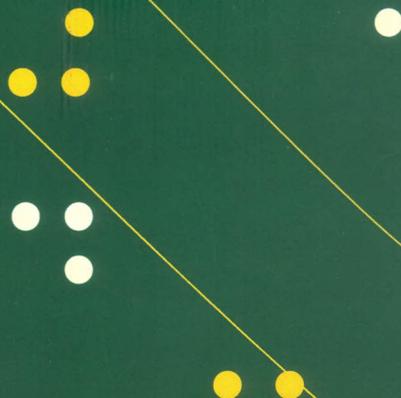
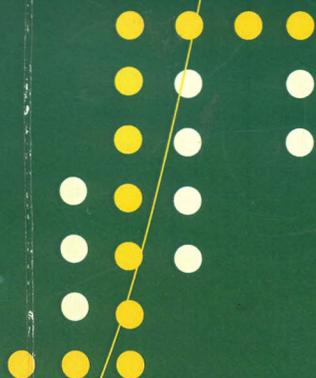
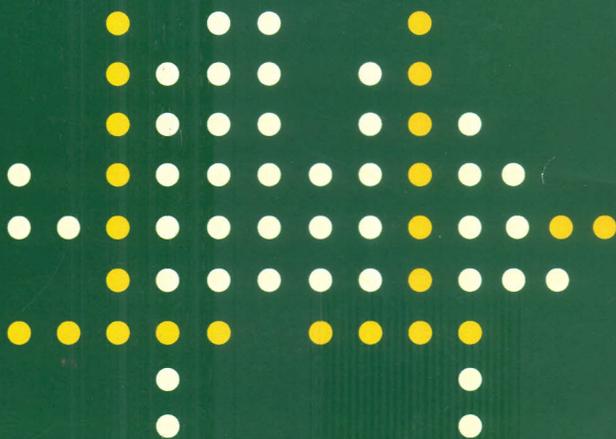


# Evaluation of Functioning of Tribal Research Institute (TRI) in Assam

Final Report

November 2011

Sponsored by  
Ministry of Tribal Affairs  
Government of India



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Government of India

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## Foreword

About eight per cent of the total population of India is officially recognised as Scheduled Tribes. A very high concentration of tribal population is found in the North-Eastern region of the country. More than 80 per cent of the population of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland belong to Scheduled Tribes. Assam has about 12 per cent of its population from Scheduled Tribes. In order to improve economic opportunities for Scheduled Tribes and to uplift their socio-economic condition, Article 15(4) of the Constitution of India has incorporated several special provisions to promote their education and economic status as well as to protect them from social injustice and exploitation. Eighteen organisations for tribal research have been set up in various states and union territories of India for contributing to programmes for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes.

One such institute, the Tribal Research Institute (TRI), was established in 1963 in the composite state of Assam. NCAER was recently requested by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, to take up an evaluation of the functioning of TRI Assam and to provide an analysis of TRI's manpower capacity and its infrastructure, including building, museum and library. The evaluation was also expected to assess research studies conducted by TRI over the years and its training activities conducted for the welfare of the unemployed youth among Scheduled Tribes.

This study provides a SWOT analysis and suggestions for strengthening TRI, Assam. The study finds that the library has a very relevant and significant collection of resources on tribal culture. The TRI Ethnographic Museum has a rich collection of ethnographic objects such as ornaments and costumes, agricultural, fishing and hunting implements, and household articles used by the different tribes of Assam. The existing campus of the Institute has sufficiently large land area to accommodate future expansion. At the same time, there are areas of concern. The existing location of the campus is a serious hurdle in the use of the library and museum facilities by external users and attempts to popularize the existing collections in the Ethnographic Museum and the library have not been adequate. The study also notes that the slow recruitment of qualified leaders for the Institute and the quantum of financial grants and their uncertain flow act as serious bottlenecks in the efficient operation of the Institute. The study has provided a number of recommendations to enable the Institute to fulfill its objectives fully.

We are grateful to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, for entrusting this study to us. Dr Tarujyoti Buragohain has been the Principal Investigator of this study. Prof. D.B. Gupta, Senior Consultant, worked closely with Dr Buragohain, and Dr Shashanka Bhide provided overall supervision.

I trust the study will be a valuable input in designing programmes that yield high-quality, meaningful, and practical research that can support improved economic opportunities for the Scheduled Tribe population in our country and help preserve and enrich their culture.

**Shekhar Shah**

*Director-General*

NCAER

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Study Team

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## Executive Summary

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**Background:** India has a very large tribal population—almost 8.20 per cent of country's population in 2001—and they are currently at different stages of social, economic and educational development. In some states like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and the UTs of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Lakshadweep the population of tribals exceeds almost half of their respective populations. A distinctive feature of tribal population is its low level of development compared to other non-tribal populations. This is irrespective of the set of indicators used for this purpose. Perhaps their different lifestyle, crude and primitive technology used in cultivation and tendency to live in isolated areas seemed to have contributed to their remaining far behind from the mainstream population. In order to uplift their condition, Article 15 (4) of the Constitution of India has incorporated several special provisions for promoting education and economic status of the Scheduled Tribes as well as to protect them from social injustice and exploitation. Thus during the Fifth Five Year Plan, a strategy called the 'Tribal Sub-plan' (TSP) for the overall development of Scheduled Tribes in India was adopted, covering 21 states and 2 UTs.

This scheme provides financial assistance to Integrated Tribal Development projects, Tribal Research Institutes and non government organisations (NGOs) for undertaking projects and activities not covered by any of the existing schemes. Accordingly under the tribal research component a number of tribal research institutes have been set up in a number of states and UTs. In all 18 such Institutes were set up in different parts of the country. In this study an attempt is made to assess the working of one such institute, namely the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, located in Guwahati. The jurisdiction of the Institute extends to entire Assam covering both hills and plains and its main functions include (i) Research, (ii) Evaluation (iii) Planning and (iv) Training. In addition to these functions, there are several other functions which the Institute is expected to perform. These include publication of books, research bulletin, organising seminars and workshops, participation in exhibitions both with the state of Assam and outside the state at national and regional levels, award of both doctoral and post doctoral fellowships for work with focus on scheduled tribes and scheduled castes, documentation of tribal life and culture through audio-visual media, establishment of a documentation centre and a data bank on scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, maintenance of an ethnographic museum for the authentic documentation and preservation of the material culture of tribes and their heritage, and establishment of reference library.

The Institute has over the period carried out research and evaluation, besides organising training programmes, workshops and seminars on a regular basis. The Institute has a library and a museum of artifacts of tribal communities of the state.

**Objectives:** The present study was undertaken by the Council to assess the institutional capacity and functioning of the Institute at the instance of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India with the following objectives.

- To understand details about the institutional capacity; (i) profile of manpower (ii) profile of infrastructure including building and status of the library, etc.
- To understand the type of research study that has been conducted over the years, and to assess whether these studies have practical bearing on improving socio-economic conditions of STs in the last three years.
- Capacity of the institute in promotion and preservation of tribal heritage/culture for North-eastern Region as a whole.
- Capacity building for up keeping the museum.

**Methodology:** The assessment is based on a desk review of the available documents with the Institute and interaction with the various categories of staff on one to one basis as well as through group meetings including the officiating head (Joint Director), Museum curator, Librarian, research/technical staff and accounts officer of the Institute.

**Structure of the Report:** The report has a number of sections. It begins with a description of the tribal communities in India including their main characteristics, with focus on tribes in the North-east and in particular of tribes in Assam. The Report also contains a profile of the Institute outlining its research and training activities as well as an idea of the available resources, both physical and manpower. Based on SWOT analysis, the Report is also available with the Institute. Section 4 represents an attempt to review the functioning of the Institute, including its main strengths and weaknesses. The report concludes with providing suggestions to improve the functioning of the Institute, as well as indicates measures for the future development of the Institute in Section 5.

**Tribal Institutes:** At present there are 18 tribal research institutes (TRI) in various states/ Union Territories of India for overall welfare of the Scheduled Tribes. These are located in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Andaman and Nicobar Island and Goa, and Daman & Diu. They have been working and providing planning inputs to the state government, conducting research and collecting data, conducting training for skill development, organising seminars and workshops for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes. Some of these institutes have also established museums and exhibit tribal handicrafts. The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes is one of these 18 Institutes.

## Profile of TRI Assam

### Campus Infrastructure

**The Buildings:** The “Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes” (AIRTSC) with an area of about 43,200 sq ft has its own campus in ‘Jawaharnagar’, Guwahati and it is located on the outskirts of the main city. The Institute with a carpet area of 24,000 sq ft is a three storied building comprising two wings.

**Library:** The library with nearly 9000 books and documents, mainly on tribes and tribal life, has separate area for stacking the books as well as a fairly decent sized reading room. The library has been regularly acquiring books with nearly 200–250 acquisitions every year. The library is currently subscribing to four Journals on a regular basis. The Institute also has a publication department.

**Museum:** A major activity of the Institute is its ethnographic Museum. This museum has preserved a variety of artifacts reflecting the socio-religious and socio-economic aspects of the multi ethnic groups in Assam. While Bamboo and Cane-made artifacts dominate the various sections of the gallery, the material culture of the Tiwas, Karbis, Hmars, Dimasa Kacharis, Rabhas, the Bodos, and Mishings, Sonowal Kacharis, Rengmas, Tamangs and some other tribes is also housed in the Museum. The collection largely focuses on cultural objects of the tribes required in their daily life, during festivals, in funeral ceremonies, during hunting and fishing expeditions, etc. The intricate designs in the traditional textiles are praise worthy. This is not surprising as weaving forms an integral part of tribal culture. The museum has a good collection of earrings and necklaces traditionally worn by the Tribals. These ornaments traditionally belong to Dimasa Kachar, Bodo Kachari, Karbi, Garo, Rabha, Kuki, HMAR, Tiwa, Hajon, Rengma and Sonowal.

### **Human Resources**

**Administrative and Technical:** The chief executive of the Institute is the Director, usually a member of the civil services. He is supported by a Joint Director and by a Deputy Director; generally both the persons are from the state civil services. At the technical level there is a librarian, a Museum Curator and an accountant. The accountant is usually from the state secretariat.

**Research and Training:** The Institute has a research staff of 7 research officers, one of whom is designated as curator. The existing research staff has post graduate qualification— four of them having specialisation in Social Anthropology; the other two have specialisation in Economics. They have also received training in the preservation of certain agricultural products and in the basic operation of computer. None of them have a research degree or formal research training. The research staff is regularly organising training programmes on a variety of themes, especially for the unemployed youth for self-employment.

### **Review of Current Activities**

**Documentation of Tribal Culture:** The Institute is engaged in the documentation of various aspects of tribal life, including their socio-cultural details, historical, folk dances and festivals, etc. for wider dissemination. The institute has so far documented five tribal languages of hill tribes, namely 'Hajong', 'Goro', 'Karbi', and 'Dimasa' and 'Zeme Naga' Tribes.

**Documentary films:** The Institute has in its records a number of documentary films of varying duration depicting the life, heritage and culture of various tribes in Assam.

**Research Output:** A detailed review of research work carried out by the Institute staff since 2005–06 shows a fairly steady flow of research output on a wide range of issues; the focus being on understanding the life and culture of tribes in the state, including the socio economic. The findings of these studies are made available as Institute's publications. On an average almost two to four of such research studies are published every year.

**Evaluation Studies:** Another important function that the Institute relates to is carrying out assessments of the benefits accruing to targeted tribal communities. These evaluations cover wide range of programmes including the impact of 'post matric' scholarship schemes for the ST candidates, utilisation of seats in admission, quota schemes, and hostel scheme for STs, etc. Importantly the findings of these evaluation studies are widely disseminated and are made available to the policy makers in the state.

**Publications:** The Institute has constantly endeavoured to not only undertake the publication of the research work and evaluations for wider dissemination but also accepted publishing research studies carried out by outside scholars provided they fall within the broad scope of the objectives of the Institute. The Institute has its own publication unit.

**Training:** Apart from research, another major activity of the Institute is to impart training in such areas as food preservation and pickle making, and upgrading computer skills, etc. More than three training programmes were conducted in a year.

**Seminars and Workshops:** An integral activity of the Institute is holding Seminars/workshops to not only disseminate the findings of the researches at the Institute but also on subjects of contemporary interest to an understanding of the problems of tribal people. These seminars and workshops are usually attended by people from other North- eastern states.

