

## Tribal Displacement and Settlement

**Mains Syllabus: GS II - Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation, vulnerable sections of the population.**

**GS III - Linkages between development and spread of extremism.**

### Why in the News?

The National Commission of Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has ordered a proper survey of the displaced tribal people in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Chattisgarh.

### What are the causes of tribal displacements?

- **Security issues** - Around 50,000 tribals were displaced from Chhattisgarh due to left-wing extremism.
- **Development Projects** - Large-scale infrastructure projects like dams and highways often lead to forced relocations.
- The Sardar Sarovar dam on the Narmada River displaced more than 41,000 families in Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh.
- **Political Conflicts** - Ethnic tensions, insurgencies, and border disputes can displace tribal communities.
- States like Nagaland, Assam, and Mizoram have seen tribal displacements due to insurgent activities and ethnic conflicts.
- For instance, clashes between Bodos and other communities in Assam have displaced thousands.
- **Ecological disasters** - Floods, droughts, and cyclones lead to the forced relocation of indigenous communities from their traditional lands.
- For example, the displacement of the Mishing community on Majuli Island in Assam due to river erosion.

### How effective was the Strategic Hamlet Program in India?

- **Strategic hamlets** - This counterinsurgency tactic involves relocating the tribal population into fortified areas or "strategic hamlets" to isolate them from insurgents and prevent them from supporting the rebellion.
- **Telangana** - At the end of 1949, the new Government of India also shifted tribals from forests to roadside camps to fight the Telangana communist revolutionaries after

Nizam's surrender.

- They had recruited hundreds of tribals as “special police constables” to fight the communist dalams.

*One such special group of Koya tribals was the “Tiger Squad,” which had around 300 members.*

- **Chhattisgarh programme** - In 2005, around 50,000 Gond tribals were forced to migrate to then-undivided Andhra Pradesh (now parts of Telangana) when the Government of India embarked on the ‘strategic hamleting’ programme to eliminate Maoists in Chhattisgarh.
- The tribals, whom the government had relocated to roadside camps, have long returned home to the deep forests.
- Some, who could not go back in fear of Maoists, joined the security forces.
- **Mizoram** - The Strategic Hamlet strategy was more successful in Mizoram in the 1960s, when the government eventually reached a peace deal with the Mizo fighters.
- **Bru displacement** - In 2019, when the same Mizo tribals started a fight with fellow Bru (Reang) tribals, causing thousands to flee to nearby Tripura

### **What are the challenges faced by displaced tribals?**

- **Lack of national policies** - The absence of any national or international law for Internally Displaced People (IDPs) affects the rehabilitation and resettlement activities of the displaced tribal people.
- **Harassment** - The displaced tribals have been the subject of atrocities over the years — from forest officials, police, and even local tribals who view them as encroachers on their resources.
- **Security issue** - Maoists have not allowed them to go back to their home location.
- **Lack of recognition** - State authorities such as Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are reluctant to treat them as tribals.
- Over the past twenty years, a new generation of Gutti Koya tribals has emerged in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- However, they have been denied State support as tribals because both governments treat them as "migrants who cannot be given tribal status."
- **Non-provision of alternate land**—As per the Forest Rights Act (FRA), if a tribal person is forced to vacate forest land, the State must provide her with alternative forest land.
- Despite the law, many tribals in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Chhattisgarh are not compensated with alternate land.
- **Inadequate compensation** - Not providing adequate compensation and rehabilitation under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013 act.
- **Regressive state actions** - Telangana has taken over the farmlands of many displaced tribals, planting trees there as part of a renewed effort to push them back to Chhattisgarh.
- Andhra Pradesh has discouraged any efforts to build new houses in the forest by

violently destroying them.

- **Lack of inter-state cooperation:** States often disagree on taking responsibility for the welfare of the displaced tribals.

### What lies ahead?

- A national-level policy on Internally Displaced People (IDPs) specific to tribals is required to provide a framework for inter-state cooperation and tribal rights.
- Existing legislation, such as the Forest Rights Act 2006 and the Land Acquisition Act 2013, needs to be amended for effective implementation.
- Adequate alternative lands with the required infrastructure need to be provided.
- The political and social rights of the displaced people need to be respected in both the new land and the displaced land.

### Reference

[The Hindu | Call for permanent settlement for tribals](#)

