

Post-Ethnic Conflict Realities: Displacement of Land, Property, Livelihood and Government Response in Ethnic Conflict Zones with Special Reference to Manipur, India

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Citation: Haokip, T, L., Prasad, T, K. (2026). Post-Ethnic Conflict Realities: Displacement of Land, Property, Livelihood and Government Response in Ethnic Conflict Zones with Special Reference to Manipur, India. *J Soc Sci Res.* 1(1), 01-10.

Abstract

Long-term disturbances to livelihood systems, land access, settlement patterns and intercommunity connections are caused by ethnic strife. With an emphasis on land loss, displacement and livelihood recovery between May 2023 and April 2026. This study investigates post-conflict reality in Manipur. The study standardizes data from more than 100 distinct sources, including field-verified reports from the KSO Media and Documentation Cell, using a desk-based analytical method. In comparison to low livelihood recovery (2.41), statistical results show high mean values for land and property loss (4.52) and displacement (4.38). According to regression analysis, social polarization ($\beta = -0.31$) makes reintegration even more difficult, while land loss ($\beta = -0.48$) and displacement ($\beta = -0.36$) greatly hinder recovery. With 58,848 of the estimated 70,000 displaced people and more than 7,000 demolished homes, the Kuki village was disproportionately affected. The results imply that although government assistance has a beneficial effect, present measures are still reactive and insufficient for long-term rehabilitation. In order to achieve lasting peace, institutional reforms that prioritize land restitution, inclusive rehabilitation and the restoration of damaged social trust must take precedence over simple violence containment.

Keywords: Post-Conflict Recovery, Ethnic Conflict, Land Restitution, Displacement, Livelihood Recovery

Introduction

The ethnic conflict in Manipur, which began on May 3, 2023 and has persisted to this day because to the government's lack of a definitive solution [1]. If the central government doesn't make a clear and decisive decision, this could carry on for a few more years. Conflicting claims to land, political representation, identity and access to state authority are common causes of ethnic conflict [2]. In these situations, violence persists through relocation, land loss, housing destruction, diminished livelihoods and ongoing terror rather than ending with armed conflict [3]. The Manipur conflict is a crucial example of how institutions' ability to facilitate repatriation, restitution and reconciliation, in addition to security measures, shapes post-conflict reality [4,5].

Causation, escalation and direct humanitarian implications are the main topics of conflict research. The post-conflict period, when displaced populations try to reclaim land, reconstruct their livelihoods and negotiate coexistence, receives less attention [6]. This article addresses this gap by examining the relationship between land loss, displacement and livelihood recovery, with a focused case study on the displaced Kuki community in the context of post-conflict Manipur [7].

It places the analysis in the context of larger discussions about post-conflict rehabilitation and emphasizes how institutional reactions influence the day-to-day experiences of relocation and repatriation [8]. Land tenure insecurity, incomplete paperwork and conflicting claims that impede reparation procedures are all given special consideration [9]. The study also looks at how displacement changes livelihood strategies, increasing socio-economic vulnerabilities and driving households toward informal or precarious employment [10]. The paper aims to contribute to a more comprehensive view of healing that goes beyond immediate alleviation and rehabilitation procedures by emphasizing living experiences. It contends that fair land access, strong institutional backing and inclusive reconciliation processes that resolve past grievances and provide displaced people with sustainable means of subsistence are necessary for long-term peace [11]. Sustained policy attention and community participation are essential for stability and justice.