### Overall Assessment of the Institute

**Staff:** Research, training and dissemination are some of the basic activities of the Institute. These are largely carried out by the research staff with the support staff acting as facilitators and providers of logistics. Most projects were completed on time. In addition to carrying out research, the staff also imparted training on a wide variety of focus areas relevant to the needs and problems of the tribes in the state. In addition the Institute sends its staff for training to improve their skills. It would be fair to conclude from a review of the work of research staff that their contribution in terms of *academic and research output has been substantial*. However, the research staff pointed out certain areas of concern

which need to be addressed to improve their efficiency. While there will be a need for prioritization and consistency between goals and incentives to achieve the sustained high levels of productivity, we mention the concerns of the staff below.

1. All categories of staff are not sufficiently motivated due to 'lack of incentives', especially the avenues for further promotion.
2. Research staff lacked adequate opportunities for training, especially trainings abroad with a view to improving and upgrading their existing skills.
3. Lack of campus housing or housing facilities close to the Institute adversely affected their research productivity, besides an obstacle in the retention of good staff.
4. Absence of interactive environment (the intellectual environment), a critical input for quality research and suggested creation of desired intellectual environment, through bringing outside consultants with expertise in select areas of interest to the Institute.
5. Lack of availability of staff car adversely affects the field operations of the Museum Curator as well as the field work.
6. Absence of service rules for the staff.

## Infrastructure

**Physical Infrastructure:** The existing campus of the Institute has sufficiently large area to accommodate future expansion of facilities. However, looking into the specifics, one finds some areas for intervention. The Institute has a dusty and noisy neighbourhood. This is because of the location of the Institute which is on a busy road and a coal depot is next to it. Further, frequent carpeting of the main road makes the Institute vulnerable to water logging.

**Library:** Despite fairly decent collection of books and documents, the library is scantily used. Its main users are the Institute staff, with only a few visitors from outside. These are mostly research scholars both from India and foreign scholars. We were told that in a year nearly 300 outsiders use library's resources. The library needed some cooling too to make the place comfortable for readers.

**Museum:** The Museum has a rich collection of ethnographic objects such as ornaments, costumes, agricultural, fishing and hunting implements, household objects used by the tribals in Assam, etc. However, there was little addition made to the initial collections in the Museum. This is believed to be because of lack of sufficient space in the Museum for keeping more exhibits and artifacts in the museum. A rather disturbing feature of the Museum was the fact that most exhibits and artifacts were hugely covered with dust.

The Museum was not keeping a record of the visitors. This low interest in the Museum is evident from the fact that hardly 50–60 visitors—mostly researchers, largely foreigners—visited the Museum annually.

**Outreach:** The Institute seems to have a limited outreach as is evident from the limited audience for both library and the Museum. However, the research output has made a significant impact as is evident from the sale of Institute's publications. In fact some of the research monographs have been reprinted. Another significant aspect was the use of Institute's research findings in the policies of the state government.

**Financial Resources:** There were two major sources of funds – state government and the central government. Most of these funds flow through the state government. As far as the funds for research and training are concerned, they are directly transferred by the central government to the Institute. However delays in the release of funds occur frequently and most grants were received around the time of close of financial year. This has seriously affected expenditure planning, sometimes even leading to funds lapsing. A major problem was the meagre quantum of funds available for the Museum. However, the funds flowed regularly for salaries and establishment.

**Administration:** The Institute is headed by a full time Director and he is supported by a Joint Director and one Deputy Director. The Museum is looked after by a Curator who is also a part of the research team. The Director is usually a civil servant on deputation to the institute. The Joint Director reports to the Director and the Deputy Director to the Joint Director. There is one employee for looking after the accounts and the appointee is usually from the finance department of the state.

The Director's position, at the time of our visit was vacant. We were told that at present the financial powers of the Director were limited and this is detrimental to the efficient functioning of the Institute.

## **SWOT analysis**

**Strengths:** In terms of the resources available to the Institute, the research staff has adequate capacity for carrying out sustained research as is evident from continuous flow of academic output in the form of research publications and contributions in the in-house Annual Bulletin. The research staff is not only young (mostly between 35–45 years) but competent and enthusiastic with many years ahead of them for productive research work. The Institute's staff is also disseminating research findings to key stakeholders including the state government. The main instruments are workshops, seminars, in-house bulletin, besides research publications.

**Weakness:** The physical inaccessibility aspect of the Institute is a serious drawback in the further development of the Institute. While existing location of the campus is a serious hurdle in the use of the library and museum facilities by outside users, it is fair to say that no serious attempt has been made so far to popularize the existing collections in the Ethnographic Museum and the Library. There is yet another area which is detrimental to the working of the Institute. There is a need to review whether the top administrative positions of the institute can be filled by professionally qualified and experienced people in tribal research rather than by civil service officials. Recruitment of qualified leaders for the institute will help raise the motivation level for the staff. Both the quantum of financial grants and their flow act as yet another serious bottleneck.

**Opportunities:** A major opportunity for the Institute is the keenness of the Central Government to see this Institute to assume the role of an apex institution for the North-east. The Union government is also highly committed to the welfare of the tribes in the North-east and is keen not to lose the rich and invaluable heritage of these people especially with the ongoing integration of various communities in the country.

**Threat:** Given current financial health of most states, it is doubtful whether the state government of Assam would be willing to show its long-term interest in the Institute through its commitment to not only enhance the current levels of grant but also show its commitment in ensuring that various positions including that of the Director do not remain unfilled for any length of time.

## **Strengthening the TRI Assam: Suggestions and Way Forward**

### **Role of Ministry of Tribal Affairs/Central Government**

When the location cannot be changed, ways should be found to improve the utility of the Institute. Also if the institute has to serve as an apex institute to cover entire North-eastern region, the central government may play a critical role in following ways.

**First:** The Ministry should provide one time financial support/grant for up gradation/expansion of the building of current TRI Assam. To share the role and responsibility with the state government, it has been suggested to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding intending to provide full cooperation.

**Second:** The Ministry should set up a separate cell within vicinity of TRI Assam to coordinate with other North-eastern states as there is only 6 research staff in TRI Assam. They are preoccupied with their research work. It is not advisable to impose upon them additional responsibility. The cell should consist of 2–3 senior research staff and one director.

**Third:** The Ministry should have a monitoring system to keep track of the activities of TRI by visiting TRI at least once in two months (by a senior official) to help resolve outstanding issues.

**Fourth:** As indicated earlier, most staff wanted to be deputed to receive training not only in institutions within the country but also outside the country. Based on their previous training received such as 'basic computer operation', 'fishery technology', 'food processing', other vocational type training; it is suggested that advanced training should be provided on similar areas for upgradation of the skill of research staff after taking into account the utility of such programmes.

**Fifth:** A suggestion was to review the existing financial powers of the Director and if needed these may be increased. It was also suggested that a review of financial procedures currently existing in the Institute be carried out so as to make them conducive for the smooth functioning of the institute.

### **Role of TRI Assam/state government**

**First:** The Institute should make efforts to create awareness about its available heritage resources among scholars, school going children, tourists and the like. Besides greater visibility, these measures would create pressure on the staff to keep its resources in good shape and constantly endeavour to improve its heritage collections.

**Second:** The collections in the museum should not remain confined to the tribes in Assam but should cover all other North-eastern states. Besides, the Assam Institute should be able to serve as a nodal Institute for all the other tribal research institutions in the North-eastern states.

**Third:** In addition, if the ethnographic Museum is to be properly developed, more space would be needed as the existing space available to it is too small. Indeed the Institute has not been able to display all its collections (currently kept away in store) for want of space. Efforts should be made to make the Museum dust proof.

**Fourth:** To create better interactive, intellectual environment, the Institute may consider appointment of couple of expert consultants for limited periods to step up activities in the areas of concern to the institute.

**Fifth:** The Institute may consider involving the private and the NGO sector to collaborate in the activities of the Institute, including sourcing funds from the private sector.

The partnership may go beyond provision of funds. It may also seek the help of the private sector and grass root NGOs to assist in the collection of tribal artifacts and other items of interest for the Museum.

**Sixth:** The Institute should review its current publication and distribution policy. The provocation to make this remark arises from the fact that there was a large stock of books lying unsold. This is not only consuming precious space but also cuts into the limited financial resources of the Institute.

**Seventh:** Keeping in view of the relatively large size of support staff, the Institute should think of reviewing the activities of its support staff.

### **Way Forward**

The study has provided some insights into the working of the Tribal Institute located in Guwahati. On the basis of detailed discussion with the staff and administration of the Institute and a close review of the documents and researches, it is seen that, given the available resources, the performance of the Institute is reasonably good. However there are several areas which need attention, especially if this Institute is to serve as a model Institute with its focus on the preservation and dissemination of the rich cultural heritage of the tribes in the North-eastern region of the country. Indeed from the viewpoint of the Institute serving the objective of preservation of tribal culture and heritage, it would not be harsh to say that the Institute

has not fully succeeded in its goals. This was evident from inadequate attention received in the development of the Museum. It also failed to create enough interest among the public and the research community, largely because of the quality of its collection of the artifacts. These comments are no reflection on the existing staff of the Institute; it indeed has largely to do with the lack of not only resources available to the Institute but also the lack of commitment of both state and union governments.

Specifically we would suggest a greater role for the Union government. The rich cultural heritage is a national asset and the Union government should make available substantial resources, both capital and enhanced recurring grants. Given the poor financial health of most state governments, and Assam is no exception, stepping in of the Union government cannot be over emphasized.

There is also a need to undertake a review of the governance structure of the Institute, especially if it has to serve as an Institute of national importance showcasing the tribal heritage of the states located in the North-east. Perhaps a governing council comprising representative of the North-eastern states and of the Union government may be set up for the purpose of managing the Institute. As the Institute would be located in Guwahati, a greater role may be assigned to the state government of Assam. Serious thought may also be given to relocation of the Institute so that its accessibility becomes better. Another major step, especially with developments in the e-sector, there should be close networking among various tribal Institutes in the region as well as with museums of other states.

# Evaluation of Functioning of Tribal Research Institute (TRI) in Assam

## Section 1: Introduction

---

### 1.1 Background

India had a population of 84.33 million persons belonging to Scheduled Tribes or nearly 8.2 per cent of country's population in 2001 (Census 2001). The tribal groups are currently at different stages of social, economic and educational development. They have their presence in most states and union territories except in Haryana, Punjab, Chandigarh, Delhi and Puducherry. On the other hand there are states like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and the UTs of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Lakshadweep where the tribal population exceeds almost half of their respective populations. The major concentration of tribals is in the North-eastern states and Orissa.

It is interesting to note that, while some of the tribal communities have adopted themselves to be a part of the mainstream way of life, there are still almost 75 primitive tribal groups spread over in nearly 17 states and UTs of the country. These primitive groups are largely characterised by low literacy, pre-agriculture level of technology, stagnant/declining population and subsistence level of economic activity.

The total tribal population has seen a secular increase, especially since 1961. For example during 1961-2001, the tribal population increased by almost 25 per cent. Also during the 1991-2001 decade the tribal population increased at a faster rate compared with country's overall population (31.64 per cent for tribals versus 23.1 per cent, for the country during the same period).

Another feature of tribal population is its low level of development compared to other non-tribal populations. As mentioned above, differences in lifestyle, primitive technology used in cultivation and tendency to live in isolated areas have resulted in their remaining extremely far behind from the mainstream population. About 92 per cent among tribals still live in rural areas as compared to 72 per cent for the country as a whole. The literacy rate among tribals is 47 per cent as compared to 68.8 per cent among others and 54.7 per cent among Scheduled Castes. About 36.38 million Scheduled Tribes population (age 7 years and above), constituting 53 per cent of the total are still illiterate as compared to 31.2 per cent among others. The female literacy rate, which is lower for the tribal population compared to the general one, has however shown a significant increase during the decade 1991-2001—from 18.2 to 34.8 per cent. However, high dropout rate has kept tribal representation low in higher education. An interesting aspect of tribal population is its superior sex ratio—933 females per 1000 male in general population compared to 978 females per 1000 tribal males (2001 Census). As far as the job profile is concerned, most tribal workers are engaged in primary activities as is evident from the fact that in 2001 Census 69 per cent of tribals were main workers, of whom 51 per cent were cultivators and 28.4 per cent were agricultural labour.

In order to uplift their condition, Article 15 (4) of the Constitution of India has incorporated several special provisions for promoting education and economic status of the Scheduled Tribes as well as to

protect them from social injustice and exploitation. For example during the Fifth Five Year Plan, for the overall development of Scheduled Tribes in India a strategy called the ‘Tribal Sub-plan’ (TSP) was adopted, covering 21 states and 2 UTs; these are the areas where scheduled tribes constitute a sizeable population. The TSP strategy seeks to ensure adequate flow of funds for tribal development from both state plan funds and central ministries/departments. TSP is thus a part of the overall plan of a state/UT or a central ministry/department. The Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs is also implementing several schemes and programmes for the benefit of Scheduled Tribes. Special assistance is given to all the states to supplement their efforts in tribal development through the Tribal Sub-Plan. According to the constitutional provision, grants are also given to the states to meet the costs of the projects for tribal development and for raising the level of administration of the Scheduled Area. A part of the funds is utilised for setting up of residential schools to provide quality education to the tribal students.

