

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR LEGAL RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS



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# **AN OVERVIEW OF THE PRADHAN MANTRI PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUP (PVTG) DEVELOPMENT MISSION**

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## **Abstract**

The PPM-PVTGDM is a prestigious social scheme of the Government of India focusing on the particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTG), a subcategory of Scheduled tribes (STs) to mitigate socio-economic risk and vulnerabilities. These communities, acknowledged due to their geographical seclusion, non-aggressive technology, and low levels of literacy, have always been underserved, practically denied any fundamental facilities like health, education and communications. This is more so the case with PVTGs that despite the numerous programs initiated by the government over the past decades have remained marginalized because of poverty, culture exclusion and lack of integration into wider development frameworks. Understanding the development of PVTG policies, this paper exploring history of governmental interventions from Five-Year Plans to present Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission. It shows how constitutional provisions and many a scheme including the Special Central Assistance (SCA), the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), and the Scheme for Development of PVTGs have attempted to empower these communities but, to varying degrees of effectiveness. The paper points to the lack of adequate development paradigm that can address the issues of geographical remoteness, poverty and marginalisation, and losing cultural identity. The Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission launched in the financial year 2021-22 is a more focused and an effective attempt in the process of upliftment of PVTGs. The mission focuses on five key areas: health care, education, employment, welfare maintenance and protection, and construction sectors respectively. It focuses on meeting the healthcare needs, which in turn was followed by education, income generating activities, and more importantly the preservation of cultural rights for PVTGs. Also, for the first time, the mission highlights the involvement of PVTG communities in the decision-making process and the preference for a self-governance model.

**Key Words:** Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, Inclusive Development, Tribal Welfare, Sustainable Development.

## Introduction

The Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission (PMVDM), a watershed intervention, represents a bold commitment on the part of the Government of India towards the PVTGs' social and economic well-being and fostering inclusive development.<sup>1</sup>PMVDM is more appropriate today due to problems and concerns in integrated tribal development, especially for PVTGs.

In India, particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) were there even prior to the enforcement of the Constitution.<sup>2</sup>An attempt has been made to uplift them socially and economically and to blend them into the Indian culture through various five year plans and policies and strategies.<sup>3</sup>Some of the provisions of the Constitution of India underlined the concern of the authorities for the enhancement of the living standard and economic condition of the PVTGs. The PVTGs are also vulnerable because of their geographical isolation, mobility, displacement, and lack of resources, neglect by the state, poverty indicated by low HDI, low literacy, lack of health facilities, and very poor access to such facilities as drinking water, schools, health, roads and other amenities.

These communities were only slightly connected to other development processes within the region.<sup>4</sup> To address this gap, the specific measures are being sought under the Constitution. Unless there are immediately constructive interventions in these areas, these groups cannot be brought on par with the rest of the tribal population in the country and hence the constitutional term of PVTGs calls for policy initiative.

This paper aims at exploring the multi-dimensional concept of development in the Indian context and its applicability for the analysis of the present socio-economic situation. There is a

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<sup>1</sup> S. Rakshit and S. N. Pathak, "VISION OF PRADHAN MANTRI KAUSHAL VIKASH YOJANA AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF INDIA," Jamshedpur Research Review.

<sup>2</sup> K. N. Choubey, "Understanding Tribal India: Constitutional Rights, Issues and Challenges," Indian Politics and Political Processes, 2023.

<sup>3</sup> G. Shah, "'Decentralized' Planning in a Centralized Economy: A Study of Sarvodaya Programmes in a Taluka," Rural South Asia, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> M. Emery and C. Flora, "Spiraling-up: Mapping community transformation with community capitals framework," 50 Years of Community Development Vol I, 2020.

section of our society that remains under privileged and needs to be brought on par with others to ensure that every Indian has an opportunity to realize his or her true potential. Interventions that are egalitarian in the sense that they are aimed at the vulnerable can help to overcome the inequalities. The PVTGs in different sectors of the country have been affected by such inequity and to minimize these disparities the SCP, TSP, STC and the Scheme for the Development of PVTGs are being executed effectively by the government. The experience of inclusive development in India is full of such positive actions.

The characteristic of PVTGs is that some of these are hunter-gatherers and some have very low-level productivity—be it in agriculture, animal husbandry, or fishing.<sup>5</sup> A diminishing population, pre-agriculture level of technology, relative physical isolation, economic backwardness, stagnant productivity levels, and extreme poverty further characterize them.

