

Tribal Sub-Plan in Rajasthan: An Assessment of the Institutional Framework, Budgetary Perspectives and Implementation Status

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ABSTRACT

The Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) strategy was initiated in 1974 by the Planning Commission of the Government of India (GoI) for the overall development of STs. The Commission issued guidelines to all States and Union Territories to design tribal development programmes with a focus on both area-based and individual-based approaches, ensuring that plan allocations under TSP are at least proportional to the share of STs in the total population.

The Government of Rajasthan (GoR) also issued guidelines for the implementation of the Tribal Sub-Plan, along with the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan. As per the 2011 Census, the tribal population in Rajasthan constitutes approximately 13.5% of the total population. Therefore, allocations and expenditure under TSP should ideally be around 13.5% of the State's total plan budget. Actual allocations and expenditures have not fully aligned with the prescribed norms, which has influenced the pace of socio-economic progress among tribal communities. As a result, outcomes in areas such as education, health, livelihoods and access to rights continue to evolve, shaped by the implementation of the sub-plan along with broader structural factors.

In response, several states, including Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Uttarakhand, introduced legislative frameworks for sub-plans. With the discontinuation of the Plan and Non-Plan classification of budget expenditure after 2017, these frameworks required adaptation to the revised budgeting structure. The Government of Telangana addressed this transition through a new Act for sub-plans, enacted in 2017. Similarly, the Government of Rajasthan enacted the "Rajasthan State Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Fund (Planning, Allocation, and Utilization of Financial Resources) Act, 2022" to further strengthen the planning, allocation, and utilization of resources under sub-plans.

The present paper examines the socio-economic status of tribal communities in Rajasthan, with a focus on the design and functioning of the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP). It reviews the existing strategies, institutional mechanisms and implementation guidelines underpinning the TSP framework. Further, the paper analyzes trends in budgetary allocations and expenditures during the financial year 2010–11 to 2025–26, and assesses the status of TSP within the planning and budgeting process. Based on this analysis, the paper highlights areas for improvement and concludes with policy suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of TSP implementation.

Keywords: Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Tribals, Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP)

Introduction:

Scheduled Tribes (STs)² are among the most vulnerable and marginalized social groups in Indian society due to historical injustice and prolonged exploitation. After independence, the Constitution of India came into effect on 26 January 1950, guaranteeing equal rights to all citizens irrespective of caste, class, gender, community, religion and region. In addition, several provisions were incorporated to safeguard the rights of STs and other marginalized groups, aiming at their protection and socio-economic upliftment. Consequently, planned efforts have also been made by both the union and state governments for their overall development. Also, strategies for the development of STs (as well as SCs) were prepared in the fifth and sixth five-year plan. The Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) was initiated in 1974 (as well as Scheduled Caste Sub Plan-SCSP for SCs was initiated in 1979) by the planning commission of the government of India (GoI). The main objective of these strategies was to ensure the allocation of plan outlay under these sub plans, which should be at least in proportion to their percentage in the total population. The planning commission (GoI) issued guidelines to the union government ministries, and state governments and union territories (UTs) to implement these strategies of TSP and SCSP (CBGA & NCDHR, 2011). Main guidelines of the sub-plans are as following:

² Those castes, tribes or communities that are specified in the list under Article 342 of the Constitution of India are recognized as Scheduled Tribes. Individuals belonging to these groups are considered tribal communities.

Main Guidelines of Sub-Plans:

- Funds should be earmarked for TSP and SCSP from the Union/state government ministry's/department's plan outlays at least in proportion to the percentage of ST and SC population of the country/state.
- The funds allocated for TSP and SCSP should be placed under separate budget heads/sub heads for each department/ministry for implementing TSP and SCSP. In this context "Detailed Demand for Grants" (in State and Union Budgets), TSP (with code 796) and SCSP (with code 789) can be opened as minor heads below the functional the major heads/sub major heads wherever necessary.
- Outlays for area-oriented schemes directly benefiting SC hamlets/villages having a majority of SC population/tribal hamlets/villages should be included in SCSP and TSP.
- Designing proper and appropriate development schemes/programmes/activities relevant and useful for the overall development of STs and SCs both within the existing general programmes across sectors, and also conceiving new programmes/avenues for this purpose, if not there so far.
- Only those schemes and programmes should be included under TSP/SCSP that ensures direct benefits to individuals or families of STs/SCs.
- A special mechanism and nodal agency responsible and accountable for monitoring and effective implementation of TSP and SCSP should be designed.
- Wage component, especially under rural employment scheme should not be included under TSP/SCSP.
- Ensuring timely release of TSP and SCSP funds for the purpose(s) they are meant for. TSP and SCSP funds should be non-divertible and non-lapsable.
- The SCSP (also TSP) Strategy needs to be evaluated at the end of the year in terms of financial allocations made and the expenditure incurred, and assessment of their impact through gauging physical and ultimate outcomes.

