# Socioeconomic Status of Kuki Tribal Women:
# A Case Study Churachandpur District, Manipur

*Shrabanti Maity, Victoria Haobijam and Alok Sen*

Department of Economics, Assam University (A Central University),
Silchar -788011, Assam, India

**Abstract:** The socio-economic status of women plays a very vital role in both individual and community life. It is a multidimensional concept that can be measured by composition of various factors. The present study is about the socioeconomic status of Kuki women. The kuki are the one of the major tribal groups in Manipur. The study is based on primary data taking some prominent factors to highlight the socio-economic condition of the Kuki women. Inorder to find out the socioeconomic status of the Kuki women, the present study used a self-developed composite socio-economic index which is the combination of three indices namely, Health Index, Educational Index and Income Index. And finally a logit regression model is fitted to find out the major factors influencing the socioeconomic status of women.

## INTRODUCTION

**An Overview:** Socioeconomic status is an intricate concept covering of two different aspects, the social aspect that includes status or position in a social stratification and the economic aspects that includes resources such as income, occupation and wealth. Even though there is no generally accepted definition of the term "Socioeconomic status", so we get to see heterogeneous definition by writers and scholars. Socioeconomic status is a construct that reflects one's access to collectively desired resources, be they material goods, money, power, friendship networks, healthcare, leisure time, or educational opportunities [1]. Furthermore, it has been defined as the position that an individual or family occupies with reference to the prevailing average standards of cultural possessions, effective income, material possessions and participation in the group activities of the community [2]. Very often it is measured as a combination of various factors such as education, income and occupation. Therefore, it can be said that socioeconomic status is not a unitary concept and with this concept in mind, for the present study socio-economic status is measured by using some of the prominent factors such as social factors, demographic factors and economic factors.

**Rationale of the Study:** The position that the women hold in a society gives an indication of the level of the social justice in that particular society. The socioeconomic status of women is the position which they attain as a reason of the various norms, beneficial and obligations in the society. It is often found that the women are more vulnerable section of the society relative to the male counterpart and they often happen to be last receiver of the opportunities delivered along with the development of the nation.

The severe is the case when we consider about the tribal women as they are more isolated in term of education, employment and health facilities from the mainland. So, it may be that they are more deprived when compare with male-counterpart as well as the women from other communities.

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**Corresponding Author:** Victoria Haobijam, Department of Economics, Assam University (A Central University),
Silchar -788011, Assam, India.

The tribal women are mostly engage in agriculture, household chores and maintaining the household. So, in this regard the study is an attempt to highlight the socio-economic status of Kuki women in a district called Churachanpur district. The Kuki are the tribal group who are the original inhabitant of hilly region consequently they are bound to be isolated from the mainland as well as development. The Kuki society is a patriarchal in nature where men are the head of the family and female are treated as a subordinate. So, in such a case, it is of upmost important to find out the socio and economical condition in which they are living in order to bring them towards the stream of development.

**Objectives of the Study:** On the light of our above discussion the present study revolves around two main objectives. They are as follows

- To examine and find out the socioeconomic status of Kuki women in Churachandpur district of Manipur
- To find out the factor influencing the socioeconomic status of Kuki women in the above mention district.

As discussed above in the first section of the present study, it consists of the introduction, rationale and the objectives to be carried out for the study. The second sections consists of the reviewed of related books, journals and articles. Section-3 will discuss the data and methodology to be used to carry out the objectives. The fourth section consists of the result and discussion of the study and finally, section-5 includes the conclusion and suggests policy prescriptions on the basis of the above study.

**Review of Related Literatures:** Singh [3] have expressed that the health and educational status of tribal women is low in comparison to their non-tribal counterpart and they have also characterised the status of the tribal women by over-work, invasion of sexually exploitative market forces in tribal society, illiteracy, high fertility and high malnutrition and near absence of modern health care facilities.

Dowerah [4] explained that the Dimasa womenfolk in Assam, enjoy certain freedom but inspite of this the women are not given any opportunities for active participation in decision making. Adding to that it further stressed that for the improvement of the status; the women need social, political and economical development. Ghosh [5] shows that the Manipuri women are regarded in high position because of the unique function of the womenfolk to control and manage the trade and commerce of the state unlike in the profession of trading mostly controlled universally by the men-folk.

