

ABSTRACT

1. BACKGROUND

Land access refers to the ability of individuals, households, or communities to acquire rights to use, control, and benefit from land resources. This concept is crucial as land provides a foundation for livelihood, agriculture, shelter, and economic development. Land access can take various forms, including ownership, leasing, inheritance, or community-based rights, and is often governed by legal, cultural, and social norms. In many rural and indigenous/tribal communities, land access ensures food security, economic independence, and cultural continuity. However, land access is not uniformly distributed and is influenced by factors like socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, and government policies. For example, marginalised groups like women, ethnic minorities, and tribal communities often face significant challenges in securing land rights. In such cases, restricted access to land can lead to economic vulnerability, social inequalities, and limited opportunities for development. Furthermore, issues such as land encroachment, displacement, and conflict can exacerbate these challenges, leading to reduced access for vulnerable populations. Improving equitable land access is essential for promoting sustainable development, empowering marginalised communities, and addressing socio-economic disparities. It enables communities to build secure livelihoods and fosters resilience against external pressures.

Land access is fundamental to securing livelihoods, especially for rural and indigenous communities whose economic survival depends on land-based activities like agriculture, grazing, and forestry. With secure land access, individuals and families can cultivate crops, build homes, and sustainably manage resources, enabling food security, economic independence, and resilience against poverty. Land access also allows people to make long-term investments in their land, which can improve productivity, create jobs, and stimulate local economies. However, limited or insecure access to land can lead to economic vulnerability and social instability. Marginalised groups such as women, ethnic minorities, and indigenous communities often face restrictions in land ownership and access, leaving them at greater risk of poverty and displacement. Issues such as encroachment, displacement due to development projects, and environmental degradation further complicate land access for these communities, impacting their livelihoods and quality of life. Ensuring equitable land access is essential for sustainable development and poverty alleviation. It enables communities to generate income, secure their

food supply, and maintain their cultural practices, creating a foundation for both economic and social well-being.

Land access is fundamental for the livelihood, culture, and identity of tribal communities, as land is central to their traditional ways of life, subsistence, and social structure. For many tribal groups, land is not just an economic asset; it holds spiritual significance and is deeply tied to their customs, beliefs, and communal identity. However, tribal communities often face challenges in accessing and securing land rights due to socio-political marginalisation, displacement, encroachment, and the pressure of developmental projects, which can lead to a loss of ancestral lands. Legal protections, such as the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Indian Constitution, aim to secure land rights and self-governance for tribal areas. However, the implementation remains complex and inconsistent. Despite these legal provisions, tribal land rights are frequently under threat from industrial expansion, mining, and deforestation. These activities can displace communities and undermine their rights to use and manage their lands sustainably. Improving land access for tribal communities is crucial to maintaining their cultural heritage, reducing poverty, and promoting sustainable development. It allows them to uphold their traditional practices, ensures food security, and provides them with the autonomy to develop according to their needs and aspirations.

Land access is a critical component of tribal livelihoods, as it directly influences their economic activities, cultural practices, and social stability. Tribal communities traditionally rely on land for agriculture, animal grazing, forest produce collection, and other means of subsistence. Access to land ensures food security and sustains their daily needs, while also supporting traditional crafts, medicine, and resource-based trades that are vital to their economic resilience. For many tribal groups, the land carries a sacred value that connects them with their ancestors and guides their cultural expressions, rituals, and social structure. However, in many regions, tribal communities face challenges such as displacement, land grabbing, and limited legal recognition of customary rights, which hinder their ability to maintain sustainable livelihoods. Industrial projects, mining, and deforestation are significant threats, often forcing tribes to migrate, lose economic independence, and face cultural disintegration. Securing land access for tribal communities is essential for strengthening their socio-economic position, reducing poverty, and supporting sustainable development. With protected land rights, tribal people can sustain their livelihoods, preserve biodiversity, and exercise self-determination in ways that align with their traditional values and community needs.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In several regions across the globe, social unrest stems from inadequate access to land. Securing land rights is difficult, especially for tribal communities in rural and forest areas. Land in the Bodoland Region is not properly settled, recorded, or demarcated. This lack of land security hinders livelihoods and leads to conflict. Land issues are often a root cause of unrest and disputes in the region. Ownership, registration, transfer, and boundary problems, as well as landlessness and ethnic conflict, are major concerns for tribal communities. The gap between land access and livelihoods remains a significant challenge for tribal communities. Even today, despite economic liberalisation, the forest economy and the agriculture continue to be the most important sources for tribal livelihoods. While most tribal peoples rely on agricultural and forest based economy, access to land is still an urgent concern for tribal livelihood and security. Processes to ensure tribal access to their lands remain necessary.

It is true that the tribal communities are grappling with severe land access issues that critically undermine their livelihoods in the region. Historically dependent on land for their economic sustenance and cultural identity, these tribal populations face encroachments by illegal non-tribal groups, ambiguous land ownership, and ineffective legal protections. Despite constitutional safeguards like the Sixth Schedule, which aims to protect tribal lands and provide autonomy, implementation gaps and bureaucratic inefficiencies persist, leaving tribal land rights vulnerable and inadequately protected. There remains a lack of suitable methods to study tribal livelihood aspirations and conditions, hindering support for better living standards. Extensive land acts have failed to lessen the quantity of unresolved land issues in the region. Many regions of the nation and Northeast India, including Assam, may still feel the effects of the British Colonial authority's significant disruption of land patterns and possessions. Land issue remains relevant, active, and in need of valid redress.

Encroachments and the consequent displacement of tribal families lead to loss of ancestral lands, diminishing major source of livelihood and food security. Lack of clear land titles and proper documentation exacerbates this problem, making legal recourse challenging and often inaccessible. Government development projects and policies frequently neglect the traditional land rights of these communities, further marginalising them and disrupting their socio-economic stability. Significant economic impact as agriculture is primary livelihood for BTR tribes. Forced displacement pushes people to cities for unskilled work, leading to exploitation and harsh conditions, disrupting traditional life and endangering culture.

