

## Participatory Planning: The Gram Panchayat Development Plan Process in Keinou Gram Panchayat, Bishnupur District, Manipur

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**Abstract:** Decentralized planning refers to the process of planning where some of the functions and responsibilities of decision-making are delegated from the Center/State to the local level of administration. It involves the process of providing power and authority to the formally created local bodies and relies heavily on participatory planning. By encouraging local communities to become actively engaged in their own decision-making processes, participatory planning creates opportunities for greater engagement with local issues. This study investigates the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) process within the Keinou Gram Panchayat located in the Bishnupur District of Manipur, India. It examines the extent to which communities are actively involved in local planning activities. Findings from this research indicate that, although the GPDP process provides institutionalised mechanisms such as the Gram Sabha to support and promote participatory planning, levels of community participation vary across different types of community group. This study contributes to a better understanding of grassroots-level planning practices in addition to providing a reminder of the importance of Participatory Planning for achieving sustainable, inclusive rural development.

**Keywords:** Participatory Planning, Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), Decentralisation, Gram Sabha, Rural Governance, Manipur

**Introduction:** The decentralization of democracy in India has been made possible by the emergence of participatory planning, which encourages the participation of local communities in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of development initiatives. The Constitution of India (Amendment 73) of 1992 created a significant change in the way that governance is practiced in India by authorizing Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to serve as self-governing institutions, creating a mechanism for the participation of the people at the local level. The Gram Panchayat Development Plan is an essential tool for incorporating the needs and priorities of local communities into a well-defined growth plan through participatory planning processes.

The GPDP links the planning of development in each sector (social, economic, infrastructure) while ensuring that there is coordination between the various centrally sponsored, state, and locally sponsored schemes available for development at the local level. Citizens (especially women, marginalised groups, and vulnerable sections of society) will play a vital role in decision-making, thereby providing a basis for strengthening local governance, increasing accountability, and securing rural sustainability through the GPDP. The GPDP has greater significance in the context of Manipur, given the state's socio-political conditions, ethnic diversity, and developmental difficulties. The Keinou Gram Panchayat, located in the Bishnupur district of Manipur, provides an ideal location for assessing the effectiveness of participatory planning at the grassroots level and evaluating how the GPDP process works in practice.

The GPDP implementation in Keinou Gram Panchayat's has faced several obstacles in practice, including limited citizen awareness, the lack of capacity of the Panchayat functionaries, inadequate financial resources and different

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levels of community participation. Consequently, it is necessary to analyse the GPDP process through empirical research to identify the extent of citizen participation, inclusivity of the planning process and effectiveness of the local governance systems.

**Objectives of the study:** The primary objective of this study is to analyse the process followed in preparation of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan of Keinou Gram Panchayat and assess the level and nature of people's participation in the GPDP process. This study also seeks to analyse the role of the Gram Sabha and Panchayat representatives in participatory planning.

**Review of literature:** Participatory planning is a form of local governance within the democratic decentralisation process in India, and many scholars believe that participatory planning facilitates community-level identification of need, prioritisation of development issues and the participation of individuals in the decision-making process thus enhancing democratic practices at a village level. Many researchers have looked at the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) as a vehicle for participatory planning. They conclude that GPDP is a plan that has been developed through the collective input of the community and is an integrated, comprehensive plan reflecting the collective aspirations and priorities of the local development. From the reports from the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, it is clear that GPDP provides an opportunity for the Gram Sabha members to be actively involved in both identifying their need and in the allocation of resources. Scholars such as Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) have stated that inclusive participation (especially from women and marginalised groups) results in improved development outcomes. However, other studies have suggested that due to social hierarchy, political power and administrative interference, genuine participatory planning processes may be undermined. From the literature reviewed, it is clear that GPDP is an area of considerable potential to enhance local governance and rural development. However, the success of GPDP will be dependent on active community participation, capacity building for Panchayat functionaries and an administrative framework supportive of community-level engagement. Nevertheless, currently available research does not provide any micro-level, empirical data on GPDP process for any specific Gram Panchayat in the state of Manipur. This study of Keinou Gram Panchayat is designed to provide a micro-analysis of both participatory planning and GPDP implementation at the grassroots level.

