

Reimagining a Samridh Palampur

A Working Paper

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Himalayan Institute for Transformative Actions

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Disclaimer

- ▶ *The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the participants and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of any entities they represent or of HITA.*

The Context

Through the involvement of some of the key experts from GIZ and HITA, a presentation titled *‘Reimagining Himachal: Green Himachal – Samridh Himachal’* was made on the request of the office of the Chief Minister, Himachal Pradesh, to the cabinet members and secretaries of key departments on 27 November 2024 at Shimla. Some of the reimagined ideas from that presentation have been taken up by the Government and are under implementation: Drone Addas, dustbins in tourism taxis, etc.

Subsequently, the HP Government tasked the Manmohan Singh Himachal Institute for Public Administration (HIPA) to initiate a process for Reimagining Himachal@2045, called the ‘SAMRIDH Himachal’ vision process. HIPA initiated a three-step process for developing this vision. Colloquium 1 was an information collection round, followed by Colloquium 2 on 22–24 March 2025 at HIPA, wherein intensive consultations with about 100 experts led to the finalisation of eight key themes for further planning. Working Groups led by relevant Secretaries and with members from other agencies, the private sector, etc., were established as part of Colloquium C3 to develop a Vision Report for the state. This process was technically supported by GIZ, and the report was finalised in early 2026 and is with the office of the CM for its launch.

Simultaneously, two experts who were involved in the SAMRIDH Himachal process and were part of Himalayan Institute for Transformative Actions (HITA), catalysed a host of active organisations, experts and citizens to initiate a bottom-up process for developing actionable recommendations, with a focus on the Palampur Sub-Division, which consists of 35 Gram Panchayats and the Municipal Committee of Palampur. The idea was to develop a Working Paper for stakeholders to take forward and also to contribute inputs into the State SAMRIDH Vision Document.



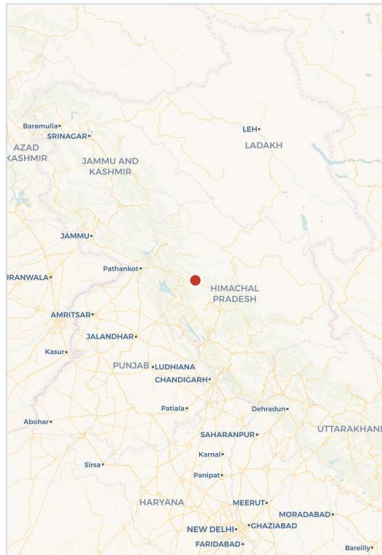
Palampur Sub-Division in the Kangra Valley, set against the Dhauladhar range. Photo: Rajputcenation / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

Palampur Sub-Division is located in the Kangra Valley of Himachal Pradesh. Palampur is a famous hill station, and the town came into being when Dr. Jameson, the superintendent of Botanical Gardens, introduced the tea bush from Almora in 1849. The bush thrived in the climatic conditions of Palampur and became the focal point of the European tea estates. Palampur is a Sub-Division, one of 21 Sub-Divisions of Kangra district. There are 409 villages and 1 town in Palampur Sub-Division, covering an area of 429.29 km².

As per the Census of India 2011, Palampur Sub-Division has 44,501 households and a population of 189,276, of which 93,807 are males and 95,469 are females. The population of children between ages 0–

6 is 10.47% of the total population. The average household size in the sub-division is about 4.25 persons per household, reflecting the area’s population density and family structures. The decadal population growth rate between 2001 and 2011 was 12.77%; assuming the same growth rate, Palampur’s population is approximately 222,531 persons in 2025, with a population density of 525 in 2025 compared to 441 in 2011. Palampur town, with the inclusion of 14 surrounding Gram Panchayats, became a Municipal Corporation in 2022.

Palampur Sub-Division
 Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh · 409 villages + 1 town · 429.29 km²



Regional setting in North India



Palampur and surrounding Kangra Valley ● = Palampur town

Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, © CARTO. Boundaries indicative, not authoritative.

Palampur Sub-Division at a Glance

Census of India 2011, with 2025 projection at the 2001-11 decadal growth rate (12.77%)



The SAMRIDH Palampur team selected three state-level themes and two local themes as priorities, and conducted a round of consultations with key stakeholders in each of these themes.

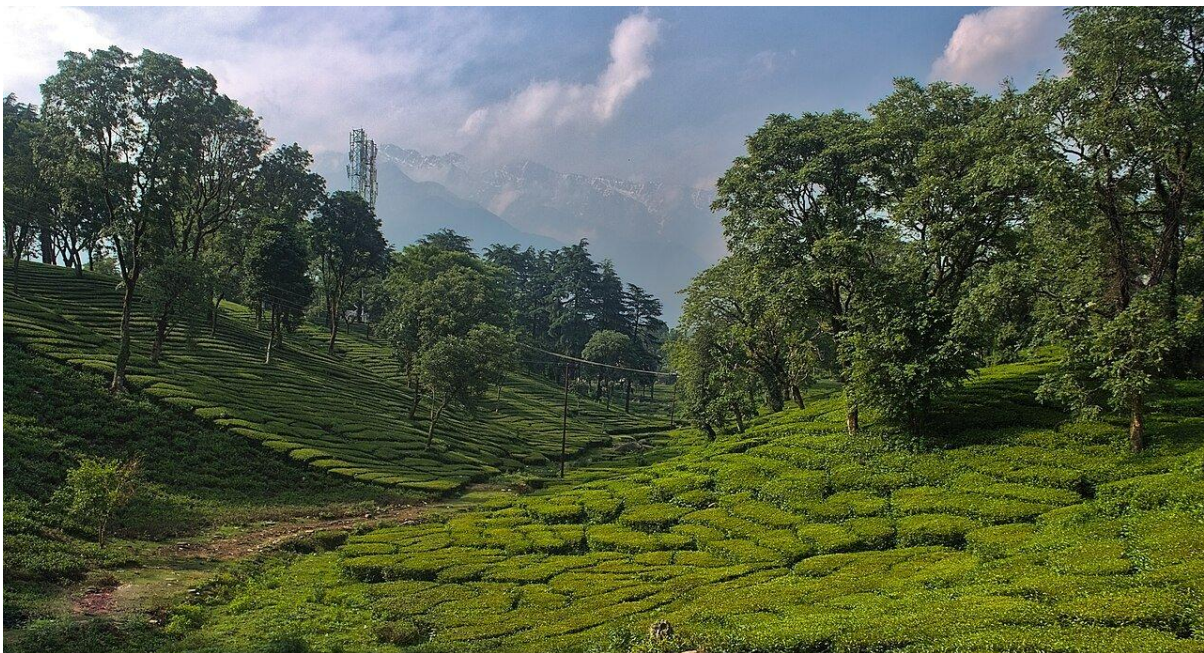
The themes are:

- Re-imagining Tourism
- Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry diversification
- Education, Skilling and Livelihood across all cross-sectoral themes
- Public Health
- Drug menace

The contributors jointly drafted this report through theme-wise virtual calls for each theme and filling up a standard template provided by HITA. The key participants and contributors are recognised in each chapter. This is a working document and will keep improving with further engagements and actions.

