

## **Impact of Tribal Development Programmes: Analysis based on Attappady Tribal Development Block, Kerala**

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**ABSTRACT:** Attappady, the first tribal development block in the Indian state of Kerala provides a stark dissimilarity to the general development experience of the state. Even after fifty years of formation, Attappady is suffering from environmental issues, land degradation, malnutrition, lack of social and human capital etc. which culminated in a crisis with massive infant deaths in the region in 2013. Developmental interventions play a vital role in improving the condition of tribal communities and as such a plethora of interventions were made in Attappady after the crisis. The article based upon both primary and secondary data examines the impact of tribal development programmes implemented in Attappady after the crisis. Even though there have been some positive changes in the situation of tribes in terms of educational, health and livelihood attainments, the issues still remain in spite of the huge amount of money flowing to the region in terms of different development schemes. Lack of awareness, inadequate infrastructure facilities, dearth of quality education, unavailability of sustainable employment opportunities etc. still remain as major problems in the hamlets. In order to uplift their situation a holistic approach is needed synergizing the actions through a bottom- up approach.

**KEYWORDS:** Attappady, Tribal development programmes, malnutrition, infant deaths

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The United Nations and other international organizations emphasize that provision of minority rights is significant to those who need protection to preserve and develop values and practices which they share with other members of their community. They distinguish that minorities of the society make substantial contributions to the productivity and diversity, and that States which take appropriate measures to identify and stimulate minority rights are more likely to remain tolerant and stable (United Nations, 2012). All countries in the world have ethnic and religious minorities within their inhabitants. The terms "indigenous ethnic minorities," "indigenous peoples," "tribal groups," and "scheduled tribes," refer to those social groups with a social and cultural identity distinct from the main society that makes them vulnerable to being disadvantaged in the development process (World Bank, 1991). The protection and promotion of the rights of tribal groups requires particular attention to the issues of recognition of their existence; the raising of multicultural or intercultural education; the inclusion of their concerns in poverty reduction; inclusion of their participation in all aspects of public life; addressing disparities in social indicators such as health, housing, education and employment and special concern about tribal women and children. For this protection is provided to the tribal communities through national and state level laws, regulations and specific government orders based on the constitutional provisions and implementation of developmental programmes.

The south Indian state of Kerala stands aloof among the Indian states because of the achievements it has marked in social development. The human development indicators that the state has achieved in education and health (inspite of the low level of economic growth) are at par with developed countries, this experience of Kerala being termed as the 'Kerala Model of Development'. But studies show the Kerala model of development has eluded the tribal communities as evidenced by the lower attainments of tribes in education and health status (Nair S & Sajeev M V., 2021). Popular attention was brought to the issue of tribes in Kerala with the continuous reporting of infant deaths in Attappady tribal block in Palaghat district. UNICEF Report (2013) observed that a total of 39 deaths has been reported from Attappady tribal block district between April 2012 and May 2013, major causes being asphyxia, acute respiratory distress syndrome, aspiration, preterm and low birth weight, development growth delay, and intrauterine growth retardation (Manikandan A.D, 2014). The state machinery was criticized vehemently and there were demands from the media, the non-governmental organizations and tribal activists for a development package in Attappady to tackle the issue. The necessity for intervention through policies aimed at larger allocation to public services (such as education, health care, nutritional support and environmental protection) and much more comprehensive programmes of economic equity and social security along with development of the physical and social infrastructure. (Nair, S 2018) was highlighted.

As such central and state schemes and projects were designed and initiated along with different departmental initiatives to ameliorate the situation. Additionally, ‘Attappady Comprehensive Tribal Development Project’ was devised to enable tribal population address the issue of poverty and malnutrition and to improve the standard of living. The present article examines the impact of these developmental intervention programs in the upliftment of tribal population in Attappady.

