

Localising Rural Resilience: Assessing PRI-DDMA Co-ordination and Multidimensional Poverty Outcomes in Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract:

The mountainous topography of Himachal Pradesh has made rural communities face repeated natural disasters, which are threatening to neutralise the sustainable benefits obtained by the development programs. There is a need to establish localised resilience as disasters have the capacity to put vulnerable families in poverty traps. This paper proposes research on how Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in rural India, which are the local governments, can be coordinated with District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs) to enhance disaster preparedness and disaster mitigation impacts on multidimensional poverty in Himachal Pradesh.

The analysis can clarify the policies by relying on policy frameworks, case studies, and recent empirical evidence to determine how empowered local governance can increase the effectiveness of disaster response and help to alleviate poverty. It has also been shown that active involvement of PRI in the planning and coordination process, as envisaged by the disaster management framework in India, results in an increase in community preparedness and less human and economic losses. However, there are still some practical gaps, as poor resources and capacities exist at the grassroots level, which prevent the best possible PRI and DDMA cooperation.

The study highlights the need for strengthening local institutions through training, inclusive planning, e.g. Gram Panchayat Disaster Management Plans and linking of poverty alleviation programmes with risk reduction. Coordination of PRI and DDMA is capable of protecting the benefits of development, speeding up recovery, and eventually enhancing multidimensional poverty indicators in the high-risk districts. It has been suggested that community-based resilience should be incorporated into institutional disaster governance frameworks, and hence, resilience in rural areas of Himachal Pradesh should be localised towards sustainable development.

Keywords: Disaster resilience, Panchayati Raj Institutions, governance, multidimensional poverty, sustainable development.

Introduction

Rural resilience can be described as the ability of rural society to resist, adapt and recover following shocks like natural disasters and continue socio-economic development. Hazards such as floods, landslides, and cloudbursts that occur because of climate have been exacerbated in the Indian Himalayas, making the concept of resilience something of urgent concern. Himachal Pradesh is a mountainous state in Northern India where frequent disasters are experienced due to monsoon-triggered havoc, causing disruption in the livelihood and infrastructure of the community. In 2023, a historic heavy rainfall caused flash floods and landslides in several districts, disconnecting roads, destroying homes, and killing people (Alvi and Gupta, 2023). Such events underscore that the question of increasing resilience at the community level goes beyond a developmental goal and is a matter of survival (Beriwal et al., 2025).

The resilience is made up of local governance institutions. The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution introduced the third level of governance under the name Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), through which elected rural communities gained powers in planning and development. PRIs (Gram Panchayats to district-level Zila Parishads) are well placed to lead disaster preparedness and response because of their local accessibility and familiarity with local hazards (Mondal et al., 2018). Concurrently, the Disaster Management Act of 2005 provided for the setting up of State and District Disaster Management Authorities to systematically plan for and administer disaster management. DDMA, as chaired by District Collectors, are the focal bodies of coordination at the district level with the responsibility of planning, implementation and monitoring of all the disaster management activities following the national and state guidelines (Kumar, 2019). Notably, the Act requires the local government elected chairperson (Zila Parishad President) to be a co-chair of the DDMA, thus representing the so-called desired collaboration between formal governance and the local community leadership of the disaster governance (Kumar, 2019).

Regardless of these statutory provisions, the real-life effectiveness of PRI coordination of DDMA is a heterogeneous one. Globally, rural regions are recognised to be inherently vulnerable because of persistent poverty, nature-based livelihoods, poor planning and geographic isolation (Pathak & Deshkar, 2023). These aspects increase the risk of disasters to rural communities and expose the top-down relief operations. Historical disasters in India prove that merely a centralised approach cannot be used; communities should be at the centre of resilience building (Beriwal et al., 2025). The Government of India's National Policy on Disaster Management 2009 expressly emphasised the significant role that the local authorities, such as PRIs and municipalities, would play in the entire disaster management process, especially in the response and relief related to disaster (NDMA, 2009). Moreover, both the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (especially SDG 1 and 11) support the idea of localisation of disaster resilience and its combination with development planning (Pathak & Deshkar, 2023).

