

## **Assessing the Impact of People's Participation in Gram Panchayat functions for Rural Development: A Comparative Study**

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### **Abstract**

Rural development assumes a pivotal role in a nation's advancement, especially when a substantial portion of the population resides in rural settings. At the heart of this progression lie Gram Panchayats—local self-governing bodies—empowering communities to actively participate in shaping their destinies. At its core, democratic decentralization cultivates a sense of ownership and duty towards rural development. The incorporation of local insights and needs amplifies project alignment, sustainability, and community ownership. Within India, Gram Panchayats stand as indispensable agents of rural development, benefiting from government support to catalyze social and economic transformation. This study meticulously explores the ramifications of people's involvement in Gram Panchayat functions, dissecting its influences on infrastructure, social welfare, resource administration, and the empowerment of marginalized groups. Acknowledging this influence, stakeholders can devise strategies to enhance efficient rural development, nurturing grassroots democracy, local stewardship, and enduring progress. The study uncovers that Gram Panchayats with higher levels of people's participation in their functions tend to exhibit a more effective implementation of essential amenities for the rural people. Therefore, the study suggests that Both Gram Panchayats must focus on improving communication strategies and outreach efforts to ensure that all residents, irrespective of their category, whether, or not they got proper information. Develop targeted awareness campaigns specifically aimed at reaching the SC and ST communities. These campaigns should emphasize the importance of Gram Panchayat services, provide information about available resources, and address any concerns or misconceptions.

*Key words: People Participation, Gram Panchayat functions and development.*

### **Introduction**

Rural development holds significant importance in the progress of a country, especially where a substantial portion of the population resides in rural areas. In many nations, the Gram Panchayats, also known as village councils or local self-government bodies, play a crucial role in facilitating rural development. These institutions serve as the cornerstone of decentralized governance, empowering local communities to actively engage in decision-making processes that directly impact their lives. The principle of democratic decentralization underpins the idea of people's participation in Gram Panchayat functions. By encouraging active involvement and collaboration between community members and elected

representatives, the aim is to instil a sense of ownership and responsibility for rural development initiatives. Local individuals bring with them a wealth of knowledge, specific needs, and a deep understanding of their community's challenges, making their participation in these functions invaluable. Rural development is essential for fostering inclusive growth and improving the quality of life for millions of people in rural areas. In countries like India, the Gram Panchayat system plays a pivotal role in driving rural development at the grassroots level. These local self-government institutions are designed to address the unique needs and challenges of rural communities.

One of the fundamental pillars of effective Gram Panchayats is the active participation of people, especially the local residents and stakeholders, in decision-making and implementation processes. People's participation entails involvement in planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation of development initiatives within their villages or rural areas. The impact of such participation is profound and multifaceted. When rural inhabitants actively engage in decision-making, it ensures that development projects align more closely with the actual needs and priorities of the community. Participatory development approaches are also more sustainable, as they foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among the local population. Recognizing the significance of Gram Panchayats in rural development, the central and state governments, along with various committees, have emphasized their role in India. The Panchayats are seen as responsible for village development with the goal of transforming social and economic life in rural areas. They are not merely institutions of political participation but also of social and economic development, and thus, receive financial support from the government.

The Panchayats are playing an important role in rural development in India. The central and state governments and various committees have emphasized the importance of these bodies in the Indian context. Particularly the second five-year plan, laid special emphasis on the role of Panchayats in rural developments. And also a plan envisaged a Panchayat as responsible for village development keeping transformation of social and economic life of rural areas as its goal of development. It says that, the rural progress depends entirely on the existence of an active organization in the village which can bring all the people, including the weaker sections, in common programmes to be carried out with the assistance of administration. It has been reorganized with wider powers and financial resources not merely as institutions of political participation but institutions of social and economic development. Hence, Government finance is significant in social and economic development of rural areas. In this manner, central and state government has provided the financial support to rural areas. Because basic needs of rural areas still remain unmet. Therefore, the people should connectivity to Gram Panchayat activities for better services. And also people should be participating in various functions such as ward sabha and Gram sabha lead by the Gram Panchayats. Hence, Panchayat will development.

