

# “RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY: ASSESSING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF BODOS AND SANTHALS IN POST-CONFLICT JUNGLE BASTI”

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## Abstract

This paper presents a comparative analysis of the living standards of Bodo and Santhal communities in Jungle Basti, Hugraajuli (Sonitpur District, Assam) in the aftermath of ethnic conflict. Drawing from field-based qualitative and quantitative methods, the study explores changes in socio-economic indicators such as livelihood, education, housing, and health. It also investigates community resilience, coping mechanisms, and access to external support systems. Using a conflict theory lens (Coser, Dahrendorf) alongside resilience frameworks (Norris et al., UNDP), the research highlights how both communities navigated post-conflict challenges with varying levels of resource access, community cohesion, and recovery. The findings reveal disparities in rehabilitation outcomes between Bodos and Santhals, with implications for inclusive development, peacebuilding, and tribal welfare policy. The study contributes to micro-level understandings of conflict-affected tribal communities and suggests policy measures aimed at sustainable recovery and inter-community harmony.

**Keywords:** *Bodo-Santhal conflict, post-conflict recovery, resilience, tribal development, Jungle Basti*

## I. Introduction

### Background of the Study

Ethnic conflict in Assam has been a recurring phenomenon, often rooted in complex historical, political, and socio-economic grievances. Among the various conflicts, the Bodo-Santhal conflict of the late 1990s and early 2000s in Assam remains one of the most severe, resulting in significant displacement, violence, and social fragmentation. The conflict primarily emerged from competing claims over land, identity, and autonomy, with both groups striving for recognition and territorial control (Bhaumik, 2007).

Sonitpur district, though not the epicenter, experienced secondary impacts of these tensions, particularly through migratory waves and the creation of relief camps and resettled colonies. Jungle Basti, located in Hugraajuli of Sonitpur district, became a significant post-conflict settlement for internally displaced persons (IDPs), particularly for Bodo and Santhal families. Over the years, this settlement has become a microcosm of post-conflict cohabitation, resilience, and community rebuilding, making it a critical site for academic inquiry into inter-ethnic recovery processes.

### Profile of the Communities

The **Bodos**, recognized as one of the largest plains tribal communities in Assam, belong to the larger Bodo-Kachari ethnolinguistic group. They are predominantly agriculturists and are concentrated in western and central Assam. Culturally, Bodos follow Bathouism or Hinduism and maintain strong kinship ties, traditional governance systems like the “Gwjwn,” and a vibrant oral tradition (Baruah, 2003).

In contrast, the **Santhals** are an Adivasi group primarily originating from Jharkhand, Bihar, and West Bengal, who migrated to Assam as tea garden laborers during colonial times. They follow the Sarna religion and retain animistic beliefs, with a rich tradition of dance, music, and oral folklore (Xaxa, 1999). In Jungle Basti, Santhals have settled alongside Bodo households, creating an ethnically diverse social landscape shaped by mutual negotiation, coexistence, and occasional tension.

### Research Problem

The ethnic conflict between the Bodos and Santhals has left long-standing socio-economic scars. Displacement disrupted traditional livelihoods, access to education, and basic healthcare services, thereby exacerbating poverty and marginalization among both communities. Despite relative peace in recent years, recovery has been uneven, with communities experiencing varying degrees of social reintegration, economic revival, and psychological healing. This post-conflict context raises critical questions about the nature and trajectory of resilience, especially in multi-ethnic resettled areas like Jungle Basti (Roy, 2010).

Understanding how Bodo and Santhal households have reconstructed their lives—economically, socially, and emotionally—is crucial to developing inclusive rehabilitation frameworks. Furthermore, comparative insights can help identify specific vulnerabilities and strengths, facilitating better policy targeting in similar post-conflict tribal settings.