Scenario of Scheduled Tribes in Rajasthan:

Rajasthan is the largest state of the country in terms of geographical area with total area of 3.42 lakh square km., which is about 10.41% of the total geographical area of the country. Total population of the state is about 686.21 lakh, which is about 5.66% of Indian population (Census, 2011). Rajasthan is one of largest states in terms of ST population in the country. The proportion of ST population in 2001 Census was about 12.56%, which as per 2011 census is increased to 13.5%. The total allocation and expenditure for TSP (as well as for SCSP) in the state is well below in relation to the prescribed norms. The socio-economic conditions of STs in the state indicate developmental gaps across sectors such as education, health, livelihoods and access to rights. The socio-economic status of STs in the state is discussed below.

ST population in Rajasthan is mostly concentrated in southern part of the state which covers mainly eight districts namely Banswara, Dungarpur, Pratapgarh, Udaipur, Sirohi, Chittaurgarh, Rajsamand and Pali. About 31 Tehsils of these districts come under the fifth scheduled areas. About 50% of the total state's tribal population is concentrated in these districts. The highest proportion of tribal population is in Banswara district (76.4%) followed by Dungapur (70.8%) and Pratapgarh (63.4%).

Socio-economic indicators for STs in Rajasthan:

As discussed earlier, the socio-economic indicators for STs in the state indicate relatively lower outcomes in literacy, health, livelihoods and poverty levels in comparison to other social groups. The annual plan 2016-17 of Rajasthan states "most scheduled caste and tribal families possess small or no landholdings. Their low resource base is compounded by poor employable attributes, as reflected in their comparatively poor literacy. This leads to their disproportionately large presence of the marginalized (over 90%) in BPL families. Their poverty leaves them vulnerable to exploitation. Women in these groups are even more marginalized, with much lower literacy rates."³ If we look at the literacy among the STs, the community has very low literacy rate compared to the state's total literacy. As per 2001 Census, literacy rate for STs was about 44.7%, which was much lower than the overall literacy rate (60.1%) of Rajasthan. Though literacy rate among STs has increased to 52.8% in 2011 Census, but it is still lower compared to overall literacy rate (66.1%) of the state. Therefore, the improvement in literacy among STs during the decade 2001–2011 has been modest. The situation is more pronounced in the case of female literacy within STs. As per Census 2011, the female literacy rate among STs stands at 37.3 per cent. Further, according to the World Bank (2012), approximately 48 per cent of Scheduled Tribe adults in the state were reported to be illiterate.⁴ As for other indicators, the same World Bank report suggests that while 58% of total households of

³<https://plan.rajasthan.gov.in/content/dam/planning-portal/planning-dpt/plan/annual-plans/chapters/year%202016-17/930082016120118.pdf>

⁴<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/255081468179096086/pdf/105876-BRI-P157572-ADD-SERIES-India-state-briefs-PUBLIC-Rajasthan-Social.pdf>

Rajasthan practiced open defecation in 2012, 90% of ST households, 68% of SC households, 56% of OBC households and 28% of general category households practiced open defecation. Also, though only 51% households in Rajasthan had drinking water on premises in 2012. This was only 17% of ST households, 47% of SC households, 54% of OBC households and 74% of general category households having drinking water on premises.

As far as the sex ratio is concerned, Census 2011 indicates that STs in Rajasthan have a higher sex ratio (948) compared to the overall state average (928). The sex ratio among STs in the state is also higher than the national average of 943. This suggests that the sex ratio among STs is relatively more balanced compared to the overall population of the state.

