

# **Dying Alive: Vulnerability of Tribal Internally Displaced Persons in Assam, India**

By

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*Paper presented at*

**26<sup>th</sup> IUSSP International Population Conference**

Held at Marrakech, Morocco

During 27<sup>th</sup> September – 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2009

## **Dying Alive: Vulnerability of Tribal Internally Displaced Persons in Assam, India**

### **Abstract**

The ethnic conflict between Santhals and Boro Tribe that erupted during 1996 and 1998 displaced about 5.17 lakh persons and took life of about 400 people. At the end of 2003 1.28 lakh of them were still taking shelter in the makeshift relief camps. The humanitarian assistance provided was extremely paltry (inhumane) and there is hardly any income generating avenues around. Most of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) live in animal like condition with meager per-capita income of Rupees 367 (approximately 7\$US) per month. Many of them survive by collecting firewood, whereas most of the womenfolk sale country liquor or do odd jobs to generate additional income for the household. Multi-variate analysis shows that social networking helps IDPs to have slightly better economic condition. Due to extreme economic hardship and lack of basic infrastructure - denied of fundamental human rights, they are quite vulnerable to various types of exploitation, health hazard, hunger etc.

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Displacement of population or forced migration causes profound economic and cultural disruption to the displaced persons and thereby social fabric of the communities of the area gets completely shattered. Such displaced persons have been known by different terms depending on causes of displacement, distance they move and administrative boundary they cross. However, in the present study Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) means those *persons who are displaced due to situations of generalized violence or ethnic clash, belong to Boro Tribe and currently staying in the relief camp in Assam, India.*

There are currently 25 million internally displaced persons uprooted by conflict and human rights violations worldwide. In India at the beginning of 2006 there were about 600,000 IDPs because of political violence. This figure at the end of 2003 (reference period of study) was about 650,000, of whom between 250,000 to 450,000 were from Kashmir and 250,000 others from northeast India (IDMC, 2007). In northeast India majority of the IDPs are in Assam, and they are mainly Santhals, Boros and Muslims. Under the existing socio-political scenario, there are chances of generating even more conflict induced internally displaced populations in the near future in India (SAHRDC and HRDC 2001) and especially in northeast India (Hussain, 2000; Unnikrishnan and Max, 2000).

Hussain (2006:393) noted that if we look at the IDP issue from the impoverishment risk model developed by Micheal M Cernea, we find that all the IDPs of the north-east India suffer from landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to common property rights, social disarticulation and disintegration. Further, Hussain (2000) has reported that some of internally displaced Santhal women of Kokrajhar district in Assam, India are taking up flesh trade along the National Highway for their survival. In terms of economic condition Castles (2006: 25) observes that conflict destroys economic resources, undermines traditional way of life and break up communities. Forced migration is thus a factor that deepens underdevelopment, weakens social bonds, and reduces the capacity of communities in societies to achieve positive change. However, Deng (2003:3) reveals that in conflict induced forced migration, there is an element of discrimination, because in most cases of natural disasters there is spontaneous response on humanitarian grounds to help people who have been affected.

Most publicly available IDP information is generated in order to help plan and deliver humanitarian assistance, rather than for purposes of academic research. This is reflected by the nature of available information, which is often fragmented with major geographical and thematic information gap (Danevad and Zeender, 2003:24). Further, they say that presently available information are mostly descriptive in nature, thereby there is urgent need to develop better conceptual and methodological tools for qualitative and quantitative analysis of internal displacement situation. Jacobsen and Landau (2003) argues that much of the published research on refugees and IDPs is based on data that has been collected through a relatively small number of interviews conducted without apparent reference to be accepted and systematic sampling. Therefore, present study is a humble attempt to highlight the various vulnerabilities the Boro Tribal IDPs are facing in the relief camp, with special focus on the economic hardship.

### **Ethnic conflict and population displacement in Boro dominated areas of Assam**

Displacement of population due to ethnic clash causes more havoc to the population than the displacement due to the developmental activities. As in the former case people have

to move for live without prior notice, whereas in the later case people are well notified before they are to move.