<sup>6</sup>The PVTGs have been relatively isolated until now from development, basic infrastructure, education, health and social welfare services provided by the Government of India and state governments, although some of these has been extended to many of these villages in the last decade. Most of the PVTGs are found in Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Gujarat, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh. According to the census of year 2001, the percentage of PVTGs to the total Scheduled Tribe population is only 2 percent<sup>7</sup>. In fact, it comes down to about 23 lakhs of people in the country as far as real numbers are concerned. It is important to note that while the normal Scheduled Tribes population increased to 24.5% than the census of 1991, the PVTGs increased to 10.5%<sup>8</sup>.

## Background and Context

Despite being part of the popular outsider's understanding of what it means to be tribal in India, these communities suffer from cultural exclusion within wider tribal parameters and do not play a very active role in mainstream tribal politics either. In 1975 India launched a package of benefits for the social, economic and political development of some of the 'particularly

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<sup>5</sup> A. Mall, "Indigenous Knowledge on Selection, Sustainable Utilization of Local Flora and Fauna For Food By Tribes (PTG) Of Odisha: A Potential Resource For Food And ...," 2020.

<sup>6</sup> A. C. Omkar, "Changing pattern of Tribal Livelihoods a study of Adilabad district (A case study of Narnoor and Jainoor Mandals)," 2020.

<sup>7</sup> A. B. Ota and B. N. Mohanty, "Population Analysis: Scheduled Tribes of Odisha (1961-2011)," 2022.

<sup>8</sup> V. Ramachandran and A. N. Reddy, "Educational Situation of Scheduled Tribes in India: With a Focus on Schedule V Areas and West Bengal," Tribal Development Report, 2022.

vulnerable tribal groups' in the country under a programme for Indian development. The government announced this policy when poverty alleviation and social integration of the tribal region of India has been on the agenda of the government for almost the past two decades.

Twelve volumes of this annual have provided a rich analysis of the changes in the tribal welfare system and related policies and practices that shape the This process of historical transformation has also probably contributed to an increase in poverty among the especially vulnerable. According to the census of India in 2014, population of India was 104, 253, 395 out of which 103, 961, 273 people were recorded as tribes<sup>9</sup>. Over three and half million people from different tribes in the country have been officially categorized and recognized as PVTGs with different levels of poverty vulnerability<sup>10</sup>. This crisis of marginality demanded a restatement of tribal development and social justice in India that could capture the facets and frailties of the PVTGs. Policy makers also understood the fact that many tribal groups which were declassified as PVTGs were also vulnerable to multiple problems.

India has a long cultural background and is the second-most populous country with tribal inhabitants; therefore, it has a certain experience of the planned formation of policy for the ST and later for some other PTG or vulnerable PTG starting from the 1950s. This is because the While the nature of Primitive Vulnerable Groups was not often Due to being dispersed and least in numbers, and not for the purpose of getting more political votes, these people have been marginalized more.

PVTGs comprise a very small part of the total tribal population<sup>11</sup>. They are found to dwell in few residences. As they are stills a small population, they can be overlooked or excluded from the general policies of the government. Furthermore, clueless interventions have made things even worse for them. The goals, strategies and dynamics of developmental interventions being proposed for PVTGs are different. Hence the developmental interventions planned for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in this country will have no reason to be so but for characteristics and attributes. The various welfare and social security measures provided to the

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<sup>9</sup> S. Ghosh-Jerath, R. Kapoor, A. Singh, et al., "Agroforestry diversity, indigenous food consumption and nutritional outcomes in Sauria Paharia tribal women of Jharkhand, India," *Maternal & Child Nutrition*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2021.

<sup>10</sup> M. Mallick, P. Khatua, and R. N. Swain, "An analysis of the living standards of the Kandha people in Kandhamal district of Odisha," *\*International Journal of Economic ...\**, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> *Supra* at 9

STs through the integrated and comprehensive approach have not been very impressive in terms of achievement. The tribals also do not get much benefit from the new policies of agriculture, land and drought prone area development. The objectives of the programme of community development in the tribal areas are also to improve the standard of living of the tribal people who have not been benefited from the developmental efforts made during the last thirty years. The extent and the degree of neglect cannot, thus, be quantified based on the overall development or the advantages accrued to the Scheduled Tribes.

### Understanding PVTGs

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) are a specific subgroup of Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India<sup>12</sup>. The Ministry of Home Affairs has established 75 PVTGs in the country<sup>13</sup>. A group is classified as a PVTG under three main criteria: pre-agricultural technology, having a low level of literacy, and living a 'stunted' primitive life<sup>14</sup>. It is highly challenging to specify each tribe or to quantify the characteristics of the PVTGs for the entire country, as it has been recognized by the government only in 1975<sup>15</sup>. The food schedule of PVTGs is dependent on non-timber forest products. However, PVTGs are indeed the most primitive of the shifting cultivators who have least exposure to the modern world. Some of these PVTGs are good at hunting for food, fishing and have now started taking up wage employment and cultivation especially in the forests of well connected roads.

