

## Tribal Women in Local Governance: Exploring Socio-Economic and Cultural Dimensions of Participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Namsai District for Advancing Gender Equality

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A comprehensive approach towards understanding various aspects of the women empowerment process is required to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 5, which aims for gender equality. It will also provide information to policy-making, identifying gaps, and designing interventions for the effective promotion of gender equality and empowering women. So, it is crucial to study the interconnection of economic, social, and political empowerment, as with economic empowerment promoting autonomous decision-making and political empowerment, and social empowerment enabling women to reach their full potential. Women, particularly tribal women, face obstacles such as illiteracy, economic instability, traditional gender roles, and limited awareness of legal rights, compounded by violence and intimidation. This paper aims to examine the socio-economic and cultural factors that influence women's political participation and representation in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) of Namsai District, Arunachal Pradesh, India. It highlights the progress made in women's representation, driven by policies like 33 per cent reservation for women. The study evaluates the effectiveness of current policies and highlights the need for continued efforts to dismantle barriers through targeted interventions, policy reforms, and community engagement.

**Keywords:** tribal women, political empowerment, gender equality, sdg no. 5

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## 1. Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by eliminating discrimination and violence, including trafficking and sexual exploitation. It seeks to eradicate harmful practices like child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation, and to ensure women's full participation and equal opportunities in leadership and decision-making at all levels, along with universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. These efforts aim to create a world where women fully participate in and benefit from all aspects of society (UN Women, 2015). Social empowerment liberates women from exploitation and mistreatment, helping them achieve their full potential and strengthening their societal position (Hoque, 2020). Women's political empowerment has been recognised as vital for ensuring a meaningful voice in the decisions that shape their lives. It was also noted that women can make independent decisions if economically empowered, not only for themselves but also for the prosperity of their families and communities. This economic strength further promotes political empowerment, as women become more capable of influencing policies that support their economic well-being. Socio-economic and political empowerment are deeply connected, each strengthening the other, ultimately promoting an environment where women can thrive and contribute meaningfully to society. Despite various efforts, women still continue to face significant barriers to political participation and are underrepresented in governing bodies in India. Recognizing women as crucial stakeholders in development is essential for building a progressive nation, making their inclusion in public bodies imperative (Pal, 2014). The 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act of India has been pivotal, mandating one-third of Panchayat seats be reserved for women. Taking further, some states of India have increased the seats reservation for women to 50 per cent in PRIs. It also reserves positions for SC/ST and women, empowering historically marginalized groups and aiming to improve their socio-economic conditions at the grassroots level (Hoque, 2020).

In the North Eastern Region of India, tribal women are considered to enjoy equal privileges with men and are integral to the socio-economic fabric, contributing throughout their lives.

Despite of different opportunities compared to other regions, their understanding of gender equality is distinct. However, challenges remain, as men often hold authority and make final decisions, even though women's contributions are invaluable (Wangsu, 2022). Similarly, Arunachal Pradesh, one of the North East States of India, considered as one of the least developed states has seen significant changes in grassroots politics and development with the introduction of PRIs, connecting tribal politics to mainstream Indian politics. The North East Panchayat Raj Regulation, 1967, and later the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1997, ensured proper democratic decentralisation. These regulations strengthened local self-governance and included provisions for women's reservation, advancing gender equality by ensuring women's recognition and representation in local governance (Rai, 2022).

### **Women in Arunachal Pradesh**

Arunachal Pradesh is mainly inhabited by the tribal population. Tribal women have historically faced significant challenges in political participation due to systemic issues like marginalisation, lack of education, traditional gender roles, and economic instability. These barriers are compounded by limited awareness of legal rights and cultural norms that restrict mobility and visibility. Additionally, the underrepresentation of tribal women in formal political structures exacerbates their sense of alienation and hinders their aspirations for political involvement (Pradha, 2024).

In Arunachal Pradesh, the NEFA Panchayati Raj Regulation, 1967, led to seven elections between 1969 and 1992; however, women's representation was reported to be not satisfactory. It began to change with the introduction of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, which prompted the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1997, which came into force in 2001. This Amendment was a game-changer as it ensured women's participation by reserving 33 per cent of seats in PRIs for women. As a result, women's participation in elections recorded a notable increase in 2003, 2008, and 2013 (Yadav, 2017). Then, in 2018, Arunachal Pradesh introduced a two-tier Panchayat structure, replacing the previous three-tier system. By the 2020 election, there were 9,383 PRI representatives in the state, with 3,658 (38.9 per cent) being women and 5,725 (61.0 per cent) being men (Raj, 2020).

