



# From MPLADS to SAGY: Changing role of peoples' representatives in grass roots level development in India

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## ARTICLE INFO :

Received : 28.04.2020  
Accepted : 25.05.2020

## KEY WORDS :

MPLADS, SAGY, Rural development

## HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE :

Bhatt, Sonal (2020). From MPLADS to SAGY: Changing role of peoples' representatives in grass roots level development in India. *Adv. Res. J. Soc. Sci.*, 11 (1): 33-39, DOI: 10.15740/HAS/ARJSS/11.1/33-39. Copyright © 2020:Hind Agri- Horticultural Society

## ABSTRACT

This paper makes a comparison between the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) and Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) and outlines the difference between the approaches of the two Schemes. It concludes that even as MPLADS and SAGY are tactically similar schemes, the people's representatives have a much greater role as agents of change under SAGY. Participation from village officials and the rural people themselves is also essential for fulfilling the objectives of SAGY.

## INTRODUCTION

Rural development in India calls for change at the grass-roots level. Schumpeter (1934, quoted in Jhingan, 2003) defines economic development as the result of 'spontaneous and discontinuous' changes in economic life that are not forced upon it from without but arise from within the economy by its own initiative. Rostow (1969, as quoted in Jhingan, 2003) suggests that the process of economic development is the 'take-off' stage is the result of the 'existence or quick emergence of a political, social and institutional framework which exploits the impulses of expansion in the modern sector and gives to growth, an outgoing character'. An enabling and

responsive system of governance that encourages communication and participation from stakeholders, beneficiaries as well as the community as a whole is essential in the process of development (Shokrollahi *et al.*, 2018). A top-down, techno-centric or capital intensive approach to development alone may not be effective if it is not supplemented with a bottom-up, people-centric and human-capacity enhancing approach.

Experiences with regard to the the role of peoples' representatives in grass-roots level development have not been uniform. (Roy, 2018) opined that democratic decentralization in India is the main pillar of the grassroots democracy through which change is brought about by voluntary consent of people that results in activating the

process of the nation-building. Swain (2012) concluded that municipal councillors in Chennai influenced people's access to municipal services by mediating between citizens and the municipal corporation. Sorensen (2006) concluded that governance can no longer take the form of a sovereign rule but must be performed through a combination of state-regulation as well as self-regulation by the people. This results in the transformation of the role of politicians in governance as well as the society. In her case study about the role of politicians in four municipalities in Denmark, she suggests that politicians must strengthen their roles in governance by broadening their leadership repertoire to include design of governance institutions, supporting, facilitating and participating in governance in a much wider sense. She terms this as meta-governance.

Elected representatives in India from the Lok Sabha (Lower House) or Rajya Sabha (Upper House) are known as Members of Parliament (MPs). Being elected directly by the people, these MPs enjoy proximity with the electorate. They could play the role of 'points of contact with the government' for the people and be an effective medium of communication about development initiatives.

India has undertaken two notable experiments that directly involved MPs in grassroots level development effort. The Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) in December, 1993 was initiated to involve the MPs directly in their constituency in order to recommend and develop infrastructure as per specific local needs. Similarly, The Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) was introduced by the GoI on 11<sup>th</sup> October, 2014 which is a village development project under which each MP takes the responsibility of developing three 'Adarsh Grams' or 'model villages' by March 2019, of which one would be achieved by 2016. Thereafter, five such *Adarsh Grams* (one per year) were to be selected and developed by 2024.

### **Rationale of this study:**

This difference in the approaches of both MPLADS and SAGY are reflected in the vision of both the schemes as well as in the way in which objectives have been formulated and the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders have been defined. This in turn would have an impact on their implementation and reflect on the

fulfilment of their objectives on the grass roots level. This study aims to make a comparison of the objectives, features and role of MPs in MPLADS as well as SAGY. It takes an overview of the implementation of both schemes.

### **Objectives of the study:**

– To make a comparison of MPLADS and SAGY in terms of their vision, objectives, design, as well as roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, particularly that of the MPs.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study is based on secondary data accessed from websites of various departments of the GoI, the MoRD as well as research studies and reports published in newspapers.

### **Comparison of MPLADS and SAGY:**

*Salient features of the two schemes:*

As seen from Table 1, the salient features of MPLADS and SAGY are similar yet different in some respects. MPLADS intends to involve the MPs directly with the developmental works in their respective constituencies so that they may become aware of the specific 'felt' needs and developmental effort could be directed towards meeting the same. On the other hand, in SAGY the MP is not only aware of the specific needs of the local area and the people, but tries to transform their vision of progress by introducing them to Mahatma Gandhi's vision of an 'adarsh gram' or ideal village. Thus, the MP becomes an external agent in the holistic transformation of the GP.

