

“The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing:

that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.”

**- The Constitution of India
Directive Principles of State Policy, Article 39**

“A child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

State Parties shall undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.”

- Convention on the Rights of the Child

7c. CHILDREN IN TAMILNADU

“ Absence of reliable data on Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances (CEDC,) – working and bonded children, street children, abused children, abandoned and neglected children, child victims of prostitution and child trafficking, children in conflict with the law, disabled children, and children affected by HIV / AIDS - partly due to ambiguity on definitions - is a serious concern”

- UNICEF, September 2000

The 1959 UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child asserted that humankind owed the child ‘the best it has to give’. After decades of negotiations and serious work, the UN General Assembly adopted the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989.

CRC has been one of the most comprehensive instruments to ensure the full spectrum of rights of children. The 4 general principles of CRC are Non-discrimination (Art 2), the best interests of the Child (Art 3), Right to life, survival and development (Art 6) and Respect for the views of the child (Art 12). And CRC has been near universally accepted and ratified by the Governments across the globe. India acceded to the Convention in 1992.

In 1993, SAARC countries laid down 5 goals for child welfare by the year 2000: universal child immunization, universal primary education, child nutrition, provision of pure drinking water and adequate shelter. The countries also set the year 2000 as the deadline to end child labour in hazardous conditions or in bonded labour, and 2010 as the deadline for total eradication of child labour.

The very definition of “child” has been a point of controversy. While CRC has held 18 as the norm, Indian Constitution has it as 14. In this report, we have kept 14 years as the norm, except where otherwise mentioned.

As per the 1991 Census, there were 1,98,81,540 children (0-14 years) in Tamilnadu, constituting 35% of the State’s total population. The National Health Family Survey 1992-93, had placed it at 31%, with just Goa (27%) and Kerala (30%) below Tamilnadu.

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Tamilnadu, in 1991, was the second lowest, in the country, in terms of children as proportion of general population. Only Kerala had a lower proportion (27.8%)

And, as per the Sample Registration System Report 1996, the Tamilnadu child population had come down to 29.2% of its total population, compared to the Indian average of 36.4%. And, Tamilnadu was the second lowest, in the country, in terms of children as proportion of general population. Only Kerala had a lower proportion (27.8%).

LIFE & SURVIVAL

Under-5 mortality Rate (U5MR)

The reduction of U5MR has, over time, emerged as the most accepted measure of progress for children and accepted as an important index of development. Almost all governments have accepted, as a goal for the year 2000, a reduction of U5MR to 70 or less per 1000 live births.

In 1871, Tamilnadu had an U5MR of 189. But in 1992-93, as per the National Family Health Survey, the rate had substantially come down to 87, compared to the Indian average of 109. Tamilnadu held the 5th rank in India. In 1995, the rate had come down to 66.

Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)

“IMRs are more than just a measure of infant deaths. They capture many vital dimensions of human development... To that extent, the IMR is a surrogate measure of human development”

- UNICEF, September 2000

	Tamilnadu			India
	Rural	Urban	Total	
1971	127	77	113	129
1981	104	55	91	110
1990	70	37	59	80
1991	65	42	57	80
1992	66	42	58	79
1993	66	38	56	74
1994	64	48	59	74
1995	61	43	54	74
1996	60	39	53	72
1997	58	40	53	71

(Census 1991 – State Profile for 1971-96;
India Human Development Report for 1997)

In 1995, as per the data of the office of Registrar General, Tamilnadu held the 4th rank in the country, behind Kerala (13), Maharashtra (50) and Punjab (55), in success in reducing infant mortality. In 1998, IMR is supposed to be 53, according to the SRS reports – the 3rd best in the country, behind Kerala and Maharashtra.

As in various other indicators, district-wise as well as rural-urban differences in IMRs are indeed striking.

In 1995, as per DPH reports, with the State IMR at 54.8, Dharmapuri (98.1), Madurai (84.4), Salem (80.1), Ramanathapuram (78.1), Dindigul (65.8), Tiruchy (60.2), Perambalur (56.3) and Villupuram (55.5) districts had higher than State average levels of IMR. Kanyakumari (18.4) had the lowest IMR in Tamilnadu.

The VES 1999 survey, again, found a wide range of IMR variation from 14.3 in Chennai to 80.7 in Dharmapuri. The districts of Dharmapuri, Salem, Theni and Perambalur contributed maximally to the State's pool of infant deaths.

As elsewhere, the rural rate keeps lagging behind the urban rate, in terms of IMRs too.

“Though there is a decrease in infant mortality rate, there are vast disparities, between the urban and rural situation. It is 40 per 1,000 live births in the urban areas and 67 in the rural areas. Even in Madras, the incidence is 70% higher among the slum population.”

- Tamilnadu Peoples' Manifesto, 1996

In 1996, as per DPH reports, State rural IMR stood at 54.8. The districts that showed more than average rural IMRs were Dharmapuri (98.10), Madurai (84.40), Salem (80.10), Ramanathapuram (78.10), Dindigul (65.80), Tiruvannamalai (60.20) and Villupuram (55.50).

