



LOW PARTICIPATION IN GRAM SABHA MEETINGS

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The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has released a National Study Report on Low Participation in Gram Sabha across States and Union Territories (UTs) on 30th June, 2026, prepared by the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (N.I.R.D.P.R).

The assessment identified multiple factors contributing to low and inconsistent participation across Gram Panchayats. These include livelihood and occupational constraints, weak awareness and inadequate communication systems, weak responsiveness to grievances, absence of line department officials, limited transparency in governance processes, inadequate follow-up actions on issues raised during meetings, etc. On women's participation, the findings also reflected continuing barriers relating to household responsibilities, social hesitation, male dominance during discussions and limited opportunities for effective participation.

“Panchayat”, being “Local Government”, is a State subject and part of State List of Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. Panchayats are set up and operated through the respective State Panchayati Raj Acts. States have made their own Panchayati Raj Act, subject to the provisions of the Constitution of India. As per Article 243(b) of the Constitution of India, a Gram Sabha comprises of persons (including women, youth, Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and other disadvantaged sections) registered in the electoral rolls relating to the village. Article 243A of the Constitution of India states that a Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide, which ensures rural democracy, formulation of local development plans, social monitoring and accountability of Panchayats, etc.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has taken various steps to make the Gram Sabha a more participatory and accountable institution by circulating detailed advisories to the States/ UTs to revitalize the institution of Gram Sabhas by taking up measures such as sharing basic details of flagship schemes of the Government in Gram Sabha meetings, increasing the frequencies of Gram Sabhas, ensuring minimum quorum as provided in the State Panchayati Raj Act, preparation of regular standing agenda for the Gram Sabha, to facilitate the holding of separate Ward Sabha and Mahila Sabha meeting before Gram Sabha meetings, ensuring maximum attendance in Gram Sabha, formation and functioning of Standing Sub-Committees of Gram Sabha, etc.

The Ministry is implementing a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, namely the Revamped Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), w.e.f. financial year 2022-23, with the objective of supporting Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) by imparting training to Elected Representatives (ERs) and other stakeholders to develop leadership abilities, thereby enabling Gram Panchayats to function effectively across all States/UTs. Under the scheme, capacity-building support is provided to elected representatives, functionaries, and other stakeholders of Panchayats, including women, youth, SCs, STs and other

disadvantaged sections of society under different categories, viz. basic orientation and refresher programmes, thematic interventions, specialized training, and Panchayat Development Plan-related programmes, etc.

Additionally, the Ministry has launched a Specialized Training Module as a part of “Shashkta Panchayat Netri Abhiyan” for the capacity building of Women Elected Representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The focus of this training module is to build the capacity of Women Elected Representatives across different aspects of rural governance and enhance their knowledge and practical skills for the effective discharge of roles and responsibilities as elected representatives, thereby promoting women-led governance.

The Ministry has also launched the Model Youth Gram Sabha (MYGS), an experiential simulation of grassroots democracy in schools, wherein schools conduct mock Gram Sabha sessions involving students in agenda setting, deliberation, budgeting and passing of resolutions, closely mirroring real Gram Sabha procedures, etc. Further, the Ministry conducts the People’s Plan Campaign (PPC), typically from 2nd October to 31st January, enabling Gram Panchayats to prepare comprehensive, inclusive and need-based development plans through active engagement of citizens, particularly via Gram Sabhas, following a structured timeline for participatory planning, situation analysis and finalization of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDs).

Further, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has also developed digital applications under the e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project (e-MMP) to strengthen transparency and citizen-centric governance in Panchayati Raj Institutions. The eGramSwaraj portal facilitates preparation and monitoring of GPDs through a participatory planning process, involving the Gram Sabha. Similarly, Panchayat NIRNAY, a digital application which facilitates end-to-end digital management of Gram Sabha meetings, including scheduling, advance dissemination of agenda, recording of proceedings and decisions, etc.

This information was given by Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh in a written reply in Lok Sabha on 11th August 2026.

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