

Praveena Makesh

APPLIED DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS · FIELD RESEARCH · THINGS I BUILD

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I read development from the edges.

I grew up Tamil in Kuwait, at home in a place I could never belong to by law, then studied in India, and now in London. Being the *in-between* person has been the one constant.

It taught me to notice who gets counted and who goes missing. I have been asking the same few questions ever since, in regression tables, a classroom curriculum, a community survey, and small talk at a charity till.

THE SAME QUESTIONS, ASKED MANY WAYS

Some of my work answers more than one at once. That overlap is the point.

- Q1 Who gets dignity through work?
- Q2 Who gets seen for what they can actually do?
- Q3 What actually moves people?
- Q4 What's the economics underneath a social choice?
- Q5 Who gets counted, and who goes missing?

SELECTED WORK

Gender, art, and public space

QUALITATIVE · 2023

Studying Expression of Gender through Art by Transgenders in Public Spaces in Urban Bengaluru. MSc Sustainable Development, Christ University. A qualitative study of the Aravani Art Project.

It began with an encounter outside my hostel: a transwoman who told me she would rather beg than return to work where she had been abused. The dissertation argues that a person is wronged not only by exclusion, but by being flattened to a single identity that overshadows everything else they are.

SEEN DIGNITY

What the trafficking numbers hide

QUANTITATIVE · 2026

Books, Sticks, or Lights: state-level variation in human trafficking across India, 2014-2023. MSc Applied Development Economics, LSE. A two-way fixed-effects panel built in Stata from official data.

The finding I keep returning to: where reported trafficking rises with state income, the likeliest story is not more crime but more reporting. The data measures who is counted, not only what occurs.

COUNTED DIGNITY SEEN

Project Matram

FIELD · FOUNDED

A menstrual-health initiative I founded in Ambedkar Nagar, Bengaluru, built on a baseline survey I designed and led. The survey surfaced a belief no desk study would predict: that boys seeing used pads causes blindness, which was driving disposal into a nearby lake.

I did not argue from hygiene. I reframed it: the person sent to clean that water will be one of your own; and a cup costs less per month than pads, and lasts two years.

MOVES ECONOMICS

Teaching the first to graduate

FIELD · TEACHING

At Mahindra Pride School I built my own module and taught life and interview skills to first-generation graduates from below the poverty line. I was in my first year of college then, teaching people older than me.

I treated English not as a test of worth but as a tool, and told them that fearing it is exactly what the coloniser would have wanted. Some wrote back, once placed, to say it had helped.

SEEN DIGNITY MOVES

The charity till

FIELD · OXFAM

I volunteer on the till at Oxfam. It is where I learned that some people come not to buy but because they are lonely, and that a conversation can be the day's real transaction.

It is also where I watched people pay more for a tote upcycled from a sari than for a cheaper one. A small, clear willingness to pay for an ethical choice.

MOVES ECONOMICS

Know Your Citation

BUILD · NEXT.JS

A working prototype for a source-citation layer on verified political party accounts in India, built for the 2026 Tamil Nadu election. Parties supply their own source for each factual claim, so no platform has to adjudicate truth. A ~5,700-word policy proposal sits behind it.

It once caught a real one-seat discrepancy between a claim and its own cited government bulletin.

source-citation-prototype-52gm.vercel.app

COUNTED MOVES

The Tamil Nadu Growth Project

BUILD · DATA ATLAS

A district-by-district atlas of Tamil Nadu's economy, assembled from scattered public sources into one traceable resource. I wrote a Python script to pull district data out of 2011 Census handbook PDFs, and built the project around a natural experiment: the 2019 district bifurcations.

A test of who is visible in state-level numbers, and who disappears into the average.

COUNTED ECONOMICS

Cellwi

CONCEPT · EARLY

An app, still at the idea stage, that teaches older people to use a phone. India is ageing fast and almost everything has moved online; not everyone has a young person beside them to show them how, every time.

The design insight: make Cellwi the one app they tap, repeatedly, so the repetition itself becomes the teaching: a safe, consistent place to build muscle memory before they graduate to the real thing. I plan to test it with my own grandparents.

COUNTED MOVES

Solace Foundation

FIELD · SCHOOL

A group I started as a schoolchild in Kuwait, collecting books and stationery for NGOs in India and for Sri Lankan Tamil refugee camps.

The instinct to look for whoever is furthest outside the frame was there long before I had a word for it.

COUNTED DIGNITY

Duet

BUILD · LIVE APP

A period-tracking app for couples, taken from zero coding experience to a live URL. Built from domain knowledge in menstrual health: cycle-phase insights, a shared comfort library, notes between partners.

Proof, mostly, that a social scientist can ship.

courageous-banoffee-5ad562.netlify.app

MOVES

A visit to Ambedkar's home

WRITING · LSE BLOG

"A visit to Ambedkar's home forced me to think about who gets to belong, speak and take up space": a reflective essay for the LSE International Development blog. It moves through the rooms where he lived and worked into the quieter questions: privilege, inherited trauma, and who is permitted to take up space, even in a place built to honour resistance.

This is the register the rest of this page doesn't show: me thinking in my own voice, rather than measuring.

SEEN COUNTED

WRITING

A visit to Ambedkar's home forced me to think about who gets to belong, speak and take up space

LSE blog

Travelling for Reading Week, caught in a global crisis, and how Development Studies helped me make sense of it all

LSE blog

Know Your Citation

Substack

WHAT I CAN DO

I move between three registers, and the same person does all three.
Most of what I build comes from outside software: I learn the field,
then make the thing.

THE ANALYST

Panel econometrics and fixed-effects models in Stata; data extraction, cleaning, and merging in Python, including pulling structured data out of messy official PDFs.

THE FIELDWORKER

Baseline survey design, community engagement, qualitative interviewing, and teaching, work that starts from listening rather than from the literature.

THE BUILDER

Shipped a civic-tech prototype in Next.js, a live app, and a public data atlas, learning to code from a social-science start.

LANGUAGES

English · Tamil (native) · Hindi (professional) · Arabic (basic)

FIELDS ENTERED

Economics · Sociology · Political science · Sustainability · Information policy · Software

THE PLAIN VERSION

Kuwait

Schooling & Solace Foundation

Raised and entirely schooled in Kuwait. Founded Solace Foundation as a student: books and stationery for NGOs in India and Sri Lankan Tamil refugee camps.

Christ University,
Bengaluru

Triple major + MSc Sustainable Development

Economics, Political Science & Sociology, then MSc Sustainable Development (trans-livelihoods dissertation, 2023). Founded Project Matram; interned at Mahindra Pride School; led 100+ volunteers and national fests.

LSE, London

MSc Applied Development Economics

Department of International Development (2026); trafficking-panel dissertation. Student Ambassador for the department; Oxfam volunteer.

Throughout

Built on the side

Know Your Citation · The Tamil Nadu Growth Project · Duet · Cellwi.