

# Towards Risk Resilient Villages: Gram Panchayat Development Plans as a platform for localisation of SAPCC and resource convergence

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Climate change is causing widespread disruption globally. There are slow and unpredictable changes in weather patterns evident in temperature, rainfall pattern and number of rainy days, consecutive dry days. These changes determine water availability, lead to loss of lives and infrastructure and have a serious and direct impact on agriculture and allied livelihoods and impact developmental efforts and resources invested. These climate change vulnerabilities and impacts are often local in nature and requires local action supported by local government institutions and community participation. For this there exists a movement for locally led adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures: a fast-trending paradigm where decisions on how, when, and where to implement climate solutions are led by communities and local actors<sup>1</sup>. In India, State Action Plans on Climate Change are the primary drivers of adaptation action at state level that aligns with national priorities as defined in Nationally Determined Contribution. However, its implementation requires newer capacities, enhanced coordination between multiple actors, institutions and processes and further localisation at district and village level.

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<sup>1</sup> Conference of Panchayats (CoP): Catalyzing Local Action to Achieve Global Climate Goals

The 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment to India's Constitution<sup>2</sup> empowered Panchayati Raj Institutions as bodies of self-governance that have been mandated for development of Panchayat Development Plans (PDP) for economic growth, local development and social justice and for the implementation of development schemes<sup>3</sup>. The guidelines on Gram Panchayat Development plans (GPDP) at the village level developed by Government of India and the State Governments emphasizes on Gram Panchayats being the basic unit for localisation of development schemes and thus provides opportunity for integrating disaster risk reduction and climate resilience planning. The GPDP process also has ample scope to appropriately utilize the available financial resources, according to local needs and priorities, that can help in addressing climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) concerns in the planning and resilient development of villages.

The present paper is based on experiences from an initiative on integration of CCA-DRR in GPDP process undertaken in the state of Uttar Pradesh by Govt of Uttar Pradesh in technical cooperation with GIZ India jointly with Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group (GEAG)<sup>4</sup> under Climate Adaptation and Finance in Rural India (CAFRI)- a bilateral programme funded by BMZ. Based on the learnings, the issues which need to be considered at policy level may be summarized in following heads:

## **Needed Synergy: Integrating Climate Resilience & Disaster Risk Reduction in Local Development**

The climate risks and related impacts results from the interaction of climate-related hazards (including extreme events and trends) with the vulnerability and exposure of human and natural systems (IPCC 2014). There are two types of impacts: direct impacts that are immediate consequences of climate change trends and events (greater number of drought events mean water scarcity and crop loss) and indirect impacts, which are result of direct impacts (water borne diseases, food and livelihood insecurity, migration, indebtedness). Climate variabilities and enhanced intensity of disasters affect the developmental efforts and loss of invested resources. A 'good' development, with consideration of climate and disaster mitigation and risk reduction in the developmental activities, can significantly mitigate the climate and disaster losses and lead to resilient

development. For example, provisions of efficient drainage (flood prone areas) and water conservation (drought stricken areas) in implementation of social protection programmes (such as MGNREGA) proves to be quite helpful in reducing water logging (both in space and duration) and conservation of water. Ignoring such considerations in developmental planning and implementation leads to further aggravation of climate and disaster risks and adverse impacts. GPDP, being the basic unit of development, is most suited for integrating the synergy of climate resilience and disaster risk reduction in village development.

