ABSTRACT

Wars and conflicts, whether internal or international, remain pervasive phenomena affecting mostly low-income countries. Demographic factors, such as differential population dynamics by ethnic or religious group, or the number of young persons in a population, often play a role in the causes of conflict. The demographic consequences of war and violence include forced migration-refugees and internally displaced populations (IDPs), increased mortality and changes in fertility and family structure.

The ethnic violence in Bodo areas of Assam following their demand for a separate state has certainly changed the world for many. The consequences of this clash have been many and varied for different people. Needless to say that the women are the worst victims of the conflict as they have to face a completely new world on the wake of displacement, family breakdown, loss of kith and kin and loss of support base—both economic and social.

The present research aims at evaluating the impact of the ethnic violence on the women in this context. However, it may be noted that the impact must have been greater on those women who are on the receiving end of the conflict. It is the Santhal women who have been more displaced than their counterparts among the immigrant Muslims or the Bodos. It was proposed in this research therefore to consider the impact of the conflict only on the Santhal women while recognizing the fact that the impact of the violent conflict on the women belonging to other ethnic groups and similarly affected by the conflict could not have been anything far too different.

It is also a known fact that any ethnic conflict results in a serious imbalance in the demographic profile of the community. The ethnic conflict in the Bodo dominated areas has changed the demographic scene on an unprecedented scale. There has been large-scale
displacement and redistribution of people resulting in changes in the growth rate of population and changes in age and sex-ratio, changes in occupation due to loss of land and due to migration to relief camps and other areas. All these demographic changes have an impact on affected women who may experience a host of problems ranging from increased reproductive burden, loss of family support, widowhood and sexual harassment to increasing proportion of women headed families and employment etc. It was proposed in this research to evaluate these aspects as far as the affected Santhal women are concerned.

For the purpose of the present study the areas where Santhals constitute a significant proportion of the population of Assam has been selected as the study area. Since the Santhals living in Kokrajhar district have been the worst hit due to the clash between the Bodos and the Santhals, the study focussed only on this area. Kokrajhar is one of the few districts in Assam that has been experiencing constant rise in the share of scheduled tribe population in its total. The reasons are a mix of high natural growth rate in the scheduled tribe population as well as migration of Bodo tribes into this district in the wake of a demand for separate Bodoland state during the last few decades. Kokrajhar may be described as the gateway to the north-eastern region of India. The district has a total area of 3,169.22 sq. km. and a total population of 9,30,404 according to the 2001 Census. The district is located on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra that slices the state of Assam into two, identified as north and south banks. The district is bounded on the north by the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, by Dhubri district on the south, Bongaigaon district on the east and the Indian state of West Bengal on the west.

The Santhals are largely concentrated in Kokrajhar district. Elsewhere they account for an insignificant proportion of their total population. The district Kokrajhar was originally
a part of undivided Goalpara district. The undivided Goalpara district had a highest share of Santhal population in Assam. According to 1971 and 1991 census the total Santhal population in Goalpara was 55703 and 97086 respectively. On July 1, 1983 the Kokrajhar Sub-division was upgraded into Kokrajhar district with its Headquarter at Kokrajhar town. Bulk of the Santhali population is concentrated in the district of Kokrajhar, their number being as high as 81725 persons within Assam accounting for over 60 per cent of the total Santhal speakers enumerated in Assam in the 1991 Census.

The present study aimed at getting an insight into the consequences such conflicts have on women. Needless to mention, all conflicts have differential impact on different social and economic groups with regard to their capacity to cope with the situation. Ethnic conflicts have serious consequences for women largely due to their position in the family and in the society at large. One important consideration is their reproductive role and responsibility. They are most vulnerable to conflicting situations. The nature of armed conflicts changed dramatically during the latter half of the twentieth century, with casualties among civilians increasingly outnumbering those of military personnel. Women and girls became especially vulnerable in such conflicts. Since the end of the Cold War, women have been the primary victims in ethnic conflicts, constituting the bulk of civilian deaths and displaced refugees. The impact of conflicts on women and girls' reproductive and sexual health can never be underestimated. Their psychological, reproductive and overall well-being is often severely compromised in times of conflict. Conflicts tend to increase the incidence of sexual violence; rape; sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS; and unwanted pregnancies. In addition, essential social services, such as
medical facilities, on which women heavily depend for their well-being, are greatly disrupted by armed conflicts.

