



## OBC DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE POLICIES IN TRIPURA

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### RESEARCH ARTICLE



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#### Abstract

The assessment of Other Backward Classes (OBC) development requires an examination of how state policies address social disadvantage and promote equitable access to development opportunities. This study analyses development policies and welfare interventions for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Tripura, focusing on reservation policy, institutional arrangements, budgetary allocation and beneficiary coverage. Theoretically, it draws on Affirmative Action as the primary analytical perspective and Sustainable Development as a complementary conceptual framework. Methodologically, the study adopts a descriptive-analytical research design based on secondary data from government records, budget documents, legislative reports and scholarly literature. The findings reveal variations in budgetary allocation and scheme-wise beneficiary coverage, while the available evidence remains insufficient to establish the long-term socio-economic outcomes of these interventions. The study highlights the gap between policy provision and demonstrated developmental outcomes, underscoring the importance of systematic monitoring, reliable socio-economic data and evidence-based evaluation in assessing OBC development in Tripura.

#### DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.70096/tssr.260405040>

**Keywords:** *Other Backward Classes (OBCs); Tripura; Affirmative Action; Sustainable Development; Welfare Interventions; Social Inclusion*

### Introduction

The Other Backward Classes (OBCs) constitute a significant section of Tripura's population and have historically experienced socio-economic disadvantage and unequal access to educational, economic and other opportunities. A survey conducted by the Government of Tripura in 1995–96 estimated the OBC population at approximately 6.74 lakh, representing about 24.48% of the state's population, and identified 44 OBC communities. In response to these developmental concerns, the state has progressively introduced institutional and policy measures, including the establishment of a separate Directorate for Welfare of OBCs in 2013, reflecting a more focused administrative approach to OBC development (Government of Tripura, Department for Welfare of OBCs [DWOBC], n.d.).

OBC development has subsequently become an important component of Tripura's broader welfare and inclusion agenda. Government interventions have sought to address educational disadvantage, social vulnerability and economic constraints through targeted public programmes supported by institutional mechanisms for their delivery. These interventions provide an important basis for examining how the state translates its developmental commitment into public action, resource allocation and beneficiary-oriented support. Against this background, the present study assesses the major development policies and welfare interventions for OBCs in Tripura, with particular attention to their institutional framework, budgetary allocation, expenditure, beneficiary coverage and developmental reach.

### Statement of the Problem

Despite various government initiatives for OBC development in Tripura, questions remain regarding the extent to which these measures address the socio-economic disadvantages faced by the community. Welfare programmes provide financial and institutional support, while reservation policy concerns access to educational and employment opportunities. Understanding how these distinct policy measures address OBC development is therefore important for examining the role of the state in promoting social inclusion and equitable development. The present study focuses on these dimensions through an assessment of reservation policy, institutional arrangements, budgetary allocation, expenditure and beneficiary coverage.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the institutional framework and major policy measures for OBC development in Tripura, including reservation policy.
2. To analyse budgetary allocation, expenditure and beneficiary coverage under major OBC welfare interventions.
3. To identify the major implementation challenges and limitations of OBC development interventions in Tripura based on available secondary data.

### Research Questions

1. How do government policies, institutional arrangements and reservation provisions address the needs of OBC communities in Tripura?
2. What do budget allocation, expenditure and beneficiary data reveal about the implementation, reach and limitations of OBC welfare interventions in Tripura?

### Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study draws on Affirmative Action as its primary analytical perspective and Sustainable Development as a complementary conceptual framework. Rooted in the principle of social justice, affirmative action recognises that formal equality alone may be insufficient to overcome historical disadvantage and structural inequalities. In India, this approach finds constitutional support in Articles 15(4) and 16(4), which enable special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes and reservation in public employment for backward classes inadequately represented in state services (Government of India, 1950; Chalam, 2007). Sustainable Development complements this perspective by emphasising social inclusion and the reduction of inequalities, as reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 10 of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015). Together, these frameworks guide the assessment of OBC development policies in Tripura by examining institutional arrangements, budgetary allocation, expenditure and beneficiary coverage. Given the study's reliance on secondary data, they provide a basis for interpreting policy design and implementation without attributing long-term socio-economic outcomes directly to the interventions examined.

### Literature Review

Existing scholarship on Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in India has examined reservation policy, affirmative action, caste-based inequality and the role of the state in addressing historical disadvantage. Galanter (1961) analyses the constitutional foundations of protective discrimination and the legal measures adopted to address social disadvantage. Deshpande (2013) evaluates the rationale, implementation and limitations of affirmative action in India, while Basavaraju (2009) discusses constitutional issues surrounding reservation policy. Dushkin (1961) provides an early account of special treatment policies for backward classes. Munshi (2019) examines the relationship between caste and economic outcomes, highlighting the continuing relevance of caste in understanding economic inequality. Jaffrelot (2003) further contextualises the political mobilisation and changing position of backward communities in Indian democracy. The *Report of the Backward Classes Commission* (Government of India, 1980), commonly known as the Mandal Commission Report, provides an important basis for understanding the identification of OBCs and the development of affirmative action policies in India. Chalam (2007), in *Caste-Based Reservations and Human Development in India*, situates caste-based reservation within broader debates on social justice and human development. Hasan (2022) discusses OBC reservation and its implications for social justice and democratic representation, providing a broader political context for understanding the significance and continuing debates surrounding affirmative action. Collectively, these studies provide a broader understanding of the legal, economic and political context of OBC advancement in India.