Attappady is inhabited by three major tribal groups, Kurumba, Irula and Muduga located in three Grama Panchayaths -Agali, Pudur and Sholayur. A total of 66,171 persons resides in Attappady, of which 27,121 persons are tribals (40.9 per cent). The literacy rate of tribes is only 38.62% and above 80% of tribal group are below poverty line (Census, 2011). Many studies (KILA, 2008; UNICEF report 2013; Ekbal committee 2013) observed land alienation, failure to provide forest rights, change in life style, alcoholism, lack of awareness of governmental programs and collapse of traditional systems as the major reasons for the health-related issues of tribal population in Attappady which culminated in infant deaths. Huge fund has flowed to Attappady after the crisis through interventions in agriculture, housing, sanitation, drinking water, and livelihood generation programmes. The study in particular looks into the impact of these interventions in uplifting the conditions of the tribals in Attappady.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study used a hybrid methodology for data collection. Qualitative data is collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, transect walk etc. and quantitative data is collected from 270 individuals belonging to nine tribal hamlets. The three tribal communities namely Irula, Kurumba and Muduga are settled in 192 hamlets in Attappady (144 Irula hamlets, 24 Kurumba and 19 Muduga hamlets). Out of the total 192 hamlets 5 % (numbering 9) are selected for in depth analysis of the impact of intervention package. These nine hamlets were selected purposively; since for proper understanding of the schemes and effectiveness those hamlets which reported highly unsustainable livelihood practices and related issues including malnutrition, infant deaths, anemia is to be examined. From each hamlet, data is collected from thirty tribal households who co-operated with the researcher. Data is collected with reference to effectiveness of the development programmes particularly with reference to socio economic status, improvement in the livelihood aspect of the tribes through agriculture, animal husbandry, National Rural Livelihood Mission etc.

## III. DISCUSSION

Since 1962, Attappady’s development was guided by the special provisions for tribal communities noted in Constitution of India. The way of interventions were based on the provision of basic access to services to meet the specific needs of a ‘backward’ region and its tribal inhabitants. The trajectory of interventions made in Attappady right from 1962 is summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1: Central and State level Governmental Interventions in Attappady Tribal Development Block since 1962**

Sl. No	Governmental Interventions	Year	Purposes
1	Established Attappady Tribal Development Block as the First Tribal Development Block in India	1962	The provision of basic access to services catering to the specific needs of a ‘backward’ area and its tribal inhabitants. Interventions initially centred on social and physical infrastructure by developing roads, irrigation, educational and healthcare facilities.
2	Re-constituted Block as an Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP)	1975	To alleviate some of the deficiencies of the earlier interventions by focusing on an integrated rather than a sectorial approach. More than 22 departmental activities from agriculture, financing, electricity to healthcare included in ITDP.
3	Creation of District Level Working Groups	1980	Headed by political representatives and local officials Activities such as rearing of livestock, marketing of agricultural produce, irrigation projects etc Directed on the basis of Integrated Area Development Approach. The introduction of cooperative farming societies with the establishment of 18 cooperative farming societies and nine dairy cooperatives.
4	National and state level rural development programmes	1990	Various employment generation, self-employment, health and agricultural schemes included under Integrated Rural Development Project, Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, Million Wells Scheme, Attappady Valley Irrigation Project, Integrated Wasteland Development Project, Indira Awas Yojana (IAY)
5	Development activities through Local Self Government Institutions	1996	More autonomy to local self-governing institutions in development planning. This move changed institutional dynamics and development planning.
6	Attappady Wasteland Comprehensive Environmental Conservation Project	1996	Implemented through the Attappady Hills Area Development Society (AHADS) based in Agali (AHADS, 2010). This was a 219 crore project financed by the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation and aimed to provide employment, eco-restoration and promote the active participation of tribal hamlets in development activities. The project started in 1996 and ultimately ceased in 2010.
7	MGNREGP co-existing with	2010	The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Program ((MGNREGP) is a