Ethnic conflict between Santhals and Boro Tribe erupted in the lower Assam of India, current Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District (BTAD), and mainly in the Kokrajhar district (province) during early 1996. This ethnic conflict displaced about 42,214 families consisting of about 2,02,684 persons from their homes, that is about one fourth of the district population. Further, this clash erupted again in the year 1998 and displaced about 48,556 families consisting of about 3,14,342 persons (Govt. of Assam). By the second spell of this ethnic clash, about 5.17 lakh persons are displaced, which is about 40 percent of the district population. In these ethnic conflicts about 400 people have also lost their life. This figure may be even higher, as few of the killings might have gone unreported. This ethnic conflict induced about 1,28,260 IDPs, of whom 1,13,724 are Santhals and 14,321 are Boros and about 215 Ravas were still taking shelter in 48 relief camps in October 2003 (District Relief Camp Record, Kokrajhar).

### **Methodology**

Data for the present study comes from the primary survey conducted in Kokrajhar district of Assam, India during the year 2003 for the doctoral program. Data were collected from four Boro relief camps and four non displaced Boro villages through both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Relief camps were selected through random sampling, whereas reference villages were purposively selected based on its nearness to the displaced villages. Sample for each camp and village were allocated through probability proportionate to size (PPS). Total 304 IDP and 306 non IDP head of the household were successfully interviewed through semi-structured interview schedule. Few Officials working in relief camps and students organization were also interviewed. Uni-variate, bi-variate and multi-variate statistical techniques were applied to draw meaningful conclusions.

## **Background Characteristics of Respondents**

Before discussing problems of any group of population, it is essential to know some of the basic characteristics of the study population. It is much more important when the study involves a highly volatile population like IDPs. Because statistics of such population keeps changing over time, by sources and are most likely to be quite different from settled population. The difference over time is mainly due to arrival of new groups or exit of some of them, whereas the difference over sources is mostly because the purpose, techniques and time of data collection vary from each other. On the other hand, it is expected to be different from settled population because during the displacement, the group of population gets scattered, their socio-economic fabrics get completely disrupted, their occupation, income, living style, etc gets fully altered.

Result (1) shows that there is no significant difference in age distribution of respondents between IDPs and Non IDPs, although IDPs are slightly older. It implies that Boro Santhal ethnic clash has affected people throughout the different ages. In terms of education more than half of both IDPs and non IDPs are illiterate, but the percentage of illiterate IDPs is about 4 percent point higher than non IDPs. It is also quite clear that only about 17 percent of IDPs have high school and above level of education (whereas it is 30% for non IDPs), which suggests that barring this 17 percent, others are not suitable for modern type of work. So any plans and policies for the IDPs should also keep this aspect in mind and effort should be made to provide work opportunities suiting their capabilities, potentials and skills.

Percentage distribution of respondents by religion (table 1) shows that about 61 percent of IDPs practices *Bathow*; 27 percent follow *Brahma*; 6 percent practices Hindu and another 7 percent follow other religion. Contrary to this about half of non IDPs practices *Bathow*; about 42 percent follow *Brahma*; 4 percent follow Hindu and about 3 percent follow other religion. In the present study it is found that among IDPs about 81 percent have nuclear and about 19 percent have other type of family (table: 1), whereas among non IDPs about three fourth have nuclear and about one fourth have other types of family. Further, when we look into the family size it is apparent that among IDPs, households with small family size are more than the non IDPs. It is mainly because IDPs

are breaking up their family first because of the economic hardship, secondly to take advantage of the relief and rehabilitation grants.

Table: 1 Percentage distribution of respondents by background characteristics		
Characteristics	IDPs	Non IDPs
<b>Age</b>		
Less than 30	18.1 (55)	20.3 (62)
30 – 39	37.2 (113)	32.4 (99)
40 – 49	27.3 (83)	30.4 (93)
50 and Above	17.4 (53)	17.0 (52)
<i>Mean</i>	38.5	37.7
<i>St Deviation</i>	10.1	9.4
<b>Education</b>		
Illiterate	59.5 (181)	55.2 (169)
Primary	14.5 (44)	5.6 (17)
Middle	9.5 (29)	8.8 (27)
High School & above	16.5 (50)	30.2 (93)
<b>Religion</b>		
Bathow	60.5 (184)	51.0 (156)
Brahma	26.6 (81)	42.2 (129)
Hindu	6.3 (19)	3.9 (12)
Others	6.6 (20)	2.9 (4)
<b>Type of family</b>		
Nuclear	81.3 (247)	75.5 (231)
Others	18.7 (57)	24.5 (75)
<b>Family size</b>		
2 – 3	15.7 (48)	8.5 (26)
4 – 5	43.6 (133)	39.2 (120)
6 – 7	29.5 (90)	33.7 (103)
8 and above	11.1 (34)	18.6 (57)
<i>Average family size</i>	5.25	5.78
<i>Standard deviation</i>	1.69	1.76
<b>Number of bed rooms</b>		
1	53.8 (164)	10.1 (31)
2	34.4 (105)	31.7 (97)
3	6.6 (20)	25.5 (78)
4+	4.9 (15)	32.7 (100)
<b>Have separate kitchen</b>		
Yes	32.6 (99)	86.9 (266)
No	67.4 (205)	13.1 (40)
Total	100.0 (304)	100.0 (306)

