

CHAPTER – VI

LAND ACCESS ISSUES AND LIVELIHOODS OF TRIBAL PEOPLE IN THE BODOLAND TERRITORIAL REGION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter has been extensively dedicated to research. It seamlessly links the core of the present research to the examination and understanding of data collection or field study. It presents the findings, interpretation, and discussion of the sample household profile, delving into the significance of land, tribal land rights matters, tenure security, land entry, and tribal land connections. The final part covers topics such as land, livelihoods, the landless, and how tribal households can diversify their livelihoods.

6.2 SAMPLE HOUSEHOLD PROFILE OBTAINED FROM STUDY

Data collection from sample households is examined and accurately computed for study purposes. This section interprets the data acquired using analytical and logical thinking to find patterns, correlations, or trends linked to the research aim. The primary purpose is to use the data gathered to answer the research questions of the study.

6.2.1 POPULATION SIZE

The data in the table indicate the total population of the sample households of the 384 (three eighty-four) of the three tribal communities in the four districts under study, which are 1,980 individuals including the respondents of the study. Males account for 1,028 of the total population, while females account for 952. The male population account for 51.91% of the overall population, while the female population makes up 48.08%. The household sample-wise distribution of the sample population has been depicted in the following.

Table 6.1: Community-wise Population Size from Sample Unit of Households

District	Community-wise population size from sample unit											
	Bodo			Rabha			Garo			All total		
	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
Kokrajhar	243	127	116	146	79	67	83	46	37	472	250	220
Chirang	238	121	117	139	72	67	77	41	36	454	234	220
Baksa	275	140	135	151	77	74	89	47	42	515	264	251
Udalguri	282	147	135	160	82	78	97	51	46	539	280	259

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

Note: T = total, M = male, and F = female

6.2.2 AGE GROUP

The age groupings of the tribal households' population studied are shown below.

Table 6.2: Community-wise Age Group of Sample Households' Population Size

District	Total No. of Population	Age Distribution of Population									
		0-6 years		7-14 yrs.		15-25yrs.		26-40yrs.		41yrs. & above	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Kokrajhar	Bodo: 243	20	19	29	26	24	24	29	22	25	25
	Rabha: 146	14	10	15	14	19	15	21	17	10	11
	Garo: 83	8	5	11	8	14	11	8	7	5	6
Chirang	Bodo: 238	19	17	26	26	26	24	26	24	24	26
	Rabha: 139	12	10	14	15	18	15	17	16	11	11
	Garo: 77	6	5	8	7	12	11	9	7	6	6
Baksa	Bodo: 275	22	20	31	29	32	26	34	26	27	28
	Rabha: 151	13	12	14	15	18	17	21	20	11	10
	Garo: 89	7	7	12	10	14	12	9	7	5	6
Udalguri	Bodo: 282	21	20	33	28	28	25	36	32	29	30
	Rabha: 160	14	13	17	15	20	18	22	20	9	12
	Garo: 97	8	7	12	10	14	13	9	8	8	8
Total	1,980 Pop.	M+F = 309		M+F = 425		M+F = 450		M+F = 447		M+F = 349	

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

In the preceding table, it is seen that of the total household sample population size of 1,980 in the studied areas, the total number of people ages 0 to 14 years constitutes 734 persons or 37.07% and the total number of persons 15 years or above who usually represent the working force constitutes 1,246 persons or 62.92% of the total population. If the age groups are separated, 309 persons or 15.60% are between the ages of 0 to 6 years, 425 persons

or 21.46% are between the ages of 7 to 14 years; 450 persons or 22.72% are between the ages of 15 to 25 years, 447 persons or 22.57% are between the ages of 26 and 40 years, and 349 persons or 17.62% are between the ages of 41 or above of the total population field studies.

The different age groups within the working population of tribal communities can benefit from various livelihood interventions, such as those for the younger generation, adults and middle-aged people, and the elderly. Tailoring livelihood interventions to meet the specific needs of those age groups creates more holistic and effective approach towards uplifting the livelihoods of tribal communities.

6.2.3 EDUCATIONAL STATUS

The preceding table presents data on the sex-wise percentage of educational status and literacy rate of the tribal people in the study locations. In the field study sampled, 7.87% of the educational level is dropouts, 25.25% is illiterate, 9.14% is literate (but below primary), 29.64% is in primary to high school, 20.05% is in matriculation and under-graduate, 6.26% is graduates, 1.61% is post-graduate, and 0.15% is other (doctorate). The education will determine their prosperity, success, and security in life. Tribal communities that are either deprived of or neglect education will face the consequences. Since education is fundamental in tribal areas, it is mentioned in the Indian Constitution, Article 15(4) states that the state has the authority to create any specific provision for advancement, and Article 15(5) establishes special provisions for their admission to educational institutions.

Table 6.3: Literacy and Educational Level

Educational Level (code)	Community-wise educational status											
	Bodo			Rabha			Garo			Total No. of Educational Status		
	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T (%)	M (%)	F (%)
Drop-out	66	27	39	54	21	33	36	16	20	7.87	6.38	9.40
Illiterate	268	125	143	141	63	78	91	42	49	25.25	22.95	27.60
Literate (below primary)	72	42	30	61	33	28	48	25	23	9.14	9.98	8.28
Primary to High School	310	161	149	173	89	84	104	55	49	29.64	30.43	28.83
Matriculation & undergraduate	225	124	101	124	67	57	48	27	21	20.05	21.75	18.30
Graduate	74	39	35	33	17	16	17	10	7	6.26	6.58	5.93
Post-Graduate	21	11	10	9	5	4	2	1	1	1.61	1.69	1.53
Other (Doctorate)	2	1	1	1	1	--	--	--	--	0.15	0.19	0.10

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

As per the above table, the distribution of the sample population by educational level indicates that 7.87% of the dropout population where females 9.40% is higher than that among males 6.38%, and the community-wise dropout rates are Bodo 6.35%, Rabha 9.06%, and Garo 10.40%. The percentage of illiterate is 25.25% (male 22.95% and female 27.60%), with Garo having the highest percentage at 26.30%, followed by Bodo at 25.81% and Rabha at 23.65%. Literacy (but below primary) is 9.14% (male 9.98% and female 8.28%), with Bodo accounting for 6.93%, Rabha accounting for 10.23%, and Garo accounting for 13.87% of the sample population. The educational level of about 29.64% (male 30.43% and female 28.83%) in Bodo 29.86%, Rabha 29.02%, and Garo 30.05% are from primary to high school. Matriculation and under-graduates make up 20.05% of the population (male 21.75% and female 18.30%), whereas Bodo 21.67%, Rabha 20.80%, and Garo 13.87% are all matriculation and under-graduates. Regarding the graduate level, 6.26% (male 6.58% and female 5.93%) obtained degrees in Bodo 7.12%, in Rabha 5.15%, and 4.91% in Garo. The post-graduate degree is found in 1.61% (male 1.69% and female 1.53%) of the Bodo 2.02%, Rabha 1.51%, and Garo 0.57%. The obtaining of a doctorate is 0.15% (male 0.19% and female 0.10%). Article 29 deals with the ability of Scheduled Tribes and other minorities to use educational institutions to maintain their languages, scripts, and cultures.

Article 46 of the Indian Constitution gives priority to SCs and STs in the economic and educational interests and protects them from social injustice and all sorts of exploitation. Along with the economic strengthening of the tribal peoples in India, the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) under the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) aims to encourage the preservation of tribal dialects, cultural traditions, forms of art, and modes with the growth of the population. Despite the fact the government has set up educational facilities to educate tribal children, due to proper implementation of provisions, the percentage of literate tribal people is low. Compared to other educational levels, primary to high school levels have a higher percentage of students with degrees. It is clear from the data that females do not fall much behind men in educational attainment. Females are making faster progress in elementary and secondary education, enrollment and undergrad degrees, graduate degrees earned, postgraduate degrees achieved, and doctorate degrees obtained. However, there is still a need to improve the student dropout rate. The research observed that the lack of motivation

of parents and teachers to educate their children, the high rate of school dropouts, and low parental income are causes of young people’s disinterest in education.

In the BTR, the intersection of low literacy and high illiteracy among tribal communities and its impact on livelihoods is deeply connected to both the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and land tenure theory. These factors hinder access to essential information, modern techniques, and opportunities for diversification. Lack of literacy may restrict their ability to engage with markets, access new technologies, understand legal rights, or participate in skill-building programmes. Empowering tribal communities through education and visual aids can enhance their understanding and implementation of sustainable livelihood strategies. Low literacy levels might hinder the understanding and asserting of land rights guaranteed by land tenure policies. This lack of understanding could lead to vulnerability in land disputes or the exploitation of land by external forces. Illiteracy might restrict participation in decision-making processes related to land tenure, thereby limiting the influence of tribal communities on policies affecting their land rights.

6.2.4 BASIC AMENITIES OF TRIBAL LIVELIHOOD

Housing, health, sanitation, the availability of electricity, usage of clean fuel, and other uses are essential indicators for basic home living arrangements. The following table shows the percentage contribution of the sample household based on tribal dwelling type, revealing that 45.83% reside in pucca houses (brick houses), 32.55% live in mud or kutcha houses (but with tin roofs), 10.93% live in thatched roof houses, and 10.67% live in houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana.

Table 6.4: Types of Houses

Category	Type of House	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
House Structure	R. C. C.	--	--	--	--
	Pucca house (brick house)	43.75	47.321428	48.75	45.833333
	Kathca house (tin roof)	31.770833	33.035714	33.75	32.552208
	Thatched roof house	10.9375	10.714285	11.25	10.9375
	PMAY provided	13.541666	8.928571	6.25	10.677083

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The most significant societal health factor is access to sanitation facilities. In the study, the percentage distribution of sample households in terms of toilet facilities, 39.58% have fewer sanitary latrines (within premises) facilities and 26.04% use mud or katcha latrines. Open toilet defecation is available to 34.37% of the sample households.

Table 6.5: Toilet Facilities

Category	Type of facility	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Toilet facility	Sanitary Latrine	38.020833	44.642857	36.25	39.583333
	Mud/Katcha Latrine	29.6875	18.75	27.7	26.041666
	Open latrine	32.291666	36.607142	36.25	34.375

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The table below shows the percentage distribution of sample households based on electricity connection, which demonstrates that electrification (for residential consumers) has been spread to 63.54%. It was found that 36.45% are still without electricity connection facilities. It is revealed that there are various reasons for their non-electrification of households, including poverty and the types of dwelling houses, and they were even unaware of the residential consumers electrified in the houses.

Table 6.6: Electrification Facilities of Sample Households

Category	Type of electrified	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Source of lighting	Electrified (Residential Consumer)	65.104166	61.607142	62.5	63.54167
	Not Electrified	34.895833	38.392857	37.5	36.45833

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The table below shows the resources of drinking water facilities. Tube wells were used as a source of drinking water by 61.71%, while piped water was used by only 1.041% of the Bodo tribal households. Based on the study, 22.13% have used wells for drinking water. It is a serious matter of concern that also found 5.46% of tribal respondents still uses ponds as sources of drinking water, and 10.15% use Rivers or Streams as their main source of drinking water and other activities.

Table 6.7: Drinking Water Facilities

Category	Type of source	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Sources of drinking water	Pipe water	1.041666	--	--	0.520833
	Tube-well	56.770833	65.178571	68.75	61.71875
	Well	25.00	20.535714	17.5)	22.135416
	Pond	6.25	4.464285	5.00	5.46875
	Rivers/Streams	10.9375	9.821428	8.75	10.15626

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The next table represents the area of the water sources of the sample households. It is found that the maximum percentage of the area of water sources is 56.25% within premises, 27.60% near premises, and 9.63% of the source is far away from their homestead. One question was also asked of the participant: “Do you use any water purifiers?” The response is 6.51% “yes” regarding the water purification.

Table 6.8: Source of Drinking Water

Category	Area of water source	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Availability of drinking water source	Within premises	56.770833	54.464285	57.5	56.25
	Near Premises	26.5625	27.678571	30.00	27.604166
	Far Away	8.854166	11.607142	8.75	9.635416
	Yes, water purified	7.8125	6.25	3.75	6.510416

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The condition of cooking fuel is a significant component in affecting the lives of individuals. The usage of biomass energy remains widespread. Cooking over an open fire using biofuel poses serious health risks. Domestic air pollution is caused by the usage of wood, cow dung, and agricultural residues as fuel for cooking. The following table shows the percentage of sources of cooking energy, with firewood being used by 38.80%. The field study also found that 29.16% have used LPG as the sole source of cooking energy, whereas 32.03% have used both commercial and non-commercial sources of energy (firewood + LPG) for cooking.

Table 6.9: Sources of Cooking Energy

Category	Type of source	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Fuel used for cooking	LPG	29.6875	25.892857	32.5	29.166666
	Electricity	--	--	--	--
	Kerosene	--	--	--	--
	Firewood	36.458333	41.071428	41.25	38.802083
	Firewood + LPG	33.854166	33.035714	26.25	32.03125

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

Tribals suffer many challenges due to their solitary living in rural places in the region, which leads to a clear failure as mentioned in Article 275 of the Indian Constitution, to promote the welfare of scheduled tribes and raise the administration of schedules and tribal areas. The point states as a Directive Principle of State Policy (Articles 36 to 51) that the state should support education, economic interests, and housing for the weaker parts with special attention. Article 257(1) state that the development of human resources involves increasing access to education and health services. It involves raising the level of governance in scheduled areas and providing basic amenities in tribal communities or localities to improve quality of life. The local administration has failed to identify the provision of isolated villages and prioritized reducing tribals' hardships by ensuring access to health care services, safe drinking water, and improved sanitation as part of the National Tribal Policy, 2006.

The absence of basic amenities profoundly impacts tribal households and their livelihoods, viewed through the lenses of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and land tenure theory in the region. Without access to essentials like clean water, healthcare, sanitation, and electricity, their ability to sustain livelihoods diminishes. It affects health, limits productivity, and restricts economic opportunities. Lack of amenities can hinder education, limit access to markets, and impede the adoption of modern practices, thereby constraining their capacity to diversify livelihood sources or engage in more sustainable practices. Lack of basic amenities might make tribal communities more vulnerable to displacement or exploitation of their land. Insufficient infrastructure and services can render their living conditions precarious, potentially leading to displacement or land-related conflicts. Inadequate amenities like irrigation or storage facilities can limit the efficient

utilization of land for agriculture or other purposes, impacting their ability to sustain livelihoods from the land they possess.

6.2.5 OCCUPATION OF HOUSEHOLD HEAD

The main occupation of the household head plays a very important role in the livelihood of tribal societies in the region. The study attempts to identify and analyse the main occupation of the household heads in the field area for their livelihoods and to find the situations of heads to best enhance and locate their efforts for improved livelihoods. The study found that household heads pursue a variety of livelihood strategies.

Table 6.10: Main Occupations of Household Heads for Livelihood

Main occupation (Activity)	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Cultivation/Agriculture/Horticulture	49.479166	50.00	48.75	49.479166
Livestock/Animal Husbandry	10.9375	13.392857	13.75	12.239583
Service (Govt. /Semi Govt.)	8.854166	5.371142	3.75	6.770833
Private Service	7.8125	6.25	5.00	6.770833
Trading & Business/Self-Employed	2.604166	6.25	7.5	4.6875
Forestry	1.041666	0.892857	--	0.7815
Carpentry	1.041666	0.892857	--	0.7815
Fishing/Fish business	2.604166	1.785714	1.25	2.083333
Weaving	0.520833	--	--	0.260416
Handicraft work	0.520833	1.785714	3.75	1.5625
Daily wage labourer	11.458333	10.714285	13.75	11.71875
Other occupation	3.124	2.678571	2.5	2.864583

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

Based on the data, it can be seen in the table that the majority of household heads engaged in both farming and non-farming livelihood activities. However, 49.47% depend on agriculture as their primary source of income. The tribals' maximum source of support is their land. Those who don't have enough land must labour on other people's lands. To support their families and be able to face the hardships of daily life, they engage in a variety of occupations. However, since their only available agricultural practice is the cultivation of rice and their maximum response time is once a year, they do not have enough of a response to satisfy their needs. On the other hand, their paddy agriculture is reliant on the environment and the soil. Tribal crops are being destroyed by drought and flood, and agricultural land is deteriorating and eroding. Because of it, some agricultural tribals are now unable to access

arable land and are frequently forced to work as daily wage labourers 11.71%. In a similar vein, research respondents who raise livestock do so as a form of subsistence farming. Poultry, piggery, cattle, buffalo, and goats are considered part of 12.23% of the livestock or animal husbandry raised in the study area.

In the field study, some household heads choose non-farm livelihood options; in the service sector including government and semi-government it is 6.77%. In Assam, demographic diversity, together with challenging socio-economic factors, has resulted in disparities in service accessibility; certain segments of society are at greater risk of receiving government services, which is affecting the Bodoland region. The private service sector is 6.77%, in trading and business including the self-employed sector is also rising at 4.68%. The tribal household solely dependent on forest products is 0.78%. They do not work any other extra work except for the forest products. 0.78% is connected to carpentry work for daily wages. Significantly, the tribal people do not labour much at the carpentry work. Fishing is part of the traditional livelihood of the tribal. 2.08% is involved in the fish business and fishing for a living. Weaving is a traditional habit for tribal women and also for family members, but the study found only 0.26% of them live for weaving. 1.56% of household heads work handicrafts for daily needs or wages. The handicraft work is traditionally connected to tribals' living. 2.86% are depending on the other combination of tribal livelihood strategies including construction work, generation of power, floriculture, fruit gardening, pisciculture, and others.

