

# Limitations of The Role of Gram Panchayat Members in Rural Area of Papum Pare District, Arunachal Pradesh

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## ABSTRACT

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*A few important issues restrict the involvement of Gram Panchayat members in the rural parts of Arunachal Pradesh's Papum Pare Region. One major barrier is their inability to create sufficient boundaries and prepare enough, which limits their ability to fulfil their responsibilities and make wise decisions. Additionally, Gram Panchayats' ability to carry out improvement initiatives and provide basic services to the community is constrained by the limited funding available to them. These budgetary constraints are further exacerbated by regulatory administrative red tape and delays in reserve payout. The autonomy of Gram Panchayat members is frequently undermined by political meddling and power battles within the Panchayat system, leading to prejudice and failures in dynamic cycles. Moreover, there exists a notable deficiency in communication and cooperation between the Gram Panchayats and higher governmental tiers, resulting in a lack of clear strategy implementation. The socio-social factors also pose challenges to the Panchayat's equal and comprehensive functioning, such as orientation inclinations and the marginalization of particular local gatherings. All in all, these limitations make it more difficult for Gram Panchayat members to influence positive developments and improve the financial standing of rural communities in the Papum Pare Area.*

**Keywords:** *Gram Panchayat Members, Rural Area, Political Interference, Power Struggles, Panchayat System, Limited Financial Resources Allocated*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Gram Panchayat system, which is the cornerstone of local self-governance in India, aims to strengthen rural communities by promoting grassroots vote-based systems and enabling decentralized navigation. In Arunachal Pradesh, the Gram Panchayat plays a crucial role in organizing improvement initiatives, managing resources, and resolving local disputes, particularly in the rural parts of the Papum Pare Area. In any event, numerous limitations that affect their ability to effectively serve their supporters frequently impede the viability of Gram Panchayat members in this area.

The lack of adequate training and preparedness among Gram Panchayat members is one major barrier. A large number of the selected delegates lack formal education and are ill-prepared in terms of financial management, governance, and proper methods. Their ability to comprehend and implement government programs, manage Panchayat finances, and ensure legal consistency is hampered by this educational gap. This leads to delays and failures when it comes to carrying out improvement projects and addressing local problems.

The lack of funding allotted to Gram Panchayats is another fundamental criteria. Gram Panchayats' ability to plan and execute advancement initiatives independently is limited by their financial dependency on higher governmental levels. Underdeveloped basic infrastructure and services, such as healthcare, education, and sanitation, are caused by insufficient resources. The Gram Panchayat's ability to function effectively is further hampered by the difficult asset payment process and the lack of financial transparency.

The Gram Panchayat's political components also pose important limitations. The dynamic cycle is frequently sabotaged by political meddling from local elites and higher authorities. Interference of this kind can lead to bias, pollution, and the exaltation of political or individual additions above local government support. The public's trust in the Gram Panchayat system is eroded by this political power, which also makes it more difficult to distribute resources and services fairly.

Additional challenges arise from the rural Papum Pare Region's socio-social context. Ethnic divisions, social hierarchies, and orientation predispositions can all affect how well Gram Panchayats function. In the dynamic cycle, women and marginalized people are frequently

portrayed and given little say. Because of this lack of inclusivity, the needs and preferences of various groups are disregarded, which perpetuates social inequality.

The viability of Gram Panchayat members is further hindered by the strategic and infrastructural imperatives. In Papum Pare Locale, rural areas are frequently negatively impacted by unfavourable availability and correspondence organizations. This impedes data progression, restricts eligibility for government assistance, and isolates towns from larger-scale improvement initiatives. The lack of enough office space and care personnel further constrains the Gram Panchayats' authority.

The Gram Panchayat system has a lot of promise to promote local growth and self-governance, but a number of limitations limit its applicability in the Papum Pare Region's rural areas. Addressing these challenges necessitates a multifaceted strategy that includes boosting Panchayat members' education and readiness, ensuring enough funding, preventing political meddling, promoting social inclusion, and enhancing infrastructure offices. The Gram Panchayat system may never realize its full potential in empowering rural communities and fostering economic development in the Papum Pare Region until it takes such drastic steps.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Bhattacharjee (2008)** offers a thorough examination of Arunachal Pradesh's orientation improvement. The study is crucial for a deeper conversation about challenges and trends related to female liberation in Northeast India. Bhattacharjee draws attention to the social and socioeconomic elements that affect orientation roles in the community. The study emphasizes how differently people are trained and have access to entrepreneurial opportunities. Notwithstanding these obstacles, women's access to healthcare and education rates have significantly increased. Bhattacharjee's research highlights the importance of government initiatives and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in advancing orientation equity and augmenting women's collaboration in diverse developmental endeavors.

