

An Evaluation of India's Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)



An Evaluation of India's Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan

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Anil Kumar Sharma

Professor & Secretary and Operations Director

National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER)

NCAER India Centre

11 Indraprastha Estate, New Delhi-110 002

Email: aksharma@ncaer.org

www.ncaer.org

Publications Coordinator

Jagbir Singh Punia

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Study Team

PROJECT LEADERS

Saurabh Bandyopadhyay and Anushree Sinha

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

Laxmi Joshi and Rajesh Jaiswal

RESEARCH TEAM

Sanjukta Das, Gautam Kumar Das, Soumi Roy Chowdhury,
Sanskriti Bahl, Vaishali Jain, and Falak Naz

SUPPORT RESEARCH TEAM

Rahat Hasan Khan, Sonal Jain, Mohit Krishna, Gargi Pal
Priyanshi Chaudhary, and Akansha Agarwal

EDITOR

Anupma Mehta

IT SUPPORT

Rakesh Srivastava, Praveen Sachdeva,
Ritesh Tripathi, and Rajendra Lenka

SECRETARIAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Poonam Dhawan

Preface

The Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) was initiated under the Union Budget 2016-17 for building the capabilities of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for achieving the UN's Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs). The crucial challenges pertaining to local development in the country, viz., poverty alleviation, public health, nutrition, education, gender, sanitation, access to drinking water, and livelihood generation, fall within the realm of both the SDGs and the local governance priorities of the Panchayats. The Panchayats have, therefore, been chosen as key players for the implementation of the SDGs as per the targeted timeline of 2030. Further, the RGSA has also envisioned a major developmental role for Panchayats in the "Aspirational Districts" and in the Mission Antyodaya clusters.

The growth of the Indian economy, changing economic priorities in the country, and the focus on self-reliance or *Atmanirbhar Bharat* have led to significant policy-level changes that have also fostered a new paradigm in governance across urban and rural India. In this context, PRIs are being seen as major agents of growth and reform, especially in the rural areas. It is also envisaged that PRIs can be instrumental in guiding local populations to deal with the financial crisis arising out of the pandemic, by making them economically independent. The efficient implementation of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan, a key programme area of the RGSA, therefore, assumes critical significance.

The National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) was commissioned by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj to undertake an evaluation study of the RGSA for assessing the implementation of the programme in the target areas. The NCAER study highlights some of the

Government's important initiatives that have helped in economic upliftment of rural areas. The study reveals that various capacity building measures and training imparted to nodal RGSA staff have led to outcomes that would go a long way in creating a self-reliant India and boosting financial independence among different social classes under a revamped RGSA.

One of the primary findings of the study has been that the State Panchayati Raj departments should focus more on capacity building and training of Elected Representatives at the village level. In this regard, the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, the State Institutes of Rural Development, and other training institutions could play a primary role in assessing the training being given to of the Elected Representatives in the core thrust areas of the programme associated with rural financial and development institutions.

The current study included a survey of over 2700 stakeholders, including Elected Representatives, Panchayat functionaries, Standing Committee Members of the Gram Sabha, representatives of Self-Help Groups, the State Institutes of Rural Development, and State/district level resource persons across 12 States of India. The project has been led by Dr Saurabh Bandyopadhyay, under whose leadership the NCAER team completed the study within the time frame stipulated by the Ministry. I would like to express my appreciation for the team's efforts in producing this insightful report and suggesting policy recommendations to supplement and improve local governance at the grassroots level.

New Delhi
September 2021

Poonam Gupta
Director General, NCAER

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September 2021

Saurabh Bandyopadhyay

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADP	: Aspirational Districts Programme
CB&T	: Capacity Building and Training
CBOs	: Community Based Organisations
CEO	: Chief Executive Officer
CFC	: Central Finance Commission
CoC	: Champions of Change
CPR	: Centre for Policy Research
DPRCs	: District Panchayat Resource Centres
EGSA	: Extended Gram Swaraj Abhiyan
ERs	: Elected Representatives
FFC	: Fourteenth Finance Commission
FGD	: Focus Group Discussion
GIS	: Geographic Information System
GP	: Gram Panchayat
GPDP	: Gram Panchayat Development Plan
GPPFT	: Gram Panchayat Planning and Facilitation Team
GS	: Gram Sabha
ICT	: Information and Computer Technology
IEC	: Information, Education, and Communication
IT	: Information Technology
LD	: Line Department
LGD	: Local Government Directory
MA	: Mission Antyodaya
MGNREGS	: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
MIS	: Management Information Systems
MMPs	: Mission Mode Projects
MoPR	: Ministry of Panchayati Raj
NAD	: National Asset Directory
NCBF	: National Capability Building Framework
NeGP	: National e-Governance Plan
NGOs	: Non-Governmental Organisations
NIC	: National Informatics Centre
NIRDPR	: National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj
NRHM	: National Rural Health Mission
NRLM	: National Rural Livelihood Mission
OBC	: Other Backward Caste
OSR	: Own Source Revenue

OTJ	: On the Job Training
PCI	: Per Capita Income
PDS	: Public Distribution System
PEAIS	: Panchayat Empowerment and Accountability Incentive Scheme
PESA	: Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas
PFs	: Panchayat Functionaries
PLCs	: Peer Learning Centres
PMEYSA	: Panchayat Mahila Evam Yuva Shakti Abhiyan
PMV	: Programa Municipios Verdes
PRIA	: Participatory Research in Asia
PRIs	: Panchayati Raj Institutes
PRP	: Poverty Reduction Plan
PRTIs	: Panchayati Raj Training Institutes
REDS	: Rural Economic and Demographic Survey
RGPSA	: Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan
RGSA	: Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan
RSS	: Resource Support to States
SAMM	: Social Audit and Meeting Management
SATCOM	: Satellite Communications
SBM	: Swachh Bharat Mission
SCs	: Scheduled Castes
SC	: Standing Committee
SDGs	: Sustainable Development Goals
Sec/HS	: Secondary and Higher Secondary
SEGs	: Socio-Economic Groups
SES	: Socio-Economic Survey
SFC	: State Finance Commission
SHG	: Self Help Group
SIRD	: State Institute of Rural Development
SIRDPR	: State Institutes of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj
STs	: Scheduled Tribes
TF	: Task Force
TFC	: Thirteenth Finance Commission
TIA	: Training Impact Assessment
TMD	: Training Material Development
TNA	: Training Needs Assessment
ToT	: Training of Trainers
TP	: Training Programme
TPRI	: Training of Panchayati Raj Institutions
UNDP	: United Nations Development Programme
VC	: Village Committee
WATI	: Web-Assisted Telephone Interviewing
WG	: Working Group
ZP	: Zila Panchayat

Contents

<i>Study Team</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>Abbreviations and Acronyms</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>Executive Summary</i>	<i>xix</i>
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Genesis and the Context of the Study by NCAER	2
1.3 Panchayats and Development	3
1.4 Need for the Scheme	4
1.4.1 Financial Resources	4
1.4.2 Human Resources	5
1.4.3 Infrastructure	6
1.4.4 Technology	7
1.5 Synergies with Other Initiatives	8
1.5.1 Aspirational Districts and RGSA	8
1.5.2 PESA and RGSA	9
1.6 International Experience	10
1.7 Need for the Evaluation	11
1.8 Report Structure and a Preview	12
Chapter 2: Summary of the Findings	13
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Gram Panchayats in India	13
2.3 Training, Capacity Creation, Resources and its Utilisation	14

2.4	Overall Impact and Effectiveness of Training on the Marginalised Segments.....	15
2.5	Availability of Skills and Software in the GP System	16
2.6	Infrastructure as a Source of Capacity Augmentation.....	17
2.7	Role of Gram Sabha in reflecting CB&T through planning and development activities.....	17
2.8	Involvement of Stakeholders in Planning Activities	17
2.9	Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) in Local Development Plans, Mission Antyodaya, Generating Own Source Revenue (OSR) at the GP Level and Convergence	18
2.10	Partnership with Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Support for Livelihood Generations and Development of Innovative Projects	19
2.11	Impact Assessment of RGSA as per the Respondents.....	19
2.12	Concluding Reflections.....	20
Chapter 3: Objectives of the Study		21
Chapter 4: Methodology.....		23
4.1	Introduction	23
4.2	The Stakeholders.....	23
4.3	Sampling Methodology	23
4.4	Questionnaires	26
4.5	Primary Survey.....	26
4.6	Data Analysis	26
Chapter 5: Findings of the Studies in Detail- All States		27
5.1	Introduction	27
5.2	Demography, Representation & Educational Achievement.....	27
5.3	Orientation Training Programmes of the Elected Representatives after Election	30
5.4	Types of Training Imparted to the Elected Representatives (ERs)	31
5.5	Involvement of Elected Representatives in the Functioning of the GP Activities and the Status of Training for the Same.....	32
5.6	Mode of Training, Sources of Physical Training and its Duration	33
5.7	Training courses for ERs, women and SC/ST Representatives and Overall Impact and Effectiveness of Training.....	38
5.8	Skill and Software Availability in the GP System.....	41
5.9	Status of Infrastructure.....	44
5.10	Role of Gram Sabha in reflecting CB&T through Planning and Development Activities.....	46

5.11	Incorporating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Local Development Plans, Mission Antyodaya and Generating Own Source Revenue (OSR) at the GP level and Convergence	49
5.12	Mission Antyodaya (MA)	51
5.13	Own Source of Revenue.....	53
5.14	Convergence	55
5.15	Partnership with Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Support for Livelihood Generations and the Development of Innovative Projects.....	57
5.16	Support for Livelihood Generation	59
5.17	Support for Economic Development and Income Enhancement	59
5.18	Support for Innovative Projects	62
5.19	Impact Assessment of the RGSA Project	64
5.20	Conclusion	66
	Chapter 6: Comparative Analysis.....	68
6.1	Introduction	68
6.2	Demography, Representation of the Nature of Members Working for the GPs	68
6.3	Institutions Imparting Training to the PRIs	73
	<i>6.3.1 Training Needs Assessment</i>	<i>73</i>
	<i>6.3.2 Activities Undertaken Related to Training.....</i>	<i>74</i>
	<i>6.3.3 Involvement in Different Types of Training.....</i>	<i>74</i>
	<i>6.3.4 Area of Collaboration.....</i>	<i>75</i>
	<i>6.3.5 Training Infrastructure Equipment</i>	<i>76</i>
	<i>6.3.6 Mode of Training.....</i>	<i>77</i>
	<i>6.3.7 Challenges Faced by Training Institutes while Conducting Training</i>	<i>77</i>
6.4	Training, Capacity Creation, Resources and Their Utilisation.....	78
	<i>6.4.1 Training Infrastructure</i>	<i>79</i>
	<i>6.4.2 Mode of Training.....</i>	<i>80</i>
	<i>6.4.3 Course Content and Training Materials</i>	<i>80</i>
	<i>6.4.4 Interactions with Fellow Participants and Faculty.....</i>	<i>83</i>
6.5	Participatory Management and Issues of Efficient Functioning of the Village Level Development Effort	83
6.6	Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) and Implementation of Development Programmes at the Grassroots Level.....	89
6.7	Enhancing capability of GPs for Good Governance.....	101

6.8	Recommendation for Revamping the Scheme.....	102
Chapter 7: A Case Study of the Traditional Local Bodies (TLBs) under Sixth Schedule of Assam		104
7.1	Introduction	104
7.2	Methodology	105
7.3	Demographical and Educational Status of the Stakeholders	106
7.4	Educational Status of the Stakeholders.....	107
7.5	Training Programmes and the Supporting Infrastructure	108
7.6	IT Infrastructure in VCDC and VDC.....	111
	Box 7.1 Karbi Anglong – Howraghat VDC	114
	Box 7.2 Baksa –Barphena VCDC.....	115
7.7	Recommendations.....	116
Chapter 8: Case Studies: Best Practices		117
Case Study 8.1: Generating OSR through Developing Capacities in Odisha.....		117
Case Study 8.2: Capacity Building and Training in PESA Districts : Chhattisgarh (Bastar)		118
Case Study 8.3: Infrastructural improvement in Uttar Pradesh.....		119
Case Study 8.4: Incentivisation of GPs: West Bengal		120
Chapter 9: Conclusion and Recommendations.....		121
9.1	Key Recommendations from Major Findings.....	122
Annexure 1: Details of Approved Proposals Related to Economic Development, Support for Innovation and Distance Learning under RGSA During 2019-20.....		132
Annexure 2: Status of Panchayat Election in the Sample States.....		134
Annexure 3: Subjects listed in Eleventh Schedule		135
Annexure 4: A Suggestive Linkage of Awards to SDGs and Mapping to the Concerned Ministries/Departments		136
<i>References</i>		<i>138</i>

List of Tables

1.1:	Panchayat System in India at a glance	1
4.1:	State-Wise Sample Size	25
5.1:	Representation of the Socio-Economic Groups among Elected Representatives of GPs.....	27
5.2:	Representation of the Gender among Elected Representatives	28
5.3:	Distribution (%) of Age-Group among Panchayat Members.....	28
5.4:	Distribution (%) of Educational Achievement among Elected Panchayat Members	29
5.5:	Distribution (%) of the Level of Computer Literacy among Panchayat Members.....	29
5.6:	Orientation Training Received after the Election in the Sample States (%)	30
5.7:	Orientation Training Received after the Election in the Aspirational Districts (%).....	30
5.8:	Elected Representatives Trained under Different Training Programmes in the Sample States (%).....	31
5.9:	Elected Representative Trained under Different Training Programmes out of total training received in the Aspirational Districts of the Sample States (%)	32
5.10:	Involvement of the ERs as Sector Facilitators/Enablers and the Status of Training for the Same	33
5.11:	Distribution (%) of the Mode of Training Programme	33
5.12:	Sources of Training of the Elected Representatives in Physical Mode (%).....	34
5.13:	Experience Gained during the Exposure Visits of the Elected Representatives (%)	35
5.14:	How Exposure Visit Becomes Effective Mode of Training to Motivate ERs (%).....	36
5.15:	Method of Imparting Training through Distance Learning (%)	36
5.16:	Different Duration of the Training Attended by the Elected Representatives for the Basic Orientation Training for the Sample States and the Respondents from the Aspirational Districts	37
5.17:	Different Duration of the Training Attended by the Elected Representative for the Refresher Course Training for the Sample States and the Respondents from the Aspirational Districts	37
5.18:	Thematic Course of Training Attended by the ERs as Sector Enablers for the Sample States and Aspirational Districts (%).....	38
5.19:	Training to women and SC/ST representatives include focused sessions and materials on issues of relevant interest (%)	39
5.20:	Impact Different Type of Training received by the ERs on GPs	39
5.21:	Distribution (%) of the rating of the most effectiveness features of the Training Programme received by the ERs	41
5.22:	Distribution (%) of the knowledge of computer in all the States and Aspirational Districts.....	41
5.23:	Different types of application/software/portal used by the GPs in the Sample States (%)	42

5.24:	Different types of application/software/portal used by the GPs in the Aspirational Districts (%)	43
5.25:	Received adequate training to operate the installed application/software/portal by the ERs in the sample States (% positive responses)	43
5.26:	Where was the last training/workshop held?	44
5.27:	Users response on the availability of infrastructure of the training venue from the demand side	45
5.28:	Mapping of functional Common Service Centres (CSC) within Gram Panchayat buildings	46
5.29:	Training received on operating the Public Financial Management System (PFMS) for release and tracking of RGSA funds by the ERs in the sample States (%)	46
5.30:	Involvement of ERs in the activities of the GS	47
5.31:	Distribution (%) of respondents on CB&T on improved accountability, improved transparency of operations and outreach of the Gram Sabha	48
5.32:	A Description of the roles of the Elected Representatives in the Villages of the Sampled States (%)	49
5.33:	Strategies of incorporating SDGs in the local development plans as reported by the ERs (% positive response)	50
5.34:	Key factors for successful localization of SDGs as per ERs perception (%)	50
5.35:	The processes of MA survey in which GPs contributed most (%)	52
5.36:	Distribution of Sufficiency of OSR fund (% positive responses)	54
5.37:	How convergence is ensured of different sectoral plans in the GPDP (%)	56
5.38:	Areas where SHGs provide support to GP (%)	57
5.39:	Thematic areas where there is scope of improvement in GPs (%)	58
5.40:	GPs support to SHGs for livelihood generation (%)	59
5.41:	SHGs involvements in projects for development & income enhancement and promoting rural business hub (%)	61
5.42:	Planning process activities of SHG with GP for development of the area	62
5.43:	Kind of innovative projects that have been supported till date	63
5.44:	Funds are inadequate for implementation of the projects	63
5.45:	Innovative projects mostly supported increased ease of functioning, followed by local development and outreach	64
5.46:	Scope for improvement in the areas under GP	65
5.47:	RGSA a comprehensive scheme to enhance capabilities of GPs for good governance (% positive responses)	65
5.48:	How RGSA helped to enhance capabilities of GPs	66
6.1:	Tax revenue collected in the last Financial Year (Rs)	97
6.2:	Non-Tax revenue collected in the last Financial Year (Rs)	97
7.1:	Sample Structure in the Study Area	105
7.2:	Coverage under Training Program (%)	108
7.3:	Mode of Training	109
7.4:	Method used in the Face-to-Face Training	109

List of Figures

5.1:	Comparison of the Different Types of Training Provided to the Elected Representatives in the Sample States and Aspirational Districts of the Sample States (%)	31
5.2:	Distribution (%) of Respondents on Exposure Visits as an Effective Medium of Training (%) ...	35
5.3:	Distribution (% positive response) of women and SC/ST ERs about handholding support after training (%).....	39
5.4:	Distribution (%) of ERs conducting GS meeting.....	47
5.5:	Distribution (%) ERs who expressed the opinion that CB&T under RGSA has strengthened GS	48
5.6:	Distributions (%) of the respondents on key factors for successful localization of SDGs	51
5.7:	Distribution (%) of the ERs being part of Mission Antyodaya (MA) cluster	51
5.8:	Circulation of Audio-Visual film to augment awareness (% positive response)	52
5.9:	CB & T initiatives under RGSA strengthened the ability of the GP to aid in the execution of the MA survey (% positive response).....	53
5.10:	Own Source of Revenue (OSR) is important for the GP for sustainable development.....	53
5.11:	Training on Own Source of Revenue (OSR) is grossly insufficient (%).....	54
5.12:	Awareness about initiatives to converge the schemes of different government departments with the GP as the focal point among ERs (% positive responses)	55
5.13:	Departments converged as reported by the ERs involved in the preparation of GPDP (average)	56
5.14:	Distribution (% positive responses) of response on gap funding by RGSA to support for economic development and income enhancement	60
5.15:	Distribution (%) of response on the extent of support received through RGSA gap funding to support economic development and income enhancement	60
5.16:	Availability of funds for development of innovative projects under other schemes from other Ministries (% positive response).....	62
6.1:	Distribution (%) of Socio-Economic Groups among Elected Representatives of Panchayat.....	69
6.2:	Distribution (%) of Gender among Elected Representatives of Panchayat.....	69
6.3:	Distribution (%) of Socio-Economic Groups among Other Stakeholders	70
6.4:	Distribution (%) of Gender among Other Stakeholders.....	70

6.5:	Distribution (%) of Educational level among Elected Representatives of Panchayat.....	70
6.6:	Distribution (%) of Educational Level among Other Stakeholders of Panchayats	71
6.7:	Distribution (%) of Respondents of Panchayat Functionaries in terms of the Level of Computer Literacy.....	71
6.8:	Distribution (%) of Respondents of Other Stakeholders in terms of the Level of Computer Literacy.....	72
6.9:	Distribution (%) of the Types of Committees in the Gram Sabhas	72
6.10:	Activity-wise distribution of Training Institutions	73
6.11:	Activity-wise distribution of Training Institutions	74
6.12:	Involvement in the Types of Training conducted by SIRDPR	75
6.13:	Area of Collaboration by the SIRDPR.....	75
6.14:	Training Infrastructure at SIRDPR.....	76
6.15:	Average number of Master Trainers and Certified Trainers.....	76
6.16:	Average number of training arranged in the last financial year	77
6.17:	Mode of Training.....	77
6.18:	Challenges Faced while Conducting Training	78
6.19:	Distribution (%) of Respondents in terms of the Attendance to the Training Programme (TP) and the Nature of Attendance to TP	78
6.20:	Reaction on Average Duration of Training (%)	79
6.21:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Venue of the last Training held	79
6.22:	Mode of Training: Face-to-Face has the Highest Weightage	80
6.23:	Distribution (%) of the Main Courses taught during Training.....	81
6.24:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Relevance of Course Material/ Content	81
6.25:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Practical Orientation Course Material/ Content.....	82
6.26:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the usefulness of Training Material.....	82
6.27:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Usefulness of training in your job.....	82
6.28:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Degree of Interaction with the Trainer and Fellow Participants	83
6.29:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Degree satisfaction with Faculty Interaction.....	83
6.30:	Average Number of Gram Sabhas held in 2020-21	84
6.31:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Ideal Number of Mandatory Gram Sabha Meeting per Year	84
6.32:	Average number of SC/ST persons and Women Who attended the Gram Sabhas held in 2020-21	85

6.33:	Distribution (%) of the Line department officials and SHG Members present in the Gram Sabhas held in 2020-21	85
6.34:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the various topic of Discussion held in the GS of 2020-21	86
6.35:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Venue of the GS Meeting	86
6.36:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Areas Discussed in the Last GS Meeting	87
6.37:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on whether Minutes Kept and Approved during the Meeting.....	87
6.38:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on Conducting Social Audit of FY 2021	88
6.39:	Distribution (%) of the Positive Responses on Convening Child Sabhas, Ward Sabhas and Mahila Sabhas before GS.....	88
6.40:	Distribution (%) of the Positive Responses on Approval of Annual Income Expenditure Plan and on Prioritizing Development Work.....	89
6.41:	Average Number of GPPFT in PESA and Aspirational Districts	90
6.42:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on whether SHG help Attaining Convergence of Government Programmes.....	90
6.43:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on whether GPPFT got Adequate Training on GPDP	91
6.44:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Main Focus of the Last GPDP.....	91
6.45:	Distribution (%) of Positive Responses on Resource Mapping and Conducting Socio-Economic Survey (SES) before GPDP	92
6.46:	Distribution (%) of the Main Sources of Data while Preparing GPDP	92
6.47:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Use of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Method of Data Collection.....	93
6.48:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Compilation of data	93
6.49:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Analysis of data.....	94
6.50:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on Shortage of Skilled persons for Compilation/Analysis of data	94
6.51:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on following Government Guidelines and Convergence of Schemes among GPPFT	95
6.52:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on Convergence of Schemes among GPPFT	95
6.53:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Application of Any Software in the Preparation of GPDP	96
6.54:	Distribution (%) of the Positive Responses on the Amount of Tax Collected by GPs in the last Financial Year	96
6.55:	Distribution (%) of Responses on the Format of GP Accounts as prescribed by the State Government.....	97

6.56:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on Computerisation of GP Account.....	98
6.57:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Prioritizing Government Programmes.....	98
6.58:	Distribution (%) of the Responses on the areas to be prioritized in the Planning Process	98
6.59:	Distribution (%) of the Positive Responses on the Comprehensiveness of the RGSA in the Planning Process.....	99
6.60:	Role of SHG in preparing poverty reduction plan (%)	100
6.61:	Role of SHG in empowering Poor	100
6.62:	Enhancing capability of GPs for good governance	101
6.63:	Basis of Incentives to PRIs	101
6.64:	Area of performance Evaluation of PRIs.....	102
6.65:	Recommendation for Revamping the Scheme.....	103
6.66:	Recommendations to Increase the Training Facilities to Village level	103
6.67:	Collaboration of District level Coordination Committee with Other Institutes	103
7.1:	Distribution Social Groups among Selected/Nominated Representatives of VCDC & VDC (%)	106
7.2:	Gender Distribution among Selected/Nominated Representatives of VCDC & VDC (%)	106
7.3:	Distribution (%) of Educational Achievement among Selected/Nominated Representatives of VCDC & VDC	107
7.4:	Distribution (%) of Educational Level VCDC & VDC functionaries	107
7.5:	Distribution (%) of the Level of Computer Literacy among Selected/Nominated Representative.....	108
7.6:	Level of Computer Literacy among Functionaries of VDC & VCDC	108
7.7:	Material Received for the Training (%).....	109
7.8:	Usefulness of the Training Materials (%).....	110
7.9:	Practical Applicability of the training (%).....	110
7.10:	Reasons for Not Application of Training Knowledge in the Field.....	111
7.11:	Quality of the Trainers.....	111
7.12:	Computerisation of VCDC/VDCs	112
7.13:	Availability of Computer with Internet Facilities	112
7.14:	Software/application used in VDC/VCDC.....	113
7.15:	Use of the PRI related Software/Applications.....	113
7.16:	Training for the Software/application used in VDC/VCDC	114

Executive Summary

The United Nations Member States adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 to usher in peace, equality, and prosperity for the people and the planet by 2030. The attainment of these SDGs by 2030 necessitates efficient governance at the local level. According to Gandhian principles, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) play a crucial role in good governance at the grassroots level in India. It is, therefore, important to make Panchayats more accountable, transparent, and efficient. To ensure this, the Government of India in its 2016-17 Union Budget announced the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) with the primary aim of strengthening PRIs in all the States and UTs, including the non-Part IX areas where Panchayats do not exist, for achieving the SDGs. The scheme was approved for implementation for four years, from April 1, 2018 to March 31, 2022. The total budget for the scheme is Rs 7255.50 crores, out of which the State and the Centre will contribute Rs 2755.50 crore and Rs 4500 crores, respectively. PRIs are expected to play a significant role in ensuring the success of the scheme as they are responsible for implementing the various modules of the scheme at the local level. This decentralisation accords greater power and responsibility to the Gram Panchayats for successfully organising training programmes, monitoring their implementation, meeting the infrastructural needs, and filling resource gaps, among other things. Attaining convergence in different schemes is also very important as it would help promote good governance, pooling of human and capital resources, transfer of technologies, and productivity enhancement.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) decided to assess the overall implementation and

evaluation of RGSA till now, and to revamp the scheme, if necessary. The Ministry commissioned the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) for conducting this evaluation study by suggesting suitable policy and ground-level recommendations through an analysis of the performance of the programme and its key outcomes. NCAER conducted the study in 12 States of India, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. This NCAER study aims at providing inputs to minimise the gaps in implementation of the scheme and to improve local governance; to evaluate the possible reasons for these gaps; and recommend measures to bridge these gaps for more efficient implementation of the scheme in future.

The report is divided into 9 chapters, each one highlighting different aspects and findings of the study. The chapterisation is structured as follows. Chapter 1 provides an introduction of the scheme and identifies the need for the survey. Chapter 2 provides a summary of the main findings. Chapter 3 delineates the objectives of the scheme. Chapter 4 focuses on different stakeholders and the chosen methodology for the study. Chapter 5 lists the detailed State-wide findings. Chapter 6 presents a comparative analysis among all the targeted States, the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) districts, and the 'aspirational districts'. Chapter 7 evaluates the Tribal Local Bodies (TLBs) under the Sixth Schedule of Assam. Chapter 8 outlines the best practices identified by the NCAER team during the survey. Chapter 9 concludes the report by presenting the key recommendations, followed

by the Appendix and References. Following is a summary of each of the chapters of the report.

Chapter 1 provides details of the RGSA and the related schemes. It highlights the need for the scheme, which covers four broad areas, namely, financial resources, human resources, infrastructure, and technology. The scheme also provides funding to meet the critical resource gaps in the other projects aimed at economic development and income enhancement. Also, since Panchayats are the main agents for implementing and managing these subsidiary schemes, it is imperative to equip them with efficient human resources. RGSA also offers need-based support for the creation of infrastructure and facilities in training institutes, such as distance learning facilities, faculty/domain experts, and the recurring costs entailed by them. Furthermore, e-Panchayat is also one of the Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) launched to make PRIs more transparent, accountable, and effective, and is one of the components covered under the RGSA. The introductory chapter also discusses the Aspirational and PESA districts in detail and their linkages with the scheme. The chapter ends by pointing to the need for a robust monitoring and evaluation system for the scheme. A lot of work also needs to be done to promote capacity building, training of personnel, and generation of own sources of revenue, among others, for PRIs, to meet the scheme objectives.

Chapter 2 summarises the main findings and elaborates the need to expand the facility and coverage of the training imparted among various stakeholders in the different States as also the need to expand infrastructure. The modes and areas of training could be more focussed. Based on the experience acquired during the lockdown due to COVID-19, a hybrid mode of physical and online training could have a more positive outcome than that currently achieved at the GP level. The study also suggests some changes in the functioning of Panchayats, in capacity building and training strategies, and innovations in the use of technology for ensuring responsive service delivery, enhanced people's participation,

and greater transparency and accountability in enforcement of the scheme.

Chapter 3 lists the objectives of both the scheme and the objectives of the study as described by MoPR. The main objectives of the study are to assess the impact of the RGSA in terms of the training imparted to the ground-level functionaries, their efficacy and impact for fostering better governance, and promoting awareness, and skill development in the villages of India. The NCAER study also assesses and identifies the linkages between various activities under the programme with the SDGs, appraises the performance achieved till now, and suggests a logical data architectural framework for arriving at better future outcomes. It also reflects in detail on the outreach of the training programmes conducted under RGSA for all stakeholders of PRIs with a particular emphasis on Elected Representatives (ERs) amongst the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), Elected Women Representatives (EWRs), and members of the marginalised communities.

Chapter 4 describes the methodology of the study. First, it mentions the roles of all the seven stakeholders, namely, Elected Representatives; Panchayat functionaries; the Standing Committee of Panchayats/Working Groups/Village Committees/Task Forces/Gram Panchayat Planning Facilitation Team (GPPFT); Self Help Groups; Line Department Officials; faculties of the State Institutes of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (SIRD & PR), District Panchayat Resource Centres (DPRCs); and officials of State and District units of the RGSA. Second, the 12 States chosen for the study in consultation with the Ministry are listed, along with the four districts selected in each State, two blocks in each district, and five Gram Panchayat (GPs) in each block. Third, one questionnaire each was prepared for the seven categories of stakeholders listed above, in consultation with MoPR. Lastly, the primary survey was undertaken in the selected sample States through NCAER's empanelled networking institutions. The questionnaires were also developed for Web-assisted Telephone

Interviewing (WATI) through an appropriate software application. Thereafter, data analysis was carried out after receipt of data from all the selected States after validation.

NCAER carried out the primary survey to assess the ground reality pertaining to different aspects of the programme, such as the demographical and educational representation, the level of computer literacy, capacity building and training, and participation of stakeholders in activities carried out at their respective levels, among other things. The highest representation of STs in the scheme was found in the State of Madhya Pradesh, followed by Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. The representation of SCs, on the other hand, was the highest in Tamil Nadu, followed by Uttar Pradesh, while the representation of Other Backward Castes (OBCs) was the highest in Sikkim, followed by Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. The highest female representation was seen in Odisha, followed by Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu.

As regards the educational achievement of the ERs, the highest percentage representation was that of those having acquired secondary and higher secondary level education, at 41.3 per cent, followed by that of graduates, at 27.8 per cent. Further, 29.9 per cent possessed basic knowledge of computers, 9 per cent had intermediate skills in computer, while 2.7 per cent exhibited advanced computer literacy. Regarding the comparison of States, Sikkim had the highest basic knowhow, followed by Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, while the highest advanced level of computer literacy was observed in Sikkim, followed by Assam.

It was found that only 57.5 per cent of the ERs had received training after six months of elections, which asserts the need for expanding training capacity. At the all-state-level, ERs majorly received basic orientation training (71.9 per cent) and thematic training (58 per cent). In the aspirational districts, the delivery of refresher courses was seen to be slightly better than in the other districts, but a huge gap in provision

of training to ERs was still observed. Exposure visits, which comprise one of the most important training modules, revealed the importance of interactions with the PRI officials across all the sample States, followed by formal briefing in the form of presentations. It was observed that sharing of best practices during these exposure visits helped the ERs find solutions to their own village needs. The training programme also enhanced the capabilities of the ERs in terms of assessing the village needs and their managerial capabilities in mobilising citizens.

At the all-State level, only 15.6 per cent of the respondents knew how to operate software and applications, which highlights the ignorance and lack of awareness, as high as 84.4 per cent, among the ERs. A majority of the respondents, at the all-State level, and in the Aspirational and PESA areas, reported that the last training venue was in the Block/District Resource Centre. There is also lack of availability of infrastructure for imparting training.

The mapping of Common Service Centres (CSCs) was being more effectively in the Aspirational Districts as compared to the sample States or the PESA areas. At the national level, the extent of mapping was 57.2 per cent. In terms of local governance, 70 per cent of the ERs did not have even a basic knowledge of the operating systems. More than 60 per cent of the ERs said that CB&T under RGSA had strengthened Gram Sabha activities through improved accountability and transparency of operations.

Around 85 per cent of the ERs were involved in the preparations of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPD), while 80 per cent of them believed that the Capacity Building and Training (CB&T) initiatives under RGSA had strengthened localisation due to factors such as sensitisation and engagement of local factors, accountability mechanisms, participatory planning and service delivery, local economic development and partnerships, and the commitment to collective action. Further, 61 per cent of the GPs were aware of the initiatives

for convergence of the schemes of different government departments.

The percentage of graduates among the respondents was higher in the PESA States, whereas the proportion of those having acquired secondary and higher secondary level of education was higher in the Aspirational Districts. The Standing Committee and Gram Panchayat and Facilitation Teams were found to be functioning more efficiently in the PESA states while the Working Groups and Village Committees were relatively more active in the Aspirational Districts. The three primary activities carried out by the training institutions included training, monitoring and evaluation, and information dissemination. The same pattern was being followed in the PESA areas and the Aspirational Districts. The Training of Panchayati Raj Institutions (TPRI) constituted 97.6 per cent of the total training. The proportion was slightly higher in the PESA States as compared to the Aspirational Districts. The training institutes in the PESA States are mainly collaborating with other institutes for developing thematic modules, e-modules, and online courses, whereas in the Aspirational Districts, the training institutes are mainly collaborating for the expansion of a pool of master trainers and the assessment and certification of trainers. As regards the library and ICT tool facilities, the PESA States are far behind the Aspirational Districts. On the other hand, hostel facilities need to be strengthened in the Aspirational Districts. In the PESA areas, there is lack of involvement of the master trainers and also lack of sufficient training material as compared to the corresponding availability of these resources in the Aspirational Districts.

On an average, the number of GPPFTs is higher in the Aspirational Districts as opposed to the PESA areas. The extent of SHG support in promoting the convergence of programmes was relatively higher in the PESA areas as compared to the Aspirational Districts. The use of the PRA method of data collection was observed more in the PESA areas as opposed to the Aspirational Districts. Also, the degree of computerisation of

the GP accounts was higher in the PESA areas than in the Aspirational Districts. About 93 per cent of the respondents in the PESA areas perceived RGSA as a comprehensive scheme, whereas the corresponding figure was 77 per cent in the Aspirational Districts. It is suggested that the PESA districts should focus more on eradicating poverty to attain the SDGs.

A few case studies have also been used to highlight the qualitative key findings, which are significant for achieving the objectives of RGSA. One of the case studies was undertaken to analyse the condition of Village Development Committees (VDCs) and working status of the planning process in the VDCs. It was observed that the VDCs accorded importance to the repairing of Anganwadi centres and schools, installation of street lights, and development of village roads, among other tasks. The villagers were also aware of the Central and State government-sponsored schemes but their responses indicated that they were being deprived of some of the critical benefits of these schemes. The VDC members still have to depend on the Block Development Officers (BDOs) for the implementation of government schemes and programmes, and there is limited convergence of various government schemes.

Another case study in Odisha pertained to the generation of Own Source Revenues (OSRs) through developing capacities. Since the launch of the RGSA, the GP has been making a GPDP plan every year. The Panchayat ward members, Panchayat Samiti, and Gram Sabha members take part in forming these GPDP plans. The GP members highlight the works needed in the village based on which the GP draws the development priorities. Training is imparted to the panchayat members on their OSR generation and socio-economic development. An approximate amount of Rs 2.5 million was saved by the Panchayat from the GPDP fund for the period 2015-16 to 2019-20, which is being used for constructing a Kalyan Mandap. This space is slated to be rented out for marriage purposes, meetings, and other occasional functions/programmes with large

gatherings. The GPs believe that they will be able to generate adequate revenue through the Kalyan Mandap.

Another case study was related to capacity building and training in the PESA district of Bastar. A total of 125 training programmes were organised under RGSA in 7 districts through 3,603 trainers in 2018-19. In 2020-21, 27 training programmes were organised, whereby a total of 3,450 people, including PRI and SHG members, Line Department officials and others, were trained, mainly for subjects related to the 11th Schedule, revenue generation, women's empowerment, water conservation, e-Panchayats, Right to Information, GPDP preparation, PESA, solid waste management, cleanliness, Open Defecation Free (ODF) strategy, budgeting, and auditing, among other things. The scheme also helped improve employment generation and livelihood activities in the district.

Yet another case study was on infrastructural improvement in Uttar Pradesh. The RGSA funding bridged the gap in building of the GP infrastructure. It enhanced the capabilities of the Panchayats for good governance by enhancing participatory local planning, transparency, and accountability.

The fourth case study was on incentivisation of GPs in West Bengal. This GP was awarded the Best GPDP in the year 2018 by MoPR. Natural Resource Management is one of the crucial sectors in the area of development. In the GPDP for FY 2019-20, the GP implemented the provision of safe drinking water in the Shishu Shiksha Kendra in convergence with the One Source One Fund scheme of the School Education Department.

Following the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data, the study makes the following key recommendations:

1. The States have to strictly ensure the saturation of orientation and training of ERs of the Panchayats within six months from their election.
2. Refresher training should be imparted to the ERs within two years of their election.
3. The States should engage experienced resource persons for providing practical support to the GPs.
4. The duration of the orientation training programme should be increased.
5. More emphasis should be laid on conducting joint training programmes.
6. The RGSA needs to be revamped as a Central Sector Scheme in lieu of the present Central Support Scheme.

RGSA has provided need-based support for the creation of infrastructure and facilities in the training institutions of the States and at the district levels. Consequently, the States are expected to strengthen their institutional arrangements for CB&T while collaborating with the existing resource institutions, and NGOs, among others, to ensure the high quality of capacity endowment and outreach. More emphasis should also be placed on collecting data at regular intervals to understand the extent and outreach of the training process, and to study its underlying outcome indicators through qualitative research. It is imperative to ensure the adequate provisioning of resources and entitlements for achieving full implementation of the CB&T, while the NIRD & PR should effectively combine the mandates linked to rural governance and the various aspects needed to accomplish the SDGs. There is also a need for more concerted and robust processes to reform governance at the Panchayat level. This is possible by making governance more participatory and at the same time, technology- and performance-driven, and outcome-oriented. The results of the NCAER survey thus call for a paradigm change in the functioning of the Panchayats, a modest shift in capacity building and training strategies, innovations in the use of technology for responsive service delivery, and enhanced people's participation in decision-making for greater transparency and accountability.

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

As suggested by Mahatma Gandhi, villages are the mini-republics where true democracy takes place through people's participation at the grassroots level. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment authorised three-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to function as units of local self-government. Thus, PRIs have an important role to play in the welfare of people and decentralisation. Decentralisation refers to the transmission of authority and responsibility from the Central to intermediate and to the local governments. Strengthening local governance is intended to boost development, reduce poverty, and consolidate democracy at the grassroots level. Participatory decisions of the local governments are better reflected through the preferences of the people, especially the poor and vulnerable, due to their closeness to the local community.

Table 1.1: Panchayat System in India at a Glance

PRIs in India	2,56,103
Number of Gram Panchayats	2,48,856
Number of Block Panchayats	6,626
Number of District Panchayats	621
Number of Elected Representatives	31,00,000
Number of Elected Women Representatives	14,39,000
Percentage of Elected Women in total	46.42
Areas not covered by PRIs (non-Part IX): Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland & parts of Hill areas of Manipur, Darjeeling district of West Bengal, parts of Assam & Tripura	

Source: Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR), Government of India.

The role of Panchayats in rural governance and socio-economic development has been recognised since the 1950s. The need to strengthen Panchayats has deepened with a rise in expenditure on programmes of social welfare and inclusion, as Panchayats are crucial for ensuring that the benefits of these schemes reach the poor and marginalised sections, and the management of local institutions and accountability can be improved. In this context, there is a need to provide adequate technical and administrative support to the Panchayats, to strengthen their infrastructure and e-enablement, promote devolution, and augment their functioning. It is against this backdrop that the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan (RGPSA) has been launched to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). This scheme was approved on 7 March 2013. The erstwhile schemes of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, that is, the Panchayat Mahila Evam Yuva Shakti Abhiyan (PMEYSA), Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana (RGSY), Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), Panchayat Empowerment and Accountability Incentive Scheme (PEAIS), e-Panchayat, and Resource Support to States (RSS) have been subsumed in the RGPSA RGPSA with effect from 2013-14.¹

One of the critical issues in local self-governance is the introduction of Schedule V Areas. The Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996, lays the foundation of self-governance and people's control over resources through the Gram Sabhas (GS) in the Schedule V areas. However, the implementation of PESA has remained partial due to the lack

¹<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/Print/Release.aspx>

of amendment to the State laws in respect of PESA provisions and inadequacy of the efforts to strengthen GS. In this respect, strengthening of Panchayats and implementation of PESA in the Schedule V areas has assumed national importance, as it can lead to improved governance and accountability in these areas. In areas covered under the Sixth Schedule, the institution of Panchayats is not mandated and other forms of institutions exist for local governance. These institutions are proposed to support and strengthen PRIs in the country. It is in this context that the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) aims to strengthen the capacities of institutions for rural local governance, to enable them to become more responsive towards local development needs, prepare participatory plans leveraging technology, and efficiently utilise the available resources for ensuring sustainable solutions to local problems.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has the responsibility to oversee the compliance for strengthening capabilities for Capacity Building & Training (CB&T) of the PRIs through Elected Representatives (ERs) and Panchayat Functionaries (PFs). The increase in public expenditure through Panchayats compelled upgrading the capacity of Panchayats for better delivery of services. Owing to the emerging needs of rural areas for building the capability of PRIs, the Ministry devised the restructured Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) of RGSA. The scheme was approved to be implemented for four years, i.e., from April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2022.

The primary objective of RGSA is to strengthen PRIs with a focus on convergence with Mission Antyodaya and strengthening of the same in 117 Aspirational Districts along with incorporating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), mandated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). With a long-term vision to realise the SDGs at the grassroots level through effective and vibrant local governance institutions, MoPR commissioned this study to NCAER to assess the implementation and evaluation of RGSA with a

view to take appropriate steps for continuation of the scheme with required modifications. The study seeks to assess the current functional structure of local governance in the areas under the jurisdiction of PESA², non-PESA, and the Sixth Schedule.³

This evaluation study by NCAER has been carried out in 12 States, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. The primary survey of this study intends to bring out the gaps in local governance emphasised by the different stakeholders, who have been part of the study, and to offer recommendations to make local governance more effective and resourceful. It also covers the area of resource generation, training, and shortages, if any, and appraisal of the convergence of schemes that are operational at the grassroots level.

1.2 Genesis and the Context of the Study by NCAER

The key concern of the Central and State Governments for entrusting more programmes and activities is that Gram Panchayats (GPs) are not well-equipped with the required level of capacity to deliver the intended benefits to the targeted population. The situation varies across States but the general weakness in terms of administrative and technical capacity within the GPs in many States has led to a low level of utilisation of the already installed resources and the distribution of its benefit among the poor and downtrodden. This leads to a low productivity cycle, wherein low capability leads

²This is a legislation which extends the provisions of Panchayats to the Fifth Schedule Areas. These areas have preponderance of tribal population. This Act is called "The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996". In short PESA.

³The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution provides **for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram to safeguard the rights of the tribal population in these states**. This special provision is provided under Article 244(2) and Article 275(1) of the Constitution.

to a poor state of devolution, which, in turn, leads to disempowered institutions. Able governance of the constitutionally elected Panchayats is crucial to address issues at the local level and also to attain the 2030 agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is therefore important to assess the capacity of Panchayats and related institutions to devise mechanisms on Gram Sabha processes to support transparency, accountability, and efficient delivery of services to frame a deliverable strategy.

Apart from the decentralisation of powers and functions under State Acts, GPs are increasingly being assigned functions under different programmes of the Central and State Governments. The Union Budget 2016-17 announced the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) for building capabilities of PRIs to deliver on SDGs. Key local development challenges faced by the country viz. poverty, public health, nutrition, education, gender, sanitation, drinking water, livelihood generation etc. are in sync with SDGs and fall within the contour of PRI governance. Through RGSA capacity building and training, States/UTs provide special emphasis on digital literacy of Elected Representatives, prioritise various Capacity Building & Training activities for the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for promoting alternate livelihood opportunities through distance mode/online/video mode training with support from the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR)/State Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (SIRDPR) and forging collaborations with educational institutions and institutions of excellence for providing handholding support to Gram Panchayats for preparation of quality Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).

1.3 Panchayats and Development

With the enactment of the 73rd Amendment in the Indian Constitution in 1993, the three-tier Panchayati Raj system came into being as units of self-government, with the objective of ensuring local economic development and social

justice, and a definitive role for Gram Sabhas. Further, according to the Eleventh Schedule of the Act, there are 29 subjects for which the panchayats shall have administrative control and Article 243H empowers State Legislatures to make laws for panchayats to impose taxes, duties, tolls, and fees, and to avail of grants-in-aid. The Act also makes provisions for the inclusion and representation of marginalised groups in the Panchayats, like women and SC/ST social groups. The vision was to create conditions for inclusive growth through participatory planning (Rao and Raghunandan 2011).

The concepts of decentralisation and development are closely linked though there is no clear consensus on the relationship. One of the main reasons why decentralisation may lead to development is political accountability with respect to the provision of public goods. In a centralised system, there are often large gaps between the commitment of resources for programmes and their delivery at the local level. Not only does the local government have access to better information on the needs of the locality than the Centre, but it also has greater incentives to be more responsive, as the welfare of the locality may determine their re-election. However, local governments are also more susceptible to the capture of elites, in which case there may be over-provision of goods to the elite at the cost of non-elites (Bardhan 2002). This has been documented in several studies on local governance. For instance, a study on 500 villages in four the southern Indian States of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala shows that after the 73rd Amendment, Gram Panchayats created by this Act had a great impact in improving public delivery services, like targeting beneficiaries but were also highly dependent on the political elites that are there in the system (Besley et al. 2007).

Ultimately, whether decentralisation leads to efficient and equitable resource allocation within a community and related welfare gains depends critically on the mobilisation of vulnerable citizens, an avenue for the Gram Sabhas. Das (2015)

uses the Rural Economic and Demographic Survey (REDS) dataset prepared by NCAER to analyse whether Gram Sabhas are effective in incorporating the preferences of marginalised groups in local public goods provision. The author finds that only around 13 per cent of the villagers attend GPs, on an average, many more men than women, and there are strong differences in the preferences of men and women over local public goods. The top preference of women is water supply while that of men is road construction. The author finds that greater attendance of women as compared to men in the Gram Sabhas is successful in altering the composition of local public goods provided by the GP towards those preferred by women. The author contends that political representation alone may not capture the true ability of marginalised groups, such as women, to affect policy choices and strengthening the institution of the Gram Sabha may be a viable alternative. The author recommends better laws and enforcement, and information campaigns regarding the powers and procedures of Gram Sabhas.

At a more macroeconomic level, the MoPR has mapped the activities of the GPs to several SDGs, specifically 1 to 8, 13 and 15 (Handbook on Sustainable Development Goals and Gram Panchayats). Some of the ways in which GPs can contribute to the SDGs include: a) facilitation of income-generating activities through skills and entrepreneurship development to alleviate poverty; b) enrolment of families under the Public Distribution System (PDS) for ensuring hunger-free villages; c) maintenance and monitoring of the quality of health care services in villages to promote good health for all ages; d) ensuring retention of children in school by facilitating access to scholarships/stipends, free uniform, text books, mid-day meals, and so on, for ensuring education for all; e) ensuring an end to discriminatory and illegal practices like child marriage and female foeticide in villages for promoting gender equality and women empowerment; and so on.

One of the ways for GPs to attain the SDGs

is through a convergence of resources from different government schemes at the GP level. Mission Antyodaya (MA) is one such initiative with the specific goal of ensuring sustainable livelihoods for the deprived rural population in 50,000 GPs. A mid-term evaluation of the MA clusters compared pairs of high- and low-performing GPs, in terms of several development indicators, to understand the factors driving success (NIRDPR 2018). The study showed that greater community participation, solid leadership, responsive functionaries, active involvement of line departments, and a high degree of awareness regarding government schemes, are some of the significant enablers of better performance. Greater use of technology and funds from own sources of revenue are important factors as well. Well-performing GPs also have some locational advantages like proximity to cities and easy access to important amenities like health and education facilities.

Hence, the potential for development through empowered Panchayats is immense and an integrated approach is required for the realisation of this potential, through the simultaneous development of many dimensions of good governance, including legislative and fiscal reforms. For instance, many States have not devolved enough tax administration powers to the GPs (*The Economic Times* 2018), which may hinder autonomy and growth. An important consideration for the future is also whether PRIs should be more actively involved in the design of schemes or grants at the state or central level (The World Bank 2006).

1.4 Need for the Scheme

The RGSA responds to some critical challenges faced by PRIs, which are highlighted in the following sections.

1.4.1 Financial Resources

Panchayats receive funds from three sources, namely, Centrally sponsored schemes, funds released by State governments, and local body

grants (rural local administration). For PRIs to work effectively and efficiently, the funds they are getting must be used to create assets that generate revenues. Besides that, GPs can also raise funds by generating their own source of revenue via taxes such as property tax, vehicle tax, pilgrim tax, and animal tax; user o(The World Bank, 2014). One of the main problems faced by PRIs is their high dependence on schemes, grants, and the State for funds. According to a study conducted by the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) on 30 Gram Panchayats (GP) across eight States (Bihar, Maharashtra, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Karnataka, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh), there was an 86 per cent increase in Central Finance Commission (CFC) transfers in the Fourteenth Finance Commission (FoFC) period over the Thirteenth Finance Commission (TFC) period. State government transfers increased by 279.9 per cent, State Finance Commissions (SFC) transfers increased by 17.5 per cent whereas own revenue just increased by 9.4 per cent during this period in the above-mentioned States. The total revenues from all sources increased from Rs 9.3 crore in the TFC period to Rs 13.5 crore in the FoFC period whereas the total expenditure increased from Rs 5.2 crore in the TFC period to only Rs 6.3 crore in the FoFC period. Overall, there are 172 expenditure items reported by the States, which vary from State to State, including expenditure on community assets like buildings, parks, playgrounds, cremation grounds; roads and buildings; construction and maintenance of footpaths and local body roads; water supply and sanitation; street lighting; salaries, wages, pensions, and many others. The study also revealed problems in the utilisation of funds, and it was noted that the main problem arises because of the restrictions on the usage of funds, delay in receipts and getting approvals, and lack of human resources (Centre for Policy Research). A study conducted by PRIA in Jharkhand with the help of UNICEF also mentioned similar problems related to the generation of Own Sources of Revenue (OSRs) by the GPs and proposed recommendations for the same (Participatory

Research in Asia (PRIA).

Given this backdrop, one of the focus areas of the scheme is the mobilisation of own resources and reduction in dependence on grants, through local and convergent planning. For an effective GPDP, reflecting clear mappings of local needs to local solutions, the scheme envisages guidance and handholding support from institutions of excellence. The scheme promotes innovations, like new knowledge or processes or improvement in existing practices, including new ideas for generating OSRs. Additionally, the scheme provides funding for critical resource gaps in other schemes/projects on economic development and income enhancement.

1.4.2 Human Resources

Panchayats are the main functionaries for implementing and managing the schemes, therefore, it is imperative for all panchayats to have efficient human resources. But the human resources at the GP level are not fully accountable and cannot multi-task or take other responsibilities. There are problems in human resource functioning due to a lack of monitoring, which sometimes results in exploitation. Also, since they are appointed under different departments and schemes, their horizontal and vertical convergence is not guaranteed (MoRD, 2018). The Sumit Bose Committee (2017) has noted several deficiencies in the GPs, such as:

- Insufficiency of staff;
- Inadequacy of qualifications;
- Lack of objectivity in recruitment;
- Poor terms and conditions of service;
- Low incentives for performance; and
- Lack of adequate training.

The Committee has offered certain recommendations regarding the human resource problem and suggested that in every GP, there should be a full-time Secretary and a Technical Assistant; IT-related work can be outsourced to trained professionals from the SHG network; all

employees must have a working knowledge of computers, and the minimum qualification for hiring personnel should involve gradation and computer proficiency; GPs can get assistance from NGOs and Functional Committees whenever required. Furthermore, Training Need Assessment (TNA) must be conducted time to time. In its mid-term evaluation of RSGY in November 2011, MoPR also mentioned that Capacity Building and Training (CB&T) is still one of the neglected areas that need improvement through collaboration with professional service providing agencies, and academic institutions, among others (MoPR 2011).

Capacity Building and Training (CB&T) of PRI officials and other relevant stakeholders like SHG members is a significant focus area of the scheme. The various challenges in CB&T include: need for training a large number and diverse range of personnel; maintaining the quality of training; the difference in age, education, and experience of the officials to be trained; shortage of trainers; lack of a proper method to measure outcomes of training and monitoring of the training (National Capacity Building Framework-2014, 2014). Various training methods have been adopted by State Institutes of Rural Development (SIRDs) to overcome the above-mentioned problems, such as: the cascading training method, adopted by SIRD-Rajasthan successfully, involves decentralised training simultaneously at multiple locations to different levels of PRIs and ERs that helps in minimising costs and ensures easy access to training at different locations; self-training modules have been made available online so that officials can access them anywhere anytime, which was adopted by SIRD-Andhra Pradesh successfully; mass media like radio, TV, and newspapers have been used to create awareness among PRIs regarding relevant issues like government schemes, was utilized by SIRD-Chhattisgarh successfully; to reach a larger pool of people, Satellite Communication, that is, SATCOM training, has been used with properly installed two-way audio and video connectivity at the SATCOM centres; to boost motivation

of PRIs, exposure visits are being conducted to the good performing PRIs, guidelines for the same have been issued by the MoPR; peer learning can be a great source of learning since it involves learning from experienced and good performing ERs; on-the-job training, video conferencing and creating help desks are also used to provide training and for handling grievances of the officials. With these methods of training, an important decision for the SIRDs is to implement a combination of training methods in accordance with the needs of the time and place. While 81 per cent of the elected PRIs have been entrusted with the induction and GPDP training programmes (SIRD & PR 2020), a total of 1172 training programmes were organised by SIRD & PR during the year 2018-19 (SIRD & PR 2019) and 1632 during the period 2019-2020 (SIRD & PR 2020).

1.4.3 Infrastructure

One of the core pillars of development is public infrastructure, which may increase the productivity of labour and other inputs. In the context of GPs, while access to facilities like health and education services is indispensable, the construction, maintenance, and repair of physical buildings and other GP equipment are equally important for building strong institutional capacity. The Standing Committee on Rural Development, in its Sixth Report on Rural Development (2020), found that 23.1 per cent of the GPs were without a Panchayat Bhawan, and argued that since funding under RGSA to State governments is limited, funds could be utilised from MGNREGA, and revenue from minerals, and advised that each GP should necessarily have a Panchayat Bhawan. The Committee observed that 32.5 per cent of the GPs were without computers and many of the GPs' computers are not in use because of the absence of Internet or power connectivity, and strongly recommended that all GPs must be equipped with an adequate number of computers, Internet connection, and power supply to attain SDGs. The Committee also found that rural people are still unaware

of the facilities given to them under the PRIs, and hence, the Ministry should ensure that all relevant information flows to them through media, newsletters, and so on. The Committee praised the Ministry's quarterly magazine "*Gramoday Sankalp*" and other measures that have already been taken in this regard. The Committee also highlighted that research studies should be conducted for these schemes since they help to restructure and improve the implementation of schemes. The Committee also recommended that surprise field visits should be undertaken by the State and Central Government functionaries to check the actual progress made under the schemes and the data must be shared with the Committee.

Apart from GP buildings, RGSA also provides need-based support for the creation of infrastructure and facilities in training institutes, such as distance learning facilities, faculty/domain experts and recurring costs.

1.4.4 Technology

ICT tools aid in development by facilitating the sharing of knowledge, increasing productivity, overcoming distance, and promoting openness (The World Bank 2004). However, exclusive focus on technology without looking at the broader social and economic goals can result in wasted resources. The key issue for local governments is to ensure that the benefits of technology adoption reach even the most deprived in the community. This is particularly pertinent for the GPs.

The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) was initiated in 2006 with the main aim to "*Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency & reliability of such services at affordable costs to realise the basic needs of the common man.*" Under this, 31 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) had been launched. Common Service Centre (CSCs) were also created under this initiative in rural areas to provide high-quality and cost-effective e-services at the grassroots levels. Its deliverables

include bill payments, birth and death certificates, land records, property tax, various certificates, transport, and grievance redressal, among others. As per the NCAER Tele Law Scheme Evaluation in 2020 (NCAER 2020), an initiative of the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, a typical CSC is small with 2-3 phones and computers, and improvement is desirable in the quality of infrastructure of CSCs for ensuring their effective service delivery, particularly in the North-Eastern States.

e-Panchayat is also one of the MMPs launched to make PRIs more transparent, accountable, and effective, and is a component covered under the RGSA. Panchayat Enterprise Suite (PES) has been developed under this initiative, which addresses various aspects of the Panchayats' functioning. The PES applications involve LGD (Local Government Directory), Area-Profiler, Plan-Plus, PRAI-Soft, Action-Soft, NAD (National Asset Directory), Service-Plus, SAMM (Social Audit and Meeting Management), Training Management, NPP (National Panchayat Portal), GIS (Geographic Information System), and Online Audit. Under RGSA, funds are released directly to the National Informatics Centre (NIC) for maintenance of PES applications, faculty support, and programme management. The effective rollout of these tools is also dependent on last-mile Internet connectivity and other infrastructure in GPs (Standing Committee on Rural Development 2020).

In summary, RGSA makes it possible to bridge the gaps in these areas through its various initiatives, among others, like handholding support from institutions of excellence. However, these four broad areas highlighted are interwoven and are by no means the only challenges faced by PRIs. For instance, a GP without adequate technical staff cannot utilise innovative ICT tools to their full potential and may thus fail to realise the related productivity gains. Similarly, the cascade mode of training may not be possible without adequate infrastructure like halls and

auditoriums with seating arrangements in training institutes. Hence, coordination of a multitude of agents is required to reap the full benefits of the scheme.

1.5 Synergies with Other Initiatives

States are taking different action plans to reach the desired goals. In Andhra Pradesh, after the announcement of RGSA, the government took steps to strengthen its District Panchayat Resource Centres (DPRCs), which were launched in 2014-15 to provide support to PRIs in building capacity. Proper training is being provided to all the resource people engaged in the DPRCs, which help in capacity building and effective functioning of the PRIs (Panchayati Raj Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh 2021). Assam is one of the focus States of the Government's Skill India Mission, an initiative to strengthen the skills of citizens through vocational training. A study on the assessment of the skill development initiative in Assam showed that a majority of the people are satisfied with the training, quality, and number of trainers, and all the facilities provided are satisfactory, but post-training results are not good. There are poor placements after training, very few new ventures are started by people after training, and there is low loan application and procurement. Therefore, initiatives need to be taken in this regard to achieve the SDGs. Assam has also undertaken a study and found that the State has the potential to change the rural landscape with the smart use of its resources (SIPRD 2021).

In 2018, in the extension of the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, Extended Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (EGSA) was launched under the "Sabka Sath, Sabka Gaon, Sabka Vikas" campaign, to reach poor households, urge them to enrol them in government schemes, and obtain their feedback. Five priority areas were identified under this campaign: Education, Health, Nutrition, Skills, and Agriculture. Under the Education department, it was found that the dropout rates in schools had increased and there was a need to control them through initiatives like increasing

the number of functional toilets and drinking water facilities. The Health Department focused on the eradication of TB and has assisted approximately 74 per cent of the notified TB patients till September 2018 and is aiming at identifying and treating more. According to the Health and Wellness Centre Report, 98 per cent of the proposed health and wellness centres were operational. Under the Skill Department, Rozgar Melas were organised to facilitate mobilisation and carried out through Kaushal Melas, but their coverage was limited to 45 per cent of the target, and only 51 per cent of the candidates were able to get a job after attending the same. Only 52 per cent of the targeted Kaushal Melas and 66 per cent of the targeted Job Melas were organised but more than 200 per cent of rural youth enrolment was seen in Kaushal Panjee (skill registration platform). EGSA also included a saturation drive for 7 programmes, namely, Saubhagya, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, Ujala Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Mission Indradhanush, and Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana. As of 2018, the saturation rates for these schemes were 77 per cent, 114.2 per cent, 110 per cent, 99.9 per cent, 107.4 per cent, 103.6 per cent, and 100 per cent respectively, in terms of villages covered versus targeted (MoPR & MoRD, 2018). However, the Saubhagya and Ujjwala schemes had reached out to only 27 per cent and 39 per cent of the intended beneficiaries till May 2018, whereas the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana enrolled 88 per cent of targeted beneficiaries (*The Hindu*, 2018).