Kumari [6] in an attempt to examined the relationship between women's work participation and their status finds that women's work participation enhances their status and also found out that there is a positive association between women's work and male view regarding issues relating to the status of women.

Chandra [7] founds out that the healthcare facilities provided to the tribal women need to be reorganise and well plan considering that the women belongs to different region and different age's group. It further added that the tribal women are oppressing by their own communities and traditional authorities as it was found out that the women who struggle to get themselves educated are seen to be alienated from their society.

According to Nath [8] revealed that the Kuki women are less educated and as a result they are often force to take up the responsibilities of the house caretaking as well as work outside to sustain livelihood.

Bhasin [9] throught the study corroborates the basis that women status is high when they contribute substantially to primary subsistence activities. The study had also shows that the tribal women are more illiterate than men, share problems related to reproductive health, work very hard, in some cases even more than the men but the women are not backward as it was found out that they enjoy power in their own sphere.

Mullah [10] through their study highlighted that the socio economic status of the tribal people is substantially lower in comparison with the general people as they are lagging behind in terms of the economical, political, social and technological standings and most of them are still going on with old-fashioned tradition, standard of living and beliefs.

Panda [11] highlighted that the condition of tribal women is inferior due to unhealthy surroundings, poor working conditions and pressures of physical labour, early marriage, negligence of health and lack of medication during pregnancy as well as post delivery care.

Awias [12] explained through their work that tribal women play a major role in the co-management of their natural, social, economic resources and crop production, livestock production, horticulture and post harvest operations but they remain backward because of their traditional values, illiteracy, superstitions, indecision making, social evils and many other cultural factors.

Mishra [13] in highlighting the status of tribal women in term of their demographic, education, health, economic pursuits and social behaviour have explained that the problem of tribal women differs from one area to another owing to their geographic location and historical background.

Rao [14] through his work founds that the women do not have the freedom of decision making as all the decision on the important activities are taken by the male member in the family. So the woman has to go a long way to attain a sound socio-economic status in the society.

Das [15] in an attempts to find out the level of autonomy and decision making power of tribal women and the impact of socio-economic status on decision making roles have drawn a conclusion that the tribal women enjoy autonomy at their household level, especially in social aspects and at some point enjoy equal rights along with their husbands in economic matters. But due to low literacy rate and unemployment the community participation of the women is inactive and autonomy level is very low.

Talmaki [16] had highlighted the socioeconomic status of tribal women in India by taking the factors such as the income, education and occupation and further stress out that collective efforts and social intervention is required for improvement of the tribal women's education, vocational training, meaningful participation of tribal women in local self government bodies, anti alcohol efforts and prevention of domestic violence among tribal families.

**Data and Methodology:** In this section, a thorough discussion on the data set used for the present study and the method and techniques used to carry out the study is given in detail.

**Data:** The present study is purely base on the primary data collected from 80 sample respondents from two villages called Molphei Tampak and Chengkonpang of Churachandpur district. The district is chosen due to the fact that higher number of Kuki population is present in the district. The respondents are selected from the two villages by following the simple random sampling (by using random number table). Out of the 80 women respondents, 40 were ever married women and 40 were unmarried women. The selected respondents were from the age group of 18-59 years old. A schedule is used to catch the demographic, social and economical life of the Kuki women.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the first part of this section a socioeconomic index (SEI) is framed up in order to fulfil the first objective of the study. The Index is constructed with the composition of two indices namely Social Index (SI) and Economic Index (EI). The social index is framed up with a composite of Health Index (HI) and Educational Index (EdI). Next, inorder to carry out the second objective that is to find out the factors influencing the socioeconomic status of the women, a Logit regression is use. The above mentioned Socioeconomic Index and the Logit regression are discussed in detail one after another in the subsequent section.

**The Health Index:** The Health Status is investigated by using a self-developed dimension index called as the Health Index (HI). The index is set up separately for married women and unmarried women because in case of health status, it is observed that some factors of health were only applicable for ever married women. Therefore, those factors were omitted in case of unmarried women. The following equation is used for calculation of HI.

$$Health\ Index\ = \frac{Actual\ Value -\ Minimum\ Value}{Maximum Value -\ Minimum\ Value}$$

The variables used to measure Health index are coded by using dichotomous values (0) and (1). The value (1) is allotted to response wherever desirable and (0) will be allotted to responses wherever not desirable. The details of the allotment are given below in the Table 1.

