



ANNUAL REPORT

2024 – 2025

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY
(Funded by Adi Dravida and Tribal welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu)
MADRAS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Preface

The Centre for Social Justice and Equity was established at the Madras School of Social Work, Chennai under the grant-in-aid of the Department of Adidravidar and Tribal Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu. The Centre started functioning from September 2023 onwards. During these past nineteen months, the Centre has come up with four research monographs, organized five national conferences, four civil society consultation workshops and two stakeholder consultation workshops, one Movement Journalism workshop, prepared two manuals, completed eight zonal level trainings for District and Sub-district Vigilance Committee Members on Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989 covering thirty-four districts. In addition, the Centre has designed and executed three Socio-economic Surveys on six PVTG communities, four nomadic tribes and thirty-seven tribal communities of Tamil Nadu. Further, the Centre has been assigned six additional projects (three projects by Directorate of Tribal Welfare, two by Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission and one by Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation Limited). The Centre produced two short documentaries on caste-based discrimination and one feature-length documentary on nomadic tribes of Tamil Nadu. The centre initiated on 6th December a mass campaign on சமத்துவம் காண்போம் “Ensuring Equality”

The Centre has established institutional networking and collaboration with Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysuru on preserving and promoting tribal cultural heritages and Calcutta Research Groups, Kolkata on tribal food and livelihood security. Further the Centre plans to sign MoU with German Goethe Institute, Chennai on offering basic German language course to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Students enrolled in higher education institutions at Chennai and with Digital Sapiens on offering certificate course on Movement Journalism.

The Centre has so far published two survey reports on nomadic tribes and particularly vulnerable tribal groups and three research briefings on Panniyandi community, Post-Matric scholarship and dalit entrepreneurship. The Centre staffs have presented papers and participated panel discussions in fourteen conferences/seminars/workshops and contributed a book chapter and four articles in reputed newspapers and magazines.

Centre for Social Justice and Equity - MSSW

Apart from eight regular staff of the Centre, eleven research consultants, fourteen project consultants, four technical consultants for surveys, two consultants for documentary production, five project staff and eleven student interns from MSSW and other institutions were involved with the various tasks and assignments of the Centre.

The Centre expresses its sincere thanks to Secretary to Government, Department of Adidravidar and Tribal Welfare, Director, Adi Dravidar Welfare Department and Director, Directorate of Tribal Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu for their guidance and support. We are grateful to our President, Secretary, Finance Director, Principal, Dean, teaching and non-teaching fraternity of Madras School of Social Work for their compassionate and consistent support in making the experimental centre success.

R. Pavananthi Vembulu

Director

Centre for Social Justice and Equity

Madras School of Social Work

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About the Centre

The Centre for Social Justice and Equity (CSJE) at the Madras School of Social Work is a new addition to the wide spectrum of innovative centres created in the institute recently. The CSJE has been established under the financial grant-in-aid of the Adi-Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department of Government of Tamil Nadu by its G.O No. (MS). No. 87 Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare (PA2) Department dated 12.07.2023. The Honourable Minister N. Kayalvizhi, Adi Dravidar and Tribal welfare inaugurated the Centre on 16th August 2023.

At the CSJE, our mission is to make social justice as the crux of public policy engagements in Tamil Nadu. We've discerned that the key to unlocking game-changing policy interventions is to bring forth and echo the voices of deprived and discriminated. Because it's there that we not only uncover some of India's biggest problems, but also find the best solutions.

Research

The Centre for Social Justice and Equity (CSJE) has actively engaged in large-scale surveys and collaborative research initiatives to understand and address the systemic challenges faced by marginalized communities such as Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs), in Tamil Nadu. These efforts are designed to generate robust data and policy insights for social development and equity. A major undertaking was the Socio-Economic Survey of Scheduled Tribes in Tamil Nadu, conducted for the Directorate of Tribal Welfare, which gathered extensive data on demographics, education, health, and access to government schemes across all 37 districts. Data collection survey has been completed and writing is in progress. Adding to that, the Centre pursues Collaborative Research Initiatives on critical themes, including the socio-economic study of nomadic tribes, the accessibility of the Post Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC students, the documentation of caste atrocities, and the promotion of Dalit entrepreneurship. Three reports have been completed from the above-mentioned collaborative research. Also, The Centre has launched a Collaborative Research Project 2025 to fund new studies on social exclusion and inequality experienced by the SCs and STs.

Survey

Large-Scale Surveys Conducted by the Centre

1. Socio-Economic Survey of Scheduled Tribes in Tamil Nadu

The Directorate of Tribal Welfare tasked the Centre for Social Justice and Equity, Madras School of Social Work, with conducting a *Socio-Economic Survey of Scheduled Tribes in Tamil Nadu*. The primary objective of this survey was to gather information on personal demographics, housing and basic needs, education, health, gender, livelihood, landholding, and access to government schemes. The findings aim to assist the government in addressing the challenges faced by tribal communities and formulating targeted policies and welfare initiatives for their empowerment.

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Survey Tool

Two types of questionnaires were prepared for this survey:

1. **Household Questionnaire:** Covering 17 themes, including family details, education, employment, health, sanitation, maternal health, access to government welfare schemes, livelihood, living standards, agriculture and landholding, access to minor forest produce, and migration.
2. **Habitation Questionnaire:** Addressing themes such as population, access and availability of water, health infrastructure, roads, and crematoriums.

Training

As part of the Survey, Training of Trainers (ToTs) training has been given to Illam Thedi Kalvi (ITK) District Coordinators to train the field enumerators.



The training consists of the orientation and importance of the socio-economic survey of ST, explanation of habitation and household questionnaire, installation of SurveyCTO application and data collection using the application. The first phase of training was organized on 10th July 2024, around 60 ToTs participated and second phase of training given to District and Block level Coordinators of Illam Thedi Kalvi

Volunteers on the Household and Habitation questionnaire. The second level training was conducted to Illam Thedi Kalvi (ITK) Volunteers on 26th July 2024 by the District and Block Teacher Coordinators across the state.

Data Collection

The data collection began on 1st August 2024 and concluded on 30th September 2024, covering all 37 districts of Tamil Nadu.

The survey included:

- 246,311 households (representing 8,64,425 individuals) (yet to be verified)
- 9,830 habitations,
- Representing 37 tribal groups.

Collaborative Research Initiatives

Apart from individual research activities, CSJE has also engaged in collaborative research activities with civil society organisations, academicians, and researchers working on the issues of SC and ST.

1. Study on Nomadic Tribes in Tamil Nadu: Census of Boom Boom Maatukarar (Aadhiyan) Nomadic Tribe in Thiruvarur District

This study, conducted in collaboration with Vanavil Trust, Nagapattinam, aims to explore the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of the Boom Boom Maatukarar (Aadhiyan) nomadic tribe in Tamil Nadu. Known for their traditional livelihoods, such as bull rearing and soothsaying, as well as their expertise in handicrafts, this community faces significant challenges due to data invisibility, which limits their access to government programs. By compiling updated information, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of their living conditions, livelihood patterns, and socio-cultural practices.



Major Findings

- Among the 497 educated adults, 114 individuals discontinued their education at the primary level and 166 respondents discontinued after completing middle school (class 8) education.
- Total of 497 individuals, constituting approximately 41.0% of the participants, have had the opportunity to access formal education through schools.
- Regarding formal education 276 are not of school-going age, indicating that they have not yet reached the age where formal education typically begins.
- Access the pre-matric scholarship only 42 have accessed out of 325 students and among 147 students only 7 have accessed the post-matric scholarship provided by the government.
- Major barrier to accessing the pre-matric scholarship is the lack of a community certificate among the nomadic tribes.
- Many individuals in nomadic tribal communities lack community certificates necessary for classification under the Scheduled Tribe category. Consequently, they face barriers in accessing SHGs. Out of the 609 adult women residing in the 18 nomadic tribal hamlets, only 55 have been able to access government supported SHGs.