This study explores the significant impact of people's participation in Gram Panchayat functions for rural development. It delves into the various aspects where participation makes a difference, such as infrastructure development, social welfare programs, resource management, and empowerment of marginalized groups. By understanding the importance of people's participation in Gram Panchayat functions, policymakers, local administrators, and development practitioners can design and implement more effective strategies to accelerate rural development and ultimately improve the living conditions and well-being of rural residents. Through this analysis, we can gain insights into fostering an environment that nurtures grassroots democracy, local ownership, and sustainable progress.

## Review of Literature

Singh, S.P. (2002) his study has elucidated the key markers of successful people management within rural development Gram Panchayats. It identifies human resource enhancement as the foremost indicator, trailed by effective local-level coordination and communication. Additionally, the study underscores the significance of people's engagement and active participation in the planning process.

Tanjil Ahamad (2022) their study is to explore the most current trends in people's participation in different avenues of local government. And the realities and challenges involved in strengthening decentralisation in Bangladesh. Using a quantitative methodology, the study found that different avenues of people's participation in Union Parishads has fostered successful decentralisation since these avenues certify independent participation and enable them to share their opinions and influence decision-making processes. Since decentralisation facilitates the transfer of power from the central to the local level, people's participation is functional within Union Parishads. therefore the study suggest that, by implementing public awareness programmes, ensuring the maximum autonomy of local government units, and confirming the accountability and transparency of service providers, people's participation can strengthen the decentralisation of rural local government in Bangladesh. several studies are focus on Gram Panchayats finance, revenue mobilisation, sources of tax few studies are examine the people participation and Gram Panchayat development. Therefore, present study emphasised the impact of the People participation in Gram Panchayat functions and its effectiveness in rural area. In this context, the study examines the following objectives: To analyze the people's participation in Gram Panchayat functions in sample Gram Panchayats. To examine the effectiveness of the People Participation in Gram Panchayat Functions in sample Gram Panchayats. To offer policy and suggestions.

## Methodology

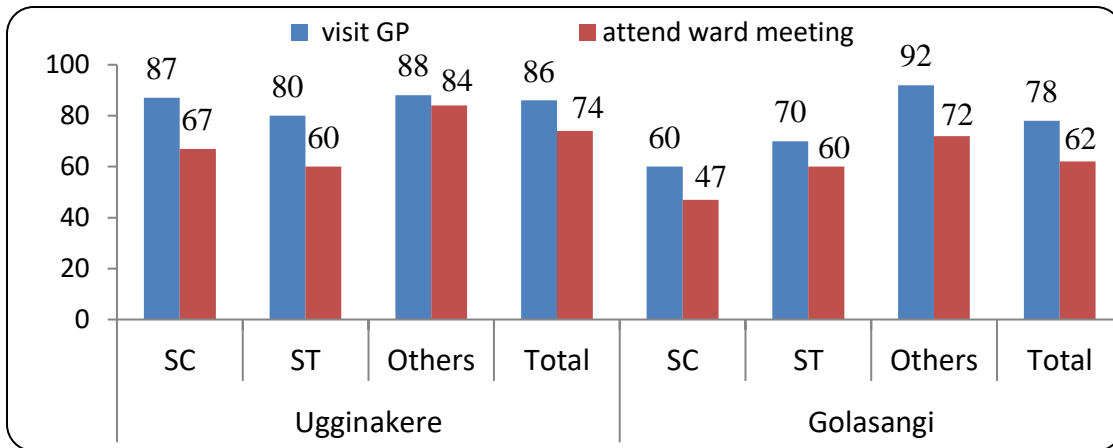
The present study is based on secondary data and Primary data. The present study follows an empirical approach to evaluate the performance of Gram Panchayats in Implementation of Basic Amenities in Rural Karnataka. The secondary data collected from Economic Survey and District at a Glance, 4<sup>th</sup> State Finance Commission Report in respect Sample Gram Panchayats, Ministry of Rural Development and Committee Report discussions with functionaries of Panchayats, etc. And Primary data collected from Selected Sample Gram Panchayats in Dharwad and Vijayapur Districts. I have selected Two Districts based on Gram Panchayat Performance indicators measured by department of RDPR in Karnataka during 2014-15. Selected two Districts based on Better Performance and Poor Performance Districts. Here Dharwad was Better Gram Panchayat Performance District and Vijayapur was poor Gram Panchayat Performance District. I have selected one taluk and one Gram Panchayat on highest Percapita own Source Revenue indicator in both districts. The study employs simple statistical tools to analyze the data collected like Tabular analysis, Percent and Annual Growth Rate. The overall study is more analytical and qualitative in nature.

