

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DETERMINANTS OF SOCIAL HEALTH INDICATORS: A CASE STUDY OF TRIBAL AREA IN TAMIL NADU

Dr. Thangamani

Associate Professor of Economics, NDA, Khadakwasla, Pune, Maharashtra

Introduction

Health is an important factor in development and is closely related to socio-economic transformation. However, the health status of the citizens of India still lags economic and other factors. India is undergoing a dramatic demographic, societal, and substantial advances in life expectancy and disease prevention since the middle of the 20th century, the Indian health systems provide little protection against financial risk, and most importantly there is widespread inequity in the health status of the population. (World Bank, 2001). Childhood diseases like diarrhea, anemia etc are also more prevalent among low-income households compared to high income households (IIPS, 2000). The health sector in India is still characterized by sharp socioeconomic, rural-urban and gender inequalities. Reaching out to the unreached is a global challenge and of a larger concern in India with one third of its population, constituting 250-300 million, living in remote, difficult and vulnerable areas and whose basic needs are not fulfilled.

Despite several achievements and efforts, the 50 years of development plan has not changed the lives of almost one third of India's population.

The continuing poverty of the rural poor is mainly due to structural constraints in livelihood and securing their well-being in terms of parameters of health, education and gender equity.

Since rural India faces such a huge magnitude of problems due to the various reasons mentioned above the severity of problems faced by the tribals is traumatizing. Unlike rural people who live in plain areas these tribals reside in remote jungles where basic needs are also deprived even after 60 years of independence. Because this part of the society remains fairly untouched even today therefore the researcher has taken the opportunity to decipher the actual health problems faced by these tribals caused mainly by their socio economic factors.

Statement of the Problem

The tribal population of Tamil Nadu has a special significance because of their extreme level of social and economic backwardness and also as they reside in remote isolated areas away from any other kind of human interaction. They are the first to receive

the wrath of nature, in ways like drought, heat stroke, infectious diseases, heavy rainfall etc. Special attention and care is required for them to lead normal lives like others.

Scheduled Tribes population in Tamil nadu was 651,321; they constitute 1.04 percent of the total population. Ever since the Fifth Five Year Plan, Government of India has introduced a number of special development programmes and interventions which are being extended for this vulnerable section of the community. Therefore this paper it is essential to understand the socio-economic indicators which determine the health of the tribal people.

The research conducted during the course of the study was unique in bringing out the difficulties of these tribals and it provides an emphasis on their upliftment as citizens of India.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows

- To analyze the socio-economic characteristics of tribal respondents that determines the basic well being of the people.
- To examine the environmental factors influencing their health conditions and to identify the crucial factors that lead to diseases in general
- To suggest suitable, corrective and remedial measures in improving their standard of living this in turn will enhance their health conditions.

Hypothesis

In accordance with the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses have been framed to test their validity:

- High rate of literacy enables the individuals to exhibit better knowledge about the government facilities and rights.
- Better standard of living is directly influenced by their socio economic conditions.
- Ecological relationship is a boon and a bane for social health indicators of the tribal people.

Methodology

The operational methodology adopted for this study was as follows:

(A) Selection of the Study Area

The village Thalaimalai comes under the Thalavadi panchayat union /block of the Sathyamangalam taluk in Erode district. Thalavadi panchayat union is situated in the northwest corner of Erode district. The area of the block is 75,330.00 a hectare (480 sq kms) in which forest area is 53029 hectares. According to 2001 census, the population of Thalavadi block was 13806, in which 9746 people belong to the scheduled caste and 4060

people belong to the scheduled tribes. There are 20 revenue villages and 99 hamlets in the Thalavadi panchayat Union.

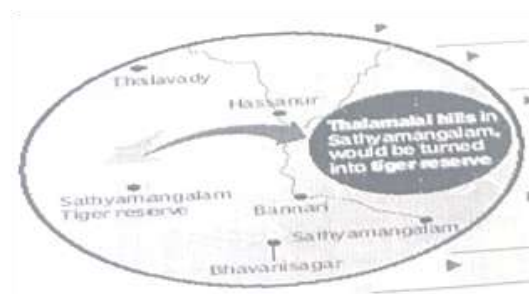
The study area, village Thalaimalai is 25 kilometers away from Thalavadi in the west which is situated 1105 meter above the mean sea level. The Thalaimalai village consists of 12 hamlets.

