

# Role of *Panahgahs* in Providing Shelter to the Homeless in Punjab: Issues and Way Forward

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## Introduction

Punjab is the most populated province of Pakistan with 53% of the country's population;<sup>2</sup> it is the second largest with respect to area. A large population of Punjab is clustered around the poverty line with the real inequality challenge coming from rural-urban income disparities. Beset by poverty, many people from rural areas continue migrating to Lahore for livelihood; most of them do not have enough funds to pay for renting a room or spending a night in a paid facility. Hence, a good number of homeless people are found sleeping on roads, under bridges, in parks, markets and stations with a concentration at Data Darbar, Minar-e-Pakistan, Chauburji, Shahi Qila and Bhatti Chowk.<sup>3</sup> This kind of homelessness is categorized as "literally homeless" a term often used to denote the people staying in shelters for the homeless, on the streets or in similar settings.<sup>4</sup>

Since 2019, a new phenomenon has arisen on the social protection horizon of Punjab: These are the 93 *Panahgahs* (literally "refuges") that have been set up for disadvantaged urban homeless of Punjab under umbrella of Social Welfare & Bait ul Maal Department. *Panahgahs* provide a decent sleeping space to the urban homeless who are informal actors of the urban economy. The initiative is in line with Target 1.3 of SDGs which aims to "implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all." This paper analyzes the effectiveness of the initiative to establish *Panahgahs* and whether it has achieved the envisaged targets or a broader and more elaborate institutional framework is required to achieve these.

Homelessness in large cities is likely to increase in the future owing to income inequalities and uneven opportunities. It affects the well-being of not only the homeless but also the public in general and aesthetics of cities. Hence, it is important to tackle this issue proactively as well as to study and analyze factors leading to homelessness so as to address those issues to prevent people from going homeless. Prima facie the *Panahgahs* in Lahore are benefiting visitors to the city for different purposes incongruent to the very concept of homelessness.

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<sup>1</sup> Pakistan Administrative Service, 32<sup>nd</sup> MCMC.

<sup>2</sup> Punjab Bureau of Statistics. *Punjab in Figures*. Annual Report, Lahore: Planning and Development Board, Punjab, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Tauqeer Hussain Shah, Huma Butt. "Sleep comes all the way: a study of homeless people in Lahore, Pakistan." *Academic Research International*, 2011: 207-217.

<sup>4</sup> Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, Max Roser. "Homelessness." *Our World in Data*, 2017.

## **The Issue**

People having low access to employment and quality health services in their areas are compelled to travel to urban centers; however, due to lack of resources either to commute from their houses daily or to spend nights in paid accommodation, they become shelter-less and are forced to sleep in public spaces.

The Government of Punjab has established 12 *Panahgahs* under the umbrella of Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal Department (SW&BMD) to accommodate such persons. The funds required for building maintenance, janitorial services and bedding etc. are met by the department from its budget which was Rs. 28.5 million for the year 2021-22.<sup>5</sup> However, there are serious questions about the financial sustainability of *Panahgahs* vis-à-vis the standards of services that are being provided there.

The research question, then, is to what extent is the *Panahgahs* project sustainable within its existing legal and administrative framework?

## **Significance and Scope of Study**

Till date no research study exists on the *Panahgahs*, an initiative of the former government that was commissioned in 2019<sup>6</sup> after approval of the cabinet. Although the *Panahgahs* have been established throughout Punjab, the scope of study is limited to *Panahgahs* in Lahore due to resource constraints.

## **Review of Literature**

The nuances of homelessness are in a flux and this condition is not an unchanging one. According to a report of The Bowry Mission, the oldest charity organization of United States, nearly one in every 106 New Yorkers is homeless — that's nearly 80,000 men, women and children. Every night, about 4,000 people sleep on the streets, in the subway system or in other public spaces.<sup>7</sup> The major causes of homelessness listed on the website are mental illness, untreated medical issues, violence and abuse, lack of affordable housing and difficulty in sustaining employment.<sup>8</sup> A research on state intervention in homelessness in Malaysia states that the government has an inherent responsibility to address the issue of homelessness by examining its causes and repercussions and develop positive strategies for its prevention and resolution in view of the profound difficulties which have to be endured by homeless persons in dealing with adversity and socio-economic exclusion.<sup>9</sup> The false perceptions attached with

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<sup>5</sup> Finance Department Punjab, Budget Book 2021-22.

