



## A study on social welfare measures in Tamil Nadu with special reference to women empowerment

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### Abstract

This study examines the diverse social welfare initiatives enacted in Tamil Nadu, emphasizing their effects on women's empowerment. The research examines targeted programs designed to improve women's economic, social, and political position within a historical framework of gender inequality. The study used a mixed-methods approach, using quantitative data from government publications in conjunction with qualitative interviews of recipients and stakeholders. Essential findings indicate that measures including financial assistance, skills training programs, and healthcare services substantially enhance women's livelihoods and autonomy. Nonetheless, obstacles remain, such as societal shame and insufficient access to resources. The study concludes with recommendations for policy improvements and community involvement initiatives to further empower women in Tamil Nadu, fostering a more inclusive and fair society.

**Keywords:** Social welfare, women empowerment, economic status, Tamil Nadu, financial aid, skill development, healthcare services.

### Introduction

#### Social Welfare Measures in Tamil Nadu

Social welfare initiatives are fundamental to progressive governance, designed to enhance quality of life and guarantee equitable access to opportunities for all societal segments. The government of Tamil Nadu, a southern Indian state, has instituted a variety of social welfare initiatives aimed at tackling diverse socio-economic issues and fostering inclusive development. These initiatives specifically target vulnerable groups, especially women, who are integral to the state's social and economic structure.

#### The Significance of Women Empowerment

Women's empowerment is essential for social welfare, crucial for attaining sustainable development and social fairness. Empowering women requires not just the provision of equal opportunity but also the rectification of institutional impediments that have historically impeded their advancement. It includes elements such as economic autonomy, educational access, healthcare availability, and safeguards against violence and prejudice. In Tamil Nadu, elevating women's position is essential for attaining overarching developmental objectives, including poverty alleviation, health improvement, and economic advancement.

#### Objectives of the Study

This study intends to rigorously analyze the social welfare initiatives enacted in Tamil Nadu, concentrating on their effects on women's empowerment. The aims encompass:

1. Evaluating the Scope and Efficacy: To assess the breadth of welfare initiatives aimed at women and determine their effectiveness in fostering empowerment.
2. Offer Recommendations: Propose enhancements for current programs and promote new initiatives or tactics to bolster women's empowerment in Tamil Nadu.
3. Inform Policy: Offer insights that can guide policymakers and stakeholders regarding the efficacy

and areas for enhancement in social welfare policies pertaining to women.

This study will provide vital insights into how targeted welfare initiatives might mitigate gender gaps and promote societal advancement in Tamil Nadu. It will also establish a framework for assessing analogous programs in other locations, facilitating the promotion of best practices and enhancing policy outcomes nationwide.

#### Review of Literature

Dr. Anshuman Sahoo (2013), "Self Help Group & Woman Empowerment: A Study on some Selected SHGs". SHG is doing right movement for the empowerment of women. Many women strongly connected with this movement but women are not still empowered as expected. It works for the socially, economically development of women in our society.

Dr. Rajeshwari M. Shettar (2015), "A Study on Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India". We all see that women empowerment is a movement which is spread in all over the world but its result is not sufficient. Somewhere the status of lower and upper gender prevails on the maximum level in our society. We can do this only by giving them job, education and awareness of this topic.

Jitendra Shinde (2015), "Women's Empowerment Through Education". This study suggests the role of education in women empowerment in our society. Education is the best option to give details about the rights and freedom. In all over the world, women are getting awareness through education and also help in the movement of women empowerment

Sujit Sarkar (2015), "A Brief Discussion on Empowerment of Women in India". This paper tells us about the importance of education in India for women empowerment. Indian government has started many girls school, Girls College for the education of women but still women are not getting education in our society. Very few women achieve a high position in the society.

**Research Methodology**

This descriptive research study seeks to deliver a thorough analysis of social welfare initiatives in Tamil Nadu, concentrating on their effects on women's empowerment. The study will delineate current programs, evaluate their efficacy, and pinpoint areas for enhancement. Data was gathered from diverse reports issued by international organizations, including the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, as well as from the Ministries and Departments of the Government of India and the Government of Tamil Nadu. Efforts are made to prevent bias.