### **Research methodology**

**A. Sampling Techniques:** A multi-stage sampling method was employed.

- In the first stage, Keinou Gram Panchayat was selected purposively.
- In the second stage, villages within the Panchayat were selected to capture demographic and cultural diversity.
- In the third stage, households and respondents were selected using stratified random sampling, ensuring representation from various socio-economic categories, genders, and age groups.

The sample size may be determined using standard statistical procedures or based on data saturation in the case of qualitative components.

**B. Research Design:** By combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches into one research design, Mixed Method Research allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the different ways people participate in local governance than was possible with just quantitative or qualitative methods alone. This allows researchers to combine numerical data with the experience and understanding of community members and their experiences with government. The combination of the two types of data enhances the credibility of research findings and increases the accuracy of the presented findings. To collect primary

data, and to answer the research questions of this study, a structured questionnaire was created to assess various aspects of how the Gram Panchayat operates, such as how people are involved, what is the role of the Gram Sabha, how decisions are made and implemented, and how the GPDP has been executed. Within the context of this study, primary data were obtained through face-to-face interviews with selected respondents of the Keinou Gram Panchayat.

**Results and Discussion**

**A. About the Village:**

**Table1: Basic Profile of Keinou Gram Panchayat**

Sl. No.	Particulars	Details
1	Total Population (2011 Census)	7,191
2	Number of Revenue Villages	3
	Name of Revenue Villages	1)Yumnam Khunou, 2)Keinou Village, 3)Ngaikhom Khunou
3	Number of Wards	11
4	Total Geographical Area	1,610.16 hectares

Source: Gram Panchayat records, 2011 census

Keinou Gram Panchayat is a significant rural local body located in Bishnupur district of Manipur. As per the 2011 Census, the Gram Panchayat has a total population of 7,191, distributed across three revenue villages of Yumnam Khunou, Keinou Village, and Ngaikhom Khunou. Administratively, the Gram Panchayat is divided into 11 wards and the total geographical area of Keinou Gram Panchayat covers 1,610.16 hectares.

**Table 2: Yumnam Khunou Village**

Sl. No.	Particulars	Area / Number
1	Total Area	123.52 ha
2	Area under Dwelling	36.47 ha
3	Total Cultivable Area	87.05 ha
4	Total Irrigated Area	79.51 ha
5	Total Unirrigated Area	7.50 ha
6	Net Sown Area	80.05 ha
7	Total Households	457

Source: Gram Panchayat records

**Table 3: Keinou Village details**

Sl. No.	Particulars	Area / Number
1	Total Area	843.51 ha
2	Area under Dwelling	98.69 ha
3	Total Cultivable Area	744.82 ha
4	Total Irrigated Area	118.95 ha
5	Total Unirrigated Area	625.87 ha

Sl. No.	Particulars	Area / Number
6	Net Sown Area	721.82 ha
7	Total Households	1,637

Source: Gram Panchayat records

**Table 4: Ngaikhong Khunou Village details**

Sl. No.	Particulars	Area / Number
1	Total Area	643.13 ha
2	Area under Dwelling	24.37 ha
3	Total Cultivable Area	618.76 ha
4	Total Irrigated Area	93.93 ha
5	Total Unirrigated Area	524.83 ha
6	Net Sown Area	618.76 ha
7	Total Households	301

Source: Gram Panchayat records

Table 2,3 and 4 shows the land use and demographic characteristics of the revenue Villages under Keinou Gram Panchayat. The data here shows that the GP is predominantly agrarian in nature, with cultivable land forming the major part of the area. This data was collected in order to gain in-depth understanding of the GPs socio economic conditions.

**Table 5: Institutional, Administrative, and Service Profile of Keinou Gram Panchayat**

Sl. No.	Particulars	Details
1	Standing Committees in the GP	1. Production Committee 2. Amenities Committee 3. Social Justice Committee
2	Other Committees in the GP	1. Village and Water Sanitation Committee 2. Biodiversity Management Committee 3. Child Protection Committee
3	GP Infrastructure	Own building with separate toilet for women
4	Accounts Maintenance	GP Secretary maintains accounts; cheques signed by Secretary and Pradhan
5	Statutory Audit	Conducted by Accountant General, Local Fund Audit, and Manipur Social Audit Agency (MSAA);
6	Registers Maintained (Total 7)	1. MGNREGA 2. State Finance 3. Gram Sabha Meeting 4. Work Demand 5. Work Register 6. Assets Register 7. 15th FC

