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Manuscript ID:
IJRSEAS-2024-010101

DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.14398410
DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14398410>

Volume: 1

Issue: 1

Month: October

Year: 2024

E-ISSN: 3066-0637

Submitted: 16-Aug-2024

Revised: 30-Aug-2024

Accepted: 15-Sept-2024

Published: 31-Oct-2024

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How to cite this article:

Chand, J. (2024). Empowering Youth for
Environmental Sustainability: A Case
Study of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan
Initiatives, Himachal Pradesh.
International Journal of Research
Studies on Environment, Earth, and
Allied Sciences, 1(1), 1–4.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14398410>

Empowering Youth for Environmental Sustainability: A Case Study of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan Initiatives, Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract:

The Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) program promotes sustainable development throughout India by acting as a transformative bridge between rural people and universities. This study looks at how Government College Sangrah students significantly contribute to environmental sustainability through UBA efforts in the Himachal Pradesh villages of Sangrah, Rerli, Borli, Ludhiana, and Mandoli. Students cultivate a culture of ecological responsibility by actively interacting with these communities and promoting sustainable behaviors and environmental awareness. Afforestation projects, plastic eradication efforts, cleanliness drives, and water body conservation are some of the main operations carried out. The students want to lessen garbage and its detrimental effects on the environment by organizing cleanliness campaigns and reducing the use of plastic. Afforestation initiatives seek to increase biodiversity and combat deforestation, while water conservation efforts focus on protecting priceless water supplies in the face of growing scarcity. This study evaluates the approaches and effects of these programs, emphasizing the results and difficulties faced. Notwithstanding many challenges, such as scarce resources and early opposition from the community, the students' dedication and creative problem-solving have produced notable advancements and stronger ties within the community. The results stimulate further UBA efforts and offer insightful information about the contribution of youth-led programs to environmental conservation and the development of a common sense of environmental responsibility. According to this case study, ongoing adolescent involvement in sustainability initiatives can benefit local livelihoods and rural ecosystems in the long run.

Key Words: Environmental sustainability, Unnat Bharat Abhiyan, Plastic eradication, Water conservation, Afforestation, Community engagement, Youth empowerment, Sustainable development.

Introduction:

The necessity of sustainable practices at the local level has been highlighted by the growing problems of resource depletion, environmental degradation, and climate change. In order to advance sustainability, programs such as the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) foster cooperation between academic institutions and rural communities. Himachal Pradesh's Government College Sangrah is actively advancing this goal by giving students the authority to spearhead a range of environmental initiatives.



Fig 1.1 Geospatial Overview of the Study Area: Mapping UBA-Adopted Villages

This essay looks at four major areas where Government College Sangrah students have had a big influence: planting efforts, conservation of nearby water supplies, cleanliness and plastic eradication programs, and sustainable community involvement. The goal is to evaluate the success of these youth-led programs and determine how much they have contributed to the development of resilient and ecologically conscious rural communities

Literature Review

Numerous studies stress how crucial community involvement is to environmental sustainability. According to research by Pande (2020), afforestation is important for enhancing ecological balance and air quality. The importance of educational institutions in advancing sustainable development is also emphasized by Singh and Kaur (2023). Water scarcity can be addressed by revitalizing traditional water management techniques, as shown by studies on water conservation (Agarwal & Narain, 2019). In addition, Ghosh and Bhattacharya (2022) emphasize that young participation is essential to accomplishing long-term environmental objectives.

All of these studies indicate that environmental preservation and rural sustainability can be greatly enhanced by a cooperative strategy including local communities and educational institutions. This framework is supported by Government College Sangrah's activities, which also offer insightful information about how youth leadership can promote environmental change.

Main Objectives

- To evaluate the effects of student-led plastic elimination initiatives and cleanliness efforts in the adopted villages.
- To examine local water source conservation initiatives and their effects on resolving water scarcity.
- To assess how plantation drives contribute to increased biodiversity and green space.
- To investigate how community involvement might support sustainable practices in rural regions.

