

Leading a Rural Transformation - A Case of Punsari Village

Bhavna Ghatge*, Diganta Chakrabarti**

Abstract

In this case, authors describe a detailed account of Punsari village in western part of India which has transformed itself from an underdeveloped and poor habitat to a “smart village” today. Punsari has attracted lot of positive attention from different corners recently for its excellent achievements as a village and has won recognition for the same. The authors depict an account of a rural transformation under the visionary leadership of the village headman (Sarpanch) during the last one decade. In a country, where villages still face scarcity of various basic facilities, Punsari has won accolades for providing even the most modern facilities to its population. Through effective planning and utilization of central and state government funds, Punsari has achieved outstanding landmarks in healthcare, education, employment and modern facilities. This village now stands as a role model of rural management for the rest of India. The authors have travelled to the village to talk to people and based on those interviews and information available in open sources, this case was developed. The authors have explored the journey of development to analyze the factors contributing to the success. The authors attempt to present the case of Punsari for a management model to follow in numerous underdeveloped villages around the globe, especially in the developing countries. It is also an example of how leadership vision and qualities can bring about radical changes to a populous social unit. It depicts the significance of rural entrepreneurial leadership in the current economic scenario.

Keywords: Rural Management, Leadership, Employment, Smart Village, Government Funds, Model Village

Introduction

Rapid pace of urbanization has put the rural areas across the globe in a state of active transition. Researches show that in spite of this wave of transition, 60% of the populations of developing countries which live in rural area are still

struggling for basic amenities. It is essential to change the course of this continuing and inevitable transition of rural areas, into positive and sustainable process of transformation (UNESCO, 2011). Sustainability of the rural transformation involve challenges of policy support for complex social- ecological system and governance of rural changes. It highlights significance of adaptive approaches to management (Schouten, Heijman, Opdam, Paul, 2012). Infrastructure has always been considered as one of the pillars of economic transformation. Indeed, development of rural infrastructure has contributed substantially in inclusive rural development (Infrastructure Development and Rural Transformation Issue Paper, May 2013).

The Indian rural transformation strategy under the 11th five year plan was envisaged towards improving the overall quality of life in rural area. Policies and interventions were designed to promote investments in rural infrastructure to bring about convergence between the aspirations and demands of rural population. Over the time, the plan has been criticized for having taken compartmentalized approach towards rural transformation (Brussels Rural Development Briefings, 2012).

PURA (Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas) is one of the interventions launched by the rural development ministry in 2004-2007 for rural infrastructure development in India. It could not achieve its aimed objectives. It was relaunched with economic regeneration activities through public-private partnership (PPP) to increase convergence. The aim was to develop model villages. (Zee News, 2014).

Model village is a defined as a self-contained community, built from the late 18th century onwards by landowners and industrialists to house their workers. These communities have relatively high quality housing, with well-integrated infrastructure and basic amenities and

* Senior Consultant, G&PS, PwC, Maharashtra, India. Email: bhavna.ghatge@in.pwc.com

** Associate Professor, FLAME University, Pune, Maharashtra, India. Email: diganta.chakrabarti@flame.edu.in

attractive physical environments (Burchardt, Jeremy, 2002). The concept of model village forms the backbone of the Adarsh Gram initiative by the government of India. The idea of an “Adarsh Gram” or model village was explored in India through a development scheme called the Pradhanmantri Adarsh Gram Yojana, launched by the Central Government in 2009-10 consecutively followed by Mukhya Mantra Adarsh Gram Yojana at State level. Sustainability, community development, technology and connectivity have been identified as key elements of a model village (Swaniti initiatives). Extending the mission of rural development further; the Ministry of Rural Development launched its flagship Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission in 2014. This Rurban mission aims at providing urban amenities in rural areas while preserving the ethos and soul of the village. The main aim is to tackle the problem of migration effectively by generating avenues for income generation through skill development. Therefore leading to a socio-economic transformation. This mission stresses on empowering villages, ensuring 24-hour power supply and quality education. While tackling these issues of migration and rural development Government of India is encouraging use of technological infrastructure to reduce rural - urban digital divide. Government envisions development of SMART village (Indian Express, 2014).

SMART village program aims to bring a radical change in the rural landscape and give a new direction to the Indian villages. It indicates 20 key indicators towards making a Smart village. These include building toilets, roads, reducing MMR (maternal, mortality rate) and IMR (infant mortality rate), increasing enrolment in schools and providing clean drinking water, environment protection, waste management, broadband connectivity, solar and biogas amongst the others. Strong leadership can act as a catalyst in implementation of central and state schemes for transformation to SMART village (The Hindu, 2014).