In terms of sleeping place result exhibits a very pathetic picture among the IDPs. It is found that about half of IDP households have single room only, one third has two rooms, 7 percent have three rooms and about 5 percent have four or more rooms. But contrasting to this among non IDP households only 10 percent have single room, one third have two rooms, one fourth have three rooms and another one third have four or more rooms.

Further, observation reveals that the rooms of IDP families are much smaller than non IDPs. This clearly indicates that the living arrangement for IDPs is quite pathetic compared to non IDPs, which also exposes them to various infectious diseases and inconveniences. Further, in the present study it is found that among IDPs two third of the households are not having separate kitchen or cooking room and only one third have separate kitchen (table: 1). But contrary to this, among non IDPs as high as 87 percent of the households are having separate kitchen and only 13 percent are not having kitchen. Although the statistics shows slightly good picture that among IDPs also one third of the households are having separate kitchen, but field observation reveals much more pathetic picture. Most of the household who are having separate kitchen actually are having a cooking place either in verandah which is extremely small, there is not even enough space to turn one's elbow or room adjoined with bedroom, from where the smoke fully goes into the bedroom. Further, no IDP has the luxury of having dining place, most of them eat outside or in the bed room itself that is why Narzary (2006) has observed house as a place for everything for IDPs.

### **Humanitarian assistance**

In the present study, an attempt was made to assess the humanitarian assistance provided to the IDPs. According to the Officials working in relief branch, Deputy Commissioner Office, in the initial stage of displacement, various items such as rice, dal, oil, salt etc, were supplied to IDPs but gradually supply of other items has been stopped, to encourage IDPs to return home. Currently (at the end of 2003) only rice and kerosene is provided. Rice is given at the rate of 500gm per adult per day and 400gm per minor per day for 15 days a month and it is supplied every month to the head of the households. However, sometimes it does not reach the office in time, so it cannot be provided in time and it has to be distributed once in two months or so. Kerosene is provided at certain intervals (exact interval not mentioned) depending on its arrival. Despite the ration supply being only rice, as of March 2003, govt. incurs Rs. 51,37,405 (102748 USD) per month in meeting these expenses (Deputy Commissioner's Office, Relief Branch). Although govt. is shouldering heavy economic burden every month in providing assistance to IDPs, but if we look from IDPs point of view the provided assistance is extremely meager, and they

are denied of their fundamental human rights – right to live, for which they have to live amidst utmost economic adversities.

As per the report (Govt. of Assam --), initially government planned to provide rehabilitation grant commensurating to the actual property loss. But later it has been fixed at Rs 10,000 (approximately 200\$US) per family, irrespective of extent of property loss. But many of the families from revenue villages returned back without receiving rehabilitation grant as they have their own land and as no restriction have been imposed on their return by any authority. The official report further says, the govt. has constructed low cost house for 1,754 (mainly for Santhals) families, and households who avail this facility are not entitled for the relief grant of Rs. 10,000. During the time of data collection, it was found that no NGOs - national or international were working for the Boro Tribal IDPs and the basic infrastructures such as house, drinking water supply, toilet facility, health facility etc were extremely poor, thereby exposing IDPs to various health hazards.

