

Integrating Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups into India's Sustainable Development Vision

Shubham Bhardwaj, Dr. Sanjay Kumar Singh,

¹ Guest Faculty, Govt. Naveen College, Vatgan, Balodabazar-Bhatapara, C.G.

² Assistant Professor, Govt. Pt Shyamacharan Shukla College, Raipur, C..G.

Abstract

This research paper critically examines the complex interlinkages between the socio-economic challenges faced by Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India and the aspirational targets of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It analyzes how current development initiatives align with or fall short of achieving inclusive and equitable progress for these marginalized communities. The analysis highlights that the unique characteristics and deep-seated vulnerabilities of PVTGs present a profound test for the global commitment to "leave no one behind." Persistent data deficiencies, the risk of cultural erosion in development efforts, and entrenched intergenerational cycles of poverty are identified as critical barriers. Despite significant governmental efforts, including the recent PM-JANMAN scheme, the report concludes that a paradigm shift towards more tailored, culturally sensitive, and community-led interventions, coupled with robust, disaggregated data systems, is imperative to ensure PVTGs are genuinely integrated into India's sustainable development trajectory by 2030.

Keywords: PVTGs, SDGs, India, tribal communities, vulnerability, poverty, health, education, livelihoods, social exclusion, government initiatives, PM-JANMAN, Forest Rights Act, data gaps, cultural preservation, community-led development

1. Introduction

India, a nation characterized by its immense diversity, is home to a substantial tribal population, officially recognized as Scheduled Tribes (STs). As per the 2011 census, STs constitute 8.6% of the country's total population.¹ Within this broad classification, a distinct sub-category was identified in 1973 by the Dhebar Commission: Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). This classification emerged from the recognition that certain tribal communities exhibited significantly lower levels of development compared to other tribal groups.¹ The primary objective behind establishing this category was to prioritize and enhance the living standards of these particularly endangered communities. In 2006, these PTGs were officially renamed Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), a designation that underscores their precarious socio-economic standing.¹

The global community, through the United Nations, adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, establishing a comprehensive framework for universal progress. This agenda is underpinned by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 specific

targets, designed to foster peace and prosperity for all people and the planet.⁵ These goals embody a holistic understanding of development, recognizing that the eradication of poverty and other deprivations must be pursued in conjunction with improvements in health, education, gender equality, economic growth, climate action, and environmental preservation.⁵ As a major global economy and the world's largest democracy, India's commitment to and progress towards these SDGs are pivotal to the global agenda. The nation has embraced a "whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach" to localize the SDGs, integrating them into its national development plans and flagship programs.⁷

The purpose of this research is to critically examine the intricate relationship between the profound socio-economic challenges confronting PVTGs in India and the ambitious targets set forth by the SDGs. The paper will analyze the extent to which existing development initiatives effectively address the unique vulnerabilities of these communities and contribute to their inclusive and equitable progress. Ultimately, it seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape and offer evidence-based recommendations for accelerating sustainable development for PVTGs.

The inherent characteristics and deep-seated vulnerabilities of PVTGs, including their remoteness, reliance on pre-agricultural technologies, low literacy rates, and stagnant or declining populations, place them at the extreme end of the development spectrum. These attributes position them as the communities "furthest behind" in the pursuit of the SDG agenda's core principle of "leaving no one behind." This situation is not merely a reflection of a development gap; it represents a fundamental structural challenge deeply embedded in their distinctive socio-cultural and geographical contexts. Achieving the SDGs for PVTGs, therefore, necessitates more than conventional development strategies. It demands highly customized, culturally sensitive, and geographically specific interventions that directly address their fundamental barriers, which are often overlooked or inadequately addressed in broader national development metrics. The challenge extends beyond simple resource allocation, requiring a profound adaptation of policy frameworks to their unique and diverse needs.

Historically, the classification of PVTGs, originating from the Dhebar Commission's findings and subsequent renaming, clearly demonstrates the Indian government's longstanding awareness of these groups' exceptional vulnerability. This historical recognition signifies a clear policy intent to uplift their living standards and address their critical needs. However, despite decades of policy formulation and implementation, PVTGs continue to grapple with persistent challenges such as pervasive poverty, severe malnutrition, widespread illiteracy, inadequate healthcare access, and profound social exclusion. This enduring disparity between policy aspirations and the lived realities on the ground points to a significant disconnect. It suggests that while the frameworks and legal provisions may be well-intentioned, their translation into tangible, equitable outcomes for these communities remains problematic. This gap indicates potential issues within policy design, resource allocation mechanisms, or a

fundamental lack of understanding regarding the nuanced, specific requirements of PVTGs, rather than a mere absence of recognition of their vulnerable status.

2. Understanding Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

A. Historical Context and Evolution of the PVTG Classification

The concept of Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) was formally introduced in India in 1973, following the recommendations of the Dhebar Commission. This commission highlighted a significant disparity in the rate of development among various Scheduled Tribes, leading to the identification of a distinct sub-category for those considered "less developed".¹ Initially, 52 communities were designated as PTGs during the Fourth Five Year Plan. Over subsequent plans, additional groups were identified, bringing the total to 75 communities by 1993-94, with the Maram in Manipur being the 75th group recognized.³ In a significant policy shift in 2006, the Government of India officially renamed these PTGs to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) to better reflect their heightened state of vulnerability.¹

Currently, these 75 PVTGs are distributed across 18 states and one Union Territory, the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.³ Demographic data from the 2011 Census indicates that the total PVTG population exceeds 40 lakhs.¹ Odisha accounts for the largest PVTG population, with 8.66 lakh individuals, followed by Madhya Pradesh with 6.09 lakh, and Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana) with 5.39 lakh.¹ Within Odisha, the Saura community is the largest PVTG, numbering 5.35 lakh members.¹ While 12 PVTGs have populations exceeding 50,000, many others consist of 1,000 or fewer individuals, highlighting their often small and isolated nature.¹

B. Defining Characteristics and Socio-Economic Indicators of Vulnerability

PVTGs are distinguished from other tribal communities by a set of specific criteria that underscore their extreme vulnerability. These include: a pre-agricultural level of technology, often manifested through practices such as hunting, gathering, and shifting cultivation; stagnant or even declining population growth; exceptionally low literacy rates; and an economy primarily focused on subsistence.² Beyond these official criteria, PVTGs typically exhibit a small, homogeneous population size, significant geographical isolation, adherence to traditional social structures, and frequently, the absence of a written language.⁴ Their unique cultural diversity, with distinct practices and customs specific to each group and locality, is also a defining feature.⁴

The socio-economic challenges faced by PVTGs are multifaceted and deeply entrenched:

