



GRAMODAY SANKALP



**Women Empowerment
through Panchayati Raj
Institutions**

In This Issue

- Women's Empowerment through SVAMITVA
- Gender Budgeting
- NPA - Sifting the Excellent Local Women Leaders

“Meri Panchayat” App Wins Big on Global Stage; Bags WSIS Champion Award 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland

“Meri Panchayat Enhances Citizen Centric Governance; Digital Tools Key to Bridging Knowledge Divide” : Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh

The transformative mobile application “Meri Panchayat” has been internationally recognized with the prestigious World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Prizes 2025 Champion Award under the Action Line Category: Cultural Diversity and Identity, Linguistic Diversity and Local Content. The honor was conferred during the WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025, organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) as part of the WSIS initiative. Meri Panchayat, as a WSIS Prizes 2025 Champion Project, symbolizes the global excellence of India’s digital governance model. The WSIS Champion Certificate was formally presented to the Union Minister of Panchayati Raj, Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh, at a ceremonial event held in New Delhi today. The occasion was also graced by Minister of State for Panchayati Raj, Prof. S. P. Singh Baghel, Secretary MoPR, Shri Vivek Bharadwaj and other senior officers of the Ministry.

On this occasion, Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh lauded the Meri Panchayat initiative that has helped in advancing citizen-centric governance through digital means. He also emphasized upon the need to further leverage such digital tools to enhance transparency, promote participatory democracy, and bridge the information and knowledge divide at the grassroots level.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)+20 High-Level Event 2025 was held from 7 to 11 July 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland. Also known as the WSIS Forum 2025, the event was co-hosted by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Swiss Confederation and co-organized by ITU, UNESCO, UNDP, and UNCTAD. Marking twenty years since the original WSIS, it provides a global platform to assess progress, address emerging challenges, and chart the future course for building inclusive information societies. Ms. Sunita Jain, Senior Director, NIC / NIC–MoPR, received the prestigious Champion Award for “Meri Panchayat” on behalf of the Government of India in Geneva on 10 July during the WSIS+20 High-Level Event 2025.



About Meri Panchayat app

“Meri Panchayat App – The m-Governance Platform for Panchayats of India” empowers over 25 lakh elected representatives and approximately 950 million rural residents across India’s 2.65 lakh Gram Panchayats, transforming rural governance through digital inclusion and transparency. It is an initiative of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and National Informatics Centre (NIC) under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

Through Meri Panchayat App, citizens can effortlessly access, on their mobile devices:

- Real-time Panchayat budgets, receipts, payments and development plans
- Details of elected representatives and functionaries
- Information on public infrastructure and civic services in their Panchayat
- Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDs) and track project proposals
- Weather forecasting at Gram Panchayat level
- Social audit tools, fund utilization data, and grievance redressal with geo-tagged and geo-fenced features
- Multilingual interface supporting 12+ Indian languages to ensure inclusiveness

The app also enables citizens to propose new projects, review and rate implemented works, and access Gram Sabha agendas and decisions, thereby strengthening participatory democracy and civic engagement.

CONTENTS

Editor-in-Chief:

Shri Vivek Bharadwaj, IAS
Secretary,
Ministry of Panchayati Raj

Editor:

Dr. Bijay Kumar Behera, IES
Economic Advisor

Editorial Assistance:

Alok Pandya
Senior Consultant, Media

2



Message From
The Hon'ble Minister

3



Message From
The Hon'ble Minister of State

4



Message From
The Hon'ble Secretary

In This Issue

05

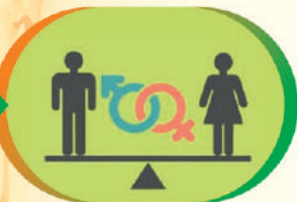


Women's Empowerment
through Co-ownership in
the Property Cards under
SVAMITVA Scheme

20

National Panchayat Awards
– Sifting the Excellent
Local Women Leaders

08



Empowering Women
PRI Leaders through
Gender Budgeting

24

Empowered women
empower communities :
Best Practices from JJM

10



Vulnerability of Women to
Dreadful Diseases: Global
and Indian Perspectives,
Remedies, and Policy
Interventions

28

Swachh Bharat Led
by Women: Best Practices
from SBM-G

16



"Empowering Women,
Transforming Lives"
A case study in Luki Gram
Panchayat of Boko
Development Block of
Assam

32

From Vision to Reality:
How These Panchayats
Became Models of
Women-Friendly Panchayat

35

The Sarpanch of Phulera
proved through her
work - Asli Pradhan Koun

37

Revisiting in State PRI acts:
A necessity for making PRIs
more effective

राजीव रंजन सिंह उर्फ ललन सिंह
RAJIV RANJAN SINGH ALIAS LALAN SINGH



Message

पंचायती राज मंत्री
और मत्स्यपालन, पशुपालन एवं डेयरी मंत्री
भारत सरकार
Minister of Panchayati Raj and
Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying
Government of India

DO. No. 27481/MIN PR&FAHD/2025

The 16th edition of Gramoday Sankalp, being brought out by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj on the theme "Women Empowerment through Panchayati Raj Institutions", draws attention to the efforts towards strengthening Panchayats as inclusive institutions where women are supported to realize their potential and contribute effectively across different domains of public life.

Since ancient times, women have held a prominent role in local governance systems in India, with active participation and leadership. The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution granted formal recognition to the Panchayati Raj system as a unit of local self-governance in rural India. Under Article 243D of the Constitution, a minimum of 33% reservation for women in elected positions within Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) has been mandated. However, 21 states and 2 Union Territories have gone a step further by making 50% reservation for women in PRIs compulsory.

There are approximately 31.5 Lakh elected Panchayat representatives across the country, of which nearly 46% are women. This significant representation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions has provided a strong foundation for women's empowerment in rural India. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is moving forward with a well-defined strategy to ensure the adequate capacity building of women Panchayat representatives, enabling them to play a decisive role in village development through effective leadership.

In response to the Hon'ble Prime Minister's call to transform India into a Viksit Bharat by the year 2047 and in line with our commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, women's empowerment and their inclusion in the mainstream of society emerge as key priorities. Among the nine thematic areas identified by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj for the localization of SDGs, one significant theme is "Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats." The active leadership of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions has catalyzed women-led development initiatives that create gender-inclusive and women-friendly ecosystems at the grassroots level. This transformative approach advances women's empowerment in its truest sense while demonstrating how local governance becomes a powerful vehicle for nurturing girl-friendly environments and the next generation of female leaders.

I am confident that this issue of Gramoday Sankalp will effectively convey a comprehensive perspective on women's empowerment through the Panchayati Raj system and our ongoing efforts in this direction. It will also serve to inspire greater participation of women in the mission of building a Developed India.



(Rajiv Ranjan Singh)

Room No. 234, B- Wing, Krishi Bhawan, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Road, New Delhi-110 001 (India),
Ph. +91 11-23380780/81/82 Fax: +91 11- 23380783 Resi. 011-23782781/82

प्रो. एस.पी. सिंह बघेल
राज्य मंत्री
मत्स्यपालन, पशुपालन एवं डेयरी
एवं
पंचायती राज मंत्रालय
भारत सरकार



Prof. S.P. SINGH BAGHEL
Minister of State for
Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying
and
Panchayati Raj
Government of India



MESSAGE

The release of the 16th edition of Gramoday Sankalp by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, themed **“Women Empowerment through Panchayati Raj Institutions”**, is a significant and timely initiative that underscores the pivotal role of Panchayats in creating an enabling environment for women to access opportunities, make informed decisions, and take active leadership in community development.

The Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of **“Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas”** can only be truly realized when women—who comprise nearly half of our nation's population—are empowered as equal stakeholders in governance and development. Their meaningful participation in local decision-making is not just a matter of equity but a prerequisite for building a Viksit Bharat.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act laid a strong foundation by mandating one-third reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Demonstrating a progressive commitment, 21 States and 2 Union Territories have further enhanced this to 50%. Today, nearly 46% of the 3.15 million elected representatives across about 2.5 lakh panchayats are women—an inspiring testament to inclusive democracy in action.

The Ministry continues to strengthen the leadership capacities of elected women representatives through structured training programmes. These efforts are bearing fruit, with women now emerging as confident leaders, driving inclusive and sustainable development across rural India. Women-led governance models are championing gender-responsive policies and nurturing girl- and women-friendly rural ecosystems.

Among the nine themes identified for the localization of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs) at the Gram Panchayat level, the goal of building **“Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats”** is of strategic importance. It anchors the economic, social, and educational empowerment of women and adolescent girls while holding panchayats accountable for their health, safety, and dignity. Many panchayats have already embarked on this path, initiating transformative efforts to foster truly inclusive villages.

This special issue of Gramoday Sankalp captures inspiring stories, innovative practices, and insightful perspectives on women's empowerment through Panchayati Raj Institutions. I am confident it will serve as a valuable resource for elected representatives, officials, stakeholders, and citizens committed to gender equality and grassroots transformation.



(Prof. S. P. Singh Baghel)

Office: Room No. 392, 'E' Wing, 3rd Floor, Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi-110001

Residence: 7, K. Kamraj Lane, New Delhi

Phone: 011-23782143, 23782548, 23782518, E-mail Id: mos-mopr@gov.in

विवेक भारद्वाज, भा.प्र.से.
सचिव
Vivek Bharadwaj, IAS
Secretary



भारत सरकार
पंचायती राज मंत्रालय
डॉ. राजेन्द्र प्रसाद रोड,
कृषि भवन, नई दिल्ली-110001

Government of India
Ministry of Panchayati Raj
Dr. Rajendra Prasad Road,
Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi-110001



MESSAGE

I am pleased to note that the publication of the 16th issue of Gramoday Sankalp is based on the theme "Women Empowerment through Panchayati Raj Institutions". This edition presents a strong and clear picture of how women are not only participating in local governance but also leading it with confidence and commitment and shaping the future of rural India.

The emphasis of the Government has been not only on empowerment of women but also women-led development. Despite the constitutional provision of reservation for the women in the local self-government system and their formidable entry on their own volition by virtue of their grit and glory, the prejudice against the women as the non-performer or lesser performer still in vogue. Our collective endeavour has been to dispel such preconceived notion.

This issue of the magazine features such real stories and practical experiences from the field dwelling on their leadership, planning, execution, management, and challenges etc. In addition to their accomplishments, the measures undertaken to strengthen their position in local self-government and society have been compiled. The articles on 'co-ownership in the Property Cards under SVAMITVA Scheme,' 'gender budgeting', 'dismissing proxy-Sarpanch practice by sheer will power', and 'special health care for the women' have added new dimension towards empowerment of women. The articles on best practices in the women-led Panchayats in promoting and assuring livelihood to rural folk, water management under JJM, keeping the health and sanitation issue on top agenda through sustained Swachhta Abhiyan and winning awards for their exemplary performance are the examples of their grit and growing confidence in proving their mettle.

I believe this edition will be of practical value to both readers and contributors, and help encourage wider awareness and positive action in rural areas towards the goal of women-led development.