Safe drinking water is one of the most essentials for good health, and it is the duty of the government to provide safe drinking water to public and more so to people in distress like IDPs. It has been found that 90 percent of IDPs get their drinking water from the Public Tube/Well and remaining 10 percent from other's Tube/Well. On the other hand, among non IDPs about 66 percent get their drinking water from their own tube/Well, 20 percent from other's Tube/Well and 15 percent from Public Tube/Well (table: 2). Normally in Boro society Well is commonly used source of drinking water. Whoever has little bit income to spare, they dig their own well at their residence. However, poor section has to depend on either other's or public well. Although the result shows somewhat good picture that very high percentage of IDPs get drinking water from public tube well, but only when we visit those relief camps one can understand its underlying problems and the actual agonies of IDPs. It was observed that in Laoripara relief camp, which was housing about 200 IDP families and in Bwirali relief camp which was housing about 150 families also only two tube wells each were functioning. Further as per the information from the IDPs, most of the time currently working tube well also gets spoiled due to the heavy use



and they again have to spare some of their meager earnings to repair them. Of course some of the IDPs are lucky enough to be placed near a public well that has very clean water and no cost involve in its use.

<b>Table:2 Percentage distribution of respondents by source of drinking water and toilet facilities</b>		
<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>IDPs</b>	<b>Non IDPs</b>
<b>Source of drinking water</b>		
Own Tube / Well	0.0 (00)	65.7 (201)
Other's Tube/Well	10.5 (32)	19.6 (60)
Public Tube / Well	89.5 (272)	14.7 (45)
<b>Toilet facility</b>		
No Toilet	92.8 (282)	81.7 (250)
Pit Toilet	1.6 (5)	15.0 (46)
Flush Toilet	0.0 (00)	3.3 (10)
Public Toilet	5.6 (17)	0.0 (00)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0 (304)</b>	<b>100.0 (306)</b>

Results (table: 2) on toilet facility show that among IDPs 93 percent and among non IDPs 82 percent do not have any toilet facility. After looking into this result one might be very happy to know that there are also public toilet facilities in the relief camps. In reality picture is quite different, those toilets were never constructed for IDPs. Actually in abandoned public buildings there are dilapidated toilets as well, so IDPs are using those toilets. On the other hand situation is quite similar among non IDPs, still about 82 percent of surveyed households do not have any toilet facility, and only about 18 percent have toilet facility. Till today in the Boro society, irrespective of economic status, people normally prefer open space for toilet, some of the old people even feel it dirty to use toilet. As one of the 50 years old non IDPs, having five sons says *'I have sufficient money, if I want I can construct flush toilet. But I feel it dirty, as well as uncomfortable, as all the family members including daughter-in-laws will use the same place for toilet'*. This qualitative information shows that mind setup of Boro tribal people still are not changing very fast, especially among the aged people. But among the younger generation, people are better conscious about importance of toilet. As one of the 30 years old respondents, married for two years, without a child, higher secondary school pass says, *'although we have a big garden attached to our house, I do not like to go to open space for toilet. I find it inconvenient and extremely difficult during the rainy season;*

moreover it is not good from hygiene point of view that is why we constructed flush toilet about five years back’.

### **Economic Vulnerability**

Result (table: 3) shows a highly pathetic picture in terms of occupation among IDPs. More than half (61.3%) of the IDPs are earning their daily bread through daily labour, 4 percent (only 11 cases) through cultivation and about 35 percent through various other means like petty business, selling liquor, fishing etc. Among IDPs most of the daily labor collect firewood from the forest and sale it in the nearby market for their sustenance. Due to this very occupation they are exposed to various vulnerabilities such as interrogation, torture, extortion by forest department or insurgent groups, and injuries, psychological pressure etc.

<b>Table: 3 Percentage distribution of respondents by occupation and per capita income</b>		
<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>IDPs</b>	<b>Non IDPs</b>
<b>Occupation</b>		
Cultivation	3.6 (11)	61.4 (188)
Daily Labor	61.3 (187)	24.2 (74)
Others	35.1 (107)	14.4 (44)
<b>Per capita income</b>		
≤ 300	47.5 (145)	30.4 (93)
301 – 500	37.4 (114)	38.5 (122)
> 500	15.1 (44)	29.7 (91)
<b>Mean</b>	366.92	500.36
<b>St Deviation</b>	198.93	442.61
<b>Total</b>	100.0 (304)	100.0 (306)

It should be noted here that about 5 percent of them have reported their occupation as selling liquor (result not shown), but from qualitative data and observation it came into light that almost all the women folks are engaged in selling liquor, which is a serious matter of concern. On the other hand, among non IDPs as high as 61 percent are cultivator, only one fourth are daily laborer and about 14 percent are engaged in other occupation. Such a truncated picture is only due to the forceful displacement. It is quite clear that normally dominant occupation of Boro people is also cultivation, but as IDPs are in the relief camp, they have no other choice but to go for daily labor, or to earn through whatever work they get. The picture of IDP daily labour is much more pathetic than it appears from the statistics.