Despite efforts to empower women, significant gender disparity persists, with men holding a larger proportion of positions in PRIs. This is due to the patriarchal structure of tribal village councils and low literacy rates among tribal women in rural Arunachal Pradesh. Various organisations and civic bodies are addressing these barriers through training programs, awareness campaigns, and support networks. Historically excluded from political institutions, women are now empowered with political rights, enabling them to engage actively in governance and marking a significant shift towards gender equality in the region.

## 2. Literature Review

**Sheeba Pakkan, et al. (2022)** examined the impact of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on university research by analysing over 200,000 research papers from India. Their study revealed both positive and negative connections between SDGs and suggested that universities should involve all stakeholders and make strategic changes to focus on SDGs to improve performance and societal benefits. The findings were valuable for academics, governments, and policymakers in developing strategies to achieve these goals.

**Minbi Kaye (2021)** observed that the introduction of the Panchayati Raj Institution in 1969 in the then North East Frontier Agency, now Arunachal Pradesh, marked a transformative shift in tribal society, particularly for women. It granted tribal women legal authority to engage in grassroots decision-making. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 further advanced this by reserving one-third of Panchayat seats for women, enabling their formal entry into local governance. Despite these gains, rural tribal women continue to face barriers in asserting influence across social, economic, political, and familial spheres, often remaining subordinate to their male counterparts.

**Pobon Kr. Gogoi (2023)** discussed the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in empowering rural women in India, offering them opportunities to participate in socio-economic and political fields, thus contributing to their empowerment and the nation's development. Despite legislative support and progress, challenges like illiteracy and economic barriers continued to persist.

The paper suggested measures such as education, awareness programs, and support for small industries to further empower women.

**B Komow, et al. (2024)** examined women's representation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the Lohit and Namsai districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The study highlighted the importance of democratic decentralization and the significant role of women in local governance. It assessed whether women were represented in PRIs as per the reserved seats and compared the extent of their representation in the two districts.

**Chow Ananda Chiring and B Komow (2024)** explored the awareness and participation of Gram Sabha members in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Namsai District, Arunachal Pradesh. Their study highlighted the significant role of democratic decentralisation through PRIs, rooted in the tradition of village Panchayats. It examined the participation levels and awareness among Gram Sabha members and provided insights into their roles and the factors influencing their engagement in PRI activities.

**Chow Ananda Chiring and B Komow (2024)** investigated the empowerment of women through their participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Namsai District, Arunachal Pradesh. The study emphasised the significance of democratic decentralisation in promoting women's political participation and examined the role of women representatives in PRIs.

The collective research highlights the transformative impact of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) on women's empowerment in tribal and rural regions of India, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh. The introduction of PRIs marked a significant shift by legally enabling women to participate in grassroots decision-making, further strengthened by constitutional provisions reserving seats for women. Despite these structural advancements, many women, especially in rural and tribal communities, continue to face challenges such as illiteracy, economic dependency, and limited influence in family and societal matters. Studies emphasise the importance of democratic decentralisation in enhancing women's roles in governance and highlight the need for increased awareness, education, and support systems to improve participation.

Additionally, the integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into institutional frameworks, such as universities and local governance, is seen as vital for driving inclusive development. Strategic involvement of stakeholders and targeted reforms are recommended to maximise the societal benefits of these initiatives and ensure that women not only hold positions in governance but also exercise meaningful influence.

**Profile of Namsai District**

Namsai, officially separated from the Lohit district in 2014, is a district in eastern Arunachal Pradesh with Namsai as its headquarters. For administrative purposes, the district is divided into five circles: Lekang, Namsai, Piyong, Lathao, and Chongkham. It is predominantly inhabited by the Tai-Khamti and Singpho tribes, alongside diverse communities as well. According to the Census of India, 2011, Namsai's population was 95,950, with 49,856 males and 46,094 females. Of this population, 14,246 (14.85 per cent) reside in urban areas, while 81,704 (85.15 per cent) live in rural areas. Namsai held its first Panchayat Election in 2020 under a new two-tier system established by the Panchayati Raj Amendment Act of 2018, and it is divided into five Gram Panchayat Blocks: Lekang, Upper Lekang, Nigroo, Namsai, and Chongkham, with a total of 38,033 voters.

