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All submissions must be prepared in Microsoft Word format using Times New Roman, 12-point font, on A4 size paper with 1.5 line spacing. Manuscripts are to be submitted in soft copy only and addressed to the Editor in Chief via the official email: send@jopaasc.com

The journal follows a **biannual publication schedule**, comprising two issues annually: January–June and July–December. Submissions received by March are generally considered for the January–June issue, while those received by September are reviewed for the July–December issue, and **all issues are print copy version**.

As part of the submission process, authors are required to provide a duly completed “Authors’ Declaration” form in soft copy. The declaration format would be provided once papers are accepted. Submission of this declaration is mandatory and forms an integral component of the ethical and procedural requirements of the journal.

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From the Desk of Editor-in-Chief

It is with immense pleasure and a deep sense of responsibility that I welcome readers to the inaugural issue (January–June 2026) of the *Journal of Public Administration and Social Change* (ISSN: 3139-4000), a bi-annual refereed and peer-reviewed journal dedicated to advancing scholarly inquiry at the intersection of public administration, governance, public policy, and social transformation. I am delighted to share that the first issue is now available in print, marking the beginning of what we hope will become a vibrant platform for rigorous academic dialogue and interdisciplinary research.

Public administration today extends far beyond the conventional boundaries of government machinery. It is increasingly recognized as a dynamic field that shapes institutions, public policies, democratic governance, and societal transformation. Contemporary challenges such as urban governance, gender equality, environmental sustainability, digital governance, disaster resilience, public health, and the inclusion of marginalized communities demand innovative scholarship and evidence-based policy discourse. The *Journal of Public Administration and Social Change* has been established with this vision—to provide a credible academic forum where researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and scholars can exchange ideas that contribute to responsive governance and sustainable social change.

This inaugural issue presents an engaging collection of research articles addressing diverse dimensions of governance and public policy, the importance of citizen confidence in urban governance, rethinking of public administration as the institutional architecture of social transformation, emphasizing its evolving role in contemporary governance. This issue also explores the role of women-led Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in promoting inclusive economic growth in India and investigates the educational challenges faced by border communities along the Line of Control in the Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir, drawing attention to issues of access and equity.

The issue further includes analysis of the implementation gap in women empowerment policies within the broader vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. The collection of studies explores diverse dimensions of governance, public policy, and social development in India. It examines environmental governance through a case study of Ranchi district, highlighting the challenges and opportunities of sustainable resource management. Another study emphasizes the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence in promoting transparency, accountability, and administrative reforms in governance. The volume also discusses India's

expanding role in global health diplomacy, focusing on international cooperation and health governance. Constitutional governance and development administration in the tribal regions of North East India are critically analyzed to understand the relationship between public policy and social change. The evolution of transgender welfare policies is explored with particular attention to inclusion, equality, and social justice. Finally, the importance of community participation in disaster management is examined, demonstrating how active citizen engagement strengthens resilience, improves disaster preparedness, and supports effective governance for sustainable and inclusive development across diverse social and administrative contexts.

Collectively, these contributions demonstrate the breadth of contemporary public administration and illustrate how governance institutions influence social, economic, environmental, and political transformation. The diversity of themes represented in this issue reflects our commitment to publishing high-quality research that is theoretically grounded, methodologically rigorous, and relevant to policy and practice.

The publication of this inaugural issue has been possible because of the dedication and collective efforts of many individuals. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the distinguished members of the Editorial Board for their academic guidance, insightful suggestions, and unwavering commitment to maintaining the highest scholarly standards. My sincere appreciation also goes to the Executive Team, whose meticulous planning, editorial coordination, technical support, and administrative efforts ensured the successful publication of this issue.

I express my deepest thanks to all the authors who entrusted us with their valuable research and contributed outstanding manuscripts to this inaugural volume. Their scholarship forms the intellectual foundation of this journal. I am equally grateful to our anonymous peer reviewers, whose constructive evaluations and thoughtful recommendations have significantly enhanced the quality and academic integrity of every published article.

As the Founding Editor-in-Chief, I envision the *Journal of Public Administration and Social Change* as a respected national and international platform for innovative scholarship that bridges theory, policy, and practice. We welcome original research articles, policy analyses, review papers, case studies, and interdisciplinary contributions that advance understanding of governance and its role in addressing contemporary societal challenges.

I invite scholars, researchers, practitioners, and policy professionals from across the globe to contribute to future issues and join

us in building a vibrant community of knowledge dedicated to strengthening public institutions and promoting inclusive, democratic, and sustainable social change.

I sincerely hope that this inaugural issue will stimulate meaningful academic discussions, inspire future research, and contribute to the advancement of public administration scholarship and policy discourse.

Dr. Ahmed Raza
Editor-in-Chief

Contents

<i>Guidelines for Submission</i>	v
<i>From the Desk of Editor-in-Chief</i>	viii

Particulars	Page
Imphal Urban Governance: The Institutional Trust Deficit in Smart City Mission <i>Dr. Ningthoujam Irina Devi</i>	01
Transformative Governance: Reframing Public Administration as the Institutional Architecture of Social Transformation <i>Dr. Sandeep Inampudi</i>	13
Empowering Women through MSMEs: A Pathway to Inclusive Growth in India <i>Dr. Shivangi Kashyap</i>	29
Educational Challenges in Border Communities: A Focus on the Line of Control in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir <i>Dr. Asad ur Rehman</i>	39
Public Policy and Women Empowerment in India: Bridging the Implementation Gap for Viksit Bharat 2047 <i>Dr. Ekta Choudhary</i>	47
Environmental Governance in India: A Case Study of Ranchi district of Jharkhand <i>Dr. S. M. Khalid</i>	59
Artificial Intelligence, Transparent Governance, and Social Change in India: A Public Administration Perspective <i>Dr. Zeba Fatima</i>	73
Global Governance for Health: Role of India in Global Health Diplomacy <i>Wajiha, Poodari Rohith Goud and Prof. Mohd. Nafees Ahmad Ansari</i>	87
Public Policy and Social Change in the Tribal Areas of North East India <i>Dr. Khalid Ansari</i>	107

Transgender Welfare Policy in India <i>Jyoti Dubey</i>	121
Community participation in Disaster Management: The Indian Experience <i>Dr. Md Karar Ahmad, Ali Mohammad SK, Nazim Ali and Prof. Anoop Kumar Singh</i>	137
<i>Book Review</i> Wronged: The Weaponization of Victimhood (Lilie Chouliaraki) <i>Bhawesh Pant</i>	153

Imphal Urban Governance: The Institutional Trust Deficit in Smart City Mission

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Abstract

With advancements in electronic and telecommunication technologies, digital governance has emerged as a central pillar of contemporary public administration by enabling innovative service delivery. Based on such technology, India's multi-crore Smart Cities Mission (SCM) depends heavily on urban institutional infrastructure and continuous citizen participation, though it is frequently warped by local socio-political fragmentation and institutional volatility. This paper attempts to examine the urban institutional performance of the Imphal Municipal Corporation (IMC) and Imphal Smart City Limited (ISCL) in the implementation of the smart city mission.

The study finding reveals that the mission successfully deployed highly visible, "aesthetic" and leisure-oriented infrastructure during its initial phases, however its failure to institutionalize long-term public participation, inability to deploy functional digital feedback loops, and maintain robust oversight in public-private partnerships has generated a profound performance and trust deficit. Ultimately, the paper also argues that without a stable state-societal relation such technological interventions fail to address deep-rooted urban utility crises.

Keywords: Urban Governance, Public Trust, Digital Democracy, Smart Cities Mission, Imphal.

Introduction

Urban centres have historically served as the primary engines of economic growth while simultaneously functioning as focal points for complex challenges in basic service delivery. In the contemporary era, urbanization extensively shapes a global transition toward "smart cities"—spaces conceptualized as technologically advanced environments that harness digital infrastructure to enhance urban efficiency, maximize managerial capabilities, and improve the overall quality of life. Within the Indian subcontinent, this urban transition carries massive economic and social implications. According to the Census of India 2011, approximately 31% of the national population resides in urban areas, yet this segment generates a disproportionate 63%

of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Managing this intensive economic engine amid rapid population concentration requires highly sophisticated governance instruments.

Accordingly, the Government of India launched the flagship Smart Cities Mission (SCM) on June 25, 2015, under the administration of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). For the vast majority of urban residents, the vision of a smart city translates directly into a localized wish list of reliable basic infrastructure: continuous water supply, optimized electricity grids, systematic waste management, enhanced public safety, and resilient job opportunities using Information and Technological solution. The SCM explicitly responds to these aspirations by anchoring its framework on four foundational pillars:

1. **Institutional Infrastructure:** Regulatory mechanisms, administrative frameworks, and transparent governance systems.
2. **Physical Infrastructure:** Transportation networks, water supply systems, sanitation, and power grids.
3. **Social Infrastructure:** Healthcare systems, educational institutions, recreational facilities, and cultural safeguards.
4. **Economic Infrastructure:** Employment hubs, skill development centers, and structural conditions favoring local industry and commerce.

From these above the institutional infrastructure under the 74th constitutional urban governance structure and its related institutions remain the most important as the rest of the pillars depends on how strong and accountable the public institution is in delivering the rest pillars for SCM. In this regard, the paper attempts to understand the Imphal Urban governance infrastructure to implement the SCM.

Imphal's Urban Context and the SCM

Imphal, the capital city of Manipur in Northeast India, represents a unique geopolitical node in Northeast India. Nestled within the flat terrain of the Imphal Valley and encircled by an imposing topography of hills, the city exhibits a distinct spatial profile characterized by significant ecological richness alongside acute physical expansion barriers. According to the Census of India 2011, Imphal has a total population of 277,196 individuals, comprising 135,313 males and 141,883 females. The wider urban agglomeration boasts an exceptionally high literacy rate of 90.77% (95.14% for males and 86.73% for females), signifying a highly educated, articulate, and politically conscious citizenry.

However, this high educational attainment stands in stark, troubling contrast to the city's underlying economic indicators. The

Census reveals that out of the entire population, only 89,368 individuals are classified as active workers (encompassing both main and marginal workers), yielding a remarkably low Work Participation Rate (WPR) of approximately 32.23%. This depressed WPR indicates limited structural engagement of the working-age population within the formal or informal employment sectors.

Furthermore, historical data from the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) 68th Round estimated urban unemployment in Manipur to hover acutely between 6% and 9%. This structural crisis is exceptionally severe among educated urban youth and women, demonstrating a persistent mismatch between local skill sets and actual market opportunities. More recent assessments, including the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), confirm the stagnation of urban employment, rendering employment-generating interventions a core priority for any local urban development scheme.

Geopolitically, Imphal is situated at the intersection of critical National Highways—NH-2, NH-53, NH-102, and NH-150—positioning it directly on the Trans-Asian Highway network. Under India's Act East Policy, the city serves as a crucial transit gateway for cross-border trade, cultural diplomacy, and regional connectivity with Southeast Asia. This strategic potential was clearly demonstrated by the successful trial of the Imphal–Mandalay bus service in December 2015 under the proposed India–Myanmar–Thailand Motor Vehicle Agreement.

Thus, Imphal's immense regional potential is severely throttled by severe internal urban service deficits: an outdated water grid suffering from 40–50% resource leakage, the total absence of a structured public mass transit system, widespread non-conformance to zoning regulations, and intense traffic congestion. The selection of Imphal in the Fast-Track Round of the SCM in May 2016 was thus explicitly intended to address these deep-seated infrastructural vulnerabilities and bridge the regional development gap in Northeast India.

Urban Institutional Architecture for SCM: The Interplay of IMC and ISCL

The governance matrix of Imphal is divided between a traditional municipal framework and a modern, parastatal corporate vehicle explicitly introduced to execute the smart city agenda. Urban local self-governance historically falls under the jurisdiction of the Imphal Municipal Corporation (IMC), which is structurally sub-divided into 27 distinct administrative wards. Each ward democratically elects a municipal councillor to head its respective Ward Development

Committee (WDC), which is legally mandated to include nominated officials and local civil society representatives to ensure neighbourhood-level oversight. The last municipal election for the IMC took place on June 2, 2016, with results declared shortly thereafter. The next election was due in 2021, but has since been postponed. Though in August 2022, the High Court pressed the state to clarify reasons and schedule fresh elections. Governance continues under caretaker setups administered by the Manipur State Election Commission (SEC) where the earlier elected councillors continue to coordinate activities in the local level. The IMC, in collaboration with the parastatal agency MAHUD (Department of Municipal Administration, Housing and Urban Development, Government of Manipur), played a key role in organizing a series of citizen consultations. These initiatives were aimed at soliciting public opinions and preferences to be incorporated into the final Imphal Smart City Proposal.

However, after the finalisation of proposals, the operational delivery of the Smart Cities Mission introduces a distinct institutional actor: Imphal Smart City Limited (ISCL). Approved on April 18, 2016, during a special council meeting of the IMC presided over by the erstwhile Chairperson A. Nimai, ISCL was formally incorporated as a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) under the corporate governance guidelines of the Companies Act, 2013.

Governance Wing	Component / Title	Specific Institutional Roles & Functional Jurisdictions
Political Wing	Municipal Council	Comprises 27 elected ward councillors; reviews and votes on municipal legislation.
	Chairperson / Mayor	Elected by the councillors; acts as the political head of the local municipal corporation.
	Standing Committees	Specialized legislative groups overseeing Finance, Sanitation, Works, and Public Health.
	Ward Development Committees	Localized bodies chaired by ward councillors to coordinate civil society demands.
Administrative Wing	Executive Officer / CEO	State-appointed administrative chief; handles bureaucratic approvals and personnel.
	Specialized Officers	Municipal Engineers, Health Officers, Revenue Officers, and Accounts Officers.

	Smart City Cell	IT/GIS Officers supporting spatial mapping, telemetry, and localized digital governance.
Smart City SPV	Imphal Smart City Ltd. (ISCL)	Special Purpose Vehicle corporate entity established to directly execute SCM projects.
	Managing Director / CEO	Senior IAS officer managing day-to-day administrative and financial deployments.
	Board of Directors	Joint steering board comprising MoHUA, the State Government, and IMC technical experts.
State Oversight	MAHUD Department	Department of Municipal Administration, Housing and Urban Development; policy supervisor.
Elections & Legal	State Election Commission	State body responsible for conducting municipal polls and ensuring legal compliance.

Table 1. Institutional Urban Governance Matrix of Imphal City

The structural blueprint of this SPV was designed to ensure independent administrative and financial autonomy. The capital structure requires a minimum of eight foundational shareholders, equally split with four promoters from the Government of Manipur and four from the IMC. The governing Board of Directors was composed to include one representative from the central Ministry, three from the state government and IMC, alongside two independent directors sourced directly from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs' national data bank.

While the IMC's political wing was designed to maintain a direct line to local neighborhoods, the creation of ISCL shifted financial and technical control over the ₹1,523 crore mission portfolio into the hands of an autonomous corporate entity. Out of the 27 infrastructure projects approved to achieve the mission's goals, ISCL assumed direct implementation responsibility for only a few targeted initiatives—specifically the construction of smart toilets, security kiosks, and automated rotary parking systems—while primarily functioning as an overall monitoring and coordinating agency for other line departments. The SCM projects implemented across Imphal can be categorized into two distinct typologies: high-visibility "aesthetic/leisure" spaces and critical "urban survival utilities.

Qualitative Fieldwork and Institutional Tracking

An initial online survey of 300 online Google Forms questionnaires were distributed to understand public view on SCM implementation. However, the survey encountered significant real-world constraints: out of the targeted pool, only 116 valid, fully completed responses were initially secured through the online portal, yielding an initial valid response rate of 39.6%. Recognizing the limitations of a purely digital survey in a conflict-prone environment experiencing frequent internet shutdowns [1], the researcher supplemented the quantitative dataset with extensive qualitative fieldwork. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on-site with randomly selected members of the public to capture qualitative narratives regarding their experiences with smart city infrastructure.

Furthermore, to evaluate the structural transparent delivery of the Special Purpose Vehicle, the researcher conducted rigorous digital tracking and field visits to the physical headquarters of Imphal Smart City Limited. Multiple attempts were made to systematically analyze the official ISCL website, with the final monitoring assessment completed on June 20, 2025. Over a continuous two-year observation period, the digital platform remained completely static, failing to provide basic project updates, fiscal expenditures, or performance metrics.

Consequently, the researcher undertook direct, in-person institutional tracking at the physical ISCL office. Semi-structured diagnostic interviews were held with the Chief Executive Officer, state officers on deputation from the IMC and the Planning and Development Authority (PDA), and three Project Management Consultants (PMCs) representing the private corporate partners, IL&FS and PwC. This dual methodology allows for the cross-referencing of official institutional claims against the lived realities of the citizens on the ground.

Institutional Performance Report Card: The Citizen Verdict

The empirical findings from Imphal highlight a key debate within public administration theory: the friction between technocratic corporate efficiency and democratic accountability. The establishment of Imphal Smart City Limited as a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) was intended to bypass slow municipal processes by transferring execution powers into an autonomous corporate entity led by a state-appointed CEO and private Project Management Consultants (PMCs). However, this institutional arrangement created a significant accountability deficit.

By shifting the implementation of the ₹1,523 crore mission away from the elected councillors of the Imphal Municipal Corporation and

placing it within an autonomous SPV, the state effectively insulated urban planning from local democratic oversight. The data confirms this consequence: 95.6% of citizens felt excluded from project finalization, and 69% reported that local ward committees were completely cut off from the feedback loop. The corporate SPV model turned public consultation into a performative, upfront exercise to secure federal funds, while keeping the actual execution top-down and bureaucratic. This institutional setup separates the city's residents from the governing body, producing an urban bureaucracy perceived as insular, unapproachable, and indifferent to community needs.

This democratic deficit was further compounded by a total lack of transparency in private procurement, which severely damaged the legitimacy of the SPV model. In November 2018, the Government of Manipur signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with two major external corporate consultancies—IL&FS Township and Urban Assets Limited, and PricewaterhouseCoopers Private Limited (PwC)—to provide project management and overall technical support for the SPV.

However, as documented by The Sangai Express and highlighted by the Centre for Research and Advocacy Manipur (CRAM) in 2019, both selected firms were simultaneously embroiled in major national financial and ethical controversies:

- **IL&FS:** Was facing a catastrophic financial collapse with liabilities exceeding ₹99,000 crore, leading to an immediate central government takeover and investigations by the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) for systemic financial fraud.
- **PwC:** Had been barred by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) from auditing listed corporate entities for two years due to its direct role in the Satyam Computers accounting scandal.

The selection of these controversial firms, combined with minimal public disclosure regarding their deliverables, damaged public confidence in the mission's financial integrity. Local authorities failed to perform adequate due diligence, selecting tarnished corporate actors to manage a critical public infrastructure mission. This complete lack of transparent procurement fueled public mistrust, leading citizens to award both the IMC and ISCL failing marks of 2.15 and 2.11 out of 5, respectively

A foundational promise of smart cities is the deployment of information technology to enhance municipal transparency and build

responsive, digital feedback channels. In Imphal, however, these digital pathways face an absolute structural breakdown.

As the data shows, 86.2% of respondents (100 out of 116) are entirely unaware of any online grievance redressal systems or service feedback mechanisms. Only a minor 12.9% (15 individuals) confirmed any awareness, with only one respondent noting a functional example where online reporting of main-road potholes led to timely administrative action. Similarly, when asked about awareness of social-media-based citizen feedback apps, 81% (94 individuals) stated "No." This lack of public awareness is directly linked to the operational failures of the official platforms run by the authorities. The primary data shows that 63.8% of the public (74 individuals) have never accessed the official ISCL website, stating that they are completely unaware of both the physical office location and its web portal. Another respondent noted that the platform exists "merely for namesake," providing little to no substantial data on projects or expenditures.

This public assessment aligns with the researcher's independent digital tracking: on June 20, 2025, systematic testing of the ISCL website confirmed that key informational portals remained completely inaccessible, broken, or un-updated for over two consecutive years. While the official ISCL Facebook page has a modest following of 2,800 individuals, it operates primarily as a top-down public relations platform rather than a two-way, collaborative feedback network. Consequently, the primary communication channel remains highly siloed, excluding the public from project tracking and financial oversight

This consistent exclusion of the public is directly reflected in the performance evaluations given to the urban governance apparatus. On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 represents the lowest performance bracket), the average scores assigned by citizens reveal a profound institutional performance deficit the institutional performance ratings reveal a critical trust deficit across all three categories:

1. **Imphal Smart City Limited (ISCL):** The corporate SPV achieved a low average score of 2.11 out of 5. The dominant rating was a score of 1, given by 35.1% of respondents (39 individuals), followed closely by a score of 2 from 31.5% (35 individuals). Only 4 individuals out of 111 rated its performance as excellent.
2. **Imphal Municipal Corporation (IMC):** The traditional municipal body performed similarly poorly, averaging 2.15 out of 5. Over 33.9% of respondents (38 individuals) awarded it a

score of 1, with 27.7% giving a score of 2, and 29.5% giving a score of 3.

3. **Overall Information Dissemination:** Tracking awareness building from the initial public consultation phase to project completion, this metric averaged a low 2.15 out of 5. The single largest segment of respondents (35.4% or 40 individuals) rated it at 1, demonstrating an information gap between the executing authorities and the public.

This data indicates a widespread trust deficit regarding the performance of local public administration, where neither the traditional municipal body nor the newer corporate SPV model managed to win the confidence of a highly literate populace. However, among the highly visible projects, the survey shows that projects focusing on historic conservation, aesthetic retrofitting, and leisure spaces achieved high levels of public awareness and positive reception. The culturally significant heritage project, Nongpok Thong (Bridge) of Kangla, achieved wide visibility with 74 respondents confirming active awareness and 18 utilizing the service through user fees. Similarly, the Nongpok Kangla River Front Project environmental retrofitting initiative achieved high public approval; 65 respondents expressed satisfaction with its delivery as a morning jogging site, while 54 praised it as a high-quality urban recreational space. Meanwhile, the pedestrianisation of Thangal Mall Road attained favorable metrics, with 47 respondents rating the localized pedestrian intervention as "Good," compared to 27 rating it as bad and 25 as very poor.

Finally, evaluating institutional performance in Imphal requires accounting for the unique socio-political volatility of the region. The implementation of a highly connected, data-driven "smart city" model requires stable physical and digital infrastructure. In Imphal, however, this digital foundation is frequently disrupted by regional conflicts and security governance.

The sudden eruption of severe communal conflict on May 3, 2023, underscores this vulnerability, leading to continuous curfews, strikes, and long-term state-imposed internet shutdowns. These prolonged network suspensions directly cripple technology-dependent urban systems, such as app-based bike sharing networks, digitized property tax registries, and online feedback platforms. When the state uses internet shutdowns as a primary security tool, it inadvertently disables the very digital governance systems intended to promote transparency and accountability. This interaction between digital dependency and political instability widens the institutional trust deficit,

convincing a highly literate public that top-down technocratic solutions are poorly suited to the volatile realities of a fragile border state.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The structural performance of the Imphal Smart City Mission serves as a clear cautionary lesson for public administration: a city cannot be engineered without strengthening the public participatory institution both the elected one and the continuous public-citizen relation. The city cannot change into being "smart" through top-down technology procurement and aesthetic landscaping alone. While the corporate SPV model successfully delivered bounded leisure projects like the Kangla Riverfront development, it failed to address the city's core municipal needs—such as drainage, traffic management, and employment generation—due to a lack of local accountability and long-term community integration. To rebuild public trust, enhance operational accountability, and stabilize urban service delivery, a comprehensive policy shift is required:

1. **Re-Institutionalize Grassroots Democratic Governance:** The state must move away from temporary caretaker setups and restore local democratic processes by holding regular municipal elections for the Imphal Municipal Corporation. Real decision-making and project tracking powers must be decentralized back to Ward Development Committees, moving citizens from tokenistic consultation to active co-production.
2. **Enforce Mandatory Digital Transparency and Disclosures:** Imphal Smart City Limited must immediately overhaul its digital platforms. The SPV should be legally required to publish detailed project scorecards, itemized financial expenditures, and the operational statuses of idle public assets—such as the non-functional automated parking systems—on an accessible public dashboard.
3. **Formulate a Hybrid, Low-Tech Communication Strategy:** To adapt to the region's frequent internet shutdowns and digital divide, urban planners must balance digital portals with offline communication networks. Authorities should institutionalize regular, in-person ward town halls, distribute physical citizen report cards, and adopt participatory budgeting models to ensure inclusive urban governance for all residents.

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Notes:

[1] On May 3, 2023, a severe communal conflict erupted across Manipur, resulting in prolonged military curfews, widespread public strikes (bandhs), deep political instability, and frequent, state-mandated suspensions of all public internet services.

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Transformative Governance: Reframing Public Administration as the Institutional Architecture of Social Transformation

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Abstract

Despite advances in public administration and governance scholarship, the processes through which governments generate sustained social transformation remain insufficiently theorised. Public administration has focused on structures, policy implementation, and service delivery, whereas social transformation has been examined in sociology, political science, and development studies.

As a result, governance and long-term societal transformation remain fragmented across disciplines. This paper addresses the gap by advancing Transformative Governance as an integrative framework reconceptualising public administration beyond its conventional role. It argues public administration is the institutional architecture through which governance develops transformative capacity to produce democratic, inclusive, and sustainable social transformation. Rather than proposing another governance model, the paper develops an institutional process perspective explaining how aspirations, institutional design, capability, governance processes, and citizen engagement generate transformative capacity.

Drawing upon classical and contemporary scholarship in public administration, governance theory, institutionalism, public value, collaborative and adaptive governance, and the capability approach, the paper develops an Institutional Process Model of Transformative Governance. The model conceptualises transformation as a continuous institutional process linking societal challenges and constitutional vision to institutional architecture, governance processes, transformative capacity, social transformation, public value, learning, and governance renewal.

The Indian governance experience provides the empirical context for developing and illustrating this framework. Rather than treating India as a conventional case study, the paper positions it as an institutional laboratory through which transformative governance can be examined across constitutional governance, decentralisation, digital public infrastructure, mission-oriented administration,

collaborative governance, and citizen-centred institutional innovation. This perspective demonstrates how governance evolves through continuous institutional adaptation and learning rather than episodic administrative reform, offering broader theoretical insights for democratic governance in diverse and complex societies.

The paper makes three principal contributions to contemporary public administration scholarship. First, it develops Transformative Governance as an integrative framework linking public administration with social transformation. Second, it proposes an Institutional Process Model that explains how governance develops transformative capacity through interconnected institutional processes. Third, it argues that the legitimacy of public administration in the twenty-first century should be assessed not only through administrative performance but also through its capacity to generate public value, institutional resilience, democratic inclusion, and sustainable social transformation. By repositioning public administration at the centre of debates on governance and societal transformation, the paper offers a theoretically grounded framework for advancing future research on governance, institutions, and democratic development.

Keywords: Transformative Governance, Public Administration, Social Transformation, Institutional Architecture, Institutional Process Model.

Introduction

The twenty-first century has redefined the intellectual and practical boundaries of public administration. Governments are no longer assessed only by their capacity to maintain administrative order, implement public policies, or deliver services efficiently. Contemporary governance is increasingly expected to respond to complex public problems involving inequality, climate risk, technological disruption, demographic change, public health vulnerability, democratic accountability, and declining institutional trust. These problems exceed the limits of rule-bound administration and require governance systems capable of sustaining institutional adaptation, public value creation, and long-term social transformation. In this scenario, a notable governance paradox emerges. Constitutional democracies frequently share similar commitments to justice, equality, participation, welfare, and development, and many implement alike administrative reforms, policy tools, digital frameworks, and citizen-focused governance approaches. However, the societal outcomes they achieve can vary greatly. While some governance systems enhance institutional trust, boost citizen capabilities, and foster lasting social change, others merely achieve procedural adherence or minor advancements despite having ambitious policy goals (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017; Sen, 1999; Fukuyama, 2013). This variation prompts a fundamental inquiry in public administration

research: why do governance systems, operating under generally similar constitutional and administrative frameworks, lead to different paths of social transformation?

Existing public administration theory offers important but incomplete answers. Classical public administration established the foundations of modern administrative thought through its emphasis on hierarchy, legality, specialisation, political neutrality, and bureaucratic rationality (Wilson, 1887; Weber, 1978). Development Administration later expanded the administrative role of the State by linking public institutions with planned development, modernisation, and nation-building in post-colonial societies (Riggs, 1964; Esman, 1991). New Public Management shifted the focus towards efficiency, performance, competition, and managerial accountability, while governance-oriented approaches brought attention to networks, participation, collaboration, public value, and service co-production (Hood, 1991; Moore, 1995; Osborne, 2010). These paradigms enriched the discipline, but they did not fully explain how administrative institutions acquire the capacity to produce enduring societal transformation.

Theories of social transformation have developed along a parallel intellectual trajectory. Sociological and political traditions have explained social change through differentiation, conflict, rationalisation, institutional change, economic development, and human capability expansion (Durkheim, 1984; Weber, 1978; North, 1990; Sen, 1999). These perspectives clarify why societies change and how social structures evolve, but they do not sufficiently explain the administrative and governance mechanisms through which constitutional aspirations and public policies are converted into sustained societal outcomes. The result is a persistent conceptual gap between public administration as a field concerned with governing institutions and social transformation as a field concerned with changes in social structures, values, capabilities, and collective behaviour (Ostrom, 1990; Pierre & Peters, 2020).

