

WHO ARE PVTGs?

- PVTGs are socially & economically very backward in the sense that they have little access to the resources for their development, low rate of literacy, relatively small population size, dwindling in numbers and some of the groups are at the verge of extinction.
- There are seventy-five communities, which are distributed in four states: Bihar, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal
- A tribe enjoys the status of PVTG in one state but not into another state.
- PVTGs are more vulnerable among the tribal groups.
- Due to this factor, more developed and assertive tribal groups take a major chunk of the tribal development funds, because of which PVTGs need more funds directed for their development.
- In 1975, the Govt of India initiated to identify the most vulnerable tribal groups as a separate category called PVTGs and declared 52 such groups, while in 1993 an additional 23 groups were added to the category, making it a total of 75 PVTGs out of 705 Scheduled Tribes, spread over 17 states and one Union Territory (UT), in the country (2011 census).

STATE WISE PRESENCE

- Government of India follows the following criteria for identification of PVTGs.
 - 1) Pre-agricultural level of technology
 - 2) Low level of literacy
 - 3) Economic backwardness
 - 4) A declining or stagnant population.
- Andhra Pradesh and Telangana - 1. Bodo Gadaba 2. Bondo Poraja 3. Chenchu 4. Dongria Khond 5. Gutob Gadaba 6. Khond Poroja 7. Kolam 8. Konda reddis 9. Konda Savaras 10. Kutia Khond 11. Parengi Poroja 12. Thot
- Bihar and Jharkhand - 13. Asur 14. Birhor 15. Birjia 16. Hill Kharia 17. Konvas 18. Mal Paharia 19. Parhaiyas 20. Sauda Paharia 21. Savar
- Gujarat - 22. Kathodi 23. Kohvalia 24. Padhar 25. Siddi 26. Kolgha
- Karnataka - 27. Jenu Kuruba 28. Koraga
- Kerala - 29. Cholanaikayan (a section of Kattunaickans) 30. Kadar 31. Kattunayakan 32. Kurumbas 33. Koraga
- Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh - 34. Abujh Macias 35. Baigas 36. Bharias 37. Hill Korbas 38. Kamars 39. Saharias 40. Birho
- Maharashtra - 41. Katkaria (Kathodia) 42. Kolam 43. Maria Gond
- Manipur - Marram Nagas
- Odisha - 45. Birhor 46. Bondo 47. Didayi 48. Dongria-Khond 49. Juangs 50. Kharias 51. Kutia Kondh 52.

Lanjia Sauras 53. Lodhas 54. Mankidias 55. Paudi Bhuyans 56. Soura 57. Chuktia Bhunjia

- Rajasthan - 58. Seharias
- Tamil Nadu - 59. Kattu Nayakans 60. Kotas 61. Kurumbas 62. Irulas 63. Paniyans 64. Todas
- Tripura - 65. Reangs
- Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand - 66. Buxas 67. Rajis
- West Bengal - 68. Birhor 69. Lodhas 70. Totos
- Andaman and Nicobar Islands - 71. Great Andamanese 72. Jarawas 73. Onges 74. Sentinelese 75. Shorn Pens
- The number of the communities in the list may be reduced to some extent. They are distributed in various ecological zones beyond the state boundaries with immense variation in subsistence pattern, technological development, ways of living and contact with outside world.
- The population size & number of particularly vulnerable tribal groups are varying in different states
- Primitive, geographically isolated, shy & socially, educationally & economically backwardness these are the traits that distinguish Scheduled Tribes of our country from other communities.
- Tribal communities live in about 15% of the country's areas in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains to forests, hills and inaccessible areas
- The main concentration of tribal population is in central & Northeastern States.
- However, they are present in all States except Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, Pondicherry and Chandigarh.

