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Visits to Children Home, Differently Abled Homes, Anganwadi and Schools in Sivaganga District from 11 to 13 September, 2014 Tamil Nadu

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I paid a visit to Sivaganga district in Tamil Nadu from 11th to 13th September, 2014 covering two children home, one school for visually impaired, one Anganwadi and discussed with district officials including Chief Education officer, District Revenue Officer and Collector. The visiting notes are given below:

1) In Tamil Nadu, the department of Social Defence that was originally called since 1947 as the "Department of Certified Schools and Vigilance Service" is entrusted to implement the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 in letter and spirit to ensure care and protection to all the children of the State. The department is allotted an amount of Rs. 30 crores in the budget.

2) The listed Mission of the Department is as follows:

- A. To protect children from all forms of abuse, exploitation & neglect
- B. To provide treatment and rehabilitation to children subjected to abuse
- C. To provide care and protection to those children who need it
- D. To protect women and children from trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation and provide for their rehabilitation and reintegration into the mainstream of society
- E. Implementation of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 and Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
- F. To ensure effective implementation of Nutritious Meal Programmes

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3) Schemes Implemented for the Welfare of Children:

Right to survival, right to protection, right to development and right to participation are the four important rights which are fundamental and to be inherited by the children as per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Apart from providing the basic needs of children like food, clothing and shelter, children need to be protected from assault, negligence, abuse, Human Trafficking, Drug addiction and sexual exploitation. The department of Social Defence ensures that these rights that are essential for the development and welfare of Children are fully available to them.

3.1) The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 as amended in 2006 and the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 are the two important Acts implemented by the Department of Social Defence through which the children in need of care and protection, children conflict with law, women and girls who rescued from Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking are protected by providing rehabilitation measures.

3.2) Children in need of care and protection: If a child doesn't have parent / guardian, no kith and kin to take care and who doesn't have any means for survival, then he / she will come under the category of children in need of care and protection.

3.3) Child Welfare Committees: Child Welfare Committees in TN are functioning in all the 32 districts. Each Committee comprises one Chairperson and four members of whom at least one member as woman. Though they are vested with powers of MM or JM of First Class, they Committees are not functioning as a Court but their functions are in a child friendly ambiance.

4) **Children Homes:** To cater to the needs of the children who require care and protection, Children Homes are established under the provision of JJ (Care and Protection) Act. Of the 36 Children Homes in Sivaganga District, 16 are issued with 3 years registration; 12 with 1 year registration; No. of homes issued with conditional registration is 2 and 4 have been closed. 20 are run by NGOs and the remaining by Government. Each institution has a capacity from 100 to 300. Education up to-X Std is imparted. TN Government has sanctioned Rs.750/- per child per month under Integrated Child Protection Scheme towards the maintenance grants to all the Children Homes including the NGO run Children Homes. For special need children there are two homes in Chennai namely Bala Vihar and Sree Arunodayam and one at Mylailaduthurai namely Arivagam Home.

4.1) Registration of Children Homes under JJ Act in TN as on 31.08.13

Sl.No	Category	Nos
1	No. of Homes identified run by Govt. & NGOs	1636
2	No. of Institutions Closed	76
3	No. of Homes Registered for 3 years by NGOs	723
4	No withdrawn by NGOs from 3 year registration	7
5	Presently, No of Homes functioning with 3-yr Registration	716
6	No. of Govt. run Homes Registered for 3 years	27
7	No. of Homes Registered for 6 Months	688
8	No of Homes from which application is yet to be received	122

Statistics – provided by Director, Social Welfare, Chennai

Statistics of Children Home in Sivaganga District

No. of Homes	No. of Homes issued 3 yr Registration	No. of Homes issued 1 yr Registration	No. of Homes given conditional Registration	No. of Homes Closed
30	16	12	3	4

4.2) Visit to Children Home run by Karthryn's Mercy Home Trust (Girls Hostel), Maviduthikottai, Devakottai, Sivaganga District. I paid a visit it on 11th September between 4 and 6pm and the District Social Welfare Officer Mrs. Revathi and the President Shri. J. Jeyapaul were present. The home occupies an area of about 5800 sq.M. with constructed area of 6700 sq.ft approximately and the premises is kept neat and tidy. Though Mr. J. Jeyapaul started in on 12th February 2006 has registered it in the year 2011 vide No. 14975/CW-2/2010 dt. 20th Dec 2011 and has been granted under 3 year category and is due for renewal on 31.11.2014. I advised the President of the Children Home to complete all formalities and apply for renewal well ahead of time i.e. 3 months prior to the expiry date. I along with District Social Welfare Officer and the President visited the campus, dormitories, kitchen, store room, meeting hall, toilets. It houses 84 girls and I interacted with the children and they are found in happy frame of mind. They were advised to concentrate on their studies and have compassion for the weaker section. The hostel of the children home has adequate infrastructure with 10 toilets and 10 bathrooms. There are 3 wardens, 2 Cook, 1 watchman, 1 gardener and 1 sweeper.