## **Resource Convergence**

Gram Panchayats receive annual allocation from Finance Commission<sup>5</sup> for the developmental activities at the village level according to needs and priorities of local community. The 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission (which also looked at developing provision for supplementing resources of the local bodies) awarded Rs 2,00,092 crores to Gram Panchayats across the country during the period of 2015-2020. 90 per cent of this is in form of basic grant and 10 per cent as performance grant. Subsequently, the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission has allocated Rs 2,36,805 for the period of 2021-2026 for duly constituted rural local bodies out of which 60 per cent is allocated for areas of national priorities (tied grants)<sup>6</sup> while 40 per cent is on the discretion (un-tied grants) of panchayats. Uttar Pradesh has more than 58,000 Gram Panchayats and have an allocation of Rs 15,204.8 crores as un-tied and Rs 22,204 as tied funds for the five years (2021-2026)<sup>7</sup>. Both these tied and untied funds have ample scope of utilization for CCA-DRR integrated developmental actions if proper and informed planning is taken-up by the villages. Besides the Finance Commission resources, state government schemes can also contribute significantly in fulfilling the resilience gaps- as identified in village level developmental planning. The need is to identify such schemes and link it with the priorities of resilient GPDP. Own Source Revenue, although a low priority, generated through appropriate utilization of village resources can be deployed for resilience building initiatives in the village. Some villages are also able to generate CSR funds which can support mitigation and adaptation activities identified by the village.

<sup>2</sup> The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992

<sup>3</sup> <http://gdpd.nic.in/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> [www.geagindia.org](http://www.geagindia.org)

<sup>5</sup> Constitutionally mandated under Article 280 of the Indian Constitution, for the purpose of allocation of revenue resources between the Union and the State Governments.

<sup>6</sup> Out of the total Grant-in-aid earmarked for Panchayati Raj institutions, 60 percent is earmarked for national priorities like drinking water supply, rainwater harvesting and sanitation (referred as tied grants), while 40 percent is untied and is to be utilized at the discretion of the Panchayati Raj institutions for location specific felt needs.

<sup>7</sup> Source: File No 15(2) FC -XV/FCD/2020-25 Ministry of Finance, Dept of Expenditure, Dated 14.07.2021

## CCA-DRR Integration following regular GPDP Steps

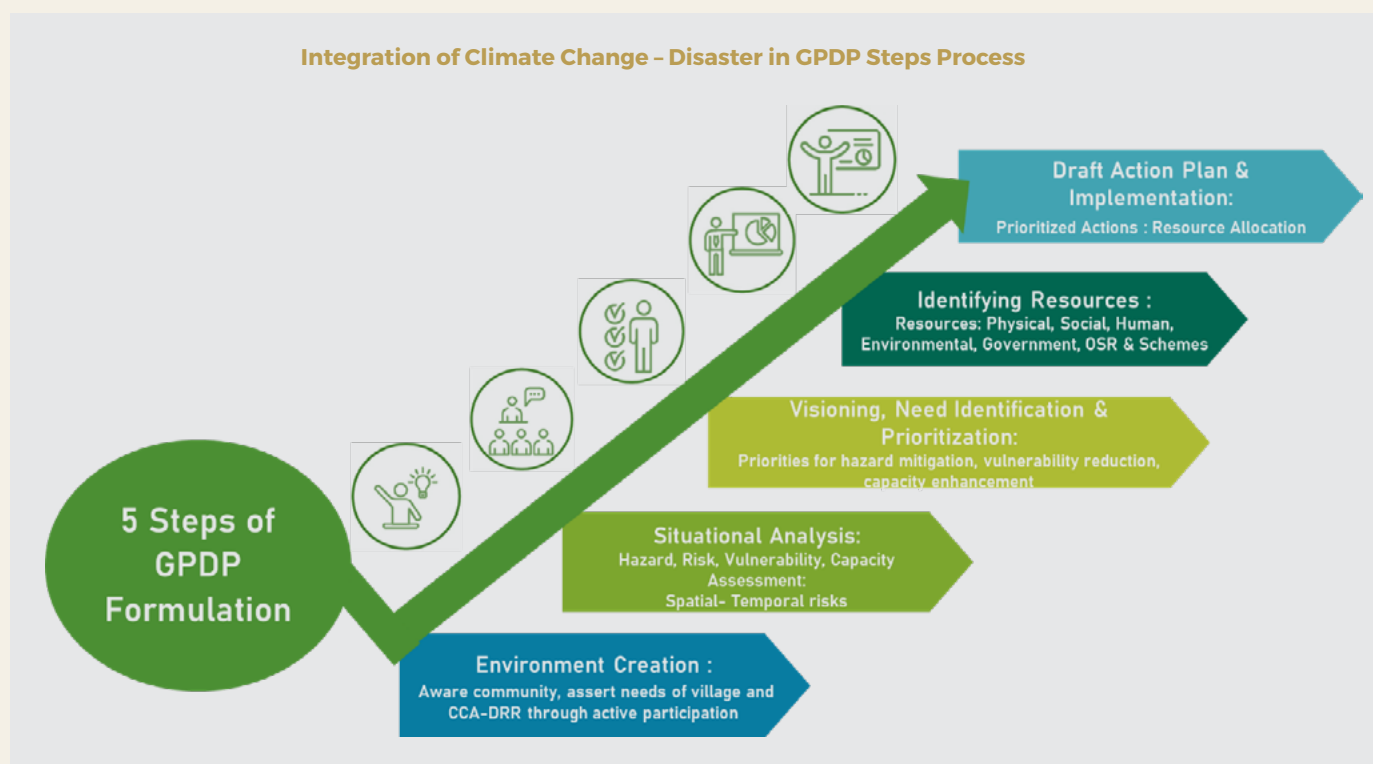
The resilient actions in village need to be institutionalized for its effectiveness, ownership and sustainability. GPDP provides a unique opportunity in this sense. Government of Uttar Pradesh has a well laid out mechanism for developing GPDP along with specified dates and deadlines. For any smooth mainstreaming process of DRR-CCA actions with GPDP, it is important that the steps and processes of GP development planning is followed. Specific actions for CCA-DRR integration can be undertaken in the five steps of GPDP formation:

- Step 1 Environment Creation** for developing better understanding amongst community on current and future climate induced disasters and relevance of CCA-DRR in developmental planning.
- Step 2 Situational Analysis** for participatory Hazard, Risk, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment. Human and social development, infrastructure, environment and disaster management, economic development, income and employment resources, individual and community issues can be made part of

situational analysis. Analysis of spatial-temporal risk patterns by the community helps in prioritizing development actions.

- Step 3 Visioning, Need Identification and Prioritization** for identifying and prioritizing need based actions (short term and long term) for preparedness, mitigation, response and adaptation towards risk informed development.
- Step 4 Identifying Resources** for identifying local resources and capacities, including Finance Commission funds, schemes and programmes, Panchayat's own source resources that can be leverage for DRR-CCA actions.
- Step 5 Developing Draft Action Plan of risk informed GPDP and implementation** where identified risk based DRR-CCA measures are aligned under different sectors. With the clarity on roles and responsibilities, the draft plan of CCA-DRR integrated GPDP can be approved by Gram Sabha (Village General Meeting) in a routine process.

GPDP process being an iterative mechanism, a review mechanism has to be in place on the basis of set indicators for CCA-DRR.





## Key elements of risk integrated GPPD

### Agro-Climatic Variations

Impact of climate change and associated vulnerabilities varies according to agro-geo-climatic situations. For resilient action to be effective and sustainable, measures cannot be uniform across such variabilities. The state of Uttar Pradesh has 9 different agro-ecological regions and the vulnerabilities of people vary according to climatic factors and socio-economic parameters. Based on a composite vulnerability index (CVI) the 75 districts located in 9 different agro-climatic regions were assessed and accordingly the regions were graded according to difference in vulnerability<sup>8</sup>. The three most vulnerable region identified were:

**NORTH EASTERN PLAIN:** including the terai of Nepal, largely flood prone

**BUNDELKHAND:** the southern part of state, largely drought prone

**VINDHYAN:** on eastern side, largely drought prone

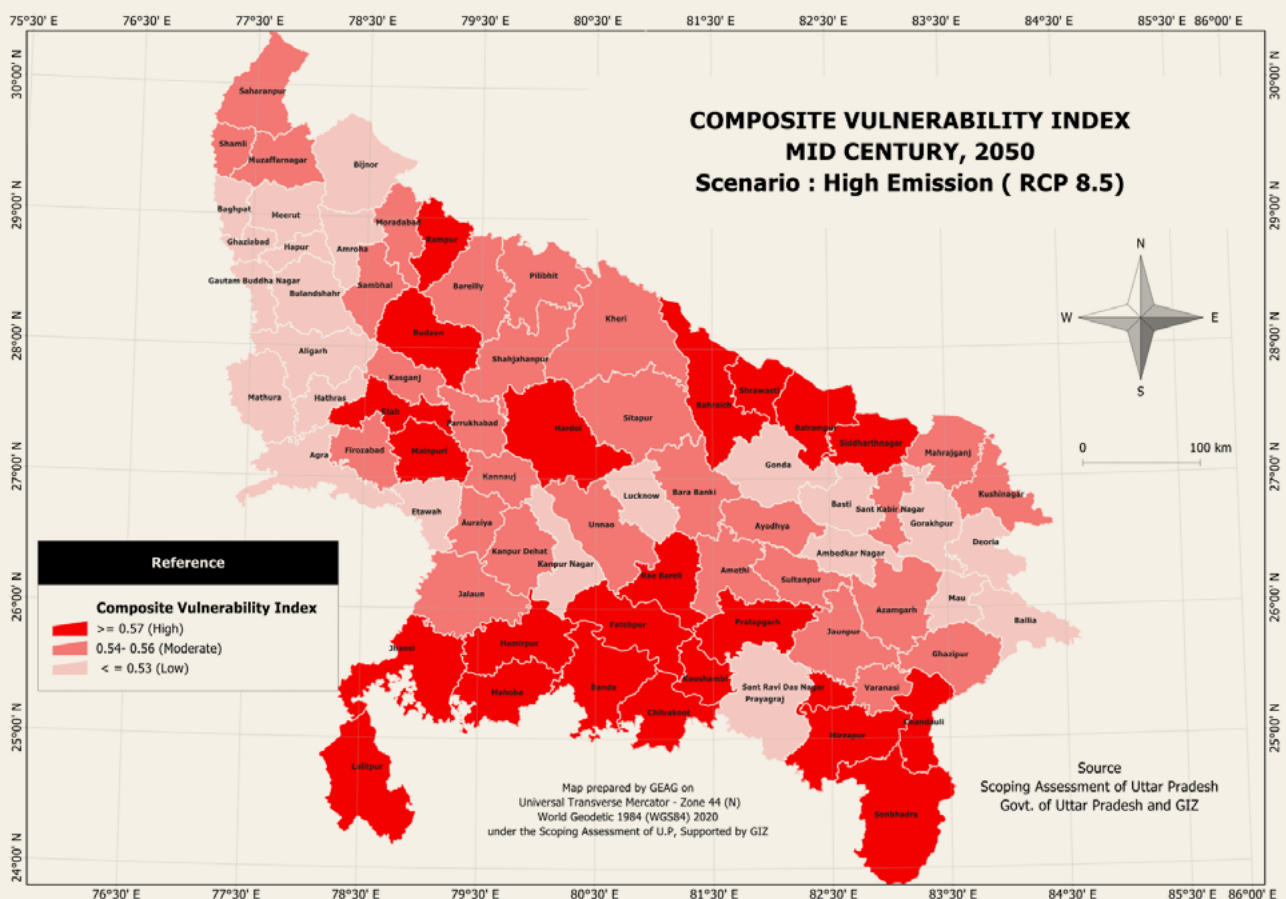
For any CCA-DRR integration process in GPPD, these regional variabilities and vulnerabilities have to be considered. The GP development planning need to be based on specific agro-climatic situation of the region.

### Environment/Ecosystem Services

The natural environment and associated ecosystem services forms an important aspect for designing CCA-DRR solutions at the Gram Panchayat level. The ecosystem services (Provisioning, Supporting, Regulating and Cultural), are recognized by local communities contributing to CCA-DRR actions. While natural ecosystems contributes in range of mitigation actions, its role in water conservation, maintaining ground water table, irrigation and drinking water for cattle in summers, cooling, wind break were some of the contribution recognized in drought prone areas. Water holding and buffering, drainage of excess water, aquaculture, checking soil erosion have been another set of services helpful in flood and water logging affected regions. Overall, the natural ecosystems and related services have been important consideration by local communities for managing climate stressed situations in a risk informed GPPD development.