With a view to provide support to TSP, the Union Government initiated a Special Central Assistance (SCA) scheme to bridge certain gaps, especially in the family-based income generating programmes. This has improved the flow of funds flow. This is evident from the figures listed in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1: Pattern of Fund flow for welfare of Tribals under TSP (Rs in crore)**

Five Year Plan	Fund released
V	119.31
VI	486.11
VII	846.95
VIII	1484.12
IX	2009.61
X	2960.83
XI(2007–08)	631.80

This scheme provides financial assistance to Integrated Tribal Development projects, Tribal Research Institutes and non government organisations (NGOs) for undertaking projects and activities not covered by any of the existing schemes. Under the tribal research component a number of tribal research institutes have been set up in a number of states and UTs.

## 1.2 Tribal Research Institutes

So far 18 tribal research institutes (TRI) have been set up in various states/ UTs of India for overall welfare of the Scheduled Tribes. These are located in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa, and Daman & Diu. They have been working and providing planning inputs to the State government, conducting research and collecting data, conducting training for skill development, organising seminars and workshops for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes. Some of these institutes have also established museums and exhibit tribal handicrafts.

### **1.3 Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes**

One such institute called the 'Tribal Research Institute' (TRI) was established in 1963 in the composite state of Assam, to identify the issues of tribal development. Subsequently Assam saw its division into several smaller states; the institute in 1976 got divided and became a directorate in 1976. In 1977, a centrally sponsored scheme under Research and Training with the approval of the Ministry of Home Affairs was implemented to extend the activities of both STs and SCs.

The institute formally known as Tribal Research Institute for administrative convenience the Government re-named this institute as "Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes" vide notification -No.TAD/TRI/468/79/189 dated 20.8.1990.

The scope of the institute includes both scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The jurisdiction of the Institute extends to entire Assam covering both hills and plains.

The main functions of the Assam Institute are stated to be (i) Research, (ii) Evaluation (iii) Planning, and (iv) Training. In addition to these functions, there are several other functions which the Institute is expected to perform. These include publication of books, research bulletin, organising seminars and workshops, participation in exhibitions both with the state of Assam and outside the state at national and regional levels, award of both doctoral and post doctoral fellowships for work with focus on scheduled tribes and scheduled castes, documentation of tribal life and culture through audio visual media, establishment of a documentation centre and a data bank on scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, maintenance of an ethnographic museum for the authentic documentation and preservation of the material on culture of tribals and their heritage, and establishment of reference library.

The Institute has over the period of its presence carried out research and evaluation, besides organising training programmes, workshops and seminars on a regular basis. For example it has so far conducted nearly 60 research studies on socio-economic conditions, demographic situations and evaluation of implementation of government schemes. In addition it has also conducted a large number of studies of confidential nature pertaining to the scheduled tribes. The Institute's library stocks nearly 9000 volumes. Besides the library has a video library with 10 documentary films on tribal cultural life. The Institute has also provided grants-in-aid to authors for publication of books written on SC/ST, organisation of seminar/workshop, participation in exhibitions of state, regional and national levels, award of doctoral and post doctoral fellowships, maintenance of ethnographic museum, reference library, data bank on SC/ST, documentation centre, documentation of tribal life and culture through audio-visual means and so on. There is also a small museum of artifacts of tribal communities of the state. The other functions include publication of books, annual research bulletin, advertisement and publicity to highlight the activities of AIRTSC awareness camp on health, forestry, etc.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The present evaluation study 'Functioning of the Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes' has been undertaken by the National Council of Applied Economic Research at the instance of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India which has provided the necessary funds to carry out the evaluation. The specific objectives of the evaluation study are

- To understand details about the institutional capacity; (i) profile of manpower (ii) profile of infrastructure including building and status of the library, etc.
- To understand the type of research study the Institute has been conducting over the years, and to assess whether these studies have practical bearing on improving socio-economic conditions of STs in the last three years.
- Capacity of the institute in promotion and preservation of tribal heritage/culture for North-eastern region as a whole.
- Capacity building for upkeep of the museum.

### **1.5 Approach to the study**

In carrying the present evaluation study, the following procedure was adopted.

- (i) A desk review based on available documents with the Institute.
- (ii) Ascertaining factual information from the research staff about their research, training received and imparted, career progression, qualifications/special training received, etc. through a brief questionnaire as well as holding discussions.
- (iii) Group meetings with research staff— current officiating head (joint director), Museum curator, Librarian, research/technical staff and accounts officer of the institute

### **1.6 Structure of the Report**

The study is organized into a number of sections. The following section provides a brief account of the tribal communities in India including their main characteristics. Inter alia the section also outlines the salient features of tribals in the north-eastern states as well as of the tribes in Assam. Section 3 is devoted to providing a profile of the Institute including a description of its research and training activities. Section 3 also gives an idea of the resources—physical and manpower available with the Institute. Section 4 is an attempt to review the functioning of the Institute, including its main strengths and weaknesses. The report concludes with suggestions to improve the functioning of the Institute, as well as measures for the future development of the Institute in section 5.

## Section 2: A Profile of Tribal Population in India

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### 2.1 Introduction

This section provides a brief profile of the tribal population in India. This is, followed by a specific description of the tribal population residing in the North-eastern States of India. The last sub-section outlines the socio-economic and cultural profile of the tribal communities in Assam. Inter alia, where appropriate specific policy interventions and measures initiated by the Union and state governments to improve the conditions of the tribal populations are indicated.

### 2.2 Scheduled Tribes in India—An Overview

Since independence, numerous programmes and schemes have been formulated to achieve development of Scheduled Tribes, run their course and disappeared, without fulfilling their intended goal. Some have been replaced without evaluating the performance benefit to the target group. To begin with the household economic wellbeing among Scheduled Tribes, household monthly expenditure could serve as a proxy for household monthly income may be taken to reflect the standard of living of the members of households. In rural India, about 17 per cent of Scheduled Tribes spent less than Rs 225 per month per capita as compared to 4 per cent among 'Others' (NSS Report No. 469). The proportion of persons in the highest MPCE class, i.e. those who spent Rs 950 or more per month was highest among 'Others', about 6 per cent as against 1 per cent among Scheduled Tribes. As high as 65 per cent of the Scheduled Tribes spent up to Rs 380 per month as against 36 per cent among 'Others'.

The household characteristics with regards to type of houses and availability of basic amenities such as electricity, safe drinking water, sanitation and drainage facilities provide a picture of the basic infrastructure and environment in which the people live and which have a direct bearing on their health and hygiene and even to the success of many of the programmes taken up by the government. According to the 2001 census, about 24 per cent are living in pucca houses among Scheduled Tribes as against 42 per cent in all others. About 36 and 17 per cent of households have access to electricity and latrine among Scheduled Tribes, respectively. The corresponding figures are 42.4 and 23.70 respectively for others. However, about 62 per cent of Scheduled Tribes households have access to safe drinking water, which is very close to the figure of others.

Table 2.1 presents the proportion of population below the poverty line among Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and all population in rural areas. The official data on poverty suggest that population below the poverty line is the highest among Scheduled Tribes. Although there has been a reduction in the incidence of poverty among all sections of the population, one of the major issues is that the reduction of poverty among Scheduled Tribes is much less than for the others and Scheduled Castes. High level of poverty among Scheduled Tribes has further impact on infant mortality, child mortality and maternal mortality and morbidity. According to NFHS-III data, the infant mortality, child mortality and maternal mortality was higher among Scheduled Tribes than the rest of the population.

**Table 2.1: Percentage of population below poverty line by social group**

Years	Rural Area		
	Scheduled Tribes	Scheduled Caste	All Population
1993-1994	51.94	48.11	37.27
2004-2005	47.64	36.81	28.29
Percentage Changes	4.3	11.3	9.0

**Source:** Planning Commission, March 2005 and "Ethnicity, Caste and Religion: Implications for Poverty Outcomes" by Amit Thorat; EPW, December 18, 2010, Vol. XLV, No. 51.

The education level attained by a person is likely to have a bearing on his or her prospects for better employment. Low level of school attendance rates and high level of dropout is common among Scheduled Tribes. Only about 20 per cent reach class X and the rest of them dropout between classes I–IX. Despite the constitutional guarantee of compulsory and free education up to 14 years of age, about 52 per cent dropout before completing five years of primary education. One serious issue is that those who dropped out from classes I–III have high chances of relapsing into illiteracy. It is argued that the central purpose of primary education is for literacy and primary education also constitutes the foundation of subsequent higher stages of education (World Bank, 1990). This view is probably based on the assumption that during the initial period of 4–5 years in primary schooling, a child can at best be endowed with the capabilities of reading and writing, counting and limited numeracy, though it may also probably impart limited cognitive skills of thinking and problem solving (Prakash. et al 1990).

Table 2.2 shows that the extent of illiterates among Scheduled Tribes is much higher than that for Scheduled Caste and all others in all the census years in India. In spite of considerable efforts from the government, more than half of the Scheduled Tribes population is still illiterate, whereas slightly less than half are illiterates among Scheduled Caste.

**Table 2.2: Number of Illiterates and Literacy rates in India**

Year	Scheduled Castes		Scheduled Tribes		All Social Groups	
	Illiterates (in million)	Literacy Rates	Illiterates (in million)	Literacy Rates	Illiterates (in million)	Literacy Rates
1961	42.50	12.80	20.83	10.62	229	31.00
1971	51.22	18.28	26.22	14.07	256	38.20
1981	60.01	27.00	33.03	20.35	302	43.67
1991	69.53	37.41	38.08	29.60	320	52.21
2001	62.40	54.70	36.40	47.10	304	65.38 (68.8%)*

**Note:** Literacy rates and number of illiterates are for 7+ population. \* Literacy rate excluding SCs & STs

**Source:** Various round of Census of India.

The situation is worse among Scheduled Tribes women. About 66 per cent among Scheduled Tribes women aged 15-49 years cannot read at all as compared to 28.5 per cent among 'others' (NFHS-3 2005-06) (Table 2.3).

**Table 2.3: Level of Learning among Women Aged 15–49 (2005–06)**

	Cannot Read At all (%)	Completed Class VI + (%)
Scheduled Tribes	66	25
Scheduled Caste	55.9	34.1
Others	28.5	59.5

Sources: National Family Health Survey (NFHS-III) International Institute for Population Science,

A recent survey of NCAER (2006) found that, in spite of providing free hostel facilities to Scheduled Tribes students some of the girls' students' dropped out to work as a domestic servant in their landlord's house to repay the loan taken by her father.

According to the available data almost 69 per cent of the scheduled tribe populations were main workers of whom nearly 51 per cent were cultivators and 28 per cent were agricultural labourers, thus indicating that almost 79 per cent of the main workers were engaged in primary sector activities. In case of among others, 80 percent of main workers to total workers whom 31.6 per cent were cultivators and 26.6 per cent agricultural labourers, thus 58 per cent are engaged in Primary sector (Census 2001). Thus as indicated in Table 2.1, it is not surprising that the proportion of scheduled tribe population below the poverty line is substantially higher compared to the national average.

It is therefore appropriate that both the Union and state governments have over the years initiated numerous schemes and programmes for the betterment of the conditions of scheduled caste population in the country.

### 2.3 Scheduled Tribes in North-eastern Region

The North-eastern Region of the country which is a home of numerous diverse tribal communities, shares its boundary with Bhutan and China in North, Myanmar in South and Bangladesh in East. The region is one of the most beautiful region endowed with richness of natural resources. Paradoxically at the same time it is backward. The area has also become among the poorest in terms of income levels of people in this region, with high incidence of rural poverty. There are conflicts and confrontations over land use and control as well as issues of language, identity, demographic changes and where majority are minority.

The North-eastern Region consists of 7 states in India. These are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura; popularly known as Seven Sisters. The region is covering 262,185 sq. km, which is 8 per cent of the total geographical area and holds 3.78 per cent of the total population of India. Sikkim has also now been included in NER. The overall economic development of all states of North-eastern region is found to be very low. These states together contribute about 2.5 per cent to NNP in India as estimated.