This paper discusses the possible ways through which better coordination between PRIs and DDMA's can enhance the rural resilience and multidimensional poverty outcomes in Himachal Pradesh. Multidimensional poverty implies the deprivation of health, education, and living-standard indicators, and not only income. In a rural setting that is vulnerable to a disaster, it is inherently connected to lessening the multidimensional poverty in alleviating shock vulnerability. The catastrophes have the potential to demolish property, interrupt services, and drive already-poor households further into poverty, a vicious cycle that is often referred to as the disaster-poverty trap (World Bank, 2019; GFDRR, 2016). On the contrary, disaster risk reduction investments can protect livelihoods and retain hard-earned gains in poverty reduction (GFDRR, 2016). The research question is based on the following hypothesis: What is the effect on disaster preparedness and response in rural Himachal Pradesh due to the coordination (or lack thereof) between PRIs and DDMA's, and what are the implications of this effect on multidimensional poverty in these communities? Through the analysis of policy frameworks, empirical research, and other recent projects in Himachal Pradesh, the paper will shed light on the best practices and shortcomings of localising resilience, i.e. the concretisation of resilience at the village level through empowered local institutions. The results will be used to make policy and practice recommendations regarding the spheres of public administration, disaster management, and rural development.

Disaster Risk and Rural Local Governance in India

Disaster management in India follows a multi-tier institutional set-up similar to its federal structure. At the top is the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), but it is at the district and local levels that disaster plans have to be converted into action (Kumar, 2019). Under the Disaster Management Act 2005, every district is required to set up a District Disaster Management Authority, which is responsible for framing district disaster management plans, coordinating prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response measures and ensuring implementation of guidelines framed at the central and state levels at the district level (Kumar, 2019). The District Collector is the chairperson of each DDMA, and the chairperson of the elected local body is the co-chairperson; thus, a mechanism of collaboration between bureaucracy and local political leadership is enforced (Kumar, 2019). Ideally, this structure makes it easy to have a bottom-up meets top-down design: local risk information needs to flow up to the DDMA through PRIs and resources, training, and early warnings flow down to communities.

PRIs are a key component in this system. Being statutory local governments, PRIs have local development and governance roles under state Panchayati Raj Acts, which are gradually covering areas of disaster management. The 73rd Amendment has given constitutional status to PRIs, which are "units of self-governing authorities empowered with powers, authority and responsibilities for economic development and social justice" (NDMA, 2009). This decentralisation revolutionised the manner of governance by taking the decision-

making to the grassroots. In disaster contexts, PRIs can use their proximity and legitimacy to carry out significant functions throughout the disaster cycle - from risk identification and mitigation planning to serving as first responders during disasters to facilitating relief and rehabilitation (NDMA, 2013a; Mondal et al., 2018). Local expertise can be invaluable: PRIs are aware of the locations where landslides are most likely to take place, which families are deprived of long-term housing, or where the old and disabled people are situated, which allows planning the disaster more comprehensively and more precisely. It is important to note that PRIs can build in the concept of disaster risk reduction into standard development endeavours, such as locating water supply networks outside flood-prone areas or using employment-guarantee schemes to build check dams and retaining walls. Community-based disaster preparedness works best when the participation of elected PRI members, local officials and community members is ensured (Gireesan, 2013).

However, to make the most out of PRIs in disaster management, one must overcome various challenges. Historically, disaster response in India was very centralised; local government was often given no defined role and consequently had little influence on decisions regarding disaster management (NDMA, 2009). Legacy practices and top-down cultures are slow to change. Many PRIs face capacity challenges: technical knowledge of disaster risk is limited, some resources are lacking, and training opportunities in disaster response are scarce. Although their roles as frontline responders are ascribed to PRIs by policy, in practice, their contribution has at times been marginal. For example, an analysis of the performance of PRI in the past disasters showed that many local governments did not even set up an emergency operations centre, and when they did, it was without basic communication facilities and power backup. In addition, no emergency meeting of stakeholders was called by the local government and hence, no significant role was played by PRIs during the crisis (Gireesan, 2013). These findings reveal the gap between expectation and reality - PRIs are expected to be coordinators and communicators between the community and district authorities; however, they will be unable to adequately perform these roles if they lack training, resources and authority. The NPDM (2009) called for capacity building of PRIs and urban local bodies so that they can fulfil their role in disaster preparedness and response (NDMA, 2009). Initiatives by the National Institute of Disaster Management and state governments have started towards this, and they are conducting training programmes for members of the Panchayats on preparation of village disaster management plan, community-based risk assessment and emergency communication. Still, mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into the day-to-day functioning of PRIs is a work in progress in many regions.