“India’s No 1 Village.” A national television channel described Punsari in one of its exclusive news reports telecast in May 2015. In last few years, this village in Gujarat, India has attracted attention from multiple sources, both domestic and international.¹ It was referred as “A model Indian village”² in November 2014. Another report claimed: “Gujarat’s dream village Punsari to be Indian role model”³. As Government of India has expressed its keenness in developing “Rurban” infrastructure⁴, Punsari has certainly achieved a distinction to be one of the role

models for the same, noted observers⁵. On 13th May, 2015, India’s Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi lauded the village administration of Punsari for its support to social security schemes. ⁶Punsari village has achieved a rare honor and distinction of a “smart village”⁷ among more than 6 lakhs (600 thousand) villages in India.⁸

Punsari: Background of the Village

The village is located about 82 kilometers north-east of Ahmedabad, the largest city of Gujarat, a state in the western region of India. Punsari falls within Sabarkantha district. The nearest railway station is 10 kilometers away. Name of the village is pronounced as “Poonsri” by its people.

According to last (2011) census of India, it has increased to 5500.⁹ About 98% of the population is engaged in agriculture or dairy activities.¹⁰ Gujarati is the Local Language here.

Punsari Gram Panchayat was established in 1955. However, it is mainly in last five years that the Panchayat’s work received significant attention and acclaim. Punsari’s Panchayat has planned and implemented multiple projects for the complete transformation of the village. Effective functioning of these projects collectively has made Punsari a success story and a role model for others to follow. The village administration has been bestowed with several awards in recognition of its exemplary achievements (Refer to Annexure 1).

But Punsari was not always a model village. Like many villages in India, it did not have proper roads. Shortage of safe drinking water was an acute problem. Electricity was available only occasionally. Street lights were non-existent. The sewage disposal system was ineffective. Sanitation was poor. To make matters worse, the gram panchayat did not have sufficient funds to bring in significant changes. The transformation from just-another-underdeveloped-village to the role model village of the country was gradual. A serious exploration of this exceptional achievement brings out the positive role of rural leadership in this transformation.

Punsari: Making of a “Rurban” Village

Punsari is a model village today. On 20th October, 2006, Mr. Himanshu Patel was elected as village headman

(Sarpanch) of Gram Panchayat with a margin of 300 votes. Since his election, Mr. Patel worked relentlessly on effective utilization of a host of welfare schemes sanctioned by state and central government, coupled with judicious management of available resources. Sustained efforts by the Sarpanch started showing results in the village. In 2011, Mr. Patel was re-elected with a higher margin of 1100 votes. In his second term, he continued his efforts to fulfill his vision of “Rurban” village. He described his vision as: “*a village with a rural soul and amenities of a city*”.

Look and Feel of A Modern Village

Different points of the village are now connected through clean and well-maintained concrete roads. Streetlights are operational through solar power. Scarcity of electricity has become a thing of the past as Punsari has 24-hours power supply through a 66 KV power sub-station located in the village itself. This was developed through funds from Jyotigram Yojana.¹¹

The village now has a proper sanitation and underground drainage system. Every house in the village has its own lavatory, which is remarkable compared to most other villages of India.

The village community is prosperous and aspirational. Cars, motorcycles, LED TVs, Split A/Cs, refrigerators, smart phones are a common sight in the village.

“Atal Express”, a bus service for villagers was funded through central government scheme Swarnimjayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana.¹² This service has been especially useful for women carrying milk to the collection center at Sambharkanta. The bus service has become one of the most used modes of transport within the village. Students are entitled to free transport as part of this facility.

Sarpanch Himanshu Patel proudly describes the development at the village. Recalling one of his interactions with a state minister, he said: “*The minister felt that I was boasting and exaggerating about the amenities in the village to him. He decided to pay a visit to the village to see the reality. No preparations were required to prove my point. I just called on the system installed in the panchayat office and informed the villagers about our arrival in 15 minutes. Around 500 villagers had gathered to welcome us.*”

Healthcare

Punsari has a primary healthcare center (PHC) which is operational on 24/7 basis. Two qualified doctors are on duty throughout. This center has a separate maternity ward as well. ASHA workers are actively engaged in the center and the entire village. They organize seminars and discussions to spread increased awareness about health and hygiene related matters. The center has its own transport system. Over the years the rate of institutional delivery and immunization of newborn babies have gone up to 100%. The expectant mothers are given monetary aid and encouraged to attend the vaccination camps.

