

Evaluation of the Composition of Developmental Assistance: A Case Study of Tribal Regions in Gujarat (India)

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Abstract: Most of the income and employment generation programs funded from the Special Central Assistance (SCA) in the tribal regions of the state of Gujarat in India revolve around agriculture. However, the conditions required for the success of these agriculture-oriented programs in the region are absent. Landlessness, inadequate irrigation and poor soil quality are the three major drawbacks. Surprisingly, less importance has been given to the allied-activities like poultry-farming, livestock rearing, tourism and skill-training-programs. In the context of the above paradox, the current paper aims at evaluating the rationality and efficacy of the scheme-wise composition of SCA with special reference to the state of Gujarat. The paper suggests an area-specific approach rather than a generic obsession towards agriculture oriented programs.

Key-Words: Rural Development, Scheduled Tribes, Special Central Assistance (SCA), Tribal Sub Plan (TSP), Tribal Development

Introduction

The main objective of the paper is to investigate the rationality of the scheme-wise allocation of the Government funds directed towards the development of tribal regions of Gujarat. There are total two sections in the paper. The first section (A) gives a brief account of the extent of poverty among rural and tribal regions of India and Gujarat, describes the Government's approach towards the development of the tribal regions in India and finally explains the objectives and the methodology of the study in brief. The second section (B) deductively evaluates the **composition** of the Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) with special reference to the state of Gujarat.

Section-A

A.1. Extent of Poverty in India and Gujarat:

A.1.1. Rural Areas: Centers of Poverty in India-

Out of the total population living below the poverty line in India, a large proportion lives in the rural areas. Out of the total number of poor in the country, 80.39% live in rural areas whereas 19.60% live in urban areas (Table-1). Thus poverty in India is mainly concentrated in the rural areas.

Table-1: Distribution of Poverty between Rural and Urban Areas of India

Population Below Poverty-Line In India			
	Rural	Urban	Total
Poor population	216.5 million	52.8 million	269.3 million
%	80.39 %	19.60 %	100

SOURCE: Press Note on Poverty Estimates, 2011-12 (Planning Commission, GOI, July 2013)

Besides this, 25.9% of the rural population in the country lives below poverty line whereas this ratio is 14% in the urban areas (Table-2).

Table-2: Poverty in Rural and Urban Areas of India

Number and Percentage of Poor Estimated by Tendulkar Method, Using Mixed Reference Period(MRP)			
	RURAL	URBAN	TOTAL
Total No. of Poor	216.5 million	52.8 million	269.3 million
Total Population	833 million	377 million	1210 million
%	25.9	14	19.9

SOURCE: Press Note on Poverty Estimates, 2011-12 (Planning Commission, GOI, July 2013)

A. 1.2. Tribal Regions: Centers of Poverty in Rural India

Among these rural poor, worst is the condition of the tribals living in the remote hilly and forest regions of the country. Almost half (precisely 47.7%) of the tribal population in rural India lives below poverty

line and has no access to economic assets as opposed to 26.7% in the non-tribal group (Table-3/ Figure-1). The tribals fare worst on most of the human and economic development indicators. With not enough food to eat and water to drink, the tribals are among the poorest of poor.

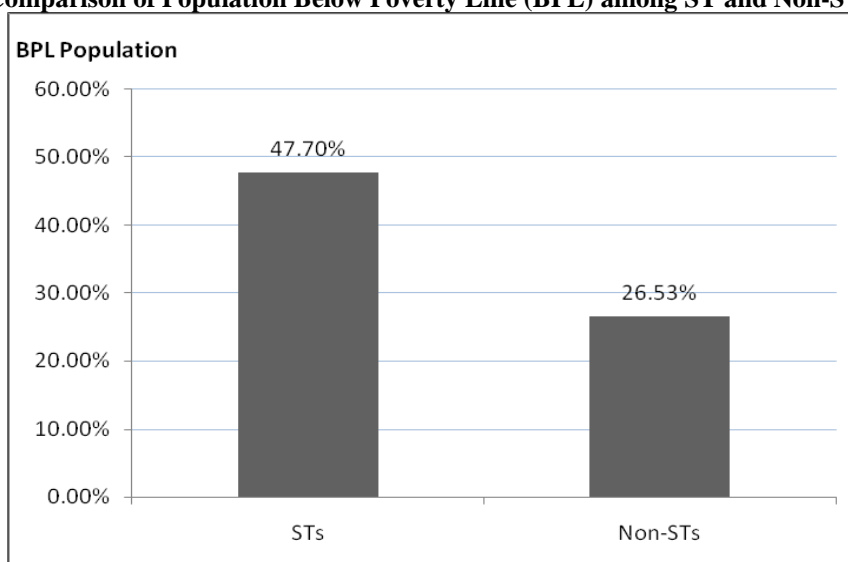
Table-3: Poverty Among All Social Groups

