



**Social Welfare and Women Empowerment Department
Government of Tamil Nadu**

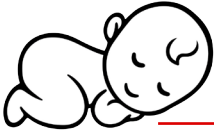
TAMIL NADU STATE POLICY FOR CHILDREN 2021





**SOCIAL WELFARE AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT DEPARTMENT
GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU**

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INTRODUCTION

All children deserve a happy childhood and the opportunity to lead a life of dignity; safe from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect, deprivation and discrimination. However, the world is changing faster than ever before, and so too are the threats, challenges and opportunities facing its children. The problems faced by children across the globe remain largely interrelated and universal.

India, the largest democracy in the world, is home to over 472 million children under the age of 18 years, representing 39% of the country's total population. The Constitution of India guarantees fundamental rights to all children in the nation and empowers the State to make special provisions for children. The Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution states that Children shall be given opportunities and facilities to grow and develop in a healthy manner in conditions of freedom and dignity.

While the entire country marches slowly and steadily to adhere to the tenets set by the Constitution of India, the State of Tamil Nadu (TN) has made fairly large strides in terms of overall indicators. TN is seen as a role-model and a pioneer for its pro-active implementation of child protection/welfare services that cater to the needs of its children. The innovative policies and programs developed by TN in the past have paved the way for it to emerge as a national front-runner. TN is also way ahead in terms of its child indicators, specifically socio-economic status, health and education indicators when compared to other States of the nation. However, COVID-19 has exacerbated the already existing inequity in education, digital divide, learning crisis, violence against children, poverty and further increased the vulnerability of children.

TAMIL NADU STATE POLICY FOR CHILDREN (TNSPC) - AN OVERVIEW

While the statistics clearly indicates the positive signs because of the steps taken by the Government of Tamil Nadu when compared to the indicators at the national level, the State is yet to see a more robust improvement in some of its child protection indicators like child marriage, child labour, crimes against children and the number of children in conflict with law. These factors pose problems and concerns for the Government, concerned stakeholders and policy makers.

Even though Tamil Nadu fares better on many of the indices compared to the national average, the following are some issues that are preventable and needs the attention of the Government of Tamil Nadu: malnutrition, anaemia, infant mortality rate, under 5 mortality rate, child sex ratio, full immunization, body mass index, gross enrolment ratio at high and higher secondary level, open defecation, etc.

In order to work towards mitigating these problems and by remaining steadfast in its commitment to create a bright future for its children, and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for children, TN has developed the Tamil Nadu State Policy for Children-2021 (TNSPC-2021).

The Government of Tamil Nadu reaffirms that its children are the State's "supremely important asset" as emphasized in the National Policy for the Children in 1974 and 2013.

The Government of Tamil Nadu takes these issues seriously and affirms that addressing these issues are of paramount importance for achieving its 10 year-roadmap for the state.

This State Policy for Children is intended to significantly improve the overall wellbeing of children and set benchmarks on all indicators on par with international standards.

The aim of TNSPC is to address the aforementioned issues which challenge the safety and well-being of the State's children with special focus on adolescents, adolescent health and their vulnerability. All aspects affecting children, either directly or indirectly have been deliberated upon or articulated while drafting the policy. This document also emphasizes the need for protection of children in humanitarian situations.