There was a progressive stepping up in the efforts to improve infant survival between 1971-91. Hence during the 1970's and 80's, Tamilnadu witnessed striking decline in IMR. The annual rate of decline in IMR, which was 2.1% during 1971-81, went up to 4.2% during 1981-86 and even further to 6.6% during 1986-91. But the decline has been less significant during the 1990's, and hardly any decline in the mid and later 90s. The rate of decline in IMR was a mere 1.4% during 1991-96.

During the 1970's and 80's, Tamilnadu witnessed striking decline in IMR. But the decline has been less significant during the 1990's, and hardly any decline in the mid and later 90s

In terms of the States with high percentages of neo-natal death rates, Tamilnadu is the third worst in the country

Actually during the period 1989-91 to 1994-96, the urban IMR in Tamilnadu showed a 2.9% increase from 40.7 to 41.9

The persistence, for almost a decade now, of levels of IMR (especially high female IMR levels), considerably higher than would be normally associated with the State's low TFR and CBR levels, has raised serious concerns all over. It calls for serious policy changes.

"The National Family Health Survey (NFHS 1992) recorded only an annual rate of decline of one infant death per 1000 live births per year from 1977-81 to 1987-91. Considering this trend, the goal of the State to reduce IMR to 30 by the year 2000 seems very ambitious... Without special efforts to tackle the various causes for infant mortality, the goals may remain unreached"

- UNICEF, "Profile of Districts in Tamilnadu"

The yet unsolved issues of very high neo-natal and early neo-natal mortality rates have been at the root of the problem. In 1996, the proportions of neo-natal and early neo-natal mortality rates to IMR were as high as 73.9% and 59.5% respectively.

And in terms of States with high percentages of neo-natal death rates, Tamilnadu was the 3rd worst in the country, with only Karnataka (74.5%) and Kerala (75.1%) behind; in terms of early neo-natal death rates, it was the 2nd worst, with only Karnataka (62.4%) below it!

Data from VES 1999 too confirm the high share of early neonatal deaths in total infant deaths in Tamilnadu.

"Though there is a positive trend in reduction of IMR, neonatal care is not reaching the rural and urban child to reduce the neonatal component of IMR. Maternal care during and before pregnancy is the need of the hour, if we have to reduce the IMR"

- "50 years", 1998

Malnutrition & Morbidity

Malnutrition has been a major problem in India and in Tamilnadu too. Persistence of malnutrition, in general, among all segments of the population (correlated with socio-economic status), and in particular, child-, adolescent girl- and maternal-malnutrition has been identified as a serious concern by the State Planning Commission.

As the UNICEF “Profile of Districts in Tamilnadu” mentions, the data available from different sources on the nutritional status of Tamilnadu Children is confusing, in spite of the wide coverage through ICDS and TINP.

The National Family Health Survey for Tamilnadu (1992-93) reported 47% of all children below 4 years as of underweight and 13% as severely malnourished. The National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau Reports, again, indicate high levels of mild malnutrition in Tamilnadu. UNICEF in September 2000 said that 48% of children under 4 are underweight. Independent studies have placed it as high as 50%. Hence the lower rates of severe and moderate malnutrition, given by ICDS and TINP programmes, surely underestimated the problem.

And there have been very sharp differences at the districts and blocks level.

“TINP Monitoring data shows that there is a large inter-district variations in the incidence of severe malnutrition ranging from 0.1% to 4.0% and moderate malnutrition from 5.4% to 28.2%. TINP I Districts show 1.5% severe malnutrition and less than 15% moderate malnutrition, while TINP II Districts report higher percentage of both severe malnutrition and moderate malnutrition with the exception of Coimbatore and Kanniyakumari Districts. There is also variation among Blocks in the level of malnutrition, some blocks reporting less than 10% of moderate and severe malnutrition put together while some blocks as high as 75%”

- Ninth Five Year Plan Tamilnadu : 1997-2002

In terms of child immunization services, Tamilnadu has shown great progress. The 1995 Multi Indicator Survey (MIS) has recorded over 90% coverage for BCG and TT2; above 80% for DPT and OPV; but only around 60% for measles. The 1992 National Family Health Survey too recorded high vaccination rates, even higher than revealed by the MIS. Overall Tamilnadu held, as per the India Human Development Report, a 82.8% record in immunization services compared to the national average of 48.5%.

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But there are areas of serious concern, as revealed by the following observation:

“In spite of high coverage for immunization, the achievements in reduction of vaccine preventable diseases is short of the targets. While only 16 cases of NNT have been reported, only 13 districts remain free of NNT. 130 cases of polio have been reported during 1995 and this is a decline from 420 cases reported in 1991, though the target was to achieve polio free status by 1995. Trend in reduction of measles cases is far from satisfactory with 3080 cases having been reported in 1995 as against 4873 in 1991”

- UNICEF, “Profile of Districts in Tamilnadu”

The India Human Development Report found during the year of study, 62% of children in rural Tamilnadu had diarrhea, compared to the national average of 59.5%. As MIS revealed, ORT use rate is unsatisfactory in Tamilnadu – only 32.8% and continued feeding rate during diarrhea is reported to be 23.1%.