Villagers are covered under a group insurance scheme for life and medical cover. Each villager between the ages of 18 to 60 years is insured for an accidental cover of ₹ 1 lakh¹³ and a mediclaim¹⁴ cover of ₹ 25,000. The farmers are insured against any accident under a scheme by RSBY¹⁵. They get an insurance of ₹ 1.2-2 lakh in selected hospitals for treatment in case of an accident. The Below Poverty Line (BPL) population of Punsari is also benefited under the Mukhyamantri Amrutam Yojna¹⁶ launched in 2012. The panchayat fumigates the whole village once in a month. There has been no epidemic outbreak in the last three years.

Punsari has eight well equipped anganwadi¹⁷ centres (crèches). All these centres have well-maintained infrastructure. Inhabitants of Punsari make best use of these centres. Facilities provided through these centres have minimized cases of malnourishment and sickness among child to almost zero level.

Drinking Water

Availability of clean drinking water used to be a crucial problem in the village. The village wells had high levels of salt which caused health issues. Punsari has worked towards advancement in provision of clean drinking water in the village through five bore wells, four hand pumps and house to house piped connections to distribute chlorinated water. Since 2010, the panchayat installed its own reverse osmosis plant producing mineral water to ensure the supply of clean drinking water to the villagers. This plant has been set up under PPP¹⁸ (public-private partnership) business model. The water is supplied to all the households at nominal charges of ₹ 4/20 liters. BPL¹⁹

families get it free of cost. The private partner also supplies this mineral water to other villages. During weddings and other ceremonies, water tankers are arranged by the panchayat. Drinking water taps are available for all villagers across the village. There are 73 wells which exist in the village and nearby areas which are recharged regularly.²⁰

Sanitation and Waste Management

Walking around Punsari, it is hard to see garbage lying around. Throughout the village, there are covered drains along the roadsides. The village has adopted a cleanliness drive in which people are motivated towards cleanliness. Every house has a lavatory leading to cleaner surroundings. Dustbins have been gifted to every household. A tractor trolley purchased in 2009 collects the waste from every household twice a day. Each village household is charged ₹ 30/year for waste management and ₹2/person/months for cleanliness drive. This helps generate revenue for the salaries of driver, 5 cleaners, tractor fuel and maintenance. There is a separate landfill site for solid waste management. There is pay-and-use toilet for visitors near the bus stand. The installation of CCTV cameras has also helped in maintaining the cleanliness in the village.

The state government has sanctioned ₹ 85 lakhs for installation of a power generation plant which will use household waste. It is under construction. The Sarpanch aims to utilize this as a revenue generation venture by selling the electricity to the state government. He plans to buy a solar energy-run tractor trolley to collect waste from nearby villages for power generation. This will help generate enough raw materials to run the power plant to its full capacity. Also, extra revenue will be generated for waste collection from various other villages.

Wi-Fi Connectivity

Punsari was completely connected to Wi-Fi in 2006. It is accessible throughout the village through Reliance's data usage plans, so every user has a unique username and password that allows access to the CCTV recordings, mobile library, complaint registrations, etc. This Wi-Fi connection is maintained by volunteers, and electrical engineers with the panchayat. Internet connectivity is provided to the villagers at a highly subsidized rate of ₹50

/ month for unlimited usage. This has changed the village administration completely.

Skill Development and Employability

Punsari aims to become a self-sustained village and with this goal in mind, fostering employability among the village youth is a priority. Sarpanch is leading the village youth by setting an example. He is involved in many entrepreneurial activities and guides the youth for the same. The village's skill development center runs courses in basic computing, running a beauty parlor and tailoring. More employment-oriented skill development courses are likely to start in near future. Some of these youngsters trained here have started some entrepreneurial ventures in the village. This is apart from employment generation that has taken place under various government schemes.

Entrepreneurial Ventures

Punsari inhabitants used to be completely agrarian but encouragement from panchayat has resulted in some entrepreneurial activity. The first entrepreneurial initiative is the mineral water plant which supplies mineral water at subsidized rates to the villagers. It also supplies water in the market outside Punsari.

Panchayat has encouraged rural women to adopt dairy as an entrepreneurial activity. Atal Express is the local transport facility. It is maintained by charging ₹3/trip for using Atal express. The revenue generated is used for fuel expense, salary of the driver and maintenance of the bus. This transport model has been a big support to the entrepreneur women and also generated surplus which adds to the panchayat corpus. Social entrepreneurship is being strongly encouraged to develop a self-sustained village economy.