Population Below Poverty Line in Rural Areas of India by Different Social Groups (%) (Tendulkar Methodology)			
ST	SC	OBC	Others
47.4	36.8	26.7	16.1

ST = Scheduled Tribes, SC = Scheduled Castes, OBC = Other Backward Classes **Source: Planning Commission, 2009-10**

Fig-1 below shows that 47.7% of the total ST population in India is poor where as the poverty among the non-ST population on average is only 26.53%. Thus poverty among the tribals is maximum.

Figure-1: Comparison of Population Below Poverty Line (BPL) among ST and Non-ST Population



Source: Poverty among Scheduled Tribe Population of India, 2009-10, Planning Commission, GOI

Around 8% of the total Indian Population belongs to the ST category. Largely the tribal belt is located in India's central-eastern regions and is characterized by forest dominated economies where people have limited possessions in a region which is relatively rich in natural resources.

A. 2. Tribal Population in Gujarat:

According to the census of 2011, 14.8 % of Gujarat's total population is Tribal. Out of the total rural population in Gujarat, 25.13% belongs to ST category. There are 4 districts in the state where the tribal population is between 25% - 50% whereas 5 districts with tribal population of above 50%. According to the planning commission's estimate (2013), almost half (48.6%) of the ST population in the state of Gujarat lived below poverty line as against 26.7% among all social groups. Landlessness is one of the important reasons for the abject poverty among the tribals of the state. According to NSSO report of 2006, 82.9% of the ST households in rural areas have less than 1 hectare land in Gujarat's rural areas.

According to Rural Development Statistics on Scheduled Casts and Scheduled Tribes, poverty levels among STs had gone up during the 11-year period ending with 2004-05 in the state of Gujarat along with other states like Andhra-Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Punjab.

The Geographical dimensions of the tribal regions in the state of Gujarat: The eastern regions of Gujarat with heavy tribal concentration, receive very heavy rainfall during June-September. However, most of the water runs off due to the fractured basalt rock geology and poor water holding capacity of soils. The 8 month dry period is hence characterized by severe water stress and scarcity. The contrasting situation of very heavy rainfall for 3-4 months followed by water stress imposes restrictions on cropping seasons and crops grown. Agriculture in the region is subsistence based and consists of a single rain-fed crop. Even those who have the land are not able to produce anything substantial as the quality of land is not excellent. Most of the land in the region is hilly and uneven. Agriculture is confined to low lands in plains/ valleys and gentle slopes. Thus, although agriculture is the main source of livelihood, a single rain-fed crop of cereals is unable to feed most families for more than 6 months. There are very few other employment opportunities in the region. Landlessness

and poor quality of land have resulted into extremely low standards of living.

A. 3. Tribal Sub-Plans (TSPs): India's Approach towards Development of Tribal Regions

Many Government programs and policies have been implemented for the development of the tribal regions and their people ever since the independence of the country from British rule (i.e. year 1947). Massive amounts of financial allocations have been made through various agencies for the purpose. Most efforts for tribal development are done by the state governments through the Tribal Sub Plans. The Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) strategy was initiated for the rapid socio-economic development of tribal people since the 5th five year Plan (1974-79). The strategy for the TSP was meant for 'areas of tribal concentration' which were designated as Integrated Tribal Development Projects. TSP is part of an overall plan of a State/ Union Territories (UT) and has the objective of socio-economic development and Protection of STs against exploitation through legal and administrative support and thereby narrowing the gap between their levels of development and that of the general communities. The Tribal Sub-Plan Programmes are financed by the following sources:

- (a) State /UT Plans
- (B) Special Central Assistance (SCA) To Tribal Sub Plan (TSP)
- (c) Grants under Article 275 (1) of the Constitution to the States/U.Ts
- (d) Funds from Centrally Sponsored Schemes and
- (e) Institutional Finance.

