

## 6c. BASIC AMENITIES IN TAMILNADU

The availability of basic amenities such as housing, drinking water, electricity and sanitation facilities indicates the quality of life of the people. Even after 50 years of Independence, a majority of Indian people have been deprived of such facilities.

The 1991 Census brought out the highly disturbing reality that only 16.1% of Indian households had all the three basic facilities of electricity, safe drinking water and toilet facilities. Within this, the rural-urban gap is indeed deplorable: While 50.5% of urban families had all these three facilities, only 3.9% of rural households enjoyed these benefits.

The situation in Tamilnadu is even worse than the general Indian situation. Only 15.6% of Tamilnadu households enjoyed all the three facilities of electricity, safe drinking water and toilet facilities.

In terms of the rural-urban divide, while 40.5% of urban households enjoyed these facilities, only 4.0% rural households did so.

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*With the onslaught of the new economic policies, huge developmental projects displacing big numbers of people and due to increasing speculative activities on land, the rural and urban poor in Tamilnadu, as elsewhere, are more and more being pushed into a state of homelessness*

## HOUSING IN TAMILNADU

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Under pressure from international financial agencies, successive governments in Tamilnadu have brought about increasing privatisation of the housing industry. Housing industry is fast becoming a means of acquiring and investing in unaccounted wealth, with the result that housing gets more and more beyond the means of common working people, forcing them to resort to squatting and living in inhuman and unhygienic conditions.

As per the 1991 Census, 45% of the Tamilnadu Households had pucca houses, 18.03% semi-pucca houses and 36.44% kutcha houses.

The housing requirement during the 9<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan has been worked out by the Evaluation & Applied Research Department, GOTN at 29.68 lakh units (18.61 lakh units in rural areas and 29.68 lakh units in urban areas).

| Area                               | Units (in lakhs) |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Rural                              | 18.61            |
| Urban                              |                  |
| a. minimum Housing Requirement     | 7.54             |
| b. Inadequate housing/overcrowding | 1.53             |
| c. Replacement shortage & others   | 2.00             |
| Total                              | <b>29.68</b>     |

The shortage of housing stock is even more acute in urban areas compared to rural areas. The urban housing shortage has been calculated at 11.07 lakh units as follows:

| Category                        | Units (in lakhs) |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| a. Economically weaker sections | 4.46             |
| b. Low income group             | 2.23             |
| c. Middle income group          | 2.24             |
| d. High income group            | 2.14             |
| Total                           | <b>11.07</b>     |

*“The State housing policy of the government of Tamilnadu attempts to solve the housing crisis through the market ie., contractors, real estate agents, finance companies, NRI’s and industrialists, without recognising the fact that it is precisely these forces that destroy the housing resources so much needed by the poor to build their homes...*

*“Housing is a basic Right of all...*

*“The policy of the government to resolve the housing crisis through mere substandard house construction programmes should be reviewed. The answer to the housing crisis is for the State, first of all, to guarantee the socio-economic and political conditions for people to adequately house themselves...”*

**- Tamilnadu Peoples’ Manifesto, 1996**

## DRINKING WATER

### Drinking Water – Rural Tamilnadu:

*Drinking water is still not available within the premises to 85% of rural households in Tamilnadu. Of these, about 60% of households have access to water within 100 meters; another 20% have it within 500 meters; and about 5% still need to travel upto a kilometer to obtain water*

*“The proportion of households (in rural India) having access to protected water for the best part of the year was 72%. The sources include piped water, tube-wells, protected wells and regular supply from tanker trucks. The proportion of households having a regular supply of piped water was 25% for rural India.”*

- India Human Development Report, 1999

As per the 1991 Census, 35.72% of rural households in Tamilnadu did not have access to safe drinking water.

The Tamilnadu Water Supply and Drainage Board claims that, as of 01.04.2000, all the 66,631 rural habitations in the State have been covered for drinking water, 55,929 of them fully covered (40 lpcd & above) and 10,702 partially covered (1 to 40 lpcd). This is against the national norm of minimum 40 litres per capita per day.

But it is important to note that water is still not available within the premises to 85% of the rural households in Tamilnadu. Of these, about 60% of households have access to water within 100 meters; another 20% have it within 500 meters; and about 5% still need to travel upto a kilometer to obtain water.

*“The proportion of households having a regular supply of piped water was 25% for rural India. It was 50% for Tamilnadu”*

- India Human Development Report, 1999

Unlike earlier times, wells have ceased to be the major source of drinking water in most of the rural parts of Tamilnadu. While the percentage of dependence on wells had come down from 56.7% to 30% over 1981-91, the share of taps had increased from 20% to 37% and that of hand-pumps / tube-wells from 11% to 27%.

A look at rural habitations across the districts shows clearly the imbalances. “Fully covered habitations” varied from 32.43% in Kanyakumari district to 65.78% in Dharmapuri district. “Partially covered habitations” were more concentrated in Kanyakumari (68%), Nagapattinam (65%), Dindigul (64%) and Ramanathapuram (63%).

*“Quality of water is a serious problem in many parts of the State. Excess fluoride affects nearly 4000 habitations. Salinity and brackishness affect water supply in some 2000 habitations”*

**- UNICEF, September 2000**

In a number of habitations in Tamilnadu, the available ground water is not potable, as it contains high levels of chemicals like fluoride and iron.

In Tamilnadu, 3555 habitations in 1288 panchayats of Salem, Namakkal, Dharmapuri, Tiruchy, Karur, Coimbatore, Vellore, Erode and Virudhunagar districts have been identified as having prevalence of excess fluoride in ground water. According to State Govt. calculations, 2210 habitations have been covered with protected water supply, and all the habitations are proposed to be covered by 2001.

