

**Government Development Initiatives and Rural Socio-Economic
Transformation: An Empirical Study of Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh**

Ashish Pal

Research Scholar¹ Department of Gandhian and Peace Studies, Panjab University Chandigarh

Abstract

Government has emerged as main agent and determining authority to control the direction and success of any kind of development and welfare oriented schemes. With the tools of introducing and implementing these development plans and social welfare schemes in an effective manner government can play active role in socio-economic transformation of rural areas. In order to assure the welfare and development of Kullu district, the government has launched various welfare and development oriented schemes in Kullu district. The present study is an attempt to analyse these initiatives of government, their role in socio-economic transformation and challenges being faced in effective implementation of these initiatives in Kullu district.

Key words: Accessibility, Connectivity, Farming, Infrastructure, Agricultural Development.

Introduction

Expansion of transport system and accessibility of bus service by the himachal Pradesh state government to the rural area leads to increasing connectivity of rural areas with urban areas, which increased the rural urban interaction, it also affect the trade and commerce of rural areas and their economic development. Animal husbandry and dairy farming and production of milk product such as, ghee, curd, paneer and butter and selling of these products in the market by the local women leads to the economic development of rural areas, and supply of these products to the urban areas, which assure the food security of urban areas.

Agricultural development, development and expansion of tourism, establishment and construction of roads and infrastructure, expansion of education and health and promotion of education related to animal husbandry in the village and government policy and schemes of rural empowerment such as, MANREGA are some of the major initiatives of government for development of rural areas. Many people by involving in these schemes are getting benefits of employment, development and financial independence and self-reliance. In addition to it, they are getting awareness about the government initiatives for promotion of tourism and minimization of taxes on tourism and related activities.

Research Objectives

To analyse the various social welfare and development initiatives of government in Kullu district
To study the challenges being faced in implementation of welfare schemes and development initiatives

Data Base

Secondary data such as reports and official documents

Research Methodology

Qualitative thematic analysis approach has been adopted for the present study

Results and Discussion

Role of development initiatives in socio-economic transformation of rural area in Kullu district can be discussed as below:

Local works in village : Local artisan, carpenter, and weaver are involving in traditional mason work, and fitting of wooden products are some of the other the traditional work in our society to make the furniture and other handicrafts, such as, windows and door work in house and wooden product made with wood and bamboo such as Kilte and Tokra are also made by these people but in the present time new generation have no interest in traditional work, and don't want to involve in this work due to which at present less people are working with these traditional skills. Government policies for the people such as, Indira Awas Yojana and Sanjivni Yojana are being implemented at the ground level. Improving life style, provision of facility of quality education, generation of good income resource and quality health facilities are some of the benefits of government initiatives for the development of local people and by the adaptation of self-business and development and promotion of local labels of all kind of woollen product such as, shawls, traditional cap, muffler, socks, jacket, and hanky are some of the products to be produced by the handloom industry, in which many people are working and many societies are involving in promotion of this industry.

Development of infrastructure in rural areas: development of basic infrastructure such as street light on pathways in rural areas with the help of local panchayats, supply of good quality seeds and camps working on the land fertility are being organized by the government in rural areas at the Panchayats level are some of the major initiatives of the government for the development and improvement of production of agricultural field. All these initiatives have led to generation of the employment opportunities for the local people. Establishment of self-help groups at village level and construction of concrete roads and development of public transport facilities in the village level are playing major role in development of rural areas in Kullu district. Rural women folk will be involved in charity work at the village level and they fulfill their need by the charity and they developed their skill by working on the skill development and generate the economic benefits for self-need.

