

A Socio Economic Exploration of Bediya Community of Rasabeda Village in Pursuit of Sustainable Development

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Abstract:- Tribal communities have been an integral and captivating part of Indian society since the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. India is home to the second-largest tribal population in the world. Spread all across the country, these communities have rich traditions, vibrant cultures, and unique lifestyles. One such major tribal community is Bediya. This study is focused on bediya settlement in Rasabeda, a village in the hills of the Chota Nagpur plateau. The settlement is highly vulnerable and underdeveloped. The study aims to examine the socio-economic challenges faced by the Bediya residents, highlighting the community's current state of pervasive poverty and undernourishment. The aim of the research is to present a detailed analysis of Rasabeda by employing a multifaceted approach encompassing economic, demographic, social, livelihood, health, education, and agricultural dimensions.

The research seeks to contribute valuable insights into fostering lasting development in the Bediya community. The findings of this study hold significance while implementing effective strategies for sustainable growth and improvement within similar contexts.

Keywords:- Bediya, Rasabeda, Demographics, Livelihood, Health, Education, Agriculture, Environment, Sustainable Development, Tribe.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. A Brief History of Bediya Tribe

Bediya, also written as Bedia or Besia, is an ignored scheduled tribe of India.

It is one of the largest tribal communities in Jharkhand. Bedia is a variant of the Hindi term *Behara*, which refers to a forest dweller. Their lives are immensely dependent on forests. They are said to have descended from the union of a Vedbansi prince with a Munda Girl.¹

A legend has heard that they had their own 'Vedas,' and hence it is called Bediya. Their Veda was different from the Vedas of Aryans, which the Aryans destroyed. It is believed that they originally lived on Mahudipahar in Barkagaon of Hazaribagh district in Jharkhand. Many pieces of evidence (Image 1) are found in Mahudipahar, which points to the existence of their ancestral community, some folk tales and research suggest that the Bediya tribe might have migrated from their home due to some conflicts. After migration, most of them settled near Hazaribagh, Singhbhum, Ranchi, Ramgarh, Chuttu, and Silli. Some followed rivers and mountains to West Bengal, where they settled near Jhadgrama and Purullia.

Like other tribal groups, Bediyas are settled in the forests. There is no unique tribal language of the Bediya tribe. They use the dialect of the residence area, such as Hindi, Nagpuri, Khaurah, Kurmati, Panchapargania, Saadri, etc. Despite having close contact with Munda and Santhal in the past, they continue to use local dialects of the Aryan language family.



Image 1: Ruins of Caves and Temples in Mahudipahad

¹As suggested by a research by Jharkhand government published in ("Bedia | Art & Culture

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) is an important paradigm for sustainable rural development that focus on the active involvement of local communities in the management and conservation of natural resources such as forests, water bodies, and wildlife. By empowering communities to take ownership of their resources, CBNRM can conserve biodiversity and improve livelihoods in rural India.²

Agroecology is another promising framework for advancing sustainable development in rural villages. It offers an integrated approach to agriculture that aligns with ecological principles and local knowledge systems. Agroecology encompasses practices to improve soil health, conserve biodiversity, promote social equity, and enhance the economy.³

The significance of infrastructure growth and rural development was highlighted by many researchers⁴. States with greater infrastructure facilities bring more local and other investment and outperform in terms of growth. Discrepancies in per capita income between states have been linked to differences in physical, social, and economical infrastructure. It is also believed that community well-being in education and health is dependent on infrastructure, such as drinking water, sanitation, electricity, and roads, which provide access to basic essentials of life⁵.

Lack of basic infrastructure is a significant impediment to long-term community development.

A 2006 study highlighted the importance of sustainable agriculture in improving rural livelihoods and reducing poverty. It emphasizes prioritizing the needs of the current generation and their offspring over those of future generations. It also advocates for organic farming as a critical strategy for achieving sustainable agricultural growth.

III. PROFILE OF REGION

A. Jharkhand State Profile

Jharkhand, in eastern India, is a state known for its rich tribal heritage and unique physical features. Its population was approximately 38 million. The state Jharkhand came into existence on 15th November 2000 as the 28th State of the Union of India after being divided from Bihar state. This state is located at 23.6102°N latitude and 85.2799°E longitude, and the total geographical area of Jharkhand is 79.90 lakh ha, which lies on the Chota Nagpur Plateau.⁶

The state's topography ranges from hilly regions to lush woods, contributing to its unique biodiversity. Jharkhand does not have a coastline because it is a landlocked state. The most common soil type is laterite, and the climate ranges from sub-tropical to tropical.