Although there are various sources of funding the TSPs, the current paper focuses on evaluating the Special Central Assistance (SCA) which is sanctioned by the centre to the states exclusively for implementing income generating activities.

A. 3.1. Special Central Assistance (SCA)

SCA to TSP is extended by the Government of India to various State Governments since 1997-98 as an additive to their state plan efforts for tribal development and thus constitutes an integral part of the overall strategy of the TSP. The ultimate objective of extending SCA to TSP is to boost the demand based income- generation programs and thus raise the economic and social status of Tribals. As per the direction of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, only the '*tribal population living below poverty line*' should be covered under SCA-financed activities, with a special emphasis on raising their socio-economic status. While formulating SCA-funded TSP activities, priority should be given to the development of the most neglected tribals living in the Forest Villages. Innovative projects for creating employment-cum-income generation activities based on the felt needs of the local tribals should be given priority. In no case, more than 30 per cent of SCA received by the states can be permitted for the purpose of developing infrastructure. Thus, Special Central Assistance (SCA) is a crucial component of the TSP which is provided by the Central Government to the state governments for implementing 'income-generating activities' for the tribals in the state. It is meant to support the state governments to fill in the gaps in their TSPs. Although the allocation of the funds among various income-generating activities is done by the central government, it is mostly in accordance with the demands, proposals and requirements of the state Governments.

A. 4. Objective and Methodology of the Study

The narrow aim of this paper is to study the 'efficacy of the structure of SCA in the context of its objectives as described by the Central Government'. Progress of the backward tribal regions is a complex and multifaceted task which requires attempts towards both, socio-cultural as well as economic development.

However, SCA is exclusively extended for the economic development of tribal regions through income generating activities.

Hence, the analysis and evaluation of the importance of the other programs (like education, health and other economic infrastructure etc) which are not directly related to income-generation is outside the purview of the paper, although these programs are equally important for tribal development. The secondary data on the composition of SCA from the Central Government to the State of Gujarat has been obtained from the actual sanction-letters of the ministry of tribal affairs-Government of India, to the State Government of Gujarat.

Section-B

B.1. Evaluation of the Composition of the SCA to TSP in Gujarat:

B.1.1. Scheme-Wise Allocation of Central Assistance To Tribal Regions

Gujarat has been a consistent recipient of SCA due to its substantial tribal population. Following is the scheme-wise composition of SCA to Gujarat's TSP over a five year period from 2009-10 to 2013-14.

Table-5: Scheme-Wise Allocation of Central Assistance to Tribal Regions

Special Central Assistance To Tribal Area Sub Plan, Gujarat (In Rs. Lakhs)						
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Average Allocation Over Five Years
Agriculture Related Activities						
1. Integrated Wadi & Agricultural Diversification Project (IWADP)						
2. Project Sunshine(Dry Agriculture)	3009.20	NA	485.80	3972	2791	
3. Rainwater harvesting	(53.39%)		(34.26%)	(53.60%)	(33.03%)	43.57%
Integrated Dairy Development/Livestock	1936.61	NA	400.37	3438	3400	37.30%
	(34.36%)		(28.23%)	(46.39%)	(40.24%)	
Employment Oriented Skill Training and Vocational Training	521.83	NA	531.83	NIL	2257	24.49%
	(9.26%)		(37.50%)		(26.71%)	
Others	167.89	NA	NIL	NIL	NIL	-
	(2.97%)					
TOTAL	5635.53	NA	1418.00	7410	8448	
	(100%)		(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	

Source: Sanction letters from Ministry of Tribal Affairs to Gujarat Government (Scheme-wise approval of Financial Allocation)

Table-5 above shows

- that on an average; around **43.57%** (highest) of the SCA has been allocated for agriculture related activities, **37.30%** to Integrated Dairy and Livestock Development Projects and **24.49%** (lowest) for employment-oriented skill training programs over a 5 year period from 2009-10 to 2013-14.
- the share of employment-oriented skill-training programs has increased over the years but is still the lowest. Even in other states like Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra etc. (which are dominated by tribal population), most of the programs aimed at the economic development of the tribal regions revolve around agriculture.

B.1.2. Scheme Evaluation

Unfortunately, this strategy has not been very effective to improve the standard of living of the tribals because the conditions required for the success of agriculture-related programs do not exist in the tribal regions of the country. The success of the schemes aimed at tribal development through agriculture is subject to the following conditions.