Vivek Bharadwaj
(Vivek Bharadwaj)

Women's Empowerment Through Co-ownership in the Property Cards Under SVAMITVA Scheme

Sushil Kumar Lohani,
Additional Secretary, MoPR



In rural India, women have long played an essential role in agriculture, household management, and community life. Despite their significant contributions, they have faced systemic barriers to property ownership and land rights. Historically, property ownership has largely been controlled by male members of households, leaving women without legal recognition of the land they helped cultivate and maintain. This unequal distribution of property rights has restricted women's access to financial resources, opportunities, and independence.

The introduction of co-ownership for women in the SVAMITVA Scheme has brought about a notable change in the perception and practice of property rights, providing women with an equal share in family property and empowering them both

financially and socially. This innovative program aims to provide property ownership to rural households through the issuance of property cards. By introducing co-ownership for women, the scheme represents a vital milestone in advancing gender equality and promoting financial empowerment for women in rural areas.

The SVAMITVA Scheme has altered the landscape of property ownership in rural India by officially recognizing women as co-owners of land. This change is not merely symbolic; it has tangible, practical benefits that significantly impact women's lives. This move is groundbreaking because land ownership in rural India is not just a financial asset; it is also a source of social status and security. In many cases, the lack of property rights has left women vulnerable to financial instability, displacement,



Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi handing over a property card prepared under the SVAMITVA Scheme to a female beneficiary during the National Panchayati Raj Day programme held on April 24, 2024, in Rewa, Madhya Pradesh.

and even domestic violence. By granting women legal rights to land, the SVAMITVA Scheme not only provides them with security but also gives them the power to make decisions about how the land is used, who can access it, and how to benefit from its resources.

One of the most significant impacts of the SVAMITVA Scheme is that it opens doors to financial independence for women. With land ownership comes the ability to access financial services such as loans, credit, and insurance, which were often out of reach for women in the past. Without formal land titles, women were frequently unable to leverage property for financial support or to invest in their families' future.

With the inclusion of women as co-owners in the property titles, rural women now have the ability to

use their land as collateral for loans. This has already started to yield positive results. For instance, in Pune district, Maharashtra, a concerted effort by the local authorities led to a remarkable transformation in property ownership. By encouraging women to become co-owners of properties, 88% of residential properties in the district are now jointly or solely owned by women, a massive increase from just 16% at the start of the initiative. This shift has allowed women to access loans from banks, establish businesses, and gain financial independence. It has also reduced property-related disputes, giving women greater control over their economic futures.

In Madhya Pradesh, the inclusion of women as co-owners under the state's Land Revenue Code has similarly empowered women. Women like **Smt. Shaliya Siddiqui** from Harda, Madhya Pradesh, have shared how receiving a property card

through the SVAMITVA Scheme not only secured their land but also gave them the legal backing to protect their rights and access resources like loans, agricultural support, and other financial services.

The inclusion of women's names on property cards is not only a financial and legal development but also a significant social milestone. For many women, property ownership provides a sense of security, belonging, and recognition within their families and communities. It helps combat the deeply ingrained cultural norms that have historically sidelined women in property-related decisions.

By securing land rights for women, the SVAMITVA Scheme challenges long-standing gender biases and empowers women to take an active role in decision-making processes. It enhances their standing within the family and society, offering them more control over household resources. With legal ownership of land, women are less likely to be displaced or have their rights undermined in disputes over property.

Moreover, the scheme provides women with the tools they need to protect their interests in times of financial or personal crisis. For instance, land ownership can provide a form of protection from domestic violence, as women now have the legal backing to assert their rights over shared property. It also reduces the risk of exploitation, as women gain the legal power to challenge unlawful actions or claims on their property.

The SVAMITVA Scheme aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 1, which aims to end poverty in all its forms, and Sub Goal 1.4.2, which stresses strengthening tenure security for vulnerable groups, including women. By granting women legal recognition as property owners, the scheme is

a crucial step toward achieving these global goals.

Secure land rights for women lead to multiple benefits, including better access to financial services, improved education and health outcomes for their families, and a reduction in gender-based violence. Women who are landowners have greater autonomy over their economic choices, which improves their social status and participation in community affairs. As women become more empowered financially and socially, they can reinvest in their communities, strengthening local economies and contributing to sustainable development.

The success of the SVAMITVA Scheme is evident in the positive changes already seen in states like Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. With 13 states already embracing the idea of women's co-ownership in property, the hope is that more will follow suit, expanding the benefits of this transformative scheme to women across rural India.

The scheme not only provides legal recognition but also practical benefits that empower women in their day-to-day lives. By enabling women to co-own land, the SVAMITVA Scheme is breaking down barriers and giving women the opportunity to build better futures for themselves and their families. It is a powerful example of how legal reforms can drive social and economic change, improving the lives of women in rural India and promoting gender equality in the process.

As the momentum of this initiative continues to grow, it is clear that the SVAMITVA Scheme is more than just a policy, it is offering women a stronger voice, greater financial independence, and a brighter future.

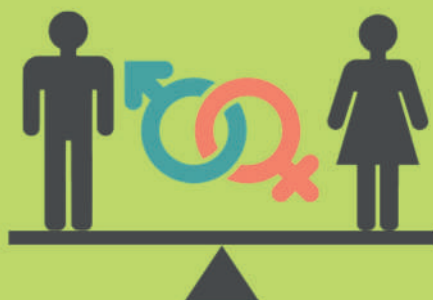
Empowering Women PRI Leaders through Gender Budgeting

Shri Santosh Kumar Sinha,

Deputy Director, MoPR

Dr Bharat Chandra Rout,

Consultant, MoPR



The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in India allows special provisions for women, including reservation of seats in Panchayats for Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Backward Class citizens. It is encouraging to note that twenty-one states and two Union Territories have made provisions of fifty percent reservation for women in Panchayats. This pledges for Viksit Bharat are currently being implemented with the help of gender budgeting.

Gender Budgeting (GB) is a public finance tool used to allocate funds for programs aimed at reducing gender disparity, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 (Target 5). In order to ensure that resources are allocated and used to meet the requirements of both genders, it entails integrating gender perspectives into the planning and execution of policies and budgets. GB promotes equity in access to resources and opportunities, not rigid budget compartmentalisation.

Gender perspective was included into national budgeting in the 1980s, when action plans for gender

What is GRB/



UN
WOMEN

perspective were established by the National Policy for Empowerment of Women. The government has

released gender budget statements (GBS) since 2005–06. There are three parts to the GBS i.e., Part-A reports expenditures in schemes with 100% allocation for women; Part-B reports programmes with allocations of 30-99% for women and Part-C reports pro-women schemes with less than 30% provisioning for women.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has been engaging with Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) to facilitate separate Ward Sabha and Mahila Sabha meetings, enhance women’s participation in Gram Sabha and Panchayat meetings and develop their capacity for effective leadership. Ministry focuses on developing the capacity of EWRs of Panchayats to enable them to function effectively in Gram Panchayats and properly discharge their leadership roles. The Ministry has also been encouraging increased involvement of women in the functioning of Panchayats through active participation in the Gram Sabha meetings for preparation of Gram Panchayat Development Plans and various schemes being implemented by the Panchayats.

The Union Budget 2025-26 has allocated Rs. 4.49 lakh crore for women and girls’ welfare, a 37.25% increase from the GBS allocation of Rs. 3.27 lakh crore in FY 2024-25. The gender budget share in the Union Budget has increased to 8.86%, with 49 Ministries/Departments and 5 UTs reporting allocations, the highest number since the GBS’s inception. Twelve new Ministries/Departments have reported allocations in the GBS

Figure 1: Part B: Pro-women (at least 30% provision for women) in BE 2025-26 (Rs in cr)

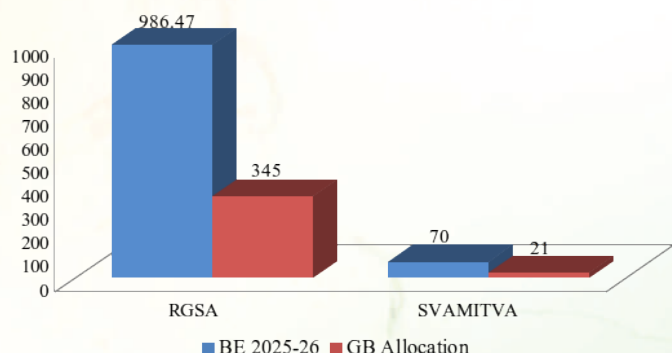
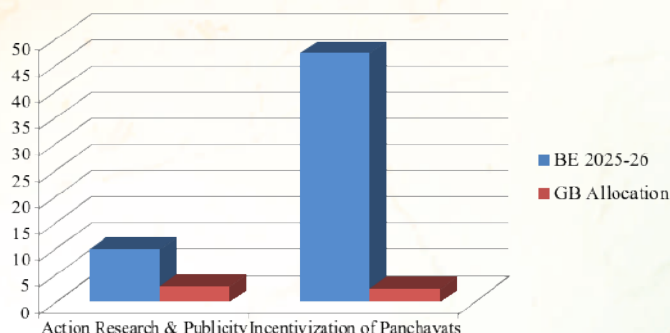


Figure 2: Part C - Below 30% allocation for women (Rs in cr)



2025-26 including Ministry of Panchayati Raj. The Gender Budget Statement of the Schemes of MoPR for FY 2025-26 is as under;

India’s Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) are driving positive change at the grassroots level, with 1.4 million women serving in Panchayati Raj Institutions championing gender equality, poverty alleviation, and inclusive development through attainment of SDGs at local level. Notably, ‘Theme 9 on Women-Friendly Panchayat’ underlines the pivotal objective of safeguarding and promoting the interests of women, while ensuring their survival, protection, development and participation rights at the grassroots level. In order to empower women to assume leadership roles effectively, various initiatives have been launched, including providing quality training. Beginning this year, an innovative and first-of-its-kind initiative – Leadership and Management Development Programme – has been undertaken to conduct training programs for elected representatives and functionaries of PRIs including EWRs in premier management institutes such as IIM Ahmedabad.

Gender Budgeting can make a significant stride where the deeper issues like son preferences in middle income households, feminisation of poverty in rural families, glass ceiling in urban corporate work culture etc. all can be addressed slowly but definitely. As has been said by Dr B.R. Ambedkar-*“The degree of progress made by a society is a reflection of the progress made by its women”*.

Vulnerability of Women to Dreadful Diseases: Global and Indian Perspectives, Remedies, and Policy Interventions

Dr Mrigen Deka,

WHO National Consultant for TB Elimination



Introduction

Women worldwide are disproportionately affected by various dreadful diseases due to biological, social, and economic factors. Women live 25% more of their lives in poor health when compared to men¹. A study published by the World Economic Forum in collaboration with the McKinsey Health Institute (MHI) in 2024, found that closing the health gap between men and women could unlock 75 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) annually and \$1 trillion in annual global GDP².

Women are more prone to be sexually exposed and get STIs, such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), additionally a young marriage and childbearing are to be blamed for the current extreme socioeconomic disparity.