The research focuses on the significance of land, particularly for tribal communities. Land plays a crucial role in their livelihood and well-being. The study aims to explore the challenges faced by tribal people in terms of tribal land connections, land access, tribal livelihood, and for whom land access and rights are necessary for life or livelihood. Identifies land issues causing tribal nervousness and discusses ways to address complex land problems with recommendations.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research study has the following objectives:

1. To investigate the relationship between land and tribal people in the Bodoland Territorial Region;
2. To investigate land access issues that affects the life of tribal people;
3. To investigate how the land has contributed to the livelihoods of tribal people in the Bodoland Territorial Region;

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

The following questions are intended to accomplish positive testing objectives:

1. How does land contribute to tribal people and what are their connections to land protection?
2. How do land access issues impact the tribal peoples?
3. How do the tribal people believe in land and their livelihoods?

5. METHOD AND MATERIALS:

The methodology being used in the current research study is explained in the section below.

5.1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research used the descriptive and analytical methods. This research study used descriptive and analytical methods. The primary data for this research include in-depth discussions with participants, questionnaires, and field observations, which serve as the basis of the research. It also investigated the published and unpublished works of different scholars, and intellectuals during the investigation process as secondary sources.

5.2 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

This study used mixed methods, using quantitative and qualitative methods, to collect data, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of current research. Quantitative methods

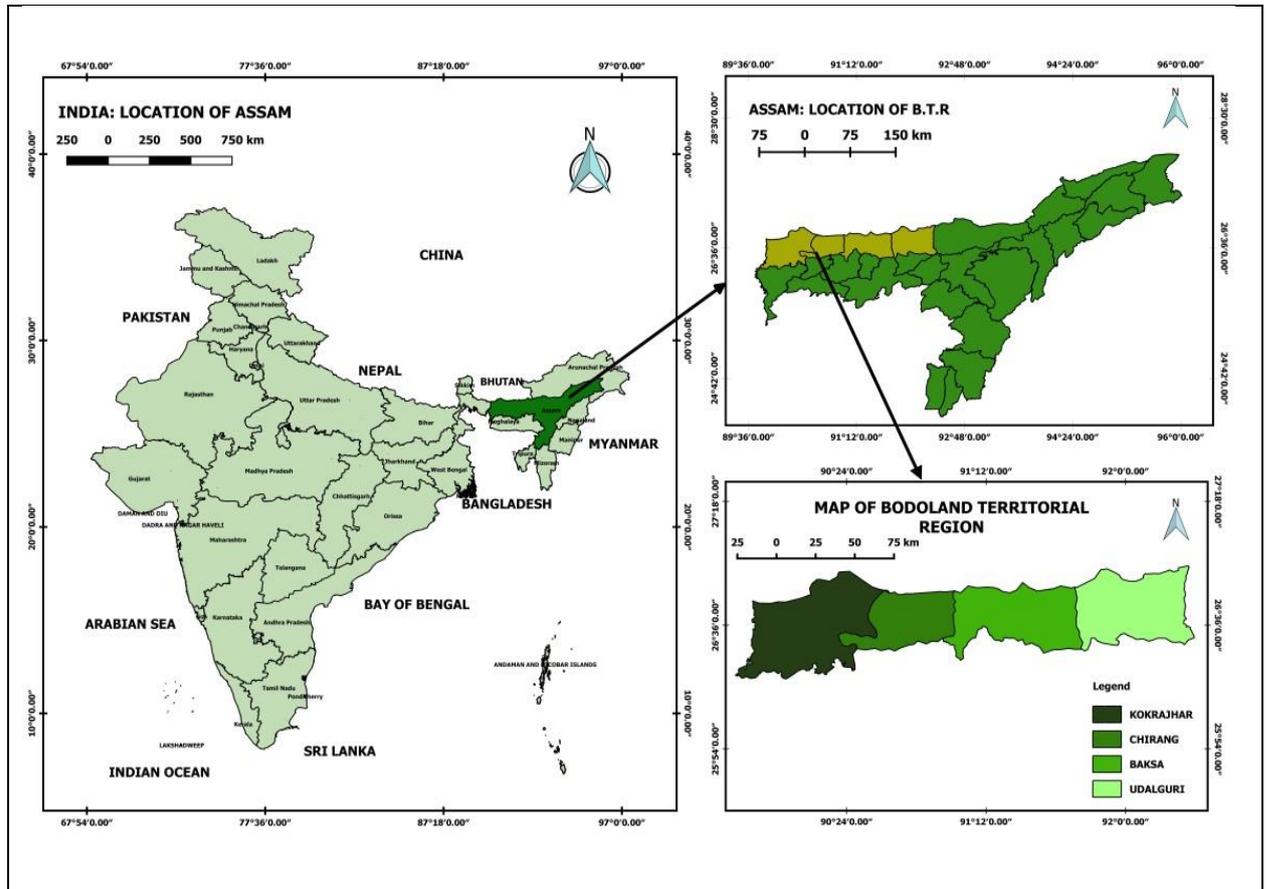
focused on analysing numerical data to uncover patterns and insights, with questionnaires designed to gather data aligned with research goals.

Qualitative information and data were obtained by utilising or applying methods such as focus group discussions with a group of participants, observations through the systematic recoding of interactions and the events, and interviews with participants to generate rich data in detailed personal accounts and perspectives.

5.3 STUDY AREAS AND SAMPLING SIZE

The study area covered Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, and Udalguri the four districts of Bodoland Territorial Region of Assam, India. The proposed geographic region is 8,795 sq. km. The four districts of the BTR geographical boundaries are located within 26°7'12" N to 26°47'50" N latitude and 89°47'40" E to 92°18'30" E longitude north-western part, including its Assam.

