

Tribal Development in West Bengal – an overview

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Abstract: Tribal development had been at the focus even during the British rule. Socioeconomic disparities, denial of traditional rights, lack of political representation etc often led to tribal insurgency and/or ethnic conflict even during the British rule. The British administration whole heartedly realised the backwardness of the community. Starting from Independence several Constitutional provisions, special and targeted development initiatives, tailor made exclusively for the community, almost in all Five Year Plans aimed to integrate the tribal community with the mainstream population. However, still they face wide disparity with respect to access to education and health services and also discrimination in terms of employment and income. The study aimed to analyse the planning initiatives for promoting inclusive development among the communities across various parameters and over time vis-s-vis the common notion of widespread underdevelopment of the tribal community.

Keywords: Tribal development, Five Year Plans, Tribal Sub Plan

1. Introduction

Tribes are typically social groups with a common territory, dialect, cultural homogeneity, social and political organization (Suresh 2014). By virtue of Article 342 of the Constitution of India a tribe becomes a Scheduled Tribe after it is notified as Scheduled Tribe. The State of the World's Indigenous Peoples, United Nations 2009, mentions that with respect to the UNDP's Human Development Index, the indigenous people lag far behind the rest of the population even in developed countries. While the people represent only 5% of the world population, they constitute 15% of the world's poor that is one-third of the 900 million extremely poor rural people. They face wide disparity with respect to access to education and health services and also discrimination in terms of employment and income.

Tribal development had been at the focus even during the British rule. Socioeconomic disparities, denial of traditional rights, lack of political representation etc often led to tribal insurgency and/or ethnic conflict even during the British rule. Though armed forces were used to suppress those unrests still the British administration whole heartedly realised the backwardness of the community which led to the establishment of separate administrative system in the tribal dominated areas. However after independence and after the adoption of the Constitution, several Constitutional provisions were made to ensure development of the tribal community. Thereafter tribal development has been a regular issue almost in all the Five-

Year Plans. The target had been to improve the condition of the Scheduled Tribes educationally, socially, politically and culturally. There has been ceaseless effort of the government to ensure development of the community through provisioning welfare schemes like Integrated Child Development Services, Janani Suraksha Yojna, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, National Social Assistance Programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhijan etc.

2. The context

The purpose of the study has not been to enquire about the achievements and failures of the government initiatives against the stated goals and objectives. It aimed to highlight the focus of the planning authorities for promoting widespread development among the communities. For this purpose the West Bengal Development Report published by the Planning Commission, Government of India, 2010 has been referred and considered as a benchmark, representative of the socio-economic development scenario of the state.

The report clearly elaborates that development for the poor and backward section of the population has been the focus for planners in West Bengal. The report summarizes that “.....rural development is supposed to consist of two dimensions, economic and a social perspective. The process may be enabled through growth that has been generating within the region or may be induced by government fund and schemes. The spectacular growth in agriculture that the state has been experiencing, is expected to generate increased demand for rural infrastructure, e.g., roads, power, education, health etc that may in turn enable improved capability and enhance productivity of the community/ population....” . According to the report the conversion of dwelling units from kachha to semi pucca to pucca units has been an indicator of rural development. In West Bengal there has been 34.7% increase in pucca dwelling units and 45.1% decline in kachcha dwelling units and 45.2% increase in semi-pucca dwelling units within 1981-2001.

The report also mentions that in agriculture there has been spectacular growth in productivity, particularly in food grain production in the early 80s that led to significant growth in the economy. As mentioned in the report Ravallion and Datt, 1996 claimed that this contributed to reduction in poverty as well. From the early 90s there has been diversification in the cropping pattern of the state. Food grains accounted for 85% of gross cropped area in 1980 while this share dropped to 78.5% in 2006. Percentage of acreage of non food crops like mustard among oilseeds and potato increased sharply. The report states clearly that agriculture in the state has been diversifying towards high value crops like fruits, vegetables and flowers. The state has been showing a rising trend in production of fruits and vegetables and has been contributing 16% of the total production of the country in 2005-2006. It clearly mentions, ‘Diversification of crops towards horticulture and floriculture may be linked to food processing and allied activities creating employment opportunities in the rural areas. Animal husbandry and fisheries also provide scope for further value addition and multiplier effect on output and

employment.’ This demonstrates that animal husbandry and alternative cultivation practices and non farm activities had been recognised as tools for development.

