

Discussing Local Challenges: A field trip to Theog by DA



Consultations with local community and government stakeholders

Development Alternatives conducted a field visit to the Dhamandri hamlet in Theog, Himachal Pradesh. The work is supported by Royal Enfield Special Mission. To study the local challenges, in-depth discussions were held with the local EGF team, Panchayat Members, Women-led SHGs and the the Municipal Council in Theog. Our work will support the circularity in local tourism including sectors like the built environment, food, water and waste.

Insights

The local construction practices in the region rely heavily on brick and cement structures, with materials often sourced from Chandigarh. This increases carbon emissions and results in buildings with poor thermal conditions during winter. Modern materials tend to retain cold, leading to inadequate indoor warmth, which forces residents to depend on traditional heating methods like tandoors and coal or wood-based stoves. The shift away from traditional construction methods, such as using mud and wood, has led to the loss of culturally significant practices that were better suited to local environmental conditions and provided natural insulation.



DA team at the local government school



Community consultations

In waste management, the informal sector, particularly Kabadiwallahs, plays a crucial role in waste collection and sorting having materials like plastic, rubber, metal, and glass. However, the region lacks comprehensive waste management infrastructure, which creates challenges in proper waste disposal and processing.

Recognising this, the local government of Theog plans to establish a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) to improve recycling rates and reduce landfill waste. Additionally, the National Amrit

Yojana is being implemented to enhance the drinking water supply infrastructure, addressing ongoing water scarcity issues.

Community concerns highlight the need for increased engagement and awareness, especially regarding waste management and environmental sustainability. There is significant concern about the environmental impact of monoculture apple cultivation, with calls for more diverse and sustainable agricultural practices. Residents also emphasise the need for improved infrastructure, including streetlights and common toilets, to enhance their quality of life.



Sorting and aggregating at junk yard

Conclusion

Need for Comprehensive Approach: A comprehensive waste management strategy is needed to address the region's specific challenges, focusing on infrastructure development, stronger waste management connections between cities and villages, community engagement, and sustainable agricultural practices.

Promote Community Engagement: Facilitate dialogue between municipal authorities and local communities to ensure that waste management initiatives align with community needs and priorities.



DA team visit at junk yard managed by private players



Current construction practices (use of bricks and cement)

Prioritise Infrastructure: Prioritise investments in essential infrastructure, such as built environment, alternative construction materials, water supply and sanitation to improve the quality of life for residents.

Diversify Agricultural Practices: Encourage farmers to adopt more sustainable and diverse agricultural practices to reduce their reliance on monoculture and mitigate environmental risks.