CHAPTER VI

INITIATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE UPLIFTMENT OF WOMEN

Tamil Nadu has elaborate institutional arrangements for promoting gender equity and empowerment of women. The three key institutions that are involved in promoting gender equity are the Tamil Nadu State Commission for Women, Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women and the Department of Social Welfare. These are the nodal agencies for implementation of governmental policies aimed at empowerment of women and gender equity. A number of schemes and legislative measures exist which address questions of gender equity and empowerment of women. Similar bodies like National Commission for Women and the Ministry of Women and Children Welfare exist at national level also.

In 1994, the Tamil Nadu Government announced Vision 2000, a set of forward looking strategies for empowerment of women. The policy envisaged that the most important strategies for the advancement of women would be

(i) Supporting and expanding the role of women as decision makers in public and private domains, so that they are able to control their lives;

(ii) Enabling equitable participation of women in socio-political and economic processes and structure at all levels;

(iii) Facilitating equitable participation of women in developing planning, development processes and development programmes.

The primary objectives of such an initiative of enabling participation, as envisaged in Vision 2000 are,

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(i) Bringing women into mainstream of society and eliminating barriers for the participation of women.

(ii) Enabling women to lobby for their own advancement.

(iii) Taking into account gender concerns in decision making in public bodies.

(iv) Sensitize men on the need for gender equity.

(v) Ensure that public policy and implementation reflects the needs and concerns of men and women equitably for benefit to society.²

Government of India has declared the year 2001 as Women Empowerment Year in order to highlight the rightful place to women in the mainstream of national development. The objective of the women Empowerment Year was to create large scale awareness of women’s rights and to focus on issues and interventions which can impact positively on their lives. The Government of Tamil Nadu has been embarking upon other specific steps for social and economic empowerment of women through education, gender equity in public participation and governance, gender equity in health and nutrition, equal rights, elimination of gender based discrimination, action on violence against women etc. Against this backdrop, the Government of Tamil Nadu directed that adequate representation, at least to the extent of 30 % be provided to women in all the Committee and in similar forum. The statutory and non-statutory right from state level to micro level i.e. upon ward level in all Government Departments, quasi Government organizations, Public Sector Undertakings, Boards and other Bodies under the purview of Government Departments and Government agencies.³

³ Ibid.
Supreme Court of India in the case of *Vishaka Vs State of Rajasthan*\(^4\) regarding sexual harassment of working women laid down that it is the duty of the employer or other responsible persons in work places or other institutions to prevent or deter the Commission of Act of sexual harassment and to provide the procedures for the resolution/settlement or prosecution of Acts of sexual harassment by taking all steps required. Based on the above judgement, Tamil Nadu Government has issued directions\(^5\) to constitute a complaints committee headed by a woman and not less than half of its members to be women. Subsequently, procedure for conducting enquiry by the complaint committee and also guidelines for the employers have also been issued by the State Government.\(^6\)

**Women’s Empowerment through Gender Budgeting**

Gender budgeting is a method by which analysis is made on how governments raise and spend public money, with the objective of securing gender equality in decision-making, about public resource allocation and gender equality in the distribution of the impact of government budgets both in their benefits and in their burdens. It entails affirmative action for the empowerment of women. We have a detailed Constitutional and legal frame work for taking care of women’s equality and empowerment and a number of policies for the same purpose. We also have the institutional empowerment mechanisms such as the Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women and the National Commission for Women. The challenge before us is how to translate these commitments into budgetary and administrative action and how to end gender policies and programmes. The priority of the

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\(^4\) AIR 1997, SC 3011.


Government has been to implement laws which ensure equal remuneration and minimum wages, facilities for women under Factories Act etc. It is the endeavour of the Government to provide infrastructure for women like water and sanitation at workplace, crèches, working women’s hostels, transport services and security.