From the table it is clear that the maximum value of the index for an individual (for ever married woman) will be seven (7) and minimum value of the index is zero (0). However, in case of unmarried women, only the last four variables will be applicable. Therefore the maximum value is (4) and the minimum value is (0).

Table 1: Allotment of values for responses related to health

| Sets of variables | Allotted Values |
| --- | --- |
| Age at the time of first marriage | Above 18 =1, below 18 = 0 |
| Neonatal Care | Yes = 1, No = 0 |
| Antenatal Care | Yes = 1, No = 0 |
| Knowledge about AIDS | Yes = 1, No = 0 |
| Consult doctor for acute disease | Yes = 1, No = 0 |
| Any illness neglected due to financial problem | Yes = 1, No = 0 |
| Whether BMI appropriate or not | Yes = 1, No = 0 |

**Educational Status:** In order to examine the Educational status of the women, a dimension index is set up for all the respondents irrespective of their marital status

$$Educational\ Index = \frac{Actual\ Years\ of\ Schooling\ of\ the\ Respondent}{Maximum\ Years\ of\ Schooling}$$

Educational status is measured by using the literacy status measured in terms of years of schooling attains by the respondents. For those respondents who do not attain school or any other kind of formal training on education, are given a score '0' and for others we assign a score according to their years spend in school, with minimum score one year. This means that if the particular respondent spent less than one year for her schooling she would receive a score '0'.During the survey, it is found out that the highest level of education is the post graduation (masters) so the maximum value is taken as 17.

**Economic Status:** In order to determine Economic status of the women, a dimensional index called as the Economic Index (EI) is framed up. Here, the per capita family income is taken into account instead of the respondent earned income. The per capita family income is use with the idea that the selected sample women may not be income earners. However, cases may be there where the woman's economic status is high and also maintain a high standard of living in comparison to another woman due to presents of other higher income earner in the household [may be because of her husband or because of her father]. Thus, it will be prudent to consider the per-capita family income instead of considering the income earn by the respondent. It is to be noted here that income in this study serves as a surrogate for all the dimensions of socioeconomic status that are not reflected in health and educational status. Income is adjusted because for maintaining a decent standard of living, unlimited income is not required. Accordingly the Logarithm of income is used and then the index is defined as follows.

$$Economic\ Index = \frac{\ln(Actual\ Value) - \ln(Minimum\ Value)}{\ln(Maximum\ Value) - \ln(Minimum\ Value)}$$

**Socioeconomic Status (SES):** The socioeconomic status of the Kuki women is done with help of self-developed socioeconomic index (SEI) for Kuki women. SEI is constructed as a weighted average of Social Index and Economic Index, where an equal weightage are allotted for both indices. Thus by giving equal weightage to both indices, we define SEI for $i^{th}$ respondent as;

$$SEI_i = \frac{1}{2}(SI_i) + \frac{1}{2}(EI_i)$$

Thus for constructing of the socioeconomic index of any respondent we need to calculate two indices, namely Social Index (SI) and Economic Index (EI). Firstly, a self-developed Social index is constructed by identifying two social variables namely, education and health. The health index (HI) and educational index (EdI) which are being discussed in the earlier section are used in Social Index. The Social Index for the $i^{th}$ respondent is constructed by giving equal weightage to both indicators. Hence,

$$SI_i = \frac{1}{2}(HI_i) + \frac{1}{2}(EdI_i)$$

Secondly, we determine the economic index (EI) by using the above mentioned method for each respondent. After constructing Social Index (SI) and Economic Index (EI), Socioeconomic Index for each of the respondents is constructed. The value of SEI will range from the value of (0) to (1). For a woman whose index value nearer to (1) implies better socioeconomic status compare to woman who index value is close to (0). For the purpose of comparison we consider the mean value of the SEI of the respondents as the benchmark. This means that if the calculated value of the SEI of a particular respondent is lower than the mean value of SEI then that woman will be considered as socioeconomically poor relative to the woman whose constructed index value is higher than the mean SEI value.

