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ROLE OF VB-G RAM G IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Getting local communities to adopt and implement the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) depends largely on the availability of local governments that are empowered and supported by sound laws and policies through decentralisation. In India, the legal empowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, is a significant step toward local democratic governance. The concept of VB-G Ram G is a model that describes the normative and functional aspects of village governance, which, in addition to constitutional values, include the rule of law, participatory democracy, and sustainable development as main features. The present chapter deals with the legal implications of the VB-G Ram G for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from constitutional mandates, statutes, and village-level governance mechanisms. The research combines legal and policy analysis to determine how VB-G Ram G contributes to poverty eradication, education, gender equality, environmental protection, decent work, climate change, and strong institutions, among other key SDGs. Finally, it is argued that through operationalising the constitutional goals stated in the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy, and local self-governance provisions, VB-G Ram G acts as a legal instrument for sustainable development in India.

Keywords: *Sustainable Development Goals, Value-Based and Vibrant Gram Governance, Panchayati Raj, Constitutional Law, Decentralisation, Rural Governance.*

Introduction

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the United Nations in 2015 was an unprecedented and bold statement of global commitment to inclusive, impartial, and sustainable development through cooperation.¹ Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals reflect the idea that sustainable development cannot be measured solely by economic prosperity or growth, and it will need the joint cooperation and efforts of society to overcome the challenges of eradicating poverty, bringing people closer, safeguarding nature, empowering communities through the establishment of democratic institutions, and offering equal opportunities to all.² The SDGs provide a universally acknowledged set of guiding principles for development; Though, the actual success of these Goals heavily depends on governance systems at the grassroots level within the society and at higher levels of state governments. In the Indian context, the country's constitutional decentralisation plan establishes an important legal framework that supports the idea of grassroots sustainable development. Through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, constitutional status has been secured for the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), one of the most vital democratic transformations in the country's governance system.³ The introduction of Part IX (Articles 243 to 243-O) and the 11th Schedule to the Indian Constitution, through a Constitutional Amendment, empowered rural grassroots units to exercise self-governance in development, promote the principle of social justice, and plan at the local level. These constitutional mandates reflect a democratic decentralisation approach that supports the active participation of the village community and other stakeholders in decision-making on local development matters.

Based on these constitutional provisions, VB-G Ram G (Value-Based and Vibrant Gram Governance) represents a new form of rural governance that combines constitutional values, ethical bureaucracy, participation-based democracy, openness, and good governance practices, as well as sustainable development at the local level. VB-G Ram G goes against the grain when they just use Gram Panchayats as a tool for implementing government schemes, whereas the model sees them as local institutions capable of promoting participative governance, strengthening civic mobilisation, providing better, efficient delivery of public services on one

¹ Xiaoxi Li, Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: An Appeal of Global Cooperation for Building Green Civilization, Green Civilization (2020).

² Stephanie Dawson, UN Sustainable Development Goals (2021).

³ Dr. Nagendrappa K.T., Transforming Grassroots Democracy: The Evolution and Impact of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, International Journal of Novel Research and Development (2023).

side, and encouraging people-friendly ecological development on the other.⁴ A lot of the SDGs like the eradication of the event of extreme poverty (SDG 1), access to good education (SDG 4), equity of men and women (SDG 5), ensuring access to clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), decent work (SDG 8), tackling climate change (SDG 13), and building peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16)⁵ can only be achieved through the cooperation and involvement of the local governing structures. Planning at the village level, the involvement of locals in the process, social responsibility, environmental protection, and the development of policies that are fair to everyone are the major building blocks of a sustainable future that centralised decision-makers cannot implement alone.

Understanding VB-G Ram G: Conceptual Framework and Principles

The Village-based governance model VB-G Ram G (Value-Based and Vibrant Gram Governance) embodies a forward-thinking approach in which village self-government is reinforced by constitutional values, a sense of moral responsibility, people's involvement in the decision-making process, openness, responsibility, and environmentally safe development.⁶ While rural local government under conventional methods mainly focuses on running government programs and carrying out its administrative work, VB-G Ram G,⁷ in essence, offers a broader perspective on rural governance by making it sensitive to community problems and aligned with democratic principles at the national level and with sustainable development.