	AHADS		national-level rural development scheme and has been the most significant development intervention in Attappady
8	Attappady Comprehensive Development Project	2013	In conjunction with the MGNREGA, another 100 crore plus, special package under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) was announced as recently as 2013/14 to promote self-employment, rejuvenate agriculture and extend basic healthcare services to Attappady. A shift in the approach from 'top-down', technical interventions towards local democratic institutions, incorporating a formal acknowledgment of cultural pluralism and natural resource management.
9	Millet village	2017-2020	Intended for rejuvenating the traditional tribal agriculture in selected hamlets in Attappady. It is implemented jointly by Agriculture Department and Scheduled Tribes Development Department.

Source: Various government reports

**Table 2: Activities under Attappady Comprehensive Development Project**

1	Community Kitchen	Provision of nutritious food through tribal Neighbourhood Groups
2	Institution Building	Formation of exclusive institution (e.g. Oorusamithi, Block Samithi)
3	Bridge school	Mainstreaming dropout children
4	Bridge course	Supplementary tuition in 136 hamlets, provision of breakfast, life skills training etc.
5	Centre of excellence	A training centre and demonstration site fully owned by tribals
6	Gender resource centre	Prevention of domestic violence, child marriage, sex abuse etc...
7	Youth resource centre	Livelihood, expression of artistic talents and skills, social development
8	Micro finance	Regular savings , internal loan and repayment
9	Funds to the community	Vulnerability Reduction Fund (VRF), Community Investment Support fund (CIF), Corpus fund, Producer fund etc.
10	Skill development	Associated with Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDUGKY)
11	Livelihood	Agriculture, Animal husbandry Goat village
12	Convergence activities	Associated with Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) programme under UNICEF
13	Capacity building	Conduct of various training programmes and exposure visit

#### IV. RESULTS FROM PRIMARY SURVEY

To examine the effectiveness of the developmental intervention programmes primary data is collected from 270 tribals from nine sample tribal hamlets. The analysis is focused on the socio economic status of the tribal population and the effectiveness of the intervention programmes adopted.

##### Socio-economic status

As regards the economic status of the sample households, for Irula, Muduga and Kurumba community 90%, 93% and 97% of the households are respectively below poverty line. The educational status of the sample population is low, as more than half of them (64 %) are not enrolled in school. Majority of the tribal households depend on MGNREGP for their livelihood. More than 75 % of the selected samples are MGNREGP workers; this is irrespective of their hamlets or tribal types. Collecting forest products have been the traditional source of livelihood for the tribal population, this is more applicable in the case of primitive tribe Kurumba. Foraging is reported by 33.93 % of the population. Honey and wax are the two major items collected by the tribals in the Kurumba hamlets. Influence of intermediaries is very high in all hamlets and as they give less amount of money for the forest products, tribals get a price much lower than the market price.

Several schemes and programmes have been implemented by government to improve the status of housing of tribal population. Of the total households selected 61 % had pucca houses, for 28 %, houses were under construction. Houses have been constructed under EMS Housing programme, IAY, ITDP housing programme and AHADS. EMS housing programme is a state government programme, IAY is a central government sponsored scheme, ATSP housing programme, is specifically meant for Attappady area, Panchayath housing programme is sponsored by the local self-government and AHADS is sponsored by international agency. In spite of the many schemes for house construction and the huge amount allotted for the same, 10.37 % houses are in dilapidated condition. Fifty-three per cent of houses had metal sheets as their roofing material. In the case of number of rooms in the houses, out of the total 270 houses, nearly 20 % are single roomed. It implies crowded and unhealthy way in which people in these hamlets are living. Thus housing still remain as a problem for the tribals, this is because the schemes are implemented without taking into consideration the needs and requirements of the tribals.