Importantly, some states have shown the positive impact of empowering local institutions for resilience. The model of the zero-casualty cyclone in Odisha is widely used as an example of a best practice. Following a devastating super-cyclone in 1999, Odisha made a huge investment in not only infrastructure such as cyclone shelters and early warning systems but also in community mobilisation. The state formed village-level disaster management committees, trained volunteers, and made local governments a part of all stages of disaster

planning (Beriwal et al., 2025). When cyclones Phailin (2013) and Fani (2019) devastated Odisha, hundreds of thousands of people got evacuated in time and fatalities were a negligible fraction of 1999. According to the analysts, such success did not come out of the vacuum; Odisha made communities and local governance the centre of its efforts and included local governments in planning disasters, constructing resilient infrastructure, and organising social capacity by using women's associations, village committees, and trained volunteers (Beriwal et al., 2025). In other words, the state successfully changed a once top-down (bureaucracy-driven) process to a community-centred movement. Local leadership was central: elected leaders and community organisations played an important role as the first responders because they used their knowledge of the terrain and social networks to ensure that warnings were translated into action on time (Beriwal et al., 2025). This is one example that illustrates how, when the higher authorities trust and empower the local bodies, the latter can significantly mitigate the effects of a disaster. This lesson can be closely applicable to the context of Himachal Pradesh: the risks are different (cyclones are substituted with the hill floods and landslides), but the concept of community-based resilience by means of the PRI engagement can be widely applicable.

Himachal Pradesh: Hazard Profile and Multidimensional Poverty

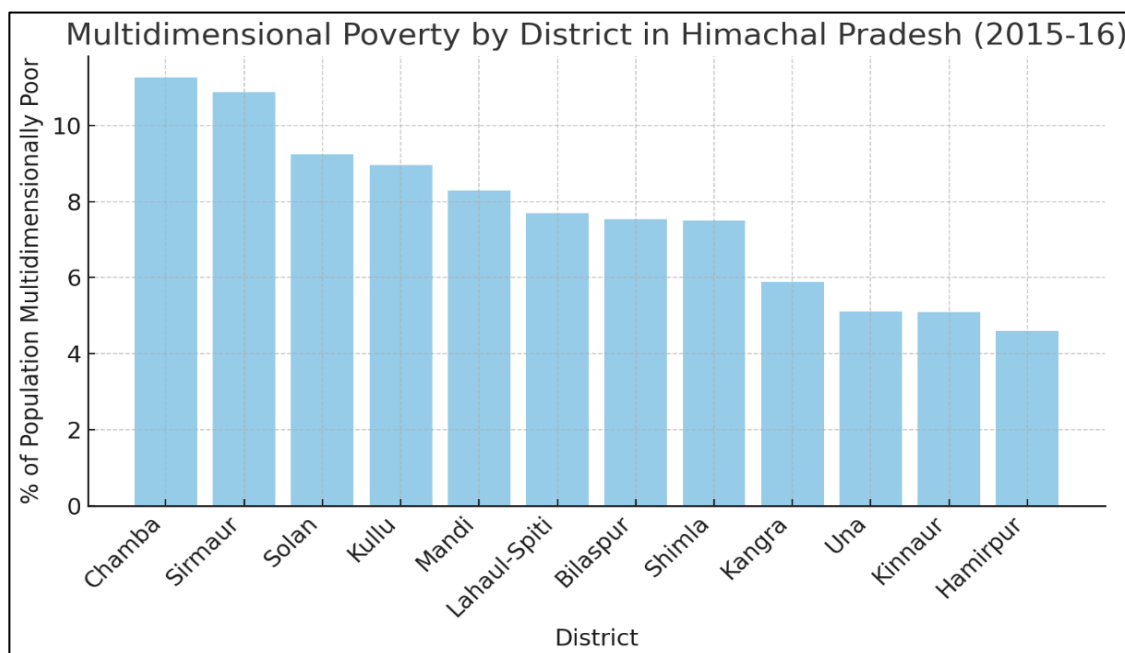
Himachal Pradesh (HP) is mainly a rural state located in the western Himalayas and is a state of steep topography, heavy monsoon rains and seismic activity. The vulnerability of the state to a variety of natural hazards is due to the weak geographical conditions. High peaks and deep valleys are predisposing factors for landslides, flash floods, cloudbursts and avalanches, especially during the June-September monsoon period when torrential rainfall saturates slopes (Chaudhary & Kumar, 2024).