**Descriptive Methodology**

The project will employ a descriptive research design to thoroughly delineate and document the characteristics, efficacy, and impact of social welfare initiatives for women in Tamil Nadu

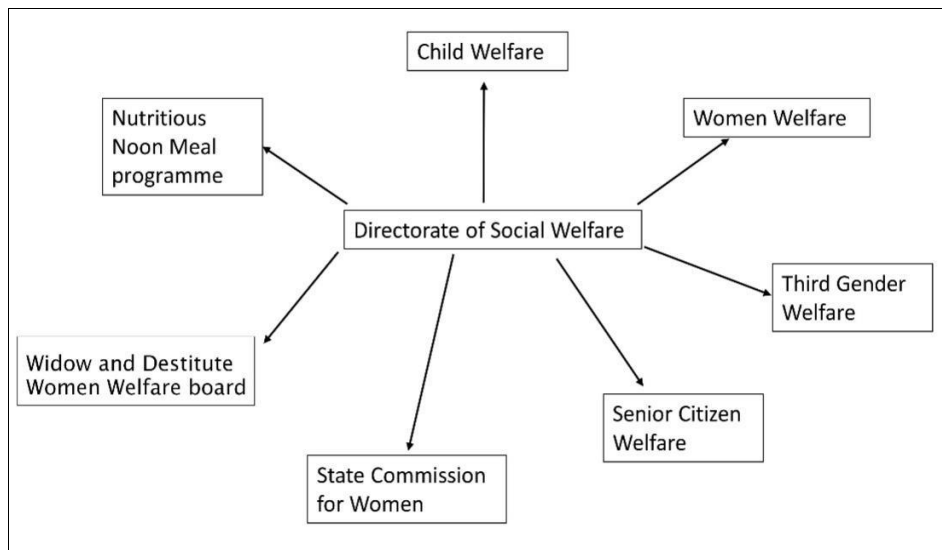
- **Document Analysis:** Examination of governmental reports, program assessments, policy documents, and scholarly literature to comprehend current measurements and their recorded impacts.
- **Government Reports:** Examine reports from agencies including the Department of Social Welfare and Women Empowerment.
- **NGO Publications:** Evaluate materials from entities engaged in women's empowerment.

This descriptive research offers a comprehensive analysis of social welfare initiatives for women in Tamil Nadu, emphasizing their influence on women's empowerment. The study provides significant insights and ideas for improving assistance for women by documenting present practices, evaluating their effectiveness, and addressing difficulties. Executing these ideas can result in more efficient programs and more empowerment for women in Tamil Nadu.

**Social Welfare and Women Empowerment Department**

The Social Welfare and Women Empowerment Department is implementing several welfare programs to improve the nutrition, safety, and socioeconomic security of children, women, elderly adults, and transgender people. The Directorate of Social Welfare runs Marriage Assistance, Girl Child Protection, the Nutritious Meal Programme, and school uniforms. Service Homes in seven districts protect underprivileged, abandoned women and girls freed from child marriage. Twenty-eight Working Women Hostels provide safe, secure lodging with facilities and sanitary cuisine at a reasonable price for remote working women who work in district headquarters and industrial regions. For self-employment and economic independence, 98 Women Tailoring Industrial Co-operative Societies and one Transgender Tailoring Society were founded. Different social institutions help seniors and transgender people live decent lives.

**Social Welfare & Women Empowerment Department, Government of Tamilnadu, India Organisational Chart**



**Chart 1**

**List of Schemes for Women/Girls Welfare by Tamil Nadu State Government**

Empowering girls and women is crucial for the social and economic advancement of every nation. The Tamil Nadu state government has initiated multiple projects to enhance education, health, safety, and livelihood. These initiatives seek to ensure equal opportunities, rights, and dignity throughout all aspects of life. The Tamil Nadu government has initiated several programs for girls.

1. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)
2. Chief Minister's Girl Child Protection Scheme

3. Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar Ninaivu Marriage Assistance Scheme
4. Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme
5. Mahalir Thittam
6. Girl Child Protection Scheme etc.

**Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)**

The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) initiative, launched in 2004 as part of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, aims to improve educational access for girls from disadvantaged communities in India. These residential

schools serve girls aged 10-14 years, offering lodging, meals, and high-quality education in rural and disadvantaged regions. The KGBV initiative seeks to enhance school enrollment, bolster retention rates, and empower girls via extensive academic and vocational training. KGBVs, financed by the central government and administered by state authorities, have achieved notable progress in advancing gender equality and educational accessibility. Nonetheless, obstacles such as infrastructural constraints and socio-cultural impediments persist in affecting the efficacy of the program.

#### **Chief Minister's Girl Child Protection Scheme**

The Girl Child Protection Scheme is a premier initiative of the Tamil Nadu government, inaugurated in 1992. It offers financial support to families with one or two daughters, with the objective of preventing female infanticide and fostering gender equality. The program comprises two elements:

##### **The scheme aims to:**

- Promote the enrollment and retention of female students in educational institutions, ensuring their education extends to at least the intermediate level.
- Encourage girls to marry solely after reaching the age of 18.
- Encourage parents to embrace the family planning standard of having two female offspring.
- Safeguard the rights of the female child and facilitate her social and financial empowerment.
- Enhance the family's role in elevating the status of the girl kid.

#### **Single Girl Child Component**

This component provides a fixed deposit of Rs. 50,000 to the family of a sole female child. The deposit matures upon her reaching 18 years of age and becoming eligible for marriage. She is permitted to withdraw the sum along with accrued interest for her educational or matrimonial expenditures. To access this benefit, the family must meet several criteria, including registering her birth, ensuring her immunization, enrolling her in school, and refraining from marrying her before the age of 18.

#### **Two Girl Children Component**

This component provides a fixed deposit of Rs. 25,000 to the households of two female children. The savings mature upon reaching 18 years of age and becoming eligible for marriage. They may withdraw the funds, inclusive of interest, for educational or matrimonial expenditures. To access this benefit, families must meet specific criteria, including registering births, ensuring immunization, enrolling in school, undergoing sterilization, and refraining from marrying before the age of 18.

#### **Chief Minister's Girl Child Education Scheme**

The Chief Minister's Girl Child Education Scheme is an initiative of the Tamil Nadu government that commenced in 2011. The program offers incentives to girls who complete their 10th and 12th grades, promoting their pursuit of further education. The program comprises two elements:

##### **Class 10th Incentive**

This program provides a monetary reward of Rs. 3,000 to girls who achieve at least 60% marks in their class 10

examinations. The incentive is deposited into a bank account under the girl's name and may be withdrawn upon her completion of class 12. To qualify for this benefit, the girl must come from a family with an annual income below Rs. 50,000 and must have attended a government or government-aided school.

##### **Class 12th Incentive**

This component pays Rs. 5,000 to ladies who complete class 12th with 60%. After enrolling in a degree or diploma program at a recognized institution, the girl can withdraw the incentive from her bank account. To receive this benefit, the girl must have attended a government or government-aided school and come from a family earning less than Rs. 50,000.

Girls are motivated to finish secondary and higher secondary school and study more thanks to the Chief Minister's Girl Child Education Scheme. The strategy has also reduced dropouts and boosted girls' exam performance. The Directorate of Government Examinations, Tamil Nadu reported that ladies passed class 10th and 12th exams more than boys in 2020-21.

#### **Chief Minister's Ujjawala Scheme**

The Tamil Nadu government launched the Chief Minister's Ujjawala Scheme in 2015. The scheme supports trafficked and sexually exploited women and girls with rehabilitation, counseling, legal aid, and vocational training. The scheme has four parts:

We strive to combat trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls by raising awareness, sensitizing stakeholders, boosting community vigilance, and offering alternative livelihood opportunities.

