

A Report
on
Community Development through Panchayati Raj
Institutions (PRIs) in Himachal Pradesh: A Study of
Pahlu Panchayat

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	ii-iv
Introduction	
Overview of Panchayati Raj in Himachal Pradesh	1
Methodology	
Need for the study	3
Objectives of the study	3
Nature of data used	4
Research approach	4-5
Findings and Analysis	
Case Study of Pahlu Panchayat	7-34

Executive Summary

Gram Panchayat Pahlu is located in Bijhari block, tehsil Barsar of district Hamirpur. This panchayat has been spread in the area of 3 to 5 square kilometers. It has been established on October 29, 1985, by Government of Himachal Pradesh as per the norms of Union Government. As per Census 2011, panchayat has 672 households having population of 2110 which consists of 1052 males and 1058 females. Sex ratio of panchayat is 1005 females per thousand males. Scheduled castes comprise 28.39 percent of population. Around 83.50 percent of population are literate of the panchayat's. Native language of panchayat is Hindi and Pahari, where Hindi is the predominant language used by most of the villagers. Most of the villagers are dependent upon agriculture, horticulture and dairy farming to earn their living. Gram panchayat Pahlu is headed by Pradhan and comprises seven ward members.

In India, gram panchayats are considered as the major transforming body of economic and social aspects of rural inhabitants. Hence, several developmental works have been undertaken through gram panchayats with the collective efforts and co-operations of people in the country. Likewise, over the period of time, gram panchayat Pahlu has completed and are running several progressive works that have brought economic and social changes in the region. Like other regions of the state, majority of residents of Pahlu panchayat earn their living through agriculture and livestock activities. But the area under agriculture was totally dependent upon rainfall and the situation becomes difficult during the months when there was no rainfall. Lack of adequate rainfall not only affects the agriculture production but also reduces the productivity of land. As the situation was getting difficult, the residents and panchayat officials met and discussed the seriousness of the problem. As a result, water well has been quarried to mitigate the water problem in the village and water storage tanks/rain water harvesting tanks have been constructed on individual lands for the purpose of irrigating fields and farms, watering and bathing of cattle's and washing clothes etc.

The connectivity of roads was also one of the major problem of panchayat. Although, Pahlu panchayat is only 3 km far from the main highway but there was no all-weather road connectivity of the villages to towns. Therefore, it was difficult for the villagers to connect with the several basic facilities such as health, education and transportation. Sometimes situations became drastic in rainy season when someone fell in ill and needs health care facilities. Before constructing the village roads and path it was difficult to the villagers to reach at main roads. In case of illness, accidents and in delivery care conditions people usually use *charpaies* (bed) to carriage the patients

from nearby main road or health care centers. But the situation become severe in case of inclement weather condition when it was difficult to cross the adjoining rivulets or streams of village. After concerning the issue on gram panchayat level the residents of Pahlu panchayat along with the panchayat officials have taken the step towards constructing all-weather roads in the panchayat under PMGSY and MNREGA schemes. Now the villagers have all-weather road connectivity along with public transportation services from district headquarter and adjoining towns and they are happy and thankful for the panchayat's efforts.

To organize various village functions and programs in the village, the problem of public structure in a common place was also a big issue in Pahlu panchayat. Sometimes lack of community hall, the functions had to be organized under open sky. The situation became worse during extreme weather. Due to these difficulties, the panchayat took initiative to construct a community hall in each wards/village which could be used for multiple purposes in the near future. These multipurpose community hall plays an important role of village assets built by the village panchayat. As the village festivals and other religious functions take place in these halls all around the year. It has been also seen that some of the community halls have been used for Aanganwari Centre in the village and some of are running SHGs and Mahila Mandal Groups of village women simultaneously. Moreover, the community hall helped local residents to organize the functions in a better way especially during rainy and sunny seasons.

Sanitation and cleanliness is one of major issue of concern among Indian households and Pahlu panchayat was not detached from it. The problem of open defecation, open drainage and domestic waste material was also a major cause of unhygienic conditions of villages of Pahlu panchayat. Therefore, with the co-operation of panchayat officials and people the panchayat has initiated the idea of constructing soak pit in each house, toilets have been constructed with the help of panchayat and dustbins have been distributed by the panchayat to each household under Swachh Bharat Mission. Although it was difficult for panchayat officials to convince each household about cleanliness and sanitary issues. Therefore, several awareness programs have been organized by panchayat with the help of different respective government departments. Correspondingly, Pahlu panchayat has initiated the idea to construct soak pit in each house with minimum costs. Sock pit is one of best initiative taken by gram panchayat Pahlu to overcome the problem of household's liquid waste material from kitchen and drainage. It is a covered, porous-walled chamber that allows water to slowly soak into the ground. On the one hand, it has increased the moisture of soils

in village whereas on the other, it made the village neat and clean. Now there are less possibility of spreading diseases caused by mosquitos and housefly (*Musca domestica*) in the village as before.