TAMIL NADU STATISTICS

Tamil Nadu vs. India - Child - Related indicators

INDICATORS	TN	INDIA	SOURCE
Incidence of multi-dimensional poverty (in %)	30.5	52.7	OPHI, 2016
Loss in HDI due to inequality in income, health, education (%)	27	32	IHDI,UNDP,2011
Child Population (In Million and %)	22, 29%	440, 34%	CENSUS 2011
Child Sex Ratio (CSR)	954	919	NFHS-4, 2015-16
Stunted children below 5 yrs (%)	27.1	38.4	NFHS-4, 2015-16
Children with anaemia aged 6-59 months (<11.0 gm/dl) (%)	50.7	58.6	NFHS-4, 2015-16
Children fully immunised (12-23 months) (%)	69.7	62	NFHS-4, 2015-16
Girls with BMI less than 18 (15-18 yrs) (%)	35.2	44.7	RSOC, 2013-14
IMR (per 1000 live births)	12	23	SRS 2018
Under 5 Mortality Rate (per 1000 live births)	17	36	SRS 2018
MMR (per 100,000 live births)	60	113	SRS 2018
GER (Class 1- 8)	98	97.8	UDISE+ 2019-20
GER (Class 9-10)	90.5	77.9	UDISE+ 2019-20
GER (Class 11-12)	73.2	51.4	UDISE+ 2019-20
Currently married women of 22-24 yrs before 18 yrs (%)	16.3	26.8	NFHS-4, 2015-16
Children 5 -14 yrs engaged in labour (%)	2.49	4.5	CENSUS 2011
Households practicing open defecation (%)	43.4	45.5	RSOC 2013-14
Total crimes against children (Rate of crime per 100000 child population)	4338 (21)	128531 (28.9)	NCRB 2020
Total juveniles in conflict with law(Rate of crime per 100000 child population)	3394 (16.4)	29758 (6.7)	NCRB 2020

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles of the Tamil Nadu State Policy for Children (TNSPC) are based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989, National Policy for Children, 2013, the National Plan of Action 2016 and UN's Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development. Hence, the TNSPC recognizes and reaffirms that –

1. A child is any person who has not completed the age of 18 years.
2. The principle of “first call for children” in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private or administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be primary consideration.
3. All children have –
 - the rights irrespective of their place of birth, sex, religion, caste, class, language, and disability, social, economic or any other status without any discrimination;
 - the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect, violence, maltreatment and exploitation; and
 - the right to express their views so that their opinions in all matters concerning them are heard and respected.
4. The achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is essential for children's overall development.

The vision and mission of the TNSPC are as follows:

VISION

To ensure holistic development of every child in an enabling safe environment to reach her/his full potential and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for children.

MISSION

*The Government of Tamil Nadu will endeavour to ensure that every child is protected from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation, shall have access to quality health care & education, will be able to freely express his/her views on any issue concerning him/her and to ensure the principle of **“Leave no one behind”**.*

STRATEGIC APPROACH

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), in the year 1989, unequivocally stated what constitutes the rights of the child and laid down a broad frame work to uphold the rights of the Child. The Tamil Nadu State Policy for Children espouses this message in order to guarantee that an overall amelioration in all aspects of a child's life cycle, vis – a – vis survival, growth, development, protection and participation is achieved.

The four thematic focus areas are



I. Life, Survival, Health and Nutrition



II. Education



III. Protection



IV. Participation

I. LIFE, SURVIVAL, HEALTH AND NUTRITION

The State of Tamil Nadu is committed to providing all children equitable access to life, survival, health and nutrition. To achieve these goals, the strategy considers the health needs of the children across all life stages. It highlights the need for intensified efforts to address growing inequities in health and nutrition outcomes, including a particular focus on their overall, holistic development. The State is further committed to providing adequate nutrition to every child to safeguard against hunger, malnutrition and deprivation and to meet their growth demands at different stages of their life.

In order to increase focus and coherence across health programmes, the TNSPC identifies and mandates the following approaches, namely : -

1. **Provide high priority to investing in first 1000 days of children**, the period between a woman's pregnancy and completion of 2 years that provides an unique window of opportunity to build healthier and more prosperous future. Nutrition, relationships, understanding, socialization, physical, communication and environment in the first 1000 days shape a child's future outcomes particularly child's brain development and ability to grow, learn and thrive.
2. Address key determinants of feticide, child mortality and morbidity; with emphasis on health, nutrition, safe potable water and high sanitation standards.
3. Bottom-up increased and improved access to information, evidence and services in order to help the community take informed choices on birth, spacing of children and its impact on health.

4. Strengthen public health system to work towards an improved delivery of services in terms of Reproductive and Maternal New born Child Health (RMNCH) and nutrition including pre-natal, peri-natal, ante-natal care and safe institutional delivery.
5. Afford special measures for improved health care and nutrition, health and nutrition literacy for pregnant women, nursing mothers and adolescent girls using available latest technological advancements.
6. Make certain that all children below the age of six have universal and equitable access to quality Early Childhood Care and Development by strengthening anganwadis.
7. Continuous improvement in neo-natal care delivery and child health (prevention, treatment, care and management); protect children from all communicable, non-communicable and preventable diseases and provide universal and affordable access to such services.
8. Avert HIV infections at birth and make sure that infected children receive appropriate care pathway, nutrition and after-care.
9. Encourage and support focused behavior change to improve new born and child care practices at the household and community levels.
10. Deliver timely interventions to prevent disabilities (both mental and physical), during, before and after pregnancy in the mother and child.
11. Offer services for early detection, treatment and management of disabilities at the pre and post-natal stage.
12. Fortify services for management, support and rehabilitation of children with special needs and education for children with disability.