Chapter 1 · Re-imagining Tourism in Palampur Sub-Division

Palampur’s tourism potential lies in its status as the “Tea Capital of North India,” offering a unique blend of sprawling tea estates, colonial-era architecture, and adventure sports. Lying at the base of the majestic Dhauladhar ranges, the valley is poised for significant growth as a tourist hub. However, its tourism offerings are not well known, and they also stand the risk of becoming the over-crowded and polluting tourism witnessed by other hill stations.¹



Tea estates below the Dhauladhar, the signature landscape of Palampur tourism. Photo: UnpetitproleX / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

1. Resources & Potential

- Palampur valley has unique landscapes of mountains and valleys at the same time, which support diverse experiences for tourists.
- Palampur, unlike other over-developed tourist destinations in Kangra (like Dharamshala and Bir), still has lots of greenery, clear set-back views of mountains, and amazing tea plantations.
- Religious tourism, with famous temples at Kangra, Chamunda and Baijnath and Buddhist monasteries (especially Norbulingka, Chongaling, Tashizhong, etc.), has a strong pull.
- Cricket tourism anchored in the stadium in Dharamshala also has a strong pull, but only a few times of the year, when local tourism faces overcrowding and some spillover tourism happens towards Palampur, with no big benefit.
- The Dharamshala airport and 3 flights a day provide easier access for Palampur, but flights are expensive.

¹Contributors: Sandeep Kakkar (Chartered Accountant) and Rajeev Ahal (HITA); Karan Grewal (Norwood Green); Surya Prakash (Wah Tea Estate); Clifton David (Cliffy Café).

- The highways from Chandigarh, Mandi and Pathankot are under construction and will ease access in time and travel quality, but projects are delayed and poor quality of construction may pose risks, especially during the rainy season.
- Many tea plantations attract tourists and already market their tea products and experiences of ‘the plantation’.
- The narrow-gauge ‘Toy Train’ is a unique experience, but it is not functioning well; the schedule and bookings are not well organised.
- Nearby historical sites like Kangra and Aiju fort are great attractions but are not well developed and are largely ignored by tourists, who are not made aware of these places.
- The Ayurvedic college in Paprola and Kayakalp in Palampur offer a strong, established base for wellness and health tourism.
- A huge number of diverse hotels, restaurants, resorts and homestays have already come up through private investments and provide a strong foundation to develop tourism further.

2. Current Challenges

- Waste management is a big problem and getting worse through lack of implementation of existing policies due to poor governance. Projects and funds are needed to build adequate facilities in every village that is slowly becoming more urbanised.
- Encroachments on government land are leading to unplanned and unattractive development of the valley.
- There is only 1 tourism inspector for the whole of Kangra district, so support and registration of tourism facilities is slow.
- Deforestation and forest fires are destroying the trees and biodiversity, and communities are no longer helping the Forest Department to stop these fires.
- Tea plantations are numerous, but are not doing well financially.
- There is no tourism master plan to ensure that hotels, resorts and homestays are well placed and have good access, parking and garbage disposal.
- After a couple of days, there are no activities that encourage tourists to spend more time and money in Palampur. A bouquet of activities and experiences is needed, with different ones for different age groups (young, mid-age and old) and income groups of tourists.
- Local handicrafts and pottery exist but are not well presented and accessible to tourists; existing spots (e.g. Andreatta) have issues such as parking, clean bathrooms, nearby cafes, etc.
- Activities such as zip lines, etc., are limited and fraught with risks, and need adherence to standards and quality controls.
- The Government of HP does not support stalls promoting tourism in HP, especially Palampur, in the trade and tourism fairs across India; e.g. Uttarakhand had sent 300 participants to a national tourism fair in 2025.

3. Strategic Leaps

Short-Term (2026–30)

- Promote Palampur as a tourism brand, a joint role of the Government and local tourism sector.
- Map all existing hotels, resorts and homestays with their bed capacities on a map and provide it to tourists.
- Map all existing unique tourist offerings of Palampur.
- Plan a carrying-capacity-based tourism with footfall limits (to ensure Palampur and nearby areas do not become overcrowded and dirty like Kullu–Manali).
- Identify attractions around existing sports activities such as paragliding and others.

- Develop and promote a big menu of unique local activities and experiences by leveraging local taxis, hotels, guides, etc.
- Incentivise tourists to collect and deposit trash for incentives in identified garbage hot-spots, with Palampur Municipal Corporation (PMC) to lead.
- Attract and allocate funds for concept development and campaign management.
- Jointly develop a Tourism Master Plan for the next 15 years with three 5-year programme periods, factoring in possible impacts of climate change and disaster impacts (vulnerability studies and projections already exist).
- Based on this, PMC and local administration should invite the private sector with a single-window clearance system for land on lease, etc.
- Enhance health and wellness tourism offerings through Kayakalp and other private players (learn from Kerala).
- The Zonal Leprosy Hospital, Kandbari, can be converted into a wellness centre, operated under PPP mode.
- Develop the eco-tourism hub announced by GoHP near HP Krishi Vishwa Vidyalaya.
- Establish and manage world-class bathrooms at strategic places along the highways (long travel from the plains) and tourist hot spots. Use interest from temple trust funds for this.
- Develop 3 signature temple-tourism corridors with improved temple-trust- and community-led experiences at Chamunda, Baijnath and Tashizhong.
- Undertake projects on solid and liquid waste management in identified hotspots and clear legacy waste.
- The tea plantations can learn from Karnataka and Kerala coffee plantations to enhance profitability through boutique tourism, e.g. bungalows in plantations, etc.
- Organise an International Tea Festival in Palampur in 2027.
- The HP Department of Culture, private agencies, foundations, etc., can take up development of historical sites and forts for tourists, and promote these widely through social media, supporting stalls for photo opportunities in local and traditional (e.g. Gaddi) dresses on-site.

Medium-Term (2030–35)

- Regulate carrying-capacity-based visitor limits and re-distribute tourism to lesser-frequented areas through incentives (as being done in Stockholm through discount coupons given to tourists and redeemed in outlying locations).
- Ensure timely completion of access infrastructure:
 - Expanding Dharamshala airport for wide-body and international flights.
 - Highways from Chandigarh, Mandi and Pathankot made into four-lane ones.
 - Broad-gauge conversion retaining the ‘Toy Train’ experience.
- Implement the next stage of the Tourism Master Plan.