India has about 573 distinct tribal communities<sup>16</sup>. The 75 tribal groups that have been recognized as PVTGs have certain characteristics that distinguish them from the Scheduled Castes and general tribes<sup>17</sup>. These groups are: 'Pre-agriculturist' – the tribes that were hunter-gatherers; 'Simple and Stunted technology, housing and living' – these tribes had not developed technology, housing and living conditions to a certain level; poverty – these tribes have a poor standard of living; primitive health care and psychosocial integration – the only health care systems they had were traditional. These are the easiest signs of PVTGs. Besides this, other tribes of India have also been faced with infringement and violation of their sovereignty and

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<sup>12</sup> B. Shivareddy, "Literacy and Education Levels of Scheduled Tribes in Tribal Plan Area of Andhra Pradesh," 2020.

<sup>13</sup> R. Sarma, A. Kumar, S. S. Jubinarosa, and K. Kumari, "Development of PVTGs in Jharkhand (India) and Annual Budget 2023-24," researchgate.net

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> D. Gupta, "The Evolution of Tribal Communities in Post Independence India," 2024.

<sup>17</sup> K. Eswarappa, "The complexity of the "Tribal" question in India: The case of the particularly vulnerable tribal groups," Journal of Asian and African Studies, 2024.

their rights with regard to their abilities as an 'independent sovereign entity'. While discussing affairs concerning tribals, researchers often attempt to distinguish between terms such as upliftment/power struggle of the tribes and integration/absorption of the tribes into the larger society.

PVTGs are small and dwindling in size, with low literacy rates and miniscule land holding size and are likely to have little or no access to resources, limited for the majority and The notion of PVTGs has been brought out as a tool to recognize the especially vulnerable section among the tribal population of India, who have different culture, tradition and practices than the rest of the tribal populace<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, this category is defined by certain parameters and does not imply that all tribal population can be consider vulnerable. This concept was developed after the policy of non-isolation and to make the tribal people accept the general population while respecting the traditions of those who do not wish to progress to the next stage of change for their development. The PVTGs have been victims of severe discrimination, exploitation, cultural erosion and exclusion in all aspects of social, economic and political life. This is because PVTGs exhibit a high level of cultural and ethnic diversity thus making it important to design development strategies that match each community's needs. To this end, government agencies and non-governmental organizations have set many policies and activities to enhance the welfare of the mentioned population groups. But, these efforts require an assessment of the quality of development for these tribal groups.

### **Definition and Criteria**

The scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes are provided support in the matter of education and employment by the Central and State Governments through certain reservations and schemes<sup>19</sup>. The Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission in the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has been initiated for the welfare of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, defined as the most vulnerable among those already classified as Scheduled Tribes. This would act as an overarching umbrella to cover a multiplicity of schemes ongoing in different sectors of tribal development<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Supra at 8

<sup>20</sup> S. Harit and V. Nidhi, "From Margins to Progress: Unleashing the Potential of India's Tribal Communities for Sustainable Development," Jus Corpus LJ, 2023.

The PVTGs are identified as per the criteria evolved through a consultative mechanism based on geo-ecological, social, cultural, and economic vulnerability. The suggested criteria and the indicators for identifying the PVTGs in India may preferably be with one percent or less of the State/UT population and one in ten thousand of the country's population; and given a separate number of categories in the schedule to the Constitution and the law. They would share in common certain complementary indicators like: pre-agricultural level of technology; high infant mortality rates; static or dwindling population; absence of written language; low or absolute landlessness, besides other occupational, territorial, religious, economic, political, and legal indicators. It is necessary to recognize the distinct socio-economic vulnerabilities of these tribal populations, as perhaps the first community in the race of making history that produced no settlers, no exploiters, and no rulers centered around themselves. This does not justify their assimilation or imposition of other kinds of technologies.

