



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

from National Seminar on

“Balanced Development in India: Addressing Intra-State Regional Imbalances”

Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Development Research (CMDR), Dharwad
22–23 January 2026



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(CMDR), Dharwad
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D) PREAMBLE

The Two-Day National Seminar on “*Balanced Development in India: Addressing Intra-State Regional Imbalances*”, organised by the Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Development Research (CMDR), Dharwad, brought together scholars, policymakers, administrators, and practitioners to examine the persistent and widening regional disparities within states.

Despite sustained economic growth, significant intra-state inequalities continue across key sectors such as health, education, agriculture, industry, infrastructure, gender, and governance. These disparities are reflected in the uneven distribution of resources, concentration of growth in urban and metropolitan regions, and limited developmental spillovers to backward and peripheral areas. Addressing these imbalances is essential for achieving inclusive growth, social justice, and balanced regional development.

The seminar received an overwhelming academic response, with 160 abstracts submitted from across the country. Of these, 80 authors were invited to submit full-length papers, resulting in 66 accepted papers, of which 63 were presented in thematic technical sessions. The participation of scholars from multiple states underscored the national relevance of the theme.

The seminar brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including academicians, policymakers, government officials, research scholars, and civil society practitioners. This multidisciplinary engagement enriched the deliberations by combining theoretical insights, empirical evidence, administrative experience, and grassroots perspectives.

The discussions were structured around clearly defined objectives, thematic areas, and a rigorous methodology involving technical sessions, expert moderation, and evidence-based analysis. The seminar emphasised data-driven approaches, regional case studies, and sector-specific insights to better understand the nature and drivers of intra-state disparities.

Empirical evidence presented during the seminar highlighted key concerns, including:

- Persistent regional divides within states
- Concentration of economic growth in metropolitan clusters
- Weak developmental spillover effects to peripheral regions
- Structural governance and fiscal imbalances
- Inadequate availability of disaggregated, grassroots-level data for effective policy targeting

In light of these deliberations, the seminar sought to identify policy gaps, document best practices, and develop actionable strategies for promoting balanced and inclusive regional development.

Based on rigorous research, multidisciplinary discussions, and structured policy deliberations, the following recommendations are respectfully submitted for consideration by the State and Central Governments.

Objectives of the Seminar

- To examine the nature, extent, and patterns of intra-state regional imbalances in India, with special reference to sectoral and spatial disparities.
- To analyse the structural, institutional, and policy-related factors contributing to persistent regional inequalities across districts and regions.
- To assess the effectiveness of existing government policies, programmes, and institutional mechanisms in addressing regional disparities.
- To identify gaps in planning, implementation, and monitoring that hinder balanced regional development.
- To document best practices, successful models, and innovative approaches for reducing regional imbalances.
- To promote evidence-based and data-driven policy dialogue among academicians, policymakers, and practitioners.
- To provide actionable and context-specific policy recommendations for achieving balanced, inclusive, and sustainable regional development.

Themes of the Seminar

- Conceptual and theoretical perspectives on regional imbalances
- Historical and contemporary dimensions of regional disparities in India
- Sectoral dimensions of regional imbalances
- Intra-state regional disparities: evidence from Indian states
- Governance, decentralisation, and institutional mechanisms
- Policy interventions and development programmes
- Data, technology, and evidence-based planning
- Best practices and innovative approaches
- Towards balanced, inclusive, and sustainable development

Methodology of the Seminar

The seminar adopted a **multidisciplinary and evidence-based approach** to examine intra-state

regional imbalances and generate policy-relevant insights.

The methodology comprised the following components:

- **Call for Papers and Academic Screening:** A nationwide call for abstracts attracted wide participation. A total of 160 abstracts were received, of which selected authors were invited to submit full papers. These papers were screened to ensure quality and relevance to the seminar theme.
- **Technical Sessions and Paper Presentations:** The seminar was organised into thematic technical sessions covering sectoral, regional, and policy dimensions. A total of 63 research papers were presented, enabling in-depth discussion on empirical findings and regional case studies.
- **Multidisciplinary Participation:** The seminar brought together academicians, policymakers, administrators, civil society representatives, and research scholars from diverse disciplines, ensuring a holistic understanding of regional



disparities.