Fig.1: Map of the Study Area



Source: <https://www.mapmyindia.com/latest-political-map-of-india/>, designed by Researcher

The current research study focused on the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) of Assam, specifically including the districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, and Udalguri. The Bodoland Territorial Region has been split into 10 administrative sub-divisions, and the research area is

covered in all 10 sub-divisions. In the Kokrajhar district, there are 3 sub-divisions: Kokrajhar (headquarters), Gossaigaon, and Porbotjhora. The Chirang district has 2 sub-divisions, which are Kajalgaon (headquarters) and Bijini. In the Baksa district, there are 3 sub-divisions: Mushalpur (headquarters), Tamulpur, and Salbari. From Udalguri district, 2 sub-divisions are Udalguri (headquarters) and Bhergaon. In BTR, there are a total of 3,066 villages spread across four districts: Kokrajhar has 1,068 villages, Chirang has 508 villages, Baksa has 690 villages, and Udalguri has 800 villages. There are 13 revenue circles, 25 development blocks, and 415 Village Council Development Committee (VCDC) in the administrative structure of the council.

In the field study, the tribal household sample was conveniently applied to an equal sample distribution for all the districts because the percentage of tribal people and households in the four study districts is almost the same. The percentage of tribal population and households in the rural villages of the region is presented in the following table.

Table 1: ST Population and Households in Four Districts of BTR

Districts	ST Population & Households	
	ST population (%)	ST Household (%)
Kokrajhar	31.41	25.98
Chirang	37.06	17.02
Baksa	34.84	31.46
Udalguri	32.15	25.51

Source: Census Report of India, 2011

In the research field study, the data would be taken from a sample size of 384 (three hundred eighty-four) respondent households, and a single household sample equates to one sample unit. In the research-covered districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, and Udalguri, the overall sample unit for the Bodo is 192 sample households, the Rabha is 112 sample households, and the Garo is 80 sample households. Based on the population size, the sample size is divided into three parts: 50% for the Bodo, 30% for the Rabha, and 20% for the Garo. One district sample of households was collected from Bodos 48 households, Rabhas 28 households, and Garos 20 households, for a total of $48 + 28 + 20 = 96$ (selected tribal communities respondent households = total) numbers. For the entire four districts, that is $4 \times 96 = 384$ (districts x respondent households = total) numbers. All four sample districts were expected to be representative; with a sample size and target population that ensured a margin of error fewer than 5% and a confidence level of 95% in the research.

Table 2: Sample Units of the Study Area

District	Total No. of Households Random Respondent	Distributed Household Sampled Respondent	Total No. of Sample Household
Kokrajhar	96	Bodo = 48 Rabha = 28 Garo = 20	384 Nos.
Chirang	96	Bodo = 48 Rabha = 28 Garo = 20	
Baksa	96	Bodo = 48 Rabha = 28 Garo = 20	
Udalguri	96	Bodo = 48 Rabha = 28 Garo = 20	

In research study all respondents were given identical questionnaires to collect data. A representative of the head of each household is interrogated or questioned in every household in the sample. Regardless of whether the head of the household was a man or a woman, the participants in the study were chosen based on who ran the household.

5.4 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Various data gathering strategies utilised while collecting data from both primary and secondary sources.

5.5 ADOPTED CITATION

For the adoption of research study references, the current research study using the ‘American Psychological Association’ (APA) 7th edition 2020 citation form for both in-text and reference citations in the research analysis.

5.6 THE WRITING OF THE THESIS

The writing of the Ph.D. thesis, I have been following the rules provided by Bodoland University. All the copies are the standard A4 size. A margin of at least 3 cm has been left on all sides of the thesis page. The thesis is written in 1.5-spaced and Times New Roman font. The maps and tables may be the appropriate size as advised by the Ph.D supervisor.

6. THESIS STRUCTURE

The thesis structure has been divided into seven chapters, which are created and included to explain the significant findings of my research:

Chapter: I	: The Prologue
Chapter: II	: Review of Literature
Chapter: III	: Conceptual Study of Tribes/Tribal and Land
Chapter: IV	: Land Access Issues in Bodoland Territorial Region
Chapter: V	: Importance of Land and Livelihoods of Tribal
Chapter: VI	: Land Access Issues and Livelihoods of Tribal People in the Bodoland Territorial Region
Chapter: VII	: Epilogue

7. MAJOR FINDINGS

With the research aims and research questions of study in the four districts of the Bodoland Territorial Region, the research is anticipated to investigate and achieve the land access issues and livelihoods of the tribal people of Bodo, Rabha, and Garo.

The study developed research questions to point current investigations on the right path. The research has major findings related to tribal land access issues and their impact on livelihoods in the Bodoland Territorial Region which are given below:

7.1 SAMPLE HOUSEHOLD PROFILE OBTAINED FROM STUDY

The data collected from households in the field study is analysed and precisely calculated.

The sampled household population of the three tribal communities in the four districts is 1,980 individuals. Males make up a minimally higher percentage of the population than females. The male account 51.91% and female makes up 48.08%. The age grouping of the tribal population between 15 to 25 years of age represents 22.72% of all the age groups studied.

Education will determine their prosperity, success, and security in life. Overall, the educational status of primary to high school levels is 29.64% higher than other levels of education, and the illiterate percentage is 25.25%. The females stay caught up with men in educational attainment. There are 7.87% dropout students, still a need to improve or decline the student dropout rate. Lack of motivation among parents and teachers and low parental income are causes of young people's disinterest in education, literate tribal people is low.

As per the basic amenities of tribal livelihood most tribal settlements lack essential utilities like toilets, drinking water, electricity, and appropriate housing for adequate settlement, necessitating careful planning. 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 PMAY. 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%. Electrification (for residential consumers) has been spread to 63.54%, and 36.45% still without electricity connection facilities. Tube wells were used as a source of drinking water by 61.71%, 22.13% have used wells, and 10.15% use Rivers or Streams as their main source of drinking water and other activities. 29.16% have used LPG whereas 32.03% have used both firewood and LPG for cooking.