(B) Sample Selection

The study area covers 6 hamlets of tribal community, which accounts for 196 of tribal houses, Lack of time and resources hampered studying all the households in the selected hamlets. Therefore, it was decided to study 49 households in 6 hamlets. These 49 houses were selected based on systematic random sampling, among them 45 houses were investigated through interview method by using specific information questions The study concentrates mainly on the socio economic conditions of the sholaga tribal community and its impact on their health conditions.

(C) Data Collection

The study used both the primary as well as secondary source data in its findings. The secondary data was collected from published and unpublished documents of Government Departments and private agencies such as, Census report, Statistical Abstract of Tamil nadu, District Statistical Hand Book, District at a Glance, District Gazetteer, and information collected from offices like District collectors, Blocks of district, Panchayat offices etc. Besides this, secondary data were collected from books and from Internet. The secondary data were ratified during field data collections. Primary data was collected from the selected household of tribal area in Thalaimalai village. It was collected directly from the respondents through interview method by using specific information questions related to socio-economic data such as housing condition, family size, age, gender, literacy, marital status of members, occupation, income, health and sanitations, Loan and borrowing, monthly consumption, households assets etc which emphasizes their living conditions.



This place is in the border of the Erode District and Chamarajanagar District, Chamarajanagar is north towards this place. It is near to the Karnataka State Border. The village thalaimalai is 25 kilometers away from thalavady in the east.

Hamlets of Thalaimalai village

S. No.	Name of the Hamlets
1	Thalaimalai
2	Doddpuram
3	Mudyanur
4	Kodipuram
5	Seergahalli
6	Gandhi nagaram
7	Ramaranai
8	Bejjalati
9	Ittarai
10	Thadasalatti
11	Mavanatham
12	Galidimbam

Source: Field study

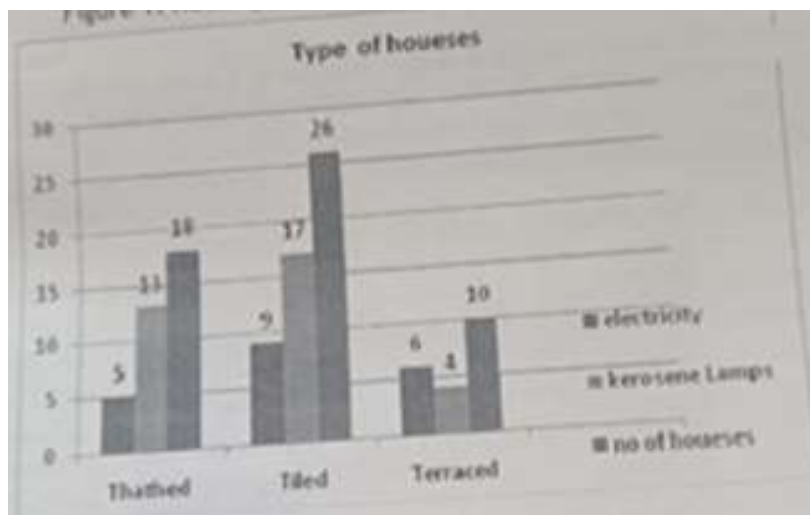
Thalaimalai village consists of 12 hamlets out of these, the last six hamlets (Ramaranai, Bejjalati, Ittarai, Thadasalatty, Mavanatham and Galidimbam) are tribal hamlets. These six hamlets are surrounded by thick forest. All types of wild animals are inhabiting in the forest. The major cultivation of the people includes maize, ragi, jowar, gingelly and also vegetables to a limited extent. The tribal people also resort to supplementary occupation such as broom making, collecting minor forest products like kalpasam, tamarind, grasses, shikakai, soap nuts neem seeds and pungam seeds etc., There is no canal irrigation in these areas.

Respondants for 196 of tribal houses out of which 49 houses i.e., 25 percent were selected based on systematic random sampling. An investigation was conducted through interview method by using a specific questionnaire. They consists of Agricultural labourers, Marginal farmers, Small farmers, Big farmers and other caegories of people. The study concentrates mainly on the houses, sex composition, age structure education, landholding pattern, agricultural crop, loan particulars like livestock particulars income and expenditures and general awareness etc.

The selected hamlets are marked and shown in the given map.