The native of Pahu panchayats are mostly associated with agricultural activities but the problem of soil erosion during floods in streams was one of the main issue of concern. Therefore, agricultural land development works are important to save the land from soil erosion. Most of the times the top soil and sides of fields were washed away due to heavy rains which causes soil erosion. Residents often complained of soil erosion that not only reduced the size of their holding but also affected the fertility of land. With the help of MGNREGA works, land development works like spar and retaining walls, stone/concrete cladding of fields were initiated by the panchayat. Apart from these initiatives, the panchayat has done other important works that has transformed the entire area. For these initiatives the panchayat has won several district, state and national level awards such as Maharishi Balmiki Sawachhata Purskar 2009, Nirmal Gram Purskar 2010, Atal Adarsh Gram Award in 2012 and Panchayat Sashktikaran Rashtriya Purskar 2015 respectively.

Introduction

An overview of Panchayati Raj in Himachal Pradesh

In Himachal Pradesh, Panchayat Raj system was established in a statutory form under the provisions of the Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1952 in the year 1954. Before the enactment of the Himachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1952 only 280 Gram Panchayats existed. However, in the year 1954, 466 Gram Panchayats were established, and the number of Gram Panchayats increased to 638 during the year 1962. On 1st November 1966, the hilly areas of Punjab were merged in the State, and consequently, the number of Gram Panchayats rose to 1695. In the merged area, a three-tier Panchayati Raj system was in existence under the provisions of Punjab Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad Act, whereas two-tier system was prevalent in this State. To bring uniformity in the Panchayati Raj system of the old and the newly merged areas, the Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1968 was enacted on 15th November 1970 in this State, and the two-tier Panchayati Raj system was established throughout the State. After the enactment of the said Act in the year 1970, the existing Gram Sabhas were reorganized or bifurcated from time to time and new Gram Sabhas/Gram Panchayats were established. At present, some Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) working in the state of Himachal Pradesh in several domains are quite noticeable which include fields like regularity of panchayat meetings including those of gram sabha and standing committees, attendance in these meetings particularly the representation of SC and STs in the Gram Sabhas, discussions held and issues discussed, resolutions undertaken on various development works, identification of multiple beneficiaries, implementation of the State and Central Government schemes, efforts for achieving total sanitation, development of effective plans for raising own resources, systems for efficient tax collection, strengthening of local institutions, capacity building of the elected representatives and staff, having mechanism for

transparency and accountability, development in the infrastructure in the panchayat, cleanliness, women empowerment, save girl child, education, health, employment, awareness and so on. These gram panchayats in the state have set many examples in rural development, infrastructure development and implementation of all programmes launched by the Centre and state government. These panchayats have been selected among many gram panchayats from all over the country and state for the national and state level awards in different time periods and got an appraisal for their best performance in the country. Some of these panchayats took the lead in getting declared open defecation free (ODF) in the state and became eligible for different cash awards. Some of them have successfully launched Swachh Bharat Mission by keeping its panchayat neat and clean besides constructing separate toilets of boys and girls in all government schools in the panchayat and fulfilled all yardsticks laid down by the Centre under the Swachh Bharat programme. Some of them have installed solar streetlights in different wards of the panchayats. The panchayats have also built crematoriums under government's Vikas Mein Jan Sahyog scheme. Most of these panchayats have built their panchayat bhawans (buildings) with a well-furnished conference hall, veterinary dispensary, community hall, and a fair price shop are sometimes running under the same roof. Some of them have brought about a remarkable change in the magnitude of participation of women in PRIs. In fact, Himachal excels in working for women empowerment and has been awarded the 'Diamond State' award. Himachal Pradesh has become the first state in the nation in which 50 % reservation is given to women in Panchayati Raj institutions and other urban jobs. In this project, we have documented the successful practices of such 5 panchayats from three districts named Kangra, Kullu, and Hamirpur of Himachal Pradesh. These panchayats are national award-winning panchayats in excelling in the overall development of the panchayat. This work is

beneficial to motivate other panchayats especially those who have the similar type of problems, topography and climatic condition.

Methodology

Need for the study

Himachal Pradesh is different from rest of the country in many aspects. These include the topography of the region, climate, culture, dialects, agricultural cycles, and practices. In addition, there is a relative absence of industrial factories in the state that are the mainstay of urban employment in many other states of India. Himachal Pradesh is the most rural state in the country where 90% the population live in rural areas. Although 3316 panchayats (Zila Parishad 12, Panchayat Samitis 78 and Gram Panchayats 3226) are working in the state but some of them are doing very well and are ahead of many other panchayats in their work efficiency and management. These panchayats are considered good in meeting some of the core objectives of the Panchayati Raj including rural asset creation, micro-watershed development, reducing urban migration, empowering women, uplifting scheduled caste, scheduled tribes, economically and socially backward sections. For their outstanding contribution, they were awarded national awards many times. In this project, we have documented that in spite of hard topography and other barriers, how these panchayats have performed better than others. There was a great need of the documentation of successful practices of these panchayats and the mitigation strategies

Objectives

While many panchayats in Himachal Pradesh have been successful in achieving the desired objectives of the Panchayati raj but there is a lack of studies done on the factors behind the successful working of these panchayats. Our study has delineated the practices and processes responsible for the successful working of these panchayats. Given Himachal's mountainous

terrain the study has also uncovered the practices which can become inspirations to other panchayats of the country especially to other hilly and difficult terrains.