- The primary sources of lighting in nomadic tribal households are kerosene and candles, with 415 out of the 559 households (approximately 74.2%) relying on them for illumination.
- Regarding the basic needs majority of 416 households do not have any type of bathing facilities within their premises and instead utilize common ponds, rivers, or lakes for bathing and 489 households, do not have access to toilets within their houses.
- Out of the 559 households surveyed, only 25 have accessed this insurance, while 534 households have not accessed it.
- Access to Anganwadi, 559 households surveyed across 18 hamlets, 125 households had access and 6 nomadic tribal hamlets did not have any Anganwadi/ICDS centre near their settlements.
- Nearly 60% (326 families) have accessed hold a ration card. The PDS emerges as the most utilized scheme by the nomadic tribal people, providing crucial food security assistance.
- Among the 566 married, widowed, or divorced women who participated in the survey, only 8 have received marriage financial assistance from the government and 62 of these women have received financial assistance under the Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme (MRMBS) scheme.
- Among 559 surveyed households only 111 households have accessed work through the MGNREGA scheme. Reasons for the nomadic tribal population's limited access to the scheme is that most of their settlements are located near towns or cities where the NREGA scheme is not applicable.
- Child marriage is still prevalent among the nomadic tribes, with many women giving birth before turning 19, thus disqualifying them from availing the scheme.
- Among those with community certificates, 46 individuals hold Most Backward Classes (MBC) certificates, 9 have Scheduled Caste (SC) certificates, and 435 individuals, possess Scheduled Tribe (ST) certificates.

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The findings are intended to guide policymakers in formulating specific policies or enhancing existing initiatives for the welfare of nomadic tribes in Tamil Nadu. This research will serve as a foundation for addressing the community's needs and integrating them more effectively into mainstream society, ensuring inclusivity and equitable opportunities for development.

Collaborator: Vanavil Trust, Nagapattinam

2. A Study on Post Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC Students in Tamil Nadu

The research investigates the challenges faced by Scheduled Caste students in accessing the Post Matric Scholarship Scheme. Scholarships play a pivotal role in addressing the educational barriers SC and ST students face due to poverty and social exclusion. The study examines gaps in timely disbursement of funds, which adversely affect enrolment and retention in higher education. Data from the past decade on SC/ST enrolment in engineering education in Tamil Nadu is being analysed, supplemented by in-depth interviews with SC students to understand their lived experiences.

The study seeks to highlight the systemic issues and provide recommendations to improve the scholarship's implementation. By addressing these gaps, it aims to support SC students in overcoming financial and social barriers, fostering their access to higher education and professional opportunities.



Major Findings

- All respondents reported that scholarship funds are credited late often mid or sometimes in end of the semester. This misalignment with academic fee deadlines forces students to pay fees upfront, violating G.O. 92's no-upfront-fee policy.
- Families from low-income groups depending on daily wage labourer, small-scale businesses, or agriculture, struggle to meet the heavy fees ranging from Rs. 2,00,000 to Rs. 2,50,000 per year leading to severe financial distress of the households.
- The high cost of engineering education, delayed scholarship disbursement pushing families into debt and emotional distress. Many students reported feeling stressed and confused due to repeated calls from agents even after securing admission adding to their emotional distress.
- The majority of students faced language issues as they shifted from Tamil to English medium, which impacted their understanding, participation, and performance. Many students relied on English speaking friends for understanding the subjects .7 out of 10 respondents faced language barriers as the reason for arrears.
- The scholarship amount fails to cover the full tuition and hostel fees, leaving students with a significant financial gap. Many students engage in part time jobs, loans, or external support to manage expenses, impacting their academic performance and Late fund disbursement leads to hostel expulsions, denial of exam participation, and financial penalties. Students face emotional distress and humiliation while pleading with staff to allow them to appear for exams.
- Students experienced caste-based discrimination and harsh treatment from scholarship-handling staff. Many reported being humiliated and spoken to disrespectfully when unable to pay fees on time, further adding to their emotional distress.

Collaborator: Ms. Semmalar Selvi, Assistant Professor, Loyola College, Chennai, and Dr. Milind Brahme, Associate Professor, IIT Madras

5. Dalit Entrepreneurship with reference to Adi Dravidar Confederation of Trade and Industrial Vision (ACTIV), Tamil Nadu.

This research explores the role of the Adi Dravidar Confederation of Trade and Industrial Vision (ACTIV) in fostering entrepreneurship among Dalit communities in Tamil Nadu. The study analyses the support mechanisms provided by ACTIV, including skill development, networking opportunities, and venture support. Through in-depth interviews and case studies, it examines the experiences of successful Dalit entrepreneurs and the socio-economic impact of ACTIV's initiatives. The research highlights the challenges faced by Dalit entrepreneurs and ACTIV's efforts to address these barriers. By documenting the success stories and analysing the institution's role, the study aims to inspire more Dalit youth to pursue entrepreneurship and contribute to their communities' economic empowerment.



Major Findings

- The majority of respondents are first-generation entrepreneurs from the Adidraavidar and Paraiyar communities, particularly when compared to other sub-castes within the Scheduled Castes. They have faced numerous challenges and obstacles in their entrepreneurial journeys.

- Majority (95%) of the respondents operate as sole proprietors, with only 5% engaged in partnerships. The predominance of first-generation entrepreneurs and limited access to social capital has led many to pursue sole proprietorships.
- Dalit women entrepreneurs highlighted their progress in cultivating a positive self-identity, securing equal opportunities, and elevating their social status.
- The study's results demonstrate that many Dalit entrepreneurs experience significant obstacles when starting their enterprises. Specifically, 70% of those surveyed reported a lack of adequate initial capital and insufficient wealth accumulation. Moreover, 55% of the participants cited the unavailability of collateral as a significant obstacle in obtaining bank loans.
- Dalit entrepreneurs continue to confront discriminatory practices when seeking financial aid and resources, with societal rejection serving as a barrier to their business efforts.
- Dalit entrepreneurs continue to confront discriminatory practices when seeking financial aid and resources, with societal rejection serving as a barrier to their business efforts.
- The involvement of Dalit entrepreneurs in business ventures has resulted in considerable enhancements to their quality of life, financial stability, and overall social and economic standing.
- ACTIV emerged as one of the few organizations committed to advancing the economic status of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) by supporting Dalit entrepreneurs. The organization aids the Dalit community by fostering connections among various sub-castes and increasing awareness of business opportunities.

Collaborator: Dr. S. Lalitha, Assistant Professor, RGNIYD, Sriperumbudur, and Dr. Selvaraj Arulnathan S.J., Director, Indian Social Institute, Bangalore

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Collaborative Research Project 2025

The Centre for Social Justice and Equity, funded by the Department of Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu, initiated its Research Project 2025 to address the challenges faced by marginalized communities, particularly Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). In December 2024, the Centre invited research proposals from researchers, academicians, and organizations, offering a grant of Rs. 1,00,000 per project. The initiative aimed to explore critical themes such as social exclusion, education, health, gender, and the impact of government schemes on marginalized groups. A total of 36 research proposals were submitted from across Tamil Nadu, covering diverse themes and focusing on SCs, STs, sexual minorities, and other marginalized communities. The proposals were categorized based on the following themes:

1. **Social Exclusion and Discrimination**
2. **Education** – Challenges in education, girls' education, and barriers in higher education
3. **Impact of Government Schemes** – Annal Ambedkar Business Champions Scheme and government hostels
4. **Health and Well-being**
5. **Gender and Sexuality**
6. **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**

The Research Unit of the Centre conducted the first level of scrutiny, shortlisting 14 proposals out of the 36 submissions. These 14 proposals were further evaluated by a three-member expert committee comprising:

- Dr. S. Lalitha, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur, Kancheepuram
- Dr. P. Mahendra Varman, Associate Professor, Department of Economics, University of Madras, Chennai
- Dr. V. Gajendran, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, The Tamil Nadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University, Chennai

The committee convened on 28 January 2025 at the Centre for Social Justice and Equity to review the shortlisted proposals. After a rigorous evaluation process, six research proposals were selected for funding. The selected proposals are as follows:

- 1. Caste, Market, and the Scheduled Castes' Dispossession of Panchama Lands: A Proposal to Revisit Karanai Village**
 - Dr. C. Jerome Samraj, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Pondicherry University, Puducherry
- 2. Geospatial Mapping of Social Exclusion and Discrimination among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Tamil Nadu**
 - Dr. Chandramohan Karuppiah, Former ICSSR Post-Doctoral Fellow, Madurai
- 3. The Triple Burden: Understanding the Intersections of Caste, Gender, and Sexuality in Dalit and Tribal Girls' Lives**
 - L. T. Stegana Jency, Director, Centre for Child Rights and Development, Chennai
- 4. A Study on the Status of Government-Aided Schools Established by Scheduled Castes in Tirunelveli District**
 - Dr. J. Balasubramaniam, Assistant Professor, Journalism and Science Communication, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai
- 5. A Study on the Accessibility of Social Entitlements for Transgender Persons in Tamil Nadu**
 - Dr. T. R. Kanmani, Additional Professor, Psychiatric Social Work, National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Bengaluru

6. Navigating the Intersection of Traditional Health Practices and Government Schemes: Pregnancy to Childbirth among the Malayali Tribes of the Jawadhu Hills

- Dr. Suriya S, Assistant Professor, Department of Development Studies, Madras School of Social Work, Chennai
- Dr. Gnana Sanga Mithra, Associate Professor, Vinayaka Mission's Law School, Chennai

On 14 February 2025, the selected researchers were invited to present their proposals at the Centre for Social Justice and Equity, Madras School of Social Work, Chennai. The researchers were given a three-month deadline from the commencement date to submit their final research reports.

This initiative underscores the Centre's commitment to fostering equitable social development by addressing systemic inequalities and amplifying the voices of marginalized communities. The selected research projects are expected to provide valuable insights and policy recommendations to improve the lives of SCs, STs, and other vulnerable groups in Tamil Nadu.

Research Consultation Meeting

1. Dalit Entrepreneurship with Reference to Adi Dravidar Confederation of Trade and Industrial Vision (ACTIV), Tamil Nadu

Date: 30.01.2025 - **Time:** 2:00 p.m.

A consultation meeting on *Dalit Entrepreneurship with reference to Adi Dravidar Confederation of Trade and Industrial Vision (ACTIV), Tamil Nadu* was organized by the Centre for Social Justice and Equity, Madras School of Social Work, Egmore, on 30 January 2025. The research study, conducted by Dr. S. Lalitha, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur, examined ACTIV's role in promoting Dalit entrepreneurship and the challenges it faces in addressing caste-based barriers.

Dalit entrepreneurs encounter significant obstacles, including social stigma, discrimination, and limited access to resources and opportunities, which hinder their entrepreneurial growth. While ACTIV provides crucial support through training, mentoring, and networking, the Tamil Nadu Government's role remains pivotal in fostering Dalit entrepreneurship.

Key findings of the study include:

1. Entrepreneurs have benefited from both general and SC-specific government schemes, leading to improved quality of life, financial stability, and social standing.
2. Despite initial caste-based discrimination, Dalit entrepreneurs have shown resilience and achieved notable success.
3. Their ventures have enhanced leadership skills, self-worth, and access to government programs and contracts, enabling business growth.
4. Entrepreneurship has transformed their lives and positively impacted their families' financial and social status.

Dr. Lalitha recommended addressing challenges through:

- Awareness and sensitization programs for bank personnel to change attitudes toward Dalit entrepreneurs.

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- Training bank officials on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 and 2015, to ensure legal compliance.
- Extending loan repayment durations from one to two years and raising the age limit for loan eligibility from 55 to 65 years.
- Simplifying loan processes and providing fixed assets, such as land, to first-generation Dalit entrepreneurs to overcome capital barriers.



The meeting saw participation from 30 attendees, including representatives from ACTIV, PRAXIS, and MSSW staff.

2. Post Matric Scholarship Schemes for Scheduled Caste Students in Tamil Nadu

Date: 30.01.2025 - **Time:** 10:30 a.m.

On 30 January 2025, the Centre for Social Justice and Equity organized a research consultation meeting on *Post Matric Scholarship Schemes for Scheduled Caste Students in Tamil Nadu* at the Madras School of Social Work, Chennai. The research, conducted by Ms. Semmalar Selvi, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Loyola College, Chennai, focused on challenges faced by SC students in accessing technical higher education, particularly engineering, and its impact on their academic pursuits.



Key findings from the research include:

1. Delays in scholarship fund disbursement and insufficient amounts force families to borrow money or sell assets, increasing financial burdens.
2. Students who fail to pay fees on time face unwelcome treatment from staff.
3. Language barriers hinder academic performance, and most students, being first-generation learners, lack proper guidance during admissions.

Ms. Selvi recommended the following measures:

- Private institutions should adhere to the fee structure set by the fee fixation committee.
- Mentorship programs and career guidance should be introduced for SC students.
- Penalties for scholarship delays should be removed, and awareness about the Post Matric Scholarship Scheme should be increased.
- The scheme's coverage should be expanded to include deemed universities.

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- Arts and Science institutions should establish fee fixation committees.
- A grievance redressal portal, similar to the UGC fellowship or Canara Bank Portal, should be created for students.
- Scholarships should be offered for all university-approved courses.

The Centre for Social Justice and Equity plans to collaborate with civil society organizations to raise awareness, conduct training on the scholarship scheme, and provide language orientation courses for students. The consultation was attended by 15 participants.

PROGRAM UNIT

The Centre for Social Justice and Equity (CSJE) at the Madras School of Social Work (MSSW) is dedicated to advancing social justice, equity, and the empowerment of marginalized communities, with a particular focus on Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Tamil Nadu through various activities such as consultations, capacity building, campaigns, workshops etc.

Through a multi-faceted approach, the unit executes a wide range of initiatives, including:

- **Networking and Collaboration:** Building strong partnerships with over 160 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and government departments like the Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department.
- **Capacity Building:** Conducting workshops, training for government officials, and developing specialized training manuals on critical legislation.
- **Knowledge Sharing & Advocacy:** Organizing seminars, public lectures, national conferences, and mass awareness campaigns on issues such as caste atrocities, honor killings, and tribal rights.
- **Cultural Promotion & Heritage Preservation:** Hosting events for the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples and national conferences focused on preserving endangered tribal languages and cultural heritage.

The unit's work is strategically designed to bridge gaps between policy, implementation, and community action, aiming to create a more inclusive and equitable society. Key achievements include successful large-scale public campaigns, impactful residential workshops like the one on Movement Journalism, and significant policy-level discussions through national conferences.

Moreover, the unit has specifically developed two training manuals:

1. **“The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 and Rules, 1995”** for the non-official members of DVMC (District Vigilance and Monitoring Committee).
2. **“Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj Act, 1994”** for panchayat presidents.

NETWORKING

Consultation with Civil Society Organisations – April 2024

In the month of April 2024, the Centre conducted consultation meetings with various Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Villupuram and Krishnagiri District of Tamil Nadu. These consultations aimed to build a network with CSOs and to initiate collaborative programmes targeting the development of Scheduled Castes and Tribes.



More than 150 CSOs participated in these meetings, discussing key focus areas for the development of Scheduled Castes and Tribes in their respective regions. These organisations maintain strong networks with government agencies and play a crucial role in implementing government programmes and schemes designed for marginalised communities. The consultation meetings provided a platform to strategise and prioritise initiatives that address the needs of these communities. The sessions were held in November 2023 and continued from January to April 2024.

WORKSHOPS

Workshop on Food, Livelihood Security, and Life Claims – 21.09.2024

The workshop on "Food, Livelihood Security, and Life Claims" was held at the Madras School of Social Work (MSSW) on September 21st, 2024. The focus of the workshop was primarily on the existing food security issues among tribes in Tamil Nadu, exploring the broader spectrum of food insecurity and its impact on livelihoods and life claims. The workshop brought together experts, policymakers, and stakeholders to engage in discussions addressing the critical issues related to food security, livelihoods, and the risks faced by individuals and communities.