Table 1: Socio-Economic Indicators for Scheduled Tribes in Rajasthan

Indicator	Year	STs	Total
Population (in lakh)	2001	70.98 (12.56%)	565.07
	2011	92.38 (13.46%)	686.21
Literacy rate (in %)	2001	44.70	60.41
	2011	52.8	66.1
Female literacy rate (in %)	2001	26.16	43.85
	2011	37.3	52.1
Sex Ratio (per '000)	2001	944	921
	2011	948	928
Work participation ratio (in %)	2001	47.6	42.1
	2011	48.3	43.6
Gross enrollment ratio (GER) in higher education for the population of 18-23 years' age group (in %)	2020-21 (AISHE)*	23.3	26.0
Infant Mortality Rate- IMR (per 1000 live births)	NFHS -5**	43.2	30

Source: Census Reports, various years. *All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), 2020-21, MHRD, GoI, ** National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5

Note: () Bracket shows the percentage in total population

Moreover, the enrolment ratio of STs in higher education in Rajasthan remains comparatively lower. As per the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2020–21, the enrolment ratio for STs is about 23%, as against the overall enrolment ratio of 26%.

With regard to health outcomes, the status of STs in the state indicates certain developmental concerns. The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) among STs is higher relative to other social groups in Rajasthan, as reported in the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-V). Further, findings from NFHS-V suggest that health and nutritional indicators among ST children, particularly in tribal-majority districts, remain below the overall state averages.⁵ About 32% of ST children below five years of age are underweight, compared to 28% among children across all social groups. Similarly, the prevalence of wasting among ST children is 35.9%, which is higher than the overall rate of 32%. With respect to infant mortality, Scheduled Tribes record the highest Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) among all social groups in the state, as reported in NFHS-V. The IMR for Scheduled Tribes stands at 43.2 per 1,000 live births, compared to the state average of 30 per 1,000 live births.

These indicators highlight disparities in socio-economic and health outcomes for STs in the state. Higher incidence of poverty among this community is also an important contributing factor influencing these outcomes. The data presented in Table 2 further illustrates the status of poverty among STs.

Poverty among STs:

The tribal communities have their distinct cultural identity and traditions based on community living and natural harmony. Their life and livelihood are largely dependent on land and forests. Majority of ST population is concentrated in rural areas and who are mainly dependent on agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood. As far as poverty among STs is concerned, most of the families are still below the poverty line. Majority of them are engaged in low wage/earning occupations and activities like collection of minor forest produces (MFPs), daily commuters, wage labour and cultivators. They are also involved in menial jobs like sweeping, scavenging etc.

Table 2: Percentage of poverty among Scheduled Tribes and All Groups in Rajasthan and India (1993-94 to 2009-10)

⁵ <http://rchiips.org/nfhs/NFHS-5Reports/Rajasthan.pdf>

Category	Year	Scheduled Tribes (STs)			All Group		
		Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Rajasthan	1993-94	64.1	12.6	62.5	40.9	30.0	38.4
	2004-05	59.3	26.8	57.9	35.8	29.7	34.5
	2009-10	35.9	28.9	35.4	26.4	19.9	24.8
	2011-12	41.4	21.7	40.3	16.1	10.7	14.8
India	1993-94	65.9	41.1	63.7	50.3	31.9	45.7
	2004-05	62.3	35.5	60.0	41.8	25.7	37.7
	2009-10	47.4	30.4	45.6	33.3	20.9	29.9
	2011-12	45.3	24.1	43.0	25.4	13.7	22.0

Source: Panagaria, Arvind and Vishal More (2013), "Poverty by Social, Religious and Economic Groups in India and Its Largest States, 1993-94 to 2011-12", Working Paper No. 2013-02, Columbia University.

Note: The poverty data are based on Tendulkar poverty line.

The data presented in the table indicate that the incidence of poverty is higher among STs compared to other social groups, both at the national level and in Rajasthan. As per 2011–12 estimates, the poverty rate among STs is approximately 40.3%, which is significantly higher than the overall state average of 14.8%. Although poverty levels have declined over the period from 1993–94 to 2011–12, the relative gap for STs remains notable.