One of the most fundamental aspects of VB-G Ram G is its commitment to value-based governance. At the level of village governance, the system of management should not only uphold democratic processes but also respect constitutional principles, take ethical considerations into account, serve the public good, and be fair and transparent in its dealings. These principles are more than just high moral ideals; they form the basis of our country's constitutional philosophy.⁸ The Preamble to the Constitution enlists justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity as the core values governing society, while the DPSP exhorts the government to promote social welfare, reduce inequalities, and ensure the equitable allocation of resources.

⁴ Anne-Sophie Jung et al., Rule-Breaking and Rulemaking: Governance of the Antibiotic Value Chain in Rural and Peri-Urban India, 14 Antibiotics (2025).

⁵ V. Herrera, Reconciling global aspirations and local realities: Challenges facing the Sustainable Development Goals for water and sanitation, World Development (2019).

⁶ D. P, G. S. & Satheeshkumar M., Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevilka Mission (Gramin): Vb-G Ram G in India, International Journal of Science, Strategic Management and Technology (2026).

⁷ Rashmi Tuli, MGNREGA (Now VB-G RAM G act) and RURAL livelihoods: A Haryana-I.

⁸ Aji Baskoro, Strengthening Good Village Governance Strategy: Transparency, Accountability, and Inclusive Rural Development, Bestuurskunde: Journal of Governmental Studies (2025).

That means value-based governance is about village units not only performing what they are supposed to do by law, but doing so in a way that supports constitutionally mandated goals rather than merely ticking items off an administrative list.

Another important pillar of VB-G Ram G is *participatory democracy*.⁹ Democratic decentralisation under the Constitution envisages citizens as active participants in governance rather than passive beneficiaries of government programmes. The Gram Sabha serves as the institutional mechanism through which villagers collectively participate in planning, monitoring, and evaluating developmental activities. Effective participation strengthens transparency, enhances public trust, improves accountability, and enables local communities to influence decisions directly affecting their social and economic well-being.¹⁰ Transparency and accountability constitute equally significant components of the model. Sustainable governance requires that public resources be utilised efficiently and that decision-making processes remain open to public scrutiny. Mechanisms such as social audits, public disclosure of financial records, citizen participation in Gram Sabha meetings, and institutional grievance redressal help reduce corruption and improve administrative efficiency. These governance practices not only strengthen public confidence in local institutions but also facilitate effective implementation of developmental programmes designed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The concept also promotes **inclusive governance**, recognising that development must benefit all sections of society without discrimination. Constitutional provisions relating to reservation for women and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Panchayati Raj Institutions have significantly enhanced the representational character of local governance. VB-G Ram G builds upon these constitutional safeguards by encouraging meaningful participation of marginalised communities, women, youth, and other vulnerable groups in local decision-making. Inclusive governance ensures that development policies reflect local priorities and help reduce social and economic inequalities within rural communities. Environmental sustainability forms another essential dimension of VB-G Ram G. Rural local bodies increasingly play a critical role in water conservation, sanitation, waste management, biodiversity protection, climate resilience,

⁹ A. Bua & Sonia Bussu, Between governance-driven democratisation and democracy-driven governance: Explaining changes in participatory governance in the case of Barcelona, *European Journal of Political Research* (2020).

¹⁰ N. Srikanth & P. T. Rao, An Assessment of Needs of Rural People for Economic Development and Social Justice: A Case Study on the Role of Gram Sabha in Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh, 38 *Journal of Reproduction and Development* (2019).

and natural resource management. Through effective village planning and community participation, local governance institutions can significantly help balance developmental needs with environmental protection.