- **Expert Moderation and Panel Discussions:** Each session was moderated by subject experts who facilitated critical discussions, synthesised key findings, and highlighted policy implications.
- **Evidence-Based Analysis:** The deliberations were grounded in empirical research, including district-level data analysis, case studies, spatial analysis, and sector-specific assessments.
- **Documentation and Synthesis:** Key insights, emerging themes, and policy suggestions were systematically documented and consolidated.
- **Policy Deliberation and Consensus Building:** Dedicated discussions were held to identify priority areas, policy gaps, and actionable strategies, leading to consolidated policy recommendations.
- **Integration of Research and Practice:** The methodology ensured the integration of academic research with field-level experiences and administrative perspectives, enhancing the practical relevance of outcomes.



II) DATA-DRIVEN REGIONAL EQUALISATION FRAMEWORK

Rationale and Evidence

- Significant intra-state disparities across districts—particularly between northern and southern Karnataka—in sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure highlight the need for granular, district-level data for effective policy intervention.
- State-level averages often mask underlying regional inequalities, making disaggregated and region-specific data essential for accurate targeting and equitable resource allocation.

The absence Rationale and Evidence

- Significant intra-state disparities across districts—particularly between northern and southern Karnataka—in sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure highlight the need for **granular, district-level data** for effective policy intervention.
- State-level averages often mask underlying

regional inequalities, making **disaggregated and region-specific data** essential for accurate targeting and equitable resource allocation.

- The absence of **real-time and integrated data systems** leads to inefficient resource allocation and weak inter-departmental coordination.
- Empirical studies using **composite indices and GIS-based analysis** demonstrate the effectiveness of data-driven approaches in identifying backward regions and prioritising interventions.
- Weak monitoring and evaluation systems, due to fragmented and non-standardised data, limit the effectiveness of policies aimed at reducing regional imbalances.

Recommendations

The Government may:

1. **Develop and institutionalise a District Composite Development Index (DCDI)**

integrating key dimensions such as health, education, infrastructure, employment, agriculture, fiscal capacity, and gender equality.

Implementation: Constitute a technical committee to design the index using reliable datasets (e.g., NFHS, NSS, SECC, and administrative data), with periodic revision of indicators and weights.

2. **Publish annual district-level rankings** based on the DCDI to enhance transparency, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making.

Implementation: Assign a nodal agency (e.g., Planning/Finance Department) to release an annual “State of District Development Report”



supported by public dashboards.

3. **Provide compensatory and need-based fiscal allocations** to bottom-quartile districts.

Implementation: Introduce a formula-based equalisation grant linked to DCDI scores, ensuring higher untied funds and targeted investments in lagging regions.

4. **Link state budget allocations and planning processes to DCDI-based performance gaps.**

Implementation: Integrate DCDI indicators into departmental planning, medium-term expenditure frameworks, and district development plans, with performance-linked incentives.



III) HUMAN DEVELOPMENT EQUALISATION STRATEGY

Rationale and Evidence

Empirical evidence and seminar deliberations highlight significant **intra-state disparities in health outcomes**, particularly between northern and southern regions of Karnataka.

- District-level analysis (NFHS-5) reveals **low antenatal care (ANC) coverage and inadequate maternal health service utilisation** in northern districts such as Yadgir, Raichur, and Koppal.
- There is a **high unmet need for family planning**, indicating gaps in access to reproductive health services in backward regions.
- **Health insurance coverage remains lower in less developed districts**, increasing out-of-pocket expenditure and financial vulnerability.
- A clear **north–south divide in maternal and reproductive health outcomes** persists, with southern districts performing better due to stronger infrastructure and higher female education.
- These disparities are closely linked to **underlying socio-economic factors**, including poor sanitation, low female literacy, weak health infrastructure, and limited institutional capacity.