The discussions were organized into three panels, each focusing on different aspects of these interconnected topics. The workshop opened with a brief discussion on the significance of food security in the contemporary world, setting a serious yet hopeful tone. Emphasis was placed on the interconnection between food systems, livelihoods, and economic stability. The session highlighted efforts among policymakers, communities, and institutions to engage critically and practically with these issues. Government representatives shared initiatives taken for the food security of indigenous communities in Tamil Nadu, while various non-governmental organisations shared their experiences and proposed action plans to further strengthen food security and livelihood development.

Movement Journalism Workshop Report – February 10-17, 2025

Organized by: Centre for Social Justice and Equity (CSJE), Madras School of Social Work (MSSW), in collaboration with Digital Sapiens Foundation



The Centre for Social Justice and Equity (CSJE), established and funded by the Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu, in collaboration with the Digital Sapiens Foundation, organized a one-week residential workshop on *Movement Journalism* from February 10 to 17, 2025. The workshop aimed to equip participants, primarily SC/ST students, with essential skills in grassroots-level journalism, focusing on social justice, equity, and the amplification of marginalized voices. The event was held at the Madras School of Social Work (MSSW) and Desifma Academy, Kodambakkam, Chennai, and brought together 20 selected participants from various districts of Tamil Nadu and beyond.

The workshop emphasized the transformative role of journalism in advocating for social change, particularly in addressing issues of inequality, discrimination, and social exclusion. Through a combination of lectures, field visits, and hands-on projects, participants gained practical insights into the power of journalism as a tool for social advocacy.

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Objectives of the Workshop

The workshop was designed with the following objectives:

1. **Empowerment through Journalism:** To equip participants with the skills and knowledge necessary to use journalism as a tool for social change, particularly in advocating for marginalized communities.
2. **Amplifying Marginalized Voices:** To provide a platform for underrepresented voices and highlight the importance of diverse narratives in mainstream media.
3. **Ethical and Responsible Journalism:** To promote ethical journalism practices and the constructive use of digital technology in storytelling.
4. **Practical Exposure:** To offer hands-on experience in reporting, data journalism, and multimedia storytelling through field visits and project work.
5. **Networking and Collaboration:** To foster collaboration among participants, journalists, and social activists, creating a network of change-makers in the field of movement journalism.

Workshop Highlights

Inaugural Ceremony – February 10, 2025

The workshop commenced with an inaugural ceremony at the TAG Auditorium, MSSW. The event was graced by distinguished guests, including Thiru M. Punitha Pandian, Editor and Publisher of *Dalit Murasu*, and Thiru Pa. Ranjith, Film Director and Founder of the Neelam Social & Cultural Foundation. Both guests shared valuable insights on the role of media in advocating for social justice and the importance of amplifying marginalized voices.

Other notable attendees included Thiru K.A. Mathew IAS (Retd), President of MSSW; Dr. S. Raja Samuel, Principal of MSSW; Dr. R. Pavananthi Vembulu, Director of CSJE; and Dr. Nidhya Balasubramanian, Founder Director of the Digital Sapiens Foundation. The inaugural session set the tone for the workshop, emphasizing the importance of journalism in driving social change and the need for ethical and responsible reporting.



Day 1 – February 11, 2025

The first day of the workshop focused on foundational concepts in movement journalism. Dr. E. Suresh Paul, Dean of the School of Media Studies at Vel Tech University, led a session on *Media, Ideology, and Social Justice*, exploring how media shapes societal ideologies and influences social justice movements. He highlighted the role of media in promoting equality and referenced historical figures like Periyar and Ambedkar.

The second session, led by Thiru T. Needhirajan, Journalist and Editor of *South Vision Books*, delved into the *Evolution, Impact, and Opportunities* of movement journalism. Participants learned about the historical development of movement journalism and its role in advocating for social change.

The day concluded with a panel discussion on *Alternative Writings and Journals*, featuring Thiru Vanniarsu, Former Editor of *Tamilman*, and Thiru Prince Ennares Periyar, Reporter at *Viduthalai*. The discussion emphasized the importance of alternative media in challenging mainstream narratives and providing diverse perspectives.

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Day 2 – February 12, 2025



The second day focused on practical aspects of journalism. Dr. Srinivasan Ramani, Deputy National Editor of *The Hindu*, led a session on *Data Journalism and Activist Reporting*, highlighting the importance of data-driven insights in social justice reporting. Adv. A. B. Rajasekaran conducted a session on *Press Laws and Ethics*, discussing the legal and ethical frameworks guiding journalistic practices. The day also included a session on *Print and Broadcast Media Reporting*, led by Ms. Jeyarani, who provided participants with essential skills for effective media reporting in social movements.

Field Visits – February 13-14, 2025



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The workshop included field visits to prominent media organizations, offering participants hands-on experience in journalism. Visits to *Madha TV*, *The Hindu*, *Theekathir*, *News 18*, *News 7 Tamil*, *Murasoli*, and *Nakkheran* provided insights into the operational aspects of broadcast and print media. Participants observed how these organizations report on social issues and gained practical knowledge of news production and storytelling.

Day 5 – February 15, 2025

The fifth day focused on multimedia journalism. Mr. Arul Anand, a documentary filmmaker, led a session on *Broadcast, Audio Journalism, and Narrowcasting*, emphasizing the power of multimedia storytelling in movement journalism. Mr. Gopi, Editor of the Digital Sapiens Foundation, conducted a session on *Video Journalism*, teaching participants techniques for capturing and editing impactful video content.

Day 6 – February 16, 2025

The sixth day explored the evolving media landscape and the challenges faced by journalists. Ms. Saradha V, Producer at BBC Tamil Nadu, led a session on *Changing Media Landscape and Emerging Challenges*, discussing the impact of technological advancements on journalism. Dr. J. Balasubramaniam, Assistant Professor at Madurai Kamaraj University, conducted a session on *Impact of Dalit Journals in Journalism*, highlighting the role of Dalit publications in shaping narratives around caste and social justice.

Day 7 – February 17, 2025

The final day focused on project work and presentations. Participants showcased their learning through charts, written assignments, and reporting videos, addressing various social issues through the lens of movement journalism. The day concluded with a valedictory ceremony, where Mrs. G. Lakshmi Priya IAS, Secretary to the Government, Adiravidar Welfare Department, and Thiru A. Pannerselvan, Former Readers Editor of *The Hindu*, distributed certificates and offered valuable advice on honing writing skills in the digital age.

Workshop Outcomes

The workshop successfully achieved its objectives, equipping participants with essential skills in reporting, writing, and multimedia storytelling. Key outcomes included:

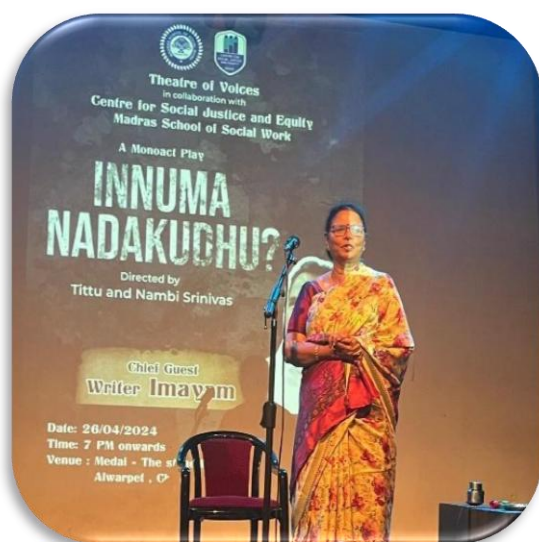
1. **Enhanced Skills:** Participants gained hands-on experience in news production, video editing, and data journalism, enabling them to create impactful content for social movements.
2. **Ethical Journalism:** The workshop emphasized the importance of ethical and responsible journalism, encouraging participants to use their skills for the greater good.
3. **Networking:** The event fostered collaboration among participants, journalists, and social activists, creating a network of change-makers in the field of movement journalism.
4. **Practical Exposure:** Field visits and project work provided participants with real-world insights into the challenges and opportunities in movement journalism.