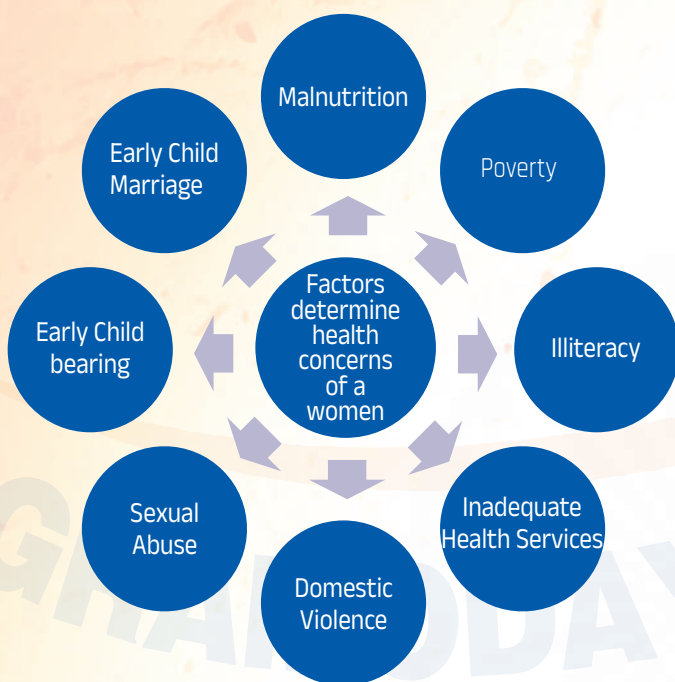
This article examines the global and Indian perspectives on women's vulnerability to critical

¹WEF_Blueprint_to_Close_the_Women's_Health_Gap_2025.pdf

²<https://www.weforum.org/publications/closing-the-women-s-health-gap-a-1-trillion-opportunity-to-improve-lives-and-economies/>

diseases, provides statistical insights, discusses existing policies, and recommends solutions for improving women's health outcomes. Special emphasis is given to the role of the Panchayati Raj system in addressing these health challenges in rural India.

Factors lead to women health concern:



Global and Indian Burden of Women's Diseases

The burden of diseases affecting women globally and in India remains a critical public health concern, encompassing a range of conditions such as cancer, tuberculosis, maternal and reproductive health issues, non-communicable diseases (NCDs), and malnutrition. Understanding these health challenges is crucial to developing targeted interventions and improving women's health outcomes.

Recent data from the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) shows that the contribution of communicable, maternal, neonatal and reproductive diseases to deaths amongst Indian women had declined from 53% in 1990 to less than 30% in 2013, whereas the contribution of NCDs to all deaths in women had risen from 38 % to 60 %³. Mental disorders are associated with considerable stigma in India, which

leads to massive under-recognition and hence under-treatment. According to the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), housewives constitute the largest demographic group amongst suicide deaths. For the last 25 years, it has stood consistently around 20%⁴.

Cancer remains a leading cause of mortality among women worldwide, with breast and cervical cancers being the most prevalent. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 670,000 women died from breast cancer in 2022⁵, underscoring the urgent need for early detection and improved treatment strategies. In India, the burden is similarly significant, with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) estimating that breast cancer accounts for 14% of all cancer cases among women, while cervical cancer contributes to nearly 6%⁶. Limited access to screening and awareness programs, coupled with socioeconomic barriers, often leads to late-stage diagnoses and poorer treatment outcomes.

Tuberculosis (TB) continues to pose a major health challenge for women worldwide. Women account for nearly 30% of the global TB burden, with an estimated 1.2 million new cases annually. In India, which contributes to one-third of the world's TB cases, an estimated 11,21,000 women are diagnosed with TB each year⁷. Despite the availability of free treatment under the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme, socioeconomic constraints, stigma, and gender-related disparities hinder timely diagnosis and adherence to treatment regimens.

Maternal mortality and reproductive health issues remain critical concerns, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Nearly 95%

³Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, Global Burden of Disease, 2013.

⁴National Crime Records Bureau, Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India, 2014

⁵<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/breast-cancer>

⁶https://www.icmr.gov.in/icmr/object/custom_data/1702893085_icmr_press_release_ncrp_18082020.pdf

⁷Global Tuberculosis Report 2024

of all maternal deaths in 2020 occurred in such regions, with Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia experiencing the highest burden⁸. While India has made notable progress in reducing its maternal mortality ratio (MMR) to 97 per 100,000 live births, as per the Sample Registration System (SRS) 2023, significant regional disparities persist. Rural areas and marginalized communities continue to face challenges in accessing quality maternal healthcare, leading to preventable deaths and complications during childbirth.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are emerging as a major health threat for women globally. Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are the leading cause of death among women, accounting for 35% of all female mortality worldwide⁹. In India, the increasing prevalence of diabetes, hypertension, and stroke among women is attributed to changing lifestyles, urbanization, and lack of awareness regarding preventive healthcare. The growing burden of NCDs necessitates enhanced public health initiatives focused on early diagnosis, lifestyle modifications, and improved healthcare access.

Malnutrition and anaemia continue to disproportionately affect women, particularly in low-resource settings. Globally, nearly 30% of women of reproductive age suffer from anaemia, a condition that significantly impacts maternal and child health¹⁰. In India, findings from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) indicate that over 57% of women aged 15-49 years are anaemic. This high prevalence is linked to dietary deficiencies, poor maternal health, and inadequate access to nutritional interventions, highlighting the need for targeted strategies to address this persistent issue.

Addressing the burden of these diseases requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving healthcare infrastructure, enhancing awareness programs, reducing social stigmas, and ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare services

for women. Strengthening policy frameworks and multi-sectoral collaborations will be key to tackling these health challenges and improving overall women's health outcomes both in India and globally.

Existing Policies to Combat Women's Health Challenges

Global Initiatives

The global response to women's health challenges is shaped by several key policies and initiatives that aim to ensure comprehensive healthcare access, reduce health disparities, and promote gender equality. These policies focus on addressing maternal mortality, reproductive health, and specific health conditions such as cervical cancer, while also aligning with broader global goals for sustainable development and universal health coverage.

The Global Strategy for Women's, Children's, and Adolescents' Health (2016-2030), led by the World Health Organization (WHO), is a major initiative designed to ensure that every woman, child, and adolescent not only survives but thrives. It aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, which seeks to reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030, underscoring the global commitment to improving maternal and reproductive health.

Another significant initiative is the Cervical Cancer Elimination Initiative, launched by WHO to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health issue by the end of the 21st century. This effort follows the 90-70-90 strategy: ensuring that 90% of girls receive the full HPV vaccination by age 15, 70%

⁸<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality>

⁹<https://world-heart-federation.org/what-we-do/women-cvd/>

¹⁰https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/topics/anaemia_in_women_and_children

of women undergo high-performance screening by ages 35 and 45, and 90% of those identified with cervical disease receive appropriate treatment and care. By integrating HPV vaccination and cervical cancer screening into universal health coverage (UHC) programs, this initiative aims to bridge disparities and provide equitable access to essential health services for women worldwide.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also play a critical role in addressing women's health challenges. SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) focuses on improving healthcare access, reducing maternal mortality, and tackling major epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. SDG 5 (Gender Equality) ensures women's sexual and reproductive health rights, including access to contraceptives and maternal healthcare services. Additionally, other SDGs contribute to women's health outcomes. SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) addresses malnutrition and anaemia, particularly in pregnant and lactating women. SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) improves menstrual hygiene and sanitation access, reducing infections and reproductive health issues. SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) promotes economic empowerment and workplace healthcare benefits for women, fostering a healthier workforce.

Indian Policies and Programs

Improvement in the quality of Healthcare in India for Women

India has made remarkable strides in improving healthcare for women, particularly in the areas of maternal and child health. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has declined significantly from 6 children per woman in 1951 to 3.1 in 2001 and further to 2.0 in 2020, indicating the country's progress toward replacement-level fertility. Additionally, the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has decreased

from 301 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2001-03 to 97 in 2018-20, reflecting substantial advancements in maternal health.

Key Government Initiatives for Women's Healthcare

1. National Health Mission (NHM)

NHM aims to provide assured and high-quality maternal and child health services, ensuring dignified care at public health institutions. The Government of India (GoI) has established Maternal and Child Health (MCH) wings to facilitate institutional deliveries for pregnant women. These wings include:

- Obstetric High Dependency Units (HDUs)
- Intensive Care Units (ICUs)
- Maternity Operation Theaters (OTs)
- Labor rooms to ensure respectful maternity care

Additionally, NHM initiatives include:

- **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY):** Promotes institutional deliveries to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality.
- **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK):** Eliminates out-of-pocket expenses for pregnant women and sick infants at public health facilities.
- **Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN):** Ensures assured, dignified, and quality healthcare at no cost, with zero tolerance for denial of services.
- **Anaemia Mukta Bharat (AMB) Programme:** Aims to reduce anemia among women through targeted interventions.

2. Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) & Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

- PMSMA provides free antenatal care and screenings for pregnant women on the 9th of every month.
- PMMVY offers financial assistance to pregnant and lactating women for improved nutrition and care.

3. Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK)

This program focuses on early detection and treatment of diseases in children, particularly benefiting young girls.

4. Poshan Abhiyaan

A comprehensive initiative aimed at tackling malnutrition and anemia among women, particularly pregnant and lactating mothers, through improved dietary practices and awareness campaigns.

5. Ayushman Bharat Initiative

- **Ayushman Arogya Mandir (AAM):** Provides preventive, promotive, and curative healthcare services close to communities, including screenings for cervical and breast cancer.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY):** Ensures financial protection for secondary and tertiary healthcare services, benefiting women from economically weaker sections.

6. National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP)

Recognizing the gender-specific impact of tuberculosis, NTEP includes targeted interventions for early TB detection and

treatment among women, particularly in vulnerable communities.

7. Mother and Child Tracking Facilitation Centre (MCTFC)

A dedicated platform that provides relevant health information directly to pregnant women, parents, and community health workers. It gathers feedback on various maternal and child healthcare services, ensuring continuous improvement and accountability.

Solutions and Recommendations

1. Enhancing healthcare solutions for women requires a multi-pronged approach that focuses on awareness, infrastructure, education, nutrition, financial protection, and community involvement. A key priority is the expansion of awareness and screening programs to facilitate early diagnosis of diseases such as cancer, tuberculosis, and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Strengthening routine health check-ups and ensuring widespread access to screening services will significantly improve health outcomes and reduce mortality rates.
2. Equipping primary healthcare centers with adequate staff, medical supplies, and diagnostic tools is crucial to addressing the healthcare needs of women, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Strengthening infrastructure at the grassroots level will enhance accessibility to quality healthcare services, reducing delays in diagnosis and treatment.
3. Empowering women through community-based health education programs is another essential component in combating diseases. Initiatives focused on reproductive health, NCDs, and infectious diseases can increase awareness and encourage proactive health-seeking behavior. Educating women about disease prevention,

maternal care, and family planning will contribute to better health outcomes for both women and their families.