The state is crossed by five large river basins (Ravi, Sutlej, Beas, Chenab and Yamuna), and their tributaries have the potential to fill very quickly during the occurrence of extreme rainfall, thus threatening the occurrence of the floods downstream (Chaudhary & Kumar, 2024). Himachal Pradesh is also located in a Himalayan physiographic belt; in the past, in 1905, the Kangra earthquake (magnitude 8) caused the loss of life on a massive scale. Even though there has been no similar earthquake in recent decades, the latent threat remains. Moreover, there are also some forest fires that take place in the summer season in some parts of the state, as well as droughts that occur periodically. Some of these hazards are made more severe by climate change, as there is evidence of more intense episodes of rainfall, which are high-intensity. In July 2023, the India Meteorological Department sounded an alert of unusually heavy rainfall, and then there was a massive downpour in large parts of HP, causing disastrous floods and landslides (Alvi and Gupta, 2023). This multifaceted hazard profile requires a robust disaster management at both the level of the state apparatus and at the village level.

Despite impressive gains in Himachal in relation to human development indices, there still remain pockets of poverty and deprivation that coincide with high disaster-prone areas. These vulnerabilities can be understood

with the help of the concept of multidimensional poverty. Multidimensional poverty (MDP), as opposed to income poverty, is a measure of deprivation of health, levels of education and living standards, such as nutrition, schooling, clean water, sanitation, electricity, housing and assets, all of which can lead to the poverty condition of a household. In 2021, NITI Aayog published a National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) grounded on NFHS-4 data (2015-16), which, in its turn, gives a breakdown by district. Himachal Pradesh became one of the better-off states in this MPI, and this shows its relatively high successes in access to basic services. However, there were large intra-state differences. Poor districts of Chamba and Sirmaur have around 1011 per cent of the population in multidimensional poverty, which is significantly higher than the state average. On the contrary, MDP incidence is the lowest in Hamirpur, Kinnaur, Una and Kangra districts (4-6% on average) (Rajendran and Walia, 2021; OPHI and UNDP, 2021). Such disparities tend to be geographically and roughly connected: Chamba and Sirmaur are mountainous, with a large number of isolated villages, traditionally poorer infrastructure and services, whereas Hamirpur or Una are lower-hill districts and show a better road network and other development metrics. It is interesting to note that there are some tribal and high-altitude regions (Lahaul-Spiti, Kinnaur) where MPI is moderate even in harsh climatic conditions, and this may be because of targeted government programmes and smaller population. In general, the number of the MPIs in Himachal is very low compared to the national one, but the last mile issue is that the vulnerable populations are still left behind despite the general development.

Figure 1: Multidimensional Poverty by District in Himachal Pradesh (Percentage of population identified as multidimensionally poor, NFHS-4 2015–16). Higher bars indicate greater poverty headcount in that district.



Source: NITI Aayog MPI Baseline Report.