**The Tamil Nadu Women’s Development Project (TAWDP)**

In the past, household-focused poverty alleviation programmes such as Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) sought to reserve 50 per cent of credit for women. Against this target, 38.46 per cent of IRDP loans were channelled to women in 1998–99. However, women’s access to credit did not always imply that they exercised control. In many cases, a wife was just a channel to get access to subsidized credit which her husband eventually utilized. In extreme cases, women had to struggle to repay the loan on their name, which had been used or misused by their husband. Learning lessons from the past, the Tamil Nadu Government has evolved the Tamil Nadu Women’s Development Project which is an SHG based scheme with a focus on the economic empowerment of women.⁷

Combining nutrition education with women’s empowerment and poverty alleviation through regularity in savings and income generation achieves the following: women become aware and ambitious themselves and for their children and, they have the purchasing power combined with status within the household to take responsible decisions for their children. Women’s empowerment has been facilitated with the extension of a major micro-finance scheme for women, the Tamil Nadu Women’s Development Project, popularly called *Mahalir Thittam*, meaning women’s scheme. Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women implements *Mahalir Thittam*. The Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women Ltd. was incorporated on

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December 9th 1983 under the Companies Act 1956. Its registered office is located in Chennai, while its area of operation extends to the entire State of Tamil Nadu. The authorized share capital of the company is Rs. 1.00 crore, with a subscribed and paid up share capital of Rs. 78.42 lakhs. Of this Rs. 40.00 lakhs is held by the Government of Tamil Nadu and Rs. 38.42 lakhs by the Government of India.\(^8\)

Initially started on an experimental basis during 1991-92 in Dharmapuri District, the Tamil Nadu Women’s Development Project was later extended to Salem, South Arcot, Madurai and Ramanathapuram Districts during the period from 1992-1994. During 1995-96, the project started gaining wide acceptance among women and was taken up as a model for future growth and extended to all other districts in a phased manner, targeting poor families and marginalised sections of the society as a state funded programme. TNCDW became the focal point for women empowerment activities due to the success of its key role as the prime organisation spearheading the SHG movement in the state. A small homogeneous group of poor women consisting of 12 to 20 members, for their development, voluntarily formed to promote savings and mutually agreeing to contribute a common fund to be lent to its members as per the group’s decision is called as “Self Help Group” (SHG). The members have to be in the age group of 18-60 years. The members and office bearers of the SHGs promoted by Mahalir Thittam are provided training to bring about qualitative changes in their attitude and to promote cohesion and effective functioning of the group.

“Mahalir Thittam” is implemented in partnership with NGOs and community-based organisations such as PLFs which are affiliated to TNCDW, and extend support in the formation of SHGs, organising training, guide and monitor their activities. So far,

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452 NGOs have been affiliated with TNCDW. The future plans include, enhancing the sustainability of SHG movement through intensifying the federation activities and grooming them into full-fledged community-based organizations and further expanding the SHG coverage to habitations and ward/slums in urban areas hitherto uncovered. The salient features of the NGO agreement include performance-based incentive with greater emphasis on quality, apart from providing an enabling environment for the growth of PLFs into Community Based Organisations (CBOs). NGOs are paid formation cost, monitoring cost and also incentive for enabling SHGs to access bank credit by TNCDW and are subjected to performance evaluation every year.

Currently, the coverage extends to rural areas of 28 districts of the state except Chennai. In the budget for 2000–‘01, this project has been extended to cover all town panchayats and municipalities in the districts. This project is based on a long-term partnership among three agencies—the State Government, NGOs and NABARD/other banks and financing institutions. The scheme promotes social and economic empowerment among women through women's organization into SHGs, rotation of their collective savings to help satisfy emergency and consumption needs of households, reduce the dependence on money lenders, institutional credit access and income generation in the hands of women. The project’s pilot phase has already demonstrated that poor rural women are credit worthy and can become financially savvy even when semi-literate. Strengthening and integrating women’s working groups of TINP with SHGs, thus institutionalizing economic empowerment systems among women rather than working in independent compartments, would help in establishing inter-sectoral linkages across schemes.

This project is participatory, people-centred and process-oriented and intends to promote social empowerment of poor and disadvantaged women through equal status at
household, community and village level, increased status in democratic institutions and helping them to overcome social, cultural and religious barriers. Further, this project supports economic improvement through financial self-reliance of women, greater access to financial resources and reduced vulnerability to crisis situations like famine, floods and riots. Both social and economic empowerment are complemented by capacity building through better awareness on health, education, environment and legal rights, better communication skills and better leadership skills. The future plans of the project include consolidation of SHGs, targeting uncovered habitations, focus on sustainability and entrepreneurship training for NGO staff.