Long-Term (2035–45)

- Design and implement the next 15-year Tourism Master Plan based on the experiences and findings of the Medium-Term plan implementation.

Big bets for the future

- ▶ Avoid high-volume tourism; create high-value, low-impact tourism.
- ▶ Brand Palampur as the world’s leading wellness & conscious-travel destination.
- ▶ Establish Palampur as a world leader in regenerative, well-being-centred tourism.

Chapter 2 · Sustainable and High-Value Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry

Palampur lies in the Mid-Hill Zone (also called Zone II: Sub-Humid Mid-Hills, or the Lower West Himalayan Zone), which has a mild temperate to sub-humid climate with heavy rainfall, strongly influenced by the nearby Dhauladhar range. The area is known for Kangra tea, rice, wheat, maize, off-season vegetables, and sub-temperate fruits such as citrus, litchi, and plums. High-value agriculture, horticulture, and animal husbandry form the backbone of the rural economy. Small landholdings make it more profitable to replace low-yield cereal production with high-value cash crops and livestock, improving per-acre returns, creating sustainable employment, and empowering farmers and local youth.²



High-value horticulture against the Dhauladhar, where floriculture and protected cultivation hold strong potential. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

1. Resources & Potential

- Palampur lies in a very strategic and prominent zone within the three zones of HP.
- It holds very diverse realities in terms of soils, irrigation, crops, weather, temperature, diseases and pests.

Agriculture

- HP Krishi Vishwa Vidyalaya has a Centre focused on scientific inputs for natural farming. The Institute for Himalayan Bioresource Technology (IHBT) has developed a huge number of technologies, and the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) is doing frontier research on animal husbandry.
- Natural farming works well, as most of the agriculture has low fertiliser and pesticide use, with nitrogen as the main input.
- HP is a champion state in natural farming, with active work by CSOs and farmers.

²Contributors: Dr. D.K. Sadana and Sukhdev Vishwapremi from RRA Network; Dr. Rakesh Kumar (MAPS), CSIR; Hitendra Patial (Subject Matter Specialist); Dr. Pradeep (Head of Soil Department, HPKVV); Mr. Gagan, Gram Panchayat Pradhan Nain (trout farmer); Mr. Shakti, naturally farmed vegetables in YOL.

Horticulture

- Crops like mushrooms in the mid zone provide 9 months of livelihoods without needing AC or any energy inputs, a high-potential area. Mushroom wastage can be converted into compost.
- Vegetables through natural farming in Yol and other areas are all sold out locally.

Animal Husbandry

- Animal husbandry helps to diversify the risks and limits of agriculture.
- Goatery is a rich tradition with higher income potential, given the high local price of meat. Goat meat is currently being imported, making this a high-potential area.
- MoFAHD focus programme on the Jersey breed for Kangra, with progeny testing ongoing.
- HP already supports a society for higher-cost natural milk procurement.

Fishery

- Trout has high potential for the upper zone.
- Mahseer has huge potential for catch-and-release angling.

2. Current Challenges**Agriculture**

- Use of pesticide is low, as natural farming has been shown to be working well.
- Monkey and wildlife menace causes ₹500 crore loss, mostly in Kangra. Farms are already rainfed and farmers more discouraged.
- Weather uncertainty and climate change.
- Local labour is not available and migrant labour is expensive for agriculture.
- Natural farming for maize is not working well, as nutrition requirements are not supported by soils; the focus should therefore be on other crops.

Horticulture

- Cluster formation (10–15 ha land needed) is difficult in mid and upper areas, as not enough land is available for fencing.
- Mango grows well in Nurpur, but current varieties are the same as in Punjab and come into the market at the same time (a glut), so late varieties (Pusa Arunima, etc.) need to be introduced.
- Marketing of naturally farmed vegetables is a challenge once surplus exceeds direct local sales. Farming is seasonal, and off-season production without chemicals is not possible. Small land farms are a challenge.
- Organic farming (2016) used organic pesticides but was expensive. In natural farming, untimely planting leads to higher pest attacks. Some crops do well, such as peas, kulth inter-cropping in maize, karela, etc.
- Floriculture is difficult to do without pesticide; learn from current horticulturists.

Animal Husbandry

- Feed and fodder are scarce and expensive.
- Cattle population has reduced by 25% and goat–sheep numbers are static in Kangra, so the potential is being under-utilised.
- Forests are mostly pine and do not allow fodder production through indigenous trees, contributing to the stray-cattle menace.

Fishery

- Needs running and clean water. Pollution and chemicals are being put in by people as mischief, and the role of the GP to monitor and punish is required.
- Heavy monsoon rains of late break the water-feeding channels to tanks and damage production.

- Rainbow trout feed is very expensive, so alternatives need to be found.
- Carps are displacing and replacing higher-value fish like rohu and katla.

3. Strategic Leaps

Short-Term (2026–30)

Land-use optimisation & consolidation

- Use MGNREGA remote-sensing- and GIS-based Gram Panchayat plans as the base layer for integrated farming-systems planning (agriculture, livestock, floriculture, horticulture, fishery, poultry, etc.). Plans need to be developed for identified village clusters from the 35 Gram Panchayats based on their common agro-climatic and agri-allied service activities and potentials, following a ‘one crop / one model per cluster’ approach instead of ‘one district one crop’.
- Promote voluntary land pooling / land leases and cooperative farming to achieve viable plot sizes for mechanisation and specialised enterprises.
- Map land suitability (soil, slope, microclimate) and create parcel-level recommendations (tea, orchards, vegetables, fodder).
- Identify different horticultural crops for each cluster and develop these clusters, leveraging KfW, ADB and JICA programmes.

Livestock improvement & integrated farming

- Improve breed quality (AI, selective breeding) for dairy and small ruminants; promote backyard poultry and beekeeping.
- Develop fodder systems (silage, high-yielding fodder grasses, leguminous fodder belts) and feed-formulation units.
- Encourage integrated crop–livestock systems (manure recycling, agroforestry) to raise farm incomes and resilience.

Horticulture expansion & value chains

- Develop high-density orchards for plums, litchi, citrus and stone fruits with quality planting material.
- Establish collection centres, cold chains and pack-houses to reduce post-harvest loss and enable market timing.
- Support processing units (juices, jams, dried fruit) and value-added branding (“Palampur produce”).

Seedling / planting material and extension services

- Set up quality nurseries and certification for disease-free planting material.
- Strengthen extension with mobile apps, demonstration plots, and farmer field schools focusing on integrated pest management, pruning, soil health, and organic options.

