

22.05.2021

To,  
The Chief Secretary,  
Government of Tamil Nadu,  
Fort St.George,  
Chennai- 600 009  
Email: [cs@tn.gov.in](mailto:cs@tn.gov.in)

Sir,

**Sub:** Request to provide **financial assistance** to persons without ration cards, specifically the homeless persons and other vulnerable population in the state of Tamil Nadu.

We, the undersigned, are members of civil society organisations and volunteer groups and have actively engaged in various degrees of COVID-19 relief work over the past one year. Our contribution to relief work has ranged from fund raising, organising delivery of essential supplies to vulnerable communities, assisting in the safe sheltering and transportation of stranded migrant workers, extending support for medical aid and liasoning with State officials for implementation of statutory protections and Government Orders that have been put in place for the welfare of vulnerable sections.

At the outset, we congratulate and commend the State Government's initiative to provide Rs.4000/- monetary assistance to rice ration card holders. It will help alleviate the severe financial stress being experienced by low income housholds on account of the lockdown.

We have enclosed herewith a brief note on the need to extend similar assistance to the homeless persons and other vulnerable population across the state of Tamil Nadu who do not have ration cards, and thereby are prevented from availing the much needed financial assistance from the Government of Tamil Nadu.

We sincerely hope that the State Government will consider this issue favourably and extend financial assistance to these persons also on an urgent basis and help alleviate their distress in these trying times.

Sincerely,

| Name                   | Designation/Organization                              | Phone No.  | Email                                                                          |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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## **EXTENDING SOCIAL SECURITY AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO HOMELESS PERSONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

### **Defining the homeless:**

For the purpose of census, the ‘houseless households’ are defined as “households who do not live in buildings or census houses but live in the open on roadside, pavements, in Hume pipes, under flyovers and staircases, or in the open in places of worship, mandaps, railway platforms, etc.”<sup>1</sup> However, this definition has been further expanded by the Commissioners of the Supreme Court (in the Case of Writ Petition (Civil) 196 of 2001<sup>2</sup> including those who stay in shelters, transit homes, short stay homes, beggars’ homes and children’s home and those who live in temporary structures with or without walls under plastic sheets, or thatch roofs or pavements, parks, nallah beds and other common spaces.

### **Homeless persons are particularly vulnerable during the pandemic:**

UN Special Rapporteur’s report on the right to adequate housing dated 02.04.2020 acknowledges that in the face of this pandemic, a lack of access to adequate housing is a potential death sentence for people living in homelessness and puts the broader population at continued risk. The report notes that homelessness, including during a crisis, and irrespective of nationality or legal status, is a prima facie violation of human rights. The core protections provided by the right to housing, as well as the right to health and the right to food, are so fundamental to human dignity and the preservation of life that they can never be suspended, even in a state of emergency.

### **Lack of identity documents among the homeless persons:**

Since the primary basis for issuance of any identity document by the State is usually proof of residence, homeless persons find it extremely difficult to procure any form of identity document from the State. However, the possession of these documents are essential pre-requisites to be entitled to any form of benefit from the State agencies. Thus, these individuals who are already vulnerable, become further disempowered and excluded from assistance meant for vulnerable and weaker sections of society. The Hon’ble Supreme Court in *Swaraj Abhiyan and Others Vs. Union of India* ( AIR 2016 SC 2953) has also recognised the need to provide relief to those not holding ration cards in times of crisis.

### **How many homeless persons are there in the City of Chennai?**

Different studies across the years have documented the number of homeless persons in the city of Chennai. The following table lists some of the important studies and the findings:

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<sup>1</sup> Census of India 2011, Meta Data, Available at: [https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/HLO/Metadata\\_Census\\_2011.pdf](https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/HLO/Metadata_Census_2011.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Shelters for the Urban Homeless – A Handbook for Administrators and Policy Makers, Commissioners of the Supreme Court in the Case of Writ Petition (Civil) 196 of 2001, 2014, Available at: [https://www.hlmn.org.in/documents/Shelters\\_Urban\\_Homeless\\_Handbook.pdf](https://www.hlmn.org.in/documents/Shelters_Urban_Homeless_Handbook.pdf)

