



LOCALIZING SDGs

A study of socially excluded vulnerable communities in Northeast India.

MARCH 2021

Introduction & Acknowledgement

This study was conducted by SDG Club Northeast, HRF in collaboration with GIZ to strengthen the evidence-based monitoring of SDGs in the context of the socially excluded vulnerable communities in the Northeast Region of India to uphold the SDGs central transformative agenda to 'leave no one behind' in this Decade of Action (2021-2030) so that every individual can live with dignity in a transformed world.

Five case studies were undertaken to highlight the development challenges of five different socially excluded vulnerable communities in Assam and Manipur by addressing their livelihood (SDG 1 & 2), health (SDG 3), climate impacts (SDG 13) and justice (SDG 16). Though all the SDGs are interrelated and interlinked, the study focuses on the mentioned areas as improvement in these areas will accelerate other areas of development. The socially excluded vulnerable communities are mostly poor and hence, access to their livelihood affects all other areas of their well-being. As most of them are dependent on natural resources for their livelihood, climate impacts hit them hard with the degradation of natural resources such as wetlands and forests. And most importantly, their access to justice underpins their participation in the development process. Hence, these areas of development were prioritized.

The focus of the study is to make SDGs relevant to the marginalized communities while localizing it. Our attempt is to bring out the community level disaggregated data to create visibility to their development challenges which national and state level data fail to capture as they are aggregated macro level data. Lack of data for the vulnerable communities is a big challenge to monitor implementation of targeted policies and programs meant to uplift them. Our efforts has been to bridge that gap through a participatory process of focused group discussions, key informant interviews and collection of data through community members to present their perspectives and perceptions of the development challenges faced by the communities. The objective of the study is to use the findings for policy engagement involving multiple stakeholders to make SDGs real for the socially excluded vulnerable communities.

We would like to acknowledge and express our gratitude to all the experts, our partner organizations and community members for their support and sharing their experiences and knowledge with us which contributed immensely to this study.

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Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the international community on 25th September 2015 envisage to 'leave no one behind'. In this respect, the fishing community of Loktak Lake in Bishnupur district of Manipur needs special mention as a socially excluded vulnerable community whose livelihood is under threat. They mostly belong to scheduled castes. How they sustain themselves and achieve development under SDGs by alleviating themselves out of poverty is a big challenge when efforts are on to alienate them from the resource which sustain them from different quarters, including both state and non-state agencies. They are dependent on the lake which is a Ramsar Site with its own significances and under threat from degradation due to various human interventions for which the fishing community has been squarely blamed and efforts to evict them from the lake by burning their thatched huts have been carried out by state agencies. Public Interest Litigation (PIL) have been filed contesting their right to live on the lake. There is conspicuous denial of their rights by delegitimizing them as illegal occupiers of the lake. Back in the 90s they were disenfranchised. Efforts to reclaim their voting rights are in progress.

Methodology

This study is based on both primary and secondary data and interviews with key community members including both men and women on their struggle for securing their livelihood. The primary data used for the study was contributed by ALLAFUM¹, the community based union of fishers of Champu Khangpok and their partner organization Indigenous Perspectives from their study.

SDGs Targets & Indicators Covered

SDG	TARGET	INDICATORS	
 <p>1 NO POVERTY</p>	<p>End poverty in all its forms everywhere.</p>	<p>By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.</p>	<p>Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, with legally recognized documentation and who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and by type of tenure</p>
 <p>2 ZERO HUNGER</p>	<p>End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.</p>	<p>By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.</p>	<p>Access to Public Distribution System (PDS)/Family ration card.</p>
 <p>3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</p>	<p>Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.</p>	<p>Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.</p>	<p>Access to CM Health Card.</p>
 <p>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p>	<p>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.</p>	<p>Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.</p>	<p>Ongoing legal processes</p>

¹ALLAFUM stands for All Loktak Lake Areas Fishermen Union of Manipur.



End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Champu Khangpok comprises some 175 floating huts with a population of 1500 according to Indigenous Perspectives, a local NGO which has been working very closely with the fishing community. They mostly belong to scheduled castes. Both the 1991 and 2011 censuses records include this floating village. However, they are facing an identity crisis based on their relationship with the floating biomasses or 'phumdis'. These phumdis deteriorate over a period of time and is not a permanent structure but the land rules of the State apply here. In addition, this community is not recorded as fishers in census records². No one from the community have secure tenure rights to land with legally recognized documentation. They are landless and totally dependent on the lake for their livelihood. Their only assets are their fishing equipments which are subject to wear and tear and require replacement annually.



Being a wetland, Loktak is an important source of protein in the diet of the local people by providing a rich variety of fish species. According to an estimate made in 1992, 60 percent of the fish available in the state came from Loktak³. However, the degradation of the lake due to various human activities affect the quality and quantity of its water which have a direct bearing on the quantity and quality of fish catch which affect the health of the people who depend on this importance source of protein. With extreme climate impacts more acutely felt in the region on food security, this importance source of food cannot be taken lightly as historically, the lake provided food during famines⁴. The lake is indispensable both as a source of water and food to the people, especially to those living in the lake areas.

However, the development projects on Loktak Lakesuch as the Ithai Barrage and Loktak Inland Waterways Project affect the livelihood of the fisher community and the natural ecosystem of the lake. The commissioning of the Ithai Barrage on Loktak in 1983 changed the ecology of the lake as the water level has to be maintained at 768 meters to feed the 3 turbines of the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation to run the 105 MW Loktak Hydroelectric Project. This led to submergence of 60,000 hectares of seasonal agricultural and fishing grounds and the subsequent proliferation of the huts on the phumdis. All this was done without any social or environmental impact assessment and no compensation has been paid to the community so far according to Indigenous Perspectives. The project compelled the local community to shift from land to water and from farming to fishing.

Loktak Development Authority (LDA) was constituted under 'The Manipur Loktak Lake (Protection) Act, 2006' to provide administration, control, protection, improvement and conservation of the natural environment of the lake⁵. However, in 2011 it set the huts on the phumdis on fire in the name of clearing the obstruction such as the phumdis and weeds. LDA again wants to repeat the same as the phumdis and the floating huts stand in the way of the motorized transport under the Loktak Inland Waterways Project. Civil society has been critical of it as being based on miscalculation and misleading the general public. In their critique of the project, Shripad Dharmadhikary and Ram Wangkheirakpam denounced the heavy machinery being employed in a Ramsar Site without the necessary Environmental and Social Impact Assessment threatening the lake and its unique ecosystem along with the community living on its water and their livelihood⁶. Destruction of the local ecosystem by 'dredging' without proper environment impact assessment has been decried by scientists. Moreover, the natural vegetation supports the fish and birds, especially the migratory birds which the project will destroy, thereby destroying the natural ecosystem of the lake in the process of creating tourism attraction to the lake. Hordes of birds flock here for food and nesting because of its favourable climate and rich supply of food during winter months and it is mainly in recognition of this favourable habitat for migratory birds coming from as far as Europe and Central Asia that Loktak Lake was recognized as a Ramsar Site⁷.

It is not uncommon for clashes between the local community and state conservation groups as the local community depend on the vegetation and reeds grown within the keibul Lamjao National Park. This is in violation of the goals under the Fourth Strategic Plan of Ramsar which emphasize community participation in conservation of wetlands of international importance such as the Loktak Lake⁸.

Thus, securing SDG 1 is a big challenge for this community as there is clash over access to their livelihood source as the interests of the community, state agencies and conservation groups compete and clash over the use of LoktakLake. Without a secure livelihood, achievement of all other SDGs can be undermined as the community continues to struggle in the web of multidimensional disadvantages of poverty.

²Indigenous Perspectives, Champu Khangpok Floating Village of Loktak-A water story.

³Ibid

⁴<https://www.ramsar.org/news/feature-article-the-fate-of-loktak-lake-india>

⁵www.loktaklake.org

⁶Shripad Dharmadhikary & Ram Wangkheirakpam. Loktak Inland Waterways Improvement Project- A critique

⁷Ibid

⁸www.ramsar.org. The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024.



End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

According to the Manipur Vision Document 2030,⁹ the vast networks of wetlands, lakes and rivers in the valley have been the main source of cheap fish supplies in the valley region to a predominantly fish eating population. According to official estimates, the total fish production in 2014-2015 was 30.5 thousand tonnes against a target of 32 thousand tonnes. The Vision Document clearly states that a sustainable fisheries policy must factor in the need for natural water bodies, crop production and ecological equilibrium. This is because fish farming in the state is at the expense of the paddy farm land and the drying up of wetlands and natural fisheries which are common property resources.

The fishing community of Champu Khangpok has no access to the Public Distribution System as they have no family ration card. They were disenfranchised in the 90s. The community received no support from the state for Covid-19 relief. Whatever came, it came from individuals and some organizations. With covid-19 lockdown, the community lost access to markets to sell their daily catch of fish. The usual place to sell their fish at Thanga, Moirang and Ningthoukhong or that of Imphal were closed with the pandemic. They lost access to markets to buy their essential commodities such as rice, cooking oil, salt, spices, firewood for cooking and smoking fish as people in the neighbouring areas did not want people from Loktak to enter their areas in the absence of clarity on the status of covid-19

The community appealed to the Inner Manipur MP Mr. R.K. Ranjan for help who sent 15 bags of rice (each family received 4 kgs), 4 bags of lentil, oil and salt. All Manipur Students' Union donated 4 bags of rice, 10 bags of potatoes, cooking oil and some vegetables. Another 4/5 organizations donated 30 bags of rice (each family received 12 kgs). The relief materials came from individuals and organizations. No help came from the government. This was in the month of August and September 2020.

When the community approached the District Administration for help under the PM Scheme like elsewhere in the state for covid-19 relief, they were told that there is no allotment for Champu Khangpok and they can claim from whichever constituency they are enlisted as voters. Champu Khangpok is listed in the census records since 1991. This amounts to denial of their rights to public services and social safety nets which must be strengthened during such crisis and not denied. According to the Secretary of ALLAFUM, the disenfranchisement of the community started in the 90s. They have approached the Election Commission of Manipur and now the process is ongoing with 308 persons from the community enlisted back in the electoral roll. As recent as November 2020, the Election Commission of India had given permission for a polling station in Champu Khangpok but this has not yet materialized.



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

According to a socio-economic study conducted by Indigenous Perspectives and ALLAFUM of 60 families of Champu Khangpok, the family size ranges from 3 to a maximum of 8 members. Only 4 out of these 60 families are not in debt which implies a high 93% of the families suffer from indebtedness. And the amount range from Rs.18,000.00 to Rs.5,00,000.00. Their main assets are the fishing equipments but 13 families do not own any fishing equipment. These equipments are modern but subject to wear and tear and have to be replaced on an annual basis. These equipments cost anything between Rs.40,000.00 and Rs.2,88,330.00. Almost each family suffer from backpain and eyes problem. This may be related to the profession of spending long hours fishing in the lake where the alertness of eyes and strenuous work of setting the fishing equipments are required. Thus, the health problems are closely related to their profession. No one from the community has access to the CM Hakshelgi Tengbang (CM Health Card) meant for the poor and needy bona fide citizens of Manipur which provide health cover upto Rs 2 lakhs per year to eligible families.

In emergency cases requiring medical attention during the initial months of covid-19, the journey for treatment of members of the community has been more of a journey of tears with request for safe passage from the neighbouring villages as inter-village roads are blocked. All the treatments are at private hospitals as public hospitals are packed with covid-19 treatment. For the poor community, this means no earning but double expenditure. They had to take expecting women for delivery to Imphal, and choose c-section and not normal delivery. Only 1 person can stay in hospital because of the pandemic which makes it all the more difficult. All regular health check-up are not possible for any of them.



Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.



