



Strengthening local self-governance through CRP-EP under SVEP: A study of scheme with decentralized approach in Tappal Block, reflecting Sardar Patel's vision

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Abstract

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, a first Deputy Prime Minister of India and Home Minister, played a pivotal role in the political unification. Along with this, he always emphasized on decentralization of administrative power for the rural development. Several policies and schemes have been launched in independent India to carry forward his vision of empowered local self-governance and rural development. In line with his vision, one more scheme was launched by Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India i.e Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Program (SVEP), which aims to promote entrepreneurship in rural India at Block level through decentralized approach. This program is led by the local self-governing body (LSGB) of the scheme i.e Block Resource Committee (BRC), but to implement the scheme, this LSGB has Community Resource Persons-Enterprise Promotion (CRPs-EP) as their executive arm. They serve as grassroots facilitators in mobilizing and supporting beneficiaries. This research paper examines the role of CRP-EPs in supporting LSGB of the scheme in the Tappal Block of Uttar Pradesh, highlighting their contribution to effective SVEP implementation. Through field-based qualitative and quantitative data, the study analyzes how CRP-EPs strengthen institutional linkages, facilitate enterprise development, and ensure convergence between the community and local governance mechanisms. This paper concludes with policy recommendations to enhance the sustainability and scalability of SVEP by reinforcing the CRP-EP-LSGB interface, to fulfil the Sardar Patel's vision.

Keywords: Local self governance, public policy, community governance, rural development

Introduction

India's democratic foundation is deeply rooted in the principle of local self-governance, a vision ardently championed by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the architect of national integration and a strong proponent of decentralized administration. Patel believed that true democracy begins at grassroots, where empowered and self-reliant villages should be developed through local self-governance. In alignment with this vision, the Govt. of India has launched numerous initiatives to bolster local institutions and promote rural entrepreneurship. Amongst these, the Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Program (SVEP) implemented under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), stands out as a targeted intervention to catalyze economic empowerment at village level through community participatory approach. SVEP is implemented in this block during 2016-2020. To implement this scheme, in 91 villages of Tappal block, there were 14 CRPs working under LSGB of the scheme. Selection of this CRPs was jointly undertaken by BRC and Mentor/Project Implementing Agency (PIA). During selection, the criteria which is taken care of that he/she should be literate, fluent in the local language, a resident of the block, should have a working knowledge of aptitude for mathematics and business understanding, should be willing to travel and interact with potential entrepreneurs, ideally should be a member of, or should be from the family of a member of a SHG and the age criteria is between 18 to 45 years. This CRPs selected after a due process of selection, which has a written test and some team activities. This CRPs expected to clear a post training certification process, only after which he/she is eligible to operate as a CRP-EP. Core responsibilities of these CRP-EPs include mobilizing beneficiaries, preparing business plans, mentoring, tracking enterprise performance, and providing handholding support

during critical stages of enterprise development. Due to their familiarity with local conditions and community dynamics, CRPs can act as effective intermediaries between LSGB of scheme and beneficiaries. For SVEP to be successful at the grassroots, active collaboration between CRP-EPs and LSGBs is essential. CRP-EPs are not only to assist LSGBs in identifying and supporting viable enterprises but also help to implement the scheme within the broader framework of decentralized governance.

The study explores the nature of collaboration between CRP-EPs and Panchayati Raj Institutions, assesses the effectiveness of their joint efforts in identifying and nurturing rural entrepreneurs, and evaluates how this partnership contributes to the overall success of SVEP at the local level in alignment of Sardar Patel's vision.

Review of Literature

(Menon, 1999) ^[9] Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel strongly advocated for empowered village institutions, emphasizing that India's democratic success depends on empowering local self-governance bodies. In several speeches and administrative actions, Patel argued that villages must become self-reliant units, capable of managing their affairs with minimal dependence on State.

(Mehta, 1999) ^[8] Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel played a pivotal role not only in the political integration of India but also in laying the ideological foundation for decentralized governance. Patel believed that governance should be accessible, accountable, and participatory, especially at the village level.