| Table 1: Urban Homeless Population in Chennai |                                                                                                                           |          |                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------------------|
| Year of Survey                                | Name of the Department/Organisation                                                                                       | Coverage | Total Urban Homeless Population Identified |
| 1990                                          | SPARC for Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority <sup>3</sup>                                                         | 10 Zones | 40,763                                     |
| 2001                                          | Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India – Census 2001                                                | 10 Zones | 67,676                                     |
| 2003                                          | ActionAid                                                                                                                 | 10 Zones | 40,533                                     |
| 2011                                          | Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC)                                                                                         | 10 Zones | 11,116                                     |
| 2011                                          | Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India – Census 2011                                                | 10 Zones | 16,682                                     |
| 2014                                          | Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC)                                                                                         | 15 Zones | 8,226                                      |
| 2015                                          | Information and Resource Centre for the Deprived Urban Communities (IRCDUC) /Indian Community Welfare Organization (ICWO) | 6 Zones  | 8,325                                      |
| 2017                                          | Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC)                                                                                         | 15 Zones | 3,500                                      |
| 2018                                          | Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC)                                                                                         | 15 Zones | 9,087                                      |

The reason for the discrepancies in the number of homeless as revealed in Table 1 could be attributed to lack of understanding of the definition of homeless. Many homeless families (who are commonly referred to as ‘pavement dwellers’ are treated as ‘encroachers’ and are often not included in the list of urban homeless) and the migrant workers who are either homeless or reside in makeshift arrangements are often not included in the enumeration. Census 2001 has identified 67,676 homeless in the city and ever since the number of homeless, identified through the various enumeration processess, has been declining. The decline in the number of homeless persons in the surveys does not indicate that the declining number of homeless in the city but highlights the discrepancies in the enumeration process, this is evident in the fact that two of the surveys conducted in the year 2011 has two varied findings. The

<sup>3</sup> Source: CMA (Chennai Metropolitan Area) Second Master Plan:  
[http://www.cmdachennai.gov.in/Volume1\\_English\\_PDF/Vol1\\_Chapter05\\_Shelter.pdf](http://www.cmdachennai.gov.in/Volume1_English_PDF/Vol1_Chapter05_Shelter.pdf)

Census 2011 figures point out 16,682 homeless in the city where as the GCC's survey is only 11,116.

Further, the homeless families and individuals are often excluded in the various formal survey processes as they are 'invisible' and cannot be identified by adopting conventional methods of identification/enumeration. However, it is estimated that there are around 75,000 to 90,000 homeless in the city including those in the different transit accommodations. Civil Society Organisations in the city have pointed out that the migrant workers in the labour camps are excluded from these enumerations, however, they will be classified as homeless based on the definition of homeless as expounded by the Commissioners of the Supreme Court (in the Case of Writ Petition (Civil) 196 of 200

A third party survey conducted by the Corporation of Chennai in the year 2018 pegs the number of homeless persons in the City of Chennai alone to **9,087**. The study reveals that there are 3,742 households (Units comprising of both individuals and family are households) with a total number of 9,087 homeless people who are living under the open sky. As per the same survey, 48% of the homeless households do not have access to ration cards, 42 % do not have voter IDs and 83% do not have access to any form of medical insurance. Hence, a large majority of the homeless cannot avail any financial aid from the Government.

### **Need for financial aid:**

Contrary to the popular myth that all homeless persons are those who live off alms and are not earning members of the society, a majority of the homeless persons are those who eke a living by performing odd jobs in the area. Some are street vendors, distress migrants, seasonal migrants, occupational migrants, waste pickers, nomadic tribes, persons who have been abandoned by their families, destitute persons, persons with disabilities, sexual and gender minorities living on the streets etc. In fact, homelessness is often a direct consequence of having to find a place of dwelling that is proximate to the place of work, so that there is minimum expenditure on daily transportation. Homeless persons/families are known to dwell on pavements and in other makeshift settings only because of lack of affordable accommodation near their places of work.

According to a 2015 Survey,<sup>4</sup> 31% of the urban homeless earn incomes above Rs.200 (per day) and their average days of income per month will be from 15 to 20 days. 21% of the urban homeless earn less than Rs. 100 (per day) with 15 to 20 days of income per month. 3% of them earn less than Rs. 50 per day. Thus a majority of the homeless population are income earning and on a similar economic footing as low-income ration-card holders. Just as other low-income and economically weaker sections have been severely hit by the lockdown and ensuing economic slump, the homeless persons

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<sup>4</sup> Detailed Survey of the Urban Homeless in Chennai, Hotspot Locations of Zone I, II, III, V, VI and XI, Information and Resource Centre for the Deprived Urban Communities (IRCDUC) and Indian Community Welfare Organization, Chennai, 2015. Available at: [https://drive.google.com/file/u/1/d/1mdnDbr6gyDmeFc4-y\\_x9SCj5jw23lCJn/view?usp=drive\\_open](https://drive.google.com/file/u/1/d/1mdnDbr6gyDmeFc4-y_x9SCj5jw23lCJn/view?usp=drive_open)

also find it extremely hard to earn any income in the present situation and their usual means of sustenance have been completely destroyed and has come to a standstill.