Constitutional and Statutory Framework Supporting VB-G Ram G

The role of VB-G Ram G as a model of value-based and vibrant village governance hinges First and foremost on the constitutional and statutory setup of India dealing with decentralisation of administration. Although the term "VB-G Ram G" is never explicitly mentioned in the Constitution or any Act for that matter, its fundamental ideas like democratic decentralisation, participatory governance accountability social justice, and sustainable development are all part and parcel of the concept of local self-government expressed or implied through the constitutional language. The legal regime for Panchayati Raj Institutions offers an institutional platform for carrying out those ideals at the local level.¹¹

A lot, the village self-governance power is rooted in the Constitution at Article 40 in the section of Directive Principles of State Policy.¹² This directive asks the State to constitute the village panchayats and entrust them sufficient authority and powers to make it possible for the panchayats to be functioning as units of self-governance. While Directive Principles do not have a legal basis and are not implementable by a law court, they have guided the State policy and inspired major legislative and constitutional changes for decentralised governance systems.¹³ Besides, the directive reflects that the constitution wants the democratisation to be not only a representative democracy but also to include rural communities' self-governance which is an important and integral aspect of the whole scheme of things.

This constitutional vision has largely been backed by the Seventy-third Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 that granted constitutional recognition to the Panchayati Raj

¹¹Ranjeet Kumar, Impact of The Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill, 2025 (commonly VB-G RAM G Bill, 2025) on Employment Generation in Rural India, International Research Journal on Advanced Engineering and Management (IRJAEM) (2026).

¹² **Article 40 – Organisation of village panchayats**
The State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.
This article provides the foundation for local self-governance in rural India by mandating the creation and empowerment of village panchayats.

¹³ Ranjeet Kumar, Impact of The Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill, 2025 (commonly VB-G RAM G Bill, 2025) on Employment Generation in Rural India, International Research Journal on Advanced Engineering and Management (IRJAEM) (2026).

Institutions. The Amendment introduced Part IX, Articles 243-243-O,¹⁴ into the Constitution providing a strong legal and constitutional backing to democratic decentralisation. And, it created a three-tier Panchayati Raj system, ensured regular elections, and made provisions for the reservation of seats for women and Members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, set up State Finance Commissions and State Election Commissions, and contained several decentralised financial and administrative measures. The inclusion in constitution of these democratic decentralisation measures is the most important factor that led to the shift in the nature of the Panchayats from merely a statutory bodies into a constitutionally recognized instrument of local democracy giving them, in this way, greater legitimacy, permanence and accountability.¹⁵

One of the key provisions of the Seventy-third Amendment is the Eleventh Schedule, which lists twenty-nine spheres that Panchayats may be given charge of managing. These subjects are agriculture, land development, small scale irrigation, animal husbandry fisheries social forestry, drinking water supply, rural housing, roads construction, poverty alleviation programmes education health sanitation women and child development, social welfare, public distribution system including of food and medicines, and management of communal assets.¹⁶

The constitutional commitment to value-based governance is further reflected in the **Preamble**, which resolves to secure justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity for all citizens. These constitutional ideals provide the normative foundation for ethical governance at every level of administration, including village institutions. Likewise, the **Fundamental Rights**, particularly Articles 14, 15, and 21, guarantee equality before law, prohibit discrimination, and protect the right to life and dignity. These rights require local authorities to exercise their statutory powers fairly, transparently, and without arbitrary discrimination, thereby reinforcing the principles of accountable and inclusive governance embodied in VB-G Ram G.

The Directive Principles of State Policy constitute another element of enhancing the legal foundation for sustainable village governance. These principles act as a guideline for

¹⁴ The **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992** introduced **Part IX** (Articles 243 to 243-O) into the Constitution of India. This amendment provided a constitutional framework for the structure, powers, and functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions (village-level local self-governments) across the country.

¹⁵ Dr. Sanjeev Gangwar, Role and struggle of women entrepreneurship in rural development in Panchayati Raj, Knowledgeable Research: A Multidisciplinary Journal (2023).

¹⁶ V. R. Krishna & Uddagatti Venkatesha, Political Dimensions of Weaker Sections Welfare in Local Self Government in India: A Study, Journal of Social Science Research (2019).

legislation, while the constitutional guarantees can serve an actual legal basis. One such guarantee for a constitutionally protected right is the welfare of people by guaranteeing justice through social ordering (Article 38).¹⁷ Another important point stressed here is equity in material resources and protection of the society from economic imbalance (Article 39).¹⁸ In the meanwhile, Articles 41 and 46¹⁹ focus more on the weakest sections and their rights of livelihood education public assistance, educational as well as economic interest. Article 48A²⁰ is In particular a point where the environmental protection aspect has been given constitutional recognition. It places on the State a duty to not only protect and enhance the environment but to also guarantee the forests and wildlife of the country. Together, these directives of the Constitution set the stage and give a legal backdrop for the fusion of local governance of social justice, environmental conservation, and inclusive developmental planning.

