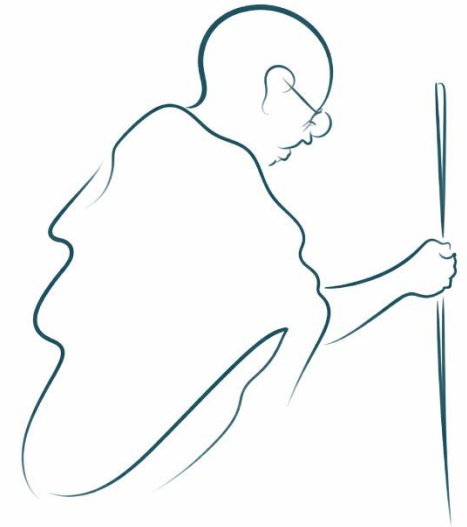


“True democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre. It has to be worked from below by the people of every village...”

In the true democracy of India, the unit is the village.”





Panchayat Saathi: Algorithms for Gram Panchayats

Strengthening Grassroots Democracy

Gram Panchayats power rural India, translating democracy into development, services, and outcomes

Gram Panchayats (GP) –serving over 900 million rural Indians across ~250,000 local governments—anchor last-mile governance, driving development planning, service delivery, accountability, and resource mobilization at the village level.



Build Public Works

Identify village needs, formulate the annual GP Development Plan (GDP), and execute public works across 29 constitutionally mandated subject areas (roads, water, sanitation, education, health etc.)



Process Documents & Schemes

Process government documents (e.g. birth certificate, ID cards), identify eligible beneficiaries for welfare schemes, process applications, and track delivery



Monitor Social Services

Sit on school and health committees, raise grievances when teachers don't show up or health workers are absent



Access Resources & Funding

Generate revenue and negotiate upward with Block and District offices for funds and approvals

CONTEXT: WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Gram Panchayats are the foundation of inclusive, last-mile governance in rural India & among the world's oldest & largest forms of democracy

Gram Panchayats anchor local governance for millions—enabling direct participation, inclusive representation, and accountable decision-making closest to citizens.



Drive Consequential Decisions
Shape outcomes that directly impact daily life—from roads and water to schools and welfare



Anchor Inclusive Representation
Among the most inclusive democratic systems globally, with mandated representation for women (33–50%) and marginalized communities



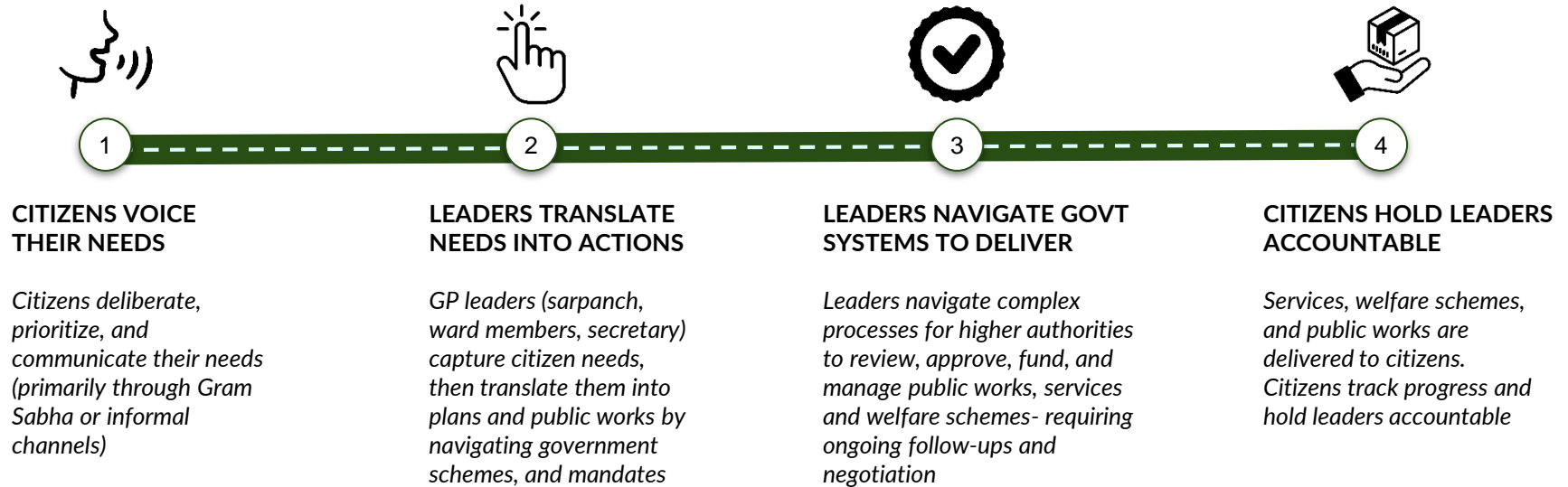
Enable Participatory Democracy
Citizens deliberate—not just vote—through Gram Sabhas and other forums to collectively shape local priorities