The bulk of the population practices Hinduism, but there are substantial numbers of tribal people practicing their traditional traditions. Rice, lentils, and regional delicacies are staple items in the cuisine, which reflects local culture. Jharkhand's vegetation is characterized by deep woods with diverse flora and fauna. This area is home to various tribal communities, including Bedia, Ho, Munda, Sanotal, and Mahato.

B. About Rasabeda

Rasabeda is a small village/hamlet located in the tail part of the Chota Nagpur plateau, approximately 40 kilometers from Ranchi.

The name Rasabeda is derived from two Nagpuri terms, *Rasa* and *Beda*. *Rasa* signifies liquid/nectar, while *beda* means a mountain.

So, rasabeda itself means “*mountain nectar*.” This name is not a coincidence. An aquifer at the base of the mountain serves as the village's primary supply of water. Aquifers never run out of water. It is literally the nectar of the mountain and a lifeline for the locals. Rasabeda lies in kuchu gram panchayat that leads to the settlement. The village is not accessible by car/other vehicles. You can, however, manage with a two-wheeler and a good rider. There are 33 housing structures (mud and cement), of which 29 are currently used for living.

Seven *pucca* houses are constructed under Pradhan Mantri Gramin Aawas Yojana, (as known as Indira Awas Yojana). There are currently 25 families living in 29 houses. All families are from the Bediya caste.

²(World Neighbour, 2022) describes CBNRM as the integration of natural resource conservation and development to alleviate poverty and hunger.

³(Clara, October 2012) in Agroecology Scaling Up for Food Sovereignty and Resiliency.

⁴(A. Hirschman, 1958) in the Strategy of economic development and (John W. Mellor, 1991) in his journal titled Agricultural Links to Nonagricultural Growth discussed importance of infrastructure facilities for development.

⁵(Gaurav Datt, 2000) discussed elasticity of rural poverty in India in his article titled Farm Productivity And Rural Poverty In India

- A total of 124 people are living in the vil- lage.



Image 2: Satellite image of Rasabeda

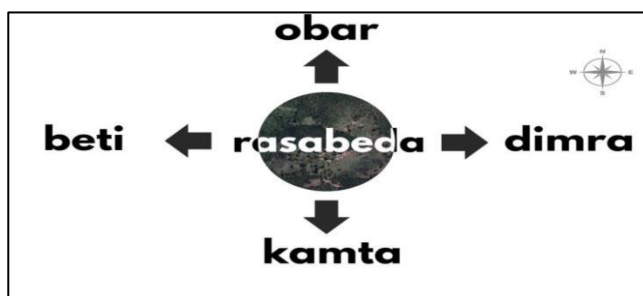


Image 3: Geographical Location of Rasabeda

IV. METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a systematic and scientific strategy to collecting, analysing, and interpreting both (quantitative or qualitative) data in order to answer research questions or test hypotheses. A methodology is similar to a plan for conducting research, and it keeps researchers on track by limiting the scope of the investigation.

A sample of 25 households in the village was selected. Data was collected using quantitative (survey-interview) and quali- tative methods (observation and case study). Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) was also an essential aspect of data collec- tion. PRA is defined as a methodology and method for gathering information about village life and problems from, with, and for rural residents. The main target of PRA is to learn from rural people.⁷ The survey was designed in 4 schedules. The first part dealt with socio- personal variables and general information like age, sex, marital status, education, medical and health details, and number of family members. The second schedule included information like land holdings, agriculture, crops, occupation, income, irrigation, and skill set / Hobbies. Third part collected information about livelihood, Challenges faced in village, day to day information, house data. The last schedule had information about migrations, government schemes, and other details.

The survey was done by interviewing the sample. Both Structured and unstructured interview methods were used in the collec- tion of data⁸.

V. FINDINGS

After collecting data from 25 households in the village and analyzing the parameters like education, livelihood, population, age, gender, caste, culture, and so on, we have come up with the following findings in the Rasabeda village:

A. Demographic Dimension:

➤ Population and Gender

The settlement has 124 residents, with 54 (43.5%) males and 70 (56.5%) women. It is apparent that the number of women in the village is significantly higher than the number of men (13%), which is a common trend across various tribes in India.⁹

Table 1: Male and Female Population in Village

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
54	70	124
43.54%	56.45%	100%

➤ Age

A sample of 122 respondents revealed that the average age of the village is 23.25 years, which indicates that the population might be dominated by young people. Av- erage age for women is 24.7 years and for men it is 21.8 years.