Given this background the broad objectives of this research were to get an insight into the ethnic dimension of the population redistribution in the areas of Bodo concentration; to study related demographic changes which are directly linked to the ethnic conflict and to assess the consequences of the demographic changes brought about by the conflict on the Santhal women.

The research questions placed before the research included the following: what are the consequences of conflict for morbidity, and mortality? How does conflict affect fertility, reproductive health or household composition? What are the consequences of conflict in terms of forced migration and other types of internal mobility? What are the demographic repercussions of forced migration?

Much of the data required for this research has been obtained from primary sources particularly through a survey in the Relief camps and in the Rehabilitated villages in the study area. Census publications pertaining to population and language tables have been used to analyse patterns in the distribution and growth of Santhal and Bodo population at district, and village level. The secondary data also has been collected from District Commissioner Office Kokrajhar.

The Study has considered a time span of about 30 years, i.e., 1971 to 2001 while making use of secondary sources of data available in Census to understand the changes in vital demographic indicators. An attempt was made to assess the spatial dimension of the change by a reference to the re-distribution of the Non Schedule Caste, Scheduled caste and, Scheduled Tribes to ascertain the areas where redistribution happened. By identifying the
villages from where the Santhals have migrated to Relief camps, rehabilitated villages and analysing the demographic characteristics of the population living in those villages a general picture of their demographic characteristics before the conflict began has been obtained to be compared with their present demographic characteristics. The comparison has been made on such vital demographic indicators as the household size, sex ratio, literacy and occupational structure using field data from selected relief camp and rehabilitated villages for the year 1996-2004.

The selection of relief camps is based on a fair representation of the Santhals from all over the district. Six relief camps and four rehabilitated village were selected for the collection of data and it was ensured that these relief camps and rehabilitated villages have Santhals coming from most areas of the district. The impact of the conflict on Santhal women and the consequences of the conflict has been analyzed with reference to the following broad demographic indicators as changes in fertility, marital status with special reference to widowhood and remarriage, problems with regard to reproductive burden, reproductive health, mortality and morbidity, changes in occupational structure, changes in household composition etc.

This study was organised into six broad chapters. The first chapter outlined the design of the research. The second chapter dealt with spatial distribution of the Santhal and chronology of the Bodo-Santhal conflict including a note on their distribution in India with special reference to Assam and the causes related to their migration. The chapter also studied the distribution and core and periphery of Santhals in India and in Assam too. The third chapter dealt with redistribution and ethnic homogenization with a special reference to Kokrajhar district. The fourth and fifth chapters dealt with the impact of the conflict on
Santhal women living in selected relief camps and selected rehabilitated villages respectively.

Fight for territorial supremacy was one of the triggering factors for the Bodo-Santhal riots in 1996. Both communities had been living in peace in the area for decades. But, with the signing of the Bodo Accord in February 1993 between the All Bodo Students Union and the Centre came the new autonomous structure called the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC). Only those villages with 50 per cent Bodo population were to be included into the BAC. This provision is generally believed to have encouraged a section of Bodos, including armed militants of different hues, to attempt ethnic cleansing - driving out the non-Bodos and converting vast stretches into Bodo majority areas. The divide today between the two communities is more than complete. The demand for Bodoland and issues like protest against Muslim, Bengalis and Santhals in the region reveals that the Bodos adopted the method of achieving their demand by the means of “ethnic cleansing” and “violence”. The ensuing clash between ethnic groups has left many homeless and without the social support base which they enjoyed before the conflict erupted. The Santhals, due largely to their immigrant status and lacking political and economic resources, were naturally the worst hit. There is a still a lack of clarity about the total area of Bodoland Territorial Council; the number of villages included and in future the villages might get included within the council, its total population and ‘ethnic mix’ of that area. The ‘ethnic mix’ comprises the Hindu Assamese, the Adivasis, the Hindu Bengali and the Muslim communities. All these communities have a reason to be apprehensive on the decision taken in support of Bodos forming Bodoland Territorial Council and extending its area by including the villages with less than 50 percent of Bodo population to form contiguous region. As they view the land
equally as their homeland. The setting up of the Bodoland Territorial Council, without clarifying these issues, and removing these apprehensions, is likely to be one of the most problematic aspects of the functioning of the Bodoland Territorial Council. Given the violence that marked the agitation in all its phases, a resumption of similar sectarian violence for fulfilling further future demands is very much on the cards.