- **Poverty and Food Insecurity:** These are identified as fundamental drivers of high rates of malnutrition, morbidity, and mortality within tribal populations, including PVTGs.¹ Many PVTG households subsist on extremely low incomes, with some studies indicating that over half of respondents fall into low-income categories.¹⁷ Their position at the "bottom of the human development index" is largely attributable to a severe lack of

livelihood and food resources in their habitats.¹

- **Health and Nutrition:** PVTGs experience alarmingly poor health and nutritional outcomes. High rates of underdevelopment and undernutrition are prevalent, particularly among children.¹ Challenges include limited access to healthcare, inadequate maternal and child health services, poor sanitation, and a lack of safe drinking water.¹ The prevalence of anemia among women of reproductive age is particularly high.²⁰ In many instances, a lack of basic health education leads communities to rely on traditional healthcare practices, which can sometimes exacerbate health issues.²¹
- **Education and Literacy:** A defining characteristic of PVTGs is their "extremely low literacy rates," significantly lower than other tribal groups and the national average.² A substantial number of adolescents remain out of school, hindering their overall development and well-being.¹ High dropout rates, especially at the primary level, are often directly linked to economic pressures and poverty, as children are compelled to contribute to family livelihoods.²³ Female literacy rates are notably lower compared to their male counterparts.¹⁵
- **Livelihood and Economic Backwardness:** PVTGs operate at a subsistence level, with their economies heavily dependent on natural resources, particularly forests, for sustenance.¹ However, their traditional livelihoods are increasingly threatened by factors such as legal bans on hunting, diminishing availability of and demand for forest products, and the impacts of climate change.¹⁷ Furthermore, these communities often lack control over essential resources and assets.¹⁷ Their vulnerability is compounded by external pressures from industrial projects, conservation efforts, tourism, and the complexities of forest bureaucracy, which can disrupt their customary ways of life and resource access.¹⁸
- **Social Exclusion and Isolation:** PVTGs endure a marginalized status, experiencing profound social exclusion and limited interaction with non-tribal communities.¹ Their significant geographical isolation further entrenches their marginalization.² Well-intentioned efforts to assimilate them into mainstream society have, in some instances, inadvertently led to cultural disintegration and erosion, undermining their unique identities.⁴ Historically, there have even been instances where PVTGs were denied fundamental rights, such as access to contraceptive use, based on assumptions about their population trends. This policy, however, was later ruled a violation of their right to privacy.³
- **Infrastructure and Connectivity:** These communities frequently lack adequate healthcare facilities, face limited transportation options, suffer from poor connectivity, and have insufficient access to safe drinking water and sanitation.¹
- **Data Deficiency:** A significant impediment to effective policy design and implementation for PVTGs is the pervasive lack of current and comprehensive data. This includes a notable absence of updated habitation data and baseline surveys.¹³ This data gap directly compromises the efficient delivery of essential services and hinders effective policy planning and monitoring.¹³

The persistent lack of current and comprehensive data on PVTGs is more than a mere statistical void; it represents a fundamental obstacle to effective policy design and implementation. This absence of granular information means that many PVTGs remain effectively "invisible" to targeted development interventions, thereby perpetuating their marginalized status despite the government's stated intentions. Without accurate, real-time, and disaggregated data on their population sizes, health status, educational attainment, and livelihood conditions, any interventions, regardless of their intent or funding, risk being misdirected, inefficient, or entirely failing to reach the most vulnerable populations. This directly impacts the ability to measure progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals for these specific communities. The "invisibility" caused by these data gaps fundamentally challenges the core SDG principle of "leaving no one behind," as it becomes impossible to precisely identify, reach, and track those who are truly at the margins. This situation perpetuates a cycle of underdevelopment and continued vulnerability, as interventions cannot be precisely tailored or effectively evaluated for their impact.

Another critical consideration in PVTG development is the potential for cultural erosion. The existing literature notes that efforts to assimilate these communities into mainstream society have sometimes resulted in "cultural disintegration and erosion".⁴ The importance of safeguarding PVTG culture is explicitly recognized.¹⁷ This highlights a fundamental tension: while socio-economic development is undeniably necessary to improve living standards, if pursued without profound cultural understanding and respect, it can inadvertently dismantle the very fabric of these communities. PVTGs are defined by their unique cultural practices, traditional social structures, and intricate dependence on natural resources.¹ External pressures, such as legal restrictions on traditional activities and declining demand for forest products, contribute to the erosion of tribal culture.¹⁷ This raises crucial questions about the true meaning and desired outcomes of "development" for PVTGs. Genuine sustainable development for these groups must be holistic, integrating cultural preservation as an equally vital component, rather than viewing it as an impediment or an afterthought. This perspective is also relevant to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), emphasizing the imperative for inclusive, culturally appropriate governance and policies that empower self-determination rather than imposing external values.

The observed early age of marriage and engagement in livelihood activities among PVTG youth, coupled with persistently low literacy rates, points to an entrenched intergenerational cycle of poverty and educational deprivation. PVTG youth often marry early and are compelled to engage in subsistence activities, heavily relying on forest resources to support their families.¹ Concurrently, these groups are characterized by exceptionally low literacy rates, with a significant proportion of adolescents remaining out of school.¹ This creates a clear causal link: immediate economic pressures and prevailing traditional social norms often lead to children and young people being withdrawn from or never entering formal education. The resulting lack of education and skill development then perpetuates their subsistence-level economy and severely limits their access to improved economic opportunities. This cycle effectively traps successive generations in the same patterns of poverty and vulnerability.

Breaking this cycle requires comprehensive and sustained interventions that not only provide educational opportunities but also address the underlying economic stressors and social norms that drive early marriage and child labor, ensuring that educational investments yield long-term, transformative benefits for the entire community.

Table 1: Key Characteristics and Identification Criteria of PVTGs

Category	Criteria/Characteristics	Description	Source Snippets
Identification Criteria	Pre-agricultural level of technology	Practices like hunting, gathering, shifting cultivation	²
	Stagnant or declining population	Zero or negative population growth	²
	Extremely low literacy rates	Significantly lower than other communities	²
	Subsistence level of economy	Economic activities focused on immediate survival needs	²
Key Characteristics	Small homogeneous population	Typically a small, uniform group	⁴
	Geographic isolation	Reside in remote and isolated areas	²
	Traditional social structures	Maintain long-standing traditions	⁴
	Absence of a written language	Many do not have a developed written language	⁴
	Dependence on traditional sustenance	Livelihoods from gathering, hunting, forest resources, shifting cultivation, livestock	⁴
	Wide cultural diversity	Distinct practices and customs unique to each group	⁴
	High socio-economic inequality	Significant disparities in access to resources/opportunities	¹⁷

Table 2: State-wise Distribution and Population of Select PVTGs (2011 Census data)