Recommendations

The Government may:

1. **Launch a Special Maternal and Reproductive Health Equalisation Programme** in low-performing districts.
Implementation: Improve ANC coverage, institutional deliveries, and postnatal care through targeted outreach, mobile health units, and strengthened primary healthcare systems.
2. **Mandate specialist deployment policies in deficit districts.**
Implementation: Introduce compulsory posting norms, telemedicine support, and hardship allowances to ensure availability of specialists in underserved areas.
3. **Introduce incentivised rural medical service bonds.**
Implementation: Link medical education subsidies with mandatory rural service, supported by financial incentives, career advancement opportunities, and housing support.
4. **Upgrade district hospitals in bottom DCDI districts.**
Implementation: Prioritise infrastructure,

diagnostics, blood banks, and emergency obstetric care facilities under a phased investment plan.

5. Conduct universal health insurance saturation drives.

Implementation: Strengthen enrolment under public schemes (e.g., Ayushman Bharat) through awareness campaigns, simplified registration, and last-mile facilitation.

b) Women-Centric Regional Empowerment Strategy

Rationale and Evidence

Seminar findings indicate that **gender disparities are closely linked to regional inequalities**, affecting long-term human development outcomes.

- Female education levels are **significantly lower in backward regions**, influencing health outcomes and economic participation.
- Lower female literacy is associated with **higher early marriage rates and reduced utilisation of maternal healthcare services**.
- Women in lagging districts face **limited access to employment, financial resources, and institutional support**, reinforcing cycles of exclusion.
- **Intra-state variations in women's empowerment indicators** contribute to persistent regional disparities.

- The absence of **gender-responsive planning and budgeting** weakens targeted interventions for women's development.

Recommendations

The Government may:

1. **Introduce targeted female secondary education incentive schemes** in lagging districts.
Implementation: Provide conditional cash transfers, scholarships, transport facilities, and hostel support to reduce dropout rates and delay early marriage.
2. **Promote SHG-linked women economic clusters** to enhance livelihoods and financial inclusion.
Implementation: Strengthen Self-Help Groups (SHGs) through credit linkage, skill development, market access, and value-chain integration.
3. **Institutionalise gender-responsive district budgeting**.
Implementation: Establish gender budgeting cells with dedicated allocations and monitoring frameworks.
4. **Establish district-level women safety and support infrastructure funds**.
Implementation: Invest in safe transport, working women's hostels, crisis centres, helplines, and community-based safety mechanisms.

IV) AGRICULTURE AND RURAL ECONOMIC REBALANCING

a) District-Specific Agricultural Diversification Plans

Rationale and Evidence

Seminar deliberations and empirical studies highlight significant **regional imbalances in agricultural development**, contributing to uneven rural incomes and livelihood vulnerabilities.

- **Crop concentration in backward districts**, often limited to low-value or risk-prone crops, reduces income stability and increases vulnerability to climate shocks.
- **Irrigation asymmetry persists**, with northern and dryland regions having lower irrigation coverage, leading to productivity gaps.
- **Weak market access and poor value-chain integration** constrain farmers' ability to realise better prices and diversify production.
- **Inadequate storage, logistics, and agro-processing infrastructure** results in post-harvest losses and limits value addition.

- Structural constraints such as **fragmented landholdings, limited institutional support, and low technology adoption** further deepen rural disparities.

Recommendations

The Government may:

1. **Develop agro-climatic region-based diversification strategies**.
Implementation: Promote crop planning aligned with soil, climate, and water availability, including high-value crops, horticulture, millets, and allied activities such as dairy and fisheries.
2. **Conduct irrigation equity mapping and targeted expansion**.
Implementation: Use GIS-based tools to identify irrigation gaps and prioritise micro-irrigation, watershed development, and minor irrigation projects in underserved regions.
3. **Expand Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) clusters in backward regions**.

