

Chapter Five

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY SUGGESTION

This chapter is organized into four sections. First section of the chapter presents summary of the principal findings of the preceding chapters. The second section conveys conclusion drawn on the basis of statistical and empirical analysis of the present study. In section three, attempts have been made to suggest policies to remove poverty and improve human development. The chapter is ended with section four where recommendations are extended on the scope and area for future research.

5.1 Summary of the Principal Findings

This section gives an account of the major findings of the preceding four chapters.

The introductory chapter of the present study, that is, Chapter I was designed to have a comparative and analytical discussion on statement of the problem in context of South Asia, and other regions of the world. Socio-economic status of Assam is assessed compared with all-India states with special reference to North eastern states. It is added with a brief note on Mishing tribe. This chapter highlights the rationale of the present study and portrays the profile of the study areas, viz., Dhemaji and Sivasagar districts. Attempts have been made to give a synoptic view on the theoretical framework and measurement of poverty, inequality and human development. Finally, objectives of the present study and hypothesis to be tested are mentioned along with the scope and limitations of the study.

In Chapter II, attempt is made to review on research work and literature on the present study. The first and second section of the chapter presents the theoretical and empirical works on poverty and inequality with a view to international and national studies. The third and fourth sections examine the literature on theory and practice of human development. The section five presents literature gaps to justifying the present Study.

The main findings of the chapter are given below:

- Growth is the principal means for poverty reduction, rather than an end in itself. Mehta and Chatterjee (2011) picturize the great poverty debate on growth and poverty between two groups of India. Bhagwati and Panagariya (2014) say reform-led growth leads to reduction of poverty in India. Bhagwati and Panagariya assert that high pro-growth reforms pull the poor into gainful employment and also lead to greater revenues. Higher growth generates higher tax revenues. Social expenditure to be incurred in poverty reduction cannot be continued without revenues. They favour Track II reforms, i.e., the use of revenues in redistributive programmes aimed at poor. They focus on targeted (instead of universal) and unconditional cash (instead of kind) transfers for removal of poverty. Amartya Sen and Jean Drèze group emphasize on social expenditure rather than growth. Hasan and Quibria (2002) show that economic growth has the highest impact on poverty in East Asia, followed by Latin America, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa.
- There are conceptual and methodological difficulties in the poverty analysis. Ravallion (1992) presents an overview of these problems, and provides some solutions. He examines certain new tools of poverty comparisons and put the theory into the applications in assessment, monitoring and policy evaluations of poverty in context of developing world. Using axiomatic approach where welfare notion is ordinal, Sen (1976) proposes a new measure of poverty. This new measure overcomes the measurement difficulties of poverty and leads to practical use due to requirement of limited information. Sen (1983b) outlines absolute poverty in terms of capabilities and differs it from commodities, characteristics and utilities. Absolute approach of poverty in terms of the space “capabilities” becomes relative in the space of incomes, resources and commodities. Sen (2010a) re-examines the nature and reach of inequality. Inequality is analysed in context of capability, functioning, agency, gender and class. He develops methodology dealing with issues of inequality in general and explores substantive approach to assessment of

social arrangement in particular. Alkire and Santos (2010) present a new Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) composed of ten indicators using the same three dimensions of the human development index.

