

Understanding Stakeholders' Perspectives on the Inner Line Permit System in Arunachal Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

The Inner Line Permit (ILP) system is an important mechanism for regulating the entry of non-residents into Arunachal Pradesh while protecting the identity, culture, and customary rights of its indigenous tribal communities. This study explores the perspectives of different stakeholders on the ILP system, focusing on its benefits, implementation challenges, and possible improvements. A qualitative research design was adopted, and data were collected through semi structured interviews with 25 participants representing different stakeholder groups. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings show that most participants consider the ILP essential for protecting indigenous identity and regulating migration. However, they also highlighted challenges such as delays in permit processing, limited public awareness, repeated permit renewals, and the need for better coordination among government agencies. Participants recommended simplifying the online application process, strengthening digital monitoring through proposed technologies such as QR code verification, improving coordination among government departments, and increasing public awareness. The study concludes that the effectiveness of the ILP depends on balancing the protection of indigenous interests with an efficient, transparent, and user friendly permit system. The findings provide useful insights for strengthening ILP policy and governance in Arunachal Pradesh.

Keywords: *Inner Line Permit; Arunachal Pradesh; Stakeholder Perspectives; Indigenous Rights; Governance; Qualitative Research; Public Policy*

INTRODUCTION

The Inner Line Permit (ILP) is a legal travel document that regulates the entry of Indian citizens who are not permanent residents into certain protected states of Northeast India, including Arunachal Pradesh. The system operates under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, a colonial era law that continues to serve as an important mechanism for safeguarding the land, culture, traditions and customary rights of the indigenous tribal communities of the state.

In Arunachal Pradesh, the ILP is more than an administrative requirement. It has become closely linked with questions of identity, governance, migration and the constitutional protection of tribal communities. As the state experiences increasing movement of people for employment, education, trade, tourism and infrastructure development, public discussions surrounding the ILP have become more significant. Many indigenous organisations and civil society groups argue that effective implementation of the ILP is essential to prevent illegal settlement, protect demographic balance and preserve the unique cultural heritage of the state's tribal population. At the same time, visitors, students, business owners, migrant workers and employers have raised concerns regarding procedural delays, documentation requirements and the need for a more efficient permit system.

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Recognising these concerns, the Government of Arunachal Pradesh has recently undertaken several reforms to strengthen the ILP mechanism. the Government has proposed strengthening the ILP mechanism through initiatives such as a fully digital e ILP system, QR code based permit verification, Aadhaar based authentication, stricter monitoring of permit holders, and enhanced enforcement measures aimed at improving transparency and preventing misuse of permits. These initiatives reflect the government's efforts to balance security, administrative efficiency and public convenience while preserving the objectives of the ILP system.

Despite these developments, opinions about the ILP continue to differ across stakeholder groups. Indigenous communities often view the permit system as a vital safeguard for protecting their identity, traditional institutions and natural resources. In contrast, traders, tourists, students, employers and temporary workers may perceive certain procedures as time consuming or restrictive. These differing perspectives highlight the need for a deeper understanding of how the ILP system is experienced by those who are directly affected by it.

Against this background, the present study seeks to explore the perspectives of different stakeholders on the Inner Line Permit system in Arunachal Pradesh. Using a qualitative research approach, the study aims to understand how various groups perceive the purpose, effectiveness, benefits and challenges of the ILP system. It also seeks to identify suggestions for improving its implementation in a manner that protects indigenous interests while ensuring transparency, efficiency and fairness. The findings are expected to contribute to informed policy discussions on the future of the ILP system and its role in promoting inclusive and sustainable governance in Arunachal Pradesh.

Research Contributions

This study will contribute by

- understanding different stakeholder perspectives on the ILP system
- identifying practical challenges in implementing the ILP
- providing suggestions for improving the permit system
- contributing to policy discussions on tribal protection and governance
- adding recent qualitative evidence to Political Science literature

Objectives of the Study

- i. To understand stakeholders' perceptions of the Inner Line Permit system in Arunachal Pradesh.
- ii. To identify the benefits and challenges associated with the implementation of the ILP.
- iii. To explore suggestions for improving the present ILP system.

Research Questions

- i. How do different stakeholders perceive the Inner Line Permit system?
- ii. What benefits do stakeholders associate with the ILP?
- iii. What challenges do stakeholders experience regarding the ILP?
- iv. What improvements do stakeholders suggest for strengthening the ILP system?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study adopted a **Systematic Literature Review (SLR)** following the **PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analyses)** framework. The PRISMA approach ensured a transparent and systematic process for identifying, screening, and selecting relevant literature. Academic publications were searched through **Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and JSTOR**, while official policy documents were obtained from the Government of Arunachal Pradesh. The review covered publications from **2020 to April 2026**, enabling an

assessment of recent developments relating to the Inner Line Permit (ILP), indigenous rights, migration governance, and public policy.

