PREFACE

Tribal developmental programmes play a significant role in integrating the tribals into the mainstream of Indian society. Tribal development has been based on a two-dimensional approach: (a) promotion of developmental programmes through planned efforts and (b) protection of the interests of the Scheduled Tribes through constitutional, legal, and administrative support. Positive discrimination has been a deliberate strategy to enable the neglected groups to reach the developmental goals.

"The very will to give priority to the upliftment of SCs/STs in the National Agenda is missing. The approach and methodology adopted by public bodies does not match the urgency with which these issues need to be tackled." The exploitation has to end, which has to be the first and the foremost concern of all those who are responsible for tribal development. The tribal sub-plan strategy held hopes for integrated development of tribal areas. However, six decades of its implementation has not brought about any perceptible change in the life of the majority of tribal people. We have traversed long distance without any significant gains. The tribes themselves had no access to planning and implementation for their development.

It is universally accepted that despite considerable attention, the tribal areas and the tribal people in our country lag woefully behind others in development and the tribals continue to be among the weakest and the most exploited section of the society. Before and after Independence, particularly in the context of special provisions in the Constitution for the protection and promotion of the interests of the Scheduled Tribes, various plans and programmes were designed to promote their development. One wonders whether tribal development sector was not a laboratory to experiment with different formulae as panacea for their ills. After commencement of fifth plan, relying on flow of benefits from general sectors of development with
area specific approach like Special Multipurpose Tribal (SMPT) and Tribal Development (TD) Blocks has now reached the tribal sub-plan approach.

Since the Fifth Five Year Plan the emphasis has been on predetermined quantification of funds in identified areas of tribal concentration called ITDP and assured budgetary and accounting mechanism to avoid diversion and lapse of funds. The subject matter of this study report is in relation to assessment of tribal sub-plan approach with focus on reduction of poverty levels. In fact, in size and intensity there has not been any appreciable reduction in poverty levels.

They just subsist, impoverished due to severe erosion of livelihood resources base—land, water, forest—with delayed and inadequate government assistance. It is in this context that decentralized Panchayati Raj system assumes importance whether they are Scheduled or Non-Scheduled Areas. Participatory decentralized democracy holds promise, can work and yield results, but interference from vested interests must stop. With separate administrative arrangements at the Centre and in the States for pursuing tribal development with special dispensation under Panchayati Extension scheduled Area Act (PESA) 1996, it is to be hoped that the pace of development in tribal areas, would increase manifold bringing substantial benefits.

All these were to change for good with the strategy of Tribal Sub-Plan concept from the beginning of the Fifth Five Year Plan. Unfortunately, this has not happened. Tribal sub-plan mechanism involving area specific development and special schemes for numerically small and economically and socially more marginalized vulnerable groups, has not made much headway. In particular, the state perception for planning was deficient both in micro and macro-planning.

One cannot afford to be pessimistic, though past experience offers no other choice. To change things, we have to change the implementation mechanism lock, stock and
Conceptually, Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) approach is sound and can be relied upon. Panchayati Extension Scheduled Area Act (PESA) 1996 offers a route to prosperity, but again faithful implementation is a sine qua non. Let us hope that the tribals will have better days ahead under government patronage but through self rule within the ambit of Panchayati Raj. This study impact of developmental programmes among scheduled tribes has enabled us to examine in depth the problems in implementing developmental programmes, particularly in reducing poverty levels of Scheduled tribes.