

2.29. Women's Development and Child Rights

Tamil Nadu has always given importance to programmes for the development of women and children which have resulted in a better human development status compared to other states of the country. The State has had a long tradition of formulation and implementation of various welfare programmes which make the state to emulate as a model to other states as well as the country.

Women's Development

Women, who represent nearly half of the State's population, constitute one of the most important target groups for the provision of social welfare services. It is a proved maxim that women who are empowered economically and socially become a strong and vigorous force for the removal of poverty and for the overall development of the society. The status of women at present is reflected through the following indicators like Literacy rate, Work participation rate, Sex ratio and Gender Development Index (GDI) etc. The important objectives for Social Welfare sector are as follows:

The State has a female literacy rate of 64.43% as compared to 51.33% for India. The Gender ratio for literacy in 2001 is 0.782 which has correspondingly improved from a level of 0.594 in 1991. The female work participation rate increased gradually from 32.41% in 1981 to 34.41% in 1991, after which it fell to 31.53% in 2001. While comparing the NSS rounds between 1999-2000 and 2004-05, the Work Participation Rate has increased from 35.42% to 35.5%. The increase is due to women participation in the secondary and tertiary sector. The Sex ratio in Tamil Nadu was 987/1000 in 2001 against the All India average of 933/1000. The Juvenile Sex Ratio is 942/1000 in 2001 in the state. The GDI is a summary measure, which is often used to study at the status of women in a society. The GDI (2003) for Tamil Nadu is 0.654 and it has been increased to 0.722 (2006).

The important objectives for women empowerment are to promote socio economic empowerment of women especially through

formation of self help groups and to make women aware of their rights and protect them from any form of exploitation.

The programmes are classified broadly into education, health, economic activities etc.

Education

Education is the powerful instrument of changing the position of women in the society. In order to encourage education in women at all levels and to reduce the gender bias, Government have been implementing major schemes for upliftment of educational status of women viz., educational concessions, free education, and special programmes including supply of free bicycles, free education to SC/ ST, free education to girl students and free coaching exclusively for women. The details of these programmes along with outlay are given in the respective sectors viz., General education and Welfare of SC/ ST & OBCs.

Health

The policy of the Government is to take care of pregnant women till lactating period. Towards this, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity assistance scheme is being implemented which provides cash assistance of Rs.6000/- for the pregnant women from below poverty line families to compensate the loss of wages, for nutritional supplementation to avoid low birth weight babies. During 2008-09 an amount of Rs.250 crore is proposed (includes Rs.70 crore for SCSP) under the Health sector outlay.

Economic activities

Tamil Nadu Women's Development Project

The unique feature of Self Help Groups is through peer pressure and involvement, the members inculcate the habit of thrift, savings and banking. This enables them to access financial resources outside the clutches of the exploitative money lenders. Due to the sustained action taken under the Mahalir Thittam for formation and empowerment of SHG's, there has been a perceptible change in the

social status of women in general and rural women in particular. During 2007-08, Rs.20.00 crore has been provided for formation of 2 lakh Self Help Groups. For 2008-09 an amount of Rs. 33.49 crore has been proposed to form 1.91 lakh SHGs (which includes the provision for SCSP) under Mahalir Thittam.

Entrepreneur Development Programme (EDP)

This training is intended to provide the SHG women with basic skills for a particular chosen activity for livelihood empowerment. Training is imparted through NGOs, Polytechnics and other reputed institutions. During 2007-08, Rs.88 lakh has been provided under the scheme.

Assistance to Self Help Groups for Youth

In addition to formation of women SHG's, it has been proposed to focus on the formation of Youth Self Help Groups. Unlike women SHG which were formed originally for social empowerment, these youth SHG members will have economic empowerment as their prime focus. Therefore there will be more emphasis on providing livelihood skills for these youth. For 2008-09, an amount of Rs.14.93 crore is proposed.

Imparting Training to SHGs

Suitable skill training is imparted to SHG women for getting self employment in rural and urban areas. For imparting training to SHGs, an amount of Rs.15.00 crore has been provided during 2007-08 and Rs. 17.22 crore is proposed for 2008-09.

Assistance to Vocational and skill training programme

Vocational and skill training programme was introduced to provide upgradation of skill training to EDP trained SHG women, so as to enable them to start their own income generating activities. The training is imparted through NGOs, institutions, polytechnics etc. During 2008-09, an amount of Rs.5.74 crore is proposed for giving training to 10,000 women.