13. Restructure child immunization schedules based on emerging needs and intensify universal awareness programs for increased uptake of immunizations.
14. Optimize mechanisms for early detection, management and treatment of health issues among children.
15. Build on currently available essential maternal and child health services.
16. Strengthen access to information, support services essential for physical, mental and reproductive health and development (including healthy lifestyle choices) of children and increased involvement of community.
17. Establish mechanisms to increase awareness on physical & mental health and monitoring the health of all children and adolescents, and involvement of community.
18. Ratify only child safe products and services for children by enforcing safety standards.
19. Promote crèches, day care facilities for children of working, underprivileged or ailing mothers; set-up baby feeding facilities in public places and at work places.
20. Build evidence- based research for health innovations.
21. Focused interventions in areas of low parameters / standards.
22. Ensure adequate food-security and safety is available to all children.
23. Ensure adolescent friendly health services.
24. Prevent micro-nutrient deficiencies by improving awareness of and access to micro-nutrient rich foods.
25. Tracking children from 0 to 18 years including children of migrant labourers, street children, Children in slums, Third gender, Differently Abled Children.

II. EDUCATION

The State of Tamil Nadu recognizes that every child has equal rights to learning, knowledge and education. The State also reaffirms its commitment to its responsibility to make available an enabling setting conducive to the educational requirement and well-being of the child on par with international standards.

Through this policy, the Government of Tamil Nadu expresses its firm commitment to improve Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) and quality of age appropriate and grade appropriate learning outcomes using competency/capability framework as envisioned in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF). The Government of Tamil Nadu makes its commitment clear to use latest available technological advancements/platforms that will help to ensure quality education reaches all children in the state.

The State shall take all necessary steps to ensure:

1. Facilitation of the holistic development of children with emphasis on their strengths and empowering them to manage their lives, body and behavior.
2. Provision of a safe, secure learning setting that ensures the physical, mental and emotional safety and well-being of the child.
3. Access to a formal school within their neighbourhood for all children completing 5 years.
4. Increased access to free, equitable, inclusive and quality education in safe schools through reduction of school dropouts at all levels by addressing various barriers to education such as gender and social exclusion, child marriage, child labour, gender and social exclusion, etc.

5. Making high quality secondary level education affordable and accessible for all children and thereby, empowering them to reach higher education.
6. Building in age appropriate, participatory and child friendly processes of teaching and learning with emphasis on gender equality, value education, life-skills and self-defence.
7. Development and sustenance of systems providing quality education to everybody.
8. Inclusivity in schools, replete with appropriate infrastructure, adequate trained personnel and special educators for children with special needs and inclusive education system for children with disability and special needs.
9. Identify gifted children, especially those belonging to disadvantaged groups and provide them with backing, encouragement and assistance.
10. Foster equal opportunity, treatment and participation irrespective of place of birth, sex, religion, caste, health, disability or social, economic or any other status and eliminate discrimination of all forms in schools.
11. Engrain a culture of positive discipline with dignity within schools and teachers; strictly forbid corporal punishment or mental harassment of any form within or outside the class.
12. Prioritization of access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools to provide inclusive and affordable quality education for all children particularly in situations like pandemic and natural or human made disaster.
13. Digital education to all children that is safe, enjoyable and age appropriate.
14. Ensuring and maintenance of quality of standards of schools and child care institutions by building adequate infrastructure including science labs, computer labs, libraries, clean functional toilets, provision of safe potable water and hygienic environment.