The problems for the fishing community began with the passing of the Loktak Protection Act by the Manipur State Assembly in 2006 without any consultation with the community living around the lake. By 2008-2009, efforts to implement the Act began without any clarity or transparency as far as the community living on Loktak was concerned. Under the Act, the fisher community were no longer permitted to set athaphum, a fishing structure which are biomasses cut in circular shape. The official stand was that this structure was destroying the natural ecosystem of the lake, blocking the free movement of fish and natural current of the lake. In addition, huts on phumdis were no longer allowed and permission for fishing had to be obtained from the LDA. Though the Act had provision for making changes in case of objection from the community, it was kept a secret for 2-3 years.

The Project Director of Loktak Development Authority (LDA) released a notice on Nov 11, 2011 appealing to the community to take part in the verification process by 15 November 2011. Compensation would commence on 16 November onwards to those who agreed to remove their phumsang. Thereafter, eviction was supposed to start on 16 November but started on 15 November, one day ahead. The community stayed at the Ningthoukhong community hall from 14 to 17 November to meet the district administration to discuss the matter but the Authority approached from Sendra with watermaster and motor boats and set all the phumsangs on fire rampantly in the name of eviction. A total of 777 huts were set on fire. Till this day, not a single person from the landless fisher community took compensation from the state. Apparently many huts were built on phumdis prior to this event and the landless fisher community allege that this party sided with the LDA and took compensation.

The community appealed to the Gauhati High Court as they cannot survive without their livelihood. In particular, they sought to know what it meant when the LDA say a total of 777 huts were set on fire as there were 1147 huts on record. State claimed only 1100 were on record. So, now only 330 khangpoks are officially recognised. The Court passed an interim order on 25 Jan 2012, stating that LDA cannot set the remaining huts on fire. At the same time, the community cannot build any new khangpok. LDA tried 11 times to remove the remaining khangpok in spite of the order. Relief camp was set up for those who had nowhere to go upto April 2012.

Several submissions have been made through a PIL 24 of 2017 by ALLAFUM and Indigenous Perspectives at the High Court of Manipur regarding the lack of transparency and incompetency of the LDA in protecting and managing the Loktak lake¹⁰. It calls for the revamping or disbanding of the LDA on various grounds such as absence of multidisciplinary management, no data in public domain in spite of claiming to have a state of the art lake monitoring lab and failure to proactively monitor activities within the lake.

Of primary concerns are infrastructure projects such as the Loktak Ring Road, eco-tourism development projects such as the golf course, sea beach, integrated cable car for lakeside tourism and release of Rs 933.72 lakhs for development of tourist resort in Sendra. The Ring Road connecting Mayang Imphal to Toubul which used to be a footpath dissects 35 sq kms of Loktak from the main lake. The Ring Road Project could have serious ramifications for the streams and rivers which feed Loktak and the future of the lake.

The court submissions also calls for review of LPA which conform to neither the Ramsar Convention nor the National Wetlands Rules 2017. Last but not the least, for NHPC to be a respondent in the case as the party benefitting from the project at the cost of the environment and the local community.

The ongoing legal processes are important for delivering justice to the community who have been affected by a development project and where many are being planned for the future which will jeopardize the lake ecosystem and the livelihood of the fisher community. Thus, access to justice for all is all the more crucial for socially excluded vulnerable communities as they depend on fragile ecosystem over which there is clash among different interests groups in society.

¹⁰Indigenous Perspectives, Loktak submission to High Court of Manipur with regard to PIL No. 24 of 2017.

The following story highlights the pain and suffering of the community.



Kiranbala Khoirom is 48 years old and belongs to the fishing community of Champu Khangpok Village in Loktak Lake, the only floating village in the world which is also a Ramsar Site and home to the endangered brow-antlered deer called *Sangai* locally. The woes and uncertainties for her and her community began with the commissioning of the dam on Loktak Lake in 1983. The construction of the dam led to submergence of the surrounding paddy fields and land in the lake area with a direct impact on their homestead and livelihood. The rising water level made it difficult for them to cast their nets like before and they could no longer go for fishing like before. In addition, the popular local species of fish population in the lake such as *sareng*, *ngaton* and *pengba* dwindled as the river which brings fish from the neighbouring country of Myanmar is blocked by the dam, thereby affecting the spawning of fish in the lake. They could no longer depend on the

natural edible vegetation the lake provided, they disappeared with the rising water level of the dam. The dam altered the lake ecosystem.

According to Kiranbala, in 2011, the LDA set the many floating huts on fire in the name of cleaning the biomasses by declaring them illegal settlements by giving only 4-5 days notice. In the fire, many fishers lost their fishing equipments, books and school uniform of children and all their lives earnings and savings, creating a gloomy uncertain future for the community. Prior to this incident, they were lured with money for rearing pigs to diversify their source of income as a backward community.

Fearing for their lives and being rendered homeless, the community numbering around 1300 set on foot to find support, running from pillar to post and came to Imphal to protest but met with police repression. Without proper food, clothing and shelter for some time, they decided to return to Loktak and rebuild their lives again, building back their homes and lives. They attended meetings to voice their concerns but the State turned a blind eye to their woes and only met with further destruction of property. For the simple fisher community, it became a harsh reality of life without any knowledge to face the challenges before them.

In the process, the 3 children of Kiranbala lost a year of education like the rest of the children in the community. As the community did not want to compromise on the education of the children, the education of the children became a shared responsibility with older children sent to boarding schools while a new school was started for the young children by the community. From November 30 to February end every year, the community has been observing the lean season for fishing to enhance fish spawning in the lake for the last 3 years as a good practice while the rest of the state enjoy the harvesting season.

Building back better

Building back better would mean building a resilient economy which can withstand any future shock such as the covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic forced lockdown worldwide to prevent the spread of the virus. In the process, all the formal and informal economies had to shut down causing loss of jobs, livelihood and rendered many homeless. The lockdown affected food supply chains creating food insecurity amidst escalating prices. To prevent such events in the future, adhering to sustainable development goals is all the more important today, to strive for economic development which promote social equity and protection of biodiversity.

As a wetland of international importance, the development of Loktak must stand on these sustainable goals which are interrelated and interlinked with the Fourth Ramsar Strategic Plan. In this respect, the views of the community are included below. Some of the main reasons why the community want the abrogation of the Loktak Protection Act are:

- ✦ Conservation and management: The community fails to see any real action on conservation and management of the lake. If people truly want conservation of the lake, it is high time to remove Ithai barrage. The community lament the deforestation of catchment areas instead of developing the riverine forests to protect the ecosystem.
- ✦ Lack of transparency: Though the LDA has a laboratory, there is no data to show the changes in Loktak since Ithai barrage was commissioned. Before the barrage was built, Loktak and khuga river used to join seasonally which served to desilt the lake naturally. The community claimed that the heavy siltation of the lake has raised the bottom of the lake by at least 1 meter. Earlier the biomasses used to pick up the silt and clean the lake in the natural way during the dry season, now there are no natural cyclic processes to do that. In their opinion, NHPC is only concerned with maintenance of water level for generating power.
- ✦ Narrowing of the lake: The community claim that the biomasses are piled up in the middle of the lake though the project has allocation for transportation and dumping of the biomasses. In the process, the lake is getting narrow.
- ✦ Loktak Ring Road: A road from Toubul to Mayang Imphal has been created in the middle of the lake. The community wonder whether this amount to protection/management or destruction of the lake as the road is carved out of the lake.
- ✦ Loktak Inland Waterways Project: The honorable High Court has given orders to process the inland waterways and ecotourism projects after obtaining clearance from the designated ministry. However, 'wise use' of wetland as provided under Ramsar Convention is not included. So, instead of saving, the community fear that this project will destroy the lake.

To protect and save Loktak, restoring the health of the lake is very important for the community. The biodiversity of the lake must be conserved and maintained. To do this, the community suggested the following steps can be considered:

- ✦ Water treatment of rivers which drain into Loktak Lake: Almost all the rivers of Manipur drain into the lake after passing through polluted urban areas. One day waste from Nambul river is greater than whole year pollution by the community who have been blamed for the degradation of the lake. Though the community has appealed to Manipur State Pollution Control Board many times, it is still unheeded.
- ✦ Transfer the administration of the Lake to the Manipur State Wetland Authority: State Wetland Authority and the community can cooperate and survey under the Wetland Rules 2016 to save Loktak. And State Wetland Authority be headed by the Ministry of Environment.
- ✦ Address the identity crisis of the fisher community: As the phumdis are not permanent structures, their relationship to the phumdis are not the same as one has to land. So, new rules which are in compliance with the Ramsar Convention and The National Wetlands Rules need to be formulated in their context. In addition, to strengthen their access to public services and social welfare schemes which are crucial, especially in crisis times such as the present pandemic, their franchise rights must be restored. At present the community has no access to any government schemes or programs. And clarify their occupation which is listed as 'other' and not 'fisher' in census records.

DRUG USERS & PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV (PLHIV)

Introduction

Target 5 on Substance Abuse of Goal 3 on Health of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is vital for Manipur as the young productive population is adversely affected by substance abuse in the state and undermines the achievement of the SDGs. According to the consultation report of The 3.5 Collective on Drug Menace in Manipur¹, Manipur has recorded drug addiction in children as young as 12 year old. According to the report 'Magnitude of Substance Use in India 2019', 1% of children under 17 years of age in Manipur use one or other form of substance abuse out of curiosity, by accident or peer-pressure. Unfortunately, both the Voluntary National Review and the Manipur Vision Document do not mention such a grave issue for the future development of the state.


Initially, the menace of drugs in Manipur was more of being a transit in the route of the Golden Triangle but now, it is purposely brought in and locally manufactured in the state. 'Heroin' and pharmaceutical drugs were rapidly brought into the state in the 1980s. The 80s also saw the beginning of the poppy cultivation in the state. The barren hilltops in Manipur stand as testimonies to this lucrative trade with hilltops devoid of all natural vegetation which were abandoned after poppy cultivation as the same field can support only 3 seasons of this crop. What has not yet been assessed is the irreparable damage to the ecology.

Now, drugs are easily available in the state. It is just a phone call away! It is corroding society at its foundation by affecting the youth state-wide across all economic class, caste, religion and gender. Often, drug users are criminalized and ill-treated with impunity. At present, the state approach on drugs is to reduce demand, supply and harm. Under the aegis of The 3.5 Collective, an umbrella organization of 18 different NGOs.

Methodology

This study is based on two focus groups meetings- one with drug users over a range of years starting from the generation who started using drugs in the 1980s when drugs became easily available in Manipur upto recent users and two, with People Living with HIV (PLHIV) or those women who were transmitted HIV from their partners and continue to live with the stigma in society for the last two decades. This study is based in Imphal and the participants belong to the Meitei community. This is owing to the mobility and gathering restriction imposed by Covid-19 which restricted a wider participation. As people who are marginalized in society, the study aimed at understanding the underlying problems and challenges they face as drug users and PLHIV so that they are part of building back better of Sustainable Development Goals and are not left behind while creating a transformed world for all.

SDGs Targets & Indicators Covered

SDG	TARGET	INDICATORS
 <p>3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</p> <p>Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.</p>	Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.	Coverage of treatment intervention (pharmacological, psychosocial and rehabilitation and aftercare services) for substance abuse.
	By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases	Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population, by sex, age and key populations

¹The 3.5 Collective, Report of the Consultation on Drug Menace in Manipur, 2020.

²Ibid

The table below gives the current substance abuse in the State in comparison with the national level.

Name of Substance	Current Use (%) Manipur	Current Use (%) Manipur	Dependence (%) Manipur	Dependence (%) Manipur	Quantum of Work (%) Manipur	Quantum of Work (%) India
Cannabis	3.74	2.83	0.33	0.25	0.88	0.66
Opioids	14.22	2.06	1.80	0.26	4	0.70
Sedatives	7.73	1.08	0.77	0.11	1.43	0.20
Cocaine	-	0.10	-	0.02	-	0.03
Amphetamine Type Stimulants	4.86	0.18	0.46	0.02	1.76	0.06
Inhallants	2.11	0.70	0.23	0.08	0.62	0.21
Hallucinogens	0.22	0.12	0.02	0.01	0.06	0.03

Source: Magnitude of Substance Use in India 2019³

A cursory look at the data shows the extent of substance abuse in Manipur far exceeds that at the national level for all the categories of substances other than cocaine. Current use of Opioids, sedatives and amphetamine type stimulants are alarmingly high in the state. Use of inhallants is more prevalent among children than adults in Manipur and cause for concern according to the report 'Magnitude of Substance Use in India 2019'. Thus, the quantum of work required to treat the problem is definitely high for the State which far exceeds the national level. For example, while 0.70% of work is required at the national level for opioids, 4% of the work is required for Manipur.

Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.

Treatment at rehabilitation centres:



Treatment for substance abuse is mainly provided at the rehabilitation centres. The state lacks psychosocial support. No one tried drugs knowing the future consequences that one day they will become drug addicts and completely change their lives for the worst. The easy availability, peer-pressure, fashionable, pleasure seeking, escape route and to boost self-confidence were some of the main reasons why people started using drugs. Drugs affect mostly young people across all sections of the society. Initially, there was not much of a stigma attached to it and youth from both rich and poor family used it. However, the HIV epidemic in the 1990s affected the society adversely and henceforth became a stigma associated with drug users. Drug users suffer from multiple discrimination which cut across the family, society and the state.

In Manipur, every drug user is sent to rehabilitation centre. According to experts who have been working with drug users, early users who have been using drugs upto one year can be provided counselling and resolved with the support of family. The space for counselling of users is lacking in the state. Treatment

at rehabilitation centres are replete with violence, physical abuse and beatings. Users allege that even centres in Imphal keep inmates chained, staff beat inmates including elderly persons with the intention to hurt and maim. This amounts to torture and ill-treatment and gross violation of human rights. Usually, there is no doctor or male nurse to attend to any sickness and when anybody wish to go home for treatment, it is trivialized as an excuse to leave the centre.

According to the users, the quality of food served at centres is bad. Lentil is just boiled. If some generous persons donated snacks on special occasion then, no dinner is provided. There are less number of well-maintained centres in the state. In private centres, staff are promoted to counsellors without proper training. To prevent the abuse and provide more treatment, efforts to recognize the private centres are ongoing.

³Ambekar A, Agrawal A, Rao R, Mishra AK, Khandelwal SK, Chadda RK on behalf of the group of investigators for the National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Substance Use in India (2019). Magnitude of Substance Use in India. New Delhi: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India

Treatment by family:

Though with treatment on time, users can reintegrate into family and society and live with dignity, responsibilities are not entrusted and users suffer from public insult. There is total silence on physical abuses against them which amount to serious human rights violations. In some cases, drug users receive less entitlements of family inheritance as they are considered incapable of keeping them especially land as someone who will not survive for long. For a drug user, family support is most important during treatment and especially 2-3 months post-treatment stage as without support one can relapse easily. However, users suffer from lack of trust by family and society. Family do not want them to know about money. They are the usual suspects for all wrongs within the family or society at large.

There is a vicious cycle of targeting drug users to earn money in the name of helping them. Drugs users are arbitrarily picked up and dropped at rehabilitation centres without their consent. Victims allege police get money from the centres for doing so. Private centres charges Rs.7000.00 per month while state-run centres through NGO partners charge between Rs.1000 and Rs.3000.00 but Sneha, a state-run centre charges Rs.4500.00 per month.

Treatment by society:

Society is hostile to drug users and the respective family. It is not unusual for the society to show cold shoulder to the user and her/his family. The local community based clubs, a part of civil society which undertake various responsibilities for the development of the local area in the valley districts also serve as the local vigilante group and often catch and shame the individual and family instead of providing guidance and support to help. Incidents of drug users being beaten brutally and deprived of entering exam hall on time but subjected to harassment even by students' bodies is not unusual. This is in spite of clarification in local newspapers which the drug users have to comply with when caught otherwise face dire consequences as dictated by some civil society organizations which maybe students groups or others. As pointed out in the consultation on drugs menace in Manipur, community participation plays an important role in controlling drug abuse in society but without proper understanding and training can prove counter-productive.

Treatment by law enforcement agencies:

Often, drug users are looked upon as people with bad or loose character and justify ill-treatment including physical violence against them. How family and society treat and look upon them is institutionalized as law enforcement agencies are people from the same society with prejudices against them. It is not unusual for drug addicts to get slapped without any questioning by police. Police pick up and release them on payment of fines. There have been incidents of drug users being picked up by excise officials without informing the family. The clueless family searched even the morgue for the missing person. This amounts to arbitrary detention by law enforcement agency. When excise officials could not find drugs or injection marks on the body, victims allege they were forced to sign on blank papers. Usually mobiles and wallet are confiscated without any official record. Drug users claim that when they are with peddlers they are seldom caught by the police as the peddlers pay tax. They are caught once seen leaving the peddlers.

Treatment by educational institutions:

Drugs users also face a big challenge when they want to continue education after treatment. Often, they have to hide their history of using drugs and repeat classes losing 4-5 years of precious academic period in some far away school. They also face the humiliation of studying below their juniors in age. Users claim that there is no awareness program in schools as part of curriculum. Parents also lack awareness on the issue. There is widespread use of drugs in boarding schools through FMCG and school employees like campus gardeners. In some schools, students are named and shamed in school assembly and rusticated instead of providing guidance and counselling to correct it.

Thus, achieving SDG 3 for Manipur remains a big challenge. Unless the gaps are bridged in service provision and family, society, state and institutions work together, SDGs will be difficult to achieve for Manipur as the young population group remains highly vulnerable to substance abuse.

The following story of a recovered young woman underscores the long road to recovery which is possible with treatment and family support.



Babina Sanabam is in her early twenties and lives with her mother and two younger brothers in Keishampat area of Imphal in Manipur. She started using drugs very early, around 15-16 years of age before completing matriculation. It started with the daily fights between her parents when her father started seeing another woman. The fights became an embarrassing spectacle in the neighborhood and cause for insult. As her mother got married young, she was unable to pay full attention to her children while going through her personal crisis when her husband chose to stay with the second wife. Before turning to drugs to escape from her helplessness to intervene when her parents fought as a young girl, she attempted to take her life four times.

She started using drugs with her younger brother and his friends without knowing the consequences she had to bear in the future. Initial use took her to a new space where she felt life was better with drugs as it gave her confidence to speak up and her broken family bothered her less. From using only when feeling low, it became a daily habit. When

she stopped after a week of using drugs, the withdrawal symptoms kicked in, she had to bear the pain and body ache forcing her to go back to drugs. From once a day, the frequency and dosage increased and eventually she was unable to control her addiction as drugs started controlling her life. From demanding money to buy new clothes to selling her own clothes, stealing from home and lying became a habit.

Though her mother suspected use of weeds, she never thought of 'heroin'. Finally, she was caught red-handed after one and half years of use. As her mother had no idea of rehabilitation, resorted to beatings to correct her but she was unable to control her. Initially kept some dosage at home without her mother's knowledge and pretended to stay away from drugs. But the frequent loss of money from home and the smell gave away. The helpless mother would keep the washroom door ajar even while using it so that she could hear if the cupboard door was unlocked. Her brother was sent to a rehab centre while she was treated at home as entering a rehab centre for a girl is looked down by society and her mother tried to hide it. When she was unable to stop and in unbearable pain, her mother rushed to get her the drugs she was addicted to. Finally, she was sent to a rehabilitation centre after 4-5 years of using drugs. She stayed there for about 2 months.

After treatment, she gained confidence and wanted to go home. However, she relapsed after sometime. She went to rehab center for the first time in September 2017 and again in February 2018. The second time around, she woke up with breathing problem and felt death was better than staying alive that way as a girl and an addict. Made suicide attempts at the center too! When she came out this time, her mother contacted a local NGO called CONE (Community Network for Empowerment) which supported her and she started working as a volunteer with the NGO.

Initially, her family lacked trust and treated strictly. Her neighborhood neither approved nor accepted her. During a fight between one of her aunts and some male neighbors, when she intervened to defend her, she was abused and beaten up and forced to apologize which she refused. The neighbors came and vandalized her house door, windows and verandah. The fact that the aunt for whom she intervened to defend did not speak up for her because she used drugs hurt her the most till this day. With support from CONE and the fellowship program for recovering from drugs, she rose from a volunteer to a Project Staff with hard work and perseverance. After treatment, she continued with her education. She has cleared her 12th and continuing graduation as of now. Young people with history of drugs use face a lot of difficulties when they want to continue their education as the society look upon them with suspicion and consider a bad influence to other students. These days, she helps early users to kick the habit, provide counselling and reference to rehab centres. She also brings them to her workplace and today, three of them have recovered.

In her opinion, if space such as parks or avenues for sports is provided to the young generation for recreation without moral policing by society like using social media to share videos online to shame young people, it would help young people to seek happiness and entertainment without drugs. This lack of space in society today is part of the curtailment of freedom to live with security and safe space which the conflict situation in the region reinforces denying the young generation of an important space in their lives to develop and live free. For those who have recovered, if vocational training is provided, it would help them to earn their livelihood and live with dignity as most recovered addicts have not completed their education. Drugs are easily available in Manipur, it is just a call away. To dissuade young people from using drugs, a dedicated youth team of volunteers in every school and every locality to spread awareness is highly desirable.

'War on drugs'



The CM of Manipur launched the 'war on drugs' campaign to make Manipur a drug-free state. Users and civil society want clarity on the campaign as the destruction of poppy cultivation and targeting of drug users have mostly been portrayed by the media. An incident of parading and shaming of drug users using social media in total violation of their rights has shocked civil society. Unfortunately, even the Manipur Human Rights Commission trivialized the matter!

As shared by experts during the deliberation of the consultation on drugs menace in Manipur, drug users can be treated and reintegrated back into society and live normal productive lives. Criminalizing users will only prove counter-productive as cases elsewhere show, especially in the US where the 'war on drugs' started under President Nixon⁴ in 1971 declaring drug abuse as 'public enemy number one'. The aim of the campaign in the US is to end illegal drug trade by prohibiting illicit drugs, military aid and intervention. According to an estimate by Drug Policy Alliance, the US spends \$51 million on this campaign each year.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)⁵, drug arrests account for a quarter of the people incarcerated in the US. Most of them are poor people and people of color branded as criminals increasing their difficulty to get jobs, housing and stability as they are forever suppressed and repressed. In spite of spending billions each year, ACLU claims that drug use in the US has remained steady, thereby exposing the failure of the policy and its consequences on poor and marginalized communities in society.

The recent cases of targeting drug users during the covid-19 crisis in Manipur is sending shock waves to the community. In the name of helping them, they are picked up and kept in rehabilitation centres converted from broiler sheds which are totally unhygienic with flooring just concretized recently and still not yet fully dry. Donation drives for food and shelter follows in their name. Therefore, it is only the moral responsibility of the state to dispel any doubts on the 'war on drugs' as everyone wants to live with dignity in a drug-free state. Recently, Manipur is witnessing numerous protests by civil society against the release of suspected persons in drug cases. Unfortunately, society is polarizing on ethnic lines and pitting the valley against the hills which does not bode well for the state as drugs affect both the hills and the valley.



⁴<https://addictionresource.com/guides/war-on-drugs/>

⁵<https://www.aclu.org/issues/smart-justice/sentencing-reform/war-drugs>

Building back better

Sustainable Development Goals envisage to 'leave no one behind' in this Decade of Action (2021-2030). As the socially excluded communities are usually marginalized, this Decade of Action localizes SDGs to give visibility to their issues with their active participation. To build back better so that no one is left behind, the social safety nets must be strong and effective and development must be inclusive and participatory. Implementation of targeted schemes with adequate budget allocation is all the more important in rebuilding post covid-19. What is required to build back better is a resilient economy which engenders growth with equity while protecting the environment so that it can withstand any future shocks, be it any disease or disaster.

