

NATIONAL STUDY REPORT

# LOW PARTICIPATION IN GRAM SABHA

ACROSS THE STATES & UTs

VOLUME - II



## STATE/UT REPORTS AND BEST PRACTICES



**A NATIONAL STUDY REPORT**  
*on*  
**LOW PARTICIPATION**  
**IN GRAM SABHA**  
**Across the States and UTs**

*Volume-II*

June, 2026

**STATE/UT REPORTS**  
**AND BEST PRACTICES**



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**Disclaimer**

This Volume II of the National Report on Low Participation in Gram Sabha across the States and Union Territories has been prepared for submission to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR), Government of India. The state-wise findings presented in this volume are based solely on the opinions, perceptions and responses provided by respondents during the study period. The findings do not represent independently verified facts, official positions or assessments of any Gram Panchayat, Department, State Government, Union Territory Administration or individual. The results are intended exclusively for policy analysis, programme planning, capacity building and institutional learning purposes. The contents of this report shall not be construed as evidence of compliance, non-compliance, performance evaluation, audit findings or legal conclusions. Any interpretation or use of the report beyond its intended purpose shall be the sole responsibility of the user.

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# STATE/UT REPORTS



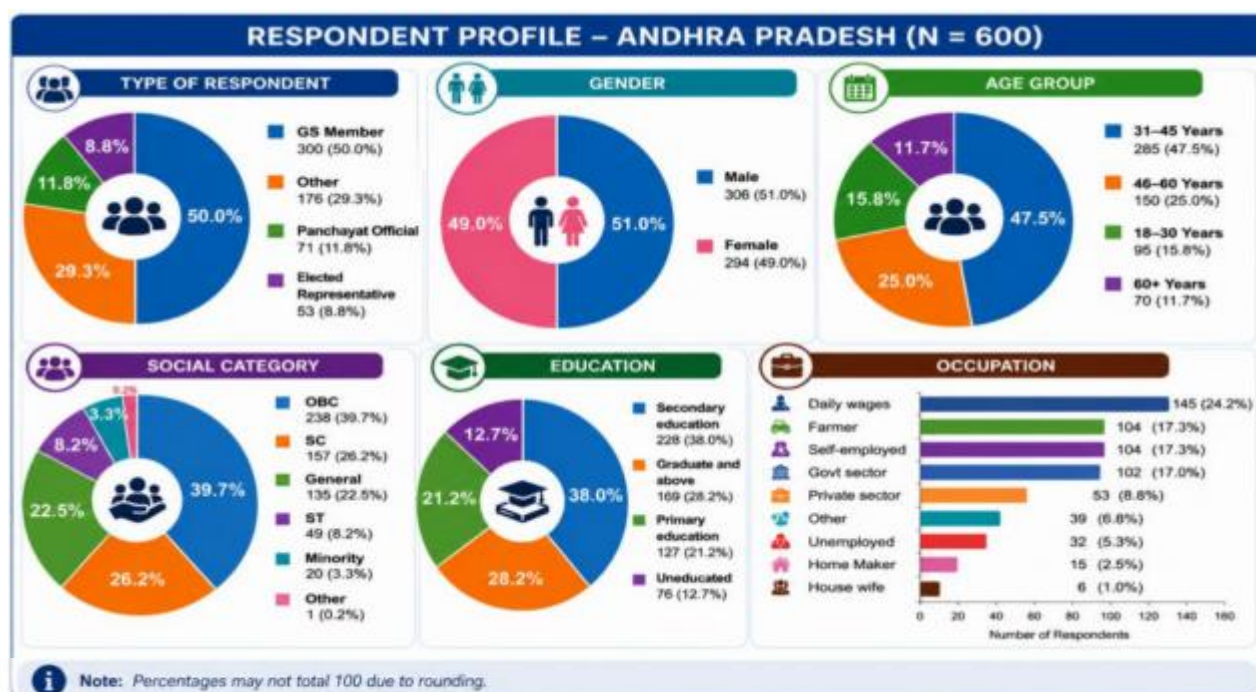
# ANDHRA PRADESH

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 600 respondents from 30 Gram Panchayats across 17 districts of Andhra Pradesh. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. The respondent profile reflects a broad cross-section of rural society and captures views of individuals directly involved in local governance processes. Half of the respondents were Gram Sabha members, while the remaining respondents included community members, Panchayat officials and elected representatives. The sample also included balanced representation of men and women, different social groups and varied livelihood categories, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of factors influencing Gram Sabha participation in the State.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 600   |
| Districts Covered       | 17    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 30    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate that awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings is widespread in Andhra Pradesh. More than nine out of ten respondents reported being aware of Gram Sabha meetings, while a substantial majority also reported awareness regarding their rights within Gram Sabha processes and the prescribed frequency of meetings. Attendance levels were also encouraging, with most respondents indicating participation in at least one Gram Sabha meeting during the previous year.

Despite high levels of awareness and attendance, procedural understanding appears relatively weaker. Awareness regarding quorum provisions was reported by only about one-third of respondents. This suggests that while citizens are familiar with Gram Sabha as an institution, knowledge regarding procedural requirements and governance mechanisms remains limited. Strengthening awareness on quorum, citizen rights and Gram Sabha decision-making processes may therefore contribute to more informed participation.

Respondents also reported relatively active engagement during meetings. However, participation levels were largely perceived as moderate rather than high, indicating opportunities for strengthening meaningful citizen engagement and improving the quality of deliberations.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 91.50          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 72.67          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 78.83          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 35.83          |

## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

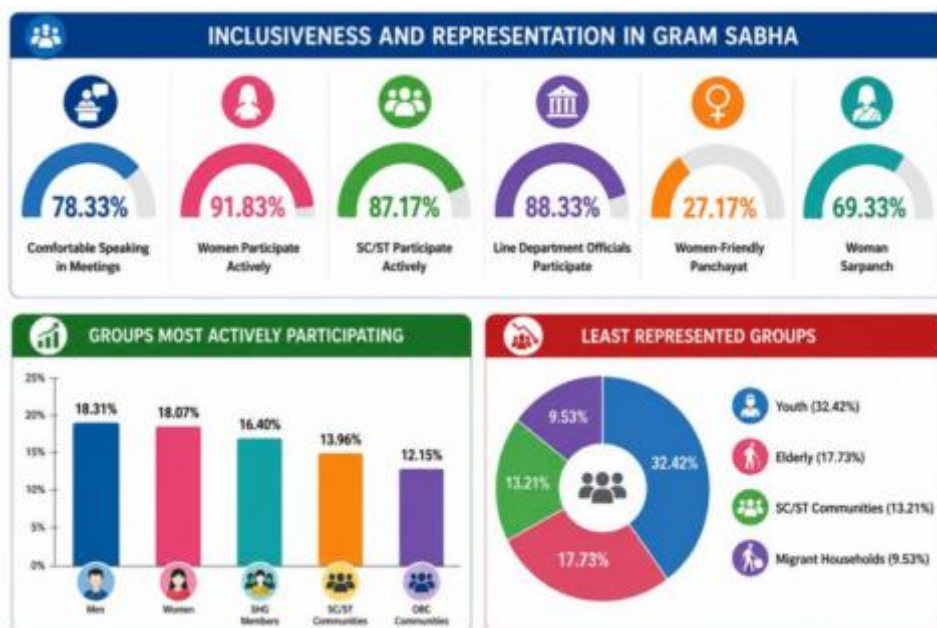
Respondents generally perceived Gram Sabha meetings in Andhra Pradesh as reasonably inclusive forums. Women and members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were widely perceived to participate actively in Gram Sabha proceedings. A large majority also reported feeling comfortable expressing their views and concerns during meetings, suggesting that Gram Sabha meetings provide opportunities for public expression and discussion.

At the same time, the findings indicate that participation is not uniform across all groups. While women, SHG members and SC/ST communities were identified among the most active participants, youth emerged as the most underrepresented group in Gram Sabha meetings. Elderly persons, migrant households and certain marginalized sections were also identified as relatively less visible in Gram Sabha discussions. These findings suggest that future efforts to strengthen Gram Sabha participation should place greater emphasis on engaging youth and other underrepresented groups.

An important finding relates to perceptions regarding women-friendly governance environments. While women were perceived to participate actively, only about one-fourth of

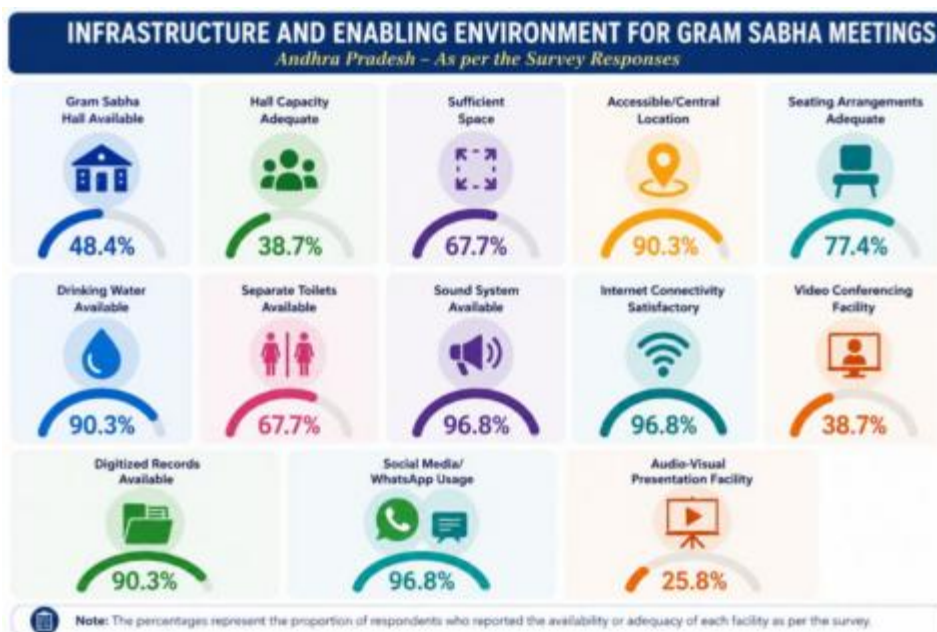


respondents considered their Panchayat to be women-friendly. This indicates that active participation does not necessarily translate into an enabling and supportive environment for women within local governance institutions.



## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

Physical infrastructure and communication facilities play an important role in creating an enabling environment for effective citizen participation in Gram Sabha meetings. The study assessed the availability of key infrastructure and digital support facilities associated with the conduct of Gram Sabha meetings across surveyed Gram Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh.



The findings indicate that Andhra Pradesh possesses a relatively strong enabling environment for conducting Gram Sabha meetings. Basic facilities such as accessible meeting locations, drinking water, sound systems, internet connectivity, digitized records and social



media or WhatsApp-based communication were reported to be available in a majority of surveyed Gram Panchayats. Adequate seating arrangements and sufficient meeting space were also reported by a substantial proportion of respondents.

At the same time, certain infrastructure gaps continue to exist. Less than half of the respondents reported availability of dedicated Gram Sabha halls, adequate hall capacity and video conferencing facilities, while audio-visual presentation facilities were available only in a limited proportion of locations. Strengthening these infrastructure and digital support systems can further improve the quality of Gram Sabha deliberations, citizen engagement, information dissemination and technology-enabled governance processes across the State.

## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

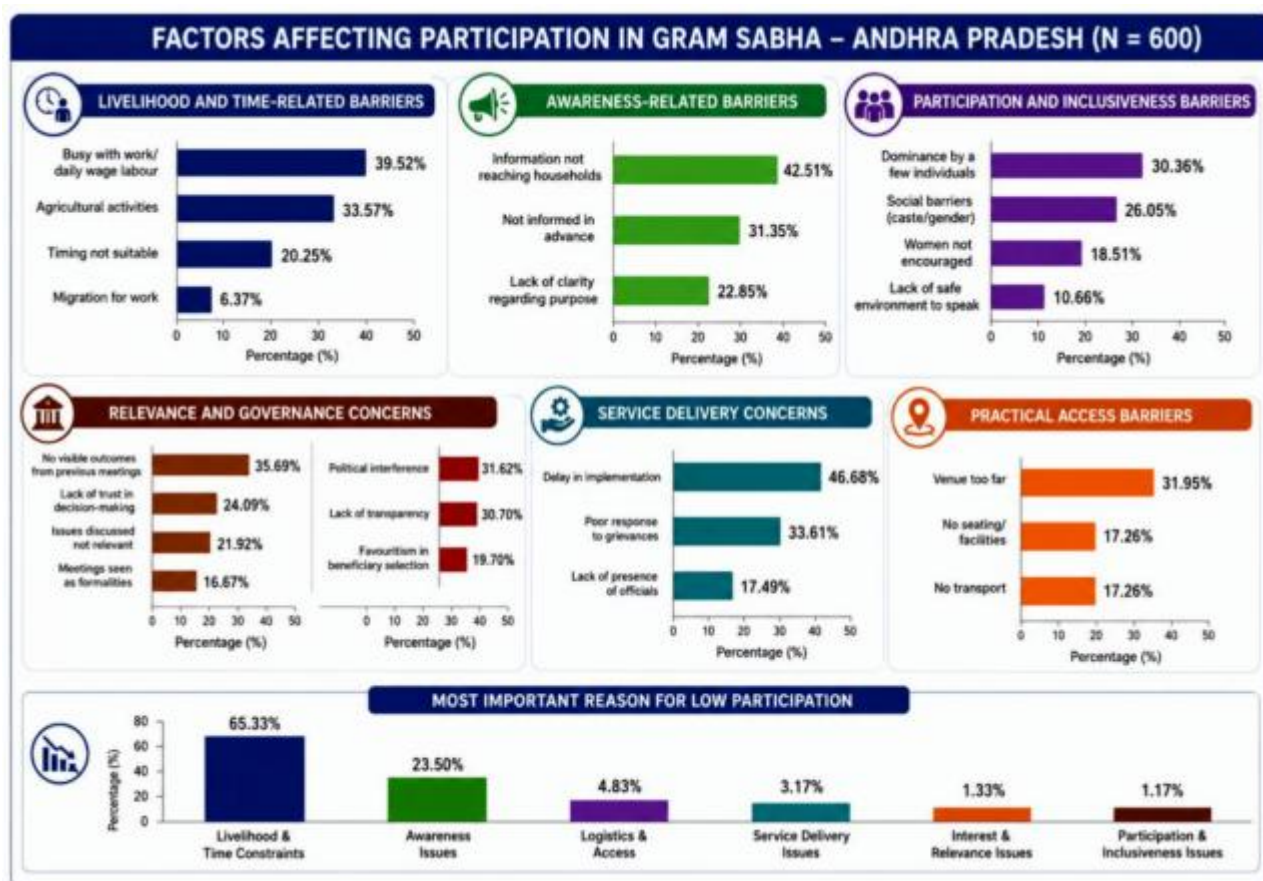
The study clearly indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Andhra Pradesh. Daily wage employment, agricultural activities and unsuitable meeting timings emerged as major challenges preventing citizens from attending meetings. Given the predominance of agriculture and informal livelihoods in rural areas, participation often competes with income-generating activities and seasonal work commitments.

Awareness-related challenges also continue to affect participation. Respondents reported that information regarding Gram Sabha meetings frequently fails to reach all households, while advance communication remains inadequate in many areas. Lack of clarity regarding the purpose and significance of Gram Sabha meetings further reduces citizen motivation to participate.

Participation barriers were also evident within Gram Sabha processes. Respondents highlighted dominance by a few individuals, social barriers based on caste and gender, and inadequate encouragement for women as factors limiting meaningful participation. These concerns suggest that participation is influenced not only by attendance but also by the quality and inclusiveness of deliberations.

The findings further reveal concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Lack of visible outcomes from previous meetings emerged as the most important issue affecting citizen interest in Gram Sabha participation. Political interference, lack of transparency, favouritism and delays in implementation of decisions were also reported as significant concerns. Respondents indicated that weak grievance redressal systems and delayed follow-up actions reduce confidence in Gram Sabha processes and discourage future participation.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities in Andhra Pradesh

Respondents identified local development issues, sanitation, welfare schemes, development priorities and health-related concerns as the most frequently discussed agenda items in Gram Sabha meetings. Beneficiary identification, approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans and annual budgeting also emerged as important agenda items. The findings suggest that citizens primarily view Gram Sabha as a platform for addressing local development concerns and improving service delivery.

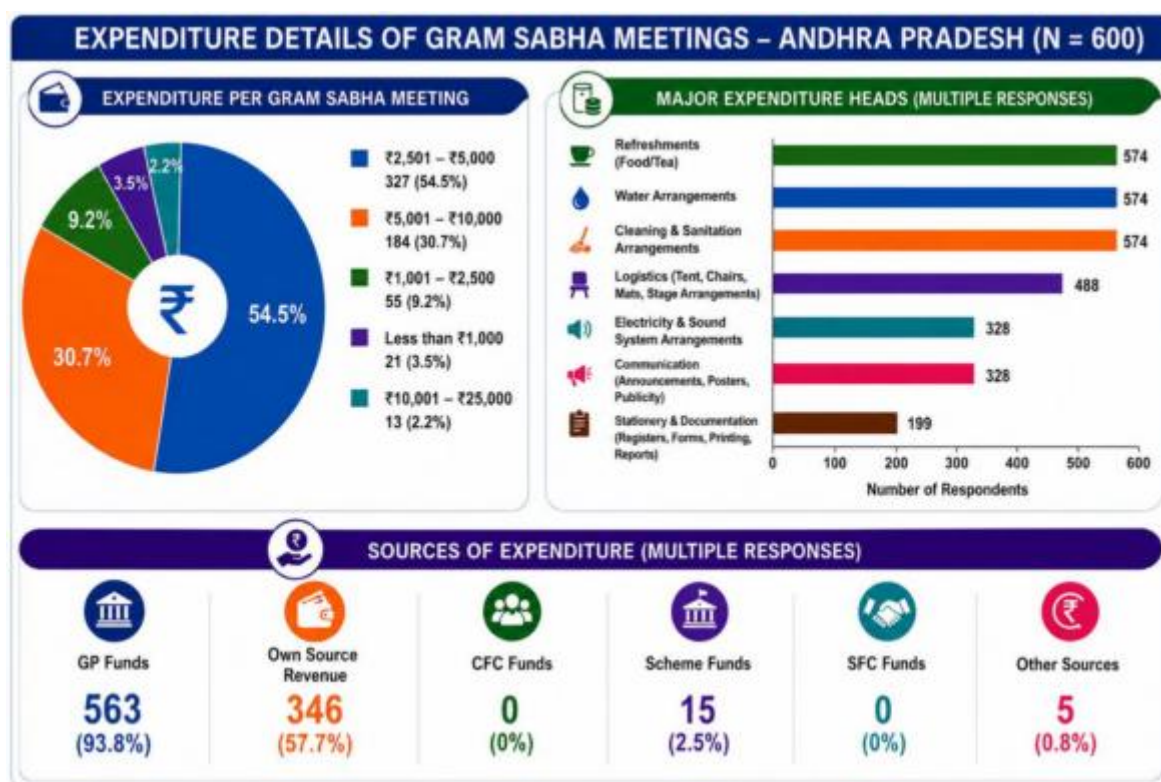
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Identifying Local Issues  | 16.30          |
| Sanitation                | 12.17          |
| Welfare Schemes           | 11.21          |
| Development Priorities    | 8.85           |
| Health & Literacy         | 7.70           |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 7.20           |
| Approving GPDP            | 6.86           |
| Annual Budget             | 5.96           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Gram Sabha meetings in Andhra Pradesh are generally conducted with relatively modest financial resources, with more than half of the respondents reporting expenditure in the range of ₹2,501–₹5,000 per meeting and nearly one-third reporting expenditure between ₹5,001–₹10,000. Major expenditure is primarily incurred on refreshments, drinking water arrangements, sanitation activities and logistics, reflecting the emphasis placed on facilitating community participation and ensuring basic meeting arrangements. GP Funds emerged as the principal source of financing, reported by a substantial majority of respondents, while Own Source Revenue also contributed significantly to meeting expenditures. Only a very small proportion of respondents reported the use of scheme-based funds or other sources. Overall, the expenditure pattern indicates a strong reliance on Panchayat-level financial resources and a focus on meeting operational requirements and participant-support arrangements.



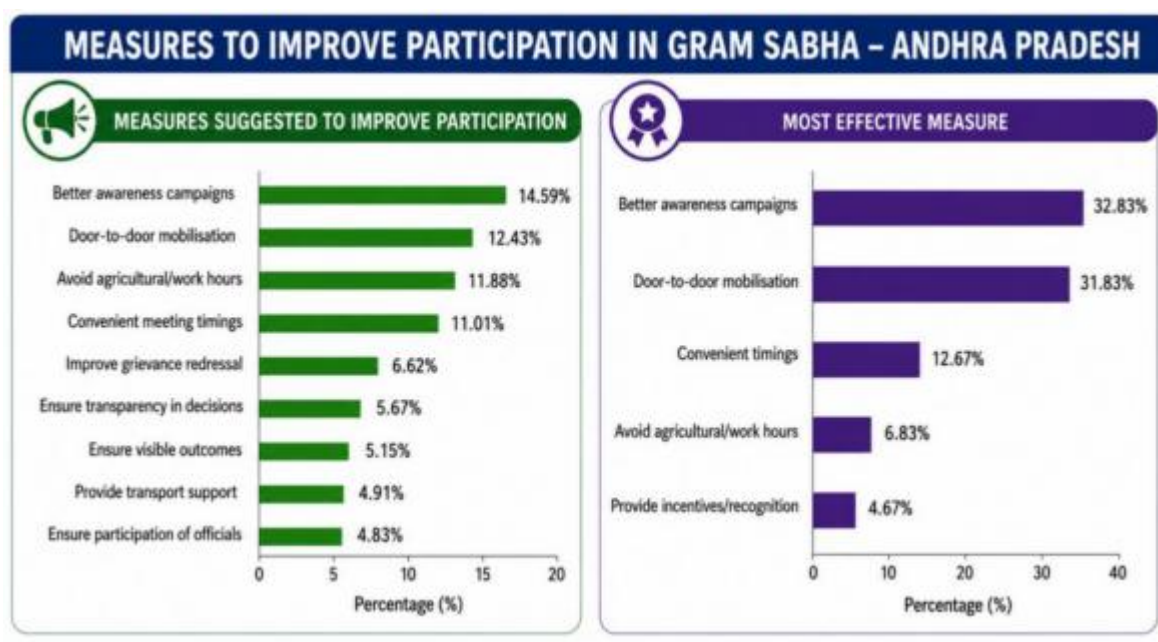
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents strongly emphasized awareness generation and community mobilisation as the most effective approaches for improving Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns and door-to-door mobilisation emerged as both the most frequently suggested and the most effective measures. Respondents also highlighted the importance of scheduling meetings at convenient times and avoiding agricultural or working hours.

The findings indicate that citizens are willing to participate when meetings are perceived as relevant, accessible and capable of producing visible outcomes. Respondents also emphasized the need for stronger grievance redressal systems, greater transparency in decision-making and more active involvement of officials. The findings therefore suggest that improving



participation requires a combination of awareness, mobilisation, convenience, accountability and responsiveness.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings is high in Andhra Pradesh.
2. Attendance levels are relatively strong, but awareness regarding quorum remains limited.
3. Women and SC/ST participation are generally perceived to be satisfactory.
4. Youth emerge as the most underrepresented group in Gram Sabha meetings.
5. Livelihood and time constraints constitute the most significant barrier affecting participation.
6. Information dissemination gaps continue to affect attendance.
7. Dominance by a few individuals affects inclusiveness of discussions.
8. Lack of visible outcomes reduces citizen motivation to participate.
9. Governance concerns such as political interference and lack of transparency affect public confidence.
10. Delays in implementation and grievance redressal weaken citizen engagement.
11. Basic infrastructure and communication facilities for Gram Sabha meetings are generally available, but gaps remain in meeting capacity, video conferencing and audio-visual facilities.

### Recommendations

- Strengthen awareness regarding quorum requirements, citizen rights and the role of Gram Sabha in local decision-making.
- Improve household-level communication and advance dissemination of information regarding Gram Sabha meetings.



- Promote greater participation of youth through targeted mobilisation and engagement initiatives.
- Schedule Gram Sabha meetings at times convenient for farmers, daily wage earners and other working populations.
- Encourage wider and more meaningful participation of women and marginalized groups during Gram Sabha discussions.
- Ensure opportunities for all participants to contribute and reduce dominance by a few individuals during deliberations.
- Improve transparency in decision-making and beneficiary selection processes.
- Ensure visible follow-up on Gram Sabha resolutions and regularly communicate implementation status to citizens.
- Strengthen grievance redressal mechanisms and improve responsiveness to issues raised during Gram Sabha meetings.
- Ensure timely implementation of decisions and greater accountability of concerned officials and departments.



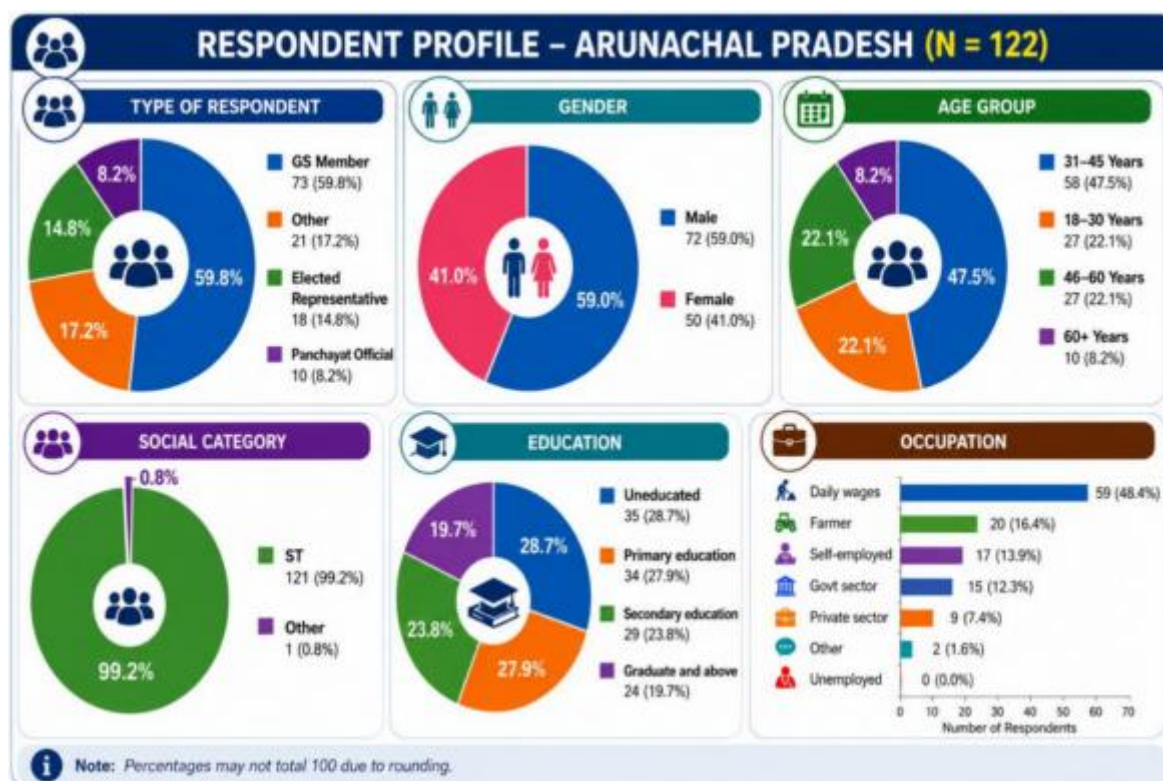
# ARUNACHAL PRADESH

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 122 respondents from 06 Gram Panchayats across 2 districts of Arunachal Pradesh. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse educational, occupational and social backgrounds. The respondent profile reflects the predominantly tribal character of the State, with Scheduled Tribe respondents accounting for nearly the entire sample. The study captures perspectives of individuals directly involved in local governance processes and provides important insights into factors influencing Gram Sabha participation in Arunachal Pradesh.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 122   |
| Districts Covered       | 02    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 06    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate exceptionally high awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings among respondents in Arunachal Pradesh. Nearly all respondents reported being aware of Gram Sabha meetings, while a substantial majority were also aware of their rights within Gram Sabha processes and the prescribed frequency of meetings. Attendance levels were similarly encouraging, with a large majority reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

Despite strong awareness and attendance levels, awareness regarding quorum provisions remains relatively limited. Less than half of the respondents reported being aware of quorum requirements, while a majority indicated that they were not aware whether quorum was achieved during Gram Sabha meetings. This suggests that while citizens are familiar with Gram Sabha as an institution, procedural aspects require greater attention.

Respondents generally reported active engagement during Gram Sabha meetings. However, most respondents characterized their participation levels as moderate rather than high, indicating scope for strengthening more meaningful and informed participation.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 97.54          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 89.34          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 73.77          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 41.80          |

## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

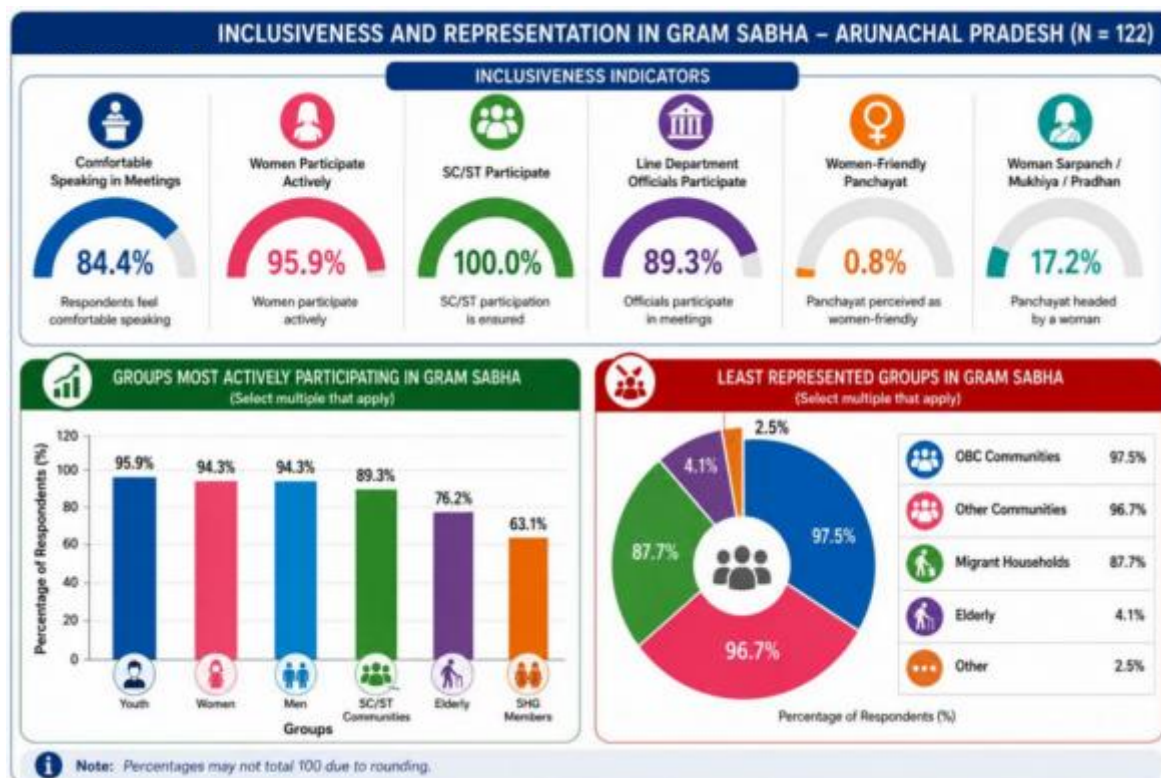
Respondents generally perceived Gram Sabha meetings in Arunachal Pradesh as inclusive forums that provide opportunities for participation by different sections of society. Women were widely perceived to participate actively, while all respondents indicated that Scheduled Tribe communities actively participate in Gram Sabha meetings. Most respondents also reported feeling comfortable expressing their views during discussions.

Unlike many other States, youth emerged as one of the most active participant groups in Gram Sabha meetings. Men, women and Scheduled Tribe communities were also identified among the most visible participants. This reflects strong community engagement in local governance processes and suggests that Gram Sabha continues to function as an important institution for collective decision-making.

However, some concerns emerge regarding institutional inclusiveness. Very few respondents reported participation of line department officials in Gram Sabha meetings. Similarly, most respondents indicated that their Panchayats could not be considered women-friendly environments, despite high levels of participation by women. These findings suggest that



active participation does not necessarily translate into supportive governance environments or institutional responsiveness.



## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

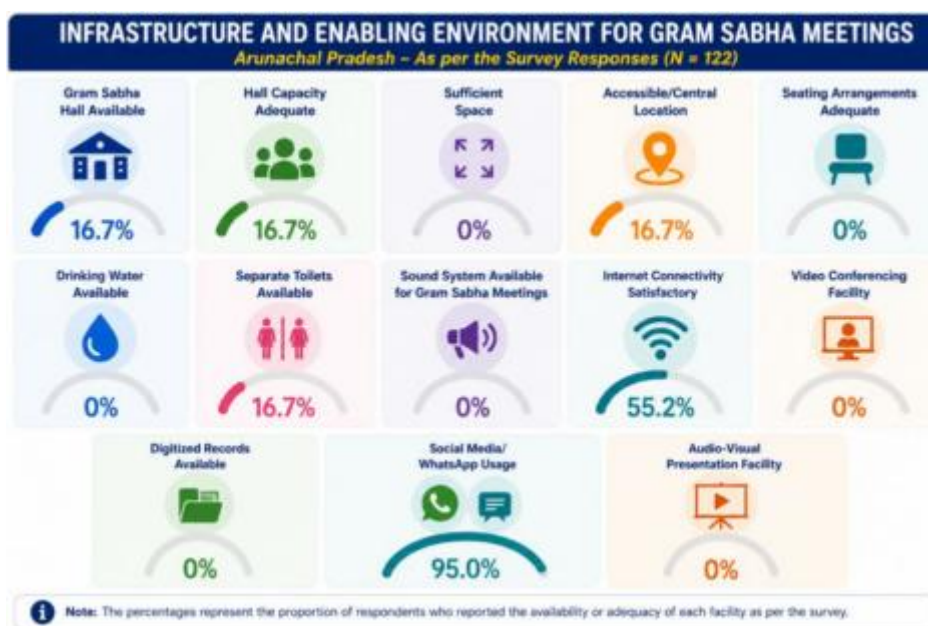
Physical infrastructure and communication facilities play an important role in facilitating effective Gram Sabha functioning and citizen participation. The survey findings indicate that the availability of basic infrastructure for conducting Gram Sabha meetings remains limited across several surveyed locations in Arunachal Pradesh.

Availability of dedicated Gram Sabha halls, adequate hall capacity, accessible meeting locations and separate toilet facilities was reported only in a small proportion of Gram Panchayats. Facilities such as sufficient meeting space, seating arrangements, drinking water, sound systems, video conferencing facilities, digitized records and audio-visual presentation systems were largely absent according to survey responses.

At the same time, internet connectivity was reported to be available in more than half of the surveyed locations, while social media and WhatsApp-based communication emerged as the most widely available digital communication mechanism. The findings suggest that digital communication platforms are being utilized despite significant limitations in physical and digital meeting infrastructure.

Overall, the results indicate the need for strengthening basic meeting infrastructure and digital support facilities to improve the quality of Gram Sabha deliberations, communication, documentation and citizen engagement across the State.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

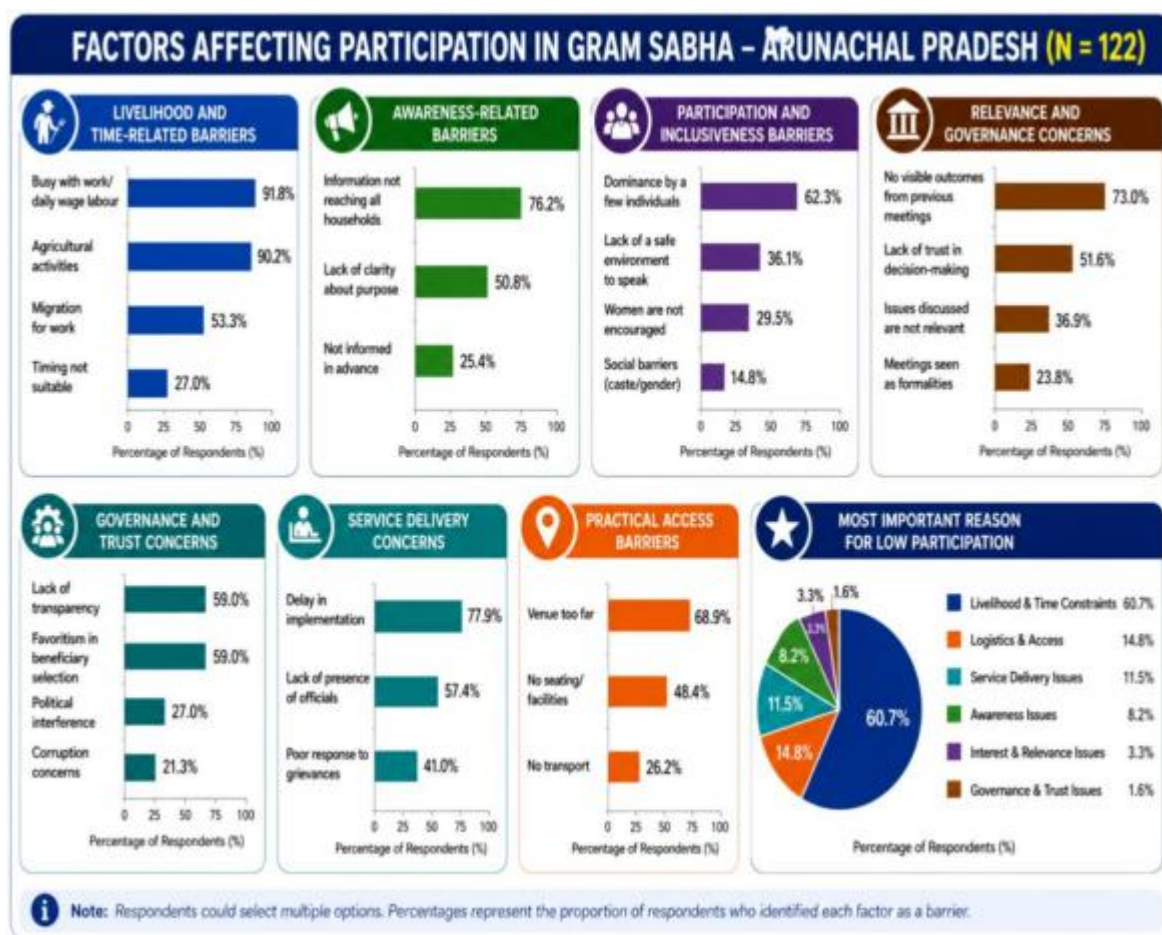
The study clearly indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Arunachal Pradesh. Work-related commitments, agricultural activities and migration for employment emerged as major challenges preventing citizens from attending meetings. These findings suggest that participation continues to compete with livelihood responsibilities, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Awareness-related barriers were also significant. Respondents reported that information regarding Gram Sabha meetings often fails to reach all households, while many citizens remain unclear about the purpose and importance of meetings. Such information gaps reduce citizen motivation to participate and weaken the effectiveness of mobilisation efforts.

Participation-related barriers were equally important. Dominance by a few individuals emerged as the most frequently reported issue affecting inclusiveness. Respondents also highlighted the absence of a safe environment for speaking and inadequate encouragement for women. These findings suggest that improving participation requires attention not only to attendance but also to the quality of deliberations and inclusiveness of discussions.

The findings further indicate concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Lack of visible outcomes from previous meetings emerged as the most important issue affecting citizen interest in Gram Sabha participation. Governance concerns such as lack of transparency and favouritism in beneficiary selection were also widely reported. Delays in implementation of decisions and inadequate presence of officials further contribute to declining confidence in Gram Sabha processes.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs), beneficiary identification and identification of local issues as the most frequently discussed agenda items in Gram Sabha meetings. Annual budgeting also emerged as an important agenda item. Compared to several other States, planning and beneficiary selection appear to occupy a central place in Gram Sabha deliberations in Arunachal Pradesh.

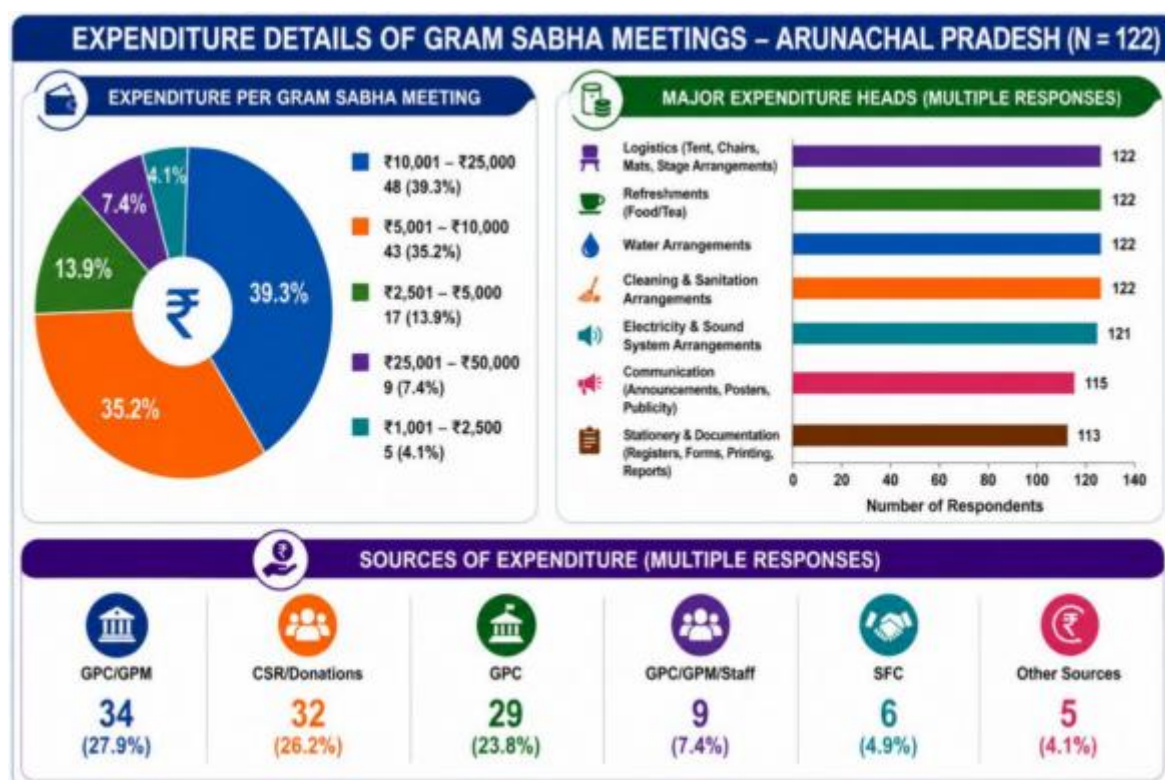
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Approving GPDP            | 19.90          |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 17.82          |
| Identifying Local Issues  | 17.47          |
| Annual Budget             | 15.40          |
| Livelihood Issues         | 5.02           |
| Development Priorities    | 4.50           |
| OSR Generation            | 4.33           |
| Social Audit              | 3.63           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Gram Sabha meetings in Arunachal Pradesh involve comparatively higher expenditure levels, with a majority of respondents reporting expenditure above ₹5,000 per meeting and the largest proportion reporting expenditure in the ₹10,001–₹25,000 range. Expenditure is largely concentrated on logistics, refreshments, drinking water, sanitation arrangements and sound system facilities, reflecting the challenges associated with organizing meetings in geographically dispersed and remote locations. Funding is derived from a diverse mix of sources, with GPC/GPM funds, CSR/Donations and GPC support emerging as the major contributors. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Arunachal Pradesh require relatively higher resource allocation and depend on multiple funding streams to ensure effective conduct and community participation.



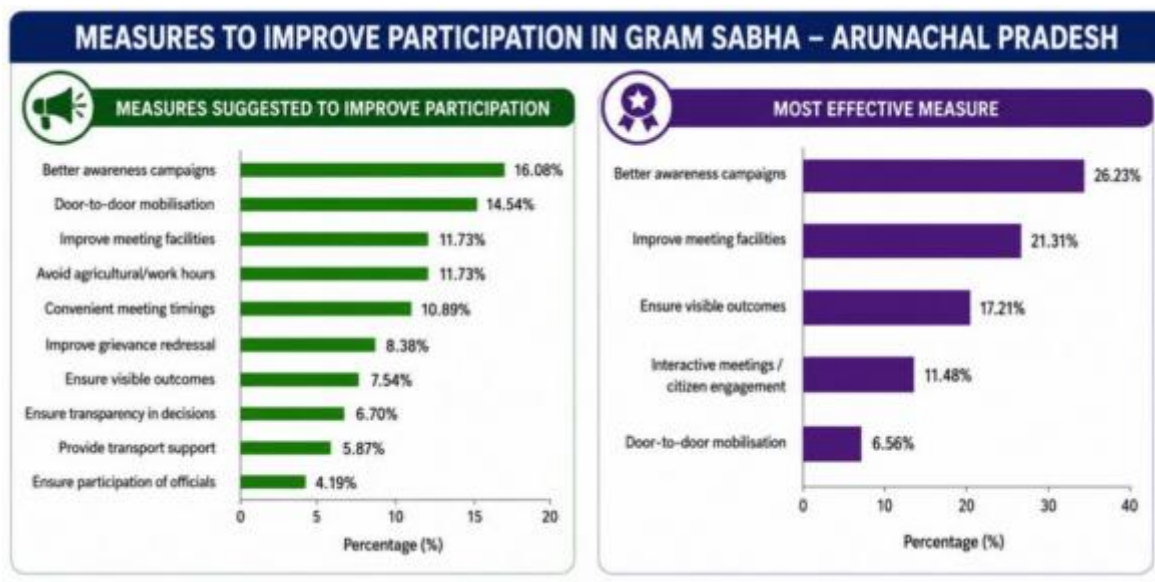
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents strongly emphasized awareness generation and community mobilisation as the most effective approaches for improving Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns emerged as both the most frequently suggested and the most effective measure. Door-to-door mobilisation, avoiding agricultural work periods and improving meeting facilities also received strong support.

An interesting finding in Arunachal Pradesh is the importance attached to meeting infrastructure. Respondents highlighted the need for better meeting facilities, including shade, seating arrangements and access to water. The open-ended suggestions repeatedly emphasized the need for dedicated Gram Sabha or community halls, indicating that infrastructure constraints continue to affect participation in remote and rural areas.



The findings suggest that improving participation requires a combination of awareness generation, improved facilities, visible outcomes, interactive discussions and better transparency in decision-making processes.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings is very high in Arunachal Pradesh.
2. Attendance levels are relatively strong and a majority of respondents reported active participation in Gram Sabha meetings.
3. Women and SC/ST participation are perceived to be highly satisfactory, with SC/ST participation reported across almost all surveyed locations.
4. Youth, women and men were identified as the most actively participating groups in Gram Sabha meetings.
5. OBC communities, migrant households and certain minority groups were perceived to be comparatively less represented in Gram Sabha processes.
6. Livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barrier affecting participation.
7. Information dissemination gaps continue to affect participation despite high overall awareness levels.
8. Dominance by a few individuals and limited opportunities for wider community participation affect inclusiveness of discussions.
9. Lack of visible outcomes from previous meetings and delays in implementation reduce citizen motivation to participate.
10. Governance concerns relating to transparency, beneficiary selection and public trust affect confidence in Gram Sabha processes.
11. Service delivery challenges, particularly delays in implementation and inadequate grievance responsiveness, weaken citizen engagement.



12. Physical infrastructure for conducting Gram Sabha meetings remains limited across many surveyed locations.
13. Internet connectivity and social media/WhatsApp usage are relatively strong, indicating potential for expanding digital communication and citizen outreach.

## Recommendations

- Strengthen household-level communication and advance dissemination of information regarding Gram Sabha meetings.
- Institutionalize door-to-door mobilisation and community outreach prior to Gram Sabha meetings.
- Schedule Gram Sabha meetings at times that minimize conflicts with livelihood and agricultural activities.
- Ensure greater participation of underrepresented groups, particularly migrant households and OBC communities.
- Promote inclusive discussions and create opportunities for wider community participation during meetings.
- Improve transparency in decision-making, beneficiary selection and implementation of development programmes.
- Present Action Taken Reports on resolutions passed in previous Gram Sabha meetings.
- Ensure visible follow-up on decisions and regularly communicate implementation progress to citizens.
- Strengthen grievance redressal mechanisms and improve responsiveness to issues raised during Gram Sabha meetings.
- Ensure timely implementation of Gram Sabha resolutions and development priorities.
- Improve availability of basic infrastructure, including meeting space, seating arrangements, drinking water and sanitation facilities.
- Strengthen digital governance practices by leveraging internet connectivity and social media platforms for awareness generation, citizen engagement and information dissemination.
- Encourage regular participation of line department officials to improve responsiveness and coordination in addressing local development concerns.



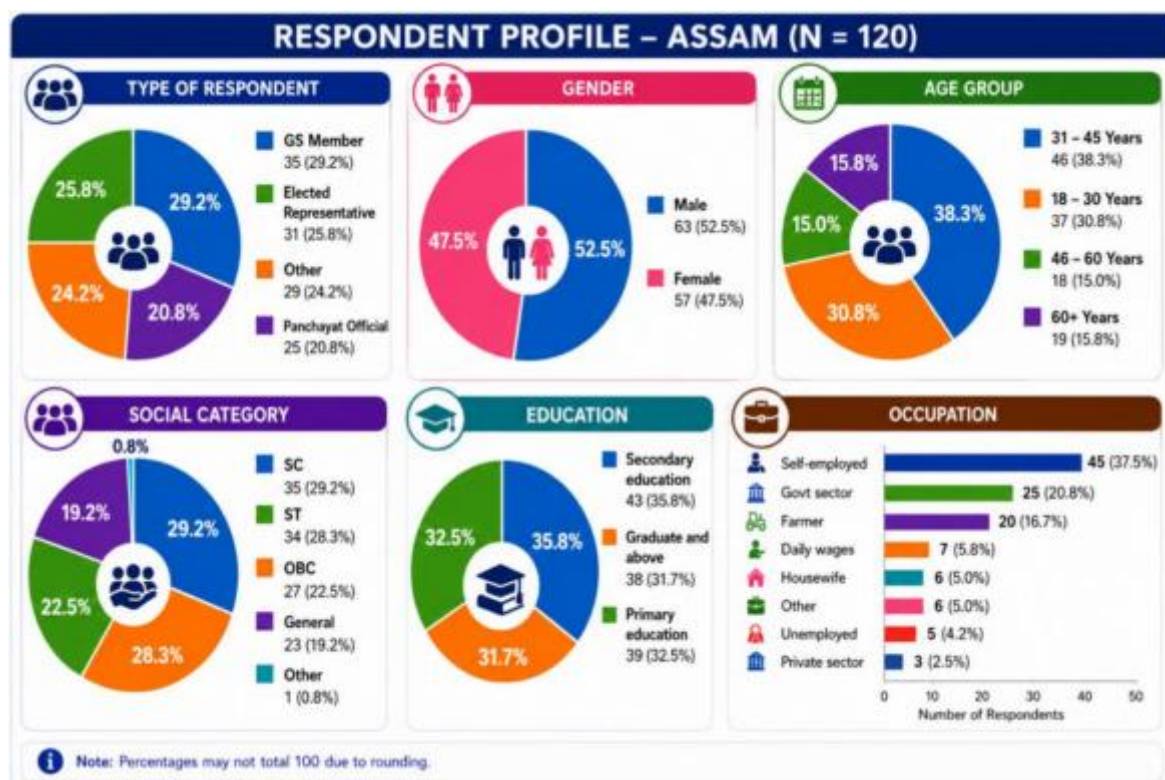
# ASSAM

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 120 respondents from 06 Gram Panchayats across 3 districts of Assam. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. The sample reflects balanced representation across major social groups, with participation from OBC, General, ST and SC communities. Women constituted a majority of respondents, while self-employed individuals, government employees and farmers represented the dominant occupational categories. The findings therefore provide a comprehensive understanding of factors influencing Gram Sabha participation in the State.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 120   |
| Districts Covered       | 03    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 06    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate very high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Assam. Almost all respondents reported being aware of Gram Sabha meetings, while awareness regarding citizen rights within Gram Sabha processes was also exceptionally high. Attendance levels were equally encouraging, with nearly all respondents reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

Respondents also reported relatively high levels of active engagement in Gram Sabha proceedings. Most respondents indicated that they actively participate during meetings and feel comfortable expressing their views and concerns. This suggests that Gram Sabha continues to function as an important platform for local participation and community engagement.

However, awareness regarding quorum provisions remains comparatively limited. Although general awareness of Gram Sabha is very high, less than two-fifths of respondents reported being aware of quorum requirements. This indicates the need for greater dissemination of information relating to procedural aspects of Gram Sabha functioning and decision-making processes.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 99.17          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 96.67          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 91.67          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 38.33          |

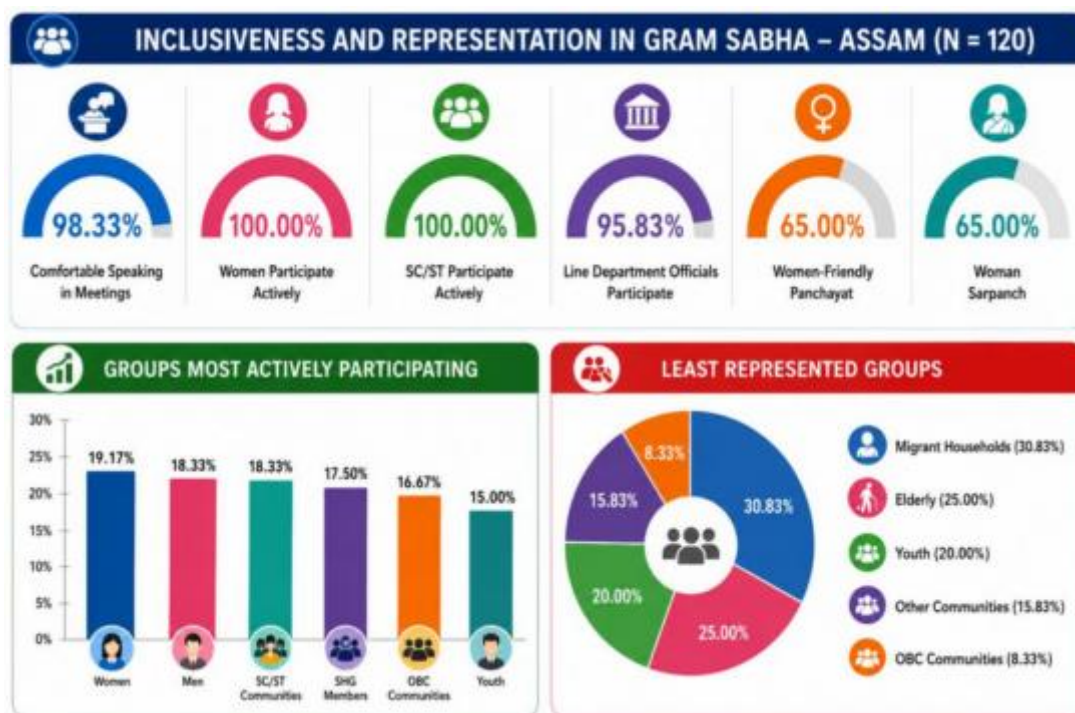
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

Respondents generally perceived Gram Sabha meetings in Assam as highly inclusive forums. Women, SC/ST communities, SHG members and OBC communities were identified among the most active participants in Gram Sabha meetings. Almost all respondents reported feeling comfortable speaking during meetings, while every respondent indicated that women and SC/ST communities actively participate in Gram Sabha proceedings.

The findings further indicate strong institutional participation. Unlike several other States, participation of line department officials was reported to be very high, suggesting stronger coordination between Gram Panchayats and departmental functionaries. The presence of officials may contribute to improved responsiveness and citizen confidence in Gram Sabha processes.

Despite these positive findings, certain groups continue to remain underrepresented. Migrant households emerged as the least represented group, followed by elderly persons and youth. These findings suggest that targeted efforts may be required to improve participation among these sections of the population. Additionally, while women were perceived to participate actively, only about one-third of respondents considered their Panchayat to be women-friendly, indicating scope for strengthening gender-responsive governance practices.





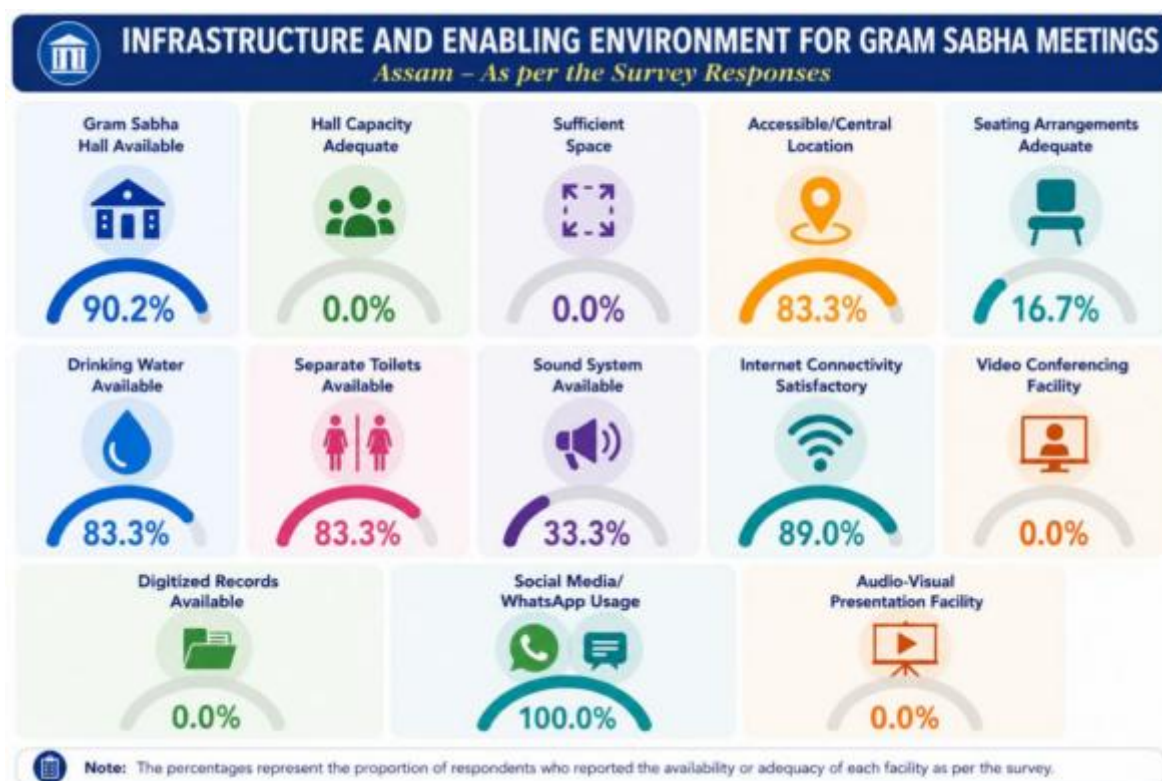
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The survey findings indicate that several basic infrastructure facilities required for conducting Gram Sabha meetings are available across surveyed locations in Assam. A large majority of respondents reported the availability of Gram Sabha halls, accessible meeting locations, drinking water facilities, separate toilets and internet connectivity. Social media and WhatsApp-based communication systems were reported to be widely used for information dissemination and citizen outreach.

At the same time, important infrastructure gaps remain. Respondents reported limited availability of adequate seating arrangements and sound systems. Facilities such as video conferencing, digitized records, audio-visual presentation systems, adequate hall capacity and sufficient meeting space were largely absent across surveyed locations.

The findings suggest that while basic physical infrastructure and communication facilities are available in many Gram Panchayats, strengthening meeting infrastructure and digital governance facilities can further improve the quality of Gram Sabha deliberations, citizen engagement, documentation and information dissemination processes.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

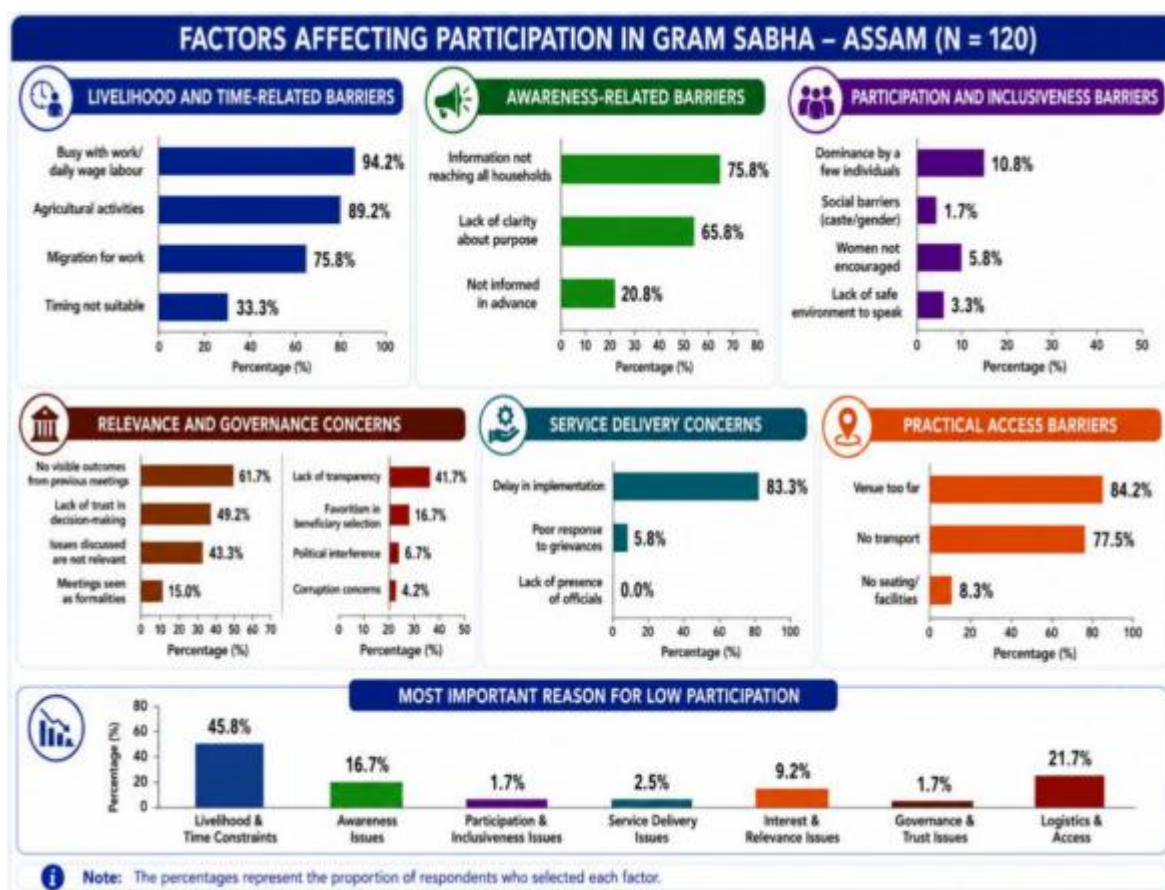
The study indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Assam. Work commitments, agricultural activities and migration for employment emerged as major challenges limiting attendance. These findings suggest that participation often competes with livelihood responsibilities and economic activities.

Awareness-related barriers were also identified. Respondents reported that information regarding Gram Sabha meetings frequently does not reach all households, while many citizens lack clarity regarding the purpose and importance of meetings. Such communication gaps reduce citizen engagement and weaken participation levels.

Interestingly, respondents reported relatively fewer participation and inclusiveness barriers compared to many other States. A large proportion indicated that no such barriers exist. However, among those who reported concerns, dominance by a few individuals emerged as the most significant issue. Relevance-related concerns were more prominent, with many respondents perceiving Gram Sabha meetings as formalities and expressing concerns regarding lack of visible outcomes.

Governance and service delivery concerns also emerged as important factors affecting participation. Lack of transparency, delays in implementation of decisions and accessibility challenges such as distant venues and lack of transport were identified as major concerns. The findings suggest that improving participation requires both institutional reforms and practical measures to improve access.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified local issues, beneficiary identification, health and literacy, welfare schemes and livelihood concerns as the most frequently discussed agenda items in Gram Sabha meetings. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha in Assam is strongly oriented towards addressing local development concerns and service delivery needs. Discussions relating to infrastructure, sanitation and development priorities also featured prominently.

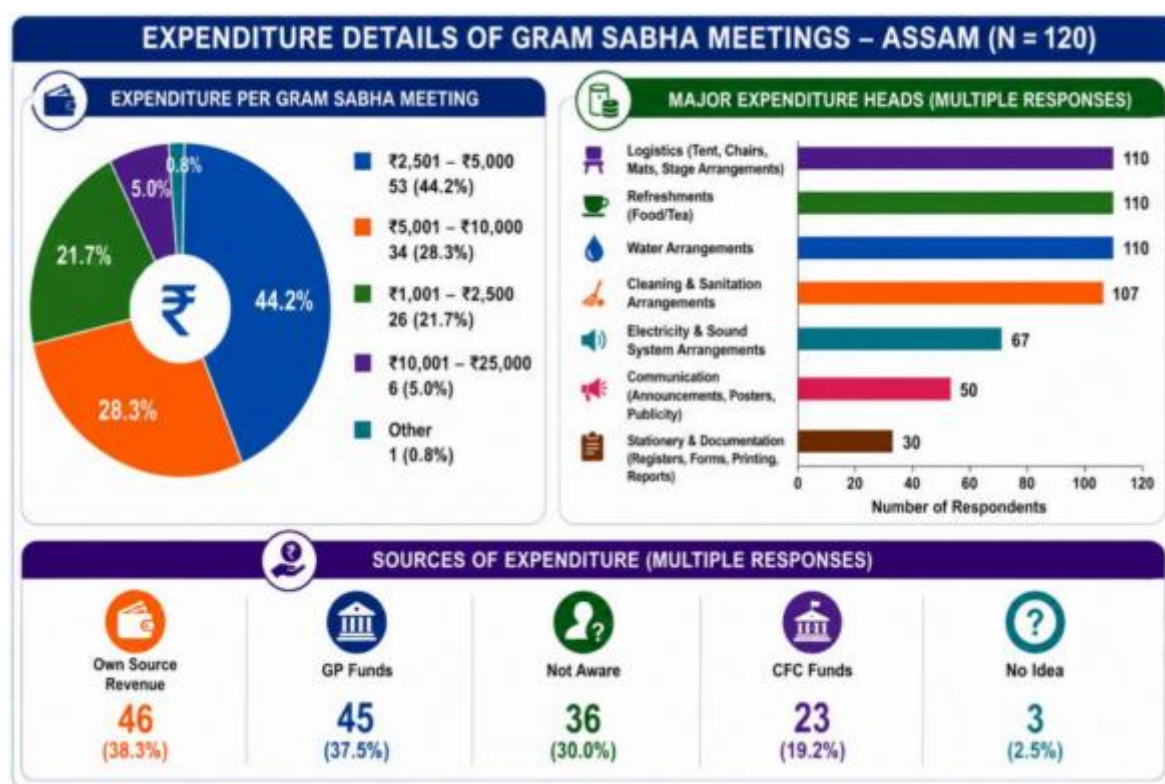
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Identifying Local Issues  | 9.92           |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 9.65           |
| Health & Literacy         | 8.95           |
| Welfare Schemes           | 8.95           |
| Livelihood Issues         | 8.86           |
| Infrastructure            | 8.50           |
| Approving GPDP            | 8.33           |
| Development Priorities    | 8.24           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Gram Sabha meetings in Assam are generally conducted with moderate levels of expenditure, with nearly three-fourths of respondents reporting expenditure below ₹10,000 per meeting. The most commonly reported expenditure range was ₹2,501–₹5,000, followed by ₹5,001–₹10,000. Expenditure is primarily concentrated on logistics arrangements, refreshments, drinking water and sanitation facilities, highlighting the importance placed on ensuring basic meeting arrangements and participant convenience. Own Source Revenue and GP Funds emerged as the principal sources of financing, while a substantial proportion of respondents were not aware of the funding source, indicating limited public awareness regarding Gram Sabha financing mechanisms. Overall, the expenditure pattern suggests that Gram Sabha meetings in Assam rely largely on local Panchayat resources and focus on essential operational requirements necessary for conducting community meetings effectively.



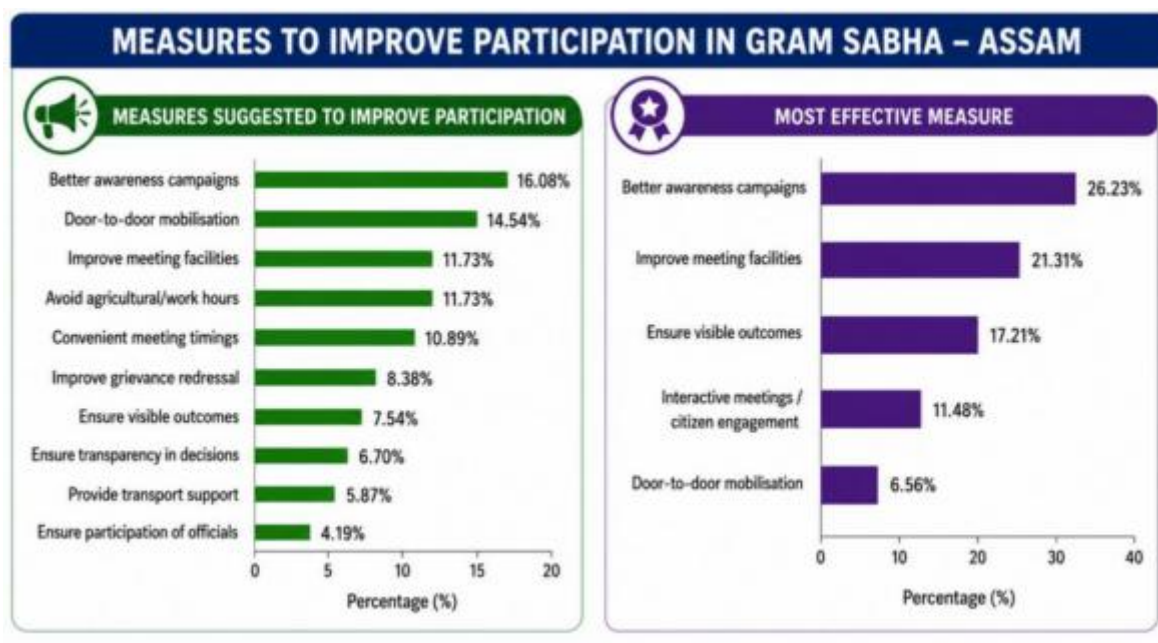
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents emphasized awareness generation, mobilisation and improved accessibility as key strategies for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns emerged as the most frequently suggested measure, followed closely by avoiding agricultural work periods, door-to-door mobilisation and transport support. The prominence of transport-related suggestions reflects the importance of accessibility concerns in Assam.

A distinctive feature of Assam is the emphasis on incentives and recognition. When respondents were asked to identify the single most effective measure, providing incentives or recognition emerged as the top choice. Ward Sabhas, Mahila Sabhas and visible outcomes from Gram Sabha meetings were also viewed as important strategies for improving participation.



The findings suggest that improving participation in Assam requires a combination of awareness generation, logistical support, citizen incentives and visible outcomes from Gram Sabha decisions.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings is very high in Assam, and a large majority of respondents reported attending Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.
2. Active participation levels are relatively strong; however, awareness regarding quorum and Gram Sabha procedures remains comparatively limited.
3. Women and SC/ST participation are perceived to be highly satisfactory, with almost all respondents reporting active participation of these groups.
4. Women, men, SC/ST communities and SHG members emerge as the most actively participating groups in Gram Sabha meetings.
5. Migrant households, elderly citizens and youth are perceived to be comparatively underrepresented in Gram Sabha processes.
6. Livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barrier affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings.
7. Information dissemination gaps, particularly information not reaching all households and lack of clarity regarding the purpose of meetings, continue to affect participation.
8. Lack of visible outcomes from previous meetings and limited public trust in decision-making reduce citizen motivation to participate.
9. Delays in implementation of decisions emerge as a major service delivery concern affecting citizen engagement.
10. Practical access barriers, particularly long distances to meeting venues and transportation difficulties, significantly affect participation.



11. Awareness campaigns, avoiding agricultural and work hours, and door-to-door mobilisation emerge as the most frequently suggested measures for improving participation.
12. Incentives and recognition for participants emerge as the most preferred single measure for improving Gram Sabha participation.

## Recommendations

- Strengthen awareness campaigns on Gram Sabha meetings, citizen rights and participation procedures.
- Improve household-level dissemination of information through advance communication and village-wide outreach mechanisms.
- Institutionalize door-to-door mobilisation prior to Gram Sabha meetings.
- Schedule Gram Sabha meetings at times that minimize conflicts with livelihood activities, agricultural work and wage employment.
- Promote greater participation of migrant households, youth and elderly citizens in Gram Sabha meetings.
- Ensure visible follow-up on Gram Sabha resolutions and regularly communicate implementation progress to citizens.
- Strengthen transparency in decision-making and beneficiary selection processes.
- Improve responsiveness to grievances and ensure timely implementation of Gram Sabha decisions.
- Improve accessibility of meeting venues and address transportation-related barriers affecting participation.
- Encourage continued participation of women, SC/ST communities, SHGs and community-based institutions in Gram Sabha processes.
- Explore appropriate incentive and recognition mechanisms to encourage wider citizen participation.
- Strengthen collaboration with village committees, SHGs and local community institutions for mobilisation and awareness generation.



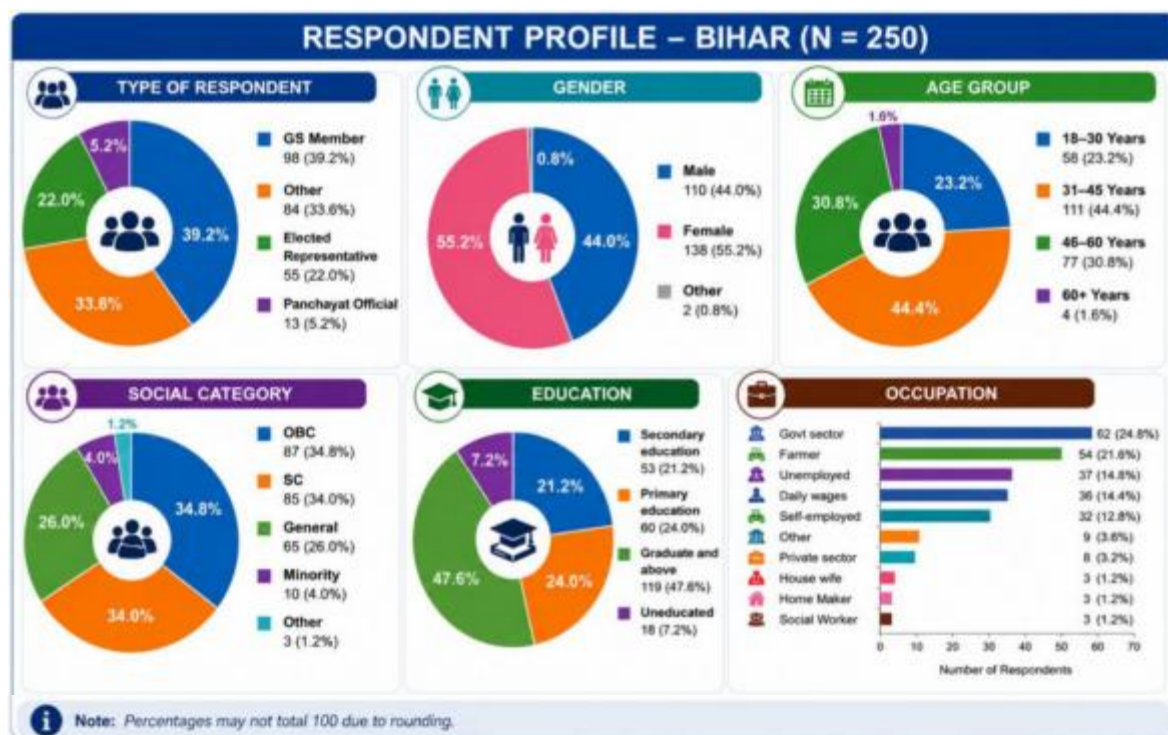
# BIHAR

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 250 respondents from 13 Gram Panchayats across 6 districts of Bihar. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. The sample reflects participation from OBC, SC, General and Minority communities, with women constituting a slight majority of respondents. Government employees, farmers, unemployed youth, daily wage labourers and self-employed individuals were among the major occupational groups represented in the survey. The findings therefore provide a comprehensive understanding of factors influencing Gram Sabha participation in Bihar.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 250   |
| Districts Covered       | 06    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 13    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate exceptionally high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Bihar. Nearly all respondents reported being aware of Gram Sabha meetings, while a substantial majority were also aware of their rights within Gram Sabha processes and the prescribed frequency of meetings. Attendance levels were similarly encouraging, with most respondents reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

A notable finding from Bihar is the very high level of awareness regarding quorum provisions. Unlike many other States where procedural awareness remains limited, a large majority of respondents reported knowledge of quorum requirements and indicated that quorum is generally achieved during Gram Sabha meetings. This suggests relatively strong familiarity with Gram Sabha procedures and governance processes.

Respondents also reported high levels of active engagement during Gram Sabha meetings. More than sixty percent described their participation levels as high or very high, indicating that Gram Sabha continues to serve as an important platform for citizen engagement and local decision-making in Bihar.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 98.80          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 92.00          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 90.40          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 94.40          |

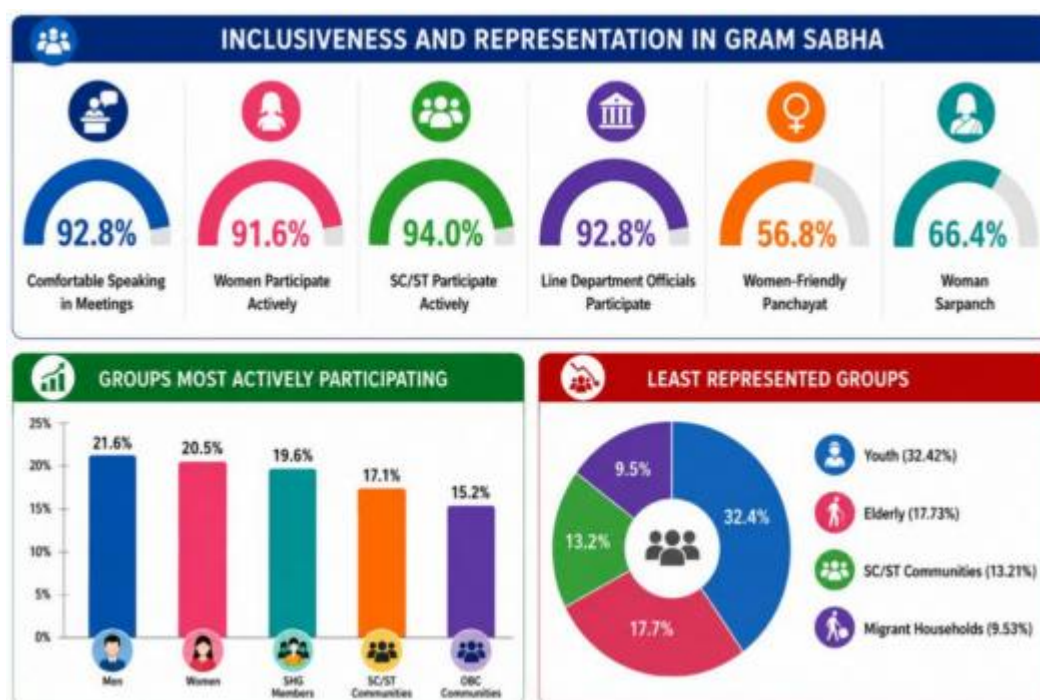
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

Respondents generally perceived Gram Sabha meetings in Bihar as inclusive forums with active participation from women, SHG members, SC/ST communities and other social groups. Women and SHG members emerged as the most active participants, followed closely by men and SC/ST communities. Most respondents also reported feeling comfortable expressing their views and concerns during meetings.

The findings suggest strong participation by women and marginalized communities. More than ninety percent of respondents reported active participation of women and SC/ST communities in Gram Sabha proceedings. Participation of line department officials was also perceived to be high, indicating relatively strong institutional engagement in Gram Sabha processes.

At the same time, certain groups continue to remain underrepresented. SC/ST communities, women and SHG members were identified as among the least represented groups by some respondents, indicating that participation may vary across locations. Youth, elderly persons and migrant households were also perceived to participate less actively in some Gram Panchayats. The findings therefore suggest that while participation levels are generally strong, continued efforts are required to ensure equitable representation across all social groups.





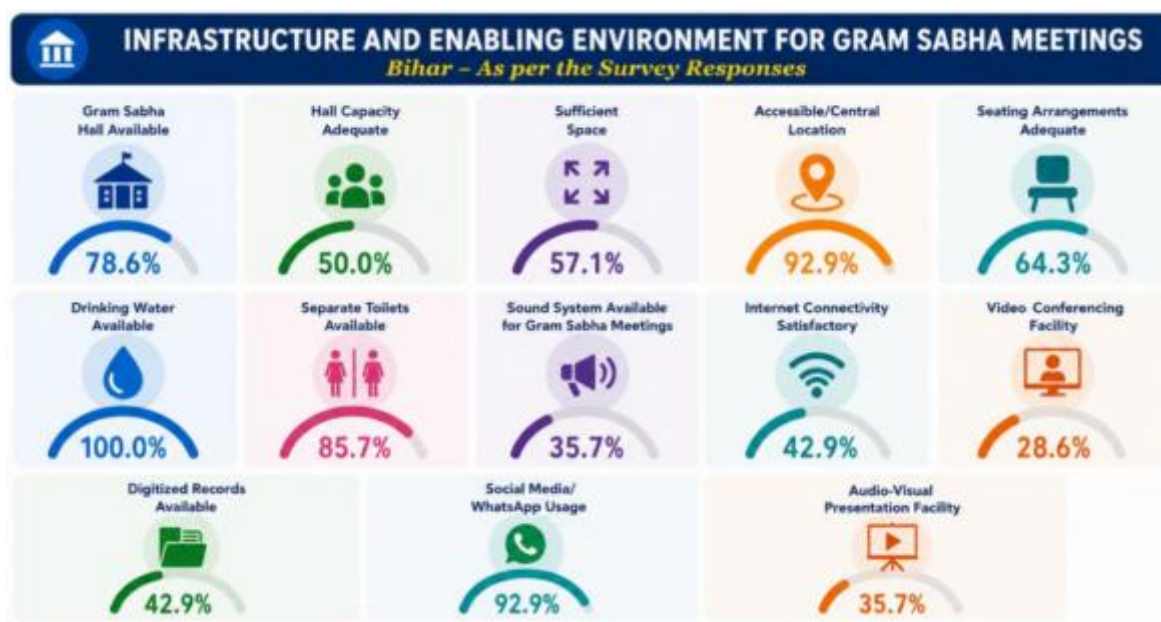
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The survey findings indicate that Bihar has established a reasonably accessible physical environment for conducting Gram Sabha meetings, particularly in terms of venue accessibility, drinking water availability, sanitation facilities and communication outreach. A large majority of respondents reported that Gram Sabha venues are located at accessible and central locations (92.9%), while drinking water facilities were reported to be available in all surveyed locations. Separate toilet facilities (85.7%) and social media/WhatsApp usage (92.9%) further demonstrate the availability of basic support systems for community participation.

However, the findings also reveal significant gaps in infrastructure quality and digital readiness. Only half of the respondents reported that hall capacity was adequate (50.0%), while sufficient meeting space was reported by 57.1 percent respondents. Availability of sound systems (35.7%), internet connectivity (42.9%), digitized records (42.9%), video conferencing facilities (28.6%) and audio-visual presentation facilities (35.7%) remains limited. These gaps may constrain effective communication, digital record management and technology-enabled participation during Gram Sabha meetings.

The findings suggest that while Bihar has achieved substantial progress in ensuring basic physical access to Gram Sabha meetings, further investments are required to strengthen meeting infrastructure, improve digital facilities and enhance the overall quality of citizen engagement processes.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

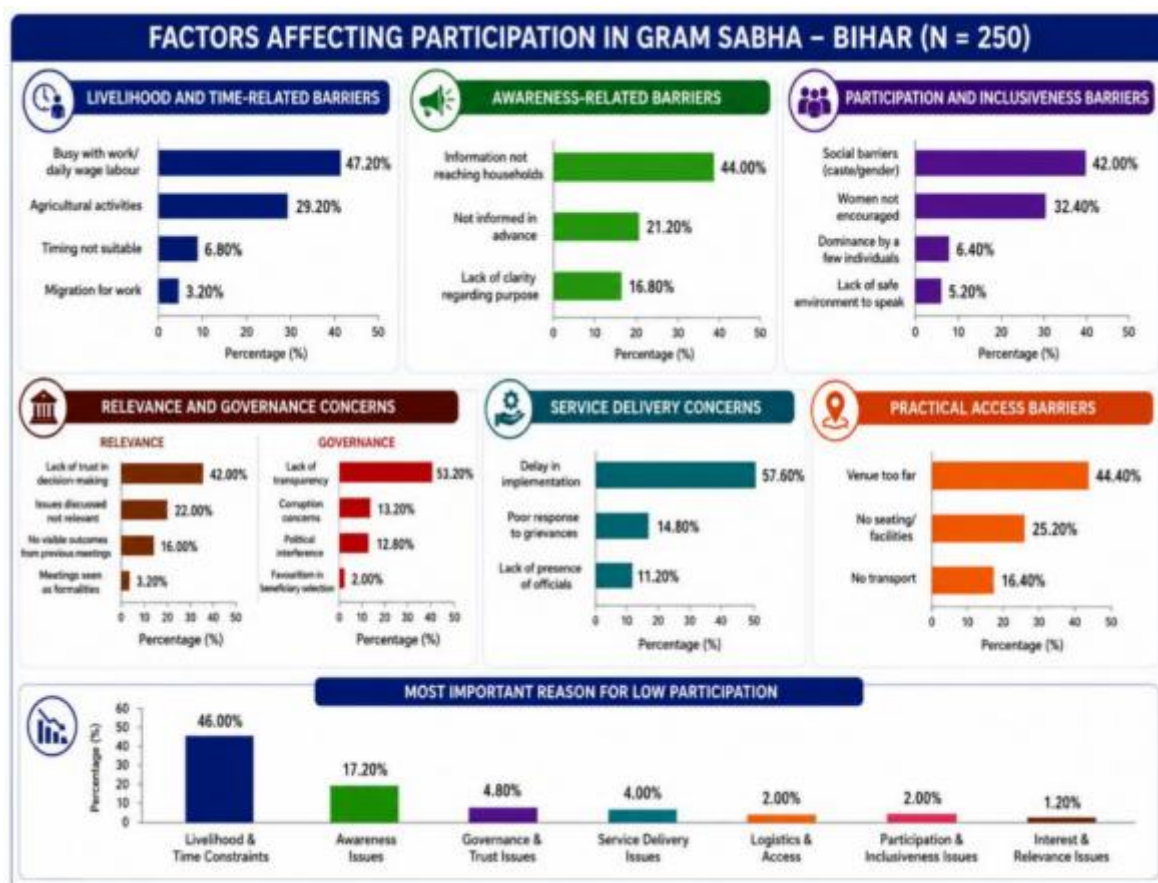
The study clearly indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Bihar. Daily wage employment, work commitments and agricultural activities emerged as the most frequently cited reasons preventing citizens from attending meetings. These findings suggest that participation often competes with livelihood responsibilities and income-generating activities.

