

ACCESS TO CHILD CARE, EDUCATION AND
NUTRITION SERVICES IN THE RELOCATION
SETTLEMENTS OF PERUMBAKKAM AND NAVALUR
IN KANCHIPURAM DISTRICT AND GUDAPAKKAM
IN THIRUVALLUR DISTRICT: ASSESSMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Since 30 November 2016, Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) along with the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB) and the Public Works Department (PWD) has been evicting the marginalised families residing in the banks of River Cooum as part of the *Integrated Cooum River Eco-Restoration Project* of the Chennai Rivers Restoration Trust (CRRT).

Till date, 6,310 families from 28 settlements have been resettled to the settlements of Perumbakkam and Navalur in Kanchipuram District, AIR Site in Chennai District and Gudapakkam located in Thiruvallur District.

Of the 6,310 families relocated, 4,699 families were relocated to Perumbakkam, 753 families to Navalur 709 families to Gudapakkam and 149 to AIR Site.

All the 28 settlements were evicted without adequate notice period and the existing gaps in the rehabilitation has a severe impact on the children of the resettled families in many ways. Of the 28 settlements evicted, 22 settlements were evicted during the mid-academic year disrupting the education of the children. It is to be noted that only the evictions carried out in the year 2018 were carried out during summer vacation.

Some of the impacts of the eviction and resettlement on children are as follows:

- **Trauma:** The process of eviction is traumatic for children as most of them are unable to understand and gauge the full implications of the sudden appearance of police personnel and bulldozers around their homes. The experience of having one's home torn down, which is often accompanied with an increased vulnerability of the family, can leave an indelible mark on the psychological health of the child. In the evictions that were carried out in the settlements of Rangoon Street and Om Shakthi Nagar the GCC officials had informed the date of eviction only the previous night; therefore there was no ample time to prepare the children about what was to happen to their homes and their area of habitation. It is also to be noted in EVR Periyar Salai, the families were misinformed about the resettlement site and they availed information about the actual resettlement site only when they were loading their belongings in the trucks. The children were completely in a confused state not sure of where they are to be moved and such acts of negligence further traumatizes the children.
- **Homelessness:** In the immediate aftermath of an eviction, some families are rendered homeless. The sudden loss of security of home, community and exposure to harsh weather conditions often has a severe impact on children's health. After the eviction of the settlement of West Namashivayapuram on 18 October 2017, 33 families in the locality have been left homeless. Because of the heavy rains the left-out families had to seek refuge in a chapel nearby. The health and education of the children was affected, as the children had no shelter to protect them from the heavy rains. Perumal Koil Street was evicted on 23 November 2016; two families were forced to reside in partly demolished houses without electricity for over a year before they could access permanent houses. The children in these families were living in precarious living conditions for about a year before they availed houses. Though GCC

has opened its homeless shelters for those whose houses are demolished and are not provided with permanent houses, the transition from the demolished house to the shelter and then to the permanent houses has a drastic impact on the health and education of the children.

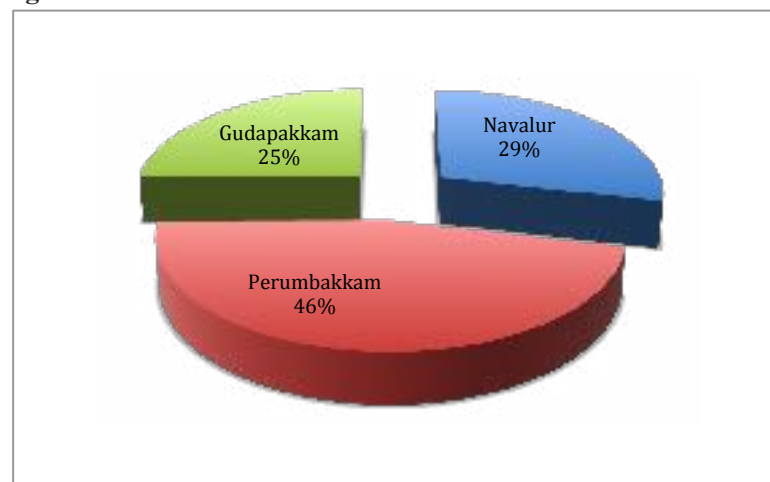
- **Loss of livelihood and the impact on children:** The Government of Tamil Nadu has failed to conduct processes like Social Impact Assessments and Resettlement Action Plan to mitigate the adverse impact of resettlement, especially when the families are moved to sites that are over 35 kilometers from their area of habitation. As the livelihoods of the families are location centric, people lose their livelihood options immediately after resettlement. Loss of family income results in increased vulnerability of the family and in many cases the parents are unable to meet the nutritional needs of the children. Though sustenance amount of Rs. 2,500/- is paid, most of it is spent on travel (for livelihood and education back to their previous place of habitation) and health care, as these services are inadequate in these sites.
- **Loss of Access to Nutrition, Education, Health Care Facilities:** Lack of adequate anganwadi centres and primary health care centres have resulted in children unable to access adequate nutrition, education and health care facilities.

