



Mains Practice Question

Q. Analyze the impact of development projects and policies on tribal communities in India. (150 words)

18 Apr, 2023 GS Paper 2 Social Justice

Approach

- Start your answer by providing data about tribal communities.
- Discuss the positive and negative impacts of development projects on tribal communities.
- Conclude with a way forward approach.

Introduction

- According to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, tribal people constitute 8.6% of India's population, but account for 46% of its total poverty.
- Development projects and policies in India have had a significant impact on tribal communities, who often live in remote and ecologically sensitive areas.

Impact of Development projects and policies on Tribal communities:

Positive impacts:

- Government policies and programs, such as the **Forest Rights Act (FRA)**, **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA)**, and the Tribal Sub Plan approach, have aimed to promote the **socio-economic development** of tribal communities and protect their rights.
- The FRA and PESA provide **legal recognition and secure the land rights of tribal people**.
- The Tribal Sub Plan approach ensures earmarking of plan funds for tribal sub-plans in proportion to their population.
- **Eklavya model residential Schools** have been able to promote education among tribal communities.
- The **PESA Act** empowers tribal communities to govern their own affairs and strengthen **local self-governance**.

Negative impacts:

- **Forced displacement:**
 - Development projects such as mining, dam construction, and industrialization often require large tracts of land, which frequently results in the forced displacement of tribal communities.
 - The **Vedanta Group's mining project in the sacred Niyamgiri Hills of Odisha** was blocked by the Supreme Court because the tribe living there, Dongria Kondh, had not given their free, prior, and informed consent.
- **Loss of livelihoods:**
 - Development projects often lead to the loss of traditional livelihoods of tribal communities. **The Virginius Xaxa committee report** states that tribals have been **pushed out of their traditional habitats due to land acquisition and displacement**, which has impacted their agricultural and forest-based livelihoods.

- **The Sardar Sarovar Dam case** is an example of this. The dam construction on the Narmada River in Gujarat resulted in the **displacement of over 100,000 people**, many of whom were tribal communities. The project also **led to the submergence of fertile agricultural land and destruction of livelihoods.**
- **Destruction of cultural heritage:**
 - Development projects and undue outside interference can also lead to the destruction of the cultural heritage of tribal communities, which is against the idea of **'Tribal Panchsheel'** propagated by J.L. Nehru.
- **Lack of recognition of land and water rights:**
 - Tribal communities have been using their land and water resources for generations, but these are often violated by development projects.

Conclusion

- Development projects and policies have had both positive and negative impacts on tribal communities in India.
- The way forward involves **ensuring the participation and consultation of tribal communities in decision-making processes** and promoting their inclusion and **empowerment in mainstream society.**

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