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A Study on Illegal Immigration into North-East India: The Case of Nagaland

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Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses
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ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION IN NAGALAND

With a total area of 16,579 sq. km, Nagaland had a population of 1,988,636 in 2001. The state is bounded by Assam on the west, Myanmar and Arunachal Pradesh on the east and by Manipur on the south. Nagaland is predominantly rural, where nearly 73 per cent of the population is engaged in agriculture sector. Its per capita income during 2000-01 was Rs 11,473 (at constant 1993-94 prices). The literacy rate was 67.11 per cent in 2001. The state is inhabited by 16 major tribes apart from several sub-tribes. Ao, Angami, Chang, Konyak, Lotha, Sumi, Chakhesang, Khiamniungam, Kachari, Phom, Rengma, Sangtam, Yimchungrü, Kuki, Zeliang and Pochury are the major tribes. Each tribe has distinct customs, language and attire.

AIMS AND METHODS

No study is available in print on illegal immigration in Nagaland. Likewise, this phenomenon is also not well-documented in the media. Therefore, this study may be of some value in understanding the issue. Hence, this study is aimed at understanding the following objectives:

1. The nature and extent of illegal immigration in Nagaland;
2. The factors of immigration;
3. The local perception towards illegal immigration; and
4. The overall impact of illegal immigration.

The study has an exploratory-cum-descriptive design and is based on a host of primary as well as secondary information, gathered through extensive field surveys and media-coverage. A bulk of the information was gathered through personal discourse with several people across Nagaland, including journalists, academicians and student leaders, who have a wider understanding of the problem. The fieldwork covered important places like Kohima, Dimapur and Medziphema given the larger presence of the alleged illegal immigrants in these areas. However, the

fieldwork in Kohima town²⁹ had to be abandoned midway as this researcher was strongly advised by a student leader to seek prior permission from them in pursuance with their resolution restricting non-Nagas from conducting research work on any Naga issue. As a result, the fieldwork had to be mainly concentrated in and around Dimapur town. In all, 200 respondents (165 'common-men' and 35 'intelligentsia') were interviewed between 2005 and 2008.

Two sets of questionnaires were prepared after intensive evaluation of the limited literature available. However, I must admit that there is huge amount of literature on Assam. The first set of questionnaire was meant exclusively for the 'common-men' while the second one was for the 'intelligentsia' that included academicians, journalists and student leaders. The questionnaires contained both open-ended and closed-type questions. The open-ended questions made the respondents express their own views. The questionnaires attempted to capture the overall complexity of the subject and were administered both in the urban and semi-urban segments in Dimapur, Kohima and Medziphema. Adequate care was taken in the administration of the questionnaires; and additional comments were also solicited to better portray the problem.

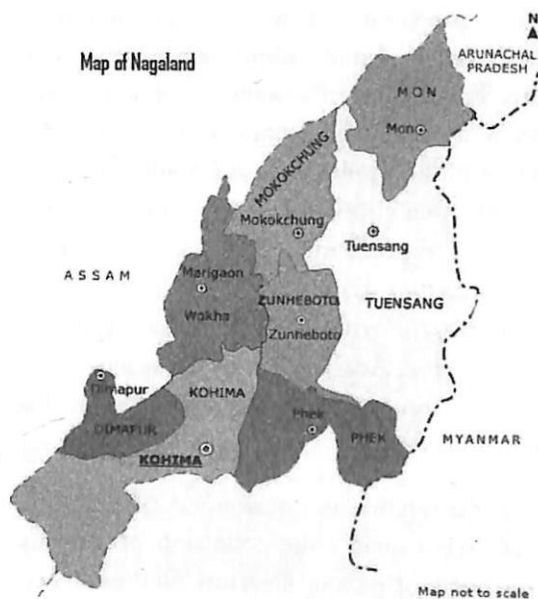
The fieldwork yielded both the quantitative and qualitative information. The secondary source materials were mainly the collection of various newspapers clippings, given the dearth of printed literature on the subject.

Some of the limitations of the study are: (a) non-availability of reliable data; (b) clandestine nature of the immigrants, who identified themselves as the bona-fide residents of Assam; and (c) sensitivity of the issue.