State/UT	Number of PVTGs	Total PVTG Population (2011 Census)	Examples of PVTGs in that State/UT	Source Snippets
Odisha	13	866,000	Saura, Kutia Kandha, Mankidia, Bonda, Lodha, Dongria Kondh, Paudi Bhuyan, Juang	¹
Madhya Pradesh	7	609,000	Bharia	¹
Andhra Pradesh (incl. Telangana)	12	539,000	Chenchu	¹
Gujarat	5	144,593	Kotwalia, Kolgha, Kathodi, Siddi, Padhar	²⁸
Karnataka	2	~50,870 (Jenu Kuruba: 36,076; Koraga: 14,794)	Jenukuruba, Koraga	²
Tamil Nadu	6	794,697 (total ST, PVTG subset)	Irular, Konda Reddi, Paliyar, Katunayakkan	¹
Jharkhand (incl. Bihar)	9	Not specified	Asur, Birhor, Birjia, Parhaiya, Korwa	¹⁵
Chhattisgarh (incl. MP)	7	Not specified	Abujhmadia, Baiga, Birhor, Kamars, Pahadi Korwas, Bhunjia, Pandos	¹⁵
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	5	Not specified	Great Andamanese, Jarawa, Onge, Sentinelese, Shompen	⁴
Kerala	5	Not specified	Kadar	¹⁵
West Bengal	3	Not specified	Birhor, Lodha, Totos	¹⁵
Manipur	1	Not specified	Maram	³
Rajasthan	1	Not specified	Not specified	¹⁵
Tripura	1	Not specified	Not specified	¹⁵
Uttarakhand	2	Not specified	Buksa, Raji	¹⁵

Note: The total PVTG population of 40 lakhs is an aggregate figure from the 2011 Census.¹ Detailed 2011 population data for all 75 PVTGs across all states is not uniformly available in the provided snippets. The table above provides specific figures where available and general presence otherwise.

3. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A Framework for Universal Progress

A. Overview of the 17 SDGs and their Overarching Objectives

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), unanimously adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, represent a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.⁵ This ambitious agenda comprises 17 interconnected global goals, supported by 169 specific targets, addressing a broad spectrum of social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.⁶

The overarching objectives of the SDGs are comprehensive, aiming to: eradicate poverty and hunger (SDG 1 & 2); ensure good health and quality education (SDG 3 & 4); achieve gender equality (SDG 5); provide clean water and sanitation, and affordable and clean energy (SDG 6 & 7); promote decent work and economic growth, and build resilient infrastructure, industry, and innovation (SDG 8 & 9); reduce inequalities (SDG 10); foster sustainable cities and communities, and responsible consumption and production (SDG 11 & 12); take urgent climate action (SDG 13); conserve life below water and on land (SDG 14 & 15); promote peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16); and strengthen global partnerships for sustainable development (SDG 17).⁵

India has demonstrated a strong commitment to achieving the SDGs, integrating them into its national development plans and flagship programs. The NITI Aayog, as the nodal agency, plays a leading role in this endeavor, linking government schemes with global goals and working closely with various ministries to ensure a coordinated approach.⁹ The SDG India Index, developed by NITI Aayog, serves as a crucial instrument for monitoring progress at both national and sub-national levels, fostering a spirit of competitive federalism among states and Union Territories.¹⁰

B. Detailed Examination of Key SDG Targets Most Relevant to Marginalized Communities

The universal nature of the SDGs implies that progress must extend to all segments of society, particularly the most marginalized. For communities like PVTGs, several SDG targets hold direct and profound relevance:

- **SDG 1: No Poverty:** This goal aims to end poverty in all its forms everywhere.⁵ Key targets include eradicating extreme poverty (Target 1.1) and ensuring that all people, especially the poor and vulnerable, benefit from social protection systems and have equal access to basic services (Target 1.3).³³
- **SDG 2: Zero Hunger:** This goal seeks to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.⁵ Relevant indicators include the prevalence of undernourishment, severe food insecurity, and stunting among children under five years of age (Target 2.2).³³
- **SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being:** The objective is to ensure healthy lives and

promote well-being for all at all ages.⁵ Important targets include reducing global maternal mortality (Target 3.1), ending preventable deaths of newborns and children under five (Target 3.2), and achieving universal health coverage, including access to quality essential healthcare services (Target 3.8).³³

- **SDG 4: Quality Education:** This goal aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.⁵ Specific targets include ensuring all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education (Target 4.1); ensuring access to quality early childhood development and pre-primary education (Target 4.2); ensuring equal access to technical, vocational, and tertiary education (Target 4.3); substantially increasing the number of youth and adults with relevant skills for employment (Target 4.4); eliminating gender disparities and ensuring equal access for vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples (Target 4.5); and achieving literacy and numeracy for all youth and a substantial proportion of adults (Target 4.6).³³
- **SDG 5: Gender Equality:** This goal strives to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.⁵ Key targets involve ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls (Target 5.1), eliminating harmful practices such as child, early, and forced marriage (Target 5.3), and ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making (Target 5.5).³³
- **SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation:** The aim is to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.⁵ Targets include achieving universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water (Target 6.1) and adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all, ending open defecation, with special attention to vulnerable situations (Target 6.2).³³
- **SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy:** This goal seeks to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.⁵ A core target is universal access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services by 2030 (Target 7.1).³⁸
- **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth:** This goal promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.⁵ Key targets include promoting development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, and the growth of micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (Target 8.3), and achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people and persons with disabilities (Target 8.5).³⁸
- **SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure:** This goal aims to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.⁵ A crucial target is developing quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all (Target 9.1).³⁸
- **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities:** This goal seeks to reduce inequality within and among countries.⁵ Relevant targets include empowering and promoting the social, economic,

and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status (Target 10.2), and ensuring equal opportunity and reducing inequalities of outcome by eliminating discriminatory laws and practices (Target 10.3).³⁸

- **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities:** This goal aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.⁵ A key target is ensuring access for all to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services and upgrading slums (Target 11.1).³⁸
- **SDG 13: Climate Action:** This goal calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.⁵ Targets include strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters (Target 13.1) and integrating climate change measures into national policies, strategies, and planning (Target 13.2).³⁸
- **SDG 15: Life on Land:** This goal focuses on protecting, restoring, and promoting the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems.⁵ Key targets include promoting the sustainable management of all types of forests, halting deforestation, and restoring degraded forests (Target 15.2), and promoting fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources (Target 15.6), as well as enhancing global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities (Target 15.c).³⁸
- **SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions:** This goal promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provides access to justice for all, and builds effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.⁵ Targets include promoting the rule of law and ensuring equal access to justice for all (Target 16.3), and providing legal identity for all, including birth registration (Target 16.9).³⁸

The comprehensive nature of the SDGs underscores that the challenges faced by PVTGs are not isolated but are, in fact, deeply interconnected. Addressing one SDG, such as poverty, without simultaneously considering its linkages to others, such as health, education, or environmental sustainability, is likely to result in suboptimal and unsustainable outcomes.¹⁰ For instance, efforts to improve education (SDG 4) among PVTGs are inherently constrained by pervasive poverty (SDG 1), which often necessitates early engagement in labor (SDG 8) and by poor health conditions (SDG 3) that affect school attendance and learning capacity.¹ Conversely, successful interventions in one area can generate positive ripple effects across multiple goals. For example, improved access to clean water (SDG 6) can significantly enhance health outcomes (SDG 3) by reducing waterborne diseases. This also contributes to gender equality (SDG 5) by lessening the burden of water collection, traditionally borne by women and girls, thereby freeing up their time for educational pursuits (SDG 4). This intricate web of interdependencies highlights that a fragmented or siloed approach to PVTG development, focusing on individual SDGs in isolation, is inherently inefficient and unlikely to yield sustainable results. A truly effective strategy must be holistic and integrated, explicitly recognizing and leveraging the complex causal relationships and synergies that exist between different dimensions of vulnerability and development.