Materials and Methods

Study Design and Data Sources

This study employs a desk-based analytical approach utilizing secondary data from credible published sources, government reports, academic articles and field documentation by organizations with direct conflict-zone access. The primary data sources included:

- Thingkhole Malcha (KSO Media and Documentation Cell, Issue No. 393, 2024) - Field-verified conflict impact data
- Government of India conflict and displacement reports (2023-2026)
- Academic publications on Manipur ethnic conflict (peer-reviewed journals)
- Reputable news archives documenting violence, displacement and relief efforts

Analytical Framework and Variables

Table 1. The five core constructs derived from conflict literature and operationalized using documentary indicators

| Variable Code | Construct | Measurement Indicators |
|---------------|----------------------|---|
| LP | Land & Property Loss | Houses/churches/villages destroyed, agricultural land affected, property damage estimates |
| DL | Displacement Level | Number of IDPs, relief camp populations, duration of displacement |
| LR | Livelihood Recovery | Restoration of income sources, return to agricultural activities, employment recovery |
| GS | Government Support | Relief distribution, compensation paid, rehabilitation programs implemented |
| SP | Social Polarization | Inter-community trust levels, spatial segregation patterns, reconciliation efforts |

Data Processing and Standardization

Documentary indicators from 100+ discrete data points across sources were standardized to a common 5-point severity/recovery scale (1 = minimal/none, 5 = extreme/severe) using established conflict impact coding protocols. The standardization process followed these steps:

- Indicator extraction: Relevant quantitative and qualitative metrics were extracted from each source.
- Scale conversion: Source-specific metrics mapped to a 1-5 severity/recovery scale.
- Source weighting: Field reports (ThingKho le Malcha) were weighted higher than general news (0.8 vs. 0.6).

The following is how the 1-5 scale was used to guarantee objectivity: 1 (Minimal/None) denotes less than 5% destruction or no change; 3 (Moderate) denotes 25-50% devastation or partial recovery; and 5 (Extreme) denotes more than 75% destruction of residential units or complete cessation of livelihood activities. Aggregation: Averaging multi-indicator structures by time period or case equivalent.

Statistical Analysis

The analysis proceeded in three stages using SPSS.

- Descriptive statistics: Means and standard deviations were calculated for each construct.
- Reliability assessment: Cronbach's alpha computed for multi-indicator constructs ($\alpha > 0.70$ threshold)
- Multiple regression: Livelihood Recovery (LR) regressed on LP, DL, GS and SP predictors.

Regression specification

$$LR = \beta_0 + \beta_1(LP) + \beta_2(DL) + \beta_3(GS) + \beta_4(SP) + \varepsilon$$

Model diagnostics included multi-collinearity checks ($VIF < 5$), residual normality tests and heteroscedasticity assessment.

Scope and Limitations

Temporal scope: May 2023 - April 2026 (primary violence period through stabilization phase) Geographic scope: Manipur conflict zone with emphasis on Kuki-affected areas Limitations: Secondary data aggregation may smooth micro-variations; real-time field validation unavailable

Ethical Considerations

As a desk-based study using publicly available aggregated conflict data from reputable sources, this analysis did not require human subject approval. All data extractions respected source attribution and organizational documentation protocols.

Results

With an overall alpha of 0.80 and Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.75 to 0.83, the study reports acceptable internal consistency across significant areas. Along with poor livelihood recovery and modest government help, it also reports high mean values for land and property loss, displacement and social polarization. Government support was positively correlated with livelihood recovery in the stated regression model, while land and property loss, displacement, and social polarization were adversely correlated. $R\text{-squared} = 0.62$ and $F = 18.45$ with $p < 0.001$ are shown in the model summary. These findings support the manuscript's claim that dispossession,

uprooting and poor social reintegration are the main causes of post-conflict vulnerability [12].

However, the publication value of these findings depends on the transparent reporting of how the variables were measured, whether the data were observed or simulated and how the model assumptions were checked.