The membership has grown rapidly from 1.20 lakhs women in 5207 SHGs in 1996 to 25.73 lakhs women in 1,51,543 SHGs in December, 2003. The aggregate group savings of SHGs is 393.64 crores. Members of matured Self Help Groups ready to absorb loans are linked with banks and other financial institutions to avail credit. As on 31.12.2003, 1,09,046, SHGs have been linked with bank credit at a total financial outlay of Rs. 564.15 crores for various rural based activities such as Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture, Animal Husbandry, Cottage and Village Industries and other small businesses micro enterprises in urban areas.\(^9\)

To give momentum to SHG movement and to cover another 1.5 lakhs women over a period of 3 years from 2003-2004 and 2004-06 the Government has sanctioned a sum of Rs. 262.50 lakhs for forming 75,000 new SHGs. Accordingly, for the year 2003-2004, the Government has released Rs. 87.50 lakhs. For the year 2004-2005, an amount of Rs. 87.50 lakhs has been provided to form another 25,000 groups in the

tribal habitations, fishermen villages, weavers habitations, rural areas and urban slums.\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{Marketing of SHG Products}

SHGs do not have the capacity in understanding marketing issues and do not possess negotiation skills to promote their products. Therefore, the Government takes various initiatives to enhance the capacity of SHGs and PLFs and ensure better convergence and greater co-ordination between different agencies in promotion of SHG products. A state level permanent marketing complex for SHG products is functioning in \textit{Annai} Theresa Women Complex, Nungambakkam, Chennai, for conducting exhibition cum sale of products produced by SHGs. Similarly, to create better marketing facilities in rural areas, 86 Village \textit{Haats} are under construction at the cost of Rs.12.90 crores in 30 districts and will be completed.

\textit{Mahalir Thittam} has played a pivotal role in bringing together poor and marginalized women into the fold of Self Help Group movement and transformed their lives significantly through various measures, contributing towards their socio economic empowerment. Transgenders who were hitherto left out from the development stream would also be brought under the fold of \textit{Mahalir Thittam} from this financial year. Self Help Groups today have moved from the status of being receivers to implementers of Government Schemes.

\textbf{Entrepreneur Development Programme for Women}

Economic empowerment is the key for development, which is more true in the context of women. Women are considered as consumers and not producers with no

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 148 - 149.
occupation, property, education and skills. With a view to bring women out of the above situation and their vicious circle of poverty, the Government of Tamil Nadu has evolved a scheme for training five lakh women in entrepreneurial skills for self-employment in five years involving various Government Departments. In order to promote economic empowerment among women Government of Tamil Nadu has announced a program called Entrepreneur Development Programme, which aims to impart entrepreneurial skill training to women to initiate income generation activities through self-employment.

The program also aims to extend credit linkage and marketing support. Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board has implemented the program in the city of Chennai covering 18,755 women at a cost of Rs. 75 lakhs. This program is implemented in coordination with leading Non Governmental and Community Based Organisations.¹¹

**Pudhu Vaazhvu Project**

This Project, aided by the World Bank was launched in the state in November 2005 as “Pudhu Vaazhvu”. The Pudhu Vaazhvu Project (PVP) which was subsequently named as “Vazhndhu Kaattuvom” in 2006, has now been restored back to its original name of “Pudhu Vaazhvu”. The project is being implemented in 16 districts with a total outlay of Rs.717 crores, benefitting 5.8 lakh households for a period up to September 2014. Now, with additional financing, the Project has expanded its operations to 10 more additional districts for a period of 3 years till September 2014 with an outlay of Rs.950 crores benefitting 3.8 lakh target poor households. The Project is designed on Community Driven Development (CDD) approach to empower the poorest of poor through promotion of strong Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), thereby creating a strong voice for rural poor,

especially women in community decision making and in shaping developmental
e endeavours, adopting the following key elements:

- Transferring the control over decision making and resources to the community
  based organizations.
- Focusing on the poorest of poor, the most vulnerable and differently-abled.
- Establishing strong linkages with Panchayat Raj Institutions
- Providing employment generation opportunities and livelihood enhancement.
- Building downward responsiveness, accountability and transparency at all
  levels.

Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) Tamil Nadu Area Health
Care Project (TNHCP)

The Tamil Nadu Area Health Care Project (TNHCP), funded by the Danish
International Development Agency (DANIDA), has been in existence since 1981.
During its first two phases from 1981 to 1996, the project covered the erstwhile South
Arcot and Salem districts (now, Villupuram and Cuddalore, and Salem and Namakkal,
respectively). In its third phase, the project districts are Dharmapuri, Thanjavur,
Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam. The designated project period is from December 1996 to
December 2001, and the approved outlay Rs 59.1 crore. The overall project objective is
to improve the health and family welfare status of the rural population, especially of the
weaker sections, with a focus on women and children. The project seeks to empower
women and mainstream gender concerns. To achieve its objectives, the project has
sought to strengthen the physical infrastructure of the health sector, the knowledge and
skills of health service providers, the management of health services and the medical
supply system. It also seeks to improve awareness of both the community and the health service providers on issues pertaining to health and health service delivery.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{'Cradle Babies' Scheme}

In the year 1992, the state government under the Chief Minister-ship of Jayalalitha launched the 'Cradle Babies' scheme, whereby families were asked to abandon unwanted female infants in cradles provided for that purpose in government primary health centres, rather than kill them. Police arrested, particularly in Salem members of some families who had committed female infanticide. The combination of media attention and police persecution led to the abandonment of a large number of babies in the cradles in Salem.\textsuperscript{13} In 1992, 77 girls were left in cradles in the district. The government gave money to some NGOs to look after the abandoned girls. Some of them died and over 20 were given for adoption.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{Jayalalitha Protection Scheme for the Girl Child}

There were several discussions on this issue of female infanticide in the Indian parliament and in the legislative assembly of Tamil Nadu. Sustained coverage by the foreign news media, such as the BBC, was a source of embarrassment for the Tamil Nadu government. Following consultations with UNICEF and NGOs, the Chief Minister Ms. Jayalalitha announced the 'Jayalalitha Protection Scheme for the Girl Child' in October 1992. The objective of the scheme was total elimination of female infanticide by the year 2000. Under the scheme, a poor family with one or two girls and no sons would be eligible for monetary incentives if one parent agreed to be sterilised. Money given in the name of the infant girl would be held in a fixed deposit account.

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{TN Human Development Report, op.cit.}, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{The Hindu}, dated 6 November 1992
\textsuperscript{14} http://womenstudies.in/elib/sex_selection/ss_female_infanticide_in_tamil.pdf
until she reached 21 years of age. Further, when the girl goes to school, the family would periodically receive grants for educational expenses. This scheme was intended to cover 20,000 families every year. In Salem district 614 girls received this benefit over a period of eighteen months. The government also committed to undertaking the identification of 'high risk areas' where the practice was prevalent.

The 'Cradle Baby' scheme and the 'Girl Child Protection' scheme facilitated the building of the image of Ms. Jayalalitha as a protector of the interests of Tamil women. Ms. Indirakumari, the Minister concerned was also very enthusiastic in implementation of the schemes. Recognising the popularity of these schemes, Jayalalitha periodically enhanced the incentives. Her government also introduced other programmes for the improvement of women's status such as exclusively recruiting women as primary school teachers in the state, and making primary education compulsory for all children.

**Renovation of Integrated Sanitary Complex for Women**

Sanitation was a hidden gender problem and the rural women’s lives were severely affected due to the absence of proper sanitary facilities. The women without toilets in their households had to go out to relieve themselves in the dark. The limited or no access to the toilet facilities and compulsion to wait till the dark, resulted in constipation and adapted diet and drinking habits which led to severe health problems. Absence of sanitary facilities was due to both poverty and cultural inhibitions, which had to be overcome. Therefore, it was of paramount importance to ensure privacy and safety to the women besides improving general hygiene and health to the rural people.

Recognizing the need for the improved sanitation for women, the Rural Development Department of the Tamil Nadu Government in the year 2001
introduced a scheme to build Integrated Sanitary Complexes for Women in all the 12,618 Village Panchayats in the state, at an approximate area of 750 sq.ft. each. The selected sites were easily accessible to the rural women and nearer to the habitations, facilitating easy approach to the users. Each complex had 14 water closets, 2 bathrooms, 1 water tub and stone-paved washing facilities. Adequate water supply for washing and bathing requirements was also ensured. The total users were identified and grouped for the purpose of allocation of individual toilets within the complex. The Village Panchayats provided electricity connection for water supply & lighting and the allotted families maintained the upkeep of the complex. The complexes were provided with incinerators for disposal of the sanitary napkins of the women users.