To stop further violation and ill-treatment of drug users as a socially excluded vulnerable community in society, users suggested the following steps be taken:

- ✦ Provide free legal aid services to drug users as they are often beaten brutally by society or law enforcement agencies in violation of their human rights to be treated with dignity. It is important to break the culture of silence surrounding the ill-treatment of users and decriminalize them for reintegration into society after treatment. Users do not have a grievance cell to make formal complaints against any violation of their human rights and would like an ombudsman to be appointed who could be a retired judge or retired police officer to take on their case. In a recent case, the son was picked up by police but the father was not allowed to meet his son but could only communicate on phone face to face.
- ✦ Drug Users need financial support to reintegrate into society with treatment. Programs implemented in the 90s by bilateral agencies for recovery which are discontinued are highly demanded today.
- ✦ Most drug users do not complete their education and by the time they recover and reintegrate back into society, they are late to complete their education and get employment. To enable them to earn a livelihood and live with dignity, users want vocational training to be provided after rehabilitation.
- ✦ Provide trained counsellors to avoid violence against users in educational institutions and society.
- ✦ Though drugs was an issue for electoral campaign in the 1980s and affect officer level to rickshaw puller, it is still an individual issue. The issue must be addressed with utmost urgency.
Loktak Inland Waterways Project: The honorable High Court has given orders to process the inland waterways and ecotourism projects after obtaining clearance from the designated ministry. However, 'wise use' of wetland as provided

By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases.

90-90-90⁶ is an ambitious target to end the AIDS epidemic agreed upon by the international community in response to treatment of AIDS beyond 2015. Target 90-90-90 set out to achieve the following 3 ambitious targets by 2020: 90% of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status; 90% of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy; 90% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression.

Manipur adopted the State Policy on HIV/AIDS in 1996 and is the only state in India with clear cut and bold policy based on harm reduction⁷. However, there is a wide gap in the estimated number of people living with HIV and the coverage of treatment as per the estimate of the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO)⁸. According to NACO, as of March 2020, the estimated number of people living with AIDS in the State is 28,564. Out of this, a total of 14,887 which account for 52% have tested and know their status. Of this, a total of 13,216 or 89% are currently under Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART) and 8,939 (93%) are virally suppressed. As only 52% of the people living with HIV have tested and know their status, almost half or a high 48% have not tested and do not know their status. This is a big cause for concern as a public health issue as the disease is spreading to women and children.

Treatment by health professionals:

During covid-19, treatment at JNIMS, a state-run hospital in Imphal is crowded and not conducive for testing and without tests, no medication is provided for PLHIV. The 'green' card that PLHIV are issued is handled very insensitively, made more of a public spectacle rather than guarding the privacy of the patients, handled by a pair of tongs at JNIMS as alleged by the community members. In addition, there is no privacy for ART patients as PG students sit-in to hear the case story.

Discrimination by nurses and head-workers using strong words against PLHIV patients is routine. Patients refuse to go and collect medicines as counsellors insult and say strong words. Patients allege that often, they wait in long queue outside while inside the office trading of cloths takes place causing inconvenience to them.

The closure of OPD at RIMS for covid-19 treatment created difficulties for ART patients to get treatment. They have to depend on private clinics which cost them between Rs.3000 and Rs.4000 per treatment. If there is no money, they are unable to treat. According to this peer circle, 11 ART patients died during covid-19.

⁶UNAIDS, 90-90-90 an ambitious treatment target to help end the AIDS epidemic, 2014.

⁷<https://manipursacs.nic.in/index.html>

⁸National AIDS Control Organization (2020). Sankalak: Status of National AIDS Response (Second edition, 2020).

Treatment by family:

Denial of inheritance rights after the demise of the husband is a common feature. In some cases, there is no land demarcation for her. She has been denied land rights, access to piped water connection or electric connection and has to depend on others. Even married daughter had to go through divorce as mother is positive in one case. The social stigma is stronger in remote areas. After the death of the husband, often, the widow is left alone with young children, totally excluded from the rest of family and without support. Cutting electric connection day after death of husband, shops refusing to entertain them, nobody wanting to touch even the money they gave is how the family and society treat them. In one case, wherever she went, people would splash water after her footsteps so as to wash away any virus she might have left behind. In another case, where the widow fought for her inheritance rights to her husband share, she received less than what her husband was entitled to. Blaming the wife for the death of the husband and intimidating her to grab the property is common. The saddest part for most of them is when their own family desert and humiliate them and do not offer any help but harass them.

Treatment by society:

It is not unusual for society to punish the innocent women by isolating them and denying access to resources and services which they require. Because husband was HIV positive, one family had no access to the local pond. The local shopkeepers did not allow the children to buy from them. The husband family denied them access to the common road and gate. In another case, son was harassed when he wanted to get married. Today, he is a drug addict. This is a vicious cycle perpetuated in society to push back marginalized people from making progress in life and creating socially excluded communities.

All the women had no access to entertainment. PLHIV widows prefer going to funerals where they can cry their hearts out. Most of them do not attend weddings to avoid the insidious glances and whispers directed at them and humiliation at social occasions. In some family, children are asked to be kept indoors when expecting guests at home. In one case of an ART patient, an aspiring medical student had to drop out of the study as the institution demanded test result.

Access to social safety nets:

State sponsored schemes, PLHIV say, are dependent on connection and money and beyond their reach. In one case, the widow is still denied the benefit of die in harness provision. Usually, the papers of PLHIV are kept separately in government offices and not prioritized. Even in cases where as a widow one access the benefit, family grab it and utilize them as they are helpless. Where some women tried to access NREGA, they were mocked at as belonging to the VIP class and not required to work. They are not interested in such opportunity for public humiliation of them.

When they go for housing loans, they are made to wait and usually denied. Even when some manage to pass the hurdle and come to collect materials such as tin-sheets, they allege that government office try to extort money from them. According to them, widow pension selection is biased and based on connection and beyond their reach. Nobody wants to go to any office as a PLHIV as it is a sad experience. It amounts to begging!

Role of NGOs:

It is such difficulties which force them to stand up and be resilient. In some cases, their family blame their exposure to the outside world as making them sharp mouthed and no longer docile as expected under a patriarchal system. As a state in low intensity armed conflict, violence in the state perpetuates a repressive society which affects women and children more as they form the weaker sections of the society.

In this journey, they express their sincere gratitude to organizations such as CONE and World Vision for treating them and broadening their perspective which empowered them to help others like themselves in society today. Most of them received treatment and medication through CONE, KRIPA and World Vision.

Building back better

To build back better, development must be inclusive and accountable, especially under the Sustainable Development Framework to which States are implementing partners so that this Decade of Action 'leave no one behind'. To achieve this goal, access to public services must be promoted to secure the social safety nets for socially excluded vulnerable community such as the PLHIV. Some suggestions to build back better from the community are as follows:

- ❖ Redressal mechanism for PLHIV. There is no decline in discrimination against PLHIV. There is no complaint mechanism for action in health institutions and PLHIV want a redressal mechanism for them at the earliest so that they can receive treatment with dignity.
- ❖ ART follow-up used to be paid Rs.150.00 which is now discontinued. PLHIV patients have prioritized their children but now realize that health is important for them and want continuation of travelling allowance for collection of medicines. And be provided food supplements as the strong medication affect stomach.
- ❖ Psycho-social support for children of vertical transmission as some are at the threshold of marriageable age.
- ❖ Legal aid for inheritance rights of their children.
- ❖ Prioritization of widows in government schemes and programs.

Introduction

The international community adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on 25 September 2015. There are 17 SDG Goals with 169 targets to achieve for the global community to transform the world so that every person lives with dignity by 2030. The Sustainable Development Framework stand on the 3 pillars of development- a development model which fosters economic growth and reduces social inequity while protecting the environment. To promote development, peace must prevail but peace can prevail only when there is justice in society. Thus, the delivery of justice is most important in society to usher in development. To do this, institutions must be inclusive, effective and accountable. That is why Goal 16 is most important to achieve SDGs and more so for States in armed conflict such as Manipur which has witnessed serious human rights violations since the 70s. The protracted Non-International Armed Conflict¹ in the state is between the state and the non-state armed opposition groups demanding self-determinism and secession from the Indian Union.




Historically, Manipur was coerced to join the Indian Union in 1949. The Centre has responded to the demand for secession and self-determinism by non-state armed opposition groups with high deployment of security forces, thereby militarizing the region and imposition of draconian legislation known as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), 1958. AFSPA gives sweeping powers to the security forces in 'disturbed areas' to maintain order including derogation of the right to life guaranteed by the Indian Constitution to its citizens as under its provisions a security personal can shoot to kill on mere suspicion, make arrests and search houses without prior permission. However, the law gives immunity to security forces from prosecution.

In this backdrop, rampant violation of human rights by state agencies such as the Army, central security forces and state police or combined have taken place to suppress the armed conflict targeting men with suspected links to various non-state armed opposition groups. The spike in cases of extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions by Indian army, central security forces and state police have been painstakingly documented by civil society organizations to demand justice from the state as many innocent lives and families continue to pay the collateral damage of the armed conflict in the state, in most cases without any fair trial.

Methodology

This study is based on both primary and secondary data. The socio-economic status of 50 widows of victims of extrajudicial execution over the period 1979 to 2018 are used as the primary data for the study to understand the impact of the loss of family breadwinner in extrajudicial execution and the challenges which they continue to face in their fight for justice in the context of achieving SDGs by 2030. There are close to 400 such widows documented so far out of which 50 have been chosen depending on the availability of more comprehensive data. The study focuses on the relevance of SDG 1, SDG 2 and SDG 16 for the community so that they are part of the agenda to 'leave no one behind' in this Decade of Action. The primary data was collected by Extrajudicial Execution Victim Families Association

SDGs Targets & Indicators Covered

	SDG	TARGET	INDICATORS
 <p>1 NO POVERTY</p>	<p>End poverty in all its forms everywhere.</p>	<p>By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day</p>	<p>Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)</p> <p>Percentage of households living in kutcha houses (rural +urban)</p>
		<p>By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance</p>	
 <p>2 ZERO HUNGER</p>	<p>End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.</p>	<p>By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations including infants, to safe nutritious and sufficient food all year round.</p>	<p>Access to Public Distribution System.</p>
 <p>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p>	<p>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.</p>	<p>Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.</p>	<p>Uncensored detainees as a proportion of overall prison population.</p>

¹Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights in Manipur and the UN, Manipur: A Memorandum on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions. 2012.



End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.

According to Census 2011, the average size of the family is 5 in Manipur². Monthly income for a family of 5 living on less than \$1.25 per person per day is Rs. 13,687.00 ($1.25 \times 73 \times 5 \times 30 = 13,687.00$ calculated at the current exchange rate of \$1=Rs.73.00). Majority of the widows, that is, 60 percent earn between Rs.4000.00 and Rs.10,000.00 per month which is 'poor' according to the poverty line adopted by SDG. 18 percent earn between 10,000.00 and Rs.20,000.00 and 4 percent earn between Rs.20,000.00 and Rs.70,000.00. 72 percent spend between Rs.4000.00 and Rs.10,000.00 per month. Indebtedness is one problem which they face. Only 25 percent of the widows spend above Rs.10,000.00.

The young widows come from all the districts of Manipur and cut across all religion, castes and class which demonstrate the endemic nature of extrajudicial execution in the state and the impact of violence on women. They live with the trauma of the incident unable to develop with the loss of the family breadwinner. The loss also translates into loss of income and hardships. At present, 52 percent of the respondents are in the age group of 30-40 years. 32 percent are middle-aged (41-50 years) while the remaining 8 percent are in the age group 50-70 years. Thus, the majority of the widows are young and heading the respective family.

According to the report 'Progress of the World's Women 2019-2020' by UNWomen, 4.5% of all households in India are headed by lone-mother. There are 13 million such lone-mother headed households in India with another 32 million living in extended households. The poverty rate for lone-mother households is 38% in comparison with 22.6% dual-parent households. Thus, lone-mother households live in poverty which is worse than dual-parent households.

