

A Tale of Two Districts

Malappuram district (₹29,699) had the lowest (constant 2004–05 prices) per capita income in 2009–10 in Kerala (₹45,921).

THE INTENT IN this article is to highlight regional imbalances within India using district-level data. Two districts with the lowest Net District Domestic Product (NDDP) within their respective states have been chosen for comparison. The districts of Malappuram in Kerala and Uttar Dinajpur (UD) in West Bengal (WB) are compared in this article. Are we comparing apples versus oranges? Perhaps, but the results are startling.

The two districts are located in states that are different yet similar. The dominance of socialist parties, long coastlines, rich and abundant natural resources, a rich history of trading and the cultural importance on education are what makes Kerala and WB similar. However, Kerala's per capita income, growth rate, literacy rate and life expectancy are significantly higher than WB.

At the district level it is a similar story. Malappuram was formed in central Kerala in 1969 and has an area of 3,554 km². It is a hilly district with three rivers flowing through it. There are no major backwaters but connection to inland waterways exists¹. The district borders Tamil Nadu on the east and has 70 km of coastline on the west. UD was formed in 1992 in WB². It is similar in size (3,140 km²) to Malappuram. UD is enclosed by Bangladesh on the east, Bihar on the west and other WB districts on the north and south. The regional topography is generally flat with a gentle southerly slope and three rivers flow through the district². Both districts have similar population densities (Table M.1). Malappuram is more urbanised than UD.

Table M.1: Select Indicators of Uttar Dinajpur, West Bengal and Malappuram, Kerala

Indicators	Uttar Dinajpur (West Bengal)	Malappuram (Kerala)
Area (square km)	3,140	3,550
Population (2011)	30,00,849	41,10,956
Population density (people per square km)	956	1,158
Number of females per 1,000 males (2011)	936	1,096
Percentage of urban population (% , 2011)	12.07	44.2
Literacy rate (% , 2011)	60.1	93.6
Life expectancy at birth (2001), Female	63*	76.1
Life expectancy at birth (2001), Male	61*	75.2
HDI Composite, 2001	0.51*	0.75
Percentage of households having electricity (2011)	33.3	94.3
Percentage of households having tap water from treated source (2011)	3.4	11.1
Percentage of households availing of banking services (2011)	26.5	68.2
Percentage of households having mobile only (2011)	31	54.8
Percentage of households having latrine facility within the premises (2011)	27.5	97.4
Percentage of households with drainage (2011)	19.3	45.2
Percentage of permanent census houses [†] (2011)	31.3	88.8

Notes: *These statistics are for the district of Dinajpur, which consists of Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur.

[†]Permanent houses are houses with wall and roof made of permanent materials. Wall can be made of G.I., stone packed with mortar, stone not packed with mortar, metal, asbestos sheets, burnt bricks, stone or concrete. Roof can be made of hand-made tiles, machine-made tiles, slate, G.I., metal, asbestos sheets, brick, stone or concrete.

Sources: Census 2011.

Development and Planning Department, Government of West Bengal (2004). West Bengal Human Development Report 2004.

http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/stateplan/sdr_pdf/shdr_wb04.pdf

Government of Kerala. (2006). Human Development Report 2005. http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/stateplan/sdr_pdf/shdr_kerala05.pdf

1. Malappuram district website. <http://malappuram.nic.in/default.html>

2. Uttar Dinajpur district website. <http://uttardinajpur.nic.in/>

Malappuram district (₹29,699) had the lowest (constant 2004–05 prices) per capita income in 2009–10 in Kerala (₹45,921)³. Its NDDP formed 7.7 per cent of the Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) in 2009–10. UD (₹16,987.2) had the lowest per capita income in 2009–10 in WB (₹30,065)⁴. Its NDDP formed 1.97 per cent of WB's NSDP in 2009–10. Between 2006–07 and 2009–10, the average annual growth of real per capita income was lower for UD (3.8%) than for Malappuram (5.6%). The Planning Commission has identified UD as one of the 150 backward districts in the country.

Despite the wide differences in income, both districts were dominated by the services sector especially 'other services'. Agriculture formed one-third of the NDDP of UD, whereas it only formed 10 per cent of the NDDP of Malappuram (Table M.2). The industrial sector of UD formed 11.4 per cent of NDDP and was dominated by unregistered manufacturing (4.4% of NDDP) and construction (6.2% of NDDP). In Malappuram the construction sector (12.5%) dominated the district's industry

(17% of NDDP). Intuitively, this is a direct consequence of emigrants sending back remittances. The number of emigrants per 100 households in the district was 51.7 in 2011, the highest in the state⁵.

Within the services sector, it is 'other services' that formed 72.4 per cent of the NDDP in Malappuram in 2009–10 followed by 'trade, hotels & restaurants' (23.4% of NDDP). The top three services sectors in UD were 'trade, hotels & restaurants' (13.9% of NDDP), 'other services' (12.6% of NDDP) and 'transport, storage & communication' (8.6%).

Table M.1 shows that both physical and human infrastructure are better in Malappuram. In sum, while Malappuram is definitely better off than UD, the growth patterns of both these poor districts are surprisingly lopsided and different from historical growth and development patterns of the rest of the world. These need the attention of policymakers, because they have implications for both growth and equity. It is also of paramount importance to invest in both the physical and human infrastructure of UD.

Table M.2: Estimates of Net District Domestic Product by Industry of Origin at constant (2004–05 prices), 2009–10

Sectors	Uttar Dinajpur (Rs lakh)	Uttar Dinajpur (% of NDDP)	Malappuram (Rs lakh)	Malappuram (% of NDDP)
Agriculture	1,55,990	30.3	96,250	7.9
Forestry & logging	8,285	1.6	28,039	2.3
Fishery	9,223	1.8	5,869	0.5
AGRICULTURE & ALLIED ACTIVITIES	1,73,498	33.7	1,30,158	10.7
Mining & quarrying	10	0.0	4,459	0.4
Manufacturing	24,400	4.7	46,327	3.8
Construction	32,168	6.2	1,52,401	12.5
Electricity, Gas & Water Supply	2,123	0.4	3,666	0.3
INDUSTRY (INCLUDING MINING AND QUARRYING)	58,701	11.4	2,06,853	17.0
Transport, storage & communications	44,190	8.6	1,48,924	12.2
Trade, hotels & restaurants	71,570	13.9	2,85,880	23.4
Banking & insurance	42,141	8.2	73,707	6.0
Real estate, ownership of dwellings & business services	34,518	6.7	1,46,536	12.0
Public administration	25,393	4.9	31,413	2.6
Other services	65,127	12.6	1,95,690	16.1
SERVICES	2,82,939	54.9	8,82,150	72.4
TOTAL (NET DISTRICT DOMESTIC PRODUCT)	5,15,138	100.0	12,19,161	100.0

Sources: Bureau of Applied Economics & Statistics, Government of West Bengal, 2011.

State Domestic Product and District Domestic Product of West Bengal. <http://dospiwb.org.in/images/Repo.pdf>

Department of Economics and Statistics, 2011. Gross Domestic Product of Kerala and India from 2004–05 to 2011–12 (Base Year 2004–05).

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