(Palanithurai, 2002) ^[10] asserts that Patel's insistence on functional autonomy for local bodies provided a strong ideological foundation for future governance reforms in India. His administrative experience as a municipal leader in

Gujarat, and later as Home Minister, enabled him to understand the importance of local governance in both political consolidation and community development.

(Dey, 2005) ^[3] notes that Patel envisioned a system where village councils (Gram Panchayats) would exercise not just consultative but executive powers—handling local infrastructure, health, education, and economic development with autonomy. He believed in the functional, financial, and administrative empowerment of PRIs.

(Chandra, 2010) ^[2] Patel's approach to nation-building was guided by two principles: unity through integration, and strength through decentralization. He believed that strong village institutions would safeguard both democracy and national integrity.

(Verma, 2011) ^[16] Patel believed that true democracy must begin at the grassroots and that Panchayati Raj was not merely an administrative necessity but a moral and political imperative. He consistently advocated for village panchayats to have autonomy in decision-making and fiscal matters, foreseeing the need for institutionalized local bodies that could serve as engines of rural transformation.

(Jha, 2015) ^[5] point to issues like political interference, lack of capacity building, and fiscal dependence that hinder the effectiveness of PRIs. There is a growing call to revisit Patel's ideas in light of these modern challenges, to reinforce the role of village institutions as genuine engines of democracy and development.

(Kumar, 2018) mentioned that Sardar Patel's deeper legacy lies in the principles of decentralized governance. Patel viewed decentralization as a method not only of efficient administration but of nation-building—where people, especially in rural India, were active participants in development.

(QCI, 2019) ^[13] reports that the range of services provided by CRP-EP and BRC should be improved. BRC has been set up as the base for implementation of SVEP in the blocks and forms an important part of the institutional and contractual arrangements for block level operations. More needs to be done to design them as a single point solution for enterprise promotion, so that they are able to address the needs and grievances of the community through information availability, business plan processing, documentation support and funding. Their role especially in facilitating start-up support and handholding of entrepreneurs through CRP-EPs and monitoring the progress and timely loan repayment of enterprises need to be improved. The various committees within the BRC that have been formed, like executive and approval committees, need to be strengthened further. The role of the PIA in providing handholding support to BRC & CRP-EPs, especially in establishing the norms, terms and conditions for the operations should be phased out gradually so that the program becomes sustainable after the PIA's withdrawal. The mid-term evaluation study (overall sample) also took the beneficiaries perspective for support provided by CRP-EPs and reported that the entrepreneurs received support from the CRP-EPs in following aspects – selecting business models (31%), document preparation (60%), accessing loans – CIF/CEF (37%), setting up business (17%), bank linkage (23%) and book-keeping (37%).

(Singh, 2020) ^[15] In modern discourse, Patel's ideas are invoked in the context of rural development, cooperative movements, and decentralized program implementation. Public policy programs seek to place control in the hands of

community-based facilitators and Gram Panchayats, embodying the spirit of bottom-up governance that Patel envisioned. The increasing focus on community-led planning, participatory rural development, and devolution of fiscal powers reflects Sardar Patel's enduring influence on India's development policy framework.

(Phansalkar, 2020) have expressed the meaning, need and identification process of community resource persons that, the development of CRP is a mechanism to strengthen the community-based organizations by creating a local resource pool to make the community institutions self-reliant by managing them effectively. The community institutions are supported by a cadre of community professionals under different thematic interventions. CRPs have been promoted under the programme for supporting different interventions. The principal objective of these CRPs is to provide technical support as well as guide the members of community institutions in undertaking different interventions under the programme. These CRPs act like a bridge between (Community Based Organizations) CBOs, Banks, Networking Intuitions and Government Departments.

(Jain, 2020) There should be a common online platform for the CRP-EPs to discuss the issues and challenges faced by them. This will facilitate them in informal learning which can subsequently help the program. Along with this, there should be a mapping of the training needs for the CRP-EPs. A few specific areas need to focus like business plan preparation, loan application & processing, pursuance of loan repayment and tackling an external environment. A strongly calibrated strategy should be developed to balance the time spent by CRP-EPs between enrolling new entrepreneurs and supporting the existing establishments. This can be influenced by establishing a norm on the visiting frequency of CRP-EP's to the existing enterprises.