- The Rescue component conducts raids, rescue operations, and medical exams to rescue women and girls from trafficking and sexual exploitation.
- Rehabilitating rescued women and girls from trafficking and sexual exploitation involves giving shelter, food, clothing, counseling, legal aid, and health care.
- This component strives to reintegrate women and girls who have been rehabilitated from trafficking and sexual exploitation by offering vocational training, education, employment, and social assistance.
- Trafficking and sexual exploitation victims' rights and dignity have been protected by the Chief Minister's Ujjawala Scheme.

This initiative has also given them a dignified and productive living. The Tamil Nadu Department of Social Welfare reports that the project has helped over 2,000 women and girls.

#### **Mahalir Thittam Scheme**

The Mahalir Thittam Scheme is an exemplary initiative of the Tamil Nadu government that commenced in 1998. The initiative facilitates the establishment of self-help groups (SHGs) among women in your locality and offers numerous advantages. The program comprises three elements:

##### **Formation and Development of SHGs**

This component lets you create SHGs with 12–20 women with comparable interests and needs. Your club saves a monthly sum and lends it for various causes. Banks and

other financial organizations offer low-interest loans to your group. Your group receives training, capacity building, and exposure visits to learn.

### **Economic Activities**

This tool helps you build SHGs with 12–20 women with comparable interests and needs. Members of your group save a set amount each month and lend it for various purposes. At low interest rates, banks and other financial institutions can lend to your group. You and your group learn through training, capacity building, and exposure visits.

### **Social Empowerment**

This enables your group participate in social growth and wellbeing. Your group participates in government health, education, sanitation, environment, and legal issues programs. For advocacy and collaborative action, you and your group join federations and networks. The Mahalir Thittam Scheme has drastically improved your socioeconomic status, self-reliance, and confidence. The system reduced poverty, unemployment, and gender discrimination. The plan encompassed nearly 10 lakh SHGs with 1.5 crore women members in 2020-21, according to the Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women (TNCDW).

### **Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar Ninaivu Marriage Assistance Scheme**

In many cultures, it is a traditional cultural obligation for a lady to don a gold "Thirumangalyam" at marriage, and the parents commemorate the wedding ceremony in accordance with their customs and cultural heritage. Nevertheless, parents from economically disadvantaged backgrounds struggle to manage the financial obligations associated with their daughters' marriages. The Government developed Marriage Assistance Schemes to support parents and motivate them to educate their girls until the appropriate age. Five Marriage Assistance Schemes are established to support the daughters of impoverished parents, orphaned girls, widows remarrying, the marriages of widows' daughters, and inter-caste couples.

Eligibility Criteria for availing assistance under the five Marriage Assistance Schemes

#### **Scheme-I**

Education Qualification: The bride should have studied 10<sup>th</sup> Std pass, Bride should have studied up to V Std in case of Scheduled Tribe.

Cash Assistance: Rs.25,000 paid through ECS along with 8gms Gold coin

#### **Scheme-II**

Education Qualification: Degree holders from regular colleges, Distance education / Government recognized Open University are eligible, Diploma holders should have qualified from the Institution recognized by the Directorate of Technical Education, Government of Tamil Nadu.

Cash Assistance: Rs.50,000 paid through ECS along with 8gm Gold Coin

### **Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar Ninaivu Puthumai Penn Thittam**

In the year 2022-23, the Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar Ninaivu Marriage Assistance Scheme has been restructured as the Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar Higher Education Assurance Scheme. Under this program, all girls who attended government schools from 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade and enrolled in colleges for higher education through standard courses are eligible to receive Rs. 1,000 each month till they complete their degree.

### **Prominent Characteristics of this Scheme**

This initiative offers financial incentives to female students, aiming to effect behavioral changes that reduce early marriage rates, increase enrollment in higher education, and enhance the retention of female students in higher education. The Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar Higher Education Assurance Scheme aims to empower girls, particularly those who have graduated from Government schools.