**Chakraborty and Mukhopadhyay (2014)** examine how Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and popularity-based decentralization affect women's empowerment in rural India. The authors examine whether women's participation in PRIs signifies true empowerment or if they are only symbolic figures—often referred to as "intermediary women"—in the process. Their research in rural India, encompassing areas such as Arunachal Pradesh, demonstrates inconsistent

results. PRIs have, on the one hand, provided a platform for women to participate in local governance and decision-making. Then again, lack of education and man-centric standards frequently compromise the return on this investment. While PRIs may empower women, Chakraborty and Mukhopadhyay argue that in order to fully realize their potential, substantial efforts must be made to remove the socio-social hurdles that impede their efficacy.

**Kabak and Mandal (2016)** analyze the empowerment of women in Arunachal Pradesh through Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Seven components of empowerment are identified by their study: instructional, legal, psychological, social, political, financial, and natural. In the district, SHGs have emerged as a potent tool for women's empowerment, giving them access to opportunities for income growth, skill development, and collective bargaining. The authors highlight how support from SHGs has led to greater self-assurance, improved access to financial resources, and more notable participation in neighbourhood issues. However, the report also identifies issues that need to be resolved in order to increase the impact of SHGs, including poor training, a lack of marketing assistance, and societal reluctance.

**Lalfakmawii (2016)** examines the participation of SHGs in the Tlangnuam RD Block of the Aizawl District's Integrated Watershed Management Program (IWMP). The report emphasizes the significant contributions SHGs have made to the advancement of water resource management, soil conservation, and sustainable agriculture methods. In this context, self-help groups (SHGs) have improved natural resource management and given women more power by giving them access to financial resources and leadership roles. The study emphasizes how important local community support is to efforts to conserve the environment and how SHGs help the local populace develop a sense of accountability and ownership. The report also highlights the difficulties faced by SHGs, including a lack of specialized knowledge and insufficient assistance from local government, highlighting the need for improved training and restricting building projects.

**Lali (2020)** investigates the efficiency of social audits in Arunachal Pradesh's implementation of the MGNREGA. The social review is a crucial tool for guaranteeing accountability, openness, and public participation in the implementation of public policies. According to Lali's research, social audits have improved rural residents' knowledge of their MGNREGA rights and benefits. According to the results, social audits have proven effective in locating and resolving problems like inconsistent work measures, misallocation of resources, and wage

payment delays. However, the report also identifies a number of shortcomings, such as a lack of knowledge about the review procedure, inadequate auditor training, and opposition from local authorities. The study recommends bolstering the social review system with improved training, wider information sharing, and more reliable complaint resolution procedures.

**Majumder (2019)** concentrates on the role of Nyishi women in the occupation security of families in the Papum Pare District. The study looks at a number of company security issues, such as resource availability, revenue stability, and food security. Nyishi women engage in a variety of occupations, including traditional crafts, agriculture, and animal husbandry, as important contributions to household economies. According to Majumder's research, Nyishi women make a substantial financial contribution to the well-being of their families and communities. The report also covers the difficulties these women face, including their restricted access to financial, medical, and educational resources. The results indicate that improving Nyishi women's opportunities and capacities can greatly advance homework security and overall local area improvement.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Secondary data served as the study's foundation. Data were collected from a sample of 100 GPs in 10 districts of Arunachal Pradesh in order to evaluate the current state of participatory practices in the state's rural areas. Six blocks were selected from each district, and two sample general practitioners were picked from each block. In order to guarantee that every area of the district is represented, important considerations such as the blocks' proximity to the district headquarters and geological distribution were taken into account during the block selection process. The information collected was based on the Arunachal Pradesh general practitioners' self-assessment dataset. The Arunachal Pradesh government's Panchayat and Rural Improvement Division prepares the self-assessment design, which is distributed annually to every PRI body. PRI agencies that are concerned complete the necessary data and return the structure. The data set for the 2009–10 period obtained from the Rural Improvement Division and Panchayats is used in this study, and the analysis is done in accordance with it. A study was conducted using the self-assessment data set of 100 general practitioners to determine the type and level of local support for PRI initiatives.

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Existing Participatory Practices in Rural Arunachal Pradesh

After discussing the origins of PRI in Arunachal Pradesh as well as the characteristics and extent of the invited spaces, this section evaluates the participatory practices that are currently in place in rural Arunachal Pradesh.