The Household heads' main occupation is engaged in farming and non-farming livelihood activities. However, 49.47% tribals depend on agriculture as their primary source of income. 11.71% tribals are unable to access arable land and are frequently forced to work as daily wage labourers. Poultry, piggery, cattle, buffalo, and goats are considered part of 12.23% of the livestock or animal husbandry raised in the study area.

The source of annual income and expenditure of households, land determines the annual income for 48.63% of tribals. It should be noted that tribal people in rural areas of the Bodoland region are not habituated to maintaining a record of their income and spending because no one attempts to preserve a family budget. The pattern of tribal expenditure of households, it found on food items contributes 58.27% to the maximum yearly consumption. 9.29% expenditure on education spending is significantly increasing or is in progress.

The landholding is owned and identified based on inheritance. The landholding size is not uniform. Where 67.70% of the landholdings are marginal holdings, there is a significant rise in marginal holdings of less than one hectare of land. There are 56 tribal households out of 384 sampled were found to be below the poverty line, with a percentage of 14.58%. The study found 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. The insufficient land has caused tribal households to become landless and below poverty line (BPL).

7.2 THE EXPLORING MEANING OF LAND

The tribal villages of the BTR are almost surrounded by the open fields or the village land. The Bodo, Rabha, and Garo live in plains villages or areas and are regarded as plains tribal inhabitants.

In the perception, protection and represent of land, tribals are also believed that land is everything, without land, there is no hell and no heaven. 98.43% of tribals have expressed

protection is needed as a result of non-protected classes and land-hungry immigrants pouring into tribal areas of the Bodoland Region in droves. For 97.91% of tribals mentioned land represents most essential natural and priceless asset. Tribals are not outsiders in their land, but are the early settlers of the land, and undoubtedly regard their ancestral or tribal land and forest as inherently their own significant. About the land divided into the village areas, 80.20% of tribal participating in the village land is divided into only tribals. The villages have clear village-wise demarcation, as well as some tribal villages that have no clear demarcation.

Regarding the receive out from the land and land provides for tribals 54.68% households receives out from the land as provides shelter among the tribal households, and the desire that the rural tribals be provided with the opportunity to right to shelter, and 36.71% received from land and provided food for them.

The category of land, for a better understanding of their lands, tribal communities as well as other indigenous communities in the Bodoland Territorial Region also have traditionally classified land as in Assamese and Bodo language- *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).

7.3 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. Tribes need to secure land rights to uphold their tribal identity. So, Tribals must prepare tribal land rights for tribals to maintain their own.

Tribal land rights are becoming increasingly relevant, either globally or locally. 82.55% have positively regarded the right to land; land is a prerequisite for enhancing agricultural gain and encouraging access to sustainable resources for livelihood. Regarding the land patta and unclear land title, there is an immense rise in the tribal desire to secure permanent inhabitants and land registration as land patta (land deed), and 96.87% mentioned land patta is required for survival. The lands are inherited from their ancestors, so 79.89% expressed not owning the land certificates or the land patta creates uncertainty for their lives and livelihood.

Currently, the tribals are facing different major issues regarding unclear land titles, and they now claim that it requires a permanent solution for their proper land access. 21.61% replied the presumptive nature of land titles created uneasiness among tribals. 29.68% tribals are realistic about the difficulties of carrying out the procedure when past land transactions are not adequately documented. Poor land registration records, high cost of registering land, unclear due to a lack of land data, records do not accurately reflect, manipulating land records and the administrative entities are liable for unclear land misdeeds are the behind unclear land titles in tribal areas.

The possession of the current residential land, owns the currently resident land the men holding 67.96%, which is permanent. 1.04% of land owns women, although women can cultivate land for household needs, they are routinely denied even basic access to this resource.

The current land-related issues, tribals are facing fresh encroachment, forest land rights issues, ownership, land registration, landlessness, and land alienation. 26.30% have replied the major land rights issue hurting tribals is fresh encroachment (in grazing land, forest area, and other lands) in tribal areas. Tribal households living on the outskirts of forests are denied or have limited access to forest resources. 25.26% are deprived of access to forest land and forest rights. 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. Interestingly, 10.41% have mentioned landlessness is the present land issue of the tribal community.

Related to land tenure security, 27.34% tribals believe there is no other authority, either state or central, that may exert absolute possession rights over their ancestral land. 67.44% clearly stated the tribal understanding of land tenure security and land use is essentially dictated by their livelihood. The study question was related to the understanding of land laws apply in the research areas, 67.18% of who are tribal, have no clear understanding of what norms apply to them and the laws they obey.

7.4 LAND ACCESS AND TRIBAL LAND TIES

Many tribal inhabitants from research area own some land, but their assets are so small or inefficient that they are unable to maximise their livelihood.

On perspective on land access 45.05% tribal describe it as the right of access to their own land, where any tribal households have been living since immemorial time on the plot of land.

54.94% have no clear idea of what land access is or do not understand the concept of land access.

Many land issues related to the deprivation of tribals of their right of access to land such as the Use rights, control rights, transfer rights, displacement, better quality of land, informal tenure, legalisation, social inclusion and exclusion, land grabbing, and resistance and resilience. The deprived of access to land, 31.51% have replied the transfer rights that land access creates more confusion and deprives them of their right to land. Displacement is a significant cause of the deprivation of access to land for 13.80%. Due to ethnic conflict, many local natives were displaced and induced Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and they could not even access their own land. 9.89% agreed they were deprived of access to land use rights, including using the land for grazing, growing subsistence crops, and gathering minor forestry products. They advocated for more easily managed to control rights, used land rights and unrestricted right to access to land.

Regarding the gain access of the plot of land, it is indeed important to know how households acquired the right to possess all of the lands on which they live, 76.82% tribals gain access to their land through inheritance from family members.

Understanding the tribal and how they intended to keep the land accessible is essential. Significant tribals desired to maintain their land as the highest right of access with 44.01%. They advocated for more easily managed to control rights, used land rights and unrestricted right to access to land.

