

7.3. Women and Child Welfare

Tamil Nadu stands first in implementing various welfare programmes for the overall development of women and children. Since women and children are significant contributors for the growing economy, the State has been implementing variety of welfare programmes viz., granting of financial assistance to children and women in difficult circumstances to pursue education, marriage/widow re-marriage and also providing healthy and protective environment to them.

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 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 National Sample Survey rounds between 1999-2000 and 2004-05, the work participation rate has increased slightly from 35.42% to 35.5%, 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 as 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 to get aware of their rights and protect them from any form of exploitation.

Programmes

Education

Education is the powerful instrument of changing the status of women in the society. In order to encourage women education at all levels and to reduce the gender disparity, Government have been implementing major schemes for upliftment of educational status of women viz., incentives to girls children, educational concessions, free education and special programmes including supply of free bicycles, free education to SCs/ STs and free education to girl students for studying higher education. The details of these programmes along with outlay are given in the respective sectors viz., General education and Welfare of the underprivileged.

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 woman from below poverty line families to compensate the loss of wages and nutritional supplementation to avoid low birth weight babies.

Economic activities

Tamil Nadu Women's Development Project (Mahalir Thittam)

Under Mahalir Thittam, the Self Help Groups (SHGs) have now become a very vibrant movement spread across all districts of the State encompassing in its fold the poor, underprivileged women living on the fringes of society. This programme has evolved from promoting traditional thrift and credit practices to support economic activities and building capacity of women at every stage. 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. Systematic training has been provided to the SHG members and the office bearers. It brings qualitative changes in the attitude of women and promotes cohesion and effective functioning of the group

So far, nearly 3.70 lakh SHGs have been formed with 59.25 lakh women members with the total savings of Rs.1826.38 crore.

Assistance to Self Help Groups for Youths

By providing relevant skill training, unemployed youth could be productively engaged benefiting the society as well as the individual. Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women (TNCDW) has imparted skill training to 20696 youths through reputed industrial houses and institutions like MRF, NOKIA, Saint Gobain etc. During 2008-09, 19698 youth groups have been formed and 2640 youth SHGs have been provided revolving fund subsidy of Rs.10,000/- each.

Manimegalai Awards

In order to encourage well-functioning SHGs and Panchayat Level Federations (PLFs), the Government have announced Manimegalai awards at state and district levels. Awards are presented to 5 best PLFs and 10 best SHGs at the State level. One PLF and 3 SHGs have been selected as best at the district level are given Manimegali awards and the best SHGs at the block level is given a certificate.

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 through support for productive activities and investment using the Community Driven Development (CDD) approach.

The main objective of the project is to empower the poorest and improve their livelihoods through developing and strengthening pro-poor local institutions/groups, improving the capacity building of the poor and financing productive demand driven sub-project investments.

The total outlay for the project is Rs.717 crore and it will be implemented in 2480 Panchayats of 70 blocks covering 15 districts. The project has a Scheduled Caste to address the rehabilitation and livelihood needs of the disabled and other vulnerable sections of the society like destitute widows, deserted women etc.

Supply of sewing machines

Sewing machines are supplied free of cost to widows, destitute women, deserted wives and physically handicapped men and women below poverty line to increase self-employment potential and also to help them to earn their livelihood. The scheme will be continued in 2009-10 with the cost of Rs.160.15 lakh (includes SCSP).

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 2009-10, an amount of Rs.10.23 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 Ammaiya Ninaivu Marriage Assistance Scheme was implemented with effect from 1989. The assistance given as Rs.15,000/- per beneficiary for girls above 18 years has been enhanced to Rs.20,000/- in 2008-09 and nearly, 90,000 poor families have been benefited under this scheme. For 2009-10, an amount of Rs.150 crore (includes SCSP) is proposed for the benefit of 80,000 poor families. Under widow re-marriage assistance scheme, an amount of Rs.25 lakh is proposed to benefit 166 widows during the year 2009-10.

For the widows' daughters marriage assistance scheme an amount of Rs.450 lakh is proposed so as to benefit 3066 persons for 2009-10. With regard to orphan girls' marriage assistance scheme, an amount of Rs.41 lakh is proposed for the benefit of 273 orphan girls and for inter-caste marriage assistance scheme an amount of Rs.5.10 crore (includes SCSP) is proposed to benefit 2550 couples for the year 2009-10.

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.6.60 lakh is proposed for 2009-10.

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, Nagapattinam and Sivagangai. Along with basic education and functional courses, computer training is also being imparted to the inmates of the Service Home. For 2009-10, an amount of Rs. 73.96 lakh is proposed.

Working women hostels

In view of women's requirements for finding accommodation near their working place, Govt., is running eight working women hostels - 2 in Chennai and each in Cuddalore, Madurai, Pudukottai, Tuticorin, Trichy and Hosur. A transit hostel is also functioning at the existing working women hostel at Chennai. During 2009-10, 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 the 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.

Adoption

There are 22 licensed agencies to cater to in-country adoptions. Out of these, 8 agencies are also recognized to handle inter country adoptions. Steps are being taken to identify at least one adoption agency in each district of Tamil Nadu. An amount of Rs.15.70 lakh is proposed for 2009-10.

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.15,200/- 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. For 2009-10, an amount of Rs.7500 lakh is proposed including SCSP component to benefit 2.23 lakh girl children.

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. An amount of Rs.14.76 lakh is proposed for the maintenance of orphanages run by Government for the year 2009-10.

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 organisations are run by the 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 2008-09, Rs.183.95 lakh has been provided to implement the ongoing programmes and new 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. An amount of Rs.202.77 lakh is proposed for the year 2009-10.