4. Improving nutrition programs is essential to addressing key health challenges such as anemia and malnutrition. Expanding iron supplementation programs and nutrition interventions under initiatives like Poshan Abhiyaan will help in improving maternal and child health. Ensuring adequate dietary intake through fortified foods and nutrition education will further support the well-being of women.
5. Financial protection and enhanced access to healthcare through strengthened health insurance schemes are vital in ensuring that women do not face economic barriers to medical treatment. Expanding coverage under schemes like Ayushman Bharat and Janani Suraksha Yojana will safeguard women against the financial burden of healthcare expenses, particularly for maternal and critical healthcare needs.

Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions

The involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) is instrumental in advancing women's health initiatives at the grassroots level. PRIs play a crucial role in mobilizing communities, raising awareness, and ensuring the effective implementation of government health schemes. Village health committees and self-help groups can drive community-led interventions, promoting disease prevention, maternal care, and nutrition programs.

PRIs contribute significantly to community mobilization by organizing awareness campaigns on maternal health, tuberculosis, cancer, and nutrition. These efforts help in increasing knowledge and encouraging early health-seeking behavior among women. Additionally, PRIs facilitate access to

government schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), and Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), ensuring that eligible women receive the necessary financial and healthcare benefits.

Monitoring and accountability mechanisms led by PRIs help in improving service delivery at primary healthcare centers. Village health committees play a crucial role in identifying gaps in service delivery, ensuring timely interventions, and addressing challenges in healthcare accessibility. Furthermore, capacity building through training programs for Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and Anganwadi workers enhances their ability to support women's health initiatives effectively.

PRIs also play a vital role in advocating for sanitation and hygiene, which are essential in preventing infections and promoting overall well-being. Menstrual hygiene management, access to sanitary products, and hygiene education programs are critical in ensuring that women and adolescent girls maintain good health and prevent infections related to poor sanitation practices.

Conclusion

Women's vulnerability to dreadful diseases is a pressing concern that requires a multi-sectoral approach encompassing healthcare, education, and social empowerment. While global and national policies have made significant strides, greater community participation through Panchayati Raj institutions can accelerate improvements in women's health outcomes. Strengthening grassroots governance, increasing health investments, and addressing sociocultural barriers will be key to ensuring a healthier future for women in India and beyond.

“Empowering Women, Transforming Lives”

A case study in Luki Gram Panchayat of Boko Development Block of Assam

Pabitra Kalita and Hima Rani Baisha,

State Institute of Panchayat and Rural Development, Assam



A fascinating fact about how the lives of women folk of remote village was transforming through rural development programmes by true leadership of Panchayati Raj Institutions, is a real case study in Assam. The South West Luki Gram Panchayat of Boko Development Block of Assam has set an example of dignity of women through ‘*by the women for the women*’ worked all women job card holders under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA schemes. Here we are presenting a case study on exemplary works of Panchayati Raj Institution on women empowerment for betterment of the women folk in remote villages of Assam

Popularly called as the land of red rivers and blue hills, Assam is the gateway of northeast states in India. The total area of this land is 78,438 Sq.

Km. with 3,11,69,272 population (Census report 2011) where the number of male-female population is 1,59,54,927 and 1,52,14,345 respectively. The male-female Sex ratio is 51.19% and 48.81%. This shows that there are 954 women against 1000 male population in Assam. Again, literacy rate of male-female in Assam is 78.81% and 67.55% out of an average of 73.18%. It shows that women are lagging behind men in education sector and this has been identified as one of the major cause of women backwardness in the state.

The term Women Empowerment denotes, to render the fulcrum of power to the women. Since women constitute 50% of the total population of the country, it is necessary that they should have equal share in the matter of decision making. It is more

so because even after more than six decades of the attainment of Independence, the women are lagging far behind from holding true power in the society including the arena of decision making. If we make a critical survey of the entire process it would be evident that they are in fact, a deprived section of the society. It is therefore of utmost importance that the women should be given power so that they can come at par with the male population of the society. It is important to note that the aspect of empowerment is a continuous and dynamic process and it needs constant infiltration of womenfolk in the power fulcrum. It should be pointed out that it is also a multidimensional process having many facets.

Empowerment of women provides a scope to realize their full identity, power, position, dominance and capability in all aspects of life in the society. Again, it provides a scope for a greater access towards the attainment of knowledge and at the same time that of resources. These are of immense importance in this regard. Real empowerment can be judged from the arena of decision making. It also provides greater autonomy with regard to it. Again it denotes equal status to women. If the women are empowered socially and economically, this will provide a greater awareness of their rights and duties. This will be a stepping stone for improved standards of living, to gain self reliance, self esteem, self-confidence and a greater exposure to the society.

Empowerment of women would mean equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have positive esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in development activities. The most positive development last few years has been the growing involvement of women in the Panchayati Raj institutions. In Assam more than 50% of Elected Representatives are Women boosting the grassroots governance with a gender sensitive lens.

In the lush green landscapes of Assam's Boko Development Block under Kamrup district of Assam, a silent revolution is unfolding. Women,

once confined to the margins, are now leading the charge. In this regard the Block development office has been instrumental in unfolding various development schemes for the rural masses of Boko. Among them, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been instrumental in transforming their lives, providing economic independence, social empowerment, and skill development.



This silent revolution in the Boko Development Zone in the backdrop of a beautiful environment of green nature has brought a good message to the society. Women who were previously confined to a certain boundary of society are now able to gain full opportunities for economic independence, social empowerment and skill development by employing themselves in various schemes of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

Breaking down the walls of barriers, determined to build the future:

In Boko Development Zone, 60% of job card holders under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA are women. The residents of 70th South East Luki Gaon Panchayat under this development zone are tribal people and in the past women were confined to many norms of society and their freedom was violated. They could not go out and was hesitant to come out anywhere with an open mind.

Since the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA scheme in Boko development zone, women in this area have broken down all barriers and started getting job cards. The women of Hahim

and Shamuka villages under 70 South East Luki Gaon Panchayat in particular came forward and was able to get employment through this scheme, these women were able to . This scheme played an immense role in the build their own future empowering these women and lead to the success of these women. They are now financially self-reliant through employment of women who received job cards through Mahatma Gandhi NREGA scheme.

Before the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA scheme, the livelihood of women in Hahim and Shamuka villages was limited to household chores and they did not have adequate facilities to actively participate in economically self-reliant activities. However, after the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA scheme, these women were able to participate in various schemes including rural infrastructure development, agriculture and water conservation projects.

In 2014-15, 3 ; in 2015-16, 4 ; in 2016-17, 7 ; in 2019-20, 7; and in 2020-21, 11 beneficiaries of the job card holders of these two villages have lemon orchards and fruit orchards under the NREGA Act and pond schemes have been obtained. They are now economically self-sufficient through this scheme. They produce lemons, various fruits, and fish etc. which meet the demand in the local Hahim market. 70% of women in these two villages hold job cards.

Various schemes implemented in these two villages for the last five years:-

Financial Year (FY)	Number of schemes	Number of women employed	Working days (%average)
2019-20	1	140	85%
2021-22	5	450	75%
2023-24	2	135	80%
2024-25	5	181	60%

Through this scheme, women have been living an economically independent life by receiving wages through employment for an average of 75 per cent days per annum. Since the job card holders started working under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA scheme, the women have gained financial stability and self-worth.

As a result, women were able to make important decisions in their lives or for the welfare of their families on their own. Even, women are now able to provide financial relief to their families by taking responsibility for their children's education. In short, this economic freedom enabled them to challenge the prevailing norms of society and demand their rights.

The participation of women who have received job cards under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA scheme has brought about a change in the attitude of the society where women are recognized as equal partners in development. Such success of the women of Hahim and Shamuka villages is a beacon of hope and an excellent example for other women of rural areas. Their journey has paved a new path despite all obstacles and will inspire other women to follow in their footsteps in the future.

Empowerment through Economic Independence

As women began working under MGNREGA, they gained not only financial stability but also a sense of self-worth. They became decision-makers, contributing to their families' well-being and investing in their children's education. The economic independence they achieved has enabled them to challenge societal norms and assert their rights.

Key Achievements:

1. Increased women's participation: A significant number of women from Hahim and Samuka villages of Luki Gram Panchayat have participated in MGNREGA schemes.



2. Economic empowerment: Women have gained financial independence, enabling them to support their families and make decisions about their own lives.
3. Social transformation: Women's participation in MGNREGA has contributed to a shift in societal attitudes, recognizing women as equal partners in development.
4. Decision making process: the Women has been participating in planning process and selected the works of their choice.

Strengthening the grassroots democracy: The schemes of the MGNREGA were recommended and approved at Gram Sabha was true spirit of democratic decentralization.



National Panchayat Awards – Sifting the Excellent Local Women Leaders

Ms. Chandrani Saha,

Consultant, MoPR

Ms. Pooja Sharma,

Consultant, MoPR



Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi conferred the National Panchayat Awards (Special Category) on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day, April 24, 2025, at Gram Panchayat Lohana Uttar, Madhubani, Bihar.

It is true that women often get highly motivated when they are praised even for small achievements, especially their gender roles where they may not traditionally be recognized. Recognition and appreciation, even for small contributions, can have a powerful impact on boosting self-confidence and reinforcing their belief in their abilities. This is especially important in contexts where women have historically been underrepresented or undervalued, like in local governance or community leadership roles.

In India, 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act empowers the local self-governments i.e. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The reservation of one-third electoral seats in PRIs for women has elevated their participation in rural governance. India is among

the foremost countries for women's participation in local self-governments with over 1.45 million (i.e. over 14 lakh) women shaping local decision-making. Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) are a critical link between local governance, sustainable development, and gender equality. However, across the country, their contributions to local governance remain undervalued.

Challenges Faced by Elected Women Representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions:

Despite the fact that more women representatives are playing vital role in local decision-making, EWRs face extensive challenges to join

and continue their participation in local governance. Some of the widely known socio-cultural linked challenges/difficulties the EWRs face in discharge of their responsibilities are:

- i. Education level that has a direct impact on their performance in governance functioning and therefore reliance on relatives to bridge the gap in governance activities.
- ii. Heavy preoccupation in household chores affecting their efficiency in performance in the panchayat affairs.
- iii. Funds constraints hindering their functioning towards gender-inclusive growth at the grassroots.
- iv. Deeply entrenched prejudice against women representatives coming in the way of experience sharing among the fellow women leaders and intervention of male members of the family.
- v. Confronting gender-based discrimination and feeling ignored in the panchayat owing to their gender. Administrative roles, like that of panchayat secretary and other posts, are dominated by men.

National Panchayat Awards

Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has been incentivizing the best performing Panchayats/states/Union Territories (UTs) through National Panchayat Awards under the Incentivization of Panchayats scheme, one of the central components of Centrally Sponsored scheme of revamped Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA). These awards are based on assessing the performance of Panchayati Raj Institutions in attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through 9 identified Localization of SDG themes. National Panchayat Awards competition is pyramidal and multi-level at Block, District state/UT and national level where awardee GPs shortlisted at respective level and further nominated for higher level. For encouraging the efforts of awardee panchayats, a provision of financial incentives is

made for the awardees ranging from Rs.50 lakhs for a Gram Panchayat to 5.00 crore for a District Panchayat. Apart from this, special awards for GPs and Institutions have also been instituted. The Award money directly transferred to the awardee Panchayats in their PFMS mapped account.