<sup>6</sup> Muhammad Hassan Iqbal, Secretary Social Welfare, interviewed by author, November 4, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> The Bowry Mission, "How we Help" November 2020. <https://www.bowry.org/homelessness/> (accessed November 20, 2021).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Rusenko, Rayna M. "Homelessness, Human Insecurities and the Government Agenda in Malaysia." *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 2014: 45-74.

homeless persons and street sleepers like beggars, drug addicts and criminals affect the “attitudes to policy” and in turn reduce the extent to which they are included in “mainstream policy.”<sup>10</sup> According to the National Urban Housing & Habitat Policy (NUHHP) of India, urban homeless individuals contribute to economy of the cities and in turn the nation as cheap labour in urban sectors; yet they have to live with no shelter or social security protection. This policy suggests permanent shelters in state capitals for the homeless that should be located close to railway stations, bus depots, terminals, markets, and wholesale *mandis* (markets). The policy also proposes levy of user fees depending upon the income level of beneficiaries for the maintenance of these facilities.<sup>11</sup>

A rough sleepers Initiative (RSI) for people who were sleeping on streets was introduced by the Scottish Government in 1997 and targeted ending the need for rough sleeping by 2003. Many local authority respondents saw RSI as the catalyst for more policy developments including health and homelessness action plans and integration of homelessness services within Supporting People planning.<sup>12</sup>

The structure and core purposes of the Mughal caravanserais which were built during the period of Akbar the Great on the Agra-Lahore Highway in Eastern Punjab was stated to be “*the comfort of travelers and the asylum of poor strangers.*”<sup>13</sup> These caravanserais played an important role in the political, social and economic life of people. They helped foster political cohesion, travel safety and economic growth of the kingdom. Travelers, including pilgrims, merchants, and scholars, used these caravanserais for protection from robbers and rough weather. For travelers on long-distance journeys, these facilities served as route markers and places to rest or stay safely. As most places, caravanserais offered mosques at which daily prayer could be performed, as well as markets and bazaars where supplies could be purchased and repairs made to caravan trappings. Even court officials used *serais* for their stay while relaying proclamations from the court or collecting tax and receipts from the area. In addition to serving social and economic functions, these caravanserais reflected the glory and the might of their builders.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Suzzane Speak, Graham Tipple. "Perceptions, Persecution and Pity: The Limitations of Interventions for Homelessness in Developing Countries." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 2006: 172-188.

<sup>11</sup> Government of India. *Operational Guidelines for the scheme of Shelter for Urban Homeless under the National Urban Livelihoods Mission*. Policy Guidelines, New Delhi: Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Suzzane Fitzpatrick, Nicholas Pleace. *Final Evaluation of the Rough Sleepers Initiative*. Official Report, Scottish Executive Social Research, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Abū al-Faẓl ibn Mubārak, Henry Blochmann, H. S. Jarrett, and Jadunath Sarkar. *The A'in-I Akbari by Abu'l-Faẓl 'Allami. Translated into English by H. Blochmann*. Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1927. Page 232.

<sup>14</sup> Shaifali Johar, *Academia.edu*.n.d  
[https://www.academia.edu/35799231/A\\_Survey\\_of\\_Mughal\\_Caravanserais\\_in\\_the\\_Eastern\\_Punjab\\_India](https://www.academia.edu/35799231/A_Survey_of_Mughal_Caravanserais_in_the_Eastern_Punjab_India) (accessed December 12, 2021).

## **Research Methodology**

The study is based on a mixed-method approach using both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative primary data was obtained through both structured and unstructured focused interviews with officials and beneficiaries of the *Panahgahs*. A convenience sample of one hundred (100) persons was randomly selected from amongst the sheltered homeless who were interviewed verbally and through a questionnaire. Qualitative secondary data was obtained from various news articles and documents such as policy and project documents. Quantitative data was obtained from the Directorate General of Social Welfare, *Punjab*. Comparative data analysis techniques as well as thematic analysis methodology have been used in this paper.

## **Organization of This Paper**

Section I of the paper deals with the legal and administrative framework of *Panahgahs* in Lahore. Section II discusses the data analysis as well as issues and challenges in execution of the project. Section III is about global examples of initiatives of social welfare departments in providing relief to the street sleepers; finally there are the conclusion and recommendations.

## **Section I**

### **Legal and Administrative Framework**

#### **1.1 Legal Framework**

Articles 37 and 38 of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan provide that the state shall promote social justice, and social and economic well-being of the people and “*provide basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief, for all such citizens, irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race, as are permanently or temporarily unable to earn their livelihood on account of infirmity, sickness or unemployment*”.

The *Panahgahs* initiative aims to address at least the provisions of temporary shelter and meals to the destitute of the society for a limited period of time in major urban centers of the province. The policy for *Panahgahs* as framed by Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal elucidates that Section 3(4)(a)(d)(i) of the Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal Act, 1991 provides the purposes for which Bait-ul-Mal funds may be used and these include residential accommodation to destitute, needy widows, orphans and other needy persons.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, “*panahgahs* Policy” The Standards for *panahgahs* 9 June, 2020 <http://Panahgahs.pbm.gov.pk/policy.pdf> accessed on 21-10-2021.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment has transferred most social protection functions to the provinces in order to safeguard the fundamental rights of their vulnerable and socially excluded segments. Section 5 of the Punjab Bait-ul Mal Act 1991 gives the purposes for utilization of funds<sup>16</sup> but does not specifically contain a residential clause.

The concept paper of *Panahgahs* (PC-I) describes that it is mandate of the department to cater to social needs of the marginalized segments of the society. The poor and needy persons who come to Lahore for healing and earning purposes and have no place to spend their night time anywhere thus become shelter-less. Provision of social protection services to this segment directly comes under the purview of the SW&BMD under Punjab Government Rules of Business 2011.<sup>17</sup> There is no special act or set of rules governing the establishment or operation of *Panahgahs* otherwise.