Awareness-related challenges continue to affect participation despite high overall awareness levels. Respondents reported that information regarding Gram Sabha meetings frequently does not reach all households, while many citizens are not informed sufficiently in advance. Lack of clarity regarding the purpose of meetings also affects participation levels in some areas.

Participation and inclusiveness barriers were more pronounced in Bihar than in several other States. Social barriers based on caste and gender emerged as the most significant concern, followed by inadequate encouragement for women. These findings indicate that social dynamics continue to influence participation patterns despite improvements in representation.

The findings further reveal concerns regarding trust, transparency and governance. Lack of trust in decision-making processes emerged as the most important factor affecting participation. Respondents also highlighted lack of transparency, corruption concerns and political interference as factors that discourage citizen engagement. Service delivery concerns, particularly delays in implementation of decisions, further reduce public confidence in Gram Sabha processes.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs), welfare schemes and livelihood issues as the most frequently discussed agenda items in Gram Sabha meetings. Discussions relating to health, literacy, social audit and local development priorities also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha in Bihar is strongly focused on planning, welfare delivery and local development concerns.

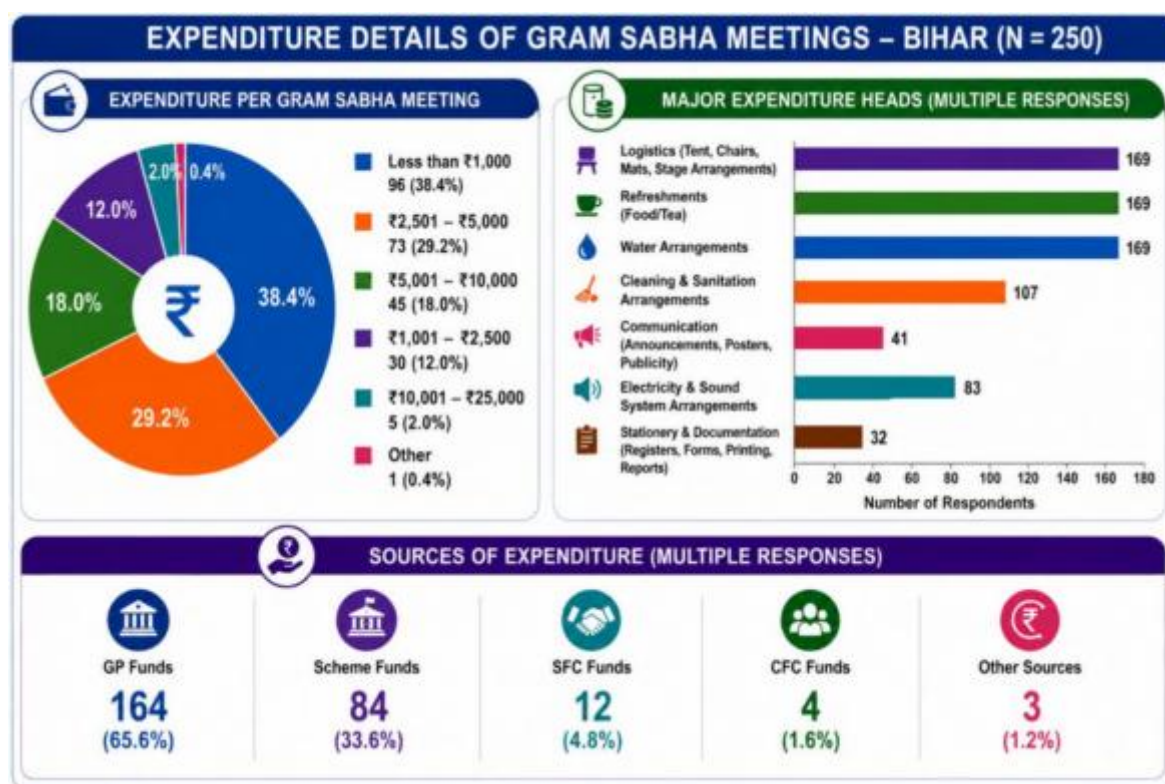
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item              | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| Approving GPDP           | 25.49          |
| Welfare Schemes          | 20.72          |
| Livelihood Issues        | 11.84          |
| Health & Literacy        | 9.54           |
| Social Audit             | 6.09           |
| Identifying Local Issues | 5.76           |
| Annual Budget            | 4.93           |
| Sanitation               | 3.95           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Gram Sabha meetings in Bihar are generally conducted with limited financial resources, with a majority of respondents reporting expenditure below ₹5,000 per meeting and nearly two-fifths reporting expenditure of less than ₹1,000. Expenditure is primarily concentrated on logistics arrangements, refreshments, drinking water and sanitation facilities, reflecting a focus on meeting basic operational requirements. GP Funds emerged as the dominant source of financing, followed by scheme funds, indicating substantial dependence on Panchayat and government resources for organizing Gram Sabha meetings. The comparatively limited contribution from other funding sources highlights the need for diversification of financial support. Overall, the expenditure pattern suggests that Gram Sabha meetings in Bihar are organized in a cost-effective manner while prioritizing essential arrangements necessary for community participation and effective conduct of meetings.



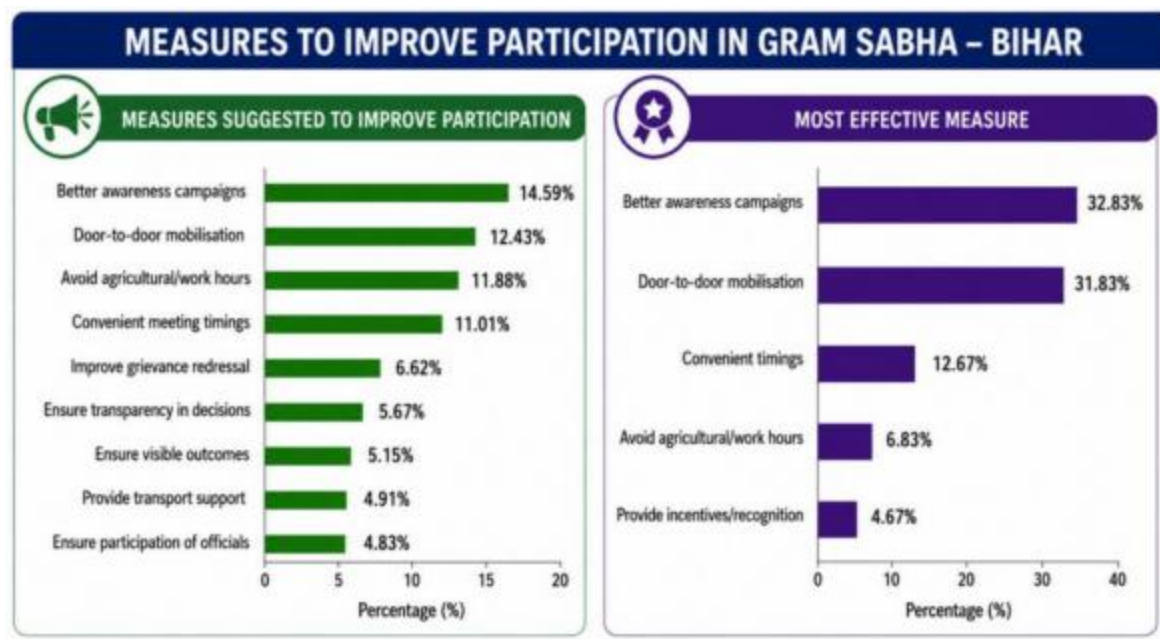
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents strongly emphasized awareness generation and citizen mobilisation as the most effective approaches for improving Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns emerged as both the most frequently suggested and the most effective measure. Door-to-door mobilisation, inclusion of women and marginalized groups, and Ward Sabha or Mahila Sabha mechanisms were also viewed as important strategies for strengthening participation.

A distinctive feature of Bihar is the strong emphasis placed on awareness creation. More than half of respondents identified awareness campaigns as the single most effective measure for improving participation. Respondents also highlighted the importance of ensuring that information reaches citizens in advance and that Gram Sabha meetings are conducted in a manner that encourages participation from all sections of society.



The findings suggest that improving participation in Bihar requires a combination of awareness generation, inclusive participation mechanisms, improved communication systems and stronger accountability measures.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Awareness of Gram Sabha meetings is very high, with 98.8% respondents reporting awareness.
2. A large majority (92.0%) reported awareness of their rights in the Gram Sabha.
3. Around 88.4% respondents attended at least one Gram Sabha meeting during the previous year.
4. Active participation levels are strong, with 90.4% reporting participation in Gram Sabha discussions.
5. Nearly 92.8% respondents feel comfortable speaking during Gram Sabha meetings.
6. Women's participation is widely acknowledged, with 91.6% reporting active involvement of women.
7. Participation of SC/ST communities is perceived positively by 94.0% respondents.
8. Knowledge of quorum is high (94.4%), and 72.0% respondents reported that quorum is generally achieved.
9. Village Health Sanitation Committees and SHG Federations are the most active community institutions supporting Gram Sabha processes.
10. GPDP approval emerged as the most frequently discussed agenda item in Gram Sabha meetings.
11. Inclusion is relatively strong, with women, SHG members, SC/ST communities and men identified among the most active participants.
12. The most important barrier to participation is livelihood and time constraints, particularly daily wage work and agricultural commitments.



## Recommendations

- Intensify awareness campaigns prior to every Gram Sabha meeting.
- Strengthen door-to-door mobilisation through elected representatives and community volunteers.
- Schedule meetings at citizen-friendly timings, avoiding peak agricultural and wage labour periods.
- Ensure timely dissemination of meeting notices to all households.
- Continue promoting active participation of women, SC/ST communities, youth and vulnerable groups.
- Improve transparency in decision-making and beneficiary selection processes.
- Strengthen grievance redressal and regularly communicate action taken on public concerns.
- Ensure visible follow-up on Gram Sabha resolutions to sustain public trust.
- Improve basic meeting facilities including seating, shade, drinking water and sanitation arrangements.
- Encourage greater participation of line department officials in Gram Sabha meetings.
- Promote wider use of Ward Sabhas and Mahila Sabhas to enhance grassroots participation.
- Publicize development outcomes and implementation progress discussed in Gram Sabha meetings.



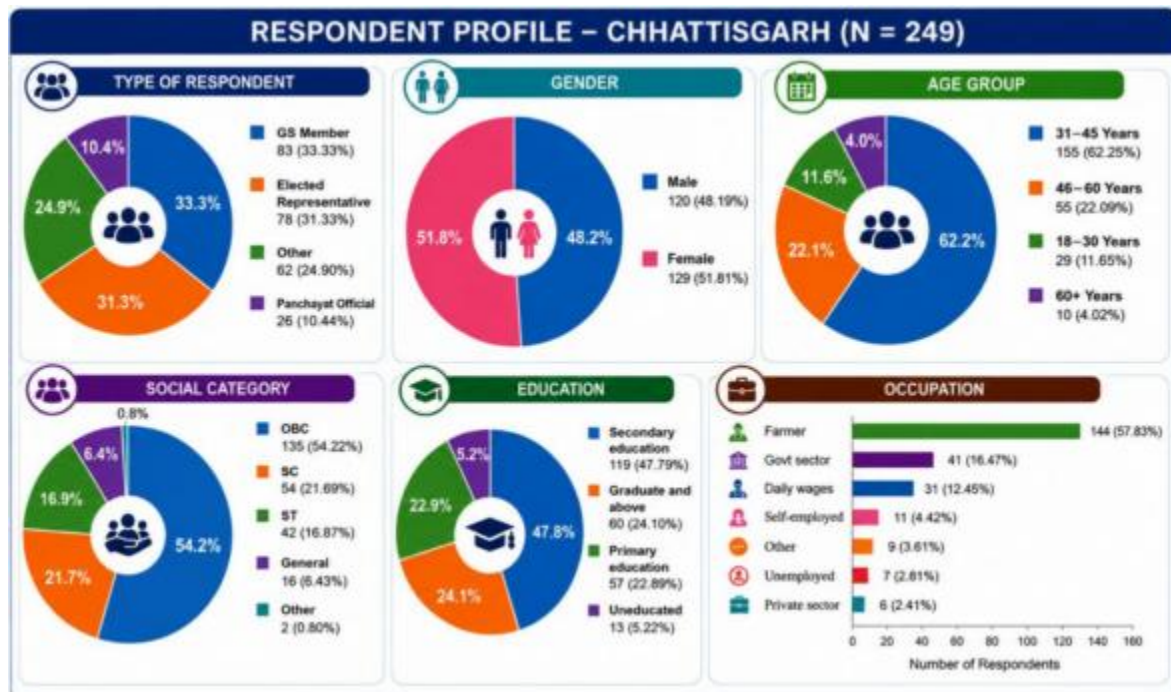
# CHHATTISGARH

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 249 respondents from 57 Gram Panchayats across 36 districts of Chhattisgarh. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. The sample was dominated by OBC, SC and ST communities, while farmers constituted the largest occupational group. Women and men were almost equally represented in the survey. The findings therefore provide important insights into factors influencing Gram Sabha participation in rural areas of Chhattisgarh.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 249   |
| Districts Covered       | 06    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 12    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate very high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Chhattisgarh. Nearly all respondents reported being aware of Gram Sabha meetings, while awareness regarding citizen rights and the prescribed frequency of meetings was also exceptionally high. Attendance levels were similarly encouraging, with a large majority reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

Respondents also reported active engagement in Gram Sabha proceedings. More than ninety percent indicated that they actively participate in meetings, while most respondents characterized their participation levels as moderate. Participation frequency was also relatively high, with a significant proportion attending Gram Sabha meetings three or more times during the previous year.

However, an important concern emerges regarding quorum. While awareness regarding quorum provisions was high, a larger proportion of respondents reported that quorum was not achieved in their Gram Sabha meetings than those who believed it was achieved. This finding suggests that attendance and participation challenges continue to affect the effectiveness of Gram Sabha deliberations despite high levels of awareness.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 98.80          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 95.18          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 90.76          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 82.33          |

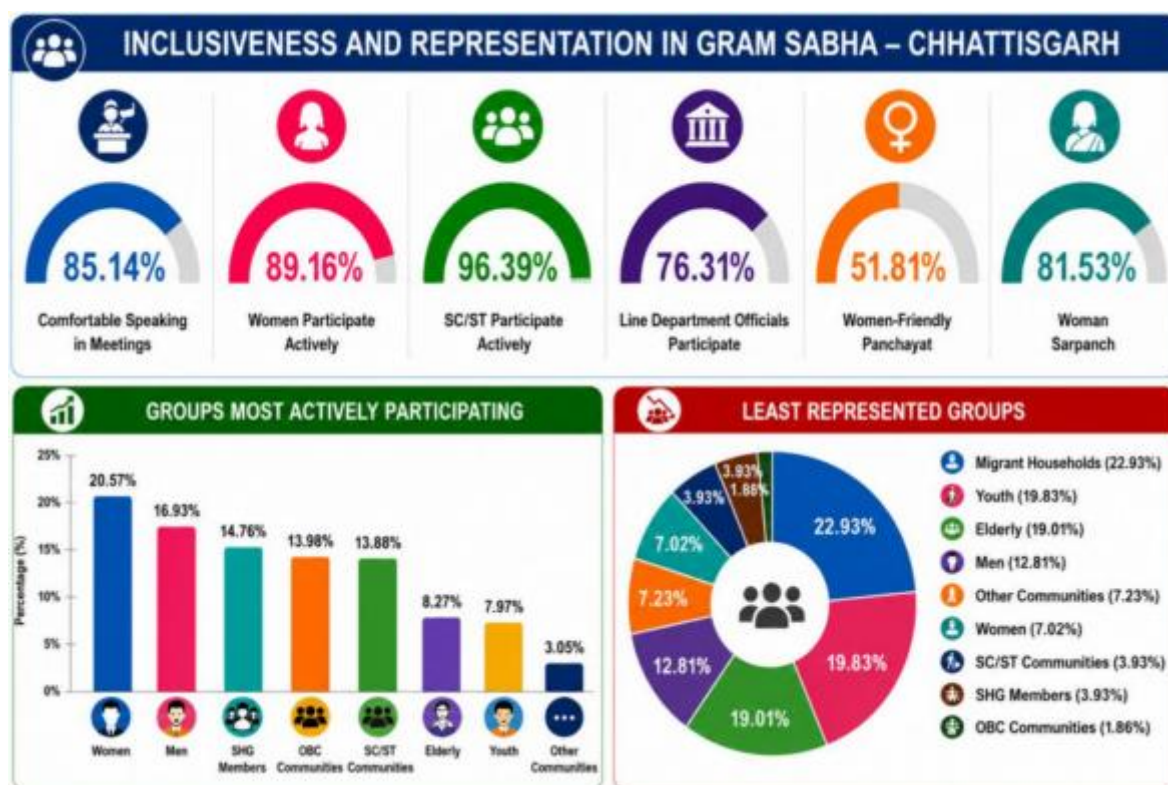
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

Respondents generally perceived Gram Sabha meetings in Chhattisgarh as inclusive forums. Women emerged as the most active participants, followed by men, SHG members, OBC communities and SC/ST communities. Most respondents also reported feeling comfortable speaking during meetings, indicating a relatively open environment for public discussion.

The findings further indicate strong participation by women and marginalized communities. Nearly ninety percent of respondents reported active participation by women, while more than ninety-six percent indicated active participation by SC/ST communities. Chhattisgarh also stands out for the high proportion of women elected representatives, with more than four-fifths of respondents reporting that the Sarpanch or Panchayat head is a woman.

Despite these positive findings, migrant households, youth and elderly persons were identified as the least represented groups in Gram Sabha meetings. These findings suggest that while social inclusion has improved considerably, participation among mobile populations and younger citizens continues to require attention. Participation of line department officials was also lower than reported in several other States, suggesting scope for stronger institutional engagement.





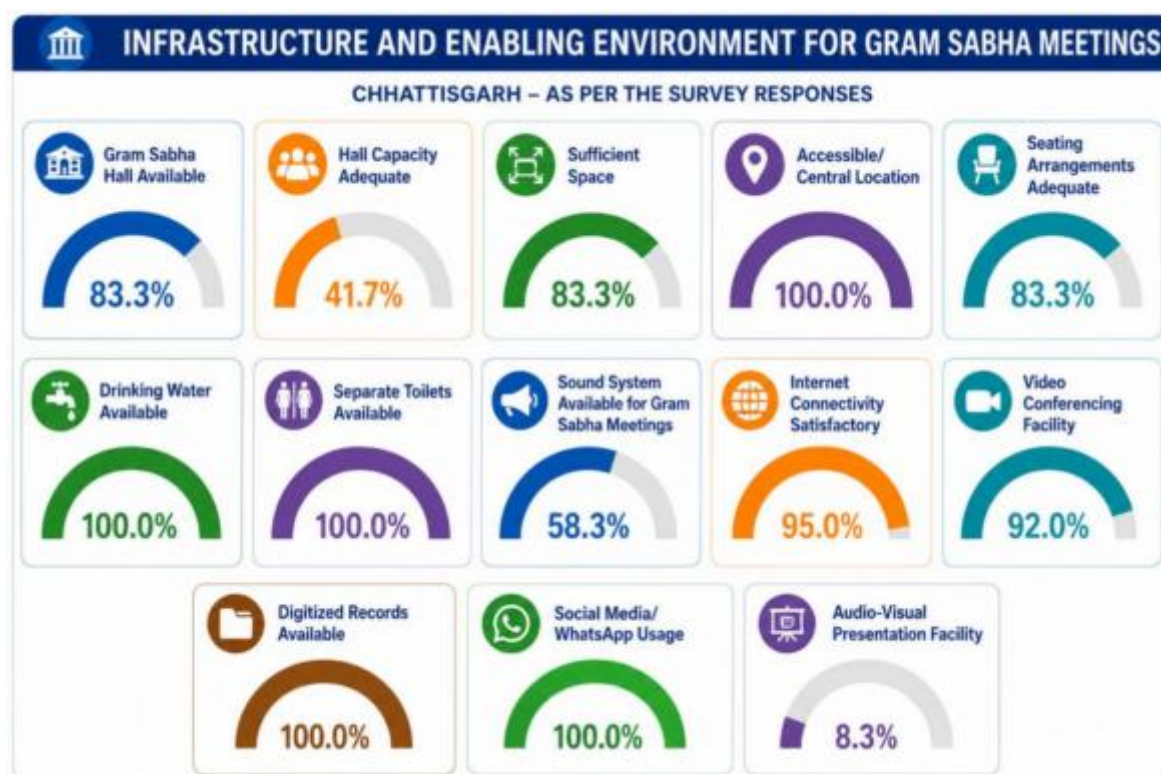
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Chhattisgarh possesses a relatively strong infrastructure environment for conducting Gram Sabha meetings. Respondents reported universal availability of accessible and centrally located meeting venues, drinking water facilities, separate toilets, digitized records, and social media/WhatsApp usage for communication purposes. High availability of internet connectivity, video conferencing facilities, Gram Sabha halls, sufficient meeting space, and seating arrangements further reflects a supportive environment for conducting meetings and promoting citizen participation.

At the same time, certain infrastructure gaps remain evident. While Gram Sabha halls were available in a majority of locations, only 41.7 percent of respondents reported that hall capacity was adequate. Availability of sound systems for Gram Sabha meetings was also comparatively lower than other infrastructure indicators. In addition, audio-visual presentation facilities were available in only 8.3 percent of the surveyed locations, indicating limited use of modern presentation and communication tools during meetings.

Overall, the findings suggest that Chhattisgarh has established a strong foundation of basic infrastructure and digital connectivity for Gram Sabha functioning. However, improvements in hall capacity, sound systems, and particularly audio-visual facilities would further enhance the quality, effectiveness, and inclusiveness of Gram Sabha meetings and strengthen participatory local governance processes.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

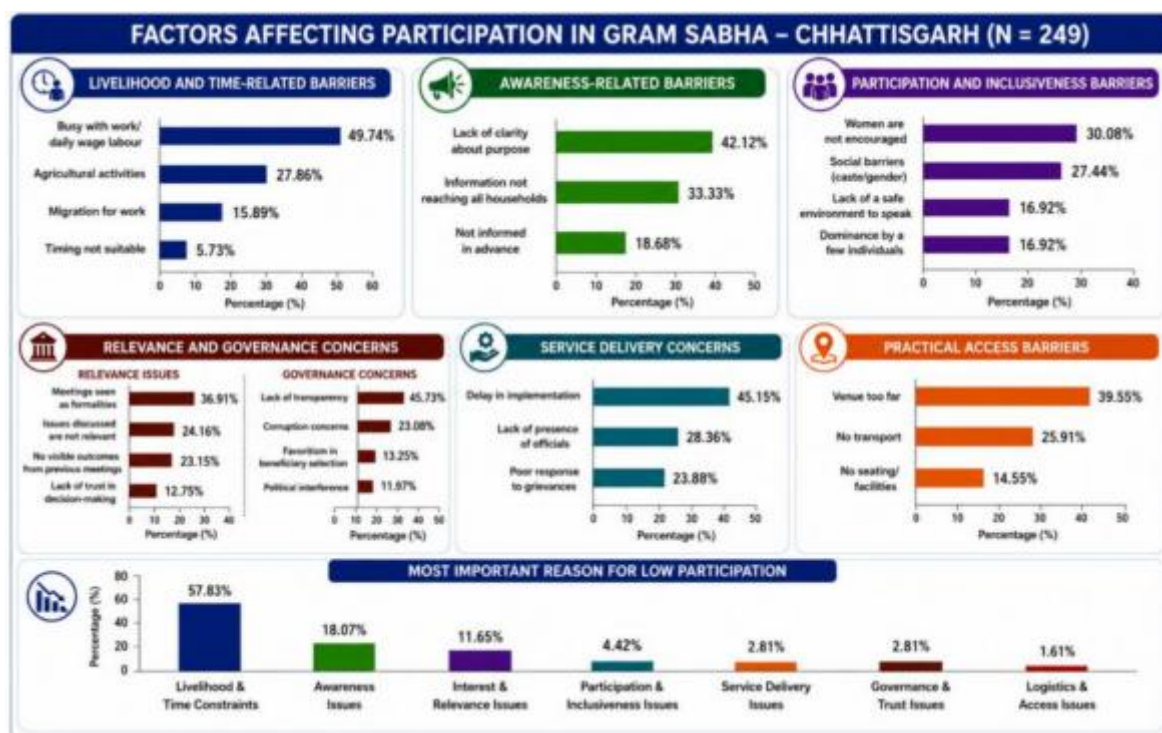
The study clearly indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Chhattisgarh. Daily wage employment, agricultural activities and migration for work emerged as the most frequently cited reasons preventing citizens from attending meetings. These findings reflect the continuing influence of livelihood responsibilities on participation patterns in rural areas.

Unlike several other States, awareness-related barriers in Chhattisgarh were dominated by lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha meetings. Respondents indicated that many citizens do not fully understand the significance of Gram Sabha or the benefits of participation. Information dissemination gaps and inadequate advance communication were also identified as important concerns.

Participation and inclusiveness barriers were primarily linked to inadequate encouragement of women, social barriers and lack of a safe environment for speaking. Respondents also highlighted dominance by a few individuals during discussions. These findings suggest that improving participation requires attention not only to attendance but also to the quality and inclusiveness of deliberations.

The findings further reveal substantial concerns regarding relevance and governance. A large proportion of respondents perceived Gram Sabha meetings as formalities, while many felt that issues discussed were not relevant to community needs. Lack of transparency, corruption concerns and favouritism in beneficiary selection further reduced confidence in Gram Sabha processes. Service delivery concerns, particularly delays in implementation and inadequate presence of officials, also emerged as important challenges affecting participation.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified local issues, sanitation, health and literacy, beneficiary identification and approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) as the most frequently discussed agenda items in Gram Sabha meetings. Discussions relating to budgeting, development priorities, welfare schemes and livelihood concerns also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha in Chhattisgarh serves as an important platform for addressing both development and service delivery concerns.

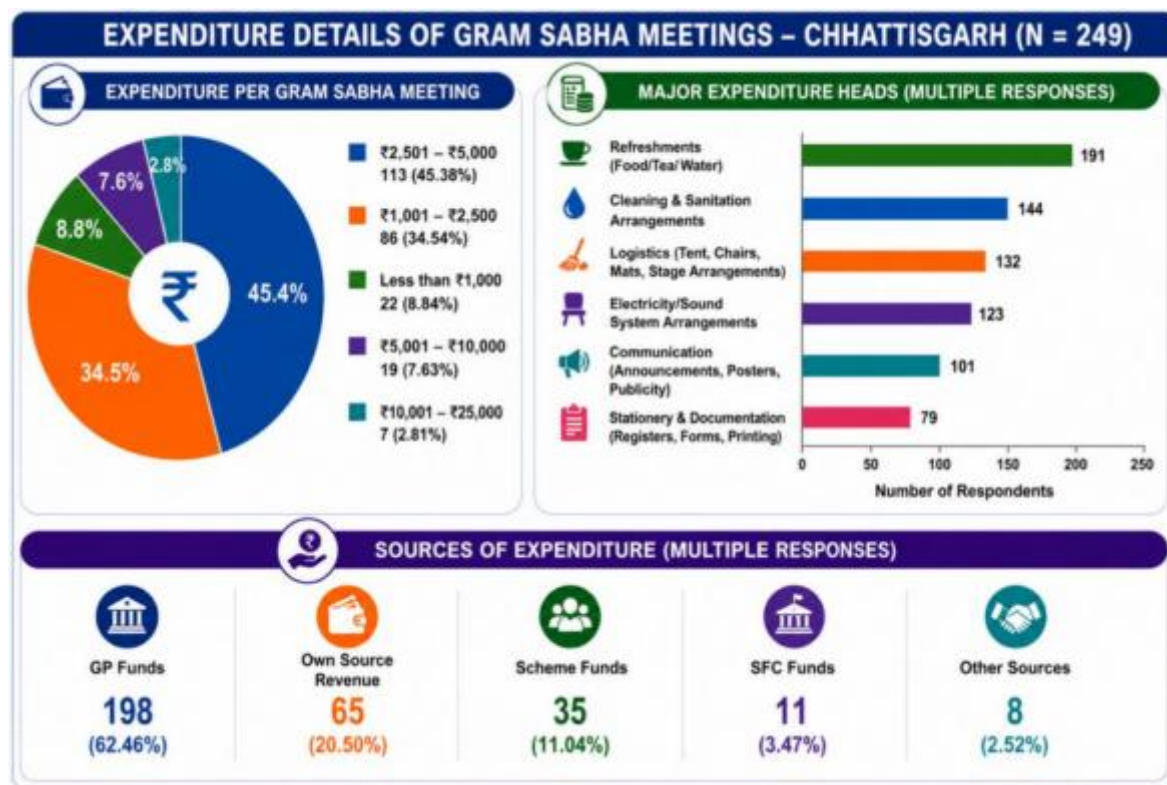
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Identifying Local Issues  | 11.88          |
| Sanitation                | 10.47          |
| Health & Literacy         | 8.41           |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 8.24           |
| Approving GPDP            | 7.71           |
| Annual Budget             | 7.47           |
| Development Priorities    | 7.47           |
| Welfare Schemes           | 7.41           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Gram Sabha meetings in Chhattisgarh are generally conducted with modest financial resources. Nearly four-fifths of respondents reported expenditure levels below ₹5,000 per meeting, with the ₹2,501–₹5,000 range being the most commonly reported expenditure category. Expenditure was primarily incurred on refreshments, drinking water, cleaning and sanitation arrangements, and meeting logistics such as tents, chairs and mats. Communication, documentation, and sound system arrangements also constituted important expenditure components. Overall, the expenditure pattern reflects a focus on ensuring the basic operational requirements necessary for the effective conduct of Gram Sabha meetings.



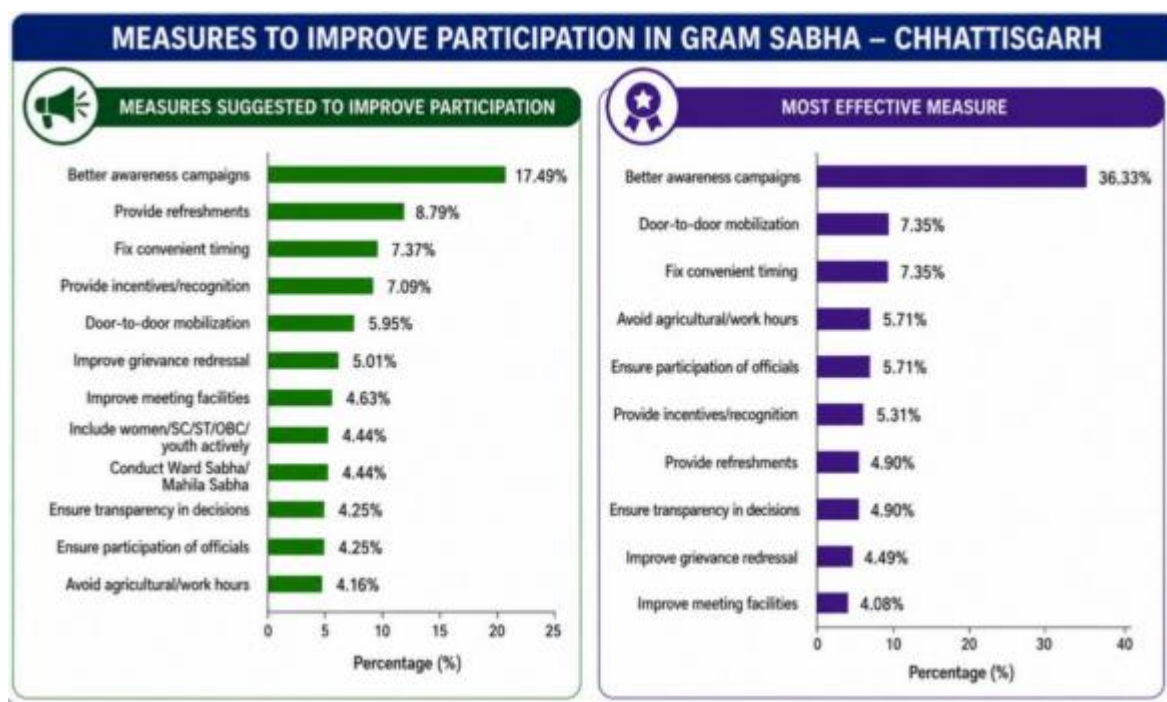
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents strongly emphasized awareness generation and community mobilisation as the most effective approaches for improving Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns emerged as both the most frequently suggested and the most effective measure by a substantial margin. This finding reinforces the importance of strengthening citizen awareness regarding the purpose, powers and benefits of Gram Sabha participation.

Several practical measures were also highlighted by respondents. Providing refreshments, fixing convenient meeting timings, offering incentives and conducting door-to-door mobilisation emerged among the most frequently suggested interventions. Respondents also emphasized the need for improved grievance redressal systems, better meeting facilities and stronger participation of officials.

The findings suggest that improving participation in Chhattisgarh requires a combination of awareness generation, citizen motivation, improved meeting management and stronger institutional responsiveness.





## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Livelihood and time constraints emerged as the most significant barrier to Gram Sabha participation.
2. Busy work schedules and agricultural activities were the primary reasons limiting attendance.
3. Information not reaching households and inadequate advance intimation reduced awareness and participation.
4. Dominance by a few individuals and social barriers affected inclusive participation in Gram Sabha meetings.
5. Many respondents perceived limited outcomes from previous meetings, reducing public interest and engagement.
6. Governance concerns such as lack of transparency, favoritism in beneficiary selection and corruption perceptions weakened trust.
7. Delays in implementation of decisions and poor grievance redressal discouraged participation.
8. Practical barriers such as distant venues, inadequate facilities and lack of transport affected accessibility.
9. Awareness campaigns and door-to-door mobilization emerged as the most preferred measures for improving participation.
10. Better awareness campaigns were identified as the single most effective measure for increasing Gram Sabha participation.
11. Chhattisgarh demonstrated strong infrastructure availability, including drinking water, toilets, digitized records, internet connectivity and social media usage.
12. Audio-visual presentation facilities and adequate hall capacity remained major infrastructure gaps despite otherwise strong infrastructure support.



## Recommendations

- Strengthen awareness campaigns through advance publicity, local announcements and digital communication channels.
- Institutionalize door-to-door mobilization through Panchayat representatives, SHGs, frontline workers and community volunteers.
- Schedule Gram Sabha meetings at convenient times that do not conflict with agricultural and livelihood activities.
- Promote inclusive participation by encouraging women, SCs, STs, youth and other marginalized groups to actively engage in discussions.
- Create a more open and participatory meeting environment to reduce dominance by a few individuals.
- Improve transparency by publicly sharing decisions, beneficiary lists, budgets and action taken reports.
- Strengthen grievance redressal mechanisms and ensure timely follow-up on issues raised in Gram Sabha meetings.
- Improve service delivery responsiveness through greater participation of line department officials.
- Enhance infrastructure by improving hall capacity, sound systems and audio-visual presentation facilities.
- Utilize digital platforms, social media and WhatsApp groups for regular communication and citizen engagement.
- Showcase visible outcomes from previous Gram Sabha decisions to build public confidence and trust.
- Establish regular monitoring and documentation systems to track participation levels, inclusiveness and implementation of resolutions.



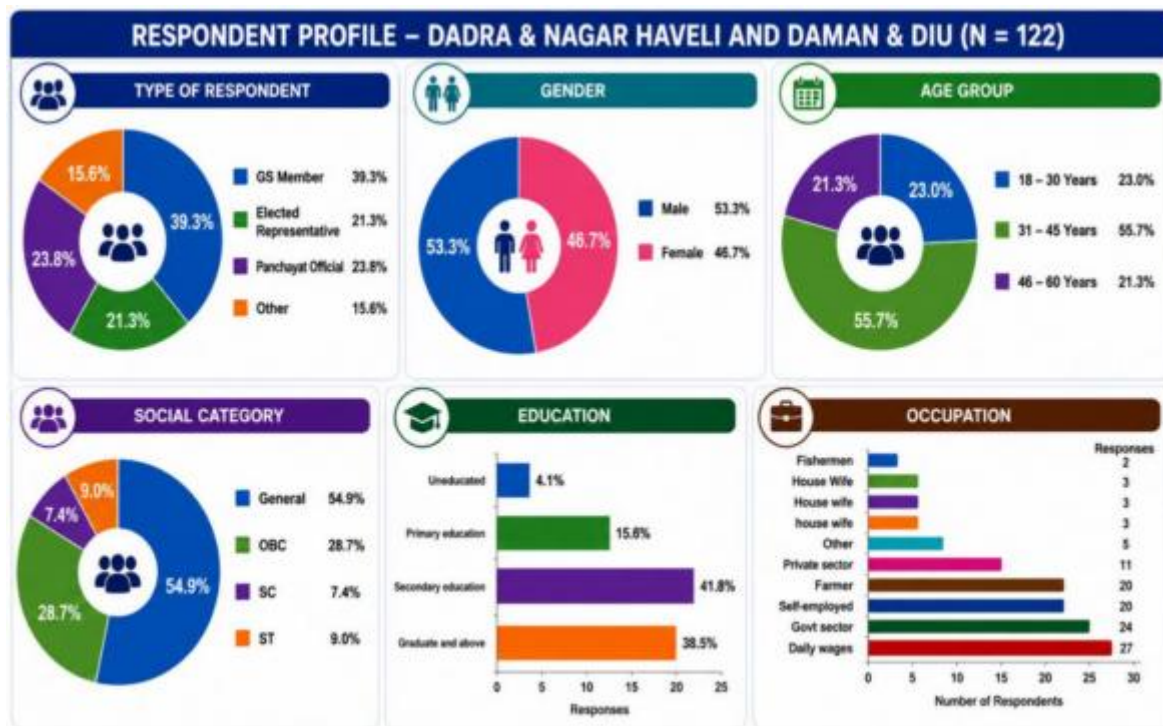
# DADRA AND NAGAR HAVELI AND DAMAN AND DIU

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 122 respondents from 06 Gram Panchayats across 3 districts of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, Panchayat officials, elected representatives and community members representing diverse occupational, educational and social backgrounds. The sample reflects participation from OBC, ST, SC and General communities, with daily wage workers, government employees, farmers and self-employed individuals forming major occupational groups. The findings provide important insights into factors influencing Gram Sabha participation in the Union Territory.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 122   |
| Districts Covered       | 03    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 06    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate exceptionally high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu. Nearly all respondents reported being aware of Gram Sabha meetings, their rights within Gram Sabha processes and the prescribed frequency of meetings. Attendance levels were equally impressive, with almost all respondents reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

Respondents also reported very high levels of active engagement during meetings. More than ninety percent indicated that they actively participate in Gram Sabha proceedings, while a majority described their participation levels as either high or very high. Participation frequency was also encouraging, with most respondents attending Gram Sabha meetings three or more times during the previous year.

Awareness regarding quorum provisions was comparatively moderate. While more than half of the respondents reported awareness of quorum requirements, a substantial proportion indicated that they were not aware whether quorum was achieved in Gram Sabha meetings. This suggests that procedural awareness remains weaker than general awareness regarding Gram Sabha participation.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 98.36          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 95.08          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 93.44          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 55.74          |

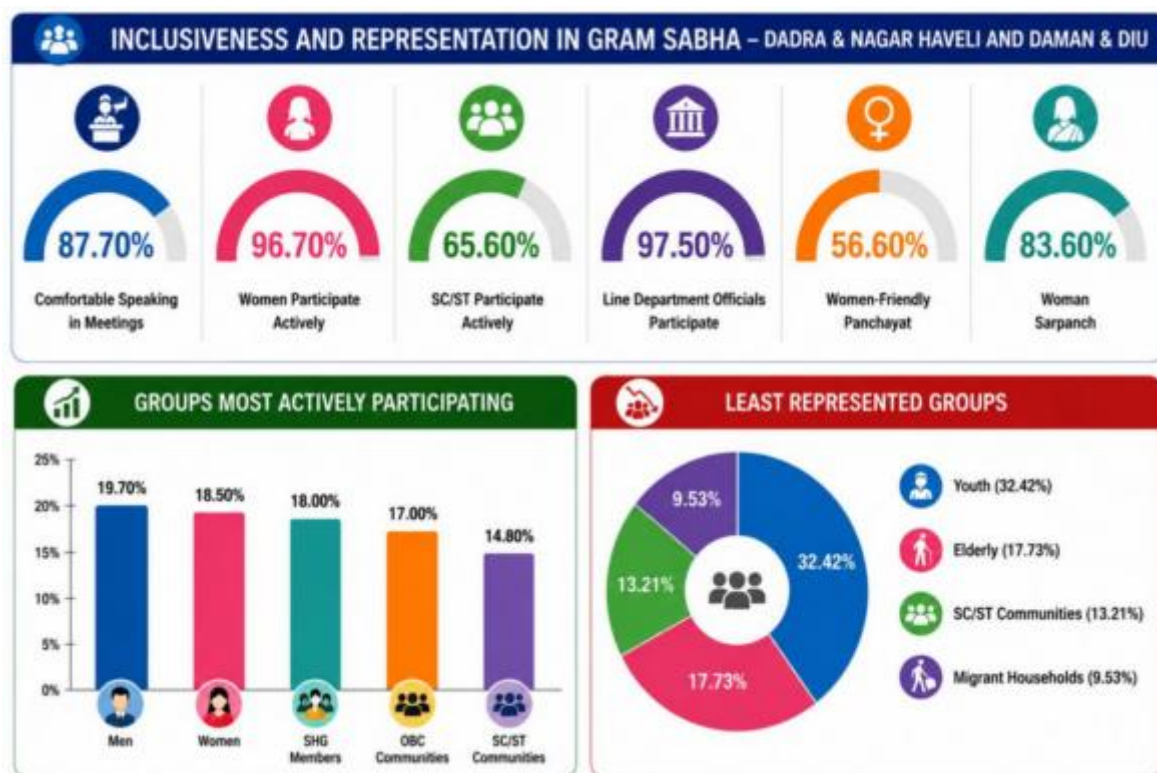
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

Respondents generally perceived Gram Sabha meetings in the Union Territory as highly inclusive forums. Women, men, SHG members and OBC communities emerged as the most active participants in Gram Sabha meetings. Most respondents also reported feeling comfortable speaking during discussions, suggesting a relatively open environment for citizen participation.

A notable finding is the exceptionally high participation of line department officials. Nearly all respondents reported that officials regularly participate in Gram Sabha meetings. Active participation by women was also widely acknowledged, and a large majority reported that the Sarpanch or Panchayat head is a woman. These findings indicate strong institutional engagement and substantial representation of women in local governance.

At the same time, participation by SC/ST communities was perceived to be comparatively lower than in several other States and Union Territories. Elderly persons, youth and migrant households were also identified among the least represented groups. These findings suggest the need for targeted measures to improve inclusion of specific social groups within Gram Sabha processes.





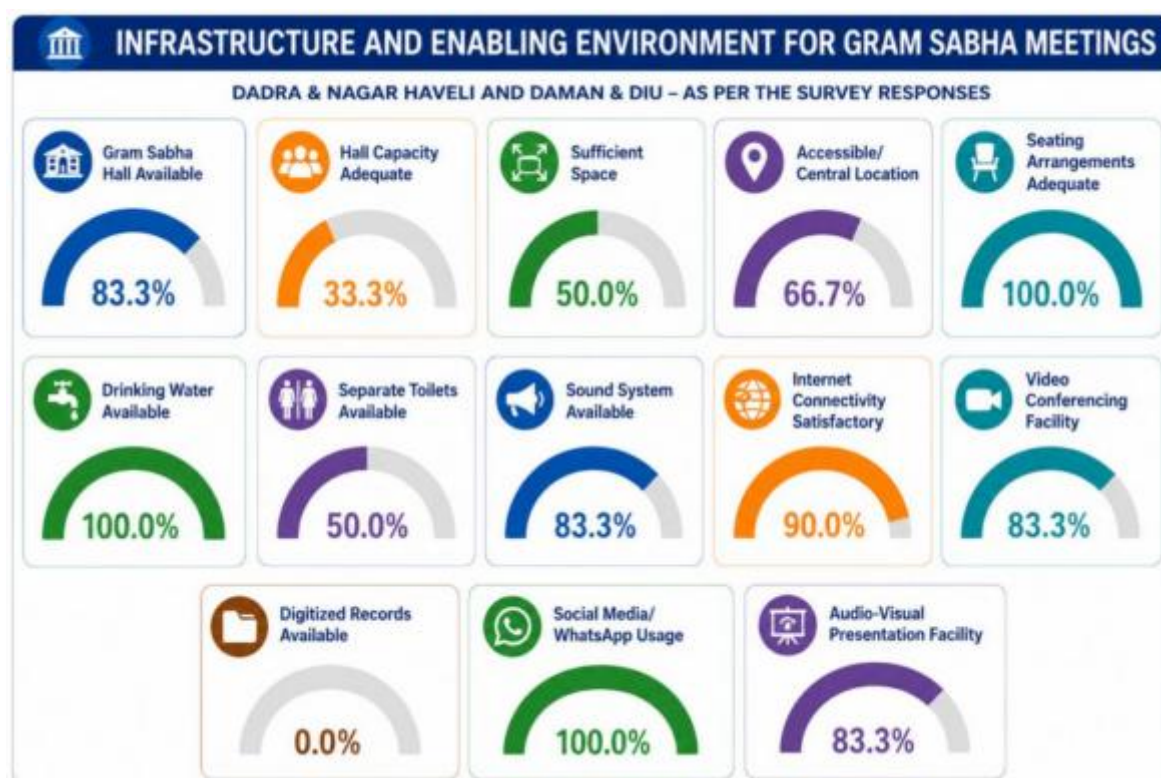
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu possesses several enabling infrastructure features that support the conduct of Gram Sabha meetings. Respondents reported universal availability of seating arrangements, drinking water facilities and social media/WhatsApp usage for communication purposes. High availability of Gram Sabha halls, sound systems, internet connectivity, video conferencing facilities and audio-visual presentation facilities further reflects a comparatively strong infrastructure environment for conducting meetings and facilitating citizen engagement.

At the same time, certain infrastructure gaps remain evident. Only one-third of respondents reported that hall capacity was adequate, while sufficient meeting space was reported by only half of the respondents. Separate toilet facilities were available in only half of the surveyed locations, and accessibility of meeting venues was reported by about two-thirds of respondents. A notable concern is the complete absence of digitized records, indicating the need for strengthening digital record management and institutional documentation systems.

Overall, the findings suggest that while the Union Territory demonstrates strong communication and technology-related infrastructure, improvements in meeting space adequacy, sanitation facilities, venue accessibility and digital record management would further strengthen the effectiveness of Gram Sabha meetings and participatory governance processes.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

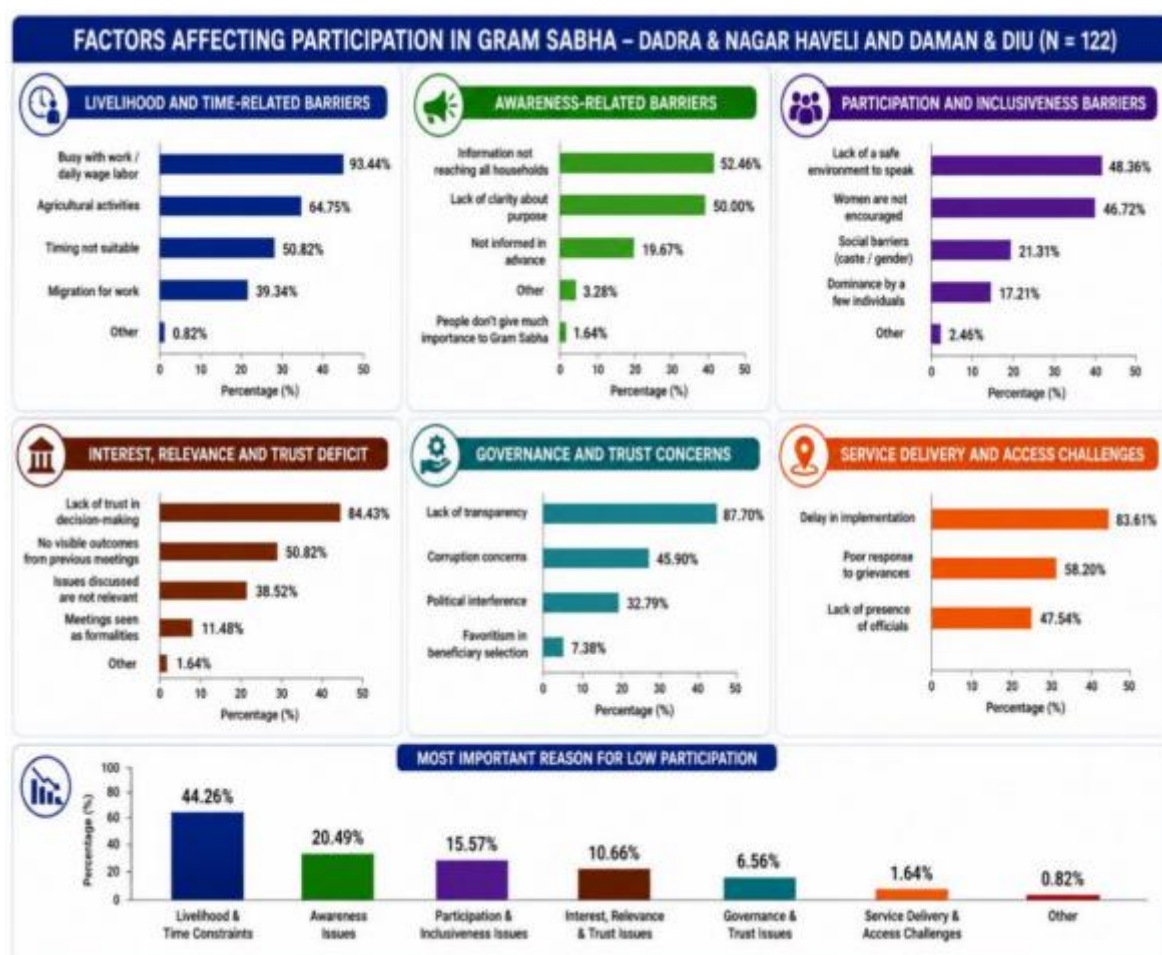
The findings indicate that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings. Daily wage employment, agricultural activities, unsuitable meeting timings and migration for work emerged as major factors limiting attendance. These findings highlight the continuing challenge of balancing participation with livelihood responsibilities.

Awareness-related barriers were also significant. Respondents reported that information regarding Gram Sabha meetings does not always reach all households, while many citizens lack clarity regarding the purpose and importance of Gram Sabha. These communication gaps reduce motivation to participate and weaken citizen engagement.

Unlike many other States, participation-related barriers were dominated by concerns regarding the quality of the participation environment. Respondents highlighted lack of a safe environment to speak, inadequate encouragement for women and social barriers as important factors affecting involvement. Relevance-related concerns were particularly prominent. Lack of trust in decision-making emerged as the single most important issue affecting citizen interest in Gram Sabha participation.

The findings also reveal substantial governance and service delivery concerns. Lack of transparency, corruption concerns and political interference were frequently cited by respondents. Delays in implementation of decisions, poor grievance redressal and inadequate transport facilities further contributed to low participation and reduced citizen confidence in Gram Sabha processes.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified local issues, approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs), livelihood concerns and sanitation as the most frequently discussed agenda items in Gram Sabha meetings. Welfare schemes, beneficiary identification, annual budgeting and development priorities also featured prominently. The findings indicate that Gram Sabha in the Union Territory serves as an important platform for planning, development and local problem-solving.

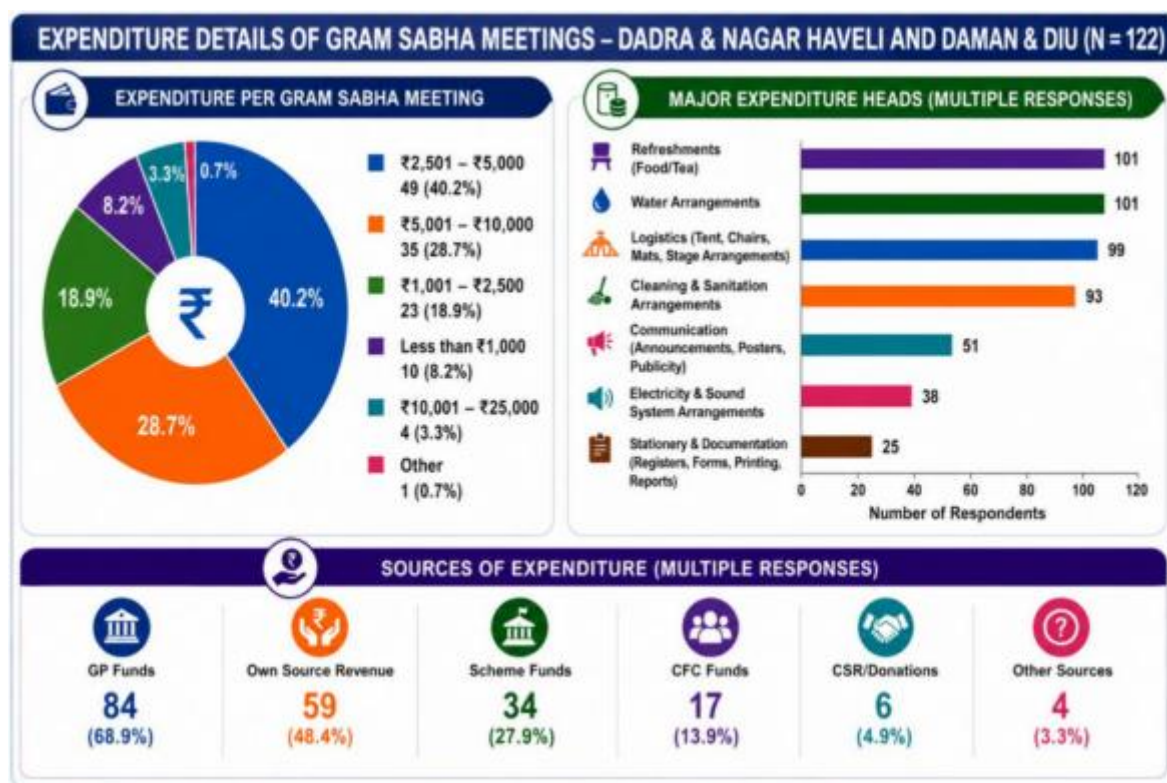
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Identifying Local Issues  | 10.97          |
| Approving GPDP            | 10.87          |
| Livelihood Issues         | 10.56          |
| Sanitation                | 10.25          |
| Welfare Schemes           | 8.80           |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 8.49           |
| Annual Budget             | 8.39           |
| Development Priorities    | 7.35           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Gram Sabha meetings in Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu are primarily financed through GP Funds and Own Source Revenue, with comparatively limited dependence on external funding sources. The most commonly reported expenditure range was ₹2,501–₹5,000 per meeting, followed by expenditure between ₹5,001–₹10,000, suggesting moderate resource allocation for Gram Sabha conduct. Major expenditure is concentrated on refreshments, drinking water, logistics arrangements and sanitation facilities, reflecting a strong emphasis on participant convenience and meeting management. Communication and sound system-related expenditure was comparatively lower than core logistical expenses. The presence of multiple funding sources, including scheme funds, CFC grants and CSR contributions, indicates some degree of financial diversification. Overall, the expenditure pattern suggests that Gram Sabha meetings in the Union Territory are supported by a reasonably stable financial base and prioritize essential operational arrangements necessary for effective community participation.



## Measures for Improving Participation

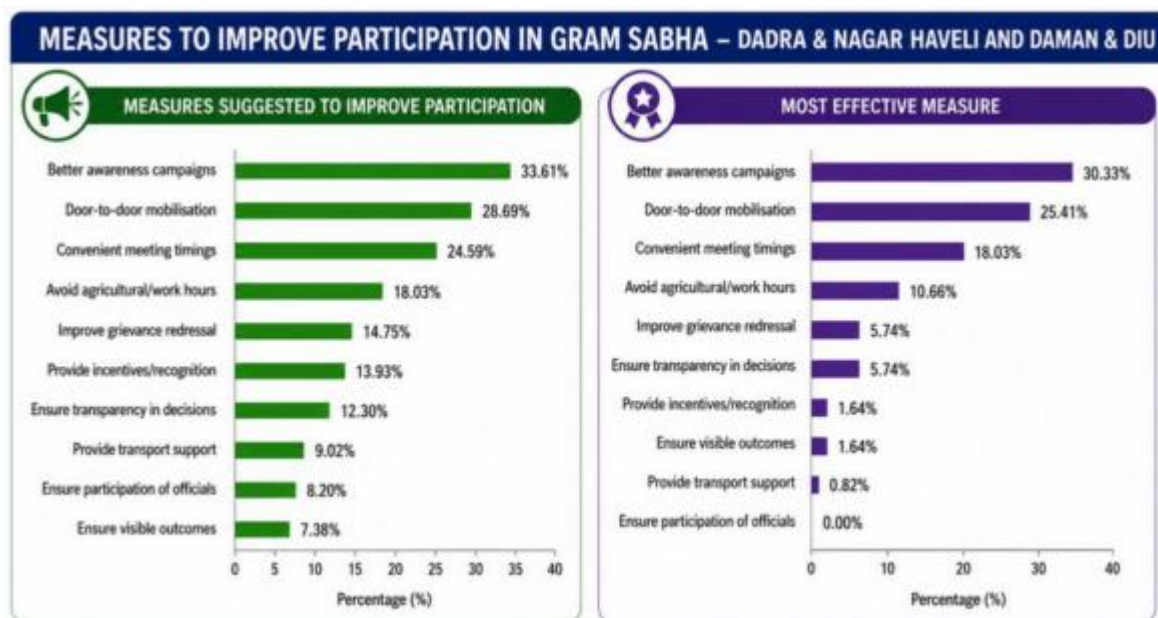
Respondents highlighted a wide range of measures for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Door-to-door mobilisation, ensuring visible outcomes, awareness campaigns, transparency in decision-making and incentives for participation emerged among the most frequently suggested interventions. These findings indicate that respondents view participation as closely linked to both citizen mobilisation and the credibility of governance processes.

A distinctive feature of the Union Territory is the strong emphasis placed on grievance redressal. When asked to identify the single most effective measure for improving participation, respondents overwhelmingly selected improvement of grievance redressal



mechanisms. Door-to-door mobilisation and incentives were also viewed as important strategies.

The findings suggest that improving participation requires a combination of responsiveness, transparency, awareness generation and stronger follow-up on Gram Sabha decisions. Citizens appear more likely to participate when meetings produce tangible outcomes and their concerns are addressed effectively.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Awareness of Gram Sabha meetings is very high, with 98.4% respondents reporting awareness.
2. Nearly all respondents (98.4%) attended a Gram Sabha meeting during the previous year.
3. Active participation levels remain strong, with 93.4% reporting participation in discussions.
4. Women's participation is widely recognized, with 96.7% respondents reporting active involvement of women.
5. Line department officials participate regularly in Gram Sabha meetings according to 97.5% respondents.
6. A large proportion of respondents (83.6%) reported that the Sarpanch/Mukhiya/Pradhan is a woman.
7. Comfort in speaking during meetings is relatively high, with 87.7% respondents feeling comfortable expressing their views.
8. Awareness of quorum remains comparatively low, with only 55.7% respondents reporting knowledge about quorum requirements.
9. Participation of SC/ST communities was reported by 65.6% respondents, indicating scope for strengthening inclusion.



10. Women, men and SHG members emerged as the most actively participating groups in Gram Sabha meetings.
11. Livelihood and time constraints were identified as the most important barrier to participation.
12. Lack of transparency, delay in implementation and lack of trust in decision-making emerged as major governance concerns.
13. Better awareness campaigns and door-to-door mobilization were identified as the most preferred measures for improving participation.
14. Identifying local issues emerged as the most frequently discussed agenda item during Gram Sabha meetings.
15. Village committees, particularly SHG Federations and School Management Committees, play an active role in community engagement and local governance.

### Recommendations

- Intensify awareness campaigns before every Gram Sabha meeting to sustain high participation levels.
- Strengthen door-to-door mobilisation to ensure that information reaches all households.
- Schedule meetings at convenient timings that accommodate daily wage earners and working populations.
- Improve communication regarding the purpose, agenda and expected outcomes of Gram Sabha meetings.
- Enhance transparency in decision-making and beneficiary selection processes.
- Strengthen follow-up mechanisms to ensure timely implementation of decisions taken in Gram Sabha meetings.
- Improve grievance redressal systems and communicate action taken to citizens regularly.
- Encourage greater participation of SC/ST communities through targeted outreach and inclusion measures.
- Promote wider participation of youth, migrant households and other underrepresented groups.
- Increase awareness regarding quorum requirements and the importance of citizen attendance.
- Strengthen digital record management and documentation systems to improve institutional transparency.
- Continue supporting women's leadership and participation in local governance institutions.
- Publicize resolutions and implementation progress to build greater public trust.
- Encourage active participation of village committees and community-based organizations in mobilisation efforts.
- Strengthen community monitoring and feedback mechanisms to improve accountability and responsiveness.



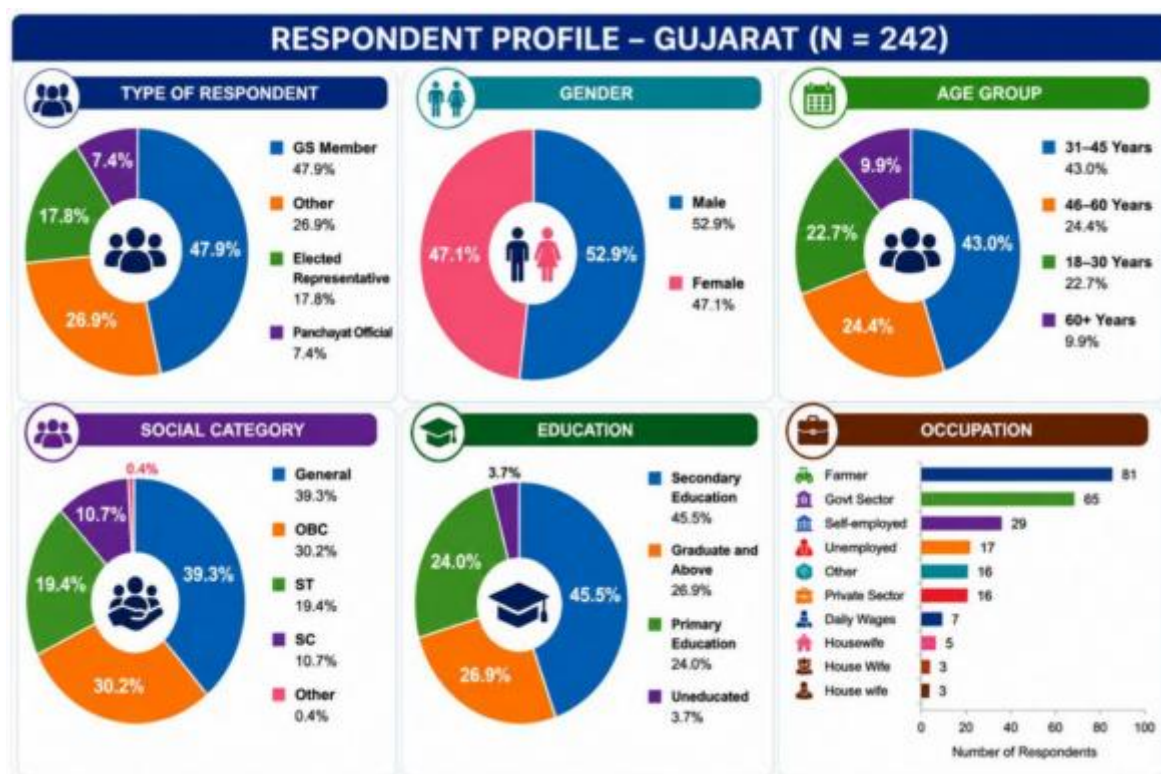
# GUJARAT

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 242 respondents from 12 Gram Panchayats across 06 districts of Gujarat. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. The sample reflects participation from General, OBC, ST and SC communities, with farmers and government employees constituting major occupational groups. Men and women were almost equally represented in the survey. The findings provide valuable insights into the factors influencing Gram Sabha participation and local governance processes in Gujarat.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 242   |
| Districts Covered       | 06    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 12    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate exceptionally high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Gujarat. Nearly all respondents reported being aware of Gram Sabha meetings, their rights within Gram Sabha processes and the prescribed frequency of meetings. Attendance levels were similarly high, with almost all respondents reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

Despite high awareness and attendance, respondents generally described their participation levels as moderate rather than high. While a substantial majority reported actively participating in Gram Sabha meetings, relatively few characterized their participation as very high. This suggests that attendance is strong, but deeper engagement in deliberations may require further strengthening.

Awareness regarding quorum provisions remains relatively limited. Only about half of the respondents reported awareness of quorum requirements, while a majority indicated that they were not aware whether quorum was achieved during Gram Sabha meetings. These findings suggest that procedural aspects of Gram Sabha functioning are less well understood than general participation-related issues.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 98.76          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 97.52          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 87.60          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 52.48          |

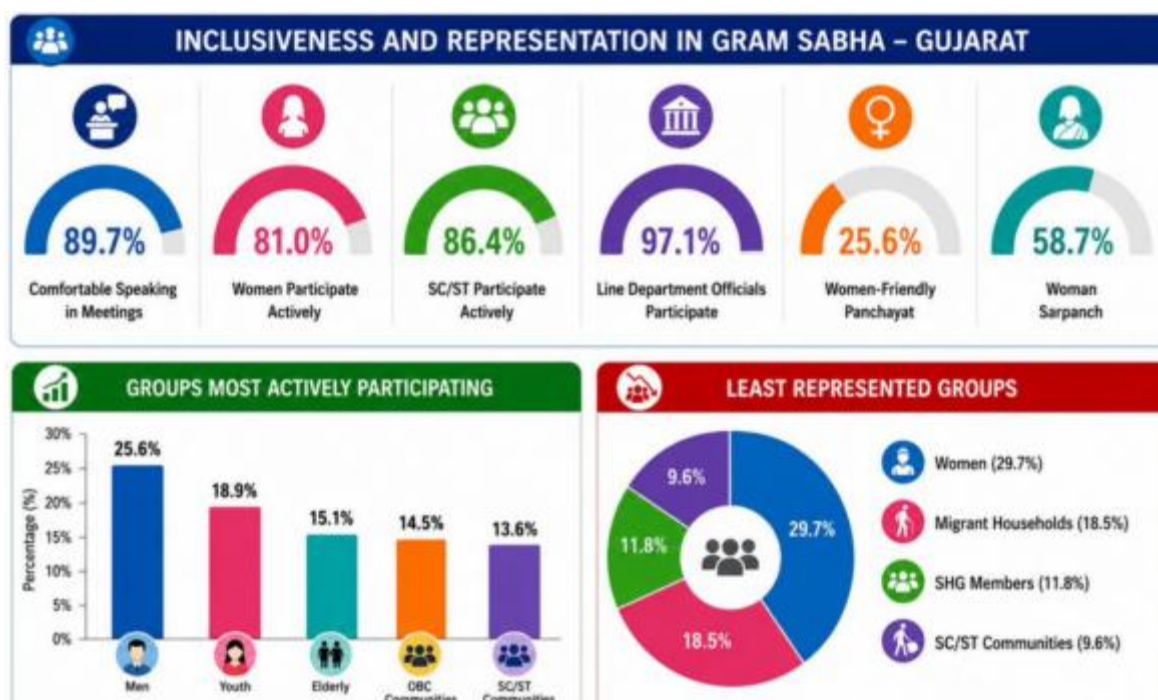
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

Respondents generally perceived Gram Sabha meetings in Gujarat as inclusive forums with active participation from a broad range of social groups. Men, youth, elderly persons, OBC communities and SC/ST communities were identified among the most active participants. Most respondents also reported feeling comfortable speaking during meetings and expressing their views.

Participation by women and SC/ST communities was generally viewed positively. More than four-fifths of respondents reported active participation by women, while an even larger proportion acknowledged participation by SC/ST communities. Participation of line department officials was exceptionally high, suggesting strong institutional engagement in Gram Sabha processes.

However, an important concern emerges regarding gender inclusiveness. Despite substantial participation by women and the presence of women representatives, nearly three-fourths of respondents reported that their Panchayat cannot be considered women-friendly. Women also emerged as the single largest group perceived to be underrepresented in Gram Sabha meetings. These findings indicate that participation alone may not necessarily translate into a supportive and inclusive environment for women.





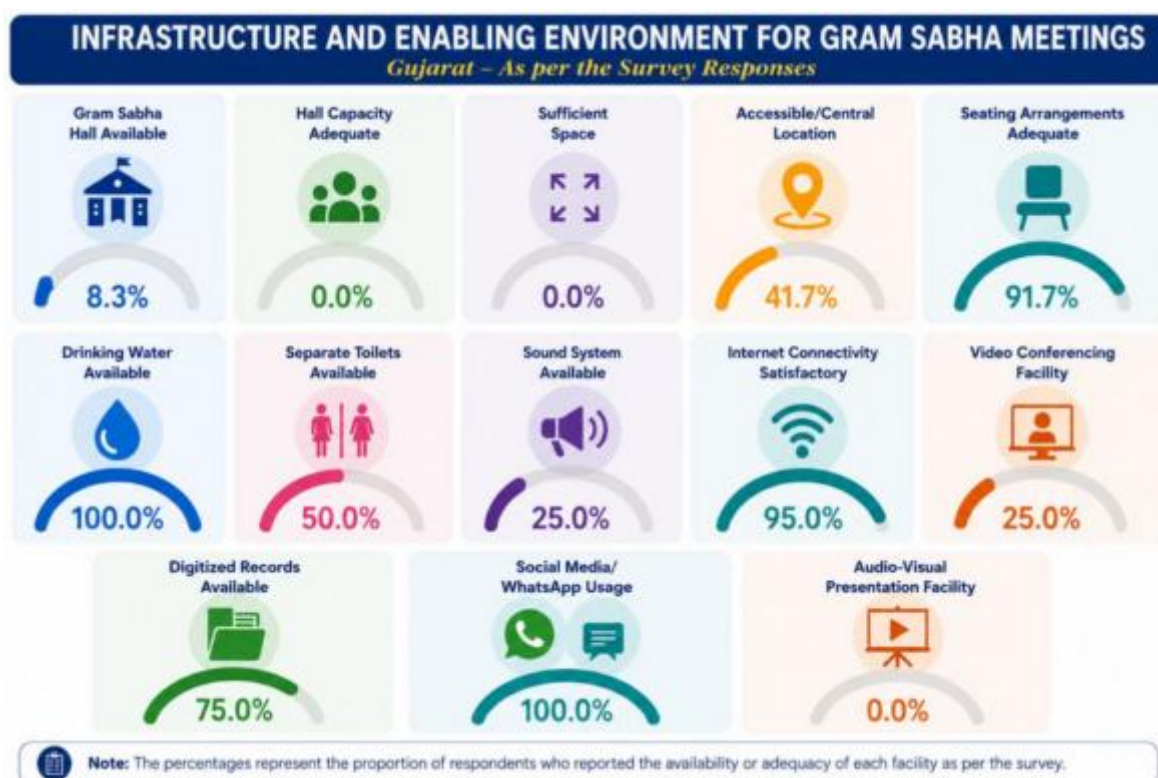
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Gujarat relies largely on existing community and Panchayat infrastructure rather than dedicated Gram Sabha facilities. Only a small proportion of respondents reported the availability of dedicated Gram Sabha halls (8.3%), while none reported adequate hall capacity or sufficient meeting space. Accessibility of meeting venues was reported by 41.7 percent respondents. These findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings are often conducted using shared facilities or alternative public spaces rather than purpose-built meeting infrastructure.

Despite limitations in physical infrastructure, the availability of basic amenities remains relatively strong. Drinking water facilities were reported to be available in all surveyed locations, while seating arrangements were considered adequate by 91.7 percent respondents. Separate toilet facilities were available in half of the surveyed Gram Panchayats. However, availability of sound systems and video conferencing facilities was reported by only one-fourth of respondents, indicating limitations in communication support and technology-enabled participation.

The survey further highlights Gujarat's comparatively strong digital readiness. Internet connectivity was reported to be satisfactory in 95.0 percent of surveyed locations, digitized records were available in 75.0 percent locations and social media/WhatsApp platforms were widely used for communication. However, the absence of audio-visual presentation facilities and the limited availability of dedicated meeting infrastructure suggest the need for strengthening physical facilities alongside ongoing digital governance initiatives to improve the overall effectiveness of Gram Sabha meetings.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

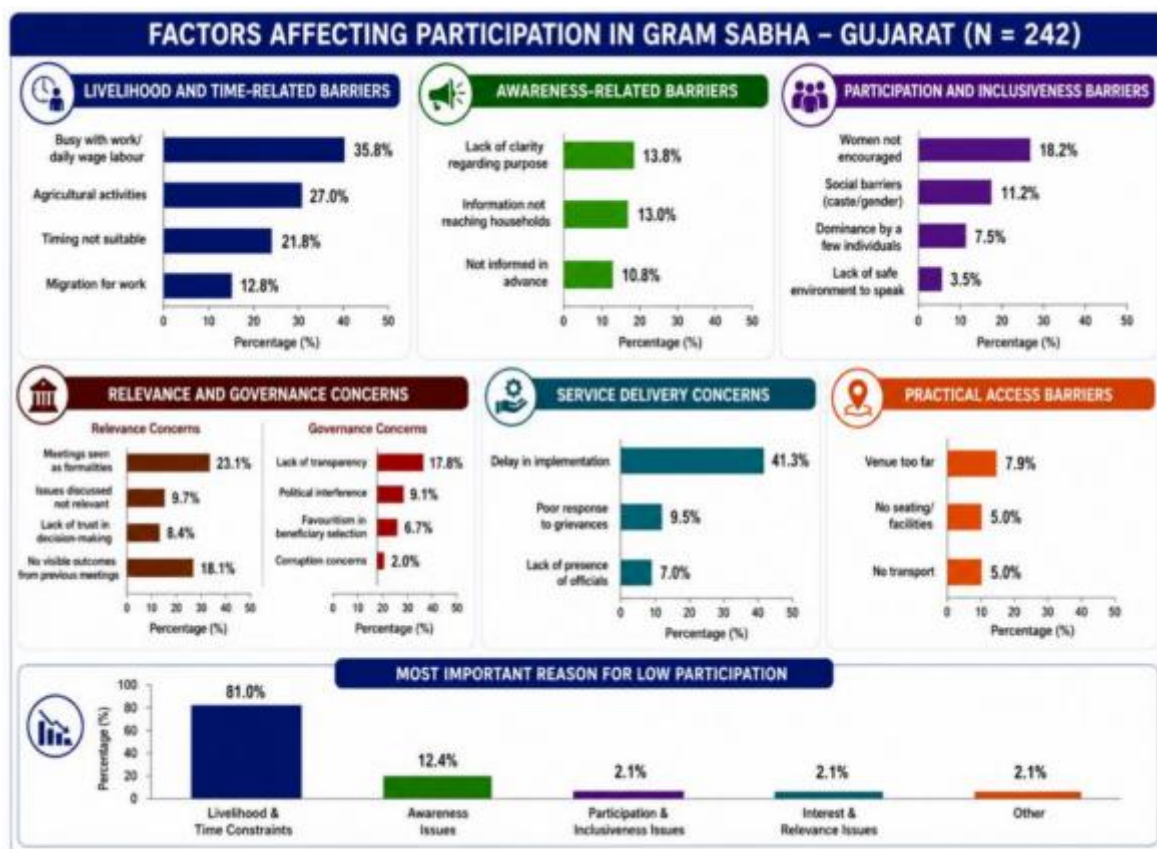
The study clearly indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the dominant barrier affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Gujarat. Daily wage employment, agricultural activities, unsuitable meeting timings and migration for work emerged as the most frequently cited reasons preventing citizens from attending meetings. Compared to many other States, the dominance of livelihood-related barriers is particularly pronounced in Gujarat.

Awareness-related barriers were also significant. Lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha emerged as the most important awareness challenge, followed by inadequate dissemination of information and lack of advance notice regarding meetings. These findings suggest that citizens may be aware of Gram Sabha meetings but not necessarily understand their significance and potential benefits.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns were primarily linked to inadequate encouragement for women, social barriers and dominance by a few individuals. Respondents highlighted the need for greater inclusion of women and marginalized groups within Gram Sabha processes.

The findings further reveal concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Many respondents perceived Gram Sabha meetings as formalities and expressed concerns about lack of visible outcomes. Lack of transparency emerged as the most significant governance concern, while delays in implementation of decisions were identified as the most important service delivery issue affecting citizen confidence.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified health and literacy, local issues and sanitation as the most frequently discussed agenda items in Gram Sabha meetings. Development priorities, annual budgeting, beneficiary identification and approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) also featured prominently. Compared to several other States, discussions relating to health, literacy and sanitation appear particularly prominent in Gujarat.

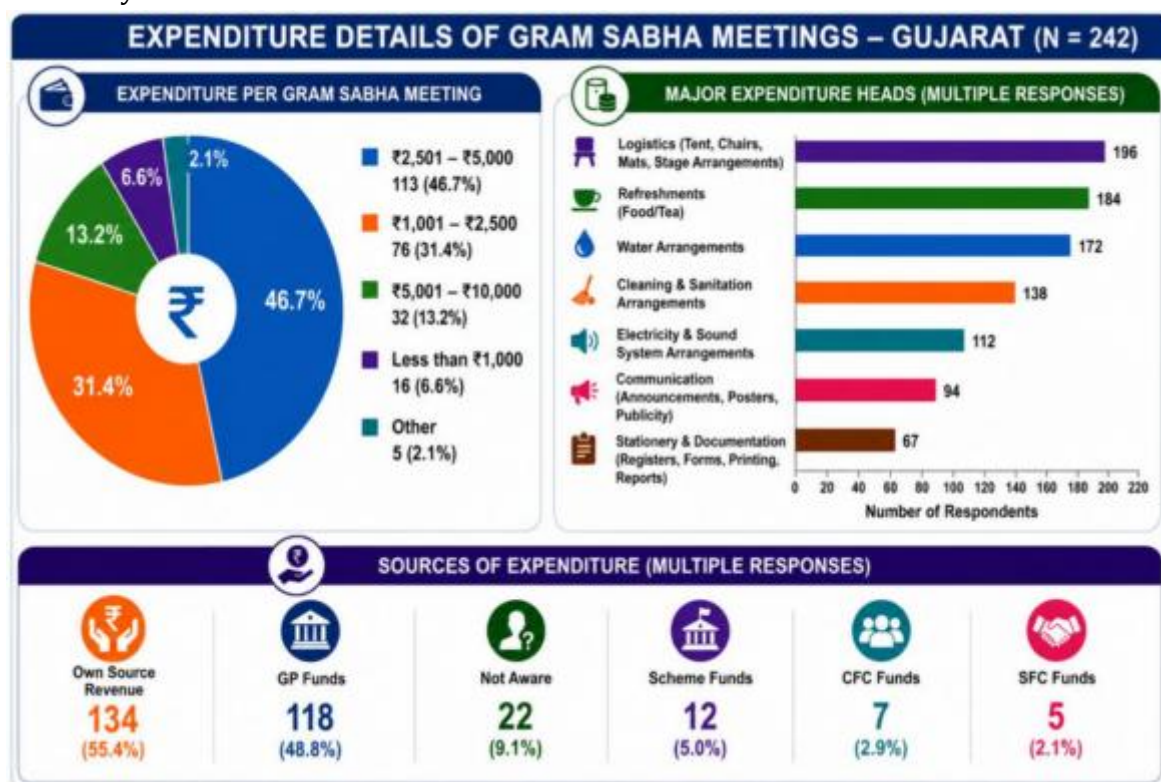
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Health & Literacy         | 13.18          |
| Identifying Local Issues  | 12.61          |
| Sanitation                | 12.03          |
| Development Priorities    | 9.96           |
| Annual Budget             | 7.45           |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 7.38           |
| Approving GPDP            | 7.31           |
| Infrastructure            | 7.23           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

The expenditure pattern in Gujarat indicates that most Gram Sabha meetings are conducted with modest financial resources, with nearly half of the respondents reporting expenditure between ₹2,501–₹5,000 per meeting and another one-third reporting expenditure between ₹1,001–₹2,500. Logistics arrangements, refreshments, water provision and sanitation emerge as the major expenditure heads, highlighting the emphasis on ensuring basic meeting arrangements and participant convenience. The findings further show that Gram Panchayat funds and Own Source Revenue constitute the principal sources of expenditure, while dependence on external funding sources such as Scheme Funds, CFC and SFC funds remains relatively limited. Overall, the findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Gujarat are primarily financed through local resources and focus largely on essential operational and facilitation expenses required for conducting community meetings effectively.



## Measures for Improving Participation

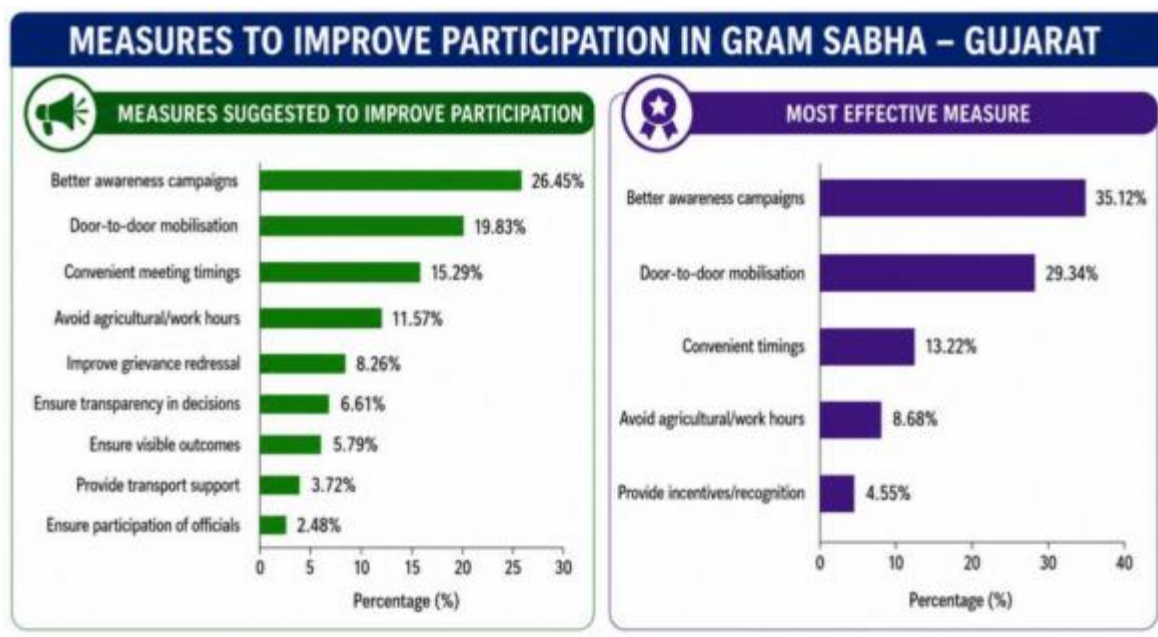
Respondents strongly emphasized citizen mobilisation and convenient scheduling as the most effective approaches for improving Gram Sabha participation. Fixing convenient meeting timings and door-to-door mobilisation emerged as the most frequently suggested interventions, followed by awareness campaigns and avoiding agricultural work hours.

A distinctive feature of Gujarat is the overwhelming emphasis on convenience and outreach. Many respondents specifically highlighted the need to schedule meetings according to local work patterns and availability of citizens. Open-ended suggestions repeatedly emphasized household-level mobilisation, advance planning and direct invitations to citizens.

When asked to identify the single most effective measure, respondents overwhelmingly selected door-to-door mobilisation, followed by convenient timings and provision of



refreshments. These findings suggest that participation challenges in Gujarat are viewed primarily as mobilisation and scheduling issues rather than governance or institutional problems.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Awareness of Gram Sabha meetings is very high, with 98.8% respondents reporting awareness.
2. A large majority (97.5%) reported awareness of their rights in the Gram Sabha.
3. Nearly all respondents (97.5%) attended a Gram Sabha meeting during the previous year.
4. Most respondents (89.7%) feel comfortable speaking during Gram Sabha meetings.
5. Participation of women and SC/ST communities is widely acknowledged by respondents.
6. Men, youth and elderly citizens emerged as the most actively participating groups.
7. Livelihood and time constraints constitute the most significant barrier to participation.
8. Lack of clarity regarding the purpose of meetings and inadequate information dissemination remain important awareness-related challenges.
9. Delay in implementation of decisions emerged as the most prominent service delivery concern.
10. Door-to-door mobilisation and awareness campaigns were identified as the most effective measures for improving participation.
11. Health, literacy, local issues and sanitation were among the most frequently discussed agenda items.
12. Gram Sabha meetings are primarily financed through Own Source Revenue and Gram Panchayat funds.



13. Internet connectivity and social media usage are strong, but dedicated Gram Sabha infrastructure remains limited.
14. Drinking water and seating facilities are widely available, while audio-visual facilities are largely absent.
15. Village committees play an active role in mobilising people and raising public issues.

## Recommendations

- Strengthen door-to-door mobilisation and household-level outreach before every Gram Sabha meeting.
- Conduct intensive awareness campaigns to improve understanding of Gram Sabha objectives and citizen rights.
- Schedule meetings at convenient times to reduce livelihood-related participation constraints.
- Improve advance communication regarding meeting dates, agenda and expected outcomes.
- Strengthen follow-up mechanisms to ensure timely implementation of Gram Sabha decisions.
- Enhance transparency in decision-making and beneficiary selection processes.
- Promote greater participation of women, youth, migrant households and other underrepresented groups.
- Improve accessibility and availability of dedicated Gram Sabha meeting infrastructure.
- Strengthen sound systems, video conferencing and audio-visual facilities to improve meeting effectiveness.
- Expand digital record management and technology-enabled governance practices.
- Encourage active involvement of village committees and community-based organizations in mobilisation efforts.
- Publicize action taken on resolutions to build greater trust in Gram Sabha processes.
- Improve grievance redressal mechanisms and ensure timely response to citizen concerns.
- Facilitate greater participation of line department officials during Gram Sabha meetings.
- Promote participatory planning, monitoring and community oversight through regular citizen engagement.