Implementation: Strengthen FPOs through credit linkage, capacity building, and market tie-ups to enhance collective bargaining power.

4. **Prioritise storage, logistics, and value-chain infrastructure in backward taluks.**

Implementation: Invest in warehouses, cold chains, rural transport networks, and digital market platforms (e.g., e-NAM integration).

Promote rural agro-processing and value addition units.

Implementation: Provide incentives, subsidies, and cluster-based support for food processing, grading, packaging, and rural enterprises to generate local employment.

V) INDUSTRIAL AND SECTORAL DECENTRALISATION

Rationale and Evidence

Seminar deliberations and empirical evidence indicate a **high spatial concentration of industrial and service-sector growth**, contributing to widening regional disparities.

- **SEZs and major industrial investments are concentrated in developed districts**, particularly around urban and metropolitan regions, limiting industrial diffusion to backward areas.
- **Service-sector growth is clustered in metropolitan cities**, resulting in uneven employment opportunities and regional income inequalities.
- Backward districts face **structural constraints**, including inadequate infrastructure, limited skilled labour, and weak industrial ecosystems, which deter private investment.
- The absence of **regionally differentiated industrial policies** has led to cumulative advantages for developed regions, further deepening intra-state imbalances.

Recommendations

The Government may:

1. **Provide differential tax incentives and fiscal benefits** for industries locating in bottom-quartile districts.

Implementation: Offer capital subsidies, tax rebates, land concessions, and streamlined clearances for investments in identified backward regions.

2. **Mandate regional equity clauses in industrial corridor and SEZ approvals.**

Implementation: Ensure a defined share of investments and infrastructure is allocated to lagging districts within corridor development plans.

3. **Establish MSME cluster development grants in underdeveloped districts.**

Implementation: Promote cluster-based industrialisation with support for common facilities, credit access, technology adoption, and market linkages.

4. **Create district-specific skill development hubs aligned with local economic potential.**

Implementation: Align skill training with local resource endowments and industry demand (e.g., agro-processing, textiles, handicrafts).

5. **Incentivise public sector and large private investments in backward districts.**

Implementation: Encourage anchor investments through viability gap funding, PPP models, and targeted industrial promotion policies.

VI) DECENTRALISED PLANNING AND FISCAL REFORMS

a) **Strengthening District Planning Committees (DPCs)**

Rationale and Evidence

Seminar deliberations and field insights indicate that **district-level planning remains fragmented and weakly integrated**, limiting the effectiveness of development interventions.

- Planning processes are often **scheme-driven rather than need-based**, resulting in duplication and inefficiencies.
- **Limited convergence across departments**

leads to sub-optimal utilisation of resources.

- **Weak stakeholder participation** reduces responsiveness to local needs and ground realities.
- Districts lack **technical capacity and data support** for evidence-based planning.

Recommendations

The Government may:

1. **Mandate preparation of five-year District Convergence Plans.**

Implementation: Integrate major state, central, and

local schemes into a unified district development framework aligned with regional priorities.

2. Conduct periodic scheme convergence audits.

Implementation: Establish independent mechanisms to assess duplication, gaps, and efficiency of resource utilisation.

3. Institutionalise participatory planning frameworks.

Implementation: Strengthen Gram Sabha and urban local body consultations, ensuring inclusion of women and marginalised groups.

4. Provide dedicated technical planning support at the district level.

Implementation: Establish District Planning Units with expertise in data analysis, GIS, and sectoral planning.

b) Reform of Inter-District Fiscal Transfers

Rationale and Evidence

Existing fiscal transfer mechanisms are **inadequate in addressing intra-state disparities**, as they do not sufficiently account for variations in development levels across districts.

- Resource allocation is often **uniform or population-based**, overlooking structural disadvantages.

