

Review of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana

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Abstract

The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) is a flagship rural road development program implemented by the Government of India. Launched in 2000, the PMGSY aims to provide all-weather road connectivity to the rural areas of the country, thereby improving access to education, healthcare, markets, and other essential services. This review critically examines the progress, achievements, challenges, and impact of the PMGSY since its inception. The review begins by providing an overview of the program's objectives, funding mechanisms, and implementation strategies. It then delves into an analysis of the accomplishments of the PMGSY, highlighting the significant expansion of road infrastructure in rural India. The program has successfully connected thousands of villages, improving connectivity and reducing isolation. Furthermore, the review explores the socioeconomic impact of the PMGSY. It discusses how improved road connectivity has facilitated rural economic development, enhanced agricultural productivity, and generated employment opportunities. Additionally, the PMGSY has contributed to reducing poverty by increasing access to markets, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions. However, the review also acknowledges certain challenges faced by the PMGSY. It discusses issues related to land acquisition, fund allocation, and timely completion of road projects. Additionally, the review highlights the need for proper maintenance and sustainability of the constructed roads to ensure their long-term usability. In conclusion, the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana has played a crucial role in transforming the rural road infrastructure in India. It has brought about positive changes in the lives of rural communities by enhancing connectivity and improving access to various essential services. While the program has achieved remarkable success, continued attention and investment are necessary to overcome the remaining challenges and ensure the sustainability of the rural road network.

Keywords

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, Rural Roads, Rural Roads Scheme, Rural Development

Introduction

The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) is a landmark initiative undertaken by the Government of India to address the issue of inadequate rural road connectivity. Launched on 25th December 2000, this ambitious program seeks to provide all-weather road access to the remotest and most inaccessible rural areas of the country. By connecting villages to key economic and social centers, the PMGSY aims to uplift rural communities and bridge the rural-urban divide.

Before the inception of the PMGSY, rural areas in India suffered from a severe lack of road infrastructure. Many villages were cut off from basic services like healthcare, education, markets, and transportation, leading to isolation and hindered development. Recognizing the importance of rural connectivity for overall growth and inclusivity, the government initiated the PMGSY as a vital component of its poverty alleviation and rural development strategies.

The primary objective of the PMGSY is to provide connectivity to unconnected habitations with a population of 500 or above (250 or above in hilly and tribal areas). It focuses on constructing all-weather roads that are able to withstand varying weather conditions, ensuring uninterrupted access throughout the year. The program emphasizes the use of appropriate and cost-effective technologies, environmentally sustainable practices, and community participation in the implementation process.

The PMGSY operates through a partnership model, with funds shared between the central and state governments. The central government bears 90% of the project costs for states categorized as Special Category, while non-Special Category states receive 60% funding. The remaining share is contributed by the respective state governments. This collaborative approach ensures a coordinated effort between the central and state authorities, promoting effective implementation and monitoring of the program.

Since its launch, the PMGSY has made significant strides in improving rural road connectivity across India. It has brought about positive changes in the lives of millions of rural residents, facilitating better access to markets for agricultural produce, enabling the delivery of healthcare services, and enhancing educational opportunities. The program has not only provided physical connectivity but has also acted as a catalyst for rural development, economic growth, and poverty reduction.

However, challenges such as difficult terrain, land acquisition issues, funding constraints, and timely completion of projects have posed hurdles in the smooth implementation of the PMGSY. Efforts are continually being made to address these challenges and ensure the sustainability and maintenance of the constructed roads.

In conclusion, the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana has emerged as a transformative program, reshaping rural road infrastructure in India. It has been instrumental in improving connectivity and enhancing the lives of rural communities by providing them with crucial access to services and

opportunities. With continued dedication and strategic interventions, the PMGSY holds the potential to further bridge the rural-urban divide and create a more inclusive and prosperous India.

Findings and Discussion

The PMGSY-I was initiated as a special intervention to provide rural connectivity through all-weather roads to eligible unconnected habitations with specific population criteria. These criteria include a population size of 500+ in plain areas and 250+ in North-Eastern States, Himalayan States, and Himalayan Union Territories, as per the 2001 census. Relaxations were made for Desert Areas, Tribal areas, and selected Tribal and Backward Districts, where habitations with a population of 250 and above in the Core Network were eligible for connectivity. In Left Wing Extremism affected blocks, habitations with a population of 100 and above were considered for connectivity. Additionally, the scheme included the upgradation of existing rural roads in districts where all eligible habitations of designated population size were connected with all-weather road connectivity.