Majority of the widows have completed their 12th Standard. 40 percent of the widows are under matriculation including 12 percent illiterates. 60 percent are above matriculation including graduates. Most of them are self-employed in weaving, tailoring, running small businesses selling grocery, fruits, clothing, fish, artificial jewellery, baking and poultry. Some work as street vendors, masons, agricultural labour, domestic helpers and guard. A few of them are primary school teachers, nurses and state employees or pensioners.

Only 48 percent of the respondents have Job Card provided under MGNREGA. 4 percent have access to old-age pension and 20 percent have health card. Only 6 percent have access to widow pension. A mere 2 percent got Ujjwala gas connection which is a central scheme to provide clean energy for cooking at subsidized rate to women who belong to the BPL category. Access to government schemes is very low and negligible for the widows. Thus, social protection and safety nets are not accessible for them and this gap must be bridged to alleviate them out of poverty.

By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.

Majority of the respondents, that is, 82 percent live in kutcha houses. The national target is 0 percent to be achieved by 2030⁴. Only 2 percent have access to housing scheme. Though majority of the houses are kutcha, 94 percent own the house. 58 percent have land for kitchen gardening while 42 percent have no land for kitchen gardening. Out of the total, 78 percent do not have agricultural land and have to depend on other sources for the staple food rice. Only 22 percent have paddy fields as assets ensuring some level of access to rice grains.

Thus, majority of the widows of victims of extrajudicial executions are poor, indebted and live in kutcha houses. Majority have studied only till 12th Standard. They are mostly engaged in small scale businesses and low paid jobs. Under the 'Leave no one behind' agenda, states are accountable for the development of the marginalized vulnerable communities and the gaps in the case of these widows make them vulnerable to poverty which undermine the development of their family as they are mostly head of single-parent households.

²<https://www.itnext.in/article/2015/09/30/census-2011-india-average-household-size>

³<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/un-report-13-million-households-in-india-where-lone-mothers-live-alone-with-children/articleshow/69949845.cms>

⁴NITI Aayog 2019. SDG India Index & Dashboard 2019-20



End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations including infants, to safe nutritious and sufficient food all year round.

The condition of the widows of victims of extrajudicial executions is shared by Ms. Neena Ningombam⁵, a former Secretary of EEVFAM as follows, “EEVFAM is an organization of widows and mothers of those killed by police and security forces. We are discriminated as young widows and also as families of the “terrorists”. We cannot access the basic schemes for widows namely widow pension given by the Social Welfare Dept. because they had not attain the age of 40 years. We cannot access the ex-gratia given by the State Government because our husbands are killed in “encounters”. We also cannot access the children’s education support under the National Foundation for Communal Harmony given by the District Commissioner because they were meant only for children killed by “non-state actors”.

Thus, they face multiple discrimination and disadvantages which push them back from accessing social protection and safety nets. The scars run deep for the surviving families as they are labelled as ‘families of terrorists’. 76 percent households have family ration card and access to PDS while 24 percent have no ration card. 22 percent have Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and 54 percent have Priority Ration Card which are given to BPL category or the poorest among the poor. Goods available are 5 to 70 kgs of rice, 1-2 litres of kerosene and 1kg of sugar. 24 percent faced discrimination in accessing PDS. They get less than what they are entitled to such as deducting 1kg of rice for each member of the family or given only 10kg of rice instead of 35 kg or 12 kg out of 15 kg. In one case, the respondent received only 5 kg based on the number of voter from the family. Thus, they are not given what they deserve as entitlements from the state and the practice of cheating them continues as they are helpless.

As mentioned in the previous section on poverty, most of them earn between Rs.4000.00 and Rs.10,000.00 and are ‘poor’ as per SDG. Thus, poverty and hunger go together and they are trapped in the vicious cycle. Government schemes and programs are not accessible for them and where they are accessible, they get less than what they are entitled to do. Thus, these gaps must be bridged by improving public services delivery and enhancing their access to targeted government schemes and programs on poverty alleviation and hunger.



Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.



This case study focuses on the relevance of this goal for the widows of victims of extrajudicial executions in Manipur who have taken the legal recourse to demand justice for the extra judicial execution of their near and dear ones. They have approached the highest court of justice in the country. A case of 1528 cases of victims of extrajudicial executions in Manipur is before the Supreme Court of India through a PIL filed by EEVFAM and Human Rights Alert (HRA), a human rights organization based in Manipur. These extrajudicial execution took place in Manipur between 1979 and 2012, including 98 children and 31 women.

Historical and Political Context: Manipur has been in armed conflict since the late 1970s. The conflict is between the state and non-state armed opposition groups demanding self-determinism. Historically, Manipur was an independent kingdom which came under the British rule following the defeat at the 1891 Anglo-Manipuri War. After the British left in 1947, Manipur moved towards democracy. However,

Manipur was coerced to sign the Merger Agreement with the Indian Union in 1949. The illegal and unconstitutional merger and general resistance against the Centre precipitated an armed conflict since the late 1970s.

⁵<https://countercurrents.org/ningombam300912.htm>

The Government of India responded by promulgating the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in 1958. AFSPA is in force in Manipur since 1980 except in the Imphal valley areas which was removed after the unprecedented protests by the public over the case of a 32 year old woman who was brutally killed in Imphal by the paramilitary. AFSPA gives sweeping powers to the security forces to maintain law and order in 'disturbed areas'. According to the AFSPA, in areas declared to be "disturbed", even a non-commissioned officer of the armed forces have powers to "fire upon or otherwise use force, even leading to death, of any person who is acting in contravention of any law" or is in possession of deadly weapons, or against an "assembly of five or more persons"; arrest without warrant and with the use of "necessary" force anyone who has committed certain offence(s); enter and search any premise(s) in order to make such arrests.

It is under these provisions of the Act that men, women and children have been tortured, raped and killed in suspicious circumstances. AFSPA provide immunity to the armed forces as no legal action can be taken against them unless sanctioned by the Union Government. Historically, this Act was used to suppress the Quit India Movement as insurgency by the British. According to the Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights in Manipur and the UN, 'The Act has created a culture of impunity and in extreme cases, gave security forces a carte blanche to commit rape, torture and carry out custodial killings'.

The 'war on terror' launched by The United States post 11 September 2001 added another dimension to the conflict in the region. As all activities which threaten the nation-states' sovereignty and integrity are termed as acts of terrorism, this global context gave a new meaning to the assertion for self-determinism or the struggles of indigenous peoples in the region. Assertion for self-determinism or struggles of indigenous peoples are now met with violent responses from the state and its agencies.



Fight for Justice and Peace: In 2013, Santosh Hegde Commission was set up by Supreme Court to probe 6 sample cases of extrajudicial executions. The Commission found the 7 deaths in these cases to be of fake encounters. None of them had criminal record. This was followed by another judgement by the Supreme Court to provide documentation for all the 1528 cases. Between July 2016 and February 2017, EEVFAM set up a centre in Cheirap Court to document the cases. They documented over 700 cases through district coordinators and with the support of NGOs. Some families did not want to be part of the PIL and many others had incorrect details. Law students from Manipur, JINDAL University, HRA and EEVFAM led the documentation.

Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) team of 5 members SIT has been appointed to investigate 39 cases of extrajudicial executions out of these 1528 cases. These 39 cases were taken up by NHRC, Judicial Inquiry and Commission of Inquiry. EEVFAM is concerned that all the cases involving the Indian Army are getting closure report. Concerned families are filing petition for further investigation. As the process tend to be repetitive and long drawn, it is becoming more difficult to recount the incident for witnesses.

EEVFAM is concerned that all the cases involving the Indian Army are getting closure report. Concerned families are filing petition for further investigation. As the process tend to be repetitive and long drawn, it is becoming more difficult to recount the incident for witnesses.

Though trial of over 80 Manipur Police Commandos have started with the permission of the Government of Manipur. The army and paramilitary are protected by the Centre and they cannot be prosecuted without sanction from the Centre under AFSPA. The argument from the Centre is that the Army and security forces are protecting the country from insurgency and giving sanction to prosecute them would demoralize the forces. Not a single personnel from the Armed Forces has been indicted so far.

EEVFAM lament the slow process of the justice delivery system. Those who are survived by wife and children can still pursue the case but for the many unmarried men, their mothers are facing old age related issues and can no longer participate, some have expired waiting for justice. In spite of the hurdles over the years, EEVFAM is marching ahead to set a precedent that no police or central security forces can violate 'right to life' guaranteed by the constitution of the country and get away with it.

From the cases of 50 widows, majority of the victims were in the age group 20-30 years when they were killed in the alleged encounters. 46 percent were in this age group 20-30 years. 36 percent fall in the next age group 31-40. That is, a high 82 percent of the victims fall in the age group 20-40 years leaving behind young families to fend for themselves. All of them died in suspicious circumstances which were termed as encounters. Request to withdraw the case in return for job and other gifts were offered to some widows. Only few families pursued justice through the courts of law, majority of the family faced difficulty in seeking legal assistance. Most of them do not have the means to pay for legal aid and free legal aid services in the state started recently.

Uncensored detainees as a proportion of overall prison population.

EEVFAM lament the slow process of the justice delivery in the state. There is no fair trial in the state even in cases where there are evidences and witnesses. The compromises made by offering government jobs and compensation to withdraw the case till date has diluted the delivery of justice in the state as there have been no conviction and sentencing so far. As the cases are long drawn, witnesses fail to recount the details with clarity as human recall period is short. Thus, important facts of the cases are lost due to the inordinate delay in the justice delivery system thereby weakening the case for prosecution.

According to the India Justice Report 2019⁶, the capacity of the formal justice system in Manipur need improvement in all areas of the justice system. The areas considered in the report are police, prisons, judiciary and legal aid. In the Police department, 1 out of every 4 officers position remained vacant. Between 2014 and 2017, the vacancy at the constable level nearly doubled from 28% to 54%. The number of women officers reduced though the overall women representation in the force increased. The reservation for ST/OBC in the police department are not met. Though there is 31% reservation for the ST, only 3/5 of the seats are filled. For the OBC, there is 17% reservation but only 1/5 is met. However, the number of SC exceeds its reserved seats. In prisons, 1 out of every 2 officers position remained vacant.

In the judiciary, 1 out of every 3 judge posts remained vacant. There are no women judges in the High Court. The report suggest the state to spend more on legal aid. There are 9 District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) in Manipur and half of the DLSA have no full-time secretary. None of the 5 jails in Manipur have legal services clinic. Manipur is one of the 10 states which does not have a permanent Lok Adalat and thus, no regular Lok Adalats are held in the state for amicable settlements of disputes.

The number of under-trial population (UTPs) is increasing in the state. It has increased from 73% in 2009 to 84% in 2016, that is an increase of 11% over the 7 year period. This is a worrying trend according to the report. Many languish in jails without any trial. It takes 5.8 years for a case to be settled in the subordinate courts of Manipur.

Thus, vacancies in key positions in the police, prisons, judiciary and legal aid in the state is a big challenge in delivering justice on time. Justice delayed is justice denied! In addition, the spending on legal aid remained low. As a state party to the SDGs, it is paramount that Manipur bridges these gaps to deliver justice to all in a time bound manner.

Building back better

The protracted armed conflict has perpetuated a vicious cycle of violence in society. Its impacts are felt most negatively on women and children as the experiences of the families of victims of extrajudicial executions show as the trauma continues to cripple lives and undermine their development and well-being in the absence of timely justice and support.

The death of their husband has traumatized all of these widows till today and affected their livelihood with the loss of the family breadwinner. Majority of them live in poverty and indebtedness. Most of them do not have the financial security to pursue justice. Children are deprived of their father and the prospect of a secure and happy childhood. Often, their education is compromised. The trauma has affected the family mentally, physically and financially.