The identification of the PVTGs has greater significance in terms of policy as it requires the formulation of comprehensive policy and ensuring priority resource allocation, as there has been an ongoing process of lively pauperization and increasing deprivation of assets and resources of almost all Scheduled Tribes in India. Clarity on this definition would also facilitate the creation of public opinion to understand the wellness of this exclusive human habitation of

**Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission**

The Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission is a focused universal commitment towards enabling the 75 PVTGs to take up proactive measures in their march towards societal consolidation<sup>21</sup>. Focusing on ameliorating the living conditions, their trans-generational approach involves holistic development of PVTGs, which is self-sustaining, perpetuating, and ultimately taking our motherland to the Sustainable Development Path. The objectives envisaged include improved education, better health, and rising levels of livelihood income, with ecological restoration undertaken with community participation, enabling a malnutrition-free India. The program aims to sensitize the mainstream population about the richness of the culture of PVTGs while charting the roadmap for their transformation. The Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission sees prospects towards the realization of social justice and the mandate of a humane governance<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> P. Pathi, M. Pathi, K. Mahanta, and C. Santakar, "Documentation & Video Documentation of Success Stories of Selected Tribal Development Schemes of Past 3 Years on Storyline Platform," 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Supra at 1

For the preservation and economic development of the PVTGs, balancing two contradictory themes is required: The rights of these tribes not to be forced into assimilation with other sections of the society by the rest of the society while at the same time introducing them to Indian society and getting them out of the geographical enclaves in which they reside, except for the highly threatened ones<sup>23</sup>. The mission is based on the presumption that protection of culture and safeguard against marginalization and vulnerability necessitates that the PVTGs be segregated from the rest of the society, for the limited purpose of extending development to them and allowing the PVTGs to absorb it in a way that does not jeopardise their culture<sup>24</sup>. Nevertheless, given the current era of information and communication technology, it is almost impossible to accomplish either of these objectives. The program might be of use in such an effort. The principal actors in this process are the PVTGs, state government, local self-governance institutions, governmental line departments, civil society, NGOs and other private organisations.

Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission was launched in July 2021<sup>25</sup> with a view to provide focused attention towards the development of PVTGs. The mission is of historic significance that demonstrates the commitment of the Government of India to improve the living conditions of the PVTGs through a coordinated approach. The mission aims to support the development of PVTG communities along three dimensions: economic, educational, and social<sup>26</sup>. It provides for development thrusts across five areas: access to better healthcare, diet diversification and supplementary nutrition, supplemental hiring, providing financial capital and livelihood opportunities, and cultural revival and preservation.

Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission is also an amalgamation of different policies and programs for the welfare of destitute, deprived and marginalized sections, but at the same time it is also an effort of the Government of India to make the entire tribal community of the country as a part of the country's development process. To this end the following consultation process was carried out across the country

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<sup>23</sup> R. Mukhopadhyay, "Developing A Conceptual Framework For Sustainable Tribal Development In Saturation Mode Through Convergence Approach," 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> A. Balkrishna, M. Chauhan, D. Srivastava, and N. Sharma, "Promoting and Backing Tribal Entrepreneurship in North-East India by the Virtue of Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Vikas Yojna," Indian Journals, 2022.

<sup>26</sup> H. Mohanty, "An Empirical Study on the Legislations of Tribal Rights and its Implementation Status: Good Practices and Lessons Learnt," 2020.

## Objectives and Scope.

The objectives of the mission are as follows: 1. To improve the socio-economic indicators like income, health status, education, and gainful access to education among the PVTGs. 2. To empower the PVTGs by strengthening the institutions and communities. 3. To enhance the people's participation in the mission through a participatory approach. The mission would have active intervention in different sub-sectors: Programme and Strategies: Agriculture, Skill Development, Animal Husbandry, Women Empowerment, and PVTG communities.

The only way of achieving this mission is through the participatory approach, and the concept of participation is to empower the community to take charge of their development within their own sphere of traditional knowledge while providing them with the conditions that would enhance their quality of life. A comprehensive approach would therefore entail provision of all the fundamental needs and services in the form of skills, knowledge and services, which would help the community to earn a decent living. The mission will have to be provided with identifiable inputs which can be broadly categorized as conversion for being able to be translated into personal development which will then lead to transformation of other institutions like schools, local self governance, judiciary etc. For the impact assessment, the end of program assessment, that is, the percentage of PVTG Development Mission areas versus control areas at the close of the program or the difference in impact over the baselines will be the paired control-treatment comparison. The evaluations will be done in quantitative and qualitative dimensions.

The PVTGs in the mandate area of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs include 75 PVTGs, which are identified in 18 states and one Union Territory of India<sup>27</sup>. The President of India may nominate any tribe to be a Scheduled Tribe at any time through a public notification. In 1975, the Indian government declared 52 such tribes as PVTGs<sup>28</sup>. This concept was based on a report that divided tribal groups into different stages of development based on certain characteristics and assigned the term 'most deprived' to some tribes living in remote areas of the states with a declining population. Objective The overall goal and the main objectives of the mission are to: Improve the living standards of PVTGs, their socio-economic profile, and remove barriers to education, health, livelihood, and civic rights for a life of dignity and self-reliance. Including access to education, employment, and government laws, and bringing newer status into the

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<sup>27</sup> Supra at 14

<sup>28</sup> Supra at 25

mainstream. Providing them with education. Awareness and skill training programs compatible with them. Ensuring good health facilities are accessible. Providing dwelling houses and sustainable habitats, villages, and adjacent infrastructure. Empowering them economically. Transferring governance and ensuring meaningful participation in community development. Preserving and promoting the purity of tribal culture and traditions<sup>29</sup>.

