



# International Journal of Research in Academic World

Received: 05/August/2023

IJRAW: 2023; 2(9):72-77

Accepted: 10/September/2023

## Empowering Rural Transformation in U.T of J&K: Assessing the Impact and Potential of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Driving Sustainable Rural Development

\*<sup>1</sup>Aamir Iqbal and <sup>2</sup>Dr. Ashish Jorasia<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Public Administration, Singhania University, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, India.<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor Department of Public Administration, Singhania University, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, India.

### Abstract

Rural development is the process of rural modernization and economic growth. It is a technique for improving rural people's quality of life and meeting their basic necessities. Rural development is also a movement from rural poverty to rural prosperity. It is not only to raise rural per capita income, but also to enhance food and nutrition, standard of living, suitable housing, health improvement, modern education, convenient transportation, social security, and social development. Rural development works on the ground and provides jobs at the village level through various programmes, which plays an important part in eradicating poverty and unemployment difficulties. The primary responsibility of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI's) is to expedite development and engage all people in the process so that people's perceived needs and development goals are met. People's empowerment is a crucial topic in today's state politics. Panchayati Raj is an institution that may empower people. This paper analyses the role and impact of Panchayati Raj institutions in the rural development of villages in Jammu and Kashmir. The panchayats help in the empowerment and upliftment of rural areas. Various schemes of rural development department are supervised and monitored on ground so that the intended benefit reaches the rural masses.

**Keywords:** Rural development, empowerment, schemes, PRI's, poverty

### Introduction

According to Ministry of Rural Development (Govt. of India) "Rural Development implies both the economic betterment of people as well as greater social transformation. In order to provide the rural people with better prospects for economic development, increased participation of people in the rural development programmes, decentralization of planning, better enforcement of land reforms and greater access to credit are envisaged." Initially, main thrust for development was laid on agriculture, industry, communication, education, health and allied sectors but later on it was realized that accelerated development can be provided only if governmental efforts are adequately supplemented by direct and indirect involvement of people at the grass root level. Keeping in view the needs and aspirations of the local people, Panchayati Raj Institutions have been involved in the programme implementation and these institutions constitute the core of decentralized development of planning and its implementations. The Ministry is also vigorously pursuing with the State Governments for expeditious devolution of requisite administrative and financial powers to PRI's as envisaged under 73rd Amendment Act of the Constitution of India.

Development of rural areas has been at the core of planning process in the country and also in the State. Rural Development is a broad, inclusive term which takes in its consideration socioeconomic and political development of the rural areas. It includes measures to strengthen the democratic structure of society through the Panchayati Raj Institutions as well as measures to improve the rural infrastructure, improve income of rural households and delivery systems pertaining to education, health and safety mechanisms. Poverty alleviation is a key component of rural development <sup>[1]</sup>. The Panchayati Raj Institutions in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir in coordination with RDD department are implementing various developmental schemes, such as Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, Swachh Bharat Mission, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Grameen), Integrated Watershed Management Programme, Community Sanitation Programme, Individual Household Latrine (IHHL), Solid Waste Management Programme, Individual and Community Compost Pit Projects, Amrit Sarovars and Rural Livelihood Mission, to provide employment opportunities, skill development, infrastructure development, sanitation, augmentation of rural economy, and allocation of basic facilities <sup>[2]</sup>. The Union Territory has significantly improved rural people's living standards through

these activities. To ensure the success of these projects, Panchayat Raj Institutions have been given the power to work on their creation, supervision, and implementation in the involved regions. Although panchayats do not get direct funding for these activities, they play an essential role in obtaining the intended results.

### Objectives of the Present Study

- Assess the current functions, responsibilities, and effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the context of rural development in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Measure the tangible and intangible impact of PRIs on rural development indicators, including economic growth, infrastructure development, social welfare, and quality of life.
- Investigate the extent to which PRIs promote local governance, citizen participation, and accountability in decision-making processes.
- Identify and analyze the challenges and obstacles faced by PRIs in fulfilling their roles and delivering development outcomes in the region.

### Review of literature

Parveen Kumar (2013) in his research paper Panchayati Raj in Jammu and Kashmir: An analytical study examines the theoretical aspect covering the constitutional 73rd amendment which paved the way for the establishment of the Panchayati Raj Institutions as bodies of local self-government and the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act 1989 which provides for the establishment of Panchayats at the state level. The study also reveals about the various aspects of panchayati raj system like the electoral process, socio-economic background of the elected leaders, the percentage of women elected, awareness of the elected leaders towards the different provisions of the act and the constraint faced by them while discharging their duties [3].