- There are numbers of empirical works on poverty and inequality in different countries of the world. International studies examine the determinants of poverty with reference to a particular country, such as Kenya (Achia, Wangombe, & Khadioli, 2010), Pakistan (Anka, , 2009; Ahmed & Sial, 2012), Cameroon (Epo, 2010), Sri Lanka (Ranathunga, 2010), Cambodia (Runsinarith, 2011), Asia (Son, 2007), West Virginia (Sousa, 2000), China (Wang, Yao, Liu, Xin, Liu, & Ren, 2006) etc. Some researchers attempt to analyse the poverty profile with reference to Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2004), West Virginia (Sousa, 2000) etc; while others tries to analyze different aspects of income and consumption inequalities in context of Pakistan (Idrees, 2006; Shams, 2012), Nigeria (Isah, 2011), Bangladesh (Khan, 2005), Asia (Son, 2007) etc. The authors have discussed poverty measurement and decomposition, incidence, interrelationship between growth, vertical and horizontal income and non-income inequality, income and consumption inequalities based on various survey data, such as, household income and expenditure survey, demographic and health survey data etc. It is found that prime determinants of poverty are low educational attainment of the head and family members of the household, large household size, higher dependency ratio, female labours, female headed households, age of household head, number of children, working in the primary sector, household head being sick, residence in rural areas, foreign and local remittances, land ownership, number of earners, having sewing machine or livestock, no access to basic facilities (such as, electricity, gas and telephone), elementary occupation etc. The causes of vertical inequalities are earnings (wages and salaries), assets and total income ; whereas major determinants of horizontal inequalities are earnings, asset, total income, type of job, access to health and education. Inequality is prominent in

under-developed and undeveloped countries accompanied by slow rate of reduction in poverty.

- There are many authors who examine the poverty and inequality in all India or state levels. Among these are Deaton, and Drèze, (2002), Dev and Ravi (2007), Mehta (2004), Pal & Ghosh (2007), Reddy and Rao (2003) etc. The prominent Indian authors who have discussed poverty and inequality in context of social groups, such as, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes are Dubey (2009), Gang, Sen, and Yun (2007), Kijima (2006), Mutatkar (2005), Saggar and Pan (1994), Shah and Sajitha (2008), Sundaram and Tendulkar (2003) etc. Others discuss with reference to a particular state, viz., Uttar Pradesh (Kozel & Parker, 2003), Punjab (Rani, 2011), Karnataka (Murgai, Suryanarayana, and Zaidi, 2003) etc. They analyze the profile, trends, determinants, and decomposition of poverty and inequality based on primary or National Sample Survey data. It is found that family size, dependency ratio, scheduled caste ratio, sex ratio, percentage of casual labour, educational attainment, age, household size, land owned, self-employed in agriculture and non-agriculture etc. were the prime causes of poverty in state or community levels. Incidence, depth and severity of poverty are high among the SCs and STs as compared to non-SCs/STs.
- It is said that people is the centre of development and objective of development is expansion of people's choices and enhancement of capabilities. Fukuda-Parr and Shiva Kumar (2011) focus on theory and practice of human development. In this way, Haq (1995) explores the holistic concept of human development. He gives the facts behind the human development reports and the impacts of these reports. Alkire (2002) examines the dimensions of human development showing its usefulness and limitations in context of capability approach of Amartya Sen and in general. Alkire and Foster (2010) propose a method for adjusting the HDI for evaluating the distribution of human development across the population and dimensions using Atkinson's inequality measure. Anand and Sen (1994)

analyse the aggregative indicators and intra-population inequality, review the construction of the human development index and provide the supplementary criteria for measuring human development in more advanced countries. Inadequate disaggregated data, conceptual and measurement difficulties are the prime hurdles for not adjusting the HDI for inequality. Considering these facts, Kovacevic (2010, November) show some recent changes in measurement of inequality in human development and present a practical implication of the Alkire and Foster (2010) adaptation of the Foster, Lopez-Calva, Szekely (2005) method. Nayak (Ed.) (2010) shows that the north eastern region as a whole is experiencing promising human development with unsatisfactory economic growth.