Subsidies and social welfare policy: Government have allocated the sufficient amount of funds and subsidies for the promotion of rural development and social welfare. Government have framed the policy to provide subsidy for the promotion of handloom industry. People have established their own handloom industrial units at the local level according to their own capability and many worker are working in their industry which generates employment at the local level. Government is providing 125 units of free electricity for the every house hold given. By getting support from the government, the people at village level have started their own work. The horticulture department is providing the subsidies on heal net and pol for the apple orchard farmers and people, who have their own business, nursery of apple plant and persimmon Palam pomegranate tree rate started from 50 rupee to 300 rupee.

Many people are involved in the business of cultivation of apple and tourism and cultivation of apple gave employment opportunities to the many people, as maximum people of Kullu are involved in this filed. Government policy for the development of the people of Kullu district, such as, Mata Sabri Shagun Yojana, Sukh Ashray Yojana, Balika Samridhi Yojana, Widow remarriage Yojana are some of the major initiatives for the welfare and development of people of the district, which have played major role in socio-economic transformation of rural areas in Kullu district.

Many women from the rural areas are working as the Aanganwadi workers and Asha workers are playing major role in promotion of education and delivery of basic health service at health center in the every area of Kullu district. As there less employment opportunities in government sector, so people prefer to set up their own business and small hut shops.

Village level Aanganwadi school are working as nodal center for implementation of welfare and development schemes and for the purpose of delivering the services intended to be provided under many policies to be implemented by the government through the Aanganwadi school staff for the welfare of pregnant women, old age persons, adults girls and children and for parentless children government provide the good quality food for the section of society and 11 to 12 year old girl child, and organize the camp for the awareness of hygienic food and education for many girls children who have left school or study. Various awareness camps are being organized for the promotion of education by the govt.

Government have tried to generate the employment opportunity for the youth as much as possible, as in absence of employment many youth have no work to earn livelihood and they are involved in the bad habits drinking and smoking and they will involve in anti-social activities. Water supply policy for the farmer of apple by the central government, setting up of Kullu hydro project and introduction and provision of supply of new varieties of apples in the village, stocking of many plants of apple for preservation and supply to the market resulted into improvement of apple production and high return value in the market and promotion of the tourism have boost up the economic development in the Kullu district.

Challenges and issues: Lack of communication between the local community and the government, lack of employment opportunity of job for every house hold and lack of funding and inequality in distribution of the funds by NABARD and lack of money for the local people are some challenges to be addressed by the government in sufficient and in effective manner. Water resources are being drying up and conditions of roads are not good in many areas of Kullu district. Corruption and malpractices in distribution of funds among Panchayat by Panchayats Pradhan are some challenges, which effect the fair distribution of funds grant fairly and illiteracy among Panchayat Pradhan is also a challenge, which affect the functioning of Panchayats Pradhan and their interaction with government officials and represents of government, as most of them are illiterate and they have no idea about the government policy and mechanism of their functioning.

So there shall by fixation of mandatory minimum qualification criteria of plus two, so that they could have any idea about the development plan for the village. Although, the Khadi board is providing the 35 % subsidy for local artisan for their startup for the business and Corporation of schedule cast and schedule tribe offered the help of 10 thousand for the startup of business but they are not getting benefits from these schemes as per the desired level, because there source of income and sale of production tend to decline due to shifting of interest of the people from local and traditional handicrafts to modern plastic products made in factories.

Development and welfare policy and schemes of State government and center government at panchayat level: Although many subsidies are being given by the central as well as state government for the welfare and promotion of local artisans, but fruitful results of these subsidies are below the satisfaction level, because new generation have no interest to join and involve in

this traditional artisan work, as this field required a lot of hard work but income generation is very low that's why the new generation shows disinterest to involve in this field and they tend to shift to another profitable work. Replacement of the product made by the local artisan basket, kirda shup and takli chabdi etc. by the plastic product have also provoked to the new generation to shift to other occupation.

Many schemes such as, depot food supply, MNREGA, and Aanganwadi ration provided by the state government are working at village level and concrete roads for transportation purpose are being constructed and arrangement of water supply in every house hold and clean and concrete pipeline system in the village. Panchayat cannot provide the sufficient amount of employment and only a few members of families are getting the benefits from the developmental scheme. Management of forest area covered by the new plant and running of the plant drive in the village level and care taking of path are being done by the local people in the village and Panchayat.