4.2.1) A perusal of records maintained reveals that neither Child's Health Check up Register nor Children's Medical History were found filled up. Moreover, the illegible observations made by the Medical Officer made it impossible to decipher. In addition, it is found that the Medical Officer has not signed in the health check up register.

4.2.2) It is found that neither the date of birth column nor community column found filled up at the time of admission of children. Both date of birth and

caste are very important for their admission for higher studies or for employability. The President was briefed about their importance and he was asked to inquire from those who accompany the children and send him along with his staff to the concerned native place to procure those documents and he promised to attend to it. District Social Welfare Officer Smt. Revathi, who was present, noted the observations not only for compliance but also to bring it to the notice of their Director. The Commission may advise the Director, Social Welfare Department to issue an elaborate instructive memorandum to ascertain date of birth and get caste certificate within a period of 5 to 6 months.

4.2.3) Of the 16 homes under 3 year Registration category, it is found that 5 units have not initiated renewal proposal even after expiry of the date of renewal. Proper briefing by field officials will help to avoid such a situation. It is suggested that Commissioner, Social Welfare may be requested to ensure proper training of their field staff.

4.3) Visit to Children Home in Mana Madurai: On 12th September, 2014, I paid a visit to St. Anne's Karunalaya Home for Children, which is in a sprawling campus of an acre-and-a-half and the constructed area is about 4500 sq.ft. Sr. Litticiya, the Sister in-charge states that it was started on 1st June, 2007 and at present they have 43 students including 18 girls. It has been granted conditional license.

4.3.1) Lack of Continuity in Registration of temporary Children Home: The home in question was registered under 6 months registration category vide Commissioner of Social Welfare dated 18th May, 2011 and the validity was up to

31st October, 2011 only. It is found that renewal proposals were submitted on 24th October, 2011 and then only on 10th December, 2013 and again on 18th October, 2013. It is informed by the District Social Welfare Officer that the proposal was sent to Commissioner of Social Welfare, Chennai on 25th November, 2013 and no order received till date. It is reliably learnt that similar situation exists in quite a few units that seek renewal of license. It is suggested that Commission may advise Commissioner of Social Welfare to systematize the licensing procedure for all categories of Children home so that renewal procedure is commenced 3 months prior to expiry and all formalities completed and even temporary license issued prior to expiry of the license and that no institute at any time remain without proper license.

4.3.2) Maintenance of Registers: A perusal of the registers maintained reveals that even the important Children Admission register has not been maintained properly. Moreover, neither important column like date of birth nor caste of the child was found filled up with due care and they remain blank. Likewise, quite a few columns in health check up register and children care history were also found blank. It is recommended that the Commission may advise Commissioner of Social Welfare to bring out a list of registers with standardized format for maintenance of records and also train the concerned NGOs the moment they become eligible for grant of temporary license to ensure proper and scrupulous maintenance.

4.4) Absence of Full Time District Child Protection Officer or Child Welfare Officer in Police Stations: The various District Child Protection Units functioning

for the protection of children do not have a full time District Child Protection Officer. The probation officers of Social Defence Department hold additional charge of the posts in respective Districts. Each Police Station instead of appointing one Sub-Inspector as Child Welfare Officer, one of the Sub-Inspectors of each Police Station is asked to hold additional charge. On transfer of such officer, it is the duty of the Inspector of the Police Station or Deputy Superintendent of the sub-division to appoint one SI and intimate to the Chairman, Child Welfare Committee, which does not happen at all. Moreover, the Sub-Inspector designated as Child Welfare Officer himself would not remember it at all. Whenever District Administration holds training for Child Welfare Officers, in almost all districts, in a hurry burry one SI or the other would be sent for attendance sake and not the Child Welfare Officer. There is absolutely no involvement or commitment towards the assigned duty as a huge gap in awareness concerning Child Protection and duty of the Child Welfare Officer. A massive sensitization of officers from the rank of SI to Director General of Police and also Home Secretary of the respective State Government is a must.

4.5) **Mobility:** Non-provision of vehicles hampers the movement of District Child Protection Officers. Not only a full time District Child Protection Officer should be appointed but also provided with vehicles for their movement.

5) **Visit to Blind School run by Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church (TELC), Tiruppathur (Sivaganga District):** In Sivaganga district there are 9 units including 5 for mentally retarded; 2 for orthopedically impaired; 1 for hearing impaired and

one for visually impaired under the District Differently abled Welfare Office, Sivaganga. It is good to note that no license is due for the current year and that licenses are due for 5 in the year 2015 and for 3 in the year 2016.

