

KEY OBSERVATIONS

- India's socio-economic development is uneven, and marginalized, tribal communities endure continuous structural poverty
- Seasonal migrations have long been a livelihood strategy for the poorest households in India, as a mean to access food and money through casual labour.
- A combination of intertwined social, economic and political drivers sustains tribal seasonal migrations, while external shocks will result in increased movements between now and 2020.
- Women and children are more vulnerable to nutrition and health services deprivation resulting from seasonal migration.

Definitions:

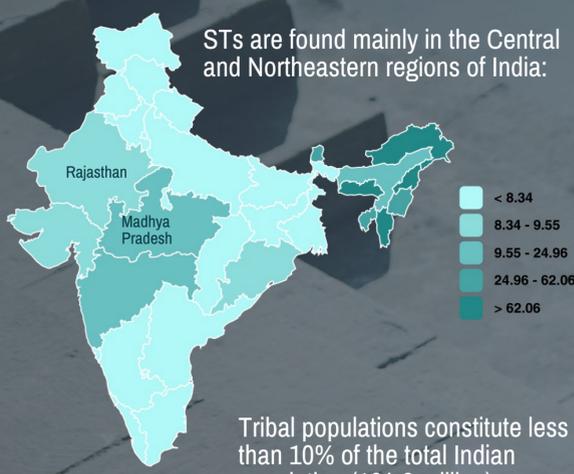
Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs) are official designations in the Indian Constitution (Art. 342/366.24) representing various groups of historically disadvantaged communities in the country.

STs are sometimes referred to as Adivasis and mainly live in tribal areas. SCs are occasionally known as Dalits, and have the lowest status in the caste structure.

While STs and SCs constitute two distinct social groups and have different cultural identities and socio-political backgrounds, they share common vulnerabilities.

Scheduled Tribes

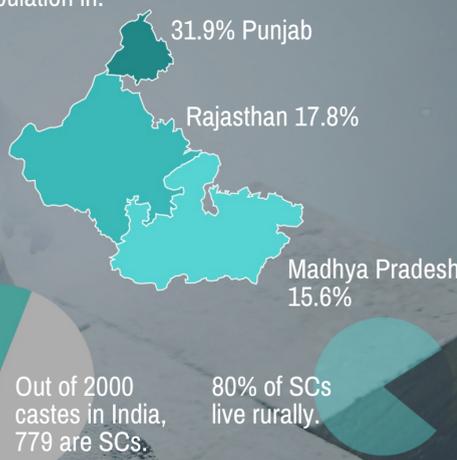
STs are found mainly in the Central and Northeastern regions of India:



Scheduled Castes

16.6% (201.3 million) of the total population of India are recognized as SCs.

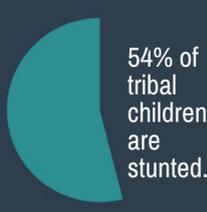
Scheduled Castes constitute a significant share of the state population in:



Nutrition



Globally, over a third (61m) of under 5 stunted children are found in India.



Severe stunting in tribal children is 9 points higher than in non-tribal children (29% vs. 20%)



In Madhya Pradesh, an NGO monitored MAM and SAM cases: 77% and 86% were from STs & less than 2% were SCs. Because of this, our research focused on the drivers of migration for Scheduled Tribes.

KEY DRIVERS FOR TRIBAL MIGRATIONS

Entrenched poverty

India is home to a third of the world's extreme poor (people living with less than \$1.25 a day)

STs account for a great part of the rural poor of the country.

In Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, at least 50% of STs are illiterate

Less than 15% complete secondary school (compared to 40% in non-ST communities).

Access to food and safe water in rural areas

Poverty strikes most in rural areas (216.5 million or 80% of the total poor population).

Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan are prone to water scarcity and flooding. Distances to water points are often large and irrigation is not widespread.

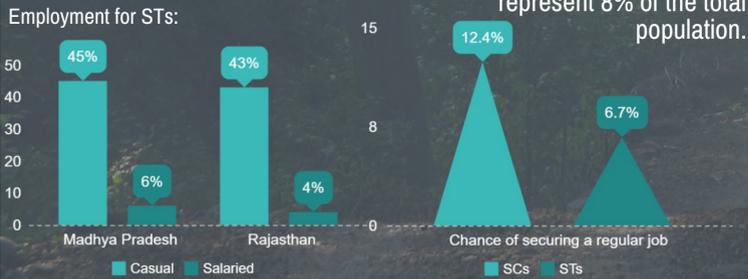
Tribal households:

- Landless: 34%
- No drinking water on premises: 14%

Resilience vs dependence

Migrations are a centuries-old mechanism among tribal communities, often associated with positive outcomes. However, alongside forced migrations resulting from land alienation and dispossession, new patterns of seasonal migrations translate into extended periods of time spent on the move, growing numbers of migrating families, and a growing vulnerability towards contractors ('thekedar') or corruption practices

Cash-earning activities and indebtedness



Endangered tribal forest lands

Forests are a conflicted resource between tribal people and investors, despite existing protection laws and regulations.

- 30% of Madhya Pradesh is covered in forest
- 12% of the country's forests are to be found in Madhya Pradesh
- 14% of India's coal reserves are in Madhya Pradesh

SCENARIOS TO 2020

- Despite featuring in the 2019 election campaign, STs are not prioritised on the government agenda.
 - Investment in rural areas improves food security at state level but progress is slow in tribal areas.
 - The mechanisation of farming reduces employment opportunities and endangers livelihoods.
 - Under-5 stunting among tribal communities remains high.
 - Increasing tribal households become landless, compensation is rare.
 - Seasonal migration spreads the pressure geographically, but perpetuates the cycle of indebtedness.
 - STs have no choice but to rely on contractors, accept low wages, and endure abuses.
- Increased government support and funding towards STs result in poverty reduction and binding regulations, protecting STs.
 - Investments in water access and safety net programmes improve food insecurity.
 - Land grabbing slows and compensation schemes are implemented for those alienated from their land.
 - Minimum wages and employment programmes are discussed at government level.
 - Dependence on contractors remains a key feature of seasonal migrations.
 - Decision making power of tribal communities increases slowly. This is a long-term shift to 2020 and beyond.
- STs continuously fall off the government agenda.
 - Droughts and destructive monsoon rains mean a worsening of the situation in tribal areas.
 - Climate change causes agricultural crop losses, forcing families to migrate further, increasing their vulnerability (affecting the health of women and children most).
 - Ever more families decide to permanently settle in urban centres.
 - Tribal lands are monopolised by industries, raising environmental concerns. Environmental activists clash with investors, disrupting access to land.
 - Small scale actions increase STs' resilience and job security. Indebtedness and discriminatory monetary policies remain a reality for STs.

CONCLUSION

Seasonal tribal migrations illustrate one of India's biggest challenges: achieving both economic development and poverty reduction for the most marginalized populations. In the run up to 2020, tribal migrations are likely to continue accelerating. As tribal populations grow and their environment continues to deteriorate in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, women and children will likely pay the highest price.