**3. Objectives of the study**

- i). To evaluate the present women’s representation in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Namsai District.
- ii). To examine the impact of literacy, economic status and social norms in limiting women’s participation in PRI.
- iii). To examine how PRI in Namsai align with the SDG No 5 on gender equality.

**4. Research Methodology**

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative method to provide a comprehensive analysis of women's empowerment through Panchayati Raj Institutions in Namsai. For primary data collection, the researcher utilized a stratified sampling method, dividing the study area into five Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) blocks.

By employing a simple random sampling technique, 20 representatives 10 men and 10 women were selected from each block, ensuring a balanced and comprehensive sample, culminating in a total of 100 participants for the study. Thus, 50 women representatives and 50 men representatives were taken for the study.

For secondary data collection, the researcher relied on official data sources, research journals, books, and other relevant publications. This comprehensive approach provided a well-rounded and in-depth perspective, complementing the primary data collected through field research.

**5. Discussion and Analysis**

**Table 1:** Details of Gram Panchayat Blocks in the District of Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh, prepared as per election 2020

Name of Gram Panchayat Blocks	No. of Gram Panchayat Segments	No. of Women GPM	No. of Women GPC
Lekang	96	33	07
Upper Lekang	117	37	09
Nigroo	82	28	13
Namsai	164	55	25
Chongkham	114	48	09
Total	573*	201 (44.0 per cent)	63 (54.0 per cent)

**Note:** Gram Panchayat Members (GPM) and Gram Panchayat Chairperson (GPC). \*2 GPM seats vacant  
**Source:** As per latest data 2024 from Official Data of Panchayati Raj Department, DC Office, Namsai

The data for the Gram Panchayat Blocks in Namsai District, Arunachal Pradesh, highlights significant female representation in local governance, with 44 per cent of Gram Panchayat Members (GPMs) and 54 per cent of Gram Panchayat Chairpersons (GPCs) being women across the blocks. The distribution reveals Upper Lekang having the highest number of total Gram Panchayats (117) and Namsai leading in female representation with 55 women GPMs and 25 women GPCs. This active participation of women is essential for balanced decision-making and inclusive development, underscoring the importance of female leadership in local governance.

**Opinion of the Women Representatives on Gender Equality in PRIs**

**Table 2:** Does the level of formal education among women correlate with increased political participation in local governance, particularly within Panchayati Raj Institutions?

Attributes/ Responses	Ranks	Yes	No
Academic Qualification	Elementary	12 (50.0)	12 (50.0)
	Secondary	07 (35.0)	13 (65.0)
	Graduate	00 (00.0)	06 (100.0)
Annual Income	0-50k	08 (21.6)	29 (78.8)
	51k-01lac	01 (25.0)	03 (75.0)
	1.1lac-1.5lac	01 (16.67)	05 (83.3)
	<1.51lac	01 (33.3)	02 (66.67)

**Source:** Primary Data

The analysis uncovers a complex relationship between women's formal education, economic status, and their political participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Notably, women with only elementary education exhibited the highest level of political engagement, with 50 per cent reporting active participation. In contrast, none of the graduate-level respondents participated, with 100 per cent indicating non-involvement. This counterintuitive trend suggests that higher education does not necessarily correlate with increased political participation in this context, possibly owing to social or cultural constraints that persist despite academic achievement. Economic factors also play a significant role. Among women with an annual income of ₹0–50,000, a striking 78.8 per cent reported no political participation, recording the highest negative response across income brackets. Similarly, 83.3 per cent of women earning between ₹1.1–1.5 lakh annually also reported non-participation. These findings highlight that economic hardship remains a major barrier to political engagement, and that both education and income alone are insufficient to guarantee active involvement in local governance. This underscores the need for targeted interventions that address not only educational and economic empowerment but also the socio-cultural factors influencing women's political agency.