- Economic growth (EG) and human development (HD) are interrelated and interdependent. Ranis, Stewart, and Ramirez (2000) prove that high growth in GDP per capita leads to reduce shortfalls in life expectancy rate. It implies that high EG leads to higher performance in HD. Ravallion (2010) argues that new HDI has considerably reduced the implicit weight on longevity in poor countries, compared to rich ones. In practice, the HDI doesnot take into account the distribution of health, education, or income within countries. Stanton (2007) analyse the history, accounting of inequality, and disaggregation of HDI by gender, race and state along with its criticisms. He proposes alternative indices to capture inequality in the measurement of human development.
- There are numbers of empirical works on human development with a view to a country, such as, South Africa (Gumede, 2010) and some are in context of India as a whole (Madan, 2012;Ray, 2009; Suryanarayana, Agrawal, & Prabhu, 2011). Many analysed with reference to a state or a community within India, such as, Jammu and Kashmir (Ahmad, 2012), Kerala (Leni, 2006), Nagaland (Mishra & Nayak, 2010), Bodo of Assam (Basumatary, 2010), Dalits of Karnataka (Pote, 2011), scheduled tribes (Sarkar, Mishra, Dayal, & Nathan, 2006), Tai Ahoms of Assam (Borgohain, 2012), tea garden

labourers of Assam (Chetia, 2003) etc. They focus on human development and tried to relate human development to poverty and inequality also. It was observed that people of North-east India, specially the SCs and STs are deprived in education, health and standard of living. Similarly, people are still more deprived in standard of living as compared to education and health.

Chapter III was solely devoted for a brief outline on models used, methodology applied and data collected to carry out the present study. Econometric methods cover the ordinary least square models and logit models. It incorporates a detailed description regarding the non-econometric methods, that is, measurement of poverty, inequality and human development. Nature and sources of primary and secondary data are mentioned along with the sampling design.

Chapter IV was framed mainly for the purpose of analyzing the empirical findings of the study meticulously. It was divided into four sub-themes, namely, profile of the sample households; poverty, inequality and human development, and econometric analysis of poverty. The gist of the chapter is given below:

- The overall proportion of working class people (15-64 years) is much higher (64.78) than the children (0-14 years) and retired or old-age people (65 years above). The (total) dependency ratio among the Mishing tribe in Sivasagar district is 50.75. The corresponding figures are 58.11 in Dhemaji district. The sex ratio for Sivasagar turns out to be 970 per 1000 males and that in Dhemaji stands at 967 per 1000 males. The sex ratios of the two districts are higher as compared to entire Assam (954 as in 2011) as well India (943 as in 2011). The household sizes of the Mishing tribe in Sivasagar and Dhemaji district are 5.79 ± 0.16 and 6.19 ± 0.16 members respectively. Out of the total sample households (373) in the two districts, the proportion of the nuclear family is higher (58.71 per cent) than that of the joint family (41.29 per cent).
- Out of the total number of households for the two districts (373), 130 (34.85 per cent) are illiterate, 144 (38.61) are educated between 5th - 9th class, 34

(9.12 per cent) are educated up to high school, 24 (6.43 per cent) are educated up to primary level (1-4th Class), 22 (5.90 per cent) are educated up to higher secondary, 18 (4.83) are graduates and 1(0.27) is post-graduate. District-wise average Household-level Educational Indices are estimated at 0.457 and 0.461 in Sivasagar and Dhemaji respectively. Among the members of the households 24.55 per cent are illiterate. Highest 35.84 per cent are 5th-9th class standard. The effective literacy rates among the Mishing tribe in Sivasagar and Dhemaji district are lower (78.94 per and 69.49 per cent respectively) compared to the overall literacy rate (80.41 per cent and 72.70 per cent respectively as per census 2011) of these two districts.

- Highest 57.37 per cent of Mishing households live in rooms having 0-2 persons. As high as 82.05 per cent of households have floor made of bamboo and woods.
- Among the Mishing tribe 89.01 per cent are enjoying improved source of drinking water where 76.14 per cent have tube-well. The highest percentage of households with electricity connection is 84.00 and lowest is 16.98. Around 82.84 per cent use woods as cooking fuels.
- It is found from the field study that the average Monthly Household Consumption Expenditure and Monthly Per-capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) are Rs 13014.09 ± 1231.90 and Rs 2690.54 respectively in Sivasagar district; whereas, the corresponding figures in Dhemaji district are Rs. 6844.59 ± 355.40 per month and Rs. 1655.85 per month respectively.
- The BPL households spend more in food items (54.5 per cent) than in non-food items (45.5 per cent); while APL households spend more in non-food items (52.5 per cent) as compared to food items (47.5 per cent). The share of food expenditure (54.5 per cent) to the total expenditure among the Mishing tribe in Sivasagar and Dhemaji districts exceeds the all India level and lower than the all Assam figure.