Mono Act Play

“Innuma Nadakuthu” – A Play on the Concept of Understanding the Prevalence of Honor Killings in Tamil Nadu – 26.04.2024

Honor killings, also known as "shame killings," occur when a person, typically a woman, is murdered by their own family members to protect the "dignity" and "honor" of the family, particularly in cases of inter-caste or inter religious marriages or relationships. While men are occasionally victims, women are predominantly targeted. In some cases, members of the queer community, including lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender individuals, also fall victim to honour killings. The deeply ingrained caste system in Indian society ties closely with the family and marriage systems, and although Indian legislation guarantees the right to marry as an adult, inter-caste marriages are often met with opposition due to caste-based norms. These norms, particularly the concepts of purity and chastity, frame the female body as the object of patriarchal control in the caste system.

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The play "Innuma Nadakuthu" aims to raise awareness about the prevalence of honour killings in Tamil Nadu, exploring the intersection of caste, family, and honour. The play seeks to shed light on how these killings are tied to the enforcement of cultural norms regarding marriage, sexual autonomy, religious conscience, and caste. These norms, often linked to the concept of "honour," can lead to tragic consequences when violated. Since no specific law exists to convict and penalize perpetrators of honour killings in Tamil Nadu, the Centre for Social Justice and Equity (CSJE), MSSW, partnered with the team "Theatre of Voice" to create public awareness about this issue. The mono act play, directed by Mr. Tittu (a.k.a. Yadheendar) and performed by Mr. Nambi Srinivas, took place on April 26th, 2024, at the Medai – The Stage Hall in Mylapore. The play emphasized the need for special legislation and policy frameworks to address and prevent such heinous crimes in society.

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples – 09.08.2024

The Centre for Social Justice and Equity (CSJE), in collaboration with the Directorate of Tribal Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu, commemorated the *International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples* on 9 August 2024. The event aimed to raise awareness about the rights, cultures, and challenges faced by indigenous communities, particularly the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

The day began with an inauguration at the TAG Auditorium, MSSW, featuring addresses by dignitaries such as Ms. G. Laxmi Priya IAS, Secretary, Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department, and Thiru S. Annadurai CLS, Director, Directorate of Tribal Welfare. The CSJE website was launched, and reports were released during the event.

A panel discussion on *Problems and Challenges in Tribal Development in Tamil Nadu* was moderated by Dr. A. Bhagathsingh, with insights from panelists including Ms. K. Sivagami, Dr. Thennarasu, Mr. Muthusamy, and Dr. Vijayalakshmi Praveen. The discussion highlighted issues such as land rights, education, and healthcare disparities faced by tribal communities.

The event also included a documentary screening titled *Naadodikalin Thaalam*, focusing on nomadic tribes, followed by a discussion with the director, Dr. Aribabu. A photo exhibition, *Lens of a Tribe*, by Ravi Maran, showcased the lives of the Beta Kurumba community.

A consultation meeting with tribal organizations, particularly those working with the Irular community, was held to discuss actionable plans for tribal development. The day concluded with a vibrant tribal cultural evening, featuring performances by the Irular community through dance, songs, and street theatre, celebrating their rich heritage and resilience.

The event underscored the need for continued efforts to protect the rights and uplift the lives of indigenous communities in Tamil Nadu.











“Samaththuvam Kaanbom” – Mass Public Awareness Campaign at Manonmainam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli on 20.12.2024

The strategic goal of mass public awareness campaigns is typically to advance scientific understanding of a certain component or situation. Public education is a process that aims to change people's opinions, perceptions, behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs. According to sociological theory, mass awareness campaigns are a systematic method of raising public awareness of a cause.

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Numerous public awareness campaigns had an impact on people's lives, similar to what the governments did when they interfered in a state's citizens' lives. There are many examples of how public opinion can be mobilized to support a cause and consequently impact decision makers' political will. To transmit communications and generate the support required to change the public's views, a variety of awareness-raising techniques, tools, and strategies can be employed.

Public awareness campaigns can involve a variety of activities, depending on the subject: releasing briefings and commentary; sharing reports, studies, and publications; collaborating with the media; hosting public events and lectures; organizing conferences and workshops; and developing and contributing to educational materials. Radio, television, video, cinema, the internet, social media, mobile phones, newspapers, newsletters, leaflets, poster campaigns, and the arts are just a few of the many ways that information can be shared.

Background of the Public Awareness Campaign at Tirunelveli

The village's well-known name, Nanguneri, was widely recognized and spelled by all parties involved in Tamil Nadu in August 2023, when caste conflicts arose among the village's schoolchildren. The "dominant caste" attitudes have impacted the schoolchildren, who have attacked classmates who are part of the scheduled caste group. There have been numerous documented and reported atrocities committed against Tamil Nadu's scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The incident demonstrated how the caste fronts have enraged Tamil Nadu's youngsters and adults, causing them to conflict with the law. In the same way, the most targeted and ideal victims have been the children and adults of reserved castes.

The state formed the "One Man Committee," led by Hon. Justice K. Chandru, a former judge of the High Court of Madras, to analyse caste polarization and comprehend caste suppressions using a socio-political thermometer.

Raising and increasing awareness among school and college going students in the hot zones is one of its main recommendations. Accordingly, the Centre for Study of Social Inclusion Research at Universities of Manonmainam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, has been invited by the Centre for Social Justice and Equity of

Madras School of Social Work to organize a large-scale public awareness campaign among university students with objectives as follows.

Key Objectives

In line with the recommendations of the successive commissions and the policy endeavors of Adi Dravida and Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, the Centre for Social Justice and Equity at Madras School of Social Work initiates a mass public awareness campaign in order to raise awareness on ensuring equality among the school, college and university students.

In this context, the objectives of the campaign are as follows:

- Encouraging students to create and ensure equality practices at their respective educational institutions;
- Training them to speak, think and react to stop atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in general;
- Encouraging them as an agent to combat violence against scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and ensuring equality in public;
- Enhance awareness of the general public on the extent, scope, consequences and risks of violence against scheduled castes and scheduled tribes with emphasis on the protection measures and services available for victims of caste violence;
- Disseminate Centre for Social Justice and Equity produced campaign videos and materials;

Working group and Target Group

There were totally 900 students from the Manonmaiam Sundaranar University has participated in the mass public awareness campaign held on 20.12.2024 at VOC Auditorium of Manonmaiam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli. 40 NCC Students have volunteered to organise the campaign and 10 staff from the Centre for the Study of Social Inclusion Research of MSU served as organising

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committee members and the Director of CSJE and programme Unit of CSJE, MSSW has done the overall coordination of the mass public awareness campaign.

On Campaign Day – 20.12.2024

The Centre for Social Inclusion Research at Universities of MSU, Tirunelveli has involved NCC volunteers to organise the campaign and they had involved themselves from the preparatory tasks of the campaign. The NCC students have assembled and were ready to pay their salutation to the Chief Guests.



Awareness Wall Posters

There have been several posters designed and pasted on the walls of the venue hall, and the students have seen the posters in the mass public awareness campaign.



Awareness Selfie Booth

As a part of the mass public awareness, we have encouraged the students to take selfies in the selfie booth designed by CJSE – MSSW. The students and staffs have taken the pictures and posted in their social media pages to create awareness in the digital medium.



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Programme Invitation

The mass awareness campaign had conducted by the following programme plan



The Students of NCC from Manonmaniam Sundaranar University has sung the Thamizh Thaa Vazhththu.



Welcome Address

Followed by that, Dr.R.Selvaraju, Director, the Centre for Study of Social Inclusion Research at Universities of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli has delivered the welcome address.



Rationale of the Mass Public Awareness Campaign

Followed by sir, The Director of Centre for Social Justice and Equity of Madras School of Social Work has delivered the Rationale of the public awareness campaign and briefed about the CSJE – MSSW’s activities and objectives.



Inaugural Address

The mass public awareness campaign’s inaugural address was presented by respected Prof. [Dr.] J. Sacratees, Registrar, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli. Professor has stated that it is the responsibility of the student community who can build a strong equality chain across different sections in society. He emphasised the notions of the father of Indian Constitution Dr.B.R.Ambedkar and his

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vision to eradicate the caste suppressions in society. He has been encouraged the students to become the trainers who can pass the message of ensuring equality among the general public.