PRIMITIVE TRIBAL GROUPS

- The predominantly tribal populated States of the country (tribal population more than 50% of the total population) are: Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Union Territories of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Lakshadweep.
- States with sizeable tribal population and having areas of large tribal concentration are A.P. Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Rajasthan.
- These tribal groups were identified by Shri U. N. Dhebar, in his capacity as Chairman of the Commission, popularly known as Dhebar Commission Report of 1961.
- The Commission Report stated "...We feel that at the base of these four layers is the class of tribals which is in an extremely underdeveloped stagethis lowest layer needs the utmost consideration at the hands of the Government.
- The Report of the Study Team on Tribal Development Programme (1969) popularly known as Shilo Ao team, stated that large number of tribal communities

continue to be extremely backward & some of them are still in the primitive stage of food gathering economy.

- The Fifth Five-Year Plan (1974-79) started the Tribal Sub-Plan with two pronged strategy was developed, that is, (i) socio-economic development of Scheduled Tribes, and (ii) protection of tribal people against exploitation.
- The tribes involved in hunting & food gathering identified as more backward among the tribal groups which need special programme for their development & these communities have been identified as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) by the 'Working Group on Development of Scheduled Tribes in 1975.
- Mohanty (2002: 30) mentioned that the first attempt to list "Primitive Tribes" in the country was made during the Census of 1931
- The criteria generally followed in the identification of the Primitive Tribal Groups are: A stagnant and diminishing population, Pre-agricultural level of technology, Very low level of literacy.
- Primitive Tribes are most concentrated in the State of Madhya Pradesh, followed by Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra States.
- Thus the central India tribal belt is the refuge of the Primitive Tribal population of India.
- It possibly reflects that in the course of the long history of migration of the people of India, the Primitive Tribes found a secured place in the central India.
- In 1973, the Dhebar Commission created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category, who are less developed among the tribal groups.
- In 2006, the Government of India renamed the PTGs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).
- PVTGs have some basic characteristics - they are mostly homogenous, with a small population, relatively physically isolated, social institutes cast in a simple mould, absence of written language, relatively simple technology and a slower rate of change etc.
- According to the 2001 census, the PVTGs population is approximately. 27,68,322.
- There are 12 PVTGs having a population above 50,000 and the remaining groups have a population of 1000 or less.
- The PVTG of Sahariyas has the highest population of 4,50,217, while the PVTGs of Sentinelese and Andamanese has a very small population of 39 and 43, respectively.
- There are five PVTGs in the Andaman islands such as Great Andamanese, Jarawas, Onges, Sentineles and Shompens.
- In 1858, the Great Andamanese were estimated at nearly 3500, in 1901 their number declined to 625.
- According to the 2001 Census, the Great Andamanese stood at just 43, Jarawas are 241, Onges are 96, Sentinelese are 39 and Shompens are 398.

- PVTGs depend on various livelihoods such as food gathering, Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), hunting, livestock rearing, shifting cultivation and artisan works. Most of their livelihoods depend on the forest.
- Climate change affected the forest dwelling badly so affected their livelihood
- Most of the PVTG are suffering of malnutrition & anaemic conditions
- The diseases like anemia, upper respiratory problem, malaria; gastrointestinal disorders like acute diarrhea, Intestinal protozoan; micronutrient deficiency and skin infection diseases are common among PVTGs.
- Many of these diseases can be prevented by providing nutrition food, timely medical facilities and health awareness.
- The condition of education is also very poor, with an average literacy rate of 10% to 44% in PVTGs.
- The Scheme for Development of Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), came into effect from April 1, 2008.
- The Scheme defines PVTGs as the most vulnerable among the Scheduled Tribes and the Scheme therefore seeks to prioritise their protection and development. It identifies 75 PVTGs.
- Activities supported under the scheme include housing, land distribution, land development, agricultural development, cattle development, construction of link roads, installation of non conventional sources of energy, social security, etc.
- Funds are made available only for activities essential for the survival, protection & development of PVTGs and not already funded by any other Scheme of the central/state governments.