- An over whelming majority (66.9) of head of households in Dhemaji district is found self-employed in agriculture that is more than two times as compared to Sivasagar district (24.5 per cent).
- Average level of poverty in Dhemaji and Sivasagar district are higher as compared to state level figures of Assam. Mishings people basically live in banks of rivers and every year they are heavily affected by the flood. This results in loss of their wealth and crops leading to high and persistent poverty.
- The relative poverty is high in Sivasagar district as compared to Dhemaji district. It is perhaps because, Dhemaji district, a highly flood affected district, is totally rural area where prime occupation of villagers is agriculture. Characteristics of villages, occupational patterns and quality of life are very similar in this district.
- There is evidence to show that relative poverty or inequality is lower among the poorest of the poor and the socio-economically backward have remarkably low inequalities. Globally all tribal groups have remarkably lower inequalities. It is expected in a closely knit egalitarian society, Mishings are no exceptions.
- Inequality-adjusted Household-level Human Development Index (IHDI) values of Dhemaji and Sivasagar districts accounted for 0.30 and 0.26 respectively. Household-level Human development index (HDI) values using unlogged PCE are estimated at 0.41 and 0.37 in Dhemaji and Sivasagar districts respectively. Loss due to inequality in Dhemaji and Sivasagar districts are being 25.86 per cent and 29.95 per cent. HHDI value in Sivasagar district comes out at 0.536 and the corresponding figure in Dhemaji district stands at 0.520. Human development is found to be negatively associated with multi-dimensional poverty.
- The variables that raise poverty are age of principal earner, size of the household, dependency ratio, sex ratio, distance to nearest urban centre,

condition of area (affected by flood and erosion), and contribution of agriculture to household income. On the other hand, the variables that reduces poverty are educational attainment, sound health, and improved sanitation facility, distance of school from house (if within one km), improved drinking water, main road connectivity with village and enrollment in MGNREGA.

- In case of Dhemaji and Sivasagar districts, it is found that the probability of being poor is high in case of high size of household, high dependency ratio, high female-male ratio, occupation as agriculture and allied, poor health distance from town, and flood.

The Chapter V, the core chapter of the present study outlines the summary, conclusions, policy suggestion and future research extension.

5.2 Conclusions

Some factors that cause poverty are inside the households and others are outside the households. The study indicates that poverty among the Mishng tribe is beyond the control of the households. The prime determinants of poverty that are identified are age of principal earners, size of the household, type of family, dependency ratio, sex ratio, education, health, numbers of earners, sanitation facility, drinking water facility, contribution of agriculture to total household income, occupation as agriculture and allied, main road connectivity with village, physical assets, landholdings, distance from town to the village, flood and enrollment in MGNREGA.

There are variations between monetary and multidimensional poverty among the Mishng tribe. Economic inequality is significant within and across occupations. The human development is low among the Mishng tribe due to low level of educational attainment, health and standard of living. It is found that human development is negatively associated with multidimensional poverty.

The government's initiatives with regard to flood control and improvement in transport and communications infrastructure in the region have largely been

ineffective resulting in negligible improvements in physical standards of living of the Mishings.

