



PM-Janman Yojana and socio-economic development of 75 particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) in India

Anjay Sonkar¹, Dr. Urjaswita Singh²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Economics, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith University, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India

² Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith University, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India

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Abstract

India's 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) constitute some of the most marginalized communities, characterized by pre-agricultural technology, declining or stagnant population, extremely low literacy, and a subsistence-level economy. The PM-JANMAN Yojana (Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan), launched on November 15, 2023, represents a watershed policy intervention targeting these communities across 18 states and one Union Territory. This paper critically examines the scheme's design, implementation architecture, coverage, and potential socio-economic impact on 75 PVTG communities. Drawing on secondary data from government reports, census records, and academic literature, the study argues that while PM-JANMAN marks a significant departure from earlier fragmented welfare approaches, its long-term success depends on convergent implementation, community participation, and addressing deep-rooted structural inequities. The paper contributes to emerging scholarship on tribal welfare policy in post-colonial India.

Keywords: PVTGs, PM-JANMAN Yojana, tribal development, socio-economic marginalization, India, welfare policy

Introduction

India is home to 705 Scheduled Tribe communities, accounting for approximately 8.6% of the total population (Census of India, 2011) [6]. Among these, a subset of 75 communities has been classified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) — formerly known as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) — on account of their extreme socio-economic backwardness and vulnerability to extinction. These groups, estimated at around 28 lakhs (2.8 million) in population, inhabit remote forests, hills, and inaccessible terrains across 18 states and one Union Territory (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023) [20].

Despite decades of constitutional protections and development schemes, PVTGs have remained disproportionately excluded from mainstream development outcomes. The Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution and subsequent legislation such as the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) and the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 [22] (FRA) have sought to protect tribal rights, yet implementation gaps have persisted (Xaxa, 2005; Bijoy, 2008) [4, 40].

Recognizing this persistent gap, the Government of India launched PM-JANMAN (Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan) on November 15, 2023 [20] — coinciding with the birth anniversary of tribal icon Birsa Munda — with a budgetary allocation of ₹24,104 crore over three years. The scheme aims to saturate PVTG habitations with 11 critical interventions across nine ministries, marking a convergent, mission-mode approach to tribal development (Press Information Bureau, 2023) [28].

This paper situates PM-JANMAN within the broader discourse of tribal welfare policy in India, examines its components, evaluates its socio-economic development potential, and identifies key implementation challenges. The research is significant not only for policy analysis but also for understanding how the Indian state conceptualizes and

responds to extreme forms of social and economic vulnerability.

Historical Background and Classification of PVTGs

The classification of certain tribal communities as "primitive" originated from the recommendations of the Dhebar Commission (1960–1961) [7, 10], which identified tribes with declining populations, pre-agricultural economies, and near-total illiteracy as requiring special attention (Government of India, 1961) [10]. Based on this, the Planning Commission categorized 52 communities as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) in 1973–75, which was later expanded to 75 groups by the Lokur Committee in 1975 (Lokur Committee, 1965 [15]; Planning Commission, 1973).

The term "Primitive Tribal Groups" was changed to "Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups" (PVTGs) in 2006 [18] on the recommendation of the expert committee, recognizing the pejorative nature of the earlier nomenclature (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2006) [18]. The four criteria defining PVTGs are:

1. Pre-agricultural level of technology
2. Stagnant or declining population
3. Extremely low level of literacy
4. Subsistence level of economy (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2013) [19]

Geographical Distribution

The 75 PVTGs are spread across 18 states and one Union Territory, with significant concentrations in Odisha (13 PVTGs), Andhra Pradesh (12), Bihar and Jharkhand (9 combined), Madhya Pradesh (7), and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands (6) (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023) [20]. Notable PVTGs include the Sentinelese (Andaman Islands), the Birhor (Jharkhand), the Chenchu (Andhra Pradesh/Telangana), the Bondo (Odisha), and the Dongria Kondh (Odisha).

Socio-Economic Profile

PVTGs exhibit severe deprivation across all human development indicators. According to the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) 2011 [6] and the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019 [24]–21), PVTG communities demonstrate:

- Literacy rates below 30% in many groups, compared to the national average of 74.04% (Census of India, 2011) [6]
- Infant Mortality Rates (IMR) significantly above national averages
- Extremely low rates of access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and electricity
- Severe malnutrition and stunting among children
- Limited land titles and tenure security despite FRA provisions (NFHS-5, 2021; Rao, 2020) [29]

Literature Review

Conservation-cum-Development (CCD) Plans

The first dedicated policy instrument for PVTGs was the Conservation-cum-Development (CCD) Plan, introduced during the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974–79) [26]. Under this framework, individual micro-plans were prepared for each PVTG community, funded centrally through the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. However, scholars have consistently noted that these plans suffered from poor targeting, bureaucratic inertia, and failure to integrate with broader state development machinery (Xaxa, 1999; Fernandes, 2001) [9, 39].