As cited in the report, the NSS 61st round data showed that West Bengal accounts for the highest incidence of marginalisation of landholdings among the major agriculture based states of India. Regarding indebtedness based on the survey on farmers in the NSS 59th round in 2003, the report states that nearly 50% of farming households were indebted and 55% among them were cultivators. Cultivators utilised 46% of their loans for farming activities, 44% for consumption and other purposes and the rest for nonfarming activities. In this respect the statement made by the report – “the marginal landholding groups however used a major portion of their total borrowing in consumption and other non productive purposes simply because their earnings are not sufficient even for basic consumption.” is noteworthy. Also the share of institutional sources to total agricultural credit increased considerably in the 80s but it declined in the 90s. Analysing the findings of the NSS 37th round, 48th round and 59th round the report concluded that percentage share of institutional sources in outstanding cash debt of rural households in the state has declined with time, 65.5% in 1981, 82% in 1991 and 58% in 2003. Also the figures for all the years are higher when compared with the all-India average. The report also states that “Small farmers with landholding of over 2 hectares have been relatively favoured by banks in receiving direct agriculture lending. Marginal farmers, on the other hand, continue to depend on non-institutional finance”.

“Education is both a constituent and instrumental component of human development. It has a significant effect on life expectancy, infant mortality, nutritional status and environmental awareness... As West Bengal is the most densely populated state in the country because of various historical, sociological and economic reasons, provisions of elementary education and also of primary health care has been a challenging task”- the report mentions. The literacy rate for the population aged seven years and above in the state has been higher than the national average as per the Census 2001 and NSSO (1999-2000) Report No. 473 as referred in the report. Under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan since 2001-2002, there has been noteworthy progress in infrastructure in all the tiers of the education system. There has been noteworthy growth in the number of primary schools (3.5%), secondary schools (11.3%) and higher secondary schools (151.4%) though the number of upper primary schools declined by 28.1%.

The report has also showed that following the Census 2001, 88.5% of households in the state have access to water sources. Regarding health, the report showed a dismal picture. It commented in general about the poor health status among women and children. The World Health Survey for the state reported that 94.7% of the population do not eat sufficient vegetable and fruit. Leaving aside the rural urban disparities, there has been expansion in health care infrastructure, both in physical infrastructure and man power though the achievement has not been significant in comparison to the improvements in the other Indian states. Regarding utilisation of health care services the report cited the results of the NSS 60th Round that revealed that bad treatment, poor accessibility and long waiting time are the major reasons behind poor utilisation of government facilities for outpatient care. However with

respect to inpatient care, comparing its percentage across different marginal per capita expenditure (MPCE) quintiles, the report concluded that government hospitals are utilised both by the rich and the poor sections of the population.

The employment situation in the state also showed progress. The estimated aggregate employment increased gradually from 17.8 million in 1983 to 27.6 million in 2005-2006. Regarding rural employment the report states that its share in state aggregate has been showing a declining trend for the last two decades of the twentieth century. Job opportunities for both rural male and female labourers shrunk significantly and that along with adverse labour market conditions fuelled migration of the workforce. But there has been spectacular growth in the rural nonfarm employment. Following the Head Count Ratio, the report shows a decline in rural poverty in the last two decades. Also the rate of decline has been faster than the all-India rate. In this regard the report mentions the comment of the Economic Survey, GOI (2002) that identified land reform measures and empowerment of the Panchayats as the strategies of the state government for poverty eradication. The report subsequently acknowledges the participation of the Panchayats to organise the interest of the marginal class. To conclude, the report clearly shows development has been occurring with respect to public health, education, agriculture, employment and rural development sectors. But in reality it is a common notion that government interventions, in whatsoever form has failed to render 'development' for this section of the population.

3. Tribal development in practice

Tribal development policies had been at the crux of debates ever since independence. Following the masterwork 'A Philosophy of NEFA' of Dr. Verrier Elwin in 1957, Jawaharlal Nehru initiated the concept of 'Panch Seel' for planning and administration of the tribal communities. This had been the guiding philosophy for tribal development initiatives in the 1950s. Following the Nehruvian approach the development initiatives so formulated and adopted succeeded in the North Eastern states of the country but failed to deliver results for the rest of the population. The Renuka Ray Report of 1959 referred for an integrated approach for tribal development policies. Subsequently the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission under the chairmanship of U.N. Dhebar in 1960 followed by the S.C. Dube committee in 1972 advocated for a shift from the erstwhile schematic pattern of the plans to an integrated approach for the development policies. This laid to the introduction of the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) from the Fifth Five Year Plan as an area development programme. Later from the Sixth Plan onwards Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) was initiated to guide the ITDP as a target group oriented programme at the household level. The prime motive of the ITDP has been to attend to the needs of the tribal families through comprehensive development of the families. This approach called for planning initiatives at the lowest level of the administration that is at the block level keeping in view the availability of resources, constraints and the aspirations of the inhabitants. Block level plans consisting of beneficiary oriented schemes for respective ITDP areas were subsequently aggregated at the

