

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- # 941
TO BE ANSWERED ON- 14/12/2022

MORTALITY RATE OF TRIBAL CHILDREN IN KERALA

941 # DR. RADHA MOHAN DAS AGRAWAL

Will the Minister of TRIBAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether for the last 10-15 years, the mortality rate of children in the tribal settlements of Attappadi, Agali, sholayur, etc. of Palakkad district of Kerala, is very high as compared to the rest of Kerala; and

(b) the help provided by Central Government so far and the reasons why Government of Kerala has failed to control it?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRIBAL AFFAIRS
(SMT. RENUKA SINGH SARUTA)

(a) & (b): The subject of the reported mortality of tribal children in Palakkad district of Kerala has been examined in consultation with the State Government. A detailed report from State Government on the issue as well as action taken has been submitted to the Ministry, gist of which is enclosed in **Annexure-I**. National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has also made visit in this respect and has made certain observations and recommendations. These recommendations were sent to the State Government and Action Taken Report has been given by the State Government, which is given at **Annexure-II**.

In addition, a team of officials has been constituted in the Ministry of Tribal Affairs to visit and report on the ground situation in Attapady.

ANNEXURE – I

Annex referred to in reply to part (a) to (b) of the Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. #941 for answer on 14.12.2022

The State Government has submitted vide its report dt. 19.07.2022 that the following schemes are being implemented in Attappady as part of its integral development.

a. Food Support/Security Programme

The scheme is intended for providing food grains in needy tribal areas of all the Districts in the State and to address the issue of malnutrition and poverty among the STs. Choice of food items will be decided according to specific tastes and preferences of the tribes and this will be decided at PO/TDO level.

b. Janani-Janma Raksha

One of the major concerns in the development of tribal health aspect pertains to the nutritional issues of mother and child. Inadequate pre and post maternal care is the major issue among them and is attributed mainly to the lack of timely financial assistance. The scheme is envisaged for extending timely assistance @ 2000 per month for 18 months, beginning from third month of the pregnancy to the month in which the child attains one year.

c. Comprehensive Health Care Project

During 2021-22 an amount of Rs 85.00 lakh has been allotted to the Project Officer, ITDP, Attappady for implementing Comprehensive Health Care Project and an amount of Rs 110 lakhs has been allotted to Government Tribal Specialty Hospital, Kottathara, Attappady through the District Medical Officer, Palakkad. Under this scheme cost of medicine, laboratory charges, hire charges of vehicles are given. Financial assistance to by-standers is also distributed through this scheme.

d. Assistance to Sickle Cell Anaemia Patients

Financial assistance @ Rs.2500 per month is being provided to all sickle cell anemia patients to meet their medical and nutritional expenses.

e. Community Kitchen in Attappady: Community Kitchen is a programme aimed to enhance the nourishment of the vulnerable population including pregnant and lactating mothers, adolescents, senior citizens, chronic patients etc.

The objectives of these programmes are as follows.

- Ensure food to the most vulnerable communities.
- Ensuring nutrition at present and in the long run providing nutritional education to the communities.
- Enhancing access to knowledge and information about their rights and entitlements.
- Developing livelihood and augmenting income of the communities,

f. Attappady Tribal Apparel Park (ATAP): Apparel Park is a developmental project for providing employment opportunity to 250 Scheduled Tribes Women at Attappady Block in Palakkad District. Under the scheme 6 months intensive training programme is provided for 250 Scheduled Tribes Women with 3 months in factory job training. The programme aims at skilling and empowering Scheduled Tribes women in Attappady area. After successful completion of the training, a textile production unit has been established in Attappady engaging 200 women thereby ensuring their livelihood.

g. Millet Village for food security in Attappady: This is a new initiative intended for rejuvenating the traditional tribal agriculture and thereby addressing the malnutrition problems in Attappady. The infant mortality rate due to malnutrition of the tribal community can be addressed by consumption of their traditional food. It is implemented jointly by Agriculture Department and Scheduled Tribes Development Department at a cost of Rs.6.87 crore.

h. Scheme for Nutrition-sufficiency in food through introduction of Agra ecology in Attappadi: The Scheduled Tribes Development Department initiated an innovative pilot project in 2019-20 to address nutrition sufficiency in 20 hamlets in Attappady Block. The total cost of this homestead agricultural project is Rs.1.13 crore and it is implemented for 600 families in 1244 acres. 16 field co-ordinators from

tribal communities supervise the projects and support the farmers in their activities. The scheme aims to introduce nutrition-sufficiency in food through introduction of Agra ecology in close participation and management of tribal communities.

i. Vatsalyasparsham Volunteers: Lady Health Volunteers from Scheduled Tribes community having ANM/GNM qualifications are appointed to help lactating mothers to prevent milk aspiration and to assist them in pre-natal and ante-natal care.

j. Medical facilities in Attappadi: One Government Tribal Specialty Hospital, 3 Family Health Centres and one Community Study Centre are functioning in Attappady region. 5 Mobile Medical Units under Health and Family Welfare Department are also functioning in Attappady. 2 OP Clinics run by Scheduled Tribes Development Department are also functioning. Scheduled Tribes Development Department through ITDP arranges 24x7 Ambulance service and also provides logistic support during emergencies.