At the Panchayat level the 15th finance commission under schemes of MANREGA and SDRF provided the funding for the Panchayat development, due to which the Panchayats have done the construction work of the roads and water tank paver roads and cow shelter and water supply pipeline to every house hold. All this work has been coordinated and executed by the local Panchayat and Panchayat and due to all these activities the Panchayats provided the employment for the people through the MNREGA scheme, water bodies and cow shelter and roads construction. Village level Panchayat also aware the people through digital and mobile phone about the schemes running by the government and their benefits.

Women income resource and educational activity and critical analysis government Policy:

Handmade product such as, swatter, socks, Pattu Topi etc. are being made by the village female and they sell all these products in the market swatter set for the children 300 and other setter are 1000 rupees and cap 150 and simple Pattu 2500 rupees in the market which help them to earn the money through handmade products and enable them to setting up of their own business and they also work in the handloom production units. Village ladies have no idea about the government schemes and subsidies being given by the government in the filed in which they are working, and construction of roads and ration depot are open for their welfare.

Economically people are sound and education institutions have been established in rural areas and private schools bus are coming in the village and they send their children in the private school. Children studying in government school are also being provided free bus service in the school timing and no bus fare are being charged. School boys and girls are being provided the free books, bag, and school uniform and mid-day meal for the student are also being given under state government policy. Employment opportunities are more less in the public sector and hydro project give the less employment for the local people and once the hydro project has been completed local people have lost their employment in our the district. Only few people having been benefitted from the government welfare policy, schemes and subsidies. Some of the people are aware of the government schemes but maximum people are not aware the government policies and schemes due to which they cannot get the benefit from the government policy and subsidy.

Government made a policy for the farmer and give them subsidy and to provided new opportunity for the farmer and implement the schemes and policies social welfare of the people at the ground level. In the village level people have their own business of shoes repairing and they made shoes by

their own hands from leather and are useful school student and villager purchase the shoes from the market, due which this business is severely affected because readymade shoes are available in the market on cheaper price, that is the reason why this business is shrinking and new generation is not interested to learn this work and only few people are working in this industry and these people have no benefit from the government side and there is no policy for the welfare of these people and this work is almost at the ending point and they have no enough money for the start up for the new business.

Government is also providing the loan on interest rate of 2% for the artisans to produce and to prepare items at home the home product these item prepare by the local artisan and they start their own work. Government cannot promote the local artisan work on the large scale and also imposition of heavy rant in the local festival affect the profitability of artisans work. Due to increasing demand for plastic product instead of artworks of traditional artisans in the market affect the government initiative to promote and support the artisans work as they tend to shift to other occupation due to lack of output from traditional occupation.

Opening of the Navodaya Vidhyalaya and Kenderiya Vidhyalaya at district level, leads to the development and expansion of education and setting up in the district, on the other hand promotion of tourism and initiation of hydro product leads to generation of the some kind of employment for local people and establishment of shopping mall and local shops in the Kullu affect the socio-economic structure of Kullu. Before establishment of any project by the government getting the consent of the local people will increase the chances to achieve the desired objectives of that projects. Provision of skill education by government through its various agencies leads to employment generation and economic upliftment of the people of the area.

Provision financial assistance of 6000 during the pregnancy time for the women under the policy of matri Yojana and provision of the healthy food by the Aanganwadi School and also taking care of child provide the healthy good items and also provide the iron tablet calcium tablets and proper vacation of children and provide the polio drops at home are some of schemes for family welfare.