Salinity in water sources, owing to Tamilnadu's long coastal tract, is another major problem in providing protected water supply. As on 01.04.1996, 2274 habitations were found to be affected with excess salinity problems. The problem is especially acute in Ramanathapuram district. Desalination plants have been installed in 11 places in the district.

## **Drinking Water – Urban Tamilnadu:**

*“Urban water supply (in Tamilnadu) faces dual constraints of limited water sources and high costs”*

**- UNICEF, September 2000**

As per the 1991 Census, 25.83% of urban households in Tamilnadu did not have access to safe drinking water.

The status of urban water supply in Tamilnadu is well below the national average. In 1994-95, while per capita water supply in Indian metro-cities, on an average, was 214 lpcd, Coimbatore had only 104 lpcd, Chennai had only 81 lpcd, and Madurai had only 74 lpcd, as per the Citizens' Fifth Report.

The national norms for per capita service level for urban water supply is 110 lpcd for Corporations, 90 litres lpcd for Municipal Towns and 70 lpcd for Town Panchayats. It has been calculated that in at least 50% of the 6 corporations, 102 municipalities and 636 town panchayats in Tamilnadu, the lpcd levels are way below the national norm.

*The status of urban water supply in Tamilnadu is well below the national average. In atleast 50% of the corporations, municipalities and town panchayats, the lpcd levels are way below the national norm*

*101 out of 104 municipalities, all 6 corporations and 412 out of 635 town panchayats have lpcd supply of drinking water well below the national norm*

Out of the 6 corporations, none has ensured an adequate supply of water (110 lpcd). Less than 20% of the municipalities have succeeded to reach the norm of 90 lpcd. And in hardly 35% of the urban town panchayats and 40% of the rural town panchayats is water supplied as per norm (70 lpcd).

*“The urban water supply in Tamilnadu is well below the national average. 101 out of 104 municipalities, all 6 corporations and 412 out of 635 town panchayats have lpcd of supply well below the national norm”*

**- Tamilnadu – An Economic Appraisal 1996-97**

*“Water supplies vary from 34 lpcd in town panchayats to 74 lpcd in corporations, significantly below the State norm of 90 lpcd”*

**- Ninth Five Year Plan Tamilnadu : 1997-2000**

The problem of drinking water is quite acute in town panchayats, rural and urban. According to the “Tamilnadu – An Economic Appraisal 1996-97” document, 45 (12%) out of 370 urban town panchayats and 97 (37%) out of 265 rural town panchayats were not fully covered with water supply. And about 15% of the urban population is still left uncovered with drinking water.

Privatisation of water is becoming the dominant approach in many State circles. Surely clean drinking water is becoming too costly for the poor to aspire for!

Meanwhile, preliminary analysis, last year, of 191 samples of water commercially sold in bottles and satches revealed that 44 of them were unfit for human consumption. Of these, 34 samples, sent for bacteriological tests, 24 were found to have coliform bacteria.

## SANITATION

In Tamilnadu, as per the 1991 Census, only 23.13% of households are reported to have toilet facilities (which is much lower than even the lowly Indian average of 23.70%). Among the 24 Indian States, Tamilnadu held a miserably low 16<sup>th</sup> position in terms of households having toilet facilities.

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Here again it's striking to note that, of this, while 57.47% in urban areas in Tamilnadu (compared to 63.85% in India) have access to sanitation, the figure is as low as 7.17% in rural areas (compared to 9.48% in India).

There was not much appreciable increase in the coverage of urban sanitation during the Eighth Five Year Plan period (1992-97). Actually, the situation seems to have got even worse, especially in the rural areas.

*“The multi indicator survey reported that only 6.6% of rural and 58.7% of urban households have access to sanitary facilities. This falls short of the mid decade target of 10% for rural and 65% for urban areas.”*

- UNICEF, “Profile of Districts in Tamilnadu”

Underground drainage facilities have been provided fully or partially only in 16 towns in Tamilnadu (2 of 6 corporations, 12 out of 102 municipalities and 2 out of 636 town panchayats). Even the existing drainage systems suffer from major deficiencies.

*“Only 57% of population in Corporation areas (Chennai Corporation has 75%), 32% in municipalities and 16% in panchayats have access to safe sanitation”*

- Ninth Five Year Plan Tamilnadu : 1997-2002

A point of shame, out of the 26,100 middle and primary schools in Tamilnadu, 19902 do not have proper toilet facilities.

*Of the 26,100 primary and middle schools in Tamilnadu, as many as 19902 do not have proper toilet facilities*

As has been stressed by UNICEF regularly, this has serious health implications. In Tamilnadu, more than 18% of persons below age 4, are calculated to die due to diarrhoea, worms, skin diseases etc, often linked with poor sanitary conditions.

## ELECTRICITY

*“On the whole (in India) only 43% of rural households were found to have electric connections. The Southern and Western States have a moderate range of 60 to 70%”*

- India Human Development Report, 1999

In Tamilnadu, 54.7% of all households have access to electricity. Among the districts, the top ranked Chennai had 83.5% and the lowest ranked Pudukkottai, had 39% of their households electrified.

A comparison between the urban and rural figures reveals a wide differential of nearly 30%. Lack of accessibility of electricity to rural pockets of the backward districts of Tamilnadu is, indeed, a major point of concern.

As regards urban households, 76.8% are electrified. Thanjavur (68.6%) and Nilgiris (57.2%) rank low in the list.

In terms of electrification of households in rural areas, Tamilnadu, with a figure of 44.5%, ranks 9th among all the States in India. Sivagangai, Ramanathapuram and Pudukkottai are at the bottom of the districts list.

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