The young widows are seeking justice and have approached the highest court of justice in the country through EEVFAM and HRA. As the only parent, these women face a lot of hardships in life. To build back a peaceful and inclusive society, they suggest the following steps be taken to provide access to justice for all:

- ✚ Repeal the AFSPA as the alleged torture, ill-treatment and extrajudicial execution are taking place under its provisions.
- ✚ To convict and punish the murderers and guarantee non-repetition of extrajudicial execution in the state. They are fighting for justice so that 'right to life' is respected by all and to serve as a reminder that no one is above the rule of law so that there is no misuse and abuse of power. They are fighting for justice for exemplary punishment so that in future no state actor can kill and get away with impunity, to bring about a change in the system and spread legal awareness so that we live together in society as law abiding citizens.
- ✚ Their quest for justice is to create a peaceful society so that every individual in the state can live without fear and move towards conflict resolution.
- ✚ As precious life is lost forever, they want compensation for the loss, livelihood support and suitable job as the loss of the family breadwinner has pushed them into poverty and hardships in life.
- ✚ Support for children's education. In many cases, education of children is compromised due to lack of money.

⁶https://www.tatatrusters.org/Upload/Content_Files/Manipur_oct%201.pdf

Rani's story from despair to one of hope and justice



Rani is a member of EEVFAM fighting for justice for her husband and the countless others who lost their lives in alleged fake encounters with police or central security forces and the army. She was only 24 years old and an expecting mother with a young child. Around 7am on 4th July 2008, Rani's husband left the house on a two-wheeler. Within an hour, one of his neighbors informed the family that he had been picked up by police and taken in a police gypsy while a policeman rode his vehicle. For the next 2 hours the family tried their best to secure his release. Then came the shocking news that he had been killed. Police alleged he was a member of a proscribed outfit and threw hand grenade at them near the airport which is some distance from his neighborhood, from where he was picked up. Eyewitness and police accounts differed.

Rani fainted on hearing the news. The neighborhood refused to accept the official version and staged sit-in-protest and took his death body after 3 days to perform his last rites after their demands were agreed upon. She says police also came to investigate the case and she extended her full support. As she is not well educated and young at the time, she was not involved in any formal talks and have no idea about the demands made as she was not informed. Someone in the family accepted government employment as part of the compromise. She declined the meagre amount she was offered to support her and her children.

These were the early formative years for EEVFAM. She participated in the observance of the foundation day twice and has continued to be associated and be a part of the organization. When a young widow started stepping out of her house, members from her own family mocked her as useless efforts and mostly likely to get remarried. However, she continues to stand by her two sons and her sole objective in life today is to bring up her boys independently besides fighting for justice. Now, people have stopped mocking her, are appreciative of her courage and extend support.

She restarted life with two young children penniless. She received no legal support to pursue her husband case. Her association with EEVFAM broadened her knowledge on rights. Weekly meeting served as support group and her suicidal thoughts changed to one of hope and the desire to be self-sufficient and take care of her family. All that she wants today is for atleast 1 or 2 cases to set the precedent that no state actor can kill any innocent person for whatever reason and get away with impunity under AFSPA or state protection. If anybody has committed a crime, let the person stand trial in a court of law and punish him if found guilty. He may have family waiting for him to return to after serving his term. Taking precious life amounts to punishing the entire family.

Renu's journey from a simple homemaker to one of leadership

It was on Good Friday in 2007 that Renu's husband went pillion riding with two friends to buy a film roll for the camera from the market close to her place. Shortly after her husband left, she heard gunshots closeby and her phone started ringing continuously asking about her husband's whereabouts. Finally, an elderly neighbor came and told her that her husband and his friends were taken to hospital after a scuffle. She was still unaware of the true incident. His parents who were in church were informed about the incident. It was like a nightmare for her and she could not accept it as true. She was 27 years old at that time with an 11 month old infant.



According to eyewitnesses and the people in the neighborhood, her husband and his friends were stopped for frisking but they did not stop fearing harassment. They were chased and fired at killing the one sitting behind which toppled the vehicle and all of them fell on the ground. They were surrounded and tortured for about 10 minutes and killed according to the people in her neighborhood who hid around and saw the incident. But police alleged they threw hand grenades at them. In this case too, the official account differed from those who saw it. Bandh was declared and the main road leading to her place was blocked.

Since 2009 she started participating in meetings organized to address fake encounters and violation of human rights. When EEVFAM formally started in 2009, she was elected for the role of president which she continues to hold till today. The organization started without money and meetings were held secretly as some families forbade the widows from participating. Their turning point was the fake encounter of a reformed member of a banned outfit and a pregnant woman in the heart of the capital city on 23 July 2009. With this incident Manipur became the focus of many fact finding missions, journalists and human rights defenders. Within this context, EEVFAM grew in activism with the exposure and the crisis in the state. In 2012, Renu presented the case of extrajudicial executions (in Manipur) in Geneva calling on the international community to address the violation of human rights in the state.

Fortunately, she has no family issues and people in her neighborhood witnessed what happened to her husband. Today, people appreciate her for the leadership role she has taken in the fight for justice. She feels that the justice delivery in Manipur is weak. Even when families have hired good lawyers, till now no perpetrator is in jail even in strong cases. Often, Joint Action Committee and family concerned agree to the offer from the state and the case is not pursued further for justice. As state actors are involved, the protection given to them is a challenge for delivery of justice. There is no fair trial. However, how we viewed police and security forces have changed with the cases. With the cases pending in courts, the police and security forces now know that they cannot kill under AFSPA and get away with impunity.

CASE 4

TANGKHUL NAGA TRIBE OF KACHAI VILLAGE

Introduction

Under the Sustainable Development Framework, it is the responsibility of states as implementing agencies to 'leave no one behind' in this Decade of Action (2021-2030). The focus is on those who were already marginalized by development such as the socially excluded vulnerable communities. The community of Tangkhul Nagatribe of Kachai is one such community as a tribal community and also as the last mile people living in the extreme west of Ukhrul district far from the reach of the state administration in Manipur. There are 510 households with a population of 2107 in Kachai village¹.

Though the community in Kachai depend on cultivation of paddy, vegetables and rearing pigs, the lemon plantation is gaining popularity and becoming the biggest cash crop for the community. Kachai lemon is special as it is registered as a Geographical Indication (GI) tagged product which accord high value to indigenous product of exceptional quality. It contains 45-51mg/100ml ascorbic acid which is considered the highest among citrus fruits (51% compared to 20% to 30% in other lemon varieties) and the juice content per fruit is 36-56 ml per fruit².

As a GI tagged product and an important source of additional income to the community, the development of lemon plantation is being promoted in the village and spreading to neighboring villages and districts as well. However, Kachai is experiencing a warmer climate. The quality and quantity of lemon produced in the last 2-3 years is declining. This study focuses on presenting the development challenges faced by the community in achieving SDGs by addressing the gaps in access to social protection and safety nets and the role of lemon plantation in augmenting their income to alleviate them out of poverty in a changing climate which plays an important role in the production of lemon.

Methodology






This study is based on a one-day field trip to Kachai Village. FGDs were conducted with the Village Authority and ASHA workers separately. A questionnaire was developed for the purpose, mainly to understand the development challenges faced by the community with specific focus on poverty, hunger, climate change, peace and justice and the impact of covid-19. 10 families were approached randomly to understand and present their perception of development challenges faced by the community followed by interviews of lemon growers in the village. People from Kachai and Kachai Theikkor participated in the discussions. Around 70 persons shared their perspectives and the findings present the perception on poverty, hunger, climate change and peace and justice as experienced by the community. However, the sample maybe too small to present the true picture of the village and may require further research.

¹<https://ukhrul.nic.in/tourist-place/kachai-village/>

²<https://momamanipur.com/kachai-lemon/>

SDGs Targets & Indicators Covered

SDG	TARGET	INDICATORS	
 <p>1 NO POVERTY</p>	<p>End poverty in all its forms everywhere.</p>	<p>By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day</p>	<p>Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)</p>
 <p>2 ZERO HUNGER</p>	<p>End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.</p>	<p>By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round</p>	<p>Access to PDS</p>
 <p>13 CLIMATE ACTION</p>	<p>Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.</p>	<p>Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries</p>	<p>Number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies</p>
 <p>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p>	<p>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.</p>	<p>Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.</p>	<p>Access to legal aid</p>



End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.

Most of the families spend on average between Rs.2000.00 and Rs.10,000.00 per month. Food and education of children are the main expenditure. As per the poverty line adopted by SDG, people living below the \$1.25 per person per day are counted as poor. Such a family earns less than Rs.13,688.00 per month in the context of Manipur ($1.25 \times 73 \times 5 \times 30 = 13,688.00$ calculated at current exchange rate of one US dollar equaled to Rs.73.00 multiplied by the size of family given as 5 for Manipur by Census 2011³ which is further multiplied by 30 days of the month). As expenditure commensurate with the level of income, it can be inferred that all the respondents are poor as they spend below Rs. 13,688.00.

Lemon plantation is the biggest source of income in Kachai. Every house in Kachai has 30-40 lemon trees. Kachai Fruit Farming & Co-operative Society was started to promote and protect lemon plantation in Kachai through the Annual Lemon festival. State recognition and prizes serve as encouragement to the local growers. In the last 2/3 years, Kachai has been given due recognition by the state for its lemon plantation. The demand for seedling/sapling/pickles has created a market for the plant through the society. For protection and promotion of the lemon plantation, the Society was granted a vehicle by the state and a market shade has been built.

³<https://www.itnext.in/article/2015/09/30/census-2011-india-average-household-size>

It is under the leadership of the Society that each household grows 30-40 lemon trees in the backyard and reaping the benefit as an additional source of income. The Society with 375 members is growing 5000 lemon trees in Kachai Shimpungrim. At present 200 to 300 trees bear fruits. Now there are more lemon trees but only the big farms which grow at least 1000 trees get monetary benefits from the state. Big growers who grow 1000-2000 trees earn about Rs 3-4 lakhs in a year. While small growers with 50-60 trees earn about Rs.10-16 thousand. There are only 10-15 big farms which grow 1000-2000 trees.

The community benefit from the Lemon Festival as they get employment opportunity in lemon farms and get daily wages. Their own production of lemon also gets sold. Otherwise, they sell their produce in Imphal. There is no local market to sell their produce. There is no route for selling it outside the state as of now. Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) come around lemon festival which is celebrated in January every year to impart training on enhancing the yield and how to deal with insects and pests.



End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

According to the Village Authority, 51 families have AAY (Antyodaya Anna Yojana) or the Yellow Card, mostly families of widows and widowers. People feel that many among those who deserve it have been left out. There are 380 households in Kachai out of which 351 households are PDS card holders. Some families have applied for ration card but not yet received it. As per Census 2011, there are 510 households in Kachai according to the number of registered MGNREGS card holders. The higher number is attributed to more than 1 family member who hold MGNREGS card and double counting of it.

According to NitiAayog 2019⁴, 36.89 percent of population live below the national poverty line in Manipur. Only around 120 people from Kachai are employed in various departments of the state and private sector. Very few earn between Rs.60-70 thousand per month. Majority are cultivators who earn less than Rs.2000.00 per month but only 51 families or 13.42% of the households live below the poverty line according to the PDS card issued to people in the village.

Rice and chana are distributed monthly. 5 kgs of rice per person at Rs.5/kg is distributed. As per the Act, the above mentioned AAY category are entitled to 35kgs rice per month at Rs.3.00 per kg. They are charged more to cover the charge of transportation from Imphal to Kachai by the local distributors. People complained of cheating and getting less than what they are entitled to. This amounts to denial of their right to food.

The access to PDS is all the more important for Kachai especially in the context of climate impacts on paddy cultivation in the last 3 years. Paddy is mainly grown for consumption and for 3 consecutive years from 2018 to 2020 the paddy fields were flooded by heavy rains as the rivers overflowed into the fields and destroyed 50% of standing crops. Some families reported only 20-30 % production and depended on neighbors and relatives. They received no support from the state. Thus, the gap in public delivery system and climate impacts are major areas for the village to overcome to realize SDG 2 by 2030.