The foregoing analysis highlights disparities in socio-economic outcomes for STs in areas such as education, health and livelihoods. In this context, the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) assumes significance as a policy instrument aimed at promoting inclusive development and addressing these disparities. However, there remains scope for strengthening the effectiveness of TSP implementation in areas such as planning, budgeting and execution. The subsequent section examines the implementation of TSP in Rajasthan, including institutional mechanisms, budgetary allocation and expenditure patterns, as well as key issues and challenges.

Structural Mechanism for Implementation of TSP in the state:

Tribal Area Development (TAD) Department is the nodal department for the implementation of Tribal Sub-Plan in Rajasthan.

Tribal Sub-Plan: According to the annual progress reports of TAD (GoR, 2022-23), the state has identified TSP area⁶ (the fifth Scheduled area), Marginal Area Development Approach (MADA) area⁷, MADA clusters⁸, Saharia area⁹ and scattered tribal population areas in 30 districts for the implementation of TSP in the state.

The TSP area covers 31 tehsils of 8 districts of southern Rajasthan where tribal population is about 45.52 lakh, accounting for nearly 50% of the total ST population in the state. A significant proportion of TSP allocations (around 75%) is directed towards the Scheduled area, while the remaining allocation is distributed among MADA areas, MADA clusters, Saharia areas and scattered tribal population areas of the state (Ahmad, 2013).

Tribal Development Fund: Tribal Development Fund (Janjati Kalyan Nidhi), which was conceptualized on the basis of Maharashtra Model, was initially named as Maharashtra Pattern. Considering the good performance of this model in the state of Maharashtra, the modified form of Maharashtra Pattern was adopted by the GoR on February 15, 2000. Within the TSP, the state government has also created the Janjati Kalyan Nidhi or Tribal Development Fund (based on Maharashtra Pattern), under which two-third of the TSP amount of the 13 departments of the state government is to be transferred to the Tribal Area Development department, which prepares the development plan for tribal area based on the plan submitted by these departments (TAD, 2013). The major schemes under the TSP being implemented in the state are Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP), MADA, MADA Cluster Development Scheme, Saharia Development Scheme and Scattered Tribal Development Scheme.

Assessment of Planning and Budgeting for the Tribal Sub-Plan up to 2016–17:

The planning and budgeting processes for the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) in Rajasthan indicate scope for further strengthening. With regard to planning, there is limited evidence of comprehensive and systematic planning practices across different administrative levels, including the state, district, and block and below levels. The Planning Department, Government of Rajasthan (GoR), issued a circular on February 6, 2012, outlining guidelines for the implementation of TSP and SCSP, which were subsequently revised in 2016 following the merger of Plan and Non-Plan budget classifications. While these guidelines provide a structured framework, they place relatively greater emphasis on accounting procedures than on decentralized and participatory planning processes.

⁶TSP area covers those districts/blocks/villages, which come under fifth scheduled area of the state.

⁷MADA area covers those pockets, which have population of 10,000 or more with 50% tribal population

⁸MADA clusters are those pockets, which have population of 5,000 or more with 50% tribal population.

⁹Saharia dominated two blocks, Shahabad and Kishanganj of Baran district of the state, are identified as Saharia area. Saharia is the only Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) in the State.

The circular further specifies that allocations to large infrastructure projects may be apportioned to sub-plans based on the population share of STs and SCs in the state, or based on their proportion among project beneficiaries, estimated through population coverage in project areas (such as roads and canals). It also recommends inclusion of establishment costs in sub-plan allocations, either fully or proportionately, depending on whether the project is implemented within sub-plan areas (GoR, 2012; Ahmad, 2013).

With regard to budgeting, the allocation to the TSP is shown under Demand Number 30 (as well as Demand number 51 for SCSP) in the budget books of finance department (GoR). All the departments are required to show the allocations and the expenditure for the sub-plans under specific Minor Heads for every Major Head. Minor Head 796 is used for TSP (Minor Head 789 is used for SCSP). The GoR has made provision for inserting the Demand Number 30 under the Minor Head (than 789 and 796) as well, so that the allocation to the two sub-Plans could be inflated (Ahmad, 2013).