1.5.1 Aspirational Districts and RGSA

The Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP), launched in 2018, aims to measure the real-time progress of 115 most backward districts with respect to three core principles, namely, Convergence (of Central and State schemes), Collaboration (among the Centre, State, District, and Citizens) and Competition (among the districts in key performance indicators). The parameters monitored span 5 sectors: Healthcare

and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Basic Infrastructure, and Skill Development and Financial Inclusion, with varying weightage (NITI Aayog 2018). RGSA has provided panchayats with a major role in the development of these aspirational districts through initiatives like capacity building and training.

An evaluation of the ADP by UNDP (UNDP 2020) compares the Aspirational Districts with other districts of similar socio-economic conditions and finds that the Aspirational Districts have shown relatively more progress on all the indicators. Stakeholders revealed that the month-on-month monitoring approach through the Champions of Change (CoC) Dashboard on 49 indicators has played a significant role in the evident improvements. Some of the other enabling factors include synchronised planning and governance, and collaborations with civil society organisations, philanthropies and other knowledge partners. However, many of these districts are struggling with insufficient and inefficient human resources, especially districts located in remote areas with poor ICT infrastructure. The study highlights the need to strengthen the capacities of the technical and administrative personnel of these districts, through regular training sessions and handholding support. Some of the technical skill trainings suggested are measurement and data collection methods, digitisation, data analysis, bid writing skills, and coordination at the grassroots level. Another study (Kapoor and Green 2020), conducted through a distance to the frontier approach, also found that the Aspirational Districts had made significant progress on health and nutrition, education and basic infrastructure parameters, and attribute this to initiatives related to generating awareness, monitoring through the CoC dashboard, and incentivised collaborations among the government and private and civil society sectors. Hence, by design, RGSA has the potential to address these gaps, while also providing support to sustain the good practices through interventions at the grassroots level.

1.5.2 PESA and RGSA

The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, (PESA) is a law enacted in 1996 with the main aim to extend Part IX of the Constitution, with certain modifications and exceptions, to the Schedule V areas, with a preponderance of tribal population, based on a report of the Bhuria Committee submitted in 1995. It aims to empower the tribal population so that they can self-govern through Gram Sabhas. The Schedule V areas exist in 10 States, including Telangana, Rajasthan, Odisha, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh. However, it has been seen that the implementation of the Act has been less than satisfactory because of two reasons—firstly, because States have not shown enough interest in amending State laws to comply with the Act, and secondly because there is an inadequacy in the efforts to strengthen Gram Sabhas (MoPR).

The Act mandates that all Chairpersons of PRIs and at least half of the total seats in the PRIs will be reserved for ST individuals. The political economy literature on the effects of electoral quotas on the welfare of minority communities, though vast, does not provide conclusive evidence. We can expect quotas to empower the targeted groups, but their impact on the distribution of power and benefits across groups is less straightforward. There are several contrasting hypotheses regarding this issue. First, there may be a solidarity effect of quotas, wherein there are positive spillovers from the targeted groups to other non-targeted minorities, for instance, due to cooperation between groups with similar policy preferences. Second, there could be a competition effect of quotas, wherein the gains to the targeted groups come at the cost of the non-targeted minorities, for instance, when different groups vie to capture the same public goods. Finally, there could be a performance effect of quotas, whereby the benefits to non-targeted minorities remain unchanged, for instance, if quota politicians put in more effort than non-

quota politicians. These effects are not mutually exclusive and may co-exist through different dimensions (Gulzar et al. 2020, Dunning 2010).

Gulzar et al (2020) empirically investigate this question in the context of the PESA areas and find support for the competition and performance hypotheses. The authors study the impact of the electoral quota in PESA areas on service delivery under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), road construction under Prime Minister's Gram Swaraj Yojana (PMGSY), and public goods provision and find positive impacts on the Scheduled Tribe (ST) community. They further find that the gains to ST households come at the cost of the relatively privileged rather than other historically disadvantaged groups like Scheduled Caste (SC) households. Overall, the delivery of government programmes in PESA areas is no worse than in non-PESA areas. The study measures impact up to twelve years after the implementation of the Act and hence captures a relatively long-term effect. However, other research (CPR 2018) shows that the ST population in PESA areas remains one of the most vulnerable and impoverished groups in India despite the special constitutional and legal protections extended to them. Hence, more needs to be done for the development of these areas. Under RGSA, capacity development of PESA areas is a focus area.

1.6 International Experience

A regional authority index computed by Hooghe et al. (2010) for 42 advanced democracies shows that close to 70 per cent of these countries have decentralised since 1950. The impact of fiscal decentralisation on socio-economic indicators has also been widely studied for the OECD countries. The results from these studies indicate that decentralisation has led to improved student performance on standardised tests, a decline in infant mortality rates, higher GDP per capita and productivity of labour force, and reduction in public indebtedness. At the same time, it is associated with greater income inequality

within a country. It has also been found to lead to greater regional disparities in countries with poor institutional quality, where elite capture is more prevalent (Martinez-Vazquez et al. 2017). The latter point is a serious concern in other developing countries as well, like China.

The experience of China is worth noting. A distinctive feature of the Chinese governance system is that it is characterised by political centralisation with economic and administrative decentralisation. Local governments in China have much more fiscal authority in terms of spending out of the total government budgetary expenditure and also much larger responsibility for infrastructure-building and public services than in India. They manage infrastructure construction, operation and maintenance through separate companies set up for the purpose rather than through their own departments like in India. They are also much more actively involved in local business development. However, there are much fewer checks on unlawful activities through collusion between local officials and businessmen, like violations of safety standards in factories and mines. Debt-fuelled over-investment and excess capacity in politically connected firms are also major areas of concern currently in China (Bardhan 2020). A recent study on the impact of a decentralisation reform initiated in 2004 in China (Jia et al. 2020) finds that it significantly dampened tax enforcement. The reform simultaneously increased local tax autonomy and fiscal transfers, and gave rise to conflicting incentives, and the net effect is negative. The author posits that for mitigating fiscal difficulties at the local level, tax autonomy is a much more effective tool than transfers. This has been noted in other studies as well.

A comparable programme to RGSA is the Programa Municípios Verdes (PMV) or the Green Municipality Program, which was implemented in 2011, in the state of Pará in the eastern Brazilian Amazon. The programme was introduced in response to a national policy that placed municipalities with particularly high rates of deforestation on a 'blacklist' and imposed

penalties and restrictions on them. The policy aimed to effectively decentralise efforts to control deforestation. The programme sought to increase the capacity of local governments to respond to this policy by lowering their deforestation rates while at the same time sustaining economic development in the long run. Among other incentives, the PMV offers technical support in the form of training and equipment in environmental management and collaborations with other stakeholders, like local producers, businessmen and environment agencies, to participating municipalities. It also seeks to strengthen the vertical relationship between local, State, and national governments. An evaluation of the PMV (Sills et al. 2020) finds that while the programme has a limited impact on deforestation rates, it does stimulate the local economy in other ways by improving the share of the tax revenue they generate.

The role of local governments in attaining the SDGs is also prominent in other parts of the world. Many of the SDGs remain a challenge around the world because they are not only a problem of technology, infrastructure or financing but also one of the capability and quality of local governments and there is a poor understanding of the same. Herrera (2019) discusses some of the local governance challenges that countries face in the context of SDG 6—ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. As the task of overseeing the implementation of water and sanitation services falls under the domain of responsibilities of elected officials, they are often influenced by their electoral incentives, as has been documented in Sub-Saharan Africa and Mexico. When local public utilities are subject to such clientelism, this can not only lead to under-provision of the services required most in the community, but also lead to technically unsound creations, which break down over time.

In addition, service professionalisation and training are often limited at the local level, which further hampers implementation. While private sector engagement in service provision could

solve these problems and have had some successes, such as in Chile, Colombia, and China, their efficacy in most low-income countries lagging on the SDGs has been less promising. SDG 6 also envisioned greater community participation, which has had mixed results. In rural settings, when projects are implemented on a small scale, it can lead to improved water services, such as in Oaxaca, Mexico, and the highlands of Bolivia. These are cases where, in the absence of the support of local governments, rural communities struggle with issues surrounding water contamination, low levels of experience or information, and financing. However, when community water projects are implemented by external agencies, such as international organisations, without local support, they are likely to fail and lead to unrest, as has been illustrated in case studies in Chile and Mali. Thus, while active community participation is desirable, technical and fiscal training, long-term planning, and monitoring are equally important. The broad ideas highlighted by the author in this article applies to other SDGs as well.

1.7 Need for the Evaluation

Along with investments in critical areas, a robust monitoring and evaluation system is required for the scheme to progress and improve. As has been seen in the literature, a lot of work still needs to be done in building capacity, training of personnel, and generating Own Sources of Revenue (OSRs), among others, for the PRIs to meet the scheme objectives. Proper monitoring and getting regular progress reports are required to stay up-to-date about the status of every State and to address any gaps promptly. Attaining convergence in different schemes is also very important, as it would help in good governance, pooling of human and capital resources, transfer of technologies, and enhancement in productivity (Sangeeta Bhattacharyya, 2018). Many indicators have been developed for effective monitoring and evaluation of the development of villages, like a village index by Mulyanto and Susilowati in 2012 using 9 village development indicators

(Susilowati, 2012), and the Rural Transformation Index by Wang et al. in 2012, using 3 different rural development indicators (Wang and Zhang, 2012). Such an initiative is also required for the scheme.

The present study is an attempt to evaluate the RGSA from various angles, like implementation and effectiveness of capacity building and training initiatives, use of technology, preparation of GPDP, the conduct of Gram Sabhas, collaborations with institutions of excellence, and so on. The specific objectives of the evaluation are to assess:

- a) The coverage and quality of capacity building and training initiatives conducted under the scheme, including coverage of marginalised groups;
- b) The quality of infrastructure facilities, that is, Panchayat Bhawan, SPRC, DPRCs, PLCs, etc. created under the scheme;
- c) Whether the GPDPs are participatory, inclusive, and relevant to the target community needs and ensure convergence of resources from different schemes, with a special focus on localisation and attainment of SDGs;
- d) The extent of adoption and usage of ICT tools;
- e) The fund flow and accountability under the scheme; and
- f) If the challenges are being tackled and best practices replicated under the scheme.

1.8 Report Structure and a Preview

The report presents a comprehensive appraisal of the RGSA scheme undertaken by the Government of India with the available ground-level information received from the field survey. The next chapter presents a summary of the findings. A summary of the objectives of the study is presented in Chapter 3, while the methodology undertaken is elaborated in Chapter 4. The State-wise detailed findings are summarised in Chapter 5. A comparative analysis is attempted next, followed by the conclusion and recommendations. A discussion on the best practices adopted by the GPs is presented at the end.

Summary of the Findings

2.1 Introduction

The critical objectives of the RGSA are to enhance the capabilities of Panchayats at the local level with a focus on optimal utilisation of accessible resources and convergence with other government schemes to address issues of poverty and vulnerability of the poor and marginalised sections of rural India. Keeping in view the objectives of the RGSA, NCAER carried out a field survey at different levels of stakeholders and panchayat functionaries in 12 States, including Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal. The feedback received from the respondents of various stakeholders through the primary survey provided insights on the impact and performance of the RGSA programmes on the training undertaken at the GP level, training infrastructure, capacity building and its impact in terms of its outreach among the communities involved in local governance at the village level in India.

2.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Gram Panchayats in India

The distribution of Socio-Economic Groups (SEGs) among the Elected Representatives (ERs) of the GPs is an important reflection of social empowerment. This representation includes 16 per cent of the Scheduled Castes (SCs), 26.5 per cent of the Scheduled Tribes (STs), 39.8 per cent of Other Backward Castes (OBCs), and 17.3 per cent of the General category. Among the States, the highest female representation is observed in Odisha (61.5 per cent), followed by Chhattisgarh (59.6 per cent), Rajasthan (55.8 per cent), and Tamil Nadu (55.3 per cent).

The age-group distribution shows that the elected Panchayat members mostly belong to the economically active working age group of 25-45 years (65.0 per cent of the total). Among the States, Uttar Pradesh represents the highest distribution of active working age members (76.9 per cent), followed by Uttarakhand (75.0 per cent), and Odisha (73.1 per cent).

The composition of the operational committees in the Gram Sabha (GS) includes 35.4 per cent of the Standing Committee (SC), 19.6 per cent of the Working Group (WG), 27.1 per cent of the Village Committee (VC), 1.4 per cent of the Task Force (TF), and 16.5 per cent of the Gram Panchayat Planning and Facilitation Team (GPPFT) members. The gender distribution in the GS shows a little over 46 per cent of female representation, which is a satisfactory position as regards the functioning of local governance.

Educational achievement is an important consideration in the functioning of the GPs as a grass-roots level institution. The distribution of educational achievement among the ERs shows the highest percentage representation of those with secondary and higher secondary level education (41.3 per cent), followed by graduates (27.8 per cent). The proportion of graduates is the highest in Andhra Pradesh (44.2 per cent) followed by Uttarakhand (39.6 per cent). The educational achievement among the ERs shows that Panchayats are well-endowed in terms of adaptability and if trained suitably, they can emerge as a devoted workforce for development of the local economy. On the whole, it is observed that a little over 41 per cent of the respondents are conversant with computer applications, which

can be a driving force of change in the village economy.

2.3 Training, Capacity Creation, Resources and their Utilisation

Training programmes are significant sources of capacity creation and resource utilisation at the GP level. The National Capability Building Framework (NCBF) is intended to assist States in expanding their outreach and enhancing the quality of their capability building initiatives. It provides many references on various modes of training, subjects of training, quality-enhancing strategies, training imparted to women as well as to SC and ST representatives, and improving training institutions, among other things. Organising orientation training programmes after election for the ERs in the GP is one of the major objectives of RGSA. The NCAER survey confirms that the training programme is organised within six months of joining for around 60 per cent of the respondents. However, it is important to note that in this area, major States like Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra trailed behind in comparison to the other States. The feedback received from the respondents shows that apart from the lockdown conditions, the critical reasons for lower level of training is the lack of infrastructure for providing relevant training after the elections. The quantum of training was found to be less in the Aspirational Districts, which points to the need for expansion of the training capacity for better outcomes.

Among the States, Tamil Nadu achieved a training level of 49 per cent, while the proportion of training was near-total in the States of Sikkim and Uttarakhand. **The reason for the higher proportion of training in the States basically reflects the online mode of orientation courses offered to the ERs during the lockdown phases in the reference period (2020–21). This indicates the need for adopting a hybrid mode of training.** However, there is concern about the low outreach of the refresher courses. Overall, **only 34 per cent received refresher course training.** The condition in the Aspirational Districts reveals

little variation and overall, there is a huge gap in provision of such training to the ERs and other stakeholders.

The low intake of refresher courses highlights the visible deficiency of capacity to conduct and provide quality training to the important stakeholders, that is, those who are supposed to lead the changes in the approach to development planning in the village economy. It is anticipated that as more funds become available under the CB&T, its outreach and quality will be enhanced. However, this will not happen mechanically. For this purpose, the States, along with the State Institutes of Rural Development (SIRDs) and other resource institutions will need to follow a systematic strategy for increasing the outreach of their capability building efforts and enhancing quality. As reflected in the NCAER primary survey, the thematic training for the sector enabler remains severely under-provided. On the other hand, joint training programmes, like the refresher course, are almost non-starters, which is an issue of concern. The changed operating environment of rural development has meant rapid changes in the basic concepts and approaches to the training method.

For reaching out to a large number of targeted persons, the key strategies would be to adopt a cascade mode of training, whereby the resource persons are trained, and they then provide training at multiple locations; the use of distance modes of education, especially satellite or SATCOM-based training; decentralisation of training by establishing training institutes at the district and block levels; and partnership with NGOs and academic institutes to provide training as per a common framework. These strategies need to be sustained and strengthened across the States. An equally important issue for reaching out to large numbers is the need to train new ERs after elections. Some States are able to train all the new ERs within six months of elections as stipulated, but others take longer. It is important for each State to develop the capacity and strategy to train all ERs after elections within six months. While all the States address

the training of ERs, efforts to train Panchayat functionaries such as secretaries and accountants are less uniform. Several institutes have begun to impart training to new stakeholders, such as Panchayat Development Officers and watermen in Andhra Pradesh, members of Gram Sabhas, and public representatives in Tamil Nadu. All States should concurrently increase the range of stakeholders for reaching out to all those involved with Panchayats.

In this context, there is an impending need to augment the capability to train the stakeholders not only to facilitate the work process but also to bring in the desired changes that are crucial for the development of the village society at the grassroots level. Among the ERs who are part of the Standing Committee, around 62 per cent have received training, while the remaining 38 per cent have been left out. The same is true for the GPPFT, in which 39 per cent of the stakeholders have not received any training at all. Important States like Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha are lagging far behind in imparting training. Another important aspect is the availability of thematic experts/sector enablers from the ERs. This is more pronounced in the States where the level of training is reported to be low, and the training for sector enablers is also inadequate, with more than 40 per cent of them remaining out of theme-specific training.

The mode of the Training Programme (TP) is pre-dominantly physical, that is, face-to-face (77.5 per cent). The next mode, signifying a huge gap from the first mode, is that of the exposure visits (15.9 per cent). Exposure visits are important for providing practical experiences to the learners, especially in the thematic areas linked to poverty eradication, health, sanitation, and women's empowerment. Except Andhra Pradesh, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, and Odisha, the exposure visits are negligible in most of the other States. Distance learning is important during the times of health emergency, and its proportion was found to be the highest in Uttar Pradesh (35.8 per cent), followed by Sikkim (33.3 per cent). The

share of other modes of training (for example, IEC) is insignificant.

The duration of training depends on the courses taught and their coverage. It may be noted that the duration for the basic orientation course is mostly 3 days while the refresher courses show a higher percentage weightage of over 7 days. **It is recommended that the duration of the training programme should be increased.**

2.4 Overall Impact and Effectiveness of Training on the Marginalised Segments

Women and SC/ST elected representatives represent the marginalised sections of society and training for them requires more intensive support for building informed perceptions with hand-holding support. The Training Programme has helped develop the capabilities of the stakeholders in some of these crucial areas. It has helped in developing an assessment of the village needs (66 per cent), followed by development of managerial capabilities in mobilising citizens (48.5 per cent). Over 36 per cent of the respondents felt the impact while disseminating information on Government schemes and issues like the SDGs in their respective villages. This is an important outcome and the theme (SDGs) should be an integral part of the training course.

The ratings of the training programme in terms of their effectiveness in developing some of the attributes of the participants indicates that the success of such programmes is limited. Adoption of a systematic approach to training through Training Needs Assessment (TNA), development of training materials, training of trainers, and actual training followed by training impact evaluation, are essential. There are several aspects wherein the TNA has to be enriched, especially in terms of providing additional knowledge and skills, helping understand the ERs about their role as agents of change, and imbibing the skills of forging partnerships and creating networks, which are the most significant collaborative aspects of any development programme.

The quality of trainers is thus one of most important spheres that needs attention. The selection of trainers, who can be drawn from line departments, universities, and from among former ERs, NGOs, and social activists, should be well-planned and methodical. Several noticeable practices have emerged in this area, such as the initiation of certificate courses for new trainers and various other testing techniques used by SIRDs. The types of materials and training procedures adopted play a dynamic role, as does the planning, organisation, and supervision of training. SIRDs need to work thoroughly on all these aspects, while promoting sectoral convergence and up-grading of institutional structure and quality to augment capability-building initiatives. Special initiatives for the CB&T of women as well as for SC and ST ERs are necessary to ensure capacity building of these ERs to enable them to perform their roles. Members of the SCs and STs, and women ERs often have limited formal education and experience, and also face hostility and discrimination. The dominant members in their families or in society try to use them as proxy candidates. In this context, each State needs to develop a strategy for addressing the special needs of these ERs. This can consist of focused TNA exercises, assortment of trainers sensitive to their needs, special awareness programmes for trainers, customised training campaigns, and sensitisation of all ERs to the needs of women and different communities.

Several States have already undertaken special measures for the CB&T of women as well as the SC and ST ERs. These need to be reinforced across all the States. In the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act (PESA) areas, special training programmes to activate the Gram Sabhas, as also to train the PESA mobilisers need to be taken up rigorously. A strong institutional structure is necessary to achieve the requisite outreach and quality of CB&T. At present, the availability of resource institutions varies across States, yet setting up institutions at the decentralised levels is necessary for imparting high-quality training to

large numbers of candidates. Under the RGPSA, funds are available to the States to establish State Panchayat Resource Centres (SPRCs) at the State level, District Panchayat Resource Centres (DPRCs) at the district level, and Block Resource Centres (BRCs) at the block level. States can take benefit of this opportunity to create a strong institutional structure. However, to derive the full advantage of this institutional structure, it is necessary to develop a good human resource policy for recruitment along with appropriate infrastructure. Continuous professional development of the faculty as well as autonomy in functioning are also necessary.

2.5 Availability of Skills and Software in the GP System

Knowledge of computers is important for accessing information and applying methods for expediting the planning process. It is observed that around 60 per cent of the ERs do not have even the basic knowledge of computers. This is more pronounced in the Aspirational Districts (with low per capita incomes), where over 65 per cent of the residents lack such knowledge. This scenario is not in tune with the objectives set out for achieving the best practices for an efficient local governance. On the other hand, the software availability status indicates that GPs use various softwares to augment the speed of information dissemination and actively use data in the software and portals for stimulating development work for the local governance. It may be noted from the responses that the reach of all the softwares in the GPs is below the half-way mark. **It could also be that the respondents themselves are not aware if the softwares are available.** If this is so, then there is an impending need to increase the skill development training, and this task should be given utmost importance.

The level of ignorance is also evident from the fact that among respondents for all the States combined, only 15.6 per cent knew how to operate these softwares and their applications, **which implies that the level of ignorance and lack of awareness among ERs is a whopping 84.4 per**

cent. States like Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh need close monitoring in this regard.

2.6 Infrastructure as a Source of Capacity Augmentation

The availability of infrastructure for conducting training is the most significant aspect of effective dissemination. A majority of the respondents in all the sample states say that the last training venue was in the Block/District Resource Centre. This is true for all the respondents from the Aspirational Districts and the PESA areas as well. The training venue in the Panchayat Bhawan should not be part of any formal training process. We came across various district level officials and found that due to pandemic, some of the training had taken place in the panchayat offices. Overall, the availability of infrastructure for providing training is grossly deficient. There is inadequate availability of conference room facilities in the sample States, and even less so in the Aspirational Districts and in the PESA area. The sitting capacity, though revealed to be more, needs suitable expansion for better coverage. **In this era of technical dissemination, the inadequate provision of computers with Internet facilities is a matter of great concern. The deficit in these facilities in the Aspirational District and in the PESA areas is even more acute than in the other areas. The facility of separate hostels for male and female members is also reported to be extremely poor and almost negligible in the PESA areas.**

Mapping of Common Service Centres (CSCs) is important for ensuring the provision of meeting points for multifarious activities at the level of the GPs. This is done better in the Aspirational Districts as compared to the total sample States or the PESA areas. It may be noted that at the national level, 57.2 per cent of the mapping of functional CSCs within the GP building has been carried out whereas the highest proportion of CSCs are located in Maharashtra (72.6 per cent), followed by West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh. The lowest proportion of mapping of CSCs is noted in Odisha (23.5 per cent).

In the Aspirational Districts, 57.1 per cent of the mapping of functional CSCs within the GP building has been done whereas the highest proportion of CSCs was found to be in Andhra Pradesh (90 per cent), followed by Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, which achieved corresponding figures of 84.6 per cent and 84 per cent, respectively. The lowest percentage of mapping of functional CSCs was noted in Odisha (20 per cent). Overall, the mapping level of CSCs remains inadequate, especially in the PESA areas, which points to the need for a special focus in this area.

2.7 Role of the Gram Sabha in Reflecting CB&T through Planning and Development Activities

The Constitution mandates that the Gram Sabha (GS) should exercise its powers and approve plans, programmes, and projects for social and economic development before they are implemented by the GPs. The GS is also responsible for the identification or selection of persons as beneficiaries under poverty alleviation and other programmes. The ERs are legally bound to organise and conduct the GS meetings. It may be noted that in more than 90 per cent of the cases, the GS meeting is conducted by the ERs.

The ERs are actively involved in various activities in the GS, of which resolving village problems is the primary one, followed by the prioritisation of development needs. However, **there is visibly less involvement in deciding the budgetary allocation for schemes or in the approval of annual plans.**

2.8 Involvement of Stakeholders in Planning Activities

The Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) is pivotal to the planning exercise carried out at the grassroots level. GPs have been mandated for the preparation of a GPDP for economic development and social justice by employing the resources available to them. **The GPDP planning process has to be inclusive**

and based on a participatory process, which *inter alia* involves full convergence with the schemes of all the related Central Ministries/ Line Departments associated with 29 subjects enlisted in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution (Appendix 3). Panchayats have a significant role to play in the effective and efficient implementation of flagship schemes on subjects of national importance for transforming rural India. In this framework, the ERs also need to perform a different set of roles to execute planning exercises at the GP level. The most representative role among the ERs is reported to be development activities, including the planning and execution of public works (77.5 per cent). General administration and aspects like service delivery along with accounts and finance come next. The engagement with development activities indicates that a high proportion of ERs are involved in the GPDP. **The NCAER survey found that around 85 per cent of the ERs are involved in the preparation of GPDPs.** Since ERs are trained under the CB&T, a good outcome in village governance is expected. However, in this regard, **there is scope for achieving greater the coverage and penetration of training, especially in skill orientation.**

2.9 SDGs in Local Development Plans, Mission Antyodaya, Generating OSR at the GP Level and Convergence

The functionaries engaged in local governance, along with the other local stakeholders, have a crucial role to play in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. The indicators of SDGs for evaluating local programmes and schemes require more attention and training/re-working for better implementation and success. The key factors for the successful localisation of the SDGs include accountability mechanism works as well as a majority of the responses received from the ERs. The localisation of SDGs also includes fine-tuning of the monitoring and data system, building partnerships and ensuring commitment for collaborative action with partner organisations.

The broad strategy of the Panchayat in achieving the associated goals entails participatory approaches for poverty eradication, promotion of sustainable livelihoods, empowerment, and creation of social capital. It also ensures the smooth functioning of the GPs by streamlining the day-to-day functioning, proper record-keeping, and ensuring equal participation of all the members. The GPs also need to work with different stakeholders for ensuring equity and social inclusion of the poor and marginalised sections of the society. The Panchayat also enables the poor to overcome geographical, economic, social, and political exclusion while ensuring access of women, the poor and marginalised sections to the institutions that provide services for livelihood generation and development.

Mission Antyodaya (MA), which was approved in the Union Budget of 2017-18, is a convergence and accountability framework to facilitate optimal use and management of resources allocated by the Government under various programmes for the development of rural areas. Around 62 per cent of the respondents said that they were part of MA cluster. In the MA survey process, ensuring the active participation of the Line Department plays the most important role, as expressed by over 34 per cent of the ERs, while the provision of field-level enumerators comes next. **Hence, validation and verification of data is one of the most important components of training that could be utilised in the MA survey.**

The generation of sufficient Own Source Revenues (OSRs) for development is important for using the untapped potential. Overall, **75 per cent of the respondents say that there are insufficient funds in the OSRs.** However, 64 per cent of the respondents assert that plans are afoot to improve the OSR fund in the GPDP.

It is important to include OSR as a priority area in the GPDP and the relevant stakeholders should receive adequate training in this area as a part of the CB&T. However, the result shows that only a little over 31 per cent of the ERs

have received such training, and overall there is gross inadequacy in imparting training for this important component for local level planning.

The RGSA emphasised convergence as one of the prime objectives for local governance. The NCAER primary survey shows that awareness about initiatives to converge the schemes of different government departments with the GP as the focal point is a little over 61 per cent. **This awareness was observed to be very low the States of Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh.**

Ensuring the convergence of different sectoral plans entails various approaches of reconciliation, wherein around 44 per cent of the respondents cited inter-departmental co-ordination as the most preferred route. The pooling of resources from multiple schemes comes subsequently.

2.10 Partnerships with Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Support for Livelihood Generation and Development of Innovative Projects

Recognising the need for an operative and functional working relationship between the GPs and SHGs of women, in particular, the Village Organisations (VOs), the NRLM framework was revised to incorporate provisions for forging a formal relationship between local governments and the organisations of the poor. The NCAER survey obtained a few interesting and noteworthy responses in this regard. **About 89 per cent of then ERs responded that they had partnered with SHGs to help in their operations.** The partnership is near-total in Assam and over 90 per cent in the States of West Bengal, Sikkim, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh.

SHGs provide support to the GPs in various ways, with the important ones being conduction of the GS, preparation of a Micro Credit Plan, and implementation of the MGNREGS. It was anticipated that women's active participation will lead to livelihood enhancement among

the disadvantaged communities because it will help them learn to plan and execute their own programmes through the convergence of various government programmes. It is noted that for all the States, around 89 per cent of the ERs observed that the support from SHGs for livelihood generation and partnerships between the GPs and SHGs are highly effective in this regard.

Gap funding available under RGSA to support current projects for economic development and income enhancement and other schemes is also important for promoting local level development. It may be noted that the level of positive responses in this regard is quite low for all the States combined. It is particularly low in the Aspirational Districts. This low level of positive responses partially reflects ignorance and lack of awareness about the components of the programme among the representatives. However, **among the positive respondents, the extent of support received for the Aspirational Districts and the PESA areas was observed to be proportionally higher than in the total sample of States.**

Community-based development programmes and strategies have, over the years, been relying significantly on community institutions for building ownership and effective programme delivery through the utilisation of organised social capital at the grassroots level. **The survey reveals that 64 per cent of the SHGs are involved in preparing projects for economic development/income enhancement along with the GPs. This proportion is lower for the PESA districts and a little higher in the Aspirational Districts. Similarly, over 72 per cent of the SHGs in the Aspirational Districts are involved in promoting rural business hubs.**

2.11 Impact Assessment of RGSA as per the Respondents

An imperative focus of the institutional development of the PRIs would be feedback on their functioning and support to processes

of democratic and accountable functioning. There is also need for strengthening institutional capability for timely and accurate reporting and monitoring the performance of the various tiers of Panchayats in the areas of planning, governance, service delivery, and inclusion. While there are many areas of improvement, according to the respondents, the most important area is education, followed by public health, and poverty. Although gender issues were accorded low importance, they should also be included in the programme, as per the objectives of RGSA for strengthening the entitlements of the marginalised sections of society.

The RGSA scheme has helped enhance the capabilities of the GPs by facilitating more democratic decision-making, followed by improved service delivery system. This has also promoted greater transparency and accountability, as reported by a majority of the stakeholders.

2.12 Concluding Reflections

The NCAER survey reflects that there is a need to expand the facility and coverage of the training programme provided to various stakeholders in different States. The outreach of the Capacity Building and Training is still not all-encompassing and the infrastructure too needs thorough refurbishing. The training mode and areas could be more focused. Based on the experience during the long phase of the lockdown and the COVID-19 scenario, a hybrid mode of physical and online training could lead to more positive outcomes than what was achieved at the GP level currently.

RGSA has provided need-based support for the creation of infrastructure and facilities in the training institutions of the State and at the

district levels, whereby the States are expected to strengthen their institutional arrangement for CB&T while collaborating with the existing resource institutions, and NGOs, among others, to ensure the high quality of capacity endowment and outreach. More emphasis should be placed on collecting data at regular intervals to understand the extent and outreach of the training process and to study its underlying outcome indicators through qualitative research. The adequate provisioning of resources and entitlements for ensuring the full implementation of CB&T is imperative in this regard, while NIRD&PR should effectively combine the mandates linked to rural governance and the aspects that are needed to cover the objectives of the SDGs.

Increasing the resources, both financial and physical, which that are allocated to the CB&T should include monitoring, evaluation, mid-course correction, and regulation aspects to ensure attainment of the planned outcomes. This would also involve capacity building of the faculty of training institutions and equitable creation of a large mass of efficient trainers from amongst the officials in the field.

There is also a need for implementing more concerted and robust processes for reforming governance at the Panchayat level. This would be possible by making governance more participatory, yet technology- and performance-driven and outcome-oriented. The results of the NCAER survey call for paradigmatic change in the functioning of Panchayats, a modest shift in capacity building and training strategies, innovations in the use of technology for responsive service delivery, and enhanced people's participation in decision-making for achieving greater transparency and accountability.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to assess the impact of the RGSA in terms of imparting training to the ground-level functionaries, their efficacy and impact in terms of ensuring better governance, promoting awareness, and skill development in the villages of India. The core of the RGSA scheme lies in Capacity Building and Training (CB&T), which is a complex and challenging task, as it involves a large number and diverse group of stakeholders. The challenge is to reach out to multifarious groups while ensuring high-quality and context-specific CB&T. Moreover, as GPs are the representatives of local governments, the subjects that are covered are also large and wide-ranging, starting from management, finance, and social mobilisation, to 29 subject areas for the Panchayats. The challenge of CB&T has further increased, in the context of Finance Commission's Devolutions Plan to the Panchayats, operationalisation of the GPDP and accomplishment of SDGs. Under the erstwhile schemes for capacity building by the Ministry, considerable support for training and training infrastructure has been provided. The Ministry had also enabled sharing across States, and use of knowledge-based activities like workbooks, quizzes, helpdesk, street plays, and exposure visits of Elected Representatives (ERs). Other activities included workshops for departmental officials and SIRDs/PRTIs, the orientation of State resources and preparation of supporting resource material/ manuals on different thematic areas.

The Ministry has issued a detailed National Capability Building Framework (NCBF) for developing a comprehensive framework to build the capacity of PRIs, which entails flexible guidelines for training infrastructure, resource persons, logistics, monitoring and evaluation,

subjects, duration, target groups, and educational software. States are required to prepare detailed Annual State Capacity Building Plans for PRIs in accordance with the guidelines and submit them to the MoPR for appraisal and approval. The annual plans are required to be developed by the States following the assessment of needs through extensive consultation with ERs, Panchayat Functionaries (PFs), and other stakeholders. The States/UTs have the flexibility to evolve State-specific CB&T Plans covering the following areas:

- Training Needs Assessment (TNA);
- Consultation with ERs, PFs, and other stakeholders;
- Assessment of trainers;
- Plan for the training of master trainers;
- Impact assessment of training programmes;
- Devising CB&T activities based on the NCBF developed by the MoPR;
- Initiating training programmes for PRIs following a phased saturation approach with a focus on new ERs and functionaries;
- Conduction of orientation training of newly elected ERs within six months of their election, and of refresher courses for ERs within two years of their election;
- Specially targeted capacity building interventions for women ERs and ERs from disadvantaged groups like SCs and STs; and
- Priority for Mission Antyodaya GPs and Aspirational Districts.

Community-based rural development programmes and strategies over the years are dependent on community-based institutions and scheme-specific Committees for effective programme delivery through the use of social

capital at the grassroots level. While various groups have been created for the implementation and management of specific programmes, organisations like Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) have the potential of strengthening democracy and governance, and improving accountability of the PRIs. The SHGs/CBOs can mutually engage in poverty alleviation, strengthen local institutions, and improve programme delivery and governance by mobilising community participation.

The CB&T programmes for PRIs emphasise areas like leadership development, local planning, office management, own-source revenue generation, monitoring and implementation of various schemes, and women's empowerment. Subjects of national importance like primary health and immunisation, nutrition, education, sanitation, and water conservation should also be among the areas of focus. The training plan also includes a module on the scheme of Panchayat Awards, aspects of GPDP, and exposure visits for ERs and PFs both within and outside the State. The development of model Panchayats as Peer Learning Centres (PLCs) where regular exposure visits can be organised. In addition to PRIs, training may be organised for the District Collectors/CEO of the Zilla Panchayats (ZPs) on effectively utilising various provisions under the RGSA. A provision for trainee assessment and feedback at the required intervals is part of the training programme, along with provision of reference materials for neo-literates on assurance of a return to Panchayats.

The NCAER study has been carried out to assess and identify the linkages between various activities under the programme with the SDGs and to evaluate the performance till now, and to suggest a clear logical framework coupled with a data architectural framework, which will enable the Ministry to regularly monitor the performance of the scheme, going forward. A copy each of the Output/Outcome Monitoring Framework (OOMF) of scheme for the years 2018-19, 2019-20, and 2020-21 has been annexed.

The NCAER study would reflect in detail the outreach of the training programmes conducted

through RGSA for all the stakeholders of PRIs with particular emphasis on the ERs amongst the SCs, STs, Elected Women Representatives (EWRs), and also those from the marginalised communities. This would help assess the following:

- The quality of training provided to the ERs, EWRs, Panchayat functionaries, facilitators, Master Trainers, and other related stakeholders;
- The knowledge levels of ERs;
- Quality of infrastructure, that is, the Panchayat Bhawan, SPRC, DPRCs, and PLCs created under the scheme;
- Modules, methodology followed, Training Need Assessment (TNA), and training materials, prepared by the States for imparting training to the Panchayat stakeholders;
- Quality of trainers;
- Quality of projects implemented under the component of Economic Development and Support for Innovation under the RGSA; and
- Whether the GPDPs in the selected PRIs are participatory, inclusive, and relevant to the target community needs.

The study should also assess whether GPDPs acknowledge the convergence of resources both from national flagship schemes such as the NRHM, SBM, DDUGKY, MGNREGA, PMAY-G, and the State schemes.

In order to assess the adoption and usage of IT by PRIs and identify the critical challenges either in the form of network bandwidth, digital literacy, complexity of IT solutions, and grievance redressal, the current study has been extended further. This will facilitate a comparative assessment for identifying the resource utilisation and gaps/challenges. The existence of Common Service Centres (CSCs) in the GPs and various e-governance services offered by the CSCs is also being reviewed. The study will also assess whether the current revenue source meets the target potential and will identify other potential revenue sources, if needed.

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

An understanding of the existing structure, systems, and policies is imperative for enabling better planning and effective implementation of RGSA, as it would help to identify the capacity gaps and challenges in the programme. It would be useful to recommend suitable strategies and capacity enhancement support to achieve the objective of strengthening local level planning. The evaluation undertaken by NCAER aims to provide an objective perspective on the functioning of various aspects of the scheme. This was achieved through discussions with a multitude of stakeholders linked with the Panchayats, including beneficiaries and implementers, across the 12 selected States. This chapter outlines the methodology used in the analysis.

4.2 The Stakeholders

In order to evaluate the scheme, the following seven categories of stakeholders were identified:

- *Elected Representatives (ERs)*: These are the elected officials of the Panchayats, specifically, Sarpanch, Deputy Sarpanch, and Panch. They are elected for a fixed term by the localities to govern the villages which form the Panchayat.
- *Panchayat Functionaries*: These are the non-elected members of the Panchayat, like the Panchayat Secretary, who aid the ERs in the operations of the Panchayat.
- *Standing Committee of Panchayats/Working Groups/Village Committees/Task Forces/Gram Panchayat Planning Facilitation Team (GPPFT)*: These are groups, including Panchayat officials and expert professionals,

that perform the specific functions assigned to them by the Panchayats for the development of the villages, such as protecting the interests of marginalised groups.

- *Self-Help Groups*: These are informal associations of people, typically women, from similar economic and social backgrounds, who come together to find ways to improve their living conditions.
- *Line Department Officials*: These are members of administrative agencies, which execute government policies/programmes.
- *Faculties of State Institutes of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (SIRD&PR), District Panchayat Resource Centres (DPRCs)*: These are the officials of SIRD&PR and DPRC, such as instructors, who are in charge of the training of Panchayat officials, Gram Sabha members, and so on.
- *Officials of the State and District Units of RGSA*: These are officials from the Department of Panchayati Raj for States and districts, who are involved in the implementation of RGSA.

4.3 Sampling Methodology

The States for the survey were selected through discussions with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR). Two States each were chosen from six regions of the country, viz., North, South, East, West, North-east, and Central. The selected States were: Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand (Northern Region); Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu (Southern Region); Odisha and West Bengal (Eastern Region); Maharashtra and Rajasthan (Western Region); Assam and Sikkim (North-Eastern); and Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh

(Central Region). Six of these States are covered under PESA, viz., Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh.

1. The Ministry recommended 12 States for the study. In each state, four districts were selected, and in each district, two blocks were selected. Finally, from each block, five Gram Panchayats (GPs) are selected.
2. As per the recommendation received from the Ministry, the districts were selected based on the Per Capita Income (PCI), and also on the basis of the Aspirational and Non-Aspirational categories. The specific criteria maintained are as follows:
 - One district must have the lowest PCI and should fall under the Aspirational Category (that is, the lowest PCI and Aspirational District).
 - One district must have the highest PCI and should fall under the Aspirational Category (that is, the highest PCI and Aspirational District),
 - One district must have the lowest PCI and should fall under the Non-Aspirational Category (that is, the lowest PCI & non-Aspirational District).
 - One district must have the highest PCI and should fall under the non-Aspirational Category (that is, the highest PCI and non-Aspirational District).
3. The Ministry also recommended that within the four sample districts, at least one district should exclusively represent the provisions of the Panchayats-Extension to Scheduled Areas Act-1996, known in short as the PESA area. It has already been mentioned above that 12 States were selected for the study. Out of these 12 States, PESA is available in 6 states, viz., Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and Odisha.
4. The PESA area can be categorised into two parts, that is, fully covered and partially covered. In a fully covered PESA area, all the Block and Gram Panchayats are completely covered under the PESA Act. In the partially covered PESA area, some blocks of a district or only some of the GPs in a block fall under PESA.
 - After mapping of all the districts with the coverage of PESA areas in the States, it was found that the PESA areas fall under all the four district categories, that is, the lowest PCI and Aspirational District, highest PCI and Aspirational District, lowest PCI and non-Aspirational District, highest PCI and non-Aspirational District.
5. One of the common results emerging from the mapping is that in all the six States under PESA, it is available in the lowest PCI and Aspirational District. In the other categories of districts, that is, the highest PCI and Aspirational District, lowest PCI and non-Aspirational District, and highest PCI and non-Aspirational District, the PESA area is available but not common in all the six States.
6. NCAER decided that in each of the six States, the PESA will be exclusively represented from the Aspirational Districts, which have the lowest PCI (that is, the lowest PCI and Aspirational District) and used the purposive sampling method to select only those blocks/GPs from the complete list of blocks/GPs of the State fully covered by PESA. In other words, we filtered out the partially covered PESA blocks/GPs from the complete list of blocks/GPs of the State. After that, the systematic sampling method was applied for the final selection.
7. In the remaining three districts categories, that is, the highest PCI and Aspirational District, lowest PCI and non-Aspirational District, and highest PCI and non-Aspirational District, of all the six States,

NCAER used a systematic sampling method for the selection of blocks/GPs.

8. In case of States not covered under PESA, NCAER used a systematic sampling method for all the four district categories.
9. In summary, while sampling the PESA areas, that is, the lowest PCI and Aspirational

Districts, NCAER first used the purposive sampling method to filter out the partially covered PESA area and then used the systematic sampling method for the final selection of districts/GPs.

Table 4.1 presents the distribution of the actual sample.

Table 4.1: State-Wise Sample Size

Region/State	Number of Districts	Number of Blocks	Number of GPs	Elected Representatives of the PRIs	Panchayat Functionaries	Standing Committee of Panchayats /Working Groups /Village Committees/ task forces/ GPPFT	Representatives/facilitators from SHG/Federation	Line Department officials of GP, Block and District level	Faculties of SIRDPR, DPRC	Officials of State and District unit of RGSA
Northern Region										
1. Uttar Pradesh	4	8	40	52	40	40	40	52	4	5
2. Uttarakhand	4	8	40	52	40	40	40	52	4	5
Sub-Total	8	16	80	104	80	80	80	104	8	10
Southern Region										
3. Andhra Pradesh	4	8	40	52	40	40	40	52	4	5
4. Tamil Nadu	4	8	40	52	40	40	40	52	4	5
Sub-Total	8	16	80	104	80	80	80	104	8	10
Eastern Region										
5. Odisha	4	8	40	52	40	40	40	52	4	5
6. West Bengal	4	8	40	52	40	40	40	52	4	5
Sub-Total	8	16	80	104	80	80	80	104	8	10
Western Region										
7. Maharashtra	4	8	40	52	40	40	40	52	4	5
8. Rajasthan	4	8	40	52	40	40	40	52	4	5
Sub-Total	8	16	80	104	80	80	80	104	8	10
North-Eastern Region										
9. Assam*	2	4	20	26	20	20	20	26	2	3
10. Sikkim	4	8	40	52	40	40	40	52	4	5
Sub-Total	6	12	60	78	60	60	60	78	6	8
Central Region										
11. Madhya Pradesh	4	8	40	52	40	40	40	52	4	5
12. Chhattisgarh	4	8	40	52	40	40	40	52	4	5
Sub-Total	8	16	80	104	80	80	80	104	8	10
Grand Total	46	92	460	598	460	460	460	598	46	58

Source: Prepared by the NCAER research team for the RGSA study.

Note: *In Assam, two districts were selected separately for the Sixth Schedule area.

4.4 Questionnaires

One questionnaire each was prepared for the seven categories of stakeholders listed above, in consultation with MoPR. These covered questions on the various objectives of RGSA, such as capacity building and training initiatives, e-enablement, inclusivity of local planning, localisation of SDGs, incentivisation, and so on. These were then translated into seven regional languages, including- Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Marathi, Oriya, Tamil, and Telugu.

4.5 Primary Survey

The primary survey was undertaken through our empanelled networking institutions/survey partners between July 1, 2021, and August 19, 2021. In light of the pandemic, the survey was mostly conducted through digital platforms. The questionnaires were transformed to Web-assisted telephone interviewing (WATI) by developing an appropriate software application. WATI is a mixed-mode interview technique, allowing the respondent to follow a telephone questionnaire online under the control of the telephone

interviewer, allowing data to be shown in step with the question flow. In addition, enumerators visited one district in each State for the survey. The contact details of stakeholders were collected from the State Nodal Officers for the scheme.

A two-day intensive training was imparted to enumerators on Zoom, where the attendees were briefed about the project, followed by a detailed discussion on the questionnaires and demonstration of WATI. The questionnaires were then mock-tested and the requisite revisions were made before launching the survey. The field data was cleaned and validated as and when it became available.

4.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis has been carried out after receipt of data from all the selected States after validation. First, a data tabulation plan has been prepared and the data has been arranged as per the tabulation plan. The result of each of the tabulations has been used to derive insights into the various aspects of the RGSA schemes across States.

Findings of the Studies in Detail – All States

5.1 Introduction

PRI are self-governing institutions working towards achieving social inclusion, gender equality, and economic development, as mandated in the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution of India, with the responsibility of activating developmental programmes at the grassroots level. The Panchayati Raj System has mandated the twin objectives of ensuring economic development and social justice for the people living in the rural areas.

In this context, the RGSA has been initiated by the MoPR to impart CB&T, and enable empowerment through the convergence of schemes and efficient coordination of knowledge partners at the district, State, and national levels. NCAER carried out a primary survey to assess the ground level scenarios at the level of the GPs in the States, and how it is converging with the core objectives of RGSA.

5.2 Demography, Representation and Educational Achievement

The NCAER primary survey of the PRI stakeholders was conducted in the sample States and districts as elaborated in Chapter 4. There are State-wise variations in the representation of the Socio-Economic Group of the ERs of the GPs. The highest representation of STs is noted in Madhya Pradesh (57.7 per cent), followed by Chhattisgarh (46.2 per cent) and Rajasthan (44.2 per cent). The representation of SCs is the highest in Tamil Nadu (40.4 per cent), followed by Uttar Pradesh (34 per cent), while that of the

Other Backward Castes (OBCs) is the highest in Sikkim (56.9 per cent), followed by Uttar Pradesh (56.6 per cent), and Maharashtra (53.8 per cent) (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Representation of the Socio-Economic Groups among the ERs of the GPs

State	SCs	STs	OBCs	Other
Andhra Pradesh	9.6	26.9	48.1	15.4
Assam	7.7	0.0	50.0	42.3
Chhattisgarh	19.2	46.2	28.8	5.8
Madhya Pradesh	3.8	57.7	23.1	15.4
Maharashtra	5.8	25.0	53.8	15.4
Odisha	19.2	42.3	30.8	7.7
Rajasthan	11.5	44.2	34.6	9.6
Sikkim	2.0	41.2	56.9	0.0
Tamil Nadu	40.4	2.1	42.6	14.9
Uttar Pradesh	34.0	0.0	56.6	9.4
Uttarakhand	19.1	6.4	25.5	48.9
West Bengal	21.2	9.6	30.8	38.5
Total	16.3	26.5	39.8	17.3

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

As regards gender, the ERs show a majority representation of men (53.8 per cent) for all the States combined. Among the States, the highest female representation is observed in Odisha (61.5 per cent), followed by Chhattisgarh (59.6 per cent), Rajasthan (55.8 per cent), and Tamil Nadu (55.3 per cent) (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Representation of the Gender among the ERs

State	Female	Male
Andhra Pradesh	50.0	50.0
Assam	50.0	50.0
Chhattisgarh	59.6	40.4
Madhya Pradesh	44.2	55.8
Maharashtra	50.0	50.0
Odisha	61.5	38.5
Rajasthan	55.8	44.2
Sikkim	25.5	74.5
Tamil Nadu	55.3	44.7
Uttar Pradesh	42.3	57.7
Uttarakhand	38.8	61.2
West Bengal	23.1	76.9
Total	46.2	53.8

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021.

The age group distribution shows that the Elected Panchayat members belong mostly to the economically active working age group of 25-45 years (65.0 per cent). Among the States, Uttar Pradesh represents the highest distribution of active working age members (76.9 per cent), followed by Uttarakhand (75.0 per cent) and Odisha (73.1 per cent) (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3: Distribution (%) of Age Group among Panchayat Members

State/Age Group (in Years)	<25	25-45	46-60	>60
Andhra Pradesh	5.8	69.2	21.2	3.8
Assam	3.8	50.0	38.5	7.7
Chhattisgarh	1.9	61.5	32.7	3.8
Madhya Pradesh	0.0	62.7	35.3	2.0
Maharashtra	7.7	59.6	30.8	1.9
Odisha	1.9	73.1	19.2	5.8
Rajasthan	17.3	50.0	23.1	9.6
Sikkim	2.0	68.6	29.4	0.0
Tamil Nadu	0.0	69.6	26.1	4.3
Uttar Pradesh	5.8	76.9	13.5	3.8
Uttarakhand	4.2	75.0	18.8	2.1
West Bengal	1.9	57.7	34.6	5.8
Total	4.4	65.0	26.5	4.1

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021.

The distribution of educational achievement among the ERs shows the highest percentage representation of those with secondary and higher secondary level of education (41.3 per cent), followed by graduates (27.8 per cent). The number of illiterates is observed to be the highest in Andhra Pradesh (7.7 per cent), followed by Uttar Pradesh (7.5 per cent), while the percentage of graduates is the highest in Andhra Pradesh (44.2 per cent), followed by Uttarakhand (39.6 per cent) (Table 5.4). The data on educational achievement among ERs shows that the Panchayats are well endowed in terms of adaptability and if well trained, the Panchayat functionaries can be a dedicated workforce for the development of the local economy.

Table 5.4: Distribution (%) of Educational Achievement among the Elected Panchayat Members

State	Up to Primary Level	Secondary and Higher Secondary Level	Graduate	Illiterate	Other
Andhra Pradesh	25.0	19.2	44.2	7.7	3.8
Assam	3.8	73.1	23.1	0.0	0.0
Chhattisgarh	34.6	48.1	17.3	0.0	0.0
Madhya Pradesh	48.0	21.2	25.0	5.8	0.0
Maharashtra	15.4	46.2	30.8	0.0	7.7
Odisha	28.9	50.0	21.2	0.0	0.0
Rajasthan	38.5	26.9	32.7	1.9	0.0
Sikkim	21.6	45.1	29.4	0.0	3.9
Tamil Nadu	12.8	53.2	27.7	2.1	4.3
Uttar Pradesh	18.9	28.3	9.4	7.5	35.8
Uttarakhand	0.0	45.8	39.6	4.2	10.4
West Bengal	9.6	55.8	32.7	0.0	1.9
Total	22.4	41.3	27.8	2.5	5.9

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021.

Computer literacy is important for achieving efficiency in the functioning of local governance. Overall, the basic knowledge of computers is revealed to be the highest (29.9 per cent) among the computer literates, followed by those with intermediate (9 per cent) and advanced level of computer literacy (2.7 per cent). However, among

the States, the basic knowledge of computers is the highest in Sikkim (54.9 per cent), followed by Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal (40.4 per cent each), while the advanced level of computer literacy is observed to be the highest in Sikkim (7.8 per cent), followed by Assam (7.7 per cent) (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5: Distribution (%) of the Level of Computer Literacy among the Panchayat Members

State	Basic Level	Intermediate Level	Advanced Level	Ignorant
Andhra Pradesh	40.4	23.1	3.8	32.7
Assam	30.8	15.4	7.7	46.2
Chhattisgarh	9.6	1.9	1.9	86.5
Madhya Pradesh	25.0	1.9	0.0	73.1
Maharashtra	21.2	19.2	3.8	55.8
Odisha	25.0	9.6	1.9	63.5
Rajasthan	21.6	7.8	3.9	66.7
Sikkim	54.9	9.8	7.8	27.5
Tamil Nadu	40.0	17.8	0.0	42.2
Uttar Pradesh	24.5	0.0	0.0	75.5
Uttarakhand	27.1	4.2	0.0	68.8
West Bengal	40.4	1.9	3.8	53.8
Total	29.9	9.0	2.7	58.4

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

5.3 Orientation Training Programmes of the Elected Representatives after their Election

Organising orientation training programmes after election for the ERs in the GP is one of the major objectives of RGSA. Table 5.6 shows that the training programme is organised within six months of joining for around 60 per cent of the

respondents. Important States like Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra trailed behind in comparison to the other States in imparting training. As per the feedback received from the respondents, apart from the lockdown conditions, one of the critical reasons for this is the lack of infrastructure for providing training after the ERs' election (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6: Orientation Training Received after the Election in the Sample States (%)

State	Within 6 Months	Within 6 Months to One Year	After One Year	No Training
Andhra Pradesh	61.5	3.8	0.0	34.6
Assam	80.8	15.4	3.8	0.0
Chhattisgarh	46.2	15.4	5.8	32.7
Madhya Pradesh	48.1	28.8	19.2	3.8
Maharashtra	57.7	7.7	1.9	32.7
Odisha	46.2	11.5	42.3	0.0
Rajasthan	57.7	3.8	0.0	38.5
Sikkim	80.4	15.7	2.0	2.0
Tamil Nadu	59.6	2.1	2.1	36.2
Uttar Pradesh	62.3	0.0	0.0	37.7
Uttarakhand	63.3	2.0	18.4	16.3
West Bengal	71.2	15.4	9.6	3.8
Total	60.3	10.0	9.0	20.7

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Note: Please see Annexure *** as regards the status of Panchayat elections in the sample States.

However, the proportion of training imparted is exhibited to be less in the Aspirational Districts, as shown in Table 5.7. Overall 57.5 per cent of

the ERs received training within 6 months of the election, which highlights the need for expansion of the training capacity in these areas.

Table 5.7: Orientation Training received after the Election in the Aspirational Districts (%)

State	Within 6 Months	Within 6 Months to One Year	After One Year	No Training
Andhra Pradesh	81.8	4.5	0.0	13.6
Assam	61.5	30.8	7.7	0.0
Chhattisgarh	34.6	15.4	7.7	42.3
Madhya Pradesh	26.9	53.8	15.4	3.8
Maharashtra	61.5	3.8	0.0	34.6
Odisha	50.0	19.2	30.8	0.0
Rajasthan	69.2	0.0	0.0	30.8
Sikkim	78.6	21.4	0.0	0.0
Tamil Nadu	16.7	0.0	0.0	83.3
Uttar Pradesh	55.6	0.0	0.0	44.4
Uttarakhand	75.0	0.0	8.3	16.7
West Bengal	73.1	15.4	7.7	3.8
Total	57.5	13.4	7.1	22.0

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

5.4 Types of Training Imparted to the ERs

Attending a training programme of the basic orientation courses is the first step towards understanding the basics of the development approach of local governance and its inclusion. The refresher course is intended to help the trainees in getting acquainted with the latest advances in the subjects along with technical applications. It may be noted that the outreach of

the basic orientation course is mostly adequate, with a penetration of around 71 per cent. Among the States, the extent of training imparted in Tamil Nadu was 48.9 per cent. **The reason for the higher proportion of training in the States basically reflects online mode of orientation courses offered to the ERs during the lockdown in the reference period (2020-21).** However, there is concern about the low outreach of the refresher courses. Overall, only 26 per cent received refresher course training.

Table 5.8: ERs Trained under Different Training Programmes in the Sample States (%)

State	Basic Orientation Training	Refresher Course Training	Thematic Training	Joint Training with Functionaries
Andhra Pradesh	65.4	61.5	63.5	23.1
Assam	76.9	42.3	80.8	61.5
Chhattisgarh*	63.5	0.0	38.5	11.5
Madhya Pradesh	84.6	25.0	61.5	26.9
Maharashtra	63.5	5.8	28.8	32.7
Odisha	94.2	44.2	86.5	57.7
Rajasthan	50.0	5.8	21.2	9.6
Sikkim	98.0	47.1	86.3	66.7
Tamil Nadu	48.9	40.4	59.6	8.5
Uttar Pradesh	52.8	20.8	43.4	11.3
Uttarakhand	83.7	20.4	59.2	18.4
West Bengal	82.7	19.2	78.8	48.1
Total	71.9	26.9	58.0	30.2

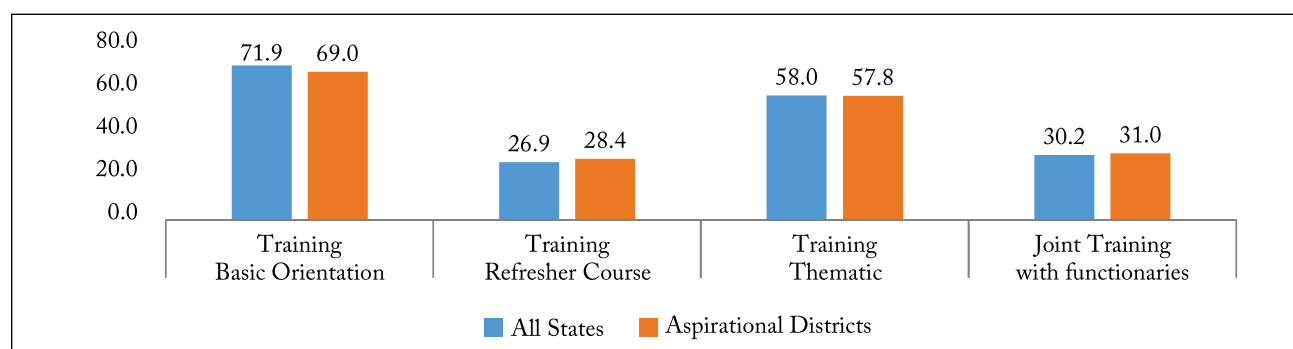
Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Note: * Chhattisgarh: Thematic training perceived as training for refresher courses.

The condition in the Aspirational Districts reveals little variation. In terms of the refresher courses, the performance of the Aspirational

Districts is slightly better but overall, there is a huge gap in providing such training to the ERs. A snapshot of comparison is shown in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Comparison of the Different Types of Training Provided to the ERs in the Sample States and Aspirational Districts of the Sample States (%)



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Table: 5.9: ERs Trained under Different Training Programmes out of Total Training Imparted received in the Aspirational Districts of the Sample States (%)

State	Basic Orientation Training	Refresher Course Training	Thematic Training	Joint Training with Functionaries
Andhra Pradesh	86.4	77.3	81.8	27.3
Assam	53.8	23.1	69.2	76.9
Chhattisgarh	57.7	0	30.8	15.4
Madhya Pradesh	84.6	23.1	50.0	15.4
Maharashtra	65.4	7.7	30.8	42.3
Odisha	92.3	46.2	84.6	65.4
Rajasthan	38.5	11.5	42.3	11.5
Sikkim	100.0	57.1	85.7	64.3
Tamil Nadu	16.7	16.7	50.0	0
Uttar Pradesh	40.7	22.2	44.4	3.7
Uttarakhand	83.3	33.3	66.7	20.8
West Bengal	84.6	26.9	76.9	50.0
Total	69.0	28.4	57.8	31.0

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Table 5.9 shows that the low intake of refresher courses is responsible for the visible deficiency in the capacity to conduct and provide quality training to the ERs, who are supposed to lead the changes in the approach to development planning at the basic unit of the economy, i.e., the villages. The thematic training for the sector enabler remains acutely under-provided. On the other hand, the refresher course for joint training functionaries is almost a non-starter, which is an issue of concern. The changed operating environment of rural development has ushered in rapid changes in the basic concepts and approaches to training methods. Since the earlier programmes of rural development have been restructured, merged, or modified to meet the current needs, joint training of the ERs with other functionaries can be used to impart the necessary skills to the functionaries, and needs continuous upgradation.