## Results and Discussion

To analyze the people's participation in Gram Panchayat functions in sample Gram Panchayats.

The figure 4.1 shows, in both Ugginakere and Golasangi, the overall 86 percent of respondents to visiting Gram Panchayats is higher in Ugginakere than in Golasangi percent 78. This indicates that a larger proportion of respondents in Ugginakere are willing to visit Gram Panchayats compared to Golasangi. In Ugginakere, 87 percent of respondents from the SC community to visiting Gram Panchayats, while in Golasangi, the percent is lower at 60. This shows that a higher proportion of SC respondents are willing to visit Gram Panchayats in Ugginakere compared to Golasangi. In both Ugginakere and Golasangi, the

percent of respondents from the ST community is relatively close, with 80 in Ugginakere and 70 percent in Golasangi. In both Ugginakere and Golasangi, the percent of respondents from the "Others" category relatively high, with 88 percent in Ugginakere and 92 percent in Golasangi. higher percent of respondents in Ugginakere are willing to visit Gram Panchayats compared to Golasangi. Because of Ugginakere Gram Panchayat Performance has better to compare Golasangi Gram Panchayat. The overall percent of respondents attending ward meetings is higher in Ugginakere percent 74 compared to Golasangi percent 62. This indicates that a larger proportion of respondents in Ugginakere attend ward meetings compared to Golasangi. In Ugginakere, 67 percent of respondents from the SC community attend ward meetings, whereas in Golasangi, the percent is lower at 47. This shows that a higher proportion of SC respondents attend ward meetings in Ugginakere compared to Golasangi. Both in Ugginakere and Golasangi, the percent of respondents from the ST community who attend ward meetings is the same at percent of 60. In Ugginakere, 84 percent of respondents from the "Others" category attend ward meetings, while in Golasangi, the percent is slightly lower at 72 percent. This suggests that a higher proportion of respondents in the "Others" category attend ward meetings in Ugginakere compared to Golasangi. A higher percent of respondents in Ugginakere attend ward meetings compared to Golasangi. This trend is consistent across the SC community and the "Others" category, where a higher proportion of respondents attend ward meetings in Ugginakere. However, in the ST community, the attendance percents are the same in both Ugginakere and Golasangi. Because of very less number of ST categories households in both Gram Panchayats and they have less awareness among the Gram Panchayat services.



**Figure 4.1**

People Participation in Highest PCOSR Gram Panchayats (Percent)

The Table 4.1 clears that by going Social groups, SC respondents expressing 87 percent of staff availability during working hours is higher in Ugginakere compared to Golasangi Gram Panchayat with 80 percent. ST respondents expressing 80 percent of staff availability during working hours is higher in Ugginakere compared to Golasangi Gram Panchayat percent is 40 percent. Others respondent said that 88 percent of staff availability is there during working hours are quite high in Golasangi compared to Ugginakere. The total household respondents expressing staff availability is there during working hours is higher 74 percent in Golasangi compared to Ugginakere 68 percent. It shows that SC and STs Households has been more communicate with Gram Panchayat service compared to others in Ugginakere. But Golasangi Gram Panchayat has been doesn't create the awareness among SCs and STs therefore, Golasangi Gram Panchayat failed to reach the SCs and STs Community. In Ugginakere Gram Panchayat, SC respondents expressing staff availability during working hours is higher 87 percent compared to Golasangi Gram

Panchayat, where it is 80 percent. Similarly, in Ugginakere, ST respondents expressing staff availability during working hours is higher 80 percent compared to Golasangi, where it is only 40 percent. However, when it comes to the "Others" category, Golasangi Gram Panchayat performs better, with 88 percent of respondents expressing staff availability during working hours, whereas Ugginakere has a slightly lower percent. Furthermore, the total household respondents in Golasangi 74 percent show a higher percent of staff availability during working hours compared to Ugginakere 68 percent. This suggests that SC and ST households in Ugginakere are more actively engaged with the Gram Panchayat services compared to "Others," while Golasangi Gram Panchayat fails to effectively reach and create awareness among SC and ST communities. In conclusion, Ugginakere has relatively higher staff availability perception among SC and ST respondents, but Golasangi performs better in engaging the "Others" category. However, Golasangi needs to improve its outreach and awareness efforts to better serve the SC and ST communities. The Gram Panchayat should focus on addressing the disparities and ensuring equal access to services for all communities.