Research specifically addressing OBC welfare interventions in Tripura remains comparatively limited. Choudhury, Chatterjee and Bhattacharjee (2023), in their study of the Swavalamban scheme in Unakoti district, examine the distribution of entrepreneurial finance and variations in access to financial support across social groups. The *15th Report of the Committee on Welfare of Scheduled Castes, OBCs and Minorities* of the Tripura Legislative Assembly (2013–2014) documents educational assistance, scholarships, financial support and skill-development initiatives, while identifying administrative and access-related concerns. Although these sources provide useful insights into welfare policy and implementation, a systematic assessment combining budgetary allocation, expenditure, beneficiary coverage and implementation across major OBC development interventions in Tripura remains limited. The present study addresses this gap through a sector-wise analysis of these dimensions using secondary data.

### Methodology

The study employs a descriptive-analytical research design based on secondary data to examine OBC development policies and welfare interventions in Tripura. Data are drawn from official government records, budget documents, legislative reports and relevant scholarly literature. The analysis covers budgetary allocations from 2021–22 to 2025–26 and scheme-wise expenditure and beneficiary coverage for the available period, particularly 2018–19 to 2023–24. Tabulation, percentage analysis, year-wise comparison and trend analysis are used to examine resource allocation, expenditure and beneficiary coverage. The findings are interpreted through the perspectives of Affirmative Action and Sustainable Development, with attention to policy implementation and the reach of welfare interventions within the limitations of available secondary data.

## Discussion and Analysis

**Who Are OBCs?:** Other Backward Classes (OBCs) are communities identified as socially and educationally backward for affirmative action and welfare measures. Article 340 of the Indian Constitution provides for appointing commissions to investigate their conditions. The First Backward Classes Commission, chaired by Kaka Kalelkar, was appointed in 1953 and submitted its report in 1955. The Second Backward Classes Commission, popularly known as the Mandal Commission, was appointed in 1979 under B. P. Mandal and submitted its report in 1980 (Government of India, 1980).

The Mandal Commission assessed backwardness using 11 indicators: four social, three educational and four economic, covering factors such as social status, educational participation and living conditions. It estimated that OBCs constituted approximately 52% of India's population and recommended 27% reservation in central government services and public-sector undertakings (Government of India, 1980). Constitutionally, Article 342A governs the specification of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBCs) in the Central List, while the Constitution (105th Amendment) Act, 2021, recognises States' authority to maintain their own SEBC lists for State purposes. Thus, Article 340 provides for commission-based investigation, whereas Article 342A addresses the constitutional listing process.

**Constitutional Provisions for the Development of Other Backward Classes (OBCs):** The Indian Constitution provides a framework for promoting social justice and equal opportunities for OBCs through affirmative action and welfare measures. Article 15(4) empowers the State to make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes, while Article 15(5) enables special provisions for their admission to educational institutions, including private institutions, except minority educational institutions under Article 30(1). Article 16(4) permits reservation in public employment for backward classes that, in the State's opinion, are inadequately represented in its services. In *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India* (1992), the Supreme Court upheld OBC reservation under Article 16(4) and established the principle of excluding the creamy layer from its benefits. Institutional accountability is strengthened by Article 338B, inserted by the 102nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2018, which established the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) as a constitutional body. The Directive Principles of State Policy, particularly Articles 38(2) and 46, guide the State towards reducing inequalities and promoting the educational and economic interests of weaker sections. Articles 243D(6) and 243T(6) also enable State legislatures to provide reservation for backward classes in Panchayats and Municipalities, respectively. Together, these provisions establish constitutional support for educational advancement, access to public employment, institutional oversight and political participation.

**Institutional Framework for OBC Welfare in Tripura:** At the state level, the implementation of OBC welfare measures in Tripura is supported by a specialised institutional framework. While constitutional provisions establish the basis for affirmative action and social inclusion, state-level institutions translate these objectives into welfare programmes and development interventions. The Department for Welfare of Other Backward Classes provides the administrative framework, while the Directorate for Welfare of OBCs serves as a key implementing agency. The Tripura OBC Welfare Corporation complements these efforts through financial assistance, self-employment and entrepreneurship-oriented support (DWOBC, n.d.). The institutional arrangement is further supported by community-level organisations such as the MAA USHA Charitable Trust, which has been involved in educational, healthcare, vocational training and livelihood-oriented activities (DWOBC, n.d.). Thus, OBC development in Tripura is implemented through a combination of administrative, financial and community-level mechanisms. The existence of these institutions provides an organisational basis for targeted interventions; however, their developmental significance ultimately depends on the resources committed, their utilisation and the extent to which intended beneficiaries are reached. The subsequent analysis therefore examines budgetary allocation, expenditure and beneficiary coverage across major OBC development interventions.

