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The Socio-economic Status of the Urali Tribal of Tamil Nadu in India Using Tribal Composite Index

Vani Archana¹, A. Thomas², G. Philip Kumar³ and Bernard D'Sami⁴

¹*Loyola Institute of Social Science Training and Research (LISSTAR),
Loyola College, Sterling Road, Nungambakkam, Chennai 600034, Tamil Nadu, India
Phone: 9003095332, E-mail: vaniarchana@yahoo.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-3831-107X*

²*Loyola College, Sterling Road, Nungambakkam, Chennai 600034, Tamil Nadu, India
E-mail: principal@loyolacollege.edu*

³ARCALI, India

E-mail: philipknr@gmail.com

⁴*LISSTAR, Loyola College, Sterling Road, Nungambakkam,
Chennai 600 034, Tamil Nadu, India
E-mail: bernad@loyolacollege.ed*

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ABSTRACT The present study is the outcome of an in-depth fieldwork analysis with 1128 Urali tribal families in Erode district of Tamil Nadu. The selection of the study area was purposive and was based on the population of the Urali people, who are concentrated in the hilly terrain of these tribal districts, the selection of the sample units was done randomly. The study attempts to understand the outcome of development intervention practices and document the change in socio-economic frontiers accrued in favour of beneficiaries and the impact on their livelihoods, if any. This paper also attempts to explore if there is any association between educational status (those who are still studying/those who have discontinued) and level of education (primary/middle/high/higher secondary/college). The data was analysed using multi-stage stratified random sampling via face-to-face interviews, phone calls, and structured questionnaires, as well as statistical techniques such as Chi-Square and Composite Index. The composite indices show that illiteracy, indebtedness, lack of awareness, poor infrastructure, poor health care, unemployment, unfriendly development policies, etc. pose major challenges to tribal development. The Land and Economic Index lends credence to claims that the Urali community with low landholdings suffers from the extortion of rich and influential settlers. The study concludes that to fully integrate the tribal group into the national mainstream, action must be taken not only to strengthen socioeconomic activities but also to address the enduring issues of poor literacy and high dropout rates.