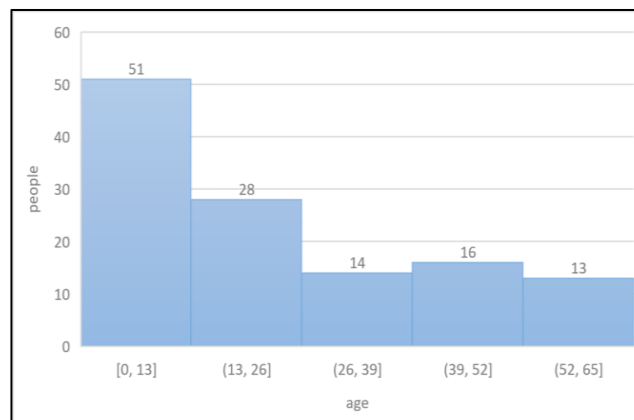


Fig 1: Age Distribution in Rasabeda

⁶(About State, 2020)

⁷(Robert, 1992) defined PRA in his paper titled “Rural Appraisal: Rapid, Relaxed and Participatory.”

⁸Structured interviews are defined by (Ray & Mondal, 1999) as an interview where the inter- viewer just asks questions. Answers to the ques- tions are limited to yes, no, don't know, know. Un- structured interviews involve tailoring questions to assess respondents' intelligence, knowledge, and beliefs.

⁹The trend and various factors affecting sex ratio in tribes of India are explained in article by (RUKMINI, 2013) titled “Higher sex ratio among tribal, SC groups”

From (Table 2. Population % in each age bracket) it can be observed that the population of young people is very large compared to old people. About 65 % of the population is below or equal to 26 years of age. About 42 % of the population consists of small children equal to or less than 13 years of age. This disparity suggests a future population boom and potential for settlement growth.

Table 2: Population

Age bracket(in years)	Population	Percentage	Cumulative %
Less than 13	51	41.80%	41.80%
14 - 26	28	23%	64.80%
27 - 39	14	11.40%	76.20%
Greater than 40	29	23.80%	100%

B. Social Dimension:

➤ *Caste*

The entire population (124) belongs to the Bediya caste. According to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Order Act, 1976, incorporated by Act 30 of 2000, it is one of the major tribes of Jharkhand. According to the 2011 census, Bediya is a Scheduled Tribe under the name of Beriya.

➤ *Religion*

The ancient features of the Bediya tribe deviated from Hindu religious practices. However, Hinduism has had a significant impact. Most of them follow Hindu customs and identify themselves as Hindus. Their lifestyles incorporate a mix of indigenous and Hindu religious rituals.

➤ *Marriage*

There are a total of 19 married pairs in the village. There are six people with a deceased spouse. Marriage is performed in a combination of Hindu and tribal rites. Marriage proposals are made through relatives, with the majority coming from nearby villages and within the Bediya clan. Most marriage ceremonies are done in the house of the groom. Dowry culture is quite common in marriage.

A common place for meeting the bride and groom is Paina Pahad Mela or any other fairs organized nearby. Arranged marriages are preferred, with ceremonies lasting 4 - 5 days. Women often marry between the ages of 17 and 21, while men marry between 19 and 24.

➤ *Food*

People are primarily vegetarians, yet they occasionally prefer non-vegetarian foods. The main reason for vegetarianism is that they cannot afford to eat non-vegetarian foods on a daily basis. Curry is commonly served with rice. Vegetables eaten are brinjal, potato, beans, tomato, and gourd.

An average household consumes approximately 2-3 kilograms of rice. Around 80% - 85% of the villagers eat three times a day, with the most common time being 9 a.m., 1 p.m., and 7 p.m. Food is cooked in a small earthen or wooden stove.

➤ *Festival*

Major festivals celebrated in Rasabeda include Pahad Pooja, Karma Puja, Diwali, and Sarhul. During Pahad Pooja, which is celebrated on *paina pahad*, the villagers perform dance and visit Mela, which is arranged on the pahad. Paina pahad mela is organized every year on 5th June. Animal sacrifices are very common in festivals.

Diwali includes bursting crackers and decorating houses with diyas. They occasionally pray to Hindu deities.