**Factors Influencing Socioeconomic Status of Kuki Women:** In order to identify the factors which are influencing the socioeconomic status of sample Kuki women here an attempt has been made to specify the model. For this purpose we divide the entire set of variables into three categories namely,

- Social variables
- Demographic variables
- Economic variables

Social variables: For this study we consider two social variables, namely,

- Years of schooling of the respondent
- Health status of the respondent.

Years of schooling of the respondent is measured in terms of years spend by the respondent in attainment of the level of education at the time of survey.

The logic behind the inclusion of this social variable is that higher will be the years spending in the ambit of education, higher will be the Socio-economic status. From literatures, it is found that education is a variable which positively influence the socioeconomic status of any individual. The second social variable taken is the health status of the respondent in terms binary variable. Health of an individual also influences the SES of the person positively and it is defined as follows,

Health Status = 0 if Body Mass Index is not appropriate
= 1 if Body Mass Index is appropriate

**Demographic Variables:** In case of demographic variables, like earlier in case of social variables, two variables were taken into consideration, namely

- Family size
- Age of the respondent.

Family size is the number of family member in the household of the each sample respondent. The size of the family generally have inverse relationship with socio-economic status of respondent [17].

Next, the age of the respondent is measured in terms of number of full year, the respondents have completed from the day of birth to the duration at the time of survey. In this study, it was assumed that age, as an important variable might affect adversely the role played by women in the household and in the society which will affect the socioeconomic status of the women.

**Economic Variables:** In order to measure the economic status of the respondent, two economic variables are consider, namely

- Income of the respondent
- Per capita consumption expenditure of the family.

For this study, income of the respondent is defined as the amount (in rupees) a respondent is earning through formal or any informal employment in a month. The income of the respondent will influence the socioeconomic status of Kuki positively as it will increase the standard of living and access over other resources. Next, Per capita consumption expenditure of the family is defined as the total expenditure that the whole family members spend in education, food consumption and health. Higher per capita expenditure of the family also has a positive association with socioeconomic status of Kuki women.

Therefore, as a whole six important variables are taken into account to identify the relative socioeconomic status. The notations given to the selected independent variables are mentioned as

- Age of the respondent ($x_1$)
- Family size ($x_2$)
- Per-capita consumption expenditure ($x_3$)
- Health status( measured as binary,appropriate-1 and inappropriate-0) ($x_4$)
- Years of schooling ($x_5$)
- Monthly income of the respondent in rupees ($x_6$)

The above mention variables have been identified on the basis of field experience of the researcher. The above mentioned six variables are the independent variables. To form the model in the next step the dependent variable need to specify. As mentioned in the earlier section that the socioeconomic status of Kuki women is determine on the basis of a self-developed index and the value of the index lies between "0" and "1" for each respondent. The calculated value of SEI for each woman is consider as dependent variable for the regression [18]. Since the dependent variable ranges between "0" and "1", the model is specified in the following non-linear form to avoid the unboundness problem [19, 20].

$$SEI_i = \frac{1}{1+e^{\alpha+\sum_{j=1}^{6}\beta_j x_j +u_i}} \quad \forall j = 1,2,...,6 \text{ and } \forall i = 1,2,....,80 \tag{1}$$

where,
$SEI_i$ = Socioeconomic index of ith respondent
$\alpha$ = coefficient of the constant term
$\beta_j$ = coefficient of the six independent variables
$x_j$ = Independent variables
$u_i$ = stochastic error

Equation (1) can be written as:

$$SEI_i = \frac{e^{\alpha+\sum_{j=1}^{6}\beta x_j +u_i}}{1+e^{\alpha+\sum_{j=1}^{6}\beta x_j +u_i}}$$

$$Or, \frac{SEI_i}{1-SEI_i} = e^{\alpha+\sum_{j=1}^{6}\beta x_j +u_i}$$

$$Or, \ln\left(\frac{SEI_i}{1-SEI_i}\right) = e^{\alpha+\sum_{j=1}^{6}\beta x_j +u_i}$$

$$Or, P_i = \alpha + \sum_{j=1}^{6} \beta x_j + u_i \qquad (2)$$

Using the six variables, equation (2) can be rewrite as:

$$P_i = \alpha + \beta_1 Ag + \beta_2 FS + \beta_3 PC + \beta_4 HS + \beta_5 YS + \beta_6 IR + u_i \quad \forall i = 1, 2, \ldots, 80$$

where,

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ln | = | Natural logarithm |
| $P_i$ | = | Log odd ratio of SEI of the *ith* respondents. |
| $\alpha$ | = | Co-efficient of constant |
| $Ag$ | = | Age of the respondents |
| $FS$ | = | Family size |
| $PC$ | = | Per capita consumption of the family |
| $HS$ | = | Health status as binary |
| $YS$ | = | Years of schooling |
| $IR$ | = | Income of the respondent in rupees |
| $\beta_1, \ldots, \beta_6$ | = | Coefficient of the independent variables |
| $u_i$ | = | stochastic error |