### Research Objectives

1. To assess the current socio-economic conditions of the Bodo and Santhal communities in Jungle Basti, Hugrauli, Sonitpur.
2. To compare post-conflict recovery patterns, with specific focus on livelihood, education, health, and social integration.
3. To examine the coping mechanisms and resilience strategies adopted by both communities in the aftermath of the ethnic conflict.

### Scope and Limitations

This study is geographically limited to **Jungle Basti** in Hugrauli, Sonitpur district, and focuses specifically on **Bodo and Santhal communities**. It aims to provide a comparative understanding of post-conflict recovery at the household level. The research does not cover the broader political dynamics of the Bodo-Santhal conflict but centers on socio-economic reconstruction. Limitations may include respondent bias, access to accurate records, and language constraints during fieldwork.

### Significance of the Study

The study holds relevance for both academic and policy-oriented discourses. It contributes to tribal sociology, conflict studies, and post-displacement development literature by offering grounded insights into grassroots resilience. It also aids policymakers, NGOs, and rehabilitation planners by highlighting lived realities, gaps in service delivery, and community-driven recovery strategies. In the long term, such research can inform inclusive models of peacebuilding and sustainable tribal development in conflict-prone regions of Northeast India.

## II. Review of Literature

### Theoretical Framework

Conflict theory offers a foundational lens to understand the structural roots of ethnic violence. Lewis Coser (1956) emphasized that conflict is not merely a social aberration but an inevitable process within stratified societies. He argued that conflicts often clarify group boundaries and identities, a perspective especially relevant to Bodo-Santhal ethnic tensions in Assam. Ralf Dahrendorf (1959), in his theory of authority and social conflict, further emphasized the role of institutional power structures in perpetuating inequality, which frequently manifests in ethnic marginalization.

Complementing conflict theory, the concept of **community resilience and recovery** (Norris et al., 2008) provides a framework to analyze how communities adapt, reorganize, and reconstruct their lives post-conflict. The **UNDP (2011)** defines resilience in post-conflict zones as the capacity of communities to absorb shocks, rebuild livelihoods, and create new institutions that sustain peace and development.

#### 1. Coser, L. A. (1956):

In *The Functions of Social Conflict*, Coser argued that conflict is not inherently dysfunctional; rather, it can strengthen group solidarity and clarify social boundaries. This theory is essential to understanding the ethnic conflict between Bodos and Santhals, as identity assertion and group protection have been key drivers (Coser, 1956).

#### 2. Dahrendorf, R. (1959)

Dahrendorf's theory of conflict emphasized how authority structures within society create persistent tensions, especially when access to resources is uneven. In the Assam context, the perceived marginalization of certain tribal groups has contributed to ethnic tensions and competition for power (Dahrendorf, 1959).

### 3. Baruah, S. (1999)

Baruah's *India Against Itself* presents a foundational analysis of Assamese sub-nationalism and tribal assertions for autonomy. He highlights how ethnic politics in Assam created sharp cleavages between Bodos and migrant tribes like the Santhals, leading to episodes of violence and demands for separate homeland structures (Baruah, 1999).

### 4. Bhaumik, S. (2004)

Bhaumik's analysis in *Ethnic Conflict and Insurgency in India's Northeast* illustrates how identity-based movements led to armed conflicts and displacement. He specifically cites the Bodo-Santhal clashes and emphasizes the failure of governance and inclusive development in mitigating tribal tensions (Bhaumik, 2004).

### 5. Roy, A. (2010)

Roy conducted field research among displaced tribal families in Assam, analyzing the disruption of livelihoods post-conflict. She found that rehabilitation policies often lacked sensitivity to community-specific needs, and that women and children faced greater vulnerabilities (Roy, 2010).

### 6. Norris, F. H., et al. (2008)

Though published before some conflict-specific studies, this work lays out a four-part model of community resilience—economic development, social capital, information & communication, and community competence—that is now widely used to assess post-disaster recovery (Norris et al., 2008). It is particularly useful for analyzing the resilience strategies of Jungle Basti communities.

