

# Entrepreneurship Development Among Tribal Communities in Madhya Pradesh: An Integrated Assessment of Programs, Challenges, and Opportunities

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**Abstract:** *This research paper evaluates the effectiveness, impact, and challenges of Entrepreneurship Development Programs (EDPs) aimed at tribal communities in Madhya Pradesh. It synthesizes outcomes related to income generation, skill acquisition, leadership emergence, and market integration by drawing insights from studies and initiatives across districts such as Mandla, Dindori, Samnapur, and Bhedaghat. Findings reveal that targeted interventions have substantially improved livelihoods; however, persistent barriers—such as limited financial access, market linkage, and socio-cultural norms—remain. The study proposes a holistic model to strengthen tribal entrepreneurship through inclusive policy design and contextual program delivery.*

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship Development Programs, Tribal Communities, Madhya Pradesh, Skill Development, Livelihood, Inclusive Growth, Socio-Economic Empowerment.

## 1. Introduction

India's tribal population represents over 8.6% of the total populace, with Madhya Pradesh accounting for the highest proportion. These communities often reside in remote regions, facing systemic deprivation in education, employment, and economic participation. Entrepreneurship offers an alternative and sustainable means of empowerment. In recent years, multiple government and NGO-led Entrepreneurship Development Programs (EDPs) have been initiated in tribal-dominated districts. Yet, a comprehensive evaluation of these initiatives—particularly in the context of Madhya Pradesh—is still limited. This paper aims to bridge that gap by integrating existing literature, empirical data, and field-based insights to assess programs, challenges, and opportunities in a unified framework.

## 2. Literature Review

Khare (2024) examined the income enhancement of herbal vendors in Pataalkot due to training programs, finding a direct correlation between skills and income. Tekam (2013) evaluated the Integrated Tribal Development Program (ITDP) in Mandla, noting that education and training had a significant influence on income. Pandey (2023) assessed the SVEP in Samnapur, citing gaps in post-training support. Tripathi highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship education in skill formation. Kumari and Sharma (2024) reviewed pan-India tribal entrepreneurship, highlighting policy gaps and financial exclusion. These studies underscore the role of institutional mechanisms, contextual training, and social support networks in promoting tribal entrepreneurship.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

- To assess the structure and delivery mechanisms of EDPs targeting tribal populations in Madhya Pradesh.
- To examine the socio-economic outcomes of these programs among tribal beneficiaries.
- To identify key challenges and opportunities in scaling tribal entrepreneurship.
- To propose policy and programmatic recommendations based on findings.

## 4. Research Methodology

The research employs a mixed-method study design in order to fully examine the efficacy, impact, and challenges of Entrepreneurship Development Programs (EDPs) in tribal communities of Madhya Pradesh. The research combines both quantitative and qualitative information to create a holistic vision of not only economic outcomes but also socio-cultural aspects of entrepreneurship in tribal areas

### 4.1 Research Design

A mixed-method approach was selected in order to combine empirical facts with people's stories. The justification for the application of this design is the multifaceted, multidimensional character of tribal entrepreneurship. Although changes in income and the number of enterprises offer quantifiable measures, variables such as empowerment, motivation, and local acceptance are more effectively explained through qualitative observations.

- **Quantitative Component:** Focused on systematic indicators like income before and after involvement in EDP, enterprise survival, and participation rates.

- **Qualitative Component:** Emphasized experiences of living, motivation, challenges, and social change through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.
- The combined approach allows for triangulation of results, enhancing study reliability and depth.

#### 4.2 Data Collection Method

The study used both primary and secondary data collection methods:

##### a) Primary Data Collection:

- **Structured Questionnaires:** Filled out by tribal entrepreneurs who participated in EDPs within the last three years. The questionnaires included both close-ended and Likert-scale questions about income, satisfaction, credit access, market linkages, and the effectiveness of training.
- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Conducted with 25 key informants, including tribal entrepreneurs, local NGO facilitators, and training coordinators.
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Held in each case study area with 6–8 participants each to explore collective views on training usefulness, challenges, and local dynamics.