- Backward districts face **higher infrastructure deficits, poverty levels, and fiscal constraints**, requiring targeted support.

- The absence of **objective, data-driven allocation formulas** weakens equity and efficiency in public spending.

Recommendations

The Government may:

1. Introduce a formula-based inter-district fiscal transfer system incorporating:

- Backwardness index
- Infrastructure deficit
- Human development gap
- Poverty incidence
- Fiscal capacity
- Population vulnerability

Implementation: Develop a transparent and periodically updated allocation formula aligned with the DCDI framework.

2. Establish automatic compensatory fiscal mechanisms tied to measurable deficits.

Implementation: Ensure predictable, rule-based transfers to lagging districts, with performance monitoring and conditional incentives.

VII) SPECIAL REGIONAL PROVISIONS AND MONITORING

a) Review and Strengthening of Special Constitutional Provisions (e.g., Article 371(J))

Rationale and Evidence

Special constitutional provisions such as **Article 371(J)** were introduced to address **historical and structural regional backwardness**, particularly in regions like Kalyana Karnataka. However, seminar deliberations indicate key implementation gaps:

- Outcomes have been **uneven and insufficiently evaluated**, limiting assessment of policy effectiveness.

- There is a lack of **robust monitoring mechanisms and reliable data systems** to track fund utilisation and development outcomes.

- Institutional capacity constraints at the district level** hinder effective implementation.

- The absence of **transparent reporting and accountability frameworks** reduces policy impact and public trust.



Recommendations

The Government may:

1. **Conduct independent and periodic evaluations** of outcomes under special constitutional provisions.

Implementation: Engage academic and research institutions to assess sector-wise impacts using measurable indicators.

2. **Establish dedicated monitoring and data cells** at state and regional levels.

Implementation: Develop integrated dashboards to track fund allocation, utilisation, and outcomes

in real time.

3. **Mandate statutory and time-bound reporting of fund utilisation.**

Implementation: Require annual reports to be tabled in the State Legislature to ensure transparency and accountability.

4. **Strengthen district-level institutional capacity for implementation.**

Implementation: Provide trained personnel, technical support, and administrative autonomy to regional development boards and district authorities.

VIII) DIGITAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE EQUALISATION

a) Bridging the Digital Divide

Rationale and Evidence

Seminar deliberations indicate that **digital and infrastructure gaps are a key driver of regional inequality**, particularly between urban and rural areas and across backward districts.

- **Uneven access to broadband and digital infrastructure** limits access to education, healthcare, e-governance, and market opportunities in lagging regions.
- **Digital exclusion reinforces socio-economic disparities**, especially among rural populations, women, and marginalised groups.
- Limited use of **spatial planning and digital tools** constrains efficient infrastructure development and service delivery.
- The absence of **real-time monitoring systems** weakens governance responsiveness in underserved regions.

Recommendations

The Government may:

1. **Ensure universal broadband connectivity across all Gram Panchayats.**

Implementation: Accelerate fibre network expansion under national and state programmes, prioritising underserved and remote areas.

2. **Develop a District Digital Inclusion Index.**

Implementation: Measure access, usage, affordability, and digital skills across districts to identify gaps and guide interventions.

3. **Launch targeted digital literacy missions in lagging districts.**

Implementation: Focus on women, youth, farmers, and small entrepreneurs through community-based training and institutional partnerships.

4. **Deploy GIS-based infrastructure planning tools.**

Implementation: Use spatial data to plan equitable distribution of infrastructure such as roads, irrigation, health, and education facilities.

5. **Introduce real-time governance dashboards.**

Implementation: Enable monitoring of schemes, service delivery, and development indicators at district and state levels.

IX) MULTI-DIMENSIONAL POVERTY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

a) District and Taluk-Level Poverty and Inclusion Monitoring

Rationale and Evidence

Seminar findings indicate that **poverty and deprivation are multidimensional and unevenly distributed**, often concentrated in specific districts, taluks, and vulnerable social groups.

