Tibetan Rehabilitation in Arunachal:Local, State and Geopolitical Anxieties. Sonika Gupta, Associate Professor Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Madras. Email: <u>Sonika@iitm.ac.in</u>

Tibetan refugee presence in Arunachal Pradesh has becomes the site for contention with local identity narratives prioritizing indigenous communities over refugee rehabilitation. . Currently, Arunachal has four designated Tibetan settlements in Tezu (1962), Tenzingang (1972) Miao (1975) and Tuting (2013) with a scattered population of Tibetans in Bomdila and Tawang. According to figures provided by the Central Tibetan Relief Committee, the total population of these settlements does not exceed 10,000. The announcement of the 2014 Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy saw an immediate backlash from politically powerful All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union (AAPSU) and more recent outfits like the Students United Movement of All Arunachal (SUMAA) against providing land tenure guarantees and state welfare benefits to Tibetans in the state arguing that Tibetans are not indigenous to the state. This exclusionary articulation of the student groups must be contextualised within a contentious history of refugee resettlement in the state, contemporary nationalist assertions that include ethnic binaries as well as local pressures of land and resource competition. This has produced worrying on the ground outcome including attacks on Tibetan owned businesses as well as a ground level consolidation of anti-refugee politics in the state. This paper will map the local resistance to the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy in Arunachal and its long-term local resistance towards refugee resettlement in the state. There is currently no academic or policy level study that engages with the issue of Tibetan rehabilitation in Arunachal in the context of the 2014 policy. This paper takes a multi-stakeholder approach and is based on fieldwork in Bomdila and Tawang. It builds on my existing research with thorough familiarisation with the processes and politics of Tibetan rehabilitation in India. Some of my recent published work that supports this paper includes:

Balasubramaniam, Madhura, and Sonika Gupta. "Disciplining Statelessness: Fragmentary Outcomes of the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy in India." *Asian Studies Review* 46.1 (2022): 74-92.

Balasubramaniam, Madhura, and Sonika Gupta. "From Refuge to Rights: Majnu ka Tilla Tibetan Colony in New Delhi." *kritisk etnografi: Swedish Journal of Anthropology* 2.1-2 (2019): 95-110.

Gupta, Sonika. "Enduring liminality: Voting rights and Tibetan exiles in India." *Asian Ethnicity* 20.3 (2019): 330-347