

# MADRAS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY

(Established by the Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department, Tamil Nadu)



# NEWSLETTER

September - October

2024

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 2024, the Centre for Social Justice and Equity (CSJE), MSSW, undertook a series of significant academic and field engagements. A field visit to the Kani tribal community at Thalamalai, Peachiparai on 06 September facilitated discussions on indigenous language and cultural practices. The Social Justice Day pledge-taking ceremony was observed on 16 September. On 20 September, an eminent public lecture by Prof. Virginius Xaxa on "Food, Livelihood Security and Life Claims of the Indigenous People of India" was conducted, followed by a national workshop in collaboration with the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group on 21 September.

The month culminated in the successful organisation of Tholkudi – National Conference on Preservation and Promotion of Tribal Cultural Heritage on 27–28 September 2024, which received appreciation from both the MSSW Principal and the Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department. Simultaneously, field training for the Parandur Livelihood Impact Assessment Survey was conducted at Kanchipuram. In October 2024, enumerator training commenced on 01 October, followed by the initiation of field data collection on 03 October. Despite a community protest at Nagapattu village on 07 October, the field team remained safe and continued survey operations.



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## National Conference on Preservation and Promotion of Tribal Cultural Heritage

The Tholkudi National Conference on Preservation and Promotion of Tribal Cultural Heritage was a landmark two-day event held on 27–28 September 2024, jointly organised by the Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, and the Centre for Social Justice and Equity (CSJE), Madras School of Social Work. The conference brought together policymakers, linguists, academics, tribal advocates, and cultural practitioners to address the urgent need to document, protect, and promote the rich indigenous cultural traditions of tribal communities across India.

### Inauguration and Leadership

The conference was inaugurated by Tmt. N. Kayalvizhi Selvaraj, Honourable Minister for Adi Dravidar Welfare, who delivered the special keynote address, underscoring the government's commitment to safeguarding tribal heritage. The event was anchored by a distinguished leadership team comprising Tmt. G. Laxmi Priya IAS, Secretary, Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department; Thiru S. Annadurai CLS, Director of Tribal Welfare; Dr. S. Raja Samuel, Principal, MSSW; and Dr. R. Pavananthi Vembulu, Director, CSJE, who served as the Conference Convenor.

### Academic and Technical Sessions

The sessions, primarily hosted at The Westin, Chennai, offered in-depth scholarly engagement on the linguistic and cultural challenges facing tribal communities.

Day 1 (27 September) featured discussions on endangered tribal languages and oral traditions, led by eminent scholars including Dr. C. Maheswaran and Prof. Sadhana Naithani. Sessions on teaching and learning resources for endangered languages were presented by Prof. Anvita Abbi and Prof. Sam Mohan Lal, while Prof. Rajesh Kumar from IIT Madras explored the role of new media and digital technology in language revitalisation.

Day 2 (28 September) focused on documentation and safeguarding, with insights on archiving endangered languages from Prof. Ramesh Gaur (IGNCA) and Dr. M. Muthukumaraswamy. Specialised sessions also examined policy frameworks and regional promotion schemes for Scheduled Tribes of Tamil Nadu.

### Cultural Celebration & Valedictory

A vibrant Tribal Cultural Show was held at the Government Museum Theatre, Egmore, providing a celebratory platform for traditional tribal arts, music, and performance, reinforcing the living heritage of indigenous communities. The conference concluded at the TAG Auditorium, MSSW, with a Valedictory Address by Thiru T. Udhayachandran IAS, Principal Secretary, Finance Department, and a Presidential Address by Hon'ble Justice K. Chandru, former Judge of the High Court of Madras. The conference received wide appreciation from the Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department as a meaningful and well-executed initiative towards preserving tribal cultural heritage.