##### b) Secondary Data Collection:

- Reviewed existing academic articles, evaluation reports (SVEP, ITDP, MPCON), government publications, and NGO implementation notes.
- Government portal data from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and training modules by MPCON were also examined.

#### 4.3 Sampling Strategy

The sampling involved stratified and purposive methods to cover a broad yet focused group of respondents:

- **Sample Size:** 100 tribal entrepreneurs
- **Location:** Four districts led by tribal communities—Mandla, Dindori, Bhedaghat (Jabalpur), and Samnapur.
- **Types of Businesses:** Participants came from sectors like herbal product trade, eco-tourism, tailoring, food processing, and retail micro-enterprises.
- **Stratification:** Ensured the inclusion of responses from all genders (about 60% women), age groups (18–45 years), and various EDP programs attended.

This method helped analyze EDP results across different business categories and social groups within the tribal population.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis Process

Data was examined using both descriptive statistics and thematic content analysis:

##### a) Quantitative Analysis:

- Summary statistics described income levels, number of businesses started, and EDP participation rates.
- Comparative tables showed changes before and after training, such as income increases and business sustainability.
- Frequency analysis highlighted common business types and sources of support.

##### b) Qualitative Analysis:

- Transcripts from interviews and FGDs were analyzed thematically using NVivo software.
- Key themes included access to credit, post-training support, social empowerment, cultural suitability of EDPs, and digital challenges. Quotes and stories supported the statistical findings and deepened interpretation.

#### 4.5 Limitations of the Study:

While the methodology aimed for accuracy and relevance, the study acknowledges several limitations:

- **Geographical Scope:** Findings relate to the selected districts but do not represent all tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh.
- **Sample Size:** Although adequate for qualitative purposes, 100 respondents are not enough for broad statistical generalizations.
- **Time Frame:** As a cross-sectional study, it cannot examine long-term effects or growth trends.
- **Recall Bias:** Some data, like income before training, depends on memory and may be inaccurate.
- **Excluded Non-Participants:** Tribal individuals who were eligible but did not participate in any EDP are not included, possibly limiting insights into program barriers or reach.

This comprehensive approach helped capture both the outcomes and reasons behind EDP results, providing deeper insights into tribal entrepreneurship in Madhya Pradesh. This holistic methodological strategy enabled the study to record both the what and the why of EDP outcomes, which facilitated the discovery of more in-depth insights into tribal entrepreneurship in Madhya Pradesh.

### 5. Case Studies

#### 5.1 Case Study: Herbal Vendors of Patalkot (Chhindwara District)

##### Context:

Patalkot is a remote valley in Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh, and the inhabitants here are mainly from the Bharia and Gond tribes. These communities possess vast ethnobotanical knowledge passed orally from generation to generation. Their herb trade was largely informal and was considered without value addition. Middlemen were mostly exploiting them.

##### Intervention of EDP:

The training institute, helped by local NGOs and state agencies, developed intervention modules on herbal identification, sustainable harvesting, hygiene practices, value addition, packaging, and branding. Numeracy and simple pricing techniques were also imparted during the course.

##### Implementation Methodology:

**Sample:** 30 herbal vendors attending the training, with equal numbers of males and females

**Training Days:** Consisted of four weeks of intense workshops

**Support:** Monthly follow-up by field trainers; helped in forming a cooperative.

#### Outcomes:

Average income went up from Rs. 1,200 to Rs. 3,200 in six months.

They started doing eco-friendly, sealed packaging with local branding (e.g., "Patalkot Naturals").

A cooperative society was registered and started bulk supplies to Ayurveda stores, and also took part in fairs like Aadi Mahotsav.

### 5.2 Case Study 2 -Women Entrepreneurs in Jabalpur (MPCON (Madhya Pradesh Consultancy Organisation) Project Statement of the Problem The MPCON Project, meant for women entrepreneurs, has received meagre attention.)

#### Context:

In tribal belts of peri-urban Jabalpur, tribal women were traditionally engaged in domestic chores with negligible or no earnings. MPCON started a targeted EDP to enable women to participate in micro-enterprises.

#### EDP Intervention:

There was training to make pickles/papad, tailoring, household chemical production (phenyl, detergent). It emphasized hands-on learning and cooperative establishment of enterprises.