Accountable Governance
Most accessible tier of governance, with leaders living amongst their communities and directly accountable to citizens

Citizen needs translate into action through the Gram Panchayat system

Citizens share their needs, local leaders translate them into action, government systems deliver services—and citizens ultimately evaluate their leaders through ongoing feedback and elections.



However, at each stage, structural and systemic constraints shape how effectively citizen voices are translated into outcomes

The journey from citizen voice to service delivery is inherently complex—spanning multiple actors, layers of governance, and interdependent processes.



CITIZENS VOICE THEIR NEEDS

- Gram Sabha compresses village voices into short time windows (3-4 hours)
- Participation is uneven; marginalized groups and working citizens are often excluded
- Inputs rely on leaders accurately capturing and representing them

LEADERS TRANSLATE NEEDS INTO ACTIONS

- Interpretation of needs can be subjective, shaping what gets prioritized
- Translating needs to action is complex - high cognitive and administrative load: 29 constitutional mandates, ~42 schemes across 21 ministries

LEADERS NAVIGATE GOVT SYSTEMS TO DELIVER

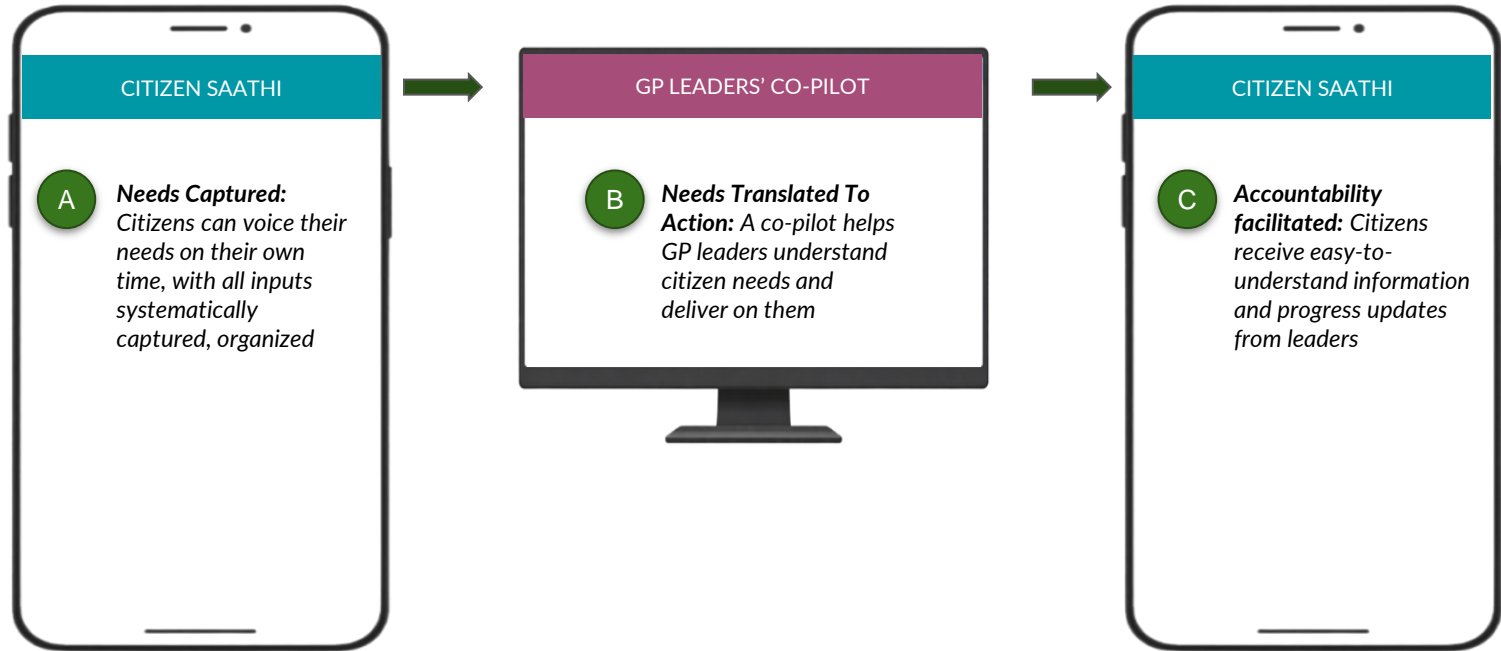
Complex planning cycles, compliance requirements, and reporting structures