Riyaz Panjabi, (1990) in his study Panchayati Raj in Kashmir: Yesterday, Today and tomorrow reveals how the Panchayati Raj was misused by the landlords in Jammu and Kashmir during the rule of Maharaja Hari Singh. The study focuses on the autocratic features of the Panchayati System and the conditions that were put before the common people for participation and what was the purpose of government behind the panchayat system in the state. During the period, the conditions for voters as well as for officer were tough and prescribed authority was given the power to fix the number of panchs. The study debates that the panchayat system in the state was an extra instrument in the hands of the Dogra Rule to humiliate common people [4].

Bhat Zahid, (2012) in his paper Challenges before Panchayati Raj in Jammu and Kashmir, examines different types of challenges before Panchayati Raj in J&K such as mismanagement in the Panchayati system, political influence, corruption, lack of motivation, inappropriate use of funds, lack of responsiveness, lack of transparency, lack of skills and manpower, lack of infrastructure, and lack of proper guideline. It is because of these challenges that the panchayat system could not develop itself to such an extent when compared to other states of India [5].

### Panchayati Raj Institutions and Devolution of Functions for Development.

Panchayati Raj Institutions in Jammu and Kashmir have been given expanded powers to work for people's development. The Panchayati Raj Act of Jammu and Kashmir of 1989 split

the roles of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the development process. The Halqa panchayat has been tasked with developing and implementing development plans. The Block Development Board Council is in charge of supervising and monitoring them. The District Development Council examines, directs, and prioritises the development of programme [6]. Under Cabinet Decisions No.40/3/2011, 170/21/2011, and Government Order No:1126-GAD of 2011, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir granted devolution of powers and activities to Panchayati Raj Institutions related to Fourteen Departments. These departments enlarged the scope of Panchayati Raj Institutions in different aspects of rural people and developed the socio-economic life of villagers. Different developmental functions have been delegated to the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayat system. Rural development, social welfare, Soil conservation, social forestry, rural industrialization, education, health, sanitation, agriculture and sheep husbandry, and a variety of other welfare activities are among these duties [7]. Panchayat bodies are responsible for the planning, execution, and oversight of all of these projects, as well as additional programmes aimed at reducing poverty and unemployment.

### Research Methods

In this paper a comprehensive review of existing literature, research papers, reports, and policy documents regarding the prosperity and upliftment of rural areas and rural life by Panchayati Raj Institutions in Jammu & Kashmir is done. The secondary data was collected from several Research Papers, Magazines, Books, Journals, Articles, websites, newspapers, and Block development offices, Assistant Commissioner Development, Assistant Commissioner Panchayat & District Panchayat Offices etc.

### Role of PRI in Different Schemes for Effective Governance, Infrastructure and Rural Development in J&K

#### Mgnrega

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is one of our country's most essential and effective programmes, employing millions of jobless people each year. The initiative was implemented in 200 areas across the country in February 2006. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (Mahatma Gandhi NREGA) attempts to improve rural people's livelihood security by guaranteeing 100 days of pay work every fiscal year to a rural household. It was initially extended to three backward districts of Jammu and Kashmir, Doda, Kupwara, and Poonch, in 2006, and then to two additional districts, Anantnag and Jammu, in the second phase, and eventually to the entire state on April 1, 2008, in the third phase [8]. The Gram panchayats are entrusted to issue a Job Card within 15 days of a family applying for registration, after due verification. All plans and labour budgets are approved in a meeting of the Gram Sabha and it is the duty of the Programme officer that these Gram Sabha meetings are conducted. In J&K these gram Sabha's are mostly held in the month of October every year so that plans are approved on time for the next financial year. Different activity works like micro irrigation, rural connectivity, rural sanitation, flood protection, Land development, amrit sarovars etc are incorporated in the plan as per the requirement of the Panchayat Halqa.

