



# *Localizing Climate Action: The National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) and Panchayats*

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose** – This article studies the localization of climate action through the lens of National Action Plan on Climate Change

(NAPCC) and its implementation through the framework of Panchayat Raj Institutions aiming to understand how effectively climate change is being localized in the context of SDGs 13(Climate Action), we focus on assessing the alignment between national climate goals and their reach into community-level initiatives.

**Design/methodology/approach** –The focus of this research is qualitative. We have used secondary sources which were available like policy documents, earlier research, official reports, and expert commentary to collect data. To look at the weaknesses and strengths in the local implementation of NAPCC policies and schemes, we drawn themes through research lens and comparative case studies from selected Panchayats.

**Findings** –Strengthening Local Climate Governance

- PRIs generally have little to no access to climate finance, such as the NAPCC.
- A majority of PRIs do not have the technical capability to support the writing of fundable project proposals.
- Climate and ecology are not embedded into GPDs – due to the low levels of awareness and capacity around climate and ecology.

Inter-Institutional Coordination

- The various departments, such as agriculture, energy, and rural development, are generally insulated from one another and as a result climate planning is often not integrated.

Bridging the Capacity-Finance Gap

More than 90% of PRI officials do not have a formal education and training for mobilizing climate finance, interlinking schemes and budgeting for resilience approaches (NIRDPR, 2020)

- The existing climate-related schemes, like PM-KUSUM and SAPCCs aren't even localized with Panchayats not aware of scheme components like objectives, eligibility or modalities of implementation.
- Even if CSR and NGO partnerships exist, it's obvious that most Panchayats do not have the institutional set-up to initiate or sustain these partnerships.
- There is almost no incorporation of climate-related vulnerabilities (like drought/flood risks) into the planning and fund allocation, which, as sad as it sounds, makes the proposal less investable or productive
- There is no formal and standardized digital platforms or dashboards that capture climate-related pathways to finance, the fund status, and any anecdotes from successful examples (other models).

**Originality/value** – This study addresses To assess the integration of NAPCC missions into Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDs) and to identify best practices and barriers in localizing climate action

**Keywords** - Climate ActionNational Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)Local GovernanceDecentralized Climate PolicySustainable Development Goals (SDG 13)Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPD)Rural DevelopmentClimate ResilienceParticipatory Governance

**Paper type** - Research article



## Introduction and Background

The national framework on climate change in India is based on the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) that outlines eight national missions aimed at promoting environmental sustainability and resilience to climate change. The NAPCC is strategic in its vision, but realizing that vision is contingent on its monocular application and incorporation into local actions. (Drishti IAS. (2019, September 19). National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) <https://www.drishtiias.com/to-the-points/Paper2/national-action-plan-on-climate-change> ) PRI's being the institutional levels responsible for rural development, are important agents of climate change governance. (Tarh, T. Ramya. (2014). Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Rural Development: The Study of a Tribal Village in Arunachal Pradesh. SSRN. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2556301> ) Nonetheless, there are issues related to poor access to resources, inadequate institutional capacity, and limited policy coherence that challenge this localization. ( National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR). (n.d.). Capacity building for Panchayats. <https://nirdpr.org.in/> ) The introduction has the aim of laying the framework for understanding how the climate change agenda, as outlined at the level of the national agenda, is then translated into actions by the Panchayats.

## Problem Statement

Although India has developed a goal-oriented national climate policy through the NAPCC, implementation of these policies and missions into action at the grassroots level remains a significant challenge and under-researched work.

## Thematic Literature Review

### 1. Theme: – Climate Resilient Rural Development

Rural India is on the frontline of climate change vulnerability. The majority of the rural population (more than 70%), for their livelihoods depend on agriculture and natural resources, are especially vulnerable with a degree of risk associated with more irregular weather events, insufficient water resources, land degradation and loss of biodiversity. Thus, climate resilient rural development represents more than a development challenge but also a question of climate justice, food security and sustainable national development over long timeframes.