VB-G Ram G is quite aligned with these duties, the most prominent being to make administration responsive, transparent, and community-centric. Apart from the laws for Panchayati Raj, various different laws that cover specific areas also emphasize the work of the local governance in delivering a sustainable development. These are: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)²¹ that delegates considerable duties to the Gram Panchayats to not only plan but also implement the work of rural employment through the programme. MGNREGA aims a great deal at poverty reduction and livelihood security. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE)²² is all about

¹⁷ INDIA CONST. art. 38, cl. 1.

INDIA CONST. art. 38, cl. 2.

¹⁸ INDIA CONST. art. 39(a).

¹⁹ **Article 41 – Right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases:** This article directs the State to make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education, and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness, and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want, within the limits of its economic capacity and development.

Article 46 – Promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections: This article directs the State to promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, particularly the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

²⁰ INDIA CONST. art. 48A. This article directs the State to endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.

²¹ Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, No. 42 of 2005, INDIA CODE (2005).

²² Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, No. 35 of 2009, INDIA CODE (2009).

Explanation:

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), enacted in 2009, guarantees free and compulsory education to all children aged 6 to 14 years in India. It lays down the duties and responsibilities of the government, local authorities, and parents to ensure that every child receives an elementary education.

universal elementary education while ²³focuses on raising the level of food security through decentralised implementation of various mechanisms.

In fact, the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986 also works hand in hand with the local authorities by encouraging the responsibilities of local communities in promoting the conservation of environment, managing waste, and using natural resources that is sustainable.²⁴ This legal system and constitutional structure have found recognition of judicial interpretation also. Constitutional provisions on local government have so received judicial backing by way of the recognition of the importance of democratic decentralisation and active governance. In the Indian Constitution alone, such a form of local self-government as panchayati raj institutions has been given a constitutional status and has been understood in a broader sense by the courts that the concept of local administration is an integral element of democratic administration. Judiciary has also continuously pointed out that when interpreting constitutional provision about panchayats, one should make a judgment which would reinforce people-based or grassroots democracy besides enabling participation of the local community in governance of an efficient level in different ways.²⁵

Role of VB-G Ram G in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) acknowledge that achieving sustainable development is possible only with governance systems that are effectively inclusive participatory accountable and responsive to the needs of the local communities. Even though SDGs were accepted as a global development strategy, their implementation relies heavily upon domestic legislative structures and grassroots governance arrangements. In India, the constitutional regulation of the Panchayati Raj Institutions offers the formal background for carrying out national pledges in village-level works. Inside that structure, VB-G Ram G model of governance raises the Gram Panchayats' abilities to carry out constitutional orders while pursuing sustainable development by community involvement and value-based administration.

²³ National Food Security Act, No. 20 of 2013, INDIA CODE (2013). The National Food Security Act, 2013 aims to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two-thirds of India's population as a matter of legal right. It seeks to ensure food and nutritional security by making the right to food a legal entitlement for eligible individuals.

²⁴ M. I. F. Rahayu, Anthony Susanto & Amad Sudiro, The Meaning of the Principle of Local Wisdom in Management and Protection Law Environment Indonesia, Journal of Lifestyle and SDGs Review (2024)

²⁵ Rosalind O'Hanlon, In the Presence of Witnesses: Petitioning and judicial 'publics' in western India, circa 1600–1820, 53 Modern Asian Studies (2019).