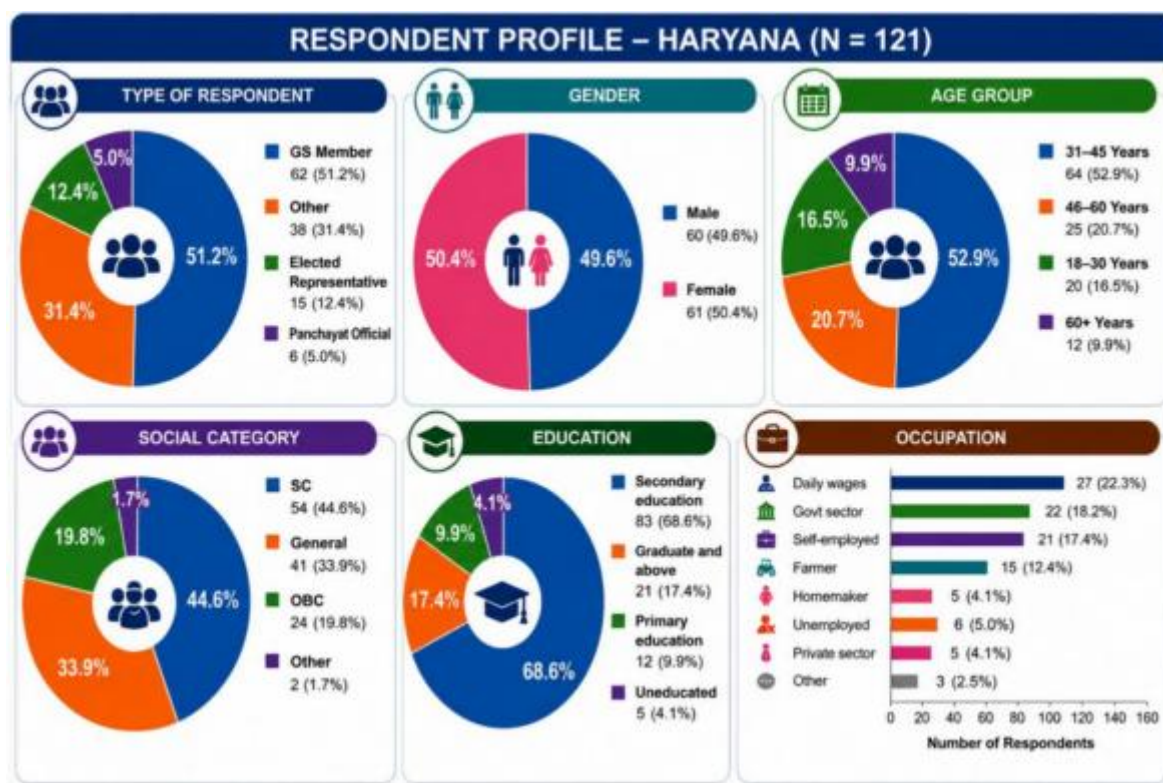
# HARYANA

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 121 respondents from 06 Gram Panchayats across 3 districts of Haryana. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse occupational, educational and social backgrounds. The sample reflects participation from SC, General and OBC communities, with daily wage workers, government employees, self-employed individuals and farmers constituting major occupational groups. Men and women were almost equally represented in the survey. The findings provide valuable insights into factors influencing Gram Sabha participation and local governance processes in Haryana.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 121   |
| Districts Covered       | 03    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 06    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate relatively high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Haryana. A substantial majority of respondents reported being aware of Gram Sabha meetings, their rights within Gram Sabha processes and the prescribed frequency of meetings. Attendance levels were also encouraging, with nearly nine out of ten respondents reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

However, compared to many other States, awareness indicators in Haryana are relatively lower. Awareness regarding quorum provisions is particularly limited, with less than one-third of respondents reporting knowledge of quorum requirements. A large majority were also unaware whether quorum was achieved in Gram Sabha meetings. These findings suggest that procedural aspects of Gram Sabha functioning remain poorly understood.

Respondents generally described their participation levels as moderate. While a majority reported active participation in Gram Sabha meetings, relatively few characterized their participation as high or very high. This indicates scope for strengthening deeper engagement and more meaningful citizen involvement in Gram Sabha deliberations.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 90.08          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 76.86          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 78.51          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 29.75          |

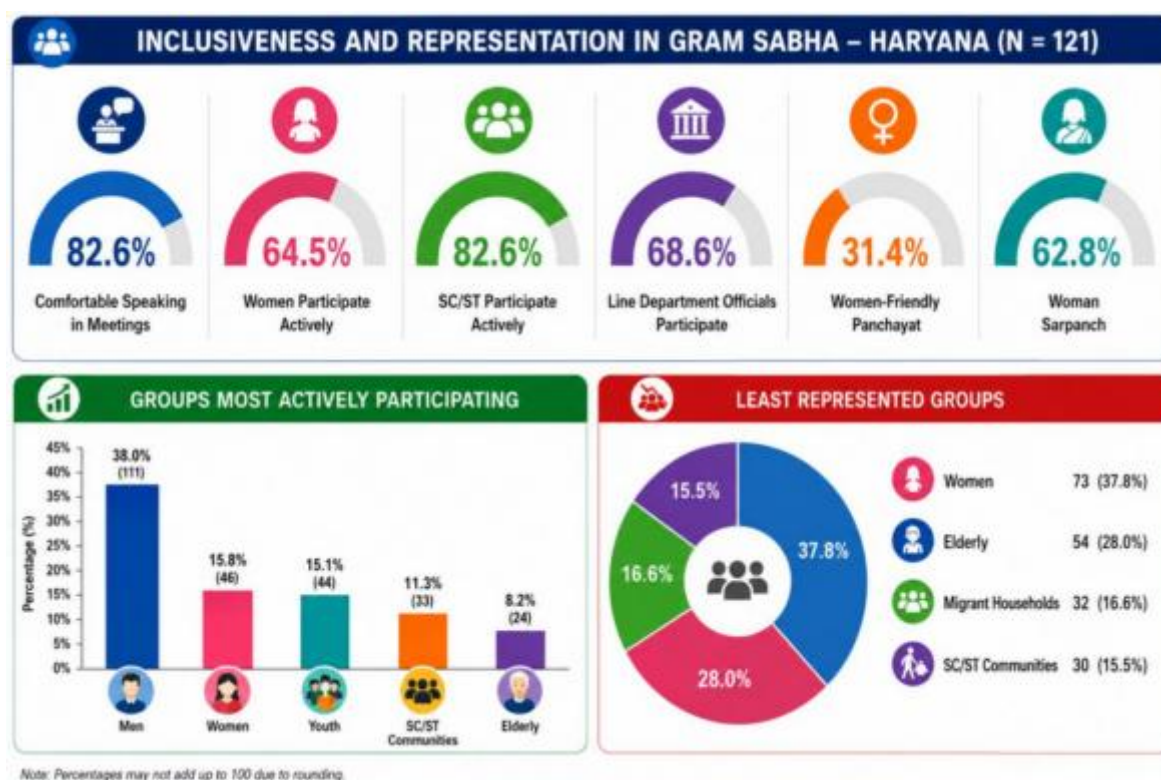
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

The findings indicate that inclusiveness remains a significant concern in Haryana. Men emerged as the dominant participants in Gram Sabha meetings, followed by women and youth. While a majority of respondents reported feeling comfortable speaking during meetings, participation by women and marginalized groups was perceived to be weaker than in several other States.

Only about two-thirds of respondents reported active participation by women, making Haryana one of the States with comparatively lower perceptions regarding women's involvement in Gram Sabha processes. Participation of SC/ST communities was viewed more positively, although representation gaps continue to exist. Participation of line department officials was also limited, with most respondents indicating that officials do not regularly attend Gram Sabha meetings.

A particularly important finding relates to gender inclusiveness. Nearly eighty-six percent of respondents reported that their Panchayat cannot be considered women-friendly. Women were also identified as the most underrepresented group in Gram Sabha meetings. These findings suggest that improving participation in Haryana will require targeted efforts to create a more supportive and inclusive environment for women.





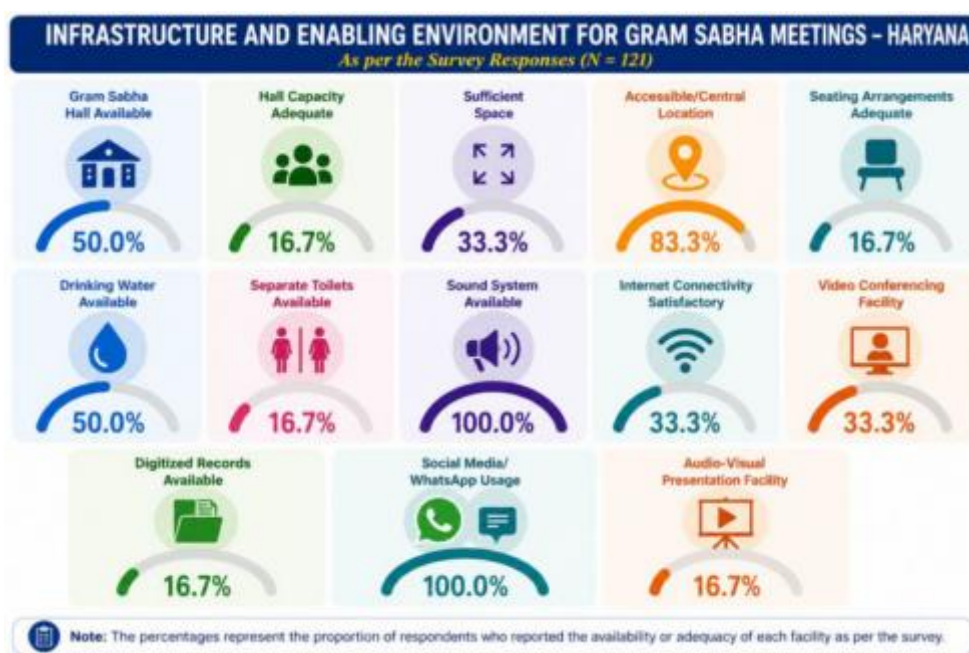
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Haryana possesses a mixed infrastructure environment for conducting Gram Sabha meetings. Respondents reported universal availability of sound systems and social media/WhatsApp usage for communication purposes, while a large majority indicated that meeting venues were located in accessible and central locations. Availability of Gram Sabha halls and drinking water facilities was reported by half of the respondents, suggesting the presence of some basic infrastructure to support Gram Sabha functioning.

At the same time, several infrastructure gaps remain evident. Only one-third of respondents reported the availability of sufficient meeting space, internet connectivity and video conferencing facilities. Hall capacity was considered adequate by only 16.7 percent of respondents, while seating arrangements and separate toilet facilities were also available in only a limited number of locations. Digitized records and audio-visual presentation facilities were similarly reported by only 16.7 percent of respondents, indicating relatively weak digital and technological infrastructure.

Overall, the findings suggest that while Haryana has established basic communication mechanisms and sound system support for Gram Sabha meetings, significant improvements are required in physical infrastructure, sanitation facilities, seating arrangements, digital record management and technology-enabled meeting facilities. Strengthening these areas would contribute to more effective, inclusive and participatory Gram Sabha processes.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

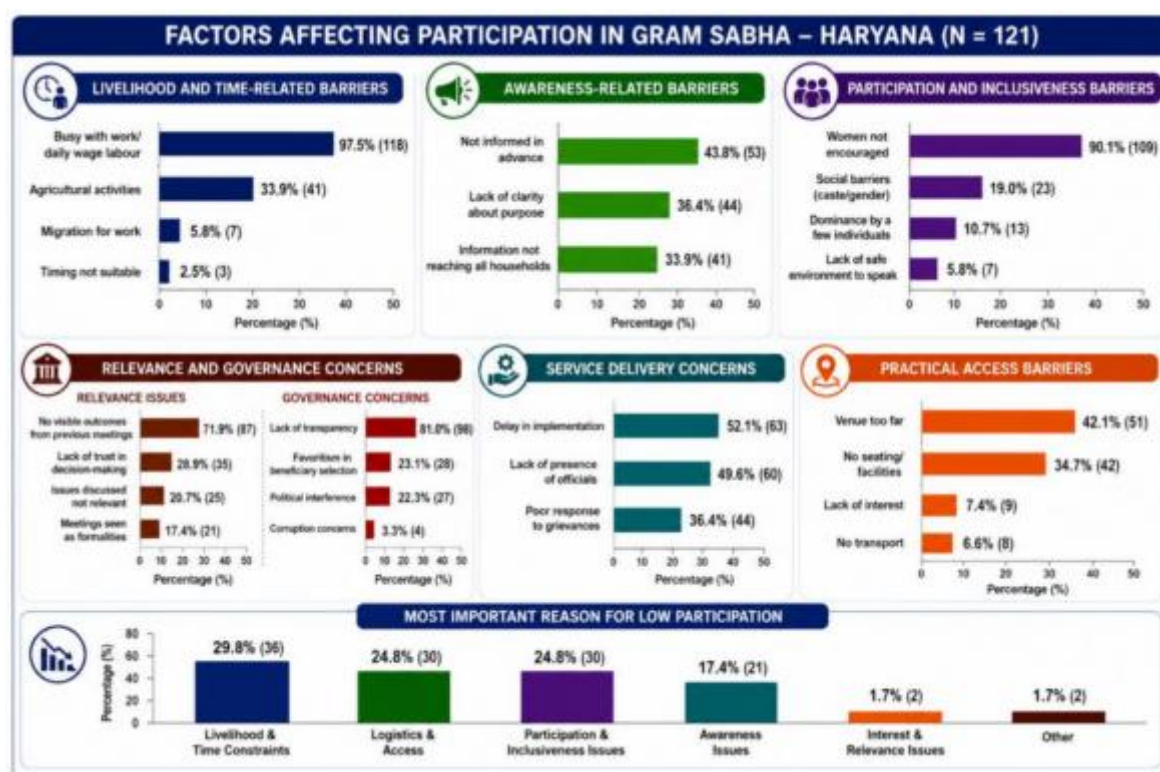
The study clearly indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most important barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Haryana. Daily wage employment overwhelmingly emerged as the dominant factor limiting attendance, far exceeding agricultural activities, migration and timing-related concerns. These findings suggest that economic pressures and livelihood responsibilities remain the primary obstacles to participation.

Awareness-related barriers were also significant. Respondents reported that many citizens are not informed in advance about Gram Sabha meetings, while lack of clarity regarding the purpose of meetings and inadequate dissemination of information continue to affect participation. These communication gaps reduce citizen engagement and limit attendance.

Participation and inclusiveness barriers were particularly pronounced in Haryana. A large majority of respondents identified inadequate encouragement for women as the most important participation-related concern. Social barriers, dominance by a few individuals and lack of safe spaces for expression were also reported. These findings reinforce broader concerns regarding gender inclusion and equitable participation.

The findings further reveal substantial concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Lack of visible outcomes from previous meetings emerged as the most important factor reducing citizen interest in participation. Lack of transparency, favouritism in beneficiary selection and political interference were also widely reported. Delays in implementation, lack of presence of officials and weak grievance redressal mechanisms further contribute to declining confidence in Gram Sabha processes.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified sanitation, social issues, infrastructure and livelihood concerns as the most frequently discussed agenda items in Gram Sabha meetings. Discussions relating to local issues, development priorities, health and literacy and welfare schemes also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Haryana are strongly focused on community welfare, infrastructure development and social concerns.

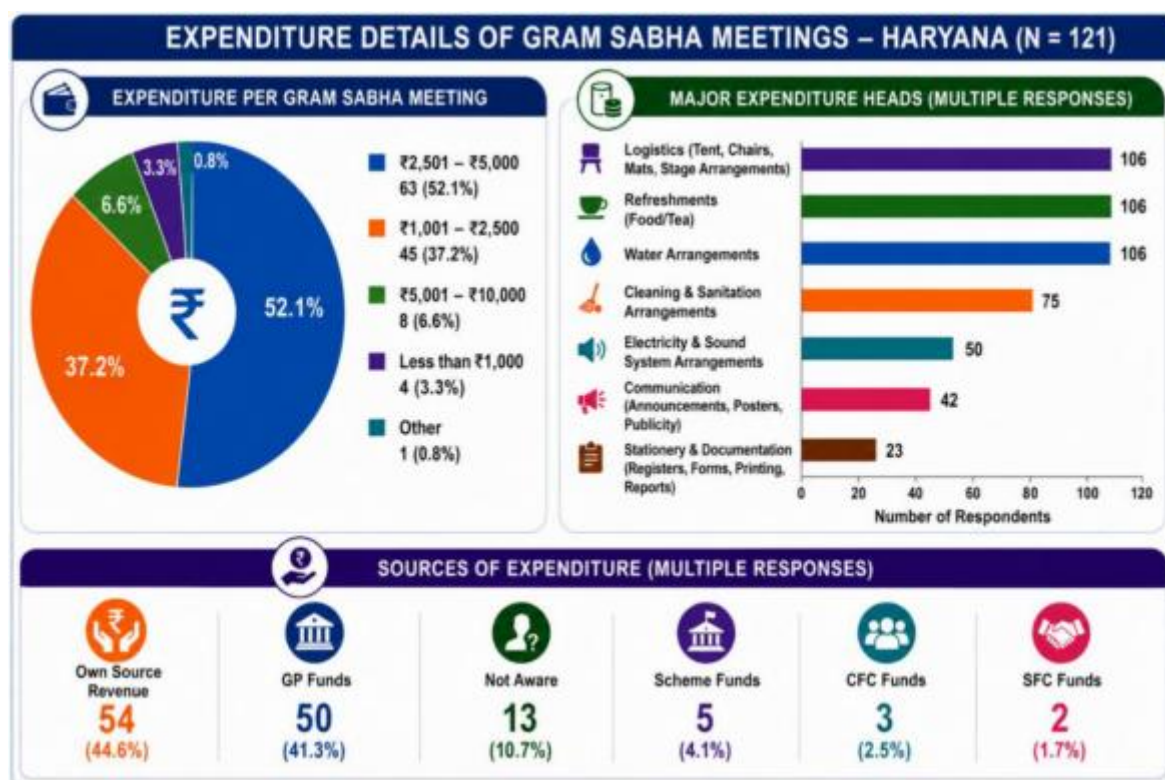
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item              | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| Sanitation               | 16.30          |
| Social Issues            | 15.62          |
| Infrastructure           | 12.56          |
| Livelihood               | 10.70          |
| Identifying Local Issues | 10.19          |
| Development Priorities   | 9.51           |
| Health & Literacy        | 8.83           |
| Welfare Schemes          | 7.30           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Gram Sabha meetings in Haryana are generally conducted with modest expenditure levels, with nearly 90 percent of respondents reporting expenditure below ₹5,000 per meeting. The most commonly reported expenditure range was ₹2,501–₹5,000, followed by ₹1,001–₹2,500. Major expenditure is concentrated on logistics arrangements, refreshments and drinking water facilities, highlighting the emphasis placed on ensuring basic meeting arrangements and participant convenience. Own Source Revenue and GP Funds emerged as the principal sources of financing, while dependence on external funding sources was comparatively limited. Overall, the expenditure pattern suggests that Gram Sabha meetings in Haryana are primarily supported through local Panchayat resources and focus on essential operational requirements necessary for conducting community meetings effectively.



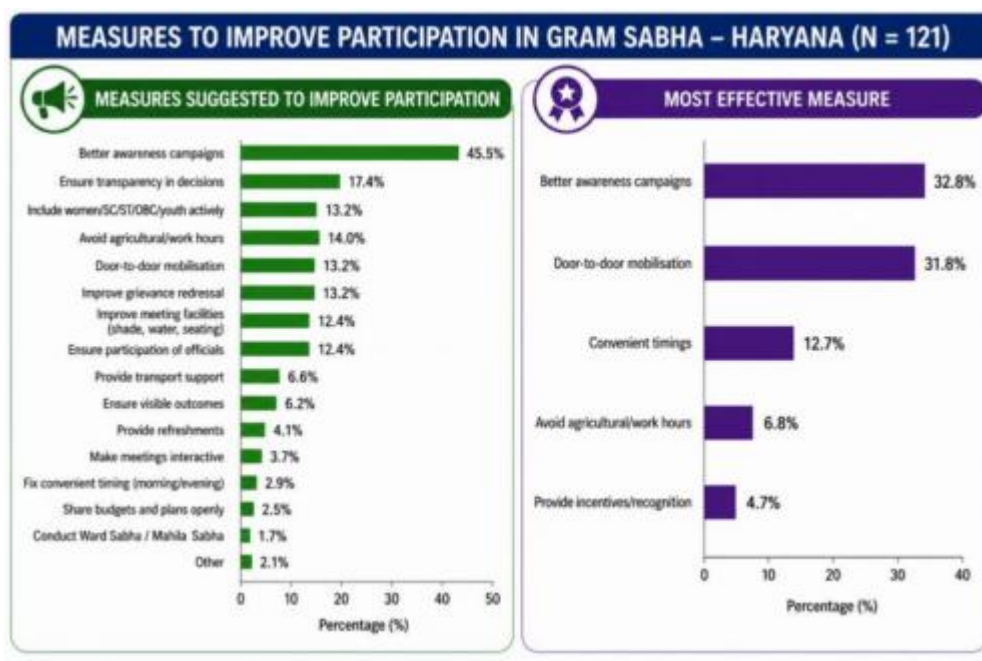
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents strongly emphasized awareness generation as the most effective approach for improving Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns emerged as both the most frequently suggested and the most effective measure by a substantial margin. Respondents also highlighted the importance of visible outcomes, transparency in decision-making, participation of officials and inclusion of women and marginalized groups.

Unlike several other States where mobilisation or scheduling emerged as dominant concerns, respondents in Haryana placed greater emphasis on trust, transparency and awareness. This reflects the importance of strengthening citizen confidence in Gram Sabha processes and ensuring that meetings produce visible and meaningful outcomes.



The findings suggest that improving participation in Haryana requires a combination of awareness generation, improved transparency, stronger accountability mechanisms and targeted efforts to improve inclusion of women and marginalized groups.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Only half of the respondents reported the availability of dedicated Gram Sabha halls, indicating limited meeting infrastructure in several locations.
2. Hall capacity was considered adequate by only 16.7% of respondents, suggesting that existing venues may not comfortably accommodate participants.
3. Sufficient meeting space was reported by only one-third of respondents, highlighting constraints for conducting larger community gatherings.
4. Accessible and centrally located venues were available in a majority of locations (83.3%), representing one of the strongest infrastructure indicators.
5. Seating arrangements were reported as adequate by only 16.7% of respondents, indicating a significant gap in participant comfort and meeting preparedness.
6. Drinking water facilities were available in only half of the surveyed locations, reflecting deficiencies in basic amenities.
7. Separate toilet facilities were available in only 16.7% of locations, representing a major infrastructure concern, particularly for women and elderly participants.
8. Sound systems were available in all surveyed Gram Sabha locations, demonstrating strong support for communication during meetings.
9. Internet connectivity and video conferencing facilities were available in only one-third of locations, limiting the scope for technology-enabled governance.
10. Digitized records were available in only 16.7% of locations, indicating weak digital record management systems.



11. Social media and WhatsApp usage was reported in all locations, suggesting strong adoption of digital communication channels for information dissemination.
12. Audio-visual presentation facilities were available in only 16.7% of locations, limiting the use of interactive and technology-based presentation methods during meetings.

## Recommendations

- Increase the availability of dedicated Gram Sabha halls to ensure adequate and permanent meeting spaces across all Panchayats.
- Upgrade existing halls to improve seating capacity and accommodate larger numbers of participants comfortably.
- Strengthen basic amenities such as drinking water facilities and sanitation infrastructure at Gram Sabha venues.
- Ensure the provision of separate and functional toilet facilities, particularly to encourage participation of women, elderly persons and vulnerable groups.
- Improve seating arrangements through provision of adequate chairs, benches and meeting furniture.
- Expand internet connectivity in Gram Sabha venues to support digital governance and information access.
- Promote video conferencing facilities to facilitate interaction with line departments and higher-level institutions.
- Accelerate digitization of Panchayat records and strengthen digital record management systems.
- Introduce audio-visual presentation facilities such as projectors and display systems to improve communication and citizen engagement.
- Integrate Gram Sabha infrastructure development into Panchayat planning and local development priorities.
- Leverage the widespread use of social media and WhatsApp platforms for advance communication, agenda sharing and citizen mobilization.
- Establish minimum infrastructure standards for Gram Sabha venues and monitor compliance through periodic assessments and audits.



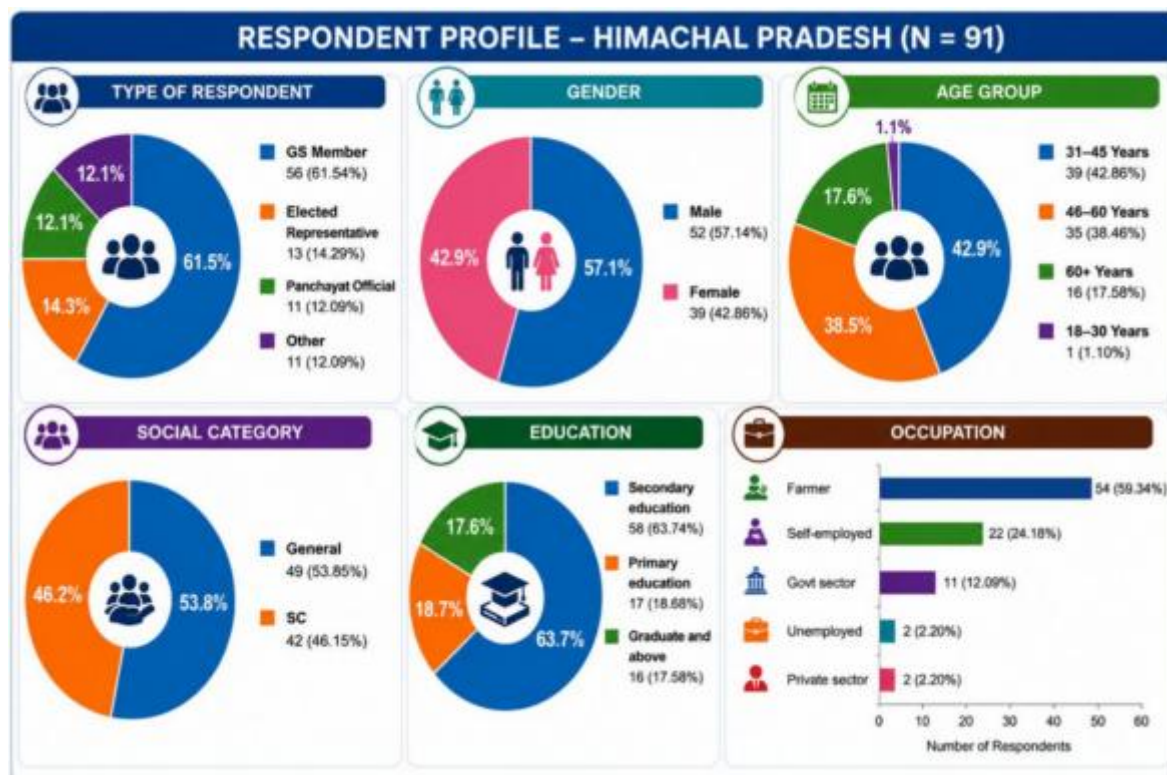
# HIMACHAL PRADESH

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 91 respondents from 06 Gram Panchayats across 3 districts of Himachal Pradesh. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse educational, occupational and social backgrounds. Farmers constituted the dominant occupational group, followed by self-employed individuals and government employees. The sample was largely drawn from General and Scheduled Caste communities. The findings provide valuable insights into the factors influencing Gram Sabha participation and local governance processes in Himachal Pradesh.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 91    |
| Districts Covered       | 03    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 06    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate exceptionally high levels of awareness and participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Himachal Pradesh. All respondents reported awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings, citizen rights within Gram Sabha processes and active participation in Gram Sabha proceedings. Awareness regarding the frequency of meetings and quorum provisions was also almost universal.

Attendance levels were particularly impressive. Every respondent reported attending Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year, while a majority reported attending meetings three to four times annually. Respondents also reported relatively high levels of active engagement, although most characterized their participation levels as moderate rather than high.

Unlike many other States, procedural awareness appears to be very strong in Himachal Pradesh. A substantial majority reported that quorum is achieved during Gram Sabha meetings, indicating comparatively robust institutional functioning and citizen engagement. These findings suggest that Gram Sabha continues to occupy an important place within local governance processes in the State.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 100.00         |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 100.00         |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 100.00         |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 98.90          |

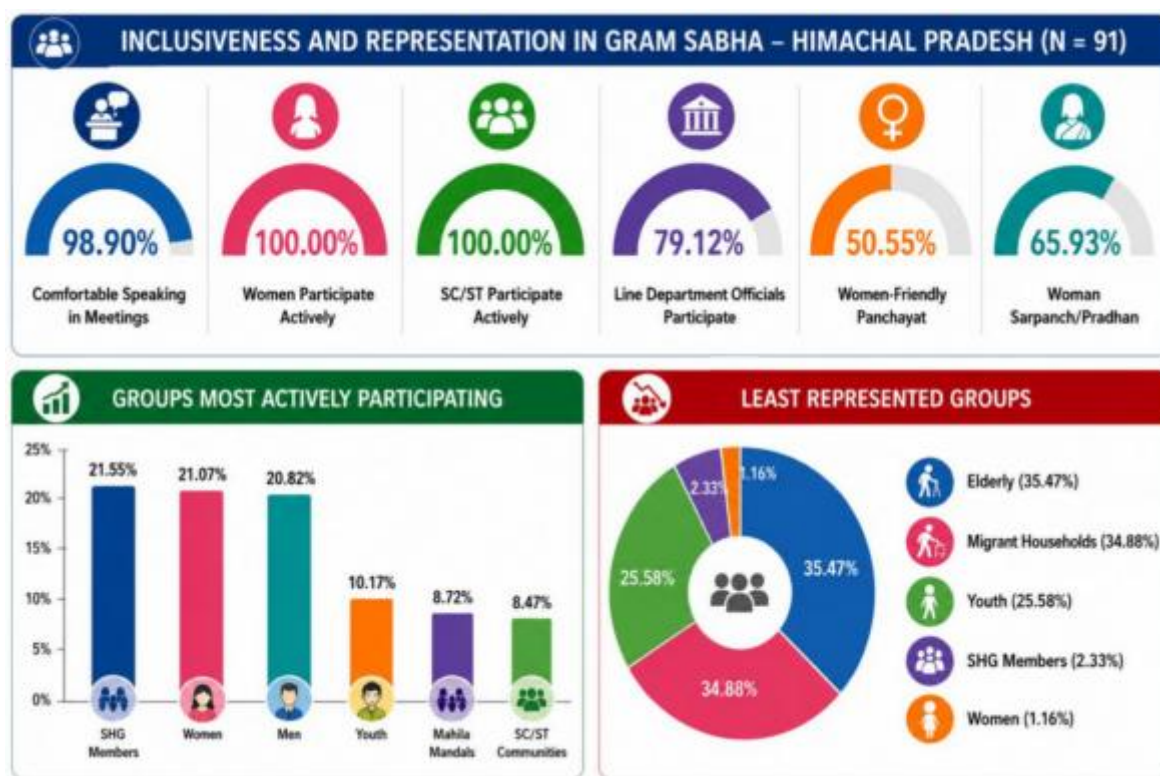
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

Respondents generally perceived Gram Sabha meetings in Himachal Pradesh as highly inclusive forums. Women, SHG members, men, youth and Mahila Mandals emerged as the most active participants in Gram Sabha meetings. Nearly all respondents reported feeling comfortable speaking during discussions, while every respondent indicated that women and SC communities actively participate in Gram Sabha proceedings.

Participation of line department officials was also relatively high compared to many States, with nearly four-fifths of respondents reporting their presence in Gram Sabha meetings. Half of the respondents considered their Panchayats to be women-friendly, while nearly two-thirds reported that the Sarpanch or Panchayat head is a woman.

The findings nevertheless indicate some participation gaps. Elderly persons, migrant households and youth were identified as the least represented groups in Gram Sabha meetings. While overall participation remains strong, these findings suggest that special efforts may be required to improve representation of these groups in local governance processes.





## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

Among the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Himachal Pradesh, the availability of basic Gram Sabha infrastructure was generally encouraging. A large majority of surveyed locations reported the availability of Gram Sabha halls, adequate seating arrangements, drinking water facilities and accessible meeting locations. Separate toilet facilities were also available in most surveyed Gram Panchayats, indicating that the basic physical infrastructure required for conducting Gram Sabha meetings was largely in place across the surveyed areas.

The findings further indicate moderate levels of digital readiness within the surveyed Gram Panchayats. Internet connectivity was reported to be satisfactory in a majority of locations, while digitized records were available in nearly two-thirds of the surveyed Gram Panchayats. Social media and WhatsApp were reportedly used in all surveyed locations for communication and information dissemination, suggesting increasing adoption of digital platforms for local governance processes and citizen outreach.

However, certain infrastructure gaps were also observed in the surveyed areas. Only about one-third of the surveyed Gram Panchayats reported the availability of video conferencing facilities, while audio-visual presentation facilities were available in a limited number of locations. Similarly, sound systems were available in only about half of the surveyed Gram Panchayats. These findings suggest that while basic infrastructure requirements were largely met in the surveyed locations, further investments in communication, presentation and digital engagement infrastructure could strengthen the effectiveness and inclusiveness of Gram Sabha meetings.





### Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

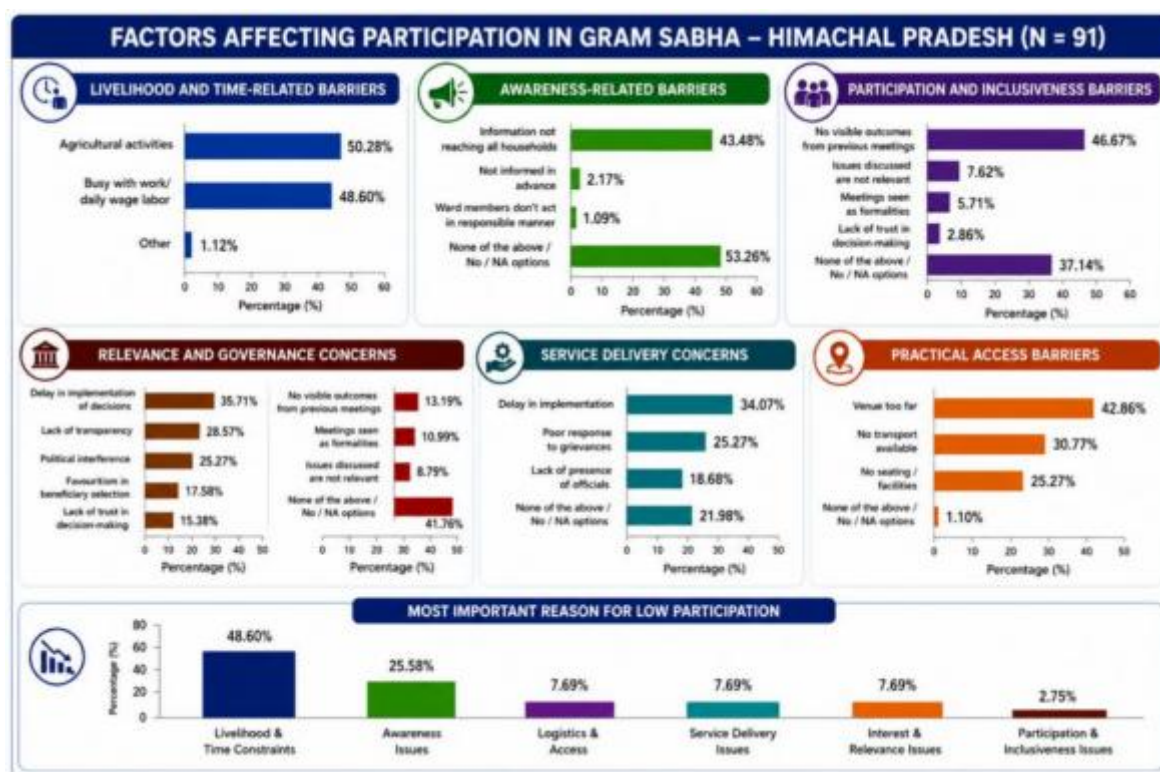
The study indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most important barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Himachal Pradesh. Agricultural activities and work-related commitments emerged as the dominant factors limiting participation. Given the agrarian nature of many rural communities, participation often competes with seasonal agricultural responsibilities and livelihood demands.

Interestingly, awareness-related barriers appear relatively limited in Himachal Pradesh. While information not reaching all households emerged as the most important awareness concern, a substantial proportion of respondents reported that no major awareness-related barriers exist. This reflects the generally high levels of awareness and engagement observed across the State.

Participation and inclusiveness barriers were reported to be minimal. Most respondents indicated that no significant participation-related barriers exist, suggesting relatively inclusive Gram Sabha processes. However, relevance-related concerns remain important. Lack of visible outcomes from previous meetings emerged as the most frequently cited factor reducing citizen motivation to participate. This indicates that even in areas with high participation, citizens expect tangible results from Gram Sabha deliberations.

Service delivery concerns were primarily linked to delays in implementation and inadequate presence of officials. Governance-related concerns were minimal compared to most other States, suggesting relatively high levels of trust in local governance processes.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents reported a broad range of agenda items being discussed in Gram Sabha meetings. Beneficiary identification and sanitation emerged as the most frequently discussed topics, followed closely by approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GDPs), identification of local issues and development priorities. Discussions relating to health, literacy and welfare schemes also featured prominently.

The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Himachal Pradesh serve as important platforms for local planning, beneficiary selection, service delivery discussions and community development priorities.

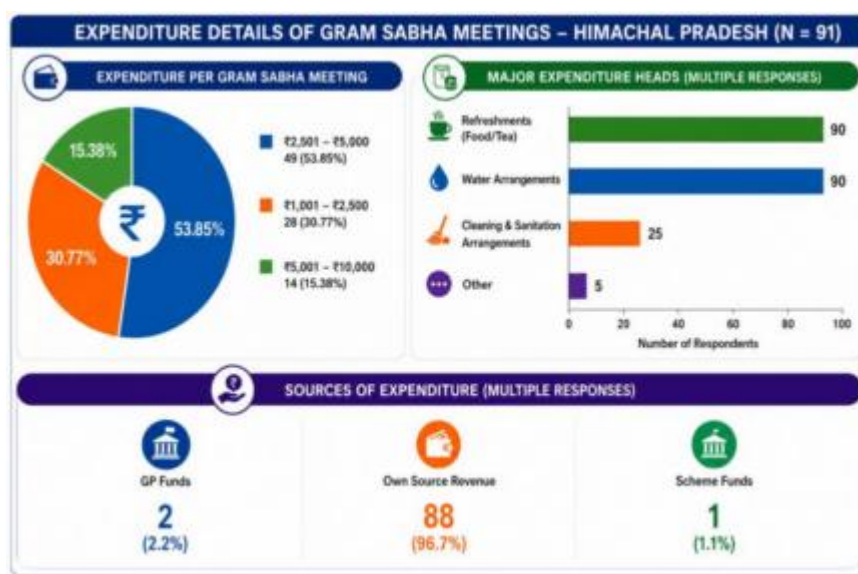
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 10.79          |
| Sanitation                | 10.79          |
| Approving GDP             | 10.55          |
| Identifying Local Issues  | 10.55          |
| Development Priorities    | 10.43          |
| Health & Literacy         | 9.83           |
| Welfare Schemes           | 9.35           |
| Social Issues             | 8.15           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

Among the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Himachal Pradesh, expenditure incurred for conducting Gram Sabha meetings was generally modest, with more than half of the surveyed locations reporting expenditure in the range of ₹2,501–₹5,000 per meeting, followed by ₹1,001–₹2,500. Refreshments, drinking water arrangements and basic meeting-related provisions emerged as the principal expenditure heads, while cleaning and sanitation constituted a relatively smaller share of expenditure. Notably, respondents reported that Gram Sabha meetings were financed predominantly through Own Source Revenue (OSR), with only a limited number of surveyed Gram Panchayats indicating the use of GP funds or scheme funds. These findings suggest that the surveyed Gram Panchayats largely relied on locally mobilized resources to support the conduct of Gram Sabha meetings.



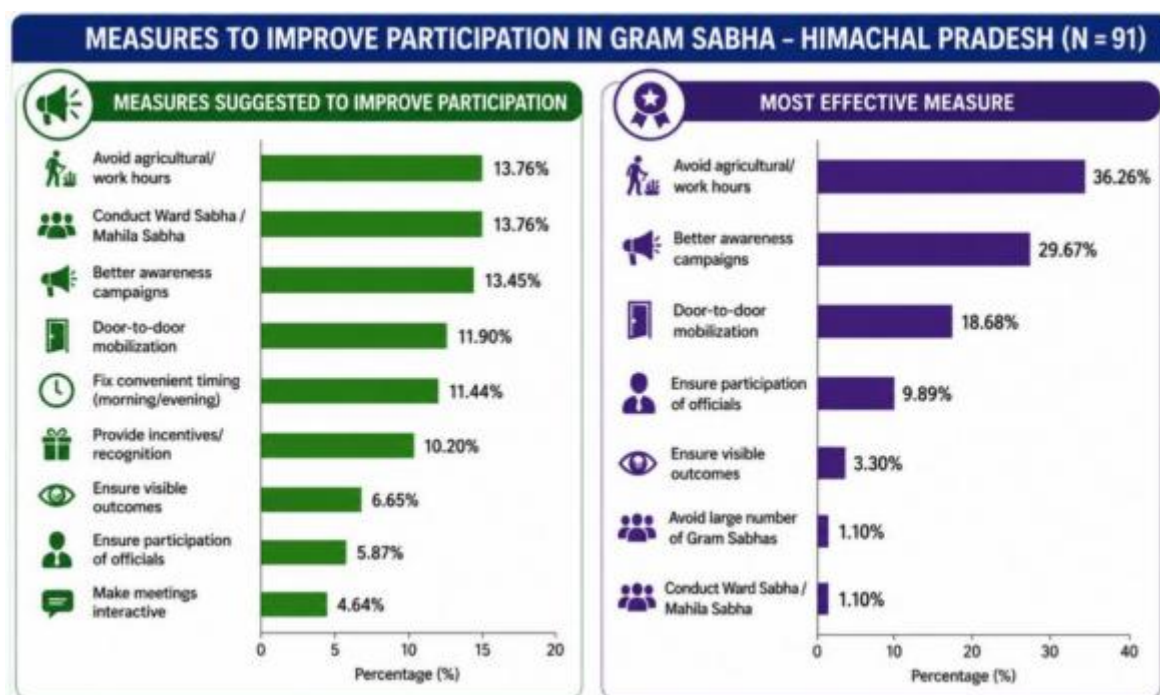
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents emphasized scheduling and mobilisation measures as the most important approaches for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Avoiding agricultural work periods and conducting Ward Sabha or Mahila Sabha meetings emerged as the most frequently suggested interventions, closely followed by awareness campaigns, door-to-door mobilisation and convenient meeting timings.

A distinctive feature of Himachal Pradesh is the strong emphasis placed on aligning Gram Sabha schedules with agricultural cycles. Respondents repeatedly highlighted the need to avoid conducting meetings during harvesting seasons and peak working periods. Many also suggested reducing the number of Gram Sabha meetings held annually and ensuring stronger participation of line department officials.

When asked to identify the single most effective measure, respondents overwhelmingly selected avoiding agricultural work periods, followed by awareness campaigns and door-to-door mobilisation. These findings suggest that participation challenges in Himachal Pradesh are viewed primarily as scheduling and practical coordination issues rather than institutional or governance problems.





## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Avoiding agricultural and peak working hours emerged as the most preferred measure for improving Gram Sabha participation.
2. Better awareness campaigns were identified as a major strategy for increasing citizen engagement.
3. Conducting Ward Sabhas and Mahila Sabhas received strong support as a means of improving local participation.
4. Door-to-door mobilisation was widely viewed as an effective approach for reaching citizens and encouraging attendance.
5. Respondents emphasized the importance of fixing convenient meeting timings to accommodate work schedules.
6. Providing incentives or recognition was considered useful for motivating participation.
7. Many respondents highlighted the need for visible outcomes from Gram Sabha decisions to sustain public interest.
8. Participation of line department officials was viewed as an important factor for improving meeting effectiveness.
9. Respondents suggested making Gram Sabha meetings more interactive and discussion-oriented.
10. Awareness, timing and mobilisation-related measures received greater preference than infrastructure-based interventions.
11. Open-ended responses repeatedly stressed reducing excessive numbers of Gram Sabha meetings and avoiding meeting fatigue.
12. Several respondents recommended better coordination between line departments and Gram Sabha processes.



## Recommendations

- Schedule Gram Sabha meetings outside agricultural seasons and peak working hours.
- Strengthen awareness campaigns through local institutions, schools, community organizations and Panchayat representatives.
- Expand door-to-door mobilisation and household-level outreach before every Gram Sabha meeting.
- Institutionalize Ward Sabha and Mahila Sabha meetings as preparatory platforms for Gram Sabha discussions.
- Ensure active participation of line department officials in all Gram Sabha meetings.
- Publicize actions taken on previous Gram Sabha resolutions to demonstrate tangible outcomes.
- Improve citizen engagement through interactive discussions, presentations and feedback mechanisms.
- Rationalize the number of Gram Sabha meetings and integrate departmental consultations wherever feasible.
- Provide recognition for active community participation and exemplary citizen engagement.
- Develop state-specific communication strategies using social media, WhatsApp groups and local awareness networks.
- Encourage participation of youth, migrant households and other relatively under-represented groups.
- Strengthen convergence between Panchayats and line departments to improve responsiveness and citizen confidence in Gram Sabha processes.



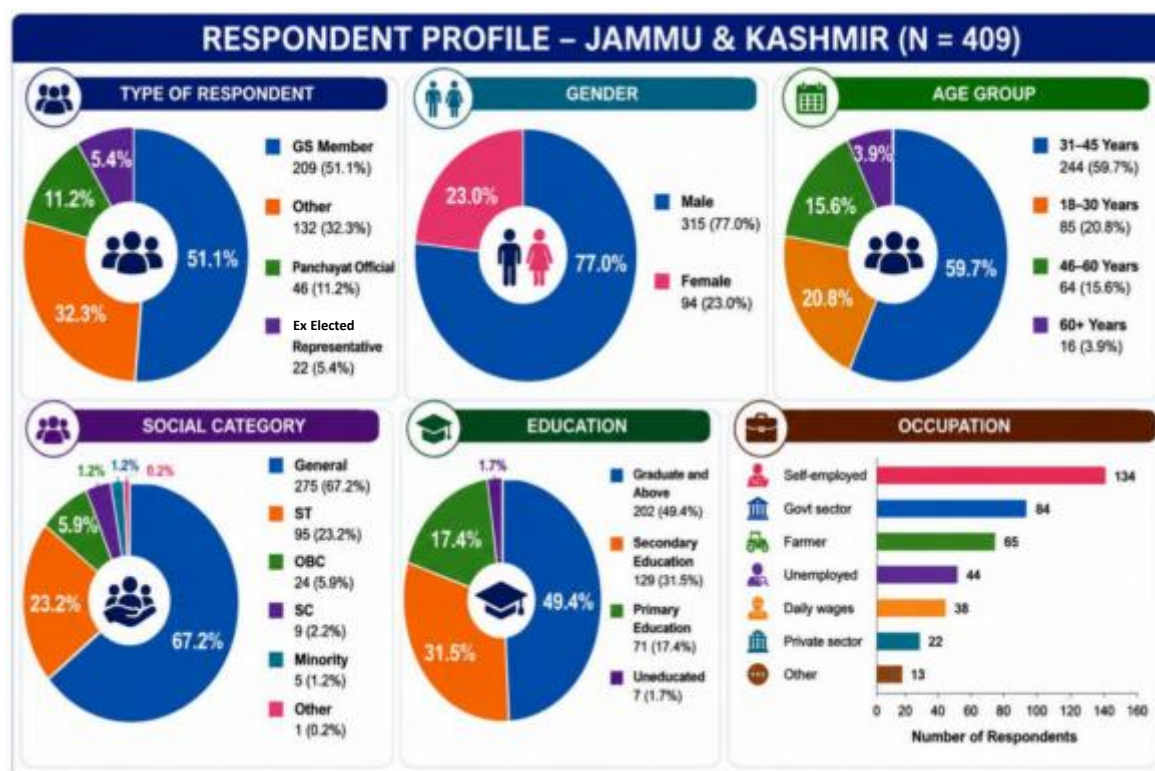
# JAMMU AND KASHMIR

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 409 respondents from 23 Gram Panchayats across 13 districts of Jammu and Kashmir. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, Panchayat officials, ex-elected representatives and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. The sample was dominated by General and Scheduled Tribe communities, while self-employed individuals, government employees and farmers constituted major occupational groups. The findings provide important insights into factors influencing Gram Sabha participation and local governance processes across the Union Territory.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 409   |
| Districts Covered       | 13    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 23    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate relatively high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Jammu and Kashmir. A large majority of respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, citizen rights and the prescribed frequency of meetings. Attendance levels were also encouraging, with nearly all respondents reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

However, deeper participation presents a more complex picture. While almost four-fifths of respondents reported active participation, participation levels varied considerably. A significant proportion described their participation as low, while others reported high or very high levels of engagement. This suggests substantial variation in the quality and intensity of participation across Gram Panchayats.

A notable concern relates to awareness regarding quorum provisions. Only about one-third of respondents reported knowledge of quorum requirements, while more than half were unaware whether quorum was achieved during Gram Sabha meetings. These findings indicate that procedural aspects of Gram Sabha functioning remain poorly understood despite generally high awareness of meetings themselves.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                            | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings     | 98.29          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha    | 90.71          |
| Awareness of Frequency of Meetings   | 90.95          |
| Attended Gram Sabha in Previous Year | 97.07          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha   | 78.73          |
| Awareness of Quorum                  | 32.27          |

## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

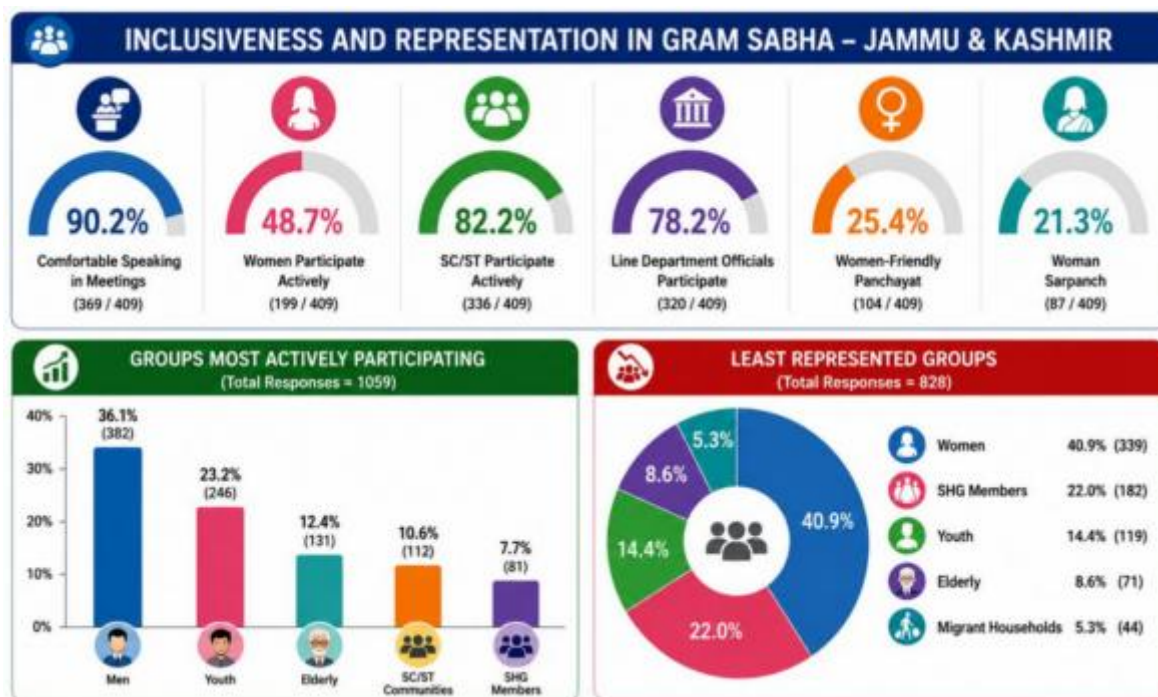
The findings reveal important challenges relating to inclusiveness and representation within Gram Sabha meetings in Jammu and Kashmir. Men emerged as the dominant participants, followed by youth and elderly citizens. Women were perceived as comparatively less active participants despite constituting an important segment of the rural population.

More than half of the respondents reported that women do not participate actively in Gram Sabha meetings. Similarly, nearly three-fourths indicated that their Panchayat cannot be considered women-friendly. The proportion of Panchayats headed by women was also relatively low. These findings point towards significant gender-related barriers affecting participation and representation.

Participation of SC/ST communities was viewed more positively, with a large majority acknowledging their involvement in Gram Sabha proceedings. Participation of line department officials was also relatively strong. However, women, SHG members and youth were consistently identified as the most underrepresented groups in Gram Sabha meetings.



These findings suggest that improving inclusion, particularly of women, remains a critical challenge for strengthening participatory governance in Jammu and Kashmir.



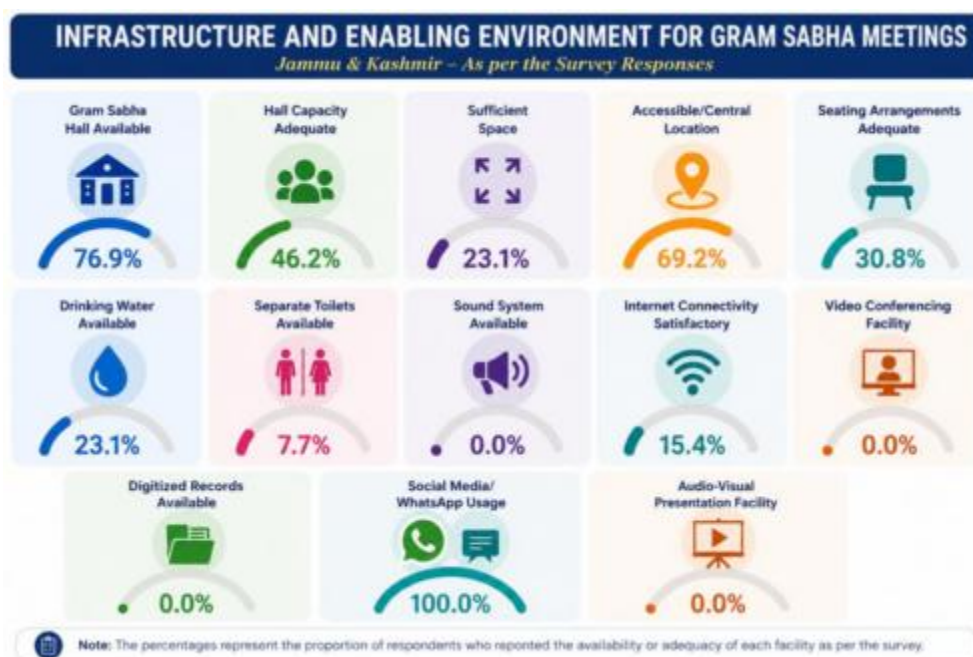
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Jammu & Kashmir has relatively good availability of Gram Sabha meeting venues, with 76.9 percent respondents reporting the availability of Gram Sabha halls and 69.2 percent indicating that meeting locations are accessible and centrally located. However, only 46.2 percent respondents considered hall capacity to be adequate, while sufficient meeting space was reported by only 23.1 percent respondents. These findings suggest that although meeting venues are generally available, their adequacy for conducting large community meetings remains a challenge.

The availability of basic amenities was found to be limited across several surveyed locations. Seating arrangements were reported to be adequate by only 30.8 percent respondents, while drinking water facilities were available in 23.1 percent locations. Separate toilet facilities were reported by only 7.7 percent respondents, indicating a significant infrastructure gap that may affect participant comfort and inclusiveness, particularly for women, elderly citizens and vulnerable groups.

The findings further reveal substantial gaps in digital and technology-enabled infrastructure. Internet connectivity was reported to be satisfactory by only 15.4 percent respondents, while no respondents reported the availability of sound systems, video conferencing facilities, digitized records or audio-visual presentation facilities. At the same time, social media and WhatsApp platforms were widely used for communication. The findings suggest the need for focused investments in basic amenities, meeting infrastructure and digital facilities to improve the effectiveness and inclusiveness of Gram Sabha meetings in Jammu & Kashmir.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

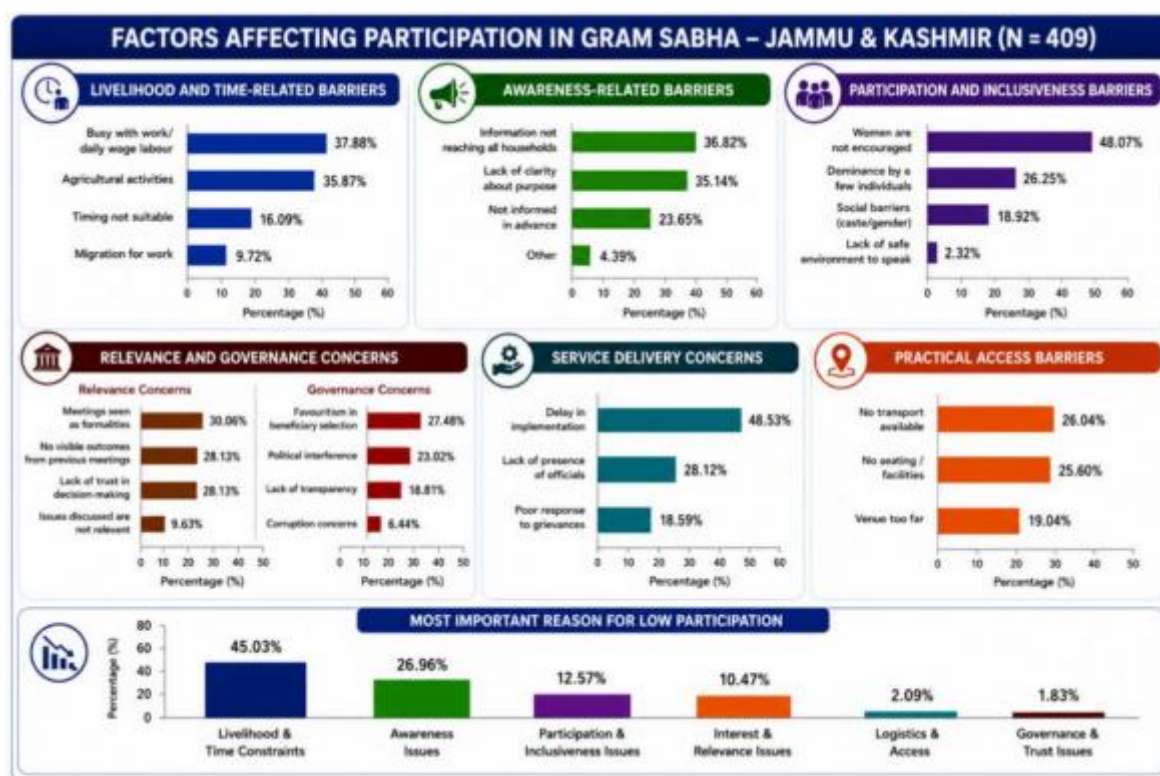
The study clearly indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Jammu and Kashmir. Daily wage employment and work-related commitments emerged as the most frequently cited reasons for low participation, closely followed by agricultural activities. Timing-related challenges and migration for work also affected attendance.

Awareness-related barriers were equally significant. Respondents reported that information regarding Gram Sabha meetings often fails to reach all households, while many citizens lack clarity regarding the purpose and importance of Gram Sabha. Inadequate advance communication further reduces participation and limits community mobilisation.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns are particularly pronounced. Nearly half of all respondents identified inadequate encouragement of women as the most important participation-related barrier. Dominance by a few individuals and social barriers based on caste and gender were also widely reported. These findings reinforce broader concerns regarding inclusion and equitable participation.

The findings further reveal substantial concerns regarding relevance and governance. Many respondents perceived Gram Sabha meetings as formalities, while others reported lack of trust in decision-making and absence of visible outcomes from previous meetings. Governance concerns relating to favouritism in beneficiary selection, political interference and lack of transparency further weaken citizen confidence. Service delivery issues, particularly delays in implementation and inadequate presence of officials, continue to affect participation and public trust.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified local issues, development priorities and welfare schemes as the most frequently discussed agenda items in Gram Sabha meetings. Beneficiary identification, social issues, approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) and health-related issues also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Jammu and Kashmir serve as important platforms for local development planning, welfare delivery and community problem-solving.

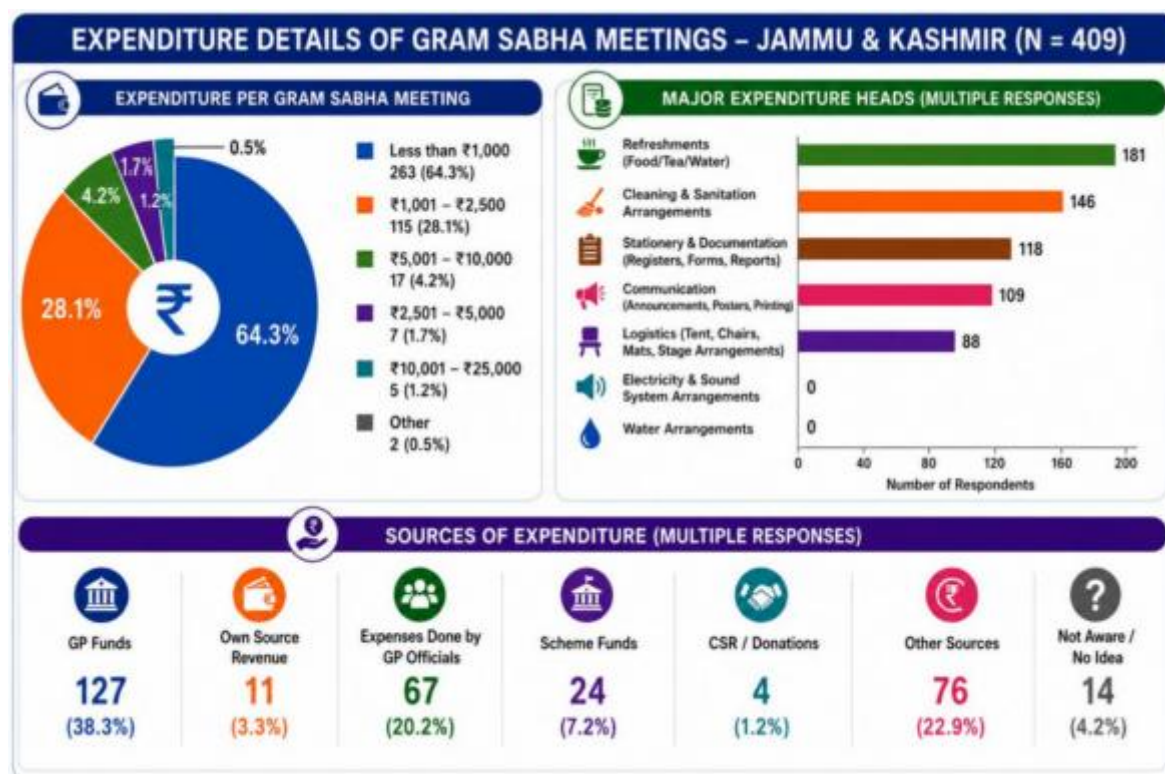
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Identifying Local Issues  | 13.08          |
| Development Priorities    | 12.78          |
| Welfare Schemes           | 12.16          |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 9.39           |
| Social Issues             | 9.03           |
| Approving GPDP            | 8.36           |
| Health & Literacy         | 8.16           |
| Social Audit              | 7.39           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

Gram Sabha meetings in Jammu & Kashmir are conducted with relatively modest expenditures, with nearly two-thirds of respondents reporting spending below ₹1,000 per meeting. GP Funds constitute the primary source of expenditure, while refreshments, sanitation arrangements and documentation-related activities account for the largest expenditure components. The findings indicate that Gram Sabha meetings are generally organized through limited local resources with a strong focus on basic operational requirements.



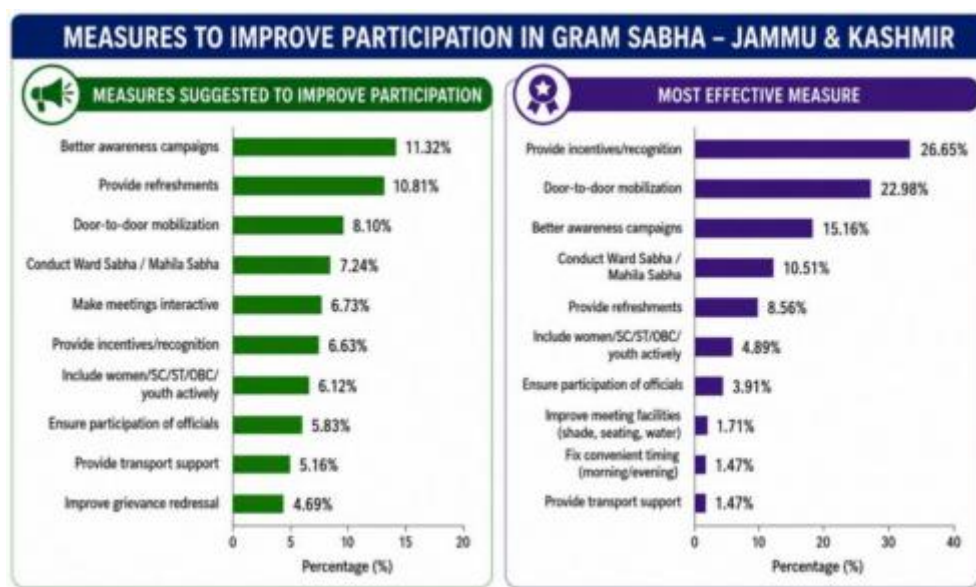
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents highlighted awareness generation, citizen mobilisation and incentives as the most important measures for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns emerged as the most frequently suggested intervention, followed closely by provision of refreshments, door-to-door mobilisation and Ward Sabha or Mahila Sabha meetings.

A distinctive feature of Jammu and Kashmir is the strong emphasis placed on inclusion and motivation. Respondents repeatedly highlighted the importance of encouraging participation of women, youth and marginalized groups. Provision of incentives and recognition also emerged as an important mechanism for encouraging participation.

When asked to identify the single most effective measure, respondents overwhelmingly selected incentives and recognition, followed by door-to-door mobilisation and awareness campaigns. These findings suggest that participation challenges are viewed not only as awareness issues but also as issues of citizen motivation and engagement.





## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Awareness of Gram Sabha meetings is very high, with 98.3% respondents reporting awareness.
2. A large majority (97.1%) attended Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.
3. Most respondents feel comfortable speaking during meetings (90.2%).
4. Awareness of Gram Sabha rights is relatively high at 90.7%.
5. Men and youth emerged as the most actively participating groups in Gram Sabha meetings.
6. Women were identified as the most underrepresented group, followed by SHG members and youth.
7. Participation of women remains a concern, with only 48.7% respondents reporting active involvement of women.
8. Livelihood and time constraints constitute the most important barrier to participation.
9. Lack of information reaching households and inadequate awareness about the purpose of Gram Sabha meetings are major awareness-related barriers.
10. Women not being encouraged to participate emerged as the most significant inclusiveness challenge.
11. Delay in implementation of decisions and inadequate presence of officials are major service delivery concerns.
12. Transport constraints and lack of basic meeting facilities discourage participation in several areas.
13. Gram Sabha meetings are generally conducted with modest expenditure, with most meetings costing less than ₹1,000.
14. GP Funds constitute the primary source of expenditure for conducting Gram Sabha meetings.
15. Identifying local issues, development priorities and welfare schemes are the most frequently discussed agenda items.



16. Village committees, particularly SHG Federations and youth groups, play an active role in community mobilisation and raising public issues.

### Recommendations

- Strengthen targeted awareness campaigns to ensure information reaches every household before Gram Sabha meetings.
- Adopt systematic door-to-door mobilisation through Panchayat representatives, SHGs and frontline workers.
- Provide adequate advance notice regarding meeting dates, agenda and venue.
- Introduce special mobilisation efforts to increase women's participation and leadership in Gram Sabha meetings.
- Organize Ward Sabhas and Mahila Sabhas as preparatory platforms for wider community engagement.
- Consider incentives, recognition mechanisms and community appreciation measures to encourage participation.
- Improve participation of line department officials to address citizen grievances and local issues directly.
- Strengthen implementation and follow-up of Gram Sabha resolutions to enhance public trust.
- Improve transparency in decision-making, beneficiary selection and utilization of public funds.
- Strengthen grievance redressal mechanisms and regularly communicate action taken to citizens.
- Improve transport access and basic meeting facilities, particularly in remote and dispersed habitations.
- Enhance infrastructure support including seating arrangements, drinking water and sanitation facilities.
- Promote greater participation of SHGs, youth groups and community-based organizations in mobilisation activities.
- Increase the use of digital communication tools, WhatsApp groups and public announcements for citizen outreach.
- Publicize outcomes and achievements arising from Gram Sabha decisions to demonstrate the value of participation.
- Encourage participatory planning and regular community monitoring to strengthen grassroots democratic governance.



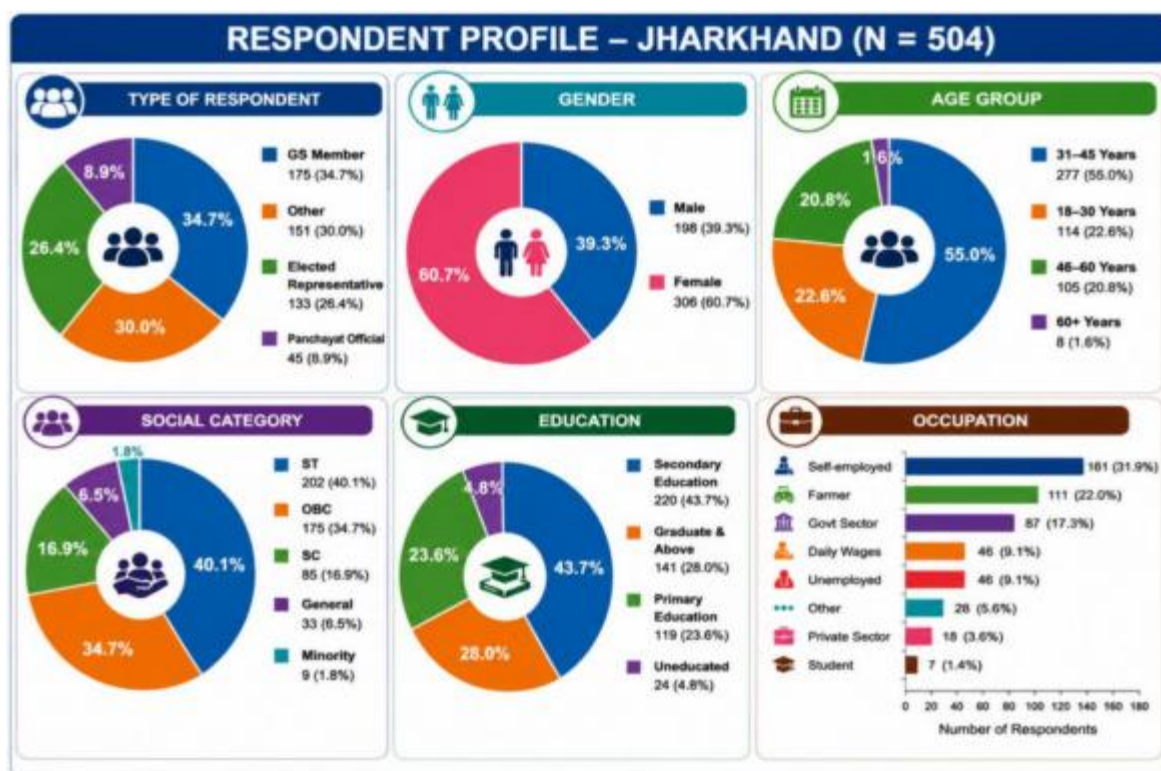
# JHARKHAND

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 504 respondents from 25 Gram Panchayats across 12 districts of Jharkhand. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. The sample was largely drawn from Scheduled Tribe, OBC and Scheduled Caste communities, with self-employed individuals, farmers and government employees constituting major occupational groups. Women constituted a majority of respondents, providing significant insights into participation patterns and local governance experiences.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 504   |
| Districts Covered       | 12    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 25    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Jharkhand. Most respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, citizen rights and the prescribed frequency of meetings. Attendance levels were equally encouraging, with more than ninety-four percent reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

Participation appears relatively regular and sustained. Nearly half of the respondents reported attending Gram Sabha meetings three to four times annually, while more than one-fourth attended more than five meetings during the year. Respondents generally described their participation levels as moderate, indicating consistent engagement rather than occasional attendance.

Awareness regarding quorum provisions was comparatively stronger than in many States. More than two-thirds of respondents reported awareness of quorum requirements, while a substantial proportion indicated that quorum is achieved during Gram Sabha meetings. These findings suggest relatively strong institutional awareness and engagement with Gram Sabha procedures.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                            | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings     | 96.03          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha    | 89.09          |
| Awareness of Frequency of Meetings   | 85.91          |
| Attended Gram Sabha in Previous Year | 94.44          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha   | 81.15          |
| Awareness of Quorum                  | 67.66          |

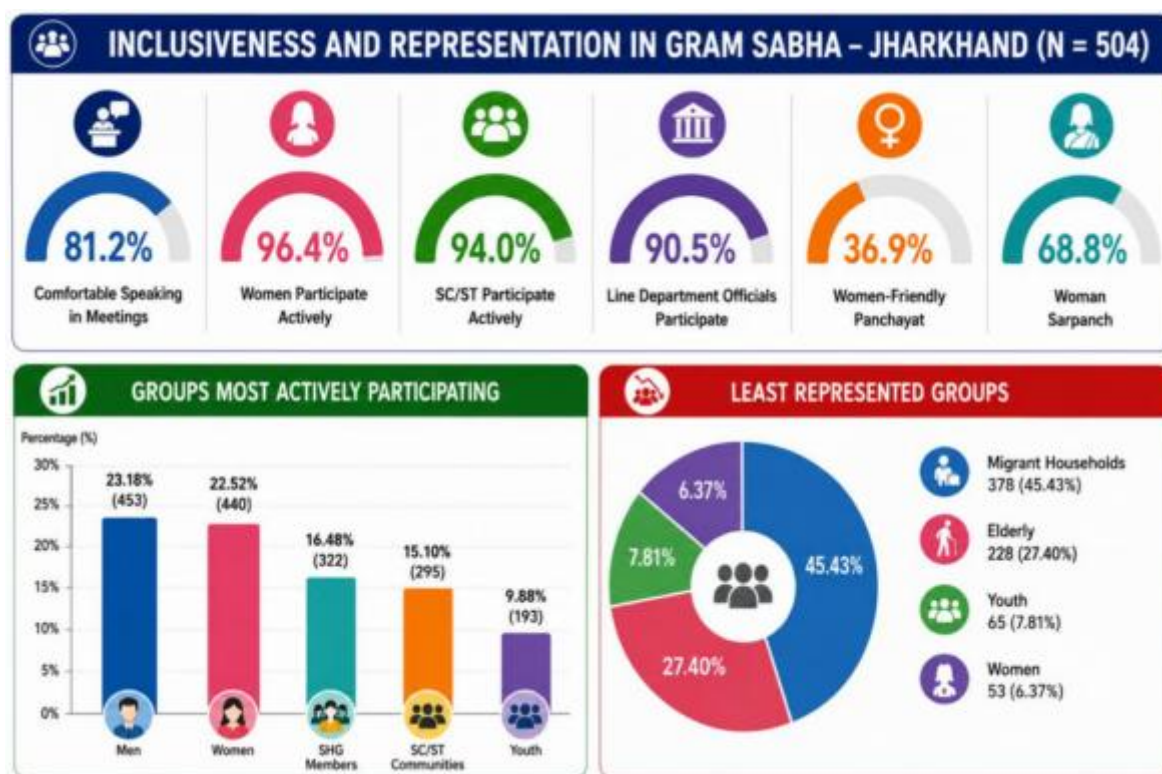
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

The findings indicate relatively strong perceptions of inclusiveness in Gram Sabha meetings across Jharkhand. Men and women were both identified among the most active participants, alongside SHG members and SC/ST communities. This suggests that Gram Sabha meetings serve as important participatory spaces for a wide range of social groups.

Women's participation emerged as a particularly positive feature. More than ninety-six percent of respondents reported active participation by women, while nearly sixty-nine percent indicated that the Panchayat head is a woman. Participation of SC/ST communities was also viewed very positively, with an overwhelming majority acknowledging their active involvement in Gram Sabha proceedings.

At the same time, respondents identified migrant households and elderly citizens as the most underrepresented groups. Although women participate actively, a majority of respondents still did not consider their Panchayat to be women-friendly. These findings suggest that representation and participation may not always translate into a fully supportive institutional environment.





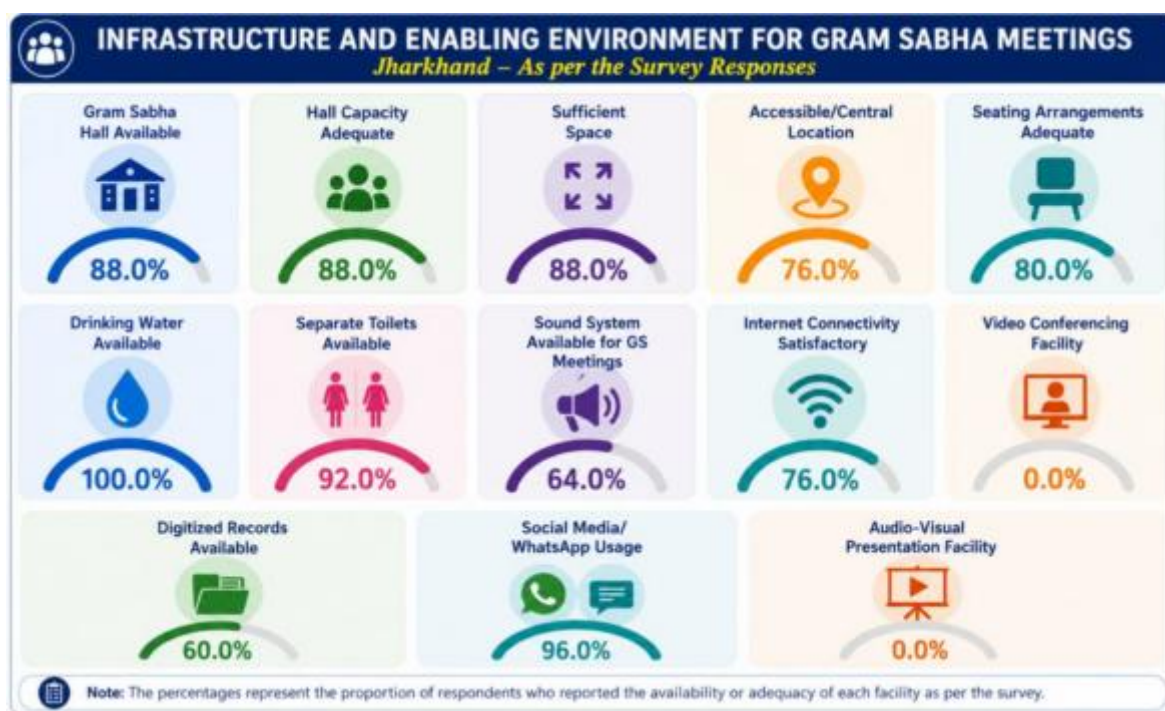
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Jharkhand possesses a relatively strong infrastructure base for conducting Gram Sabha meetings. Respondents reported high availability of Gram Sabha halls, adequate hall capacity and sufficient meeting space, with each of these facilities available in nearly nine out of ten surveyed locations. Drinking water facilities were reported to be universally available, while separate toilet facilities and seating arrangements were available in a large majority of locations. The widespread use of social media and WhatsApp platforms further reflects strong communication support for citizen mobilization and dissemination of Gram Sabha-related information.

At the same time, certain infrastructure gaps remain evident. While accessible and centrally located venues were reported by a majority of respondents, availability was comparatively lower than other basic infrastructure indicators. Sound systems and internet connectivity were available in around two-thirds to three-fourths of locations, indicating scope for strengthening technology-enabled meeting infrastructure. A notable concern is the complete absence of video conferencing facilities and audio-visual presentation facilities, which limits opportunities for digital participation, remote engagement and technology-supported presentations during Gram Sabha meetings.

Overall, the findings suggest that Jharkhand has established a robust foundation of physical infrastructure and basic amenities for Gram Sabha meetings. However, significant investments are required in digital infrastructure, particularly video conferencing, audio-visual facilities and digitization systems, to modernize Gram Sabha functioning and enhance the effectiveness of participatory governance processes.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

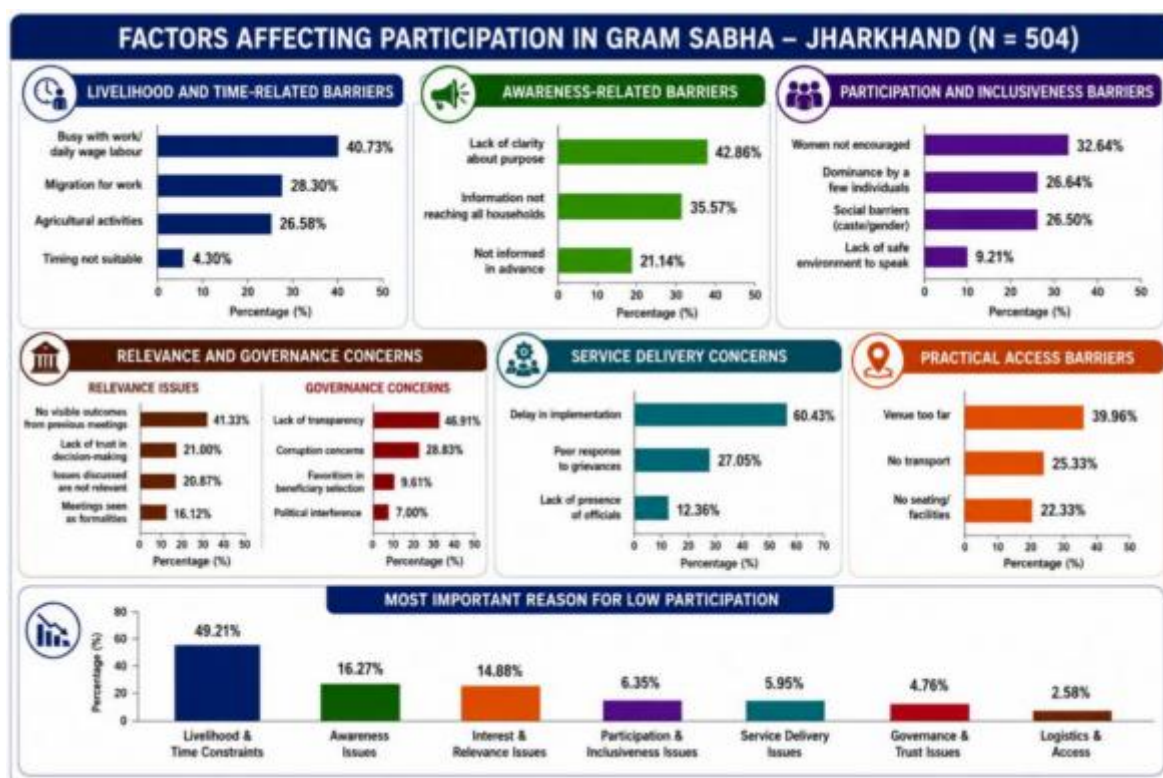
The findings clearly indicate that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Jharkhand. Daily wage employment emerged as the dominant factor limiting attendance, followed by migration for work and agricultural activities. These findings highlight the continuing influence of livelihood responsibilities on citizen participation.

Awareness-related barriers were also significant. Lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha emerged as the most frequently cited awareness challenge, followed by inadequate dissemination of information and insufficient advance notice regarding meetings. These findings suggest that awareness remains an important area requiring attention despite generally high levels of participation.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns were primarily linked to inadequate encouragement for women, dominance by a few individuals and social barriers based on caste and gender. Respondents also highlighted the absence of safe and supportive environments for participation in some Gram Panchayats.

The findings further reveal substantial concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Lack of visible outcomes from previous meetings emerged as the most important factor reducing citizen interest in participation. Governance concerns were dominated by lack of transparency and corruption-related issues, while delays in implementation emerged as the most significant service delivery challenge. These findings indicate that citizens expect Gram Sabha meetings to produce tangible outcomes and visible improvements.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified local issues, approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) and social issues as the most frequently discussed agenda items in Gram Sabha meetings. Beneficiary identification, welfare schemes, development priorities and livelihood concerns also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Jharkhand function as important platforms for local planning, beneficiary selection and community problem-solving.

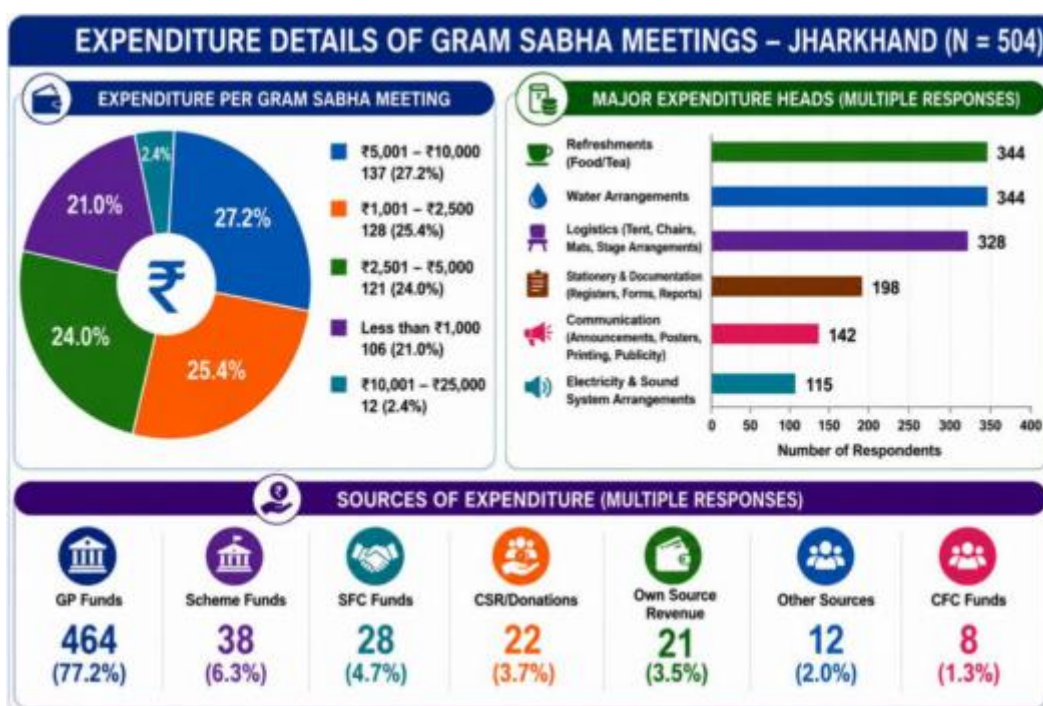
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Identifying Local Issues  | 17.78          |
| Approving GPDP            | 13.30          |
| Social Issues             | 12.12          |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 9.63           |
| Welfare Schemes           | 9.37           |
| Development Priorities    | 8.56           |
| Livelihood                | 7.59           |
| Sanitation                | 6.11           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Gram Sabha meetings in Jharkhand are generally conducted with moderate expenditure levels, with the largest proportion of respondents reporting expenditure between ₹5,001 and ₹10,000 per meeting. Expenditure patterns reveal a strong focus on refreshments, drinking water and logistics arrangements, reflecting efforts to facilitate participation and ensure smooth conduct of meetings. Documentation-related expenditure also accounted for a significant share, indicating attention to record-keeping and procedural requirements. GP Funds emerged as the overwhelmingly dominant source of financing, while contributions from scheme funds, SFC grants, CSR support and own-source revenue remained limited. Overall, the expenditure pattern suggests that Gram Sabha meetings in Jharkhand rely primarily on Panchayat resources and prioritize essential operational arrangements necessary for effective community participation and local governance.



## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents strongly emphasized awareness generation and citizen mobilisation as the most effective approaches for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns emerged as both the most frequently suggested and the most effective intervention by a substantial margin. Door-to-door mobilisation was the second most preferred strategy.