To understand the impact of relocation on children's Access to Education, Nutrition and health related services, Information and Resource Centre for the Deprived Urban Communities (IRCDUC) has conducted an assessment in the relocation settlements of Perumbakkam, Navalur and Gudapakkam. 200 children from the relocation settlements were identified through simple random sampling method. It was ensured that children shifted from different locations and children residing in different blocks in the relocation settlements were included in the study. A survey format designed and administered to assess the operationalization of Anganwadi centres in these settlements. The information on the centres were collected from the anganwadi workers, anganwadi helpers, mothers and the information was correlated with the secondary data available with the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India

THE FINDINGS

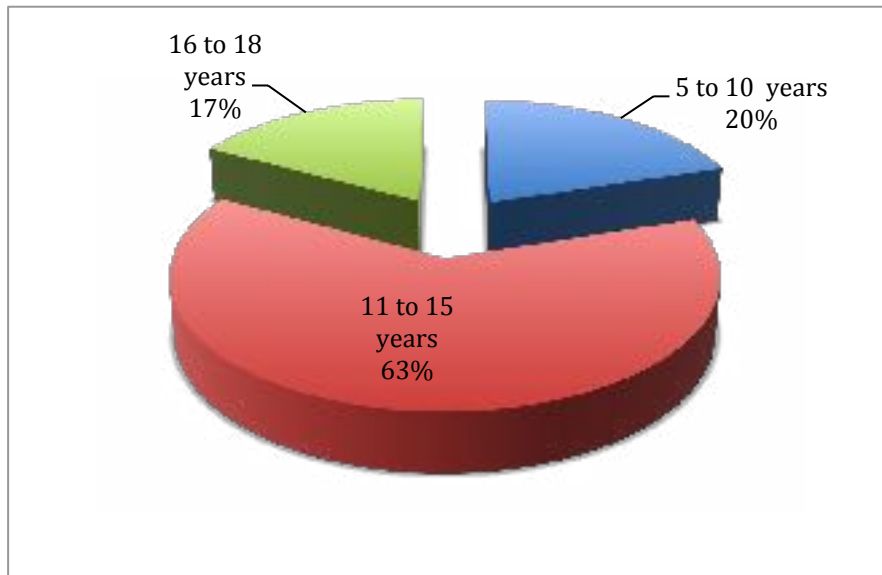
Access to Education:

Image 1: Children identified from the relocation settlements



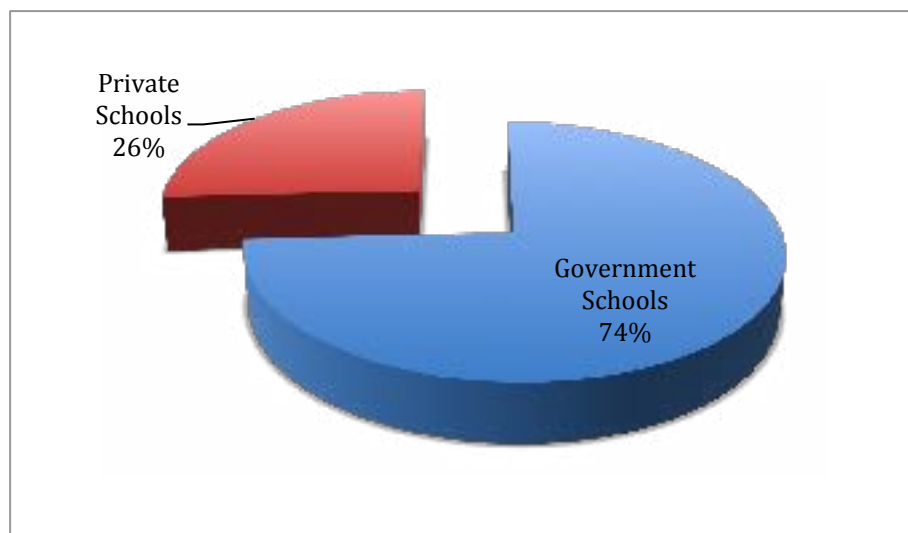
46 per cent of the children were identified from Perumbakkam as it is one of the largest relocation settlement and over 75 per cent of those evicted under CRRT were shifted to Perumbakkam. Of the 200 respondents, 51 per cent were girls and 49 per cent were boys.