Image 4: Paina Pahad mela

➤ *Linguistic*

The entire population speaks Hindi with a Nagpuri-based dialect, which they call *bedia*. Two residents know a bit of Bengali because they work in Kolkata.

➤ *Occupations and Wages*

Bediya communities are known as forest dwellers. Forest plays a vital role in their economy. The major occupation of the Bediya community is agriculture. This community has a traditional occupation of snake charming. However, this is not the case in Rasabeda. Mainly due to unyielding agriculture and terrain type. Because of scarcity of water and land type, it's very difficult to practice farming. So due to increasing family demand, the trend of occupation is shifting more towards selling forest wood and doing odd jobs outside the village.

Agriculture and selling wood are the most important sources of income for villagers. Each household showed more than one income source. For most of the families, young men went to work outside the village. Older men, women, and children helped in agriculture and cutting and selling wood. They sell the farm produce and wood in the nearby Jonha daily market, which acts as a very important factor of livelihood. Around 32 % of people (all male) worked in jobs outside Jharkhand state. Most of these jobs are handyman jobs like construction, garage work, labour, etc. They worked

in states like Haryana, west Bengal, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Delhi.

Farming is more common in houses lying on the west side of the village because of the availability of water. Most houses on east side lack water source for farming, this is due to slope, water flows towards west. Hence, households in the East have non-farming income sources like selling livestock. The selling price for a pig is around 260 rupees/ kg.

MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. -100 days job guarantee act.) also provides job opportunities to the villagers. Currently, the water tank constructed in the village offers job opportunities to the villages through MGNREGA.

The wage level in the village is very low; the average monthly income is 5850 rupees, which on an international scale comes under the extreme poverty range.¹⁰ The highest household monthly income in the village is approx. 13000 rupees, and the lowest is around 1700 rupees.

Table 3: Distribution of Various Occupation Types in Rasabeda

OCCUPATION	POPULATION
Farming	72%
Selling wood	90%
Labouring	8%
Odd jobs(in ranchi)	20%
Odd jobs(outside state)	32%
Selling goats/pigs	12%

➤ *Migrations*

Most of the population never migrated from the village, but 19 % have migrated to other places.

13 % of the population has migrated seasonally, which means they regularly come to the village and go out only for jobs.

While 6 % of them have permanently migrated to Ranchi city. Most common cause for migration is searching for jobs.

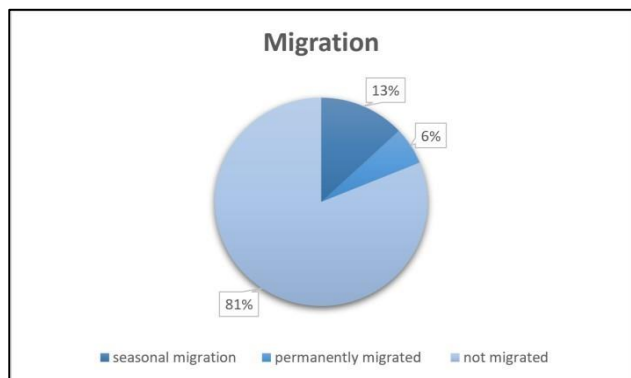


Fig 2: Distribution of Migration types Observed in Village

➤ *Some Beliefs*

After talking to many villagers, we found that the residents of Rasabeda now realize the importance of education. Many kids are now being sent to school without gender differences. We also found that people's views on marriage age have changed. Unlike the previous generations, they now understand importance of marriage age.

Due to a few workshops conducted over the past years, women realized the need for sanitary pads. On the other hand, people still abandon a few women because they think she is a daayan(witch).

There are still many believers in blind faith. People continue to trust in invocations for disease treatment and problem solutions.

C. *Livelihood Dimension:*

They rely on forest resources for a variety of things, including fuel wood, building materials, medicine, and food. Drinking water is collected from a nearby natural aquifer (recently a pipeline has been connected to aquifer). Aquifer is the most important water resource for the villagers. There is a total of 4 sources of water in the village, 2 wells, 1 pipeline outlet and 1 aquifer (pipeline outline is connected to aquifer). The aquifer in local language is referred as *chua*, it originated from the word *choona*, which means a leakage. An overhead 5000-liter water tank is being constructed by the government in the village. Rasabeda has 29 houses and 25 households. On approaching each household, only three reported using the washrooms, while five reported that washrooms exist but have yet to be used. Rasabeda is connected with the nearest community by a such as headphones, fans, electronic speakers, and led torches.

