



Livelihood Promotion Among Tribals

For Prelims: [Multidimensional Poverty Index \(MPI\)](#), [National Food Security Act, 2013 \(NFSA\)](#), [National Family Health Survey \(NFHS-5\) 2019-21](#), [Stunting](#), [Wasting](#), [Underweight](#), [Subsistence Farming](#), [International Fund for Agricultural Development](#), [Odisha Tribal Development Project \(OTDP\)](#), [UNICEF](#), [World Food Programme](#), [Community Forest Rights \(CFR\)](#), [Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India \(TRIFED\)](#), [PDS](#), [Microfinance](#), [Local Governance Bodies](#).

For Mains: Challenges associated with livelihood of tribals. Measures needed for tribal livelihood promotion.

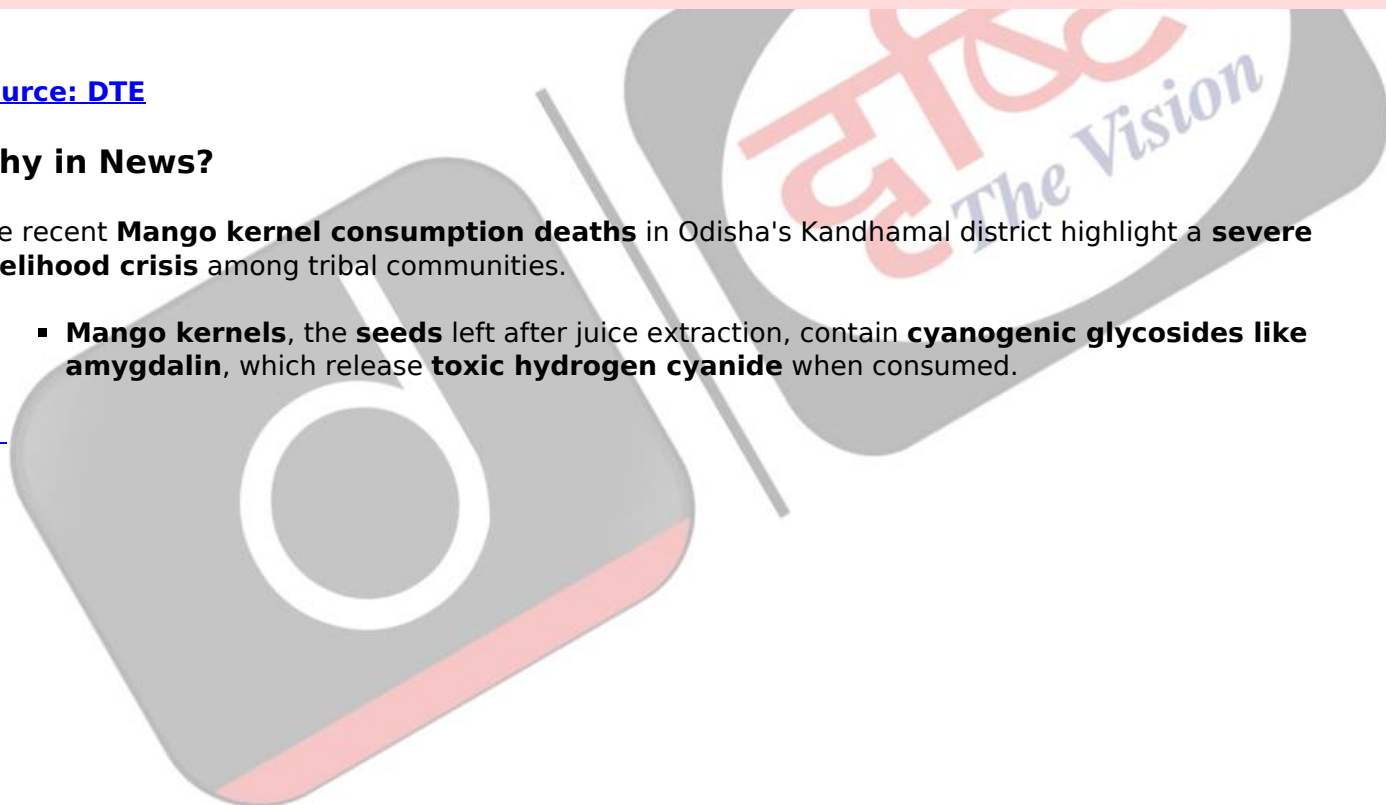
Source: [DTE](#)

Why in News?

The recent **Mango kernel consumption deaths** in Odisha's Kandhamal district highlight a **severe livelihood crisis** among tribal communities.

- **Mango kernels**, the **seeds** left after juice extraction, contain **cyanogenic glycosides like amygdalin**, which release **toxic hydrogen cyanide** when consumed.

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Scheduled Tribes



STs constitute **8.6%** of the total population of India (Census 2011).



