

## COLLABORATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A PROPOSAL FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD FOR TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

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### Abstract

*This study analyzes the efficacy of the government's schemes to promote livestock-based incomes for tribes within Tamil Nadu and identifies key issues in their implementation that hinder their impact for the long run. Government initiatives like NSTFDC credit schemes, TRIFED interventions livestock distribution programs, as well as vet assistance have all played an important part in providing the first opportunities for tribal families to earn a living. These programs have helped in generating income as well as asset creation and increased access to resources. However, their viability is limited due to a variety of reasons, such as a the lack of awareness, a lack of reach, insufficient follow-up support and weak linkages to the market. The study focuses on essential values like sustainability, inclusion empowerment, equity, and sustainability in the development of tribal communities. The study argues that development efforts must not only concentrate on distribution of assets but should also be able to provide ongoing support, capacity building and strengthening of institutions. In this light the paper suggests collaborative entrepreneurship approach as an effective approach to increase the impact of livelihoods. This method encourages the concept of shared investment, collective responsibility and risk-sharing mechanisms thus reducing vulnerability for individuals and promoting community participation. In addition, the strategy improves market access, increases information sharing and promotes the long-term sustainability of tribes. The results show the importance of integrating collaborative strategies with existing government programs can help bridge gaps in implementation and improve efficiency. The study also highlights the importance of having a holistic participative, an inclusive development system that allows tribal communities to move from subsistence living to sustainable entrepreneurship and ensure sustainable and equitable growth.*

### Keywords

Tribal Livelihood, Collaborative Entrepreneurship, Livestock Development, Government Schemes, Tamil Nadu

### Introduction

Tribal tribes in India which are officially referred to in the form of Scheduled Tribes (STs), are a large, yet socio-economically marginalized section that makes up a significant portion of India's population comprising around 8.6 percent according to the Census of India (2011). They are mostly located in forested, remote and hilly regions which are tied to natural resources, such as forests as well as agriculture and livestock. In states such as Tamil Nadu, where tribal population is about 1.1 percentage of population, livelihoods mostly depend on

the rearing of livestock as well as minor collection of forest produce as well as small-scale agricultural practices. Despite their rich traditional knowledge and resource dependence, tribal communities continue to face persistent challenges such as poverty, unemployment, low levels of education, and limited access to formal financial systems. Traditionally, tribal livelihoods have been characterized by subsistence-oriented economic activities, including the collection and sale of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), livestock rearing, and handicrafts. But, these industries often are not productive and insufficient organization, restricted access to markets, and the exploitation by intermediaries, which limits earning potential and increasing the vulnerability of their economy. To address these issues and challenges, government officials from the Government of India, along with the state governments, have launched a range of development plans and interventions by institutions aimed to improve the livelihoods of tribal communities and encouraging the development of entrepreneurial skills. Important initiatives include that of Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED), National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC), Van Dhan Vikas Yojana (VDVY) along with the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission have aimed to improve access to financing market links, improvement of skills, and the value-added the tribal products. In Tamil Nadu, programs like Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have been created to assist tribes in value-adding as well as commercialization of forest goods which will increase the opportunities for income. In addition, livestock-based programs that include the distribution of cows and goats subsidies, as well as veterinarian assistance, are being introduced to improve livelihood security. While these initiatives have contributed to initial income generation and asset creation, their long-term sustainability remains constrained due to limited awareness, restricted outreach, lack of continuous support, and inadequate market integration. Entrepreneurship has increasingly been recognized as a powerful tool for socio-economic development, employment generation, and poverty reduction. When it comes to tribal communities it is not just a means of the generation of income, but also assists in helping to preserve the indigenous knowledge of the people and facilitates sustainable resource use. Yet, current strategies typically concentrate on individual-based entrepreneurship which is not suitable in tribal settings that are marked by resource limitations and social structures. In this scenario co-entrepreneurship is emerging as a viable strategy to improve the quality of life for tribal communities. Through promoting sharing of investment, collective accountability and risk-sharing collaboration models can overpower

the limitations of individual business. Such approaches can improve access to finance, enable better utilization of resources, strengthen market linkages, and ensure continuous support through institutional and community participation. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of government schemes in promoting tribal livelihoods and proposes collaborative entrepreneurship as an effective strategy for sustainable livelihood enhancement among tribal communities. Through addressing gaps in the present and integrating collective strategies and approaches, this study hopes to help contribute to an inclusive and sustainable development of tribal communities.