**Reservation Policies for OBCs in Tripura:** Reservation policies in India promote affirmative action by improving access to education and public employment for historically disadvantaged communities. Under the applicable central framework, OBCs receive 27% reservation, SCs 15% and STs 7.5% in covered central government services and educational institutions. In contrast, Tripura's state reservation framework provides 31% for STs and 17% for SCs, without a corresponding general OBC quota under the state policy examined in this study. Although *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India* (1992) established 50% as the general ceiling for reservations, this limit alone does not explain the absence of a separate OBC quota in Tripura.

The issue extends beyond educational and employment opportunities to political representation. At the state legislative level, the constitutional framework provides for reserved Assembly seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, but not a separate category of reserved seats for OBCs. Similarly, the Tripura Panchayats Act, 1993, provides for reserved seats for SCs and STs in Panchayati Raj institutions without specifying a corresponding OBC reservation under the provisions examined (Government of India, 1950; Government of Tripura, 1993). The absence of category-specific reserved representation raises questions about the extent to which OBC-specific concerns are articulated in legislative deliberations, local development planning and resource-allocation decisions. Although OBC individuals may participate in elections and hold elected office through general constituencies, the lack of a separate reservation mechanism may limit institutional guarantees of representation. This makes political voice, participation and accountability important dimensions of assessing OBC development in Tripura.

Tripura University follows a distinct allocation: its reservation policy report specifies 31% for STs, 17% for SCs and 2% for OBCs and 10% for the EWS category (Tripura University, n.d.). However, the demographic basis of this allocation remains an important question. As no recent comprehensive OBC population survey has been identified in the sources reviewed for this

study, the extent to which the allocation reflects the community's current demographic share cannot be established. This limitation highlights the need to examine the evidence and policy rationale underlying the allocation.

The legal complexities surrounding OBC reservation were illustrated in *Sri Swapnanil Chaudhuri v. State of Tripura* (2020), W.P. (C) No. 778 of 2020. The petitioner challenged the reservation of three MBBS seats for OBC candidates at the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Imphal, as well as ten additional seats allocated to Economically Weaker Section (EWS) candidates at Agartala Government Medical College (AGMC). The Tripura High Court held that the three OBC-reserved seats at RIMS were impermissible because the seats were being treated as State-quota seats, to which Tripura's reservation policy applied; the State could not combine its SC/ST reservation framework with the Central Government's OBC quota for the same seats. The Court consequently cancelled the admissions of the three OBC candidates and directed that the seats be filled from the unreserved category according to merit. However, it did not interfere with the ten additional EWS seats at AGMC, which had been sanctioned specifically to accommodate EWS reservation without reducing the existing seats available to other categories. The judgment therefore clarifies the legal distinction between State and Central reservation policies and illustrates the limitations of applying the Central OBC quota within Tripura's State-quota framework (*Sri Swapnanil Chaudhuri v. State of Tripura*, 2020).

**Budgetary Allocation towards OBC Welfare:** The budgetary allocation for OBC welfare in Tripura is presented separately under Demand No. 61 – Welfare of OBCs. The budget distinguishes between the Revenue and Capital Accounts, permitting the financial provision to be examined according to the nature of expenditure. For comparability, the present analysis considers the Budget Estimates (BE) for the financial years 2021–22 to 2025–26.

**Table 1. Budgetary Allocation for Welfare of OBCs in Tripura, 2021–22 to 2025–26**

| Financial Year | Revenue Account (₹ lakh) | Capital Account (₹ lakh) | Total Allocation (₹ lakh) | Total (₹ crore) |
|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 2021–22        | 4,016.00                 | 85.00                    | 4,101.00                  | 41.01           |
| 2022–23        | 4,067.00                 | 2,157.00                 | 6,224.00                  | 62.24           |
| 2023–24        | 5,713.00                 | 2,150.00                 | 7,863.00                  | 78.63           |
| 2024–25        | 5,732.30                 | 2,101.00                 | 7,833.30                  | 78.33           |
| 2025–26        | 6,603.97                 | 1,051.00                 | 7,654.97                  | 76.55           |

**Source:** Government of Tripura, Finance Department, *Budget at a Glance*, respective financial years; Demand No. 61, Welfare of OBCs.