Ugginakere Gram Panchayat has a slightly higher 73 percent SC respondents receiving proper information compared to 67 percent in Golasangi Gram Panchayat. Golasangi has a significant issue as there are no positive responses from ST respondents, while Ugginakere has a comparatively higher percent. Golasangi Gram Panchayat has significantly better communication with the "Others" category compared to Ugginakere Gram Panchayat. The data shows notable differences in the perception of receiving proper information among different categories in both Ugginakere and Golasangi Gram Panchayats. While the SC category generally reports higher percents of proper information received, there are considerable disparities within the ST and Others categories. Golasangi faces a critical challenge with the ST community, as there are no positive responses in this category. Golasangi Gram Panchayat has completely neglected to STs because of less number households are lived in Golasangi. To address these disparities, both Gram Panchayats must focus on improving communication strategies and outreach efforts to ensure that all residents, irrespective of their category, receive proper information. It is crucial for effective governance, transparency, and inclusion in the respective Gram Panchayats.

**Table 4.1**

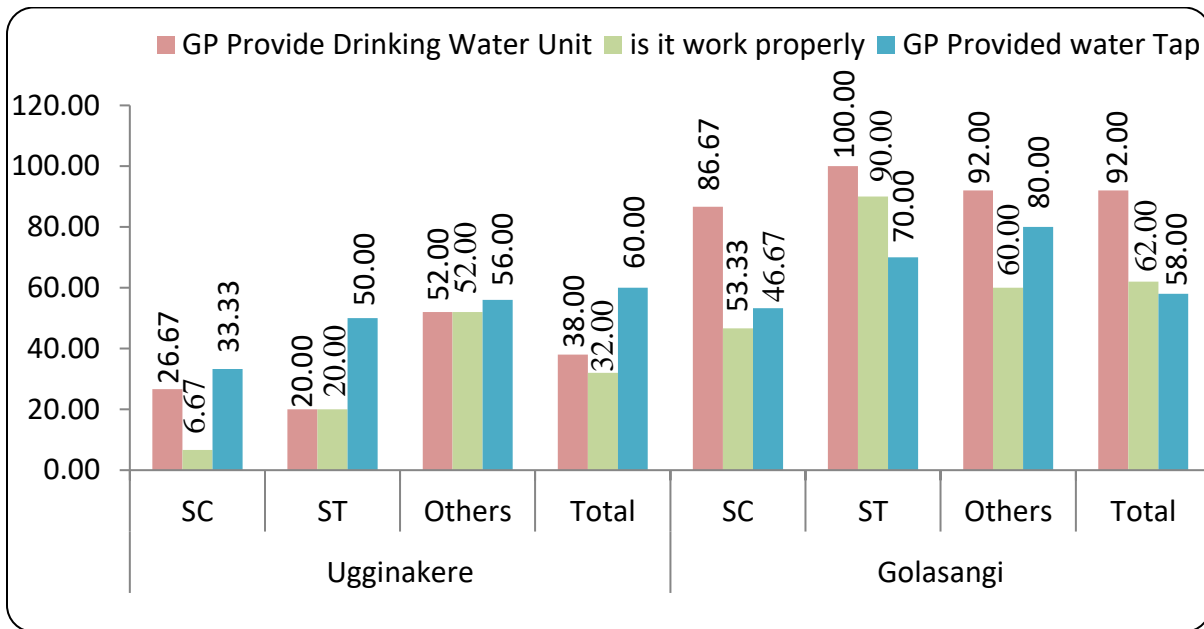
***Perception regarding Service Delivery by Sample Gram Panchayats (Percent)***

GPs		Categories	Staff availability during GP time	Is GP staff given proper information	GP create awareness
			Yes	Yes	Yes
Highest PCOSR GPs	Ugginakere	SC	87	73	73
		ST	80	60	50
		Others	52	44	44
		<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>54</b>
	Golasangi	SC	80	67	53
		ST	40	0	10
		Others	88	88	84
		<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>62</b>

Source: Field survey 2018

To examine the effectiveness of the People Participation in Gram Panchayat Functions in sample Gram Panchayats