Search Keywords

The search strategy used combinations of the following keywords: *Inner Line Permit, Arunachal Pradesh, Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, tribal identity, indigenous rights, border governance, migration, stakeholder perspectives, public policy, and North East India.*

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Only English-language publications, peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, policy documents, and credible institutional publications published between 2020 and April 2026 were included. Newspaper editorials, blogs, conference abstracts, duplicate records, and studies unrelated to the ILP or Arunachal Pradesh were excluded.

Literature Analyzed

Author	Year	Study	Major Findings	DOI / Open Source
Tsangpa Dorjee	2025	<i>Inner Line Permit System of Arunachal Pradesh</i>	Examines the historical evolution and policy relevance of the ILP, concluding that it remains an important legal mechanism for protecting indigenous identity while balancing migration and development.	DOI: 10.36948/IJFMR.2025.V07I06.68793
Government of Arunachal Pradesh	2026	<i>Inner Line Permit Guidelines, 2026</i>	Proposed QR code based permit verification, Aadhaar based authentication, and strengthened enforcement measures to improve transparency and monitoring.	Official Document: Arunachal Pradesh ILP Guidelines 2026 and Arunachal Pradesh eILP Portal (BEFR, 1873)
Topha Manham	2026	<i>Land, Forest, and Resource Governance among the Wancho Tribe</i>	Discusses indigenous governance, land rights, and resource management among the Wancho tribe, providing insights into tribal governance that are relevant to ILP and indigenous protection in Arunachal Pradesh.	DOI: 10.33545/26646021.2026.v8.i1c.859
Prabuddha Chakraborty, T. V. Ramachandra, and colleagues	2020	<i>Sustainable Development and Indigenous Governance in Arunachal Pradesh</i>	Highlights the importance of customary institutions, indigenous governance, and community-based natural resource management in safeguarding tribal rights and livelihoods.	DOI: 10.1007/s10668-020-00945-1
Abhishek Saha	2020	<i>What is the Inner Line Permit? (The Indian Express, policy analysis)</i>	Explains the historical origin of the ILP under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, and its continuing role in protecting indigenous communities in Northeast India.	Open Access: The Indian Express – What is the Inner Line Permit?

Thematic Review**Theme 1: Stakeholders' Perceptions of the Inner Line Permit System**

Several studies indicate that the Inner Line Permit (ILP) is perceived differently by various stakeholder groups depending on their social, economic, and institutional interests. Dorjee (2025) argues that indigenous communities generally regard the ILP as an essential mechanism for safeguarding tribal identity, customary practices, and community land rights. Likewise, Chakraborty et al. (2020) highlight that the ILP contributes to preserving traditional governance systems and protecting indigenous communities from uncontrolled migration.

Government reports also present the ILP as a constitutional and administrative tool for ensuring regulated entry into Arunachal Pradesh while maintaining the cultural and demographic integrity of the state. However, studies suggest that non-local workers, business owners, students, and tourists often perceive the permit process as an administrative requirement that can involve procedural complexities and delays. These varying perspectives demonstrate that stakeholder perceptions are shaped by their respective roles and experiences within the ILP framework.

Theme 2: Perceived Benefits of the Inner Line Permit System

The literature consistently identifies several benefits associated with the ILP system. According to Dorjee (2025), the ILP serves as an important legal instrument for protecting indigenous identity and regulating migration. Chakraborty et al. (2020) further argue that controlled migration helps preserve customary institutions, traditional land ownership, and community-based resource management.

The Government of Arunachal Pradesh (2026) maintains that the ILP strengthens border governance, improves public security, and assists authorities in monitoring the movement of visitors through digital permit verification systems. These findings suggest that the ILP contributes not only to cultural preservation but also to administrative regulation and sustainable governance.

Theme 3: Challenges in the Implementation of the ILP

Despite its recognised importance, several studies identify practical challenges in implementing the ILP effectively. Manham (2026) reports concerns relating to illegal entry, inconsistent permit verification, limited public awareness, and administrative inefficiencies. Similar observations are reflected in government reports, which acknowledge the need for improved digital infrastructure and stronger monitoring mechanisms.