### Spatial Planning

For CCA-DRR related actions, spatial considerations are crucial and GPPD provides opportunity of spatial planning. Drainage Planning according to slope gradient in the village, identifying the waterbody catchment and its conservation for maintaining the efficiency of wetlands and related services, conservation of water streams and other such



examples were observed in community led process of CCA-DRR integrated GPDP. Climate resilient farming mechanisms like multi-tier farming and linkage with nearby ecosystems for availability of farm inputs are examples where such spatial considerations help farm based communities.

#### **Box-1: Local Climate Actions: Gram Panchayats Paving the Path**

In Uttar Pradesh, risk-informed GPDPs were developed as models in the identified three most vulnerable agro-climatic regions, that i.e. North-eastern Plains, Bundelkhand and Vindhyan regions.

One specific example is the Gram Panchayat Rehali Vishunpur in the Shravasti district, located in the North-eastern Plains region. This area is prone to regular flooding and waterlogging problems. In response, the PRI members along with the village communities carried out a situational analysis to assess the types of hazards and the risks affecting their villages. The analysis revealed that floods and prolonged waterlogging were the major issues impacting the lives and livelihoods of the people. These problems resulted in crop damages, collapsed houses, loss of livestock, obstructed roads, water contamination, and disease outbreaks, among other challenges. Based on the identified risks, the communities determined their needs and priorities. These included local actions such as raising hand pumps and community toilets, constructing gradient-based drainage systems, rejuvenating water ecosystems in the village, managing solid waste, and tree plantation. These initiatives were incorporated into the GPDP action plan to address the specific challenges faced by the Gram Panchayat Rehali Vishunpur.

Similarly, in the Gram Panchayat Unchadeeh in Chitrakoot district, located in the Bundelkhand region, the PRI members and the village community jointly developed the GPDP plan. This process followed the five steps of GPDP. The Gram Panchayat in this area primarily faces drought conditions, fire incidents, and heat waves. These issues result in crop losses, food insecurity, loss of livelihoods, loss of livestock, and a lack of fodder for animals. To address these challenges, the communities prioritized their needs and incorporated local actions into the GPDP plan. These actions included increasing the water holding capacity in village ponds, constructing farm ponds and new ponds, cultivating drought resilient crop varieties, fire mitigation machines, tree plantation.

### **Social inclusion and gender mainstreaming**

The CCA-DRR integrated GPDP mechanisms provide adequate opportunity for the vulnerable groups to express their specific needs, according to their specific socio-economic and spatial vulnerability, during GPDP steps of environment creation and situational analysis (which includes hazard, risk, vulnerability and capacity assessment). The vulnerability according to socio-economic status, livelihood, gender, age, disability, spatial dimensions can be mapped and subsequently addressed in action planning and resource allocation. Gender mainstreaming in the GPDP process is crucial to promote gender equality in all aspects of planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of development programs and initiatives at the Gram Panchayat level. Active participation and representation of women in decision-making processes at the Gram Panchayat level need to be encouraged, enabling them to contribute to resilient development planning and resource allocation, helping in realization of SDG-5.

### **Defined Standard Operating Procedures**

CCA-DRR interventions need a convergent action and hence coordination amongst various stakeholders including the community groups, frontline workers and teachers, elected panchayat representatives, government departments at gram panchayat, block and district level and so on. It becomes, therefore, important that roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders are clearly defined and communicated. A standard operating procedure with roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders (a) during various steps (Environment creation, situational analysis, Needs and priorities, identifying resources, draft plan and approval) of GPDP development (b) during implementation of GPDP and (c) for review and evaluation of GPDP were compiled which provides role clarity and needed timely actions.

### **Sectoral Coordination**

In the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment, 29 sectors/ subjects have been directed to provide services to panchayats. The Disaster Management Act, 2005 under section 40 directs each department working for the development at districts, block and village level to include risk reduction, preparedness and mitigation actions in their programme.

