



Pathways to Inclusive Growth: A Strategic Assessment of Rural Development in Shravasti District

Dr. Punit Kumar Kanujiya¹, Dr. Hargun Sahni², Shyam Sunder Yadav³, Aman Jaiswal⁴

¹Assistant Professor, Dept. of Commerce, National Post Graduate College,
University of Lucknow, Lucknow

Email- kanauziyaa@gmail.com, | Orcid ID- [0000-0002-5821-9406](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5821-9406)

²Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Meerut College, Meerut

³Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, University of Lucknow, Lucknow

⁴Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, University of Lucknow, Lucknow,

Email- amanjaiswal1322@gmail.com | Orcid ID- [0009-0004-6648-5087](https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6648-5087)

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Abstract

This research assesses the current development status of Shravasti district (Uttar Pradesh), analyses challenges to rural resilience and inclusive growth, evaluates existing development strategies and national/state schemes, and provides actionable recommendations and an implementation roadmap aligned with the Viksit Bharat@2047 vision. The study uses secondary sources—government reports, district data, academic literature, policy documents, and credible media coverage—to build an evidence-based strategy focused on agriculture modernization, livelihoods diversification, social services strengthening, infrastructure, and governance reforms.

Keywords: Development, Shravasti District, Viksit Bharat@2047, Rural

I. Introduction

Shravasti district, located in northeastern Uttar Pradesh, is historically significant and predominantly rural. Despite cultural importance and agricultural potential, the district lags on many socio-economic indicators. National and state visions such as Viksit Bharat@2047 and Viksit UP@2047 present opportunities to leapfrog development by 2047. This study maps a pragmatic pathway for Shravasti to contribute to the national vision through targeted, place-based strategies built on resilience, inclusivity, and local capacities.

II. Research objectives and questions

Objectives:

- Compile and synthesize secondary evidence on Shravasti's development status.
- Identify key barriers to rural resilience and inclusive growth.
- Assess alignment of existing schemes with local needs.
- Propose evidence-based strategies and an implementation roadmap aimed at 2047 outcomes.

Research questions:

1. What are the current socio-economic strengths and weaknesses of Shravasti district?
2. Which development strategies and schemes are implemented locally and how effective are they?
3. What interventions can accelerate rural resilience, livelihood diversification, and inclusive growth by 2047?

III. Methodology

This study uses secondary data from: district administration portals, Census District Handbook (2011) and linked updates, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) district profile, national policy documents (NITI Aayog Vision/Viksit Bharat papers), Mahatma Gandhi NREGA dashboard, ICAR contingency plans, authoritative media investigations, and peer-reviewed literature and think-tank reports. Data triangulation was used where multiple sources reported on the same indicator. Limitations include reliance on dated census statistics (2011) for some demographic indicators and heterogeneous reporting dates across sources.

IV. District Profile :

- **Geography & Administration:** Shravasti is a part of Devipatan division, neighboring Balrampur, Gonda and Bahraich, with the district headquarters at Bhinga. It lies close to the Rapti river and has predominantly agricultural land use.
- **Population & Demographics:** According to the Census District Handbook (2011), Shravasti's population is approximately 1.11 million, with marked rural concentration and low urbanization. Key demographic features include low overall literacy and a skewed sex ratio. Female literacy is significantly lower than male literacy and among the lowest in the state indicating gendered barriers to human capital development.
- **Economy & Livelihoods:** Agriculture is the mainstay paddy wheat cropping systems dominate, with mixed cropping patterns that include maize, lentil, groundnut, sesame, and horticulture enterprises. Net sown area and cropping intensity indicate potential for yield improvement, but fragmentation, irrigation shortfalls, and low value-add remain constraints. Per capita income in the district is low compared to state averages and poverty prevalence has historically been high.

V. Development Indicators: Health, Education, Poverty, Gender

- **Education & Literacy:** Literacy rates are well below national averages (notable gender gap). School enrolment drives have been reported, but foundational learning and female education remain priority areas.
- **Health:** Historical surveys and district-level reports flagged extremely high infant mortality rates, although recent NFHS cycles suggest some improvements. Maternal and child health, nutrition, and access to primary health infrastructure remain pressing gaps.
- **Poverty & Social Exclusion:** Multiple reports identify Shravasti among districts with high poverty incidence. Vulnerable groups—smallholders, landless laborers, scheduled castes, and women—face systemic exclusion from productive assets and social services.

VI. Agriculture, Climate Risk, and Natural Resources

- **Cropping Systems & KVK Findings:** Local agricultural extension (KVK Shravasti) documents prevailing farming systems—rice-wheat-lentil rotations, oilseeds, pulses, dairy, and fish culture—suggesting possibilities for integrated farming and livestock-linked incomes.

- **Irrigation & Soil:** Significant portions of the net sown area are rain-fed; irrigation coverage is limited, affecting cropping choices and resilience to monsoon variability. Soil classifications indicate loamy soils of variable depth—amenable to productivity gains with proper inputs and conservation agriculture.
- **Climate Risk:** Proximity to the Rapti river exposes communities to flood risk and riverine instability. Climate change may amplify rainfall variability, threatening yields and livelihoods—necessitating climate-resilient cropping, water harvesting, and disaster preparedness.

VII. Infrastructure, Connectivity, and Services

Road connectivity is improving via state highways but rural last-mile connectivity is incomplete. Basic services—drinking water, sanitation, energy access, digital connectivity—show uneven coverage, with pockets of severe deficit. Market access and storage facilities (cold chain, warehousing) are limited, constraining farmer incomes and value addition.