5.5 Involvement of ERs in the Functioning of the GP Activities and the Status of Training for the Same

ERs are the leading forces of change in

local governance. They work through various functional and facilitation teams at the GP level, and remain central to the implementation of the RGSA scheme as a sector enabler or thematic expert, for which adequate training is vital. Table 5.10 shows that the status of training of the ERs is not satisfactory and there is an impending need to augment the capability of the ERs not only to facilitate the work process but also to bring in the desired changes that are crucial for the development of the village society at the grassroots level. Among the ERs who are part of the Standing Committee, around 62 per cent have received training, while 38 per cent have been left out. The same is true for the GPPFT, in which 39 per cent have not received any training. Important States like Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha lagged far behind. Another important aspect is the availability of thematic experts/sector enablers from the ERs. This is more pronounced in the States where the adequacy level of training is low, and the training imparted to the sector enabler is also on the lower side, with more than 40 per cent of the targeted beneficiaries remaining out of theme-specific training (Table 5.10).

Table 5.10: Involvement of the ERs as Sector Facilitators/Enablers and the Status of Training for the Same

State	ER Part of Standing Functional Committee	If Yes, received adequate training	Part of GPPFT	If Yes, received adequate training	Serve as thematic expert	Selection based on area of interest	If Yes, received adequate training
Andhra Pradesh	82.7	86.0	78.8	79.5	76.9	95.2	81.8
Assam	76.9	85.0	73.1	84.2	30.8	50.0	69.2
Chhattisgarh	90.4	48.9	71.2	45.9	44.2	73.9	30.8
Madhya Pradesh	80.8	76.7	59.6	74.2	42.3	68.2	50.0
Maharashtra	62.7	54.5	45.1	36.4	15.7	50.0	30.8
Odisha	84.6	43.5	61.5	44.4	32.7	100.0	84.6
Rajasthan	78.8	26.2	57.7	37.5	15.4	62.5	42.3
Sikkim	98.0	78.0	86.0	79.1	39.6	89.5	85.7
Tamil Nadu	57.4	75.0	62.2	65.7	44.7	53.8	50.0
Uttar Pradesh	75.5	52.5	71.7	45.9	67.3	91.7	44.4
Uttarakhand	87.5	58.1	80.9	60.5	76.6	77.8	66.7
West Bengal	88.5	73.9	80.8	66.7	40.4	57.1	76.9
Total	80.6	62.3	68.8	60.6	44.3	77.4	57.8

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

5.6 Mode of Training, Sources of Physical Training and its Duration

The mode of the training programme is predominantly physical, that is, face-to-face (77.5 per cent). Exposure visits come next with a huge gap (15.9 per cent). Exposure visits are important for providing practical experience to the learners, especially in the thematic areas linked to poverty eradication, health, sanitation,

and women's empowerment, among other things. Except Andhra Pradesh, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu and Odisha, the exposure visits are negligible in most of the other States. Distance learning is important during the time of a health emergency and it was found to be the highest in Uttar Pradesh (35.8 per cent), followed by Sikkim (33.3 per cent). The share of other modes of training is insignificant (Table 5.11).

Table 5.11: Distribution (%) of the Mode of Training Programme

State	Face to Face	Exposure Visits	Mass Media	Distance Learning	On the Job Training	IEC Events
Andhra Pradesh	71.2	50.0	55.8	11.5	1.9	9.6
Assam	96.2	7.7	19.2	19.2	11.5	11.5
Chhattisgarh*	57.7	7.7	11.5	7.7	9.6	5.8
Madhya Pradesh*	98.1	7.7	0.0	1.9	15.4	0.0
Maharashtra*	65.4	7.7	0.0	1.9	34.6	1.9
Odisha	100.0	19.2	25.0	26.9	0.0	1.9
Rajasthan	63.5	1.9	1.9	0.0	5.8	0.0
Sikkim	100.0	39.2	15.7	33.3	3.9	23.5
Tamil Nadu	74.5	21.3	29.8	21.3	21.3	14.9
Uttar Pradesh	34.0	1.9	7.5	35.8	0.0	3.8
Uttarakhand	83.7	10.2	2.0	4.1	2.0	2.0
West Bengal	96.2	13.5	3.8	1.9	3.8	5.8
Total	77.5	15.9	14.1	13.6	9.0	6.4

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Note: *In the States of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, out of 52 samples, only 4 each of the respondents replied positively.

The number of ERs who received training in the physical mode was the highest. The responses regarding face-to-face training highlight the importance of the training institutions, master trainers, and peers in the training process. Table 5.12 shows that training institutions have not been performing their role diligently in States

like Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. This may be ascribed to the reference period, which mostly coincided with the COVID-induced lockdown. Master trainers at village or at the block level account for the largest share of those imparting physical training to the participants.

Table 5.12: Sources of Training of the Elected Representatives in Physical Mode (%)

State	Training Institutions	Master Trainers at Village/Block	Peers within Panchayat	Other
Andhra Pradesh	55.8	67.3	23.1	3.8
Assam	96.2	46.2	15.4	0.0
Chhattisgarh	23.1	42.3	13.5	3.8
Madhya Pradesh	48.1	55.8	32.7	1.9
Maharashtra	17.3	32.7	26.9	13.5
Odisha	92.3	80.8	11.5	36.5
Rajasthan	5.8	51.9	7.7	1.9
Sikkim	72.5	43.1	33.3	3.9
Tamil Nadu	40.4	51.1	34.0	0.0
Uttar Pradesh	0.0	17.0	30.2	0.0
Uttarakhand	40.8	69.4	8.2	4.1
West Bengal	46.2	34.6	9.6	30.8
Total	42.5	49.3	20.7	8.8

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Exposure visits enhance the practical experience to the ERs and constitute an important form of training modules. **The exposure visits comprises interactions with PRI officials followed by formal briefing in the form of presentations, across all the sample States.** Site visit is important in some States like Sikkim, Odisha, and Assam while the observations of

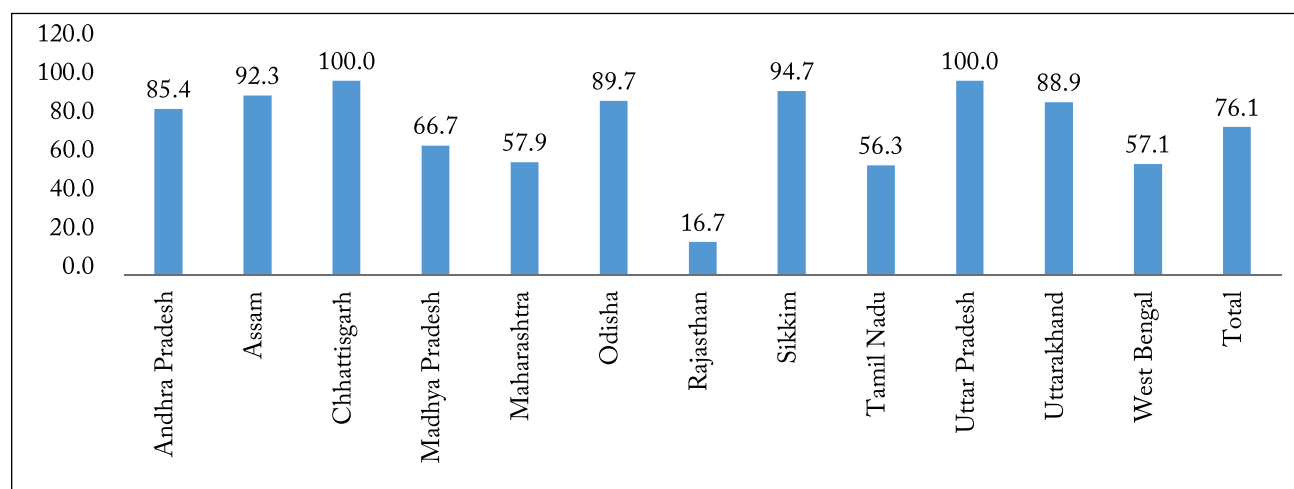
delivery and management of services in the model PRI assumes importance in states like Odisha, Assam, Tamil Nadu, and Sikkim. **More importance should be given to the practical rather than theoretical training. The practical orientation of the training may vary from one GP to another.**

Table 5.13: Experience Gained during the Exposure Visits of the ERs (%)

State	Formal briefing in the form of presentations	Interaction with model PRI officials	Site visit	Observations of delivery and management of services in the model PRI	Other
Andhra Pradesh	21.2	55.8	7.7	5.8	5.8
Assam	53.8	69.2	26.9	26.9	7.7
Chhattisgarh	3.8	3.8	5.8	1.9	0.0
Madhya Pradesh	5.8	9.6	1.9	0.0	0.0
Maharashtra	13.5	5.8	15.4	7.7	15.4
Odisha	23.1	30.8	34.6	30.8	3.8
Rajasthan	0.0	0.0	3.8	0.0	0.0
Sikkim	54.9	54.9	60.8	21.6	0.0
Tamil Nadu	27.7	42.6	12.8	29.8	2.1
Uttar Pradesh	0.0	0.0	1.9	0.0	0.0
Uttarakhand	10.2	10.2	14.3	4.1	0.0
West Bengal	13.5	13.5	13.5	9.6	17.3
Total	17.3	22.5	16.1	10.7	4.2

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Over 76 per cent of the respondent ERs term exposure visits as an effective way of inspiring panchayats to improve their functioning as shown in the following graph (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: Distribution (%) of Respondents on Exposure Visits as an Effective Medium of Training (%)

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

It is also interesting to note the reasons by which exposure visit becomes an effective mode of training. It may be noted that the sharing of

best practices during the exposure visits helps the ERs to find solutions to their own village needs (Table 5.14).

Table 5.14: How Exposure Visit Becomes an Effective Mode of Training to Motivate ERs (%)

State	Sharing of best practices/ strategies provide new solutions to local problems	Interactions with the leaders expands knowledge base and helps in strategizing	Observations on site helps in replicating/developing own models of good governance/ service delivery
Andhra Pradesh	61.5	61.5	36.5
Assam	80.0	80.0	52.0
Chhattisgarh	7.7	1.9	5.8
Madhya Pradesh	5.8	3.8	5.8
Maharashtra	13.5	13.5	15.4
Odisha	38.5	30.8	40.4
Rajasthan	0.0	0.0	3.8
Sikkim	62.7	52.9	51.0
Tamil Nadu	27.7	36.2	23.4
Uttar Pradesh	0.0	0.0	1.9
Uttarakhand	16.3	8.2	16.3
West Bengal	13.5	19.2	15.4
Total	24.8	23.1	20.9

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Distance learning is a critical method of imparting training to the participants, especially during a health emergency. It may be noted that Web and computer-based self-learning modules account for the highest share of those who have attended distance learning, followed by video conferencing (Table 5.15). The 'other' mostly

refers to training imparted through mobile applications. The web-based training method is comprehensible in terms of outreach and dissemination. **The quality of online training can be enhanced through the inclusion of audio/video inputs, posters, and documentaries of the best practices.**

Table 5.15: Method of Imparting Training through Distance Learning (%)

State	Web and computer-based self-learning modules	Video Conferencing	Online courses offered by academic institutions	Satcom training	Other
Andhra Pradesh	63.5	0.0	13.5	1.9	9.6
Assam	42.3	50.0	30.8	3.8	11.5
Chhattisgarh	0.0	5.8	3.8	0.0	0.0
Madhya Pradesh	1.9	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Maharashtra	5.8	3.8	0.0	0.0	21.2
Odisha	5.8	32.7	3.8	0.0	26.9
Rajasthan	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.9
Sikkim	9.8	33.3	7.8	5.9	3.9
Tamil Nadu	36.2	23.4	23.4	4.3	0.0
Uttar Pradesh	28.3	18.9	1.9	0.0	0.0
Uttarakhand	2.0	6.1	2.0	0.0	0.0
West Bengal	0.0	0.0	3.8	0.0	23.1
Total	15.1	13.1	6.4	1.2	8.1

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The duration of training depends on the courses taught and their coverage. It may be noted that the duration of the basic orientation course is mostly concentrated within 3 days (Table 5.16) while the refresher courses extend for over 7 days (Table 5.17). It is recommended that the duration of the training programme should be increased. The lack of training capacity has already been

manifested earlier wherein the ERs were not fully trained even within the stipulated time frame. The basic orientation training should be provided to the ERs immediately after the elections. Along with the old rules and guidelines, the new rules and guidelines that were introduced for the Panchayats by the States should also be included in the basic orientation training courses.

Table 5.16: Different Duration of the Training Attended by the ERs for the Basic Orientation Training for the Sample States and the Respondents from the Aspirational Districts

State	1 to 3 days		4 days to 7 days		More than 7 days	
	All States	Aspirational Districts	All States	Aspirational Districts	All States	Aspirational Districts
Andhra Pradesh	97.0	100.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Assam	82.6	70.0	17.4	30.0	0.0	0.0
Chhattisgarh	72.7	61.5	18.2	38.5	9.1	0.0
Madhya Pradesh	72.0	80.0	14.0	4.0	14.0	16.0
Maharashtra	85.3	76.5	11.8	23.5	2.9	0.0
Odisha	86.0	75.0	10.0	16.7	4.0	8.3
Rajasthan	65.6	55.6	15.6	11.1	18.8	33.3
Sikkim	54.0	50.0	40.0	42.9	6.0	7.1
Tamil Nadu	93.3	100.0	3.3	0.0	3.3	0.0
Uttar Pradesh	71.4	58.3	0.0	0.0	28.6	41.7
Uttarakhand	75.6	60.0	12.2	20.0	12.2	20.0
West Bengal	68.2	66.7	31.8	33.3	0.0	0.0
Total	75.9	70.0	16.1	18.7	8.0	11.4

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Table 5.17: Different Duration of the Training Attended by the Elected Representative for the Refresher Course Training for the Sample States and the Respondents from the Aspirational Districts

State	1 to 3 days		4 days to 7 days		More than 7 days	
	All States	Aspirational Districts	All States	Aspirational Districts	All States	Aspirational Districts
Andhra Pradesh	96.9	100.0	0	0	3.1	0
Assam	94.1	75.0	5.9	25.0	0	0
Chhattisgarh	4.8	0	0	0	95.2	100.0
Madhya Pradesh	63.6	75.0	0	0	36.4	25.0
Maharashtra	11.8	11.8	0	0	88.2	88.2
Odisha	64.6	63.6	0	0	35.4	36.4
Rajasthan	0	0	0	0	100.0	100.0
Sikkim	73.8	72.7	4.8	9.1	21.4	18.2
Tamil Nadu	82.1	-	0	-	17.9	-
Uttar Pradesh	36.8	40.0	0	0	63.2	60.0
Uttarakhand	21.1	42.9	0	0	78.9	57.1
West Bengal	77.8	66.7	22.2	33.3	0	0
Total	52.5	50.4	1.6	3.3	46.0	46.3

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

5.7 Training Courses for ERs, Women and SC/ST Representatives and Overall Impact and Effectiveness of Training

Capacity building starts with the recognition of the needs of individual and group learners. Training needs are clearly linked to the functions and responsibilities exercised by local governments. Hence, training courses and the impact of training on improving capabilities

are significant for assessing the performance of CB&T. Training courses for the ERs cover many areas. For the sector enablers, training on thematic areas like health, water or sanitation and waste management are important. There are minor variations in the positive responses regarding participation in training in these areas between all the sample States and the Aspirational Districts.

Table 5.18: Thematic Course of Training Attended by the ERs as Sector Enablers for the Sample States and Aspirational Districts (%)

State	Health/Water/Sanitation		Waste Management	
	All States	Aspirational Districts	All States	Aspirational Districts
Andhra Pradesh	63.5	81.8	51.9	81.8
Assam	80.8	69.2	42.3	38.5
Chhattisgarh	38.5	30.8	3.8	3.8
Madhya Pradesh	61.5	50.0	15.4	3.8
Maharashtra	28.8	30.8	11.5	15.4
Odisha	86.5	84.6	78.8	76.9
Rajasthan	21.2	42.3	9.6	15.4
Sikkim	86.3	85.7	39.2	42.9
Tamil Nadu	59.6	50.0	40.4	25.0
Uttar Pradesh	43.4	44.4	18.9	22.2
Uttarakhand	59.2	66.7	14.3	12.5
West Bengal	78.8	76.9	28.8	34.6
Total	58.0	57.8	29.0	29.9

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

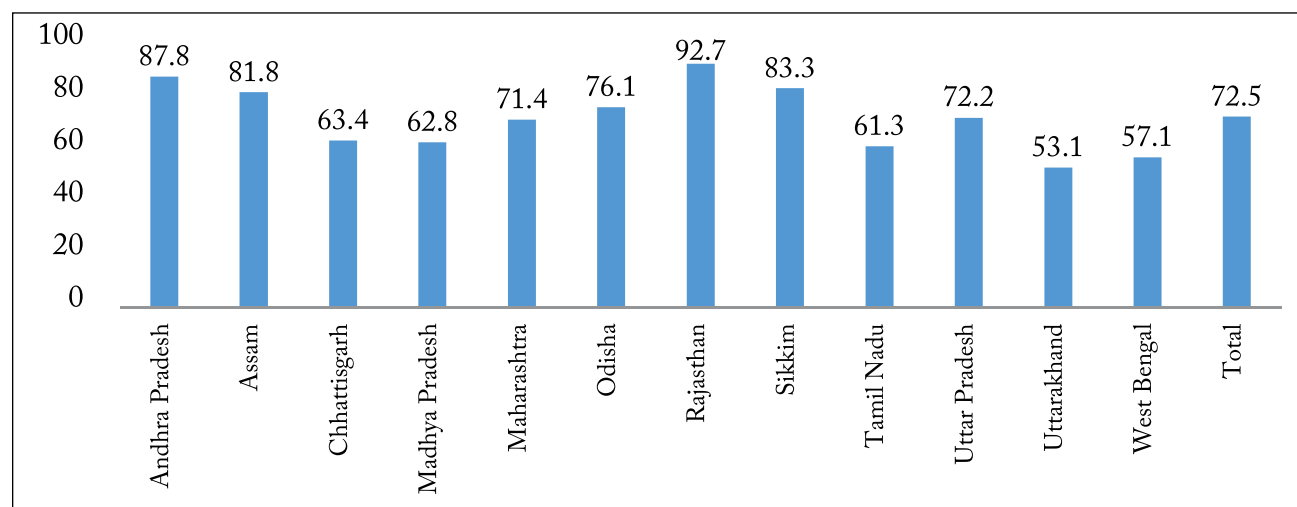
Women and SC/ST elected representatives represent the marginalised sections of society, and training for them requires more intensive support for building informed perceptions with

handholding support. The training programmes to women and SC/ST representatives included focused sessions and materials on the topics mentioned in Table 5.19.

Table 5.19: Training to women and SC/ST representatives include focused sessions and materials on issues of relevant interest (%)

State	Gender Sensitisation	Social inclusion in development planning and practice	Education on Rights	Confidence Building	Skill Development and Empowerment	Protective Measures against Discrimination	Other
Andhra Pradesh	50.0	53.8	69.2	26.9	44.2	23.1	3.8
Assam	23.1	57.7	53.8	57.7	38.5	34.6	0.0
Chhattisgarh	15.4	30.8	26.9	25.0	17.3	11.5	1.9
Madhya Pradesh	23.1	46.2	25.0	21.2	9.6	7.7	0.0
Maharashtra	3.8	38.5	25.0	15.4	7.7	7.7	5.8
Odisha	71.2	73.1	67.3	73.1	65.4	15.4	0.0
Rajasthan	9.6	36.5	34.6	30.8	17.3	15.4	5.8
Sikkim	33.3	35.3	31.4	35.3	25.5	17.6	0.0
Tamil Nadu	23.4	40.4	55.3	38.3	25.5	12.8	2.1
Uttar Pradesh	13.2	22.6	18.9	24.5	15.1	17.0	1.9
Uttarakhand	10.2	42.9	40.8	38.8	16.3	18.4	0.0
West Bengal	21.2	25.0	26.9	21.2	15.4	17.3	1.9
Total	24.9	41.2	38.8	32.9	24.2	15.8	2.0

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 5.3: Distribution (% positive response) of women and SC/ST ERs about handholding support after training (%)

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The training programme has helped to develop the capabilities of the ERs in some of the crucial areas described in the Table 5.20. The assessment of village needs got the highest rank (66 per cent), followed by developing managerial capabilities in mobilising citizens (48.5 per cent). Mobilising citizens and convergence of

schemes come subsequently. Over 36 per cent felt the impact of the training programme while disseminating information on Government schemes in their respective villages with issues like the SDGs. Providing training on the theme related to SDGs is important and should be an integral part of the training course.

Table 5.20: Impact Different Type of Training received by the ERs on GPs

State	Assessment of village needs and gaps in development	Mobilizing Citizens	Convergence of Schemes	Information dissemination of Government schemes, SDGs and other related issues	Teamwork in projects	Mentoring / Training other GP Officials
Andhra Pradesh	59.6	59.6	34.6	30.8	15.4	11.5
Assam	69.2	53.8	42.3	46.2	38.5	19.2
Chhattisgarh	50.0	48.1	19.2	28.8	11.5	7.7
Madhya Pradesh	75.0	59.6	50.0	48.1	34.6	7.7
Maharashtra	59.6	15.4	32.7	25.0	28.8	15.4
Odisha	82.7	57.7	71.2	55.8	57.7	17.3
Rajasthan	55.8	30.8	23.1	25.0	23.1	17.3
Sikkim	88.2	70.6	56.9	47.1	56.9	23.5
Tamil Nadu	53.2	36.2	40.4	29.8	29.8	14.9
Uttar Pradesh	45.3	28.3	20.8	22.6	20.8	17.0
Uttarakhand	73.5	59.2	59.2	26.5	16.3	12.2
West Bengal	78.8	65.4	57.7	51.9	53.8	13.5
Total	65.8	48.5	42.2	36.1	32.0	14.6

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

However, the distribution of rating of the training programmes in terms of developing some of the attributes of the participants indicates a low level of their effectiveness. There are several areas wherein Training Need Assessment (TNA)

ought to be enriched, especially for providing additional knowledge and skills, and helping the ERs understand their role as agents of change in the development programme.

Table 5.21: Distribution (%) of the rating of the most effectiveness features of the Training Programme received by the ERs

State	Raising awareness and understanding of important development issues	Providing additional knowledge or skills	Helping better understand the role as an agent of change in development goals	Helping to develop strategies or approaches to address the needs of the GP/its citizens	Helping you develop contacts, partnerships and networks in the field
Andhra Pradesh	45.0	5.0	10.3	2.5	2.5
Assam	40.0	32.0	36.0	32.0	32.0
Chhattisgarh	44.1	29.4	26.5	35.3	29.4
Madhya Pradesh	17.6	27.5	32.0	27.5	32.0
Maharashtra	52.6	44.7	37.8	39.5	36.8
Odisha	1.9	13.5	26.9	50.0	3.8
Rajasthan	52.9	26.5	23.5	30.3	32.4
Sikkim	36.0	42.0	51.0	49.0	36.7
Tamil Nadu	17.1	22.9	22.9	34.3	14.3
Uttar Pradesh	17.6	20.6	20.6	20.6	20.6
Uttarakhand	42.5	27.5	34.2	34.2	31.6
West Bengal	38.5	28.8	36.5	40.4	32.7
Total	32.6	26.6	30.5	33.9	25.2

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

5.8 Skills and Software Availability in the GP System

The knowledge of computers is important for accessing information and expediting the planning process. It is observed that around 60 per cent of the ERs do not have even a basic knowledge of computers. This is more pronounced in the Aspirational Districts (with low per capita incomes), where over 65 per cent of the ERs lack such knowledge (Table 5.22). This scenario points to a gap between the reality and the objectives laid down for best practices to facilitate efficient local governance.

Table 5.22: Distribution (%) of the knowledge of computer in all the States and Aspirational Districts

State	All States	Aspirational Districts
Andhra Pradesh	67.3	59.1
Assam	53.8	61.5
Chhattisgarh	13.5	3.8
Madhya Pradesh	26.9	23.1
Maharashtra	44.2	50.0
Odisha	36.5	30.8
Rajasthan	33.3	24.0
Sikkim	72.5	64.3
Tamil Nadu	57.8	30.0
Uttar Pradesh	24.5	22.2
Uttarakhand	31.3	26.1
West Bengal	46.2	42.3
Total	41.6	34.1

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The software availability status shows that GPs use various softwares to augment the speed and extent of information dissemination for stimulating development work for local governance.

The list of different types of applications, software availability, and portals used by the GPs is shown for all the sample States and Aspirational Districts in Tables 5.23 and 5.24. PRIYASoft, ActionSoft, and PlanPlus are important data-driven applications software, while the simplified work based accounting application for Panchayati Raj is e-Gramswaraj.

This software aims to bring in better transparency in decentralised planning, progress

reporting, and work-based accounting in order to strengthen e-governance in PRIs across the country. Geo-tagging, on the other hand, can help users find a wide variety of location-specific information from a device. For instance, someone can find images taken near a given location by entering the latitude and longitude coordinates into a suitable image search engine.

It may be noted from the responses that the reach of all the softwares in the GPs is below the half-way mark. One reason for this could be that the respondents themselves are not aware if the software is available. If this is so, then there is an impending need to increase skill development training (Tables 5.23 and 5.24).

Table 5.23: Different types of application/software/portal used by the GPs in the Sample States (%)

State	PRIASoft	ActionSoft	National Asset Directory	Tool for geo-tagging of assets	PlanPlus	e-Gramswaraj
Andhra Pradesh	21.2	19.2	17.3	11.5	13.5	11.5
Assam	61.5	57.7	50.0	65.4	42.3	76.9
Chhattisgarh	48.1	34.6	23.1	17.3	21.2	25.0
Madhya Pradesh	63.5	50.0	30.8	36.5	34.6	50.0
Maharashtra	86.5	78.8	23.1	26.9	40.4	76.9
Odisha	51.9	42.3	26.9	30.8	36.5	40.4
Rajasthan	76.9	63.5	19.2	9.6	32.7	75.0
Sikkim	84.3	78.4	49.0	58.8	62.7	72.5
Tamil Nadu	12.8	12.8	6.4	2.1	6.4	6.4
Uttar Pradesh	35.8	35.8	32.1	24.5	30.2	49.1
Uttarakhand	67.3	42.9	40.8	61.2	53.1	65.3
West Bengal	61.5	50.0	36.5	57.7	76.9	82.7
Total	55.9	46.9	28.8	32.2	37.5	51.9

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Table 5.24: Different types of application/software/portal used by the GPs in the Aspirational Districts (%)

State	PRIASoft	ActionSoft	National Asset Directory	Tool for geo-tagging of assets	PlanPlus	e-Gramswaraj
Andhra Pradesh	9.1	13.6	13.6	9.1	9.1	4.5
Assam	46.2	38.5	38.5	53.8	30.8	100.0
Chhattisgarh	30.8	23.1	23.1	15.4	15.4	7.7
Madhya Pradesh	46.2	34.6	19.2	15.4	19.2	26.9
Maharashtra	88.5	76.9	42.3	11.5	61.5	80.8
Odisha	38.5	23.1	15.4	15.4	19.2	26.9
Rajasthan	53.8	38.5	23.1	3.8	7.7	53.8
Sikkim	85.7	71.4	57.1	85.7	71.4	71.4
Tamil Nadu	0.0	8.3	8.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Uttar Pradesh	44.4	40.7	40.7	29.6	40.7	51.9
Uttarakhand	79.2	54.2	54.2	79.2	62.5	83.3
West Bengal	50.0	57.7	23.1	50.0	76.9	80.8
Total	48.9	40.7	29.5	28.7	35.1	48.5

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The level of ignorance about computers is evident from the fact that among all the States combined, only 15.6 per cent of the respondents know how to operate those softwares and their applications, **which implies that the level of**

ignorance and lack of awareness among ERs is a whopping 84.4 per cent. States like Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh need close monitoring in this regard.

Table 5.25: Received adequate training to operate the installed application/software/portal by the ERs in the sample states (% positive responses)

State	All States	Aspirational Districts
Andhra Pradesh	23.1	22.7
Assam	46.2	61.5
Chhattisgarh	7.7	11.5
Madhya Pradesh	7.7	15.4
Maharashtra	15.4	23.1
Odisha	17.3	7.7
Rajasthan	15.4	15.4
Sikkim	29.4	42.9
Tamil Nadu	23.4	16.7
Uttar Pradesh	0.0	0.0
Uttarakhand	8.2	8.3
West Bengal	9.6	0.0
Total	15.6	15.7

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

5.9 Status of Infrastructure

The availability of infrastructure for conducting training is the most significant aspect of effective dissemination.

Table 5.26: Where was the last training/workshop held?

State	Panchayat Office			Block/District RC			SIRD			Other		
	All Sample	Aspirational	PESA	All Sample	Aspirational	PESA	All Sample	Aspirational	PESA	All Sample	Aspirational	PESA
Andhra Pradesh	69.4	83.3	-	5.6	0.0	-	19.4	16.7	-	5.6	0.0	-
Assam	35.3	12.5	-	47.1	62.5	-	17.6	25.0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Chhattisgarh	-	-	-	48.6	40.0	-	11.4	20.0	-	22.9	40.0	-
Madhya Pradesh	20.0	10.0	-	50.0	60.0	-	22.5	30.0	-	7.5	0.0	-
Maharashtra	21.2	37.5	-	33.3	12.5	-	24.2	37.5	-	21.2	12.5	-
Odisha	44.0	60.0	-	48.0	20.0	-	0.0	0.0	-	8.0	20.0	-
Rajasthan	21.4	100.0	-	78.6	0.0	-	0.0	0.0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Sikkim	42.9	66.7	-	25.7	0.0	-	17.1	22.2	-	14.3	11.1	-
Tamil Nadu	22.9	4.5	-	18.8	22.7	-	37.5	45.5	-	20.8	27.3	-
Uttar Pradesh	55.6	100.0	-	0.0	0.0	-	0.0	0.0	-	44.4	0.0	-
Uttarakhand	37.0	42.9	-	40.7	28.6	-	0.0	0.0	-	22.2	28.6	-
West Bengal	10.5	10.5	-	57.9	52.6	-	13.2	21.1	-	18.4	15.8	-
Total	31.1	29.1	34.7	37.0	30.8	42.9	16.8	23.1	12.2	15.1	17.1	10.2

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

As per the findings delineated in Table 5.26, a majority of the respondents in all the sample States say that the last training venue was the Block/District Resource Centre. This is true for all the respondents from both the Aspirational Districts and PESA areas. The training venue in the Panchayat Bhawan should not be part of any formal training process. We came across various district level officials who reported that due to the pandemic, some of the training had taken place in the Panchayat offices.

It may be noted that the availability of infrastructure for providing training is grossly

deficient. Conference room facility is inadequate in the sample States. These facilities are progressively less available in the Aspirational Districts and in the PESA areas. Even the seating capacity needs suitable expansion for better coverage. In this era of technical dissemination, provision of there is also a dearth of adequate computers with Internet facilities, especially in the Aspirational Districts and the PESA areas. The separate Hostel facilities for males and females are also reported to be extremely poor and almost negligible in the PESA areas.

Table 5.27: Users response on the availability of infrastructure of the training venue from the demand side

State	Conference room/ auditorium			Adequate seating capacity			Adequate computer with internet facilities			Separate hostel for male and female		
	All Sample	Aspirational	PESA	All Sample	Aspirational	PESA	All Sample	Aspirational	PESA	All Sample	Aspirational	PESA
Andhra Pradesh	47.2	50.0	-	52.8	66.7	-	25.0	16.7	-	2.8	16.7	-
Assam	70.0	60.0	-	65.0	60.0	-	35.0	50.0	-	30.0	50.0	-
Chhattisgarh	62.5	60.0	-	62.5	60.0	-	35.0	50.0	-	25.0	30.0	-
Madhya Pradesh	80.0	90.0	-	82.5	70.0	-	55.0	20.0	-	27.5	30.0	-
Maharashtra	57.5	70.0	-	67.5	70.0	-	37.5	40.0	-	27.5	50.0	-
Odisha	17.1	10.0	-	56.1	50.0	-	19.5	0.0	-	12.2	0.0	-
Rajasthan	27.5	30.0	-	25.0	20.0	-	10.0	0.0	-	2.5	0.0	-
Sikkim	82.5	81.8	-	77.5	81.8	-	70.0	81.8	-	37.5	63.6	-
Tamil Nadu	41.7	27.3	-	35.4	31.8	-	39.6	27.3	-	10.4	4.5	-
Uttar Pradesh	5.0	0.0	-	22.5	15.8	-	7.5	0.0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Uttarakhand	57.5	70.0	-	57.5	55.0	-	20.0	15.0	-	15.0	10.0	-
West Bengal	70.2	69.6	-	68.1	56.5	-	59.6	52.2	-	19.1	17.4	-
Total	50.8	49.7	47.5	55.5	49.7	59.0	35.0	29.2	29.5	16.9	19.3	8.2

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The mapping of CSCs is important for ensuring the conduction of multifarious activities at the Gram Panchayat level. In this regard, the performance of the Aspirational Districts is better than that of the sample States or the PESA areas (Table 5.28). Table 5.28 shows that at the national level, 57.2 per cent of the mapping of the functional CSCs within the GP building has been carried out whereas the highest percentage of CSCs is located in Maharashtra (72.6 per cent), followed by West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh. The lowest percentage of mapping is noted in Odisha (23.5 per cent).

In the Aspirational Districts, 57.1 per cent of the mapping of functional CSCs within the GP building is done whereas the highest percentage of CSCs is in Andhra Pradesh (90 per cent), followed by Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, at 84.6 per cent and 84 per cent, respectively. The lowest percentage of mapping of functional CSCs is noted in Odisha (20 per cent). Overall, the mapping level of CSCs remains inadequate, especially in the PESA areas, which highlights the need for special focus in this area.

Table 5.28: Mapping of functional Common Service Centres (CSC) within Gram Panchayat buildings

State	Sample States	Aspirational Districts	PESA
Andhra Pradesh	63.3	90	-
Assam	34.6	NR	-
Chhattisgarh	50.0	50.0	-
Madhya Pradesh	55.8	53.9	-
Maharashtra	72.6	84.0	-
Odisha	23.5	20.0	-
Rajasthan	51.0	50.0	-
Sikkim	48.9	30.8	-
Tamil Nadu	66.1	60.6	-
Uttar Pradesh	74.6	84.6	-
Uttarakhand	64.6	60.9	-
West Bengal	67.3	50.0	-
Total	57.2	57.1	53.9

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

One of the important aspects of local governance is the Public Finance Management System (PFMS). The primary function of PFMS is to facilitate a sound system for the Government of India by establishing an efficient fund flow mechanism as well as a payment-cum-accounting network. PFMS is also the channel for payment, accounting, and reporting under the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme, which is an important input for preparing the GPDP. Moreover, for the release and tracking of the RGSA fund, it is imperative that ERs should be trained to get acquainted with the system speedily so that an efficient development process can be initiated. However, in practice, **nearly 70 per cent of the ERs (Table 5.29) do not have basic knowledge of operating the system, which is a challenge for local governance,**

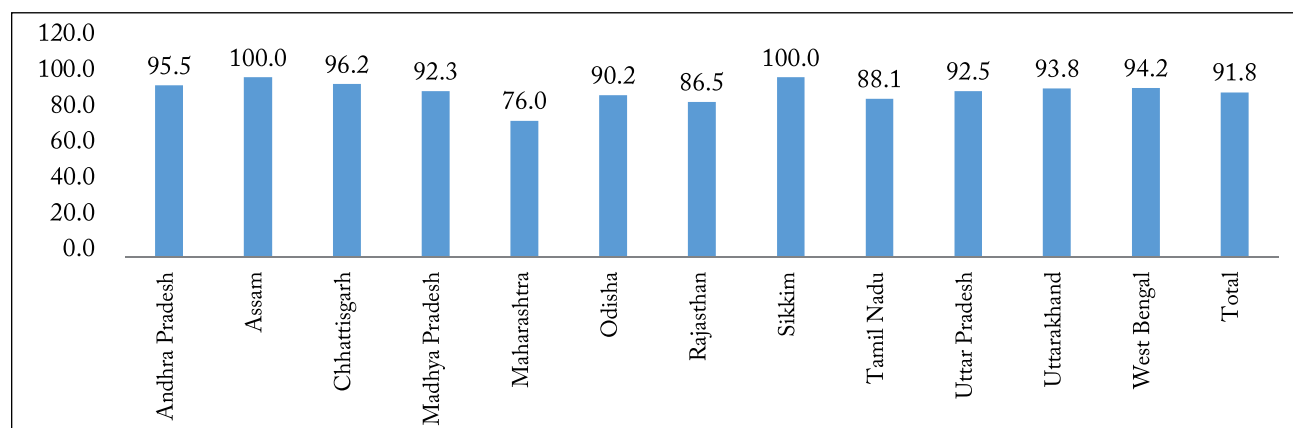
Table 5.29: Training received on operating the Public Financial Management System (PFMS) for release and tracking of RGSA funds by the ERs in the sample states (%)

State	All States	Aspirational Districts
Andhra Pradesh	46.2	36.4
Assam	61.5	53.8
Chhattisgarh	21.2	15.4
Madhya Pradesh	23.1	19.2
Maharashtra	25.0	30.8
Odisha	48.1	30.8
Rajasthan	21.2	34.6
Sikkim	52.9	57.1
Tamil Nadu	51.1	33.3
Uttar Pradesh	17.0	14.8
Uttarakhand	24.5	29.2
West Bengal	19.2	19.2
Total	32.9	28.7

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

5.10 Role of the Gram Sabha in CB&T through Planning and Development Activities

The Constitution mandates that the Gram Sabha (GS) should exercise its powers and perform such functions at the village level so that it can approve of plans, programmes, and projects for social and economic development before they are implemented by the GPs. The GS is also responsible for the identification or selection of persons as beneficiaries under the poverty alleviation and other programmes. The ERs are legally bound to organise and conduct the GS meeting. Figure 5.4 shows that in more than 90 per cent of the cases, the GS meeting is conducted by the ERs. However, the proportion of GS meetings is a little lower in Maharashtra (76 per cent), followed by Tamil Nadu (88.1 per cent).

Figure 5.4: Distribution (%) of ERs conducting GS meeting

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The ERs are actively involved in various activities in the GS. Of these, resolving village problems is the primary one, followed by the prioritisation of development needs. However,

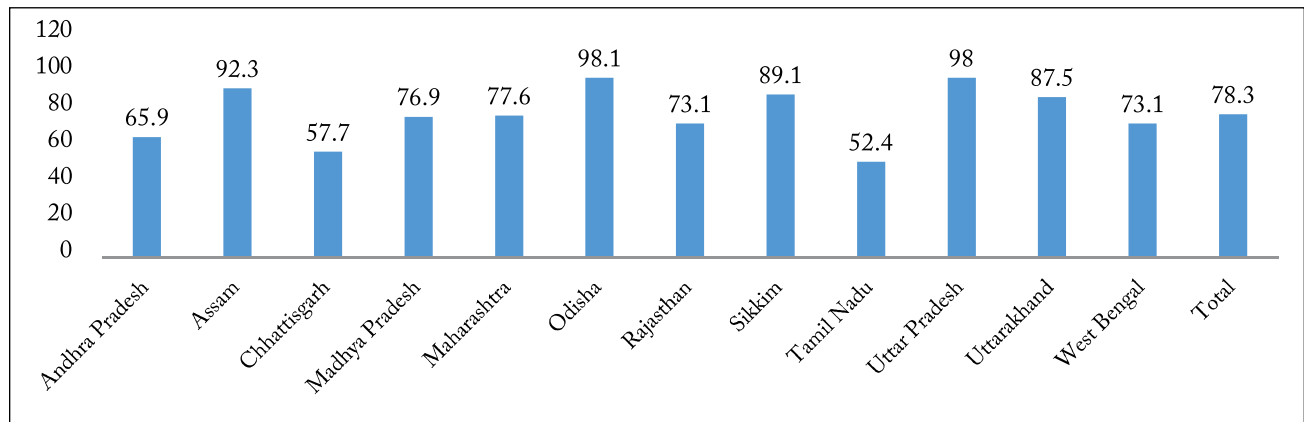
there is visibly lower involvement regarding the budgetary allocation for schemes or the approval of annual plans.

Table 5.30: Involvement of ERs in the activities of the GS

State	Social mobilization	Providing guidance for development of agenda for GS	Resolution of village problems	Prioritisation of development needs	Deciding on budgetary allocations for schemes and other initiatives	Approval of annual plans
Andhra Pradesh	69.2	67.3	71.2	67.3	51.9	28.8
Assam	88.5	57.7	88.5	76.9	69.2	42.3
Chhattisgarh	69.2	65.4	80.8	82.7	48.1	30.8
Madhya Pradesh	67.3	63.5	71.2	69.2	51.9	36.5
Maharashtra	34.6	48.1	59.6	44.2	21.2	19.2
Odisha	76.9	55.8	84.6	80.8	57.7	53.8
Rajasthan	63.5	57.7	82.7	75.0	28.8	40.4
Sikkim	82.4	72.5	88.2	64.7	60.8	80.4
Tamil Nadu	63.8	34.0	72.3	40.4	25.5	31.9
Uttar Pradesh	47.2	41.5	66.0	66.0	49.1	30.2
Uttarakhand	40.8	83.7	87.8	77.6	51.0	63.3
West Bengal	53.8	50.0	82.7	67.3	59.6	71.2
Total	62.0	58.1	77.5	67.5	47.1	44.1

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

It is important to note that the CB&T initiatives under RGSA have strengthened the functional performance of the GS.

Figure 5.5: Distribution (%) ERs who expressed the opinion that CB&T under RGSA has strengthened GS

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Table 5.31 shows that more than 60 per cent of the ERs perceive that CB&T under RGSA has strengthened the GS activities through improved accountability, followed by improved

transparency of operations. However, outreach is an issue of concern as more than 50 per cent of the ERs believe that outreach has not improved.

Table 5.31: Distribution (%) of respondents on CB&T on improved accountability, improved transparency of operations and outreach of the Gram Sabha

State	Improved transparency of operations	Improved accountability of members of the GP	Improved outreach of GP
Andhra Pradesh	46.2	51.9	26.9
Assam	73.1	80.8	76.9
Chhattisgarh	53.8	38.5	34.6
Madhya Pradesh	67.3	73.1	36.5
Maharashtra	44.2	51.9	44.2
Odisha	76.9	94.2	51.9
Rajasthan	61.5	50.0	51.9
Sikkim	70.6	70.6	54.9
Tamil Nadu	23.4	44.7	29.8
Uttar Pradesh	64.2	58.5	79.2
Uttarakhand	81.6	79.6	28.6
West Bengal	53.8	59.6	55.8
Total	59.3	62.0	46.6

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The GPDP is pivotal to the planning exercise carried out at the grassroots level. The ERs perform different roles to execute planning exercises at the GP level. They mostly follow the functions described in Table 5.32. The frequently represented role among ERs in development activities includes the planning and execution of public works (77.5 per cent). This is the highest in Madhya Pradesh (88.5 per cent), followed by Rajasthan (84.6 per cent). General administration and aspects like service delivery along with

accounts and finance come next. The engagement in development activities indicates that a large proportion of ERs are involved in the GPDP. **The NCAER survey found that around 85 per cent of the ERs were involved in the preparation of GPDP.** Since the ERs are trained under CB&T, the expectation of a good outcome in village governance is expected. However, as seen earlier, **there is still a lot of scope for improving the coverage and penetration of training, especially with regard to in skill orientation.**

Table 5.32: A Description of the roles of the Elected Representatives in the Villages of the Sampled States (%)

State	General Administration, Service Delivery, Accounts & Finance	Development Activities, Planning & Execution of Public Works	Regulation, Supervision and Control of Operations of the GP	Support Functions	Other
Andhra Pradesh	76.9	82.7	84.6	40.4	0.0
Assam	76.9	80.8	76.9	38.5	0.0
Chhattisgarh	69.2	82.7	59.6	44.2	0.0
Madhya Pradesh	76.9	88.5	73.1	32.7	0.0
Maharashtra	46.2	76.9	51.9	44.2	0.0
Odisha	78.8	71.2	63.5	26.9	0.0
Rajasthan	59.6	84.6	61.5	55.8	38.5
Sikkim	82.4	80.4	74.5	52.9	0.0
Tamil Nadu	61.7	68.1	57.4	27.7	6.4
Uttar Pradesh	45.3	83.0	64.2	30.2	1.9
Uttarakhand	87.8	81.6	55.1	38.8	0.0
West Bengal	59.6	50.0	65.4	25.0	0.0
Total	68.0	77.5	65.3	38.1	4.1

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

5.11 Incorporating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Local Development Plans, Mission Antyodaya and Generating Own Source Revenue (OSR) at the GP level and Convergence

Localising the SDGs involves awareness, alignment setting with the achievable targets, and

monitoring of the implementation of strategies at the local level, which is essential to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Table 5.33 shows that using the SDG indicators for evaluating local programmes and schemes requires more attention and training/re-working for better implementation and success.

Table 5.33: Strategies of incorporating SDGs in the local development plans as reported by the ERs (% positive response)

State	Raising awareness regarding the importance of SDGs and their relevance to local communities	Do you align your local development priorities and plans in the GPDP with the SDGs	Setting targets for the achievement of SDGs in terms of measurable indicators at the GP level	Monitoring the implementation of SDGs at the GP level	Using the SDG indicators for evaluating local programmes and schemes
Andhra Pradesh	86.7	88.9	77.8	86.7	86.7
Assam	100.0	100.0	92.3	92.3	92.3
Chhattisgarh	90.4	82.4	66.7	78.8	63.5
Madhya Pradesh	88.5	67.3	58.8	68.6	58.8
Maharashtra	91.8	89.8	73.5	63.3	70.8
Odisha	86.5	88.5	61.5	57.7	42.3
Rajasthan	94.2	90.4	84.6	96.2	82.7
Sikkim	100.0	89.4	68.9	84.4	66.7
Tamil Nadu	69.0	61.0	71.4	61.9	69.0
Uttar Pradesh	87.8	68.4	77.3	60.4	74.4
Uttarakhand	95.7	95.6	91.1	88.9	82.2
West Bengal	94.2	82.7	69.2	82.7	73.1
Total	90.2	83.5	73.5	76.2	70.7

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Among the key factors for the successful localisation of SDGs is the accountability mechanism, which works well, as per the majority of the responses received from the ERs. The crucial aspect of localisation of the SDGs also

includes the fine-tuning of the monitoring and data system. More efforts are also needed towards collective action, which calls for collaborative action with the partner organisations.

Table 5.34: Key factors for successful localisation of SDGs as per ERs perception (%)

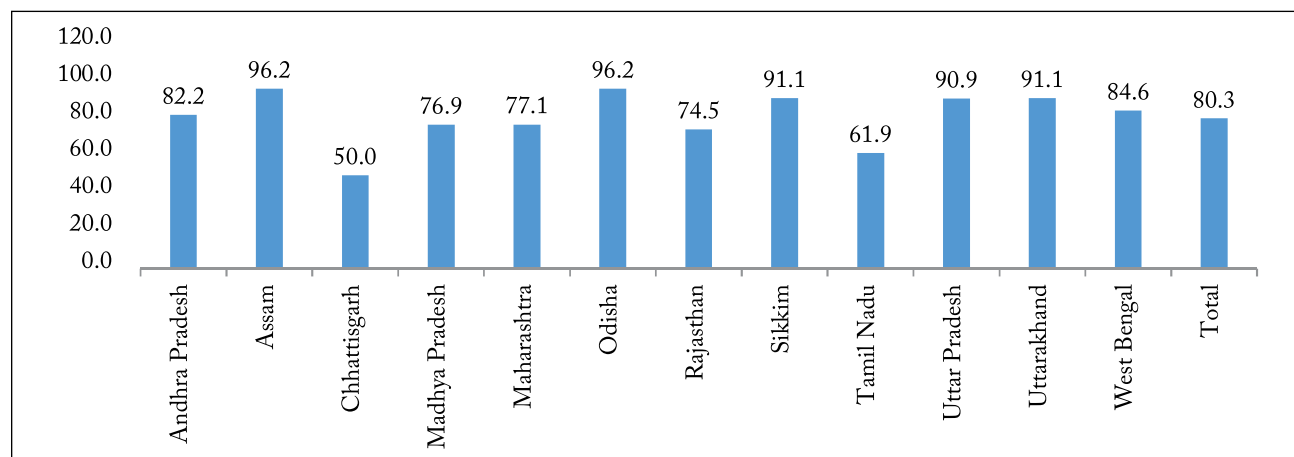
State	Sensitisation and engagement of local actors	Accountability mechanisms	Participatory planning and service delivery	Local economic development	Partnerships and the commitment to collective action
Andhra Pradesh	44.2	67.3	53.8	46.2	23.1
Assam	84.6	80.8	53.8	53.8	57.7
Chhattisgarh	32.7	44.2	50.0	59.6	44.2
Madhya Pradesh	67.3	55.8	71.2	48.1	48.1
Maharashtra	40.4	38.5	42.3	53.8	34.6
Odisha	40.4	65.4	69.2	36.5	23.1
Rajasthan	57.7	65.4	51.9	76.9	36.5
Sikkim	60.8	70.6	60.8	64.7	31.4
Tamil Nadu	14.9	63.8	59.6	46.8	27.7
Uttar Pradesh	24.5	39.6	47.2	49.1	24.5
Uttarakhand	32.7	67.3	71.4	65.3	24.5
West Bengal	55.8	44.2	55.8	59.6	32.7
Total	44.9	57.5	57.3	55.1	33.1

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Over 80 per cent of the ERs believed that CB&T initiatives under RGSA have strengthened localisation due to the factors enlisted above.

However, the ERs of Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu have a moderate viewpoint.

Figure 5.6: Distributions (%) of the respondents on key factors for successful localisation of SDGs



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

5.12 Mission Antyodaya (MA)

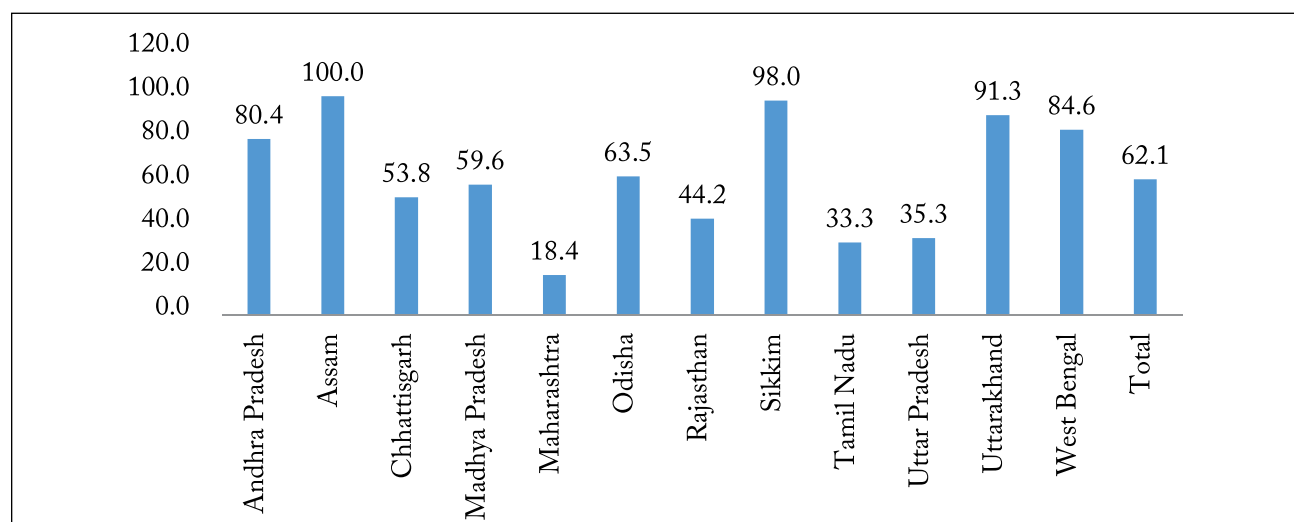
Mission Antyodaya (MA), the implementation of which was approved in the Union Budget 2017-18, is a convergence and accountability framework to optimise the use and management of resources allocated by the Government under various programmes for the development of rural areas. It is envisaged as a State-led initiative with GPs as the focal points of the convergence efforts.

The annual survey in GPs across the country is an important aspect of the MA framework. It

is carried out coterminous with the People's Plan Campaign (PPC) of the MoPR, and its purpose is to lend support to the process of participatory planning for the GPDP.

As per Figure 5.7, around 62 per cent of the respondents say that they are part of the Mission Antyodaya cluster. It is equally important to observe that respondents from some of the important States are below par, which reflects their lack of awareness about the Mission or the fact that they have not received valuable information.

Figure 5.7: Distribution (%) of the ERs being part of Mission Antyodaya (MA) cluster



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

In the MA survey process, ensuring the active participation of the line department plays the most important role, as expressed by over 34 per cent of the ERs, while the provision of field-

level enumerators comes next. The validation and verification of data is, therefore, one of the important training components that could be utilised in the MA survey.

Table 5.35: The processes of MA survey in which GPs contributed most (%)

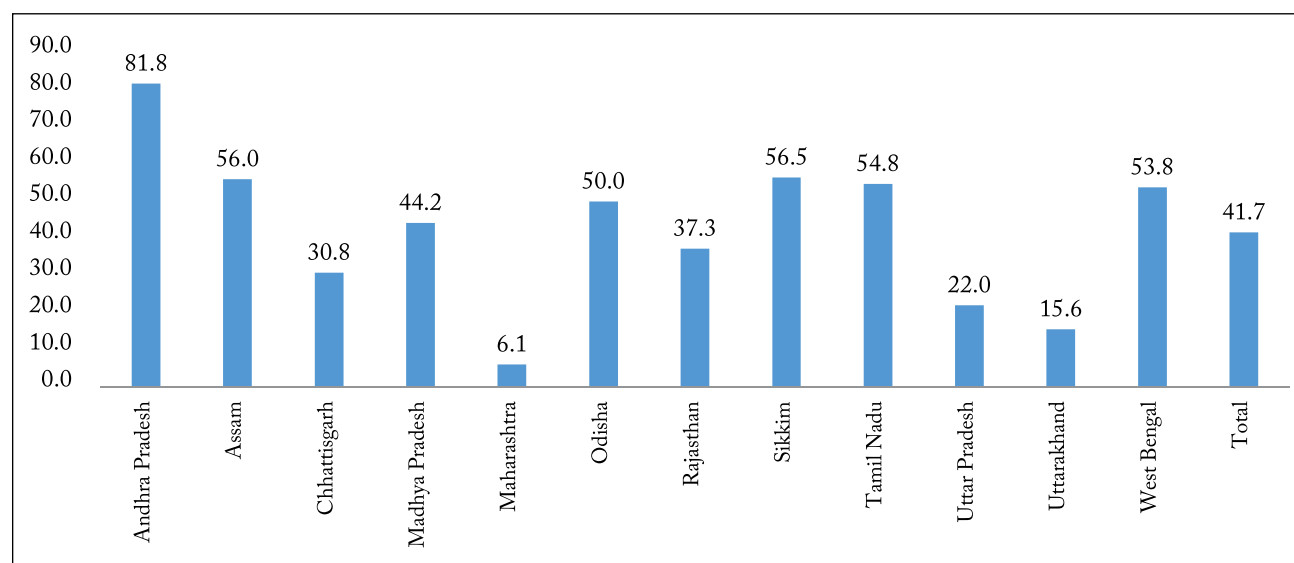
State	Provision of field level enumerators for survey	Ensuring active participation of line departments	Validation and verification of data	Spreading awareness regarding the survey / scheme
Andhra Pradesh	25.0	19.2	13.5	17.3
Assam	73.1	84.6	73.1	65.4
Chhattisgarh	19.2	21.2	17.3	36.5
Madhya Pradesh	23.1	36.5	30.8	28.8
Maharashtra	3.8	5.8	7.7	11.5
Odisha	46.2	38.5	34.6	42.3
Rajasthan	30.8	23.1	21.2	21.2
Sikkim	66.7	66.7	60.8	51.0
Tamil Nadu	8.5	8.5	8.5	14.9
Uttar Pradesh	28.3	30.2	24.5	28.3
Uttarakhand	32.7	53.1	36.7	34.7
West Bengal	44.2	50.0	50.0	32.7
Total	31.9	34.4	29.8	30.7

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Circulating the films prepared by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) for educational and communication purposes could help in awareness generation on various schemes and programmes among the participants. The

results indicate that greater penetration of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) application in training could have been a catalyst for fostering changes in the perception and application of the development process.

Figure 5.8: Circulation of Audio-Visual film to augment awareness (% positive response)

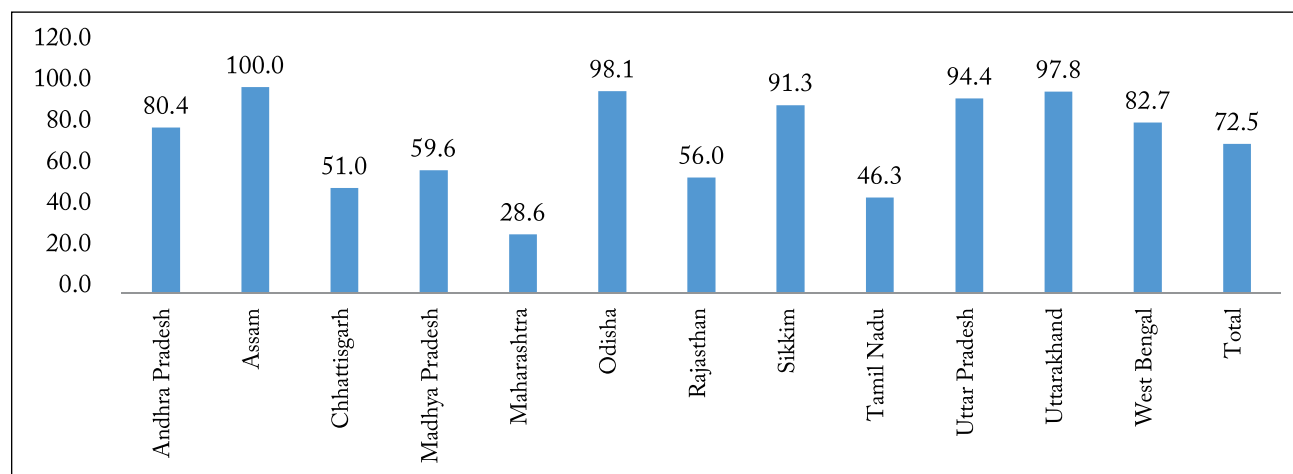


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

In this regard, it would be challenging to know if the CB&T initiatives under the RGSA have strengthened the ability of the GP to aid in the execution of the MA survey. It is noted that in 5 of the 12 sample States of the NCAER survey, the response of the ERs is below the total average

of 72.5 per cent. These States are Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu. The result implies the need for introducing more initiatives to support the MA survey, which is an important objective of the RGSA.

Figure 5.9: CB & T initiatives under RGSA strengthened the ability of the GP to aid in the execution of the MA survey (% positive response)



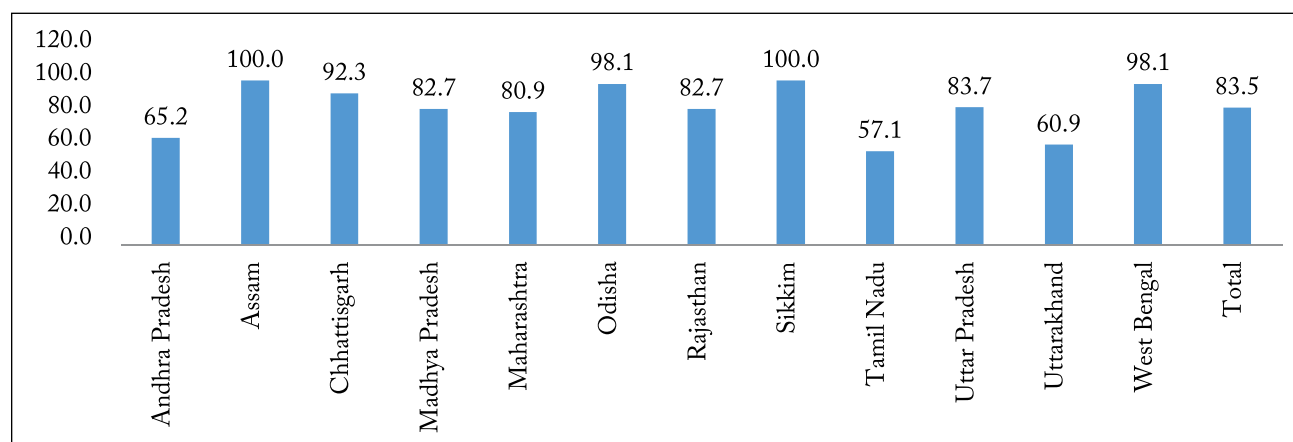
Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

5.13 Own Source of Revenue

One of the most significant sources of funds for the GPs are grants from the Central Finance Commission (CFC). The earmarked funds are to the tune of Rs 2.12 lakh crores for the period 2015–2020, for approximately 2.28 lakh GPs in the country.¹ Beyond this, there are grants from

the State Finance Commissions. Own sources of revenue (taxes, tariffs, and fee), by and large, remain unexploited in most GPs. However, this could have been a potential source of support for the SDGs, as indicated by around 84 per cent of the responses received from the ERs (see Figure 5.10).