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the result from the calculation of SEI of the 80 Kuki women are presented and discussed. At the same time an analysis of the estimated results of the factors influencing the socioeconomic status of Kuki women are discuss in detail.

**Result from Calculation of SEI:** For the first objective, the SEI is calculated by using the self-developed index discussed in the earlier section. The mean value of the SEI is taken as the benchmark for comparison of the relative socioeconomic status of Kuki women. The comparison is made on the basis that the woman with SEI value higher than the mean value is in better socioeconomic status relative to the woman with SEI lower than the mean SEI. The calculated SEI of each respondent is presented in the Table 2.

It is worth to be mentioned here that the mean value of the SEI is found to be 0.585591883 and 52.5 percent of the women is showing to have SEI above the mean value and the remaining 47.5 percent of the women is showing to have the value of SEI below the mean value. Therefore, the index value shows that more than half of the sample respondents are having better SES relatively than the other remaining sample respondents.

From this we can conclude that Kuki women are in better position in terms of their socioeconomic status.

**Discussion on Factors Influencing the Ses:** For the second objective of the present paper that is to find out the factors influencing the socioeconomic status of Kuki women, the following result is being obtained by using the Logit regression which has been discussed in the earlier section. Table 3 presents the estimated results of the regression. The results are obtained by using the computer programme Eviews-6.

From the above table, as expected the estimated coefficients of per capita consumption expenditures of the household, health status, years of schooling and the income of respondent are positively affecting the socioeconomic status of the Kuki women. When an individual is well educated and higher the years spend in the ambit of education, she is more likely to have better livelihood and flexibility to work. At the same time it is also true that with sufficient income and knowledge, the person will have better access to health facilities and other resources.

From the table it is clear that the variable years of schooling has strong positive influence on the socioeconomic status of Kuki women, as the estimated coefficient is not only positive in value but also it is highly significant. Again, the variable per-capita consumption expenditures also positively influence the socioeconomic status of Kuki women and it is also highly significant.

Health status of Kuki women is also an important factor for determining the socioeconomic status and as expected this variable positively affects the socioeconomic status of Kuki women, but unfortunately the estimated coefficient turns out insignificant.

Another thing to be noted here that the respondent's income also has positive influence on the socioeconomic status of Kuki women and the estimated coefficient is also highly significant but the elasticity value is very low. This may due to the fact that the only very few Kuki women in the sample are income earner.

Again as expected, the elasticity coefficients of Age of the respondent and Family size negative in sign giving an indication that these variables adversely influence the socioeconomic status of Kuki women. The reason is quite obvious that as the age of the individual increases, her capacity to earn livelihood and mobility to work decline. However, unfortunately the estimated coefficient of this variable turns out insignificant.