1. Enhances the educational position of female students and fosters enthusiasm to pursue higher education, so providing a stronger foundation in both economic and social domains, including the advancement of gender parity at elevated levels.
2. Facilitates the development and engagement of a proficient female workforce.
3. The incentive reward of Rs. 1,000 per month per beneficiary facilitates girl children in pursuing school without incurring supplementary fees or obstacles.
4. Facilitate the engagement of female students in public arenas and augment employment prospects.
5. Guarantees the socio-economic empowerment of women.
6. Mitigates dropout rates beyond higher secondary education and enhances the retention percentage in higher education.

### **Dr. Dharmambal Ammaiyar Ninaivu Widow Remarriage Assistance Scheme**

This plan provides financial support of Rs.15,000 via ECS, Rs.10,000 in the form of a National Savings Certificate, and an 8-gram 22-carat gold coin. No income ceiling or educational degree is required to profit from this plan. Degree and certificate recipients get 50,000, of which 30,000 is disbursed by ECS and 20,000 is provided as a National Savings Certificate, accompanied by an 8-gram 22-carat gold coin.

### **E.V.R. Maniammaiyar Ninaivu Marriage Assistance Scheme For Daughters Of Poor Widows**

Under this plan, participants receive financial support of Rs.25,000 along with an 8-gram 22-carat gold coin. To qualify for this scheme, the family's annual income must not surpass Rs.72,000. A amount of Rs. 50,000/- and an 8gm gold coin are awarded to beneficiaries upon graduation.

### **Annai Therasa Ninaivu Marriage Assistance Scheme For Orphan Girls**

No income ceiling or educational degree is required to profit from this plan. Under this program, participants receive financial support of Rs. 25,000 along with an 8-gram 22-carat gold coin, while graduates are awarded Rs. 50,000 along with an 8-gram gold coin.

### **Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Ninaivu Inter-Caste Marriage Assistance Scheme**

The bride should have finished 10th grade. This initiative provides Rs.25,000 in cash assistance, Rs.15,000 through ECS and Rs.10,000 through a National Saving Certificate and an 8-gram 22-carat gold coin. Degree/diploma holders receive Rs.50,000, Rs.30,000 from ECS, Rs.20,000 from National Saving Certificate, and an 8-gram 22-carat gold coin. No income or educational requirement is set.

#### **Types of Inter-caste Marriage**

**Category – I:** Either of the spouse of the Inter-caste married couples should be from Scheduled caste or Scheduled Tribe while the other spouse may be from any other Community.

**Category – II:** Either of the spouse should be from forward or unreserved community and the other spouse from BC/MBC.

### **Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme (MRMBS)**

The Tamilnadu Maternity Benefit Scheme was created in 1987 to lower IMR and MMR. Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy administered Rs.200/- to pregnant mothers from 03.06.1989 (G.O(Ms) No.516, Backward Classes Welfare, Nutritious Meal Programme and Social Welfare Department, dated:31.05.1989).

The National Maternity Benefit Scheme became the Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Scheme. Under the scheme, poor pregnant women received Rs.1000/month for 6 months from 7th month pregnancy (3 months before and 3 months after delivery) subject to the conditions in G.O(Ms) No.184 dated 11.09.2006. The Hon'ble Chief Minister increased it to Rs.12,000 per beneficiary on 01.06.2011. On 20.02.2017, G.O(Ms) No.40 increased this to Rs.18,000 per beneficiary. The 02.04.2018 G.O (Ms) No.118 outlines the Rs.18,000 disbursement parameters.

The Indian government introduced Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, a 60:40 Central-State split for qualified pregnant and nursing mothers with their first child. The government would administer the Pradhan Mantri Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) scheme in collaboration with the Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme (State scheme) for qualified prime moms.

#### **Other Social welfare Measures**

##### **Free travel for women in Government Buses**

Since 2021, complimentary travel services have been extended to all women, including working women, transgender individuals, and girls engaged in higher education, on standard fare city buses managed by the Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation.