Like any other member of the low-income or economically weaker sections, the homeless also have essential needs apart from food. In particular, women/families with infants would need money to purchase milk. Menstruating women and the elderly would need money to purchase sanitary hygiene products. Given that free public healthcare facilities are already overburdened, those who are chronically sick or recuperating would need liquid cash for accessing essential medicines/treatments. Since the launch of the COVID-19 vaccination drive, several activists have been drawing attention to the dismal vaccination rates among the homeless. More worryingly, those who test positive and require to be quarantined are very rarely able to access these facilities. At a time when life-saving diagnostic tests as well as medical supplies are running short and being sold at prices that are exorbitant even for the affluent, COVID-19 infection among the vulnerable sections could prove immensely fatal.

The principal object of universal cash assistance programs are stated to be immediate financial relief, enhancement of purchasing power and protection from cycles of debt. The same grounds are very much applicable to the homeless population. Putting cash in the hands of the homeless would help in at least partly setting off the income loss suffered by them and protect against further indebtedness. It would provide some measure of social security and dignity to the homeless. These are only some of the reasons why it is crucial that the present minimum financial assistance of Rs.4000/- from the State Government be extended to these most vulnerable segments of the population, without insisting on a ration card or any form of identification.

It is to be noted that even during the lockdown announced last year, the Government of Tamil Nadu issued G.O.M.S.189 dated 11.04.2020 and G.O.Ms.233 dated 12.05.2020 extending assistance to persons who were registered in one or the other welfare Boards even if they did not possess ration cards. However, even though the homeless persons are also working and earning members, they could not avail the benefits since they don't form part of any of these lists/official enumeration records. Such exclusion remains the norm despite the Hon'ble Supreme Court urging states to resolve the issue of welfare schemes being denied to the homeless on account of non-possession of identifying documents such as Aadhar.

### **Enumeration and distribution of financial aid- Suggestions**

- (i) The homeless and waste pickers inhabit locations normally occupied by them for decades together. The zone-wise numbers of the homeless is available as part of the 2018 survey of the Corporation of Chennai. A rough enumeration based on inputs from local NGOs is also annexed herewith (**Annexure-1**). This data could be the starting point of the enumeration exercise.
- (ii) Some individuals who have migrated for work or deserted by family members might have their name mentioned in the ration card of their erstwhile family, but the family members will be availing the services at the source village. Such

individuals would have to be enumerated separately. Most individuals / families might not possess any form of identification document.

- (iii) Therefore, in order to reach cash assistance and other benefits, it is necessary to enumerate them zone wise. The ULBs should conduct this **rapid assessment** along with a civil society organization in the area to aid in the process of enumeration of homeless persons. In GCC, the Shelter for Urban Homeless Cell has personnel who can help coordinate the rapid assessment process. The Shelter Coordinators/Managers should be involved in the rapid assessment process. E.g. organisations like Information and Resource Centre for the Deprived Urban Communities (IRCDUC) & Uravugal Social Welfare Trust (USWT) have information and experience in this regard.
- (iv) The Commissionerate of Municipal Administration (CMA), the implementing agency for the Shelter for Urban Homeless Scheme, under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Urban Livelihood Mission (DAY-NULM) should **issue orders to the Urban Local Bodies** (ULBs). The ULBs implementing the scheme could then take the responsibility of identifying the urban homeless families and individuals without ration card.
- (v) The rapid assessment and enumeration exercise can also assist in ensuring that homeless persons are allowed to access vaccination drives and access other health benefits and schemes extended by the State during the pandemic.

### **Role of shelters:**

According to the Standard Operating procedure for institutionalizing basic services for the Homeless adopted by the Corporation of Chennai in 2014, shelters should be a space for convergence and provision of various entitlements of social security, food, education, and livelihood and housing schemes of the government to ensure that they are no longer homeless. Entitlements for the homeless residents in the shelters should include:

1. Birth Certificate/ age proof
2. Old age, widows, and disability pensions
3. BPL identification/ PDS ration cards / Electoral cards
4. Bank or post office accounts
5. Access to Anganwadi services /Admission to government schools
6. Linkage with Tamil Nadu Urban Livelihood Mission (TNULM)/National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM)
7. Linkage to National Urban Health Mission (NUHM)
8. Admission to all public hospitals with free medicines and treatment
9. Linkage to Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY)
10. Free legal aid

According to Operational Guidelines under the Scheme of Shelters for Urban Homeless as framed by the National Urban Livelihoods Mission 2013, a shelter capable of housing 100 persons should be set up per population of 1,00,000 and each

person should have a space of 50 square feet in the shelter<sup>5</sup>. However, in the City of Chennai, we do not have enough shelters nor do shelters have requisite facilities to shift all the homeless to shelters and for the shelters to act as spaces for convergence of all these entitlements at this point of time.