National Panchayat Awards are one of the prime factor for the encouragement of panchayats especially women headed panchayats facilitating the panchayat development in following ways:

- **Inspiration and Motivation for Other Women**

National Panchayat Awards do not just reward individual effort—they serve as a beacon of inspiration for other women. When one woman receives recognition, it creates a ripple effect that encourages other women to pursue leadership roles in their own communities. The visibility of these women as change makers encourages many other women to break traditional barriers and pursue political and social leadership. Moreover, such awards foster the belief that women's contributions in the public sphere are crucial, leading to a shift in societal perceptions that women are equal partners in nation-building.

- **Encouraging Good Governance and Community Development**

The awards are often given to Panchayats that have excelled in governance, social development, and public service. Many of the winners are led by women, and these Panchayats often focus on local issues such as health, education, sanitation, and poverty alleviation. When women are in leadership positions, they are more likely to prioritize the well-being of families, children, and marginalized groups, which has a positive impact on the community's overall development.

- **Capacity Building and Access to Resources**

Women Panchayat representatives who are recognized by the National Panchayat Award

often gain access to specialized training programs, resources, and government schemes designed to further develop their leadership skills. These programs help women Panchayat heads become more effective in managing their Panchayats, improving public services, and implementing development projects. With enhanced skills and knowledge, they are better equipped to address their community's needs.

- **Creating a Platform for Networking and Influence**

One of the most powerful aspects of receiving a National award is the networking opportunities it creates. Award recipients gain access to a wider circle of influential people, including policymakers, development experts, and leaders from various sectors. These connections open doors for women to influence policy decisions, advocate for more inclusive development programs, and collaborate on larger initiatives. In many instances, we have seen that women who lead successful rural programs are invited to share their experiences at national policy discussions or consult on government initiatives. This amplifies their voice, allowing her to directly contribute to shaping policies that affect millions of people, particularly women in rural areas.

- **Highlighting Women's Issues at the National Level**

National awards often bring attention to the specific challenges faced by women at the grassroots level. The recognition of a woman leader's work at the local level helps highlight the pressing issues that rural women encounter, such as access to education, health services, sanitation, and financial inclusion. By bringing these issues to the forefront, the awards catalyze greater focus on the needs of marginalized women.

Moreover, the media coverage that accompanies such awards ensures that these issues are communicated to a wider audience, inspiring

other communities, organizations, and even governments to take action. This increased awareness and focus can lead to better policies and greater investment in grassroots-level women's empowerment.



Hon'ble President of India Smt. Droupadi Murmu Confers National Panchayat Awards to 45 Exemplary Panchayats & Institutes on 11th December 2024 at Vigra Bhawan New Delhi.

- **Encouraging Long-Term Social Change**

Woman Sarpanch who recognized for her leadership, becomes a symbol of progress, encouraging others to follow in her footsteps. As more women are empowered to take leadership roles, communities begin to see the positive effects of female leadership—whether through improvements in healthcare, education, or social welfare.

In the long run, the recognition of grassroots women leaders helps create a more inclusive society, where women's voices are heard and their contributions are valued. This fosters gender equality and promotes more sustainable development in rural areas, where women are often the backbone of the community.

Women-Led National Panchayat Awardees:

Women Sarpanches are highly motivated to participate in the National Panchayat Award (NPA) competition and have shown great enthusiasm in winning these prestigious awards. A total of 18

women-led panchayats received awards under NPA-2023, and 17 panchayats were honoured under NPA-2024. These award-winning women Sarpanches are strategically planning and utilizing the award funds for effective local development. Gram Panchayat Kanha serves as an excellent example of how to maximize the impact of this initiative.

Case Study- Gram Panchayat Kanha (Telangana)



Gram Panchayat Kanha has won second prize in Carbon Neutral Vishesh Panchayat Puraskar (CNVPP) under National Panchayat Awards -2023. Ms. Sarita Challagulla is an educated and efficient women Sarpanch of GP Kanha. She is a first time Sarpanch and served the Panchayat from 2019 till 2024. She has done B.Tech in Computer Science from Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad and. Masters in Computer Science from University of Kentucky, Lexington



(USA). She has been a practitioner of Heartfulness Meditation for over 20 years. She has effectively planned the award money with the participation of gram sabha and invested the award money of Rs 75 lakhs in three environmental projects to promote sustainability. She has set up a bio gas plant (Rs 15,64,144) in collaboration with Sahaj Marg Spirituality Foundation and to manage organic waste and produce fuel for community use. She has also installed solar panels (Rs 54,02,182) to ensure an eco-friendly power supply. Additionally, Rs. 5,33,674 was spent on the purchase of geo-tagging devices to tag and track the location of trees, biodiversity species which helps in environmental conservation. These all projects are benefitting the 3000 residents of Kanha Gram Panchayat and contributing towards long-term environmental goals.

Conclusion

National Panchayat Awards play a vital role in empowering women leaders at the grassroots level in India. They provide the recognition, encouragement, and resources necessary to overcome challenges and expand their leadership potential. By highlighting the achievements of women at the local level, these awards inspire future generations of women to take on leadership roles and contribute to the social and economic development of their communities. The empowerment of women at the grassroots level not only benefits the individual leaders but also has a profound impact on society as a whole, fostering a more inclusive, equitable, and progressive India.

Empowered Women Empower Communities : Best Practices from JJM

National Jal Jeevan Mission

Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti, GoI

Across rural India, women have emerged as not just beneficiaries but change-makers in water governance. These stories of leadership under Jal Jeevan Mission highlight how women are transforming their communities, ensuring water security, and breaking gender barriers.

1. Smt. Shalu Dilip Ramteke: The 'Panidar Sarpanch' of Bhuj Tukum

**Village: Bhuj Tukum, District: Chandrapur,
State: Maharashtra**



For years, Bhuj Tukum village struggled with erratic water supply, forcing women to travel long distances for water. This affected their health and livelihood. Having witnessed these hardships firsthand, Smt. Shalu Dilip Ramteke, upon becoming Sarpanch and President of the VWSC, resolved to change the situation.

Determined to solve the water crisis, she studied government schemes, worked with engineers, and led her village to implement a water supply system under JJM.

Smt. Ramteke organized meetings with villagers and women to gain their support and ensured the preparation of a detailed village action plan by the Sub-Divisional Engineer of Bramhapuri. The work on the water supply scheme commenced in 2022-23 and was completed within a year. During the project, she encountered resistance from villagers who opposed laying distribution pipelines in front

of their houses and hesitated to take FHTCs. Despite these challenges, she engaged with the community, addressed their concerns, and motivated them to support the initiative.

She remained present during well-deepening operations and pipeline installation, working alongside the Rural Water Supply Department and contractors to resolve any issues. Her tireless efforts resulted in every household in Bhuj Tukum receiving access to clean and sufficient water through taps.

Her persistent leadership ensured timely completion of the project, providing every household with tap water. Recognizing her unwavering commitment, the villagers affectionately call her the '*Panidar Sarpanch*' – a leader who turned water scarcity into a story of empowerment and transformation.



Community leaders addressing students during an awareness session on water conservation and sustainability

Source: PHED, Maharashtra

2. Smt. Mohini Devi: Leading Galodia to Water Security

Village: Galodia, **District:** Bhilwara,
State: Rajasthan



Galodia, a village in Bhilwara district, located 7 kilometers from the Sahada Panchayat Samiti headquarters and 44 kilometers from the district headquarters, once grappled with a

severe water crisis. Earlier, the women of the village would wake up at the crack of dawn and walk long distances to fetch water from wells. Over time, the wells began to dry up, and the villagers started relying on borewells. However, with declining groundwater levels, the bore well water became brackish, worsening the problem.

This water scarcity disrupted the lives of the villagers. Women often found themselves quarreling over water, children's education and school attendance suffered, and during the summer months, thirsty cattle would wander in search of water. Amidst these challenges, the villagers saw a ray of hope with the launch of the Jal Jeevan Mission.

In March 2021, the Jal Jeevan Mission was introduced in the village. The responsibility of leading this initiative fell on the village Sarpanch and the chairperson of the Village Water and Sanitation Committee (VWSC), Smt. Mohini Devi. For her, this wasn't merely a government scheme but a movement to transform the village's future.

Smt. Mohini Devi collaborated with the villagers to first map the village and assess the situation of each household. She took a pledge to ensure piped water connections not only for every home but also for essential community institutions

like the Panchayat Bhavan, health centers, schools, and Anganwadis. Through awareness campaigns, she emphasized that the Jal Jeevan Mission was not just about resolving the water crisis but about shaping a brighter and more sustainable future for the village.

The youth and women of the village actively participated in the initiative. Under Smt. Mohini Devi's leadership, contributions were collected from every household and deposited into the VWSC's account. Regular meetings were organized to monitor water quality and ensure proper maintenance of the piped water connections.

3. Smt. Priya Kumari: Ensuring Safe Drinking Water in Fluoride-Affected Villages

Gram Panchayat: Sono, **District:** Jamui,
State: Bihar



In the fluoride-affected Ward No. 12 of a Gram Panchayat in Jamui, access to safe water was a major challenge. It faced a significant challenge due to the high fluoride content in groundwater, which, if consumed over a long

period, could lead to severe bone and dental health issues. To tackle this problem, a fluoride treatment plant was installed under the water supply scheme. Priya Kumari, a trained pump operator and water quality supervisor has been responsible for its regular operation and maintenance.

Priya Kumari took charge of the Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal initiative under the Mukhyamantri Gramin Peyjal Nishchay Yojana. She manages the village's fluoride treatment plant, ensuring purified water

reaches households. As the head of the Panchayat Water Testing Center, she conducts monthly water quality tests and uploads reports to the JJM portal. These are also shared with the respective pump operators.

Ensuring three daily water supply cycles (6-9 am, 1-2 pm, and 4-6 pm) for 196 households is not an easy task. Priya swiftly tackles technical challenges such as power outages, motor breakdowns, and pipe leaks, ensuring uninterrupted supply.

The village is home to traders, farmers, and laborers, many of whom leave for work early in the morning. Timely water distribution has brought efficiency and stability to their daily lives.

Beyond supply operations, Priya engages the community through 'Jal Choupals', raising awareness on water conservation. Her journey showcases how women's participation in water governance strengthens community resilience and public health.



Smt. Priya Kumari taking the lead to educate and empower the women of her village

Source: PHED, Bihar

4. Women of Ichhapur: A Self-Sustaining Water Management Model

Village: Ichhapur, **District:** Burhanpur, **State:** Madhya Pradesh

In Ichhapur village, Burhanpur district, women have taken the initiative to install taps in nearly 1,500 household water connections, preventing the wastage of millions of liters of drinking water. These women are not only managing the water supply system but also collecting approximately ₹1.5 lakh every month from households as water charges. The operation and maintenance of Jal Jeevan Mission project in the village is fully funded through the collected water charges, making it a model of self-sustainability. The Ichhapur Water Committee takes pride in this achievement, and their sense of self-reliance is evident in their confidence.

Ichhapur is the largest village in Burhanpur district. Although a water supply scheme existed earlier, it was neither sufficient nor regular. Often, the supply was disrupted for months due to minor technical issues. Water scarcity was an annual crisis, especially during summers, forcing women to carry water from distant sources on their heads.