Nature of data used

In order to analyze the objectives of this study, both primary, as well as secondary data, has been used. The secondary information has been collected from the District Rural Development Agencies, Block Development Offices, books, journals, and reports. The primary information has been collected from different stakeholders at the panchayat level.

Research approach

Our study aims to delineate the practices and processes responsible for the successful working of five panchayats namely; 1) Tandi Gram Panchayat, block Banjar, district Kullu; 2) Balagad Gram panchayat, block Banjar, district Kullu; 3) Kuther Gram panchayat, Nagrota Surian block, district Kangra; 4) Kasba Paprola Gram panchayat, district Kangra; 5) Pahlu Gram panchayat, district Hamirpur, in the diverse areas of Himachal Pradesh, India. These panchayats got different national and state awards for their exemplary works in the respective panchayats. This study has been conducted in three phases. The first two phases involved preparation of preliminary and preparatory tools to undertake the main survey in Himachal Pradesh. In the first phase, a review of the literature, internal group discussion and interviews with key stakeholders has been conducted, which provided the background information necessary to ensure a complete understanding of the successful Panchayati Raj institutions' working. With this background information, the study has proceeded to the next level wherein appropriate research tools have been identified, as also the indicators to measure the different dimensions of the study. This exercise has enabled the research team to secure greater control over and a better understanding of the issues under review. The research methodology and tools have been then taken to the field

for pre-testing. The pre-testing has helped in establishing confidence in the methodology and to facilitate the firming up of indicators. From this phase, the study moved into the final level, which has included field survey and monitoring, preparation of data entry programme, data entry, preparation of analysis plan, analysis of data, and final report writing.

Case Study of Pahlu Panchayat

The milieu of the district in which Pahlu panchayat is situated

The Hamirpur district is situated between 76-17-50 to 76-43-42 east longitudes and 31-24-48 to 31-53-35 north latitudes. It is located in the south-western part of Himachal Pradesh. It is covered by lower Himalayas; the elevation varies from the 400 meters to 1,100 meters. The history of Hamirpur is closely associated with the Katoch dynasty which ruled the area between the Ravi and Satluj rivers in the olden days which was a part of the old Jalandhar-Trigarta Empire. Panini referred to the people of this kingdom as great warriors and fighters. People of the Hamirpur district speak dialects of western Pahari. These dialects are similar to other dialects spoken in the adjoining areas of Mandi, Bilaspur and Kangra districts. Besides Western Pahari, the bulk of the population of Hamirpur district can speak Hindi also. About 92% population of this district live in the rural areas and they are agriculturist.

District Hamirpur came into being on September 1, 1972. An official Census 2011 detail of Hamirpur, a district of Himachal Pradesh has been released by Directorate of Census Operations in Himachal Pradesh. Enumeration of key persons was also done by census officials in Hamirpur District of Himachal Pradesh. In 2011, Hamirpur had a population of 454,768 of which male and female were 217,070 and 237,698 respectively. In 2001 census, Hamirpur had a population of 412,009 of which males were 195,971 and remaining 216,038 were females. Hamirpur District population constituted 6.62 percent of total Himachal Pradesh population in 2011. In 2001 census, this figure for Hamirpur District was at 6.78 percent of Himachal Pradesh population. There was a change of 10.38 percent in the population compared to population as per 2001. In the previous census of India 2001, Hamirpur District recorded increase of 11.62 percent to its population compared to 1991.

Demographic characteristics of district Hamirpur of Himachal Pradesh

Description	2011
Actual Population	454,768
Male	217,070
Female	237,698
Population Growth	10.38%
Area Sq. Km	1,118
Density/km ²	407
Proportion to Himachal Pradesh Population	6.62%
Sex Ratio (Per 1000)	972
Child Sex Ratio (0-6 Age)	887
Average Literacy	88.15
Male Literacy	94.36
Female Literacy	82.62
Rural Population	93.09
Urban Population	6.91

Source: Hamirpur district: Census 2011 data retrieved from <https://www.census2011.co.in/census/district/234-hamirpur.html>

District Hamirpur has been divided into 5 subdivisions namely Barsar, Bhoranj, Hamirpur, Nadaun and Sujanpur. These subdivisions consist of 7 tehsils and 2 sub-tehsils. A total number of villages and towns comprise 1780 and 6 respectively. There are 229 village panchayats comprising 1,377-gram panchayat members and 125 panchayat Samiti members in the district. There are 18 Zila Parishad members in the district.