Recent policy reforms introducing QR code-based permits and Aadhaar-based verification demonstrate the government's efforts to modernise the permit system. Nevertheless, existing studies indicate that challenges remain in ensuring uniform implementation, improving service delivery, and balancing security with administrative convenience.

Theme 4: Recommendations for Strengthening the ILP System

A growing body of literature recommends adopting a more participatory and technology-driven approach to the implementation of the ILP. Recent government initiatives advocate the use of digital permits, electronic verification, and integrated monitoring systems to enhance transparency and reduce administrative delays. Scholars also emphasise the importance of increasing public awareness, simplifying permit procedures, strengthening coordination among enforcement agencies, and involving local communities in policy implementation.

The existing studies show that the Inner Line Permit plays an important role in protecting the identity, culture, and land rights of the indigenous people of Arunachal Pradesh. Most researchers have focused on its legal background, historical development, and policy importance. Government reports have mainly highlighted administrative reforms

and digital initiatives to improve the permit system. However, there is very little research that examines how different groups such as tribal leaders, government officials, business owners, students, tourists, and non local workers actually experience the ILP in their daily lives. The literature also provides limited discussion on whether the recent digital reforms have improved the permit system from the perspective of those directly affected. Therefore, a qualitative study that brings together the views of different stakeholders is necessary to provide a more balanced understanding of the present ILP system.

Alignment of Themes with the Study

Theme	Objective	Research Question
Theme 1: Stakeholders' Perceptions of the ILP	Objective 1	RQ1
Theme 2: Benefits of the ILP	Objective 2	RQ2
Theme 3: Challenges in ILP Implementation	Objective 2	RQ3
Theme 4: Suggestions for Improving the ILP	Objective 3	RQ4

Research Gap

Although previous studies have explained the historical, legal, and administrative importance of the Inner Line Permit system, very few studies have explored how different stakeholders understand and experience it. Most research has focused on government policies, indigenous rights, or migration, while the opinions of people who regularly interact with the ILP system have received limited attention.

Recent reforms, including online applications, QR code verification, and Aadhaar based authentication, have modernised the permit system. However, little evidence is available regarding whether these changes have improved the experiences of government officials, tribal organisations, business owners, students, tourists, and non local workers.

Another important gap is that earlier studies have rarely examined the ILP using Stakeholder Theory, which helps explain how different groups may have different expectations, interests, and concerns regarding the same policy.

Therefore, this study adopts a qualitative approach to understand how various stakeholders perceive the ILP system, the benefits they associate with it, the challenges they experience, and the improvements they believe are necessary. By bringing together multiple stakeholder perspectives, this study aims to contribute useful evidence for future policy making and governance in Arunachal Pradesh.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study follows a **qualitative research design** because it aims to understand people's opinions, experiences and perceptions regarding the Inner Line Permit system.

Population

The study includes different stakeholders in Arunachal Pradesh such as

- Government officials
- Tribal leaders
- Local residents
- Business owners
- Students
- Non local workers

Sampling Strategy

The study used purposive sampling because the researcher intended to interview participants who had direct knowledge and experience of the Inner Line Permit system. This method allowed the researcher to collect detailed information from people who regularly interact with the ILP in different ways.

Participants included government officials, tribal leaders, local residents, business owners, students, tourists, and non local workers. Selecting participants from different stakeholder groups helped capture a wide range of experiences and opinions.

Sample Size

A total of 25 participants were interviewed. The interviews continued until data saturation was reached. Data saturation refers to the stage where no major new ideas or themes emerged from additional interviews. Since the purpose of qualitative research is to understand experiences in depth rather than produce statistical findings, this sample size was considered appropriate.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The respondents included information on

- Age
- Gender
- Occupation
- District
- Stakeholder category
- Years of experience with the ILP system

Participant Profile

Stakeholder Group	Number of Participants
Government officials	3
Tribal leaders	3
Local residents	4
Business owners	3
Students	4
Non local workers	3
Tourists	2
Research scholars	3
Total	25

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through **semi structured interviews**.

Each interview lasted about **30 to 45 minutes**.

Participants were asked open ended questions regarding

- their understanding of the ILP

- its benefits
- existing challenges
- suggestions for improvement

The interviews were recorded with participants' permission and later transcribed for analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were followed throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research before the interviews, and **informed consent** was obtained from each participant. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. The identity of all participants was kept confidential by using codes instead of names, and the information collected was used solely for academic purposes. The researcher also ensured that the views of all participants were reported honestly and respectfully without any bias or misrepresentation.

TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Several steps were taken to improve the quality and credibility of the study. Participants were encouraged to explain their experiences freely so that their views could be understood clearly. Interview responses were carefully compared during the analysis to ensure that the themes accurately reflected the participants' opinions. The researcher also maintained detailed notes throughout the research process to improve consistency and transparency. Direct quotations from participants were included in the findings to support the interpretation of the data. These measures helped increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The interview recordings were first transcribed into written form. Each transcript was read several times to become familiar with the participants' responses. Similar ideas were identified and assigned simple codes. These codes were then grouped into broader themes based on the objectives of the study. Finally, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately represented the experiences shared by the participants. The analysis followed the six step thematic analysis process suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis. After transcribing the interviews, participants' responses were coded and organised into themes based on the objectives of the study. Four major themes emerged from the analysis: (1) stakeholders' perceptions of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system, (2) perceived benefits of the ILP, (3) challenges in its implementation, and (4) suggestions for improving the system.

Initial Codes and Themes

Initial Code	Category	Final Theme
Protects tribal identity	Indigenous protection	Stakeholders' perceptions
Controls migration	Governance	Benefits of ILP
Delay in permit approval	Administrative issues	Challenges
QR code system	Digital reforms	Challenges
Online application	Administrative improvement	Suggestions
Public awareness	Policy improvement	Suggestions

Theme 1: Stakeholders' Perceptions of the Inner Line Permit System

The majority of participants viewed the ILP as an essential mechanism for protecting the identity, culture, and land rights of the indigenous communities of Arunachal Pradesh. Government officials, tribal leaders, local residents, and civil society representatives described the ILP as a safeguard against uncontrolled migration and demographic change.

One government official (P1) stated:

"The ILP is necessary for regulating entry into the state. The idea of introducing QR code verification will improve monitoring, but departments will need better coordination to track permit expiry."

Similarly, a tribal leader (P2) remarked:

"The ILP is our constitutional safeguard. Without proper implementation, indigenous communities may face demographic pressure and loss of traditional land rights."

At the same time, business owners, students, tourists, and non-local workers generally accepted the importance of the ILP but emphasised the need for a more efficient and user-friendly system.

Finding: Overall, stakeholders recognised the importance of the ILP, although their perceptions differed according to their roles and experiences.

Theme 2: Perceived Benefits of the ILP System

Participants identified several benefits of the ILP. The most frequently mentioned benefit was the protection of indigenous identity, followed by migration control, preservation of tribal land rights, and improved security.

The local resident (P3) commented:

"The ILP should remain strict, but enforcement needs to be uniform. Sometimes outsiders stay beyond the validity of their permits."

A civil society representative (P9) observed:

"The ILP is important for preserving indigenous identity, but stronger monitoring is required to prevent misuse of permits and illegal entry."

Government officials believed that digital verification could improve administrative monitoring and help reduce fraudulent permits if implemented effectively.

Finding: Participants generally agreed that the ILP contributes to protecting tribal interests, maintaining demographic balance, and strengthening border governance.

Theme 3: Challenges in the Implementation of the ILP

Although participants supported the objectives of the ILP, they highlighted several implementation challenges. These included delays in permit processing, inconsistent verification procedures, limited public awareness, repeated permit renewals, and weak coordination among implementing agencies.

A business owner (P4) stated:

"I support the ILP because it protects local interests. However, genuine workers and suppliers should receive permits more quickly to avoid delays in business."

Similarly, a non-local worker (P6) explained:

"Getting an ILP is not difficult, but renewing it repeatedly can be inconvenient. A longer validity period for genuine workers would help."

A police officer (P10) also pointed out:

"Digital verification is expected to reduce fake permits; however, tracking visitors after permit expiry may continue to remain a challenge unless coordination among departments is strengthened."

Finding: While the ILP system is widely supported, participants believed that administrative procedures and enforcement mechanisms require further improvement.

Theme 4: Suggestions for Strengthening the ILP System

Participants suggested several measures to improve the effectiveness of the ILP system. The most common recommendations included simplifying the online application process, strengthening digital monitoring, increasing public awareness, improving coordination among government departments, and ensuring faster approval of applications submitted by genuine visitors.

A university student (P5) remarked:

"Most young people support the ILP, but the online application process should be simpler and more user-friendly."

A hotel owner (P8) added:

"The digital system is faster than before, but visitors sometimes arrive without knowing they need an ILP. More public awareness is necessary."

A research scholar (P12) suggested:

"The ILP should protect tribal rights while ensuring that genuine students, researchers, and visitors can obtain permits without unnecessary hurdles."