The Secure use of land enhances societal stability by reducing uncertainty, 62.23% stated they were 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. 37.76% replied to the equitable and adequate land access.

The tribals are facing difficulties accessing their land. 13.54% tribals are concerned about land ownership; believe their land rights are not adequately protected. 14.84% realising that the inherent inadequacies in their mechanism of keeping land registries are causing increasing secure and access land problems. 6.51% have expressed land boundary issues on their plot are not just a tribal dilemma but that other communities also suffer in the region. There is 8.59% tribals expressed unauthorised or illegal land acquisition issues feel that ultimate ownership gives the state the authority to redistribute land, causing stress to tribals. Tribal groups are dealing with land disputes and conflicts as a result of the never-ending issue of illegal immigration for 5.46%. The immigrants illegally entered their nearby village, which was grazing land. There is issues of

division of land into protected, 12.5% tribals have expressed that even with the provision of tribal belts and blocks, that is, protected belts and blocks, the inflow remained frequent. Certain localities became closed to immigration, and conflict arose involve tribals, immigrants, and non-tribals. There is advocated of 6.77% who believe they are denied access to their land and forest rights have responded angrily to the government's restrictions on their traditional rights. 7.29% mentioned issue of inter-ethnic conflict has far-reaching ramifications in the Bodoland region, such as land loss, internal displacement, regional instability, socio-economic failures, and others.

For the purpose of access to current land in the next 5 years, 65.88% tribal indicate that they 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. 28.12% or 108 sampled households have mentioned that are unable to access their current land. As why not able to uses present land in the next five years, According to 108 sampled households, there are common reasons such as- no land patta or certificate, access only for a specified duration, land is leasing, land rights are not enforced, government may limit use, competition among villagers, competition with neighbouring villages, and infrastructure or road development. 40.74% tribals are not able to access the current lands such they could not use or had concerns about using their present land due to a lack of a land patta and land allocation certificates.

The tribals living nearby forest area and also some are residing inside the forest land areas, 27.08% tribals have forest areas in their nearby villages, and 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. The tribal, 23.17% or 89 households have clearly stated that they live in reserved forest land areas. They are tribal households and unemployed families living in forests and facing the lack of agricultural land, landlessness, and other livelihood purposes.

Tribals residing inside the forest land, 67.41% of tribal have access the reserved forests, recorded forest areas, or government protected forests. The other tribal respondents have not used the forest with permission from the relevant authority or who have not been granted access to the forest under government jurisdiction.

The tribals are essentially, socially, and historically attached to the forests and its resources. Regarding the forest as a source of economic and livelihood resources they greatly appreciated the forest and its resources. As the non-timber forest products that are used as natural resources for many tribal household implements needed daily and for economic activities while

collecting of vegetables is 57.30 % for household consumption and sale. Tribals have concessionary access to the forest for household consumption; they access the forest for grass and dead wood, for fuel or non-timber purposes.

7.5 LAND, LANDLESS AND LIVELIHOODS OF TRIBAL HOUSEHOLDS

Land provides the essential basis for 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.

The livelihood is entirely dependent on the land, 90.36% indicated appropriately that land is significant for enhancing and improving livelihood through adequate exercise of its worthiness. The land functions as a mother who feeds her child. For tribals, there is no other meaning of land; the meaning of land is the land itself.

The purposes of using the land for tribal livelihood, 63.02% use the land for agricultural purposes. Agriculture is the main source of revenue for most households. 72.39% has 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.

Tribals produce various commonly items on the land for numerous aspects- *Forest Land*: provide fuel, construction materials, medicinal plants, fruits, vegetables, orchids, and habitats for specific wild animals, birds, and butterflies, among other species and things. *Water Body Land*: is generally used for communal or individual baths, cleaning clothes, utensils or tools, seed and wood soaking, ritual practices, and other purposes. *Grazing Land*: a considerable quantity of cattle depends on grazing possibilities provided by all local community members. *Residential Land*: tribals grow various basic needs and requirements-specific plants, such as coconut, neem, banana, bamboo, betel nut, betel leaf, and fruit trees, among others, around their residential land area. *Homestead Land*: is rich in diverse species, such as citrus fruits, blackberries, betel nuts, betel leaves, coconuts, mangoes, oranges, jackfruit, guavas, papayas, and others permanent forest trees. *Kitchen Garden Land*: it covers vegetables, *potatoes, tomato plants, chilies, cabbage, pumpkins, gourds, squash, brinjal, cauliflower, vegetable leaves, onions, ginger, turmeric, and coriander leaves.* *Croplands*: cropland is a type of land used to grow crops; seeding bed: prepared year-round during April and May, unused during off-season, some grow vegetables for household use in the *Rabi* season. Autumn paddy field: cropping *Ahu* rice March, April, and May, using both beaming and grafting processes, cropping again *Ranjit, Sadhu, Aijong*, others in June, July, and August, hybrid rice, during the winter utilised to grow mustard and pulses.

Winter paddy field: indigenous rice- *Ranjit, Sadhu, Baradur, Aijong, Sali*, others in May, June, July, and August year-round, and grow hybrid rice. *Bao* paddy field: bao rice- cropping in April through the first of December, these land fields are cultivated.

The type of land use, especially agricultural land vary among tribal communities such as homestead land, dry field, garden land, fallow land, wet land, grazing land and plantation land. It is straightforward that the wetland wherein tribal landowners produce paddy is owned by 53.90%. Wetland is found in study areas where the land is sufficiently wet for paddy cultivation.

The issues related to the agriculture production tribal have been facing most. Agriculture is the major source of livelihood for tribals in the region 72.39% of respondents have own cultivable land and are actively dependent on agricultural activities. Despite agricultural land and the provision of large fertile land, crop productivity has been falling because of a variety of constraints in the region. 27.60% had land, although it is insufficient quality for agricultural uses. The specified significant percentage in the study owns less than one hectare of land. Floods are wreaking havoc on agricultural productivity, with 11.97% of respondents in the study area being especially flood-affected has affect the tribals most.