Collecting data on income of respondents is one of the very complicated tasks and has various shortcomings, yet income is one of the very important variables. Hence, it has been collected for the present study under the assumption that discrepancies whatsoever in reporting of income is similar for both IDPs and non IDPs. Further, per capita income has better edge over the household income. Hence, per capita income has been used for the statistical analysis. In the present study it is found that the average monthly per capita income of IDPs is about Rupees 367 (approximately 7\$US), whereas it is about Rupees 500 for non IDPs, of course with much higher standard deviation. This result shows that majority of the IDPs live in the hand to mouth situation. Looking at the low standard of living and easy availability of natural resources in the study area, it is felt that with about 300-500 Rupees is one can somehow sustain. The result (table: 3) shows that almost half (47.5%) of IDPs have per capita income less than the minimum requirement, whereas among non IDPs only about one third (30.4%) have per capita income less than minimum requirement. In the high per capita income category very high differences is observed, that is among IDPs only 15 percent have per capita income above 500 Rupees; whereas among non IDPs about 30 percent are in this income level. Among the non IDPs the situation is much better than the statistics, because as majority of the villagers are cultivator, when they report income in terms of money, they take mostly paddy yield into consideration, whereas other small produce are not taken into account, besides they do not have to buy many things as they grow in their own. This result clearly shows that in terms of economy internal displacement has severely affected the IDPs in particular and Boro society as a whole.

### **Results of Multiple Classification Analysis (*per capita income*)**

To find out the relationship between various background characteristics of the respondent and per capita income, Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) is a good statistical technique if it is continuous, because it gives both unadjusted and adjusted mean value of the dependant variable. Results (table: 4) shows that apparently oldest IDPs are having the highest per capita income (Rs. 438) followed by the youngest IDPs (Rs 393). Even when we control the effect of other variables like education, occupation, social reorganization and duration of stay, the highest income remains concentrated among the

oldest (40-49 years) group of IDPs, and followed by youngest group of IDPs. Similarly among the non IDPs also when we do not control the effect of other variables, oldest group has highest per capita income, followed by the youngest group and this pattern remains even if we control the effects of other variables. However, the level of per capita income is higher among the non IDPs in all the age groups. Among non IDPs, such pattern may be due to the fact that the older groups have bigger land holdings, whereas younger people are more enterprising.

<b>Table: 4 Results of Multiple Classification Analysis</b>						
<b>Background characteristics</b>	Dependant variable: Per capita income (in Rs)					
	<b>IDPs</b>			<b>Non IDPs</b>		
	Cases	Unadjusted mean	Adjusted mean	Cases	Unadjusted mean	Adjusted mean
<b>Age</b>						
Less than 30	55	393.46	405.38	62	488.05	544.76
30 – 39	113	327.08	311.60	99	458.48	476.51
40 – 49	83	357.50	365.83	93	528.50	443.20
50 and above	53	438.98	446.31	52	544.41	595.03
<b>Education</b>						
Illiterate	181	375.75	373.71	169	371.64	424.37
Primary School	44	308.02	313.20	17	564.57	603.02
Middle School	29	366.39	368.52	27	485.24	505.96
High School & above	50	387.53	389.15	93	726.91	618.05
<b>Occupation</b>						
Cultivation	11	298.72	282.63	188	456.23	438.43
Daily Labor	187	340.26	333.81	74	303.91	375.06
Others	107	420.64	433.58	44	1019.25	975.68
<b>Have friends outside</b>						
No	78	347.28	365.40	48	319.15	467.06
Yes	226	373.68	367.45	258	534.07	506.55
<b>Reorganization</b>						
Not reorganized	198	356.35	347.95	142	431.99	495.47
Reorganized	106	386.66	402.32	164	559.55	504.58
<b>Duration of stay</b>						
< 7 Years	75	363.16	369.09	N.A.		
> 7 Years	229	368.16	366.21	N.A.		
	$R^2 = 0.543$			$R^2 = 0.549$		