VIII. Existing Policies, Schemes, and Local Initiatives

Key national/state schemes active in the district include: - MGNREGA: providing employment and asset creation at village level, with district-level performance available on the national dashboard. - PMAY (housing), SBM (sanitation), National Health Mission (NHM), and various women's self-help group (SHG) and livelihood programs promoted by state agencies. - Agricultural extension via Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) and ICAR guidance; state-level agricultural modernization initiatives under Viksit UP@2047.

At the state level, the Viksit UP@2047 initiative sets targets for agri-productivity, health, education and industry creating an enabling policy framework for district-level alignment. At the national level, Vision India@2047 and Viksit Bharat policy papers provide broad governance and human development goals.

IX. Barriers to Rural Resilience and Inclusive Growth

Major constraints emerging from secondary evidence:

- ✓ **Low human development:** low literacy (especially female), poor maternal and child health outcomes.
- ✓ **Poverty concentration:** high incidence among households with small/no landholdings.
- ✓ **Agricultural constraints:** limited irrigation, low mechanization, minimal value-addition, weak FPO penetration.
- ✓ **Infrastructure gaps:** poor market and storage infrastructure, weak road/rail connectivity in some blocks.
- ✓ **Governance & implementation:** need for better convergence of schemes, weaker local institutional capacities.
- ✓ **Climate vulnerability:** flood risk and monsoon variability threaten livelihoods.

X. Strategic Recommendations Towards Viksit Bharat@2047

The recommendations cluster into five pillars: Human capital, Agrarian transformation, Diversified livelihoods, Infrastructure & markets, and Governance & finance.

A. Human Capital (Health, Education, Skilling)

1. **Accelerate female literacy & foundational learning:** Targeted girls' education campaigns, learning centers, remedial education.
2. **Strengthen primary health systems and nutrition:** Scale up community health workers, maternal-newborn interventions, and nutrition programs tied to local anganwadis and PHCs.
3. **Skill development for youth:** Demand-driven skilling in agri-processing, services, and digital skills; leverage state skilling missions and nearby urban training hubs.

B. Agrarian Transformation

1. **Irrigation & water management:** Decentralized water-harvesting, micro-irrigation subsidies, watershed-based soil-water conservation to expand the irrigated area.
2. **Promote Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and value chains:** Encourage aggregation, commodity-specific FPOs (rice, pulses, oilseed), link to cold chain and processing clusters.
3. **Climate-smart agriculture:** Promote crop diversification, short-duration varieties, conservation agriculture, agroforestry, and integrated pest/disease management.
4. **Extension & digital advisory:** Strengthen KVK-led demonstrations, digital marketplaces, and advisory via mobile (weather, agronomy, price signals).

C. Diversified Rural Livelihoods

1. **Rural non-farm enterprises:** Micro-enterprise development in food processing, handicrafts, eco-cultural tourism (Buddhist heritage), and services.
2. **Dairy, poultry, and fisheries scaling:** Leverage mixed farming systems to boost incomes and reduce seasonality of farm earnings.
3. **Women-led SHGs & microfinance:** Strengthen SHG federations, expand access to credit and market linkages for women entrepreneurs.

D. Infrastructure, Markets & Connectivity

1. **Market infrastructure:** Invest in primary-level collection centers, cold storage clusters, and link roads to highway corridors.
2. **Digital infrastructure:** Improve broadband in Gram Panchayats, digital literacy programs, and use e-governance for scheme delivery.
3. **Climate-resilient public goods:** Embankments where necessary, flood forecasting and community preparedness systems.

E. Governance, Institutions & Finance

1. **District-level integrated development plan:** Converge vertical schemes through a district mission aligned to Viksit Bharat@2047 priorities.
2. **Local capacity building:** Strengthen Panchayati Raj institutions for planning, procurement, and social audits.
3. **Performance-based financing:** Incentives for block teams and PRIs tied to measurable outcomes (learning, nutrition, income growth).

4. **Data & monitoring:** Institutionalize district dashboards, citizen scorecards, and regular surveys to guide adaptive management.

XI. Implementation Roadmap and M&E Framework

- **Short-term (1–3 years)** - Baseline survey for key indicators; expand literacy & health outreach; scale MGNREGA works for water harvesting. - Pilot 10-15 FPOs and establish 3 model collection + value addition centers.
- **Medium-term (3–7 years)** - Expand irrigation coverage and cold chain; integrate skilling and enterprise incubation; digital marketplaces for FPO produce. - Improve maternal & child health outcomes measurably.
- **Long-term (7–25 years, toward 2047)** - Achieve near-universal basic services, robust rural non-farm sector, competitive agri-value chains linked to regional/national markets, and strong local institutions capable of self-sustained growth.

M&E Framework:

- **Outcome indicators:** Literacy rates (esp. female), infant & maternal mortality, per capita income, poverty headcount, cropping intensity, irrigated area, FPO membership & turnover.
- **Process indicators:** Number of FPOs formed, hectares under micro-irrigation, number of SHG loans, MGNREGA person-days and assets created.

XII. Conclusion

Shravasti faces complex, interlinked deficits across human development, agriculture, and infrastructure. However, its agricultural base, cultural tourism potential, and existing institutional anchors (KVK, PRIs, SHGs) present pathways for transformative change. A place-based approach—converging schemes, prioritizing female human capital, scaling climate-smart agriculture, supporting FPOs and non-farm enterprises—can position Shravasti to contribute meaningfully to the Viksit Bharat@2047 vision.

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