*Note: Figures represent Budget Estimates (BE) and indicate budgetary provision rather than actual expenditure.*

The total budgetary provision for OBC welfare increased from ₹41.01 crore in 2021–22 to ₹76.55 crore in 2025–26, representing an 86.7% increase. The allocation reached a peak of ₹78.63 crore in 2023–24 and remained broadly stable in 2024–25 before declining by 2.3% in 2025–26. Thus, the overall trend indicates a substantial expansion in budgetary provision, although the increase was not uniform across the period (Government of Tripura, Finance Department, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025).

The composition of the allocation also changed considerably. Revenue provision increased by 64.4%, from ₹4,016 lakh to ₹6,603.97 lakh, whereas Capital provision increased sharply between 2021–22 and 2022–23 but subsequently fell by 51.3%, from ₹2,157 lakh to ₹1,051 lakh by 2025–26. The later expansion in total provision was therefore driven primarily by the Revenue Account rather than sustained growth in Capital provision.

These figures demonstrate changes in budgetary provision, but not necessarily in actual utilisation or beneficiary reach. Since the data represent Budget Estimates, assessment of implementation requires comparison with scheme-level expenditure and beneficiary coverage. The next section therefore examines the educational interventions through these indicators.

### **Educational Development Interventions**

Education constitutes a major component of OBC development interventions in Tripura. The educational support framework combines broad-based scholarships, merit-based incentives and targeted assistance for professional education. These interventions operate across different stages of educational progression, from school education to higher and professional studies, while also addressing academic achievement and economic disadvantage.

i) **Pre-Matric Scholarship:** The Pre-Matric Scholarship provides financial assistance to OBC students from Class I to X and is jointly funded by the State and Central Governments on a 50:50 basis. Eligible students receive ₹150 per month for ten months, subject to a family income ceiling of ₹2.5 lakh per annum. The scheme is primarily intended to reduce financial barriers at the school level and support continued participation in formal education (DWOBC, n.d.).

ii) **Post-Matric Scholarship:** The Post-Matric Scholarship extends financial assistance to OBC students from Class XI through postgraduate and professional courses. The scheme is funded predominantly by the Central Government, with 90% Central and 10% State funding, and covers courses grouped into four categories. By extending assistance beyond school education, it provides financial support for continued educational progression at higher and professional levels (DWOBC, n.d.).

iii) **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Merit Award:** The Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Merit Award is a State Government initiative designed to encourage academic excellence among OBC students. Students securing 60% or above in Madhyamik or Higher Secondary examinations receive ₹1,500 through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). The scheme therefore complements need-based scholarships by providing a merit-based incentive for academic achievement (DWOBC, n.d.).

iv) Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Memorial Gold Medal: The Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Memorial Gold Medal provides more selective recognition to high-performing OBC students in Madhyamik and Higher Secondary examinations under the Tripura Board of Secondary Education. The award comprises ₹25,000, a gold medal and a certificate and is limited to the top ten OBC students. The scheme thus represents a highly selective form of merit recognition within the broader educational support framework (DWOBC, n.d.).

v) Sponsorship for Professional Courses: The Sponsorship for Professional Courses is a State Government initiative aimed at supporting meritorious OBC students pursuing career-oriented training. The scheme covers professional programmes such as B.Ed., D.El.Ed., G.N.M. and para-medical courses. Its emphasis on specialised qualifications extends educational assistance towards professional preparation and potential employment opportunities (DWOBC, n.d.).

vi) One-Time Financial Support for Economically Weaker Section Meritorious OBC Students: Introduced in 2020–21, this scheme provides ₹50,000 annually for two years to selected meritorious OBC students pursuing professional courses. Eligibility includes a family income below ₹2.5 lakh per annum. By combining economic disadvantage, academic merit and professional education, the scheme provides targeted financial assistance to students who may face greater financial constraints in pursuing professional qualifications (DWOBC, n.d.).

Taken together, these interventions combine broad-based educational assistance with targeted merit and professional support, covering different stages of educational progression. The available beneficiary and expenditure data are presented in Tables 2–4.

**Table 2. Major Educational Scholarships for OBCs in Tripura: Beneficiary Coverage and Financial Expenditure, 2018–19 to 2023–24**

| Educational Scheme             | Indicator            | 2018–19  | 2019–20  | 2020–21  | 2021–22  | 2022–23   | 2023–24  | Total            |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|------------------|
| <b>Pre-Matric Scholarship</b>  | Beneficiaries        | 53,158   | 65,855   | 38,934   | 31,352   | 23,152    | 21,733   | <b>234,184</b>   |
|                                | Expenditure (₹ lakh) | 531.58   | 658.55   | 389.34   | 313.52   | 347.28    | 325.995  | <b>2,566.265</b> |
| <b>Post-Matric Scholarship</b> | Beneficiaries        | 17,711   | 14,966   | 14,575   | 20,802   | 20,008    | 20,594   | <b>108,656</b>   |
|                                | Expenditure (₹ lakh) | 2,450.00 | 3,000.00 | 1,976.30 | 2,943.57 | 3,446.504 | 4,211.66 | <b>18,028.07</b> |