Figure 5.10: Own Source of Revenue (OSR) is important for the GP for sustainable development



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

¹http://www.jiwaji.edu/pdf/ecourse/political_science/m.%20a%20pub.%20adm.%20iv%20sem404%20panchayati%20raj%20finance%20in%20m.%20p.pdf

The generation of sufficient OSR funds for development is an important aspect for enhancing untapped potential. It is noted that overall, 75 per cent of the respondents say that there are

insufficient funds from OSR. However, 64 per cent of the respondents assert that plans are afoot to improve OSR funds in the GPDP.

Table 5.36: Distribution of Sufficiency of OSR fund (% positive responses)

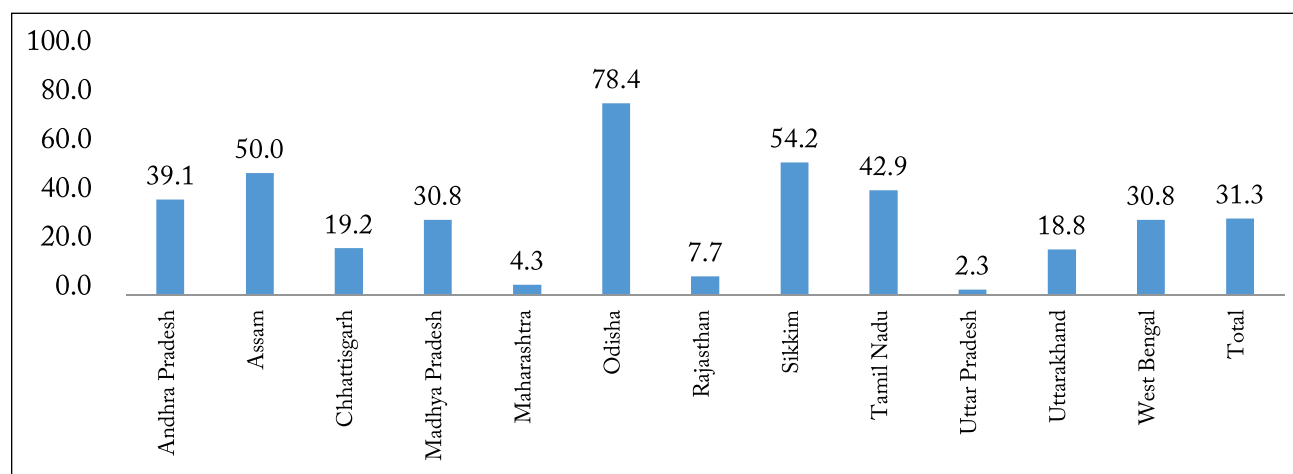
State	Does your GP have sufficient funds from OSR	Plans for increasing / improving OSR included in the GPDP
Andhra Pradesh	24.4	60.9
Assam	92.3	96.2
Chhattisgarh	19.2	65.4
Madhya Pradesh	25.0	57.7
Maharashtra	33.3	50.0
Odisha	15.7	96.2
Rajasthan	9.6	44.9
Sikkim	26.5	95.7
Tamil Nadu	26.2	48.8
Uttar Pradesh	0.0	13.3
Uttarakhand	4.7	24.3
West Bengal	53.8	94.2
Total	25.2	64.0

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

It is important to check if the OSR is given priority in the GPDP, and if the ERs should receive adequate training as a part of CB&T. However, the result shows that only a little over 31 per cent have received such training and overall, there is gross insufficiency in imparting training

for this important component of local level planning (Figure 5.11). The State of Odisha is an exception, while Assam, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh are picking up. Still, the attainment is far less and requires thorough revamping of the course structure.

Figure 5.11: Training on Own Source of Revenue (OSR) is grossly insufficient (%)



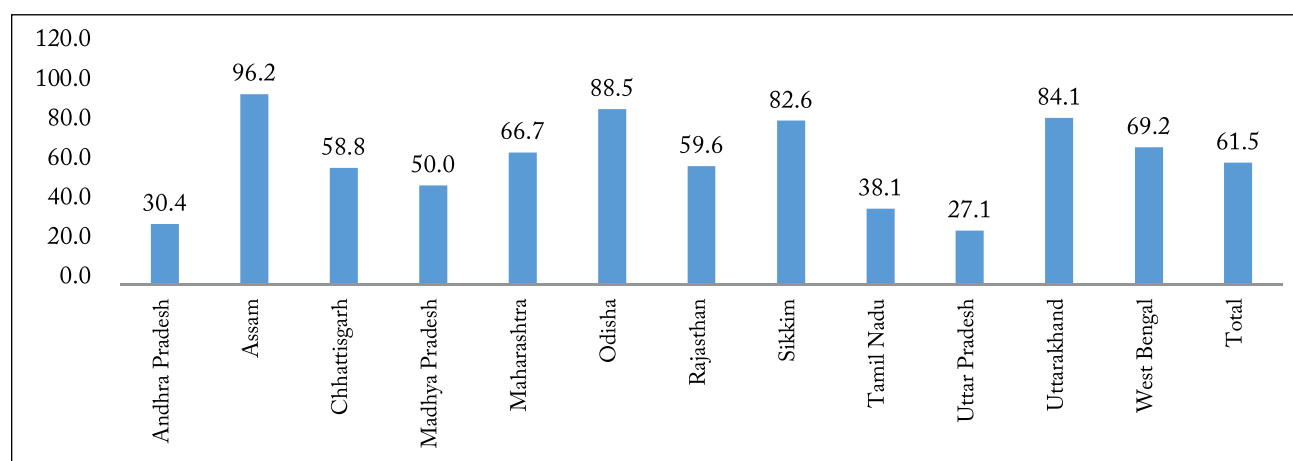
Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

5.14 Convergence

Substantial public investments took place over the years for strengthening the rural economy and the livelihood base of the poor. In order to maximise the outcomes of these investments and effectively address the issue of poverty alleviation, there is a need to optimise efforts through the inter-sectoral convergence of development programmes. The schemes and programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) both operate in rural India and the beneficiaries are mostly common. While the MoRD's schemes and programmes focus on employment generation/guarantee, as well as asset creation in rural areas, both for community benefit and individual livelihood support, the MoA

targets the agriculture sector with schemes and programmes which typically benefit individual farmers, though certain interventions are for the collective benefit of the farming community. Thus, while both the Ministries are channelling funds for benefiting primarily the same target group, currently there exists very limited convergence or meeting point for these two streams. The RGSA thus emphasises convergence as one of the prime objectives for local governance. Figure 5.12, based on the results of the NCAER primary survey, shows that the awareness of initiatives to converge the schemes of different government departments with the GP as the focal point, is a little over 61 per cent. This awareness is observed to be very low in States like Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh.

Figure 5.12: Awareness about initiatives to converge the schemes of different government departments with the GP as the focal point among ERs (% positive responses)



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Ensuring the convergence of different sectoral plans entails various approaches of reconciliation, wherein around 44 per cent of the respondents

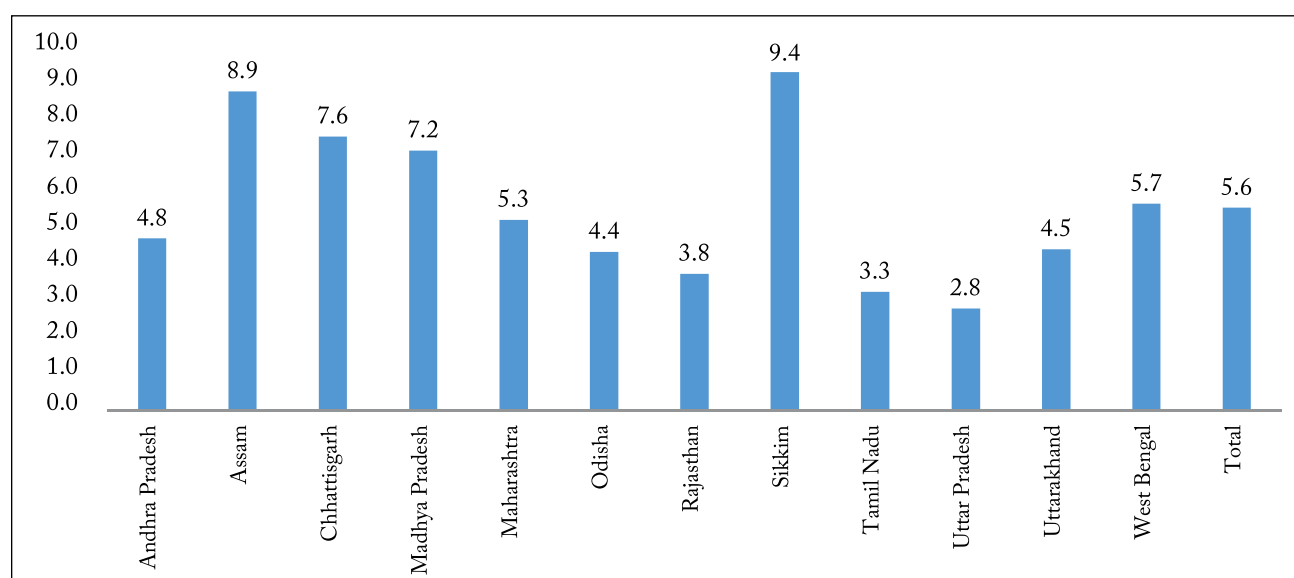
placed inter-departmental co-ordination as the most preferred route. Pooling of resources from multiple schemes comes subsequently.

Table 5.37: How convergence is ensured of different sectoral plans in the GPDP (%)

State	Through inter departmental co-ordination	Through pooling of resources from multiple schemes with similar objectives	Through area based integration of schemes	Through integration of beneficiaries from different schemes
Andhra Pradesh	26.9	23.1	19.2	15.4
Assam	80.8	65.4	80.8	53.8
Chhattisgarh	44.2	46.2	28.8	23.1
Madhya Pradesh	32.7	30.8	26.9	30.8
Maharashtra	44.2	38.5	25.0	32.7
Odisha	71.2	32.7	48.1	44.2
Rajasthan	36.5	34.6	36.5	21.2
Sikkim	68.6	43.1	49.0	49.0
Tamil Nadu	8.5	21.3	21.3	17.0
Uttar Pradesh	22.6	26.4	24.5	22.6
Uttarakhand	65.3	61.2	42.9	34.7
West Bengal	40.4	19.2	40.4	44.2
Total	43.7	35.6	35.1	31.5

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The NCAER survey of enumerators shows that the highest level of average convergence took place in Sikkim (9.4), followed by Assam (8.9), and Chhattisgarh (7.6) (Figure 5.13).

Figure 5.13: Departments converged as reported by the ERs involved in the preparation of GPDP (average)

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

5.15 Partnership with Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Support for Livelihood Generations and the Development of Innovative Projects

The PRIs were constitutionally empowered in 1993, and at the same time, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) started developing, mostly supported by NABARD. Over the years, however, not much synergy has developed between the institutions of local government and the institutions of the poor. As GPs have been assigned the twin functions of economic development and social justice, performing these functions naturally requires a close partnership with community-based organisations, particularly of the marginalised sections.

Recognising the need for an operative and functional working relationship between the GPs and SHGs of women, in particular, the Village

Organisations (VO), the NRLM framework was revised to incorporate provisions for forging a formal relationship between local governments and organisations of the poor. In this context, the present survey by NCAER has obtained a few interesting responses. First, **about 89 per cent of the ERs responded that they have partnered with SHGs to help in its operations.** The partnership is near-total in Assam, and over 90 per cent in the States of West Bengal, Sikkim, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh.

SHGs provide support to the GPs in various ways. Among these, conducting GS (67.1 per cent), preparation of a Micro Credit Plan (48.3 per cent), and implementing the MGNREGS (42.7 per cent) are the important ones. The potential of this partnership could have been more effective in outreach initiatives that are important in terms of CB&T (Table 5.38).

Table 5.38: Areas where SHGs provide support to GP (%)

State	Conduct of Gram Sabhas	Local planning processes such as preparation of Micro Credit Plans	Outreach initiatives such as dissemination of technologies	Monitoring of GP functions	Planning and implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)
Andhra Pradesh	65.4	26.9	25.0	23.1	21.2
Assam	92.3	76.9	57.7	57.7	73.1
Chhattisgarh	71.2	46.2	23.1	48.1	23.1
Madhya Pradesh	73.1	48.1	44.2	48.1	30.8
Maharashtra	61.5	46.2	30.8	46.2	40.4
Odisha	59.6	38.5	15.4	25.0	75.0
Rajasthan	76.9	30.8	15.4	69.2	44.2
Sikkim	92.2	74.5	25.5	37.3	70.6
Tamil Nadu	53.2	21.3	31.9	42.6	8.5
Uttar Pradesh	28.3	75.5	22.6	20.8	26.4
Uttarakhand	53.1	40.8	14.3	26.5	38.8
West Bengal	90.4	65.4	30.8	36.5	73.1
Total	67.1	48.3	26.8	39.3	42.7

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

In the PRI-SHG convergence, it is important to note that over 67 per cent of the SHGs are involved as facilitators in the GS whereas in the PESA States, the percentage involvement of SHGs as facilitators of GS is observed to be around 50 per cent. On the other hand, 66.7 per cent of the SHG respondents assert their involvement in the GPDP, whereas the same is slightly higher in the PESA States. **Of this, only around 26 per cent are noted to be**

involved in Village Poverty Reduction Plans (VPRPs) and the representation of the PESA States is little less, at around 22 per cent. This calls for more synergy and convergence of PRI-SHGs, especially in the PESA States. While recommending areas to be prioritised during planning, specific recommendations are needed for different thematic areas such as poverty, education, public health, and nutrition.

Table 5.39: Thematic areas where there is scope of improvement in GPs (%)

State	Poverty	Public Health	Nutrition	Education	Gender	Sanitation	Drinking Water	Livelihood
Andhra Pradesh	71.2	69.2	67.3	73.1	55.8	73.1	73.1	78.8
Assam	61.5	69.2	76.9	88.5	19.2	69.2	92.3	42.3
Chhattisgarh	69.2	69.2	48.1	69.2	17.3	65.4	50.0	55.8
Madhya Pradesh	94.2	78.8	75.0	82.7	32.7	63.5	59.6	51.9
Maharashtra	75.0	63.5	57.7	76.9	17.3	28.8	28.8	61.5
Odisha	69.2	86.5	88.5	92.3	61.5	94.2	94.2	80.8
Rajasthan	67.3	75.0	53.8	71.2	28.8	67.3	69.2	53.8
Sikkim	76.5	80.4	49.0	78.4	21.6	78.4	80.4	72.5
Tamil Nadu	46.8	46.8	36.2	44.7	14.9	51.1	51.1	51.1
Uttar Pradesh	69.8	60.4	64.2	75.5	32.1	86.8	71.7	75.5
Uttarakhand	61.2	65.3	16.3	53.1	4.1	73.5	61.2	87.8
West Bengal	73.1	86.5	73.1	69.2	38.5	84.6	88.5	61.5
Total	70.2	71.2	58.5	72.5	29.3	69.8	67.5	65.4

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

There are State-level variations in the prioritisation of thematic areas. States like Madhya Pradesh placed poverty (94.2 per cent) as the highest thrust area, while respondents from Odisha and West Bengal (86.5 per cent each) laid greater emphasis on public health. The highest priority of planning in nutrition and education was noted in Odisha (88.5 per cent and 92.3 per cent, respectively), while the respondents from Assam (88.5 per cent) laid greater emphasis on education. The thematic area on gender was least referred to in Uttarakhand (only 4.1 per cent), followed by Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh (17.3 per cent each), while sanitation and drinking

water got the highest mention in Odisha and Assam, respectively. Assam and Uttarakhand placed the highest emphasis on livelihood and Assam the least. As per Tamil Nadu's data, sanitation, water, and livelihood need high attention. Rajasthan also has scope for improvement in sanitation and drinking water, and also marks poverty and education as areas needing a lot of improvement. Sikkim follows a similar case as that of Rajasthan. Andhra Pradesh needs the most focus on livelihood and almost follows the same trend as Rajasthan. The major focus areas for Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal are sanitation and drinking water, respectively.

It is recommended that major focus needs to be given to poverty, education, sanitation, and drinking water. **The role of SHGs must be synergised in preparing poverty reduction plans since they operate at the grassroots level.** Awareness should be spread among the panchayats for attaining a good level of education and taking care of village sanitation. ICT can also help in attaining higher and good quality education. All the GPs should consider providing clean drinking water to all the households as their priority. Exposure visits can help in monitoring development in these areas.

5.16 Support for Livelihood Generation

According to a legitimate constitutional status to the PRIs two decades ago was envisioned to result in greater economic efficiency, larger

resource mobilisation, better service delivery, and inclusive development, leading to higher level of fulfilment. In this context, NRLM targets the building of strong institutions of women in the marginalised areas to reinforce democracy at the grassroots level. These institutions can act as training grounds for women to participate in the GS so that they are able to express their views and concerns. It was anticipated that women's active participation would lead to livelihood enhancement of the disadvantaged communities because they would learn to plan and execute their own programme through the convergence of various government programmes. It is noted that for all the States, around 89 per cent of the ERs observed the support of GOs to SHGs for livelihood generation and partnership with SHGs is effective in this regard (Table 5.39).

Table 5.40: GPs support to SHGs for livelihood generation (%)

State	GPs support to the SHGs in livelihood generation / improvement	Is the partnership effective
Andhra Pradesh	84.4	86.7
Assam	100.0	92.0
Chhattisgarh	90.4	86.5
Madhya Pradesh	92.3	88.5
Maharashtra	90.0	85.7
Odisha	90.4	67.3
Rajasthan	84.3	80.8
Sikkim	96.0	93.9
Tamil Nadu	73.2	75.6
Uttar Pradesh	100.0	97.9
Uttarakhand	71.7	76.7
West Bengal	90.4	80.8
Total	88.5	84.1

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

5.17 Support for Economic Development and Income Enhancement

As per the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) of 2011, around 8.9 crore households were observed to be deprived² from multi-

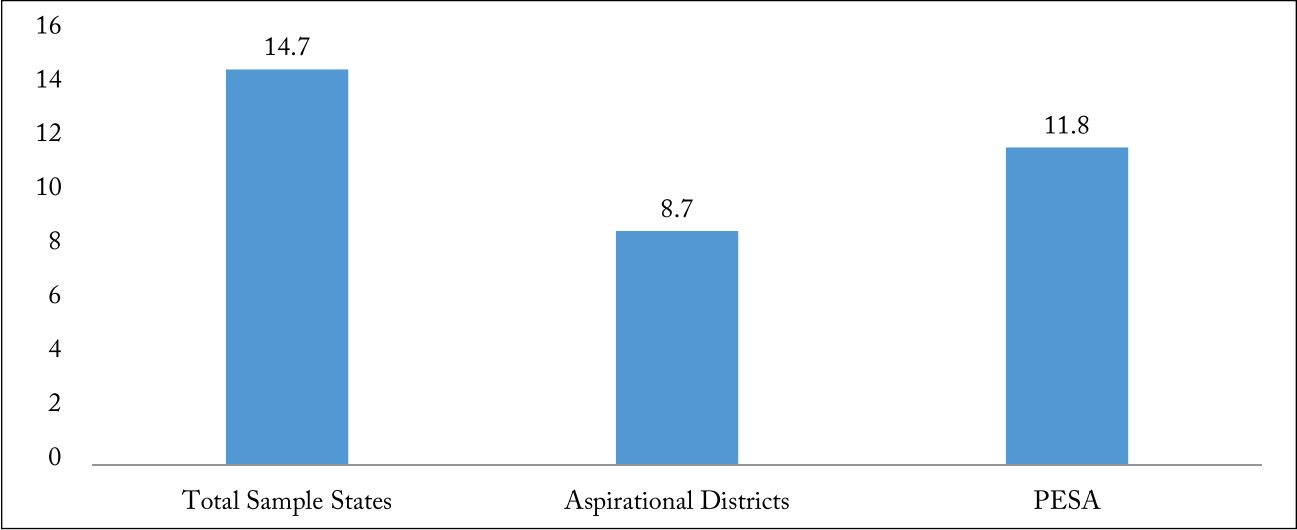
dimensional perspectives. These households need targeted interventions under the various schemes and programmes of the government. In this

²Framework for implementation of RGSA, MoPR.

context, there is need for support for economic development with the GPs as the basic unit for planning by following a saturation approach entailing the pooling of resources for ensuring sustainable livelihoods through an inclusive, transparent, and participatory process. Hence, gap funding available under the RGSA to support current projects on economic development and

income enhancement under other schemes is important for promoting local development. It may be noted that the positive response in this regard is too low for all the State level groupings. This is alarmingly low in the Aspirational Districts. The lower level of positive responses partially reflects ignorance and lack of awareness about the component among the representatives.

Figure 5.14: Distribution (% positive responses) of response on gap funding by RGSA to support for economic development and income enhancement

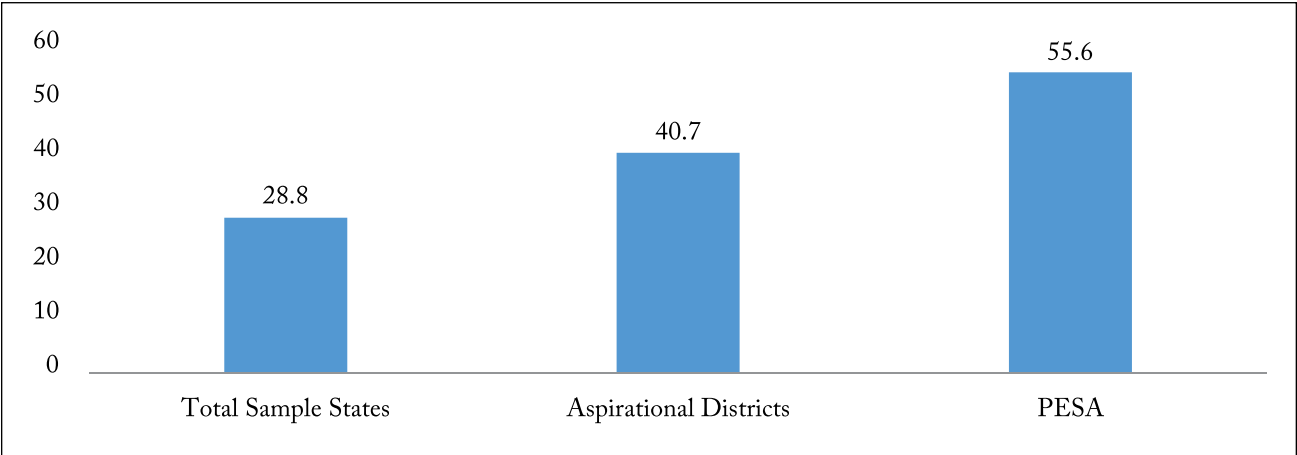


Source: NCAER’s calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

However, among the positive respondents, the extent of support received for the Aspirational Districts and the PESA areas is observed to be

proportionally higher than the total sample of States.

Figure 5.15: Distribution (%) of response on the extent of support received through RGSA gap funding to support economic development and income enhancement



Source: NCAER’s calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Community-based development programmes and strategies over the years have been relying significantly on community-based institutions for building community ownership and effective programme delivery through the utilisation of organised social capital at the grassroots level. The **actual picture reveals that 64 per cent of the SHGs are involved in preparing**

projects for economic development/income enhancement with the GP. The percentage is less for the PESA areas and a bit more for the Aspirational Districts. Similarly, over 72 per cent of the SHGs in the Aspirational Districts are involved in promoting rural business hubs (see Table 5.41).

Table 5.41: SHGs involvements in projects for development & income enhancement and promoting rural business hub (%)

State	SHG involvement in projects for development & income enhancement			Promote rural business hub		
	Total Sample States	Aspirational Districts	PESA	Total Sample States	Aspirational Districts	PESA
Andhra Pradesh	70.3	83.3	-	89.2	88.9	-
Assam	95.0	90.0	-	70.0	50.0	-
Chhattisgarh	70.0	70.0	-	65.0	65.0	-
Madhya Pradesh	72.5	65.0	-	82.5	90.0	-
Maharashtra	95.0	95.0	-	65.0	50.0	-
Odisha	40.0	40.0	-	92.5	100.0	-
Rajasthan	52.5	50.0	-	57.5	80.0	-
Sikkim	72.7	60.0	-	38.9	40.0	-
Tamil Nadu	70.0	NA	-	75.0	NA	-
Uttar Pradesh	56.8	55.6	-	81.6	84.2	-
Uttarakhand	43.8	NA	-	45.5	NA	-
West Bengal	41.0	50.0	-	23.1	30.0	-
Total	63.9	65.7	60.3	65.7	72.5	62.1

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

On the other hand, the percentage of SHGs appointed to prepare the Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP) and incorporation of the Micro Credit Plan (MCP) and vulnerability

reduction plan in the GPDP presented to the GS is observed to be low, especially in the PESA areas.

Table 5.42: Planning process activities of SHG with GP for development of the area

State	Preparation of VPRP for incorporation in GPDP			Incorporation of MCP and vulnerability reduction plan in GPDP		
	Total Sample States	Aspirational Districts	PESA	Total Sample States	Aspirational Districts	PESA
Andhra Pradesh	13.2	15.8	-	21.1	31.6	-
Assam	35.0	60.0	-	30	50.0	-
Chhattisgarh	30.0	35.0	-	20	15.0	-
Madhya Pradesh	25.0	5.0	-	20	0.0	-
Maharashtra	27.5	15.0	-	35	25.0	-
Odisha	27.5	35.0	-	15	10.0	-
Rajasthan	10.0	20.0	-	10	20.0	-
Sikkim	57.5	70.0	-	52.5	50.0	-
Tamil Nadu	22.5	NA	-	15	NA	-
Uttar Pradesh	28.2	31.6	-		26.3	-
Uttarakhand	20.0	NA	-	20	NA	-
West Bengal	20.5	30.0	-	35.9	70.0	-
Total	26.2	28.0	13.6	24.2	25.0	8.5

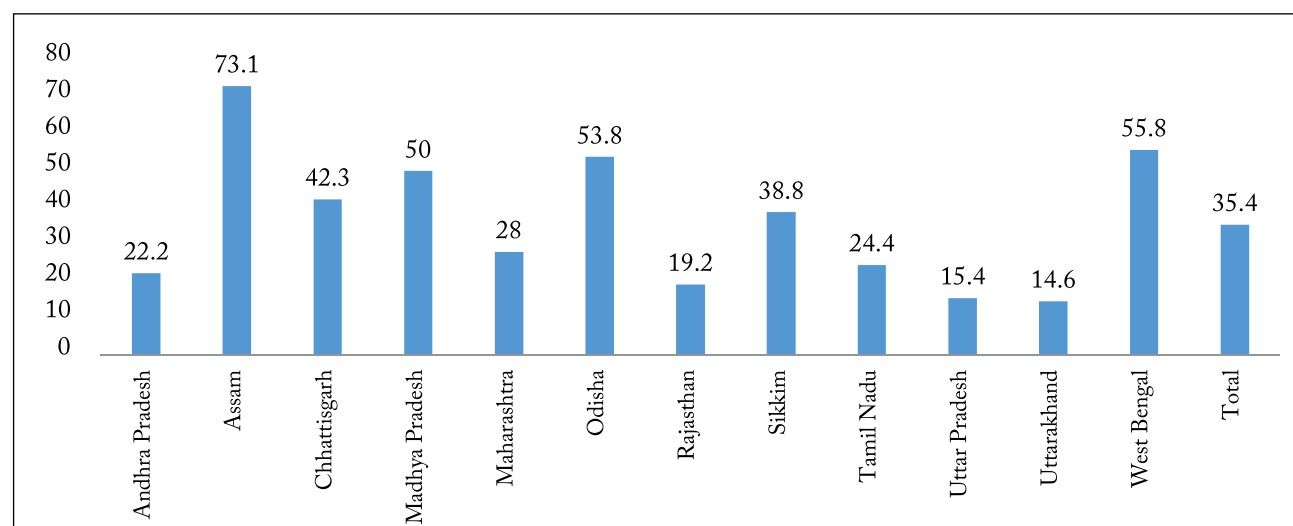
Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

5.18 Support for Innovative Projects

Potentially, with the funds that GPs have and can leverage, the powers they can exercise and the people's resources they can recruit and access, GPs should be able to change the face of rural India by supporting innovative economic projects. This is not entirely part of RGSA. It should be recognised that the contributions, which ERs can make, can create enabling environments

and incentives for them to function effectively. However, barring a few States, very little funds under RGSA are provided for the development of innovative projects under schemes for other Ministries, as per the responses received from the ERs. Among the responses, the level of awareness and ignorance of the ERs is another concern, which points to the need for expanding the coverage of the training courses.

Figure 5.16: Availability of funds for development of innovative projects under other schemes from other Ministries (% positive response)



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Among the positive responses, a majority of the funding support went into GP governance and service delivery projects. However, innovative methodologies for capacity building

are important and should be emphasised more in view of capacity constraints that emerged from the results of the NCAER survey.

Table 5.43: Kind of innovative projects that have been supported till date

State	Innovation in strengthening GP governance and service delivery	Innovation in use of technology to deliver local solutions	Innovative methodologies of capacity building
Andhra Pradesh	13.5	17.3	15.4
Assam	57.7	53.8	42.3
Chhattisgarh	40.4	19.2	15.4
Madhya Pradesh	51.9	26.9	25.0
Maharashtra	23.1	17.3	15.4
Odisha	30.8	26.9	30.8
Rajasthan	17.3	3.8	3.8
Sikkim	37.3	31.4	13.7
Tamil Nadu	10.6	17.0	12.8
Uttar Pradesh	11.3	13.2	18.9
Uttarakhand	14.3	6.1	6.1
West Bengal	36.5	30.8	42.3
Total	27.6	20.7	19.3

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

However, the fund availability to support the innovative projects is noted to be insufficient. **Over 50 per cent of the total respondents cited**

the insufficiency of funds to support innovative projects (Table 5.44).

Table 5.44: Funds are inadequate for implementation of the projects

State	Yes	No	Don't Know
Andhra Pradesh	70.0	20.0	10.0
Assam	47.4	52.6	0.0
Chhattisgarh	77.3	18.2	4.5
Madhya Pradesh	61.3	29.0	9.7
Maharashtra	78.6	14.3	7.1
Odisha	39.3	50.0	10.7
Rajasthan	9.1	81.8	9.1
Sikkim	50.0	50.0	0.0
Tamil Nadu	64.3	35.7	0.0
Uttar Pradesh	26.7	6.7	66.7
Uttarakhand	57.1	42.9	0.0
West Bengal	25.0	75.0	0.0
Total	49.3	41.7	9.0

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

It is noted that though limited in penetration, innovative projects have mostly supported the increased ease of functioning and efficiency of

local Panchayats. The attainment of SDGs is observed to be high in Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu.

Table 5.45: Innovative projects mostly supported increased ease of functioning, followed by local development and outreach

State	Increased ease of functioning / efficiency of the Panchayat	Increased local development and outreach	Enabled attainment of the SDGs	Provided a stimulus for further innovations
Andhra Pradesh	80.0	70.0	66.7	50.0
Assam	84.2	73.7	57.9	52.6
Chhattisgarh	90.9	95.5	90.9	77.3
Madhya Pradesh	75.0	65.4	57.7	38.5
Maharashtra	85.7	64.3	92.9	57.1
Odisha	82.1	88.9	53.6	50.0
Rajasthan	81.8	63.6	72.7	36.4
Sikkim	94.7	89.5	89.5	84.2
Tamil Nadu	78.6	57.1	92.9	50.0
Uttar Pradesh	50.0	66.7	33.3	62.5
Uttarakhand	100.0	100.0	100	100.0
West Bengal	90.6	90.6	84.4	78.1
Total	83.3	79.0	73.8	60.8

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

5.19 Impact Assessment of the RGSA Project

An imperative focus of institutional development of PRIs would be feedback on their functioning and support for processes of democratic and accountable functioning, As well as strengthening of institutional capability to achieve timely and accurate reporting and monitoring of the performance of the various tiers of Panchayats

in the areas of planning, governance, service delivery, and inclusion. The most important areas of improvement, as per the respondents' answers, are education, followed by public health and poverty. Although gender issues have been accorded low importance, gender as a theme should also be included in the objectives of RGSA for strengthening the entitlements of the marginalised sections of society.

Table 5.46: Scope for improvement in the areas under GP

State	Poverty	Public Health	Nutrition	Education	Gender	Sanitation	Drinking Water	Livelihood Generation
Andhra Pradesh	71.2	69.2	67.3	73.1	55.8	73.1	73.1	78.8
Assam	61.5	69.2	76.9	88.5	19.2	69.2	92.3	42.3
Chhattisgarh	69.2	69.2	48.1	69.2	17.3	65.4	50.0	55.8
Madhya Pradesh	94.2	78.8	75.0	82.7	32.7	63.5	59.6	51.9
Maharashtra	75.0	63.5	57.7	76.9	17.3	28.8	28.8	61.5
Odisha	69.2	86.5	88.5	92.3	61.5	94.2	94.2	80.8
Rajasthan	67.3	75.0	53.8	71.2	28.8	67.3	69.2	53.8
Sikkim	76.5	80.4	49.0	78.4	21.6	78.4	80.4	72.5
Tamil Nadu	46.8	46.8	36.2	44.7	14.9	51.1	51.1	51.1
Uttar Pradesh	69.8	60.4	64.2	75.5	32.1	86.8	71.7	75.5
Uttarakhand	61.2	65.3	16.3	53.1	4.1	73.5	61.2	87.8
West Bengal	73.1	86.5	73.1	69.2	38.5	84.6	88.5	61.5
Total	70.2	71.2	58.5	72.5	29.3	69.8	67.5	65.4

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Note: Questionnaires with multiple options are estimated using the count of positive responses for an option by taking the percentage share with the total number of respondents.

On the ground, RGSA is observed to have helped enhance the capabilities of GPs for good governance at the local level. had a comprehensive impact that has finally

Table 5.47: RGSA a comprehensive scheme to enhance capabilities of GPs for good governance (% positive responses)

State	RGSA a comprehensive scheme for strengthening PRIs	RGSA enhanced capabilities of GPs for good governance
Andhra Pradesh	80.4	80.4
Assam	100.0	100.0
Chhattisgarh	78.4	70.6
Madhya Pradesh	82.7	94.2
Maharashtra	68.0	73.5
Odisha	96.2	96.1
Rajasthan	78.4	82.7
Sikkim	90.2	92.2
Tamil Nadu	69.8	72.1
Uttar Pradesh	88.7	88.7
Uttarakhand	100.0	100.0
West Bengal	96.2	92.3
Total	85.4	86.6

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The RGSA scheme has helped enhance the capabilities of the GPs by enabling more democratic decision-making, followed by an improved service delivery system. This

has also promoted greater transparency and accountability as per the ERs responsive to the survey questionnaires.

Table 5.48: How RGSA helped to enhance capabilities of GPs

State	Enhanced participatory local planning	More democratic decision making	Greater administrative efficiency	Improved service delivery	Greater transparency and accountability	Better institutional structure
Andhra Pradesh	57.7	65.4	67.3	55.8	59.6	42.3
Assam	92.3	65.4	57.7	57.7	57.7	50.0
Chhattisgarh	51.9	48.1	42.3	36.5	44.2	17.3
Madhya Pradesh	57.7	82.7	53.8	53.8	42.3	13.5
Maharashtra	46.2	23.1	32.7	26.9	44.2	30.8
Odisha	71.2	63.5	61.5	84.6	88.5	25.0
Rajasthan	53.8	50.0	44.2	51.9	55.8	19.2
Sikkim	72.5	68.6	54.9	51.0	58.8	25.5
Tamil Nadu	38.3	31.9	38.3	38.3	36.2	23.4
Uttar Pradesh	26.4	39.6	41.5	73.6	41.5	26.4
Uttarakhand	42.9	77.6	73.5	77.6	73.5	8.2
West Bengal	50.0	55.8	55.8	55.8	46.2	51.9
Total	53.6	55.6	51.7	55.3	53.9	26.9

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

5.20 Conclusion

The intricacy and challenges of training programmes at the GP level require robust institutional competence in terms of developing infrastructure, accessing modern training equipment and tools, as well as pooling faculty and resources through coordination with the best quality institutions of the country. It is also felt that one or two rounds of formal institutional training would not be sufficient to equip ERs and functionaries of Panchayats to become capacitated. ERs and functionaries would need continuous mentoring or handholding support in order to enhance their functional competencies to deliver their functions. In order to develop capabilities of GPs for implementation of innovative plans and activities or for developing model panchayats, institutional arrangements may be undertaken by the States to engage

experienced resource persons or mentoring teams, reputed NGOs and other expert agencies of recognised integrity for providing practical support to Panchayats. In this regard, it is pertinent to establish horizontal networking with other national and international organisations to establish collaborations for quality training and faculty development. A system can be evolved through the State Institutes of Rural Development (SIRDs)/other identified institutions to continue to update their skills and knowledge. There could be many advantages of this system in which faculty members mutually gain from each other through interactions between the field and the institution for getting good trainers for decentralised training, particularly for ERs and functionaries. They can also be utilized to improve the training infrastructure of other departments in the State to conduct

training for PRIs. Moreover, collaboration with the centre of excellence like the Institute of Rural Management, IITs can provide much leeway in training the resource people at the grass-root level.

The RGSA has provided need-based support for the creation of infrastructure and facilities in the training institutions of the State and at the district levels in which States are expected to strengthen their institutional arrangement for CB&T while collaborating with the existing resource institutions and NGOs to ensure the high quality of capacity endowment and outreach.

More emphasis should be placed on collecting data at regular intervals to understand the extent and outreach of the training process and to study its underlying outcome indicators through qualitative research. Adequate provisioning of resources and entitlements for ensuring the full implementation of CB&T is imperative in this regard, while NIRD&PR should effectively combine the mandates linked to rural governance and the aspects that are needed to cover the objectives of the SDGs.

Increasing the financial and physical resources that are allocated to CB&T should include monitoring, evaluation, mid-course correction, and regulation aspects to ensure the attainment of planned outcomes. This would also involve capacity building of the faculty of training institutions and creating equitably a large and good mass of trainers from amongst the officials in the field.

There is now a need for more concerted and robust processes for reforming governance at the Panchayat level. This is possible by making it more participatory yet technology- and performance-driven and outcome-oriented. The results of the NCAER survey calls for a paradigmatic change in the functioning of Panchayats, a shift in capacity building and training strategies, innovations in the use of technology for responsive service delivery, and enhanced people's participation in decision-making for achieving more transparency and accountability. The focus should now be on the innovative use of ICT tools for the delivery of services like the provision of certificates, licences, and tax collection, among other things.

The RGSA needs to develop local leadership capacities and promote self-improving GPs by enabling them to find innovative, community-driven and sustainable solutions to local problems and to engage more in the thematic areas.

Access to information is the most important consideration for bridging the knowledge gaps and initiating behavioural change. Dissemination of information through an effective communication strategy can be instrumental in enhancing the impact of the development initiatives. A comprehensive development strategy at the national level should be developed to make Panchayats more people-centric and to motivate people by strengthening the GS to participate in local development and rework processes to influence decisions that shape their lives.

Comparative Analysis

6.1 Introduction

One of the critical objectives of the RGSA is to enhance the capabilities of Panchayats for inclusive local governance with a focus on the optimal utilisation of accessible resources and convergence with other schemes to address issues of national importance. As a part of the above objectives, it is important to improve the capabilities of Panchayat to raise their own sources of revenue to attain the socio-economic objectives of poverty reduction and empowerment of women, poor, and downtrodden. It is also imperative to strengthen the Gram Sabha (GS) to function effectively as the basic forum of people's participation, transparency, and accountability within the Panchayat system. Moreover, to promote the devolution of powers and responsibilities to the Panchayats according to the spirit of the Constitution and the PESA Act, 1996, the RGSA scheme has facilitated a network of institutions of excellence to support capacity building and handholding for the PRIs.

The Fourteenth Finance Committee (2015-20) has shaped a massive opening at the GP level by allocating a substantial number of resources to them. It emphasises the urgent empowerment of the GPs in terms of the delivery of basic services reliably and efficiently. The Constitution envisions the PRIs as an institution of self-governance with the successful devolution of power through financial, functional and functionaries. The devolution of power and authority to Panchayat

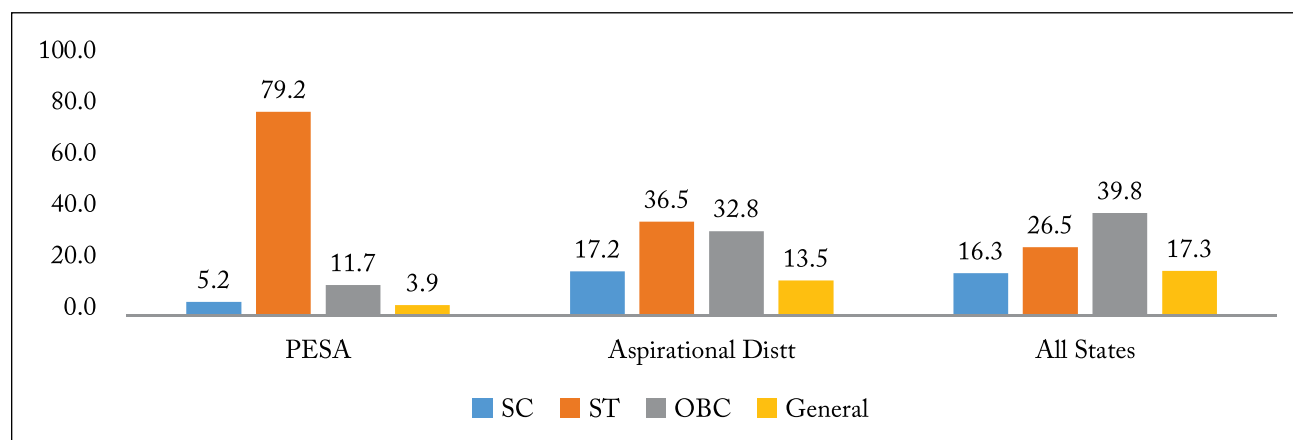
is to be done by the State Governments. Financial powers are to be assigned to collect appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees. However, it is observed that in many States, the PRIs in general and GPs, in particular, are presently not mobilizing their resources of revenue to the extent desired and are largely dependent on grants.

The current study by NCAER has carried out a field survey at different level of stakeholders and panchayat functionaries. The findings of the survey have obtained several insights. The survey has two important sets of state, i.e., PESA states and Aspirational Districts. A few insights are presented as a comparative summary of major findings.

6.2 Demography, Representation of the Nature of Members Working for the GPs

The distribution of Socio-Economic Groups (SEGs) among the ERs of the GPs is an important indicator of social empowerment in shaping the people's participation and the participatory approach at the ground level of our economy. This is more so in the distribution of the PESA areas and the Aspirational Districts. Figure 6.1 shows the representation of SEGs among the group of States in our sample. It may be observed that among the PESA States (Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Rajasthan), the representation of STs is around 79 per cent (Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1: Distribution (%) of Socio-Economic Groups among Elected Representatives of Panchayat

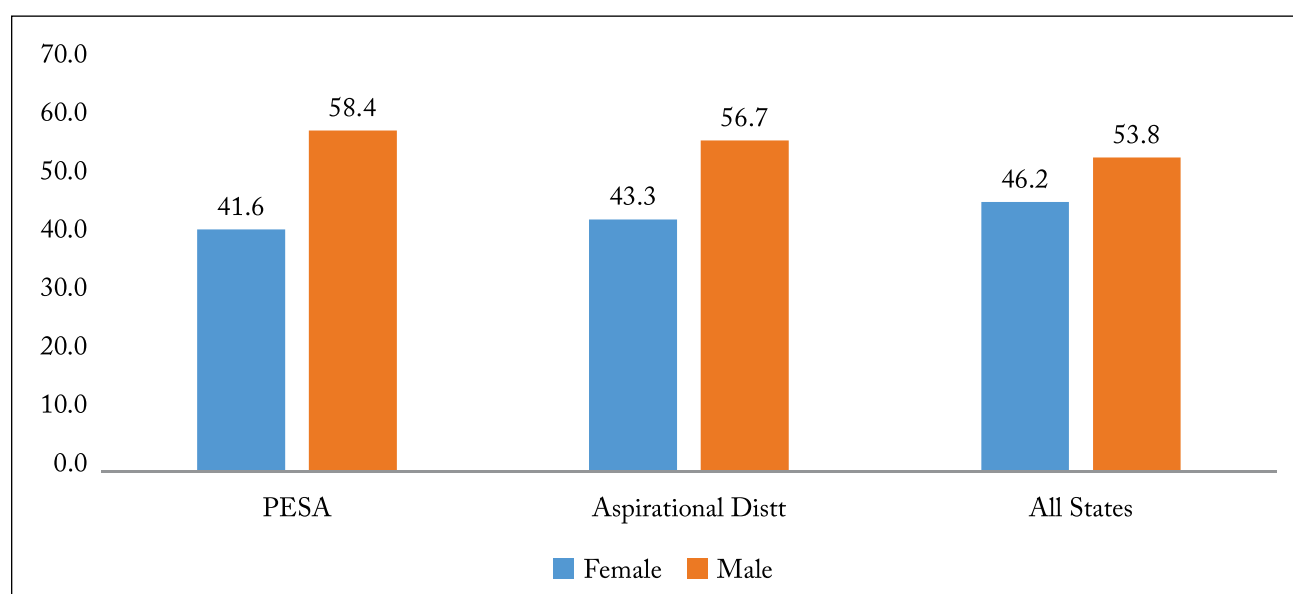


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Clause (3) of Article 243D of the Constitution ensures the participation of women in PRIs by mandating not less than one-third reservation for women out of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election and the number of offices of chairpersons of Panchayats. The gender

distribution among the ERs (Figure 6.2) shows a very noticeable representation of females. States like Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu reported a higher representation of EWRs as compared to their male counterparts.

Figure 6.2: Distribution (%) of Gender among Elected Representatives of Panchayat

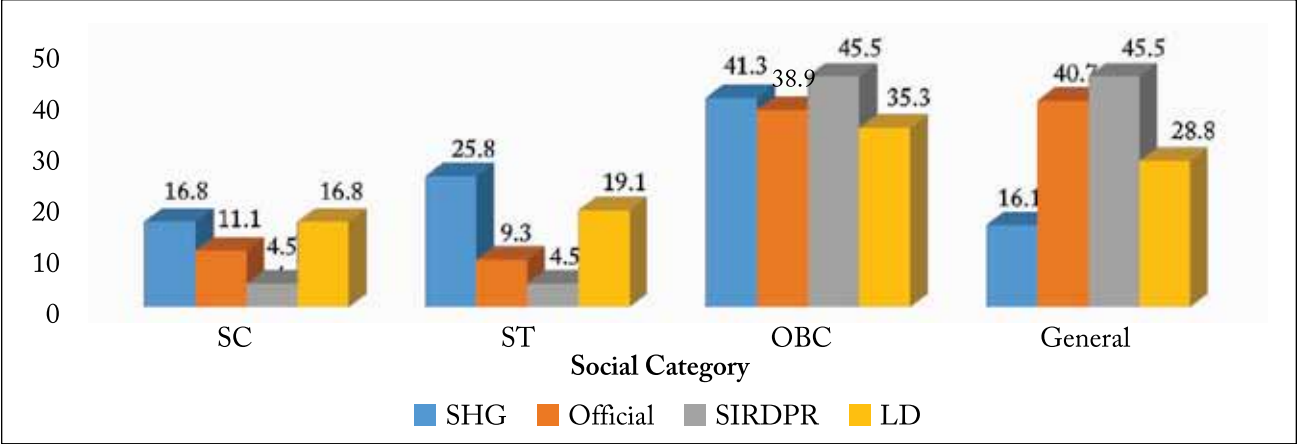


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Among the other stakeholders, 46 per cent belonged to the OBCs in the SHGs and SIRDPR, and 40 per cent of the stakeholders belonged to the General category, as compared to the others. The importance of the SHGs in poverty alleviation and women's empowerment is emphasised by the fact that as many as 90

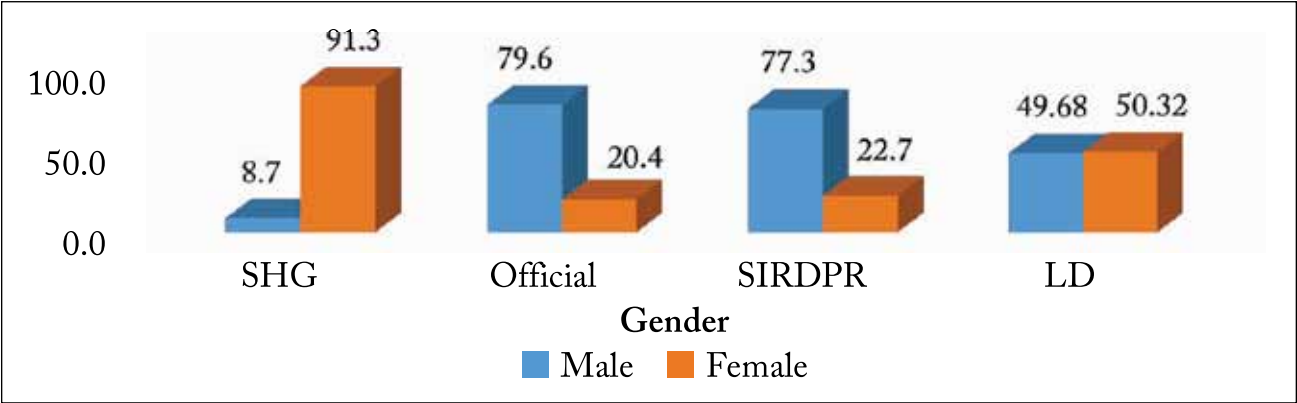
per cent of the SHGs are entirely comprised of women. The present study reported that the proportion of females in the SHGs is quite high, i.e., 91 per cent and the proportion of males is high as compared to the other stakeholders, i.e. 80 per cent.

Figure 6.3: Distribution (%) of Socio-Economic Groups among Other Stakeholders



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 6.4: Distribution (%) of Gender among Other Stakeholders

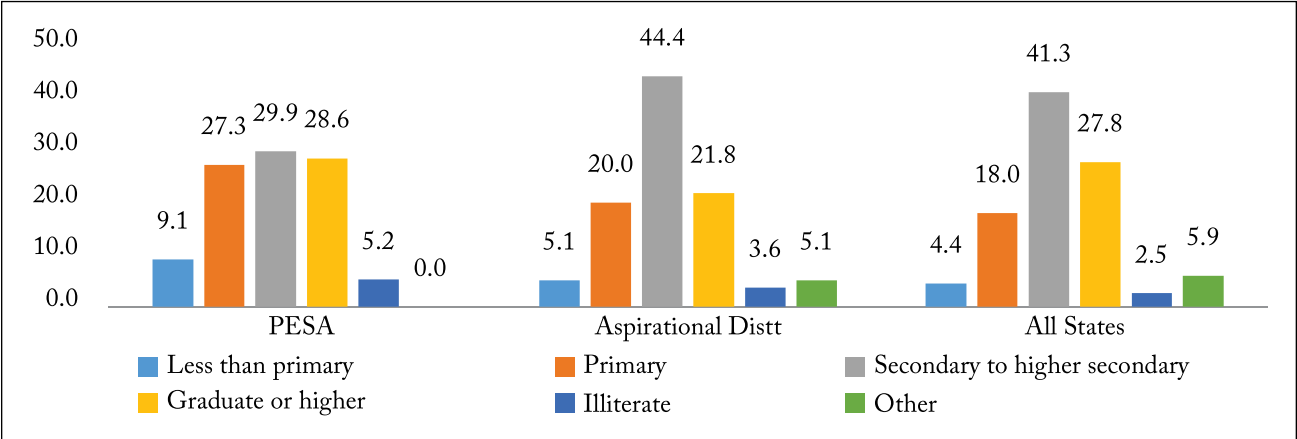


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Educational achievement is important for the efficient functioning of grassroots level institutions. It may be noted that the proportion of graduates (28.6 per cent) is higher in the PESA

States, while those with secondary and higher secondary level of educational qualifications is higher in the Aspirational Districts (44.4 per cent).

Figure 6.5: Distribution (%) of Educational level among Elected Representatives of Panchayat

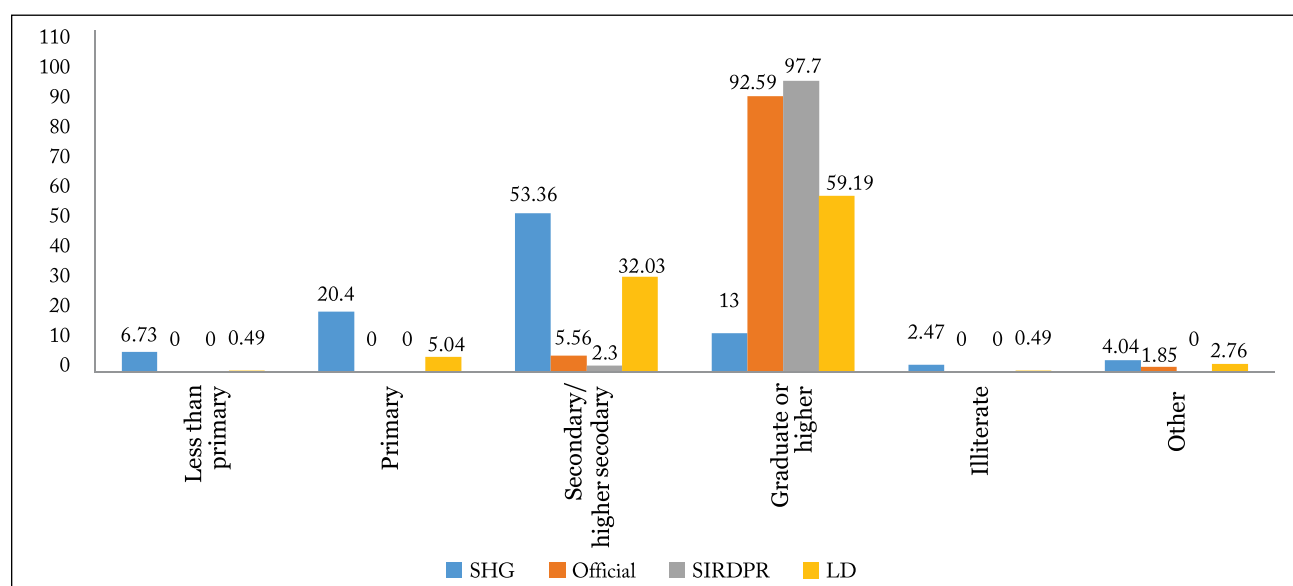


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

All the respondents are mostly graduates or higher graduates among the stakeholders of SIRDPR and officials. Most of the SHG

respondents, that is, 54 per cent, have acquired secondary level of education.

Figure 6.6: Distribution (%) of Educational Level among Other Stakeholders of Panchayats



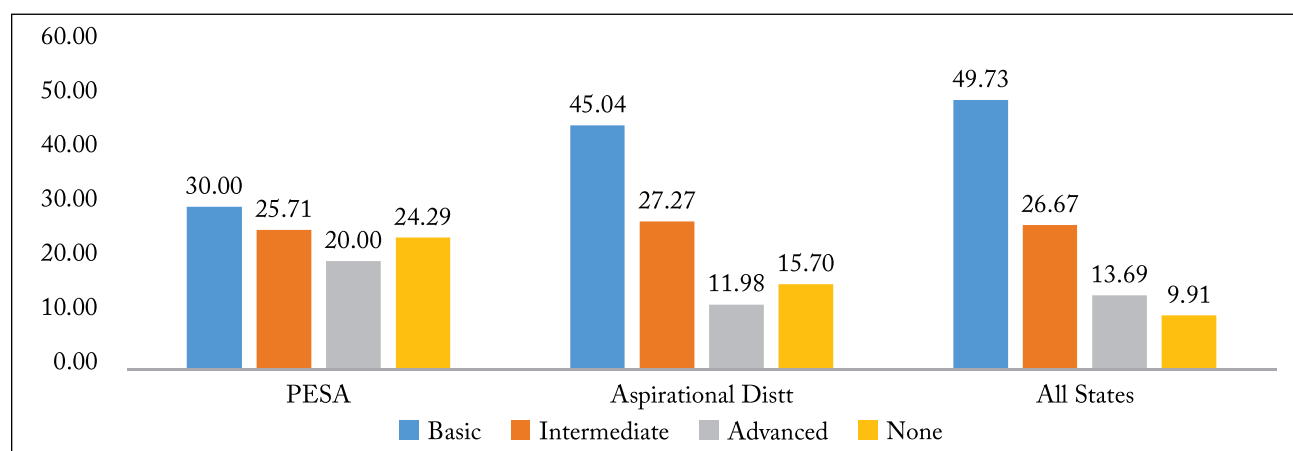
Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Technical education is an important factor for enhancing the technical capabilities of the Panchayat system. In this count, the level of computer literacy assumes critical significance as the functioning of the PRIs nowadays depends considerably on the knowledge and usage of computers. It may be noted that the level of ignorance in computer usage is around 50 per cent for all the sampled States of the NCAER study, and there are variations in terms of the

knowledge pertaining to basic, intermediate, and advanced stages of computer literacy for the PESA and Aspirational Districts.

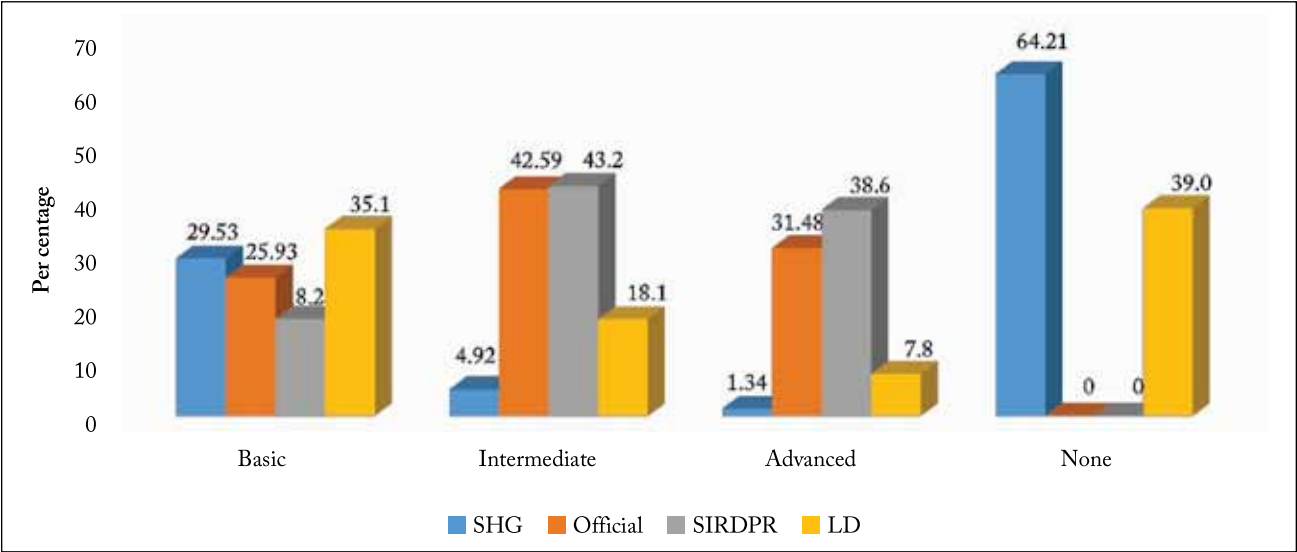
The level of computer literacy of the respondents in SIRDPR and among the officials is identical, with 43 per cent and 32 per cent of the respondents reporting advanced knowledge. On the other hand, most SHG respondents, that is, 64 per cent, have no computer literacy.