This paper addresses that gap by advancing Transformative Governance as an institutional process perspective. Its central proposition is that public administration should be understood not merely as the machinery of government but as the institutional architecture through which governance develops the transformative capacity necessary to produce democratic, inclusive, and sustainable social transformation. This proposition builds on, but also moves beyond, existing approaches to administrative efficiency, development administration, public value, and collaborative governance by placing transformative capacity at the

centre of the relationship between governance and social transformation (Moore, 1995; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015; Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Reframing Public Administration: Towards an Institutional Process Perspective of Transformative Governance

Public administration has never been a static discipline. Its evolution reflects the changing expectations that societies place upon the State and its institutions. Early scholarship was primarily concerned with establishing an efficient administrative system capable of maintaining order, ensuring legality, and implementing public decisions. As governments assumed wider developmental and regulatory responsibilities, the discipline expanded to engage with questions of economic development, institutional reform, governance, public value, collaboration, and citizen participation. Each phase did not replace its predecessor; rather, it broadened the intellectual canvas of public administration by responding to emerging governance challenges and changing public expectations (Hood, 1991; Osborne, 2010; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

However, contemporary governance increasingly demands capabilities extending well beyond implementation. Governments are expected to mobilise multiple stakeholders, respond to uncertainty, coordinate across institutional boundaries, strengthen public trust, encourage citizen participation, and generate sustainable public value. These expanding expectations suggest that public administration can no longer be interpreted solely through the traditional lens of administrative machinery; it must also be understood as the institutional foundation that enables governance to evolve, adapt, and respond to changing societal conditions (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015; Osborne, 2010).

Understanding public administration as institutional architecture also requires a broader understanding of governance itself. Governance is neither simply another administrative arrangement nor merely a replacement for government. Rather, it represents the dynamic institutional process through which governments, public agencies, markets, civil society organisations, communities, technological systems, and citizens interact to address shared public problems (Rhodes, 1996; Osborne, 2010; Ansell & Gash, 2008). Institutional architecture provides the structural foundation of governance, whereas governance refers to the continuous processes by which institutions coordinate authority, resources, participation, knowledge, and collective action. This distinction is analytically important because institutional structures alone cannot generate transformation; transformation emerges through the

quality of governance processes operating within those institutional arrangements.

The central proposition advanced in this paper is that governance becomes transformative when institutional architecture develops the capacity to convert constitutional aspirations, public policy, administrative capability, and citizen participation into sustained societal outcomes. Building upon broader scholarship relating to state capacity, institutional capacity, governance capacity, adaptive governance, and public value, this paper conceptualises transformative capacity as the ability of governance systems to continually mobilise institutional resources, foster collaborative action, generate organisational learning, strengthen democratic legitimacy, and adapt to emerging societal challenges in ways that produce enduring social transformation (Moore, 1995; Folke et al., 2005; Fukuyama, 2013). Transformative capacity is therefore neither a single administrative competence nor a policy outcome. It is an emergent institutional capability that develops through sustained interaction among constitutional values, administrative institutions, governance processes, and citizen agency.

This perspective also necessitates a reconsideration of social transformation within public administration scholarship. Social transformation is frequently examined through sociological, economic, or political perspectives that emphasise structural change, economic development, technological progress, or cultural evolution (Sen, 1999; North, 1990). While these perspectives remain indispensable, they do not adequately explain the governance processes through which public institutions facilitate transformation. Within the framework proposed in this paper, social transformation refers to the sustained institutional process through which governance reshapes public values, strengthens citizen capabilities, improves institutional resilience, influences collective behaviour, and expands democratic opportunities in pursuit of constitutional objectives. Transformation is therefore understood not as a discrete policy outcome but as a cumulative institutional achievement emerging from continuous governance adaptation and learning.

The relationship among these concepts forms the basis of the proposed Institutional Process Perspective of Transformative Governance. Public administration provides the institutional architecture that enables governance processes to function effectively. Governance processes, in turn, cultivate transformative capacity by integrating administrative competence, collaborative institutions, citizen participation, and adaptive learning. Transformative capacity ultimately determines the ability of governance systems to produce enduring social

transformation while simultaneously strengthening public value, institutional legitimacy, and democratic resilience. This perspective shifts analytical attention away from evaluating governments solely through administrative efficiency or policy implementation and towards understanding the institutional processes through which governance generates long-term societal transformation.

Accordingly, Transformative Governance should not be interpreted as an alternative administrative model competing with existing paradigms. Rather, it represents an integrative institutional perspective that synthesises the principal contributions of public administration, governance, institutional theory, public value, and collaborative governance into a coherent explanation of how governance develops the capacity to facilitate democratic and sustainable social transformation. The following section operationalises this perspective by developing the Transformative Governance Framework and identifying the institutional dimensions through which transformative capacity can be analysed across diverse governance contexts.

The Transformative Governance Framework- An Institutional Process Perspective

The preceding discussion established that contemporary public administration has progressively expanded its analytical scope from administrative order and policy implementation towards governance, collaboration, institutional adaptability, and public value. At the same time, it identified an important theoretical limitation: existing paradigms provide valuable explanations of administrative performance and governance processes but offer only partial accounts of how governance develops the institutional capability necessary to generate sustained social transformation. Responding to this limitation, this paper proposes the Transformative Governance Framework, an institutional process perspective that integrates constitutional vision, institutional architecture, governance processes, transformative capacity, and societal outcomes within a single analytical model.

Unlike conventional governance frameworks that primarily evaluate governments through indicators such as efficiency, accountability, transparency, service delivery, or institutional performance, the proposed framework shifts analytical attention towards the institutional processes through which governance progressively acquires transformative capability. Transformation is not conceptualised as the direct outcome of individual public policies or administrative reforms. Rather, it is understood as a cumulative institutional process emerging from the continuous interaction among constitutional

principles, public institutions, governance practices, administrative learning, and citizen engagement. Consequently, governance should be evaluated not only by what governments do, but also by how institutions collectively create the conditions for sustainable societal transformation.

The framework rests upon four interrelated analytical components that together explain the institutional evolution of transformative governance. The first component comprises the Normative Foundation of governance. Every democratic governance system derives its legitimacy from a constitutional vision that articulates shared public values, democratic principles, the rule of law, and broader societal aspirations. Constitutional commitments establish the normative direction of governance by defining the public purposes towards which institutions, policies, and administrative systems are expected to operate. Rather than functioning merely as legal instruments, constitutional values provide the enduring normative foundation that guides institutional continuity, democratic accountability, and public legitimacy across changing political environments (North, 1990; Pierre & Peters, 2020).

The second component is Institutional Architecture, which translates constitutional aspirations into durable governance arrangements. Institutional architecture encompasses organisational structures, legal frameworks, administrative systems, accountability mechanisms, leadership arrangements, and policy coordination processes that collectively enable governmental action. Public administration occupies a central position within this architecture because it provides the organisational continuity and administrative capability necessary for democratic governance irrespective of changing political leadership. Institutional architecture therefore represents considerably more than governmental organisation; it constitutes the institutional environment through which governance acquires stability, coordination, administrative competence, and implementation capacity (Wilson, 1887; Ostrom, 1990; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015).

The third component comprises Governance Processes, representing the dynamic interactions occurring within institutional architecture. Governance is understood here as a continuous process through which governments, public agencies, citizens, civil society organisations, markets, and technological systems collectively address complex public problems. Collaborative decision-making, citizen participation, inter-organisational coordination, adaptive learning, policy innovation, and institutional flexibility become essential characteristics of governance because they determine the ability of institutions to respond effectively to changing societal conditions (Ansell & Gash,

2008; Osborne, 2010). Institutional structures alone cannot produce transformation. Transformation emerges only when governance processes continuously strengthen cooperation, learning, adaptability, and collective problem-solving.

These three components converge to generate Transformative Capacity, which represents the central explanatory mechanism of the proposed framework. Building upon existing scholarship on state capacity, institutional capacity, governance capacity, adaptive governance, and public value, transformative capacity is conceptualised as the institutional ability of governance systems to continuously translate constitutional aspirations, public policies, administrative capability, collaborative action, and citizen participation into sustained societal transformation (Fukuyama, 2013; Moore, 1995; Folke et al., 2005). Unlike administrative efficiency, which measures organisational performance, or governance quality, which evaluates institutional effectiveness, transformative capacity explains why some governance systems consistently generate durable institutional resilience, democratic legitimacy, and societal transformation despite operating under conditions of uncertainty and complexity. It therefore functions as the integrative mechanism connecting institutional architecture with transformative societal outcomes.

The final component of the framework concerns Transformative Outcomes. Governance ultimately seeks to achieve outcomes extending beyond programme implementation or service delivery. Sustainable governance strengthens institutional resilience, expands citizen capabilities, generates public value, enhances democratic legitimacy, and facilitates long-term social transformation. Importantly, these outcomes are not treated as terminal achievements. They generate new institutional learning, reshape governance practices, and continuously renew constitutional and administrative institutions. Transformative governance is therefore understood as a recursive institutional process in which governance outcomes contribute to future governance capability, thereby creating a continuous cycle of institutional adaptation and democratic renewal.

The Transformative Governance Framework offers three important analytical advantages. First, it integrates constitutional principles, institutional arrangements, governance processes, and societal outcomes within a single explanatory perspective, thereby overcoming the fragmented treatment of these concepts across existing scholarship. Second, it shifts evaluation away from isolated administrative outputs towards the institutional capacities that sustain governance over time.

Third, it positions transformative capacity as the central mechanism through which governance converts public purpose into enduring democratic and developmental outcomes. Rather than replacing existing theories of public administration or governance, the framework synthesises their principal contributions while providing a broader institutional explanation of governance-led social transformation.

Accordingly, the proposed framework should be understood as an institutional process perspective rather than a prescriptive governance model. It does not prescribe a uniform administrative structure or policy approach. Instead, it provides an analytical lens through which scholars and practitioners can examine how different governance systems develop the institutional capabilities necessary to sustain democratic legitimacy, public value, institutional resilience, and social transformation across diverse political and administrative contexts. The following section illustrates the explanatory potential of this framework through the Indian governance experience, demonstrating how constitutional vision, institutional architecture, governance processes, and transformative capacity interact in practice to shape long-term societal transformation.

India as an Institutional Laboratory of Transformative Governance

The Transformative Governance Framework proposed in this paper finds particular relevance in the Indian administrative context. India presents one of the world's most complex democratic governance systems, characterised by constitutional diversity, federal institutions, social heterogeneity, administrative scale, and continuous policy experimentation. Rather than treating India as a conventional case study, this paper views it as an institutional laboratory in which successive constitutional, administrative, and governance innovations demonstrate how public administration progressively develops the capacity to facilitate societal transformation. The significance of the Indian experience therefore lies not merely in the number of public programmes implemented, but in the institutional evolution through which governance has expanded its transformative capabilities.

The normative foundations of transformative governance in India are embedded within the constitutional vision articulated in the Preamble and reinforced through Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy, democratic decentralisation, and constitutional accountability. These constitutional commitments extend beyond legal authority by establishing justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, social welfare, and democratic participation as enduring public purposes. Consequently, constitutional values continue to provide normative direction for

governance despite changing political priorities, administrative reforms, and developmental challenges. This constitutional continuity illustrates the first component of the proposed framework by demonstrating that transformative governance derives its legitimacy from enduring public purpose rather than from temporary political objectives (Austin, 1966; Basu, 2018).

India's post-independence administrative evolution similarly reflects continuous expansion of institutional architecture. Successive administrative reforms strengthened planning institutions, constitutional bodies, local self-government institutions, regulatory organisations, independent oversight mechanisms, and increasingly specialised public agencies. Constitutional amendments relating to Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies further institutionalised participatory governance by expanding democratic decision-making beyond the traditional administrative hierarchy. These developments demonstrate that institutional architecture is not a static organisational design but an evolving governance infrastructure capable of accommodating changing developmental priorities while preserving administrative continuity (Second Administrative Reforms Commission, 2008; Mathew, 1994).

The emergence of Digital Public Infrastructure has significantly expanded governance processes by strengthening coordination, transparency, service integration, and citizen accessibility. Platforms supporting digital identity, digital payments, direct benefit transfers, and integrated public service delivery illustrate how technology can strengthen institutional capability without replacing administrative institutions. Digital governance has increasingly enabled governments to coordinate across departments, improve administrative responsiveness, reduce transaction costs, and strengthen citizen-state interactions. From the perspective of the proposed framework, digital transformation should therefore be interpreted not merely as technological modernisation but as an institutional process that enhances governance capability through improved coordination, accessibility, accountability, and administrative learning (Misra & Schmidt, 2020).

Mission-oriented governance further illustrates the importance of governance processes within transformative governance. National initiatives across sanitation, financial inclusion, health, digital services, renewable energy, infrastructure, and rural development have increasingly relied upon intergovernmental coordination, collaborative implementation, behavioural change strategies, technology-enabled monitoring, and citizen participation. Their significance extends beyond programme implementation. Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate

how governance processes become increasingly adaptive, collaborative, and learning-oriented when addressing complex public problems that cannot be solved through conventional bureaucratic procedures alone. Institutional effectiveness therefore depends not only upon administrative capacity but also upon the quality of coordination, collaboration, and continuous adaptation across multiple governance actors.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of the Indian experience lies in demonstrating the gradual emergence of transformative capacity. India's governance evolution reveals that sustained social transformation rarely results from isolated administrative reforms or individual public policies. Instead, transformation emerges through cumulative institutional learning, incremental administrative adaptation, constitutional continuity, technological innovation, and expanding citizen participation.

Improvements in financial inclusion, digital service accessibility, local governance, social protection, and public accountability illustrate the capacity of governance systems to progressively strengthen institutional resilience while simultaneously expanding citizen capabilities. Although important governance challenges relating to regional disparities, implementation capacity, institutional coordination, and administrative inequality continue to persist, these challenges further reinforce the central proposition advanced in this paper: transformative governance is an ongoing institutional process rather than a completed administrative achievement.

The Indian experience therefore demonstrates the analytical value of the proposed Transformative Governance Framework. Constitutional vision provides normative legitimacy. Institutional architecture creates administrative continuity. Governance processes enable collaboration, participation, and adaptation. These interacting processes collectively cultivate transformative capacity, which ultimately determines the ability of governance systems to generate public value, institutional resilience, democratic legitimacy, and sustained social transformation. Rather than presenting governance as a sequence of administrative reforms, the framework interprets governance as a continuous institutional process through which democratic societies progressively strengthen their capacity to address increasingly complex public challenges.

Viewed from this perspective, India contributes to public administration scholarship not simply by offering examples of governance innovation but by demonstrating how constitutional

democracies continuously negotiate the relationship between institutions, governance, citizens, and social transformation. The Indian experience therefore reinforces the broader theoretical argument of this paper that transformative governance should be understood as an evolving institutional process through which public administration converts constitutional aspirations into enduring societal outcomes.

Conclusion

Contemporary public administration stands at an important intellectual juncture. While the discipline has progressively expanded from its traditional concern with administrative organisation towards governance, collaboration, public value, institutional resilience, and citizen-centred administration, it continues to confront a fundamental theoretical question: why do governance systems operating under comparable constitutional commitments, administrative reforms, and policy aspirations produce markedly different trajectories of social transformation? Existing paradigms have significantly advanced understanding of governmental performance, institutional effectiveness, and governance processes. However, they have provided only partial explanations of the institutional mechanisms through which governance develops the capacity to generate enduring societal transformation.

This paper addressed that conceptual challenge by proposing Transformative Governance as an institutional process perspective that reconceptualises public administration beyond its conventional implementation-oriented role. Rather than viewing public administration merely as the machinery of government, the paper argued that it should be understood as the institutional architecture through which governance develops the transformative capacity necessary to produce democratic, inclusive, and sustainable social transformation. This perspective shifts scholarly attention from administrative outputs and isolated policy interventions towards the institutional capabilities that enable governance systems to adapt, coordinate, learn, and continuously create public value.

The proposed Transformative Governance Framework contributes to public administration scholarship in three important respects. First, it integrates constitutional foundations, institutional architecture, governance processes, transformative capacity, and societal outcomes within a single analytical perspective, thereby addressing the fragmented treatment of these concepts across existing governance literature.

Second, it positions transformative capacity as the central institutional mechanism linking governance processes with long-term

societal outcomes, providing a more comprehensive explanation of governance-led transformation than approaches focusing exclusively on efficiency, accountability, service delivery, or institutional performance. Third, the framework offers an analytical perspective that is sufficiently flexible to examine governance across diverse democratic contexts while remaining grounded in established traditions of public administration and governance scholarship.

The discussion of the Indian governance experience further demonstrates that social transformation should not be interpreted as the product of isolated programmes or episodic administrative reforms. Instead, transformative outcomes emerge through cumulative institutional evolution in which constitutional vision, administrative capability, collaborative governance, technological innovation, citizen participation, and continuous institutional learning reinforce one another over time. Although India presents a distinctive democratic and administrative context, the institutional processes identified in this paper possess wider analytical relevance for understanding governance across complex and pluralistic societies.

The framework proposed in this paper should therefore be understood as an analytical lens rather than a prescriptive model of governance. It does not advocate a uniform institutional design or a single pathway to transformation. Instead, it provides a conceptual foundation for examining how governance systems cultivate the institutional capabilities necessary to sustain democratic legitimacy, strengthen public value, enhance institutional resilience, and facilitate long-term social transformation.

Future research may further refine and empirically examine the proposed framework through comparative studies across different administrative systems, federal arrangements, policy sectors, and governance contexts. Such investigations would contribute to assessing the explanatory value of transformative capacity and its relationship with governance performance, institutional development, and societal outcomes.

Ultimately, the future relevance of public administration will depend not only on its ability to improve governmental efficiency or strengthen administrative performance, but also on its capacity to explain how democratic governance contributes to meaningful societal transformation. By repositioning public administration as the institutional architecture of social transformation, this paper seeks to encourage renewed scholarly engagement with the evolving relationship between

institutions, governance, public value, and democratic development. In doing so, it offers a conceptual foundation for advancing future debates on governance that extend beyond administrative management towards understanding the institutional processes through which democratic societies continuously shape their collective future.

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Empowering Women through MSMEs: A Pathway to Inclusive Growth in India

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Abstract

The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector is a cornerstone of India's economic landscape, contributing significantly to GDP, exports, and employment. With over 64 million enterprises, the sector drives innovation, skill development, and rural entrepreneurship. Notably, women-led MSMEs have become vital agents of inclusive growth by creating jobs, stimulating local economies, and enhancing women's socio-economic status. However, despite their potential, women entrepreneurs remain underrepresented—comprising only around 20% of MSME ownership—due to structural, cultural, and economic barriers. These include limited access to finance, digital tools, market networks, and mobility, alongside disproportionate caregiving responsibilities. The SAFE (Strengths, Aspirations, Fears, and Environment) Framework provides insights into the constraints hindering women's entrepreneurial growth. This article examines how MSMEs foster inclusive development and argues that enhancing women's participation requires addressing these systemic challenges through targeted, gender-sensitive policy interventions and ecosystem reforms.

Keywords: MSMEs, Women Entrepreneurship, Inclusive Growth, Gender Barriers, SAFE Framework

Introduction

The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector forms the backbone of India's economy. Often referred to as the “engine of growth,” MSMEs are instrumental in ensuring economic diversification, employment generation, and inclusive development. They contribute nearly 30% to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), account for around 49% of total exports, and employ more than 110 million people (Gupta & Kumar, 2022). With over 64 million enterprises spread across the country, the sector offers tremendous opportunities for innovation, skill development, and entrepreneurship—especially in rural and semi-urban areas. On the other hand, MSMEs also represent a powerful vehicle for inclusive growth by offering livelihoods to those excluded from formal

employment, supporting rural entrepreneurs, and enhancing female workforce participation, MSMEs help bridge economic inequalities and foster grassroots development. Notably, women-led MSMEs have emerged as key contributors to this transformation, creating job opportunities, boosting local economies, and enhancing the social status of women across India. India has 63 million micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), of which around 20% are women owned, employing 22 to 27 million people Agarwal, 2018).

Table 1: Share of women-owned MSMEs by Size, by sector and by Top-3 states with women led MSMEs (in percent)

Share of women-owned MSMEs by Size	Micro	Small	Medium
In Percent	20.44	5.26	2.67
Share of women-owned MSMEs by sector	Manufacturing	Trade	Other services
In Percent	45	8.7	7.4
Top-3 states with women led MSMEs	West Bengal	Tamil Nadu	Telangana
In Percent	23.42	10.37	7.85

Source: MoSME Annual Report 2021-22.

Women-owned enterprises in India are predominantly micro-scale, home-based, and operate within the informal sector, resulting in limited market access and inadequate marketing capabilities. Female entrepreneurs face structural and socio-cultural barriers, including restricted mobility, logistical constraints, time poverty due to unpaid care responsibilities, and concerns related to personal safety and security. These factors significantly hinder their ability to manage and scale their businesses effectively. Furthermore, disparities in digital and technical proficiency, driven by lower literacy levels and limited access to mobile technology and the internet, exacerbate the challenges (Gupta, 2021). The SAFE (Strengths, Aspirations, Fears, and Environment) Framework developed by MSC provides a comprehensive lens to analyze these persistent obstacles that contribute to the stagnation of female entrepreneurship in India. At the same time, women-led MSMEs face multiple barriers—ranging from limited access to finance, training, and markets to deep-rooted societal and cultural constraints. Revamping the MSME ecosystem with an inclusive, gender-sensitive lens is vital to unlocking India's full economic potential. This article seeks to explore how the MSME sector contributes to India's pursuit of inclusive growth,

emphasizing that women's participation can be significantly enhanced by addressing the structural and socio-economic challenges they face.

MSMEs as Drivers of Inclusive Growth

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) serve as key drivers of inclusive growth in India by fostering entrepreneurship, generating employment, promoting regional development, and enabling economic participation among marginalized groups, including women and rural populations.

Employment Generation

One of the most defining features of MSMEs is their labor-intensive nature. Unlike capital-intensive industries, MSMEs can provide large-scale employment opportunities with relatively low investment. This is particularly important in a country like India, where a vast segment of the population remains underemployed or informally employed (Economic Survey of India. 2023).

MSMEs contribute to inclusive growth by offering jobs to youth, unskilled and semi-skilled workers, and those from marginalized communities. According to government data, the sector has witnessed significant job growth—nearly doubling from 90 million in 2022 to 190 million by 2024—further underlining its potential to absorb a wide spectrum of the working population.

Rural Entrepreneurship and Development

With nearly 69% of the Indian population residing in rural areas (Census 2011), the development of rural enterprises becomes essential for balanced regional growth. MSMEs promote rural entrepreneurship by leveraging local skills and resources, creating jobs, and supporting ancillary industries. In rural regions where large industries are often absent and agriculture remains seasonal, MSMEs emerge as a viable alternative source of income. From agro-processing and handicrafts to rural BPOs and dairy cooperatives, the rural MSME ecosystem holds the promise of reducing poverty, improving infrastructure, and checking distress migration to cities.

Non-Agricultural Livelihood Opportunities

India's economic transformation hinges on shifting excess labor from agriculture to more productive sectors (Agarwal et al. 2021). MSMEs provide crucial non-farm employment opportunities that help in diversifying income sources. This is especially relevant for landless laborers, women, and seasonal workers. Rural MSMEs, especially in the

non-agricultural domain, absorb surplus labor and help build a more inclusive and sustainable economy. By anchoring rural employment ecosystems, they help bridge the rural-urban divide and reduce economic disparities.

Enhancing Female Workforce Participation

Women entrepreneurs form a critical pillar of the MSME story in India. Despite social constraints, 20% of every 1000 MSMEs in India are currently owned or managed by women. These enterprises not only contribute to the economy but also catalyze broader social change by empowering women financially and socially. MSMEs offer flexible working conditions, informal setups, and opportunities for self-employment—making them particularly attractive to women who face mobility or time constraints due to caregiving roles.

Higher Pay and Stability for Informal Workers

MSMEs often offer better wages and job stability than informal, unregistered firms. For many unskilled and semi-skilled workers, MSMEs serve as an important entry point into the formal economy. Studies suggest that small businesses tend to offer better employee benefits, more personalized management practices, and longer job tenures than larger, more impersonal corporate setups. This fosters upward mobility for low-income workers and provides them with the means to invest in education, health, and housing—key drivers of inclusive growth.

Affordable Products for Low-Income Families

MSMEs produce cost-effective goods and services that cater to the needs of the middle and lower-income populations. Their ability to operate in remote and underserved areas, combined with local insights, allows them to meet consumer demands more effectively than large multinational corporations. By ensuring access to essential goods at affordable prices, MSMEs help enhance the purchasing power of the poor and reduce economic inequality.

Reducing Regional Inequalities

The spread of MSMEs across small towns and villages helps in the development of local infrastructure—such as roads, electricity, and communication facilities. This, in turn, reduces migration pressure on urban areas and promotes balanced regional development. By promoting localized development, MSMEs contribute to narrowing the gap between urban and rural regions—creating a more equitable economic landscape.

Hence, MSMEs hold immense potential to drive inclusive growth in India. By addressing gender-specific challenges and promoting equitable access to resources, the sector can further empower marginalized communities and strengthen the nation's socio-economic fabric.

Women Entrepreneurs in MSMEs

According to data from the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), as published on the Udyam Registration Portal (URP), women-owned MSMEs constitute 20.5% of the total registered units since the portal's launch on July 1, 2020. These enterprises contribute 18.73% to employment, 11.15% to total investment, and 10.22% to the overall turnover among Udyam-registered MSMEs. In the informal sector, data from the Udyam Assist Platform (UAP), which documents Informal Micro Enterprises (IMEs), indicates a significantly higher representation of women. Since the UAP's inception on January 11, 2023, women-owned IMEs account for 70.49% of total IME registrations and contribute 70.84% to employment within this category. These statistics highlight a substantial presence of women entrepreneurs, particularly in the informal microenterprise segment, reflecting both the potential and existing contributions of women to India's MSME ecosystem.

Table 2: Contribution of Women-owned MSMEs to total MSMEs registered on Udyam Registration portal since Inception of the portal (1st July 2020 to 31st Jan 2024).

Category	Total	Employment	Investment (Rs. In Crore)	Turnover (Rs. In Crore)
Women MSME	4,667,278	28,407,069	126845.12	1714992.98
MSMEs	22,819,417	151,668,034	1,137,237	16,784,358
MSMEs owned by Women (%)	20.5	18.73	11.15	10.22

Source: Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises

Empowering Women and Advancing Social Entrepreneurship through MSMEs

The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) in India plays a pivotal role in promoting women's empowerment through entrepreneurship. By implementing various targeted schemes, the

ministry facilitates the transition of women from homemakers to business owners, thereby contributing to economic and social development. Under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), approximately 1.38 lakh projects have been initiated by women entrepreneurs as of January 23, 2019, constituting nearly 30% of the total projects under the scheme. Women classified under the Special Category receive subsidies of 25% in urban and 35% in rural areas, with a reduced own-contribution requirement of only 5% of the project cost.

During 2016–2018, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) supported 30,437 women-led projects, disbursing ₹85,305 lakh in margin money. Beyond MSME, the Government of India has implemented several complementary initiatives such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Stand Up India, Mudra Yojana, and various credit and training schemes specifically designed to promote women's entrepreneurship and financial inclusion. Collectively, these efforts aim to foster gender equity and economic independence among women across the nation. While MSMEs are well-positioned to empower women, targeted policies are necessary to unlock their full potential.

Challenges Facing Women in MSMEs

Despite various schemes and policy announcements, structural and cultural barriers continue to hinder women's participation in the MSME ecosystem. MSMEs often face an overwhelming number of compliance requirements. A typical enterprise has to adhere to 50–100 different acts, rules, and regulations at the Union, State, and local levels—totaling nearly 1500 compliance tasks annually. This regulatory overload becomes even more daunting for women entrepreneurs who may not have access to expert legal or financial support (Parameshwar, 2020). A significant portion of women-led enterprises are unable to secure loans due to lack of collateral or limited knowledge about credit systems (Raza, 2021). Moreover, societal norms often restrict their ability to engage with banks or participate in financial decision-making. According to surveys, 83% of women entrepreneurs face hurdles in availing bank loans. The estimated financing gap for women-owned MSMEs in India stands at a staggering \$158 billion. Deep-rooted gender norms restrict women's mobility, time, and autonomy. In many families, women are expected to prioritize household duties over business commitments. This cultural expectation leads to the underutilization of their skills and economic potential. Moreover, the lack of support systems such as affordable childcare and safe transport further deters women from entrepreneurial ventures. Most women-led MSMEs remain micro in nature and are concentrated in low-value segments such as tailoring, food

processing, or handicrafts. They are underrepresented in high-value sectors or supervisory roles. This "missing middle" highlights the need for better mentorship, leadership training, and access to networks that can help women grow their businesses beyond survival-mode. (Brush & Welter, 2012). Following points can be understood how women in MSME have been facing issues for several reasons.

Enhancing Access to Credit

Access to credit remains the most significant barrier for women entrepreneurs. Many lack collateral, a formal credit history, or the financial literacy required to navigate banking systems. As a result, they are often excluded from institutional finance. Expanding the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) with priority lending for women-led MSMEs can bridge this financing gap. Creating a gender-specific fund under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana will reduce entry barriers for women starting micro-enterprises.

Integrating SHGs with MSME Ecosystems

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are a powerful tool for women's empowerment in rural India. However, they often remain isolated from formal MSME ecosystems. Formal integration with MSME value chains, training modules, and credit access will amplify the economic output of SHGs and lead to higher productivity (Siddhartha et al., 2021).

Improving Market Access

Women entrepreneurs often lack the networks or digital skills to access large markets. Prioritizing the onboarding of women-owned businesses onto the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) and offering exclusive listing categories, training, and bidding support can greatly enhance visibility and sales.

Incubation and Training Support

Lack of awareness about taxes, legal frameworks, and business operations holds back many women from scaling up their businesses. Focused programs on business taxation, digital payments, and GST compliance will improve financial literacy and formalization. Providing incubation and mentorship to women-led non-tech ventures—especially in rural crafts, services, and agribusiness—will foster innovation and sustainability.