- **Aggregate poverty indicators mask micro-level deprivation**, particularly in tribal areas, border villages, and socially excluded communities.
- **Significant intra-district variations** exist, with pockets of severe deprivation alongside relatively developed areas.
- Poverty is closely linked to **deficits in health**,

education, housing, livelihoods, and access to basic services, requiring a multidimensional approach.

- The lack of **granular, sub-district data** limits effective targeting of welfare programmes.
- Existing schemes often fail to reach the most vulnerable due to **weak identification and monitoring mechanisms**.

Recommendations

The Government may:

1. Develop district and taluk-level Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

Implementation: Include indicators across health, education, living standards, and livelihoods using survey and administrative data for fine-grained analysis.

2. Identify micro-pockets of deprivation within

districts and taluks.

Implementation: Use GIS mapping and household-level data to locate high-deprivation clusters for targeted interventions.

3. Design targeted development packages for vulnerable regions and groups, including:

- Tribal regions
- Border villages
- Socially excluded communities

Implementation: Integrate sectoral interventions (health, education, livelihoods, and infrastructure) into area-specific development plans.

Link MPI findings to fiscal allocations and programme prioritisation.

Implementation: Allocate higher resources to high-deprivation areas through formula-based transfers and targeted schemes.

X) RE-EXAMINING CAPITAL-CENTRIC DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Rationale and Evidence

Seminar deliberations highlight a **persistent capital-centric pattern of development**, wherein economic activity, infrastructure investment, and administrative functions are concentrated in major metropolitan regions.

This has resulted in:

- **Infrastructure bias**, with higher-quality public services concentrated in capital regions
- **Administrative centralisation**, limiting decentralised decision-making
- **Revenue concentration**, with capital regions generating a disproportionate share of state revenues
- **Weak regional spillovers**, with limited diffusion of growth to backward and peripheral districts

These structural imbalances reinforce intra-state disparities and necessitate a re-examination of existing development and governance models.

1. Constitution of an Expert Commission

The Government may constitute a **High-Level Expert Commission** to undertake a comprehensive review of capital-centric development patterns.

Mandate:

- Examine the **impact of metropolitan concentration** on regional inequality
- Review **alternative governance and**

administrative models

- Assess **fiscal federal implications**
- Analyse **international models of metropolitan governance** and their applicability

2. Alternative Governance Models for Examination

The Commission may examine the feasibility of the following models:

i) Special Metropolitan Administrative Region Model

- Establish **separate fiscal accounting mechanisms** for capital regions
- Introduce **mandatory revenue-sharing frameworks** with backward regions

ii) Metropolitan Union Territory Model (Subject to Constitutional Review)

- Assess feasibility of **restructuring capital regions as Union Territories**
- Design **fiscal rebalancing mechanisms** for equitable distribution

- Ensure **federal safeguards and protection of state interests**

iii) Distributed Capital Model

- **Relocate selected government departments and institutions** to backward regions
- Establish **regional secretariats and administrative hubs**
- Promote **functional decentralisation of**

governance structures

3. Immediate Fiscal Equalisation Measures

Pending structural reforms, the Government may:

1. Establish a Capital Region Equalisation Fund.

Implementation: Pool a share of revenues generated in capital regions for redistribution to lagging districts.

2. Earmark a portion of capital-region revenues for backward districts.

Implementation: Introduce formula-based transfers linked to development deficits.

3. Adopt balanced capital expenditure norms.

Implementation: Ensure equitable distribution of major public investments across regions, guided by objective indicators such as DCDI.

Constitutional Safeguard

Any territorial or administrative restructuring must comply with **Article 3 of the Constitution of India**, ensuring:

- Preservation of **federal balance**
- **Democratic consultation** with stakeholders
- Maintenance of **economic and administrative viability**

XI) GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

a) Taluk and Gram Panchayat-Level Composite Indices

Rationale and Evidence

Seminar findings highlight that **district-level averages often mask significant intra-district disparities**, particularly across taluks and Gram Panchayats.