Kuldeep Chauhan (electronic and telecommunication engineer turned entrepreneur from Punsari) deals in installation of security systems, biometric attendance, CCTV camera and public address system in villages other than Punsari. He says `` *The biggest change after 2006 is that people feel free to come and communicate with the Sarpanch. This has led to great cohesion amongst the villagers for easy problem solving.*''

Women's Empowerment

Punsari's village administration encourages and supports women's self-help groups (SHGs). Number of SHGs has increased from 2 to 111 in the last eight years. These SHGs with a collective membership of 1200 women are called "Sakhi Mandals". They mainly work towards empowerment of the rural women through development of various employable skills like sewing and stitching etc. They are also engaged in promoting saving schemes for self-employed women. Around 90 mandals are attached with banks for loan facilitation and enjoy the benefit of revolving funds facility²¹. The village has Suvidha²² shopping center with 8 shops run by SHGs currently in operation. There is a proposal for establishment of a driving school for women in near future.

Education

There are five primary schools (up to standard V) in Punsari and one secondary school (up to standard VIII). Schools have well equipped computer labs and libraries. Students' lockers were installed in classrooms. As a result, children don't have to walk to school and back home with heavy bags. In addition, buses are provided to transport the children to and from school. The village panchayat also has a scholarship scheme for students from economically weak backgrounds. Every year, cost of education of five boys and six girls is borne through this scholarship. All the five schools have all the basic amenities like proper drinking water and toilet facilities. Cleanliness is maintained strictly in the school premise. The mid-day meal plan²³ is being run efficiently so that no child is left hungry any day. The plan is run by the state government by appointing a cook, a peon and a manager for managing it. As part of this scheme, children are provided a feast or special meal on selected occasions every month.

One of the schools in the village has been developed as a model school. It has projectors and computers for teaching. The focus of all the schools is on activity-based learning. Punsari schools strictly follow the ideal 30: 1 (student: teacher) ratio as mandated by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (Department of Higher Education), India. The panchayat initiated a joint venture with Navneet Publications²⁴ in 2009 to develop an audio visual teaching module; e-sense²⁵. At that time, it was first-of-its-kind initiative for a rural school. Navneet

has replicated it across the country now. Vidya Patel, a student of Class VII of this school, thinks learning is fun. She exclaims: "The audio visual presentations make it easier to remember our lessons."

CCTV cameras are placed in the classes to enable parents check their wards' performance. This has improved the teaching standards at the school. This school will soon have ACs installed in the classrooms. This was designed as a unique way of attracting students to school. The school also has access to a mobile library which can be accessed through a mobile application. All these facilities have reduced the school drop-out rate to zero in Punsari. Number of students has doubled from 300 in 2006 to over 600 in 2014.

The village schools are maintained under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan Schemes²⁶. The village was rated "B+" during Gunotsav²⁷ 2011 and "A" during for the consecutive three years. The village panchayat is creating awareness amongst the rural population to reduce seasonal school dropouts, which is a common phenomenon in rural schools in India. "At a government primary school in the village, the students are under constant CCTV observation. This is to keep a tab on any wrong activities" says Bhagwatiben Patel, Principal of the Punsari Primary School. Literacy and education of adults is also part of the panchayat's initiatives. Two female teachers are appointed to run this literacy mission under the "Shaksharta Mission" of the state government. The literacy rate is very high with only 100 illiterate people in the village.

Sarpanch applied for BRGF²⁸ funds for developing a mobile library and it is operational today. This is a mobile van with books and space to sit and read. This library moves across the village. People can borrow books and read. There is a capacity of 4 people to sit and read in the mobile library. This has encouraged reading habits amongst the villagers. Some of the villagers have even donated books to this library.

There is no facility for higher education in the village but panchayat encourages the rural youth towards higher education. There are around 30 students from the village who are studying engineering and other degree courses in nearby towns. Tejas Dangi is a computer engineering student from Punsari. He says: "I volunteer to administer Punsari village's facebook account. I am very happy with the development of my village. I look forward to go abroad to work."

Punsari's Transformation: Role of Leadership and Management

Sandeep Panchal is an employee at the gram panchayat office, Punsari. He says "if not for sarpanch the village would not have been transformed."

Studies reveal that rural India has a set pattern of thought and behavior which has been developed over the history and is sacrosanct to people. Therefore the process of social development needs re-orientation of leadership for dealing with the challenges peculiar to the Indian rural context. It is important that democratic leadership is decentralized. (Narain, 1964). Over the years Governments across the globe have been trying to develop the villages to gain socio-economic sustainability and reduce the rural-urban divide. It has been identified that good leadership can lead to better mobilization of the rural resources to achieve sustainable growth. The researches show that transactional leadership (Burnes, 1978) can influence development of rural communities but transformational leadership (Burnes, 1978) can play a significant role in developing of adaptive capacity for sustainable growth. (Davies, 2009). Effective rural leadership encompasses not only skills of the individual but is strongly affected by the skills and actions of the followers and relative access to social resources. (Davies, 2014). Sensitization of rural leadership towards the existing community attitude and structure can lead to effective designing of development strategies. These strategies can encourage better participation and cooperation of the community members in development. (Randy 2009). In India, rural leadership depends on the factors like caste, wealth, family reputation, influence and connections. The leadership generally lacks the knowledge about the development plans implemented by the government. During the last decade there have been changes in the village pattern. The objectives of socio-economic development can be achieved only through professionalism in rural leadership. The rural leader should have an ability to mobilize and organize the villagers for participation and cooperation in planning and implementation of rural development initiatives at grass root level. (Bhatt, 1994).