Poverty Alleviation and Inclusive Rural Development

The elimination of poverty still remains among the primary goals of sustainable development. District rural bodies are crucial in locating the households that are the most vulnerable economically, putting welfare measures into work, creating opportunities for jobs, and making sure the development benefits go evenly. With the help of community-based decision making in the planning phase, VB-G Ram G increases the efficiency of projects which are designed to alleviate poverty and also economically integrate.²⁶

The base of these activities is the two constitutional Articles, viz. Article 38 which instructs the Government to remove inequalities and to promote social welfare, and Article 39 calling for a balanced distribution of the material resources of the community. Besides that, statutory schemes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA) give Gram Panchayats more scope for doing the work they are supposed to do, for example, in providing employment, rural infrastructure development, and increasing livelihood security. To ensure that VB-G Ram G leads up to the reduction of leakages in delivery of social welfare and fair access of public resources,²⁷ VB-G Ram G has adopted an approach that would lead to transparency in selection of beneficiaries and social audit.

Education, Health and Human Development

The promotion of sustainable development necessitates regular spending on different spheres such as education healthcare nutrition, sanitation, and public welfare. Village governance institutions play a strategic role in the implementation of educational programmes, public health initiatives, promotion of sanitation, monitoring, and proper functioning of government welfare schemes. Article 21A recognizing education as a fundamental right while Article 21 protecting human dignity, besides directives under the Constitution providing for public health and education, form the constitutional/legal basis for local authorities to act in these matters.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

One of the most significant constitutional achievements of democratic decentralisation is the enhanced participation of women and marginalised communities in local governance. The

²⁶ D. P, G. S. & Satheshkumar M., Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin): Vb-G Ram G in India, International Journal of Science, Strategic Management and Technology (2026).

²⁷ Mina Jayanti & Agustin Fadjaranie, Mitigating Fraud in Social Assistance: Enhancing the Role of Government External Auditor, International Journal of Business and Applied Economics (2025).

Seventy-third Constitutional Amendment introduced mandatory reservation for women as well as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Panchayati Raj Institutions, thereby promoting inclusive representation in decision-making.

VB-G Ram G reinforces these constitutional guarantees by encouraging meaningful participation rather than merely formal representation. Value-based governance requires that women, vulnerable communities, youth, and socially disadvantaged groups actively participate in Gram Sabha deliberations, local planning, and developmental decision-making. Such participation strengthens democratic legitimacy, promotes social justice, and ensures that development policies respond to diverse community needs. Consequently, the governance model substantially contributes to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 concerning gender equality and aligns with the constitutional commitment to equality under Articles 14 and 15.

Environmental Protection and Climate Resilience

Sustainability at the local level is integral to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals on a global level. Rural local governing bodies increasingly take the responsibility of natural resource management, waste segregation and disposal, water resource conservation, biodiversity protection, and introduction and implementation of climate resilient developmental practices. Environmental issues mostly show their negative effects on a local level; So, it is village-level governance that matters a lot in ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources.²⁸ The provision of constitution Article 48A that imposes a duty upon the State to protect and enhance the environment with the citizens' duty under Article 51A(g) that mandates everyone to participate in the protection and improvement of the environment act as a major legal backing up environmentally friendly governance.

Village development officer, VB-G Ram G, motivates the locals to carry out villagelevel planning and manage waste, do afforestation, conserve water, and raise environmental awareness through various community programmes to promote climate action and ecological conservation, which results in environmentally sustainable practices. Such initiatives directly support the Sustainable Development Goals of achieving clean water and sanitation, fostering

²⁸ Lambert Ekene Anyanwu, Olorunsomo Olaosebikan Felix, Ike Walter Ejike & Isdore Onyewuchi Anyanwu, Environmental governance frameworks and stakeholder engagement mechanisms for effective natural resource management at local levels, World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews (2025).

sustainable human settlements, taking climate action, and conserving terrestrial ecosystems.²⁹

Participatory Governance, Transparency and Strong Institutions

SDG 16 among the Sustainable Development Goals highlights the significance of efficient, responsible, and inclusive institutions. This goal is closely aligned with the constitutional principles behind democratic decentralization in India. A democratic decentralisation mechanism through participation in governance, checking public expenditure, programme evaluation, and holding elected leaders accountable is a function fulfilled at the grass root level by Gram Sabha, the Village Assembly.³⁰