The concept of providing shelter has already been realized by the department in the form of old age homes and orphanages. The *Panahgah* is basically an extension of that concept providing shelter only for the night and two meals. However, this is incongruent with the prevalent international practice where homeless persons are provided shelter for considerably longer periods of time until the incumbents shift to permanent housing facilities or low rent housing.

## 1.2 Administrative Framework

Twelve *Panahgahs* in Lahore have been established by the SW&BM department Punjab after approvals of the cabinet and Chief Minister. The *Panahgahs* in other districts of Punjab have been established and are being operated by respective district administrations.<sup>18</sup> Out of the 12 *Panahgahs* of Lahore, five are purpose-built or signature *Panahgahs* while seven have been set up in rented buildings on a need basis.

**Table 1: Location and Capacity of *Panahgahs***

| Signature Panagahs         | Capacity | Make-Shift Panahgahs | Capacity |
|----------------------------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| Data Darbar Chowk          | 144      | Negheban Center      | 30       |
| Bus Stand, Badami Bagh     | 100      | Kot Khawaja Saeed    | 30       |
| Fruit and Vegetable Market | 100      | Johar Town           | 40       |
| Railway Station            | 144      | Bund Road            | 30       |
| Thokar Niaz Baig           | 100      | Shahdara             | 40       |

<sup>16</sup> Punjab Laws, “The Punjab Bait-ul-Mal Act” 30 March, 1991 <http://punjablaws.gov.pk/laws/380.html> accessed 21-10-2021.

<sup>17</sup> Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal Department, PC-I of the *Panahgahs* Project, 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Zaib Waseem, Director Planning, SW&BM department, interviewed by author, 03 December, 2021.

|  |  |                            |    |
|--|--|----------------------------|----|
|  |  | Bibi Pak Daman Ali Complex | 70 |
|  |  | Gajju Matta                | 20 |

The *Panahgah* facility can be utilized for night time stay only from 6 pm to 9 am; two meals, breakfast and dinner, are provided to the beneficiaries. The facilities are closed during the day time and neither travelers/guests nor staff are allowed after closing hours i.e., 9:00 AM.<sup>19</sup> Any person with a CNIC or any other known identity document, who has no place to spend a night is eligible to reside in the *Panahgahs* except one who is using or in possession of narcotic drugs, firearms or suffering from any severe communicable disease or a psychiatric disorder; in case of the latter two he/she is referred to a hospital. The persons belonging to Lahore are ineligible to avail this facility. Each *Panahgah* has to maintain a proper record pertaining to the admission of each resident. The admission is now being made on Guest Management Information System (GMIS) software developed by PITB for entering the record of beneficiaries. Following is the strength of officers and officials posted at each *Panahgahs* for completion of formalities and facilitation of persons staying there:

| S.No | Nomenclature           | BPS | Remarks  |
|------|------------------------|-----|--|
| 1    | Social Welfare Officer | 17  | One for each <i>Panahgah</i>                                     |
| 2    | Assistant              | 16  | One for each <i>Panahgah</i>                                     |
| 3    | Warden                 | 11  | One male and one Female Warden for each <i>Panahgah</i>          |
| 4    | Junior Clerk           | 11  | One for each <i>Panahgah</i>                                     |
| 5    | Washer-man             | 1   | 2 for each <i>Panahgah</i>                                       |
| 6    | Attendant              | 1   | 2 Female Attendants + 3 Male attendants for each <i>Panahgah</i> |
| 7    | Mali                   | 1   | One for each <i>Panahgah</i>                                     |

Each *Panahgah* comprises of a gentlemen's block, a ladies/families block, a mosque, dining hall and washrooms. The janitorial services are outsourced for each *Panahgah* and the service company is paid from the budget of the department. Hence the establishment is the function of government while food and basic medicines are provided by philanthropists/NGOs.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Muhammad Hassan Iqbal, Secretary Social Welfare, interviewed by author, 04 November, 2021.