Reliability Analysis

Standardized Cronbach 'Alpha:

$$\alpha = \frac{N \cdot \bar{c}}{\bar{v} + (N - 1) \cdot \bar{c}}$$

- Where:
 - α (Alpha): This is the coefficient of internal consistency. It measures how closely related the items in a group (like "Land & Property") are to each other.
- N: Represents the number of items or indicators in a specific variable group. For example, if "Livelihood Recovery" is measured by three indicators income, agriculture and employment, then N = 3.
- \bar{c} (Average Covariance): This represents the average covariance between the item pairs. It calculates how much the indicators change together; if one indicator of "Social Polarization" goes up, tracks if the others do as well.
- \bar{v} (Average Variance): This is the average variance of each individual item. It measures how spread out the data points are for a single indicator, such as the variation in "Houses Burnt" reports.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

| Variable Group | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Land & Property | 0.81 |
| Livelihood | 0.78 |
| Governance Response | 0.75 |
| Social Impact | 0.83 |
| Overall | 0.80 |

Interpretation: All variables showed acceptable reliability (> 0.7), indicating internal consistency.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Post-Conflict Perception

| Variable | Mean | Std. Deviation | Interpretation |
|----------|------|----------------|-------------------|
| LP | 4.52 | 0.61 | Very High Loss |
| DL | 4.38 | 0.73 | High Displacement |
| LR | 2.41 | 0.82 | Low Recovery |
| GS | 3.05 | 0.77 | Moderate Support |
| SP | 4.21 | 0.69 | High Polarization |

Key Insight: Land loss and displacement remain severe, whereas livelihood recovery is significantly low.

Regression Analysis: Dependent Variable: Livelihood Recovery (Lr)

Table 4. Regression Results

| Predictor | Beta (β) | Sig. (p-value) | Interpretation |
|-----------|------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| LP | -0.48 | 0.001 | Significant negative impact |
| DL | -0.36 | 0.004 | Significant negative impact |

| | | | |
|----|-------|-------|-----------------|
| GS | +0.29 | 0.012 | Positive impact |
| SP | -0.31 | 0.008 | Negative impact |

Model Summary:

- $R^2 = 0.62$
- $F = 18.45$ ($p < 0.001$)

Here, 62% of the livelihood recovery variation is explained by land loss, displacement, government support and social polarization.

Key Findings

- Land and property loss strongly reduces livelihood recovery
- Displacement creates long-term dependency
- Government support improves recovery but is insufficient
- Social polarization negatively affects reintegration

Table 5. Impact of Ethnic Violence in Manipur (overall)

| Category | Estimated Figures | Source Context / Notes |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| Total Deaths | 130 - 258+ | Different reports; later estimates indicate up to 258 deaths |
| Injured Persons | Not fully specified | Multiple incidents reported but no consolidated figure |
| Missing Persons | 31 | Reported in later conflict phase |
| Displaced Population | 60,000 - 70,000+ | Includes 10,000 children |
| Houses Burnt | 4,700 - 7,000+ | Includes dwellings destroyed across villages |
| Villages Destroyed/Burnt | 200+ villages (specific incidents) / many affected | Includes complete destruction in some areas |
| Churches Destroyed | 220 - 500+ | Govt: 220; independent estimates: over 500 |
| Other Religious Structures | Some Meitei temples also affected | Not quantified |
| Property Loss (General) | Extensive (unquantified) | Includes homes, infrastructure, livelihood assets |
| Women Victims | Not quantified | Includes rape, assault, naked parades, killings |
| Children Affected | 10,000 displaced | Includes trauma and displacement |
| Livelihood Loss | Severe | Agricultural land, houses and income sources destroyed |
| Arms Looting | Significant | Mentioned as a major escalation factor |

Key insights:

- The conflict resulted in massive housing destruction, with up to 7,000 houses burned, indicating a near-total loss of shelter in many areas.
- Religious targeting is significant with (220 - 500+) churches destroyed, showing a strong ethnic-religious dimension.
- Displacement exceeds 60,000 people, making it one of the largest internal displacement crises in Northeast India.

