

Title – Empowerment and engagement of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in accelerating TB elimination efforts in Himachal Pradesh, India

Background: A concept of ‘Healthy Villages’ has been envisaged for achieving SDGs in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Since 2019, the health department of Himachal Pradesh established partnership with PRIs to address service delivery gaps in TB and accelerate TB elimination efforts in every Gram Panchayat (GP). There is a need for convergence and coordination between Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) and the health department related to TB elimination activities.

Objective: To empower and engage PRIs to improve the health of villagers and provide a more people-centered care and attain TB free panchayat status

Methods: At the state level, the health department and PRI forged a partnership with the agenda to accelerate TB elimination efforts at the GP level. Panchayat Forum Meetings were initiated that constituted TB survivors, representatives of the health department and PRI members. These meetings addressed the issues faced by TB survivors and created a stigma-free platform for all. The recent launch of ‘The TB Mukta Panchayats Initiative’ (TB free Panchayats) on ‘World TB Day 2023’ at Varanasi by Hon’ble Prime Minister of India laid out 6 criteria under which a panchayat will be declared TB free. We tracked and mapped all presumptive TB testing and TB notification in the year 2023 against the GPs of Himachal Pradesh using the state mobile application “TB Mukta Himachal’ for the purpose of the claims with the support of PRI department.

Results: A total of 5,527 PRI representatives from 3,615 Gram Panchayats across 80 health blocks have been sensitized about TB. PRIs have actively supported the health department in IEC activities, TB case finding, improving treatment adherence, and reducing Lost to Follow-Up cases. They have also prioritized the inclusion of persons with TB in various welfare schemes. This engagement has enabled decentralized delivery of TB-related health services

and strengthened efforts towards TB elimination at the village level.

As a result, the state achieved 1,052 (29%) out of 3,615 Gram Panchayats declared TB-free in 2025, of which 233 GPs received Silver status and 125 (3%) GPs achieved Gold status. In comparison, 823 (23%) Gram Panchayats were declared TB-free in 2024, and 731 (20%) in 2023, showing consistent progress due to sustained PRI engagement. Additionally, Gram Panchayats have incorporated TB-free activities into their Gram Panchayat Development Plans, allocating a budget of Rs. 10,000 for these initiatives.

Conclusions:

The TB Mukht Panchayats initiative launched by the center reiterates the need for people's movement in achieving TB free status and the state has been making efforts to achieve the same. Himachal Pradesh will intensify its existing efforts to empower PRIs as per this initiative and accelerate TB elimination in the state.

Key words: TB, Healthy Village, TB elimination