Although the confrontation has taken an ‘ethnic’ dimension and the Memorandum of Settlement speaks about the Bodos forming Bodoland Territorial Council fulfilling the economic, educational, and linguistic aspirations and the preservation of the land rights, socio-cultural and ethnic identity of the people residing in the region, are likely to be exploited by the Bodos against the minority on all aspects of life.

The minority communities who are at the receiving end over the region now started to retaliate by mushrooming up their own militant groups’ like Bengali Hindu formed there group Bengali liberation tigers, Adivasis formed Adivasi Cobra Militants of Assam and Muslim Fundamental organisations formed Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam, Muslim United liberation Front of Assam, all these groups are now better equipped to resist Bodo extremists. The Bodo movement has paved the way for the minorities to follow the same lines drawn by the Bodo extremists and show their retaliation to Bodo autonomy over the region.

Santhals are the most badly affected by conflict among all other minor communities. Presently they are in the most worsen state with lack of social development with poor economic background. Many of them have faced displacement twice within a short period of time and are staying in relief camps for more than a decade. The resettlement and
rehabilitation of the devastated Santhals is still a low priority issue in the political agenda of
the state government as well as Bodoland Territorial Council.

The significant issue that is addressed in this research however does not relate to the
cause and the solution to the problem. The basic issue is the impact of the conflict on
women in a situation of ethnic unrest, displacement, fear and uncertainty of the future. The
Santhal women are of particular interest as they are in the receiving end of the ethnic clash
in the wake of the formation of Bodoland Territorial Council.

As far as the tribal population is concerned, this segment is highly concentrated in
three major pockets in Assam: lower part of northern Brahmaputra valley mostly inhabited
by the Bodos, Rabhas and the Tiwa communities; in the south central parts considering of
the two hill districts (North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong) of Assam where the Karbis
and the Kacharis dominate and the third pocket is located in the north-eastern corner
(Dhemaji district) of Assam which too contain a sizeable proportion of the Bodos in the total
Scheduled Tribe population.

The Scheduled Caste population is highly concentrated in the southern districts of
the Barak valley. The two other areas of their concentration are found in Morigaon in the
central part and Bongaigaon district in the western part of the state.

On the other hand, the Non-Scheduled population is distributed all over the state
though the extent of their dominance is inversely related to the areas of concentration of the
Scheduled Tribes. The most interesting aspect of the ethnic composition of Assam relates to
the fact that the Scheduled Tribe population is distributed both in hills as well as in the
plains. The Bodo Tribes are by and large confined to the northern bank of the Brahmaputra
Valley.
At the state level, the share of the Scheduled Tribe population increased rapidly during the period 1971-91, but declined subsequently. The Bodo population too increased its share in the total as well as in the Scheduled Tribe segment in the same period. The increase in the share of the tribal population as also of the Bodos appears to be due to high natural increase in their population. This increase in the proportion of the Scheduled Tribe as well as that of the Bodos has been responsible in a relative decline in the share of the Non-Scheduled population over the period due largely to lower natural increase in its population.

The history of Santhal migration into Assam reveals aspects of their spatial concentration and clustering in the state. Ethnically a tribe and recognised as a Scheduled tribe in Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal, the Santhals who were brought to work in the tea gardens of Assam in early 19th Century are not recognised as a Scheduled tribe in Assam. To begin with the Santali immigrants were almost exclusively confined to the gardens; but later their descendants formed a sizeable chunk of the population in the districts of Darrang, Sonitpur, Nagaon, Jorhat, Golaghat, Dibrugarh, Cachar, Hailakandi, Karimganj and Tinsukia districts in upper Assam where the tea gardens were located. But later these ‘tea tribes’ moved to lower Assam too and were found in significant numbers in Kokrajhar and Bongaigon districts too.

The Santhal territory in the mainland remains little disturbed as far as their cores were concerned. Even the periphery remains highly compact revealing little distribution of the Santhal population in the mainland. However, there appears to be significant redistribution of Santhal immigrants in Assam as the initial livelihood available to them in the tea gardens has dwindled in scope forcing them to disperse themselves into a vast territory. Significantly, their core of concentration lies away from the major areas of tea
cultivation and is now located in Kokrajhar district and the adjoining areas. The Santhals now are a largely cultivating group and have diversified their livelihood systems in the wake of demographic increase in their population and limited opportunities in the tea gardens which are less labour intensive than before.