Medium-Term (2030–35)

Crop diversification toward high-value and climate-resilient crops

- Scale Kangra tea, off-season vegetables, and high-value spices (cardamom, saffron where suitable).
- For rainfed and wildlife-exposed areas, low-risk, low-labour, low-input and high-return agriculture is needed: shift to cluster (5–6 ha) based aromatic crops such as lemon grass, wild marigold, Tulsi and Jatamansi. Industry is ready to buy, and demonstrations exist in the upper areas of Baijnath. Fatehpur block of Kangra has a working processing plant for Tagetes, etc. IHBT is ready to provide expertise.
- Introduce climate-resilient cereal varieties and pulse/legume rotations to improve soil fertility.
- Millets can be reintroduced and bring very high incomes; being a climate-resilient crop (1–2 irrigations compared to 5 for wheat), it is a good alternative.
- Promote protected cultivation (polyhouse, shade nets) for year-round vegetables and nursery production.

Value addition

- Promote niche poultry of jungle fowl and Kadaknath for upper areas where tourists come and will be willing to pay a higher price for exotic varieties.
- Identify alternate late or early mango varieties (Pusa Arunima, etc.), as current mango varieties compete with mango harvests from the plains.
- Enhance fodder in identified clusters by replacing pine trees in forests and planting high-yielding grass varieties such as Taiwan Giant grass and Napier.
- A specific higher-productivity livestock breed based on the Red Sindhi variety should be developed for Palampur conditions by NDRI, Karnal.

Market access, aggregation & finance

- Form farmer producer organisations (FPOs) and cooperatives for aggregation, collective marketing and bargaining.
- Link producers to e-markets, institutional buyers, and tourism-linked retail (farm stays, local markets).
- Facilitate access to credit, crop/livestock insurance, and targeted subsidies for modernisation.

Skills, youth engagement & entrepreneurship

- Run vocational training for youth in agri-tech, horticulture management, food processing and farm tourism.
- Offer start-up grants/mentorship for agri-entrepreneurs and promote women-led enterprises.

Long-Term (2035–45)**Mechanisation & appropriate technology**

- Provide access to small-scale, hill-appropriate machinery (walk-behind tractors, fruit harvesters, mini-reapers) via custom-hire centres.
- Support solarisation (drying, pumping) and renewable-energy solutions for remote sites.

Soil health, water management & erosion control

- Implement contour bunding, terracing repairs, agroforestry hedges, and check dams to reduce erosion.
- Promote micro-irrigation (drip/sprinkler), rainwater harvesting, and spring rejuvenation to secure water supply.
- Carry out regular soil testing and site-specific nutrient management; promote composting and green manures.
- Provide soil maps through the use of RS and GIS to all farmers, with advisories on soil-health improvement through the use of low-cost and local inputs.

Processing, cold chain & value addition

- Create community-level processing units (fruit pulping, dehydration, tea grading, packaging) and cold-storage hubs.
- Train entrepreneurs for branding, packaging, food safety, and meeting standards for wider markets.

Research, demonstration & climate adaptation

- Partner with local research institutions (Krishi Vigyan Kendra, agricultural universities) for adaptive trials and best-practice demonstration plots.
- Develop climate-smart practices such as crop calendars, early-warning systems, pest monitoring, and insurance-linked adaptation.

Big bets for the future

- ▶ Premium Kangra tea premiumisation and specialty branding.
- ▶ Off-season and protected-cultivation vegetables.
- ▶ Integrated dairy + fodder systems for quality milk/cheese.

Chapter 3 · Education, Skilling and Livelihood across all Cross-Sectoral Themes

Palampur is known as an educational hub in the region, hosting institutions like the Himachal Pradesh Agricultural University (CSKHPKV), CSIR-IHBT, and several government and private colleges. Here, education, skilling and livelihood work together to turn population numbers into productive human capital. In an economy like Palampur's, where traditional agriculture faces clear structural bottlenecks, this is a necessity rather than a luxury. Skilling is not only about jobs; it is about equipping people to build economies that are resilient and locally rooted.³

1. Current Challenges

- **High literacy, low absorption:** While the youth in Palampur are highly literate and academically driven, the local economy remains heavily reliant on agriculture, tea, tourism and government services.
- **The “brain drain” and underemployment:** Because there is a lack of large-scale IT, corporate or industrial sectors directly within the Palampur Sub-Division, many educated youths face underemployment. This forces a significant portion of the demographic to migrate to neighbouring states (like Punjab, Chandigarh or Delhi) or seek recruitment in the armed forces, which has traditionally been a preferred career path in Kangra.
- **Fragmented institutions,** misaligned skill development, weak market linkages, and an absence of global-standard institutions. Some of the specific constraints identified are:
 - Funding constraints and delays in the release of approved Government funds to institutions.
 - GGDS College Baijnath planned a certificate course in AI for agriculture but shelved it due to a lack of funds for hiring trainers and licensing software.
 - A proposed solar-tech lab at CSK-HPKV remains unfunded despite Himachal's target of 10 GW renewable energy capacity by 2030.
 - Availability of land is constrained, as Section 118 of the Himachal Pradesh Tenancy and Land Reforms Act, 1972 severely limits external parties from purchasing land to set up educational institutions. Therefore, state allocation of adequate land becomes important.
 - There is a lack of dedicated funds for skill development. Himachal could create a dedicated state fund using CSR contributions and global grants (e.g. the World Bank's green-skills initiatives).
 - Graduates from the State Institute of Hotel Management, Dharamshala, and Laureate Institute face barriers in overseas jobs due to non-recognition of their certifications in the EU or GCC countries.
 - There is a need for harmonisation of courses offered in the State with those in the European Union and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and to create opportunities for students to obtain foreign qualifications.

³Contributors: Manab Chakraborty, Prof. Sachin Kumar, Preeti Mann, Saurabh Mittal, Rajan Sharma, and Abhishek Taneja.

- The skilling centres are not connected with industries in the State. The pharmacy industry in Baddi sources a large number of candidates from outside Himachal. The skilling centres need to come to an agreement with industries in Baddi to create a supply chain of skilled workers from Palampur.

2. Strategic Leaps

Short-Term (2026–30): Strengthen the Base

- Strengthen institutions across the value chain, from schools to higher education and technical institutes, focusing on quality, relevance and inclusivity.
- Embed vocational skills, local knowledge and industry-oriented content early in the schooling system, using NEP 2020 as the guiding framework.
- Tailor programmes at ITIs, polytechnics, PMKVY centres, and NSDC / state-run institutions to meet local industrial needs and global skill demands.
- Encourage institutions to address real-life regional issues such as climate change, sustainable farming, and rural healthcare, through education and innovation.
- Integrate Gaddi wisdom, Tibetan practices, Lok-Ayurveda, and folk traditions into course content to create a unique value proposition.
- Improve digital connectivity, faculty training, and campus infrastructure to deliver quality education and skills.
- Design programmes aligned to the skill demands of Palampur's surrounding industrial zones (e.g. pharma in BBN, agri-forest clusters). Reimagine temples as centres for oriental learning, offering professional training to cater to global spiritual and cultural demands.