²⁹ Initially, we proposed to undertake fieldwork at Niuland in Dimapur district. But we were compelled to abandon it due to practical difficulties we encountered in the field due to the sensitiveness of the issue. However, I managed to collect some comments during frequent trips to Dimapur. Again in Kohima, we abandoned the fieldwork midway before reaching our set targets due to restriction imposed upon 'non-locals' from undertaking such sensitive study in Nagaland. An influential student leader whom we met in Kohima advised us to take prior permission from them, and advised us to submit a synopsis of the study. However, we felt not to seek the permission and continued the fieldwork elsewhere where there were not such restrictions.

THE PROBLEM

Illegal immigration has been taking place in Nagaland, especially in areas bordering Assam, since the early 1970s or even earlier, but it has picked up since the 1980s. While immigration in Assam and Tripura are comparatively well-documented, it has not been done in Nagaland. Very recently, the issue has generated some attention among a section of the Naga society, who perceive it as a potential threat to their tribal identity.



Courtesy: Centre for Development and Peace Studies, Guwahati.

Like elsewhere, estimates about the total population of illegal immigrants in Nagaland are not forthcoming and these estimates vary from 100,000 to 300,000. In 1999, Thuingaleng Muivah, the general secretary of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM), estimated two lakh Bangladeshis in the Dimapur area.³⁰ But in 2000, the Union Home Ministry estimated about 75,000 illegal immigrants in the state. In 2003, the

Nagaland government estimated approximately one lakh illegal immigrants who had settled in the foothills of the state bordering Assam.³¹ Based on this estimates, we can assume there are at least 1 lakh illegal immigrants in the state.

³⁰ Kanchan Lakshman and Sanjay K. Jha, "India-Bangladesh: Restoring Sovereignty on Neglected Borders", *Faultlines: Writings on Conflict & Resolution*, Volume 14, Institute for Conflict Management, New Delhi, 2003, p. 124.

³¹ Nishit Dholabhai, "Rio to warn Delhi on settlers with expose", *Telegraph (Kolkata)*, December 26, 2003.

Since Nagaland is not connected either by land and water with Bangladesh, immigrants have been coming via Assam after obtaining fraudulent documents, such as ration card, voter identity card and driving licence, from places like Karimganj, Nagaon, Golaghat and Sibsagar in Assam; and then settled along the foothills of Assam-Nagaland border as well as areas around Dimapur. Since the immigrants possessed these documents, the local police could do nothing despite suspecting their dubious nationality. Further, the cosmopolitan nature of Dimapur, the commercial hub of Nagaland, makes their identification and detection a highly arduous task. In 2003, the Nagaland chief minister, Neiphiu Rio, publicly acknowledged Assam as being the 'exporter' of illegal immigrants to Nagaland. *The Telegraph*, a Kolkata-based daily newspaper, also reported that certain officials of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation were issuing birth certificates for a paltry sum of Rs 200. Terming the report an 'eye-opener', Rio alleged that such rackets were endangering the entire North-East. He also alleged that when Bangladeshis were arrested by the Nagaland Police, they produced documents issued by the Assam government to prove their Indian citizenship.³²

Prospects for better employment and the dislike of the locals for manual labour have significantly contributed to the influx of immigrants, with the immigrants easily finding work, be it in the agricultural fields, in homes, or as rickshaw pullers and manual labourers. As Nagaland faces a labour shortage, certain sections of Naga society also encouraged immigrants by providing them shelter, land for settlement and cultivation. Local contractors and businessmen also prefer to engage immigrants as they provide cheap and skilled labour.

Surprisingly, in the last two decades (1981-2001), Nagaland has recorded the highest rate of population growth in the entire country. Its population growth (Census of India 2001) recorded a sharp rise from 56.08 per cent in 1981-1991 to 64.41 per cent in 1991-2001. The population grew by 5.0 per cent per annum during 1971-81; 5.6 per cent per annum during 1981-91; and further increased to 6.4 per cent per annum during 1991-2001. Ironically, the population growth has not been uniform; it is concentrated in the plains adjoining Dimapur and districts bordering Assam. During

³² Ibid, no. 33.

1991-2001, Wokha district registered a maximum growth rate of 95.01 per cent followed by Tuensang (78.1 per cent). Mokokchung district registered the lowest growth rate of 43.48 per cent during the period. Most observers attribute this phenomenal increase to illegal immigration. Interestingly, all this is happening when the state is supposed to be protected through an 'inner-line permit system', which restricts non-locals (Indian citizens from other states) access to most parts of the state.³³ My own impression is that the inner-line permit system has not been effective, because it has been severely misused by the local administration, taking small bribes for allowing non-locals to travel, mostly through the Dimapur-Kohima-Imphal section of National Highway No. 39.

