



Tribals of West Bengal battling food scarcity: study

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Communities are 'far behind' in terms of human development, says survey of 1,000 households by Professor Amartya Sen's institute

- Two months after the West Bengal government denied any food scarcity as a possible cause of death of seven persons from a tribal community, a survey report has identified "food scarcity in varying degrees" in about 31% of tribal households in West Bengal.
- West Bengal is home to a over five million tribals, with 6% of the India's tribal population of 100 million.
- The study titled 'An Inquiry into the world of the Adivasis of West Bengal', conducted by Professor Amartya Sen's Pratichi Institute and Asiatic Society, will be released in Kolkata.
- The survey was conducted in 1,000 tribal households to ascertain living conditions, health and education.
- Most of the families surveyed could hardly afford animal protein or pulses.
- Degradation of forest and environmental degradation are cited as two more reasons for "reduced availability of natural nutrients" resulting in early deaths.

Premature deaths

- The report indicated that the number of deaths reported to have occurred in the surveyed households, in the year preceding the survey, "was 52, among which 48 [92%] were premature deaths" and only four were due to old age.
- The work participation rate [WPR] is higher among the Adivasis in Bengal "forcing the children of schoolgoing age to discontinue their studies in order to fend [for] themselves and support the families," the report noted.