**Source:** Government of Tripura, Department for Welfare of Other Backward Classes, *Major Development Schemes and Achievement of the Department along with Scheme Details*. [obcw.tripura.gov.in](http://obcw.tripura.gov.in)

Table 2 demonstrates a clear difference in the scale and expenditure pattern of the two major educational scholarship interventions. Pre-Matric Scholarship recorded higher beneficiary coverage throughout the period, peaking at 65,855 beneficiaries in 2019–20 before declining to 21,733 in 2023–24, a reduction of 67.0%. In contrast, Post-Matric beneficiary coverage fluctuated, reaching a low of 14,575 in 2020–21 and recovering to 20,594 in 2023–24. Expenditure under the Post-Matric Scholarship increased from ₹2,450.00 lakh to ₹4,211.66 lakh, while Pre-Matric expenditure declined from ₹531.58 lakh to ₹325.995 lakh during the same period.

The contrasting patterns suggest wider beneficiary reach under Pre-Matric support but substantially higher financial expenditure under Post-Matric support. This may reflect the higher financial requirements associated with education beyond the school level. However, the available administrative data capture programme coverage and expenditure rather than educational outcomes and therefore do not establish effects on retention, completion or progression. Consistent reporting and verification of scheme-wise administrative data remain important for reliable assessment.

**Table 3. Merit and Targeted Educational Support for OBCs in Tripura: Beneficiary Coverage and Financial Expenditure, 2018–19 to 2023–24**

| Educational Scheme                                                                         | Indicator            | 2018–19 | 2019–20 | 2020–21 | 2021–22 | 2022–23 | 2023–24 | Total          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------------|
| <b>Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Merit Award</b>                                                       | Beneficiaries        | 1,873   | 2,253   | 2,970   | 4,261   | 3,262   | 2,148   | <b>16,767</b>  |
|                                                                                            | Expenditure (₹ lakh) | 28.09   | 33.79   | 44.55   | 63.925  | 43.93   | 32.22   | <b>246.505</b> |
| <b>Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Memorial Gold Medal</b>                                               | Beneficiaries        | 14      | 8       | 20      | 11      | 26      | 23      | <b>102</b>     |
|                                                                                            | Expenditure (₹ lakh) | 5.50    | 2.50    | 6.10    | 2.75    | 6.50    | 5.75    | <b>29.10</b>   |
| <b>One-Time Financial Support for Economically Weaker Section Meritorious OBC Students</b> | Beneficiaries        | —       | —       | 155     | 156     | 157     | 172     | <b>640</b>     |

|  |                         |   |   |        |        |        |        |               |
|--|-------------------------|---|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------------|
|  | Expenditure<br>(₹ lakh) | — | — | 155.00 | 156.00 | 157.00 | 172.00 | <b>640.00</b> |
|--|-------------------------|---|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------------|

**Source:** Government of Tripura, Department for Welfare of Other Backward Classes, scheme-wise administrative records, 2018–19 to 2023–24.

Table 3 shows that merit-based and targeted educational interventions operated on a more selective scale than the broad-based scholarship programmes. The Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Merit Award covered 16,767 beneficiaries during 2018–19 to 2023–24, reaching a peak of 4,261 beneficiaries in 2021–22 before declining to 2,148 in 2023–24. The Memorial Gold Medal covered only 102 students over the six-year period, while the One-Time Financial Support scheme covered 640 beneficiaries from 2020–21 onward.

The three interventions represent distinct forms of targeted support through merit incentives, selective academic recognition, and financial assistance to economically weaker meritorious OBC students. However, the available data measure beneficiary coverage and expenditure rather than educational outcomes; therefore, their effects on academic progression or professional outcomes cannot be established from the available evidence.

**Table 4. Professional Course Sponsorship for OBCs in Tripura: Beneficiary Coverage and Financial Expenditure, 2018–19 to 2019–20**

| Professional Course Sponsorship | Indicator            | 2018–19       | 2019–20       | Total         |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>B.Ed./D.El.Ed.</b>           | Beneficiaries        | 100           | 180           | <b>280</b>    |
|                                 | Expenditure (₹ lakh) | 102.00        | 157.51        | <b>259.51</b> |
| <b>G.N.M.</b>                   | Beneficiaries        | 4             | 6             | <b>10</b>     |
|                                 | Expenditure (₹ lakh) | 5.23          | 10.14         | <b>15.37</b>  |
| <b>Para-Medical Courses</b>     | Beneficiaries        | 40            | 50            | <b>90</b>     |
|                                 | Expenditure (₹ lakh) | 49.83         | 64.25         | <b>114.08</b> |
| <b>Total</b>                    | Beneficiaries        | <b>144</b>    | <b>236</b>    | <b>380</b>    |
|                                 | Expenditure (₹ lakh) | <b>157.06</b> | <b>231.90</b> | <b>388.96</b> |

**Source:** Government of Tripura, Department for Welfare of Other Backward Classes, scheme-wise administrative records.

Table 4 shows that professional-course sponsorship supported 380 OBC students during 2018–19 and 2019–20, with total reported expenditure of ₹388.96 lakh. B.Ed./D.El.Ed. accounted for the largest share of beneficiary coverage, with 280 beneficiaries, followed by para-medical courses with 90 beneficiaries and G.N.M. with 10 beneficiaries. Overall beneficiary coverage increased from 144 students in 2018–19 to 236 students in 2019–20.

