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SYMPOSIUM ON TRIBAL HEALTH AND NUTRITION

REGIONAL MEDICAL RESEARCH CENTRE PORT BLAIR

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27 February 1998

A symposium on Tribal Health and Nutrition was conducted at the Regional Medical Research Centre, Port Blair on 27 February 1998. More than 40 participants attended the scientific sessions in which 6 papers on different aspects of tribal health and nutrition were presented. The papers presented were:-

1. *Diet and Nutrition Scenario in India and National Nutrition Policy* by Dr. Kamala Krishnaswamy, Director, National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad
2. *Morbidity, Child Mortality and Nutritional Status of Jarawas – Report of the first Pilot Study* by Dr. V.G. Rao, Asst. Director, Regional Medical Research Centre, Port Blair
3. *Nutritional Status of Tribal Populations of India with Reference to Andaman and Nicobar Islands* by Dr. Hanumantharao, Deputy Director, National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad
4. *Health and Nutritional Status of Onges* by Dr. M.V. Murhekar, Senior Research Officer, Regional Medical Research Centre, Port Blair
5. *Health and Nutritional Status of Great Andamanese* by Dr. Shivsankar Singh, Medical Specialist, G.B. Pant Hospital, Port Blair
6. *Planning Better Nutrition for Tribals* by Smt. Padma Mohanti, Head of Dept. of Home Science, Jawaharlal Nehru Rajkiya Mahavidyalaya, Port Blair

These papers highlighted the following issues related to demography, health and nutrition of the tribes of Andaman and Nicobar islands:-

1. The populations of most of the tribal groups are on the decline.
2. The population structures of these tribes are imbalanced to varying degrees with a low female to male ratio
3. Age difference between spouses is very high in many cases
4. Though the overall fertility rates are high compared to Indian averages, these rates are not effective in maintaining and increasing their population strengths