### **Literature Review**

The discussion of the tribal economy and entrepreneurialism in India has changed significantly from a welfare-oriented model to one that stresses empowerment of self-reliance, sustainability, and empowerment. Livestock is recognized as an integral element of tribal and rural livelihood systems. Studies show that livestock is a major contributor to the generation of income as well as food security and risk reduction in marginalized communities (Rao et al., 2016; Rangnekar, 2006). It is a means of financial security and also as a form of insurance against a variety of risks, including dry spells and failure of crops (Birthal and Jha 2005). In addition, small-scale livestock activities like goat rearing can be a great way to make use of family labour and boost the income of households (Kumar & Deoghare, 2003). Despite its importance, the productivity of livestock within tribal communities is still limited due to infrastructural, technological and socio-economic limitations (Mazumder and others. 2014). The inaccessibility of land as well as markets, credit, and land is a further obstacle to the expansion of livestock-related enterprises in Scheduled Tribes (Sarkar 2020). Additionally, the absence of veterinary training, support and the latest scientific information can affect the sustainability of livestock-based entrepreneurship (Lemma, 2014). Government interventions have tried to address these issues by implementing schemes and providing institutional assistance. The programs implemented by government agencies like TRIFED and NSTFDC seek to improve the livelihoods of tribal communities through financial assistance along with market connections and capacity development. However, studies show the fact that these schemes are not implemented properly, have insufficient awareness, and insufficient follow-up assistance, especially in tribal areas with remote populations (Planning Commission 2013, and Kumar & Singh in 2018). While asset distribution programs boost income levels at first however, their long-term viability depends on ongoing institutional support and a strong market integration (IFAD,

2015). The role of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) in the tribal economy has been extensively researched. They are a major source of income, However the inefficiency of value chain as well as the exploitation of intermediaries decreases the income of tribal collectors (Girijan Reports of the Cooperative Corporation and various research studies). The cooperatives, as well as other institutional mechanisms, have been attempting to enhance marketing and procurement however, the challenges persist. In recent times the concept of entrepreneurship has been acknowledged as an important driver for the development of society and economic growth. Schumpeter (1934) focused on innovation and the significance of entrepreneurs in the growth of economics and modern research suggests that entrepreneurship could help marginalized communities to create jobs and increasing income (Ansari and others. 2021). However it is also true that tribal entrepreneurship is restricted by the lack of knowledge as well as a lack of access to finance as well as inadequate networks of social networks. The idea of collaboration business is emerging as a viable solution to these issues. Models that are based on group, like Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and cooperatives have shown success in increasing the utilization of resources and reducing risk for individuals and improving access to markets (Ansari et al. 2021). These models align well with the collective social structure of tribal communities and promote inclusive development. Furthermore, digital transformation has introduced new opportunities for tribal entrepreneurship by enabling access to markets, financial services, and information. Digital platforms can help eliminate intermediaries and boost the value of products made by tribal communities (Nambisan 2015). Government initiatives in programs like Digital India have aimed to improve digital inclusion. However issues like the lack of digital literacy, inadequate infrastructure and socio-cultural obstacles continue to hinder their impact.

### **Research Gap**

In spite of extensive research regarding tribal livelihoods as well as livestock development and entrepreneurship, there is only a small amount of research that integrates collaborative entrepreneurship with the tribal lifestyle of livestock systems. Most research studies are focused on specific approaches or government-sponsored schemes, paying no consideration of community-based risk-sharing models. This absence of integrated strategies emphasizes the need for collaborative strategies to improve the sustainability of livelihoods for tribes.

## Objectives of the Study

To study the role of the government's schemes for tribal livestock development, to identify the challenges in implementation and suggest a collaborative entrepreneurial model for enhancing livelihoods for tribes.

## Methodology

This study employs qualitative methods that is based on secondary data as well as literature reviews. It collects data from reports issued by government agencies as well as academic journals and institutions such as TRIFED as well as NSTFDC. The focus of the research is collaborative entrepreneurialism and its importance in enhancing the lives of tribal people. Data is analyzed thematically in order to discover the most important patterns and insights

## Discussion

### Government Schemes and Their Power

The schemes of the government have played an important part in encouraging the development of livelihoods for tribes across India especially in Tamil Nadu. Important initiatives include that of National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC) loan schemes, Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) interventions, as well as a variety of support programs, including subsidies, livestock distribution along with veterinary medical services. These initiatives seek to address the social and economic challenges confronted by tribal people and increase their capacity to generate income (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2022) . As shown in Figure 1 the framework for institutions illustrates the role in The Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the Government of India in implementing schemes like TRIFED programs, NSTFDC financial support, and the Stand-Up India Scheme together with programs for the grassroots like Van Dhan Vikas Yojana (VDVY) and Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) that directly benefit self-help groups of tribal communities and entrepreneurs.

