

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](#)