(PIB, 2021) CRP-EPs are selected from the community where the programme is being implemented as they understand the local context and their familiarity with the NRLM eco-system. CRP-EPs along with the Block Programme Manager (BPM) and the Mentor are the key human resources at the block level for implementing the programme. They play an important role for Orientation of CBOs on Enterprise development, business plan preparation, market linkages and handholding support to entrepreneurs. CRP-EPs are trained before they start working with the entrepreneurs, the training is a mix of classroom and field trainings. The total duration is for 56 days. Once they undergo training in one component through class room sessions, they have components of field work where they attempt to put into practice some of the learnings.

(Neeraj, 2023) CRPs are not fully equipped to handle grass root level problems and challenges. They are facing many challenges, dynamics in groups, VO's and CLFs. Absenteeism in regular meetings and decision making, collective activities issues, value additions & marketing of the produces etc. are the key issues to resolve. SRLM has to provide more resilience training, exposure to build strong knowledge and processes to resolve the challenges. CRPs also need identity, social security, insurance and social media training to organize this valuable community cadre involved in transforming the rural women's life through institutionalizing SHGs and their upper tier formations.

(Mazumdar, 2024) The performance of CRP-EPs is measured by their maximum support to entrepreneurs in receiving the CEF Loan, its repayment, and the and the

business facilitation for market linkage and bank linkage under the SVEP-Programme. The support is not limited to promotion but focuses on identifying potential entrepreneurs from the beginning with training, market, financial linkages, etc. It is essential to maintain and expand the support provided to beneficiaries by CRP-EPs and BRC for the continued success of the scheme in the region.

(Arahant, 2024) SVEP is implemented with strong support from CRP-EPs. The entrepreneurship and pre-orientation programs provided under this scheme can only become effective with a strong support base of CRP-EPs. There is a variation in the role of CRP-EPs according to the needs of the regions. During our field study, we observed that the bureaucratic government structure overlaps the process, which impacts CRP-Eps' efficiency. The quality of training provided to the CRP-EPs is the major issue that still needs to be resolved under the current scheme. Specific issues like low wages for CRP-EPs, no insurance and travel allowances demotivate CRP-EPs. We observed that there is a requirement for specific sector training, for example, business plan preparation, pursuance of loan repayment from entrepreneurs, and scanning of the external environment.

Research Gap/Need for Study

From the studied review of literature, it has been identified that the block-level studies, particularly in smaller regions like Tappal Block, are largely not covered in scholarly studies. Most evaluations are either state-wide or national in scope, and micro-level operational realities remain unattended to analyze the role of community resource persons to support the LSGB for implementation of Government scheme at Block level. Moreover, it has been observed that the vision of Sardar Patel, especially his emphasis on decentralized administration and participatory

governance, is either not properly implemented in practice or insufficiently covered in scholarly discourse. This study will also address the same.

Objectives

1. To study the role of CRP-EPs in supporting Local Self-Governing Institutions of the SVEP, in alignment with the principle of decentralized governance and participatory approach as envisioned by Sardar Patel.
2. To identify challenges faced by LSGBs to implement the scheme through CRP-EP, which can further fulfill the vision of Sardar Patel to strengthen the community for their effective engagement in local self-governance model.

Methodology

A descriptive and analytical research design is used to examine the role of CRP-EPs in supporting LSGB for the implementation of SVEP in the block Tappal. The structured questionnaire is introduced to 90 LSGB members of the scheme to capture the primary data. For the same, the Likert scale (1-5) is used in the questionnaire. Through this methodology, the data was captured and analyzed.

Limitations of Study

- The study is limited to the Tappal Block and may not be generalizable to other regions.
- The quantitative focus may not capture in-depth qualitative nuances of the CRP-EP and LSGB dynamic.

Interpretation & Analysis

The primary data was collected from BRC based on the key roles of the CRPs which facilitate LSGB of the scheme for implementation. The summary of the same is as tabulated below.