Electricity has reached almost all nine hamlets surveyed. Source of fuel for an overwhelming majority is firewood. Even after the implementation of different schemes for toilet facility 16.70 % of the selected tribals

do not have toilet. Toilets were constructed under various government schemes including Open Defecation Free Scheme, Swachh Bharat Mission, and toilets included in the housing schemes etc. Scarcity of water is another notable problem which hinders the usage of toilet in all hamlets. The people posed a valid question 'If the government cannot provide us adequate water to quench our thirst, how could they insist us to defecate in our toilets and how is it possible without water? All the tribal households from the nine hamlets do not have separate bathroom facility. Drainage facility is not available for eight out of nine hamlets. Unhealthy method of waste disposal is practiced in all the hamlets which results in the spread of communicable diseases.

"Give us water," is the common refrain of the people of the tribal hamlets. The scarcity of water in the region has been aggravated by the significant decrease of rainfall during both the South West and the North East monsoons. The impact of climate change is the root cause of this scarcity. In addition to climate change, deforestation weakened the water storage capacity of Attappady soil. In general most of the households wait for the water supply provided by the local authority once in a week. They also opined that the water they get from the same is inadequate for their daily necessities. Most of them depend on river for bathing and washing clothes even by walking many kilometers. River Bhavani and its tributary Siruvani play a significant role in the lives of tribes living in Attappady region. Drinking water supply schemes are not working properly in the hamlets. The entire sample opined that availability of drinking water has decreased over the years. Around 75 % of the people are not at all satisfied by the quality of drinking water. Water treatment habit is poor among the tribals, 35 % do not boil water before drinking.

### **Effectiveness of intervention by Agriculture Department**

The sample tribal farmers agree that over the years agricultural output has been decreasing. Earlier they used to cultivate their traditional crops like *ragi*, *thomara*, *chama*, *cholam* and *amara*. But due to inadequate market access, lack of irrigation facility and vagary of monsoon, output has declined over the years. Due to the less productivity and profitability they are not at all satisfied by the agricultural activities. The cropping pattern has changed in all the selected hamlets. Moreover, the penetration of cash crops, non-food crops and plantation crops into the tribal areas is a major phenomenon. It leads to a displacement of traditional food crops and causes nutritional insecurity among the tribals. There is a shift from the traditional crops or locally named as *Panchakkadu* (includes the crops namely Thuvara, amara, ragi, chama and cholam) to the modern cash crops such as coconut, arecanut, banana, pepper, coffee etc. in all the sample hamlets. The responsibility of settlers is also not minor in the present agricultural scenario in Attappady. In their hurdle to find a livelihood, from the early days onwards, settlers adopted various land use activities, indiscriminate of its consequence, which resulted in soil erosion and a gradual degradation of forest cover and land quality. However, under the aegis of National Rural Livelihood Mission rejuvenation of agriculture activities is organized in tribal hamlets. Joint Liability Groups are formed with members of twenty each and financial support is provided to these groups for promotion of agriculture activities. As such, extension of agriculture cropping area and return to the traditional varieties of crops is taking place.

### **Animal husbandry**

Agriculture and animal husbandry used to be the traditional method of livelihood for the tribals. Animal husbandry department, NRLM etc. provide tribal inhabitants financial support for purchasing cows, goats, hen, and bullock. Self Help Groups (Kudumbashree) provide a market support system for the sales of goat. Attappady black goat breed has high demand in the market. Adugraamam (Goat rearing support), Ksheerasaagaram (Dairy support scheme), backyard poultry production, male calf rearing are the major animal husbandry initiative of Kudumbashree. Out of total 270 selected households, 122 (47 %) households have goat stocking, 62 households have cow rearing and 48.15 % of households have poultry farming. All of the households in all selected hamlets complained about very less market access and high prevalence of intermediaries. They agreed that they have less bargaining power during the time of exchange of livestock. Due to all these reasons only 7.8 % of the selected households feel animal husbandry as profitable. Regarding income from animal husbandry over the years only 8.9 % of the total sample population opined that their income had increased over the years. A vast majority of the selected households told that their income from animal husbandry remains more or less same over the years as there is no efficient marketing system.