Figure 4.2 shows that in terms of water supply, Golasangi Gram Panchayat outperforms Ugginakere Gram Panchayat, particularly concerning the provision of water taps and drinking water units among social groups. In Ugginakere Gram Panchayat, there is better performance in providing water taps to households, with a rate of percent 60 compared to Golasangi percent 58. However, Golasangi excels in providing drinking water units among social groups, surpassing Ugginakere in this aspect. Ugginakere lags behind slightly in terms of providing drinking water units to social groups. Moreover, the drinking water units in Ugginakere Gram Panchayat face challenges as they do not function as effectively as those in Golasangi Gram Panchayat. In summary, while Ugginakere Gram Panchayat performs better in providing water taps to households, Golasangi Gram Panchayat demonstrates higher success in delivering drinking water units among social groups. However, there are issues with the functionality of drinking water units in Ugginakere compared to Golasangi. To improve water supply services, both Gram Panchayats should address these disparities and work towards more efficient and accessible water supply solutions for all social groups.



**Figure 4.2:**

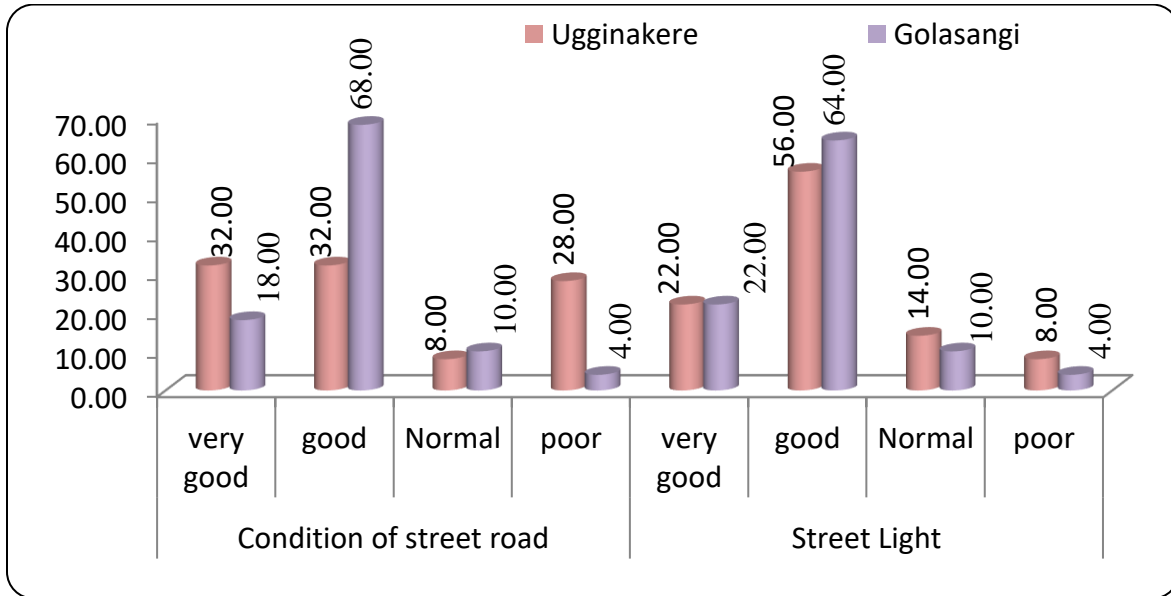
Peoples opinion about water service in Highest PCOSR Gram Panchayats (Percent)

Source: Field survey 2018

The Figure 4.3 indicates that the during a field survey in Dharwad and Vijayapur Districts, the condition of roads and street light facilities was assessed in two sample Gram Panchayats: Ugginakere and Golasangi. In terms of road conditions, 32 percent in the sample households in Ugginakere expressed a "very good" opinion, which is lower compared to Golasangi Gram Panchayat. In Golasangi, a higher percent of households, 68 percent expressed a "good" opinion about the road conditions. Regarding street light facilities, Golasangi outperformed Ugginakere. 64 percent of the sample households in Golasangi opined that "good" street light facilities were being provided, while in Ugginakere, a lower percent of households expressed satisfaction with the street light facilities. In summary, during the survey, more households in



Golasangi Gram Panchayat were content with the road conditions and street light facilities compared to Ugginakere Gram Panchayat. However, in Ugginakere, a significant proportion of households still rated the road conditions as "very good," indicating that the overall road infrastructure is still well-regarded by a substantial portion of the community. To further improve the quality of roads and street light facilities, both Gram Panchayats should take into account the feedback from their residents and address any areas of concern.