**Table 3:** Does support and encouragement enable women to contest in Panchayat elections freely?

Attributes/ Responses	Ranks	Yes	No
Academic Qualification	Elementary	22(91.67)	02 (8.33)
	Secondary	18(90.0)	02 (10.0)
	Graduate	06 (100.0)	00 (00.0)
Annual Income	0-50k	33(89.19)	04(10.81)
	51k-01lac	04(100.0)	00(00.0)
	1.1lac-1.5lac	06(100.0)	00(00.0)
	<1.51lac	03(100.0)	00(00.0)

**Source:** Primary Data

The data strongly indicates that support and encouragement play a pivotal role in enabling women to freely contest Panchayat elections, regardless of their educational or economic background. Among women with graduate-level education, 100 per cent reported receiving support to contest, while those with elementary and secondary education also showed high levels of affirmation, 91.67 per cent and 90 per cent respectively. This suggests that encouragement is widespread across educational levels, and may be driven by policy awareness or community-level initiatives. Economic status further reinforces this trend. An overwhelming 89.19 per cent of women in the lowest income bracket (₹0–50,000) reported receiving support, while 100 per cent of women in all higher income categories affirmed the same. These findings highlight a positive environment for women's political participation in Panchayat elections, suggesting that support mechanisms whether familial, social, or institutional are effectively reaching women across socio-economic strata. This widespread encouragement is a promising indicator of inclusive governance and reflects progress toward gender equality in local political spaces.

**Table 4:** Does your local Gram Panchayat have sufficient representation of women in elected positions?

Attributes/ Responses	Ranks	Yes	No
Academic Qualification	Elementary	16(66.7)	08(33.3)
	Secondary	17(85.0)	03(15.0)
	Graduate	05(83.3)	01(16.7)
Annual Income	0-50k	32(86.5)	05(13.5)
	51k-01lac	01(25.0)	03(75.0)
	1.1lac-1.5lac	03(50.0)	03(50.0)
	<1.51lac	02(66.7)	01(33.3)

**Source:** Primary Data

The data suggest a generally positive perception of women's representation in local Gram Panchayats, particularly among respondents with secondary and graduate education. A notable 85 per cent of secondary-educated women and 83.3 per cent of graduates affirmed that their Panchayat has sufficient female representation, indicating that awareness and recognition of gender inclusion may increase with education. However, only 66.7 per cent of elementary-educated respondents shared this view, suggesting a possible gap in perception or exposure to governance structures. Economic status presents a more varied picture. While 86.5 per cent of women in the lowest income bracket (₹0–50,000) reported sufficient representation, only 25 per cent of those earning ₹51,000–₹1 lakh agreed, marking the lowest positive response. This sharp contrast may reflect differing expectations or experiences with governance based on economic standing. Interestingly, perceptions improve again in higher income brackets, with 66.7 per cent of women earning above ₹1.51 lakh affirming adequate representation. These findings indicate that while education generally correlates with a positive view of women's representation, economic factors may influence perceptions more inconsistently, pointing to the need for deeper engagement and transparency in governance across all income groups.

**Table 5:** Does the Panchayati Raj Institution play a major role in enhancing the social status of women through increased political participation?

Attributes/ Responses	Ranks	Yes	No
Academic Qualification	Elementary	23(95.8)	01(04.2)
	Secondary	19(95.0)	01(05.0)
	Graduate	06(100.0)	00(00.0)
Annual Income	0-50k	36(97.3)	01(02.7)
	51k-01lac	04(100.0)	00(00.0)
	1.1lac-1.5lac	06(100.0)	00(00.0)
	<1.51lac	02(66.7)	01(33.3)

**Source:** Primary Data

The data strongly supports the view that Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) play a significant role in elevating the social status of women via increased political participation. Across all educational levels, the perception is overwhelmingly positive: 95.8 per cent of elementary-educated, 95 per cent of secondary-educated, and 100 per cent of graduate respondents affirmed the empowering impact of PRIs.

This suggests that regardless of formal education, women recognise the transformative potential of political involvement facilitated by these institutions. Income-wise, the trend remains consistent, with 97.3 per cent of women in the lowest income bracket (₹0–50,000) and 100 per cent of those earning between ₹51,000 and ₹1.5 lakh agreeing with the statement. Even among higher-income respondents (above ₹1.51 lakh), 66.7 per cent acknowledged the positive role of PRIs, though this is notably lower than other groups. The slight dip in affirmation among the highest earners may reflect differing priorities or reduced reliance on local governance structures. Overall, the data shows the important role of PRIs in promoting women's empowerment and enhancing their social standing, particularly among economically and educationally diverse groups.

**Table 6:** How significantly do women's economic conditions influence their participation in local political processes?