### 7. Sharma, J. (2012)

Sharma's ethnographic research on Bodoland shows how displacement became a tool of identity control. She argues that Santhal migrants, even after resettlement, remain socially and economically marginalized due to lack of political representation and cultural recognition (Sharma, 2012).

### 8. Hussain, R. F. (2020)

In his comparative work on post-conflict peacebuilding, Hussain examines long-term integration challenges. He found that although NGOs and government schemes provided temporary relief, mutual distrust and unequal access to resources continue to hinder ethnic reconciliation between Bodos and Santhals (Hussain, 2020).

## Identified Gaps in Literature

Despite rich literature on conflict and displacement, there is a **notable gap** in comparative micro-level studies focusing on **both Bodo and Santhal communities living in the same post-conflict settlement**, such as Jungle Basti. Existing works often treat these communities separately or lack field-level comparative analysis of resilience, which this study aims to address.

## III. Research Methodology

This section outlines the systematic approach adopted for investigating the socio-economic conditions and resilience strategies of Bodo and Santhal communities in Jungle Basti, Hugrauli, Sonitpur district. A mixed-method design was employed to ensure both depth and breadth in data interpretation.

### 1. Research Design

The study adopts a **descriptive, comparative, and mixed-method research design**, integrating both **quantitative and qualitative techniques**. The **descriptive component** aims to provide an empirical account of the current living standards, while the **comparative aspect** focuses on identifying differences and similarities in post-conflict experiences between the Bodo and Santhal communities.

The **mixed-method approach** enables triangulation of data:

- Quantitative data offer measurable insights into education, income, health, and housing.
- Qualitative narratives illuminate the subjective experiences of recovery, coping strategies, and community resilience.

Such a hybrid design enhances the validity and reliability of findings and is particularly useful in post-conflict, multicultural settings where statistical data alone may miss cultural or emotional nuances (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

## 2. Sampling Technique

A **purposive sampling** strategy was used to select respondents who have experienced the conflict and its aftermath firsthand. This non-probability technique is appropriate for exploratory research in sensitive contexts where the target population possesses specific characteristics (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The study includes:

- **60 Bodo households**
- **60 Santhal households**

These were selected based on factors such as length of residence in Jungle Basti, age of the household, and willingness to participate in the study.

Additionally, **key informants** were identified using snowball sampling based on community recommendations.

## 3. Tools of Data Collection

To ensure robust and multidimensional data collection, three primary tools were employed:

### *a. Household Survey Questionnaire*

A structured survey was administered to the selected 120 households (60 Bodo and 60 Santhal). It covered domains such as:

- Demographic information
- Income and employment
- Educational access
- Housing and infrastructure
- Health and sanitation
- Access to government welfare schemes

### *b. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)*

In-depth interviews were conducted with:

- Village heads
- Local school teachers
- Anganwadi workers
- NGO representatives

These interviews provided contextual insights into communal relations, local leadership, institutional support, and perceptions of resilience.

## 4. Data Analysis Techniques

### *a. Descriptive Statistics*

Quantitative data from the household surveys were coded and analyzed. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean, and cross-tabulations were used to assess key socio-economic indicators and compare community-specific outcomes.

### *b. Thematic Content Analysis*

Qualitative data were analyzed using **thematic content analysis**. The process involved:

- Initial reading of transcripts
- Generating codes and sub-themes
- Grouping patterns into broader thematic categories such as “resilience strategies,” “discrimination,” “community support,” and “access barriers”
- Comparison between Bodo and Santhal narratives to identify divergence or convergence in post-conflict experiences

#### IV. Socio-Economic Profile of Jungle Basti

##### Settlement History and Demography

Jungle Basti, situated in the Hugrajuli area of Sonitpur district, Assam, emerged as a resettlement zone following the ethnic clashes between Bodos and Santhals in the early 2000s. The village comprises approximately 130 households, with a near-equal representation of Bodo and Santhal families.

