

## **Survey of Villages in Tribal Development Blocks**

Orissa – Narayanapatna Block

Tripura – Amarpur Block

### **1. The Study**

At the request of the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Programme Evaluation Organisation undertook the survey of villages in Tribal Development Blocks. The scope of the study was finalised in consultation with the representatives of the Ministry of Home Affairs, community Development, Cooperation and Panchayati Raj and the Planning Commission.

### **2. Objectives**

The main objective of the survey was to study the problems of land alienation, indebtedness and marketing in the socio-economic setting of the tribal areas.

### **3. Sample size/Criteria for selection of Sample**

It was decided to take up the study in two selected blocks of Orissa and Tripura and the choice fell on the Narayanapatna Block in Orissa and the Amarpur Block in Tripura.

Six predominantly tribal villages from two out of the five panchayats of Narayanapatna Block of Orissa were selected for the study in consultation with the block staff on the basis of certain characteristics such as population, accessibility, proximity to market centres and Panchayat Hqrs and the extent of urban contact and influence.

In Amarpur block of Tripura five villages inhabited by four major tribes were selected for intensive study. The villages were selected in consultation with the block officials. A total of 153 households from Narayanapatna block and 162 from Amarpur block were interviewed.

### **4. Reference Period**

The field work for the survey was undertaken towards the end of 1963 in Narayanapatna and in the beginning of 1965 in Amarpur. The data were collected for the period 1962-63 for Narayanapatna Block and 1963-64 for Amarpur Block.

### **5. Main Findings**

1. Cultivation including shifting cultivation (known as 'Podu' in Narayanapatna and 'Jhum' in Amarpur) was the chief occupation of the majority of the tribal households in both the selected blocks. The net sown area constituted only 8.4% in Narayanapatna and 8% in Amarpur.

2. It was found that some of the posts were not filled up throughout the sanction period. Further, being a tribal area largely covered by forests, the stall selected showed reluctance to join or whosoever joined was always keen on getting a transfer. Whatever staff was available, did not move out of headquarters frequently and thus the extension work in the villages suffered.
3. Acceptance of new practices sponsored was reported to be slow in Narayanapatna owing to factors like poor contacts by the VLWs and other block officials. In Amarpur block it was found that the bulk of the agriculturists including all tribal people were not in the habit of making any use of improved agricultural practices.
4. No record of land alienation from tribals to non-tribals were available with the block or revenue department. But discussions with block and revenue officials revealed that such transfers of land do take place occasionally by mutual agreement between the parties concerned without a formal sale deed being drawn up. In the absence of formal records, the exact magnitude of this problem could not be ascertained.
5. The tribal households preferred to sell their little surplus in the nearest weekly market because of facility of selling their goods in bulk, getting ready cash and to buy goods for their own use. However, the middlemen operated in a manner, which was detrimental to the interest of the seller. Standard weights and measures were practically unknown in the area. The purchasing process in the area revealed the middlemen's exploitation at its worst. In Amarpur block non-tribal traders appeared to dominate different marketing centres
6. To provide an alternative, a primary marketing cooperative society in Amarpur Block and two marketing cooperative societies in Narayanapatna Block were organised. But it was gathered that private interests seemed to dominate these societies and the interests of the tribals were rarely protected.
7. Because of the subsistence level of living and the lack of savings, most of the tribal households were obliged to borrow money for the purchase of foodgrains during lean months and other items of consumption and clothing during festive occasions. Because of the high rate of interest charged and the prevalence of some sort of barter system, the tribal families were exploited by the traders-cum-money lenders to a great extent.
8. It was surprising that people's knowledge about the programme and contact with the block staff had been meagre in spite of the fact that the blocks had been in operation for a number of years. About 55% of the respondents in Narayanapatna and 33% in Amarpur did not know the block officials. Only 5% selected respondents stated that some programmes had been taken up.

9. With regard to changes in living conditions, only 6% respondents in Narayanapatna Block had reported that they were better off in respect of food and clothing while in Amarpur block, this was reported by 31% respondents.
10. Only a small proportion of respondents (16%) were hopeful of a better future for their children in Narayanapatna while the percentage was 31 in Amarpur.
11. As to the question whether the Government was taking more interest in their welfare, only a small proportion of respondents (10%) replied in the affirmative in Narayanapatna. On the contrary, a substantial number of respondents, i.e. 64 percent in Amarpur Block replied positively.

## **6. Suggestions**

1. There is a good scope for promoting cultivation of fruits like oranges as a plantation crop. Hence adequate attention should be given towards this aspect.
2. Attempts should be made to extend the area and introduce improved cultivation practices by leasing the area to the tribal households.
3. Provision of timely loans at lower rate of interest should be made in order to mitigate their financial difficulties.
4. There is a need for greater contact and communication between the block staff and the tribals for creating the necessary climate for development.