Special Address of the Resource Persons

Next to Registrar sir of MSU, Thiru.Ganesan, Assistant Commissioner, In-Charge of Social Justice and Human Rights unit of Tirunelveli City has delivered the special address. He has been explaining about his experiences to in the journey of combating violences and ensuring justice for the victims of caste atrocities in Tirunelveli city. In addition, he added it is the responsibility of the students who can stop victimizing the human beings in the name of caste. Also, he added the importance of developing the practice of equality at educational campuses.



The special address on the topic of “Uyirkalai Ondrendru Unarungal” (உயிர்களை ஒன்றென்று உணருங்கள்) has been delivered by Dr. K. Ragupathi, member, Tamil Nadu State Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The origin of the Indian caste system is a debatable and questionable subject. He has delivered the scientific arguments of understanding the caste system as a practice in Indian society. Sir, has strongly acknowledged that there have been very serious historical roots founded in dividing the human labour according to caste hierarchy in India. It has been spread over from north to south and east to west across India. There have been different caste groups with scientific temper and knowledge who caused the development of the society. Yet, those communities were suppressed and marginalized from the mainstream during the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. The present liberalized and globalized Indian society is continuing the same social exclusion in different forms—why? Sir, has raised the questions and

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given the reasons for the same. He has also insisted the students make scientific research on the social institutions, including caste and its operations in society.



Awareness “Reel Competition” poster unveiling

Following the special address, the Dr.P.Suseendhira, Programme Co-ordinator of the Centre for Social Justice and Equity, Madras School of Social Work has made announcements and invited the resource people to unveil the poster for the "Reel Competition" with the theme of "சமத்துவம் காண்போம்"—"Ensuring Equality" for the

students in Tirunelveli. The Centre for Study of Social Inclusion Research at Universities of MSU further will hold this reel competition for Tirunelveli students.



Awareness Cultural Programmes

The mass public awareness campaign has compiled with the set of activities one such activity is the cultural performances by the univeristy students and “Kalaivanar Kalaikuzhu” on the themes of ensuring equality among students at educational institutions, ending caste based discriminations and atrocities against SC and ST in Tamil Nadu and popularising the scheme of common burial grounds. These events were hosted by Ms.M.Priyachitra,



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Vote of Thanks

Dr.P.Suseendhira, Programme Co-Ordinator has delivered the vote of thanks. Finally, group photos have been taken with the NCC student volunteers and the organising committee members of the mass public awareness campaign.





Suggestions

1. The District Collector of Tirunelveli district has suggested to conduct the public awareness campaign during the “Nellai – Porunai Book Fair” on 03.02.2024.
2. The Commissioner of Police, Tirunelveli City Thiru.Rupesh Kumar Meena (IG) has suggested to conduct the sustainable campaigns in every month at Tirunelveli in collaboration with the Social Justice and Human Rights Unit of Police Department.
3. The Deputy Commissioner of Police, Tirunelveli City Thirumigu.Anitha, IPS has suggested to develop a specific awareness campaign for children in Adi-Dravidar hostels with regard to accessing higher education.
4. The NCC Co-ordinator of MSU, Dr.Sivakumar has suggested to train the NCC students of the university to act as the trainers to organize such awareness campaigns.
5. The Director, the Centre for Social Inclusion Research at Universities of MSU

has suggested to conduct short surveys to analyze the impact of these public awareness campaigns among the scheduled castes and non-scheduled caste groups.

Feedback

1. The students of MSU have shared that the special lectures could be more interactive.
2. The students of MSU have pointed out that the poster could be circulated to their respective departments so that all the students can see the posters and take part in the awareness campaign.
3. The cultural programmes could be incorporated an awareness play.

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National Conference on “Tholkudi – Preservation and Promotion of Tribal Cultural Heritage” – 27th and 28th September 2024.

The conference was jointly organized with the Department of Adi-Dravidar and Tribal Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu. The two-day national conference was held at Hotel Westin, Velachery and MSSW, Egmore.

Day 1

Inaugural Session

The two-day conference was inaugurated by the Honourable Minister **Tmt. N. Kayalvizhi Selvaraj**, Honourable Minister for Adi Dravidar Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu.

Minister Tmt. Kayalvizhi Selvaraj highlighted the importance of the conference and presented various initiatives taken by the state government for the development and welfare of the tribal communities. She specifically mentioned the “Nannilam” scheme, which enables SC and ST women to own land as an outstanding initiative. She also emphasized that the Tamil Nadu government has launched several initiatives to support the growth of Scheduled Communities in terms of employment, education, and entrepreneurship. Another noteworthy program she introduced was the “Tholkudi Puththaaivu Thittam”, aimed at supporting students from tribal groups pursuing master’s, doctorate, and post-doctoral degrees.

Minister Tmt. Kayalvizhi Selvaraj reiterated that the “Tholkudi” scheme is a dedicated program designed to improve the livelihood of tribal community members.

The conference has jointly organised with the Department of Adi – Dravidar and Tribal Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu. The two-day national conference has held at Hotel Westin, Velachery and MSSW, Egmore.



Following Minister Tmt. N. Kayalvizhi Selvaraj, Tmt. G. Laxmipriya IAS, Secretary to the Government, Adi-Dravidar and Tribal Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu, addressed the gathering with the following remarks:

The Integrated Tribal Development Program (ITDP) and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) are significant policy frameworks focusing on tribal development. One of the notable schemes, 'Tholkudi', is being implemented in the state with the vision to improve the living standards of the Scheduled Tribes community. This initiative focuses on enhancing their economic status through livelihood programs and improving infrastructure, while also emphasizing the preservation and promotion of their rich and diverse cultural heritage. As part of Tholkudi, the government aims to document

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the linguistic resources and phonetic forms of tribes such as Toda, Kota, Sholaga, Kani, and Narikuravar from an ethnographical perspective.

Tmt. G. Laxmipriya IAS emphasized the importance of this conference, which brings together scholars, tribal leaders, policymakers, and cultural activists to engage in a meaningful dialogue about the challenges and opportunities facing tribal communities. She highlighted the need to work together to safeguard tribal traditions, promote their languages, and support their art forms, ensuring that their voices are heard in contemporary narratives.

The keynote address of the conference was delivered by Prof. Garapati Uma Maheshwar Rao, former Professor & Director at CALTS, University of Hyderabad. In his address, Prof. Rao elaborated on the importance of language technology, particularly focusing on Indian Languages Machine Translation. He discussed his work on the linguistic genetic reconstruction of the common source for the Dravidian, Mongolian, and Turkic language families.

Dr. S. Raja Samuel, Principal, MSSW, shared insights on the Centre for Social Justice and Equity of Madras School of Social Work's collaboration in the conference and the ongoing efforts to promote social justice.

The vote of thanks for the inaugural session was delivered by Thiru. S. Annadurai CLS, Director, Directorate of Tribal Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu.



Plenary Discussion

The first plenary speaker of the conference was Dr. V. Madan Karky, Founder of the Research Foundation. This research centre specializes in language literacy and computerized language learning. He provided detailed information about the practices and technologies used in the preservation of tribal languages among Australian Aboriginals. He shared his research experience in Australia, where he had obtained his doctorate in philosophy. He emphasized the importance of preserving traditional languages in Tamil Nadu, noting that Tamil is considered a "classical language" among other Indian languages. Similarly, we have age-old traditional languages practiced among our indigenous people. The gaps in the preservation process mean we are losing our roots and cultural heritage, he added. He proposed that advancements in technology are paving the way for the revitalization and promotion of languages practiced by indigenous people.

Following him, Tmt. R. Uma Maheswari, Additional Secretary, Adi-Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, delivered the rationale and objectives of the conference.





Rationale of the Conference

The overall rationale of the conference is to provide policy direction on the conservation and safeguarding of tribal cultural heritage in Tamil Nadu. It aims to translate the policy framework into a series of interrelated yet practically implementable schemes and programs that will ensure the tribal cultural heritage remains safe and sustainable.

Specific Objectives of the Conference

- To discuss the direction and approach for the development of the draft policy framework on tribal cultural heritage in Tamil Nadu.
- To identify the structure, key components, and manifestations of tribal cultural heritage in Tamil Nadu.
- To propose action plans and schemes to be undertaken to conserve and safeguard tribal cultural heritage in Tamil Nadu.