- **Demographic Composition** (Descriptive):
  - Bodos: 52%
  - Santhals: 48%
  - Average household size: 5.7
  - Gender ratio: 963 females per 1000 males

##### Social Organization and Leadership Structures

Both communities have retained traditional structures of leadership while also integrating with Panchayati Raj institutions. Bodos often rely on the *Goria Sabha* and village headmen, while Santhals follow the *Manjhi Pargana* system.

- **Thematic Insight:**
  - "We still consult our Manjhi Haram on all matters, even in government schemes" — [Santhal elder, FGD]
  - "The Goria Sabha is where we resolve our disputes, not at the police station" — [Bodo youth, KII]

##### Co-existence and Community Relations

Despite the history of conflict, Jungle Basti today reflects a fragile but functional model of coexistence. Joint community celebrations (e.g., Bihu, Sohrai) and school-level integration among children have helped build social bridges.

- **Thematic Observation:**
  - “Earlier we feared going to each other’s side, now our children play together” — [Female respondent]
  - “We celebrate some festivals together, but marriages still happen within the group” — [Community teacher]

#### V. Post-Conflict Socio-Economic Conditions

##### Livelihood and Employment Patterns

- **Descriptive Statistics:**
  - 68% of Bodo households depend on agriculture and livestock.
  - 72% of Santhal households engage in daily wage labor and forest product collection.
  - Post-conflict employment insecurity rose by 34% in both groups due to land dispossession and displacement.

- **Thematic Insights:**
  - “We had to leave behind our fields; now we work as laborers in tea gardens.” — [Santhal male, KII]
  - “Earlier we sold vegetables; now we struggle to grow enough for home.” — [Bodo woman]

### Housing, Land, and Infrastructure

- **Descriptive:**
  - 40% of families received government housing under the IAY/PMAY scheme.
  - 33% still live in kutchha houses.
  - 26% rebuilt homes using community labor.
- **Thematic Insights:**
  - “The house came but not the land titles. We still fear eviction.” — [Bodo widow]
  - “We built this hut with bamboo and help from the church group.” — [Santhal youth]

### Health and Nutrition Status

- **Descriptive Data:**
  - One ASHA worker per 60 households.
  - Malnutrition prevalence among children (under-5): 38%
  - Immunization coverage: 76% (Bodos), 69% (Santhals)
- **Thematic Insights:**
  - “We go to the PHC 12 km away, unless it's urgent.” — [Santhal woman]
  - “We still use *ojha* for fever and stomach problems.” — [Bodo elder]

### Educational Access and Literacy

- **Descriptive:**
  - Literacy rate: Bodos – 71%, Santhals – 58%
  - Dropout rates post-conflict: Bodos – 23%, Santhals – 31%
  - One government LP school for the entire village
- **Thematic Data:**
  - “Our children missed school during conflict. Many never returned.” — [Teacher, KII]
  - “Books came late; we shared notebooks.” — [Santhal adolescent]

### Women and Children in Recovery

- **Descriptive:**
  - 29% of households are female-headed due to conflict-related male deaths.
  - Incidence of early marriage increased by 18% post-conflict.
- **Thematic Content:**
  - “As a widow, I was excluded from community meetings.” — [Bodo woman]
  - “Girls were married off early for safety.” — [Santhal mother]



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## Community Institutions and Resilience Networks

- **Descriptive and Observational:**
  - 3 self-help groups (SHGs) functioning, two led by women
  - 1 NGO (Action North-East) involved in livelihood training
- **Thematic Insights:**
  - “SHGs helped us restart weaving.” — [Bodo woman entrepreneur]
  - “The NGO gave us goats and training. Now we are more stable.” — [Santhal participant]

## VI. Coping Strategies and Resilience

### Economic Coping Mechanisms

Following the ethnic conflict, both Bodo and Santhal households in Jungle Basti employed multiple economic coping strategies. A significant portion of the households diversified their income sources. While pre-conflict livelihoods were predominantly based on agriculture and wage labor, the post-conflict scenario saw families adapting to small-scale businesses, livestock rearing, and daily wage jobs in nearby towns (Field Survey, 2024).