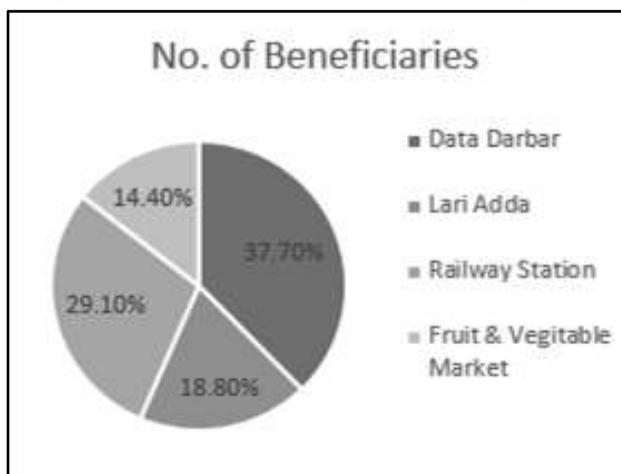
## Section II

### Data Analysis, Issues and Challenges

#### 2.1 Data Analysis

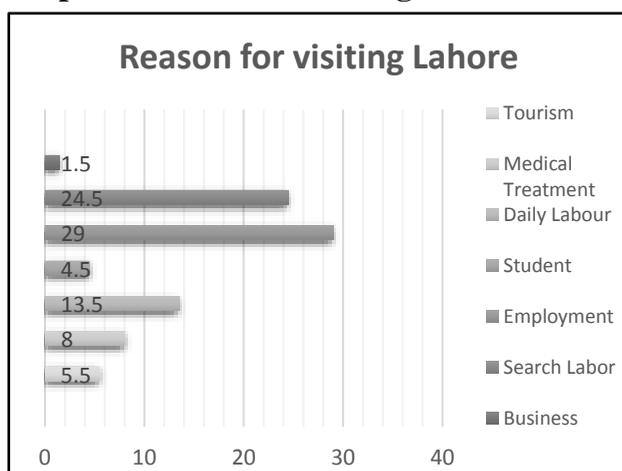
Analysis has been conducted on the basis of the secondary data obtained from the Directorate General of Social Welfare and primary data collected through questionnaires.

**Graph 1: Visitors at different *Panahgahs***



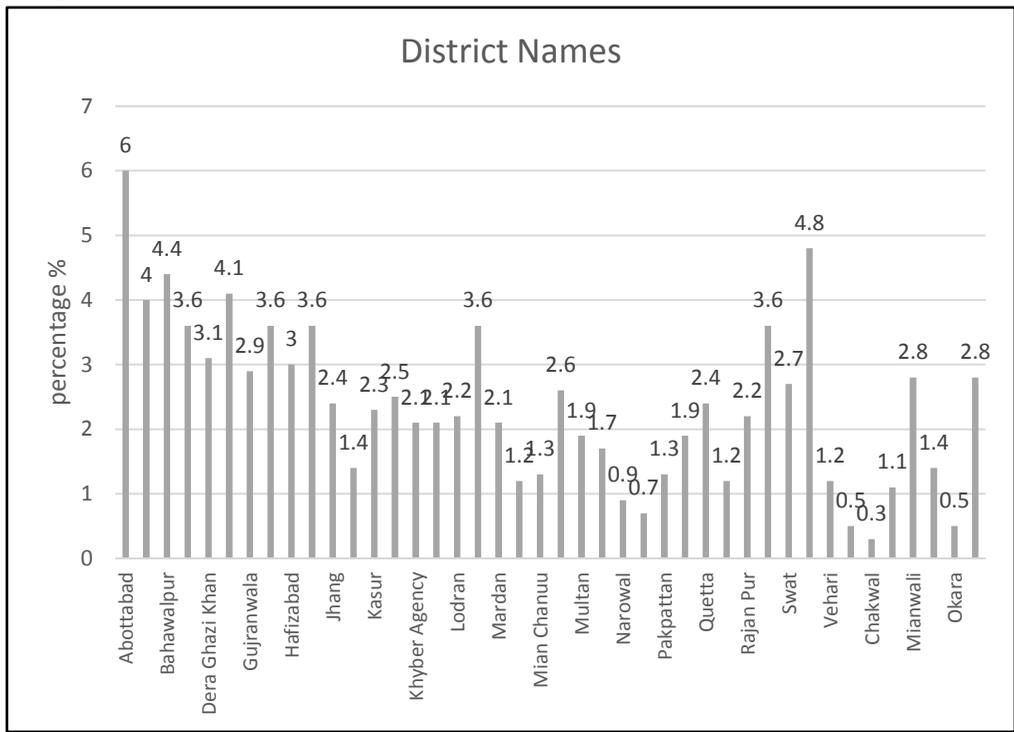
This pie chart represents stay preference of passengers. 37.7% passengers visited Data Darbar Center for stay furthermore 29.1 %, 18.8%, 14.4% & 0.4 persons stayed at Railway Station, Thokar Niaz Baig, Fruit Market Lahore & Bus Stand (Lari Adda) respectively. This shows that Data Darbar and Railway Station centres are the more preferred options as compared to others.

**Graph 2: Reason for Visiting Lahore**



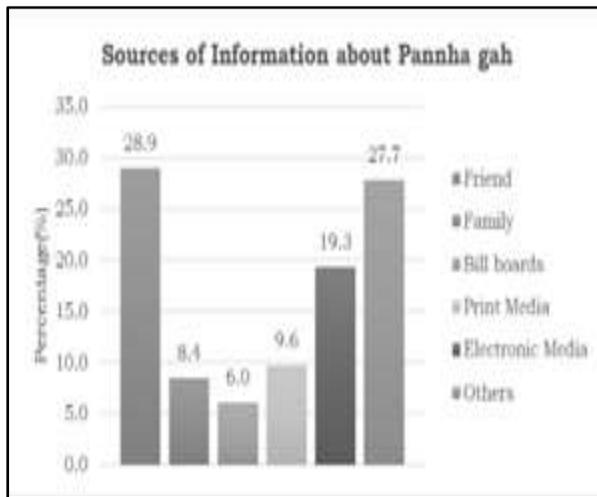
This graph shows that 24.5% of beneficiaries came to Lahore in search of labour, 29% for employment, 13.5% for daily labour, 8% for medical treatment and 4.5% of beneficiaries visited Lahore as students. Students and labourers can be allowed to stay more than three days but upon payment of nominal charges

