

The Impression of Adaptive Capacity of the Rural Community in the Indian Himalayan Region: A Way Forward for Sustainable Livelihood Development

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Abstract : The value of integrated, participatory, and community based sustainable development strategies is eminent, but in practice, it still remains fragmentary and often leads to short-lived results. Despite the global presence of climate change, its impacts are felt differently by different communities based on their vulnerability. The developing countries have the low adaptive capacity and high dependence on environmental variables, making them highly susceptible to outmigration and poverty. We need to understand how to enable these approaches, taking into account the various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders functioning at different levels, to deliver long-term socio-economic and environmental well-being of local communities. The research assessed the financial and natural vulnerability of Himalayan networks, focusing on their potential to adapt to various changes, through accessing their perceived reactions and local knowledge. The evaluation was conducted by testing indices for vulnerability, with a major focus on indicators for adaptive capacity. Data for the analysis were collected from the villages around Govind National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary, located in the Indian Himalayan Region. The villages were stratified on the basis of connectivity via road, thus giving two kinds of human settlements connected and isolated. The study focused on understanding the complex relationship between outmigration and the socio-cultural sentiments of local people to not abandon their land, assessing their adaptive capacity for livelihood opportunities, and exploring their contribution that integrated participatory methodologies can play in delivering sustainable development. The result showed that the villages having better road connectivity, access to market, and basic amenities like health and education have a better understanding about the climatic shift, natural hazards, and a higher adaptive capacity for income generation in comparison to the isolated settlements in the hills. The participatory approach towards environmental conservation and sustainable use of natural resources were seen more towards the far-flung villages. The study helped to reduce the gap between local understanding and government policies by highlighting the ongoing adaptive practices and suggesting precautionary strategies for the community studied based on their local conditions, which differ on the basis of connectivity and state of development. Adaptive capacity in this study has been taken as the externally driven potential of different parameters, leading to a decrease in outmigration and upliftment of the human environment that could lead to sustainable livelihood development in the rural areas of Himalayas.

Keywords : adaptive capacity, Indian Himalayan region, participatory, sustainable livelihood development

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