While national bodies like NITI Aayog track SDG progress at the state and Union Territory levels through mechanisms like the SDG India Index¹⁰, a critical issue persists: the specific data for PVTGs often remains inadequate.¹³ This represents a significant challenge for truly assessing inclusive development. Even if a state demonstrates overall progress and is categorized as a "Front Runner" on a particular SDG, this aggregated data does not guarantee that PVTGs within that state are benefiting equally or experiencing comparable improvements. The absence of PVTG-specific, disaggregated data creates a critical blind spot in national SDG reporting. Their unique vulnerabilities and the actual impact of development interventions on their lives are not adequately captured or reflected in these broader metrics. This makes it impossible to genuinely determine if the "leave no one behind" principle is being effectively applied to these most vulnerable groups, potentially leading to misallocation of resources and the perpetuation of their marginalization. Consequently, there is an urgent need for more granular, community-level data collection methods specifically tailored to PVTG habitations, ensuring their experiences and progress are visibly integrated into the national SDG narrative.

4. Intersecting Vulnerabilities: Mapping PVTG Challenges to SDG Targets

The unique and profound challenges faced by Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India are not isolated issues but are deeply intertwined with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Addressing the vulnerabilities of PVTGs is thus not merely a matter of social justice but a critical imperative for India to achieve its 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. This section systematically maps the identified socio-economic challenges of PVTGs to specific SDG targets, illustrating the direct relevance and urgency of targeted interventions.

A. SDG 1 (No Poverty) & SDG 2 (Zero Hunger): Addressing Extreme Poverty, Food Insecurity, and Malnutrition

PVTGs are disproportionately affected by extreme poverty and chronic food insecurity, placing them at the very bottom of the human development index.¹ Their lack of livelihood and food resources is a primary cause for the high incidence of malnutrition, morbidity, and mortality within these communities.¹ A significant proportion of PVTG households struggle with low incomes, often relying on a subsistence-level economy.¹⁷

These challenges directly contradict the core objectives of SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). SDG Target 1.1 aims to eradicate extreme poverty globally by 2030, while Target 2.1 seeks to end hunger and ensure universal access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food, particularly for the poor and vulnerable.³³ Furthermore, Target 2.2 explicitly calls for an end to all forms of malnutrition.³³ The precarious economic situation of PVTGs, their heavy dependence on often-depleting natural resources, and their limited access to market opportunities⁴ exacerbate these issues. Their struggle to meet basic needs, as evidenced by high rates of malnutrition and associated health problems, serves as a stark indicator of the distance yet to be covered in achieving these fundamental global goals.

B. SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being): Bridging Gaps in Healthcare Access, Maternal and Child Health, and Disease Prevalence

PVTGs suffer from alarmingly poor health conditions, a consequence of systemic factors including poverty, widespread illiteracy, inadequate sanitation, lack of safe drinking water, and the geographical isolation of their habitations.¹ There is a high prevalence of undernourishment and undernutrition, particularly among children, reflecting severe developmental deficits.¹ Maternal and child health services are limited, contributing to higher mortality rates.¹ Anemia is a widespread issue, especially among women of reproductive age, posing significant risks for both maternal and child survival.²⁰ The reliance on traditional healthcare practices, often due to a lack of access to or awareness of modern medical facilities, can further complicate health outcomes.²¹

These health disparities directly undermine SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). SDG Target 3.1 aims to reduce the global maternal mortality ratio, while Target 3.2 seeks to end preventable deaths of newborns and children under five.³³ Target 3.8 calls for achieving universal health coverage, including access to quality essential healthcare services.³³ The geographical remoteness and lack of infrastructure in PVTG areas make it extremely difficult to extend essential healthcare services.¹ This results in higher rates of preventable diseases and mortality, directly hindering the achievement of SDG 3 targets and necessitating urgent, targeted health interventions.

C. SDG 4 (Quality Education) & SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth): Enhancing Literacy Rates, School Enrollment, Skill Development, and Sustainable Livelihood Opportunities

PVTGs are characterized by "extremely low literacy rates," significantly lagging behind other communities.² A notable proportion of adolescents are out of school, impeding their overall development.¹ High dropout rates, particularly at the primary level, are often driven by economic necessity, as children are pulled into livelihood activities to support their families.²³ This perpetuates a lack of education and essential skills, contributing to their economic backwardness and limited control over resources.¹⁷ PVTG youth often marry early and engage in subsistence livelihoods heavily dependent on forest resources.¹

These educational and economic challenges directly impede the realization of SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). SDG Target 4.1 aims to ensure that all children complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education, while Target 4.5 seeks to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access for vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples.³⁸ Target 4.6 focuses on achieving literacy and numeracy for all youth and a substantial proportion of adults.³⁸ Simultaneously, SDG Target 8.3 promotes development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, and entrepreneurship, and Target 8.5 aims for full and productive employment and decent work for all.³⁸ The pressure for early engagement in subsistence livelihoods among PVTGs creates a vicious cycle, preventing skill development

and access to decent work, thereby hindering progress on SDG 8. Without comprehensive and targeted interventions in education and skill-building, PVTGs will remain excluded from broader economic growth and opportunities, perpetuating their marginalized status and making the achievement of these SDGs elusive.

D. SDG 5 (Gender Equality) & SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities): Empowering Women and Girls, Combating Discrimination, and Promoting Social Inclusion

Within PVTG communities, gender disparities are pronounced, exemplified by the early age of marriage for youth¹ and significantly lower literacy rates among females compared to males.¹⁵ These groups also experience pervasive social exclusion and a lack of political representation.¹ Historically, there have been instances of direct denial of rights, such as access to contraceptive services for PVTG women, based on misconceptions about their population trends. This discriminatory practice, as seen with the Baiga community, was later ruled a violation of their right to privacy.³

These issues directly undermine SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). SDG Target 5.1 aims to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls, while Target 5.3 seeks to eliminate harmful practices like child, early, and forced marriage.³³ Target 5.5 focuses on ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership.³⁸ Concurrently, SDG Target 10.2 aims to empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of various statuses, and Target 10.3 seeks to ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome by eliminating discriminatory laws and practices.³⁸ The deep-seated gender disparities within PVTGs, particularly the educational and reproductive health challenges faced by women, directly impede progress towards SDG 5. The historical denial of reproductive rights, for example, serves as a stark illustration of systemic discrimination that violates fundamental human rights and SDG 5.1. These issues are further compounded by the broader social exclusion and lack of political agency experienced by PVTGs, which act as significant barriers to achieving SDG 10's targets for reduced inequalities and inclusive participation. Empowering PVTG women and ensuring their full inclusion in decision-making processes are therefore crucial for holistic development.

E. SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) & SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) & SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) & SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities): Ensuring Basic Services and Resilient Infrastructure

PVTG habitations frequently suffer from a severe lack of fundamental infrastructure and basic services. This includes inadequate access to safe drinking water, poor sanitation facilities, limited transportation options, and a general lack of connectivity, including electricity and telecom services.¹ Their geographical isolation and often challenging terrain make the provision and maintenance of such services particularly difficult.¹

This absence of essential amenities directly hinders the achievement of several SDGs. SDG Target 6.1 aims for universal access to safe and affordable drinking water, and Target 6.2 for adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene.³⁸ SDG Target 7.1 seeks universal access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services.³⁸ SDG Target 9.1 focuses on developing quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure with equitable access for all.³⁸ Finally, SDG Target 11.1 aims to ensure access for all to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services.³⁸ The lack of these basic services not only severely impacts the daily lives, health, and dignity of PVTG members but also fundamentally impedes their economic development and access to education. This creates a reinforcing cycle of deprivation that is antithetical to the vision of sustainable and inclusive communities outlined by the SDGs. Bridging these infrastructure gaps is a foundational step towards enabling PVTGs to participate in and benefit from national development.

F. SDG 13 (Climate Action) & SDG 15 (Life on Land): Promoting Environmental Sustainability, Traditional Knowledge, and Climate Resilience

PVTGs are heavily dependent on natural resources, particularly forests, for their sustenance and traditional livelihoods.¹ This intrinsic link makes them disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.⁴² Unsustainable tourism practices, resource depletion, and habitat destruction further exacerbate their environmental challenges.⁴ While their traditional knowledge and practices are crucial for ecosystem management and climate adaptation³², challenges in effectively implementing the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, often lead to insecure land tenure and continued livelihood issues.²

These environmental dependencies and vulnerabilities directly relate to SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land). SDG Target 13.1 aims to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards, and Target 13.2 calls for integrating climate change measures into national policies.³⁸ SDG Target 15.2 promotes the sustainable management of forests and halting deforestation, while Target 15.c emphasizes increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities.³⁸ The insecure land tenure and difficulties in exercising rights under FRA undermine PVTGs' ability to sustainably manage their traditional forest resources and adapt to changing climatic conditions.² This creates a significant barrier to achieving both climate action and biodiversity conservation goals, highlighting the need to empower PVTGs as key partners in environmental stewardship.

G. SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions): Ensuring Legal Identity, Access to Justice, and Inclusive Governance

PVTGs experience a marginalized status, often coupled with a lack of control over resources and political deprivation.¹ They face significant challenges in obtaining legal identity and accessing government welfare schemes.⁴⁸ Historical instances, such as the denial of

contraceptive rights to the Baiga community, illustrate a broader pattern of rights infringements.³

These issues directly challenge SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). SDG Target 16.3 aims to promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice for all, while Target 16.7 seeks to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels.³⁸ Crucially, Target 16.9 calls for providing legal identity for all, including birth registration.³⁸ The marginalized status and political exclusion of PVTGs prevent their full participation in societal processes and hinder their access to justice. Difficulties in obtaining legal identity documents, as well as navigating complex bureaucratic processes for scheme access, further entrench their vulnerability.⁴⁸ Empowering PVTGs through inclusive governance, ensuring their legal rights are recognized and protected, and facilitating their access to justice mechanisms are fundamental prerequisites for achieving peaceful, just, and truly inclusive societies.

5. Government Initiatives and Progress

A. Major Schemes and Policies for PVTG Development

The Government of India has recognized the unique challenges faced by PVTGs and has implemented several targeted schemes and policies for their development. A flagship initiative is the "**Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) scheme**", administered by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. This centrally sponsored scheme provides 100% central assistance to the 18 states and the Union Territory where the 75 identified PVTGs reside. It operates as a gap-filling intervention, supporting projects tailored to the specific needs of these communities across sectors such as education, health, livelihood, skill development, agricultural development, housing, habitat, and cultural conservation.¹⁴ Conservation-cum-Development (CCD) plans are prepared by each state/UT based on need assessments, then appraised and approved by the Ministry.¹⁴

A more recent and significant initiative is the **Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN)**, launched in November 2023 with a substantial budget of ₹24,000 crore.⁴ This mission, an extension of the earlier PM-PVTG Development Mission, aims for the holistic development of all 75 PVTGs across 22,000+ villages in 18 states and UTs.¹⁵ It is a multi-ministerial effort, with 17 line ministries collaborating to bridge critical gaps in social infrastructure, healthcare, education, and livelihoods.⁴ The scheme focuses on providing essential facilities like safe housing, clean drinking water, sanitation, road and telecom connectivity, electrification, and sustainable livelihoods.⁴

Beyond these dedicated schemes, PVTGs also benefit from broader government programs that are either generally applicable or specifically targeted towards Scheduled Tribes:

- **Housing and Infrastructure:** Schemes like **PM-Gram Awaas Yojana** provide pucca houses, while **PM-Gram Sadak Yojana** focuses on road connectivity.⁴ The **Jal Jeevan Mission** aims to provide piped water connections.⁴

- **Education:** The **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)** are a significant investment, with 728 schools approved to provide quality education to tribal children from Class VI to XII, including PVTGs.⁴ The Ministry of Tribal Affairs also implements various **scholarship schemes** (Pre-Matric, Post-Matric, National Overseas, National Fellowship) benefiting over 1 crore ST students annually.⁸
- **Health:** The **PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission** and the **Sickle Cell Anemia Elimination Mission** (announced in Budget 2023-24) aim to strengthen healthcare access and address specific health challenges in tribal areas.⁸ Mobile medical units are also deployed to remote areas.⁸
- **Livelihood and Economic Development:** Initiatives like **Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs)** under the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM) aim to foster tribal entrepreneurship and support forest-based livelihoods by providing market linkages and minimum support prices for Minor Forest Products (MFPs).⁸ Schemes for animal husbandry, horticulture, sericulture, and minor irrigation also exist.²⁹
- **Digital Inclusion:** The **Digital India Programme** aims to extend digital services like Aadhaar and UPI to tribal communities.⁸
- **Rights-Based Approach:** The **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006**, is a landmark legislation aimed at recognizing the rights of forest-dwelling communities, including PVTGs, over forest land and resources.² This includes recognizing habitat rights, crucial for preserving their traditional way of life.²⁷

B. Progress and Impact Assessment

NITI Aayog plays a central role in India's SDG localization and monitoring efforts through the **SDG India Index**. This index tracks progress across states and Union Territories, linking government schemes with global goals and fostering a competitive spirit for good governance.⁹ Recent reports, such as the NER District SDG Index 2023–24, indicate notable progress in specific SDG areas for districts in the North Eastern Region, with a significant rise in "Front Runner" districts across goals like No Poverty (SDG 1), Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3), Quality Education (SDG 4), Gender Equality (SDG 5), Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7), and Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8).³⁶