FAULTS IN THE LIST

- The PVTG list requires revising and refinement to avoid overlapping and repetition.
- For instance, the list contains synonyms of the same group such as the Mankidia and the Birhor in Odisha, both of which refer to the same group.
- Some of the PVTGs are distributed in more than one State.
- The Birhor are recognised as a PVTG in four States, while 10 other group are PVTG in two States, namely the Sahariya, Kurumba, Koraga, Korwa, Jenu Kuruba, Kattunayakan, Katkari/Kathodi, Kharia, Kolam, and Lodha.
- The number of the PVTGs at the national level would be 63
- Odisha has established exclusive micro-projects for the PVTGs, there are none such in for the five PVTGs in Gujarat.
- In Tamil Nadu, development schemes are being monitored through the Tribal Research Centre, Ooty, and implemented by the State government.
- In Karnataka, all affairs of two the PVTGs are handled by the Social Welfare Department, which extends

some schemes as per their knowledge, barely receiving any professional advice

- Only recently, the Karnataka Tribal Research Centre was established at Mysore while many States did so decades ago.
- In some cases, a PVTG receives benefits only in a few blocks in a district, while the same group is deprived in adjacent blocks.
- The reason is that micro-projects extend benefits only within their jurisdiction.
- For example, the Lanjia Saora are recognized as a PVTG across Odisha but the micro-projects are established only in two blocks
- Smallest population size among the PVTGs are the Sentinelese (as per the last contact effort on March 9, 2005, groups of 32 and 13 persons were sighted at different places).
- Sentinelese are still shy away from others.
- The Great Andamanese (57 persons) and the Onge (107 persons in 2012 as per Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti) are the dwindling populations.
- In main land, the Toto of West Bengal (314 families with 1,387 persons as per 2011 census) and the Toda of Tamil Nadu (1,608, inclusive of 238 Christian Todas as per TRC, Udagamandalam [Ooty], 2011) have population less than 2000 persons.
- The Saharia people of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan are the largest among the PVTGs with population more than 4 lakhs.
- Literacy rate among the PVTGs has gone up significantly over the past.
- From a single digit literacy rate, the figures have increased to 30 to 40 % in many of the PVTGs.
- At present, the PVTG population in Odisha numbers 1.06 lakh. They reside in 541 villages under 160 gram panchayats of 29 blocks in 11 districts.
- With the addition of 888 new villages and hamlets, the State's PVTG population has increased to about 2.5 lakh.
- While in 2015 the Forest Rights Act granted the PVTGs from the displaced villages community forest resource rights
- From 2017, after the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) issued an order that banned the process of distributing tribal rights in the tiger reserves across India

SAVING THE SENTINELESE

- The Sentinelese of the Andamans are in the spotlight for allegedly killing young American missionary John Allen Chau after he went to their island to spread the Gospel.
- The tribe has been left alone since Independence so that they can be shielded from diseases against which they have not developed any immunity.
- The country's academic circles have long debated whether to leave members of the tribe alone or open them up to the so-called "civilised world".

- According to the 2011 Census of India, there were only 15 Sentinelese individuals. But Census officials observed the tribe only from a distance, without actually going to them.
- The Sentinelese are a highly endogamous group.
- They can be wiped out in two circumstances. Because they are endogamous, there is an accumulation of recessive mutations in them," says K Thangaraj, Chief Scientist, Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad.
- In exogamy, these mutations are unable to express themselves due to presence of dominant alleles for the same character.
- According to research workers "The tribal groups of the Andamans, including the Sentinelese are unlikely to fit this description, In case of an epidemic, the whole population can be wiped out if it does not have protective genes. "Or a natural disaster could wipe them off,"
- Two of the major threats to them are infections and infant mortality.
- There are historical records of these tribes falling prey to malaria and recently measles
- What we can do is prevent infant mortality. At least for tribes that now have contacts with the outside world like the Jarawas, the Onge and the Great Andamanese.
- Unfortunately, there is a lack of data on infant mortality among them
- We should tailor policies to suit each tribe.
- Currently, there is a one-size-fits-all policy.
- For instance, the Sentinelese should be left alone. They can sustain themselves through their forests.
- In other groups like the Jarawas and the Onge, scientific evaluation should be done for development programmes