CITIZENS HOLD LEADERS ACCOUNTABLE

- High information asymmetry limits effective citizen oversight
- Grievance redressal and feedback loops remain weak or underutilized

A multi-pronged AI solution designed for both citizens and Gram Panchayat leaders can remove complexity on both sides

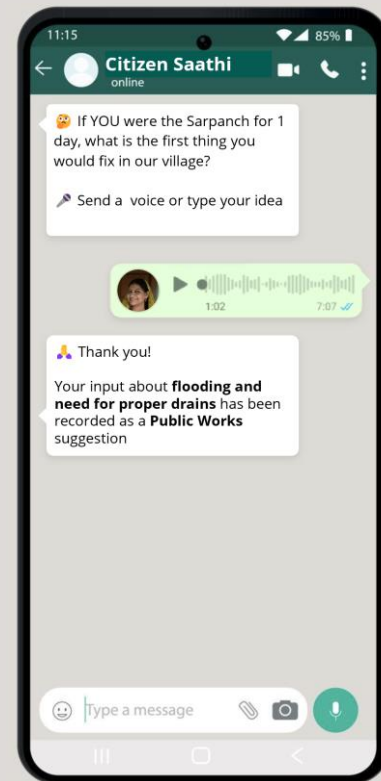
By simplifying how citizens express needs, how leaders act on them, and ensuring citizens receive clear progress updates, this solution reduces system complexity and strengthens end-to-end governance.



CITIZEN SAATHI: NEEDS CAPTURE



Today: Citizens attend around two Gram Sabhas a year to voice their needs



Tomorrow: Citizen Saathi prompts over Whatsapp and citizens can leave a voice note

The Citizen's Saathi captures needs through a three-step process: enabling inputs anytime, categorizing them, and prioritizing them

Research shows that even limited engagement—two three-hour meetings a year—can improve [welfare targeting by 25%](#) (a proxy for governance). Further, local politicians are often unaware of citizen preferences; providing this information increases policy alignment by [14.4% overall and 20% for women's priorities](#). Expanding this to continuous, anytime citizen input could unlock significantly greater governance impact.

CAPTURE

Most citizens don't know what they're entitled to ask for - **HCD-driven prompts will be designed to surface latent needs**, not just obvious ones. They will be **captured via voice or text** (WhatsApp), with SHGs enabling participation for those without phone access.

In a future phase 2, we'll **innovate on different prompting strategies** by developing a benchmark and crowding in innovation

CATEGORISE

Unstructured voice inputs are converted into structured, tabular data and **categorized into public works** (e.g., need a hand pump), **social benefits** (e.g., need a ration card), **service challenges** (e.g., teacher absenteeism), and other needs.

PRIORITISE

In phase 1, this will be simple - e.g. based on the **number of times a need is mentioned**.

In a future phase 2, we will **incorporate approaches for more inclusion, deliberation, and consensus building**, to help citizens prioritize needs.

GP LEADER'S CO-PILOT

GP Dashboard

- Dashboard
- Identify Needs
- Needs Fulfillment
- Find Schemes
- Autofill GPDP
- Grievance Redressal
- Scheme Application

Settings

Search

Needs Fulfillment > Drainage Systems > **Planning Drains**

Plan Drains for your region

Select region for the detailed plan

STEP 1:
Select your region

From:

To:

STEP 2:
Select drain type

For your location will need the following:

*In a Panchayat like Phulera, constructing 100 meters of piped nalla requires around **7 workers, 15-20 days**. Workers include **1 supervisor** who costs Rs **1000/day**, **2 skilled** workers who cost Rs **700/day** and **4 VBG-RAM-G** workers who cost Rs **300/day***

You may click on any of these assumptions to update them

Duration: 15-20 weeks

Logistics to consider: xxx

Total Cost: ₹40-50 lakhs

- Labour Needed: ₹27-36 lakhs
- Materials required: ₹10-15 lakhs

Process and Timeline:

Months (M)	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
xxx	xxx				
xxx			xxx		
xxx				xx	

Please note that these details may vary for your location. Please double check based on your region and needs.