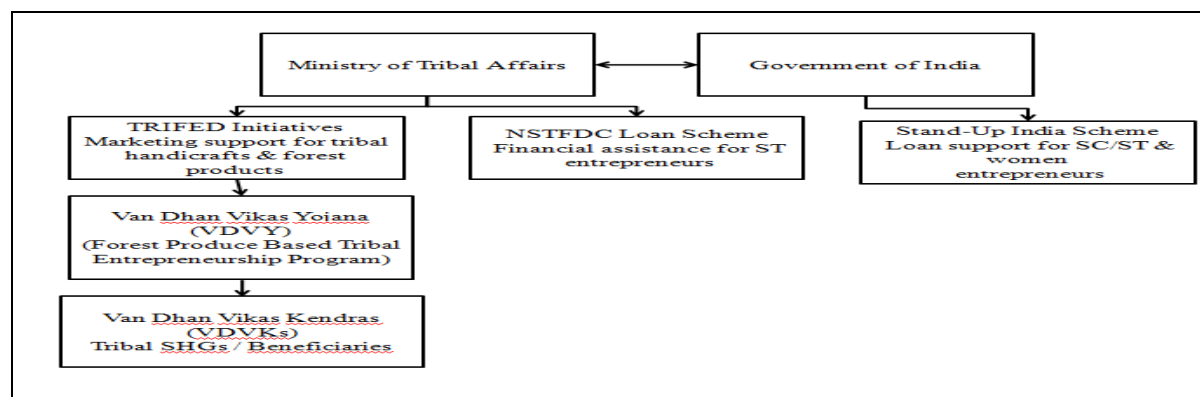


Figure 1: Government Initiatives for Promoting Tribal Livelihoods and Entrepreneurship

These programs aim to boost income generation, increase self-employment, and offer institutions and financial assistance for tribal families. For example, NSTFDC schemes offer concessional loans and financial aid to tribal entrepreneurs who want to start income-generating ventures. However, research suggests that the effectiveness of NSTFDC schemes has varied across states, with varying levels in terms of accessibility and efficiency (NSTFDC 2023). Additionally, TRIFED interventions have demonstrated tangible gains in employment, income and asset growth for tribespeople. A study that was conducted within Tamil Nadu (Tiruvannamalai district) with 190 tribal families observed that TRIFED initiatives resulted in significant growth in household incomes and savings levels (Chellasamy and Kannamudaiyar, 2023). Livestock distribution programs that focus on the distribution of cows and goats are frequently used as a method of the promotion of livelihoods. These programs allow tribal families to participate in small-scale livestock farming which is an efficient source of income as well as a source of nutrition security. Assistance measures like veterinary health camps and subsidy programs help to strengthen these initiatives by enhancing the health of animals and reducing the financial cost (Planning Commission, 2013). Despite these efforts, the reach and efficacy of these programs are insufficient. Statistics suggest that a substantial portion of tribal households remain in the absence of a traditional support structure, with 73% of tribal families residing below the poverty limit and heavily dependent on traditional practices of livelihood (Government of India 2011, and Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2022). Furthermore, NSSO data indicates that Scheduled Tribes own only about 7% of rural enterprises, highlighting limited participation in entrepreneurial activities (NSSO, 2016). The partial reach of these schemes can be attributed to several structural and implementation-related challenges. The most significant issue is the inadequacy of tribes about the programs and procedures for application. Research has shown that more than 40 percent of households in tribal communities are ignorant of welfare programs offered by the government particularly in remote or forest-based areas (Planning Commission 2013). Additionally, beneficiary selection processes are often limited and selective, resulting in unequal distribution of resources. Accessibility is another critical concern. Tribal communities who live in remote areas have significant difficulties in getting access to financial institutions, vet services, and even organized markets. This hampers their ability fully benefit from these programs. Furthermore, the absence of ongoing monitoring, training, and follow-up care decreases the longevity of livelihood programs (IFAD 2015).

