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### Socio-economic Status of Scheduled Tribes in Jharkhand

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#### ABSTRACT

“Any tribe or tribal community or part of or group within any tribe or tribal community as deemed under Article 342 is Scheduled Tribe for the purpose of the Indian Constitution”. Like others, tribal society is not quite static, but dynamic; however, the rate of change in tribal societies is rather slow. That is why they have remained relatively poor and backward compared to others; hence, attempts have been made by the Government to develop them since independence. Still, even after so many years of numerous attempts the condition of tribals in Jharkhand presents one of deprivation rather than development. The 2011 Human Development Report argues that the urgent global challenges of sustainability and equity must be addressed together and identifies policies on the national and global level that could spur mutually reinforcing progress towards these interlinked goals. Bold action is needed on both fronts for the sustained progress in human development for the benefit of future generations as well as for those living today. All these have been addressed in the present article.

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### Introduction

Jharkhand, the 28<sup>th</sup> state of India was carved out of the southern part of Bihar state on 15<sup>th</sup> Nov 2000. The state is bordered by Bihar in the north, Uttar Pradesh and Chattisgarh in the west, Orissa in the south and West Bengal in the east. Jharkhand was brought into existence by the Bihar reorganization Act on November 15, 2000. The state is famous for its rich mineral resources and forests which occupy more than 29% of the state's area. In fact, Jharkhand is a state always known in the country for its resources, distinct culture as well as various forms of deprivation and exploitation.

The state was formed with eighteen districts eleven years ago and even after several promises and assurances for betterment the situation in the state is depressing because of multiplication of negative aspects of development. According to the 2001 Census total population of the state is 2.69 crore where the share of tribal population is 26.30%.

Jharkhand contributes 8.4% ST population to the total ST population of the country. The major concentration of tribal population is in the six districts of Ranchi, Lohardaga, Gumla, West Singhbhum, Dumka and

Pakur where more than 40% of tribal population of Jharkhand resides (Fig. 1).

## Rationale

The state is at a very slow pace of development in relation to its potential and expectations. As per the 2001 census 46.2% of the population is below the poverty line (some estimates put it at 54%). The incidence of poverty is higher than Bihar whose per capita income is around half of that of Jharkhand. The state has one of the richest mineral reserves yet there is vast social and regional disparity. It is a paradoxical situation of a primitive and marginalized society on the verge of extinction juxtaposed with the modern western world. The per capita income of the state is approximately Rs.15000 which is almost equal to that of other states where incidence of poverty is much lower. Since the state has a large tribal population it is quite obvious that they are the most deprived section of the society.

## Objectives

This paper is a modest endeavour to examine the deprived and marginalized communities in the state of Jharkhand with respect to development. With the help of Census and other related data the paper seeks to examine the economic status of one third of the total population of Jharkhand with regard to the basic attributes of poverty, education and work participation.

## Demographic Profile of the STs

There are 32 tribes (2011) in Jharkhand of which Santhals are most numerous accounting for one third of the total tribal population followed by Oraon, Munda and Ho contributing more than 10% to the total tribal population. Other tribes such as Kharwar, Lohra, Bhumij and Kharia have a share of less than 3% each while Mahli, Mal pahariya, Bedia and Chero have share of 1-2% each. The tribes with less than 1% contribution to

the state's tribal population include Karmali, Gond, Chick Baraik, Generic tribes, Kisan, Sauria Paharia, Korwa, Kora, Paharia, Binjhia, Asur and Birhor. The most marginalized tribes with less than 0.01% are Savar, Birjia, Gorait, Baiga, Bathudi, Banjara and Khond (Fig.2).

Among the districts Gumla, Lohardaga and West Singhbhum account for more than 50% tribal population. Certain tribes have been under special scrutiny on the basis of their levels of primitiveness, backwardness and extincting status like the Asur, Paharia, Sabar, Birhor, Birjia, Korwa, Mal Pahariya and Sauriya Paharia. Eight out of the thirty odd tribes of Jharkhand fall under Primitive Tribal Group (PTG). They are Asur, Birhor, Birajia, Korwa, Savar, Pahariya (Baiga), Mal Pahariya and Souriya Pahariya. Together they constitute 2.73 lakhs (2001) which is a very nominal part of the total tribal population. According to the reports by the health department Birhor, Birajia, Baiga and Souriya Pahariya are declining.