Auto Fill GPDP

Available Schemes:

1. Swachh Bharat Mission

Flagship rural sanitation initiative to promote sustainable sanitation in rural India

- *Funding: Phulera may be able to access Rs 15L - 20L for materials*
[View application form here](#)

2. VBG-RAM-G

Flagship rural employment initiative for unskilled workers

- *Funding: Phulera may be able to access Rs 10L - 12L for VBG-RAM-G workers*
[View application form here](#)

Tomorrow:

GP leaders use a co-pilot that helps them identify needs, and deliver on them.

In this mockup, a leader is planning drainage infrastructure for her panchayat.

She selects the start and end location on Google Maps, chooses the drain type, and the Co-pilot generates a detailed plan – including cost estimates, workforce requirements, timelines, and available government schemes. She can adjust any assumption, and when ready, auto-fill the necessary paperwork directly.

GP leaders' co-pilot enables data-driven decisions, resource navigation, and effective service delivery

Elected GP leaders already align resources more closely with citizen priorities ([0.35% higher allocation for every 10% increase in preference](#))—what's missing is the information to act on this effectively.

IDENTIFY NEEDS

Synthesize **qualitative** inputs from the Citizen Saathi, combined with **quantitative** data from administrative sources, remote sensing, and forecasts (e.g., disease predictors, climate risk, agricultural advisories), to enable GP leaders to **make evidence-based decisions** rather than relying on intuition.

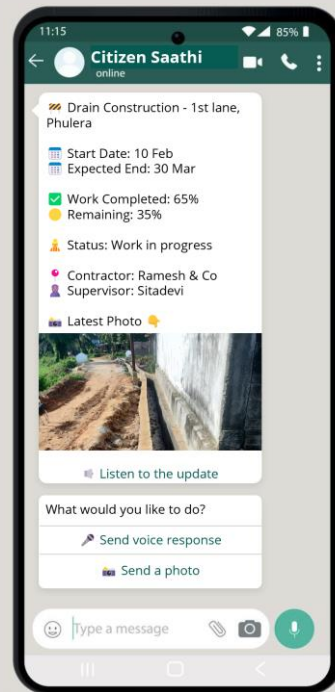
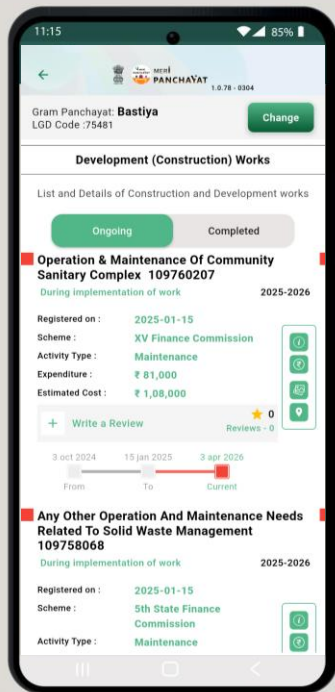
ACCESS RESOURCES

Develop a knowledge base of government orders, schemes, programs, and funding sources, to enable GP leaders to search for resources via a chatbot, receive proactive recommendations for high-priority needs with execution planning support, and access clear welfare scheme details (e.g., eligibility, benefits) to prioritize citizen enrollment.

NAVIGATE SYSTEMS

Support GP leaders in completing government forms (e.g., GPDP) to access resources, navigating grievance redressal pathways, and guiding scheme applications for eligible citizens.

CITIZEN SAATHI: ACCOUNTABILITY



Today: The government's Meri Panchayat app tracks progress against commitments, but its interface reflects the underlying complexity of government systems – making it difficult for most citizens to interpret.