People at Punsari hold their 32 years old Sarpanch Mr. Himanshu kumar Patel as their role model. A graduate from North Gujarat University, Mr. Patel had won the panchayat elections on 20th October, 2006, at the age of 23 for the first time. For a young man in his early twenties,

village administration was not something entirely novel to him though. Patel's father and his grandfather have also been Sarpanch of Punsari. His election was a sign of infusion of young blood in village administration. However, when he took charge as the head of village, conditions were far from ideal. People were struggling for basic amenities like drinking water, healthcare, roads, employment opportunities, education. Punsari was struggling as a village. Youthful and earnest, Patel was keen on identifying the main reasons for lack of development in his village. What he found out soon was that there was no dearth of funding schemes for rural development. The problem lay in unsystematic and inefficient utilization of these funds. His goal was to transform Punsari into a developed and self-sustained village.

Since taking over as the head of village administration, Patel relentlessly worked towards achieving his goal. He actively engaged in networking with the district administration set up to procure funds entitled under multiple development schemes. The funds came from schemes under the District Planning Commission, Backward Regional Grant Fund, 12th Finance Commission, and those under Self Help Group plans. Gradually, he was able to build up a sizeable corpus for the development of the village.

Unlike a stereotypical Sarpanch of a village, Patel has been known to Punsari's people for the spirit of an entrepreneur. He has always focused on socio-economic development for the men, women and children of his village. At the same time, he wanted to achieve his developmental objectives while carefully preserving the delicate social and cultural fabric of the multi-caste, multi-community village. He is known for his vision for growth and development. People of Punsari respect, admire and support him as their leader. Particularly for the youth, he is a role model.

The Sarpanch is easily approachable for anyone in the village. He has worked earnestly towards reducing gender bias in his village. Inclusion of women in village administration through appointment in various positions has been one of his priorities. Participation of women in development is also encouraged through volunteering activities in various village development programs. Women's SHGs regularly hold meetings with Sarpanch to discuss the problems of women in the village and find solutions for the same.

Management of Funds

Even before the term of the present Sarpanch Mr. Patel, Punsari gram panchayat was eligible for grants and funds from various state and central government schemes. However, utilization of these funds was far from effective. When Patel took over as the head of village administration, he initiated a complete overhaul in procurement and disbursement of funds. It is important to note that success of Punsari cannot be attributed to any specially designed inflow of fund or exclusive grant. Interestingly, Punsari is not a beneficiary of any special state-funded scheme like chief minister's fund etc. It is not even a receiver of funds from sources like Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), Non Resident Indians (NRIs) or international agencies like World Bank or International Monetary Fund. In fact, Punsari could not qualify for the benefits of PURA²⁹ and Rurban initiatives by the government as the village did not meet the prerequisite of a population of 7000 people. All it could afford was the common government-run schemes for its makeover as a model village.

Total estimated sum for all development projects in Punsari was pegged at ₹140 crores³⁰. Funds were collected from various state and central government schemes gradually. The financial condition of Punsari has improved significantly over the past eight years. The village administration, which had a debt of ₹ 1 lakh in 2006, has a surplus of ₹ 75 lakhs now.

Patel's success lies in the fact that he has been able to implement the directives of the panchayat act³¹. The act suggests that a gram panchayat should make the best utilization of the various village resources and become self-sustained. The village thrives by creating awareness and optimal utilization of state and central government sponsored schemes. Proper utilization of these schemes and management of funds has led to a vibrant economy in this village. *"We didn't feel the need of NRI funds or donations since there is enough from various budgetary grants of the state and Centre. If you utilize it properly, you can work wonders,"* said Mr. Patel while talking about utilization of funds.

The panchayat act empowers the sarpanch to auction some of its grazing land to generate funds. This land needs to be utilized only for residential purpose. The Punsari, village panchayat owned around 120 hectares of pasture land. In 2008-2010, ₹ 80 lakhs were generated for the panchayat

corpus by auctioning such land. It helped solve three issues – scarcity of funds, scarcity of residential area for villagers and curbing the illegal encroachment of grazing land.