⁴NitiAayog 2019, SDG India Index & Dashboard 2019-20.



Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.



Kachai has been experiencing heavy rains over the last 3 years. The streams overflowed and destroyed standing crops in 2018 due to heavy rains. It also caused landslides and sand deposit on the charcoal and firewood collection. 30/40 people worked together to remove the charcoal and firewood. In 2019, agricultural fields were affected due to rise in river water level. In November 2020 again, heavy rains flooded the paddy fields. 50% of the crops were destroyed. For 3 years, the village has been experiencing heavy rains, flooding of paddy fields and destruction of standing crops. The villagers applied for flood relief but their grievances have not been addressed. They say both the state administration and the local MLA are just interested in the pictures of the devastation. They do not come to help them. The local structure for response has been using available bamboos, wood and mud to block the overflow of rivers to the paddy fields which does not work as the strong current carry them away. Over these years, in times of such crisis, people coped by collecting gooseberries and production of more handicrafts which they sell at the markets in Imphal.

On the other hand, the village is facing water scarcity, especially during the rice cultivation season which starts in May-June and continued till August. They attribute it to the vagaries of the monsoon. They do not have access to any scheme of the government other than training on lemon farming. The community has decided to go organic and use organic pesticides. Root infestation and leaf curl are the diseases prevalent in the crops grown here. Insects, pests and weeds are the main challenges faced by the community. Every year the grasses and weeds have to be cleared around the tree 2/3 times for the lemon plantation which is labour intensive. Though they get training on use of pesticides, it is not available in Kachai or in Ukhrul. According to some women, insects and pests are very resistant and difficult to kill.

Locals say the climate of Kachai is warmer than what it used to be. According to the people here, it used to be 24/25° Celsius in summer 15 years ago but now it is 31/32° Celsius. Kachai used to be foggy from November to January which is favorable for the lemon plantation but nowadays fog remains for a shorter time, over 1 and half months only. The lemon trees now bear less fruit with less juice content in the last 2-3 years. As Kachai is warmer now, lemon trees are dying due to lack of water. Lemon trees require a lot of water and can bear fruits throughout the year with adequate water. KVK/MOMA⁵ conduct the acid test for kachai lemon every year and it remains the same. But locals say the sourness has decreased and the pulp is dry and less juicy. Other than the local lemon, vegetables now grow faster and perish quicker. In the months of May-June-July, lemon trees are usually attacked by stem borers and it is a labour intensive task to remove them.



According to a research paper by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)⁶ on climate resilient agriculture in Manipur, "The temperature is projected to rise by over 1.7°C by the end of the 21st century. The southern districts are expected to experience higher temperature than that of the northern districts. Total annual precipitation is expected to increase throughout the state. As evident from the last 30 years' climate data analysis, precipitation rate in the northern parts is expected to increase by ≥19%. The northern districts like Tamenglong and Senapati are expected to receive ≥21% precipitation as compared to the southern districts (≥5%). It is also projected that the extreme rainfall events (100mm/day) will become more frequent. Crop yields are projected to decrease by 10% in 2030". Thus, the climate projection is true of Kachai and it is vulnerable to climate impacts.

Therefore, SDG 13 on Climate Action is crucial for Kachai. For 3 consecutive years, heavy rains destroyed standing crops and is a challenge to local food security. State support for averting disaster is lacking and the local response is ineffective. The warmer and drier climate of Kachai on the other hand, is adversely affecting the lemon plantation as trees are dying.

⁵KVK stands for Krishi Vigyan Kendra, MOMA stands for Manipur Organic Mission Agency

⁶S.S.Roy, M.A.Ansari, S.k.Sharma, B.Sailo, Ch.Basudha Devi, I.M.Singh, A. Das, D. Chakraborty, A.Arunachalam, N.Prakash, S.V.Ngachan, Climate resilient agriculture in Manipur: status & strategies for sustainable development. Indian Council of Agricultural Research. 2015

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328412988_Climate_Resilient_Agriculture_in_ManipurStatus_and_Strategies_for_Sustainable_Development



Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

In the early nineties, there were 2 incidents in the village related to armed conflict. In 1992, a villager was killed and in 1993, 4 paramilitary troops were killed. There is no legal support available for the village. They depend on the Tangkhul Union or Tangkhul Naga Long for support. According to the India Justice Report 2019⁷, there are 9 District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) in Manipur and half of the DLSA have no full-time secretary. The spending on legal aid remained low in the state. Thus, there is a gap in providing access to justice which is a stumbling block in realizing SDG 16 for the community.

Impact of Covid-19

During the covid-19 crisis, serious patients could not be treated as movement of patients to Ukhrul was hampered and neither doctors nor medicines were available for treatment. The village arranged for a quarantine centre for 106 returnees which cost them around Rs.5 lakhs, donated by the villagers and Village Authority. No help came from the Government. Anticipating scarcity of food, villages cultivated unused paddy fields. Business was largely affected. Though school fees were taken no online classes are conducted. As schools closed, there is no meal supply for children. They received supplies through PDS but it was irregular. They received rice and chana once a month. Village Authority handle the distribution directly.

Building back better

For the last 3 years Kachai has been experiencing heavy rains which flood the paddy fields and destroy standing crops. The community use bamboos, wood and mud to block the flow of water from the rivers but these local measures cannot withstand the strong current. The district administration and the local MLA have failed to address their grievances. The community suggest sandbags be provided to the village until a lasting solution in the form of a permanent structure to stop the rivers overflowing into the paddy fields is built. So far, they have not received any disaster relief from the state but most families are affected as the yield for some families have been just 20% to 30% and have to depend on neighbors and relatives.

The lemon trees are dying as Kachai is experiencing a warmer and drier climate. Lemon requires a lot of water to give fruits throughout the year. The thick fog from November to December which is favorable for lemon is getting shorter and the trees are not receiving adequate water. To meet this challenge, community members have suggested provision of drip irrigation to the plantation by the state which will cover both the marginal and big growers.

The village also suffer from water scarcity and people are forced to fetch water at night from the local sources. The state provided piped water source is not working as the pipes have burst in many places and overflows on the ground. These pipes must be changed at the earliest to ensure adequate water supply for household uses and other purposes.

An important and related area with the lemon plantation is the availability of pollinators. To support the plantation, the community need a good population of pollinators and would like the state to provide beehive boxes to all the growers.

⁷https://www.tatatrusts.org/Upload/Content_Files/Manipur_oct%201.pdf

Introduction

The global community adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on 25 September 2015 to transform the world by focusing on people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships. Assam is the first state in the country to adopt the SDG framework for development in India¹. Under the SDGs, it is the responsibility of the State to 'leave no one behind' in this Decade of Action to accelerate development and transform the world so that each individual can live with dignity. States are accountable for the development of the marginalized or the socially excluded vulnerable communities in society. However, such communities often lack research and information on them due to discrimination which cut across class, caste, religion, sex, age etc. to name just a few. Lack of such data render specific program targeting such communities difficult to implement and monitor. This study attempts to understand the underlying challenges facing the muslim minorities in the Barak Valley of Assam which is one of the most neglected regions in the State. The 3 districts which fall under the Barak Valley have the lowest HDI rankings in the state with Cachar ranked 24th, Karimganj ranked 25th and Hailakandi ranked 27 out of 27 districts according to the Assam HDR 2014², which indicate their deprivation of basic amenities and lack of development.

Methodology

This case study is based on a one-day consultative workshop of vulnerable communities held at district level, followed by focus group discussions carried out in 7 localities/villages in the Barak Valley³. The workshop attempted to generate information on deprivation and vulnerabilities of communities, who follow Islam as their religion, in Barak Valley of Assam. There has been no or limited information on deprivation and vulnerabilities of the communities following Islam in Barak valley in public domain. The meeting and FGDs carried out sought to discuss on deprivation and vulnerability vis-a-vis SDGs 1, 2, 3 and 16 on poverty, hunger, health and peace and justice respectively. The focus group discussion was carried out in 7 localities/villages - Singerband V Muslim Basti, Algapur village, Raypur and Chikorpatty Slum Ward 1 in Cachar district, Bairagi Chak Part I and Baleswar Part I in Karimganj and Bakrihawar VI in Hailakandi district. The FGD was conducted based on a questionnaire developed for the purpose. The FGD were facilitated by community workers. Community workers mobilized and involved village leaders during the discussion.







Limitations of the methodology: Though training was given to community workers to conduct FGD, most of them are not well trained on research and documentation. So, there are limitations in gathering details of poverty status through an FGD. We made best effort to represent the community through 7 location/villages, but we understand the sample is too small to represent the community. However, the data collected indicate approximate idea of poverty situation of the localities/villages/communities. To deepen our understanding on issues of the community, there is requirement of empirical research.

¹Assam Agenda 2030. Strategies and actions for achieving Sustainable Development Goals. Centre for Sustainable Development Goals. Assam Administrative Staff College, 2018.

²Assam HDR 2014. Government of Assam

³The Barak valley mainly consists of three administrative districts of Assam- namely Cachar, Karimganj, and Hailakandi.

SDGs Targets & Indicators Covered

SDG	TARGET	INDICATORS	
 <p>1 NO POVERTY</p>	<p>End poverty in all its forms everywhere.</p>	<p>By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day</p>	<p>Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)</p>
	<p>By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance</p>	<p>Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services.</p>	
 <p>2 ZERO HUNGER</p>	<p>End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.</p>	<p>By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round</p>	<p>Access to PDS</p>
 <p>3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</p>	<p>Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.</p>	<p>Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all</p>	<p>Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all</p>
 <p>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p>	<p>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.</p>	<p>Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development</p>	<p>Indicators</p> <p>Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law</p>



End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.

The poorest in the rural areas of the Barak Valley include tenant farmers, agricultural labourers, wage labourers, fisher folks (locally known as Mahimal or Maimal), shitalpati mat weavers (locally known as patikar community) and tea garden labourers. In the urban areas, informal labourers like construction workers, daily wage labourers, domestic workers, rickshaw pullers, thela pullers form the poorest section of the referred community. Also included among the poorest in the community are persons with ill health and those abandoned by children who are aged, widows or divorcees. There are class division based on occupation within the community. For example, fisherman and shitalpati mat weavers among the Muslim community. The percentages of households living in poverty depend on the class within the community and their access to and control over resources.

Based on data collected from the 7 localities/villages in the Barak Valley, representing population of different class, approximately 55.64% HHs earn less than Rs. 13,413 per month ($1.25 \times 73 \times 4.9 \times 30 = 13,413$ calculated at current dollar exchange rate of Rs.73 multiplied by the size of the family for 30 days⁴) and are poor according to SDG. According to NITI Aayog 2019⁵, percentage of people living below national poverty line in Assam is 27. Thus, proportion of people in the community living below the poverty line is much higher than the state average of Assam. The 'Report on Economy of Assam' sponsored by the Government of Assam to assess the impact of covid-19 has predicted that nearly half of Assam will be pushed into poverty if the 8% unemployment rate in the state increases by more than two-fold by the pandemic.

In the case of tenant farmers and agricultural labourers, landlessness is one of the major reasons for being poor. Even marginal land holding does not make one richer in current context as they do not earn enough to remain above poverty situation.

District level landlessness in Assam

District	No homestead land	No cultivable land	No irrigated land
Cachar	1.5	63.8	92.6
Hailakandi	0.8	58.0	76.7
Karimganj	0.6	63.2	93.3
State level	0.8	48.5	89.5

Source: Assam HDR 2014

The table above depict the level of landlessness in the 3 districts of Barak valley. As per the Assam HDR 2014, the percentages of households with no cultivable land were 63.8% in Cachar, 58% in Hailakandi and 63.2% in Karimganj. The percentages of household with no cultivable land in the three districts is higher than state average of 48.5%. The data collected through the FGDs conducted in the 7 localities/villages show that 72.46% of households have no cultivable land.

