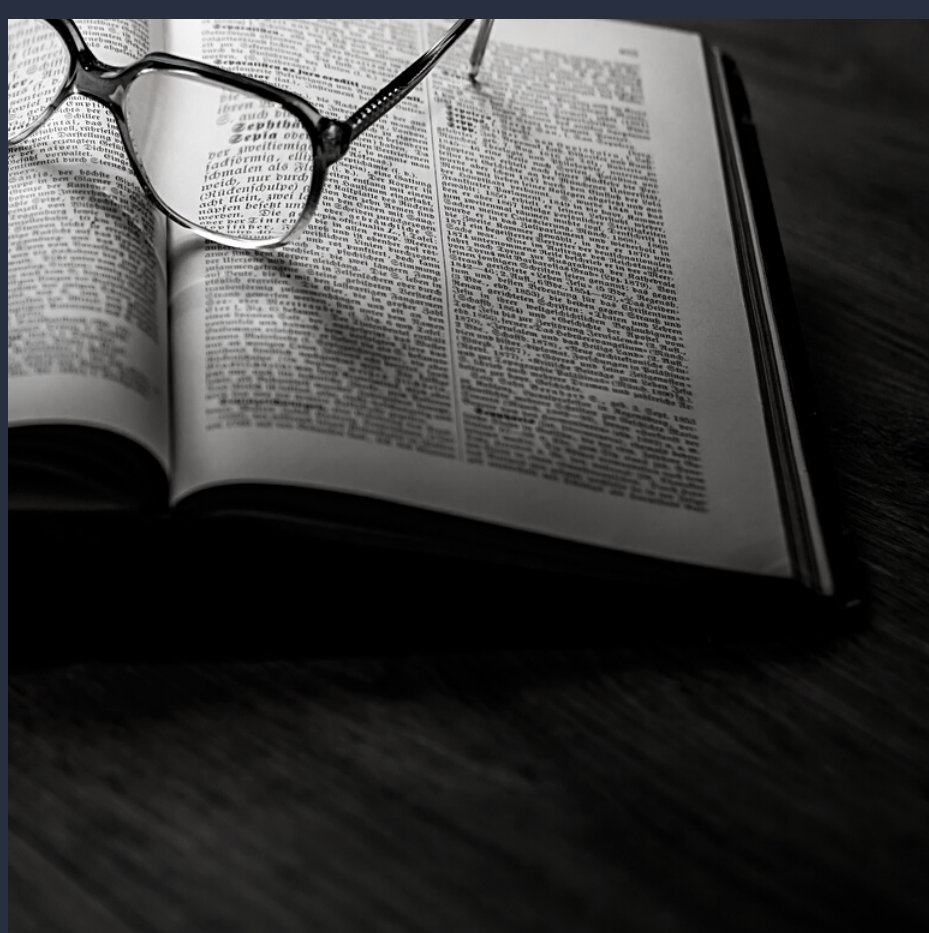
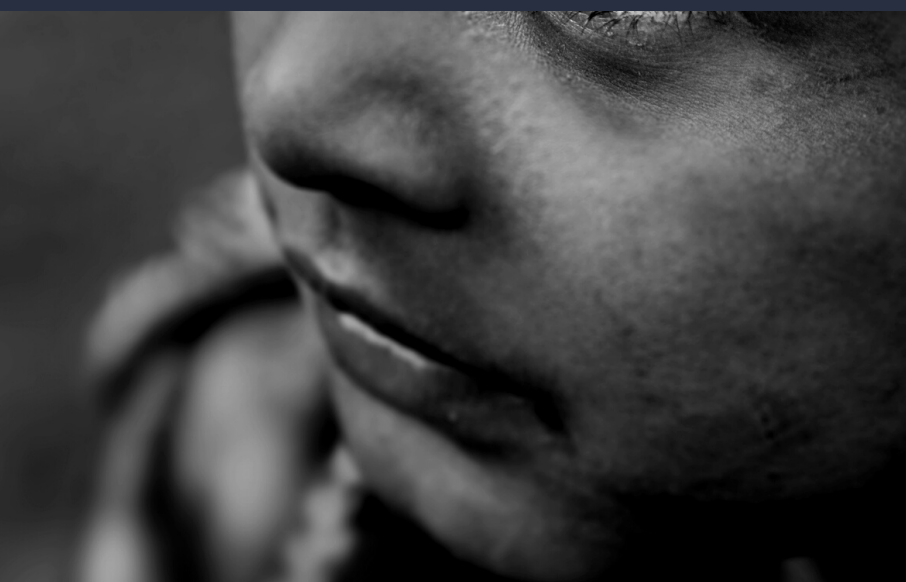