ANNEXURE -II

Annex referred to in reply to part (a) to (b) of the Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. #941 for answer on 14.12.2022

NCST recommendations dt. 06.07.2022 and the gist of the Action Taken Report by State Government dt. 05.08.2022

1. The Commission had made the following recommendations in this regard and requested the State Government to take immediate action in the matter:

- i. Upgrade the medical and health facilities with well equipped pathological labs in the Attapady Block. The Primary Health Centres, Community Health Centres, Dispensaries and Government Tribal Specialty Hospital, Kottathara needs to be equipped with the required medical facilities for scanning, sonography machine, radiology etc. The State Government needs to take immediate action for creation of the required posts of Doctors, Specialized Doctors and Para Medical Staff for all the Departments in order to avoid referring patients to other specialised hospitals which are far away. These efforts would prevent high incidence of infant deaths in the Block.
- ii. The State Government and District Administration need to regularly organise special medical camps and awareness camps about sickle cell and anemia in each tribal hamlet, at least every month and also establish mobile dispensaries in the areas of ST habitation.
- iii. Food delivery system need to be in line with the traditional food habits of the tribals for ready acceptance.
- iv. Tribal leaders, tribal promoters and social workers working for the welfare of STs need to be involved and engaged for all round development and for addressing health related problems.
- v. Road connectivity needs to be expanded in the areas inhabited by tribal and the road connectivity between tribal hamlets and hospital requires improvement.
- vi. All pending claims of the STs under Forest Rights and Community Forest Rights must be immediately cleared and titles distributed to them. Allotment of land must be reasonable, nearby their habitation.

vii. The cases of land alienation need to be thoroughly investigated and necessary corrective action be taken immediately against the land grabbers and restore the land in favour of STs. The District Administration also to ensure that the provisions of Kerala Restriction on Transfer by and Restoration of Lands to Scheduled Tribes, Act, 1999 should be implemented in true spirit.

viii. To enhance income of STs, the State Government and District Administration need to introduce and implement income generating schemes such as providing dairy animals, fisheries, poultry farms, pig and cultivation of cash crops etc.

ix. Fencing/boundary walls need to be erected between forests and villages in order to prevent entry of wild animals in ST habitation areas.

x. To take immediate necessary action to check delay in disbursement of payment to the ST pregnant women under Janani Jan Raksha Scheme.

xi. To ensure safe drinking water to every house of ST hamlet.

xii. Ensure education of all ST children of the Attapady Block. Primary education needs a revisit to ensure children are taught in their local language (Malayalam).

xiii. To discourage the habit of alcoholism among the ST male persons, the State Government and District Administration need to organise regular awareness programmes and rehabilitation measures.

The recommendations of the NCST were sent to the State of Kerala and the District Administration for taking action in the matter. Further, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs had also sought factual position in the matter from the State Government. The State Government submitted its report vide letter dated 19.07.2022.

Action Taken Report (State Government)

1. The State Government of Kerala has submitted that Attapadi Tribal block in Palakkad District consists of 3 Grama Panchayats viz Agali, Sholayur and Pudur. Irulas, Mudugas and Kurumbas are the main Tribal communities of Attapady living in 192 hamlets. There are 10,893 families, including joint families. Total population of Attappady is 30,658. Irulas are the largest community and Kurumbas the smallest. Kurumbas are particularly vulnerable tribal group and Irulars are the highest on Social ladder in Attappady.
2. The State Government has reported that the Scheduled Tribes Development Department is constantly ensuring that the Central Government funds sanctioned for the welfare of STs in Kerala reach the beneficiaries without any lapse. Scheduled Tribes Development Department works in tandem with Attapady block Panchayath to the welfare schemes of the tribes. Three Grama Panchayaths in Attapady undertake programmes under TSP schemes of Panchayath Raj Institutions every financial year. The schemes are mainly intended for upliftment of tribes in various schemes covering infrastructure, education, nutrition and other health activities. As a result, the status of inhabitants at Attapady has been comparatively raised.
3. The State has submitted that during last year 9 tribal children of 0-6 age groups have died in Attapady. The reported deaths are not due to starvation but due to various reasons like milk aspiration, congenital disease etc. Infant death among tribal children, and malnutrition problem were brought to the notice of authorities and various speedy measures were taken to tackle the problems with joint efforts of various Government Departments.
4. The Government has taken effective steps for providing medical and nutritional care to pregnant and lactating women of Attappady to ensure health and to prevent the neonatal deaths. Health Department is providing service to the people of Attappady through 245 Medical personnel which includes Doctors, Nursing staff, Paramedical and field staff like JPI-IN, JH Inspectors, Health Inspectors, Lady Health Inspectors, Lady Health Supervisors and through 10 of its institutions in the area.
5. Scheduled Tribes Development Department is collecting accurate information of homeless and landless among ST's in the Attapady and follow up actions are being taken. A prestigious scheme "LIFE MISSION" has been envisaged by Government of Kerala with an aim to provide proper houses to all homeless and preference would be given for Tribes. It is not true that the Tribes are driven out from their natural habitats. Their possession of Forest Land is legalized under FRA 2006, Land has been provided from vested forest circuits. Almost all Tribal families in Attapady have land with valid documents.
6. Earnest efforts are being taken to minimize drug narcotics abuse and to rehabilitate those who are addicted to narcotics. Steps are also being taken to induce a sports culture in tribal youth by setting up playgrounds and other facilities. The Scheduled Tribes Development Department, Excise, Police and Forest Departments are adapting strong awareness programs and effective measures to reduce the use of alcohol and other intoxicants.