However, the majority of responders use farm and non-farm living strategies together. This indicates that a wide range of livelihood alternatives are used by the vast majority of respondents. The Government has provided plans for the development of tribal areas and improving the socio-economic conditions of the tribal peoples. Since the Fifth Five-Year Plan, the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) has implemented the Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDP) scheme, with particular goals of reducing poverty, enhancing educational standing, and eradicating tribal household exploitation, but the results are not much encouraging in the study areas.

The lack of diverse occupations significantly affects tribal livelihoods in the Bodoland region when viewed through the lens of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. Dependence

on a single or limited number of occupations, often agriculture or traditional activities, limits income opportunities for tribal communities. This lack of diversity in income sources makes them more vulnerable to economic fluctuations and environmental changes. Relying solely on a particular occupation increases susceptibility to risks and shocks for tribals. For instance, dependence on agriculture makes tribal livelihoods vulnerable to crop failures due to climate change or market price fluctuations. A lack of diverse occupations might hinder the overall development of tribal communities. It restricts skill diversification, technological adoption, and exposure to new market trends or opportunities, leading to stagnation in their economic growth. Diversification of livelihood sources enhances resilience. Without diverse occupations, tribal communities have limited capacity to adapt to changing circumstances, whether economic, environmental, or social.

6.2.6 SOURCE AND ANNUAL INCOME OF HOUSEHOLD

Annual income and sources of the household from various sources are indicated in the following table. In this regard, it should be noted that tribal people in rural areas of the study region are not habituated to maintaining a record of their income, and spending and no one attempts to preserve a family budget. As a result, while determining yearly income, the value of items produced and services supplied at current prices is taken for the study.

Table 6.11: Annual Income from Different Sources of Livelihood

Source of Income (Activity)	Source of Income (Annually)			
	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Land related activities	51.029844	46.45122	47.563832	48.636697
Employment (Govt.)	26.184850	24.731713	26.107709	24.552247
Employment (Private)	4.624668	4.673980	4.635710	4.633050
Livestock/Animal Husbandry	5.879342	6.094870	5.043245	5.711026
Daily wage labourer	8.528676	10.095797	9.415756	9.216693
Trading & Business/Self Employed	1.878901	3.926143	4.126291	3.084358
Forestry	0.696811	0.493572	--	0.450054
Carpentry	0.559937	0.403831	--	0.363816
Fishing/Fish business	1.638335	0.628182	0.356593	0.992636
Weaving	0.335962	--	--	0.145526
Handicraft work	0.233307	0.969196	1.375430	0.755930
Other related	1.468280	1.525587	1.375430	1.457962

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The above table shows that land related activities provides for 48.63% of annual income. In addition, the percentage differs for each tribal group in the study. In areas with significant earnings from employment, wage labour, and livestock, the share of land is relatively low. However, the sizable percentage of earnings from land indicates that the tribals are mostly depending on their main source of livelihood. The second main source of income is the employment sector (government or semi-government) which accounts for 24.55%, and private service employment contributes for 4.63%. This indicates that tribal people have become increasingly employment-oriented, whether in the public or private sectors. Wage-earning or wage labour is the third most important source of income for tribals, accounting for 9.21% of total tribal annual income. Individuals among the landless and marginal landowners used to earn a living as agricultural labourers and as daily labourers in a variety of sectors. The income source of 5.71% is derived from livestock or animal husbandry. Livestock or animal husbandry is raised in the research areas in the categories of poultry, piggery, cattle, buffalo, and goats. They are raised for domestic consumption as well as for socio-religious activities. The excess of household purposes and uses of pigs, goats, birds, and eggs are sold at local marketplaces. The income or earnings from trading and business, or from being self-employed, is likewise increasing, at a rate of 3.08%. The tribals now recognise self-employed as a source of income for their households.

Forest products are still used to maintain tribal livelihoods of 0.45% work in forest product collection. Earnings from carpenter work 0.36%, 0.99% from fishing or fish business, 0.14% from weaving, and 0.75% from handicraft labour. This is not to mean that tribal members do not engage in carpentry, fishing or fish businesses, weaving, and handicrafts. In this regard, tribals produce cane items and bamboo goods, weave for household use as well as items for trade as part of their daily work and leisure time activities. Fishing is part of their tradition, mostly for domestic consumption, leaving very little for sale. The uncategorisable income is shown under 'other related' 1.45%.

The impact of limited sources and annual income on tribal communities in the Bodoland region aligns with the principles of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. Relying on a few sources of income, often tied to agricultural land or traditional activities, limits the economic opportunities for tribal communities. Limited sources of income result in low and often

unstable annual earnings for tribal households. This instability affects their ability to meet basic needs, invest in education and healthcare, or improve their living conditions. Dependence on a narrow range of income sources reduces resilience against economic shocks. Low and stagnant annual incomes hinder overall community development.

6.2.7 PATTERN OF EXPENDITURE

Only the major items of expenditures are considered when estimating the expenditure pattern. Additional items that are not categorised here are included in the ‘other related’ column. It has previously been revealed that tribal households do not practise keeping a family budget. As a result, it is quite difficult to acquire exact statistics on single household expenditures on various items over a year. It determined the values of several items during the field study of respondents by continually presenting questionnaires. As a basis, the anticipated expenditures listed in the various columns are only estimates.

Table 6.12: Pattern of Expenditure Annually

Head	Items of Expenditure in percentage			
	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Food	59.964706	56.262733	56.854143	58.277017
Housing	5.590879	6.039556	7.055913	6.008991
Clothing/Ornaments	3.893448	3.850230	4.079303	3.917354
Education	9.250441	9.304728	9.402519	9.296086
Health	4.523682	5.084279	5.195166	4.818597
Rituals	1.792666	2.301500	2.743925	2.127435
Social functions	1.141424	0.999579	0.621956	0.998189
Litigation	0.784291	0.394895	0.404271	0.596400
Entertainment	1.490154	1.641283	1.426841	1.521170
Household durable	2.948096	3.483718	2.612217	3.038014
Other related	8.620206	10.637497	9.603740	9.400213

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

Based on the preceding data, food items contribute to 58.27% of total yearly consumption. The worth of household-grown food material consumed is also taken into consideration when determining the expenditures made on this point. A larger percentage of expenditure on food products shows the economic backwardness of the tribals. Housing

accounts for 6% of total annual expenditure. Clothing and ornamentation expenditure accounted for 3.91%. Household looms also meet the tribal household cloth requirements. Education expenses accounted for 9.29%. Education spending would have been significantly increasing in the last 20 to 30 years, whereas health expenses represent 4.81% of overall yearly expenses. While ritual practice provides for 2.12%, social functions account for 0.99%. Another interesting finding is the relatively low amount of money spent on litigation, which amounts to 0.59%. This is because village councils in the tribal villages of the Bodoland Territorial Region decide minor disputes. Tribals only resort to the law courts in cases of serious offences, and now for increasing land-related issues. Entertainment expenditure, which has been reported to be increasing amounts to 1.52%, including mobile and television recharging. The expenditure on household durable goods is determined to be 3.03%. ‘Other related’ generally refers to various items of spending not included in the listed categories and accounts for 9.40%.

The tribal pattern of expenditure significantly influences tribal livelihoods in the Bodoland region within the framework of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. Tribal expenditure patterns often prioritize basic needs such as food, housing, and healthcare. While crucial, this allocation might limit investment in livelihood improvement initiatives such as education, skill development, or diversification of income sources. If a significant portion of expenditure goes towards immediate needs, there might be inadequate investment in education and skill-building. This limitation affects the capacity of tribal individuals to access better livelihood opportunities in the long run. In some cases, the lack of surplus income for savings or asset building restricts the ability of tribal households to cope with emergencies or invest in productive assets that could enhance livelihoods.

6.2.8 LANDHOLDING SIZE

The land is controlled under holding conditions on a community basis and in traditional patterns. The study area represents the main landholding which is identified based on inherited. Along with the inherent basis of landholding, the size and availability of land holdings in the Bodoland Territorial Region are governed by the extent of tribal holdings

being divided owing to socio-economic structures, traditional settlement, and land ownership rights and transfers.

In the Bodo, Rabha, and Garo landholdings, the research has taken place on the registered and unregisters residential land including homestead land and kitchen garden land, cropland, and unregistered land. Most tribal people do not have cropland but may have residential land. Most of their cropland has no irrigation facilities, so they mainly depend on rainfall for their cultivation. Even today, the tribal economy is entirely dependent on agriculture. However, marginal landholdings dominate all other categories of holdings. The research finds that 77.34% of the sample households both have registered and unregistered residential or cropland or include both categories, and 22.65% are landless which includes no landholdings or does not have any land.

Table 6.13: Landholding Size of the Households

Landholding Size (in Hectare)	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Large: >10.00 ha	1.041666	--	--	0.520833
Medium: >4.00 to <10.00 ha	1.5625	0.892857	1.25	1.302083
Semi-Medium: >2.00 to <4.00 ha	2.604166	1.785714	1.25	2.083333
Small: >1.00 to <2.00 ha	7.291666	5.375142	2.5	5.729166
Marginal: >0.01 to <0.9 ha	68.75	67.857142	65.00	67.708333
Landless/No holding	18.75	24.107142	30.00	22.65625

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

Note: Assam landholding measurement is: 7 bigha, 2 kotha, and 6 lessa = 1 hectare; 1 bigha = 0.1337 hectare; 1 bigha = 5 kotha, and 1 kotha = 20 lessa.

The landholding size is not uniform for all three tribal communities studied. The data indicates three tribal groups have an unequal distribution of land. The majority of the landholdings in the area are 67.70% marginal holdings, which mostly range from >0.01 to <0.9 hectares of land. In the present scenario, the marginal holder does not have a consistent source of income. They cannot survive on the products of their land for an entire year. As a result, the majority of households have either little or no land, which is insufficient to maintain their livelihood throughout the year. It observed that practically all of them, those with insufficient food or extra revenue, rely on diversifying their livelihood strategy. The landholdings of 5.72% is the size of small holdings, ranging from >1 to <1.9 hectares of land,

and they also do not have a sustainable livelihood through their lands. It found that the size of the landholding the semi-medium, medium, and large holdings can sustain through the land. In this case, the semi-medium range from >2 to <4.9 hectares of landholdings is 2.08%, which is the standard for livelihood and produced agriculture. The landholdings of 1.30% in the medium range from >4 to <10 hectares and the landholdings of 0.52% in the large range from >10-hectare holdings households have ensured survival from the cultivation or agricultural products on their land.

Out of the 384 sample household units, 22.65% of the total households are landless. In comparison, the Bodo represented 18.75%, the Rabha 24.10%, and the Garo 30% of landless households, live without a landholding and no land *Patta* and *Daag* (*Daag*- the smallest land units of the village landscape are generally demarcated by the village surveyors using numbers) number where they are living in unregistered land. Some tribals inform that they have land, but their land is not registered, and others have sold their unregistered land due to the habit of their contingent expenditure. There are landless people too who settle in other tribals' land in the same village. It also revealed that they found the land where they were settling, unregistered land, and claimed it over time. As a result, most of the households that have unregistered land now belong to the same landless tribal, which has also helped to reduce landless families. The landless are the most deprived residents of study areas. They are deprived of the basic needs of production in a rural economy. Furthermore, landless individuals experience social hardship, poor health, illiteracy, and a high percentage of child mortality since they have little or no access to financing, marketing channels, or other services. The harsh truth of their lives is insecurity. Respondents opine that local governments must allocate land, including grazing land or forest land, to the landless as part of the effort to solve rural tribal landlessness.

The study found that traditionally, tribals are the maximum number of landholders in the study area. The response also exposed that their landholdings are now significantly rising in marginal holdings of less than one hectare of land. The main causes are the growing population, floods, soil erosion, and the unpredictability of the migration of land-hungry immigrants into various tribal lands. Tribals are now interested in holding permanent residents and land documentation or registration of land. In terms of separation, scattering, structure,

concentration of landholdings and more importantly the non-tribals do not agree that the land rights and access to land for tribals only, the land reflects prevailing inequalities and affects their sources of earnings and livelihood. However, the tribals continue their traditional occupations, such as cultivation, agricultural labour, household industry, etc. The cultivation and the agricultural labour are more significant, proving that the tribals are being deprived of even their small landholdings and have to work as agricultural workers. As tribals live in many of the research areas where development projects have come up, it is evident that land alienation away from tribals occurs due to land acquisition by non-tribals other than indigenous people and due to the pace of some government projects.

The impact of marginal landholding and landlessness among tribals in BTR resonates deeply within both the land tenure theory and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. Marginal landholding and landlessness often result from insecure land tenure systems in the region. Tribals might have limited access to or recognition of their land rights, leading to vulnerability against land encroachments, displacement, or exploitation by external forces. Limited land availability due to fragmentation or inadequate land rights recognition can lead to conflicts within tribal communities or with external stakeholders, impacting social stability and economic development. Marginal landholding restricts the efficient utilization and management of resources. Limited access to productive land can impede agricultural productivity and limit opportunities for sustainable land-use practices.

Marginal landholding or landlessness often forces tribals to depend on limited resources for their livelihoods, primarily focusing on agriculture or small-scale activities. This dependency restricts their ability to diversify income sources and adapt to changing economic conditions. Landlessness or marginal landholding makes tribals more vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks. Landlessness can lead to restricted opportunities for livelihood diversification. Lack of access to land for agriculture or other income-generating activities hampers the adoption of alternative livelihood strategies.

6.2.9 ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF TRIBAL PEOPLE HOUSEHOLD

Land significantly influences the economic condition of the afflicted households. This study analysis of the cases involving land access and livelihood shows that the poverty of the

affected households is the main factor contributing to landlessness. The table below provides information on who is considered to be Below the Poverty Line (BPL). As per the national norm, the poverty line for each household is measured at Rs. 27,000.00/- annually.

Table 6.14: Below Poverty Line Households

Community	BPL percentage in District				Total BPL	(%) BPL Household
	Kokrajhar	Chirang	Baksa	Udalguri		
Bodo (Sample 192)	2.604166	3.645833	2.604166	3.125	23	11.979166
Rabha (Sample 112)	2.678571	4.464285	3.571428	6.25	19	16.964285
Garo (Sample 80)	2.5	3.75	5.00	6.255	14	17.5

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

From the above table, 56 tribal households out of 384 sampled were found to be below the poverty line, with a percentage of 14.58% in four study districts. In the Bodo group, 11.97% of the households below the poverty line were found to be the lowest of the study tribal group. When compared to other groups, the Bodo tribe has the highest per capita and household incomes. The Rabha group has a poverty rate of 16.96% below the poverty line, and the Garo group has 17.5% below the poverty line households. The study shows that the percentages of Rabha and Garo people living in poverty are nearly equal in comparison to that of Bodo inhabitants. They not only have the lowest household average income, but they also have the lowest per capita income.

Tribal people from the region go to other parts of the country to search for work because of their livelihood. Sometimes they are ineligible or not appropriately provided for the numerous benefits often offered to the poorest portions of society, such as the below-poverty line and ration cards. Poverty and social isolation have a cumulative influence on tribal social determinants. The tribe can be encouraged by improving everyday living circumstances, addressing inequitable power, money, and resource distribution, creating widespread awareness of problems, keeping track of issues, and evaluating initiatives. It is claimed that the state and local governments have completely failed in the implementation of the provisions provided in the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), with particular goals of reducing poverty, enhancing educational standing, and eradicating tribal household exploitation.

The local government of the Bodoland region and the state government of Assam have failed to implement proper land tenure theory and the sustainable livelihoods approach for

those below the poverty line, especially among tribal communities. Inadequate policies or ineffective implementation of land tenure laws and regulations might result in unclear land rights for impoverished tribal populations. This ambiguity can lead to land grabbing, disputes, or exclusion from accessing resources crucial for livelihoods. Even if there are policies in place, gaps in their implementation due to administrative inefficiencies, corruption, or a lack of awareness about the needs of populations Below the Poverty Line (BPL) can hinder their effective utilisation and impact.

6.3 THE EXPLORING MEANING OF LAND

The tribal villages of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) are almost surrounded by open fields or the village land. In the study area of four districts 97.88% (as per the 2011 Census Report of India) of the tribal people (Bodo, Rabha, and Garo) live in plains villages or areas and are regarded as plains tribal inhabitants in the region.

6.3.1 PERCEPTION, PROTECTION AND REPRESENT OF LAND

To explore the meaning of the land, the questions were asked to the respondents “What is your perception on the land?” To the respondents, in a tribal society, the land was the least valuable asset. Land as a valued asset is a relatively new idea among tribal inhabitants in the region. They take land as a gift from nature or God. The land is the only basic source of living for the tribals. The tribals believed that “land is everything, without land, there is no hell and no heaven.” In the relationship seen between land and tribals, the land is equivalent to the ancestral land of the habitat, which is their birthright to hold as long as they wish. The question was related to “What connection do you have with your land?” Responded, the tribal and land are inseparable entities or closely connected. It is beneficial to tribals in numerous ways, including food, firewood, timber, and other building products, and most importantly for permanent settlement. For them, the land is a natural gift from nature to humans, who cannot exist without the use of land and its resources. And land uses must be as diversified as the tribal ranges.