Table 2: District Profiles of Nagaland

Districts	Area	Share of Total area (%)	Population 1991	Population 2001	Share in State population 2001 (%)	Decadal growth of population
Dimapur	927	5.59	*	308382	15.51	73.3
Kohima	4041	18.79	387561**	3,14,366	15.81	49.96
Mokokchung	1615	9.74	158374	227230	11.43	43.48
Mon	1786	10.77	149699	259604	12.05	73.42
Phek	2026	12.22	102156	148246	74.55	45.12
Tuensang	4228	25.5	232906	414801	20.86	78.1
Wokha	1628	9.82	82,612	1,61,098	8.10	95.01
Zunheboto	1255	7.57	96218	154909	7.78	61

Notes: * Dimapur was a subdivision of Kohima district in 1991

** includes the population of Dimapur Subdivision

Source: Nagaland State Human Development Report, 2004.

There are also reports of the intermarriages between the immigrants and natives. Some observers even accuse that immigrants are desirous of marrying natives to secure social sanction for their settlement, and this is particularly reported in areas bordering Assam. Concerned by these

³³ 'Outsiders' (Indian citizens from other states) are not allowed entry to Nagaland without obtaining an 'Inner-line permit' except in Dimapur town.

allegations, the Naga Students' Federation (NSF), an influential student body, even imposed restrictions on native girls marrying immigrants. Talking to the media in Guwahati on August 10, 2003, a student leader from Nagaland stated that the NSF had imposed a ban on Naga girls marrying immigrants from Bangladesh. He, however, clarified that the ban could not be strictly imposed.³⁴ On several occasions, several student organisations, including the NSF, have even gone to the extent of identifying and deporting suspected illegal immigrants. Unfortunately, they reportedly came back. In any event, such claims of 'deportation' have little meaning as they involve nothing more than dumping the illegal immigrants from one state to another. Nagaland has claimed to have deported about 20,000 immigrants between 1994 and 1997, but most of them are said to have returned.

As a result of rising intermarriage, a community called 'Sumias' has reportedly emerged in the state. Our investigations reveal that the term 'Sumias' was first reported in the late 1980s by a journalist who conducted an investigation at Niuland in Dimapur district.³⁵ The 'Sumias' are the children of intermarriage between the Sumi Naga tribe and immigrants. However, the alleged emergence of 'Sumias' remains very controversial and sensitive. Right or wrongly, it is even alleged that some Naga girls married immigrants on the impression that the immigrants were hard working.³⁶ On December 4, 2002, a local politician, Ato Yephthomi, told the media in Guwahati: "These Muslim immigrants settle along the border areas and are engaged in agricultural activities. They are employed in the paddy fields and after staying in the areas for a few years get married to local Sumi girls. And when their offspring are born, they name them after the Sumi tribe".³⁷ In the course of the field work, concerns have been raised about the possibility of the voters' list being doctored to include the 'Sumias' as well other immigrants. As an editorial in a Dimapur newspaper noted:

"There is no denying the fact, that in any Muslim religious day, at least half of the shops in Kohima and some 75 per cent in Dimapur

³⁴ See "NSF wages war on Bangla influx", Assam Tribune (Guwahati), August 11, 2003.

³⁵ Interview with a senior journalist (name withheld) at Dimapur, October 11, 2008.

³⁶ Interview with an intellectual (name withheld) in New Delhi, June 18, 2009.