15. Provision of a gamut of career choices through counselling, vocational guidance and training options to all children in schools and also a special focus to school dropouts.
16. Develop, review and sustain age-specific initiatives for safe spaces for play, sports, recreation, leisure, traditional and modern sports, cultural and scientific activities in neighbourhoods, schools and other institutions to develop children's innate potential.
17. Create a literate environment throughout the state by improving adult literacy and inculcation of reading habits among children by upgrading locally accessible public libraries in all panchayats and school libraries.
18. Make schools free from alcohol, tobacco and all narcotic substances.
19. Liaison with local governments and civil society organizations to map the gaps in availability and relevance of educational services.
20. Tracking of children schools – particularly dropouts and the causes of it.
21. Strengthen School Management Committees to ensure free, inclusive, equitable and quality education in safe schools for all children.
22. Introduce Constitutional Rights to all children as part of regular school curriculum to promote them as responsible citizens.
23. Strengthen community based mechanisms, multi-sectoral collaboration, partnerships and convergence, working with local bodies and civil society organisations.
24. Identify the children of migrant workers, who are eligible for schooling in each area; Take all efforts to continue their studies and provide opportunities for continuing education in their mother tongue; support them by all means to continue their studies without any barrier.

III. PROTECTION

Whilst recognizing that all children deserve a happy childhood and the opportunity to lead a dignified life safe from violence, exploitation, neglect, deprivation and discrimination, the Government of Tamil Nadu resolves to build a safe and secure environment and child friendly spaces as foundation for the realization of the rights of all children in the State.

The State shall, therefore, take the following necessary steps to:

1. Strengthen and sustain community based mechanisms to protect children from all forms of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, denial and online), discrimination, exploitation, violence or any other activity that will harm them or affect their care, protection and overall development.
2. Government of Tamil Nadu affirms its commitment towards “Zero Tolerance to any form of violence against children” and provide equal importance to protection of children as well as prevention of all forms of violence against children.
3. Introduce and adopt child protection policy in all panchayats and urban bodies for creating child safe spaces in whole State of Tamil Nadu.
4. Introduce child safeguarding policy in all schools to make all schools safe for children.
5. Form Internal Complaints Committee under POSH Act in all schools.
6. Strengthen existing child protection systems particularly Village Level Child Protection Committee (VLCPC) and Neighborhood Child Protection Committee (NCPC).

7. Awareness campaigns on all forms of violence against children, its negative impact on children, laws/institutions to be accessed/ approached for redressal, etc. through all forms of media such as print, electronic and social media.
8. At all times, ensure that the rights and dignity of all children are upheld (irrespective of sex, religion, language, caste, disability, social and economic background).
9. Create safe, respectful caring, child-friendly public, learning, media and online spaces.
10. Employ special measures to ensure the rights and entitlements of children in need of special protection.
11. Strengthen Family care / Alternative care and consider institutionalization as the last resort and measure.
12. Implement highest standards of safety and security within all child care institutions.
13. Build a preventive, responsive child protection system; promote effective enforcement of legislation and administrative measures against all forms of abuse, neglect, discrimination, exploitation.
14. Strengthen child-protection structures and schemes so that they are equipped and competent to fulfill the needs of children particularly children with special needs.
15. Improve awareness of children on available services and systems for their protection.
16. Leverage multi-sectoral collaboration, plan and commitment of various stakeholders for a synchronized and effective child protection system.
17. Evolve village, block, district, state-level mechanisms to identify, intervene with and resolve all issues related to children.

18. Upgrade rehabilitation services under the child protection system with special focus on mental health and psycho-social support.
19. Ensure privacy of children in need of care and protection and children in conflict with law; maintain data confidentiality.
20. Reinforce readiness of data repository and data management systems to provide real-time data to enhance monitoring, evaluation and decision making.
21. Create family strengthening services to prevent entry and re-entry of children into institutions.
22. Augment community awareness by creating appropriate IEC materials specific to child protection and development.
23. Prevent re-victimization of children coming into the child-protection network.
24. Strengthen after-care services for children leaving institutional care till they become self-reliant and independent.
25. Conduct periodical appraisals, research and social audits to enhance decision making in child protection policy formulations.
26. Build and enable a disaster and emergency management system for the sole purpose of protecting children.
27. Promote and reinforce redressal mechanisms for safe guarding child rights at different levels.