At the same time, Planning Department of Rajasthan reported the allocations for TSP (as well as SCSP) in line with prescribed norms (approximately 13.5% for TSP in Rajasthan) up to the financial year 2016–17. However, analysis of budget documents of the Finance Department suggests variations in reported allocations. Differences between the data reported by the Planning Department and those reflected in budget documents have been noted in various studies (Dutta, 2007; BARC, 2010; Ahmad, 2013), indicating the need for greater convergence and transparency in reporting practices.

Implementation status of TSP in Rajasthan:

The implementation status of the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) in Rajasthan, particularly with respect to budget allocation and expenditure, is based on data compiled from the relevant Minor Heads in the detailed budget documents of the Finance Department (GoR). The status of budgetary allocation and expenditure under TSP is discussed below.

Budget allocation and expenditure for TSP: As discussed earlier and reflected in table 3, although the allocation for TSP has increased over the years, the total allocation and expenditure have remained lower than the proportion of the tribal population (13.5%) in the state. The status of TSP in the total plan budget of the state during the period of 2010-11 to 2016-17 is presented in the below table (3);

Table 3: Allocation/Expenditure under TSP and Rajasthan State Plan (2010-11 to 2016-17)

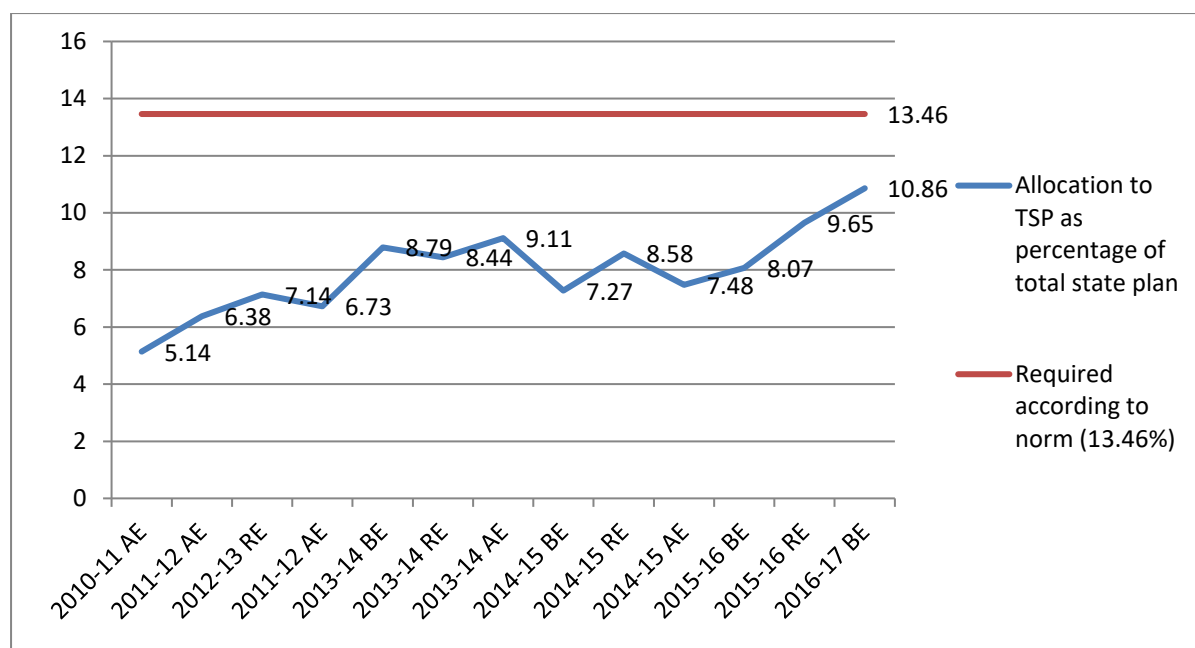
(Amount in Rs. Crores)