Sl. No.	Particulars	Details
7	Services Delivered by GP	Birth Certificate, Death Certificate, Residence Certificate, MGNREGA works, Trade Licence, Vehicle Registration, Maintenance/Improvement of Community Assets etc
8	Educational Institutions	Primary Schools: 1 Upper Primary Schools: 3 High Schools: 1
9	Health & Childcare	Health Sub-Centres: 2 Anganwadi Centres: 34
10	Self-Help Groups (SHGs)	12
11	Drinking Water Sources	Tap water and Water ATM
12	Markets / Haats	3
13	Electricity Access	95% of households have electric connection
15	Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies	13
16	NGOs / Youth Clubs / Voluntary Organizations	NGOs: 12

Source: Gram Panchayat records

Table 5 presents the institutional, administrative, and service profile of Keinou Gram Panchayat, highlighting its governance structure, infrastructure, and service delivery mechanisms. These institutional and service structures form the backbone of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), as they guide the identification of local priorities, allocation of resources, and implementation of sector-wise development programs, thereby translating participatory planning into tangible outcomes for the community.

### Gram Panchayat Development Process in Keinou GP

**Step 1: Formation of Gram Panchayat Planning Facilitating Team/Ward planning facilitating team:** In the process of establishing GPDP in Keinou Gram Panchayat, GPPFT and WPFT are formed at the same time as the GPDP Process is created. The primary function of these Teams of Planners is to facilitate an inclusive approach to the planning process, in which the entire community of the village can participate and contribute to the development of the GPDP. In addition to including elected members of the community, the planning committees also include local youth representatives, school teachers and members who represent Self-Help Groups (SHGs). The member composition of these committees also ensures that the views of the various marginalized groups of the community (including women and youth) are represented.

**Step 2: Environment creation and community mobilization:** The second step in the formation of Keinou GPDP Process involves establishing a supportive environment and mobilizing the community to participate in the GPDP. In order to ensure a good understanding of what the Gram Panchayat Development Plan is, why it exists, and how it can be of benefit to the Village, awareness building activities are held in partnership with different Government Departments and also with the assistance and support of Elected Representatives.

**Step 3: Situation Analysis:** The elected officials of the Gram Panchayat together with the elected representatives prepare the development status report. From the previous GPDP documents and record information, this report

will methodically identify gaps in development, services, infrastructure and eventual outcomes of development. The report creates an overview of the overall development of the village of the village and highlights the areas which are lacking development to help with future planning of the GPDP process.

**Step 4: Data collection:** The primary as well as secondary data is collected ward-wise by the members elected for the wards to ensure that the Gram Panchayat Development Plan is evidence based. This would allow the planning to be done in a manner that is accurate and localized, reflecting the true needs and resources available in the ward, thereby adding to the relevance and effectiveness of the GPDP itself.

**Step 5: Mahila Sabha/ Bal Sabha:** The Bal Sabha, a forum for children below 18 years of age, is conducted by the elected representatives in Keinou Government School with the school children and teachers. It provides an opportunity for children to share their concerns and priorities so that their needs can be identified and incorporated into the Gram Panchayat Development Plan. The Mahila Sabha which is a dedicated forum for women residents of the Gram Panchayat, is also organized in Keinou GP to ensure their active participation in local governance and development planning. In Keinou GP, these meetings are convened by the Women elected representatives and specifically involves leaders of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) as well as other women stakeholders from the community.

**Step 6: Organization of Ward Sabha:** Ward Sabha is organized at the ward level in Ward Sabha by ERs to initiate awareness for GPDP in the shape of a Focus Group Discussion where they discuss their problems and things they want to incorporate in GPDP. Through the Ward Sabha the also discussed the things to be incorporated to resolve confusion among ERs.

**Step 7: Resource Envelope:** Resource constraint is a major systemic deficiency hampering the ability of Keinou GP in effective and timely delivery of services. On set of GPDP process all the available resources like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), 15th Finance Commission, Own Source revenue and other State grants are estimated by the Elected Representatives and Officials of the Gram Panchayat.

**Step 8: Organizing Special Gram Sabha:** A Special Gram Sabha is organized to discuss the progress of the GPDP for the ongoing year, including the current developmental status, requirements, and priorities of the village. In this Gram Sabha, various stakeholders and concerned State departments are invited, enabling the departments to present their available schemes to the public for consideration and possible inclusion in the GPDP. The Village Prosperity and Resilience Plans (VPRPs) prepared by Self-Help Groups (SHGs) may also be discussed, keeping in view the availability of funds within the resource envelope of the Gram Panchayat.