PVTGs & FOREST RIGHTS

- PVTG communities are entitled to the habitat rights under FRA
- The FRA has a provision that says, "In view of the differential vulnerability of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) among the forest dwellers, the District Level Committee should play a proactive role in ensuring that all PTGs receive habitat rights in consultation with the concerned PTGs' traditional institutions of these groups, after filing claims before the gram sabha".
- Habitat is defined under the act as, "the area comprising the customary habitat and such other habitats in reserved forests and protected forests of primitive tribal groups and pre-agricultural communities and other forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes."

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS OF PVTGs

- Restrictions on access to permanent contraception methods for Chhattisgarh's Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG), enforced through two orders

from 1979 and 2017, were quashed recently by the high court there.

- It was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) by 10 families of the Baiga tribe, along with Jan Swasthya Sahyog, Ganiyari and Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA) Chhattisgarh.
- PVTG comprises the Kamar, Pahari Korwa, Abhujmaria and Birhor tribes apart from the Baigas. These are the most vulnerable among India's indigenous communities.
- The Union government restricted their access to permanent contraceptives in 1979 to ensure their populations were maintained despite high mortality rates. It also kept them out of any forced sterilisation drive.
- In 2017, an order was issued allowing women from these communities to be sterilised with the permission from the concerned sub divisional magistrate.
- In 2016, women had sought sterilisation but they were denied permission ostensibly because of recent sterilisation deaths.
- The women already had 3-10 children; were weak, and from poor families.
- According to a recent study published in journal Reproductive Health Matters, tattoo marks on Baiga women's foreheads are often used to deny them access to both permanent and temporary contraceptive services.
- In recent years, the tribe has been asking for access to contraceptives as multiple pregnancies lead to impoverishment and malnutrition.
- To avoid this, Baiga women often travel to neighbouring states

TOURISM & PVTGs

- In the first week of August 2018, the government of India removed Restricted Area Permit (RAP) from 29 islands in Andaman, in order to foster tourism in the archipelago of Andaman & Nicobar.

- Concerns have been raised by activists to take back the decision to stop blocking of the PVTGs surviving independently on the islands
- There were plans to twin Port Blair and Phuket by a few ambitious local leaders, stating that the ancient links between Indian culture and Thailand would boost tourism.
- The 29 islands being opened for tourism include nine inhabited Nicobar Islands and two Andaman Islands, which are occupied by PVTGs and indigenous Nicobar islanders.
- The islands now opened up in the Andaman District which have PVTGs are: North Sentinel Island, Strait Island and Little Andaman Island.
- Islands opened up in the Nicobar District with PVTGs include: Chowra, Tillangchong, Terassa, Katchal, Nancowry, Kamorta, Pulumilo, Great Nicobar and Little Nicobar.
- While North Sentinel is inhabited by the Sentinelese who have consistently rejected the island administration's attempts to establish contact since the 1960s
- Strait Island is home to the dying population of the Great Andamanese and Little Andaman is the home of the Onges.
- The Great Andamanese, once the largest tribal group, now live in "Strait Island", where they have been relocated after their population started dwindling to alarming numbers.
- The Great Andamanese were a group of ten different sub-tribes or clans, who had fought for their land when the British first tried to occupy the islands.
- Their bows and arrows being no match to the modern guns of the British, these communities had to surrender in the famous Battle of Aberdeen (May 14, 1859).
- Gradually declined from the estimated 8,000 then to 50 odd today.
- The Onges, a PVTG of the Little Andaman Island. The Onges today number around 110 and have been confined to a small area inside their own island