Creating temporary or transit camps are also not a viable solution as problems of crowding, resources and other issues created by an alien environment will arise. Hence in the present Covid pandemic situation, it is best to equip the homeless to provide for themselves by extending cash assistance and also arranging for additional assistance like vaccination, medical assistance etc.

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<sup>5</sup> Government of India. (2013). National Urban Livelihoods Mission: Scheme of Shelters for Urban Homeless, Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation, Available at: [https://smartnet.niua.org/sites/default/files/resources/NULM Scheme of Shelters for Urban Homeless Operational Guidelines.pdf](https://smartnet.niua.org/sites/default/files/resources/NULM%20Scheme%20of%20Shelters%20for%20Urban%20Homeless%20Operational%20Guidelines.pdf)

## ANNEXURE - 1

### Area Wise Homeless Data

| S.No | Zone | Area                     | Population |
|------|------|--------------------------|------------|
| 1    | 1    | Ennore Express road      | 86         |
| 2    | 1    | Basin Salai              | 34         |
| 3    | 1    | Tiruvottiyur High Road   | 62         |
| 4    | 1    | Thiruvottiyur Bus Depo   | 27         |
| 5    | 1    | Beach Road               | 59         |
| 6    | 2    | TP road                  | 31         |
| 7    | 2    | Manali High Road         | 23         |
| 8    | 3    | Madhavaram Bridge        | 23         |
| 9    | 3    | Madhavaram Round tana    | 15         |
| 10   | 3    | GNT road Puzhil          | 12         |
| 11   | 3    | MRH Road                 | 19         |
| 12   | 4    | Patalam Stran Road       | 170        |
| 13   | 4    | Tondairapet Road         | 94         |
| 14   | 4    | Jeeva Railway Station    | 123        |
| 15   | 4    | Peramur Church Road      | 54         |
| 16   | 4    | PH road old Washermenpet | 184        |
| 17   | 4    | Ambedkar nagar korukupet | 156        |
| 18   | 4    | Perambur railway station | 230        |
| 19   | 4    | Jamaliya                 | 86         |
| 20   | 4    | Paper mill road Perambur | 87         |
| 21   | 4    | Barracks Road, Patalam   | 54         |

|    |   |                        |     |
|----|---|------------------------|-----|
| 22 | 5 | Gandh Irvin Road       | 230 |
| 23 | 5 | Pudupet                | 80  |
| 24 | 5 | Rathana Bazar          | 280 |
| 25 | 5 | TNPSC road             | 70  |
| 26 | 5 | Evening Bazar          | 50  |
| 27 | 5 | Narayappan St          | 130 |
| 28 | 5 | Devaraj MUthaliyar st  | 90  |
| 29 | 5 | Sringer street         | 40  |
| 30 | 5 | Anderson Street        | 25  |
| 31 | 5 | Davidson st            | 240 |
| 32 | 5 | Anna pillai street     | 80  |
| 33 | 5 | NSC Boss Road          | 285 |
| 34 | 5 | Umpherson st           | 105 |
| 35 | 5 | Senbudoss st           | 269 |
| 36 | 5 | Pidariyar koil st      | 120 |
| 37 | 5 | Memorial hall          | 70  |
| 38 | 5 | Nyniappa st            | 160 |
| 39 | 5 | Mint St                | 80  |
| 40 | 5 | Audiappa st            | 37  |
| 41 | 5 | Wall tax Road          | 320 |
| 42 | 5 | Karupura st (Near GCC) | 140 |
| 43 | 5 | Thambu chetty st       | 40  |
| 44 | 5 | Beach Line             | 110 |