There are over 730 Scheduled Tribes **notified** under Article 342 of the Constitution of India.



Article 342 of the **Indian** Constitution outlines the procedures for specifying Scheduled Tribes (STs).



Article **275(1)** of the Constitution of India guarantees grants-in-aid from the Consolidated Fund of India each year for promoting the welfare of Scheduled Tribes.



Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (**PVTGs**) are more vulnerable among the tribal groups. Among the 75 listed PVTGs, the highest number is found in Odisha.



Bhil is the largest tribal group followed by the Gonds.



Madhya Pradesh has the highest tribal population in India (Census 2011).



Why Tribals Rely on Unsafe Consumption for Livelihood?

- **Severe Poverty:** Tribal communities depend on wild and foraged foods mainly because of **widespread and long-standing poverty**.
 - According to the global **Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)**, **65 million** of the **129 million** tribals are living in **multidimensional poverty**.
- **Food Insecurity:** The geographical **isolation, inadequate infrastructure, and logistical challenges** have made it difficult for tribal communities to access regular, nutritious food supplies under **National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA)**.
- **Malnutrition:** Many tribal families do not have enough access to food staples like **grains, pulses, oils, or fortified items**.
 - As per the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) 2019-21** report, the prevalence of **stunting, wasting and underweight** among tribal children stands at **40.9%, 23.2% and 39.5%** respectively.
- **Lack of Forest Rights:** Tribals have historically relied on **forests** for their livelihoods, gathering

wild foods, and [subsistence farming](#).

- However, **displacement**, [deforestation](#), **loss of forest rights**, and **restricted access** to land pushed them into extreme poverty.
- **Economic Exploitation:** Some tribals are forced to resort to **mortgaging their welfare cards** (e.g., [ration cards](#)) to local moneylenders in exchange for **short-term debt relief**.
 - These exploitative practices often **deprive** the rightful recipients of government benefits, forcing them **further into debt**.
- **Survival in Extreme Conditions:** During periods of extreme poverty, [food scarcity](#), and **seasonal droughts**, tribal families are forced to rely on **unsafe food sources** to survive amidst worsening **socio-economic conditions**.
- **Insufficient Institutional Support:** The impact of [International Fund for Agricultural Development](#)-supported [Odisha Tribal Development Project \(OTDP\)](#), [UNICEF's Household Food Security Project](#) in vulnerable blocks, and the [World Food Programme's](#) community-based anti-hunger projects in remote tribal areas has been limited.

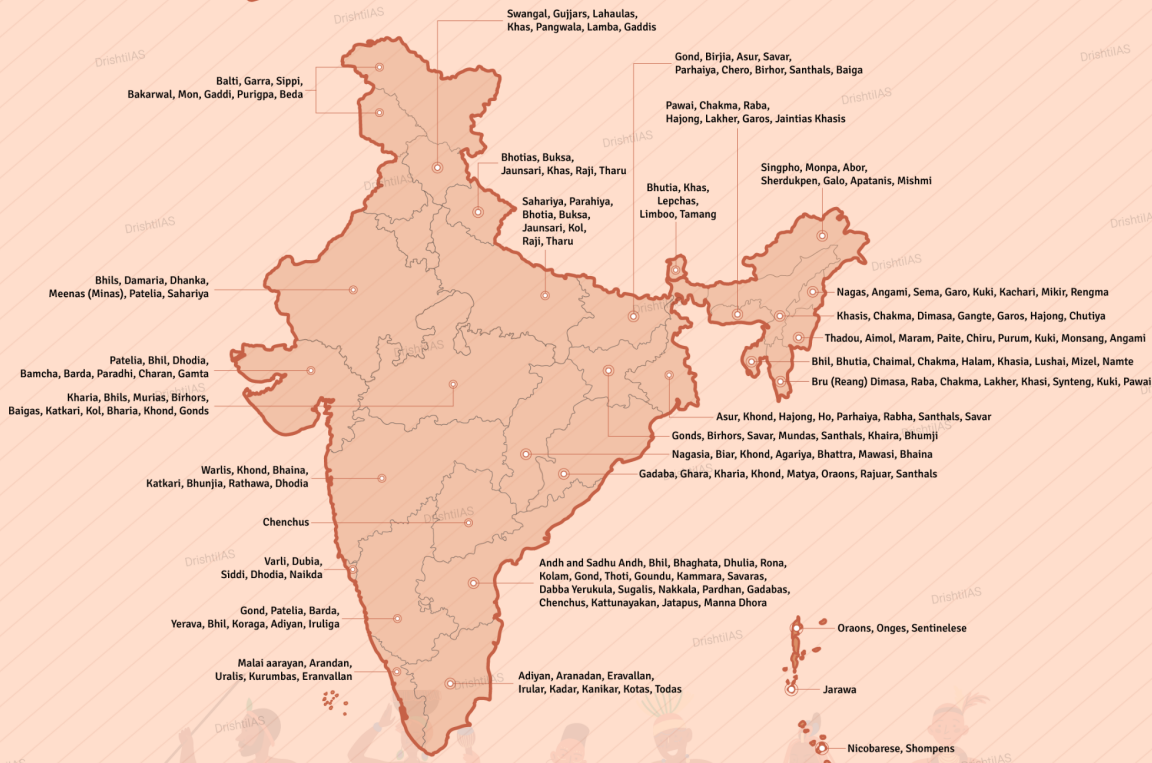
What are Government Initiatives for Tribals?