Responsive institutions and effective policy interventions are must to meet the formidable challenges that harm health, impeded education and endanger livelihoods of the Mishing tribe. For which we need a pro-poor, proactive and responsible government and governance that can provide a permanent solution of flood and erosion, corruption-free mechanism, socio-economic safety nets, human capital and standard of living among the Mishing tribe with a consistent, balanced and equity-based approach. The policy makers and policy implementers must have clear and concrete perceptions regarding the what, why and how of poverty, inequality and human underdevelopment among the Mishing people. Quality, timeliness, relevance and accessibility of data regarding the Mishing tribe must be ensured for policy-making, research and financial assistance.

To sum up, government and civil society must take policies to prevent economic and health shocks, reduce natural risk and build human resilience to reduce poverty, promote capabilities and protect choices.

5.3 Policy Suggestions

The Mishing tribe basically lives in riverine natural area with unique cultural heritage, particular condition of an ethnic society, economy, and natural resources. But some Mishing people are presently living indifferent socio-economic and mixed cultural settings, which lead to change in tradition, outlooks, sources of earnings and standard of living. In spite of adoption of welfare schemes, this community is still lagging behind in terms of socio-economic conditions. Overall, the findings derived from primary data provide important policy insights on amelioration of poverty and inequalities, and uplift of human development among Mishing tribe.

Based on the empirical findings of present study, the following policy implications can be drawn to uplift the community:

- i) Very importantly, it requires explicit and careful understandings about the what, why and how of poverty clearly, before adopting the winning strategies for poverty eradication.
- ii) Good health and sufficient nutrition are prime requirements to increase the productivity and thus earnings of the poor households. The Mishing poor households are found to travel for a long distance for proper medical treatment. Most of them follow traditional treatment and observe rituals. Thus, provision of timely and adequate health care services including adequate and concessional medical facilities, sufficient doctors and nurses is very important to improve the quality of rural life and also in building human capabilities as a means to an end.
- iii) Population becomes human capital (i.e. the knowledge, ability, skill and physical capacity of the people that help them to produce more) when investment is made in education and health sectors. Hence, government should incur more expenditure on education for formation of human capital to enhance capabilities, productivity and earnings⁵¹ of Mishing people. Simultaneously, the government needs to monitor and evaluate the existing educational programmes. Education is very important to change the traditional obsolete attitudes of the Mishing cultivators and to acquire the scientific outlook. Awareness on government schemes as well as proper knowledge on banking transactions, production and marketing are must needed to reduce poverty and inequality.
- iv) Most of the poor express their reluctance to bear the cost of education. So, the government and NGOs have to provide free books, uniform and other allied facilities to the poor, especially, to girls. It is a fact that female education and fertility are usually negatively correlated, hence the policy of educating girls could also have an impact on household size, which is another important determinant of poverty.

⁵¹In practice, there is difference between income and earnings. Income is a regular amount of money on which a person may rely. Earnings are amount of money a person earn for his work that may vary from month to month or year to year. Here, we use “earnings” instead of “income”. Because, money earned by a rural poor is not regular; rather vary from time to time.

- v) Size of the population has negative impact on the standards of living and human development. The results envisage large size of household among Mishing population. It requires strict family planning.
- vi) Since livestock is prime source of earnings for most Mishing households, so it needs to improve livestock sector.
- vii) The Mishing rural people are engaged in paddy cultivation only for 6 months during a year. Yield levels are very low and self-consumption is the primary motive. So, to engage cultivators in productive activities and to increase their earnings, sustainable employment opportunities need to be generated through development of cottage, village and tiny industries through joint venture of government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Some industries need to be established to utilize the agricultural products, such as, fruit processing units, dairy farm, grain processing industries etc. However, industrialization in these areas is very unlikely to happen. Agrarian sector growth could be the only alternative for poverty alleviation among Mishings.
- viii) One hand, income is considered as prime tool for policymakers and on the other hand, prime occupation of most of the Mishing households is agriculture. So, it necessitates the diversification of agriculture: i) Diversification of crops (shifting from single cropping system to multiple cropping); ii) Diversification of productive activity (shift resources from farm activities to non-farming activities like livestock, poultry, fisheries etc.). It will increase the earnings of the poor households and reduce poverty. Government should ensure the existence of an adequate economic infrastructure (transport, communication and energy) and social infrastructure (education and research, health and family welfare, housing, other civic amenities, such as, water supply and sanitation).
- ix) Government departments must take initiative to build awareness in Mishing dominated areas about credit and marketing, and need to provide cold storage facilities at a very moderate rate.