# CHILDREN IN INFORMAL, COASTAL AND MIGRANT SETTLEMENTS IN TAMIL NADU

THE HINDU CENTRE FOR POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY  
AND UNICEF:

ROUND TABLE ON PUBLIC POLICY AND THE CHILD IN TAMIL  
NADU



INFORMATION AND RESOURCE  
CENTRE FOR THE DEPRIVED  
URBAN COMMUNITIES



# Children in Informal, Coastal and Migrant Settlements in Tamil Nadu: Gaps in Policies and Challenges in Implementation

Vanessa Peter

**Abstract:** *The non-homogenous categorisation of the child, even amongst disadvantaged communities, is brought out by the condition of children in informal, coastal and migrant communities. Often lost in the maze of numbers, there is no clear publicly available estimate of the children hailing from these three segments. Vanessa Peter, Independent Researcher and member of the Shelter Advisory Committee of the Corporation of Chennai, identifies the gaps in the policy-making process, the inconsistencies in documentation, and the knowledge gaps that are impediments to successful policy interventions. On the normative side, she sees the potential for a progressive welfare-orientated State such as Tamil Nadu to mainstream the child in the policy-making process by incorporating issues relating to children in Annual Policy Notes of the State's Departments relating to informal, coastal and migrant settlements, and other related Departments.*

One of the ten vision themes of the Government of Tamil Nadu as expounded in Vision Tamil Nadu 2023<sup>1</sup> is to facilitate an inclusive growth pattern by ensuring an enabling environment for vulnerable and destitute sections of the society. Tamil Nadu is widely considered a pioneer in India for its welfare schemes which are beneficial to disadvantaged children. However, gaps in its policy-making and challenges during implementation persist. If the gaps in policies are not addressed with the perspectives of beneficiaries, they would only exacerbate the children's vulnerability.

This working paper intends to analyse the gaps in policies, identify the diverse dimensions of vulnerabilities affecting the disadvantaged children residing in the informal<sup>2</sup>, coastal, and migrant settlements in Tamil Nadu.

The key challenge in measuring the intensity of the problems and provisions of appropriate service is that of inadequate data on the vulnerabilities of these children. The census survey has information on the number of children residing in informal settlements and those that are urban homeless only for the 0–6 years age category.<sup>3</sup>

The 2011 Census has data of the migrant children of 0-18 years, but not for the most vulnerable children, like the distress, seasonal, and circulatory migrants. Likewise, the data on children in coastal areas is also limited, as the primary focus group of the Marine Fisheries Census 2010 is that of marine fishing communities and specific allied fishing communities. There is inadequate data on the families involved in freshwater fishing and other coast-based livelihood in Tamil Nadu.

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<sup>1</sup> Vision Tamil Nadu 2023 – Strategic Plan for Infrastructure Development in Tamil Nadu, Government of Tamil Nadu, March 2012. [http://www.spc.tn.gov.in/pdfs/TN\\_Vision\\_2023.pdf](http://www.spc.tn.gov.in/pdfs/TN_Vision_2023.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> In this working paper, the term 'slum' is intentionally referred as 'informal settlement', as the Tamil Nadu Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act, 1971 defines the 'slum' as 'any area is or may be a source of danger to the health, safety or convenience of the public of that area or of its neighbourhood, by reason of the area being low-lying, insanitary, squalid, over-crowded or otherwise' and thereby violates the dignity of the residents of these areas.