Image 2: Age Group of the Children



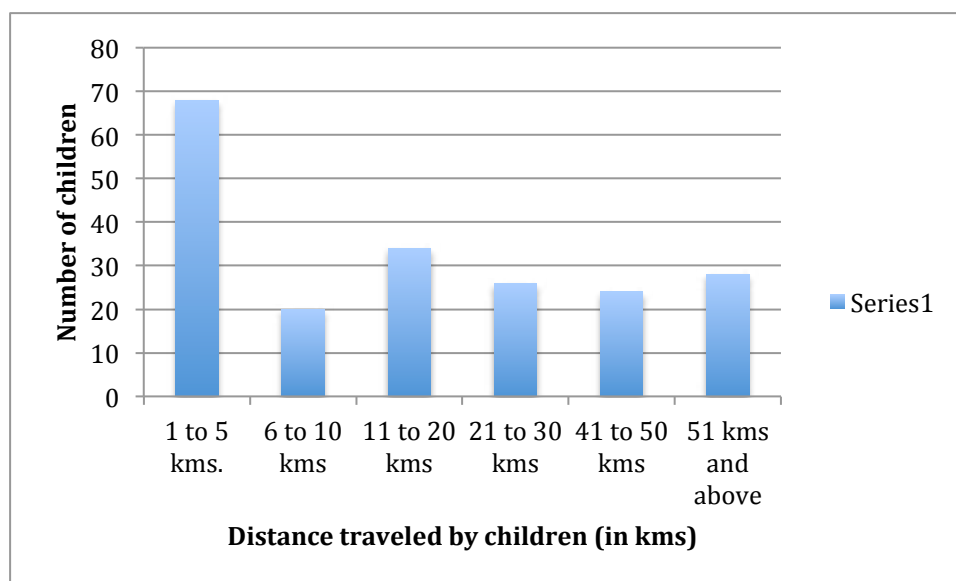
About 19.9 per cent of the children are from the age group of 5 to 10 years, 63.7 per cent of the children are from the age group 11 to 15 years and 16.4 per cent of the children are of 16 to 18 years of age.

Image 3: Schools where the children are studying



It is to be noted that 74 per cent of the children are studying in Government Schools and 26 per cent of the children are studying in private schools.

Image 4: Distance travelled by Children to reach school



The assessment reveals only 68 children (34 per cent) travel less than 5 kilometres (one way) from the settlement to access education. 20 children (10 per cent) have to travel 6 to 10 kilometres to access education. 34 children (17 per cent) travel 11 to 20 kilometres every day to access education. 78 children (40 per cent) travel over 20 kilometres to access education, however about 28 children (14 per cent) within them have to travel over 50 kilometres (every day to access education). The study reveals that many children from Navalur and Gudapakkam travel over 30 kilometres to access education as they continue to study in their previous place of habitation.

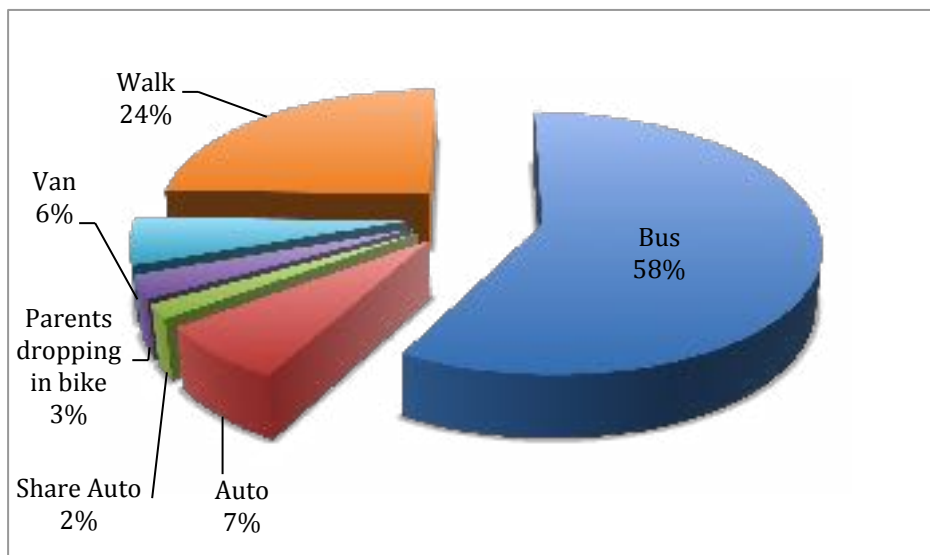
Children from these three settlements study in schools that located in 21 different locations of these 21 locations only 4 are located near the resettlement sites. In case of Perumbakkam on an average the children have to travel 22 Kms (one way) to reach their school everyday, Navalur they have to travel on an average 44 Kms (one way) and Gudapakkam they have to travel on an average 27.5 Kms.