Sr. No.	Indicator for CRP-EP to Support LSGB in Scheme Implementation	Feedback from LSGB				
		Very Poor	Below Average	Average	Good	Excellent
1	Activeness in mobilizing potential entrepreneurs	3%	5%	19%	56%	17%
2	Accuracy in Business Plan Preparation	9%	16%	28%	41%	6%
3	Timely submission of business plans	2%	3%	21%	53%	21%
4	Timely loan repayment collection	11%	6%	39%	32%	12%
5	Efficiency in Monitoring Enterprise & Handholding	8%	12%	31%	38%	11%
6	Punctuality in submitting reports to BRC	2%	3%	22%	49%	24%
7	Expertise on Use of ICT platforms	14%	12%	43%	24%	7%
8	Delivery of Entrepreneurship Development training	16%	38%	25%	17%	4%
9	Soft Skills & Communication	7%	12%	41%	27%	13%

This section presents an analytical interpretation of the feedback received from Local Self Government Bodies (LSGB) regarding the performance of Community Resource Persons for Enterprise Promotion (CRP-EP) across nine key indicators in the implementation of the scheme as mentioned below.

Activeness in Mobilizing Potential Entrepreneurs

The majority of respondents (73%) rated the CRP-EPs as either Good (56%) or Excellent (17%) in mobilizing entrepreneurs. This high rating suggests strong grassroots engagement and outreach capacity among CRP-EPs, with minimal feedback indicating Very Poor (3%) or Below Average (5%) performance.

Accuracy in Business Plan Preparation

Feedback in this area reflects a moderate level of satisfaction. Only 6% rated the CRP-EPs as Excellent, while

a significant proportion (25%) rated performance as Very Poor (9%) or Below Average (16%). With the largest segment rating it as Average (28%), there is clear room for improvement in the quality and accuracy of business planning support.

Timely Submission of Business Plans

The indicator received a favorable response, with 74% of respondents marking performance as Good (53%) or Excellent (21%). Only 5% reported dissatisfaction. This reflects positively on the timeliness and reliability of CRP-EPs in meeting planning deadlines.

Timely Loan Repayment Collection

Performance in this area was mixed. Only 44% rated it as Good or Excellent, while 39% considered it Average. Notably, 17% of feedback indicated below average or poor performance. This suggests the need for strengthened post-

credit monitoring and borrower follow-up mechanisms.

Efficiency in Monitoring Enterprise and Handholding

Although 49% rated the performance as Good or Excellent, 20% gave it a below average rating. With 31% rating it as Average, the data implies that while CRP-EPs are moderately effective in handholding and monitoring, a more structured or capacity-enhancing approach may be beneficial.

Punctuality in Submitting Reports to BRC

This indicator received the highest proportion of Excellent feedback (24%) and the second-highest Good rating (49%), totaling 73%. This indicates strong discipline and reporting efficiency among CRP-EPs, with very few respondents (5%) reporting dissatisfaction.

Expertise on Use of ICT Platforms

ICT-related skills remain a significant area of concern. Only 31% rated this indicator as Good or Excellent, while 69%

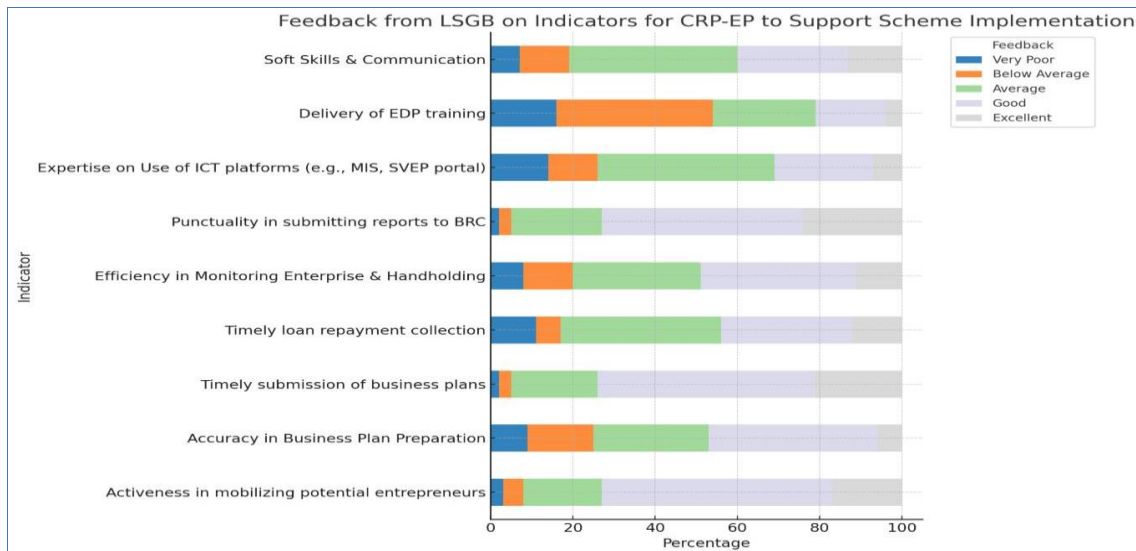
gave Average (43%) or lower scores. The relatively high Very Poor rating (14%) points to a pressing need for ICT training and capacity building.

