

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Poverty and Deprivation among the Tribals

A question of Social Non-Inclusiveness

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Poverty and Deprivation among the Tribals **A question of Social Non-Inclusiveness**

SUMMARY

The concept of poverty includes both income poverty and non-income poverty. In India the incidence of non-income poverty is much more alarming than the incidence of income poverty. Across social groups the STs (Scheduled Tribes) have the highest level of poverty in India. Poverty may be both the cause and consequence of social exclusion. The concept of deprivation is related to social exclusion. The extent of deprivation can be examined by comparing one's situation with those who are better off in the society. Although India has been following the inclusive growth approach since independence the STs continue to be excluded from mainstream society which not only limits their participation in the economic, social and political spheres but also their access to education, healthcare and other social goods. Over the past decades there has been a decline in the incidence of poverty in India. Despite a decline in poverty rates, the gap between poverty among the disadvantaged sections especially the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes and the general population is large and growing. The main focus of the project is to examine poverty and deprivation in terms of non-income factors such as education, health and basic amenities among the scheduled tribes (STs) relative to other social groups in the state.

The main Objectives of the Project are

1. To compare the socio-economic status of STs in Kerala with that of all India
2. To compare the extent of poverty and deprivation among the ST households across social groups in Kerala
3. To compare the living conditions of sub-groups within the STs
4. To study the different development schemes implemented by the government for the welfare of ST population in Kerala
5. To suggest policy measures for more inclusive growth

The study depends on both primary and secondary data. The extent of poverty and deprivation among the STs is studied in a comparative setting using secondary data. An analysis based on primary data was carried out on the basis of a random sample taken from two panchayaths in Kannur district. It includes a detailed study of 188 ST households taken from Kannavam Kurichiar settlement of Chittariparamban panchayath in Kuthuparamba block and 296

ST households taken from the 'Tribal Resettlement Area' of AralamPanchayath in Iritty block of Kannur district. A house to house survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire to collect information about the living conditions of the tribals. The results are analyzed using statistical tools like tables, diagrams and simple quantitative techniques.

The report is organized in six chapters. After introducing the topic in the first chapter, the relevant literature is reviewed in the second chapter. The third chapter consists of two sections. In the first section the extent of poverty and deprivation among the STs in Kerala is compared with that of all India. The second section compares the socio-economic wellbeing of the STs across social groups in Kerala. A comparison of the living conditions of three sub groups within STs settled in two different areas is the main content of the fourth chapter. The fifth chapter examines the various policies and programs implemented by the Central and State government for the socio economic development of the STs. The final chapter presents the main findings & policy suggestions.

The main findings are

- Scheduled tribes in Kerala are comparatively better off than their counter parts in other states socially and educationally. The incidence of poverty among SC/ST in Kerala is only half that of the all India level. Kerala lags behind only in one indicator-access to improved drinking water facilities.

The extent of poverty and deprivation across social groups in Kerala revealed the following

- Majority of STs are engaged as agricultural labourers and in India the incidence of poverty was the highest among agricultural labour households
- Literacy rate is lowest for STs for both males and females across all social groups.
- The number of illiterates is highest among the STs
- Gross enrollment ratio and current attendance ratio of STs is higher at the primary level but shows a declining trend at progressively higher levels of education
- Dropout rate is higher for STs across all social groups and is higher for ST boys than for girls
- Two important health indicators-infant mortality rate and under 5 mortality is more pronounced for STs when compared with the SCs

- The percentage of women with (Body Mass Index) BMI<18.5 and with anemia is high for STs and SCs and more significant for STs
- % of children immunized by all vaccinations is low for STs when compared with OBCs and others
- Proportion of households living in Kutcha houses is highest for STs
- Proportion of households with electricity for domestic use is lowest for STs
- The proportion of households having no bathroom and no latrine is highest for STs

An analysis of the primary data reveals that the socio economic status and living conditions of the tribals remain backward when compared to the general population. The living conditions of the STs in the tribal resettlement area are far behind their counterparts living in other areas. They are deprived of basic amenities of life. There exists inter group differences within the STs. The Kuichiars have made progress and are much ahead of the Karimpalans and Paniyans. The paniyans are the most backward group.

An analysis of the government schemes for ST development implemented in Kerala reveals that over the years, the outlay and expenditure for different beneficiary programmes are showing an increasing trend. The main obstacles in the path of development are delays in the implementation of projects, insufficiency of funds, leakages and corruption.

Policy Suggestions

The main policy suggestions are

- The state or the government has an important role to play in building inclusive societies. Targeted efforts are needed to provide productive employment for all, including women.
- Given the fact that the incidence of poverty was the highest among the agricultural labour households which constituted a significant proportion of ST population, poverty alleviation among this occupational group will have a major impact on overall poverty reduction of the STs.
- Educational backwardness is the main hurdle in the socio economic progress of the Scheduled Tribes and hence top priority should be given for their educational development. The economic status of the family has an impact on children's education. Therefore to improve the level of education, the economic backwardness of the households should be addressed. Parental education and support in education play an

important role in improving learning outcomes and its inadequacy has contributed to the lower learning outcomes of children from STs. Adult literacy classes and training to parents will help improve the performance of students. The quality of education should be ensured to improve the learning outcomes. Target based approaches are needed for reducing disparities in drop outs between gender and social groups.

- STs poorer access to health services is partly because they live in remote rural and forest areas where medical facilities are unavailable. To achieve equity in health outcomes, greater efforts must be made to ensure that STs are provided public health services and basic infrastructural facilities.
- Downsizing of staff in the public sector has diminished employment opportunities for STs/SCs. To overcome this reservation policy should be extended to employment in the private sector.
- A main reason for the poverty and backwardness of the STs is their addiction to alcoholic drinks, smoking and chewing. Measures should be taken to free them from this vice through awareness programmes.
- Basic amenities and employment should be provided for the upliftment of the tribals living in tribal resettlement areas. Their life and property should be protected from the attack of wild animals.
- Laws and programmes are in place to address the special disadvantages of the excluded groups but the implementation is poor. The government should ensure that socially excluded groups benefit from public expenditure as much as other groups. Measures should be taken to improve delivery systems, monitoring, transparency and accountability of programmes by involving the community and thereby prevent leakages and corruption.
- The tribal communities live in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions and are in various stages of social, economic and educational development. The government should adopt group specific and location specific programmes to build an inclusive society.