##### **Service Homes**

Services houses care for widows, deserted spouses, economically disadvantaged women, and girls rescued from child marriage who are neglected by their families. Tamil Nadu has seven government service homes: Chennai, Salem, Cuddalore, Thanjavur, Tirunelveli, Sivagangai, and Krishnagiri.

Service Homes offer housing, food, and medical care. Inmates who dropped out can attend school again. Widows and divorced wives can raise their children in these Service Homes. A mother can have three kids max. Girl children

receive education up to XII Standard, while boy children receive education up to V Standard in the Service Home. They also learn vocational skills for economic sustainability. These homes offer computer training, spoken English, and career and further education counseling.

##### **Higher Education to Girls**

The Government is offering financial help of Rs.50,000 for professional courses and Rs.30,000 for degree or diploma courses to ex-inmates who have completed +2 in Service Homes and Government Children Homes for the purpose of pursuing higher studies. A multitude of girls from 26 Government Children Homes and 7 Service Homes benefited from this project. Training in the repair of electronic and electrical consumer appliances, plumbing, and related fields is provided under the Tamil Nadu Skill Development Mission to inmates of Government Children Homes, Government Service Homes, and recipients of the Chief Minister's Girl Child Protection Scheme.

##### **Widow and Destitute Welfare Board**

The Government of Tamil Nadu established the Widow and Destitute Women Welfare Board through G.O.(Ms) No.56, SW & WE Dept dated 02.09.2022, to tackle the diverse challenges encountered by vulnerable women, including widows, abandoned women, orphaned women, and spinsters. The Board aims to enhance their livelihood status by implementing essential schemes that provide education, healthcare, employment opportunities, the formation of specialized Self Help Groups, and skill training, thereby enabling them to lead safe and dignified lives within society.

##### **Tamil Nadu Widows & Destitute Women Welfare Board**

To address the myriad challenges encountered by widows, women abandoned by their spouses, marginalized women, destitute women, and spinsters in Tamil Nadu, and to enhance their livelihoods through education, health, employment, the establishment of specialized self-help groups, and the provision of vocational training, the "Widows and Destitute Women Welfare Board" was established on September 2, 2022, to ensure their safety and dignity within society. The Widows and Destitute Women Welfare Board operates with 10 official members and 14 non-official members, chaired by the Minister of Social Welfare and Women Empowerment Department.

##### **Family Counseling Centre**

Victims of domestic violence, including women, children, and family members, receive counseling, referrals, and rehabilitative services from relevant departments, facilitated by two qualified counselors at each of the five family counseling centers operated by Non-Governmental Organizations in the districts of Chennai, Thiruvavur, Villupuram, Theni, and Sivagangai, with financial support from the State.

##### **Special programmes**

###### **Free supply of sewing machine scheme**

The Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme Department is offering free sewing machines to widows, deserted wives, economically disadvantaged women, differently abled people, and socially affected women to boost their self-employment income.

The Department of Textiles and Handlooms supplies the 32 Social Welfare Department-controlled cutting centers with Free Supply of Uniform Scheme textiles. The Tailoring societies stitch the uniforms from the material cut in the cutting centers and deliver them to the 413 AEEOs and 67 DEOs of the education department.

15500 advanced sewing machines were given to Women Industrial Co-operative Societies with 10% government subsidy. This has raised consistent stitching quality and Women Industrial Co-operative Tailoring Societies' output.

**Women Industrial Cooperative Societies**

To guarantee gender equality, empower women with skills and knowledge to become independent. Economic freedom is the only way to empower women. Empowerment requires meeting a woman's economic requirements. With this in mind, the Directorate of Social Welfare is implementing

socio-economic development initiatives through Women Industrial Co-operative Societies. Collective action helps women in co-operative organizations better their socioeconomic standing. These Industrial Co-operative Societies are for disadvantaged women only. These societies accept 18-40-year-old women below the poverty level and offer them decent jobs.