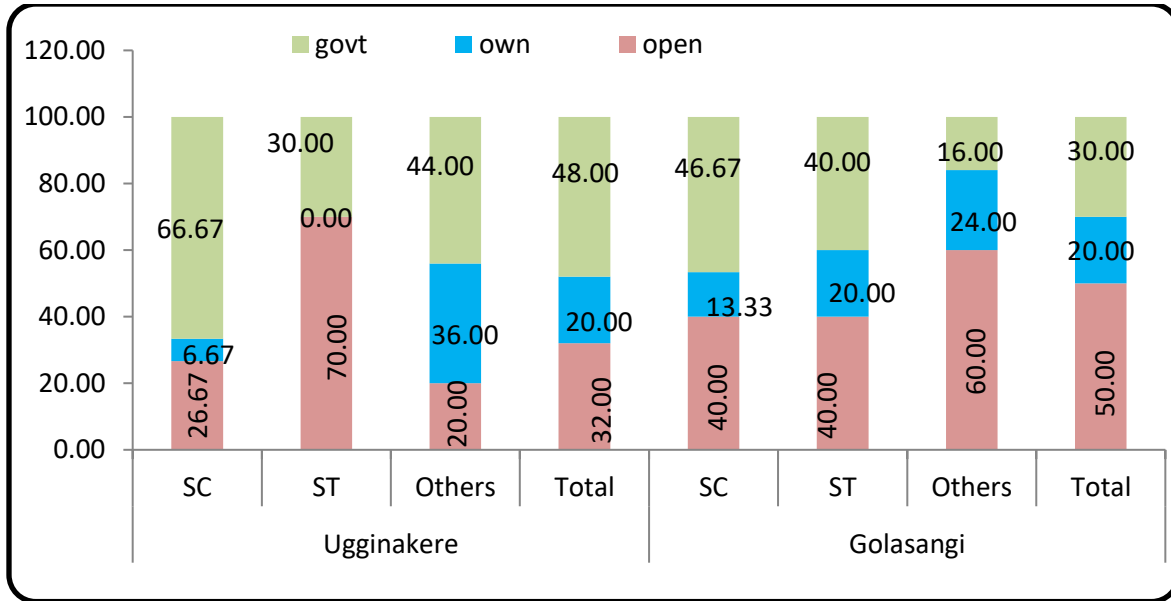


**Figure 4. 3:**

Condition of Road and Street Light in Highest PCOSR Gram Panchayats (Percent)

Source: Field survey 2018

The Figure 4.4 illustrate that In Ugginakere Gram Panchayat, a majority of sample households 48 Percent had access to toilet facilities, which was higher compared to Golasangi Gram Panchayat, where only 30 Percent of households had such facilities. Regarding toilet facility provision to specific social groups, Ugginakere Gram Panchayat performed better in providing toilet facilities to SCs, with 66.67 Percent of SC households having access to toilets, whereas in Golasangi Gram Panchayat, the percent of SC households with access was 46.67 Percent. However, in terms of toilet facilities for the "Others" category, both Gram Panchayats fared better, with a higher percent of households having their own toilet facilities compared to SCs and STs. In Ugginakere Gram Panchayat, a concerning issue was identified among STs, with 70 Percent of them resorting to open defecation due to a lack of access to government-provided toilet facilities. Similarly, in Golasangi Gram Panchayat, the "Others" category had the highest number of people depending on open defecation, compared with SCs and STs. In summary, Ugginakere Gram Panchayat showed better performance in providing toilet facilities to a higher percent of sample households, especially to SCs. However, there remains a critical need to address the lack of government-provided toilet facilities for STs. In both Gram Panchayats, efforts are required to encourage the "Others" category to adopt proper toilet facilities and reduce open defecation practices. Addressing these disparities and ensuring equitable access to clean and hygienic sanitation facilities for all social groups should be a priority for both Gram Panchayats.



**Figure 4.4:**

Nature of Toilet in Highest PCOSR Gram Panchayats (Percent)

Source: Field survey 2018

### Findings and suggestion

***Following are the major findings of the study which focus on what are the effects have been achieved due to people's participating in the Gram Panchayat functions.***

A higher percent of respondents in Ugginakere are willing to visit Gram Panchayats compared to Golasangi. Because of Ugginakere Gram Panchayat Performance has better to compare Golasangi Gram Panchayat.