- x) Political leaders must have political will to reduce poverty and enlarge human choices.
- xi) Adopt new pragmatic approach to enhance capability of rural Mishing people. The present process for building human capabilities (through professional and job-oriented education, training, health, housing, pure drinking water, food and nutrition, sanitation etc.) should be streamlined with involvement of the stakeholders at different stages from the identification of the needs of the poor to the evaluation of the programmes through social auditing.
- xii) There has to be an effective mechanism to monitor and evaluate anti-poverty programme.
- xiii) Poverty reduction and human development policy of government must have “woman’s face”. The productivity differentials must be reduced between men and women increasing special economic opportunities for women and improving their skill.
- xiv) Combat corruption and red-tapism at *Panchayat* levels, control flood, provide lands to the landless and rehabilitate the flood-affected Mishing people in areas having future prospects.
- xv) The creation of new jobs both in quantity and quality would motivate investment in human capital formation leading to higher educational attainment which in turn results in higher productivity, higher wages and higher per capita income. Finally this results in lesser poverty.
- xvi) In general, most of the poverty reduction strategies tend to reduce slightly the inequality in income, expenditure and assets. So, the policymakers should take it into consideration.
- xvii) The objective of increased revenue for spending on poverty reduction is to make addition of purchasing power of the poor. Everywhere, there are two options: direct transfer or wage employment, transfer in cash or kind, public or private provision, conditional or unconditional transfers, universal or targeted transfers. So, the most preferred strategy is the

unconditional cash transfer that is targeted for rural poor. It is better to be wage employment with both public-private provisions.

- xviii) Transfer of income appears to be an effective way to reduce poverty and lowering income inequalities at the same time. Hence, the government may adopt policies that would provide credit facilities, education attainment and job opportunities to the rural migrants who come to urban area for jobs. If the rural jobless migrants are employed in the urban sector, their remittances (i.e. transfer income) to their rural households would help increasing income of the rural poor households resulting reduction in income inequality.
- xix) Policy makers are to focus on the capability and capacity of government institutions in carrying out human development programmes. Because, high quality institutions and effective government are required for implementation of good policy and favorable outcomes.
- xx) Empirically, it is evident that the higher incidence of poverty among the Mishing tribe is mainly due to lack of productive assets like land, (endowment failure), low productivity or lack of access to improved quality inputs, lack of skill and capabilities (production failure), low prices for products, lower wages, limited occupational shift towards the non-agricultural sector, lack of labour mobility (exchange failure); addiction to alcohol, indebtedness, high unproductive expenditure (consumption failure) and limited access to the social security and protection to be provided by the government (state failure). Government should take initiative to remove these failures.
- xxi) A consistent expansion of rural non-farm sector (that lead to occupational diversification and rural transformation) is thought to provide a sustainable livelihood, reduce disguised unemployment and thus alleviate rural poverty among the rural Mishing tribe.
- xxii) The general development programmes should be accompanied by the special time-bound programmes to tackle the issue. The on-going poverty

alleviation programmes should be implemented in association with NGOs and VOs. Regular “social auditing” should be made by a third party to make these programmes more transparent and accountable to the stakeholders. In addition, these on-going poverty alleviation programmes should be implemented ensuring equitable outreach and full utilisation of the allocated funds.

- xxiii) To raise the level of human development, concrete efforts should be made to expand the economic activities and educational facilities along with their equitable distribution.
- xxiv) Social cohesion, responsive institutions and effective policy interventions are must for permanent solution of the problems (especially, the flood problem) of the Mishing tribe.