The National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) provides a policy framework at the macro-level through 8 missions and their associated objectives, including the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), the National Water Mission (NWM) and the Green India Mission. At present, they are often not visible at the grassroots level and aligned to local institutions, and thus rarely act as vehicle for transformative change in rural society. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI's) provide a particular institutional opportunity for decentralized and participatory climate action. They derive their legitimacy from the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, and are legislated to create and execute development plans for socio-economic development and social justice. If we embedded those objectives as part of the NAPCC in the Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDs) then community endorsed resilience strategies could facilitate local solutions to these vulnerabilities. (Drishti IAS. (2019, September 19). National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) <https://www.drishtiias.com/to-the-points/Paper2/national-action-plan-on-climate-change> )

The "Climate Resilient Livelihoods" project in Malkangiri district, Odisha involved a collaborative partnership between Grams Panchayats, UNDP and the Odisha State Climate Change Cell. For PRI's, participatory vulnerability assessments in their communities helped to identify issues of concern, including cyclical floods and crop failures, and adaptive solutions, including elevated grain banks, saline first paddy varieties and decentralized solar irrigation. All of this was supported by relevant components of National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) and National Water Mission (NWM) which was an effective example of vertical integration connecting the policy with planning at the local sub-district level. ( GIZ. (2019). National Adaptation Plan (NAP) India – Climate adaptation in action. <https://www.adaptationcommunity.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/giz2019-en-factsheet-nap-india-low-res.pdf> )



Likewise, in Kolar, Karnataka, the Panchayat implemented water budgeting and demand-side groundwater management with guidance from the National Water Mission “Catch the Rain” campaign. This example shows how PRI-led microplanning can be cumulatively harnessed to meet mission targets on water efficiency. (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). (2024). India leads climate action through policy and local-level implementation: MoEFCC (Press Release, June 5). <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2101289> )

Nonetheless, structural barriers remain:

- Lack of climate literacy among Panchayat.
- Lack of local climate data and early warnings
- Rigid scheme-oriented funding that does not allow for integrated resilience planning.
- Weak convergence across sectors (agriculture, forestry, water, rural development).

The next pivotal step is to create "Climate-Resilient Panchayat Frameworks" at the state level, with allocated budgets, capacity development modules, and data dashboards around district-specific vulnerabilities. The Climate Resilient Rural Development will also enhance the climate action or SDG 13 relationship as there is greater recognition of the importance of local action within the global space. The continued commitment of India to support climate-resilient communities through Mission LiFE and the Localizing SDGs Campaign can further bolster the ability of Gram Panchayats (GPs) to scale adaptation responses. (National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR). (n.d.). Capacity building for Panchayats. <https://nirdpr.org.in/> )

## 2. Theme: Policy and Institutional Synergies

Successful climate governance in India relies on ongoing coordination between policy regimes and institutions. (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). (2024). India leads climate action through policy and local-level implementation: MoEFCC (Press Release, June 5). <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2101289>) The National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), and their eight mission based approaches, creates strategic ideas on how to address climate challenges. The implementation part however, depends on how well it blends with State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs) and becomes part of the local governance frameworks, especially through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). This sensitive link, sometimes called policy and institutional synergy is essential to helping national goals falls into activities that have local relevance.

One of the major challenge is the gap between center policy making and local implementation. While Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDs) give a mechanism for localizing climate priorities, poor coordination and inadequate technical assistance often limit their practical implementation. Many a times Panchayats are not fully utilized, despite the fact that Constitution have given role of panchayats separately for local development. Looking at the positive side, local developments have taken few steps, models such as watershed programs and behavior change initiatives merged with MGNREGA like programs exemplify the benefits of institutional synergy. These initiatives shows that if ministries, departments, and Panchayats work together closely, climate action can become more effective and inclusive.