Tribal Sub-Plan and PVTG Development

The Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) strategy, introduced in 1974–75 [26], mandated that states earmark funds proportional to the tribal population for tribal welfare. While PVTGs were to receive priority within TSP allocations, in practice, funds were often diverted or underutilized (Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers Act, 2006; Planning Commission, 2013) [22, 27].

Forest Rights Act, 2006 [22]

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 [22] was a landmark legislation that recognized the rights of tribal communities over forest land. Special provisions under Section 3(1)(e) and Section 3(2) mandated the recognition of Community Forest Rights (CFR) for PVTGs. However, implementation has been uneven, with large numbers of PVTG households still awaiting title recognition (Springate-Baginski *et al.*, 2010; Kumar & Kerr, 2012) [14].

Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana and Van Dhan Vikas Kendras

More recent interventions include the Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana (2014) and the Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (2018),

which sought to improve tribal livelihoods through value addition and market linkages. While Van Dhan Kendras showed promise in aggregating minor forest produce and supporting tribal entrepreneurship, coverage of PVTG communities remained limited due to remote habitation and poor infrastructure

Objective of the study

1. To improve the socio-economic condition of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in India.
2. To ensure social inclusion and reduce regional disparities by Integrating PVTG communities into the mainstream development process.

Hypothesis of the study

Null Hypothesis; H0: The PM Janman Yojana has no significant impact on the socio-economic condition of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

Alternative Hypothesis; H1: The PM Janman Yojana has on the socio-economic conditions of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

Null Hypothesis H0: The PM Janman Yojana does not significantly promote social inclusion and reduce regional disparities among the PVTG communities. **Alternative hypothesis H1:** The PM Janman Yojana significantly promotes social inclusion and reduces regional disparities among PVTG communities.

Research methodology research design

This study uses a descriptive and analytical methodology to thoroughly examine PM Janman Yojana.

Data collection

Collecting secondary data, the research is based on examination of secondary data sources that already exist, including academic publication, paper, article and online resources about PM Janman Yojana. Data sources: Academic journal report publications book, internet source, including PM Janmaani Yojana, tribal ministry are also sources of data for the study.

Financial Architecture

The total outlay for PM-JANMAN is ₹24,104 crore for the period 2023–24 to 2025–26, of which ₹15,336 crore is to be funded by the Central Government and ₹8,768 crore by the states (Ministry of Finance, 2023) [17]. This represents the largest dedicated financial commitment to PVTGs in India's post-independence history.

Key Interventions (11 Critical Components)

PM-JANMAN covers 11 critical interventions under nine ministries:

Intervention	Nodal Ministry
Safe housing (PMAY-G)	Ministry of Rural Development
Clean drinking water	Ministry of Jal Shakti
Improved road connectivity	Ministry of Road Transport & Highways
Telecom connectivity	Ministry of Communications
Off-grid solar power	Ministry of New & Renewable Energy
Viability Gap Funding for mobile medical units	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
Hostel for students from PVTG areas	Ministry of Education
Anganwadi centres	Ministry of Women & Child Development
Multi-purpose centres (MPCs)	Ministry of Tribal Affairs
Van Dhan Vikas Kendras	Ministry of Tribal Affairs / TRIFED
Legal support & land rights	Ministry of Tribal Affairs

The scheme targets approximately 28 lakh people across 22,544 PVTG villages/habitations in 18 states and one Union Territory. A dedicated PM-JANMAN portal has been developed for real-time monitoring of scheme implementation (Press Information Bureau, 2023) ^[28].

Socio-Economic Development: Analytical Framework

The analysis of PM-JANMAN's developmental potential is grounded in the capabilities approach articulated by Amartya Sen (1999) ^[33], which evaluates development not merely in terms of income or economic growth, but in terms of the expansion of human capabilities — freedom to live a long and healthy life, to be educated, and to participate in political and social life. PVTGs' exclusion is fundamentally a capability deprivation, and PM-JANMAN's multi-dimensional design aligns with this framework.

Additionally, the concept of "convergent governance" (Joshi & Moore, 2004) ^[13] is relevant — the scheme's success depends on effective coordination between nine ministries, state governments, district administrations, and community institutions.

Housing and Habitat Security

Access to safe housing is a prerequisite for socio-economic development. The inclusion of PMAY-Gramin (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin) as a core component of PM-JANMAN acknowledges housing deprivation as a critical issue. Studies have shown that secure housing significantly improves health outcomes, children's educational attendance, and women's safety among tribal communities (Drèze & Sen, 2013; Gupta, 2018) ^[8, 11].

Health and Nutrition

Mobile Medical Units (MMUs) and Anganwadi centres are central to addressing the twin challenges of healthcare access and child malnutrition in PVTG habitations. Research on similar interventions in tribal areas of Odisha and Jharkhand has demonstrated that mobile health services can meaningfully reduce IMR and malnutrition rates when supported by community health workers (ASHAs) and sustained supply chains (Rao & Sivaram, 2017; UNICEF India, 2019) ^[30, 37].