Policy Recommendations to Support Women in MSMEs

Addressing the systemic barriers faced by women in MSMEs requires the following targeted, inclusive policy interventions that enhance access to finance, markets, skills, and support systems to foster equitable entrepreneurial growth (Kondal, 2014).

Enhance Access to Credit

Expand the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) with a gender-sensitive approach. Establish dedicated funds under schemes like Mudra Yojana to address the \$158 billion financing gap for women-led MSMEs and eliminate collateral requirements for small loans.

Financial Literacy and Digital Inclusion

Implement nationwide programs focusing on financial literacy, digital banking, and credit awareness specifically for women entrepreneurs to improve their access to financial services and banking systems.

Simplify Compliance for Women Entrepreneurs

Streamline and digitize MSME compliance procedures through a single-window platform tailored to support women entrepreneurs, reducing the burden of managing nearly 1,500 compliance tasks annually.

Integrate SHGs into MSME Ecosystems

Connect Self-Help Groups (SHGs) with MSME value chains by providing market linkages, training, and credit access to boost scalability and formal participation in the MSME sector.

Improve Market Access and Visibility

Facilitate onboarding of women-led enterprises onto Government e-Marketplace (GeM) with exclusive categories, capacity-building workshops, and marketing support.

Provide Affordable Childcare and Safe Mobility

Invest in community childcare centers and safe public transport systems near industrial hubs to alleviate domestic responsibilities and mobility issues for women.

Sector Diversification and Skill Training

Encourage women's participation in high-value sectors like manufacturing and technology through targeted vocational training and upskilling initiatives.

Incubation and Mentorship Support

Develop women-centric incubation centers offering mentorship, legal aid, and business development services, especially for rural and non-tech ventures.

Promote Leadership and Networking Platforms

Create women entrepreneur networks and leadership forums to enhance access to peer learning, mentorship, and industry connections.

Gender-Responsive Policy Frameworks

Mandate a gender lens in MSME policymaking, ensuring that all schemes include measurable gender inclusion indicators and regular impact assessments.

Conclusion

The MSME sector stands as a cornerstone of India's journey towards inclusive and sustainable economic development. It holds the key to unlocking job opportunities, promoting grassroots entrepreneurship, and driving regional growth. The sector's innate flexibility, labor intensity, and local orientation make it ideal for achieving equitable development goals. However, for MSMEs to fully realize their potential, especially in empowering women, targeted policy interventions are essential. Women entrepreneurs need greater access to finance, skills, markets, and mentorship. The government, private sector, and civil society must work in tandem to eliminate the systemic barriers faced by women in the MSME sector. Only by embracing inclusive growth in both spirit and execution can India harness the full potential of its MSME ecosystem—and with it, uplift millions of lives across urban and rural landscapes.

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Educational Challenges in Border Communities: A Focus on the Line of Control in Poonch District of Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

Residents near the Line of Control (LoC) in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) face compounded challenges. Enduring seven decades of international conflict marked by persistent cross-border ceasefire violations, they also contend with governmental neglect from both Union and former state administrations. Despite being among India's most marginalized groups, their voices advocating for peace, basic healthcare, education, and infrastructure have gone unheard in mainstream public and political discourse. While the struggles of minorities, tribal communities, and scheduled castes have been acknowledged in Indian politics and academia since 1947, the plight of LoC residents—regardless of caste, class, religion, or gender—has been conspicuously absent from discussions on social inequalities and exclusion in contemporary India. This qualitative research draws from ethnographic field studies conducted between 2021 and 2023 in the border district of Poonch to examine the educational status of border children attending primary and secondary schools near the LoC. It argues that due to the precarious conditions at the LoC, residents have been unable to assert their right to education for their children against the Indian state, whose foreign and domestic policies perpetuate a daily struggle for survival, wherein life and death hang in the balance.

Keywords: Education, Border, Children, LoC, and Jammu and Kashmir.

Introduction

The academic discourse surrounding Jammu and Kashmir has predominantly revolved around the intricate historical dispute between India and Pakistan, internal state politics, and the identity dynamics across its regions, notably the Kashmir Valley. This discourse has underscored the demands for political, administrative, and financial autonomy from various regions and ethnic groups. However, amidst this focus, the plight of those residing in the militarized border areas has often been sidelined. Despite significant intellectual and civil society activism

addressing human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir, the attention has disproportionately gravitated towards the Kashmir Valley, neglecting the enduring struggles faced by border communities since 1947 (Cohen, 1955). *Thunder over Kashmir*. Orient Longman. Kolkata. This skewed emphasis on international conflict and the Kashmir Valley-centric narrative has obscured the longstanding suffering endured by those living along the borders.

The Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir stretches 740 kilometers in total, with 103 kilometers passing through the Poonch district of the Jammu division (Maini 2012). Guarded by the Indian Armed Forces and supplemented by the paramilitary Border Security Force (BSF), the LoC has been a site of perpetual cross-border shelling and firing, with border communities enduring the challenges of three international wars between India and Pakistan in 1947-48, 1965, and 1971. According to a study by the United States Institute of Peace, the LoC remains an unsettled border, witnessing land grabs on either side during ceasefire violations in the wars of 1965 and 1971 (Jacob 2017). The intensity of cross-border bombing and firing escalated during the period of cross-border militancy from 1989 to 2003 but gradually declined after the November 2003 ceasefire arrangement between India and Pakistan (Ganguly, 1997). While the ceasefire initially brought about a decade of relative peace for border communities, violations have increased since 2014, severely disrupting their everyday lives once again. In 2018, Pakistan recorded 2,936 ceasefire violations across the International Border (IB) and the LoC, marking the highest number since the 2003 ceasefire agreement. Subsequently, in 2019, ceasefire violations by Pakistan exceeded 2,050 times (until September 21), resulting in 21 fatalities and numerous injuries on the Indian side of the LoC (The Hindu, 2019).

This study is grounded in field surveys spanning three years, conducted between 2021 and 2023, in three remote border villages: Qasba, Kirni, and Mendhar, situated in the Poonch district. These villages are nestled within three to four kilometers from the Line of Control (LoC), with over 90% of residents residing within a mere 2 kilometers from the zero line, despite being officially designated as the Actual Line of Control (ALC) villages, positioned 6 kilometers from the zero line. Restricted entry is enforced by the armed forces, barring non-border residents, owing to the presence of landmines dating back to the Indo-Pak wars of 1947, 1965, 1971, and post-2002 following the Indian Parliament attack (2001), rendering traversing these areas perilous for outsiders. Furthermore, outsider access is limited due to the sensitive nature of the LoC, prone to militant infiltration from across the border.

The author, a permanent resident of the same block of these villages, conducted field studies and research, leveraging their extensive local knowledge and familiarity with the area and its inhabitants. This involved engaging in informal group discussions and unstructured individual interviews with respondents.

Educational status of Jammu and Kashmir

There is a dearth of literature addressing the educational landscape in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), particularly evident in the J&K appraisal report of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2010). This report critically examines the state's progress from 2002 to 2010, highlighting concerns such as the sluggish advancement in addressing issues related to out-of-school children, children with special needs, gender disparities, and data inaccuracies (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, 2010). In parallel, Save the Children's (NGO) 2010 report identifies five factors impeding children's engagement in schooling: family-related, school-related, institutional, governance, and political unrest. Despite initiatives like the midday meal scheme, student enrollment hasn't seen significant improvement. While these documents offer valuable insights into the educational landscape of J&K, there is a notable absence of detailed accounts concerning educational conditions in border villages. Most reports focus on the educational scenario in the Kashmir valley or urban areas of the Jammu region, leaving the rural border villages largely unexplored in academic research.

Education and Cross-Border Firing

In the village of Qasba, there is one government high school catering to classes 6 to 10, along with one government middle school covering classes 1 to 8, and three government primary schools for classes 1 to 5. Salotri boasts two government middle schools and one government primary school, while Suvinaar has only one government primary school. These government schools serve as the sole educational resource for the children in these villages. Unfortunately, they suffer from a shortage of well-qualified teachers, as educators are hesitant to be posted in high-risk border areas. Tragically, respondents have shared accounts of school children and teachers falling victim to sudden ceasefire violations.

Furthermore, these villages lack basic infrastructure such as motorable roads and regular public transport services. Children often endure long journeys on foot, spanning several kilometers, just to access elementary education, exposing themselves to physical risks along the way. The presence of landmines, planted by both the Indian Army during

conflicts and foreign militants in the 1990s, has resulted in the loss of lives and limbs among children commuting to school, playing outside their homes, or tending to livestock. Some areas within these villages are still marked as minefields, posing ongoing dangers to residents.

Students typically undertake arduous journeys of Ten to Twenty kilometers daily, navigating challenging hilly terrain on foot or by bicycle to reach the government higher secondary school Islamabad or in Poonch, which offers classes 6 to 12. Private transport options are scarce and often overcrowded. While comparable conditions might exist in other remote and underdeveloped hilly regions across India, the children of these border villages face additional challenges. Their daily commute to school unfolds in an environment overshadowed by the constant threat of sudden cross-border firing and shelling, adding an element of uncertainty and danger to their already demanding journeys.

During the period of cross-border militant infiltration spanning from 1989 to 2003, school buildings and playgrounds bore the brunt of firing and bombing, especially since they are situated within one kilometer of the zero line in these villages. As a result, the educational infrastructure suffered significant damage and destruction. In 2016, only about 50 males and 10 females from the three villages combined had obtained an undergraduate degree. These individuals represented the first generation of learners in the post-2003 ceasefire decade, during which a relative sense of peace prevailed for the first time since 1947. This period of stability afforded them the opportunity to attend the Government Degree College in Poonch town, located 20-40 kilometers away from their villages.

When asked about education in the border schools, a 26-year-old villager from Mandhar shared his firsthand experience at the government high school in Shahpur, located less than one kilometer from the Line of Control (LoC). He recounted that the primary and most crucial lesson imparted to them at school was how to ensure their own safety in the event of sudden cross-border firing. Students were instructed on various survival tactics, such as seeking refuge in ditches or canals, taking cover behind boulders or trees, or crawling to the nearest area of relative safety during shelling and bombing. In the event of unexpected firing during school hours, students and teachers would be ushered into a large room in the government high school capable of accommodating nearly 200 individuals. Unlike the rest of the school rooms with tin roofs vulnerable to bombings, this particular room boasted a concrete roof, believed by teachers to offer a degree of protection. The respondent further noted that the residents, including young children, were adept at recognizing and

distinguishing between the sounds of various firearms, artillery, and tanks utilized by the armed forces, a skill borne out of necessity in their borderland existence.

The pervasive threat of cross-border firing and shelling significantly undermines the education of children living in border areas. Daily attendance at school becomes challenging, if not impossible, as children are forced to skip classes for days or even weeks during periods of heightened Indo-Pak hostility. Teenage boys often drop out of school altogether to seek employment as laborers in agricultural fields or as drivers of passenger vehicles, contributing to the cycle of educational disengagement and economic necessity. The situation for girls is even more dire. Fearful for their safety, parents hesitate to send their daughters to school, fearing permanent disability or worse during firing incidents, which could jeopardize their prospects for marriage. Consequently, early marriages remain prevalent, with many young girls being married off between the ages of fourteen to eighteen years old. In these Actual Line of Control (ALC) villages, the educational attainment of girls is particularly low. Only a mere 1% of the female population achieves a BA degree, highlighting the stark gender disparity and educational barriers faced by girls in these border communities.

The respondents have highlighted a concerning lack of accurate reporting on civilian casualties in the remote border villages. Unofficial figures suggest that between 2005 and 2018, approximately 54 civilians were killed in the three surveyed villages alone. Shockingly, there have been instances where entire families, including young children, have perished due to bombs detonating while they slept or ate within the safety of their homes. The number of individuals and livestock injured is difficult to quantify, as cross-border firing occurs almost daily during periods of heightened hostility and less frequently during relative peace. However, it is estimated that at least two to four individuals sustain injuries from shrapnel wounds during each such incident, often resulting in temporary or permanent disabilities. To mitigate the risk, buildings, including schools and houses, have their doors and windows constructed on sides facing away from the border, aimed at preventing bullets, shrapnel, and bomb fragments from entering. Despite these precautions, the residences of children residing near the zero line bear the visible scars of countless bullet impacts on their doors and windows, serving as stark reminders of the perpetual danger faced by border communities.

The local border residents remain vigilant and avoid areas where live mines might still be present, despite decades of de-mining operations. These de-mining efforts themselves pose significant risks, with security

personnel sometimes sustaining injuries or losing their lives in the process. Tragically, the dangers of landmines hit close to home for many families. Siblings, aged 6 and 4 respectively, lost their lives to a landmine while innocently playing in the pastures of Qasba village. Heartbreakingly, their family did not receive even the inadequate compensation, ranging from ₹1.5 lakh to ₹2.5 lakh for landmine victims, as permitted by the State Human Rights Commission (SHRC), according to reports from Outlook. Such incidents underscore the ongoing threats posed by landmines in border areas and the dire consequences faced by innocent civilians, especially children, as a result (Outlook, 2013).

Education in Refugee Camps

The people of Jammu and Kashmir endured the brunt of cross-border militancy between 1989 and 2003, with the residents of the Poonch district among the hardest hit. Border communities, comprising 60% of the district's population, faced significant displacement during this tumultuous period. An overwhelming majority of respondents (90%) from the surveyed villages had experienced displacement from their homes and fields at least twice in their lifetimes, with some individuals (30%) enduring more than ten displacements since 1947 (Prem, 1996). Cross-border mortar shelling, small arms fire, and military tank bombings became distressingly common occurrences along the Line of Control (LoC) as militant infiltration escalated in the 1990s. In response to the escalating violence, border villagers were forced to flee to the nearest city, often Poonch city, situated 15 to 25 kilometers away from the respondents. This migration necessitated leaving behind their cultivated fields, homes, and even livestock. For those from the surveyed villages, the government higher secondary school in Poonch served as the nearest migrant camp. Here, they sought refuge for periods ranging from a few weeks to a year, enduring unhygienic conditions, their stay dictated by the intensity and frequency of the shelling. These displacements underscore the profound disruptions and hardships endured by border communities during periods of heightened conflict and instability.

The continuation of the disrupted school academic year in migrant camps proved challenging, with the quality of education suffering due to the limited mental space provided for learning in such environments. Many teachers themselves had been injured or lost family members in the cross-border firing, or had been relocated to different migrant camps, further exacerbating the educational disruptions. The state government's 'no-fail' policy until the tenth class ensured that all children could be promoted to higher grades, even if they had not achieved the necessary educational goals for their respective school

years. However, this policy led to a lack of basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic among border children, contributing to a growing aversion to education and a sense of inferiority compared to children from non-border areas of the district. For male border children, aspirations often shifted towards joining the armed forces, known as the 'belt forces,' rather than pursuing education beyond the tenth or twelfth grades. As reported by respondents, the number of undergraduates and post-graduates among border youth remains abysmally low due to the pervasive impact of international conflict on their education from childhood, perpetuating cycles of educational disadvantage and limited opportunities for advancement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the education of children living in border areas, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir, is severely impacted by factors beyond local issues such as caste or class discrimination. The primary hindrance stems from international conflict, an issue that the Indian state has not adequately addressed despite being responsible for the educational deficiencies in these regions. The promise of a liberal democratic welfare state, which aims to balance hope and frustration, truth and suspicion, has failed to materialize at the Line of Control (LoC). Generations of these children have suffered neglect since 1947, making them latecomers to modernity despite their equal rights to education. It is imperative to provide these children, irrespective of their community background, with uninterrupted access to education, as it serves as their sole pathway to a dignified life away from the turmoil of border conflicts. The Indian state must establish alternative education facilities in these areas, ensuring a safe environment equipped with modern educational resources. Simultaneously, concerted efforts towards diplomatic, political, and non-military resolutions of international conflicts are necessary to pave the way for lasting peace along the LoC. By prioritizing education and pursuing peaceful resolutions, we can strive towards a brighter future for the border children and their families.

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Public Policy and Women Empowerment in India: Bridging the Implementation Gap for *Viksit Bharat 2047*

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Abstract

Women empowerment has emerged as a critical driver of social, economic, and political development in India. This research paper examines the multidimensional aspects of women empowerment, highlighting its significance in achieving gender equality and fostering inclusive growth. The paper begins by defining women empowerment and its key dimensions—socio-cultural, economic, and political—while contextualizing the historical and contemporary status of women in India. It traces the evolution of women's empowerment from ancient and medieval periods through the pre- and post-independence eras, emphasizing the role of social reformers, constitutional provisions, and legal frameworks in promoting women's rights.

The study further analyzes current gender disparities through statistical data on literacy, health, workforce participation, and political representation, underscoring persistent challenges such as patriarchal norms, low literacy rates, limited economic opportunities, and inadequate political representation. The paper reviews government initiatives and schemes—including Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Stand Up India, PMJDY, and digital skill programs—which aim to empower women economically, socially, and politically. Additionally, recent trends in digitalization, AI, and mobile governance are examined as tools for enhancing women's access to education, financial services, health care, and political participation.

By linking empowerment to national development, the paper argues that advancing women's rights is essential for realizing the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. The research concludes that holistic strategies addressing education, health, economic participation, legal protection, and technology adoption are imperative to achieve sustainable gender equality and societal progress.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Gender Equality, Economic Participation, Political Representation, Digital Inclusion, Viksit Bharat 2047

Introduction

Women empowerment refers to enabling women to gain control over their own lives and make meaningful decisions that improve their personal and social conditions. It emphasizes independence, self-confidence, and the ability to take actions that shape their future. Empowerment strengthens women's belief in their own worth and provides them with the authority to influence change not only in their own lives but also within society.

According to the European Institute for Gender Equality, women empowerment consists of five key dimensions. These include developing a strong sense of self-worth, having the right to make independent choices, gaining access to opportunities and essential resources, and possessing control over life both at home and in public spaces. Additionally, empowerment involves women actively participating in efforts to create a more just and equitable society at national and global levels. Overall, women empowerment is a multidimensional process promoting equality, autonomy, and social transformation (Wonde, 2024).

Dimension of Women Empowerment

Women empowerment is a multidimensional concept that includes socio-cultural, economic, and political dimensions, each playing a vital role in enhancing women's overall status and participation in society.

Socio-cultural empowerment focuses on enabling women to make informed choices and transform those choices into meaningful actions within the context of their social and cultural environment. It emphasizes building confidence, self-awareness, and decision-making power. For instance, when a rural woman participates in local community training programs and gains the confidence to establish a women's cooperative, she not only improves her own livelihood but also contributes positively to her family and community.

Economic empowerment involves providing women with access to financial resources, skills, employment opportunities, and entrepreneurship support. It aims to ensure financial independence and active participation in economic activities. For example, a woman who receives a small loan to start a tailoring business can achieve financial stability and strengthen the local economy.

Political empowerment refers to enhancing women's participation in political processes and decision-making bodies. It ensures that women have a voice in shaping laws and public policies. When a woman from a marginalized community successfully contests local

elections and advocates for improved education and healthcare, she exemplifies political empowerment in action.

Status of women in India

According to the UN Women, gender equality means that women and men, as well as girls and boys, should enjoy the same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. It does not imply that they must be identical, but rather that their access to rights and opportunities should not be determined by gender. Gender equality is both a fundamental human right and a necessary foundation for sustainable, inclusive, and people-centered development.

In India, the status of women has changed significantly over time. In ancient India, particularly during the early Vedic period, women are believed to have enjoyed relatively equal status with men. However, during the medieval period, especially with the advent of Muslim rule, the condition of women further declined. Social reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy later worked toward women's upliftment (Sinha, 2021). After independence, the Constitution of India provided safeguards to ensure equal rights and promote women's participation in national development.

Women empowerment in India aims to improve women's social, economic, and political status to ensure equality, dignity, and active participation in society. It involves expanding access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities while strengthening legal protections against gender-based violence, workplace discrimination, and inequality. Various initiatives, such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, self-help groups, and reservation policies, have been introduced to support women's development and encourage their contribution to national progress (Pandey et. al, 2018).

Despite notable advancements, challenges such as patriarchy, illiteracy, and safety concerns continue to hinder true empowerment. Sustained and comprehensive efforts are therefore essential to overcome these barriers. Women empowerment and gender equality are deeply interconnected concepts. Promoting gender equality lays the foundation for empowering women, while genuine gender equality cannot be achieved without women's empowerment. Thus, both processes are mutually reinforcing and must progress together to build a just and inclusive society.

The history of women empowerment in India reflects both respect and discrimination. During pre-independence India, organized

efforts toward women's empowerment began in the 19th century through socio-religious reform movements. Reformers such as Raja Rammohan Roy, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar played a crucial role in promoting gender equality and challenging oppressive social practices (Shafia & Chaturvedi, 2022). Their initiatives led to significant legislative reforms, including the Sati Abolition Act (1829), the Widow Remarriage Act (1856), and the Child Marriage Restraint Act (Sarda Act) of 1929.

In the early 20th century, the establishment of women's organizations further strengthened the movement for women's rights. Organizations like *Bharat Mahila Parishad*, the Women's Indian Association, and the All India Women's Conference actively raised issues of gender inequality (Karmakar, 2014). They demanded women's suffrage, inheritance rights, and broader social and political reforms, thereby expanding the scope of women's empowerment in India.

During India's freedom movement, Gandhiji actively encouraged women to participate in the struggle for independence. He motivated them to fight not only for political freedom but also for their social and political rights (Raza, 2017). Although their involvement did not directly challenge patriarchy, it significantly promoted women's empowerment by boosting their self-confidence, revealing their inner strength, and helping break several restrictive traditions and social customs.

In post-independence India, especially after the 1970s, there was a renewed and stronger focus on women's empowerment and gender equality. This period is often referred to as the second phase of the Indian women's movement. During this time, several prominent women's organizations played an important role in advancing women's rights and improving their social and economic conditions. The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) worked to enhance the livelihoods and working conditions of women in the unorganized sector (Mendiratta, 2026). Similarly, Annapurna Mahila Mandal (AMM) focused on the welfare and development of women and girl children, contributing significantly to empowerment efforts.

Gender Inequality in India: Important Statistics

Gender inequality in India remains a persistent and multifaceted challenge, reflected in socio-cultural, economic, and health indicators. According to the World Economic Forum, India ranks 129 out of 146 countries in overall gender equality, highlighting significant disparities (Pandit, 2024). Socio-cultural indicators reveal ongoing concerns: while

the overall sex ratio stands at 1020 females per 1000 males (NFHS-5, 2019-21), the sex ratio at birth is low at 929, indicating persistent sex-selective practices. Maternal health also reflects gender disparities, with the maternal mortality rate at 97 deaths per lakh live births as per report of 2018–20 (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2025).

Nutritional and educational inequalities further underscore the problem. NFHS-5 data shows 18.7% of women aged 15–49 are underweight, 21.2% stunted, and nearly 53% anemic. Female literacy lags behind male literacy at 70.3% versus 84.7%. Gender-based violence remains widespread, with over 400,000 reported cases in 2021 (NCRB), likely underestimating actual prevalence. Additionally, child marriage continues, with 23.3% of women aged 20–24 married before 18. These statistics collectively demonstrate that despite policy interventions, structural inequalities persist, necessitating targeted strategies to promote women's health, education, safety, and social empowerment in India.

Economic and political disparities continue to limit women's empowerment in India. Only 32.8% of women aged 15 and above were employed in 2021–22, with 81.8% working in informal jobs lacking stable income and benefits (International Labour Organization). The wage gap remains severe, as women earn only about 21% of what men earn on average (Global Gender Gap Report, 2021). Politically, women's representation is low at all levels: about 14.94% of Members of Parliament and 13.9% of state legislature representatives are women. Although women hold 46.94% of local panchayat positions, the "Sarpanch-Pati" culture often limits their real authority (PRS Legislative Research, 2023). These figures underscore that despite some progress, structural barriers in economic participation and political representation continue to impede true gender equality in India.

Importance of Women Empowerment for Viksit Bharat 2047

Women empowerment is a critical driver of India's socio-economic and political development, with direct implications for achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. Empowering women and ensuring gender parity is not only a matter of social justice, recognized as a fundamental human right by the United Nations, but also essential for national progress, as women constitute nearly half of the country's population. Excluding women from growth and decision-making processes would hinder India's ambitions to become a developed nation by its centenary of independence.

Socio-culturally, empowered women contribute to building a more peaceful society by reducing gender-based violence and promoting

social inclusion. Women's decision-making tendencies and investment in family welfare lead to broader social transformation, creating a ripple effect of positive change. Education, closely linked with empowerment, ensures healthier families, delayed marriages, and improved school enrolment for future generations.

Economically and politically, the active participation of women enhances productivity, innovation, and governance. Therefore, advancing women empowerment is not just a moral or social imperative—it is a strategic necessity for Viksit Bharat 2047, ensuring equitable growth, sustainable development, and an inclusive society.

Women empowerment plays a pivotal role in shaping Viksit Bharat 2047, impacting health, economic growth, and political governance. Educated and empowered women tend to marry later and raise healthier children, improving the overall health of society. Economically, gender equality is strongly linked to national development and prosperity. Equal opportunities in employment and fair wages enhance the Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR), bringing diverse skills, perspectives, and innovations that drive productivity and competitiveness.

Politically, women's participation ensures that their perspectives and needs are included in policymaking, leading to more inclusive, effective, and responsive governance. Women in leadership roles contribute to innovative solutions for economic inequality, social injustices, and climate challenges, strengthening societal resilience.

Therefore, promoting women empowerment is not only a social and ethical imperative but also a strategic necessity. Ensuring gender parity across health, economy, and politics is central to realizing India's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, fostering sustainable development, inclusive growth, and a more equitable society.

Public Policies for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality

The Government of India has implemented multiple schemes and initiatives to promote women empowerment and gender equality, addressing social, economic, and cultural dimensions. At the national level, the National Policy for Empowerment of Women seeks to advance the overall development and empowerment of women, while the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) strengthens institutional mechanisms to support their all-around growth. Additionally, Gender Budgeting is being applied to ensure that government expenditures promote gender equality and address women's specific needs (Kabeer, 2017).

Several programs focus on socio-cultural empowerment. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) aims to improve the child sex ratio and promote girls' education and empowerment. The National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE) encourages enrollment and retention of girls in secondary education up to 18 years. Health-related initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) enhance access to quality healthcare for women and girls. Safety and protection are also prioritized through programs like One Stop Centres (OSC), providing integrated support to women affected by violence, and the Nirbhaya Fund, which finances projects to improve women's safety (Himi and Bordoloi, 2022).

Collectively, these government interventions aim to create an enabling environment for women, addressing structural inequalities, enhancing educational and health outcomes, and promoting social and economic participation. Effective implementation of these schemes is crucial for advancing gender equality and achieving the vision of an empowered and inclusive India by Viksit Bharat 2047.

The economic and political empowerment of women in India is supported through several targeted government initiatives. Economic empowerment programs aim to enhance women's financial independence and entrepreneurial capabilities. The *Stand-Up India* Scheme provides bank loans to women from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and minority communities, fostering entrepreneurship. The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) promotes women's financial inclusion by granting access to basic banking services (Kaur & Singh, 2015). Skill development programs, such as the Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP), equip women with vocational skills to pursue self-employment or entrepreneurial ventures. Additionally, Mahila E-Haat, an online marketing platform, enables women entrepreneurs to showcase and sell their products directly (Akhila, 2018).

Political empowerment is promoted through training and capacity-building initiatives by both government and non-government organizations, aimed at enhancing women's participation in governance and decision-making. Programs like the Women Leadership Development Programmes conducted by NIRD&PR focus on developing leadership skills and political acumen among women, enabling them to effectively engage in local, state, and national governance.

Together, these initiatives strengthen women's economic independence, leadership abilities, and political participation, forming an

essential foundation for achieving gender equality and the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Challenges to Women Empowerment and Gender Equality

Women empowerment and gender equality in India face significant social challenges that impede progress despite legislative and policy interventions. Deep-rooted discriminatory social norms persist, particularly in rural areas, where historical legacies continue to dictate unequal expectations for men and women. While men are socially permitted to be assertive and vocal, women are often expected to be soft-spoken, calm, and compliant, limiting their public participation and self-expression. Role stereotyping further restricts women to household chores, with financial responsibilities and professional work largely considered male domains.

Low literacy levels among women, especially in rural regions, remain a major barrier. Traditional practices such as dowry, coupled with economic constraints, often prevent families from prioritizing girls' education, resulting in limited access to knowledge and skill development.

Safety concerns also significantly hinder empowerment. Women continue to face gender-based violence, including female feticide, domestic violence, rape, trafficking, forced prostitution, honor killings, and workplace harassment. Such threats not only affect their physical and mental well-being but also limit their mobility, access to education, and participation in economic and political activities.

Addressing these social barriers is crucial for promoting gender equality and ensuring that women can fully contribute to India's growth and the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Women in India face significant economic and political challenges that hinder their empowerment and full participation in national development. Economically, gender role stereotyping creates prejudice against women in the workforce, as they are often perceived as less reliable due to household and child-rearing responsibilities. The glass ceiling effect further restricts career advancement, with invisible barriers preventing women from attaining leadership and decision-making positions. Limited employment opportunities and restricted access to financial resources exacerbate economic disparities, making it difficult for women to achieve financial independence and self-reliance. These structural inequalities undermine both personal growth and broader economic progress.

Politically, women's representation in legislative bodies remains disproportionately low, reflecting systemic barriers to participation. Although some progress has been made, phenomena like the 'sarpanch-pati' culture—where male relatives exercise authority on behalf of elected women—often render formal political representation symbolic rather than substantive. This undermines women's ability to influence policymaking and governance effectively.

