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## TRIBAL LIVELIHOOD DEVELOPMENT THROUGH INCOME GENERATION PROGRAMMES IN TELANGANA

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### ABSTRACT

Telangana state has a significant amount of tribal population. Lambada, Koya, Gondi, Chenchu are the major tribal groups in the state and they played crucial role in the state's socio-cultural and ecological landscape. Despite constitutional safeguards and targeted welfare measures, tribal households continue to face structural disadvantages such as poverty, low asset ownership, limited access to markets, and dependence on subsistence livelihoods. Income generation programmes have therefore emerged as a crucial policy instrument for improving the economic conditions of Scheduled Tribes (STs). This article examines the income generation programmes implemented for tribal communities in Telangana state, analysing their objectives, implementation mechanisms, and socio-economic impact. The study also highlights challenges in programme execution and suggests policy recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of tribal income generation initiatives.

**KEYWORDS:** Tribes, Income Generation, Telangana, Tribal Welfare, Livelihoods, ITDA, TRICOR.

### INTRODUCTION

India is home to one of the largest tribal populations in the world. Scheduled Tribes account for around 8.6 per cent of the country's total population, residing largely in forested and hilly regions. Telangana, formed in 2014, has a substantial tribal population concentrated mainly in districts such as Adilabad, Khammam, Bhadrak, Kothagudem, Mulugu, and Jayashankar Bhupalpally. These regions are characterised by rich natural resources but also by historical neglect, limited infrastructure, and restricted access to education and employment

opportunities. There are 32 tribal groups recognized in the state with the approximate population of 10 per cent.

Income generation is central to tribal development because income poverty is closely linked with malnutrition, illiteracy, poor health, and social exclusion. Traditional tribal livelihoods such as shifting cultivation, collection of minor forest produce, hunting, and subsistence agriculture are increasingly becoming unsustainable due to deforestation, climate change, land alienation, and population pressure. In this context, income generation programmes aim to diversify livelihood sources, enhance productivity, create assets, and integrate tribal households into the mainstream economy without undermining their cultural identity.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The major objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities in Telangana.
2. To analyse major income generation programmes implemented for tribes in the state.
3. To assess the role of institutions such as ITDAs and TRICOR in promoting tribal livelihoods.
4. To identify challenges in implementation and outcomes of these programmes.
5. To suggest policy measures for strengthening income generation among tribal communities.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature. It is based on secondary data collected from government reports, policy documents, academic journals, books, and research studies related to tribal development and income generation programmes in Telangana. The study also draws insights from case studies and evaluation reports of specific programmes. Although no primary survey has been conducted, existing empirical findings are synthesised to draw meaningful conclusions.

### **Socio-Economic Profile of Tribes in Telangana**

#### **Demographic Distribution**

Scheduled Tribes constitute approximately 10% of Telangana's total population. 32 communities are recognized under Scheduled Tribe category and the major tribal groups include Gond, Koya, Lambada (Banjara), Kolam, Chenchu, Yerukula, and Thoti. Adilabad Consists Gonds, Khammam and Warangal majorly consisting Lambada and Koya tribes and

Mahaboobnagar is having Chenchus. Many of these groups inhabit Scheduled Areas notified under the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

### **Education and Literacy**

Tribal literacy rates in Telangana remain below the state average. According to the 2011 censes, its population is below the half mark which is 49.5% whereas 66.5% is the overall literacy percentage in the state. The governments are tried to improve this percentage through residential schools, ashram schools, and scholarships. Despite of these initiatives, the dropout rates among these communities are still high, especially at the secondary level. Low educational attainment directly limits access to skilled employment and income-generating opportunities.

### **Livelihoods and Income Generation**

A livelihood is a combination of capabilities, assets, and activities required for a means of living. Income generation programmes aim to expand livelihood options, enabling individuals and households to earn sustainable incomes. For tribal communities, livelihood development must account for cultural values, ecological sustainability, and market integration.