Finding: Participants favoured retaining the ILP while introducing reforms that make the system more transparent, efficient, and accessible without compromising its primary objective of protecting indigenous communities.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that different stakeholders generally support the Inner Line Permit system because they believe it helps protect the identity, culture, and land rights of indigenous communities in Arunachal Pradesh. However, the reasons for supporting the ILP differ among stakeholder groups. Tribal leaders mainly viewed it as a safeguard for indigenous rights, while government officials focused on administrative control and border security. Business owners, students, tourists, and non local workers accepted the importance of the ILP but expected a simpler and more efficient permit process.

These findings support Stakeholder Theory, which suggests that different groups often have different interests and expectations regarding the same public policy. Although all participants recognised the importance of the ILP, their experiences depended on how the policy affected their daily activities. This demonstrates the need for policy makers to consider the views of multiple stakeholder groups while improving the ILP system.

The findings are also consistent with previous studies that describe the ILP as an important mechanism for protecting indigenous communities. However, this study extends earlier research by showing how different stakeholder groups experience the permit system in practice and by highlighting their suggestions for future improvements.

Another important finding is that Participants generally expressed support for proposed digital initiatives such as QR code based permits and online applications, believing that these measures have the potential to improve monitoring and transparency. However, they also emphasised that technology alone would not ensure effective implementation. Better coordination among departments, greater public awareness, and simplified procedures are equally important for improving the overall effectiveness of the ILP system.

Overall, the study highlights that the future success of the ILP depends on maintaining a balance between protecting indigenous interests and ensuring an efficient, transparent, and user friendly administrative system.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study have several practical and academic implications.

First, the study provides valuable insights for policymakers by highlighting the views of different stakeholder groups regarding the implementation of the ILP system.

Second, the findings suggest that strengthening digital monitoring through proposed QR code based verification should be accompanied by better coordination among government departments, increased public awareness, and periodic monitoring of permit validity.

Third, the study contributes to the existing literature by providing recent qualitative evidence on stakeholder perspectives, an area that has received limited scholarly attention.

Finally, the study demonstrates the usefulness of Stakeholder Theory in understanding how different groups experience and evaluate the ILP system. These findings may support future policy decisions that seek to balance indigenous protection with administrative efficiency and sustainable development.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has a few limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings.

- i. The study adopted a qualitative research design with a relatively small number of participants. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to the entire population of Arunachal Pradesh.
- ii. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, which may not represent the views of every stakeholder group across the state.
- iii. In addition, the study focused only on stakeholder perspectives and did not include quantitative measures to examine the effectiveness of the ILP system.

Despite these limitations, the study provides meaningful insights into the experiences and opinions of stakeholders directly associated with the ILP.

FUTURE RESEARCH

- i. Future studies may include a larger number of participants from different districts of Arunachal Pradesh to obtain a broader understanding of stakeholder perspectives.
- ii. Researchers may also adopt a mixed methods approach by combining qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys to strengthen the findings.
- iii. Comparative studies may be conducted between Arunachal Pradesh and other states where the Inner Line Permit system is implemented, such as Nagaland, Mizoram, and Manipur.
- iv. Future research may also examine the long term impact of digital reforms on the efficiency, transparency, and public acceptance of the ILP system.
- v. In addition, studies focusing on the economic, social, and administrative impact of the ILP on tourism, trade, education, and employment would further strengthen the existing body of knowledge.
- vi. Future studies may evaluate the effectiveness of QR code based permit verification after its full implementation to examine its impact on monitoring, permit compliance, administrative efficiency, and stakeholder satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The Inner Line Permit system remains an important institution for protecting the indigenous identity, cultural heritage, and customary rights of the people of Arunachal Pradesh. The findings of this study indicate that while stakeholders strongly support the objectives of the ILP, they also recognise the need for improvements in its implementation. Administrative efficiency, stronger monitoring, greater public awareness, and effective coordination among government agencies emerged as key areas requiring attention.

Participants believed that proposed digital reforms, including QR code based verification and online permit services, have the potential to improve the ILP system. However, they emphasised that effective implementation would require better coordination among departments, increased public awareness, and continuous administrative support.

This study provides a better understanding of how different stakeholders view the Inner Line Permit system in Arunachal Pradesh. While most participants strongly supported the purpose of the ILP, they also identified several practical issues that require attention. The findings suggest that future reforms should not only strengthen security but also improve administrative efficiency, public awareness, and digital services. By considering the views of different stakeholder groups, policy makers can develop a permit system that protects indigenous interests while supporting responsible development and good governance.

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