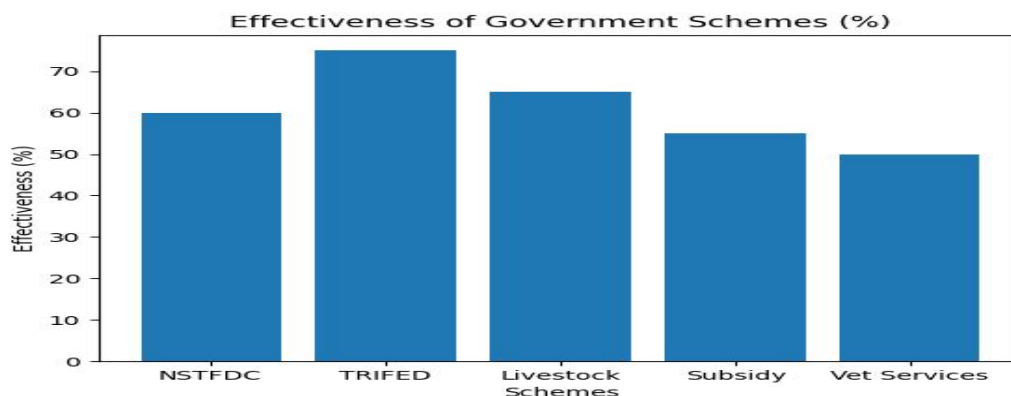


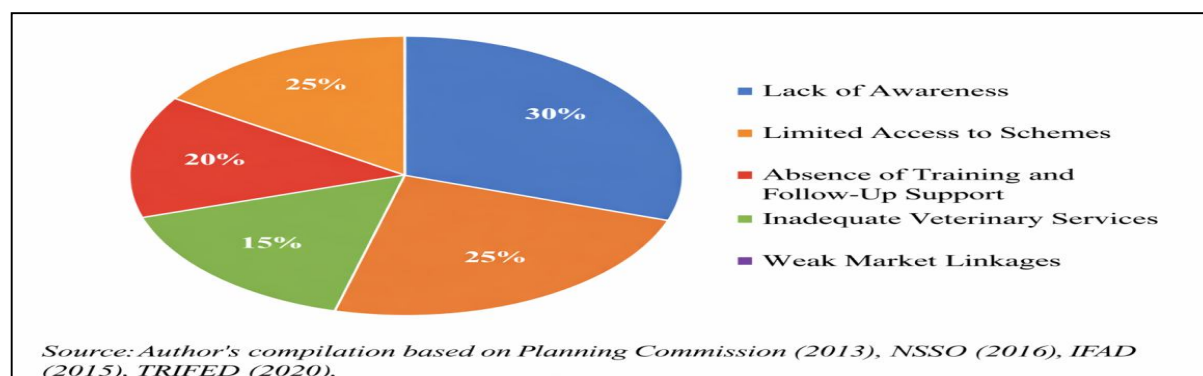
Figure 2: Effectiveness of Government Schemes in Tribal Livelihood Development

The efficiency of different government programs is shown in Figure 2. This illustrates that TRIFED initiatives have a significantly more impact due to the strong market linkage, however, NSTFDC and the livestock distribution programs show moderate efficacy. Contrary to this, subsidy schemes and veterinary services show a less effectiveness due to the lack of in their implementation and delivery. So, even though government programs have been a major contributor to the development of tribal livelihoods but their overall impact is limited by issues of access, awareness as well as institutional support. It is vital to address these issues to ensure sustainable and inclusive results in the lives of tribes.

### Challenges in Existing System

The current system of tribal livelihood development via government schemes is confronted with multiple obstacles that limit its effectiveness and sustainable. The challenges are interrelated and are a reflection of institutional, structural and socio-economic weaknesses. One of the biggest problems is the absence of knowledge among tribal communities. A large portion of tribal households aren't sufficiently informed about the existence of welfare schemes, eligibility criteria and the application process. Research suggests that over 40 percent people living in tribal homes are not aware of the welfare programs provided by government particularly in remote or forests-based regions (Planning Commission 2013). The lack of knowledge can lead to a poor utilization of resources, which limits participation in development programmes. In addition, the low levels of literacy in tribal communities result in low program utilization. Limited access to financial and scheme services adds to the difficulty. Tribal communities are often dependent heavily on illegal sources of funding because of the difficulty in obtaining formal institutions. Based on NSSO (2016) the Scheduled Tribes have only 7 percent of rural businesses and have a lower participation rate within formal business activities. The reasons for this include the need for documentation,

bureaucratic delays and geographic isolation create obstacles to accessing financial support. Another important problem is the lack of follow-up training and support. Although schemes offer initial assets like livestock, there is usually insufficient capacity building technical education, training or constant assistance. This causes inefficient utilization of resources, which hinders the ability to transform livelihoods to sustainable businesses. IFAD (2015) notes that schemes based on assets without monitoring and support for follow-up show poor long-term sustainability outcomes. Inadequate veterinarian services also pose an issue. Livestock-based livelihoods heavily depend on the health of the animals and their management. In several tribal areas the veterinary care is inconsistent and not sufficient. This results in increased mortality rates for livestock and lower productivity, directly affecting income production as well as livelihood stability. Weak market links further hinder the efficiency of these programs. Tribal producers are often not able to access to markets that are organized and are reliant on intermediaries in their local area, which results in a lower rate of prices being realized. Studies have shown that tribal producers only receive an enviable portion of value of the final market because of the role of intermediaries (TRIFED 2020). While efforts to integrate institutions have been put in place however, market integration is not yet complete.