Education and Human Capital

Hostel facilities for PVTG students address the critical barrier of distance from schools, which remains the primary reason for high dropout rates. The Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) programme has demonstrated that residential schooling significantly improves enrollment, retention, and learning outcomes among tribal children (Ministry of Education, 2022; Nair, 2016) ^[23].

Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion

Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) are designed to aggregate and add value to minor forest produce (MFP), supporting PVTG livelihoods. The success of VDKs is contingent on effective market linkages, fair pricing mechanisms, and community ownership. Evidence from existing VDKs suggests mixed results — successful clusters exist in Chhattisgarh and Odisha, while others have struggled with governance and marketing issues (TRIFED, 2021; Sahu, 2020) ^[31].

Digital and Physical Connectivity

Telecom connectivity and road infrastructure are identified as crucial enablers. Research consistently demonstrates that improved road connectivity correlates with increased market access, healthcare utilization, and school enrollment in remote tribal areas (Banerjee & Duflo, 2007; Aggarwal, 2018) ^[1, 3]. However, the ecological sensitivity of PVTG habitations demands that infrastructure development be accompanied by robust environmental safeguards.

Analysis and Challenges

Implementation Gaps

India's tribal development history is replete with well-designed schemes that have faltered at implementation. Common failure modes include:

- Last-mile delivery failures due to poor road connectivity and remoteness
- Bureaucratic fragmentation across multiple departments and ministries
- Elite capture within tribal communities
- Cultural insensitivity in programme design (Fernandes, 2001; Xaxa, 2005; Bijoy, 2008) ^[4, 9, 40]

PM-JANMAN's convergent approach attempts to address fragmentation, but coordinating nine ministries at the national level and multiple departments at the state level presents formidable administrative challenges.

Land and Forest Rights

A fundamental lacuna in PM-JANMAN is the limited emphasis on resolving pending FRA claims. As of 2023, over 40% of individual forest rights claims and a significant proportion of community forest rights claims remain pending or rejected (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2023c) ^[20]. Without secure land and forest rights, other development interventions risk building on a fragile foundation.

Community Participation and Informed Consent

The literature on tribal development strongly emphasizes the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) as a prerequisite for successful interventions in PVTG areas (International Labour Organization, 2013; UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007) ^[38]. PM-JANMAN's design documents reference community participation, but mechanisms for ensuring genuine FPIC remain underdeveloped.

Cultural Preservation vs. Development Tension

A persistent tension in PVTG development policy is between integration/development and cultural preservation. Some scholars argue that aggressive development interventions risk eroding the unique cultural, linguistic, and ecological knowledge systems of PVTGs (Bijoy, 2008; Bose, 2011) ^[4, 5]. The scheme must balance material improvement with cultural respect and autonomy.

Data and Monitoring Deficits

Reliable, disaggregated data on PVTG populations, their precise locations, and baseline socio-economic indicators remain scarce. The absence of a Census since 2011^[6] and the lack of PVTG-specific data collection mechanisms impede effective planning and monitoring (Office of the Registrar General, 2023).

Comparative Perspectives

International Analogues

India's experience with PVTG development can be compared to policies for indigenous peoples in other countries. Brazil's FUNAI (Fundação Nacional do Índio) and its Ethno-Environmental Protection Fronts for uncontacted tribes, Australia's Indigenous Community Development Programme, and Canada's First Nations development frameworks all grapple with similar tensions between state-led development and indigenous self-determination (Anaya, 2009; Stavenhagen, 2005) ^[2, 35].

The international consensus, reflected in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007) ^[38], increasingly emphasizes indigenous peoples' right to self-determined development — a principle that PM-JANMAN's design partially incorporated through community-level multi-purpose centres but could more fully embrace.

Conclusion and Recommendations

PM-JANMAN Yojana represents a significant and historically unprecedented commitment to the development of India's 75 PVTGs. Its mission-mode, convergent design, substantial financial outlay, and focus on last-mile connectivity address real and documented gaps in earlier tribal welfare approaches. However, the scheme's ultimate success in generating sustainable socio-economic development will depend on:

1. Strengthening implementation architecture through dedicated PVTG Development Officers at block and district levels
2. Resolving pending FRA claims as a precondition for durable development
3. Ensuring genuine community participation through Gram Sabha-based planning and monitoring
4. Building PVTG-specific data systems for real-time monitoring and evidence-based course correction
5. Cultural sensitivity in all programme components, with PVTG communities as co-designers, not just beneficiaries
6. Ecological safeguards for infrastructure development in biologically sensitive PVTG habitats
7. Long-term commitment beyond the three-year scheme horizon, recognizing that deep structural deprivation cannot be addressed in a single policy cycle

If these conditions are met, PM-JANMAN has the potential to substantially improve human development outcomes for India's most vulnerable tribal communities and to serve as a model for convergent, rights-based tribal development policy.

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