VULNERABILITY AND ADAPTATION OF A MARGINALISED COMMUNITY: EVIDENCE FROM THE FIELD

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ABSTRACT
Sixty-five years after Independence, India is still struggling with poverty, especially rural poverty, which is most widespread among the socially disadvantaged groups like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This study looks at a marginalized community, the Kheria Sabar, inhabiting a particular unfavourable agro-ecological area in Puruliya, West Bengal (India). The study argues that the vulnerabilities the Sabars face in terms of the interaction of interlinked systems – historical, socio-economic, political, environmental and spatial, are the causes behind their continued poverty and marginalization. The state of poverty of the Sabars is manifest at the present time in the form of limited access to power and resources. However, the vulnerability of the Sabars is found to vary on a micro-scale (both inter-village and inter-household) with diversity in the availability of resources and opportunities as well as in the level of adaptation to these stresses. This paper seeks to highlight these differentials in vulnerability and adaptation through village level case studies which are responsible for the observed heterogeneity in the present status of the people. It is these disparities that will have to be taken into perspective while designing appropriate development strategies in the future.

KEY WORDS: Adaptation, Criminal Tribe, Kheria Sabar, Marginalization, Vulnerability