Employment through private and government sector in Kullu: New business ventures in the Kullu district such as paragliding, taxi, and homestay hotel are being open at the large level and local people have got the new opportunities for the employment and opening of the small shops and stall selling maggi, Sidhu, momos and bred omelette and tea point etc. In this business many people have setting up their own business and employment and government subsidy cannot reach to the common people so they cannot any get the benefits of subsidy. Water shortage for the farming affect the agriculture, as the farmer cannot do planting and cultivation of crop at the time of crisis of water scarcity, so shortage of water becomes a very serious problem for the farmer and agriculture department.

Department of agriculture also organized the awareness camps and to test the soil quality and productivity also check the soils quality of agricultural land at the ground level and information and supply of new verity of apple and other quality of fruit are being provided at the ground level.

Many people are getting directly benefit from government schemes as today there is access to roads in every village due to which access to education and medical facility in the near area becomes possible. Many people are engaged in government projects to earn their livelihood and to serve the benefit of government scheme to ever people of society. Government food scheme and

establishment of the good education institution changing the scenario of rural society. But less employment opportunity in the government job and lack of other employment opportunities are some problems to be addressed by the government. Implementation of welfare the policies of the government without the consent of people affect the expected outcome of these policies, organization of the awareness camp at the ground level regarding these welfare policy and their benefits will be helpful in implementation of these schemes on ground level.

Congress government under the leadership of honorable chief minister shri Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu created the Job opportunities in police department, forest guard, Patwari in the revenue department, Post Graduate Teachers, and Trained Graduate Teacher, CBSE school Teacher, Assistant professor for collage cedar and medical officer through the commission in the education department and other public sector departments and old pension scheme also having been implement by the state government. Awareness camp lead by the government about the children health are helping to promote the awareness about children health in which a lot of women organizations are participating. Functioning of the government after 2025 disaster got severely affected as roads connectivity became poor and road are entered in damaged condition and many village have lost government connectivity with bus services and other kind of transport facility.

Challenges impact and government support at ground level: Due to over rainfall, cloudburst and irregular rainfall cycle farmer face many challenges due to disturbed rain fall pattern. There are several government development initiatives underway in Kullu district focusing on development of infrastructure for tourism, rural development, disaster mitigation and local economic support by the government in Kullu. Better road connectivity improved the access of people to healthcare and education development projects which create employment opportunities in Kullu. Development initiative consider the local needs, success of developmental initiatives depends on how project is planned and implemented.

Implementation of development initiatives in effective manner have improved standard of living of people of Kullu district, construction of infrastructure such as, better roads improved the accessibility and connectivity of rural areas to urban areas and other services, it has also increased local participation focus on remote areas and create more skill base education for local population, and arrangement of water supply to every household provides the water benefit to local people. PM Kissan samman Nidhi money will be provided by the government in the bank account of the beneficiary. Provision of the quality education and corruption free government services and schemes, and determination of the accountability of officers and government representatives and agencies improved the access of people to the schemes and policies meant for their development welfare. People associated with handloom industry now have less work to do in this industry so in order to support him to survive under government give the subsidies on food in depot and for the people who have their own work government will give the subsidy for the work.

Provision of subsidy on the gas cylinder and 125 units subsidies, provision of free water supply in times of the shortage of water supply in the irrigation are some other people oriented schemes of government which helped to the people to survive in the time of crisis. Improvement in the sector of transport and tourism boost the employment in this sector, as taxi, snow scooter and bikes and scooter on rent in the tourist area helped in improvement tourism sector, which creates new venture of employment. There is absence of any kind of river boundary wall and road side area, which

leads to the incident of land sliding and which destroy the road connectivity, which affect the accessibility of apple farmers to the market, due to which apple farming and income of farmers involved in apple farming got affected drastically, they be opt to start their own business and make medicine from their own plant.

Improvement of farming on the ground level in the apple season time provide the employment 5 to 10 people in the orchid and government cannot provide the employment for the unskilled locales. Road connectivity and the standard of living people have increased throughout the district. Networking of telecommunications and increase in pay scale leads to creation of more employment opportunities for the people. On the other hand, only few skilled people get the benefits of development hydro and other development project, and most of the local people opt to set up their own small business.