What links poverty to disaster resilience? In other words, poverty increases vulnerability and disasters, in their turn, enhance poverty. The poor households are particularly likely to live in riskier locations, e.g., on steep slopes, near the riverbanks, in poorly constructed dwellings, and to have fewer buffers, e.g., scarce savings, no insurance, and little social support to manage when the disaster happens (GFDRR, 2016). A mudslide caused by heavy rain in the setting of Himachal can destroy a poor farmer's home and his field, pushing the family to a state of poverty where it is hard to pull themselves out without outside help. This cat disaster-poverty nexus is verified by studies all around the world. According to the report by the World Bank and UN titled Unbreakable (2016), the annual transfer of about 26 million people to poverty due to natural disasters happens globally, and the losses of consumption are estimated at 520 billion annually, considering the disproportionate impact on the poor (GFDRR, 2016). Government reports in India have recognised that this country is losing approximately 2 per cent of GDP on average to the calamities every year (UNDP & MHA, 2012) and that a disproportionate burden of the loss is suffered by low-income communities lacking resilience. After big events, the affected families tend to tighten their belts by reducing their needs: food, healthcare, education, or borrowing at high-interest rates, thus leading them into a vicious cycle of poverty (World Bank, 2019).

On the other hand, disaster risk reduction and preparedness produce a resilience dividend by protecting gains in development. As the ability to respond to disasters at the local level increases, the impact on assets, schooling, or employment is reduced, and recovery is faster, and transient shocks will not be transformed into long-term poverty traps (GFDRR, 2016). To this end, it is essential to combine poverty reduction with disaster management development in order to achieve sustainable rural development. This in practice would be to identify the most vulnerable households in hazard-prone regions and target them to take risk-reduction measures- e.g. by strengthening their houses under a rural housing scheme to make them disaster-resilient, or by ensuring messages of early warning reach them and evacuation plans are accommodating of their needs (e.g. evacuating livestock, as the loss of livestock can be fatal to a marginal farming household). By investing in local disaster mitigation measures, including drainage systems, slope terracing, and afforestation, which decrease the risk of disasters and also give income, social protection programmes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in India can be aligned with resilience (Beriwal et al., 2025). Himachal Pradesh, with its strong tradition of community involvement, has a chance to deliberately change the agendas of poverty elimination and disaster preparedness at the panchayat level.

PRI-DDMA Coordination: Implications for Resilience and Poverty Outcomes

The PRIs and DDMA's should be properly coordinated effectively so as to boost the rural areas and improve the poverty outcomes. What makes successful coordination? It involves the fact that local and district authorities communicate, plan and supplement each other well before a disaster hits. On the village level, PRIs

ideally develop local Disaster Management Plans that discover hazards, map vulnerabilities, which are households with insecure housing, slope-prone areas, etc. and develop response protocols, such as community task forces. Such local plans ought to be connected to the district disaster management plan so that the district authorities can assign resources and training in areas where there are gaps locally. The representatives of the PRI in the DDMA (as members or co-chairs) represent the issues of the community in the decision-making of the district level (Kumar, 2019). Then, in case of warning signs of severe weather, the DDMA forwards the same to PRIs, who in turn spread the information to isolated hamlets and organise local response teams. In the framework of relief work, PRIs organise the last-mile delivery, using their understanding of which families need help first (such as finding poor families that have lost their entire home). In recovery, PRIs will benefit by advocating in the DDMA with equitable need-based assistance to the neediest and the poorest, and by targeting rehabilitation grants or livelihood support to the most needy and poor, an invaluable step in avoiding further extension of the effects of disaster in inequalities.

In Himachal Pradesh, there have been significant initiatives to enhance such grassroots coordination in the recent past. After a succession of destructive flash floods, in June 2023, the state government authorised the formation of Disaster Management Units in every 3,645 panchayat (Government of Himachal Pradesh, 2023). The following village-level units are charged with direct relief and rescue efforts during emergencies and basically formalise and train the local teams to respond at the panchayat level (Government of Himachal Pradesh, 2023). These units may serve as the initial responders, evacuation, search and rescue, first aid and shelter and then these forces can respond until others can reach the inaccessible locations. This relocation is an indication of the fact that people expect the local government during times of disaster to be the main provider of basic needs and services (Gireesan, 2013). As a matter of fact, PRIs are the closest governmental body, the point of default contact to distressed citizens; thus, they should be properly prepared to address the situation in a timely and efficient manner (Gireesan, 2013). Himachal Pradesh seeks to establish a formal connection between the community and the district administration by introducing disaster committees at the panchayat level. Every unit will have communication equipment, emergency basic supplies and volunteers. A warning issued by the DDMA (such as of heavy rain or a glacier lake outburst flood) can directly contact all the panchayat units, and they can then mobilise local preparedness, such as alerting the villagers using temple bells or loudspeakers, evacuating people in dangerous areas, pre-positioning rescue equipment, etc. This immediate local response can help to save lives and property, which will lessen the human and economic burden of already poor communities.