Addressing these economic and political challenges is crucial for fostering gender equality and empowering women to contribute meaningfully to India's socio-economic and political development. Overcoming these barriers is essential to achieving inclusive growth and realizing the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Public Policies and Women Empowerment in India – Recent Trends

Recent trends in women empowerment in India highlight significant progress in financial inclusion, digital skills development, and economic independence. Over 200 million women have been integrated into the formal banking system through government financial inclusion initiatives, enabling access to insurance, loans, and social assistance. The adoption of digital technologies has further expanded opportunities for women, bridging gaps in financial and social resources.

Skill development programs are playing a transformative role. Recently, Microsoft, in collaboration with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), launched initiatives to train over one lakh underserved women in digital skills. These programs include live training sessions and digital skilling drives targeting first-time job seekers and those affected by COVID-19, preparing them to participate in the emerging workforce.

Entrepreneurial and social initiatives also demonstrate innovative approaches to empowerment. The Azad Foundation's Women on Wheels program provides disadvantaged women with stable employment as cab drivers, ensuring financial independence and safe working conditions. This initiative not only promotes income generation but also fosters women's confidence and autonomy.

Collectively, these recent trends reflect a growing focus on integrating women into the formal economy, equipping them with relevant skills, and providing safe, sustainable employment opportunities—essential steps toward achieving comprehensive women empowerment and contributing to the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), digitalization, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and mobile governance has become a transformative tool for women empowerment in India. These technologies provide women with immediate access to critical information on health, education, legal rights, and government schemes, enabling informed decision-making and enhancing social awareness. Digital platforms also facilitate education and skill development through online courses, certification programs, and AI-powered learning tools, particularly benefiting women in rural or underserved areas, thereby improving employability and competitiveness in the modern workforce.

Economic empowerment is further enhanced through mobile governance and digital platforms, which provide access to banking, digital payments, micro financing, and entrepreneurship opportunities. E-commerce platforms allow women to sell products online, reaching wider markets without requiring a physical storefront, promoting financial independence and self-reliance.

Health and safety benefits are also significant. AI-powered applications and mobile platforms offer real-time health information, telemedicine, and counseling services. Mobile governance tools enable reporting of domestic violence and sexual harassment, ensuring legal support and enhancing personal safety.

Overall, AI, digitalization, and ICT act as catalysts for socio-economic, educational, and legal empowerment of women, strengthening their participation in society and contributing to inclusive growth and the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Digital technologies, including AI, ICT, and mobile governance, are increasingly enhancing women's political participation and leadership in India. Digital platforms provide women with timely information on voting, political campaigns, and governance processes, encouraging informed engagement in decision-making. Mobile governance initiatives further empower women by enabling direct interaction with policymakers, voicing concerns, and advocating for policies that promote gender equality, thereby strengthening democratic participation and inclusive governance.

Beyond politics, digital tools foster social connectivity and support networks. Social media and mobile applications create virtual communities where women can share experiences, exchange knowledge, and collaborate on initiatives aimed at social change and empowerment. These platforms help women access mentorship, guidance, and collective strategies for overcoming barriers in both public and private spheres.

Conclusion

The integration of AI, digitalization, ICT, and mobile governance plays a pivotal role in advancing women's empowerment. By providing access to information, facilitating economic opportunities, and enhancing social and political engagement, these technologies contribute to women's holistic development, enabling them to actively participate in society and supporting the broader vision of an inclusive and equitable Viksit Bharat 2047.

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Environmental Governance in India: A Case Study of Ranchi District of Jharkhand

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Abstract

This paper examines environmental governance in India, focusing on the Ranchi district of Jharkhand through a comprehensive field study involving 200 local respondents. Ranchi, a district rich in natural resources and biodiversity, is facing increasing environmental challenges driven by urbanization, deforestation, and industrialization. The study aims to assess the effectiveness of existing environmental policies, the role of local governance, and the involvement of the community in addressing these challenges. The research utilizes a mixed-method approach, combining surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions to gather insights from a diverse cross-section of the district's population. The 200 respondents, representing various socio-economic backgrounds, provided valuable perspectives on the state of environmental governance in Ranchi. The findings highlight several critical issues, including the inconsistent enforcement of environmental regulations, limited public awareness, and insufficient community participation in governance processes. The study suggests that more effective environmental governance in Ranchi requires stronger enforcement mechanisms, enhanced public participation, and better integration of local knowledge into policy-making. This paper contributes to the understanding of environmental governance in India by providing empirical evidence from Ranchi, offering insights that could inform policy adjustments and foster sustainable development in similar contexts across the country.

Keywords: *Environmental governance, policy, sustainable development, implementation.*

Introduction

Environmental governance in India is a multifaceted and evolving framework aimed at ensuring sustainable development and the protection of the environment through a combination of legal, regulatory, and policy measures. Governed by a range of institutions at the central, state, and local levels, India's environmental policies have been shaped by its unique socio-economic challenges, rapid industrialization, and the

need to balance development with ecological sustainability. Key legislation, such as the Environmental Protection Act (1986), the Forest Conservation Act (1980), and the Wildlife Protection Act (1972), provide the legal backbone for environmental governance (Singh, 1989). Additionally, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) established in 2010 plays a crucial role in adjudicating environmental disputes and enforcing legal and regulatory frameworks. Various ministries, including the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), are responsible for formulating and implementing policies related to environmental conservation, climate change, and biodiversity.

Jharkhand, a state rich in mineral resources, faces significant environmental challenges due to extensive mining activities, industrialization, and deforestation. The state's economy heavily relies on mining, which has led to substantial ecological degradation, including soil erosion, water contamination, and loss of biodiversity (Ritika & Pattnaik, 2023). The management of these environmental impacts is complicated by issues such as illegal mining and inadequate enforcement of environmental regulations. Ranchi, the capital city of Jharkhand, epitomizes the environmental governance challenges faced by the state. As a rapidly growing urban center, Ranchi is experiencing increased pressure on its natural resources, leading to concerns about sustainable development, pollution, and resource management (Ekka, 2007).

The governance framework in Ranchi involves multiple stakeholders, including the Jharkhand State Pollution Control Board (JSPCB), municipal authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the local community. JSPCB has implemented various measures to monitor and control pollution levels, including setting up air quality monitoring stations and enforcing regulations on industrial emissions. Efforts to improve water management include the implementation of rainwater harvesting systems, rejuvenation of water bodies, and initiatives to promote efficient water use practices. To combat deforestation, the state government and NGOs are involved in afforestation and reforestation projects, aimed at restoring degraded lands and enhancing green cover. Municipal authorities are working towards improving solid waste management through the development of waste segregation and recycling systems, establishment of waste processing facilities, and community awareness campaigns.

Statement of Problem

The rapid expansion of urban areas has led to deforestation and habitat destruction, threatening local biodiversity. Ranchi's forests, which are home to a variety of flora and fauna, are under threat from illegal

logging and land conversion. With rising vehicular traffic and industrial activities, Ranchi faces significant air pollution issues. The city's air quality often exceeds safe limits, posing health risks to its residents. Ranchi's water bodies are increasingly contaminated due to industrial discharge, sewage, and solid waste dumping. Additionally, the city grapples with water scarcity, exacerbated by over-extraction of groundwater and inefficient water management practices. Solid waste management is a critical issue in Ranchi, with inadequate infrastructure and systems for waste collection, segregation, and disposal leading to environmental pollution and health hazards. Though, environmental governance in Ranchi, Jharkhand, is a complex and dynamic process that requires more coordinated efforts from government agencies, civil society, and the local population. Environmental governance in Ranchi reflects the broader challenges as there exist gaps in implementation, on the other hand, resource constraints constitute another major issues. This research paper explores the initiatives taken for environmental concerns and issues associated with environmental governance in India with focus on Ranchi district of Jharkhand.

Literature review

This review examines key books and journal articles that explore the dynamics of environmental governance in Ranchi, Jharkhand, providing insights into the effectiveness of policies, the role of various stakeholders, and the socio-economic impacts on local communities.

Prakash Chand Kandpal (2019) did a comprehensive overview of the environmental governance framework in India, focusing on legal and institutional aspects. Kandpal highlights the challenges of implementing environmental policies at the state and local levels with a specific chapter dedicated to environmental policies. The book discusses the rich natural resources and the environmental challenges arising from mining and industrial activities. He delves into the principles of sustainable development and their application in Indian environmental governance. The author discusses various environmental policies and their implementation in India as a whole. The book highlights the role of community participation and local governance in achieving sustainable environmental outcomes.

Arpana Premi Lina and Asha Premlata (2021) explored the interplay between urbanization and environmental governance in Ranchi. The authors examine the environmental consequences of rapid urban growth, such as air and water pollution, and the effectiveness of governance responses. The article calls for a more coordinated approach

to urban planning and environmental management. Their research highlights the role of local communities in environmental governance in Ranchi. The article discusses various community-led initiatives aimed at conserving natural resources and improving environmental quality. Sharma argues that empowering local communities is crucial for the success of environmental governance strategies.

Rajesh Chadha, Ishita Kapoor & Ganesh Sivamani (2021) examined the effectiveness of environmental governance mechanisms in Ranchi. They analyse the role of state and local governments, as well as non-governmental organizations, in addressing environmental issues. The article highlights the challenges of enforcing environmental regulations in the face of economic pressures and the need for stronger community engagement. It focuses on the environmental impacts of mining activities in Ranchi and the governance frameworks in place to mitigate these impacts. The article provides a detailed analysis of the regulatory landscape, identifying gaps and recommending measures to improve environmental governance. The study underscores the importance of balancing economic development with environmental conservation.

K.V. Raju et. al. (2018) edited volume explores environmental management practices across different regions in India, examining the impact of urbanization on local ecosystems. The book provides case studies that illustrate the conflict between economic development and environmental sustainability, emphasizing the need for integrated governance approaches.

The literature on environmental governance in Ranchi, Jharkhand, underscores the complexity of managing environmental issues in a rapidly developing region. Books and journal articles reviewed here highlight the interplay between economic development, regulatory frameworks, and community participation. While there are significant challenges, including regulatory gaps and enforcement issues, the studies also point to the potential for more effective governance through integrated approaches and greater community involvement. As Ranchi continues to grow, addressing these challenges will be essential for achieving sustainable development and environmental conservation.

Research Objectives

- To examine the existing environmental policies and regulatory frameworks in India and assess their effectiveness in addressing environmental challenges.

- To analyse the role of various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and the local community, in environmental governance within Ranchi.
- To evaluate the impact of urbanization and industrialization on environmental sustainability in Ranchi, identifying key areas where governance has succeeded or failed in mitigating negative effects.
- To propose actionable recommendations for enhancing environmental governance in Ranchi by identifying gaps in the current system and suggesting best practices based on successful models from other regions in India.

Hypotheses

- The current environmental governance frameworks in India are insufficient to effectively address the growing environmental challenges, particularly in the context of rapid urbanization.
- The involvement of local communities and NGOs in Ranchi's environmental governance positively influences the implementation and enforcement of environmental policies.
- There is a significant correlation between industrial activities in Ranchi and the degradation of environmental quality, highlighting the need for stricter regulatory measures.

An Analysis of Environmental Governance in India since Independence

Environmental governance in India has evolved significantly since independence in 1947. Initially, environmental concerns were not a priority, overshadowed by pressing issues like poverty, economic development, and infrastructure building. However, over the decades, environmental governance has gained prominence due to growing awareness of environmental degradation, global environmental movements, and the pressing need for sustainable development.

In the immediate post-independence period, India's focus was primarily on nation-building, economic development, and social welfare. Environmental issues were largely overlooked, and there was minimal legislative or institutional framework to address environmental concerns. Industrialization and urbanization were pursued aggressively, often at the expense of the environment.

The 1970s marked a turning point in India's environmental governance. The Stockholm Conference of 1972 was a catalyst, prompting the Indian government to recognize the importance of

environmental protection. Key legislative measures included: The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 was India's first significant environmental law, aimed at curbing water pollution.

The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 act aimed to regulate deforestation and promote forest conservation. The 1980s and 1990s saw the establishment of a more robust institutional framework for environmental governance: the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) was established in 1985, the MoEF (now MoEFCC) became the central agency for environmental policy and regulation. The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986: has empowered the central government to take measures to protect and improve the environment.

The judiciary began playing a crucial role in environmental governance through PILs, allowing citizens to seek judicial intervention in environmental matters. Entering the 21st century, India began to integrate sustainable development into its policy framework. Key initiatives included such as the National Environment Policy, 2006 which emphasized sustainable development, environmental protection, and the integration of environmental concerns into all developmental processes. Recognizing the global climate crisis, India launched the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), outlining strategies for adaptation and mitigation across various sectors (Singh, 2024).

In recent years, India has faced the challenge of balancing rapid economic growth with environmental sustainability. Significant developments include such as amendments to Environmental Laws, efforts to streamline environmental clearances and improve regulatory mechanisms, though sometimes were criticized for favouring development over environmental protection.

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission), launched in 2014 aims to improve sanitation and waste management, addressing both health and environmental concerns. India has made significant strides in promoting renewable energy, particularly solar and wind, to reduce its carbon footprint and dependency on fossil fuels.

Despite these efforts, India's environmental governance faces several challenges. There is often a significant gap between policy formulation and implementation, with local governance structures lacking the capacity and resources to enforce environmental regulations effectively. Economic development often takes precedence over environmental protection, leading to conflicts and compromises that harm the environment. Air and water pollution remain severe problems, exacerbated by industrialization, urbanization, and inadequate waste management. India is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts,

including extreme weather events, which pose significant risks to its economy and population.

Environmental governance in India has come a long way since independence, evolving from a neglected issue to a critical component of national policy. On one hand, while significant progress has been made in terms of legislation, institutional frameworks, and public awareness, on the other hand, substantial challenges remain the same.

There is a need to balance economic growth with environmental sustainability, improving implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, and addressing the impacts of climate change are crucial for the future of environmental governance in India. Continued efforts, innovative policies, and strong political will are essential to ensure a sustainable and resilient environmental future for the country

Ranchi: A Case Study

Ranchi, the capital of Jharkhand, is a rapidly growing city with a unique blend of urban development and rich natural resources, including extensive forests, rivers, and waterfalls. Historically known for its moderate climate and scenic beauty, Ranchi has witnessed significant industrial and infrastructural growth, which has put immense pressure on its environment. The city faces several environmental challenges, including deforestation, air and water pollution, and inadequate waste management systems.

As the administrative and political hub of Jharkhand, Ranchi plays a critical role in shaping environmental governance policies for the state. The need for sustainable development practices in Ranchi is urgent, as the city grapples with balancing its economic aspirations with environmental conservation (Hasan Saif et al, 2024). This makes it an essential case study for understanding the complexities of environmental governance in urban India, particularly in a region with significant indigenous populations and rich biodiversity (Jharkhand Economic Survey (2016–17).

Government Initiatives and Environmental Governance in Ranchi

The government of Jharkhand, in collaboration with the Ranchi Municipal Corporation (RMC) and other local bodies, has undertaken various initiatives to address environmental issues. These include afforestation drives, the implementation of pollution control norms, and the promotion of sustainable urban development practices. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives has been limited by challenges such as inadequate enforcement, lack of public awareness, and resource

constraints (Islam et. al. 2015). Environmental governance in Ranchi is further complicated by the competing interests of development and conservation. While there is a push for industrial growth and urbanization to boost the economy, there is also a pressing need to protect the environment and ensure sustainable development. This balance is crucial for maintaining the ecological integrity of Ranchi and ensuring the well-being of its residents.

Ranchi, as the capital of Jharkhand, presents a complex interplay between rapid urbanization, industrial growth, and environmental sustainability. As the city continues to expand, the challenges of environmental governance will become more pronounced. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach, including stronger regulatory frameworks, enhanced community participation, and the integration of sustainable practices into the city's development plans.

The future of Ranchi's environment hinges on the ability of its governance structures to adapt to these evolving demands while safeguarding the region's natural heritage. The JSPCB monitors air quality through several monitoring stations. However, enforcement of emission standards remains weak due to lack of resources and technical expertise. Initiatives like the Clean Subarnarekha Project aim to reduce pollution, but a lack of coordination between agencies hampers their effectiveness.

The Ranchi Municipal Corporation (RMC) has initiated waste segregation and recycling programs, yet public awareness and participation are limited. The Forest Department's initiatives to plant trees and conserve green belts face challenges due to encroachment and funding constraints. Organizations like Citizens Foundation and Green Earth Foundation actively engage in awareness campaigns, tree plantation drives, and advocacy for better environmental policies. Community involvement in environmental governance is growing, with residents increasingly participating in clean-up drives and environmental monitoring.

Ranchi faces a multitude of environmental challenges. The city has seen rising levels of air pollution, primarily due to vehicular emissions, industrial activities, and construction dust. This has contributed to a decline in air quality, posing health risks to the population. The contamination of water bodies, especially the Subarnarekha River, due to industrial effluents and sewage discharge, is a major concern (Kumar, 2018). This pollution threatens aquatic life and the availability of clean water for domestic use. Urban sprawl and industrialization have led to significant deforestation in and around

Ranchi, resulting in loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, and altered microclimates. The rapid urban growth has outpaced the city's solid waste management infrastructure, leading to improper disposal of waste and the proliferation of illegal dumping sites.

Data Interpretation and Analysis

The study has employed a mixed-method research design to explore environmental governance in Ranchi, Jharkhand. This approach combines both qualitative and quantitative research methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the environmental governance landscape. The primary focus is on assessing the effectiveness of local governance structures in addressing environmental concerns, as perceived by the residents of Ranchi.

The population for the study includes residents of Ranchi, Jharkhand, aged 18 and above. A total of 200 respondents were selected for the survey. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation across different demographics such as age, gender, socio-economic status, and geographical location within Ranchi.

This stratification helps capture a diverse range of perspectives on environmental governance. Data was collected through structured questionnaires administered to 200 respondents. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions were used to gather quantifiable data on respondents' perceptions of environmental governance, while open-ended questions allowed for more nuanced responses and deeper insights. Supplementary data was gathered from government reports, academic publications, and relevant environmental governance literature to provide context and support the primary data.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

Awareness of Environmental Issues: Questions on the respondents' awareness of local environmental issues, such as pollution, waste management, and conservation efforts.

Perception of Governance: Respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of local governance in addressing environmental issues, including responsiveness, transparency, and accountability.

Community Engagement: Questions aimed at understanding the level of community involvement in environmental governance initiatives.

Table 1- Showing Responses about Awareness of Environmental Issues, Perception of Governance & Community Engagement

Particulars		No. of Respondents
Awareness of Environmental Issues	High	138
	Moderate	42
	Low	20
	Total Respondents	200
Perception of Governance	Effectiveness	48
	Moderate Effectiveness	82
	Ineffectiveness	70
	Total Respondents	200
Community Engagement	Active Involvement	44
	Passive Awareness	96
	Lack of Engagement	60
	Total Respondents	200

Source: Field work

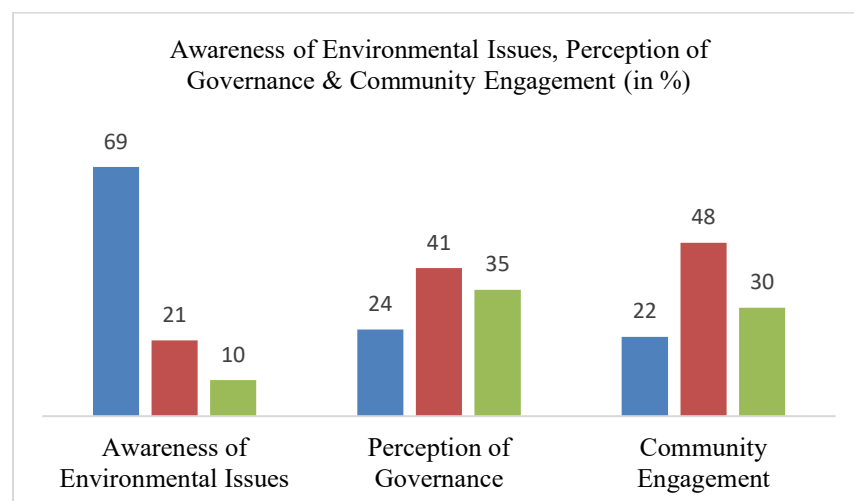


Figure 1- Showing respondents' awareness, perception and community engagement about environmental issues

Interpretation

Awareness of Environmental Issues

69% of respondents indicated a high level of awareness regarding local environmental issues, particularly air and water pollution. 21% were moderately aware, mostly acknowledging general environmental concerns without in-depth knowledge. 10% had low awareness, often limited to visible issues like littering and waste management.

Perception of Governance

Only 24% of respondents rated local governance as effective in addressing environmental issues, citing efforts in waste management and pollution control. 41% believed governance was moderately effective, recognizing efforts but pointing out significant areas for improvement, particularly in enforcement and transparency. 35% considered governance ineffective, highlighting issues such as corruption, lack of enforcement, and poor public communication.

Community Engagement

22% of respondents reported being actively involved in community environmental initiatives, primarily through local NGOs or resident associations. 48% were aware of such initiatives but did not participate due to time constraints or lack of interest. 30% had no involvement or knowledge of community environmental activities, often due to apathy or perceived ineffectiveness.

Summary of Findings

The field study indicates a high level of environmental awareness among Ranchi's residents, coupled with a strong desire for more effective government action. The data highlights the need for better enforcement of existing environmental regulations and greater community involvement in government initiatives. The findings suggest that while local people are willing to engage in environmental protection efforts, they require more robust support and action from government agencies to address the environmental challenges facing Ranchi effectively. This interpretation provides a clear picture of the environmental concerns in Ranchi and the perceived gaps in government responses, offering a foundation for further research or policy recommendations.

Conclusion

The case study of Ranchi District in Jharkhand underscores the complexities and challenges of environmental governance in India. The

findings reveal that while there have been efforts to address environmental issues through various policies and initiatives, significant gaps remain in implementation and community involvement. The lack of coordination among government agencies, limited public awareness, and inadequate enforcement of environmental regulations contribute to ongoing environmental degradation in the region. Furthermore, the socio-economic factors and rapid urbanization in Ranchi exacerbate the environmental challenges, highlighting the need for more inclusive and participatory governance mechanisms. To ensure sustainable development and effective environmental governance, it is crucial to strengthen institutional frameworks, enhance stakeholder engagement, and prioritize environmental education and awareness at the grassroots level. Ranchi's experience offers valuable insights for other regions facing similar challenges, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach that integrates environmental sustainability with socio-economic development.

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Artificial Intelligence, Transparent Governance, and Social Change in India: A Public Administration Perspective

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Abstract

AI is increasingly transforming public administration by affecting how governments deliver services, process information, and engage with citizens. Such a transformation in India would have far-reaching implications for transparent governance and social change. This article examines the shifting relationship between AI, transparency and governance and posits that artificial intelligence can be harnessed to advance administrative transparency, enhance accountability and citizen-oriented service delivery, within an ethical and inclusive governance paradigm. At the same time, it warns that artificial intelligence may also replicate existing inequalities, widen the digital divide, and generate new forms of opacity if its application is not guided by transparency, oversight by humans, and institutional responsibility.

The paper adopts a conceptual and analytical approach to explore how AI technologies can support public administration in India. It highlights the potential of AI in areas such as decision support, grievance redressal, predictive policy planning, welfare targeting, and administrative monitoring. These applications can improve efficiency and reduce discretionary delays, thereby contributing to more transparent and responsive governance. However, the paper also identifies major concerns, including algorithmic bias, privacy risks, and lack of explanation, weak accountability mechanisms, and unequal access to digital systems. These challenges are especially relevant in a diverse and unequal society like India, where social change depends not only on technological adoption but also on fair institutional design and democratic inclusion.

The article further argues that transparent governance in the age of AI requires a balance between innovation and regulation. Public administrators must ensure that AI systems remain auditable, explainable, and aligned with constitutional values of equity, justice, and accountability. The paper concludes that AI has the potential to become a meaningful instrument of social change in India, but only if public administration embraces ethical governance, capacity building, and citizen participation as central principles. In this way, AI can contribute not

merely to administrative efficiency, but to a deeper transformation of governance toward transparency, trust, and social inclusion.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Transparent Governance, Public Administration, Social Change, India, Accountability, Digital Governance

Introduction

Artificial intelligence has emerged as one of the most significant technological developments influencing contemporary governance and public administration. Its expanding use in decision-making, service delivery, data management, and citizen interaction has altered the way states function and how public institutions respond to social needs. In India, where governance must address complexity, diversity, inequality, and developmental demands at a large scale, the integration of AI into public administration holds both promise and concern. On the one hand, AI can improve efficiency, reduce administrative delays, strengthen monitoring systems, and support more informed policy decisions. On the other hand, it raises serious questions about transparency, accountability, ethical use, and fairness in governance.

Transparent governance has become increasingly important in the digital era because citizens now expect public institutions to be more open, responsive, and explainable. The use of AI in governance systems can either advance or weaken this expectation depending on how it is designed and implemented. If applied responsibly, AI can help public administrators improve access to information, streamline grievance redressal, and make public services more citizen-centric. However, if deployed without adequate oversight, it may create opaque decision-making structures, reinforce bias, and exclude vulnerable groups who already face barriers to digital access. Therefore, the relationship between AI and transparency cannot be understood merely in technical terms; it must be examined as a matter of public values, institutional trust, and democratic governance.

The Indian context makes this discussion especially relevant because digital governance initiatives have expanded rapidly, yet administrative capacities, regulatory mechanisms, and public awareness have not always kept pace with technological change. This creates an important space for scholarly inquiry into how AI can be used to promote transparent governance and social change without compromising equity or accountability. The present article explores this relationship from a public administration perspective and argues that AI should be viewed not only as a tool for administrative efficiency but also as an instrument with broader social and political consequences.

The article examines the conceptual link between AI, transparent governance, and social change, with particular attention to the Indian administrative environment. It discusses the opportunities AI offers, the challenges it presents, and the policy conditions necessary for its ethical and inclusive use. In doing so, the paper seeks to contribute to debates on how public administration can adapt to technological transformation while remaining committed to transparency, justice, and citizen welfare.

Background and Context

Artificial intelligence is gradually becoming an important component of governance systems worldwide, including in developing democracies such as India. Governments are increasingly using AI-based tools for tasks such as data analysis, predictive planning, public service delivery, fraud detection, grievance management, and administrative monitoring. This shift reflects a broader transformation in public administration, where digital technologies are no longer treated as mere supporting instruments but as active forces shaping how institutions function and how citizens experience the state. In such a setting, AI is not merely a technical innovation; it is also a governance issue with deep administrative and social implications.

In India, the relevance of AI in public administration is closely linked to the country's ongoing digital transformation. Over the past decade, the state has expanded digital platforms for welfare delivery, online citizen services, identification systems, and administrative coordination. These developments have improved the reach and speed of governance, but they have also exposed structural challenges such as unequal access to technology, gaps in digital literacy, data privacy concerns, and varying levels of institutional capacity. AI is now entering this environment as a further layer of technological change, with the potential to improve responsiveness and transparency, but also the risk of increasing opacity if not properly regulated.

Transparent governance has become a central concern in this context because citizens expect public institutions to function in ways that are open, accountable, and understandable. Traditional governance systems often suffer from delays, discretionary decision-making, and weak monitoring mechanisms. AI can help address some of these issues by enabling faster processing of information, better tracking of public workflows, and more consistent administrative decisions. Yet transparency in AI-driven governance is not automatic. Algorithms may be difficult to understand, data inputs may be biased, and decision-making processes may become less visible to citizens and even to public

officials themselves. This creates a tension between efficiency and openness that lies at the heart of the present study.

The Indian administrative environment makes this question especially significant because governance must operate in a context marked by social diversity, economic inequality, and large-scale service delivery demands. AI-based governance therefore has implications beyond administrative efficiency; it may influence access to welfare, patterns of inclusion, public trust, and the broader direction of social change. For this reason, the discussion of AI in India must move beyond technical enthusiasm and engage seriously with questions of public value, democratic accountability, and social justice.

This background establishes the need to examine AI, transparent governance, and social change together within a public administration framework. The article builds on this context to analyze how AI can contribute to more open and responsive governance in India while also identifying the institutional and ethical conditions required to make that contribution meaningful.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the relationship among three central variables: artificial intelligence, transparent governance, and social change. These concepts are closely interconnected within the broader field of public administration, particularly in a country like India, where digital governance is expanding rapidly and administrative systems are under increasing pressure to become more efficient, accountable, and citizen-oriented. The framework assumes that artificial intelligence is not merely a technological innovation but a governance instrument that can significantly influence administrative behaviour, institutional accountability, and the quality of state–citizen interaction.

Artificial intelligence, in the context of public administration, refers to the use of computational systems capable of processing large volumes of data, identifying patterns, supporting decisions, automating routine administrative tasks, and improving the delivery of public services. In governance settings, AI can be applied to welfare targeting, grievance redressal, predictive policy analysis, fraud detection, resource allocation, and monitoring mechanisms. From a public administration perspective, AI is important because it has the potential to reshape how decisions are made, how services are delivered, and how institutions respond to public demands. However, its significance lies not only in

technical efficiency but also in the way it redefines administrative processes and public accountability.

The second concept, transparent governance, refers to openness, clarity, accountability, and accessibility in governmental functioning. It implies that citizens should be able to understand how decisions are made, how resources are allocated, and how administrative actions affect their lives. In democratic governance, transparency is essential because it promotes public trust, reduces arbitrariness, and strengthens accountability. In the age of AI, transparency acquires a new meaning. It is no longer limited to access to information or administrative openness; it also includes algorithmic explainability, data accountability, procedural visibility, and institutional oversight. Therefore, this study treats transparent governance as both a democratic value and an administrative principle.