|    |   |                             |    |
|----|---|-----------------------------|----|
| 45 | 5 | Jaffar Sarang               | 60 |
| 46 | 5 | Egmore high road            | 20 |
| 47 | 5 | PH road                     | 80 |
| 48 | 6 | Coornoor High road          | 60 |
| 49 | 6 | Purasaivakkam High road     | 84 |
| 50 | 6 | Otteri                      | 67 |
| 51 | 6 | Kolathur High road          | 18 |
| 52 | 6 | Redhills road               | 27 |
| 53 | 6 | Ayanavaram                  | 40 |
| 54 | 7 | Ambathur Bridge (Near BSNL) | 78 |
| 55 | 7 | Bazar road                  | 35 |
| 56 | 7 | Ambathur Estate             | 30 |
| 57 | 7 | Padi Bridge                 | 42 |
| 58 | 7 | Ambathur post office        | 18 |
| 59 | 7 | GNG street                  | 44 |
| 60 | 8 | Mayor Ramanathan Salai      | 40 |
| 61 | 8 | Villivakkam Bus depo        | 35 |
| 62 | 8 | New Avadi Road              | 57 |
| 63 | 8 | Anna Nagar 2 and 3 avenues  | 34 |
| 64 | 8 | Kilpauk (Crematory)         | 38 |
| 65 | 8 | Anna Nagar Tower            | 23 |
| 66 | 8 | Nelson Manikam Road         | 40 |
|    | 8 | Aminjakarai Market          | 32 |

|    |    |                                            |     |
|----|----|--------------------------------------------|-----|
| 67 | 8  | EVR salai (Ega Theatre to NSK nagar)       | 50  |
| 68 | 9  | Sai baba Temple                            | 45  |
| 69 | 9  | Nungabakkam High road                      | 30  |
| 70 | 9  | Wallaja road                               | 110 |
| 71 | 9  | Chepauk MRTS Railway station               | 38  |
| 72 | 9  | Thirumalai MRTS railway station            | 35  |
| 73 | 9  | Santhone High Road                         | 47  |
| 74 | 9  | Kamaraj Salai and Marina beach road        | 560 |
| 75 | 9  | Bells Road                                 | 20  |
| 76 | 9  | Bharathi salai                             | 43  |
| 77 | 9  | Royapettah (Sathiyam Theater opp)          | 55  |
| 78 | 9  | Anna salai Dharuka                         | 90  |
| 79 | 9  | Mylapore tank                              | 50  |
| 80 | 9  | Dr Radhakrishnan salai(Near hotel Savera ) | 70  |
| 81 | 9  | Mandhavalli MRTS                           | 18  |
| 82 | 9  | GP road                                    | 10  |
| 83 | 10 | Kodambakkam high Road                      | 50  |
| 84 | 10 | Koyambedu Bus depo and market              | 120 |
| 85 | 10 | Vadapalani bus depo                        | 30  |
| 86 | 10 | North usman Road                           | 45  |
| 87 | 10 | Pondy bazar                                | 50  |
| 88 | 10 | Panagal Park                               | 35  |
| 89 | 10 | Natason park                               | 20  |

|     |    |                               |    |
|-----|----|-------------------------------|----|
| 90  | 10 | GNT Chetty Road (Jeeva park)  | 20 |
| 91  | 10 | Saidapet Bus depo             | 40 |
| 92  | 10 | Saidapet Market               | 15 |
| 93  | 10 | Saidapet railway station Road | 30 |
| 94  | 10 | West Jones Road               | 10 |
| 95  | 10 | Aranga Nathan subway          | 30 |
| 96  | 11 | Kamarajar Salai               | 15 |
| 97  | 11 | Rama puram main road          | 30 |
| 98  | 11 | Arcot Road                    | 25 |
| 99  | 11 | Alapakkam Main road           | 19 |
| 100 | 11 | PH Road (Chennai Bypass road) | 28 |
| 101 | 12 | St.Mount station              | 65 |
| 102 | 12 | Karuneejar                    | 30 |
| 103 | 12 | Chennai – Trichy Bypass       | 27 |
| 104 | 12 | MKN road                      | 24 |
| 105 | 12 | Madavakkam Main road          | 20 |
| 106 | 13 | Sardhar petal Road            | 25 |
| 107 | 13 | Kotur puram Main road         | 20 |
| 108 | 13 | Basent Nagar church           | 43 |
| 109 | 13 | LB road                       | 38 |
| 110 | 14 | Velacherry Road               | 39 |
| 111 | 14 | Perumbakkam Main road         | 17 |
| 112 | 14 | Medavakkam Main road          | 26 |

|     |    |                            |    |
|-----|----|----------------------------|----|
| 113 | 14 | OMR                        | 28 |
| 114 | 14 | Thiruvannamur bus depo     | 32 |
| 115 | 14 | Madipakkam Bazar Main road | 23 |
| 116 | 15 | ECR                        | 12 |
| 117 | 15 | OMR                        | 15 |