

## RURAL DISTRESS REPORT - TELANGANA, 2018

Farmer suicides are symptomatic of rural distress that is tenacious and cyclic, abetted by an indifferent state and unresponsive system. While the rural distress in Telangana was inherited from the erstwhile combined Andhra Pradesh, the indifference of the new state towards farmer suicides has only deepened the crisis and institutionalized the inadequacies of the state response. Andhra Pradesh, according to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), had the highest farmer suicides after Maharashtra in the years from 2006 to 2013 (except in 2007).



Rural distress was at the heart of the support for the Telangana agitation, but the continued high number of farmer suicides shows that agrarian problems may not be top priority of the new state. According to the NCRB, there were 1,347 farmer suicides in 2014 – the second highest in the country – and in 2015, there were 1400 farmer suicides. However, in 2016 the toll had decreased to 645 farmer suicides. This drastic reduction of numbers, explained in the following section, may have more to do with methodological creativity rather than actual change in the condition of farmers.

Assessment reports show that there is little improvement in the ground situation of rural distress in Telangana. The loan waiver, subsidies on inputs, irrigation, power supply, and labour wages, are issues that the Telangana government is yet to address. Urban Telangana, however, appears to have fared better in catching the attention of government after the state formation, although the urban population is at 38 percent, according to Census 2011. For example, the Telangana government had in 2018 announced a three-year plan of Rs 50,000 crore, centered around the development of Hyderabad. In comparison, the schemes for rural Telangana have been neglected leading to enormous increase in costs and increasing burden to the tax-payer.

The Telangana state is unique for the possibilities of its development and intensity of its distress. While the former has been charted extensively, and often finds mention in the state's political discourse, the latter has remained uncharted and is diminished in the overall view of

the state. This is further problematised as there is evidence of distress, like in the case of continued farmer suicides, which has remained under-analysed and unlocated in the conceptualization of Telangana as a new state. One immediate visualization is the comparative analysis of farmers' lives before and after the formation of the state, which quantitatively as well as qualitatively might show a decline and help in demarcating their distress. While this is actualized through the data from Census 2011 for the erstwhile 10 districts, it requires specific methodological innovation to bring to fore the unaddressed aspects of distress.



The main objectives of the *Rural Distress Report-Telangana* (RDR-T) were to access the actual scope and depth of distress in Telangana, which neither the state nor the politics of the state appear to research and analyse. The RDR-T also sought to identify the governance deficit through the states own data about different parameters, as well as the state procedure when it dealt with farmer suicides.