

Draft Concept Paper and Framework

Grama Rajya

Concept and Framework

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1. Background

The rural administration had been the prime administration prior to the country became one well organized state in the second century BC. Since more than 70% of the population still resides in the rural sector, rural administration plays a vital role even in the organized state administration.

District and Divisional Coordination Committees (DS & DCCs) have been coordinating development programs funded by government ministries, departments, provincial councils and Pradeshiya Sabha for about 25 years now. However lacking appreciable socio-economic development in the rural sector, the disappointment of people in representative democratic system and the public service delivery mechanism, and friction between elected and selected members in public service have indicated the need to review the current system.

Empowering the local community and strengthening the links between national/provincial level entities and the local community is helpful in planning and implementing development activities effectively and with a better focus upon the needs of the community. The need to establish such links has been strongly endorsed also by the public through the mandate given to implement the five concepts put forward at the Parliamentary Election in 2015. Thus Grama Rajya (GR) proposed here is expected to enable the local communities to become stakeholders in the development of their community through the participation in planning and monitoring socio-economic and cultural development projects along with other relevant organizations existing in the area of GR.

The proposed Grama Rajya concept could be viewed as an institutional mechanism implemented through approximately 2500 units created considering factors such as economic convergence and viability, social cohesion, geographical layout etc. for the purpose of creating a citizens' demand driven mechanism enabling:

- Participation of the people in Government activities
- Upholding National Unity
- Full enjoyment of leisure, social (socioeconomic) and cultural opportunities
- Safeguarding the environment and sustainable development

2. Grama Rajya

2.1. Objectives

Socio-economic and cultural development of locality, social well-being, sharing ownership of social economic goods and aligning the development to support national development goals are the key aspects that the objectives of GR are expected to cover. Accordingly main objectives of GR are defined as given below:

1. To serve as an institutional mechanism within a predefined locality with the (active and meaningful) participation of local community to contribute to sustainable socio-economic and cultural development of the country
2. To work towards the creation of a sustainable society, characterized by a well conserved environment and natural resources, healthy public, learned community, inclusive caring and fair society, economic prosperity, social harmony and sustainable production, services and consumption.
3. To create a platform which enables interaction between the community and the state and voicing community concerns and priorities related to the development of the locality and create a mutually beneficial feedback mechanism

2.2. Organizational Structure-Overall System

Grama Rajya would represent a better organized and equipped group of recipients who can influence the planning, development process and delivery mechanisms of the state while contributing the uplifting and sustaining the socio-economic status of GR. Thus GR would not be a part of the state or its machinery.

GRs will be formed by combining one or two proposed wards. An administrative division coming under a Divisional Secretary (DS) is expected to have eight to ten GRs under its purview. The overall structure of proposed Grama Rajya system is shown in Fig. 1. It consists of a Regulatory, Supervisory and Support Structure and a Working Structure as shown in Fig 1. A National GR Commission and Regional committees will be formed to support and regulate and facilitate the operation of GRs.