The features of the GPs are shown in Tables 1 and 2 with respect to certain key elements of participatory governance. Interestingly, up to 55% of the GPs selected Pradhans who were members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M). Trinamool Congress (TMC) is the second-biggest party representing GPs, with Pradhans selected under the TMC banner in about 24% of GPs. Just 15% of the GPs are owned by the Congress, and the Pradhans choose this party.

**Table 1:** Features of the Sample Districts based on Literacy Rate and Political Affiliation

Sample Districts	Literacy Rate	Political Affiliation of Pradhans in Sample GPs
1.Tawang	Male: 71.94%	1. CPI(M): 66 (55.5%)
2. West Kameng		2. CPI: 2 (1.10%)
3. East Kameng		3. Forward Block: 2 (1.10%)
4. Papum Pare	Female: 60.85%	4. RSP: 6 (5.5%)
5. Lower Subansiri		5. Cong: 18 (15.5%)
6. Upper Subansiri		6. TMC: 28 (23.9%)
7. West Siang		7. BJP: 5 (4.7%)
8. East Siang		8. SUCI: 2 (1.10%)
9. Lohit		9. Other: 6 (5.5%)
10. Changlang		

Understanding how powerful the "invited space" is in Arunachal Pradesh is relevant. Given this particular situation, it is crucial to ascertain the quantity and operation of these invited places that have been created. Numerous intriguing possibilities surface when one considers the Gram Arunachal Vikas Parishad and how it operates in the districts of Arunachal Pradesh that are sampled. Regarding the formation of the Gram Arunachal Vikas Parishad, nearly one-



fifth of the Gram Sansad did not establish a GAVP during the research period, despite the need that all Gram Sansads construct a GAVP (Table 2). When the sampled districts are compared, it can be seen that West Siang is the primary district that has formed the Gram Arunachal Vikas Parishad GAVP in each of the studied GPs' GSs. East Kameng (almost 100%), Lohit (92%), West Kameng (92%), Changlang (89%) and East Siang (87%), are the other stronger performers. Papum Pare (49%) has performed the worst on this front, followed by Lower Subansiri (66%) and Upper Subansiri (74%).

**Table 2:** Features of the Sample Districts based on Fund Utilization, Participation, and Literacy Rate

Sl. No.	District	Literacy Rate (%)	Average Attendance in Gram Sansad Meeting (%)	% of Sansad Constituted GAVP	% of GAVP Opened Bank Account	Average GAVP Meeting per Year	Average Utilisation of Fund by GP (%)
1	Tawang	67.3	16.5	84	99	12	83.4
2	West Kameng	68.9	21	92	81	13	77.7
3	East Kameng	62.9	22.8	99	57	13	78.3
4	Papum Pare	58.3	22.6	49	78	6	80
5	Lower Subansiri	78.3	21.10	66	72	9	83.8
6	Upper Subansiri	67.6	26.8	74	67	7	90.5
7	West Siang	76.8	22	102	80	12	90.8
8	East Siang	83.9	22.10	87	75	12	82.8
9	Lohit	56.7	17	92	53	12	78.3
10	Changlang	54.11	17.11	89	92	11	76.6
<b>All District</b>		<b>65.38</b>	<b>21.06</b>	<b>83.6</b>	<b>75.6</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>82.06</b>

The situation for hosting GAVP meetings is no longer ideal. Even though it is required of each GAVP to meet once a month or so, there are often fewer than nine GAVP sessions held year. West Kameng, East Kameng, West Siang, East Siang, Lohit, and Tawang are the districts that have done well on this front; together, they have organized more than or equal to ten meetings annually. However, only four meetings were held by Papum Pare annually, with five in Upper Subansiri and seven in Lower Subansiri. Although the GAVP constitution establishes a "invited space" that may potentially guarantee transparent and efficient governance, its absence, and particularly its incapacity to convene meetings, may pose a significant obstacle to reaping the benefits of participatory governance.

Unlike GAVP, which meets once a year, Gram Sansad sessions often take place in the months of May and November. The annual meeting takes place in May, while the half-yearly meeting takes place in November. As needed, GP may call further special Gram Sansad sessions to address any pressing matters. All general practitioners are required to host a minimum of two Gram Sansad meetings annually in a Gram Sansad. In any event, there are GSs in Arunachal Pradesh that defy these conditions; in fact, they didn't hold two meetings during the study period. Research reveals that nearly 9% of the GPs in the sample did not attend every Gram Sansad meeting. These GPs are dispersed over seven of the ten study districts. This is hardly a surprise discovery. The majority of Gram Sansads, or 74% of them, held half-yearly meetings in November 2008, according to the Arunachal Pradesh government's Yearly Administrative Report 2008–09. This information was previously provided by the department of rural development and panchayats.