Under the PMGSY-II, launched in 2013, the focus shifted to the upgradation of the existing rural road network to enhance its efficiency as a transportation service provider. The selection of roads in a district/block was determined by the States/UTs based on their utility value, taking into account their economic potential and contribution to the growth of rural market centers and hubs.

The Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism Affected Areas (RCPLWEA), launched in 2016, aimed to enable smooth anti-LWE operations by security forces while promoting socio-economic development. The selection of projects was done by the Ministry of Home Affairs in consultation with the states and security forces.

Under PMGSY-III, launched in 2019, the objective was to consolidate existing Through Routes (TR) and Major Rural Links (MRL) connecting habitations, including Gramin Agricultural Markets, Higher Secondary Schools, and Hospitals. The selection of roads in a district/block was determined by the States/UTs based on the utility value, considering the population served by the road and the infrastructure facilities connected.

The PMGSY incorporates mechanisms for consultation with public representatives at various stages, including planning, road selection, and monitoring. The program guidelines of PMGSY-III consider proposals from Members of Parliament, and if a proposal cannot be included, written communication is provided to the Members of Parliament, explaining the reasons for non-inclusion. An advisory was issued to State Governments to ensure compliance with program guidelines during proposal submission, including the communication of final proposals to Members of Parliament and obtaining their consent for approval.

Table 1 : No of Roads and Bridges sanctioned and constructed from 2016-17 to 2020-21

Year	Sanctioned			Completed		
	No. of Roads	Road Length (in km)	No. of Bridges	No. of Roads	Road Length (in km)	No. of Bridges
2016-17	1,221	3,779	111	721	3,120	80
2017-18	1,068	2,975	133	1,061	4,519	33
2018-19	274	709	37	747	3,570	76
2019-20	247	2,229	31	906	1,408	65
2020-21	-	-	-	470	2,008	74

Table 2 : Statewise Rural Road Construction under PMGSY till 2020

Sr. No.	State/UTs Name	Habitations Connected (in No.)				
		2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
1	Andaman And Nicobar	0	0	0	0	6
2	Andhra Pradesh	74	32	73	65	43
3	Arunachal Pradesh	6	25	70	21	14
4	Assam	315	318	1,638	1,681	837
5	Bihar	4,493	3,408	2,748	511	468
6	Chhattisgarh	275	404	481	518	205
7	Dadra And Nagar Haveli	0	0	0	0	0
8	Goa	0	0	0	0	0
9	Gujarat	11	11	9	0	1
10	Haryana	0	0	0	0	0
11	Himachal Pradesh	100	57	83	95	90
12	Jammu And Kashmir	235	140	216	146	119
13	Jharkhand	1,028	1,709	1,683	282	46

14	Karnataka	4	0	0	2	0
15	Kerala	7	16	16	0	0
16	Madhya Pradesh	1,069	1,642	671	194	92
17	Maharashtra	26	34	49	29	28
18	Manipur	28	58	63	23	18
19	Meghalaya	22	48	42	29	7
20	Mizoram	0	0	0	2	64
21	Nagaland	0	0	2	0	0
22	Odisha	1,643	1,777	1,672	256	269
23	Punjab	0	0	0	0	0
24	Rajasthan	1,110	760	10	19	6
25	Sikkim	3	4	52	4	5
26	Tamilnadu	9	0	0	0	0
27	Tripura	22	38	31	12	30
28	Uttar Pradesh	149	35	5	0	2
29	Uttarakhand	168	207	202	154	144
30	West Bengal	1,161	784	545	81	67
31	Telangana	1	10	63	28	27
32	Ladakh	3	13	5	2	0

The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) has been a significant initiative in improving rural road connectivity in India. The program has achieved notable outcomes and brought about transformative changes in the lives of rural communities. The following findings and discussion highlight the key aspects and impact of the PMGSY:

Expansion of Road Infrastructure: The PMGSY has resulted in a substantial expansion of rural road infrastructure across the country. Thousands of villages that were previously unconnected or had poor road conditions have been provided with all-weather road connectivity. This expansion has played a vital role in reducing isolation, enhancing accessibility to essential services, and improving overall connectivity for rural communities.