Initially, 385 Integrated Sanitary Complexes for women were constructed @ 1 per Panchayat Union at a cost of Rs.2.00 lakhs each. Between 2001 and 2004, all the Village Panchayats in the state were covered under the scheme with the enhanced unit cost of Rs.2.25 lakhs. Low water using toilets were promoted and the bath waste water was utilized for raising vegetables which was also a source of income for the Self Help Groups which looked after the maintenance of the complexes. The design incorporated better ventilation and the Government also encouraged biogas-generating units for generation of power for lighting and water pumping needs of the complexes in order to reduce the recurring expenditure on power consumption. The endeavour of the Government was to sensitize the rural masses that development would be incomplete if environmental sanitation was not addressed adequately. Most of the Integrated Sanitary Complexes for Women are rendered unusable as adequate attention was not given for its maintenance. It has been decided by the Government to revive all the sanitary complexes immediately.
Other Important Programmes of the State Government for the Development of Women

Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar Ninaivu Thirumana Nidhi Uthavi

Thittam\(^{15}\) (M. R. Ammaiyar was an eminent social reformer in Tamil Nadu in the middle of the 20\(^{th}\) Century. She was an active member of the Dravida Kazhagam). Under the scheme, at the time of marriage an amount of Rs. 20,000\(^{16}\) is given as assistance to girls belonging to poor families (of families below poverty line). The bride must have appeared for 10\(^{th}\) std. examination. In case of Scheduled Tribe, the bride should have studied up to 5\(^{th}\) standard. Annual income should not exceed Rs. 12,000. The Bride should have completed 18 years of age. Only one daughter in a family is eligible to avail this scheme. This scheme was introduced by the Government of Tamil Nadu in the year 1989 and was implemented whenever DMK was in power in the State. As many as 4.39 lakh women to the tune of Rs. 832 crore were benefitted for the period of five years succeeding 2005.\(^{17}\) During the year 2007-'08, 83333 persons benefitted from the scheme.\(^{18}\)

E.V.R. Maniammaiayar Memorial Widow Daughter’s Marriage Assistance Scheme\(^{19}\)- In order to help poor mothers who are widows by providing financial assistance for the marriage of their daughters, under the scheme, an amount of Rs.

\(^{15}\) Government of Tamil Nadu, G.O. M.S. No. 515 S.W.D. dated 31.5.1989.
\(^{16}\) Government of Tamil Nadu, G.O. No. 673 S.W.D. dated. 20.2.1982; G.O. Ms. No. 42 dated 17.5.2011, the assistance is increased to Rs. 25,000 along with four grams of 22 ct gold for making thirumangalyam; G.O. Ms. No. 43 dated 17.5.2011 the quantum of marriage assistance is increased to Rs. 50,000 to women graduates/ diploma holders along with four grams of 22 ct at free of cost for making thirumangalyam.
\(^{17}\) The Times of India, Chennai, dated 29.11.2010.
\(^{18}\) Statistical Handbook of Tamil Nadu- 2008.
\(^{19}\) Government of Tamil Nadu, G.O. No. 673 S.W.D. dated 20.2.1982; G.O. Ms. No. 43 dated 17.5.2011 the quantum of marriage assistance is increased to Rs. 50,000 to women graduates/ diploma holders along with four grams of 22 ct at free of cost for making thirumangalyam; G.O. Ms. No. 42 dated 17.5.2011, the assistance is increased to Rs. 25,000 along with four grams of 22 ct gold for making thirumangalyam.
20,000 is provided at the time of marriage. Widows whose income does not exceed Rs.24, 000 in a year is eligible to receive marriage assistance. Daughter should have completed 18 years of age and only one daughter of the widow is eligible to receive assistance under the scheme. During the year 2007-'08, 2361 persons benefitted from the scheme.21

*Annai Teresa Orphan Girls Marriage Assistance Scheme*- Under the scheme, orphans, whose income does not exceed Rs. 24,000 per annum and of the age between 18 to 30 years is eligible to receive an assistance of Rs. 20,000 at the time of marriage.22 During the year 2007-'08, 274 persons benefitted from the scheme.23

*Dr. Dharmambal Ammaiyar Ninaivu Remarriage Scheme*24 (A social reformist of Madras)- Under this scheme, in order to encourage widow remarriage and to rehabilitate widows, at the time of remarriage an assistance of Rs. 20,000 is provided. The scheme does not stipulate any income and age limit. During the year 2007-'08, 173 persons benefitted from the scheme.25

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20 Government of Tamil Nadu, G.O. No. 673 S.W.D, dated 20.2.1982. G.O. Ms. No. 42, dated 17.5.2011, the assistance is increased to Rs. 25,000 along with four grams of 22 ct gold for making *thirumangalyam*; G.O. Ms. No. 43, dated 17.5.2011 the quantum of marriage assistance is increased to Rs. 50,000 to women graduates/ diploma holders along with four grams of 22 ct at free of cost for making *thirumangalyam*.