state level as Tribal Sub Plans where resources are allocated according to the welfare proposals forwarded from the grass root level. The project authorities receive their disbursement from the respective state authorities for each year and also for the entire five years period. This has been the working principle of the TSP concept. The state governments also receive Special Central Assistance (SCA) from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India as additional funding for TSPs for promoting family oriented income generation schemes in agriculture, horticulture, sericulture and animal husbandry projects. The purpose has been to encourage socio economic development of the tribal population.

The provision under Tribal Sub Plan are attained from the following sources : (i) State Plans, (ii) funds under TSP components of Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) administered by Central Ministries/ Departments, (iii) Grant under Article 275 (1) of the Constitution, (iv) Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub Plan. Following Dungdung 2015, the allocation of fund for the previous four fiscal years has been presented below:

Table 1: Source wise Allocation of funds for TSP

Sources	Financial Year (INR in crores)			
	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Funds under CS/CSS	17453.61	20184.10	22029.97	32386.84
TSP under State Plan	44772.42	55019.05	59937.64	69922.16
Article 275 (1)	1015.01	852.54	1050.00	1200.00
SCA to TSP	1111.28	820.00	1097.14	1317.00
Total	64352.32	76875.69	84144.75	104826.00

Source: Dungdung 2015

Dungdung 2015 concluded that the human development indicators for the tribal population have been surprisingly low in comparison to the rest of the population. That signals that allocation of funds are not getting utilised for ensuring development of the tribal people.

Inadequate budget allocation

The research work also mentioned about inadequate budget allocation keeping in view the percentage of tribal population in the country. The Tribal Sub Plan strategy as elaborated in the Fifth Five Year Plan recommended for allocation of fund equivalent in proportion to the tribal population of the states and union territories. But the percentage of Union Budgetary outlay and allocation under TSP for the previous five financial years has been far lesser than the proportion of the resident tribal population.

Table 2: Union Budgetary Allocation for TSP

	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Total Outlay	1257729	1490925	1665297	1681158	1777477
TSP allocation due as per ST population	108164	128219	143215	144579	152863
Actual allocation under TSP	17959	21710	24598	26715	19980
Allocation under TSP (%)	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.1

Source: Dungdung 2015

Utilisation of funds

Underutilisation of TSP funds has been an important issue. As reported by Dungdung 2015, for the financial years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 Rs. 1,013 crores and Rs. 1,526 crores respectively remained unutilised. For the financial years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India gave away Rs. 72.9733 crores and Rs. 98.7879 crores respectively. Lack of proposals has been cited by the Ministry to be the reason for such huge underutilisation of funds earmarked for TSP allocation.

Sector wise Outlay

Deogaonkar 1992 reported a brief sector-wise decomposition of the Plan outlay during the Fifth Five Year Plan. It shows that the highest allocation, 26% has been for agriculture and allied activities. The next important allocation, 21% has been for health and education. This was followed by the co-operation department that was boosted up with huge investment in order to facilitate marketing for agricultural produce and minor forest products. Transport and communication has received a meagre (8%) outlay.

For the state of West Bengal a comparison of the Department-wise Performance of TSP during Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) and Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) of the Government of West Bengal has been presented herewith. Agriculture, Agriculture Marketing, Animal Resource Development, Education (School), Technical Education & Training, Forest, Health & Family Welfare, Panchayat & Rural Development and Water Investigation & Development Departments of the state government has been considered. Comparison of the total actual expenditure for TSP with the total budget estimate for TSP for the Tenth Plan period (2002-2007) show that the actual expenditure falls far short of the budget estimate for these departments.