Under Jal Jeevan Mission, a retrofit water supply scheme was implemented, providing tap water connections to approximately 2,000 households.

Initially, local community members and Water Committee representatives were unaware of how to operate and maintain the project. To address this, the Public Health Engineering Department, in collaboration with KRC Vibhaavari under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India, organized a three-day residential training programme for Water Committee members and village representatives.

During the training, women participants took an oath by tying Raksha Sutas (protective threads),

pledging to manage and maintain the village's water supply system themselves. The event was attended by Sarpanch Smt. Nanda Patil.

Following the training, under the leadership of Sarpanch Smt. Nanda Patil, committee members Smt. Sunita Patil Kailash Patidar, Smt. Meenakshi Patil Sudhir Prajapati, Smt. Sheetal Patil, and Smt. Jyoti Patil took on the responsibility of spreading awareness.

The VWSC members went door-to-door, educating villagers about water conservation and encouraging them to install taps on their household connections. Their efforts paid off – most villagers installed taps, significantly reducing water wastage. For those unwilling to install taps, wooden stoppers were placed in their pipelines to prevent excessive water flow. As a result, drinking water is now being saved.

Alongside this initiative, the women took charge of collecting water charges in their respective wards. This was no easy task. They had to visit homes repeatedly, explain the cost of water supply operations, and even warn families that non-payment could lead to service disruption.

Breaking social norms, these women proved that financial management is not just a man's responsibility. In cases where some families persistently refused to pay water charges, a list of 164 defaulters was submitted to the Panchayat, leading to official notices for disconnection.

Impact of the Initiative

- Ichhapur's water scheme is now on the path to complete self-sustainability.
- Significant reduction in water wastage.

- A major step towards women empowerment.
- Women have set a new benchmark in financial management.

Today, thanks to the relentless efforts of the committee, around ₹1.5 lakh is collected every month. The expenses for pump operators, electricity bills, and system maintenance amount to over ₹1 lakh, all of which are covered through collected charges.

In this way, Ichhapur's tap water project under the Jal Jeevan Mission has become a truly self-sustaining model. The pride of self-reliance shines on the faces of the committee's women members.



Women-led development in Ichhapur under JJM
Source: PHED and Jal Nigam, Madhya Pradesh

Swachh Bharat Led by Women: Best Practices from SBM-G

Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin

Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation,
Ministry of Jal Shakti, GoI

In rural India, empowered women leaders at the grassroots level have taken charge with remarkable strength in the field of sanitation as well. Elected women representatives of the Panchayati Raj Institutions are playing a pivotal role in translating the objectives of the Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin into ground-level action. Presented here are inspiring success stories of women sarpanches and village heads who have brought about significant transformations in the area of sanitation.



Shushum Lata: A Grassroots Leader Driving Change in Rural Bihar

In Dawa Gram Panchayat, Jagdishpur Block, Bhojpur district, Bihar, Mrs. Shushum Lata, the Mukhiya (village head), has transformed her community through sanitation, waste management, menstrual health awareness, and education. Her leadership has turned challenges into opportunities, making her village a model of cleanliness, sustainability, and self-reliance.

When Mrs. Lata assumed office, sanitation was a major issue—streets were littered, and waste disposal was inadequate. Under her leadership, Dawa became Open Defecation Free (ODF) by December 2016, ensuring every household had a toilet under the Swachh Bharat Mission. However, she recognized that infrastructure alone wasn't enough; behavior change and proper waste management were essential.



She initiated a solid and liquid waste management unit, converting waste into organic manure used by local farmers. The Panchayat now generates Rs.15,000 per month from waste processing, turning a sanitation problem into a source of revenue and environmental sustainability.

A significant transformation took place when she led the conversion of a garbage dump—once the site of the historic Dunmrao Maharaj's court—into a modern marketplace. This initiative not

only improved sanitation but also boosted local businesses and created economic opportunities.

Before becoming Mukhiya, Mrs. Lata worked with Jeevika SHGs, where she often heard women discussing menstrual health issues. Upon taking office, she discovered that many illnesses among women were linked to poor menstrual hygiene. Determined to address this, she:

- Established a sanitary napkin manufacturing unit under the Chief Minister Nav Parivartan Yojana, producing affordable biodegradable sanitary pads priced at Rs 26– Rs 28 per pack.
- Trained and empowered 1,400 women from Jeevika SHGs in menstrual health awareness.
- Created employment opportunities for women in the sanitary pad production unit, ensuring both health benefits and financial independence.

This initiative not only improved menstrual hygiene but also reduced stigma surrounding the issue, making Dawa a model for women-led health initiatives.

In terms of waste-to-wealth initiatives:

- A total of 1,820 kg of compost has been produced, with 500 kg sold, generating approximately Rs 10,000.
- Around 275 kg of plastic waste has been sold, adding Rs 1,560 to the GPIC fund.
- The sanitary pad production unit has manufactured 1,00,000 pads, with 30,000 sold so far.

Dawa GP was declared an ODF Plus Model GP on May 2, 2023. Since then, 400 households have been paying user charges, from which ₹25,410 has been collected. The Panchayat has also achieved significant success in liquid waste management, eliminating stagnant water and ensuring proper drainage throughout the village.

Kerala's Kadirur Panchayat: Inspiring Fight Against Plastic and Cancer



Members of Haritha Karma Sena in Kerala

Source: SBM-G, Kerala

Kadirur Grama Panchayat, located in North Malabar in Kerala, is setting an example of how local communities can create meaningful change. Kadirur has turned the challenge of plastic pollution into an opportunity to support cancer patients, showing how environmental and health concerns are deeply connected.

At the heart of this initiative is strong leadership, particularly from the women at the helm of the panchayat. Their dedication has been key to driving this community-led effort. With a population of around 25,000-30,000, Kadirur Panchayat is committed to fighting plastic pollution and the message disseminated is plastic causes cancer and harms the environment. However, this panchayat has taken this a step further, by linking waste management directly to health outcomes.

On World Cancer Day, the panchayat reached an important milestone. Through plastic waste management activities, they raised Rs 3.81 lakh, which were donated to support cancer patients in the community. This initiative is part of the broader “Kadirur Care” program, led by the panchayat’s women leaders who have been actively involved in planning and overseeing the project. A dedicated team of 25 Haritha Karma Sena (HKS) women workers plays a crucial role in this effort. They go door-to-door across all 18 wards of the panchayat, collecting plastic waste from homes and businesses. The collected waste is taken to a management plant at Kuttyerichal, where it is sorted and sent



Haritha Karma Sena members engage in waste segregation at a Resource Recovery Facility in Kadirur

Source: SBMG, Kerala

to the Clean Kerala Company. Plastic that can't be recycled is shredded and used in road construction, ensuring minimal waste ends up in landfills. The proceeds from these waste management activities have been directly channeled into cancer treatment funds. In the current financial year alone, the panchayat handed over 18,826 kg of plastic waste to Clean Kerala Company, earning ₹2.56 lakh. An additional ₹1.25 lakh was earned from shredded plastic used in road tarring. All these funds were pooled to support cancer patients, with the money handed over to the District Panchayat President.

The initiative has also empowered women at the grassroots level. The Haritha Karma Sena members, many of whom are women from local communities, earn an average monthly income of ₹20,000 through their work in waste collection and management. Their role is not just limited to collecting plastic waste—they also manage the collection of medical waste, e-waste, and other non-biodegradable materials, ensuring a comprehensive waste management system.

Kadirur Panchayat has also promoted household-level waste management. Nearly every

household has an organic waste management system, with thousands of compost units distributed, including pipe composts, ring composts, biogas units, and vermicomposting setups. The community also uses technology effectively, with a smart garbage app that helps track and manage plastic waste collection systematically.

The leadership of women in this initiative has been a defining factor in its success. By addressing environmental issues while also supporting public health, Kadirur Panchayat is showing how local communities, led by committed leaders, can create sustainable change. This model not only tackles plastic pollution but also supports vulnerable members of the community, demonstrating the power of grassroots action.

SHG Women in Odisha Leading the Way: Sundargarh's Waste Revolution

In Sundargarh, Odisha, women from Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are leading a transformative waste management initiative "*Aama Sundargarh, Swachh Sundargarh*". Driven by the dedication of SHG women leaders, this program has become a model of grassroots leadership in managing solid waste, especially plastic, while promoting community health and environmental sustainability.

Swachhta Sathis, women from SHGs manage every stage of waste management — from door-to-door collection to segregation, transportation, and processing. These women are not only environmental stewards but also entrepreneurs. The revenue generated through recycling directly supports their livelihoods, creating a self-sustaining system that empowers over 550 women across the district.

Covering all 279 Gram Panchayats, the initiative has reached over 3.63 lakh households and 5,000 schools, significantly reducing waste, improving sanitation, and cutting carbon emissions.



SHG members engaged in waste management
Source: SBM-G Odisha



Renu Devi during waste HH waste collection
Source: SBMG Jharkhand, CEE

Through their leadership, SHG women have turned a waste crisis into an opportunity — promoting recycling, advocating for behavior change, and setting up forward linkages with recyclers and industries. They are working on also repurposing farm waste generated as raw materials for cultivation of mushrooms and vermicompost.

The success of Aama Sundargarh, Swachh Sundargarh is a testament to what can be achieved when women lead from the front. By turning waste into a resource and fostering environmental responsibility, these SHG leaders are shaping a cleaner, healthier future for Sundargarh — and setting a replicable model for other regions.

Jharkhand's Renu Devi's Journey in Women's Empowerment and Waste Management in Jharkhand

Renu Devi is a 42, a mother of two from Dahu village, Ormanjhi Block, Barwe Panchayat, Jharkhand, embodies the transformative power of opportunity and empowerment. Before joining the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in Ranchi, Renu was a housewife with no source of income. However, since July 2024, she has been working as a Safai Mitra at the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in Ranchi.

On her first day at the MRF, Renu and six other women Safai Mitras were provided with hands-

on training on waste segregation and machine operations. Every day since completion of her training, Renu dedicates eight hours to her work, segregating approximately 90 kilograms of dry and plastic waste daily. So far, the MRF has collected 43 metric tons of dry and plastic waste, with 11 metric tons sent to recyclers and aggregators for further processing (as of November 2024). Beyond her duties at the MRF, Renu engages with her local community in Barwe Panchayat, where she focuses on spreading awareness about the importance of waste segregation and responsible disposal practices. Renu, during her time at the MRF, has been capacitated and has evolved from just a being a woman from a scheduled caste trying to make her ends meet to becoming a confident woman who is passionate about her work.



Renu Devi during at the MRF
Source: SBMG Jharkhand, CEE

She encourages her neighbours, who were once indifferent to waste management, to adopt better practices, and they now recognize her as a leader driving positive change in the community.