Administrative and Panchayati Raj setup in district Hamirpur

Description	2017
Sub Divisions	5
Tehsils	7
Sub-Tehsils	2
Blocks	6
Towns	6
Total Villages	1780
Total Panchayats	229
Zila Parishad Members	18
Panchayat Samiti Members	125
Gram Panchayat Members	1377
Total Panchayat Secretaries	63

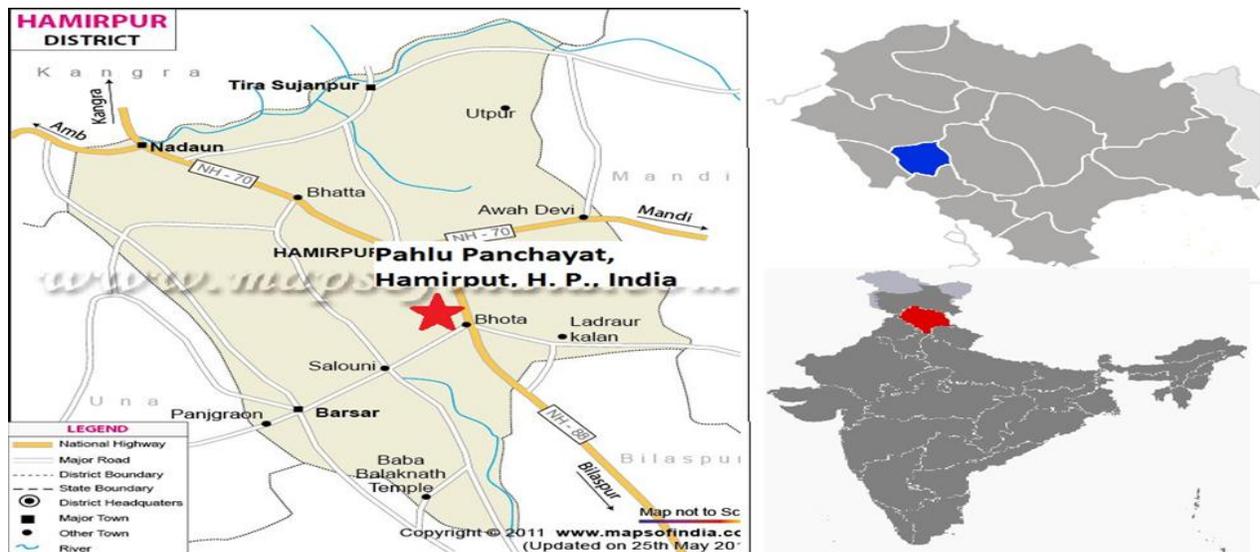
Source: District administration: Hamirpur retrieved from

http://himachal.nic.in/index1.php?n=1&lang=1&dpt_id=201&level=1&sublinkid=8507&lid=8801

Location and demographic characteristics of Pahlu panchayat

The gram panchayat Pahlu is located in Bijhari block, Tehsil Barsar of district Hamirpur. The gram panchayat Pahlu has been established on October 29, 1985, by the Government of Himachal Pradesh under Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act 1994. The area of gram panchayat is 259 hectares which have been spread in the range of 3 to 5 square kilometers. As per Census 2011, the panchayat has 672 households having a population of 2110 which consists of 1052 males

Location of Pahlu panchayat in district Hamirpur of Himachal Pradesh



Source: <https://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/himachalpradesh/districts/hamirpur.htm>

The native language of panchayat is Hindi and Pahari, where Hindi is the predominant language used by most of the villagers. Hinduism is the only religion in the panchayat which includes the Brahmins, Rajputs, Kolis, Luhars and Chammaras etc. Most of the villagers are dependent upon agriculture, horticulture and dairy farming to earn their living.



Panchayat office Pahlu, Bihari Block, Hamirpur, Himachal Pradesh

and 1058 females. The sex ratio of panchayat is 1005 females per thousand males. Scheduled castes comprise 28.39 percent of the population. Around 83.50 percent of the population are literate of the panchayat.



Locational details of Pahlu panchayat

Case presentation of Pahlu panchayat

In case of Pahlu panchayat information was collected from panchayat members (Sushma Narota – Pradhan, Malkiyat Singh – Up-pradhan, Ramesh Chand- former panchayat secretary, Gulshan- current panchayat secretary, Vinod Kumar, Rajani Devi, Pinki Devi, Pushpa Devi, Neelam, Bishan Dass, and Meena Kumari – ward members) and residents of different villages of the panchayat. Malkiyat Singh (Up-pradhan) is serving this panchayat for more than 15 years. He is a retired army personnel and joined politics after getting superannuation from the Indian army. Sushma Narota (Pradhan) is 48 years old and has a political carrier for almost 10 years. Earlier she was elected as ward member. Last time there was a reserved seat for women as Pradhan in Pahlu panchayat and she got elected to that sea.

Gram Panchayats are considered as the major transforming body of economic and social aspects of rural inhabitants in India. Hence, several developmental works have been undertaken through gram panchayats with the collective efforts and co-operation of people in the country. Likewise, over the period of time, gram panchayat Pahlu has completed and is running several progressive works that have brought economic and social changes in the region. These works comprise (i) Construction of water well, (ii) Construction of rainwater harvesting tanks (iii) Construction of all-weather roads and paths. (iv) Construction of multipurpose community hall in the panchayat (v) Construction of Toilets and Sock Pits (vi) Distribution of Dustbins and waste segregation and disposal, and (vii) Land development works. Apart from these works panchayat has also done various other developmental works such as the construction of houses for poor households under Pradhanmantri Awas Yojana, plantation of fodder grass trees on public land and check dams to restrict land sliding or water conservations. Due to the paucity of space and time, we cannot present a detailed explanation of all the developmental works. Among all the developmental works done by the

panchayat, we have given a detailed account of some of the most important works done by the panchayat, problems faced by them during these works and how these initiatives brought a change in the lives of local residents. These works are as following:

Water conservations and management works

Like other regions of Siwalik Hills, some regions of Pahlu panchayat are hilly and the majority of residents earn their living through agriculture and livestock activities. As the area under agriculture is totally dependent upon rainfall, the situation becomes difficult during the months when there is no rainfall. Lack of adequate rainfall not only affects the agriculture production but also reduces the productivity of the land. Year after year, a prolonged spell of dry weather had a detrimental effect on the productivity of land and the income of farmers also reduced manifold. The graveness of situation compelled the panchayat members and farmers to take initiatives to come out of this predicament. As a result, underwater storage and management work, water well has been quarried to mitigate the water problem in the village and water storage tanks/rainwater harvesting tanks have been constructed on individual lands for the purpose of irrigating fields and farms, watering and bathing of cattle's and washing clothes etc.

Digging of water wells

Digging of water well and pit was one of the best initiative taken by Pahlu gram panchayat to overcome the water shortage in the village. Although, it was difficult for the people or panchayat to dig a well from their personal resources but the



Water conservation tank in Kathala village

panchayat makes it easy for them together on the same platform for tackling the same problem. With the help of MNREGA and Jalagam Project, it was helpful for them to manage financial resources for such basic infrastructural requirements in the panchayat. Therefore, a water well having 35ft depth from the surface has been quarried adjoining to Mr. Prakash Chand's house, nearby Kathala village of Pahlu panchayat. In this well, at least 12-14ft water has been recorded in summer season while rest of year it has been found full. The well water has been lifted to the Kathala village, the ward no. 1 of Pahlu panchayat situated on top of the hill vertically straight from the well. Now, not only Mr. Prakash Chand is benefited from the well water but approximately 15 households of Kathala village are getting benefited from panchayat efforts to alleviate their water problems. Today the villagers are happy and thankful to panchayat's efforts who have sorted out their problems with the help of inhabitants' collective co-operation and efforts.



Water well and rainwater harvesting tanks in pahlu panchayat for water conservations

Construction of rainwater harvesting tanks

Construction of rainwater harvesting tanks on personal lands has helped the households in restoring the rainwater for several domestic and farm uses. Before constructing the tanks, it was difficult for the households to meet their daily water requirements for several uses. Lack of sufficient personal financial resources it was not easy to the individual household to construct the rainwater harvesting tanks, but with the help of panchayat officials, active co-operation of local residents and with the Government aid through MNREGA and Jalagam Projects. There are some live examples, Mr. Ashok Kumar, a resident of Beri village, Pawan Kumar, a resident of Kandoh village and Panjab Singh of Beri village of Pahlu panchayat. A rainwater harvesting tanks were constructed on their individual land mainly in front of their house and water was stored during raining from the sloped roof of their houses. With the accumulation of water in the storage tank, they started irrigating their fields and kitchen garden with the help of sprinkler and drip irrigation. In case of lack of water from regular sources or drought situations in summer they also use it to wash clothes, bathing and for cattle like buffalos and cows etc. In the beginning, they were growing all these for self-consumption vegetables like garlic, onion, cauliflower, turnip, radish, mustard and fodder for cattle's etc. But now they had started it on large scale by producing the crop as per the market need and are earning 50 to 70 thousand rupees annually from their fields.

Adequate water supply to fields has increased the fertility of soil which has resulted in the increased productivity of the land. Along with crops and vegetables, they are also cultivating some horticulture products like lemon and other citrus fruits. All these initiatives have resulted in a manifold increase in their annual income. With the construction of water tank, nearby families have also



Results of water wells in Pahlu panchayat

getting benefitted. Through proper channelization, they are also able to irrigate their land. Construction of water storage tanks has not only diversified the sources of income in the entire panchayat but also brought prosperity in the lives of the people.