Table 3: Department wise performance of TSP under Tenth Five Year Plan

Department	Total Budget Estimate for TSP (RS, in lakh)	Total Actual Expenditure for TSP (Rs, in lakh)	Percentage spent
Agriculture	1641.33 (1.30)	924.31	56.31
Agriculture Marketing	223.22 (0.18)	139	62.27
Animal Resource Development	607.83 (0.48)	285.53	46.98
Co-operation	82.56 (0.07)	21.88	26.50
Education(School)	10754.29 (8.50)	10209.56	94.93
Forest	1260.3 (1.00)	390.7	31.00
Health & Family Welfare	5687.66 (4.50)	2364.91	41.58
Water Investigation & Development	1824.78(1.44)	807.76	44.27
Panchayat& Rural Development	5367.47 (4.24)	4551.24	84.79
Technical Education & Training	161.75 (0.13)	2.6	1.61

The figures in the parentheses indicate the percentage of allocation for the respective department.

During the Tenth Five Year Plan period utilisation of fund has been high in the Panchayat & Rural Development Department and also in Education (School). In both of these departments allocation of fund has been considerably more than the other mentioned departments. In spite of significant contribution of animal husbandry in aggregate income of the tribal population, 0.48% of the total Plan allocation has been earmarked for this department while 8.50% for Education (School), 4.49% for Health & Family Welfare and 4.24% for Panchayat & Rural Development. Also noteworthy has been the budget estimate for Technical Education & Training (0.13%). The scheme-wise projected outlays also show that for animal husbandry only 26.33% of the total outlay has been spent. For dairy development 21.36% has been utilised. Under rural employment only 30.08% remains utilised. Fund allotted for schemes under Irrigation and Flood Control also show a disappointing figure. 0.36% and 48.51% of allocation has been utilised for Major & Medium Irrigation and Minor Irrigation respectively. Figures of total outlay and expenditure for the subgroup Village and Small Enterprises, consisting of small scale industries, handlooms/powerlooms, handicrafts, sericulture/coir/wool and food processing industries show 21.39% utilisation.

Budget estimate for the Eleventh Five Year Plan reveal that the allocation for Animal Resource Development has been reduced from 0.48% in the previous Plan to 0.34% of the total Plan outlay. Similarly allocation for forest also has been reduced from 1% to 0.78%. However for Education (School), Panchayat and Rural Development there has been significant increase in plan outlay. There has been marginal increase in allocation for Water Investigation & Development and Technical Education & Training.

Table: 4 Total Budget estimate for TSP under Eleventh Five Year Plan

Department	Total Budget Estimate for TSP (RS, in lakh)
Agriculture	4394 (0.86)
Agriculture Marketing	566.14 (0.11)
Animal Resource Development	1746(0.34)
Co-operation	496.82 (0.09)
Education (School)	52513.36(10.27)
Forest	4012.5 (0.78)
Health & Family Welfare	21208.68 (4.15)
Water Investigation & Development	8347.74 (1.63)
Panchayat& Rural Development	77767.3 (15.21)
Technical Education & Training	1072.25 (0.20)

The financial performance by the Heads of Development in respect of Tribal Sub-Plan for the entire period, 2002-2003 to 2011-2012, that is combining the Tenth Five Year Plan and the Eleventh Five Year Plan period together, reveals significant trends in the budget estimates.

Table 5: Department-wise Financial Performance for TSP, 2002-2003 to 2011-2012

Departments	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
		-	-					-	-	

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Agriculture	1.88	3.23	1.46	0.73	0.89	0.47	0.65	1.23	1.23	0.64
Agriculture Marketing	0.27	0.21	0.24	0.13	0.15	0.13	0.12	0.09	0.12	0.10
Animal Resource Development	1.02	0.76	0.67	0.22	0.34	0.44	0.28	0.38	0.45	0.23
Co-operation	0.18	0.04	0.03	0.06	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.10	0.13	0.13
Education (School)	9.60	6.74	8.37	10.92	6.84	6.43	6.71	7.89	10.44	15.04
Technical Education & Training	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.34	0.31	0.28	0.19	0.16	0.18
Forest	1.98	1.43	2.17	0.40	0.62	0.67	1.15	0.97	0.83	0.51
Health & Family Welfare	8.93	6.43	2.66	4.76	2.51	3.22	4.56	5.14	3.64	4.11
Irrigation & Waterways	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.84	3.02	3.87	5.31	5.97	7.30
Land & Land Reforms	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.43	0.93	0.61	1.41	1.32	0.44	0.34
Panchayat & Rural Development	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	11.33	16.45	16.99	16.01	16.46	12.42
Water Investigation & Development	2.40	1.29	2.17	0.98	1.27	1.10	1.20	1.26	2.30	1.82

For Animal Resource Development the budget estimate in the Annual Plans has increased over time in absolute amount. But as a percentage of the Total Annual Plan outlay the budget estimates show a declining trend.