5.1) I paid a visit to TELC Special School for Visually Impaired on 11th September, 2014 from 1130 to 1330 hours. On the basis of application from TELC dated 19th August, 2013, a license was for granted for 3 years wef 6.12.2012 to 19.8.2015 as Special School for Visually Impaired in Swedish Mission Hospital Compound, Tiruppathur. History goes back to 1909 when Dr Fredrik Kugelberg paid a visit to Tiruppathur and conducted quite a few eye surgeries. His wife Mrs. Eva Kugelberg and he took steps to build an Eye Hospital. In the complex a school was started in the year 1919 and from the year 1971 – 1972 it caters to visually impaired children in a separate branch. A few years back, the Swedish mission handed over maintenance to TELC

5.2) The special school for visually impaired has a strength of 53 including 18 girls and of the 7 teachers 3 teachers get State Government grant of Rs 10,000/- per month. A discussion with TELC NGOs reveals that they experience difficulties for sending proposal for renewal 3 months prior to expiry as they have to get certificates from Government approved chartered Engineer for building stability, Fire Department, Tahsildar office. The difficulty is not isolated one for this NGO alone and almost all the NGOs express their difficulties, which in turn delay their date of application and consequently in receipt of license from the Commissioner of Differently Abled. When Collector called on me on 12th September, I did bring to his notice the difficulties experienced and he promised to coordinate all the concerned wings during his monthly meeting to avoid delay

in sanction of certificates to NGOs by the concerned departments. It is suggested that the Commission may request the Government of Tamil Nadu to request the Commissioner of Differently abled to issue necessary circular to streamline the process of issuance of license.

5.3) The reasons for depletion of strength of visually impaired students both in Government run and NGOs run schools were discussed with the District Differently Abled Officer and NGOs. Awareness among public and use of Early Intervention Centres in each district and admission of partially impaired children in nearby regular schools (under SSA and IED schemes) were cited as reasons for the decrease in the number of visually impaired students. It is reliably learnt that the visually impaired students undergoing schooling in regular schools do not get full time attention as one specialist has to cover 4 to 6 schools and as a result the students remain idle. It is suggested that the Commission may seek full statistics from all Governments and make recommendation to have a full time teacher to impart knowledge to visually impaired students even if the number of students is just in one digit.

6) **Non Availability of Toilet Facility in Schools:** Chief Education Officer Smt. Vasanthi reports that In Singalpunari block in Sivaganga there are 79 schools and of which in 12 schools (15%) which are listed below do not have any toilet facility for boys in 9 schools or girls in 3 schools.

- a) Poolathankurichi - ubisocode - 33231001701 - No Boys toilet
- b) Sittammallipatti ubisocode - 33231001001 - No boys toilet
- c) Singampunari - ubisocode - 33231000204 - No boys toilet
- d) Mettupatti ubisocode - 33231000302 - No boys toilet

e) Aniampatti GHS	ubisecode – 33231000213 - No boys toilet
f) Kollikudipatti	ubisecode – 33231002102 - No boys toilet
g) Serudapatti	ubisecode – 33231001802 - No girls toilet
h) Kolkudipatti	ubisecode – 33231001206 - No boys toilet
i) Innothipatti	ubisecode – 33231000902 - No girls toilet
j) Tennamalpatti	ubisecode – 33231000901 – No girls toilet
k) Anaikarapatti	ubisecode – 33231000106 - No boys toilet
l) Marudipatti	ubisecode – 33231000402 - No boys toilet

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 7) The Commission may strongly recommend to the Government of Tamil Nadu to provide toilets invariably in all schools in Tamil Nadu apart from ensuring proper supply of water and drainage facilities.

7) Integrated Child Development Services Scheme, Sivaganga District: ICDS that was launched in India on 2nd October, 1975 and today it represents one of the world's largest and most unique programmes for early childhood development. In Sivaganga district, ICDS have 1552 Anganwadi centres of which 1155 are main Anganwadi centres and the remaining 397 are mini Anganwadi centres. The vision of Tamil Nadu Government is to make the State malnutrition free. The beneficiaries are not only children from 6 to 60 months but also ante natal and pre natal women and adolescent girls.

7.1) Objectives of ICDS: The main objectives of ICDS are as follows:

- To lay the foundation for proper psychological, physical and social development of the child
- To reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, mal-nutrition and school dropout

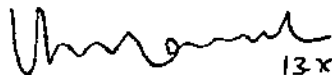
- c) To achieve effective coordination of policy and implementation amongst the various department to promote child development

7.2) I paid a visit to Kalimettupatti Anganwadi centre along with ICDS District Officer Smt. Alaguseelvi. The children were in a happy frame of mind. They exhibited their talents and the quality of food supplied was good. 11 registers containing details of family, supplementary feeding, house visit plan register and weight record of children were well maintained. It is heartening to note that the weight record of children is being scrupulously followed. The syllabi for teaching month-wise also have been beautifully depicted.

7.2.1) Unfortunately in the first week of August, 2014 two children from this Anganwadi - Rahul and Mohit were reported missing and subsequently their bodies were recovered and a case in Uthamapalayam Police Station Cr.No. 311/2014 was registered and is under investigation. The report which I had sought for is awaited.

Rec Suggestions:

- i. Special fund should be allotted to ICDS for construction new Anganwadi buildings and they should be located within Primary School campus or nearby areas;
- ii. Sufficient contingent fund should be provided to existing Anganwadi centers for carrying out minor repairs and for providing water and drainage facilities
- iii. A scheme should be drawn to have a shortlisted person in each area to fill up vacancy then and there


13.8.14

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