Child Care (Nutrition) Services

Starting from the school midday meal scheme, way back in 1956, Tamilnadu has had a long history of providing organized child care services with an emphasis on nutrition to children outside the home under institutionalized care. Tamilnadu Government has an extensive network of nutrition programmes and they have been much acclaimed.

“In terms of impact on women and children, nutrition programmes which have both short- and long-term benefits are very important. The Tamilnadu Integrated Nutrition project (TINP) is a successful example in India.”

- India Development Report 1999-2000

Over the years, the many nutrition programmes of the State Government have been reorganized around the 3 major programmes: The Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS), The Tamilnadu Integrated Nutrition Project (TINP) and The Chief Minister’s Nutrition Meal Programme (NMP).

The ICDS was originally introduced in Tamilnadu, in 1975-76, in 3 blocks, intended for children aged 0-6 years and for poor pregnant and lactating women. The programme was visualised as a package of 6 services: supplementary nutrition, pre-school, immunisation, referral and health care for children and nutrition and health education for the community. Today the ICDS has become a State level child care grid.

The TINP was launched in 1981 in a few districts. TINP II was launched in 1991.

The NMP was launched in 1982. And today, the noon meal scheme has about 29,282 Child Welfare Centres, 37,480 Rural School Centres and 1978 urban Centres.

And now, with the World Bank-assisted TINP-I and TINP-II projects, the entire rural area of Tamilnadu is being covered by either the TINP or ICDS programmes.

As of 31.3.2000, there were 113 projects under general ICDS and a further 318 under the World Bank-ICDS III project. 10482 anganwadis were functioning under general ICDS and a further 19,500 anganwadis under the World Bank ICDS III (erstwhile TINP projects).

There have been studies to show that the ICDS / TINP areas have a better record with regard to malnutrition, infant mortality rate, pre-school education etc.

Infrastructural problems have plagued the ICDS Centres constantly. Out of the 10,459 centres in General ICDS, 9,945 are said to be functioning in buildings and 537 without buildings. Out of the 19500 centres in WB ICDS III project, 15,139 are in public buildings and 4361 in private buildings.

A recent official study identified certain buildings as 'unfit for living' and 'threatening the life of children'. Of a total of 1034 ICDS centres, official statistics have identified around 135 buildings (77-corporation, 17-slum clearance board, 40-MUDP and 2 others) as requiring 'immediate repairs'.

Several nutrition centres function in roofless, doorless, windowless structures, without facilities for electricity, water or sanitation. Problems arose because 70% of the ICDS centres functioned in Corporation, TN Slum Board and the defunct Madras Urban Development Project

Studies have shown that the ICDS/TINP areas have a better record with regard to malnutrition, IMR, pre-school education etc. But infrastructural problems have plagued the ICDS centres constantly

Limitations placed on those in charged of the anganwadis have turned them into routine workers, bereft of any creativity

(MUDP) buildings. Rent has to be paid to the respective authorities and repairs could therefore be carried out only by these agencies. The study also acknowledged regular theft of moveable property and stores from the centres and the use of anganwadi premises for anti-social activities. (Hindu 28 March 2000).

More than even infrastructures, the limitations placed on those responsible for the anganwadis have turned them into routine workers. One of the weakest points in the existing programmes is inadequate worker-child ratio. For inspectors too, mundane office duties like keeping accounts etc take precedence over quality pre-school education, which remains very routine and bereft of any creativity. The themes around which the education takes place are often very rigid and have not been revised for more than a decade. New Strategies in the form of “Joy of Learning – Preschool Education” and the UNICEF-assisted “Management Development Programme” are claimed to answer some of the above long-standing lacunae.

The poor sustainability of these programmes is another major concern, given the fact that most of the schemes are implemented through loan assistance from World bank and other international organizations, at a time when debt servicing is becoming a major burden and structural adjustment policy is proving to be detrimental to women and children...

Again, the community usually perceives the anganwadi centres merely as feeding centres for children. Hence community participation has not taken deep roots in the activities of ICDS. Constant monitoring by a conscious parent community is absent, resulting in a lack of effort in moving towards community involvement in service delivery, such as in food preparation or distribution.

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“An analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the current strategies and the challenges and opportunities for the State indicate that effective interventions for child development should address the critical area of empowering the families and local communities to care for their children..... They need access to and control of resources that can prevent malnutrition. Thus the process of involving families and communities becomes important for sustainable interventions”.

- Ninth Five Year Plan Tamilnadu : 1997-2002

CHILD LABOUR

*“The incidence of child labour was found to be relatively high in the rural areas of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharastra, **Tamilnadu** and Punjab....”*

- India Human Development Report, 1999

Estimates of child labour in Tamilnadu, as elsewhere, have been difficult to compile, given the highly unorganized, informal and unregulated nature of the economy and the labour market.