### **Livelihood Patterns**

Through the ages the tribal groups livelihood is depends upon the traditional occupations and their primary sources of income include:

- **Rain-fed agriculture:** Most tribal families are smallholders (often rain-fed) growing paddy, millet, pulses, cotton, chillies and other crops. A large share are marginal holders with less than 1 hectare, facing limited irrigation access and low productivity.
- **Shifting –cultivation:** Historically, tribes like the Gonds, Kolams and Koyas practiced podu (shifting cultivation) in forested areas. While much of this has declined due to legal restrictions and forest regulations, podu still exists and influences livelihoods.
- **Agricultural wage labour:** With the unavailability of the agricultural lands and lack of opportunities in other sector majority of the tribal households employed as a wage labourers in agriculture sector.
- **Collection and selling of Minor Forest Produce (MFP):** Most of the tribal groups gather honey, gum, medicinal plants, fruits, tubers and other forest products for subsistence or sale. Collecting of forest goods and making the handicrafts and selling

them in the market is also one of the major livelihood pattern among the tribal groups in Telangana.

- **Hunting of animals and selling them in the markets:** This is the traditional livelihood pattern among the many tribal groups. In primitive society, they hunt the wild animals for their food but now many of them hunting the animals and birds for selling them in the market.
- **Livestock rearing:** Rearing of the Goats, cattle and buffalo's and chickens is part of the tribal culture.
- **Seasonal migration to nearby towns:** after the globalization, with the unavailability of employment opportunities, many tribal groups migrated to urban areas.

Income from these sources is often irregular and insufficient. The land rights such as 1/40 failed in allowing the tribes for the cultivation in tribal lands. The picking of forest goods and hunting the animals is also prohibited. These changes in tribal living culture making tribal families vulnerable to debt and poverty.

### **Concept of Income Generation Programmes**

Income generation programmes are policy interventions designed to:

- Enhance household income through self-employment or wage employment
- Create productive assets
- Build skills and entrepreneurship
- Reduce dependency on traditional low-return occupations

For tribal communities, such programmes must be culturally sensitive, locally relevant, and ecologically sustainable. In Telangana, income generation initiatives are implemented through a combination of tribal-specific schemes and mainstream development programmes with special provisions for STs.

### **Institutional Framework for Tribal Income Generation in Telangana**

#### **Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs)**

ITDAs are the primary institutional mechanism for planning and implementing development programmes in Scheduled Areas. In Telangana there are 4 ITDAs namely Eturunagaram, Bhadrachalam, Utnoor and Mannar which represents 4 erstwhile districts Warangal, Khammam, Adilabad and Mahabubnagar. Each ITDA functions as a single-line administration, coordinating efforts across departments such as agriculture, animal

husbandry, horticulture, industries, and rural development. ITDAs play a crucial role in identifying beneficiaries, implementing income generation schemes, and monitoring outcomes.

### **Telangana State Scheduled Tribes Cooperative Finance Corporation (TRICOR)**

TRICOR provides financial assistance to ST families living below the poverty line. Its key objectives include: Promoting self-employment, financing income-generating activities, Providing subsidies and loans and Facilitating skill development. Since 2014, the government of Telangana through TRICOR spent 112.60 Crores. TRICOR's interventions focus on agriculture, animal husbandry, small businesses, transport activities, marketing of the goods and service-based enterprises. Through a combination of financial assistance, skill development, and support for both farm and non-farm enterprises, TRICOR has significantly enhanced tribal livelihoods in Telangana. TRICOR partners with institutional programmes like the CM ST Entrepreneurship & Innovation Scheme, which supports entrepreneurial capacity building for tribal entrepreneurs. Under this scheme, training and exposure support has been provided through the Indian School of Business (ISB) platform, with cohorts of ~50 aspiring tribal entrepreneurs each year receiving capacity building support. Its achievements are visible in increased household incomes, greater women's participation in economic activities, and improved access to institutional credit, contributing to sustainable tribal development. With the support of TRICOR the Bhim Bhai Tribal Women Cooperative Society of utnoor got 1.27 crors turnover by selling Ippa Puvvu Laddu.