Medium-Term (2030–35): Integrate and Collaborate

- CSK Agricultural University, Palampur, has decided to transfer 112 hectares of land to the tourism department for setting up a tourism village. This land could be used as an educational cluster imparting hands-on courses and skills on eco-tourism.
- Build a unified vision across institutions to drive collaborative teaching, innovation and community engagement.
- Launch joint research programmes addressing regional and national challenges such as herbal sciences, sustainability, and climate resilience.
- Attract ed-tech start-ups, digital service providers, and leadership-training centres to base themselves in the region.
- Forge meaningful collaborations between academia, industry and government for co-created skill pathways.
- Promote AI, green jobs, remote work, digital tech, and soft skills as part of core curricula.
- Develop clusters around future growth areas like agri-tech, climate tech, and bio-innovation, with Palampur as their anchor.

Long-Term (2035–45): Palampur as a Global Knowledge & Tech Innovation Hub

- Position Palampur as a model of integrated, future-ready, tradition-anchored learning that attracts talent from across India and the world.
- Encourage world-class institutions to establish satellite centres or research labs in Palampur.
- Develop unique offerings that blend indigenous wisdom with modern science and tech for global application.
- Launch high-visibility innovation hubs focused on education, sustainability and rural transformation.
- Create an environment for skilled professionals, especially Himachalis living outside, to return, set up institutions, and mentor the next generation.

Key Indicators for Success

- ▶ Increased enrolment in vocational and skill-oriented courses.
- ▶ Growth in research outputs, patents and institutional rankings.
- ▶ Global placements and entrepreneurial success from Palampur-based institutions.
- ▶ Palampur becomes synonymous with *Purpose, Progress and Potential*.
- ▶ Emergence of “India comes to Palampur, and the world follows” as a new reality.

3. Critical Challenges

- Foster a holistic approach to education that nurtures values, creativity and soft skills, not just job-ready training.
- While short-term steps require limited funding, long-term transformation will demand sustained investment and strategic leadership.
- Equip the local workforce with competitive, globally benchmarked skills.
- Create meaningful local opportunities to reduce out-migration and make Palampur aspirational.
- Tap into Palampur’s significant military presence for leadership training, logistics support, and value-based education.
- Promote inter-departmental coordination with strong individual leadership to drive execution beyond government silos.

4. Future Vision

Big Bets

- ▶ Palampur emerges as India’s premier mountain education hub, drawing global talent and investment.
- ▶ Leverage Palampur’s rich academic institutional base to attract best-in-class global and national institutions to Palampur.

Chapter 4 · Public Health

Public health in Palampur boosts productivity and reduces lost workdays, directly supporting farm and livestock incomes. It prevents zoonoses and waterborne diseases, protecting both livelihoods and food safety. Strong primary care, WASH, and emergency readiness lower healthcare costs and increase community resilience.⁴

1. Resources & Potential

- A functioning health infrastructure: As of March 2022, Palampur had 2 Civil Hospitals, 1 Community Health Centre, 4 Primary Health Centres, and 27 Health Sub-Centres (HSCs). The Civil Hospital, Palampur, has 200 beds, 16 specialist doctors, 10 general doctors, and 3 dental surgeons. There are two dozen private hospitals in the sub-division, including Fortis Hospital and Vivekanand Hospital.

⁴**Contributors:** Manab Chakraborty (Economist); Vijay Kumar (drug campaigns and communications expert); Dr. Tarun Sood (Senior Resident, Govt. Hospital Tanda); Mr. Navneet (journalist, Dainik Jagaran); Dr. Kshama Maitre and Mr. Narender Paul (NGO CORD, Sidhbari); Sukhdev Vishwapremi (NGO RTDC); Dr. Rajesh Kumar Sood (Public Health specialist and District TB Control officer); Dr. Sanjay Bhardwaj (ex-HP Police department, also Charitable Blood Bank and trust).

- Palampur boasts a number of ayurvedic hospitals, including DMC Ayurvedic Multispecialty Hospital and Kayakalp Naturopathy Centre.
- The Tibetan Delek Hospital located in Dharamshala serves the Tibetan residents in Bir Billing and the local community, as well as tourists from around the world. It practices social assistance, mainly using modern medicine. The hospital's training unit provides training such as First Aid, HIV-AIDS, Lab, Dental, TB, RH-MCH, Refresher Courses, Mental Health, and so on.
- However, due to a shortage of specialist doctors in the medical departments at the District Hospital in Tanda, patients are compelled to seek treatment at IGMCM Shimla, Dr. R.P.G.M.C Tanda, and PGIMER Chandigarh.

2. Current Challenges

It is evident that, in view of the present achievement, the State needs to gear up and review the activities to achieve the target for 2030 for a few indicators, as discussed below:

- The State target for institutional deliveries in 2022 was 90 per cent, and 100 per cent by 2030. The State achievement for Palampur was 92.68 per cent as of March 2022.
- The target for 2022 for NMR was 15/1,000, and the State's achievement in Palampur was 13/1,000 during 2019-20. The State needs to gear up to achieve the target for 2030.
- The target for IMR for 2022 was 22 per 1,000. The State achievement for Palampur was 19/1,000 as of May 2022.
- The State target for 2022 for giving all four ANC was 100 per cent, but as on March 2022, the State achievement for Palampur was 80.30 per cent.
- The target for 2022 was to cover all sub-divisions/blocks teams for awareness/training/sensitisation/yoga, but as of September 2021, the Government had notified to only provide financial incentives to yoga teachers in Health Wellness Centres (HWCs). No data for awareness/training/sensitisation was provided by the Department. Further, in the selected districts, it was noticed that no yoga services were provided in HWCs.
- To reduce the death rate due to road traffic injuries, the State had targeted to ensure dedicated trauma care services up to CHC level and quality services in all centres by 2022. But as of June 2022, no dedicated Trauma Centres have been established in Palampur.
- Ayushman Arogya Mandir is an attempt to move from a selective approach to health care to deliver a comprehensive range of services spanning preventive, promotive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative care. It has two components which are complementary to each other. Under its first component, Ayushman Arogya Mandir was established in Palampur to deliver Comprehensive Primary Health Care that is universal and free to users, with a focus on wellness and the delivery of an expanded range of services closer to the community. The second component is the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), which provides health insurance cover of Rs. 5 lakhs per year to over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families for seeking secondary and tertiary care. Unfortunately, the AAM centres in Palampur are dysfunctional because the demand for the first level of palliative care is low.
- In Palampur, common nutritional deficiencies include those related to iron, Vitamin D, and iodine. These deficiencies can lead to various health issues, including anaemia, bone problems, and impaired growth.
- Studies have shown increased prevalence among youth for drugs like tobacco, cannabis, sedatives, opioids, inhalants and amphetamines. It is a matter of concern for them, as they are at risk of health and other problems from their current pattern of substance use. Many cheaper synthetic drugs, e.g. *Fentanyl*, *tramazole*, *dependazole*, are now increasingly being consumed.