Though the population size is statistically not significant for the analysis of individual tribe especially the communities with very small size of population, it is inevitable to examine their level of development for proper intervention and development action plan in terms of human development indicators. The sex ratio of the STs in the state is 987 and Binjhia, Kharia and Karmali have sex ratio more than 1000. Most of the other mentioned tribes have very poor sex ratio especially the Khonds and the Banjaras. However this is not a good measure for any estimation due to very small population of some tribes and also the high degree of male migration amongst certain tribes.

## Levels of Poverty

Scheduled Tribes have been known for their high level of poverty and deprivation. When compared to the rest of India poverty level seems to be higher in case of Jharkhand as per the following

data (Table 1). Poverty is generally found to be high in regions of ST concentration (Table 2). This is further reiterated by the fact that Santhal Pargana and Palamu have shown exceptionally high levels of poverty. Not only are these regions drought prone but they also have a long history of feudal system with exploitation and bonded

labour. According to the NSS-55<sup>th</sup> round Schedule 10 the poverty head count varies from 85% in Pakur to 80% in Deogarh, 77% in Dumka, 74% in Palamu, to 54-55% in Lohardaga and East Singhbhum, to 20-21% in Dhanbad and Hazaribagh.

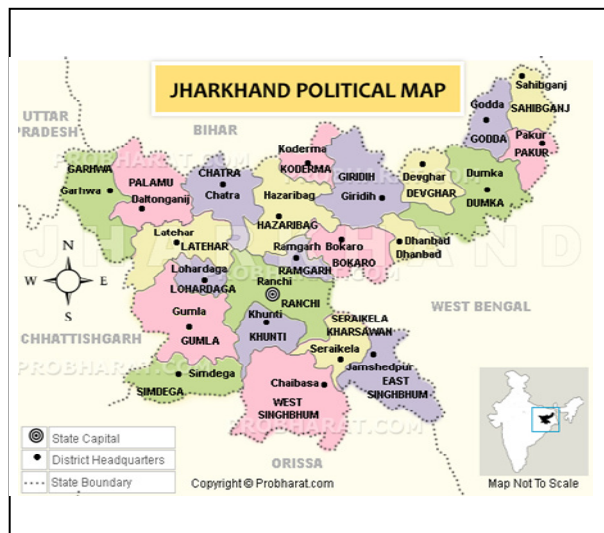


Fig.1: Location Map

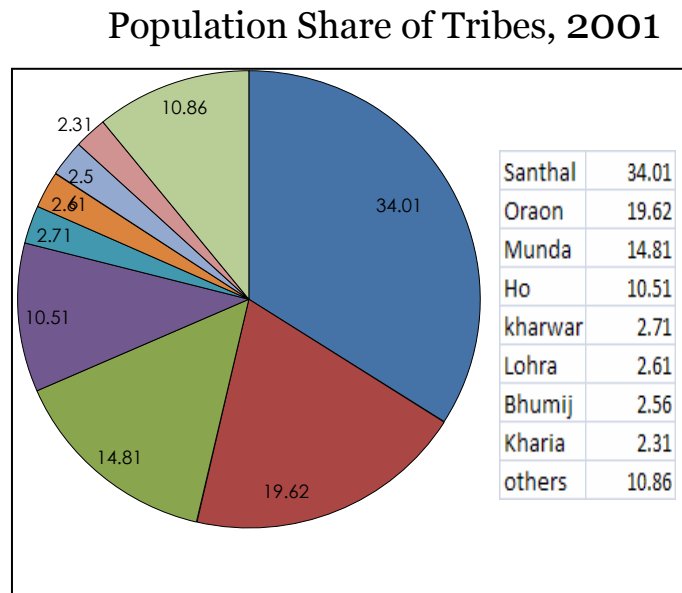


Fig.2

Table 1: Per capita Income on 31.01.2008 (Constant Prices at 1999-00)

Year	Highest ranking state Punjab	Jharkhand	Lowest ranking state Bihar
2001-02	25994	10360	5972
2002-03	26065	10571	6634
2003-04	26955	11144	6158
2004-05	28119	14343	6771
2005-06	29887	14990	6610

Source: Directorate for Economics and Statistics of respective State Govt and Central Statistical Organisation

Table 2: Poverty Rates by Social Groups for Rural Jharkhand (2004-05)