The distribution indicates a greater concentration of support in teacher education and para-medical training, while G.N.M. sponsorship remained comparatively limited. These interventions extend OBC educational assistance to career-oriented professional training. However, the available data cover only two financial years and report programme inputs and beneficiary coverage rather than subsequent employment or income outcomes; therefore, their longer-term developmental effects cannot be established from the available evidence.

**Socio-Cultural and Health Interventions:** The socio-cultural and health interventions complement the educational and economic measures by addressing immediate healthcare needs and recognising the social and cultural contributions of OBC communities. The available interventions comprise :

**i) Financial Assistance for Medical Treatment:** The State Government, through the Welfare of OBC Department, provides financial assistance to economically disadvantaged OBC individuals requiring medical treatment. The assistance includes ₹2,500 for treatment within the state, ₹5,000 for treatment outside the state, and up to ₹8,000 in special cases. The scheme is intended to reduce the immediate financial burden of healthcare among economically vulnerable OBC households (DWOB, n.d.).

**ii) Vidyasagar Socio-Cultural Award:** The Vidyasagar Socio-Cultural Award is a State Government initiative that recognises eminent OBC personalities for contributions to culture, sports, literature and social service. Between 2018–19 and 2023–24, a total of 17 individuals were recognised under the scheme. The intervention therefore represents a form of socio-cultural recognition that extends OBC welfare beyond direct financial and educational assistance (DWOB, n.d.).

The available beneficiary and expenditure data for these interventions are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Socio-Cultural and Health Interventions for OBCs in Tripura: Beneficiary Coverage and Financial Expenditure, 2018–19 to 2023–24**

| Financial Year | Financial Assistance for Medical Treatment |                                | Vidyasagar Socio-Cultural Award |                                |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
|                | Number of Beneficiaries                    | Financial Expenditure (₹ lakh) | Number of Beneficiaries         | Financial Expenditure (₹ lakh) |
| 2018-19        | 627                                        | 15.8                           | 3                               | 0.3                            |
| 2019-20        | 158                                        | 5.5                            | 2                               | 0.2                            |
| 2020-21        | 69                                         | 3.6                            | 3                               | 0.3                            |
| 2021-22        | 54                                         | 3.49155                        | 3                               | 0.3                            |
| 2022-23        | 65                                         | 2.96                           | 3                               | 0.3                            |
| 2023-24        | 54                                         | 3.93528                        | 3                               | 0.3                            |

|       |      |          |    |      |
|-------|------|----------|----|------|
| Total | 1027 | 35.28683 | 17 | 1.70 |
|-------|------|----------|----|------|

**Source:** Government of Tripura, Department for Welfare of Other Backward Classes, scheme-wise data, 2018–19 to 2023–24. Table 5 demonstrates considerable variation in the scale, coverage and nature of the two interventions. Financial Assistance for Medical Treatment covered a total of 1,027 beneficiaries during 2018–19 to 2023–24, with annual coverage declining from 627 beneficiaries in 2018–19 to 54 in 2023–24, representing a 91.4% decrease. Over the same period, reported expenditure declined from ₹15.80 lakh to ₹3.94 lakh, equivalent to a 75.1% decrease. The sharper decline in beneficiary coverage than in expenditure indicates a substantial reduction in the reported reach of the programme. However, the available data do not establish whether this change was associated with variations in demand, eligibility, resource availability or administrative implementation.

In contrast, the Vidyasagar Socio-Cultural Award operated on a much smaller and more selective scale, recognising 17 OBC individuals during the six-year period, with annual recipients ranging between two and three. The intervention differs from conventional welfare assistance in that its primary function is recognition of contributions to culture, sports, literature and social service. Its limited beneficiary coverage is therefore consistent with its selective and recognition-oriented character rather than a broad-based financial assistance model.

Taken together, the two interventions illustrate the broader sectoral scope of OBC welfare policy in Tripura, extending beyond educational and economic assistance to include healthcare support and socio-cultural recognition. At the same time, the substantial decline in the reported coverage of medical assistance warrants closer attention to programme accessibility and continuity. The available data, however, are insufficient to determine the underlying causes of this decline. The findings therefore point to the importance of regular monitoring of beneficiary coverage and expenditure, particularly for social protection interventions where changes in programme reach may have direct implications for access among economically vulnerable OBC households.