The landless problem is not a new dilemma in the Bodoland Territorial Region. 71.09% have clearly stated that landless means living without land. However, 19.01% are completely unconscious and unaware of the term landless.

Regarding the reason of landlessness is various, 25.52% have stated that population growth is the main reason for landlessness, and a result of colonial legacy, 18.48% indicated that tribal people have become landless. As per 9.89%, indicated that land-hungry illegal immigrants are increasing, they 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. Ethnic conflict is identified as the reason for tribal landlessness by 9.89%, it is regrettable to state that the Bodoland region is regarded as an ethnic conflict prone zone.

The sources of livelihood of landless are depending on various sources, however, mainly on the manual labourers. Landlessness is increasing among rural tribal households in the Bodoland region. Tribal households had cultivated even small plots of land. The loss of land, traditional livelihoods, and unemployment has forced 47.26% of tribal people to engage in wage labour for a living. It quite an increase of young people, show a rapid rise of labourers and a decline in the number of cultivators in the region.

7.6 STRATEGIES OF LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION

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.

Tribals have an alternate approach to livelihood combinations as a source of earnings, 31.25% have engaged in only traditional occupations as no shift, the 64.84% of households involved in traditional and non-traditional occupations have diversified their livelihoods shift horizontally, and 3.90% have non-traditional vertical occupation shifts.

The distribution of occupational categories among sample households of the Bodo community showed that 28.12% do not have a shift in occupation. A majority 67.70% of the sample households are shifting occupations horizontally. Only 4.16% are solely engaged in combined 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. The 63.39% have combined their occupations horizontally into traditional and non-traditional. Only 3.57% combined only in non-traditional occupations shift.

In the Garo community, 36.25% of occupation classifications rely exclusively on traditional occupations as there is no shift. The 60% have combined their occupations shift horizontally into both traditional and non-traditional. Only 3.75% vertically combined non-traditional occupations shift.

The several important findings reflect the land access and livelihood challenges faced by the tribal in the region. The right-to-land issues, land disputes, and land conflicts over land ownership and rights often lead to displacement and insecurity among tribal communities, exacerbating their vulnerability. Limited access to land and resource productions due to historical marginalization with insufficient legal recognition of tribal land rights hinders their ancestral land ties and economic development. Reliance on traditional subsistence farming, coupled with diminishing natural resources, and a few alternative options beyond traditional practices hinder sustainable livelihood diversification. Historical conflicts over land and resources continue to disrupt livelihoods and perpetuate a cycle of instability, affecting the well-being of tribal populations. Policy gaps or inadequate policy frameworks and implementation

strategies fail to address adequately the specific rights and needs of tribal communities regarding land access and livelihood improvement.

8. VALID RESEARCH OUTCOME

The study findings have been thoroughly verified and compared to the valid outcomes of the drawn research questions. The results are factual and valid, as understood from the subsequent points.

8.1 TRIBAL AND MEANING OF LAND

The tribal villages of the Bodoland Territorial Region are almost surrounded by the open fields or the village land.

Perception on the land: 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.”

Connection with land: Tribal and the land are inseparable entities or closely connected. Land is a natural gift from nature to humans, who cannot exist without the use of land and its resources.

Land protection: 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 land.

Land represents for tribals: Like other communities, the tribes also have strong emotional ties to their lands. The most essential natural and priceless asset and imperishable endowment from which tribals obtain nourishment, social prestige, economic, social equality, a permanent place of dwelling, labour, and a way of life is land. 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.

8.2 TRIBAL LAND RIGHTS ISSUES AND LAND SECURITY

The tribals must prepare tribal land rights for tribals so that tribals should maintain their own.

Right to land: Tribals rely significantly on the land for survival. Therefore, without preserving rights to land for tribals, one basic tie and holding the land that belongs to their society may be lost, restricting their ability to use their land.

Land patta: Initially, tribals believed that all members of the tribal would have been landowners, but situations have changed now. The tribals trusted legal documents called *land pattas* (land deeds) for securing long-term tenancy. The lands are inherited from their ancestors.

Land title issues: The tribals have been facing long pending issues over land related to land records that are incomplete, inaccurate land titles. The majority of tribals consider land titling as a means of enhancing their land rights.

Women right to land: Although women have the option of cultivating land for household needs, however, they are routinely denied even basic access to this (land) resource, which is controlled to the fullest extent possible by the family head.

Fresh encroachment in tribal areas: The present major land rights issue hurting tribals is fresh encroachment on grazing land, forest area, and other lands in tribal areas.

Tribal land alienation: Tribal land alienation is a potentially problematic issue in the region. The state and local governments have taken no concrete measures to restore illegally alienated tribal lands, and not restore possession of wrongfully alienated lands.

Land tenure security: As per the land security concern in the research region, revenue administration in the Bodoland Territorial Council is equivalent to that in the non-Sixth Schedule plains districts of Assam state. In a tribal society, land tenure is equal to ancestral habitat land, which they have a birth right to hold for as long as they determine. One defining aspect of a truly tribal land tenure system is that the tribal people are entirely free of the fear of land scarcity. However, their lands are not usually settled, and records are created. Land tenure security remains a significant challenge to the livelihood process in the region.

8.3 LAND ACCESS ISSUES EFFECTS ON TRIBAL LIFE

The tribals have been facing basic land access issues, where they are currently deprived of their right of land.

Use rights: The tribals are deprived of use rights, for that purpose, they are not able to access the land properly including grazing land, growing subsistence crops, and gathering minor forestry products from the forest.

Control rights: Tribals want to control of land but deprived of the control rights. Traditionally, they have had no confusion or fear about controlling their own land, but today they are terrified of the right to decide how the land should be managed and to benefit from it.