The Bodos who were far more widespread in their territorial distribution have also been subject to tremendous redistribution and are now confined to a much smaller territory in the north bank of the Brahmaputra river. At the district level, the Bodo population shows extreme clustering in just three districts- Goalpara, Kamrup, and Darrang (eight districts in 2001, after reorganisation of these three districts) located in lower Brahmaputra valley. These three (undivided) districts have experienced unprecedented rise in the proportion of the Bodo population during 1971-91 decades, a fact that cannot be simply explained by natural increase alone.

The redistribution of both the communities- the Bodos and the Santhals brought them face to face as the cores and peripheries of the two communities coincided significantly. It is this accident of history in the peopling of Assam that promoted one of the most serious ethnic conflicts for the political control over a territory. The ethnic clash between the two groups left many dead, homeless and without a sustainable livelihood. The impacts of the conflict, long after the settlement, have continued to affect all sections of the people in the territory.

There has been tremendous transfer of population among the three different ethnic groups namely the Bodos, the Scheduled Caste, and others. The Scheduled Caste as well as the Bodo population seems to have dispersed over more villages over the period of thirty years. The real decline in the presence of the Non- Scheduled component is rather alarming
whose presence has been getting highly restricted over the years. The Bodos on the other hand have substantially increased their presence in many more villages. It appears that the Bodos and the Scheduled Caste people filled the vacuum created by the Bengalis, Nepalese, Santhals and Assamese people in this period.

The analysis conclusively proved that the Bodos have been successful in evicting the Non-Bodo population in a large number of villages with whom the Bodos had been living for centuries. The fact that there has been a corresponding decline in exclusively dominated villages by the Non-Scheduled population clearly indicates that it is this segment of the population which has been evicted from their traditional habitations. The Non-Scheduled segment seems to have lost the battle and has redistributed itself in a manner to protect themselves in a fewer villages within the district or have taken shelter in the Relief camps.

The spatial patterning in this process of redistribution of ethnic groups reveals greater homogenization of ethnic areas within the district. The most glaring changes in this process of spatial homogenisation are seen with respect to the Scheduled Tribes (the Bodos) and the Non-Scheduled component. The exclusive Bodo areas became spatially contiguous and far more extensive in the period 1971-91. The pattern in the year 2001 becomes even more clear and extensive with the extension of areas of Bodo concentration further westwards into Kachugaon block and emergence of new area of high Bodo concentration in the southern part in the traditional stronghold of the Non-Scheduled population. On the contrary, the areas of extensive numerical dominance of the Non-Scheduled component in the entire southern belt underwent massive transformation and were confined to only small patches with large discontinuities. The Non-Scheduled population seems to have lost the battle in the process of its hegemony in terms of spatial contiguity. As a whole, the changes
in the pattern of concentration reveal greater ethnic homogenisation on space, reflecting a
greater ethnic homogenisation on space, reflecting a
spatial dichotomy in the presence of the Scheduled Tribes (the Bodos) and the Non-
Scheduled population.

Though there is some inter-block variation in this pattern of ethnic homogenisation
the redistribution of population along ethnic lines however has been very pervasive in the
entire district only varying in intensity.

Analysis of the trends in population growth at the village level too revealed
tremendous inter village transfer of people along ethnic lines wherein a large number of
villages belonging to the Bodos and the Scheduled Castes increased their dominance in
villages increasing proportion of ethnically homogenous villages. On the other hand the
Non-Scheduled population left many villages located in areas of the conflict. Only a small
proportion of villages saw extraordinary rise in their population indicating some inter village
transfer of the Non-Scheduled population. Evidently, these villages belonged to the most
affected Santhals people who were organising themselves to counter Bodo onslaught. The
period between 1991 and 2001 is characterised by a process of further consolidation as
evident from a net decline in population belonging to all segments without a corresponding
increase in the proportion of villages that experienced substantive rise in the total
population. Evidently such villages are the ones where they had small numerical presence.
Villages experiencing extraordinary increase in population were extremely few cutting
across ethnic lines contrary to the earlier phase. The growth data is a sufficient clue to the
fact that more villages attained ethnic homogeneity during the 1991-2001 decade.