Regarding land protection, the question was asked: “How do you use to protect your land?” To tribal people, the land is as free as the air and water, all for the greater good of

humanity. That is why they are frightened of preserving the local tribal territory. No hostility, violation, invasion, or encroachment of tribal land is permitted. They saw it as their sacred responsibility to protect the own original bounds of a parcel of land and its boundaries. The majority of respondents, 98.43% (Bodo: 97.91%, Rabha: 98.24%, and Garo: 97.5%), said protection is needed as a result of non-protected classes and land-hungry immigrants pouring into tribal areas of the Bodoland Region in droves. It is remarkably pervasive among tribals who inhabit nearby villages in the border areas of the region. In this case, the tribals have no satisfaction with land protection. The state and local administrations did not look adequately under a draft of the National Tribal Policy, 2006, at land protection issues and implement measures to prevent the alienation of land owned by Scheduled Tribes and restore possession of wrongfully alienated lands.

The question related to the land and what it represents for the individual as well as what it means to different tribals is “How land represents for you?” It found that the tribals also have strong emotional ties to their ancestral lands, similar to how other groups feel attached to their unique social circumstances. The most essential natural and priceless asset and imperishable endowment from which tribals obtain nourishment, social prestige, economic, and social equality, a permanent place of dwelling, labour, and a way of life island. Because of the nature of tribal lands, land usage is significant in a variety of ways.

Table 6.15: Land Represents for Individuals

Land represents	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Significant	98.4375	97.321428	97.5	97.916666
Insignificant	--	--	--	--
Don't Know	1.041666	0.892857	1.25	1.041666
In confusion	0.520833	1.785714	1.25	1.041666

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

It found in the study that 97.91% of the overall sample responded that tribals are not outsiders in their land, but the early settlers of the land, and undoubtedly regard their ancestral or tribal land and forest as inherently their own and the significance of the land cannot be overstated. For all of these purposes, it is evident that land is a desire and an integral part of

the tribal experience, and thus any attempt to interrupt this notion is most strongly felt by the plain tribals of the region. Seriously, the study found that nobody has responded to the insignificant portion of land. Overall, 1.04% opined that they do not know the importance of land, basically those who are landless tribals. The other 1.04% of respondents was also in confusion regarding what land represented to them.

6.3.2 LAND DIVIDED AMONG COMMUNITIES

The present four study districts are situated within the Tribal Belts and Blocks. Aside from the three tribes (Bodo, Rabha, and Garo), the other reserved categories would be considered for land possession based on their specific needs. The other reserved categories include scheduled castes, tea labourers, Santhals (Adivasis), and other classes who permanently settled before the creation of the Tribal Belt and Block or even the creation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (1993), Bodoland Territorial Council (2003), or Bodoland Territorial Region (2020). Other non-tribal individuals who have settled there will be permitted to occupy land based on their valid documentation. In the study, the question put forth to the respondents was “How is a land divided among the many communities in your village area?” The results are given below.

Table 6.16: Land Division among the Community Members

Land divided	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Tribal only	80.208333	77.678571	83.75	80.208333
Tribal & Non-tribal	15.104166	18.75	12.5	15.625
Tribal & Immigrants	4.6875	3.571428	3.75	4.166666

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The study found multiple responses from the sampling units. The respondents from the three tribal communities opted for positive and negative responses. In connection with the study question about the land divided into the village areas of the respondents, the maximum number of people participating in the village land is divided into only tribals 80.20%, the land divided into tribal and non-tribal in the village is about 15.62%, and the concerning issue is that the land divided with the tribal and immigrants who identify illegal encroachers in village

land is 4.16%. It was found that there are many non-tribal villages with populations of more than 50%, with some of the non-tribal villages surrounding the tribal villages. The villages have their clear village-wise demarcation, as well as some tribal villages that have no clear demarcation; there is village boundary conflict between them. The important finding is that many non-tribal people successfully classify themselves as tribals to gain privileges meant for tribals. Non-tribals are acquiring tribal lands through married tribal women. There is evidence that land has been transferred to children of tribal women who married non-tribal men.

6.3.3 RECEIVE OUT FROM LAND

The next table is related to what the individual receives out from the land, “What do you receive out from land?” The results are given below.

Table 6 17: Household Received from the Land

Received out from land	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Shelter	57.8125	52.678571	50.00	54.6875
Food	34.895833	38.392857	38.75	36.71875
Other	5.729166	6.25	7.5	6.25
Don't Know	0.520833	0.892857	1.25	0.78125
No Comment	--	0.892857	--	0.260416
In Confusion	1.041666	0.892857	2.5	1.302083

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The data shows that 54.68% have stated that land provides shelter among the tribal households and the desire that the rural tribals be provided with the opportunity to right to shelter. On the other hand, 36.71% indicated they were dependent on or received land and land provided food for them. The study found that in tribal villages tribal residents did not have proper land titles. Lack of land rights and titles had a detrimental influence on agriculture activities, effectiveness, and household food security. Moreover, the tribals received other sources 6.25% from the land. Most of the time, tribals combined other sources of income with their own to effectively use the natural resources of the area where they inhabited. It is also important to note that the tribal respondents do not know is 0.78%, no comment is 0.26% and in confusion is 1.30% about what they received from the land. Despite

the positive provisions of tribal land protection, tribals are disregarded in the region. However, the land is significant for tribals, and in that sense, the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) of the Government of India has strengthened the importance of the tribals' need for more land for settlement, cultivation, and other requirements. The land is assigned to the tribe for their settlement.

Land tenure theory can play a crucial role in enhancing land access for tribals in the region, enabling them to receive benefits from the land. Land tenure theory emphasizes securing land rights and shelter for tribal communities and having legal ownership or access to land. With land tenure policies that prioritize equitable distribution of land, tribals have improved access to land resources necessary for livelihoods. Secure land tenure enables tribals to effectively manage natural resources on their land.

6.3.4 CATEGORY OF LAND

The study asked what the different categories of land are where they live on the land, “What are the different categories of land in your area?” To better understand their lands, tribal societies or residents in the Bodoland Territorial Region have traditionally classified them by land category. These types of land are identified as in Assamese and Bodo- *Janghal toli* or *Janghal maati* (Bodo- *Hagrani Ha/Hagrabarini Ha*) (forest area or patch land), *Jalashay* (Bodo- *Dwini Ha*) (water body land), *Bakari maati* (Bodo- *Gomad/Fwtar/Gwlwiswnai Ha*) (grazing land), *Gharveti* (Bodo- *Bitha/Nabti*) (residential land), *Basti maati* (Bodo-*Tagra/Nolunanwi tagra Ha*) (homestead land), *Sakanibari* (Bodo- *Mwigong bari*) (kitchen garden land), and *Shasyar maati* (Bodo- *Abad tili/Abad dubuli*) (cropland).

6.4 TRIBAL LAND RIGHTS ISSUES AND LAND SECURITY

The essence of the rural tribal village is participatory visioning from the bottom up, with specific goals for tribal land rights and new initiatives. It prioritises the tribal perspective of local areas while thoroughly understanding the need to defend land rights. Through more collaboration with tribal people, the local and state governments must make plans by generating resource maps per village and sociable models for each habitat, holding walks, and

analysing issues within themselves. Tribals must prepare tribal land rights for tribals so that tribals should maintain their own. Tribal land rights are becoming increasingly relevant, either globally or locally.

6.4.1 RIGHT TO LAND

For the respondents, the study question was related to “What do you know about the right to land?” A total of 317 respondents or 82.55% out of 384 respondents have positively replied regarding the significance of the right to land. So, the findings clearly show that having the right to land is an important prerequisite for enhancing agricultural gain and encouraging access to sustainable resources for livelihood. Tribals rely significantly on the land as a natural resource for survival. Therefore, without preserving land rights, one basic tie and holding the land that belongs to their society may be lost, restricting their ability to use their land. Tribals are degrading their basic rights even though provisions in the Indian Constitution of 1950 protected the land rights of Scheduled Tribes. For the first time, Article 19(1)(f) granted equal property rights, by incorporating the fundamental right to property. However, the right was changed to a constitutional right protected by law in the 44th Constitution Amendment of 1978 in Article 300A. It found that there is still an urgent need to increase access to land rights and ownership among tribals in the BTR.

The respondents have revealed that the Bodoland government has faced challenges in effectively protecting the land rights of tribals, aligning with the principles of land tenure theory. Although there might be land tenure policies in place, ineffective implementation or enforcement of these policies can result in the violation of tribal land rights. Administrative inefficiencies or a lack of monitoring mechanisms contribute to these failures. Limited awareness among tribals about their land rights and insufficient participation in decision-making processes concerning land tenure hinder their ability to assert their rights effectively.

6.4.2 LAND PATTA/LAND DEED AND UNCLEAR TITLES

The researcher tries to understand what *land patta* means from the respondents. The question was “Do you know about land patta?” and it provided an option: (i) Yes (ii) No (iii) Don't Know (iv) In confusion (v) No Comment. The majority of respondents rely on positive

responses 96.87% (Bodo: 97.39%, Rabha: 95.53%, and Garo: 97.5%) say ‘Yes.’ The other provided option has just a minimal percentage of reactions. There is an immense rise in the tribal desire to secure permanent inhabitants and land registration. Initially, tribals believed that all members of the tribal would have been landowners if land grabbing had not taken place and alienated their land. Whole tribal lands, free from the money-lenders or encroachment of land-hungry immigrants, were not for sale or lease, and there was no market for them. But situations have changed now. The residents of the region trusted legal documents called *land pattas* (land deeds) for securing long-term tenancy. Reason refers to the rising population and erratic rise of land-hungry immigrants on tribal lands. Other than that, the land is first obtained for cleaning and use on a periodic lease from the government. During the periodic lease, the tribals paid the government a small amount of revenue. After use, the tribals apply for a permanent patta from the government in their names, the periodically used land. The land pattas are not found in the case of forest land and grazing land. But found the land certificate of residing in the forest land as per section 3(1)(h) Scheduled Tribe and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 of India.

The study question asked about the feelings and emotions of the individuals not owning the land certificates and the land pattas for their parcel or plot of household land, “How do you feel about not owning land certificate and land Patta?” The majority of respondents responded 79.89% that the lands are inherited from their ancestors, so not owning the land certificates or the land patta is a feeling of uncertainty for their lives and livelihood; even if they are living in the Sixth Schedule area.

The study question was related to unclear of land title living on land. Currently, the tribals are facing different major issues regarding unclear land title, and they now claim that it requires a permanent solution for their proper land access. The study was carried out in order to identify the root causes of the problems that tribal people face. The question is related to land records that are incomplete, inaccurate, and do not reflect the position on the ground, the legal framework for land, registration of documents, contracts, and all information around land. The study question was “What do you believe the main reason for the unclear tribal land titles?”

Table 6.18: Reasons behind not having Land Patta

Reasons for unclear titles	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Presumptive	22.916666	19.642857	21.25	21.614583
Registration not mandatory	28.645833	29.464285	32.5	29.6875
Cost of registering	9.375	10.714285	10.00	9.895833
Land data	12.5	12.5	8.75	11.71875
Poor maintenance	7.8125	7.142857	6.25	7.291666
Records not reflect position	5.208333	5.357142	7.5	5.729166
Manipulation of land records	4.6875	3.571428	2.5	3.90625
Administrative entities	8.854166	11.607142	11.25	10.15625

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The data presented above are replies from respondents, with 21.61% expressing frustration with the presumptive nature of land titles. They are realistic about the difficulties of carrying out the procedure when past land transactions are not adequately documented and there are gaps between official records and the real situation of landholdings. This is because of gaps in past and current land records make it easier to contest a title. In 2009, the Committee on Financial Sector Reforms (FSRC) pushed switching from a presumptive to a conclusive titling process. Conclusive titles are those that are guaranteed by the state, with the state guaranteeing the title's accuracy and providing compensation in the event of a dispute. s indicates that, due to past practice the tribal people earlier thought that land registration was not mandatory for them and that they could live without appropriate land documentation. Poor land registration records of the past have affected present land transactions in tribal places of study. It found that tribal members feel land registration processes are tricky and the official procedures are lengthy since most are clueless and cannot comprehend the guidelines. As a result, the claim of land registration procedures should be as clear, simple, and precise as possible. 9.89% have opined that the unclear land titles are connected with the high cost of registering land. Respondents suggested that registration fees be kept to a minimum, procedures be kept simple, and officials do not discourage people from registering property transfers. The stamp duty should be less than the cost of the property, allowing poor rural tribals to register their smallest plot of land. There will be a discount on large parcels to mark the end of the long-pending land biases, issues, and controversial procedures in the tribal

areas. As the land is under the competence of states under the Constitution, item 18 in the State List. In 2011, the central government issued a draft Land Titling Bill as a model law for all states to examine, and it should adequately maintain. The Financial Sector Reforms Committee (FSRC) proposed that the Indian Stamp Act of 1899 and the Registration Act of 1908 be changed so that stamp duty is not required to register certain property transactions. Furthermore, stamp duty rates should be decreased to reduce transaction costs. States should reduce the stamp charges. One of the essential state-level changes under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) was to rationalize stamp duty and reduce it to less than 5% by 2018. Likewise, the Standing Committee on Commerce on Ease of Doing Business, 2015 suggested that stamp duty be reduced to 2%. However, tribals have claimed that all these policies are not properly implemented.

Land management or administration requires recording, processing, and distributing data on land ownership, value, and usage. In every state of the country, the process for managing land records differs based on variables such as historical and local traditions. 11.71% stated that land titling in the region is unclear due to a lack of land data (sale deeds, rights records, and spatial land records). It found that tribals still followed traditional methods at the time of land purchase at the village level. With few witnesses present, the seller and buyer signed a sale deed on nominal non-judicial stamp paper or on the white paper written by some local rules for a prescribed amount. So, the transfer does not come into effect in the state government records because of the non-legal sale deed, which does not provide documentary evidence of rights over land in the form of a *patta* (deed) for the buyer. The *patta* initially remained with the first seller as evidence of land rights. The provision in the Registration Act of 1908, the buyer and seller's identity and whether the previous sale deed was registered must be verified when registering a property sale deed; however provision is not properly implemented in the region. The spatial land records on a map of the land have not been updated correctly and are inadequately sketched in the document. The respondents are unhappy about the surveys conducted by the relevant survey and settlement departments to create spatial land records without venturing onto the spot. There is a provision that land can now be transferred from one party to another by sale, purchase, gift,

inheritance, mortgage, or tenancy. The Transfer of Property Act of 1885 states that only a registered instrument can transfer the right, title, or interest in immovable property.

It is found that 7.29% have mentioned that poor maintenance of land records is the cause of unclear land titling. The tribals are unsatisfied with the historical land registration, manual land record, and record maintenance processes of revenue departments. This is because manual land records are not easily accessible to the public. Attempting to sell land makes accessing land-related data complicated and time-consuming. The findings revealed that online preservation of land records using digitization could be linked with the respective district or state court registries. So, a buyer can obtain accurate information on any pending litigation against an asset. 5.79% have expressed concern that the records do not accurately reflect the situation on the land, which has resulted in land unrest. It found that cadastral maps are generally restricted to agricultural land, with rural villages and areas of communities mostly not surveyed. Due to inadequate management of land records and a failure to update the records through surveying, mapping has not been conducted to identify actual boundaries on the ground. Therefore, the spatial records do not reflect or match the textual records. The disparity between spatial and textual records also emerges because land transfers and divisions, whether via inheritance or sale, are not recorded by assessments or surveys. The maximum issue lies to the fact that documents may not be revised when a landowner dies and such land is transferred to the beneficiary. The Assam Land Policy 2019 has provided for the cadastral survey and non-cadastral areas to protect the land allotment or settlement of individuals. However, the administrative council of the BTR has no proper planning or has not decided on such steps to solve the land problems.

Regarding the manipulation of land records, 3.90% have said the inadequacy of the process of manipulating land records is not accidental in the region. However, it has arisen due to the efforts and interests of some government officials. This is not just the manipulation of the land records to give tribal land to the non-tribals; rather, there is a history behind the manipulation, and the state has supported the land record manipulation and the settlement of the non-tribals in the tribal lands. 10.15% believe that administrative entities are liable for unclear land misdeeds. The respondents claimed for changes in the official process concerning their land maintenance and adequate records of unclear land records. The

necessary changes are required for the registration of sale deeds, the collection of stamp duty, the maintenance of the record of rights, the mutations register, changes in titles, the maintenance of tax registers for the collection of revenue from land, spatial data or maps, the execution of surveys to collect land-related data, and the updating of maps. In addition, the Committee on State Agrarian Relations and the Unfinished Task of Land Reforms of 2009 found that the average age of village and cadastral maps in almost every state is more than 50 years, with the majority created during the British government.

Uncertain land titles and deeds have been a significant impediment to land access and rights of ownership for tribals in the BTR, according to the principles of land tenure theory. Unclear land titles lead to disputes and conflicts over land ownership among tribal communities. Without clear documentation, it becomes challenging to establish rightful ownership, leading to conflicts that hinder access to land. The lack of clear land titles exposes tribal lands to encroachment by external parties. Land without definitive ownership is often vulnerable to encroachment and exploitation, depriving tribals of their rightful access to land resources. Land without clear titles lacks legal protection. Unclear land titles restrict access to resources necessary for livelihoods.

6.4.3 POSSESSION OF RESIDENT LAND

Individual land ownership has progressively replaced the traditional individual land ownership in the Bodoland region with the desire for permanent cultivation. In terms of the study area, the growth of individual land ownership is the result of a change in tribal cultivation classification. Tribals have initiated permanent cultivation of paddy, cash crops, and horticultural crops by cultivating sustainable land near their own households. Prior to the previous four to five decades, tribal peoples placed little significance on areas that were maintained in permanent cultivation. Lands were often given without remuneration to relatives and other tribal members, as well as close friends from other local tribes. Later, as the population rose and a significant number of land-hungry immigrants poured into these areas, the tribals began to attach great emphasis to the right to individual ownership. In relation to all of this, the question asked, who they considered to be landowners to assess

genuine land ownership, question “Who owns the land where your family currently resides?”