State	ST(%)	SC(%)	OBC(%)	OTHERS(%)	ALL(%)
Jharkhand	54	58	40	36.9	46.2
All-India	45	37	25.8	17.5	28.1

Source: Directorate for Economics and Statistics of respective State Govt and Central Statistical Organisation

Over the years poverty has declined in the state albeit at a slow rate. The following graph reflects the quantification of poverty in Jharkhand (Fig.3)

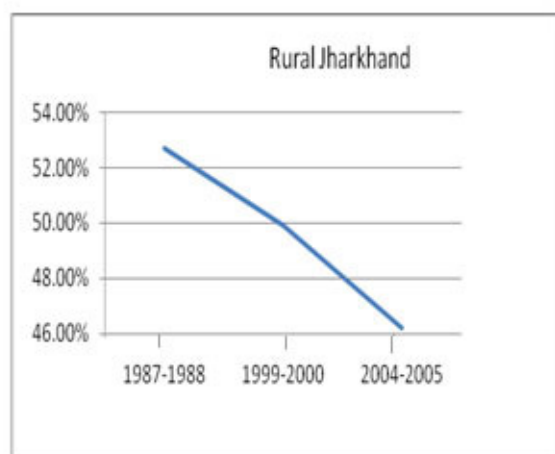


Fig. 3

### Status of Education

Literacy is one of the most basic parameters for the success of democratic system of governance. “The Millenium Development Goals” cannot be met without getting tribal children especially girls educated. Amartya Sen’s argument for faster development of India has been to repeatedly stress the criticality of primary education. Years of planning, budgetary allocation of funds and numerous schemes have not been able to provide the basics to education to the tribal population of Jharkhand. Tribal children are trapped in an intergenerational vicious cycle of poverty, illiteracy and deprivation due to their primitive (shy) nature and thus solated from the mainstream of life and other strata of the society.

The average literacy rate is 54.13% in Jharkhand though amongst tribals it is as low as 40.7% and 10% amongst women (Table – 3). Though the literacy rate increased from 27.5% (1991) to 40.7% (2001) it is much lower than the national level of 47.1%. This is particularly evident amongst the Santhal, Bhumij, Ho, Lohra and Kharwa which are numerically the larger tribes. In general, tribes have low literacy rate but Pahariya is the most deprived community with

only 12.59% literacy rate followed by Korwa, Baiga, Birhor and Savar. Other tribes too have literacy rate varying between 20-40%. Literacy rate is the highest amongst the Khond, Oraon, Kharia and Chick Baraik i.e above 50%. These tribes show higher female literacy too. In terms of female literacy almost all communities are deprived with only 27.21% literacy. The poorest amongst the poor are the Pahariya and Korwa with only 5.47% and 6.45% literacy rate followed closely by Baiga, Savar, Birhor, Sauriya Pahariya, Mal Pahariya, Banjara, Kharwar and Asur having female literacy below 15%.

It is also noticeable that the higher percentage of literates having education level below primary goes to marginalized and underdeveloped tribes like the Korwa, Khond, Mal Pahariya, Banjara, Chero, Birhor Baiga etc. It is interesting to note that the Birhors have the lowest percentage 0.47% pursuing intermediate or Higher secondary education. This implies that there is a high dropout rate amongst the Birhors. The percentage of graduates amongst the Birhor is also the lowest only 0.19%. Hence it can be concluded that educational deprivation is the highest amongst the Birhors.

Since deprivation is larger amongst minor communities, it is absolutely essential to free them from poverty, illiteracy and darkness of ignorance. The following section reveals the quantified level of their deprivation. So the most deprived tribes that are to be focused are the Paharia, Korwa, Baiga, Birhor, not forgetting the Santhals which account for one third of the total tribal population of Jharkhand. Percentage of school going children in the age group 5-14 years was the highest amongst Oraon (55%) followed by Kharia (53%), Munda (50.1%), Bhumij (46.6%) and Lohra (44.1%).

College going students account for only 5.23% of the total students/trainees of Jharkhand. The census data 2001 also reveals of only 15.90% total tribal population attend educational

institutions out of which 94% go to school meaning thereby an unexpected drop out after schooling. It is therefore necessary to provide incentives and protection to encourage more students to attend school as well as skill oriented training at vocational centres.