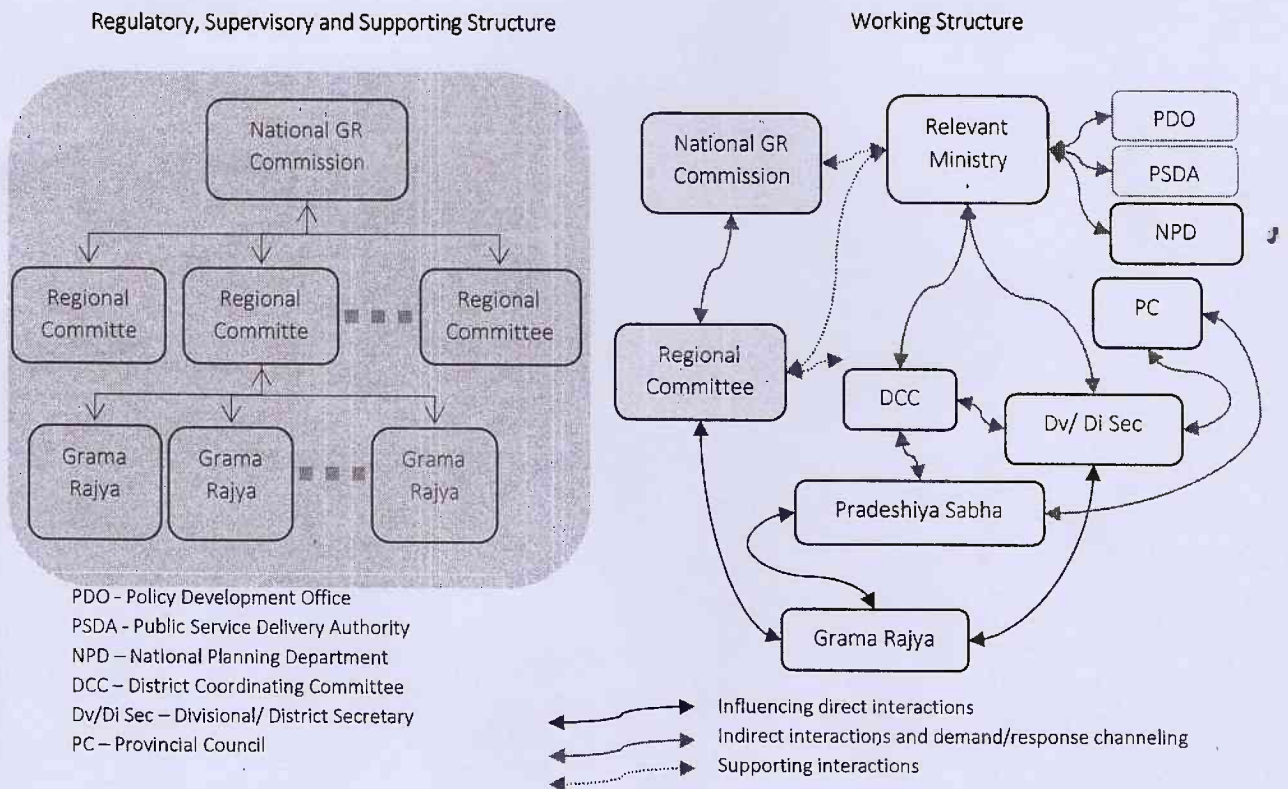


Fig.1. Proposed GR Structure

2.3. Grama Rajya Structure

2.3.1. General Body of GR

For the functioning of GR, forming a General Body (GB) having well representation from all areas covered by a GR is proposed. The following composition is proposed for GB:

- Heads or his representative of recognized organizations in operation for more than three years within GR and acceptable to NGRC
- One male and one female and one youth (Below 35 years of age at the time of election) representative from recognized organizations in operation in the GR for more than three years and acceptable to NGRC. If the organization under this category is a gender based organization then two representatives, one of whom should be in the category of youth, from such organization.
- One representative from each village nominated by village within GR
- Heads of schools and other state and non-state educational institutes recognized by NGRC within GR

The membership of GB is renewed once every year and an individual is eligible to serve in GB only two consecutive terms if nominated unless they are ex-officio. A member of any local authority or Provincial Council or parliament or involved in active politics at any time within two years prior to the date of selection cannot be appointed as a member of GB.

The establishment of an Advisory Committee consisting of the heads of religious places of worship and Divisional secretary who chairs the committee is proposed. Any matters of GR which require advisory input may be referred to this advisory committee.

2.3.2. The Management Committee (MC) of GR

The GR will elect a MC to manage the affairs of the GR in accordance with the decisions of the GR. Each GR shall from amongst its GB elect:

- A Chairperson
- A woman Committee Member who should be vice chairperson if the chairperson is a male
- 3 other members one of whom should be in the category of youth and another should be a woman by preference voting in which the ranking order from 1 to 5 is expressed.

The GR shall not support any political party or involve in any political activity.

Any member of GB is expected to make a declaration that he/she would not be a candidate for any Local Authority or Provincial Council or Parliamentary election for two years since he/she has ceased to be a member.

2.3.3. Powers, Duties and Functions of GR

- (a). With the directives of the MC and the approval of GB, a GR may undertake the following functions within its authority in coordination with Local Government(s) that the GR fall within.
- Taking any action that they deem appropriate to improve the community including preparing Community Development Plans to achieve the objectives spelled out in section 2.1 and if necessary jointly with adjoining communities.
 - Doing anything an individual may do as long as it is not limited by the provisions of any other law. Notice to be given to the GR Commission prior to implementing decisions in accordance with the rules.
- (b). GR has the right to be informed and consulted by the higher level authorities on development plans for the area
- (c). GR shall be consulted by Local Authorities and other state and provincial agencies in all activities in related to the development in GR.
- (d). GR shall voice the community concerns on projects to be implemented in the locality at appropriate forums in Local Authorities and other state and provincial agencies.
- (e). GR shall have power to supervise and facilitate projects implemented within a GR
- (f). A GR may arrange for the discharge of any of their function by a committee, a sub-committee or an suitable individual selected by the GR
- (g). With the directives of the MC and the approval of GB, a GR may influence, monitor and guide the relevant agencies within it:
- To ensure the effective delivery of Public Services
 - To provide and maintain,
 - Local halls and recreation grounds, parks, playing fields, swimming areas, public toilets, public markets, cemeteries and crematoriums
 - Cleaning and drainage of ponds, water courses and ditches,

- Control of litter
- Any other community development work
- To promote
 - Sports, recreation, leisure activities.
 - culture and the creative arts
 - Tourism
 - Economic Development including Agriculture and Commerce of the GR
 - the growth of small enterprises jobs and self-employment
 - health services and environmental protection
- To designate nature reserves

2.3.4. The Responsibilities of GB

The GB that represents GR:

- Shall meet not less than once in three months.
- Shall be responsible for approving plans and programmes and giving directions to the MC on the exercise of its powers and functions and duties.