The most significant facts emerged from the analysis is that of desertion of villages
by a particular ethnic group. The fact that desertion from villages cut across ethnic
boundaries reveals the unprecedented nature of population redistribution and ethnic homogenisation of village population. Evidently the villages that experienced decline of population by an ethnic group became more ethnically homogenous. This process of desertion of villages has to be seen in terms of the ethnic homogenisation that had set in motion in the context of the ethnic clash between the Bodos and the Non-Bodo segment.

Statistical measure of the extent of redistribution revealed extraordinary inter-village transfer of people cutting across ethnic lines. Thus it is clear that the process of redistribution has been highly localised and is of intra-district in character. The localised nature of redistribution too points to the fact that it was largely an effect of the ethnic conflict within the district and that though there has been extraordinary transfer of people along ethnic lines, it has largely taken place within the district. It must be mentioned here that the dissimilarity index only shows a statistical measure of the extent of re-distribution and does not specify the causes which may be either due to differential natural growth in their population or due to inter village transfer of population. However, it can be easily concluded with reference to widespread ethnic homogenization that this redistribution is more due to the latter than the former.

Ever since the conflict respondents of relief camps and rehabilitated villages reported that they are being displaced several times outside and within the state to hide. After coming back to camps also they kept on moving from one camp to another in search of better place to stay or by official orders. Nearly all the respondents reported conflict, threat in their own villages as the main reasons for the displacement. Relief camps to them are much safer place than their villages, which are located near the Bodo villages.
The analysis of the demographic consequences of the conflict on the Santhals in general and on the Santhal women in particular and those living in the relief camps revealed that the respondents and their family members have suffered long and continuous strife induced displacement. The respondents in the relief camps have experienced displacement since the onset of the conflict. While hiding themselves from the Bodos at the time of the conflict they all moved out and got displaced several times from one place to another.

The respondents along with their household members are staying at the relief camps for nearly a decade. Many of them did not go back to their villages due to renewed attacks on their life and property. While staying out of their villages they faced loss of their property. Since the conflict erupted, the respondents have also faced loss and death of their close kinfolk from their household.

A significant consequence of the conflict and its aftermath has been a change in the pattern of head of the households of many now living in the relief camps. There has been an increase in female headed households- something that puts women in a difficult position with regard to managing the family affairs and earnings for the family without much support received from the male members.

There have been changes in the household type too. There has been an increase in the proportion of extended household types after the conflict. This change is against the norms of the Santhals traditionally living in nuclear households. The reasons for this change may be their forced living in the relief camps and purely economic. This also appears to be a temporary phenomenon.

Pattern of marital status shows increase in the number of widows and incidence of non-marriage increasing over the years. The impact of the conflict is certainly evident in the
changes taking place in the marital composition of the households. There is larger number of cases where the women now live singly or without the support of males who may have died, are missing or have deserted. In any case, greater number of the women now faces the world without the much needed support of their male counterparts. Cases of early marriages are on the rise as an effect of the conflict. This may be a consequence of threat and insecurity developed among parents staying in the relief camps.

The conflict and displacement has had some serious impact on education of Santhal women. The dropout rate among respondents due to conflict is extremely high. The major reasons behind dropout of respondents and the household members have been reported as displacement, and fear of going to education centres.

The conflict has induced changes in occupational structure. Substantive shift in occupation and deterioration in the economic condition of the respondents and respondents’ household has been seen. Drastic shift in occupational structure since the conflict has rendered the female segment far more vulnerable and marginalised. Breaking out of the conflict and their shift to the relief camp deprived them of the vital land that provided livelihood to them forcing them to seek wage labour as a major option to earn a living. The Santhal women had to look for other avenues of work including some non-agricultural work like collection and sale of firewood, catching and sell of fish in the local market or petty trade- all of which were combined to generate some income. Agricultural wage earning provides work opportunities only for a few months and with very low wages. It is significant that wage earning by working in other’s land as an occupation was conspicuous by its absence among the women before coming to the camps. However, left with no better option, bereft of their traditional livelihood a majority of the Santhal women had to offer their
labour for a wage—a situation that made them highly vulnerable to complexities of agricultural wage market and wage market in general. Given the situation the women have faced marginalisation and poverty in a situation of complete vulnerability.

Age specific death rate of the females is higher in younger age in respondents’ household than the males. Morbidity has affected all segments but more so the females. Increase in frequency of diseases among women is much higher after coming to relief camp as compared to earlier. The women too are afflicted by diseases not common to them before.