The village Treasurer, Nanjibhai Parmar says, *"We prepared a proposal to sell plots of village panchayat land to the villagers. We lobbied to get the proceeds of the sales from the state government and created a corpus of around Rs 80 lakh. This fund was utilized for the developmental projects in the village."*

Revenue is also generated through regular collection of taxes like water, household, street electrification, cleanliness and administrative taxes. The grazing land in the village has also been used for revenue generation by growing trees which can give income in 3-5 years. Currently, Punsari achieves approximately 95% revenue collection every year, through water tax, property tax, sanitation charge, etc. Himanshu Patel says, *"In last two years I have increased these taxes by 20% still people have no complains. People are very happy with the facilities available to them. Taxes are collected regularly."*

"The village has demonstrated how understanding various schemes available and leveraging them properly can bring about a transformational change." said Himmatnagar collector Banchha Nidhi Pani while discussing the good financial management at Punsari.

Law and Order

Earlier, the village used to be victim of crimes like thefts and burglaries. Alcoholism was a nagging problem amongst the rural male. Over the years, though, the village managed to achieve remarkable improvement in overcoming these. There has been no case of theft in the village since last three years. Alcoholism among people has been reduced drastically. Awareness campaigns against alcohol consumption have been successful.

Himanshu Patel strongly believes in safety and transparency in all the activities as a means to development of the village. He got CCTV cameras installed in the village. This has not only helped in monitoring staff but also in improving overall cleanliness and safety in the village, reducing violence and improving discipline.

Right to Information (RTI)³² Systems is followed very diligently at Punsari. The gram panchayat office has

22 full-time employees (it had 3 in 2006), a toll free telephone, a complaint register for speedy and time bound grievance redressal. The redressal mechanism is strengthened as a record of every problem is maintained through a complaint record.

The panchayat also has 47 young men and women employed as volunteer. These practices in the village have won accolades and awards for good governance.

e-gram³³ has been introduced in the panchayat. Any tax receipt can be availed by anyone by paying small fees of ₹5 /receipt. This has led to transparent and very efficient administration. Most of the information has been disclosed on the public domain. Punsari was amongst one of the first villages in the country to launch its panchayat's website.

A public address system was installed in 2009. It is operated from the Sarpanch's office and is connected to 120 waterproof speakers placed at different parts of the village. This helps to keep people informed, aware and well connected with the village governance. Sarpanch likes to connect to the villagers regularly. He strongly believes in administration through participative inclusion of the villagers. His phone is connected to the public address system and he can deliver any message and welfare scheme alerts to the villagers from anywhere.

Village Co-Ordination Committee

At Punsari, a village co-ordination committee has been constituted. This committee works towards inclusive plans for development and growth of the village. This committee has the following members; Sarpanch/head of the committee, Talati/secretary, gram panchayat members, principals of schools, fair price shop holders, aangawadi workers, PHC staff, ASHA workers, Sakhimandal heads, animal husbandry officer and mid-day meal operators. Sarpanch has religiously conducted committee follow-up meetings every month since 2006. Proceedings of these meetings are maintained in files. In near future, the committee plans to video-record their proceedings.

PAHELI Project

PAHELI (People's Action for Health Education for Livelihood) is a project of Gujarat state government supported by the corporate social responsibility wing of

Tata Steel. The project aims to change the mindset of the villagers by inculcation of self-discipline and sense of pride for their village. The project has a special focus on health education. The project is working at micro-level of a rural development change initiative. Ravindra Kumar, Executive from Tata Steel, a volunteer for PAHELI at Punsari says "*Punsari has reached a certain level of development due to the relentless efforts of its sarpanch. It needs to be sustained by the future panchayat.*" The Sarpanch, Mr. Himanshu Patel has strongly supported the project to understand the development indicators for rural areas. He believes development and growth of a village can be sustained by reducing the gap between need the urgency of change at institutional and personal level. ParthSarthi, volunteer of TATA steel shares his experience at Punsari: "*Talking to people at Punsari clearly reveals that the sarpanch has used relationship building as a tool for transformation. The villagers at Punsari share a strong value for creating the 'best village'. Sarpanch has been able to infuse confidence and a sense of urgency amongst the villagers. They are united and open for change.*"

Looking Forward

As his tenure approaches its end, the sarpanch is concerned about sustainability of the development in future. He feels regular employment generation and abiding by good fund management systems is the only key to sustainability. He has initiated a series of new projects to be implemented during his tenure. Some projects like electricity producing unit and Bank at the village are already in their advanced stage. The sarpanch has a plan to start a cold storage for potatoes, as it is the prime crop at Punsari. He feels it will help villagers generate higher price for their crop. He has a dream to empower the women of Punsari by initiating a women federation for generating regular employment.