In order to augment this synergy, there is a need to institute formal coordination mechanisms at different levels. This must involve central ministries (such as MoEFCC and DST), state climate cells, and local government institutions. Providing access to climate information and financial resources, in particular through connecting funds from schemes such as PMKSY and Jal Jeevan Mission, is also essential. India is an agrarian country we know this agriculture happens in village, agriculture is the most crucial and ignorant in terms of taking it as a career. This is also due to no prominent outcome which ultimately linked to climate actions. Our actions, how we take care of the climate is given back to us, so it is utmost important to make local community familiar with climate actions and policies made for it causes. (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC). (2023). <https://moef.gov.in/> )



India has achieved its position in international climate discussions and debates, internal unity is important. Locals community should be aware of the policies made for them under climate action plans and implementation of those policies should be done effectively. Its of utmost importance to recognize panchayats, as actors and participants in the stakeholders participatory framework, rather than simply just implementers. At the end, the success of climate resilience at the grassroots level rests on enabling integrated policy interventions and institutional coordination to enable actor and beneficiary to enable to take ownership of their own adaptations initiatives.

#### Theme: Capacity Building and Finance

Building the capacity of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and enabling access to climate finance is crucial for converting the frameworks outlined in the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) into actions at the local level. ( [National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj \(NIRDPR\), \(2020\). Training Module on \[https://nirdpr.org.in/nird\\\_docs/tps/tp050820.pdf\]\(https://nirdpr.org.in/nird\_docs/tps/tp050820.pdf\)](#) )

Climate Change Adaptation for PRIs. PRIs manage over 250,000 Gram Panchayats that interact directly with almost 65% of the rural population in India (MoPR, 2020). Yet, with this powerful base, they are not able to achieve much with climate change, largely due to a shortage of technical knowledge and institutional assistance, as well as a lack of access to financial resources.

Recent analysis finds, only 12% of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GDPDs), built climate resilience into their plans, and over 70% of Panchayats have never accessed climate specific funding ([NIRDPR, 2021](#)). Although GDPD or other funding mechanisms exist, such as the National Adaptation Fund on Climate Change (NAFCC), MGNREGA and PM-KUSUM, PRI participation is limited, due to their lack of understanding and skills to mobilize climate finance

Capacity building is a tremendous need. A survey done by ( [NIRDPR \(2019\)](#) ) reported that only 10% of Primary Revenue Institutions (PRI) facilitators had received any form of training on climate adaptation ([NIRDPR, 2020](#)). PRIs cannot access funds such as the ₹364.35 crore NAFCC ([MoEFCC, 2023](#)), or take advantage of schemes under the State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs) without training on proposal writing, budgeting, and co-ordination between departments. For example, in PM-KUSUM which aims for 30.8GW solar capacity for rural areas where the scheme is not fully exploited due to incomplete integration at sub-state levels ([MNRE, 2022](#)).

Working alongside NGOs, private Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) actors and experts in the field can lead to lessons that improve climate adaptations at the grassroots. Two pilot programs in Odisha and Maharashtra demonstrated a 25–30% increase in the proportion of climate-related spending in the budgetary allocation and enabled a better relationship with communities ([Vij et al., 2024](#)).

Since India suffers \$87 billion in economic losses due to climate disasters every year ([World Bank, 2021](#)), investing in the PRIs is a compelling strategy. As greater training, access to financial resources and inclusive planning is developed, PRIs can take the transformational lead in locally-driven sustainable climate action.

#### Interpretation and Analysis

If the national architecture (NAPCC) is a full-fledged document, there are gaps between aspirations and implementation because of lack of capacity, coordination and context. The successful pathways and models, like climate-sensitive GDPDs and interdisciplinary convergence (E.g watershed management through MGNREGA) proved that structured and quality capacity and participatory governance can work. The analysis suggests that Panchayats can be conveners of climate adaptation when provided relevant tools, training and funds. ( [GIZ. \(2019\). National Adaptation Plan \(NAP\) India – Climate adaptation in \[ow-res.pdf\]\(#\)](#) )



### Policy and Practice Recommendations

#### 1. Recommendation Area: Technical Support and Finance Mobilization

- Establish climate action technical cells within district planning offices. (MoEFCC (2023) )
- Conduct training sessions on accessing climate finance and ensuring compliance. (NIRDPR (2020); MOEFC (2023) )
- Create a district-level climate fund pooling mechanism.
- Introduce a mobile support system for PRIs to provide real-time help.