1 Transgender Industrial Co-operative Society and 99 Women Industrial Co-operative Societies are under Directorate of Social Welfare jurisdiction. All societies stitch and supply uniforms to schoolchildren benefiting from PurachiThalaivarM.G.R. Nutritious Meal Programme, Adi Dravidar, Tribal Welfare, Most Backward Class, and Minority Welfare Departments.

Mission Director of Integrated Child Development Services Scheme oversees 25 women-weaning food manufacturing cooperatives.

**Table 1:** Details of Co-Operative Societies and members enrolled there in are as follows

Sl. No	Type of Society	No. of Co-Operative Societies	No of members
1	Women Tailoring Industrial Co-Operative Societies	84	80592
2	Women Stationery Industrial Co-Operative Societies (Also engaged in tailoring)	15	4428
3	Weaning food Manufacturing Women Industrial Co-Operative Societies	25	1350
4	Transgender Industrial Co-operative Society	3	68
	<b>Total</b>	125	86438

**Table 2:** Colours of the uniform provided under the free supply of uniform:

Variety of Uniform	Colour of Uniform
Boys – 1. Half pant 2. Full pant	Dark Green Drill Sandal Drill
Boys – Shirts 1. 1-5 <sup>th</sup> std 2. 6-8 <sup>th</sup> Std	Light Green Checked Sandal checked
Girls – 1-5 <sup>th</sup> std- a. Skirt b. Blouse	Dark Green Casement Light Green Checked
Girls – 6-8 <sup>th</sup> std a. Salwar bottom b. Top c. Overcoat	Sandal Casement Sandal checked Sandal Casement

Special Uniforms provided to the children in Hilly areas like Nilgiris

Students in hilly area schools in 16 districts, including Nilgiris, benefiting from PTMGR Nutritious Meal Programme receive fullpants with full-sleeved shirts for boys and fullhand Salwar kameez with overcoat and dupatta for girls.

Societies have added Associate Members to stitch 4 uniforms. Women members received special training in Salwar Kameez and Full Pants sewing.

**Nirbhaya Fund**

The prevalence of heinous crimes such as rapes, murders, and acid attacks in India makes women feel unsafe. The aftermath of the Nirbhaya tragedy led to the development of a Rs.1000 crore corpus fund by the Indian government to protect women from abuse. The Indian government has allocated Rs.2919 crore under the Nirbhaya Fund to create safe cities, which might serve as a model for the country. The Indian government has selected eight cities, including

Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Hyderabad, and Lucknow, for safe city development. The goal is to ensure women feel comfortable in public spaces. The fund aims to establish a GPS-equipped ambulance network for speedy response. This cash may eventually be used to provide panic buttons on mobile phones for emergency calls by women. An upcoming forensic science facility in Chandigarh aims to identify and punish perpetrators who commit crimes against women. We will implement more deterrent measures, such as educating and equipping police to effectively combat violence against women. Plans include installing cameras in strategic locations and implementing video surveillance. The decision has been made to deploy face recognition analytics and tracking to identify criminals. States like Delhi have launched police patrol vans to discourage crime. The government plans to develop Police Didi programs with female officers. Police will closely monitor criminals and prevent crimes under this program. Police will enhance security in public transportation facilities. We will use Nirbhaya Fund to create help-desk services for women who have experienced violence. The decision has been made to open all police facilities to combat violence against women. The government is considering 24/7 vigilance and patrolling of cities and metropolitan areas. Tamil Nadu boosts government job reservation for women from 30% to 40%.

**Maternity Leave Policy**

Women in Tamil Nadu government departments are eligible for a 270-day maternity leave period. According to the Government of Tamil Nadu (2016), married women with fewer than two surviving children can choose to take leave for child delivery from pre-confinement to post-confinement recuperation. Women working in Central Government Departments are limited to 180 days of leave (Central Civil

Services Leave Amendment Rules, 2016). Women working in the private sector must take a 26-week maternity leave for their first two children. Private sector working women with more than two children are entitled to 12 weeks of full-pay maternity leave (Maternity Benefit Amendment Act, 2016).