Under PM-JANMAN, significant physical progress has been reported. As of June 2025, interventions include the construction of 1,88,696 *pucca* houses, 3,001.698 km of connecting roads, 2,92,941 piped water connections, 1,050 Anganwadi Centres, and the electrification of 1,24,016 households.⁸ Mobile towers have been installed, covering 559 villages.⁸ The number of registered students in EMRS has increased significantly, from 34,365 in 2013-14 to 1.33 lakh in 2023-24.⁸ The Ministry of Tribal Affairs' budget has also seen a substantial increase, reflecting enhanced commitment to tribal welfare.⁸

Despite these efforts, significant challenges persist, particularly concerning data collection and impact assessment. Multiple reports highlight a persistent **lack of current and**

comprehensive data on PVTGs, including updated habitation data and baseline surveys.¹³ This data deficiency is a major hurdle, as it impacts the precise identification of PVTG families and their socio-economic status, leading to potential misallocation of resources and delayed identification of gaps.¹³ The SDG India Index, while valuable, relies on aggregated data, which may mask the lack of progress among the most vulnerable PVTGs, meaning that even if states show overall improvement, these specific communities might still be left behind.¹¹

Furthermore, challenges exist in the implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006. Despite being a landmark legislation, accessing its benefits remains difficult for tribal communities. There are high rejection rates for claims due to procedural errors, lack of documentation, or misinterpretation of provisions.² Weak institutional mechanisms, opposition from some conservation lobbies, and a lack of awareness and capacity among communities also hinder its full potential.⁴⁷ This directly impacts livelihood security and resource control for PVTGs, who are highly dependent on forest ecosystems.²

C. Case Studies of Successful Interventions

Several localized initiatives and programs demonstrate successful approaches to PVTG development:

- **Gumla District, Jharkhand:** This district has set a benchmark in PVTG development through a multi-pronged strategy under PM-JANMAN. Initiatives include extensive infrastructure projects like road connectivity (76.75 km sanctioned) and housing (over 1600 houses approved).³⁰ Gumla has also pioneered solar electrification, installing 700 solar-powered street lights and achieving complete solar water supply coverage in several PVTG villages.³⁰ In healthcare, Gumla became the first district in Jharkhand to saturate Ayushman Bharat and conduct comprehensive sickle cell anemia screening for all PVTG residents, supported by mobile medical units and weekly medical camps.³⁰ A focused malnutrition reduction program distributes nutrition kits, and eligible PVTG households have been linked with Jan Dhan accounts, MNREGA job cards, and PM-KISAN schemes, enhancing financial inclusion.³⁰ Livelihood opportunities have been diversified through potato chips farming and processing, and Van Dhan Vikas Kendras facilitate market connections for millet farmers.³⁰ Education has seen improvements through the 'Gift of Education' program, which enhanced Class X results, and vocational education centers providing skills in carpentry, masonry, and tailoring.³⁰ A dedicated PVTG helpline has also been launched for grievance redressal and feedback.³⁰
- **Odisha PVTG Nutritional Improvement Programme (OPNIP):** Recognizing the severe nutritional challenges, particularly among the Dongria Kondh tribe, Odisha implemented OPNIP under the Odisha PVTG Empowerment and Livelihoods Improvement Programme (OPELIP). This program monitors pregnant and lactating mothers, providing them with nutritious meals. Key interventions include community-based creches for young children and spot feeding centers. The program's success is attributed to community ownership, with local PVTG self-help groups managing the

interventions.²⁰

- **Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS):** Located in Odisha, KISS serves as a model institution for holistic tribal education. It provides free education from primary to postgraduate levels, along with accommodation, food, healthcare, study materials, and vocational training for tribal students, including those from PVTGs. The institute aims to bridge the educational gap and nurture tribal talents, demonstrating that with opportunity, PVTG students are as intelligent and receptive as their non-tribal counterparts.²³
- **Community-Led Initiatives:** Various community-led efforts have shown success in addressing specific needs. Examples include the 'Drink-from-the-Tap Project' in Odisha addressing water contamination, the 'Gifting Sight to the Tribes of Kota' initiative providing eye care, and livelihood diversification projects like banana plantations and trellis farming.⁵⁶ The recognition of habitat rights in Chhattisgarh for communities like the Kamar PVTG, supported by UNDP, empowers communities to manage their traditional territories for livelihood, social, economic, cultural, and religious purposes, ensuring legal recognition and protection of their land rights.²⁷ These initiatives highlight the importance of local participation and ownership in development processes.²⁰

6. Challenges and Recommendations

A. Persistent Challenges in PVTG Development and SDG Achievement

Despite concerted efforts and significant financial allocations, several persistent challenges impede the comprehensive development of PVTGs and their full integration into India's SDG achievements:

- **Data Gaps and Monitoring:** A critical barrier remains the pervasive lack of disaggregated, real-time data specific to PVTGs. Existing statistical frameworks often fail to capture the nuanced socio-economic realities and progress within these communities, leading to delayed identification of gaps and inaccurate policy formulation.¹³ This "invisible" vulnerability means that even when states show overall progress on SDGs, PVTGs might still be left behind, masked by aggregated data.
- **Implementation Gaps:** A significant disconnect often exists between well-intentioned policies and their effective implementation on the ground. This is exacerbated by fragmented implementation across states, a lack of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and coordination gaps between different government departments and agencies, leading to suboptimal outcomes and missed opportunities for cross-sectoral impact.²¹
- **Geographical Isolation and Accessibility:** The remote and often challenging terrains where PVTGs reside pose immense logistical hurdles for service delivery. This isolation limits access to essential services such as healthcare, education, clean water, sanitation, and connectivity, perpetuating cycles of deprivation.¹
- **Cultural Sensitivity and Assimilation:** Development initiatives, if not culturally sensitive, risk undermining the unique cultural identity and traditional social structures

of PVTGs. Efforts to "civilize" or assimilate them into mainstream society have sometimes resulted in cultural disintegration and erosion, causing unintended negative consequences for community cohesion and well-being.⁴

- **Livelihood Security and Resource Control:** PVTGs' traditional livelihoods, heavily dependent on natural resources, are increasingly threatened by changing environmental conditions, legal restrictions, and external economic pressures. Challenges in the implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), including high rejection rates of claims and a lack of awareness, lead to insecure land tenure and continued vulnerability regarding their primary source of sustenance.²
- **Capacity Gaps:** There are often uneven capacities at state and local government levels to design, execute, and monitor effective SDG interventions tailored to PVTG needs. Local governments may lack the technical expertise and resources required for effective grassroots implementation.⁴⁰
- **Intergenerational Poverty Cycle:** The combination of early marriage, low literacy rates, and immediate economic pressures compels PVTG youth into subsistence livelihoods, creating an entrenched intergenerational cycle of poverty and limited educational attainment. This perpetuates their marginalized economic status and hinders upward mobility.¹

B. Recommendations for Accelerated and Inclusive Development

To accelerate progress towards the SDGs for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups and ensure that no one is left behind, a multi-faceted and integrated approach is essential:

