



# DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

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**GETTING THE 'MICROPICTURE' AT  
THE PANCHAYAT LEVEL IN INDIA**

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## GETTING THE 'MICROPICTURE' AT THE PANCHAYAT LEVEL IN INDIA

### Context

- Grassroots governance in India often lacks accessible, detailed data which is difficult for panchayat leaders to assess their own communities effectively.

### Need of Micro Data in Local Governance in India

- The **Panchayati Raj system** and **municipal bodies** are the first point of contact between citizens and the state.
  - These rely on various datasets to assess needs, allocate resources, and track progress.
- Collecting raw data on **households, employment, infrastructure, education, and health** are key for:
  - Understanding **intra-village inequalities** and social hierarchies.
  - Identifying **hyperlocal priorities** that may be invisible to district or state-level planners.
- Detailed data empower Panchayats for:
  - Make **evidence-based decisions**.
  - Improve **public service delivery** (e.g., water access, sanitation, schools).
  - Monitor **welfare program effectiveness** more efficiently.

### Concerns & Challenges

- Usability of Data:** Enormous datasets available through ministry portals and policies like the **National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP), 2012**.
  - Despite the open data framework offered through various platforms, data formats remain unfriendly for public or even trained researchers.
- Localised Problems:** The **'top-down' and macro-level models** often failed to capture localised problems like caste-based exclusion, women's unpaid labour, localized water stress, or migration patterns.
- Disconnected Data at the Grassroots:** At the **panchayat, block, and district levels**, data is generated primarily for consumption at higher levels of governance like **secretaries and departmental heads**.
  - Limited technical expertise among local representatives to interpret complex datasets.
- Delayed Census:** Evidence-based policymaking in India faces significant challenges due to delays in Census operations and the inconsistent availability of time-series data.

### Other Challenges Facing Panchayats in India

- Inadequate Financing:** Most panchayats rely heavily on funds from higher tiers of government, with limited avenues for generating their own revenue.
  - A study by the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** revealed that in 2022-23, the average revenue per panchayat was 21.23 lakh, with only 1.1% coming from local taxes and fees.
- Technological and Digital Literacy Gaps:** Limited technological infrastructure and low digital literacy hinder effective monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of progress.
  - Without digital tools, real-time tracking of SDG progress remains a challenge.
- Fragmentation in Rural Governance:** Multiple government departments operate in villages without proper coordination, leading to duplication of work and inefficient use of resources.
  - The lack of convergence between different schemes and departments makes holistic development difficult to achieve.

### Key Steps By Government

- Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) Baseline Report 2022-23:** It provides a micro-level assessment of panchayats, helping leaders make informed decisions
  - It is aligned with the **Localization of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs)**.
  - The PAI can determine whether a **Gram Panchayat qualifies as a 'Healthy Panchayat'**, pinpointing specific gaps and enabling swift corrective action.
- National Data and Analytics Platform (NDAP):** It facilitates access to government datasets, allowing users to search, merge, visualize, and download data easily.

- ♦ It helps local bodies analyze trends and improve governance.
- **Open Government Data (OGD) Platform:** It provides public access to datasets from various ministries and departments.
  - ♦ It enables data-driven policymaking and transparency in governance.
- **Role of Institutions and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs):** The government can leverage over **4,000 institutions** under the **Unnat Bharat Abhiyan** to maximize impact.
  - ♦ The **‘hand-holding’ model**, supplemented by CSOs and institutional expertise, can complement departmental efforts and **accelerate SDG attainment**.
- **Technological Integration:**
  - ♦ **eGramSwaraj:** A digital governance initiative **available in 22 languages**, enabling transparent fund management and real-time monitoring.
  - ♦ **SVAMITVA Scheme:** Drone surveys have been conducted in 3.17 lakh villages, issuing over 2.19 crore property cards to empower rural property owners.
- **Micro Matters Initiative:** It focuses on data-driven development **under India’s G20 presidency**, promoting the use of **big data analytics, AI, and IoT** to improve governance at the grassroots level.

### Conclusion

- By integrating data analytics into governance, India can empower its local institutions to create targeted policies, improve service delivery, and enhance accountability—ultimately leading to stronger, more responsive local governance.
- India is investing in digital infrastructure, including optical fiber networks for villages and AI-driven data analytics. These advancements aim to improve service delivery and governance efficiency.

Source: TH

### Mains Practice Question

[Q] How can micro-level data improve governance at the panchayat level, and what challenges might occur for effectively utilizing such data for policymaking?