Tomorrow: Citizen Saathi delivers easy-to-understand progress updates via WhatsApp - with voice notes, photos, and simple status summaries that citizens can interact with and respond to.

The Citizen's Saathi puts accountability in citizen's hands by providing easy-to-understand information and progress updates

Studies on transparency show mixed results, but [research](#) shows that this is driven by the gap between information being available and being interpretable - exactly what the Citizen's Saathi targets, giving citizens specific, verified information that makes accountability stick.

PROGRESS UPDATES

Provide easy-to-understand voice/text notes that citizens can interact with to understand progress on public works and social benefits. This information already exists in apps like Meri Panchayat, but are difficult to navigate.

For social benefit applicants, mention application status and send alerts when there is a status change (where this information is available)

INFORMATION

Send targeted alerts for new social benefits or updates to existing benefits and share searchable summaries of benefits available and benefits availed in the Gram Panchayat

This system then becomes a platform for continuous innovation in Grassroots Democracy

Phase 1



Citizens' Saathi



GP Leaders' Co-pilot

Phase 2 – A platform for innovation

The system built in phase-1 can become a platform for algorithmic innovation – to prototype ideas that improve democracy and governance.

Early examples of areas of innovation

Deliberation and consensus – Improve how citizens [deliberate](#), build [consensus](#), and make decisions - drawing on a rich body of existing algorithmic research

Smarter Prompting – The quality of citizen input depends heavily on how questions are asked. We can develop a prompting benchmark and open this up to outside innovators to crowd in innovation.

Nudging – Draw on the AI and behavioral economics literature to design timely, evidence-based nudges for citizens and leaders

Learning – Experiment with new approaches to learning, such as clustering similar GPs into peer networks to learn from each other

Research – The platform generates rich, unstructured data on how village democracies function, enabling applications of novel methods that answer, rigorously, what works in grassroots governance and why.

Pilot Implementation Plan for Phase 1

Pilot Location

We'll begin in Uttar Pradesh, where Hindi is widely spoken and we can therefore leverage more mature Hindi-capable LLMs. We'll also launch a small pilot in Odisha given the strong potential for engaging with multiple government departments there.

Frontline Organizations

Jan Sahas (anchor organization), Rosa Sansthan, Vigyan Foundation, Gramin Vikas Sewa Sansthan, and SATHI are the frontline organizations for this project. They each bring unique strengths and collectively work closely with 2000+ Gram Panchayats, across 17 districts in Uttar Pradesh. We'll start by onboarding 20 panchayats each in UP and Odisha for prototyping our solution followed by 160 panchayats in UP for pilot evaluations.

Implementation Plan

1. **Conduct needs discovery** (HCD-led) – Human Centered Design team + frontline partners engage GP leaders and citizens to deeply understand workflows, pain points, and decision contexts
2. **Define product strategy** (cross-team alignment) - Project management team synthesizes inputs from HCD, frontline team, and works with algorithms team to identify feasible and high-impact product directions
3. **Prototype and test with GPs** - HCD + frontline teams co-create and test multiple feature pathways with Panchayats to identify what works in practice
 - To begin, we'll independently prototype, test, and refine each arm of the solution – Citizen Saathi Needs Capture, GP Co-Pilot, and Citizen Saathi Accountability – in 10-12 Panchayats each
 - For the GP Co-Pilot, we'll start with three high-value resource needs, test, and then scale to other needs
4. **Build core system** - Algorithms team develops the system based on validated features and real-world usage insights
5. **Deploy and Evaluate** – We will prototype the solution in 40 pilot GPs (~10-12 GPs per arm), then scale to ~160 GP where we will evaluate (potentially using RCTs) before scaling further
6. **Drive adoption & change management** - HCD + frontline teams design and implement strategies to ensure uptake, usability, and sustained engagement

250,000 village democracies. 900 Million citizens. 3 Million elected representatives – more than any democratic system on earth.

Every year, hundreds of millions of decisions are made at this level that directly shape whether a family has a home, a child has a teacher, a farmer has water.

This is the most consequential layer of governance in India.

Village governance in India has a remarkable history of invention - from the deliberative assemblies developed over 3000 years ago, to the landmark 1992 law that ensured women and marginalized communities would govern, to the digital apps of today.

Each era brought new ideas and we believe AI represents the next such moment – not a disruption, but a continuation of a tradition of innovation that strengthens democracy and governance