MPLADS focused only on providing physical infrastructure; while SAGY goes much beyond that by aiming for integrated development across areas such as agriculture, health, education, sanitation, environment, livelihoods etc. to bring about an overall improvement in the lives of the people.

The most important difference between MPLADS and SAGY is that while in MPLADS, the MP had a power to spend Rs. 5 crore per year on his chosen developmental work in his constituency; no such budget is earmarked for SAGY. This makes the MP's job all the more challenging as he is not to act as an external agent or donor who allocates funds to a particular work and

<b>Table 1: Salient features of MPLADS and SAGY</b>	
<b>MPLADS</b>	<b>SAGY</b>
Administered by Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), transferred to Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) since October 1994	MoRD, GoI is the nodal agency for coordinating and monitoring
Involves MPs directly in their constituency, administration, local people and their specific needs	Unique, transformative, holistic approach towards development incorporating the vision of 'adarsh gram' or model village by Mahatma Gandhi
Focus on providing physical infrastructure	Integrated development of the selected village across multiple areas: agriculture, health, education, sanitation, environment, livelihoods
Annual budget of Rs. 5 crores to be spent by each MP allocated by the central government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No separate fund allocation. Tied and untied funds of the GP such as own revenue, Central and State Finance Commission grants to be used</li> <li>Convergence of funds, resources and efforts put in existing government development programmes, private and voluntary initiatives</li> <li>Aimed to develop one Adarsh gram by 2016 and another two by March 2019. Thereafter, five such Adarsh Grams (one per year) to be selected and developed by 2024</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selection of either rural or urban area</li> <li>Lok Sabha MP suggests works in his/her constituency</li> <li>Rajya Sabha MP recommends works in one or more districts in the State from where he/she was elected</li> <li>Nominated Members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha could select any one or more districts from any one State in the country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selection of a village with a population of about 3000-5000 in plain areas and 1000-3000 in hilly, tribal and difficult-to-reach areas</li> <li>The model of 'adarsh gram' should spread to other villages</li> <li>Lok Sabha MP selects a GP from his/her constituency</li> <li>Rajya Sabha MP selects a GP from the State from which he/she is elected</li> <li>Nominated MPs may choose a GP from any district in the country</li> <li>MPs elected from urban constituencies must choose a GP from a nearby rural constituency</li> </ul>
Designated nodal Department in the State or Union Territory to coordinate with Ministry at the Centre	Close coordination and convergence between Central Ministries, Central Schemes, MPLADS, State Government and private sector
District Collector responsible for receiving funds, sanctioning and implementing works, maintenance of the created assets	State-level Empowered Committee including Chief Secretary, Departments heads, experts and at least two Civil Society representatives. Secretary of the Rural Development Department is the convenor and District Collector is the nodal officer

**Source:** (i) [https://www.mplads.gov.in/MPLADS/UploadedFiles/MPLADSGuidelines2016English\\_638.pdf](https://www.mplads.gov.in/MPLADS/UploadedFiles/MPLADSGuidelines2016English_638.pdf)  
(ii) <https://www.india.gov.in/spotlight/saansad-adarsh-gram-yojana>

subsequently may just forget about it. Rather, the MP must be closely and continuously associated with the GP for the utilization of funds already allocated to it by way of various grants and revenue sources. These funds could also be augmented with the help of private sector donations. The MP must coordinate with the GP so that all these funds are received well in time; spent as intended; and the outcomes for the expenditure are achieved. All this calls for the use of the MP's leadership capacity, creativity, commitment and networking skills.

While in MPLADS, any rural or urban area may be

selected by the MP; in SAGY, only a GP as per the given criteria may be selected. Hence, the attention and efforts of the MP would be directed towards a specific GP where development effort is much required.

#### *Role of MPs :*

There is a fundamental difference in the role of the MP as envisaged in MPLADS and SAGY. While in MPLADS the MP only oversees the suggested 'work'; in SAGY, the MP is supposed to have intense and regular engagement with the village community, actively

**Table 2: Role of the MP in MPLADS vs. SAGY**

MPLADS	SAGY
MPs directly involved in grass-roots level development process	MP closely connected with the selected village on a regular basis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of suggesting specific works in specific area of their constituency</li> <li>• Overseeing the execution of works suggested</li> <li>Interaction with local administration viz., District Collector, nodal departments of state government etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intense and regular engagement with the village community</li> <li>• Actively oversee, guide and facilitate the formation of the VDP through peoples' participation in coordination with District Collector</li> <li>• Help in mobilising resources to implement it</li> <li>• Directly supports organisation of health camps, grievance redressal camps, community mobilisation programmes</li> <li>• People to benefit from the leadership, capacity, commitment and energy of the MPs</li> </ul>

**Source:** (i) [https://www.mplads.gov.in/MPLADS/UploadedFiles/MPLADSGuidelines2016English\\_638.pdf](https://www.mplads.gov.in/MPLADS/UploadedFiles/MPLADSGuidelines2016English_638.pdf)  
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participate in the formation of the Village Development Plan (VDP) and help in mobilising resources for implementing the same. Thus, the MP is not an infrequent visitor or a 'guest' in the village but akin to a regular member of the village community who is only so distant as to provide an objective view of the development work in the GP as well as guidance and assistance as and when required.