- **Development gaps are concentrated in micro-level pockets**, which remain invisible in district-level analysis.
- Effective targeting requires **granular, sub-district level diagnostics**.
- The absence of **standardised measurement frameworks at taluk and GP levels** limits precision in planning, monitoring, and resource allocation.
- Strengthening such measurement systems is essential for **evidence-based decentralised planning and inclusive development**.

Recommendations

The Government may establish a **Grassroots Development Measurement Framework (GDMF)** comprising:

i) Taluk-Level Composite Indices

- Taluk Human Development Index (HDI)
- Taluk Gender Development Index
- Taluk Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI)
- Taluk Hunger and Nutrition Index
- Taluk Child Development Index
- Taluk Infrastructure Deficit Index

Implementation: Develop standardised indicators using administrative and survey data, ensuring periodic updates and inter-taluk

comparability.

ii) Gram Panchayat-Level Composite Indices

- GP Human Development Score
- GP Gender Equality Score
- GP Food Security Index
- GP Child Health and Education Index
- GP Livelihood Vulnerability Index
- GP Service Delivery Performance Index

Implementation: Use household-level data, local registers, and digital platforms (e.g., Panchayat MIS) to generate real-time, actionable insights.

b) Linkage with Planning and Budgeting

Recommendations

1. Integrate index scores into District Planning Committee (DPC) decision-making.

Implementation: Use GDMF indicators to prioritise high-deprivation taluks and GPs in district plans.

2. Align State Finance Commission (SFC) transfers with index-based needs.

Implementation: Introduce formula-based devolution incorporating grassroots development indicators.

3. Introduce performance-linked grants.

Implementation: Incentivise improvements in key indicators such as health, education, and service delivery.

1. Publish annual Taluk and GP Development Report Cards.

Implementation: Ensure transparency and accountability through publicly accessible dashboards and periodic reporting.

XII) STRENGTHENING THE GRASSROOTS DATA ECOSYSTEM

a) Unified Grassroots Data Architecture (UGDA)

Rationale and Evidence

Seminar deliberations indicate that **fragmented and non-standardised data systems at the grassroots level** constrain effective planning, monitoring, and policy targeting.

- Multiple departments operate **siloed data systems**, limiting comparability and integration.
- The absence of **standardised and regularly updated datasets** reduces the reliability of evidence-based decision-making.
- Weak data integration hampers **cross-sectoral planning and scheme convergence**.

Objectives

The Government may establish a **Unified Grassroots Data Architecture (UGDA)** to:

- Standardise socio-economic indicators across departments
- Harmonise definitions and data protocols
- Enable cross-sectoral data integration
- Ensure periodic updating and real-time accessibility

b) Periodic Taluk and GP-Level Surveys

Recommendations

1. Taluk-Level Comprehensive Survey (Every 3 Years)

Coverage:

- Income and livelihoods
- Agriculture
- Employment and migration
- Health and nutrition
- Education
- Infrastructure
- Gender and social inclusion

Implementation: Use standardised survey instruments aligned with national datasets to ensure comparability.

2. Gram Panchayat-Level Annual Rapid Assessment

Coverage:

- Household vulnerability profiling
- Nutrition tracking
- Service delivery gaps

- Welfare coverage

Implementation: Conduct through local institutions using digital tools for real-time data capture.

c) Data Validation and Quality Assurance

The Government may:

1. Establish **multi-layer verification systems** across administrative levels
2. Introduce **third-party audits** for data credibility
3. Ensure **social audit validation through Gram Sabhas**
4. Mandate **geo-tagging of public assets and infrastructure**
5. Conduct **randomised back-check surveys** for data accuracy

d) Integration of Administrative and Survey Data-

Develop a unified data platform **integrating:**

- Health Management Information System (HMIS)
- Education MIS (EMIS)
- ICDS data
- Public Distribution System (PDS) records
- MGNREGA data
- PRI financial data
- Agriculture databases

