

## **Economic and Employment Status of Minorities in West Bengal: Evidence from NSSO**

*Funding Agency:* Department of Minority Affairs and Madrasah Education Department,  
Government of West Bengal

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IDSK undertook a project on *Economic and employment status of minorities in West Bengal* based on NSSO 61<sup>st</sup> Round sponsored by the Department of Minority Affairs and Madrasah Education Department, Government of West Bengal.

The final report of the project was submitted to the Minority Affairs Department during the last week of November 2008. In this report it was observed that differences in workforce and labour force participation rates between socio-religious communities (SRCs) are marginal. Unemployment rates, too, are low among Muslims. However, while unemployment by current daily status has fallen between 1999-00 and 2004-05 for Muslims, it has increased marginally when measured in terms of usual status.

Poverty levels are highest among Muslims in both rural and urban areas. In rural areas, land owned and possessed by Muslims is lower than that of other SRCs, while land cultivated is greater than only Backward Castes. Despite their rural centrality, a relatively smaller proportion of Muslims are engaged in agriculture than other SRCs. Sharp differences in earning were found in agricultural and non-agricultural occupations, with Muslims lagging behind in most cases.

The Report found a uni-dimensional picture of relative deprivation of Muslims in urban West Bengal. The majority of Muslims were engaged in the informal sector. This was indicated by an analysis of distribution of workforce by economic status and place of work. The low representation of Muslims in sectors like police force, education, health and public health was concerning.

It was recommended that targeting of Muslims in Government schemes is essential for improving their welfare. Special schemes may also be introduced in collaboration with institutions like NABARD and SIDBI. In the long-run, the provisioning of mainstream education facilities in Muslim-concentrated areas is another important requirement for improving the current status.