**Graph 3: District wise Residents**



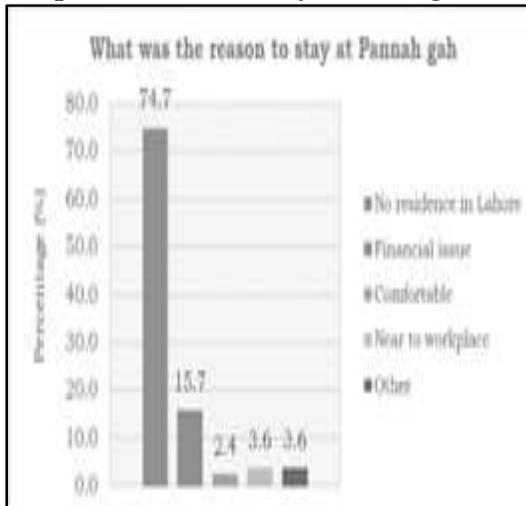
As evident from this graph, most of the residents travelled from Abbottabad followed by T.T Singh and Bahawalpur meaning thereby that most residents were from far off places, hence the need for the initiative is justified.

**Graph 4: Sources of Information about Panahgahs**



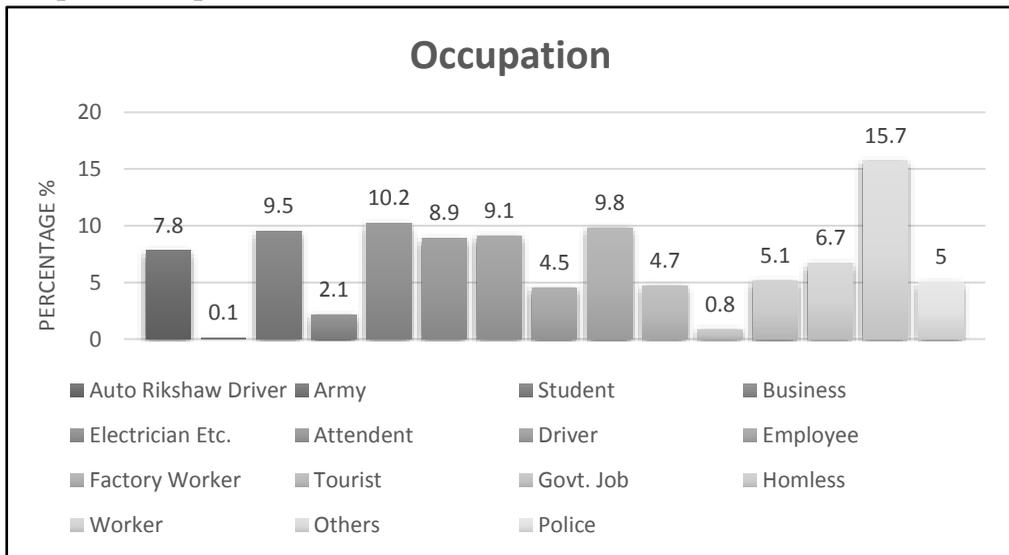
When asked about how they came to know about Panahgahs, the beneficiaries gave the following percentage wise responses. 28.9% came to know from a friend, 8.4% from family, 6% from billboards, 9.6% from print media, 19.3% from electronic media and 27.7% responded that they came to know from other sources

**Graph 5: Reason to Stay at Panahgahs**



As evident from graph, 74.7% of the beneficiaries were those who had no residence in Lahore, while 15.7% said they had financial issues, 2.4% chose *Panahgahs* because it was comfortable to stay there. 3.6% stayed at *Panahgahs* because it was near to their workplaces. Hence, it is evident that the compelling factor for stay at *Panahgahs* was not poverty alone and that there were other considerations too. This is also evident from the next graphical representation.

**Graph 6: Occupation of Residents**



The graph shows that residents were not necessarily homeless street sleepers, for whom the facilities were actually intended; other people also availed the facility. This is primarily because of the facility of a decent living space as well as dignity with which the residents are served.

## **2.2 Issues and Challenges**

The rationale behind establishment of *Panahgahs* was to provide shelter to street sleepers, safety from extreme weather as well as from social exclusion. The *Panahgahs* dwellers are those who have a home in another city but are homeless in Lahore as the facility is not applicable to Lahore domiciled citizens.

### **2.2.1 Legal Gaps**

No legal provision (Act or Rules) specifically governs establishment and operation of *Panahgahs* in Punjab. Moreover, there exist multiple systems of supervision, operation and maintenance in Lahore and other districts of Punjab, i.e., in Lahore and Taunsa Sharif the *Panahgahs* are being maintained by SW&BM department while these are being run by Deputy Commissioners in other districts with the help of non-profit organizations. Some projects of social welfare are being carried out by Punjab Social Protection Authority which functions under umbrella of P&D Board; there is no coordination between the two agencies. Lack of provincial policy and legal provisions as well as a uniform system of operation and maintenance also puts the sustainability of the project under question, especially given the fact that many political decisions and projects of predecessor regimes are either discontinued or scaled down; this was the case of Rescue 1122 and Surgical Tower of Mayo Hospital Lahore.