Figure 1: Housing condition of the Sample Respondents



Source: Field Survey

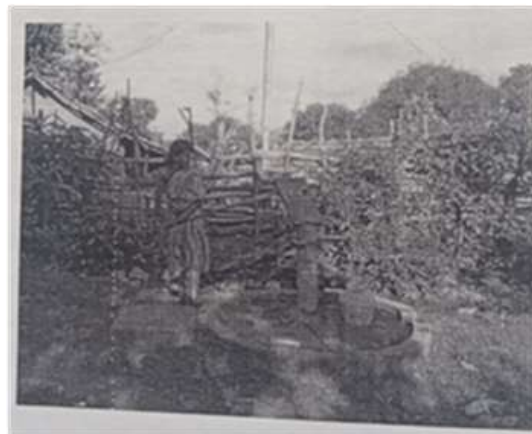
Among the 54 houses 18 houses are thatched, 26 are tiled houses and the remaining houses are terraced houses. Among the total houses about 36 percent of the houses have got electricity facility. The tiled houses were built by the IRDP Scheme in which some of them were totally damaged and few houses were repaired by MYRADA (Mysore resettlement and Development Agency) a non-governmental organization. Also Terraced roofs are partly damaged. Since these people live in thick forest, they should be given proper housing

facilities which enable them to be away from acute problems which crop up from their surroundings.

Tribal Household with no infrastructural facilities

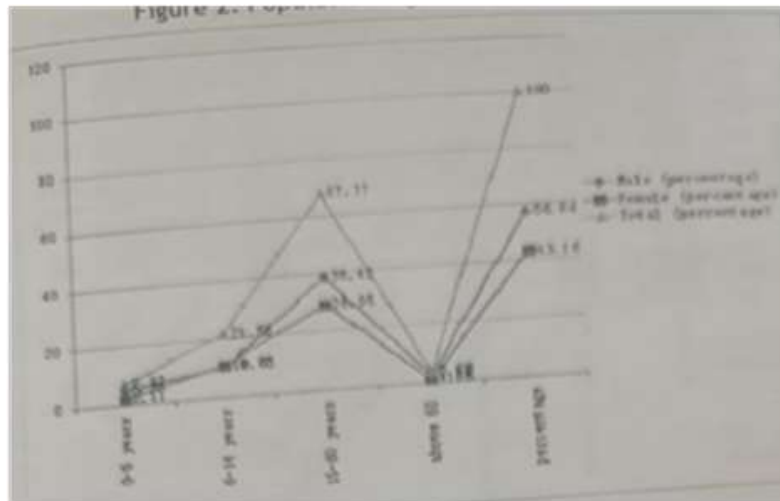


Moreover their entire housing structure consists of a single room which serves as a kitchen, hall and bathroom all in one. Also they utilize firewood as a cheif source of fuel for cooking, this results in huge quantities of smoke to be released leading to various breathing disorder which always goes unnoticed and untreated.



Drinking water is available throughout the year except in the summer months when they are forced to search for alternative water sources which are unclean and contaminated. Consumption of such water only aggravates the spread of infectious diseases which if not treated in time, causes an endemic to breakout leading to loss of many lives.

Figure 2: Populations by Sex and Age Group



Source: Field Survey

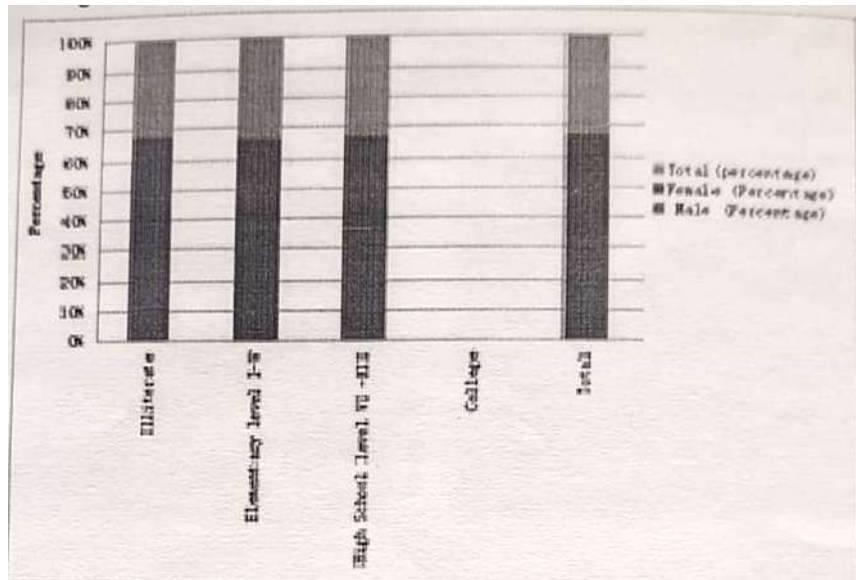
The above figure reveals the age group and sex of the tribal hamlets of Thalaimalai village, the percentage of male population is higher than the women population. Besides, it is also expressed that working population size is more in men i.e., 38.42 percent than the women's population (28.95 percent).