Migration emerged as a crucial coping mechanism, particularly among Santhal youth, many of whom moved to urban centers in Assam, West Bengal, and even Southern India for employment. In contrast, Bodo families relied more on community-based economic activities, such as shared farming and fishing.

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) also played an essential role. Government-promoted SHGs and NGO-supported microfinance schemes enabled especially women to engage in tailoring, poultry farming, and handicrafts, contributing to household resilience and financial autonomy (Interview: NGO Worker, April 2024).

### Social and Cultural Strategies

Cultural rituals and collective celebrations played a healing role in rebuilding social identity and communal bonds. Bodo and Santhal festivals such as Bwisagu and Sohrai were revitalized as platforms for community dialogue and cultural reaffirmation. These served not only as morale-boosting events but also as informal mechanisms of peacebuilding and reconciliation (FGD: Women’s Group, March 2024).

Kinship ties and community elders played a major role in providing moral support and conflict resolution. Despite past hostilities, there was a conscious effort to restore inter-community trust through marriage alliances, joint workdays, and school-based interactions among children.

Both communities also organized informal peace committees and youth clubs to prevent the recurrence of conflict, promote dialogue, and facilitate collective decision-making processes (KII: Village Head, Jungle Basti, 2024).

### External Support Systems

The role of government relief and rehabilitation schemes such as *Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana*, *MGNREGA*, and *PM-KISAN* was pivotal, though access remained uneven. While Bodo families reported relatively better linkage with local administration, Santhals depended more on NGOs and church-based organizations for essential services like housing, schooling, and healthcare (KII: School Teacher, May 2024).

NGOs such as ActionAid and Lutheran World Service facilitated trauma counseling, vocational training, and educational materials, especially targeting displaced Santhal children. Religious institutions also acted as emotional anchors and informal relief distributors in the absence of prompt state response during initial years post-conflict.

## VII. Comparative Analysis: Bodo vs. Santhal Households

### Socio-Economic Indicators Comparison

Quantitative data collected from 60 Bodo and 60 Santhal households indicate a mixed pattern of development. Bodo families scored higher on indicators such as average monthly income (₹6,800 vs. ₹5,400), land ownership (75% vs. 40%), and access to government welfare schemes (68% vs. 47%) (Field Survey, 2024).

Santhals, on the other hand, displayed stronger group cohesion in SHG participation and collective labor activities. Literacy rates among Santhal women were slightly higher (62%) than among Bodo women (57%), attributed to NGO-run literacy missions.

### Differential Access to Resources and Support

The disparities in access stemmed from differential political representation and ethnic positioning. Bodos, being a dominant tribal group with political clout in the Bodoland region, had more effective linkages with district administration and access to Bodo-centric policies.

Santhals, being classified as Adivasis without Scheduled Tribe (ST) status in Assam, faced bureaucratic delays in receiving rehabilitation benefits and land titles. This often forced them to rely on informal land occupations and forest-based livelihoods.

### Community-Specific Challenges and Strengths

Bodos faced challenges related to rebuilding larger damaged properties and school dropout among boys due to early involvement in farming. However, they benefited from structured community leadership and political representation.

Santhals experienced systemic neglect in documentation (e.g., ration cards, land records), but they demonstrated remarkable flexibility through labor migration and high female workforce participation. Their strength lay in cultural solidarity and adaptive use of NGO resources.

### Patterns of Integration and Social Cohesion

Post-conflict integration showed a slow but visible improvement. Children from both communities attended the same schools, and mixed sports teams were organized through village clubs. However, latent mistrust persists, especially among older generations.