Thus, the poverty reduction and human development strategies must lay emphasis on the equitable and efficient delivery of public services, expansion of agricultural and non-farm sector, and the strengthening of food security and the informal sector. The official data on income or expenditure, health and educational attainment provided by the socio-economic institutions should be reliable, relevant, quality-based, adequate, timely, accessible, and supervised by expert research groups, but not administratively motivated. Otherwise, it will cause difficulties in policy making, implementation, research and financial assistance for fostering the well-being of the Mishing tribe.

5. 4 Possible Extensions

The present study is a primary study on an ethnic tribe group who lives basically in remote riverine area and annually affected by flood. So, this topic has thought to have relevance equally in national and international context, for there are lots of ethnic groups throughout world having the same characteristics and problems. The present study provides a framework under which a number of studies can be undertaken in future by the researchers. The following recommendations can be made for future theoretical and applied work:

Poverty is generally defined in terms of income or expenditure, but the economic status of a household also depends on its real and financial asset holdings. Asset poverty and its measurement is possible avenue for future research. It is found that the asset-based poverty measures predict poverty status of a household more accurately than the income-based measures.

The concept of poverty and poverty amelioration strategies require cross-disciplinary research with the strengths and methods of different disciplines, and their quantitative and qualitative approaches to poverty analysis.

Instead of using the state-level poverty line estimated by planning commission, we can construct district level local poverty line based on same methodology adopted by planning commission. Similarly, we can use new or modified indicators in Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) consistent with our local socio-economic and demographic conditions. Thus, we can analyze the poverty and inequality among different tribes of Assam using both the nationally or globally accepted Index and locally constructed Index. We can make comparison between the two estimates.

We can examine the relations between human development and its correlates, such as, social competencies (employment vulnerabilities, social protection and assistance, moral development, skills for processing/acquisition and communication etc.), social exclusion, personal insecurity (displacement, homeless situation, domestic violence etc), environment (man-made and natural vulnerabilities, risks, effects of environment etc.), perceptions (individual and state level perceptions on wellbeing or human development), and command over and allocation of resources (income, savings, expenditure, tax etc.).

Another possible avenue for future research may be to analyze the impacts and effectiveness of different policies enacted to reduce and alleviate poverty (absolute and relative) in context of its breadth, depth and duration.

Another avenue for further research is to identify causal effects of education and health in alleviating poverty and inequality among the scheduled tribe people.

To identify the contribution of different sources of earnings to total income inequality and the impact of each of the different sources on inequality may be possible extension of research. This would help in analyzing and comparing the urban and rural aspects of income inequality of any tribe in Assam.

Good health and education is the foundation of a high standard of living. Therefore, we must focus on the efficiency of people in terms of sound health and skill, and effectiveness of government and social institutions for uplift of human development and reduction of poverty.

Whether differentiated programmes for indigenous peoples, like Mishings, Bodo etc. produce better results than general or non-differentiated programmes? Whether education, health and job opportunity measures designed for indigenous peoples can increase earnings and ultimately reduce poverty and develop human living standard? In this context households that are on the verge of take-off from the subsistence level should be identified on the basis of educational and occupational criteria. Inequality levels are low within Mishings, but is it low across ethnic groups in Assam? It is more important to examine inequality across the population than within an isolated tribal alone.

The present study observes dissatisfactory effort on the part of the local and state governments in providing basic infrastructure in the Mishings dominated remote areas. The exact cause for the failure of the government needs to be identified. Safe sanitation drive is also found to be insignificant and insufficient. Rate of child immunization is highly dissatisfactory. Causes of the limited reach out of the local government demands a separate study.

Further studies are needed to measure the poverty and human development of different tribes of Assam using an index that includes both income and non-income indicators.

Future research may focus on poverty dynamics - over the life-cycle, across generations and among varied social groups; and to measure poverty dynamics in terms of more multidimensional aspects beyond mere income and consumption.