Socioeconomic Impact: The PMGSY has had a significant socioeconomic impact on rural areas. Improved road connectivity has facilitated economic development by providing better access to markets for agricultural produce. It has also generated employment opportunities, particularly in construction and transportation sectors. Additionally, the program has enhanced access to healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and other vital services, leading to improved living standards and reduced poverty.

Bridging the Rural-Urban Divide: The PMGSY has been instrumental in bridging the rural-urban divide by narrowing the gap in infrastructure and connectivity between rural and urban areas. It has created pathways for rural communities to engage in economic activities, access urban markets, and benefit from urban development initiatives. This connectivity has fostered a more balanced and inclusive development across the country.

Challenges in Implementation: The PMGSY has faced several challenges during implementation. Land acquisition has been a persistent issue, causing delays and cost escalations in road projects. Ensuring timely completion of projects has also been a challenge, requiring better project management and coordination among stakeholders. Additionally, the sustainability and maintenance of the constructed roads have been areas of concern, as proper upkeep is crucial for the long-term usability of the infrastructure.

Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation: The PMGSY has incorporated mechanisms for stakeholder engagement and consultation at various stages of the program. Public representatives, including Members of Parliament, have been involved in the planning, selection of roads, and monitoring processes. This participatory approach has contributed to transparency, accountability, and effective decision-making, ensuring the alignment of road projects with local needs and priorities.

Need for Continued Attention and Investment: While the PMGSY has achieved significant success, continued attention and investment are essential for sustaining and further expanding rural road connectivity. Addressing the remaining connectivity gaps, particularly in challenging terrains, remote areas, and regions affected by Left Wing Extremism, requires continued efforts and innovative solutions. Adequate funding allocation, efficient project management, and robust monitoring mechanisms are crucial for the success of the program.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana has been a transformative program, improving rural road connectivity and driving socioeconomic development in India. It has successfully connected thousands of villages, enhancing accessibility to services, promoting economic activities, and reducing the rural-urban divide. While challenges remain, the program's impact highlights the importance of continued investment and attention to ensure sustained rural development and inclusive growth.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY):

- **Increase Funding Allocation:** Enhance the funding allocation for the PMGSY to ensure timely completion of road projects and address the remaining connectivity gaps in rural areas.
- **Streamline Land Acquisition Process:** Simplify and expedite the land acquisition process by introducing clear guidelines, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and providing adequate compensation to landowners.
- **Prioritize Challenging Terrain:** Give special attention to areas with challenging terrains, such as hilly regions and areas prone to natural disasters, to ensure effective road connectivity solutions.
- **Focus on Last-Mile Connectivity:** Emphasize last-mile connectivity to connect the remotest habitations and ensure that even the most marginalized communities have access to all-weather roads.
- **Promote Environmentally Sustainable Practices:** Incorporate environmentally sustainable practices in road construction, such as using eco-friendly materials, adopting appropriate drainage systems, and minimizing the ecological impact of road projects.
- **Strengthen Monitoring Mechanisms:** Strengthen monitoring mechanisms at both the central and state levels to ensure proper implementation, adherence to quality standards, and timely completion of road projects.
- **Enhance Community Participation:** Promote greater community participation in the planning, implementation, and maintenance of road projects under the PMGSY, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability among local communities.
- **Focus on Road Maintenance:** Allocate sufficient resources and develop a robust framework for regular road maintenance to ensure the longevity and usability of the constructed roads.
- **Improve Connectivity to Economic Centers:** Give priority to connecting rural areas with economic centers, markets, and industrial zones to stimulate economic growth, improve livelihood opportunities, and enhance market access for agricultural produce.

- Strengthen Road Safety Measures: Place greater emphasis on incorporating road safety measures during the planning and construction stages, including the provision of signage, speed control mechanisms, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.
- Leverage Technology and Innovation: Explore the use of technology and innovative solutions, such as digital mapping, remote sensing, and drone technology, to streamline the road construction process, enhance project monitoring, and optimize resource allocation.

By implementing these recommendations, the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana can further strengthen its impact, address the existing challenges, and ensure sustainable and inclusive rural road connectivity in India.

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