The Nature of the Conference

The conference took place in three modes:

- I. **Plenary Sessions**
- II. **Panel Discussions**
- III. **Working Groups**

While the plenary session addressed the issue of evolving a general policy framework for tribal cultural heritage, the panel discussions focused on the following themes, with several subject experts from across India. They presented policy papers on specified themes and engaged in detailed discussions during the conference.

Tribal Stalls

Three stalls were exhibited at the conference venue, Hotel Westin, on Day 1. One showcased the cultural instruments of tribal communities, another displayed 'Toda' embroidery, and the third featured 'Kurumba' paintings. Representatives from the tribal communities provided explanations about the exhibits.



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Tribal Cultural Events

The tribal cultural events of the conference took place at the Government Museum, Egmore. Three different tribal groups performed, and delegates, along with participants from various schools and colleges, attended the event. **Kuruman's Sevaiattam, Palliyar Dance**, and **Kaniyan Koothu** were some of the tribal cultural programmes showcased by the community members.



Panel Discussion

There were six panel discussions that took place in a two day national conference.

Panels	Thematic Areas	Experts
Day - 1 I	Endangered Languages and Traditions Tribal Oral	Prof. Sadhana Naithani, Professor of Folklore, School of Languages and Cultural Studies, JNU, New Delhi.
		Prof. T. Dharmaraj, Professor, Department of Folklore Studies, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, Tamil Nadu.
		Dr. C. Maheswaran, Former Director, Tribal Research Centre, The Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu.
Day - 1 II	Teaching and Learning Resources of Tribal Endangered Languages	Prof. Sam Mohan Lal, Former Deputy Director, Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysuru, Karnataka.
		Prof. Anvitha Abbi, Professor of Linguistics, JNU, UNESCO Advisory Board Member on Endangered languages, New Delhi.
		Prof. Minati Panda, Former Chairperson of Zakir Hussain Centre for Educational Studies, School of Social Sciences, JNU.
Day - 1 III	Revitalization of Endangered Languages: New Technologies and New Media	Prof. Rajesh Kumar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT – Madras, Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
		Prof. A R D Prasad, Former Professor and Head, Documentation Research and Training Centre, Indian Statistical Institute, Bangalore.
		Mr. Anand Kanitkar, Programme Officer for Culture, UNESCO, New Delhi.
Day - 2 IV		Prof. Ramesh Gaur, Professor & HoD, Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi
		Dr. M. Muthukumaraswamy,

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	Documenting and Archiving Endangered Tribal Languages	Director, National Folklore Support Centre, Chennai. Nerupama Y.Modwel, Principal Director, INTACH, New Delhi.
Day - 2 V	Scheme of Preservation and Promotion of Tribal Languages	Dr. Sujoy Sarkar, Special Officer in Charge Scheme for Protection & Preservation of Endangered Languages, Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) Manasagangotri, Hunsur Road, Mysuru, Karnataka.
		Dr. C. R. Sathyanarayanan, Former Joint Director, Anthropological Survey of India, Central Regional Centre, Nagpur, Maharashtra.
		Dr. Siddhartha Krishnan, Senior Fellow & Convener, Atree Academy, Bangaluru, Karnataka.
Day 2 VI	Speech Community and Language Safeguarding Practices: The Scheduled Tribes of Tamil Nadu	Dr. Tarun Chhabra, Anthropology and Ecology, Toda Nalaavazhvu Sangam, Tamil Nadu.
		Dr. K. Vasamalli, Advisory Board Member, Centre for Oral and Tribal Literature, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi.
		Mr. Odiyen Lakshmanan, Independent Researcher, Irula Language, Tamil Nadu.

With the policy paper presented by the above experts the Working Groups will be convened in future. The specific working groups are meant for designing schemes and programs that would conserve and safeguard the tribal cultural heritage.



Valedictory session

The valedictory of the conference was held at MSSW, Egmore on the second day after the panel discussions. It was headed by Tmt. G.Laxmi Priya, IAS, Secretary, Adi – Dravidar and Tribal Welfare department, Government of Tamil Nadu. Dr.R.Pavananthi Vembulu, Director, Centre for Social Justice and Equity, Madras School of Social Work had presented the report of the conference. The delegates who were presented the policy papers have felicitated by the chief guests. Honourable Justice.Thiru.K.Chandru, Former Judge (Rtd), High court of Madras, Chennai was of the chief guests of the valedictory session and he delivered the valedictory address on the rights of the tribes in Tamil Nadu. Next to Justice, Thiru.T.Udhayachandran IAS

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has delivered the keynote address on the special initiatives by the government to protect and promote traditional languages in general and tribal languages in particular.



Documentation

The Documentation Unit at the Centre for Social Justice and Equity (CSJE) serves as a cornerstone for collecting, organizing, maintaining, and disseminating data and materials related to marginalized communities, with a special focus on Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in Tamil Nadu. This unit plays a critical role in advancing CSJE's mission to amplify the voices and lived experiences of historically oppressed groups through evidence-based advocacy and policy making. By curating high-quality documentation, it ensures transparency and accessibility for stakeholders, including policymakers, researchers, academicians, students, and civil society organizations.

Recognizing the importance of data in public policy interventions, the Documentation Unit undertakes several key activities. It primarily creates comprehensive data sheets using open databases such as the Population Census, Agriculture Census, NFHS, NSSO, and NCBR. These datasets are instrumental in preparing reports and providing data-driven inputs that support the Centre's research and campaign efforts. Additionally, the unit collaborates with other CSJE divisions, including the Research and Programme units, to strengthen research initiatives and advocacy campaigns.

Beyond data management, the unit oversees the maintenance of CSJE's website, ensuring regular updates and active engagement through social media platforms. It also publishes monthly newsletters documenting the Centre's activities. In the past year, the unit has focused on Scheduled Tribes (ST) in Tamil Nadu, producing district-wise datasets on the population and landholdings of STs and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). It has also released a data bulletin, a detailed report on the PVTGs of Tamil Nadu, and two awareness videos addressing social issues. Through these efforts, the Documentation Unit remains integral to CSJE's vision of promoting social justice and equity.

Core Functions and Responsibilities:

1. Comprehensive Data Collection and Organization:

- The Documentation Unit prioritizes the systematic collection of data from both primary and secondary sources to address knowledge gaps about marginalized communities.
- It works to identify and curate essential records, including government reports, census data, and field-based studies, ensuring the information remains up-to-date and accessible.
- The unit actively collaborates with researchers, NGOs, and community leaders to collect firsthand information and community narratives that may be underrepresented in mainstream databases.

2. Creation and Maintenance of Resources:

- A core responsibility of the unit is to create original documentation that reflects the socio-economic realities of marginalized communities.
- The Documentation Unit maintains an organized repository of digital and physical records, ensuring long-term preservation and easy retrieval of materials.

3. Publication of Reports and Bulletins:

- The unit has developed a series of publications that contribute significantly to the understanding of marginalized communities' issues:
 - **Research Briefs:** These include in-depth studies on topics such as:
 - *The PVTGs of Tamil Nadu*
 - *Boom Boom Maatukarars: Addressing Statistical Invisibility*
 - *Invisible Margins: A Study on the Panniandi Community*

- **Data Bulletins:** Highlighting critical issues such as:
 - *Forest Governance and Tribal Land Holdings in Tamil Nadu*
- **Newsletters:** Aimed at documenting and sharing activities, updates, and research findings on a regular basis. Issues published include:
 - *September & October 2023*
 - *January 2024*
 - *March & April 2024*
 - *February 2024*
 - Quarterly Reports for 2023–2024.
- Journals/ Books/ Books Chapter
 - Dr. R. Pavananthi Vembulu, published an article, titled ‘Ecological Democracy and Environmental Justice: Political Ecology of Disasters in India’ in a edited book titled ‘Youth, Community, and Democracy in India, Myanmar, and Tailand by Chosein Yamahata, and Makiko Takeda, published by Paalgrave Macmillan.
- Newspapers/ Periodicals

4. **Social Media and Website Management:**

- The unit plays a key role in managing CSJE’s social media accounts and website, ensuring timely dissemination of research findings, event highlights, and updates on ongoing initiatives.
- Through these digital platforms, the unit creates awareness, fosters engagement, and shares narratives of marginalized groups to a broader audience.