The third concept, social change, is understood as a transformation in social relations, access to opportunities, institutional responsiveness, and patterns of inclusion or exclusion. In the present study, social change is linked to the impact of governance on citizens' everyday lives. If AI enhances the fairness, efficiency, and openness of public administration, it can contribute to positive social change by expanding access to services, reducing delays, empowering marginalised groups, and improving trust in public institutions. Conversely, if AI is implemented without ethical safeguards, it may intensify exclusion, deepen digital inequality, and create new forms of administrative opacity.

The framework, therefore, proposes a causal and normative relationship among these variables. Artificial intelligence influences administrative processes; these processes shape the degree of transparency in governance; and transparent governance affects the direction and depth of social change. At the same time, this relationship is mediated by institutional capacity, ethical regulation, digital literacy, and democratic accountability. Thus, the framework recognises that AI does not automatically produce transparent governance or social progress. Its outcomes depend on the values, structures, and policy conditions within which it is embedded.

In this sense, the study adopts a public administration perspective to argue that AI should be evaluated not only in terms of innovation and efficiency but also in terms of its contribution to transparency, justice, and inclusive social transformation.

Literature Review

The emerging literature on artificial intelligence in public administration highlights its growing significance in transforming governance structures, administrative processes, and public service delivery. Scholars increasingly view AI as a tool capable of improving efficiency, reducing bureaucratic delays, and enabling data-driven decision-making in the public sector. In public administration, AI is commonly associated with automation, predictive analytics, digital monitoring, and citizen service systems, all of which may enhance the capacity of governments to respond more effectively to public needs. This body of literature suggests that AI is not merely a technological innovation but a governance mechanism with institutional and normative implications. (Monlezun, 2026)

A major strand of recent scholarship focuses on the relationship between AI and transparency in governance. Researchers argue that AI has the potential to improve administrative transparency by increasing traceability, enabling real-time monitoring, and standardizing decision-making processes. In this view, AI can reduce discretionary opacity in administration and support more accountable service delivery. At the same time, scholars caution that such gains are not automatic, because many AI systems function through complex algorithms that are not easily understandable to citizens or even to administrators. This concern has led to growing interest in explainable AI, algorithmic accountability, and auditable governance systems as essential conditions for maintaining democratic transparency in AI-enabled administration. (Ligot, 2024)

Another important theme in the literature concerns public trust and citizen-centric governance. Studies suggest that transparency in AI systems can strengthen citizen confidence only when the use of technology is accompanied by participation, digital literacy, and institutional accountability. Public trust depends not simply on technological accuracy but on whether citizens perceive governance systems as fair, understandable, and responsive. This argument is particularly relevant in democratic societies where legitimacy is closely connected to openness and public scrutiny. Therefore, scholars increasingly emphasise that AI must be embedded within broader principles of ethical governance rather than treated solely as a technical solution. (Monlezun, 2026)

In the Indian context, the literature remains relatively limited but is steadily expanding. Existing studies note that AI holds significant promise for improving governance in areas such as welfare administration, digital public services, policy targeting, and

administrative monitoring. India's large population, complex governance needs, and ongoing digital transformation make AI especially relevant to public administration. However, researchers also identify serious concerns, including data privacy, digital inequality, institutional capacity gaps, and the absence of robust regulatory frameworks. These concerns are particularly important because AI-driven governance in India operates within a socially diverse and unequal environment, where technological systems can either expand inclusion or reproduce existing marginalities. (Nielsen et al., 2022)

Overall, the literature reveals a clear shift from viewing AI as a mere efficiency-enhancing tool to understanding it as a powerful administrative force with ethical, political, and social consequences. Yet an important gap remains. Much of the existing research either focuses broadly on AI in governance or emphasises technical and ethical concerns in isolation. There is still insufficient integrated analysis of how AI, transparent governance, and social change intersect within the specific framework of Indian public administration. The present study seeks to address this gap by examining AI not only as an administrative innovation but also as a factor shaping transparency, accountability, and inclusive social transformation in India. (Mujeebunnisa, 2025)

Analytical Discussion

The analytical core of this article rests on the argument that artificial intelligence is transforming public administration in India not simply by improving efficiency, but by altering the relationship between the state, citizens, and governance processes. AI introduces new possibilities for transparency, responsiveness, and inclusion, yet it also creates new risks of opacity, exclusion, and institutional imbalance. Therefore, its role in governance must be evaluated not only in administrative terms but also in relation to democratic accountability and social change.

One of the most frequently cited advantages of AI in public administration is its ability to improve administrative efficiency through automation and data-based decision support. Public institutions often struggle with delays, procedural complexity, and uneven service delivery. AI-based systems can assist in sorting large volumes of information, identifying patterns in public grievances, improving targeting in welfare schemes, and supporting faster administrative action. In the Indian context, where governance operates at a vast scale, such capabilities can reduce transaction costs and improve state capacity. Efficiency, however, is only one aspect of administrative reform. The more important question

is whether these technological interventions also make governance more transparent and socially meaningful. (Chowdhury & Sadek, 2012)

AI can contribute to transparent governance by making administrative operations more traceable, measurable, and structured. In traditional bureaucratic systems, opacity often arises from discretion, fragmented record-keeping, procedural delays, and weak monitoring. AI has the capacity to address some of these limitations by generating digital records, tracking workflows, flagging anomalies, and standardizing repetitive decisions. Such changes may reduce opportunities for arbitrariness and strengthen accountability in service delivery. In principle, AI-based administrative systems can create a more visible chain of action, allowing institutions to monitor implementation more effectively and enabling citizens to receive quicker and more predictable responses. This is especially significant in governance sectors such as welfare delivery, taxation, urban administration, grievance redressal, and regulatory compliance. (Aman Kumar Mishra et al., 2024)

Yet transparency in AI-based governance cannot be assumed automatically. A major contradiction lies in the fact that a technology introduced to reduce opacity may itself become opaque. Many algorithmic systems function as “black boxes”, where the basis of decisions is difficult to interpret. If public authorities rely on such systems without adequate explainability, citizens may find it harder—not easier—to understand why they were included, excluded, prioritised, or denied access to a service. In such cases, technological sophistication may conceal rather than reveal administrative logic. This problem is especially serious in democratic public administration, where legitimacy depends not only on correct decisions but also on understandable and justifiable decisions. For this reason, explainable AI, audit trails, and institutional review mechanisms are essential to transparent governance.

The public administration perspective also requires attention to the human dimension of AI deployment. Governance is not a purely technical exercise; it is an interaction between institutions and people. Even when AI systems improve accuracy or speed, they may weaken administrative justice if they reduce avenues for appeal, dialogue, or contextual judgement. Bureaucratic discretion has often been criticised for arbitrariness, yet complete automation can also be problematic because social realities are complex and not always reducible to data categories. In a country like India, where citizens differ across language, caste, class, literacy, location, and digital access, standardised algorithmic decisions may fail to capture lived inequalities. Therefore, the integration of AI into public administration must preserve human

oversight, especially in high-stakes decisions affecting welfare, rights, and access to essential services.

This tension leads directly to the question of social change. If used ethically and inclusively, AI can support positive social transformation by improving access to public services, reducing corruption opportunities, and strengthening citizen trust in institutions. Faster grievance mechanisms, better identification of service gaps, and improved administrative responsiveness can help marginalised groups interact with the state more effectively. AI may also assist governments in planning targeted interventions in health, education, agriculture, and local development. In this sense, social change occurs not only through technological modernisation but also through the reorganisation of state capacity in ways that affect everyday life.

At the same time, AI can deepen social inequality if its design and implementation reflect existing structural biases. Data-driven systems are only as fair as the data and assumptions on which they are built. If administrative datasets exclude certain populations, misclassify vulnerable citizens, or replicate historical discrimination, AI may institutionalise injustice under the appearance of neutrality. This is a major concern in India, where digital exclusion remains uneven and where many citizens still face barriers related to connectivity, literacy, documentation, and awareness. In such circumstances, AI may benefit already-connected populations more than the marginalized, thereby widening rather than reducing governance gaps. Social change, therefore, cannot be measured merely by digital expansion; it must be judged by whether governance becomes more equitable and accessible.

Another important analytical issue is public trust. Transparent governance depends not only on information availability but also on citizens' confidence that institutions act fairly and responsibly. AI can help build this confidence when systems are explainable, accountable, and responsive to citizen feedback. Participatory governance, digital literacy, and public communication become central here. Citizens are more likely to trust AI-enabled governance when they understand its purpose, when grievance and review mechanisms exist, and when administrative responsibility remains visible. If, however, AI is introduced as a distant technical authority without consultation or safeguards, it may intensify suspicion and weaken democratic legitimacy.

From an Indian public administration perspective, the challenge is therefore not whether AI should be used, but how it should be governed. The benefits of AI in transparency and social change are real,

but they are conditional. They depend on ethical design, explainability, institutional capacity, data protection, inclusion, and continuing human accountability. Public administration must ensure that AI serves constitutional values rather than displacing them. In that sense, AI should be treated not as an autonomous governing force but as a public tool that must remain subject to democratic norms, administrative responsibility, and social justice. Only under these conditions can AI meaningfully contribute to transparent governance and transformative social change in India.

Indian Perspective and Case Discussion

The Indian perspective is central to understanding the relationship among artificial intelligence, transparent governance, and social change because India presents a unique administrative environment shaped by scale, diversity, inequality, and rapid digitalisation. Public administration in India is expected to serve a vast population across varied social, linguistic, and regional contexts. This makes governance both highly complex and deeply consequential for everyday life. In recent years, India's administrative system has increasingly relied on digital infrastructure to improve state capacity, expand service delivery, and reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies. The growing incorporation of AI into this digital ecosystem marks a new phase in administrative transformation, one that carries both institutional promise and normative challenges. (Chatterjee, 2020)

One important feature of the Indian case is the wider ecosystem of digital public infrastructure that already supports governance functions. Identification systems, payment platforms, public databases, and online service portals have created a foundation on which AI applications can be layered for predictive analysis, automated response systems, targeted delivery, and real-time administrative monitoring. This gives India an important advantage in experimenting with AI-enabled governance at scale. In areas such as welfare administration, citizen grievance systems, urban management, and digital public services, AI has the potential to improve coordination, detect anomalies, and make public responses more timely and traceable. From a public administration perspective, these developments suggest that AI can strengthen procedural efficiency while also reducing certain forms of discretion that traditionally contributed to opacity in governance. (*IJFANS International Journal of Food and Nutritional Sciences*, 2023)

A useful way to understand the Indian case is through the lens of service delivery and welfare administration. India has long struggled with leakage, delays, duplication, exclusion errors, and uneven

implementation in public welfare systems. AI-supported tools can assist administrators in identifying patterns of need, flagging irregularities, and improving the targeting of benefits. When combined with digitised records and direct transfer mechanisms, such technologies may support a more transparent flow of resources and a more accountable administrative chain. Similarly, AI-based grievance interfaces and multilingual chat systems can increase citizen access to government by making interactions more immediate and structured. These developments hold significance for social change because they can reshape how citizens, especially those historically marginalised, engage with state institutions. (Korlahalli, 2025)

At the same time, the Indian case also reveals the limitations of techno-administrative optimism. The benefits of AI are unevenly distributed in a society marked by digital inequality, uneven literacy, patchy connectivity, and differences in administrative capacity across states and institutions. Citizens who lack technological access, digital literacy, or proper documentation may find it harder to benefit from AI-enabled public systems. Moreover, if algorithmic decisions are not explainable or if grievance mechanisms remain weak, administrative opacity may persist in new forms. In such cases, exclusion can become more difficult to challenge because decisions appear objective while remaining institutionally distant. This raises an important concern for Indian public administration: AI must not merely Digitise governance; it must democratise it. (*NeGD – National E-Governance Division – Your Gateway to E-Governance and Digital Empowerment*, 2026)

Recent governance discussions in India have increasingly recognised this challenge by emphasising accountability, fairness, transparency, and human oversight in the design of AI systems. This is an important development because it reflects a shift from viewing AI only as an efficiency tool to treating it as a matter of democratic governance. For India, therefore, the real administrative question is not whether AI can be adopted, but whether it can be embedded within institutions in ways that protect rights, preserve accountability, and promote inclusion. The Indian case shows that AI can contribute to transparent governance and social change, but only when supported by ethical safeguards, public oversight, and citizen-centred design. In that sense, India offers both a promising and cautionary example of how technological governance must remain rooted in the broader values of public administration. (*Press Information Bureau*, 2017a)

Policy Implications

The policy implications of this study suggest that the successful use of artificial intelligence in Indian public administration depends less on technological availability and more on the quality of governance frameworks that regulate its deployment. AI should not be introduced merely as an efficiency-enhancing instrument; it must be embedded within a policy architecture that safeguards transparency, accountability, inclusion, and democratic oversight. This requires a shift from technology-led governance to principle-based governance in which administrative innovation remains aligned with constitutional values and public interest. (*Press Information Bureau*, 2017a)

First, public institutions should adopt clear standards for explainability and auditability in AI-based decision-making. Administrative systems that affect welfare, eligibility, grievance resolution, or regulatory action must provide understandable reasons for decisions and maintain audit trails that can be reviewed by officials and challenged by citizens. Without such mechanisms, algorithmic governance may weaken transparency rather than strengthen it. Second, AI policy in public administration must preserve meaningful human oversight. Human review is especially necessary in high-stakes decisions where automated systems may overlook contextual realities or reproduce social bias. (*NeGD – National E-Governance Division – Your Gateway to E-Governance and Digital Empowerment*, 2026)

Third, capacity building is essential. Public servants need training not only in the technical functioning of AI tools but also in ethics, accountability, and rights-based governance. Administrative capacity must include the ability to interpret outputs critically, detect bias, and ensure procedural fairness. Fourth, AI governance in India should be inclusion-sensitive. Multilingual interfaces, accessible grievance systems, and protections for digitally marginalised communities are necessary if AI is to contribute to equitable social change rather than deepen exclusion. (Lorenzen, 2024)

Finally, India needs stronger institutional mechanisms for responsible AI governance, including ethical review structures, incident reporting systems, data protection safeguards, and interdepartmental coordination. These policy measures are crucial because the legitimacy of AI in public administration depends not simply on innovation, but on whether it enhances public trust, administrative justice, and inclusive governance. In this sense, the future of AI in Indian public administration lies in responsible regulation as much as in technological advancement. (Shruthika, 2025)

Conclusion

Artificial intelligence has emerged as a significant force in contemporary public administration, especially in a country like India where governance must respond to large-scale social needs, administrative complexity, and rising citizen expectations. This article has argued that AI holds substantial potential to enhance transparent governance by improving efficiency, traceability, responsiveness, and data-driven decision-making in public institutions. At the same time, the study has shown that technological capability alone cannot guarantee democratic governance. Without explainability, accountability, ethical safeguards, and institutional oversight, AI may create new forms of opacity, deepen exclusion, and weaken public trust.

From a public administration perspective, the significance of AI lies not merely in automation but in its capacity to reshape the relationship between state institutions and citizens. When embedded within inclusive and rights-based governance frameworks, AI can contribute to social change by expanding access to services, reducing procedural arbitrariness, and making administration more citizen-centred. However, in a socially diverse and unequal setting such as India, these outcomes remain conditional. Administrative justice depends on whether AI systems are designed and governed in ways that recognise social realities rather than flatten them into technical categories.

The study therefore concludes that AI should be treated as a public instrument governed by democratic values rather than as an autonomous solution to administrative problems. Its long-term value for Indian governance will depend on responsible regulation, institutional capacity, human oversight, and public accountability. In this sense, the future of transparent governance and social change in India will be shaped not simply by how much AI is adopted, but by how ethically and inclusively it is governed.

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Global Governance for Health: Role of India in Global Health Diplomacy

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Abstract

Global governance is the political and economic interactions among transnational actors aimed at solving problems that affect more than one state or region. Health and the community's welfare are essential to global good governance. It is often seen as a set of values that includes health as a human right and the public good. Global healthcare is a complex phenomenon that fosters new perspectives and approaches to address global health concerns. Today, global healthcare encompasses technologies that help diverse population groups and address various challenges related to global health concerns affecting millions of people in multiple ways.

The interstate and multi-sectoral institutions are engaged in policymaking and promoting transparency and accountability globally; some are notably health-specific (e.g., the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF, and UNAIDS). This article highlights how India's COVID diplomacy during one of the most unfavourable global crises in recent decades has enabled it to emerge as a responsible and credible international player, even as many established global powers have floundered. Furthermore, ensure a comprehensive study of current health policies and their evaluation to provide proper governance in the healthcare sector.

The study used a descriptive and analytical methodology to address the objectives; both qualitative and quantitative data were used within the study's framework. There is a need to improve knowledge, understanding, and expertise in areas of governance. The study emboldens discussions about challenges posed by globalisation and provides a clear vision of what is needed to address them through global governance.

Keywords: Global Governance, Diplomacy, Healthcare, Accountability, Globalisation.

Introduction

Health governance has fundamentally changed over the last 30 years. That field that was previously interpreted relatively narrowly as "international health"-the surveillance, detection and control of infectious disease at border crossings and ports-has evolved into a much broader and much more inter-dependent field, called "global health," where the causal agents of disease, the agents of response, and the institutions of governance all largely operate above and beyond the level of the nation-state (Frenk & Moon, 2013). The driving force behind this transformation has been globalisation with increasing flows of people, pathogens, products, and capital across national borders, turning the issue of health security from one of internal management to a matter of foreign policy and international security (Kickbusch et al., 2007).

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified and highlighted these prior trends. It demonstrated that no state, no matter how affluent and technologically sophisticated, could be protected from a borderless health emergency and highlighted extreme inequalities in the global availability of vaccines, oxygen, diagnostics, and therapeutics, particularly for the least affluent and middle-income countries (Chattu et al., 2021). In its aftermath, the lengthy, complex negotiations and the eventual conclusion of the WHO Pandemic Agreement in 2025 also evidenced the ongoing relevance of multilateralism, as well as its extreme complexity, especially given continuing vaccine nationalism, intellectual property disputes, and major-power rivalry.

It is within this evolving environment that many middle and rising powers have discovered new avenues for diplomatic engagement. Indeed, few states are in as unique and somewhat odd a situation as India: one of the largest manufacturers of vaccines and generic drugs (not inappropriately called "the pharmacy of the world"), and simultaneously one of the developing countries with the largest domestic burden of disease and most to do to reach universal health coverage. India's bifurcated role as both a supplier and a consumer of global public goods provides a case that can uniquely help us understand how such a large developing-world country manages and influences global health governance.

While it is evident that India has emerged as a significant provider of vaccines, medicines, and digital public health, and has developed a more commanding presence within international organisations, from the WHO to the G20 and the WTO, India's wider role in shaping global health governance has been underdeveloped in the scholarly literature. As the review of literature provided in the present

paper illustrates, existing scholarship on global health governance has been fixated on a very specific time-limited segment of Indian diplomatic practice that is encapsulated by the 'COVID-19 Vaccine diplomacy' with insufficient regard to the more holistic, multidimensional and embedded contribution India has made towards global health governance over time.

Research Questions

- What is Global Governance for Health, and how has its architecture evolved?
- How has India emerged as a significant actor in Global Health Diplomacy?
- What are India's substantive contributions to global health governance across pharmaceutical, digital, medical, and traditional-medicine domains?
- What domestic, international, and institutional challenges limit India's global health leadership?
- How can India strengthen and institutionalise its global health role in the trajectory toward *Viksit Bharat @2047*?

Objectives

- To examine the evolution of Global Governance for Health as a conceptual and institutional field.
- To analyse India's health diplomacy across its historical, pharmaceutical, vaccine, digital, medical, and traditional medicine dimensions.
- To evaluate India's substantive contributions to global health institutions, including the WHO, G20, BRICS, Quad, and WTO.
- To identify the domestic, international, and governance-level challenges constraining India's global health leadership.
- To suggest institutional, international, and domestic policy reforms consistent with India's *Viksit Bharat @2047* aspiration.

Significance

The research holds relevance across multiple disciplines and policy arenas. For public policy, it illuminates the institutional constraints that policymakers in India need to contend with when framing foreign health policy tools. For International Relations, the study provides an empirical case of middle-power agency in a functionally narrow, but securitised policy area. The Global Health literature expands the inquiry beyond COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy to debates around digital health, traditional medicines, and health institutional reform. In relation to SDG

3 on health and well-being, it identifies India's unique strengths and limitations as it pursues global health goals. Ultimately, in charting a pathway towards India's *Viksit Bharat @2047*, it connects domestic healthcare reform with the objective of making the country a leader in global health governance by its centenary year of independence.

Health Diplomacy: Concept and Types

Global health diplomacy is the multi-level, multi-actor negotiations that build the global policy environment for health and, at the same time, make health a means of developing cooperation, trust, and common understanding among states. This article then differentiates several inter-lapping forms of health diplomacy relevant in the context of the Indian case namely bilateral health diplomacy conducted as direct state-state government co-operations; regional health diplomacy, implemented through direct state-to-state governmental cooperation organizations like the SAARC and BIMSTEC, multilateral health diplomacy taking place via the WHO, G20 and WTO; humanitarian health diplomacy which is in essence emergency medical and material support to countries suffering from humanitarian emergencies; vaccine diplomacy; and the utilization of health to engender positive relations and enhance capacity by means of health-care worker exchanges, telemedicine, capacity building and generic medicines trade diplomacy where India competes by offering better access to cheaper medicine. Digital public health diplomacy, involving the export of India's health technologies, is another significant domain, as is the pharmaceutical trade, including generic medicines and discussions on intellectual property rights. Lastly, India also has a considerable presence in AYUSH's traditional medicine diplomacy.

India's Health Diplomacy

There is now a growing body of empirical literature which has focused on different dimensions of Indian health diplomacy. Sharun and Dhama (2021) trace the establishment and early implementation of the "Vaccine Maitri" programme as an instance of what they call "humanitarianism-plus-soft power" in diplomacy. Gulati and Busari (2022) document the internal and leadership-based domestic difficulties in India in expanding its vaccination programme to reach over a billion Indians; this adds to the debate by tempering a purely diplomatic-based analysis by underlining domestic limitations that defined external commitments. India's approach to the TRIPS waiver proposal at the WTO, in collaboration with South Africa, is treated as a distinct case of health diplomacy. India's trajectory in the evolution of its global health

diplomacy during the pandemic emphasises its combination of pharma power, production scale, and regional and multilateral partnerships.

Research Gap

Despite this burgeoning literature, there are still three obvious lacunas. Firstly, the current literature focuses heavily on the acute COVID-19 years (2020-2022), but has made little effort to consider India's post-2020 global health governance engagement, including its 2023 G20 presidency and its role in the ongoing negotiations on a WHO Pandemic Agreement. Secondly, the literature addresses only the vaccine diplomacy aspect, while overlooking the potentially more significant contributions of India to digital public health infrastructure, traditional medicine diplomacy, and pharmaceutical trade diplomacy. Thirdly, much of the literature discusses diplomatic relations but does not systematically situate India's practice within the theories of global governance, global public goods, and health diplomacy, leaving a gap between description and explanation that this article seeks to fill.

Conceptual framework

The paper structures its arguments according to a conceptual chain that proceeds from the general to the specific. The highest level in the conceptual chain is Global Governance, understood, following Rosenau (1992), as the whole set of norms, rules, and institutions that coordinate the behaviour of states and non-state actors in the absence of a world government. Contained within this is Global Health Governance, which encompasses the subset of norms, rules and institutions, the WHO, the International Health Regulations, the Global Fund, Gavi, CEPI, and the Pandemic Agreement, governing the response to cross-border health issues (Frenk & Moon, 2013). Situated within this architecture is Global Health Diplomacy, the interaction and negotiation of states to advance their interests within this governance framework (Kickbusch et al., 2007).

India's Foreign Policy serves as the nation-state framework, through its various neighbourhood, regional, and global dimensions (Neighbourhood First, Act East, Indo-Pacific, and Global South policy orientations), which form the lens of this paper's enquiry into India's health diplomacy. This national-level diplomacy can best be understood as an endeavor to supply and gain access to Global Public Goods (Kaul et al., 1999) - which include vaccines, generic medicines, epidemiologic information, and preparedness capacities in case of pandemics - which contribute to the more general goals of Health Security, understood as security from cross-border health threats, and of Universal Health

Coverage, understood as ensuring access to essential health services for all people regardless of their social status. These six analytical concepts—global governance, global health governance, global health diplomacy, national foreign policy, global public goods, health security and universal health coverage—constitute the analytic backbone of the remainder of this paper.

Methodology

This article uses a descriptive and analytical qualitative methodology based solely on secondary sources. Sources of information fall into four broad categories. These include international institutional documents, namely, reports and press communications by the WHO, World Bank, United Nations and G20; Government of India documents including official statements and press releases by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and NITI Aayog, The Lancet, British Medical Journal, Nature affiliated journals, New England Journal of Medicine and specialized global health and international relations journals; and secondary government and institutional documents relating to the specific case studies in the form of WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine and the Quad Health Security Partnership.

A combined methodological approach is employed to analyse the information. This involves three complementary methods of analysis: thematic content analysis of international and governmental literature to identify themes and structure the paper; policy analysis of identified health diplomacy initiatives in terms of their objectives, tools and outcomes in the light of the policy theory developed in Section 3; and case study analysis in relation to five episodes: the COVID-19 Vaccine Maitri initiative, TRIPS waiver proposal, Global South health co-operation, digital public infrastructure diplomacy and the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine. This study, being a qualitative study based on secondary data, does not produce new primary data; the numerical information presented in this paper, e.g., export volumes, is based directly on the aforementioned government and institutional sources and is indicative of scale rather than verified facts.

Evolution of Global Governance for Health: From International Health to Global Health

The transition from “international health” to “global health” entails a conceptual revolution in how threats are addressed and services are delivered. International health was a discipline and practice from the

nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century, primarily aimed at regulating the crossing of boundaries with disease, predominantly through quarantine and bilateral sanitary conventions. Global health takes into consideration that drivers of health, and also climate change, trade policy or access to networks, for example, operate on the planetary scale, which renders state or even bilateral responses to health problems futile (Frenk & Moon, 2013). The diplomatic implications of this shift are obvious: health has increasingly become central to the business of foreign ministries and heads of state, leaving the technical responsibility for it solely with ministries of health.

The Role of the World Health Organisation

WHO stands at the helm of global health governance as the central normative and coordinating institution, acting as an authority of last resort, coordinating responses to global emergencies, and bringing countries together at the World Health Assembly – the chief arena for multilateral health negotiations. It was, however, always an organisation that had to depend on its member-states for legitimacy and, to a large extent, for its operational activities and financing and increasingly the WHO relies heavily on targeted voluntary contributions that undermine its flexibility to control its own budget and provide opportunities to large donors to unduly influence its policy agenda (Sridhar, 2012). It had also, time and again, provoked debate about its legitimacy and sovereignty, which took on another critical dimension during the pandemic, when its timeliness and the appropriateness of the pandemic response were challenged.

The Sustainable Development Goals

The launch of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development dramatically expanded the terrain covered by global health governance. While the MDGs focused on a select set of disease- and mortality-related targets, SDG 3 covers a much broader array of health issues, including universal health coverage, reductions in non-communicable diseases, mental health, health system strengthening, and many more (Marten et al., 2018).

Pandemic Governance

The COVID-19 crisis prompted the biggest innovation in global health governance in decades: the agreement on a first-ever standalone Pandemic Accord, which the 78th World Health Assembly adopted by consensus on 20 May 2025 (World Health Organisation, 2025). The Pandemic Accord includes provisions establishing a Coordinating

Financial Mechanism to support developing countries in strengthening their capacity to prepare for pandemics, and establishing a Global Supply Chain and Logistics Network to ensure more equitable access to health products related to pandemics during future events. It also includes a much more debated element that remains on the table for more negotiation: a Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) system to ensure that countries sharing pathogen samples and genetic sequences will get their due if those pathogens turn into new vaccines or medicines; the Intergovernmental Working Group to negotiate an annex to this accord will go on for at least another year.

Health as a Global Public Good

Beneath this evolution of institutions, there is the insight most systematically put forward by Kaul, Grunberg and Stern (1999) that a large part of the substance of health security is a global public good: a commodity (or in the case of infectious disease, a bane) that is non-excludable and non-rival across the international system. This makes it difficult for any single country to ensure health security in isolation. This insight provides a normative underpinning to an organisation like the WHO or the emerging Pandemic Agreement and accounts for the privileged international standing of states with considerable productive capacity for these goods, vaccines, generic medicines, and epidemiological surveillance. India in particular fits this description well.

India's Global Health Diplomacy: Historical Evolution

India's modern health diplomacy was not a creation in a vacuum but rested on an old and established strand of South-South solidarity within its foreign policy. That tradition of solidarity originated at the 1955 Bandung Conference and the ensuing Non-Aligned Movement, when post-colonial Asian and African nations sought to foster cooperative endeavours beyond the bipolar Cold War order. This legacy of "Bandung spirit" solidarity was gradually transformed into a more organised program of South-South Cooperation, where India started rendering technical, training and credit support to various other developing nations, in particular the health sector, even prior to the advent of COVID-19, which has put India's vaccine diplomacy into a global focus. India's Development Partnership Administration, established within the Ministry of External Affairs, has upheld that tradition by fostering capacity-building initiatives across South Asia, Africa, and small island developing states.

India's Pharmaceutical Diplomacy

India's most enduring competitive advantage in global health diplomacy lies in its pharmaceutical production capacity. Commonly known as the 'pharmacy of the world', India is responsible for a large chunk of global production of generic drugs, a majority of which include antiretroviral medications essential for managing HIV/AIDS in low- and middle-income countries, as well as generic treatments for cancer and tuberculosis. This production has also ensured that India is often central in the international debate concerning the nexus of intellectual property protection and access to affordable medicine. India's diplomatic and legal stances have consistently promoted the utilisation of flexibilities in the WTO's TRIPS Agreement, such as those related to compulsory licensing, to prevent patent protection from becoming a significant barrier to access to health care for low- and middle-income nations.