### **Dimension of Livelihood of the STs (Adivasi)**

Since deprivation is much larger among some of the minor communities who are under severe threat of survival, it is inevitable to examine the extent of their deprivation in livelihood also. In this case the examination has been done through work participation in various sectors. About little less than half of the tribal population constitutes to be the working population (Fig. 4).

The deprived communities also follow suit. Relatively lower work participation has been noticed among the communities of Karmali, Khond, Chero and Kora. The inferences are that more than half population are either engaged with some other activities like study, some are in the non-working age-groups or do not have work opportunity despite seeking work, which goes very high among females of urban areas though it is also considerable among urban males.

In rural areas, livelihood system is primarily dependent on combinations of agriculture, forestry and laboring. Due to very small holding and very low productivity of land, most households eke out a living by maintaining a diversified pattern of occupations. There is however small artisan communities of tribals who lend out their services or engage in small scale processing and marketing.

Women's work is critical for tribal households both in terms of provisioning food and income as well as management of resources. Amongst the PTGs such as Birhors, Pahari Korwa and Sawar women play an important role on food gathering, rope making, honey collecting, herbal medicinal plant collection, basket making, and

even fishing and hunting. Thus work participation of tribal women in rural areas is more as women's work is regarded as crucial for survival of tribal households.

Work participation is more in rural areas than urban maybe because of large engagements in agriculture and allied activities of rural population indicating the disguised unemployment. Urban area reflects more unemployment also due to engagements in longer education sector of more population. Very large rural-urban differences are found among Binjhia, Asur and Birjia, Sauria Paharia, Kharia, Gond and Banjara. The gaps have come down for the communities of Bhumij, Mal Paharia, Karmali, Generic Tribes, Chero, Kora Birhor and Khond where Birhor and Khond have very small difference.

The communities with lower gaps and low level of work participation reflect less opportunities in both urban and rural labour market or economic avenues. It is revealed that only 59.43% workers get the work for at least six months in a year. This share goes down to 41.03% in case of females largely due to poor opportunities/participation in the rural areas by them. There is a very large difference among various communities as far as the engagement in main work (work for more than 180 days in a year) is concerned. For example 92.74% total workers among Banjara have been recorded as main workers followed by Khond with 80.82% main workers.

Most of the communities have reported to have more than 60% main workers. The lower share of main workers is found among Savar, Bhumij and Bathudi (Fig. 5). The share of main workers is larger in urban areas than in rural area except among Banjara and Paharia. The gap is as large as 51.1 percentage points for Bathudi followed by Baiga with 45.98 percentage points. It reflects that the tribals who reside in urban areas permanently or for the want of employment have

better employment opportunities at least for six months a year. In the rural areas agriculture, allied activities and their traditional occupation do not provide the employment even for at least

six months in a year. Exceptions are there for whatever reasons among Banjara and Paharia communities who find main work in rural areas than their urban counterparts.

Table – 3: Literacy rate of STs in Jharkhand, 2001

Communities	Rate (>40.67%)	Communities	Rate (<40.67%)
Khond	60.76	Kora	35.05
Oraon	52.46	Santhal	33.42
Kharia	51.01	Bathudi	33.26
Chik Baraik	48.93	Birjia	31.22
Munda	47.91	Kharwar	29.60
Gorait	45.86	Asur	29.10
Karmali	44.02	Kisan	29.08
Gond	43.68	Banjara	23.47
Generic Tribes	42.48	Sauria Paharia	21.70
Bhumij	41.51	Mal Paharia	20.90
Chero	40.17	Savar	18.06
Ho	39.16	Birhor	17.55
Lohra	38.94	Baiga	17.34
Binjhia	38.78	Korwa	14.29
Bedia	37.89	Paharia	12.59
Mahli	36.43		

Source: Directorate for Economics and Statistics of respective State Govt and Central Statistical Organisation