D. *Health Dimension:*

➤ *Medical Data*

When asked about diseases/medical issues/disabilities, the villagers have reported eye problems, seizures, fever, and knee pain. Cases of vomiting blood due to excess consumption of alcohol have also been reported. Only 18 out of 105 were found to visit the hospital at time of sickness. Many villagers see no need to visit hospitals, while some take herbs from the forest for treatment whenever required.

Eight families out of 12 reported that deliveries are not institutionalized. A few villagers claimed that they were unaware of the exact cause behind the death of their family members in the past 15 years as they didn't visit the hospital when the person fell ill.

¹⁰According to the Poverty and Inequality Platform by (World Bank, 2017), households under 150 Rs per day per head income comes under the extreme poverty category.

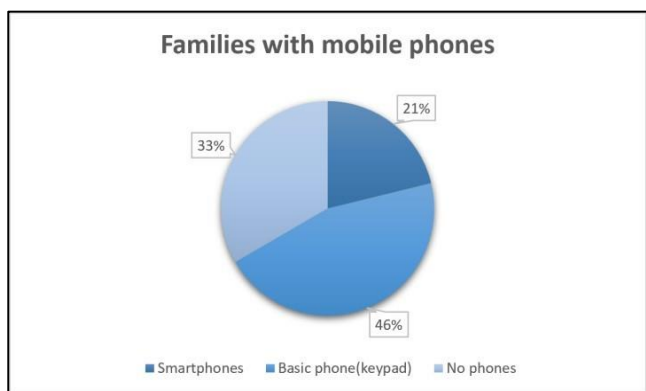


Fig 3: Population with Mobile Phones in Rasabeda

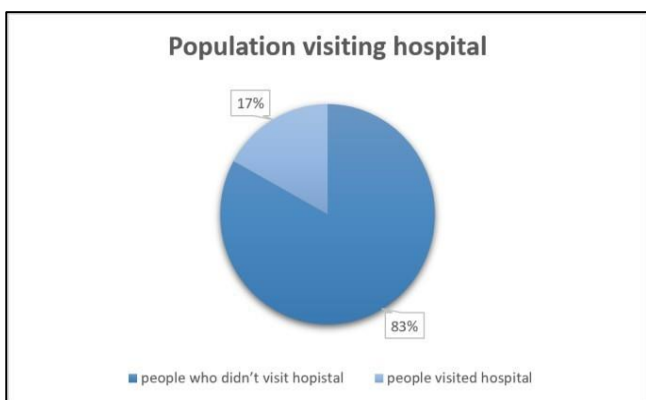


Fig 4: Distribution of Population who Visit Hospital at Time of Sickness

➤ *Common Diseases*

Anemia in women is one of the common diseases among the residents of Rasabeda; other common diseases include diarrhea, common cold and fever.

The average lifespan of the villagers is around 60-65 years. The most common causes of death are bodily diseases related to kidney, liver and heart.

E. Educational Dimension:

Rasabeda has a government school near the start of the village that teaches up to the 5th grade. There are currently 19 children enrolled in the school. However, it is occasionally not operational, and a recent Pratham assessment test found that the Rasabeda school is unable to fulfill its function. It was additionally found that Rasabeda school does not conduct exams until the 3rd grade. As a result of this, many children attend a nearby school in Dimra which teaches up to 8th grade. Dimra School has a total enrollment of 15 students from Rasabeda. Also 4 children attend a private school in Dimra and some go to Anganwadi. The total number of people who did school in the area is around 60, out of which 29 are continuing their education. Regarding the educational qualifications of the parents, 69% of them have gone to school. On average, they studied up to the 5th grade, while the highest level of education attained was the 12th. The dropout rate of children is very high in the village. For children in Compulsory Education bracket¹¹ there are 33% dropouts.

Most common class for dropping out is class 8th. Total Children in the village are 52, of which 36(70%) lie in compulsory education bracket age (6 -14). Out of these 36 children there are only 23(64%) children studying and 13(36%) are dropouts. Main reason for children to drop out of school is mainly to assist their families financially.