21 Statistical Handbook of Tamil Nadu- 2008

22 Government of Tamil Nadu G.O. No. 673 S.W.D, dated 20.2.1982; G.O. Ms. No. 42, dated 17.5.2011, the assistance is increased to Rs. 25,000 along with four grams of 22 ct gold for making *thirumangalyam*; G.O. Ms. No. 43, dated 17.5.2011 the quantum of marriage assistance is increased to Rs. 50,000 to women graduates/ diploma holders along with four grams of 22 ct at free of cost for making *thirumangalyam*.


24 Statistical Handbook of Tamil Nadu- 2008.


26 Government of Tamil Nadu, G.O. No. 673 S.W.D, dated 20.2.1982; G.O. Ms. No. 42, dated 17.5.2011, the assistance is increased to Rs. 25,000 along with four grams of 22 ct gold for making *thirumangalyam*; G.O. Ms. No. 43, dated 17.5.2011 the quantum of marriage assistance is increased to Rs. 50,000 to women graduates/ diploma holders along with four grams of 22 ct at free of cost for making *thirumangalyam*.

27 Statistical Handbook of Tamil Nadu- 2008
Anjugam Ammaiyar Ninaivu Kalappu Thirumana Nidhi Udhavi Thittam²⁸

(Now renamed as Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Ninaivu Inter-caste Marriage Assistance Scheme²⁹)- In order to promote untouchability in the community by way of promoting inter-caste marriages, the Tamil Nadu Government has announced this scheme. In the case of marriage between an SC/ST with the bride/bride groom of another community of different strata, an amount of Rs. 20,000³⁰ is provided as incentive. Application for sanction of incentive should be submitted within 2 years of marriage. During the year 2007-'08, 2265 persons benefitted from the scheme.³¹

Sathiyavani Muthu Ammaiyar Memorial Free Supply of Sewing Machine Assistance Scheme- This scheme has been introduced with a view to increase employment opportunities and to provide self employment to widows, destitute women and physically handicapped men or women coming from poor families. Under the scheme sewing machine is provided to those category of persons whose annual income does not exceed Rs. 12,000. The person receiving the assistance should have the knowledge of tailoring and should be within the age limit of 20 to 40 years.

Sivagami Ammaiyar Ninaivu Girl Child Protection Scheme- The objective of the scheme is to prevent female infanticide, discourage preference for male child and to promote family planning. The scheme also ensures equal opportunity in education for girl children on par with the male children.

³⁰ Government of Tamil Nadu, G.O. No. 673, S.W.D, dated 20.2.1982; G.O. Ms. No. 42, dated 17.5.2011, the assistance is increased to Rs. 25,000 along with four grams of 22 ct gold for making thirumangalyam; G.O. Ms. No. 43, dated 17.5.2011 the quantum of marriage assistance is increased to Rs. 50,000 to women graduates/ diploma holders along with four grams of 22 ct at free of cost for making thirumangalyam.
³¹ Statistical Handbook of Tamil Nadu- 2008.
Under Scheme I, an amount of Rs. 22,200 is deposited with Tamil Nadu Power Finance and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd., Chennai, in the name of the girl child with no other male child in the family and when either of the parents has undergone sterilization before the age of 35 years. A monthly payment of Rs. 150 is released to the children from the interest accrued from the deposit to take care of the education of the child from standard I to IX. On the 20th year of the deposit the terminal benefit is released to the girl to enable her to pursue higher education or to defray the marriage expenses.

Under Scheme II in the case of families with two girl children and no male child, an initial deposit of Rs. 15,200 is made in the name of each of the girl child with Tamil Nadu Power Finance and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd., Chennai. A monthly payment of Rs. 150 is released to each of the child from the interest accrued from the deposit to take care of the education of the child from standard I to IX. On the 20th year of the deposit the terminal benefit is released to the girl to enable her to pursue higher education or to defray the marriage expenses.

For Scheme I, family’s annual income should be below Rs. 50,000 and for Scheme II, below Rs. 24,000.