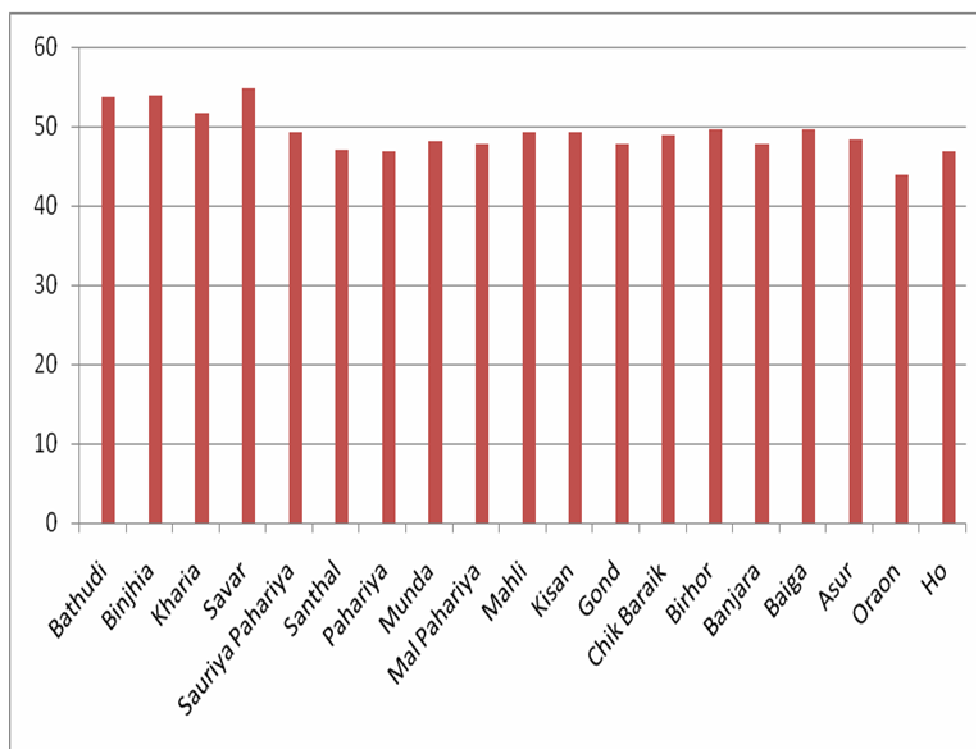


Fig. 4: Work Participation among Tribals, 2001



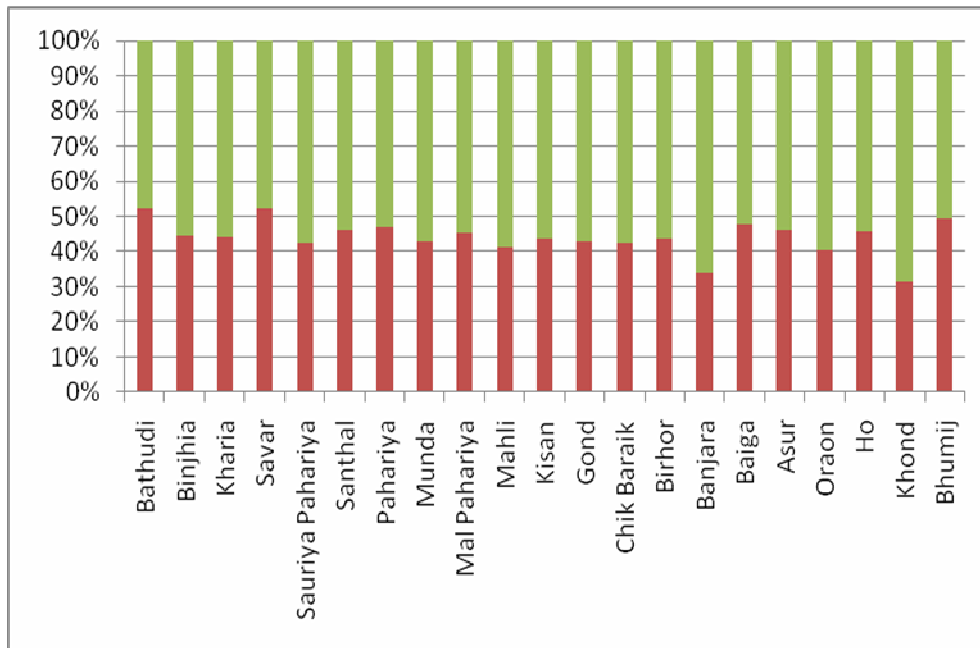


Fig. 5: Percentage of Worker and Main Workers among STs in Jharkhand, 2001

Table – 4: Occupational Pattern of Tribes, Jharkhand, 2001

Community	Cultivators	Agri. Labourers	HH Industry	Others	Primary Sector
Asur	76.21	5.22	1.28	17.29	81.43
Baiga	47.28	36.10	2.94	14.68	82.38
Banjara	40.96	42.17	3.61	13.25	83.13
Bathudi	9.83	78.98	0.68	10.51	88.81
Bedia	66.05	12.45	1.17	20.33	78.50
Binjhia	86.59	5.86	0.66	6.89	92.44
Birhor	10.34	19.42	39.55	30.69	29.76
Birjia	53.75	24.72	15.36	6.18	78.46
Bhumij	45.68	29.93	1.81	22.57	75.61
Chero	53.85	29.09	1.78	15.29	82.94
Chik Baraik	67.43	13.44	1.95	17.17	80.88
Gond	62.43	14.53	3.37	19.68	76.96
Gorait	32.16	26.39	2.74	38.71	58.55
Ho	59.99	18.98	3.19	17.84	78.98
Karmali	23.13	19.48	11.23	46.16	42.61
Kharia	78.62	11.19	0.83	9.36	89.81
Kharwar	67.02	23.63	0.87	8.48	90.65
Khond	1.69	0	1.69	96.61	1.69
Kisan	76.37	13.26	0.94	9.45	89.62
Kora	29.38	33.62	4.11	32.89	63.00
Korwa	41.38	44.03	4.41	10.19	85.41
Lohra	32.37	20.03	18.82	28.77	52.40
Mahli	15.46	8.56	59.90	16.08	24.02
Mal Paharia	47.54	32.91	2.40	17.15	80.45
Munda	73.40	10.43	1.21	14.96	83.83
Oraon	69.61	10.30	0.84	19.26	79.90
Pahariya	33.80	36.68	17.00	12.52	70.48
Santhal	58.86	24.73	0.98	15.42	83.59
Saura Paharia	63.63	18.29	0.38	18.69	80.92
Savar	2.72	60.76	5.77	30.75	63.48
Generic Trib	42.81	17.29	5.39	34.72	60.10

Source: Directorate for Economics and Statistics of respective State Govt and Central Statistical Organisation

The industrial category of main workers of each community reflects that almost all Khond workers are engaged in non-primary sectors. Similarly Mahli and Birhor have also very high level of work participation in non-primary sectors with more than 70% main workers. Industrial break up reveals that Savars and Bathudi are primarily engaged as agricultural labour with 78.98% and 60.76% main workers, which is a serious matter of concern.

The other communities like Banjara, Parhaiya, Baiga, Kora, Mal Pahariya, Bhumij, Chero and Gorait also needs attention for their high percentage of main workers as agricultural labourers. It is evident that the communities like Khond and Savars have the lowest share of cultivators may be because of landlessness. Birhor and Bethudi may also be kept in the same group.