**Step 9: Draft preparation of GPDP:** A draft GPDP is prepared, indicating the works identified under each focus area along with the corresponding fund allocations and timelines for completion. A special meeting of the Gram Panchayat is then convened to discuss the draft, incorporate necessary modifications, and finalize the plan before submitting the final GPDP.

**Step 10: Finalization of GPDP:** To finalize the process, the GPDP document containing project-wise details is placed before the Gram Sabha for approval in the presence of officials from State departments, community members, Panchayat elected representatives, and other Panchayat officials. All issues and concerns are discussed

in the Gram Sabha, and upon approval, the GPDP is finalized and submitted to the Secretariat for uploading on the portal.

**Level and nature of Community participation in GPDP Process:** From the above shown GPDP process we can see that the level and nature of community participation in the GPDP process of Keinou Gram Panchayat can be described as consultative, structured, and inclusive in design, though uneven in practice.

Community participation is facilitated at multiple stages of the GPDP process through institutional platforms such as the Ward Sabha, Mahila Sabha, Bal Sabha, and Gram Sabha, which provide spaces for different social groups to articulate their needs and priorities. At the ward level, Ward Sabhas function as the primary forum for identifying local issues through focused group discussions, enabling residents to propose sector-wise development works for inclusion in the GPDP. The organization of Mahila Sabhas and Bal Sabhas further reflects an effort to include women and children in planning, with Self-Help Groups (SHGs) playing an important role in articulating livelihood, social welfare, and resilience-related concerns. Community members also participate during Special Gram Sabhas, where developmental progress, available resources, and departmental schemes are discussed in the presence of State department officials.

However, the intensity of participation varies across social groups, with relatively higher involvement from elected representatives, SHG members, and active community leaders, while sections such as daily wage workers, marginal farmers, and less-informed households exhibit limited engagement. Overall, while the GPDP process in Keinou Gram Panchayat demonstrates a participatory framework with multiple entry points for community involvement, challenges related to awareness, capacity, and resource constraints continue to influence the depth and effectiveness of participation.

**Table 6: Awareness of GPDP and Participation in Gram Sabha by Gender and Age Group**

Age Group (Years)	Gender	Awareness of GPDP (%)	Attendance in Gram Sabha (%)
<b>18–30</b>	<b>Male</b>	20	20
	<b>Female</b>	25	32
<b>31–45</b>	<b>Male</b>	55	50
	<b>Female</b>	75	85
<b>46–60</b>	<b>Male</b>	55	50
	<b>Female</b>	85	85

Source: Field Survey, Keinou Gram Panchayat

Results from Table 6 indicate that there are differences in the awareness of GPDP and participation in Gram Sabha and its gender-wise and age-wise distributions in Keinou Gram Panchayat. It is evident that all ages of female participants possess a higher level of knowledge and are more likely to participate than males, particularly those aged 31-60 years which exhibit the greatest participation rates (75%-85% for female participants compared to 50%-55% male). Young adults, who fall into the category of 18-30, also have a slight edge over their male counterparts with regard to both the level of awareness and attendance to the Gram Sabha. The reasons for this include the increased awareness and participation of women due to continued support from the Mahila Sabha,

SHGs, and other initiatives to mobilize communities to increase women's participation at both state and local levels. These findings suggest that men and youth need greater outreach and engagement in order to increase their participation as well.

**Conclusion:** This study highlights the importance of community involvement for planning in the context of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) at Keinou Gram Panchayat of Bishnupur District, Manipur. The GPDP exercise offers a number of institutional platforms like Ward Sabhas, Mahila Sabhas, Bal Sabhas, and Gram Sabhas where the people, meaning women and Self-Help Group members in particular, have the opportunity to express their needs. Based on the analysis of gender- and age-wise participation, it has been found that women belonging to the age group of 31-60 have adequate awareness about the GPDP and actively participate in the meetings of the Gram Sabha. This indicates the effectiveness of specific mobilization activities. However, the factors of lack of awareness in the male and youth populations and limitations of capacities of the Panchayat functionaries and lack of resources still impact the scope and effectiveness of people-centric planning.

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