Many respondents also highlighted the importance of visible outcomes from Gram Sabha meetings. Suggestions relating to transparency, grievance redressal, interactive meetings and sharing of budgets and plans further indicate that citizens seek greater accountability and responsiveness from local governance institutions.

When asked to identify the single most effective measure, nearly forty percent selected awareness campaigns, while another thirty percent preferred door-to-door mobilisation.



These findings demonstrate the central importance of communication and citizen outreach in improving participation levels.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Better awareness campaigns emerged as the most frequently suggested measure for improving participation, indicating the continued importance of citizen awareness and information dissemination.
2. Door-to-door mobilization was identified as the second most preferred strategy, highlighting the value of direct community outreach.
3. Respondents emphasized the need for visible outcomes from Gram Sabha decisions, suggesting that participation increases when citizens perceive tangible benefits.
4. Provision of refreshments received considerable support, indicating that basic meeting arrangements can positively influence attendance.
5. Respondents highlighted the importance of making Gram Sabha meetings more interactive and engaging rather than purely procedural.
6. Incentives and recognition mechanisms were viewed as useful tools for encouraging greater citizen participation.
7. Improving grievance redressal mechanisms was identified as an important step for strengthening public confidence in Gram Sabha processes.
8. Transparency in decision-making emerged as a recurring theme, reflecting citizens' expectations for accountable governance.
9. Sharing budgets and development plans openly was considered important for enhancing trust and informed participation.
10. Convenient meeting timings were identified as a practical measure for addressing attendance constraints.
11. Better awareness campaigns were also ranked as the most effective measure overall, receiving substantially higher support than other interventions.



12. Door-to-door mobilization was considered the second most effective measure, reinforcing the importance of personalized outreach and community engagement.

## Recommendations

- Launch sustained awareness campaigns on the objectives, functions and benefits of Gram Sabha participation through multiple communication channels.
- Strengthen door-to-door mobilization efforts through Panchayat representatives, frontline workers, SHGs and community volunteers.
- Ensure that decisions taken in Gram Sabha meetings result in visible and timely outcomes to build public confidence and trust.
- Publicize actions taken on previous Gram Sabha resolutions to demonstrate responsiveness and accountability.
- Adopt more participatory and interactive meeting formats that encourage discussion and citizen engagement.
- Strengthen grievance redressal mechanisms and regularly communicate progress on grievance resolution.
- Improve transparency by openly sharing meeting agendas, decisions, beneficiary lists, budgets and implementation status.
- Use social media, WhatsApp groups and local communication platforms to disseminate information widely and in advance.
- Schedule Gram Sabha meetings at convenient times that minimize conflicts with work and livelihood activities.
- Encourage recognition of active participants and community contributors to promote continued engagement.
- Enhance meeting facilities and participant comfort to create a more welcoming environment for citizens.
- Develop targeted outreach strategies for women, youth, migrant households and other underrepresented groups to ensure broader and more inclusive participation in Gram Sabha processes.



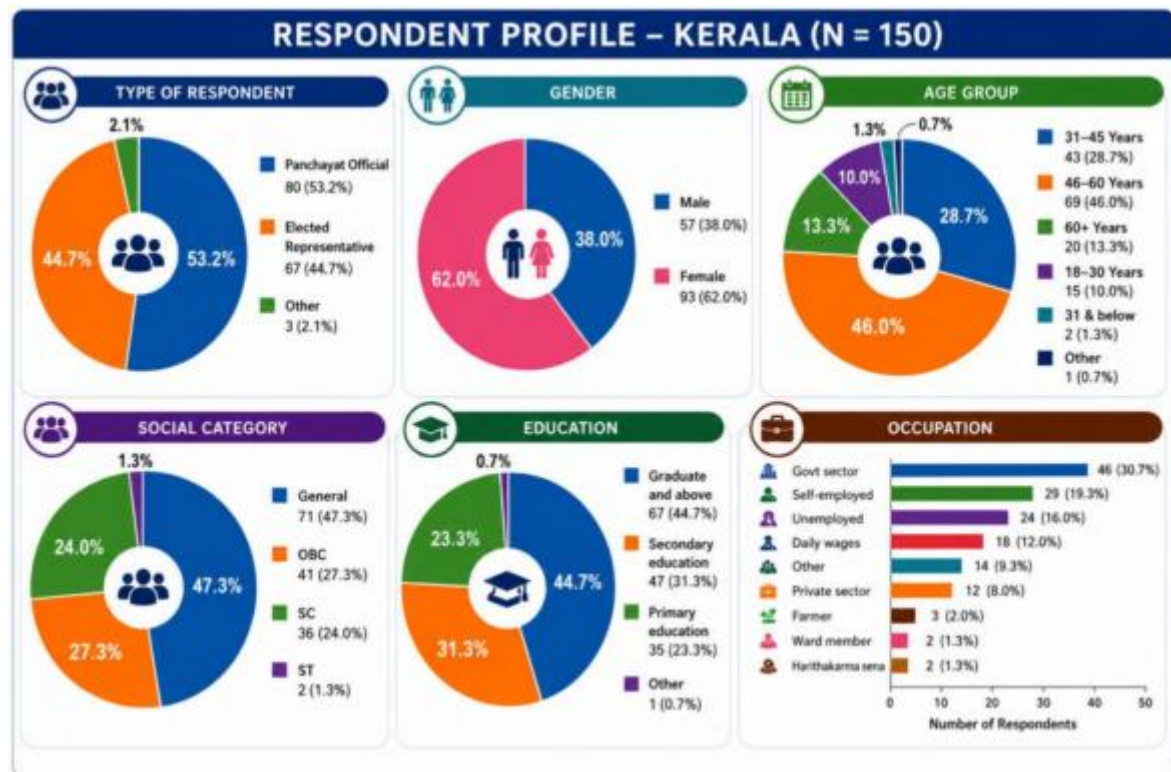
# KERALA

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 150 respondents from 07 Gram Panchayats across 3 districts of Kerala. Respondents included elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. Women constituted a significant majority of respondents, while a large proportion possessed graduate-level education. Government employees, self-employed individuals and unemployed respondents formed the major occupational groups. The findings provide useful insights into Gram Sabha participation, inclusiveness and local governance processes in Kerala.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 150   |
| Districts Covered       | 03    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 07    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate relatively high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Kerala. Most respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, citizen rights and meeting procedures. Awareness regarding quorum provisions was particularly strong, with a large majority reporting familiarity with quorum requirements and achievement of quorum during meetings.

However, attendance levels present a different picture. Only about three-fifths of respondents reported attending Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year, making Kerala one of the States with comparatively lower attendance levels despite high awareness. Similarly, only two-thirds reported active participation in Gram Sabha meetings. These findings suggest that awareness alone does not necessarily translate into regular participation.

Among those attending meetings, participation was generally described as moderate to high. Nearly half of the respondents characterized their participation as moderate, while more than one-fourth reported high participation levels. This suggests that citizens who attend Gram Sabha meetings are generally willing to engage actively in discussions and deliberations.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 91.33          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 84.67          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 66.67          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 86.00          |

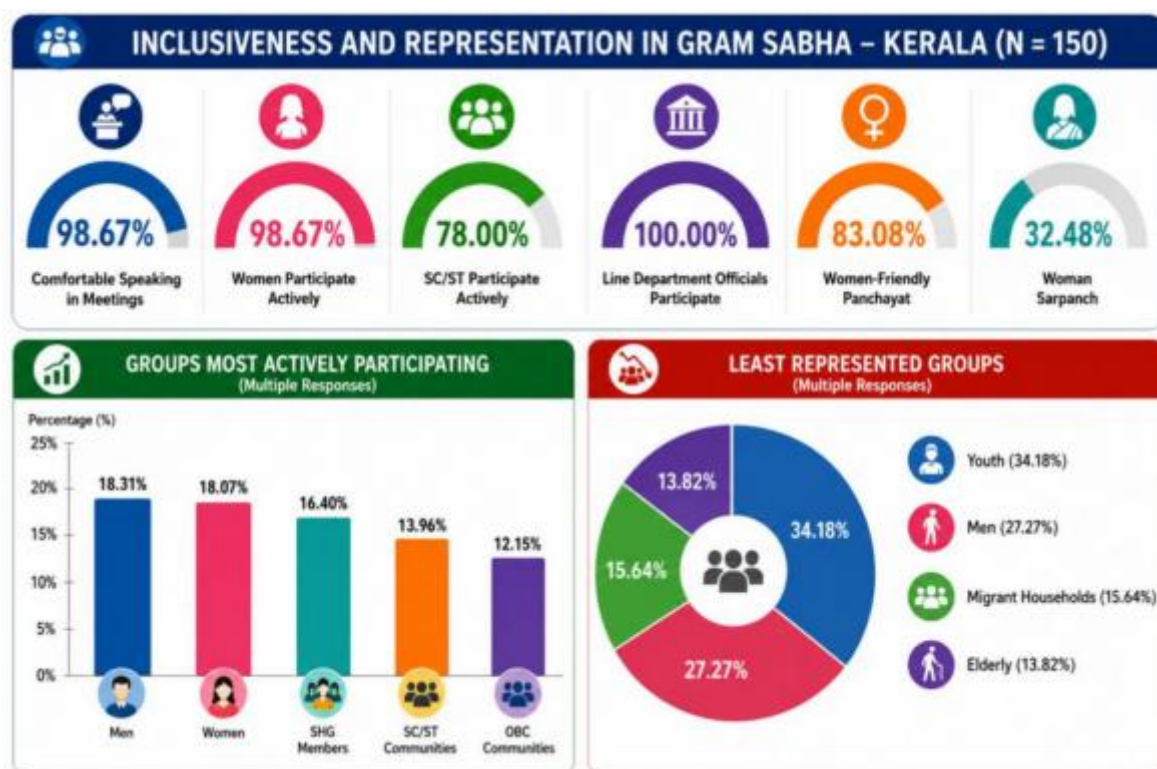
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

Kerala presents one of the strongest pictures of inclusiveness among the surveyed States. Women emerged as the most active participants in Gram Sabha meetings, followed by SC/ST communities, SHG members and elderly citizens. Nearly all respondents reported active participation by women and SC/ST communities.

A particularly significant finding is that every respondent considered their Panchayat to be women-friendly. More than eighty-three percent reported that the Panchayat head is a woman. These findings reflect the strong institutional presence of women within local governance structures and community decision-making processes.

Participation of line department officials was also relatively strong, while a large majority reported feeling comfortable speaking during meetings. Nevertheless, youth emerged as the most underrepresented group in Gram Sabha meetings, followed by men, migrant households and elderly citizens. These findings suggest that future efforts may need to focus more specifically on increasing youth engagement in local governance processes.





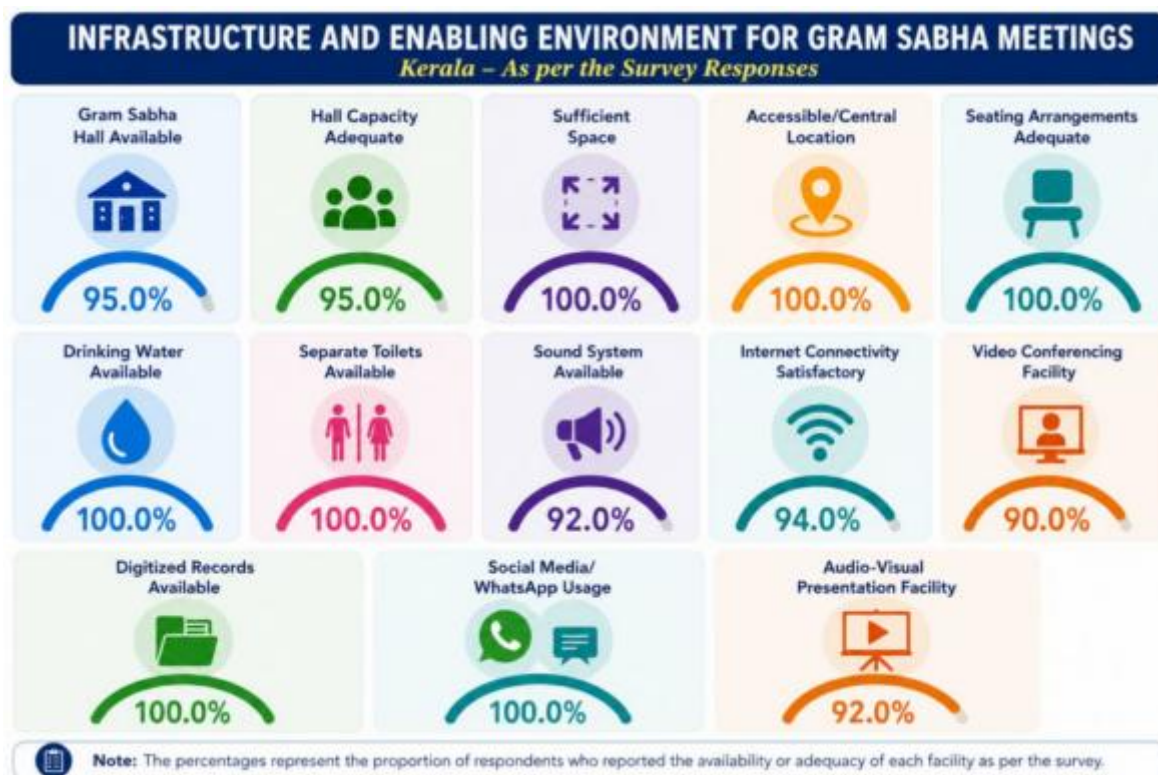
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

Among the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Kerala, infrastructure availability for conducting Gram Sabha-related meetings was reported to be very high across most indicators. Surveyed Gram Panchayats reported widespread availability of meeting spaces, adequate seating arrangements, drinking water facilities, sanitation facilities and accessible locations. The findings indicate that the surveyed local governments generally possess the basic infrastructure required to support citizen participation and local governance processes.

The surveyed Gram Panchayats also demonstrated very strong digital readiness. Internet connectivity, digitized records and the use of social media and WhatsApp for communication were reported in almost all surveyed locations. Sound systems, video conferencing facilities and audio-visual presentation facilities were also available in a large majority of the surveyed Gram Panchayats, reflecting Kerala's advanced adoption of digital technologies for local governance and citizen engagement.

However, the interpretation of these findings requires consideration of Kerala's unique governance context. Gram Sabha meetings in Kerala are commonly conducted as Ward Sabhas due to the relatively large population covered by individual Gram Panchayats. Consequently, meetings are often organized in schools, anganwadis, community halls, libraries and other public facilities available within wards rather than relying exclusively on dedicated Gram Sabha infrastructure. Therefore, the high infrastructure availability reported in the survey should be interpreted as reflecting the strong availability and effective utilization of community infrastructure and digital facilities for participatory governance rather than the existence of dedicated Gram Sabha infrastructure in every location. The findings nevertheless indicate a highly supportive ecosystem for conducting Ward Sabha and Gram Sabha processes in the surveyed areas.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

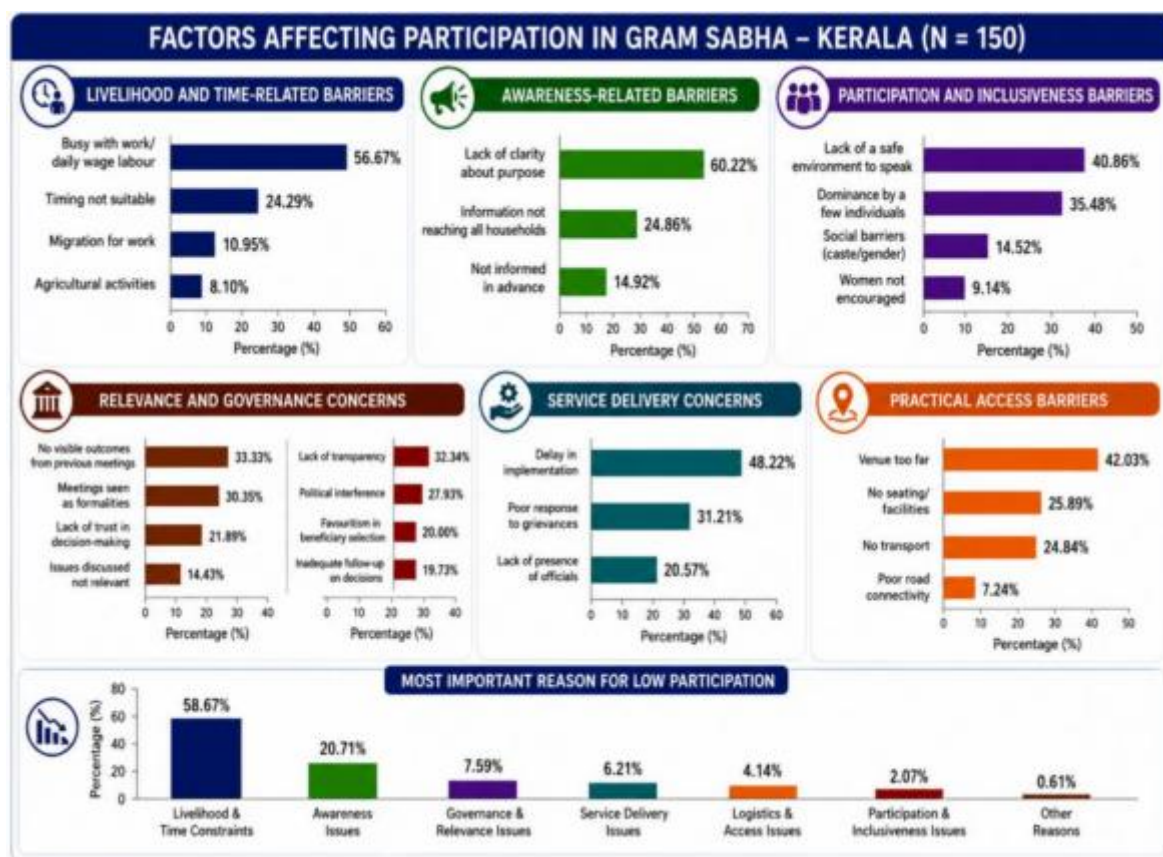
The findings clearly indicate that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Kerala. Daily wage employment and work-related commitments emerged as the dominant factors limiting attendance, followed by unsuitable meeting timings. Migration and agricultural activities were comparatively less significant concerns.

Awareness-related barriers were particularly noteworthy. Lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha emerged as the most important awareness challenge by a substantial margin. This suggests that even in a State with relatively high literacy and awareness levels, many citizens remain unconvinced about the practical significance and benefits of participation.

Participation-related concerns differed from many other States. Instead of women-related barriers, respondents emphasized lack of safe spaces for expression and dominance by a few individuals. These findings suggest that participation challenges in Kerala are linked more closely to the quality of deliberation and inclusiveness of discussions than to social exclusion.

The findings further reveal concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Many respondents perceived Gram Sabha meetings as formalities or reported lack of visible outcomes from previous meetings. Governance concerns centered on favouritism in beneficiary selection, political interference and lack of transparency. Delays in implementation and weak grievance redressal mechanisms also emerged as important concerns affecting citizen confidence.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified local issues as the most frequently discussed agenda item in Gram Sabha meetings. Beneficiary identification, welfare schemes, development priorities and sanitation also featured prominently. Discussions relating to annual budgeting, infrastructure, social audit and GPDP approval indicate a relatively broad agenda covering both development planning and governance issues.

**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

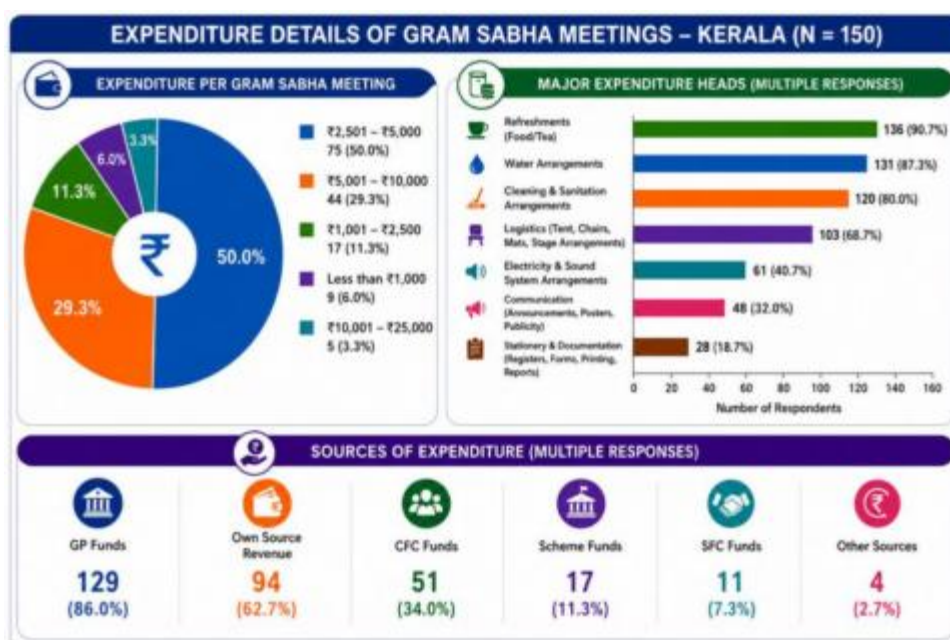
| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Identifying Local Issues  | 16.93          |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 10.86          |
| Welfare Schemes           | 10.01          |
| Development Priorities    | 9.31           |
| Sanitation                | 8.18           |
| Annual Budget             | 7.62           |
| Infrastructure            | 7.19           |
| Approving GPDP            | 5.78           |
| Social Audit              | 5.78           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

Among the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Kerala, expenditure incurred for conducting Gram Sabha meetings was generally modest, with a majority of respondents reporting expenditure in the range of ₹1,001–₹2,500 per meeting. Smaller proportions reported expenditure below ₹1,000 or above ₹5,000, indicating that Gram Sabha meetings are typically organized with relatively limited financial resources. The findings further suggest that GP funds constituted the primary source of financing for Gram Sabha meetings, supplemented by own source revenue, Central Finance Commission (CFC) funds, State Finance Commission (SFC) funds and scheme funds in some locations.

Refreshments, drinking water arrangements and communication-related activities such as announcements, posters and public outreach emerged as the major expenditure heads in the surveyed Gram Panchayats. Logistics-related arrangements, including tents, chairs, mats and stage facilities, also accounted for a significant share of expenditure. Expenditure on stationery, documentation and electricity or sound systems was comparatively lower. Overall, the findings indicate that financial resources allocated for Gram Sabha meetings in the surveyed areas were primarily directed towards ensuring citizen participation, meeting logistics and effective communication.



## Measures for Improving Participation

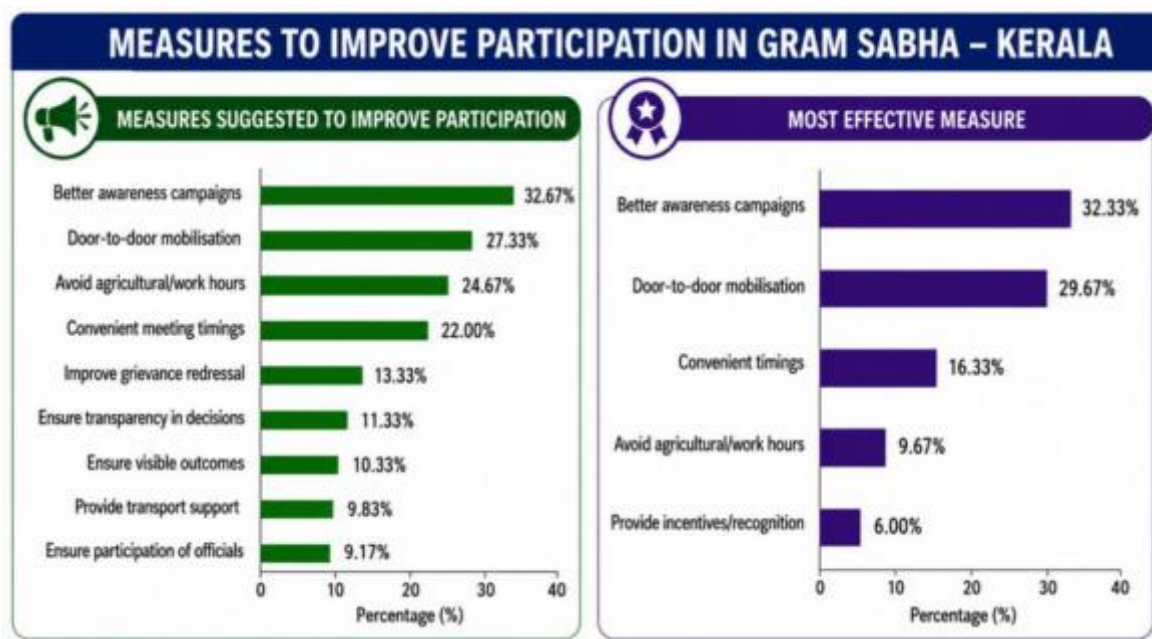
Respondents strongly emphasized awareness generation as the most effective strategy for improving participation in Gram Sabha meetings. Better awareness campaigns emerged as both the most frequently suggested and the most effective intervention by a substantial margin. Door-to-door mobilisation, convenient scheduling and improved grievance redressal also received considerable support.

A notable feature of Kerala is the emphasis placed on quality of governance and citizen responsiveness. Respondents highlighted the need for grievance redressal, transparency, interactive meetings and visible outcomes. These findings suggest that participation



challenges are linked not only to awareness but also to citizen expectations regarding effectiveness and accountability.

When asked to identify the single most effective measure, more than one-third selected awareness campaigns, while door-to-door mobilisation emerged as the second most preferred option. The findings indicate that strengthening communication and demonstrating the value of participation remain central priorities for improving Gram Sabha engagement in Kerala.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. The surveyed Gram Panchayats reported exceptionally high availability of physical infrastructure required for conducting Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha meetings.
2. Adequate meeting space, accessible locations, seating arrangements, drinking water facilities and separate toilets were available in almost all surveyed locations.
3. Internet connectivity was reported to be satisfactory in a large majority of the surveyed Gram Panchayats.
4. Digitized records were available across all surveyed Gram Panchayats, indicating advanced adoption of digital governance practices.
5. Social media and WhatsApp were universally used for communication and citizen outreach in the surveyed areas.
6. Sound systems were available in most surveyed Gram Panchayats, supporting effective communication during meetings.
7. A large majority of surveyed Gram Panchayats reported the availability of video conferencing facilities.
8. Audio-visual presentation facilities were available in most surveyed locations, supporting information dissemination and citizen awareness activities.



9. The findings reflect a strong digital ecosystem supporting local governance and participatory processes.
10. Infrastructure availability appears to be supported not only by Panchayat assets but also through the effective utilization of community infrastructure at the ward level.
11. The surveyed locations indicate that infrastructure constraints are unlikely to be a major barrier to conducting Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha meetings.
12. Kerala's surveyed Gram Panchayats demonstrate a high degree of readiness for technology-enabled and citizen-centric local governance processes.

## Recommendations

- Continue strengthening digital governance systems and maintain universal digitization of records.
- Expand the use of audio-visual tools for awareness generation, citizen education and Gram Sabha discussions.
- Further integrate video conferencing facilities for training, consultations and citizen engagement activities.
- Institutionalize best practices in digital communication through social media and WhatsApp platforms.
- Strengthen maintenance mechanisms for existing infrastructure to ensure long-term sustainability.
- Continue leveraging schools, community halls, libraries and other ward-level public facilities for conducting Ward Sabhas.
- Develop standardized digital participation tools to complement physical Gram Sabha meetings.
- Promote documentation and dissemination of Kerala's infrastructure and digital governance practices for replication in other states.
- Enhance accessibility features for elderly persons and persons with disabilities in meeting venues.
- Encourage greater use of digital presentation tools to improve transparency and citizen understanding of local development issues.
- Strengthen integration between digital records, grievance systems and citizen feedback mechanisms.
- Continue investments in technology-enabled participatory governance to further improve the quality and effectiveness of Gram Sabha processes.



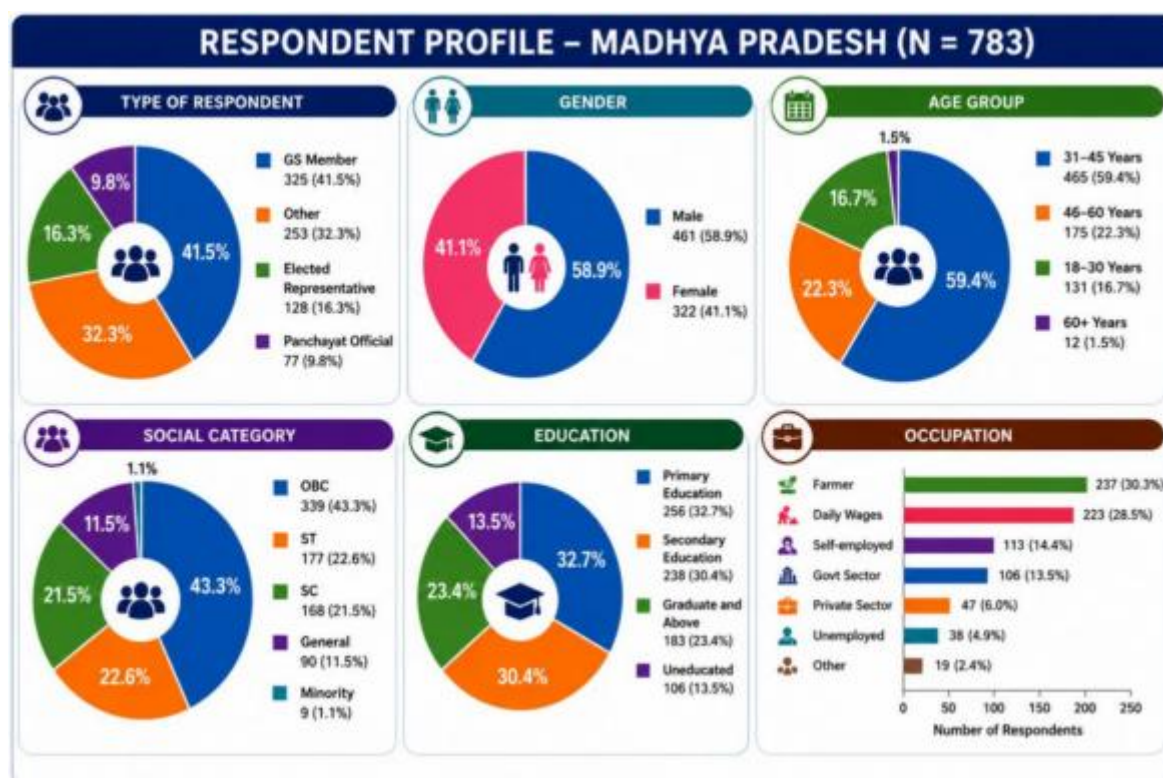
# MADHYA PRADESH

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 783 respondents from 39 Gram Panchayats across 18 districts of Madhya Pradesh. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. The sample was dominated by OBC, ST and SC communities, while farmers and daily wage workers constituted the largest occupational groups. The findings provide important insights into participation patterns, governance challenges and citizen perceptions regarding Gram Sabha functioning in Madhya Pradesh.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 783   |
| Districts Covered       | 18    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 39    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate relatively high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Madhya Pradesh. A substantial majority of respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, citizen rights and meeting frequency. Attendance levels were particularly encouraging, with more than ninety percent reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

Participation levels, however, were generally moderate. While over three-fourths of respondents reported active participation, a large proportion described their participation level as moderate or low rather than high. This suggests that attendance remains strong, but opportunities exist to deepen citizen engagement and deliberative participation.

Awareness regarding quorum provisions was moderate. Nearly two-thirds of respondents reported awareness of quorum requirements. However, less than forty percent believed that quorum is regularly achieved, while almost one-third reported that quorum is not achieved. These findings suggest continuing challenges in ensuring effective participation and procedural compliance during Gram Sabha meetings.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 89.02          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 80.08          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 77.39          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 63.35          |

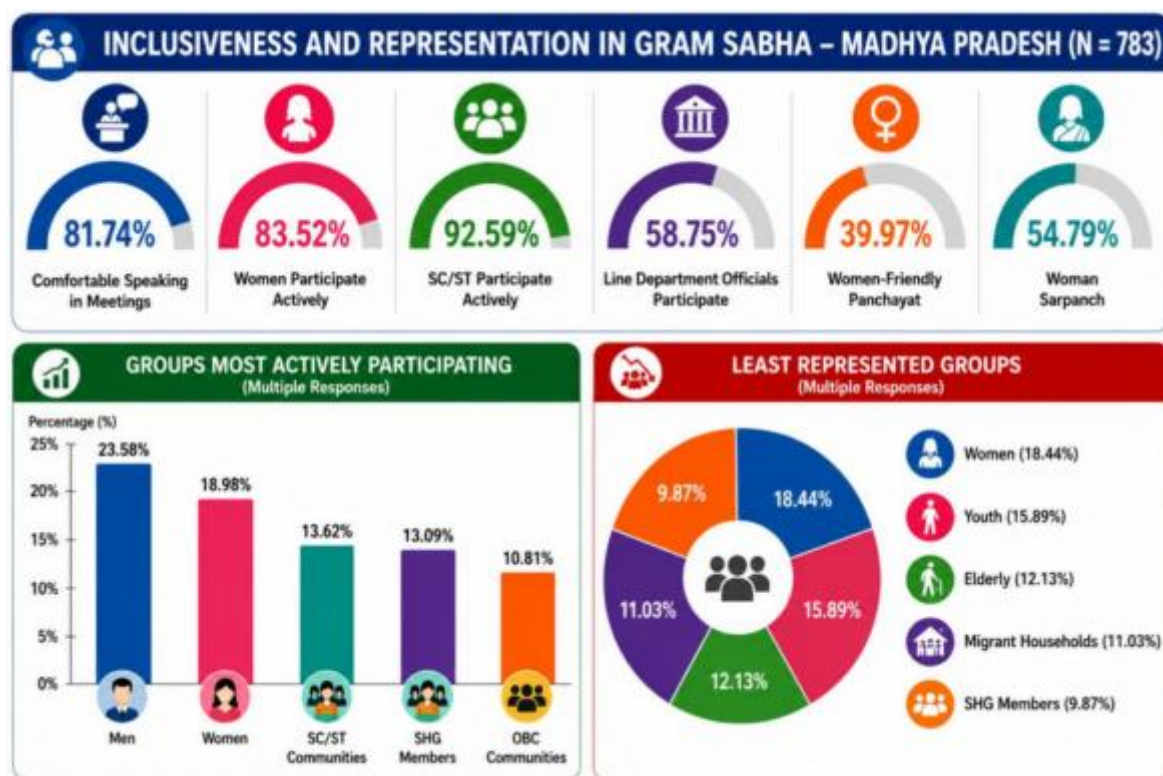
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Madhya Pradesh are broadly participatory, though important inclusion challenges remain. Men emerged as the most active participants, followed by women, SC/ST communities and SHG members. Youth participation was also reported to be relatively strong compared to several other States.

Participation of women and marginalized communities was viewed positively by a majority of respondents. More than eighty-three percent reported active participation by women, while over ninety-two percent acknowledged active participation of SC/ST communities. However, only about forty percent considered their Panchayat to be women-friendly, indicating that participation may not necessarily translate into a supportive environment for women.

Women, youth and elderly persons emerged as the groups perceived to be least represented in Gram Sabha meetings. Participation of line department officials was also reported to be relatively limited, with more than forty percent indicating that officials do not regularly participate in Gram Sabha proceedings. These findings suggest the need for stronger institutional engagement and more inclusive participation mechanisms.





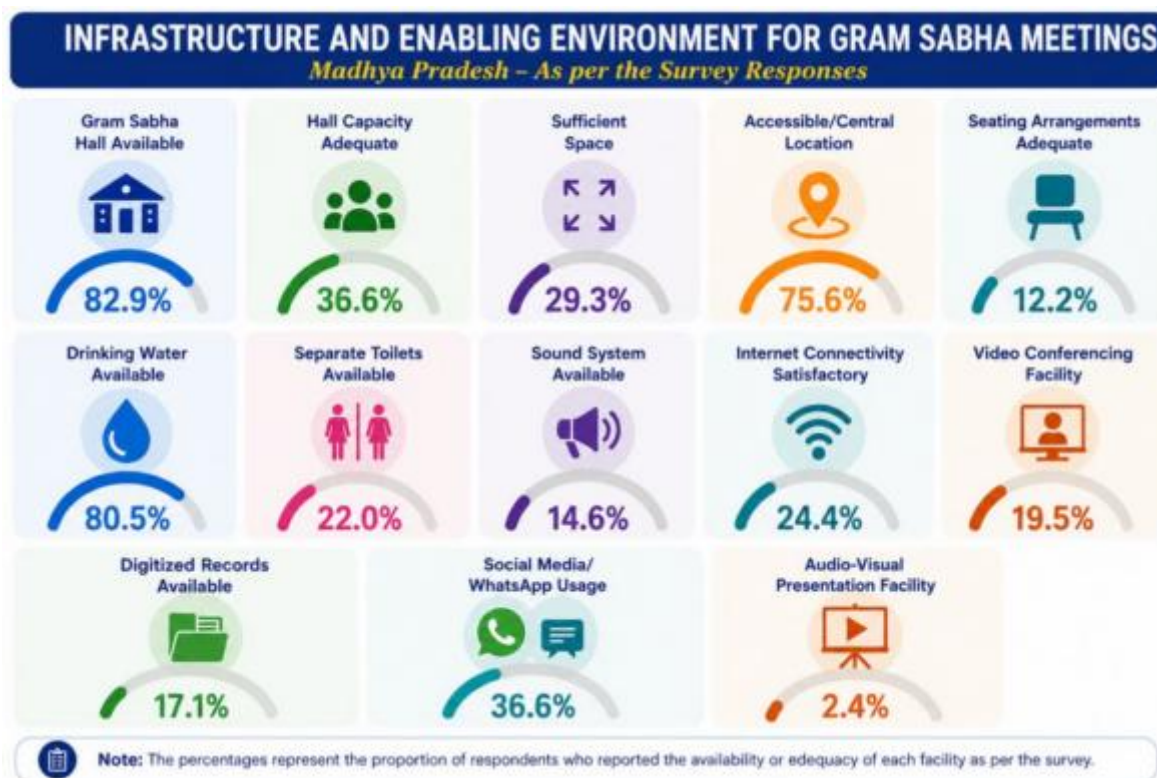
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Madhya Pradesh has relatively good availability of venues for conducting Gram Sabha meetings. More than four-fifths of respondents reported the availability of Gram Sabha halls, while three-fourths indicated that meeting locations are accessible and centrally located. However, hall capacity and availability of sufficient meeting space were reported by considerably fewer respondents, suggesting that many existing venues may not be adequately equipped to accommodate larger community gatherings.

The availability of basic amenities presents a mixed picture. Drinking water facilities were reported to be available in a majority of locations, but adequate seating arrangements and separate toilet facilities were reported by a much smaller proportion of respondents. These gaps may affect participant comfort and inclusiveness, particularly for women, elderly citizens and other vulnerable groups attending Gram Sabha meetings.

Digital and communication-related infrastructure remains limited across many surveyed Gram Panchayats. Less than one-fourth of respondents reported satisfactory internet connectivity, while the availability of video conferencing facilities, digitized records and sound systems was relatively low. Audio-visual presentation facilities were almost absent. Although some use of social media and WhatsApp platforms was reported, the findings suggest a need for strengthening both physical and digital infrastructure to improve the effectiveness, accessibility and overall quality of Gram Sabha meetings in Madhya Pradesh.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

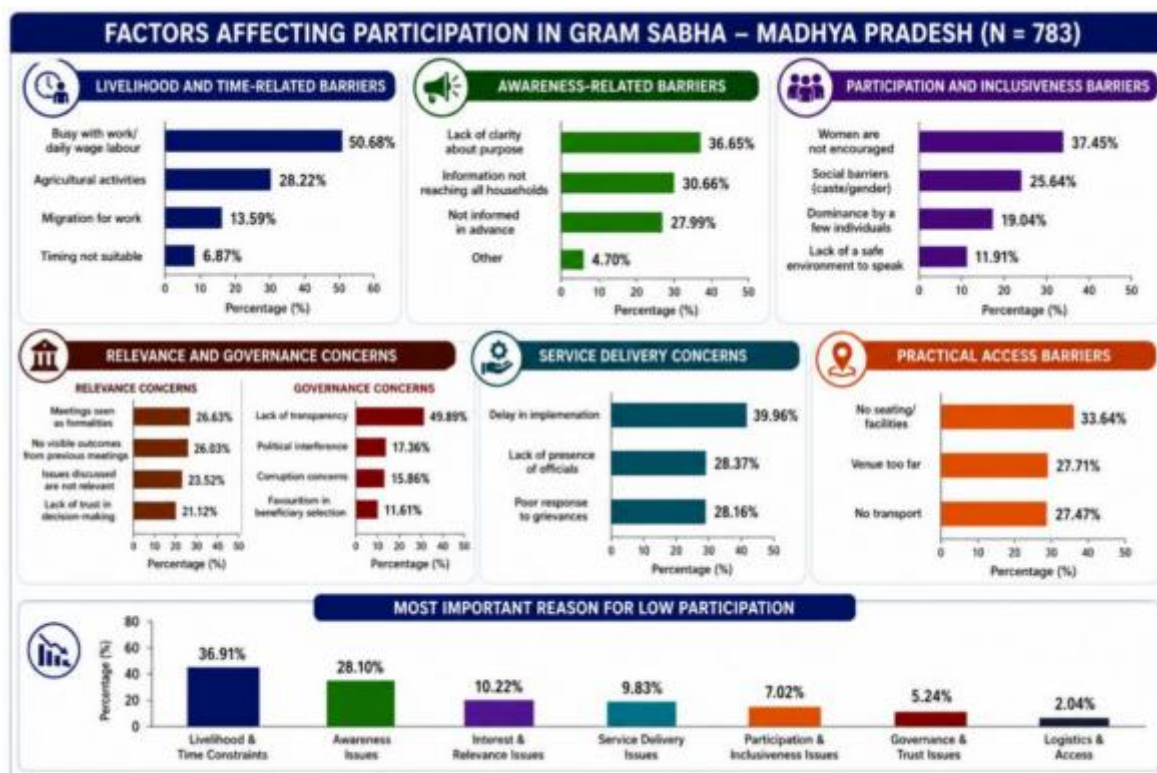
The study clearly indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Madhya Pradesh. Daily wage employment emerged as the dominant factor limiting participation, followed by agricultural activities and migration for work. These findings highlight the continuing challenge of balancing livelihood responsibilities with civic participation.

Awareness-related barriers were also substantial. Lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha emerged as the most important awareness challenge, followed by information not reaching all households and inadequate advance communication. These findings indicate that many citizens continue to lack a clear understanding of the relevance and benefits of participation.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns were primarily linked to inadequate encouragement for women, social barriers and dominance by a few individuals. Respondents also reported concerns regarding lack of safe spaces for expression. These findings point toward the need for more inclusive and participatory meeting environments.

The findings further reveal concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Many respondents perceived Gram Sabha meetings as formalities or believed that discussions do not produce visible outcomes. Governance concerns were dominated by lack of transparency, while delays in implementation emerged as the most important service delivery issue affecting citizen confidence and participation.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified local issues as the most frequently discussed agenda item in Gram Sabha meetings. Infrastructure development, approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs), sanitation, health and literacy, welfare schemes and beneficiary identification also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Madhya Pradesh are strongly oriented toward local development planning, infrastructure improvement and service delivery.

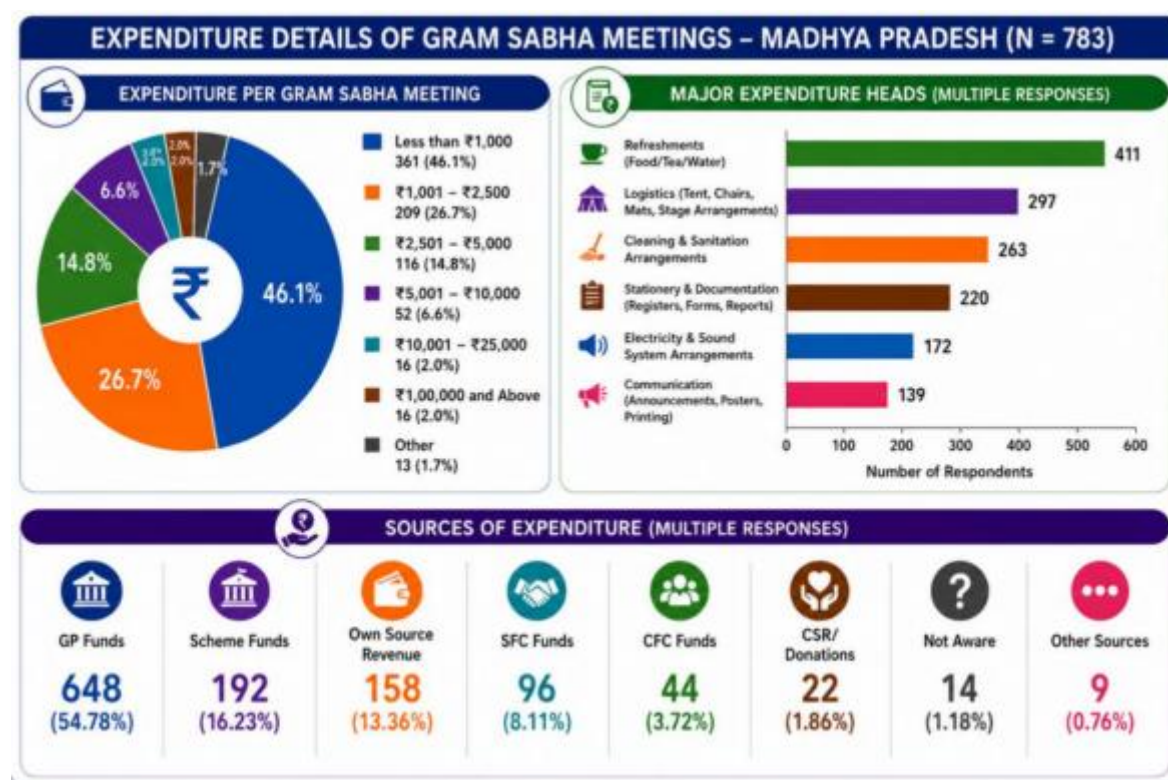
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Identifying Local Issues  | 14.66          |
| Infrastructure            | 9.03           |
| Approving GPDP            | 9.03           |
| Sanitation                | 9.00           |
| Health & Literacy         | 8.97           |
| Welfare Schemes           | 8.44           |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 7.54           |
| Development Priorities    | 6.64           |
| Annual Budget             | 6.19           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

The expenditure pattern in Madhya Pradesh indicates that Gram Sabha meetings are generally conducted with modest financial resources, with nearly half of the respondents reporting expenditure below ₹1,000 per meeting and another one-fourth reporting expenditure between ₹1,001 and ₹2,500. Refreshments, logistics arrangements, sanitation measures and documentation-related activities constitute the major expenditure heads, reflecting the focus on essential meeting management and participant facilitation. GP Funds emerge as the principal source of expenditure, supplemented by Scheme Funds, Own Source Revenue and Finance Commission grants. Overall, the findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Madhya Pradesh are largely financed through Panchayat resources and are organized with an emphasis on basic operational requirements rather than extensive infrastructure or technology-related expenditure.



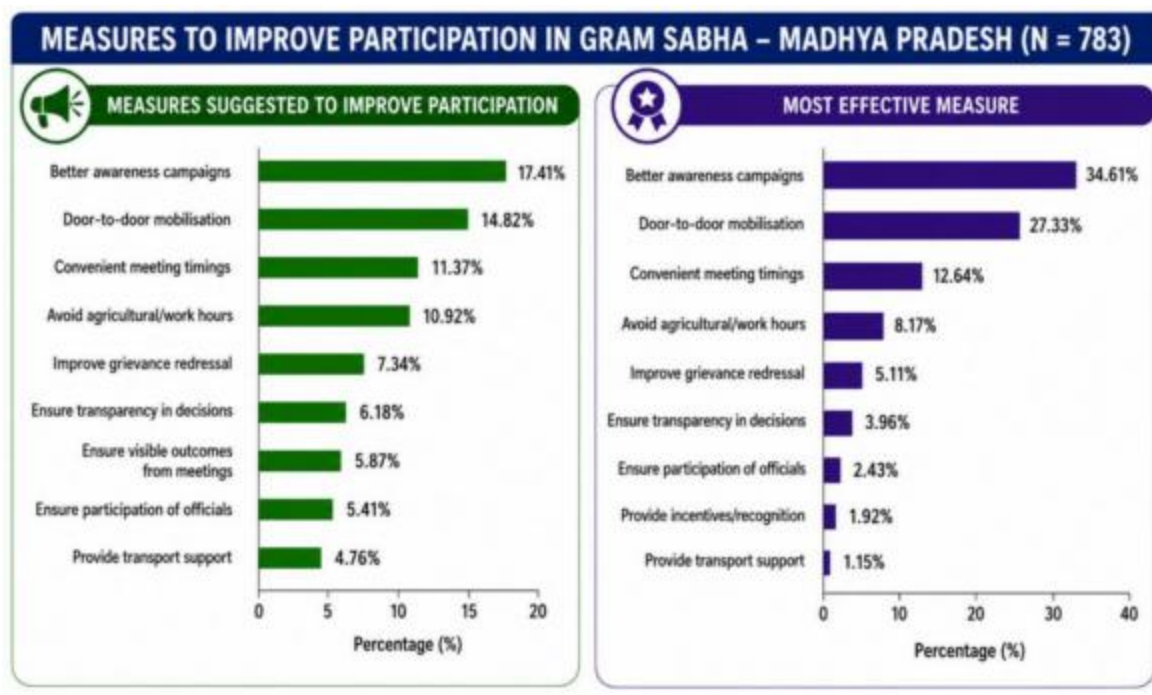
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents strongly emphasized awareness generation and community mobilisation as the most effective strategies for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns emerged as the most frequently suggested intervention, followed closely by door-to-door mobilisation. Convenient meeting timings, transparency and grievance redressal were also identified as important measures.

A distinctive feature of Madhya Pradesh is the strong emphasis placed on direct mobilisation. Respondents consistently highlighted the importance of door-to-door outreach, community-level awareness campaigns and active involvement of officials. The findings suggest that participation challenges are viewed primarily as mobilisation and communication issues.



When asked to identify the single most effective measure, door-to-door mobilisation emerged as the top preference, followed by awareness campaigns and participation of officials. These findings indicate that respondents place significant value on direct citizen outreach and institutional engagement.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Awareness of Gram Sabha meetings is high, with a large majority of respondents reporting awareness of meeting schedules and citizen rights.
2. Men, women and SC/ST communities emerged among the most actively participating groups in Gram Sabha meetings.
3. Respondents reported substantial participation of women and SC/ST communities, reflecting progress toward inclusive local governance.
4. Women-friendly Panchayat practices and women's leadership are visible, though there remains scope for further strengthening participation and representation.
5. Livelihood and time-related constraints emerged as the most significant barrier to participation, particularly among daily wage earners and farmers.
6. Lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha meetings and inadequate dissemination of information continue to affect participation.
7. Women not being encouraged to participate and social barriers remain important inclusiveness challenges.
8. Lack of transparency and concerns regarding governance processes were identified as major factors affecting public confidence.
9. Delays in implementation of Gram Sabha decisions and inadequate responsiveness to grievances emerged as important service delivery concerns.



10. Basic infrastructure such as Gram Sabha halls and drinking water facilities is available in many locations, but seating arrangements, toilets and digital facilities remain inadequate.
11. Internet connectivity, digitized records and audio-visual facilities are available only in a limited number of Gram Panchayats.
12. Awareness campaigns and door-to-door mobilisation were identified as the most effective measures for improving participation.

## Recommendations

- Strengthen awareness campaigns to improve understanding of Gram Sabha objectives, rights and responsibilities among citizens.
- Institutionalize door-to-door mobilisation before every Gram Sabha meeting through Panchayat representatives, SHGs and frontline workers.
- Schedule meetings at convenient times that do not conflict with agricultural activities and daily wage employment.
- Ensure advance communication of meeting dates, agenda and venue through multiple channels including public announcements and digital platforms.
- Promote greater participation of women, youth and vulnerable groups through targeted outreach and community mobilisation.
- Strengthen women-friendly measures and create supportive environments that encourage women to actively participate and voice their opinions.
- Improve transparency in decision-making, beneficiary selection and utilization of Panchayat resources.
- Establish robust follow-up mechanisms for implementation of Gram Sabha resolutions and regularly communicate progress to citizens.
- Strengthen grievance redressal systems and ensure timely response to community concerns.
- Improve availability of basic facilities such as seating arrangements, sanitation facilities and drinking water at meeting venues.
- Invest in digital infrastructure, including internet connectivity, digitized records, audio-visual equipment and communication systems.
- Enhance participation of line department officials to facilitate informed discussions and quicker resolution of local issues.
- Promote participatory monitoring and social accountability mechanisms to strengthen trust in Gram Sabha processes.



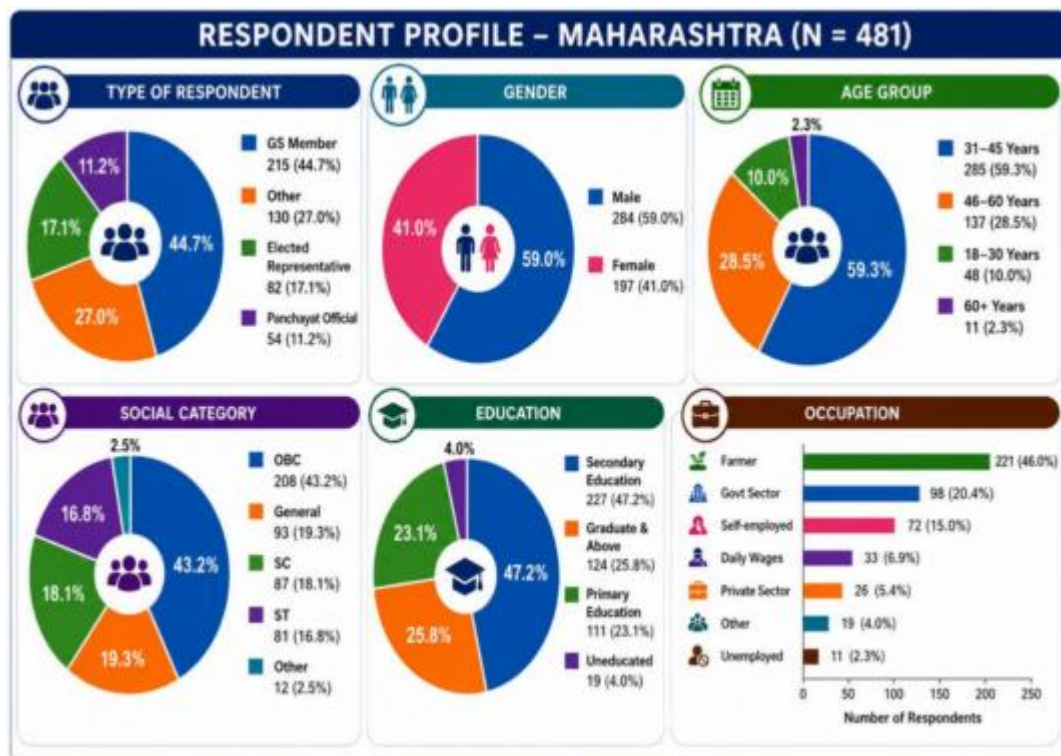
# MAHARASHTRA

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 481 respondents from 24 Gram Panchayats across 13 districts of Maharashtra. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. The sample was dominated by OBC, General, SC and ST communities, while farmers, government employees and self-employed individuals constituted major occupational groups. The findings provide important insights into participation patterns, governance challenges and citizen perceptions regarding Gram Sabha functioning in Maharashtra.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 481   |
| Districts Covered       | 13    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 24    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate exceptionally high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Maharashtra. Nearly all respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, citizen rights and the prescribed frequency of meetings. Attendance levels were equally impressive, with almost all respondents reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

Participation levels were generally strong. More than ninety percent of respondents reported active participation, while a majority described their participation levels as moderate or high. Participation frequency was also encouraging, with nearly three-fourths attending Gram Sabha meetings three or more times annually.

Awareness regarding quorum provisions was particularly strong. More than eighty-five percent of respondents reported awareness of quorum requirements, while over sixty percent indicated that quorum is regularly achieved in Gram Sabha meetings. These findings suggest comparatively strong institutional awareness and participation across surveyed Gram Panchayats.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 98.54          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 95.63          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 91.48          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 85.65          |

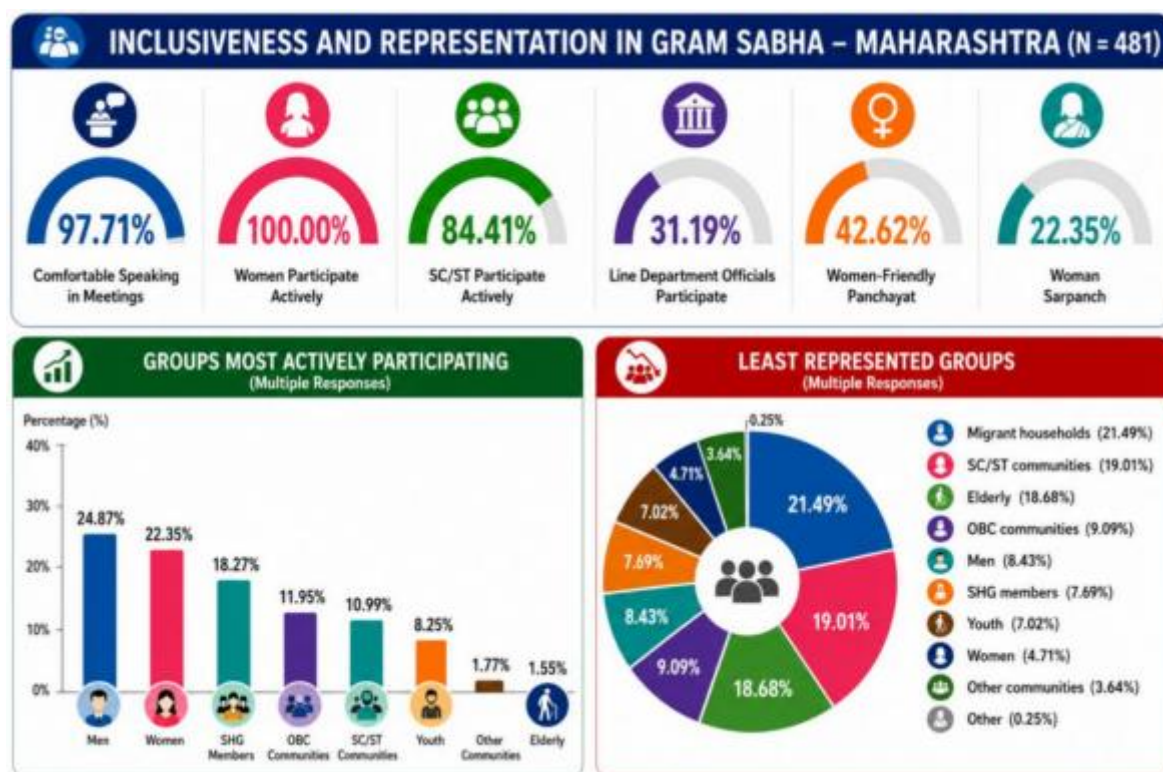
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

The findings indicate relatively strong participation across a wide range of social groups in Maharashtra. Men, women, SHG members, OBC communities and SC/ST communities emerged as the most active participants in Gram Sabha meetings. Most respondents also reported feeling comfortable speaking during discussions and expressing their views.

Women's participation was viewed very positively. Nearly ninety-eight percent of respondents reported active participation by women, while all respondents acknowledged participation of SC/ST communities. Participation of line department officials was also relatively strong, with more than four-fifths reporting their regular presence in Gram Sabha meetings.

However, important inclusion concerns remain. Despite strong participation by women, nearly sixty-nine percent of respondents reported that their Panchayat cannot be considered women-friendly. Migrant households, SC/ST communities and elderly citizens emerged as the groups most frequently perceived as underrepresented. These findings suggest that participation and representation do not always translate into a fully inclusive governance environment.





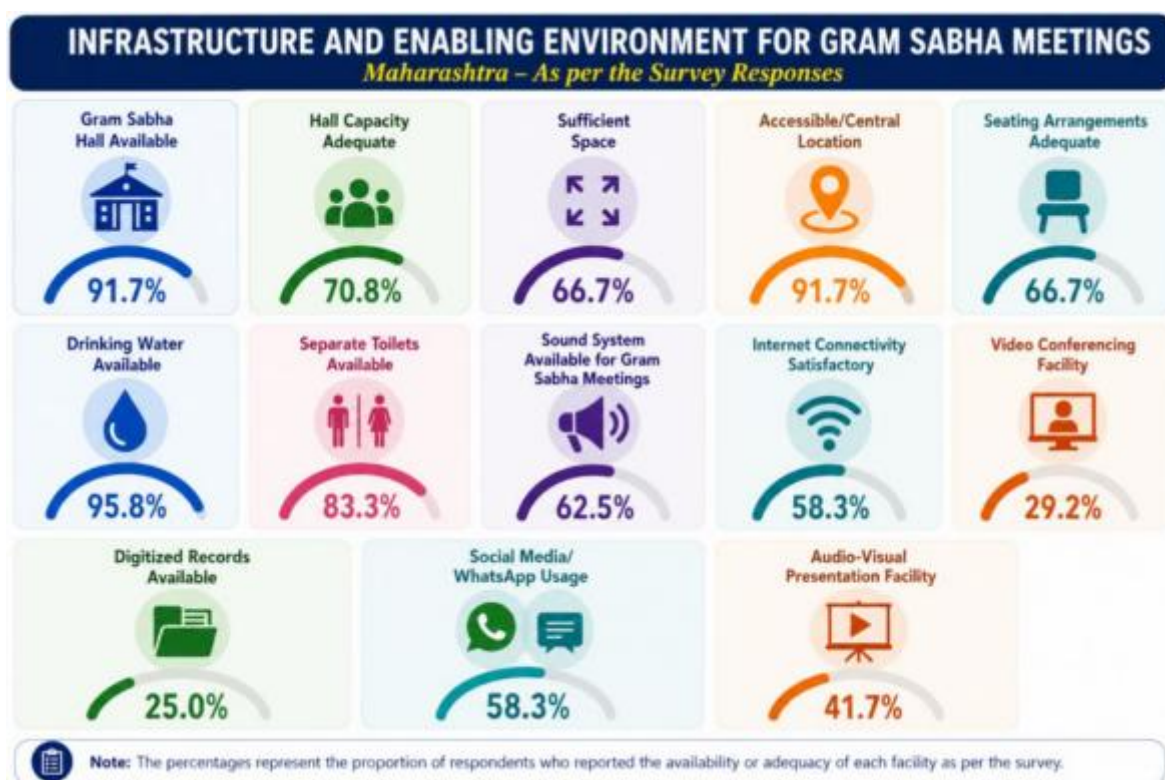
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Maharashtra possesses a relatively strong infrastructure environment for conducting Gram Sabha meetings. Respondents reported high availability of Gram Sabha halls and accessible or centrally located venues, each reported by more than ninety percent of respondents. Drinking water facilities were available in nearly all surveyed locations, while separate toilet facilities and adequate hall capacity were also reported by a substantial majority. These findings suggest that the basic physical infrastructure required for conducting Gram Sabha meetings is largely available across surveyed areas.

At the same time, certain infrastructure gaps remain evident. Although seating arrangements and sufficient meeting space were available in about two-thirds of locations, there remains scope for further improvement. Sound systems were available in a majority of locations; however, internet connectivity and social media or WhatsApp usage were reported by only around three-fifths of respondents. Video conferencing facilities were available in less than one-third of locations, while digitized records were reported by only one-fourth of respondents, indicating significant limitations in digital governance infrastructure.

Overall, the findings suggest that Maharashtra has established a strong foundation of physical infrastructure and basic amenities for Gram Sabha meetings. However, investments in digital infrastructure, including internet connectivity, digitized record management, video conferencing and audio-visual facilities, would further strengthen Gram Sabha functioning and support more technology-enabled and participatory local governance processes.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

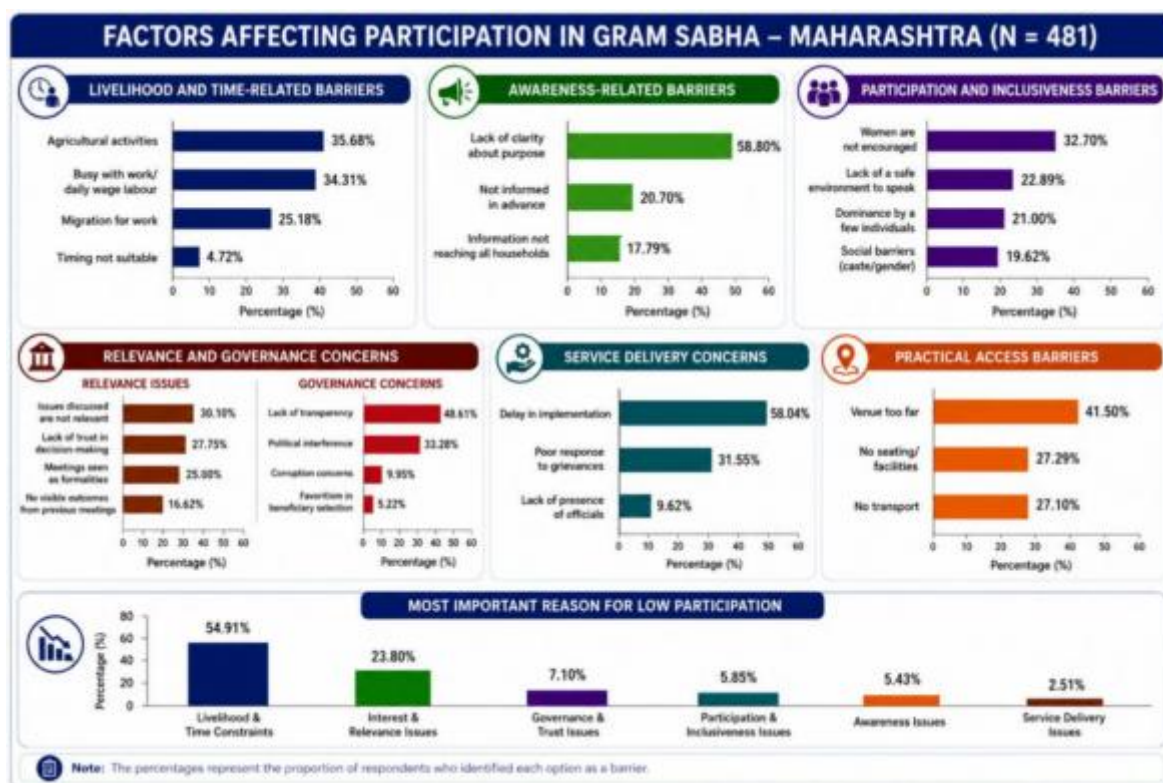
The study clearly indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Maharashtra. Agricultural activities emerged as the single most important factor limiting participation, closely followed by work-related commitments and migration for work. These findings reflect the strong influence of agricultural and livelihood cycles on participation patterns.

Awareness-related barriers were dominated by lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha. Nearly sixty percent of respondents identified this as the principal awareness challenge. Compared to many States, concerns relating to advance information and communication were relatively less prominent.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns centered primarily on inadequate encouragement for women, lack of safe spaces for expression and dominance by a few individuals. Social barriers and unequal participation opportunities also emerged as important concerns.

The findings further reveal significant concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Respondents frequently reported that issues discussed in Gram Sabha meetings are not relevant to local needs, while many expressed lack of trust in decision-making processes. Governance concerns were dominated by lack of transparency and political interference. Delays in implementation emerged as the most important service delivery challenge affecting citizen confidence in Gram Sabha processes.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified local issues, sanitation and beneficiary identification as the most frequently discussed agenda items in Gram Sabha meetings. Welfare schemes, health and literacy, approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) and livelihood concerns also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Maharashtra serve as important platforms for addressing local development priorities, service delivery concerns and community welfare issues.

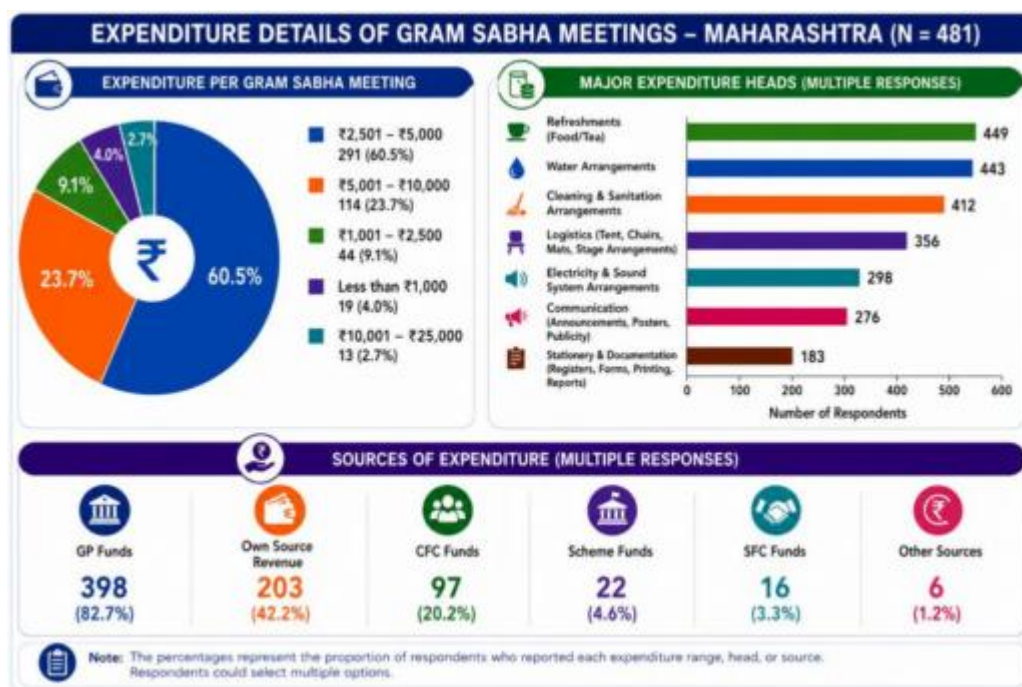
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Identifying Local Issues  | 11.54          |
| Sanitation                | 10.87          |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 10.23          |
| Welfare Schemes           | 9.55           |
| Health & Literacy         | 8.97           |
| Approving GPDP            | 8.78           |
| Livelihood                | 8.46           |
| Annual Budget             | 6.78           |
| Infrastructure            | 6.43           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Gram Sabha meetings in Maharashtra are generally conducted with modest expenditure levels, with nearly half of the respondents reporting expenditure between ₹1,001 and ₹2,500 per meeting, while about one-fourth reported expenditure below ₹1,000. Expenditure patterns reveal that refreshments, drinking water and tea constitute the dominant expenditure heads, followed by logistics arrangements such as tents, chairs, mats and stage arrangements, reflecting a strong emphasis on facilitating community participation and ensuring basic meeting amenities. Electricity, sound systems, communication and publicity-related expenses accounted for a relatively smaller share of expenditure. In terms of funding sources, GP Funds emerged as the principal source of financing, supplemented by CFC funds, scheme funds, SFC funds and own-source revenue. Overall, the findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Maharashtra are largely financed through Panchayat resources and prioritize essential operational arrangements required for effective conduct of meetings and citizen engagement.



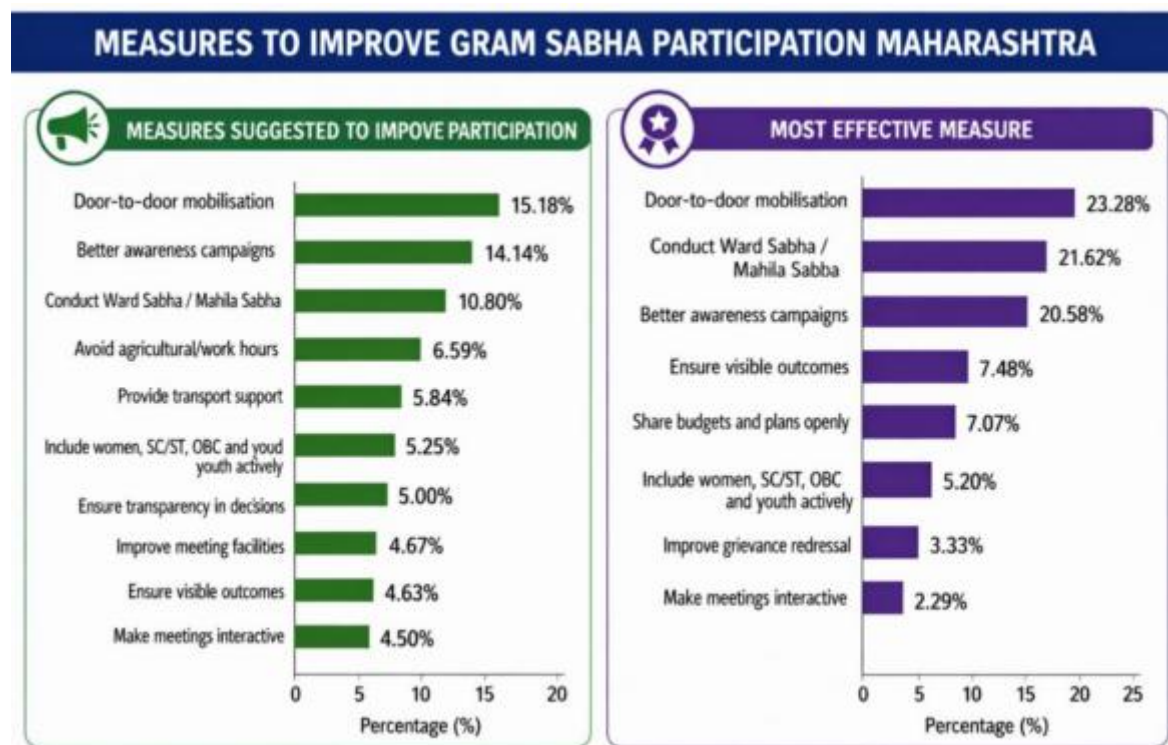
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents strongly emphasized mobilisation, awareness generation and community-level consultation as the most effective approaches for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Door-to-door mobilisation emerged as the most frequently suggested intervention, followed closely by awareness campaigns and Ward Sabha or Mahila Sabha meetings.

A distinctive feature of Maharashtra is the strong emphasis on pre-Gram Sabha consultations and localized mobilisation efforts. Respondents repeatedly highlighted the importance of Ward Sabhas, Mahila Sabhas and community-level outreach activities. Transport support, inclusion of marginalized groups and transparency in decision-making were also identified as important measures.



When asked to identify the single most effective measure, door-to-door mobilisation again emerged as the most preferred option, followed by Ward Sabha/Mahila Sabha meetings and awareness campaigns. These findings suggest that participation challenges are viewed primarily as mobilisation and community engagement issues rather than purely administrative concerns.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Door-to-door mobilization emerged as the most frequently suggested measure for improving participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Maharashtra.
2. Better awareness campaigns received strong support, indicating the need for continuous citizen education regarding the importance and functions of Gram Sabha.
3. Respondents emphasized the importance of conducting Ward Sabhas and Mahila Sabhas to improve grassroots participation and inclusiveness.
4. Avoiding agricultural and work hours was identified as an important strategy for addressing livelihood-related attendance constraints.
5. Provision of transport support was viewed as a useful measure for overcoming access-related barriers.
6. Respondents highlighted the need for greater participation of women, SCs, STs, OBCs and youth in Gram Sabha processes.
7. Transparency in decision-making emerged as an important expectation among respondents.
8. Improvements in meeting facilities and basic amenities were considered beneficial for enhancing attendance and engagement.



9. Citizens emphasized the importance of visible outcomes from Gram Sabha decisions to sustain public interest and participation.
10. Interactive and discussion-oriented meetings were preferred over purely procedural gatherings.
11. Door-to-door mobilization was also identified as the most effective measure overall, reflecting the importance of direct community outreach.
12. Ward Sabhas, Mahila Sabhas and awareness campaigns were perceived as highly effective mechanisms for strengthening participation and local democratic engagement.

## Recommendations

- Institutionalize systematic door-to-door mobilization before every Gram Sabha meeting through Panchayat representatives, SHGs and frontline workers.
- Conduct regular awareness campaigns to improve citizen understanding of Gram Sabha roles, rights and benefits.
- Strengthen Ward Sabha and Mahila Sabha processes as preparatory platforms for broader community participation.
- Schedule Gram Sabha meetings at times that minimize conflicts with agricultural and livelihood activities.
- Provide transport support wherever distance and accessibility affect attendance.
- Develop targeted strategies to increase participation of women, youth, SCs, STs, OBCs and other underrepresented groups.
- Improve transparency by proactively sharing agendas, beneficiary lists, budgets and decisions with citizens.
- Ensure timely implementation of Gram Sabha resolutions and regularly communicate progress to the community.
- Upgrade meeting facilities and basic amenities to create a more comfortable and inclusive environment for participants.
- Promote interactive discussion-based meeting formats that encourage active citizen engagement.
- Utilize digital platforms, social media and WhatsApp groups for wider dissemination of meeting information.
- Strengthen accountability mechanisms and follow-up systems so that citizens can clearly observe the outcomes of their participation.



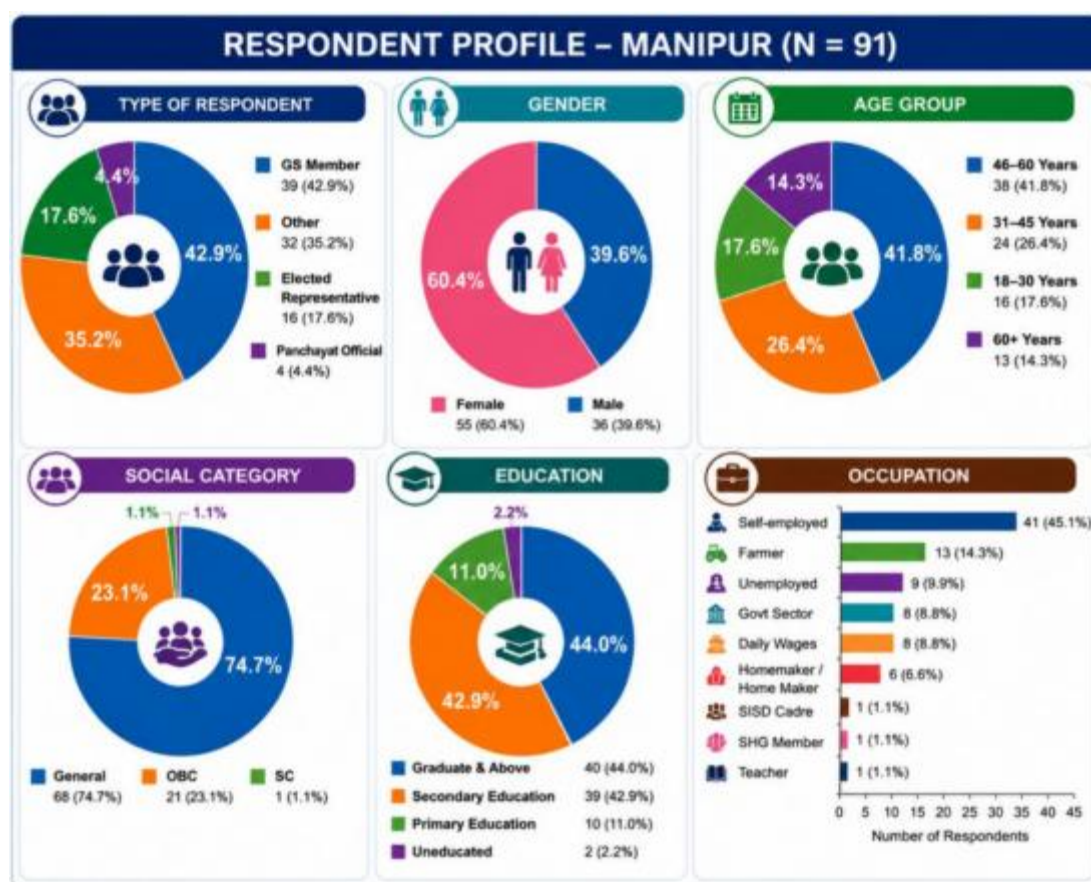
# MANIPUR

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 91 respondents from 6 Gram Panchayats across 3 districts of Manipur. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. Women constituted a majority of respondents, while a large proportion possessed graduate and secondary-level education. Self-employed individuals formed the largest occupational category. The findings provide important insights into participation patterns, governance challenges and citizen perceptions regarding Gram Sabha functioning in Manipur.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 91    |
| Districts Covered       | 3     |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 6     |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Manipur. Nearly all respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, while a substantial majority also reported awareness of their rights within the Gram Sabha. However, awareness regarding the frequency of Gram Sabha meetings was comparatively lower, suggesting gaps in procedural understanding.

Attendance and participation levels were moderate. Four-fifths of respondents reported attending Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year, while nearly three-fourths reported active participation. Most respondents described their participation levels as moderate rather than high, indicating regular but not necessarily intensive engagement in Gram Sabha proceedings.

Awareness regarding quorum provisions was moderate. Although more than sixty percent reported awareness of quorum requirements, only a small proportion believed that quorum is regularly achieved during meetings. A large number of respondents were either unaware of quorum achievement or reported that quorum is generally not achieved. These findings suggest challenges relating to participation levels and procedural compliance in Gram Sabha meetings.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 98.90          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 84.62          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 72.53          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 61.54          |

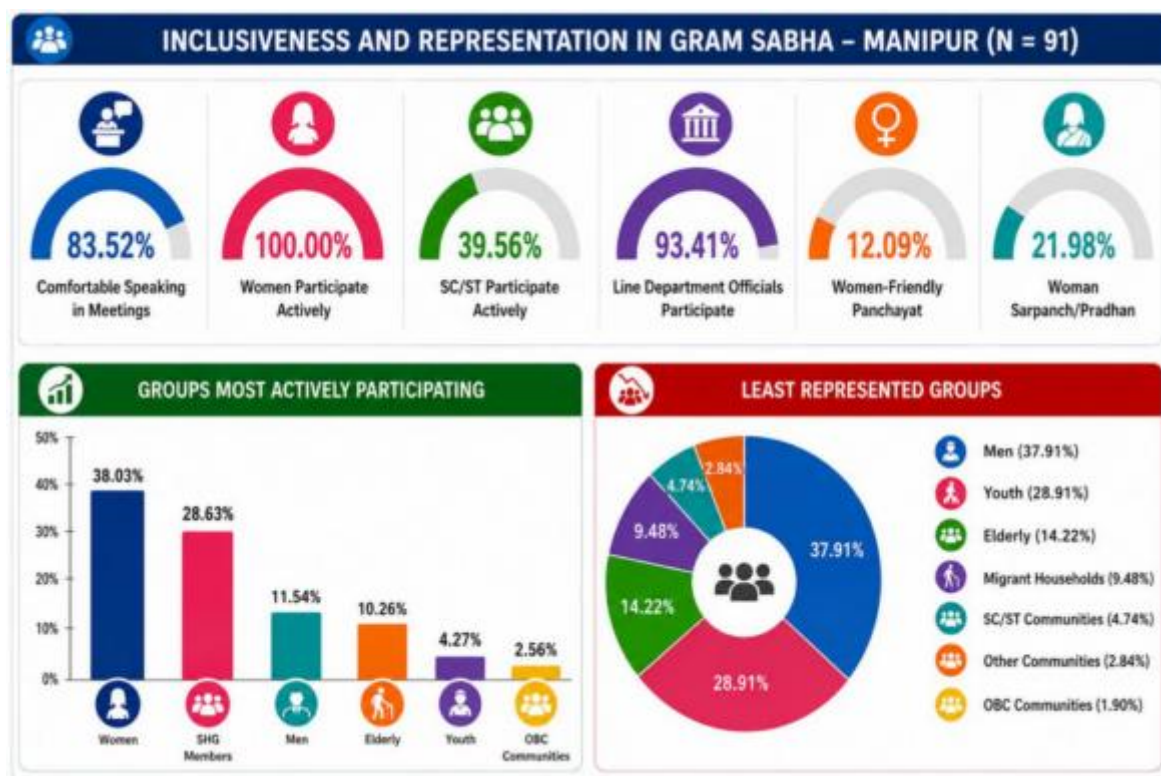
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

The findings reveal a distinctive participation pattern in Manipur, with women and SHG members emerging as the most active participants in Gram Sabha meetings. Women were overwhelmingly identified as the dominant participants, followed by SHG members, men and elderly citizens. This reflects the important role played by women and community-based organizations in local governance processes.

Women's participation was particularly strong. All respondents reported active participation by women in Gram Sabha meetings. Participation of line department officials was also reported to be exceptionally high. However, participation of SC/ST communities was perceived to be comparatively weak, with a majority reporting that these groups do not actively participate in Gram Sabha proceedings.

Despite strong participation by women, a large majority of respondents reported that their Panchayats are not women-friendly. Similarly, only about one-fifth reported that the Panchayat head is a woman. Men, youth and elderly citizens emerged as the groups perceived to be least represented in Gram Sabha meetings. These findings suggest important gaps between participation levels and broader inclusion within local governance structures.





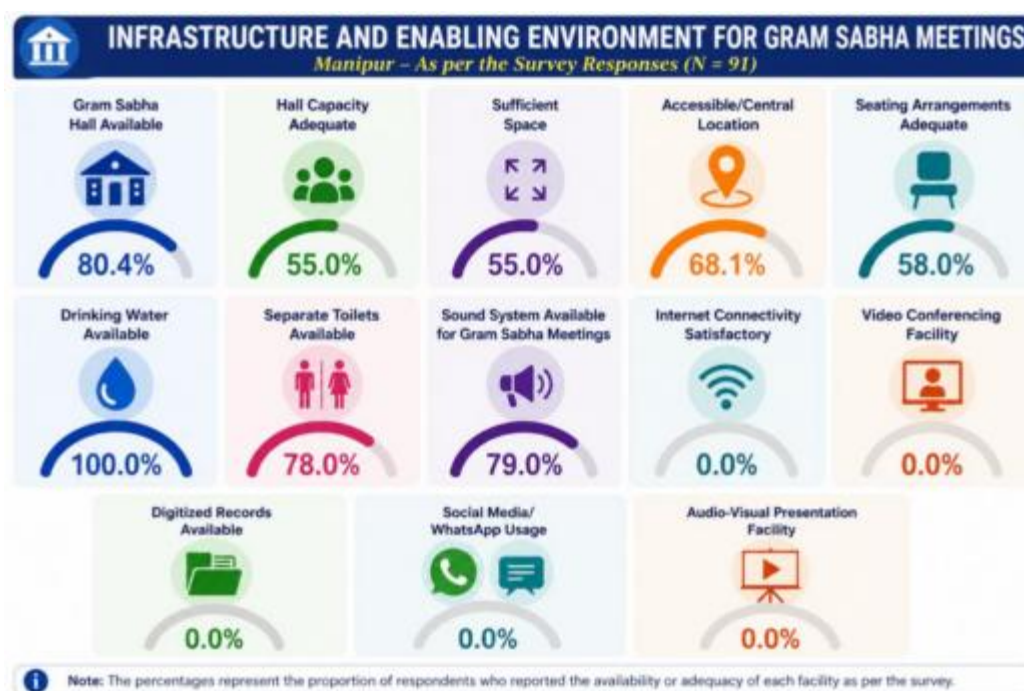
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

Among the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Manipur, the availability of basic infrastructure required for conducting Gram Sabha meetings was mixed. A majority of surveyed locations reported the availability of Gram Sabha halls, accessible meeting venues and adequate seating arrangements. Drinking water facilities were available in all surveyed Gram Panchayats, while separate toilet facilities were available in a substantial proportion of surveyed locations. However, only about half of the surveyed Gram Panchayats reported adequate hall capacity and sufficient meeting space, indicating scope for strengthening physical infrastructure in some locations.