Figure 6.7: Distribution (%) of Respondents of Panchayat Functionaries in terms of the Level of Computer Literacy



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 6.8: Distribution (%) of Respondents of Other Stakeholders in terms of the Level of Computer Literacy

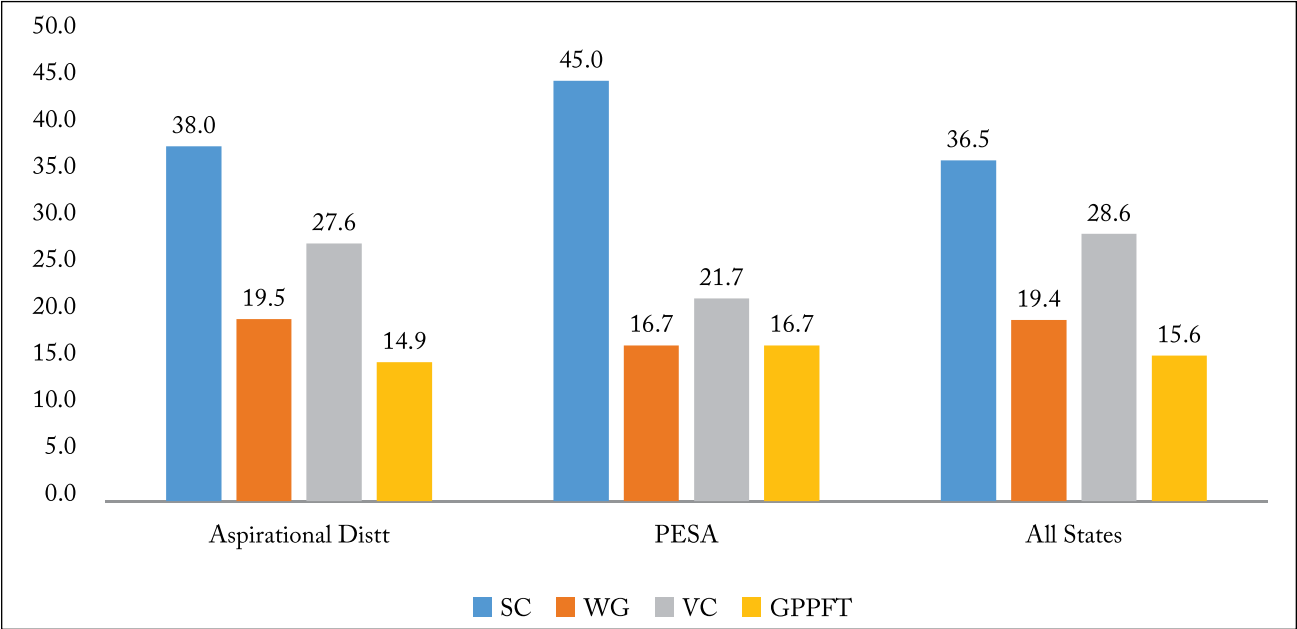


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The deliberation and representation of the Gram Sabha (GS) are most important in the functioning at the grassroots level, as it is the fulcrum of the PRIs and village development. The distribution and type of operational Committees in the GS among the PESA States and the Aspirational Districts are delineated in Figure

6.9. The figure 6.9 shows that the representation of the Standing Committee and Gram Panchayat Planning and Facilitation Team (GPPFT) is higher in the PESA States while that of Working Groups (WGs) and Village Committee (VCs) is relatively higher in the Aspirational Districts.

Figure 6.9: Distribution (%) of the Types of Committees in the Gram Sabhas



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Note: SC=Standing Committee, WG=Working Groups, VC=Village Committee, TF=Task Force, and GPPFT=Gram Panchayat Planning and Facilitation Team.

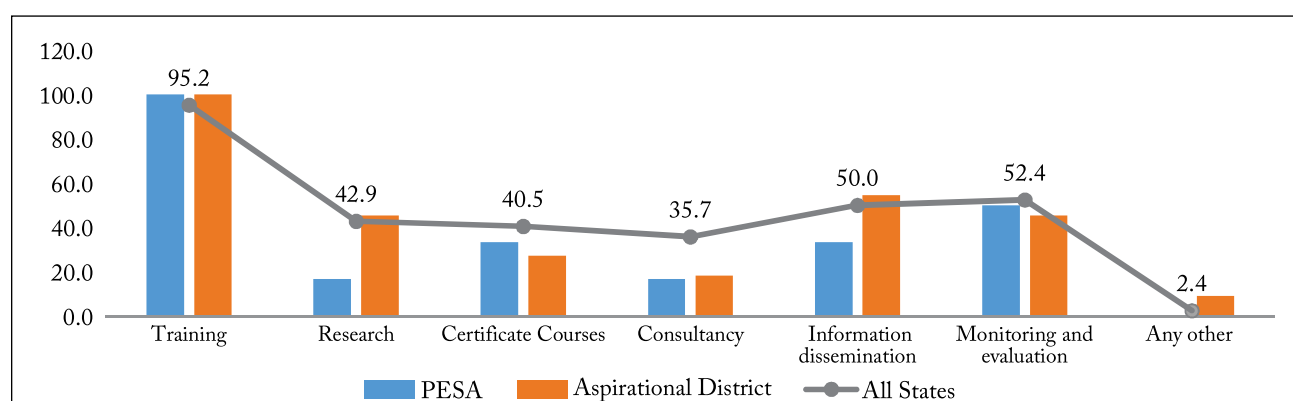
6.3 Institutions Imparting Training to the PRIs

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) prepared the National Capability Building Framework (NCBF) to serve as a guide for planning and implementing CB&T-related programmes for ERs and functionaries associated with the PRIs. Strengthening the Panchayats is a critical concern for improving governance through CB&T. The ERs and Panchayat functionaries need to understand their roles and acquire the concomitant skills to effectively perform these roles. High-quality capacity building, reaching out to all stakeholders of the Panchayat, is required to ensure the effectiveness of the GPs. The NCBF is meant to assist the States in expanding their outreach and enhancing the quality of their capacity building initiatives. The MoPR has been sharing the NCBF with the States/UTs to plan and execute CB&T programmes with increased usage of the NCBF across the country. The experience brings out some issues about the NCBF that need to be addressed. Training activities under the RGSA are conducted through the State Institutes of Rural Development (SIRD), which are State government institutions aimed at increasing knowledge and skills in the field of rural development. Funds have been provided for orienting the GS on issues related to the PESA Act, but it is unclear how they get utilised, and how much gets utilised because of lack of transparency in the system.

6.3.1 Training Needs Assessment

The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD & PR) is organically linked to the State Institutes of Rural Development (SIRDs), which in turn serve as apex institutions for the Extension Training Centres. Some of the States like Sikkim have been quick to realise the importance of training and have provided for allocation of one per cent of the funds for training institutions. **It is necessary to create a continuous chain of training institutions from the national level down to the Panchayat level.** Training needs assessment is important in determining the subject, area, and quantum of training to be imparted to the targeted audience. Meaningful implementation of the training action plan cannot be possible without a directed effort to produce relevant print and electronic training material for different programmes and categories of functionaries. The production of training material in regional languages may be done at the State level under the supervision of the committee of experts on training materials, who would prepare the outline of course material. **Preparation of training materials for different level of trainees requires an understanding of the training needs and also the most effective methods of imparting training.** These would vary from State to State, and from one level of functionaries to the other. Such material can be disseminated and reproduced for training at various levels in the State. The activity-wise distribution of training institutions is depicted in Figure 6.10.

Figure 6.10: Activity-wise distribution of Training Institutions



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

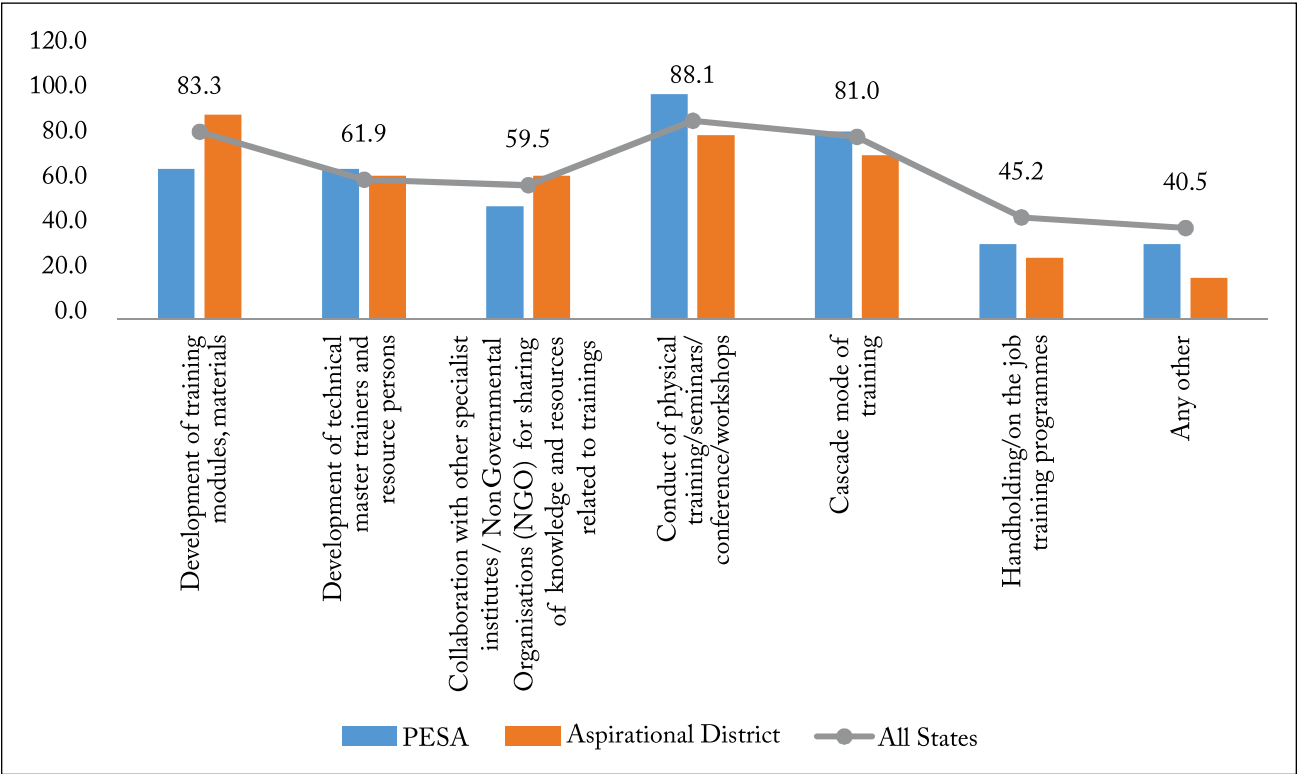
Out of the total activities undertaken by the training institutions, training constitutes 95.2 per cent, followed by Monitoring and evaluation (52.4 per cent) and Information Dissemination (50 per cent). A similar pattern was observed in PESA and Aspirational Districts also.

6.3.2 Activities Undertaken Related to Training

Training institutes have been enlarging their canvas of training activities every year and have also been successful in making them more need-based and focused. A number of training programmes are undertaken in the core areas by organising

banner programmes, in the identified thrust areas that cover the multi-dimensional aspects of rural development and several sponsored programmes, which have been established by the Institute in the area of rural development training. **The activities of the institutions related to training are: conducting physical training, seminars, conferences, workshops; development of training modules and materials; imparting training through online platforms and blended mode with virtual and face-to-face training; cascade mode of training, etc.** The proportion is almost identical for both the PESA and the Aspirational Districts, that is, 19 per cent.

Figure 6.11: Activity-wise distribution of Training Institutions

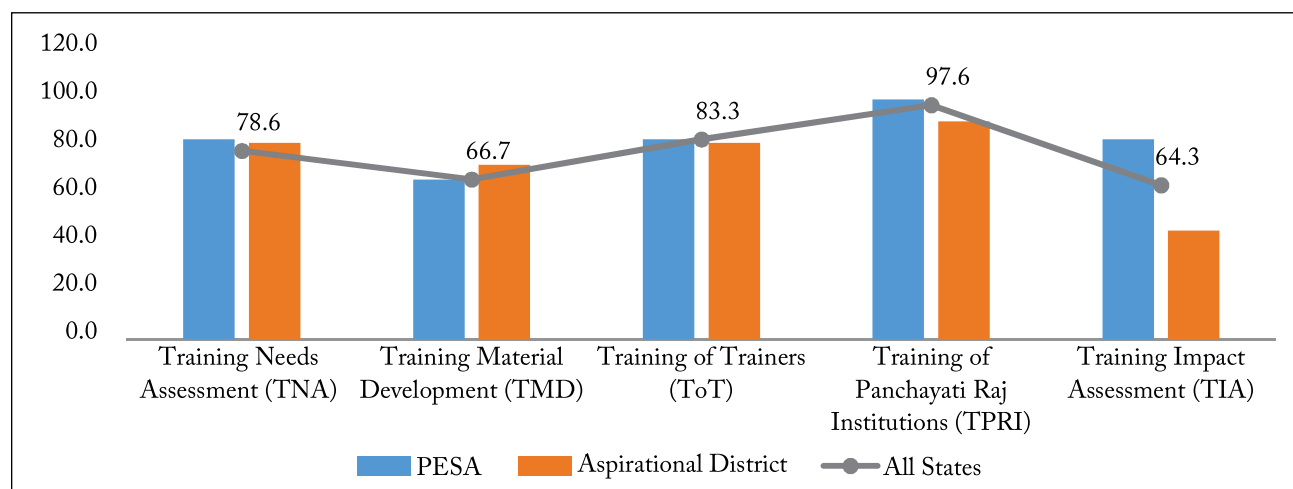


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

6.3.3 Involvement in Different Types of Training

A very important challenge to be addressed by all the States is the quality of CB&T. A systematic approach to training, which includes Training Needs Assessment (TNA), development of training materials, training of

trainers, and actual training, followed by Training Impact Assessment is vital. Involvement in various types of training conducted by SIRDPR is shown in Figure 6.12. **TPRI constitutes 97.6 per cent of the total training undertaken by the training institutions. The proportion is slightly higher in the PESA States as compared to the Aspirational Districts.**

Figure 6.12: Involvement in the Types of Training conducted by SIRDPR

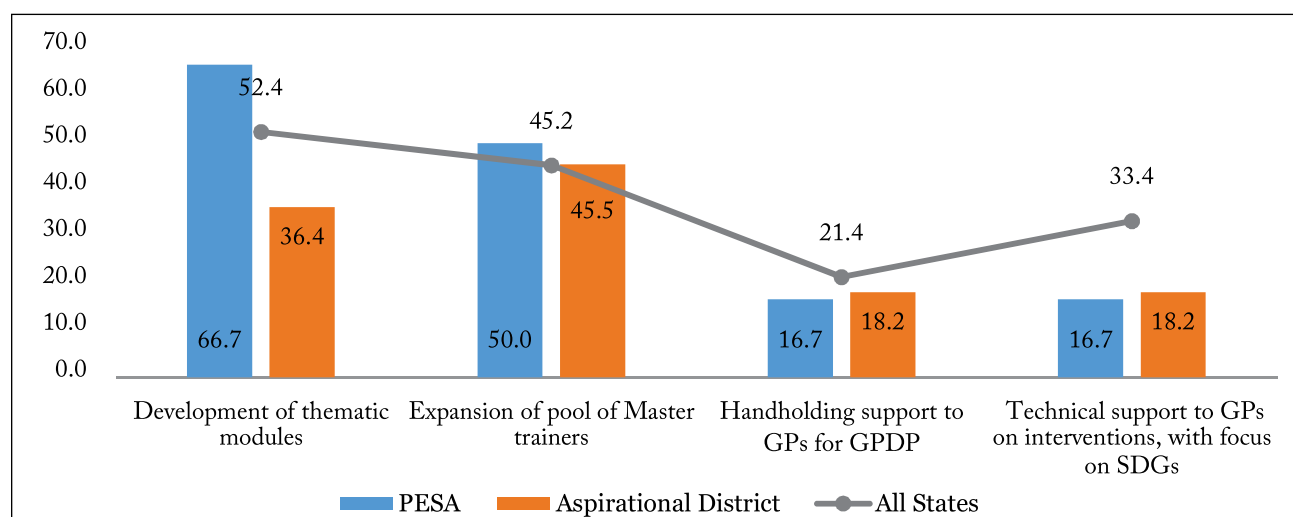
Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The institutes are more involved in providing the TPRI by developing general basic modules for achieving one of the objectives of RGSA, which is the development of governance capabilities of the PRIs. This will also help bridge the gap in provision of handholding support by academic institutions/institutions of excellence to the GPs for formulation of the GPDP.

6.3.4 Area of Collaboration

The areas of partnership and collaboration by the training institutes with other specialist institutions, like academic institutions, NGOs,

UN agencies and international organisations is depicted in Figure 6.13. It was observed that in the PESA States, training institutes are mainly collaborating with other institutes for developing thematic modules, e-modules and online courses, and training materials, whereas in the Aspirational Districts, training institutes mainly collaborate for the expansion of the pool of master trainers and the assessment and certification of trainers. More than 50 per cent of the respondents found the collaboration to be useful in many ways like getting support with knowledge management, followed by an improvement in the quality and outreach of CB&T initiatives.

Figure 6.13: Area of Collaboration by the SIRDPR

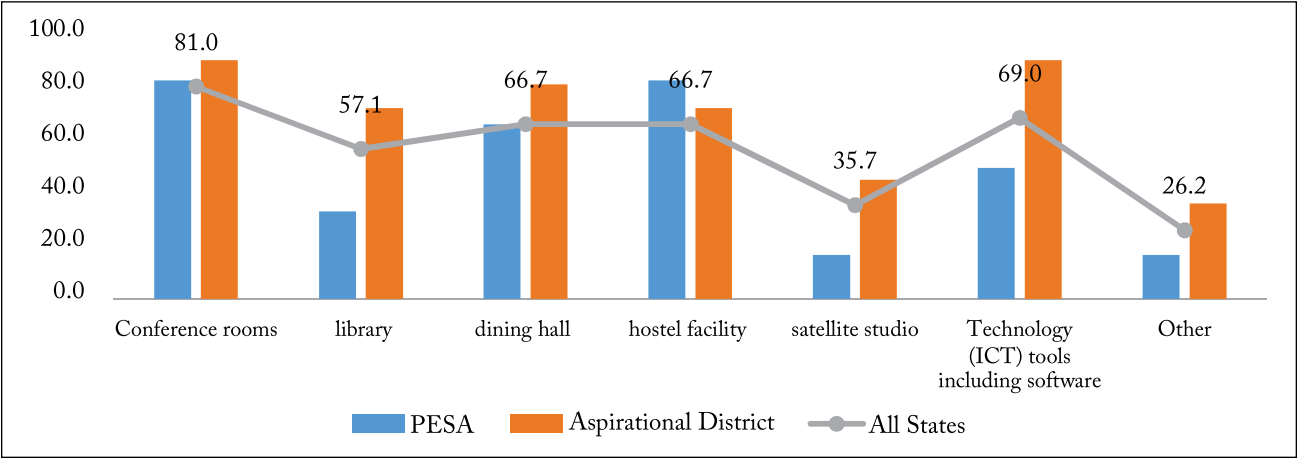
Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

6.3.5 Training Infrastructure

Details of the training infrastructure equipment in the SIRDPR are shown in Figure 6.14. It was observed that the availability of conference rooms, computers, and Communication Technology (ICT) tools including software, library facility, dining hall facility and satellite studio facility is higher in

PESA States than in the Aspirational Districts whereas more hostel facilities for trainees are available in the Aspirational Districts as compared to the PESA States. **In terms of library and ICT tool facilities too, the PESA States are far behind the Aspirational Districts. There is thus a need to strengthen these facilities in the training institutes of the PESA States whereas hostel facilities need to be strengthened in the Aspirational Districts.**

Figure 6.14: Training Infrastructure at the SIRDPR

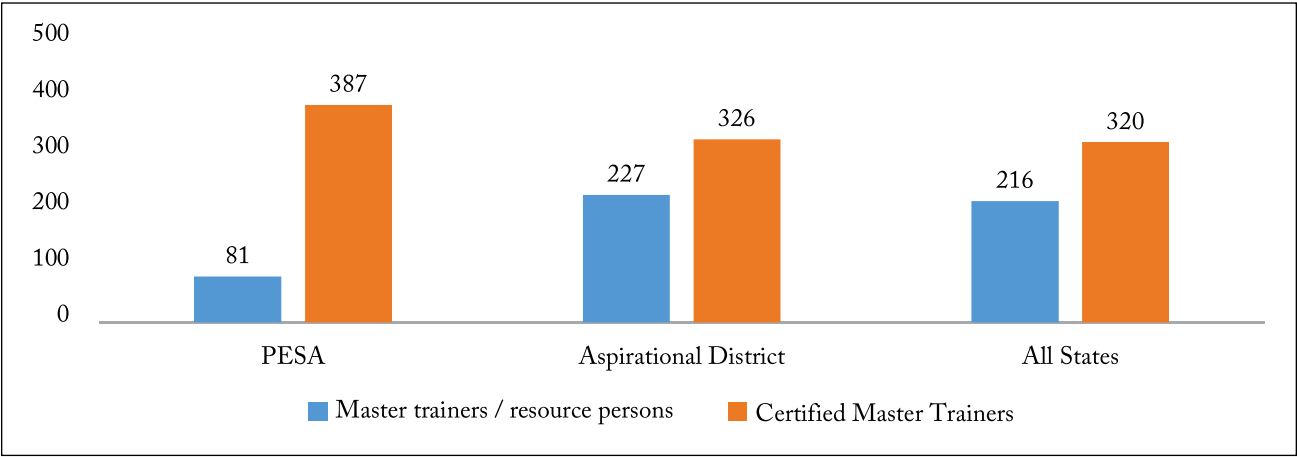


Source: NCAER’s calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

In the Aspirational Districts, the average numbers of master trainers and certified master trainers are higher than in the PESA States because the training institutes in the Aspirational Districts are collaborating with other institutes mainly for the expansion of master trainers and the assessment and

certification of trainers. **In the PESA States, the lower number of master trainers could be due to the lack of infrastructural facilities that can be strengthened by collaborating with the other specialist institutions like academic institutions, and NGOs.**

Figure 6.15: Average Number of Master Trainers and Certified Trainers



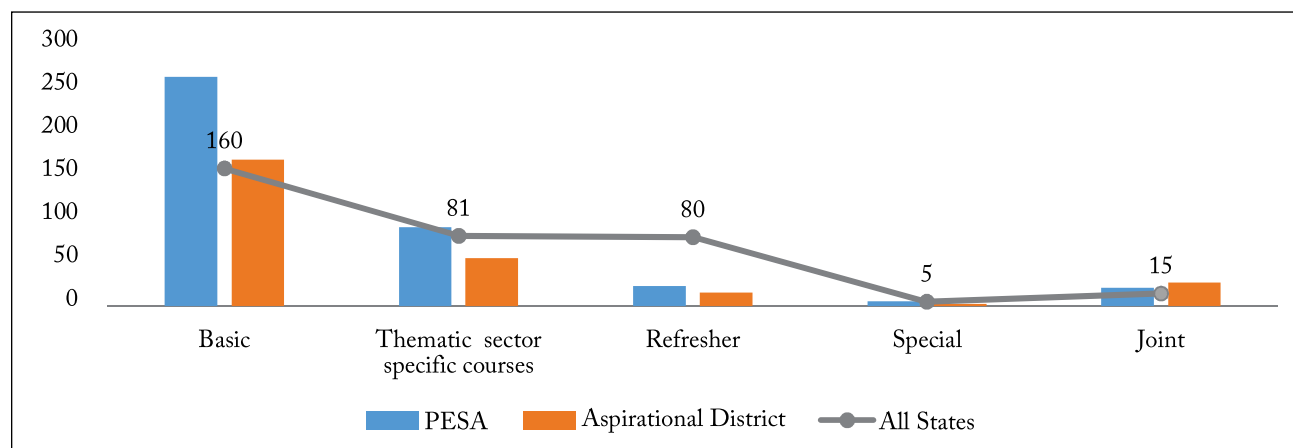
Source: NCAER’s calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

6.3.6 Mode of Training

The main mode of training was conducted during the last financial year was in basic courses and thematic courses, and it was more in the PESA States than the Aspirational Districts. Training was mainly conducted through the face-

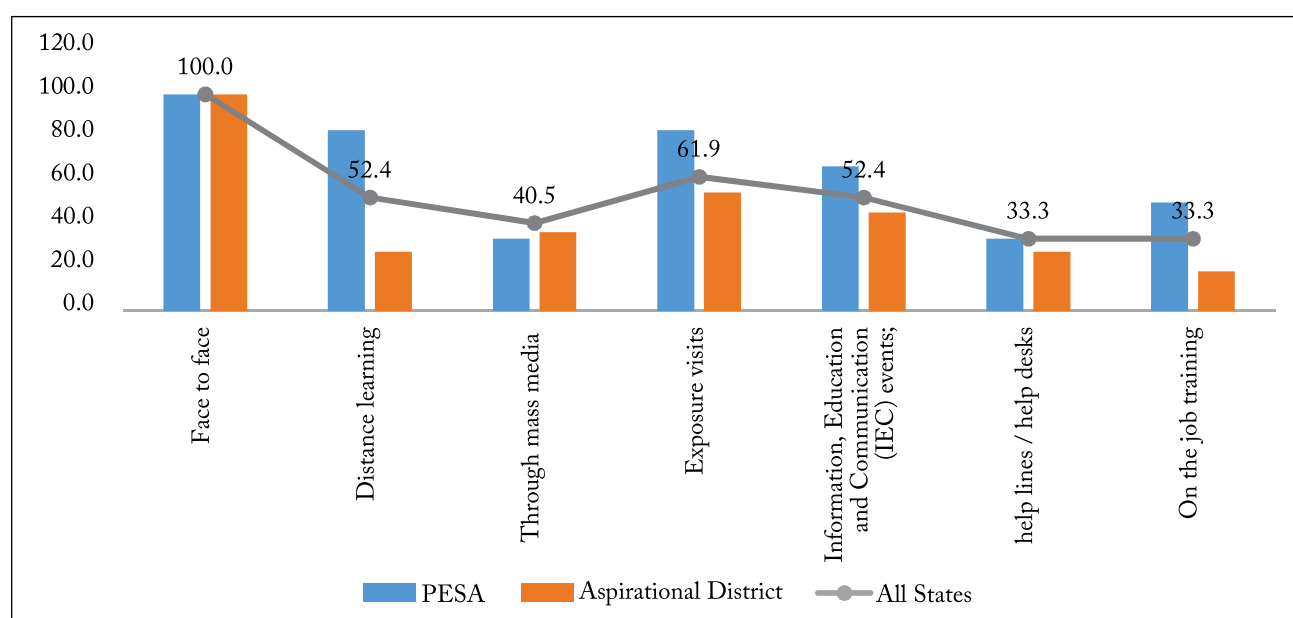
to-face mode in both the PESA States and the Aspirational Districts. Besides the face-to-face mode, the PESA States are also using distance learning, exposure visits, and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) and on the job training mode more as compared to the Aspirational Districts.

Figure 6.16: Average Number of Training Sessions Arranged in the Last Financial Year



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 6.17: Modes of Training



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

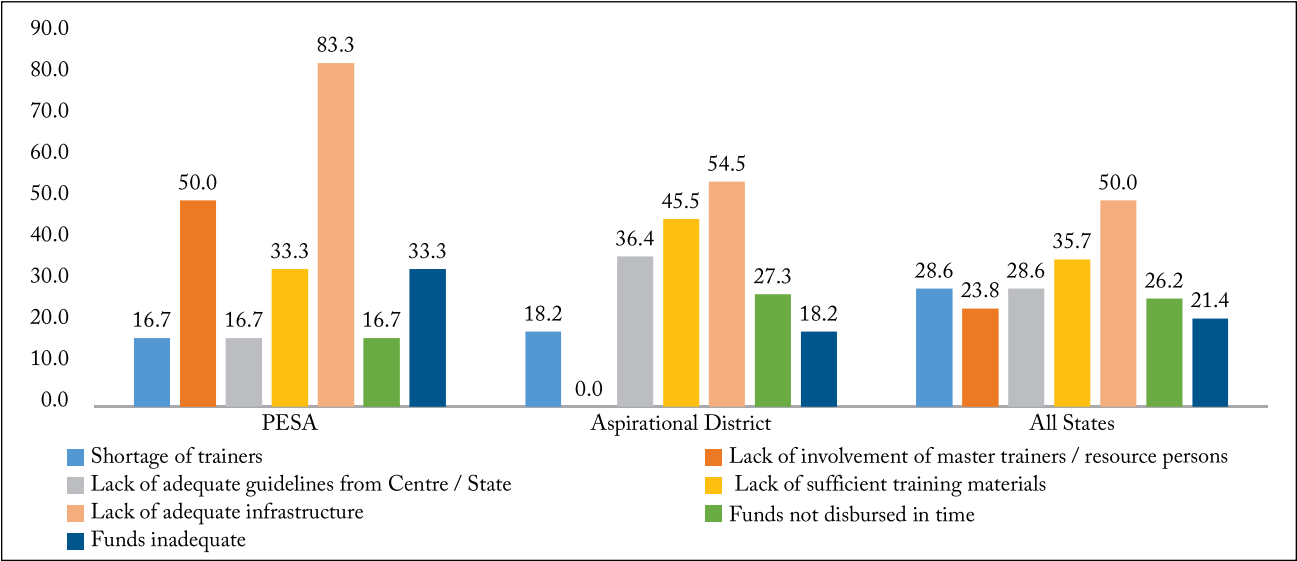
6.3.7 Challenges Faced by Training Institutes while Conducting Training

The major challenge for conducting the training, as reported by the respondents, is the lack of adequate infrastructure in both the

PESA States and the Aspirational Districts. The second most challenging factor in the PESA States is the lack of involvement of master trainers and resource persons whereas in the Aspirational Districts, it is the lack of sufficient training materials. The inadequacy of

funds is reported in the PESA States whereas the timely distribution of funds is another challenge faced during the conduction of training in the Aspirational Districts.

Figure 6.18: Challenges Faced while Conducting Training



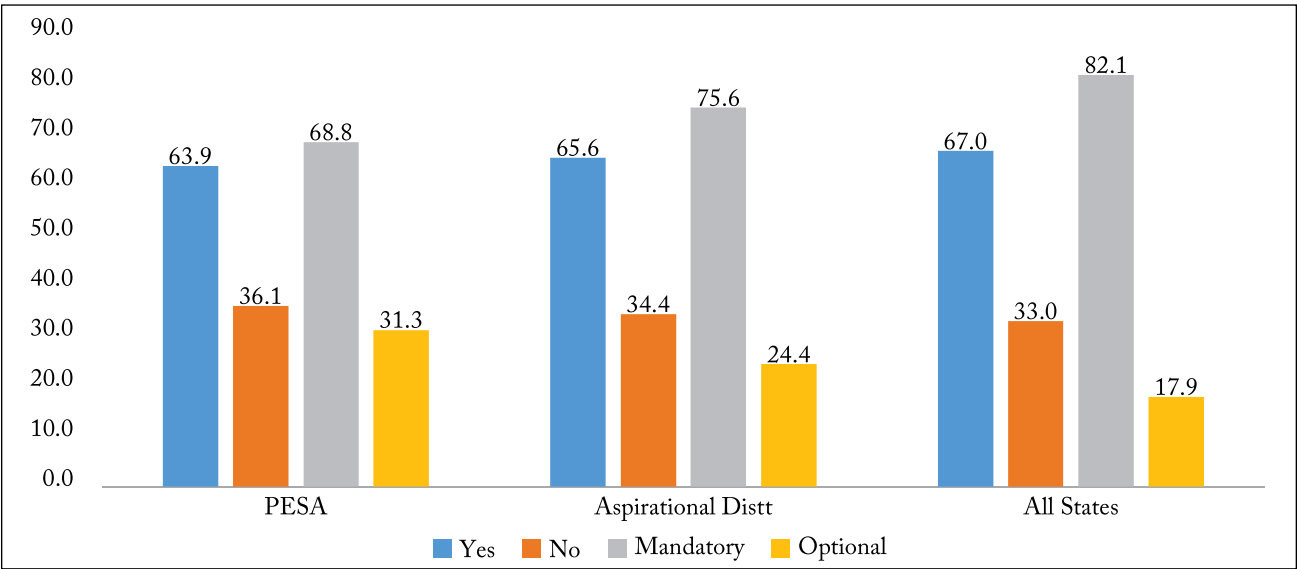
Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

6.4 Training, Capacity Creation, Resources and Their Utilisation

Ideally all the functionaries, ERs, and others must be suitably trained once at the time of taking up a job relating to rural development. Thereafter, refresher training/reorientation needs to be provided to the functionaries. Training

programmes are significant sources of capacity creation and resource utilisation at the GP level. There are significant differences in this regard between the responses from the PESA States and the Aspirational Districts. However, the attendance in the training programme is mostly mandatory (76 per cent) in the PESA States as compared to the Aspirational Districts.

Figure 6.19: Distribution (%) of Respondents in terms of the Attendance to the Training Programme (TP) and the Nature of Attendance to TP

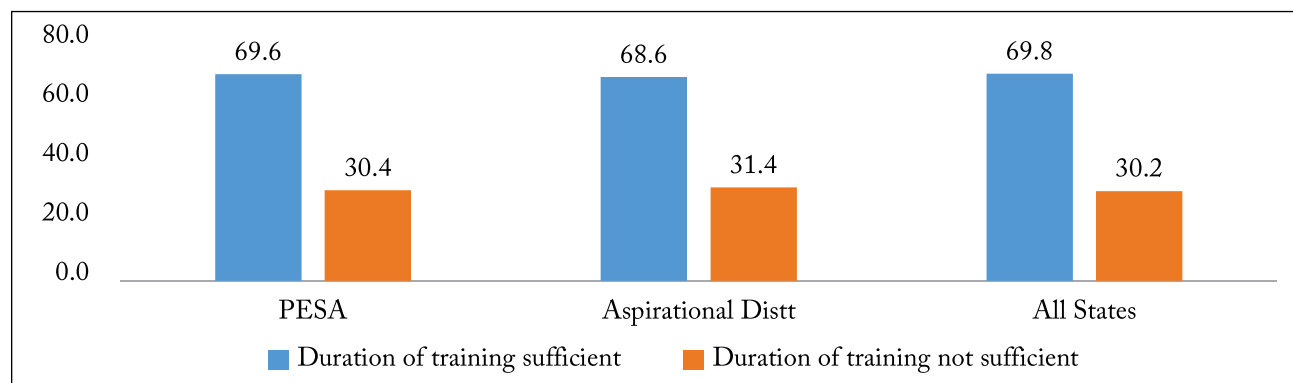


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The number of average training days is five in the PESA States, whereas in the Aspirational Districts, this number is more than five, and 70

per cent of the respondents recounted that the duration of training is sufficient (Figure 6.20).

Figure 6.20: Reactions on the Average Duration of Training (%)



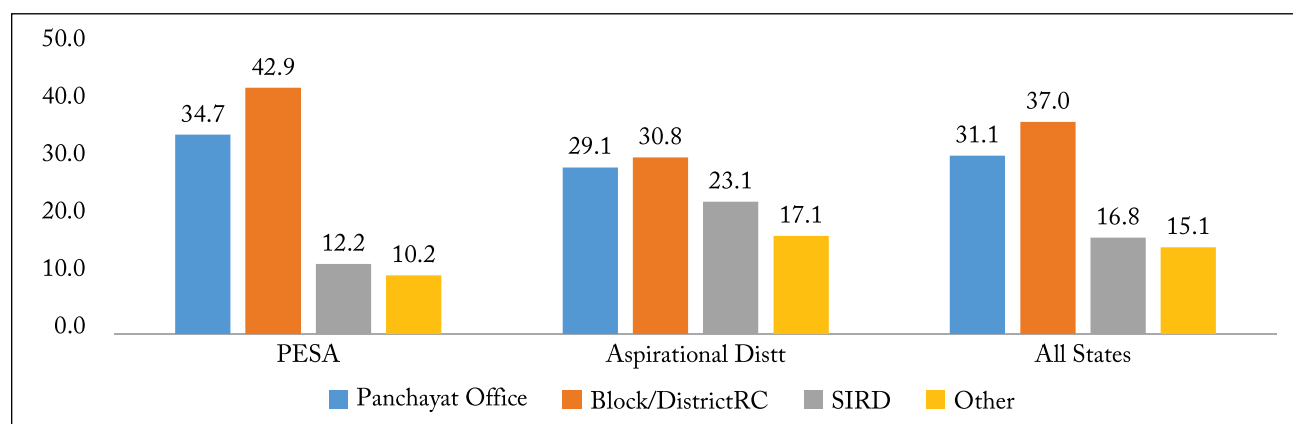
Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

6.4.1 Training Infrastructure

The training infrastructure is an important foundation for imparting training. It is observed that most of the training took place at the block or district level in the Resource Centres, and

subsequently in the Panchayat Offices and State Institutes of Rural Development (SIRDs). A significant level of training was also provided at the common and private places (Figure 6.21).

Figure 6.21: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Venue of the Last Training held



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The training infrastructure could be strengthened by using the training infrastructure of other departments and agencies through the distance education mode to supplement and complement institutionalised training and by networking with the following training institutions:

1. Central Government-funded/supported institutions: NIRDPR, LBSNAA IIPA,

SIRDs ETCs, other sector-specific institutions;

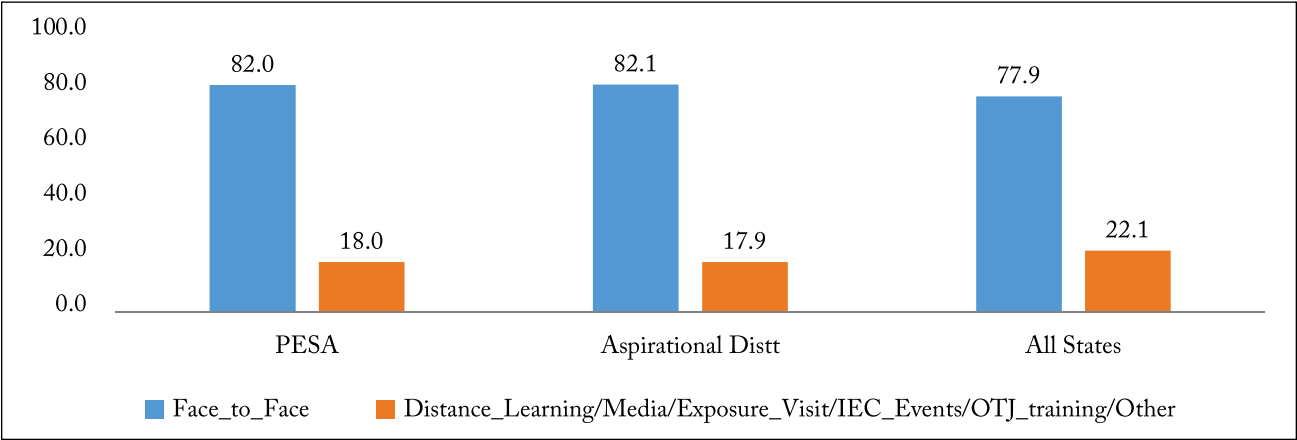
2. State Government-funded institutions: ATIs, PRTC, other sector-specific institutions;
3. Non-Government sector institutions: IRMA, BIRD, etc.; and
4. Other deemed Universities, NGOs, and other technical and academic institutions.

6.4.2 Mode of Training

The task in this is twofold—first, capacity building of the faculty of training institutions, and second, creating a reasonably large and good mass of trainers from amongst the officials in the field. A system can be evolved to create a sustainable linkage between this created mass and the SIRDs/other identified institutions to continue to update their skills and knowledge, and also keep them involved. There could be many advantages of this system. The principal factor among these would be the advantage of this mass and the training institute faculty mutually gaining from each other through interactions between the field and the institution, and getting good trainers for decentralised training, particularly for the ERs of the PRIs and middle- and low-level functionaries.

The mode of the training programme is crucial in determining the spread and extent of penetration of teaching among the intended groups. Figure 6.22 shows that face-to-face training is the most prevalent mode in both the PESA States and the Aspirational Districts. The courses offered in the Training Programme also constitute an important aspects of the usefulness and relevance of the training in terms of resource development. **It was observed that the Basic Foundation Course is taught in most cases, followed by Skill Development.** Language is an important medium of imparting training to the Panchayat participants, and **regional language should be the first preference, which is being followed.** However, since Hindi is the mother tongue of many of the participants, there is need to combine both the regional languages and Hindi, for the training courses.

Figure 6.22: Mode of Training: Face-to-Face Has the Highest Weightage



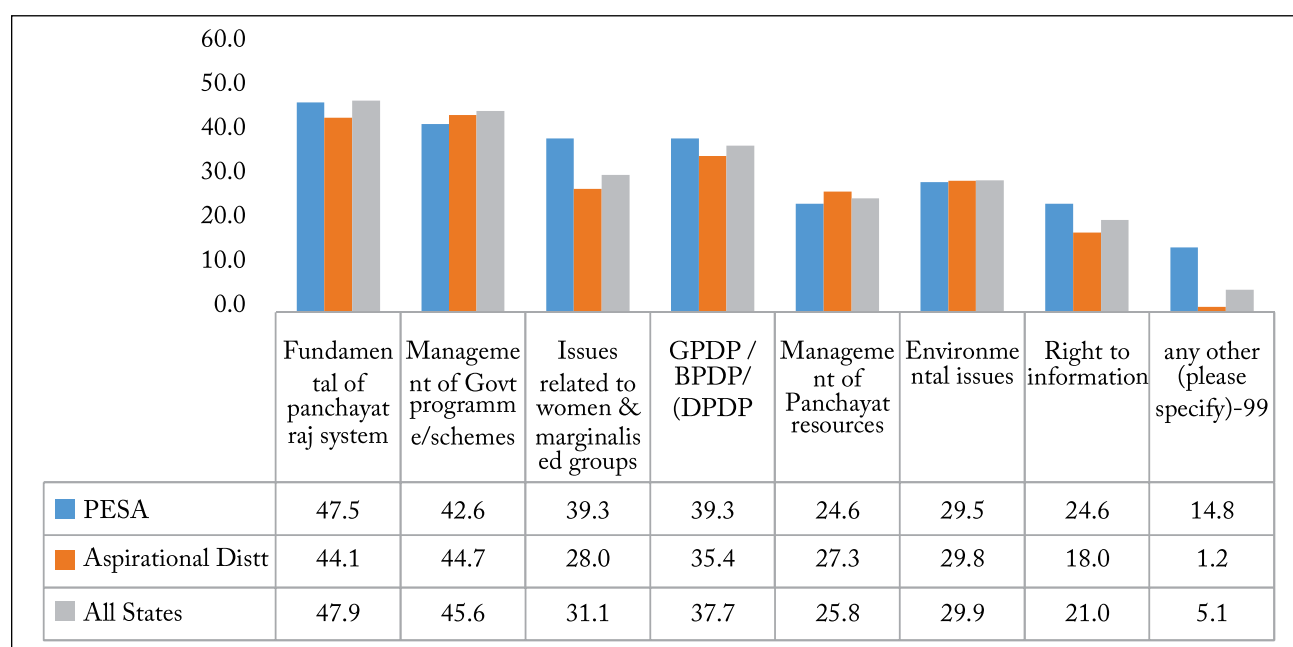
Source: NCAER’s calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Note: IEC=Information, Education and Communication; OTJ= On the Job Training.

6.4.3 Course Content and Training Materials

As regards the main themes covered in the training programmes, the maximum emphasis

is placed on the fundamentals of PRI systems, followed by the management of government programmes, the GPDP, and issues related to women/marginalised groups (Figure 6.23).

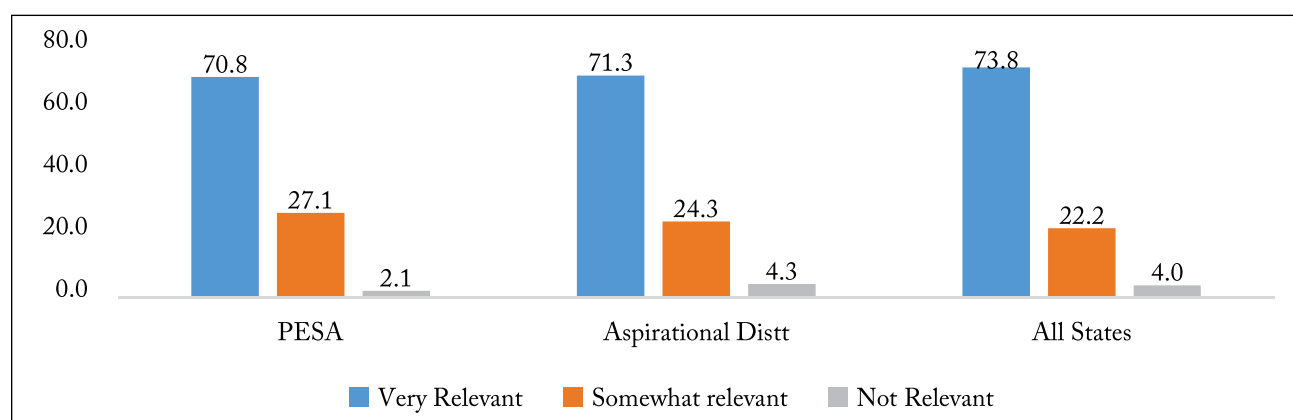
Figure 6.23: Distribution (%) of the Main Courses Taught during Training

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Note: Multiple responses permitted and the percentages are not mutually exclusive.

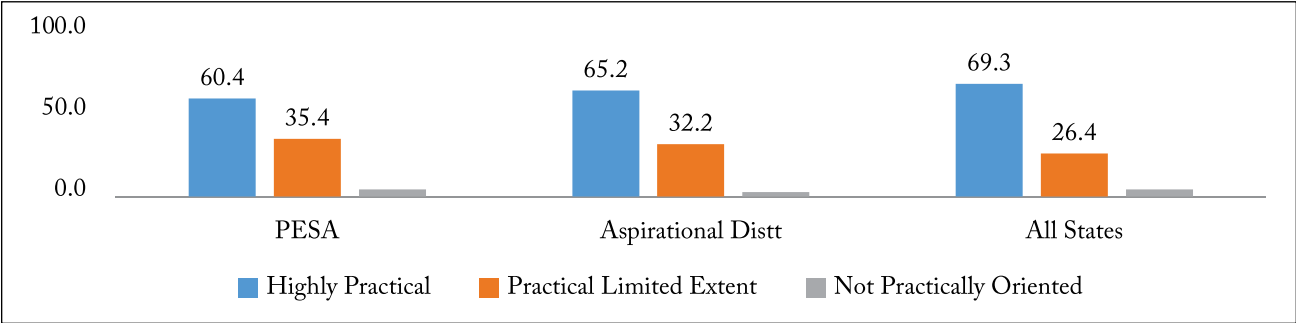
The course content is most relevant as per the job needs. More than 70 per cent of the attendees in both the PESA States and the Aspirational Districts say that the content of the course was relevant while more than 60 per cent found it to be highly practical. However, 27 per cent of the respondents from the PESA States and 24 per cent from the Aspirational Districts found it less relevant. **There is a need to create a core faculty of**

professionals in the identified specialised areas. The faculties should be provided opportunities for the upgradation of knowledge and skills in their specialised areas and the faculties of the training institutions should also be exposed to basic training skills while the courses for the training programme should be designed in a way to enhance their effectiveness (Figures 6.24 and 6.25).

Figure 6.24: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Relevance of Course Material/ Content

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 6.25: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Practical Orientation Course Material/Content

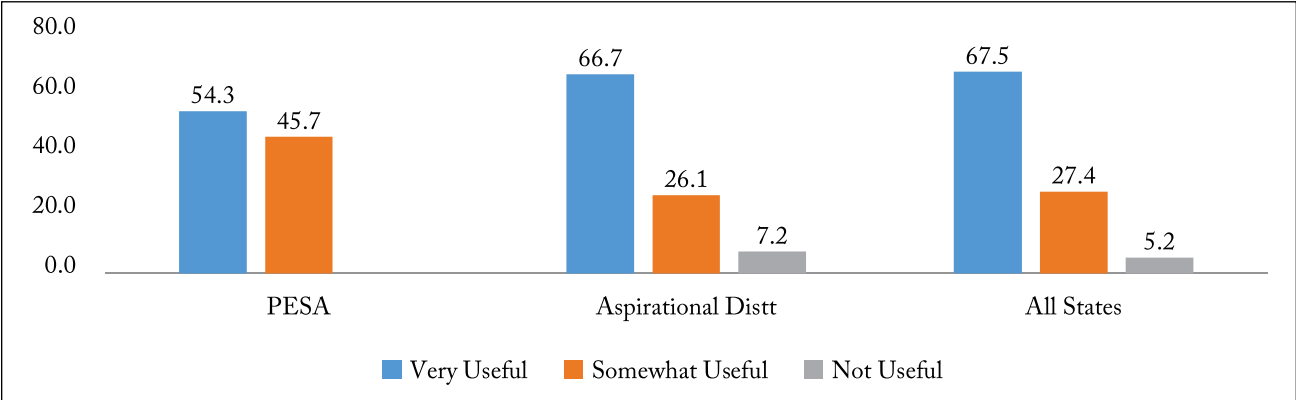


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

There is a need to prepare the training materials for different levels of trainees in accordance with the training needs and effective methods of imparting training need to be devised. These would vary from State to State, and from one level of functionaries to the other. There is a need to disseminate and

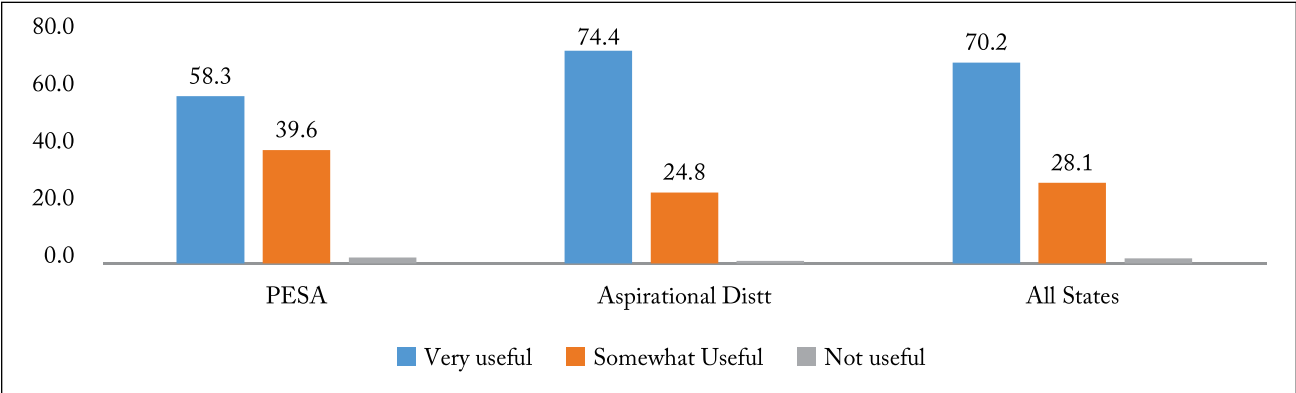
reproduce the training material for training at various levels in the State. The training packages and modules should be designed with the help of Training Need Assessment exercises for all types and categories of functionaries (Figures 6.26 and 6.27).

Figure 6.26: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Usefulness of Training Material



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 6.27: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Usefulness of Training in Your Job



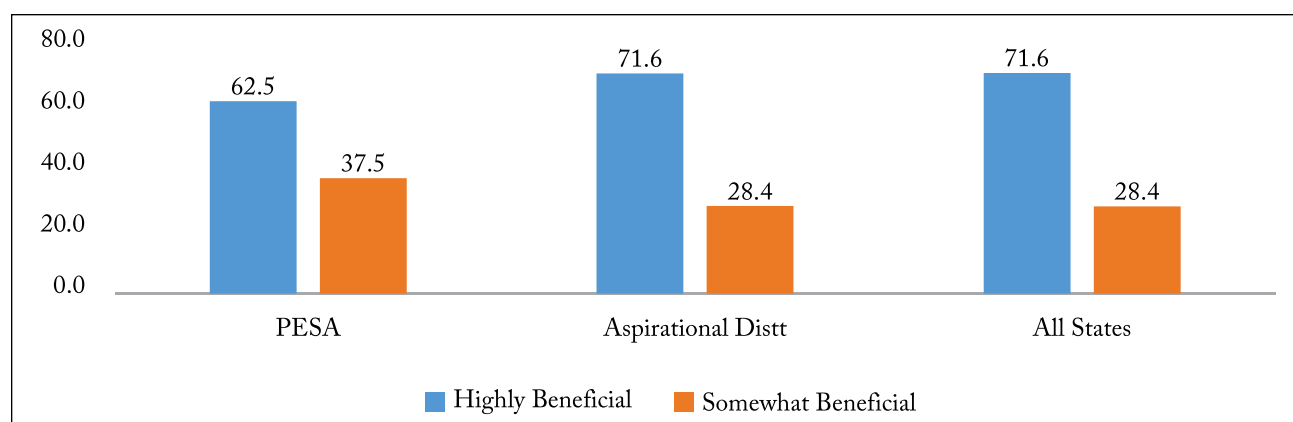
Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

6.4.4 Interactions with the Fellow Participants and Faculty

The faculty of the training programmes plays an important role in bridging the knowledge gap and ushering in the inspiration to augment developmental work at the GP level. It is observed that more than 70 per cent of the respondents in all the States are highly satisfied with their interactions with the trainers, fellow participants,

and the faculty. But it may also be noted that a mixed reaction is observed for the attendees in the PESA States, where the level of satisfaction with regard to the training programme is lower as compared to the respondents from the Aspirational Districts, implying that there is lot of scope of improvement of faculty appointment and training in the PESA States (Figures 6.28 and 6.29).

Figure 6.28: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Degree of Interaction with the Trainers and Fellow Participants



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 6.29: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Degree of Satisfaction with the Faculty Interaction



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

6.5 Participatory Management and Issues of Efficient Functioning of the Village Level Development Effort

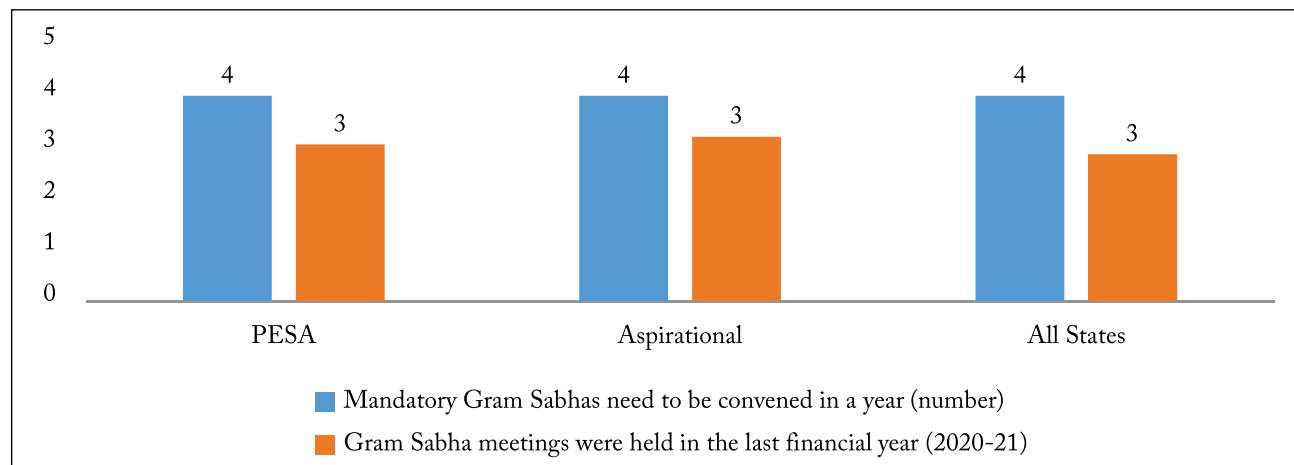
As already mentioned, the Gram Sabhas represent critical inputs of the participatory

approach for the PRIs, and the Gram Sabha constitutes Committee/s to carry out functions like maintaining peace and order, management of minor forest produce and water bodies, village markets, and control over moneylending, among other things. According to the State Panchayat

Raj Acts, the Gram Sabha must meet at least two to four times a year. The average number of Gram Sabha meetings in the year 2020-21, as reported by the respondents of the primary survey of

NCAER, is around 3 for all the States combined. **The reason for a lower number of GS meetings during the year is the COVID-19 situation and associated lockdowns (Figure 6.30).**

Figure 6.30: Average Number of Gram Sabhas held in 2020-21

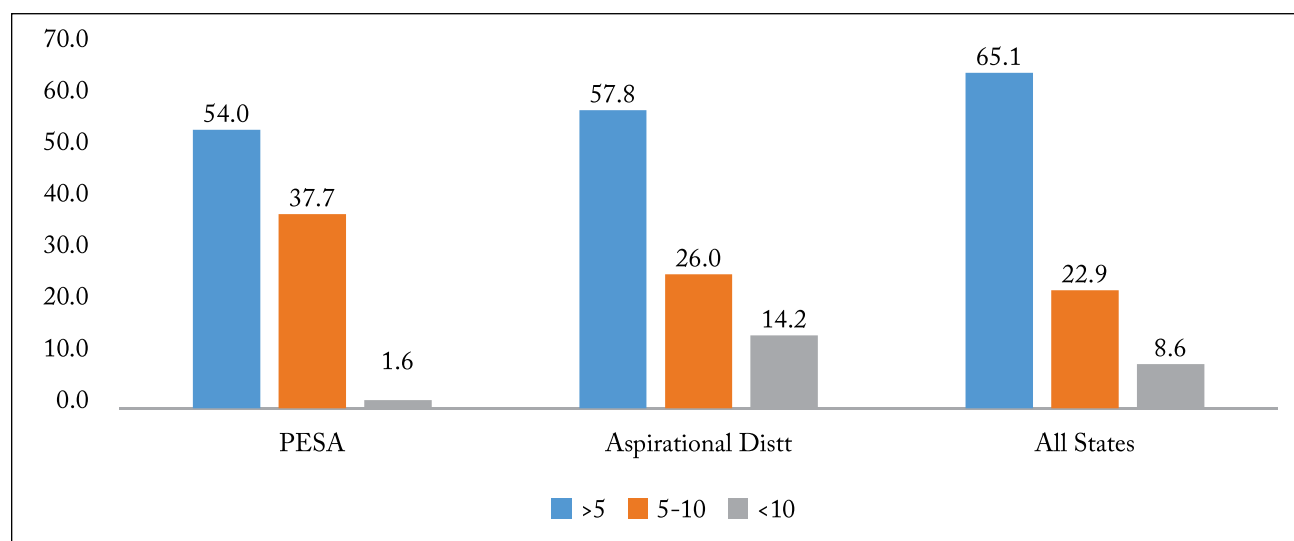


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

However, as per most of the respondents, the ideal number of mandatory Gram Sabhas should be less than 5, while more than 37 per cent of the respondents from the PESA States preferred that 5-10 Gram Sabhas should be held annually.

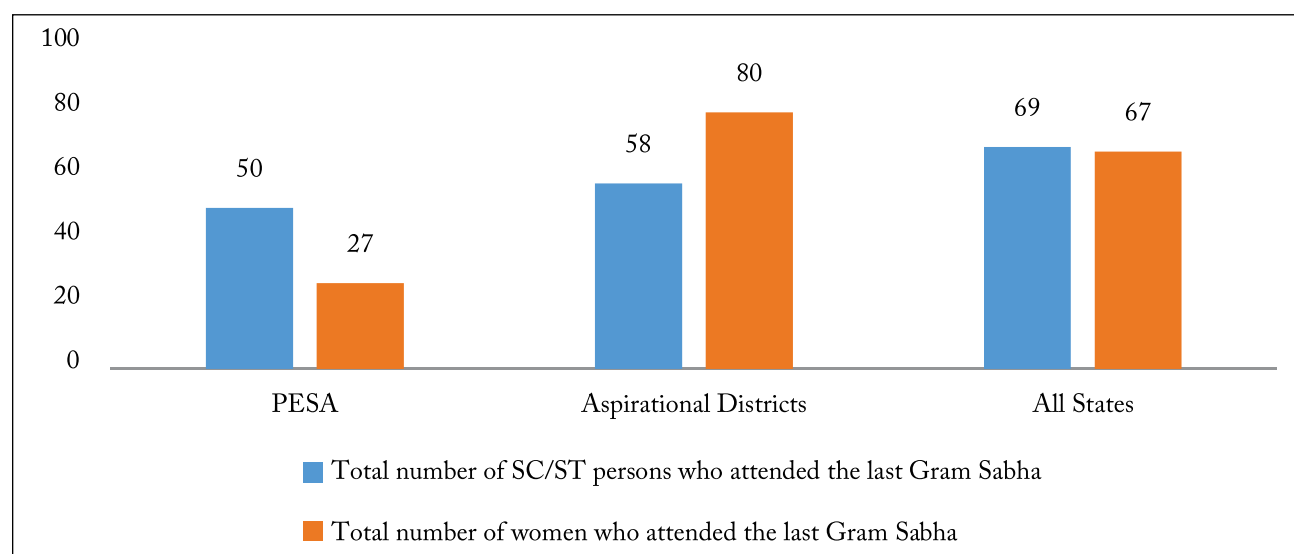
The proportion of respondents who felt that more than 10 Gram Sabha meetings should be held per year is 1.6 per cent in the PESA States, and 14.2 per cent in the Aspirational Districts (Figure 6.31).