Implementation: Enable interoperability across departments through common data standards and digital platforms.

e) District and Taluk Data Systems

The Government may:

1. Establish **Data and Analytics Units at the district level**
2. Appoint **Taluk Data Coordinators**
3. Train **Panchayat-level data operators**
4. Build capacity in **data analysis and policy use**

f) Use of Data in Policy and Budgeting

The Government may mandate that:

- Development planning be **evidence-based**
- Budget allocations reference **index scores (DCDI, MPI, GDMF)**
- **Underperforming regions receive corrective action plans**
- Annual reviews be **outcome-oriented and data-driven**

g) Transparency and Public Access

The Government may:

1. Launch **public development dashboards**
2. Publish **Taluk and GP-level scorecards**

3. Adopt **open-data frameworks**

Provide **citizen-accessible GIS-based development maps**

XIII) RECOMMENDATIONS TO CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Rationale and Evidence

Seminar deliberations underscore that **addressing intra-state regional disparities requires coordinated action between State and Central Governments**, particularly in fiscal transfers, national programmes, and policy frameworks.

- Existing central schemes primarily focus on **inter-state disparities**, with limited emphasis on inequalities within states.
- There is a lack of **standardised national frameworks** for measuring and addressing intra-state regional imbalances.
- Current fiscal transfer mechanisms do not adequately account for **within-state disparities**, limiting equitable development outcomes.

Recommendations

The Central Government may:

1. **Incorporate intra-state disparity metrics into the Aspirational Districts Programme.**

Implementation: Expand programme design to

include intra-district and sub-district indicators for more granular targeting.

2. **Align Finance Commission transfers with intra-state equity parameters.**

Implementation: Introduce incentives for states adopting transparent, formula-based inter-district allocation systems linked to development gaps.

3. **Promote a national framework for regional equity measurement.**

Implementation: Develop standardised indices aligned with DCDI and MPI concepts for consistent measurement across states.

4. **Provide dedicated technical and planning grants for backward districts.**

Implementation: Support capacity building, data systems, and decentralised planning through targeted assistance.

5. **Encourage inter-state knowledge sharing on regional governance reforms.**

Implementation: Facilitate platforms for states to exchange best practices in decentralisation, fiscal equalisation, and inclusive development.

FINAL CONCLUSION

The seminar concludes that achieving balanced regional development requires a **shift from aggregate, macro-level approaches to granular, evidence-driven policy frameworks**.

Balanced development must be anchored in:

- **Measurable district and sub-district diagnostics** for precise identification of regional disparities
- **Fiscal redesign based on equity and need-based allocation**
- **Sectoral decentralisation** to promote regionally distributed economic growth
- **Strengthening of institutions**, particularly at district and grassroots levels
- **Robust and integrated grassroots data ecosystems** for real-time, evidence-based decision-making
- **Re-examination of capital-centric development patterns** to address structural imbalances

The deliberations emphasise that balanced development must move beyond a macro-level aspiration to **micro-level, data-driven, and structurally embedded policy action**.

Sustained and inclusive growth requires a transition from **metropolitan concentration of economic activity to regionally distributed development**, ensuring equitable access to opportunities across regions.

Such a transition is essential to **promote social cohesion, reduce regional inequalities, strengthen cooperative federalism, and achieve long-term inclusive prosperity**.

Stay Connected: director@cmdr.ac.in, registrar@cmdr.ac.in

Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Development Research (CMDR)

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Nagar, Near Yalakki Shettar colony, Dharwad-580 004 (KARNATAKA) Tel : 0836-2460453.

<https://cmdr.ac.in>

CMDR YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/@cmdrdharwad4239/videos>

CMDR Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/people/Cmdr-Dharwad-Karnataka>

Seminar Co-ordinated and the Document Prepared by

Dr. S V Hanagodimath