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THEMATIC PAPER

Synergizing Resilient Livelihoods and Development Planning: Localizing Climate Actions at Gram Panchayat Level

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In the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh, a large proportion of the population depends on agriculture, livestock, forestry, and natural resources for sustaining their livelihoods. Changing climatic conditions—such as continuous rise in temperatures, erratic rainfall, frequent floods, droughts and growing water stress—are severely affecting both the rural economy and human life. These challenges have made fundamental issues like food security, access to drinking water, income stability, and social protection increasingly fragile.

In such a context, National or State-level Policies alone are not sufficient. The most effective pathway to address climate change lies at the local level, through community leadership and Gram Panchayat-based planning processes. Climate change has emerged as one of the greatest challenges to rural development and livelihoods, with serious impacts on agriculture, water resources, natural ecosystems, and socio-economic life. Therefore, it is essential to integrate resilient livelihood strategies, long-term development planning, and local climate action so that communities can be safeguarded against future risks.

The key challenges in the Bundelkhand region include erratic weather patterns, droughts, floods, drinking water scarcity, soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and declining employment opportunities. These issues



adversely affect crop production, reduce household incomes, and lead to large-scale migration. The impacts of these crises are not only economic but also deeply social—particularly affecting women, youth, and vulnerable communities. Therefore, community-based planning is essential for climate change adaptation and risk reduction.

In this context, the Gram Panchayat—the most basic unit of local governance—can emerge as a critical leader in addressing the impacts of climate change. If development planning processes such as the District Panchayat Development Plans (DPDP), Block Panchayat Development Plans (BPDP) and Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP) are linked with livelihood security, climate and disaster risk-informed planning and equitable use and distribution of resources, they can not only create better livelihood opportunities but also make communities more resilient and capable of facing climate-related disasters.

An integrated approach that brings together the GPDP, livelihood enhancement programmes, water security, and natural resource management-based interventions can steer rural areas towards climate resilience and sustainable development. When local communities plan based on their own priorities, risks, and available resources, they not only draw upon scientific and government support but also incorporate traditional knowledge into decision-making. This makes the planning process more practical, context-specific, and sustainable.

To make local climate action effective at the Gram Panchayat level, local climate risk assessments, climate-sensitive planning, scientific resource management, and convergence of multiple financial sources play a crucial role. GPDPs have ample scope to include interventions such as water budgeting, agricultural diversification, water-harvesting structures, organic farming, drought-tolerant seeds, livestock models, disaster management plans, and forest management. Convergence of resources from schemes such as MGNREGA (now known as VB-G RAM G), 15th Finance Commission Grants, Jal Jeevan Mission, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, NRLM, and Agriculture Department programmes can yield more effective and impactful outcomes.