VB-G Ram G supports the institutional processes at the local level which are the most important building blocks in a democracy, by encouraging transparency in financial operations, participatory budgeting, public disclosure of developmental activities, grievance redressal mechanisms, and social accountability through which these governance practices help build trust in local institutions which in turn reduces the scope for misuse of funds. Promoting open governance is one way to bring development programme success by ensuring that community priorities are reflected and public funds are well used without waste which can be achieved only when local bodies are honest, accountable, and transparent.³¹

Localising the Sustainable Development Goals

Localising the Sustainable Development Goals to their last mile delivery will be the determining factor in the success to achieve them in the truest sense. Merely having national policies would be inadequate to meet the varied developmental requirements of different villages in India if constitutionally authorized local authorities are not actively doing their part through implementation. VB-G Ram G presents a governance system enabling constitutional principles, statutory duties, and goals for sustainable development to come together at a community level. The model³² is a vehicle for combining responsible governance, citizen

²⁹ Reza Ronaldo & Tulus Suryanto, Green finance and sustainability development goals in Indonesian Fund Village, Resources Policy (2022).

³⁰ P. Datta, Exploring the Dynamics of Deliberative Democracy in Rural India: Lessons from the Working of Gram Sabhas in India and Gram Sansads in West Bengal, 65 Indian Journal of Public Administration (2019).

³¹ Muslim Afandi, Syed Agung Afandi & Rizki Erdayani, FROM AMBITION TO IMPLEMENTATION: A THEORY-GUIDED QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP, Jurnal Ilmiah Widya Sosiopolitika (2025).

³² Dr. Shankar Subramanian Iyer, Indian Community Development – A bottom-to-top Prospective, Global Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (2025).

participation democracy green initiatives, and accountability in an effort to bring local governance in line with the spirit of international commitments towards development.³³ It shows that sustainable development is not just a goal-oriented target set at the policy level.

Challenges and Legal Gaps

The constitutional recognition of rural self-government and VB-G Ram G's progressive vision haven't been sufficient for making SDG implementation at the grassroots level happen without hindrance. Despite the constitutional provisions, there are multiple legal-, institutional-, and administrative-related hurdles that remain. The constitutional design is clearly an ideal legal basis for grassroots-level governance, it often lacks the proper execution in practical situations, which leads to the situation being very different from what is envisioned in Part IX of the Constitution.

One of the biggest barriers lies in the transfer of powers to Panchayats not being comprehensive. The 11th Schedule mentions 29 areas that can be assigned to Panchayats, but whether, and to what extent, Panchayats will be entrusted with legislative, administrative and financial powers rest with the State Governments. Devolution levels differ a lot from one State to the next, making it difficult, at times, to even speak about decentralized governance.³⁴ Very often, Gram Panchayats do hardly anything other than executing schemes promoted by higher levels of governments and cannot plan and make decisions independently. This way, they are unable to deal with development demands of local people in a proper way. Relatedly, there is the issue of financial independence. One of the keys to maintaining grassroots-level governance is to have enough financial resources to carry out the duties imposed by legislation. But a lot of the time, Gram Panchayats rely largely on the grant or funds they receive from the Centre or the state government. The problem is that because the local authorities have very little of a source of income by themselves, they don't get the necessary funds timely and also they aren't allowed to spend the money per the priorities of the local communities.³⁵

The last great issue is how the Gram Sabha which under the Panchayati Raj system, should be

³³ Gopal Prasad & Sona Ojha, Sustainable Indigenous Governance: Catalysts for Economic Development in India, International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research (2024).

³⁴ Panchayati Raj In Bihar: Constitutional Promise, Institutional Practice, And The Next Frontier Of Decentralisation, Journal of Carcinogenesis (2025).