Participation in household industries is in general low (3.21% for all tribal communities). However, Mahli and Birhor have high participation due to their traditional craft works distantly followed by Lohra, Paharia, Birjia and Karmali among which Lohra is the tribal artisan community. Khonds have been engaged in other works mainly tertiary kind of occupation with 96.6% workers. There are some other communities also with good share of workers in other sector. The nature of other works however is not known whether it is highly skilled services or petty jobs.

The other side is a very low participation of main workers of various communities in the other sectors, which demands of diversification of economy and creation of jobs in various sectors. The share of marginal workers also reflects some socio-economic realities where more than 90 per cent marginal workers are engaged in primary sector only. The critical occupation is the high percentage of agricultural labour. It includes those also who are marginal farmers with very small land holding sizes or have land mostly less productive or unproductive.

The data for population seeking job or disguised unemployment by various educational level will reveal the job requirement in various sectors to some extent. In 1991 11.01 and 6.3% workers among STs were engaged and cultivators and agricultural labour under Bihar regime. It appears that the agriculture and allied activities need to be strengthened to support the population along with diversification of economic activities for the absorption of qualified, skilled and non-skilled labour force among these communities and for the overall growth and development.

## Conclusion

The identification of individual tribal community as well as district or pockets need to be identified based on each indicator of deprivation for proper intervention because the type and nature of deprivations are different among different tribes and in different districts. Even if the districts are developed due to mining and industry for example, some specific communities are deprived in some form or other. These districts may be considered as priority districts for each tribe based on the above criteria. Further, prioritization of district may be done for individual tribe as given and within the district the primary survey will be helpful to identify the pockets in the blocks and villages for the area and community specific action plan generation and implementation at micro level.

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