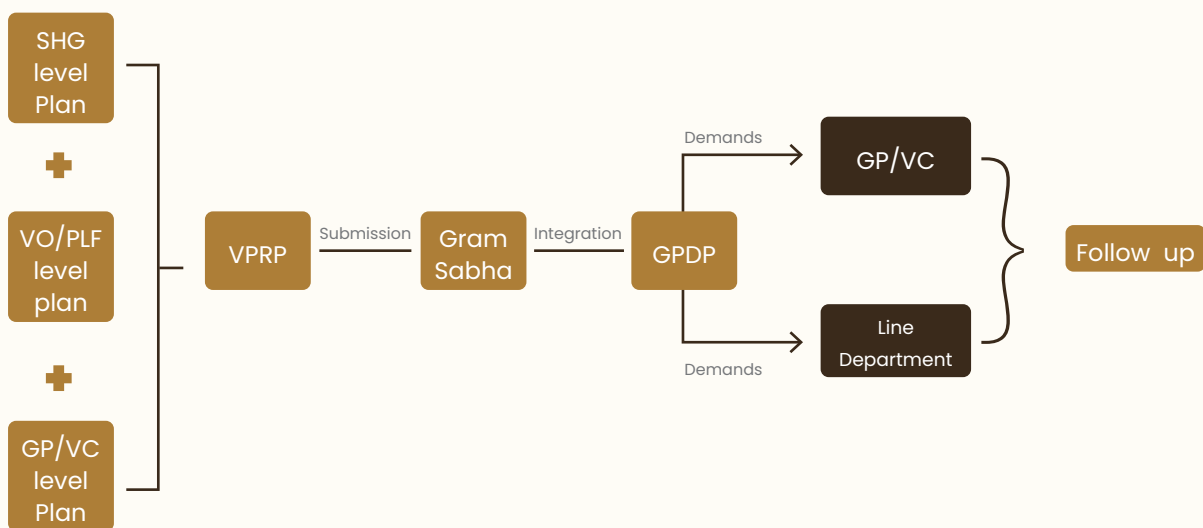
The real impact of resilient livelihoods and climate-sensitive development planning becomes evident when the Gram Sabha sets priorities, Panchayats make climate-informed decisions in financial allocations, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), farmer groups, and women leaders expand economic initiatives, and technical departments provide the required knowledge and support. Through this collaborative model, Panchayats not only move towards self-reliance but also make significant contributions to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Example: In one of the districts, Gram Panchayats prepared water budget-based plans through participatory planning, under which check dams, farm ponds, groundwater recharge structures, and crop diversification were prioritised. With this, the inclusion of SHG- and FPO-based livelihood options led to a 40%–60% increase in income for more than 250 families and a 35% expansion in the irrigated area. This model demonstrated that local planning, community participation, and multi-departmental convergence together can deliver more effective and sustainable outcomes.

In the changing context—where the Government of India is now attempting to improve the quality of planning through AI-enabled platforms (such as Sabhasar)—it is equally imperative to adopt integrated and participatory models at the Gram Panchayat level to address climate change. The convergence of community development planning, livelihood enhancement, and climate adaptation has proven to play a decisive role in making rural communities safer, more resilient, capable, and self-reliant.

Recognising the growing risks of climate change and its direct impacts on rural livelihoods, the Uttar Pradesh State Action Plan on Climate Change (UP-SAPCC) emphasises strengthening local-level adaptation and resilience strategies. In line with this, the Uttar Pradesh State Rural Livelihood Mission (UPSRML) has transformed the earlier Village Poverty Reduction Plan (VPRP) into the Village Prosperity & Resilience Plan, with the objective of institutionally strengthening social, economic, and climate resilience at the Gram Panchayat level. Through this initiative, SHG women, community institutions, and local leadership are being empowered to identify real local issues, conduct risk analysis, and play an effective role in integrating these priorities into the GPDP. Further, the Govt of India mandates integration of VPRP and GPDP as presented in Figure-1 below.

Figure-1: Enhancing Resilience in Agriculture and Water Sectors for Livelihood Enhancement



(Source: Integration of Village Poverty Reduction Plans (VPRP) into GPDP, Ministry of Rural Development, DAY-NRLM, Govt of India)



This participatory process has not only accelerated the growth of women's leadership but has also established a community-based, evidence-driven, and climate-sensitive approach to planning. As a result, the GPDP is no longer viewed merely as an infrastructure-focused investment plan; it is emerging as a resilience- and livelihood security-centred development model that strongly links climate risk management with the SDGs.

There is a pressing need to technically align GPDPs and Localisation of SDGs with the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC) so that development investments are responsive to climate risks and local resources are utilised through a scientific approach combined with community participation. Such integration will enable Panchayats to develop climate-sensitive, data-driven, and evidence-based development models, ensuring resilient livelihoods and long-term security in rural areas.

Looking ahead, priority directions should include technology-enabled community planning, strengthening the leadership capacities of youth and women, improving access to climate finance at the policy level, and reinforcing institutional convergence. This comprehensive, locally grounded approach will form the foundation of sustainable development and a climate-just society.

In this context, it is critically important that development planning, livelihood security, and climate resilience function in an integrated manner. The Government of India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and the states' State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC) provide strategic guidance for climate adaptation and resilience. To translate these frameworks into action on the ground, Gram Panchayats must be strengthened as the frontline institutions for local climate action.

Thus, the convergence of resilient livelihoods, development planning, and local climate action will be a truly effective and transformative step towards sustainable development and climate justice.



