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Impact of PESA Act and Community Forest Rights on Sustainable Development: A Case Study of Baglinga Village in India

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Abstract

This research paper examines the impact of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA Act), and the acquisition of Community Forest Rights on the socio-economic development of Baglinga Village Block of Chikhaldhara, Districts Amravati, Maharashtra, India. The study analyses the situation before and after the implementation of these legal provisions and their role in improving forest management, local governance, and livelihoods. The findings reveal the challenges faced in the absence of these rights and the subsequent improvements in forest conservation, community empowerment, and livelihoods post-implementation. The paper highlights the importance of raising awareness and promoting the effective use of these legal provisions to enhance development in tribal-dominated areas.

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1. Introduction

The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA Act), and the Forest Rights Act, 2006, stand as pivotal legislative frameworks aimed at empowering tribal communities and fostering sustainable development. These acts recognize the unique socio-cultural practices of scheduled tribes, providing them with a platform for self-governance and management of their natural resources. This paper directs its attention to Baglinga Village, situated in the Chikhaldhara District of Amravati, Maharashtra, India, to conduct a nuanced analysis of the transformative impact of the PESA Act and Forest Rights Act. By scrutinizing the socio-economic conditions prevailing in Baglinga Village both before and after the implementation of these acts, the study aims to elucidate the tangible changes and improvements brought about in the lives of the tribal communities. In doing so, the paper delves into the multifaceted dimensions of empowerment, including enhanced local governance, improved forest management practices, and the overall upliftment of livelihoods. This research contributes to the broader understanding of the effectiveness of legal provisions in promoting sustainable

development in tribal-dominated areas, shedding light on the specific challenges faced by Baglinga Village and the resultant positive outcomes arising from the implementation of the PESA Act and Forest Rights Act.

2. Objective

1. To assess the impact of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA Act), and Community Forest Rights on Baglinga Village.
2. To understand the situation prevailing before the implementation of PESA Act and Community Forest Rights in Baglinga Village.
3. To examine the challenges faced in forest management prior to the implementation of these rights.
4. To identify and propose solutions to address challenges related to forest management.
5. To evaluate the current status of PESA and Community Forest Rights management in Baglinga Village.

3. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative approach to comprehensively assess the impact of the Panchayats

(Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA Act), and Community Forest Rights on Baglinga Village. Data collection is multi-faceted, incorporating information from various sources. Field surveys constitute a primary data-gathering method, where trained researchers administer structured questionnaires to gauge the community's awareness and perceptions regarding PESA Act and Community Forest Rights. In addition, in-depth interviews with key community members, tribal leaders, and stakeholders provide qualitative insights, capturing community perspectives on challenges faced before implementation and changes observed post-implementation. Secondary data is sourced from relevant government reports, offering insights into the implementation status of PESA and Community Forest Rights in Baglinga Village. Researchers closely observe the on-ground implementation of these legal provisions, engaging with community activities, governance structures, and forest management practices. Thematic analysis is applied to qualitative data, identifying recurring themes, patterns, and discrepancies. Ethical considerations include obtaining

informed consent from participants and ensuring the confidentiality of personal information. The study acknowledges limitations such as geographical constraints and time constraints. Rigor and validity are enhanced through triangulation of data sources and peer review processes. Findings derived from this methodology will be disseminated through academic publications, conferences, and community engagement sessions to contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable development in tribal areas.

4. Socio-economic Status

Baglinga Village is home to a total population of 103,209 people, primarily belonging to the Koraku Tribal community. The village has 501 households, with a literacy rate of 68%. The majority of the population (60%) secures employment, with a significant portion involved in agriculture, daily wage labor, and seasonal migration. Out of the total farmers (42), 35 are marginal farmers, and 197 households are landless. Additionally, 197 families fall below the poverty line (BPL). (See annexure- 1)