Vaccine Diplomacy: The Vaccine Maitri Case Study

India's highest-profile piece of pandemic health diplomacy was its "Vaccine Maitri" (Vaccine Friendship) project, announced in January 2021, where India donated domestically produced Covid-19 vaccines to its partners (Sharun & Dhama, 2021). Vaccines flowed to neighbouring states such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, the Maldives, Myanmar and Afghanistan, as well as countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. In total, India donated around 300 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to over 90 countries during the pandemic, according to figures from the Government of India (Prime Minister's Office, 2023). This effort generated considerable goodwill, especially in the neighbourhood, under New Delhi's "Neighbourhood First" approach, according to several analysts.

However, this should be juxtaposed with the significant constraints on India's generosity with vaccines. Gulati and Busari (2022) report significant internal operational pressures faced by India in its own vaccination efforts, supply constraints, registration and infrastructure bottlenecks, and coordination between the centre and states, culminating in a sharp halt to vaccine exports amid the Delta variant outbreak in India during April and May 2021. This interruption also impacted the Quad Vaccine Partnership, where India was designated as the principal manufacturing partner for vaccine donations across the Indo-Pacific, with the goal of delivering one billion doses by the end of 2022 was not met. This experience reflects the fundamental flaw in the logic of vaccine diplomacy by a country that is simultaneously a significant global

supplier and a high-burden country: humanitarian pledges abroad become subordinate to domestic conditions.

India's Digital Health Diplomacy

Another, less discussed, but arguably growing aspect of India's health diplomacy centres on its digital public health infrastructure. During the pandemic, India created and deployed Co-WIN, the vaccine booking and tracking infrastructure for its over one billion population, on top of the extant Aadhaar-based digital identification system. In the aftermath of the pandemic's acute phase, this digital public infrastructure (DPI) approach has been amplified and extended through the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission. The government hopes to develop interoperable health records nationwide and then offer them as a potential template for other countries, especially developing ones with large populations, to establish their health systems cost-effectively and at scale.

Medical Diplomacy

Beyond vaccines and digital infrastructure, emergency medical teams, disaster response support, and medical equipment have been deployed during regional crises, and medical capacity-building programmes, such as training for foreign medical staff and telemedicine sharing, have become a longer-term aspect of medical diplomacy. As both a significant exporter of medical personnel and pharmaceutical goods, India has cemented its image as a provider, rather than a recipient, of global health aid, a dramatic transformation from being a major beneficiary of health aid from foreign nations in the post-independence decades.

AYUSH Diplomacy

Additionally, India has endeavoured to export its diverse traditional medicine practices – grouped under the term AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) as its particular contribution to the global health architecture. This is embodied in the establishment of the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM) in Jamnagar, Gujarat. With a foundational contribution from the Indian Government, comprising support towards infrastructure and the cost of ten years of operation, amounting to approximately USD 250 million, the Centre was symbolically launched by the Prime Minister of India in the presence of the WHO Director-General in April 2022.

Officially presented as a global public good, in the spirit of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, the world is one family (Prime Minister's

Office, 2022). The Centre, the WHO's sole and first outpost focused on traditional medicine, aims to create reliable evidence, data, and standards for traditional medicines that are relied upon by most of the world's population. Following the precedent of establishing International Yoga Day and broader "wellness diplomacy," Indian policymakers have thus attempted to brand its traditional medicine as a form of soft power.

Health in India's Foreign Policy

Health diplomacy is no longer confined to narrow, vertical engagements but is increasingly intertwined within the dominant geographic and institutional structures of India's foreign policy. As part of the 'Neighbourhood First' strategy, New Delhi has extended health aid to its South Asian neighbours with the goal of strengthening regional influence and thwarting the growing influence of rival powers in the region such as China. Through its 'Act East' policy and wider engagement in the Indo-Pacific, India has actively expanded its health partnerships with its Southeast Asian neighbours, which has been evidenced in particular by the launch of the Quad Health Security Partnership. First established in March 2021 as the Quad Vaccine Partnership, it was conceived as a collective effort led by India to leverage local manufacturing to distribute vaccines throughout the Indo-Pacific. The US and Japan pledged funding to help expand Indian manufacturing capacity. The Quad had agreed for Australia and Japan to support delivery, with the ambitious goal of distributing 1 billion doses in 2021. Although this goal was not fully realised by New Delhi due to domestic events, the partnership was later expanded to encompass pandemic readiness exercises, such as joint pandemic drills and public health workforce training for the Indo-Pacific region.

Similarly, India has also health cooperation on a whole gamut of partnership engagements ranging from Africa, engagement with the Global South (for example, the 2023 "Voice of Global South Summit") to plurilateral fora such as IBSA (India-Brazil-South Africa), and BRICS (where the notion of vaccine cooperation and traditional medicine were among discussions in the health sphere). The logic of coalition diplomacy centred on the domain of health, as described by Upadhyay (2021), is embedded within a wider framework of middle powers and the utilisation of 'soft security' cooperation as seen in the area of health, as a means of institutionally building trust and strategic importance without the rigidity associated with the formation of traditional military alliances.

Case Studies of India's Global Health Diplomacy

Case 1: Vaccine Maitri – Humanitarian Leadership and Strategic Constraints

India's flagship health diplomacy programme, Vaccine Maitri, embodied India's goal to establish itself as the 'pharmacy of the world'. India delivered roughly 300 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to more than 90 countries under grants, commercial supply and the COVAX framework, contributing as a responsible global public good producer. This effort also deepened Indian engagement with the Global South and augmented its soft power early in the pandemic.

Vaccine Maitri also revealed a set of structural conflicts between public health goals at home and external obligations. The export halt in April 2021 amid India's brutal second COVID-19 wave strained bilateral relations and disrupted the Quad vaccine partnership, underscoring the risks of centralising production. Hence, Vaccine Maitri demonstrates the limits and possibilities of health diplomacy, as consistent international leadership relies on robust domestic health systems and capabilities.

Case 2: The TRIPS Waiver Proposal – Advancing Global Health Equity through Trade Diplomacy

India's joint initiative with South Africa at the WTO to secure a temporary TRIPS waiver from intellectual property norms represents arguably one of the most important contributions to global health diplomacy in modern times. Rejecting a purely norms-based approach at health fora, the initiative strategically deployed trade law instruments to overcome inequitable access to vaccines and other vital medical products. The waiver initiative sought to overturn the existing balance between intellectual property and public health concerns during a global health emergency, provoking an extraordinary international debate about access to medicines.

Although the eventual compromise at the WTO, adopted in June 2022, was substantially less ambitious than the original proposal, it was nonetheless a significant multilateral concession and sets a useful precedent for the inclusion of public health in the future architecture of global trade governance. Overall, the TRIPS waiver negotiation highlights India's potential to integrate legal, diplomatic and developmental objectives in achieving global health equality.

Case 3: Global South Health Cooperation – South–South Solidarity in Practice

India's cooperation with other nations in the Global South in the health sector is guided by India's age-old diplomatic doctrine, the spirit of the Bandung Conference, and South-South cooperation. In keeping with the spirit, India has engaged in capacity building for the health workforce in developing countries, provided technical assistance for the development of health systems, distributed pharmaceutical products, and facilitated co-operation through plurilateral forums such as IBSA and BRICS. The emphasis here, unlike the conventional donor-recipient relationship between the Global North and South, has always been on partnership, shared capabilities, and demand-driven development assistance. India's most recent engagement on vaccine, medical equipment, health infrastructure development, capacity building, training and the sharing of pharmaceuticals with developing countries showcases a transition from political solidarity to a substantive role in health partnership, thus consolidating India's self-image as a development partner dedicated to democratising global health while enhancing the collective goals of the countries in the Global South.

Case 4: Digital Public Infrastructure – Exporting Digital Health as a Global Public Good

In recent years, digital innovation has been woven into India's international health engagement with DPIs, proposed as a globally translatable model to enhance health systems. Co-WIN and the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission are examples of how India's domestic digitally governed solutions can be extended globally. This model deviates from existing modes of health engagement – the sharing of medicines, vaccines, and monetary support – by prioritising the exchange of interoperable platforms, technical know-how, and governance models. Digital Health systems, India claims, are to be made available as a public good at the international level – broadening the purview of health diplomacy from material support to that of building institutions and technical capacity. This strategy, moreover, fits neatly with India's aspirations to be a global player in digital governance.

Opportunities for Strengthening India's Global Health Leadership

Notwithstanding these hurdles, India has many comparative advantages, which, according to experts, can enable the country to emerge as an increasingly powerful player in the future of global health governance. India's existing internationally recognised manufacturing

capacity in medicines, as well as the country's rapidly growing digital economy and information technology sector, provides an enabling environment for capacity building to lead in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence-enabled health, digital health governance, disease surveillance, precision medicine, and new drug discovery. Building on the enabling strength of building blocks such as Co-WIN and the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, India has shown that it can develop a scalable Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) that other developing countries seeking affordable, harmonised health information architecture can adopt.

India's size, credibility as a champion of the developing world and parts of the Global South, and its long-standing presence in the South-South cooperation arena enhance its position as a leader within the Global South. These factors give India a crucial role in future negotiations over how the global health system should be reformed, including how the proposed WHO Pandemic Agreement, Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) mechanisms, and funding structures for future pandemic preparedness should be implemented.

Advancing further toward UHC through efforts like Ayushman Bharat enhances India's prestige and credibility as it campaigns for the right to equitable access to health worldwide. India's promotion of the One Health ideology during its 2022 G20 Presidency incrementally builds on the One Health agenda's ability to integrate human, animal, and environmental health into a broad international policy framework.

Another significant domain of diplomatic leadership is climate change. As a country most prone to climate-change-related diseases, heat stress, and other environmental health risks, India has both the motivation and the know-how to lead the design of global efforts to build climate-resilient health systems. In addition, increased engagement in the fields of biosecurity, biotechnology, vaccine research and development, pharmaceutical breakthroughs, resilient medical supply chains and health workforce strengthening represents an excellent opportunity for India to expand its delivery of global public goods.

In the final analysis, India's future role in global health governance hinges on its capacity to integrate a domestic health system-strengthening agenda with its international health engagement. By balancing the state of the art in technology, pharmaceutical manufacturing capabilities, digital public goods, South-South partnership, and proactive multilateralism, India can aspire to help craft a fair, resilient, and inclusive global health architecture.

Policy Recommendations

The results of this study indicate that, ultimately, India's contribution to global health governance will be shaped by how it approaches both domestic and global health system strengthening, as well as international roles. To reinforce its emergent authority in global health, the following policy suggestions were made.

Institutional Recommendations

An institutional organisation would also be required to strategise and improve the articulation and coherence of India's global health diplomacy. This could include the creation and strengthening of the Global Health Division in the MEA, with the appointment of a team of dedicated technical experts in public health, global governance, international law, and health economics, to name a few. In addition, the articulation of a laid-down inter-ministerial mechanism to establish a functional line of coordination with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the Department of Pharmaceuticals and NITI Aayog would be crucial.

Secondly, India needs to develop a National Health Diplomacy Strategy that clearly sets out the country's priorities, the responsible institutions, and how cooperation will operate. This would institutionalise health diplomacy as a predictable, rules-based component of Indian foreign policy rather than an ad hoc, crisis-dependent activity, and ensure that reputational damage is limited by short-lived policy reversals such as the bans on vaccine exports during the second COVID-19 pandemic wave.

Third, developing expertise in global health diplomacy within the professional training of Indian Foreign Service officers and public health practitioners would help India more effectively leverage the opportunity to shape global health policy. Focusing on cross-cutting skills around international negotiations, global health law, pandemic governance, trade policy, and health security would enhance India's role in global health diplomacy and enable Indian expertise to promote its interests internationally.

International Recommendations

India needs to reinforce its leadership in global health within existing multilateral institutions and South-South cooperation institutions. The primary emphasis should be on playing a more active role in the implementation of, and future negotiations on, the WHO Pandemic Accord, especially the Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing

(PABS) mechanism. Given that India is home to one of the world's largest vaccine-producing companies and has numerous public health priorities, it is well-positioned to pilot governance designs that promote innovation while ensuring equitable access.

Based on the lessons of Vaccine Maitri, India should create a 'Vaccine Maitri 2.0' framework that institutionalises the predictability of mechanisms for sharing of vaccines, medicines, and medical equipment with neighbours and Global South partners. For example, setting up contingency plans, multiple manufacturing networks, and strategic reserve capacities to avoid domestically caused supply chain disruptions can be part of this.

India may further deepen health cooperation through plurilateral arrangements such as BRICS, IBSA, the Quad, and the Voice of the Global South, thereby strengthening South-South cooperation and fostering more inclusive global health governance. Concurrently, India needs to advocate for its Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) ecosystem-Co-WIN, Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, and comparable interoperable digital health systems-as global digital public goods and thus elevate the issue to the WHO, G20, and other multi-lateral development agencies.

Domestic Recommendations

Sustainable global leadership will require a strong domestic health system. In response, India should seek to gradually ramp up public health spending to enhance health system capacity, address inequalities, and build resilience. Greater domestic public health expenditure will also bolster India's standing in the world as a champion of Universal Health Coverage.

The country needs to make innovation a national priority by investing more in vaccine research, biologics, biotech, and domestic pharma R&D. With an enhanced ability to innovate, India could leverage its current comparative advantage in manufacturing generic medicines by moving into next-generation medical technologies. Increasing the investment in public health research infrastructure, pandemic preparedness, genomic surveillance and indigenous vaccine platforms will strengthen India's adaptive capacity to emerging health threats while further enabling the country to meet its international obligations.

To sum up, unrelenting human resource shortages in India demand systematic investments in medical and public health human resource development, retention, and incentive strategies to enhance healthcare access in rural and remote areas. Building a more robust and

fair health workforce, more importantly, means better engagement not only domestically but also globally for India in the next few decades.

Conclusion

India's approach to global health governance accordingly signals a shift from "a state that was historically a recipient of foreign aid in health to one which is becoming a key global provider of public goods and is an emerging agenda setter within the evolving architecture of global health governance." Through its experiment with pharmaceutical diplomacy, Vaccine Maitri, digital public infrastructure, medical assistance, South-South cooperation and AYUSH diplomacy, India has demonstrated its ability to project power and influence by transforming domestic expertise into global advantages. Most notably, the instrumentality of India's Digital Public Infrastructure in deepening and broadening global health cooperation is a recent innovation along this trajectory, reflecting the expansion of health diplomacy beyond the provision of medicines and vaccines to include areas such as digital governance models and technological expertise.

Nevertheless, to be a top global health power, India will have to overcome pressing domestic and international limitations. The disintegration of Vaccine Maitri during the second wave of the pandemic illustrates how domestic health system resilience is intricately linked to international credibility. Similarly, the fractured nature of global health governance, the entrenchment of geopolitical rivalries, finalisation of financial arrangements and negotiations on the Pandemic Agreement continue to pose critical hurdles to India's endeavours.

In the future, India's capacity to lead must rest on three interdependent shores-the empowerment of its internal health system, the portability of a coherent and consistent foreign health policy, and the development of a deeper, more autonomous engagement with multilateral institutions. Further investment in pharmaceutical innovation, digital health infrastructure, population health and health systems research, health workforce strengthening, and South-South cooperation would only enhance India's potential to dictate the contours of the 21st-century global health order.

As the global community strives toward designing a more equitable, resilient, and inclusive global health architecture post-pandemic, India is uniquely placed to play a bridging role in this framework, mobilising its technological prowess and pharmaceutical industry for building the global common, while drawing on its institutional form of democratic governance and long tradition of

equitable development. Supported by a continuous process of domestic reform and a strategic international order, India's vision of Viksit Bharat @2047 can go beyond India's development agenda and can be translated into a new global health order where India is seen as more than "pharmacy of the world" - India is seen as a trusted narrator, norm entrepreneur, and pioneer of twenty-first-century global health governance.

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Public Policy and Social Change in the Tribal Areas of North East India

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between public policy and social change in the tribal areas of North East India, arguing that policy is not merely a response to existing social realities but an active force that reshapes social, political, and economic structures. Focusing on the constitutional and developmental framework governing the region, the study analyses how asymmetric federal arrangements, particularly the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, have sought to balance tribal autonomy with national integration. While the Sixth Schedule established Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) with legislative and administrative authority over land, forests, customary laws, and local governance, its implementation has been constrained by institutional weaknesses, financial dependence, overlapping jurisdictions, and limited democratic accountability. The paper highlights the uneven application of constitutional protections across the North Eastern states, demonstrating that tribal governance is shaped by multiple constitutional provisions rather than a single policy framework. It further examines the role of development administration through institutions such as the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), the North Eastern Council, and the Act East Policy, arguing that these initiatives have increasingly prioritised infrastructure, connectivity, and resource extraction over community-centred development. The paper concludes that the disconnect between constitutional ideals, development policies, and implementation has generated new forms of inequality, elite capture, and governance deficits. It argues for a more participatory, financially empowered, and culturally sensitive policy framework that strengthens local self-governance and aligns development initiatives with the aspirations and rights of indigenous communities in North East India.

Keywords: Public Policy, Social Change, Tribal Governance, Sixth Schedule, Autonomous, District Councils (ADCs), Fiscal Federalism

Introduction

North East India, comprising Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura, holds a unique position in India's constitutional and political landscape. It is home to numerous tribal communities with diverse languages, kinship systems, land practices, and histories. The region has been governed by asymmetric constitutional arrangements aimed at balancing tribal self-rule with a centralising nation-state. Among these, the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution stands out, supported by a complex network of central ministries, development agencies, security laws, and welfare programs, which have influenced social change in the region for over seventy years.

The paper explores how public policy influences social change specifically in marginalised and tribal regions of North East India. It asserts that policy and social conditions are interconnected and shape each other, with policy actively generating new social structures—such as emerging elites, land alienation, ethnic solidarity, and conflict zones—rather than merely responding to existing social realities. The study begins by examining the historical and constitutional basis of tribal governance, especially the 6th Schedule and Autonomous District Councils (ADCs). It then reviews the broader policy framework of development administration and fiscal federalism. The analysis covers topics such as land and livelihoods, conflict and militarisation, identity and citizenship, the ecological impacts of connectivity-driven development, and gender and customary law. The final section critically evaluates the disconnect between policy goals and actual social outcomes.

Historical and Constitutional Foundations: The Sixth Schedule

The constitutional approach to the hill tribes in the North East originates from colonial administrative methods. The 1873 Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation established an 'Inner Line system' that separated the plains from the hills, marking what a colonial official called the boundary between the tribal areas and the settled regions, the jungle and the cultivated land (Prasad and Sarkar 2017). Regions beyond this boundary were later designated as 'Backwards', 'Excluded', or 'Partially Excluded Areas'. These areas were kept largely outside regular provincial control. This colonial idea of protective exclusion was incorporated into the constitutional framework of independent India through the Sixth Schedule under Article 244(2), which administers ten Autonomous District Councils in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura.

The framers of the Sixth Schedule, guided by the Bordoloi Committee of the Constituent Assembly, were animated by two considerations: protecting the distinct social, economic and political customs of hill communities, and preventing their exploitation by more economically advanced neighbouring populations. ADCs were vested with legislative competence over land, forests (excluding reserved forests), shifting cultivation, village administration, inheritance and marriage, and were empowered to constitute village courts and levy local taxes. In principle, this represented one of the more ambitious efforts anywhere in the postcolonial world to accommodate indigenous self-governance within the notion of shared-rule and self-rule of the Indian federal design. It creates a multi-level governance structure of tribal autonomy within state-level federalism.

Seven decades of experience with the Sixth Schedule expose an ongoing gap between the constitutional ideals and actual institutional practices. Recent financial assessments by the Finance Commissions reveal that ADCs heavily rely on discretionary grants from state governments rather than guaranteed, formula-based transfers. As a result, councils often have just enough revenue to cover staff costs, leaving little room for development projects (Vanlalhrualtuange and Umdoe, 2025). The shared jurisdiction between district councils and state governments over issues like forests and mining has led to frequent legal disputes and administrative stalemates. Additionally, structural challenges such as capacity shortages, elite control, weak internal democracy, and the marginalisation of women and non-tribal residents hinder ADC operations. The 2019 amendments to Article 280 and the Sixth Schedule aim to enhance ADCs' financial and administrative powers, reflecting ongoing policy acknowledgement of these issues, though effective implementation remains delayed.

The Sixth Schedule's uneven geographic coverage is noteworthy: it fully applies only in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura. Meanwhile, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim depend on separate special provisions under Articles 371A, 371C, 371F, and 371H, or, in Manipur's hill regions, on the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act. This indicates that the tribal regions in the North East are not governed by a single, unified policy but by a collection of region- and community-specific arrangements; a fact often overlooked in policy discussions that mistakenly assume the Sixth Schedule covers the entire region.

Development Administration and Fiscal Federalism

In addition to constitutional autonomy, the Indian government has promoted tribal development in the North East through a parallel development approach. This includes the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), the North Eastern Council, the North Eastern Development Finance Corporation, and sector-specific initiatives in agriculture, horticulture, and skill development. Starting in the 1990s, this framework was complemented by the 'Look East' and later 'Act East' policy, which transformed the North East from a securitised orientation into a potential trade gateway for Southeast Asia, initiating numerous connectivity projects such as highways, railways, inland waterways, and cross-border trade routes.

This development administration has historically operated through a top-down, scheme-driven approach that conflicts with the traditional and communal land and resource institutions protected by the Sixth Schedule. In the North East, current development discussions mostly view the hills as a resource frontier — focusing on hydropower, minerals, forest products, and, increasingly, tourism, rather than recognising them as areas inhabited by distinct political communities with their own development needs (Sharma, 2024; Karlsson, 2023). As a result, Sharma (2024) contends that large-scale infrastructure and resource-extraction projects tend to be approved and funded by state and central bureaucracies, with minimal consultation or participation from village councils, traditional institutions such as the Dorbar Shnong in Meghalaya or the Village Development Boards in Nagaland, or the ADCs.

Fiscal federalism deepens this democratic gap. ADCs lack guaranteed shares of central or state taxes and rely on irregular grants, which significantly limits their ability to turn constitutional authority over land and resources into actual development results (Vanlalhrualtuange and Umdoe, 2025). This creates a paradox: while they have formal control over land and forests, they are heavily dependent on external funding for nearly all development activities, including primary education and rural roads. This dependence essentially shifts real decision-making authority back to state governments and central ministries that hold financial power. ADCs, including all three councils in Meghalaya, have repeatedly petitioned successive Finance Commissions to address this structural underfunding, but with limited success (Aniruddha, 2019; Action Aid India, 2016).

The social impacts of this fiscal approach are evident in human development indicators that remain below national averages in many

tribal districts, despite years of targeted spending. Health infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh's hill districts, Nagaland, and the ADC areas of Assam, Meghalaya, and Tripura remains underdeveloped compared to the plains. Maternal and child health outcomes, road density, and access to secondary education reflect a development approach that channels funds through parallel central schemes rather than through the elected councils responsible for education, health, and rural development at the local level. When councils are bypassed in favour of centrally sponsored schemes directly managed by state departments, local accountability for service delivery often weakens—since neither the state government nor the councils can be clearly held responsible for results. Consequently, uneven social change in the region's tribal areas.

Land, Livelihood, and Social Change

Land serves as the key site for policy-driven social change in North East India's tribal regions. Traditionally, land tenure in this area has been based on community or clan ownership rather than private titles; rights are assigned by village councils, clan leaders, or chiefs. Colonial and postcolonial policies have influenced these systems, gradually making land more individualised and commodified, even in areas that are nominally protected from external acquisition. In Meghalaya's Khasi Hills, for example, research on local land dealings reveals that the mix of customary and formal, individual-based land management, often involving long-term leases or the registration of communal land in the names of influential clan leaders, has led to internal land alienation. This process has resulted in land increasingly falling into the hands of local elites, despite the region's official protections against outside purchase (Nongkynrih, 2008; Fernandes & Barbora, 2009).

Likewise, in Arunachal Pradesh, the Land Settlement Act 2018 aimed to extend individual land titles into regions traditionally managed through community ownership. Critics argued this could hasten land alienation and weaken the traditional tribal identity, despite the state's claim that it would improve tenure security and encourage investment (Sharma & Borgohain, 2019). Similar issues have arisen around large dam projects, where land acquisition for hydro-electric schemes has often led to protests, such as the 2016 unrest in Manipur over a proposed land bill perceived as allowing non-tribal capital access to tribal land.

Forest policy has also had significant impacts. The 2023 revision of the Forest (Conservation) Act, which reduced the categories of forest land requiring central approval before diversion, is seen as a particular threat to the North East. This region has a high proportion of legally

designated forest land and has historically relied on community and clan forests as commons vital for shifting cultivation and non-timber forest products (Bijoy, 2023). Critics argue that by relaxing clearance rules for security-related infrastructure and strategic projects within 100 kilometres of international borders, particularly in areas bordering Myanmar, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and China, the amendment could accelerate the conversion of community forests into infrastructure corridors. This process may occur with limited consultation of tribal institutions, which are supposed to oversee these forests under the Sixth Schedule (Bijoy, 2023).

These land and forest policies have gradually undermined the egalitarian, community-oriented traits that anthropologists traditionally associate with hill tribal societies. This has led to increased stratification based on clan status, gender, and market access (Shimray, 2006; Fernandes & Barbora, 2009). Shifting cultivation, or *jhum*, has become a contested policy area: government agricultural and forest agencies have frequently aimed to discourage *jhum* in favour of settled, plantation-based farming. However, this often overlooks the ecological impact on the fallow-cycle ecosystems that *jhum* communities relied on. Recent studies highlight the adaptive logic of *jhum* systems amid population growth and market demands (Sharma, 2024).

Urban development and tourism-driven growth have further complicated land dynamics. Towns like Shillong, Aizawl, Kohima, and Itanagar have expanded rapidly as administrative and commercial hubs. This growth has attracted rural tribal populations into wage labour, real estate, and service sectors centred around land that was once held communally. Peri-urban land around these towns has become a hotspot for speculative deals, turning clan and community holdings into individual, tradable assets at a pace that is challenging for customary institutions to regulate (Karlsson, 2023). Many state governments have promoted tourism as a diversification away from resource extraction, thereby strengthening this trend by drawing private investment to land near scenic and heritage sites. Local elites, skilled at navigating both customary land councils and state bureaucracies, often facilitate these transactions. Consequently, a new form of rural-to-urban land commodification has emerged in tribal areas—one that development policies have largely failed to foresee or address.

Conflict, Militarisation, and the Politics of Peacebuilding

Understanding public policy in tribal North East India requires considering the region's longstanding history of armed ethno-nationalist movements and the state's security responses. Since the 1950s, Nagas'

uprising and multiple insurgencies, such as those by Mizos, Assamese, Bodos, and Meiteis, have influenced both development strategies and their implementation, often prioritising security over development or self-governance. The persistent use of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act across large areas of the region has created a unique form of governance in which tribal hills are managed as much through counter-insurgency measures as through regular civil administration (Kikon, 2005; Sundar, 2011).

Sundar's (2011) examination of the 'interning' of insurgent populations, including the strategic regrouping of villages, the establishment of fortified camps, and the indistinction between civilians and combatants during counter-insurgency efforts, reveals how security policies in the North East have at times effectively bypassed the usual protections of tribal land and settlements, as envisioned by the Sixth Schedule. Similarly, Kikon (2005) illustrates how the Naga self-determination movement has interacted with and been influenced by the militarisation of the system, where elections, development initiatives, and military cantonments coexist uncomfortably within the same social space.

Peace initiatives, starting with the 1986 Mizo Accord and continuing through various Naga ceasefires, the Framework Agreement, and recent tripartite talks with Bodo, Karbi, and other groups, reflect an alternative policy approach in which the state aims to turn armed movement into negotiated autonomy, often by creating or enhancing territorial councils. Kikon and McDuie-Ra's (2020) research on Dimapur, Nagaland's commercial centre, depicts the social environment as a 'ceasefire city': an urban economy driven by militarised capitalism. In this setting, the informal peace benefits of ceasefire arrangements have led to new migration patterns, informal settlements, and land speculation, rather than a simple shift to civilian normalcy. Overall, this literature indicates that militarisation has not only hindered development policies in the North East but has also become a creative force, fostering unique social and economic structures that traditional development strategies find difficult to explain.

The 2023–24 Manipur violence between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities highlights the ongoing instability surrounding land, tribal identity, and territorial governance in the region. Disputes over Scheduled Tribe recognition, forest eviction campaigns in hill districts, and competing claims for Sixth Schedule-style autonomy by Kuki-Zo groups all contributed to a conflict that combined ethnic mobilisation with disputes over land and administrative borders. This conflict reflects

the persistent policy divisions, such as land classification, the varying constitutional statuses, and securitised governance, that have characterised the region's post-colonial history.

Identity, Migration, and the Question of Citizenship

The political issues surrounding migration and citizenship have significantly influenced social change in the tribal hills. The Inner Line Permit (ILP) system, originating from colonial times and still in place in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, and, since 2019, Manipur, continues to control the entry and settlement of non-domiciled Indian citizens. This regulation aims to safeguard indigenous land, jobs, and cultural identity from demographic shifts. The system's ongoing existence, along with calls from Meghalaya and other non-ILP states to adopt similar measures, highlights a common concern among tribal communities. They fear that unregulated migration, whether from other Indian regions or cross-border migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar, poses risks to land rights and political influence.

This anxiety influenced the region's reaction to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019. The law was designed to exclude areas under the Inner Line and the Sixth Schedule from its more liberal citizenship rules for non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. While this exemption partly protected Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, and the Sixth Schedule regions of Assam, Meghalaya, and Tripura from the Act's more controversial sections, it also heightened political tensions in states outside these areas, especially Meghalaya. In Meghalaya, pressure groups warned that migrants unable to settle in Assam might move there instead, leading the state assembly to pass a resolution requesting ILP status (Inner Line Permit: Regulating Access, 2025). The situation demonstrates how a central law, influenced by the region's complex constitutional structure, can produce vastly different social and political impacts in neighbouring tribal states.