Table 2.4 provides information in regard to the demographic and education profile of tribal populations living in the North-eastern states. Except Tripura, the per cent of scheduled caste population to total population in all the North-eastern states is lower than the all India average. According to 2001 Census, the female literacy rate is much higher than the all India average in all the North-eastern States except Arunachal Pradesh. In all the North-eastern states the female mean age at marriage is higher than the all India female mean age at marriage. Except Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland, the sex ratio is also much

higher in Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura than the all India sex ratio of 933 females per 1000 males.

**Table 2.4: Demographic Profile of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste Population**

	Area (sq.km)	Population	Scheduled Tribes population (%)	Scheduled Caste population (%)	Sex ratio	Female Literacy rates	Female mean age at marriage
Arunachal Pradesh	83743	1091117	64.2	0.56	901	44.2	18.50
Assam	78438	26638407	12.4	6.85	935	56.0	18.20
Manipur	22327	2388634	34.2	2.77	978	59.7	19.40
Meghalaya	22429	2306069	85.9	0.48	975	60.4	19.20
Mizoram	21087	891058	94.5	0.03	938	86.2	20.00
Nagaland	16579	1988636	89.0	0.00	909	62.1	20.30
Tripura	10486	3191168	31.2	17.37	950	65.1	17.70
All India	3166285	1027015247	8.02	16.20	933	54.1	17.40

Source: Census of India, 2001

In order to protect the interests of the scheduled tribes with regard to land alienation and other social concerns, provisions of Sixth Schedule have been provided in the Constitution of India. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India under Article 244 (2) recognises certain areas of the North-eastern states as tribal areas and provides for constitution of Autonomous District Councils and Regional Councils. Two Hills Districts of Assam viz: Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills were created under Sixth Schedule of Constitution of India.

## 2.4 Tribal Population in Assam

Assam is one of the major states in the North-eastern Region characterised by low level of development mainly due to inadequate infrastructure. According to the 2001 Census the population of Scheduled Tribes in the total population of Assam was 12.4 per cent, with a literacy rate of 62.5 per cent, being quite close to the literacy rate elsewhere. About 95 per cent of Scheduled Tribes live in the rural areas. Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Nalbari, Nagaon, Dhemaji, Jorhat and Sibsagar are some of the districts where almost 98 per cent of scheduled tribes live in rural areas.

Tribals in Assam, as in other states, are known for their unique ways of living and different culture, which provide them a distinct identity in the state. They also live in different ecological settings, mostly in hilly areas and have different systems of social control. There are 23 types of Scheduled Tribes in Assam, of which 14 are hill tribes and the others live in plains. The hill Tribes are a residue of the once composite state of Assam that included the four hill districts that eventually became the separate states of Nagaland (1963), Meghalaya and Mizoram (1972). Hence, all hill tribes in Assam have a historical background who have been demanding an 'autonomous state' within Assam. The classification and identification of Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Castes (OBC) is a state subject. Therefore, the criteria for identification are not uniform across states.

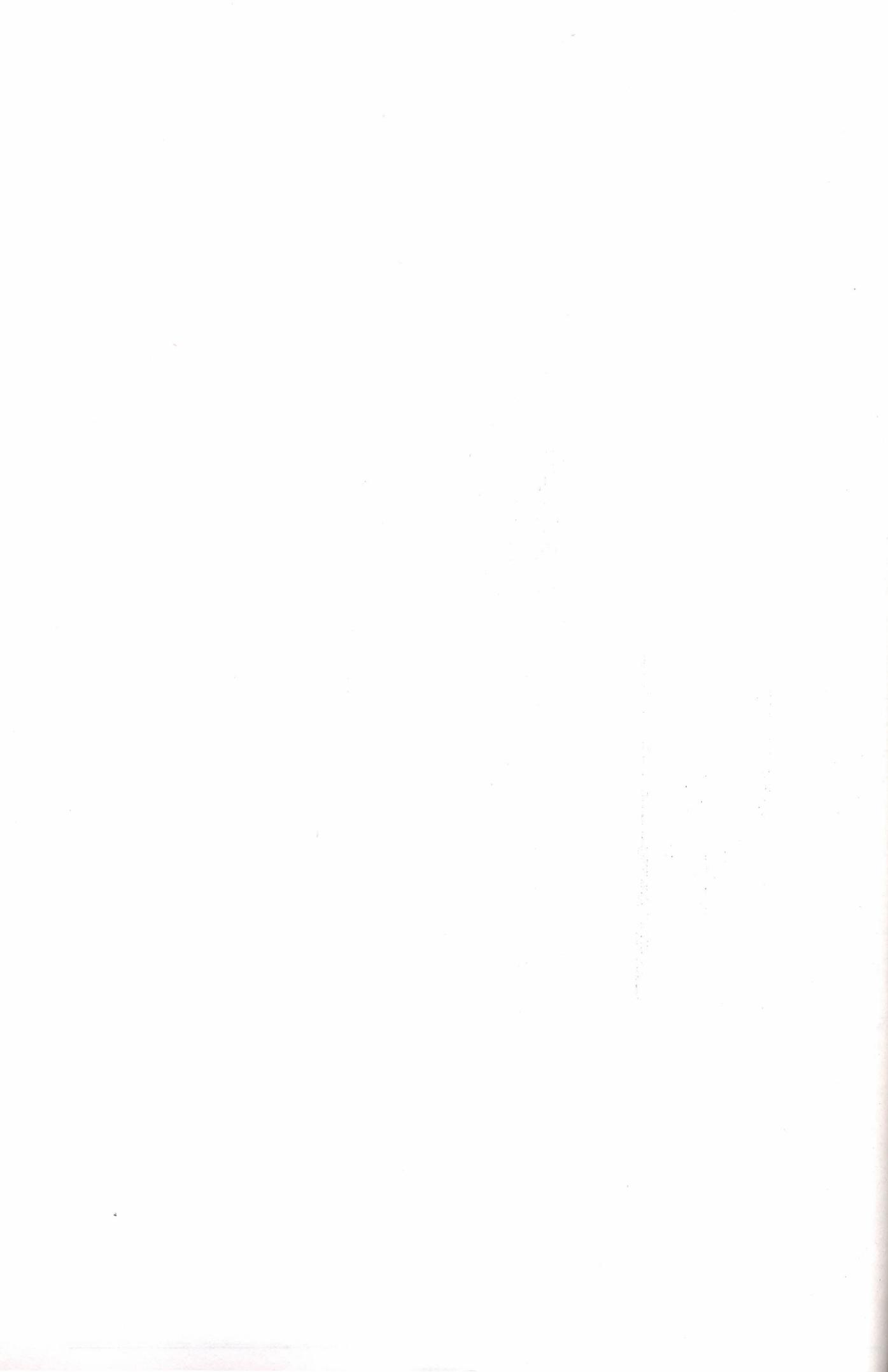
Even after 60 years of independence many of the tribals remain marginalised, and hence are unable to get benefits of the existing schemes. Many tea garden workers had migrated to Assam from Hazaribagh district of Bihar, some parts of West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa more than 150 years ago, 97 tea garden worker tribes are still not included in the list of scheduled tribes (plain) in Assam. Many of them are poorest of the poor. Very often they do not bring their children for immunization to government organised immunization camps out of grievances.

Under the umbrella of tribal community, there are number of sub-tribes which are nomadic. They occupy the lowest position in social hierarchy. The nomadic tribes are constantly on the move, they do not have any single place or state of domicile, nor do they traditionally possess land rights or house titles. As a result, they are deprived not only of welfare programmes, but also of citizenship rights, such as ration cards, electoral identity cards, etc. As a consequence inter-community conflicts have increased over time. Table 2.5 presents the population among both Hill and Plain tribes living in Assam.

**Table 2.5: Tribe-wise population in Assam**

Hill Tribes		Plains Tribes	
Name of the Tribes	Population	Name of the Tribes	Population
1. Chakma	4187	1. Barmans in Cachar	13378
2. Dimasa	65009	2. Boro kachar	1267015
3. Garo	17998	3. Deori	35849
4. Hajong	1638	4. Hojai	4582
5. Hmar	111358	5. Sonowal Kachari	251725
6. Khasi, Jaintia, etc.	11358	6. Tiwa (Lalung)	143746
7. Any Kuki	21883	7. Mech	6738
8. Lakher	36	8. Mishing (Miri)	467790
9. Man (Tai speaking)	2582	9. Rabha	236931
10. Any Mizo	1031	10. Dimasa	Not enumerated in 2001 Census as Plains Tribes
11. Mikir (Karbi)	285811	11. Hajong	
12. Any Naga tribes	15354	12. Sinpho	
13. Pawai	777	13. Khamti	
14. Synteng	368	14. Garo	
15. Lalung (Tiwa)	Not enumerated in 2001 Census Hill Tribes		

**Source:** Socio-Political Situation of the Tribes of Assam since Ahom Period by G.C. Kakati and B.K. Barman. In Tribes of North-east India : Issues and Challenges (2008-09).



## Section 3: Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes

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### 3.1 An Overview

This section provides an account of the existing physical infrastructure, available manpower —technical and support, research and training activities, seminars and workshops organised by the Assam Institute of Research for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste. The section also provides an assessment of the various resources of the Institute such as the library, the ethnographic museum and the publication section, all of which are essential components of the Institute.

#### 3.1.1 Campus Infrastructure:

Having an own campus for any institution is the first step in its development. The “Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes” (AIRTSC) has its own campus in ‘Jawaharnagar’, Guwahati. It is located on the outskirts of the main city. It has an area of about 43,200 sq. ft. The institute has a three-storied building comprising two wings. The carpet area of the building is 24,000 sq.ft. It has a library with about 9000 books and documents. The library has separate area for stacking the books as well as a fairly decent sized reading room. The library has been regularly acquiring books with nearly 200–250 acquisitions every year. The library is currently subscribing to 4 Journals on a regular basis. The Institute has also an ethnographic Museum (details provided later in this section) and a publication wing.



#### 3.1.2 Profile of Manpower:

The Institute has a position of a Director who is usually from the civil services. He is supported by a joint director and by a deputy director; both these positions are also generally held by persons from the state civil services. The Institute has both research and support staff. At the technical level there is a librarian, a Museum Curator and an accountant. The accountant is usually from the state secretariat. Table 3.1 gives an idea of the current staff strength of the Institute, including the vacant positions.

**Table 3.1: Information about the staff of this Directorate**

Sl. No.	Name of the Post	No. of Posts	Remarks
1.	Director	1	Vacant. Currently held by a Sr. Assam Civil Service (ACS) Officer
2	Joint Director	1	Currently officiating as Director
3.	Dy. Director	1	At present the post is held by Sr. ACS Officer
4	Curator	1	Look after the Museum and Carry out research
5.	Research Officer	2	Research Staff
6.	Asst. Research Officer	2	Research Staff
7	Sr. Investigator	2	Research Staff
8.	Asstt.Suptd.	1	Support Staff
9	Accountant	1	Support Staff
10	Stenographer	2	Support Staff
11	Librarian	1	Support Staff
12	U.D.Asstt.	3	1 vacant (Support Staff)
13.	L.D.Asstt	6	2 vacant (Support Staff)
14	Photographer	1	(Support Staff)
15	Driver	5	3 vacant (Support Staff)
16	Peon	7	2 vacant (Support Staff)
17	Wage earners (Fixed pay)	7	(Support Staff)

Source: AIRTSC

There has been little movement or change in the staff strength since 2005–06 as is evident from the (Table 3.2). It may also be mentioned that no upward movement of the staff was noticed.

**Table 3.2: Staff in Position since last Five Years**

Years	Number of Research Staff	Number of Support Staff	Number of Staff in Museum	Number of vacant posts among support staff
2004–05	6	32	1	2
2005–06	6	31	1	2
2006–07	6	30	1	3
2007–08	6	28	1	4
2008–09	6	28	1	4
2009–10	6	28	1	3

Source: AIRTSC

Table 3.2 suggests that there were no changes at the level of research staff, and even at the support staff level there has not been much movement of the staff.

### 3.1.3 Professional qualification of the Research Staff:

The current strength of research staff is 7 research officers, one of them designated as curator. The existing research staff has MA degree in the relevant areas. Out of six research staff, 4 of them have specialisation in Social Anthropology; the other two have Master's degree in Economics. They have also received training in the preservation of certain agricultural products and basic operation of computer. None of them have a Ph.D. or formal research training. Over the period of their stay in the Institute the research staff has

received training. Based on their training they have been regularly organising training programmes on a variety of themes, especially for the unemployed youth for self-employment.