Capacity building and sharing of information are also a part of coordination. In Himachal, DDMA have already started to undertake joint drills and training programmes in which they include the panchayat members, school teachers in the local schools and volunteers in the village, acknowledging that effective response can only be achieved through local leadership and support of the community groups (Beriwal et al.,

2025). As an illustration, in the Kullu district, which is often affected by landslides, the DDMA has made PRIs partners with it in the identification of the safe evacuation sites in every village and also made the communities aware of the emergency measures. Kangra district, subject to flood risk on its rivers, is attempting to combine early warning mechanisms with panchayat networks (e.g. putting river-level gauges in place, and mandating panchayat officials to be in place to monitor and warn downstream residents). Resilience initiatives have also been reinforced by the involvement of women self-help groups and youth clubs, which are usually done through PRIs (Beriwal et al., 2025). Through the mobilisation of such community groups, PRIs can access every household with a focus that creates trust and therefore the warnings or instructions are followed through, and this aspect has been realised in Odisha, where people have been able to evacuate in a timely when they have been told to because of the trust they had in their leaders.

Improved PRI-DDMA coordination can influence multidimensional poverty based on a number of different pathways. To start with, enhanced disaster preparedness prevents destruction of homes, schools, health centres and livelihoods, hence loss of assets and service deprivation. To a marginal farmer or labourer surviving on the edge of poverty, the distinction between a well-organised evacuation and none might involve the difference between being able to keep productive resources (land, cattle, tools) and descent into poverty. Since natural disasters increase poverty and grip on the communities, disaster risk reduction is accompanied by poverty reduction as the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery notes (GFDRR, 2016). The community-level preparedness in the context of Himachal proved to be life-saving: anecdotal information provided during 2023 floods showed that communities that had prepared local disaster committees (some of them organized by NGOs, or by previous projects) managed to evacuate people and livestock to a safe area in time, but those that did not managed to do it quickly due to the sudden appearance of a landslide. Despite the fact that extensive data is needed, it is reasonable to assume that regions where PRI plays an active role recorded fewer human victims and faster recovery, thus alleviating the impoverishment in the long term. Secondly, in distributing relief, PRIs can make sure that the poorest, who are usually the most vulnerable, get first-hand relief to avoid survival coping strategies like selling assets in distress or dropping out of school. A carefully directed relief and rehabilitation initiative based on local understanding of poverty can help families to recover without compromising on the future well-being (such as making sure widows, the elderly and disabled in a village enjoy their rightful share of relief entitlements early enough, a capability that a district official may fail to do without local knowledge).

On the other hand, poor coordination will deteriorate the results. Failure to engage PRIs can result in the information regarding warnings not reaching remote communities in time or the requirements of some hamlets not being taken into consideration during district plans. In previous incidents where PRIs were passive during a disaster- not opening control rooms and not communicating effectively (Gireesan, 2013) preventable delays in the delivery of aid were likely to ensue. The less privileged do not even have a voice; an active PRI can

plead the case of remote villages to district officials, but a passive one will only see its villagers receive road clearance, relief or compensation last. This strengthens stereotyping and impoverishment. So, the reinforcement of the PRI-DDMA connection is fundamentally concerned with the inclusion and pro-poor disaster governance. It concentrates the response and has a last-mile connection in governance, similarly to banking correspondents reaching out to the unbanked in the same manner that PRIs reach out to the unreached in crises.