## Policy framework for safeguarding languages of tribals soon

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Chennai**  
 THE Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department will soon introduce a policy framework to safeguard the languages of tribal communities in the state. A two-day conference aimed at brainstorming ideas for the formulation of the policy concluded on Saturday.

tribal languages, will be documented with an allocation of ₹2 crore. As many as 17 delegates from disciplines like anthropology, linguistics, folklore and museology took part in the event. According to officials, the policy can be expected in the next four months. "We are planning to take workable and implementable ideas and form a roll-



well as the United Nations, which has declared 2022-2032 the Decade of Indigenous Languages," the official added. Speaking at the closing plenary session of the conference, Finance Secretary T Udhayachandran said, "We have digitised 75,000 Tamil books and manuscripts through the Tamil Virtual Academy. We must now con-



### NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PRESERVATION AND PROMOTION OF TRIBAL CULTURAL HERITAGE

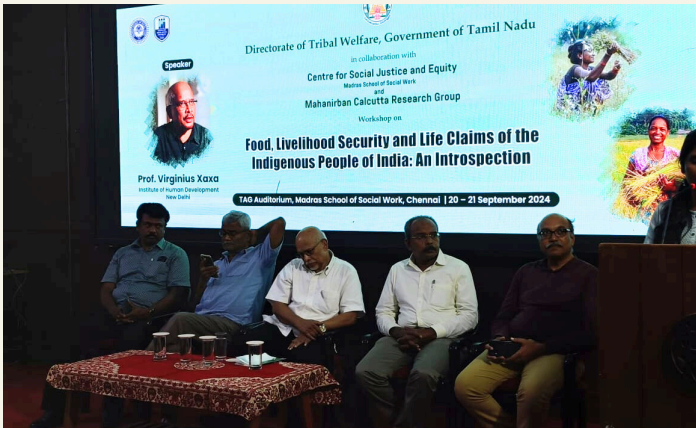


The workshop on "Food, Livelihood Security and Life Claims: Indigenous People of India" was held on 21 September 2024 at the TAG Auditorium, MSSW. Jointly organised by the Directorate of Tribal Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu, the Centre for Social Justice and Equity (CSJE), MSSW, and the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CRG), the workshop brought together academics, policymakers, and civil society representatives to examine critical issues affecting indigenous communities.

The inaugural session featured a Welcome Address by Dr. S. Raja Samuel, Principal, MSSW; felicitations by Mr. K. A. Mathew IAS (Retd.), President, MSSW, and Prof. Mouleshri Vyas, Vice President, CRG; and a Presidential Address by Ms. G. Laxmi Priya IAS, Secretary, Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department.

The workshop comprised three technical panel discussions covering law, vulnerability and justice; environmental and human protection; and tribal food security, livelihood, and migration. Eminent scholars and practitioners deliberated on themes including global migration, sanitation workers' rights, climate change, nutritional security, land rights, and the right to food as an international human right.

## Workshop on Food, Livelihood Security and Life Claims: Indigenous People of India



## Field Training and Data Collection - Proposed Green Airport Site, Parandur

In October 2024, the CSJE team advanced the Parandur Livelihood Impact Assessment Survey commissioned by TIDCO. Enumerator training was conducted at Kanchipuram by Dr. Ilavarasi and Mr. Ramkumar, equipping field teams for systematic data collection. Following the training, field data collection commenced across the survey area. During field operations at Nagapattu village, the team encountered a community protest; however, all team members were confirmed safe and data collection continued thereafter.



## Field Visit to Kani Tribe – Thalamalai, Peachiparai

On 06 September 2024, the CSJE team conducted a field visit to Thalamalai, Peachiparai, to engage with the Kani tribal community. The visit facilitated in-depth discussions on the community's distinct language, oral traditions, and cultural practices. The interactions provided valuable firsthand insights into the linguistic heritage and lived cultural experiences of the Kani tribe, contributing to CSJE's broader research and advocacy efforts on tribal cultural preservation.



The Madras School of Social Work (MSSW), founded by Mary Clubwala Jadhav in 1952, is one of India's premier institutions for social work education and research. It stands as the first social work institution in South India. Located in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, MSSW is a NAAC-accredited autonomous institution committed to fostering social justice, community development, and inclusive welfare through quality education and collaborative research.



The Centre for Social Justice and Equity (CSJE) at Madras School of Social Work was established under the financial grant-in-aid of the Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, vide G.O. (MS) No. 87 dated 12 July 2023. The Centre was formally inaugurated by the Honourable Minister N. Kayalvizhi, Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare, on 16 August 2023, marking a significant step towards advancing research, advocacy, and policy support for tribal and marginalised communities in Tamil Nadu.

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