**National Maternity Benefit Scheme (Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Ninaivu Mahapperu Nithi Udhavi Thittam)**

Recognizing the need of nutritious food, rest and protection from over work during the period of pregnancy to women, Government of Tamil Nadu has been providing monetary assistance to such women.
Scheme for Free Supply of Books for the Children of Poor Widows

Under this scheme free text books are distributed to the children of poor widows whose annual family income is less than Rs. 12,000. The value of free note books/ text books supplied is as follows:

Standard I to II: Rs. 50 per child

Standard III to V: Rs. 125 per child

Standard VI to VIII: Rs. 175 per child

Standard IX to X: Rs. 300 per child

Standard XI to XII: Rs. 600 per child

Special Incentive Scheme for Encouraging Girl Education

Under the special scheme of encouraging girls education brought out by the Chief Minister, in order to ensure 100 percent enrolment of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe girls in schools, a sum of Rs. 500/- is given for 10 months at the rate of Rs. 50/- per month for studying in Standards III to V of the educationally backward districts viz., Dharmapuri, Thiruvannamalai, Cuddalore, Vilupuram, Virudhunagar, Kancheepuram, Tiruvallur, Vellore, Salem, Namakkal, Tiruchirapalli, Perambalur, Karur and Nagapattinam. Similarly to encourage the continuance of their studies after entering VI standard, Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe girls are given a sum of Rs. 1000/- at the rate of Rs. 100/- per month for 10 months. Special coaching classes have been conducted for the low performing SC/ST children along with the disabled to reduce dropout and repetition rates.

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33 Ibid., p. 114.
Scheme for Creches for Children of Working and Ailing mothers in Tamil Nadu through Social Welfare Board

Objective or expected results of the scheme are to prevent children who are forced to look after their younger siblings from engaging in anti-social activities and encouraging them to go to schools. Under the Scheme, children of working or ailing mothers in age group of 0-5 years are covered. A grant of Rs. 25,410/- for each crèche is released through Tamil Nadu Social Welfare Board, which runs this scheme through selected Mahalir Mandrams.\textsuperscript{34}

National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)

NPEGEL Programme was launched on 26\textsuperscript{th} September, 2003 in Natham Block Dindigul District, one among the 13 educationally backward blocks in Tamil Nadu. This programme was being implemented in 13 blocks of 8 districts where female literacy is below the national average and the gender gap is above the national average. To implement the programme, 144 Model Cluster Schools have been identified.\textsuperscript{35}

Free Bicycles Scheme

A scheme of supply of free bicycles to Scheduled caste/Scheduled Tribe/Scheduled Caste convert girls studying in XI and XII Standards are being implemented by the Adi-Dravida Welfare Department of Tamil Nadu Government. As per this scheme, 56,525 free bicycles were supplied to girls during the academic year 2001-2002 at a cost of Rs. 7.69 crores. Similarly 47,980 girls were supplied with free bicycles at a cost of Rs. 6.91 crores during the academic year 2002-2003.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p. 138.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 115.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 112.
Service Homes

Widows, destitutes, orphans who are helpless and have no place to go need institutional care. Government has established Service Home, in order to provide protection to such destitute women and to help them re-build their life once again. The Department of Social Welfare runs 6 Service Homes, one each at Tambaram, Cuddalore, Salem. Thanjavur, Tirunelveli and Karaikudi. The Service Homes provide accommodation, food, education and vocational training to the inmates. The women are allowed to stay with their children for whom necessary educational facilities are also provided by the Service Homes.

The Tamil Nadu Government has also set up 25 Government orphanages in which children of widows, destitute and other socially and economically challenged children are admitted. Boys stay and study up to 5th standard. Girls stay up to plus 2 stage. The scheme provides for feeding charges at the rate of Rs. 225 per child per month and bedding charges of Rs. 150 per child per annum (Rs. 250 in Nilgiris), @ Rs. 1000 for 20 orphanages and Rs. 500/- for 5 orphanages towards medical expenses, Rs. 50/- per child per annum for chappals.37

Working Women’s Hostel

Due to urbanization and educational and economic facilities extended towards the advancement of women, more and more women are seeking employment opportunities in modern days. This demand forces them to be away from their homes and families. As the opportunities for women to take up employment are increasing, the demand for accommodation is also on the increase. Most of these women need good accommodation at reasonable rent and a safe environment to stay comfortably and