Year	State Plan Budget	Allocation for TSP	TSP as % of the total State Plan Budget	Required according to Norm (13.46%)	Amount denied TSP
2010-11 AE	14172.46	729.10	5.14	1907.61	1178.51
2011-12 AE	20569.5	1312.34	6.38	2768.65	1456.31
2012-13 RE	29580.6	2111.68	7.14	3981.55	1869.87
2012-13AE	27159.27	1826.59	6.73	3655.64	1829.05
2013-14 BE	31516.3	2770.39	8.79	4242.09	1471.70
2013-14 RE	35068.0	2959.52	8.44	4720.15	1760.63
2013-14AE	29109.65	2650.45	9.11	3918.16	1267.71
2014-15 BE	57115.26	4150.45	7.27	7687.71	3537.26
2014-15 RE	51511.25	4420.92	8.58	6933.41	2512.49
2014-15 AE	44176.87	3302.64	7.48	5946.21	2643.57
2015-16 BE	57322.77	4626.75	8.07	7715.64	3088.89
2015-16 RE	56288.89	5434.18	9.65	7576.48	2142.30
2016-17 BE	67339.97	7314.94	10.86	9063.96	1749.02

Source: State Budget Documents, GoR, Various Years.

Note: BE-Budget Estimates, RE-Revised Estimates, AE-Actual Expenditure.

Chart 1: Allocation/Expenditure to TSP (Minor Head 796) in Rajasthan



Source: Table-3

Total allocation for the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) increased from about 5.14% of the State Plan budget in 2010–11(AE) to 6.7% in 2012–13(AE) and further to 9.1% in 2013–14(AE). In 2014–15 (RE), the allocation stood at about 8.5% of the total State Plan budget, while it was around 8% in 2015–16(BE).

Similarly, total expenditure under TSP accounted for about 7.48% of the total State Plan budget in 2014–15(AE), which increased to 8.07% in 2015–16 (BE) and further to 9.65% in 2015–16 (RE). In 2016–17, the total allocation for TSP reached 10.86% of the total State Plan budget. Although this indicates a gradual improvement in the allocation and expenditure pattern over the period, the share remained below the prescribed norms for the Sub-Plan.

The issue of relatively lower allocation and expenditure was raised on several occasions in the State Assembly by Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). In response, the State Government indicated its commitment to improving both the level of allocation and the accounting system to facilitate more effective monitoring of the Sub-Plans. An important institutional step in this direction was the opening of separate Minor Heads for these Sub-Plans across 13 to 16 additional departments/Major Heads. Overall, while allocation and expenditure under the TSP improved between 2010–11 and 2016–17, they continued to remain below the stipulated norms of the Sub-Plan.

Implementation of TSP at District, Block and Gram Panchayat Levels:

According to studies conducted by BARC, the implementation of the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) (as well as SCSP) at the district and sub-district levels requires further strengthening, particularly in the areas of planning, budget allocation and expenditure. The studies indicate the need for more comprehensive guidelines and institutional mechanisms for implementing the sub-plans at the district, block and gram panchayat (GP) levels. They also highlight the importance of enhancing awareness and capacity among government officials, implementing agencies and local communities, especially at the block and GP levels. Further, the studies note that allocations under both sub-plans at the district level have often remained below the prescribed norms. In addition, they underline the need for developing a more systematic and reliable database on the sub-plans at the block and lower levels.

Moreover, an analysis of available district-level data in another study suggests that there is no discernible pattern in the allocations proposed for the sub-plans at the district level (BARC, 2019)¹⁰. Therefore, it is important that the government prepare detailed guidelines up to the district level to ensure the proper implementation of these sub-plans.

Assessment of Guidelines, Legislative Framework and Allocations under the Tribal Sub-Plan since 2017–18:

Following the abolition of the Plan and Non-Plan distinction after the financial year 2016–17, the assessment of allocations under Sub-Plans became more complex, making it difficult to ascertain whether allocations conformed

¹⁰<http://barctrust.org/sources/TSP%20-%20SCSP%20Online%20Paper%20April,%202019-20.pdf>

to prescribed norms from 2017–18 onwards. In this context, the Government of Rajasthan (GoR), through a circular dated December 28, 2016, mandated that separate provisions for Tribal Sub-Plan and Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan be made under all revenue and capital heads in proportion to their population share, based on the 2011 Census. Accordingly, scheme-wise allocation details are presented in Booklet 4B of the Finance Department, indicating that approximately 13.5% of total state's schematic budget is allocated to the Tribal Sub-Plan in line with norms. However, comparison with allocation and expenditure data reported under TSP Minor Head-796 across departments in the detailed budget documents (Table 4) reveals significant discrepancies. Thus, since 2017–18, the state budget continues to present two divergent sets of figures for these sub-plans, underscoring the need for greater clarity and consistency.