It is well known that the productive age group population is very high in both sexes in this village than the nonproductive population. It is important to note that majority of the men smoke beedies and consume liquor frequently in order to escape the cold which leads to development of lung, liver and other ailments. The household survey indicates that the average size of the household is 4.22 percent, and also the old age group is 2 percent, which is very poor compared to 8 percent of the State's old age group. many a times it is observed that natural death due to old age is uncommon and majority of the times death occur due to living in close proximity of wild animals like leopards, tigers, elephants snakes, scorpions etc. Because these tribals reside in secluded areas even primary medical assistance is unavailable in desperate situations like these.

Education Particulars

Since education is one of the important factors in achieving rapid rural development, it helps in creating a social order founded on the values of freedom, social justice and opportunities. As per the census records, a person is considered literate if he can both read and write with understanding in any language.

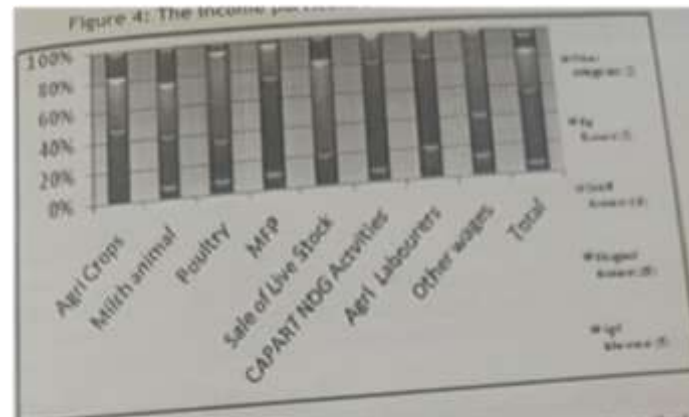
Figure 3: The Literacy level of selected sample respondents



Source: Field survey

The above diagram explains the literacy level of tribal people of Thalaimalai village. Almost 55 percent of the females are illiterate and 41 percent of the males are illiterate, it is observed that the people have studied up to primary education (almost 74 percent), whereas, 27 percent of the people have studied up to high school level. No member in all the six hamlets has studied at college; it has been observed that tribal community in the study area, have studied only up to primary education, they are not interested in pursuing higher education. After primary school, they have been advised to look after the domestic work rather sending them to higher studies. It is evident that lack of education leads to ignorance at all levels causing them to still blindly believe in age old customs and traditions.

Figure 4: The Income Particulars of tribal people in (Rs.)

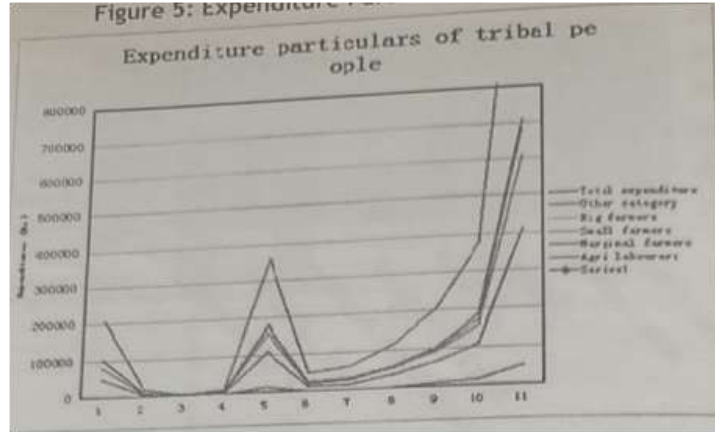


Source: Field survey

The above figure reveals that the main sources of income of the tribal people are Agricultural crops, Milch animal, Poultry, Minor forest products, Sale of livestock, CAPART and NOG activities, Agricultural labour etc. The tribal group is divided into Agricultural labourers, Marginal farmers, Small farmers, big farmers and other categories. It is important to note that among the various sources of income; only MFP has contributed maximum income to the tribals than the other sources of occupation. i.e., (34.05)

Next to MFP agricultural crops gives 33.41 percent income to tribal farmers. The other main subsidiary income of the tribal community in the study area is Milch animal and agricultural wage, which holds 9.21 percent and 7.94 percent respectively. The other sources of income is from poultry, sale of livestock, CAPART, NOG activities and other activities, i.e., about 15 percent of the total income. Therefore we can conclude that the tribal people mainly depend upon collecting the minor forest for their main income, but marginal and agricultural labourers tend to pick up any kind of job available to them. As they have a meager income it is taken for granted that little or no amount of money on any kind of medical expenses.