The results are given below:

Table 6.19: Current Possession of Resident Land

Type of land owned	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Individual owned by men	67.708333	67.857142	68.75	67.96875
Individual owned by women	2.083333	--	--	1.041666
Joint owned by couples	--	--	--	--
Land owned by nomination	--	--	--	--
Land registration under process	19.270833	17.857142	17.5	18.489583
Owned without <i>Patta</i> and <i>Daag</i>	10.9375	14.285714	13.75	12.5

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The above table shows that individuals owned by men are 67.96% the individual land ownership is the most prevalent type of land ownership for tribals in this plain area, and it is permanent. Women ownership owned only 1.04%. The respondents agreed that tribal women land ownership should be recorded, although they were not unanimous in their support. Only the Bodo tribal community of women land ownership was visible from the study. In terms of effectiveness, women are typically the sole or *de facto* heads of households in the region. Although women have the option of cultivating land for household needs, they are routinely denied even basic access to this resource, which is controlled to the fullest extent possible by the family head. It is expected that allowing them to own their own land will increase agricultural productivity, enhance their livelihoods, and expand educational opportunities for their children. Even the Forest Rights Act of 2006 respects women’s land rights as equivalent to men’s by recognizing individual forest rights through joint titles in the joint names of husband and wife. Unmarried women, abandoned women, and widows are given unique forest rights. However, women in the region continue to be deprived of their land rights. According to the provisions, women have the legal right to own, inherit, and dispose of property in India. The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 governs Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs of property rights and guarantees equal inheritance rights to sons and daughters. The tribal women are depriving against the Hindu Succession Amendment Act (HSAA) of

2005, which ensures equal access to ancestral property for men and women. In the study, tribal people living without holding land, that is, *land patta* and *daag* numbers were reported at 12.5%. While joint owned by couples and land owned by nomination none were reported, whereas there is land policy in Assam for joint patta in the name of spouse under Section 18 of the Assam Land Policy 2019, but such a type of policy and provision is not clear and provision is not implemented in the administrative council of BTR. The current land registration under process is reported 18.48%. It is the tribal populations with no land ownership that can be found in the Bodoland region's four districts. In reality, in terms of land ownership, the majority of tribe replies stated that the land was either managed or held by parents or other household relatives now where they are living. So, the Land Registration Act of 1809 which is needs to be seriously used in the region.

The Bodoland region, like many other areas, has encountered failed in effectively implementing maximum land ownership for women, in line with the principles advocated by land tenure theory. Deep-rooted patriarchal norms and customs often prevail in the region, leading to gender-based discrimination in land ownership. Traditional beliefs and practices tend to favour male inheritance, limiting women's access to and control over land. While legal provisions might exist for women's land ownership, their effective implementation remains a challenge. There might be gaps between legal mandates and the actual enforcement or recognition of women's land rights on the ground. Cultural norms and societal expectations often hinder women from owning land independently. Women's limited participation in decision-making processes related to land tenure prevents their voices from being heard and their rights from being adequately addressed.

6.4.4 CURRENT LAND RIGHTS RELATED ISSUES

The following study question was put to respondents, "What is your current land-related issue, such issue related to land rights and access?" If so, what are the main issues? The results are given below:

Table 6.20: Current Land-Related Issues of Tribal People

Land issue	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Fresh encroachment	23.4375	29.464285	28.75	26.302083
Forest land rights issues	22.916666	25.892142	30.00	25.260416
Land ownership	16.666666	15.178571	8.75	14.583333
Land registration	12.5	7.142857	6.25	9.635416
Landlessness	11.979166	8.928571	8.75	10.416666
Land alienation	5.729166	6.25	6.25	5.989583
Others	6.770833	7.142857	11.25	7.8125

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

Based on the above data, 26.30% have replied that the present major land rights issue hurting tribals is fresh encroachment in grazing land, forest areas, and other government vacant lands like *Char* land (Sandbars) in tribal areas. Under the scheme of the Indian government, the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), the priority of development schemes is to protect and preserve tribal areas from encroachment. Section 15(1) of the Assam Land Policy 2019 takes suitable and effective actions to remove those encroachers who are ineligible for land settlement under the land policy of the government. However, the results so far have not been encouraging in the BTR. Tribal households living on the outskirts of forests are denied or have limited access to forest resources. 25.26% have been deprived of forest land and forest rights. Serious concerns about tribal forests and land rights have not been adequately addressed. Many tribal members' forest patta petitions are still pending or have been rejected. It found that tribal people do not have access to forest land records, and there is no record of forest land access rights. This increases their vulnerability to exploitation by non-tribals and in certain situations by local officials. Where forest land is provided to the tribals, however, no land *pattas* (land deeds) or land allocation certificates for forest lands are given to forest residents. It has been shown that 14.58% of the inhabitants do not meet the legal requirements for land title or ownership. The issue of land registration is not ignored 9.63% of respondents engaged in the act of legal registration.

Landlessness is also a barrier to the tribals' livelihood. 10.41% have mentioned landlessness is the present land issue of the tribal community and a significant portion has not received recommendations on rights of land. Tribal groups face being both landless and

homestead less. Many tribal landless and homestead less households had lived on government-owned land for decades. The prevalence of land alienation among tribals in the studied areas remains at 5.98%. Tribal land alienation is a potentially problematic issue in the region. They argue the state and local governments have taken no concrete measures to restore illegally alienated tribal lands. So, there are no adequate measures to prevent alienation of land owned by Scheduled Tribes and restore possession of wrongfully alienated lands under a draft of the National Tribal Policy, 2006. Although 7.81% mentioned other land-related issues, it has a favourable influence on their land rights and livelihood. In the sub-question, it was related to: “Who are the most devastated communities when it comes to land issues?” The majority of 74.21% positively replied that tribal communities and non-tribals 20.31% devastated when it comes to land rights or land-related issues. It is not a shocking incident for the tribals. Definitely, they are the most devastated community, always facing the hardships of land rights issues.

The local and state governments have several failures in protecting current land-related issues for tribals, which align with shortcomings from a land tenure perspective. Weak enforcement mechanisms contribute to fresh encroachments on tribal lands. Failure to actively prevent encroachments results in ongoing disputes and the loss of traditional territories. Conflicting or poorly implemented forest land policies lead to disputes over forest lands that are crucial for tribal livelihoods. The lack of clear delineation between forested areas and inhabited lands exacerbates conflicts. Ambiguities in land ownership and unclear land titles within tribal communities create vulnerabilities, making their lands susceptible to exploitation, encroachments, or land grabbing. Complex or inaccessible land registration processes hinder tribals from obtaining formal recognition of their land rights. Historical injustices, inadequate policies, and limited access to formal land ownership contribute to landlessness among tribal communities. External pressures from developmental projects, urbanization, or vested interests lead to the alienation of tribal lands. This results in displacement, loss of cultural identity, and severe disruption to traditional ways of life.

6.4.5 LAND TENURE SECURITY

The study question was related to the land tenure security in relation to land rights and land security, “What do you know about the land tenure security?” Even today, the notion of tribal sovereignty over one’s homeland confuses the tribal land tenure system. Tribals, only 27.34% (Bodo: 26.56%, Rabha: 29.46%, and Garo: 26.25%) know the land tenure security and they believe there is no other authority, either state or central that may exert absolute possession rights over their ancestral land. The tribal members have inherited the land, and they will transfer it down to their descendants without any interference. They strongly consider that tribal lands cannot be possessed by outsiders or unlawfully owned, even in the absence of a proper study map and any demarcation of the boundaries of distinct groups or persons. The tribal residents are the landowners, and they have the authority to utilise it. They are confident and have a claim to the land and its resources. They have a right to the forest and other resources, including minerals. It identified in study areas that feudal tenure concepts such as share-cropping, sub-tenancy, lease holding, and others are less prevalent.

However, the disadvantage of a strictly tribal land tenure system is that the tribal people are not completely free of the fear of land scarcity. Another remarkable aspect of tribal interest in maintaining permanent and recorded or documented land tenure is that, under tribal milieu, each parcel of land has become a great asset when it is exposed for sales or purchases. Clearly stated, the tribal understanding of land tenure security is essentially dictated by their livelihood. Due to the strain of illegal immigration and population growth on fixed land areas, many tribals in the area have been forced to face the necessity of surviving and identifying their land resources. The study is found 67.44% (Bodo: 69.79%, Rabha: 63.39%, and Garo: 67.5%) tribals now increasingly rely on legal and permanent land documents rather than traditional or customary land rights. They preferred giving more importance to permanent documents, and such a situation has discriminatory tribal land tenure, as in the view of theorists of land tenure security, it refers to the assurances that a person’s right to a certain piece of land would be affirmed and protected in the case of a specific difficulty. People with insecure tenure are at risk of losing their land rights due to competing claims or being evicted. There is mention in Section 5(1) of the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 that a tenure holder is primarily a person who has acquired a right to hold land to collect rents or bring it under

cultivation by establishing tenants on it from a proprietor or another tenure holder and also includes the successor in interest of persons who have acquired such a right.

It is also necessary to have a stable grasp and knowledge of land policy and other difficulties that we face daily. The study question was put to respondents, “Do you know about what land laws are being implementing in the BTR?” To understand the goals of the region’s land laws and regulations, it is vital to examine the motivations of governments over land among tribals and certain other populations.

Table 6.21: Awareness/Consciousness Level on Land Laws Implemented in BTR

Land laws	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Yes	26.5625	25.892857	23.75	25.78125
No	66.145833	67.857142	68.75	67.1875
In confusion	4.166666	4.464285	6.25	4.6875
No Idea	3.125	1.785714	1.25	2.34375

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

From the above data, 67.18% have no clear understanding of what norms apply to them and the laws they obey. 25.78% said they were well-versed in the land laws that govern in the region. There are serious responses that still 4.68% are in confusion about what land policies and laws are applicable, and 2.45% have completely unknown or have no idea regarding land laws in the study areas.

The question was concerning of safeguards of land rights, “What do you think which Bodo Accord is adequately recognised the safeguarding the land rights for the tribal and for all?” The land rights have become a major issue for both tribal and non-tribal inhabitants. Any irresponsible statement on the land in the region is the flammable propensity to revive old emotions from decades of bloodshed amid violent ethnic strife and internal displacement of thousands of inhabitants. The long-pending rights and issues, which are certainly a key source of such disputes, it must be resolved is to have lasting peace. It will necessitate cooperation from all tribal and non-tribal entities.

Table 6.22: Level of Satisfaction on Safeguarding the Land Rights

Bodo Accord	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
1 st Accord, 1993 (BAC)	1.041666	1.785714	1.25	1.302083
2 nd Accord, 2003 (BTC)	47.395833	41.964285	42.5	44.791666
3 rd Accord, 2020 (BTR)	49.479166	45.535714	43.75	47.135416
In confusion	0.520833	3.571428	6.25	2.604166
No Idea	1.041666	5.357142	5.00	3.125
All Accords are Satisfactory	0.520833	1.785714	1.25	1.041666

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The above data shows, 47.13% positively opined that they can probably confirm the current Third Bodo Accord 2020, Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) reaches consensus, but they must be determined not to run away first from complexities. Surprisingly, the replies in the Second Bodo Accords of 2003, Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) were quite comparable with the Third Accord at 44.79% regarding the protection of land rights of tribal and non-tribal peoples in the Region. The First Bodo Accord 1993, Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) merely responded by 1.30%. In confusion 2.60%, even though the responders are permanent settlers of the region, they are nevertheless unsure about the agreements. When, where, and who they were signed, and what the accords mean and their significance. The responses with no ideas accounting for 3.12% and all the accords are satisfactorily responsible for the safeguarding of the land rights reported at 1.04%.

The tribals have reacted but in confused and want defined land rights under the agreements. It had no formal role, like the BAC of 1993, which was granted just an advisory role in drafting land legislation. The BTC was given the authority to create laws concerning land revenue within its jurisdiction under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2003, paragraph 3B, section (1) subsection (xv). It demonstrates the Assam government's commitment to establishing legal safeguards for tribal land rights outside tribal belts and blocks. Clause 7 of the 2020 agreement's Memorandum of Settlement. However, the new powers granted to the area over land under the sixth schedule were subject to the condition that the authority granted to Bodoland was conferred prospectively rather than retrospectively.

The lack of knowledge of tribal peoples and the failure to implement secure land tenure by local and state governments in the region have significant implications for land access and livelihoods, as viewed through the lenses of land tenure theory and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. When tribal communities lack awareness or understanding of their land rights, it leads to insecure land tenure. This insecurity undermines their ability to protect their lands from encroachment, exploitation, or disputes, affecting their livelihoods adversely. Inadequate knowledge about land tenure security often results in vulnerability to displacement. Insecure land tenure directly affects the livelihoods of tribal peoples. It restricts their access to land for agriculture, grazing, or other traditional livelihood activities.

6.5 LAND ACCESS AND TRIBAL LAND TIES

Many tribal inhabitants in Bodoland own some land, but their assets are so small and inefficient that they are unable to maximise their livelihood. The land concerns have been regarded as a long-running tragedy for tribal communities, with unequal access to land among tribals being the main reason. It also fails to recognise long-standing rights to use the land.

6.5.1 PERSPECTIVES ON LAND ACCESS

The study question was related to the perspective on land access, which was “What is your perspective on land access?” It is found that a total of 173 respondents or 45.05% of the 384 sampled have a clear understanding of land access; they describe it as the right of access to their own land. The other 211 respondents or 54.94% have no clear idea of what land access is or do not understand the concept of land access. They revealed that there are effects to denying more fair access to land, as well as the benefits of attaining land possession, transfer, etc. Respondent No. 96¹ replied that seven and eight decades earlier there was free use of land and it was no matter how they got access to land, where any tribal households have been living since immemorial time on the plot of land, “but now it is the present important fact that how we able to continue to access the land.” It opined the rural tribal households must be given special consideration owing to their ability to access land, since

¹Respondent serial number 96, a 92-year-old man from Chirang district, is a resident of the village Nangdarbari (Taigirguri, near the Laoti Mini Hydroelectric Power Project) of Sidli-Chirang block under Sidli revenue circle. He opined about the free use of land in their area.

they are mostly wage-dependent, mainly for landless or near-landless rural agricultural labourers.

The absence of clear ideas or understanding about land access affects tribal land access in the Bodoland region from the perspectives of land tenure theory and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, such as insecure land tenure, limited resource utilisation, restricted livelihood options, and the risk of marginalisation.

6.5.2 DEPRIVED THE RIGHT TO ACCESS TO LAND

The study found many land issues related to the deprivation of right of access to land. The table shows different causes of deprivation of the rights of access to land within the jurisdiction of the studied areas. The question was asked, “How are tribals being deprived of the right of access to land of their own?” The result is given below:

Table 6.23: Deprivation Level of Right to Access to Land

Deprived of access to land	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Use rights	8.854166	8.928571	13.75	9.895833
Control rights	6.770833	7.142857	8.75	7.291666
Transfer rights	34.895833	29.464285	26.25	31.510416
Displacement	11.458333	17.857142	13.75	13.802083
Same or better quality land	4.6875	3.571428	2.5	3.90625
Informal tenure	6.25	7.142857	6.25	6.510416
Legalisation	8.333333	6.25	5.00	7.03125
Social inclusion and exclusion	4.166666	9.821428	10.00	7.03125
Land grabbing	3.645833	3.571428	6.25	4.166666
Resistance and resilience	10.9375	6.25	7.5	8.854166

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The data reveals that 9.89% agreed they are deprived of access to land as use rights, including using the land for grazing, growing subsistence crops, and gathering minor forestry products. Regarding control rights, 7.29% stated that they deprived of land access rights. Traditionally, they have had no confusion or fear about controlling their own land, but today they are terrify of the right to decide how the land should be managed and to benefit from it. The majority of respondents, 31.51% stated in the transfer rights that land access creates create more confusion and deprive them of their right to land due to the uncertain land

transfer from one party to another through the use of sale or mortgage of the land, inheritance, intra-community reallocation, registration of land rights, adjudication or settlement of doubts, and plot boundaries. The BTR contains laws that prohibit anybody other than a tribe member from transferring lands. The region has barred land transfers from tribal to non-tribal, yet the authorities violate the regulation. The tribal people believe that the transfer of agricultural land to non-tribal peoples should be restricted. The Assam Land Policy of 2019 imposes limits on this issue in order to preserve the basic permanent cropland of the state. It is a measure to prevent the transfer of agricultural land belonging to agriculturists to non-agriculturists and likewise safeguard land belonging to indigenous people in the state. Such a monumental move should be made in the BTR for the sake of tribals and indigenous people.

In the study regarding displacement, 13.80% have responded that it is a significant cause of the deprivation of access to land, and there are no proper measures to provide the legislative frame for rehabilitation and resettlement to minimise displacement in the region as per the National Tribal Policy, 2006. The study region is a conflict-prone zone. Due to ethnic conflict, many local natives were displaced and induced Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and they could not even access their own land. It found that the displaced tribals' land is captured by others who are also tribal and displaced are avoiding resettlement on the same land. They are depriving the access rights to their own land. In this case, the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation, and Resettlement Act (RFCTLARR) of 2013 is a significant violation. Whereas the Act provides the legislation, mandates rehabilitation and resettlement assistance for affected families. It found 3.90% consider that implementing land-to-land retaining of the same or better quality land rights to access is hard to accomplish if community-based rehabilitation is not executed after displacement. So, there is failure and no establishment of special courts for such atrocities against the tribals in the areas, a violation of the provision for the relief and rehabilitation of the victims under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. On the issue of informal land tenure, 6.51% responded that the issues with informal land tenure prevent proper access to land. It found that the tribals are tricked into selling their land so that their future rights of access to land endure.