Attributes/ Responses	Ranks	Yes	No
Academic Qualification	Elementary	22(70.8)	02(04.2)
	Secondary	18(80.0)	02(20.0)
	Graduate	06(100.0)	00(00.0)
Annual Income	0-50k	34(91.9)	03(08.1)
	51k-01lac	04(100.0)	00(00.0)
	1.1lac-1.5lac	05(83.3)	01(16.7)
	<1.51lac	03(100.0)	00(00.0)

**Source:** Primary Data

The data reveals a strong correlation between women's economic conditions and their engagement in local political processes. Educational attainment appears to amplify this relationship: 100 per cent of graduate respondents affirmed that economic factors significantly influence political participation, followed by 80 per cent of secondary-educated and 70.8 per cent of elementary-educated women. This suggests that higher education may enhance awareness of the economic barriers or enablers to political involvement. Income-based responses further reinforce this trend. An overwhelming 91.9 per cent of women earning ₹0–50,000 acknowledged the influence of economic conditions, indicating that financial constraints may heighten sensitivity to political engagement opportunities. Interestingly, 100 per cent of women in both the ₹51,000–₹1 lakh and above ₹1.51 lakh brackets also affirmed this view, suggesting that even those with greater financial stability recognise the role of

economic empowerment in facilitating political agency. The slight dip to 83.3 per cent in the ₹1.1–₹1.5 lakh group may reflect nuanced differences in priorities or access. Overall, the data shows that economic conditions are a critical determinant of women's political participation, with both low-income and well-educated women particularly attuned to this dynamic.

**Table 7:** Does illiteracy act as a major barrier to women's effective participation in local politics?

Attributes/ Responses	Ranks	Yes	No
Academic Qualification	Elementary	22(91.7)	02(08.3)
	Secondary	19(95.0)	01(05.0)
	Graduate	05(83.3)	01(16.7)
Annual Income	0-50k	34(91.9)	03(08.1)
	51k-01lac	04(100.0)	00(00.0)
	1.1lac-1.5lac	05(83.3)	01(16.7)
	<1.51lac	03(100.0)	00(00.0)

**Source:** Primary Data

The data strongly indicate that illiteracy is widely perceived as a major barrier to women's effective participation in local politics. Among respondents with elementary education, 91.7 per cent acknowledged this challenge, rising slightly to 95 per cent among those with secondary education. Even among graduates, who might be expected to feel less personally affected, 83.3 per cent recognised illiteracy as a significant obstacle, underscoring a broad consensus across educational levels. Income-based responses mirror this trend. A substantial 91.9 per cent of women in the lowest income bracket (₹0–50,000) affirmed the barrier posed by illiteracy, and 100 per cent of those earning ₹51,000–₹1 lakh and above ₹1.51 lakh agreed. The only slight deviation appears in the ₹1.1–₹1.5 lakh group, where 83.3 per cent supported the statement. These findings suggest that regardless of economic status or educational attainment, women widely perceive illiteracy as a critical impediment to political engagement. This highlights the urgent need for targeted literacy and civic education programs to empower women and ensure more inclusive participation in local governance.

**Opinion of the Men Representatives on Gender Equality in PRIs**

**Table 8:** Do you treat representatives of both genders equally in political and community settings?

Attributes/ Responses	Ranks	Yes	No
Academic Qualification	Undergraduate	01(100.0)	00(00.0)
	Elementary	17(100.0)	00(00.0)
	Secondary	19(100.0)	00(00.0)
	Graduate	13(100.0)	00(00.0)
Annual Income	51k-01lac	06(100.0)	00(00.0)
	1.1lac-1.5lac	40(100.0)	00(00.0)
	<1.51lac	04(100.0)	00(00.0)

**Source:** Primary Data

The data shows unanimous agreement among women across all educational levels and income groups that they treat representatives of both genders equally. This strong consensus on gender equality is evident regardless of education or income.

**Table 9:** Are women in your community supported to freely contest in Gram Sabha elections?

Attributes/ Responses	Ranks	Yes	No
Academic Qualification	Undergraduate	01(100.0)	00(00.0)
	Elementary	17(100.0)	00(00.0)
	Secondary	19(100.0)	00(00.0)
	Graduate	13(100.0)	00(00.0)
Annual Income	51k-01lac	06(100.0)	00(00.0)
	1.1lac-1.5lac	40(100.0)	00(00.0)
	<1.51lac	04(100.0)	00(00.0)

**Source:** Primary Data

The data shows unanimous support for women to freely contest in the Gram Sabha election, regardless of academic qualifications or income levels. This strong consensus indicates that women are encouraged and supported to participate in the election.