The most significant challenges in the tribal livelihood systems are shown in Figure 3. The graph shows that ignorance is the most significant obstacle and is followed by the lack of accessibility to programs, insufficient training and follow-up assistance as well as weak market connections and insufficient veterinary support. These challenges together highlight that gap in policy formulation and its implementation.

### **Collaborative Entrepreneurship for Tribal Livelihood Development**

To address the weaknesses that have been observed in the current government interventions This study suggests an approach to collaborative entrepreneurship that is an alternative and a sustainable method to enhance the tribal's livelihood development. This method is a

combination of the financial aspect, technological assistance and market connectivity with a partnership-based approach that guarantees an equal share of responsibility and benefit. In this model the urban investor or professional is involved in livelihood-based activities that have the dual goal of generating financial benefits while assisting in the development of society. The investor contributes the initial capital needed to start income-generating ventures and also provides assistance in terms of management knowledge, technical direction as well as market access. At the same time, the tribal family is considered an active participant and given the responsibility of controlling and managing the livelihood activities. Utilizing local resources and traditional knowledge systems the family is able to reduce operating costs and to ensure the sustainability of production practices. This combination of modern-day knowledge and traditional practices improves the efficiency and effectiveness of. For example, a first investment of about Rs10,000-15,000 could help small-scale livelihoods like livestock rearing handicraft production, livestock rearing, or other traditional jobs. These kinds of activities have the potential to provide regular income and their scope can slowly grow over time, thus increasing the stability of the economy. This method lowers the financial burden of tribal households and allows them to participate actively in the process of income generation. A key element of this strategy is the equal share mechanism that lets both the investor and the tribal household share in the production and the income that is generated. This guarantees fairness, increases accountability, and decreases the risk of financial loss for both parties. The shared structure does not just increase trust, but also fosters long-term collaboration. In addition the investor can facilitate sales and marketing by making use of access to markets in urban areas as well as digital platforms and price knowledge. This helps reduce the need for intermediaries and facilitates more efficient price realization for products. As a result, tribal producers gain improved market access, while investors benefit from organized and scalable business operations. Economically, the approach demonstrates strong potential. With a relatively low investment as well as a gradual increase in production and market-driven pricing create moderate to high-income potential. The combination of technological support and market linking increases productivity and helps ensure sustainability. At the same time, some issues remain, such as the necessity for trust and coordination among partners, the risks associated with market and production fluctuations as well as the necessity of constant monitoring and support from institutions. A lack of knowledge among tribal communities could be a factor in the initial adoption. But, these issues are easily addressed with the help of planning as well as training and institutional

involvement. Overall this strategy is an opportunity for both sides, as investors earn financial rewards and the social benefits, and tribes enjoy increased income, better livelihoods and improved quality of living. By encouraging risk-sharing as well as capacity-building and market integration that transform traditional livelihoods into viable and scalable entrepreneurial opportunities. Thus the incorporation of collaborative entrepreneurship into livelihood-related initiatives provides an adaptable, inclusive sustainable and sustainable approach to the development of tribal communities. Contrary to conventional methods that focus on diversification, it increases economic participation and enhances the long-term social and economic empowerment of tribes .

### **Conclusion**

Government programs have played an important contribution to improving the living conditions of tribespeople. But their impact is restricted due to a lack of understanding of their accessibility, as well as implementation. Tribal communities are still facing difficulties in accessing resources, making use of schemes efficiently and creating an sustainable income. The collaboration-based entrepreneurship concept is a viable and sustainable solution to these issues. Through the integration of the sharing of investment, technical assistance and market connections, it improves the efficiency of existing schemes as well as promoting sustainable living sustainability. This report concludes the shift away from individual-based intervention towards collaborative, community-based models is vital to achieve sustainable and inclusive development. The combination of collaborative entrepreneurship and government initiatives could significantly enhance livelihood outcomes and allow tribes to be active members of economic development.

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