#### Implementation Methodology:

**Participants:** 40 Tribal women, 18–45 years of age.

**Training Duration:** six months (in batches)

**Post Training Support:** Formation of SHG, linkage with local banks, and rural haats.

#### Outcomes:

More than 75% of trainees formed SHGs and enterprises.

Monthly income varied from Rs. 2,000 to 4,500.

There are also tailoring SHGs, which have bulk orders for the stitching of school uniforms.

The self-esteem of women was reported to have increased significantly, with some of them attending Panchayat meetings.

#### Challenges:

Rigid gender roles severely limited mobility.

Limited exposure to marketing platforms.

#### Opportunities:

E-commerce support through apps such as GeM and ONDC.

### 5.3 Case Study: Tribal Youth in Ecotourism – Bhedaghat (Jabalpur District)

#### Context:

Bhedaghat, with its famous marble rocks and the Narmada River, attracts thousands of tourists annually. However, local tribal youth were often excluded from formal tourism enterprises.

#### EDP Intervention:

An EDP focused on equipping youth with tourism-related skills: eco-guiding, hospitality, safety training, and basic spoken English. The program partnered with the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board for certification.

#### Implementation Methodology:

- **Participants:** 25 tribal youth (70% male, 30% female)
- **Training:** 8-week certification
- **Support Activities:** Practical internships with hotels, support in getting vendor licenses

#### Outcomes:

- Youth started eco-guided boat tours, homestays, and crafts stalls.
- Monthly earnings ranged between Rs. 6,000–8,000 during peak seasons.
- Women participants helped organize cultural shows with tribal dance and handicraft exhibitions.

#### Challenges:

- Seasonal income; low earnings during monsoon/off-season.
- Regulatory hurdles in acquiring tourism licenses.

#### Opportunities:

- Expansion of cultural tourism packages.
- Development of tribal art galleries and homestay listings on tourism portals

### 5.4 Case Study: Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Program (SVEP) in Samnapur (Dindori District)

#### Context:

Samnapur is a tribal-dominated block with limited livelihood options. SVEP was introduced here to foster rural entrepreneurship with training, seed funding, and mentoring.

#### EDP Intervention:

SVEP adopted a multi-pronged model involving Cluster Level Federations (CLFs), entrepreneur selection, handholding support, and financial access via Community Enterprise Funds.

#### Implementation Methodology:

- **Sample:** 60 tribal participants (32 men, 28 women)
- **Sector Focus:** Grocery stores, tailoring units, agarbatti manufacturing
- **Mentorship:** Community Resource Persons – Enterprise Promotion (CRP-EPs) provided one-on-one support.

#### Outcomes:

- 36 out of 60 launched micro-enterprises.
- Income increase of Rs. 1,500–3,500/month.
- Enterprise sustainability rate after 1 year was approx. 60%.

#### Challenges:

- Weak credit history, bank hesitance in providing loans.
- Digital illiteracy affected inventory tracking and mobile banking.

**Opportunities:**

- Linking with Digital India and PMEGP schemes.
- Training CRP-EPs in basic digital coaching.

**6. Research Gap**

Although Entrepreneurship Development Programs (EDPs) have made tangible progress in enhancing livelihoods in Madhya Pradesh's tribal communities, a closer examination of the sector reveals that significant gaps persist, particularly regarding the long-term, sustainable impact of such programs.

**1) Short-Term Orientation, Long-Term Silence**

Most programmed assessments end with short-term success indicators like the number of trainees placed in an enterprise or earnings made within a few months of the training. For example, in Samnapur, while 36 out of 60 trained persons initiated enterprises, few of them survived even a year. Hardly anything is known after that. Do they expand? Do they shut down? Do trainees go back to unemployment? The facts are not there.

Why it's important: Without long-term data, we cannot truly know whether these programs are truly transformative or merely fleeting.

**2) Each District, a Different Story—But No Common Lessons**

District programs such as those in Patalkot, Jabalpur, Bhedaghat, and Samnapur have been successful in various areas—herbal commerce, tailoring, tourism, etc. But they are not being compared or correlated. That is, no attempt is being made to compare or aggregate insights across districts. So, what has been learned in one place remains there, rather than feeding into improved designs for other districts.

