



Do ordinary people in a rural district know about the key elements of human development that affect their lives? Are people accessing and benefitting from government programmes for water, sanitation, social protection, health and education? Can simple tools and methods be developed that help ordinary people to understand their current status and core outcomes in health, water, sanitation, food, livelihoods, housing, education and literacy? Can this approach lead to action?

PAHELI seeks to apply the ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) model to other social sectors in order to understand the status of key human development indicators. For basic parameters in education, ASER focuses on whether a child is in school and learning. For other sectors too, the challenge was to identify a key outcome and to develop simple tools, measures and methods to understand the status of that outcome in a given area (whether it be a neighbourhood, hamlet, village, block or district).

PAHELI 2011 is a product of these efforts. PAHELI stands for people's assessment of health, education and livelihoods. The PAHELI framework is built around four key human development domains: Life & Livelihoods, Water & Sanitation, Education & Literacy, Mother and Infant Health & Care. Based on the Millennium Development Goals goals and on national priorities, PAHELI is a household survey which looks at the provision of basic services at the village level through key central government social schemes and the links of these services to households. The schemes covered in PAHELI are Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, ICDS, public health services, PDS and MGNREGS.

The PAHELI tool-kit can be used to assess and understand the status of human development in any given area. It can be used for a census in a hamlet, village or panchayat. It can be also be used in a sample survey of a block or district. For PAHELI 2011, the tool-kit was used to create a district report card for human development. PAHELI was conducted in eight districts selected across seven states. Sixty villages were randomly selected in each district, and twenty randomly chosen households were surveyed per village. The findings were captured in the form of a district report card and disseminated at the district and state levels.

The PAHELI 2011 initiative was supported by the UN-Planning Commission Convergence Programme. In addition, two other partners provided technical know-how and resources: Arghyam in water and sanitation and Accountability Initiative for fund tracking at the local level. A set of local partners comprising organisations based in the area carried out the exercise at the local level. Government departments in each state supported the effort during training, implementation and dissemination.

Our findings: Some examples

For decentralised planning to be effective, it is important for the common man to be able to link the status of key indicators across domains. In this context, PAHELI can be a useful tool. The PAHELI main report and the District Reports have detailed findings for each domain. Here, we outline some of the findings that need urgent action.

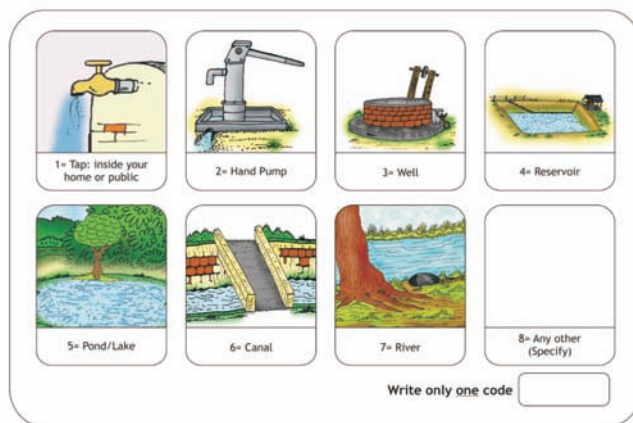
Clean and safe drinking water in schools is mandated as part of India's Right to Education Act. Internationally, the UN recognises universal access to clean water as a basic human right and as a vital step towards improving living standards. It is a Millenium Development Goal as well. Among other indicators in water, PAHELI 2011 also looked at water quality. Although more than 70% of water samples across all seven districts were found to be contaminated (bacterial contamination), close to three-quarters of the respondents expressed satisfaction with the quality of water. 80% of all schools surveyed had drinking water available but in close to 45% of these, the water had bacterial contamination. The situation in surveyed anganwadis was similar.

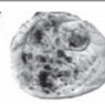





PAHELI also attempted to understand what adult women eat by interviewing women with children under the age of 3. Findings revealed that although most households own livestock (68%), only one-tenth of adult women (11.9%) consumed milk or milk products once a day. Similarly, although close to 81% of all households own some amount of land, the consumption of green leafy vegetables and fruits (protective foods) was extremely low across all seven districts (1.1%). The National Institute of Nutrition recommends that an adult woman consume at least 300 ml of milk and milk products and 100 grams of green leafy vegetables and fruits daily.

Concluding thoughts

PAHELI aimed to create measures, methods and mechanisms to engage citizens and communities in understanding the status of human development in their locality and gauging the effectiveness of government-run programmes. By building capacities in communities, this approach may lead to a better identification of actions that households can take to improve their situation as well as demands that communities can make for better delivery of services at the local level.

PAHELI also opens up the possibility of widespread participation of local people in collecting data that can be an integral part of planning and implementation. The lessons learned in the process of designing and executing PAHELI will be used to review and refine the framework, design, tools, methods and analysis for future rounds. For example, there was a great deal of interest at the village level in testing water or salt, and in activities such as asking children to read or do arithmetic. Interest and discussion at the village level can turn 'respondents' into 'participants' and pave the way for future actions. Generating curiosity and interest in understanding the key dimensions of the situation and context is the first step towards finding solutions.



| S.No. | Food product (Ingredient) | Write code (1=Yes; 2=No) |
|-------|---|--------------------------|
| 1- | Rice, roti made of atta/bajra/makki/maida, bread/pav  | |
| 2- | Curd, paneer, buttermilk, Khoya  | |
| 3- | Milk (alone)  | |
| 4- | Milk in tea  | |
| 5- | Green leafy vegetables: Methi, Palak, Saag etc.  | |
| 6- | Any other vegetable (other than potato, tomato and onion)  | |