The Corporation for Development of Women has now been brought under the control of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department in order to bring about greater synergy and better coordination in implementing various socio economic development schemes for women.

World Bank Aided Tamil Nadu Empowerment and Poverty Reduction Project (Vazhndu Kattuvom Project)

The Tamil Nadu Empowerment and Poverty Reduction Project is the State's initiative to reduce rural poverty and empower the women and vulnerable sections of the society. The main objective of the project is to include the poorest of poor in the SHG formation, making them self sufficient and sustainable, providing financial resources and linkages for enhancing their livelihoods and thereby generating an increase of their income. The total outlay for the project is Rs.717 crore. The project has a special component to address the rehabilitation and livelihood needs of the disabled and other vulnerable sections of the society like destitute widows, deserted women etc. During 2007-08, 132.84 crore has been provided and for 2008-09 Rs.131.14 crore is proposed for the implementation of the activities viz., formation of Self Help Groups and Federations. During 2008-09, 581 Self Help Groups and 599 Economic Activity Groups (EAG) will be formed.

Supply of sewing machines

Under the scheme on supply of sewing machines, sewing machines are supplied free of cost to destitute widows and deserted wives and destitutes below poverty line to help them to eke their livelihood and this will be continued in 2008-09 with the cost of Rs. 1.78 crore.

Conducting tailoring centres for tribal women

There are 4 tailoring centres functioning exclusively for tribal women. Every year, 65 tribal women are benefited under this scheme. For 2008-09, a sum of Rs.8.12 lakh is proposed.

Marriage Assistance Scheme

To help financially poor parents in getting their daughter married and to promote the educational status of poor girls, Moovalur Ramammirtham Ammaiyar Ninaivu Marriage Assistance Scheme was implemented with effect from 1989. Now the assistance is given as Rs.15,000/- per beneficiary (for girls above 18 years). During 2007-08, nearly, 76,666 poor families have been benefited under this scheme. For 2008-09, a sum of Rs.90.70 crore is proposed for the implementation of this scheme. Under widow re-marriage assistance scheme, an amount of Rs.20 lakh has been provided for the benefit of 200 widows during 2007-08. For 2008-09, it is proposed to benefit 153 widows with a cost of Rs. 31 lakh. In the case of widows' daughters marriage assistance scheme, about 2952 widows' daughters have been benefited during 2007-08. For 2008-09, an amount of Rs. 2.59 crore is proposed for the benefit of 1506 widows' daughters. With regard to orphan girls' marriage assistance scheme, an amount of Rs.30 lakh has been provided for the benefit of 300 orphan girls. For the year 2008-09, an amount of Rs.51.67 lakh is proposed for the benefit of 300 orphan girls. For inter-caste marriage assistance scheme nearly 1800 couples have been benefited during 2007-08. For 2008-09, an amount of Rs.4.59 crore is proposed for this scheme.

Family Counseling Centres

There are 6 family counseling centres run by NGOs through Tamil Nadu Social Welfare Board. The objective of the family counseling centres is to provide counseling to preserve the basic social unit of a family. It helps women who approach the centre in the redressal of their grievances. An amount of Rs.7.58 lakh is proposed for 2008-09.

Service Homes

Eight service homes to accommodate destitute women in the age group of 18 to 40 are being run in Chennai, Cuddalore,

Thanjavur, Salem, Tirunelveli, Madurai, Karaikudi and Sirkalil. Apart from these, two Tsunami special homes at Kanyakumari and Nagapatinam were also opened during 2004-05. Along with basic education and functional courses, computer training is also being imparted to the inmates of the Service Home. About 1245 women and 265 children will benefit under this scheme. For 2008-09, an amount of Rs. 74.36 lakh is proposed.

Working women hostels

In view of womens requirements for finding accommodation near their working place, Govt., is running eight working women hostels - 2 in Chennai and each in Cuddalore, Madurai, Tuticorin, Trichy and Hosur. During 2008-09, token provision is proposed for this scheme.

Child Rights

Nurturing the children who are the tender seedlings of the social field is necessary. The children need greater attention and support. Keeping these needs in mind, the State accorded highest priority to programmes for child development, education, health and nutrition. These schemes are covered under the respective sectoral chapters. Creating a protective environment for girl children and improving their status is also a thrust area under the Plan. In addition, schemes for setting up of creches as well as for streamlining the procedure for adoption are being actively implemented.