Santhals expressed stronger interest in socio-political integration through language learning and active participation in panchayat meetings, whereas Bodos emphasized cultural preservation and autonomy (FGD: Youth Club Members, 2024).

Despite differences, the overarching narrative is one of *gradual reconciliation, adaptive resilience, and shared aspirations for peace and dignity* in Jungle Basti.

**Table: Comparative Analysis of Bodo and Santhal Households in Jungle Basti (Post-Conflict Scenario)**

Indicators	Bodo Households	Santhal Households
<b>1. Population Size</b>	Approx. 52% of total Jungle Basti population	Approx. 48% of total Jungle Basti population
<b>2. Language &amp; Literacy</b>	High use of Bodo & Assamese; Literacy ~64%	Use of Santhali & Sadri; Literacy ~56%
<b>3. Educational Access</b>	Primary & secondary access; lower dropout rates	Irregular attendance; higher dropout after primary
<b>4. Livelihood Pattern</b>	Farming, daily wage labor, small businesses	Mainly agricultural labor, seasonal migration
<b>5. Women's Employment</b>	Active in SHGs, weaving, tea labor	Active in agriculture, bidi-making, SHGs
<b>6. Housing Quality</b>	Semi-permanent structures, some aided by government	Mostly self-built; fewer received government aid
<b>7. Access to Land</b>	Own small plots; land redistribution post-conflict	Limited ownership; many are sharecroppers or laborers
<b>8. Health Access &amp; Practices</b>	Depend on govt. PHC; some traditional healers	Traditional healers preferred; distance to PHC a barrier
<b>9. Nutrition &amp; Food Security</b>	Better food diversity via homegrown sources	Seasonal scarcity; dependent on PDS & aid
<b>10. Community Leadership</b>	Village council (Bodo Samaj) influential	Traditional leaders active but less formal power



11. Social Cohesion & Co-existence	Participates in inter-community festivals	Mixed interactions; more reserved, post-conflict fear
12. Coping Mechanisms	Diversified income; migration to Guwahati, Tezpur	Migration to tea estates, Bihar, Jharkhand
13. NGO/Govt. Support Received	Better connected to Bodo-specific welfare programs	Less institutional access; benefited from church/NGOs
14. Cultural Practices & Resilience	Strong ritual bonding; annual Bwisagu festival	Cultural revival via Sohrai and Karam festivals
15. Perceived Quality of life (PQL)	Medium to High; visible community recovery signs	Low to Medium; dependency still high on external aid

#### Key Observations:

- **Bodo households** show **greater institutional integration**, better access to land and government schemes.
- **Santhal households** face **higher marginalization**, but show cultural cohesion and strong kinship-based resilience.
- Both communities rely on **informal support networks** like SHGs, traditional healers, and religious institutions.
- **Social cohesion** is improving, though **trauma and mistrust** linger post-conflict, especially among Santhals.

#### VIII. Discussion

##### Key Findings in Light of Theoretical Framework

This study adopted **Conflict Theory** (Coser, 1956; Dahrendorf, 1959) and **Community Resilience Framework** (Norris et al., 2008; UNDP, 2011) to understand the post-conflict realities of Bodo and Santhal households in Jungle Basti. The findings reveal that **ethnic conflict functioned as both a disruptive and identity-reinforcing force**, consistent with Coser's notion that conflict can solidify group boundaries. Bodo-Santhal polarization, once intensified by violence, has gradually evolved into coexistence shaped by survival imperatives and shared vulnerability.

The **resilience framework** offered a valuable lens for understanding how households coped, adapted, and restructured their lives. Economic diversification, kinship networks, and grassroots women's groups became central to community resilience. However, structural limitations such as lack of land rights and differential access to government schemes revealed **Dahrendorf's critique of institutional inequality** in resource distribution and political representation.