### **Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)**

Because of the continued infant deaths in Attappady due to malnourishment it has been the government decision to enhance the facilities in Anganwadi (Child Development Centre). The major facilities provided in Anganwadis include potable water facility, child friendly toilet, toys, separate building for Anganwadi, proper distribution of supplementary nutritional food (milk, egg, fruits), maintenance of growth chart, weighing machine, gas connection and electricity. Except in two hamlets, in all other hamlets, Anganwadi is located within the hamlet itself. Only 11 % of the surveyed people opined that Anganwadi workers as very punctual

and remaining 89 % opined they are not punctual in timings and supply of food articles. Nearly 52 % of the respondents are not satisfied with the working of the Anganwadi.

### **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)**

NRLM in Attappady is an integrated development project aiming at reducing vulnerabilities of the communities and improving their socio-economic and livelihood status. The project aims to maximise the communities' access to their rights and entitlements. The project consists of three aspects – social development, livelihoods (Mahila Kisan Saktikaran Pariyojana) and skill development. The focus is on building exclusive tribal women's institutions like NHGs, Oorusamithis and Panchayat Samithi. These institutions would function with the Integrated Development Project of Attappady under the Kudumbasree Mission supported by NRLM.

*Community Kitchen:* National Rural Livelihood Mission is providing facility for community kitchen for every hamlet. It is supported by the ministry of social justice, government of Kerala. From community kitchen, cooked meals are provided to malnourished children, lactating mothers and pregnant women, adolescent children and senior citizens. This is to ensure adequate weight of the newborn, prevent acute malnourishment of children and lactating mothers. The community kitchen is now managed by NHG members. The time period allotted to each NHG is two months. Food materials are purchased by the NHG member by using their group fund. After submitting the bill the NRLM will disburse the amount to the group. However 44.44 % opined that community kitchen is not working in the hamlet. Seventy per cent opined that the quality of food provided through community kitchen as good, where as 30 % opined it as average.

*Resource Hub:* Resource hub is an NRLM initiative aimed at providing newspapers, employment news and other magazines to the people in the hamlet especially for the youth. However, only 22.2 % opined that there were resource hubs working in the hamlets.

*Bridge course:* Bridge course is another initiative made by NRLM which is an educational supporting programme similar to tuition facility with not less than 15 regular students. The programme aimed at helping children to overcome the language/subject barriers they are facing in schools such as English, Mathematics etc. The tutor of the programme is selected from the corresponding hamlet on the basis of educational qualification. Out of the nine hamlets the programme is conducted regularly only in two hamlets.

### **Interventions in health and nutrition**

Attappady hamlets attracted popular attention because of the continued infant deaths which was reported in 2013. The nutritional status of tribal children in Attappady is appalling due to the negligence towards their health and sanitary conditions. Many studies (KILA, 2008; UNICEF report 2013; Ekbal committee 2013) observed high incidence and intensity of undernourishment problems in Attappady. Lots of intervention packages were announced to remedy the nutritional problem of children and women in the tribal hamlets. Decentralised health care system was already proved to be successful in Kerala if implemented cautiously (Nair, S and Naidu, N 2016) and as such the decentralized structures of health care were in Attappady were improved with infrastructure enhancement at the Primary Health Centres in Agaly, Pudur and Sholayur. Nutritional Rehabilitation Centre was started along with the Primary Health Centre at Pudur. But even after all these programme data shows that 56.13 % of the interviewed tribals are not aware of the necessity of nutritious food. Even after the intervention of the NRLM and community kitchen 34.4 % get food only two times a day. Rice along with a curry made from leaves is found as their major food items. Vegetables are also often consumed by 33.3 %. The change in their food habits and consumption patterns affects them severely. At present people from only two hamlets use food from their own farm. In other areas people are not growing traditional food crops. All of them depend on Public Distribution System and nearby shops for food items. Questions were asked regarding doctor's visit, distribution of iron tablets, visit of public health nurse and immunization and all the participants opined that all these happened regularly. Fifty six percent of them viewed that health workers visited the hamlet often and 44.44 % opined that workers visited the hamlets very often. All the selected sample tribals possess insurance card but only 30 % of them has renewed it. Ten per cent reported that they have malnourished children in their home.