### 3.1.4 Documentation of Tribal Culture:

The Institute has undertaken documentation of various aspects of tribal life, including their socio-cultural details, historical, folk dances and festivals, etc. for wider dissemination in a scientific way among people to the public, besides serving as an important reference record. The institute has so far documented five tribal languages of hill tribes so far. These are 'Hajong', 'Goro', 'Karbi', 'Dimasa' and 'Zeme Naga' Tribes (Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3: List of Documentation of Tribal language**

Sl.No.	Year	Name of the Documentation	Tribes
1	2007	Documentation of Tribal language	Hajong
2	2007	Documentation of Tribal language	Garo
3	2007	Documentation of Tribal language	Karbi
4	2007	Documentation of Tribal language	Dimasa
5	2007	Documentation of Tribal language	Zeme Naga

Source: AIRTSC

The institute has also been keeping records of documentary films. Table 3.4 provides the range of collection of films that the Institute has prepared since 2004–05. In addition Table 3.4 provides details about the duration of the film and the tribe to which these films are related.

**Table 3.4: Name of the Films produced by the Institute**

Sl.No.	Years	Name of Films	Duration (min)	Tribes
1	2004–05	1. Wangala festival of Garo community	30	Garo
		2. Dance of Hajong Community	-do-	Hajong
2	2005–06	1. Religious festival of Man (Tai speaking)	15	Man Tai
3	2006–07	1. Bamboo is our life, Karbi & dimasa	30	Karbi&
		2. Singphos of Assam	-do-	Dimasa Singphos
4	2007–08	1. Life and culture of Sonowal kacharis of Assam	30	Sonowal
		2. Life and Culture of Rabha Community of Assam	-do-	kachari Rabha
5	2008–09	NIL	NIL	NIL
6	2009–10	1. Documentation of Bodo Language	60	Bodo
		2. Murong Ghar and porag Festival	30	Mising
		3. Life and Culture of Tai Phakes of Assam	-do-	Tai Phake

Source: AIRTSC

The documentary film of 'Wangala Festival of Garo' community was recorded in 2004–05 and the duration of this film is about 30 minutes.

The documentary film of 'Dance of Hajong' community was also recorded for about 30 minutes in 2004–05.

In 2005–06, a 'Religious festival of Man (Tai speaking)' was recorded. The duration of the film is only for 15 minutes.

In 2006–07, a documentary film among ‘Karbi & Dimassa’ was recorded for about half an hour. The name of the film is ‘Bamboo is our life’ of Karbi and Dimasa. Another documentary film was recorded among ‘Sinphos of Assam’ for about half an hour in the same year.

Two documentary films were recorded in the year 2007–08. One was recorded about ‘Life and culture of Sonowal Kacharis of Assam’ and the other was recorded about ‘Life and culture of Rabha Community of Assam’. Both the films are for half an hour only.

In 2009–10, the institute has recorded three documentary films among the tribals of Assam. One of the films for about an hour was documented about ‘Bodo Language’. One was documented among ‘Mising’ tribe of Assam. The name of the film is ‘Murong Ghar and Porag Festival’ among ‘Mising’ for about half an hour. The ‘Tai Phake’ is one of the hill tribes of Assam. A documentary film for about half an hour was recorded to show ‘Life and culture of Tai Phakes’ of Assam in the year 2009–10.

### 3.1.5 Research Output during the past five years:

An idea in regard to the range of studies and the areas in which the Institute’s staff has engaged itself can be judged from Table 3.5. This contains an overview of the research studies conducted during 2005–06 and 2008–09.

**Table 3.5: Type of Research Studies conducted by the Institute in last five years**

Years	Name of the Research Study
2005–2006	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Research Study on Tribal Situation in changing Environment and Health Aspect of Children of the Tiwa Tribes of Nagaon and Karbi Anglong District</li> <li>2. Research Study on the Tribal situation in Changing Environment: A study on the Mishing of lakhimpur and Dhemaji District</li> </ol>
2006–2007	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A study on Curative Health Aspects of the tribal of undivided Darrang and Sonitpur district of Assam.</li> <li>2. A study on the determination of infant mortality in relation to health aspects among the Garos and Rabhas of Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam.</li> <li>3. A study on the Socio-economic condition and problems faced by the tribals living in the forest villages of Nagaon and Golaghat districts of Assam.</li> <li>4. A study on the Khamti and Singpho tribes of Assam –an ethnographic note.</li> </ol>
2007–2008	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Human Development Indicators for Scheduled Tribes of Assam</li> <li>2. Utilisation of reservation for the Scheduled Tribes in Government Jobs (State/Central including PSU)</li> <li>3. Availability of credit to the Scheduled Tribes of Kamrup, Nogaon, Golaghat and Jorhat Districts of Assam</li> </ol>
2008–2009	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ethnographic notes on Moran</li> <li>2. Ethnographic notes on Matak</li> <li>3. Ethnographic notes on Koch Rajbanshi</li> </ol>

Source: AIRTSC

### 3.1.6 Brief Description and scope of research studies conducted in the Institute since 2005–06:

In order to gain an idea about the scope and utility of some of the research work carried out at the Institute, an attempt is made to provide brief descriptions of select studies. From a close look at these it would be clear that the staff has been continuously engaged in research on issues relevant to providing an

understanding of the problems of tribal population in the state. The Institute has endeavoured to present the findings of their research, especially to the state department of tribal affairs, to the university scholars and through the Institute's Annual Bulletin. The following provides short descriptions of select research projects.

**(i) During 2005–06**, two studies were carried out by the institute on 'Tribal Situation in Changing Environment'. One was carried out on the health aspects of children of the Tiwa Tribes in Morigaon and Karbi Anglong districts. The Tiwa believe that mystical powers like evil eye, evil mouth, and evil touch are the agents of diseases. The Tiwa observe Puja to appease various malevolent deities and spirits who are believed to cause diseases and epidemics. They also treat diseases with locally available herbs, roots and creepers. Policy suggestion has been given to extend the ICDS facilities as the services are not reaching to these villages. Emergent health care of the children in the post flood season should be given top priority as children mostly suffer from Malaria, small pox, colic pain during this season.

The other was a case study on the Mising of Lakhimpur and Dhemaji District of Assam. Mising is known as one of the plain tribes in Assam. However, according to a Mising writer 'Sonaram Payeng', the Miris came down to the plains as the Abors (hilly area of Arunachal Pradesh) constantly oppressed them by committing theft, loot etc. being thus humiliated the Miris left their hilly abode and came to the plains. In this migration the members of 'Doley' and 'Pegu' left the hills while some families of other clans remained in their original place. The main feature of the Mising villages is that the people always prefer to construct their houses on the banks or near the banks of a river and they try to co-habit with the recurring floods. Sometimes they are badly affected by floods and families are compelled to shift their villages. Thus the Mising villages do not have, by and large, permanent villages.

The study has tried to analyse the problems of the Mising who have been displaced due to flood and changes in their way of life.

The study highlights that both Dhemaji and Lakhimpur districts are badly affected by flood and erosion which alone contributes towards overall backwardness of the tribal population. Pressure on land is increasing. The overall economy of the Mising remains in the subsistence level. The unemployment is mounting, lack of higher education, lack of awareness being the reasons for overall backwardness.

**(ii) During 2006–07 and 2007–08**, four research studies were done by the Institute. These are (a) study on the Socio-economic conditions and problems faced by the tribals living in the forest villages of Nagaon and Golaghat districts of Assam, (b) A study on Khamti and Singpho tribes of Assam-an ethnographic note, (c) A study on Curative Health aspects of the tribal of undivided Darrang and Sonitour district of Assam, (d) A study on the determination of infant mortality in relation to health aspects among the Garos and Rabhas of Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam

a. *The study on the Socio-economic condition and problems faced by the tribals living in the forest villages of Nagaon and Golaghat districts of Assam:* The forest villages were established under the Forest regulatory Act 1891. The primary objective of setting up such villages was to gather full time work force for Forest department and at the same time to enhance protection of the forest through these settlers. The study was conducted to know the present socio-economic status of the tribals living in the forest village. The study highlights that even though the government allows them to stay in the

forest village but they do not own the land right; like patta. These are not revenue villages. Due to lack of patta the villagers are unable to avail certain benefits of government's scheme and financial institute also do not provided loans. The study finds that their economic condition is worse than the neighboring revenue village.

- b. *A study on Khamti and Singpho tribes of Assam—an ethnographic note:* These two tribes have got the status of ST in the Government list recently. The study tried to assess the current socio-economic condition of these two tribes as they are able to get Government benefits now.
- c. *A study on Curative Health aspects of the tribal of undivided Darrang and Sonitpur district of Assam:* The study was conducted in 15 Bodo–Kachari inhabited villages of Darrang district and 15 Mising tribe inhabited villages of Sonitpur district. The major objectives of the study were to find out the socio-cultural factors that compel them to rely on traditional medicine, to determine role played by medicine man and medicine used by the tribal people for treatment, to find out the status of curative health care and herbal medicine prevalent among the tribals, to assess the priority of health care and expenditure incurred in curative health aspects of tribals, etc. The study finds that majority of tribal women are not aware of the family birth control measures provided freely by the Government. The studies suggest that, the health providers/ANM/ gram sevikas should be specially entrusted to educate the women folk about small family norms. The dependence on traditional magic religious beliefs should be discarded with the help of Media publicity.
- d. *A study on the determination of infant mortality in relation to health aspects among the Garos and Rabhas of Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam:* The study highlights the major reasons of high infant mortality among the tribals. Lack of awareness, hard work during pregnancy, home delivery, lack of pre and post natal care and traditional practice are the factors for high infant mortality among the tribals. The study suggests strengthening the existing health facilities in such villages.

(iii) **During 2008–09**, two studies were conducted (a) Availability of Credit to Scheduled Tribes of Kamrup, Nagaon, Golaghat and Jorhat district of Assam, (b) Human Development Indicators for Scheduled Tribes of Assam.

**(a) Availability of Credit to Scheduled Tribes of Kamrup, Nagaon, Golaghat and Jorhat district of**

**Assam:** The major objectives of the study were to know about the awareness of the tribal people living in the state regarding availability of credit facilities. To assess the impact of Government credit policy and measures on the tribal dominated areas. To ascertain the level of utilisation of the loans availed and payment of the loans. To assess the problems faced by the Tribal living in Assam in getting credit. Total 40 villages were considered for the study. Ten villages were considered each from Kamrup, Nagaon, Golaghat and Jorhat districts of Assam. The study confined to five tribal communities; they are 'Bodo', 'Rabha', 'Lalung', 'Mising' and 'Deori'. The study has provided following suggestions.

- Monitoring of the credit utilisation should be done as loan amount is diverted to other heads mostly on consumer items.
- Due to absence of regular visit of collectors from bank authorities, irregular repayment cases are increasing. The credit sanctioning authorities should be particular in reminding the people taking loans to repay installments.

- In order to get successful implementation of the credit scheme; the Government should provide infrastructural facilities.
- The loans should be sanctioned expeditiously. It is alleged that middlemen (even local political leaders) act as mediator to provide loans to the illiterate tribal people by demanding commission.
- Special credit policy may be formulated for flood prone areas.
- The bank authorities should have personnels to assist the tribals rather than rejecting the loan application on the grounds of improper schemes.
- The NGOs/SHGs role remains to be bolstered as the present services appear to be insufficient.
- The banks have been involved mainly in the distribution of loans and subsidies and have never organised a get together of the loanees to explain the financing schemes which properly and sincerely implemented can go a long way to ameliorate the poor socio-economic status of the tribal people. It should be the duty of the bank authorities to hold regular interaction with the loanees in the field situation.

**(b) Human Development Indicators for Scheduled Tribes of Assam:** The major objective of the study was to assess the current status of health, education, material wellbeing, infrastructural facilities of human development indicators and structural changes needed in human development among 'Tiwa', 'Bodo' and 'Rabha'. Human development implies qualitative growth of people with capabilities and potentialities to grow and develop. Education, environment, food and nutrition, information, media, transport and communication, health care facilities, housing, sanitation, adjustment to changing situation are salient features of human development. The study was covering four districts of Assam. These are Morigaon, Kamrup, Darrang and Odalguri covering 10 villages from each district. The study suggests the following measures.

- Urgent attention should be given to improve the village roads.
- Pure drinking water facilities should be extended to the village.
- The villagers should be mobilized to accept diversification of the economy.
- As the tribal people possess the requisite expertise, hence the cottage industry should be revitalised.
- Suitable step should be taken to stop school dropout.
- Need based formulation of the schemes should be taken on priority base.

### **3.1.7 Evaluation Studies:**

Apart from conducting research studies on various aspects of tribal life, the Institute is also engaged in carrying out evaluations of various schemes and programmes for the welfare of tribals. The Institute has also carried out studies to assess the benefits accruing to targeted tribal communities. The following are some of the key evaluation studies carried out by the Institute.