- **Strengthening Data Systems and Monitoring:** It is imperative to urgently conduct comprehensive baseline surveys and establish robust, real-time data frameworks specifically for PVTGs. Data must be disaggregated by various parameters (e.g., age, gender, location, specific PVTG) to accurately capture their socio-economic status and measure the impact of interventions at the community level.¹⁵ This will ensure that PVTGs are no longer "invisible" in national development metrics and that resources can be precisely targeted.
- **Tailored and Culturally Sensitive Interventions:** Development plans must move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach. Customized development plans that deeply respect and integrate PVTG cultures, traditional knowledge systems, and unique customary practices are crucial.⁴ This includes developing educational curricula in local languages and integrating traditional healing practices into healthcare delivery where appropriate.
- **Enhanced Multi-sectoral Convergence and Coordination:** A "whole-of-government" approach is vital, requiring improved synergy and coordination between central ministries, state governments, and local bodies. This will prevent duplication of efforts, optimize resource allocation, and ensure that interventions across different sectors (e.g., health, education, infrastructure, livelihoods) are integrated and mutually reinforcing.⁸
- **Promoting Community-Led Development:** Empowering PVTG communities to actively participate in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of development programs is fundamental. A bottom-up approach, where local voices and priorities lead

the initiatives, fosters ownership, ensures relevance, and builds on local strengths.¹⁵ This includes strengthening local self-help groups and traditional governance structures.

- **Ensuring Rights and Justice:** Expediting the implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, is critical to secure land tenure and resource control for PVTGs. This requires reviewing rejected claims transparently, providing legal literacy, and strengthening institutional mechanisms for rights recognition.² Ensuring legal identity for all PVTG members is also paramount for accessing government schemes and exercising their rights.
- **Investing in Human Capital Holistically:** Comprehensive and sustained investments in education, skill development, and health services are essential to break the intergenerational cycle of vulnerability. This includes expanding access to quality education (e.g., EMRS), providing scholarships, offering vocational training tailored to local contexts, and strengthening primary healthcare services, particularly maternal and child health and disease screening programs.¹ Addressing underlying economic stressors that lead to early marriage and school dropouts is also necessary.
- **Fostering Sustainable Livelihood Diversification:** Support for alternative and sustainable economic activities that align with their environment and traditional knowledge can enhance livelihood security. This includes promoting value addition to forest produce, supporting tribal entrepreneurship, and providing market linkages, while ensuring these activities do not compromise their cultural practices or ecological balance.³⁰
- **Adopting a Long-term Vision and Sustained Commitment:** Policy and resource allocation for PVTG development must shift from short-term outcomes to a sustained, long-term vision. This requires consistent policy continuity and adaptive learning mechanisms to adjust strategies based on evidence and evolving needs, ensuring that PVTGs achieve truly sustainable progress by 2030 and beyond.⁴⁰

7. Conclusion

The journey towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in India cannot be considered complete or equitable without the full inclusion and upliftment of its Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups. The analysis presented in this paper underscores that PVTGs represent the ultimate test of the "leaving no one behind" principle. Their unique socio-economic and geographical characteristics, coupled with historical marginalization, place them at a severe disadvantage across nearly all SDG indicators.

The persistent challenges faced by PVTGs—ranging from extreme poverty, food insecurity, and poor health outcomes to low literacy, limited livelihood opportunities, and social exclusion—are deeply intertwined with the targets of the SDGs. The absence of precise, disaggregated data for these communities means that their specific struggles and progress often remain obscured within broader national statistics, hindering effective policy targeting and accountability. Furthermore, the delicate balance between development and cultural preservation is a critical consideration; interventions must be culturally sensitive to avoid inadvertently eroding the unique identities that define these groups. The intergenerational

cycle of poverty, perpetuated by factors such as early marriage and limited educational access, demands comprehensive and sustained efforts that address root causes.

Despite these profound challenges, the Government of India has demonstrated a clear commitment through dedicated schemes like PM-JANMAN and the integration of PVTG development within broader national programs. Successful localized interventions highlight the potential for positive change when approaches are tailored, integrated, and, crucially, community-led.

Ultimately, achieving the SDGs for PVTGs requires a paradigm shift. It necessitates moving beyond a mere service delivery model to one that empowers these communities to claim their rights, participate meaningfully in decision-making, and shape their own development trajectories. This involves strengthening data systems to make their vulnerabilities visible, fostering multi-sectoral convergence to address interconnected challenges, and ensuring that all development initiatives are deeply rooted in cultural respect and community ownership. India's success in integrating PVTGs into its sustainable development narrative will not only be a testament to its commitment to the 2030 Agenda but also a powerful example of truly inclusive and equitable progress for the world.

Works cited

1. Review Article Empowering Particularly Vulnerable Tribal ... - AWS, accessed July 28, 2025, https://sdiopr.s3.ap-south-1.amazonaws.com/2024/Aug/28-Aug-24/2024_JSRR_121465/Rev_JSRR_121465_Mum_A.pdf
2. Margins to mainstream: Reframing tribal inclusion - Deccan Herald, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/margins-to-mainstream-reframing-tribal-inclusion-3609694>
3. Particularly vulnerable tribal group - Wikipedia, accessed July 28, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Particularly_vulnerable_tribal_group
4. PVTG Full Form| Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups UPSC CSE, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://chahalacademy.com/pvtg>
5. Goals Archive - The Global Goals, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://globalgoals.org/goals/>
6. THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>
7. Progress and challenges in achieving sustainable development goals in India: A comprehensive review - Learning Gate, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://learning-gate.com/index.php/2576-8484/article/download/4304/1663/6110>
8. India's Largest Tribal Village Development Scheme - PIB, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?NoteId=154915&ModuleId=3>
9. 'A story of scale, speed and inclusion': India on the development path, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://india.un.org/en/298677-%E2%80%98-story-scale-speed-and-inclusion%E2%80%99-india-development-path>
10. SDG India Index 2019 - NITI Aayog, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2020-07/SDG-India-Index-2.0.pdf>
11. SDG India Index 2023-24 - NITI Aayog, accessed July 28, 2025, https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2024-07/SDG_India_Index_2023-24.pdf
12. LOCALISING SDGs - NITI Aayog, accessed July 28, 2025, https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2020-07/LSDGs_July_8_Web.pdf
13. Understanding the Challenges and Initiatives for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India : Daily News Analysis | Dhyeya IAS, accessed July 28, 2025,

<https://www.dhyeyaias.com/daily-current-affairs/understanding-the-challenges-and-initiatives-for-particularly-vulnerable-tribal-groups-in-india>