Development initiatives have consider a partial local need, and people are not aware about the development projects to be implemented in the area, which affect the profitability and objectivity of developmental projects. Road connectivity should be improved and basic human need like water, electricity and food will be easily available to the needy people to enable them to earn their livelihood in the village. People earn their income from the orchard apple and Pease and other fruits and mechanic work of spray pump. Local people take the benefit from the new techniques and skills they learned and construction of water tank in the orchard of farmers improved the water supply and due to availability of many new technical equipment in the market for the farmers for sewing and embroidery work at the rural area, ladies in rural areas are involved in the work of embroidery government, which enable them to earn more money.

Government shall have to provide the technical skill to the local people and then it have to implement and commence the development project which will provide the employment for the local people. Government should provide the subsidy on hamber machine for the local artisan working in making of iron tools in effective manner so that the tool making process can be make easy. Many youth from the farmer community have getting an employment opportunity due to improvement in tourism and many local people are actively involved in the promotion of tourism due to efforts of tourism department. Tourism department did not have a road map for providing proper training for local people for the rafting. Therefore, establishment of dedicated training centers is essential to empower local youth with the necessary skills for adventure sports, ensuring safety and enabling them to acquire the required licenses for employment in the tourism sector.

Department did not have the required staff and they cannot provide the proper information regarding the tourism and department employee of the department are involved in the corruption they are not accountable for the local people. The education sector of government will provide the skill education and more focused on the modern education. Jibhi and Shangarh valley are being developed as new tourist sites in the Kullu district.

Conclusion: after above discussion it can be concluded that:

1. Government initiative such as establishment of homestays and hotels, expansion of road connectivity, supply of the new verity of apple plants to the farmer, extension of the education and health facilities at the village level enhance the financial security, earning of livelihood by the people, and development of capabilities and physical well-being of the people of rural areas of Kullu district.

2. Implementation of the welfare and development policy effectively at the village level is major challenge for the government, as many villages have no access to basic infrastructure such as internet, road and public bus facility, which affect the success of development and welfare policy on one hand and standard of living and livelihood of rural population on the other hand.
3. Government should promote the culture and traditional value and local industry. Government policies should be formulated by keeping the needs of community in mind and also taking care of the environment. Awareness campaign must be organized regarding the possible benefits and expected loss due to development projects by the government and people may know about the development project, and about the provision of employment to the local people.
4. Effective management of the development projects and assurance of the availability of jobs according to the need of local of the people are some of possible future impact of these projects, which will play effective role in socio-economic transformation of rural areas of Kullu district.

References

1. Chambers, Robert (1983): Rural Development: Putting the Last First. Longman.
2. Ellis, Frank (2000): Rural Livelihoods and Diversity in Developing Countries. Oxford University Press.
3. Government of Himachal Pradesh (2023): Economic Survey of Himachal Pradesh 2022–23.
4. Government of Himachal Pradesh (2024): Statistical Abstract of Himachal Pradesh 2023–24. Department of Economics and Statistics.
5. Government of Himachal Pradesh (2024): Annual Administrative Report: Department of Horticulture. Shimla.
6. Government of Himachal Pradesh (2024): Annual Report: Department of Rural Development. Shimla.
7. Government of Himachal Pradesh (2024): Annual Report: Department of Tourism and Civil Aviation. Shimla.
8. Government of Himachal Pradesh (2024): Annual Report: Department of Agriculture. Shimla.
9. Government of Himachal Pradesh (2024). Annual Report: Department of Animal Husbandry. Shimla.
10. Government of Himachal Pradesh (2024). Annual Report: Department of Women and Child Development. Shimla.
11. Government of Himachal Pradesh (2024). Annual Report: Department of Health and Family Welfare. Shimla.
12. Government of India (1992): The Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992. Ministry of Law and Justice.
13. Government of India (2005): Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005, Ministry of Rural Development.
14. Government of India (2023): Annual Report, Ministry of Rural Development. Government of India.
15. Government of India (2023) Annual Report, Ministry of Panchayati Raj. Government of India.
16. Government of India (2023): National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM): Annual Report. Ministry of Rural Development.