Figure 6.31: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Ideal Number of Mandatory Gram Sabha Meeting per Year



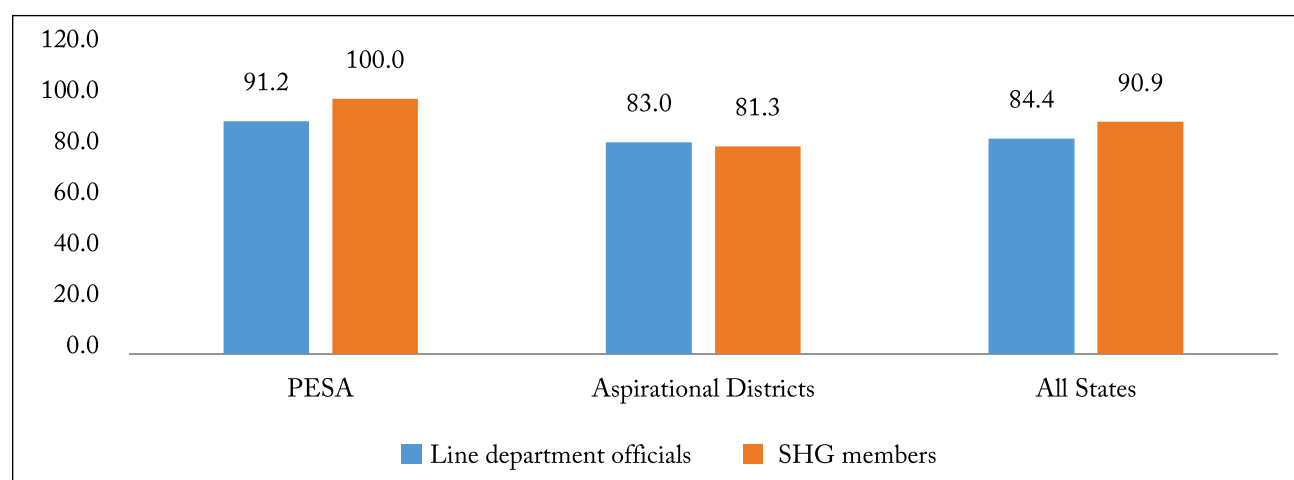
Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 6.32: Average Number of SCs/STs and Women Who Attended the Gram Sabhas held in 2020-21



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

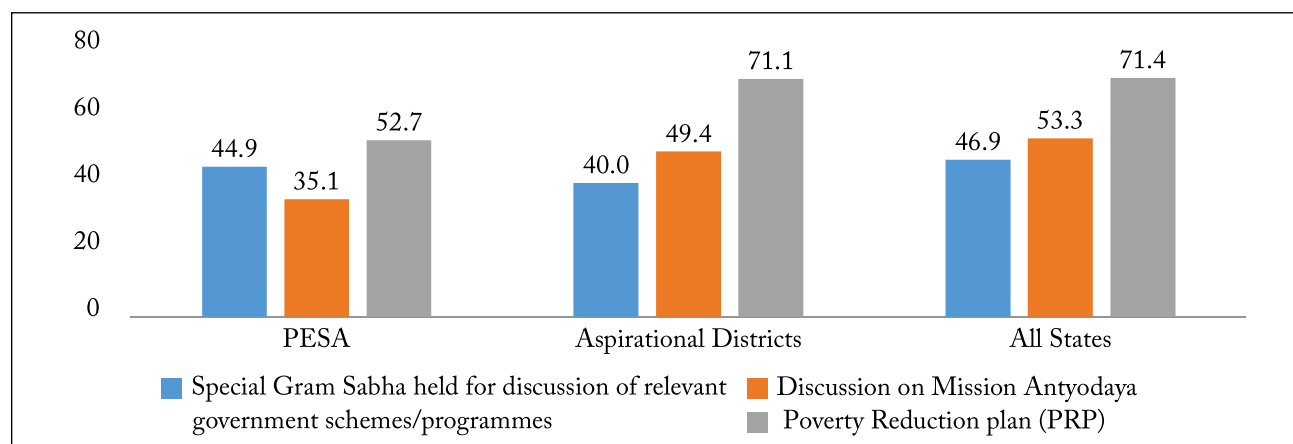
Figure 6.33: Distribution (%) of the Line Department Officials and SHG Members Present in the Gram Sabhas held in 2020-21



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Around 47 per cent of the respondents reported that a special Gram Sabha was held to discuss the relevant government schemes/programmes during the financial year 2020-21. The percentage is reported to be higher in the PESA States (44.9 per cent) than the Aspirational Districts (40.0 per cent). The fact that a discussion was held on Mission Antyodaya in the Gram Sabha in the last financial year 2020-21 was reported by around 53.3 per cent of the

respondents for all the sample States. However, it was discussed more in the Aspirational Districts (49.4 per cent) than in the PESA States (35.1 per cent). As regards the initiatives for attaining the SDGs, the Poverty Reduction Plan (PRP) is a key validation of the agenda of the PRIs. The PRP was discussed more in the Aspirational Districts (71.1 per cent) as compared to the PESA States (52.7 per cent) (Figure 6.34).

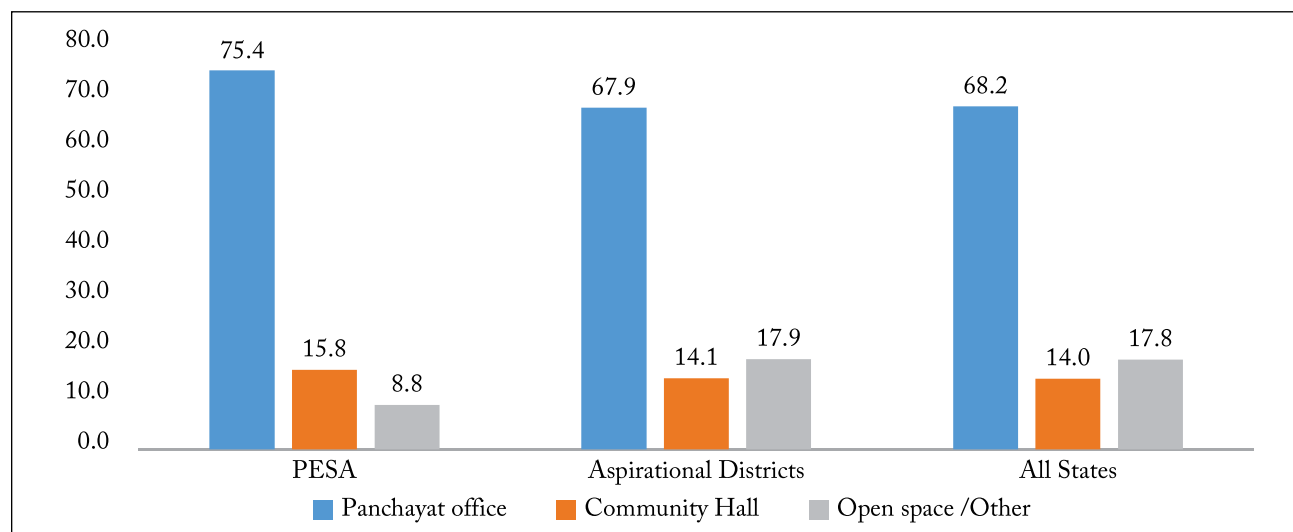
Figure 6.34: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Various Topics of Discussion held in the GS of 2020-21

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The fact that the GS meeting was held on the scheduled date is reported by around 77.4 per cent of the overall respondents. However, 78.9 per cent of the respondents from the PESA States and 76.9 per cent from the Aspirational Districts reported scheduled GS meetings. The reason as to why the meeting was not held during the scheduled date is mostly due to the prevalence of the COVID-19 scenario during 2020-21. On the other hand, more than 90.5 per cent of the respondents reported that the GS meeting time was uploaded in the Management Information System (MIS). However, 96.4 per cent of the respondents from the PESA States and 88 per cent from the Aspirational Districts reported that the

GS meeting time was uploaded in the MIS.

The meeting of the Gram Sabha shall ordinarily be held in the office of the Panchayat or at any other convenient public place accessible to all the villagers. As regards the provision of infrastructural support to the meeting venue of the GS, it is reported that a little over 68 per cent of the meetings took place in the Panchayat office itself. However, the availability of the Panchayat office is observed to be around 75.4 per cent in the PESA States, as compared to 67.9 per cent in the Aspirational Districts. It is observed that the PESA States are better equipped with infrastructure as compared to the Aspirational Districts (Figure 6.35).

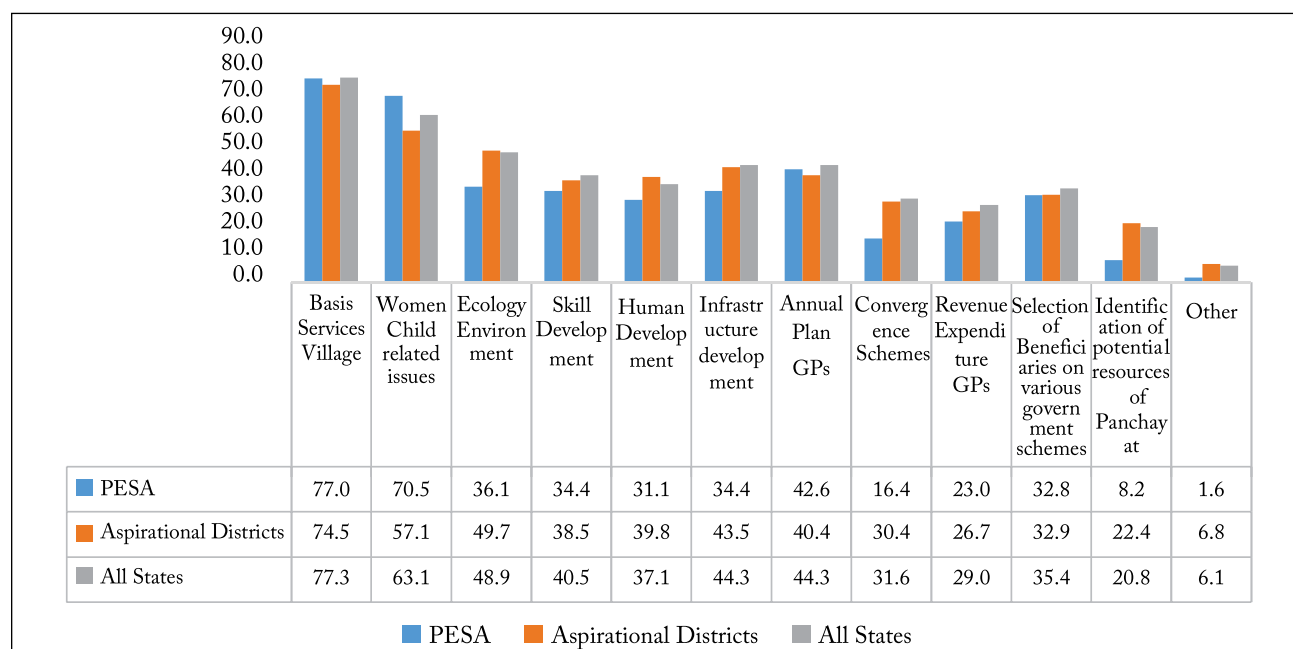
Figure 6.35: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Venue of the GS Meeting

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The subjects discussed in the GS meeting set the tone for initiatives for village level development. The prominent issues discussed in the meeting are varied and shown in Figure 6.36. It may be noted that the **basic services attract the**

most attention, followed by women and child issues along with the ecology and environment. The GP level annual plan and infrastructure comes subsequently (Figure 6.36).

Figure 6.36: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Issues Discussed in the Last GS Meeting

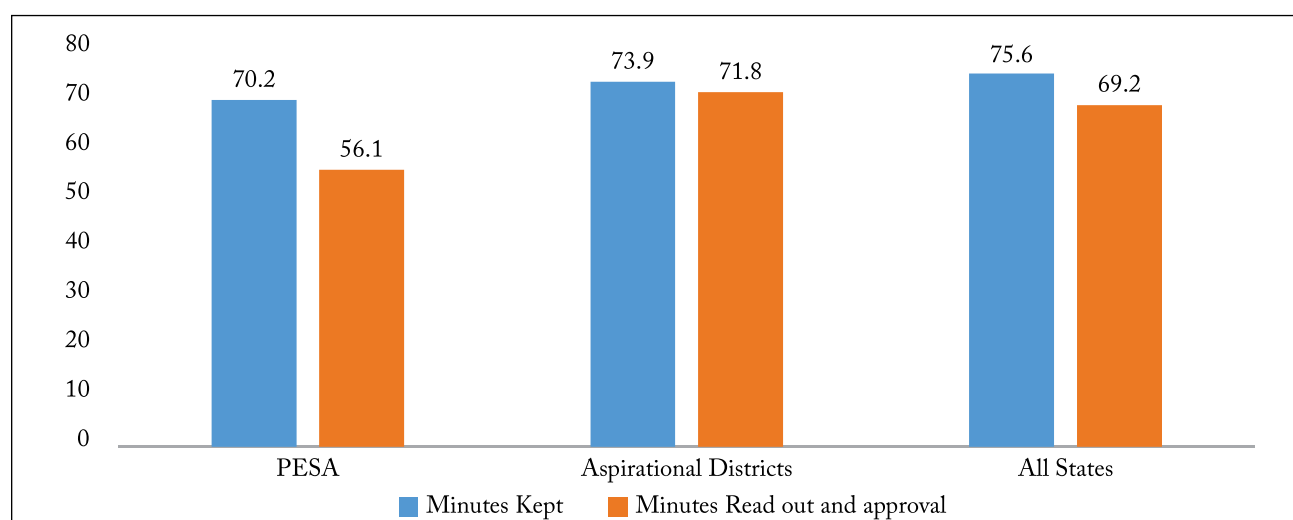


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

In terms of the procedural mechanism of the participatory approach, keeping the minutes of the meeting and its approval are important aspects of transparent functioning. It may be noted that overall, more than 75 per cent of the

respondents said that minutes are kept but its approval saws a dip of 5 per cent. Moreover, in terms of the percentage responses, the PESA States lagged behind in the task of keeping the minutes of the meeting and its approval.

Figure 6.37: Distribution (%) of the Responses on Whether Minutes of the Meeting were Kept and Approved during the Meeting

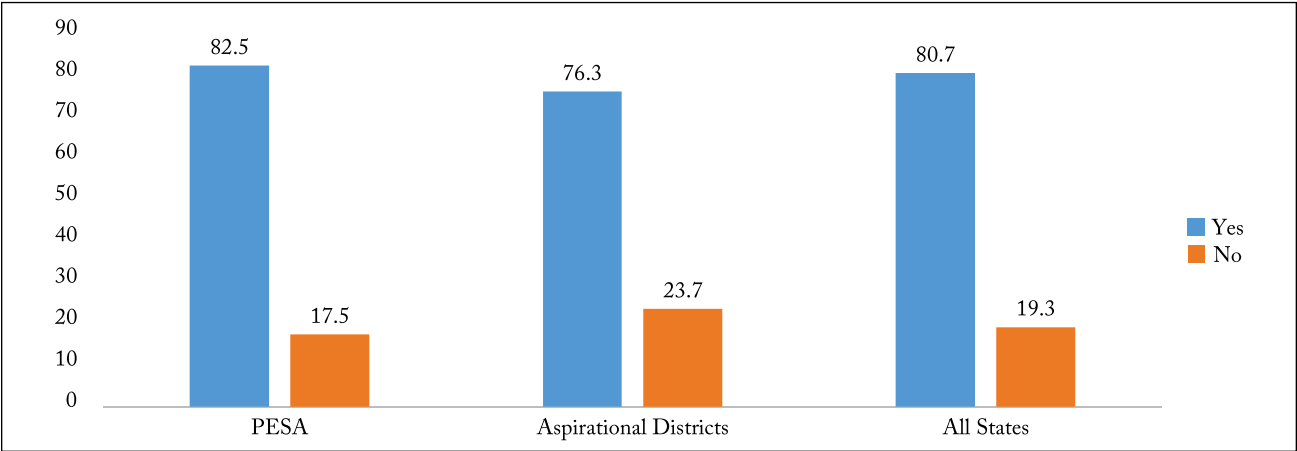


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Conducting a social audit is another critical part of transparent governance and functioning. More than 80 per cent of the respondents reported having a social audit in place for the financial year 2020-21. However, it is important to note that

around 23.7 per cent of the respondents from the Aspirational Districts reported the absence of a social audit in the year 2020-21, which is not reasonable from the perspective of transparency of fund usage and upkeep.

Figure 6.38: Distribution (%) of the Responses on Conducting Social Audit of FY 2021



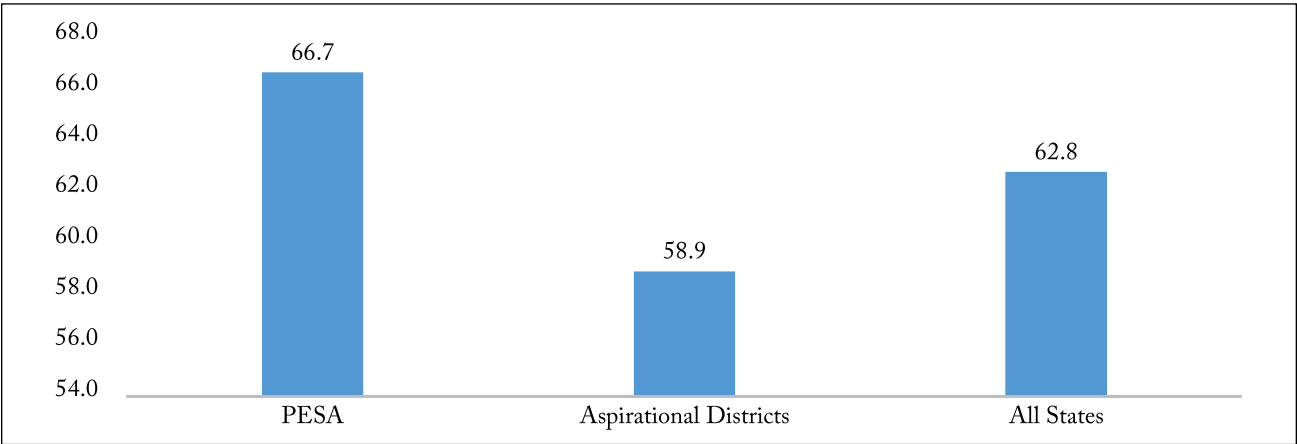
Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The presence of beneficiaries of the various development initiatives from the villages in the GS is a vital aspect of participatory conduct. It is noted that around 84 per cent of the beneficiaries were present in the GS meeting. On the other hand, more than 55 per cent of the respondents said that the Panchayat Committee can change the beneficiaries chosen by the GS in all the States. Among the respondents, 64.3 per cent and 52.5 per cent in the PES States and the

Aspirational Districts, respectively, reported that the Panchayat committee has the power to change the beneficiaries selected by the GS.

Convening of the Child Sabha, Ward Sabha, and Mahila Sabha before convening of the Gram Sabha is part of the FGD, and in this regard, it is noted that the PESA States convened more of such Sabhas before the GS. The positive responses are shown in Figure 6.39.

Figure 6.39: Distribution (%) of the Positive Responses on Convening Child Sabhas, Ward Sabhas and Mahila Sabhas before GS



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

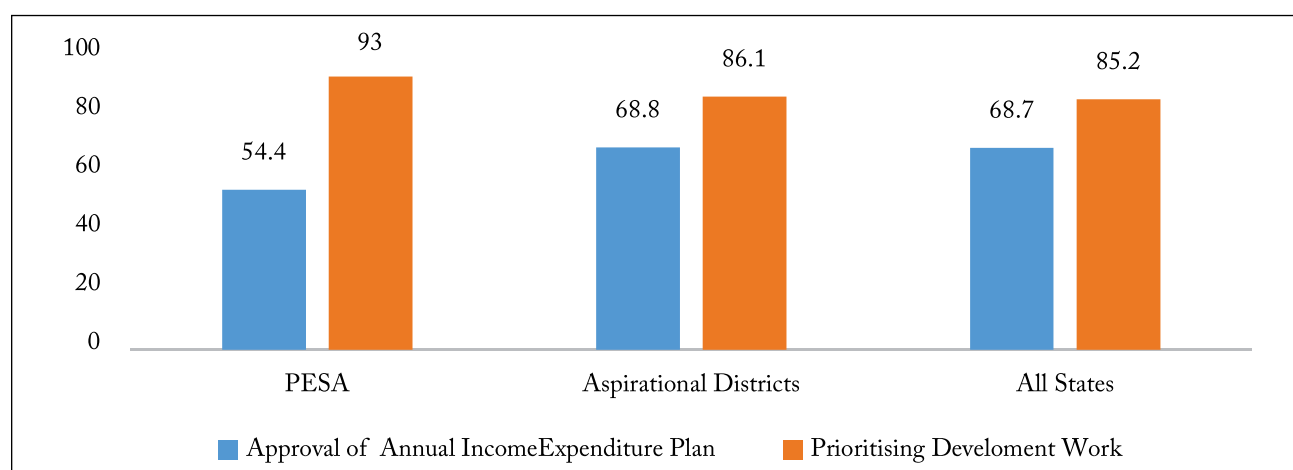
6.6 The Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPD) and Implementation of Development Programmes at the Grassroots Level

As per the Constitutional Amendment, Article 243G of the Constitution authorised Panchayats in India to plan for economic development and social justice. As local governments, Panchayats are expected to engage local people in participatory planning and decision-making to address the susceptibilities of the poor and marginalised. This can only be attained through the implementation of well thought-out plans through efficient and optimum utilisation of the available resources. The development plan of the GPs should match the local needs and priorities, and should have been prepared through an inclusive, transparent, and participatory process. The emphasis should

be on the local perception of needs and priorities linked with the SDGs, the local analysis of problems, solutions, and resources, and aligned with a shared local vision.

The distribution of positive responses on the approval of the Annual Income and Expenditure Plan indicates that it is approved in 68.7 per cent of the Panchayats, while development work is prioritised in 85.2 per cent of the panchayats. The distribution of approval of the annual expenditure plan among the PESA States and the Aspirational Districts shows that the extent of approval of the same is less in the PESA States (54.4 per cent) as compared to the Aspirational Districts (68.8 per cent). However, the development work is prioritised more in the PESA States (93 per cent) as compared to the Aspirational Districts (Figure 6.40).

Figure 6.40: Distribution (%) of the Positive Responses on Approval of Annual Income Expenditure Plan and on Prioritizing Development Work

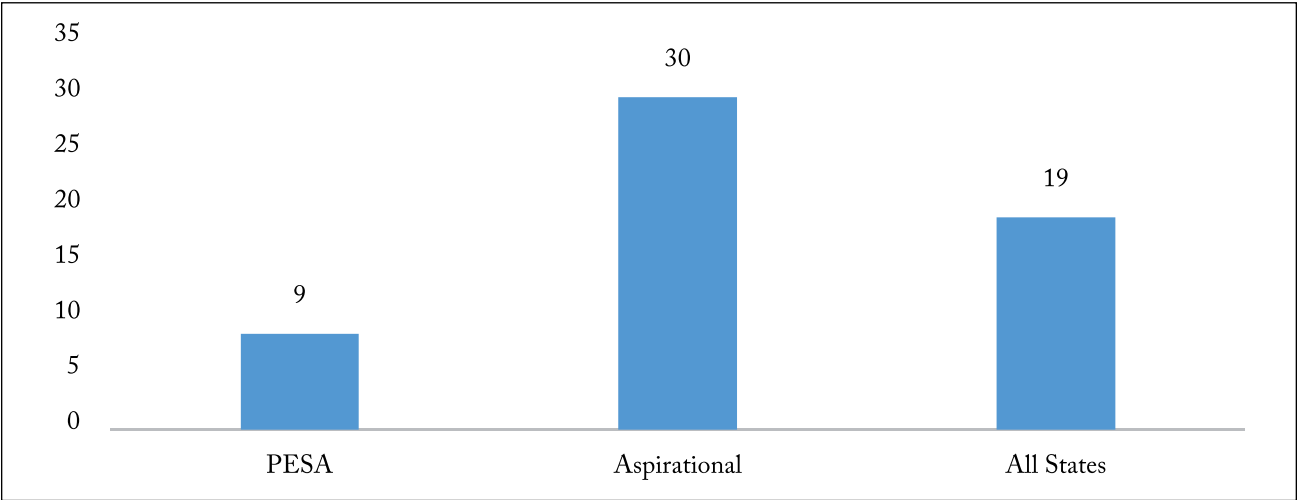


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The Gram Panchayat Planning Facilitating Team (GPPFT) is stated to be involved at every stage of the GPD, starting from environment building for plan preparation to the approval of

the plan at the GS level and implementation of its activities. It is noted that the average number of GPPFTs is higher in the Aspirational Districts.

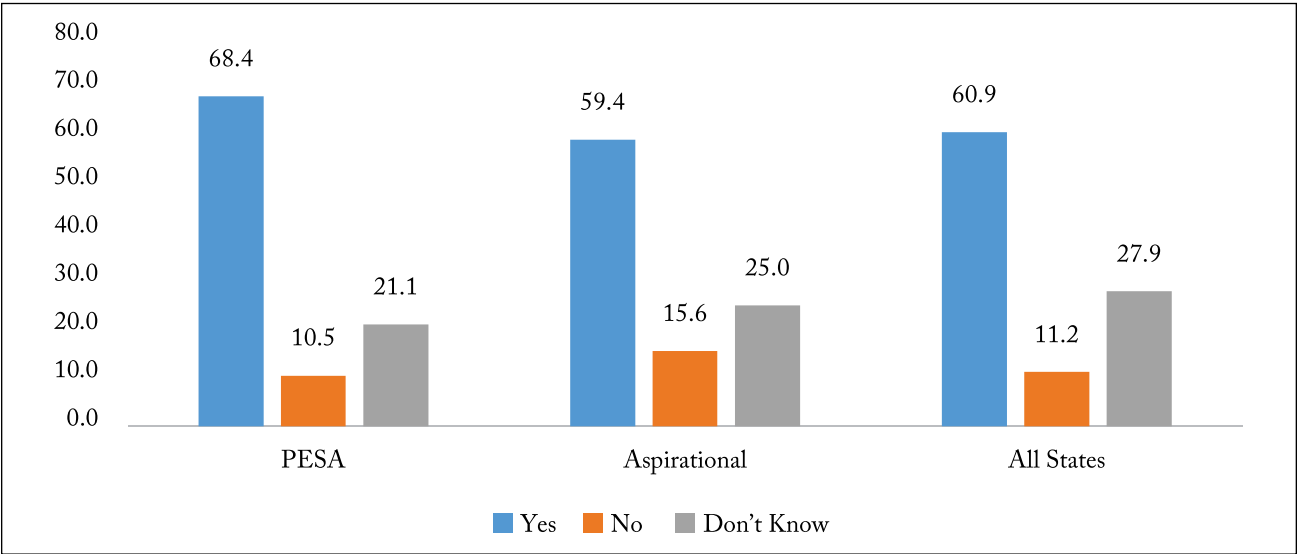
Figure 6.41: Average Number of GPPFTs in the PESA States and the Aspirational Districts



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 6.42 reveals that overall, a majority of the respondents believe that the SHG supports the convergence of programmes (58.6 per cent), and this figure is observed to be higher in the PESA States (63.8 per cent).

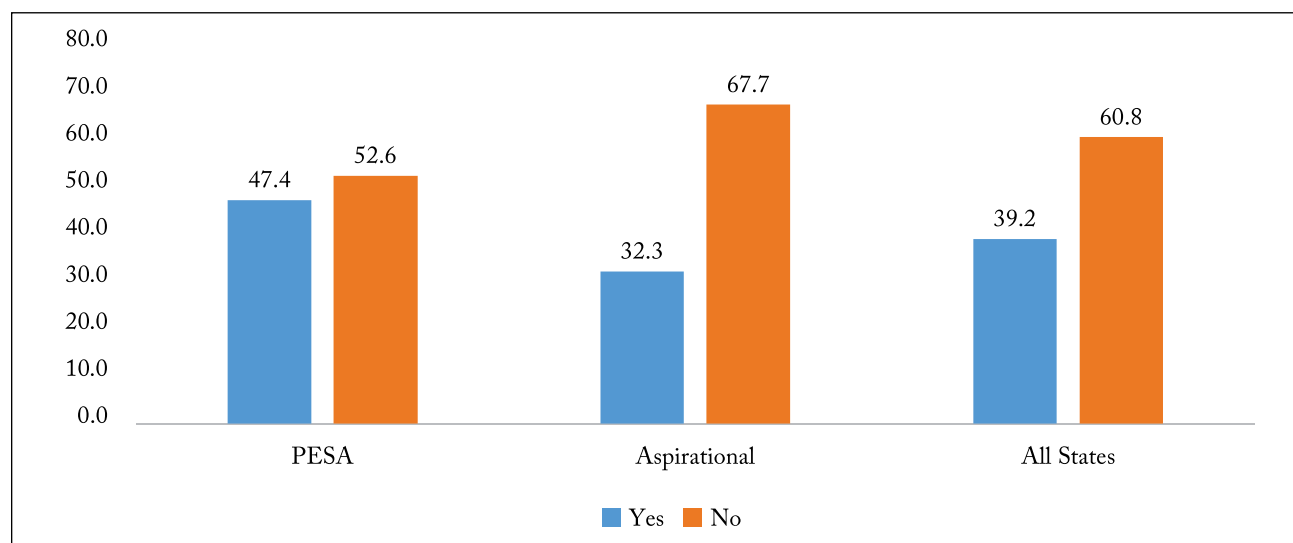
Figure 6.42: Distribution (%) of the Responses on whether SHGs helped in attaining Convergence of Government Programmes



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

As regards the question on whether the members of the GPPFT received adequate training on the GPDP, the responses appear disappointing. A large number of the respondents from GPPFT replied in the negative to this question. It is a matter of concern that a specialised body has only few members who have received adequate training for performing their roles. However, it is also observed that the number of trained members is higher in the PESA States (47.4 per cent) as compared to the Aspirational Districts (32.3 per cent) (Figure 6.43).

Figure 6.43: Distribution (%) of the Responses on whether GPPFT got Adequate Training on GPDP

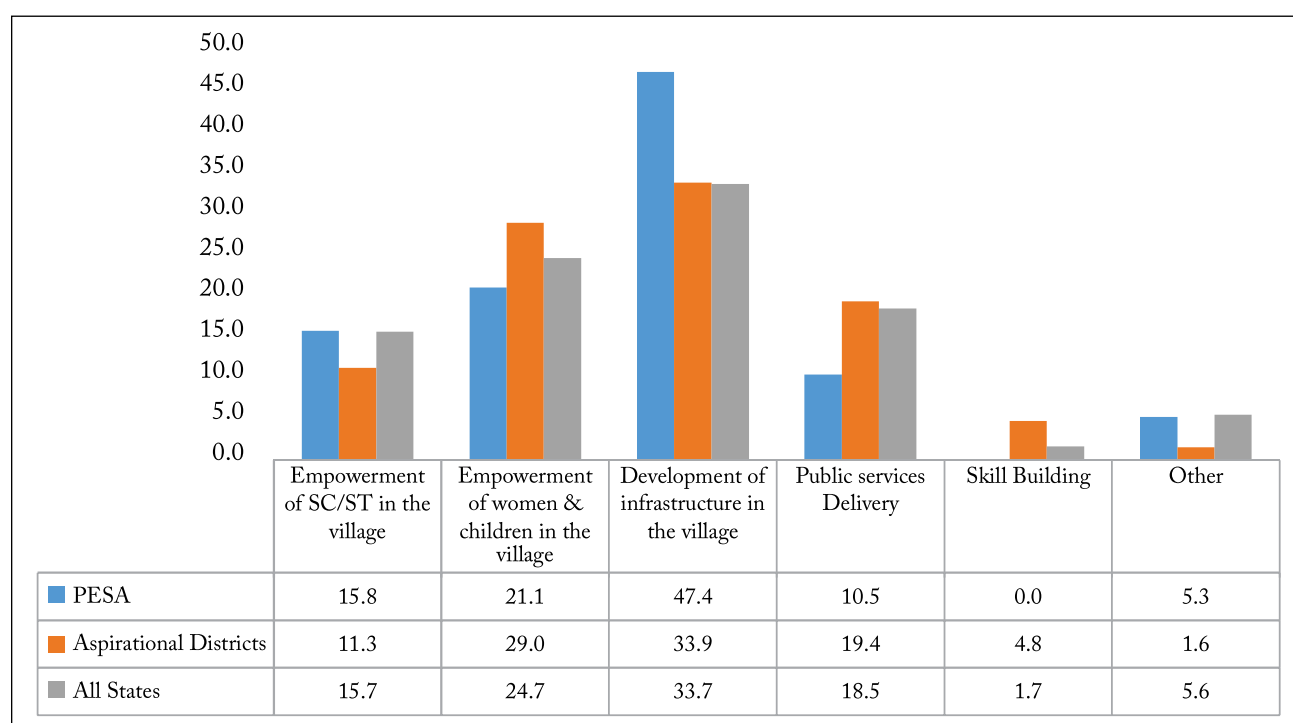


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The main focus of the last GPDP highlights the issues that were prioritised in the planning process, as reflected in Figure 6.44. In terms of the priorities, development of infrastructure

ranked first, followed by the empowerment of women and children, and the public service delivery system.

Figure 6.44: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Main Focus of the Last GPDP



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

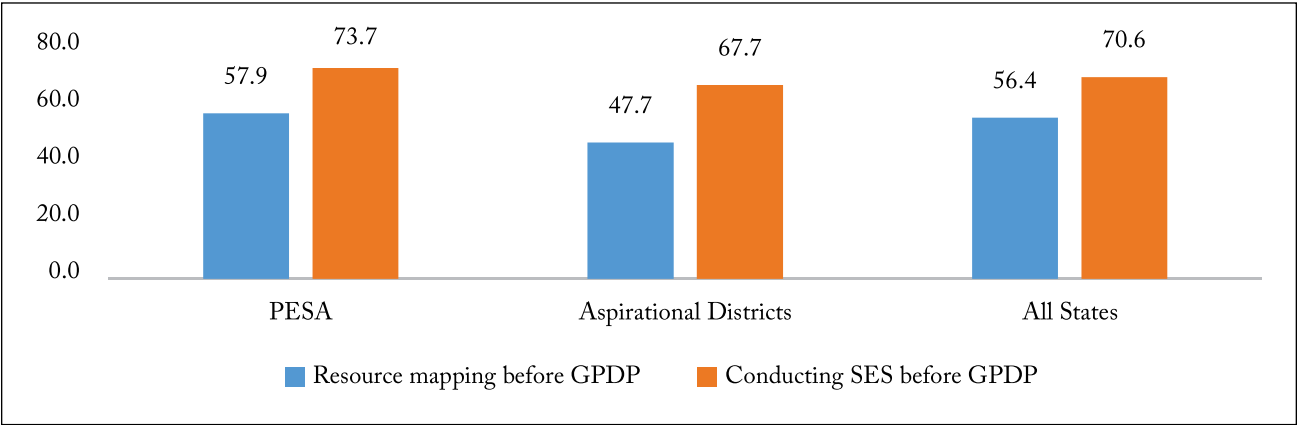
Resource mapping and conducting the Socio-Economic Survey (SES) should be an integral part of any planning effort. Overall, a

little over 56.4 per cent of the respondents from the GPPFT said that resource mapping is done before the GPDP, while around 70.6 per cent

confirmed conducting the SES. The incidence of conduction of the SES before the GPDP was higher in the PESA States (73.7 per cent) as

compared to the others, which reflects a better planning strategy (Figure 6.45).

Figure 6.45: Distribution (%) of Positive Responses on Resource Mapping and Conducting Socio-Economic Survey (SES) before GPDP

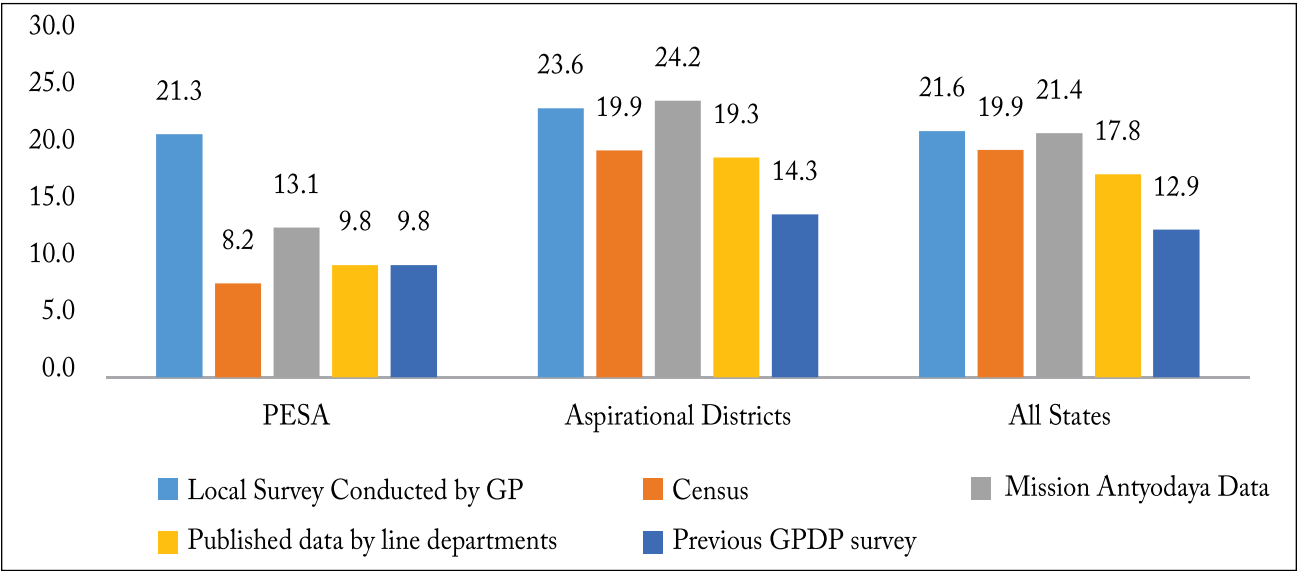


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The sources of data while preparing the GPDP constitute an important part of the planning strategy. It is observed that among the sources of data, the data received from the local survey conducted by the GPs has been used the most in the GPDP, followed by the data from

Mission Antyodaya. The data from the Census and that published by the line departments comes next. A little over 12 per cent of the respondents confirmed using data from the previous GPDP survey (Figure 6.46).

Figure 6.46: Distribution (%) of the Main Sources of Data while Preparing the GPDP

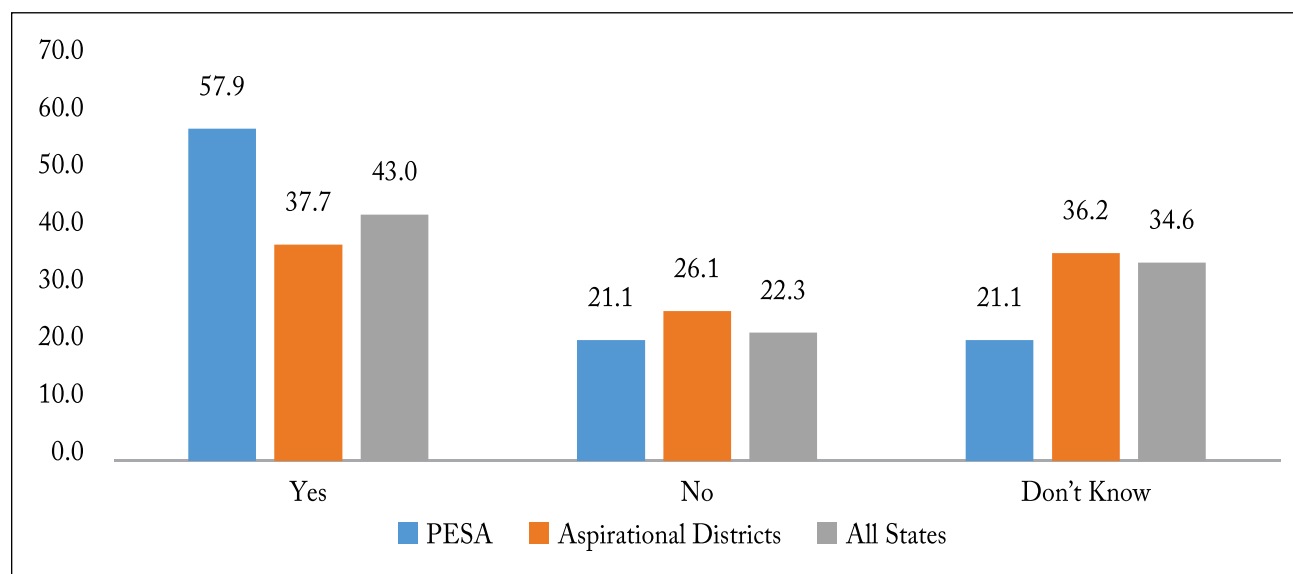


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

When the respondents were asked if the Working Group of the Panchayats used the Participatory Rural Appraisal Method (PRA) for primary data collection, the answers were

mostly inclined towards ignorance and negativity. Only 43 per cent of the respondents replied in the affirmative to this question, as observed from Figure 6.47.

Figure 6.47: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Use of the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Method of Data Collection

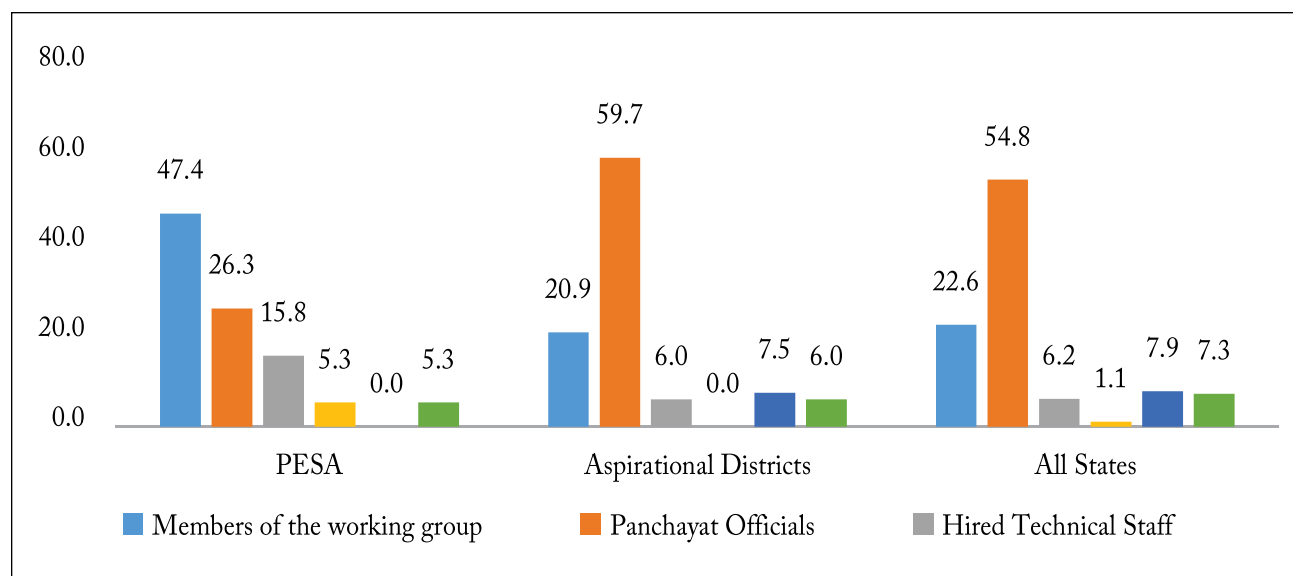


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

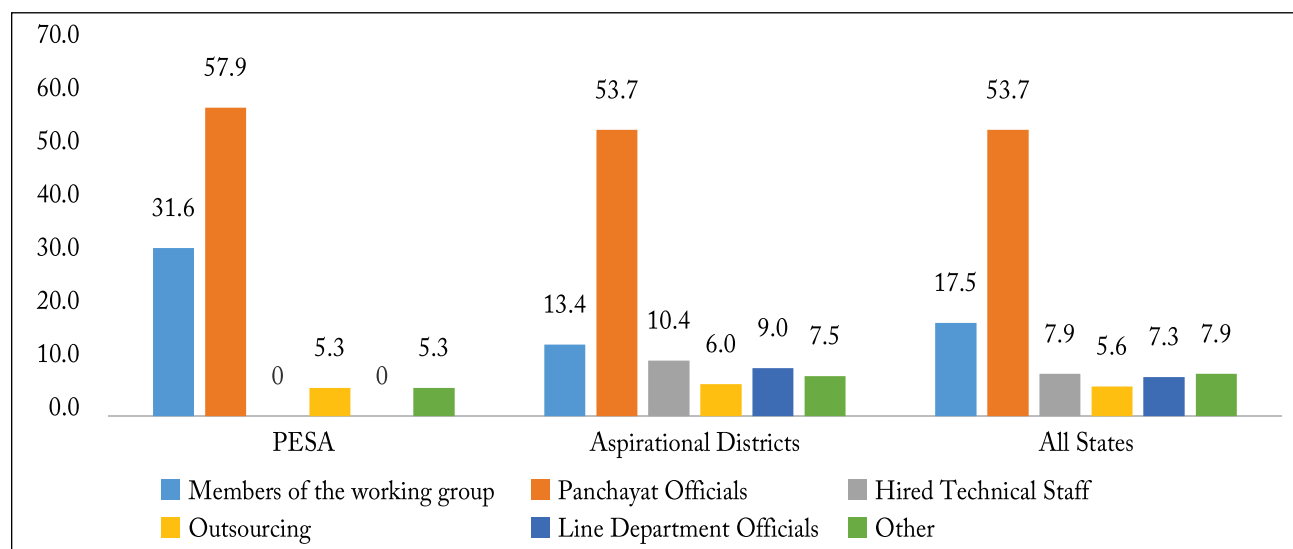
Data collected in the SES is mainly compiled and analysed by the Panchayat officials, followed by members of the working group. However, in the PESA States, data compilation is mainly done by members of the working group and the

analysis is mainly done by the Panchayat officials. The role played by line department officials and outsourcing in data compilation and analysis is also smaller than that of the others.

Figure 6.48: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Compilation of Data



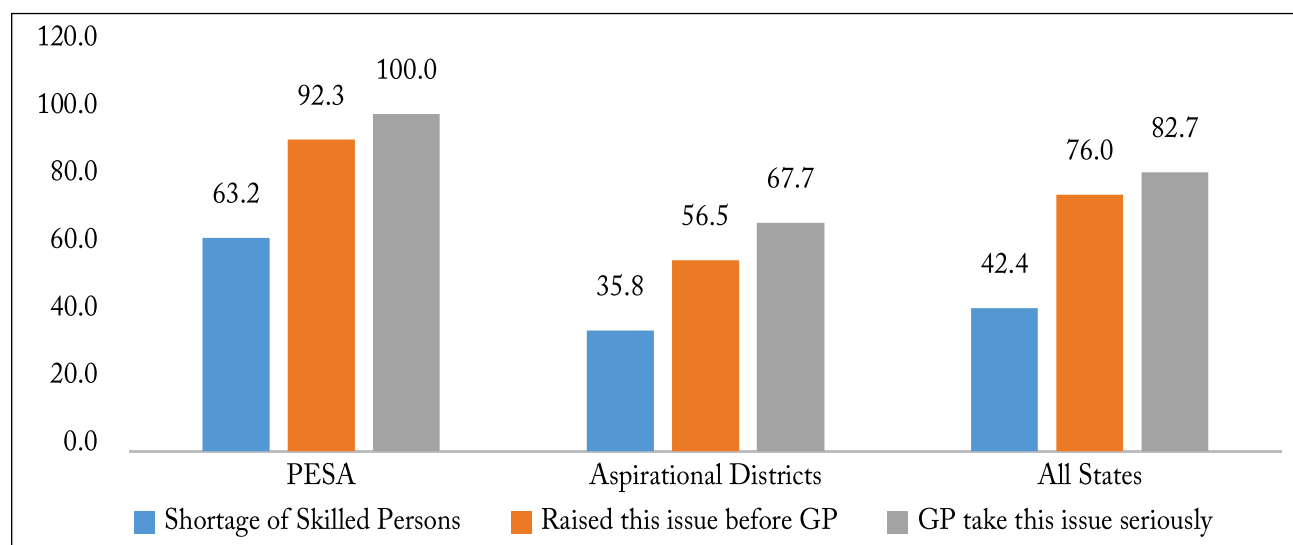
Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 6.49: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Analysis of Data

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The shortage of skilled manpower for the compilation and analysis of data was observed more in the PESA States than the Aspirational

Districts and the GP take this issue very seriously in the PESA States.

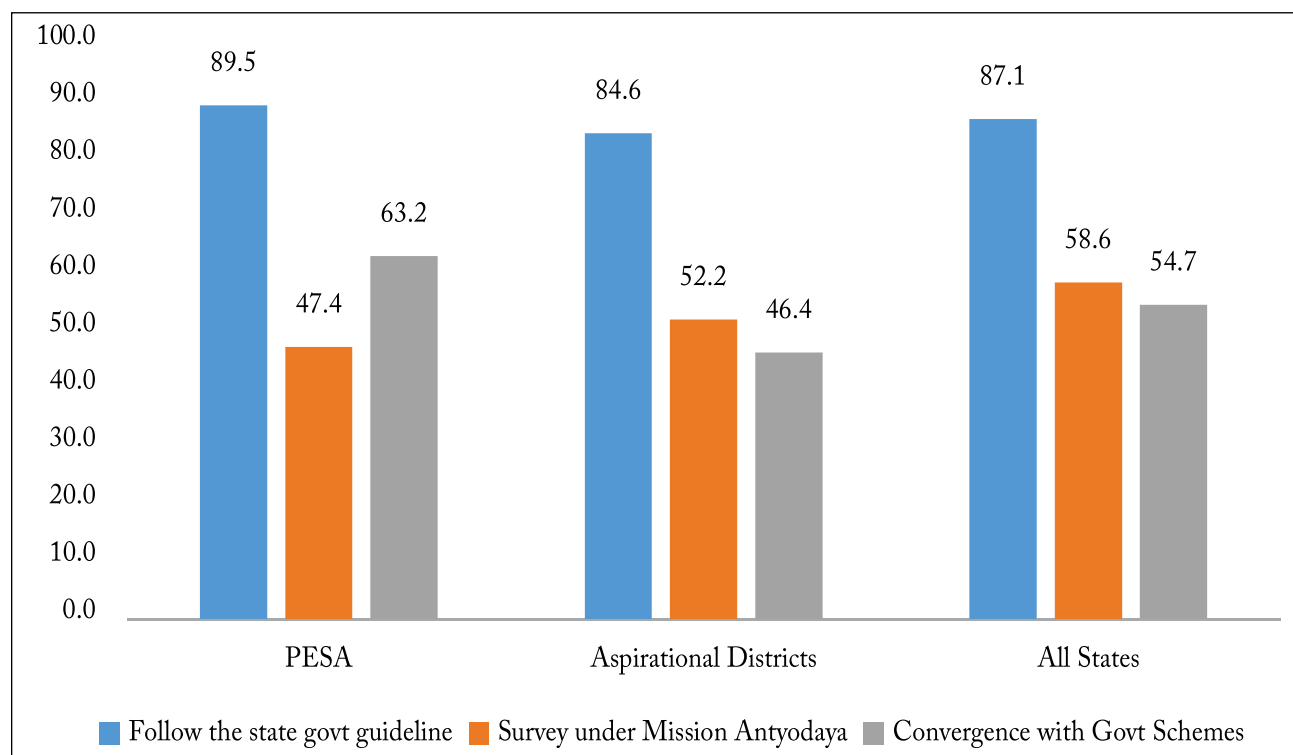
Figure 6.50: Distribution (%) of the Responses on Shortage of Skilled persons for Compilation/ Analysis of data

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

During the GPDP, State Government guidelines are mostly followed in the PESA States (89.5 per cent), followed by the Aspirational Districts (84.6 per cent). Similarly, the survey under the Mission Antyodaya format is carried out more in the Aspirational Districts. However, the question on the convergence of schemes in the GPDP reflects the level of ignorance among

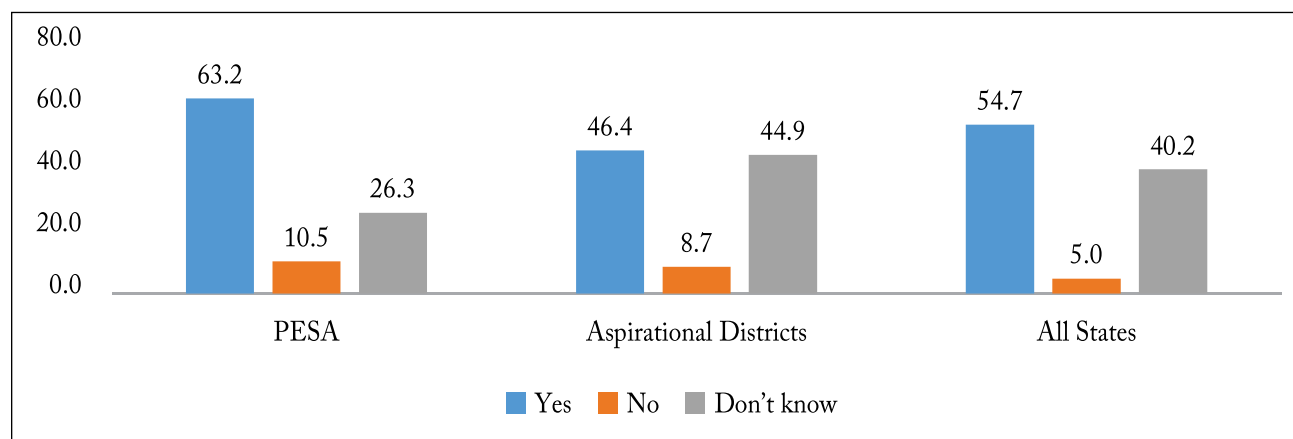
many of the respondents. Overall, 40 per cent of the respondents have no idea about how the GPDP helps in the convergence of schemes. On the other hand, around 63.2 per cent of the respondents from the PESA States says that the GPDP helps in a convergence of schemes (Figure 6.51).

Figure 6.51: Distribution (%) of the Responses on Following Government Guidelines and Convergence of Schemes among the GPPFT



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 6.52: Distribution (%) of the Responses on Convergence of Schemes among GPPFT



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Once converged with MGNREGS, the State Finance Commission (SFC) transfers Own Source Revenue (OSR) and flows from the other State- and Centrally-Sponsored Schemes, it could generate a significant resource base for the GPs in terms of convergent planning, contributing to realisation of the objectives of attaining the SDGs and strengthening their governance on local development. The Ministry

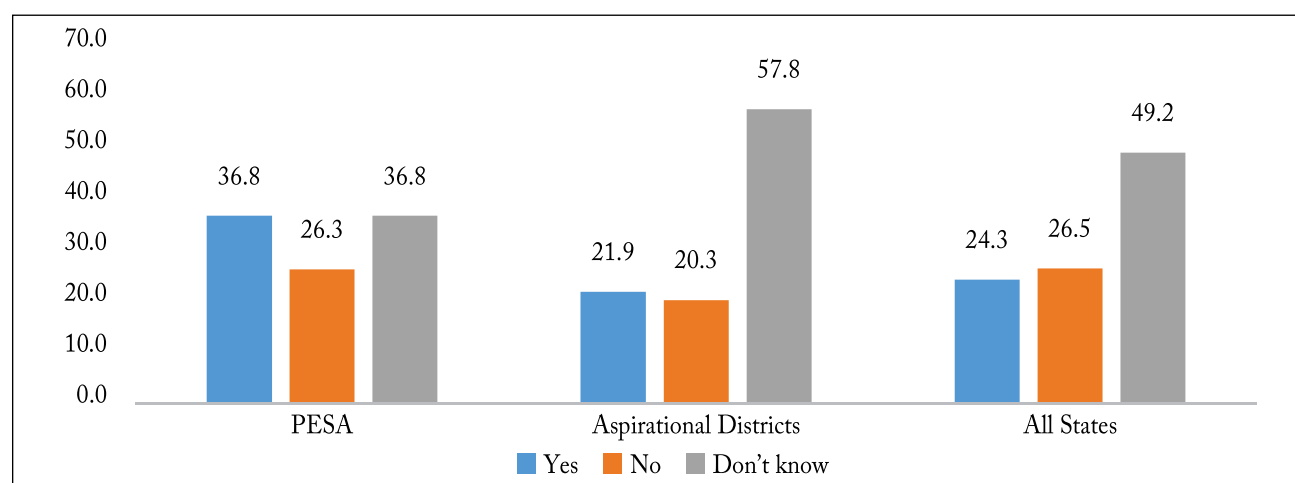
(MoPR) supported the States to develop State-specific guidelines for the GPDP, which is also reflected from the responses of the NCAER survey.

A locally prepared plan would be the only way to use resources efficiently and accountably. In this count, the efficient planning model demands a specialised body to manage the GPDP.

However, the primary survey reveals that very few respondents could reply if any software was used for the GPDP. Overall, only 24.3 per cent of the respondents could respond positively while 49.2 per cent of the GPPFT expressed ignorance. It is heartening to note that the proportion of positive respondents from the PESA States is higher (36.8 per cent) in comparison to 21.9 per cent of the positive responses from the Aspirational Districts. Among 24.3 per cent of those who

responded positively, reported that PRIYAsoft, Actionsoft, and e-gramswaraj software is used for the GPDP and its usage is restricted to only a few. It should be noted in this regard that **developing a coherent and effective GPDP is a technical process that needs a deeper understanding of resource allocation, community mobilisation, vulnerability mapping, and compliance with government procedures, outcome-based planning, and technical sanctions** (Figure 6.53).

Figure 6.53: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Application of Any Software in the Preparation of the GPDP

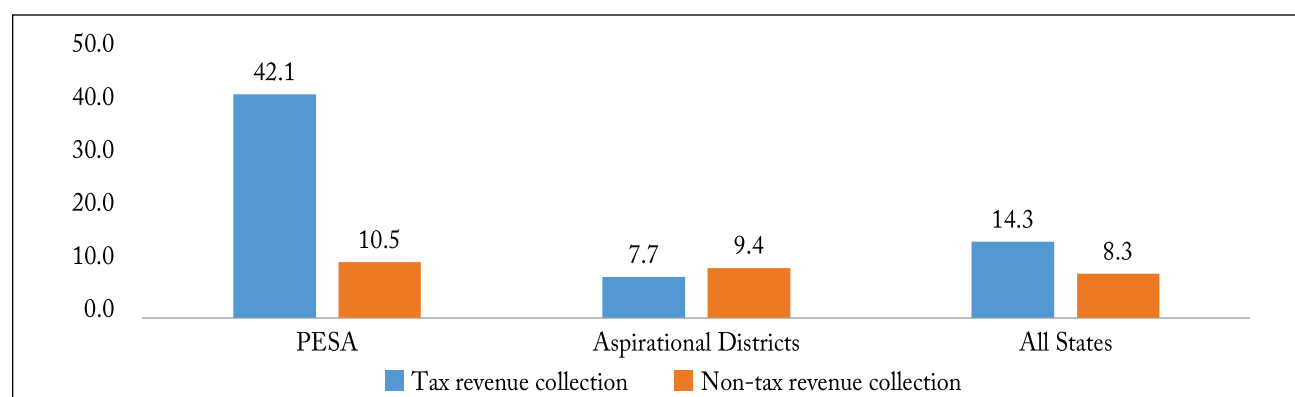


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The question related to information on the amount of tax revenue collected drew poor responses. More than 85 per cent of the overall respondents expressed ignorance on this issue. The same is true with regard to the non-tax revenue, where the level of ignorance exceeded 91 per cent. A similar pattern was observed in the Aspirational

Districts. However, in the PESA States, 42 per cent of the respondents reported that they knew about the tax revenue collection. During the survey, a few States reported the tax and non-tax revenue collected during the previous financial year (Tables 6.1 and 6.2).