These citizenship and permit policies have created a framework in which tribal identity is defined primarily by exclusion and territorial boundaries, rather than by the positive self-governance principles outlined in the Sixth Schedule. Over time, this has reinforced the division between tribal 'sons of the soil' and non-tribal communities such as plantation workers in Assam, residents of Bengali and Nepali origin in various hill states, and groups like the Reangs and Chakmas, whose statuses blur the tribal-non-tribal divide. This dynamic has led to repeated tensions over land, employment, and political representation, which development policies alone failed to address.

Connectivity, Infrastructure, and Ecology

The Act East policy's focus on connectivity has significantly expanded road, rail, and hydropower infrastructure in the tribal hills over the last two decades. Advocates see it as long-overdue integration of a historically under-connected region into broader markets, but critics highlight the ecological and social impacts, which often fall heavily on tribal communities along these projects. Large hydroelectric dams on the Siang, Subansiri, and other rivers have frequently become contentious, as downstream communities in Assam and upstream tribal groups in Arunachal Pradesh raise concerns about seismic hazards, land submersion of farms and forests, and insufficient resettlement plans.

The 2023 South Lhonak glacial lake outburst flood in Sikkim, which destroyed the Teesta III hydropower dam and caused widespread downstream damage, highlights the dangers of building large dams in the Himalayan and sub-Himalayan tribal regions without proper climate risk evaluation (Upadhyay, 2023). These events have contributed to a growing body of criticism suggesting that policymakers view the region's hydropower resources mainly as a national energy supply, rather than as a part of the land and livelihoods of local tribal communities (Karlsson, 2023).

The 2023 amendment to the Forest (Conservation) Act directly intersects with this infrastructure push, as it relaxes clearance requirements for strategic and security-linked projects within 100 kilometres of the international border; precisely the corridor along which much of the region's connectivity infrastructure runs (Bijoy, 2023). Overall, these developments indicate that the connectivity-focused development policy in the North East, despite its economic rationale, has largely mirrored the broader land and forest policies. It tends to implement national-level development goals with minimal adjustments to the self-governance and consent mechanisms established by the Sixth Schedule and related constitutional provisions.

Gender and Customary Law

Public policy's effect on tribal social structures is also evident in gender relations, where the interaction between customary law and modern administrative and market institutions has produced ambivalent outcomes. Several North East Indian tribal societies, most notably the Khasi and Garo, are matrilineal, with property typically passing through the youngest daughter and clan membership traced through the mother. Yet ADCs and other tribal political institutions constituted under the Sixth Schedule and related provisions have historically excluded women

from formal decision-making roles, producing what scholars have termed a paradox of matrilineal descent alongside patriarchal governance (Nongkynrih, 2008).

Similarly, as customary communal land has been progressively individualised through registration and leasing, women's traditionally strong land rights in matrilineal communities have in some cases been eroded, as formal titling processes and market transactions have tended to privilege male household heads and clan elders as points of contact with state agencies (Fernandes & Barbora, 2009). Moreover, the underrepresentation of women in Autonomous District Councils and other tribal political bodies, noted as a persistent structural weakness of the Sixth Schedule system, has meant that development and land policy formulated at the council level has excluded women's priorities, despite their central role in agricultural and household economies across the hills.

Education and language policies intersect as areas of social change debate. The many tribal languages in the region—many with small speaker groups and lacking standard scripts—mean that state schools often teach in the dominant regional language (such as Assamese in Assam's hill regions or English and Hindi elsewhere) rather than the pupils' mother tongues. This impacts early learning and, over time, threatens the transmission of tribal languages. Autonomous District Councils and state authorities have at times introduced mother-tongue education at the primary level and supported the development of scripts for unwritten languages, but these efforts are inconsistent and underfunded. This reflects broader fiscal dependence patterns. Consequently, the linguistic environment in the hills is slowly shifting, with smaller tribal languages gradually declining while larger regional and national languages expand their presence through education. By an estimation

Critical Assessment: The Gap between Policy Intention and Social Outcome

A recurring pattern exists in how public policy and social change interact in North East India's tribal regions: policies framed around protection and autonomy often lead to outcomes that contradict their original goals. The Sixth Schedule's commitment to self-governance has been greatly undermined by dependency on funding and overlapping jurisdiction with state authorities (Vanlalhrualtuange and Umdoe, 2025). Land and forest policies, though stated to defend tribal ownership, have instead enabled new forms of land alienation both internally and externally (Nongkynrih, 2008; Sharma & Borgohain, 2019). Security laws aimed at restoring order have instead created a long-lasting

militarized social environment, complete with its own economies and settlement patterns (Kikon & McDuié-Ra, 2020; Sundar, 2011). Likewise, citizenship and permit systems intended to safeguard indigenous identity have entrenched exclusionary politics that complicate issues of belonging rather than solve them (Inner Line Permit: Regulating Access, 2025).

This pattern indicates that the core policy failure is not just poor implementation but stems from a fundamental design tension between centralised, scheme-driven development management and genuinely devolved, community-controlled governance. When councils, village institutions, and customary authorities are seen merely as implementers for centrally designed schemes rather than true partners in setting development priorities, tribal autonomy's core substance often diminishes, even though its formal, constitutional form persists. To address this, strengthening ADC finances through formula-based devolution; resolving jurisdictional overlaps among councils, forest departments, and ministries; and establishing institutional frameworks for the free, prior, and informed consent of communities in land, forest, and infrastructure decisions are essential.

Recognizing the diverse nature of the 'tribal areas of the North East' is crucial, as there is no single policy applicable to the region. The eight states and their varied tribal communities are governed by different constitutional arrangements—such as the Sixth Schedule in four states and special provisions under Articles 371A, 371C, 371F, and 371H in others—and have followed unique paths shaped by conflict, migration, and development. Public policies that ignore this internal diversity and focus mainly on security and resource extraction risks exacerbating the very tensions that constitutional measures over the past seventy years have aimed to address.

Conclusion

Public policy in tribal North East India has never been merely a neutral tool imposed on a pre-existing social order. Instead, it has played an active role in shaping land relations, political institutions, ethnic boundaries, and economic structures within these communities. The Sixth Schedule stands as the most significant institutional expression of the Indian state's commitment to tribal self-governance in the region. However, over seven decades, its record shows that constitutional protection alone—without fiscal autonomy, clear jurisdictional boundaries, and genuine community control—tends to result in formal autonomy rather than substantive self-governance. Policies related to

land, forests, security, and citizenship have each, in their own ways, caused social changes that often diverge from original policy intentions.

A truly federal and consultative approach to development in the region involves recognising Autonomous District Councils, village institutions, and customary authorities as partners in policy-making, rather than merely implementing development plans. This approach offers the most credible way to align public policy with the principles of self-determination, ecological sustainability, and social equity — values that have guided tribal politics in North East India since independence.

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Transgender Welfare Policy in India

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Abstract

There was spiritual and cultural value in the people from transgender community carrying different identities like hijras, jogappas, and shiv-shaktis in ancient times. Still, the colonial rule devalued them through laws such as the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871. Ignorance is visible in the post-independence era; due to negligence, they remain excluded from education, healthcare, and employment. The Supreme Court's landmark NALSA v/s Union of India (2014) judgment brought significant change in their lives by affirming constitutional rights to equality, dignity, and self-identification and giving them the opportunity to be recognised as a "third gender" person. Subsequent rulings, such as those on privacy and the decriminalisation of same-sex relations, have also expanded protection for them. Not only this, but also Legislative progress came with the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, which prohibits discrimination. Though it mandates bureaucratic certification of identity has brought significant change in the status of transgender people.

Various State-level initiatives, such as Tamil Nadu's Transgender Welfare Board and Kerala's participatory policy, have pioneered housing, pensions, skill training, and healthcare. Whereas states like Odisha, West Bengal, and Karnataka introduced narrower schemes compared to them. Despite all these efforts, policy effectiveness remains hampered due to persistent challenges like stigma, discrimination, bureaucratic hurdles and complications, inadequate resources, and poor awareness. The paper concludes that genuine empowerment can be gained by simplifying the certification process, expanding healthcare, strengthening education, ensuring employment inclusion, and institutionalising community participation. Awareness campaigns, adequate resource allocation, and robust data collection are those required for sustainable welfare. And there is an urgent need to move beyond tokenism toward dignity and rights-based inclusion.

Keywords: *Transgender Welfare, Transgenders, Third Gender.*

Introduction

Transgender people in India have faced systemic exclusion, stigma and denial of rights for a long time. Communities such as hijras, jogappas, and shiv-shaktis have historically played ritualistic roles and appeared in epics like the Mahabharata and Ramayana. Despite having a deep cultural and religious presence, during the colonial era, the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 criminalised their existence and entrenched them in marginalisation. However, post-independence policies took various marginalised groups into account but left this community ignored, ultimately leading them to poverty and invisibility.

The past two decades have been very crucial for this community as it is driven by judicial interventions, which recognised transgender rights too. The Supreme Court's landmark *NALSA v/s Union of India* (2014) judgment recognised transgender persons as a "third gender" and affirmed their constitutional rights along with reservations, healthcare and welfare schemes. There are subsequent rulings, including *Puttaswamy* (2017) on privacy and *Navtej Singh Johar* (2018) on decriminalising same-sex relations, which have expanded protections for gender and sexual minorities. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, a remarkable legislative action in the history of independent India taken for transgender community, which prohibits discrimination in education, employment, healthcare, and housing, etc. showed light towards a better future. Yet, this act is criticised by various people. As it mandated the certification of gender identity through a bureaucratic process. Leading to undermining self-identification and failing to provide reservations, limiting its transformative potential.

Various state-level initiatives are on the ground, like Tamil Nadu's Transgender Welfare Board (2008) and Kerala's Transgender Policy (2015), which pioneered housing, pensions, skill training, and free surgeries. Odisha and Karnataka introduced pensions and skill programs. But with narrower scope, the success of all these innovations is uneven and based on political will and resources.

Crucial to look into persistent challenges like problems arising in the certification process, discrimination in the healthcare sector, lack of acceptance in formal employment and well-known existing social stigma. Various civil society organisations like *Sohadaran* and *Sangama*, along with international frameworks like the *Yogyakarta Principles*, have advanced their advocacy and service delivery for the betterment of this section of society. This paper aims to evaluate the transgender welfare policy in India. Where it is integrating historical, judicial, legislative, and civil society perspectives along with policy. It underscores the need for

participatory, rights-based frameworks that move from tokenism toward genuine empowerment and dignity.

Historical Background

Cultural Recognition

Gender fluidity is addressed in various ancient sculptures such as the Mahabharata and Ramayana; their presence in those texts is dignified and spiritually significant (Nanda, 1999). So, it is not something new and absurd but an old phenomenon. In various societies, hijras are treated as having divine powers of fertility and auspiciousness and are often called upon to bless newborn and newlywed couples. Now, not only hijras but other groups, such as jogappas in Karnataka and shiv-shaktis in Andhra Pradesh, possess spiritual roles. They usually serve deities and also participate in temple traditions.

Their presence was crucial during medieval India, especially in the Mughal era; they hold influential position in royal courts. Also, they served as guardians of harems and advisors because of their perceived neutrality and loyalty (Reddy, 2005). This historical presence underscores the traces of a respected position. Marginalisation wasn't from advent but socially constructed later, particularly under colonial rule

Colonial Marginalization

The colonial state disrupted this recognition through its rigid categorisation of identities. The worst was the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, which declared hijras as "criminals by birth," ultimately leading to stigmatisation and marginalisation (Reddy, 2005). This discriminatory law has stripped their legitimacy, made their existence as criminal and pushed them into unethical and undignified livelihoods like sex work and begging. For Colonial administrators, non binary identities are threats to social order, so they framed them as immoral and deviant.

With the help of surveillance and policing, this stigma was reinforced. The denial of their rights to perform ceremonial roles has cut their economic base. Not only were they deprived of the right to live a dignified life, but their bodies became sites of regulation. Entrenchment of stigma, marginalisation and vulnerability were the key features in the evolution of the transgender community in this era.

Post-Independence Neglect

After independence in 1947, colonial biases became inevitable. Though the independent government has worked a lot for the upliftment of the marginalised section of India, this community remained untouched

and unheard for years. The government's major focus was then on caste, class, and rural poverty. Even census data has also ignored and remained transgenders uncouted till 2011. All these factors led to a lack of targeted intervention; due to this, it was impossible to make welfare schemes for their upliftment. There was no official recognition for them; ultimately, they were left behind and got excluded from formal education, employment, and healthcare services.

Failure in the inculcation of their rights in the legal framework, along with acceptance of those old colonial discriminatory provisions (e.g., criminalisation of transgender livelihoods, laws against public nuisance and vagrancy, etc), has forced them to opt for informal and indignified economies.

Transgender advocacy is a recent phenomenon. The advocacy groups like the Humsafar Trust and Sahodaran highlighted the need for healthcare, housing, and employment support. It was only in the early 2000s that their activism, along with global human rights discourse, gradually brought transgender issues under public policy perspective. The 2011 census was pivotal in acknowledging their existence and laid the groundwork for subsequent judicial and legislative interventions.

Judicial Interventions: Background of the Case

The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) v/s Union of India case was filed in 2012, seeking recognition of the rights of transgender persons. NALSA was a statutory body established to provide free legal aid. NALSA argued for transgender people and highlighted the systematic discrimination faced by these people and also the denial of rights, along with emphasising issues of identity, access to healthcare, education, and employment, etc. The petition also demanded the recognition of transgender people as a distinct category.

The reality of what transgender people were going through is now highlighted through this case; hence, this case was significant from an upliftment perspective. Hijras, Kinnars, and other gender-diverse groups suffer just because of a lack of recognition of their identity and welfare measures.

Supreme Court's Recognition

In April 2014, the Supreme Court delivered a landmark judgment. It recognised transgender persons as a “third gender,” affirming their fundamental rights under several constitutional provisions:

Article 14 (Equality before law): Ensures equal protection of laws for all persons, including transgender individuals.

Article 15 (Non-discrimination): Prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex, interpreted to include gender identity.

Article 16 (Equal opportunity in public employment): Mandates equal access to jobs and reservations for transgender persons.

Article 21 (Right to life and dignity): Affirms that the right to live with dignity includes recognition of one's gender identity.

The Court emphasized that gender identity is integral to personal autonomy and dignity. It rejected the notion that gender must be determined biologically, affirming instead that self-identification is a fundamental right.

Directives to Governments

The judgment directed central and state governments to:

- Provide reservations in education and employment for transgender persons, treating them as socially and educationally backward classes.
- Ensure access to healthcare, including separate HIV treatment centers and medical facilities sensitive to transgender needs.
- Establish social welfare schemes, covering housing, financial assistance, and skill development.
- Promote awareness and sensitization, instructing officials and institutions to reduce stigma and discrimination.

These directives were groundbreaking, as they mandated affirmative action and welfare measures specifically for transgender persons.

Impact on Constitutional Jurisprudence

The NALSA judgment changed how Indian courts handle equality and dignity. Scholars say it treated gender identity as part of basic constitutional rights (Narain, 2014). The decision dropped the old male-female split and said protections cover everyone, whatever their identity. It also opened the door to later laws. One clear result was the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. Critics rightly point out that the Act weakened self-identification rules. Still, the fact that Parliament passed anything shows NALSA's reach. Cases that came after, like Puttaswamy in 2017 on privacy and Navtej Singh Johar in 2018 on same-sex relations, both drew on the same ideas of autonomy and dignity.

Legislative Framework: The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019**Overview of the Act**

India's first national law for transgender rights came in November 2019. The Act bans discrimination in schools, jobs, hospitals, and housing (Government of India, 2019). It also states that people get to name their own gender, tying that choice to personal freedom rather than birth records alone. The law casts a wide net. It covers anyone whose sense of gender differs from the sex listed at birth, plus hijras, kinnars, intersex individuals, genderqueer people, and those with recognised sociocultural identities. That broad wording marked real progress in how the state sees gender diversity.

Certification Requirement

Yet the Act still demands a certificate from the district magistrate. When someone wants official recognition as male or female after surgery, the process includes a medical exam. Critics argue that this requirement undermines the principle of self identification established in the *NALSA v. Union of India* (2014) judgment, which emphasized autonomy and dignity (Chakraborty, 2020).

The certification process has been described as paternalistic, placing bureaucratic hurdles before individuals seeking recognition. Many activists contend that it subjects transgender persons to humiliation and invasive scrutiny, contradicting the spirit of constitutional equality.

Rules of 2020

To operationalize the Act, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020 were notified. These Rules outline procedures for welfare measures, grievance redressal, and institutional mechanisms. Key provisions include:

- Creation of welfare boards at the state level to oversee implementation.
- Appointment of complaint officers in establishments to address grievances related to discrimination.
- Mandates for inclusive education and sensitization programs in schools and workplaces.
- Healthcare directives, requiring hospitals to provide services without discrimination.

The Rules attempt to translate the Act's broad principles into actionable mechanisms, though their effectiveness depends heavily on state level implementation and resource allocation.

Criticism and Gaps

Activists and scholars argue that the Act dilutes the spirit of NALSA. By imposing certification requirements, it reintroduces bureaucratic control over identity, undermining self determination. The lack of clarity on affirmative action and reservations remains a major gap. While the Supreme Court in NALSA directed governments to provide reservations in education and employment, the Act does not explicitly mandate such measures.

Furthermore, penalties for discrimination under the Act are relatively weak, often limited to fines, which critics argue fail to deter systemic exclusion. The Act also lacks provisions for comprehensive healthcare, particularly mental health services, which are critical given the high rates of depression and anxiety among transgender persons.

Civil society organizations have highlighted that while the Act acknowledges rights, its implementation mechanisms are vague and underfunded. Without strong enforcement, many transgender persons remain excluded from welfare schemes.

State-Level Initiatives

State	Initiative	Highlights
Tamil Nadu	Transgender Welfare Board (2008)	Housing, pensions, skill training (Mani, 2012)
Kerala	Transgender Policy (2015)	Free gender reassignment surgery, education aid (Kerala Govt., 2015)
Odisha	Social security pensions	Monthly financial support (Odisha Govt., 2017)
West Bengal	Healthcare schemes	Free medical treatment for transgender persons (WB Govt., 2018)
Karnataka	Skill development programs	Vocational training and employment support (Karnataka Govt., 2019)

Tamil Nadu: Transgender Welfare Board (2008)

Tamil Nadu was the first state in India to establish a Transgender Welfare Board in 2008, marking a pioneering step in institutional support for transgender persons. The Board provides housing, pensions, and skill training, aiming to integrate transgender persons into mainstream society (Mani, 2012). It also issues identity cards, which help beneficiaries access government schemes. The Board's initiatives include vocational training programs, financial assistance for self employment, and healthcare support. However, challenges remain in terms of funding adequacy and bureaucratic delays, which often hinder timely delivery of benefits.

Kerala: Transgender Policy (2015)

Kerala introduced a Transgender Policy in 2015, widely regarded as one of the most progressive in India. The policy emphasizes healthcare and education, offering free gender reassignment surgeries in government hospitals and scholarships for transgender students (Kerala Govt., 2015). It also includes housing schemes and skill development programs. Importantly, Kerala's policy was developed through consultations with transgender communities, reflecting participatory governance. Despite its strengths, implementation has been uneven, particularly in rural areas where stigma remains entrenched. Nonetheless, Kerala's policy is often cited as a model for other states.

Odisha: Social Security Pensions

In 2017, Odisha introduced social security pensions for transgender persons (Odisha Govt., 2017). This initiative provides monthly financial support, offering a safety net for individuals excluded from formal employment. While the pension scheme addresses immediate economic needs, it does not tackle structural barriers in education and employment. Critics argue that financial assistance alone cannot ensure long term empowerment without complementary measures such as skill training and workplace inclusion.

West Bengal: Healthcare Schemes

West Bengal launched healthcare schemes in 2018, providing free medical treatment for transgender persons (WB Govt., 2018). These schemes aim to reduce healthcare exclusion and improve access to essential services. However, reports suggest that discrimination in hospitals persists, limiting the effectiveness of these initiatives. Awareness campaigns and sensitization of healthcare providers are necessary to ensure that transgender persons can access services without stigma.

Karnataka: Skill Development Programs

Karnataka introduced skill development programs in 2019, focusing on vocational training and employment support (Karnataka Govt., 2019). These programs aim to integrate transgender persons into formal employment sectors, reducing dependence on informal livelihoods such as begging. While promising, workplace discrimination remains a significant barrier. Without broader sensitization and affirmative action, skill development alone may not translate into sustainable employment opportunities.

Comparative Insights

Kerala and Tamil Nadu are often cited as pioneering models. Kerala's policy emphasizes healthcare and education, while Tamil Nadu's welfare board provides institutional support. Together, they represent comprehensive approaches that combine financial assistance, healthcare, and skill development. In contrast, states like Odisha and West Bengal focus on specific areas such as pensions or healthcare, offering narrower interventions. Karnataka's emphasis on skill development highlights the importance of employment inclusion but requires complementary measures to address workplace discrimination.

Implementation Challenges

Bureaucratic Hurdles

One of the most significant challenges in implementing transgender welfare policies in India is the bureaucratic process of certification. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 requires individuals to obtain a certificate of identity from a district magistrate, often involving medical validation if they seek recognition as male or female after surgery (Chakraborty, 2020). This requirement undermines the principle of self identification affirmed in the NALSA v. Union of India (2014) judgment.

For many transgender persons, the certification process is not only complex but also humiliating. Reports suggest that officials often demand invasive medical evidence or subject applicants to insensitive questioning. These hurdles discourage individuals from applying, thereby excluding them from welfare schemes. The bureaucratic insistence on medical proof reflects a paternalistic approach that contradicts constitutional guarantees of dignity and autonomy.

Social Stigma

Even when policies exist, social stigma remains a formidable barrier. Discrimination persists in schools, workplaces, and healthcare institutions. Transgender students often face bullying and exclusion, leading to high dropout rates. In workplaces, employers may refuse to hire transgender persons or subject them to harassment, limiting the effectiveness of skill development programs.

Healthcare institutions are another site of exclusion. Despite directives for inclusive services, transgender persons frequently encounter ridicule or denial of treatment. This discourages them from seeking medical care, exacerbating health disparities (UNDP India, 2017). Stigma also affects access to welfare schemes, as officials may harass or delay applications, reinforcing systemic exclusion. Without broader social sensitization, welfare policies risk remaining ineffective.

Resource Gaps

Welfare boards and schemes often suffer from inadequate funding. While states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala have established welfare boards, many of these institutions operate with limited budgets, restricting their capacity to deliver services. Housing schemes, pensions, and healthcare programs frequently remain under implemented due to resource constraints (Humsafar Trust, 2018).

Budgetary limitations also affect outreach and monitoring. Without sufficient funds, welfare boards struggle to conduct awareness campaigns or evaluate the effectiveness of schemes. This leads to uneven implementation, where benefits reach only a fraction of the intended population. Resource gaps highlight the need for sustained financial commitment from governments to ensure that welfare policies translate into tangible outcomes.

Awareness Issues

Another major challenge is the lack of awareness among transgender persons about available schemes. Many remain unaware of pensions, housing programs, or healthcare initiatives due to poor dissemination of information. This problem is compounded by the lack of sensitization among officials, who may fail to guide applicants or even discourage them from applying (Singh, 2019).

Awareness gaps are particularly acute in rural areas, where stigma is stronger and access to information is limited. Without targeted outreach, welfare schemes risk excluding those most in need. Civil society organizations often step in to fill this gap, but their reach is limited

compared to government machinery. Effective implementation requires proactive awareness campaigns and training for officials to ensure that transgender persons can access their rights without barriers.

Social and Economic Impacts

Education

Education is a critical pathway to empowerment, yet transgender persons in India continue to face systemic barriers. Scholarships and inclusion policies introduced by states such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu have improved access, enabling more transgender students to enroll in schools and colleges (Singh, 2019). However, dropout rates remain high due to bullying, harassment, and lack of acceptance within educational institutions. Inclusive curricula that acknowledge gender diversity are still limited, and teachers often lack sensitization training. Without structural reforms, financial aid alone cannot ensure retention or meaningful participation.

Employment

Skill development programs have been introduced in states like Karnataka to provide vocational training, but mainstream employment opportunities remain scarce. Many transgender persons are confined to informal sectors such as begging, sex work, or small-scale self-employment (ILO, 2016). Workplace discrimination is a major barrier, with employers reluctant to hire transgender individuals. Affirmative action policies, including reservations in public sector jobs, have yet to be fully implemented, limiting economic inclusion.

Healthcare

Healthcare initiatives, such as Kerala's provision of free gender reassignment surgeries, have improved access to medical services. Yet discrimination in hospitals persists, with transgender persons often ridiculed or denied treatment (UNDP India, 2017). Mental health remains particularly neglected, despite high rates of depression and anxiety within the community. Comprehensive healthcare policies that include counseling, HIV treatment, and gender affirming care are urgently needed.

Housing

Government housing schemes provide some relief, but homelessness continues to affect many transgender persons. Social stigma often prevents integration into communities, with neighbors

resisting the inclusion of transgender households (Reddy, 2005). As a result, many remain in precarious living conditions, dependent on informal networks for shelter. Sustainable housing policies must address not only physical infrastructure but also community acceptance

Role of Civil Society

Civil society has been central to advancing transgender welfare in India, often filling gaps left by state institutions. NGOs such as Sahodaran and Sangama have provided critical healthcare services, HIV prevention programs, counseling, and community support (Sahodaran, 2018). These organizations not only deliver direct aid but also create safe spaces where transgender persons can access resources without fear of stigma or discrimination.

Beyond service delivery, civil society has played a vital advocacy role. Grassroots activism has been crucial in pushing for inclusive welfare measures, challenging discriminatory laws, and mobilizing public opinion (Narain, 2014). Activists were instrumental in bringing landmark cases like *NALSA v. Union of India* to the Supreme Court, ensuring judicial recognition of transgender rights.

International frameworks such as the Yogyakarta Principles have influenced Indian policy discourse, largely through civil society engagement. By linking local struggles to global human rights standards, activists strengthened the legitimacy of demands for inclusion and equality.

Civil society thus acts as both a service provider and a catalyst for change. Its grassroots presence ensures that policies translate into tangible support, while its advocacy connects community needs to broader legal and policy reforms, making it indispensable in the pursuit of dignity and justice for transgender persons.

Recommendations

Simplify Certification

The certification process for transgender identity remains one of the most contentious aspects of welfare policy. The *NALSA v. Union of India* (2014) judgment affirmed self-identification as a constitutional right, yet the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 requires certification through district magistrates, often involving medical validation. This undermines autonomy and dignity. Moving toward a system of self-identification without bureaucratic or medical barriers would align legislation with constitutional principles and international best practices, such as Argentina's Gender Identity Law,

which allows individuals to change identity documents without medical proof.

Expand Healthcare

Healthcare access remains uneven. While Kerala offers free gender reassignment surgeries, comprehensive coverage is lacking nationwide. Transgender persons face discrimination in hospitals and limited access to mental health services, despite high rates of depression and anxiety (UNDP India, 2017). Expanding healthcare must include gender affirming surgeries, HIV treatment, counseling, and sensitization of medical staff. Mental health support is particularly urgent, requiring trained professionals who understand transgender experiences.

Strengthen Education Access

Education is a cornerstone of empowerment. Scholarships have improved access, but dropout rates remain high due to bullying and stigma (Singh, 2019). Policies must go beyond financial aid to enforce anti-discrimination measures in schools. Inclusive curricula that acknowledge gender diversity and teacher sensitization programs are essential. Creating safe learning environments will ensure retention and meaningful participation of transgender students.

Employment Opportunities

Skill development programs exist, but mainstream employment remains scarce. Workplace discrimination prevents transgender persons from securing jobs, confining many to informal sectors (ILO, 2016). Mandating workplace inclusion through anti-discrimination laws and affirmative action policies is critical. Expanding skill training programs alongside reservations in public sector jobs would provide sustainable economic opportunities and reduce dependence on marginal livelihoods.

Community Participation

Policies are most effective when shaped by those they affect. Involving transgender persons in policymaking ensures relevance and effectiveness (Narain, 2014). Community participation can be institutionalized through advisory boards, consultations, and representation in welfare committees. This participatory approach empowers communities and fosters accountability in implementation.

Awareness Campaigns

Stigma remains a major barrier to inclusion. Awareness campaigns targeting officials, educators, healthcare providers, and the

public are essential (Humsafar Trust, 2018). Sensitization programs can reduce discrimination and foster acceptance. Media campaigns, workshops, and training modules should highlight the rights and dignity of transgender persons, shifting societal attitudes toward inclusion.

Resource Allocation

Welfare boards often lack adequate funding, limiting their capacity to deliver services. Increasing resource allocation is critical to ensure housing, pensions, healthcare, and skill development programs reach beneficiaries. Accountability mechanisms must be established to monitor implementation and prevent misuse of funds.

Data Collection

Accurate data is essential for effective policy design. Transgender persons were first recognized in the 2011 Census, but data remains limited. Including transgender persons in census surveys and national studies will provide insights into their socio-economic conditions, enabling targeted interventions. Reliable data ensures that welfare measures are evidence based and responsive to community needs.

Conclusion

The evolution of transgender welfare policy in India reflects a journey from cultural recognition to colonial marginalization, post-independence neglect, and finally, modern efforts at inclusion. Historically, communities such as hijras were integrated into rituals and spiritual life, but colonial laws institutionalized stigma, pushing them into marginal livelihoods.

