



Building Viksit Bharat from Ground Up: 12 Years of Panchayat Reforms and Innovation

Approx 3.18 Crore Property Cards Issued; Over 4.10 Crore Elected Representatives Trained; 84% Jump in Rural Local Body Grants

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In the last twelve years, India has seen significant transformation and progress in rural India marking a significant phase in the strengthening of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) as effective institutions of self-government. Guided by the vision of building capable, accountable and financially empowered Panchayats, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has undertaken a series of initiatives that have deepened democratic decentralization, expanded digital governance, strengthened local planning, enhanced fiscal devolution and promoted inclusive development for rural citizens across the country.

Focus on Capacity Building & Digitalization

A major focus has been on strengthening institutional capacity. Under the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), introduced in 2018-19 and revamped from 2022-23, training and capacity building of 4.10 crore Panchayat elected representatives and functionaries (cumulative) of more than 2.70 lakh Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) at all three tiers have been completed – a feat of institutional outreach without parallel in the history of rural governance. The RGSA has also been the backbone for capacity building of women elected representatives, PESA training, and a range of governance skilling initiatives. Under RGSA, more than 33.55 lakh women elected representatives have been trained from FY 2022-23 to FY 2025-26 alone, equipping them with knowledge of Panchayat functioning, service delivery, and leadership. To improve the functioning of Panchayats, substantial investments have been made in strengthening local governance infrastructure. More than 25,100 Gram Panchayat Buildings and over 61,000 computers have been provided under RGSA and the revamped RGSA, enhancing both the physical and digital capacities of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Simultaneously, the Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDs) has been institutionalized as the primary instrument of participatory village planning, with development plans being prepared and implemented across more than 2.55 lakh Gram Panchayats. The digital integration of GPDs through the e-GramSwaraj platform has further improved transparency and accessibility of local development planning.

One of the most transformative initiatives of the period has been the SVAMITVA Scheme. Since its launch in 2020, the scheme has enabled drone-based surveys of inhabited rural areas and facilitated the distribution of approximately 3.18 crore property ownership cards across 1.92 lakh villages, as on 10th June 2026. By providing formal records of property ownership, the scheme has helped reduce property disputes, improved access to institutional credit and strengthened the revenue potential of Panchayats. The Ministry has also led a digital transformation of rural local governance through the e-GramSwaraj platform, which has digitized planning, budgeting, accounting and financial management processes across

Panchayats. More than 2.59 lakh Panchayats have been onboarded onto the e-Panchayat ecosystem, while integration with the Public Financial Management System (PFMS) has enabled real-time financial monitoring and online payments. As of 10th June 2026, online transactions amounting to over ₹3.16 lakh crores have been processed through the integrated platform, significantly improving transparency and accountability in Panchayat finances. Citizen participation has been strengthened through the Meri Panchayat App, which connects rural residents with their local governments and provides access to information on development works, Panchayat meetings and public assets. The application has recorded more than one crore downloads, emerging as an important tool for citizen-centric governance.

Strengthening Local Finances

The Ministry has also played a significant role in advancing fiscal decentralization. During the Fifteenth Finance Commission award period (2020–26), grants amounting to ₹2.82 lakh crore, representing 94.98 percent of the total allocation, were released to Rural Local Bodies. This constitutes the highest-ever release percentage under any Finance Commission award cycle and reflects the growing emphasis on empowering Panchayats with financial resources necessary for local development. Building upon this momentum, for the award period 2026-27 to 2030-31, the Sixteenth Finance Commission has recommended a total grant of ₹4,35,236 crore for duly constituted Rural Local Bodies, which represents an increase of nearly 84% compared to the allocations made under the Fifteenth Finance Commission. This enhanced allocation underlines a strong commitment to fiscal empowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions and improved delivery of essential services at the grassroots level. Recognizing the importance of financial self-reliance, SAMARTH Panchayat Portal and the Atmanirbhar Panchayat Program to strengthen Own Source Revenue (OSR) mobilization by Panchayats has been launched. The digital platform provides end-to-end tools for revenue assessment, demand generation and collection, enabling Panchayats to move towards greater fiscal autonomy and sustainable local governance.

AI Transforming Rural Governance

In April 2025, Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) was introduced as a comprehensive framework for assessing Panchayat performance against the nine themes of Localised Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs). Covering over 2.59 lakh Gram Panchayats, the Index has emerged as an important instrument for evidence-based planning, monitoring and performance benchmarking at the grassroots level. Ministry's PAI project has been awarded the gold prize at National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG) 2026 under the Digital Transformation by Use of Data Analytics in Digital Platforms by Central Ministries/States/UTs category. The Ministry has also pioneered the application of Artificial Intelligence in local governance through SabhaSaar, an AI-enabled platform launched in August 2025 for automatic generation of Gram Sabha Minutes of Meetings in 23 Indian languages. More than 1.35 lakh Panchayats have used the platform since its launch, generating over three lakh Minutes of Meetings and significantly improving the transparency and accessibility of Gram Sabha proceedings. In October 2024, the Ministry launched India's first Gram Panchayat-level weather forecasting initiative in collaboration with the India Meteorological Department and the Ministry of Earth Sciences. The initiative provides Panchayat-level weather forecasts and hourly weather information through digital platforms, helping farmers and rural communities make informed decisions and prepare for weather-related events.

Empowerment of Tribals, Women & Youth

The Ministry has also undertaken several initiatives to strengthen implementation of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA). These include the development of seven specialized training manuals translated into tribal languages, the launch of a dedicated PESA-GPDP Portal, establishment of a Centre of Excellence for PESA and the introduction of the country's first PESA Ranking framework. Together, these initiatives have strengthened tribal self-governance and improved the implementation of PESA provisions across Scheduled Areas. Women-led development has remained a

central pillar of the Ministry's efforts. The Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan, launched in 2025, has focused on enhancing leadership, communication and governance capacities among elected women representatives. 744 Model Women Friendly Gram Panchayats were identified across States and Union Territories and Nirbhay Raho Campaign was launched to promote women's safety, leadership and participation in local governance through targeted capacity-building initiatives. The Model Youth Gram Sabha (MYGS) initiative, launched in October 2025, introduces students to grassroots democracy through simulated Gram Sabha proceedings in schools. Covering 619 Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, 200 Eklavya Model Residential Schools, and selected Government schools, the initiative engaged over 29,000 students across 819 residential schools in 2025, fostering civic awareness, democratic participation, and leadership among the youth in line with NEP 2020.

Over the last twelve years, Panchayats have increasingly emerged as key drivers of grassroots development, service delivery and citizen participation. Through a combination of institutional reforms, digital innovation, fiscal empowerment, women's leadership and citizen participation, Panchayats today are better equipped than ever before to deliver development outcomes and contribute meaningfully to the vision of Viksit Bharat.

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