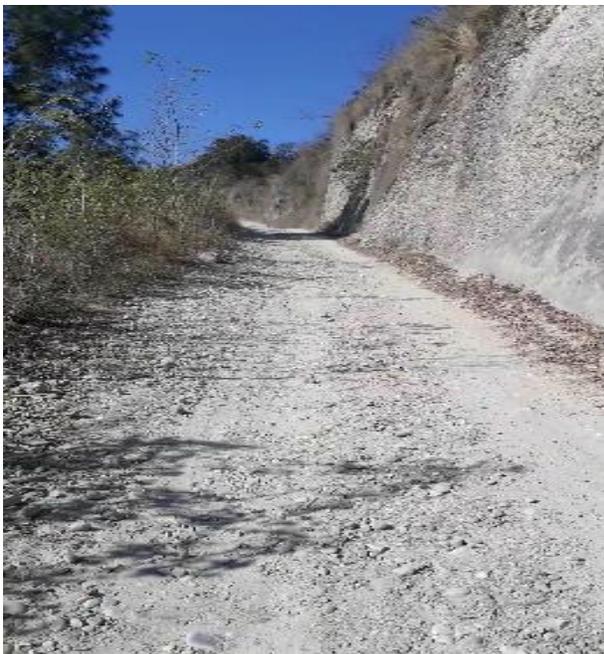
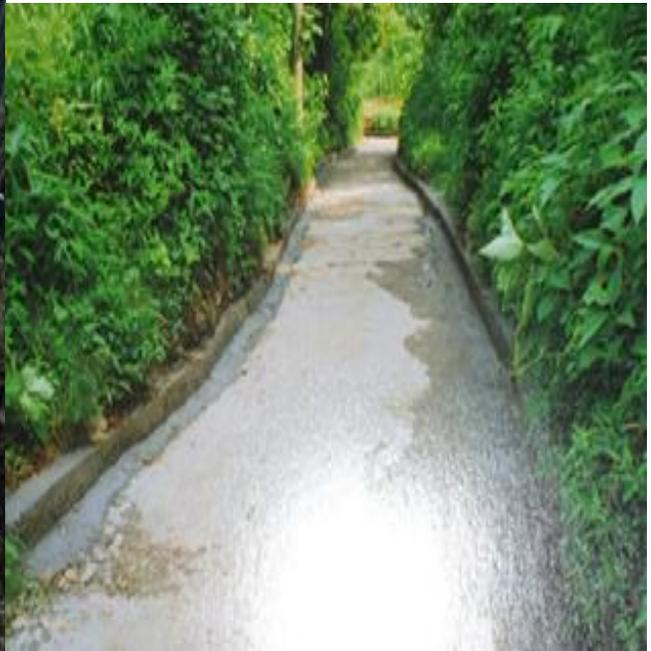
Construction of all-weather roads and footpaths

Although, Pahlu panchayat is only 3 km far from the main highway but there was no all-weather road connectivity of the villages to towns. Therefore, it was difficult for the villagers to get connected with the several basic facilities such as health, education, and transportation. Many times situations had become severe in the rainy season when people fell ill and needed health care facilities. Before constructing the village roads and path it was difficult to the villagers to reach to main roads. In case of illness, accidents and in delivery care conditions people usually use *charpaies* (a kind of bed) to carry the patients to nearby main road or health care centers. But the situation was becoming severe in case of inclement weather condition when it was difficult to cross the adjoining rivulets of the village. Example: Mrs. Premi Devi wife of late. Mr. Bakshi Ram, a resident

of Kandoh village of Pahlu panchayat told that situation of her village was very poor before constructing road by the panchayat. She told that one day her husband Mr. Bakshi Ram felt pain in his chest and they took him to the district hospital for care. There the doctors gave some medicines and injections to recover from pain and relieve him. But when they reached home, after some hours at night he again felt pain and meanwhile, there was heavily raining outside. Due to this rain, it was difficult to cross the rivulets and streams adjoining to the village because of flood and it got continued for 8 days. After 8 days, they again took him to district hospital but they refer him to the higher medical institution due to a severe health condition. Then they took him to Mumbai for better care. Although, somehow they saved the husband but increased their worries and expenditure on his health care and pushed them into strong economic conditions. Similar situations also happened with Mrs. Savitri Devi wife of Mr. Lakhveer Singh, a resident of Kandoh village of Pahlu panchayat that how she has suffered from the same flood problems in nearby streams during her daughter's marriage. Another example of Mrs. Vimla Devi wife of late Mr. Vidhi Chand, a resident of the same village Kandoh of Pahlu panchayat told that her husband was a heart patient. One day he had a heart attack and they took him to the hospital but as they reached the hospital the doctors declared him dead. Due to the lack of transportation facilities, there was a gap of 4 to 5 hours between his heart attack and hospitalization. Then they thought that if they had road connectivity the problem could have been solved. By taking these issues into consideration panchayat took the initiative to construct the all-weather roads under any of the schemes such as PMGSY or MNREGA. Today, all villages of the panchayat are fully connected from the road to the main highway.

Roads are known as the lifeline of any community. It connects people from one place to other. Like other places of Himachal Pradesh, the geographical constraints in Pahlu panchayat are same and plays a major determining factor to construct the roads. The panchayat is situated only 3 km far

from Sukkarkhad (Bhota-Una highway) but there was no all-weather connectivity in the panchayat from its every ward/village. After discussing this issue at gram panchayat level the residents of Pahu panchayat along with the panchayat officials have taken the step to construct all-weather roads in the panchayat. However, during the construction of roads, the panchayat officials and associated people faced several problems like land issues with the forest department and personal landholder. Such issues have also been faced by the gram panchayat Pahu during the construction of a road from government high school Berry to Kandoh village of Pahu panchayat when a person stop the construction work because the road was going through his land. Then all the residents of Kandoh village met and requested him and gave some money from collections. After that with the help of PMGSY and MNREGA, gram panchayat Pahu got connected to many roads connecting each village to the highway or main roads such as Kalidas ke Ghar to Kathala village approximately 1km pukka road and 1.5 km pukka road from high school Berry to Kandoh village. Now the villagers have all-weather road connectivity along with public transportation services from district headquarter and adjoining towns. Villagers are happy and thankful for the panchayat's efforts. Now even students can easily go to their school and college as a day scholar.



