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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. State the criteria followed for the determination of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). What are the issues faced by them? Also mention the measures taken by the government to address these issues. (150 words)

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Approach:

- Give a brief introduction of PVTGs
- Enumerate the criteria for determination of PVTGs
- Discuss the issues faced by them
- List measures taken by the government

Introduction

- Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in general, are socially as well as economically more backward among the tribal groups. 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). There are 75 PVTGs notified as on date in the country in 18 States and UT of Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Body

The criteria followed for determination of PVTGs are as under:

- A pre-agriculture level of technology;
- A stagnant or declining population;
- Extremely low literacy; and
- A subsistence level of the economy.

Issues Faced by PVTGs

- **Insufficient baseline surveys:** The Anthropological Survey of India observed that out of 75 PVTGs, baseline surveys exist for about 40 groups, even after declaring them as PVTGs. This has hindered implementation of welfare schemes directed at the communities.
- **Outdated PVTG list:** It has led to overlapping and repetition of names. 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.
- **Population:** Quite a few PVTGs still face stagnation in population growth such as the Birhor in central India. Some are declining like the Onge and Andamanese.
- **Loss of their traditional livelihoods, habitats and customary resource** due to industrial projects, tourist activities, the apathy of forest bureaucracy, climate change, deforestation and so on.
- **Poverty:** It is a common phenomenon among most of the PVTGs which lead to hunger, malnutrition, ill-health, illiteracy etc.

- **Education:** The educational status of these groups especially women is very low compared to other tribal groups.
- **Health:** The health indicators such as Infant Mortality Rate (IMR); malnutrition; and certain chronic diseases like Leukemia, Skin disorders etc. are very high and common.
- **Infrastructure:** Lack of safe drinking water, poor sanitary conditions, difficult terrain and unavailability of health and nutritional services.
- **Non-recognition and lack of awareness of their rights** have made them more vulnerable.

Government Measures

- **The Scheme for Development of Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs):** It is a flexible scheme and covers funding for activities like housing, land distribution, land development, agricultural development, animal husbandry, construction of link roads, installation of non-conventional sources of energy for lighting purpose, social security including Janshree Bima Yojana or any other innovative activity meant for the comprehensive socio-economic development of PVTGs.
- Priority is also assigned to PVTGs under the schemes of **Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Tribal Sub-Scheme (TSS), Grants under Article 275(1)** of the Constitution, and **Grants-in-aid to Voluntary Organisations** working for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes.
- Each state and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands' administration, is required to prepare a **long term Conservation-cum-Development (CCD) plan**, valid for a period of five years for each PVTG within its territory, outlining the initiatives it will undertake, financial planning for the same and the agencies charged with the responsibility of undertaking the same.
- **The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 (FRA)** recognizes the forest and habitat rights of the PVTGs.

Conclusion

Each of the 75 PVTGs has an innate connection with their land and habitats. So, protection of their land and resources must be at the very heart of any policy or development initiatives concerning PVTGs. Some of them are even on the verge of extinction such as Shompens and Jarawas of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Abhuj Maria of Chhattisgarh etc. Thus, the PVTGs are in need of special and undivided attention on priority for their protection and support in view of their fragile living conditions; prevailing socio-economic vulnerability and diminishing numbers.