5. Program Documentation:

- Every program, event, and initiative undertaken by CSJE is meticulously documented by the unit. This includes activities such as civil society consultation meetings, workshops, and lectures.
- Program briefs and reports are prepared with precision, ensuring that the objectives, outcomes, and impact of these activities are captured comprehensively.

6. Knowledge Dissemination through Lectures and Podcasts:

The Documentation Unit plays a vital role in curating and archiving knowledge resources that inspire awareness and facilitate critical discussions on socio-economic and cultural challenges. These resources include expert lectures, podcasts, and thematic presentations, covering key topics such as social equity, food security, indigenous rights, and systemic discrimination.

- **Highlighted Initiatives:** The unit has documented and shared several impactful lectures and podcasts, including:
 - *Food, Livelihood Security, and Life Claims of the Indigenous People of India* by Prof. Virginius Xaxa, which delves into the intersection of food security and the rights of indigenous communities.
 - *நாடோடிகளின் தாளம்* which explores the cultural and social realities of nomadic communities.
 - *தீண்டாமைச் சுவர் அகற்று வோம்* focusing on campaigns to challenge caste-based segregation.
 - *மயானப் பாகுபாடு களைவோம்* addressing issues of caste-based inequality in burial practices.

7. Visual and Data Resources:

- The unit has compiled a range of visual aids and datasets to enhance the understanding of marginalized communities' challenges and needs. Notable examples include:

- District-wise data on Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) and Scheduled Tribes, sourced from the Census of India.
 - Maps of 12 districts highlighting PVTG populations.
 - Visual archives capturing the daily lives, traditions, and resilience of SC and ST communities.
- These resources serve as invaluable tools for researchers, advocates, and policymakers.

Guest Lecture: Artificial Intelligence and Social Science Research: Tools & Techniques

Date & Venue: 20th February 2025, VC Hall, Madras School of Social Work (MSSW)

Resource Person: Prof. ARD Prasad

The Documentation Unit at CSJE – MSSW, in collaboration with the Library Department, organized a guest lecture titled "Artificial Intelligence and Social Science Research: Tools & Techniques" on 20th February 2025 at the VC Hall, MSSW. The event aimed to introduce students and researchers to the latest AI tools and methodologies, enhancing their capabilities in social science research. Renowned AI expert Prof. ARD Prasad delivered the lecture, which was attended by around 40 participants, including professors, PhD researchers, and students from diverse disciplines.





Prof. Prasad provided an in-depth exploration of AI's role in social sciences, covering tools for data analysis, predictive modelling, and applications in both qualitative and quantitative research. His engaging presentation highlighted AI's transformative potential while addressing its ethical and practical challenges. The lecture concluded with a vote of thanks by Swetha, the librarian, who expressed gratitude to Prof. Prasad and the participants.

An interactive Q&A session followed, where attendees raised questions on AI's ethical implications, limitations, and its potential to revolutionize research. Prof. Prasad offered insightful responses, encouraging researchers to leverage AI tools while remaining mindful of their constraints. The event successfully demonstrated AI's value as a powerful tool for advancing social science research.

Tholkudi

During the 2024-2025 budget session, Honourable Minister for Finance and Human Resources Management, Government of Tamil Nadu, announced a scheme to document and preserve Tamil Nadu Tribal Linguistic and Cultural Heritage. Following this announcement, the Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, organised a “Tholkudi” conference on September 27 and 28, 2024. In this conference domain experts from UNESCO and other educational and research institutions had participated and developed a road map and identified strategies for preserving and promoting tribal languages and cultural heritage.

As a follow up of these initiatives, the Department called for proposals from the experts working on tribal cultural and linguistic heritage. A total of six proposals had been selected and awarded financial grant. Each awardee has collected linguistic heritage related data in audio-visual formats. Then these data were archived as a Tholkudi Digital Repository. The Centre for Social Justice and Equity, established and funded by the Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu at the Madras School of Social Work was entrusted with the task of developing and curating the digital repository.

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Projects and Consultancies

Apart from these activities the Centre has also engaged in the projects and consultancies.

- **Focus Block Development Programme (FBDP)** - Tamil Nadu government announced the 50 focus Blocks Development Programme in the Budget 2023-2024 and it has been implemented the State Planning Commission, Government of Tamil Nadu. The primary object is to create capacity at the block level administrative machinery to strive for augmenting development resources and deploy them effectively to achieve faster development in relation to other regions in the state. In this process, academic institution was identified across Tamil Nadu to prepare strategy paper for the FBDP. Centre for Social Justice and Equity were one of the knowledge partners in this process.
- **Socio-Economic Survey on “Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) for the Project Affected Families for the Development of the Chennai Greenfield Airport at Parandur”** - As per the direction of the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation Limited (TIDCO), Centre has carrying out a Survey on “Resettlement Action for Project Affected Families for the Development of the New Greenfield Airport, Parandur”. The budget submitted for the study is Rs. 17,93,954/- (Rupees Seventeen Lakh Ninety Three Thousand Nine Hundred and Fifty Four only).
- **Status of Platform based Gig Workers in Tamil Nadu:** The study on the Status of Platform-Based Gig Workers in Tamil Nadu was conducted for the State Planning Commission from January to March 2025, with a sanctioned budget of ₹13,48,600. The first instalment of ₹2,96,692 was received, and the second instalment was requested. The primary objective of the study was to support the State Planning Commission in developing a regulatory framework for the platform-based gig economy by analysing the current status, challenges, and working conditions of gig workers in Tamil Nadu.

Advisory Committee Members

1. **Mr. T. Anand, IAS** – Director, Directorate of Adi Dravidar Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu.
2. **Mr. K.M. Acharya, IAS (Retd.)** – Former Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
3. **Prof. C. Lakshmanan** – Former Professor, MIDS, Chennai.
4. **Prof. N. Manimegalai** – Director, Centre for Women’s Development Studies, New Delhi.
5. **Dr. Nadarajah Manickam** – Loyola Extension Service, Trivandrum, Kerala.
6. **Mr. Paul Divakar N** – Convenor, Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent.
7. **Dr. Murali Shanmugavelan** – Researcher, Fairwork, Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford; Research Affiliate, Data and Society, New York.
8. **Mr. K.A. Mathew, IAS (Retd.)** – Chairman, MSSW.
9. **Dr. S. Raja Samuel** – Principal, MSSW.
10. **Dr. Pavananthi Vembulu** – Director, Centre for Social Justice and Equity.

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List of Interns

1. **Mr. Krishna** – Department of Economics, Tamil Nadu Central University, Tiruvarur.
2. **Mr. Magha Bhothi P** – Master of Social Work (MSW), Disability & Empowerment Programme, Madras School of Social Work (MSSW), Chennai.
3. **Ms. K. Sai Sushma** – MA Development Studies, Madras School of Social Work, Chennai
4. **Mr. Tharun.K** - MA Development Studies, Madras School of Social Work, Chennai
5. **Mr. Keluthizo Zango** - MA Development Studies, Madras School of Social Work, Chennai

Policy interventions

- Played role in the preparing guidelines for the policy note on Tamil Nadu Fellowship for Tribal Research (TNFTR).
- Tholkudi – As part of the Tholkudi scheme, Centre played a crucial role in bringing a project of the Documentation of Linguistic and Cultural Resources of the Tribes – Creating an Archival Repository for Tribal Cultural Heritage of Tamil Nadu Under the Tholkudi Program
- Focused Block Development Programme (FBDP) – CSJE was one of the Academic Knowledge partners under the State Planning Commission, Government of Tamil Nadu in preparing FBDP reports for eight blocks from seven districts namely, Thiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Chengalpattu, Ranipet, Vellore, Villupuram and Tirupathur.



CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY

(Established by Adi Dravidar & Tribal Welfare Department, GoTN)

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