### **2.2.2 High Operational and Maintenance Standards**

In Lahore and Taunsa Sharif, purpose built buildings with state of the art facilities have been constructed under the project. The maintenance of buildings is being done on high standards; this researcher visited *Panahgahs* in Lahore and found these to be clean, aerated, furnished with bunk beds and neat sheets and clean blankets. The washrooms, dining halls were also clean and disinfected. It is noteworthy that two *Panahgahs* were visited on an unannounced / surprise basis but the upkeep, cleanliness and standard of meals were same. All the operations of *Panahgahs* are being performed under supervision of a BS-17 Social Welfare Officer. The expense of janitorial services, utility bills and washing activities is being met by the department from its own budget. There are no nominal charges for the use of these facilities even by the ones who can afford to pay a nominal amount for this decent stay. There is no connection between the beneficiaries seeking employment and their employers.

It may not be viable to continue such expenditure on this initiative in the longer run if the national macroeconomic indicators do not change for better. The department is carrying out other welfare functions as old age homes, orphanages, *dar-ul-amaans*<sup>21</sup>, *Aafiat* etc. This project, being in the (political) focus of authorities, may end in

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<sup>21</sup> Shelter homes for destitute women.

stagnation or to the detriment of other existing programs without additional operational budget.

### **2.2.3 Informal Multi-agency Cooperation**

The arrangement of meals for the inhabitants of *Panahgahs* is being done informally by the department in Lahore and by the district administrations in other districts of Punjab. There is no formal agreement, arrangement or MoU for cooperation with any organizations for this project. Since the start of *Panahgahs*, several non-government partners in small districts have demonstrated difficulty in complying with agreed-upon levels and measures of assistance. Hence, bolstered only by a non-binding apparatus, SW&BM department is cognizant of the reality that non-government partners can reduce or withdraw their support at any time. The lack of an enforceable framework for reliable network coordination prevents *Panahgahs* staff from knowing with confidence, whether or when necessary assistance will come through. These informal arrangements not only adversely impact quality, consistency, and efficacy in services and resources, but also act as hurdles in the ability to incorporate a newer set of services and options. Ultimately, the department has little choice but to continue its focus on delivery of the few resources and services within its control. In case of non-cooperation by these charitable institutions, provision of free meals to temporary residents will be an uphill task.

Punjab Social Protection Authority carried out an exercise for identifying various social programs which revealed that there are more than 100 social protection schemes being carried out in the Punjab by about 25 departments. A lack of coordination in these schemes clearly points to potential inefficiencies and wastage of resources.<sup>22</sup>

### **2.2.4 Classification of Beneficiaries**

The idea of *Panahgahs* was basically conceived to provide shelter to the street sleepers and the homeless. However, since drug addicts and persons with communicable diseases are not allowed, hence, as evident from data, all the beneficiaries do not necessarily belong to the lowest strata of society i.e., only 5% of them are permanently homeless, others have some kind of employment and a house in their hometowns. But all are treated same at *Panahgahs* and there is no fee or charge for utilization of the facility. One of the beneficiaries interviewed by the author had come from Sukkur, Sindh in search of employment; he informed that ‘truck hotels’ charge Rs. 60 for one single cot (*chaarpai*) per night in Lahore whereas the *Panahgahs* having much better facilities and ambience and are free of charge.

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<sup>22</sup> Punjab Social Protection Policy, Punjab Social Protection Authority, 2021 (1-44).

### **2.2.5 Study on Social Benefits of the Project**

The PC-IV of the project developed by the Monitoring and Evaluation wing of the Planning and Development Board Punjab has been studied; this document mainly deals with the specifications of the concrete structure of the purpose-built *Panahgahs*, the facilities provided therein and the number of beneficiaries who availed the facility. Though it has provided a lot of facilitation to the attendants of patients in hospitals and travelers from other parts of the country, but there is no study/research into the economic, social and policy based benefits that have accrued from this project, especially the reduction in the number of street sleepers.

## **Section III**

### **Comparison with Other Countries**

Street homelessness is becoming a pronounced part of urban landscapes all over the world. Numerous cities in the world have become testing grounds for governments to introduce reforms and initiatives to address the needs of street sleepers. A comparative study of initiatives taken by the governments of four countries for providing shelter to the urban homeless has been made. The aim of this comparison is to see what governmental or non-governmental apparatuses have been used for re-integrating street sleepers into society and reducing their number and how far these mechanisms have proved effective.

#### **3.1 Rain Baseras/Night Shelters for Homeless in Delhi**

The National Capital Territory/ Government of Delhi under the directions of Supreme Court of India in its order dated 27<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2012 came up with the scheme of Shelters for Urban Homeless (SUH) and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Population Development notified the Operational Guidelines for SUH. Under these guidelines, the Delhi government has developed a system of shelters for the homeless under supervision of a Supreme Court monitored committee a few years back.

Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB), an authority formed under DUSIB Act, 2010 has been assigned the 'role of establishing the rain baseras' and looking after the *jhuggie jhomprie* squatter settlements / clusters by way of provision of civic amenities and their resettlement too. There are 150 night shelters in Delhi, 66 are permanent while the rest are temporary. These shelter homes are being run by different NGOs under the supervision of DUSIB.<sup>23</sup> These may comprise of concrete buildings, porta cabins or, in some instances, tents also. There is no fee charged from the residents. They are provided with lunch and dinner and the stay is as long as a resident desires.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board, List of Shelter Homes [https://delhishelterboard.in/main/?page\\_id=2100](https://delhishelterboard.in/main/?page_id=2100).

<sup>24</sup> Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board, "Frequently Asked Questions" under Rain Baseras [https://delhishelterboard.in/main/?page\\_id=12026](https://delhishelterboard.in/main/?page_id=12026) accessed on 30-11-2021.

However, a research study by Shankey Verma suggests that there was a diversity in the inhabitants from beggars to medical students; the prevalent living conditions in *rain baseras* are far from the ideal (officially) described. Some of the shelters did not have beds but “*daris*” (floor spreads) to sleep on and dirty blankets. The residents of some shelter homes said that they bring food from outside and sometimes food is donated/distributed by people or they received *bhandara* or *prasad* (temple handouts) meaning thereby that there was no uniform system of provision of meals in shelters across Delhi.<sup>25</sup> The Hans of India reported on 08 August 2021 that Arwind Kejriwal has stated that AAP government will provide free cooked food at night shelters for the homeless.<sup>26</sup> Hence there is some legal backing to the system, but no uniform system for provision of food and facilities to the residents of *Rain Baseras* in Delhi.

### 3.2 Anjung Singgah for Kuala Lumpur Malaysia<sup>27</sup>

In Kuala Lumpur, the federal Social Welfare Department (SWD) in 2010 began with a street census of the city identifying 1,387 persons as homeless, 64% of whom stated unemployment or low-income as the primary contributing factor for their homelessness. Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development (MWFC) Malaysia established a pilot transitional home called Anjung Singgah in Kuala Lumpur in April 2011, with the objectives of (i) reintegrating homeless persons into society and (ii) reducing their overall number. This shelter is being administered under a government-linked charitable organization, the National Welfare Foundation (NWF), and provides employment referrals, counselling, meals and other forms of assistance limited to a two-week period. In its first year, the pilot project saw nearly 500 clients and became the model for a series of other government-initiated shelters, also named Anjung Singgah.

A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) authorized by the MWFC and NWF provides Anjung Singgah’s overarching mission, objectives, strategies, operational framework and performance indicators. The provision of food, shelter and work stands as the prime operative mechanism for achieving this aim, based in part on consultation with NGOs. MWFC has devolved administration including responsibility for covering necessary operational expenses to NWF which seeks to hand over key operations such as meal provision, counselling and medical care to other actors in an extensive cooperative network. Consequently, within the present structure, NWF has negligible influence and control over partners and resources. Further, in the absence of a government policy on homelessness that assigns responsibility for and ensures quality and uniformity in

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<sup>25</sup> Shankey Verma, Vartika Srivastava. "Urban Homelessness and basera/shelters: an evaluative study conducted during winter in NCT Delhi." *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Hans News Service, The Hans India, 8 August, 2021 <https://www.thehansindia.com/news/national/aap-government-to-provide-free-cooked-food-at-night-shelters-for-the-homeless-700535> accessed on 11-12-2021.

<sup>27</sup> Rusenko, Rayna M. "Homelessness, Human Insecurities and the Government Agenda in Malaysia." *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 2014: 45-74.

action, Anjung Singgah as an institution and its partners tend to operate in an *ad hoc* and unguided fashion with only a loose control of the government.

Eligibility criteria include being a Malaysian citizen, aged 18+ and not being a drug or alcohol addict. The facility is provided for two weeks to clients to start their journey of reintegration into the social and economic mainstream.

### **3.3 PATH for Homeless in New York, United States<sup>28</sup>**

The Department for Homeless Services (DHS), City of New York has developed temporary shelters for homeless families (PATH or Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing) and homeless adults (Adult Intake Center). The mission statement provides for prevention of homelessness and provision of safe temporary shelter to address street homelessness and connect New Yorkers experiencing homelessness to suitable housing. They claim doing this with accountability, empathy, and equity.

DHS is an agency with 2,000 employees and has an annual operating budget of over US\$ 2 billion. It collaborates with twenty “providers” which are NGOs for maintenance of shelter homes. It employs multiple innovative strategies to help families and individuals successfully exit shelter and return to self-sufficiency as quickly as possible. DHS requires shelter inhabitants to gain employment, connect to work supports and other public benefits, save their income, and search for housing, to better prepare for independent living. The following documents required for entry to shelter homes along with identity documents:

- Eviction papers or marshal's notice
- Leases
- Con Edison or telephone bills
- Pay stubs or proof of income

The data of persons served per day is regularly updated on the official website; an average 45000-46000 persons are served per day.<sup>29</sup> The focus is on re-employment of shelter-less persons/families and access to affordable housing for the quick re-integration of the homeless in the society. The average length of stay is over 400 days and families who do not qualify for a subsidy have to pay their own rent.