Table 1: Distance from the resettlement site to the schools located in some of the areas closer to their previous place of habitation (Source: Google Maps)

Name of the Resettlement Site	Location of School	Distance between the site and the school (one way) in kms.	Number of Children travelling of the 200 respondents
Perumbakkam	Kotturpuram	19.3	3
Perumbakkam	Saidapet	22.4	5
Perumbakkam	Velachery	12.8	1
Perumbakkam	Adyar	18.4	7
Perumbakkam	T. Nagar	23.3	1
Perumbakkam	Guindy	17.2	1
Perumbakkam	Maduravoyal	38.3	1
Navalur	Aminjikarai	45.6	19
Navalur	Koyambedu	42.2	3
Navalur	Arumbakkam	44.3	7
Navalur	Anna Nagar	44.8	1

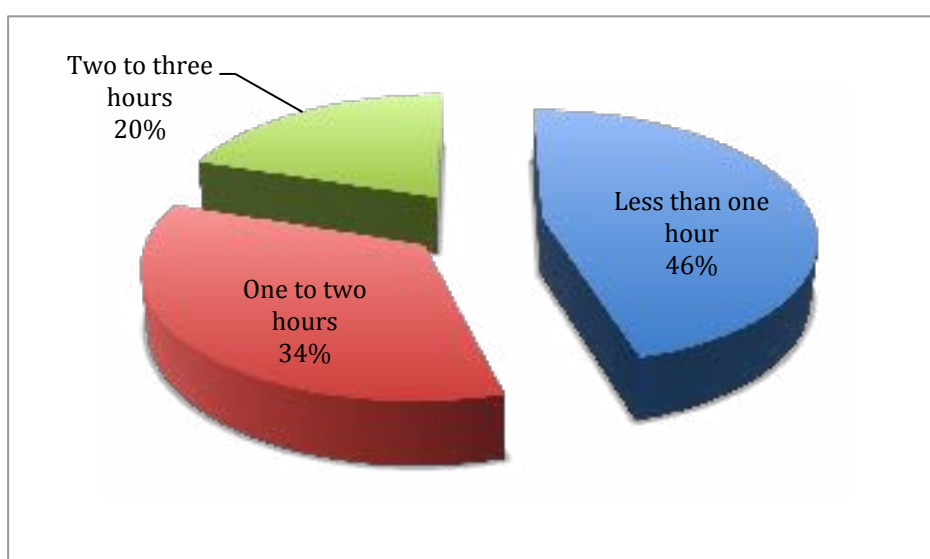
Gudapakkam	Ayyapakkam	24.5	3
Gudapakkam	Aminjikarai	30.4	2
Gudapakkam	Nerkundram	25.5	7
Gudapakkam	Anna Nagar	29.6	1
Total			62

Image 5: Mode of transportation used by children to reach school



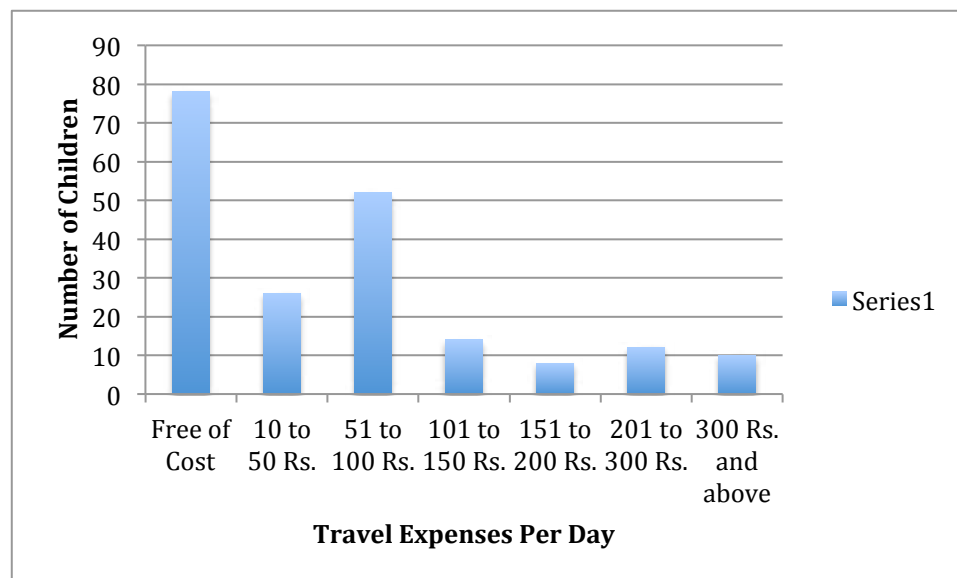
The study reveals that only 24% of the children are able to walk to their school. 58 per cent of the children are using bus facility. Discussion with children and parents reveals that there are no adequate bus services available during peak hours for the children to reach their school. As a result of inadequate bus facility the buses are often crowded and the children have no option but to travel in crowded buses.