Under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Panchayat Halqa works as the statutory body

to execute works in their respective areas. The Panchayat Halqa prepares a shelf of projects within their jurisdiction mostly in the month of October and calls a Deh Majlis (Gram Sabha) in the same month for getting the shelf approved. Then, the plan of all the Panchayat Halqa's is after approved by Deh Majlis is forwarded to the concerned Block Development Officer who consolidates and forwards the same to the Assistant Commissioner Development who is also District Wage Employment Project Officer for the purpose of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and the accord of approval to the plan is granted by ACD. Gram Panchayats are responsible for registering eligible adults above 18 years of age who are willing to work in each village under their control and issue Job Cards to them free of cost. The panchayat registers Job Card holder's requests as demand for work. When a work demand is recorded, the panchayat selects a task from the prioritised work lists for which estimates, technical sanction, and administrative approval is already issued. The Panchayat issues an authority letter to the Technical Assistant/Junior Engineer for work demarcation. The site for execution of work is recorded by capturing a geo tagged photograph using the Bhuvan NREGA mobile application by the concerned Gram Rozgar Sevak of VLW/Panchayat Secretary. The Panchayat provides the GRS or Village Level Workers with the relevant documentation, which must be kept on site and include a Muster sheet which is used for recording attendance. After January 2023 the attendance of the job card holders and workers in muster roll is recorded online on daily basis by officials using NMMS mobile application. This online attendance has brought more transparency in the system. During the execution of the work, the Panchayat, chaired by the Sarpanch, monitors the work and guarantees that it is completed in accordance with the estimates. The work is keenly observed by the panchayat and no work taken up by the panchayat or any individual on his own or without an estimate duly sanctioned and administratively approved is paid by the Block Development Officer<sup>[9]</sup>.

In Kulgam district under MGNREGA for the financial year 2023-24, a total of 920 works has been completed, 7044 works are currently in progress, 27351 works are approved but not in progress and 8984 works are proposed but not yet approved as on date. Out of this a 105 & 22 works have been completed, 793 & 423 works are currently in progress, 3401 & 886 works are approved but not in progress and 1220 & 600 works are proposed but not yet approved in the Qaimoh

and Kulgam blocks respectively<sup>[10]</sup>. The Panchayat Raj Institutions in Jammu and Kashmir have indeed developed the rural life and the infrastructure of rural areas after the implementation of MGREGA scheme. The mud kochas (footpaths) in villages have been developed with tile lanes. The irrigation canals have been constructed with concrete cement material.

### **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)**

The campaign of Swachh Bharat Mission Prime Minister was officially launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 2 October 2014 at New Delhi, with the aims to clean the villages, cities, streets, roads and infrastructures of the country. Similarly, the campaign was started in every state including the state of Jammu and Kashmir. This scheme was earlier implemented by the name of Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) and then changed to Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA) in 2012. The scheme's principal goal is to decrease or eliminate open defecation. To combat the rural population's habit of open defecation and improper disposal of domestic refuse, which increases pollution levels in water bodies and thus pollutes potable water, the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj is implementing this scheme in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, which aims to convert all bucket latrines into sanitary latrines, build sewerage systems/Drains, and Community Sanitary Complexes. Through this programme, individuals are made aware of their link with the environment and encouraged to make reasonable decisions<sup>[11]</sup>.

The sarpanch in consultation with other panchayat members prepares a list and recommends the names of individual households who do not have the indoor toilet facility at their homes. The recommended household is then provided an amount of Rs. 12000/-to construct a SBM point by the rural development department. This amount is also transferred to the eligible head of the household through DBT. This also comes under the initiative of Swachh Bharat Mission (Clean India mission) of government of India. The panchayat members also recommend for the creation of community sanitary points in their respective panchayat halqa's. Till date more than 4 lakh villages have achieved ODF Plus status moving towards "Swachh Sujal Bharat" with "Jan Bhagidari". Jammu and Kashmir has also been declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) and placed under ODF Plus status under Swachh Bharat Mission<sup>[12]</sup>. The achievements of SBM in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir is shown in the table below:

**Table 1:** Achievements of IHHL, SWM, LWM under Swachh Bharat Mission in U.T of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sr. No.	District Name	Total Villages	Total ODF Plus villages	Villages Having Arrangement of SWM and LWM	Community Sanitary Complexes	Individual Household Toilets constructed under SBM
1	Anantnag	426	426	426	337	118209
2	Baramulla	511	511	511	307	116019
3	Budgam	516	516	516	419	66202
4	Doda	443	443	443	334	56203
5	Jammu	774	774	774	284	128093
6	Kathua	522	522	522	198	83327
7	Kupwara	375	375	375	384	63655
8	Poonch	176	176	176	166	44247
9	Pulwama	341	341	341	323	45090
10	Rajouri	436	436	436	706	118452
11	Srinagar	26	26	26	35	2368
12	Udhampur	388	388	388	230	69989
13	Kishtwar	178	178	178	224	49320
14	Ramban	172	172	172	304	47012
15	Kulgam	249	249	249	222	55916
16	Bandipora	185	185	185	215	43848
17	Samba	339	339	339	256	39045
18	Shopian	211	211	211	185	37732
19	Ganderbal	132	132	132	121	17529
20	Reasi	250	250	250	238	35830
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6650</b>	<b>6650</b>	<b>6650</b>	<b>5488</b>	<b>1238086</b>

(Achievements of IHHL, SWM, LWM under Swachh Bharat Mission in U.T of Jammu and Kashmir)

In Qaimoh and Kulgam block of Kulgam district all 29 and 40 villages of 23 Panchayat Halqa's have achieved the tag of Model ODF plus village having 7392 & 7574 Individual Household Latrine points, 25 & 29 Community sanitary complexes, 21 & 43 community waste collection and segregation sheds, 18 & 41 community compost pits, 3610 & 3250 individual household compost pits and 2687 & 1910 individual soakage pits constructed till date respectively. This achievement have been impossible without the tireless efforts of the Panchayat representatives who made awareness among the masses about these schemes.

#### **Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (Gramin)**

In 1985, the Indian government started the Indra Awaas Yojna as a subtheme of the Jawahar Yojana to provide houses for the rural poor. However, recognising a gap between its aspiration and the reality on the ground, the NDA administration led by Mr. Narendra Modi established the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojna initiative in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in 2016 with the goal of meeting the housing needs of the rural poor<sup>13</sup>. Under this scheme the list of houseless beneficiaries for Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojna (PMAY, formerly IAY) is prepared at panchayat level by the Panchayat members and the beneficiaries get an amount of Rs. 1.75 Lacs in instalments for building their houses. The

first instalment of Rs. 50,000 is paid on completion of the plinth level. Second instalment of Rs. 50,000 is paid during construction of upper plinth work/brick work. Third instalment of Rs. 50,000 is paid after the completion of roof. Wages of 100 man-days under MGNREGA is also provided to the beneficiary which also amounts to Rs. 24,400 as the current per day wage rate in Jammu and Kashmir is Rs 244/day. All the instalments are paid by the RDD departments after having a completion certificate of each stage duly attested by concerned Panch and Sarpanch of the beneficiaries Panchayat Halqa. These panchayat representatives confirm the authenticity and completion of the work. This also adds in the development of the rural areas and the people living below poverty line are benefited.

The following table shows the total number of houses completed in a financial year (irrespective of target year) from 2019 to 2023 after the formation of union territory of Jammu and Kashmir under PMAY (G) scheme. This data shows that the maximum houses have been built under the scheme in the current year which shows leads towards the development of the region. This also describes the words of Prime Minister of India Mr. Narendra Modi that more focus would be done towards the development and upliftment of the poor class in the UT post abrogation of Article 370.



**Table 2:** Total houses constructed since the formation of UT of Jammu and Kashmir under PMAY(G) scheme

S. No.	District Name	Houses completed in 2019-2020	Houses completed in 2020-2021	Houses completed in 2021-2022	Houses completed in 2022-2023	Houses completed in 2023-2024	Total Houses completed in 2023-2024
1	Anantnag	0	0	22	0	0	22
2	Badgam	0	0	1	0	0	1
3	Bandipora	0	0	10	0	0	10
4	Baramulla	0	0	6	0	0	6
5	Doda	4	16	196	0	4	220
6	Ganderbal	0	0	8	0	0	8
7	Jammu	2	0	40	0	0	42
8	Kathua	14	6	40	0	0	60
9	Kishtwar	7	21	173	0	0	201
10	Kulgam	0	0	1	0	0	1
11	Kupwara	0	0	7	0	0	7
12	Poonch	31	101	631	0	9	774
13	Pulwama	0	0	9	0	1	10
14	Rajauri	139	86	675	0	31	933
15	Ramban	29	35	180	0	2	248
16	Reasi	44	28	495	0	8	578
17	Samba	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	Shopian	0	0	5	0	0	6
19	Srinagar	0	0	1	0	0	1
20	Udhampur	9	60	42	0	0	111
	Total	279	353	2542	0	55	3239