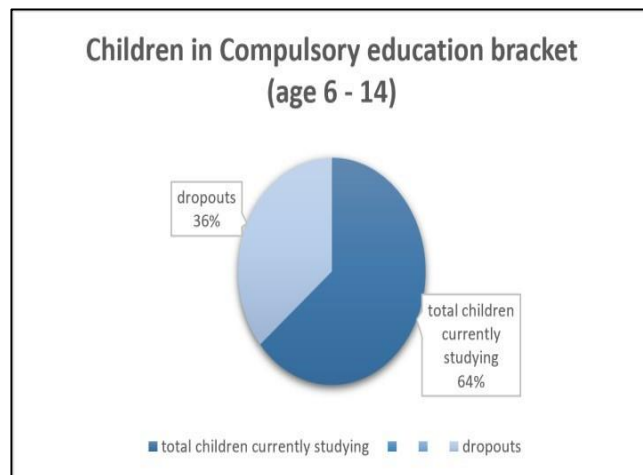


Fig 5: Status Distribution of Children in CEB

F. Agricultural Dimension:

There are few farms in the village. And most farms are very small, with an average size of 1500 to 2500 square feet. The soil type is red soil. The lowermost layer of soil is black in color and very fertile, but the upper layer is sandy and porous. Rasabeda settlement is located at the foot of a hill, with a huge slope that allows rainwater to flow and provide an irrigation source. The underground water level at Rasabeda is very high. Two wells are the primary sources of irrigation on the village's east side, while the aquifer provides water on the west side. All of the village's water sources originate from rainwater.

G. Crops

Potato, Rice, Tomato and Brinjal, gourds, pumpkins, ragi whole, finger millets are the majorly grown crops.

Due to shortage of water, the farms are fallow from the month of January to July. Potatoes, tomatoes are grown from October to January. Rice is grown in the monsoon and winters. Only one crop is grown at a time in a particular farm. They do not use any inorganic farming methods (pesticides, herbicides, chemical fertilizers). Cow dung is the only fertilizer used in the farms. Average yield of a rice farm is approximately 1 - 2 quintals.

¹¹According to (Ministry of Education, 2009) in "Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009", 'Compulsory education' casts a mandatory obligation on government and local authorities to ensure that all children aged 6-14 receive and complete elementary education.

Table 4: Crop Pattern in Rasabeda

Seasons	crops			
Summer (february - june)	no farming			
Monsoon (july - september)	rice	brinjal	finger millets(ragi)	
Winter (september - january)	rice	potatoes	tomatoes	gourds

Table 5: Cattle

livestock type	population	no. of family owning	% of family owning
chicken	37%	15	60%
cow, buffalo, bull	23%	18	72%
goat	34%	14	56%
pig	6%	7	28%
Total	100%		

➤ *Cattle*

The village has an immense number of livestock which includes animals like cows, buffaloes, chicken, goats, bulls and pigs. The foothills and valleys are used as the common grazing land. Cows and buffaloes provide them with milk, goats and pigs are mostly for selling and sacrifices. They are sold in the jonha market nearby. Price rate for pig is around Rs 260/kg. Most of the pigs are owned by the population towards the east of the village because agriculture is comparatively difficult (no water resource), so they rear and sell pigs as an income source.

H. Welfare Dimension:

➤ *Government Scheme*

Pensions and Rations are the two most commonly received schemes under government programs. Most of the families reported receiving 15kg ration per month.

Few families have reported receiving financial support from the government to construct their homes in 2017. A few individuals have also reported receiving the benefits of the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY).

➤ *Government IDs*

Of the total population, 31 people have ration cards, and 42 possess bank passbooks. Although 49 people are eligible for Voter ID, only 19 have reported possessing it.

Similarly, while 12 people are eligible for a pension, only five have reported receiving it. The pension amount is INR 1000 per month per head. Additionally, eight people have an Ayushman card, and 90% of villagers hold Aadhar cards.

➤ *IIM Ranchi Adoption*

Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ranchi under Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA), a program run by Govt. of India, adopted Rasabeda¹². UNGC-PRME, along with various stakeholders such as students, faculty, villagers, and government, is trying to work on the holistic development of this village. Every year students of the Integrated Programme in Management (IPM), IIM Ranchi are sent for a one-month social internship in Rasabeda, where they work on the sustainable development of the village.

There have previous works done in the village by few NGOs. The "Rasabeda Drinking Water Project" was initiated under the "Recharge Ranchi, Jal shakti Movement" in collaboration with GRAM and Deeksha NGO to address the water crisis in Rasabeda. The project involved the construction of a 1300L storage tank, along with a well. The water goes through a filter bed before reaching the storage tank and is then distributed through taps for drinking purposes. It is currently not in use due to lack of maintenance. Also, a hand pump was installed, it is currently non-functional as well.