Age specific fertility rate is high among the respondents’ in relief camp as compared to the state. The fertility rate in relief camps is the highest in the prime childbearing age at 20-29. Death of respondents’ children is higher after coming to the relief camp. Still births and spontaneous abortions are more frequent after the conflict. Health problems during pregnancy have increased after conflict.

Lack of proper food and care has been reported by the respondents of the camp. Insufficient and improper food has affected the health condition of the Santhal women living in the camps. The conflict and displacement has deprived a majority of Santhal women the much needed family support and care while in relief camps.

Reproductive health of the women has worsened after coming to relief camp. The Psychological trauma which women develop during the conflict period has manifest primarily in physical and gynaecological symptoms related to increase in gynaecological disorders.

Overall, the demographic consequences of the conflict have had a debilitating effect on the economic, social and psychological conditions of the Santhal women. Most serious consequences are seen in the sphere of family change, changes in marital status, school
dropout, changes in occupational structure, heightened morbidity and affliction to new
diseases and reproductive health. Though not comparable to situation of war, the
consequences are quite significant for the displaced Santhal women and living in relief
camps.

The analysis of the demographic consequences of the conflict on the Santhals in
general and on the Santhal women in particular and those living in the relief camps leads to
the following broad generalisations.

The respondents and their family members have suffered long and continuous strife
induced displacement. The respondents in the relief camps have experienced displacement
since the onset of the conflict. While hiding themselves from the Bodos at the time of the
conflict they all moved out and got displaced several times from one place to another.

The respondents along with their household members are staying at the relief camps
for nearly a decade. Many of them did not go back to their villages due to renewed attacks
on their life and property. While staying out of their villages they faced loss of their
property. Since the conflict erupted, the respondents have also faced loss and death of their
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A significant consequence of the conflict and its aftermath has been a change in the
pattern of head of the households of many now living in the relief camps. There has been an
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the proportion of extended household types after the conflict. This change is against the
norms of the Santhals traditionally living in nuclear households. The reasons for this change may be their forced living in the relief camps and purely economic. This also appears to be a temporary phenomenon.

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The conflict has induced changes in occupational structure. Substantive shift in occupation and deterioration in the economic condition of the respondents and respondents’ household has been seen. Drastic shift in occupational structure since the conflict has rendered the female segment far more vulnerable and marginalized. Breaking out of the conflict and their shift to the relief camp deprived them of the vital land that provided livelihood to them forcing them to seek wage labour as a major option to earn a living. The Santhal women had to look for other avenues of work including some non-agricultural work like collection and sale of firewood, catching and sell of fish in the local market or petty
trade— all of which were combined to generate some income. Agricultural wage earning provides work opportunities only for a few months and with very low wages. It is significant that wage earning by working in other’s land as an occupation was conspicuous by its absence among the women before coming to the camps. However, left with no better option, bereft of their traditional livelihood a majority of the Santhal women had to offer their labour for a wage— a situation that made them highly vulnerable to complexities of agricultural wage market and wage market in general. Given the situation the women have faced marginalisation and poverty in a situation of complete vulnerability.

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Overall, the demographic consequences of the conflict have had a debilitating effect on the economic, social and psychological conditions of the Santhal women. Most serious consequences are seen in the sphere of family change, changes in marital status, school dropout, changes in occupational structure, heightened morbidity and affliction to new diseases and reproductive health. Though not comparable to situation of war, the consequences are quite significant for the displaced Santhal women and living in relief camps.

Consequences of conflict and displacement are many and varied. However, resettlement and rehabilitation are measures that have been widely accepted as post conflict resolution mechanisms. Fortunately most Santhals who left their homes and villages were rehabilitated in the villages once left by them. Return to the villages after long stay in the relief camps does not mean return to normalcy. However, it is expected that return and resettlement in the very villages has had its positive consequences which is borne out of the foregoing analysis. Nonetheless the impacts of the conflict and displacement can still be felt for a long time, much after the rehabilitation.

