sustainable development.

#### Steps taken

- Door-to-door visit for awareness, construction of toilets with the convergence of SBM(G) and MGNREGS
- 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**.
- Banned the single-use of plastics
- The GP 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.
- 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.
- The GP has also created an impact in generating the livelihood opportunities. Under **National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)**, 60 milch animals were provided at subsidised rates to villagers. With support from GP, villagers are selling milk and sustaining their livelihood.
- 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**.

#### Conclusion

- More than 95% of Gram Panchayats are preparing GPDPs across the country. However, now is the time to **shift the focus from 'numbers' to 'quality' of planning**, to transform the GPDPs from mere **wish-lists to informed, actionable plans followed by due monitoring**.
- 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.

**LOCALISING SDGS FOR PANCHAYATS**

- The ambitious goals of SDG, agreed upon in 2015, aim to end poverty, tackle inequality once and for all, and find lasting solutions to the environmental challenges faced by the world.
- Data becomes crucial enabler for driving action to achieve global goals by 2030.
- 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.

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.

**Data Management by Panchayats: Benefits**

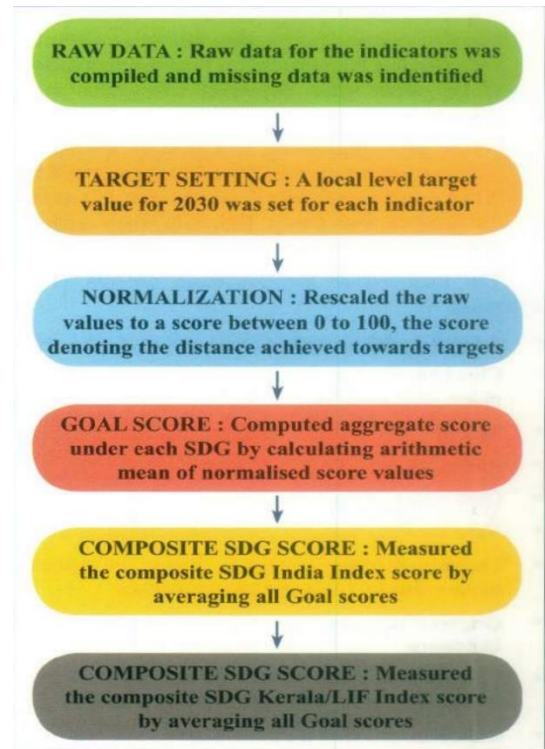
- It **enables the community to identify and design targets and indicators** that make sense specifically in their context.
- It provides a platform to **track the progress** that the community makes in achieving its goals.
- Most importantly, it ensures that **everyone gains a voice** on development matters.
- Recognising the importance of this, the need to prioritise and localise SDG targets was felt. This process of localising the SDGs requires tools and policy guidance for States, provinces and Panchayats.

**Data Revolution: The Role of Indicator**

- 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.
- This can be operationalised by developing a Local Self Government (LSG) level dashboard for monitoring indicator framework for SDGs.

**Utility of the dashboard**

- 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 Dashboard will play a **key role in driving the SDG agenda**.



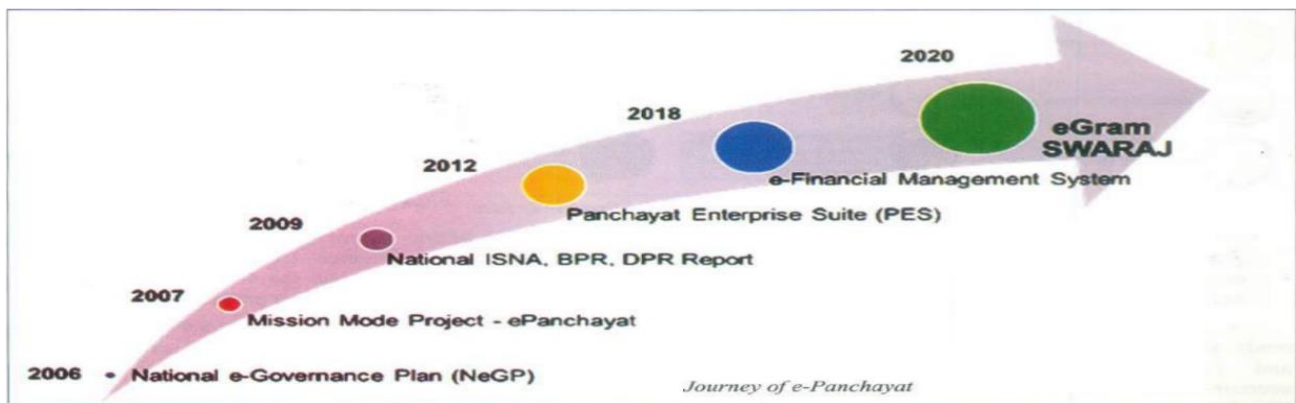
*SDG- Construction of the Dashboard*

- It will **raise awareness on SDG** on many levels - within government, media, researchers, and civil society organisations.
- Through dashboard, functionaries can develop targets, and track and monitor the progress on the attainment of SDGs. The public can access this platform in the future.
- The dashboard helps to **identify innovative sources of data** at the local level on a variety of themes. It will enable **monitoring the progress towards the SDGs** at the local and State level.