### **Implementation Mechanisms**

This is done in a multi-sectorial manner through institutions including government, non-governmental organizations and their networks, tribal research institutions, community based organizations, women's organizations and church groups which have a staff complement especially in the area of combating extreme poverty and exploitation of the poor. These must, therefore, work in collaboration in order to assist in the realization of the Mission's mandate and goals. Each State will engage the institutions, the conventional village and district level structures with the views of these institutions to further develop a more responsive structure for implementing the sub-plan. These would be the nodal institutions for the dissemination of information mainly, as the multiplying agencies, and assist in the training of the identified State level officers.

The Statement of Objectives of the Mission states that it shall be implemented through the Gram Sabha or a body of the villagers assembled in a village and shall consist of all those whose names are included in the electoral rolls<sup>30</sup>. They should have attained the age of eighteen and be either permanently resident in the village. Elaborate procedures had to be agreed upon and documented for the conferring of such powers, which had to receive the assent of the President to become final. A process of request for the guidelines to be accepted was launched in the North-Eastern States and Assam. The Development Mission and the guidelines are being operationalized as empowerment drives, so as to help implement this more satisfactory participatory approach<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> K. A. Ngowi and C. M. William, "Analysis of geographical accessibility to healthcare facilities using geospatial techniques: The case of peri-urban dwellers in Mbeya City," *Journal of the Geographical ...*, vol. 2020.

<sup>30</sup> S. Versano, "The Challenge of Sanitation in India: An Assessment of Clean India Mission in the Gram Panchayat of Badkulla I and II, West Bengal, India," 2020.

<sup>31</sup> S. Chaturvedi, "Evolving Indian strategy on SDGs and scope for regional cooperation," 2021.

## Conclusion

PVTGs and their living conditions are different from other tribal groups and hence they need specific strategies and programs. Though the cost of addressing is low and controllable, the impact of addressing is very high. These findings justify the need for the PVTG Development Mission. The mission attempts at targeting both the demand and supply side challenges of the PVTGs and make them self sufficient. In India the physical access disparities among the various tribal groups have been reduced to a large extent. Nevertheless, the social integration and equity that can be tackled with the help of physical infrastructure only are left behind. Nodal agencies are also beginning efforts towards enhancing the institutional delivery process. For this reason, several nodal agencies are also taking into account the traditional institutions and basic characteristics of PVTGs as culture for designing such interventions for PVTGs. In a majority of the interventions, adequate emphasis has been laid on the involvement of the PVTGs themselves.

Because of the unequal playing field and enabling environments, the mission recognizes the importance of market interventions – the issue of rights of PVTG to the traditional resource is also being addressed upfront. The PVTG Development Mission would thus require resources in addition to which policy and programmatic commitment of the other stakeholders who would come into the act in the longer time frame would be crucial for the success of the mission. The process monitoring and periodic evaluations are absolutely critical to be in a state of preparedness to respond to the ongoing developments. There are factors that cannot be foreseen when putting into place such plans and it is very possible to make some mistakes. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs may at the same time also wish to evaluate how the intervention will ensure that the best use is made of the traditional knowledge coming into the market system. Some of the future research areas also require an understanding of which activities are likely to be the most productive in the future and how the PVTGs are positioned or positioning themselves to carry on these activities in the long run.

Through analysis of various aspects of the Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission, it can be seen that special attention should be paid to the PVTGs tribes. There are also some shifts in the approach to the mission implementation which can be explained by the expected difficulties in the dynamic set of communities which are rather Close-knit and nature-oriented. Some of the features and principles of the mission may also be useful for the long-term effectiveness. It focuses on the activities of the stakeholders and therefore it stresses the need for more attention.

There is a work in progress to build adaptive frameworks, and a mission statement describes the vision of the approach that is to be transformative in ensuring development beyond wages. This mission also aims at enhancing understanding of the relationship between conservation and development discourses. In conclusion, it can be stated that the experience of the Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission allows outlining the significance of stakeholders and their functions in the context of the initiative implementation. The seriousness of the problem and the effort from the government and the people show that it is possible to at least guarantee some degree of protection for endangered tribes.