(Data showing total houses constructed since the formation of UT of Jammu and Kashmir under PMAY(G) scheme)

### Challenges Faced by Panchayati Raj Institutions in Jammu & Kashmir

Jammu and Kashmir is a heaven on the earth. Besides being heaven there are lot of problems and challenges which the Panchayat Raj Institution members have to face. There is no end to these problems and day after day these challenges are becoming bigger and bigger. Few problems faced by PRI's in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir are discussed as under:

- i). Security issue to the representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions. The PRI members does not enjoy the security cover besides receiving the threats from several unknown terror organisations.
- ii). People do not participate in Panchayat elections at large. Most of the voters remain home bound at the day of polling. Last Panchayat elections in 2018 saw below 10% polling which hinders in the right selection of the panchayat leadership for better governance.
- iii). The funds are not released in time to panchayats so that the execution of works is completed well in time.
- iv). The infrastructure for Panchayat leadership is not available throughout the union territory. Panchayat Ghar is either not available in the halqa or there is dispute between the land donor and administration. This also hampers in the smooth functioning of the Panchayat Raj Institutions.
- v). The elections are not held after regular intervals which has also remained the challenge for PRI's.
- vi). Many members being illiterate doesn't know their responsibilities to work for the upliftment and development of their respective Panchayat Halqa's.
- vii). The interference of political party leadership also disturbs the PRI functioning and remained a challenge in local governance.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

The results of the present study reveal that the functions and responsibilities assigned to the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the union territory of Jammu & Kashmir are effectively performed with some exceptions. The study indicate that the schemes of rural development are executed on ground in collaboration and consultation with the Panchayat leadership. The centrally sponsored schemes like MGNREGA, SBM, PMAY which are under the monitoring and close supervision of panchayat leadership have helped in the empowerment of rural transformation and social welfare. The PRI have promoted the local governance and citizen participation in the rural areas of the region. The panchayat representatives make the citizens of their respective areas aware of the different rural development schemes and increase their participation in several decision-making processes. The people of villages try to solve their grievances and personal matters before the Panchayat members. So, the PRI help in handling and sorting out the local issues at their level.

Besides being the Panchayati Raj Institutions as the tool and mechanism for driving sustainable rural development, they face the challenges highlighted above in the study which need to be minimized and addressed so that potential of PRI's is maximised and the local governance flourishes much more.

### References

1. Mishra AK, Naved Akhtar, Sakshi Tarik. *Role of PRI in RDD*, VII, No.1.
2. Government of Jammu and Kashmir, *Citizen's Charter*, (Kashmir: Government Press, 2007, 5).
3. Parveen Kumar, "Panchayati Raj in Jammu and Kashmir: An analytical study" *Indian Journal of Scientific Research*, 2(8), 124-127.

4. Riyaz Panjabi, "Panchayati Raj in Kashmir: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow", in George Mathew's Panchayati Raj in Jammu and Kashmir (Delhi: Concept Publication Company, 1990, 31-37.
5. Bhat Zahid, "Challenges before Panchayati Raj in Jammu and Kashmir: A case study", The Indian Journal of Social Science, 2016, 3.
6. Department of Rural development and Panchayati Raj, *Panchayati Raj Act-1989 and Panchayati Rules-1996* (Jammu: Ranbir Govt. Press, 1996, 1-29.
7. Rural Department Development and Panchayati Raj, *Panchayati Raj Act-1989 and Panchayati Rules, 1996*, 19.
8. Government of Jammu and Kashmir, "*Mahatma Gandhi NREGA*", *Gaon Jahan Hamara* (Srinagar: Information & Publicity Wing, 2017, 11.
9. Government of Jammu and Kashmir, "Guidance for devolution of functions to Panchayat Raj Institutions", Dehat Suhar (Jammu and Kashmir: Information & Publicity Wing, 2011, 9-13.
10. Government of Jammu and Kashmir, "Mahatma Gandhi NREGA", retrieved on 19-08-2023 at [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)
11. Government of Jammu and Kashmir, "*Swachh Baharat Mission*", *Gaon Jahan Hamara*, 2017, 11.
12. Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs.
13. Government of Jammu and Kashmir, "Honorable Minister for RD & PR Launches PMAY (G) on PFMS", *Gaon Jahan Hamara*, 2017, 10.