Transfer rights: The transfer rights that create land access 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.

Displacement: It is a significant cause of the deprivation of access to land, Due to ethnic conflict, government projects, and natural disaster, many local natives were displaced and induced ‘Internally Displaced Persons’ and they could not even access their own land. 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.

Issue of ownership: Most tribals are concerned about land ownership issues, and believe their land rights are not adequately protected. 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.

Land registration issue: 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.

Land boundary issue: Land boundary issues on their plot or the tribal inhabited areas are not just a tribal dilemma but that other communities also suffer in the region.

Illegal immigration: An ongoing issue in the region is illegal immigration in their neighbouring villages on the government’s vacant land and grazing lands, which creates a chaotic scenario of accessing tribals’ their lands where they are settling near tribal land. Tribal groups are dealing with land disputes and conflicts as a result of the never-ending issue of illegal immigration. There is a rise in violence and conflict, when the tribal communities are obstructed from entering and tries to evict the immigrants.

Division of land in protected areas: Division of land into protected areas, even with the provision of tribal belts and blocks, witnessed of division of tribal lands with non-protected class. They have been facing inadequate 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.

Ethnic conflict: Ethnic conflict has far-reaching ramifications, including land loss, internal displacement, regional instability, and socio-economic failures. Ethnic hatred creates unease about accessing their land after the conflict.

Land law and policy: Tribals are unable to access their current land due to land laws and policy issues. The current situation has been worsened by reality, as many tribal individuals who

have resided in the forest and government lands for decades are lacking the requisite documents to prove it. So, there is required to verification of procedure.

Human and wildlife issue: The government illegally evicted tribals from their land for conservation and reservation. They 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.

Forest land rights issues: Tribal households living on the outskirts of forests are denied or have limited access to forest resources. Tribal members have applied for forest land patta, but petitions are still pending or have been rejected. 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 adequately.

8.4 LAND CONTRIBUTED TRIBAL LIVELIHOOD

The tribals have a greater dependence on land for their livelihoods. They rely on resource sustainability and understand how important land is.

Essential of land and livelihood: Land provides the essential basis for tribal livelihoods. Their livelihood is dependent on the land. The land is significant for enhancing and improving livelihoods by adequately exercising its worthiness. The land functions as a mother who feeds her child. For tribals, there is no other meaning of land; the meaning of land is the land itself. They depend on the land, but on the other side, the land is still alive for the activities of tribals.

Purpose of using the land: The land is used for agricultural purposes as most tribal households' primary revenue source. However, recently, tribal farmers have produced only for domestic use and not for commercial purposes because agricultural productivity and crop yields have declined. Most youth tribal members are not in the mood to serve on agricultural fields, as we could see earlier.

Existing cultivable lands: The majority of tribal farmer has possesses less than <1 hectare of cultivable or arable land, which they operate by ploughing, planting, and producing crops.

Wet land: The tribals used wetlands, which are used primarily for agricultural production.

Agricultural issues: Tribals have land to produce agriculture. However, it needs to be of sufficient quality land for agricultural uses. The quality of land for agriculture is declining.

Floods are wreaking havoc on agricultural productivity. Notably, the flood impacts the area with loss of life, damage to land, and crop damage.

Landlessness: Landlessness is a barrier of livelihood of the tribals in the region. A significant portion of the tribal community is still landless, and a significant portion has not received recommendations on rights concerns. There are many tribal landless and homesteadless households that had lived on government-owned land for decades.

8.5 LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION

Most tribal people living in rural villages need to use multiple livelihood strategies for their households.

Occupational shift: 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.

Occupational combination: The tribal livelihood combination is more diverse in terms of the traditional and non-traditional combinations of livelihood and even the challenges arising. Their capital does not cover their daily needs and livelihood requirements, which they meet to prepare livelihood combinations.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings include the significant number of tribal communities that presently lack land security, adequate planning of livelihood strategies, or the challenge of households accessing their land. The issues have become more measurable, giving policy-makers a clearer insight into which vulnerabilities must be addressed and resolved. Based on the findings of the study, some recommendations have been made to address the issues:

1. The Government should take educational programmes involving community engagement, government officials, educators, and social workers are required to accelerate educational development, to bring necessary transformational change in the education system.
2. The tribal people who have lived in the region since antiquity must be safeguarded and made available to protect their right to land and forest rights to access.
3. Ensure the tribal people collect bonafide livelihood needs from the forest, such as the small timber and non-timber forest products.
4. Land is essential and everything within and above it, including forests, minerals, rivers, and others, belong to them. Thus, it should be defended through the

administrative council constituted under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

5. It must be effectively enforced to prohibit the sale, transfer, alienation, and unlawful settlement of ancestral land by tribals to non-tribal people.
6. Conduct land transfer surveys to better identify the land issues that must be solved with a new law.
7. Ensuring legislation and cadastral survey efforts include steps to eliminate landlessness, conflict, registration, women's land title and joint land titling, and legal ownership systems.
8. To prevent illegal settlements, the local government needs to monitor government-owned vacant lands, wastelands, grazing reserve lands, and forest land reserves.
9. The local government and organisations should look into the denial of shared resources like land and the changes in the demographic profile and character.
10. It should be amended the existing land laws as to confer secure access to land.
11. It is critical to adopt laws to decrease legal tenure instability in the region. The goal can be reached through a variety of mechanisms, including legal land rights, legal rights to long-term occupancy, and effectively managing and minimizing the likelihood of state-led eviction.
12. Importance should be provided for landless tribal people when allocating and redistributing lands under any land policy or act.
13. The micro-level village development process should be executed to address the tribal, rural village livelihood enhancement.
14. It is necessary to strengthen sustainable livelihoods and social security mechanisms to resolve many issues.
15. The administrative officials should visit tribal villages to grasp the livelihood barriers and bring a rural development approach.
16. Promotes agricultural growth that is environmentally friendly and capable of providing long-term fulfilment for human needs.
17. It should take programmes of rural and tribal livelihood to be successful and require a close link between agriculture and small-scale industries in the region.