### **Establishment of University for Women**

In 1984, the Tamil Nadu government founded Mother Teresa Women's University to empower women holistically through education. The motto of the university is 'Towards Equal Status'. The university aims to monitor women's education across the state, establish research facilities, fulfill social duties, and provide consulting services.

### **Micro credit for Women (Mahila Samridhi Yojana)**

This plan provides loans to women self-help groups for small companies, repayable over three years. Beneficiaries of this initiative are women SHGs with a minimum of 20 members from backward, most backward, or denotified communities. Loan support is limited to Rs.10 lakhs each SHG and Rs.50,000/- every member, with an annual interest rate of 4%. The Tamil Nadu Backward Classes Economic Development Corporation Limited oversees the implementation of this policy through District Central Co-operative Banks, Urban Co-operative Banks, and Primary Agricultural Co-operative Societies.

These schemes show how the Tamil Nadu government is improving the lives of girls and women. They have various benefits, such as:

- Better education and career prospects
- More income and opportunities
- More choice and control over their lives
- More safety and respect
- Better health and happiness

Therefore, we urge you to spread awareness and support these initiatives that make a positive difference for girls and women in Tamil Nadu. Together, we can create a more equal and inclusive society for everyone.

### **Recommendation and Suggestion for improvements to policies and practices to better support women's safety and empowerment in Tamil Nadu.**

The following policy and practice changes are suggested to empower Tamil Nadu women:

1. **Strengthen Legal Frameworks:** Update and implement laws for women's safety, while increasing penalties for noncompliance to improve protection and accountability.
2. **Improve Implementation and Coordination:** Coordinate government agencies, NGOs, and community groups for a unified approach and streamlined abuse reporting.
3. **Expand Support Services:** Increase shelters, support centers, funds, and offer legal aid, counseling, and rehabilitation.
4. **Promote Community Engagement:** Conduct awareness campaigns and gender sensitization training for law enforcement and community leaders to create a receptive environment.
5. **Enhance Education and Economic Opportunities:** Increase female educational and vocational programs, and support initiatives promoting entrepreneurship and economic independence.

6. **Enhance Monitoring and Evaluation:** Create rigorous procedures to evaluate safety and empowerment programs and seek input for continual improvement.
7. **Promote Collaboration:** Collaborate with government, civil society, and commercial sector to achieve complete women's safety and empowerment.

These measures aim to create a safer, more supportive environment for women, enhancing their overall empowerment and well-being.

### **Suggestions**

- The government must regulate charges for maternity healthcare in hospitals to guarantee access to high-quality healthcare facilities for all women, regardless of their socio-economic position.
- Women welfare initiatives, such as conditional cash transfer programs, should be accessible to every girl, regardless of socio-economic position.
- Education for girls, from primary to postgraduate levels, should be provided free of charge in both government-funded and private institutions.
- The school curriculum may be appropriately adjusted to enhance knowledge of gender equality.
- Gender mainstreaming of all existing policies must be implemented to achieve gender equality in all dimensions.
- Certain reductions may be granted regarding property registration and property tax to encourage women's property ownership.
- Women may be excluded from direct taxes to enhance the flow of resources to them, so addressing the prevailing inequity.
- The products and services generated by women-owned enterprises may be designated as zero-rated to foster women's entrepreneurship.
- Goods and services that substantially contribute to the empowerment of women may be designated as zero-rated under current indirect tax regulations.
- Policies must be formulated to guarantee extensive political participation of women to achieve their political empowerment.

### **Conclusion**

Tamil Nadu has made significant strides in improving women's safety and empowerment through diverse social welfare initiatives and legislative structures. Addressing persistent difficulties necessitates a comprehensive strategy that encompasses enhancing implementation mechanisms, including communities, and promoting ongoing policy reforms. By capitalizing on these chances for enhancement, Tamil Nadu may advance its progress and strive to establish a safer, more equal environment for women, thereby promoting overall social well-being and growth.

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