³⁷ See "Illegal immigrants give birth to new Naga tribe", Asian Age (New Delhi), December 5, 2002.

remain closed. The point is that this is a clear indication of how much the migrants have been able to make an impact on trading.”³⁸

It is also a fact that immigrants, either legal or illegal, are fast gaining access to business establishments across the state. In a major survey conducted by the Department of Evaluation, Government of Nagaland in 2006 on the employment in the private/unorganised sector in three district headquarters of Kohima, Dimapur and Mokokchung, altogether 13,380 establishments/shops were surveyed. The total number of non-Naga³⁹ workforce earning their livelihood in these three sample districts was 45,815, with an annual income of Rs 450.60 crore. According to this survey, Dimapur had the largest non-Naga workforce of 32,700 persons, followed by Kohima (10,900) and Mokokchung (2,215). The survey covered 78 different trades ranging from agriculture, trading and manufacturing to the service sector. The annual income of non-Nagas in Dimapur was the highest at Rs 351.85 crore followed by Kohima at Rs 89.98 crore and Mokokchung at Rs 8.77 crore. The construction sector had the highest non-Naga workforce, employing 4,099 persons. This sector was followed by the loading and unloading sector in railway and bus stations and godowns. These service industries were dominated by non-Nagas. The third largest workforce of non-Nagas was in trading and entrepreneurial activity. Running of pan/gumti shops provides employment to 2,780 persons. This was followed by the grocery/ration shops and then by the service sector, with 2,514 persons engaged in plying handcarts and rickshaws. Catering/hotel and restaurant industry, which is also a service sector, had a workforce of 2,257 and was the sixth largest employer of non-Nagas.⁴⁰ Further, a survey conducted by the state Directorate of Agriculture in 2003 revealed that out of 23,777 business establishments, nearly 71.73 per cent were owned and run by non-Nagas, with the Nagas owning only 6,722 shops

³⁸ See “Silent invasion”, Nagaland Post (Dimapur), August 31, 2002.

³⁹ According to the NSF, there are two categories of non-Nagas in Nagaland. The first category constitutes the illegal immigrants (foreign nationals) like the Bangladeshis, Bhutanese, Nepalese (except those residing in Naga Hill District prior to 1940), etc. The second group comprises of non-Nagas of Indian origin (Indian citizens) who are under the purview of Inner Line Regulation. For details, see Naga Students’ Federation, *The Vanguard* (a monthly bulletin of the NSF), 1(1), May 1992, Kohima.

⁴⁰ Government of Nagaland, Directorate of Evaluation, “Evaluation Study on Employment Opportunities Forgone by Nagas and Employment of Non-Nagas in the State”, Publication No. 52, Kohima, July 2007.

(28.27 per cent).⁴¹ In June 2009, the Angami Students Union (ASU) launched a verification drive of immigrants in Kohima, the capital of Nagaland, and to get their 'inner line permits' verified. In 2008, around 8,000 immigrants were registered in a similar drive undertaken by the union, though this number was far below the actual figures. The 8,000 immigrants were employed in 17 professions, such as business, labour, sales, carpentry, driving, tailoring, barbering, tea ferrying, mechanics, milkmen, cobblers, painters, paper hawkers, teachers, electricians, and masons.⁴²

Immigrants not only provide cheap labour, but are more willing to take up jobs which native workers normally avoid. As a result, unemployment among unskilled and semi-skilled natives has also gone up. The presence of immigrants is increasingly being felt in the major marketing areas of Dimapur and control businesses that deal with second-hand clothes, bamboo, thatch, chicken, fish and vegetables. In the course of the fieldwork, it was often alleged that several business establishments bearing local names on the sign boards were actually owned and run by the immigrants. In 2003, the noted columnist, Patricia Mukhim, in an open letter to Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, cautioned:

“It may not be too long before somebody with the power of numbers (population) demands a Union Territorial status in Dimapur. Its market areas already look like a mini-Bangladesh, albeit more lucrative.”⁴³

On their part, law enforcement agencies perceive the presence of illegal immigrants as a law and order problem, with their suspected involvement in various criminal acts like drug peddling, flesh trade and robbery. Some have charged that 'this population of desperate and homeless foreigners' was mainly responsible for the introduction of criminal and anti-social activities within Naga society.⁴⁴ With this background information it is important to ascertain public perception towards illegal immigration.

⁴¹ See “Business survey shows outsiders control Nagaland”, *Asian Age* (New Delhi), September 6, 2003.

⁴² “Angami Students’ Union to start verification drive”, *Nagaland Post* (Dimapur), June 15, 2009.

⁴³ See M Amarjeet Singh, “Countering floating population”, *Telegraph* (Kolkata), December 4, 2003.

⁴⁴ “ASU verification drive to check influx of illegal migrants”, *Morung Express* (Dimapur), June 16, 2009.