*Objectives of the two schemes:*

As seen from Table 3, the objective of MPLADS was fairly simple *i.e.* to create durable capital assets according to locally felt needs. The work done and its outcomes were also visible and measurable in the short or medium term. On the other hand, the objectives of SAGY encompass a large spectrum of rural life such as ensuring basic needs including healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities, personal development of people including getting rid of various addictions and regressive values and traditions, community empowerment and participation in local governance and establishment of a vibrant community and accumulation of social capital. Some of the outcomes of SAGY may be visible, achievable in the short-run and measurable; while others may not be so.

*Implementation of MPLADS and SAGY:*

Experiences and assessment of MPLADS showed many lacunae in its implementation. The MPs were found to not sufficiently involve various active constituents such as resident forums, NGOs etc. to understand locally felt needs on which basis works were to be recommended. There were found to be many anomalies in the

implementation. Many sanctioned works were found to be inadmissible as per rules. Many of the sanctioned works were found to be abandoned, incomplete or suspended leading to a wastage of the expenditure already incurred on them. Basic internal control mechanisms such as asset registers, work registers were found to be missing in many instances. Some works that were completed were not found to be used for the intended purpose. The expenditure of funds tended to increase during the time nearing elections but in other time periods, funds tended to accumulate. Utilization of funds was very low at only 37-52 per cent of the sanctioned amount. Besides, the unspent balances were not redistributed to the new incumbent MPs that were elected. Hence, they could not be used by the new MPs as well; rendering them idle (GoI, 2011). The unspent balances sanctioned under MPLADS rose by 214.63 per cent between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha (Rawat, 2019). Unspent balances amounted to Rs. 4,103.97 crore on March 31, 2019; Rs. 4,877.71 crore on March 31, 2018 and Rs. 5,029.31 crore on March 31, 2017 (Economic Times, March 11, 2020). The unspent amount under the scheme was Rs. 4,103.97 crore on March 31, 2019; Rs. 4,877.71 crore on March 31, 2018 and Rs. 5,029.31 crore on March 31, 2017. CAG Report-2001 also mentions the low rate of utilisation (around 64 %) of funds under MPLADS. It further stated that the release of funds is not linked to their end-use, utilisation certificate could be obtained for only 29.78 per cent of the total works, reporting of inflated and fake expenditure to the Ministry, use of MPLAD funds for inadmissible purposes, tinkering with labour material ratios, appropriation of money meant for labour expenses by obtaining fake muster rolls and

<b>Table 3 : Objectives of MPLADS vs. SAGY</b>	
<b>MPLADS</b>	<b>SAGY</b>
Create durable capital assets in a specific local area according to its specific needs	<p>Provide infrastructure in schools like toilets, libraries, smart schools</p> <p>Achieve comprehensive development in tune with local people's aspirations</p> <p>Channelize local potential towards development</p> <p>Trigger processes for holistic development:</p> <p>Improve standard of living and quality of life of all sections of the population through a provision of good quality basic amenities</p> <p>Promote opportunities to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase productivity</li> <li>• Enhanced human development</li> <li>• Better livelihood opportunities</li> <li>• Reduced disparities among different classes, castes and creed</li> <li>• Improve access to rights and entitlements</li> </ul> <p>Establish a vibrant and empowered community that revels in folk art, cultural festivals, village song etc. resulting in the enrichment of social capital</p> <p>Promote effective local governance through strong and transparent GPs and active Gram Sabhas, e-governance, participation of women in decision-making</p> <p>Promote community participation towards universal access to education facilities, adult literacy, e-literacy</p> <p>Social mobilization against alcoholism, smoking, substance abuse</p> <p>Inculcate self-confidence and values such as national pride, patriotism, community spirit, respect for women, martyrs and elders, respect for the environment, good reading habits, Antyodaya, gender equality, dignity of women, social justice, spirit of community service, cleanliness, eco-friendliness, peace and harmony, mutual cooperation, self-reliance, transparency and accountability in public life etc. amongst the young generation</p> <p>Ensure provision of quality health care in the selected village in order to improve outcomes on parameters like immunization, institutional delivery, IMR, MMR, malnutrition among children</p> <p>Personal development of people through sports, regular physical exercise, balanced nutrition, personal hygiene etc.</p> <p>Promote the adoption and adaptation of technology for planning, monitoring and increasing productivity</p>