Concerning 7.03% have expressed the reason for legalisation in the secure access to land. It revealed that the state (Assam) and local (BTR) land rules are confusing the appropriate right of access to land. The land rights of the individuals are safeguarded and governed by state laws. Different states have enacted safeguards to prevent and return any illicit land transfers to socially excluded people. However, unlawful land transactions have been reported as violating the laws in the BTR. The respondents' perspective is that land is a crucial provider of livelihood prospects and hence requires adequate legalisation. It is social inclusion and exclusion, 7.03% agreed it is not a recent phenomenon in the study areas. Based on the study, the right to access land is an important aspect of household, community, livelihood, and other activities. However, rural social inclusion and exclusion often hinge solely on land access issues.

In the study, 4.16% agreed that there are issues of land grabbing that prohibit tribal from having access to land, it need to be used adequately the provision of the Assam Land Grabbing (Prohibition) Act, 2010, to prohibit the activity of land grabbing. Regarding resistance and resilience, 8.85% have expressed that the resistance to entry into forest land areas is a bundle of causes, including tribal tradition and the right to access forests. They have exposed that sustainable livelihood and development concept rely heavily on secure land access and other uses of forest resources. Respondents specify that Section 3(1)(h) of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act of 2006 does not appropriately protect them. The approach, which has no legal basis, allows for severe manipulation and denials of rights to tribe's traditional forest residents of the region.

The revelations by tribal people regarding the local government's failure to protect their rights to access to land in various crucial aspects, as per land tenure theory, profoundly affect their livelihoods. Restrictions or a lack of protection in transfer rights hinder tribal communities from freely using or transferring their land. Inadequate protection in utilising land rights limits tribal communities from optimising their land for agriculture, grazing, or other traditional practices vital for their livelihoods. The failure to protect against displacement disrupts the stability and continuity of tribal communities' livelihoods. Displacement removes their access to resources and cultural ties linked to their lands, often leading to economic hardships. Insufficient control over their lands denies tribal communities

the ability to manage and make decisions about their resources. The lack of formal recognition or legalisation of informal land tenure systems further marginalises tribal communities. Discrimination and exclusion from land access or control rights isolate tribal communities socially and economically. This exclusion prevents them from accessing opportunities for economic growth and development. Failure to protect against land grabbing exposes tribal lands to exploitation and external encroachment.

6.5.3 GAIN ACCESS TO PLOT OF LAND

It is indeed important to know how households acquired the right to possess all of the lands on which they live and have access to their arable lands. When asked how tribal people gained access to their land, they mentioned such methods as inheriting it from family members, purchasing the land, getting it through donation, and gaining access to it through occupancy. The question was, “How did you gain access to the whole of your parcel or plot of land?” The response is reflected in the table below.

Table 6.24: Gain Access to Plot of Land

Gain access to land	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Inherited from family	77.083333	76.785714	76.25	76.822916
Through the occupy	11.458333	10.71285	10.00	10.9375
Through purchasing	4.6875	5.357142	5.00	4.947916
Through donation	2.083333	2.678571	3.75	2.604166
Don't know	4.6875	4.464285	5.00	4.6875

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The above data shows that the majority of respondents gain access to their land through inheritance from family members represents 76.82% of all three tribal communities. The other means of obtaining it through the occupy is 10.93%, gaining it through purchasing the land is 4.94%, acquiring a plot of land through donations is 2.60%, and it is gained through other means and respondents do not know how they get access is 4.68%. The sons participate equally in the inheritance of their parents’ household and possessions. The girls do not receive any of their father’s inheritance. However, respondents disclosed that land is now equally shared for girl children. They also receive an equal share of their mother’s belongings, such as clothing, jewelry, woven offerings, and so on. It found that when any person receives

the land as a gift or donation from elderly people who do not have sons or daughters, they cultivate it indefinitely. However, they cannot possess the landholding right or certificate on it, but they do have the capacity to hold and use the land. The tribal communities in the region clearly appeal to the local administration to empower tribal communities to promote self-governance and self-rule, including land-related issues, as per the National Policy of 2006.

Tribal communities in the Bodoland region have appealed to the local administration for several measures to protect their access to land. Tribal communities seek legal recognition and secure land rights. They request inclusion in decision-making processes concerning land governance. They appeal for safeguards to ensure the stability and continuity of their livelihoods linked to their lands. They seek improved access to resources necessary for sustainable land use. Tribal communities request the legalization and recognition of their traditional land tenure systems. They request effective enforcement of existing land laws and regulations to ensure protection of their land rights. By appealing for these measures, tribal communities aim to secure their land rights, preserve their livelihoods, and foster sustainable development within their communities in line with the principles of land tenure theory.

6.5.4 INTEND TO HOLD PLOT OF LAND ACCESSIBLE

Understanding the tribal and how they intended to keep the land accessible is essential. The questionnaires include the right of access, control, usage, occupancy, management, clearance, usufruct, and waste and abuse. The question was “How do you intend to hold your parcel or plot of land accessible?” The result is given below:

Table 6.25: Intend to Hold Plot of Land

Intend to hold land	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Right to Access	47.395833	43.75	36.25	44.010416
Control rights	19.791666	18.75	21.25	19.791666
Use rights	13.020833	15.178571	16.25	14.322916
First occupancy rights	8.854166	8.928571	8.75	8.854166
Management rights	4.6875	4.464285	11.25	5.989583
Right of clearance	2.604166	4.464285	2.5	3.3125
Usufruct	2.083333	2.678571	2.5	2.34375
Waste & abuse	1.5625	1.785714	1.25	1.5625

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The data shows the majority of tribals desired to maintain their land as the highest right of access with agreeing 44.01%. Respondents have been more troubled by the right to access. However, they replied constructively, pointing out that individuals get the opportunity to obtain land access and resource access rights under the right to access. The control rights of their land are consequently 19.79%, revealed that they should have the right to monitor land and decide how to use it when they have the authority to do so. Regarding the use rights, they are 14.32% and claimed they should have the right to use the land for agriculture, grazing, and the preparation of forestry resources. They contend that the use rights of land come with landholdings.

The result of first occupancy rights of 8.85%, in the first occupancy were adamant that any land entry and placement of tribals in an uninhabited area is acceptable and that the government should recognise the first right of occupancy. Concerning the management rights of 5.98%, tribal hold that the right to manage land rights is theirs under the rules prescribed against tribal interests. That is the right of clearance of 3.31%, tribals were the first occupants, chopping shrubs and constantly cultivating in the study areas, and they should be allowed to clear their own land as they see fit. It is 2.34% in the usufruct, tribal have the right to all the pleasures earned from accessing the land without damaging or abusing it as they have. The waste and abuse is 1.56%, it is strongly argued that tribes have the right to alter the state of the land for the better or for the worse, as well as to abuse it. They advocated for more easily managed to control rights, used land rights and unrestricted right to access to land.

Tribal communities face several challenges in accessing their lands in the region. By addressing the issues and aligning policies with land tenure theory and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, governments can empower tribal communities to secure their land rights, preserve their livelihoods, implement or amend laws to recognize and protect the land rights of tribal communities, and foster sustainable development within these communities.

6.5.5 SECURED LAND AND CURRENT LAND ACCESS ISSUES

The Secured use of land enhances societal stability by reducing uncertainty, and land-related issues. Insecurity, unemployment, poverty, and social isolation are also lessened by it. In the study question was: “Do you feel you are securing the ability to use and adequate land

access?” Out of the 384 sampled households, 239 respondents or 62.23% stated they are interested in enlarging the ‘secure ability to use the land’ through the right of land access so that the marginalised tribals might benefit from dwelling on and using the lands. Tribals believed that fair and equal access to land is the core for resolving land issues. A fundamental barrier to tribal livelihood is the issue of inadequate land access.

The sample of 145 respondents or 37.76% replied to the question about ‘equitable and adequate land accesses’ and they are aware of the need for an effective approach to support their pursuit of equitable and adequate land access. Also, in response, it was stated that the tribal groups in the region believe in a paradigm shift and that it is related to transformations. They do not wish to be involved in land disputes or identity crises. So, tribals are plea the local government to proper implement the Article 19(1)(f) of the Indian Constitution, it preserved the land rights of Scheduled Tribes and Article 300A the right was transformed into a fundamental right guaranteed by law.

The next table is connected with the current land access issues they face regarding accessing their land. The question was “What current issues do you consider to be limiting in accessing your own land?” The result is given below:

Table 6.26: Current Land Access Issues in BTR

Related land access issue	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Issue of land ownership	20.833333	21.428571	22.5	21.354166
Land registration issue	19.791666	16.071428	18.75	18.489583
Land boundary issue	6.770833	7.142857	8.75	7.291666
Human & wildlife issue	4.166666	2.678571	2.5	3.385416
Illegal immigration issue	10.416666	10.714285	10.00	10.416666
Forest land and rights issue	9.895833	9.821428	8.75	9.635416
Division of land in protected areas	13.020833	15.178571	15.00	14.0625
Because of ethnic conflict issue	11.458333	10.714285	5.00	9.895833
Land laws and policies issue	5.729166	5.357142	6.25	5.729166

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

Based on the data presented above, most tribals are concerned about land ownership, as stated by 21.35% and believe their land rights are not adequately protected under Articles 31(1) and (2), which prohibit any deprivation of property by a person. Moreover, Article

300A establishes the Right to Property as a constitutional right and states that no individual shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property. The land rights in the state are outlined in Section 6 of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886, which needs to be implemented more in the study region. The respondents have stated the connection between tribals and land is primarily a social tie based on land. Land ownership cannot be equated with ownership of any other asset. The ties with tribal and land rights and land use as resources are referred to as rights over land ownership. Respondents, 18.48% are realising that the inherent inadequacies in our mechanism of keeping land records or registries are causing increasing problems with land registration. Earlier, tribals were unaware of the significant value of land as an asset, but now they recognise it. The tribal view is that there is an evident infringement of the rights of land registration as stipulated by Rule 215 of the Assam Land Records Manual of 1906 and Sections 50, 52, and 53 of the Assam Land Revenue Regulation, 1886, which regulate the processes involved. The land boundary issue affects 7.29%, stated that land boundary issues on their plot are not just a tribal dilemma but other communities also suffer.

It is found that 3.38% have been facing human and wildlife issues or conflicts in the natural use of land. When humans and wildlife clash, it results in adverse effects such as loss of land, livelihood, and even human life. An ongoing issue in the region is illegal immigration, which has affected 10.41% in neighbouring villages. Tribal groups are dealing with land disputes and conflicts as a result of the never-ending issue of illegal immigration. In the study, respondent No. 20² opined, “the immigrants illegally entered their nearby village, which was grazing land.” When the tribal communities are obstructed from entering and try to evict the immigrant, the immigrant says, Bodo- *Hadora Nwngswrni, Natai Haya Jwngni*, Assamese- *Dekh Tumar, Kintu Maati Amar* and Hindi- *Desh Tumhaara, Lekhin Jameen Hamaara* (The country is yours, but the land is ours). The Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act of 1950 allows for the removal of certain immigrants from Assam. Despite the Act, immigration issues are not sufficiently dealt with. That is, to overwhelm the tribal people and isolate them from the vast area of the Bodoland Territorial Region.

² Respondent serial number 20 is an 85-year-old man from the Bodo community, and he is from the Udalguri district Mazbat block area and Mazbat revenue circle. The old man opined regarding the clashes between immigrants and native peoples that he had shown in the past.

The government illegally evicted tribals from their land for conservation and reservation forest. Where they have always remained and have always been respected and protected forest land and its resources. On the other hand, there is non-implementation of Section 4(5) of the Forest Rights Act of 2006. They are accused of endangering wildlife and the environment while maintaining the local environment better than any other group. Because of forest land 9.63% believe they are denied access to their land and forest rights have responded angrily to the government's restrictions on their traditional rights limiting their access to forest lands. It found that they rely heavily on the forest for a living, and their issues cannot be merged with those of the non-tribal population. The tribals are demanding the full implementation of the Forest Rights Act 2006 in the region. Division of land into protected areas 14.06% have expressed that even with the provision of tribal belts and blocks, that is, protected belts and blocks, the inflow remained frequent, even though immigration to the 'Char' areas and sparsely populated places of Assam had been ongoing for decades. Certain localities became closed to immigration, and conflict arose involve tribals, immigrants, and non-tribals. Respondents indicate that the government should take protective measures for tribals who cannot look out for their own welfare owing to their primitive living conditions, insufficient education, and scarce land for their livelihood. The so-called tribal belts and blocks given in Chapter X of the Assam Land Revenue Regulation of 1886, which is a farce, have not been preserved in any way for tribal interests. The Tribal Belts and Blocks have not included all tribal villages and areas. The word tribal was omitted from the title of Chapter X of the Assam Act XV Act of 1947.

For 9.89% issue of ethnic conflict has far-reaching ramifications in the BTR, such as land loss, internal displacement, regional instability, socio-economic failures, and others. It found that the ethnic hatred in Bodoland is due mainly to the ongoing land conflict between tribals and non-tribals. In some parts, non-tribals dominate tribals, and they are concerned that illegal immigration would make tribals as minority in their ancestral land. The tribals, mainly the Bodo rebels, are opposed to the settlement of Adivasis, whose forebears came from eastern and central India as tea plantation labourers under British rule. Where there was a violation of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation, and Resettlement Act of 2013, the displaced families did not get the proper

settlement after the conflict as per the resettlement policy. 5.72% felt that they are unable to access their current land due to land laws and policy difficulties. It found that the current situation has been worsened by reality, as many tribal individuals who have resided in the forest areas and government lands for decades are lacking the requisite documents to prove it. So, there is required to verification of procedure under Section 4(5) of the Forest Rights Act of 2006.

The study found that, as per the Land Tenure Theory and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, the Bodoland region and its government have failed to address various current land access-related issues that impact tribal communities. Failure to resolve land ownership disputes and maintain accurate land registries leads to uncertainties and conflicts over land, affecting the secure land access of tribal communities. Unresolved boundary issues create tensions and hinder access to land, impacting tribal communities' ability to use and manage their traditional territories effectively. Encroachments of wildlife into human habitats lead to conflicts that disrupt agricultural activities and pose threats to the safety and livelihoods of tribals. Influxes of migrants or illegal immigrants affect land resources and exacerbate existing tensions over land use among tribals. Lack of recognition of tribal land rights in forested and protected areas limits their access to vital resources, restricting their livelihood options and cultural practices. Land-related ethnic conflicts escalate tensions, impacting social cohesion and economic development within tribal communities. Outdated or inadequate land laws and policies fail to address the evolving needs and rights of tribal communities, perpetuating ongoing land access issues.

6.5.6 ACCESS TO CURRENT LAND IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS

In the region, access to land for the tribals is based on inheritance. Access rights may have their origins in the long-term usage of the lands through inheritance, ancestral occupancy rights, and the use of land by ancestral societies. In such cases, the act of original land clearing and settlement by forefathers establishes rights. In the study, the question was “Do you think you will be able to access your current land for the next 5 years?” The following shows the responses in the table.

Table 6.27: Access of Current Land in the Next 5 Years (If ‘No’- go to table: 6.28)

Current land access	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Yes	68.75	66.071428	58.75	65.885416
No	25.520833	27.678571	35.00	28.125
Don't Know	5.729166	6.25	6.25	5.989583

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The above data indicate that out of 384 sampled households, 253 respondents or 65.88% have positively responded that they would be able to access their current land for the next five years. They have no doubts regarding the precise use and access of their existing land. 5.98% of respondents do not know that they will be capable of accessing their existing land for the next 5 years because they are unclear whether their family possesses land documents.