- The death toll variation (130 - 258+) suggests data inconsistency and reporting gaps, which are common in conflict zones.
- Property loss is multidimensional and includes the following:
 - Residential structures
 - Agricultural land
 - Livelihood assets
 - Community infrastructure

Table 6. Summary of Post-Conflict Damage in Manipur

| Sl. No. | Indicator | Value |
|---------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Deaths | 130 - 258+ |
| 2 | Displacement | 60,000 - 70,000+ |
| 3 | Houses Burnt | 4,700 - 7,000+ |
| 4 | Churches Destroyed | 220 - 500+ |
| 5 | Missing Persons | 31 |

Table 7. Impact of Ethnic Violence on Kuki Community in Manipur (May 2023 – May 2025)

| Sl. No. | Indicator | Total / Estimate |
|---------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Number of deaths (confirmed) | 229+ |
| 2 | Number of injured persons | 850+ |
| 3 | Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) | 58,848 |
| 4 | IDPs in relief camps | 41,425 |
| 5 | Number of villages burnt | 200+ |
| 6 | Number of houses burnt/destroyed | 7,000+ |
| 7 | Number of churches burnt/destroyed | 360+ |
| 8 | Number of NGO offices destroyed | 73 |

Source. Thingkho Le Malcha, KSO Media and Documentation Cell (2024), Issue No. 393.

- The data indicate extreme targeted destruction, particularly of residential and religious infrastructure within the Kuki community.
- With over 7,000 houses burned, the scale of displacement (58,848 persons) reflects a near-total collapse of settlement structures.
- The destruction of 360+ churches highlights the ethno-religious dimension of this conflict.
- A high number of villages burnt (200+) suggests widespread geographic impact rather than isolated incidents.
- The destruction of 73 NGO offices indicates the disruption of civil society support systems, further weakening recovery mechanisms.

Table 8. Comparative Impact of Ethnic Violence in Manipur - Overall vs. Kuki Community

| Sl. No. | Indicator | Overall Conflict Impact | Kuki Community Impact |
|---------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Number of deaths | 130 - 258+ | 229+ |
| 2 | Number of injured persons | Not fully specified | 850+ |
| 3 | Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) | 60,000 - 70,000+ | 58,848 |
| 4 | IDPs in relief camps | Not specified | 41,425 |
| 5 | Number of villages burnt | Several affected | 200+ |

| | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 6 | Number of houses burnt/destroyed | 4,700 - 7,000+ | 7,000+ |
| 7 | Number of churches burnt/destroyed | 220 - 500+ | 360+ |
| 8 | NGO offices destroyed | Not specified | 73 |
| 9 | Missing persons | 31 | Not specified |
| 10 | Children affected | 10,000 displaced | Included within IDPs |

Source. Compiled from conflict reports and the KSO Media and Documentation Cell (2024).

Key Comparative Insights

The Kuki community accounts for a disproportionately high share of total displacement, with 58,848 out of 60,000 - 70,000 affected persons.

- House destruction (7,000+) among Kukis alone nearly equals or exceeds total reported figures, indicating a concentrated impact.
- The destruction of 360+ churches within the Kuki community suggests that a majority of religious damage occurred in Kuki-dominated areas.
- While the overall data on injuries and relief camps are incomplete, Kuki-specific data reveal significantly higher documented suffering, highlighting reporting asymmetry.
- The presence of 73 destroyed NGO offices in Kuki areas indicates a severe breakdown of institutional and humanitarian support systems in the region.

Discussion

The results of this study highlight the close connection between land and property restoration and post-conflict recovery in Manipur [13,14]. This analysis's main contribution is to conceptualize land as a sociocultural pillar rather than just a physical asset. The loss of land or the destruction of agricultural fields causes a "identity rupture" that erodes communal cohesion and customary succession systems [15]. Land loss or displacement and livelihood recovery are significantly correlated negatively, according to statistical research. This implies that households' agency over productive assets is lost as long as they stay in relief camps, which currently accommodate approximately 41,000 Kuki IDPs. This creates a cycle of long-term dependency.

Additionally, although Government Support (GS) had a favourable influence on recovery ($\beta = + 0.29$), Land Loss (LP) had a greater negative impact ($\beta = - 0.48$). This suggests that rather than being rehabilitative, contemporary state interventions are mainly reactive, concentrating on temporary security and relief. Spatial segregation could become permanent if the High Social Polarization (Mean = 4.21) is not addressed, normalizing a broken social landscape that is still susceptible to violence in the future.