**Economic Upliftment and Other Developmental Interventions:** Economic interventions in Tripura combine concessional finance, entrepreneurship support and broader livelihood-oriented development. The OBC Cooperative Development Corporation Ltd., established in 1996–97, provides financial assistance for education, transport, small business and service-sector activities. During 2018–2024, it supported 2,827 beneficiaries with nearly ₹48 crore, indicating a substantial institutional emphasis on credit-based economic assistance (DWOB, n.d.).

The Atmanirbhar Tripura Scheme, introduced in 2021–22, extends this approach through interest-subsidy support for OBC beneficiaries seeking financial assistance for self-reliance and enterprise development. The scheme provides assistance of up to ₹1 crore, with an 8% interest subsidy for six years and a one-year moratorium, subject to specified socio-economic eligibility conditions (DWOB, n.d.).

**Table 6.** Economic Assistance through the OBC Cooperative Development Corporation, 2018–2024

| Indicator                                | Reported Coverage |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Beneficiaries                            | 2,827             |
| Financial Assistance                     | Nearly ₹48 crore  |
| Education Loans                          | ₹1–5 lakh         |
| Transport Loans                          | Up to ₹5 lakh     |
| Small Business Loans                     | ₹2–5 lakh         |
| Service Sector ( <i>Shilpa Sampada</i> ) | ₹3–5 lakh         |

**Source:** Government of Tripura, Department for Welfare of Other Backward Classes, scheme-wise data, 2018–2024.

The reported financial assistance of nearly ₹48 crore for 2,827 beneficiaries corresponds to an aggregate average of approximately ₹1.70 lakh per beneficiary. This figure should be interpreted as an overall average rather than an individual loan amount, as the scale of assistance varies across sectors and purposes. The range of lending categories further indicates diversification across education, transport, small business and service-sector activities.

The available evidence demonstrates a measurable scale of credit-based economic intervention through the OBC Cooperative Development Corporation. However, the available data do not establish the extent to which this financial assistance has translated into sustained employment, increased household income or long-term enterprise viability.

Overall, the interventions suggest that OBC development policy in Tripura extends beyond conventional welfare assistance towards financial inclusion, self-employment and livelihood-oriented development. Nevertheless, the available evidence primarily captures policy inputs and beneficiary coverage rather than longer-term outcomes. Assessing these outcomes would require beneficiary-level and longitudinal evidence beyond the scope of the present dataset.

**Special Development Package for the Welfare of OBCs :** The Government of Tripura has introduced special development packages to promote the socio-economic development of OBCs. Two packages comprising 11-point and 10-point programmes were launched in 2001 and 2003–04, respectively. Subsequently, another Special Development Package was proposed for the five-year period from 2013–14 to 2017–18, drawing on the experience and feedback associated with the earlier initiatives. The package addressed infrastructure, livelihood opportunities and educational support in OBC-populated areas.

The proposed infrastructure measures included all-weather roads, electricity, safe drinking water, sanitation, healthcare and irrigation facilities in areas where these services remained inadequate. The package also envisaged multipurpose halls accommodating 300–500 people for skill development, cultural programmes and democratic activities, alongside the establishment of a separate department for OBC welfare. Economic measures included the allotment of available *khas* land to eligible landless OBC families below the poverty line (BPL), housing assistance of ₹75,000 for eligible homeless families,

vocational training in marketable fields such as handloom, handicrafts and electronics, and access to financial assistance and soft loans for enterprise development. Agricultural support was proposed through Kisan Credit Cards for eligible OBC farming households and assistance to improve agricultural productivity. The package further included support for women's self-help groups (SHGs), assistance to youth and SHG members establishing enterprises, and the improvement of markets and construction of market stalls in OBC-dominated areas.

Educational interventions under the package included pre-recruitment coaching for examinations such as the IAS, IPS, IFS, TCS, TPS and TFS, educational loans for higher studies, pre-matric scholarships for students in Classes VI–X, post-matric scholarships for eligible students, and additional coaching in Science, Mathematics and English. It also proposed free bicycles for eligible OBC girl students in Classes IX–XII whose annual family income was below ₹1.25 lakh, as well as computer training in software and hardware with assistance for trained youth.

Recent initiatives reported by the Directorate for Welfare of Other Backward Classes include the laying of the foundation stone for a 200-seat OBC Girls' Hostel at Women's Polytechnic, Hapania. Construction is also progressing on a 50-seat Girls' Hostel at Kulai, Ambassa, and a 150-seat OBC Girls' Hostel at Algapur, Dharmanagar, North Tripura. These projects are intended to provide residential facilities for OBC girl students and facilitate their access to education. Their effectiveness, however, will depend on completion, operationalisation, occupancy and accessibility for eligible students.