PUBLIC PERCEPTION TOWARDS ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

In this study, two-thirds of the intelligentsia identified: 'economic opportunities in Nagaland' and the 'aversion of Nagas towards manual labour' as the two key pull factors responsible for illegal immigration in the state. Other factors which they considered important are: 'poverty in Bangladesh', 'lack of adequate laws' and 'presence of Bangladeshis in Assam'. Therefore, it is clear that several factors are responsible for illegal immigration in Nagaland. Besides these factors, some of them also argued that the tradition of tribal chieftainship also patronised immigration, as the self-proclaimed village chiefs adopted immigrants in order to establish new villages along the inter-state boundary with Assam.⁴⁵ A senior journalist in Dimapur remarked:

“Land is prestigious for the Nagas. However, inability of the locals to work in the field compelled us to depend on non-locals, many of them Bangladeshis, to tilt or plough. The hospitality of the Nagas coupled with the erosion of community-based values among the contemporary Naga society patronised immigrants to work for us. We are now increasingly dependent on them. In their absence, will the Nagas fill up the vacuum created?”⁴⁶

As stated earlier, estimates on the population of illegal immigrants in Nagaland vary from between one and three lakh. In this study, we assume at least 1,00,000 illegal immigrants in Nagaland. In this context, we inquired about the magnitude of illegal immigration in the state. As much as 85.71 per cent of the intelligentsia as against 32.72 per cent common-men perceived the magnitude to be 'high'. Thus, it can be said that the intelligentsia perceived more seriously than the common-men. Of the latter, 38.78 per cent perceived the magnitude to be 'moderate' as against 14.28 per cent of the intelligentsia. Moreover, one-fifth of the common-men were not aware of immigration.

⁴⁵ Author's Interview with M. Jamir, an academician, at Dimapur, February 18, 2005.

⁴⁶ Author's interview with Monalisa Changkija, Editor, Nagaland Page, at Dimapur, November 12, 2005.

Table 3: Magnitude of Immigration in Nagaland

Response	Common-men		Intelligentsia	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
High	54	32.72	30	85.71
Moderate	64	38.78	5	14.28
Low	14	8.48	-	-
No aware	33	20	-	-
Total	165	99.98	35	99.99

When asked about the presence of illegal immigrants in their own locality, the data presents a mixed response. The responses of common-men were worked out as: 'high' (21.21 per cent), 'moderate' (18.78 per cent), and 'low' (40.60 per cent), respectively. However, the 19.39 per cent were 'not aware'. Majority of the respondents from Dimapur area stated that there was a large concentration of illegal immigrants in their district.

Table 4: Presence of Immigrants in the locality

Alternative Response	Common-men	
	Number	Per cent
High	35	21.21
Moderate	31	18.78
Low	67	40.60
Not aware	32	19.39
Total	165	99.98

When asked if any respondents had ever employed suspected illegal immigrants, either to work in their fields, in their homes, etc., around one-fifth of the common-men claimed to have employed them, while around 81.12 per cent denied doing so.

Table 5: Employment of Immigrants

Alternative Response	Common-men	
	Male	Per cent
Yes	31	18.78
No	134	81.21
Total	165	99.99

**Migrant Labourers Engaged in Road Construction in Assam**

Migrant labourers engaged in road construction work in Guwahati.⁴⁷

We were also interested in knowing the distinction between immigrant workers and local ones. Here, it was found that a majority of the respondents, 72.12 per cent of the common-men and 91.42 per cent of the intelligentsia felt that native workers were not readily available whereas immigrant workers were easily available. Almost all the respondents also felt that the immigrant workers could be hired at a cheaper rate as compared to native workers. Further, 35 per cent of the common-men as against 26 per cent of the intelligentsia felt that immigrant workers were more skilled than the native workers. However, around 44 per cent of the common-men and 40 per cent of the intelligentsia did not think so. Also, around 22 per cent common-men and 34 per cent intelligentsia did not respond on this issue.

⁴⁷ Frontline (Chennai), June 2-15, 2007.

Interestingly, 27.27 per cent common-men and 31.42 per cent intelligentsia found the immigrants more hardworking than the native workers. But another 49.09 per cent common-men as against 37.14 per cent intelligentsia did not think so. Despite our arduous efforts, around 22 per cent common-men and 31.42 per cent of the intelligentsia refused to comment on this subject. But it was clear illegal immigrants accepted the first job they were offered and usually at lower rates of wages as compared to native workers.