Unadjusted and adjusted mean value of income suggests that there is no distinct relationship between education and the per capita income among the IDPs, and no clear relationship is observed among the non IDPs as well (table: 4). It suggests that there is no direct relationship between education and income among the IDPs in particular and among the reference population in general. It may be because of the limited avenues available for the educated people. Findings of Multiple Classification Analysis also

indicates that per capita income of cultivator is lowest among the IDPs, followed by daily labor, but it is highest among whose occupation is other than these two (cultivation and daily labor). Similarly, per capita income of non IDPs is highest among those respondents whose occupation is other than daily labor or cultivation. Among IDPs, the cultivators are having lower per capita income because most of the cultivators are doing share cropping, and above that, they have to hire most of the requirement for the cultivation like bullocks, seeds, manure etc.

The per capita income of IDPs who are not having friend from outside is Rs 347 and who are having friends from outside is Rs 373. But when we control the effect of other variables, there is no significant difference in per capita income (table: 4). It means to say that the social reorganization at the individual level is not being able to help IDPs to improve their economic condition. On the other hand, among non IDPs, those who are having friends from outside are having much higher per capita income than their counter part. This relationship may be other way round; the person with higher income has more friends from outside, however it needs further exploration. In the present study an attempt is also made to understand whether social organization at the societal level helps IDPs to economically improve. The result of multiple classification analysis (table: 4) shows that there is strong positive relationship between social reorganization and economic condition. The mean per capita income of reorganized and not reorganized IDPs is Rs 386 and Rs 356 respectively. But when we control the effects of other variables, the gap between them widens, those who are organized, their mean per capita income raises to Rs 402 , whereas those who are not reorganized their per capita income reduces to Rs 347 per month. A similar pattern is observed among the non IDPs, although their income level is much higher than the IDPs. This result indicates that one of the ways to improve the economic condition of IDPs would be to improve social organization or social networking of the IDPs. This is so, because when a person has more contacts with the outsider, they would be able to venture out more avenues for income generating activities. So, there is an urgent need to improve the social networking of the IDPs.

Both the unadjusted and adjusted mean indicates that there is no significant difference in the per capita income between the two groups of IDPs (table: 4), although duration of stay in the relief camp is considered to be a very crucial variable, but it is not found to play any role in the economic reorganization. It may be because, even with the increase in the duration of stay, they are not being able to find out sustainable source of livelihood. It also indirectly suggests that IDPs are in the trough of economic difficulty, unless someone comes out to help them, they are not being able to come out of this trough in their own. So, there is a need to provide IDPs with income generating activities, and govt. and NGOs have a great scope to play their role in such situation.

Analysis shows that the unadjusted mean per capita income of IDPs is only Rs 367, whereas it is Rs 500 among non IDPs (table: 3). When we put both IDPs and non IDPs together in the multi-variate model, it is found that the per capita income of IDPs even goes down (to Rs. 347), whereas it remain same (Rs. 500) among the non IDPs (results not shown), which signifies that difference in the mean per capita income is caused mainly due to the displacement. In other words IDPs would also have had similar level of income if they were not displaced. From this result one can gauge the severe effect of displacement on the economic conditions of IDPs. Hence steps should be taken to improve economic condition of the IDPs, otherwise their mental status also would go down, and it may lead to other social pathologies, such as robbery, burglary, suicide, kidnapping, prostitution, trafficking, child labor etc.

Besides per capita income, an attempt is also made here to find out the satisfaction of the respondents about their income. The analysis (table: 5) shows that among the IDPs who feel their income is not sufficient, all of them (99%) are not satisfied with it. On the other hand, who feel their income is sufficient about 25 per cent is not satisfied with it. Similarly among non IDPs who feel their income to be insufficient about 99 percent are not satisfied with it, but those who feel it to be sufficient only 13 percent are not satisfied. This result suggests that although IDPs feel that their income is sufficient to run their family, they are not being able to accept their current level of income. This may be because IDPs must be feeling that their economic condition would have been better had

they not been displaced, whereas in reality some of them might have had even lower level of income, at least in terms of cash.