Image 6: Time taken for children to reach schools



The assessment reveals that about 54 per cent have to travel for more than one hour and about 20 per cent of the children have to travel more than two hours to access education every day.

Image 7: Cost of Travel Per Day



The children studying in government schools have access to free bus passes and 78 children (39 per cent) do not have to spend for travel. However, those children who do not have direct bus service from the relocation site to the connecting main road have to spend on share autos or autos despite having free bus passes.

The children are forced to spend on share auto or auto so that they are able to reach the main road from the settlement so as to reach their schools on time, especially in the site of Gudapakkam and Navalur that are located in interior areas. Those who pay over 100 Rs for travel on a daily basis are those children who use auto, share auto or van to travel to school.

These children continue to go back to their previous place of habitation for resuming education because of the following reasons:

- Non availability of English medium of instruction is another reason for children travelling to other areas or their previous place of habitation to resume their education
- Most of these children travelling to their previous place of habitation are studying in private schools
- The children who are in 11th and 12th standard are reluctant to shift schools till they complete 12th standard

In Gudapakkam, the capacity of the existing high school (that services also to the host communities) is full. The government middle school located in Meetukandigai where children are studying is not connected by government bus service. As private buses do not stop near the settlement (as it already full during peak hours) parents are hiring private vehicles to do so.

The nearest higher secondary school is over 8 kilometres away from the site and there is no adequate transportation facility to ensure that the children are able to commute to the school. The higher secondary schools located in Kuthambakkam and Koppur (only for girls, nearly 7 to 8 kilometers) cannot be accessed, as there is no connecting bus facility for these schools. There are also higher secondary schools in Thirumazlisai and Manavallan Nagar but the children will have to travel over 10 kilometers to reach the school. Girl children find it difficult to travel to school as the buses are crowded during the peak hours, when they manage to board the crowded buses they are victims of abuse. The parents are also not keen on sending their children to school because of the distance from the settlement to the school and the inadequate transportation facilities.

In Perumbakkam, the primary school is functioning in the tenements (constructed for residential purposes) as the construction work is ongoing. More children cannot be accommodated in these makeshift schools that are functioning in the tenements because of lack of space. In this primary school there are nearly 420 children enrolled and as the rooms constructed for houses is used as classrooms only 3 toilets are allotted for children. Of the three allotted toilets one is not functioning because of inadequate water facility. Children are made to use the open space behind the tenement as toilet. Though there are 5 locations, earmarked for primary schools only one school is under construction. The capacity of the nearest school in the relocation settlement of Semmenchery is also full. The delay in operationalizing schools in the relocation settlement, even after 5 years of inception of the site is a violation of the rights of the children.

In Navalur, only primary school facility is available within the settlement. The children are not provided with adequate books in this school. This has forced many parents to access schools located in other areas. To access high school, the children will have to travel to Naatarasanpatti or Padapai. For those children studying in Padapai there is no adequate bus connectivity from the settlement to the main road. For those children studying in Naatarasanpatti there is only private bus facility available to access schools and hence providing free bus passes also does not serve the purpose. Therefore the communities are demanding that the school in Navalur can be upgraded as a higher secondary school with all adequate facilities.

Concerns:

- Mid Academic year evictions has an adverse impact on the education of the children
- Evictions were carried out without ensuring the basic social infrastructure facilities including schools and anganwadi centres in the site
- Despite a year after resettlement why is there no considerable improvement in the social infrastructure facilities related to education, health and nutrition for the children
- The delay in addressing issues related to access to education is a violation of the rights of the displaced children

The report of the Advocate Commissioner appointed by the Honourable High Court of Madras by the order dated 10 May 2017 (W.P. No. 13128 of 2017) points out the following:

- Majority of the school children in this area continue their studies in the same schools, which were located near their erstwhile homes adjoining the river banks. The complaints of the parents are that there are no good schools in the scheme area and the quality of the teaching in the schools in the scheme area are poor and not upto expected standard.
- A primary school in Perumbakkam operates out of the tenements and is cramped. Therefore the children are forced to continue their studies in their old schools. The children face extreme hardship to travel by two or three buses, spending three to four hours in the process. There are some dropouts in schools due to the foregoing reasons. There is a Government middle school for both boys and girls and the strength is 324 and it has to be upgraded to +2 this year to meet the requirements for the next year. Other wise all the present 10th standard students will have to travel to a far of place.
- ***There is no adequate number of schools (Primary, High and Higher Secondary) for the huge population. This is the place where all the governmental agencies should work hard for the implementation of RTE in letter and spirit.***
- **Perumbakkam:** Half of the children who were evicted from West Cooum Road, Aminjikarai, Thousand Lights etc., were studying in private schools. As the Primary schools at Perumbakkam Scheme does not have English medium, may of the children are pursuing their studies in the schools, where the English medium is taught, which are situated in their erstwhile area. I have met a group of girls who informed that they were studying in Church Park Convent at Thousand Lights, Chennai. When I asked them as to how they reach their schools from Perubakkam, to my surprise they said that they would wake up at 5 am and walk all the way to Sembakkam Bus Stop to catch up free special bus (No.221, Two buses) orgnaised by the Board through MTC for pick up and dropping at their schools. The Board has earmarked four places for Primary Schools in the northern region. The Education Department has not taken any steps so far to receive the said land and start the construction of the said primary schools. As a result students numbering 172 are walking for a long distance all the way to the south zone crossing busy main roads. A primary school is functioning in a tenement meant for the families and it is cramped one. I am told that the primary school is under construction in the southern region.
- **Navalur:** There is a primary school in this tenement. The parents complaint that the wards are not supplied with the books (freely supplied by the Government) and the quality of teaching is poor. For middle and high school one has to go to Nattaransanpet and Padappai for which adequate bus facility has to be organised
- **Gudapakkam:** There is no school in this place. Nearly 125 young children are studying in Government Middle School at Meetukandigai, which is 500 metres away. There is no bus facility for reaching the schools located outside the area, the parents are forced to hire van and autos to send their children to the school. Private buses are not stopping in this area. There is a high school and primary school located 1 kilometre away from this area. Here again the children are struggling to reach the school.

Access to Early Childhood Care (Pre-school Education, Health and Nutrition) through AWCs (Anganwadi Centres):

Table 2: Availability of AWCs in the Relocation Settlements

Name of the Site	Total Houses	Total Occupied Houses	Total Population	Population Norms	Number of AWCs as per population currently residing in the site	Number of AWCs	Number of AWCs required on a priority basis
Perumbakkam	23,864	13,000 (Approx.)	52,000	1 Centre for 800 population ¹	65	7	7
Navalur	2,048	2,000 (Approx.)	8,000		10	3	2
Gudapakkam	1,024	900 (Approx.)	3,600		4	1	3
Total	26,936	15,900	63,600		79	10	12

Table 2 reveals that there has been violation of the population norms for setting up AWCs in the relocation settlements. This clearly implies that a majority of the children, pregnant women and the lactating mothers will be denied of the basic services. Children in the age group of 0-3 will be denied of nutrition supplementation, immunisation, growth monitoring and other basic services. Children in the age group of 3-6 years will be denied preschool education, nutrition supplementation, growth monitoring and other basic services. The pregnant and lactating mothers will be denied of health services (ANC and PNC care), nutrition supplementation, counselling etc.

Functioning of the Centres:

- Out of the 11 centres, 3 AWCs (one from Navalur, Perumbakkam and Gudapakkam) are functioning on an irregular basis (with no fixed time or day for opening and closing the centres).
- Two in Navalur closes around 2 pm
- The opening and closing time of the centre in Gudapakkam is not regular.

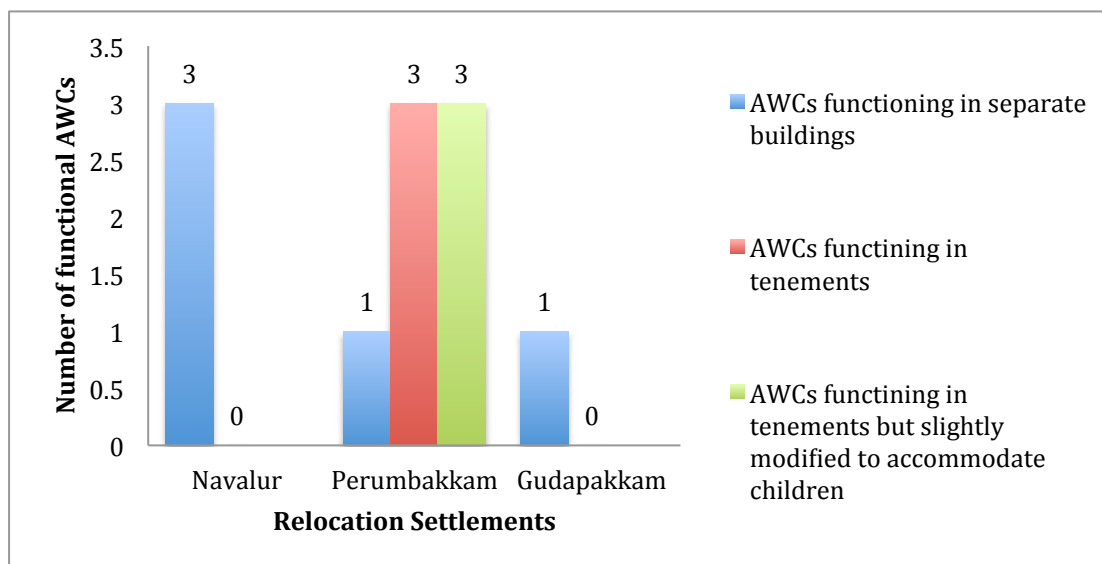
The report of the Advocate Commissioner appointed by the Honourable High Court of Madras by the order dated 10 May 2017 (W.P. No. 13128 of 2017) points out the following:

- **There are hundreds of children in these four areas. I have not seen a full-fledged “Balwadi” with all the faculties with good numbers of children in one centre.** Either the teacher may not be there or the helper may not be there or no potable water and regular rations for the mid day meals or no supply of gas cylinder and stove or no adequate fans. The balwadis are not adequate for the hundreds of children.
- **Navalur:** Two ICDS centres are not supplied with vessels, Gas Stove and Cylinder for preparing food for the children. I had also noticed that there are no fans in two ICDS centres. As a result parents are reluctant to send the

¹ Women Development Corporation (Source: <http://wcd.nic.in/icds.htm>)

children to these centres. In one Blawadi there is no teacher and it is managed by helper only.

Image 8: Type of AWC buildings



It is to be noted that only in the sites of Navalur and Gudapakkam that the existing AWCs are functioning in separate buildings constructed exclusively for the purpose of setting up AWCs. In the site of Perumbakkam, only one AWC is functioning in separate building, 3 AWCs are functioning in tenements constructed for residential purpose and 3 centres are functioning within the tenements, slightly modified to accommodate children. These differences highlight poor planning on the part of the TNSCB to provide adequate early childcare facilities for the displaced children.

Electricity: Of the 7 centres in Perumbakkam, two centres (both located in Perumbakkam) do not have electricity connection. Two centres in Navalur do not have fans fixed and it causes discomfort for the children.

Water Supply: Two centres (One located in Navalur and the other in Perumbakkam) do not have adequate water supply

Staffs: Of the 11 AWCs only 6 centres have regular full-time Anganwadi Worker (AWW) and Anganwadi Helper (AWH).

A detailed analysis of the official data available at the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India reveals about AWCs in Perumbakkam reveals the following:

- Of the 7 centres in Perumbakkam, staff information is not available for 3 centres. Of the 4 centres with available staff information, the AWH position is vacant in 3 centres. Of the 4 centres with available staff information, one teacher is managing two centres.

In the sites of Navalur, of the 3 centres, only one centre has both AWW and an AWH. The other two centres have one AWW and AWH.

Access to Supplementary Nutrition Programme:

- Of the 11 centres, 3 (two in Navalur and the other in Perumbakkam) does not have adequate vessels, gas connection in the centre for preparation of hot cooked food.
- With 3 AWH positions vacant in Perumbakkam it is not possible for the AWW to take care of the children and cook

A detailed analysis of the official data available at the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India reveals about AWCs in Perumbakkam reveals that there are 11 boys and 13 girls who are malnourished in Perumbakkam. This clearly indicates that they do not have the vessels as well as the personnel to prepare the food and it affects the nutritional status of the children.

Perumbakkam	Boys	Girls
0-3 years moderately malnourished (<-2SD to-3SD)	6	7
0-3 years severely malnourished (<-3SD)	0	2
3-5 years moderately Malnourished <-2SD to-3SD)	5	3
3-5 years severely Malnourished (<-3SD)	0	1
Total	11	13

Pre-school Education Materials:

- Of the 11 centres, 4 centres (1centre in Navalur, 2 in Perumbakkam and 1 in Gudapakkam) do not have pre-school education materials and wall paintings. Preschool education is one of the important components in the ICDS as more than 80 per cent of the cognitive development of the children happens before the age of 5 years. On one side there are very few centres, this automatically excludes the eligible children to get the preschool education secondly even in the functioning centres about 25 per cent of the centres did not have the basic education material. This clearly denotes that poor children are denied of proper education and development from their early age.

Access to Health Care:

- In Perumbakkam, only 2 centres are administering immunization for the children.
- 8 centres are maintaining registers for pregnant mothers
- Only 4 centres have growth chart and weighing machines in the centre
- The AWCs in Navalur and Gudapakkam does not have health care services in the centres

Discussion with the families in Perumbakkam reveals that the AWCs are asking parents to contribute Rs. 100/- and if parents are reluctant the children are not allowed to access the centre.