Strategies for Localising Resilience and Reducing Poverty

To have strong PRI-DMAR coordination in Himachal Pradesh (and in other states), it is important to have strategic interventions at several levels. According to the literature and on-field evidence, the following are some of the major strategies:

- **Institutionalise Village-Level Disaster Plans and Committees:** Every Gram Panchayat needs to have a Disaster Management Plan and a standing committee or task force to respond to disasters. These strategies should be community-owned annual documents that are realistic. It is a move towards this direction since a decision to constitute Panchayat Disaster Management Units was made recently (Government of Himachal Pradesh, 2023). Going forward, such units ought to be accorded legal status under the state Panchayati Raj or DM policies demarcating their responsibilities with those of the DDMA and line departments. The HP State Disaster Management Authority can create a template of Gram Panchayat DM Plans to provide consistency and conformity to district and state plans.
- **Capacity Building and Training:** It is essential to continuously train PRI members and village volunteers (youth and women) and local authorities. This includes the fundamental emergency response competencies: first aid, search and rescue, relief camp management, and planning competencies; risk mapping and development of mitigation proposals. The 2013 study by NIDM underlined the fact that PRIs should possess an organisational structure and certain capabilities to be efficient during the disaster (Gireesan, 2013). The state can collaborate with training centres and NGOs to carry out simulations and drills in each panchayat. Peer learning is what is needed--the panchayat leaders of Odisha or of other disaster-prone states might give an experience to Himachali panchayats.
- **Enhance Communication and Early Warning Systems to Last Mile:** Timely information is the key to efficient local response. Another solution would be the use of simple technologies like SMS or WhatsApp groups connecting DDMA control rooms with all the PRI heads or the distribution of battery-operated wireless sets to the panchayats with low connectivity; this would make sure the warnings reach even the farthest village. Modern technology can be utilised with local traditional methods of warning, e.g. beating of drums or temple bells, to offer redundancy. This is meant to ensure

that none of the villages is too distant to be alerted; all citizens are expected to be members of the alert system through the PRI. The rough topography of Himachal is making it difficult, and novel solutions can be created, like HAM radios and community radio networks, to fill the gaps (Government of Himachal Pradesh, 2023).

- **Financial Delegation for Emergency Response:** PRIs do not always have funds at their disposal to take immediate action. Creation of a Local Disaster Response Fund on the panchayat level, even a small sum each year, tied to risk level, would enable PRIs to acquire emergency supplies, fuel to evacuate and/or temporary shelter materials, when necessary. It may be facilitated by governmental funds or a redistribution of development grants currently in place, and part of it would be directed towards disaster mitigation and response. The experience of the world shows that the presence of special resources on the local level significantly increases the speed of relief; PRIs will not have to wait until the district allows using minor, yet urgent funds during the crisis (GFDRR, 2016).
- **Integrated Development Planning:** The concept of mainstreaming resilience through the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) process is an erudite way of reducing the risks. Gram Sabhas meets every year to resolve GPDP projects. These sector-based plans have a strong opportunity of creating climate and disaster resilience through grassroots-level planning (Pathak & Deshkar, 2023). As an example, when a drinking water scheme is identified by the GPDP of a village, then resilience thinking would locate the scheme in a safe place and maybe budget for flood protection of the source. In a case where a road is being constructed on a rural scheme, the PRI is able to make sure that it is all-weather and has proper drainage to ensure that the road does not experience erosion that leads to landslides. PRIs can deal with the underlying causes of vulnerability (including stabilising slopes by managing watersheds and diversifying livelihoods, so that a flood does not destroy all income) by incorporating climate adaptation and risk mitigation strategies into normal development (Pathak & Deshkar, 2023). This subsequently decreases long-term multidimensional poverty by safeguarding the assets and enhancing infrastructure.
- **Community Engagement and Social Capital:** Resilience building is not simply an infrastructural and planning project, but also a socially bonded community project. PRIs may also cooperate with the local community-based organisations (youth clubs, self-help groups of women, forest user groups, etc.) to build the culture of preparedness. Even routine activities, like community meetings before and during the monsoon, to talk about threats, where to be safe, and assemble self-help groups to assist risky neighbours (the elderly, children), can save lives. The warnings can be translated to collective action by the local leaders who foster trust and involvement (Beriwal et al., 2025). When communities trust the local institutions, disaster advisories will be more responsive, as seen in Odisha (Beriwal et al.,

2025). Himachal PRIs can also foster local champions. Champions, the teachers, Anganwadi workers, police beat constables, as well as elected members, are also included in the resilience network.