#### 2. Recommendation Area: Strengthen Local Capacity

- Integrate climate modules in PRI training
- Promote local adaptation knowledge
- Fund structured technical support teams at block level

#### 3. Recommendation Area:

##### PRI-Centric Climate Solutions: Identifying Risks, Raising Funds, and Tracking Progress

- Create a team of ‘Trained Professionals – Climate Guides’ at the block/district level to assist PRIs in fund identification, proposal drafting, and monitoring
- Incorporate localized climate risk mapping into Panchayat planning, like recurring floods or heatwaves, so their plans reflect what’s happening on the ground.
- Design an open-access “Climate Finance Navigator” portal, offering real-time data on schemes, deadlines, fund status and successful use cases.
- Facilitate PRI–CSR convergence platforms at the district level to unlock non-government funding through trust-building
- Mandate quarterly climate finance utilization reviews at the district planning committee level.

### Conclusion

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) act as the agents of local climate action. (National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR). (2020)) Localizing climate action through PRIs is not merely a governance issue, it is an evolution needed in India’s climate framework. This report shows that, in spite of the NAPCC laying out a well-planned national strategy, this does not translate into action at the local level, partly due to issues like fragmentation of institutions for climate action, capacity, disjointed pathways to funds, and limited community engagement. (GIZ. (2019). National Adaptation Plan (NAP) India–Climate adaptation in action.<https://www.adaptationcommunity.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/giz2019-en-factsheet-nap-india-low-res.pdf> )

The findings indicated a significant shift in the climate governance architecture of India away from a top-down policy delivery model towards building bottom-up resilience. The Panchayats must not only be perceived as implementers of climate action, but as recognized climate decision-makers. For this milestone to materialize, state and central governments have to work to catalyze knowledge transfer and to build technical capacity, with participatory governance models that are forged from the local experience(GIZ. (2019). National Adaptation Plan (NAP) India – Climate adaptation in action.<https://www.adaptationcommunity.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/giz2019-en-factsheet-nap-india-low-res.pdf> )

To achieve the tipping point of SDG 13 (Climate Action) at scale is to ensure that the lowest tiers of governance are empowered. With climate considerations integrated into Local plans and PRIs as active actors in the climate response, India will be on a pathway to building resilient rural communities that are ready not only to survive the climate crisis, but to spearhead effective resistance against it.



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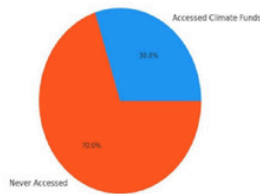
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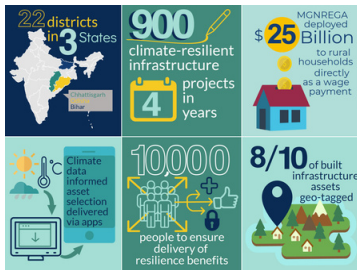
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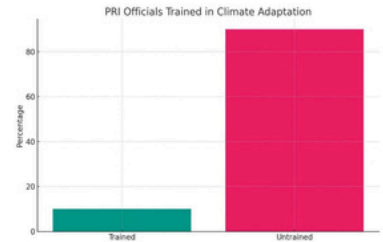
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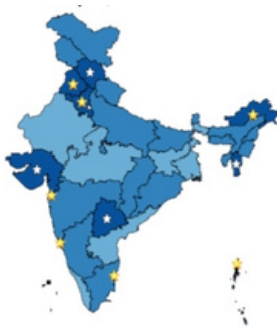
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