2.3.5. The Responsibilities of MC

The responsibilities of MC are:

- Preparing an annual plan to achieve objectives listed in section 2.1 and obtaining approval from GB before implementing.
- Preparing annual activity plan to implement the annual plan and obtaining GB approval.
- Employing efficient mechanisms to coordinate and monitor the implementation of planned activities.
- Ensuring the efficient functioning of GR
- Meeting monthly to review progress
- Reporting the progress to the GB at a quarterly meeting.
- Presenting annual progress report to the GB at the annual meeting.

2.4. Grama Rajya - Staff and Assistance

Grama Niladhari, Development Officers, Agricultural Officer, Divineguma Officer, Public Health Inspectors and Midwives should facilitate the functioning of GR. It is proposed that NGRC would call for applications from Development Officers who are willing to serve GRs as Secretaries who will be the CEO/CFO/CTO of GRs. The selected Development Officers would be trained and release to each GR on the secondment basis.

The term of a Secretary at a single GR shall not be longer than four years. Secretary shall coordinate with all relevant officials, MC and GB when implementing the decisions of the GR. Secretary should function on the directives of MC and provide necessary knowledge inputs to GR to function effectively.

2.5. Grama Rajya - Finances

GR may raise funds for any activity and share expenses with the Pradeshiya Sabah (local authority) and Government and Provincial agencies in accordance with the rules to be laid down by NGRC in coordination with Regional Committees, relevant Government and Provincial authorities.

For the improvement of GR necessary fund may consisting of

- a share of the rates paid to the GR
- a special levy raised within the GR for a specific purpose in accordance with the rules
- Contributions and donations to the GR.

All self-arranged funds of a GR should be managed according to Financial Manual developed by NGRC and with the concurrence of Regional Committee. All audited accounts should be presented at the annual general meeting for the approval of GB. Auditors are appointed by NGRC

2.6. Grama Rajya - Forums

Two types of forums are proposed under GR system for each region defined within the GR system. One is expected to consists of Chairmen of GRs and call GR Chairmen's Forum (GRCF). The other is expected to consist of Secretaries of GR and called GR Secretaries' Forum (GRSF). The purposes of these forums are to provide a platform to exchange mutual

experience and ideas for the effective functioning of GR system and facilitate joint operations among GRs when necessary.

2.7. National GR Commission (NGRC)

2.7.1. Composition

The National GR Commission will consist of the following members: ●

- A Chairman and five other members to be appointed by the President with the concurrence of the Constitutional Council
- Two members nominated by the Minister in-charge of the subject
- Secretary of the Ministry under whom Grama Rajya functions, Secretary Provincial Council and DG- National Planning as ex-officio.

2.7.2. Responsibilities

(In consultation with the Minister concerned) Commission is expected to:

- Prepare schemes to give effect to the Act and to implement such schemes including schemes to recognize community grass root organizations for membership of GR.
- Promote the objectives of the GR
- Arrange funds, develop rules, regulations and manuals necessary for regulatory, supervisory and supporting activities
- Coordinate with the relevant Government institutions to support effective functioning of GR system
- Continuous functional improvement and capacity building of GRs and GR system
- Create awareness of the GR
- Meet staff requirements of GRs

2.8. Regional GR Committee (RGRC)

A Regional Committee consisting of the following members appointed by the NGRC will be set up for each region consisting of one or more districts within the same province:

- A Chairman

- three professionals one of whom shall be a woman nominated by the Chief Minister of the province
- Two members nominated by each DCC one of whom shall be a woman
- Three members, one of whom shall be a youth, and another shall be a woman nominated by the GR Chairmen's forum (GRCF)
- One male and female members nominated by chambers operating in the region and
- The Chief Secretary of the province and the District Secretaries and divisional secretaries of the region are exofficio.

The Regional Committee will implement NGRC policies, decision; programs etc. and facilitate the operation of GRs within the province. In addition, the Chairman of a Regional Committee will chair the meetings of GR Chairmen's Forum and GR Secretaries' forum (GRSF) meetings

3. Concluding Remarks:

In order to enable GR to undertake the functions mentioned in section 2.3.3, it may be necessary to amend the Pradeshiya Sabha Act No. 15 of 1987.

Furthermore the Election Act too needs amendment to in order to ensure that GR shall not support any political party or involve in any political activity.

4. Recommendations for the Implementation of Proposed GR System

The following recommendations are proposed in relation to the future actions based on this report.

- a). At least one pilot project should run in each district in the first year of implementation.
- b). The GR framework presented in this document should be refined using the findings of the pilot phase and empower by a Parliament act thereafter.
- c). Identifying and training of personnel involved in GR activities should be carried out prior to the implementation of GRs.
- d). a, b, and c above should follow the passage of Grama Rajya Act in principle in Parliament

End