For the needed actions on CCA and DRR various development departments can significantly contribute under the existing guidelines. However, there are areas where actions are needed in collaboration of two or

more departments. In the current process of DRR-CCA integration in GPDP, out of 29 sectoral departments assigned to provide services to panchayats, 23 subjects were identified which can directly contribute for CCA-DRR activities. For the ease of understanding of various departments, detailed compilation of specific actions which can be taken-up by specific department for Mitigation, Preparedness and Adaptation was done. This is expected to provide clarity on actions to be taken up at departmental level as well as areas where inter-departmental coordination and convergence are required.

## Capacity Building

Community is the first responder in the events of climate induced disasters. They are also part of developmental planning at panchayat level. Capacity building of community for their active contribution in resilient planning and needed actions during shock and stress is crucial for the resilience and sustainability of villages. Besides the community, those who are involved in developmental planning at village, block and district level like departmental officials, elected representatives, frontline workers and teachers, training institutions, local civil society organizations etc need capacity building for their active contribution in effective and robust GPDP. The training of trainers followed by number of regional and district training by state training institutions created a critical mass of effective trainers for resilient development in different parts of state.

### Box 2: E-Learning Platform for Capacity Development<sup>9</sup>

As part of CAFRI project, GIZ jointly with the Department of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (DoEFCC), Government of Uttar Pradesh is cooperating with the Panchayati Raj Training Institute (PRTI) to strengthen capacities of Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) functionaries. The joint efforts aim to integrate climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction into sectoral and development planning processes towards need-based, gender-responsive, risk integrated Gram Panchayat Development Planning (GPDP). To digitise and scale up capacity development efforts, a dedicated e-learning platform has been developed to impart training through e-learning modules, planning toolkits as well as support network of Panchayati Raj Institutions and associated stakeholders. The e-learning platform is an open-source learning management system, hosting multiple courses and training materials which address different groups of learners and facilitates climate literacy and capacity development. The platform envisages to increase reach, effectiveness and frequency of training programmes and can also be used to disseminate subject-specific knowledge, expand knowledge networks, and share expertise and experience. In addition, the online platform allows the Directorate of Panchayati Raj and PRTI Panchayati Raj Training Institute to digitise and host training modules and content under the Rastriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyaan (RGSA).





## Contributing to Sustainable Development Goals

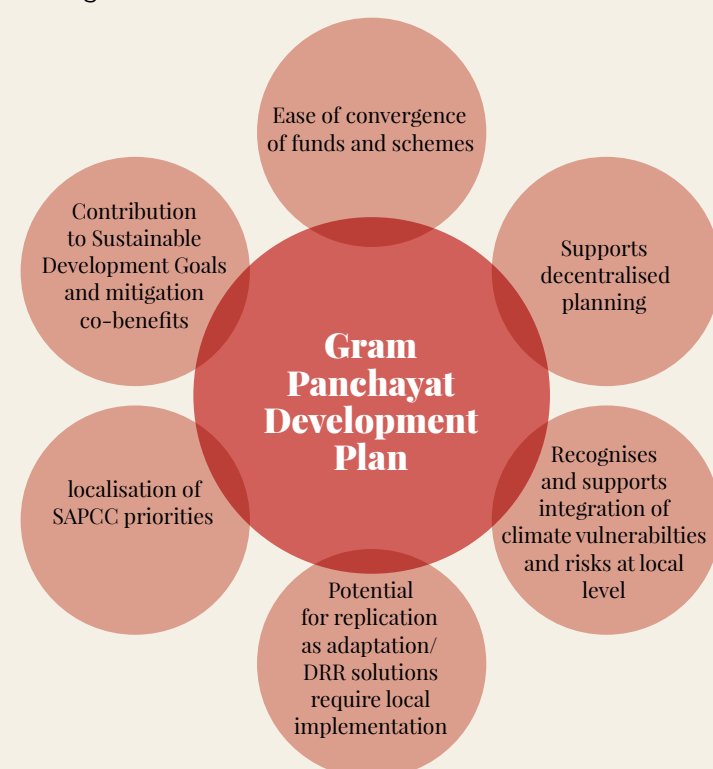
Towards localization of SDGs, Ministry of Panchayat Raj has adopted an approach to align Village, Block and District panchayat planning with SDGs and suggest the use of schemes and programmes of departments dealing with 29 specified sectors (under 11<sup>th</sup> schedule<sup>10</sup>) for the purpose. For the purpose the sectoral approach is suggested around 9 themes like poverty free villages, healthy villages, child friendly villages, adequate water villages, clean and green villages, self-dependent basic infrastructure villages, socially secure villages, good governance villages and women friendly villages<sup>11</sup>. Several targets under each of these themes contribute to CCA-DRR aspects. Following these targets in the ground actions, CCA-DRR aspirations can also be fulfilled.