The State government has consistently maintained that there are about 10,000 child labourers in Tamilnadu. Based on the Tamilnadu Survey on Child labour in hazardous and non-hazardous industries, Tamilnadu Government had submitted to the Supreme Court that there were 25,431 child workers in Tamilnadu. These are obviously ridiculously low figures. No wonder the Supreme Court demanded a resurvey!

Even the report of an official of the Tamilnadu Social Welfare Board in September 1999, putting the number of child laborers in Tamilnadu at 11.5 lakhs, is an understatement in our view.

Census figures too are not of much help. As shown clearly by independent studies, Census data regarding child labour has serious limitations, as there is a vast unorganised, informal and unregulated sector, often not accounted for or much underestimated in official labour statistics, including the Census.

The 1981 Census calculated that there were 9,75,055 working children (871,313 main workers and 103,742 marginal workers) below the age of 15 in Tamilnadu. This accounts for 5.88% of all the children in Tamilnadu below 15 years of age and for about 5% of the total work force in Tamilnadu.

But even within the Census 1981, according to the Series 20 (Tamilnadu, Social and Cultural tables), about 40 lakhs children in Tamilnadu in the age group 5-14 (15,58,031 boys and 24,08,387 girls) were recorded as neither in school nor in the workforce. They form about 35% of the total children in that age group (26% of boys and 42% of girls).

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It may be assumed that most of these children were already part of the informal sector work force without being reported in the official statistics.

National Sample Survey (1986) indicated that 1.6% children in the age group 5-9 and 20% children in the age group 10-14 in Tamilnadu were working. This is much higher than the figures reported in the 1981 census data.

The 1991 Census categorized 5.78 lakhs children (age 5-14) as child workers. NSS (round 43) calculated that there were 11 lakhs child labourers in Tamilnadu.

But, based on the estimate of child population (ages 5-14) in Sample Registration System (Fertility and Mortality Indicators – 1991) and gross enrollment data (1991) for children provided by the Education department of Tamilnadu, it has been estimated that 31,83,903 children (ages 5-14) were out of school during 1991 and most of these children must have already been in the workforce.

Calculations based on enrolment data of the Department of School education show that nearly 28 lakhs children in the 5-14 age group were out of school in 1996-97.

Thus it becomes clear that anything between 20-30 lakhs children (age 5-14) in Tamilnadu are being forcefully denied their childhood and made to work for their own and their families' livelihood.

And, among the children in the 12-14 years bracket, the problem of child labour is even more acute in all the districts.

Variation Across Sectors

Child labour in Tamilnadu exists in almost all sectors, primary, secondary and tertiary. It is much more a rural than urban phenomenon and is found mostly in the informal and unorganised, but also to some extent in formal / organised industries.

“Approximately 90% of the working children are in rural areas and employed in agricultural labour, livestock, forestry and fisheries. In urban areas, manufacturing, servicing and repairs account for 8.64% of child labour. Of this only 0.8% of child labour is in factories. The unorganized and informal sectors both in urban and rural areas account for almost all the child labour force”

- Arunodhaya Study (1999)

Agriculture

Agriculture accounts for the largest section of child labour. As per the 1981 census, 20% of the total child labour force was reported as cultivators and about 48% as agricultural labourers. The remaining 32% was reported to be working in the non-agricultural sector.

Number-wise, there were 4,16,390 children (2,06,238 boys and 2,10,152 girls) reported to be working as agricultural labourers and 45,691 children (31,188 boys and 14,503 girls) reported to be working in livestock tending and forest work.

Child labourers in agriculture are involved in weeding, harvesting, in tending cattle, gathering firewood and other works related to agriculture. Children of cultivating households do this as unpaid, and mainly during peak agricultural seasons, resulting high rates of school drop-outs in the season and permanently.

Manufacture

Most of the child labour in the manufacturing sector are found in the following industries: match and fireworks, gem cutting, textiles (powerloom, handloom, dyeing and bleaching), hosiery, metal, tanneries, mosquito net making, beedi making and starch making.

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There are a large number of children working in the service sector in cities and towns. These children are mainly employed as domestic servants, in tea stalls, hotels, automobile shops, petrol pumps, rag picking etc. A large number of these live on the streets, bereft of family support and exposed to sexual exploitation and hazardous conditions

Match Works: A case study

“A 7 member fact-finding team consisting of Mr. Suresh Dharma (CACL), S.Pandian (HRF), A.Josephraj (ICCW, Srivilliputhur), T.Thirunavukarasu (Malarchi Trust, Sankarankoil), Velusamy and Mangalakannan (CEDAR) and Ms. S.Helen Mary (SWAN Trust, Veeravanallur), that went into the death of 4 children in a Arun Kumar Match works unit in Kadalaiyur village, Tuticorin, on April 9, have demanded that the State should pay a compensation of Rs.5 lakhs each to the families of the children...More than one lakh children work in the match belt, 40% of them part-time workers...The group recommended the prohibition of ‘sector D’ type of match factories as they were not covered by the Factories Act.”