From Vision to Reality: How These Panchayats Became Models of Women-Friendly Panchayat

Ministry of Panchayati Raj

“Best Practices of National Panchayat Award 2024 winners Panchayat in the Women Friendly Panchayat category”

Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has celebrated National Panchayats Awards – 2024 Ceremony on December 11, 2024, which was graced by the Hon'ble President of India. A total of 45 Panchayats of 2024 were honoured nationally in different category of awards. Under Deen Dayal Upadhyay panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar, awards are given in 9 LSDG Themes including Women Friendly Panchayat. A Women Friendly Panchayat is one which ensures equal opportunities to women, 100% immunization of pregnant women, 100% institutional delivery, zero crimes against women and girls, participation of Women in socio-political, economic activities etc. The three Gram Panchayats/Village Committees which were awarded in National Panchayat Award 2024 under Women Friendly Panchayat are as below:

1st Position: South Manubankul Village Committee

Block Advisory Committee: Rupaichari
District Council: Tripura Tribal Areas
Autonomous District Council
State: Tripura

South Manubankul Village Committee of Rupaichari Block Advisory Committee under Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council, Tripura, has been recognized with the first prize for its Women-Friendly Panchayat initiative. With a population of 1,900, 62% of whom belong to Scheduled Tribes, the Panchayat has



made remarkable strides in empowering women and fostering a safe, inclusive environment. A key achievement is the establishment of the “SRESTHA” brand, which markets SHG-made products like spices and rice, creating a recognizable identity for locally produced goods and promoting entrepreneurship. The Panchayat has empowered women through financial independence, supporting ventures in farming (vegetable and rice cultivation, animal husbandry, floriculture) and non-farming sectors (handicrafts, textiles, food processing). It has recognized 301 “Lakhpatis,” women who have achieved financial stability and serve as role models, inspiring others in the community. Initiatives like “Empower Her” provide mentorship to young girls, guiding them toward personal and

professional growth, while “Balika Manch” in schools has ensured zero cases of child marriage and girl student dropouts. The Panchayat has also prioritized menstrual hygiene by installing sanitary pad vending machines and incinerators in schools and public places, alongside regular awareness campaigns. Notably, it has achieved zero cases of violence against women, reflecting a safe and supportive environment.

To achieve these outcomes, the Panchayat established Mahila Sabhas and a Gender Resource Centre, creating spaces for women to participate in governance and decision-making. Financial literacy and credit camps were organized to equip women with financial management skills, while community service providers like Swasthya Sakhis, Bank Sakhis, Pashu Sakhis, and Matshya Sakhis under the Tripura Rural Livelihood Mission supported women’s economic independence.

Additionally, Solar Street Lights were installed using Fifteenth Finance Commission Grants to enhance women’s safety. The Panchayat received support from ASHA and Anganwadi workers, who conducted health and hygiene awareness campaigns, and from local and state government agencies, which provided resources for clean drinking water and health initiatives. Looking ahead, the Panchayat aims to institutionalize key programs like the Tripura Rural Livelihood Mission, Balika Manch, and Empower Her, ensuring their integration into community development. It plans to continue financial literacy and health awareness camps, fostering an inclusive environment where women’s participation in governance and economic activities is normalized and encouraged, thereby sustaining its transformative impact.



2nd Position: Chillapalli Gram Panchayat

Block Panchayat: Manthani
District Panchayat: Peddapalli
State: Telangana

Chillapalli Gram Panchayat, located in Manthani Block Panchayat of Peddapalli District, Telangana, has been awarded the second prize for its Women-Friendly Panchayat initiative. With a population of



1,081 (573 males and 508 females), the Panchayat has made significant strides in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment. It supports 64 Women’s Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and has conducted four women’s training programs, focusing on economic and social development. Key achievements include the successful implementation of women-centric schemes, active participation of women in Gram Sabhas, and enhanced economic empowerment through SHGs, with all eligible SHGs accessing bank loans. The Panchayat has achieved zero maternal deaths, a 100% female enrolment ratio in higher secondary, secondary, and upper-primary schools, and a zero transition rate for girl children across these educational levels, reflecting its commitment to education and health. However, challenges such as patriarchal mindsets, cultural barriers, domestic violence, limited access to financial resources, and underrepresentation of women in Panchayat leadership persist.

To address these challenges, the Panchayat conducted awareness campaigns and training programs, established new SHGs, and provided access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. It ensured women’s representation in decision-making and monitored progress to evaluate impacts. Support from the Ministry of Panchayati Raj

under the Localization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been instrumental, particularly in promoting gender justice and equality through the Women-Friendly Village initiative. The Gram Panchayat Development Plan integrates village action plans and flagship schemes from various departments, ensuring holistic socio-economic interventions. Looking ahead, the Panchayat aims to institutionalize training programs for women members, integrate gender-sensitive budgeting, enhance digital literacy, and mainstream gender equality in policies and decisions. It also plans to increase women's representation in decision-making positions, improve gender-sensitive budget allocation, and support women-led initiatives and enterprises. By fostering an inclusive environment and addressing systemic barriers, Chillapalli Gram Panchayat is committed to sustaining its efforts toward achieving SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and ensuring long-term empowerment and safety for women and girls in the community.

3rd Position: Varaganoor Gram Panchayat

Block Panchayat: Kuruvikulam
District Panchayat: Tenkasi
State: Tamil Nadu

Varaganoor Gram Panchayat, located in Kuruvikulam Block Panchayat of Tenkasi District, Tamil Nadu, has been awarded the third prize for its Women-Friendly Panchayat initiative. Governed entirely by women, the Panchayat serves a population of 2,712 (1,296 males and 1,416 females) and has made significant strides in promoting women's health, education, and economic empowerment. Key achievements include monthly health check-ups and yoga classes for women, resulting in a zero maternal death rate, and ensuring all children, especially girls, attend school. The Panchayat also established Bal Sabha to empower boys and girls with self-protection skills and eco-friendly practices, while providing skill development training for women in areas like embroidery, jewelry making, soap making, and baking. However, challenges such as inadequate



sanitation facilities, limited access to clean drinking water, and the lack of proper toilet facilities, which forced women to travel long distances, impacted their safety and well-being.

To address these issues, the Panchayat constructed individual toilets and community sanitary complexes under the Swachh Bharat Mission and improved clean drinking water accessibility through the Jal Jeevan Mission, which established overhead tanks and individual tap connections. Additionally, a dedicated website was created to help women market their products, expanding their business opportunities. The Panchayat has benefited from various state and central government schemes, including the special incentive scheme for girl students, Magalir Urimai Thogai, NABARD, Atal Pension Yojana, Ayushman Bharat, and the Chief Minister's Breakfast Scheme. Looking ahead, the Panchayat envisions holistic community development as the foundation for sustainable growth. It plans to continue fostering active participation and leadership among women and children through Mahila Sabha and Bal Sabha, ensuring their voices are heard in decision-making processes. By addressing systemic challenges and leveraging government support, Varaganoor Gram Panchayat is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and empowering environment for women and girls, ensuring their long-term well-being and development.



The Sarpanch of Phulera proved through her work - Asli Pradhan Koun?

Ministry of Panchayati Raj



Ministry of Panchayati Raj has collaborated with The Viral Fever (TVF) for the production of a series of compelling digital content (Phulera ka Panchayati Raj) that addresses critical issues affecting local rural governance. Created within the universe of the widely acclaimed web-series Panchayat, this production by TVF features renowned actors like Neena Gupta, Chandan Roy, and Faisal Malik.

The first episode of this series, titled '*Asli Pradhan Kaun?*', focuses on empowered women leadership in Gram Panchayats and strongly critiques the practice of proxy representation in local governance. This episode has been widely

appreciated by viewers and has garnered over 10 million views on YouTube channel so far.

"*Asli Pradhan Kaun?*" premiered on 4th March, 2025, coinciding with the launch of the Ministry's "Sashakt Panchayat Netri Abhiyan" (सशक्त पंचायत-नेत्री अभियान). The film was screened at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi before an audience of over 1,200 elected women representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions from across the country.

The film '*Asli Pradhan Kaun?*', illustrates how effectively a woman Gram Pradhan exercises her powers for public welfare. "*Asli Pradhan Kaun?*" addresses the issue of 'Sarpanch Pati' culture –

where male family members unofficially represent elected women leaders – a practice that undermines the constitutional mandate of women representation in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Speaking about her role, acclaimed actor Neena Gupta said, “It’s always a pleasure to be part of stories that have a purpose. *Asli Pradhan Kaun?* is not just another production – it is a reflection of real-life challenges faced by women in rural India. I am excited for audiences to see how beautifully this message has been conveyed through storytelling”.

This initiative comes in the wake of the recent Report on “Transforming Women’s Representation and Roles in Panchayati Raj Systems and Institutions: Eliminating Efforts for Proxy Participation”, which has gained wider attention and gathered momentum in favour of the Ministry’s consistent efforts to strengthen genuine women leadership in local governance. As part of its comprehensive approach, the Ministry released two additional productions focusing on Digital Intervention and Transparency titled as ‘*Phulera Me Chori*’ and on the topic of Own Source Revenue titled as ‘*Alhua Vikas*’. All these episodes have crossed the milestone of 10 million views, setting a new record.



“*Phulera Mein Chori*” highlights the impact of the SVAMITVA Scheme and digital governance tools

such as Meri Panchayat App, showcasing how rural communities are gaining access to transparent, efficient services.



“*Alhua Vikas*” highlights the critical importance of generating Own Sources of Revenue (OSR) by Rural Local Bodies that helps in strengthening the self-reliance of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) across rural India. This film promotes citizen awareness on timely payment of local taxes, highlighting how such contributions enable improved service delivery and sustained village development.

You can watch these episodes by clicking on the following link:

“Asli Pradhan Kaun?”

https://youtu.be/aNcYFjB40qQ?si=o7HFpzEE_CbCvXl3

“Phulera Mein Chori”

https://youtu.be/h2iej7BIOYA?si=Bm9dNbKO_YiDMH-Iv

“Alhua Vikas”

https://youtu.be/mWZq2CHSvMU?si=UNMoxBP_yDGmCh9-j

Revisiting in State PRI acts: A Necessity for Making PRIs More Effective

Amar Nath H K

Associate Professor and Head, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy

&

Aakanksha Shrawan

Assistant Professor, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (1992) intended the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) as ‘*local self-governing institutions*’ that were not only responsible for successful implementation of development programs but also entrusted with adequate financial resources and financial autonomy to levy and raise their own revenues in order to successfully perform these duties. Majorly, Gram Panchayats (GPs) have been empowered to levy taxes and user charges for the provision of public services according to the State Panchayat Raj Acts. However, as highlighted in the recent Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) Report (2024), the fiscal health of the PRIs,

especially GPs, is a cause of immediate concern. The average share of the own source revenue (OSR) in the total receipts of GPs across 30 States/UTs was a meagre 6% in the year 2021-22. As per the Report, on average, for the period 2017-18 to 2021-22, the per capita OSR was reported at just INR 59. A recent RBI also confirms the same with the share of OSR a minuscule 6.31% in the total receipts of the GPs in 2022-23. Nearly 95% of their total receipts constitute grants from the Central and the state governments, with the Central grants constituting a bulk of the GPs’ revenues. In the recent study “Preparation of a Viable Financial Model for Generation of Own Source Revenue



OSR

Own Source Revenue

**Gram Panchayat:
Bonaigarh**

Block: Bonaigarh District: Sundargarh, Odisha

@moqr_goi @MinistryOfPanchayatiRaj @ministryofpanchayatraj www.panchayat.gov.in



Developed Biju Park with OSR revenue which is now generating extra revenue for the GP.