Table 6: Comparison between immigrant and local labourers (in per cent)

Statements	Common-men			Intelligentsia		
	Agree	Disagree	No Comment	Agree	Disagree	No Comment
Local labourers are scarce whereas immigrant labourers are easily available	72.12	8.34	19.39	91.42	5.71	2.85
Immigrants can be hired cheaply as compared to the local labourers	81.81	1.81	16.36	100	-	-
Immigrants are more skilled compared to local labourers	34.54	43.63	21.81	25.71	40	34.28
Immigrants are more hardworking than the locals	27.27	49.09	23.63	31.42	37.14	31.42
Immigrants can be easily handled as compared to local labourers	58.18	19.39	22.42	37.14	11.42	51.42

Further, at least 58.18 per cent common-men and 37.14 per cent of the intelligentsia felt that immigrant workers could be easily handled as compared to the native workers. But another 19.39 per cent common-men and 11.42 per cent intelligentsia did not think so. Here again, quite a good number, that constituted 22.42 per cent common-men and 51.42

per cent intelligentsia, preferred to remain mum. In this context, someone remarked: "If you employ native workers, you have to pay more. At the same time, the immigrants can be easily handled and are very loyal too."⁴⁸

Table 7: Who to be blame for Illegal Immigration? (in per cent) (Intelligentsia)

Alternate Response	High	Moderate	Low	No comment
Naga themselves	11.42	62.85	8.57	17.14
Politicians	82.85	17.14	-	-
Local contractors	91.42	5.71	-	2.85
Assam	45.71	37.14	8.57	8.57

Local contractors and politicians were also usually blamed for encouraging illegal immigration. The politicians were mostly blamed for not taking any initiative to tackle the problem. For local contractors, the blame is mainly for encouraging employment of immigrants. Those surveyed also blamed the Naga society for encouraging immigration. Assam too was criticised for the present situation in the state. "The advantages of illegal migration tend to be on the employers' side. In that the migrant's illegal status vis-à-vis his residence or employment places him in a situation of marked dependence, rendering him more willing to accept a very low wage, often below the legal minimum, the employer might expect to benefit."⁴⁹

Table 8: Awareness of the campaign against illegal migration (in per cent)

Organisations	Common-men		Intelligentsia	
	Aware	Not Aware	Aware	Not Aware
Students' Organisations	31.51	68.48	91.42	8.57
Political parties	18.78	81.21	14.28	85.71
Media	32.32	67.67	97.14	2.85

⁴⁸ Author's interview with a respondent at Dimapur, November 12, 2005.

⁴⁹ Tapinos Georges, 'Clandestine Immigration: Economic and Political Issues', in Trends in International Migration, OECD, 1999, p. 236.

Nonetheless, of late, the natives' concern for illegal immigration has begun to grow. But so far only the students' organisations have been largely credited with raising the issue in the state. As the data indicates, only 31.51 per cent of the common-men as against 91.42 per cent of the intelligentsia were aware of the campaigns launched by various students' organisations. A large majority of the respondents had not even heard about any campaign launched by local political parties. In fact, no political parties in the state have ever seriously taken up the matter. However, 97.14 per cent intelligentsia, as against 32.12 per cent common-men, were aware of the efforts of the media, particularly local dailies to create awareness among the masses.

As outlined earlier, a section of the native population began to perceive illegal immigration as one of the most dramatic economic, demographic, social and political problems of the state. Their apprehension is that this may lead to loss of land and damage tribal culture. They are also equally worried that in due course of time the illegal immigrants might even become an ethnic group. Keeping this in mind, we were also interested in knowing the perceived threat on Nagaland due to illegal immigration. Accordingly, 32.12 per cent of the common-men perceived the impact of illegal migration on tribal economy to be 'highly negative', while more than one-fifth (22.42 per cent) of them considered the economic impact to be 'moderately negative'. Altogether, 32.72 per cent of the common-men did not see any significant threat. Moreover, another 12.72 per cent common-men were not aware at all.