All weather road connectivity in Pahu panchayat

Construction of community hall

Like other panchayats, the lack of public structure to organize various village functions was a big issue also in Pahlu panchayat. Sometimes lack of community hall, the functions had to be organized under the open sky. The situation was becoming worse during extreme weather. Due to these difficulties, the panchayat took the initiative to construct a community hall in each ward/village which could be used for multiple purposes. Panchayat Pahlu has seven small villages/ wards and in each ward multipurpose community hall has been constructed by the panchayat. This multipurpose community hall plays an important role in village assets built by the village panchayat which comprises one small office room and one big hall for multiple uses. As the village festivals and other religious functions take place in these halls throughout the year. Due to the availability of ample space, marriages and other gatherings are also taking place in the building/hall. In addition to the hall, there is a separate kitchen to organize feast during functions. To keep proper sanitation panchayat has also constructed toilets in the vicinity of the premises. Earlier lack of toilets caused major sanitation problems, especially during functions. It has also seen that some of the community halls are being used as Aanganwari Centre in the village and some of them are used by SHGs and Mahila Mandal Groups of villages simultaneously. Moreover, the community hall helped local residents to organize the functions in a better way, especially during rain and hot weather.



Community Hall of village Kandoh in panchayat Pahlu

Construction of toilets, soak pits and distribution of dustbins

Next, sanitation and cleanliness are some of the major issues of concern among Indian households. In each and every village of our country, the open household waste material disposal is the main cause of several communicable and viral diseases such as Diarrhea, Cholera, Typhoid and even Malaria etc. Similarly, the problem of open defecation, open disposal of domestic waste material was the major cause of unhygienic conditions of villages of Pahlu panchayat also. Therefore, with the co-operation of panchayat officials and people, the panchayat initiated the idea of constructing soak pit in each house. Although it was difficult for panchayat officials to convince each household about cleanliness and sanitary issues. Several awareness programs have been organized by panchayat with the help of respective government departments. Because it is always difficult to change the mindset of people in rural areas especially when there is a tradition associated with it. Most often it is seen that people are reluctant to a change.



Construction of toilets to free open defecation: in panchayat Pahlu

They had certain reservations about the new initiative and it was difficult to get their permission. According to panchayat Pradhan, the most difficult part was to construct toilets. Because there were several problems of people e.g. lack of water to use toilets and habit of using toilets were some of them. But panchayat somehow got success in convincing residents and now every house has a toilet and household members are using it. With the active support of panchayat, villagers have constructed Pucka, Semi-Pucka and Kachha structure of toilets as per their financial strength and today panchayat is fully free from open defecation and had won several awards at district, state and national level. Further, to decompose domestic waste material, garbage dumping tanks have been constructed and domestic dustbins have also been distributed to each household under the scheme of Swachh Bharat Mission. Also, construction material has been provided by panchayat for each

household to construct toilets to eliminate the problem of open defecation in the villages.



Soak pit in every house in Pahlu panchayat

Correspondingly, Pahlu panchayat has initiated the idea to construct soak pit in each house with minimum costs. Sock pit is one of the best initiative taken by gram panchayat Pahlu to overcome the problem of household's liquid waste. It is a covered, porous-walled chamber that allows water to slowly soak into the ground. This soak pit has been constructed with the efforts of panchayat officials and members to fulfill the goal of Clean India and Swachh Bharat Mission in each house of Pahlu panchayat. On the one hand, it has increased the moisture of soils in village whereas, on the other, it made the village neat and clean. Now there is less possibility of spreading diseases caused by mosquitos and housefly (*Musca domestica*) in the village as before.



Distribution of dustbins in Pahlu panchayat

Further, domestic dustbin has been distributed by the gram panchayat Pahlu to each household of the panchayat or village and even training to their proper usage have also been given to the villagers. In every ward or village, a garbage dumping tank has been constructed at the appropriate place with the help of inhabitants to vacate the domestic dustbins. Now every household is habitual of using all these dustbins to overcome the garbage problem from the village and to fulfill the goal of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan of the central Government.

Land development and other works

The native of Pahlu panchayats are mostly associated with agricultural activities but the problem of soil erosion during floods was one of the main issues of concern. Therefore, agricultural land development works are important to save the land from soil erosion. Most of the times the topsoil



Land development work in Pahlu panchayat

and sides of fields were washed away due to heavy rains which causes soil erosion. Residents often complained of soil erosion that not only reduced the size of their holding but also affected the fertility of the land. With the help of MGNREGA, land development works like spar and retaining walls, stone/concrete cladding of fields was initiated by the panchayat. Further, despite the all above development activities gram panchayat Pahlu has undertaken several works and initiative to transform the lifestyle of villagers. Such as under Pradhanmantri Awas Yojana, houses with two pukka rooms, one kitchen, one toilet and bathrooms have been constructed for many poor households in the village.