As a village, Punsari has definitely reached a stage where it stands apart from most other villages in India. It has earned its laurels but it doesn't want to rest on them. People of the village now expect even more from the gram panchayat and look forward to further development. Farmers in the village are keen on learning more about risk protecting their produce. People demand a college to be opened in the village. It has been observed that though women attend the various skill development programs but they do not utilize these skills for income generation. Most of them are more comfortable taking care of the cattle and find dairy production as a safe source of income. The

reasons identified for this problem are insufficient funds and difficulty in finding market for produce. This remains as an area of concern. Youth of the village are also lagging behind in this area. To make this issue complicated, job opportunities under various government schemes have reached a saturation point. There are also some concerns among some sections of people about preservation of “rural culture” in view of the industrial development.

CONCLUSION

Rural transformation is not limited to development of basic amenities and infrastructure. It has a dimension of human development which can affect the sustainability of any change. The rapid development in the urban community is creating conditions of enormous vulnerabilities in the rural areas. On the other hand this changing scenario is also creating opportunities for development and growth. The key contributor towards sustainable transformation is mobilization and organization of community participation in development activities. This convergence of demands of rural community and change can be brought about by rural leadership.

Annexure-1: Awards and Achievements

- 2012-13: Swarnim Gam Award
- 2012-13: Best Sarpanch Award By M.S. University of Vadodara
- 2012-13: Rajiv Gandhi Bharat Ratna Award By Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, Andhra Pradesh
- 2012: The Academy of Grassroots Studies and Research of India award.
- 2011-12: Central Government Award Under PEAIS
- 2011-12: Best Gram Sabha award at the third National Panchayati Raj Day held at New Delhi.
- 2010-11: Best Gram Panchayat Of Gujarat
- 2010: Nirmal Gram Award by Central Government.

Endnotes

- ⁱ Link: http://zeenews.india.com/news/videos/dna/dna-zee-media-exclusive-punsari-indias-no-1-village_1530915.htm
- ⁱⁱ Leading media agencies which highlighted Punsari in their correspondence included BBC, IBN Live,

NDTV, India Today, The Times of India, The Economic Times, DainikBhaskar, DainikJagran, etc.

- ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-29914208>
- ^{iv} <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/gujarats-dream-village-punsari-to-be-indian-role-model/articleshow/37379430.cms>
- ^v Govt to scale up “rurban” infrastructure (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Govt-to-scale-up-rurban-infrastructure/articleshow/36320133.cms>)
- ^{vi} Punsari: Rurban model up close and personal (http://content.icidirect.com/mailimages/IDirect_Punsari_VisitNote.pdf)
- ^{vii} InGuj’sPunsari village, Panchayat has decided to pay the premium for the Social Security schemes launched. A great gesture.
- #JanSuraksha 7:29 PM - 13 May 2015. (Link: http://pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pm-expresses-happiness-over-the-tremendous-response-among-the-people-generated-by-recently-launched-social-security-schemes/)
- ^{viii} How Punsari is upping its smartness quotient (<http://www.ahmedabadmirror.com/ahmedabad/cover-story/How-punsari-is-upping-its-smartness-quotient/articleshow/47401508.cms>)
- ^{ix} http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_data_finder/A_Series/Number_of_Village.htm
- ^x Gujarat’sPunsaripanchayat-villager’s pride, neighbour’s envy (<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-gujarats-punsari-panchayat-villagers-pride-neighbours-envy-1608954>)
- ^{xi} Main crops grown in the village,Source :(<http://www.punsarigrampanchayat.in/>)
- ^{xii} “Rurban”, Source: <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/dHdu4kjRB4cRx0YiJmdBPI/Rurban-India-to-be-NDA-priority.html>)
- ^{xiii} Jyotigram Yojana (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jyotigram_Yojana)
- ^{xiv} Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swarnajayanti_Gram_Swarozgar_Yojana)
- ^{xv} Accredited Social health Activist (ASHA).<http://nrhm.gov.in/communitisation/asha/about-asha.html>
- ^{xvi} 1 lakh=100 thousand
- ^{xvii} Mediclaim plans are hospitalization benefit plans that are offered by general and health insurance companies.
- ^{xviii} RashtriyaSwasthyaBimaYojana(RSBY), Source :<http://www.rsby.gov.in/> ^{xix} MukhyamantriAmruta-