(Hindu 26 April 2000)

Services

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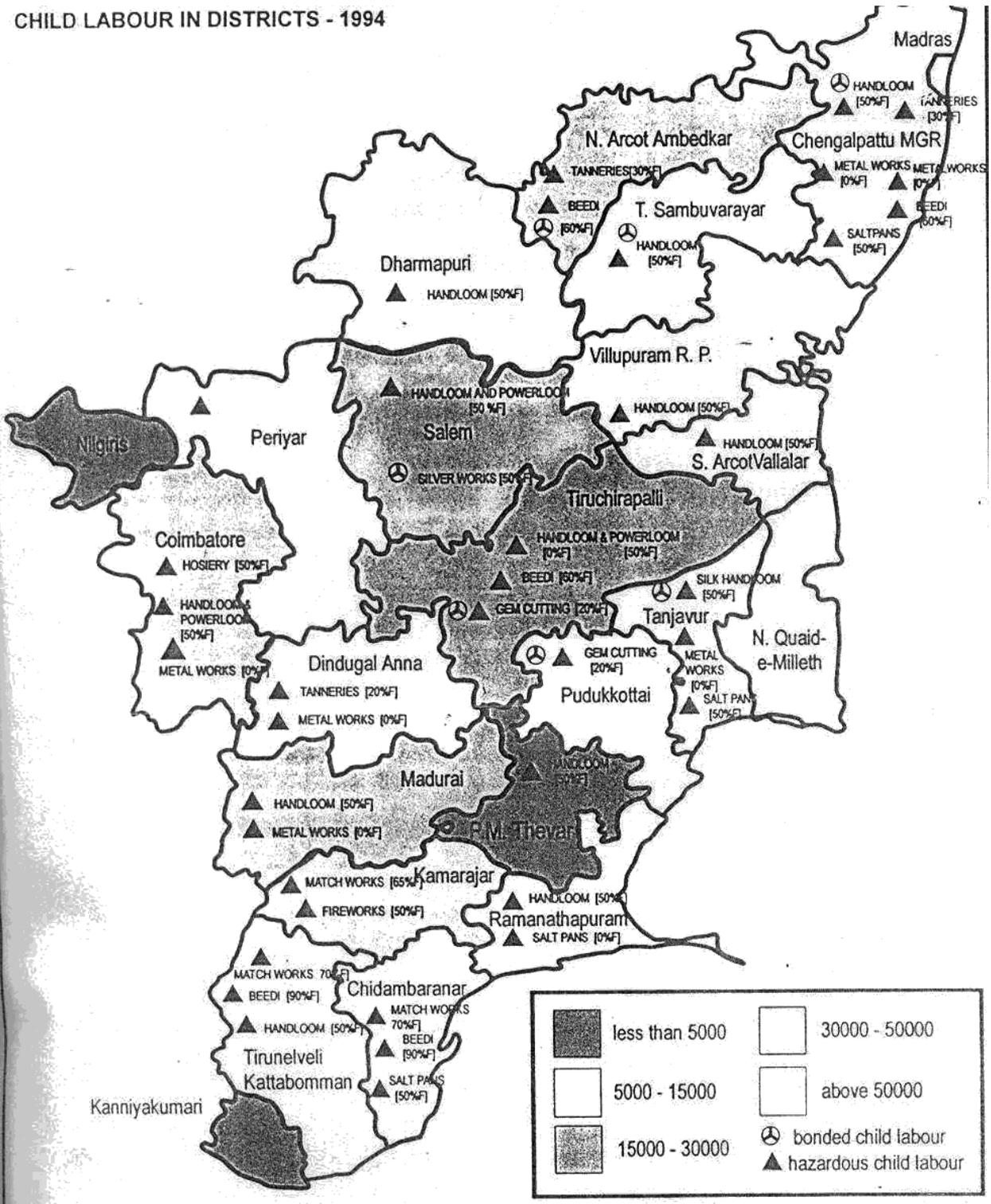
Catering Establishments: A case study

The Consultation on Eradication of Child Labour in Catering Establishments (Hotels and Restaurants), organized by HRF, Chennai and Antenna Network, Madurai in March 2000, confirms large scale prevalence of child labour in catering establishments throughout the State. The Consultation called for radical amendments to the Catering Establishments Act and Child Labour Act 1986: It also demanded that the age of the child should be raised to 18 years, as recognized by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; that the section on penalties (stipulating a small fine of Rs 50) should be strengthened. For the first conviction, a minimum fine of Rs 30,000 and a 2 year imprisonment must be slapped on the offenders; and that no young person (below 18) should be allowed to work before 10 am or after 5 pm.

Variations across districts

The problem of child labour in Tamilnadu varies from district to district. While child workers in Tamilnadu account for about 5% of the total work force, it varies across the districts from 1.28% to 10.62%, according to one estimate.

CHILD LABOUR IN DISTRICTS - 1994



SOURCE : UNICEF MADRAS 1995

The districts that have an above-average concentration of child labour seem to be Dharmapuri, Salem, Coimbatore, Madurai and Vellore

The districts that have an above-average concentration of child labour are Dharmapuri (10.62%), Salem (8.5%), Coimbatore (7.6%) and Vellore (7.37%).