The respondents, along with their family members have shifted to rehabilitated villages only recently. Some of them did not go back to their villages and got rehabilitated themselves in other villages than their own in fear of a backlash. While staying out of their villages they faced loss of their property. Respondents have also faced loss of household members when many got missing and death of their household members since the conflict changing the stable demographic pattern.
One such impact is seen in the case of rising proportion of female headed households as a direct outcome of the conflict and loss of many male members who either died or got missing. This is a major consequence for a number of rehabilitated women who now have to manage the family affairs singly, without much support from the male members. Return to the village and rehabilitation has also seen a change in the type of households compared to the types in the relief camps. There has been a perceptible increase in the number of nuclear households after coming to rehabilitated villages. Only a few single households remained as an after effect of the conflict.

Understandably the pattern of marital status shows the number of widows and deserted women who are of younger ages at rehabilitated villages. The conflict and displacement has had some serious impact on education of the Santhal women. Rehabilitation of the Santhals in their original villages has not much improved the situation and education has been a great casualty. The dropout cases among the respondents are extremely high. The major reasons by respondents behind dropout for them and their household members has been reported as conflict related displacement, and fear of going to education centers.

The respondents and household members have suffered loss of property, which has resulted in tremendous shift in occupation structure, loss of work, and poor earnings. After conflict a wider shift in occupation and economic condition of respondents’ and respondents household has been seen. Growing dependence on wage labour and on other activities in the informal sector of the economy has further impoverished them and made them vulnerable to poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and hunger. Their self sufficiency and sustained relation with the environment has received a rude shock.
The death rate during conflict at respondents household was extremely high. Age specific death rate of females is higher in respondents’ household than males. Number of deaths gradually decreased over the years, though 2004 shows some increase in number (17 percent). Needless to mention, deaths in the initial period are directly related to the conflict, but later the deaths are more an indirect effect of the conflict and displacement that saw a spurt in morbidity incidence.

After shifting to the rehabilitated villages, prevalence of different diseases have indeed declined. After coming to the relief camps most of the respondents suffered from tuberculosis, jaundice, malaria, also faced different stomach problems like indigestion, diarrhoea and gastric. Rehabilitation dramatically changed the situation with regard to tuberculosis, gastric, jaundice and indigestion which showed a drastic decline in their prevalence among the rehabilitated sections. Only cases related to Diarrhoea have increased. But overall, the health situation has improved after resettlement and rehabilitation of the displaced Santhals. However, the trauma of the conflict continues to be felt among the rehabilitated females with a number of them complaining of critical diseases like blood pressure, blood sugar, asthma and arthritis which are an after effect of trauma and psychological stress. There is however, a distinct improvement in the non-cereal food intake by the respondent women after their return to the rehabilitated villages and compared to their pitiable condition while in the relief camps.

Age specific fertility rate is high among the respondents’ in rehabilitated villages as compared to the state. Still births and spontaneous abortions continue to affect the rehabilitated women as an after effect of the conflict induced displacement, fear and trauma.
A major demographic consequence of the conflict, displacement and rehabilitation has been an increase in the reproductive problems faced by the Santhal women. The psychological trauma which women experienced during the conflict period has manifest primarily in physical and gynaecological symptoms related to increase in gynaecological disorders. However, the women in the rehabilitated villages have received better quality of care and family support than before coming to rehabilitated villages.

In general the rehabilitation has brought some relief to the Santhal women though after paying a high cost as the consequence of the conflict which has made them highly vulnerable economically and socially. The world for most has changed beyond any repair.

The study made an attempt to understand demographic consequences on women in conflicting situation by considering two situations, namely the consequences during the displacement and after the rehabilitation. The study conclusively proved the negative impacts on the women on a number of demographic variables. Such impacts are not too different in other situations of conflicts affecting people in various parts of the world. However, the study merely aimed at drawing the attention of scholars working in this area of research to focus on women and their plight.

The limitation of the study flowed largely from non-availability of secondary data for the Santhals at the village level which made comparison rather difficult. Temporal analysis too became another grey area due to lack of census data for the year 1981. Data collected from District Commissioner Office and Bodo Autonomous Council on villages, relief camps and rehabilitated villages was also erroneous when compared with the name given by Santhals during the field study. Most of the name of the villages for particular blocks, which were described in records given by District Commissioner Office and Bodo
Autonomous Council, did not correlate with the name given in the census for the villages in particular blocks.

In spite of the limitations posed by data availability, attempts were made to overcome these difficulties by intensive field investigations conducted at some relief camps and in a few rehabilitated villages. The findings and conclusions arrived in this study may be of interest to academicians and policy makers dealing with conflict related rehabilitation.