³⁵ Bishnu Prasad Mohapatra, Own Revenue Growth of Rural Local Governments and Socio-Economic Challenges, SocioEconomic Challenges (2026).

the mechanism of direct democracy for village dwellers, is actually working. Even though the Gram Sabha is the tool through which villagers can be directly involved in matters of planning, monitoring, and being socially responsible to each other, its functioning regularly suffers from the problems of nonattendance, lack of public enlightenment, minimum civic involvement, the existence of social inequalities, and the effects of a few of the powerful ones.³⁶ Some of the village leaders, Mostly in certain rural areas, have been known to control the decisions that affect everyone else through the use of their economic and other power as the village head or someone who leads the meetings. As a result, a majority of rural communities hardly experience any changes in their lives because their local government bodies are not democratic enough and, in many cases, the leaders simply decide what the people are allowed to do. In the absence of the capacity constraints, the implementation of value-based governance will be affected. Local institutions are limited with capacity so the introduction of value-based governance is hampered. Elected representatives often take over their roles without receiving training on legal procedures, financial management, digital governance, environmental regulation, or developmental planning.³⁷ In fact, the complexity of welfare programmes and Sustainable Development Goal indicators is so high that the skills required are generally available at the village level only through occasional and insufficient support.

Transparency and accountability, which are key aspects of VB-G Ram G, are also challenged with implementation. Even though social audits, public disclosure requirements, and grievance redressal mechanisms as tools available in law have empowered citizens and provided a greater chance at supervision, their impact differs a lot between jurisdictions. Poor documentation, lack of monitoring, lack of digital infrastructure, and occasionally even corruption are factors that lower people's trust in local bodies. That means, it is still necessary to work on strengthening accountability mechanisms in order for governance to be consistent with constitutional values and the interests of the public. A greater demand of digital governance also leads to opportunities as well as to challenges. For example, the use of digital tools has contributed to a better level of transparency, efficient delivery of government services and an increased amount of time during which people are able to access the required information.³⁸ Unfortunately, most areas in rural India are still suffering from poor internet connectivity, low

³⁶ Mikaela Vasstrøm & Roger Normann, The role of local government in rural communities: culture-based development strategies, 45 Local Government Studies (2019).

³⁷ L. Kuitert, L. Volker & Jolien Grandia, Facing NPG implementation problems in municipal organizations: The wickedness of combined value systems, 39 Public Policy and Administration (2023).

³⁸ S. Sindakis & G. Showkat, The digital revolution in India: bridging the gap in rural technology adoption, 13 Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (2024).

level of computer equipment and lack of basic knowledge and training in computer literacy of both, public officials and the general public.

Another aspect that raises issues for legal and institutional structures is environmental governance at the village level. Municipal authorities are expected to support environmental protection, waste disposal and climate resilience, but their statutory responsibilities have hardly ever come with sufficient technical support, financial resources, or administrative coordination. Environmental issues are becoming more and more part of sustainable development strategies,³⁹ so it will gradually become indispensable that local bodies are well prepared with legal setups to confront ecological problems from the grassroots as well!

Last but not least, a lack of a consistent legal system explicitly integrating Sustainable Development Goals into Panchayat administration is still a prominent policy issue. Even though many government programs aim at promoting a local approach to SDGs via Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs),⁴⁰ putting them into practice mainly depends on executive orders instead of thorough legislative rules. If local governance legislation more deeply embeds the idea of sustainable development through the law, this can mean better understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities among the authorities, enhanced accountability,⁴¹ and the possibility of monitoring the developmental outcomes systematically.

Recommendations

The effective and large-scale implementation of VB-G Ram G as an exemplar of model village governance which promotes values and vibrancy would depend greatly on strengthening legal and institutional setups of the country to support the Panchayati Raj Institutions. While the Constitution is a strong basis for democratic decentralisation, its goals can be successfully achieved only through the execution of implementation, availability of the necessary institutional support, and consistent legal reforms.

³⁹ J. A. Reis-Filho, Yram Lecht Fiterman, T. Giarrizzo & E. Noleto-Filho, Environmental deregulation by design: Institutional capacities and the perils of Brazil's new environmental licensing law, *Environmental Challenges* (2026).

⁴⁰ Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs), MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ, GOV'T OF INDIA. Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) are annual plans prepared by each Gram Panchayat in India, as mandated by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India. These plans aim to reflect the priorities and needs of the local community through participatory planning and decentralized decision-making.

⁴¹ Sriram Divi, Dr. Debendra Nath Dash & M. K. Sahoo, Problems and Challenges of Indian Rural Local Governments in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals: An Analysis of the Viable Perspectives, *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning* (2024).