Table 9: Impact of Immigration on Tribal Economy (in per cent)

Response	Total
No significant impact	32.72
Moderately negative	22.42
Highly negative	32.12
Not aware	12.72

Altogether 30.29 per cent of the common-men felt that the illegal immigration is a potential security threat for Nagaland, whereas 21.81 per cent do not think so. This question was raised in the context of a possible conflict between immigrants and the natives in the near future. Such

assessment is particularly necessary in view of the sensitivities of the ethnic conflict in the North-East region. However, another 47.90 per cent were not aware of any threat. In this regard, a journalist cautioned: "Among the bulk of the illegal immigrants, many are rootless. Hence, life for them is not as precious, so they can go to any extent of committing any criminal act."⁵⁰

Table 10: Security threat of Immigration (in per cent)

Response	Total
Yes	30.29
No	21.81
Not aware	47.90

Again, 12.72 per cent of the common-men perceived that the demographic threat due to immigration was 'high' while another 31.51 per cent perceived a 'moderate' threat. Yet another 35.75 per cent perceived a 'low' threat. The remaining, 20 per cent, were not aware at all.

Table 11: Demographic threat due to Immigration (in per cent)

Alternate Response	Total
High	12.72
Moderate	31.51
Low	35.75
No response	20.00

When asked about the reports of intermarriage between the natives and the immigrants, only about one-fourth common-men claimed to have heard about this. According to them, one of the reasons for such marriages could also be the efforts of the immigrants to materialise their stay in the state. However, according to another one-fourth respondents, this was a baseless allegation.

We were also interested in knowing the perceptions of the intelligentsia on the impact of illegal migration. When asked about the economic impact,

⁵⁰ Interview with a journalist (name withheld) at Dimapur, November 11, 2008.

their response was 'high' (40 per cent), 'moderate' (48.57 per cent), and 'low' (5.71 per cent), respectively. On their apprehension regarding the shrinking of employment opportunities among the locals, the response was worked out as 'high' (42.85 per cent), 'moderate' (42.85 per cent), and 'low' (5.71 per cent), respectively. The overall impression was that immigrants' foray into the local workforce would deprive the natives of low paid jobs, thus leading to unemployment amongst them.

Table 12: Perceptions of the Intelligentsia on the Impact of Immigration (in per cent)

Statements	High	Moderate	Low	No comment
Nagaland's economy is affected	40	48.57	5.71	5.71
Employment opportunities of the locals are shrinking	42.85	42.85	5.71	8.57
Affects the demographic profile of the state	32.28	65.71	-	-
It is a threat to the security of Nagaland	22.85	51.42	-	25.71
Affects political and electoral process	8.57	31.42	11.42	48.57

Accordingly, 65.71 per cent intelligentsia felt that state's demographic profile would be 'moderately' affected due to immigration, while another 28.57 per cent considered it to be 'high' in small tribal states like Nagaland. On the security front, 51.42 per cent of them perceived a 'moderate' security threat; another 17.14 per cent felt the threat to be 'high' as there would be constant tension between the immigrants and the natives. Illegal immigration, according to 31.42 per cent intelligentsia, would pose a 'moderate' threat on the state's political and electoral process; another 8.57 per cent of them perceived the threat to be 'high'. Many of them expressed the threat would be real in about 30 to 40 years from now. However, almost all the intelligentsia felt that the state government were unable to respond to the situation. Many of the respondents were actually worried of the demographic implication, if illegal immigration continued unabated.

Table 13: Common-men' Perceptions towards the following Statements (in per cent)

Statements	Agree	Disagree	No comment
Immigrants attempts to legalise their stay by marrying locales	47.67	3.09	49.09
Local politicians/influential people patronise immigrants in settling in the state	54.54	3.63	41.81
State government is indifferent	53.33	18.18	48.48
Naga themselves are to be blamed for immigration	49.59	7.27	43.03
Bangladeshi migrants also indulge in criminal acts	40	1.21	58.78

Less than one-half of the common-men agreed with the allegation of immigrants attempting to materialise their stay by marrying natives. However, the rest did not accept the allegations or were not aware. Half of them blamed local politicians and influential people for patronising immigration. At the same time, half of them also said that the Naga community was responsible. Someone remarked: "Almost everyone in Nagaland is against illegal immigration. However, we lack a united effort to tackle the menace."⁵¹ Though the issue has generated some concerns in the recent past, but no concerted strategy has been evolved. This underscores the complexities of the issue. Hence, we were also interested in knowing the measures suggested by the respondents. As the data indicates, 80 per cent of the common-men and 57.14 per cent intelligentsia suggested 'forcible deportation' of the illegal immigrants. Almost all the respondents (86.06 per cent common-men and all the intelligentsia) felt that the existing laws were inadequate to deal with immigration and advocated the need for stricter laws. Only 4.09 per cent of the common-men, as against 57.14 per cent intelligentsia, felt that unless Assam cooperated illegal migration would continue in the state. However, 24.09

⁵¹ Interview with A. Lotha, a college student, in Dimapur, November 11, 2005.

per cent common-men and another 8.57 per cent intelligentsia found no logic in seeking the cooperation of another state.