However, much more concerning is the appallingly low turnout for any Gram Sansad meetings that are conducted in different Arunachal Pradesh GPs that have been sampled. It was estimated that 21% of GPs in the sample actually participated on a regular basis. District-to-district variances are likewise quite noticeable. Districts such as Tawang (16.5%), Lohit (17%), Changlang (17.11%) and Upper Subansiri (26.8%), had participation rates exceeding 22% apiece, whereas East Siang (22.10%), East Kameng (22.8%), and Papum Pare (22.6%) did even worse. Although only 12% of voters are required to form a quorum for meetings, some sampled general practitioners (GPs) have also failed to guarantee that members participate at a normal rate of 13% in Gram Sansad meetings. These GPs are primarily dispersed throughout the three districts of Upper Subansiri, West Kameng, and East Kameng.



It is equally concerning to observe that attendance at Gram sansad meetings in the state of Arunachal Pradesh appears to be diminishing. According to the Arunachal Pradesh Human Development Report, the state's average attendance at Gram Sansad meetings fell from 18% in 1997 to 14% in 2001. According to the Arunachal Pradesh government's Panchayat and Rural Development Department's Yearly Administrative Report for 2008–09, the average attendance at the semi-annual Gram Sansad meeting in November 2008 was 17%, and the average level of support from women was 4%.

In order to obtain funding for development projects in Sansad areas, GAVPs are expected to open ledgers as a sign of strong conveyance and openness. The outcomes in Arunachal Pradesh are likewise not very positive in this regard. Typically, 75.6 percent of GAVP are reported to have opened ledgers through 2009–2010. When districts are compared, it can be seen that while Tawang (almost 100%) and Changlang (92%) have done somewhat better, districts like Lohit (53%) East Kameng (57%) and Upper Subansiri (67%) have not quite reached the target.

One of the main goals of the nation's democratic decentralization process is better use of funds. One could argue that greater productivity and transparency can be attained by individual cooperation, which would result in a more notable and lawful use of finances. Approximately 82% of the money given to general practitioners (GPs) in Arunachal Pradesh throughout the study period were reported to have been utilized. Nevertheless, a lot more work needs to be done to enhance the utilization even further. The striking differences between the sampled districts are interesting. In West Siang and Upper Subansiri, asset utilization reaches a peak of over 90%, whereas in West Kameng and Changlang, it falls to a low of 77% or less.

The previous conversations make it quite clear that Arunachal Pradesh has had the PRI in place as a democratic government organization for many years. It just recently gained significance again in 1992 with the passage of the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution. There is little doubting that democratic decentralization via PRI has significantly altered how different agencies operate, and as a result, conveyance mechanisms are said to have been reinforced. However, there have also been disclosed shortcomings in numerous significant domains. It is unsettling, in particular, to witness incredibly terrible attendance at Gram Sansad sessions. Similarly, there are acknowledged shortcomings on this front as well, even though it is required of every Sansad to establish a Gram Arunachal Vikas Parishad. Furthermore, no district is discovered to have achieved the goal, despite the fact that regular meetings are required. Even

though reserve GP use has reached about 82 percent in many districts, there is still room for improvement, particularly in loafer areas. It's interesting to note that a large number of Gram Arunachal Vikas Parishad have not opened their financial accounts, demonstrating a lack of knowledge about the PRI.

Numerous prior researches have looked into the causes of the low support rates in Gram Sansad meetings. Datta discovered that just 15% of the sampled Gram sansads participated in his study on West Kameng and Jalpaiguri. The fact that most decisions are made outside of the Gram Sansad meetings, where their main purpose is to endorse them, revealed to the respondents that they did not participate in these sessions. Another important factor that motivates people to attend Gram Sansad meetings is political alignment. While conducting research on 20 town constituencies in Arunachal Pradesh, Ghatak and Ghatak noticed that the bulk of the electors in attendance belonged to the parties of the selected legislators. There was a 0.97 correlation coefficient between the political parties of the selected members and the percentage of voters who shared those parties' ideologies. A noteworthy finding was that those who consider themselves to be reasonably well-off do not attend these meetings since they do not immediately see any advantages. It is noteworthy that although people are aware of these gatherings, they are reluctant to attend since they believe them to be unproductive.