Post-independence, invisibility persisted until advocacy and judicial interventions, most notably the *NALSA v. Union of India* (2014) judgment, began to reshape constitutional jurisprudence by affirming self-identification and dignity as fundamental rights.

Legislative frameworks, particularly the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, represent progress but remain contested due to bureaucratic hurdles and lack of affirmative action. State level initiatives in Tamil Nadu and Kerala demonstrate innovative models, while other states provide narrower interventions. Yet, implementation challenges—bureaucratic barriers, social stigma, resource gaps, and lack of awareness—continue to undermine effectiveness.

The social and economic impacts of welfare measures reveal partial gains in education, healthcare, and housing, but persistent exclusion in employment and community integration. Civil society

organizations and international frameworks have played indispensable roles in advocacy, service delivery, and linking local struggles to global human rights standards.

Moving forward, recommendations emphasize simplifying certification, expanding healthcare, strengthening education, mandating workplace inclusion, ensuring community participation, launching awareness campaigns, increasing resource allocation, and improving data collection. Together, these reforms can transform welfare policy from symbolic recognition into genuine empowerment, aligning India's approach with constitutional principles of equality, dignity, and justice.

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Community participation in Disaster Management: The Indian Experience

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Abstract

It is contended that community participation is a significant framework in order to achieve all disasters with dealing natural as well as Humann Sustainable development and disaster risk management are important prerequisites in order to grapple with the natural and manmade calamities. To put it further, disaster management is a pressing need for one and all from the security point of view. In order to prevent disasters, communities need to be empowered first. then they can tackle with the difficult situations in an effective manner. This paper discussed community participation in general and focused on INDIA 's disasters. At the same time the paper gives several recommendations for planning and restoration of the disaster affected areas through community-based participation. Both primary and secondary data has been incorporated in this research paper. Intensive field work has been to collect empirical to know the importance of community in disasters. The paper concludes, inter alia, with recommendations that awareness programme on the part of the community; positive policies and commitment can be beneficial for disaster risk management.

Keywords: Community Participation, Disaster Management, Disaster Risk Reduction, CBDM, Planning and Restoration, Resilience India.

Introduction

In the aftermath of disasters, community involvement is the most initial responder to manage during, pre and post disasters. Therefore, community-based readiness, awareness, and mitigation are immediately needed, particularly for the most vulnerable communities living in the most susceptible parts of the nation. In the developed society the

community has been played a very crucial role during and after disasters. It has been seen that most vulnerable society in the developed and developing countries and India is no exception.

Though, our approaches still more effective the same and strategies are needed. So as to enhance the abilities of vulnerable communities to deal with and counter the impacts of economic, social and environmental hazards. Minimize the risks, Now-a-days community participation is being an integral part in Disaster management in the emergency. It has proved many times the importance during the disaster and after the disaster (Zubair and Amirrol 2011). "Community is described as a for one another for the same feeling and faith, and requirements can be addressed with dedication and commitment." (McMillan and Chavis, 1986).

Some social scientist tried to differentiate between community participation and involvement. Community participation is generally taken to mean that a given community takes responsibility at all stages of a program including planning and implementation. "Community participation refers to a situation in which members of the community are invited to take part in a program that has already been planned and designed by other individuals or institutions for a specific purpose." Lots of scholars, social scientist has defined the term in own way though the aforesaid definition is favoured because it is comprehensive. Thus, community includes not only the people who live in a certain location, but also includes the local government, local business sector, local academic bodies and NGOs or more. "In the 1980s, community-based disaster management began to receive widespread recognition in the development sector, particularly in developing and least developed countries. This concept attracted the attention of the entire society. However, even before this period, both formal and informal practices related to disaster management at the community level had already begun to emerge in different parts of the world. Over the past few decades, the concept of Community-Based Disaster Management (CBDM) has become very popular, particularly in developed countries where disasters occur frequently. However, in developing countries like India as well, community-based disaster management has gained significant importance and effectiveness at both governmental and non-governmental levels, including the active involvement of NGOs and local communities. The main objective of Community-Based Disaster Management (CBDM) is to reduce disaster risk. Particularly in areas where disasters occur frequently or where multiple types of hazards are present, community-based institutions play an important role alongside government agencies. They contribute to both pre-disaster preparedness

and post-disaster recovery, thereby helping to minimize risks and strengthen the resilience of the community.”

Between 1996 and 2001, India experienced a period characterized by a high frequency of natural disasters, during which nearly two percent of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was lost. Additionally, around 12 percent of the government’s total revenue had to be allocated to relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction efforts.

Both natural and human-induced disasters affect a large number of people, leaving many homeless and causing severe hardship. This clearly demonstrates that disasters not only result in significant loss of human lives and property but also pose serious obstacles to the development process. According to the National Institute of Disaster Management (2014), 27 out of the 35 states and union territories in India are vulnerable to different types of disasters.

Concept of Community

People living in disaster-prone areas are often connected through shared sentiments such as ethnic similarity, faith, values, customs, and collective identity. In contemporary times, these relationships are also maintained through virtual communication platforms. Durable relationships that extend beyond immediate family or genealogical ties also contribute to the formation of a sense of community. This sense of community is significant for shaping individuals’ identities, practices, and roles within social institutions such as family, home, workplace, government, and society at large. Although communities are generally smaller than broader social networks, the term “community” can also refer to larger collective affiliations, including national, international, and virtual communities.

According to Minkler et al. (1997), a community can be defined as a socio-political network that connects individuals, community organizations, and leaders. Understanding these networks is essential for effective community engagement and planning. For instance, examining the social relationships among individuals can help engagement leaders identify community leadership, understand behavioural patterns, recognize high-risk groups, and strengthen community networks. R.E. Park (1921) Community is defined not only by its geographical boundaries but also by the social relationships including strong bonding among one another. A natural event sometimes becomes a disaster due to access than the natural one. The same event made huge amount of loss of property and lives.

Meanwhile, disasters affect both individuals and communities collectively; therefore, active community participation is crucial for effective disaster risk reduction. Community-Based Disaster Management (CBDM) emphasizes the involvement of affected people in identifying, assessing, and mitigating disaster risks through a collective approach. In light of the growing frequency and intensity of disasters, CBDM has proven to be an effective strategy and should be formally recognized and integrated into broader disaster management frameworks.

According to McMillan and Chavis (1986) “A community can be treated as a sense of belonging among its members, where individuals feel that they are important to one another and to the group as a whole. It also reflects a shared belief that the needs of members will be fulfilled through their mutual commitment and requirement to the collective support”. While the term “community” can be defined in various ways, this definition is widely accepted because of its comprehensive nature. It recognizes that a community includes not only the residents of a particular area but also local government agencies, businesses, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). All of these stakeholders play important roles in maintaining the social and functional structure of the community, especially during emergencies and disaster situations.

Concept of Participation

The concept of people’s participation in governance is often misunderstood, particularly regarding its meaning, the ways in which it should occur, and the areas in which it should be practiced. According to Hickey and Mohan (2003), participation should not be viewed as a one-time activity or limited to specific programs; rather, it should be understood as an integral and continuous aspect of citizenship. Participation is a social and historical process that forms the foundation of political and civic life. This perspective requires a reconsideration of the meaning of citizenship in the contemporary context. As governments increasingly face limitations in meeting collective societal needs, citizens are expected to take a more active role in governance not as a favour granted by the state, but as both a democratic right and a civic responsibility.

A well-proportioned understanding of rights and duties among all participants’ citizens, governmental authorities, and civil society organizations is essential for achieving effective governance. Such balance promotes governance systems that are both inclusive in participation and accountable in decision-making. In this context, Bryan S. Roberts (1992) provides a sophisticated interpretation of citizenship.

He defines citizenship as a collection of practices through which individuals are recognized as capable and legitimate members of society, thereby influencing how resources are distributed among individuals and social groups. This perspective transcends a purely legal or bureaucratic notion of citizenship and instead conceptualizes it as a socially constructed and dynamic status. Consequently, citizenship functions as a mechanism that shapes individuals' access to rights, benefits, and opportunities within the wider socio-political framework.

Main Characteristics of Community Based Disaster Management

Implementation of Community Based Disaster Management points to the following essential features. The local community serves as the main actor in both immediate disaster response and long-term risk reduction strategies. Given that communities are the first to experience the impacts of disasters and are often the first responders, disaster management frameworks must be grounded in a community centric approach. This necessitates a paradigm shift wherein the community is not just a passive recipient of aid but an active agent in planning, implementing, and sustaining disaster risk management initiatives. Prioritizing the local community ensures that interventions are contextually relevant, socially inclusive, and sustainable over time.

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) and the mitigation of vulnerability form the foundational principles of Community-Based Disaster Management (CBDM). At its core, CBDM seeks to address and transform the underlying conditions that generate vulnerability be they social, economic, environmental, or institutional. Rather than focusing solely on emergency response, the central objective of CBDM is the proactive identification and reduction of risk factors, thereby enhancing the resilience and adaptive capacity of communities over the long term.

Community as a key resource in disaster risk reduction. The community is the key factor as well as the primary beneficiary of disaster risk reduction. Within the community, priority attention is given to the conditions of the most vulnerable as well as to their mobilization in the disaster risk reduction.

CBDM as an involving and dynamic framework. Lessons learned from practice continue to build into the theory of CBDM. The sharing of experiences, methodologies and tools by communities and CBDM practitioners continues to enrich practice.

Case Studies

Importance of case studies to justify the importance of community participation in disaster response. It will be clearer after these points:

In-depth Understanding a case study allows researchers to gain a comprehensive and detailed understanding of a specific phenomenon, event, organization, community, or individual within its real-life context. For example, in the 2015 Nepal Earthquake, community members used their understanding of local terrain and informal networks to quickly identify and assist affected households before aid agencies arrived.

Resource Mobilization and Local Innovation

Case studies show that locally available resources and community innovation can bridge gaps in delayed official response. During the 2010 Pakistan floods, local volunteers created makeshift rafts and communication lines, ensuring continued aid distribution when national services were overwhelmed.

Trust and Social Cohesion

Community-led disaster response often enjoys higher trust and compliance, especially in culturally sensitive areas. For instance, in Japan's Kobe Earthquake (1995), neighborhood associations played a central role in coordinating relief, as residents trusted these grassroots bodies more than national agencies.

Capacity Building and Long-Term Resilience in out of India

Case studies illustrate how involving communities in response builds their long-term resilience. In the Philippines, the "Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committees" (BDRRMCs) have empowered locals to plan and execute risk mitigation strategies effectively, reducing disaster impacts over time.

Inclusive and Equitable Recovery

Participatory responses ensure marginalized groups are not left behind. In Hurricane Katrina (2005), failure to engage local communities especially minority groups led to inequitable aid distribution and prolonged recovery, a point emphasized in many critical case evaluations. Finally, Case studies are invaluable in demonstrating that community participation isn't just a supplementary aspect of disaster response it is central to effective, timely, and sustainable interventions. They provide tangible proof of what works, why it works, and how it can be adapted to different contexts.

Community participation is a cornerstone of effective disaster management, as demonstrated by numerous case studies worldwide. Engaging local communities not only enhances preparedness and response but also fosters resilience and recovery. Here are several illustrative examples to justify the importance of community participation in disasters situation.

Rapid Response and First-Hand Intervention

Communities are the first responders during disasters. In the case of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, many lives were saved in coastal villages of Tamil Nadu due to spontaneous community-led evacuation before official warnings were issued.

Role of Aapda Mitra in Community based Disaster Risk Reduction at Kolhapur

The Maharashtra Aapda Mitras "disaster friend" program in Kolhapur is essential to community-based disaster risk reduction since it equips and trains local volunteers to handle emergency situations like floods. They help with basic rescue and relief efforts, guaranteeing prompt aid to the impacted community.

The community-based disasters responses have been well documented in disaster history of India. In light of that disasters which are occurred in recent decades. Some of case studies have been incorporated in the paper. Apada Mitra programme of NDMA is implemented in Kolhapur District Maharashtra in which 200 hundred volunteers from the flood prone areas of Kolhapur district got trained in Flood Risk Reduction. They have done a great work on 14 July 2018 when heavy rainfall was received. Consequently, the entire rivers flowing above danger level. Emergency Management planning was done under the guidance of District Magistrate Avinash Subhedar, Incident Commander with all the line department including Aapda Mitra. With the support of Aapda Mitra 06 lives got saved due to effective communication and efficient response by the Aapda Mitra.

Role of Aapda Mitra in Community based Disaster Risk Reduction at Tripura

In Sepahijala district, Tripura and about 90 volunteers got trained in field of flood risk reduction. On 22nd May, 2018 due to heavy rainfall there was a flood like situation in low lying areas of Sonamura sub division under Sepahijala District. The rescued persons were shifted to the relief camp ensured the relief arrangements. The sub-division

administration and the communities were appreciated the prompt response of the Aapda Mitra volunteers for saving the precious lives.

Overview of Disaster in India

The Geographical condition of the country is vulnerable of multiple Disasters. India having a large geographical area Although the country is a beauty of nature with cultural heritage, it is highly vulnerable to natural hazards such as flood, cyclone, drought, tidal surge, cold wave, earthquake, river-bank erosion, arsenic contamination of ground water, water and soil salinity and various forms of pollution due to her geographical location, land characteristics, multiplicity of rivers and monsoon climate (Disaster Management Bureau, 2008, p. 3).

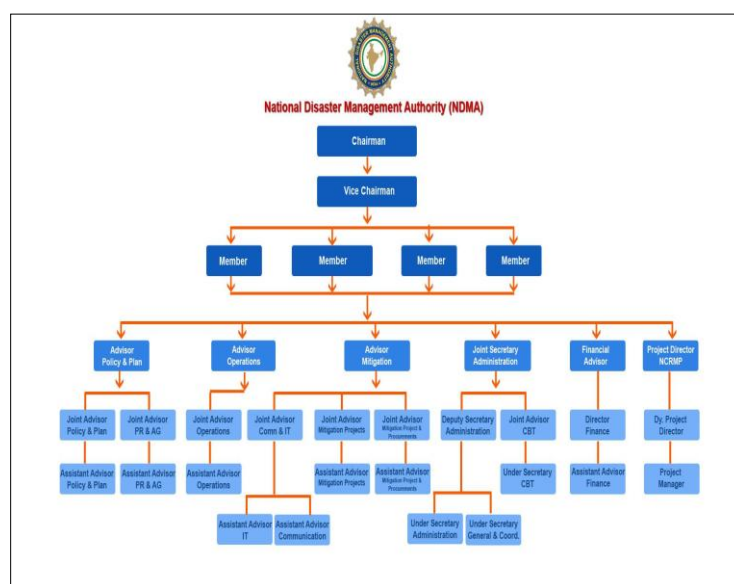
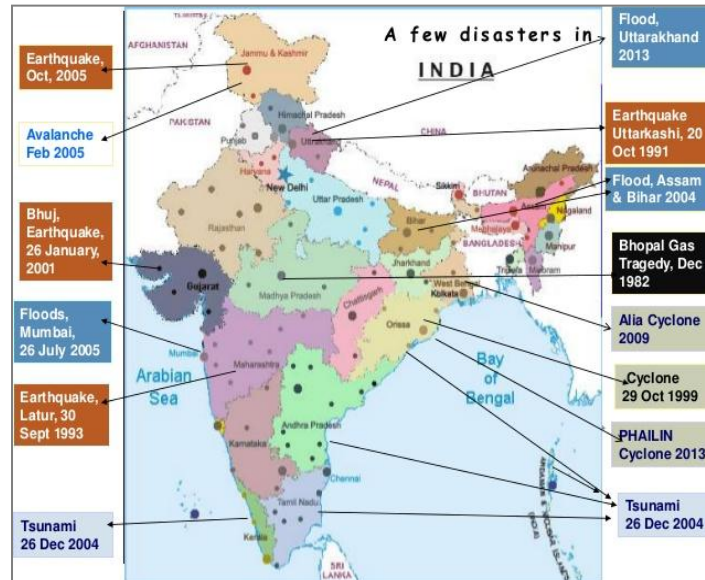


Image Source: Vikaspedia

Community Based Disaster Management Plans

Community Disaster Management Committee (CDMC) is formed in each community and it is responsible for initiating disaster preparedness activities. It is managed by a local group headed by one of representative. local elected representative members consist of local elected representatives, grass root level government functionaries, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), members of youth groups such as the National Service Scheme (NSS) and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangatan (NYKS), women groups, youth club members, grass root level government functionaries, etc. The size of VDMC is based on the

population and need of the villagers. The head of the VDMC takes a lead in mobilizing the community for the preparation of the CBDP plans.



Objectives of the study

The core objective of this study is to analyze the prevailing best practices of community participation in disaster management in India. The following are the specific objectives:

To examine the practices of community participation in disaster management planning in India.

To analyze the role of NGOs and government organizations in encouraging community participation in disaster management.

To recommend appropriate practices of community participation in disaster preparedness planning and community mobilization to reduce disaster-related damages and losses.

Literature Review

In order to aid in the analysis of the emergency management expectation gap, the paper explores existing published literature in three areas of research: (1) citizen participation prior to disasters, (2) the use of best practices, and (3) public education/warning/hazard awareness.

Citizen Participation and Engagement Prior to Disasters

In the late 1980s, the Japanese state has promoted volunteering as a way to tackle various issues ranging from the aging population and worsening environmental pollution, to employed parents (mothers in particular) desperately needing childcare facilities. It ran a series of media campaigns to encourage its citizens to embrace Volunteering as "a new way of life" (Ogawa 2009). Volunteering as voluntary, or self-directed, unpaid commitment of time to help others and tackle social issues is a relatively new notion for many Japanese (Georgeou 2010; Nakano 2005). This pressure from the general public continues to grow, especially following events such as the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and Hurricane Katrina, for better management of and response to disasters (Kapucu, 2008) as more incidents occur and more agencies become involved in disaster response.

Use of Best Practices and Indigenous Knowledge

Research by Twigg (2007) highlights the role of best practices in DRR, including integrating traditional coping mechanisms with modern technologies. Blaikie et al. (1994) in *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability and Disasters* stress the importance of linking scientific approaches with local experiences. In India, studies by NDMA (2019) have documented successful best practices such as cyclone shelters in Odisha and flood management initiatives in Bihar that combine community participation with scientific planning.

Public Education, Warning, and Hazard Awareness

Public education and awareness campaigns are vital components of disaster management. UNISDR (2015) notes that education builds a culture of safety and resilience at all levels. Paton and Johnston (2001) emphasize that community awareness, early warning systems, and regular drills significantly reduce casualties during disasters. In the Indian context, NIDM (2020) has underlined the importance of school safety programs, mock drills, and local language-based awareness drives for effective communication during emergencies. The significance of community involvement in disaster management has been emphasized globally. McMillan and Chavis (1986) defined "community" as a sense of belonging and shared responsibility. Zubair and Amirrol (2011) showed how participatory models in Pakistan improved flood resilience. Maskrey (1989) argued that CBDM empowers communities by combining indigenous practices with modern strategies.

In India, Kapoor (2014) examined grassroots involvement in flood management in Bihar, while NIDM (2014) emphasized the role of

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in local disaster governance. NDMA (2016) guidelines also recognized the importance of community-led preparedness and response, yet field studies reveal a persistent gap between policy and practice (Shaw & Krishnamurthy, 2009).

Data and Methodologies

The present study is based on primary and secondary sources of data. For the primary sources of data some personals interviews are made. So many government websites are consulted for the current data. So many research papers, NIDM website, others government data has been collected from States government's disaster management department is also consulted. The present study employs a qualitative, descriptive, and case-based research design to examine the role of community participation in disaster management in the context. of India. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the social, cultural, and institutional dimensions that shape community responses to disasters. Descriptive analysis is used to present the observed patterns of participation, preparedness, and resilience, while the case-based framework facilitates contextualized learning from specific regional examples.

Primary Data

Primary data were collected through:

Semi-structured interviews with local residents, community leaders, Panchayati Raj representatives, and members of disaster management committees.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools such as social mapping, hazard ranking, and focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted in selected case study areas.

Field observations of community preparedness activities, early warning responses, and rehabilitation practices.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were gathered from: Reports and guidelines published by National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM). Academic articles, government documents, and policy reports from reputed journals and institutions. District Disaster Management Plans (DDMPs), census data, and socio-economic surveys relevant to the selected study areas.

Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and verbal consent was obtained prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. Fieldwork adhered to the ethical guidelines for social research and institutional protocols.

Mapping Exercise

One of the most important activities of the CBDP is the mapping of risk, vulnerabilities and capacities of the Village by the community itself because it is considered to be a very simple and cost-effective tool to collect ground level data. This is done through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercise.

Mock Drills Identification of the Hazard Specific Mitigation Activities

Mock drill is an integral part of the village CBDP plan, as it is a preparedness drill to keep the community alert. Keeping this in view, mock drills are organised in all villages to activate the DMTs and modification of the DM plan based on the gaps identified during such exercises. Basically, this is a simulation exercise, which if practised several times, would help in improving the cohesiveness of the community during an emergency.

Analysis of Previous Disaster

It refers to prioritizing disasters based on its frequency and analysis of the estimated losses. This can be carried out by taking the help of elderly people of the village. The villagers analyse the losses that they had incurred during various disasters and learn the best practices carried out. This is an important activity as it forms the basis for preparedness and mitigation plans.

Community & Fund Generation

Availability of resources for various activities to be carried at different phases of the cycle is very crucial. Generally, it has been seen in the different case studies in India as well as some cases in developing countries that the community himself managed their expenses as per intensity of disaster. Each household in the village is encouraged to contribute resources to prepare for emergencies. These contributions may be in the form of money or food grains, which together create a village grain bank. A small amount, according to the financial capacity of each household and family members, is also collected and maintained as a Community Contingency Fund or village emergency fund. During the

annual village meeting, the community collectively decides how this fund should be used based on the needs and development plans of the village.

Suggestions for Improvement

The following measures can strengthen community participation:

1. Increase disaster awareness programmes.
2. Strengthen local institutions and Panchayats.
3. Encourage women and youth participation.
4. Expand Aapda Mitra and volunteer networks.
5. Improve early warning communication systems.
6. Promote school and college disaster education.
7. Integrate indigenous knowledge with scientific methods
8. Strengthen NGO-government partnerships.
9. Conduct regular mock drills.
10. Use digital Technology and mobile applications for community alerts.

Conclusion

Community participation is the foundation of effective disaster management in India. Experiences from cyclones, earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, and pandemics clearly show that local communities play a vital role in reducing disaster risks and saving lives. India has made significant progress through institutional reforms, community-based programmes, volunteer training, and awareness campaigns. However, challenges such as poverty, lack of awareness, and weak coordination continue to affect disaster resilience. The success of Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM), including Climate Change Disaster Risk Reduction (CCDRR), depends on maintaining awareness in holistic manner and continuing effective practices at the community level while also integrating CBDRM strategies into national policies. A major challenge is ensuring continuous financial support and commitment from local governments. Incorporating CBDRM initiatives into local budgets should involve more than just preparing a “wish list” of required resources, as this may place additional responsibility on communities to maintain these projects on their own (Luna, 2004).

The purpose of this paper is to identify and examine the strategies used by local communities in India during the pre-disaster stage. Based on previous studies in this field and recommendations from field surveys, three major components have been identified for the pre-disaster phase. The first component is the preparation of effective coordination and management plans. The second is the development of information and

knowledge systems. The third is the establishment of early warning and communication plans. These components play an important role in strengthening disaster preparedness at the community level.

Disaster preparedness planning leads organisational willingness in anticipation of an emergency in India; this includes emergency supplies and coordination procedures. Information is essential for assessing risk and potential vulnerability in the earliest stages of community planning or for individuals planning in India.

Disaster preparedness planning enhances the keenness of organizations to respond effectively to potential emergencies in India. This process involves arranging emergency supplies and establishing coordination mechanisms. Accurate and timely information plays a crucial role in identifying risks and possible vulnerabilities during the early stages of community or individual planning. Such information helps communities and planners take appropriate measures to prepare for disasters in India.

Disaster data contains information largely driven by NGOs and local communities' considerations in pre-disaster activities. Risks threatening India cannot be prevented, but their human, socio-economic and environmental impacts can and should be minimised through appropriate measures, including early warning. There is a need to disseminate early warning protocols of every type of risks in India for local communities.

NGOs in India region require a common understanding of what creates effective disaster preparedness system including and understanding of disaster risk factors pre-disaster. The early warning system in India region is considered weak and need to be developed. The findings of this research will be significant concerning the present and future of organisational planning and management by both governmental and NGOs regarding disaster management practice.

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Book Review

Wronged: The Weaponization of Victimhood

Lilie Chouliaraki

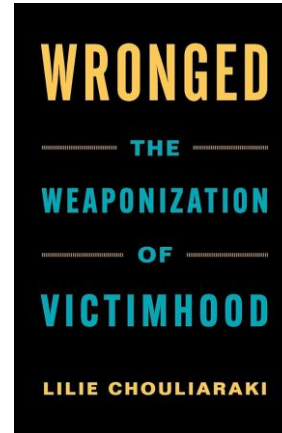
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The notion of *victimhood* has drawn much scholarly attention (Brown, 1995; Armaly & Enders, 2022; Chouliaraki & Banet-Wiser, 2021). The larger oeuvre, not all, treat ‘victimhood’ as a claim of being non-agential; a means brought in use by weak and marginalised to magnify their subordination (Bruni, 2024; Swamy, 2026; Sibanyoni et. al., 2023). Offering a different view, emerging scholarship examines how ‘victimhood’ is strategically deployed by the section not marginalised per se; instead, this claim is for immediate or enduring outcomes. Al Ghazzi (2021) maintains that in contemporary times, relying on “meta-history to make self-victimising claims as a means for consolidating power” (p. 45) is on the rise.

In this vein, Lilie Chouliaraki’s book presents concepts such as “victimhood” to readers in a highly accessible manner. Though this work draws on selected registers from US contexts, the presented articulations remain relevant across settings. The book spans four well-structured, aptly elaborated chapters; discerning readers will also gain valuable insights from the author’s detailed notes. Lilie introduces her work in a very poignant manner when she writes in the preface that “in societies historically unequal and thoroughly digitized, like ours in the West, [...] the pain of the powerful, largely the pain of white men, [...] ends up mattering the most, and the communication of victimhood becomes, in this case, not about vulnerability but about privilege” (p. x).

Lilie holds that we inhabit a society in which everyone is vulnerable in some respect; thus, the crucial question is not merely proving one’s pain or victimhood, but rather who succeeds in making that

claim part of the discourse. Consequently, only those individuals or collectives with sufficient resources will be able to instrumentalise their claims. For this reason, she writes: “the privileging of pain in the fight for justice personalizes politics, depoliticizes justice, and ultimately favors the powerful” (p. 5). Lilie does not treat “victimhood” in isolation; instead, she uses examples to link it to the *politics of communication*. In doing so, she traces an intellectual trajectory to examine how privileged ontologies have claimed the status of victims in different chapters.

In the first chapter, Chouliaraki deliberates on the Blasey Ford-Kavanaugh case, which gained prominence in 2018, and asserts that victimhood is not merely a conceptual category for exposing one’s exploitation; rather, “claims to victimhood are claims to power” (p. 4). This chapter establishes the theoretical framework upon which the entire book is grounded. She strongly asserts that victimhood must be understood by moving beyond the oppressor-sufferer dichotomy and examining the contexts from which these narratives emerge. She urges readers to recognise that, to comprehend victimhood, we must scrutinise the communicative space where the discourse of victimhood develops.

In the following chapter, Chouliaraki examines victimhood through the lens of public memory. She attempts to demonstrate that, historically, whether in World War I or subsequent wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, these events have been framed in terms of post-traumatic stress or “moral injury.” While this narrative portrays white male soldiers as victims, non-white soldiers and civilians are rendered invisible within this discourse. Chouliaraki articulates this powerfully when she states: “White men suffer as they fight, suffer as they kill, kill as they protect, and suffer for protecting” (p. 73).

In the third chapter, Chouliaraki explores the workings of far-right majoritarianism during the COVID-19 pandemic. She asserts that while the government’s flawed and ineffective policies were the primary cause of the deaths and crises witnessed during the pandemic, leaders like Trump (US) and Johnson (UK) nevertheless cast doubt on national communities within their own countries. In doing so, the vulnerabilities of racialised minorities and essential workers were systematically disregarded. The chapter highlights the *performance of victimhood* and deliberates on the notion of ‘reverse victimhood’ adopted by populist leaders.

Just as Chouliaraki avoids abstracting concepts in isolation, preferring instead to ground her assertions in specific instances, she adopts the same approach in the fourth and final chapter. Here, she centres her analysis on the landmark 1973 case of *Roe v. Wade*. In doing

so, she critiques the discourse of victimhood on two levels. First, she highlights speech acts in which the label “victim” is subjected to sceptical scrutiny, turning claims of suffering into objects of doubt and thereby enacting symbolic violence. For instance, in abortion debates, Black women, migrants, and queer individuals are often cast not as victims but as irresponsible or habitual offenders, thereby rationalising the cruelty directed at them. Second, she urges readers to evaluate victimhood by asking two questions: Is the claim to victimhood *tactical*, meaning it is a strategic assertion put forward by privileged groups for immediate gain, or is it *systemic*, involving social groups (such as religious minorities, people of colour, migrants and gender minorities) that are subjected to structural exclusion?

Although *Wronged: The Weaponization of Victimhood* draws its insights primarily from a Western context, I am confident that the arguments presented within it will prove equally relevant in South Asian contexts. In this book, Lilie frequently transcends disciplinary boundaries, engaging with fields such as political science, sociology, and cultural studies. Reading the book repeatedly brought to mind the different forms through which victimhood is being weaponised in our own context(s). I hope that perceptive readers, too, may sense these resonances as they engage with the book.

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