**Source:** (i) [https://www.mplads.gov.in/MPLADS/UploadedFiles/MPLADSGuidelines2016English\\_638.pdf](https://www.mplads.gov.in/MPLADS/UploadedFiles/MPLADSGuidelines2016English_638.pdf)  
(ii) <https://www.india.gov.in/spotlight/saansad-adarsh-gram-yojana>

large scale evidence of incomplete works were some of the major drawbacks of the scheme. Evaluation report of the Planning Commission on MPLADS also highlighted overlapping of works in certain specific constituency/district by several MPs leading to a regional imbalance as well as overburdening of the district administration. Populist recommendations were notices instead of those works which were really necessary (Mohanty, 2004).

About six years and four phases have been implemented since the inception of SAGY. However, the adoption of GPs was way below expectations. It can be clearly seen from Table 5 that the number of selected GPs by MPs is continuously falling. more than six months after the formation of the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha, about two-thirds of its MPs were yet to select a GP under Phase-IV. The Standing Committee on Rural Development

Number of GPs	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV
Total GPs adopted by MPs	703	497	301	252
GPs adopted by LSMPs	500	364	239	208
GPs adopted by RSMPs	203	133	62	44

**Source:** Sharma, Harikishan, (2020), *Indian Express*, January 2, 2002, accessed from <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/its-official-not-enough-mps-are-adopting-model-village-scheme-6195442/>

State	Total projects	Projects completed	Work in progress	Yet to start	% of work completion
Bihar	4824	1450	677	2697	69.9
Rajasthan	3531	1313	394	1824	62.8
Maharashtra	6837	2989	773	3075	56.2
All India	63,586	32682	7743	23161	48.7

**Source:** (<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/saansad-adarsh-gram-yojana-only-51-projects-completed-so-far/articleshow/67635041.cms>)

stated in its report presented to Parliament on December 5, 2019 that the seriousness required to achieve the objectives of SAGY was lacking amongst MPs (Sharma, 2020).

A senior official in the MoRD attributed this lack of interest among MPs to the dearth of funds to develop a GP. As there are no specific funds for SAGY, MPs have to tap into other resources like funds from existing schemes, the GP's own revenue, CSR funds and the like. As ambitious as this initiative sounds, it is equally arduous. This leads to the poor performance of SAGY (Kaushik, 2016).

A study concluded that only about 56 per cent work was completed under SAGY till July 2019. Only 1,297 GPs had provided data that showed that only 38,021 projects out of a total 68,407 were completed after the inception of SAGY in the year 2014. The states of Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Odisha which are among the top ten states with the highest proportion of rural areas in their territory were also among the worst performers with respect to the implementation of SAGY. It was no surprise that the MPs affiliated to opposition parties did not take up SAGY in a big way as it was the brain-child of the Prime Minister and the party in power. However, a similar tendency was exhibited by the MPS from the ruling alliance as well (<https://tfipost.com/2020/01/saansad-adarsh-gram-yojana-is-a-colossal-failure-and-it-is-going-to-hurt-the-bjp-in-bihar/>).

However, success stories of SAGY have been

reported as well. In Laderwan GP of Jammu and Kashmir, the main source of income is agriculture. To increase their productivity, the MP linked the mobile numbers of 379 farmers with Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), which started sending SMSs to farmers of the GP about weather forecasts, recommended package of practices for specific crops at particular stages of crop growth, tips about efficient and productive farming practices etc. Bangurda GP in Jharkhand was devoid of proper healthcare facilities for adolescent girls, due to which they faced problems such as anaemia, gynaecological diseases, urinary tract infection and skin diseases due to poor sanitation facilities and a lack of awareness about healthy hygiene practices. The MP arranged for awareness programmes to be held for adolescent girls and women in the GP which addressed the social stigma attached to such problems as well and encouraged the patients to seek treatment. After this, a series of health camps were arranged for these patients (<https://www.oneindia.com/india/there-is-no-taker-of-the-sansad-adarsh-gram-yojna-fund-crunch-being-sighted-the-reason-2712133.html>).

### Conclusion:

SAGY could be termed as old wine in new bottle. The objectives of SAGY are great many and most of them are not measurable or achievable in the short term. Much like MPLADS, in case of SAGY too, the MP remains only an external agent who, at best, could only provide an 'objective' view, a direction and leadership to

developmental effort in the chosen GP. However, it is the people and the officials of the GP themselves, could fulfil the objectives of SAGY.

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