- The target group should possess a certain minimum amount of land, which is of a reasonably good quality.
 - The region should have adequate irrigation facilities throughout the year.
- However, most of the tribal regions in the country and the state do not satisfy any of these preconditions.
- Majority of the tribal poor do not have any land at-all or have only marginal lands. Hence the landless, who are the poorest of the poor get excluded altogether from the agriculture-based economic programs. It is noteworthy that the entire allocation through SCA sanctioned by the central government is to be utilized for tribals living below poverty line.
 - Even those who have land receive very negligible benefits because the lands are of uneconomic size and of very inferior quality.
 - Agriculture is mainly dependent on rainfall with no or limited irrigation facilities in the region.
- These programs would be more inclusive because the land-less, who are ultra-poor will also get the benefits. Casual labourers among tribals of Gujarat, who are landless, have 36% more poverty than those with subsistence cultivation. Skill formation among these landless casual labourers will help creating better jobs for them.
- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme provides employment to unskilled labourers by engaging them in public-projects. However, it fails to provide work through-out the year. Formation of the right skills among the people through proper training programs would provide non-

- distress driven employment for more days and better wages.
3. Once the right skills are imparted, these programs will be able to generate incomes on more sustained basis for the tribals as compared to that from agriculture which requires continues support from the agencies.
 4. Agriculture requires recurring investment in seeds, fertilizers and irrigation. However, once the skills are formed, sustained incomes will be generated without any substantial investment by the poor.
 5. Skills will enhance the confidence of the poor and can be taught by one generation to another.
 6. The dependence on climate for income generation can be removed.

Following are some of the important points necessary for the success of such skill-training programs, which must be ensured.

1. The product for which the skills are being developed should have a huge market, so that the skills are in heavy demand throughout the year.
2. The location of the training-centre should be convenient to the people.
3. The training-centre should have the basic amenities and lunch facility for the trainees.
4. The agency conducting the program should arrange for expert trainers and market the product aggressively.
5. Some of the traditional tribal skills wherein the tribals convert the forest inputs like bamboo etc. into finished goods can be further strengthened.
6. New skills related with agro-processing like pickle and jam making, cashew processing etc. can also be developed.

Table-6: Land-Ownership among Tribals

Distribution of ST Households according to Land Possession(Hectares) in Rural Gujarat (2004-05)					
Landless (A)	0.001-1.00 (B)	1.01- 2.00 (C)	2.01-4.00 (D)	4.01 and Above (F)	% of HHs with less than 1 Hectare (A+B)
4.6 %	78.3 %	9.5 %	6.5 %	1.2 %	82.9%
<p>Source: NSSO, Report No. 516, Employment and Unemployment Situation among Scheduled Tribes in India, 61st Round Tribes in India, 61st Round (July 2004-June 2005), October 2006</p>					

Table-6 above shows that around 82.9% (i.e. 4.6% + 78.3%) of the scheduled tribe households in Gujarat possessed less than one hectare of land in 2004-05. Similarly, according to the draft paper of the Ninth Five-Year Plan, 77% of dalits (SCs) and 90% of adivasis (STs) are either 'absolute landless' (own no land) or are 'near landless'.

In the context of the above problems associated with the agriculture in tribal regions, an alternative approach focusing on skill formation, tourism, livestock and dairy development seems to be more effective. The good news is that gradually the financial allocation towards these alternative schemes is increasing but is still less than that allocated to purely agricultural activities and needs to be enhanced further. Besides, these alternative income generating programs need to be conducted with much more urgency and systematic planning.

B.2. Thinking beyond Agriculture:

The argument is not to neglect agriculture but to rationally improve the allocation of scarce resources so that the landless who are the poorest of poor get maximum benefits of Government Programs. Following are some of the reasons to pursue and the ways to make these alternative programs more effective and successful.

B.2.1.Training For Skill-Formation:

Extensive skill-formation programs for the tribals appear more promising vis a vis agriculture because of the following reasons. Thus, carefully designed and managed skill-formation programs should become an effective alternative for agriculture-oriented programs which have failed to bring a significant improvement in the standards of living of the tribals due to their inherent limitations. Formation of specific skills would have an edge over traditional education as it will be more useful to the tribals in income- generation on sustained basis with lesser gestation period. There is a high risk that the tribal people may not complete the training and leave the program in between due to their indifference and apathy towards improvement. To counter this limitation and bring about cultural changes, the actual technical training should be supplemented by some motivational sessions aimed at attitudinal changes. No doubt, the Government is allocating funds for skill-training. However, there is a need to increase this allocation and conduct these programs with more resolve and better planning.