The data shows a total of 108 of respondents or 28.12% who are unable to access their current land. The most common reasons given by respondents for not being able to access the responses are listed below. The question was “Reasons or why the present land will not be used over the next 5 years?” The results are given below:

Table 6.28: Uncertainty of Land Use/Possession in the Next 5 Years

Reason or why	% of Bodo Sample 49	% of Rabha Sample 31	% of Garo Sample 28	Total % of Sample 108
No land patta/certificate	38.775510	38.709677	46.428571	40.740740
Access only for a specified duration	--	3.225806	10.714285	3.703703
Land is leasing	10.204081	6.451612	7.142857	8.333333
Land rights are not enforced	12.244897	6.451612	7.142857	9.259259
The government may limit use	18.367346	12.903225	10.714285	14.814814
Competition among villagers	4.081632	12.903225	7.142857	7.407407
Competition with neighbouring villages	6.122448	9.677419	7.142857	7.407407
Infrastructure/road development	10.204081	9.677419	3.571428	8.333333

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

From the above data, 40.74% stated that they could not use or had concerns about using their present land due to a lack of a land patta and land allocation certificates. In this aspect, respondents claim to be landless. The study found that tribals become landless due to

being forced to sell their lands to survive poverty, disease, and floods. Further motivations behind selling land include satisfying social pressures, such as the marriage of sons and daughters. 3.70% indicated that they have access only for a specified duration to the current land where they are residing, which has been used for agriculture and grazing purposes. As a result of state and local government forest conservation efforts, evictions from land may occur. The study found that 8.33% are on a lease as a result of being landless, agricultural labourers, or jobless youths in rural households. They have stated that because their land is leased, they will be unable to hold or access the current use land. 9.25% felt that considerable legal rights to land are not enforced for tribal purposes. If the land rights of tribals remain inadequate or insecure, it will be highly susceptible to eviction, land grabbing, and encroachment by outsiders. It also found that the state and local governments must enact and enforce laws to protect tribal land rights. Respondents say that provisions of the Tribal Belts and Blocks officially exist but are utterly destroyed and encroached upon by non-tribals in cooperation with government authorities. The state administration is not interested in evicting the non-tribal encroachers, who are not legal settlers within tribal belts and blocks but rather promotes their revocation. Strangely, the state administration is taking steps to remove poor landless tribal households from 'Khas lands' in the tribal belts and blocks rather than evicting non-tribal encroachers. The study also found that due to incorrect government practices, some contiguous tribal regions were left out of the Tribal Belts and Blocks,

For 14.81% revealed that the government may limit the use of their land at any moment. It found that threats to tribal lands constitute real risks to tribal life. Respondents stated that granting them with strong legal entitlements and not limiting their usage of their lands would be an essential first step for their survival and livelihood. 7.40% revealed that they face land confrontation among the villagers, which prevents them from using their current land holdings. It found that the main issues are rooted or connected to land boundary issues, unclear land deeds within the family, and mistrust between seller and buyer regarding land allocation certificates. Land competition exists between tribals and the non-tribal communities of neighbouring communities. 7.40% said the individual land competition with villages caused disturbance and violence among tribals as well as tribal and non-tribals. It found that the major land issues are village land boundaries, ritual land locations, village

funeral sites, playgrounds and roadsides lands, wetlands, fishing spots and streams, and primarily grazing land areas. Lack of physical infrastructure hinders economic growth for some tribal communities. However, the solution is not to uproot the tribals from their land. 8.33% said that because of infrastructure and road construction projects, they surrendered their land to the relevant agencies, and are now not able to access their existing lands.

The lack of ability of tribals in the region to access present land has a severe influence on their livelihoods, aligning with the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, such as agricultural impact, livestock and pastoralism, resource dependency, non-agricultural livelihoods, cultural and social impact, and economic vulnerability.

6.5.7 LIVING NEARBY FOREST AREA

The Bodo, Rabha and Garo only three tribals are the most prevalent forest communities in the region. The tribals have been maintaining and clearing small parts of the forest for livelihood cultivation or husbandry; however, they may now lose and risk their traditional forest right. The question was “Is there any forest area near in your village?” The result is given below:

Table 6.29: Village near Forest Areas

Forest land area	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Yes	24.479166	29.464285	30.00	27.083333
No	71.354166	64.285714	63.75	67.708333
Don't Know	2.083333	2.678571	2.5	2.34375
In confusion	2.083333	3.571428	3.75	2.864583

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The above data indicate that 27.08% have forest areas in their nearby villages. The respondents revealed that a forest is a real village, and similar to human society, it serves as a forest to its habitat. For the tribal community, distinct diversities and cultures, their livelihood depends on it. 67.70% have stated that their village is not near any forested land areas. However, they have expressed the importance of the forest to their livelihood. 2.34% have no sure whether their village is near forest areas. The remaining 2.86% expressed confusion

about whether there is any forest land and whether their villages are located near that reserved forest or any national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

6.5.8 RESIDING IN FOREST LAND

It noted that forests play an essential and significant part in the tribal peoples’ social, economic, political, and cultural life. However, the N.C. Saxena Committee stated that in Assam, thorough surveys of forest villages had not been conducted, and their residents were not entitled toward the benefits of FRA of 2006. The question asked “Do you are residing in State/Local Govt. Forest land area?” The result is given below:

Table 6.30: Residence in Forest Land Area

Residing forest land area	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Yes	19.791666	25.892857	27.5	23.177083
No	75.520833	68.857142	65.00	71.09375
Don’t Know	2.604166	2.678571	3.75	2.864583
In confusion	2.083333	3.571428	3.75	2.864583

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The data presented above, 23.17% have clearly stated that they live in reserved forest land areas. The respondents say they are tribal households and unemployed families living in forests and facing the lack of agricultural land, landlessness, and other livelihood purposes. Respondents argue that they are not sufficiently safeguarded by Section 3(1)(h) of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act of 2006. The practice, which has no legal basis, allows for significant manipulation and denial of rights to tribals who live in traditional forests in the region. It is clear that 71.09% do not live in reserved forest land areas and do not live near forests. The indicated percentage of household respondents have land deeds and land allocation certificates. Also included are those who have yet to receive the land documents for which they applied for registration. 2.86% have no idea or do not know whether they are residing on forest land or not. 2.86% are illiterate and stated that they are in confusion about whether their current residence is located in a government-reserved forest.

Regarding the residents of state or local government-reserved forest land areas, recorded forest area, and forest cover mentioned in the preceding data, various questions were presented to the 89 households or 23.17% who are living in forest land area, such as “If yes, residing in a forest area, how do you access the forest?” The responses obtained from responders are presented below

Table 6.31: Residence and Access to the Forest

Forest access		% of Bodo Sample 38	% of Rabha Sample 29	% of Garo Sample 22	Total % of Sample 89
Type of Forest	Private forest area	18.421052	24.137931	22.727272	21.348314
	State/Local Govt. forest	68.421052	62.068965	72.727272	67.415730
	Don't know	13.157894	13.793103	4.545454	11.235955
	Total	38 (100)	29 (100)	22 (100)	89 (100)
Type of Use	With permission	13.157894	6.896551	22.727272	13.483146
	Without permission	39.473684	44.827586	36.363636	40.449438
	Only by the state	47.368421	48.275862	45.454545	47.191011
	Total	38 (100)	29 (100)	22 (100)	89 (100)

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

From the above data, in terms of type of forest access 21.34% have replied that they use private forest resources owned by someone. It was found that, when growing a private forest one does not require legal approval on their land in the region. Only a few individuals have their own private forest land areas and unclassed forests. However, the number of people seeking benefits from it is the greatest. Out of the 89 household respondents who reside in the forest areas, the 60 respondents or 67.41% they access the reserved forests, recorded forest areas, or government protected forests. In regions where complete protection is guaranteed by the regulations of the Indian Forest Act or the State Forest Acts, where all activities are prohibited unless permitted; the responses reveal that they have to access the forest resources, whether they are reserved, recorded, or protected forests for the purposes of their livelihood. The remaining 11.23% were unsure or had no idea what types of forests existed or how they use the resources to benefit their livelihoods.

The table also related to the type of forest how they used by the household respondents. With consent from the concerned authority, 13.48% of tribal people have access

to forest resources. The respondents stated that they should have the traditional right to use the forest for household purposes, such as gathering honey, fallen wood, medicinal plants, fruits, and other items, because they live in an Indian tribal region. There are 40.44% who have not used the forest with permission from the relevant authority or who have not been granted access to the forest under government jurisdiction. It was responded that it makes no difference whether it is reserved forests, recorded forest areas, or protected forests, as long as they are accessing forest products. 47.19% expressed an unbiased opinion to use of forest resources, stating may be state and local governments, working together with the forest department, have decisive authority over the use of reserved, recorded, and protected forests in the Bodoland region. State policies are brought into accordance with the Act's requirements when tribal people believe that the authority denied them access to the forest for little forest produce, even as described in Section 3(1)(c) of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, and as indicated in Section 2(i) of the Act.

The question was about how individuals see or consider the forest. The question was "How do you see the forest? The result is given below:

Table 6.32: The Forest and Tribal Perspective

Forest and perspective	% of Bodo Sample 38	% of Rabha Sample 29	% of Garo Sample 22	Total % of Sample 89
As a holy/sacred place	13.157894	10.344827	13.636363	12.359550
As an economic/livelihood resource	71.052631	65.517241	63.636363	67.415730
Both of the above	15.789473	24.137931	22.727272	20.224719

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

From the above data, 12.35% have replied that they have maintained the forest because their history and culture are intimately connected with forests. They see the forest as a holy and sacred area for religious practises or rites and burial places importance. Since the Bodoland is also a floodplain zone, forests provide ecological integrity, including erosion reduction. One positive response was that their ancestors became fully aware of the significance and benefits of natural resources, along with the need to preserve the forest for the survival of humanity. Regarding the forest as a source of economic and livelihood

resources, 67.41% is greatly appreciated the forest and its resources. But the participants maintain that the implementation of the National Tribal Policy of 2006 does not sufficiently adhere to ensuring the protection and securing of rights for Scheduled Tribes regarding forest lands and other forest rights. It found that forest land areas represent a significant source of livelihood and economic resources for tribals. Together with men, tribal women mostly engage in economic and livelihood tasks such as collecting fuelwood, farming, gathering food, and hunting, which rely heavily on forest resources. Respondents pressed state and local administrations to intervene, stating that the tribal ecosystem and existence are greatly impacted when external parties exploit tribal lands, forests, and resources. 20.22% expressed that the forest provides them with a holy and sacred place, as well as an economic and livelihood resource. It found that the fact that forest land is a major resource that tribal populations rely on it is not exaggerated and appealed to the local government to take proper planning actions taken to safeguard tribal people and forest areas.

The provided table from the study reflects the primary products that respondents obtained from the forest or forest land area. The respondents reported that the tribals are essentially, socially, and historically attached to the forests and its resources for their livelihood. Tribals inhabiting in forest settlements and nearby forest land areas depend on the forest for several of their purposes. The question was “What are the main products that you are collect from the forest area?” In the question for the respondents, that was regarding the purposes of the forests use. 31.46% said they use the forest for the purpose of selling forest products to supplement their income. 61.79% tribals have concessionary access to the forest for household consumption; they are permitted to access the forest for certain forest products, such as grass and dead wood, for fuel or non-timber purposes. Regarding the other purposes of forest use, 6.74% responded that it is not surprising how and for what the forest is required to be utilised, and that forest resources are liable to withdrawal at any time. The study also addressed the tribal people’s use of forest resources in their house-building activities, including trees like sal, teak, sheesham, gamhari, and others.

Table 6.33: Products Collect from the Forest

Forest Use for	% of Bodo Sample 38	% of Rabha Sample 29	% of Garo Sample 22	Total % of Sample 89
For sale	36.842105	31.034482	22.727272	31.460674
For household consumption	55.263157	62.068965	72.727272	61.797752
For other purpose	7.894736	6.896551	4.545454	6.741573
Total	38 (100)	29 (100)	22 (100)	89 (100)
<u>Non-timber forest products:</u>				
Orchids	7.894736	13.793103	9.090909	10.112359
Honey	5.263157	10.344827	4.545454	6.741573
Rattan	2.631578	3.448275	4.545454	3.370786
Leaves for roofs	--	3.448275	9.090909	3.370786
Vegetables	65.789)	48.275862	54.545454	57.303370
Medicinal plants	13.157894	17.241379	13.636363	14.606741
Other	5.263157	3.448275	4.545454	4.494382
Total	38 (100)	29 (100)	22 (100)	89 (100)

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The data shown above represents non-timber forest products that are used as natural resources for many tribal household implements needed daily and for economic activities. In terms of orchid collection, 10.11% stated that they harvest a variety of orchids from forests for domestic use, commercial reasons, and medicinal uses. 6.74% revealed that they collect honey for domestic and commercial purposes. However, these activities were only done on a seasonal basis, not regularly, and only during the off-season for extra earnings for livelihood strategies. 3.37% of those studied indicated they gathered the rattan for the craft. They stated that there is no demand for rattan in their locations. The rattan craft, which provided a significant source of livelihood for tribals, is facing several challenges, including a lack of forest resources, limited marketing means, and an overflow of plastic household products. In the study area, it was found that only 3.37% collect the leaves for their houses' roofs and household consumption from forests. 57.30% confidently claim that the vegetables are meant for both household use and selling. The study results indicate that the forest has consistently been the primary source of livelihood in the area. The majority of tribal women engage in forest products. Forestry and vegetables are the lifelines that provide earnings for large tribal women in the region. The field study found that 11.23% used the forest to collect medicinal plants. They have sound knowledge of the medicinal nature of the plants available in their

area. 4.49% asserted they gather forest products, including canes and bamboos, as well as food items like edible berries, mangoes, oranges, bananas, jackfruits, tamarinds, and others.

The tribal settlements in the region are mainly plain, and the forest areas include plains and foothills. Despite being threatened by the fast development of the country, some tribal people continue living in forests. Some of them can only exist by collecting small forest products. Generations of tribal people have relied on the forest for their survival. Nonetheless, following the implementation of the Forest Conservation Act in 1980 and the Forest Rights Act of 2006, their capacity to gather minor forest products and other forest resources has been significantly restricted. The Assam Forest Policy 2004 ensures that the genuine livelihood needs of rural poor people, particularly tribal communities, are met by the forests' carrying capacity, providing fuel wood, bamboo, canes, small timbers, and other non-timber forest products in the region. The Assam Forest Policy 2004 has not been effectively enforced. The indigenous individuals residing in rural areas outside of forests are fearful of being displaced. Consequently, it must be adhered to in accordance with Section 4(5) of the Forest Rights Act of 2006, which explicitly prohibits the eviction or displacement of any forest dwelling Scheduled Tribe member or traditional forest dweller from the land they occupy until the recognition and verification process is finalised.

The theory of land tenure and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) both highlight the significance of acknowledging tribal livelihoods in terms of forest land rights. Land tenure theory recognizes the traditional rights of indigenous communities to forest lands. It highlights the importance of legally acknowledging and safeguarding these rights, guaranteeing the ability to access and manage forest resources crucial for their survival. It supports the development of legal frameworks that recognize and safeguard forest land rights for tribal communities. These legal processes guarantee that indigenous communities have the privilege to access, oversee, and gain from the resources in forests. The concept supports the involvement of tribal communities in making decisions about forest resources through community-based forest management. This approach ensures sustainable utilization and conservation of forest lands while supporting tribal livelihood practices.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach acknowledges the significance of a variety of livelihood strategies. For many tribal communities, forest resources provide a significant

livelihood component, enabling non-agricultural income through activities like collecting non-timber forest products, hunting, or handicrafts. SLA highlights the necessity of access to natural resources for livelihood security. Recognizing forest land rights ensures access to resources crucial for tribal livelihoods, promoting their economic well-being and resilience. The SLA acknowledges the cultural significance of forests for tribal communities. Access to and control over forest lands align with the socio-cultural practices and traditions of these communities, contributing to their overall well-being. Nevertheless, the local and state governments have not succeeded in protecting the forest land rights and resources of the tribal communities in the region from either standpoint.

6.6 LAND, LANDLESS AND LIVELIHOODS OF TRIBAL HOUSEHOLDS

The tribal people rely more heavily on the land for their means of living. Land provides the essential basis for tribal livelihoods. The tribals' connection to the land is not only confined to agriculture. They rely on resource sustainability and understand how important land is. The tribals maintain the bond with such great respect. It recognises numerous essential resources for survival, and acquiring them requires different actions. It centers on people who depend more on land-based resources to make a living.

6.6.1 ESSENTIAL OF LAND AND LIVELIHOOD

The research aims to comprehend and evaluate the survival strategies and living conditions of tribal communities in order to improve their livelihoods through land use. The land is the sole source of income. It found that there were available forest areas and unoccupied plains land in the 1920s and 1930s. It was reported that the land was exclusively utilized for farming purposes and not for any other uses, such as fisheries, livestock, piggeries, etc. The land management records were formally kept using traditional methods, but the landholders treated the land as worthless and unimportant. There were no effective landholding certificates, or they were not required to have any land deeds to settle on khas land. The significant finding was that when tribes finally realized the importance of obtaining official land titles, it was already too late for them to assert ownership over the lands that should have been rightfully theirs. They used to have a serious flaw when dealing with government authorities who issued land certifications or deeds. Respondents say they are

conscious of the delineation of their landholdings now, but the fact is that even today it is a very noticeable situation. The essentiality of land for livelihood, the question was asked, “How is land essential to your household’s livelihood? The result is given below:

Table 6.34: Land for Livelihood

Land for livelihood	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Significant	92.1875	88.392857	88.75	90.364583
Insignificant	--	1.785714	1.25	0.78125
Don’t Know	5.729166	6.25	6.25	5.989585
No Idea	2.083333	3.571428	3.75	2.864585

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The data representing 90.36% indicated appropriately that land is significant for enhancing and improving livelihood through adequate exercise of its worthiness. The land plays a significant role in enhancing opportunities for earning a living. The land functions as a mother who feeds her child. In the research, respondent No 112³ said that “for tribals, there is no other meaning of land; the meaning of land is the land itself.” They depend on land, but on the other side, land is still alive for the activities of tribals. 0.78% repressed that land plays a minor role in their household’s livelihood. They replied that the land does not belong to either me or you. During my field study, they questioned me about “Why only the government has the ultimate authority to control the land?” in regards to land rights, access, and livelihoods. Whoever asked me is fine, but I was completely surprised by their question. 5.98% are not serious about how important land is for their livelihoods. The respondents are landless, wage labourers, and depend mainly on forest resources. 2.86% have expressed that they have no clear concept of land, livelihoods, or their strategies. But one thing I have found is that they are using the ‘waste and uncultivated land’ belonging to government land for their vegetable and pulses cultivation. They are at great risk.

