

Institute for Human Development , New Delhi
International Seminar on
Adivasi/ ST Communities in India: Development and Change
27 – 29 August 2009
New Delhi

BACKGROUND

Over the last half century, adivasi communities in India, as elsewhere in the world, have been part of many developments, both positive and negative, and have undergone many changes.

Recent studies done by the IHD have shown that adivasis have an HDI that is at least one-third lower than that for all-India and that, as per poverty reduction trends over the last decade, they will not meet the Millenium Development Objective of reducing by half the incidence of poverty by 2015. The extent of deprivation among the STs is such that, by international comparisons, they would rank among the 25 most-deprived peoples of the world, all of which are otherwise countries of Sub-Saharan Africa.

The extent of deprivation among STs is such that the Government of India, the Planning Commission and other bodies have been concerned with framing policies for *inclusive growth*. A recent Expert Group of the Planning Commission drew attention to the lack of development and the type of development as both closely connected with the spread of armed movements (generally referred to as Naxalite movements) in the country. It is in this context IHD is holding an international seminar on “Adivasi/ST Communities in India: Development and Change.”

OBECTIVES

The seminar aims to: (1) assess the types of development and changes that have come about in adivasi society in the post-independence period; and (2) work out proposals for development policies of adivasis, policies that are consonant with their rights and aspirations.

OUTPUT

It is expected that papers presented at the seminar and ensuing discussions will throw light on the nature of development and problems therein, which will be of help in framing development policies in the context of the rights of the adivasi communities to appropriate development.

Selected papers from the seminar will be put together in a volume. It is expected that the volume will be of high quality and will be submitted to a reputed international publisher for publication.

A number of international participants from universities, research institutes and development organizations have also expressed their keenness to participate in the seminar. The Chairperson of the UN's PFII (Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues), has agreed to present a key note address at the seminar.

THEMES

The workshop can cover the following broad areas:

1. Overview of development among adivasi communities in India

- What do the human development indicators show?
- Are they adequate?
- Do we need other indicators to assess adivasi development?

2. Property and economic orientation

- Nature and extent of shift from subsistence to accumulation/maximization of income
- Changes in aspirations
- Economic orientation and access to resources
- Role of markets
- Indigenous social welfare systems and changes therein

3. Agriculture and land use

- Agro-ecological zones and types of land use
- Changes in *jhum*, valley-rice, vegetable and other cultivation
- Role of plantations
- Issues in the transformation of rain-fed agriculture
- Changes in land systems, individualization, etc.
- Should there be restrictions on alienation of adivasi land?
- Forest Rights Act

4. Food security

- Are there hunger deaths among adivasi communities?
- Coping mechanisms
- Poverty, location and assets
- Nature of poverty among adivasis
- Extent and depth of poverty
- Effects of location and asset deprivation

5. Forest management and forest-based livelihoods

- State management of forests
- Types of devolution (CFM, JFM)
- Special issues of protected areas
- NTFP

6. Finance and trade

- Inter-linked markets
- Rural finance
- Micro-finance

7. Climate change

- Vulnerability and resilience in adivasi society
- Adivasi communities in provision of ecological services
- Adaptation
- Mitigation
- Issues of bio- and cultural-diversity
- Environment safeguards

8. Adivasi communities and their inter-relations

- Inter-relations between upland, lowland and migrant ethnic communities
- Special situation of former hunter-gatherers

9. Gender relations

- Roles of women and men
- Changing gender relations in agriculture and other economic activities
- Women in ownership and management of resources
- Spiritual practices

10. Labour and employment

- Adivasi participation in the labour market
- Is there discrimination?
- Benefits of reservation
- Special problems of plantation labour
- Gender differences among adivasis in the labour market
- Nature and effects of migration
- NREGA and impacts

11. Mines, dams, displacement and rehabilitation

- What is the extent of adivasi displacement for development projects?
- What happens to the displaced?
- Can big projects be combined with development for the adivasis?

12. Health and education

- Access to health services
- Are there special health issues among adivasis?
- The question of bi-lingual education
- Ashram schools? Cultural continuity?
- Adivasi children
- Benefits and effects of reservation in education

13. Administration and government systems

- Traditional forms of administration
- Links to and interaction with state systems
- Does self-government make a difference?

14. Language, identity, equality and development

- Nature of indigenous identity
- Harmonizing development with preservation of cultural identity
- Inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic equality
- Rights of indigenous peoples

Quite a large number of topics and areas that could be covered have been listed. Nevertheless actual presentations will depend on the individual scholars /spokespersons, and their choice of topic relevant to development and change among adivasi/ST communities, even if it goes beyond those listed above.

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