### **List of Evaluation Studies**

1. Social assessment study in 3 DPEP Districts of Assam.
2. Mid-term Learners Assessment in 5 DPEP Districts of Assam.
3. Working of ST Boys' Hostel of Assam.
4. Working of SC Boys' Hostel of Assam.
5. An Evaluation Study on the Utilisation of Quota of Seats in Admission by SC and ST in Educational (Technical) Institutions of Greater Guwahati.
6. Evaluation study on the pre-Examination Coaching sponsored by Assam Administrative Staff College, Guwahati.
7. Evaluation Study of the Impact of the scheme of Post-Matric Scholarship to the scheduled castes of Assam.
8. Evaluation study on the Role of NGOs in Assam.
9. Evaluation study on NGOs working for SC/ST people of Assam during the year 2001–2002.
10. Evaluation Study on Family Oriented Income generating Scheme (FOIGS).
11. National Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers and their dependants (NSLRS).

A close look at the above-mentioned studies clearly shows the wide range of subjects covered. They range from assessing the impact of post matric scholarship schemes for the ST candidates, utilisation of seats in admission, assessing the quota schemes, working of the hostel scheme for STs, etc. The findings of these evaluation studies are made available to the policy makers in the state.

#### **3.1.8 Publications:**

The Institute has constantly endeavoured to not only undertake the publication of the research work and evaluations for wider dissemination but also accept for publication of researches of outside scholars in case they are relevant to the objectives of the Institute. The Institute so far has a good record of publications as is evident from Table 3.6.

**Table 3.6: List of General Publications of the Institute**

Sl.No.	Name of Books and Year of Publication	Name of Editor	Remarks
1	Chomangkan- The death ceremony observed by the Karbis, 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition (1982)	Dr. B.N. Bordolai	
2	The dimasa kacharis of Assam, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition, (1984)	Dr. B.N. Bordolai	
3	The lalungs (Tiwas), 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 1985	Dr. G.C. Sharma Thakur	
4	Alienation of Tribal Land and Indebtedness, 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 1986	Dr. B.N. Bordolai Dr. G.C. Sharma Thakur	Publication based on seminar organized by the institute
5	Tribes of Assam, (Popular series) Pt-I 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 1987	Dr. B.N. Bordolai Dr. G.C. Sharma Thakur and M.C. Saikia	Monograph
6	Tribes of Assam, (Popular series) Pt-II 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 1988	Dr. B.N. Bordolai Dr. G.C. Sharma Thakur	Monograph
7	Application of Science and Technology for Tribal Development, 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 1988	Dr. B.N. Bordolai	Publication based on seminar organized by the institute
8	Constraints of Tribal Development in North East India, Edition, 1990	Dr. B.N. Bordolai	Publication based on seminar organized by the institute
9	Tribes of Assam, (Popular series) Pt-III 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 1991	Dr. B.N. Bordolai	Monograph
10	Socio-Economic Development of the Scheduled castes of Assam, 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 1992	Dr. G.C. Sharma Thakur	Publication based on seminar organized by the institute
11	Socio-Economic Conditions of the kaibartas of Assam (A case study) 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 1994.	Dr. B.N. Bordolai	Publication based on seminar organized by the institute
12	Core Problems of the Scheduled Castes of Assam, 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 1995.	B.K.Hazarika	Publication based on seminar organized by the institute
13	Forest Resources in Hill Districts of Assam- Constraints of Development, 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 1998	R. Zaman	Publication based on seminar organized by the institute
14	Report on the Survey of Alienation of Tribal Land in Assam, 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 1999	Dr. B.N. Bordolai	Based on Survey Report
15	Health and Education among the Tribes of Assam: Problems and Prospects, 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition 2001	N.A. Hazarika	Publication based on seminar organized by the institute
16	Communal Harmony Among the Tribal and Non-Tribal Communities of N.E. India, 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 2004	AIRTSC Publication	Publication based on seminar organized by the institute
17	The Dimasa Kacharis of Assam, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition, (1984)	Dr. B.N. Bordolai	Reprint, 2005
18	Tribes of Assam, (Popular Series) Pt-I, 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 1987	Dr. B.N. Bordolai Dr. G.C. Sharma Thakur and M.C. Saikia	Reprint, 2005
19	Tribes of Assam, (Popular series) Pt-II 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 1988	Dr. B.N. Bordolai Dr. G.C. Sharma Thakur	Reprint, 2005
20	Hand Book of United Mikirs and North Cachar Hills, 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 1972	Dr. B.N. Bordolai	Reprint, 2005
21	The Plains Tribes of Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur and Nagaon Districts	Dr. B.N. Bordolai	Reprint, 2005
22	Tribal Tradition and Development in the Hill Areas of Assam, 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 2006	Dr. G.N. Das	Publication based on seminar organized by the institute
23	Tribal Women and Development, 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition, 2007	Compiled by Dr. G.N.Das	Publication based on seminar organized by the institute
24	A Report on Socio-Economic Conditions of Tribal and Non-Tribal Villages of Morigaon and Nagaon Districts of Assam	Conducted by the Institute	Study Report
25	Empowerment of Tribal Women of Assam	N.A. Hazarika	Publication based on seminar organized by the institute
26	Institute's Annual Research Bulletin		

Source: AIRTSC

It may be mentioned that these publications are reasonably priced, but despite this a large number of copies remain unsold. This is a serious issue and requires attention in regard to the number of copies that need to be printed.

### 3.1.9 Training:

Apart from research, yet another important activity of the Institute is training. Accordingly the Institute is constantly engaged in imparting training on a wide range of subjects, including training in income earning activities like in the preservation of food, making pickles, up gradation of skills, etc.

Table 3.7 provides an idea about the types of training and subjects/issues on which programmes were organised during the course of past five years. More than three training programmes were conducted in a year.

**Table 3.7: Type of Training courses organised by the Institute during 2005–06 to 2009–10**

Name of the Training Programme	Duration of the Training	Number of Participants attended	Budget (Rs in lakh)	
			allotted	spent
1. "Training course on Muga reeler cum spinner" in collaboration Director Sericulture Assam Khanapara Guwahati-22	19 <sup>th</sup> Jan to 2 <sup>nd</sup> Feb 2006	26	0.86	0.86
2. Training Programme on 'Medicinal and Aromatic plants' in collaboration with CIMAP, Lucknow	6 <sup>th</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup> March 2006	20	2.12	2.12
3. Training Programme on Computer Basic for Unemployed ST youth	26 <sup>th</sup> July to 18 <sup>th</sup> August 2006	25	1.20	1.20
4. Training Programme on Unemployed ST youth	9 <sup>th</sup> to 25 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2006	25	1.07	1.07
5. Training Programme on Food preservation for Unemployed ST youth	6 <sup>th</sup> to 19 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2006	25	0.75	0.75
6. Training Programme on Computer Basic for Unemployed ST youth	19 <sup>th</sup> July to 10 <sup>th</sup> August 2007	25	1.12	1.12
7. Skill upgradation of Tribal weavers by Integrated Handloom training programme on Vanya silk	22 <sup>nd</sup> May to 21 <sup>st</sup> July 2006	20	2.88	2.88
8. Training cum workshop on implementation of the National rural Employment Guarantee Programme 2005 (NREGP) for state Govt. officials	17 <sup>th</sup> to 22 <sup>nd</sup> Sept. 2007	31	4.00	4.00
9. Training Programme on Computer basic for unemployed ST youth	1 <sup>st</sup> 23 <sup>rd</sup> July 2008	25	1.25	1.25
10. Training Programme on Fishery for Unemployed ST youth	6 <sup>th</sup> to 15 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2008	30	1.45	1.45
11. Training Programme on Food Preservation for Unemployed ST youth	19 <sup>th</sup> 28 <sup>th</sup> August 2008	25	0.80	0.80
12. Training Programme on weaving for Unemployed ST youth	10 <sup>th</sup> Sept to 9 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2008	24	3.00	3.00
13. Training Programme on computer basic for unemployed ST youth	9 <sup>th</sup> July to 1 <sup>st</sup> August 2010	25	1.81	1.81
14. Training Programme on Fishery for unemployed ST youth	23 <sup>rd</sup> to 29 <sup>th</sup> August 2010	25	1.56	1.56
15. Training programme on Food Preservation for unemployed ST youth	2 <sup>nd</sup> to 11 <sup>th</sup> August 2010	30	1.50	1.50
17. Training programme on Beauty Culture (Hair & Skin) for unemployed ST youth	7 <sup>th</sup> to 31 <sup>st</sup> July 2010	28	2.70	2.70

Source: AIRTSC

**3.1.10 Details of Seminar organised in the last Five Years (2005–09):**

The institute has been organising Seminar/workshops from time to time as routine activities. The types of Seminars/workshops organised during the course of last five years are presented in Table 3.8

**Table 3.8: The types of Seminars Organised by the Institute during 2005–06 to 2009–10**

Name of the Seminar	Duration of the Training	Number of Participants attended	Budget (Rs in lakh)
1. Seminar on “Emerging Challenges and Prospective in Tribal Development in 21 <sup>st</sup> Century of Assam”	29 <sup>th</sup> to 30 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2005	100	1.0
2. A regional Seminar on Problems and Prospects of Tribals Development in North-East India”	27 <sup>th</sup> to 28 <sup>th</sup> August 2007	150	1.20
3. A regional Seminar on “The Tribal Communities of Assam—Problems and Prospective of Peace, Harmony and Development”	6 <sup>th</sup> and 7 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2007	120	1.00
4. Seminar on “Empowerment of Tribal Women of Assam”	6 <sup>th</sup> and 7 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2007	150	1.00
5. Seminar on “Entrepreneurship among Tribal people of Assam”	18 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2008	100	1.20
6. Seminar on “Formal Education among Tribal people of Assam”	14 <sup>th</sup> and 15 <sup>th</sup> Sept		1.50
7. Seminar on “Health care system among Tribal People of Assam”	26 <sup>th</sup> and 27 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 2010		1.50

Source: AIRTSC

**3.1.11 Museum:**

One of the important wings of the Assam institute is its ethnographic Museum. The ethnographic museums generally lay emphasis on collection of artifacts pertaining to the life and culture of different ethnic groups. Now these groups in their varied ecological conditions explore nature with their wit and experiences. Subsequently they become skilled in producing their own economy. Material culture and economy are intricately weaved to knit a beautiful mosaic of culture. The necessities of day to day life results in springing up of material culture of an ethnic group, be it in the form of storing basket, fishing trap or a wine brewer. When oral traditions cannot be preserved properly, material culture tends to throw light to reconstruct lost cultures. Indeed with such an objective, the concept of ethnographic museum came into being.

One has to go back to 1977 to know about the inception of the present ethnographic museum of Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes. The infant museum was set up along with the other wings of the Institution. The then officers and scholars were able to gather momentum in collecting the material culture in the form of museum artifacts from the entire length and breadth of Assam, the cultural cauldron of North-east India. At present the ethnographic museum displays a good number of exhibits belonging to the indigenous tribes of North-east India, particularly Assam. Bamboo and Cane-made artifacts dominates the various sections of the gallery.



*(Bamboo and Cane-made artifacts)*

This museum has preserved a variety of artifacts reflecting the socio-religious and socio-economic aspects of the multi ethnic groups in Assam. The material culture of the Tiwas, Karbis, Hmars, Dimasa Kacharis, Rabhas, the Bodos, Mishings, Sonowal Kacharis, Rengmas, Tamangs and some other tribes are housed in the showcases of the gallery in a tribe wise manner. The institution is trying to procure all the cultural objects of the tribes required in their daily life, during festivity, in funeral ceremonies, during hunting and fishing expeditions, etc. Weaving forms an integral part of tribal culture. The intricate designs in the traditional textiles are praiseworthy.