The inability of the state government to act against illegal immigration was also strongly felt by almost all the respondents. It was seen that 79.18 per cent common-men and 94.28 per cent intelligentsia felt that the state government had failed to tackle the issue. On the idea of issuing work permits to the immigrants, 37.57 per cent common-men as against 60 per cent of the intelligentsia did not support the idea. Only some respondents favoured the idea of work permits to the immigrants.

Table 14: Prevention of illegal migration (in per cent)

Statements	Common-men			Intelligentsia		
	Agree	Disagree	No Comment	Agree	Disagree	No Comment
Forcibly deportation	80	10.30	9.69	57.14	34.28	8.57
Existing laws are inadequate	86.06	2.42	11.51	100	-	-
Strict laws are needed	90.90	-	9.09	100	-	-
Cooperation of Assam is essential	24.09	24.09	46.66	57.14	8.57	34.28
Government has failed	79.18	3.03	18.78	94.28	2.85	2.85
Work permit to immigrants	12.12	37.57	50.30	2.85	60	37.14

Only a small number of the respondents (1.21 per cent common-men and 2.85 per cent intelligentsia) thought that the issue had been politicised. However, 76.36 per cent common-men and another 97.14 per cent intelligentsia did not think so. However, my own impression is that the issue has not been as politicised in Nagaland as we it has been in neighbouring Assam. However, both the state government and the community-based organisations are clueless on how to deal with this problem.

Table 15: Immigration is Politicised

Response	Common-men	Intelligentsia
Yes	1.21	2.85
No	76.36	97.14
No Comment	22.42	-

On creating awareness among the people, 60 per cent of the intelligentsia and another 41.81 per cent common-men would like to see joint efforts of the state government, the central government and community-based organisations. But, 22.85 per cent of the intelligentsia as against 50.30 per cent of the common-men wanted community-based organisations to take main initiative. Their main argument was that in a tribal state like Nagaland, the community-based organisations have a very crucial role to play as there is more acceptability of their roles among the general population. Only 11.42 of the intelligentsia and 5.48 of the common-men wanted a joint initiative of the state government and the central government. The rest (5.71 per cent intelligentsia and 1.81 per cent common-men) favoured that the entire task should be handed over to the state government and the community-based organisations. In fact the community-based organisations are expected to play an active role, as Nagaland has a vibrant civil society which until now was focussing primarily on other societal issues, including insurgency. As the response of the respondents indicated majority of them were convinced that government alone won't be able to effectively handle illegal immigration. Hence, they advocated an active role for the community-based organisations.

Table 16: Creating awareness on Illegal Immigration

Agencies	Intelligentsia	Common-men
A. State government	-	0.60
B. Central government	-	-
C. Community-based Organizations	22.85	50.30
A+B+C	60	41.81
A+B	11.42	5.48
A+C	5.71	1.81

The study also sought to know the effectiveness of the Inner-Line Permit (ILP). The ILP is required for Indian citizens to enter Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram. It is issued under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873. An overwhelming majority of the intelligentsia (94.28 per cent) felt that the ILP had not been effective at all. On July 10, 2009, Nagaland Home Minister Imkong Inchen stated on the floor of the State Assembly in Kohima that a total of 75,807 ILPs were issued in 2008-09, and the total amount collected was Rs 2,024,690. In 2007-08, the number of permits issued was 76,268, with the total amount collected being Rs 2,157,345. However, he admitted that the state did not have any mechanism to check if people coming in through this permit ever left the state or not.⁵²

Table 17: Effectiveness of the Inner-Line Permit (Intelligentsia)

Effectiveness of Inner-Line Permit	Per cent
Very high	-
High	-
Moderate	-
Low	5.71
Very low	94.28

⁵² "Home minister on issue of ILPs", Nagaland Post (Dimapur), July 11, 2009.