### **Tribal Welfare Department**

The Tribal Welfare Department formulates policies, allocates funds, and oversees the implementation of welfare and development programmes for STs. It works in coordination with ITDAs and other line departments to ensure convergence of schemes.

### **Major Income Generation Programmes for Tribes in Telangana**

#### **Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP)**

The Tribal Sub-Plan is a strategic budgeting mechanism that earmarks funds for tribal development in proportion to the ST population.

The main objectives of the Tribal Sub-Plan in Telangana are:

1. To reduce poverty among tribal communities
2. To improve income levels through livelihood and employment programmes
3. To enhance access to education, health, housing, and infrastructure

4. To promote social justice and economic equality
5. To ensure integrated development of Scheduled Areas

Under Tribal Sub Plan, resources are allocated for:

- Agriculture and allied activities
- Self-employment schemes
- Infrastructure development
- Skill training

### **TRICOR Income Generation Schemes**

It is a key institutional mechanism established to promote the economic development and self-reliance of Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Telangana. TRICOR primarily focuses on income generation, self-employment, asset creation, and skill development among tribal households living below the poverty line.

- a) Agriculture-Based Activities:** Land development, Irrigation support, Horticulture plantations, and Input subsidies.
- b) Animal Husbandry:** Distribution of milk animals, Sheep and goat rearing units, Poultry units.
- c) Small Business and Self-Employment:** Kirana shops, Tailoring units, Auto-rickshaw and transport vehicles.

These schemes typically involve a subsidy-cum-loan model, reducing the financial burden on beneficiaries.

### **Indira Solar Giri Jal Vikasam Scheme**

This flagship scheme of Telangana aims to provide solar-powered irrigation facilities to tribal farmers who have received land titles under the Forest Rights Act (FRA). The scheme promotes:

- Irrigated agriculture
- Crop diversification
- Horticulture development

By ensuring reliable irrigation, the programme significantly enhances farm productivity and income stability.

### **Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC):**

The Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC) is a government cooperative established to improve the economic conditions of tribal communities in Telangana. It procures and markets Minor Forest Produce (MFP) such as tamarind, honey, and medicinal plants at fair prices, protecting tribals from exploitation by middlemen. GCC also operates Girijan stores in tribal areas to supply essential commodities and supports value addition, thereby strengthening tribal livelihoods and income security.

### **Van Dhan Vikas Yojana (VDVK):**

It is a flagship initiative of the Government of India aimed at strengthening tribal livelihoods through the sustainable utilization of Minor Forest Produce (MFP). The Van Dhan Vikas Yojana (VDVK) supports sustainable livelihoods among tribal communities by promoting scientific and safe collection of Minor Forest Produce (MFP). Through the distribution of safety equipment and capacity-building training, the scheme enhances productivity, ensures worker safety, and encourages sustainable MFP production practices. The scheme provides capacity-building and skill development training on scientific harvesting methods, primary processing, storage, value addition, and quality control of MFPs. The scheme further encourages community ownership, women's participation, and local entrepreneurship, strengthening social and economic resilience. In Telangana, 17 VDKVs have been sanctioned, engaging approximately 5,100 tribal beneficiaries with training and equipment support for sustainable MFP collection and value addition.

### **Minor Forest Produce (MFP)-Based Livelihoods**

Tribal communities traditionally depend on MFP such as tamarind, tendu leaves, honey, and medicinal plants. Government initiatives support:

- Value addition
- Minimum Support Prices (MSP)
- Cooperative marketing

These interventions aim to enhance income from forest-based livelihoods while conserving biodiversity.

### **Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Women-Centric Programmes**

Tribal women's SHGs play an important role in income generation. Activities include:

- Food processing

- Handicrafts
- Dairy and poultry

Participation in SHGs has been shown to improve women's income, savings, and decision-making power.

### **Skill Development and Wage Employment**

Skill training programmes target tribal youth for: Driving, Construction trades, Electrical and mechanical work, Hospitality and services. These initiatives aim to improve employability and facilitate migration to urban labour markets under safer and more remunerative conditions.