The very first among these initiatives is to focus very much on the successful transfer of powers, duties, and funds to the Panchayati Raj Institutions. State Governments should make the transfer a reality and do it effectively, and transfer to the villages not only the tasks listed in the Eleventh Schedule but also authority and finances related to them. It is only with the help of genuine decentralisation that the gram panchayats will be better able to act independently in deciding what the community needs of them and at the same time be responsible to the community for what they are doing.

Second, the financial viability of the Gram Panchayats should be improved through increasing the autonomy at the financial level. Prompt issuing of grants, expanding local ways to raise revenue, and enhancing planning of the finances will help the village institutions execute development activities efficiently. Implementing a system of openness and transparency around budgeting and disclosing how money has been spent should give greater assurance to the public and at the same time, help with ensuring accountability for the people's money.

The third and another vital step would be conducting capacity-building exercises regularly not only for elected representatives and Panchayat officials but also others involved in governance processes at the village level. Instruction should also go beyond administrative procedures to cover governance under the Constitution, money management, and other areas such as law about environment, social inclusion, digital and environmental governance, and even Sustainable Development Goals planning. A very informed elected member of Panchayat will definitely be a more responsible and a responsible one in carrying out statutory as well as other functions and will also promote value-based governance at the grassroot level. Making the Gram Sabha stronger is also going to be a very effective reform. The Gram Sabha has always been a symbol of democracy at the grassroots level. Encouraging a culture of active participation by raising awareness among the common people and giving them opportunities to participate altogether in village development decisions.⁴² It should be Mainly looked after that womenfolk, members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, persons of disability, and other marginalised groups get adequate space for their voices in the system in order for their needs to be reflected in the development programs.

⁴² S. Harinath, Participation Levels of Scheduled Castes in Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha: A Sociological Study in Rural Telangana, Contemporary Voice of Dalit (2024).

Conclusion

Fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals will rely largely on creating governance systems which are active and involving all relevant people responsible transparent and can deal with the development issues on the local level. In India, the constitutional setup as introduced by the 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution⁴³ is considered to provide Panchayats a solid legal basis as local self-government instruments and democratic decentralisation through their recognition in the Constitution. The constitutional vision has moved past decentralisation in administering and aims to equip rural people so that by actively participating, they can have control over the decision-making processes for development at their level.

The current research has showed that the principles of VB-G Ram G are in agreement with the constitutional ideals of justice equality transparency, accountability and participatory democracy. Through Gram Panchayats and Gram Sabhas functioning efficiently, value-based village governance can make a good deal to sustainable development goals localisation. At poverty eradication education gender equality, environment protection, climate resilience or institutional accountability, grassroots level governance is one of the key mechanisms for implementing constitutional mandates and national development plans as visible results on the village level.

But, the paper has also pinpointed certain legal and structural difficulties that still hinder an efficient functioning of the decentralised governance. These include an uneven transfer of powers, reliance on funding, small administrative capacity, disengaged public, and implementation errors. These factors prevent the local government bodies from totally carrying out their constitutional duties. To resolve the problem soon, legal amendments should continue and get the support of the institutions, more independence in spending should be given, training initiatives should be improved and there should be a deeper connection with Sustainable Development Goal indicators at various local government stages.

Ultimately, VB-G Ram G ought to be seen not only as a governance model, but as a tangible application of India's democratic decentralisation and sustainable development constitutional

⁴³ The Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, No. 20 of 1992, INDIA CODE (1992). The 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution, enacted in 1992, added Part IX (Articles 243 to 243-O) to the Constitution. It established a constitutional framework for Panchayati Raj Institutions (local self-government) in rural India, mandating regular elections, reservation of seats for marginalized groups, and devolution of powers to local governments.

pledges. Legal implementation of the value-based village governance can effectively connect the constitutional goals to a developmental reality. As India is striving for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 it would continue being a fact that the role of the empowered and accountable local institutions is essential to guarantee that the concept of sustainable development is first inclusive and then equitable, followed by responsive to the specific rural community needs.

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