## **V. FINDINGS**

### **Achievements**

- As per the official data from Nodal Officer Tribal Health, Attappady tribal block the percentage of tribal infant mortality rate (IMR) has reduced to 11 in 2020 as compared to 33 in 2013.
- National Rural Livelihood Mission is working within the tribal communities to promote a) social development, b) livelihoods and c) skill development. The focus was on building exclusive tribal women's institutions like Neighbour Hood Groups and mobilizing the skills of the tribal women for their development. Some positive changes are happening in hamlets, but that needs to be further strengthened.

- The main way to solve the tribal issues is imparting education to the tribal children. There are thirty one schools and twenty two single teacher schools and sixteen hostels in Attappady, which caters to the education needs of the tribals. The introduction of bridge school and Community Resource Centre has resulted in improvement of educational attainments of children, at least in a few hamlets.
- Provision of income stability during times of distress has been done by promoting female participation in MGNREGS.
- Tribals reported that over the years they have become more socially involved and felt that their social status has improved. They opined that their roles as a decision maker, their attitude relating to health, cleanliness, children's education and their confidence level has improved over the years.

### **Issues and Challenges**

- Officials state that dropout rate of high school students is increasing day by day that the quality of education is very poor. Lack of provision for monitoring of the quality of education and lack of vocational education are other major issues.
- Unemployment among the people in the hamlets is also reported as a very serious problem for male inhabitants, irrespective of the hamlets. Respondents offered a variety of reasons for the lack of employment opportunities such as: the remoteness of some hamlets, anxiety about participating in state-sponsored schemes, complete dependence on MGNREGP, lack of information and awareness of how and when to apply for other jobs, a sense of discrimination when dealing with non tribals etc.
- Issues in agricultural sector, particularly loss of traditional varieties of crops is identified as a very important problem. Initiatives by the Agriculture department to provide sustainable livelihood to the tribals has not become successful in many hamlets.
- Water scarcity is reported by 89 % of the tribals and this issue needs to be resolved immediately.
- Community Kitchen which has been set up to provide nutritious food to the tribal children and women remains closed in more than 50 % of the hamlets selected.

### **Suggestions**

- For tribals all problems are directly linked to land alienation therefore focus should be on redistribution of land for tribals as their right.
- Experts opinioned that in Attappady the projects should be done in mission mode for easiness of implementation
- In spite of the plan outlays and different programs, most of the departments are not having the documents showing progress/ report of each program. In most cases, there is manipulation of the data.
- Several departments are working in Attappady and running their intervention projects. Lack of co-ordination among the departments is a major challenge in the implementation of the schemes.
- Idea of development needs to be clustered round Model villages, where every village can have 20-100 families. Phase wise development of these villages can be undertaken.
- Implementation of awareness programmes as the most important suggestion from the educated inhabitants in these areas

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

The effectiveness of intervention programmes in tribal development in Attappady illustrates mixed results. There has been provision of knowledge, communication and community development through the interventions of different agencies, although not at a larger pace and spread. The limitations include improper utilization of resources from the government, involvement of intermediaries, lack of employment opportunities and alienation from traditional modes of agriculture practices etc. The developmental policies should not only try to promote autonomy of these minorities while integrating them fully within the politico economic system but also introduce a holistic approach which is explained in the philosophy of Prime Minister Nehru's philosophy "Tribal people should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture. We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to, their own social and cultural institutions. We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but the quality of human character that is evolved"

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