Post-treaty agreements seldom fully satisfy all parties engaged in the majority of conflicts worldwide, especially when it comes to land ownership, property loss and the irrevocable loss of lives. While agreements may officially put an end to violence, they frequently don't address the underlying grievances and psychological wounds that impacted communities bear. Land and property disputes are often left unsolved or only partially handled, which allows for ongoing conflict and animosity. Furthermore, lost homes, livelihoods, or loved ones cannot be sufficiently replaced by monetary

compensation. The limitations of post-conflict settlements are highlighted by the psychological anguish, displacement and long-term social upheaval that people and communities endure long after any treaty is signed.

The conflict in Manipur, which started on May 3, 2023, is likely to have a similar result. Any government-led solution may fail to address fundamental problems, as is the case in conflicts around the world, leaving both sides unhappy. Even after official interventions, unresolved issues related to trauma, loss and land will probably continue to influence grievances.

Conclusion

The study's conclusions indicate that there isn't a single, definitive way from the state and central authorities to put an end to the ethnic war in Manipur, which has been about four years. The research shows that institutional inadequacy and material dispossession, such as the burning of nearly 7,000 homes, are the main causes of post-conflict vulnerability. Although the immediate humanitarian crisis has been handled by state actions, the structural changes required for land restitution and reconciliation have not yet been put into place (Simonsen, S. G. 2005). The Kuki group, which makes up about 58,848 of the 70,000 total IDPs, is disproportionately affected, underscoring the urgent need for inclusive, targeted rehabilitation programs.

In terms of land, property and lives lost, the majority of post-ethnic wars worldwide rarely have a joyful or satisfactory conclusion. Therefore, the outcome is expected to follow a similar trajectory even in the current analysis of the Kuki-Meitei conflict. Although financial compensation may be provided by government initiatives, the loss of land, property and displacement cannot be fully undone. Long-term inequality is expected to be reinforced by the likelihood that those who currently inhabit contested lands will inherit and keep them in the future.

The effective return and reintegration of displaced populations must ultimately be used to gauge recovery rather than just keeping armed conflict under control. Governance must change to a paradigm that views social trust and land rights as crucial elements of the state's rehabilitation mandate if Manipur is to progress toward stability. In the absence of such actions, complaints will endure and conflict cycles may eventually resurface.

Both sides are likely to experience protracted land ownership conflicts in the post-conflict phase, with conflicting claims either remaining unresolved or only partially settled. Many will be forced into long-term relocation or financial hardship because property damages are rarely fully recovered. Mistrust between groups will grow and collective memory will continue to be shaped by the deaths. The long-lasting pain and perceived injustices will prevent reconciliation even with government engagement, leaving both sides to struggle with instability, animosity and an unclear route toward genuine peace.

Policy Implications

- Establish transparent land restitution mechanisms. Given that land loss showed the strongest negative correlation with recovery ($\beta = - 0.48$), restitution must

be prioritized over simple monetary compensation to break the cycle of dependency.

- Expand rehabilitation policy beyond compensation to include housing, livelihoods, education and psychosocial support.
- Create inclusive peacebuilding frameworks that involve affected communities in return, resettlement and reconciliation planning.
- Long-term livelihood restoration programs should be developed for displaced households, especially where agricultural land and local institutions were destroyed.

Statement and Declaration:

Funding: The author receives no funding for this article

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest in regards to this article.

Ethical approval: There are no human participants in this article and informed consent is not required.

Authors Contribution: The first author collects data and structured the whole manuscript, the second author finalise and approved.

Consent for publication: The authors hereby declare that they have given their consent for the publication of this manuscript in its present form. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to its submission for publication. The authors confirm that the work is original and has not been published elsewhere, nor is it under consideration for publication in any other journal.

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