3. Strategic Leaps

Short-Term (2025–30)

- Ensure that all eligible Palampur residents have insurance cards to avail services under HIMCARE (Mukhya Mantri Himachal Health Care Scheme) and Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY). Both schemes provide cashless treatment coverage up to ₹5,00,000 per year per family in empanelled hospitals.
- To increase demand for Ayushman Arogya Mandir, focus on strengthening service delivery, improving community awareness, and fostering trust through consistent quality care. This includes expanding the range of services, implementing robust IT systems for patient tracking, and promoting health awareness through community engagement and partnerships.
- The National TB Elimination Program (NTEP), with the goal of eliminating TB in India by 2025, has promoted initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan (PMTBMBA), and the Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana (NPY) is also underway to improve community participation and ensure nutritional support for TB patients, as well as strengthen surveillance and patient care through the Ni-kshay Portal. There are still gaps in areas like staff training, supervision, and addressing the increased incidence of extra-pulmonary tuberculosis (EPTB). To run an effective TB control programme, it is necessary to address staffing shortages with re-orientation and refresher courses for medical and paramedical personnel, provide X-ray equipment and labs for diagnostic tests, and conduct more intensive Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities to raise awareness and address social stigmas associated with TB.

Medium-Term (2030–35)

- Studies have shown that school children in Kangra may have inadequate intake of iron and consume excessive amounts of empty-calorie foods. Nutrition deficiencies have contributed to stunting, wasting, underweight, and anaemia in children, as well as to the challenge of improving maternal nutrition. Nutrition intervention in Palampur involves various strategies to address malnutrition and improve overall health, particularly for women and children. These interventions include medical nutrition therapy, community-based programmes, and educational initiatives focusing on healthy eating habits and disease prevention.
- Rural health services are in disarray at Palampur. Patients suffer due to shortage of staff, limited supply of medicines, and lack of essential facilities like X-ray and sonography. Due to a lack of anaesthetists and technical staff, ventilators in all of Palampur's hospitals are out of operation.
- The Himachal Pradesh government views the drug menace largely as a policing issue. It has established a Special Task Force (STF) under the Additional Director General of Police/Inspector General of Police to combat drug abuse and dismantle organised crime networks. In addition, therapy and counselling support is needed for the family to develop ways to cope with drug cravings and adopt strategies to avoid drugs and prevent relapse. More professionally run rehab centres are also needed.

Long-Term (2035–45): Establish Kangra as a world leader in regenerative, well-being-centred tourism

- Greater availability of reliable public health services from allopathy, ayurvedic, and Tibetan traditions.
- Reduction in out-of-pocket expenses of patients for medical treatment.
- Establishment of specialist hospitals to provide specialised treatment for those suffering from kidney, neurological and digestive-system-related ailments.
- As per March 2024, the Adolescent and Youth Health Survey, Himachal Pradesh, jointly conducted by the Centre for Public Health, Department of Epidemiology, NIMHANS, Bangalore, in collaboration with the National Health Mission, Himachal Pradesh, found that 15.54% of the state's youth are excessively anxious. Another report suggests that 6-7% of the population suffers from mental disorders in Himachal. The OPD and indoor facilities for treating mental illness are extremely limited. Most indoor admissions are attributed to alcohol use and poisoning, while neuropsychiatric disorders and substance abuse are largely dealt with at the outpatient level. More skilled psychiatrists and psychological counsellors are needed.

- In 2024, Himachal Pradesh had a senior citizen population (60+) of 13.1% of its total population. This represents a significant rise from 10.2% in 2011. This increase in the senior citizen population is higher than the national average. Rapid expansion of geriatric care facilities is the need of the hour.

Key Indicators for Success

S/N	Name of indicators	SDG/Drishti Target for 2022 ⁵	State Achievements for 2022 (May 2022)	Palampur Achievement for 2022	State target for 2030
1	Infant Mortality Ratio	<45/1,00,000 live births	MMR not calculated; however, 71 maternal deaths against 89,963 live births in 2020-21 as per HMIS data	Not achieved	<25/1,00,000 live births
2	Institutional deliveries (ID)	90 per cent	92.68* per cent		100 per cent
3	Mortality rate under 5 years	30/1,000	23/1,000		<5/1,000
4	Infant Mortality rate	15/1,000	13/1,000		5-10/1,000
5	Infant Mortality rate	22/1,000	19/1,000		5-10/1,000
6	TB	<100/lakh	<20/lakh		20/lakh
7	Percentage of women aged 15-49 years with a live birth in a given time period who received all antenatal care (ANC).	Achieving 100 per cent ANC	4 ANCs – 80.30 per cent**		100 per cent by 2022
8	Age-standardised prevalence of current tobacco use among persons aged 15+ years (Prevalence of tobacco use aged 15 yrs and older: India 38 per cent, Himachal Pradesh 22 per cent)	Bring down tobacco use among persons aged 15 years and older from current level (22 per cent) to 17 per cent	12 per cent		Bring down tobacco use among those aged 15 years and older
9	No. of beneficiaries covered (H.P. SDMA, Clean energy, Hospital manual, Public awareness, Risk reduction, yoga, training of health professionals and others).	To cover all sub-divisions/blocks teams for awareness/training/sensitisation	Only notification for financial incentive to yoga teachers for conducting yoga services at HWCs. In selected Districts, it was noticed that no yoga services were provided in HWCs.		To cover all villages in the State for awareness/training/sensitisation by 2024. To cover all schools up to 10+2 level for awareness/training/sensitisation.
10	Death rate due to road traffic injuries (1000 deaths per year / approximately 3-4 deaths per day)	To ensure dedicated Trauma Care services up to CHC level and quality services in all centres	Dedicated Trauma Centres have not yet been established in the whole State (Trauma Centre at Nalagarh, Kotkhaj, Una – funds received)		To ensure dedicated Trauma Care services up to PHC level by 2024, and quality services in all health facilities
11	Stunting among 5-year children.	Prevalence of stunting (height for age <-2 standard deviation from the median of the World Health Organization (WHO) Child Growth Standards) among children under 5 years of age			In Himachal Pradesh, approximately 30.8% of children under five years old are stunted, meaning their height is low for their age according to WHO standards

Source: State targets and performance as per Drishti report. Palampur data from District Health Officer, Kangra.