### **Impact of Income Generation Programmes**

#### **Economic Impact**

Income generation programmes implemented in Telangana have had a **positive economic impact on beneficiary households**, particularly among tribal and rural communities. These interventions have led to a **notable increase in household income** by diversifying livelihood sources through agriculture support, forest-based enterprises, self-employment units, and wage employment schemes. These Schemes are also contributed to asset creation, including development of agricultural land, irrigation facilities, livestock ownership, tools, and small business infrastructure. Such assets enhance long-term income-earning capacity and economic security. Access to institutional credit, subsidies, and SHG-based financing has significantly reduced dependence on moneylenders, helping households avoid high-interest debt and chronic indebtedness.

#### **Social Impact**

Income generation programmes in Telangana have had a positive social impact on beneficiary households. Improved and stable incomes have enhanced food security, reducing seasonal hunger and enabling access to nutritious food. Increased earnings have also led to better access to education and healthcare, allowing families to invest in schooling and timely medical care. Economic independence has improved social status, confidence, and decision-making power within households and communities. Women-centric programmes, particularly through Self-Help Groups and livelihood initiatives, have promoted women's empowerment, increased community participation, and strengthened social cohesion, contributing to inclusive and sustainable social development.

## Regional Development

At the regional level, income generation programmes in Telangana contribute to balanced and inclusive development, particularly in tribal and remote areas. By providing local employment opportunities through agriculture, forest-based enterprises, and self-employment initiatives, these programmes help reduce distress migration to cities and other states. They also stimulate local economies by increasing demand for goods, services, and inputs, supporting micro-enterprises, and promoting market linkages. Overall, such interventions foster inclusive growth in tribal regions, ensuring that economic benefits reach marginalized communities, strengthen livelihoods, and contribute to the sustainable socio-economic development of underdeveloped areas.

## Challenges in Implementation

Despite notable achievements, several challenges still continued among the tribal communities such as:

1. **Lack of Awareness:** Many eligible tribal households are unaware of available schemes. Without having adequate knowledge, the common tribal households remained under developed socially and economically.
2. **Administrative Delays** – Delays in fund disbursement, asset allocation, and approvals reduce the timeliness and overall effectiveness of programmes.
3. **Skill–Market Mismatch** – Training often does not align with market demand, limiting the income potential of tribal enterprises.
4. **Sustainability Issues** – Some income-generating activities fail due to inadequate follow-up, mentoring, or technical support.
5. **Infrastructure Constraints** – Poor road connectivity, transportation, and limited access to markets hinder production, sale, and profitability of tribal products.

## Policy Recommendations

To strengthen income generation programmes for tribes in Telangana, the following measures are suggested:

1. **Enhanced Awareness Campaigns** – Disseminate programme information in local languages through community institutions, panchayats, and tribal welfare networks to ensure maximum participation and understanding.

2. **Market-Oriented Skill Training** – Provide vocational and technical training aligned with demand-driven sectors such as food processing, handicrafts, forest-based products, and small-scale entrepreneurship.
3. **Convergence of Schemes** – Integrate agriculture, credit, skill development, marketing, and forest-based programmes to provide comprehensive support to tribal livelihoods.
4. **Monitoring and Evaluation** – Conduct regular impact assessments to identify gaps, measure outcomes, and redesign programmes for greater efficiency and impact.
5. **Promotion of Tribal Entrepreneurship** – Support value addition, branding, and marketing of tribal products to increase incomes, create employment, and strengthen local economies.

## CONCLUSION

Income generation programmes form a cornerstone of tribal development in Telangana. Through institutional mechanisms like Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) and TRICOR, the state has implemented a range of initiatives aimed at enhancing tribal livelihoods. These programmes have improved household income, food security, and social well-being, contributing to overall socio-economic upliftment. However, their impact remains uneven, influenced by structural constraints, limited market access, and implementation gaps. Achieving sustainable and inclusive growth requires a holistic approach combining financial assistance, skill development, infrastructure support, and market integration. Strengthening tribal income generation is not only an economic necessity but also a step toward social justice and equitable regional development.

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