A substantial percentage of respondents from all social groups attend ward meetings. The overall attendance rate of 74 percent indicates a positive level of engagement and participation in local governance activities in better performance of Gram Panchayat.

The overall percentage of respondents attending ward meetings is higher in Ugginakere 74 percent compared to Golasangi 62 percent. This indicates that a larger proportion of respondents in Ugginakere attend ward meetings compared to Golasangi.

When compared to Golasangi Gram Panchayat, SCs and STs have expressed more concern over staff availability in Gram Panchayat during working hours in Ugginakere Gram Panchayat.

The perception of receiving proper information among different categories in both Ugginakere and Golasangi Gram Panchayats. While the SC category generally reports higher percentages of proper information received, there are considerable disparities within the ST and Others categories.

Golasangi faces a critical challenge with the ST community, as there are no positive responses in this category. Golasangi Gram Panchayat has completely neglected to STs because of less number households are lived in Golasangi.



Ugginakere Gram Panchayat has create more awareness in SCs and STs than Others, But Golasangi have to fail to reach the backward Community for upliftment.

Golasangi excels in providing drinking water units among social groups, surpassing Ugginakere in this aspect.

Ugginakere lags behind slightly in terms of providing drinking water units to social groups. Moreover, the drinking water units in Ugginakere Gram Panchayat face challenges as they do not function as effectively as those in Golasangi Gram Panchayat.

While Ugginakere Gram Panchayat performs better in providing water taps to households, Golasangi Gram Panchayat demonstrates higher success in delivering drinking water units among social groups.

However, in Ugginakere, a significant proportion of households opinion has very good improved the road conditions, indicating that the overall road infrastructure is still well-regarded by a substantial portion of the community.

Regarding street light facilities, Golasangi outperformed Ugginakere. 64 percent of the sample households in Golasangi opined that "good" street light facilities were being provided, while in Ugginakere, a lower percent of households expressed satisfaction with the street light facilities.

Toilet facility provision to specific social groups, Ugginakere Gram Panchayat performed better in providing toilet facilities to SCs, with 66.67 Percent of SC households having access to toilets, whereas in Golasangi Gram Panchayat has fail to provide the Toilet facilities to social groups.

Ugginakere Gram Panchayat showed better performance in providing toilet facilities to a higher percent of sample households, especially to SCs. However, there remains a critical need to address the lack of government-provide toilet facilities for STs.

### **Policy and Suggestion**

The Gram Panchayats have given voice and exit options to village people in local governance. In other words, political decentralization and fiscal decentralization has taken place at local level. But that is not sufficient because these rural people are not to be involved in mobilization and management of the fiscal resources at rural areas. The findings of the study are adequate testimony of this. But, at the same time, it is also a fact that whatever powers and authority have been given to the Gram Panchayats to raise additional resources has not been fully and adequately put into use by Gram Panchayats. Besides, the resources received from the Centre and the State Governments have also not been properly managed by them. Hence, keeping all these things in view, some suggestions have been put together here for effective mobilization and efficient management of the financial resources by the Gram Panchayats in the State.

Both Gram Panchayats must focus on improving communication strategies and outreach efforts to ensure that all residents, irrespective of their category, whether, or not they got proper information.

Develop targeted awareness campaigns specifically aimed at reaching the SC and ST communities. These campaigns should emphasize the importance of Gram Panchayat services, provide information about available resources, and address any concerns or misconceptions.

Train local personnel or community members in basic maintenance and troubleshooting of drinking water units. This can help address minor issues promptly and reduce downtime.

Explore alternative water sources to ensure a more reliable and consistent water supply. This could involve identifying additional groundwater sources or rainwater harvesting options.

Utilize technology such as GIS (Geographic Information Systems) to track and manage road conditions and street light locations. This can aid in efficient planning and resource allocation.

Launch campaigns to educate residents about the importance of road maintenance and safe road usage. Encourage responsible behaviour to prevent unnecessary digging on road infrastructure.

Establish community-based sanitation committees comprising representatives from different social groups. These committees can play a crucial role in advocating for improved sanitation facilities, conducting awareness campaigns, and monitoring open defecation practices.

Implement a system for regular monitoring and maintenance of existing toilet facilities to ensure they remain functional and well-maintained. Address issues promptly to maintain community confidence in these facilities.

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