A UNICEF Study in 1995 estimated that it varied from 1.28% to 7.99% across the districts. North Arcot, Salem and Madurai districts accounted for a higher proportion of child workers in Tamilnadu.

Separate surveys done in high risk blocks in Kamarajar, VOC, Salem, Coimbatore and North Arcot Districts bring out clearly the specific concentrations of child labour.

A survey of 5 blocks and 1 municipality in VOC district revealed that 8.5% of boys and 12.3% of girls in the 6-11 age group were full time workers and only 80.7% of boys and 77.3% of girls in this age group were in school.

In 7 blocks of 4 municipalities of Kamarajar district, 15.1% of boys and 19.1% of girls were full time workers and only 75.5% of boys and 70.2% of girls in the 6-11 age group were in school.

In 7 blocks and 1 municipality in Coimbatore District, 2% were working and 1% was simultaneously studying and working, and 87% of the children in the 6-11 age group were in school.

In Salem District, 13% were reported working and only 83% were in school.

A total of 1743 children were identified as Bonded Child Labourers in a survey in 1995 in North Arcot Ambedkar District.

The Coimbatore Child Labour Abolition Support Society (Kovai CLASS)) has claimed that the practice of employing child labour is even today greatly prevalent in hosiery units at Tirupur. In one unit, 3 out of 21 employees and in another, 5 out of 22 were found to be child labourers, and were rescued after medical test. (Hindu 2 November 1999)

According to a survey conducted by the Centre for Social Action and Development, an NGO based in Avinashi, an estimated 62% children form the total workforce in industries. Only a meager 15-20% are paid monthly wages, while the majority are paid piece-meal weekly rates. A large number of children also work in dyeing and bleaching units, handling poisonous substances.

A study done for UNICEF and OXFAM in 1994-95 estimates that there are 25000-30000 children working in all sectors of the hosiery sector.... Most of these hazardous industries continue to employ child labour, as they are not listed in the schedules of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986. Being smallscale units, they are out of bounds of the Factory unit (TCFR, p.226-227)

Sivakasi - A case study

Sivakasi has been long identified with child labour. Due to international exposure and pressures, there have been efforts by government and manufacturers to play down the magnitude of the problem. Even while claiming, "we have practically ended child labour in fireworks industries", the Tamilnadu Labour Minister admitted that unregistered match units which have mushroomed are employing child labour and that as many as 6000 cases had been registered last year against units found to be using child labour .

Responding to refutations by the Tamilnadu Fireworks Manufacturers Association, Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL) undertook a study in late 1999. The study concluded that child labour is still rampant in Sivakasi. Claiming that they were denied entry into major factories, the study claimed that over 30% of those employed by sub-contractors were children, often working in their own homes and with no safety precautions. The team members were denied entry into the major factories...Interviewed children said that all factories had 'emergency exits' to go out in case of an inspection by labour department.

An official, pleading anonymity, claimed that all talk of enforcing the Factories Act, Child Welfare Act in match and fireworks factories had remained only on paper. According to him, the fireworks lobby wields enormous political clout and silences any enforcement machinery...."

(Hindu, 6 November 1999)

A large number of NGOs and CBOs are working in North Chennai, which accounts for the largest collection of child labourers in the city. The lathes and metal industries of Royapuram, Kodungaiyur and Vyasarpadi employ hundreds of children. The State's Child Labour Elimination Project (CLEP) too runs a series of schools (under the Tamilnadu Slum Clearance Board) towards liberating child labour.

"The Fireworks lobby wields enormous political clout and silences any enforcement machinery"

The incidence of working girls is much higher compared to working boys in almost all the districts of Tamilnadu

Working Girl Children

The incidence of working girls is much higher compared to working boys in almost all the districts of Tamilnadu. In the State as a whole, as per the census data, working boys account for 3.61% of the total male work force (main workers) whereas working girls account for 7.06% of the total female work force (main workers).

- In terms of working girls, the proportion is quite high in Dharmapuri (10.62%), Salem (8.52%), Periyar (8.31%) and Ramanathapuram including Kamarajar (8.28%) districts.
- Except in Nilgiris (2.94%), Chennai(2.15%), Thanjavur (3.79%) and Kanyakumari (4.7%) districts, which have lower incidence of working girls, the proportion of working girls is about 6% and above in all the other districts (Tirunelveli-7.85%; Coimbatore-7.66%; Madurai-7.43%; North Arcot-7.37%; Pudukottai-6.61%; Chengai-5.9%; Trichy – 5.87%; South Arcot-5.84%).

It is worth noting, that the underestimation of the child work force among girl children is much higher than for boy children.

Child Domestic Workers

There are no reliable data regarding child domestic workers in Tamilnadu, but is becoming quite prevalent in the towns and cities of Tamilnadu.

A study conducted by the Tamilnadu Slum Clearance Board showed that child domestic workers formed 12% of the population of child labourers in Chennai. (Hindu, 19 April 2000).