B.2.2.Promotion of Backyard Poultry And Livestock:

In the absence of adequate land, a lot of tribal households depend on non-farm activities for supplementary income that includes cattle rearing, sheep rearing, piggery and poultry. Backyard livestock and poultry can play an important role in improving the socioeconomic status of the tribal population. It would also provide them with food and nutritional security. Traditionally, many of the tribal households are involved in

backyard poultry farming on a small-scale. They generally rear a number of birds ranging from 1 to 10 within a limited area in the backyards of their houses. The birds are raised mostly in a scavenging system. They eat anything edible available in the backyard like insects, farm and domestic waste, leaves, etc. They move in and around the compound of household like any other family member and rest wherever they find a place. More than 65 percent of tribal families have poultry in small flocks of 4-5 birds per household in low-input/low-output conditions. Although poultry-farming is a traditional custom, it has not been developed into a sustainable source of income. Government can initiate some pilot projects for poultry development in tribal regions. Following are the measures which can help.

- Provision of vaccination and proper veterinary facility
- Financial assistance for making meshed enclosures
- Training in improved chick rearing, feed management and mortality reduction
- Feed supplement to be made available in the village
- Provision of higher yielding variety of 'Desi' (indigenous) birds.

Similarly, the livestock production system is an important subsidiary to reduce pressure on crop production. It contributes to the livelihood of families in many ways. It is the source of protein for tribal families through the consumption of milk, dairy products and meat. In addition to their use in agriculture and transport, their dung is used to enrich soil fertility and as a fuel. Sale of livestock and livestock products can form a considerable proportion of the tribal's cash income. This will be a boon for the small farmers and landless who are mostly unemployed or underemployed.

If the Government helps in systematic and scientific development of livestock, it can become an important and sustainable component of the income for the tribals.

B.2.3. Tourism

The Government hasn't explored the tourism potential of the tribal regions fully. The serene, tranquil and isolated tribal regions, away from the hustle bustle of the city life are a perfect tourist destination for the urban people. With hills, lakes, forests and exotic waterfalls, the tribal regions have enormous potential as tourist hotspots. The tribal culture too is very rich. Its unique features generate a lot of interest among the tourists. The tribal festivals, customs and dances have potential to attract not just the Indian but also the foreign tourists. The Districts of Valsad and Dangs in Gujarat have many spots with astonishing natural beauty and potential to become popular tourist destinations. Lot of people from the western countries want to travel such tribal regions just to see the traditional cultures, rejecting the modern cities as boring and safe destinations. They want to visit these remaining corners of ancient lifestyles before the outside influences dilute and destroy them forever. Tourism will also generate a market for the tribal handicraft products. Tourism in tribal regions thus has enormous potential to generate employment and income. The belief that the tribal tourism would destroy the tribal culture has no strong holding because the experience in many African countries has been exactly the opposite. As the tribals knew that the people all over the world visit to see their customs, they felt very proud and had an incentive to keep those traditions alive. The government needs to formulate a systematic strategy to develop tribal tourism.

B.3. Conclusion:

Most programs aimed at income and employment generation in tribal regions of Gujarat revolve around agriculture but the conditions for the success of agriculture in these tribal regions are not favourable. Surprisingly, comparatively less importance has been given to allied-activities like poultry-farming, livestock rearing, tourism development and programs for skill formation. These programs, no doubt, are mentioned vividly on paper, but haven't been implemented seriously. Government and the other development agencies, somehow, have strongly believed that the economic development of tribal regions and that of the people therein would be possible only through efforts directed towards agriculture and farming. However, the actual experience has been different. Hence, an area-specific approach wherein customized programs for tribal regions are developed; based on local conditions, existing skills and traditional strengths of the people can be expected to prove more effective in over-all development of these regions as compared to a generic obsession towards agriculture oriented programs. It would be interesting to further investigate if more states in India and other under-developed economies are also relying too much on agriculture-oriented programs for poverty eradication despite the absence of the conditions necessary for the success of agriculture. And if these programs have failed to increase incomes of the poor due to the absence of the preconditions, it is high-time that the focus shifts more on alternative policies for rural and tribal development.

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