IV. PARTICIPATION

To ensure influence, relevance, added value and practical applicability of the policy, the State of Tamil Nadu recognizes that children are capable of forming their views. Respecting children and giving them opportunities to partake in matters of concern to them are some of the overarching measures that will be adopted by the State.

Some of the other necessary actions that will be taken shall include:

1. Ensuring that children are apprised of their rights, provided with prospects to develop their skills, build on their aspirations and express their views, in accordance with their age, maturity and capacities.
2. Promote linkages and strengthen platforms for children to express their opinions and needs.
3. Building opportunities for children to engage in issues of concern to them.
4. Promote and strengthen respect for the views of the child, especially those of girl children.
5. Establishing benchmarks to measure the extent of children's participation in the family, schools and community is being realized, and backing these up with evidence-based research and independent valuations.
6. Building a strong partnership with CSOs, INGOs / NGOs, Networks, Corporates and Academic institutions by forming a "Civil Society Support Group for children for consultations and advisory support".

7. Strengthening of local bodies, community based organisations, inter-departmental convergence and coordination to consolidate multi-sectoral actions.
8. Building a strong sustainable model of programming for children based on Tamil Nadu State Policy for Children for a stronger equity-focused approach by identifying the most deprived children, investing in new proven and cost-effective interventions, overcoming bottlenecks and partnering with International and National Organisations and communities.
9. Creation of Bala Sabhas in all Gram Panchayats where all children in the age group of 12-18 are members.
10. Bala Sabhas to meet at least four times in a year as Gram Sabha, pass resolutions on matters related to children and submit it to Gram Sabha to take appropriate action by affirming the resolutions passed in Bala Sabha.

CONCLUSION

The Government of Tamil Nadu articulates its commitment towards its children with the current policy, 2021, thereby assuring that all children in the State shall have an enabling milieu for their growth and development, and that their rights will be guaranteed throughout their childhood.

In this context, the Tamil Nadu State Policy for Children (TNSPC-2021) will take all obligatory actions to guide and apprise stakeholders on all laws, policies, plans and programmes concerning children. The document represents a call for action to prioritize child protection on the state agenda. It is envisaged that all actions and initiatives in the State in every sector will respect and uphold the principles, provisions and intent of this policy.

The Tamil Nadu State Policy for Children – 2021 will be put into action by developing a comprehensive Plan of Action (PoA). The overarching objective of this policy is to ensure prevention and protection of children from all/any form of violence particularly from vulnerable sections by

1. Strengthening the existing systems
2. Establishing proper systems to monitor the implementation of the policy measures
3. Convergence of action between all relevant departments
4. Creating awareness among children and all stakeholders about this policy and the Government of Tamil Nadu's commitment to the cause of children.
5. Allocating adequate budget in proportion to the child population of the State and that enables to fulfill the promises of the Government of Tamil Nadu to all children particularly from vulnerable communities and girls.

6. Harnessing technological advancements to the optimum level to realize its commitments to all children of the state.

The PoA will be drafted based on consultation sessions and inputs from different Government departments and bodies, civil society organizations, academic institutions to work towards common results and achievement of Sustainable Development Goals indicators. This will be done whilst encouraging child participation. The plan of action will encompass a multi-sectoral frame work of convergence and response measures for effective delivery of outcomes.

An exclusive multi-sectoral advisory group shall be constituted at the State level for the implementation of the policy and further monitoring.

Further, Tamil Nadu shall regularly do a child budget analysis so as to allocate adequate resources based on the emerging needs of children, assessment of outputs, outcomes, indicators on various aspects that fall within the ambit of this policy.

The policy shall be revised every five years by reviewing the outcomes / impact achieved in the said period through an evidence based appraisal and indicators of Sustainable Development Goals.

It is expected that increased programmatic collaboration will strengthen system-wide coherence at all levels. The goal areas, change strategies and enablers outlined in this policy brief will help deliver lasting results for children, bringing the State closer to realizing the vision of its constitutional agenda, a land in which no child is left behind.



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMI	Body Mass Index
CSR	Child Sex Ratio
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
HDI	Human Development Index
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
NCRB	National Crime Records Bureau
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
OPHI	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative
RSOC	Rapid Survey On Children
SRS	Sample Registration System Statistical Report
UDISE	Unified District Information System for Education
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

NOTES



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