Land is crucial for the survival of tribal groups in the Bodoland area, following the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. Land serves as the primary asset for agriculture and is the mainstay of many tribal communities. Land is essential for grazing livestock, a significant

³ Respondent serial number 112 is an elderly 54-years-old Garo woman from the village Siljan in kokrajhar district stated that indigenous communities depend on their land and other natural assets for living. She mentioned for tribals, there is no other meaning of land; the meaning of land is the land itself.

aspect of livelihoods for many tribes. Tribal communities frequently rely on land to access natural resources like forests, rivers, and grazing grounds. These resources are essential for collecting food, fuel, medicinal plants, and crafting materials, playing a crucial role in diversifying their means of livelihood. Land provides a foundation for various income-generating activities beyond agriculture, including non-timber forest product collection, handicrafts, and small-scale businesses, fostering livelihood diversification. Land ownership or access acts as an asset base, offering security and stability for tribal households.

6.6.2 PURPOSE OF USING THE LAND

The research centered on the functions of land use for sustaining tribal life. In relation to that, the study asked, ‘For what purposes do you use the land for your livelihood?’ The responses are given below.

Table 6.35: Use of Land for Livelihood

Essential for	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Agriculture purpose only	68.75	58.928571	55.00	63.020833
Non- Agriculture purpose only	10.9375	12.5	11.25	11.458333
Agriculture & non-agriculture purpose	14.583333	21.428857	26.25	19.010416
Other purposes (e.g., Indebtedness, etc.)	5.729166	7.142857	7.5	6.510416

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

From the above data, 63.02% use the land for agricultural purposes. Agriculture is their primary source of income. Previously, most agricultural outputs were used for commercial purposes, household consumption, or both purposes. However, recently tribal farmers have produced only for domestic use, not for commercial purposes. Respondents have mentioned that today, most tribal youths are not in the mood to serve on agricultural fields, as we could see earlier. It is evident that there is a decrease in agricultural productivity and crop yields in the area. 11.45% answered that the land is utilized for purposes other than agriculture as well. They reported that their crops are being destroyed by the drought and floods, and the agricultural land is deteriorating and eroding. For that reason, they have to change their strategy, relying on both agricultural and non-agricultural methods for sustenance like tree plantations on their dry and grazing land after floods. Land used for agricultural and non-agricultural purposes combined are 19.01%. The land and related

resources are important for several reasons. Floods and droughts have significantly reduced arable land. As a result, the amount of grazing land grew steadily, showing a strong dependence on additional sources of income for sustenance. They engage in livestock rearing, trading, as well as activities such as operating plant nurseries, agro-based cultivating crops, and practicing horticulture. The land is used for various purposes of 6.51%. It revealed that they must keep a financial assistant for higher education. Land is beneficial for tribal people as it is essential for their children’s education, scholarships, and higher education, in addition to receiving bank loans. It is observed that tribal people have great knowledge of the land, understand their environment, and take care to preserve it.

The data in the table illustrates the dimensions of farming land. The inquiry was asked, “Do you have cultivable land (if yes, specify)?” The result is given below.

Table 6.36: Current Cultivable Lands

Land for Cultivation	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
< 1 hectare of land	74.479166	71.428571	68.75	72.395833
>1 to < 1.9 hectares of land	17.708333	18.75	21.25	18.75
>2 to < 4.9 hectares of land	5.729166	8.035714	7.5	6.770833
>5 to < 10 hectares of land	1.5625	1.785714	2.5	1.822916
> 10 hectares of land	0.520833	--	--	0.260416

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The above data shows that 72.39% possess less than <1 hectare of cultivable or arable land, which they operate by ploughing, planting, and producing crops. Agriculture is still the cultivation of land for growing crops. Agriculture or farming includes livestock breeding, poultry, horticulture, and agro-based production. They said the cultivation of land for raising crops is decreasing. The proportion of cultivable land ranging from >1 to <1.9 hectares is 18.75%. It indicated that previously they have more land than they currently have. They sold their land during times of crisis and health checkups, and natural disasters like floods made their land graze, dry, and erode. Respondents informed present land that they had distributed their land among family members and now owned it. It found that 6.77% have a land cultivation range of >2 to <4.9 hectares. In that stretch of land, those who own it got it through family or inheritance from family members as well as from fellow tribal members amid situations of indebtedness. 1.82% revealed that they have cultivable land between >5 to

<10 hectares land. They said they have land, but it is not distributed among the family members. Some land deeds are still in their grandfathers' names, and they are currently attempting to transfer the land certificates. It found that only 0.26% of the land was >10 hectares. Respondent No. 83⁴ stated that the land in their regions is owned by the tribal communities and also by the Santhal (Adivasis) individuals. Before, the settlers in their region possessed more than ten hectares of land each. Due to a rise in population, ethnic tensions, deforestation, and non-tribal migration, conflicts are easily sparked over land.

6.6.3 CATEGORY OF LAND AND COMMONLY PRODUCED ITEMS

Open local land areas surround the settlements of the tribal people living in the region, and tribals have traditionally classified the land into different categories to understand it better, and that system still exists. These categories of land are commonly referred to as forest area or patch land, water body land, grazing land, residential land, homestead land, kitchen garden land, and croplands. Regarding productivity on their land, the question asked, "What are the most common types of items produced on your land?" The responders reacted positively to all possible questions and responded. The response data is given below.

6.6.3.1 FOREST LAND

The forest covers a significant share of the land in the BTR. The region has national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and reserved forest land. Forest areas are spread out in various sizes, comprising the plain forest areas which cover the maximum area, and the foothills forest areas of the Himalayan region which are smaller. The forest area consists of the billabong, wetland, streams, and other features. It is disgusting to witness how rapidly forest areas are shrinking. It found the forest land area was isolated from the homestead sites. However, in the study, 89 households or 23.17% are living in the forest land areas, and 104 households or 27.08% live in nearby forest areas, which are already discussed. These patches offer resources like fuel, construction materials, medicinal plants, fruits, vegetables, orchids, and homes for various wildlife, birds, and butterflies. The tribal people gather dead wood to

⁴Respondent serial number 83 is an 80-year-old man from the village Bamungao (Bengtol area) of the Chirang district who presently holds maximum land in their local area with permanent land pattas. The respondent mentioned that the locality has frequent land questions and clashes between tribals and native peoples other than tribals (such as Santhal).

sell as fuel and for use in their homes. They gather different kinds of non-timber items as well.

6.6.3.2 WATER BODY LAND

The location of the water body land has been important for rural life through providing opportunities for fishing and collecting edible plants. It is commonly utilized for public or private baths, washing clothes, utensils or tools, soaking seeds and wood, religious ceremonies, and various other reasons. Irrigating crops and providing natural drinking water for animals are additional crucial purposes and origins of water. Man-made and natural ponds, natural water wetlands, streams, rivers, and waste channels of various sizes can be found in the research sites in village areas. The research discovered that the typical size of water bodies in the village areas being studied varies from 10 lessas to >15000 bighas or beyond.

6.6.3.3 GRAZING LAND

A considerable quantity of livestock depends on grazing land. Many grazing land are available to the local people. The average grazing land area size found ranged from 4 kathas to >100 bighas or more. It found grazing land is frequently located 200–500 metres away from homesteads and forest land areas. In the tribal communities, 12.33% said that domesticated livestock depends on grazing land. Generally, grazing land is dry and remains vacant because of its limited water retention capabilities. It also mentioned that they sometimes grow mustard plants and other crops during the winter season.

6.6.3.4 RESIDENTIAL LAND

Based on the respondents, residential land typically has a slightly bigger area and is frequently arranged in a linear or border pattern beside rural or village roads. The residential land varies in size and location, ranging from <10 lessas to more than 5 bighas (per individual holding). In terms of the significance of the items grown within their residential land, 21.32% mentioned that they cultivate essential plants like coconut, neem, banana, bamboo, betel nut, betel leaf, and various fruit trees.

6.6.3.5 HOMESTEAD LAND

In the field study, 22.27% have expressed that homestead land is rich in diverse species. It allows for the year-round storage of food items and various other goods, like firewood, medicinal herbs, and decorative spices. They see these homestead locations as areas where they can obtain most of what they need for their daily lives. Due to the diversity of species and the infrequency of flowering and fruit ripening times, there is constantly available fruit to harvest if there is a steady supply of food and income throughout the year. From the research areas, it is evident that the traditional land owned by families in tribal, rural villages serves social and aesthetic purposes, showcasing the social status of both families and the community as a whole. The homestead land comes in various sizes, such as <10 lessas to >20 bighas. It found that the homestead land stretches from the backyard house by 5 to 30 metres. It is significant, adaptable, and helpful for the economy because the homestead land is used for household needs and as a source of revenue. Multiple plants are grown- citrus fruits, blackberries, betel nuts, betel leaves, coconuts, mangoes, oranges, jackfruit, guavas, papayas, and others. The permanent forest trees consist of both planted and natural tree species that are present, are also recognisable and are helpful for building materials and firewood.

6.6.3.6 KITCHEN GARDEN LAND

The kitchen garden is usually situated at a distance of 3 to 20 meters from the house, in either the front or back yard. 43.12% reported having a kitchen garden that is ready for use in the household. It has been noted that most tribal people have kitchen gardens. The kitchen garden lands range in size from <4 lessas to >1 bigha. It is fully prepared for everyday living and basic household needs. The kitchen garden areas are surrounded by bamboo and other materials, such as netting, to prevent cattle and other domestic animals from entering. Potatoes, tomatoes, chillies, cabbage, pumpkins, gourds, squash, brinjal, cauliflower, vegetable leaves, onions, ginger, turmeric, and coriander leaves are a variety of food crops grown by the tribals.

6.6.3.7 CROPLANDS

Cropland is a type of land used to grow crops; perennial and seasonal (annual) crops can be grown on cropland. During the study, there was access to the following types of crops.

The *Kathiatoli- in Assamese (Bodo-Kwthia tili)* (seed beds or seed bedding) are created on elevated land close to ample water sources like ponds and streams to access the required water for the seedbeds. Seedbeds are mostly prepared throughout the year, from April to May, but are not used in the summer or off-season. On seedbeds that were used before, a few tribal farmers grow vegetables for their own consumption during the ‘Rabi’ season. Normally, the seeding bed area is between <3 and >20 lessas in size.

The cropping starts in the *Ahutoli- in Assamese (Bodo-Dufang Bwthwrni Mai Fwtar/Dubuli)* (autumn paddy field) in March, April, and May because they are planted higher than winter paddy fields. Beaming and grafting techniques are both used to maintain the land areas year-round. Hybrid rice is cultivated in these fields following the harvest of grains during the months of June, July, and August. In the winter, certain farmers grow mustard and pulses. The size of autumn paddy fields typically ranges from <3 Katha to >25 bighas.

The *Salitoli- in Assamese (Bodo-Gwjang Bwthwrni Mai Fwtar/Dubuli)* (winter paddy field) are cultivated and readied in slightly lower areas compared to the autumn fields for local varieties of rice that are harvested in May, June, July, and August. It is evident that tribal farmers grow hybrid rice instead of indigenous varieties. As stated, hybrid rice types would boost productivity. It found winter paddy field can differ in size from <3 kathas to >45 bighas.

According to the information provided, the *Baotoli- in Assamese (Bodo-Bao Mai Fwtar/Dubuli)* (bao paddy field) occupy a small portion of the village land and consist mainly of plain, low-lying areas that stay flooded. Such land fields are cultivated from April until the first of December or even January. Clay soil alluvium and enough groundwater facilitate the production of bao rice cultivation. A bao paddy field can range in size from <2 kathas to >3 bighas of land.

6.6.4 TYPE OF LAND USE

The table below illustrates the types of agricultural land in use. In the next table represent different types of agricultural land used. The question was linked with the pursuit of a suitable response, “What type of land do you use for agriculture or cultivation?” The results are shown below:

Table 6.37: Types of Land Use

Type of land use	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Homestead land	23.4375	19.642857	21.25	21.875
Dry field	10.416666	9.821428	15.00	11.197916
Garden land	5.729166	5.357142	3.75	5.208333
Fallow land	1.5625	1.785714	1.25	1.5625
Arable land	52.604166	56.25	53.75	53.90625
Grazing land	3.645833	4.464285	2.5	3.645833
Plantation land	2.604166	2.678714	2.5	2.604166

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

Based on the above data, homesteaded land represents 21.87% of the total area of land possessed by tribal households. It responded that they are growing or raising various essential items on the homestead land, such as betel nut trees as well as other plantains. 11.19% said they cultivate on dry land as well. Dry land consists essentially of horticultural plants. It is suitable for growing bamboos, woods, and some fruit trees. The garden land was highlighted as relatively usual and not seen in every household, representing 5.20%. Fallow land was considered insignificant in the study, accounting for 1.56%. Respondents stated that they left the fallow land uncultivated at regular intervals. It is an essential finding that fallow land is generally used as grazing land for animals for a period to enhance land quality. Importantly, tribal households used their land at nearly every level possible; they rarely left it unused.

It is also straightforward that the arable land wherein tribal landowners produce paddy is owned by 53.90%. Wetland (Bodo- *Gishi Ha*) is found where the land is sufficiently wet-paddy cultivation. According to respondents wet land is important because it provides habitat and food for fish and wildlife, protects rare and endangered species, reduces flood risk, prevents erosion, provides items for human consumption, and provides opportunities for recreation and research. 3.64% have said the grazing land is not well suited for crop cultivation. It found that the tribals use the grazing land as common and free for all to access for livestock purposes and for some community uses. 2.60% have stated that they have plantation land on their own lands. It is seen that the land used for cultivation of a single item and the size of plantations are reduced over time.

6.6.5 ISSUES RELATED TO AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the primary means of support for indigenous people in the area. Based on results 72.39% of respondents have own cultivable land and are actively dependent on agricultural activities. Despite agricultural land and the provision of fertile land, crop productivity has been falling because of a variety of constraints in the region. Regarding those problems and challenges, the study question asked, “What are the issues related to agricultural productions?” The result is given below.

Table 6.38: Issues Related to Agriculture

Problems/Issues	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Insufficient quality land	27.604166	29.464285	25.00	27.604166
Floods issue	13.020833	8.928571	13.75	11.979166
No clear land status	9.895833	8.035714	8.75	9.114583
Lack of irrigation	7.8125	9.821428	10.00	8.854166
Increase of population	6.770833	6.25	12.5	7.8125
Lack of capital	8.333333	4.464285	6.25	6.770833
Occasional drought	5.729166	5.357142	3.75	5.208333
Land erosion	5.208333	4.464285	5.00	4.947916
Lack of technology information	3.645833	7.142857	5.00	4.947916
Lack of government initiative	2.604166	6.25	7.5	4.6875
Issues of wild animals	3.125	1.785714	1.25	2.34375
Other Issues	6.25	8.035714	1.25	5.729166

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The above data shows, 27.60% have owns less than one hectare of land, although it is insufficient quality land for agricultural uses. The high quality land for agriculture is declining. Floods are wreaking havoc on agricultural productivity, with 11.97% have especially flood-affected. Importantly, the flood impacts including the loss of life, damage to land, and crop damage. 9.11% claimed they possess no clear land status. They do not accurately represent reality on the ground, have poorly preserved land documents, and lack clear land titles. According to 8.85% water scarcity or insufficient irrigation facilities are the causes of the drop in agricultural productivity. Tribal farmers are falling behind, mainly due to irrigation inefficiency. The government should enhance irrigation systems for local farmers in order to attain maximum output. As per 7.81%, the growth of population is cause of decrease in arable land, which extends urban areas and encroaches on agricultural land of tribal

inhabited village areas. 6.77% stated that they do not have enough capital to make high-quality items and are unable to obtain high-quality seeds. Because of that, they must rely on the traditional manner of production on traditional land. 5.20% have experienced an occasional drought. Due to droughts on the agricultural land in the area, small and marginal tribal producers have been converted into landless agriculture and other types of labour sales. 4.94% are concerned about the issue of land erosion, which is the primary cause of crop production declines. They asserted that floods had eroded their agricultural land and degraded the soil.

About 4.94% are concerned about an absence of technological understanding and a lack of modern inputs and equipment. It found tribal farmers lack knowledge, skills, and desire. Regarding the lack of government initiative, 4.68% strongly agreed that the local government lacks an agricultural strategy. There is a lack of interest in the agricultural sector, which is really unfortunate for us. 2.34% reported issues with wildlife damaging their crops, especially the maintenance crops near forests. 5.72% stated that they also deal with other issues related to the crops, such as challenges acquiring quality seed, the fertilizers being too expensive, problems selling goods, complexities accessing fertilizers, farmer gate low price of the products, traditional land policy, expansion and construction, unchanged traditional mode of production, absence of good marketing system, and other issues. Most tribals' lifestyles and livelihoods depend on agriculture and forest resources, which are their major income sources. However, the tribals are encountering challenges in agriculture, leading to lower household earnings, restricted job opportunities in farming, and declining traditional abilities.

Issues related to agriculture in the Bodoland region pose significant challenges to tribal livelihoods and land access dependency, considering both the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) and land tenure perspectives: limited access to productive land, inadequate land tenure security, vulnerability to climate change, lack of agricultural infrastructure, and dependency on traditional farming methods.

6.6.6 LANDLESSNESS

The landless problem is not a new dilemma in Assam. The landless people are living without any plan and without alternative places to live for rehabilitation. The majority of

those affected are poor rural families. Due to illegal settlement restrictions on government land, the government carried out the eviction drive without making any rehabilitation. They have lived under an open sky of unplanned action. The tribal people are not illegal settlers or encroachers. However, tribal people are not in favour of illegal encroachment on government land, and they have no objections if illegal encroachers are evicted from government land, whoever they are. However, it is a proven reality that in the Bodoland Territorial Region, floods and erosion force numerous individuals to become homeless and landless annually, leaving them with no other option but to reside on land owned by the government. In this instance, poor affected households without alternative housing options must be resettled following a fair investigation without any bias, as it is the government’s duty to offer housing to the homeless and land to the landless in the area. In the study, the question relating to the meaning of landless was connected to “Do you know about the term landless?” The result is given below.