Within the animal resource development, dairy development has been an important sub head keeping in view the popularity, familiarity and feasibility of livestock rearing practices among the tribal communities. Under this sub head there has been increase in the budget estimate in the Annual Plans with respect to TSP. If the budget estimate is considered as a proportion of the allocation for animal resource development then an opposite trend is observed.

Table 6: Budget Estimate for Dairy Development in respect of TSP in Annual Plans (in lakhs)

2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
32	12.9	16.75	16.75	60	65	45	61	75	27

The rate of utilisation of the allotted fund has also been significantly low. Presented below are the figures for actual expenditure incurred under the Dairy Development sub head for the Animal Resource Development Department with respect to TSP in the Annual Plans, though the figures are not available for all the years.

Table 7: Actual Expenditure in Dairy Development (in lakhs)

2002- 2003	2003- 2004	2004- 2005	2005- 2006	2006 - 2007	2007- 2008	2008 - 2009	2009- 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012
15.63	42.64	28.36	28.36	57.6 3	na	na	na	38.6 7	na

Budget Estimates for Education (School), Health & Family Welfare and Panchayat & Rural Development have an increasing trend in the Annual Plans. Also the percentage of expenditure has been higher in comparison to the other departments, as showed in the [previous table](#).

There has been a slight declining trend in the Budget Estimates for Health & Family Welfare, while Education (School) have a rising trend. It's a common notion that the tribal community have strong apathy to avail public health services but the data available does not reflect that information. Also the functioning of the Panchayat has failed to appeal to the tribal population as an effective institution at the grass root level. However the perception and necessity for education for their children has been developing slowly among the community. But for other departments like Forest there has been a falling trend for allocations though the dependence on forest for the tribal community is a common fact. The allocation under technical education & training shows a slightly rising trend though the percentage of allocation has been meagre. Allocation for minor irrigation facilities also has a declining trend though its importance is significant for provisioning irrigation facilities in their cultivable lands, given their location in the inhospitable remote patches. Ownership of cultivable lands being scarce, wage earnings from agricultural labour has been a dominant source of income for the community. Development of minor irrigation structures may facilitate multiple cropping in the adjacent lands and therefore more employment opportunities for the tribal people. However allocation for these sub heads does not show noteworthy impact of the need of the tribal community.

There are some salient features in the Tenth Plan (2002-2007), for the proposals for TSP as observed in the financial outlays of the Annual Plan 2008-2009.

- The total outlay under TSP for General Education was Rs. 9194.32 while the expenditure under TSP has been Rs. 7106.34 (figures are in lakhs). Therefore the proportion of utilisation has been 77.29%.
- The maximum utilisation has been under the sub-head Elementary Education and Literacy/Adult Education. The proportion of utilisation has been 85.75%.
- For other sub heads, Secondary Education and Higher Education the level of expenditure has been significantly lower. Firstly the allocation under Secondary Education has been much more (1888.64 lakhs) than that under Higher Education (683.85 lakhs). Secondly the percentage of expenditure under TSP is 7.8% while that for Higher Education is 9.2%.
- For Technical Education the proportion of expenditure has been 0.38% only.

- Expenditure for Rural Housing, Indira Awas Yojana has been low also, 18.31%.
- For development of the Scheduled Tribe population the total outlay under TSP was 22941.31 lakhs while the actual expenditure under TSP was 12405.93 lakhs.
- The expenditure under TSP for the head Empowerment of Women & Development of Children has been even marginally higher (5876.29 lakhs) than the total outlay (5543.06 lakhs) under TSP. But if the subheads are considered the performance has been particularly dismal for Development of Children that included Integrated Child Development Services, Balwadi Nutrition Programme, Day Care Centres etc, only 19.45% has been spent. The expenditure has been more

4. Conclusion

The pattern of allocation shows that the planners have followed the mainstream development paradigm assigning importance to education, health and such related welfare aspects. In spite of such concerted efforts, backwardness among the tribal communities has been a common phenomenon. There stands a wide mismatch between the targets of development planning and the hard reality in daily life of the people. Rarely do the planning initiatives have any provision to know directly from the tribes about their requirements, preferences and/or basic needs. This study has tried to bring forth the virtual gap between the planners' perspective of 'tribal development' and the perception of reality among the community.

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