Agricultural labourers have no specific sources of income. Except in paddy cultivation and harvest season, agricultural labourers on an average, get 15 days of work in a month. They have to depend on seasonal work, which they do not get on regular basis as there are limited sources of income. In the case of fisherman, shitalpati mat weaver and tea garden labourer, they have limited access to and no control over the resources, like the river and other water bodies, forests, on which their livelihoods are dependent.

Fisherman is one of hardest hit communities in this era of privatisation/license regime of water bodies and fishing restrictions under different state laws. Government allows only individuals/collectives from fisherman community to participate in tendering of water bodies for fishing. But, in most cases, fisherman from the Maimal community cannot participate as they cannot afford it. In their name, rich individuals (non-fisherman/private farm) bid the tenders. Fishermen work under the persons/private farm as labourers. Thus, they have lost their access to and control over the water bodies which is the source of their livelihood.

Shitalpati mat weavers are also facing major challenges to survive in their traditional occupation from competition and degradation of natural resources. They are facing tough competitions with mats made of different materials like plastics. Though there is demand for Shitalpati mat, middleman take maximum share of the profits. Due to depletion of wetlands and forests, their access to raw material - *murta* plant has reduced and it has affected their income.



A couple from Fisherman (Maimal) community in front of their kutch house, BairagiChawk village, Karimganj



A lady from shitalpati mat weavers community, Boleswar Part I village, Karimganj

⁴<https://www.itnext.in/article/2015/09/30/census-2011-india-average-household-size>

⁵Niti Aayog 2019.SDG India Index and Dashboard 2019-20

⁶<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/covid-crisis-may-push-half-of-assam-population-into-poverty-says-study/articleshow/76153386.cms>

In the case of tea garden labourers, casualisation of labourers in the tea garden has deepened poverty in the community. It has not only reduced their days of engagement and annual income but also denied them of social security benefits under the Plantation Labour Act.

A good number of informal labourers in urban areas live in poverty situation. As mentioned earlier, informal labour include construction workers, street vendors, daily wage labourers, domestic workers, and rickshaw, thela pullers. Their job and income are uncertain and many household earn less than Rs. Rs. 13,413 per month. Muslim women domestic workers face social exclusion/discrimination as other communities do not want to engage them in their household. They face multiple discrimination as women and as muslim. Though Government has formulated Welfare Boards and Schemes for construction workers, the informal workers have not been able to access the benefits, except few.

A majority of widows, divorcees, persons with ill health are among the poorest. There is an increasing trend of abandoning aged, widows and divorcees by children. They are most vulnerable in the society. These categories cannot survive on Government's minimal support under Old Age Pension, Widow Pension and National Family Benefit Schemes. Many aged and widows could not apply for pension and National Family Benefit Schemes due to lack of awareness.

By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance

Approximately 24.29% HHs lives in kutcha houses in the 7 localities. According to Niti Aayog 2019, percentage of households living in kutcha houses (urban+rural) in Assam is 2.40. Thus, the disaggregated local data shows a much higher number when compared with the state level data. The number of kutcha HHs in the selected localities in the 3 districts is 10 times the state average.

The table below shows the Status of Housing in Assam in the 3 districts of Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj.

District	Rural		
	Kutcha	Semi-kutcha	Pucca
Cachar	44.9	35.8	19.3
Hailakandi	65.5	20.6	14
Karimganj	31.5	37.2	31.4
State level	48.1	35.3	16.6

Source: Assam HDR 2014

Deprivation in Basic Amenities district-wise (Rural)

District	Rural HH without electricity	Rural HH without toilet	Rural HH without drinking water
Cachar	47.4	82.0	55.6
Hailakandi	79.1	83.6	55.6
Karimganj	43.3	79.4	39.8
State level	36.2	77.3	14.2

Source: Assam HDR 2014

Thus, in the rural areas of the 3 districts of Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj, HHs without basic amenities such as electricity, toilet and drinking water is much higher than the state average according to the Assam HDR 2014.



Photograph depicting condition of a shelter of a household from fisherman community, BairagiChawk Part I, Karimganj



Photograph depicting condition of shelters of shitalpati mat weavers community, Boleswar Part VI village, Karimganj





Many of the shelters in the 7 localities of the study area are in dilapidated condition. Some of them are makeshift houses, roofed by polythene sheets and walled by bamboo mat. Many are yet to be beneficiaries of Prime Minister Awas Yojana (PMAY). Community members allege malpractices in selection of beneficiaries and corruption during implementation of housing programme. Taking advantage of people's lack of awareness on the programme, middlemen take bribe in the name of allotting PMAY houses.

Indebtedness among the poor is increasing as agricultural labourers, tenant farmers, daily wage labourers have increased their borrowing to meet their financial needs for health care, social functions, child care etc. They borrow from both institutional and non-institutional sources. Due to COVID-19 poverty among the vulnerable communities has deepened as lockdown reduced work opportunities and work environment got disrupted due to fear psychosis.



End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

The data collected from 7 localities/villages in the Barak Valley depict the following:

-  **Approximately 4.22% HHs do not have NFSA/PDS Card.**
-  **Approximately 4.31% HHs (poorest among the 55.64% poor households) skip meals**
-  **Approximately 36.81% HHs have land for farming and majority of them are marginal farmers**
-  **Approximately 14.36% HHs have enough paddy production for family consumption**

The poorest HHs in the community includes HHs with aged, widows, divorcees, persons with major illness, physically differently abled persons. Some of them do not have children or they are abandoned by their children. Due to extreme poverty situation, such households have to skip meal. Approximately 4.22% HHs does not have NFSA/PDS Card for various reasons. Divorcees, who returned to parental home have problem including in the NFSA Card of her parents' or brother's family. After separation of families among brothers, there are delays in issuing NFSA/Ration Cards. Many of them are not aware of the procedures. Community members find the process of applying for NFSA card cumbersome and corrupt. Middleman takes advantage of the situation.

A majority of 72.46% of the households do not own land for farming. Even among land holders, majority of them are marginal farmer. Only around 14.36% HHs have enough stock of paddy for family consumption. Since majority of the farmers are marginal farmers, farm sector has not been mechanised. Farmers continue to depend on rain water for farming. Floods and river bank erosion are major challenges of Barak Valley. It has impacted not only on agricultural development but many households have been pushed to poverty. Government provides occasional support like seeds, fertilisers, KCC loan etc. But in most cases the supports were given untimely. Though in recent years, Government has come up with different agricultural development project like the Assam Project on Agribusiness for Rural Transformation (APART), many of the farmers are not aware of it. Even though they may be informed, accessing the benefits under the programme still remains a challenge. In all the 7 villages, villagers informed that farming is not profitable due to high input cost and less return from farming.



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Though people can access Public Health Services, it is least preferred. Only the poorest, with no means to opt for private health care goes to Public Health Services. Treatment is free in Public Health Services but the tests are done in private laboratories and most of the medicine has to be purchased. In the wake of high price of medicine and laboratory test charges, out of pocket expenditure has increased. Hence, HHs with major ailments are either indebted due to expenditure on health care or cannot afford it. Though some families have Government Health Cards, Insurance schemes, very few could avail the benefits of the schemes due to ignorance.



Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

As part of implementation of Assam Accord, Government of Assam, under the supervision of the Supreme Court of India, updated the National Register of Citizenship of Assam. It has created fear among Bengali (both Hindu and Muslim) in Barak valley. A situation, where there are chances of a Bengali person being declared non-citizen of the country due to lack of documentary evidence of her/his ancestors having been living in the state/country as per the prescribed norms for an individual to get enlisted in the updated list of NRC⁷, made people of the community so terrified that there are few who committed suicide. Barak Human Rights Protection Committee has prepared a report of suicide of Mr. Hanif Khan. The report mentions, "Mr. Hanif Khan, young man of about 37 years of age, committed suicide hours after first part of the draft of National Register of Citizens (NRC), which is in the process of being updated in Assam was published at midnight on 31 December 2017. The draft did not have his name as he feared. He was terrified that he had lost his citizenship and as a result he would be sent to jail and would be subjected to torture and other cruel and inhuman treatment. All the local vernacular media as well as a section of the national media reported the incident. There is an atmosphere of fear and terror"⁸.

Enactment and implementation of Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 have induced division of communities on the line of faiths of communities in the Barak Valley. Participants of the consultative workshop feel that judicial systems/institutions have failed, in some cases, to deliver justice and thus, a challenge to secure SDG 16 as the development framework can be effective only when supported by the institutions.

Building back better

To build back better, development must be inclusive and 'leave no one behind'. This would require intensive targeting of the poorest in the community for their socio-economic development. While the current Government programmes targets poor, most of the poorest are still left out in the process. For example, the tenant farmers and agricultural labourers do not have access to programmes of the Department of Agriculture. Further, Government's plan to promote contract/corporate farming by introducing the three Farm Acts- Farmer's Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, and Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 will have severe impact on rural economy and will induce poverty. In addition, Government should meet required Agricultural Assets and infrastructures to increase productivity and income of the farmers. Marginal and tenant farmers cannot purchase Agricultural Assets, like the power tiller, distributed at subsidised rate under Government schemes, due to conditions attached. For example, many tenant and marginal farmers cannot afford owner's contribution.

Reduced access and control over natural resources by the fisherman, the *Maimal* and craftsman like *shitalpati* mat weavers pushed them to poverty. Different laws will be required to ensure their access and control over natural resources, related to their livelihoods and protection of their livelihoods.

As covid-19 forced lockdown and created fear, uncertainty and loss of employment or livelihood of many, the worst affected are the socially excluded communities who had to stay hungry without adequate food, affecting their general well-being and capacity to develop. Future economy must be resilient and have the capacity to absorb any shock, be it disease or any crisis which can reverse development.

Access to services, social protection and safety nets of the vulnerable communities are most important today than ever before from safe housing, food security, health insurance to employment. To address this, institutions must be inclusive, effective and accountable and deliver justice to all to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. In true spirit of Goal 16, the allocation and mobilisation of scarce resources in a situation where most resources have been diverted for Covid-19 treatment must include the socially excluded vulnerable communities while prioritising different sectors.

Another pressing issue of depletion of resources such as water bodies and forests from human interventions and climate change must be addressed with utmost urgency as vulnerable communities depend on them for their livelihood. The degradation and clash over access and control of these resources push back the vulnerable communities into further backwardness. Thus, economic prosperity must go together with people and planet in partnership in a peaceful manner for achieving sustainable development.

⁷Norms for an individual to get enlisted in the updated NRC

-Persons whose names appear in the NRC, 1951

-Persons whose names appear in any of the Electoral Rolls up to 24 March (midnight), 1971.

-Descendants of the above persons.

-Persons who came to Assam on or after 1 January 1966 but before 25 March 1971 and registered themselves in accordance with the rules made by the Central Government with the Foreigners Registration Regional Officer (FRRO) and who have not been declared as illegal migrants or foreigners by the competent authority.

-People who are original inhabitants of Assam and their children and descendants who are citizens of India provided their citizenship is ascertained beyond a reasonable doubt by the registering authority.

-'D' voters can apply for inclusion of their names in the updated NRC. However, their names will be finally included only when the appropriate Foreigner Tribunal declares them as non-foreigners.

-Persons who can provide any one of the documents issued up to midnight of 24 March 1971 as mentioned in the list of documents admissible for citizenship.

-All Indian Citizens including their children and descendants who have moved to Assam post 24 March 1971 would be eligible for inclusion in the updated NRC on adducing satisfactory proof of residence in any part of the country (outside Assam) as on 24 March 1971.

-All members of the Tea Tribes shall be covered under 'Original inhabitants of Assam' category provided for under Clause 3(3) of the Schedule of The Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.

-All such original inhabitants shall be included on the basis of proof to the satisfaction of the Registering Authority. On the establishment of the citizenship of such persons beyond a reasonable doubt, their names shall be in the updated NRC.

⁸<https://bhrpc.wordpress.com/2018/01/15/assam-nrc-process-drives-citizens-to-death-case-of-hanif-khan/>

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