⁵“Drishti Himachal Pradesh-2030” is a vision document outlining the state’s roadmap for sustainable development, aligning with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It focuses on economic growth, social inclusion, infrastructure development, and environmental sustainability, ensuring no one is left behind. The vision encompasses various sectors and aims to achieve holistic and balanced development for the state by 2030.

4. Future Vision

By leveraging collective leadership and forging genuine public-private partnerships to deliver accessible, patient-centric care, we can achieve a transformed health landscape and lay the foundation for a healthier, more equitable, and prosperous Samridh Palampur by 2045.

Big Bets

- Attract best-in-class medical institutions to Palampur.
- Brand Palampur as the State's leading health and wellness destination offering allopathy, Ayurveda and Tibetan solutions.

Chapter 5 · Vanquishing the Drug Menace

1. Resources & Potential

Himachal Pradesh (HP) stands out as one of India's most remarkable success stories in education. Historically starting from a meagre 7% literacy rate at the time of Independence, the state has undergone what economists often call the "Himachal Miracle" in schooling.⁶

Himachal Pradesh officially crossed the threshold to be declared a "Fully Literate State". Because older generations were the primary segment lacking formal education, the literacy rate specifically among the youth (ages 15–29) is effectively near-universal (close to 100%).

2. Current Challenges

- Himachal Pradesh is facing an escalating drug crisis that is endangering the health, safety, and future of its youth, disrupting family structures, and eroding the social fabric. The intersection of unemployment, lack of constructive local engagement, and substance abuse has occasionally manifested in law-and-order issues.
- Perhaps the most critical and widely discussed challenge facing the youth in Palampur and surrounding rural areas is the rising tide of drug addiction. Law enforcement agencies have noted that drug traffickers have aggressively spread their tentacles into the Palampur region. Anti-social elements have established local networks to target school and college students.
- The state has witnessed an alarming rise in the use of heroin ("chitta"), synthetic drugs, cannabis, and opium. Increasing overdose deaths, injecting drug use, arrests under the NDPS Act, and widespread stigma are further compounded by poor access to rehabilitation services. Recent reports highlight that the situation is becoming particularly worse in rural areas of the Palampur Sub-Division, where monitoring is more difficult.

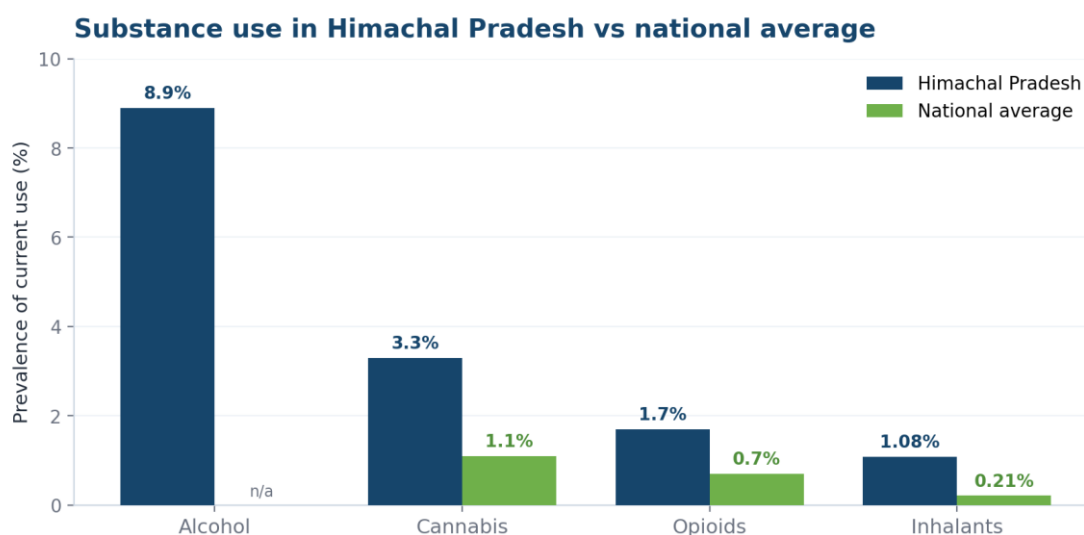
Key issues include:

- High heroin usage among youth aged 15–30.
- Rising presence of synthetic drugs (e.g., MDMA, FLAKKA, Fentanyl).
- Daily drug seizures, highlighting an active supply chain.
- Spike in overdose deaths and injecting drug use in border and semi-urban areas.

⁶Contributors: Vijay Kumar (drug campaigns and communications expert); Dr. Tarun Sood (Senior Resident, Govt. Hospital Tanda); Mr. Navneet (journalist, Dainik Jagaran); Dr. Kshama Maitre and Mr. Narender Paul (NGO CORD, Sidhbari); Sukhdev Vishwapremi (NGO RTDC); Dr. Rajesh Kumar Sood (Public Health specialist and District TB Control officer); Dr. Sanjay Bhardwaj (ex-HP Police department, also Charitable Blood Bank and trust).

- Over 50% of jail inmates are under the NDPS Act, many of them users-turned-peddlers.
- Social exclusion by communities and denial of services by PRIs and ULBs.
- Families resorting to extreme actions like reporting their own children due to lack of support.
- Public shaming via social media and community policing.

Substance Abuse in Himachal Pradesh (MSJE–AIIMS Survey, 2018)



Source: MSJE–AIIMS National Survey, 2018. Field reports suggest a significant increase in prevalence post-2018.

Substance	HP Use Rate	National Average
Alcohol	8.9%	–
Cannabis	3.3%	1.1%
Opioids	1.7%	0.7%
Inhalants	1.08%	0.21%

Note: Field reports suggest a significant increase in prevalence post-2018.

Key observations from stakeholder consultations and field data

- **Demographic Risk:** Drug use is most prevalent among adolescents and youth (15–35 years).
- **Geographic Vulnerability:** Border districts like Kangra, Una, Chamba, Bilaspur, and Solan are high-risk due to trafficking routes.
- **Stigma and Secrecy:** Shame and denial discourage help-seeking behaviour.
- **Service Gaps:** Lack of accessible de-addiction and mental health services in remote areas.
- **Human Resource Shortage:** Few trained professionals in prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.
- **Perception Gap:** Addiction is seen mainly as a criminal issue, not a health problem.