OSR

Own Source Revenue

**Annual Revenue:
₹ 27.40 Lakhs**

@moqr_goi @MinistryOfPanchayatiRaj @ministryofpanchayatraj www.panchayat.gov.in

Unlocking Sustainable Development: Bonaigarh Gram Panchayat, Sundargarh, Odisha, exemplifies the power of Own Source Revenue (OSR) in driving economic, social, and holistic progress.

(OSR)” conducted by NIPFP at the behest of MoPR, it has been found that there are several reasons for low revenue mobilisation in PRIs other than lack of political willingness to levy or low tax-paying capacity of the rural population. In view of the alarming fiscal health of the most localised level of governance, i.e., GPs, it is imperative to first understand the reasons responsible for this worrisome situation in their OSR collection as the district-level and block-level Panchayats have no or at most limited powers to raise revenues.

First, the state governments, through the State Panchayati Raj Acts have empowered the GPs to levy a range of taxes and user charges ranging from property tax, vehicle tax, pilgrim tax, water tax/user charges, sanitation tax/user charges etc. However, this empowerment varies starkly across states. The number of empowered taxes across 17 major states varies from two in Bihar, Punjab and West Bengal to eight in Gujarat, Karnataka and Kerala. However, our visit to eight of these states revealed that GPs levy very few taxes compared to the number that they are empowered with. OSR collection is also negligible and varies depending on the method of assessment. Madhya Pradesh and Odisha levy only one tax (out of seven and three, respectively) and Uttar Pradesh does not levy any tax (out of six empowered). Maharashtra collects four (out of seven), Andhra Pradesh levies three (of six) and Karnataka levies three (of eight) taxes they are empowered to collect. Though many states empower Districts and Block Panchayats with some user charges, very few levy.

The Panchayati Raj Acts also empower the GPs to levy several user charges. In the sample states, the number of empowered user charges is more than 10 (except Uttar Pradesh where the GP is empowered to levy only 6). The levy, assessment and collection depends on hand holding by the State government through guidelines and Executive Orders. Many times, GPs do not have either the technical capability or manpower to assess, levy and collect these user

charges in addition to political willingness. It was observed during the field visits to eight states, that only Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh have issued enough guidelines in helping the GPs to assess and levy the taxes and user charges.

Second, even in instances where the GPs choose to levy taxes/user charges in their respective geographies, the tax base, method of assessment and levy are not at their optimum levels. This is mainly because of lack of understanding of the issues related defining the base, method of assessment and other legal disputes. The assessment of property taxes, for instance, in several states is done on an ad-hoc basis with no fixed criterion to determine the amount of collection. Even within the state, the levy and assessment are not uniform across the districts. Karnataka serves as an ideal case study as the state government conducts a comprehensive survey of all the buildings and vacant lands and levies the property tax based on usage -*like residential, commercial and manufacturing* and features of the property - *like type and quality of construction*. Though there is a web-based application with minimal information, some districts are still collecting below their potential due to lack of manpower at GP level. Though Karnataka model is an ideal one but it cannot be followed in other states due to a lack of manpower and capabilities. In addition to property tax, the collection of water charges, sanitation charges etc., is also done on an ad-hoc basis without any pre-determined criterion in most GPs.

Third, the collection of user charges can be tremendously increased if the ownership of community/common property resources (CPRs) and public service provision is transferred to PRIs, particularly, in states like West Bengal and Maharashtra where, drinking water supply is still with line departments. Similarly CPRs like minor forest, water bodies including minor irrigation are still with either the forest, irrigation, fisheries or revenue departments. Making the GPs as custodian

of these assets, will enable them to maintain these assets and services efficiently, in addition to raising revenues.

Fourth, the legal rigmarole associated with disputed lands, boundary demarcation and encroachments also leads to significant litigation costs and loss of potential OSR. There are still no clear guidelines in several states regarding the collection of property tax from houses constructed on disputed and illegally occupied lands. It is believed at ground-level that payment of property tax or licence fee on such buildings will entitle them with ownership. Therefore, PRIs are hesitant to levy and collect the revenues from such entities. This also applies to levy of any taxes on buildings constructed on agricultural lands or on lands out of habitation area.

Fifth, the prompt constitution of the State Finance Commissions (SFC) and implementation of their recommendations can also strengthen the revenue of PRIs. But many states are often uninterested in

both. Based on their recommendations, some states devolve surcharges on stamp and registration fees, entertainment tax and profession tax to local bodies. While states such as Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh pass on the proceeds of these assigned revenues (stamps and registration fees, for instance) to not only their Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) but also the Rural Local Bodies (RLBs), states such as Uttar Pradesh only devolve the proceeds to the ULBs only. Similarly, profession tax is devolved to ULBs and not RLBs in Karnataka.

Finally, GPs in most states are grappling with the long-standing shortage of adequate manpower. There is, in most instances, one or two State-funded staff present in the GP which is responsible for the development work as well as OSR generation. In certain cases, one GP Secretary is responsible for managing multiple GPs, which keeps him busy with scheme-based development work rather than augmentation of OSR.

Table A. Own source revenue (tax and user charges) collection (in INR)-2023-24

State	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Andhra Pradesh	481	13 (Molagavalli Kottala)	1544 (Billekallu)
Gujarat	254	34 (Haijarabad)	746 (Sheth Vadala)
Karnataka	401	60 (Ramapura)	760 (Thondebhavi)
Madhya Pradesh	20	0 (Basadi, Loharwara, Khamha, Kusmi, Madia Agrasen)	123 (Jhunku)
Maharashtra	846	199 (Vijaygopal)	3750 (Wadi Ratnagiri)
Odisha	65	0 (Borikina, Pandua, Mochibahal)	242 (Nuagarh)
Uttar Pradesh	47	0 (Kasampurgarhi, Seervasuchand, Mandawali, Kursath Rural, Shadi Pur, Marounda Suchit, Patari)	373 (Jalabpur Gudal)
West Bengal	71	10 (Angrabhasa-II)	189 (Baikunthpur-II)

If the Union and the state governments intend to build an ecosystem of effective decentralisation, where the GPs can handle the maintenance of basic services on their own with sufficient revenue generation, it is imperative to address some of the bottlenecks identified in the report are – 1) take stock of the State Panchayati Raj Acts, along with the associated rules, guidelines and amendments which have not been revised for a long time, 2) a clear-cut Activity Mapping and transfer of public service provision and CPRs to RLBs . 3) Clarificatory orders in defining the base and assessment of various taxes and user charges, 4) supplementing the necessary manpower, particularly at GP-level, 5) a dedicated unit at district-level to undertake capacity building at GP-level in both understanding the PRI Acts, technical knowledge in empowering the GPs to raise revenues and finally to make the assessment of property tax, water rates and fee on commercial

establishment simpler with lesser discretion at local-level.

Tapping the revenues from public service provision and CPRs can make the GPs more self-reliant in addition to simplifying property tax assessment. For example, transferring water supply systems from PHED department and rural water supply departments in West Bengal and Maharashtra, levying property tax by GPs in Uttar Pradesh and Odisha (where there is no provision for the same), transferring levy of licence fee on commercial activity from District Panchayats to GPs in Uttar Pradesh etc.. The report suggests a clear viable finance model to define the capacity of PRIs to raise revenues, which is critical in raising their revenues rather than dependence on conditional transfers. The Report details all such measures to improve the revenues of PRIs and make them more self-reliant.

Empowerment of taxes and levying in PRIs in different States

Taxes	ZP		BP		GP	
	Empowered	Levied	Empowered	Levied	Empowered	Levied
Andhra Pradesh	-	-	-	-	6	3
Gujarat	8	-	8	-	8	2
Karnataka	-	-	-	-	8	3
Madhya Pradesh	-	-	2	-	7	1
Maharashtra	4	-	-	-	7	4
Odisha	-	-	-	-	3	1
West Bengal	1	1	1	1	2	2
Uttar Pradesh	2	1	1	-	6	-
Uttarakhand	-	-	2	-	6	-
Punjab	-	-	1	-	2	-
Rajasthan	-	-	3	-	6	-
Haryana	-	-	-	-	3	-
Jharkhand	2	-	2	-	4	-
Bihar	1	-	1	-	2	-
Telangana	-	-	-	-	4	-
Tamil Nadu	-	-	1	-	5	-
Kerala	-	-	-	-	8	-

Empowerment of User Charges and levying in PRIs in different States

User Charges	ZP		BP		GP	
	Empowered	Levied	Empowered	Levied	Empowered	Levied
Andhra Pradesh	3	3	-	-	11	9
Gujarat	7	-	7	-	13	7
Karnataka	2	-	2	-	24	2-
Madhya Pradesh	1	-	3	2	14	7
Maharashtra	5	1	-	-	28	25
Odisha	-	-	1	1	13	8
West Bengal	5	-	9	5	24	13
Uttar Pradesh	12	5	9	-	6	2
Uttarakhand	3	-	-	-	12	-
Punjab	-	-	5	-	6	-
Rajasthan	4	-	1	-	2	-
Haryana	1	-	3	-	9	-
Jharkhand	4	-	4	-	3	-
Bihar	4	-	5	-	5	-
Telangana	1	-	1	-	3	-
Tamil Nadu	3	-	9	-	9	-
Kerala	2	-	2	-	12	-

Social Media Platforms of Ministry of Panchayati Raj

Join to get the latest information related to Schemes, Programs and Initiatives related to the Ministry.

Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India
 भारतीय पंचायती राज मंत्रालय
 भारतीय पंचायती राज मंत्रालय की वेबसाइट पर आप स्वामित्व योजना के तहत 65 लाख से अधिक संघीय पंचायतों को स्वामित्व कार्ड का ई-निर्वाह किया।
 #ThankYouPM #SVAMITVA #MoPR #PanchayatiRaj
 #MeriSampatti #MeriAchivak #PM_SVAMITVA
 @narendramodi @mygovindia @LalanSingh_U @AgriGov



https://x.com/mopr_goi



<https://www.facebook.com/MinistryOfPanchayatiRaj>



Live e-Distribution of #SVAMITVA Property Cards | स्वामित्व संपत्ति कार्डों के ई-निर्वाह | #MoPR
 Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India



<https://www.youtube.com/@MinistryOfPanchayatiRaj>



<https://www.instagram.com/ministryofpanchayatiraj/>



<https://public.app/user/profile/iE23ulg7neUDYrC9tNIDfQfzaZI2>



संघीय पंचायतों को स्वामित्व कार्ड का ई-निर्वाह किया।
 #ThankYouPM #SVAMITVA #MoPR #PanchayatiRaj
 #MeriSampatti #MeriAchivak #PM_SVAMITVA

Printed and Published by Ministry of Panchayati Raj

editor-in-chief : Shri Vivek Bharadwaj, Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Govt. of India,
 Tower-2, 9th Floor, Jeevan Bharti Building, Sansad Marg, New Delhi - 110001