The findings further indicate moderate availability of meeting support facilities. Sound systems were available in a majority of the surveyed Gram Panchayats, which can facilitate effective communication during meetings. At the same time, respondents reported the absence of internet connectivity, video conferencing facilities and audio-visual presentation equipment in the surveyed locations. These findings suggest that digital infrastructure supporting Gram Sabha processes remains limited in the surveyed areas.

Overall, the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Manipur appear to possess the minimum physical infrastructure required for conducting Gram Sabha meetings, particularly with respect to drinking water, meeting venues and basic amenities. However, significant gaps were observed in digital infrastructure and technology-enabled governance facilities. Strengthening internet connectivity, digitization initiatives, communication platforms and audio-visual facilities could enhance information dissemination, citizen engagement and the overall effectiveness of Gram Sabha meetings in the surveyed locations.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

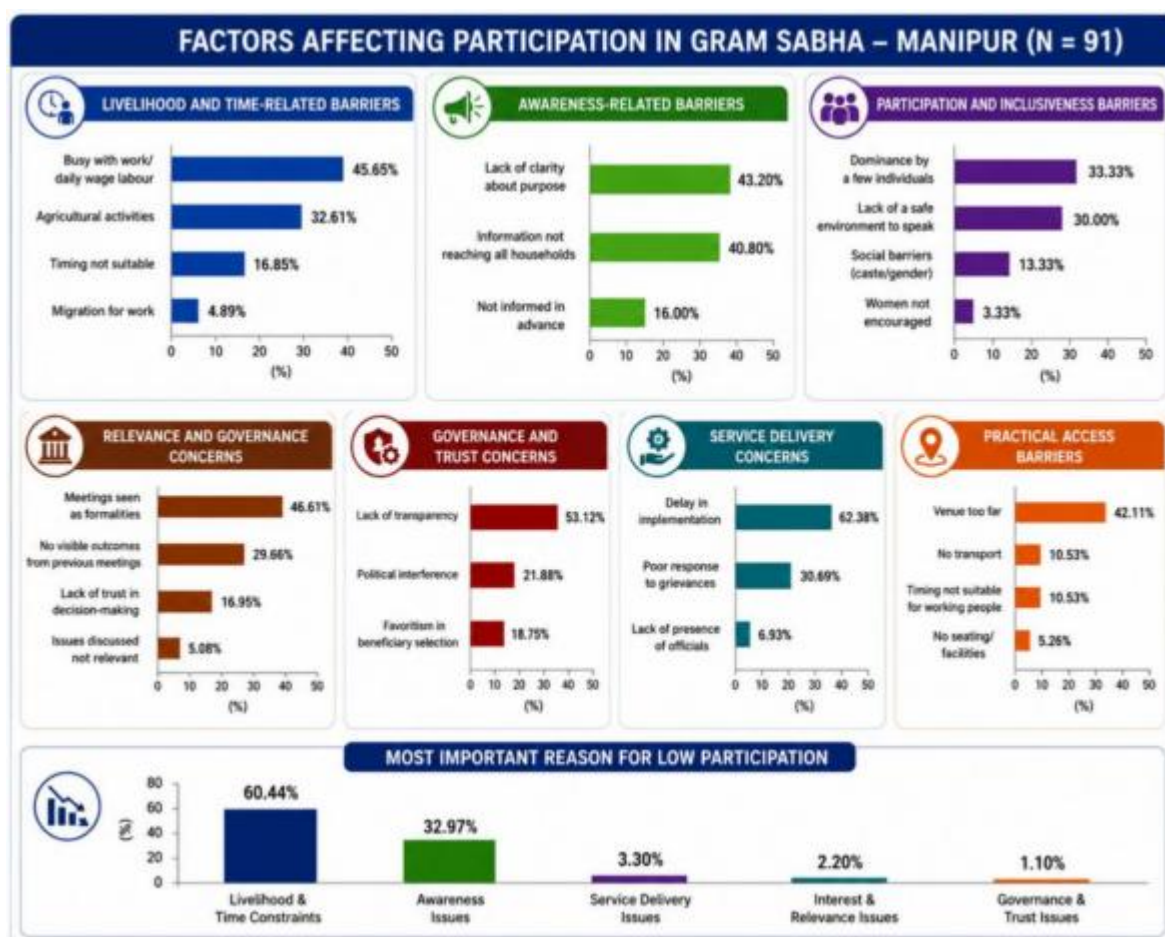
The findings clearly indicate that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Manipur. Work-related commitments and daily livelihood activities emerged as the most frequently cited barriers, followed by agricultural activities and timing-related challenges. Migration for work was comparatively less significant.

Awareness-related barriers were also prominent. Lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha emerged as the leading awareness challenge, closely followed by information not reaching all households. These findings indicate that communication and awareness continue to influence participation levels despite generally high awareness of Gram Sabha meetings.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns were primarily linked to dominance by a few individuals and lack of safe spaces for expression. Unlike many States, inadequate encouragement for women was not identified as a major concern. This finding reflects the relatively strong participation of women in Gram Sabha meetings across surveyed Panchayats.

The findings further reveal substantial concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Many respondents perceived Gram Sabha meetings as formalities and reported lack of visible outcomes from previous meetings. Governance concerns centered on lack of transparency and political interference, while delays in implementation emerged as the most important service delivery challenge. These findings suggest that citizens seek more meaningful participation and visible outcomes from Gram Sabha processes.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified local issues and approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDs) as the most frequently discussed agenda items in Gram Sabha meetings. Welfare schemes, social audit, own source revenue generation, sanitation and beneficiary identification also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Manipur are strongly focused on local planning, accountability and development-related discussions.

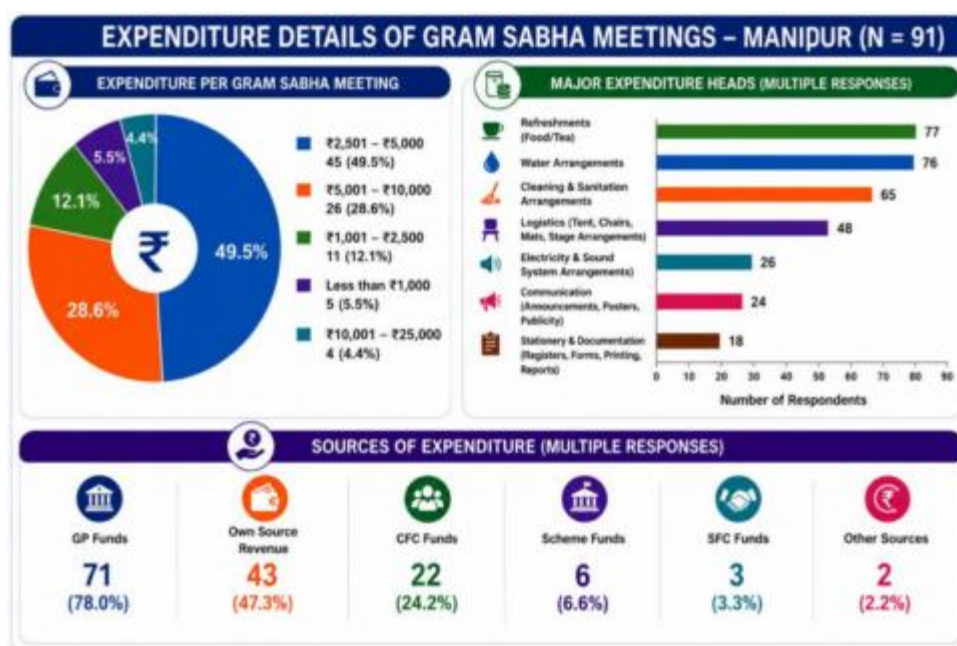
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Identifying Local Issues  | 14.74          |
| Approving GPD             | 13.26          |
| Welfare Schemes           | 10.74          |
| Social Audit              | 9.47           |
| OSR Generation            | 8.84           |
| Sanitation                | 8.42           |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 8.00           |
| Livelihood                | 6.11           |
| Development Priorities    | 5.05           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

Among the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Manipur, expenditure incurred for conducting Gram Sabha meetings was generally concentrated in the higher expenditure brackets, with a majority of respondents reporting expenditure between ₹10,001–₹25,000 per meeting. GP funds emerged as the primary source of financing, supplemented by SFC funds and limited contributions from other sources. Major expenditure heads included refreshments, drinking water arrangements, logistics such as tents, chairs and stage arrangements, and communication-related activities. The findings suggest that the surveyed Gram Panchayats allocate a substantial share of available resources towards ensuring basic meeting arrangements, citizen participation and logistical support for conducting Gram Sabha meetings.



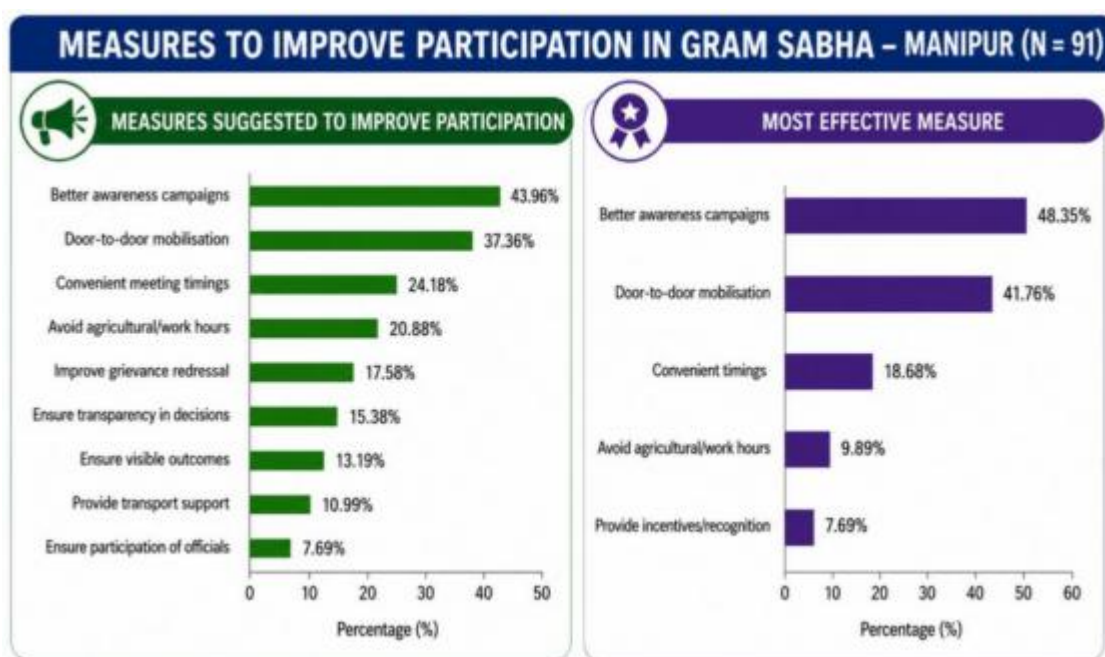
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents strongly emphasized awareness generation and citizen mobilisation as the most effective strategies for improving participation in Gram Sabha meetings. Better awareness campaigns emerged as both the most frequently suggested and the most effective intervention by a substantial margin. Door-to-door mobilisation and Ward Sabha or Mahila Sabha meetings were also widely supported.

A notable feature of Manipur is the strong emphasis placed on awareness creation and community outreach. Respondents repeatedly highlighted the need to educate citizens regarding the purpose, importance and benefits of participation in Gram Sabha meetings. Improvements in grievance redressal, transparency and visible outcomes were also identified as important measures.

When asked to identify the single most effective measure, more than one-third selected awareness campaigns, while door-to-door mobilisation emerged as the second most preferred strategy. These findings suggest that strengthening communication and public awareness remains the most important priority for increasing participation in Manipur.





## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Awareness campaigns emerged as the most frequently suggested measure for improving participation in the surveyed Gram Panchayats.
2. Better awareness was also identified as the single most effective intervention for increasing citizen participation.
3. Door-to-door mobilisation received strong support as a practical strategy for improving attendance and engagement.
4. Respondents highlighted the importance of conducting Ward Sabhas and Mahila Sabhas to strengthen community participation.
5. Convenient meeting timings were identified as an important factor influencing attendance.
6. Many respondents emphasized the need for visible outcomes from Gram Sabha decisions to sustain public interest and trust.
7. Improving grievance redressal mechanisms emerged as a significant recommendation for enhancing citizen confidence.
8. Transparency in decision-making and beneficiary selection was viewed as important for strengthening participation.
9. Respondents stressed the need for greater inclusion of women, youth and socially marginalized groups in Gram Sabha processes.
10. Open-ended responses highlighted the importance of awareness generation among men and youth regarding the purpose and benefits of Gram Sabha participation.
11. Several respondents suggested stronger engagement of SHGs, community organizations and local leaders for mobilization efforts.
12. Timely implementation of development works and responsiveness to community needs were repeatedly identified as factors that could improve participation.



## Recommendations

- Launch sustained awareness campaigns on the role, functions and benefits of Gram Sabha participation.
- Institutionalize door-to-door mobilisation and household-level outreach before every Gram Sabha meeting.
- Conduct Ward Sabhas and Mahila Sabhas as preparatory forums to encourage broader community engagement.
- Schedule Gram Sabha meetings at convenient times and avoid conflicts with work and livelihood activities.
- Strengthen grievance redressal systems and ensure timely response to citizen concerns.
- Improve transparency in decision-making, beneficiary selection and implementation of development programmes.
- Publicize actions taken on Gram Sabha resolutions to demonstrate visible outcomes and build trust.
- Encourage greater participation of women, youth and under-represented groups through targeted outreach initiatives.
- Utilize SHGs, community-based organizations and traditional community institutions for awareness generation and mobilisation.
- Strengthen communication through social media, WhatsApp groups and local information networks.
- Improve coordination between Panchayats and line departments to enhance responsiveness and service delivery.
- Ensure timely implementation of approved plans and development works to reinforce the credibility and relevance of Gram Sabha meetings.



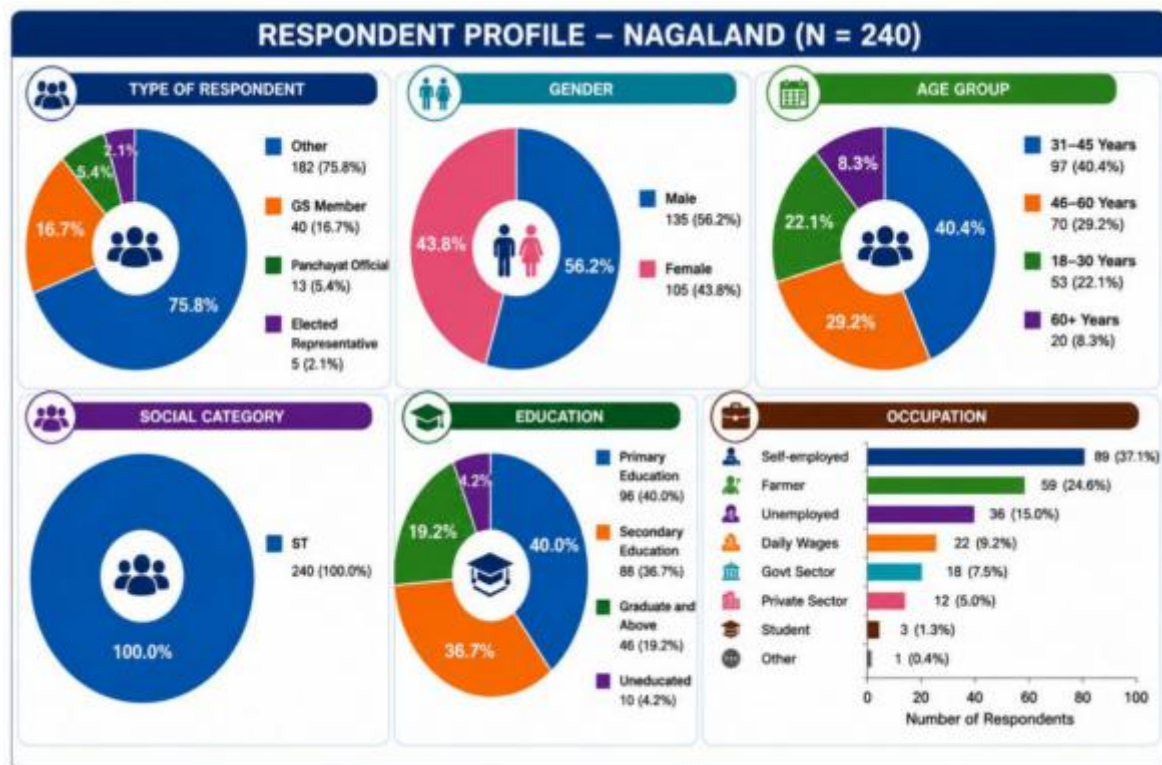
# NAGALAND

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 240 respondents from 12 Gram Panchayats across 6 districts of Nagaland. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social and occupational backgrounds. All respondents belonged to Scheduled Tribe communities, reflecting the demographic composition of the surveyed areas. The sample comprised a mix of self-employed individuals, farmers, unemployed persons, daily wage workers and government employees. The findings provide important insights into Gram Sabha participation, governance challenges and citizen perceptions regarding local self-governance in Nagaland.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 240   |
| Districts Covered       | 06    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 12    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Nagaland. Nearly all respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, while a large majority also indicated awareness of their rights within the Gram Sabha and the prescribed frequency of meetings. Attendance levels were relatively strong, with more than four-fifths reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

Despite strong attendance, active participation levels were comparatively moderate. Only about three-fifths of respondents reported actively participating in Gram Sabha discussions. Most respondents characterized their participation as moderate, while a substantial proportion described it as low. These findings suggest that attendance does not always translate into active engagement in deliberations.

Awareness regarding quorum provisions was relatively weak. Less than half of the respondents reported awareness of quorum requirements, while a majority were unaware whether quorum is achieved during Gram Sabha meetings. These findings indicate a need for greater awareness regarding procedural aspects of Gram Sabha functioning.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 97.92          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 81.67          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 62.08          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 45.42          |

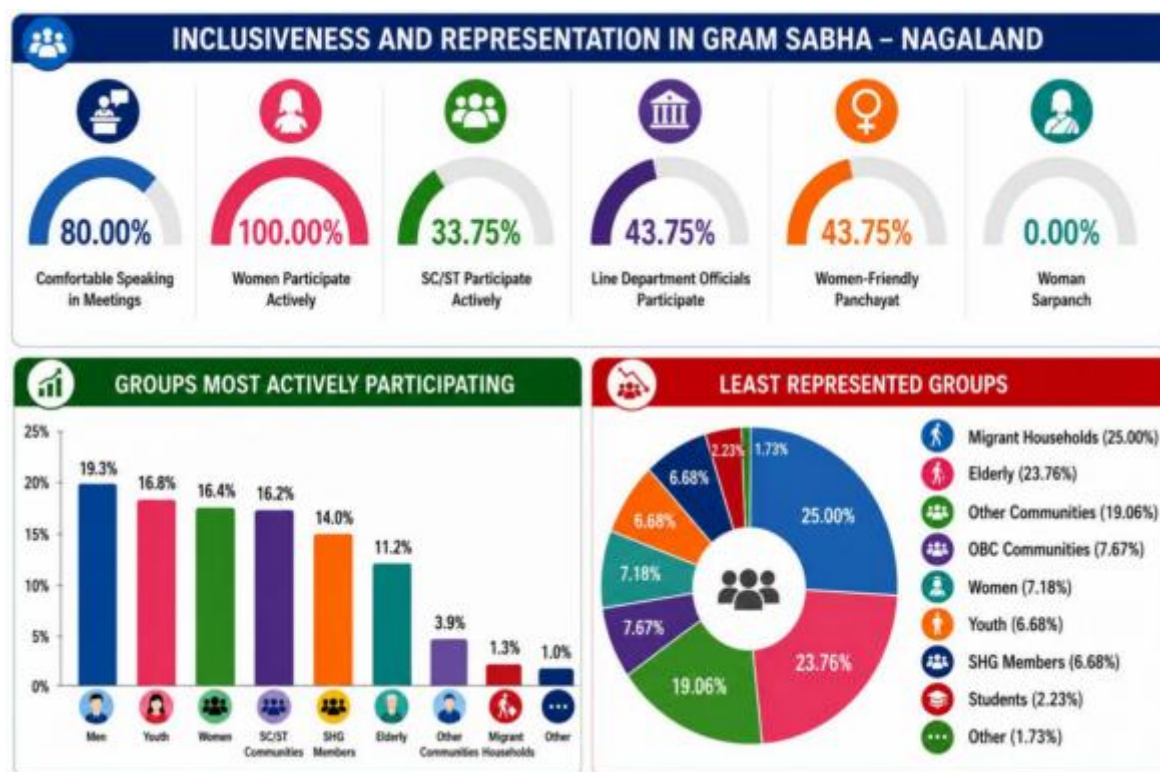
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

The findings indicate relatively broad participation across social groups in Gram Sabha meetings. Men, youth, women and SC/ST communities emerged among the most active participants. SHG members and elderly citizens were also identified as important contributors to Gram Sabha discussions. These findings suggest that participation is distributed across multiple community groups.

Women's participation was generally viewed positively, with four-fifths of respondents reporting active participation by women. Participation of SC/ST communities was universal, reflecting the social composition of the surveyed areas. However, participation of line department officials was reported to be limited, with nearly two-thirds indicating that officials do not regularly participate in Gram Sabha meetings.

Important inclusion challenges nevertheless remain. Migrant households and elderly citizens emerged as the groups perceived to be least represented in Gram Sabha meetings. More than half of the respondents reported that their Panchayat is not women-friendly, while none reported the presence of a woman Panchayat head. These findings indicate continuing gaps in gender representation and institutional inclusiveness.





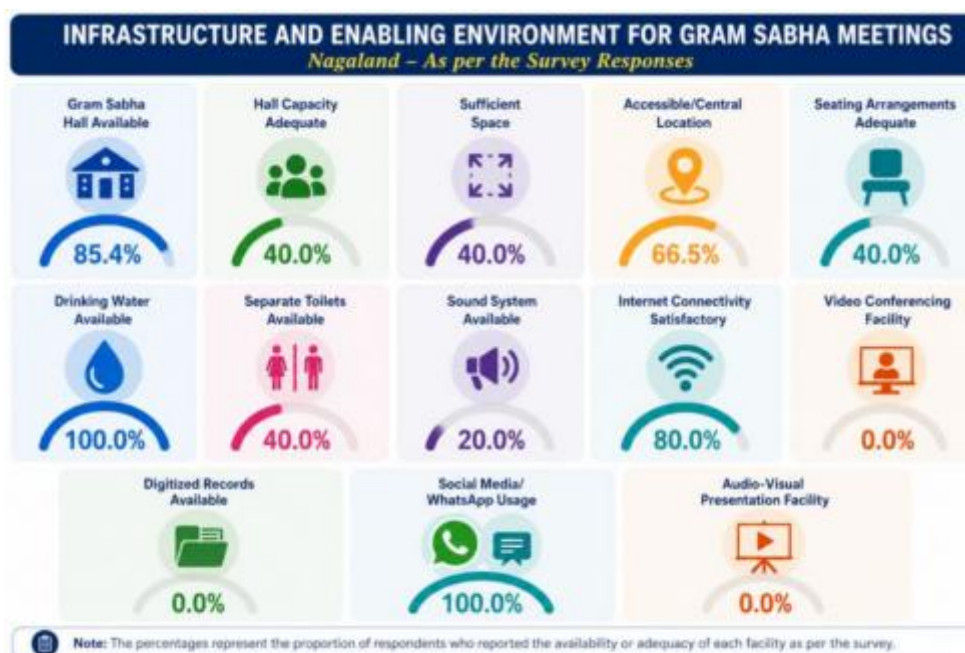
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Nagaland has relatively good availability of basic infrastructure for conducting Gram Sabha meetings. A large majority of respondents reported the availability of Gram Sabha halls, while accessible and centrally located venues were also reported in many locations. However, only two-fifths of respondents considered hall capacity and available space to be adequate, suggesting that existing facilities may not always be sufficient to comfortably accommodate larger community gatherings.

The availability of essential amenities presents a mixed picture. Drinking water facilities were reported to be universally available, reflecting a significant strength in meeting arrangements. However, adequate seating arrangements and separate toilet facilities were reported by only 40 percent of respondents. These limitations may affect participant comfort and could particularly influence the participation of women, elderly citizens and other vulnerable groups during Gram Sabha meetings.

Digital infrastructure shows both strengths and gaps. While internet connectivity and the use of social media or WhatsApp platforms were reported by a substantial proportion of respondents, facilities such as video conferencing, digitized records and audio-visual presentation systems were largely absent. Similarly, sound system availability was reported by only a small proportion of respondents. The findings suggest that while basic meeting infrastructure exists across many Gram Panchayats in Nagaland, there remains considerable scope for strengthening both physical and digital facilities to improve the effectiveness and inclusiveness of Gram Sabha meetings.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

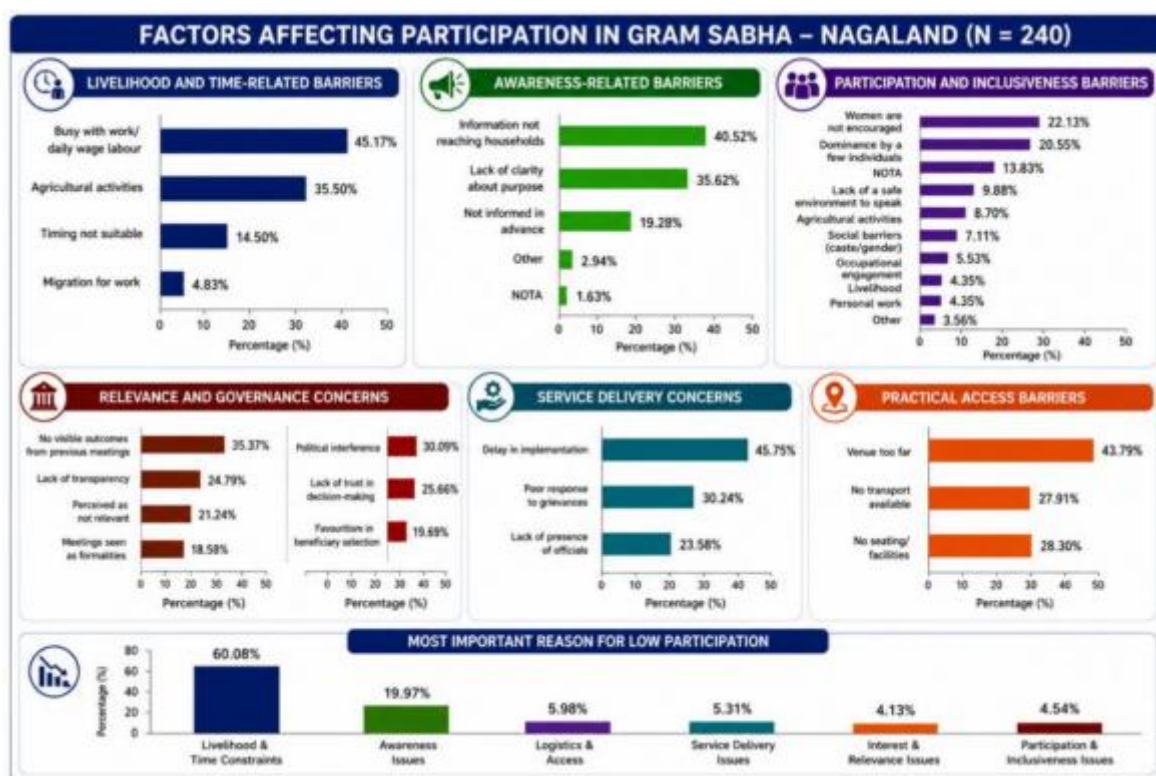
The findings clearly indicate that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Nagaland. Daily livelihood responsibilities emerged as the dominant factor limiting participation, followed closely by agricultural activities. Timing-related issues and migration for work were comparatively less significant.

Awareness-related barriers were also important. Information not reaching all households emerged as the most significant awareness challenge, followed by lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha meetings and inadequate advance information. These findings indicate that communication and outreach remain important determinants of participation.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns centered primarily on inadequate encouragement for women, dominance by a few individuals and lack of safe spaces for expression. Respondents also reported social barriers and occupational constraints affecting participation. These findings suggest that participation challenges are linked to both social and practical factors.

The findings further reveal concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Lack of visible outcomes from previous meetings emerged as the most important factor reducing citizen interest in participation. Governance concerns were dominated by lack of transparency and favouritism in beneficiary selection. Service delivery concerns were led by delays in implementation, absence of officials and weak grievance redressal mechanisms. These findings suggest that citizens expect greater accountability and tangible outcomes from Gram Sabha processes.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified local issues as the most frequently discussed agenda item in Gram Sabha meetings. Annual budgeting, social issues, development priorities, social audit, beneficiary identification and approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Nagaland serve as important platforms for local planning, accountability and community development discussions.

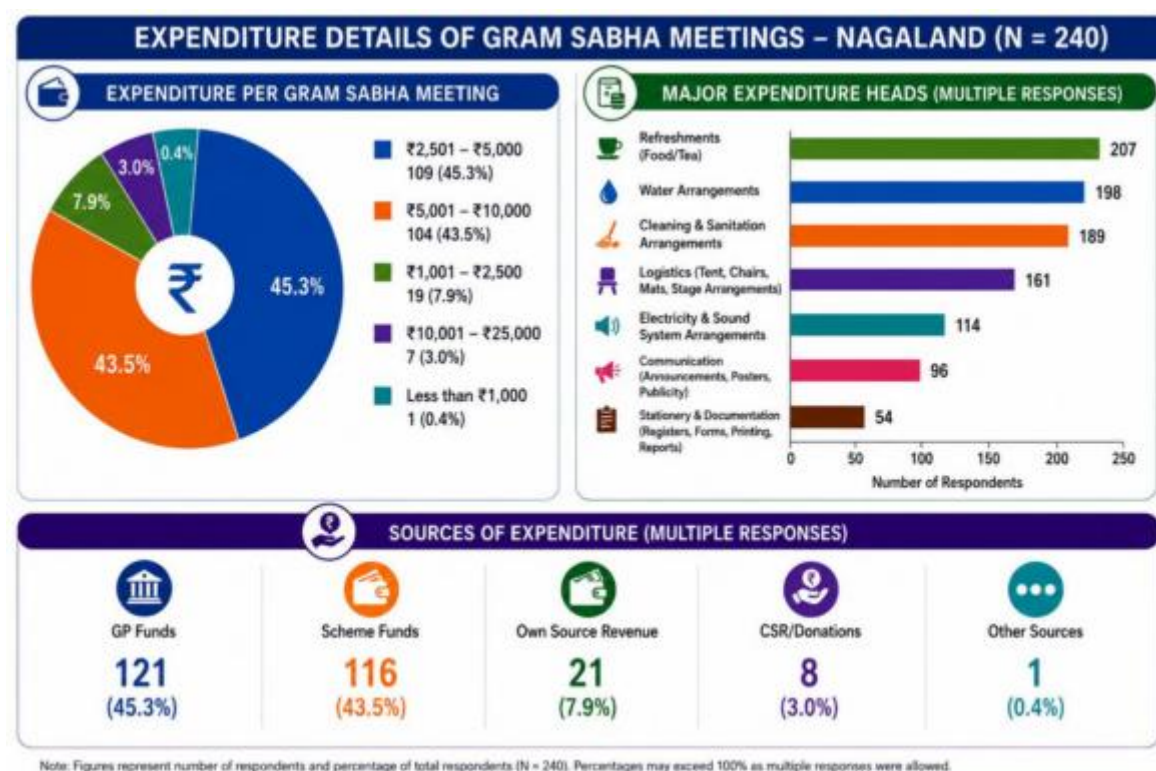
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Identifying Local Issues  | 13.56          |
| Annual Budget             | 10.86          |
| Social Issues             | 10.04          |
| Development Priorities    | 9.51           |
| Social Audit              | 9.44           |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 9.29           |
| Approving GPDP            | 8.69           |
| Welfare Schemes           | 7.04           |
| Livelihood                | 6.37           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

The expenditure pattern in Nagaland indicates that Gram Sabha meetings are generally conducted with moderate financial allocations, with nearly three-fourths of respondents reporting expenditure between ₹5,001 and ₹10,000 per meeting. GP Funds and Scheme Funds emerged as the principal sources of financing, while Own Source Revenue and CSR/Donations contributed to a lesser extent. Major expenditure was incurred on refreshments, drinking water arrangements, sanitation activities, logistics and documentation, reflecting efforts to facilitate community participation and ensure the smooth conduct of meetings. Overall, the findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Nagaland are supported primarily through Panchayat and scheme-based resources, with expenditure focused on essential operational and participant-support requirements.



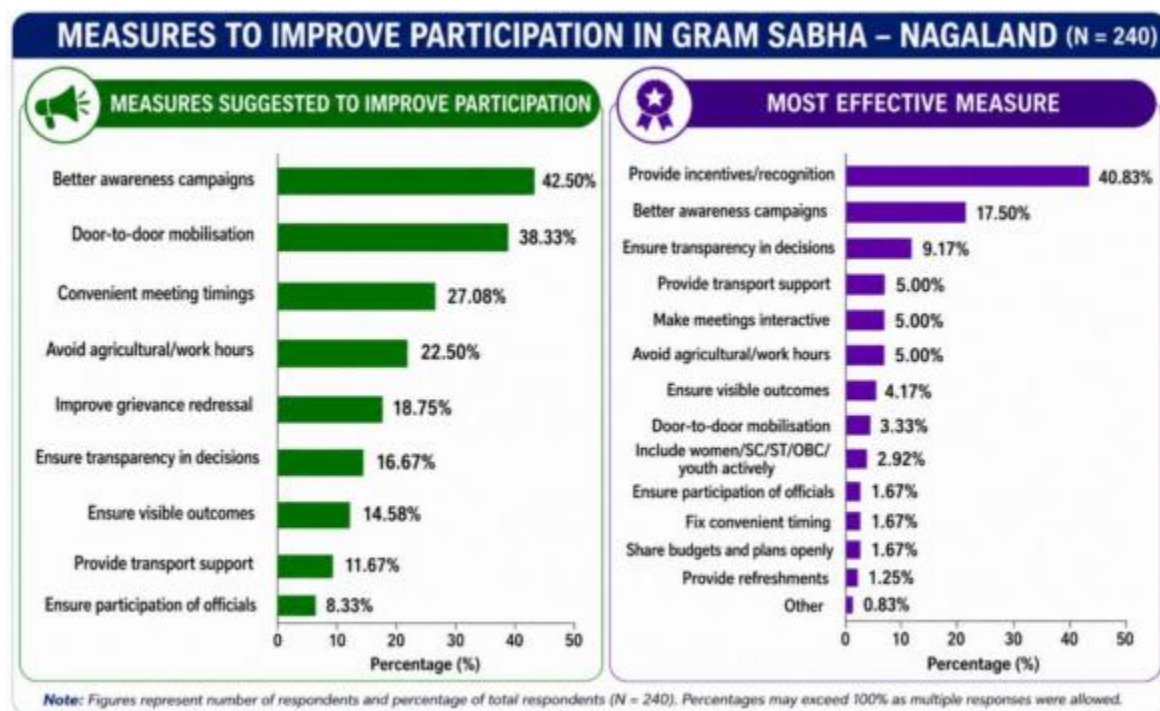
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents emphasized a combination of awareness generation, livelihood-sensitive scheduling and incentives as important strategies for strengthening participation in Gram Sabha meetings. Better awareness campaigns emerged as the most frequently suggested measure, followed closely by avoiding agricultural work hours, convenient meeting timings and incentives for participation.

A distinctive feature of Nagaland is the strong preference for incentives and recognition as a participation-enhancing strategy. When asked to identify the single most effective measure, incentives and recognition emerged as the most preferred option by a substantial margin. This differs from many other States where awareness campaigns or mobilisation activities dominate citizen preferences.



Respondents also highlighted the importance of transparency, community mobilisation, participation of officials and visible outcomes. These findings indicate that improving participation requires both improved awareness and stronger incentives for community engagement.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Gram Sabha halls are available in a majority of surveyed locations, indicating reasonable physical infrastructure for conducting meetings.
2. Accessibility of meeting venues is relatively good, with many respondents reporting centrally located venues.
3. Hall capacity and availability of sufficient space are adequate in only about two-fifths of locations, indicating constraints in accommodating larger gatherings.
4. Drinking water facilities are universally available and represent a major strength of Gram Sabha infrastructure.
5. Seating arrangements are reported to be adequate in only a limited number of locations, affecting participant comfort.
6. Separate toilet facilities are available in less than half of the surveyed locations, which may particularly affect women and elderly participants.
7. Sound system availability remains limited, potentially affecting communication and meeting effectiveness.
8. Internet connectivity is available in a substantial proportion of locations, reflecting progress in digital connectivity.



9. Social media and WhatsApp are widely used for communication and outreach related to Gram Sabha meetings.
10. Video conferencing facilities are largely absent across surveyed Gram Panchayats.
11. Digitized records are generally unavailable, indicating limited digital record management practices.
12. Audio-visual presentation facilities are also absent in most locations, restricting the use of technology-enabled presentations and awareness activities.

## Recommendations

- Upgrade existing Gram Sabha halls to improve seating capacity and accommodate larger community participation.
- Develop additional community meeting spaces in areas where existing facilities are insufficient.
- Improve seating arrangements to ensure comfortable participation for all attendees.
- Strengthen sanitation infrastructure by providing adequate and separate toilet facilities at meeting venues.
- Expand the availability of sound systems to improve communication during Gram Sabha meetings.
- Leverage the existing internet connectivity base to strengthen digital governance initiatives.
- Introduce digitized record management systems for maintaining Gram Sabha resolutions, attendance and proceedings.
- Provide basic audio-visual equipment to support presentations, awareness campaigns and participatory discussions.
- Explore the feasibility of establishing video conferencing facilities to facilitate interaction with officials and departments.
- Continue and strengthen the use of WhatsApp and social media platforms for meeting notifications and citizen engagement.
- Allocate dedicated resources for improving Gram Sabha infrastructure under relevant Panchayat development schemes.
- Conduct periodic infrastructure assessments to identify gaps and prioritize investments in underserved locations.
- Promote technology-enabled Gram Sabha processes to improve transparency, documentation and citizen access to information.
- Ensure that infrastructure improvements prioritize inclusiveness, accessibility and participant convenience.
- Encourage convergence with line departments and development programmes to mobilize resources for infrastructure strengthening.
- Establish minimum infrastructure standards for Gram Sabha venues to ensure consistent meeting quality across all Gram Panchayats.



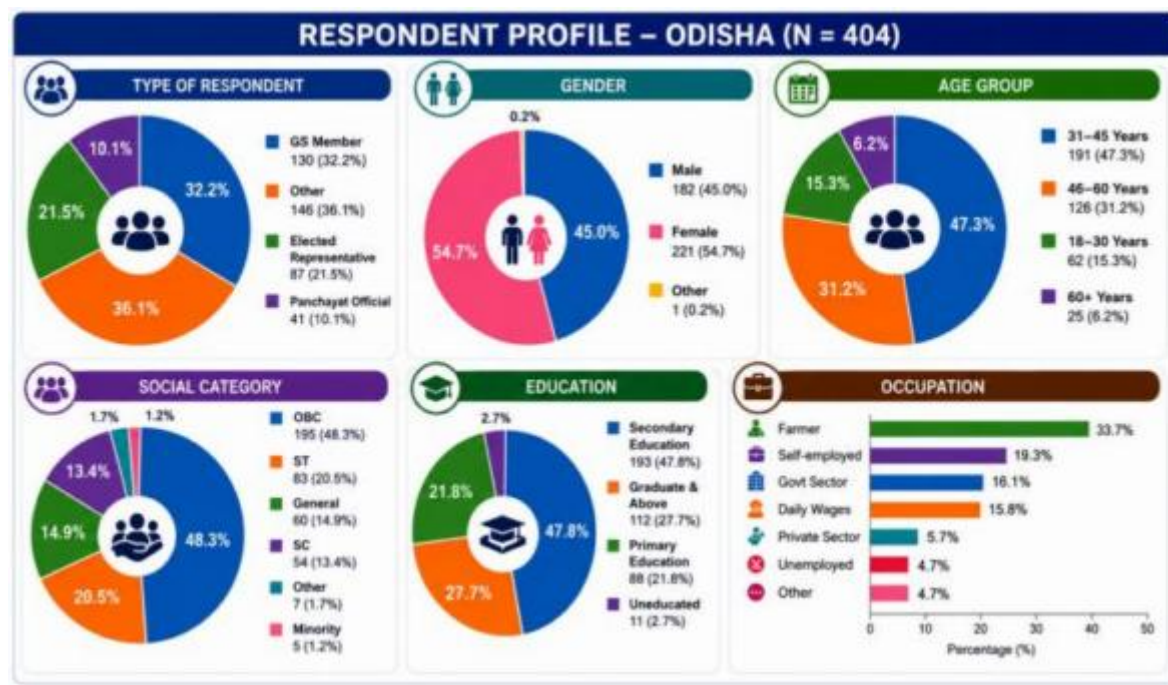
# ODISHA

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 404 respondents from 20 Gram Panchayats across 12 districts of Odisha. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. Women constituted a slight majority of respondents, while OBC, ST, SC and General communities were well represented in the survey. Farmers, self-employed individuals, government employees and daily wage workers constituted the major occupational groups. The findings provide important insights into participation patterns, governance challenges and citizen perceptions regarding Gram Sabha functioning in Odisha.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 404   |
| Districts Covered       | 12    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 20    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate exceptionally high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Odisha. Nearly all respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, while more than ninety percent were aware of their rights and the prescribed frequency of meetings. Attendance levels were equally impressive, with over ninety-six percent reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

Participation levels were among the highest observed across surveyed States. More than ninety-four percent reported active participation in Gram Sabha meetings. Participation frequency was also notable, with nearly half of respondents attending more than five Gram Sabha meetings during the year. Most respondents described their participation levels as moderate, while nearly one-fourth reported high participation.

Awareness regarding quorum provisions was relatively strong. More than two-thirds of respondents reported awareness of quorum requirements. However, only about twenty-nine percent indicated that quorum is achieved during Gram Sabha meetings, while substantial proportions either reported non-achievement of quorum or were unaware of quorum status. These findings suggest that despite high participation, procedural compliance remains an area requiring attention.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 98.76          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 92.57          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 94.31          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 68.81          |

## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

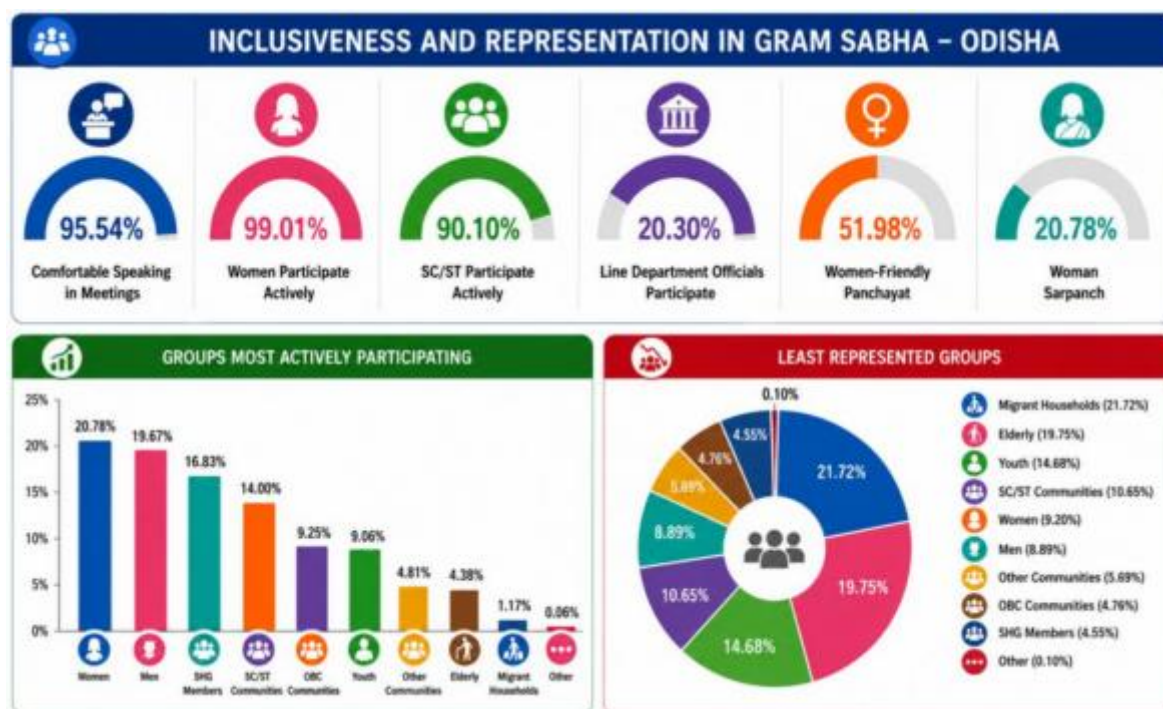
The findings suggest strong participation across a wide range of social groups in Odisha. Women emerged as the most active participants in Gram Sabha meetings, followed closely by men, SHG members and SC/ST communities. OBC communities and youth were also identified as important contributors to Gram Sabha deliberations.

Women's participation was particularly noteworthy. Nearly ninety-eight percent of respondents reported active participation by women, while more than half reported that the Panchayat head is a woman. Participation of SC/ST communities was also extremely strong, with almost universal acknowledgment of their active involvement. Participation of line department officials was among the highest reported across States, with over ninety percent indicating their presence during Gram Sabha meetings.

Despite these positive indicators, respondents identified migrant households, elderly citizens and youth as the least represented groups in Gram Sabha meetings. A particularly significant finding is that nearly eighty percent of respondents did not consider their Panchayat to be women-friendly despite the high level of participation by women. This suggests that



participation and representation do not necessarily translate into perceptions of institutional inclusiveness.



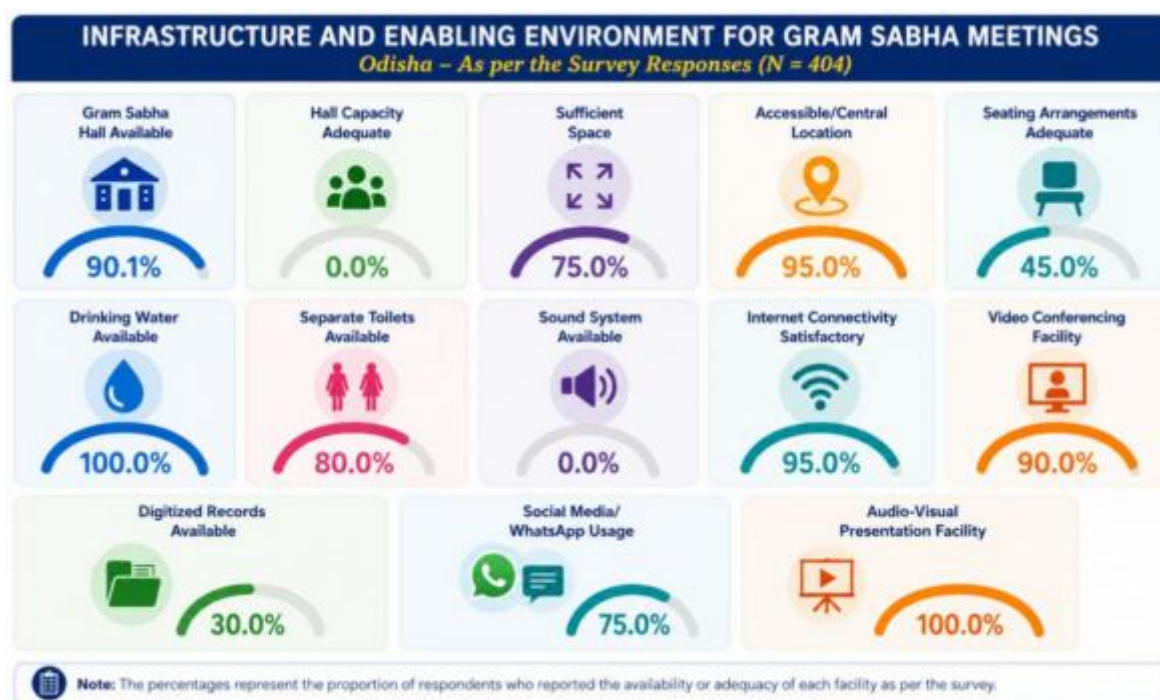
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

Among the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Odisha, the availability of infrastructure for conducting Gram Sabha meetings was generally strong across several key indicators. A large majority of surveyed locations reported the availability of Gram Sabha halls, sufficient meeting space and centrally located venues. Drinking water facilities were available in all surveyed Gram Panchayats, while separate toilet facilities were available in a substantial majority of locations. These findings suggest that the surveyed Gram Panchayats largely possess the basic physical infrastructure required for organizing Gram Sabha meetings.

The surveyed Gram Panchayats also demonstrated strong digital infrastructure availability. Internet connectivity was reported to be satisfactory in most surveyed locations, while a large majority reported the availability of video conferencing facilities and active use of social media and WhatsApp for communication and outreach. Notably, all surveyed Gram Panchayats reported the availability of audio-visual presentation facilities, indicating considerable potential for technology-enabled communication, awareness generation and citizen engagement during Gram Sabha meetings.

At the same time, some infrastructure gaps were observed in specific areas. Less than half of the surveyed Gram Panchayats reported adequate seating arrangements, while digitized records were available only in a limited proportion of surveyed locations. In addition, responses did not indicate the availability of sound systems or adequate hall capacity in the surveyed Gram Panchayats. Overall, the findings suggest that while the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Odisha possess strong venue accessibility and digital infrastructure, targeted improvements in seating facilities, record digitization and meeting support infrastructure could further strengthen the conduct and effectiveness of Gram Sabha meetings.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

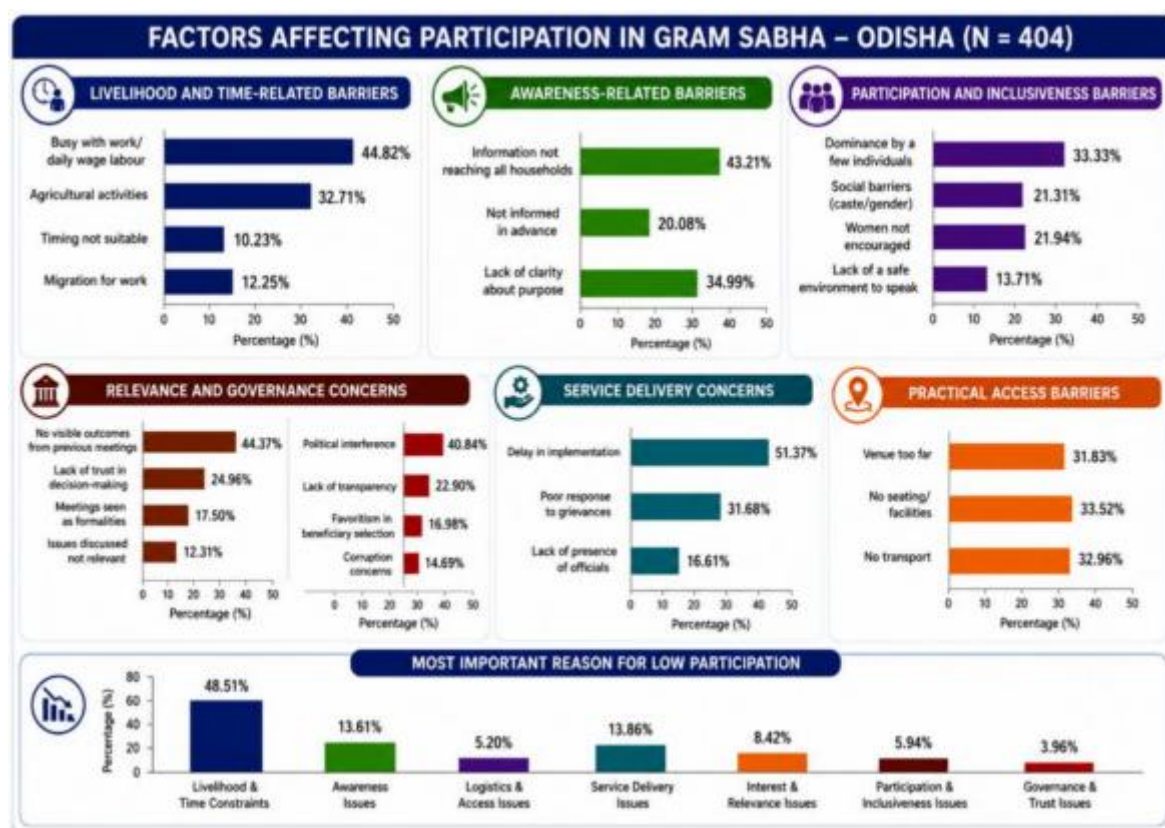
The study clearly indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Odisha. Daily wage employment and work-related commitments emerged as the dominant factor limiting participation, followed by agricultural activities, migration and unsuitable meeting timings. These findings reinforce the importance of livelihood considerations in shaping participation patterns.

Awareness-related barriers were also significant. Information not reaching all households emerged as the most important awareness challenge, followed by lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha meetings and inadequate advance communication. These findings indicate continuing gaps in outreach and citizen communication.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns centered primarily on dominance by a few individuals, inadequate encouragement for women and social barriers based on caste and gender. Respondents also highlighted the absence of safe and supportive environments for participation in some Gram Panchayats.

The findings further reveal important concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Lack of visible outcomes from previous meetings emerged as the most important factor reducing citizen motivation to participate. Governance concerns were dominated by political interference, lack of transparency and favouritism in beneficiary selection. Delays in implementation and poor grievance redressal emerged as the most important service delivery challenges affecting citizen confidence.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) and identification of local issues as the most frequently discussed agenda items in Gram Sabha meetings. Annual budgeting, beneficiary identification, development priorities, infrastructure, social audit and own source revenue generation also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Odisha serve as important platforms for local planning, budgeting, accountability and development prioritization.

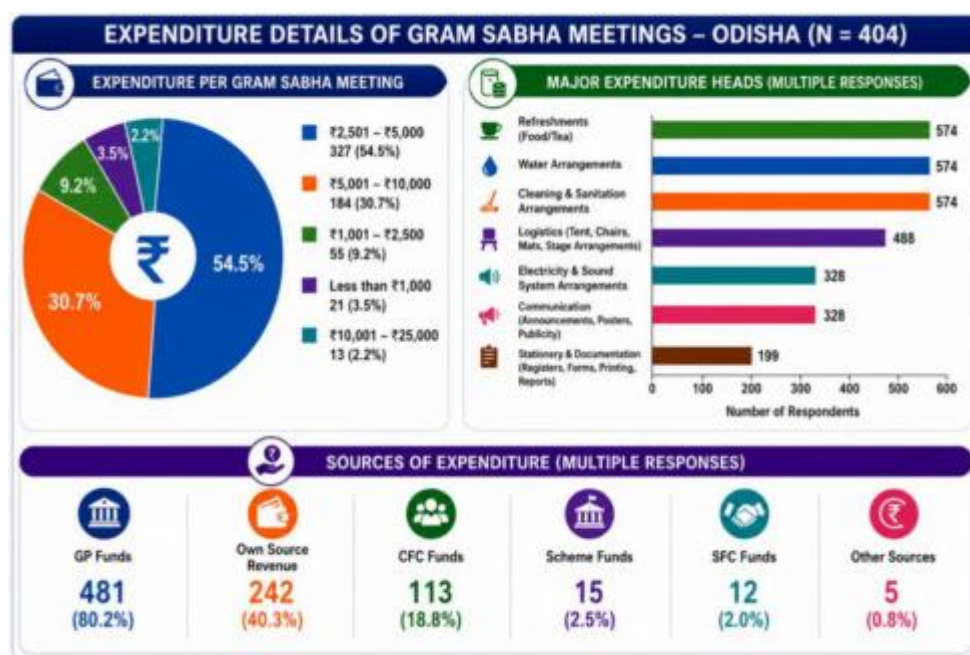
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Approving GPDP            | 13.94          |
| Identifying Local Issues  | 13.55          |
| Annual Budget             | 9.27           |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 8.79           |
| Development Priorities    | 7.78           |
| Infrastructure            | 6.44           |
| Social Audit              | 6.34           |
| OSR Generation            | 6.01           |
| Health & Literacy         | 5.67           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

Among the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Odisha, expenditure incurred for conducting Gram Sabha meetings was generally concentrated in the lower and middle expenditure ranges, with most respondents reporting expenditure between ₹1,001–₹10,000 per meeting. GP funds emerged as the primary source of financing, supplemented by own source revenue, SFC and CFC funds. Major expenditure heads included refreshments, drinking water arrangements, logistics such as tents, chairs and stage arrangements, communication activities, and stationery and documentation. The findings indicate that the surveyed Gram Panchayats allocate available resources primarily towards ensuring basic meeting arrangements, participant convenience and effective conduct of Gram Sabha meetings.



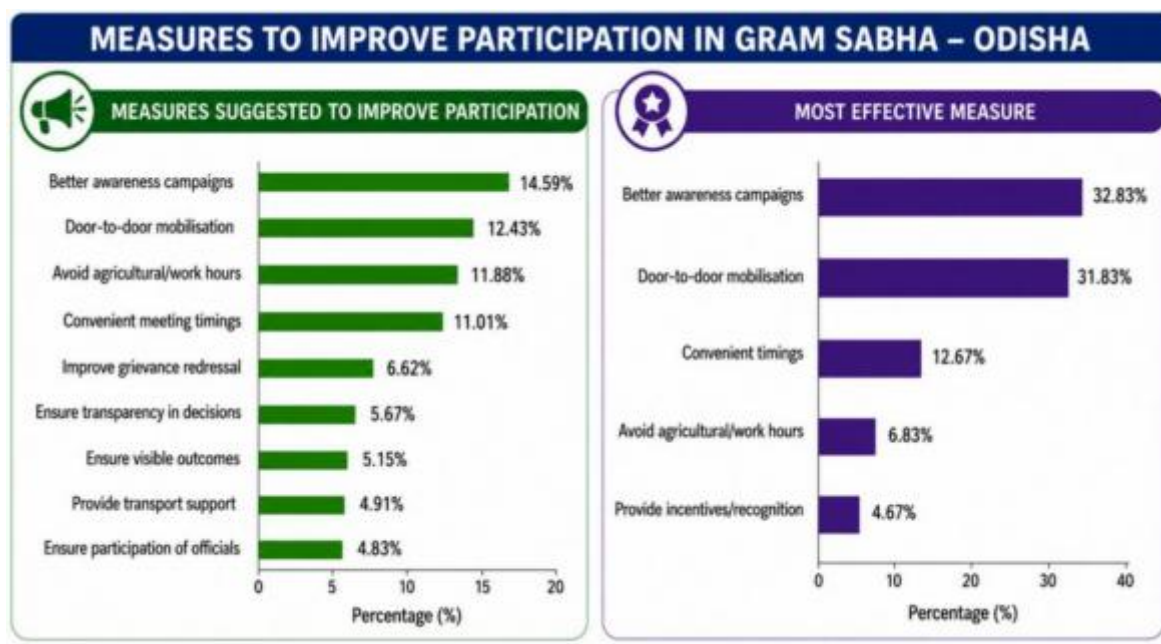
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents strongly emphasized awareness generation and community mobilisation as the most effective approaches for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns emerged as the most frequently suggested intervention, closely followed by door-to-door mobilisation. Provision of refreshments, transport support, improved meeting facilities and convenient meeting timings were also widely supported.

A distinctive feature of Odisha is the emphasis placed on improving participation through both mobilisation and practical support measures. Respondents highlighted the need for transport support, seating facilities, drinking water, grievance redressal mechanisms and transparency in decision-making. These findings suggest that participation challenges are viewed as a combination of awareness, accessibility and governance issues.

When asked to identify the single most effective measure, door-to-door mobilisation emerged as the most preferred option, followed by awareness campaigns. Respondents also highlighted convenient scheduling, transparency and grievance redressal as important strategies for strengthening participation.





## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Awareness and information dissemination remain important determinants of participation, with information not reaching all households emerging as a major concern.
2. Livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barrier to participation in the surveyed Gram Panchayats.
3. Busy work schedules and agricultural activities were identified as the leading reasons for non-participation.
4. Women's participation was reported to be very high, and respondents generally perceived Gram Sabha meetings as inclusive.
5. SC/ST participation was reported in a large majority of surveyed Gram Panchayats.
6. Dominance by a few individuals and social barriers continue to affect inclusive participation in some locations.
7. Lack of visible outcomes from previous meetings was identified as a major factor reducing public interest and trust.
8. Political interference and governance-related concerns were reported as important constraints affecting participation.
9. Delays in implementation of decisions and poor grievance redressal mechanisms were significant service delivery concerns.
10. Venue-related challenges, lack of transport and inadequate facilities continue to discourage participation in some surveyed locations.
11. Door-to-door mobilisation and awareness campaigns emerged as the most preferred strategies for improving participation.
12. GP funds remain the primary source of expenditure for conducting Gram Sabha meetings in the surveyed areas.



## Recommendations

1. Strengthen awareness campaigns and public communication mechanisms before every Gram Sabha meeting.
2. Institutionalize door-to-door mobilisation and household-level outreach to improve attendance.
3. Schedule meetings at convenient times that do not conflict with livelihood and agricultural activities.
4. Improve advance dissemination of information regarding meeting dates, agenda and venue.
5. Enhance transparency in decision-making, beneficiary selection and implementation processes.
6. Ensure timely implementation of Gram Sabha resolutions to improve public confidence and participation.
7. Strengthen grievance redressal systems and provide regular feedback on actions taken.
8. Promote wider participation of youth, migrant households and other under-represented groups.
9. Improve seating arrangements, transport support and other participant facilities wherever required.
10. Strengthen digitization of records and expand the use of technology-enabled communication tools.
11. Encourage greater participation of line department officials to improve responsiveness and service delivery.
12. Continue leveraging SHGs, village committees and community institutions as key partners for citizen mobilisation and participatory governance.



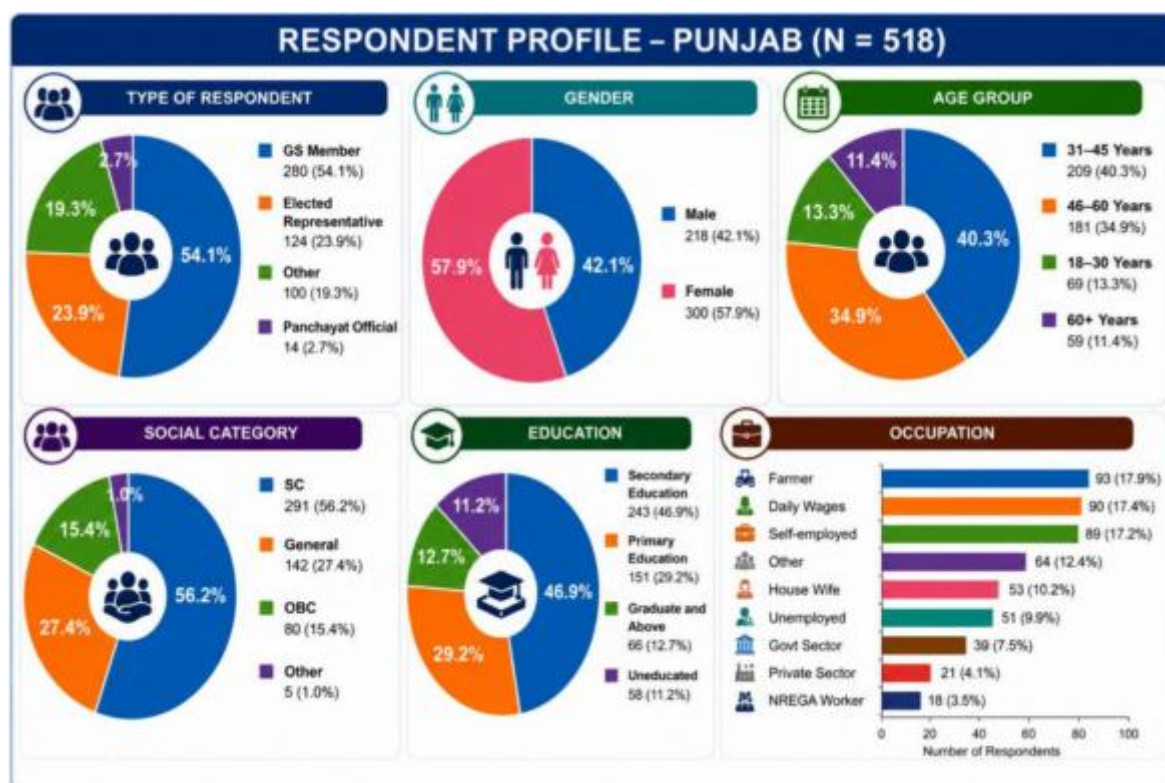
# PUNJAB

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 518 respondents from 25 Gram Panchayats across 16 districts of Punjab. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. Scheduled Castes constituted the largest social category among respondents, while women formed a majority of the sample. Farmers, daily wage workers and self-employed individuals constituted the major occupational groups. The findings provide important insights into citizen awareness, participation patterns and governance challenges affecting Gram Sabha functioning in Punjab.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 518   |
| Districts Covered       | 16    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 25    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings reveal comparatively lower levels of awareness and participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Punjab when compared with several other States. While nearly three-fourths of respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, awareness regarding citizen rights, meeting frequency and quorum provisions was considerably lower. Less than one-third of respondents reported awareness regarding quorum requirements.

Attendance levels were moderate, with approximately two-thirds reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year. Active participation levels were similarly modest, with just over half indicating active engagement in Gram Sabha proceedings. Participation frequency was also limited, with most respondents attending only one or two meetings annually.

The findings suggest that awareness and participation challenges are closely interlinked in Punjab. Limited knowledge regarding Gram Sabha procedures, rights and institutional processes appears to influence both attendance and the quality of participation. These findings indicate substantial scope for strengthening awareness and citizen engagement efforts.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 74.13          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 55.41          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 55.21          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 31.08          |

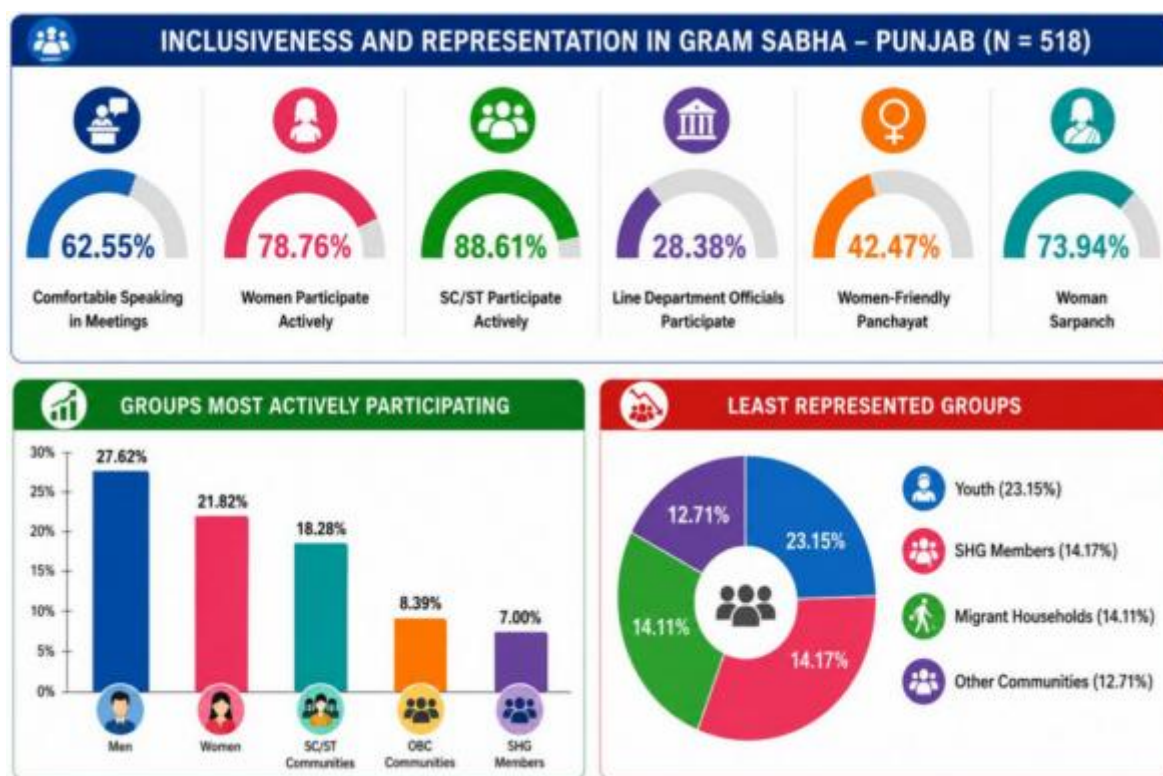
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

The findings indicate mixed patterns of inclusiveness and representation in Gram Sabha meetings across Punjab. Men emerged as the most active participants, followed by women and SC/ST communities. OBC communities, SHG members and youth were also identified as active participants, though at substantially lower levels.

Women's participation was viewed positively by a majority of respondents, with nearly seventy-nine percent reporting active participation by women. Similarly, almost eighty-nine percent acknowledged active participation of SC/ST communities. A notable finding is that nearly three-fourths of respondents reported that the Panchayat head is a woman, reflecting significant representation of women in local leadership positions.

However, important inclusion challenges remain. Youth emerged as the most underrepresented group in Gram Sabha meetings, followed by SHG members, migrant households and women. Participation of line department officials was particularly weak, with nearly seventy-two percent reporting that officials do not participate in Gram Sabha meetings. These findings suggest that institutional participation and broader citizen engagement remain areas of concern.





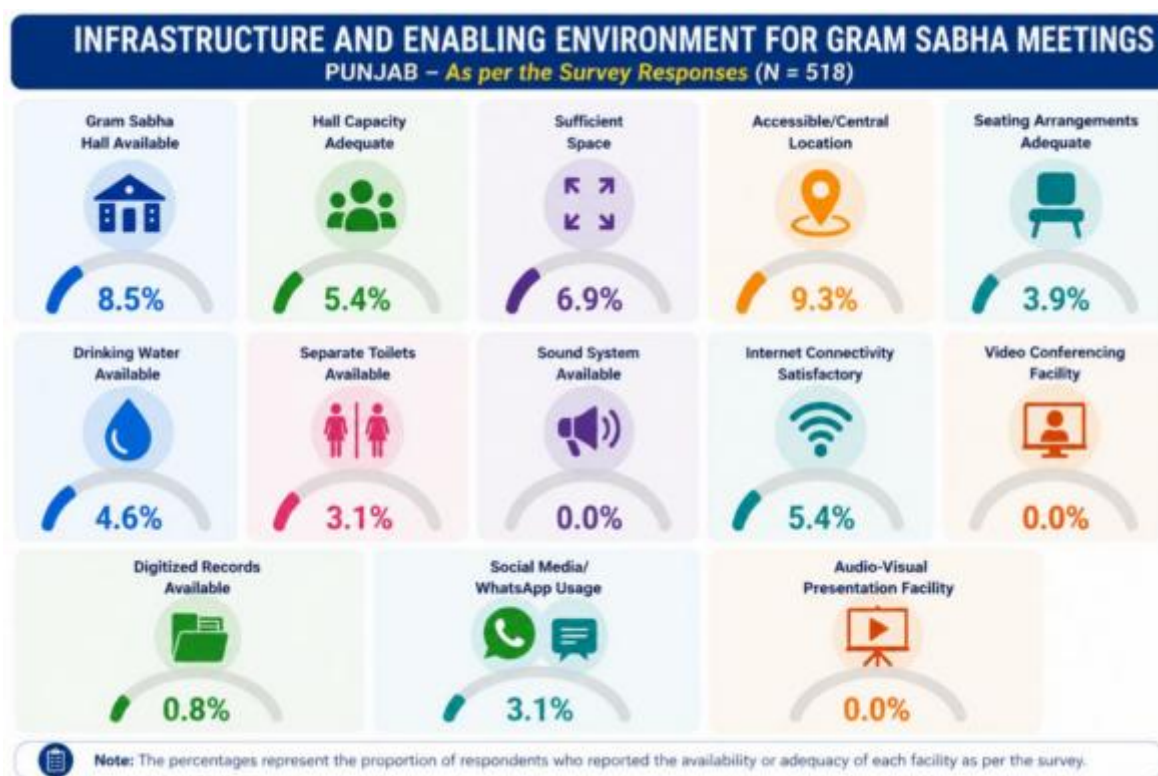
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that the availability of Gram Sabha infrastructure in Punjab is relatively limited across several key dimensions. Less than half of the respondents reported the availability of Gram Sabha halls, while adequacy of hall capacity, sufficient meeting space and accessible locations were reported by a comparatively smaller proportion of respondents. Seating arrangements were also reported to be inadequate in many locations, suggesting that basic physical infrastructure remains a challenge for conducting effective and inclusive Gram Sabha meetings.

The availability of essential amenities was found to be particularly weak. Drinking water facilities and separate toilets were reported by only a small proportion of respondents, while sound systems and video conferencing facilities were virtually absent. Internet connectivity was available in only a limited number of locations. These findings indicate that many Gram Sabha meetings continue to be conducted without adequate supporting facilities, potentially affecting participant comfort, communication effectiveness and overall engagement.

Digital infrastructure and record management systems also appear to be underdeveloped. Very few respondents reported the availability of digitized records, social media or WhatsApp-based communication mechanisms, and audio-visual presentation facilities. The overall infrastructure profile suggests that Punjab requires significant investment in both physical and digital infrastructure to strengthen Gram Sabha functioning, improve citizen participation and enhance the quality of local governance processes.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

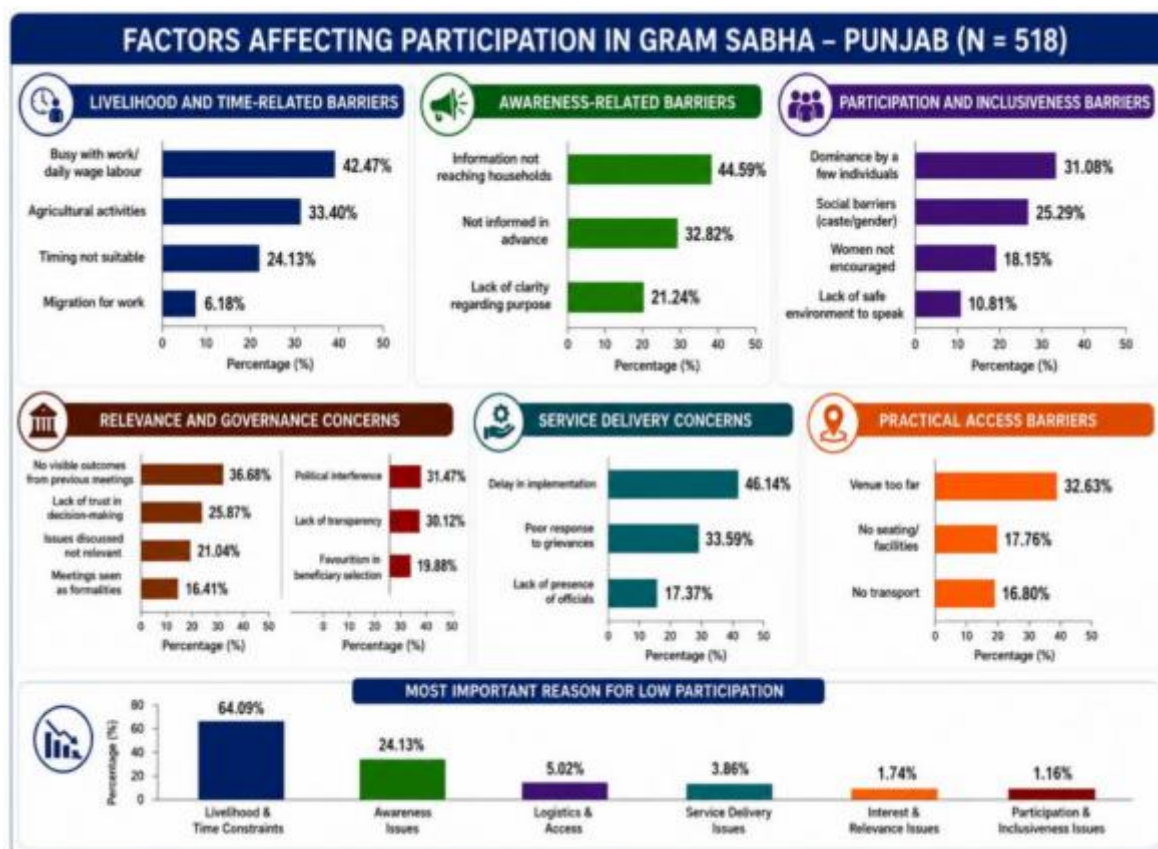
The study clearly indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Punjab. Daily wage employment and work-related commitments emerged as the dominant factor limiting participation, accounting for nearly half of all responses. Agricultural activities, migration and unsuitable meeting timings were also reported as important constraints.

Awareness-related barriers were almost evenly distributed across multiple dimensions. Lack of advance information, lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha meetings and information not reaching all households emerged as equally important concerns. These findings suggest widespread communication and awareness gaps affecting participation.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns were dominated by inadequate encouragement for women, social barriers based on caste and gender, and dominance by a few individuals. Respondents also reported concerns regarding the absence of safe environments for expressing views and grievances.

The findings further reveal substantial concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Many respondents perceived Gram Sabha discussions as irrelevant to local needs or lacking visible outcomes. Governance concerns were led overwhelmingly by lack of transparency, followed by political interference and favouritism in beneficiary selection. Delays in implementation, weak grievance redressal and limited participation of officials emerged as important service delivery challenges.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified local issues as the most frequently discussed agenda item in Gram Sabha meetings. Approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs), beneficiary identification, infrastructure development, annual budgeting and welfare schemes also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Punjab primarily focus on local development concerns, planning and service delivery issues.

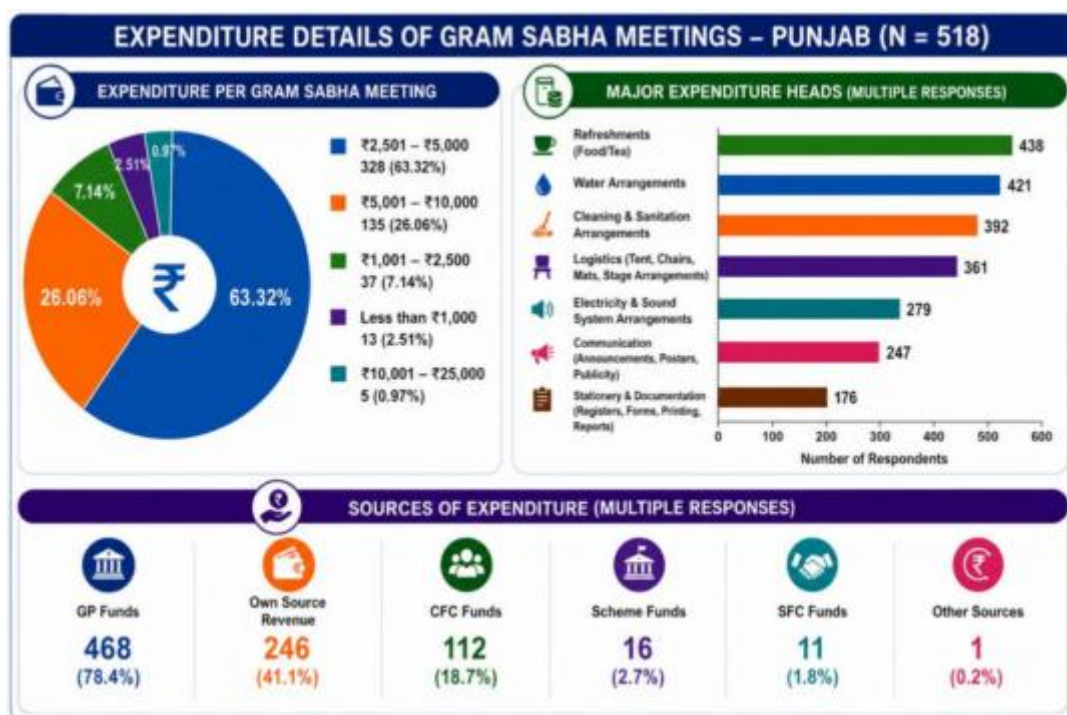
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Identifying Local Issues  | 23.51          |
| Approving GPDP            | 11.24          |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 10.01          |
| Infrastructure            | 9.60           |
| Annual Budget             | 9.39           |
| Welfare Schemes           | 7.54           |
| Development Priorities    | 7.20           |
| Social Issues             | 5.07           |
| Sanitation                | 5.00           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

The expenditure pattern in Punjab indicates that Gram Sabha meetings are generally conducted with modest financial allocations, with a large proportion of respondents reporting expenditure below ₹5,000 per meeting. GP Funds emerged as the most important source of financing, followed by Own Source Revenue and CFC Funds, while Scheme Funds and other sources contributed only marginally. Refreshments, logistics arrangements, water provision, sanitation measures and communication activities constituted the major expenditure heads, highlighting the emphasis placed on facilitating community participation and meeting logistics. Overall, the findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Punjab rely primarily on Panchayat-level resources and are organized with a focus on essential operational requirements rather than extensive infrastructure or technology-related expenditures.



## Measures for Improving Participation

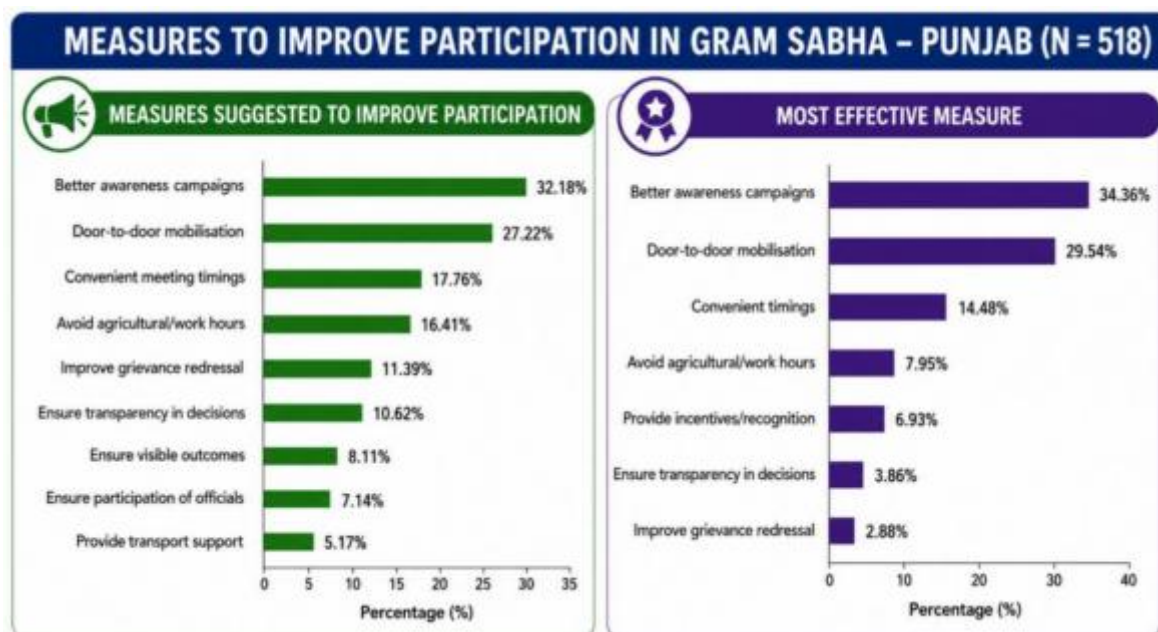
Respondents strongly emphasized awareness generation and direct community mobilisation as the most effective strategies for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns emerged as the most frequently suggested intervention, followed by door-to-door mobilisation and provision of refreshments. Incentives, participation of officials and interactive meeting formats also received considerable support.

A notable feature of Punjab is the strong emphasis placed on citizen engagement and motivation. Respondents highlighted awareness campaigns, mobilisation efforts, incentives and active participation of officials as key requirements for improving participation. Ward Sabha and Mahila Sabha processes were also identified as important mechanisms for increasing citizen involvement.

When asked to identify the single most effective measure, door-to-door mobilisation emerged as the clear preference, followed by awareness campaigns, Ward Sabha/Mahila Sabha



meetings and incentives. These findings suggest that participation challenges in Punjab are viewed primarily as awareness and mobilisation issues requiring sustained community outreach.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Better awareness campaigns emerged as the most frequently suggested measure for improving Gram Sabha participation.
2. Door-to-door mobilization was identified as another major strategy to increase citizen engagement.
3. Respondents emphasized the importance of conducting meetings at convenient times to improve attendance.
4. Avoiding agricultural and peak work hours was considered important for enhancing participation.
5. Improving grievance redressal mechanisms was viewed as necessary for building public confidence.
6. Greater transparency in decision-making was identified as a key requirement for strengthening trust.
7. Respondents highlighted the need for visible outcomes from Gram Sabha decisions to sustain public interest.
8. Increased participation of government officials was perceived as important for improving meeting effectiveness.
9. Supportive measures such as transport assistance were suggested to address access-related barriers.



10. Awareness generation and mobilization measures collectively received the highest level of support, indicating that information and outreach gaps remain the primary challenge to participation.
11. Awareness campaigns and door-to-door mobilization were also identified as the most effective individual measures for improving participation.
12. Institutional and governance-related improvements were considered important but secondary to awareness and mobilization efforts.

## Recommendations

- Launch sustained village-level awareness campaigns before every Gram Sabha meeting.
- Institutionalize door-to-door mobilization through Panchayat representatives, SHGs and community volunteers.
- Schedule Gram Sabha meetings at times convenient for farmers, labourers and working households.
- Avoid organizing meetings during agricultural peak seasons and major livelihood activity periods.
- Strengthen grievance redressal systems and ensure timely follow-up on issues raised in Gram Sabha meetings.
- Improve transparency by openly sharing budgets, plans, beneficiary lists and implementation progress.
- Publicize decisions and actions taken after Gram Sabha meetings to demonstrate visible outcomes.
- Ensure regular participation of line department officials and frontline functionaries in Gram Sabha meetings.
- Use social media, WhatsApp groups, public announcements and local communication channels for wider outreach.
- Promote inclusive participation of women, SCs, marginalized groups and youth through targeted mobilization efforts.
- Encourage Ward Sabhas and smaller community consultations as preparatory platforms for Gram Sabha meetings.
- Establish a structured communication and follow-up mechanism to keep citizens informed between meetings.
- Improve meeting facilities and accessibility arrangements where required.
- Recognize and incentivize active citizen participation and community engagement initiatives.
- Develop a state-level participation enhancement strategy focusing on awareness, outreach and citizen trust-building.
- Regularly monitor participation trends and adopt corrective measures in low-performing Gram Panchayats.