Table 4: Allocation/Expenditure under Tribal Sub-Plan in Rajasthan (2017-18 to 2025-26)

		(Amount in Rs. Crores)			
Year/ Services		Social Services	Economic Services	General Services	Total
2017-18	BE	3182.73	4035.00	108.46	7326.19
	RE	3755.10	4182.00	71.38	8008.48
	AE	3346.16	4019.39	61.53	7427.08
2018-19	BE	4330.68	6224.35	115.11	10670.14
	RE	4029.32	5982.52	86.90	10098.74
	AE	3806.27	5839.42	73.07	9718.75
2019-20	BE	4599.36	6290.99	110.18	11000.54
	RE	4615.24	6188.25	83.17	10886.67
	AE	3917.75	5880.37	69.48	9867.61
2020-21	BE	5152.78	5743.75	101.72	10998.25
	RE	4539.36	5084.29	111.16	9734.81
	AE	4231.98	4874.29	103.15	9209.41
2021-22	BE	5492.70	5695.90	117.19	11305.79
	RE	5382.62	7019.81	126.42	12528.85
	AE	4667.21	6571.34	103.03	11341.58
2022-23	BE	6742.62	8073.48	156.17	14972.27
	RE	7061.22	7443.21	143.69	14648.12
	AE	5751.09	7644.89	129.54	13525.53
2023-24	BE	8446.41	9796.86	188.27	18431.54
	RE	8488.11	10369.96	148.39	19006.46
	AE	6498.07	8937.03	120.76	15555.86
2024-25	BE	10004.73	10410.92	251.60	20667.26
	RE	9674.12	10616.67	229.77	20520.56
2025-26	BE	10878.75	12794.75	344.08	24017.57

Source: State Budget Documents, GoR, Various Years.

Note: BE-Budget Estimates, RE-Revised Estimates, AE-Actual Expenditure.

The data presented in the table indicate a gradual increase in budgetary allocations under the TSP in Rajasthan during the period from 2017–18 to 2025–26. Total expenditure under the TSP across the major heads of expenditure i.e. social, economic and general services stood at Rs. 7,427.08 crore in 2017–18 (AE), which increased to Rs. 9,867.61 crore in 2019–20 (AE). This upward trend continued in subsequent years, with the total allocation reaching Rs. 18,431.54 crore in 2023–24.

However, the increase in allocations has not been matched by a corresponding rise in actual utilization. In 2023–24, against an allocation of Rs. 18,431.54 crore, actual expenditure amounted to only Rs. 15,555.86 crore, indicating a substantial gap between budgetary provision and utilization. This suggests persistent constraints in the effective implementation and absorption of TSP funds. The broader budget estimates further reinforce the trend of increasing allocations. Total TSP provision increased from Rs. 20,520.56 crore in 2022–23 (RE) to Rs. 20,667.26 crore in 2023–24 (BE), and further to Rs. 24,017.60 crore in 2025–26 (BE). Thus, while the state has progressively expanded the financial envelope of the TSP, the continuing gap between allocation and expenditure indicates that improvements in planning, fund release, monitoring and implementation mechanisms remain necessary to ensure that higher allocations translate into effective developmental outcomes for tribal communities in Rajasthan.

Persistent shortcomings in the planning and implementation of targeted expenditure for these sub-plans have led several Indian states, including Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Uttarakhand, enacted legislation to

ensure their proper implementation. These laws seek to ensure allocations in accordance with prescribed norms prevent diversion of funds and strengthen accountability. In Rajasthan, an initial attempt to legislate the sub-plans was made in 2013, but the draft bill was not enacted. Subsequently, as discussed earlier, the abolition of the Plan–Non-Plan distinction in public budgeting rendered the earlier prescribed norms of allocation, along with draft bills, largely redundant. In this context, it becomes imperative to restructure the legislative and budgetary framework in accordance with the revised budgeting architecture introduced from 2017–18 onwards.

