

PROGRAMME BRIEF

One Day Civil Society Consultation on Social Justice and Equity – Villupuram

Background

The Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu sanctioned a Centre namely the Centre for Social Justice and Equity (CSJE) to Madras School of Social Work during the academic year 2023-24. The main purpose of this centre is to generate awareness and better understanding among key stakeholders to development about the concept of Social Justice and Equity and make it a major cross-cutting concern in all the development interventions. It aims to cover in its scope varieties of marginalized communities, however the primary focus will be the Adi Dravidar and Tribal Communities of Tamil Nadu. In this regard, the Centre organized a one-day consultation on Social Justice and Equity with NGOs and Academic institutions who are working with Marginalized Communities.

Objectives

- ❑ To try and understand the issues pertaining to marginalized communities and the need for intervention in their working areas.
- ❑ To share the purpose and activities of the Centre for Social Justice and Equity
- ❑ To explore the possibilities of collaboration and networking with Centre for Social Justice and Equity (CSJE), Madras School of Social Work (MSSW) through surveys, action research and capacity building initiatives.

Venue and Date

The Program was organized by the Centre for Social Justice and Equity (CSJE), Madras School of Social Work on 02.04.2024 at the Thurambar Development Trust Gingee, Villupuram.

Participants

The program was attended from stakeholders from four districts (Villupuram, Kallakurichi, Cuddalore, Pondicherry) and participants included directors of NGOs, researchers, and students. The twenty six participants in total. (26).

Fr. Arul Valan SDB, Convener of the Thurambar Liberation Movement and Thurambar Community Development and Research Center, Gingee, Villupuram

The movement emerged in response to atrocities and untouchability faced by the Puthirai Vannar community across Tiruvannamalai and Villupuram districts. In 2003, three Puthirai Vannar families from Kuruvimalai village in Tiruvannamalai district were rescued from caste-based bonded labor. In Sathiamangalam village, Villupuram district, discrimination against Puthirai Vannar families within the Catholic parish prompted action. These incidents led to the formation of numerous

associations, culminating in the Thurumbar Liberation Movement (TLM). The center serves as a bridge between people's issues and governmental assistance. For 23 years, we have been advocating for the Puthirai Vannar community under the Thurumbar Liberation Movement's banner. Dr. Ambedkar asserted that political change drives social change; thus, we collaborate with communities to effect political change. We strive to sharpen our approach, recognizing ongoing challenges at the center.

Resource Person's Address

Dr. C. Jerome Samraj, Assistant Professor at Pondicherry University's Department of Economics

Institutions often neglect marginalized communities' issues, leaving students with limited social awareness. Current governance excludes many, favoring NGOs' role in understanding people's needs, prompting restrictions on foreign funding. India's social inequality hierarchy now normalizes discrimination, shaping public behavior. Where oppression sparks resistance, authorities often respond with force, especially targeting Dalits. Delayed justice, such as in Tamil Nadu's vachathti violence, fails victims thirty years post-event, illustrating systemic failures. Governance remains indifferent to marginalized issues, with caste determining civil service dynamics. Implemented schemes often bypass village untouchability, undermining their efficacy. Reform should prioritize addressing untouchability to ensure effective governance. Research focusing on perpetrators, rather than victims, offers a path to societal healing. Government-owned Panchami lands could aid economic development if allocated to marginalized groups. Addressing their housing, educational, and agricultural needs requires urgent action.

Mr. V. Suresh - Tamil Nadu Board of Rural Development

"We work for Dalit people, especially Dalit women. We focus on agriculture, drinking water, education, health, etc. To date, we have conducted 150 skill training and awareness programs."

Mr. S.P. Raju – VPDS

"We work for disabled persons, conducting skill training programs and facilitating access to government welfare schemes."

Mr. M. Ganapathy - Organization of Poverty Women Child Social Economic Development Trust

"We work for tribal dwellers, providing awareness programs about their rights. Many students face challenges attending distant schools without bus facilities, highlighting the need for government-provided transportation and separate schools."