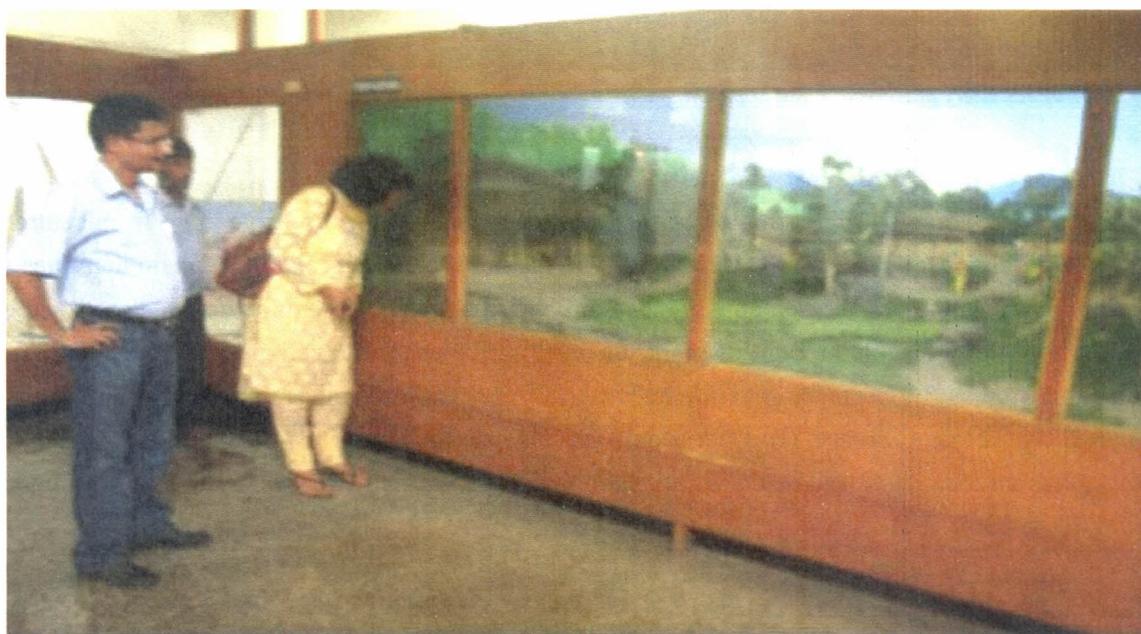
The ethnographic museum of AIRTSC is a treasure den of our past heritage. A section is maintained for each tribe, where textiles, musical instruments, hunting and fishing tools, utensils of day to day use, ornament caskets, baskets, etc. are on display. Spouted wooden bowls, wooden laddie, plunged basket, etc. find place in the showcases. Hand woven basketry and wrapped basketry built on coiled foundation are on display. Their skill is manifested in the exquisite bamboo and cane handicraft based on coiled wicks, matting and twined works. For instance, we can speak about the unique of 'Sera' of the Karbis, which is plaited in cane in the shape of a kettle, serves as a wine decanter. Again the bold and beautiful motifs in the textiles reflect their artistic pursuits and self sufficiency. Mention may be made about the RIKHAUSA, RIJAMPHAI, etc. of the Dimasa Kacharis, RIBI GOSENG of the Miris, DAUKHNA, PHASNA, JYME KHANGRA of the Bodos and the like, which are displayed in the gallery. Since last year, a separate section has been maintained for exhibiting rare and exquisite ethnic jewellery of the North-east. Most of the ornaments are made of silver. Some are silver jewellery combined with wild beads, glass, resins, feathers, etc. These rare ethnic jewellery are on the verge of getting lost. Different types of armlets and anklets find place in the showcases. Mention may be made of the beautiful "Nothengpi", a silver ear stud of the Karbis. It is the Karbi version of the Assamese tnuria. When one sees the workmanship of 'Chandrawal' the Dimasa silver necklace, one can understand the glorious heritage of that ethnic group. Necklaces made of 'Poal moni, coins, tiger tooth, amber, local rubies and the like are also on display. In that very year, the Directorate had endeavored to portray the life and culture of some indigenous tribes of Assam in the museum gallery.

In order to implement the same, picturesque landscape and sculptural figures of the Karbis, the Bodo Kacharis and Dimasa Kacharis were cast in three separate sections. One can have a vivid idea about those tribes by stealing a glance at the sculptures in their respective terrains. Another lively section has been introduced in the form of 'ethnographic photo gallery' where life and culture of different ethnic groups is being exhibited for better understanding.

The museum exhibits a wide variety of ethnographic objects including ornaments and costumes; agricultural, fishing and hunting implements; and other household objects only for tribals living in Assam. However, the space provided in the institute for museum is not enough for more objects as it is exhausted.

**The types of objects currently available in the Museum are the following.**

- i) **Rabha community:** Cloths, Basket and tools for fishing
- ii) **Bodo Kachari Community:** Clothes and Musical Instruments
- iii) **Dimasa Kachari Community:** Cloths and Musical Instruments
- iv) **Mising Community:** Typical clothes of Mising community
- v) Typical Tribal Villages of 'Boro Kachari', 'Karbi Village', 'Dimasa Kachari village and 'Mising Village' are also available in the Museum.
- vi) Few nets, which are used for hunting tigers and other wild animals by the 'Tiwa Tribe', 'Kuki' and 'Tamang' are preserved in the Museum.



*(A Model of Tribal Village Preserved in the Museum of AIRTS)*

### **Preservation of Jewellery in the Museum**

The Museum has a good collection of earrings and necklaces traditionally used by the Tribals. These ornaments traditionally belong to Dimasa Kachar, Bodo Kachari, Karbi, Garo, Rabha, Kuki, HMAR, Tiwa, Hajon, Rengma and Sonowal.

The ethnographic museum of the Institution is now laying emphasis on the collection of dying folk art, coins, traditional jewellery and other antiques. It is a universal urge for every individual to know his past.

The material culture of the tribes in the form of museum specimens are exposed to the general mass and scholars for better insights of their past heritage. The past heritage is the backbone of present culture. Museum truly serves as a base to broaden the outlook of the curious minds to know the unknown, to marvel the unraveled.



*(A set of Jewellery preserved in the Museum)*

### **3.1.12 Financial Position in the last five years (2005–09):**

The Institute receives grants from both the central and state governments. It receive grant from centre first and an equal share is received from the state later. The institute receives grants for certain activities such as for salary, publication, advertisement, grant-in-aid, for machinery & equipment, maintenance. The institute also receives a sizable amount of grant for other activities. Other activities include (a) Research and Evaluation Studies (b) Organising Seminars/workshops (c) Conducting Trainings (d) Maintenance of Museum (e) Up keeping library (f) Data Bank (g) Documentation. The following set of financial statements gives an idea about the extent of allocation on different items of expenditure for the financial years 2004–05 to 2008–09.

**Statement 1: Trend of Funds Allocation of the Institute**

Year	Type of Activities for the Year 2004-05	Rs in Lakhs	
		Budget	Released
2004-05	1. Direction and Administration	15.37	13.37
	2. Publication	4.00	4.00
	3. Advertisement	1.00	0.3
	4. Grants-in-aid	5.00	5.00
	5. Minor works	5.00	4.85
	6. Machinery & Equipment	5.40	3.40
	7. Motor Vehicle	-	-
	8. Maintenance	1.00	0.99
	9. Materials & Supply	2.50	0.95
	10. Others includes (a) Research and Evaluation Studies, (b) Seminars, (c) Training, (d) Museum, (e) Reference library, (f) Data Bank, (g) Documentation	24.73	24.18
	<b>For all activities in the year 2004-05</b>	<b>64.00</b>	<b>57.24</b>
2005-06	<b>Type of Activities and Expenditure for the year 2005-06</b>		
	1. Direction and Administration	18.30	17.81
	2. Publication	4.50	-
	3. Advertisement	1.00	1.00
	4. Grants-in-aid	6.00	-
	5. Minor works	8.00	7.95
	6. Machinery & Equipment	6.00	0.88
	7. Motor Vehicle	-	-
	8. Maintenance	1.50	1.32
	9. Materials & Supply	3.00	2.99
10. Others includes (a) Research and Evaluation Studies, (b) Seminars, (c) Training, (d) Museum, (e) reference library, (f) Data Bank, (g) Documentation	28.70	14.01	
	<b>For all activities in the year 2005-06</b>	<b>77.00</b>	<b>45.96</b>
2006-07	<b>Type of Activities and Expenditure for the year 2006-07</b>		
	1. Direction and Administration	11.00	9.47
	2. Publication	4.50	4.50
	3. Advertisement	1.00	1.00
	4. Grants-in-aid	5.00	5.00
	5. Minor works	8.00	8.00
	6. Machinery & Equipment	5.00	3.87
	7. Motor Vehicle	-	-
	8. Maintenance	1.00	1.00
	9. Materials & Supply	1.50	1.50
10. Others includes (a) Research and Evaluation Studies, (b) Seminars, (c) Training, (d) Museum, (e) Reference library, (f) Data Bank, (g) Documentation	30.00	29.84	
	<b>For all activities in the year 2006-07</b>	<b>72.00</b>	<b>64.18</b>
2007-08	<b>Type of Activities and Expenditure for the year 2007-08</b>		
	1. Direction and Administration	10.50	7.11
	2. Publication	3.00	3.00
	3. Advertisement	2.00	2.00
	4. Grants-in-aid	5.00	5.00
	5. Minor works	8.00	7.90
	6. Machinery & Equipment	4.00	1.74
	7. Motor Vehicle	7.00	-
	8. Maintenance	1.50	1.49
	9. Materials & Supply	3.00	-
	10. Scholarship Stipend	3.00	-
11. Others includes (a) Research and Evaluation Studies, (b) Seminars, (c) Training, (d) Museum, (e) Reference library, (f) Data Bank, (g) Documentation	33.00	29.52	
	<b>For all activities in the year 2007-08</b>	<b>80.00</b>	<b>57.75</b>

Year	Type of Activities for the Year 2004-05	Rs in Lakhs	
		Budget	Released
	<b>Type of Activities and Expenditure for the year 2008-09</b>		
2008-09	1. Direction and Administration	17.50	4.25
	2. Publication	5.00	
	3. Advertisement	3.00	
	4. Grants-in-aid	6.00	
	5. Minor works	20.50	
	6. Machinery & Equipment	5.00	
	7. Motor Vehicle	7.00	
	8. Maintenance	2.00	2.00
	9. Materials & Supply	4.00	
	10. Scholarship Stipend	-	-
	11 Others includes (a) Research and Evaluation Studies, (b) Seminars, (c) Training, (d) Museum, (e) Reference library, (f) Data Bank, (g) Documentation	50.00	18.00
	<b>For all activities in the year 2008-09</b>	120.00	24.15

Source: AIRTSC

It would be instructive to summarise some of salient features of Institute's financial resources, as indicated by allocations/releases contained in the above financial statements. These are:

1. In general allocations have shown a secular increase.
2. The actual amounts released are generally lower than the allocations.
3. The items marked 'Direction and Administration' and 'Others' take away a major share of total allocations.

Since 2007-08, the institute has started receiving grant separately for (i) Training, (ii) Research and Evaluation, (iii) Reference library, (iv) Ethnographic Museum, (v) Seminar/workshop, (vi) Data bank on STs, (vii) Exhibition, (viii) Documentaries on STs. The grants for these activities have gone up by 51 per cent during the course of years 2006-07 to 2008-09.

## Section 4: An Assessment of the Working of the Institute

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In this section an attempt is made to assess the performance of AIRTSC from 2005–06 onwards. The exercise is based on the available information and the discussions that the research team had with the administrative and research staff, librarian and the curator. The assessment has also used information collected from the research staff of the Institute through a brief questionnaire. The review of Institute's performance is carried out keeping in mind the broad objectives of the Terms of Reference as provided by the sponsors, namely the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India.

As indicated in Section 1, the Institute's main activities are: Research, Evaluation, Planning and Training. Specifically the Institute focuses on: publication of books relating to the tribals and their problems; dissemination of Institute's work through research bulletin; seminars and workshops; organising and participating in exhibitions; documentation of tribal life and culture through audio–visual media. In addition the Institute was required to establish a documentation centre and data bank on SC/STs and maintain an ethnographic museum for the authentic documentation and the preservation of the material culture of tribals and their heritage and a reference library.

With the above defined functions of the Institute, serving as a backdrop to the evaluation, we focus on the following activities of the Institute while carrying out the review of the working of the Institute.

1. Profile of the Manpower.
2. Infrastructure, including the Library.
3. Research, Training and Publication.
4. Capacity for promotion and preservation of tribal heritage/culture of the North-eastern region.
5. Measures for building capacity to build and maintain the Museum.

The performance review is presented below in the order indicated above.

### 4.1 Staff

Research, training and dissemination are some of the basic activities of the Institute. These are largely carried out by the research staff with the support staff acting as facilitators and providers of logistics. From the description provided in the preceding discussion, the research staff has been preoccupied in doing serious research as is evident from their publication record. They have also been developing research project proposals and successfully negotiated them to receive funding. Most projects were completed on time. In addition to carrying out research, the staff is also engaged in imparting training as is clear from the number of training programmes organized in the Institute. These trainings cover a wide variety of focus areas relevant to the needs and problems of the tribals. In addition the Institute has been deputing its staff for training with a view to updating their skills. In all one felt that, given the staff strength of the research staff, there is adequate academic and research output. However there are areas of concern which the research staff of the Institute pointed out and which they thought would contribute to improving their efficiency. These are briefly outlined below.