The table below shows the comparison of these countries in different aspects; it is very clear that focus in Malaysia and US is on re-integration of homeless in society so that they don't have to avail the facility of shelter home repeatedly. This facility is missing

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<sup>28</sup> Department of Homeless Services, “NYC Inside DHS” <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dhs/about/inside-dhs.page> accessed on 21-11-2021.

<sup>29</sup> Department of Homeless Services, “DHS Homeless Shelter Census” <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Social-Services/DHS-Homeless-Shelter-Census/3pjq-ncn9/data> accessed on 21-11-2021.

in *Panahgahs* although many beneficiaries of *Panahgahs* come to Lahore for seeking employment. The ICT based system of entry to *Panahgahs* GMIS can help in this regard. Further, the time for stay is the least in Pakistan; hence, some persons stay for three days in one *Panahgahs* and then move to the next for next three days and so on. As informed by one of the Social Welfare Officers, stays for more than three days trigger quarrels among the inhabitants on petty issues.

|  | <b>Pakistan</b>  | <b>Malaysia</b>  | <b>India</b>                                    | <b>US</b>   |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| City under study                       | Lahore   | Kuala Lumpur   | Delhi   | New York  |
| Name of Shelter home                   | <i>Panahgahs</i>                                       | Anjung Singgah   | Rain Basera                                     | Prevention Assistance & Temporary Housing (PATH)      |
| Law/Rules governing the initiative     | No formal law  | No formal law  | Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board Act, 2010 | The City of New York (statutes)                       |
| Reasons for Urban Homelessness         | Unemployment, travelling for medical reasons           | Unemployment, low-income, old age, drug addiction            | Lack of affordable housing, unemployment        | Lack of affordable housing, living wages and poverty. |
| Umbrella Agency                        | Social Welfare & Baitul Mal Dept., Govt. of the Punjab | Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development (MWFCD) | Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board           | Department of Homeless Services, DSS, NYC             |
| No. of days for which stay is allowed  | 3 days   | 15 days  | Unlimited                                       | 10 days   |
| Complaint Redressal System             | PM Portal, CM portal                                   | NA   | Toll free no. 14461                             | 311 emergency number                                  |
| Collaboration with potential employers | No   | Yes  | No  | Yes   |

## **Conclusion**

The establishment of *Panahgahs* has taken several shelter-less lives off the benches of hospitals, streets, roads and railway stations. However, it has not necessarily benefitted the target population from the lowest strata of society towards improving their lives. Three elements are a pre requisite for a comprehensive and sustainable approach for addressing the homelessness issue:

- (i) Adequate funding for any long-term strategy to tackle and end homelessness
- (ii) Political commitment at all levels (national, regional and local)
- (iii) Public support generated through information and awareness campaigns

Although NGOs have come forward for providing meals to *Panahgahs*, this is not a sustainable model. *Panahgahs* could prove to be a promising development for reducing homelessness if coordination between all social protection schemes is developed for long term evidence based policy decisions.

## **Way Forward**

Based on the data analysis and discussion above, following recommendations may be adopted:

1. SW&BM department should not only undertake legislative action but also development of a policy and strategy for overcoming homelessness in consultation with the Local Government Department and all the various offices currently managing the *Panahgahs* initiatives. Without legislative support no initiative is sustainable.
2. A feedback mechanism should be developed by involving officials of the district governments, relevant departments and NGOs for sustainable funding streams. Funding opportunities, programs, and best practices of counties with similar challenges should be reviewed for developing recommendations on responding to homelessness through an improved and innovative, financially sustainable manner without compromising the already meagre financial resources of the country.
3. An IT solution – Homeless Management Information System – may be developed to serve as an interface for all the agencies working on the *Panahgahs* initiative. There should be a database of potential employers and their employee requirements to match potential candidates amongst the unemployed. For instance, contractors who execute capital development of C&W department may be bound to get a certain percentage of labour from *Panahgahs*.
4. Persons who are already employed and availing the facility may be required to pay a service charge (based on an objective criteria.)

5. An enforceable mechanism for communication, coordination and mutual capacity building between government departments and NGOs in the project framework be developed. The NGOs desirous of working with the government on *Panahgahs* may be asked to sign a MoU for operations of *Panahgahs* for a certain time period and role of government may be limited to oversight, quality and connecting the employee and employer.
6. Concerted efforts to maintain and update data on homelessness be undertaken. Effective long term policy formulation cannot be done without addressing the root causes of the issue. The current initiative is like symptomatic treatment of an ailment. Interventions in areas identified as root causes may help address the issue.
7. As the project is a social welfare initiative, its social benefit/cost ratio must be studied and improvements and innovations suggested and implemented upon that basis.

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