<sup>3</sup> P.10, Status of Children in Urban Area – Baseline Study 2016, National Institute of Urban Affairs, New Delhi, 2016. [https://cfsc.niua.org/sites/default/files/Status\\_of\\_children\\_in\\_urban\\_India-Baseline\\_study\\_2016.pdf](https://cfsc.niua.org/sites/default/files/Status_of_children_in_urban_India-Baseline_study_2016.pdf)

## Gaps in Policies:

The gaps that hinder the most vulnerable among the poor from availing of their entitlements are (i) absence of policy safeguards and (ii) inadequacies in existing policies.

### (i) Absence of policy safeguards

One of the factors that increase the vulnerability of the disadvantaged children residing in urban informal settlements and in coastal areas is limited access to 'adequate housing'.<sup>4</sup> The lack of policy safeguards relating to housing and allied services has an adverse impact on the lives of the disadvantaged children.

Since its inception in 1971, the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB) has constructed over 1.05 lakh tenements and it has taken up 504 informal settlements for upgradation, thereby benefitting 1.30 lakh families. Over 1.08 lakh plots have been developed and allotted so far.<sup>5</sup> However, these large-scale housing programmes have been implemented without any legal or policy guidelines.

The absence of policy needs to be addressed on a priority basis as the population of children in informal settlements is steadily increasing in Tamil Nadu.

**Table: Rising Children Population (0-6 years) in Informal Settlements**

Census Year	Children Population (0-6 years) in Informal Settlements (urban)	Percentage of children population in informal settlements to urban children population
2001 <sup>6</sup>	5,11,095	17
2011 <sup>7</sup>	6,14,969	17.5

Source: Compiled by author from Census of India 2001 and 2011

Though several thousand families are being resettled for implementation of various development projects, there has not been a comprehensive Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) Policy yet and it has had an adverse impact on the lives of children in these settlements. In the resettlement sites of Ezhil Nagar, Kannagi Nagar, and Perumbakkam in Chennai, 16 per cent of children are out of school/*anganwadi* centres.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Article 11.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) guarantees the human right to adequate housing. The human right to adequate housing is further elaborated by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in its General Comment 4, 'The right to adequate housing,' 1991.

<sup>5</sup> Policy Note 2010-2011, Housing and Urban Development, Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board, <http://www.tnscb.org.in/Policy%20Note%202010-11%20Secretariat%20English.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> P.129, State of Slums in India - A Statistical Compendium 2013, Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India, New Delhi

<sup>7</sup> P.118, State of Slums in India - A Statistical Compendium 2015, Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India, New Delhi

<sup>8</sup> P. 33, From Deluge to Displacement: Impact of Post Flood Evictions and Resettlement in Chennai, Housing and Land Rights Network and Information and Resource Centre for the Deprived Urban Communities, New Delhi, 2017

Tami Nadu is also known for its effective implementation of programmes for urban homeless children under the Shelter for Homeless programme<sup>9</sup> and the Special Training Interventions<sup>10</sup> for the informal, coastal, migrant, and homeless children. However, there is a need to draft comprehensive policies on coastal communities, migrants, and urban homeless so as to facilitate inter-departmental coordination and to bring the various programmes implemented by multiple departments under a policy framework to facilitate effective planning, implementation, and evaluation.

## **(ii) Inadequacies in existing policies**

Tamil Nadu is one of the most urbanised States with 50 per cent of its population residing in urban areas and it is expected to reach 75 per cent by 2026.<sup>11</sup> The existing urban renewal programmes do not have adequate provisions for creating child-friendly spaces despite the fact that 0-18 years age group constitutes 29.3 per cent of the population residing in urban areas.<sup>12</sup> The thrust areas of these programmes are mostly in civic infrastructure facilities than the social infrastructure facilities.