### **DIGITAL LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

- The **e-Panchayat is one of the Mission Mode Projects** under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), to completely transform the functioning of PRIs – making them more transparent, accountable, and effective as organs of decentralised self-governing institutions.
- India has set an ambitious target to become a USD 5 trillion economy. 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 Timeline of e-Panchayats**



- In 2009-10, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj commissioned a comprehensive study to identify all the Information and Services Needs of the stakeholders.
- This led to the **identification of 12 Core Common Applications** that addressed all aspects of panchayats' functioning. The e-Panchayat suite of applications was launched on 24 April 2012.
- Further, to strengthen e-Governance in PRIs, eGramSwaraj, a Simplified Work-Based Accounting application for Panchayati Raj has been developed.

#### **e-Governance and ICT interventions**

- **eGramSwaraj (eGS, Simplified Work-Based Accounting Software):** It provides 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).
- 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).

- **Geo-tagging of assets:** MoPR has developed **mActionSoft**- a mobile-based solution to help in capturing photos with Geo- Tags for the works which have the asset as an output.
- **Gram Manchitra (Geo-spatial planning application):** It was launched in October 2019, as a spatial planning application for facilitating and supporting GPs. The application is being integrated with spatial and non-spatial data from various Ministries.
- 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.
- **AuditOnline:** AuditOnline was launched on 15 April 2020, subsequent to the recommendation of the Fifteenth Finance Commission. It ensures the availability of audited accounts in the public domain.



### Other Steps in pipeline

- 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 Ministry is exploring the development of an **integrated 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.

### Conclusion

- 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.

### PEOPLE'S PLAN

- 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.
- 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, 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.

- The GPDP planning process targets development challenges existing across three interrelated dimensions in rural India.

- **Economic dimension:** To alleviate poverty and create employment opportunities

- **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 etc.

- **Political dimension:** Providing opportunities for the poor and low-income people in rural areas, including women and SC and ST communities.

- The Campaign has strengthened the role of elected Panchayat leaders and women's SHG in a functional Gram Sabha.

- The **Public Information Boards** to be installed in the Gram Panchayats will **lead to transparency**.

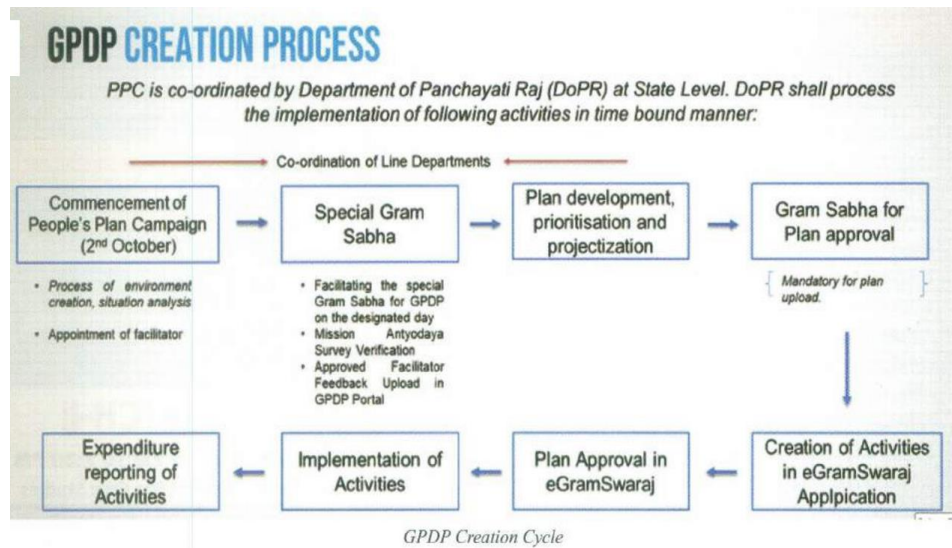
- The **ranking of Gram Panchayats** based on social and economic development will help in **identifying gaps at village** and Gram Panchayat level, and emphasise **evidence-based planning** and implementation for GPDP.

- 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.

- 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 **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.



**IEC ACTIVITIES IN PANCHAYATS**

- 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'.
- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj, is engaged in creating, encouraging, and facilitating the information needs of Gram

Gram Sabha is defined by the Constitution (Article 243B) to include all registered voters of a village within the area of a Gram Panchayat.

Panchayats to play an important role in issues of national importance.

- We have seen the most outstanding example of creating public awareness through **IEC (Information, Education, Communication) activities by Panchayati Raj Institutions during the Covid-19 crisis.**
- During the pandemic, the guidelines, instructions, and social health measures issued from time to time by the Ministry of Health were also disseminated by panchayats by using 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.
- 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 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.**
- In the last few years, efforts have been made to ensure maximum public participation in the formulation of GPDP. Public participation in this vital field is being scaled up through IEC activities.

#### **Recent Steps Taken By The Ministry To Promote IEC**

- 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).
- The **Computer Training and Information Centre 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.**