3. Strategic Leaps

Short-Term (2025–30)

Provide a full-spectrum response and support:

- Awareness & education
- Prevention
- De-addiction
- Counselling through Narcotics Anonymous peer support networks (as being done in Bir)

Primary Prevention

- **School/College-Based Programs:** Integrate structured life skills and drug education into curricula (avoiding one-time sessions). Adopt peer-led and mentor-teacher models.
- **Parental Engagement:** Regular module-based training for parents to recognise risks and support children.
- **Community Mobilisation:** Engage Panchayati Raj Institutions, women's Self Help Groups, Mahila Mandals, and NGOs for awareness and early risk identification.

Secondary Prevention (Early Intervention)

- **Peer Counsellors:** Train youth leaders to identify and refer at-risk peers.
- **Professional Counselling:** Expand district-level counsellor pools.
- **Strengthen Referrals:** Link communities to de-addiction and mental health services.
- **Psychosocial Support:** Establish community-based mental health initiatives.

Capacity Building and Convergence

Implement a Sub-Division-wide multi-stakeholder training plan to ensure all key actors are equipped to contribute to drug demand reduction:

- Training for MLAs, policy makers, PRI and ULB representatives, school principals, and youth leaders.
- Specialised modules for JJB members, DCPUs, CWC staff, and child protection teams.
- Inter-departmental training for:
 - Health (including Doctors, Nurses, Counsellors, Health educators, Community Health Officers)
 - Education (teachers, Peer leaders)
 - Women and Child Development, Labour, Transport, Excise, Panchayati Raj Institutes, DYSSO
- Mobilisation of peer leaders via Youth Clubs, National Service Scheme/National Cadet Corps, Red Ribbon Clubs.
- Women-led initiatives such as Mothers Against Addiction (MAA) through Mahila Mandals.
- Institutional integration with MS Himachal Institute PA, SCERT, PRTIs for curriculum-based training.
- Establishment of District/Sub-Division Drug Demand Reduction Committees.

Medium-Term (2030–35)

Tertiary Prevention (Treatment & Rehabilitation)

- **Expand Treatment Services:** Upgrade OPD/IPD facilities, ensuring stigma-free access.
- **Jail-Based Interventions:** Launch de-addiction programmes in central jails.
- **Child-Specific Facilities:** Establish dedicated centres for male adolescents.
- **Reintegration Support:** Relapse prevention, vocational training, and family counselling.
- **Workforce Training:** Upskill medical officers and counsellors in addiction medicine.

Targeted Interventions

- Risk profiling and mapping of high-, medium-, and low-burden areas/districts.
- Focused outreach in high-risk geographies (border blocks, tribal belts, urban slums).
- Tailored interventions for migrants, street children, and marginalised groups.

Special Focus Interventions

- **Border Area Action:** Targeted campaigns in development blocks adjoining Punjab, J&K and Haryana.
- **Local Language Digital Campaigns:** WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and community-radio-based IEC content dissemination.

- **Migrant and Transit Area Outreach:** Information desks, mobile counselling units at key congregation areas, worksites, and slums.
- **Drug-Free Tourism Campaign:** Sensitisation of tourism stakeholders and visitors via posters, kiosks, and awareness material.

Long-Term (2035–45)

Monitoring, Evaluation & Research

- Centralised MIS system with real-time dashboards.
- Periodic needs assessments, baseline surveys, and independent evaluations.
- Evidence-based planning and mid-course corrections.

Undertake research on the following priorities:

S. No.	Topic	Focus
1	Socioeconomic Drivers	Poverty, unemployment, migration in rural belts
2	Peer Pressure & Digital Media	Role in youth substance initiation
3	Stigma and Cultural Beliefs	Influence on help-seeking and recovery
4	Border Area Risks	Drug trafficking and economic factors
5	Migrant Children	Risk profiling and service access

4. Future Vision

Big Bet

- ▶ Showcase Palampur as the model for dealing humanely and effectively to solve the drug problem facing the state.

Chapter 6 · Way Forward

The idea of this Working Paper is to trigger a Palampur-level discussion where this SAMRIDH Palampur report will be presented to key members from the administration, local government, political parties and other key organisations of Palampur, to have their inputs, endorsement and ownership to take it forward.

The idea is also that if any of the Working Groups, or organisations that participated in it, would like to take some of the recommendations into action in the Palampur Sub-Division, they can decide to do so, and HITA and other organisations can support them in this endeavour.

Next steps by HITA

1. Organise a presentation of the report and discussions at the Palampur Sub-Division level in the coming months, with key stakeholders participating.
2. Create and curate platforms for continuous dialogue on these topics, and encourage one anchor organisation to take forward each of these themes and roadmaps.
3. Provide support to these organisations and their interventions.
4. Monitor and share the successes and learnings with all stakeholders, and also at the state and Himalayas level.

Palampur Sub-Division within Kangra district, Himachal Pradesh: 409 villages and 1 town across 429.29 km². Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, © CARTO

Annexure 1 · Key People / Institutions who have Contributed

No	Topic	Contributors	Organisation represented
1	Re-imagining Tourism in Palampur Sub-Division	Sandeep Kakkar	Sandeep & Co, Chartered Accountants, Palampur
2		Karan Grewal	Norwood Green, Palampur
3		Surya Prakash	Wah Tea Estate
4		Rajeev Ahal	HITA
5		Clifton David	Cliffy Café, Palampur
6	Sustainable and high-value Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry	Dr. D.K. Sadana	Himalayan RRA Network
7		Sukhdev Vishwapremi	
8		Dr. Rakesh Kumar	(MAPS) IHBT, Palampur
9		Hitendra Patial	Subject Matter Specialist
10		Dr. Pradeep	Head of Soil Department, HPKVV
11		Mr. Gagan	Gram Panchayat Pradhan, Nain
12		Mr. Shakti	Natural Farmer, YOL
13	Education, Skilling and livelihood across all cross-sectoral themes	Prof. Sachin Kumar	Principal, Wazir Ram Singh Government College, Dehri, Kangra
14		Preeti Mann	Co-Founder, QYON; Social Anthropologist
16		Saurabh Mittal	Co-Founder, QYON; Senior Advisor, IIT Mandi Catalyst
17		Rajan Sharma	Head of Department, State Institute of Hotel Management, Dharamshala
18		Abhishek Taneja	Founder-Director, EarthJust Ecosystems NGO, Solan
19		Dr. Manab Chakraborty	HITA
20	Public Health & Drug Menace	Vijay Kumar	Drug campaigns and communications expert
21		Dr. Tarun Sood	Senior Resident, Govt. Hospital Tanda
22		Navneet	Journalist, Dainik Jagaran
23		Dr. Kshama Maitre	CORD, Sidhbari
24		Mr. Narender Paul	CORD, Sidhbari
25		Dr. Rajesh Kumar Sood	Public Health specialist and District TB Control officer
26		Dr. Sanjay Bhardwaj	Ex-HP Police department; also Charitable Blood Bank and trust