Land access issues and tribal livelihoods in the Bodoland Territorial Region are complex and require a multifaceted approach. Ensuring secure land rights for tribal communities through legal documentation can help protect their lands from encroachment and displacement.

Empowering tribal communities through capacity-building programmes, education, and awareness about their rights can enable them to advocate for themselves effectively. Promoting sustainable livelihood options such as agroforestry, eco-tourism, handicrafts, and skill development tailored to the local context can reduce dependence on fragile ecosystems and provide alternative sources of income. Involving tribal groups in decision-making processes on land rights and use, development initiatives, and resource management is essential to long-term development and historical land maintenance. Advocating for policies that protect tribal rights, encourage inclusive development, and address historical injustices is vital. Collaborating with local authorities and organisations can help implement these policies effectively. Investing in infrastructure such as roads, healthcare, and schools may enhance the quality of life for tribal people while also facilitating economic activity. Addressing conflicts related to land and resources through dialogue, mediation, and conflict resolution mechanisms can foster peace and stability in the region.

10. LIMITATION OF STUDY AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study is no exception to limitations.

1. The study is limited to tribal peoples, primarily those in the Bodoland Territorial Region.
2. The research is delimited to the Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri districts of the Bodoland Territorial Region.
3. Analysis is restricted to the tribal rural villages in the study.
4. The research model is mainly focused on tribal land access issues and livelihoods.
5. The limitation in the study area is that the household size of the Rabha and Garo tribes are relatively small size in contrast to the Bodo tribes in the region.

Land access and tribal livelihoods remain a burning topic in worldwide socio-political, economic and survival debates. In comparison to others, their socio-economic and political situation is deplorable. Further research on the topic relating to tribal land and livelihoods could be done within micro areas such as land use change, landless and livelihood, forest rights and land, encroachment into forest lands, struggle for land rights, tribals and agricultural change, micro level village development, land records and titles and other research topics for the region.

11. CONCLUSION

The tribal people have a bond with their land and a sense of belonging. So the land possesses regenerative qualities necessary for tribal existence and well-being. The land is an

essential aspect of the livelihoods of tribals. As a result, education will play a role in how they achieve prosperity, success, and security. Tribals suffer many challenges due to their solitary living in rural regions. Most tribal settlements lack essential utilities like toilets, drinking water, electricity, and appropriate housing for adequate settlement, necessitating careful planning. Due to a lack of education, the household heads lack the knowledge to enhance their efforts and locate their efforts for improved livelihoods. They are not habituated to maintaining a record of their income and spending, which affects the generation. However, land determines the annual income for most households, where food item expenditure is estimated most. The land significantly influences the economic condition of the afflicted below-poverty-line tribal households in the region.

The land is the lifeline of the tribal peoples. They will be desperate if their right to land and adequate access to it is not restored. Since they are the original inhabitants, their ancestral entitlements to land are righteous and undisputed. Tribals must prepare tribal land rights for tribals so that tribals can maintain their own. The land is a prerequisite for enhancing agricultural gain and encouraging access to sustainable resources for livelihood. The tribal need for long-term residents necessitates a lasting remedy for inadequate land registration records, expensive land registration fees, ambiguous records from a lack of land information, inaccurate representation of land transactions in records, and administrative bodies responsible for unclear land transactions. It is also important to ensure the legalisation of land ownership for women is legal. Laws must be implemented to decrease legal tenure problems in the area. The tribal peoples primarily inherited their lands as a means of access. The state and local governments must settle the land access issues tribals face regarding accessing their land. The most challenging land access problems they face include ownership, registration, boundary disputes, issues related to humans and wildlife, illegal immigration, forest land and rights, ethnic conflicts, and land laws and policies. Serious that the forest cover is decreasing and reports indicate that tribal forest land rights are being infringed upon, with authorities denying access.

Tribal inhabitants have limited resources for farming their land, mostly owning less than one hectare for cultivation. They face challenges like poor quality land, floods, and droughts, leading to low agricultural production. Landlessness is a long-standing issue, leaving some without options for relocation, living in harsh conditions. The government needs to provide housing for the homeless and ensure access to land for the landless in the region to improve their living conditions.

Difficulties in tribal livelihoods have increased, including insecurity due to loss of land or being landless, unemployment, difficulty in the area of cultivation, reduced work on agricultural fields, leaving the land uncultivated, growth of population, and more depending on casual work. That takes the shape of a combination of various forms of work and earning activities. The tribal livelihood combination is more diverse in terms of the traditional and non-traditional combinations of livelihood and even the challenges arising.

The land access issues and livelihood challenges faced by tribal communities in the study region demand a comprehensive and inclusive approach. Addressing the issues requires safeguarding land rights, empowering communities, promoting sustainable livelihood options, ensuring participatory decision-making, advocating for supportive policies, investing in infrastructure, and fostering conflict resolution mechanisms. It is crucial to tailor investments to the local context, recognizing the rich history and customs of these tribal groups while striving for equitable and sustainable development. Working together among stakeholders, especially local governments, institutions organizations, and tribal members, is essential, and remains significant to achieving lasting improvements in land access and livelihoods in the region.

It is time to reconstruct and revitalise properly the tribal communities' land issues and livelihood mechanisms, together with those of non-tribals inhabiting the Bodoland Territorial Region. It is pursuing the purposes of strengthening positivity for the people and initiating an environment within which everyone can dream and work towards making those expectations a reality in the region. Land issues awareness programmes must be launched for regular interactions among tribal communities and non-tribal communities must be included in the areas that do not face ethnic violence over land in the future. The state or the local government should express its gratitude for the restoration of peace and fraternity among a cross-section of the people that has ushered in confidence among people for peaceful co-existence and equality. In the Bodoland Territorial Region, a priority must be established to engage the counselling system in addressing issues such as livelihood, domestic violence, and other social issues.