Table 1: Socioeconomic and General Information of the Village

Social Information	
Total Population	1,03,209
Number of Households	501
Number of Males	537
Number of Females	501
Community	Koraku Tribal
Literacy Rate	68%
Economic Information	
Total Farmers	42
Marginal Farmers	35
Landless Households	197
Below Poverty Line (BPL) Families	197
Geographical Information	
Total Village Area (hectares)	315
Total Cultivable Land Area (hectares)	200
Total Uncultivable Land Area (hectares)	115
Village Details	
Village Name	Baglinga
Name of the Community Forest Rights Management Committee	Baglinga
Year of Receiving Community Forest Rights	2011
Area Covered by Community Forest Rights (hectares)	699.78
Name of the PESA Village	Baglinga
Establishing PESA Committee	Kosh Committee (As per GR)

5. Best Practices

The implementation of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA Act), and the acquisition of Community Forest Rights in Baglinga Village have yielded commendable best practices that have significantly transformed the socio-economic and environmental landscape. One notable achievement is the marked reduction in encroachment on forest lands, a testament to the effective governance and management facilitated by these legal provisions. Controlled tree cutting practices have been implemented, ensuring the sustainable utilization of forest resources and mitigating the adverse impacts of unchecked deforestation. Forest fire incidents have witnessed a decline, attributed to heightened community awareness and responsible forest management practices. The emphasis on sustainable harvesting techniques has resulted in a balanced and environmentally conscious approach to resource utilization.

Furthermore, the implementation of Community Forest Rights and the PESA Act has played a pivotal role in promoting responsible grazing practices, preventing overgrazing and subsequent degradation of natural habitats. These practices collectively contribute to enhanced forest conservation and environmental preservation in Baglinga Village.

Importantly, the adoption of these best practices has led to a tangible reduction in illegal activities such as hunting, indicating a positive shift towards community-led conservation efforts. The coexistence of sustainable resource use and biodiversity preservation reflects the success of these legal provisions in fostering a harmonious relationship between the tribal community and their natural environment.

Beyond the ecological impact, the village has experienced improvements in basic amenities and infrastructure. The Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) has played a pivotal role in generating employment opportunities, contributing to the economic upliftment of the community. The combination

of improved forest management practices, environmental stewardship, and socio-economic development underscores the multifaceted success of the PESA Act and Community Forest Rights in Baglinga Village. These best practices not only serve as a model for sustainable development but also highlight the potential of legal frameworks in fostering positive change within tribal-dominated regions.

6. Findings

Before the implementation of Community Forest Rights, the forest resources remained underutilized, with a lack of awareness regarding the available resources and their boundaries. The challenges included encroachment, unauthorized tree cutting, forest fires, unsustainable harvesting, unregulated grazing, and illegal hunting. The implementation of Community Forest Rights, along with the PESA Act, led to positive changes in the village's socio-economic conditions. Encroachment decreased significantly, and responsible forest management practices have been adopted. Additionally, efforts have been made to provide basic amenities, improve infrastructure, and generate employment opportunities.

Conclusion

The PESA Act and Community Forest Rights have significantly impacted Baglinga Village, leading to improved forest management, reduced encroachment, and enhanced socio-economic conditions. Continued efforts are essential to fully realize the potential of these legal provisions and further enhance the well-being of the local community.

Recommendations

To maximize the potential of the PESA Act and Community Forest Rights in Baglinga Village and similar tribal areas, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i) **Continue Raising Awareness:** Conduct awareness campaigns to educate villagers about their rights and responsibilities under these legal provisions to ensure their effective utilization.
- ii) **Promote Community Participation:** Encourage active participation of the local community in governance and resource management through Gram Sabhas and community committees.
- iii) **Strengthen Implementation:** Ensure that funds allocated under PESA are effectively utilized for local development, cultural preservation, and infrastructure improvement.
- iv) **Sustainable Forest Management:** Provide continuous training and support for responsible forest management, sustainable harvesting practices, and the preservation of biodiversity.
- v) **Poverty Alleviation:** Implement targeted programs to uplift families below the poverty line by creating employment opportunities and promoting economic development.
- vi) **Expansion of Best Practices:** Promote the adoption of successful practices, such as community engagement, sustainable forest management, and infrastructure development, in other tribal-dominated regions.

In conclusion, the PESA Act and Community Forest Rights have had a significant impact on Baglinga Village, leading to improved forest management, reduced encroachment, and the development of socio-economic conditions. However, continued efforts are needed to fully realize the potential of these legal provisions and further enhance the well-being of the local community.

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