The Marine Fisheries Census 2010 points out that in Tamil Nadu, 37 per cent of fisher folk had no access to education. However, there is no specific data on children and their access to education. The annual policy notes by the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department do not include plans for the development of children in coastal areas.

## **Gaps in Implementation:**

The implementation challenges can be categorised into:

- i. Issue-related knowledge gaps,
- ii. Absence of operational guidelines, and
- iii. Lapses in participatory monitoring mechanisms.

## **(i) Issue-related knowledge gaps**

There are gaps in the enumeration methodologies adopted by the departments to identify the most vulnerable children. There should be different strategies adopted for different social groups. These enumerations should also ensure that the dimensions of vulnerabilities are identified. Techniques like involving communities in the enumeration process and focus group discussions can be adopted to fill these gaps.

The existing documentation of the various programmes is restricted to quantitative assessment, there is a need to evolve community participatory assessments to evaluate the successful models and use it for shared learning initiatives.

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<sup>9</sup> Implemented under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY) - National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM), implemented by the Department of Municipal Administration and Water Supply (MAWS), Government of Tamil Nadu

<sup>10</sup> Programme under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), School Education Department, Government of Tamil Nadu

<sup>11</sup> Policy Note 2017-2018, Housing and Urban Development Department, Government of Tamil Nadu [http://cms.tn.gov.in/sites/default/files/documents/hud\\_e\\_pn\\_2017\\_18.pdf](http://cms.tn.gov.in/sites/default/files/documents/hud_e_pn_2017_18.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Supra Note 3



## **(ii) Absence of operational guidelines**

The Central government schemes are implemented with broad guidelines drafted at the national level and are not State specific. As multiple State government departments are also involved in their implementation, there is a need for formulating State-specific operational guidelines/standard operating procedures to outline the roles and responsibilities of all the related departments.

## **(iii) Lapses in participatory monitoring mechanisms**

The rights of the disadvantaged children residing in the urban informal settlements and coastal areas are restricted due to deficient basic infrastructure facilities. The access of these children to these facilities is differential based on secured tenure.

The disadvantaged child residing in a notified/declared<sup>13</sup> and ‘developed’<sup>14</sup> ‘slum’ has better access to housing and other basic infrastructure facilities than the child residing in un-notified/undeclared ‘slum’<sup>15</sup> and under developed ‘slum’. In Tamil Nadu, over 49 per cent of the informal settlements do not have secured tenure on the grounds that are not notified or declared.<sup>16</sup>

In informal coastal settlements without secured land tenure, children have limited access to basic infrastructure. A study conducted by the National Institute of Urban Affairs in 2016 revealed that 6.45 per cent of children in urban areas ‘under the school-going’ (5 to 18 years) age in Tamil Nadu did not have access to any form of education.<sup>17</sup> The primary reason for children not accessing education was poverty and lack of access to schools. The budgetary allocations made by the State government to infrastructure facilities in these un-notified informal settlements are limited.

The programmes intended to benefit the urban homeless and migrant children, like the Special Training Interventions, at times, fall short of reaching them as dissemination of information is not made available directly to them in their native language. These gaps can be identified only when the programmes are monitored from the beneficiaries’ perspective, on a periodic basis.

Recommendations to ensure children-friendly environment in informal settlements, coastal areas and worksites in urban areas

### **I. General Recommendations:**

- The State should evolve a child-friendly State Urban Housing and Habitat Policy (SUHHP) as mandated by the National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy (NUHHP) 2007<sup>18</sup> through a participatory process. The policy should have special

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<sup>13</sup> Slum declared under Section 3 of the Tamil Nadu Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance), 1971.

<sup>14</sup> Slums where development activities, including that of permanent housing, are undertaken by the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB) under various schemes, like the Madras Urban Development Project (MUDP), the Tamil Nadu Urban Development Projects (TNUDP) and other housing projects of the Centre and the State governments.