Two other studies, one by Arunodhaya, a chennai-based NGO, on child domestic workers in Chennai and another by Peace Trust, with its network of NGOs in Tamilnadu, on child domestic workers in the major towns of Tamilnadu give us very valuable insights into the nature of the problem.

The Peace Trust study came up with the following findings:

- Among the domestic workers employed by some 44.8% of the houses above poverty line in the urban areas of Tamilnadu, 8.8% were children (below age 18). For the 18 towns surveyed the total figure came to 39160. Below the age of 14, there were 11280 child domestic workers in the 18 towns.
- Among the 11280 child domestic workers (below age 14), 94% were girls.
- Of the 18 towns, Ooty had the highest percentage of child domestic workers, with 34.5% below 14 years and 31% between 14 and 18, among all the domestic workers. This was followed by Karur (15.2% below 14 years), Villupuram (11.3%), Pudukottai (10.1%), Tirunelveli and Salem (8.1% each) and Madurai and Nagapattinam (close to 5% each).
- Among the employers of these child domestic workers, 26.4% were Government employees, 48.5% were factory owners and business people, and 18.2% were professionals.

The Arunodhaya study found that children working as domestic labour in the city were frequently subjected to physical abuse and long hours of work. The most harassed group was the resident child workers. The more disturbing finding was that around 26% of child domestic workers in the city work in the homes of government employees, in spite of the government order in 1997 barring State govt. employees from employing child labourers in their houses.

Among the main recommendations made by the study were:

- A scientific estimation of the magnitude of the problem of child domestic workers throughout the State should be undertaken.
- Child domestic work should be brought under the purview of Article 24 of the Constitution, which, at present, prohibits child labour in hazardous industries.
- Child domestic work should be included in part B of the schedule of Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act of 1986 and the Shops and Establishments Act.

26% of child domesticworkers at Chennai work in the homes of government employees, in spite of the Government order in 1997 banning State Government employees from employing child labourers in their houses

Present Policies

The lethargy of the administration, coupled with the strength of powerful lobbies have made mockery of any effort undertaken to eradicate child labour in the State

“The entire thrust of India’s policy on child labour is amelioration and not abolition”

- Prof. Myron Weiner

“Even seven years after the Child Labour Protection and Regulation Act was passed, the State Government has not implemented it – rules have not been framed, nor enforcing committees set up”

- TN Govt – UNICEF Report, 1993

Even as late as 1999, while lakhs of children continued to be engaged in hazardous industries and occupations, only 13 industries and occupations and 51 processes had been notified on the recommendation of the Technical Advisory Committee.

The lethargy of the administration, coupled with the strength of powerful lobbies have made mockery of any effort undertaken to eradicate child labour in the State. As late as April 2000, only 8 children in Tamilnadu, rescued from bonded child labour had received the stipulated compensation, 3 years after the Child Labour Rehabilitation-cum-Welfare Fund was constituted. So far only Rs 1,60,000 has been collected as compensation from the employers of children retrieved from hazardous industries, as per the Supreme Court Order of 1996. (Hindu 28 April 2000)

In early 2000, two agreements for an ‘integrated area specific approach’ against the hazardous and exploitative forms of child labour in the hosiery town of Tiruppur and the fireworks center of Sivakasi under IPEC were signed between ILO and the ‘National Child Labour Project Societies’ at Coimbatore and Virudhunagar respectively. The projects envisage prevention and rehabilitation of about 15,000 children in the hazardous occupations in Sivakasi, Tiruppur, Palladam and Avinasi.

Child Labour and Primary Education

*“What is needed is not a piecemeal approach dealing with the economic, social or legal aspects of the problem in isolation but a comprehensive approach covering the various facets. **And education is the key to this.** Given the strong link between school attendance and the elimination of child labour, a vigorous movement for compulsory primary education must be launched.”*

- Asha K., 1993

Article 45 of The Indian Constitution directs the States to provide free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years. And experience at both the policy and grassroots levels in States like Kerala has clearly shown that the only effective answer to the problem of child labour is to ensure that all children of school going age are back in schools.

In this context, there is a need for a radical policy changes by the Tamilnadu Government, linking free, compulsory and quality education with the eradication of child labour.

“The 1995 TN Education Act defines elementary education as upto standard V; this is inconsistent with the lower age limit for entering labour force – 14 years”

- UNICEF, September 2000

Campaigns demanding free, compulsory and quality education for all children have gained strength over the years. The Government needs to look seriously into this aspect of public policy and act!

Tamilnadu State Plan of Action 1993

In 1993, the Govt. of Tamilnadu formulated and released the State Plan of Action for Children, on the lines of goals set in the National Plan of Action made by the Govt. of India. The Plan covered a whole range of concerns such as maternity and child health, nutrition, education, child labour, childhood disabilities, drinking water, sanitation etc., and fixed goals on all the 15 points for the years 1995, 1998 and 2000.