## Beyond Gram Panchayat boundaries:

The actions for climate resilience cannot be limited to the boundary of gram panchayat. Mitigation and Adaptation actions may require addressing issues at cluster of village, block, district and regional levels also. It will be, therefore, important to identify the actions which are required beyond GP level and address those issues through provisions of Block Panchayat Development Plan (BPDP) and District Panchayat Development Plan (DPDP). Environment management, ecosystem services, resource management, mitigation measures and several such aspects need to be addressed through BPDP and DPDP for the benefit of specific GP or cluster of GPs.

By recognising and integrating climate vulnerabilities and risks at local level, risk-Informed GPDP brings following key advantages:

- Risk informed development reduces strengthen resilience, contributes to sustainable development goals and mitigation co-benefits.
- Supports localisation of climate action prioritise identified in the State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC)
- Provides an opportunity to mainstream climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures in developmental interventions at the grass-root level
- Supports resource mobilisation through convergence of funds from central and state funded schemes as well as identifying additional funding requirements for climate-disaster resilience
- Provides opportunities for spatial planning (land gradient, land-use including waterbodies and other ecosystems, etc.) at Gram Panchayat level to integrate DRR-CCA measures
- Provides avenues for optimal utilization of available local resources, skills and capacities which can be further strengthened
- Promotes decentralised planning by fostering participation of local communities in planning process which helps in understanding local needs and people's priorities in the specific agro-climatic regions and multi-hazards context.



<sup>10</sup> Added through 73rd Amendment to Indian Constitution in 1992, the 11th Schedule contains the provisions that specify the powers, authority and responsibilities of Panchayats across 29 subjects/ sectors.

<sup>11</sup> Government of Uttar Pradesh Letter No. 1033/33-3-2022-345/2016 TC1, dated 27th May 2022

## Way forward:

Panchayats play an important role in effective and efficient implementation of flagship schemes and for transformative actions in rural India. Risk integration in the GPDP process thus becomes essential for localization of SAPCC and NDC priorities. However, for localisation at Gram Panchayat level, Panchayati Raj functionaries, community-based organisations, women groups/ SHGs and line departments are required to have adequate information base and capacities required for planning and implementation.

Developing a capacity building programme and a cadre of resource persons at the state level training institutions such as PRIT and SIRD will be key to successful implementation of localisation agenda. Mechanisms of dialogue among multiple actors, including different levels of governments will allow strong coordination and cooperation and leveraging

of funds from a range of departmental schemes/ programmes. In this regard, identifying a nodal officer in each department and strengthening cooperation with SAPCC nodal department will facilitate successful policy implementation.

Concept of risk integrated GPDP also aligns LiFE Mission and with Green Credit programme of Government of India that envisages to promote environmental actions, mitigate climate change, build adaptive capacity and improve the overall state of the environment through environmental conservation. The programme focuses on mobilizing additional resources and incentivize environmentally sustainable and responsive actions by local bodies such as Gram Panchayats among other. As per the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notification, activities such as on plantation, water conservation, water harvesting, natural & regenerative agriculture, land restoration, waste management, mangrove conservation can earn green credits.



The policy brief is based on the learning from the intervention implemented jointly with Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Department of Panchayati Raj, Government of Uttar Pradesh as part of BMZ funded Indo-German bilateral cooperation project- Climate Adaptation and Finance in Rural (CAFRI). Authors acknowledge support of Mr. Manoj Singh, Additional Chief Secretary and Mr. Ashish Tiwari, Secretary, Department of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of Uttar Pradesh.