Figure 6.54: Distribution (%) of the Positive Responses on the Amount of Tax Collected by GPs in the Last Financial Year



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Table 6.1: Tax Revenue Collected in the Last Financial Year (Rs)

State	Tax revenue (Rs)
Andhra Pradesh	52,850
Chhattisgarh	875
Madhya Pradesh	8,000
Maharashtra	2,00,000
Tamil Nadu	2,49,390
Uttar Pradesh	2,52,250
West Bengal	3,25,408
Total	1,72,095

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

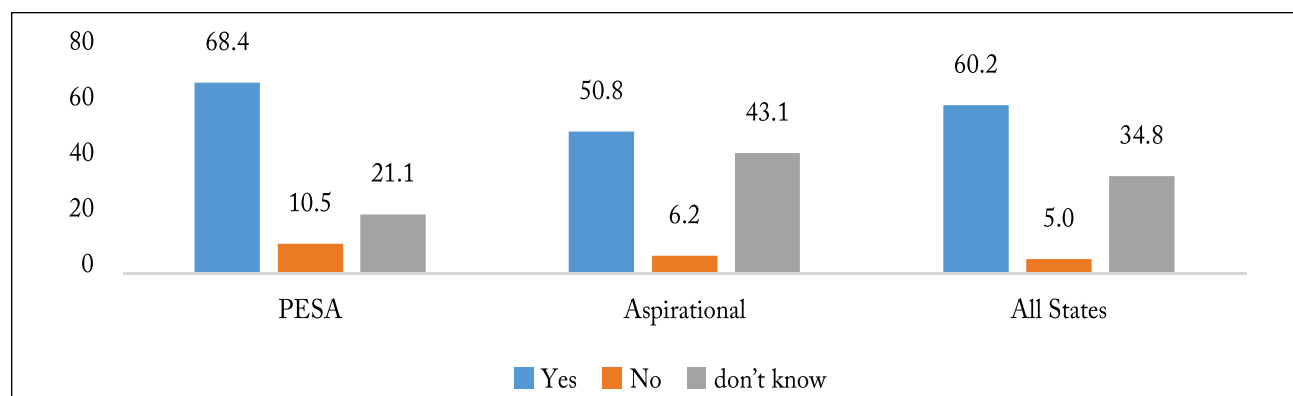
Table 6.2: Non-Tax Revenue Collected in the Last Financial Year (Rs)

State	Non-Tax revenue (Rs)
Andhra Pradesh	30,000
Odisha	38,000
Sikkim	20,000
Tamil Nadu	2,63,333
Uttar Pradesh	750
Uttarakhand	12,000
West Bengal	4,70,466
Total	2,49,468

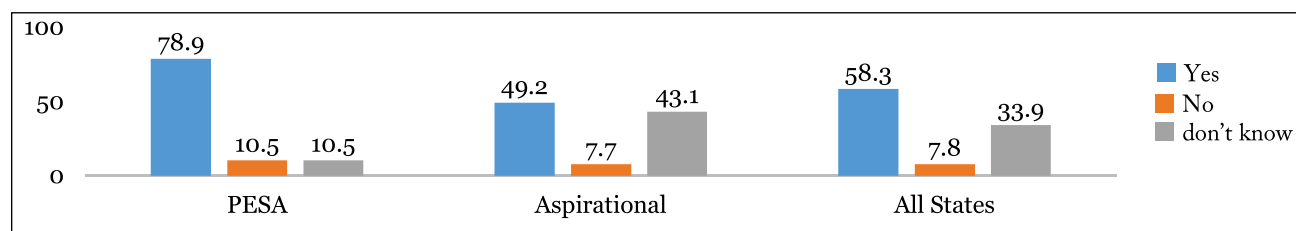
Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

It is observed that 60 per cent of the GP accounts are maintained in the format prescribed by the State government and around 58 per cent of the GP accounts are computerised. The degree of computerisation is higher in the PESA States (79 per cent) as compared to the Aspirational

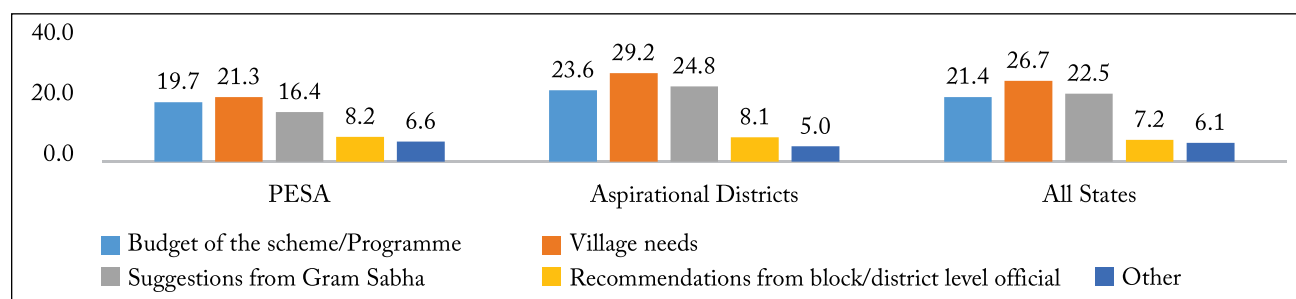
Districts (51 per cent). The responses on how the GPs use the GPDP to prioritise Government programmes are reflected through the assessment of village needs (26.7 per cent) and suggestions from the GS (22.5 per cent).

Figure 6.55: Distribution (%) of Responses on the Format of GP Accounts as prescribed by the State Government

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

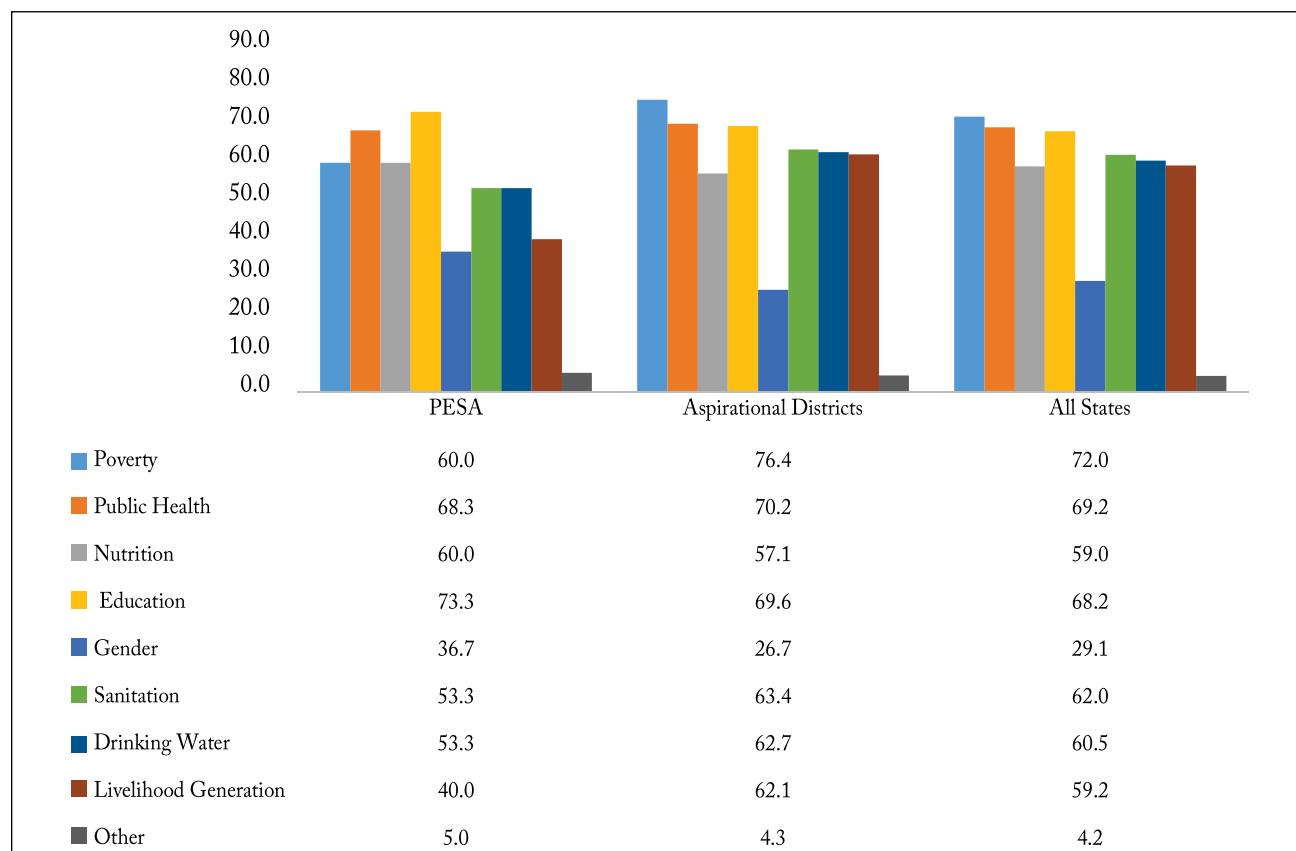
Figure 6.56: Distribution (%) of the Responses on Computerisation of GP Account

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 6.57: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the Prioritising Government Programmes

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Responses to the query regarding the scope of improvement in terms of the areas to be considered in the planning process suggest that public health should be prioritised the most in the PESA States (68.3 per cent) while poverty eradication got prominence in the Aspirational Districts (76.4 per cent).

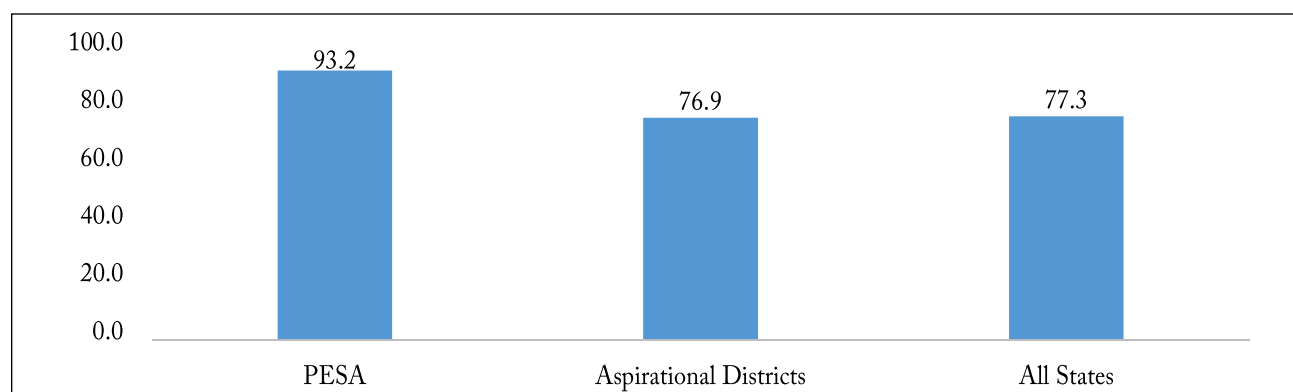
Figure 6.58: Distribution (%) of the Responses on the areas to be prioritised in the Planning Process

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Finally, as regards the responses as regards comprehensiveness of the RGSA scheme, 93 per cent and 77 per cent of the respondents

from the PESA States and the Aspirational Districts assert the inclusivity of the scheme (Figure 6.59).

Figure 6.59: Distribution (%) of the Positive Responses on the Comprehensiveness of the RGSA in the Planning Process



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

In sum, GPs are fundamentally the point of last-mile reach to the mainstream government schemes and programmes like MGNREGA, SBM, NRHM, NRLM, FFC, SFC, and OSR, for creating a positive impact on the lives of the poor and vulnerable. Convergence prevents the duplication of efforts and wastage of resources, and helps achieve synergies with ample scope for value addition that would finally benefit the poor and vulnerable.

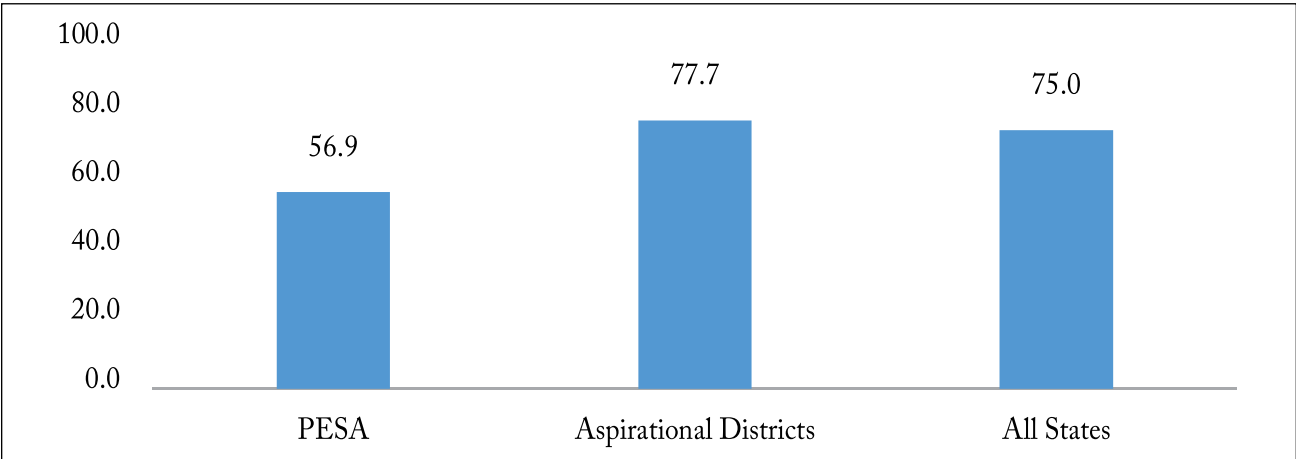
As Panchayats have been assigned the twin functions of economic development and social justice, performing these functions necessitates a close partnership with community-based organisations, particularly of the poor. It is thus important to recognise the need for an effective and functional working relationship between the Panchayats, especially GPs, and Self-help Groups (SHGs) of women. The SHGs constitute an important part of the RGSA, as they are involved in the upliftment of the economically and socially weaker sections of the society. They also play a significant role in the implementation process. **The RGSA focuses on SHG-PRI convergence for the attainment of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as they work at the grassroots level and have potential to ensure the success of the scheme through proper coordination.** It is observed that 72 per

cent of the SHGs are working on improving the livelihoods of people while 68 per cent are involved in livelihood generation. The SHGs need to focus more on these activities and try to improve lives by working on livelihood generation and improvement. **Education and poverty are among the top issues that need improvement, especially in the Aspirational Districts and the PESA States. Public health and Nutrition also have a huge scope for improvement.**

The SHGs must thus not only increase their participation in the planning process but also prepare an integrated poverty reduction plan to address the vulnerabilities of and promote livelihood opportunities for the poor. **According to the survey, 75 per cent of the SHGs are involved in preparing a poverty reduction plan.** Among the Aspirational Districts, 77 per cent of the SHGs participated in the poverty reduction plan, while the corresponding figure in the PESA States was only 57 per cent. This shows that more of the PESA States need to focus on eradicating poverty and making plans to attain the SDG of poverty reduction throughout India. The SHGs must also empower the poor to enable them to know, access, and demand their rights and entitlements. The results of the NCAER study show that 87 per cent of the SHGs have been empowering the poor to know their rights

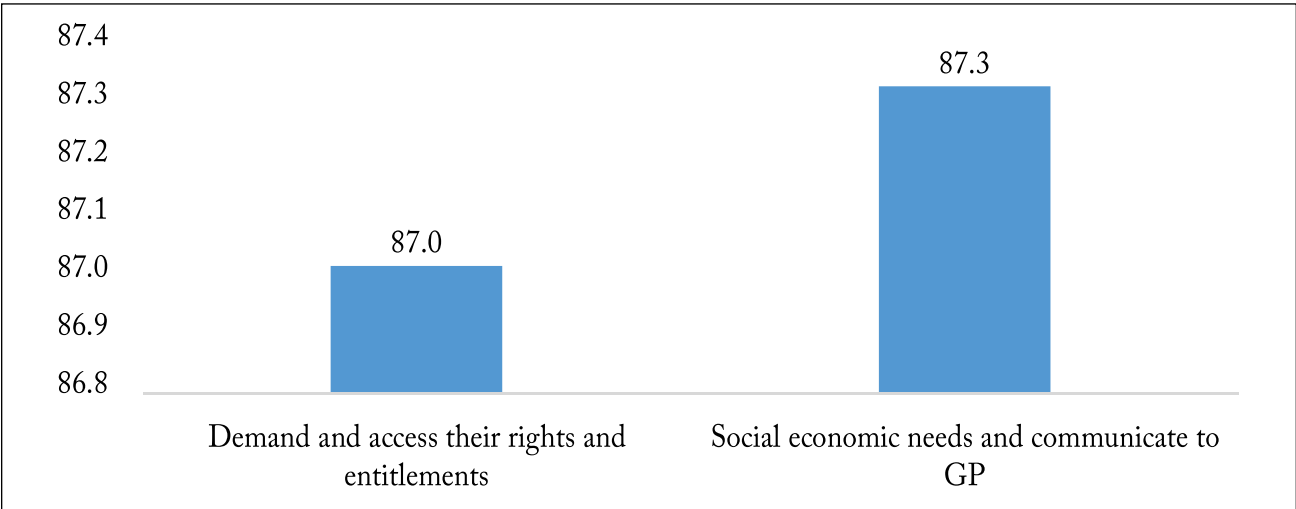
and highlighting the issue of poverty eradication before the GPs. The Government should thus incentivise such SHGs to augment their work in these areas.

Figure 6.60: Role of SHGs in Preparing Poverty Reduction Plans (%)



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 6.61: Role of SHGs in Empowering the Poor



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Raising one's own source of revenue is an important component for enabling the GPs to become self-sustainable. The GPs need to accord priority to the SHGs to access common property resources like ponds, common lands, and market places, among other things. It is observed that 68 per cent of the SHGs are given access to common property resources. In the Aspirational Districts and PESA States also, only 67 per cent of the SHGs have been provided such access. When the SHGs are not able to collect revenue, they are not able to work for development activities, which is a setback to the scheme. However, among all the

States, Maharashtra, and among all the PESA States and Aspirational Districts, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra top the charts, with 100 per cent access being provided to the SHGs, which is a good sign for economic development.

PRI-SHG Convergence. The RGSA lays special focus on PRI-SHG convergence. National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) lists the important SHG responsibilities like conducting the Gram Sabha, monitoring its activities, and supporting the GPs in all the development initiatives. Overall, 83 per cent of the SHGs are involved in conducting the Gram Sabha.

The community-based monitoring of GPs is an important factor as described by the NLRM, but only 53 per cent of the SHGs are involved in the same.

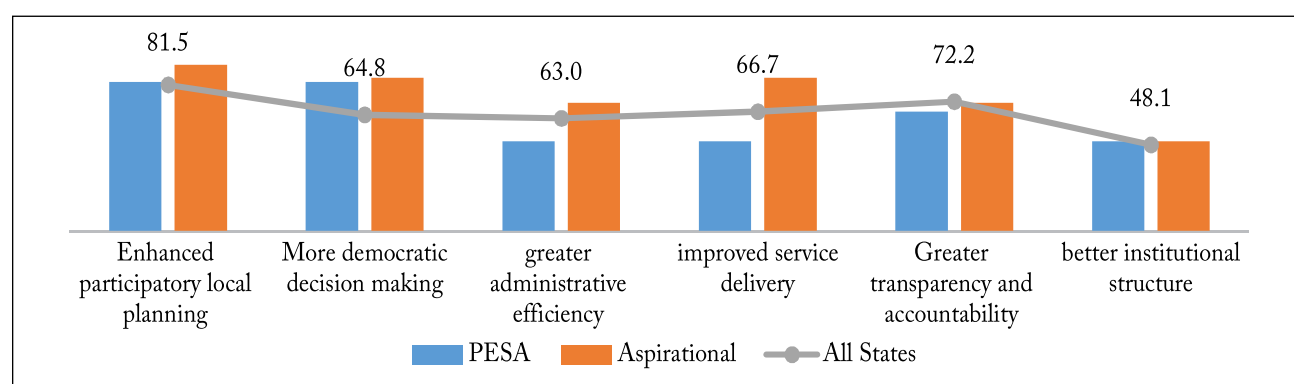
Only 64 per cent of the SHGs are involved in preparing projects for economic development/income enhancement with the GPs. This percentage is a bit less for the PESA States as compared to the Aspirational Districts. In contrast, 72 per cent of the SHGs in the Aspirational Districts are involved in promoting rural business hubs. Thus, the level of PRI-SHG convergence is not as desired, which is a great setback to the scheme. Although when asked about the effectiveness of the partnership between the SHGs and the GP, 77 per cent of the respondents responded positively, yet the data does not align with these responses. **The**

most common challenges that are faced by the SHGs in liaising with the GPs include the lack of training, guidelines, and independent functioning. These factors need to be addressed urgently.

6.7 Enhancing the Capability of GPs for Good Governance

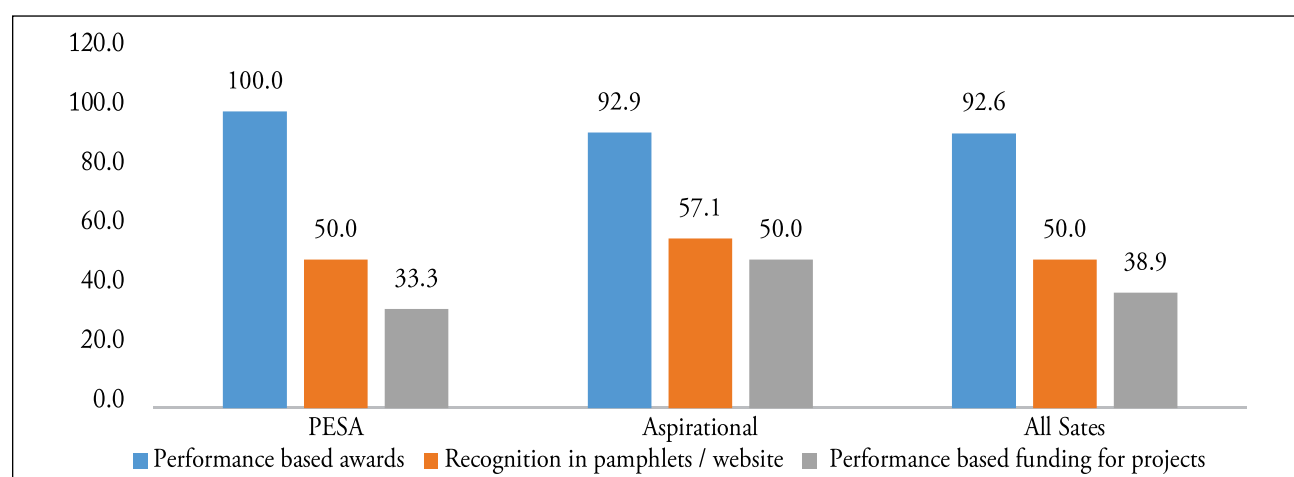
As regards the respondents' views on the impact of the RGSA on enhancing the capability of the GPs for good governance, 88 per cent of the respondents from all the States felt that the RGSA has enhanced the capabilities of the GPs for good governance in terms of facilitating participatory local planning, more democratic decision-making, greater administrative efficiency, improved service delivery, and greater transparency and accountability.

Figure 6.62: Enhancing the Capability of GPs for Good Governance



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

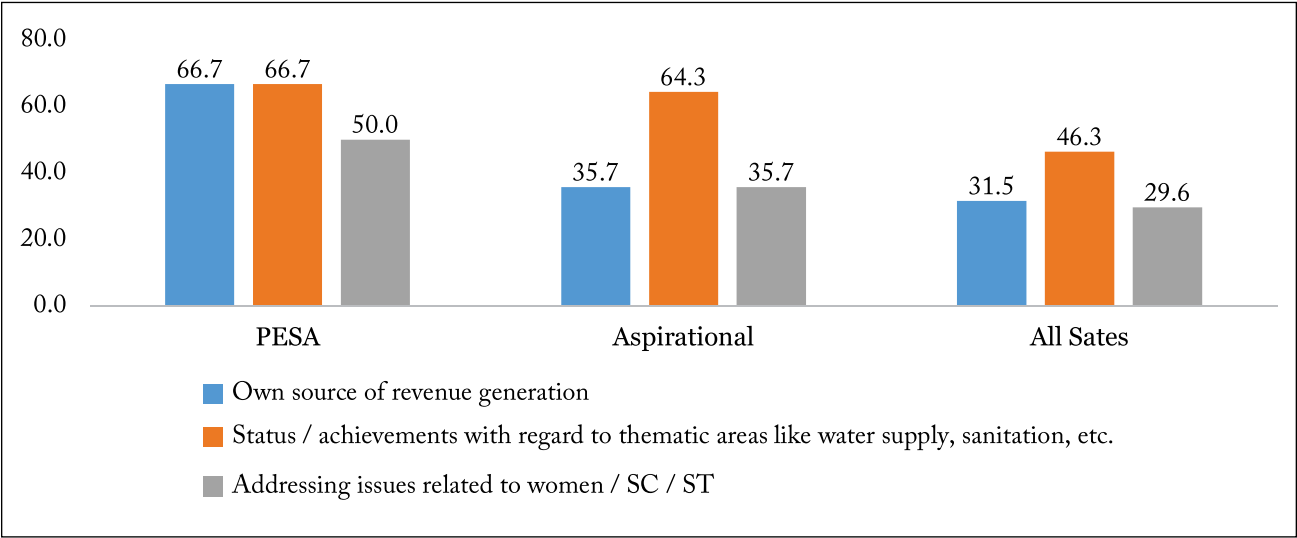
Figure 6.63: Basis of Incentives to PRIs



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The capability of the GPs can be increased by giving incentives to PRIs like performance based award, recognition in the website, and funding for projects. There is need to incentivise funding for projects in both the PESA States and the Aspirational Districts.

Figure 6.64: Area of performance Evaluation of PRIs



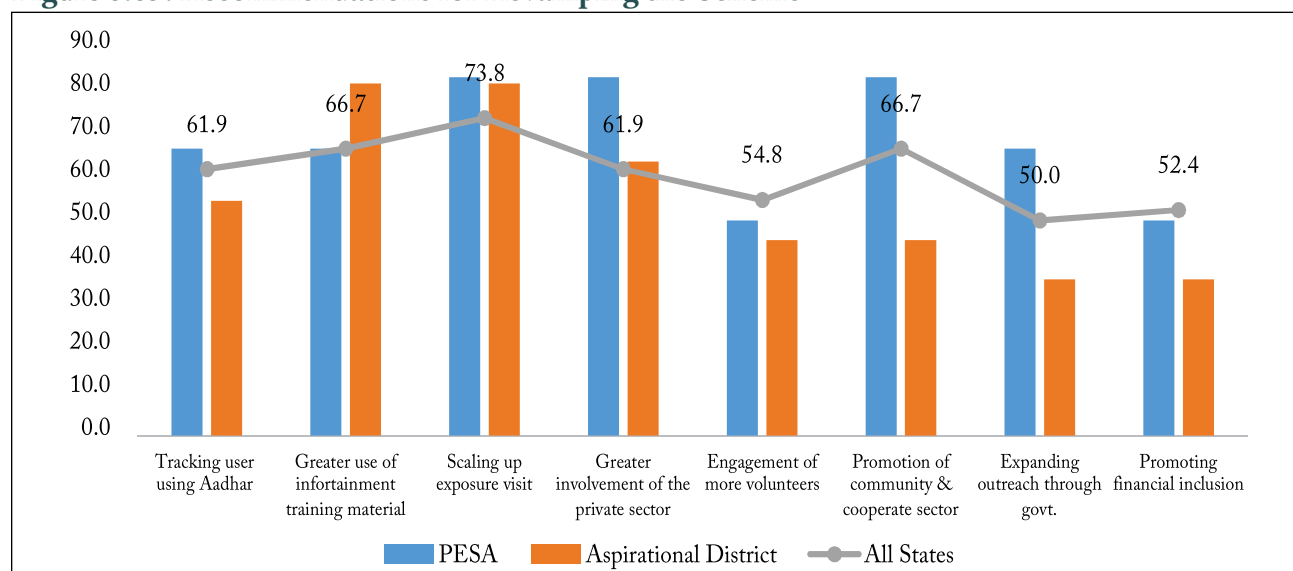
Source: NCAER’s calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

6.8 Recommendations for Revamping the Scheme

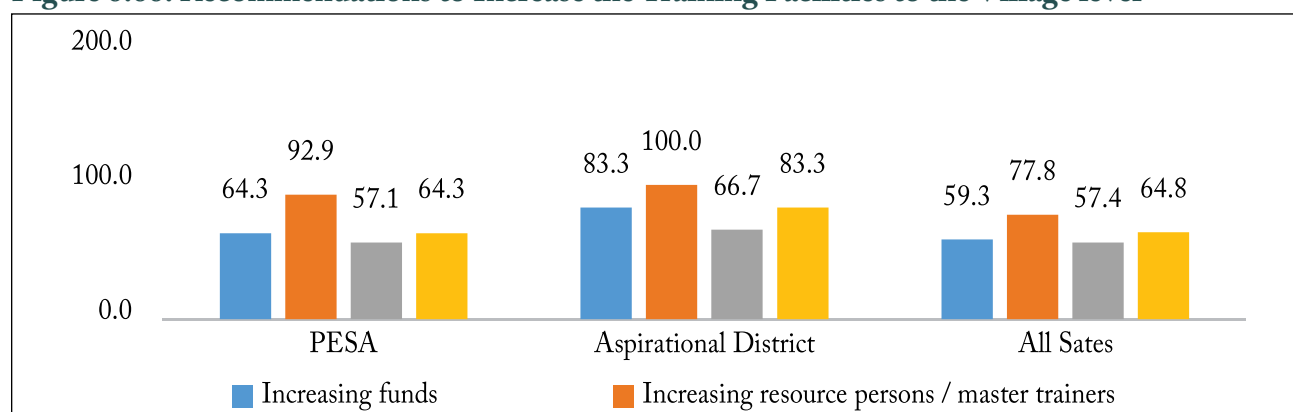
The recommendations for revamping the scheme, as expressed by respondents of the SIRDPR are shown in Figure 6.62. The scaling up of the exposure visit plays a vital role as per the responses, followed by the promotion of community and corporate sector-led innovation, and greater use of infotainment training material. For revamping the scheme, the Aspirational Districts should be given more attention as compared to the PESA States.

For increasing the training facility in the PESA States, there is a need to increase collaboration

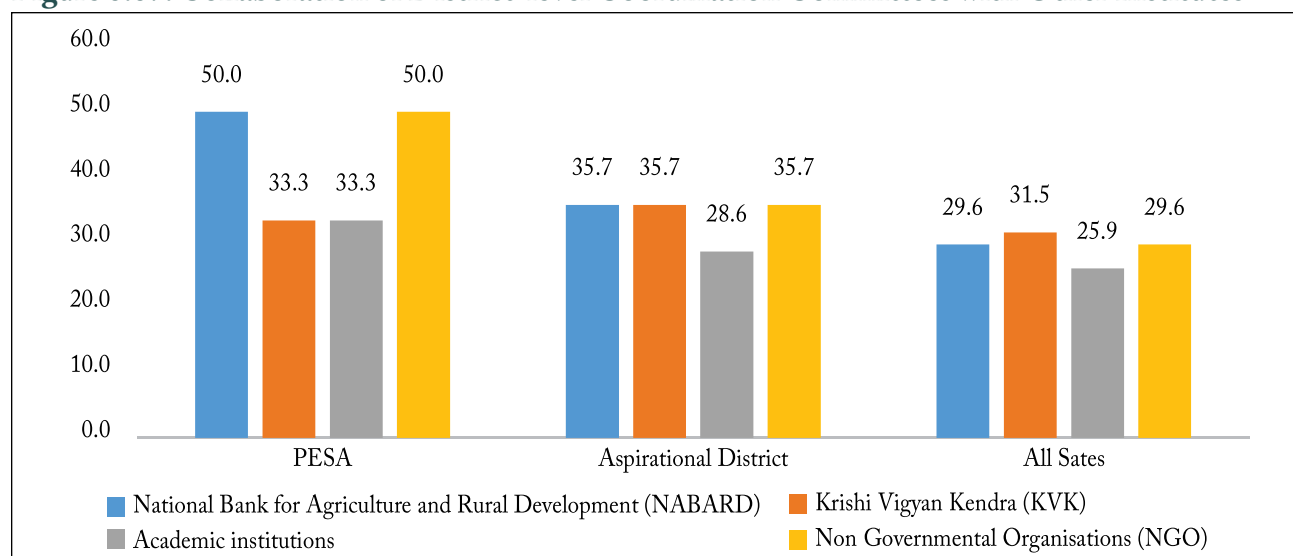
with the NGOs, and also to increase the number of master trainers and resource persons whereas in the Aspirational Districts, emphasis should be laid on increasing collaboration with the NGOs. There is also a need to strengthen the raining infrastructure in both the PESA States and the Aspirational Districts. The NCAER study found that the district-level Coordination Committee is already collaborating with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), academic institutions, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the PESA States and the Aspirational Districts, and this collaboration needs to be further strengthened.

Figure 6.65: Recommendations for Revamping the Scheme

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 6.66: Recommendations to Increase the Training Facilities to the Village level

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 6.67: Collaboration of District-level Coordination Committees with Other Institutes

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

A Case Study of the Traditional Local Bodies (TLBs) under the Sixth Schedule of Assam

7.1 Introduction

A case study of the Traditional Local Bodies (TLBs) under the Sixth Schedule is a part of the RGSA project. The main objective of incorporating the Sixth Schedule area is to understand the nature of differences in the functioning of the local entities at the grassroots level. Since the Sixth Schedule did not create provisions for democratic aspects of local governance at the village level that are administered by the respective Territorial Councils in specified districts of Assam, this case study would be an attempt to understand the similarity in the functioning of the governance at the grassroots level beyond the mainframe of the current objectives envisaged in this study.

The RGSA study delves deep into the aspects of decentralisation reflecting the transfer of authority, responsibility, and accountability from the Central to the intermediate and local governments. Local governance aims at enhancing the level of development, reducing poverty, and strengthening democracy at the grassroots level. Participatory decisions taken at the local level are expected to echo the aspirations and needs of the poor and vulnerable. This case study in one selected area beyond the PRI system would review the existing system in one of the TLBs, and compare them with PRIs in the surrounding districts. This may not have any impact on the broad structure of the study but would accommodate an inquisitive examination to reflect the ground level performance of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council and the Bodoland Autonomous Regions as a reference.

In Assam, the tribal areas are mainly categorised into the following two parts:

- Territorial Councils under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India; and
- Statutory Autonomous Councils constituted under the State Act.

There are three Territorial Autonomous Councils under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. These are the:

1. Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC);
2. Dima-Hasao Autonomous Council; and
3. Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council.

These three areas are governed through the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Sixth Schedule area in the BTC is executed through the Village Council Development Committee (VCDC) at the village level and the Territorial Level Coordination Committee (TCLCC) at the block level. On the other hand, governance in the Dima-Hasao Autonomous Council and in the Karbi-Anglong Autonomous Council, is overseen at the village level and at the block level by the Village Development Committee (VDC) and Block Level Coordination Committee (BLCC), respectively. In all the three Sixth Schedule areas, the members are directly nominated/selected by the council. At the council level, the members are elected by the people of the regions/districts.

The current case study seeks to understand the current functional structure of local governance in the areas under the jurisdiction of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council and the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) covering the process of delivery of government schemes through local level institutions and their participation. The study report proposes

to highlight the gaps, if any, in local governance as pointed out by the different stakeholders who have been part of the study, and lists their recommendations to make local governance in the TLBs more operational and efficient.

This case study will help in understanding the performance of the training, infrastructural development of VCDCs/VDCs, and planning & implementations mechanisms of the Autonomous District Councils at the grassroots level. Further, the study will also help in identifying the capacity gaps towards enhancing training and planning for the VCDC/VDC. Both are important components of the RGSA.

Overall, the study will help in understanding the situation at the ground level by studying the qualitative aspects of the enabling policy environment and programmes in the Council under community-based platforms.

The coverage of the TLBs would be confined to the Karbi Anglong and Baksa districts of

Assam, situated in the central and western parts of Assam, respectively.

7.2 Methodology

As a first step towards promoting an understanding of the existing structure, systems, and policies, the NCAER team tried to identify the capacity gaps and challenges in executing grassroots level planning and implementation in the areas through a qualitative assessment by carrying out in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) of the stakeholders. This would be useful in deciphering the ground level views on appropriate strategies and capacity enhancement support to achieve the objective of strengthening local level planning in the autonomous councils. For generating the required insights and information, the key stakeholders and their sample in two different Sixth Schedule areas of Assam are identified and listed in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Sample Structure in the Study Area

Sl. No	Baksa (BTC)	Total Sample	Karbi-Anglong	Total Sample
1.	Council Representatives	1	Council Representatives	1
2.	VCDC Chairman	10	VDC Chairman	10
3.	TCLCC Chairman	2	BLCC Chairman/Member	2
4.	VCDC Functionaries	10	VDC Functionaries	10
5.	Local Committee	10	Members of Civil Society/NGO	10
6.	Line Department	13	Line Department	13
7.	Self Help Group/Women Group	10	Self Help group	10
8.			Block Resources Centre	1
9.	DRDA-RGSA official	1	Official RGSA	1

The data gathered from the field are collated and analysed, and the key observations and findings drawn up. The data were also gathered using a mixed-methods approach, including in-depth interviews and FGDs. The idea was to obtain feedback from all the stakeholders, including lawmakers, executives, implementers and the community to get information on the

existing policies, system, gaps and challenges. In order to ascertain the appropriate stakeholders and acquire an initial understanding about the existing system. It is suggested that a meeting may be arranged between the NCAER team and the secretariat members to enable the study team to obtain a list of respondents to be included in the empirical study, as also the contacts and

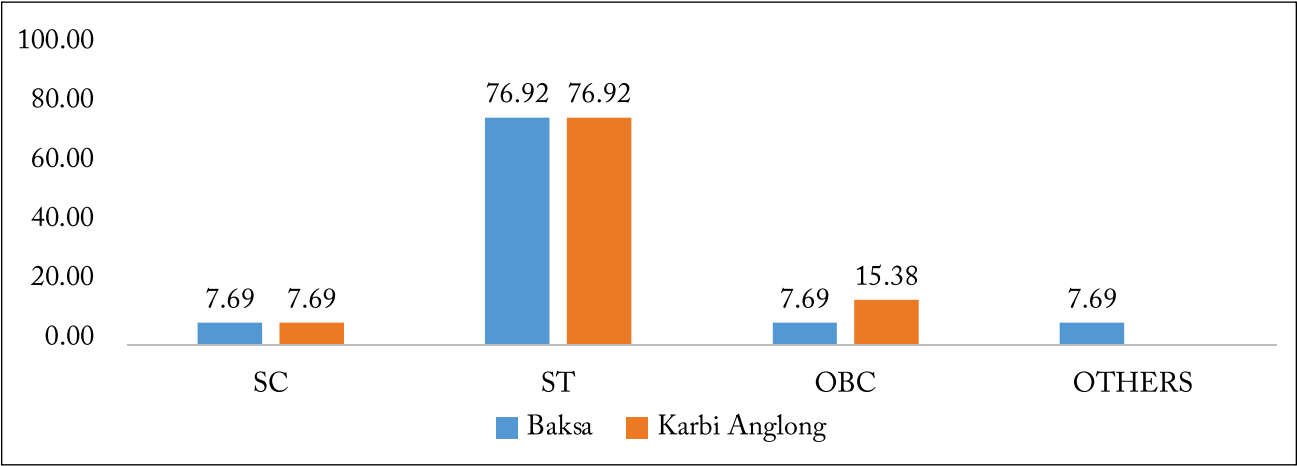
support for the one-to-one interviews. In-depth interviews were also carried out with the VCDC/VDC members, TCLCC/BLCC members, officials, and officials of the blocks, district administration, and the Council.

It is also recommended that FGDs be held with persons who are directly or indirectly related to the VDC/VCDC. The FGD is a very important tool because it will help in understanding the process of grassroots planning as well as the local governance structures and social schemes.

7.3 Demographic and Educational Status of the Stakeholders

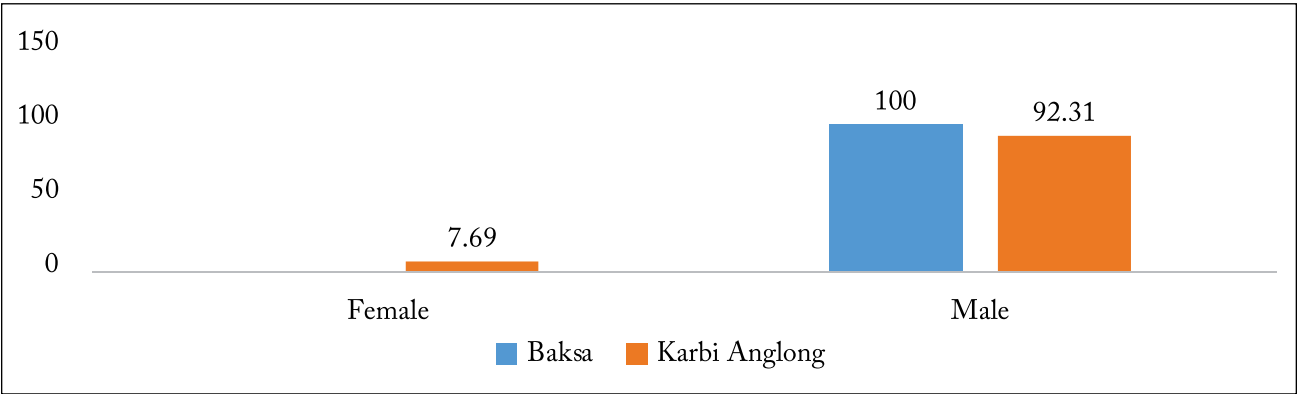
In two of the Sixth Schedule districts of Assam, there are some variations in terms of representation of the socio-economic groups of the selected/nominated representatives of the VCDC and VDC. Since we are telling about the Schedule area, among all the committee members The highest representation among all the committee members is from the ST community, followed by the OBCs and SCs, as seen in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: Distribution of Social Groups among the Selected/Nominated Representatives of the VCDC and VDC (%)



Source: NCAER’s calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 7.2: Gender Distribution among the Selected/Nominated Representatives of the VCDC and VDC (%)



Source: NCAER’s calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The gender representation in the VCDC and VDC is depicted in Figure 7.2. The status of the women in the tribal community in Assam is very high. However, in both the districts, the VCDC

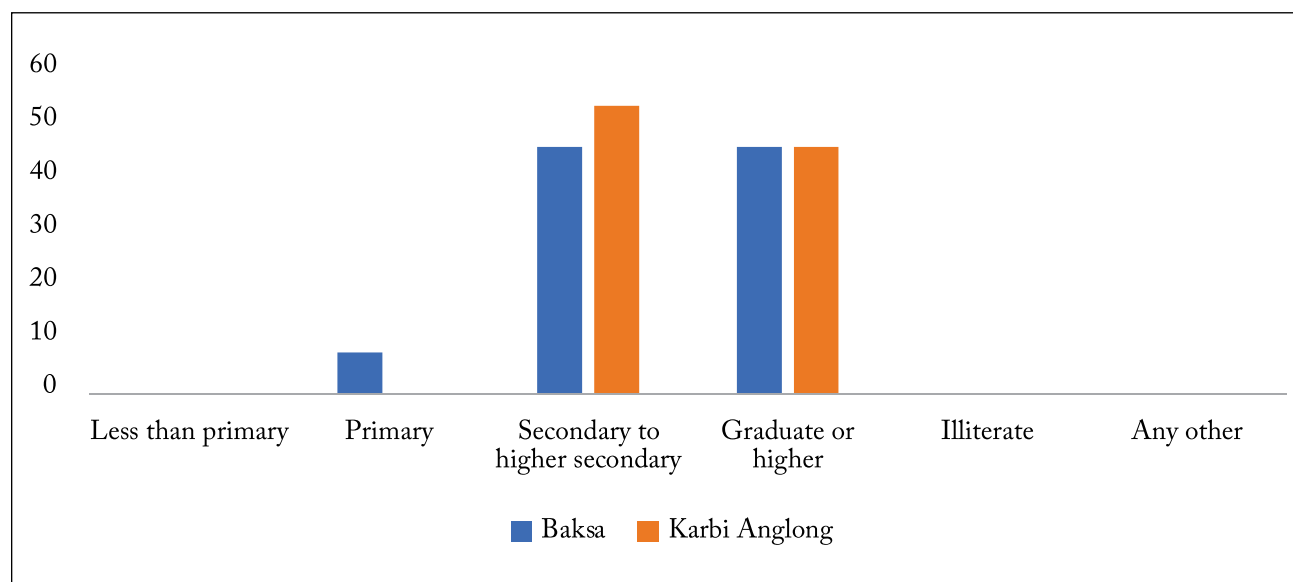
and VDC is dominated by male members. In Baksa district, there is zero representation of female members.

7.4 Educational Status of the Stakeholders

An analysis of the educational status of the stakeholders shows that in both the

districts, the highest percentage representation is that of those with secondary and higher secondary level of education, followed by graduates. The number of illiterate representatives in both the districts is nil (Figure 7.3).

Figure 7.3: Distribution (%) of Educational Status among the Selected/Nominated Representatives of the VCDC and VDC

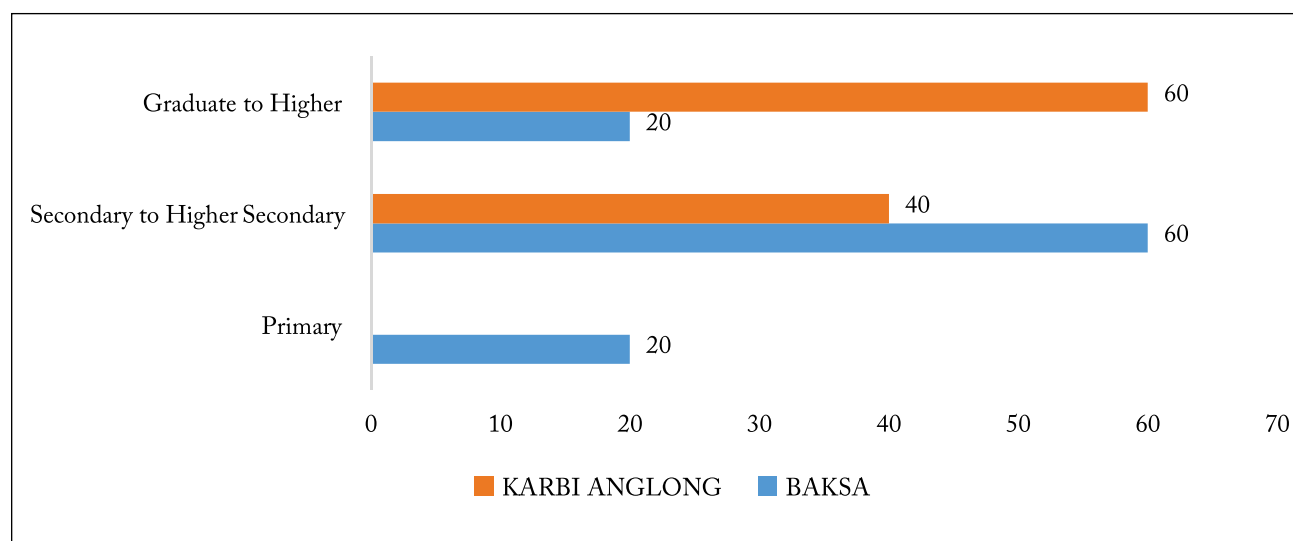


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 7.4 shows the education level of the VCDC/VDC functionaries. In Karbi Anglong, the educational status of around 60 per cent of the functionaries is graduation and above,

while 40 per cent of the functionaries have acquired secondary and higher secondary level of education. In Baksa too, 60 per cent of the functionaries are graduates and above.

Figure 7.4: Distribution (%) of Educational Status among the VCDC and VDC Functionaries

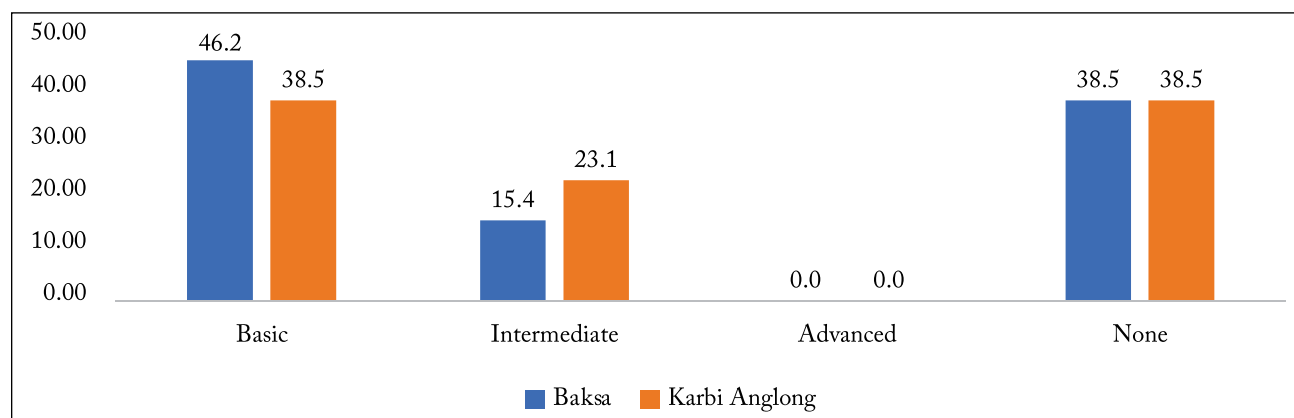


Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Computer literacy is important for achieving efficient functioning of local governance in the Sixth Schedule areas. In Baksa, Figure 7.5 shows that 46.2 per cent of the representatives have basic computer literacy. On the other hand in

Karbi-Anglong 38.5 per cent of the respondents have basic computer knowledge. Only 15.4 per cent and 23.1 per cent of the respondents have intermediate level computer knowledge in Baksa and Karbi-Anglong, respectively.

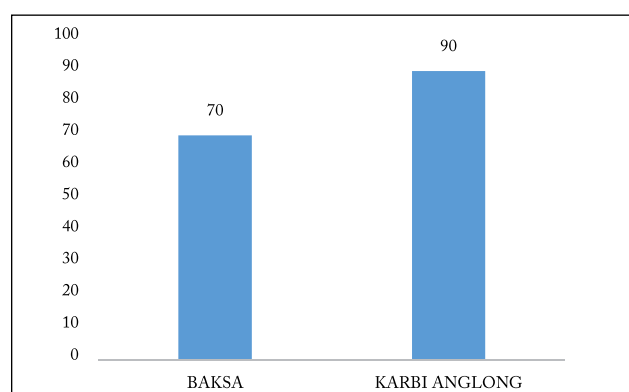
Figure 7.5: Distribution (%) of the Level of Computer Literacy among Selected/Nominated Representatives



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 7.6 shows that in Karbi Anglong, 90 per cent of the VDC functionaries have knowledge of computer and its uses. On the other hand, in Baksa, only 70 per cent of the functionaries have knowledge of computers.

Figure 7.6: Level of Computer Literacy among Functionaries of VDCs and VCDCs



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

7.5 Training Programmes and the Supporting Infrastructure

In order to understand the basic structure of the autonomous council, every representative must acquire efficient training. However, this study found that in Baksa district, not a single representative of the VCDC received training. The main reason for this is that basic foundation level training programme was not conducted for any representative in Baksa. In Karbi Anglong, out of total sample of the selected representatives, only 46.15 per cent had received training. Out of 46.15 per cent of the respondents, only 66.67 per cent and 33.33 per cent received training within six months and after six months of their selection in the VCDC, respectively. Again out of 46.15 per cent of the respondents, 85.71 per cent of the respondent obtained basic orientation training.

Table 7.2: Coverage under the Training Programme (%)

District	Yes	No	Training Received after Joining the VCDC/VDC		Types of Training Basic Orientations
			Within Six Months	After Six Months	
Baksa	-	100	-	-	-
Karbi-Anglong	46.15	53.85	66.67	33.33	85.71

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

In Karbi Anglong, the mode of the training programme was mainly physical, that is, face-to-face. Again in the face-to-face training, 100 per cent of the respondents reported that had attained training through the lecture method.

Table: 7.3: Mode of Training

Mode	Baksa	Karbi-Anglong
Face-to-face	-	100
Distance Learning	-	-
Mass Media	-	-
Exposure Visit	-	-
IEC	-	-
Helplines/Help desks	-	-
On-the-job training	-	-

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

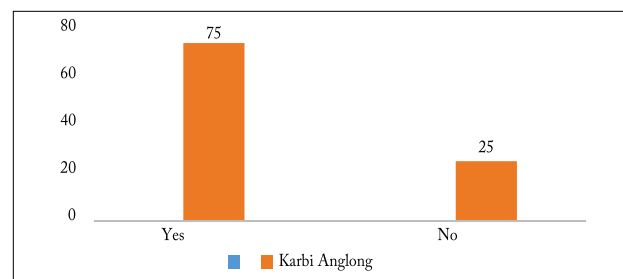
Table 7.4: Method Used in the Face-to-Face Training

Method	Baksa	Karbi-Anglong
Lecture Method	-	100
Interactive Lecture Method	-	-
Story-telling Method	-	-
Participatory Method	-	-
Field Visits	-	-
Model Project Demonstrations	-	-

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Efficient training materials are important because they can significantly increase the understanding capacity of the trainee. The study result found that in Karbi Anglong, only 75 per cent of the total representatives received training. The remaining 25 per cent of the respondents did not receive any training materials during the training programme.

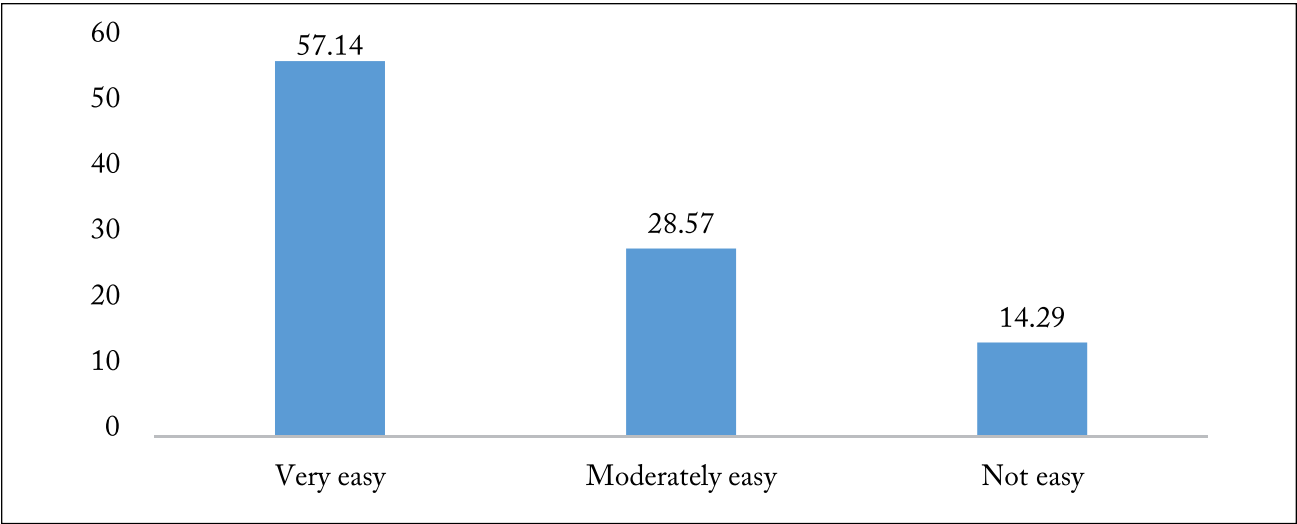
Figure 7.7: Materials Received for the Training (%)



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

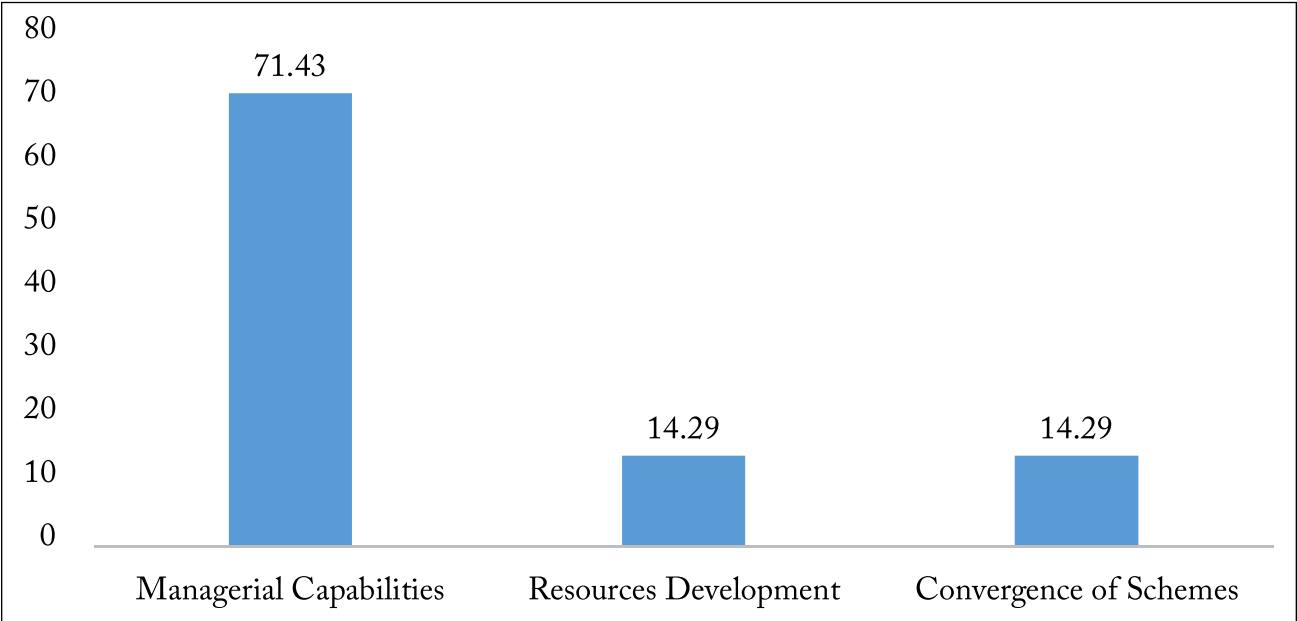
Approximately 57 per cent of the respondents reported that the training material was very easy. According to 29 per cent of the respondents, the training material was moderately easy and around 14 per cent of the respondents said that the training material was very complex and very difficult to understand.

Figure 7.8: Usefulness of the Training Materials (%)



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

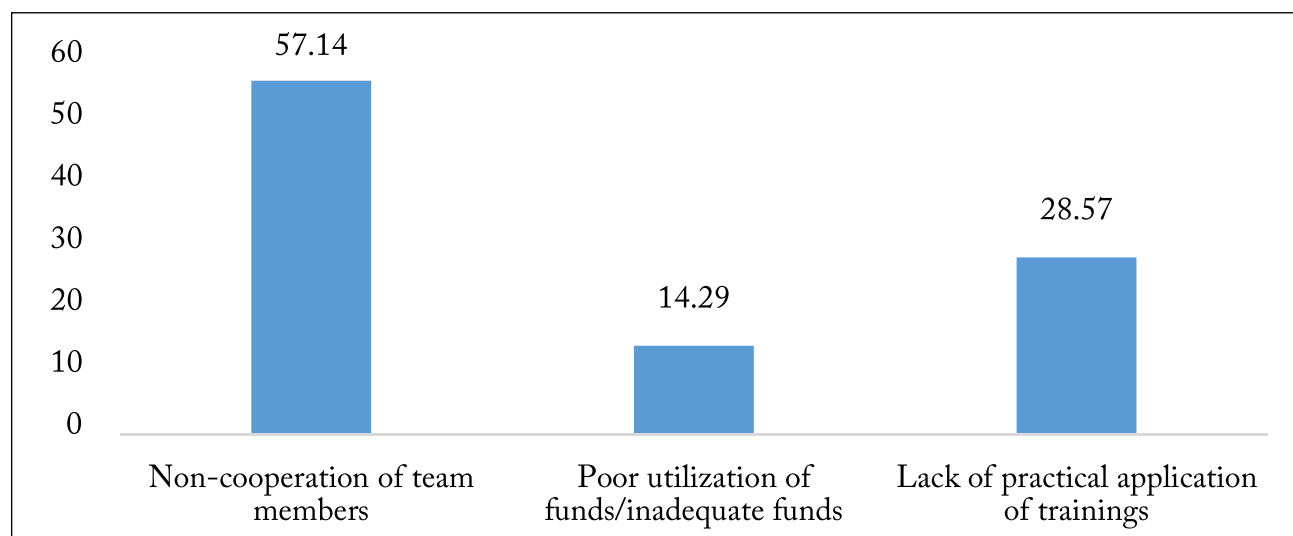
Figure 7.9: Practical Applicability of the Training (%)



Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Figure 7.8 shows that, due to the training, 71.43 per cent of the respondents were able to increase their managerial capabilities, which were well used in the VDC. The convergence of government schemes is an important aspect

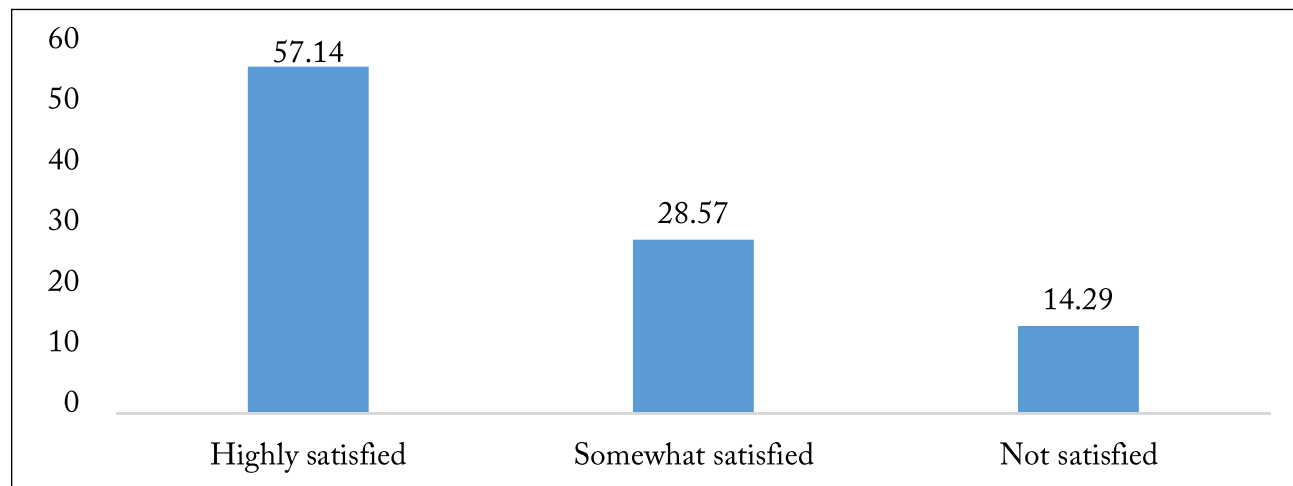
of the RGSA. However, only 14.29 per cent of the respondents reported that they were able to achieve convergence of the resources in the VDC because of the training.