Mr. M. Sathiyamorthy – People Development Federation

"For years, we have endeavored to uplift the economically oppressed, though we occasionally miss our targets. True economic growth means enhancing their existing professions."

Ms. V. Anbarasi – Makkal Kalvi Arakattalai

"We support women abandoned by husbands, combat child marriages, and assist child laborers by enrolling them in schools and providing educational support."

Dr. S.M. Karthikeyan – Pioneer Trust

"We train sanitation workers and Dalit women in various skills."

Mr. B. Louis Dass – RISE Trust

"We focus exclusively on SC/ST communities, providing disaster relief during natural calamities and conducting numerous skill training and awareness programs."

Mr. G.D. Noble - Human Upliftment Trust

"We work with children, identifying and reintegrating school dropouts."

Mr. G. Kumar – PRWO

"We support tribal peoples, women, and women entrepreneurs by providing economic development training and awareness programs."

Mr. Charles Newton – Sparrows Nest Trust

"We work in tribal villages, focusing on awareness training, basic facilities, school and housing construction, and education and employment initiatives in the Kalvarayan Hills."

Fr. Valan – Thurambar Viduthalai Iyakkam

"Fifteen to twenty villages form our sangam. We hold monthly meetings to address community issues and provide training, particularly for women and children. Additionally, we've produced the 'Echam Micham' documentary."

Ms. K. Akshalya – AHAL Centre

"We work in 86 Dalit villages, advocating for Aruthathiyar people's rights, particularly for women and children. We emphasize education and women's empowerment."

Mr. M.S. Frances Xavier – Rural Community Trust

"For three years, we've supported Dalit, tribal, and children's social rights, forest protection, tribal employment, and basic infrastructure development advocacy."

Mr. B. Jayakumar – OXFORD Trust

"We assist migrant workers at district and state levels, focusing on children's education and conducting awareness programs. We address issues like girl child marriages and substance abuse prevention."

Outcome

Various issues were addressed during the consultation meeting. Significant challenges are faced by single women, necessitating employment opportunities and educational grants for their children. Sanitation workers' rights are advocated for, and efforts are made to help unorganized labor access government welfare. Migrant workers' safety is addressed, and awareness programs on alcohol, tobacco, and drug abuse prevention are conducted to combat child marriages.

Follow-up

Women and children's welfare should be prioritized, and awareness among college and school students needs to be promoted. Improvement is needed in the access to education for tribal girls. Collective efforts are required for marginalized communities and migrant workers. Understanding social justice is deemed crucial for educational institutions, prompting the necessity for comprehensive reports.



Programme Schedule

10.00 am to 10.15 am	Welcome and Context Setting of the session, Prof.M.Antony Stephen, Assistant Professor cum Program Coordinator, Centre for Social Justice and Equity, MSSW, Egmore.
10.15 am to 10.30 am	Chief Guest: Fr. Arul Valan SDB Convener, Thurambar Liberation Movement, Thurambar Community Development and Research Center, Gingee, Villupuram.
10.30 am to 10.45 am	Key Note Address, Civil Society Perspective on Social Justice and Equity, Dr. C. Jerome Samraj, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Pondicherry University.
Session – I	
10.45 pm to 12.15. pm	Introducing NGOs and their work with marginalized communities' challenges faced intervention and learning. M.Priyachitra Program Assistant, Centre for Social Justice and Equity, MSSW, Egmore.
Session – II	
12.15 pm to 1.00 pm	About the Centre and need for empanelment and expectations from NGOs, Prof.M.Antony Stephen, Assistant Professor cum Program Coordinator, Centre for Social Justice and Equity, MSSW, Egmore.
1.00 pm	Vote of Thanks, M.Priyachitra Program Assistant, Centre for Social Justice and Equity, MSSW, Egmore.

