



Run up to 20 years of Decentralization in India

Relevance of Decentralization in India - Survey Results

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To view the questionnaire, click [here](#)



Background

- **73rd and 74th Amendments** which mark a dramatic shift in the process of decentralization in India, **complete 20 years in 2013**.
- These milestone amendments recognized local governments as constitutional bodies; entrusted them with responsibilities of economic development and social justice and paved way for direct democracy as well as bottom-up planning.
- To commemorate 20 years of the 73rd and 74th Amendment in India, the Solution Exchange Resource Team (Decentralization Community) organized different participatory activities
- This survey was aimed at reflecting the changes brought in by the amendments and most importantly, to discuss the relevance and significance of decentralization, gaps, opportunities and challenges.



Does the idea of Decentralization hold any significance for your work?

- All respondents have unanimously agreed that decentralization holds great significance to the work
- Significance was stated in terms of-
 - ❑ Democracy has no meaning without decentralization
 - ❑ Devolving powers is important to make local development viable and achieve growth which is socially just
 - ❑ Decentralization helps developing capacities like self assessment which is an important aspect of organizational growth
 - ❑ To ensure transparency, accountability and reduced corruption, it is important to decentralize and devolve powers
 - ❑ Services like Water, Sanitation, Health and nutrition are likely to be efficient with decentralization and role assignment
 - ❑ Decentralized planning also shows accelerated rural development and improved agricultural productivity
 - ❑ Greater responsibilities enhance capacities of local functionaries which in turns helps in monitoring implementation of government schemes like MGNREGA etc.
 - ❑ Decentralization empowers community and gives ownership to grassroots workers



Major benefits that decentralization has brought in...

Opportunity to women, SC/ ST/ OBC groups to participate in the political process and assume leadership roles (reservations)

Brought government closer to people-
Increased awareness of the rights among people
(direct democracy - Gram Sabha)

Increased participation in decision making, planning & Implementation (micro-planning)

- Besides the above broad themes, other benefits highlighted include -
 - ❑ Stronger grassroots level democracy
 - ❑ Promotes need based development
 - ❑ Supported building of local infrastructure, better quality of life
 - ❑ Community participation in planning leads to increased ownership
 - ❑ Use of local expertise and knowledge in planning
 - ❑ Improves transparency and accountability
 - ❑ Effective use of resources
 - ❑ Demystifies governance, making it a part and parcel of everyday life



What according to you have been the 3 main challenges in the arena of decentralization in India?

Lack of political will (State governments) for devolving Funds, Functions and Functionaries (FFF) to PRIs

Lack of efforts at capacity development of minorities (women, SC/ ST minorities)

Lack of systematized procedures for participation of people and accountability elected representatives and functionaries

- Few other challenges that were called out by our partners:
 - ❑ Lack of institutional preparedness
 - ❑ Lack of capacities of PRI functionaries
 - ❑ Elite capture; local politics, corruption creeping in PRIs
 - ❑ Absence of an active and strong Gram Sabha
 - ❑ People not being aware of their rights
 - ❑ Communities not accepting the authority of PRIs
 - ❑ Lack of technical support to elected leaders
 - ❑ Non availability of untied funds



Ministry of Panchayati Raj

- Strengthen Gram Sabhas to mobilize local resources
- Hold State assemblies accountable for slow rate of devolution
- Provide untied funds
- Lobby with Centre and State governments regarding further devolution of power
- Advocate for greater devolution to Departments/ Ministries

State Governments

- Give power to District Planning Committees
- Ensure proper implementation of schemes
- Institute mechanisms for capacity building and monitoring of work of panchayats
- Ensure activity mapping
- Organize regular training of elected representatives

Areas where stakeholders need to take initiative to strengthen decentralization

Elected Leaders

- Understand their role and position as a representatives of people and not as representatives of the State or bureaucracy
- Ensure community participation and empowerment
- Build consensus and work towards a unified approach to lobby for more powers and responsibilities

Civil Society Organizations / Activist Groups

- Campaign, network and lobby for devolution
- Monitor the work of PRIs, participate in social audits
- Create sustainable capacity building models
- Undertake research and gather evidence on connection between decentralization and improved development



What role can the Decentralization Community of Practice (Solution Exchange) play to strengthen the process of decentralization in India?

- Offers learning to all partners by sharing success stories and failures from India as well as international initiatives
- Be the platform to bring together stakeholders for effective and timely knowledge dissemination
- Organize policy dialogues and drive policy change by collating voices/opinions of stakeholders
- Highlight and showcase scalable efforts which have the potential to strengthen decentralization
- Organize face to face programmes where PRI members are invited to participate, share, contribute, learn and network
- Decentralize the Solution Exchange Web Community!
 - Hold regional chapters
 - Diversify language base
 - Use new technology to deepen outreach



Thanks to all those who participated!!