Figure 5: Expenditure Particulars of Tribal households



Source: Field Survey

The above figure reveals that expenditure incurred by the tribal people on various aspects such as expenditure on agricultural crops, expenditure on Milch animals, house tax and land tax, social and Religious ceremonies, medical and educational expenses etc., It is understood that expenditure incurred by the tribal people (all categories) on social and religious ceremonies are much more than the other expenditures. Almost 25.40 percent of expenditure goes to only ceremonies and the next important item of expenditure goes to household expenditure i.e., 26.37 percent and the miscellaneous is 14.41 percent. It signifies that they believe in old customs and traditions when it comes to curing of diseases rather than visiting or taking any doctoral advice.

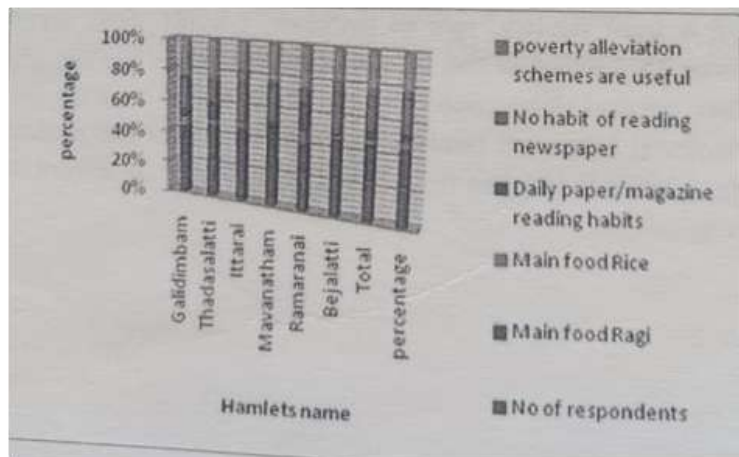


Figure 6: General information particulars

The above figure contains the general information particulars of tribal people, rice. The reason is that they cultivate only ragi and jowar in their field. Because of their majority of them consume only Ragi, it has been considered as inferior food compared to insufficient diet these tribals are usually victims of malnutrition, anemia, and are immune compromised which in turn leads to infection of the least pathogenic diseases which has resulted because of poor immune system. Since they live inside the thick forest they can hardly get the News dailies and other things. It is important to note that only 17.78 percent of the tribal people read news paper. Majority of the tribal community in the study area, i.e., 82.22 percent of the people never read regional news papers at all and there are no library facilities inside the tribal area where almost 1000 people are living. It signifies that development is a stepping-stone to economic and social development, and the most tribal people are so illiterate and ignorant about outside activities. Educational effective instrument for empowering the tribal; but it is not very much successful in tribal areas due to lack of transport facilities and lack of infrastructural facilities.

Conclusions & Suggestions

Since agriculture is the main occupation of tribal community in the study area, they are in dire need of irrigation and electricity for proper functioning of the tribal economy. This occupation is mainly seasonal hence providing them with work only during certain months of the year and rendering them jobless otherwise.

Unlike plain area population, these people are not utilizing their productive man power efficiently due to the lack of infrastructural facilities and the age old customs and traditions.

It is important to note that among the various sources of income; only MFP has contributed maximum income to the tribals than any other source of occupation. While trading these products (MFP), they are being exploited both by private traders as well as by cooperatives/corporations set up by Governments. The collection of MFP is the main or substantial source of livelihood for a large percentage of Scheduled tribes and is fast shrinking in the recent years due to lack of transport and marketing facilities. As a result, they are Unable to bear the burden of poverty, male members of several families migrated to nearby cities like Bangalore and Mysore in Karnataka in search of employment, leaving behind other family members to fend for themselves. Therefore the government should promote alternative sources of employment for the tribal community in the study area. The enable them to mingle with the mainstream society in the plains. The government should provide them, self-employment loans and housing facilities. This will give yearly permit tickets to all the eligible persons who are willing to collect minor forest produce. It is suggested that the property, is solely being enjoyed by the tribals at large.

This will achieve the twin objective of generating more employment opportunities which in turn will bring overall development.