The objectives for the child development during the Eleventh Plan are to work for the overall development of the child in a harmonious environment and to protect children from all forms of neglect and abuse including child protection through institutional, non-institutional and outreach programmes.

Cradle Baby scheme

The Cradle Baby scheme was first started in 1992 in Salem and later extended to Madurai, Theni, Dindigul and Dharmapuri districts. Cradles were placed in vital places such as hospitals, PHCs/

HSCs, district social welfare offices, orphanages and children homes in order to enable the eradication of the heinous practices of female infanticide. This was accompanied by a vigorous publicity campaign against infanticide along with visible prosecution of the offenders. The scheme is transferred to non plan from 2007-08.

Creches for children of working and ailing mothers

In order to look after the children of working and ailing mothers of low income group, 106 creches are run by the identified voluntary organisations in the state. Each creche looks after 25 children and imparts basic education to them.

Adoption

There are licensed agencies to cater to in-country adoptions. Out of these, 8 agencies are also recognized to handle inter country adoptions. Steps have taken to identify at least one adoption agency in each district of Tamil Nadu. An amount of Rs.13.41 lakh is proposed for 2008-09.

Assistance for girl child Welfare

The girl child protection scheme was introduced in 1992 and revised since 2001 to promote family planning, eradicate female infanticide and discourage the preference for a male child. Under this scheme, an initial deposit of Rs.22,200/- for one girl child or Rs.15200/- each for 2 girl children is being made by the Government with the Power Finance and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd., when either parent opts to go in for a terminal family welfare method such as vasectomy or sterilization. A monthly payment of Rs.150/- is made from the interest accrued from the deposit to take care of education of such girls from Std., I to X. The girl children will also be eligible for a terminal benefit from the deposit with accrued interest on the 20th year of deposit, which will enable them to pursue their higher studies or to defray their marriage expenses. Under this scheme 1.63 lakh girl children have been benefited so far. For

2008-09, an amount of Rs.86.11 crore is proposed including SCSP component.

Orphanages

There are 27 orphanages run by the government for the welfare of the destitute and orphan children in the state. These orphanages provide food, shelter, clothing, education and health care free of cost to the inmates. Besides, grants in aid are sanctioned to voluntary organizations towards maintenance of the children in need of care and protection. About 5500 orphan children are benefited every year. An amount of Rs.1.05 crore is proposed for assistance to private institutions for care of destitute children and Rs.15.59 lakh is proposed for the maintenance of orphanages run by Govt., during 2008-09.

Child Protection

The fundamental duties and responsibilities of the Department of Social Defence, is to ensure protection of children and women from neglect, maladjustment, abuse, exploitation etc and facilitate them to lead a meaningful life by evolving appropriate intervention, strategies and programmes for their reintegration into the mainstream society. It is therefore to ensure such intervention and programmes in accordance with the provisions of central legislations viz., the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 and the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956.

There are totally 49 institutions, out of which 6 observation homes, 11 children homes for boys and girls, 5 protective/ vigilance homes, 2 special homes for boys and girls and 3 aftercare organisation are run by Government and 22 by voluntary organisations. The main responsibility of these institutions are ensuring the administration of juvenile justice, prevention and combating of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children and women and ensuring protection of children and women from significant harm. In all the Government Children/ Special Homes, education is provided upto

class VIII. In the Government Children Homes for Boys at Chengalpattu and Special /Children's Home for Girls at Chennai education is given upto X Std apart from providing computer training. This helps to take care of the higher education needs of these children and integrate them into society.

Childline is a national 24-hour, free emergency telephone helpline and outreach service for children in need of care and protection. The Childline number 1098 is a toll free number that is common to all the cities of India. Childline India Foundation (C.I.F.) was founded in 1996, which is the Nodal Agency for implementing Childline services in the cities / districts across India. In Tamil Nadu Child line is operated in 10 cities and has provided shelter, medical services, repatriation, rescue, sponsorship and emotional support and guidance to the children in need.

The Juvenile Guidance Bureau studies the psychological problems of the inmates of Observation/ Children / Special Homes and furnishes its reports to the respective competent authorities. Special initiatives have been undertaken towards addressing the prime concern of the state for combating trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of women. During 2007-08, Rs.1.61 crore has been provided to implement the ongoing programmes viz., prevention and control of Juvenile and social mal-adjustment, upgradation of facilities in child institutions and formation of Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees. For 2008-09, Rs.1.83 crore is proposed for ongoing and new programmes.