- **Targeted Resilience Building in Poor Communities:** Resilient Building of Poor Communities: Not every village is as ready, nor every household is able to recuperate as fast. In this case, information can be used to take action- the MPI results in the state allow finding out districts and sub-districts where multidimensional poverty is concentrated (OPHI & UNDP, 2021). The resilience investments should prioritise these regions (e.g., remote belts of Chamba). To direct schemes (including climate-resilient housing and livelihood diversification programmes) to these pockets, HPSDMA can work together with the Rural Development Department. PRIs in such areas might need extra aid to put them at the same level as more privileged regions. This is in line with the principle of SDGs, which is to ensure that no one is left behind and that disaster risk reduction efforts should not unintentionally favour the poorest people and disadvantage the well-off (Pathak & Deshkar, 2023).

The enactment of these strategies will require political goodwill, administrative backing and community buy-in. Hopefully, more and more people in Himachal Pradesh are starting to appreciate the importance of localised disaster management. The fact that the state government has decided to delay panchayat elections at the end of 2023 because of the extensive monsoon damage to ensure that the government can concentrate on rehabilitation shows that issues of disaster are taken seriously across all levels (Sphere India, 2023). Further promotion of civil society and pilot projects results can prove that local resilience investments are beneficial in a variety of ways, such as the prevention of losses and accelerated development. It is both economically rational, as World Bank leaders have already stated, and a moral requirement to be resilient to disasters, since the poor often have to pay the most significant price in case of a lack of resilience (GFDRR, 2016).

Conclusion

Resilience of rural areas through enhanced coordination of PRI-DDMA is a wise policy that Himachal Pradesh should use to ensure that its development patterns are not affected by disasters. This paper shows how the local government involvement in the management of disasters can directly increase preparedness, response, and recovery and therefore shield the vulnerable communities against worsened poverty. Despite the presence of an enabling policy framework, where PRIs should be viewed as important participants in the disaster governance system in India, there are still gaps in its implementation. It is necessary to close these gaps. Having the capacity to empower PRIs with knowledge, resources, and well-defined roles is enough to enable them to act as competent first responders and planners with the assistance of district authorities. The international and local experiences support the idea that disaster resilience is greatest when based on the community and reinforced by efficient local institutions (Beriwal et al., 2025). The new efforts by Himachal Pradesh to set up panchayat-based disaster units and incorporate risk mitigation in the village development

plans are positive developments. Such initiatives should be maintained and expanded, and this way, all at-risk villages should have a prepared and responsive local team.

Such localised response results in huge socio-economic payoffs, by mitigating disaster losses, schools stay open, healthcare is provided, livelihoods are preserved, and fewer households are destitute. This eventually leads to positive changes in multidimensional poverty indices, since the gains achieved in development are not eroded by shocks over and over again. In the fragile hill areas of Himachal, a reinforcement of the poor can be done to break the poverty loop of disasters. On the contrary, sustained disregard of the local capacity may turn the course of events and increase inequalities because the poorest people are the least capable of recovering after the disasters. Thus, PRI-DDMA coordination investment is not an option; it is the core of inclusive and sustainable development.

Rural resilience localisation would imply the gram panchayat acting as the centre of disaster risk mitigation at the level of the higher-level authorities. It involves perceiving PRIs not as units of administration but as collaborators who have distinct advantages, such as community trust, on-the-ground operations, and the ability to mobilise collective action. When such strengths are in balance with the technical and logistical proficiency of DDMAAs, the outcome is a sustainable rural population that is able to withstand the negative. The culture of community cooperation and relatively high human development index is a good place to start such a model in the Himalayan region, and Himachal Pradesh is the right place. The shift to policy to practice, though, will require sustained devotion: it will be necessary to train local leaders, to spend money and to learn with each event how to improve systems. If successful, the strategy of Himachal can be a model to other Indian states and mountainous areas of the world, showing how empowerment of the local institutions and poverty reduction can act simultaneously to create a community not only surviving but also prospering during disasters.

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