- mYojna (MA), Source :<http://www.magujarat.com/>
- ^{xx} AnganwadiCentres-Source :<http://aanganwadi.org/come>
- ^{xxi} According to Ministry of Finance Government of India the PPP project means a project based on a contract or concession agreement, between Government or statutory entity on the one side and a private sector company on the other side, for delivering infrastructure service on payment of user charges.
- ^{xxii} BPL,Source : [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Below_Poverty_Line_\(India\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Below_Poverty_Line_(India))
- ^{xxiii} A recharge well-Source: <http://www.thealternative.in/lifestyle/recharge-wells-and-why-we-need-them/>
- ^{xxiv} RevolvingFund-Source:http://www.necorps.org/pub/imp_handbk/Implementation
- ^{xxv} SUVIDHA cooperative stores run by self-helpgroups.
- ^{xxvi} Mid Day Meal-Source:<http://www.akshayapatra.org/indias-mid-day-meal-scheme>
- ^{xxvii} Navneet Education Limited, Source: <http://www.navneet.com/about-us/>
- ^{xxviii} eSense is focused on providing eLearning solutions to schools and students in India. It focuses on making learning effective and engaging in innovative ways.
- ^{xxix} SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA) – Source:<http://sarvashikshaabhiyan.org/>
- ^{xxx} Gunotsav-Source :<http://www.gunotsav.org/>
- ^{xxxi} TheBackwardRegionsGrantFund-Source:<http://www.nird.org.in/brgf/doc/BRGFFINALGUIDELINES.pdf>
- ^{xxii} Provision of Urban Amenities to Rural Areas (PURA),Source: <http://rural.nic.in/sites/pura.asp>
- ^{xxiii} 1 crore=100
- ^{xxiv} Panchayat act Provisions,
Source: <http://www.rajpanchayat.gov.in/common/pesa-rules2011.pdf>)
- ^{xxxv} Right to Information Act 2005-source<http://righttoinformation.gov.in/>^{xxxvi} E-gram centers, Source: <http://panchayat.gujarat.gov.in/panchayatvibhag/Images/eGram-report-May-2015.pdf>
- Burchardt, J. (2002). *Paradise Lost: Rural Idyll and Social Change Since 1800*, I.B. Tauris, ISBN 1860645143
- Davies, A. (2009). Understanding Local Leadership in Building the Capacity of Rural Communities in Australia. *Journal compilation © 2009 Institute of Australian Geographers(Issue Geographical Research)*, 47(4), 380-389
- Davies, A. (2007). Organic or orchestrated: The nature of leadership in rural Australia. *Rural Society*, 17(2), 139-154.
- Indian Express. (2014). Centre launches its flagship Rurban mission; identifies 3 projects. Retrieved from <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/centre-launches-its-flagship-rurban-mission-identifies-3-projects/>
- India News. (7Sept2014). PM Modi's Rurban Mission: Moving fast towards Operationalization. Retrieved from http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/pm-modis-rurban-mission-moving-fast-towards-operation-alisation_1466367.html
- Narain, I. (1964). Democratic decentralization and rural leadership in India: The rajasthan experiment, *Asian Survey*, 4(8), 1013-1022. University of California Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2642638>
- NDTV. (14 July). Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Emphasis on 'Rurban. Retrired from <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/prime-minister-narendra-modis-emphasis-on-rurban-577308>
- NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency. (Sept2012). Brussels Rural Development Briefings, A series of meetings on ACP-EU development issues-Major drivers for Rural transformation in Africa (briefing no. 2). Retrieved from <http://brusselsbriefings.net>
- Schouten, M. A. H., Heide, C. M. V. D., Heijman, W. J. M., & Opdam, P. F. M. (2012). A resilience-based policy evaluation framework: Application to European rural development policies. *Ecological Economics*, 81, 165-175.
- Swaniti initiative. (2012). Adarsh gram (Model Village): A concept note. Retrieved from www.swaniti.in
- The Hindu. (27dec2014). Smart Village' Programme from On Jan. 5, Says Naidu. Retrieved from www.thehindu.com/.../smart-village-programme-from-on-jan-5-says-nai.
- The Hindu. (January 6, 2015). 20 Non-negotiable indicators identified for smart village. Retrieved

References

- Bhatt, G. D. (1994). Emerging leadership pattern in rural India: An empirical study. Retrieved from <https://books.google.co.in/books?isbn=8185880204>

from <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Vijayawada/20-nonnegotiable-indicators-identified-for-smart-village/article6757477.ece>

UNESCO International Research and Training Center for Rural Education (INRULED). (2001). Education

for R U R A L Transformation towards a Policy Framework. Retrieved from <http://www.irirulcd.org>

Williams, M. R. (Feb 1989). A Model for Deploying Rural Leadership in Community Economic Development. **ERIC Number:** ED308033. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED308033>