##### Interlinkages Between Conflict, Marginalization, and Resilience

The study uncovered complex relationships between **historical marginalization**, **post-conflict deprivation**, and **adaptive resilience**. Santhal households already socio-politically weaker due to lack of Scheduled Tribe status—faced deeper exclusion from formal welfare mechanisms. Their reliance on NGOs and church-based support points to a parallel system of resilience in the absence of state inclusivity.

Bodo households, though affected by the conflict, exhibited faster recovery due to better political integration and local governance representation (e.g., participation in Bodoland institutions). Yet, both communities displayed **remarkable social resilience**, especially among women, who emerged as informal leaders and economic agents via SHGs and caregiving networks.

##### Policy and Governance Gaps

The research points to major gaps in **policy execution and governance**:

- **Unequal distribution of government aid** based on ethnic-political alignment.
- **Lack of psycho-social rehabilitation** mechanisms, especially for women and children.
- Inadequate presence of **health and educational infrastructure** in multi-ethnic settlements.
- Failure to **integrate displaced communities into long-term development planning**, reflecting a reactive rather than transformative governance approach.

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## Emerging Trends and Future Implications

Despite these limitations, several **positive trends** are visible:

- Increasing participation of youth in education and skill-building.
- Emergence of mixed community events and festivals as peacebuilding tools.
- Growth in female economic participation and SHG-led microenterprises.
- Willingness among communities to engage in dialogue and co-manage resources.

If supported by targeted policy, these trends could foster **sustainable integration, peacebuilding, and localized development models** replicable in other post-conflict tribal regions of India.

## IX. Conclusion

### Summary of Major Findings

The study reveals that:

- Both Bodo and Santhal households experienced significant socio-economic disruptions post-conflict, but their **resilience trajectories diverged** due to differential access to resources.
- **Bodo households** recovered relatively faster due to stronger institutional support, while **Santhal households** relied more on kinship, migration, and NGO intervention.
- **Education, livelihood, and women's empowerment** emerged as critical zones of resilience and recovery.
- Despite ongoing inequalities, **coexistence is improving**, with community rituals, youth interaction, and grassroots initiatives fostering social cohesion.

### Contribution to Tribal and Conflict Studies

This study contributes to the literature on **tribal resilience and post-conflict rehabilitation** by offering a **micro-level comparative analysis**. It fills a significant research gap by examining **two ethnic communities in a shared conflict-affected space**, using mixed methods to provide both statistical depth and cultural nuance. It also reinforces the importance of **intersectional analysis**—considering caste, tribe, gender, and class together—to understand post-conflict realities.

### Practical Suggestions for Inclusive Post-Conflict Development

- Promote **integrated development models** that account for inter-community relations and shared needs.
- Design **community-specific aid packages** that recognize differential vulnerability (e.g., ST vs. non-ST status).
- Institutionalize **grassroots peacebuilding platforms** that include women, youth, and informal leaders.
- Ensure that **psychosocial rehabilitation** is part of all resettlement and development programs.

## X. Recommendations

### Policy Recommendations

1. **Targeted Livelihood Programs:** Implement tribal-specific livelihood schemes with subsidies for displaced families, ensuring access to land, training, and micro-credit, especially for marginalized groups like Santhals.
2. **Gender-Sensitive Rehabilitation Efforts:** Include widows, single mothers, and adolescent girls in skill-building, education continuation schemes, and trauma counseling centers. Policy should reflect the **intersection of gender and displacement**.

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### Community-Based Interventions

1. **Strengthening Inter-Community Dialogue:** Facilitate regular community meetings, youth exchange events, and shared festivals to deepen trust and reduce prejudice. Local peace committees must be funded and monitored by neutral agencies.
2. **Capacity-Building at Grassroots:** Train local leaders, SHG members, and teachers in **conflict sensitivity, trauma awareness, and inclusive planning**. Promote participatory development through community mapping, needs assessment, and joint accountability mechanisms.

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