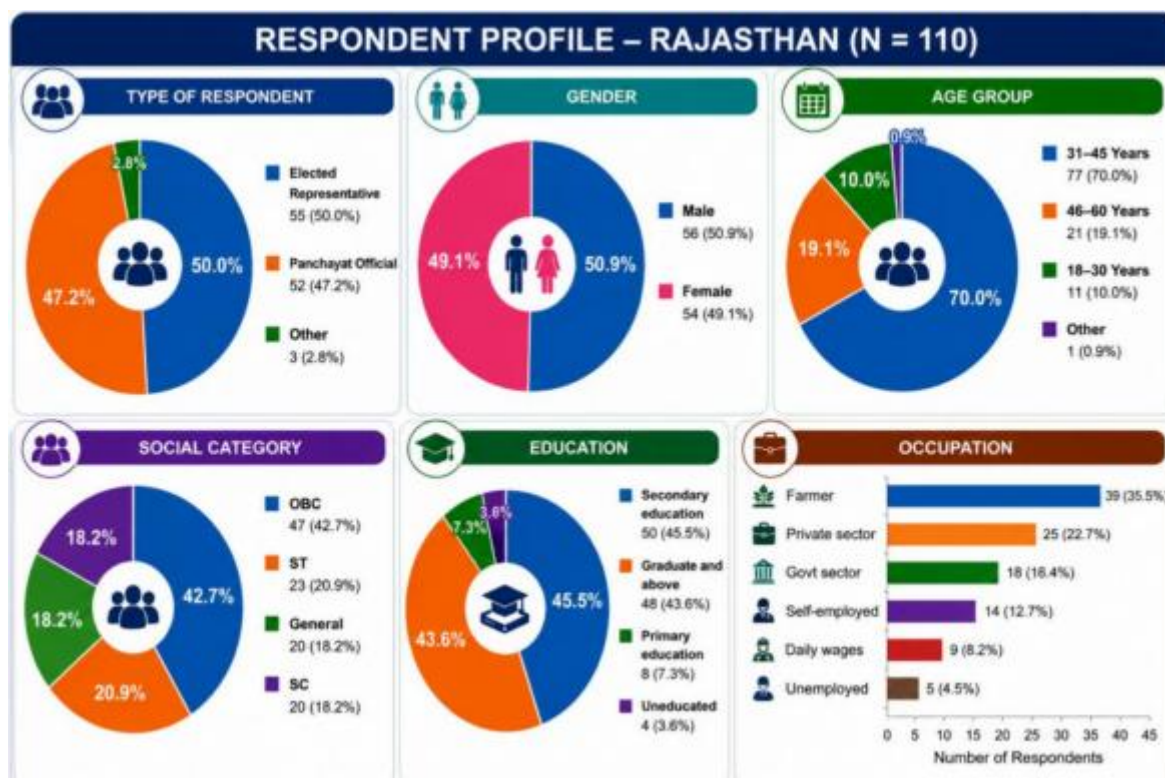
# RAJASTHAN

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 110 respondents from 06 Gram Panchayats across 03 districts of Rajasthan. Respondents included elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. OBC communities constituted the largest social category among respondents, while men and women were almost equally represented. Farmers, private sector employees and government employees formed the major occupational groups. The findings provide important insights into citizen perceptions regarding participation, inclusiveness and governance challenges affecting Gram Sabha functioning in Rajasthan.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 110   |
| Districts Covered       | 03    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 06    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate exceptionally high levels of awareness and participation regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Rajasthan. All respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, awareness of their rights within the Gram Sabha and awareness of the prescribed frequency of meetings. Attendance levels were also universal, with all respondents reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

Active participation levels were among the highest recorded across surveyed States. More than ninety-three percent reported active participation in Gram Sabha proceedings. Most respondents characterized their participation level as moderate, while more than one-third reported high participation. Participation frequency was also relatively strong, with nearly three-fourths attending Gram Sabha meetings three to four times annually.

Awareness regarding quorum provisions was almost universal. Nearly all respondents reported awareness of quorum requirements, and over ninety-two percent indicated that quorum is achieved during Gram Sabha meetings. These findings suggest strong procedural awareness and comparatively robust participation in Gram Sabha processes across surveyed Panchayats.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 100.00         |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 100.00         |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 93.64          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 99.09          |

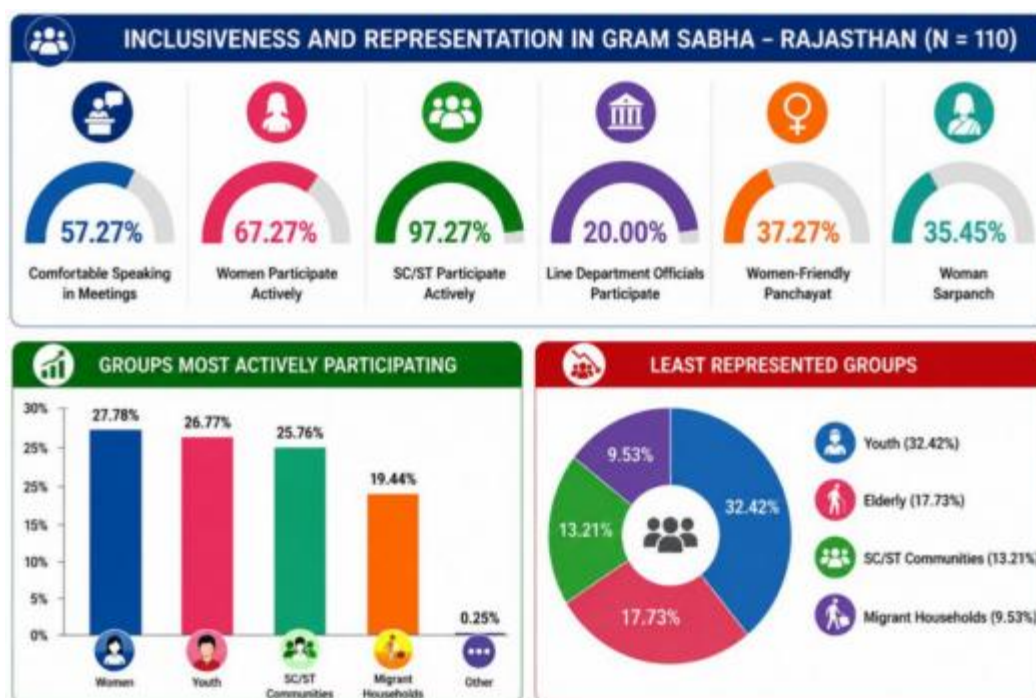
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

The findings present a mixed picture regarding inclusiveness and representation in Gram Sabha meetings. Men emerged as the most active participants, followed by other community groups and OBC communities. Participation of SHG members and SC/ST communities was comparatively lower among the groups identified as actively participating.

Most respondents reported feeling comfortable speaking during Gram Sabha meetings, while participation of line department officials was exceptionally high. However, perceptions regarding women's participation were less positive. Only about fifty-seven percent reported active participation by women, while nearly forty-three percent felt that women do not participate actively in Gram Sabha meetings.

A particularly significant finding is that eighty percent of respondents reported that their Panchayat cannot be considered women-friendly. Women, youth and SC/ST communities emerged as the groups perceived to be least represented in Gram Sabha meetings. These findings indicate that despite strong overall participation levels, concerns regarding inclusiveness and representation continue to persist.





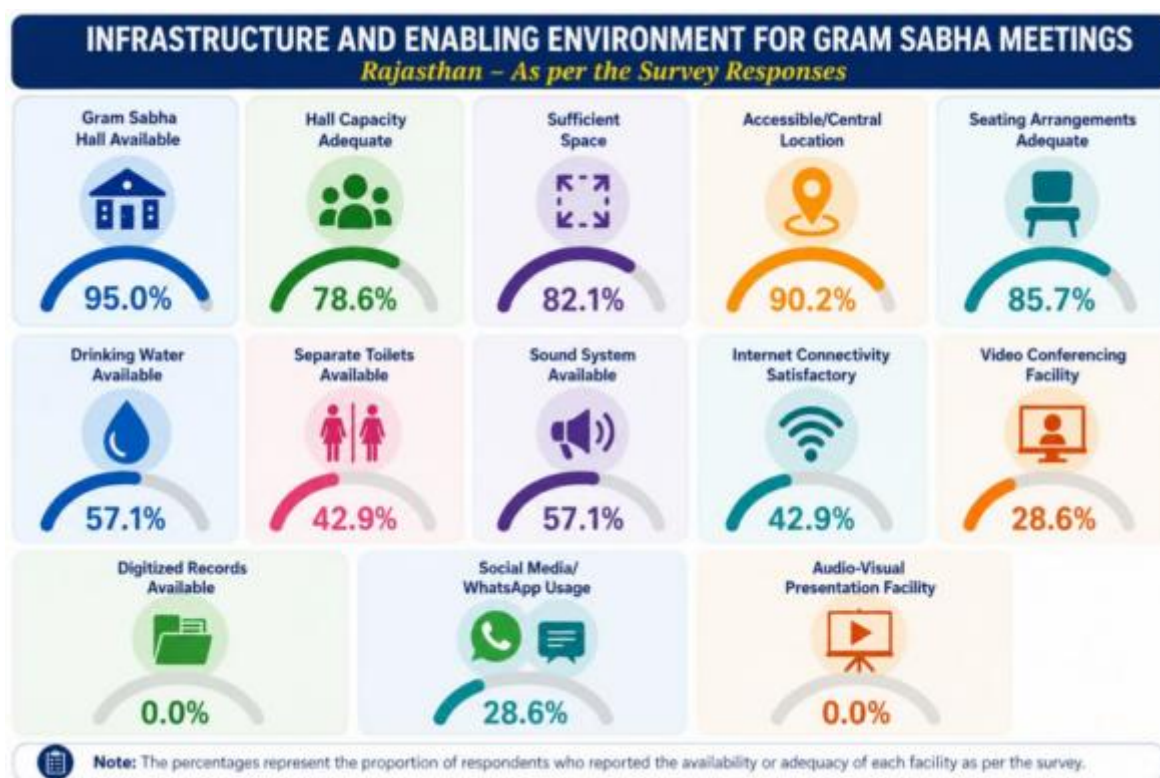
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Rajasthan possesses comparatively strong physical infrastructure for conducting Gram Sabha meetings. A large majority of respondents reported the availability of Gram Sabha halls, adequate hall capacity, sufficient meeting space, accessible locations and appropriate seating arrangements. These findings suggest that the basic infrastructure required for organizing Gram Sabha meetings is available in most surveyed Gram Panchayats, creating a conducive environment for community participation and local governance discussions.

The availability of essential amenities presents a mixed picture. While drinking water facilities were reported by more than half of the respondents, separate toilet facilities were available in a comparatively smaller proportion of locations. Sound systems were available in many Gram Sabha venues, supporting effective communication during meetings. However, internet connectivity and video conferencing facilities were reported by less than half of the respondents, indicating limitations in the adoption of digital and technology-enabled governance practices.

Digital infrastructure remains relatively weak despite the strong physical infrastructure base. Very few respondents reported the availability of digitized records, while social media and WhatsApp-based communication mechanisms were available only in a limited number of Gram Panchayats. Audio-visual presentation facilities were largely absent. The findings suggest that Rajasthan has established a reasonably strong foundation of physical infrastructure for Gram Sabha functioning, but further investments in digital infrastructure, record management systems and technology-enabled communication tools would be necessary to strengthen transparency, citizen engagement and modern governance practices.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

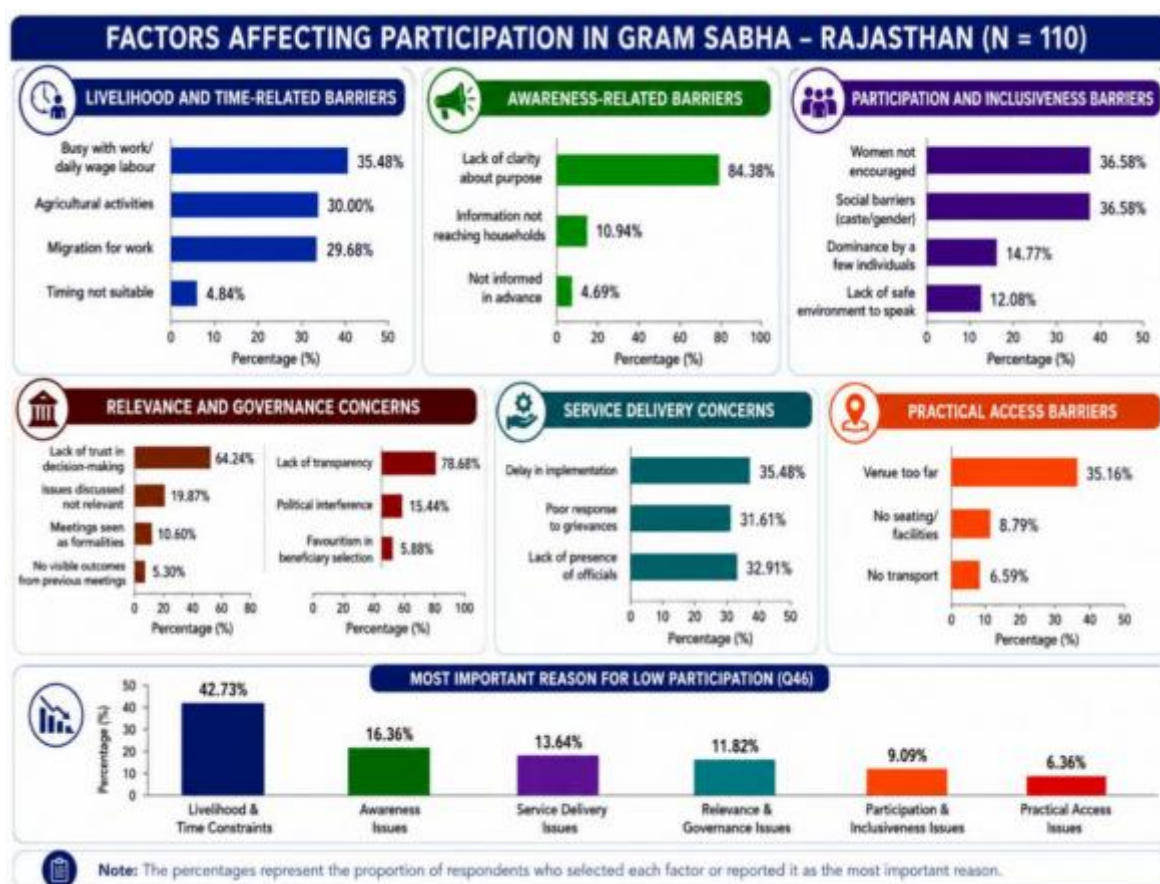
The study indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Rajasthan. Work-related commitments emerged as the leading challenge, followed closely by agricultural activities and migration for work. Timing-related issues were comparatively less significant.

Awareness-related barriers were dominated overwhelmingly by lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha meetings. More than eighty-four percent of respondents identified this as the principal awareness challenge, indicating that even where awareness of meetings exists, understanding of their significance and relevance may remain limited.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns centered primarily on inadequate encouragement for women and social barriers based on caste and gender. Dominance by a few individuals and lack of safe environments for expression were also identified as important concerns.

The findings further reveal strong concerns regarding governance and service delivery. Lack of trust in decision-making emerged as the most important factor affecting perceptions of relevance and usefulness. Governance concerns were overwhelmingly dominated by lack of transparency, while delays in implementation emerged as the principal service delivery challenge. These findings indicate that participation challenges in Rajasthan are linked not only to awareness but also to perceptions regarding governance quality and institutional responsiveness.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified development priorities, local issues and approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) as the most frequently discussed agenda items in Gram Sabha meetings. Social issues also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Rajasthan are strongly oriented toward local development planning, community priorities and social concerns.

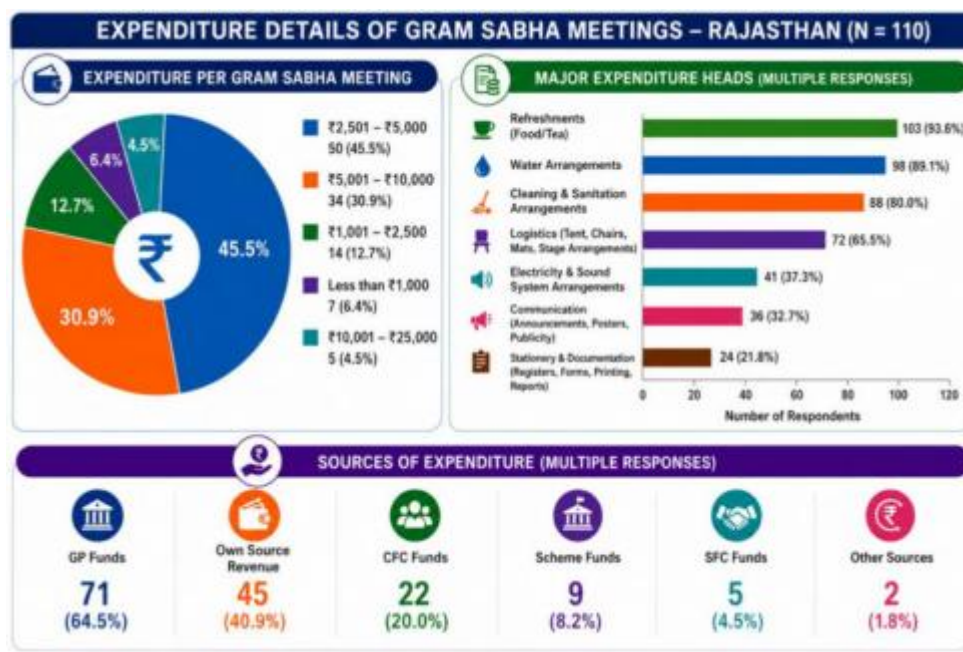
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item              | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| Development Priorities   | 25.06          |
| Identifying Local Issues | 23.33          |
| Approving GPDP           | 23.33          |
| Social Issues            | 20.35          |
| Welfare Schemes          | 3.47           |
| Annual Budget            | 2.23           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

The expenditure pattern in Rajasthan indicates that Gram Sabha meetings are generally supported by moderate levels of financial resources, with a majority of respondents reporting expenditure in the ₹2,501–₹5,000 and ₹5,001–₹10,000 ranges. GP Funds emerged as the primary source of expenditure, supplemented by Own Source Revenue and CFC Funds, while Scheme Funds, SFC Funds and other sources played a relatively limited role. The major expenditure heads included refreshments, water arrangements, sanitation measures and logistical support, reflecting a focus on ensuring basic facilities and participant convenience during meetings. Overall, the findings suggest that Rajasthan has a relatively structured expenditure framework for Gram Sabha meetings, supported largely through Panchayat-level resources and directed towards essential operational and community participation requirements.



## Measures for Improving Participation

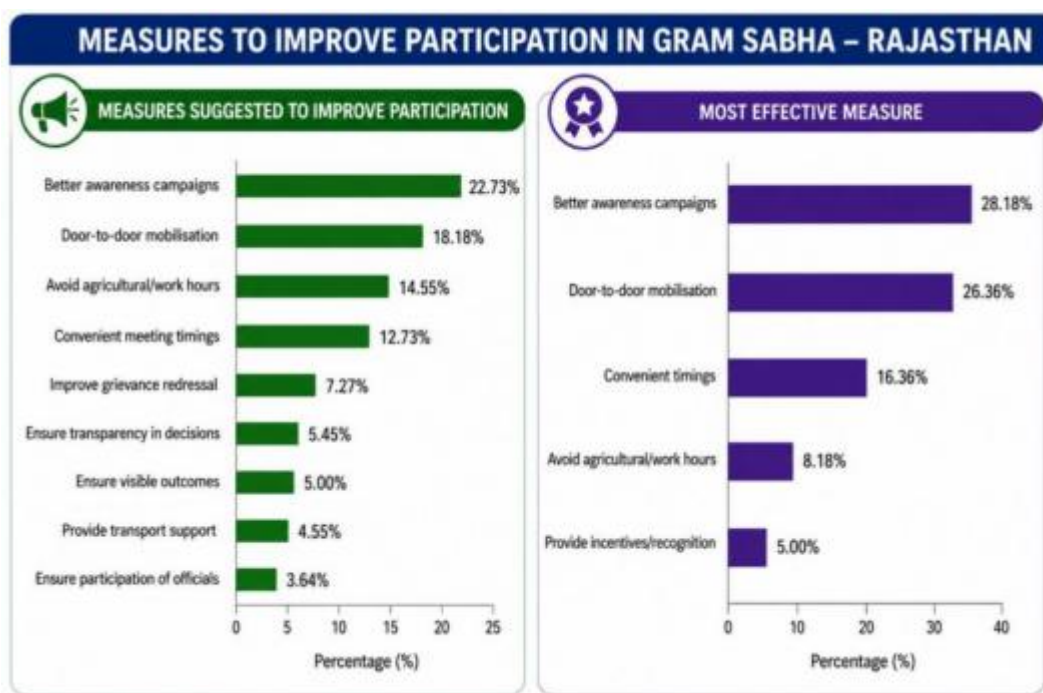
Respondents emphasized awareness generation, inclusion and accountability as the most important strategies for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns emerged as the most frequently suggested intervention, followed closely by greater inclusion of women, SC/ST communities, OBC communities and youth. Transparency, grievance redressal and Ward Sabha or Mahila Sabha meetings were also strongly supported.

A distinctive feature of Rajasthan is the strong emphasis placed on inclusion and representation. Respondents consistently highlighted the need to actively involve marginalized groups and improve grievance redressal mechanisms. Transparency in decision-making and community-level consultations were also viewed as important measures for strengthening participation.

When asked to identify the single most effective measure, inclusion of women, SC/ST communities, OBC communities and youth emerged as the leading preference, followed by grievance redressal and awareness campaigns. These findings suggest that participation



challenges are viewed primarily through the lens of inclusion and representation rather than mobilisation alone.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Better awareness campaigns emerged as the most frequently suggested measure for improving Gram Sabha participation.
2. Door-to-door mobilization was identified as the second most important strategy for increasing attendance and engagement.
3. Respondents emphasized the need to avoid agricultural and peak livelihood periods while scheduling Gram Sabha meetings.
4. Convenient meeting timings were considered an important factor influencing participation levels.
5. Improvements in grievance redressal mechanisms were viewed as necessary for enhancing public confidence in local governance.
6. Greater transparency in decision-making processes was identified as an important requirement for strengthening trust.
7. Respondents highlighted the need for visible outcomes from Gram Sabha decisions to sustain citizen interest and participation.
8. Transport support and improved accessibility were suggested to address participation barriers faced by some sections of the community.
9. Increased participation of officials was considered beneficial for improving responsiveness and credibility.
10. Awareness and mobilization-related measures received significantly higher support than governance or incentive-based interventions.



11. Better awareness campaigns and door-to-door mobilization were also identified as the most effective individual measures for increasing participation.
12. The findings indicate that information dissemination and citizen outreach remain the primary challenges affecting participation in Rajasthan.

## Recommendations

- Implement intensive awareness campaigns before every Gram Sabha meeting using multiple communication channels.
- Institutionalize door-to-door mobilization through Panchayat representatives, SHGs, community volunteers and local leaders.
- Schedule Gram Sabha meetings at times convenient for working households, farmers and wage labourers.
- Avoid organizing meetings during peak agricultural seasons and major livelihood activity periods.
- Strengthen grievance redressal systems and regularly communicate action taken on issues raised in Gram Sabha meetings.
- Improve transparency by publicly sharing decisions, budgets, beneficiary lists and implementation progress.
- Ensure that outcomes of Gram Sabha discussions are visibly reflected in local development initiatives.
- Encourage regular participation of line department officials and frontline functionaries in Gram Sabha meetings.
- Utilize social media, WhatsApp groups, local announcements and community networks for wider outreach.
- Provide targeted mobilization support for women, youth, marginalized communities and vulnerable groups.
- Conduct Ward Sabha and community-level consultations prior to Gram Sabha meetings to improve preparedness.
- Establish a structured follow-up mechanism to keep citizens informed about decisions and implementation status.
- Improve transport and accessibility support in areas where physical access remains a constraint.
- Promote citizen trust through timely implementation of decisions and responsive governance practices.
- Develop state-level participation enhancement guidelines focusing on awareness, outreach and community engagement.
- Monitor participation patterns regularly and provide additional support to Gram Panchayats with persistently low attendance.



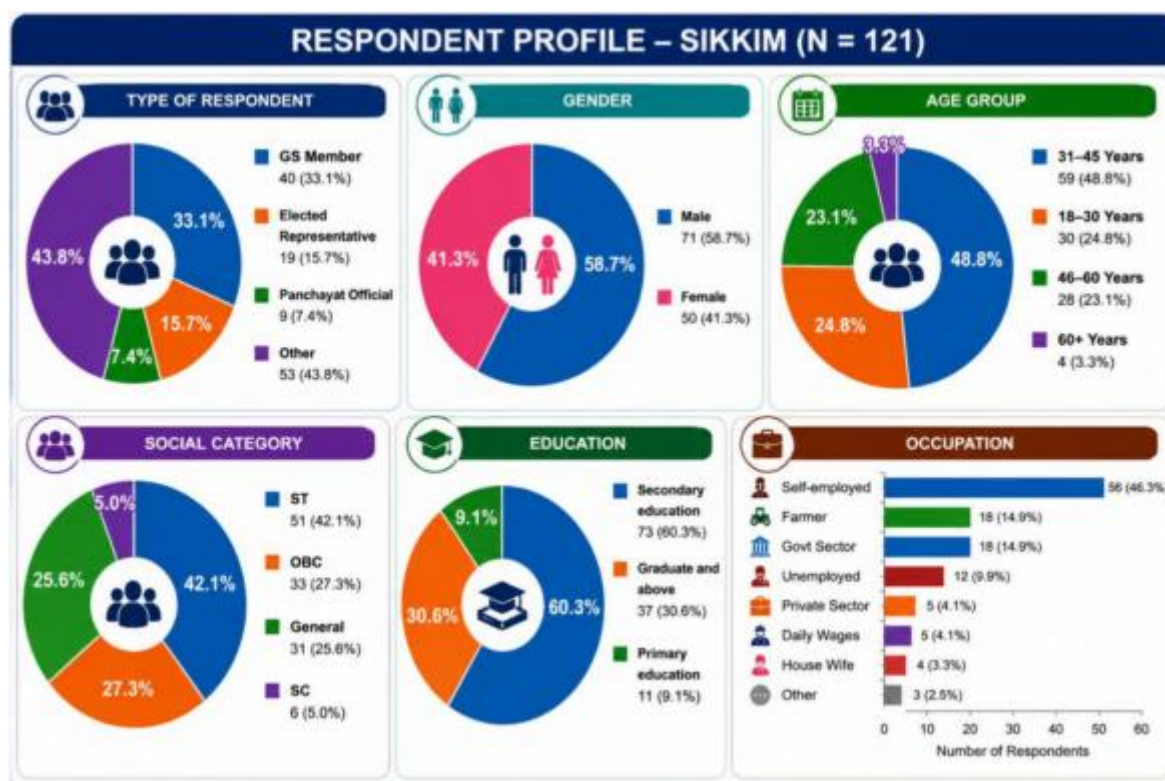
# SIKKIM

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 121 respondents from 6 Gram Panchayats across 4 districts of Sikkim. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. Scheduled Tribe communities constituted the largest social category among respondents, while self-employed individuals formed the largest occupational group. The findings provide important insights into participation patterns, governance challenges and citizen perceptions regarding Gram Sabha functioning in Sikkim.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 121   |
| Districts Covered       | 4     |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 6     |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate very high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Sikkim. Nearly all respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, while all respondents were aware of their rights within the Gram Sabha. Awareness regarding the prescribed frequency of meetings was also exceptionally high.

Attendance levels were strong, with nine out of ten respondents reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year. Active participation levels were also encouraging, with more than eighty-four percent reporting active involvement in Gram Sabha proceedings. Most respondents described their participation as moderate, while a smaller proportion reported high participation levels.

Awareness regarding quorum provisions was comparatively moderate. About two-thirds of respondents reported awareness of quorum requirements. However, a notable finding is that nearly three-fourths were unaware whether quorum is actually achieved during Gram Sabha meetings. This suggests that procedural aspects of Gram Sabha functioning may not be widely understood despite high overall awareness and participation.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 99.17          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 100.00         |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 84.30          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 66.12          |

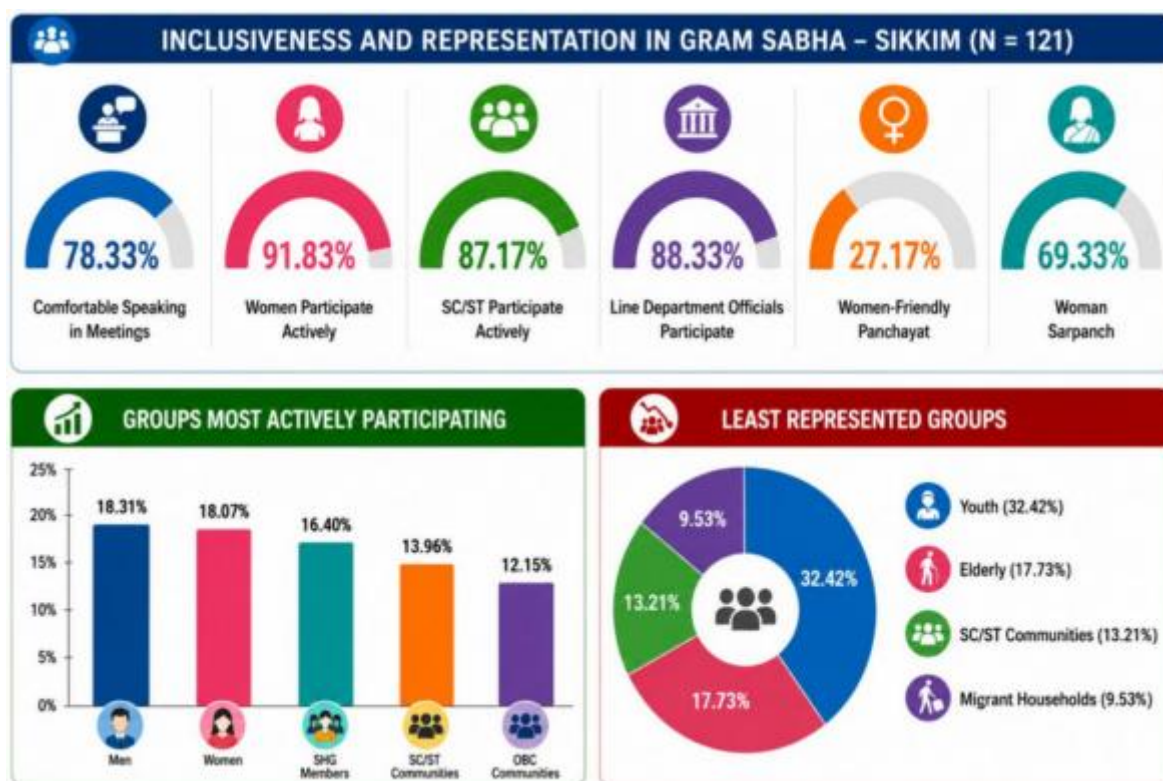
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

The findings suggest relatively broad participation across social groups in Gram Sabha meetings. SHG members emerged as the most active participants, followed by men, women, SC/ST communities and OBC communities. This indicates that community-based organizations and local groups play an important role in Gram Sabha participation.

Women's participation was viewed positively by a substantial majority of respondents, with more than ninety percent reporting active participation by women. Participation of SC/ST communities was similarly strong. More than three-fourths also reported participation of line department officials in Gram Sabha meetings.

Despite these positive indicators, important inclusion concerns remain. Youth emerged as the most underrepresented group in Gram Sabha meetings, followed by elderly citizens and migrant households. A particularly noteworthy finding is that more than eighty-three percent of respondents reported that their Panchayat is not women-friendly, while only sixteen percent reported the presence of a woman Panchayat head. These findings suggest that active participation does not necessarily translate into perceptions of inclusiveness or leadership representation.





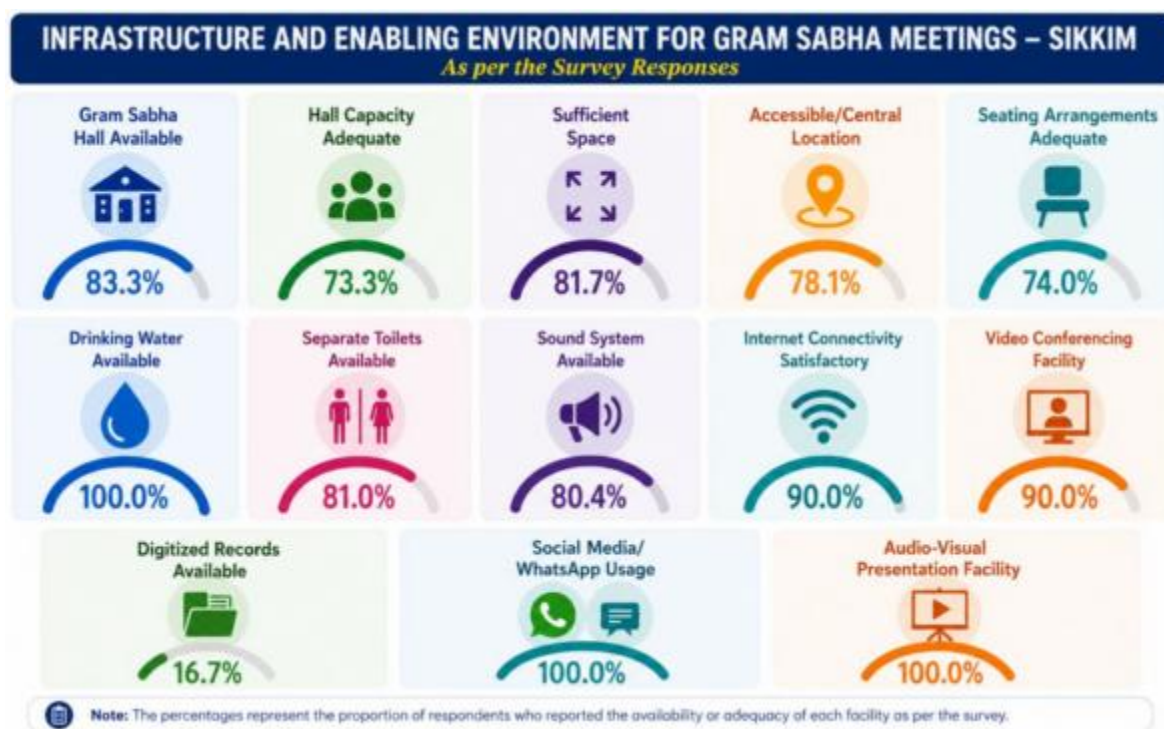
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

Among the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Sikkim, the availability of infrastructure required for conducting Gram Sabha meetings was generally favorable. A large majority of surveyed locations reported the availability of Gram Sabha halls, adequate meeting space, accessible venues and satisfactory seating arrangements. Drinking water facilities were available in all surveyed Gram Panchayats, while separate toilet facilities were also reported by a substantial majority of respondents. These findings suggest that the surveyed Gram Panchayats largely possess the basic physical infrastructure necessary for conducting Gram Sabha meetings.

The findings further indicate strong availability of communication and digital infrastructure in the surveyed locations. A large majority of respondents reported satisfactory internet connectivity, availability of sound systems and access to video conferencing facilities. Social media and WhatsApp were reported to be widely used for communication and outreach, while audio-visual presentation facilities were available in all surveyed Gram Panchayats. Such facilities can support wider dissemination of information, improve citizen awareness and strengthen engagement during Gram Sabha meetings.

At the same time, the findings reveal certain areas requiring attention. Although most surveyed Gram Panchayats reported adequate physical infrastructure, hall capacity, seating arrangements and accessibility were not uniformly available across all locations. In addition, digitized records were available only in a limited proportion of surveyed Gram Panchayats. Overall, the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Sikkim demonstrate relatively strong physical and digital infrastructure for Gram Sabha meetings, while further efforts toward record digitization and infrastructure strengthening could enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of local participatory governance processes.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

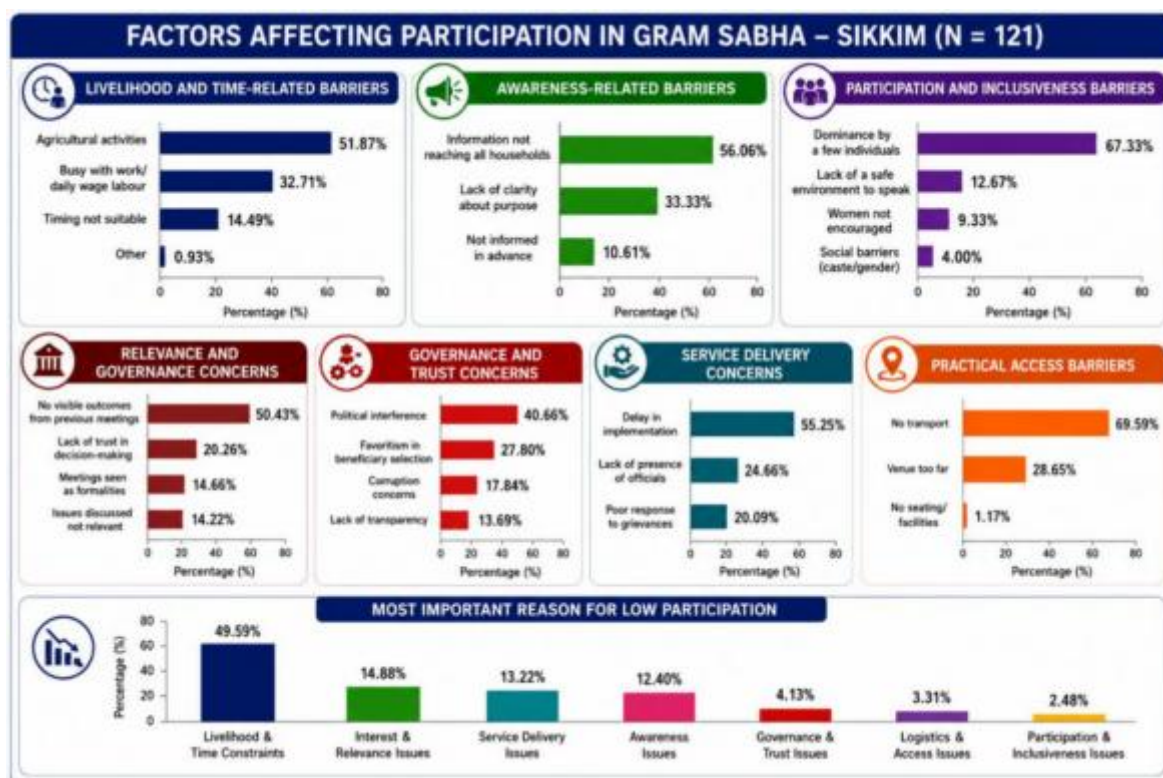
The study clearly indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Sikkim. Agricultural activities emerged as the dominant challenge, accounting for more than half of all responses, followed by work-related commitments and unsuitable meeting timings. These findings reflect the influence of local livelihood patterns on citizen participation.

Awareness-related barriers were also significant. Information not reaching all households emerged as the most important awareness challenge, followed by lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha meetings. These findings suggest that communication gaps continue to affect participation despite high overall awareness levels.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns were dominated by the perception that a few individuals dominate discussions and decision-making processes. This issue accounted for more than two-thirds of all responses within this category, making it one of the most prominent concerns reported in the State.

The findings further reveal important concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Lack of visible outcomes from previous meetings emerged as the most important factor affecting perceptions regarding the usefulness of participation. Governance concerns centered primarily on political interference, favouritism in beneficiary selection and corruption concerns. Delays in implementation, absence of officials and weak grievance redressal systems also emerged as important barriers affecting citizen confidence.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents reported a remarkably broad agenda coverage in Gram Sabha meetings. Approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs), sanitation, beneficiary identification, local issues and welfare schemes emerged as the most frequently discussed agenda items. Annual budgeting, own source revenue generation, livelihood issues, health and literacy, infrastructure and development priorities also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Sikkim serve as comprehensive platforms for local planning, service delivery and development discussions.

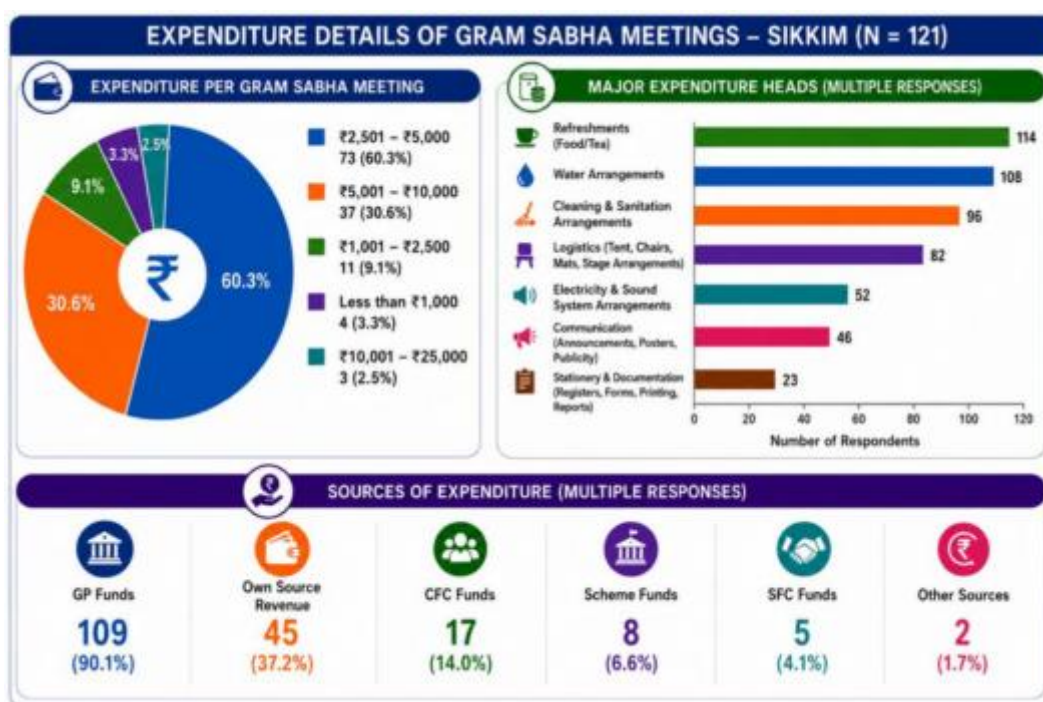
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Approving GPDP            | 8.30           |
| Sanitation                | 8.23           |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 8.16           |
| Identifying Local Issues  | 8.16           |
| Welfare Schemes           | 8.09           |
| Annual Budget             | 7.96           |
| OSR Generation            | 7.82           |
| Livelihood                | 7.82           |
| Health & Literacy         | 7.54           |
| Infrastructure            | 7.48           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

Among the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Sikkim, expenditure incurred for conducting Gram Sabha meetings was largely concentrated in the ₹2,501–₹5,000 expenditure range, followed by the ₹5,001–₹10,000 category. GP funds emerged as the principal source of financing for Gram Sabha meetings, supplemented by own source revenue and limited support from CFC, scheme and SFC funds. Major expenditure heads included refreshments, drinking water arrangements, cleaning and sanitation, logistical arrangements such as tents, chairs and mats, and communication-related activities. The findings indicate that the surveyed Gram Panchayats primarily utilize available resources to ensure basic meeting arrangements, participant convenience and smooth conduct of Gram Sabha proceedings.



## Measures for Improving Participation

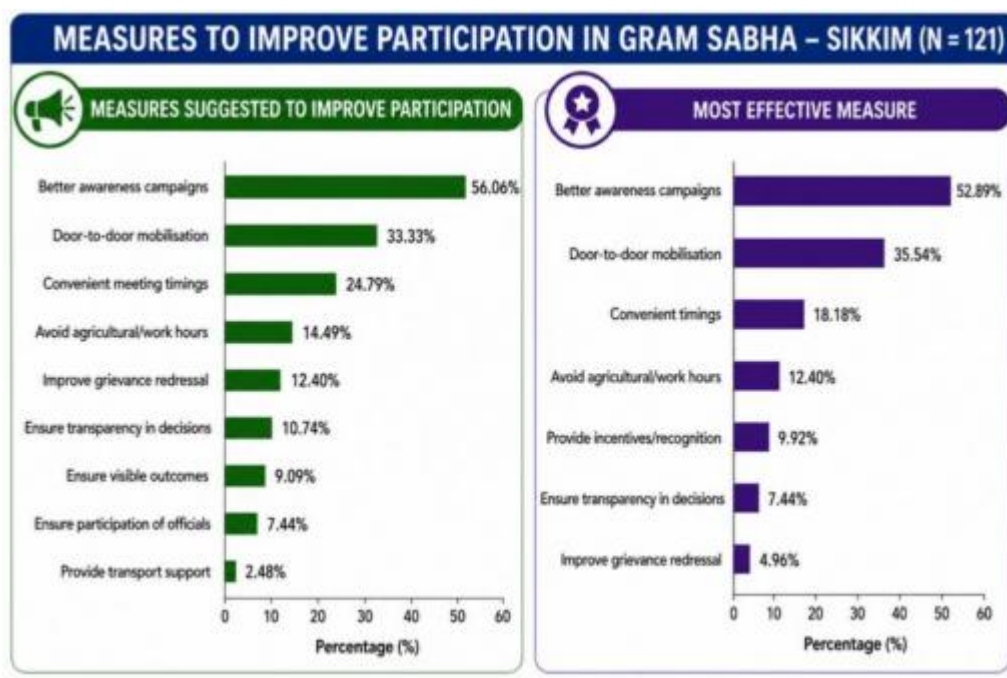
Respondents emphasized mobilisation and practical support measures as the most effective strategies for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Door-to-door mobilisation emerged as the most frequently suggested intervention, followed closely by provision of refreshments and transport support. Participation of officials, visible outcomes and incentives were also widely supported.

A distinctive feature of Sikkim is the strong emphasis placed on practical facilitation measures. Respondents highlighted the importance of transport support, refreshments, incentives and visible outcomes from Gram Sabha decisions. This suggests that participation challenges are viewed not only as awareness issues but also as issues relating to convenience, accessibility and tangible benefits.

When asked to identify the single most effective measure, door-to-door mobilisation emerged as the clear preference, receiving nearly forty percent of responses. Visible outcomes,



incentives, transport support and transparency measures were also identified as important strategies for increasing participation.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Most surveyed Gram Panchayats reported the availability of Gram Sabha halls, adequate meeting space and accessible locations for conducting Gram Sabha meetings.
2. Drinking water facilities were available in all surveyed Gram Panchayats, while separate toilet facilities were available in a substantial majority of locations.
3. Seating arrangements and hall capacity were reported as adequate in most surveyed Gram Panchayats, indicating generally favorable meeting infrastructure.
4. Sound systems were available in a majority of surveyed locations, supporting effective communication during Gram Sabha meetings.
5. Internet connectivity and video conferencing facilities were reported by a large majority of respondents, indicating strong digital infrastructure in the surveyed Gram Panchayats.
6. Social media and WhatsApp were widely used for communication and citizen outreach across all surveyed locations.
7. Audio-visual presentation facilities were available in all surveyed Gram Panchayats covered under the survey.
8. Digitized records were available only in a limited proportion of surveyed Gram Panchayats, representing the most significant infrastructure gap identified.
9. The findings indicate that the surveyed Gram Panchayats possess a relatively strong combination of physical and digital infrastructure for Gram Sabha functioning.
10. Infrastructure gaps were concentrated primarily in record digitization and, to a lesser extent, hall capacity and seating arrangements in some locations.



## Recommendations

- Expand digitization of Gram Panchayat records and meeting proceedings to strengthen transparency, accessibility and administrative efficiency.
- Build upon existing internet connectivity and video conferencing infrastructure to promote technology-enabled Gram Sabha processes.
- Institutionalize digital documentation and electronic record management systems across all Gram Panchayats.
- Strengthen capacity building of Panchayat functionaries for effective use of digital governance tools and platforms.
- Improve hall capacity and seating arrangements in locations where existing facilities may be inadequate during larger gatherings.
- Ensure regular maintenance of meeting infrastructure, including halls, toilets, sound systems and audio-visual equipment.
- Continue leveraging social media and WhatsApp platforms for advance communication, awareness generation and citizen mobilisation.
- Integrate audio-visual tools into Gram Sabha meetings for improved dissemination of information and presentation of development plans.
- Promote the use of digital platforms for agenda circulation, grievance tracking and dissemination of decisions taken in Gram Sabha meetings.
- Develop a phased infrastructure improvement strategy for surveyed Gram Panchayats with a focus on modernizing governance and strengthening participatory processes.



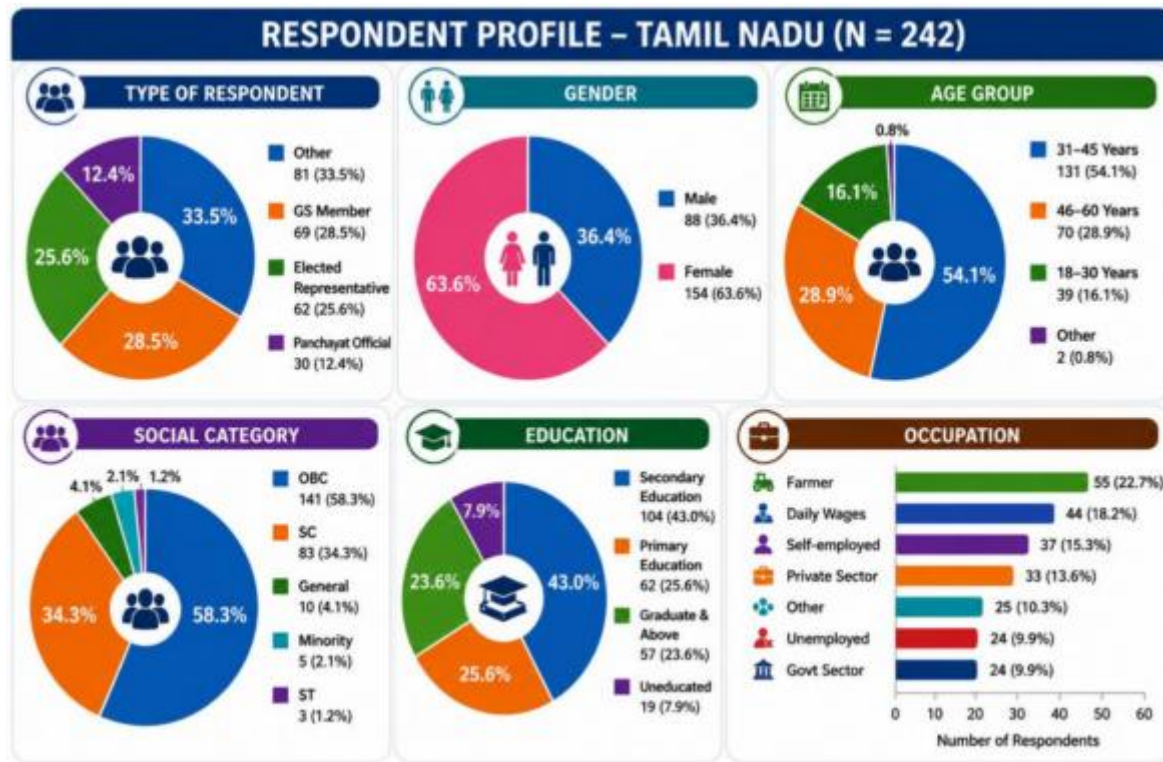
# TAMIL NADU

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 242 respondents from 12 Gram Panchayats across 6 districts of Tamil Nadu. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. Women constituted a significant majority of respondents, while OBC and SC communities formed the largest social groups. Farmers, daily wage workers, self-employed individuals and private sector employees constituted the major occupational categories. The findings provide important insights into participation patterns, governance challenges and citizen perceptions regarding Gram Sabha functioning in Tamil Nadu.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 242   |
| Districts Covered       | 6     |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 12    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Tamil Nadu. Nearly ninety-four percent of respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, while more than three-fourths were aware of their rights within the Gram Sabha. Awareness regarding the frequency of Gram Sabha meetings was also relatively strong.

Attendance levels were exceptionally high, with almost all respondents reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year. Active participation levels were similarly encouraging, with nearly ninety percent reporting active involvement in Gram Sabha proceedings. Participation frequency was also substantial, with more than two-thirds attending Gram Sabha meetings three to four times annually.

Awareness regarding quorum provisions was moderate. While nearly two-thirds reported awareness of quorum requirements, almost half stated that quorum is not achieved during Gram Sabha meetings and one-third were unaware of quorum status. These findings suggest that procedural compliance remains a concern despite high attendance and participation levels.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 93.80          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 77.69          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 89.26          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 63.64          |

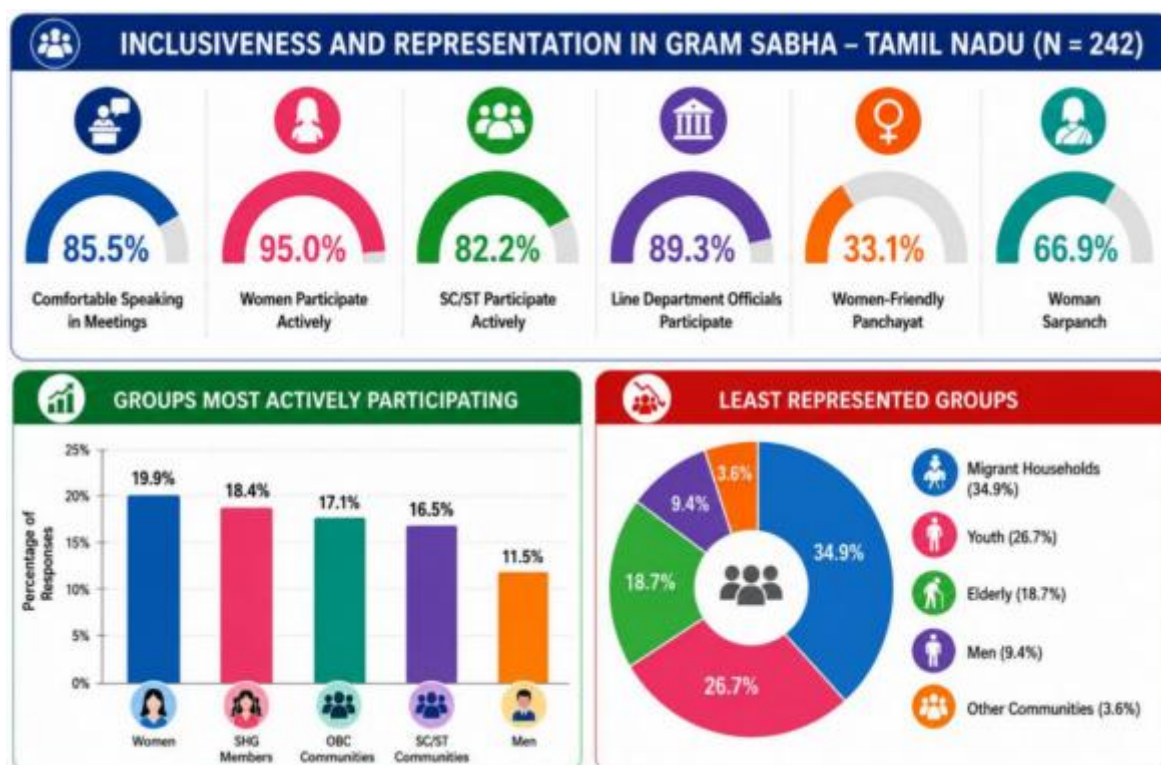
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

The findings suggest strong participation by women and community-based groups in Gram Sabha meetings across Tamil Nadu. Women emerged as the most active participants, followed by SHG members, OBC communities and SC/ST communities. Participation by men, elderly citizens and youth was comparatively lower.

Women's participation was particularly notable. More than ninety-five percent of respondents reported active participation by women, while nearly two-thirds reported that the Panchayat head is a woman. Participation of line department officials was also exceptionally strong, with nearly ninety percent indicating their regular participation in Gram Sabha meetings.

However, important inclusion challenges remain. Migrant households emerged as the most underrepresented group, followed by youth and elderly citizens. A significant majority of respondents also reported that their Panchayat cannot be considered women-friendly despite strong participation and representation by women. These findings suggest that active participation alone may not fully address perceptions regarding inclusiveness and institutional support.





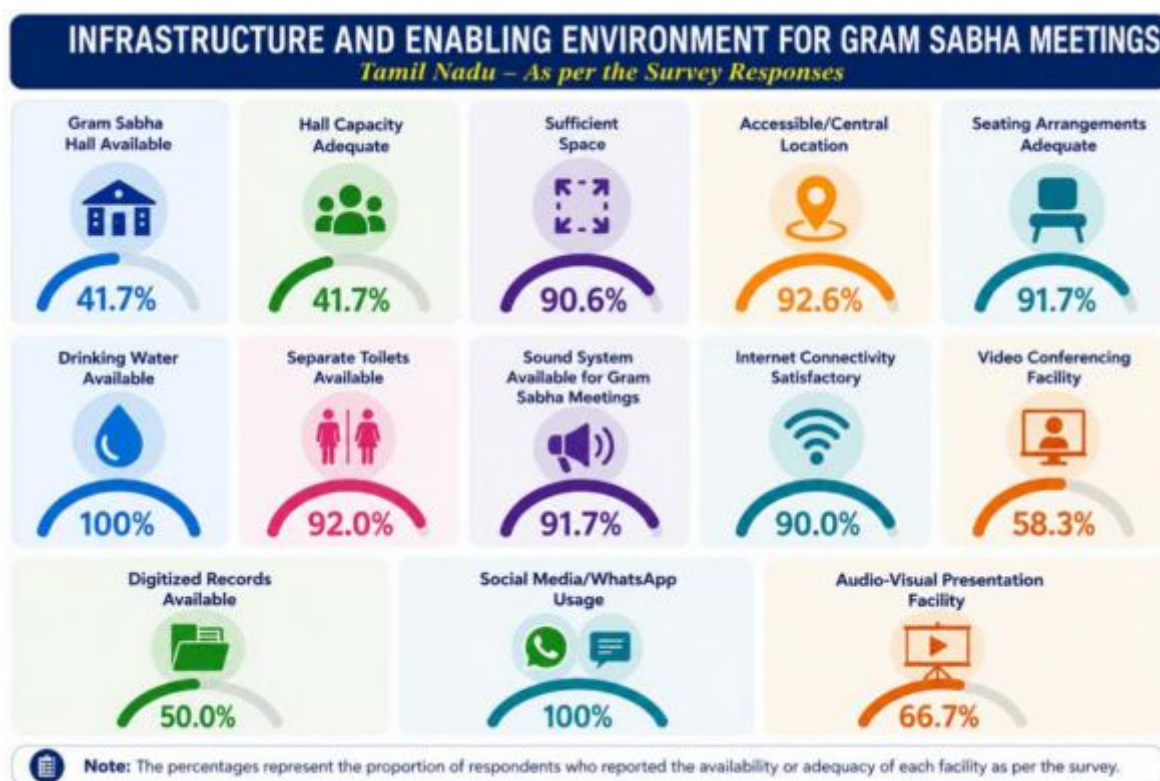
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

Among the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Tamil Nadu, the availability of basic infrastructure for conducting Gram Sabha meetings presented a mixed picture. While dedicated Gram Sabha halls and adequate hall capacity were reported in less than half of the surveyed locations, a large majority of respondents indicated the availability of sufficient meeting space, accessible and centrally located venues, and adequate seating arrangements. Drinking water facilities were available in all surveyed Gram Panchayats, while separate toilet facilities were also reported by a substantial majority of respondents.

The findings further indicate strong availability of essential meeting and communication infrastructure. Most surveyed Gram Panchayats reported the availability of sound systems, satisfactory internet connectivity and widespread use of social media and WhatsApp for communication and citizen outreach. Audio-visual presentation facilities were available in a majority of surveyed locations, while video conferencing facilities were reported in more than half of the surveyed Gram Panchayats. These facilities can support better information dissemination, citizen engagement and technology-enabled governance processes.

At the same time, the findings suggest scope for strengthening dedicated Gram Sabha infrastructure in the surveyed locations. The relatively lower availability of Gram Sabha halls and adequate hall capacity indicates continued reliance on alternative community spaces for conducting meetings. Digitized records were available in only half of the surveyed Gram Panchayats, highlighting the need for further digital transformation. Overall, the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Tamil Nadu demonstrate strong supporting infrastructure and digital connectivity, while improvements in dedicated meeting infrastructure and record digitization could further strengthen the effectiveness of Gram Sabha functioning.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

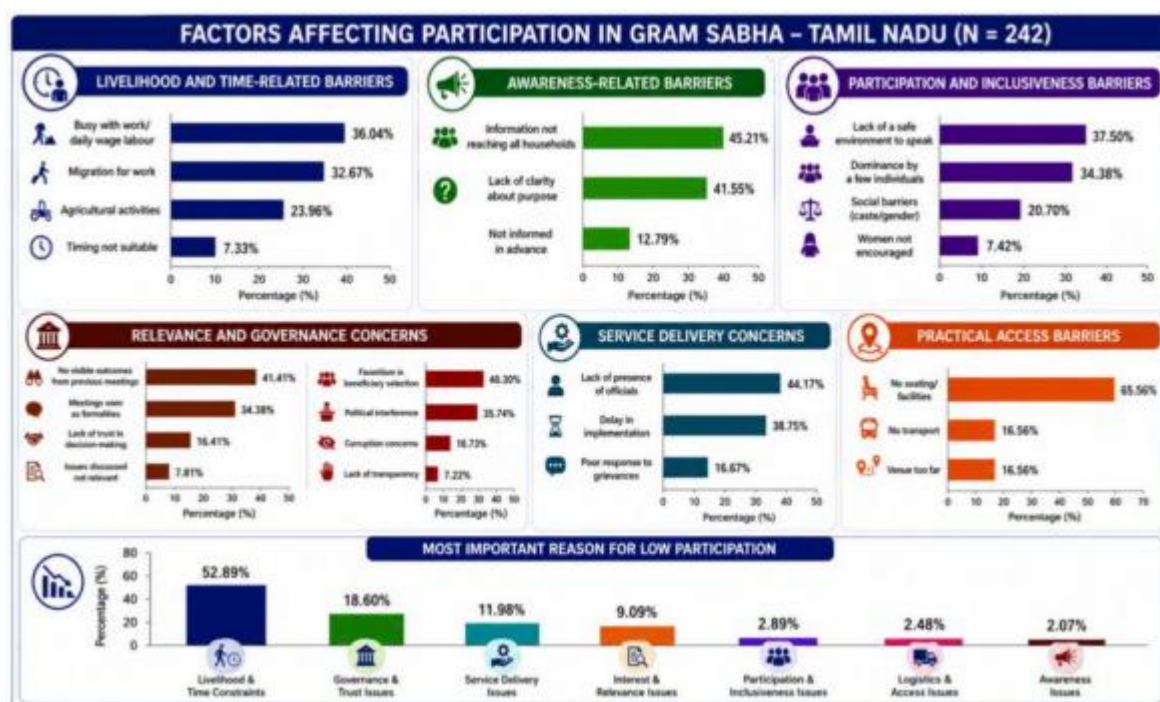
The study clearly indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Tamil Nadu. Work-related commitments emerged as the dominant factor limiting participation, followed by migration for work and agricultural activities. Timing-related concerns were comparatively less significant.

Awareness-related barriers were also important. Information not reaching all households emerged as the most significant awareness challenge, closely followed by lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha meetings. These findings indicate continuing communication and outreach gaps despite relatively high levels of awareness.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns were primarily linked to lack of safe environments for expression and dominance by a few individuals. Social barriers based on caste and gender were also identified as important concerns. In contrast, inadequate encouragement for women was reported relatively less frequently.

The findings further reveal substantial concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Lack of visible outcomes from previous meetings emerged as the most important factor reducing citizen interest in participation. Governance concerns were dominated by favouritism in beneficiary selection and political interference. Service delivery concerns centered on absence of officials and delays in implementation. These findings suggest that respondents place considerable importance on accountability, fairness and responsiveness in local governance processes.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents reported a broad agenda coverage in Gram Sabha meetings. Beneficiary identification and local issues emerged as the most frequently discussed agenda items, followed closely by sanitation, welfare schemes, infrastructure, livelihood issues, annual budgeting and social audit. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Tamil Nadu function as important forums for local development planning, service delivery discussions and beneficiary selection processes.

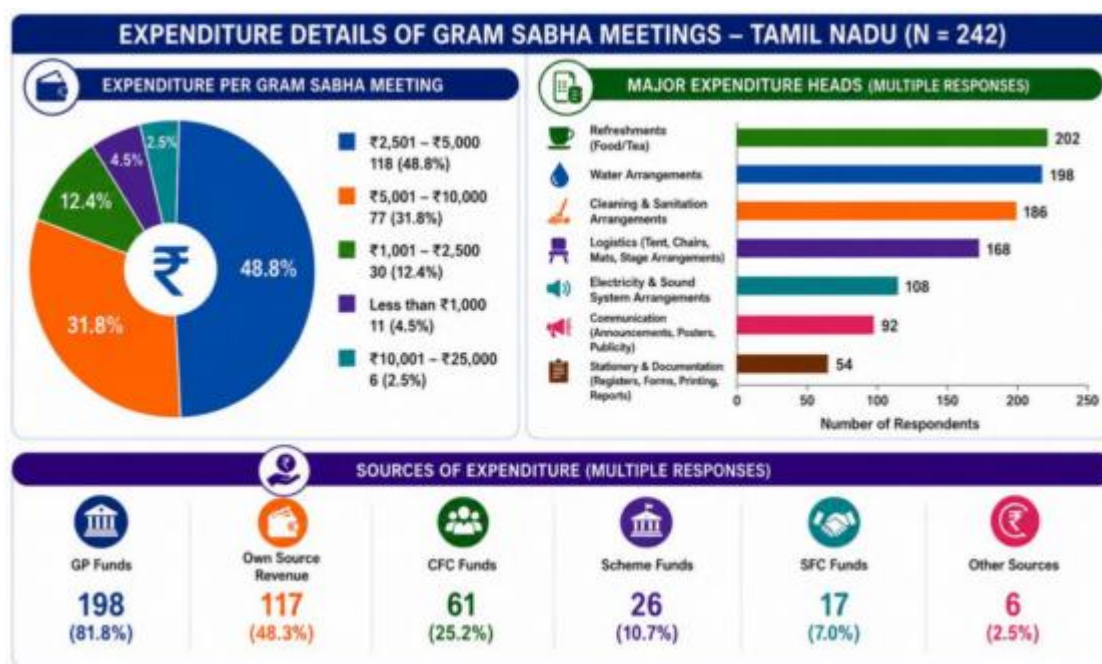
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 9.71           |
| Identifying Local Issues  | 9.63           |
| Sanitation                | 8.04           |
| Welfare Schemes           | 7.69           |
| Infrastructure            | 7.65           |
| Livelihood                | 7.60           |
| Annual Budget             | 7.56           |
| Social Audit              | 7.56           |
| Development Priorities    | 7.34           |
| Health & Literacy         | 7.30           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

Among the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Tamil Nadu, expenditure incurred for conducting Gram Sabha meetings was concentrated largely in the ₹2,501–₹5,000 expenditure range, followed by the ₹5,001–₹10,000 category. GP funds emerged as the principal source of financing, supplemented by own source revenue, CFC funds, SFC funds, scheme funds and limited contributions from other sources. Major expenditure heads included logistical arrangements such as tents, chairs and stage arrangements, stationery and documentation, refreshments, water arrangements, electricity and sound systems, and cleaning and sanitation activities. The findings indicate that the surveyed Gram Panchayats primarily utilize available resources to ensure basic meeting arrangements, participant convenience and effective conduct of Gram Sabha meetings.



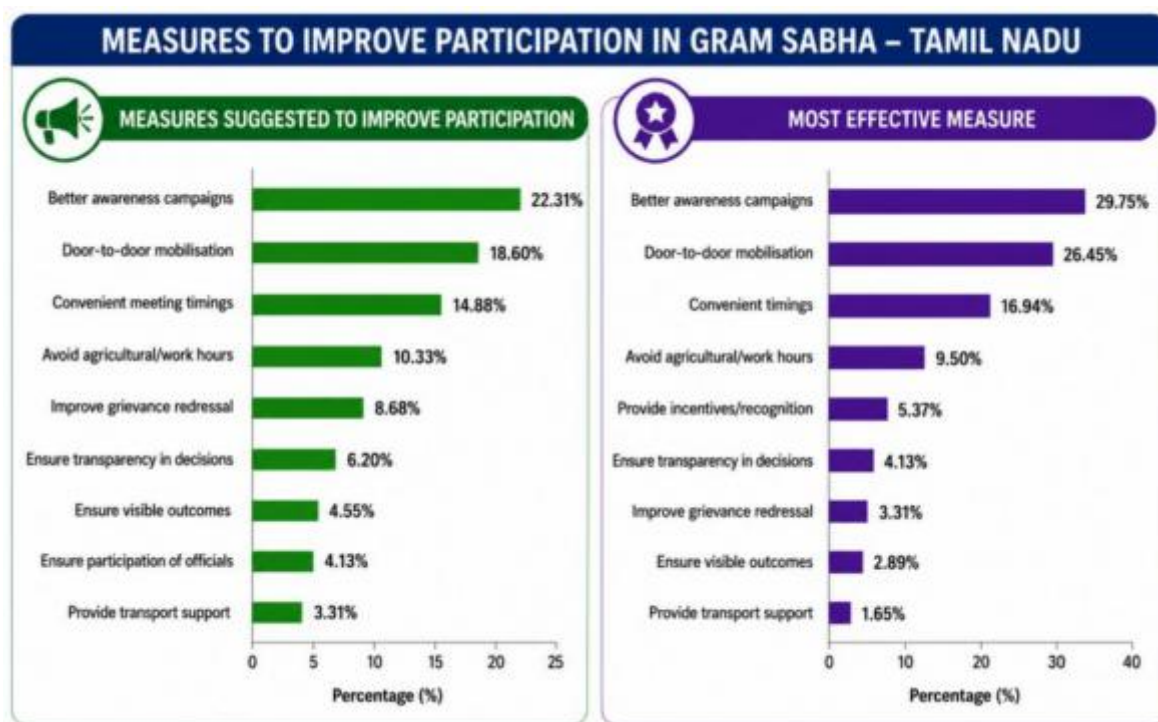
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents strongly emphasized grievance redressal, mobilisation and awareness generation as the most effective strategies for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Improved grievance redressal emerged as the most frequently suggested intervention, followed closely by door-to-door mobilisation and awareness campaigns. Incentives, participation of officials and refreshments also received considerable support.

A distinctive feature of Tamil Nadu is the strong emphasis placed on institutional responsiveness. Respondents repeatedly highlighted grievance redressal mechanisms, official participation and awareness campaigns as key requirements for improving participation. This suggests that participation challenges are viewed not merely as awareness issues but also as issues of governance effectiveness and citizen responsiveness.

When asked to identify the single most effective measure, awareness campaigns emerged as the clear preference, followed by incentives, participation of officials and grievance redressal. These findings indicate that strengthening awareness while simultaneously improving responsiveness and accountability remains central to increasing participation.





## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Most surveyed Gram Panchayats reported adequate meeting space, centrally located venues and satisfactory seating arrangements for Gram Sabha meetings.
2. Drinking water facilities were available in all surveyed Gram Panchayats, while separate toilet facilities were available in a large majority of locations.
3. Sound systems and internet connectivity were available in most surveyed Gram Panchayats, supporting effective meeting conduct and communication.
4. Social media and WhatsApp were widely used for citizen outreach and dissemination of information.
5. Audio-visual presentation facilities were available in a majority of surveyed Gram Panchayats.
6. Video conferencing facilities were available in more than half of the surveyed locations, indicating growing adoption of digital infrastructure.
7. Availability of dedicated Gram Sabha halls and adequate hall capacity was comparatively lower than other infrastructure indicators.
8. Digitized records were available in only half of the surveyed Gram Panchayats, representing a significant gap in digital governance.
9. The surveyed Gram Panchayats demonstrated strong supporting infrastructure despite limited availability of dedicated meeting halls.
10. Overall, the findings indicate favorable physical and digital infrastructure conditions for conducting Gram Sabha meetings in the surveyed locations.



## Recommendations

- Strengthen the availability of dedicated Gram Sabha halls and improve hall capacity wherever required.
- Expand digitization of Gram Panchayat records, resolutions and meeting proceedings.
- Build upon existing internet connectivity and digital infrastructure to support technology-enabled governance.
- Increase the use of video conferencing and digital platforms for citizen engagement and information dissemination.
- Continue leveraging social media and WhatsApp for awareness generation and mobilization of citizens.
- Ensure regular maintenance of meeting venues, sound systems and audio-visual equipment.
- Improve infrastructure in locations currently dependent on temporary or shared meeting spaces.
- Strengthen digital record management systems and capacity building of Panchayat functionaries.
- Promote the use of audio-visual tools for presentation of plans, budgets and Gram Sabha decisions.
- Develop a phased infrastructure enhancement strategy focusing on dedicated meeting facilities and digital governance systems.



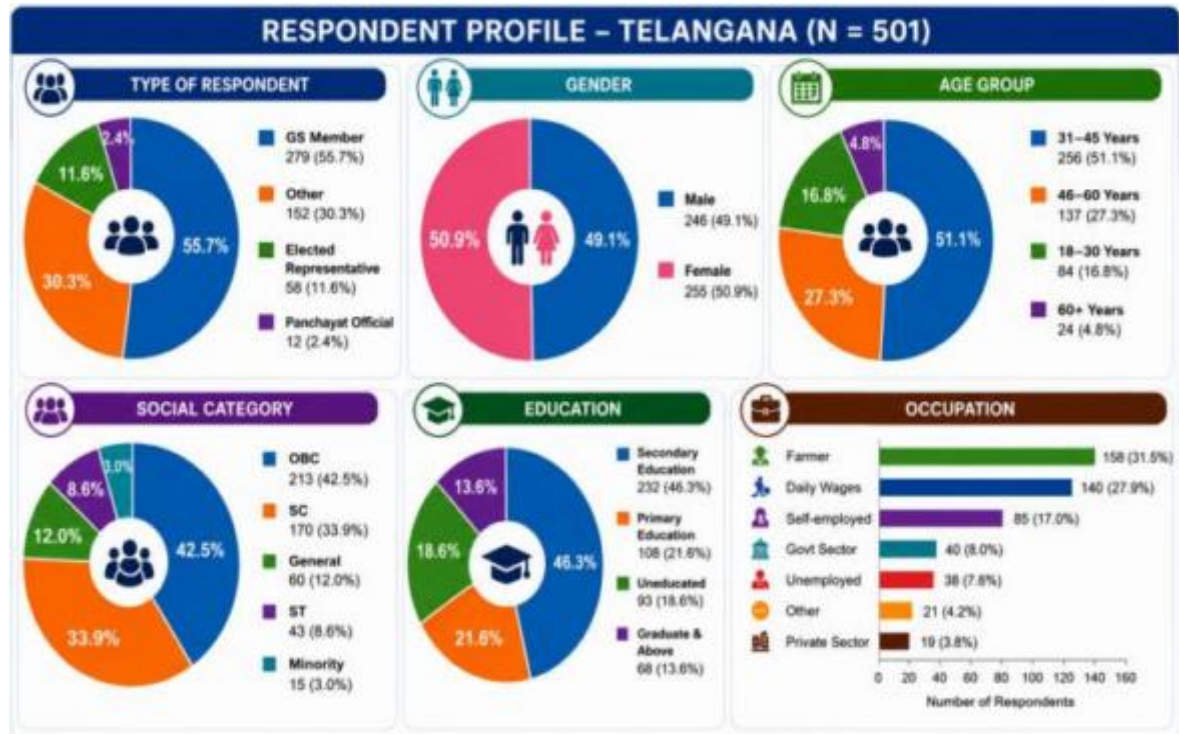
# TELANGANA

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 501 respondents from 29 Gram Panchayats across 14 districts of Telangana. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. OBC and SC communities constituted the largest social groups, while farmers and daily wage workers formed the dominant occupational categories. Men and women were almost equally represented in the survey. The findings provide important insights into participation patterns, governance challenges and citizen perceptions regarding Gram Sabha functioning in Telangana.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 501   |
| Districts Covered       | 14    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 29    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Telangana. More than ninety-three percent of respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, while three-fourths were aware of the prescribed frequency of meetings. However, awareness regarding rights within the Gram Sabha was considerably lower, with only about half reporting familiarity with these rights.

Attendance and participation levels were moderate. More than four-fifths of respondents reported attending Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year. However, only slightly more than half reported active participation in Gram Sabha proceedings, suggesting a substantial gap between attendance and meaningful engagement.

Awareness regarding quorum provisions was particularly weak. More than eighty percent of respondents reported that they were unaware of quorum requirements, while an overwhelming majority were also unaware whether quorum is achieved during Gram Sabha meetings. These findings suggest significant procedural awareness gaps despite high awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings themselves.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 93.41          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 52.30          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 55.09          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 19.16          |

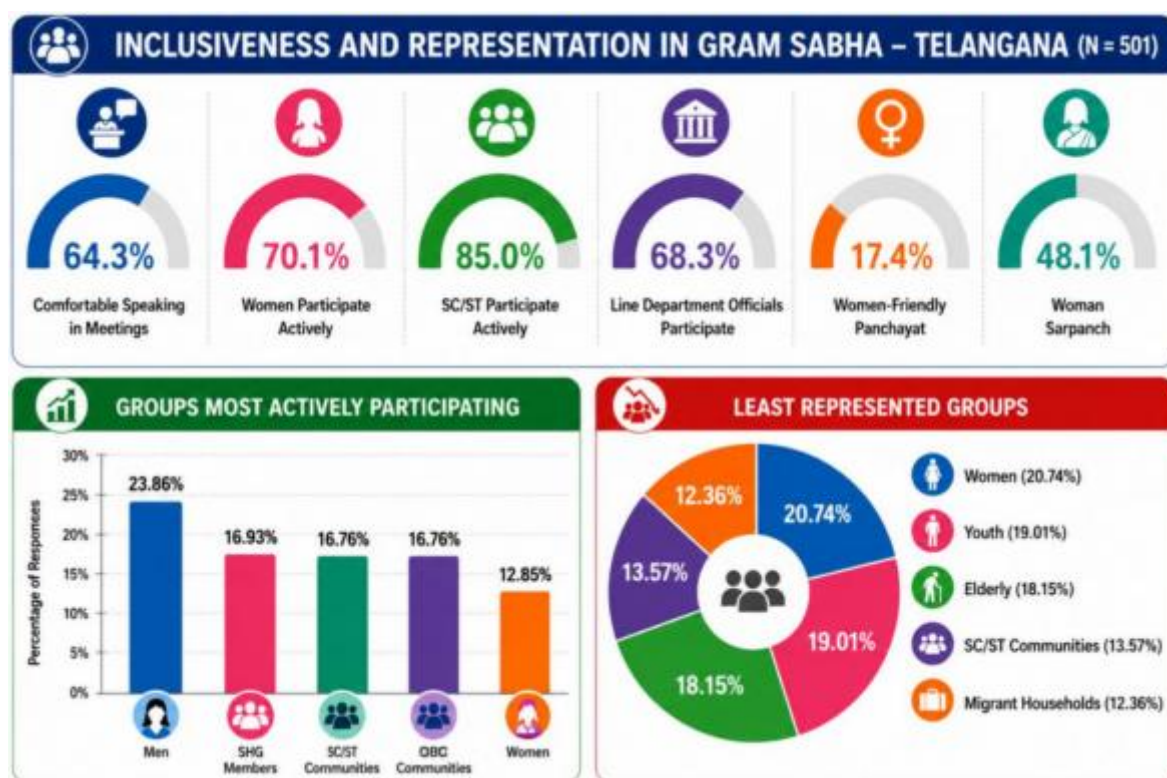
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

The findings reveal a mixed picture regarding inclusiveness and representation in Gram Sabha meetings. Men emerged as the most active participants, followed by SHG members, SC/ST communities and OBC communities. Participation by women was comparatively lower despite their substantial presence in the sample.

Women's participation was viewed positively by a majority of respondents, with about seventy percent reporting active participation by women. Participation of SC/ST communities was also considered strong. More than two-thirds reported participation of line department officials in Gram Sabha meetings.

However, important inclusion concerns remain. Women, youth and elderly citizens emerged as the most underrepresented groups in Gram Sabha meetings. A particularly significant finding is that more than eighty-two percent of respondents reported that their Panchayat cannot be considered women-friendly. While nearly half reported the presence of a woman Panchayat head, perceptions regarding inclusiveness remain relatively weak. These findings indicate that representation alone may not be sufficient to ensure inclusive participation.





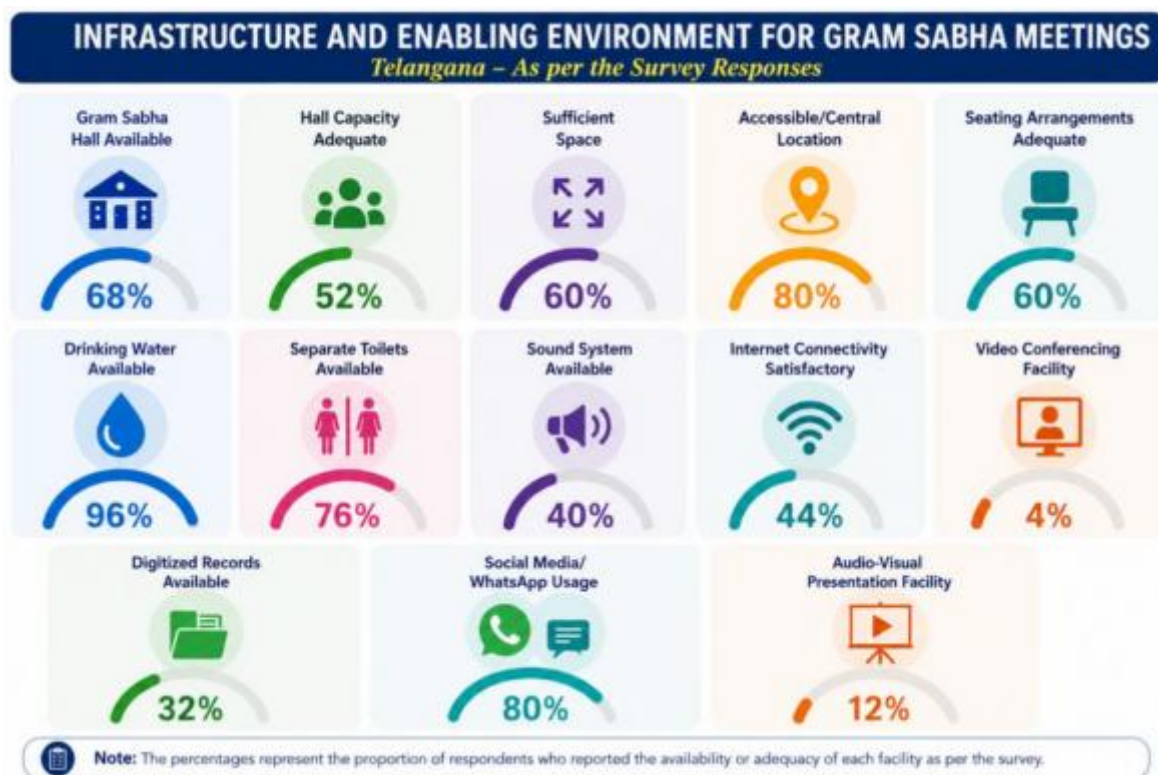
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Telangana possesses a reasonably strong infrastructure base for conducting Gram Sabha meetings. A majority of respondents reported the availability of Gram Sabha halls, adequate seating arrangements, sufficient meeting space and centrally located venues. Accessibility of meeting locations was particularly strong, suggesting that most Gram Sabha meetings are conducted in locations that are convenient for community members. Hall capacity and seating arrangements were also reported as adequate by a significant proportion of respondents, supporting effective conduct of meetings.

Basic civic amenities were available in most surveyed Gram Panchayats. Drinking water facilities were reported by an overwhelming majority of respondents, while separate toilet facilities were available in a substantial proportion of locations. However, the availability of sound systems was comparatively moderate, and internet connectivity remained limited in many Gram Sabha venues. Video conferencing facilities were almost absent, indicating that technology-enabled participation and virtual engagement mechanisms have not yet been widely adopted across Gram Panchayats in Telangana.

The digital infrastructure profile presents a mixed picture. Social media and WhatsApp-based communication mechanisms were widely used, reflecting the growing role of digital communication in mobilizing citizens and disseminating information. However, the availability of digitized records was comparatively limited, and audio-visual presentation facilities were available only in a small proportion of Gram Panchayats. Overall, Telangana demonstrates relatively strong physical infrastructure and basic amenities for Gram Sabha functioning, but substantial improvements in digital infrastructure, record digitization, internet connectivity and technology-enabled governance systems would further strengthen participatory local governance.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

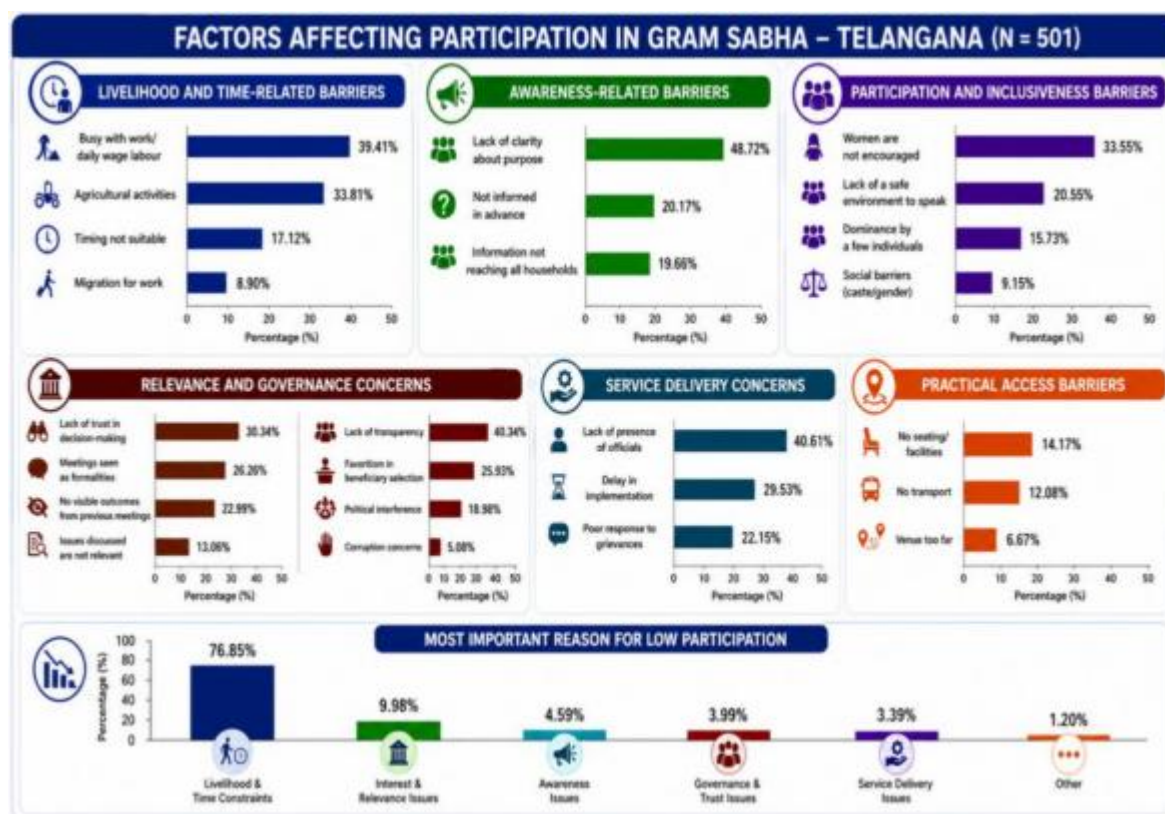
The study clearly indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Telangana. Daily wage employment and work-related commitments emerged as the dominant factor limiting participation, followed by agricultural activities and unsuitable meeting timings. Migration-related constraints were comparatively less significant.