Regarding the consumption pattern of the households, they mostly consume Ragi and 'varagu' and few of them consume rice which is issued by the fair price shops. If these fair price shops provided legumes along with rice it would enhance their nutrient levels and give them little resistance to various diseases. These fair price shops are located in Bejaloty and Hasanur, they are 3 to 6 kilometers away from the other villages which results in very poor percentage of people to take advantage of this facility. The prime reason being lack of transport facilities. There are no emergency medical facilities at night hours causing them to look death in the face many a times in case of emergencies. It would be a great help if basic medicines for common diseases like cold, fever, diarrhea and snake bites were made available at these fair price shops which would save many lives in these regions.

These people are leading primitive lifestyles which do not allow room for diversity of any sort, but only allow them to fulfill their basic needs for survival. It is understood that they spend more on social and religious functions than others, which proves that these people are bounded by old customs and traditions, that they hardly spend money on health, hygiene and educational facilities. Zoonotic diseases transmitted via animals like cattle, sheep and wild animals cannot be diagnosed and treated in well time resulting in spread of the disease very easily.

Suggestions

The above study concludes that socio economic status of the Thalaimai area is a cause of major concern as these individuals are residing in inhuman conditions and steps must be taken to provide them with better living conditions.

1. As we have seen in the case study of tribal population, it is proved that the living conditions of the tribal population is not favorable compared with the plain area population.
2. The existing socio economic conditions are not adequate enough to bring them above the poverty line, hence subjecting them to fall prey to any sort of disease.
3. Government of India has introduced various welfare programmes for the benefit of the tribal community in the study area. But the implementation is very poor due to backwardness of the people and their ignorance.
4. Better sanitation and health facilities is the need of the hour for the tribals residing here as it the only way they can lead a better life. When there is a curb on infectious diseases via water and food sources which are basic amenities of man they can breathe easily and live carefree.
5. There is a considerable distance between one hamlets to another and there is no transport facility available to them, as a result they keep crossing wild animals

even during day time. They have to cross a big stream to go to the Fair price shop in Bejality but there are herds of elephants which are always gathered over there, hence it is difficult for them to cross that area without putting their life at risk. The construction of roadways is a prime need to fulfill easy and safe movement of *these tribals*.

6. Their customs and traditions are totally different from that of the plain area people; therefore they maintain a distance between the outsiders. The government should take adequate steps to make them friendly with the plain area people by interaction so that they can learn other languages making them comfortable in turn helping them to modify their standard of living.
7. The tribal population in the study area are destroying the forest and creating problems to the wild animals and nature so wild animals keep coming to the living area and destroy the crops and properties which results in frequent deaths of wild animals in this area. Therefore certain boundaries must be established for the safety and endangerment of wild animals which will also keep the tribals a safe distance away from them.
8. They have been misused by the money lenders and officials easily due to their backwardness and illiteracy. Therefore government should take steps to introduce tribal oriented developmental activities to enhance their ability as individuals and making them comfortable to lead normal lives like that of the plain area people with twin objective of generating more employment opportunities which in turn will bring overall development.
9. Regarding the consumption pattern of the households, they mostly consume Ragi and 'varagu' and few of them consume rice which is issued by the fair price shops. These fair price shops are located in Bejality and Hasanur, they are 3 to 6 kilometers away from the other villages which results in very poor percentage of people to take advantage of this facility, The prime reason being lack of transport facilities.

Therefore the study concludes that isolation remains the main cause of social, economic and moral backwardness of any kind of tribal area. The given area of study also exhibits the same causing them to lead lives of disparity and poverty. People's development issues cannot be tackled in isolation, other infrastructure like roads, transport, schools, hospitals etc need to be strengthened to ensure tribal development, since the area is predominantly agricultural, focus can be made to develop agriculture and allied sectors, like horticulture, plantation and social forestry etc. As the potential for these activities is high, each of them will create sizeable demand for regular labour force. However, minimal infrastructure has to be developed for the programmes in agriculture and allied activities

which includes construction of roads, godowns and other facilities. It is felt that a substantive and sustainable developmental programme in agricultural and allied sectors can strengthen the tribal economy. But above all it is important that official machinery has to be sensitized to deal with tribal development problems not merely as 'paid jobs' but 'service' to community and nation building.

Change is the heartbeat of growth. In the past few years there has been a significant growth and change in these rural tribal hamlets resulting in their prosperity to a certain level. Other welcome changes were also observed like they are now equipped with certain amount of basic amenities.

"Educate one man, you educate one person, but educate a woman and you educate an entire civilization".

- Mahatma Gandhi