Legislation Framework for the Sub- Plans:

In this context, the GoR enacted the “Rajasthan State Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Fund (Planning, Allocation and Utilization of Financial Resources) Act, 2022” for ensuring proper implementation of the sub-plans¹¹, following the example of Telangana, which revised its own legislation in 2017 to align with the new budgetary structure. The 2022 Act marks an important shift from executive discretion to statutory regulation of sub-plan financing. It mandates earmarking of funds for the sub-plans in the Annual Budget and requires allocations to be broadly proportional to the population share of STs and SCs. The Act is intended to overcome persistent issues in the sub-plan framework, particularly under-allocation, diversion of funds and the tendency to book general schemes under sub-plan heads. The Act also establishes high-level institutional mechanisms, including councils chaired by the Chief Minister and committees led by the Chief Secretary, to improve coordination and oversight. However, the legislation’s effectiveness will depend not only on compliance with allocation norms but also on the quality and direction of expenditure. Evidence from different states shows that proportional allocations do not necessarily translate into better outcomes unless spending is directed towards STs and SCs specific needs in areas such as education, health, livelihoods and asset creation. In Rajasthan, there remains a risk that expenditures may continue to be reported under the sub-plans without producing measurable benefits for the intended communities, particularly because the Act does not clearly define outcome indicators or beneficiary identification procedures.

The Act’s provisions for annual reporting to the State Legislature are an important step towards greater transparency and accountability. Nevertheless, unless such reporting is supported by independent evaluation, reliable caste-disaggregated data and stronger monitoring systems, it may remain focused largely on financial utilisation rather than actual developmental outcomes. Thus, while Rajasthan’s legislation represents a significant advance in institutionalizing TSP and SCSP, its long-term success will depend on effective implementation, stronger administrative capacity and sustained political commitment to social equity in Rajasthan. Therefore, it is important to frame the rules under the act so that the proper implementation of the Sub-Plan could be ensured in the state.

Conclusion and Policy Suggestions:

The foregoing analysis indicates that the implementation of the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) in Rajasthan continues to face significant challenges in terms of planning quality, budgetary allocation and effective utilisation. Although the state has made some progress in recent years, allocations and actual spending under the TSP have not consistently matched the proportion of the Scheduled Tribe population, thereby limiting the intended redistributive impact of the programme.

In order to strengthen the effectiveness of these sub-plans, there is a clear need for institutional and administrative reforms. First, capacity-building and training programmes should be systematically organised for officials and staff at all levels, especially in district and sub-district administrations, to improve understanding of TSP and SCSP guidelines and ensure uniform implementation across departments. Second, planning processes must be made more participatory and need-based through the adoption of a bottom-up approach that reflects the diverse socio-economic requirements of tribal communities. It is important to design schemes and programmes across departments and sectors in a way that directly benefits targeted groups under the sub-plans, thereby ensuring effective last-mile delivery and outcome orientation

A robust data system is also essential for evidence-based planning and monitoring. In this regard, a comprehensive and regularly updated database on key development indicators should be established at the district, block and Gram Panchayat levels. This would enhance transparency, improve targeting, and support more effective resource allocation. Furthermore, the integration of Sub-Plans with Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) should be strengthened so that local-level planning and budgeting processes become central to the implementation strategy. The enactment of the “Rajasthan State Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Fund (Planning, Allocation and Utilization of Financial Resources) Act, 2022” is a significant step towards institutionalising these sub-plans. However, the effectiveness of this legislation depends on the timely framing of detailed Rules. These Rules should clearly define implementation mechanisms, including mandatory social audits of the Sub-Plans, and associated development funds to ensure accountability at all levels. They should also specify eligible beneficiary categories and priority sectors for investment, thereby reducing ambiguity and improving policy focus.

¹¹https://prsindia.org/files/bills_acts/acts_states/rajasthan/2022/Act%20No.%20of%202022%20RJ.pdf

Additionally, the Rules should designate nodal departments responsible for preparing consolidated annual reports on the implementation of the Sub-Plans, and related Development Funds. These reports should be presented before the state legislature during the budget session to strengthen legislative oversight and ensure greater transparency. Overall, a combination of strengthened institutional mechanisms, participatory planning, robust monitoring systems, and effective legal enforcement is essential to ensure that the objectives of equity-oriented planning under TSP and SCSP are fully realised in Rajasthan.

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