Awareness-related barriers were also prominent. Lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha meetings emerged as the most important awareness challenge, followed by inadequate advance information and information not reaching all households. These findings indicate that awareness of meetings does not necessarily translate into understanding of their significance.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns were dominated by inadequate encouragement for women. Lack of safe environments for expression and dominance by a few individuals also emerged as important concerns. These findings suggest continuing barriers to meaningful participation for several social groups.

The findings further reveal significant concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Lack of trust in decision-making emerged as the most important factor affecting perceptions regarding the usefulness of participation. Governance concerns were led overwhelmingly by lack of transparency, followed by favouritism in beneficiary selection and political interference. Absence of officials and delays in implementation emerged as the most important service delivery concerns affecting citizen confidence.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified local issues as the most frequently discussed agenda item in Gram Sabha meetings. Sanitation, welfare schemes, beneficiary identification, health and literacy, infrastructure, GPDP approval and social audit also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Telangana serve as important platforms for discussing local development priorities, service delivery concerns and welfare-related issues.

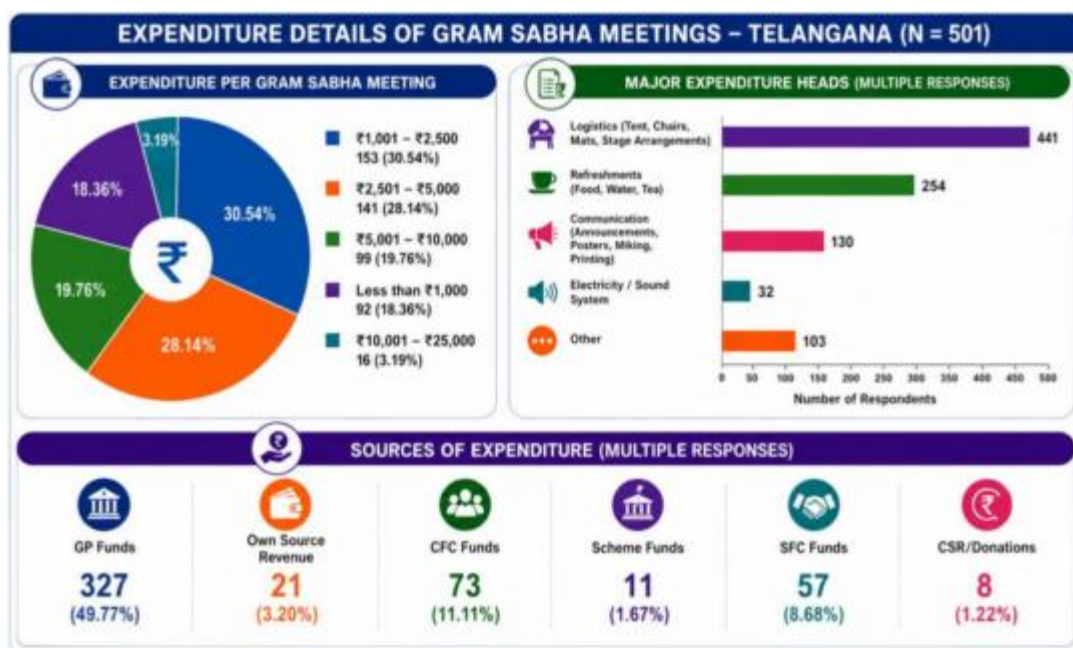
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Identifying Local Issues  | 16.03          |
| Sanitation                | 12.79          |
| Welfare Schemes           | 10.02          |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 7.99           |
| Health & Literacy         | 7.39           |
| Infrastructure            | 7.02           |
| Approving GPDP            | 7.02           |
| Social Audit              | 6.79           |
| Social Issues             | 6.14           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

The expenditure pattern in Telangana indicates that Gram Sabha meetings are generally conducted with relatively modest financial allocations, with the largest proportion of respondents reporting expenditure between ₹1,001–₹2,500 and ₹2,501–₹5,000 per meeting. GP Funds emerged as the principal source of financing, while CFC Funds and SFC Funds provided supplementary support. The major expenditure heads were dominated by logistics-related arrangements such as tents, chairs, mats and stage facilities, followed by refreshments and communication activities including announcements, posters and miking. Overall, the findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Telangana are primarily supported through Panchayat resources and focus on essential operational arrangements required for effective community participation and meeting management.



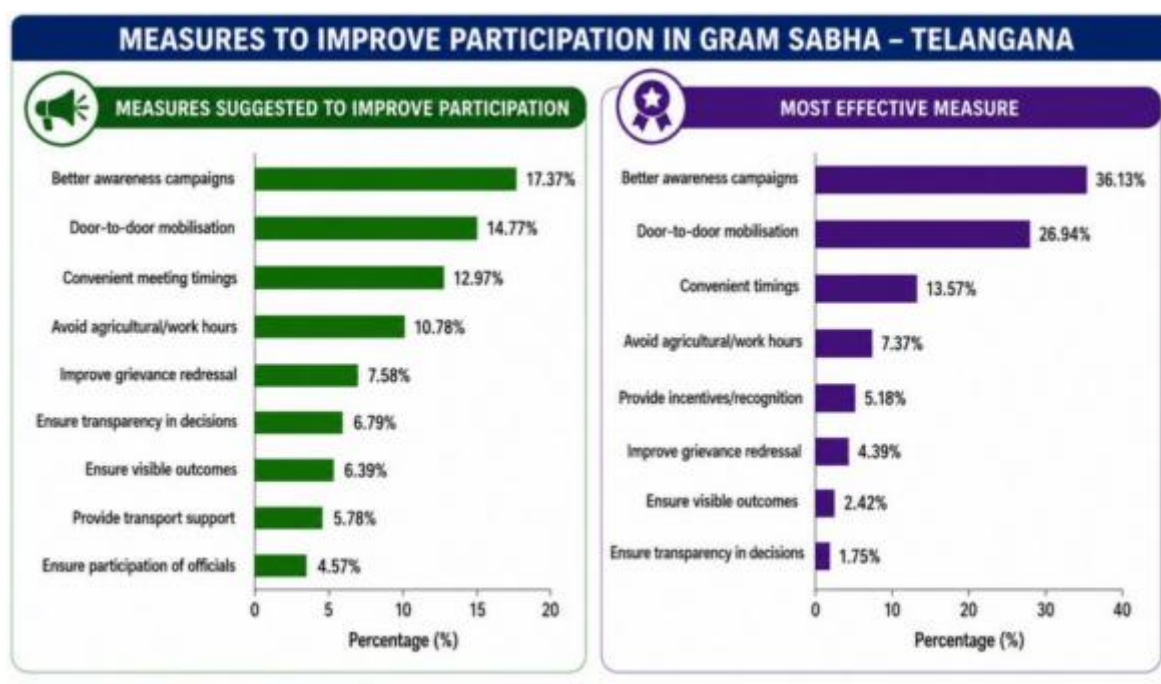
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents strongly emphasized awareness generation, mobilisation and convenient scheduling as the most effective strategies for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns emerged as the most frequently suggested intervention, followed by door-to-door mobilisation, convenient meeting timings and avoiding agricultural work hours.

A notable feature of Telangana is the strong emphasis placed on awareness creation and citizen mobilisation. Respondents repeatedly highlighted the need for awareness campaigns, household mobilisation and improved communication. Visible outcomes, grievance redressal mechanisms, Ward Sabha processes and participation of officials were also identified as important measures.

When asked to identify the single most effective measure, awareness campaigns emerged as the clear preference, followed by door-to-door mobilisation and convenient scheduling. These findings suggest that participation challenges are viewed primarily as awareness and engagement issues requiring sustained outreach and communication efforts.





## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Telangana demonstrates relatively strong basic infrastructure for conducting Gram Sabha meetings, particularly in terms of drinking water availability, accessible locations and social media-based communication.
2. A majority of respondents reported the availability of Gram Sabha halls, adequate seating arrangements and sufficient meeting space.
3. Accessibility of meeting venues was reported to be high, indicating that most Gram Sabha meetings are conducted in centrally located and convenient locations.
4. Drinking water facilities were available in almost all surveyed Gram Panchayats, reflecting strong provision of basic amenities.
5. Separate toilet facilities were available in a substantial proportion of locations, though gaps remain in some Gram Panchayats.
6. Internet connectivity was available only in a limited number of Gram Sabha venues, restricting technology-enabled governance.
7. Video conferencing facilities were largely absent, indicating minimal adoption of digital participation mechanisms.
8. Availability of digitized records remained relatively low, suggesting the need for strengthening digital record management systems.
9. Social media and WhatsApp usage were widely reported and emerged as one of the strongest digital infrastructure components.
10. Audio-visual presentation facilities were available only in a small proportion of Gram Panchayats.
11. The infrastructure profile indicates stronger physical infrastructure than digital infrastructure.



12. Telangana possesses a good foundation for Gram Sabha functioning but requires significant investments in technology and digital governance systems.

### Recommendations

- Strengthen internet connectivity across Gram Panchayats to support digital governance and information dissemination.
- Expand digitization of Gram Panchayat records and improve electronic record management systems.
- Introduce video conferencing facilities in Gram Panchayat offices to facilitate technology-enabled participation and capacity building.
- Improve availability of audio-visual presentation facilities for awareness campaigns, Gram Sabha presentations and citizen engagement activities.
- Ensure universal availability of separate toilet facilities in all Gram Sabha venues.
- Upgrade meeting infrastructure in locations where hall capacity and seating arrangements remain inadequate.
- Provide sound systems in all Gram Sabha venues to improve communication and participation during meetings.
- Develop integrated digital communication platforms linking Gram Panchayats with citizens through mobile and online channels.
- Leverage the widespread use of WhatsApp and social media for meeting notices, agenda dissemination and follow-up communication.
- Promote e-governance initiatives to improve transparency, accessibility and citizen engagement.
- Establish minimum infrastructure standards for Gram Sabha venues across all Gram Panchayats.
- Allocate dedicated resources under relevant schemes for strengthening Gram Sabha infrastructure and digital facilities.
- Conduct periodic infrastructure assessments to identify and address facility gaps.
- Encourage convergence with RGSA and other Panchayati Raj initiatives for infrastructure modernization.
- Build the capacity of Panchayat officials in digital tools, record management and technology-enabled governance.
- Develop a phased roadmap for transforming Gram Sabha venues into digitally enabled community governance spaces.



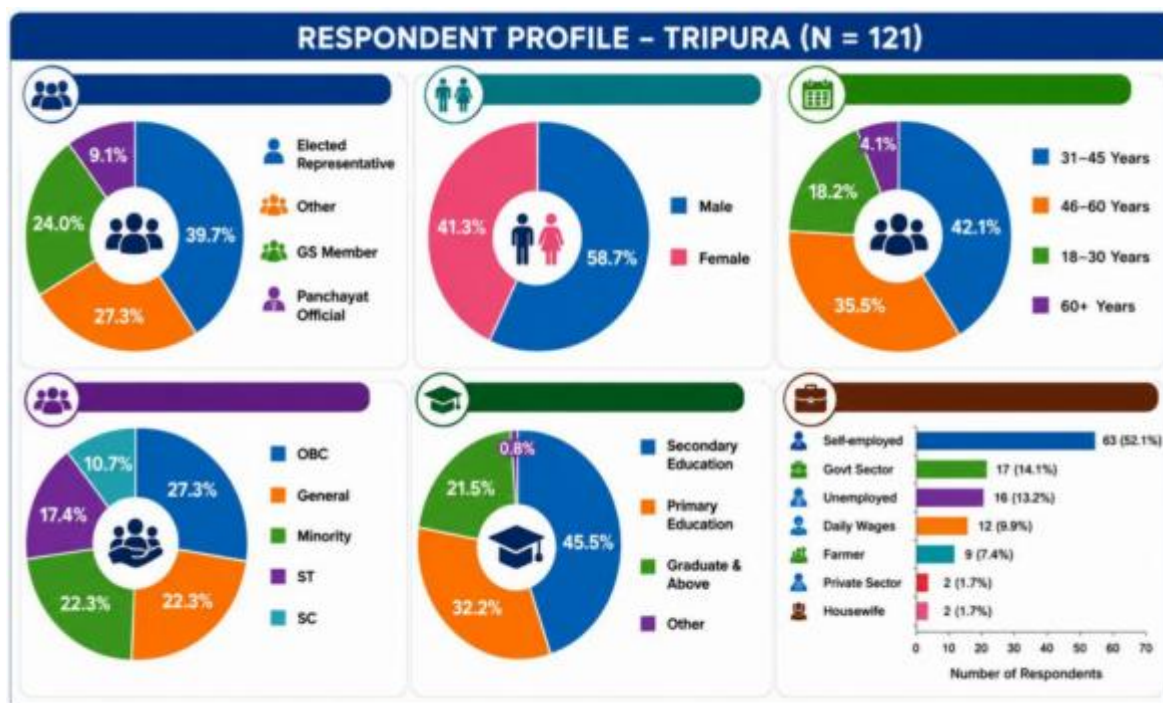
# TRIPURA

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 121 respondents from 6 Gram Panchayats across 3 districts of Tripura. Respondents included elected representatives, Gram Sabha members, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. Self-employed individuals constituted the largest occupational category, while OBC, General and Minority communities formed the major social groups. The findings provide important insights into citizen perceptions regarding participation, governance challenges and Gram Sabha functioning in Tripura.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 121   |
| Districts Covered       | 03    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 06    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate exceptionally high levels of awareness and participation regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Tripura. All respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, while almost all respondents were aware of their rights within the Gram Sabha and the prescribed frequency of meetings. Attendance levels were similarly strong, with nearly every respondent reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

Active participation levels were among the highest observed across surveyed States. More than ninety-four percent reported active participation in Gram Sabha proceedings. Participation frequency was also substantial, with almost eighty-seven percent attending Gram Sabha meetings three or more times annually.

Awareness regarding quorum provisions was similarly high, with more than ninety-one percent reporting awareness of quorum requirements. However, perceptions regarding actual quorum achievement were mixed, with almost equal proportions reporting that quorum is achieved and not achieved, while one-fourth remained unaware. These findings suggest strong awareness and participation but mixed perceptions regarding procedural compliance.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 100.00         |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 98.35          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 94.21          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 91.74          |

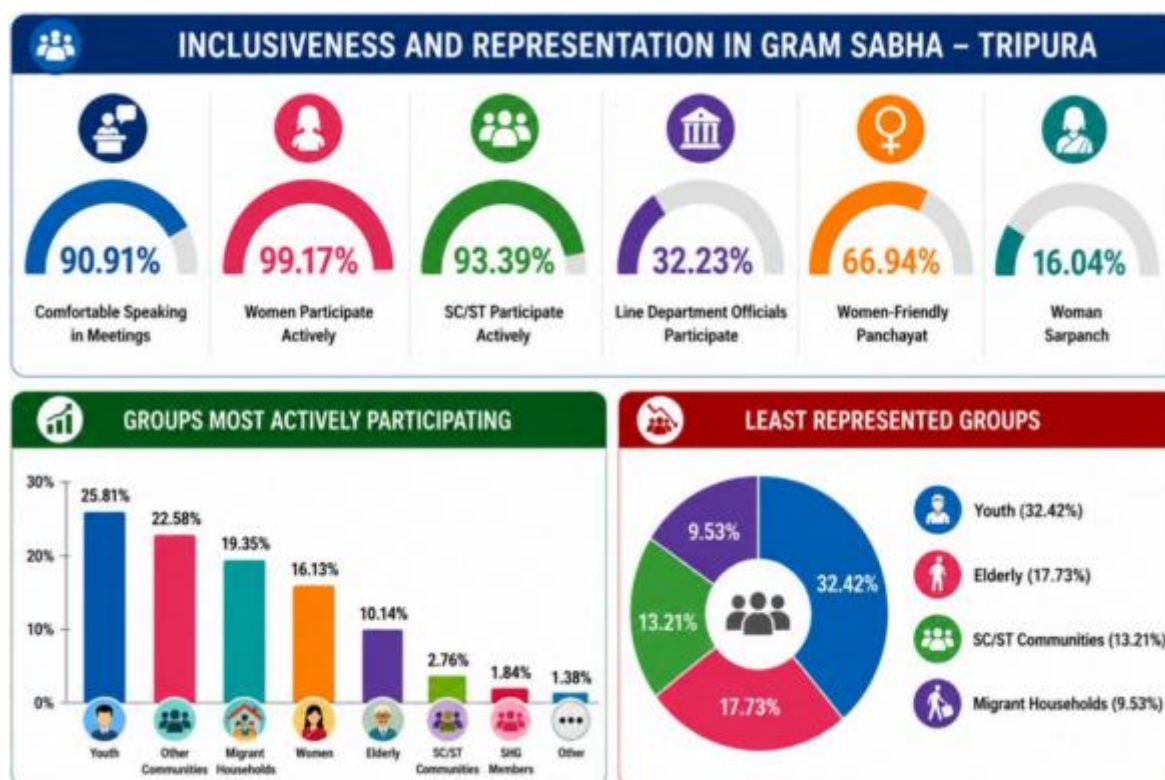
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

The findings indicate relatively broad-based participation across different social groups in Gram Sabha meetings. Men emerged as the most active participants, followed by women, SC/ST communities and SHG members. Participation of OBC communities, elderly citizens and youth was also reported at notable levels.

Women's participation was viewed positively by a large majority of respondents, with more than eighty-three percent reporting active participation by women. Participation of SC/ST communities was particularly strong, with almost all respondents acknowledging their active involvement. Participation of line department officials was also exceptionally high.

Despite these encouraging indicators, inclusion challenges remain. Youth emerged as the most underrepresented group in Gram Sabha meetings, followed by other communities, migrant households and women. More than two-thirds of respondents reported that their Panchayat is not women-friendly despite nearly sixty-seven percent reporting the presence of a woman Panchayat head. These findings indicate that leadership representation does not necessarily translate into perceptions of inclusiveness.





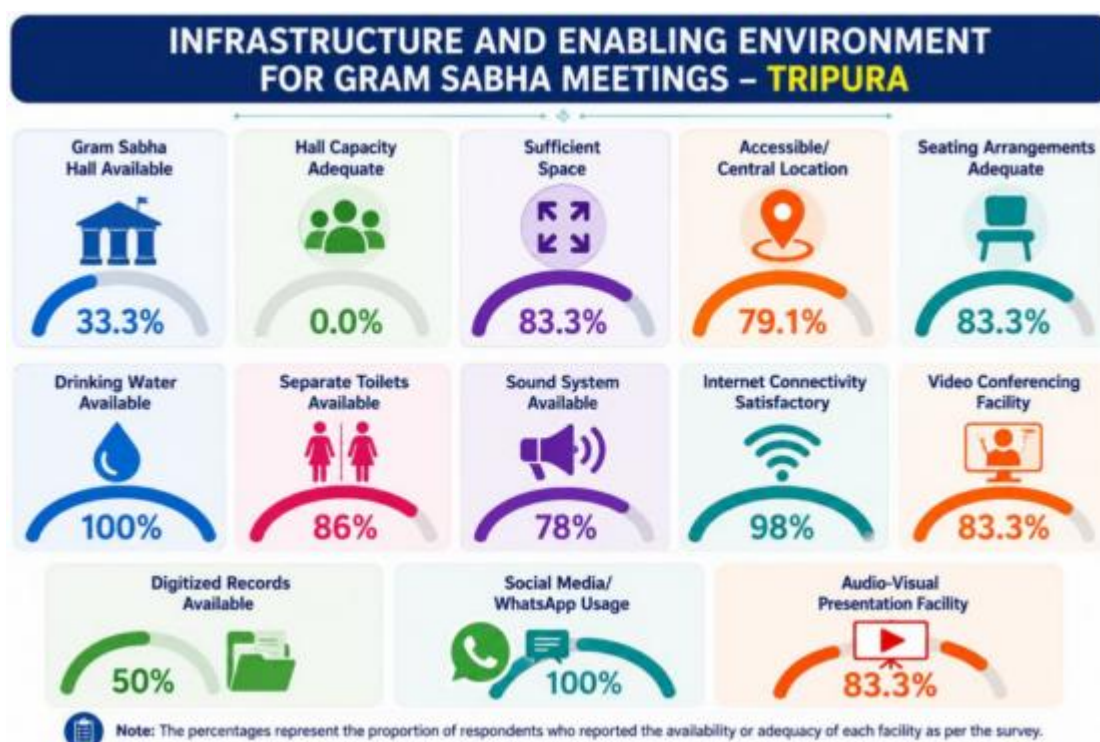
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

Among the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Tripura, the availability of dedicated Gram Sabha infrastructure was relatively limited. Only about one-third of the surveyed Gram Panchayats reported having a dedicated Gram Sabha hall, while adequate hall capacity was largely unavailable. Despite this, a substantial majority of respondents reported the availability of sufficient meeting space, accessible locations and adequate seating arrangements, indicating that Gram Sabha meetings are often conducted using alternative community facilities or shared public spaces.

The findings indicate strong availability of basic amenities and communication infrastructure in the surveyed locations. Drinking water facilities were available in all surveyed Gram Panchayats, while separate toilet facilities were available in a large majority of locations. Sound systems were also available in most surveyed Gram Panchayats. Digital connectivity was particularly strong, with very high internet connectivity and widespread use of social media and WhatsApp for communication and citizen outreach. Video conferencing and audio-visual presentation facilities were also available in a majority of surveyed locations.

At the same time, the findings highlight opportunities for strengthening dedicated meeting infrastructure and digital governance systems. While physical meeting arrangements appear adequate in most locations, the limited availability of dedicated Gram Sabha halls and hall capacity may affect the conduct of larger meetings. Digitized records were available in only half of the surveyed Gram Panchayats, indicating scope for further digital transformation. Overall, the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Tripura demonstrate strong basic amenities and digital connectivity, while investments in dedicated Gram Sabha infrastructure and record digitization could further strengthen participatory governance processes.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

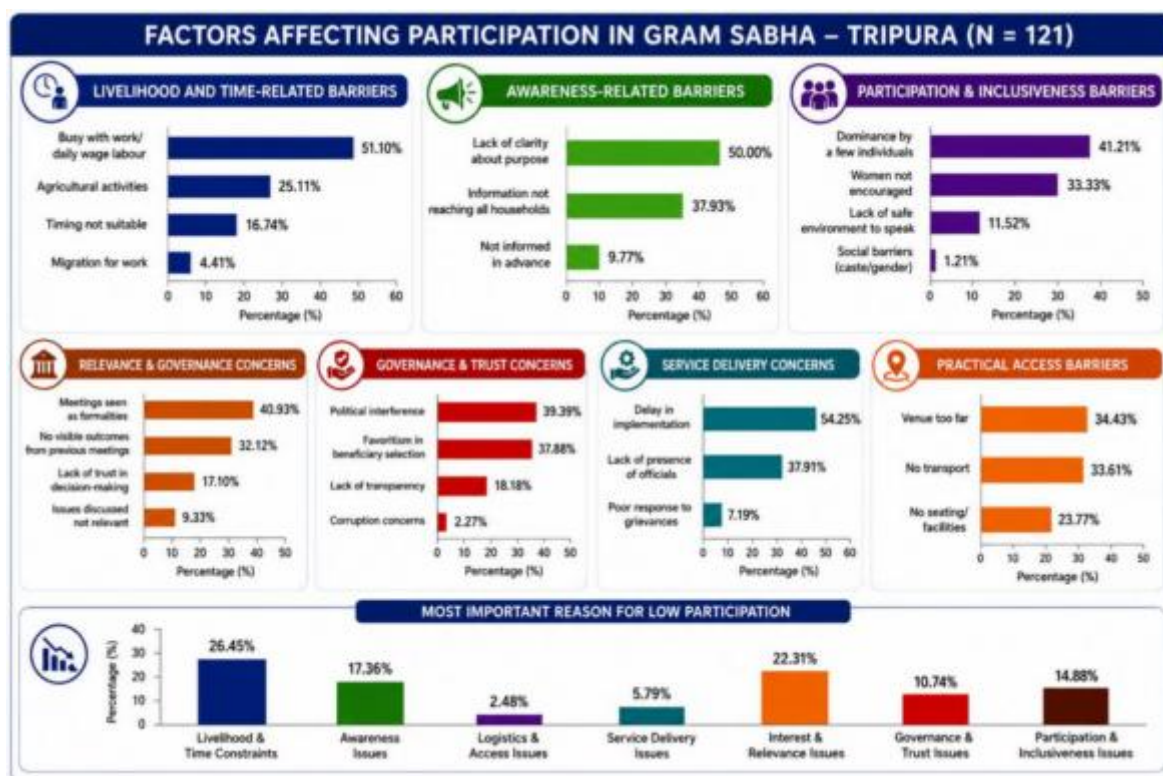
The study indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Tripura. Daily wage employment and work-related commitments emerged as the dominant challenge, accounting for more than half of all responses. Agricultural activities and unsuitable meeting timings were also identified as important constraints.

Awareness-related barriers were led by lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha meetings. Information not reaching all households also emerged as a major concern, indicating that communication gaps continue to affect participation despite high awareness levels.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns were dominated by the perception that a few individuals dominate Gram Sabha discussions and decision-making. Inadequate encouragement for women and lack of safe environments for expression were also identified as important concerns.

The findings further reveal significant concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Meetings being viewed as formalities and absence of visible outcomes emerged as the most important factors reducing citizen interest in participation. Governance concerns centered primarily on political interference and favouritism in beneficiary selection. Delays in implementation and absence of officials were identified as the most significant service delivery challenges. These findings indicate that participation challenges are linked not only to awareness but also to perceptions regarding responsiveness and effectiveness of local governance systems.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents reported broad agenda coverage in Gram Sabha meetings. Approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) emerged as the most frequently discussed agenda item, followed by sanitation, social audit, beneficiary identification, infrastructure development and local issues. Health, literacy, welfare schemes and livelihood issues also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Tripura function as important forums for planning, accountability and local development discussions.

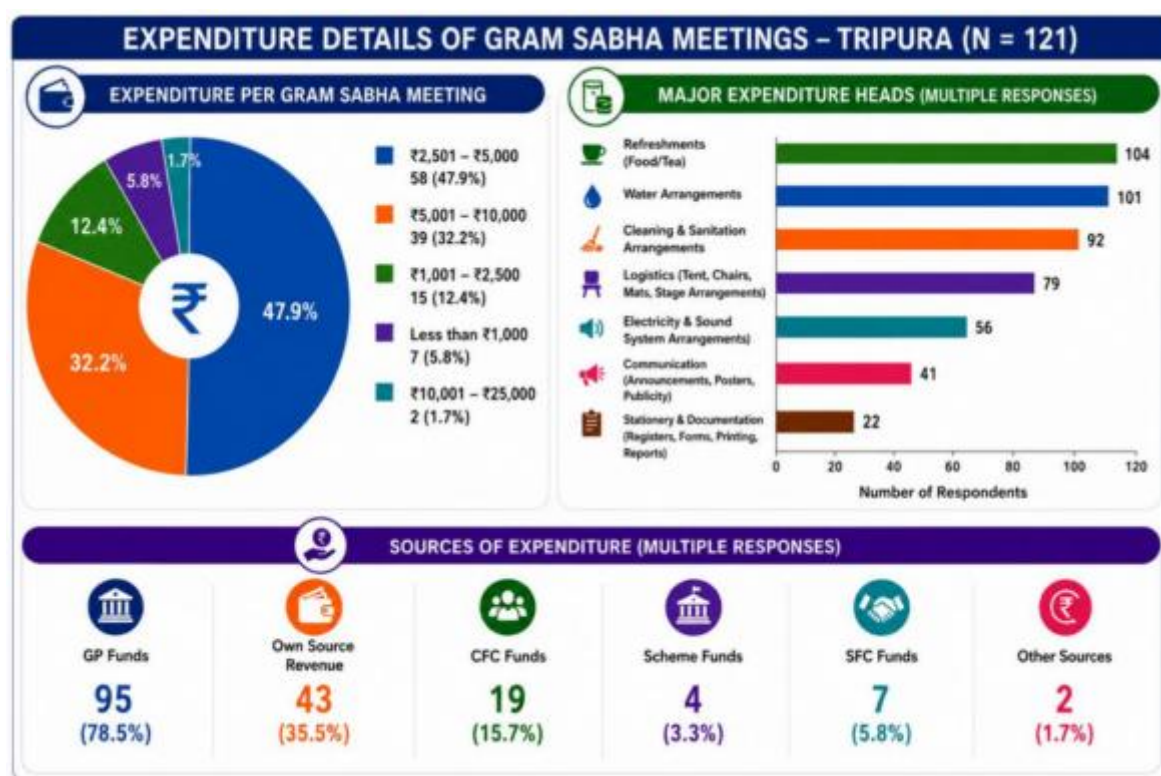
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Approving GPDP            | 10.12          |
| Sanitation                | 9.50           |
| Social Audit              | 9.06           |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 8.53           |
| Infrastructure            | 8.08           |
| Identifying Local Issues  | 7.90           |
| Annual Budget             | 7.82           |
| Health & Literacy         | 7.73           |
| Welfare Schemes           | 7.55           |
| Livelihood                | 6.75           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

Among the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Tripura, expenditure incurred for conducting Gram Sabha meetings was concentrated primarily in the ₹2,501–₹5,000 expenditure range, followed by the ₹5,001–₹10,000 category. GP funds emerged as the principal source of financing, supplemented by own source revenue and limited support from SFC, CFC and other funding sources. Major expenditure heads included refreshments, logistical arrangements such as tents, chairs and stage arrangements, communication and publicity activities, stationery and documentation, and cleaning and sanitation arrangements. The findings indicate that the surveyed Gram Panchayats largely utilize available financial resources to ensure basic meeting arrangements, participant convenience and effective conduct of Gram Sabha meetings.



## Measures for Improving Participation

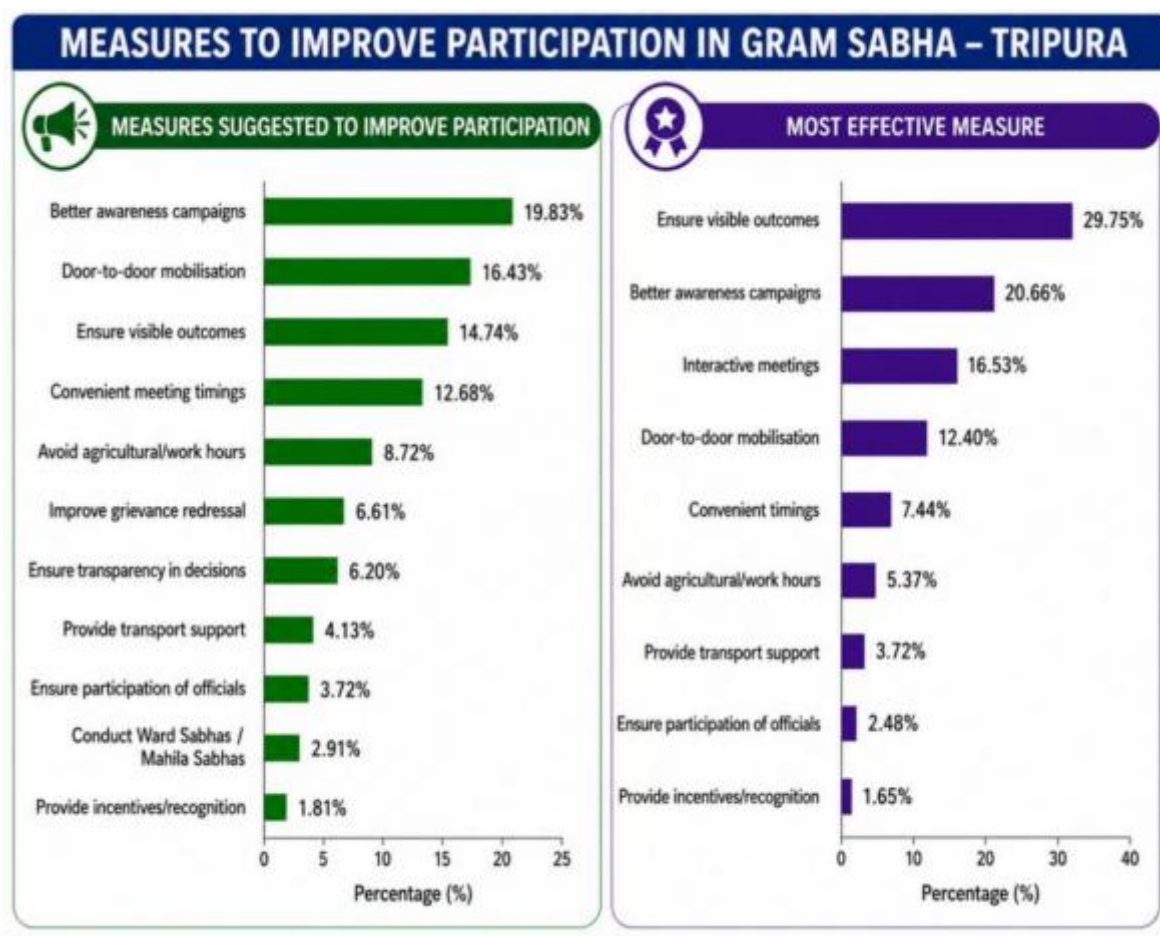
Respondents emphasized awareness generation, mobilisation and visible outcomes as the most important strategies for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns, door-to-door mobilisation and ensuring visible outcomes emerged as the most frequently suggested interventions. Interactive meetings, refreshments, incentives and convenient scheduling were also strongly supported.

A distinctive feature of Tripura is the emphasis placed on visible outcomes from Gram Sabha decisions. Respondents consistently highlighted the need for tangible results and follow-up action to sustain citizen interest and participation. Practical support measures such as transport, refreshments and improved facilities were also viewed positively.

When asked to identify the single most effective measure, ensuring visible outcomes emerged as the clear preference, followed by awareness campaigns and making meetings more



interactive. These findings suggest that respondents view participation as closely linked to the perceived effectiveness and impact of Gram Sabha decisions.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Dedicated Gram Sabha halls were available only in a limited proportion of surveyed Gram Panchayats, and adequate hall capacity was largely unavailable.
2. Despite limited dedicated infrastructure, most surveyed Gram Panchayats reported sufficient meeting space, accessible locations and adequate seating arrangements.
3. Drinking water facilities were available in all surveyed Gram Panchayats, while separate toilet facilities were available in a substantial majority of locations.
4. Sound systems were available in most surveyed Gram Panchayats, supporting the effective conduct of meetings.
5. Internet connectivity was reported to be very strong across the surveyed locations.
6. Video conferencing facilities were available in a large majority of surveyed Gram Panchayats.
7. Social media and WhatsApp were widely used for communication and citizen outreach.
8. Audio-visual presentation facilities were available in a majority of surveyed locations.



9. Digitized records were available in only half of the surveyed Gram Panchayats, indicating scope for strengthening digital governance systems.
10. Overall, the surveyed Gram Panchayats demonstrated strong basic amenities and digital connectivity despite limitations in dedicated meeting infrastructure.

## Recommendations

- Strengthen the availability of dedicated Gram Sabha halls and improve meeting infrastructure wherever required.
- Prioritize construction or upgrading of meeting spaces with adequate capacity for larger community gatherings.
- Expand digitization of Gram Panchayat records, resolutions and meeting proceedings.
- Build upon strong internet connectivity to promote technology-enabled governance and citizen engagement.
- Increase the use of video conferencing and digital platforms for communication and information dissemination.
- Continue leveraging social media and WhatsApp for awareness generation and citizen mobilization.
- Ensure regular maintenance of existing infrastructure, including toilets, drinking water facilities and sound systems.
- Promote the use of audio-visual tools for presentation of development plans, budgets and Gram Sabha decisions.
- Strengthen capacity building of Panchayat functionaries in digital record management and e-governance practices.
- Develop a phased infrastructure improvement strategy focusing on dedicated meeting facilities and comprehensive digital governance systems.



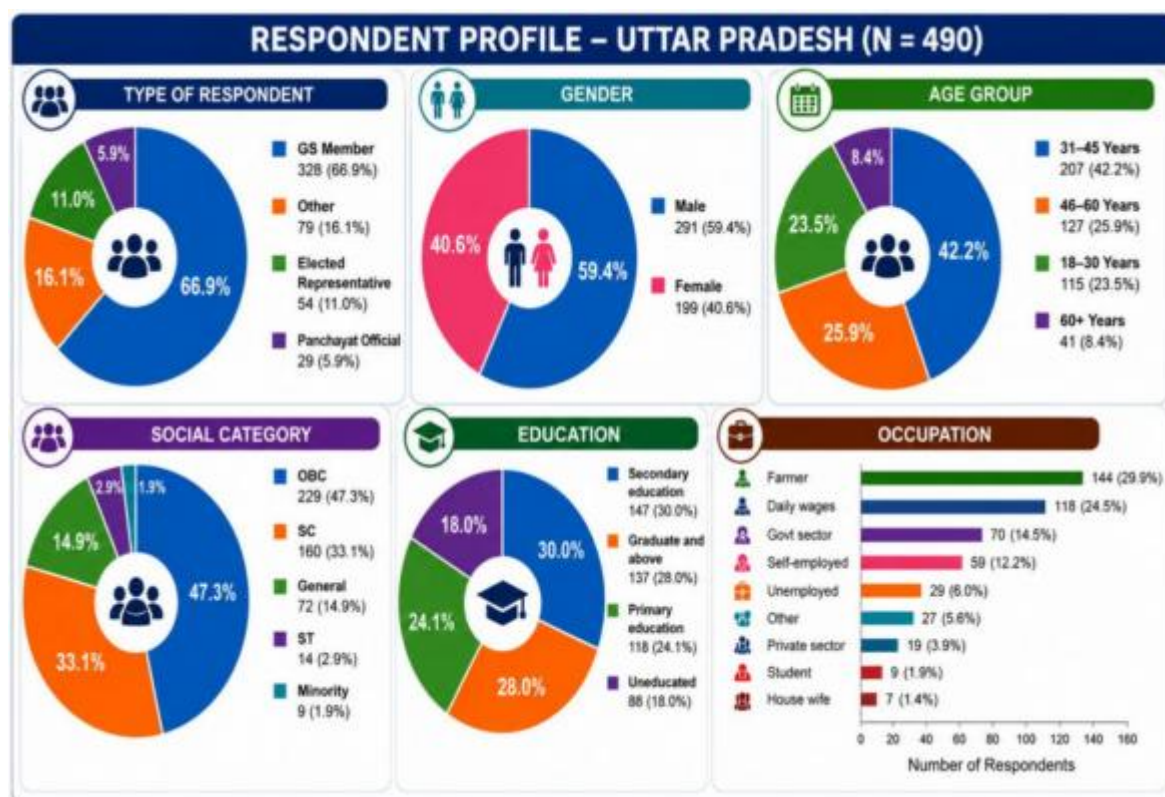
# UTTAR PRADESH

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 490 respondents from 24 Gram Panchayats across 13 districts of Uttar Pradesh. Respondents included Gram Sabha members, elected representatives, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. OBC and SC communities constituted the largest social groups, while farmers and daily wage workers formed the dominant occupational categories. The findings provide important insights into citizen perceptions regarding participation, governance challenges and Gram Sabha functioning in Uttar Pradesh.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 490   |
| Districts Covered       | 13    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 24    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate relatively high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Uttar Pradesh. Nearly eighty-eight percent of respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, while awareness regarding rights within the Gram Sabha and the prescribed frequency of meetings was reported by around three-fourths of respondents.

Attendance levels were strong, with ninety percent reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year. Active participation levels were also encouraging, with nearly eighty percent reporting active involvement in Gram Sabha proceedings. Most respondents characterized their participation level as moderate, while approximately one-fifth reported high participation.

Awareness regarding quorum provisions was moderate. Only about half of the respondents reported awareness of quorum requirements, while a substantial majority were unaware whether quorum is actually achieved during Gram Sabha meetings. These findings suggest that procedural aspects of Gram Sabha functioning remain less understood compared to general awareness regarding meetings and participation.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 87.76          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 76.94          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 79.59          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 52.24          |

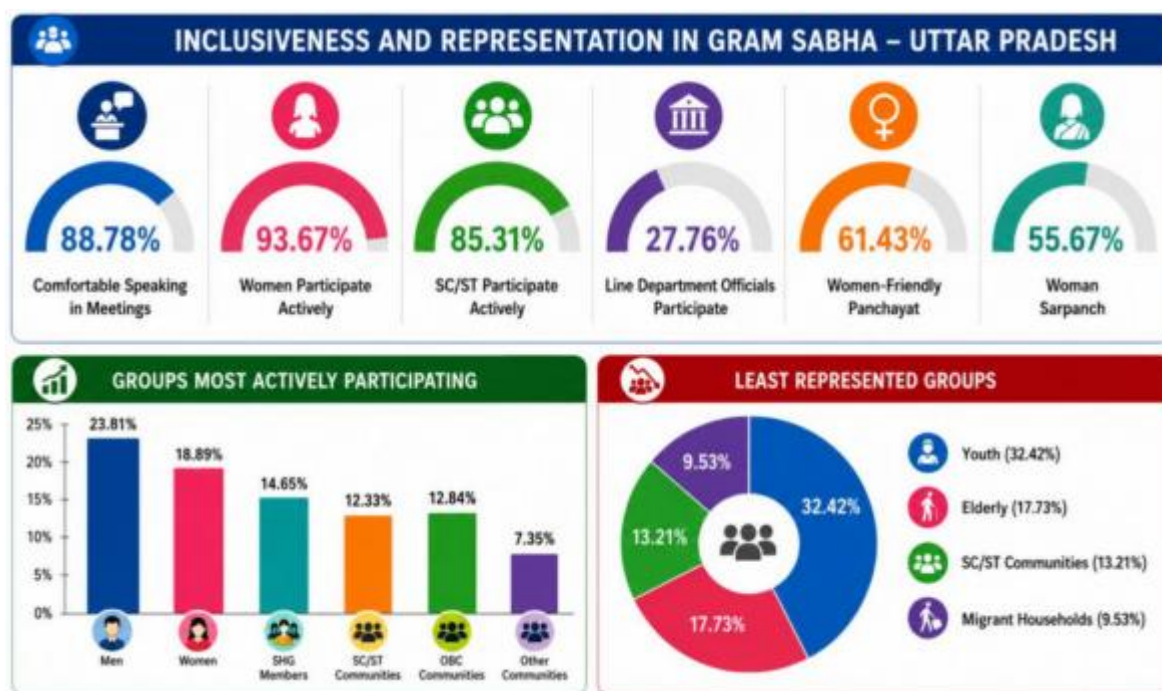
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

The findings reveal broad participation across multiple social groups in Gram Sabha meetings. Men emerged as the most active participants, followed by women, OBC communities, SC/ST communities and youth. Participation by SHG members and elderly citizens was also reported at substantial levels.

Women's participation was viewed positively by a large majority of respondents, with nearly eighty-nine percent reporting active participation by women. Participation of SC/ST communities was similarly strong, while more than eighty-five percent reported participation of line department officials in Gram Sabha meetings.

Despite these positive indicators, important inclusion challenges remain. Migrant households emerged as the most underrepresented group in Gram Sabha meetings, followed by women, elderly citizens and SC/ST communities. Nearly three-fourths of respondents reported that their Panchayat cannot be considered women-friendly despite more than sixty percent reporting the presence of a woman Panchayat head. These findings suggest continuing concerns regarding inclusiveness and meaningful participation.





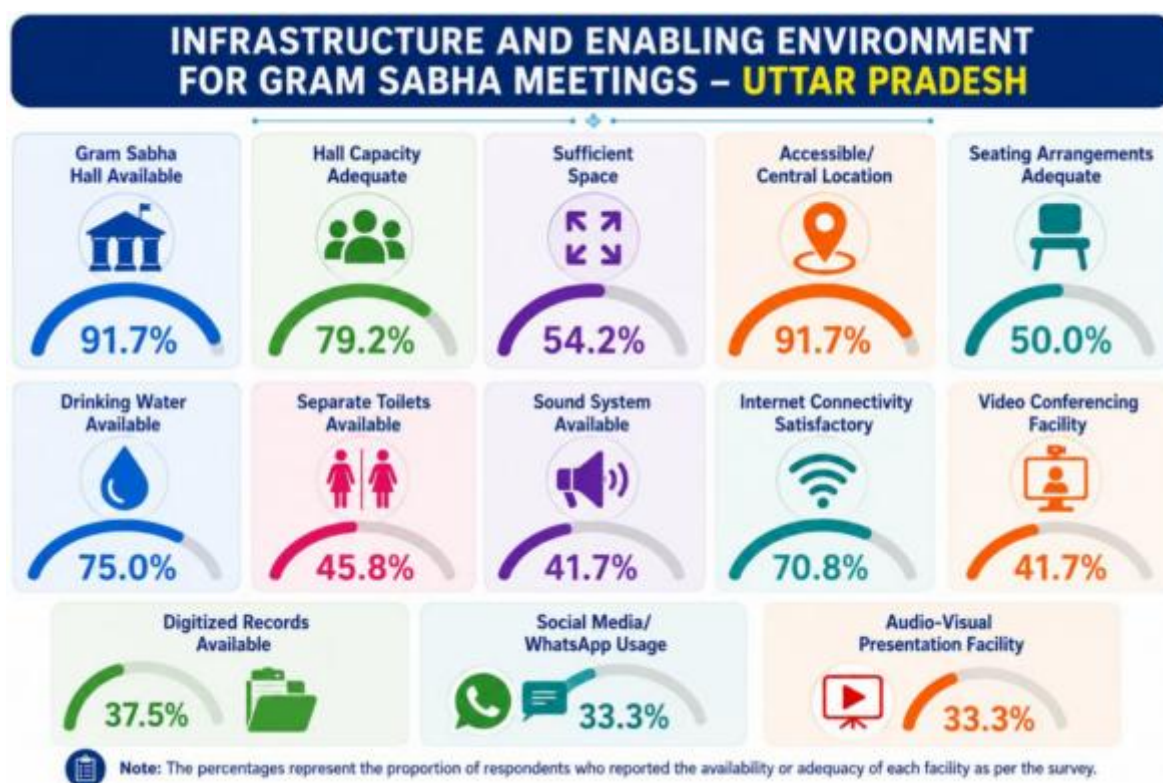
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that Uttar Pradesh possesses a relatively strong physical infrastructure base for conducting Gram Sabha meetings. A large majority of respondents reported the availability of Gram Sabha halls, adequate hall capacity and centrally located venues. Accessibility of meeting locations emerged as a notable strength, suggesting that most Gram Sabha meetings are held in locations that are convenient and easily reachable for community members. However, seating arrangements and availability of sufficient meeting space were reported to be comparatively moderate, indicating scope for further improvement in meeting infrastructure.

Basic amenities required for effective conduct of Gram Sabha meetings were available across many surveyed Gram Panchayats. Drinking water facilities were reported by three-fourths of respondents, while separate toilet facilities were available in nearly half of the locations. Sound systems were available in a moderate proportion of venues, supporting communication during meetings. These findings suggest that while essential facilities are available in many Gram Panchayats, improvements in sanitation and meeting support infrastructure would enhance the overall quality of Gram Sabha proceedings.

The digital infrastructure profile presents a mixed but relatively encouraging picture. Internet connectivity was available in a substantial proportion of Gram Sabha venues, and video conferencing facilities were reported more frequently than in many other states. Digitized records and audio-visual presentation facilities were available in around one-third of Gram Panchayats, indicating gradual adoption of technology-enabled governance practices. However, social media and WhatsApp usage for communication was comparatively moderate. Overall, Uttar Pradesh demonstrates strong physical infrastructure and improving digital readiness, though further investments in digital systems, record digitization and communication technologies would strengthen participatory local governance and citizen engagement.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

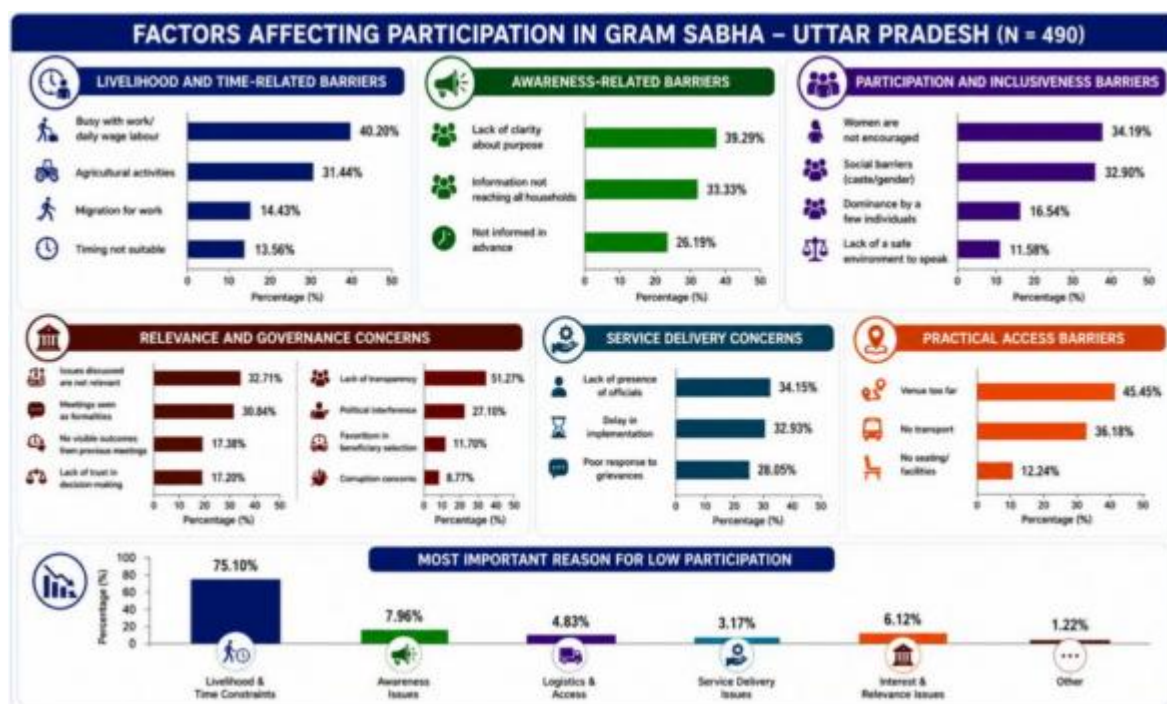
The study clearly indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Uttar Pradesh. Work-related commitments and daily wage employment emerged as the dominant challenge, followed by agricultural activities. Migration for work and unsuitable meeting timings were also identified as important factors affecting participation.

Awareness-related barriers were primarily linked to lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha meetings. Information not reaching all households and inadequate advance information also emerged as significant concerns. These findings indicate continuing communication gaps despite relatively high awareness levels.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns centered on inadequate encouragement for women and the persistence of caste and gender-based social barriers. Dominance by a few individuals and lack of safe environments for expression were also reported as factors limiting participation.

The findings further reveal substantial concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Respondents reported that issues discussed in Gram Sabha meetings are often perceived as not relevant, while meetings are also viewed as formalities. Governance concerns were overwhelmingly dominated by lack of transparency, followed by political interference and favouritism in beneficiary selection. Service delivery concerns centered on absence of officials, implementation delays and poor grievance redressal. These findings suggest that participation challenges are strongly influenced by perceptions regarding governance quality, transparency and institutional responsiveness.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents identified local issues as the most frequently discussed agenda item in Gram Sabha meetings. Approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs), beneficiary identification, sanitation, health and literacy, annual budgeting and social issues also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Uttar Pradesh serve as important forums for discussing local development priorities, service delivery concerns and welfare-related matters.

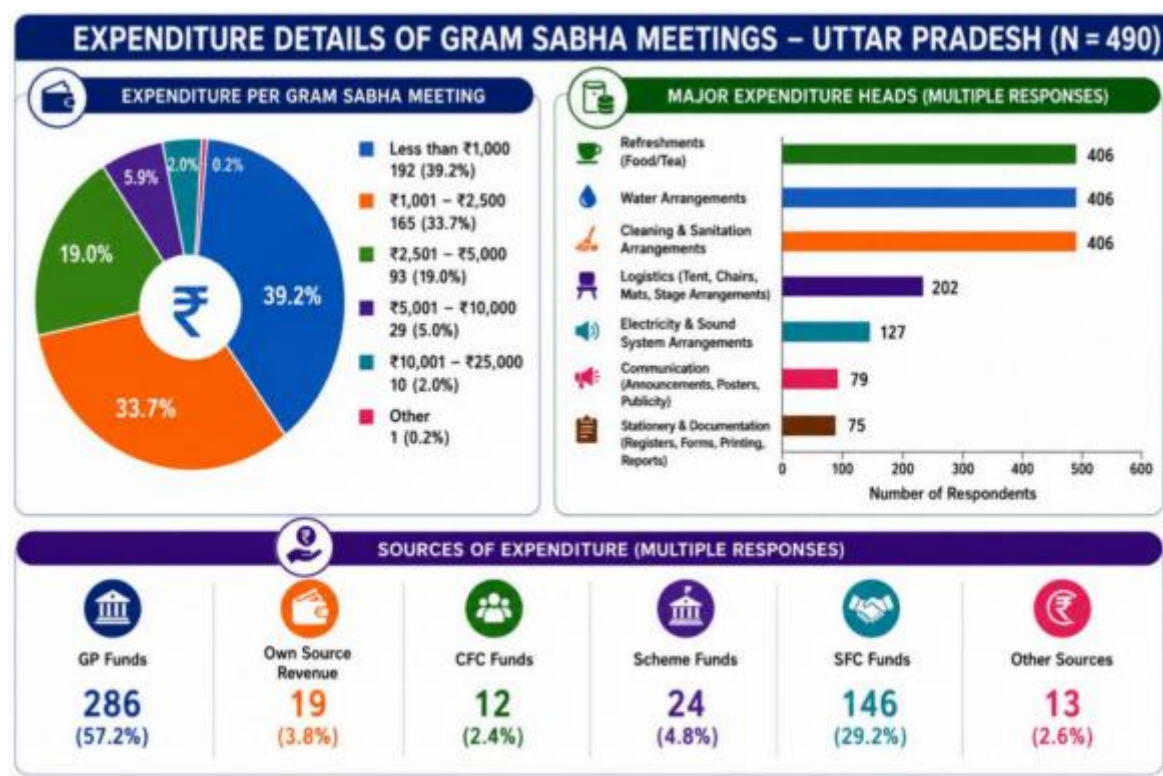
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Identifying Local Issues  | 17.49          |
| Approving GPDP            | 10.56          |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 8.77           |
| Health & Literacy         | 7.92           |
| Sanitation                | 7.92           |
| Annual Budget             | 7.07           |
| Social Issues             | 7.07           |
| Social Audit              | 6.13           |
| OSR Generation            | 5.70           |
| Development Priorities    | 5.47           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

Among the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Uttar Pradesh, expenditure incurred for conducting Gram Sabha meetings was generally modest, with a majority of meetings reporting expenditure below ₹1,000, followed by the ₹1,001–₹2,500 category. GP funds emerged as the primary source of financing, while SFC funds also contributed significantly. Major expenditure heads were concentrated on refreshments, water arrangements and cleaning and sanitation activities, followed by logistical arrangements such as tents, chairs and stage facilities. Comparatively lower expenditure was reported on communication and publicity, electricity and sound systems, and stationery and documentation. The findings indicate that Gram Sabha meetings in the surveyed areas are largely conducted with limited financial resources, focusing primarily on essential arrangements required for community participation and meeting management.



## Measures for Improving Participation

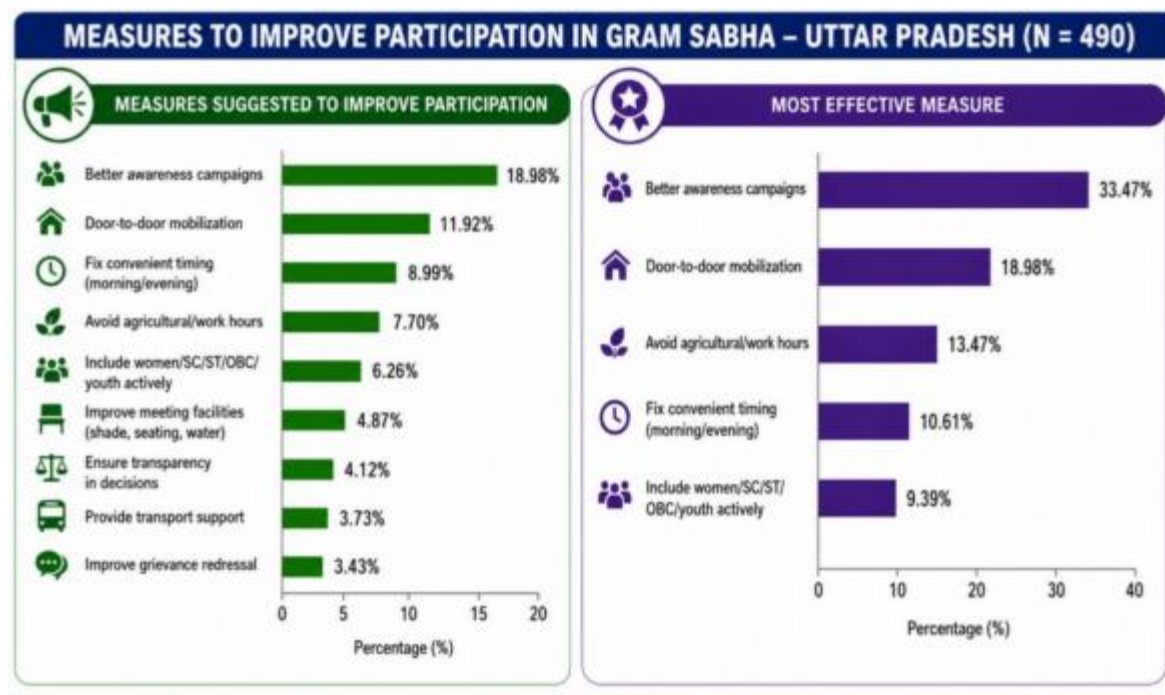
Respondents strongly emphasized awareness generation and community mobilisation as the most effective strategies for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns emerged as the most frequently suggested intervention, followed by door-to-door mobilisation, convenient meeting timings and avoidance of agricultural work hours.

A notable feature of Uttar Pradesh is the overwhelming emphasis placed on awareness creation. Respondents consistently highlighted the need for improved awareness regarding the purpose, importance and benefits of Gram Sabha participation. Inclusion of women, SC/ST communities, OBC communities and youth also emerged as an important theme.

When asked to identify the single most effective measure, awareness campaigns emerged as the clear preference, receiving one-third of all responses. Door-to-door mobilisation,



avoidance of agricultural work hours and convenient meeting timings were also strongly supported. These findings indicate that participation challenges are viewed primarily as mobilisation and awareness-related issues requiring sustained outreach efforts.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Uttar Pradesh demonstrates strong availability of Gram Sabha infrastructure, with a large majority of respondents reporting the presence of Gram Sabha halls and centrally located meeting venues.
2. Hall capacity was considered adequate by a substantial proportion of respondents, indicating the availability of suitable spaces for conducting meetings.
3. Accessibility emerged as a major strength, with most Gram Sabha venues located in convenient and easily reachable locations.
4. Availability of sufficient meeting space and seating arrangements was moderate, indicating room for infrastructure improvement in some Gram Panchayats.
5. Drinking water facilities were available in a majority of meeting venues, supporting basic participant comfort.
6. Separate toilet facilities were available in less than half of the surveyed locations, highlighting a notable infrastructure gap.
7. Sound systems were available only in a moderate proportion of Gram Sabha venues.
8. Internet connectivity was relatively strong compared to many states, indicating growing digital readiness.
9. Video conferencing facilities were available in a significant proportion of Gram Panchayats, reflecting emerging adoption of technology-enabled governance.
10. Availability of digitized records remained limited, indicating the need for strengthening digital record management systems.



11. Social media and WhatsApp usage for Gram Sabha-related communication was reported by only about one-third of respondents.
12. Audio-visual presentation facilities were available in a limited number of Gram Panchayats.
13. Physical infrastructure was generally stronger than digital infrastructure.
14. Uttar Pradesh shows considerable potential for strengthening technology-enabled participatory governance.
15. The overall infrastructure environment provides a good foundation for effective Gram Sabha functioning.
16. Investments in digital infrastructure and basic amenities would further enhance citizen participation and meeting effectiveness.

## Recommendations

- Ensure universal availability of separate toilet facilities in all Gram Sabha venues.
- Improve seating arrangements and meeting space in Gram Panchayats where infrastructure remains inadequate.
- Strengthen sound system availability to facilitate effective communication during Gram Sabha meetings.
- Expand internet connectivity to all Gram Panchayat offices and Gram Sabha venues.
- Accelerate digitization of Gram Panchayat records and governance documents.
- Increase the availability of audio-visual presentation facilities to support awareness and citizen engagement activities.
- Strengthen the use of social media and WhatsApp platforms for meeting announcements, agenda sharing and follow-up communication.
- Expand video conferencing facilities to promote technology-enabled governance and virtual interactions.
- Establish minimum infrastructure standards for Gram Sabha venues across the state.
- Provide dedicated funding support for infrastructure upgradation under relevant Panchayati Raj programmes.
- Promote convergence with RGSA and other government initiatives for digital infrastructure enhancement.
- Build the capacity of Panchayat officials in digital governance and record management practices.
- Conduct periodic infrastructure audits to identify gaps and prioritize investments.
- Encourage innovative digital tools for citizen outreach, participation and grievance management.
- Improve maintenance and upkeep of existing Gram Sabha infrastructure.
- Develop a phased roadmap for transforming Gram Sabha venues into modern, inclusive and digitally enabled community governance spaces.



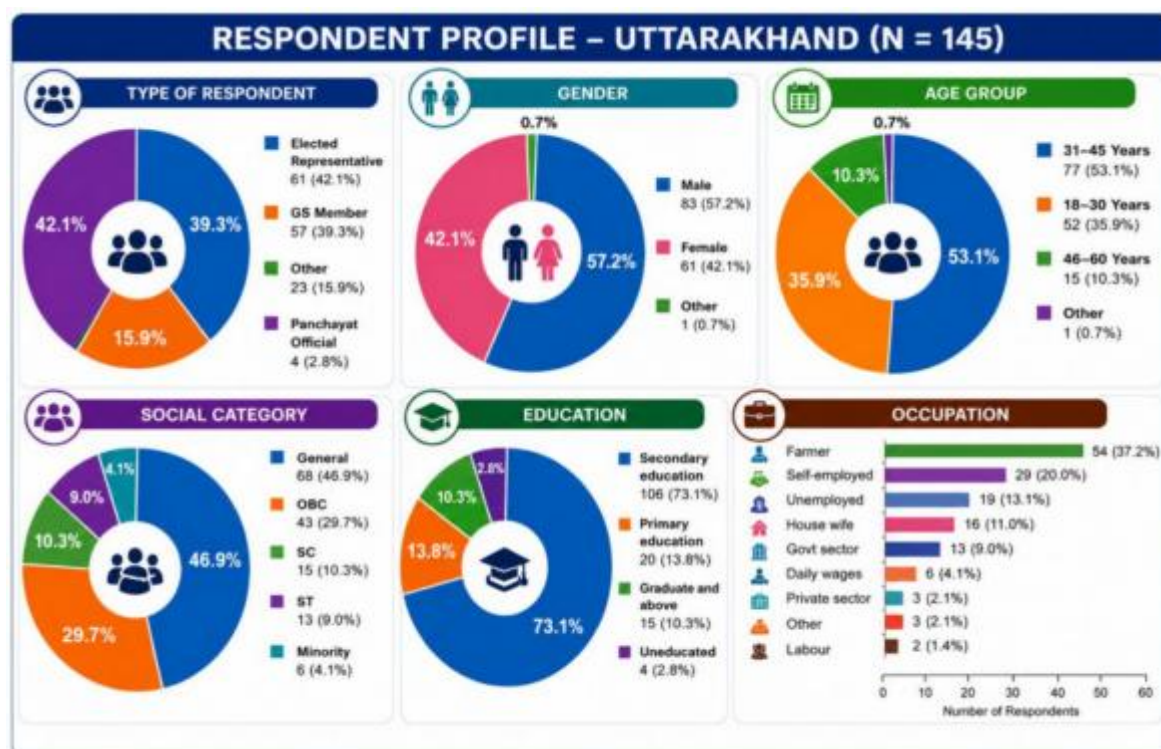
# UTTARAKHAND

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 145 respondents from 07 Gram Panchayats across 03 districts of Uttarakhand. Respondents included elected representatives, Gram Sabha members, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. General and OBC communities constituted the largest social groups, while farmers and self-employed individuals formed the dominant occupational categories. The findings provide important insights into citizen perceptions regarding participation, governance challenges and Gram Sabha functioning in Uttarakhand.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 145   |
| Districts Covered       | 03    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 07    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate exceptionally high levels of awareness regarding Gram Sabha meetings in Uttarakhand. More than ninety-seven percent of respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, while awareness regarding rights within the Gram Sabha and the prescribed frequency of meetings was also very high. Attendance levels were nearly universal, with almost all respondents reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

Active participation levels were similarly strong. More than eighty-six percent reported active involvement in Gram Sabha proceedings. Most respondents characterized their participation level as moderate, while only a small proportion reported low participation.

Awareness regarding quorum provisions was relatively high compared to many other States. More than eighty percent reported awareness of quorum requirements, while over sixty percent stated that quorum is achieved in their Gram Sabha meetings. These findings suggest strong awareness and procedural understanding among respondents.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 97.24          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 90.34          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 86.21          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 80.69          |

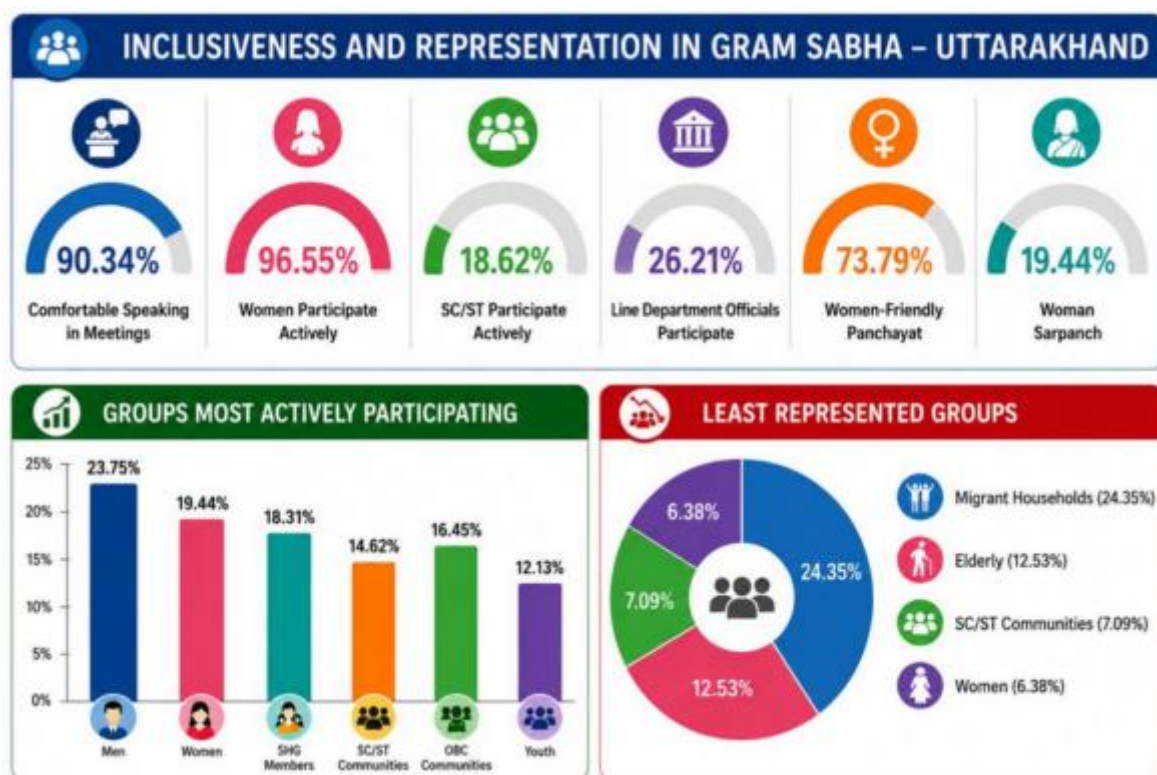
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

The findings indicate broad participation across different social groups in Gram Sabha meetings. Men emerged as the most active participants, followed by women, OBC communities, SC/ST communities and youth. Participation by SHG members was comparatively limited among the groups identified as actively participating.

Women's participation was viewed positively by a large majority of respondents, with over ninety percent reporting active participation by women. Participation of SC/ST communities was also reported to be very strong. However, a notable concern is the limited participation of line department officials, with more than eighty percent of respondents indicating that such officials do not regularly participate in Gram Sabha meetings.

Important inclusion challenges remain. SHG members and migrant households emerged as the most underrepresented groups, followed by elderly citizens and youth. Nearly three-fourths of respondents reported that their Panchayat cannot be considered women-friendly despite an equal proportion reporting that the Panchayat head is a woman. These findings indicate that leadership representation does not necessarily translate into perceptions of inclusiveness and institutional support.





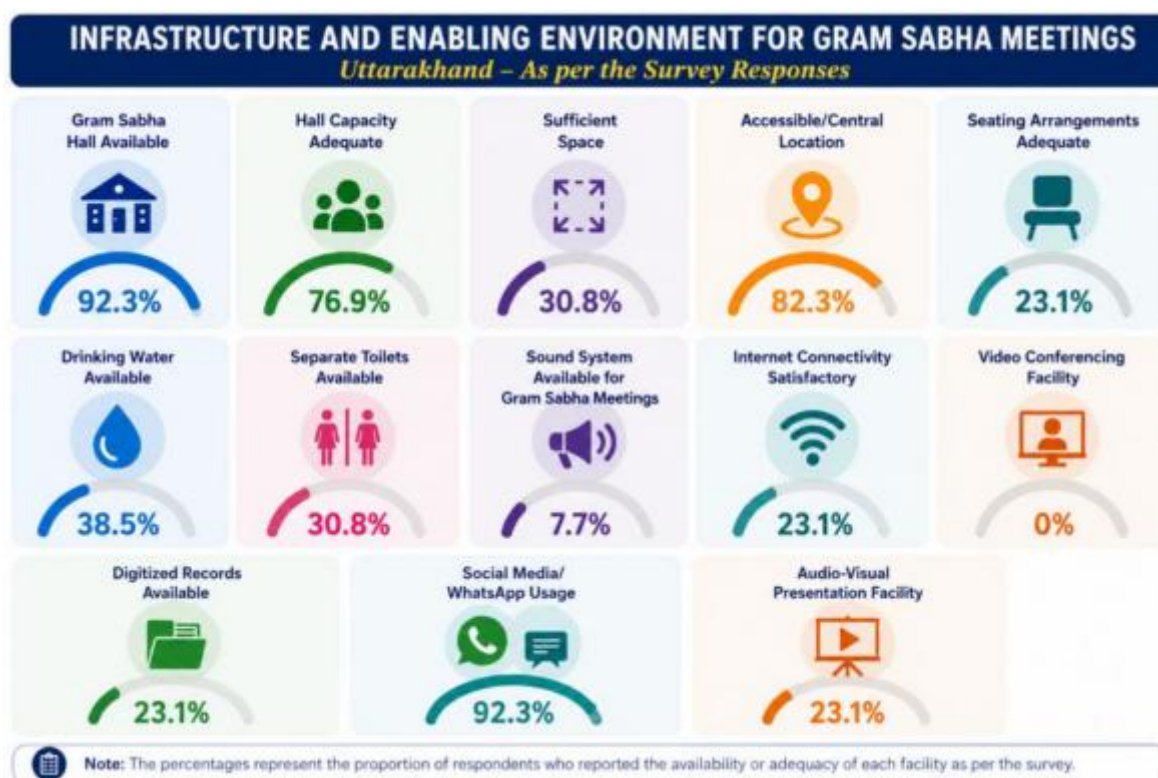
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The infrastructure profile of the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Uttarakhand presents a mixed picture. While a large majority reported the availability of Gram Sabha halls and adequate hall capacity, the availability of sufficient space and seating arrangements was considerably lower. Most respondents indicated that meeting venues were located in accessible or central locations, facilitating citizen access, although limitations in physical infrastructure may affect the comfort and effectiveness of larger Gram Sabha gatherings.

Basic amenities and supporting facilities were relatively limited across the surveyed locations. Drinking water and separate toilet facilities were available in only a minority of Gram Panchayats, while sound systems were available in very few locations. Digital infrastructure was also weak, with low levels of internet connectivity, limited availability of digitized records and almost no video conferencing facilities. These findings indicate significant gaps in the enabling environment required for modern and inclusive Gram Sabha functioning.

At the same time, social media and WhatsApp usage was reported to be widespread, suggesting that digital communication channels are being utilized despite broader infrastructure constraints. The strong availability of Gram Sabha halls and active use of social media provide a foundation for strengthening participatory governance. However, improvements in basic amenities, seating arrangements, digital infrastructure and record digitization would be essential for enhancing the quality, accessibility and effectiveness of Gram Sabha meetings in the surveyed Gram Panchayats of Uttarakhand.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

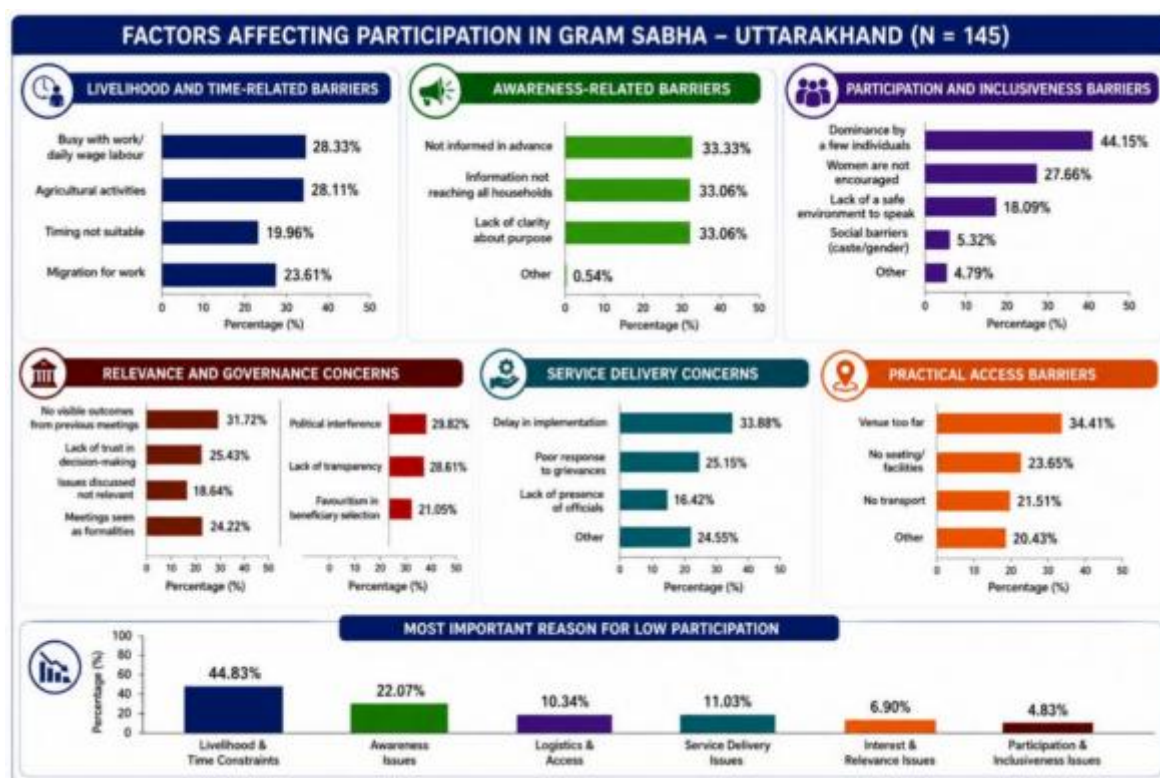
The study indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in Uttarakhand. Work-related commitments, agricultural activities and migration for work emerged as almost equally important factors limiting participation. Unsuitable meeting timings also emerged as a significant concern.

Awareness-related barriers were distributed almost equally across three dimensions. Lack of advance information, information not reaching all households and lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha meetings emerged as equally important concerns. These findings suggest continuing communication and outreach challenges despite high overall awareness levels.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns were dominated by the perception that a few individuals dominate Gram Sabha discussions and decision-making. Lack of encouragement for women and absence of safe environments for expression also emerged as important concerns.

The findings further reveal significant concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Lack of visible outcomes from previous meetings emerged as the most important factor reducing citizen interest in participation. Governance concerns were overwhelmingly dominated by lack of transparency, while poor grievance redressal, implementation delays and absence of officials emerged as major service delivery challenges. These findings indicate that participation challenges are linked not only to awareness and livelihoods but also to perceptions regarding accountability and responsiveness.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents reported broad agenda coverage in Gram Sabha meetings. Approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) emerged as the most frequently discussed agenda item, followed closely by annual budgeting and welfare schemes. Sanitation, beneficiary identification, social audit and social issues also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in Uttarakhand serve as important platforms for local planning, budgeting, accountability and welfare-related discussions.

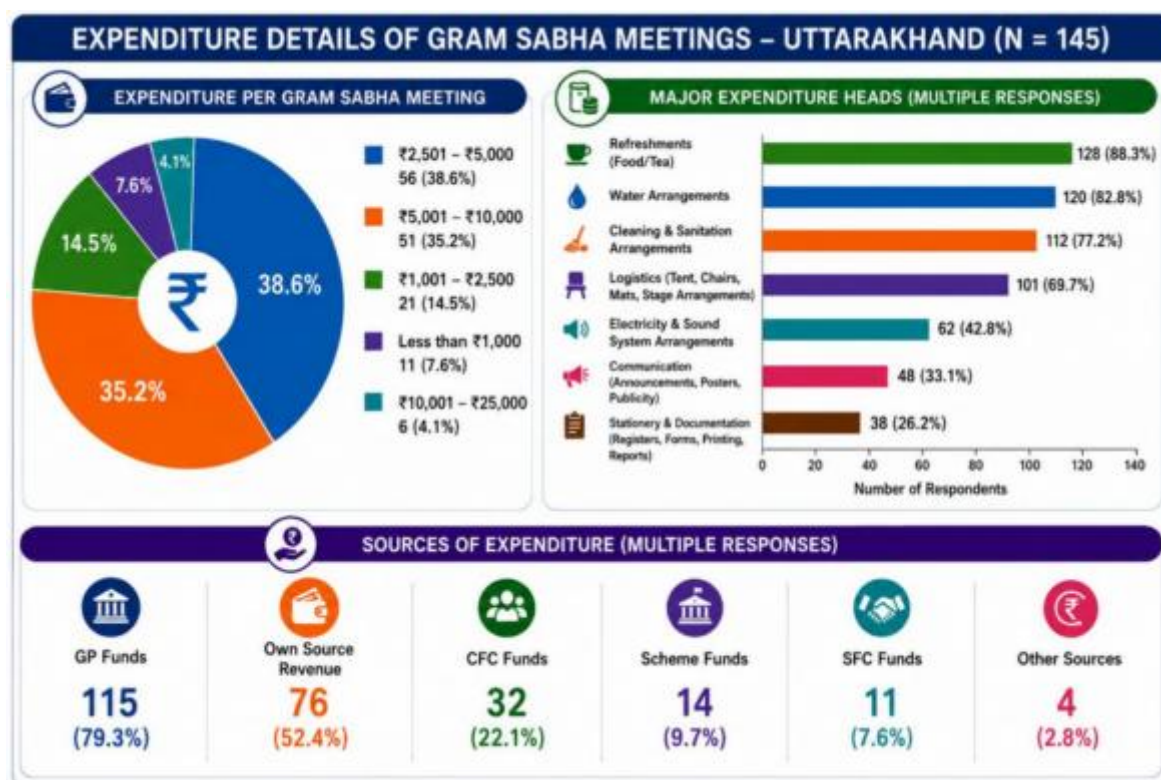
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Approving GPDP            | 13.05          |
| Annual Budget             | 12.58          |
| Welfare Schemes           | 11.55          |
| Sanitation                | 9.67           |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 8.64           |
| Social Audit              | 8.64           |
| Social Issues             | 8.45           |
| Identifying Local Issues  | 7.51           |
| Infrastructure            | 5.07           |
| Development Priorities    | 4.51           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

Among the surveyed Gram Panchayats in Uttarakhand, expenditure incurred for conducting Gram Sabha meetings was generally modest, with a majority of meetings falling within the ₹1,001–₹2,500 expenditure range, followed by the ₹2,501–₹5,000 category. SFC and CFC funds emerged as the primary sources of financing, supplemented by GP funds and limited support from scheme funds and own source revenue. Major expenditure was concentrated on stationery and documentation activities, communication and publicity measures, cleaning and sanitation arrangements, and basic logistical requirements such as tents, chairs and stage arrangements. The findings indicate that Gram Sabha meetings in the surveyed areas are conducted with relatively low expenditure, focusing primarily on administrative, communication and essential meeting-related arrangements.



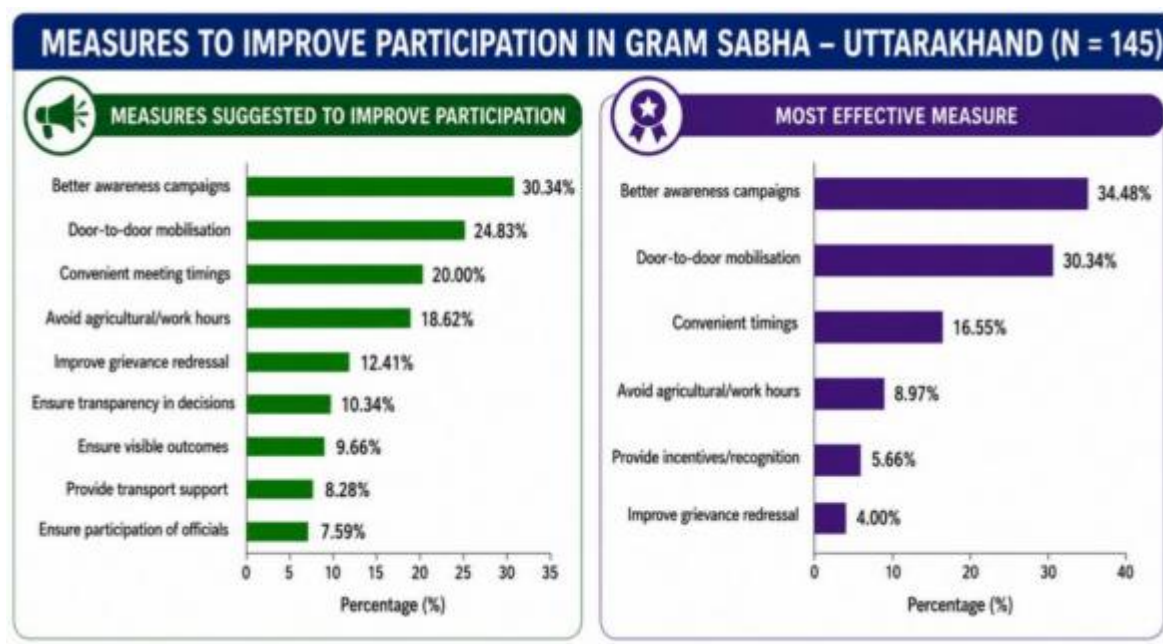
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents emphasized mobilisation, awareness generation and transparency as the most important strategies for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns and door-to-door mobilisation emerged as the most frequently suggested interventions, followed closely by transparency measures, convenient meeting timings and avoiding agricultural work hours.

A distinctive feature of Uttarakhand is the relatively balanced distribution of suggested interventions. Respondents highlighted not only awareness and mobilisation but also transparency, grievance redressal, visible outcomes, official participation and inclusion of marginalized groups. This suggests a broad-based understanding of the factors influencing participation.



When asked to identify the single most effective measure, door-to-door mobilisation emerged as the clear preference, receiving more than forty percent of responses. Awareness campaigns, convenient scheduling and avoidance of agricultural work hours were also identified as important strategies for improving participation.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. A large majority of surveyed Gram Panchayats reported the availability of Gram Sabha halls and adequate hall capacity.
2. Despite the availability of halls, sufficient space and seating arrangements were reported to be limited in many locations.
3. Most respondents indicated that Gram Sabha venues were located in accessible and centrally located places.
4. Availability of drinking water and separate toilet facilities was relatively low across the surveyed Gram Panchayats.
5. Sound system availability was extremely limited, potentially affecting the conduct of larger meetings.
6. Internet connectivity, digitized records and audio-visual facilities were available only in a minority of surveyed locations.
7. Video conferencing facilities were virtually absent in the surveyed Gram Panchayats.
8. Social media and WhatsApp usage was widely prevalent despite broader digital infrastructure constraints.
9. The findings indicate that while basic meeting venues exist, supporting infrastructure and digital facilities remain inadequate.
10. Significant infrastructure gaps may affect the effectiveness, inclusiveness and overall quality of Gram Sabha meetings.



## Recommendations

- Upgrade existing Gram Sabha halls with adequate seating capacity and improved meeting space arrangements.
- Ensure universal availability of drinking water and sanitation facilities at Gram Sabha venues.
- Provide basic sound systems to support effective communication during meetings.
- Strengthen internet connectivity and digital infrastructure across Gram Panchayats.
- Promote digitization of records, resolutions and meeting proceedings for improved transparency and efficiency.
- Introduce audio-visual presentation facilities to support participatory planning and information dissemination.
- Explore the phased introduction of video conferencing facilities where feasible.
- Continue leveraging social media and WhatsApp platforms for citizen outreach and awareness generation.
- Allocate dedicated resources for maintenance and upgrading of Gram Sabha infrastructure.
- Develop a comprehensive infrastructure improvement plan focusing on both physical amenities and digital governance capabilities.