**Table: 5 Percentage of IDPs and Non IDPs by feeling sufficient and satisfaction with the current level of income.**

Current income	IDPs		Non IDPs	
	Satisfied with the current level of income?			
	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Satisfied
Not sufficient	99.0 (192)	1.0 (2)	98.9 (93)	1.1 (1)
Sufficient	25.2 (28)	74.8 (83)	13.2 (28)	86.8 (184)

### Change of occupation after the displacement

In order to know the impact of mass population displacement on economy, we also tried to understand the change in occupation after the displacement. Among IDPs as high as 80 percent have reported to have changed their occupation after the displacement, whereas during the same period, among non IDPs only 12 percent of the respondents have reported occupational shifting and this result is statistically significant (table: 6). Changing of occupation takes place mainly around the early years of entry into the workforce, but as a person becomes more responsible they tend to get settled in certain occupation. Further, a person enters into one or the other occupation after attaining certain age, and it becomes somewhat compulsion when their marital status changes. All these phenomena can be checked simply by looking into change in occupation by age, which is done in the subsequent section.

**Table: 6 Percentage distribution of IDPs and non IDPs according to their change in occupation**

Changed occupation?	IDP	Non IDPs
No	20.4 (62)	87.6 (268)
Yes	79.6 (242)	12.4 (38)
<i>Chi square</i>	277.22***	
Total	100.0 (304)	100.0 (306)

Here it should also be noted that, among IDPs, change in occupation is irrespective of their age, whereas among the non IDPs, change in occupation is mainly among the younger respondents, among the older group (above 40 years) it is almost nil (table: 7).

Most of the IDPs also informed that they change occupation according to the season and availability of work. The change in occupation among non IDPs is basically because the younger people who have become adult during the period have changed their occupation as they have become responsible to their families, whereas IDPs were forced to change their occupation mainly due to the displacement.

**Table: 7 Percentage of IDPs and non IDPs' change of occupation by age**

Age	IDP		Non IDPs	
	No change	Changed	No change	Changed
Below 30	12.7 (7)	87.3 (48)	45.2 (28)	54.8 (34)
30 – 39	21.2 (24)	78.8 (89)	97.0 (96)	3.0 (3)
40 – 49	26.2 (22)	73.8 (62)	100.0 (93)	0.0 (0)
50 and above	17.0 (9)	83.0 (44)	98.1 (51)	1.9 (1)
<i>Chi square</i>	4.17		--	
Total	20.3 (62)	100.0 (242)	87.6 (268)	12.4 (38)

In the above context, one of the male respondents about 26 years old, just married at the time of displacement, currently staying with two children and wife said *'we were two brothers and father mother before the displacement, we had about 10 bighas of cultivable land, I used to cultivate in my own. But after displacement, I have no specific occupation; I work on whatever work I get. Besides, I also sale liquor at home; almost all the households of this relief camp sale liquor. But many of them may not be telling you the truth, because they may be afraid you are from students' union. Initially I was also afraid, but now I know your purpose of enquiry, that is why I am revealing you the truth'*. He further explained, generally men folk from this relief camp go to collect firewood, the amount of money men folk get from their work is not sufficient to run a family, on the other hand they do not get ration regularly. So most of the women folk instead of sitting ideal, sale liquor, if they would have been in native place, women folk could have gone to cultivation along with men folk. They would have had no necessity to think of selling liquor.

To substantiate the meager income of the household, IDP women sale country liquor either at home or in the market place; or sale vegetable, fish etc, or set up tea stall in the market, which is actually considered as very low grade job in the society. Some of such occupation also puts women into vulnerable condition. For example, students' union or



some of the insurgent groups are against the selling of liquor, so sometimes they bit up women selling liquor or throw their liquor for which they incur economic losses. Some women are also engaged in weaving clothes for sale. Due to constant long hours weaving women are also vulnerable to various health hazards such as eye problem, spondilites, body ache, etc.

### **Conclusions and policy recommendations**

The displacement has caused profound economic hardship among the Boro Tribal IDPs in Assam, which might be true for other IDPs as well. The relief grant or low cost house which is assured for the IDPs is just like a drop of rain in the desert; there is no infrastructure so to say; there is hardly any avenue for income generation and no international organization is given access into the relief camps. Due to the extreme poverty, IDPs are vulnerable to various problems. Hence, the government should think over rationally providing humanitarian assistance to re-establish them. If it is not capable of providing humanitarian assistance, it should set up income generating avenues around the relief camps, or give access to international organization. Otherwise IDPs may revolt against the govt. one day or the situation may compel them to resort to various anti social activities.

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