Table 6.39: Ideas about Landless

Idea of landless	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
Yes	72.395833	74.107142	63.75	71.09375
No	18.229166	18.75	21.25	19.010416
In confusion	6.25	6.25	10.00	7.03125
No idea	3.125	0.892857	5.00	2.864583

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

The above data shows, 71.09% have clearly stated that landless means living without land, and individuals who does not ability to access or own land for cultivation. Research found, there were landless households that did not possess any land. The tribal people now have a belief in land deeds, and those without land pattas or certificates are labelled as landless. 19.01% are completely unconscious and unaware of the term landless. Even the educated tribals are clueless here. They do not know whether they are staying in patta or non-patta land.7.03% indicated that they are aware of landlessness. But who are the landless, and what is landlessness? They are unable to respond to the question and are confused by the term. 2.86% have no idea what landless people are. They have no idea what a landowner and a landless person are; they treat both terms as the same.

Landlessness significantly impacts tribal livelihoods in the Bodoland region, considering the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, such as limited economic opportunities, dependency on wage labour, a lack of an asset base, vulnerability to poverty, and limited control over resources. The local government of the Bodoland region can empower landless tribal communities, improve their livelihood prospects, and contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development within these communities by tackling landlessness and ensuring access to land.

6.6.6.1 REASON OF LANDLESSNESS

Landlessness is not linked to a single reason, and it is also not a completely excluded issue. The landless are not a new phenomenon for tribals or locals, but it is a contentious issue in the BTR. The study question asked the tribal households, “What are the main reasons behind becoming landlessness?” The study clearly attempted to identify all possible causes of landlessness in order to eliminate it.

Table 6.40: Causes of Landless

Reason of landlessness	% of Bodo Sample 36	% of Rabha Sample 27	% of Garo Sample 24	Total % of Sample 87
Failure to implement land laws	19.270833	17.857142	17.5	18.489583
No inherited land	10.9375	13.392857	12.5	11.979166
Growth of population	22.916666	27.678571	28.75	25.520833
Illegal migration	9.375	9.821428	11.25	9.895833
Floods & land erosion	6.25	5.357142	6.25	5.989583
Non-implementation and policy gap	14.0625	9.821428	8.75	11.71875
Multiple evictions	3.645833	3.571428	3.75	3.645833
Ethnic conflicts	9.895833	10.714285	8.75	9.895833
Other reasons	3.645833	1.785714	2.5	2.864583

Source; Field Study (2022-23)

The above data shows, as a result of failure to implement land laws 18.48% have indicated that tribal people have become landless. They asserted that the land laws in the region have not been altered since the time of British rule. Meanwhile, demands for land distribution for the landless continue to be on the political agenda. It found that the provisions of any land laws have lost their purpose to protect tribal members from alienation and the pressure of encroachment of non-tribals. 11.97% have revealed a very visible fact in tribal society of having no land inheritance and succession. They believe in unrestricted land shares.

Mainly, the land share is restricted among family members when the lands are of varying quality and located in separate areas. However, it depends on their forefathers' landholdings to determine how much land they have and whether their land has been documented. One significant issue revealed that tribal members had shared their small parcel of land, and that process continues from generation to generation. But, at last, they have left little or no land to share with another generation. Because of this problem, most tribals are still facing landlessness issues. 25.52% of respondents have indicated that the primary cause of landlessness is population growth. People are forcing to become landless due to increasing pressure on the rural population. Because they lack land, they seek refuge in forests. The respondents raise the better policy for them, as Section 3 of the Assam Land Policy 2019 offers the allocation or transfer of land for residential use in rural regions. The provision has been provided eligible to a state indigenous family that does not have homestead land. However, this policy needs to be more encouraging and adequately followed in the Bodoland Territorial Region.

About 9.89% have indicated that land-hungry illegal immigrants are increasing in the region. They responded that illegal immigrants occupied forest land, wetland, grazing land, char areas, and other vacant lands. They began grabbing tribal land once such land was occupied without any opposition. It found that out of fear tribals fled to more densely forested areas north of the Himalayan foothills or other tribally inhabited areas. It is unfortunate that some illegal immigrants have enrolled their names on the electoral roll, got permanent residence status, land certificates, and even a patta of occupied lands where they are now. Despite, Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act of 1950, the issue of non-tribals and illegal immigrants encroaching on tribal lands poses a severe challenge to already marginalised tribal communities in the region. 5.98% stated that there are tribal people who are landless due to flooding and land erosion. It revealed that the BTR is likewise a flood-prone area. Flood significant damage is caused to standing crops, property, washed-away homes, transportation, communication, domesticated animals, and human lives almost every year. It was noted that the significant erosion of land is a result of the intensity and disaster of floods. The impacted individuals experience unimaginable suffering, which also affects their means of living. The flood is also responsible for massive loads of sand being dumped on agricultural fields,

making the land unfit for cultivation. As per the new mission of local administration the “*Mission Bwiswmuthi*” of 2022, for fulfilling the objectives of “My Land, My Right” providing land for families who have become landless laborers as a result of erosion or ethnic conflict and have been rehabilitated by administrative procedures, families displaced as refugees, possessing certificates, and rehabilitated by administrative order, and landless members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The main reason for the increase in landlessness, 11.71% is believe on the policy gap and failure of government policy to be implemented. Failures to distribute land to tribal landless people have resulted from state and local governments’ inability to follow and implement government policies and land policies. There is a provision for land distribution in the administrative council of the BTR. However, the respondents are not satisfied that the provision has yet to be appropriately implemented; Clause 7 of the Memorandum of Settlement of the 2020 agreement mentions the land rights of the tribals and their implementation. In the allotment or settlement of land in rural and urban areas, indigenous landless eligible members of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Backward Communities may be given priority as per Section 16(1) of Assam Land Policy 2019. However, in a similar way of the policy the administration of the BTR lacks a clear strategy to defend tribal land rights for the landless. 3.64% acknowledged multiple evictions of tribal people from government land as the cause of their landlessness. The tribals are forced to live on forest land because of floods, land erosion, unemployment, and the lack of arable land to cultivate. However, they are treated as illegal encroachers in their living areas. They are now forcing the local administration to provide proper title deeds as per Forest Rights Act of 2006, which could seriously impact their livelihood.

At least 9.89% mentioned the ethnic conflict is identified as the reason for tribal landlessness. It found that it is regrettable to state that the region is regarded as an ethnic conflict prone zone. This happens because of the tribal fear and unsureness’ of their century-old homeland, as well as the high levels of illegal infiltration on the original inhabitants’ localities. The indigenous communities have been deprived of their land due to ethnic conflict without following the correct procedures, which constitutes a violation of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation, and Resettlement Act

(RFCTLARR) of 2013, in response to resettlement policy, displaced families were not adequately settled after the conflict. Most displaced people preferred moving into forests and government-vacant land because of the lack of proper utilisation of the act. However, the tribal people who have been forced to leave their homes are not allowed to reside in the forest, even though it was their primary means of survival. 2.86% is connected with land-related reasons such as dearth of land, political conspiracy, land alienation, land fragmentation, permanent land deeds, and not permanent settlers within Tribal Belts and Blocks. The respondents have strongly argued because of the government’s sheer negligence or intention, landlessness problem is still an unresolved and burning issue.

6.6.7 LANDLESS AND SOURCE OF LIVELIHOOD

It found, there were 87 households of the sampled living without landholding certificate, land allotment certificate or the patta land. They are state as the landless. The question was only for the landless tribals in the study, “If landless, what activities do you consider to be your main sources of livelihood?” The result is given below.

Table 6.41: Landlessness and Alternate Sources of Livelihood

Source of livelihood	% of Bodo Sample 36	% of Rabha Sample 27	% of Garo Sample 24	Total % of Sample 87
Livestock	11.111111	11.111111	8.333333	10.344827
Fishing (public areas)	8.333333	11.111111	8.333333	9.195402
Trade & business	11.111111	7.4074074	20.833333	12.643678
Labour wage	47.222222	48.148148	45.833333	47.126436
Forestry	22.222222	22.222222	16.666666	20.689655

Source: Field Study (2022-23)

Livestock is the primary source of livelihood for 10.34% of the landless. They responded that the livestock sector has the ability to provide livelihood strategies to individuals in their present position and circumstances. It found, there is an increasing demand for livestock and opportunity to increase livestock production through development initiatives. 9.19% have expressed that their livelihood comes from catching fish. However, they also responded that fishing in rivers and beels is no longer a lucrative source of livelihood. It found that rivers and streams, which are essentially lifelines for tribals, now it have been contaminated or dried up as a result of over-exploitation of forests, mining, and related activities. 12.64% of landless tribal people work in trade and business for a living.

Responders have less skill in trade and business, but in order to survive, they must focus on it. Importantly, it is found that commerce and cash crops have received little attention. Still, non-tribals attract more attention to remote tribal areas. Non-tribal merchants establish themselves as a constant presence in many tribal settlements. Shopkeepers generally sell products on credit, trapping tribal individuals in debt or mortgaging their land. The loss of land, traditional livelihoods, and unemployment has forced 47.26% of tribal people to engage in wage labour for a living. There is quite an increase in the flow of young tribal localities to urban areas to work for daily wages. The findings clearly show a rapid rise of labourers and number of cultivator is declining in the region. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that most tribal labourers are unskilled. The forest and its resources support 20.68% of landless tribals. They emphasised that meeting tribal members' genuine livelihood needs for firewood, water, canes, bamboo, minerals, wild animals, small timber, and specific other non-timber forest resources is important. The tribals adapted to forest life and regarded themselves as a part of it rather than simply residing inside it.

Landlessness among tribal communities in the Bodoland region significantly impacts their livelihoods, and the landless tribals face challenges in engaging in agriculture, which is a primary livelihood source. This limitation reduces their ability to cultivate crops, affecting food security and economic stability. Landless tribals often rely on precarious wage labour for sustenance, working as agricultural labourers or in non-farm occupations. However, this exposes them to uncertain employment opportunities and fluctuating incomes. Without secure land rights, landless tribals lack a safety net or asset base, increasing their susceptibility to economic downturns, poverty, and lack of food security. Landlessness restricts access common resources like forests resources or grazing lands, hindering ability to gather food, fuel, and materials crucial for their livelihoods.

To address landlessness among tribal communities in the Bodoland region, the respondents appeal to the governments, either state or local, to take steps to end the landlessness problems in the lenses of land tenure theory and Sustainable Livelihoods Approach through land redistribution, secure land rights, promote livelihood diversification, community empowerment, and social support and assistance.

6.7 STRATEGIES OF LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION

Most tribal people living in rural villages need to use multiple livelihood strategies for their households. Traditionally, tribals are mainly relied on natural resources. They largely relied on agricultural land, forests, and water for a living. It is a fact that the Bodos, Rabhas, and Garos living in the Bodoland region were less involved and not experts in trade or commerce. As agricultural land becomes more limited, the government reserves forest areas, restricting entry for minor forest products, and hunting is no longer permitted. The government controls most rivers, and tribal members who fishing on them are also affected. Difficulties in tribal livelihoods have increased, including insecurity due to loss of land or being landless, being unemployed, the difficult area of cultivation, reduced work on agricultural fields, leaving the land uncultivated, and as a result, more depending on casual work. In the study areas, this takes the shape of a combination of various forms of work and earning activities.

The study identified the occupational activities, that is, the traditional and non-traditional occupations. There is an occupational shift in households' activities: no shift in only traditional, horizontal shift into traditional and non-traditional, and vertical shift through only non-traditional.

Fig. 6.1: Classifications and Category of the Nature of Occupational Shift

Identification of Occupational Category and Shift	
Nature of Shift	Category of Occupation
No Shift	<i>Only Traditional:</i> cultivation/agriculture, weaving, livestock/animal husbandry, forestry; handicraft work;
Horizontal Shift	<i>Traditional and Non-Traditional:</i> agricultural wage work, daily wage labour, construction work, carpentry, fishing/fish business; livestock; government or semi-government and private service, self-employed, trade or business, power generation;
Vertical Shift	<i>Only Non-Traditional:</i> government or semi-government and private service, self-employed, trade or business, power generation;

Source: Field Survey (2022-23)

In a sense, tribals have an alternate approach to livelihood combinations as a source of earnings because they have no other choice for preserving their livelihood where land is

scarce. In the research the question connected to that purpose, “What is your livelihood combination for living?” The following table shows the occupational combinations found among sample households. It demonstrates that the occupations identified in the sample families are diverse combinations in their personality traits.

Table 6.42: Distribution of Household Category of Occupational Combinations

Category of combination	% of Bodo Sample 192	% of Rabha Sample 112	% of Garo Sample 80	Total % of Sample 384
<i><u>Only Traditional:</u></i>				
cultivation/agriculture, weaving, livestock/animal husbandry, forestry; handicraft;	28.125	33.035714	36.25	31.25
<i><u>Traditional and Non-Traditional:</u></i>				
agricultural wage work, daily wage labour, construction work, carpentry, fishing/fish business; livestock; government or semi- government and private service, self-employed, trade or business, power generation;	67.708333	63.392856	60.00	64.843749
<i><u>Only Non-Traditional:</u></i>				
government or semi-government and private service, self-employed, trade or business, power generation;	4.166667	3.571428	3.75	3.90625

Source: Field Survey (2022-23)

The overall percentage distribution of sample households of the three tribal groups by occupational category reveals that only 31.25% have engaged in only traditional occupations as no shift. The 64.84% of households involved in traditional and non-traditional occupations diversified their livelihoods shift horizontally. Only non-traditional vertical occupation shift is performed by just 3.90% of households involved in activities.

The sample households are distributed based on percentages, in Bodo community relative to their occupational categories revealed that 28.12% of the sample households have no shift occupation. A majority 67.70% of the sample households are shifting occupations horizontally. Only 4.16% are solely engaged in combined into non-traditional occupations shift. Based on the Rabha community occupational categories, 33.03% of the sample

households depend entirely on traditional occupations as there is no shift. 63.39% have combined their occupations shift horizontally into traditional and non-traditional. Only 3.57% combined only in non-traditional occupations shift. In Garo community, 36.25% of occupations classifications rely exclusively on traditional occupations as there is no shift. 60% have been combined their occupations horizontally into both traditional and non-traditional shift. Only 3.75% shift vertically combined non-traditional occupations.

The tribal livelihood combination is more diverse in terms of the traditional and non-traditional combination of livelihood and even the challenges arising. The plain tribal area of Bodoland, two distinct livelihood diversification strategies may be identified. Its first priority, which is largely governed by the underlying survival of households living in a high-risk, high-diversity ecological setting, is to diversify livelihoods both inside and outside of agriculture. Households mainly combine wet-rice cultivation, horticulture, pisciculture, animal husbandry, livestock, fruit gardening, floriculture, plantations, forestry product sales, and casual work in the increasing rural labour market, which may include petty trade in some situations. The second aspect of livelihood diversification is based on government and private services, trade and business, construction work, village level small scale industry which is includes in self-employment, power generation, and significant wage labour. Because all of the households in the study regions do not have the same sources of income, their capital does not cover their day-to-day livelihood requirements. To support their homes, the tribals have started to prepare livelihood combinations.

Agriculture plays a crucial role in generating revenue for most tribal communities in the Bodoland areas; consequently, tribal groups must take adequate efforts to limit possible risks. Like other districts of Assam, flooding and water logging are common occurrences in the region. The risk of agriculture is that it puts farmers at risk of frequent floods. Especially during the kharif cropping period, that can result in crop loss, property damage, and push people into landlessness. It is also possible that the main constraints or risk factors are needed to deal with them through scientific process, experienced and trained trades and enterprises. Examining the insufficient capital and credit resources, inadequate livestock processing equipment, and the risk of horticulture becoming overly dependent on government aid is crucial. The study areas and their efforts are lagging behind due to a lack of effective

marketing facilities, untrained modern processing services and technologies, and inexperienced or unskilled labourers.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The issues surrounding tribal land access and livelihoods in the Bodoland Territorial Region necessitate urgent attention and comprehensive solutions. Understanding the historical context, recognizing ties to land, addressing inequities, and promoting sustainable livelihood practices are crucial steps toward fostering social justice, preserving tribal heritage, and ensuring the long-term well-being of tribal communities. Prioritizing tribal people's land rights, implementing fair land redistribution measures, fostering sustainable agricultural practices, providing access to education and skill development, and involving tribal communities in decision-making processes are pivotal. Sensitivity to economic development is crucial to addressing tribal landlessness, promoting inclusive growth, and ensuring a dignified livelihood. Respecting traditional land policies can empower tribal communities, enhance their access to and ownership of land, and pave the way for inclusive growth and prosperity within the region. However, the primary sources gathered during the field study indicates that local and state governments are making minimal effort or action to address land and livelihood challenges in tribal communities and other communities across the area.

The land is the lifeblood of tribals as individuals in this universe. The Bodoland Territorial Region will remain desolate if their land rights are not restored. Tribals are the native inhabitants of the land, not illegal settlers or encroachers; hence, their inherent title to the land is reasonable and undeniable. However, it only needs to forget the traditional land use system, and we should adopt legal land documentation methods of use.