14. Frequently Asked Questions - GOAL - Ministry of Tribal Affairs, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://goal.tribal.gov.in/faqs-mentee.html>
15. PVTGs - Levelup IAS, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.levelupias.com/pvtgs/>
16. Welfare of particularly vulnerable Tribal groups - PIB, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1577166>
17. "Socio-Economic Status Of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (Pvtgs) In Karnataka: A Comprehensive Study", accessed July 28, 2025, <https://namibian-studies.com/index.php/JNS/article/download/4983/3469/10172>
18. (PDF) Socio-economic, Demographic Progress of the Primitive and Non- Primitive's Tribal Groups (Pvtgs and Non-Pvtgs) In India: A Regional Study of the Tribal Dominated States of India (Census, 2011) - ResearchGate, accessed July 28, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383870866_Socio-economic_Demographic_Progress_of_the_Primitive_and_Non-Primitive's_Tribal_Groups_Pvtgs_and_Non-Pvtgs_In_India_A_Regional_Study_of_the_Tribal_Dominated_States_of_India_Census_2011
19. Health status of particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) of Odisha: a narrative review, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11526598/>
20. Particularly vulnerable tribes: How a focus on nutrition tipped the health scale for children in remote Odisha - Down To Earth, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/governance/particularly-vulnerable-tribes-how-a-focus-on-nutrition-tipped-the-health-scale-for-children-in-remote-odisha-88749>
21. (PDF) HEALTH ISSUES FACED BY THE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS: CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS - ResearchGate, accessed July 28, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/389801308_HEALTH_ISSUES_FACED_BY_THE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS
22. The Tribal Health System in India: Challenges in Healthcare Delivery in Comparison to the Global Healthcare Systems - PMC, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10315066/>
23. Holistic Tribal Education: A Case Study of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences in Odisha, India, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://kiss.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Holistic-Tribal-Education-A-Case-Study-of-KISS.pdf>
24. Denying access of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups to contraceptive services: a case study among the Baiga community in Chhattisgarh, India - PubMed, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31309872/>
25. Delayed census hit tribal welfare in Andhra: Expert - The New Indian Express, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/andhra-pradesh/2025/Jul/11/delayed-census-hit-tribal-welfare-in-andhra-expert>
26. 'Habitation Survey on Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) in Tamil Nadu'. - CSJE - Madras School of Social Work, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://csje.mssw.in/old-research/>
27. Empowering Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs): Recognition of Habitat Rights in Chhattisgarh | United Nations Development Programme, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.undp.org/india/blog/empowering-particularly-vulnerable-tribal-groups-pvtgs-recognition-habitat-rights-chhattisgarh>
28. Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups | Tribal Demography of Gujarat | About Us, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://tribal.gujarat.gov.in/particularly-vulnerable-tribal-groups>
29. TRIBAL WELFARE PROGRAMMES | Tenkasi District, Government of Tamil Nadu | India, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://tenkasi.nic.in/tribal-welfare-programmes/>
30. Gumla sets benchmark in PVTG development with multi-pronged strategy | Ranchi News, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ranchi/gumla-sets-benchmark-in-pvtg-development-with-multi-pronged-strategy/articleshow/121375148.cms>

31. Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) - United Nations Development Programme, accessed July 28, 2025, https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-08/pvtg_d3_english_web.pdf
32. How the Forest Rights Act Can Shape India's Climate Action - The Wire, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://m.thewire.in/article/environment/how-the-forest-rights-act-can-shape-indias-climate-action>
33. Sustainable Development Goals - Wikipedia, accessed July 28, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_Development_Goals
34. Sustainable Development Goals: 17 Goals to Transform our World | United Nations, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.un.org/en/exhibits/page/sdgs-17-goals-transform-world>
35. sdg india index - NITI Aayog, accessed July 28, 2025, https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2020-07/SDX_Index_India_Baseline_Report_21-12-2018.pdf
36. North East India's SDG Progress - PIB, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?NoteId=154877&ModuleId=3>
37. Sustainable Development Goals - National Indicator Framework Progress Report, 2024 - MoSPI, accessed July 28, 2025, https://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/SDG-NIF-ProgressReport-FullFile-v4N.pdf
38. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable ..., accessed July 28, 2025, <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>
39. TRIBAL HDI DEVELOPMENT | Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/tribal-hdi-development>
40. India's Progress And Challenges In Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A Comprehensive Overview - Only IAS, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://pwnonlyias.com/current-affairs/indias-progress-and-challenges-in-achieving-sdgs/>
41. India's Progress and Challenges in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A Comprehensive Overview - Only IAS, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://pwnonlyias.com/stage/current-affairs/indias-progress-and-challenges-in-achieving-sdgs>
42. Facilitating Tribal Transformation Towards SDGs - IBRAD, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://tribaldevelopmentibrad.org/facilitating-tribal-transformation-towards-sdgs/>
43. Assessment of livelihood vulnerability to climate change among tribal communities in Chhindwara and Dhar district, Central India, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11909276/>
44. Forest Dependent Indigenous Communities' Perception and Adaptation to Climate Change through Local Knowledge in the Protected Area—A Bangladesh Case Study - MDPI, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.mdpi.com/2225-1154/4/1/12>
45. INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION PRACTICES IN NEPAL - Convention on Biological Diversity, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.cbd.int/financial/micro/nepal-indigenous.pdf>
46. IDR Explains: Forest Rights Act (FRA), accessed July 28, 2025, <https://idronline.org/features/rights/idr-explains-forest-rights-act-fra/>
47. Supreme Court Impact: Forest Rights Act's Challenges for Tribal Communities, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/forests/how-the-supreme-court-order-on-forest-rights-act-impacts-its-implementation-and-forest-dependent-communities>
48. " ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY PVTGS IN ACCESSING GOVERNMENT WELFARE SCHEMES" - Universal Group Of Institutions Bangalore, Karnataka, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://universalinstitutions.com/addressing-the-challenges-faced-by-pvtgs-in-accessing-government-welfare-schemes/>
49. Upliftment of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups - Press Release: Press Information Bureau, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1705784>

50. Government has focused on developing Tribal human resource with a holistic approach over last 9 years :Shri Arjun Munda - PIB, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1932421>
51. Year End Review 2023: Ministry of Tribal Affairs - PIB, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1994794>
52. Year End Review 2024: Ministry of Tribal Affairs - PIB, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2090883>
53. Little progress in centralizing administration of Eklavya Schools (EMRS) 2025, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.vajiraoinstitute.com/upsc-ias-current-affairs/five-years-on-little-progress-made-to-centralise-eklavya-school-administration.aspx>
54. functioning of ekalabya model residential schools and their impact on enhancement in the educational at, accessed July 28, 2025, https://repository.tribal.gov.in/bitstream/123456789/74437/1/SCST_2011_research_0330.pdf
55. Inclusion in Question: A Field-Based Analysis of SDG Progress among the Asur Tribe in Jharkhand - INDIAN JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH (IJOMR), accessed July 28, 2025, https://ijomr.org/uploads/documents/IJOMR_25_040.pdf
56. Case Studies – Digital Knowledge Repository - Ministry of Tribal Affairs, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://knowledge.tribal.gov.in/knowledge/case-studies/>
57. Success Stories Archives - BAIF Development Research Foundation, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://baif.org.in/category/success-story/>
58. Importance of Community-led Development Initiative in India - HindRise, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://hindrise.org/resources/community-led-development/>
59. Empowering Communities in India with Health and Education - Points of Light, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.pointsoflight.org/awards/empowering-communities-in-india-with-health-and-education/>
60. EVALUATION OF EDUCATIONAL COMPLEXES - Tribal Digital Document Repository, accessed July 28, 2025, https://repository.tribal.gov.in/bitstream/123456789/73981/1/SCST_2020_research_0112.pdf