- [Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyay Maha Abhiyaan \(PM-JANMAN\)](#)
- [Janjatiya Gaurav Divas](#)
- [Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra](#)
- [PM PVTG Mission](#)
- [Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan](#)
- [Eklavya Model Residential Schools \(EMRS\)](#)

How can Livelihood of Tribals be Improved?

- **PDS Innovations:** Expanding the system to include essential **nutritious staples** (e.g., **pulses, oils**) can help bridge the nutrition gap in marginalised tribal communities.
 - **Door-to-door delivery of [PDS rations](#)** ensures that remote communities have consistent access to vital food supplies.
- **Enhanced Access to CFR:** Enhanced Access to [Community Forest Rights \(CFR\)](#) allows tribes to exercise control over forest resources, promoting **sustainable harvesting** of [minor forest produce \(MFP\)](#).
- **Fair Market Prices:** Ensuring that tribal communities receive fair prices for MFPs, like **honey, tamarind, wild mushrooms, and mango kernels**, is crucial for economic self-reliance.
 - Government initiatives, particularly those supported by organisations like the [Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India \(TRIFED\)](#), can facilitate market access by connecting tribal producers to larger markets, ensuring fair compensation.
- **Financial Protection:** Regulating [microfinance practices](#) to prevent predatory lending can protect tribal communities from exploitative loans and debt cycles.
- **Leveraging Past Lessons:** Reflecting on the successes and shortcomings of past initiatives (e.g., OTDP, PDS innovations) is essential to **refine future approaches** and build on effective strategies.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Collaborative efforts between **district administrations, [local governance bodies](#), [non-profits](#), and [civil society](#)** organisations are vital for building community resilience.
- **Value Addition:** Promoting the processing of MFPs, such as converting mango kernels into valuable products for **confectionery, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals**, can provide tribal communities with diverse income streams.

Major Tribes in India



- STs constitute 8.6% of the population of India (Census 2011). Draft National Tribal Policy, 2006 records 698 STs in India.
- Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) are more vulnerable among the tribal groups. Among the 75 listed PVTGs, the highest number is found in Odisha.
- Bhil is the largest tribal group (38% of the total scheduled tribal population of India) followed by the Gonds.
- Madhya Pradesh has the highest tribal population in India (Census 2011).
- The Santhal are the oldest tribes in India. The Santhal system of governance, known as Manjhi-Paragana, can be compared to local self-governance.
- According to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes list (modification orders), 1956, the inhabitants of Lakshadweep who and both of whose parents were born in these islands are treated as STs.
- Article 342 of the Constitution prescribes procedure to be followed for specification of STs.
- Article 275 provides for the grant of special funds by the Union Government to the State Government for promoting the welfare of Scheduled Tribes and providing them with a better administration.

Conclusion

The recent deaths from mango kernel consumption in Odisha underscore the severe livelihood crisis among tribal communities, driven by **poverty, food insecurity, and economic exploitation**. Strengthening forest rights, enhancing market access, fair pricing for minor forest produce, targeted government initiatives, and strategic partnerships can **collectively uplift and empower tribal populations sustainably**.

Drishhti Mains Question:

Q. Discuss the factors contributing to the food insecurity crisis among India's tribal communities

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. At the national level, which ministry is the nodal agency to ensure effective implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006?

- (a) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- (b) Ministry of Panchayati Raj
- (c) Ministry of Rural Development
- (d) Ministry of Tribal Affairs

Ans: (d)

Q. Consider the following statements about Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India: (2019)

1. PVTGs reside in 18 States and one Union Territory.
2. A stagnant or declining population is one of the criteria for determining PVTG status.
3. There are 95 PVTGs officially notified in the country so far.
4. Irular and Konda Reddi tribes are included in the list of PVTGs.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3
- (b) 2, 3 and 4
- (c) 1, 2 and 4
- (d) 1, 3 and 4

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q. What are the two major legal initiatives by the State since Independence addressing discrimination against Scheduled Tribes (STs)? (2017)

Q. Why are the tribals in India referred to as 'the Scheduled Tribes'? Indicate the major provisions enshrined in the Constitution of India for their upliftment. (2016)