Figure 7.10: Reasons for Lack of Application of Training Knowledge in the Field

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The practical applicability of the training is very low in Karbi-Anglong. Figure 7.9 shows the practical applicability of the training on various aspects. Around 57 per cent of the respondents suggested that they were not able to use their knowledge in the field due to the non-cooperation

of the team members. On the other hand, due to the lack of practical application of the trainings, 28.57 per cent of the respondents were not able to use knowledge acquired during the training in the field.

Figure 7.11: Quality of the Trainers

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

One of the famous quotes is that “the good teacher makes the poor student good and the good student superior”. Hence, good quality of trainers makes the training programme more successful. According to the survey conducted in the Karbi-Anglong district, around 57 per cent of the trainees were highly satisfied with the quality of the trainer. On the other hand, around 14 per

cent of the trainees were not satisfied with their trainers.

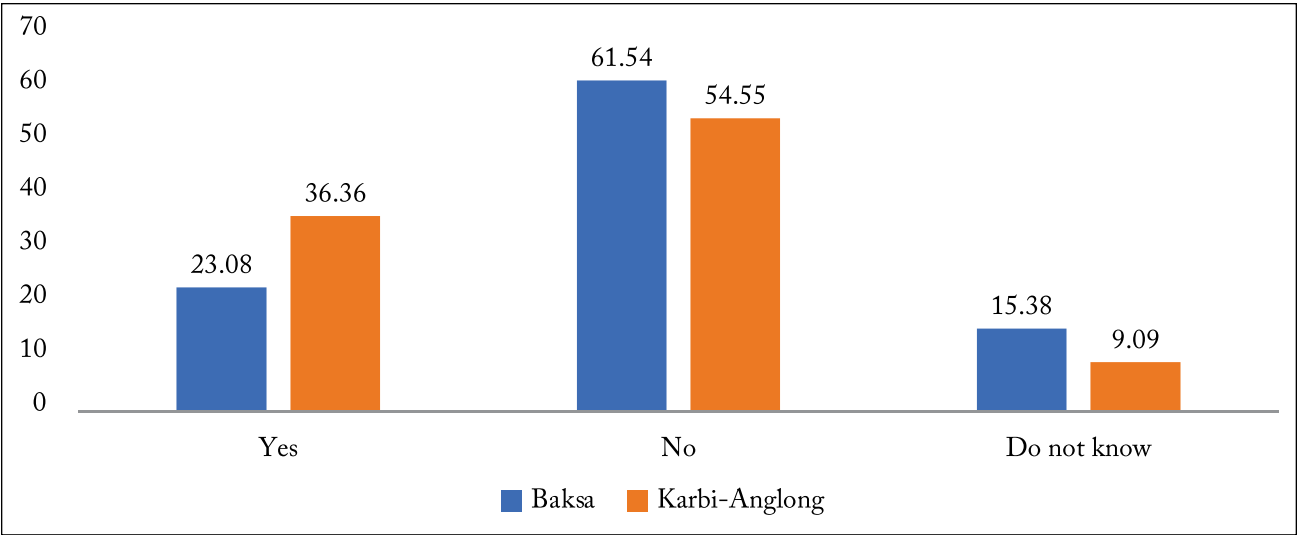
7.6 IT Infrastructure in VCDC and VDC

Around 23 per cent of the VCDC offices have computer availability in the Baksa district. On the other hand in Karbi Anglong, only around 36 per

cent in the VDC office have computer facilities. In the VCDC office of Baksa, due to the lack of computer facilities, all the data related to VCDCs and VDCs were manually recorded in the register.

Moreover, due to the lack of computer facilities, the VDCs and VCDCs cannot update their data in the government portal, which again creates lack of transparency in the VDC and VCDC.

Figure 7.12: Computerisation of VCDCs/VDCs

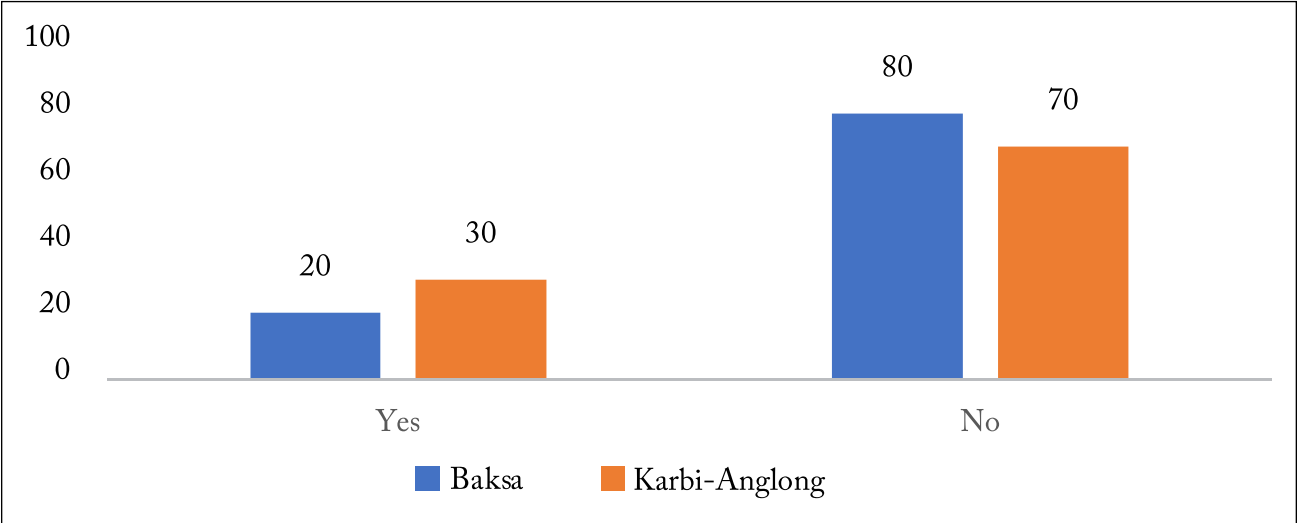


Source: NCAER’s calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

In Karbi Anglong, only 30 per cent of the VDC offices had computers with Internet facilities. On the other hand in Baksa, only 20 per

cent of the VCDC offices had computers with Internet facilities.

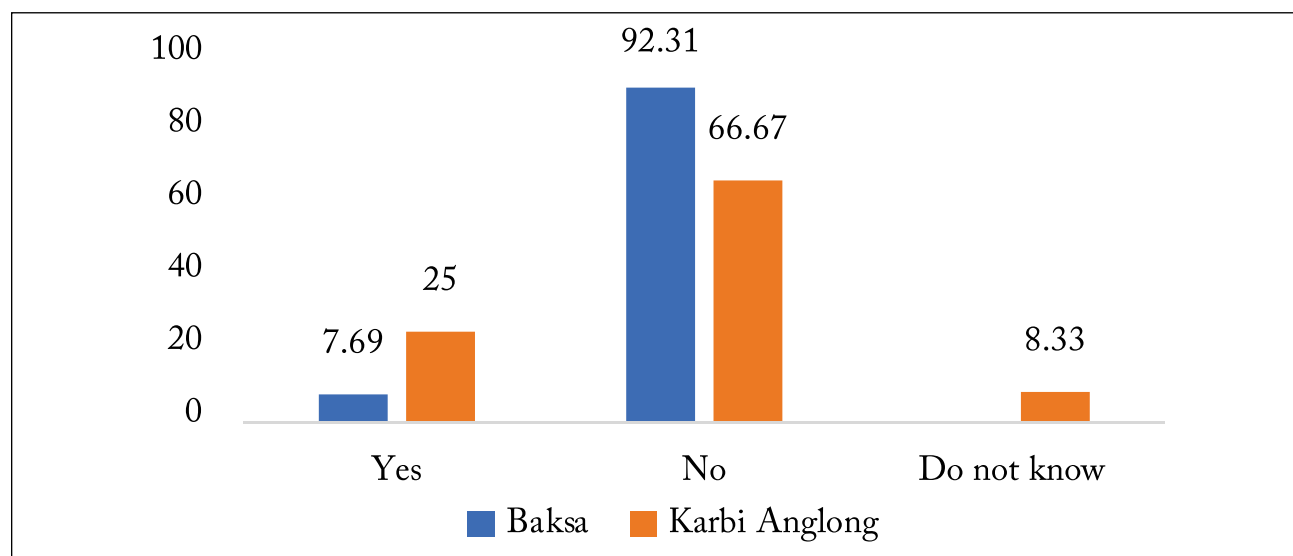
Figure 7.13: Availability of Computer with Internet Facilities



Source: NCAER’s calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Around 8 per cent of the VCDCs in Baksa and 25 per cent in Karbi Anglong were using softwares/applications, which are directly related

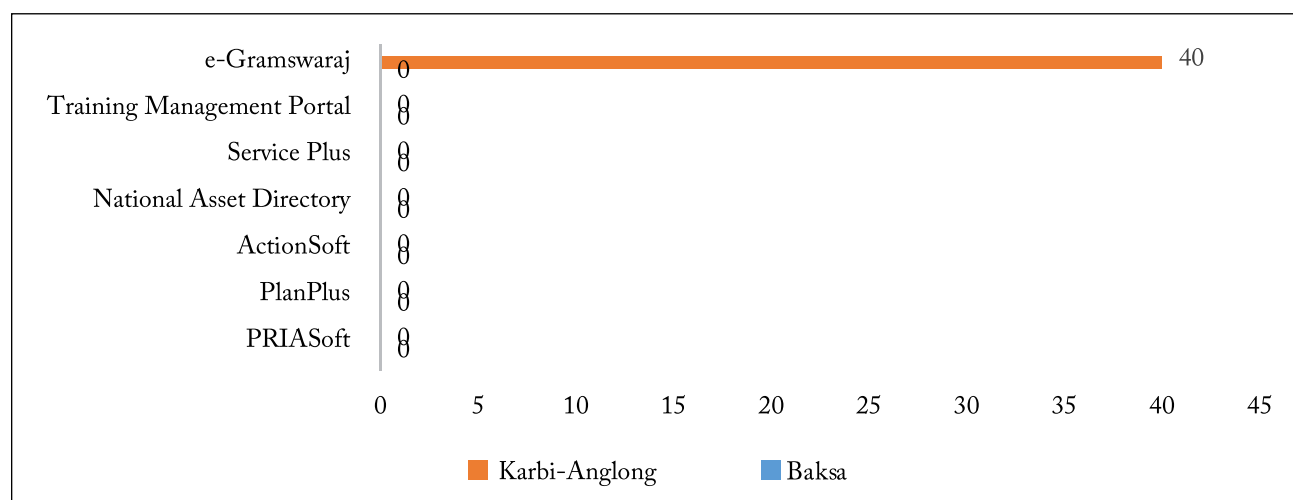
to the VDCs and VCDCs. Among these, only around 22 per cent of the VCDCs were using softwares/applications.

Figure 7.14: Software/application Used in VDCs/VCDCs

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The PRIs used different kinds of softwares such as PRIYASoft, ActionSoft, PlanPlus, and e-gramswaraj to ensure better transparency at the grassroots level. However, the study found that in

Karbi-Anglong, 40 per cent of the VDCs used e-gramswaraj software (Figure-7.14). On the other hand, not a single VCDC used any kind of software.

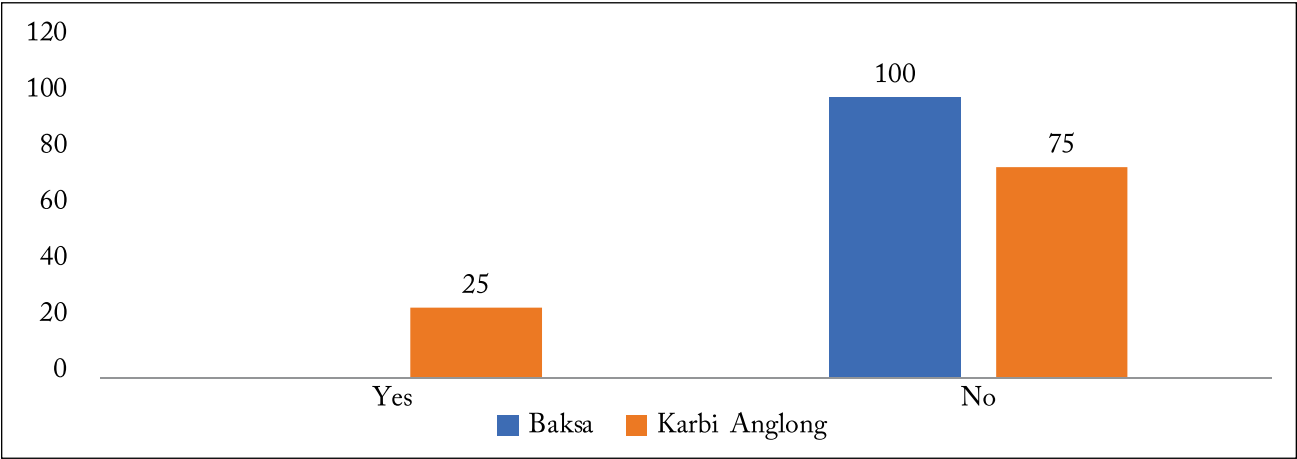
Figure 7.15: Use of the PRI-related Softwares/Applications

Source: NCAER's calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

The training of softwares/applications, which is directly related to the VCDs/VCDCs, is an important aspect for the success of the RGSA. In the Sixth Schedule areas of Assam, the level of training provided for various softwares/applications is very low. In Baksa district, not a

single respondent in the VCDC received training on softwares/applications, which is directly related to the VCDC. Only around 25 per cent of the respondents in the VDC got training on softwares/applications.

Figure 7.16: Training for the Software/Application Used in the VDC/VCDC



Source: NCAER’s calculations based on data collected during the Primary Survey, 2021, for this study.

Box 7.1
Karbi Anglong – Howraghat VDC

Case Study 1

The main objective of the FGD is to analyse the condition of the Village Development Committee (VDC) and the working status of the planning process in the VDC. In the FDGs, 10 participants from different fields such as farmers, VDC members, housewives, teachers, social workers, and local villagers explored their views on the functioning and working condition of the VDC.

Key Findings

1. In Karbi-Anglong, there is no core team for doing annual planning at the village level. Although a small team has been formed, the team is not active. Further, no training programme was conducted for the preparation of the village plan. Although for a very short period of time, training programmes were conducted at the BDO office, they are not specifically related to the annual village planning and development.
2. Before annual planning in the village, a survey is conducted jointly by the Block

Development Officer (BDO) and Village Development Committee (VDC). The main aim of the survey is to understand the present local needs of the villages. However, the role of the village planning team in the survey is very limited.

3. During the last year, under the VDC planning, importance was given to repairs in the Anganwadi centre and schools, installation of street lights, and development of village roads.
4. The development projects of the village have not been completed according to the objectives of the village plan. Most of the development projects at the village level are still pending.
5. In the VDC, one of the serious issues was that the fund for its development did not directly come to the VDC. First, the funds came to the BDO office, and thereafter the BDO released the fund to the VDC, which directly impacted the timely implementation of the village plan.

6. All the VDCs had plans to establish a Community Development Committee (CDC) at the village level. The main motive for formation of the CDC is to monitor the expenditure incurred under various development projects in the village.
7. It has been observed that villagers are aware of Central and State government-sponsored schemes in the village, but due to the constitutional obligations entailed in its being a Sixth Schedule district, they are being deprived of some of the benefits, unlike the PRIs in other districts of Assam.
8. The VDC members always have to depend on the Block Development Officer (BDO) for implementation of government schemes and programmes.
9. The FDG highlighted limited convergence of government schemes/programmes in the Karbi Anglong district.

Box 7.2 Baksa –Barphena VCDC

Case Study 2

The main objectives of the FGD is to analyse the condition of the Village Council Development Committee (VCDC) and working status of planning process in the VCDC. The FGD also focused on the digitalisation of VCDC. In the FDG, 10 participants from different field such as VCDC chairman and member, ASHA workers, SHG members, and the primary youth president of the village exchanged views on the functioning and working condition of the VCDC.

Key Findings

1. In Baksa, there is a village planning team known as the Village Council Development Plan (VCDP) team. This team is responsible for the preparation of the village plan. Before the planning process, the chairman of the VCDC arranged a meeting at the village level, wherein all the people of the village belonging to different communities participated.
2. In the FGD, it was found that no survey was conducted at the village level for the formation of the village plan.
3. No training programme was conducted for the members of the VCDC and VCDP.
4. There was no permanent VCDC office in the village. The Chairman has a small office in a library near the village market.
5. There are no computer or Internet facilities in the VCDC office. So, the record of the beneficiaries and assets of the village were manually recorded in the register.
6. The VCDC does not create any awareness about government schemes and programmes in the community meetings at the village level. A student union called the 'All Bodo Students Union (ABSU)' created awareness about government schemes and programmes among the community members of the village.
7. It was observed that community people and most of the VCDC members were not aware of the RGSA.
8. Most of the community and VCDC members were not aware of the functioning of the VCDC.

7.7 Recommendations

- In Baksa, no training programme was conducted for the VCDC members. Hence, the training should be conducted within the scheduled time.
- In both Baksa and Karbi Anglong, training should also be provided on government schemes and programmes.
- The issues and challenges that are directly or indirectly related to the VCDC and VDC should also be included in the training sessions.
- IT-specific training should also be provided to the VCDC and VDC functionaries.
- Along with the e-gramswaraj portal, more attention should also be accorded to the use of other kind of applications of PRIs such as PRIYASoft, ActionSoft, PlanPlus, and geo-tagging. Proper training should also be imparted on the use of the above software.
- The representation of females in the VCDCs is very poor, and should be a consideration at the time of nomination of the VCDC.
- In Karbi Anglong, greater focus should be on given to the conduction of refresher course training.
- The e-governance system should be properly introduced and implemented in the VCDC, which will help improve transparency and service delivery in the VCDC.
- Computer with Internet facilities should be provided to each VDC and VCDC.
- It is also found that there is no permanent office for the VCDC members and chairman. Hence, there is need to the establishment of a permanent office with adequate computer and Internet facilities.

Case Studies: Best Practices

Case Study 8.1: Generating OSR through Developing Capacities in Odisha

The Majjihara panchayat is located in the district Khordha, Odisha, Balipatna block, and 23 km from the State capital, Bhubaneswar. It has a population of 14,016, including a male population of 7265 and a female population of 6751. It is a small GP with an area of 187 sq km, consisting of four villages. The major challenge faced by the GP is inadequate support from higher authorities such as the BDO in the imposition of new taxes and revision of the old taxes. Imposing a new tax would cause conflicts and violence, so adequate support from a higher authority in mandating taxes would lead to an increase in OSR generation. The major developmental expenditures for the GP are from the Central and State government funds. In the GP, the major sources of revenue are generated from taxes on ponds and fisheries, and taxes on weekly markets. An approximate amount of Rs 2,20,000 is generated annually through different taxes at the Panchayat level, out of which Rs 70,000-80,000 are used for payment of salaries, stationery, and urgent expenditure/programme/functions.

The Rajiv Gandhi Seva Kendra is a government building in the GP. The GP rents out 25 per cent of the building space to a private bank. A monthly amount of Rs 5000 is received in the form of rent from the bank. This amount gets deposited in the account of the GP, making it an OSR for the GP. Occasionally, the GPs also rent out the remaining space for village celebrations and other occasions. This amount is variable depending on the number of programmes held.

After the launch of the RGSA, the GP makes a GPDP plan every year. The Panchayat ward members, Panchayat Samiti, and Gram Sabha members take part in forming the GPDP plans. The Gram Sabha members highlight the work needed in the village and the GP prioritises what is being highlighted by the GS members. Training is imparted to the Panchayat members on their OSR generation and socio-economic development. The Panchayat members regularly attend training offered by the SIRD officers. The training takes place at least once in a year. The training primarily highlights the roles and responsibilities of the GP. The GPs are told about their powers and priorities, and how to generate their own sources of revenues in the training.

An approximate amount of Rs 25,00,000 is saved by the Panchayat from the GPDP fund for the year 2015-16 to 2019-20, and it is being used for constructing a Kalyan Mandap. This space will be given out on rent for marriage purposes, meetings, and other occasional functions/programmes with large gatherings. The GPs believe that they will be able to generate adequate revenue from this.



Case Study 8.2: Capacity Building and Training in the PESA Districts: Chhattisgarh (Bastar)

District Bastar is a tribal PESA district in Chhattisgarh in Central India. The district consists of 7 blocks and 595 villages with 2 municipalities. It covers an area of 6596.90 sq km. According to the 2011 Census, the district had a population of 14,13,199. More than 70 per cent of the population consists of tribal communities in this PESA district. The major challenges faced by the Bastar district were the poor implementation and functioning of schemes; lack of proper training, skills and learning; and lack of infrastructure. The RGSA helped the district to overcome these challenges and work effectively by making proper use of its resources and CB&T. Despite its tribal status, the PRI members, SHGs, line department officials, and others are eagerly participating in training sessions organised under the RGSA. Due to their active participation in training and learning under the RGSA, Panchayats are able to implement the scheme actively.



For the improvement and maintenance of the Panchayat Bhawan and training infrastructure, amounts of Rs 4,00,000 in 2018 and Rs 36,00,000 in 2018-19 were sanctioned under the RGSA, and most of the work was completed on time. Some work was delayed due to the pandemic and will be completed soon. Due to the construction of these new buildings, work conditions improved, helping the authorities to monitor the work online and complete it well within the stipulated time.

In 2018-19, 125 training programmes were organised under the RGSA in 7 District panchayats, through which 3603 trainees, including PRI members, SHGs, line department officials and others, were trained. In 2019-20, 81 training programmes were organised in 7 District Panchayats, through which 3450 trainees, comprising the same categories of members as in the earlier training programme, were trained. In 2020-21, only a few training programmes were organised online/offline, due to COVID-19. A total of 27 training programmes were organised in 7 District Panchayats, through which 792 trainees were trained. This was mainly for the PRI members, secretaries, and the newly elected sarpanches. They were trained mainly for subjects related to the Eleventh Schedule, revenue generation, women's empowerment, water conservation, e-Panchayat, Right to Information, GPDP preparation, PESA, solid waste management, cleanliness, open defecation free (ODF) targeting, budgeting, and auditing, among other things. Thus, the capacity building and training programmes proved fruitful for making the Panchayats more effective and efficient. People have become more self-reliant and are keeping themselves aware of the latest plans and the development of the Panchayat. The Panchayats are also completing their work on time due to the e-panchayats and updating it online on a regular basis using PRIASoft and Plan Plus software. The scheme has also helped improve employment generation and livelihood activities in the district.

Case Study 8.3: Infrastructural Improvement in Uttar Pradesh

The Barvatola Panchayat is located in the Babhani block and Sonbhadra district in Uttar Pradesh. It has a population of 1743 with 901 males and 842 females with only one village. They have 2 female and 7 male ward members. Before 2018, there weren't any Panchayat Bhawans, even though a number of requests were made by the Panchayat officials. Due to the lack of Panchayat Bhawans, many challenges were faced by people of the GP, such as that the gram sabhas were held neither on time nor at a definitive place. No funds were allocated for the formation of Panchayat Bhawans, and there was no awareness of different types of schemes as corroborated by the Pradhan. In addition to the earlier issues, the area is hilly, so the funds allocated were not even enough to ensure a Panchayat Bhawan with even one room.

After the launch of the RGSA, many of the challenges faced such as the visits of officials, inadequate funds, awareness of the schemes, and the need for Panchayat Bhawans were all met. Post the launch of the RGSA, district officials such as the BDO came for a field visit and the Panchayat Bhawans were formed in the GP. Along with the Panchayat Bhawans, computer halls were also constructed as part of the infrastructure component of RGSA. Now, regular Gram Sabhas were conducted at a pre-decided time. People are well aware of the schemes and their implementation on the ground level.

It helped bridge the gap in the GP infrastructure. It enhanced the capabilities of the Panchayats for good governance, as regular Gram Sabhas helped increase participatory local planning, transparency, and accountability.



In addition to the above improvements, Panchayat Bhawans were also formed in the neighbouring GPs and blocks. In 2020, another fund was released for the GPs for the beautification of the Panchayat Bhawans.

Case Study 8.4: Incentivisation of GPs: West Bengal

The Pratapadityanagar Gram Panchayat is located beside the Kalnagni River of Kakdwip Block of South 24 Parganas District in West Bengal. The GP covers an area of 43.35 sq km. The total population of the GP is 32,902, with 21 wards/Gram Sansads. The GP consists of 44 ICDS centres, 15 Primary Schools, and 1 upper primary school.

The GP constituted the Gram Panchayat Facilitating Team (GPFT) of 86 members consisting of the GP ERs, GP functionaries, *Anganwadi* and Asha workers, ANMs, social workers, members of the Self-help Groups (SHGs), school teachers, and retired persons, among others. Of the total population of the GP, 45 per cent are SCs/STs. Their primary occupations are agriculture, fisheries, and small-scale cottage industries related work. Pratapadityanagar is a plastic-free and ODF GP.



This GP is known for its best initiatives in various areas of rural development. The GP has been awarded the Best GPDP in the year 2018 by MoPR. Natural Resource Management is one of the crucial sectors in the area of development. In the GPDP for FY 2019-20, the GP implemented the provision of safe drinking water in the Shishu Shiksha Kendra in convergence with the Own Source Fund and School Education Department. Here, rainwater is restored and purified for extracting drinking water for the children of primary school. The school also benefited from this initiative of the Gram Panchayat. The total Cost incurred on this activity was Rs 14850.00. The GP worked on incentivisation and rainwater harvesting under the SDGs to make RGSA a success.

Conclusion and Recommendations

One of the central objectives of RGSA is to enhance the capabilities of Panchayats for inclusive local governance with a focus on optimal utilisation of accessible resources and convergence with other schemes to address issues of national importance.

The Fourteenth Finance Commission (2015-20) has fashioned a massive opening at the GP level by allocating a substantial number of resources to them. It emphasises the urgent empowerment of the GPs in terms of the reliable and efficient delivery of basic services. The Constitution envisions the PRIs as an institution of self-governance with the successful financial and functional devolution of power through functionaries.

As part of this study by NCAER, a field survey was carried out at different levels of stakeholders and panchayat functionaries. The findings of the survey have produced several insights. The survey covers two important sets of States and their attributes, i.e., the PESA areas within States and the Aspirational Districts.

The intricacy and challenges of training programmes at the GP level require robust institutional competence for developing infrastructure, and accessing modern training equipment and tools, as well as pooling faculty and resources through coordination with the best quality institutions of the country. The results from the field survey by NCAER indicate insufficiency of training inputs in terms of their adequacy, effectiveness, and outreach. Hence, it is recommended that RGSA should be continued with the existing components along with new components as suggested under the key recommendations below to improve

governance capabilities at the third tier of the Government.

It is also felt that one or two rounds of formal institutional training would not be sufficient for capacity building among the stakeholders of Panchayats. The ERs and functionaries need continuous mentoring or handholding support in order to enhance their functional competencies. In order to develop the capabilities of GPs for implementation of innovative plans and activities or for developing model panchayats, the States may make institutional arrangements by engaging experienced resource persons or mentoring teams, reputed NGOs, and other expert agencies for providing practical support to the Panchayats.

In this regard, it is pertinent to establish horizontal networking and forge collaborations with other national and international organisations for promoting quality training and faculty development. A system can be evolved through the State Institutes of Rural Development (SIRDs)/other identified institutions to continue to update their skills and knowledge. There could be many advantages of such a system in which faculty members mutually gain from each other through interactions between the field staff and the institution. Thus it is imperative to get good trainers for carrying out decentralised training, particularly for ERs and functionaries. They can also be utilised to improve the training infrastructure of other departments in the State to conduct training for PRIs. Moreover, collaborations with centres of excellence like the Institute of Rural Management and IITs can provide much leeway in training the resource people at the grassroots level.

There is also a need for more concerted and commanding processes for reforming governance at the Panchayat level. This is possible by making it more participatory yet technology- and performance-driven, and outcome-oriented. The results of the NCAER survey highlight the need for a paradigmatic change in the functioning of Panchayats, a shift in capacity building and training strategies, and innovations in the use of technology for responsive service delivery and enhanced people's participation in decision-making to achieve greater transparency and accountability. The focus should now be on the innovative use of ICT tools for delivery of services like the provision of certificates and licenses, and tax collection, among other things.

RGSA can be used for developing local leadership capacities and promoting self-driven GPs that are capable of finding innovative and sustainable solutions to local problems and engaging more in thematic areas.

9.1 Key Recommendations Based on the Major Findings of the Report

- **The States should strictly ensure the orientation and training of Elected Representatives of Panchayats within six months from their election.**

Every five years, a majority of the new ERs of GPs assume office across the country. Although most of them have rich experience about the socio-economic status of the villagers and local systems, it is observed that most of them, particularly the first generation ERs, do not readily possess the required capacity in terms of knowledge, awareness, attitude, and skills to perform their roles effectively. Therefore, attending a training programme of the basic orientation course is the first step for the newly inducted ERs is to attend a basic orientation course for understanding the fundamentals of the Panchayati Raj system. The study result shows that most of the sample States have achieved some progress in providing such

orientation training to the ERs but have failed to achieve the target of completing the training within 6 months after the election. Out of 71.9 per cent of the ERs who received basic orientation training, 76 per cent had received the training within six months of their election Refer to Chapter 5). **It is recommended that as mandated in the Scheme framework, the States have to strictly ensure the completion of Orientation and Training of the ERs of Panchayats within 6 months from their election.**

- **States should strictly ensure the completion of refresher training within two years from their election.**

The framework of RGSA has a thrust on ensuring completion of refresher training of the ERs within two years of their election. The NCAER study shows a huge gap in the major States in ensuring this refresher training for the new ERs within the stipulated timeline, particularly in the States of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Madhya Pradesh. In Chhattisgarh, thematic training is perceived as training for refresher courses. **Out of 71.9 per cent of the ERs who received basic orientation training, only 33.5 per cent received the refresher course training.**

The basic purpose of the refresher training of the ERs of GPs is to enable them to identify and explore means of solving the problems entailed in running the GPs as institutions of self-government. The basic objective of refresher training is to develop their capability and to impart specific skills and domain knowledge to the maximum extent possible to enable them to perform their functions effectively and efficiently. However, in terms of refresher courses, the Aspirational Districts perform slightly better but overall, there is a huge gap in providing such training to the ERs.

- **The States must focus on timely conduction of orientation and refresher training for the new ERs.**

The study reveals that among the sample respondents, more than 90 per cent of ERs have been elected for the first time and a considerable number of ERs belong to the backward sections, including the SCs, STs, and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Further, due to reservation in Panchayats, a higher proportion of women ERs are now participating in the PRI system. Therefore, it is evident that without attainment of adequate capacity, it will not be possible for them to utilise the powers accorded to them and to satisfy the aspirations of the people whom they represent. In this context, the States must focus on the timely conduction of orientation and refresher training for the new ERs.

- **The States should engage experienced resource persons for providing practical support to the GPs.**

In order to develop the capabilities of GPs for the implementation of innovative plans and activities or for developing model panchayats, the States need to make institutional arrangements to engage experienced resource persons or mentoring teams, reputed NGOs, and other expert agencies for providing practical support to the Panchayats.

- **The duration of the orientation training programme should be increased to a minimum of 5-7 days.**

The basic purpose of the orientation training imparted to the new ERs of GPs is to enable them to clearly understand the structure, functions, roles, and responsibilities of the GP as an institution of self-government. The SIRDPRs/SPRCs/DPRCs and other training institutions need to organise induction level orientation for the ERs of GPs on the basis of their level of understanding and the Training Needs Assessment (TNA) done for them. One of the important

aspects of capacity building and training is the duration of the training for ERs, which depends on the courses taught and coverage. **It is noted that the duration of the basic orientation course is mostly 3 days while the refresher courses show a higher percentage weightage of over 7 days among the sample States. Considering the lack of training capacities manifested among the ERs and the limited opportunities available for refresher training, it is recommended that the duration of the orientation training programme should be increased to a minimum of 5-7 days.**

- **Customised training materials and modules for different categories of ERs should be provided by NIRDPR/SIRDs.**

An analysis of the educational qualifications of the ERs shows a higher representation of those having acquired secondary and higher secondary level of education (41.3 per cent), followed by graduates (27.8 per cent) whereas around 23 per cent of the ERs possess educational qualifications up to the primary level.

In the PESA States, the proportion of ERs with secondary and higher secondary level of education is around 30 per cent, and that of graduates is 28.6 per cent, whereas about 36 per cent of them possess educational qualifications up to the primary level.

Due to the variations in the socio-economic background, experience, and educational achievements among the ERs, both in the PESA areas and at the all-India level, it is suggested that NIRDPR/SIRDs should explore possibilities of preparing customised training materials and modules for the different categories of ERs.

- **The States must ensure and enhance the scope for joint training programmes.**

In order to ensure team synergy and a uniform understanding of the services to be delivered by the GPs, joint training of the ERs and functionaries was suggested in

the National Capacity Building Framework (NCBF) published by the MoPR. The study indicates only 30 per cent of the total sample ERs responded positively when asked about participation in the joint training programmes with functionaries. **It is therefore recommended that the States must enhance the scope for joint training programmes with adequate emphasis especially in the States of Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Andhra Pradesh.**

- **Specific SDGs may be correlated with the concerned Standing Committees and adequate training and capacity building arrangements should be provided.**

The study reveals that among the ERs who are part of the Standing Committee around 62 per cent have received training, while 38 per cent have been left out. Further, among the ERs who are working as thematic experts, only 58 per cent have received training on the relevant themes. The role of the Standing Committee members is crucial for anchoring the development agenda in the GPs.

Most of the Standing Committee members are also working as thematic experts. Further, the localisation of SDGs necessitates adequate training of the thematic experts and Standing Committee members. The crucial aspect of localisation of SDGs also includes fine-tuning of the monitoring and data system. Partnership and commitment to collective action calls for collaborative action with the partner organisations.

It is, therefore, suggested that achievement of specific SDGs may be correlated with the concerned Standing Committees and adequate training and capacity building arrangements may be put in place. The NCAER study observed four types of Standing Committees in the selected sample States: the General Administration Committee, Production Committee, Social Justice Committee, and Amenities

Committee. For the successful localisation of the SDGs in different States, the faculties should be experts in the following thematic areas related to the SDGs:

- Food and nutritional securities, poverty and inequality and rural development—Nutrition, Economics and specialisation in Rural Development
- Women studies – Both from the Economics with gender studies as specialisation and a background in Social Studies.
- Human settlement and displacement—Rural Development, Ecology, Social Studies and Economics
- Climate change and oceans, sea and marine resources—Energy and Environmental Economics, Ecology and Oceanography
- Peace and conflict—Political Science, International Studies with Diplomacy and Defence as specialisation
- Law and governance—Economics with specialisation in law and regulatory aspects
- **The States should place major emphasis on training in specific areas of national importance like Zero Hunger, Health and Nutrition, Women and Child Development, Water and Sanitation, OSR Generation and Disaster Management**

Keeping in view the issues of national importance, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the recommendations of the Fifteenth Finance Commission, **the States need to focus on imparting training in the areas of Zero Hunger, Health and Nutrition, Women and Child Development, Water and Sanitation, OSR Generation, and Disaster Management.** Adequate emphasis should be placed on collecting data at regular intervals to understand its underlying outcome indicators through qualitative research.

- **A major thrust must be laid on the preparation of plans at the Intermediate and District Panchayat level, along with a continuous thrust on the preparation of GPDP at the GP level along with CB&T, based on the recommendations of the Fifteenth Finance Commission.**

The MoPR has also published a framework for the preparation of Block and District Panchayat Development Plans. The revamped Scheme of the RGSA highlights the need for adequate emphasis on capacity building and training of ERs of the Intermediate and District Panchayat members. In this regard, greater incentivisation for training is required for the CEOs/ERs of the District and Intermediate Panchayats to enhance their managerial capabilities at the block and district level for achieving a wider impact.

- **Adequate training on basic and working knowledge on computer/online mediums should be provided to ERs and other functionaries.**

Computer literacy is vital for achieving efficient functioning of local governance. Overall, the study found basic knowledge of computers among 29.9 per cent of the respondents, who were computer-literate, followed by those with intermediate knowledge (9 per cent) and advanced level (2.7 per cent) of computers, while around 58 per cent of the ERs had no computer literacy. **In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, situation, more and more training programmes will be held through the online mode in coming days. Therefore, the ERs and other functionaries need to be imparted adequate training on basic and working knowledge on computer/online mediums.**

- **The States may explore options to develop training infrastructure at the village level.**

Under the RGSA, training facilities are provided up to the block level in most

of the States. During the survey, most of the respondents including the ERs and other State and district officials requested for extension of facilities of training infrastructure up to the village level.

Usually there is no provision of village level training at the GP offices but the NCAER study team observed that in a few States, village level training did take place, especially as the pandemic had compelled the organisers to conduct training as part of its outreach programme.

In this regard, the States may explore the option of developing training infrastructure in collaboration with the other agencies or promote the use of the existing infrastructure of other educational institutes, ITIs, and private colleges to impart such training.

- **Based on the experience during the long phase of lockdown and COVID-19 scenario, a hybrid mode of physical and online training could bring in a more positive outcome than what was achieved at the GP level.**

The survey reflects that there is a need to expand the facility and coverage of training programmes provided to various stakeholders in different States. The outreach of the Capacity Building and Training programme is not all-encompassing and the infrastructure too needs thorough refurbishing. The NCAER Survey reflects that during the pandemic, 68 per cent of the basic orientation training, 55 per cent of the thematic training, and 25 per cent of the refresher course training were conducted through the physical mode whereas 12 per cent of the basic orientation training, 10 per cent of the thematic training and 5 per cent of the refresher course training were conducted through the online mode.

- **GPs with exceptional work experience may be constituted as model GPs across the country.**

Exposure visits are important for providing practical experience to the learners, especially in the thematic areas linked to poverty eradication, health, sanitation, and women's empowerment. Barring a few selected States, the exposure visits are negligible in most of the other States.

- **Faculty development must be given priority with adequate training and inclusion of domain experts in the training institutes.**

The faculty of the training programmes plays an important role in bridging the knowledge gap and augmenting developmental work at the Panchayat level. There is a significant shortage of quality resource persons/faculty in the district-level training institutes. It is recommended that the States may focus on faculty recruitment and faculty development in the following areas:

- Economist with special knowledge on food and nutritional securities, poverty and inequality, and rural development.
- Domain experts in women's studies.
- Domain experts in human settlement and displacement.
- Persons from the environmental science stream with special knowledge on climate changes and oceans, sea, and marine resources.
- An environmentalist (with or without a formal degree) can also be invited or appointed as a guest teacher.
- Faculties with a law background.
- Persons specialising in the Geographic Information System (GIS), who can also handle GIS software, or have a degree or diploma in GIS software.
- Technical experts who can develop a need-based mobile or computer application as per the requirement of the different Gram Panchayats.
- Persons who can specifically work to achieve the selected SDGs wherein GPs also need to increase their involvement.

- **Specific mention needs to be made of the fact that there is no provision of village-level training in the existing scheme but due to the pandemic, last year a few States conducted training at their GP offices.**

Usually there is no provision of village level training at the GP offices but the NCAER study team observed that in a few States, village level training did take place, which was due to the pandemic that compelled the organisers to conduct training as part of their outreach programme.

- **Augmenting capacities of SIRDs with a dedicated cell for PR and upgradation of the existing SPRCs/DPRCs with dedicated faculty and resource persons. The States must effectively utilise the services of Master Trainers as Resource Persons.**

A very important challenge to be addressed by all States is the quality of CB&T. A systematic approach to training, which includes Training Needs Assessment (TNA), development of training materials, training of trainers, and actual training followed by training impact assessment is important. An assessment of the types of training conducted by SIRDPR shows that TPRI constitutes 97.6 per cent of the total training undertaken by the institutions..The proportion is slightly higher in the PESA areas as compared to the Aspirational Districts. Therefore, it is recommended to augment the capacities of SIRD with a dedicated cell for PRI. This will help in providing handholding support by academic institutions/institutions of excellence to GPs for GPDP formulation. In this count, there should be collaboration with local level educational institutions like block/district level colleges to take it forward as a resource centre. This will ensure upgradation of the existing SPRCs/DPRCs with dedicated faculty and resource persons.

- **Dedicated Training Institutes for PR at the national and State levels along with**

dedicated faculty for district and block level training centres

In the Aspirational Districts, the average number of Master Trainers and Certified Master Trainers is higher than those in the PESA states because the training institutes of the Aspirational Districts are collaborating with other institutes mainly for the expansion of master trainers, and the assessment and certification of trainers.

In the PESA States, the low number of Master Trainers could be because they lack facilities for working together with other specialist institutions like academic institutions of eminence, NGOs, UN agencies and international organisations. It is observed that **in the PESA States, the training institutes are mainly collaborating with other institutes for developing thematic modules, e-modules, and online courses, and training materials, whereas in the Aspirational Districts, training institutes are mainly collaborating for the expansion of the pool of master trainers and assessment and certification of trainers.** More than 50 per cent of the respondents from the Aspirational Districts found the collaboration to be useful in many ways like knowledge management followed by an improvement in the quality and outreach of CB&T initiatives.

- **Training infrastructure should be improved.**

It was observed that there is better availability of training infrastructure, including conference rooms, computers, communication technology (ICT) tools such as software, library facility, dining hall facility, and satellite studio facility in the PESA States than the Aspirational Districts whereas the number of hostels for trainees is higher in the Aspirational Districts as compared to the PESA States. **In terms of library and ICT tool facilities, the PESA States are lagging far behind the Aspirational Districts, and**

consequently, there is a need to strengthen these facilities in the training institutes of the PESA States whereas hostel facilities need to be strengthened in the Aspirational Districts as well as at the national and state levels. In this respect, it is imperative to establish 3-4 regional training institutes specifically for PRIs in addition to national level institutes and SIRD.

- **There is need for continuing support for the Panchayat infrastructure component.**

It has been observed that during the pandemic, Panchayat Bhawan offered much scope for supporting the provision of training facilities to the participants from among the stakeholders. In more than 50 cases, the mapping of Common Service Centres (CSCs) was seen to ensure a productive meeting point of the stakeholders for dealing with the development issues of the villages. It is observed that the support for Panchayat Learning Centre (PLC) is less than 50 per cent, which needs to be augmented. Further, the evaluation of the PLCs has taken place in only 30 per cent of the cases (except in the PESA areas). This necessitates a realistic assessment of the PLCs directly.

- **Continuing Support for the RGSA Mission Mode Project (MMP) on e-Panchayat should be continued.**

The MMP e-Panchayat is the medium for streamlining the functions of the Panchayats' roles and responsibilities, and for strengthening rural local governance to bring it on par with the best of Government to Citizen (G2C) service delivery mechanisms. In order to strengthen e-Governance in PRIs, e-GramSwaraj has been developed for amalgamating the functionalities of the currently available applications in the Panchayat Enterprise Suit (PES) under the e-panchayat MMP. This application aims to enhance transparency and strengthen e-Governance in PRIs across the country through decentralised planning, process

reporting, and work-based accounting. The application provides a platform for effective monitoring by the higher authorities.

- **Continuous thrust should be placed on the preparation of the GPDP. In this regard, adequate CB&T arrangements with a renewed focus, and collaboration with academic institutions or NGOs are required.**

The Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) forms the core of the planning exercise carried out at the grassroots level. One of the most frequently represented roles among the ERs is reported to be development activities, including planning and execution of public works, accounting for 77.5 per cent of the role distribution among the ERs. General administration and aspects like service delivery along with accounts and finance come next. The NCAER survey found that around 85 per cent of the ERs are involved in the preparation of the GPDP. Since the ERs are trained under CB&T, a good outcome in village governance is expected. However, in this, there is still much scope to increase the penetration of the training, especially in skill orientation. The result shows that only a little over 31 per cent of the ERs have received such training, and overall, there is gross inadequacy in imparting training for this key component for local level planning.

The RGSA emphasises convergence as one of the prime objectives for local governance. The NCAER primary survey shows that the level of awareness of the initiatives for convergence of the schemes of different government departments with the GP as a focal point is a little over 61 per cent. This awareness is observed to be very low in States like Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. This highlights the importance of providing specialised training in respect of the GPDP.

- **Economic development and innovation should be emphasised at the planning level through the setting up of business incubation centres with support from SHGs.**

Identifying the need for an operative and functional working relationship between the GPs and SHGs of women, in particular, the Village Organisations (VO), the NRLM framework was revised to facilitate a formal relationship between local governments and organisations of the poor. The NCAER survey found that **about 89 per cent of the ERs reported partnering with SHGs to help in their operations.** The partnership is near-total in Assam and over 90 per cent in the States of West Bengal, Sikkim, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh.

Gap funding available under RGSA to support current projects on economic development and income enhancement and other schemes is important to promote local level development. It may be noted that the positive response in this regard is too low for all the states combined. This is alarmingly low in the Aspirational Districts. The lower level positive response partially reflects ignorance and unawareness about the component by the representatives. However, among the positive respondents, the extent of support received for Aspirational Districts and the PESA areas are observed to be proportionally higher than the total sample of states. The NCAER survey reveals that 64 per cent of the SHGs are involved in preparing projects for economic development/income enhancement with the GPs. Similarly, over 72 per cent SHGs of Aspirational Districts are involved in promoting rural business hubs.

- **There should be PRI-SHG convergence for more participatory and pro-poor planning. The focus should be on the training of SHG and PRI members.**

The RGSA places special focus on PRI-SHG convergence. The National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) lists important SHG responsibilities like conducting Gram Sabhas, monitoring their activities, and supporting GPs in all the development initiatives. Overall, 83 per cent of the SHGs are involved in conducting Gram Sabhas. Community-based monitoring of GPs is an important factor as described by NLRM, but only 53 per cent of the SHGs are involved in the same. Moreover, only 64 per cent of the SHGs are involved in preparing projects for economic development/income enhancement with GP). The percentage is a bit less for the PESA districts as compared to the Aspirational Districts. In contrast, 72 per cent of the SHGs in the Aspirational Districts are involved in promoting rural business hubs. Hence, the extent of PRI-SHG convergence is not as desired, which is a great setback to the scheme. Although when asked about the effectiveness of SHG and GP partnership, 77 per cent of the respondents responded positively, yet the data does not align with the important factors stating their convergence. **The most common challenges that are faced by SHGs in liaison with the GP include lack of training, appropriate guidelines, and independent functioning. These factors need to be taken care of.**

- **More focus is needed on practical and managerial aspects in the training for the ERs. Elected Representatives.**

ERs. should be imparted refresher training to help improve their managerial capabilities covering various aspects such as management of the physical and financial resources at the GP and block levels. The NCAER study found that post the training, 63 per cent of the ERs were able to increase their managerial capabilities in organisation and coordination of the meeting at the GP and block levels. There is also need for devising special course material on the management of resources that should be customised for the GPs of the different States.

- **An efficient system of documenting Best Practices followed by different GPs should be developed for wide dissemination.**

This system should include site visits for providing the ERs and Panchayat functionaries exposure to new approaches/ technologies, in order to achieve concrete and practical results for localising the SDGs.

- **Effective arrangements for robust monitoring of the RGSA should be put in place at the Central and State level. Regular monitoring of progress through Management Information System should be followed strictly.**

Effective arrangements for robust monitoring of RGSA should be put in place at the Central and State levels. Regular monitoring of progress should be done through the Management Information System (MIS). Proper tracking of various meetings is also important at the GP, block, and district levels. In Chapter 6, it is seen that more than 90.5 per cent of the GS meeting time was uploaded in the MIS. Among the Aspiration Districts, 88 per cent reported that the GS meeting time was uploaded in the Management Information Systems (MIS). On the other hand, 96.4 per cent of the respondents were from the PESA areas. The RGSA MIS needs to be strengthened and made user-friendly to facilitate online monitoring of the scheme and of the GP meetings at various levels. The MIS system must also have provision for inclusion of updates pertaining to the various issues discussed in the GP meeting. Moreover, during the training period a short-term course can also be introduced on the uses of MIS.

- **SIRDs should regularly update the training programmes through Training Management Portals (TMPs).**

These portals are meant to address the training management needs of the PRIs. As regards the usefulness of TMPs, 63.4 per cent of the respondents said that they

have used the portal. However, out of these 63.4 per cent, around 65 per cent of the respondents mentioned that the TMP is not easily comprehensible and could be improved further. They suggested that it could be designed in a user-friendly manner and linked with the Learning Management System (LMS), which would help training institutions such as SIRDs/SIPRDs in meeting the training and educational needs of the ERs, Panchayat functionaries, and other stakeholders.

- **There is need to enhance capacity in local planning, decision-making, responsiveness, transparency, administrative efficiency, and the service delivery system.**

In view of the rapid technological advancement, the challenges in rural management entail the acquisition of not only specialised knowledge but also cross-sectoral learning for managing the Panchayats. In the revamped RGSA, the provision of systematic training and forging of tie-ups with premier institutes with domain expertise should be the focus areas for improving the managerial and governance capacity of the ERs.

- **Under the revamped scheme, an SDG dashboard should be conceptualised and developed with sector-wise distribution of the activities being implemented by the GPs in all the States/UTs.**

The designing of this dashboard would provide a customised view at the level of both the Panchayats and sub-Panchayats. The design and process adopted by different States such as West Bengal, Odisha, and Kerala in localising SDGs would be assessed and a theme-wise approach adopted for the localising SDGs. Achieving the SDGs demands a coordinated approach at the grassroots level. Incentivising the PRIs has been a widely discussed topic within the SDG advocacy discourses, which would be one of the areas to be included in the revamped RGSA. Mapping and documentation of best

practices in accordance with the thematic areas in the SDGs would also be undertaken in the revamped RGSA.

- **The revamped scheme should fulfil the objective of incentivisation of Panchayats for promoting their role in the localisation and attainment of SDGs at the ground level.**

Capacity building of the ERs for governance is necessary, for which the Panchayats need to be adequately and effectively incentivised. This warrants a complete revamping of the award system under the Central Component 'Incentivisation of Panchayat Schemes' of RGSA. The present system of awards and incentivisation is more process-based with an emphasis on participatory governance, such as the effective conduct of the Gram Sabha, and formulation of the Panchayat Development Plans. The award system needs to be made more outcome-oriented on various developmental parameters (please refer to Figures 6.63 and 6.64 in Chapter 6). The NCAER survey also found that **awards help in attaining the SDGs by inducing the GPs to strive harder to meet these goals.** It is also noted that the overall impact of awards in attaining the SDGs is much higher in the Aspirational Districts (76.5 per cent) while the overall positive impact is noted to be around 69 per cent. The Ministries/ Departments corresponding to the SDGs should sponsor the award money along with the MoPR. Based on open-ended questions and responses, a suggestive linkage of awards to the SDGs and mapping to the Ministries/ Departments is provided in **Annexure 4.**

- **Institutions of local self-governance should be strengthened with a thrust on public health, especially during the pandemic, so that the PRIs are sufficiently prepared enough for the effective management of COVID-19 in the rural areas.**

This is a derived lesson in the current context. The awareness on public health and safety protocol is important and future training of

all the stakeholders should cater to this need as well.

- **Revamp RGSA as a Central Sector Scheme in place of the present Central Sponsored Scheme.**

Many suggestions have been made to revamp RGSA. It was observed during the field visits by the NCAER enumerators that in many cases, financial constraints restrict the full implementation of CB&T and even the new ERs could not acquire the required training, which is an indirect outcome of the late release of funds from the relevant bodies. Moreover, SIRD representatives too viewed the outreach programme to succeed through government intervention (as reported by 50 per cent of the representatives) and also by financial inclusion (as reported by 52.4 per cent). The RGSA has both the Central and State components. National level activities, including the “National Plan of Technical Assistance”, “Mission Mode project on e-Panchayat”, and “Incentivisation of Panchayats” are part of the Central component while the capacity building of PRIs is part of the State component. However, the State component requires much more support in the CB&T, especially if the scheme is renewed as Central Sector scheme. The implementation and monitoring

of the activities of the scheme could broadly be aligned for achieving the SDGs with the main thrust on Panchayats identified under Mission Antyodaya and 115 Aspirational Districts as identified by NITI Aayog.

- **IEC augmentation and the use of ICT should be an integral and preferred component of the CB&T.**

Information, Education and Communication, shortened as IEC, is a strategy for spreading awareness through communication channels to achieve the desired positive result. It is a strategy for sharing of information through the transmission of print media, or interpersonal communication in a manner that is appropriate to the ER's localised culture and values for promoting development. Similarly, the use of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) can enhance the quality of education by increasing learner motivation and engagement, by facilitating the acquisition of basic skills, and by enhancing teacher training. The NCAER primary survey shows that **40 per cent of the representatives remained out of ICT use whereas 99 per cent have not experienced any educational engagement through IEC.** This indicates the crucial need for expanding the application for IEC and ICT in CB&T.

Details of Approved Proposals Related to Economic Development, Support for Innovation and Distance Learning under RGSA during 2019-20

Sl. No.	State	Total Number of Proposals	Name of the Proposal	Fund Approved under RGSA (Rs in Crore)
A.	Economic Development and Income Enhancement			
	Madhya Pradesh	4	Decentralised PDS in Block Samnapur, District Dindori District	1.82
			Pottery Cluster in Pachdhar GP, Seoni District	0.51
			Handloom Cluster in Bharatpur GP, Sidhi District	1.10
			Strengthening life of rural community through rural tourism in selected Gram Panchayats/Villages of Madhya Pradesh	2.04
	Mizoram	2	Areca nut leaf plate production with packaging facility at Bilkhawthlir Village	0.492
			Rural home stay and agro tourism at Tuipui Village	0.839
	Uttarakhand	2	Common waste plastic recycling facility (CPWRF) in Haridwar District	2.95
			Compactor installation to operate and handle voluminous paper, tin and plastic waste	5.23
	West Bengal	3	Establishment of "ANANDA"- an eco-tourism hub at Gourikone under Baropatia Notunbos Gram Panchayat, Sadar Block of Jalpaiguri District	1.00
			Augmentation in the cropping pattern with the help of the River Lifting Irrigation (RLI) facility	2.05
			Establishment of production and marketing unit in Patharpara GP	0.22
	4 States	11 Projects		18.251
B.	Support for Innovation			
	Chhattisgarh	1	e-Panch (Android-based notice board)	0.035
	Sikkim	1	Establishment of 25 counselling centres at GP level with focus on Beacon GPs	0.75
	Tamil Nadu	2	Using technical tools to provide and promote ethical and traceable products at the village level: Geo-tagging and ethical labelling of village products	1.20
			Integrated approach to ensure water quality through automation and real time monitoring in rural areas	0.75
	West Bengal	1	Digitisation of Primary Data to reflect the Local Human Development Indices in the process of GPDP	0.525
	4 States	5 Projects		3.26

Sl. No.	State	Total Number of Proposals	Name of the Proposal	Fund Approved under RGSA (Rs in Crore)
C.	Distance Learning			
	Haryana	1	Distance learning facilities through IP-based technology	5.02
	Kerala	1	Establishing virtual classrooms for distance learning facility through IP-based technology	0.975
	Maharashtra	1	Distance learning facility through IP-based technology for the Aspirational Districts	2.596
	Sikkim	1	Distance learning facility through IP-based virtual classroom/similar technology	0.60
	4 States	4 Projects		9.191
Total	A+B+C			30.70

Status of Panchayat Election in the Sample States

States/UTs	Year and Month when Last Election was Held	Year and Month when Next Election is Due	Remarks
Andhra Pradesh	GP: February 2021, BP: April 2014, DP: April 2014	GP: February 2026, BP: April 2019, DP: April 2019	BP and DP Panchayat Elections were held on 08.04.2021 as per SEC's notification dated 01.04.2021. However, AP High Court, vide its judgment dated 21.05.2021, has set aside SEC's notification dated 01.04.2021 and directed SEC to issue notification afresh for resuming election process. SEC is yet to announce dates for BP/DP.
Assam	December 2018	December 2023	
Chhattisgarh	February 2020	February 2025	
Madhya Pradesh	February 2015	February 2020	State Election Commission has not yet announced the schedule.
Maharashtra	GP:*, BP: January./February 2017, DP: January/February 2017	GP:*, BP: January/February, 2022, DP: January/February, 2022	*Elections for GPs in Maharashtra are to be scheduled on different dates as per their respective tenure of five years.
Odisha	February 2017	February 2022	
Rajasthan	February 2019/2020	February 2025	
Sikkim	November 2017	November 2022	
Tamil Nadu	December 2019	December 2024	
Uttar Pradesh	April 2021	April 2026	
Uttarakhand	October 2019 for 12 districts, January 2016: Hardwar	October 2024 for 12 districts, January 2021: Hardwar	State Election Commission has recently been appointed.
West Bengal	July 2018	July-2023	

Appendix 3

Subjects Listed in the Eleventh Schedule

1. Agriculture, including agricultural extension
2. Land improvement, implementation of land reforms, land consolidation, and soil conservation.
3. Minor irrigation, water management, and watershed development
4. Animal husbandry, dairying and poultry
5. Fisheries
6. Social forestry and farm forestry
7. Minor forest produce
8. Small-scale industries, including food processing industries
9. Khadi, village and cottage industries
10. Rural housing
11. Drinking Water
12. Fuel and fodder
13. Road, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways and other means of communication
14. Rural electrification, including distribution of electricity
15. Non-conventional sources of energy
16. Poverty alleviation programme
17. Education including primary and secondary schools
18. Technical training and vocational education
19. Adult and non-formal education
20. Libraries
21. Cultural activities
22. Markets and fairs.
23. Health and sanitation including hospitals, primary health centres and dispensaries
24. Family welfare
25. Women and child development
26. Social welfare, including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded
27. Welfare of the weaker sections, and in particular of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs)
28. Public distribution system
29. Maintenance of community assets

A Suggestive Linkage of Awards to SDGs and Mapping to the Concerned Ministries/ Departments

There is need to incentivise aligning with the SDGs of panchayats which have shown exemplary performance in holistic development under key socio-economic fronts, viz. Development of Basic Infrastructure, Sustainable Agriculture, Sustainable Livelihood Support, Hygiene and Sanitation, Education, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, Inclusive Social Development, Environment Preservation, Promotion of Skill Development, Promotion of Sustainable/Renewable Energy, Peace and Harmony, and Social Participation, This necessitates review and revamping of the present award system.

The award money funding (incentives) and selection can be more specialised, broad-based, and participatory by roping in the relevant line Ministries/Departments as they are responsible for implementation of various schemes and programmes for the attainment of SDGs whereas the Ministry of Panchayat Raj is responsible for their capacity building through localisation of SDGs at ground level. It is in the best interests of the stakeholders for the Ministries/Departments corresponding to the SDGs to sponsor the award money along with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj to make the awards more attractive and accountable. The following table provides a suggestive linkage of awards with the SDGs and mapping to the concerned Ministries/Departments.

Category of Awards/Themes	SDGs Linked	Particulars of SDGs	Concerned Ministry That May Sponsor The Award
Development of Basic Infrastructure	1, 6, 7, and 8	Availability and management of water, sanitation for all; access to affordable, reliable and sustainable modern energy; promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work	Multiple Ministries Like Rural Development, Health and Family Welfare, Water Resources and the like
Sustainable Agriculture	1, 2, and 8	End poverty in all forms, end hunger and achieve food security and contribute towards sustainable economic growth	Ministry of Agriculture
Sustainable Livelihood Support	1 and 2	End poverty in all forms and end hunger and achieve food security	Rural Development
Promotion of Skill Development	1 and 2	End poverty in all forms	Skill and Entrepreneurship
Promotion of Sustainable/Renewable Energy	7 and 8	Ensuring access to affordable reliable, sustainable and modern energy and promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	New and Renewable Energy

Category of Awards/Themes	SDGs Linked	Particulars of SDGs	Concerned Ministry That May Sponsor The Award
Gender Equality & Women Empowerment (Emphasis on balanced sex-ratio)	5	Gender equality	Women and Child Development
Education and School Dropout	4	Quality education	Education
Hygiene and Sanitation	3 and 6	Good health and well-being and clean water and sanitation	Health and Family Welfare, Water Resources
Peace and Harmony	16	Peace, justice and strong institutions	Home Affairs
Environment Preservation	8, 13, and 15	Sustainable economic growth, climate action, life below water, life on land	Forest, Environment and Climate Change
Participative Governance	16	Peace, justice and strong institutions	MoPR
Social Participation	17	Partnership for the goals	MoPR
Inclusive Social Development	1 to 11, 15, and 16	<p>Of the 17 SDGs, 13 focus on social inclusiveness, but also take some ecological or relational aspects into account.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No Poverty 2. Zero Hunger 3. Good Health and Well-being 4. Quality Education 5. Gender Equality 6. Clean Water and Sanitation 7. Affordable and Clean Energy 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure 10. Reduced Inequalities 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities 12. Life on Land 13. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions 	Multiple Ministries like Rural Development, Health and Family Welfare, Water Resources

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