The Plan specifically and categorically mentioned one of its goals as *“Elimination of bonded child labour and child labour in hazardous industries (children under 15 years)...and Child labour under 12 years of age in all industries and categories”*. But, like many other good programmes, it remains more in paper than in actuality. It has become the casualty of party politics and, in spite of efforts few and far in between, it still remains mostly a dream.

Campaigns demanding free, compulsory and quality education for all children have gained strength over the years. The Government needs to look seriously into this aspect of public policy and act

Tamilnadu State Plan of Action 1993 has become a casualty of party politics and remains more in paper than in reality

State Plan Of Action Goals For 2000 AD

Year 2000 Goal	Goal indicators	Target For 2000	Actuals At 2000
Child Health			
Reduction of IMR to less than 30per live births and reduction of 1-4 year mortality rate to less than 10 by 2000 AD	Infant Mortality Rate	30	53 *
	Neo-natal Mortality	↓ by 50%	68 ❖
	Peri-natal Mortality Child Mortalit, Rate	↓ by 50% <10	- -
Reduction in Vaccine preventable diseases	Immunization Coverage(%)		
	BCG	100	124 *
	DPT OPV	100 100	114 * 110 *
Elimination of neo-natal diseases	NNT cases	0	3 *
	NNT deaths	0	3 *
	Districts free form NNT	All	-
	TT2 coverage	100%	-
	Institutional deliveries	100%	83.8% *
	Deliveries by trained persons	100%	98.0% *
Elimination of polio	Polio cases	0	8 *
	Polio deaths	0	-
Reduction in measles Morbidity & mortality	Measles cases	0	1303 *
	Measles deaths	0	9 *
Reduction of 100% Deaths due to diarrhoeal Dehydration in children	ORT use rate	100%	-
50% reduction in diarrhoeal incidence rate	Number of diarrhoeal cases	By 50%	74583 *
	Diarrhoea Deaths	0	266 *
	Deaths due to ARI	↓to 15%	-
Reduction in Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)	Age at marriage	21	20.5 □
	ANC care	100%	81.1% □
	Crude Birth Rate	15	18.9 □
	Birth Interval	3 yrs	-
	Parity	2	-
	Sex Ratio	1000	974 →
	Female Literacy	100%	60% ■

Year 2000 Goal	Goal indicators	Target For 2000	At 2000
Reduction in severe and Moderate malnutrition	% of <3 children severely and moderately malnourished Incidence of low birth weight Average birth weight Reduction in anaemia	- <18% <10% 3 kg ↓ 30%	- - 2.7kg * - -
Universal Primary Education	Enrollment-Boys Enrollment-Girls Attainment of MLL	100% 100% 100%	98.50% ◇ 94.43% ◇ -
Literacy	Female Literacy %	100%	51% ❖
Universal access to safe Drinking water	No of villages/hamlets with Safe drinking water source No of HH with safe drinking Water source	All All	- 76.5(R) □ 91.9(u) □
Increased access to Sanitary facilities	No of HH with access to Sanitary facilities Rural Urban	25% 90%	6.6% □ 58.7% □

Source: 1st to 3rd Columns, Profile of Districts in Tamilnadu, UNICEF, Madras, 1996.

4th Column

- * Policy Note on Medical and Public Health, 2000-2001, Government of Tamilnadu.
- ◇ Policy Note on Education, 2000-2001, Government of Tamilnadu.
- ❖ "Tamilnadu Social Sector Priorities and Strategies", UNICEF, Chennai, September 2000.
- "Tamilnadu Literacy Scenario-at a glance", State Resource Centre, Chennai.
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- ➔ Statistical Hand Book of Tamilnadu, 1998.
- Data not available

Changes Needed:

“It is important to compile a Status Report of children in Tamilnadu by an independent committee of experts.”

- Tamilnadu Peoples’ Manifesto, 1996

The “Manifesto for Child Rights” brought out by the Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL) brings out some of the major challenges for public policy on children:

- Political aspirants need to give a commitment towards providing food, housing, health care and education for children
- There is a need for a uniform definition of the child in keeping with the Child Rights Convention
- Adequate nutritious food at the balwadis and schools, Improvement of primary health centres and government hospitals and Free, Compulsory and Quality education upto 10th standard are urgently called for
- Child care services which are inadequate at present need an overall thorough re-evaluation
- A comprehensive policy for the rehabilitation of street children
- Immediate steps to stop infanticide and feticide, regulate scan centres, make effective the ban on sex selective abortions and promote education of girl children
- A review of the Juvenile Justice Act, 1986

Many Child Labour Prevention Committees in Tamilnadu have highlighted the loopholes in labour laws prohibiting child labour and the reluctant implementation by enforcement authorities. The 1986 Child Labour Act needs to be radically amended, specifically the proviso that exempts households to employ children.

In the Southern districts of Tamilnadu, where child Labour is rampant, the Kerala and the Tamilnadu governments should take immediate measures to divert the western ghat waters, so as to increase the agricultural production which will lead to the eradication of child labour in this region.

And above all, concerted efforts must be made to ensure that every child in Tamilnadu is in school till the age 14 at least!

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