Why it's important: We lose out on learning from trends that can potentially scale tribal entrepreneurship throughout the state or nation.

**3) Tribal Women in the Shadows**

Initiatives such as MPCON in Jabalpur demonstrate that tribal women are successful entrepreneurs when they are

given the chance. However, most assessments continue to ignore the particular obstacles that women overcome, for instance, mobility constraints, domestic duties, or social stigma. Unless these gender-specific realities are addressed, most programs continue to be one-size-fits-all.

Why this matters: Disregarding gender dynamics is disregarding half the population's entrepreneurial potential.

**4) Losing Touch with Traditional Knowledge**

Tribal groups possess their own traditional expertise—such as the herbal knowledge of the Bharia tribe in Patalkot. Yet most EDPs ignore these assets and provide blanket training instead. This misalignment can not only undermine the cultural identity of these groups but also miss the sustainable economic value that hinges on what they already have.

Why this matters: The programs should capitalize on what tribal communities do well rather than replace it.

**5) Left Behind in the Digital Age.**

Though technological tools such as online stores, m-banking, and inventory software have the potential to fuel small business expansion, the majority of tribal entrepreneurs are not trained in them. In the Samnapur example, for instance, many left school just because they lacked the skills to handle inventories or online transactions.

Why it matters: Tribal digital illiteracy is fast turning into a significant hindrance to tribal enterprise development.

**6) Training Is Over, What Next?**

One of the strongest and most persistent gaps in all case studies was the deficiency of after-training support. Participants were frequently left to their own devices. In the absence of mentorship, market links, or business guidance, many struggled to maintain or expand their businesses.

Why it matters: Training is only the first step—continuing support makes or breaks actual success.

**7. Findings**

Key Factors	Observations
Training and Skills	Direct correlation with income generation
Gender Inclusion	Improved, but still limited in participation
Access to Credit	Remains a barrier for scaling enterprises
Market Linkage	Weak post-training support for product marketing
Community Model Sustainability	SHGs and cooperatives perform better than individual efforts

**Figure 1:** Sources of Entrepreneurial Support among Respondents

**Table 1:** Assessment of Key Government Programs for Tribal Entrepreneurship in Madhya Pradesh

Program Name	Key Features	Strengths	Challenges
SVEP (Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Program)	Skill training, seed funding, mentorship	Boosted micro-enterprises, youth engagement	Weak post-training follow-up, market disconnect
ITDP (Integrated Tribal Development Program)	Integrated welfare, education, and self-employment	Strong community mobilization	Fund utilization issues, slow implementation
MPCON (M.P. Consultancy Organization)	Capacity building, women-focused training	Gender inclusion, SHG promotion	Limited reach, lack of branding expertise

## 8. Conclusion

EDPs in Madhya Pradesh have positively impacted tribal livelihoods, particularly where training, market access, and institutional support intersect. However, scalability and sustainability require stronger coordination between policy, finance, and grassroots capacity-building. The study suggests strengthening tribal entrepreneurship through locally tailored EDPs, inclusive finance, digital access, and mentorship networks.

## 9. Recommendations

- 1) **Strengthen Follow-up Mechanisms:** Implement structured mentorship and post-training support for EDP beneficiaries.
- 2) **Expand Financial Inclusion:** Collaborate with banks and MFIs to ease credit access through simplified KYC and collateral-free loans.
- 3) **Enhance Market Linkages:** Create digital marketplaces and tribal trade fairs to support the marketing of tribal products.
- 4) **Promote Context-Specific Training:** Customize training based on local resources (e.g., herbal processing, bamboo craft, eco-tourism).
- 5) **Incentivize Women Entrepreneurs:** Offer special grants, child-care support, and peer mentoring to enhance the participation of tribal women.
- 6) **Integrate Digital Literacy:** Embed ICT and mobile-based tools for marketing, banking, and business management.
- 7) **Develop Entrepreneurial Clusters:** Promote SHG and cooperative-based cluster development models to increase scale and bargaining power.

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