Methodology

The study uses a qualitative case study methodology. Interviews with campaign participants from the community, professors, and students were used to gather data. Additional information was gleaned via observations of on-ground initiatives, such as cleanliness campaigns and plantation projects. To evaluate the success and impact of these activities, official UBA program reports and documentation were also examined. The study employs a qualitative case study methodology. Interviews with campaign participants from the community, professors, and students were used to gather data. Additional information was gleaned via observations of on-ground initiatives, such as cleanliness campaigns and plantation projects. To evaluate the success and impact of these activities, official UBA program reports and documentation were also examined.



Photo Plate 1.1 Visual Insights from the Field: Photographic Documentation of UBA Activities

Cleanliness Drive and Plastic Eradication Campaigns

Cleanup programs and plastic elimination initiatives are spearheaded by Government College Sangrah students in Sangrah, Rerli, Borli, Ludhiana, and Mandoli. These initiatives support the goal of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, which is to eradicate single-use plastics and promote cleanliness. Students encourage community involvement and cultivate a culture of environmental stewardship through awareness campaigns and frequent cleanup events.

The effectiveness of these efforts has been greatly aided by the participation of the local community. In an effort to create a cleaner and healthier environment, villagers have started implementing sustainable waste management techniques. However, issues like uneven participation and inadequate infrastructure for disposing of garbage must be resolved.

Impacts include:

- Better public hygiene and less plastic waste;
- A greater understanding of the risks posed by plastic contamination in the community.

Conservation of Local Water Sources

In Himachal Pradesh's rural areas, water scarcity is a major problem. Boweries and other traditional water sources have been restored and conserved by Government College Sangrah students. After years of neglect, these water bodies are now being revitalized via routine upkeep and cleaning.

Sustainable water management techniques like rainwater collection and water conservation are also promoted via awareness campaigns. With locals actively taking part in the upkeep of restored water sources, community involvement has been essential to guaranteeing the longevity of these initiatives.

Impacts include:

- Better water quality and availability for home and agricultural uses;
- Restoration of historic water bodies, lowering water shortage.

Plantation Drives and Afforestation Efforts

To stop environmental damage, students have planned plantation drives in the areas they have chosen. Enhancing ecological balance, boosting biodiversity, and improving air quality are the main goals of these programs.

Villagers are taught the value of planting trees by students through workshops and community engagement. In order to ensure the saplings' long-term survival and care, residents are urged to take charge of these plantation operations. Because the plantation drives sequester carbon emissions, they also provide a workable response to climate change.

Impacts include:

- More biodiversity and open space;
- Enhanced community involvement in environmental care.

Promoting Sustainable Practices through Community Engagement

The active participation of local communities and students is essential to the success of UBA activities. In addition to environmental initiatives, students visit homes one-on-one to spread the word about sustainable farming methods. Crop rotation, agroforestry, and organic farming are taught to farmers in an effort to lessen agriculture's negative environmental effects.

In order to give farmers vital knowledge about available resources and financial support, workshops also concentrate on government programs like the Fasal Bima Yojana and HIM-UNNATI. By empowering farmers to shift to sustainable agriculture, these initiatives enhance economic and environmental results.

Impact Include:

- Increased knowledge of government programs and agricultural regulations;
- Local farmers' adoption of sustainable farming methods.

Conclusion

The Government College Sangrah-led UBA projects show how effective youth engagement can be in promoting community development and environmental sustainability. The students have had a major influence in the adopted villages through cleaning campaigns, water conservation initiatives, plantation activities, and agricultural awareness campaigns. Cleaner surroundings, better water management, more green space, and more sustainable farming methods are the outcomes of the cooperative approach between students and locals.

Nevertheless, the programs encounter obstacles such as scarce funding, irregular involvement, and weather limitations. More funding, ongoing community involvement, and improved waste management infrastructure are required to maintain and grow these initiatives. With consistent work, these programs can promote long-term environmental sustainability and resilience by acting as a model for other educational establishments and rural communities.

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