Table 2: SEI of the Sample respondents

| Respondent | Calculated SEI | Respondent | Calculated SEI | Respondent | Calculated SEI | Respondent | Calculated SEI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| resp1 | 0.617836 | resp21 | 0.606009 | resp41 | 0.641626 | resp61 | 0.865387 |
| resp2 | 0.835593 | resp22 | 0.496765 | resp42 | 0.48347 | resp62 | 0.788182 |
| resp3 | 0.835593 | resp23 | 0.796835 | resp43 | 0.595777 | resp63 | 0.77571 |
| resp4 | 0.584106 | resp24 | 0.533182 | resp44 | 0.55732 | resp64 | 0.692458 |
| resp5 | 0.512677 | resp25 | 0.873791 | resp45 | 0.885974 | resp65 | 0.363971 |
| resp6 | 0.856562 | resp26 | 0.633858 | resp46 | 0.805094 | resp66 | 0.522498 |
| resp7 | 0.923789 | resp27 | 0.694559 | resp47 | 0.823476 | resp67 | 0.804219 |
| resp8 | 0.885974 | resp28 | 0.485867 | resp48 | 0.815476 | resp68 | 0.393647 |
| resp9 | 0.934874 | resp29 | 0.107143 | resp49 | 0.577259 | resp69 | 0.213927 |
| resp10 | 0.823476 | resp30 | 0.540263 | resp50 | 0.801976 | resp70 | 0.320545 |
| resp11 | 0.815476 | resp31 | 0.351804 | resp51 | 0.695359 | resp71 | 0.375692 |
| resp12 | 0.201322 | resp32 | 0.402904 | resp52 | 0.426592 | resp72 | 0.403369 |
| resp13 | 0.245284 | resp33 | 0.621446 | resp53 | 0.19381 | resp73 | 0.915532 |
| resp14 | 0.634098 | resp34 | 0.445326 | resp54 | 0.525007 | resp74 | 0.509737 |
| resp15 | 0.571776 | resp35 | 0.298120 | resp55 | 0.689948 | resp75 | 0.541311 |
| resp16 | 0.456227 | resp36 | 0.333516 | resp56 | 0.616419 | resp76 | 0.749725 |
| resp17 | 0.619589 | resp37 | 0.175876 | resp57 | 0.68942 | resp77 | 0.657813 |
| resp18 | 0.621304 | resp38 | 0.455021 | resp58 | 0.695359 | resp78 | 0.195227 |
| resp19 | 0.305745 | resp39 | 0.452022 | resp59 | 0.762699 | resp79 | 0.449399 |
| resp20 | 0.704904 | resp40 | 0.334298 | resp60 | 0.718582 | resp80 | 0.683548 |

Source: Authors own calculation from the primary data survey.

Table 3: Factors influencing the Socio-economic status of Kuki women

| Variables | Coefficient |
|---|---|
| Age of respondent | -0.004520 (-1.078702) |
| Family size | -0.149420* (-4.721447) |
| Per capita consumption expenditures of the family | 0.000107* (10.65278) |
| Health status | 0.054901 (0.562120) |
| Years of schooling | 0.092926* (8.841004) |
| Income of the respondent | 0.000018** (2.130934) |
| ANOVA | |
| $R^2$ | 0.866948 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.856012 |

Source- Authors own calculation based on primary data survey

*significant at 1% level, **significant at 5% level

In the parenthesis t- values are given

Similarly, larger the size of the family, lesser will be the distribution of income and resources among the family members to develop their skill and this is particularly true for women. As our society structure is like that male will get prior opportunity to enhance their skill and thus lager family size means female members of that family will face much more negligence in all respect, like educational opportunity, health care facility etc.

The estimated coefficient of the family size variable shows strong negative influence on the socioeconomic status of Kuki women. This is so because the estimated coefficient not only assumes a significant value but also it is highly significant.

## CONCLUSION

The present study brings to light that out of 80 sample respondents more than half of Kuki women are having higher socioeconomic index value relatively to the socioeconomic index value of the remaining Kuki women. So, base on the SEI describe in this study, we can draw a conclusion that the higher proportion of the Kuki women in the Churachandpur district are in better socioeconomic status than the proportion of Kuki women in weaker socioeconomic status. And another interesting conclusion drawn is that out of the six variables for instance the age of the respondent, family size, per capita

consumption expenditure of the household, health status, year of schooling and income of the respondent, four variables namely the family size, years of schooling, per capita consumption expenditure and income of the respondents are found to be highly influencing the socioeconomic status of Kuki women which is supported by their statistically significant values. So it can be say that the Kuki women who are found to be in better socioeconomic status are having better access to the variables which are found to have major influences on the socioeconomic status of Kuki women. And finally on the basis of the study, strategies aimed at uplifting the socio-economic status of Kuki women can be directed at these factors. Some of the essential suggestions are forwarded below depending upon the nature of the result stated in this paper.

- Importance of educating the girl child should be spread among the villagers.
- Training on income generating programmes such as weaving of basket, tailoring, weaving of traditional handmade cloths should be implemented for the Kuki women.
- Knowledge must be spread among the Kuki women on topic such as family planning and contraceptive methods.
- Development plan should be implemented with consideration of the traditional and cultural ethic of the Kuki communities.

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