CHILD PROTECTION ISSUES:

- All the relocation settlements do not have adequate lights in the corridors and staircases within the building and these becomes 'unsafe' zones for the children, especially girl children are at higher risk.
- All the relocation settlements do not have adequate streetlights. The children who return from schools at late hours (because they travel back from their previous place of habitation) find it difficult to head back to their homes without being harassed or abused. Therefore parents will wait for their children in the bus stands and accompany them home.
- The settlement of Gudapakkam and Navalur are located in isolated areas, there is no adequate road facilities with streetlight connecting the location to the main road. There is inadequate transportation facilities connecting the settlement to the main road and hence when children return to the settlement from school in late evenings they find it difficult to walk in these roads.
- In Perumbakkam, which is has 8 floors. The lift has a lift operator only till 6 pm. Girl children have complained of abuse in lifts after 6 pm.
- The adolescent boys have complaint of police harassment. The police use defamatory words while addressing the adolescent boys in the settlement.
- The rampant sales of drugs and liquor inside the tenements should be addressed
- In the settlement of Perumbakkam parents complain that there were cases of children being kidnapped.

The report of the Advocate Commissioner appointed by the Honourable High Court of Madras by the order dated 10 May 2017 (W.P. No. 13128 of 2017) points out the following:

- **Perumbakkam:** Many complaints were regarding the safety of girls. Many parents of the girl children complained that many anti-social elements are freely roaming in the area and the police patrolling is not adequate. They further said that they could not afford to send their children to ground floor for play with other children as they are not sure of their safety. A mother of 14 years old male child lamented that her son was missing from 10.05.2018. In spite of complaint to the Pallikarnai Police Station no FIR was registered and no action was taken to search for him.
- **Navlaur:** The street lights are not adequate, therefore it is the main cause for illegal activities in these areas during night time. There is a long distance between main road and this tenements. The poor lighting in this area adding misery to the local people as a result there is a threat to the women and children who return home after sun set.

Though Government of Tamil Nadu claims that these evictions are conducted to protect the communities from disasters such as flooding, evictions carried out in haste without providing adequate services in the resettlement sites only increases the vulnerabilities of the communities, especially the children.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Social Infrastructure Facilities:

- Government of Tamil Nadu should ensure that the resettlement site has all basic facilities including potable water, electricity, schools, health care, nutrition, early childcare facilities and adequate space for children to play.
- A development plan for children with focus on social infrastructure facilities and services should be prepared by TNSCB in coordination with the District Administration for all these settlements. These development plans should have specified timeline for implementation of the same.

Other Infrastructure Facilities/Services to ensure protection of children:

- To ensure that the relocation settlements are safe for children, there should be street lights installed in all the streets
- Lights should be installed in the corridors and staircases in all the blocks
- To ensure that lift operators are available till 10 pm
- In all the settlements, every block should be provided with grill gates so that no intruders can walk into the blocks during night time

Transportation:

- To ensure that adequate bus services are available connecting the settlement to the main road
- Special buses for the children services should be provided for those children travelling back to their previous place of habitation for schools (only for the children studying in Church park, TNSCB has made arrangements for special transportation)
- Special bus services exclusively for women and girl children should be made available in these sites especially during the peak hours.

AWCs:

- All the AWCs should be made operational with all the services; staffs should be recruited on a priority basis. It is recommended that the staffs could be recruited from those who are from the settlement
- Government of Tamil Nadu to set up additional 7 AWCs in Perumbakkam, 2 in Navalur and 3 in Gudapakkam on a priority basis.
- TNSCB should earmark locations for construction of separate buildings for AWCs with compound walls
- Mothers Committees should be formed and meetings should be conducted on a monthly basis
- AWCs or AWHs should not collect money from the parents

Schools:

- To prevent children from travelling to their previous place of habitation to access education, English medium schools should be started in all the relocation settlement.
- The construction of Primary Schools in Perumbakkam should be expedited and the primary school should not be continuing in buildings constructed for tenements
- The 4 lands earmarked for Schools in Perumbakkam should be handed over to the Education Department and the process of construction of schools should be expedited
- The primary school in Navalur should be provided with a compound wall, the school should be upgraded to higher secondary school
- All the three sites need to have access to higher secondary schools, it is recommended that the schools nearest to the location should be upgraded

Parks and playgrounds:

- The parks and playgrounds in all the settlement should be cleaned and play materials should be provided so that the children can use these spaces for playing

Policy Recommendations:

- Government of Tamil Nadu to conduct independent assessments on the impacts of eviction on the children who are evicted to the relocation settlements under the Integrated Cooum River Eco-Restoration Project
- To ensure that no evictions are carried out without a comprehensive rehabilitation plan that includes impact assessment and identification of mitigation measures to minimize the adverse impact of eviction, especially for children
- Evictions should not be carried out during the mid academic year as it disrupts the education of the children
- Third party monitoring of these evictions should be mandated to ensure that rights of children are not violated during the process
- To set up of an independent and empowered grievance redressal mechanism that will handle issues related to violation of rights of children during eviction and rehabilitation
- Ensure that the resettlement sites are safe and free from stigma and criminalisation before relocating communities