17. Government of India (2023): PM-Kissan Samman Nidhi: Annual Report. Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
18. Government of India (2024): Basic Road Statistics of India. Ministry of Road Transport and Highways
19. Government of India (2024): National Health Mission: Annual Report. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
20. Government of India (2024): India Tourism Statistics. Ministry of Tourism.
21. Government of India (2024): Agricultural Statistics at a Glance. Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
22. Katar Singh (2009): Rural Development: Principles, Policies and Management (4th Ed.). Sage Publications.
23. Michael P. Todaro, & Stephen C. Smith (2021): Economic Development (13th Ed.). Pearson.
24. M. L. Jhingan (2020): The Economics of Development and Planning (42nd Ed.). Vrinda Publications.
25. Amartya Sen (1999): Development as Freedom. Oxford University Press
26. Bina Agarwal (2010): Gender and Green Governance. Oxford University Press.
27. Elinor Ostrom (1990): Governing the Commons. Cambridge University Press.
28. D. Narayana (2005): Local Governance without Capacity Building? Concept Publishing.
29. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). (2023): Annual Report 2022–23. Mumbai.
30. NITI Aayog (2021): SDG India Index and Dashboard. Government of India.
31. Planning Commission (2008): Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007–2012): Volume III—Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment. Oxford University Press.
32. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. (2011): Census of India 2011. Government of India.
33. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2022): Human Development Report 2021/2022. UNDP.
34. United Nations (2015): Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. United Nations.
35. World Bank (2024): World Development Report 2024. World Bank.
36. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2022): The State of Food and Agriculture. FAO.
37. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2023): Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. IPCC.
38. International Labour Organization (ILO). (2023). World Employment and Social Outlook. ILO.
39. Agarwal, B. (2001) Participatory exclusions, community forestry, and gender. World Development, 29(10), 1623–1648
40. Jodha, N. S. (1992): Mountain perspectives and sustainability, Mountain Research and Development, 12(1), 41–48.
41. Jodha, N. S. (2005): Adaptation to global change in mountain agriculture, Journal of Mountain Science, 2(4), 287–299.
42. Negi, G. C. S., & Joshi, V. (2004): Rainfall variability and implications for mountain agriculture in the Indian Himalaya, Mountain Research and Development, 24(1), 62–70.

43. Rao, C. H. H. (2005). Agriculture, food security, poverty, and environment, Economic and Political Weekly, 40(18), 1948–1965.
44. Sharma, E. et al. (2019): Climate change impacts and adaptation in the Hindu Kush Himalaya. Mountain Research and Development, 39(2), 1–12.
45. Saxena, N. C. (2003): Rural poverty, livelihood security and decentralization. Economic and Political Weekly, 38(34), 3647–3655.
46. Department of Horticulture, Himachal Pradesh. (2024). Horticulture Development in Himachal Pradesh.
47. Department of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Himachal Pradesh. (2024). Tourism Policy of Himachal Pradesh.
48. Department of Rural Development, Himachal Pradesh. (2024). MGNREGA Performance Report.
49. Himachal Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority. (2024). State Disaster Management Plan.
50. Himachal Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority. (2025). Disaster Damage Assessment Report.
51. Himachal Pradesh State Transport Corporation. (2024): Annual Report.
52. District Statistical Office, Kullu. (2024): District Statistical Handbook: Kullu.
53. District Rural Development Agency, Kullu. (2024): Annual Progress Report.
54. District Disaster Management Authority, Kullu. (2025): District Disaster Management Plan.