



Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Vikas Yojana: Empowering Tribal Livelihoods Through Sustainable Practices

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ABSTRACT

The Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Vikas Yojana (PMVDY), launched in 2018 by the Government of India, is a flagship initiative aimed at improving the livelihoods of tribal communities through the sustainable utilization and value addition of Minor Forest Produce (MFP). Implemented by the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED), the scheme promotes skill development, entrepreneurship, market linkages, and the establishment of Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) for processing and marketing forest-based products. PMVDY enhances tribal incomes while encouraging sustainable harvesting practices, biodiversity conservation, and preservation of indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage. By fostering Self-Help Groups (SHGs), improving infrastructure, and facilitating financial inclusion, the scheme contributes significantly to inclusive rural development. With nearly 3,958 VDKs and over 11.83 lakh tribal beneficiaries across India, PMVDY has emerged as a successful model for tribal empowerment, livelihood security, and sustainable socio-economic development through community-based forest resource management.

Keywords: Minor Forest Produce (MFP); Tribal Livelihoods; Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs); Sustainable Development; TRIFED

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Vikas Yojana (PMVDY) is a significant initiative of the Government of India aimed at uplifting tribal communities by promoting sustainable livelihoods based on forest resources. Launched on 14 April 2018, PMVDY is a component of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Minor Forest Produce (MFP) Scheme and seeks to

improve the livelihoods of tribal populations residing in forest and remote areas (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2018). The scheme harnesses the wealth of forests, popularly known as *Van Dhan*, to generate sustainable income opportunities for tribal communities. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs serves as the nodal ministry at the national level, while the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)

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acts as the implementing agency. PMVDY focuses on value addition to Minor Forest Produce (MFP), skill enhancement, entrepreneurship development, and improved market access. Recognizing the rich biodiversity of forest ecosystems, the scheme promotes the sustainable utilization of forest resources while ensuring economic benefits for tribal communities and conservation of ecological balance (TRIFED, 2023). Since its launch in 2018, the Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Vikas Yojana (PMVDY) has expanded significantly across the country. As of August 2024, TRIFED had sanctioned 3,958 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) with financial assistance of ₹587.36 crore, benefiting more than 11.83 lakh tribal members across various states and union territories of India (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024). The programme has emerged as one of the largest tribal livelihood initiatives, focusing on value addition, entrepreneurship development, and market integration of Minor Forest Produce (MFP).

2. OBJECTIVES OF PMVDY

The primary objective of the Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Vikas Yojana is to enhance the income of tribal communities through a structured approach, focusing on the following key areas:

2.1 Capacity Building

Training programs conducted through Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) and Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), etc., are designed to develop skills related to the collection, processing, and marketing of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs). This elevates the capabilities of tribal individuals and enables them to enhance the quality and value of their products.

2.2 Establishment of Van Dhan Vikas Kendras

The scheme promotes the establishment of Van Dhan Vikas Kendra's at the block level, which serves as collection and processing centers for forest produce. These centers are crucial in aggregating tribal products, ensuring quality control, and facilitating direct market linkages.

2.3 Linkage to Markets

A critical component of PMVDY is to connect tribal artisans and producers to various markets, both national and international. Establishing market linkages helps increase the visibility of tribal products,

thereby ensuring better prices and enhancing the economic status of these communities.

2.4 Promotion of Self-Help Groups (SHGs)

The scheme encourages the formation of SHGs among tribal communities, fostering collaborative efforts in production, processing, and marketing. Such groups also help in pooling resources, sharing knowledge, and providing mutual support, which is vital for the qualitative and quantitative enhancement of their products.

3. IMPORTANCE OF THE PMVDY

The importance of the Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Vikas Yojana cannot be overstated, particularly in the context of India's tribal communities who often rely on sporadic income from traditional livelihoods. This scheme offers multifold benefits:

3.1 Economic Empowerment

By creating sustainable employment opportunities and enhancing income levels, PMVDY directly contributes to the economic empowerment of tribal households. This helps in reducing poverty levels and improving the overall standard of living.

3.2 Promotion of Sustainable Practices

The initiative emphasizes sustainable harvesting and processing of forest resources, thus contributing to the conservation of biodiversity. Moreover, it encourages awareness among tribal populations about environmental sustainability and the importance of using forest resources judiciously.

3.3 Cultural Preservation

By promoting tribal crafts and traditional knowledge related to forest produce, PMVDY also plays a vital role in preserving indigenous cultures and traditions. This not only benefits the communities themselves but enriches the cultural heritage of the nation.

3.4 Enhancing Infrastructural Development

The establishment of Van Dhan Vikas Kendras and training centers leads to improved infrastructure in tribal regions, which can have a domino effect on the overall development of these areas, including better connectivity and access to other services. (TRIFED, 2023).

4. SCOPE OF PMVDY

The scope of the Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Vikas Yojana is expansive, covering a range of areas that contribute to the holistic development of tribal communities:

4.1 Diverse Range of Products

PMVDY supports the development of a variety of products derived from forest resources, including medicinal plants, wild fruits, and organic handicrafts. This opens up avenues for innovation and entrepreneurship within tribal communities.

4.2 Collaboration with NGOs and Institutions

The scheme allows for collaboration with non-governmental organizations and research institutions, enhancing the network of support available to tribal populations and fostering a culture of knowledge sharing.

4.3 Policy Advocacy

The successful implementation of PMVDY can serve as a model for other rural development programs, encouraging policy advocacy for the rights and entitlements of tribal communities, particularly concerning land and resource access.

4.4 Financial Inclusion

By promoting SHGs and linkages with financial institutions, PMVDY contributes to the financial inclusion of tribal populations, allowing them access to credit and financial services that can facilitate their entrepreneurial ventures.

5. CONCLUSION

The Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Vikas Yojana is a transformative initiative that harnesses the potential of India's tribal communities through sustainable utilization and value addition of forest resources. Its emphasis on skill development, entrepreneurship, market linkages, and institutional support has significantly contributed to income generation, poverty reduction, and social empowerment among tribal populations. The remarkable expansion of the programme, with nearly 4,000 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras and more than 11.8 lakh beneficiaries across the country, demonstrates its effectiveness in promoting tribal livelihoods and inclusive development (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2024). Furthermore, the scheme encourages environmental sustainability through

responsible utilization of forest resources while preserving indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage. By strengthening livelihood security and fostering entrepreneurship, PMVDY has become a crucial instrument for achieving sustainable tribal development and rural prosperity in India.

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