Delivery of EDP Training

This was the weakest performing indicator, with a combined 54% rating the delivery of Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) training as Very Poor (16%) or Below Average (38%). Only 21% offered a Good or Excellent rating, indicating an urgent need to overhaul EDP training content, pedagogy, and delivery mechanisms.

Soft Skills and Communication

This indicator received balanced feedback. While 40% rated performance as Good or Excellent, 41% rated it as Average, and 19% as below average. This suggests that while some CRP-EPs demonstrate effective communication, others require focused training to improve their interpersonal engagement and facilitation skills.



Summary of Key Insights

Strong Areas: Reporting punctuality and mobilization of entrepreneurs are the strongest-performing areas identified by LSGB.

Moderate Areas: Submission timeliness, enterprise handholding, and communication skills require ongoing support and training.

Areas of Concern: ICT expertise and EDP training delivery stand out as major weaknesses, with significant feedback pointing to the need for improvement.

These insights provide a clear direction for capacity-building interventions aimed at enhancing CRP-EP effectiveness to support LSGB.

Conclusion

The feedback from Local Self Government Bodies (LSGB) offers valuable insights into the performance of Community Resource Persons for Enterprise Promotion (CRP-EP) to support LSGB across key functional areas of the scheme implementation.

The analysis reveals that while CRP-EPs exhibit commendable strength in mobilizing potential entrepreneurs

and maintaining punctuality in reporting, significant gaps persist in areas like ICT proficiency and the delivery of Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) training. Specifically, the consistent positive feedback on reporting, timeliness, and mobilization efforts indicates a robust foundation of operational discipline and field engagement. However, the relatively high proportion of “Average” and “Below Average” ratings for business planning, monitoring, and especially EDP training, underscores the need for targeted capacity-building and strategic program enhancements. The mixed responses related to soft skills and communication further point to the importance of equipping CRP-EPs with interpersonal competencies that are critical for effective community-based enterprise facilitation.

Overall, the findings suggest that while the CRP-EP mechanism has been instrumental in extending support to the LSGB at the grassroots, optimizing its impact requires a more structured approach to training, monitoring, and skill reinforcement.

The reflected strategic enhancement of the CRP-EP model stands as a contemporary realization of Sardar Patel’s vision, where empowered individuals serves as catalyst for inclusive development and self-sustained local self-governance.

Suggestions/Recommendations

1. Targeted Capacity Building Programs

Priority should be given to upskilling CRP-EPs in ICT platforms (e.g., MIS, SVEP Portal) and EDP training methodologies. Tailored, hands-on training sessions with follow-up evaluations should be instituted to bridge these capability gaps.

2. Strengthening Soft Skills and Communication

Soft skills training—including conflict resolution, negotiation, and presentation skills—should be embedded as a core part of CRP-EP orientation and refresher programs. This is especially critical given the interpersonal nature of enterprise promotion.

3. Enhance Digital Literacy and Support Infrastructure

Improving digital infrastructure at the block and GP level, coupled with ongoing technical support, can ensure smoother use of digital platforms and data entry tools by CRP-EPs, enabling more efficient scheme monitoring.

By systematically addressing the identified gaps and building existing strengths, the CRP-EP framework can be significantly strengthened. This will also build the capacity of local self-governance model as envisaged by Sardar Patel and it will further help to implement Government schemes more effectively through participation of community in local governance.

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