**Table 10:** Do you advocate for increasing the reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions?

Attributes/ Responses	Ranks	Yes	No
Academic Qualification	Undergraduate	01(100.0)	00(00.0)
	Elementary	16(94.1)	01(05.9)
	Secondary	17(89.5)	02(10.5)
	Graduate	10(76.9)	03(23.1)
Annual Income	51k-01lac	05(83.3)	01(16.7)
	1.1lac-1.5lac	35(87.5)	05(12.5)
	<1.51lac	04(100.0)	00(00.0)

**Source:** Primary Data

The data shows strong support for increasing the reservation of seats for women in the Panchayati Raj Institution across all educational levels and income groups. While support slightly decreases among those with higher education whereas the support response increases with higher income group.

**Table 11:** Table has the representation of women in your local Gram Panchayat improved in recent years?

Attributes/ Responses	Ranks	Yes	No
Academic Qualification	Undergraduate	01(100.0)	00(00.0)
	Elementary	17(100.0)	00(00.0)
	Secondary	19(100.0)	00(00.0)
	Graduate	13(100.0)	00(00.0)
Annual Income	51k-01lac	06(100.0)	00(00.0)
	1.1lac-1.5lac	40(100.0)	00(00.0)
	<1.51lac	04(100.0)	00(00.0)

**Source:** Primary Data

The data shows unanimous agreement that women’s representation in the Gram Panchayat has significantly improved with time in PRIs.

## 6. Major Findings

The study reveals a complex yet encouraging picture of women's political participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Namsai District. While perceptions of representation are generally positive, actual engagement varies—elementary-educated women reported the highest participation, whereas graduate-level respondents showed complete non-involvement, suggesting that higher education alone does not guarantee political agency. Economic hardship also emerged as a significant barrier, with the lowest and middle-income groups reporting high levels of non-participation. Illiteracy was widely recognized as a major obstacle, reinforcing the need for targeted literacy and civic education programs. Despite these challenges, support for women contesting Panchayat elections was unanimous across all educational and income groups, indicating that encouragement—whether familial, social, or institutional—is effectively reaching women. Furthermore, the data shows strong advocacy for increasing women’s seat reservations in PRIs, with support rising alongside income levels but slightly declining among the highly educated.

Encouragingly, all respondents affirmed treating male and female representatives equally, and unanimously agreed that women’s representation in Gram Panchayats has improved over time. These findings suggest that while structural barriers persist, the social and institutional environment is increasingly conducive to gender-inclusive governance, aligning well with the goals of Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 on gender equality.

## 7. Suggestions

Based on the analysis of the data regarding women’s participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the Namsai District, it is evident that various factors such as education, economic status, and social norms play crucial roles. To address the identified barriers and enhance women’s representation and participation in local governance, several targeted suggestions can be made. To enhance women's political participation, it is essential to launch educational initiatives that increase literacy rates among women, with a focus on adult education and continuous learning to address illiteracy as a significant barrier. It also needs to focus on imparting political literacy to the people. Additionally, implementing economic empowerment schemes, such as vocational training, microfinance, and entrepreneurship programs, can significantly improve women’s economic conditions and further encourage their involvement in politics. These suggestions aim to create a supportive environment that promotes gender equality, empowers women, and aligns with the goals of sustainable development, particularly SDG 5 on gender equality.

## 8. Conclusion

In conclusion, a significant improvement in women’s representation within the Gram Panchayat in Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh reflects growing support for the role of PRIs in enhancing women’s status, particularly among those with secondary education and lower incomes. The major findings reveal that women’s political participation is shaped by a complex interplay of educational attainment, economic condition, and social support. While attitudes toward gender equality and electoral participation are increasingly positive, actual engagement remains uneven, with illiteracy and economic vulnerability continuing to pose challenges.

These insights highlight the interdependence of empowerment dimensions; economic stability promotes autonomy and confidence; social empowerment through education and community acceptance enables women to overcome societal barriers; and political empowerment institutionalises their agency within governance structures. Looking ahead, sustained efforts to expand educational access, improve economic opportunities, and implement inclusive, gender-sensitive policies will be essential to deepen women's participation and ensure their meaningful and lasting impact in local governance.

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