Overall, the Special Development Package reflects a broad approach to OBC welfare by linking basic infrastructure with livelihood support and educational opportunities. Nevertheless, the proposed measures and reported construction progress should not be treated as evidence of complete implementation or measurable developmental outcomes. Assessing their effectiveness requires verified implementation records and beneficiary-level evidence.

**Overall Findings and Observations:** The overall findings indicate that OBC development in Tripura is supported by an established institutional framework, constitutional provisions and a range of targeted welfare interventions. However, the analysis reveals a distinction between the availability of policy support and the extent to which its developmental adequacy can be established. While the existing arrangements provide mechanisms for delivering assistance, the available evidence does not permit a comprehensive assessment of their effectiveness in addressing the structural disadvantages faced by OBC communities. From the perspective of Affirmative Action, the findings highlight the importance of examining not only the existence of reservation provisions and targeted schemes but also their contribution to equitable access and substantive inclusion. The analysis identifies policy measures directed towards educational and economic disadvantage, while the adequacy of reservation arrangements and their implications for OBC representation remain insufficiently established.

From the perspective of Sustainable Development, the findings demonstrate that OBC welfare in Tripura encompasses multiple dimensions of development rather than being confined to a single sector. Nevertheless, the available data primarily document policy provision, financial inputs and beneficiary coverage. They do not adequately establish whether these interventions have produced sustained improvements in educational attainment, employment, income or livelihood security.

The central finding, therefore, is that the existence of institutions, policies and welfare schemes provides an essential basis for OBC development, but does not independently establish their overall effectiveness. A comprehensive assessment requires evidence linking institutional functioning and programme implementation with equitable access and longer-term developmental outcomes. Within the limitations of the available secondary data, the study identifies this gap between policy provision and demonstrated developmental outcomes as a key issue in assessing OBC development in Tripura.

### **Conclusion and Policy Suggestions**

The development of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Tripura raises a fundamental question about how effectively state interventions translate commitments to social justice into meaningful opportunities for disadvantaged communities. Viewed through the perspectives of affirmative action and sustainable development, this study examines OBC welfare beyond the provision of financial assistance, focusing on institutional arrangements, budgetary provisions and the implementation of major welfare interventions. The analysis highlights the importance of equitable access to education, employment and economic opportunities in understanding the broader significance of these policies.

However, the available secondary data do not permit a conclusive assessment of the long-term effects of these interventions on educational attainment, employment, income security and livelihood sustainability. This limitation underscores the need to connect policy implementation with more systematic evidence of developmental outcomes. A meaningful assessment of OBC development in Tripura must therefore consider not only the existence of welfare mechanisms but also their reach, adequacy and contribution to substantive social inclusion. Such an approach would provide a stronger basis for understanding the role of state policy in advancing social justice and inclusive development.

The analysis points to several areas where a more systematic approach could strengthen the implementation and assessment of OBC development initiatives in Tripura.

1. **Develop an Updated Socio-Economic Database:** The state government should establish and regularly update a socio-economic database on OBC communities, covering educational attainment, employment, income and access to public services. Reliable and current information would help identify areas of disadvantage, establish policy priorities and assess whether existing interventions adequately address the needs of different sections of the community.
2. **Strengthen Monitoring and Outcome-Based Evaluation:** A standardised monitoring system should document scheme-wise budgetary allocations, actual expenditure, beneficiary coverage and implementation status. Periodic evaluation should also examine indicators such as educational progression, completion of professional courses, employment and livelihood

sustainability. This would enable a clearer distinction between administrative outputs and substantive developmental outcomes.

3. **Improve Programme Accessibility and Institutional Accountability:** Implementing agencies should simplify application procedures, communicate eligibility criteria clearly and ensure the timely disbursement of approved assistance. Accessible grievance-redressal mechanisms and improved coordination among relevant institutions would help address administrative barriers. Regular publication of comparable scheme-wise data would further strengthen transparency and public accountability.
4. **Promote Evidence-Based Review of Welfare and Reservation Policies:** Reviews of OBC welfare measures and reservation arrangements should be informed by reliable demographic, socio-economic and representation data and conducted within the applicable constitutional and legal framework. Educational and economic support programmes should also be assessed periodically to determine whether they reach intended beneficiaries and contribute to continued education, professional opportunities and sustainable livelihoods.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of OBC development policy cannot be judged solely by the existence of welfare schemes or the volume of public resources allocated to them. It must also be examined through credible evidence of access, implementation and developmental progress. Strengthening this evidence-based approach would provide a firmer foundation for evaluating welfare interventions and advancing social justice in Tripura.

**Acknowledgment:** No

**Author's Contribution:** *Inu Adhikari:* Data Collection, Literature Review, Drafting, Analysis, Drafting, Referencing;

**Funding:** No

**Declaration:** The author/s has/have given consent for the publication.

**Competing Interest:** No

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