¹² (timesofindia, 2023)

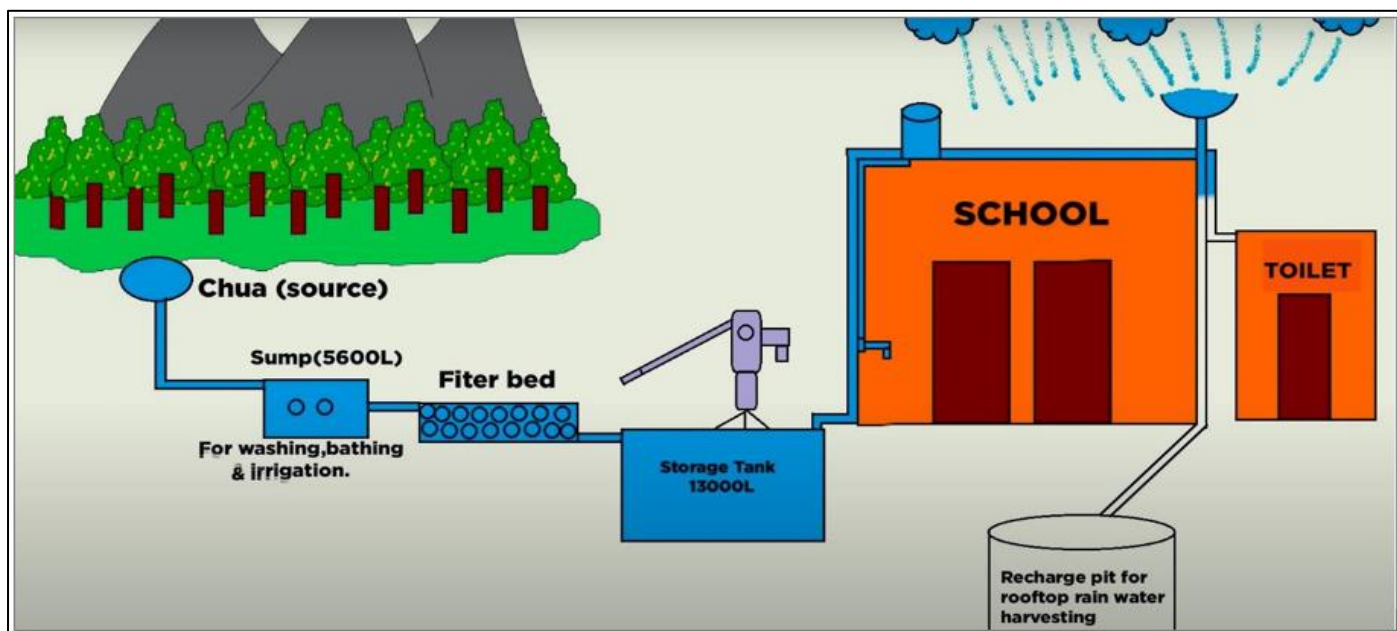


Image 5: Layout of Rasabeda Drinking Water Project

VI. CONCLUSION

Our research project focused on Rasabeda; a village situated amidst the beautiful hills of the Chota Nagpur plateau. We chose this village because there is a lack of data available. During our study, we discovered that the villagers of Rasabeda are open to change and development. We also noticed a vast age disparity between the villagers. Most villagers are children. Many children are pursuing their studies, while few are dropping out because they must financially provide for their families. Child marriages have reduced to a large extent. While the villagers are shifting from herb-based treatments to hospital treatments, this change is happening at a slow pace. Many villagers' interests in education are commendable as they send their kids to nearby schools even though they are kilometers away and have to walk all the way.

Despite the progress, several issues still need attention in the village. One of them includes making the present resources operational. The villagers need to be made aware of the importance of washrooms. Another issue is the massive gap between functional government schemes and eligible villagers, as they are unaware of the schemes and how to avail them. The village's agriculture is another major problem that needs immediate focus. Monkeys, elephants, and other wild animals destroy most crop production. The fields are left empty for months due to a lack of water for irrigation, resulting in less food availability and villagers consuming food only once a day. However, with the right efforts and sustainable solutions, we can overcome these hurdles and bring positive change to the community.

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