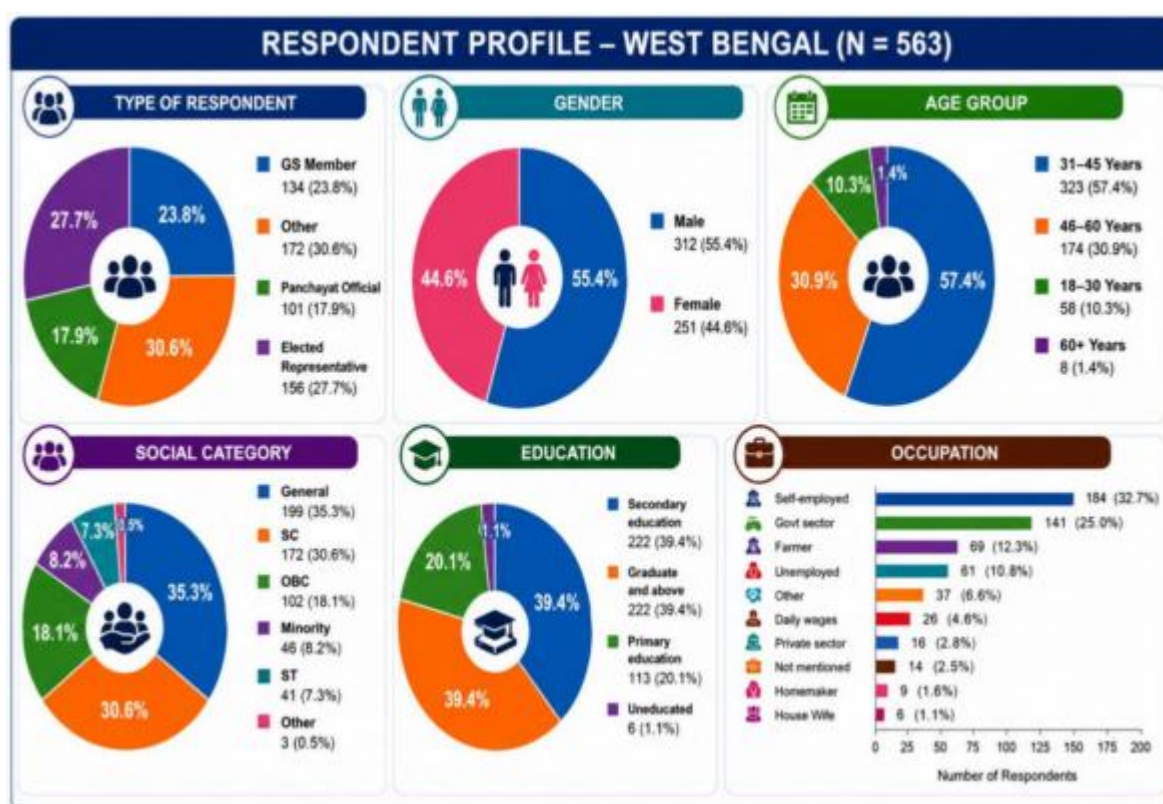
# WEST BENGAL

## Study Coverage

The findings presented in this chapter are based on the perceptions and experiences of 563 respondents from 33 Gram Panchayats across 22 districts of West Bengal. Respondents included elected representatives, Gram Sabha members, Panchayat officials and community members representing diverse social, educational and occupational backgrounds. General and SC communities constituted the largest social groups, while self-employed individuals and government employees formed the dominant occupational categories. The findings provide important insights into citizen perceptions regarding participation, governance challenges and Gram Sabha functioning in West Bengal.

**Table 1. Study Coverage**

| Indicator               | Value |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Respondents             | 563   |
| Districts Covered       | 22    |
| Gram Panchayats Covered | 33    |



## Awareness and Participation in Gram Sabha

The findings indicate exceptionally high levels of awareness and participation regarding Gram Sabha meetings in West Bengal. More than ninety-seven percent of respondents reported awareness of Gram Sabha meetings, while awareness regarding rights within the Gram Sabha and the prescribed frequency of meetings exceeded ninety-two percent. Attendance levels were similarly strong, with more than ninety-three percent reporting participation in Gram Sabha meetings during the previous year.

Active participation levels were among the highest observed across surveyed States. More than ninety-one percent reported active participation in Gram Sabha proceedings. Most respondents characterized their participation level as moderate, while one-fourth reported high participation levels.

Awareness regarding quorum provisions was also strong. More than eighty-two percent reported awareness of quorum requirements, while nearly seventy percent stated that quorum is achieved during Gram Sabha meetings. These findings suggest strong awareness, participation and procedural understanding among respondents.

**Table 2. Awareness and Participation Indicators**

| Indicator                          | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Awareness of Gram Sabha Meetings   | 97.34          |
| Awareness of Rights in Gram Sabha  | 92.36          |
| Active Participation in Gram Sabha | 91.12          |
| Awareness of Quorum                | 82.06          |

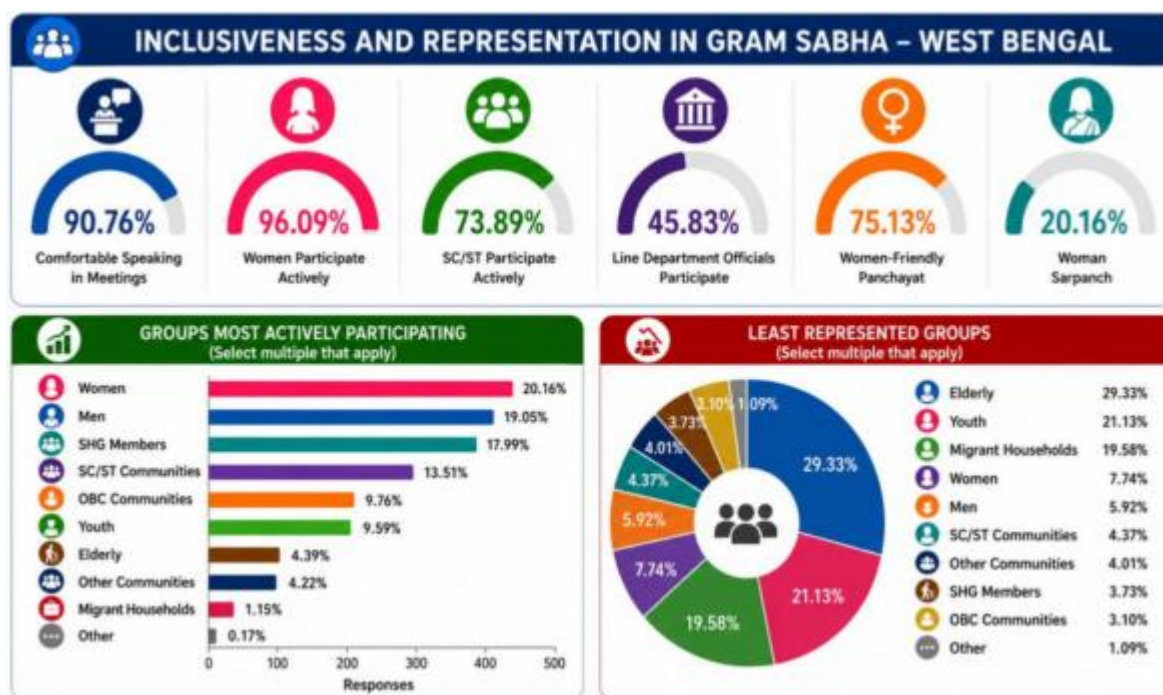
## Inclusiveness and Participation Experience

The findings indicate broad and active participation across multiple social groups in Gram Sabha meetings. Women emerged as the most active participants, followed closely by men, SHG members and SC/ST communities. Participation by youth and OBC communities was also substantial. These findings suggest that Gram Sabha participation in West Bengal is comparatively diverse and socially inclusive.

Women's participation was viewed very positively by respondents. More than ninety percent reported active participation by women, while three-fourths reported that the Panchayat head is a woman. Participation of SC/ST communities was similarly strong, and nearly seventy-four percent reported participation of line department officials in Gram Sabha meetings.

Despite these positive indicators, important inclusion challenges remain. Elderly citizens emerged as the most underrepresented group in Gram Sabha meetings, followed by youth and migrant households. Women were also identified as underrepresented by a section of respondents despite their active participation. Slightly more than half of respondents reported that their Panchayat cannot be considered women-friendly, indicating continuing concerns regarding inclusiveness and institutional support.





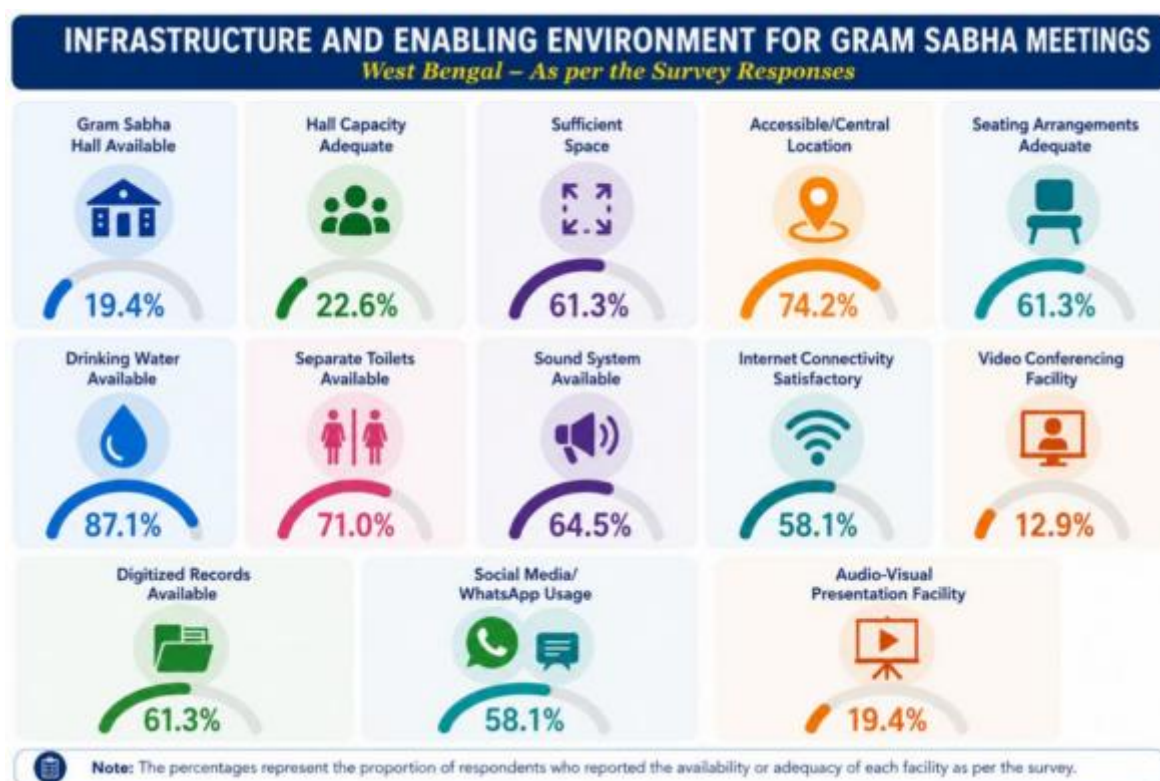
## Infrastructure and Enabling Environment for Gram Sabha Meetings

The findings indicate that West Bengal has relatively limited availability of dedicated Gram Sabha halls, with only a small proportion of respondents reporting the presence of such facilities. Similarly, hall capacity was reported as adequate by less than one-fourth of respondents. However, a majority indicated that sufficient space was available for conducting meetings, and most Gram Sabha venues were reported to be located in accessible and centrally situated locations. Seating arrangements were also considered adequate by a substantial proportion of respondents, suggesting that meetings are often conducted using available community spaces even where dedicated halls may be lacking.

Availability of basic amenities was generally strong across the surveyed Gram Panchayats. Drinking water facilities were reported by a large majority of respondents, while separate toilet facilities were available in over two-thirds of locations. Sound systems were also available in a significant proportion of meeting venues, supporting effective communication during Gram Sabha proceedings. These findings indicate that while dedicated infrastructure may be limited, essential facilities required for conducting meetings are available in many locations.

The digital infrastructure profile of West Bengal presents a relatively positive picture. More than half of the respondents reported satisfactory internet connectivity, availability of digitized records and use of social media or WhatsApp for communication and outreach. However, video conferencing facilities and audio-visual presentation equipment remained limited, indicating gaps in advanced technology-enabled participation mechanisms. Overall, West Bengal demonstrates comparatively strong basic amenities, meeting space and digital record management, but would benefit from investments in dedicated Gram Sabha infrastructure, video conferencing facilities and audio-visual systems to further strengthen participatory local governance.





## Factors Affecting Participation in Gram Sabha

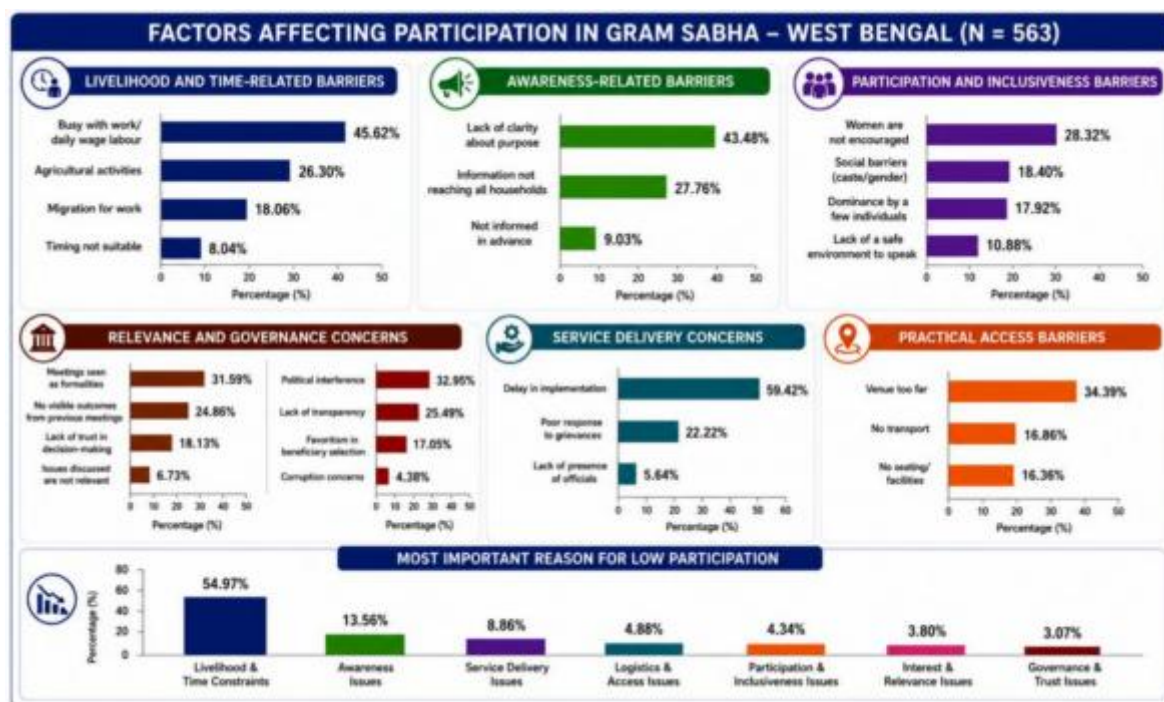
The study clearly indicates that livelihood and time-related constraints constitute the most significant barriers affecting participation in Gram Sabha meetings in West Bengal. Work-related commitments and daily wage employment emerged as the dominant factor limiting participation, followed by agricultural activities and migration for work. Timing-related concerns were comparatively less significant.

Awareness-related barriers were dominated by lack of clarity regarding the purpose of Gram Sabha meetings. Information not reaching all households also emerged as an important concern. These findings suggest that awareness of meetings does not necessarily translate into understanding of their significance and benefits.

Participation and inclusiveness concerns centered primarily on inadequate encouragement for women, social barriers based on caste and gender, and dominance by a few individuals. These findings indicate continuing challenges in ensuring broad-based and meaningful participation.

The findings further reveal significant concerns regarding relevance, governance and service delivery. Meetings being viewed as formalities emerged as the most important factor reducing citizen interest in participation, followed by lack of visible outcomes and lack of trust in decision-making. Governance concerns were dominated by political interference and lack of transparency. Service delivery concerns were overwhelmingly linked to delays in implementation, which accounted for nearly sixty percent of responses. These findings indicate that participation challenges are strongly influenced by perceptions regarding responsiveness, accountability and effectiveness of local governance systems.





## Gram Sabha Agenda Priorities

Respondents reported broad agenda coverage in Gram Sabha meetings. Approval of Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) emerged as the most frequently discussed agenda item, followed by identification of local issues, development priorities and annual budgeting. Welfare schemes, sanitation, social issues, infrastructure and own source revenue generation also featured prominently. The findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in West Bengal function as comprehensive platforms for local planning, development and governance discussions.

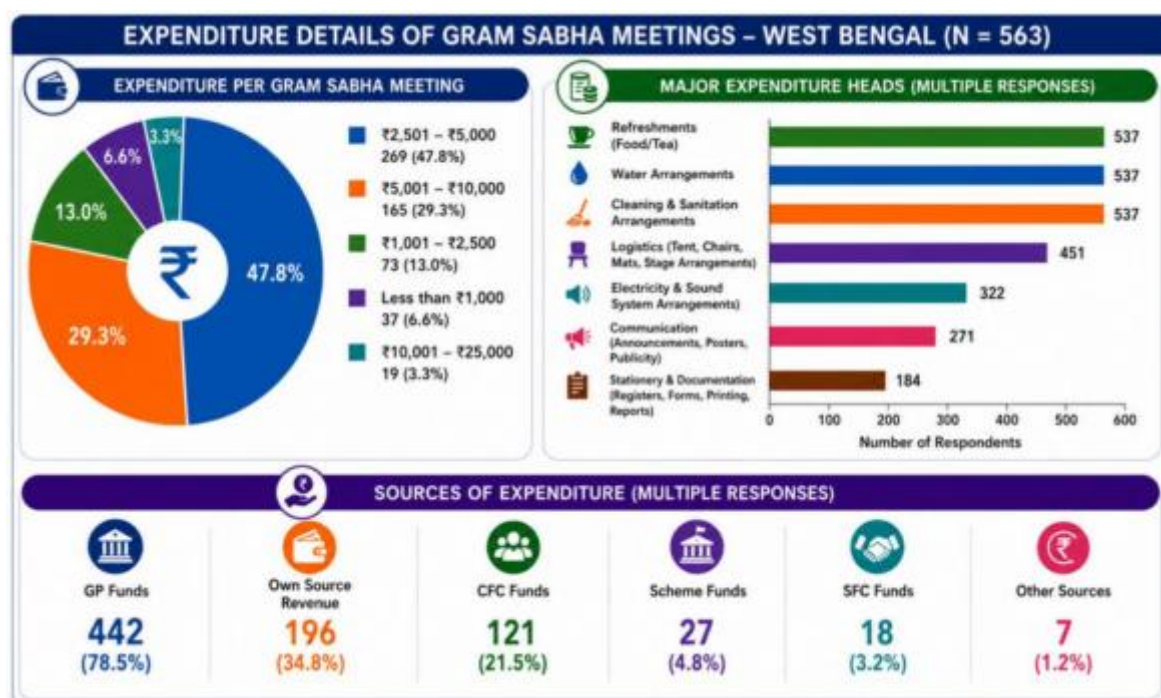
**Table 3. Most Discussed Agenda Items**

| Agenda Item               | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Approving GPDP            | 10.34          |
| Identifying Local Issues  | 9.67           |
| Development Priorities    | 9.34           |
| Annual Budget             | 8.83           |
| Welfare Schemes           | 7.79           |
| Sanitation                | 7.74           |
| Social Issues             | 7.14           |
| Infrastructure            | 7.05           |
| OSR Generation            | 6.93           |
| Identifying Beneficiaries | 6.56           |



## Expenditure on Gram Sabha Meetings

The expenditure pattern in West Bengal indicates that Gram Sabha meetings are generally conducted with moderate financial allocations, with nearly half of the respondents reporting expenditure in the range of ₹2,501–₹5,000 per meeting, followed by ₹5,001–₹10,000. GP Funds emerged as the principal source of expenditure, supplemented by Own Source Revenue and CFC Funds, while Scheme Funds, SFC Funds and other sources played a relatively limited role. The major expenditure heads were refreshments, water arrangements, cleaning and sanitation, and logistical arrangements such as tents, chairs and stage facilities, reflecting efforts to ensure participant convenience and effective meeting management. Expenditure on communication, publicity and documentation was also reported, indicating attention towards awareness generation and record maintenance. Overall, the findings suggest that Gram Sabha meetings in West Bengal are primarily financed through Panchayat resources and focus on essential operational requirements necessary for conducting inclusive and well-organized meetings.



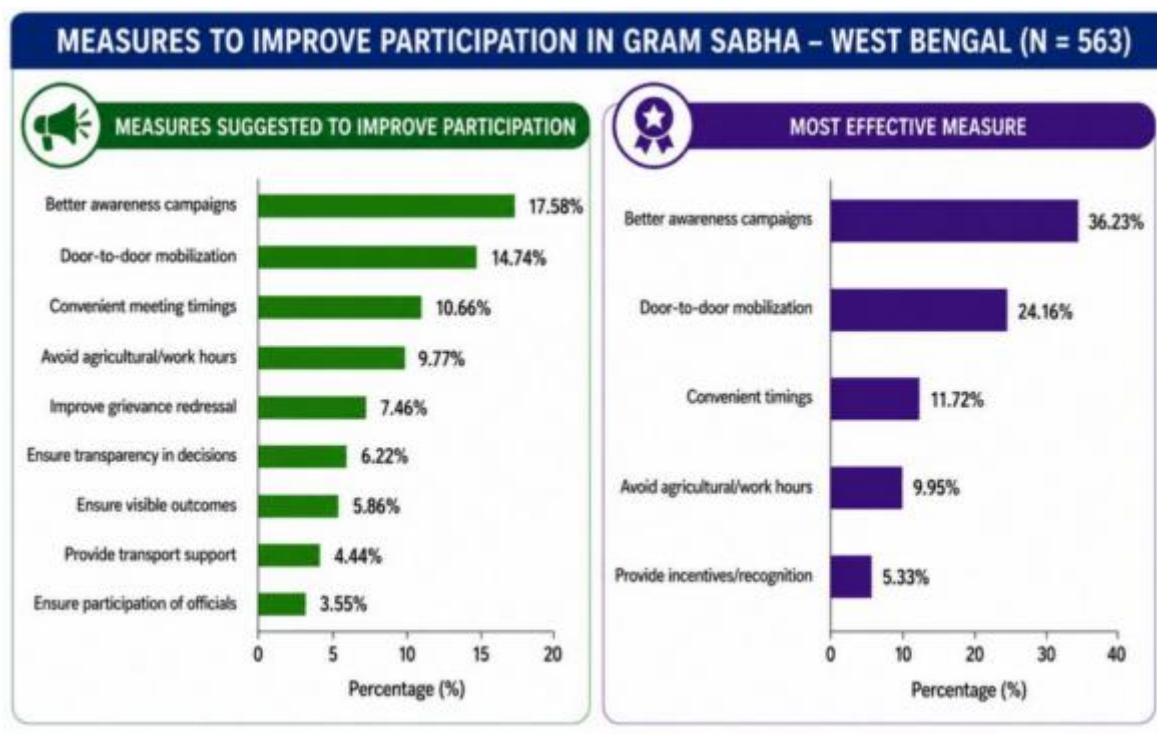
## Measures for Improving Participation

Respondents strongly emphasized awareness generation and community mobilisation as the most effective strategies for strengthening Gram Sabha participation. Better awareness campaigns emerged as the most frequently suggested intervention, followed closely by door-to-door mobilisation. Refreshments, convenient scheduling, grievance redressal, visible outcomes and transport support also received considerable support.

A notable feature of West Bengal is the emphasis placed on awareness, inclusion and practical facilitation measures. Respondents highlighted the importance of outreach, mobilisation, transparency, grievance redressal and visible outcomes. The suggestions indicate that citizens expect both improved communication and stronger institutional responsiveness.



When asked to identify the single most effective measure, door-to-door mobilisation emerged as the clear preference, followed by awareness campaigns. Avoiding agricultural work hours, strengthening grievance redressal and fixing convenient meeting timings were also identified as important strategies. These findings suggest that participation challenges are viewed primarily as mobilisation and awareness-related issues requiring sustained outreach efforts.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Key Findings

1. Availability of dedicated Gram Sabha halls was relatively low, indicating dependence on alternative community spaces for conducting meetings.
2. Hall capacity adequacy was reported by less than one-fourth of respondents, highlighting limitations in dedicated meeting infrastructure.
3. Despite limited hall availability, sufficient meeting space was reported by a majority of respondents.
4. Most Gram Sabha venues were located in accessible and centrally situated locations, facilitating public participation.
5. Seating arrangements were considered adequate in a substantial proportion of meeting venues.
6. Drinking water availability emerged as a major strength, with a large majority of respondents reporting access to this facility.
7. Separate toilet facilities were available in most locations, contributing to a more inclusive meeting environment.
8. Sound systems were available in a significant proportion of Gram Sabha venues, supporting effective communication.



9. Internet connectivity was available in more than half of the surveyed locations, indicating moderate digital readiness.
10. Digitized records were available in a majority of Gram Panchayats, reflecting progress in digital governance practices.
11. Social media and WhatsApp were actively used for communication and information dissemination.
12. Video conferencing facilities were available only in a limited number of locations.
13. Audio-visual presentation facilities remained weak and were available in only a small proportion of Gram Panchayats.
14. The state demonstrated stronger performance in basic amenities and digital record management than in dedicated meeting infrastructure.
15. West Bengal has a reasonably supportive environment for Gram Sabha functioning despite infrastructure constraints.
16. Investments in dedicated infrastructure and advanced digital facilities would significantly strengthen participatory governance.

## Recommendations

- Increase the availability of dedicated Gram Sabha halls across Gram Panchayats.
- Upgrade hall capacity and physical infrastructure to accommodate larger community participation.
- Ensure adequate seating arrangements and meeting space in all Gram Sabha venues.
- Maintain universal access to drinking water and sanitation facilities during Gram Sabha meetings.
- Expand the availability of sound systems to improve communication and public engagement.
- Strengthen internet connectivity in all Gram Panchayat offices and meeting venues.
- Introduce video conferencing facilities to support technology-enabled participation and training.
- Improve availability of audio-visual presentation equipment for awareness campaigns and Gram Sabha presentations.
- Further strengthen digitization of Panchayat records and document management systems.
- Leverage widespread WhatsApp and social media usage for meeting notices, agenda dissemination and citizen outreach.
- Establish minimum infrastructure standards for Gram Sabha venues across the state.
- Allocate dedicated resources under relevant schemes for infrastructure modernization.
- Conduct periodic infrastructure audits to identify facility gaps and monitor improvements.
- Promote convergence with RGSA and other Panchayati Raj initiatives for digital infrastructure enhancement.
- Build the capacity of Panchayat officials in digital governance, record management and citizen communication.
- Develop a phased roadmap for creating well-equipped, accessible and digitally enabled Gram Sabha spaces across all Gram Panchayats.







# BEST PRACTICES

*From States/UTs for Enhancing Participation  
in Gram Sabha*



# 1. When the Gram Sabha Became the Village's Planning Room

## Chembilode Grama Panchayat, Kannur District, Kerala

### A Panchayat Where Participation Became a Way of Life

Across India, Gram Sabhas are recognized as the foundation of participatory democracy. They provide citizens with an opportunity to discuss local issues, identify development priorities, monitor public programmes, and participate directly in decision-making. Yet, in many villages, Gram Sabha meetings often struggle to attract meaningful participation. Attendance may be limited, discussions may be dominated by a few individuals, and citizens frequently perceive the meetings as routine administrative exercises rather than platforms for shaping local development.

Chembilode Grama Panchayat in Kannur district of Kerala presents a very different picture. Here, the Gram Sabha is not merely a statutory requirement but a vibrant institution of local democracy. Citizens actively participate in discussions, women play a central role in deliberations, development priorities emerge through collective consultation, and decisions taken in Gram Sabha meetings directly influence the Panchayat's planning and implementation processes. Over the years, this approach has transformed the Panchayat into a model of participatory governance and earned it several recognitions, including multiple Swaraj Trophy awards and the National Panchayat Award for Water Sufficiency.

At the heart of this success lies a simple but powerful principle: people participate when they believe their participation matters.

### Building Participation Through Community Institutions

One of the most important factors behind Chembilode's success is the effective utilization of Kerala's Kudumbashree network. While Kudumbashree is widely known as a women's empowerment and poverty alleviation programme, in Chembilode it has evolved into a vital bridge between the Panchayat and the community.

Before every Gram Sabha meeting, information is disseminated through Kudumbashree neighbourhood groups. Women leaders communicate meeting details to households, explain the agenda, and encourage participation. Because these groups maintain regular contact with families, information reaches citizens more effectively than conventional notices or announcements.

This approach has significantly increased women's participation in local governance. Women who may otherwise hesitate to attend public meetings find themselves encouraged and supported by fellow members of their neighbourhood groups. Over time, the Gram Sabha has become a familiar and trusted platform where women discuss issues affecting their families, neighbourhoods, and communities.

The Panchayat leadership recognizes that participation cannot be generated overnight. It requires continuous engagement, trust-building, and communication. By leveraging existing



community institutions, Chembilode has succeeded in transforming participation from an occasional activity into an integral part of village life.



### **Making the Gram Sabha Relevant to Everyday Life**

A common reason for low attendance in Gram Sabha meetings is that many citizens fail to see their relevance. Meetings often cover a broad range of administrative matters without clearly connecting them to the everyday concerns of villagers.

Chembilode addressed this challenge by introducing thematic Gram Sabhas. Instead of discussing a large number of issues superficially, meetings are often structured around specific themes that directly affect local communities. Discussions have focused on topics such as water conservation, disaster preparedness, sanitation, environmental management, infrastructure development, welfare delivery, and sustainable development.

This thematic approach helps citizens understand why their participation matters. When a meeting is organized around an issue that affects their daily lives, people are more likely to attend, contribute, and remain engaged throughout the deliberations.

The Panchayat also conducts ward-level consultations and preliminary discussions before the Gram Sabha. These interactions help identify local concerns, gather suggestions, and prepare citizens for meaningful participation. As a result, Gram Sabha discussions are informed, focused, and solution-oriented rather than being limited to routine formalities.

Citizens are not passive listeners; they become active contributors to the planning process. Local priorities emerge from discussions among community members, ensuring that development interventions reflect actual needs rather than externally determined agendas.

### **Trust Through Transparency**

Perhaps the strongest foundation of participation in Chembilode is the trust that has been built through transparent governance practices.



The Panchayat has ensured that the Gram Sabha plays a central role in identifying beneficiaries for welfare programmes, housing schemes, livelihood initiatives, and other development interventions. Decisions are discussed openly, and community members are given an opportunity to express their views before beneficiary lists are finalized.

This transparency has strengthened public confidence in Panchayat institutions. Villagers know that decisions are not taken behind closed doors and that participation can genuinely influence outcomes. The Gram Sabha is therefore viewed not merely as a meeting but as a credible forum for democratic decision-making.

Trust has also been strengthened through consistent follow-up on issues raised during Gram Sabha meetings. Citizens have repeatedly witnessed that discussions lead to action. Development priorities identified through community consultations are reflected in Panchayat plans, and approved projects are implemented with visible results.

This responsiveness has created a virtuous cycle. When people see that participation leads to outcomes, they are more likely to participate in future meetings. Increased participation, in turn, improves the quality of planning and governance.

### **From Discussion to Development Outcomes**

The impact of this participatory model is visible across several dimensions of local development.

Chembilode has earned a reputation for effective planning and implementation. One of its most notable achievements has been the utilization of 100 percent of its development plan funds for three consecutive years. This remarkable accomplishment reflects the Panchayat's ability to identify community priorities, secure public support, and implement projects efficiently.

The Panchayat has also demonstrated leadership in environmental management. Long before waste management became a major policy concern, community discussions and Gram Sabha deliberations encouraged action against the burning of plastic waste and promoted environmentally responsible practices. Similarly, sustained citizen participation in water conservation planning contributed significantly to the Panchayat being recognized nationally as a Water-Sufficient Panchayat.

These achievements are not merely administrative successes. They are outcomes of a governance system where citizens actively participate in identifying problems, proposing solutions, and monitoring implementation.

The Gram Sabha has become the Panchayat's primary platform for planning, consultation, accountability, and collective action. It enables development initiatives to emerge from community aspirations rather than top-down directives.

### **A Model of Participatory Local Governance**

The experience of Chembilode demonstrates that strong Gram Sabhas are built not through occasional mobilization drives but through sustained community engagement. Effective communication, active community institutions, thematic discussions, transparent decision-



making, and visible development outcomes have collectively strengthened citizen participation in local governance.

Most importantly, Chembilode has shown that when citizens trust the process and witness tangible results from their participation, the Gram Sabha becomes much more than a statutory requirement. It becomes the village's planning room—a space where collective decisions shape the future of the community.

The Panchayat's journey offers valuable lessons for local governments across the country. By placing citizens at the centre of governance and ensuring that their voices influence development priorities, Chembilode has demonstrated how participatory democracy can become a lived reality at the grassroots level.



## 2. From a Government Meeting to a Festival of Democracy

### Gram Panchayats in Bokaro and Dhanbad districts of Jharkhand

#### Reimagining Panchayati Raj Day at the Grassroots

For many rural citizens, Panchayati Raj Day is often perceived as a government programme marked by official speeches, routine meetings, and ceremonial activities. While the occasion commemorates the constitutional status of Panchayati Raj Institutions, its observance frequently remains confined to administrative formalities with limited public engagement. In 2026, however, several Gram Panchayats across Jharkhand demonstrated that Panchayati Raj Day could become something far more meaningful—a celebration of participatory democracy rooted in community involvement, social awareness, and collective action.

Across Gram Panchayats in Bokaro and Dhanbad districts, Panchayati Raj Day was transformed into what villagers proudly described as a “Festival of Democracy.” The Gram Sabha became the centre of community life, bringing together elected representatives, women, children, Self-Help Groups, frontline workers, teachers, government officials, and ordinary citizens. Instead of merely reviewing administrative matters, the gatherings focused on issues that directly affected people’s lives, including child protection, women’s empowerment, health awareness, sanitation, nutrition, social reform, and community responsibility.

The initiative demonstrated that when Gram Sabha discussions are linked to issues that matter to citizens, participation becomes a natural outcome rather than an administrative challenge.

#### Bringing Citizens Back to the Centre of Governance

The participating Gram Panchayats recognized that one of the major reasons for low participation in Gram Sabha meetings is the perception that they have little relevance to everyday concerns. To address this challenge, Panchayati Raj Day celebrations were designed around community priorities rather than procedural discussions.

The Gram Sabha became a platform for dialogue on issues such as child marriage, gender equality, domestic violence, health and hygiene, substance abuse, nutrition, sanitation, and environmental responsibility. These topics resonated deeply with community members because they reflected real challenges faced by rural households.

Women participated actively in discussions concerning social welfare and community development. Adolescent girls engaged in conversations on health and safety. Community leaders shared their perspectives on local challenges, while government functionaries provided information on available services and programmes. The atmosphere was participatory, inclusive, and interactive, transforming the Gram Sabha into a living institution of local democracy.



Rather than viewing governance as the responsibility of elected representatives alone, citizens began to see themselves as active stakeholders in shaping the future of their communities.

### Giving Children a Voice in Local Democracy

One of the most innovative aspects of the initiative was the direct involvement of children in governance-related activities. Traditionally, children are considered beneficiaries of development programmes, but rarely participants in governance processes. The Panchayats challenged this notion by creating dedicated platforms where children could express their views and engage with community issues.

Bal Sabhas were organized in several Gram Panchayats, providing children with an opportunity to discuss topics such as school attendance, cleanliness, sanitation, health awareness, and environmental responsibility. Through these forums, children became active contributors rather than passive observers.

Drawing competitions, educational activities, and interactive sessions encouraged children to think about community development and civic responsibility. The participation of students brought families into the process as well, creating a broader culture of engagement around Gram Sabha activities.

The initiative demonstrated that meaningful participation in local governance can begin at an early age and that children can play an important role in shaping community awareness and behaviour.



### Health, Awareness and Social Responsibility

The Panchayati Raj Day celebrations also became a platform for promoting public health and social awareness. Several Gram Panchayats organized health camps with support from government departments and CSR institutions. Villagers received basic health check-ups, counselling, preventive health guidance, and information on nutrition and hygiene.



Recognizing the risks posed by extreme summer temperatures, some Panchayats distributed ORS packets and conducted awareness campaigns on dehydration prevention. These activities reflected a proactive approach to community welfare and demonstrated how Panchayats can respond to emerging public health challenges.

Awareness campaigns on child marriage prevention, women's safety, menstrual hygiene management, and child rights were also integrated into the celebrations. Public pledges were administered, encouraging community members to support girls' education, protect children's rights, and promote gender equality.

By linking governance with social responsibility, the Panchayats expanded the scope of the Gram Sabha beyond development planning and transformed it into a platform for positive social change.

### **Community Mobilization Through Collective Action**

The celebrations incorporated a variety of innovative community engagement activities designed to encourage participation across different sections of society. Mahila Sabhas and Ward Sabhas were organized to facilitate focused discussions among specific groups. Street plays on de-addiction and social reform used cultural expression to communicate important messages. Awareness campaigns on sanitation, water conservation, and environmental protection promoted collective responsibility towards community resources.

Yoga sessions, community gatherings, prize distribution programmes, and public recognition of local contributors created an atmosphere of celebration and inclusion. The involvement of schools, Self-Help Groups, frontline workers, and community leaders ensured that participation extended beyond traditional governance stakeholders.

The success of the initiative also reflected effective convergence between Panchayats, line departments, educational institutions, and CSR partners. This collaborative approach enabled the Panchayats to organize diverse activities while strengthening institutional partnerships at the local level.

### **Strengthening Participation Through Inclusion**

Perhaps the most significant achievement of the initiative was its ability to bring diverse sections of society together within a common platform. Women, children, youth, teachers, health workers, SHG members, community leaders, and ordinary villagers all found space within the celebrations.

The strong participation of women and children was particularly noteworthy. Their involvement not only enhanced the inclusiveness of the Gram Sabha but also broadened the range of issues discussed and addressed. Governance became more representative, more responsive, and more reflective of community needs.

The initiative challenged the conventional notion that Gram Sabha participation is limited to elected representatives and a small group of active citizens. Instead, it demonstrated that local democracy becomes stronger when every section of society is encouraged to participate and contribute.



## A New Vision for Participatory Democracy

The experience of these Gram Panchayats in Jharkhand illustrates how local governance can become more dynamic, relevant, and people-centred when communities are placed at the heart of decision-making. By transforming Panchayati Raj Day into a Festival of Democracy, the Panchayats moved beyond ceremonial observance and created meaningful opportunities for citizen engagement.

Through Bal Sabhas, health camps, awareness campaigns, social reform initiatives, women's participation, and community mobilization activities, the Gram Sabha evolved into a platform for collective learning, dialogue, and action. Citizens did not attend merely to fulfil a procedural requirement; they participated because the discussions reflected their aspirations, concerns, and responsibilities.

The initiative demonstrates that participation increases when governance becomes visible, relevant, and inclusive. It offers a powerful example of how Gram Sabhas can move beyond administrative formalities and emerge as vibrant institutions of grassroots democracy capable of driving social transformation and community development.

In doing so, these Gram Panchayats redefined the meaning of Panchayati Raj Day and showed how local democracy can truly become a celebration of the people.



### 3. A Gram Sabha Invitation Like a Wedding Card

**Chhina Gram Panchayat, Kalanaur Block, Gurdaspur District, Punjab**

#### **A Simple Idea That Changed Participation**

Across rural India, Panchayats invest considerable effort in organizing Gram Sabha meetings, yet ensuring public participation often remains a challenge. Notices are issued, announcements are made, and invitations are circulated, but attendance frequently falls short of expectations. Many villagers view Gram Sabha meetings as routine government activities rather than platforms where their voices can influence local development decisions.

Chhina Gram Panchayat in Gurdaspur district of Punjab approached this challenge differently. Instead of asking why people were not attending Gram Sabha meetings, the Panchayat asked a more fundamental question: how can citizens be made to feel that the Gram Sabha belongs to them?

The answer emerged through a remarkably simple but highly effective innovation. Rather than relying solely on official notices, the Panchayat began delivering personal invitation cards to every household before each Gram Sabha meeting. These invitations were distributed in the same manner as invitations for weddings, family celebrations, and important social events.

What appeared to be a small administrative change soon produced a significant transformation. Villagers no longer viewed the Gram Sabha as a government meeting; they began to see it as a community gathering where their presence was valued and their participation mattered.

#### **Making Every Citizen Feel Important**

In most villages, public meetings are announced through notices, loudspeaker announcements, or word-of-mouth communication. While these methods disseminate information, they often fail to create a personal connection between citizens and the event.

The leadership of Chhina Gram Panchayat recognized that people are more likely to attend when they feel personally invited. The invitation card strategy was therefore designed not merely as an information tool but as a mechanism for building a sense of belonging and ownership.

Each household received a printed invitation mentioning the date, time, and venue of the Gram Sabha. The invitation conveyed a simple message: every citizen's participation was important for the future development of the village.

The response was remarkable. Villagers appreciated the personal gesture and began treating the Gram Sabha as an event worthy of their time and attention. Families discussed the upcoming meetings, community members encouraged one another to attend, and participation gradually became a shared social responsibility.



The initiative demonstrated that increasing attendance is not always about introducing complex systems; sometimes it is about making people feel respected and included.



### Turning Festivals into Platforms for Democracy

While personal invitations succeeded in increasing awareness, the Panchayat recognized that sustained participation required making the Gram Sabha an engaging and meaningful experience.

Punjab's social and cultural life revolves around festivals and community celebrations. Chhina Gram Panchayat therefore decided to align some of its Gram Sabha meetings with important occasions such as Lohri and Teej. Rather than treating governance and community celebrations as separate activities, the Panchayat integrated them into a single platform.

The celebrations included competitions, cultural activities, recognition programmes, and interactions among community members. Women participated enthusiastically in events organized around local traditions, while children and youth became actively involved in community activities.

These gatherings created a festive atmosphere that attracted citizens who might otherwise have remained absent from formal meetings. More importantly, the celebrations provided an opportunity to discuss development issues in a setting that felt familiar, inclusive, and welcoming.

The Gram Sabha ceased to be viewed as an administrative obligation and evolved into a community event where citizens could celebrate their culture while participating in local governance.



## Building Trust Through Action

Awareness and attendance alone cannot sustain participation. Citizens continue to engage only when they believe their participation produces results.

One of the strongest features of the Chhina model is the Panchayat's commitment to acting upon issues raised during Gram Sabha meetings. Community concerns are discussed seriously, resolutions are recorded carefully, and efforts are made to translate decisions into action.

Villagers have witnessed that suggestions raised during meetings are not merely noted for record purposes but are incorporated into Panchayat activities and development planning. This responsiveness has significantly strengthened public trust.

Over time, citizens began to attend Gram Sabha meetings not because they were invited but because they believed their voices would be heard and their concerns would be addressed. Trust became the foundation upon which participation was built.

The Panchayat's approach also strengthened transparency and accountability. Development priorities emerged through community discussions rather than unilateral decisions. Citizens could observe how issues raised during previous meetings were addressed and monitored.

This visible linkage between participation and outcomes created a powerful incentive for continued engagement.



## Creating Space for Every Section of Society

Another important aspect of the initiative was its emphasis on inclusion. The Gram Sabha was not viewed as a forum only for elected representatives or senior community members. Women, youth, children, and elderly citizens were encouraged to participate actively.



Competitions, prize distribution programmes, and community recognition activities were used to attract diverse sections of society. Local achievers and talented students received public recognition, creating a positive association with Gram Sabha events.

The Panchayat also made special efforts to ensure that women participated meaningfully in discussions. Festival-linked activities provided an informal and comfortable environment that encouraged greater engagement by women who might otherwise hesitate to speak in public forums.

Through these initiatives, the Gram Sabha evolved into a truly community-owned institution where different groups felt welcomed and valued.

### **From Participation to Development Outcomes**

The impact of these efforts became increasingly visible over time. Chhina Gram Panchayat successfully conducted multiple Gram Sabha meetings with the required quorum being achieved consistently. Attendance improved significantly, and citizens became more actively involved in discussions related to local development.

The Panchayat also benefited from stronger community support in planning and implementation processes. Development priorities reflected local needs more accurately because they emerged from community consultations. The Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) prepared through this participatory process gained recognition as a model planning exercise within the state.

Perhaps the most significant outcome was the transformation of public perception. Citizens no longer viewed Gram Sabha as a government programme imposed from above. Instead, it became a community institution where collective decisions were taken and shared responsibilities were discussed.

The Panchayat succeeded in creating a culture of participation rather than merely increasing attendance.

### **A Lesson in Democratic Engagement**

The experience of Chhina Gram Panchayat demonstrates that participation flourishes when citizens feel personally connected to governance processes. By combining personalized invitations, cultural celebrations, community recognition, and responsive leadership, the Panchayat transformed the Gram Sabha into a vibrant platform for dialogue and collective action.

The innovation lies not in sophisticated technology or large financial investments but in understanding human relationships and community dynamics. A simple invitation card, delivered with respect and sincerity, became a powerful tool for strengthening grassroots democracy.

Today, the Gram Sabha in Chhina is not merely a meeting on the Panchayat calendar. It is a community event that villagers look forward to attending, a forum where their voices matter, and a platform through which local democracy comes alive.

The Chhina experience reminds us that meaningful participation begins when citizens feel that governance is not something done for them, but something done with them.



## 4. Ensuring That No Voice Remains Unheard

### Prathamaramapuram Gram Panchayat, Tamil Nadu

#### Taking Inclusion Beyond Representation

The true strength of democracy lies not merely in providing opportunities for participation but in ensuring that every citizen, regardless of their circumstances, can participate meaningfully in decision-making processes. While Gram Sabhas are designed to serve as platforms for direct citizen engagement, certain sections of society often remain underrepresented. Among them, Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) frequently face barriers that limit their participation in local governance. Physical accessibility challenges, lack of targeted communication, social stigma, and inadequate representation often prevent their voices from being heard during community decision-making processes.

Prathamaramapuram Gram Panchayat in Tamil Nadu recognized this challenge and decided to address it through an innovative and inclusive approach. Rather than assuming that the existing Gram Sabha system automatically accommodated all citizens, the Panchayat acknowledged that additional efforts were necessary to ensure meaningful participation of Persons with Disabilities. This recognition led to the organization of a Special Gram Sabha dedicated to understanding the concerns, aspirations, and needs of persons with disabilities and their families.

The initiative demonstrated that inclusion is not achieved simply by opening the doors of participation; it requires creating conditions that enable every individual to participate confidently and effectively.

#### Recognizing an Invisible Gap

Like many villages across the country, Prathamaramapuram had citizens with diverse disabilities who were beneficiaries of various welfare programmes and government initiatives. However, their participation in local governance processes remained limited. Discussions concerning accessibility, assistive devices, livelihood opportunities, education, healthcare, and social inclusion were often overshadowed by broader development issues.

The Panchayat realized that many concerns specific to persons with disabilities were not adequately reflected in regular Gram Sabha discussions. Even when such issues were raised, individuals often felt hesitant to speak openly in large public gatherings.

This realization prompted the Panchayat to explore new ways of ensuring that persons with disabilities could participate more actively in community decision-making. The objective was not merely to discuss welfare benefits but to create a platform where persons with disabilities could engage directly with Panchayat representatives and government functionaries regarding issues affecting their daily lives.

The initiative marked an important shift from viewing persons with disabilities solely as beneficiaries to recognizing them as active stakeholders in local governance.





### Creating a Dedicated Space for Participation

The Panchayat's response was both simple and innovative. A Special Gram Sabha was organized exclusively to facilitate discussions involving persons with disabilities, their families, elected representatives, government officials, community organizations, and other stakeholders.

Extensive efforts were made to identify and mobilize persons with disabilities across the Panchayat. Families were contacted, awareness was generated, and citizens were encouraged to participate actively in the discussions. The Panchayat ensured that the venue and arrangements were accessible and welcoming.

Unlike conventional meetings where disability-related concerns might receive limited attention, the Special Gram Sabha focused entirely on issues affecting persons with disabilities. Participants were encouraged to share their experiences, challenges, and suggestions without hesitation.

The atmosphere of the meeting was notably different from routine administrative gatherings. Citizens who had rarely participated in public discussions found an opportunity to speak openly about barriers they encountered in accessing services, education, healthcare, employment opportunities, public infrastructure, and social support systems.

For many participants, it was the first time they had been invited to discuss their concerns in a dedicated governance platform.

### Listening Before Planning

One of the most significant achievements of the initiative was its emphasis on listening. Rather than presenting predetermined solutions, the Panchayat created space for citizens to identify their own priorities and concerns.

Participants discussed a wide range of issues including accessibility of public buildings, availability of assistive devices, educational opportunities, livelihood support, transportation



challenges, healthcare services, and access to social security schemes. Families of persons with disabilities also shared their experiences and highlighted areas where additional support was required.

The discussions provided Panchayat representatives with valuable insights that might otherwise have remained invisible within routine planning processes. Local governance became more informed, responsive, and inclusive because decisions were grounded in the lived experiences of citizens.

The Special Gram Sabha also helped bridge the gap between service providers and beneficiaries. Government officials and frontline workers were able to interact directly with participants, clarify procedures, and understand challenges faced at the grassroots level.

This exchange of information strengthened mutual understanding and improved coordination between the community and local institutions.

### **From Welfare to Empowerment**

The initiative represented a significant departure from traditional approaches that focus primarily on welfare delivery. Instead of viewing disability solely through the lens of assistance and benefits, the Panchayat adopted a rights-based and participatory approach.

Persons with disabilities were encouraged to contribute not only as beneficiaries but also as citizens capable of influencing local development decisions. Their opinions were treated as valuable inputs for planning and governance.

This shift in perspective helped strengthen confidence among participants. Many individuals who previously felt excluded from public decision-making processes became more willing to engage with local institutions and participate in future Gram Sabha meetings.

The Panchayat also demonstrated that inclusion is not limited to physical accessibility. Equally important are social acceptance, respectful engagement, and the creation of opportunities for meaningful participation.

By giving persons with disabilities a dedicated platform to express themselves, the Panchayat sent a powerful message that every voice matters in local democracy.

### **Building a More Inclusive Gram Sabha**

The success of the initiative extended beyond the Special Gram Sabha itself. It generated greater awareness among elected representatives, community members, and government functionaries regarding the importance of disability inclusion.

The discussions encouraged the Panchayat to incorporate accessibility and inclusion considerations into its broader planning processes. Issues identified during the Special Gram Sabha received greater attention in subsequent development discussions and local governance activities.

The initiative also influenced public attitudes. Community members gained a better understanding of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities and the importance of ensuring equal opportunities for participation. This contributed to a more inclusive and supportive social environment.



Most importantly, the Special Gram Sabha demonstrated that inclusive governance strengthens democracy by ensuring that decisions reflect the needs of all citizens rather than only the majority.

### **A Model for Inclusive Local Democracy**

The experience of Prathamaramapuram Gram Panchayat offers an important lesson for local governments across the country. Participation cannot be considered complete if certain groups remain unheard. True democratic governance requires deliberate efforts to identify and address barriers that prevent citizens from participating effectively.

By organizing a Special Gram Sabha for Persons with Disabilities, the Panchayat moved beyond symbolic inclusion and created a meaningful platform for engagement. The initiative ensured that concerns which might otherwise have remained invisible became part of the local governance agenda.

The innovation lies not merely in conducting a separate meeting but in redefining participation itself. It recognizes that equality sometimes requires special efforts to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to be heard.

Prathamaramapuram's experience demonstrates that when governance systems actively reach out to marginalized groups and create space for their participation, democracy becomes more representative, more responsive, and more humane. In doing so, the Panchayat has shown how Gram Sabha can truly become a platform where no voice remains unheard.



## 5. The Jeevika Connection

**Nongarh Gram Panchayat, Ramgarh Chauk Block, Lakhisarai District, Bihar**

**When Women Became the Bridge Between Citizens and the Gram Sabha**

Across rural India, one of the most persistent challenges confronting Gram Sabha institutions is ensuring regular and meaningful participation of citizens. While meetings are conducted periodically, attendance often remains low, women's participation is limited, and many villagers continue to perceive Gram Sabha as a formal government exercise rather than a platform for influencing local development. In many cases, inadequate communication, weak community outreach, and limited awareness contribute to declining participation and public engagement.

Nongarh Gram Panchayat in Bihar's Lakhisarai district presents a compelling example of how community institutions can transform this situation. The Panchayat has demonstrated that when local governance structures work closely with women's collectives and community organizations, participation in Gram Sabha can increase significantly. At the centre of this transformation stands Jeevika, Bihar's flagship rural livelihoods programme, whose network of Self-Help Groups has become a powerful force for community mobilization and democratic participation.

The experience of Nongarh shows that participation is often not constrained by lack of interest alone; it is equally influenced by whether citizens receive information, feel encouraged to participate, and believe their presence can make a difference. By leveraging the strength of women-led institutions, the Panchayat succeeded in creating stronger connections between citizens and local governance.

### Understanding the Power of Community Networks

For many years, efforts to increase Gram Sabha participation in rural areas relied heavily on traditional communication methods such as notices, announcements, and occasional awareness campaigns. While these mechanisms disseminated information, they often failed to generate active participation, particularly among women and marginalized groups.

Nongarh Gram Panchayat adopted a different approach. Instead of relying solely on formal communication channels, it turned to institutions that already enjoyed the trust of the community. Jeevika Self-Help Groups, which had established strong relationships with women across villages, became key partners in spreading awareness and mobilizing participation.

The Panchayat recognized that Jeevika Didis regularly interact with households, understand local issues, and maintain close contact with women who may otherwise remain disconnected from governance processes. These networks provided an ideal platform for communicating the importance of Gram Sabha meetings and encouraging citizens to attend.

Through regular interactions, discussions, and community engagement activities, Jeevika members began informing households about upcoming Gram Sabha meetings, explaining their purpose, and motivating citizens to participate. Information that may have previously



remained confined to official notices now travelled through trusted social networks, reaching households more effectively and creating greater awareness about local governance processes.

### **Bringing Women to the Centre of Decision-Making**

One of the most visible outcomes of the initiative was the increased participation of women in Gram Sabha meetings. In many villages, women face social, economic, and cultural barriers that limit their engagement in public decision-making. Even when they attend meetings, they may hesitate to express their views or raise concerns.

Nongarh Gram Panchayat sought to change this reality by creating an environment where women felt confident and encouraged to participate. Jeevika groups played a critical role in this process. Women who regularly interacted through Self-Help Group meetings developed greater awareness of community issues and became more comfortable participating in public discussions.

As a result, women in Nongarh were not merely attending Gram Sabha meetings; they were actively contributing to discussions, raising local concerns, and engaging with Panchayat representatives. Issues relating to village development, service delivery, infrastructure, welfare schemes, and community needs were increasingly discussed from the perspective of women and families.



The participation of women also had a broader impact on the quality of governance. Discussions became more representative of community needs, and local planning processes benefited from diverse perspectives. Women emerged not only as beneficiaries of development programmes but also as active contributors to local decision-making.

### **Building Trust Through Institutional Convergence**

The success of the Nongarh model cannot be attributed to a single institution. Rather, it emerged from effective convergence among multiple stakeholders. Panchayat representatives, Jeevika Self-Help Groups, PRI members, community institutions, and local residents worked together to create a more participatory governance environment.



This convergence helped strengthen communication and coordination at the grassroots level. Citizens received information from multiple sources, community concerns were discussed more openly, and local institutions worked collectively to encourage participation. The Panchayat was no longer functioning in isolation; it became part of a broader community ecosystem focused on strengthening local democracy.

Community members increasingly viewed the Gram Sabha as a meaningful platform for addressing village issues, monitoring development activities, and participating in planning processes. The collaborative approach also strengthened public trust in local governance institutions, as citizens observed greater responsiveness and engagement from both elected representatives and community organizations.

Perhaps most importantly, convergence reduced the distance between governance structures and ordinary citizens. Decisions were discussed more openly, information flowed more effectively, and citizens felt more connected to the Panchayat's activities and objectives.

### From Awareness to Ownership

The transformation witnessed in Nongarh was not limited to improved attendance. It reflected a deeper shift in community attitudes towards local governance. Citizens became more aware of the purpose and importance of Gram Sabha, understood its role in village development, and recognized their own responsibilities within the process.

Women who had previously remained on the margins of public decision-making began to see themselves as stakeholders in governance. Community members developed greater confidence in expressing their views and participating in discussions. Local institutions became more interconnected, creating a stronger foundation for participatory planning and collective action.

The Panchayat also benefited from more informed discussions and stronger community ownership of development initiatives. Participation was no longer driven solely by administrative requirements; it increasingly reflected genuine citizen engagement.

As awareness increased, so did trust. As trust increased, participation expanded. And as participation expanded, the Gram Sabha became a more effective platform for democratic decision-making.

### Lessons from the Nongarh Experience

The experience of Nongarh Gram Panchayat highlights the transformative potential of community institutions in strengthening grassroots democracy. It demonstrates that participation can be significantly improved when governance systems work through existing social networks that enjoy credibility and trust within communities.

The Jeevika network served not merely as a mobilization mechanism but as a bridge connecting citizens with local governance. By empowering women, strengthening institutional convergence, and improving communication, the Panchayat created conditions that encouraged broader participation and deeper community engagement.

The initiative also reinforces an important lesson for local governance across India: increasing participation is not simply about organizing meetings; it is about building



relationships, strengthening trust, and creating opportunities for citizens to engage meaningfully in decision-making processes.

Nongarh's experience illustrates how women-led community institutions can become powerful catalysts for democratic participation. Through the Jeevika connection, the Gram Sabha evolved from a formal meeting into a community platform where citizens actively shape the future of their village. In doing so, the Panchayat has demonstrated how institutional convergence and community ownership can strengthen the foundations of participatory local governance.



## 6. Reaching Every Household, Every Hamlet

**Talap Gaon Panchayat, Tinsukia District, Assam**

### **When Communication Became the Key to Participation**

One of the most frequently cited reasons for low participation in Gram Sabha meetings across rural India is simple yet significant: people often do not know when meetings are being held, why they are important, or how their participation can influence local development. Notices may be issued and announcements made, but information does not always reach every household, particularly in geographically dispersed villages and socially diverse communities. As a result, Gram Sabha meetings often attract only a limited section of the population, leaving many voices unheard.

Talap Gaon Panchayat in Assam's Tinsukia district confronted this challenge by asking a fundamental question: What if participation is not a problem of citizen interest but a problem of communication?

Spread across multiple revenue villages and inhabited by diverse communities including Tea Tribes, Sonowal Kacharis, Ahoms, Morans, Mottocks, Bengalis, Bhojpuris, Marwaris, Muslims, Nepalis, and others, Talap Gaon Panchayat faces the complexities of governing a socially and geographically diverse population. Ensuring that information reaches every section of the community is not a simple task. Yet the Panchayat demonstrated that with a well-planned communication strategy, even large and diverse populations can be effectively mobilized to participate in local governance.

The result was a Gram Sabha that witnessed participation from hundreds of citizens representing different communities, social groups, and local institutions. More importantly, it offered valuable lessons on how communication can strengthen democratic participation at the grassroots.

### **Understanding the Last-Mile Challenge**

For many Panchayats, communication about Gram Sabha meetings often relies on a single method, such as a public notice or an announcement through loudspeakers. Talap Gaon Panchayat recognized that no single communication channel could effectively reach all segments of its population.

The Panchayat serves a population spread across several villages and settlements, including tea garden areas where traditional communication methods may not always be sufficient. Different groups receive information through different channels. Some rely on community networks, others on local leaders, and increasingly, many receive updates through digital platforms.

Recognizing this diversity, the Panchayat adopted a strategy that combined traditional communication methods with modern tools. Rather than depending on one medium, it



created a multi-layered communication system designed to ensure that information reached every household and every habitation.

This approach transformed communication from a routine administrative activity into a strategic component of participatory governance.

### **Mobilizing Through Community Institutions**

One of the most important elements of Talap's strategy was the active involvement of Self-Help Groups and community institutions. The Panchayat understood that trusted local networks often communicate more effectively than formal notices.

SHGs became critical partners in mobilization efforts. Members helped disseminate information about the Gram Sabha, encouraged community participation, and motivated households to attend. Their involvement ensured that communication extended beyond official channels and reached citizens through familiar and trusted community networks.

Ward leaders, Panchayat representatives, local influencers, and community organizations also played an important role in spreading awareness. Information regarding the meeting agenda and its significance was shared well in advance, allowing citizens sufficient time to plan their participation.

This convergence between Panchayat institutions and community organizations created a broad-based mobilization effort that extended across villages, hamlets, and social groups.

The approach demonstrated that participation is often strengthened when governance institutions work through existing community structures rather than functioning in isolation.

### **Combining Traditional and Digital Communication**

Perhaps the most innovative aspect of the Talap model was its use of multiple communication channels simultaneously.

Traditional methods continued to play an important role. Public notices were displayed at strategic locations, including marketplaces, public gathering points, and tea garden areas. Mobile miking campaigns were organized using auto-rickshaws equipped with loudspeakers that travelled through villages, informing citizens about the upcoming Gram Sabha.

At the same time, the Panchayat recognized the growing importance of digital communication. WhatsApp groups and other digital platforms were used to circulate information among community members, Panchayat representatives, and local stakeholders. Digital communication complemented traditional outreach rather than replacing it.

This hybrid communication approach ensured that information reached different segments of the population through the channels they were most likely to access.

The Panchayat also circulated details regarding the agenda and development issues to be discussed, helping citizens understand why their participation was important. Communication focused not only on informing people about the meeting but also on explaining how the Gram Sabha would influence decisions regarding local development and public services.





### Creating Participation Through Relevance

Communication alone does not guarantee participation. Citizens are more likely to attend when they believe that the meeting will address issues relevant to their lives.

The Gram Sabha in Talap was organized to discuss and approve important development works under the Fifteenth Finance Commission. Community members were aware that decisions relating to infrastructure, public services, and local development priorities would be discussed and approved during the meeting.

Development proposals included construction of public facilities, improvement of local infrastructure, renovation of community assets, and initiatives related to public welfare. The Panchayat also used the Gram Sabha to discuss issues of community importance such as public safety, sanitation, and the utilization of own-source revenue for educational support and community services.

By linking participation to tangible development outcomes, the Panchayat strengthened public interest in the Gram Sabha process. Citizens attended not merely as observers but as stakeholders in local decision-making.

The discussions reinforced the principle that local development is most effective when communities participate actively in shaping priorities and approving interventions.

### Building Trust Through Inclusive Participation

The success of the initiative was reflected not only in attendance figures but also in the diversity of participation. Citizens from different communities, social groups, Self-Help Groups, and local institutions participated in the Gram Sabha.

This broad representation contributed to more inclusive discussions and strengthened the legitimacy of decisions taken during the meeting. Citizens could observe that development priorities were being discussed openly and collectively rather than being determined through closed processes.



The Panchayat also ensured that the proceedings remained transparent. Key decisions and approved schemes were read out publicly before the conclusion of the meeting, reinforcing accountability and citizen ownership of the process.

Such practices contribute significantly to building public trust. When citizens are informed, involved, and able to witness decision-making firsthand, they are more likely to remain engaged in future governance activities.

### **Communication as a Tool for Democracy**

The experience of Talap Gaon Panchayat demonstrates that participation is often closely linked to the effectiveness of communication. Citizens cannot participate in processes they know little about, nor can they engage meaningfully if information reaches them too late.

By combining SHG convergence, targeted outreach, public notices, mobile miking, digital communication platforms, and community mobilization efforts, Talap created a communication ecosystem capable of reaching diverse populations spread across multiple settlements.

More importantly, the Panchayat demonstrated that communication is not merely about transmitting information. It is about creating awareness, building trust, fostering inclusion, and helping citizens understand the value of their participation.

The Talap model offers an important lesson for local governments across India: when information reaches every household and every hamlet, participation becomes more inclusive, decisions become more representative, and democracy becomes stronger. Through its innovative communication strategy, Talap Gaon Panchayat has shown how effective outreach can transform the Gram Sabha into a truly participatory institution of grassroots governance.



## 7. When Villagers Became Planners

**Gandhar Gram Panchayat, Sri Muktsar Sahib District, Punjab**

### **Moving Beyond Consultation to Collective Decision-Making**

For many citizens, development planning is often perceived as a process carried out by government officials and elected representatives. Roads are sanctioned, drains are constructed, public infrastructure is developed, and welfare programmes are implemented, but villagers frequently remain passive recipients rather than active participants in deciding what should be prioritized. While Gram Sabhas provide a constitutional platform for citizen participation, the extent to which local communities influence actual planning decisions varies considerably across regions.

Gandhar Gram Panchayat in Punjab offers a compelling example of how communities can move beyond consultation and become genuine partners in local planning and development. The Panchayat has demonstrated that when citizens are actively involved in identifying priorities, monitoring implementation, and reviewing outcomes, development becomes more responsive, transparent, and sustainable.

The experience of Gandhar is not based on a single event or campaign. Rather, it reflects a governance philosophy where planning begins with the community, decisions are shaped through collective discussions, and accountability is strengthened through continuous public engagement. The result is a Gram Sabha that functions not merely as a meeting forum but as a village planning institution where citizens help determine the future direction of development.

### **Starting with Community Priorities**

Like many rural areas, Gandhar faced the challenge of balancing multiple development needs with limited resources. Roads, drainage systems, public facilities, sanitation infrastructure, and community assets all required attention. The Panchayat recognized that prioritizing these needs effectively required direct engagement with citizens rather than relying solely on administrative assessments.

The Gram Sabha therefore became the primary platform for identifying local priorities. Villagers were encouraged to discuss development challenges, propose solutions, and collectively determine which interventions should receive immediate attention.

Rather than treating citizens as beneficiaries, the Panchayat treated them as planners. Residents from different parts of the village were invited to share their experiences and identify problems affecting their localities. Farmers discussed agricultural infrastructure, women highlighted issues relating to sanitation and public services, youth expressed concerns about community facilities, and elderly residents contributed their knowledge of local conditions.





This broad participation ensured that development planning reflected diverse community perspectives rather than the priorities of a limited group.

The process also strengthened transparency by making planning discussions visible and accessible to all citizens.

### Planning Based on Need Rather Than Preference

One of the most notable aspects of the Gandhar model was the Panchayat's emphasis on rational prioritization of development works. Rather than selecting projects based on individual preferences or political considerations, decisions were guided by collective assessments of local needs.

A commonly cited example from the Panchayat's experience was the approach adopted for infrastructure development. Community discussions often emphasized the importance of addressing drainage problems before constructing roads. Villagers understood that roads built without adequate drainage would deteriorate quickly and create recurring maintenance challenges.

This practical understanding led to the adoption of a "Drain First, Road Later" approach in several local planning discussions. The principle reflected a broader commitment to evidence-based and community-informed decision-making.

Such discussions helped citizens appreciate the complexities of development planning while enabling the Panchayat to build consensus around difficult decisions. Instead of competing



demands, the focus shifted towards identifying solutions that would benefit the community as a whole.

The process demonstrated that informed citizens are capable of contributing meaningfully to technical and developmental decisions when provided with appropriate opportunities for engagement.

### **Strengthening Accountability Through Community Monitoring**

Participation in Gandhar did not end once development projects were approved. The Panchayat actively encouraged citizens to remain involved throughout the implementation process.

Community members monitored the progress of approved works, reviewed implementation quality, and discussed emerging challenges through Gram Sabha meetings and public interactions. This community monitoring created an additional layer of accountability beyond formal administrative mechanisms.

Citizens could observe whether projects were progressing as planned, whether public resources were being utilized effectively, and whether approved priorities were being implemented according to community expectations. This transparency strengthened public trust and encouraged continued participation in governance processes.

The Panchayat also maintained open communication regarding ongoing projects and development activities. Discussions concerning expenditures, progress, and implementation challenges were shared with citizens, helping to create a culture of openness and accountability.

As a result, Gram Sabha meetings became platforms not only for planning future activities but also for reviewing past decisions and monitoring current initiatives.

### **Building Trust Through Visible Outcomes**

One of the key reasons for sustained participation in Gandhar has been the visible connection between community discussions and development outcomes. Citizens have consistently witnessed that issues raised during Gram Sabha meetings influence Panchayat decisions and are reflected in actual development interventions.

This responsiveness has strengthened confidence in local governance institutions. Villagers attend meetings because they believe their views matter and because they have seen evidence that participation leads to action.

Trust has also been reinforced by the Panchayat's willingness to involve citizens throughout the development cycle. Community members are not consulted merely to fulfil procedural requirements; they are treated as partners in planning, implementation, and monitoring.

This approach has contributed to stronger ownership of development initiatives. Projects are viewed not as government schemes imposed from above but as collective community efforts shaped through democratic processes.

The resulting sense of ownership encourages greater participation, cooperation, and support for local development activities.



## Transforming the Gram Sabha into a Planning Institution

The experience of Gandhar demonstrates that Gram Sabha can function as far more than a forum for approving resolutions and reviewing administrative matters. When designed effectively, it can become a genuine institution of participatory planning and democratic accountability.

The Panchayat's approach illustrates the value of involving citizens at every stage of the development process. From identifying priorities and selecting projects to monitoring implementation and reviewing outcomes, community participation has become an integral part of local governance.

This model also highlights the importance of transparency and collective decision-making in strengthening trust between citizens and local institutions. By ensuring that planning discussions remain open, inclusive, and evidence-based, the Panchayat has created a governance environment where participation is both meaningful and productive.

## A Village Where Planning Belongs to the People

The story of Gandhar Gram Panchayat is ultimately a story about ownership. It is about a community that moved beyond being passive recipients of development and became active participants in shaping its future.

Through participatory planning, community monitoring, and social accountability mechanisms, the Panchayat has demonstrated that local development is most effective when citizens are involved in every stage of the process. Villagers are no longer observers of governance; they are planners, monitors, and partners in development.

The Gandhar experience offers an important lesson for Panchayats across the country. When communities are given a genuine voice in decision-making and are empowered to monitor outcomes, participation becomes more meaningful, governance becomes more accountable, and development becomes more responsive to local needs.

In Gandhar, the Gram Sabha is not simply a meeting. It is the place where villagers come together to plan, prioritize, and shape the future of their village—a powerful reminder that the strongest development plans are often those created by the people themselves.



## 8. Bringing Every Voice to the Village Assembly

### Pariyari Gram Panchayat, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu

#### Redefining Participation Beyond Attendance

Gram Sabha participation is often measured by the number of people attending a meeting. However, true participation goes far beyond attendance. It requires creating opportunities for different sections of society to express their views, influence decisions, and contribute meaningfully to local governance. In many villages, certain groups—particularly women, children, adolescents, and marginalized citizens—remain underrepresented in public discussions despite being directly affected by development decisions.

Pariyari Gram Panchayat in Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu recognized that increasing attendance alone would not be sufficient to strengthen local democracy. The Panchayat adopted a more inclusive approach aimed at ensuring that every section of society had a voice in the governance process. Through innovative mechanisms such as Bal Sabhas, Mahila Sabhas, and focused community consultations, the Panchayat created multiple entry points for participation and transformed the Gram Sabha into a truly representative village assembly.

The experience of Pariyari demonstrates that participation becomes meaningful when governance structures actively create space for voices that are often unheard in conventional decision-making forums.

#### Creating Dedicated Platforms for Different Voices

One of the most innovative aspects of the Pariyari model is its recognition that different groups often face different barriers to participation. Women may hesitate to speak openly in large public gatherings. Children and adolescents are rarely given opportunities to discuss issues affecting their lives. Vulnerable groups may feel intimidated by formal discussions dominated by senior community members.

To address these challenges, the Panchayat institutionalized dedicated forums such as Mahila Sabhas and Bal Sabhas before the conduct of the Gram Sabha. These forums allowed specific groups to discuss their concerns, identify priorities, and develop recommendations in a comfortable and supportive environment.

The Mahila Sabha provided women with a platform to discuss issues related to drinking water, sanitation, health services, education, livelihood opportunities, social welfare schemes, and community development. Women who might otherwise remain silent during larger meetings were able to articulate their concerns freely and collectively.

Similarly, Bal Sabhas encouraged children and adolescents to engage with issues affecting their everyday lives. Discussions often focused on school facilities, cleanliness, health, recreational opportunities, environmental awareness, and community responsibilities. These



forums not only encouraged participation but also helped nurture democratic values among younger generations.

By creating these dedicated spaces, the Panchayat ensured that participation was not limited to those already comfortable speaking in public forums.

### **Connecting Community Discussions with Gram Sabha Decisions**

The success of the Pariyari model lies not merely in organizing separate meetings but in ensuring that the outcomes of these consultations influence Gram Sabha discussions and decision-making.

Issues identified during Mahila Sabhas and Bal Sabhas were systematically brought before the Gram Sabha. Women's priorities and children's concerns were presented alongside other development issues, ensuring that they became part of the official governance agenda.

This process strengthened the legitimacy of local planning and made decision-making more representative of community needs. Citizens could see that their concerns were not confined to separate meetings but were integrated into broader discussions on village development.

The Panchayat thereby established a clear linkage between participation and decision-making. Citizens were encouraged to engage because they knew their suggestions would be considered seriously and incorporated into planning processes wherever feasible.

This approach transformed participation from a symbolic exercise into a meaningful mechanism for influencing local governance.

### **Building a Culture of Inclusion**

The Pariyari experience highlights the importance of creating an inclusive governance culture. Participation was encouraged not only through formal meetings but also through continuous community engagement and awareness-building activities.

Panchayat representatives actively interacted with different groups within the community, encouraging them to attend meetings and contribute to discussions. Special attention was given to ensuring that women, youth, and marginalized households remained connected to governance processes.

As participation increased, citizens became more aware of their rights and responsibilities within the Panchayati Raj system. Women who initially attended meetings as observers gradually became active participants. Young people developed a greater understanding of community issues and local governance processes. Families began to view the Gram Sabha as a platform where their concerns could be raised and addressed.

This gradual change in attitudes contributed significantly to strengthening community ownership of development initiatives.

The Panchayat also benefited from a broader range of perspectives, enabling more informed and responsive decision-making.



## Empowering Future Citizens Through Bal Sabhas

One of the most significant contributions of the Pariyari model is its focus on nurturing future citizens through child participation. While children are often regarded as beneficiaries of development programmes, they are rarely viewed as contributors to governance.

The Bal Sabha challenged this perception by encouraging children to think about community issues and express their ideas. Through discussions, awareness activities, and interactive sessions, children learned about cleanliness, environmental protection, education, public health, and civic responsibility.

The initiative helped cultivate confidence, leadership skills, and a sense of ownership among young participants. It also sensitized adults to the importance of considering children's perspectives in community development.

By giving children a voice, the Panchayat strengthened not only present participation but also the foundations of future democratic engagement.



## Strengthening Local Democracy Through Inclusion

The cumulative impact of these efforts was a more inclusive and representative Gram Sabha. Participation was no longer confined to a limited group of active citizens. Women, children, youth, and vulnerable groups became visible contributors to community discussions and decision-making processes.

The Panchayat observed improved engagement during Gram Sabha meetings, greater awareness regarding local governance, and stronger community ownership of development initiatives. Citizens felt more connected to governance institutions because they had opportunities to participate in ways that were meaningful and accessible.



The approach also enhanced transparency and accountability. When more citizens participate, decisions are subject to greater scrutiny, discussions become richer, and governance becomes more responsive to local needs.

Most importantly, the Panchayat demonstrated that inclusion is not achieved through representation alone; it requires deliberate efforts to create opportunities for participation and ensure that every voice is heard.

### **A Model for Participatory and Inclusive Governance**

The experience of Pariyari Gram Panchayat offers an important lesson for local governments across India. Participation should not be viewed as a single event occurring during the Gram Sabha. It is a continuous process that requires engagement with different sections of society through mechanisms that address their specific needs and circumstances.

Through Bal Sabhas, Mahila Sabhas, and inclusive consultation processes, the Panchayat created a governance model that values every voice and recognizes the importance of diversity in decision-making. The initiative demonstrates that when citizens are given appropriate platforms to participate, governance becomes more democratic, more representative, and more effective.

In Pariyari, the Gram Sabha has evolved into a true village assembly where every section of society has an opportunity to contribute. The Panchayat's experience serves as a powerful reminder that strong local democracy is built not only through participation, but through inclusion.



## 9. Community, Culture and Collective Action

### Muthi Village Council, Mizoram

#### When Community Participation Became a Way of Life

In many parts of India, Panchayats and local governments invest significant effort in encouraging citizens to participate in Gram Sabha meetings and community development activities. Despite these efforts, participation often remains limited to a small section of the population, while younger generations and community volunteers remain largely disconnected from governance processes. Muthi Village Council in Mizoram presents a different story—one where participation is deeply embedded in community life and collective responsibility forms the foundation of local governance.

Nestled amidst the hills of Mizoram, Muthi is a village where traditional values of community cooperation continue to influence everyday life. The Village Council has successfully leveraged these traditions to strengthen participation in local governance, environmental conservation, and community development. Rather than treating governance as the exclusive responsibility of elected representatives, Muthi has cultivated a culture where citizens view community development as a shared responsibility.

The experience of Muthi demonstrates that participation flourishes when governance is closely linked to local culture, social values, and collective action. By engaging youth, mobilizing community organizations, and integrating environmental stewardship into local governance, the Village Council has created a participatory model that extends far beyond formal meetings.

#### Drawing Strength from Community Traditions

Mizoram has a long history of community cooperation and voluntary service. Traditional practices emphasizing mutual support, collective labour, and community solidarity continue to shape social life in many villages. Muthi Village Council recognized the potential of these traditions in strengthening local governance and public participation.

Rather than relying solely on formal mechanisms, the Village Council actively encourages community involvement through collective activities and village-wide initiatives. Development works, environmental campaigns, social programmes, and public awareness activities are often undertaken through community participation rather than government intervention alone.

This approach has helped create a strong sense of ownership among villagers. Community members do not perceive development projects as external schemes but as collective efforts that contribute to the welfare of the entire village. As a result, participation is driven by a sense of responsibility rather than obligation.

The Village Council has successfully built upon existing social capital to strengthen democratic engagement and collective decision-making.



## Youth at the Centre of Community Action

One of the most distinctive features of the Muthi model is the active involvement of young people in local governance and community development. Across many rural areas, attracting youth to governance processes remains a challenge. Muthi addressed this issue by creating meaningful opportunities for young people to contribute to village life.

Youth groups participate actively in environmental campaigns, community improvement initiatives, awareness programmes, and village-level activities. Their involvement extends beyond attendance at meetings to direct participation in community action.

The Village Council recognizes that youth bring energy, innovation, and leadership potential to local governance. By involving them in practical activities related to development and environmental management, the village has succeeded in creating a new generation of citizens who are aware of community issues and committed to collective action.

This engagement has also strengthened intergenerational cooperation. Young people work alongside elders, community leaders, and Village Council members, facilitating the transfer of knowledge and reinforcing community bonds.

The result is a governance environment where participation is not limited by age but shared across generations.

## Environmental Stewardship as a Community Responsibility

Environmental conservation occupies a central place in the development philosophy of Muthi Village Council. The village has recognized that sustainable development requires active citizen participation in protecting natural resources and maintaining environmental quality.

Tree plantation drives, cleanliness campaigns, waste management initiatives, and conservation activities are frequently organized with strong community participation. Rather than treating environmental protection as the responsibility of government agencies alone, the Village Council encourages citizens to take collective ownership of their natural surroundings.

Community members participate in plantation programmes, maintenance of public spaces, and awareness campaigns focused on environmental sustainability. Schools, youth groups, and local organizations are actively involved in these efforts, creating a broad-based movement for environmental stewardship.





*Inauguration of Gram Sabha through Plantation Program*

These activities serve a dual purpose. They contribute directly to environmental improvement while simultaneously strengthening community participation and social cohesion. Citizens work together towards common objectives, reinforcing the idea that collective action can produce tangible results.

The integration of environmental stewardship into local governance has therefore become both a development strategy and a participation mechanism.

### **Culture as a Vehicle for Participation**

Muthi Village Council has also demonstrated how cultural identity can be used to strengthen community engagement. Cultural events, traditional celebrations, and community gatherings provide opportunities for interaction, dialogue, and collective participation.

These occasions bring together citizens from different age groups and social backgrounds, creating informal spaces where community concerns can be discussed and shared. Cultural activities help strengthen social bonds and foster a sense of belonging that extends into governance processes.

The Village Council has effectively utilized these community platforms to promote awareness, encourage participation, and mobilize citizens around common goals. By linking governance with culture, the village has made participation more accessible and meaningful.

Citizens engage not because they are instructed to do so but because participation is integrated into the social and cultural fabric of village life.

This approach illustrates the importance of aligning governance practices with local traditions and community values.

### **Strengthening Ownership Through Collective Action**

The combined impact of youth engagement, environmental stewardship, and cultural participation has been the creation of a strong culture of collective responsibility. Villagers



view community development as a shared endeavour rather than a task assigned solely to elected representatives.

Community initiatives are characterized by cooperation, voluntary participation, and mutual support. Citizens contribute their time, effort, and ideas towards improving village infrastructure, protecting the environment, and strengthening social welfare.

This sense of ownership has significant implications for local governance. Development projects receive stronger community support, public resources are utilized more effectively, and implementation challenges are addressed collectively.

The Village Council benefits from an active and engaged citizenry, while citizens gain confidence that their contributions have a meaningful impact on community development.

Participation thus becomes both a means and an outcome of good governance.

### **A Model Rooted in Community Values**

The experience of Muthi Village Council demonstrates that strong participation does not always emerge from formal interventions alone. It can also be nurtured through cultural values, community traditions, environmental responsibility, and collective action.

By placing youth at the centre of community initiatives, promoting environmental stewardship, and leveraging cultural institutions to strengthen engagement, the Village Council has created a governance model rooted in local realities and community strengths.

The innovation lies in recognizing that participation is most sustainable when it becomes part of everyday life. Rather than depending solely on periodic meetings or awareness campaigns, Muthi has embedded participation within the social fabric of the village.

The experience offers an important lesson for local governments across India: communities are more likely to engage when governance resonates with their culture, values, and collective aspirations. Through its emphasis on community, culture, and collective action, Muthi Village Council has demonstrated how local democracy can be strengthened by building upon the strengths that already exist within society.

In doing so, the village has shown that meaningful participation is not merely about attending meetings—it is about working together to shape a better future for the community.



## 10. *Blending Tradition and Technology for Participation*

### Meral East Gram Panchayat, Garhwa District, Jharkhand

#### Reimagining Community Mobilization in the Digital Age

One of the most common challenges faced by Gram Panchayats across India is ensuring that information about Gram Sabha meetings reaches every citizen in a timely and meaningful manner. In an era of increasing digital connectivity, traditional methods such as wall writings and public announcements continue to remain relevant, particularly in rural areas where access to technology varies significantly. The challenge, therefore, is not choosing between traditional and modern communication methods but effectively combining both to maximize participation.

Meral East Gram Panchayat in Garhwa district of Jharkhand offers an innovative example of how this balance can be achieved. During the Special Gram Sabha organized on Gandhi Jayanti, the Panchayat adopted a comprehensive community mobilization strategy that combined door-to-door outreach, public campaigns, rallies, social media platforms, digital governance awareness, and community engagement activities. The result was a highly participatory event that attracted citizens from different sections of society and transformed the Gram Sabha into a vibrant platform for dialogue, learning, and collective decision-making.

The experience demonstrated that participation can be significantly enhanced when communication strategies are designed to reach citizens through multiple channels while simultaneously creating excitement and community ownership around the event.

#### Taking the Message to Every Household

The Panchayat recognized that participation begins long before the Gram Sabha itself. Effective preparation and outreach were considered essential for ensuring meaningful citizen engagement.

Well before the scheduled meeting, Panchayat representatives initiated a systematic awareness campaign across the village. Door-to-door distribution of leaflets was undertaken to ensure that information reached individual households directly. Public announcements through miking were conducted repeatedly, allowing citizens to become familiar with the date, venue, and purpose of the Gram Sabha.

Community meetings involving ward members, Panchayat functionaries, and local stakeholders were organized to coordinate mobilization efforts. Wall writings were used to reinforce key messages and increase public visibility of the event.

What distinguished the initiative was the Panchayat's recognition that different citizens access information through different channels. Rather than depending on a single communication medium, the Panchayat adopted a multi-pronged outreach strategy designed to maximize coverage and participation.



The objective was simple yet ambitious: ensure that no household remained unaware of the Gram Sabha.

### **Harnessing the Power of Digital Platforms**

While traditional communication methods remained central to the mobilization effort, Meral East also embraced digital tools to strengthen outreach and awareness.

Social media platforms, including WhatsApp groups and Facebook networks, were actively used to disseminate information regarding the Gram Sabha. Updates were circulated among community members, local leaders, government functionaries, and youth groups. Digital communication helped reach citizens quickly and complemented traditional methods such as leaflet distribution and public announcements.

The Panchayat also used the occasion to promote awareness regarding emerging digital governance initiatives. Citizens were introduced to platforms such as the Meri Panchayat App and the Nirnay App, which have been developed to strengthen transparency, citizen engagement, and local governance processes.

For many participants, this was their first exposure to digital tools designed specifically for Panchayat governance. Demonstrations and discussions helped citizens understand how technology could enhance access to information and strengthen interactions between citizens and local institutions.

The initiative highlighted an important lesson: technology becomes most effective when it complements existing community engagement mechanisms rather than replacing them.

### **Turning Awareness into Participation**

The Gram Sabha was designed not merely as a meeting but as a community event that encouraged active involvement from diverse sections of society.

Children and women participated in awareness rallies organized across the village. These rallies generated visibility, created enthusiasm, and encouraged broader community engagement. The involvement of students, women, and community groups transformed the event into a collective movement rather than a routine administrative exercise.

A video presentation on the People's Plan Campaign was screened to educate participants about the objectives and significance of decentralized planning. Discussions were conducted on the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), Panchayat Development Index (PDI), and the integration of Village Poverty Reduction Plans prepared by Self-Help Groups.

The Panchayat recognized that citizens are more likely to participate when they understand the purpose of the discussions and the relevance of governance processes to their daily lives. By investing in awareness generation, the Panchayat created a more informed and engaged citizenry.

The Gram Sabha thus evolved into a platform not only for decision-making but also for civic education and capacity building.



## Celebrating Participation and Community Leadership

An important feature of the initiative was the recognition and celebration of community contributions. Senior citizens were felicitated and invited to share their experiences regarding the development journey of the Panchayat. Their reflections provided historical perspective while reinforcing the value of community participation in local governance.

The event also included collective pledges on themes such as cleanliness, health, fitness, and substance-free communities. Citizens participated in discussions on sustainable development, environmental responsibility, and community welfare.

A plantation drive further strengthened the connection between governance and collective action. Participants planted saplings and reaffirmed their commitment to environmental conservation, transforming the Gram Sabha from a discussion forum into a platform for community action.

These activities helped create a sense of ownership and belonging among participants. Citizens were not passive attendees but active contributors to the Panchayat's development vision.



## Building a Participatory Governance Ecosystem

The success of the initiative lay in its ability to bring together multiple stakeholders within a common platform. Elected representatives, Panchayat officials, community leaders, women, youth, Self-Help Groups, senior citizens, government departments, and ordinary villagers all contributed to the process.

The convergence of traditional communication methods and digital tools ensured broad outreach. Community campaigns generated visibility and enthusiasm. Awareness sessions enhanced understanding of governance processes. Recognition programmes and public activities encouraged participation and strengthened social cohesion.

Together, these interventions created a participatory governance ecosystem where information flowed more effectively, citizens were better informed, and engagement extended beyond attendance to active involvement.



The Panchayat demonstrated that participation is not a single event but the outcome of continuous communication, awareness generation, trust-building, and community ownership.

### **A Model for Hybrid Community Mobilization**

The experience of Meral East Gram Panchayat illustrates how local governments can adapt to changing communication environments while retaining the strengths of traditional community engagement. By combining door-to-door outreach, public announcements, rallies, social media platforms, digital governance awareness, and community campaigns, the Panchayat created a hybrid participation model capable of reaching diverse sections of society.

The innovation lies not in the use of technology alone but in the integration of technology with community-based mobilization strategies. Traditional methods ensured inclusiveness, while digital tools expanded reach and improved communication efficiency.

In an increasingly connected world, the Meral East experience offers valuable lessons for Gram Panchayats across the country. It demonstrates that participation can be significantly enhanced when governance institutions meet citizens where they are—whether in village streets, community gatherings, WhatsApp groups, or public campaigns.

By blending tradition and technology, Meral East transformed the Gram Sabha into a more visible, accessible, and participatory institution of local democracy, providing an inspiring model for strengthening citizen engagement at the grassroots level.











**STRONGER GRAM SABHA.  
STRONGER PARTICIPATION.  
STRONGER DEMOCRACY.**



**LISTEN**



**ENGAGE**



**DECIDE**



**DEVELOP**



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