

1. THE REPORT

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This is a Development Report of a different type. As the exploitative forces of globalisation, religious fanaticism and casteism gather strength and threaten the very lives of the marginalised, this Report intends to become the voice of the alternative.

In recent years, Human Development Reports, in line with path-breaking efforts by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have become common. In India, though, there has been no sustained effort by the government to bring out a national Human Development Report. The National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) has brought out an India Human Development Report 1999, but based only on a rural sample study.

At the States' level, there have been some efforts : Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Rajasthan have published State-level Human Development Reports. Other States like Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Gujarat are said to be preparing their Human Development Reports. In Tamilnadu too, the State Planning Commission has taken up an initiative towards a Tamilnadu Human Development Report.

Human / Social Development and Human Rights are inseparable. Human / Social development is a basic human right for every one. And human rights violations are rooted in the concrete realities of human / social development.

The present Report is an effort to present a peoples', non-governmental and rights' perspective on human / social development in Tamilnadu.

This Report is a maiden effort by the Forum. Our ambition is to work towards an on-going grassroots-based monitoring and assessment of social development in the State. Our long-term goal is to pool together the three types of data potentially available: data by government agencies, data by private research institutions and data provided by grassroots movements, organizations and institutions.

Data at the State level, much worse at the district level, have not been easily available in ready form. As a start, we have tried to bring together most of the available government data and some minimal private research data. We hope to make the Report a regular, if not an annual, feature.

The Report is not the work of academic professionals or experts, though we have managed to get the help of a few socially concerned professionals and civil servants. The Report makes use of insights from all the existing indicators and criteria, international and national. It is an initial effort towards creating an indigenous framework for evaluation and assessment.

Our strength is primarily in our being rooted and governed by the concerns of the grassroots reality of Tamilnadu as well as by our macro perspectives on public policy and social development.

We, true to the basic options of our Forum, have looked at the human / social development scene of Tamilnadu primarily from the reality of the more deprived sections of Tamilnadu people: women, children, fisherfolk, labour, dalits and tribals. The Report tries to assess deeply the successes and failures of Tamilnadu viz-a-viz each of these sections.

The Report is primarily meant for use by persons who are involved in the struggle for social change in Tamilnadu – grassroots and macro organizations, movements and individuals, grassroots researchers and policy makers.... - and forces that are involved in concrete policy changes in the field of social development in Tamilnadu and elsewhere.

(We have preferred the term “Social Development” to “Human Development” for reasons of the basic social concerns of our Forum as well as to stress the collective social dimension of development)

Hopefully, with your interactions, critique and support, our future Reports will have fewer limitations than the present one.

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