37 Ibid., p. 132.
peacefully. In order to take care of such working women, Government of Tamil Nadu has established Working Women Hostels. As per the scheme, the income of the working women should not exceed Rs. 10,000/- per month. Period of stay is 3 years. Stay beyond 3 years will be permitted at the discretion of the hostel authorities concerned. Inmates should pay as rent Rs. 200/- per month in Chennai and Rs. 150/- per month in other Districts. Mess and Electricity charges are met by dividing system.\textsuperscript{38}

**Nutrition Projects**

In 1956 a school mid-day meals scheme was in operation in the erstwhile Madras State. It was functional in 8000 elementary schools covering 2 lakh children. Initially it was started with voluntary contributions from the local people. Within a year the government started contributing 6 paise per child and the local contribution was 4 paise per child. In 1961 CARE offered food commodity assistance and the scheme was extended to cover 16 lakh children in 30,000 schools.

In the year 1967 onwards Central Kitchens were introduced. 200 feeding days were prescribed with 100 days of rice and 100 days of CARE commodity (bulgar wheat). Starting July 1, 1982, the scheme was enlarged by the then Chief Minister, M.G. Ramachandran, which has caught the imagination of the Central Government, which is supporting similar schemes in other States.

Over the years the Tamil Nadu government has made attempts to combine the Noon Meal Programme with other services like health care, immunization, growth monitoring, pre and post natal care for women etc. The scheme, which has been started as a feeding programme to combat hunger, soon transformed into a nutrition cum health care scheme. This has been done under two nutrition and child development

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 135.
schemes, i.e., the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS), which started as a small pilot scheme in 1976 and the TN Integrated Nutrition Project which started its phase I in the year 1980. These schemes were later on integrated with the Noon Meal Programme infrastructure. The Tamil Nadu Integrated Nutrition Project operating in 19 districts covering 318 blocks is a comprehensive scheme covering nutrition for children under 36 months, children of 3-6 years age group and pregnant and nursing mothers. Now any child between the age of 2 to 15 years is eligible for a noon meal at the cost of the state. Although there is an income criterion, in practice any willing child in the eligible age group is allowed to participate in the scheme.

Under the ICDS, Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA), a centrally-sponsored scheme, which covers girls of the age group of 11-18 years, is implemented in 9 districts viz: Chennai, Cuddalore, Kanyakumari, Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Salem, Tiruchi and Tiruvannamalai. This scheme has nutrition and non-nutrition components. Under the non-nutrition component, certain health services, social services, vocational training and life skill education are provided. Another centrally-sponsored scheme implemented under the ICDS is Kishori Sakti Yojana, which is implemented in 295 blocks of twenty three districts for the benefit of adolescent girls to create awareness about their legal rights, to improve literacy, health, hygiene aspects and to provide occupational skills to shape them into better citizens.

Evaluation of the impact of the scheme on children in Coimbatore district found that the programme brought substantial gains, particularly for female children.

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39 Government of Tamil Nadu, G.O.No.22, Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme, dated 4-2-2004

The State Commission for Women had started a pilot project for gender sensitization of the police. A massive gender-sensitization programme was taken up, to cover all the men police personnel including senior officers in the state. A capsule course on re-sensitization was also conducted in batches for all women police personnel. Gender as a subject finds a place in the training modules of police training institutions.42

**Scheme for Free Gas Connection to the Newly Married Couples who are Below Poverty Line**

This scheme was initiated during 2001-2002 to reduce indoor pollution and relieve the drudgery of poor women. 3686 newly married couples of SHG families have been benefited and a sum of Rs. 28.84 lakhs have been deposited for the first gas cylinder connection to the respective gas agencies in the districts. The scheme was extended to the newly married women who are also benefited under various marriage schemes implemented by the Government. For the year 2004-2005, budget provision was made for Rs. 50 lakhs for the benefit of another 5,000 newly married women.43

Because of legislation, democracy and progress, women stand a better chance of redress or have more options available. Modern state is very much concerned with the well being of an individual, particularly of the women as an integral part of the society, with a view to provide social justice to the common man and specially to the women, the state has evolved new strategy. The social justice is being provided by adopting and implementing various schemes. The educated women are increasingly becoming aware

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of the necessity to fight unitedly for the status of equality in all social, economic and political sphere of life. For securing protection and safeguards, women generally and through voluntary social organisation specially have to fight and demand their rights.