The sample general practitioners in Upper Subansiri have the highest rate of attendance at Gram Sansad gatherings. One district that has been successful in creating Gram Arunachal Vikas Parishads under each seat is West Siang. Furthermore, it has performed admirably in practically every area, such as reserve utilization, GS meeting attendance, and so on. Its long history of participatory methods may be the reason for the success, particularly in West Siang. The state's former Medinipur district, which is now divided into the districts of West Siang and East Siang, has been pursuing decentralized district planning since the late 1970s, with renewed attempts beginning in the mid-1980s. The unified Medinipur district adopted town-based block and district planning during the 1979–1980 timeframe. All 54 blocks in the district were included in the Convergent Community Action (CCA) program in 2000. The Arunachal Pradesh government, in collaboration with UNICEF, launched the CCA program with the goal of enhancing and expediting poor participatory planning, restricting development, and empowering the impoverished.

**Table 3:** Grouping Practices based on Fund Utilization, GAVP Formation, Attendance Rates, and Literacy Rates

Categories	District (No. of GPs)	Average Male	Literacy Female	Rate Total	Percentage of Sansad where GAVP Constituted	Average Utilisation of Funds of GP
GPs with Low Attendance Rate (<15%)	57(47.10%)	71.11	59.9	65.10	88.32%	80.96%
	1. Tawang					
	2. West Kameng					
	3. East Kameng					
	4. Papum Pare					
	5. Lower Subansiri					
	6. Upper Subansiri					
	7. West Siang					
	8. East Siang					
	9. Lohit					
	10. Changlang					
GPs with Moderate Attendance Rate (15% - <30%)	57(47.10%)	73.10	63.6	68.8	76.52%	82.66%
	1. Tawang					
	2. West Kameng					
	3. East Kameng					
	4. Papum Pare					
	5. Lower Subansiri					
	6. Upper Subansiri					
	7. West Siang					
	8. East Siang					
	9. Lohit					
	10. Changlang					
	23(19.7%)					
	1. Tawang					

GPs with High Attendance Rate (30% or more)	2. East Kameng	73.10	64.5	69.2	81.42%	83.72%
	3. Papum Pare					
	4. Lower Subansiri					
	5. Upper Subansiri					
	6. West Siang					
	7. East Siang					
	8. Lohit					

The Human Development Report identified three conditions that must be met before people will cooperate: (a) fair access to health and other aspects of material prosperity; (b) fair access to knowledge; and (c) equal rights to information, skill, and creativity as well as human rights. According to the same argument, for cooperation to be effective, there must be a minimum level of education, fundamental skills, and uniformity based on caste, religion, or orientation. Additionally, individuals must be empowered locally because local elites frequently have an influence on local officials and oppose power sharing. There is occasionally a negative correlation between the number of years of training and interest. Nevertheless, it is impossible to dispute how education influences collaboration in decision-making. In particular, education is a good measure of social standing and economic prospects. By allocating GPs based on the level of investment, the current study discovers that the degree of assistance increases as the proficiency rate does (table 3). At 0.40, the correlation coefficient between the degree of collaboration and education rate is considered positive. In this particular scenario, it is crucial to remember that the level of cooperation can directly affect how quickly assets are used. Regular meetings and more visible support could guarantee efficient and quick planning, more notable accountability, and improved scheme execution. Additionally, the current study discovers a strong positive correlation (0.55) between the tested districts' asset use and the percentage of people who participate in gram sansad meetings.

Another crucial element of people's investment is their political influence. All things considered, using political networks objectively shapes the functioning of a participatory development plan well in a democracy like that of India. There seems to be a lack of social capital in villages to support the functioning of democratic bodies in the highly politicized Panchayat context. In a study on Arunachal Pradesh, Ghatak and Ghatak discovered that

political ties were a significant motivator for meeting attendance. According to Chattopadhyay, Chakrabarti, and Nath, a communication gap prevents the locals from realizing the true goals and advantages of the Gram Arunachal Vikas Parishad. Political parties exploit GAVP as an elective power base by taking advantage of the regrettable lack of understanding among the local population.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a variety of institutional, financial, political, and socio-social reasons severely limit the participation of Gram Panchayat members in the rural parts of Arunachal Pradesh's Papum Pare District. Therefore, it may be said that although though Arunachal Pradesh pioneered democratic administration in the country, the state has not yet seen the full benefits of decentralization. The cooperation of the local populace in governance still poses a significant challenge. Each of these has the potential to significantly divert the PRIs from bringing in the necessary competence, accountability, and transparency. One effective way to address this is for municipal entities to promote "invited space." Since the foundation of PRI is the devolution of power to individuals at the grassroots level, garnering the support of larger numbers of people is still essential to accomplishing the intended objectives. Thus, Arunachal Pradesh must make quick and intensive steps to guarantee the same.

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