**First**, there was general lack of motivation among all the categories of staff. This was particularly acute among the research staff. This is despite the fact that the research staff has made significant contribution in terms of the work carried out by them during their stay in the Institute. Some of the reasons mentioned for the lack of motivation seemed to be closely related to 'lack of incentives', especially the avenues for further promotion. This was clear from the fact that most staff, especially the research staff, has continued to remain at the level that they were initially recruited.

**Second**, apart from seeking measures for career advancement through creation of promotional avenues, the staff was keen that more opportunities may be provided for training, especially trainings abroad with a view to improving and upgrading their existing skills. The staff also felt that provision of campus housing or staff housing close to the Institute would contribute to higher research productivity, as well as help in retention of staff. Given the inconvenient location of TRI most staff strongly felt that staff housing would help in devoting more time for research, training and other related activities of the Institute.

**Third**, the research staff felt that the Institute lacked an interactive environment (basically the intellectual environment) which they thought was essential for improving the quality of their research. Towards achieving the objective of creating the desired intellectual environment, one suggestion related to the appointment of a couple of consultants with expertise in select areas of interest to the Institute. This according to them would provide the desired research environment and infuse fresh air especially through exchange of ideas and the experience/expertise of the consultants. In this context some even thought of the Institute's location in the vicinity of Guwahati University. There was also a suggestion in regard to the training for the staff. Most staff wanted to be deputed to receive training not only in institutions within the country but also outside the country.

**Fourth**, mobility was mentioned as yet another constraint. The research staff felt that the provision of staff car would facilitate field work as well as also help the curator in moving around to scout for collection of tribal artifacts and other items of interest. The staff also thought that the provision of staff quarters either within the Institute campus or in its close vicinity would improve their output.

From the staff view point, it is significant to point out that at present no service rules existed for the staff.

## **4.2 Infrastructure**

### **4.2.1 Physical Infrastructure:**

The preceding discussion has brought into focus areas requiring intervention to improve the working of the Institute. First focusing on the physical infrastructure, it is clear that in terms of space, it has sufficiently large area to accommodate expansion of facilities. However, looking into the specifics, one finds the following areas for intervention.

The location of the building acts as a deterrent as far as accessibility is concerned. This is partly evident from limited number of library users as well visitors to the Museum. It is perhaps not easy to envisage a fresh campus which is accessible and close to the potential users of the Institute's resources. Perhaps, if the Guwahati University can provide adequate space on its campus, the Institute will not only widen its net of potential users but would also benefit from the interactive environment.

The other aspect which favours for a rethinking on relocation of the Institute is its proximity to a dusty neighbourhood (a local depot adjacent to Assam TRI). The rare and exotic exhibits in the ethnographic Museum are being slowly damaged by the undesirable neighbourhood.

Our visit to the Institute campus also revealed yet another problem which is partly related to the location of the Institute. The Institute is located on the main road, and as a result of frequent carpeting, relative elevation of the road *vis a vis* the Institute campus is likely to create problems of water flooding. Indeed we learnt that this has already started happening.

Apart from the issues related to the location of the Institute, there is also the issue of the size of the Museum. Given the current lack of adequate space for the Museum as was evident from the crowding of existing exhibits, storage of newly acquired artifacts may pose a problem. Not only considerably large space for Museum is needed for it to serve as a showcase of Tribal heritage of the state, but that we ensure that this heritage does not get damaged and destroyed because of lack of space, or that the lack of space in the Museum act as a pretence for slowing down acquisition. In fact we learnt that some of the artifacts were kept in store.

The library at present has adequate space for stacking the books as well as for readers. However, we found that the existing storage capacity of the room where own publications of the Institute are kept is inadequate. This was partly because there is large number of unsold copies lying there. One should review the policy in regard to the number of copies to be printed as well as the manner in which the unsold copies lying for a long period can be disposed. Also given advances in publication technology it may be prudent to print in the first instance only a limited number of copies, the number to be determined by past experience. The print can be saved for future if additional copies are required.

#### **4.2.2 Library:**

The library, which is essentially a reference library, has a collection of nearly 9000 volumes. It has one qualified Librarian and he is supported by one unskilled library assistant. The latter is mainly responsible for cleaning of the library, etc. The library is scantily used. Apart from the Institute staff, there are only a few visitors from outside. These are mostly research scholars both from India and abroad. We were told that in a year nearly 300 outsiders come and use library's resources. The visitors are mainly research scholars comprising foreign as well as Indian scholars.

As was pointed out earlier library has sufficient reading space as well as space for stacking the books. Perhaps library did need some equipment to keep the place cool and dust free. In addition, at present there was one librarian who had to do everything himself right from acquisition of books, classifying them and keeping a record of the books borrowed. An additional helper with some training in documentation may help in better upkeep of the library as well as in improving library services.

#### **4.2.3 Museum:**

The Institute has a museum. As mentioned in the previous section, the Museum stocks include a variety of ethnographic objects such as ornaments, costumes, agricultural, fishing and hunting implements, household objects used by the tribals in Assam, etc. Annual additions to the museum are trivial in number. The available space for keeping the exhibits and artifacts in the museum is found to be inadequate. The

collections in the Museum had lot of dust, partly because the Museum is exposed to coal depot located close to the Institute and partly also because the Museum is supported, apart from the Curator, by only one helper who is required to perform multiple functions. Also we did not find any proper equipment to keep the museum dust and moisture free. At present the museum gave the appearance of grossly neglected place. Even the glass cupboards in which the exhibits were kept were not dust proof.



*(A Coal depot located next to the Institute)*

As far as the visitors to the Museum are concerned, no record was kept of the persons visiting the museum. This low interest in the Museum is evident from the fact that there were hardly 50–60 visitors per annum, and they were researchers, largely foreigners.

Keeping in mind the basic objective of a Museum, the existing Museum in the Institute needs to be modernized so that it is both interactive and thematic. Also there should be more publications on various aspects of Museum.

### **4.3 Outreach**

The Institute seems to have a limited outreach as is evident from the limited audience for both library and the Museum. However, the research output has made a significant impact as is evident from the sale of Institute's publications. In fact some of the research monographs have been reprinted.

### **4.4 Finance and Administration**

#### **4.4.1 Finance:**

It was seen in the preceding section that there were two major sources of funds—state government and the central government. Most of these funds flow through the state government. As far as the funds for research and training are concerned, they come directly from the central government.

The Institute/Directorate prepares its proposals providing details of financial requirements. These proposals are then forwarded to the Finance Department of the State Government. The approved funds are

released by the line departments—State Department of Welfare of Plains Tribes and Backward Classes and the Hill Area Department. We were told that there were delays in the release of funds. In fact most grants were received close to the close of financial year. This has seriously affected expenditure planning, sometimes even leading to funds lapsing.

There is an accounts department in the Institute which maintains financial records. Most records were available on the computer. In our conversation about the problems experienced by the Institute in regard to the quantum of funds and their disposal, it was mentioned that the fund for museum were inadequate. The funds flow regularly as far as the funds for salaries and establishment are concerned.

#### **4.4.2 Administration:**

The Institute is headed by a full time Director and he is supported by a Joint Director and one Deputy Director. The Museum is looked after by a Curator who is also a part of the research team. The Director is usually a civil servant on deputation to the institute. The Joint Director reports to the Director and the Deputy Director to the Joint Director. There is one appointee for looking after the accounts and the appointee is usually from the finance/line department.

The Director's position, at the time of our visit was vacant. We were told that at present the financial powers of the Director were limited and this is detrimental to the efficient functioning of the Institute. The suggestion was to review the existing financial powers of the Director and if needed these may be revised. It was also suggested that a review of financial procedures currently existing in the Institute be carried out so as to make them conducive for the smooth functioning of the institute.



*(The staffs in the Institute with NCAER's study Team)*



## Section 5: Concluding remarks and Suggestions

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### 5.1 Concluding remarks

There are strengths and weakness of AIRTSC. In terms of the resources available to the Institute, the research staff has an impressive record of research and training. There is a continuous outflow of academic output in the form of research publications as well contributions in the in house Annual Bulletin. The Institute has also been making available their research findings to the government as well as presenting them in in-house seminars and workshops as well as in seminars organised by other agencies.

A positive aspect of Institute's working is encouraging non-institute researchers by publishing their researches relevant to the objectives of the Institute.

What is however a serious gap is the outreach aspect. While it is true that the staff has been disseminating its research findings among both policy makers and other researchers, it does not seem to have made much of an impact. There is also no serious attempt by the Institute to create awareness in regard to popularizing the Ethnographic Museum. Both library (with a decent collection) and the Museum remain scantily used by outsiders. This has partly also to do with the inappropriate location of the Institute and also poorly kept Museum.

There is yet another area which is detrimental to the working of the Institute. This has largely to do with a service of Director, and even the Deputy Director being from the civil service. This does have a bearing on the level and intensity of commitment. Financial resources are yet another area affecting the working of the Institute. Even the funds allocated are not fully released.

A basic strength of the Institute is its young staff (mostly between 35–45 years) who still have many years to serve. They are competent and enthusiastic to work and contribute to the growth of the Institute.

Yet another major opportunity for the Institute is the keenness of the Central Government to see this Institute serving as an Apex Institute for the entire North-eastern region. However, unless the state government shows equal commitment to the growth of the Institute, there is a real danger for the Institute to join the ranks of yet another decaying institution.

### 5.2 Suggestions

Based on preceding discussion, it would be fair to conclude that given the resources, financial, human and physical, the functioning of the Institute can be put at as 'slightly above average' to 'fairly good'. There are clearly areas which need further support for the Institute to make greater impact.

First, the existing location of the Institute may be given a second thought. This we realise is not easy. If the location cannot be changed, ways should be found to improve the utility of the Institute.

The Institute should make efforts to create awareness about its available heritage resources among scholars, school going children, tourists and the like. Besides greater visibility, these measures would

create pressure on the Institute staff to keep its resources in good shape and constantly endeavour to improve its heritage collections.

Moreover these collections should not remain confined to the tribes in Assam but should cover all other North-eastern states. Besides, the Assam Institute should be able to serve as a nodal Institute for all the other tribal research institutions in the North-eastern states.

An additional function the Assam Institute may consider relates to its responsibility to act as an institution which could anticipate areas of friction among populations in the North-east and suggest anticipatory remedial measures to rationally and peacefully overcome them.

In addition, if the ethnographic Museum is to be properly developed, more space needs to be provided as the existing space available to it is too small. Indeed the Institute has not been able to display all its collections (currently kept away in store) for want of space. Efforts should be made to make the Museum dust proof.

To implement the above suggestions, clearly more resources would be needed. Given the finances of most state governments, a large part of the responsibility for providing additional funds has to be on the Central government.

Also to create better interactive, intellectual environment, the Institute may consider appointment of couple of expert consultants for limited periods to step up activities in the areas of concern to the institute.

Also it is not always possible for either the Central or State Governments to provide all the required funds, the management of the Institute may consider involving the private sector and the NGO sector to collaborate in the activities of the Institute, including sourcing funds from the private sector.

The partnership may go beyond provision of funds. It may also seek the help of the private sector and grass root NGOs to assist in the collection of tribal artifacts and other items of interest for the Museum.

Finally, the Institute should review its current publication and distribution policy. The provocation to make this remark arises from the fact that there was a large stock of books lying unsold. This is not only consuming precious space but also cuts into the limited financial resources of the Institute. Given the current printing technology, the Institute may consider publishing limited number of copies in the first instance, and go for more copies in case there is demand.

A final thought—are there ways in which the Institute may explore ways to raise its own revenues? While this is a possibility, it can only be done after the Institute has upgraded its infrastructure.



*(A group of Bodo Tribes)*

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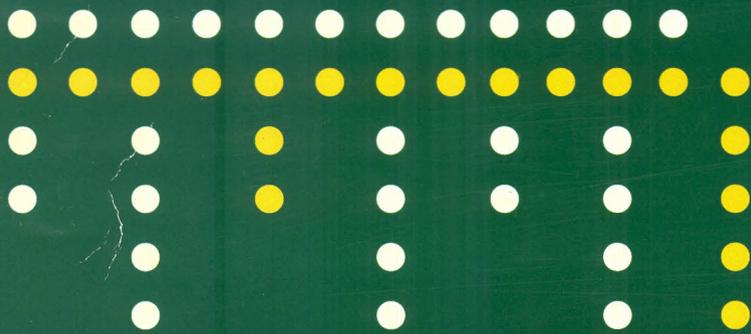
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