<sup>15</sup> Slums not declared under Section 3 or Section 11 of the Tamil Nadu Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act, 1971.

<sup>16</sup> Supra Note 8

<sup>17</sup> Supra Note 3

<sup>18</sup> National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy, 2007

[http://www.nhb.org.in/Urban\\_Housing/HousingPolicy2007.pdf](http://www.nhb.org.in/Urban_Housing/HousingPolicy2007.pdf)



provisions for the most vulnerable groups like homeless, coastal communities and the migrants.

- The Departments implementing various welfare schemes for the disadvantaged children can constitute expert committees and undertake periodic researches to regularly monitor the effectiveness of the programmes implemented.
- Strategies like social audits, documentation of best practices, shared knowledge initiatives and capacity enhancement initiatives can be adopted by the departments.
- Annual Policy Notes of the Housing and Urban Development Department that implements housing and other development work for the informal settlements, the Department of Fisheries that reaches out to the coastal communities, the Labour and Employment Department that monitors the implementation of schemes for migrant workers by the employers, the School Education Department that implements SSA and the Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme implementing the Integrated Child Development Services and the Noon Meal Programme should have a comprehensive development plan for the children of these groups based on the survey assessing the status of children.

## **II. Specific Recommendations:**

### Children in informal settlements

- Evolving a planning framework for creating children-friendly environment in smart cities plan with participation of children
- The State to amend the Tamil Nadu Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act, 1971 and include provisions related child-friendly housing and access to civic and social infrastructure facilities.
- Comprehensive child-friendly Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) Policy to be drafted by the State
- TNSCB to ensure that slums are notified and declared to facilitate access to civic and social infrastructure facilities
- Adopting civic and social infrastructure access audit processes to enhance children's accessibility to services

### Homeless and migrant children

- The State should adopt participatory policy making and evolve comprehensive child-friendly policies for the migrant and urban homeless
- To ensure that the most vulnerable within these groups are included in the enumeration process, participatory survey processes to be undertaken with enhanced civil society participation
- Qualitative social audits/impact assessments to be conducted on a periodic basis to identify gaps and evolve strategies strengthen the programmes.

### Children residing in coastal areas:

- The State should evolve a comprehensive child-friendly Fisheries Policy also encompassing the different coastal-based occupational groups
  - The Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department should initiate a joint survey to assess the living conditions of the children in coastal areas and include the other marginalised groups who depend on the coast for their livelihoods
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Being a progressive State, the Government of Tamil Nadu should take measures to strengthen the policy framework so as to protect the rights and entitlements of the disadvantaged child in informal, coastal, and migrant settlements by enabling environment towards fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>19</sup> that aspires to make human settlements in cities and coasts inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

## About the author

**Vanessa Peter**, Policy Researcher, Information and Resource Centre for the Deprived Urban Communities, has worked with the coastal communities in Tamil Nadu since 2005 as part of the Tsunami relief and rehabilitation programmes. She is also working with the urban informal settlements (slums and the urban homeless) across the State since 2007. Having been associated with the office of the Advisor to the Supreme Court, Vanessa was monitoring the implementation of 'Shelter for the Urban Homeless' programme. She was also instrumental in the designing and implementation and drafting the Standard Operating Procedure of the 'Shelter for Urban Homeless' for the Greater Chennai Corporation. Presently, she is a member of the Shelter Advisory Committee to monitor the programme. Vanessa is also the member of the State-level Project Sanctioning Committee, constituted by the Government of Tamil Nadu under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojna-National Urban Livelihoods Mission. Vanessa has produced several policy research papers, social audits, and citizens' reports that have been instrumental in highlighting the violations of rights of children and address the situation in coordination with the Government. Vanessa strives to bring about pro-poor policies by addressing the disconnect between the poor and the policy through the research initiatives undertaken through Information and Resource Centre for Deprived Urban Communities—a social initiative.

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<sup>19</sup> On September 25, 2015, the United Nations (UN) adopted a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all, as part of a new sustainable development agenda. <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>