Construction of spar and retaining walls to protect agricultural land from soil erosion during floods

As most of the villagers of Pahlu panchayat earn their livelihood from cattle and farm activities and it was difficult for them to keep these activities throughout the year. Lack of green fodder was one of the major constraints in increasing the milk production. Therefore, to provide them green grass throughout the year panchayat has taken initiative, and fodder grass and trees have been planted on public land by panchayat under MNREGA scheme. As a result, on the one hand, it has increased the employability of local inhabitants, while on the other, it has increased the area under greenery and accessibility of green fodder to the villagers. Today most of the households are earning well from livestock activities throughout the year than before.

Supportive agencies/ institutions/ individuals – Gram panchayat Pahlu is grateful to the officials at block and district level. Their co-operation in all works is appreciable as per panchayat officials. Role of former panchayat secretary Mr. Ramesh Chand was very big as per up-pradhan Mr. Malkiyat Singh. Without his help it would not have been possible, he added. Local residents of the panchayat have also helped by giving their inputs whenever needed.

Discussion

Panchayats are the basic unit of rural administration and development in India. Although, it was the oldest form of local government in South Asia especially in India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Shri Lanka. In India, it was first formed by Government of India at Nagour district of Rajasthan on October 2, 1959, but constitutionally it was formalized in 1992 by the 73rd amendment to the Indian Constitution by Government of India. Today Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are playing a vital role in the development of villages in the nation. They are the backbone on which the entire progress of a country depends. Therefore, the growth of entire village revolves around the efficiency of PRIs. In the current study, we have discussed the important initiatives taken by the gram panchayat of Pahlu that significantly transformed the entire region. Take the case of rainwater harvesting tanks/ water storage tanks built by the panchayat on the lands of the farmers. These storage tanks have been extremely beneficial to the farmers as they are no longer dependent upon the mercy of rain gods. Regular supply of water to the fields has increased the net area under vegetables and other consumable crops. Overall the annual income of farmers has increased manifold. In addition to constructing water storage tanks, the panchayat has also taken several initiatives to improve the living standard of inhabitants/residents. Road connectivity in all weather was one of the big challenges to the panchayat but with the help of PMGSY and MNREGA schemes, the initiative has been taken collectively and now all villages are connected to the road facilities. Today even transportation of surplus agricultural crops to the market is easier than before. Also in critical conditions when it was not easy to take patients to the nearby healthcare facilities but has become easier today. Along with all-weather road facilities to each village along with the pukka path to each house, multipurpose community hall to organize various activities in the village, various land development works or land reforms have been undertaken by the panchayat. One such work is spar

and retaining walls, stone/concrete cladding of fields have been done to protect from soil erosion. These constructions have reduced the soil erosion significantly and restored the fertility of agriculture land. Further, one of the best initiatives taken by Pahlu panchayat was to free the villages from open defecation, garbage and open drainages. For this purpose, free construction material for toilets such as toilet seats, pipes etc. domestic dustbins to each household has been provided by panchayat to escalate Swachh Bharat Mission in the villages.

Recognition for her/ his activities

Pahlu panchayat got appreciated from time to time for its efforts in various activities of development in the panchayat. Pahlu panchayat won several awards from the district, state and national level as well. Some of them are Maharishi Valmiki Cleanliness Award at the district level and Attal Aadrash Gram Panchayat Award at the state level, Nirmal Gram Panchayat Award and Panchayat Shasktikaran Award at national level respectively.

Acknowledgement

We thank the panchayat Pradhan Mr. Malkiyat Singh, panchayat Secretary Mr. Ramesh Chand and other ward members for giving us the detailed information about the initiatives taken by the panchayat. We also thank local residents for sharing their inputs about the developmental works undertaken by the panchayat and the changes brought about by these works.

Legends Tables, figures, and photographs



Kitchen garden which is getting moisture from a soak pit constructed in Pahlu panchayat

क्र.सं.	वर्ष	विवरण/पुरस्कार का नाम	पुरस्कार राशि
1.	2009-10	महर्षि वाल्मीकी स्वच्छता जिला स्तर पर पुरस्कार	3,00,000/-
2.	2011-12	निर्मल ग्राम पंचायत पुरस्कार	2,00,000/-
3.	2012-13	अटल आदर्श ग्राम पंचायत पुरस्कार राज्य स्तर	20,00,000/-
4.	2015-16	पंचायत सशक्तिकरण राष्ट्रीय पुरस्कार	5,00,000/-

Pahlu panchayat's list of awards with amount in INR



Project staff explaining project to the panchayat officials and villagers



Project staff explaining project to the panchayat officials and villagers in Panchayat office Pahlu



Soak Pits in Pahlu panchayat



Soak pits in Pahlu panchayat



Spur constructed by Pahu panchayat to retain school ground



Spur to control flood in Pahu panchayat



Spur constructed by Pahu panchayat to control flood on Sukar rivulet



Road constructed to a village in Pahu panchayat



Compulsory toilet construction in Pahlu panchayat



Retaining wall in village Pahul in Pahlu panchayat



Rain water harvesting tank and its owner explaining the benefits and profits because of this tank

Video version of the case study

Given separately.

Permission

Not needed.