

An Assessment of Infrastructure and Access to Services at Ezhil Nagar, a newly constructed neighbourhood in the Kannagi Nagar resettlement colony (May 2015, updated October 2015)¹

The following is the summary of a fact-finding exercise conducted by the Transparent Cities Network (housed at CAG) in May of 2015. The information has been updated after a visit to the site on 19th October 2015. Kannagi Nagar has 15,656 tenements with a population of approximately 78,280 residents. Ezhil Nagar, which was added onto the Kannagi Nagar neighbourhood in 2013, has 8,048 tenements, approximately 2,650 of which are presently occupied. Almost no facilities have been provided for Ezhil Nagar alone. Therefore, the Kannagi Nagar facilities are effectively for the use of a population of approximately 1,18,520 residents of 23,704 tenements, including both the original Kannagi Nagar neighbourhood and the Ezhil Nagar extension. We have provided a breakdown of the facilities available in this resettlement colony below, along with an assessment of its quality and adequacy.

Ezhil Nagar tenements are 4-storey buildings with 24 units on each floor.

- **Design challenges:** The buildings have no lifts: only a narrow staircase with no facilities for the disabled or elderly. Houses are on either side of a long and badly lit corridor.
- **Water and sanitation:** Water is supplied for only 2 hours on every alternative day. The residents complained that they have to stay at home in the mornings to collect water. Each unit has a single tap in the toilet/bathroom. Ground floor houses are not connected to sewerage lines, and many pipes are broken and unattended. Drainage leads to and floods the rear side of all the tenements. Overflowing sewage and stagnating rainwater have resulted in a mosquito menace, a health hazard leading to increased suffering for the residents.
- **Roads:** The roads throughout Ezhil Nagar are in very bad shape. They are either unpaved or paved with low quality materials resulting in potholes which fill with rain and drainage water.
- **Anganwadi:** Ezhil Nagar has 1 ICDS run anganwadi, with 3 more run by Asha Nivas, an NGO, while the actual requirement for current population is 16. Kannagi Nagar has 19 anganwadi centres run by the government and 15 anganwadis and 1 centre for special children run by NGOs. The centres have poor infrastructure and insufficient resources and facilities for all children. The 19 ICDS anganwadis in Kannagi Nagar and 1 ICDS anganwadi in Ezhil Nagar also provide nutrition mix to pregnant and post natal women. No other service is provided to pregnant and post-natal women or adolescent girls as required by the ICDS Scheme (immunization, health check-up, nutrition education, etc.)
- **Schools:** Ezhil Nagar has 1 primary school which started functioning in June 2015. The school has only 2 teachers and 160 students on roll. Due to lack of teachers the 1st

¹ This information was collected through interviews with the Councillor, TNSCB representative, residents and persons in charge of infrastructure (such as the headmaster of a school), and through physical verification of the infrastructure.



and 2nd grades are clubbed into one class and 3rd and 4th grades are clubbed into another. The school does not have drinking water or toilet facilities and the lack of furniture forces the children to sit on the floor. Kannagi Nagar has just 1 government higher secondary school and 3 primary schools, all running beyond capacity and unable to admit more students. Permission to construct an additional floor in the school has been denied. Only 43 children from Ezhil Nagar are studying in the government school. Some children go to the nearby private schools, while most travel to the school near the site from which they were evicted, a journey of up to two hours each way.

- **Public Distribution System:** Ezhil Nagar has only 1 ration shop catering to 1600 ration card holders from Ezhil Nagar and the rest of the households in Ezhil Nagar still purchase their ration from PDS shops in Kannagi Nagar. Kannagi Nagar has 7 ration shops, only 2 of which serve Ezhil Nagar residents. The ration shops are found to be over-crowded and residents reported shortages of supplies.
- **Health:** Ezhil Nagar has 0 PHCs or dispensaries. A health outreach centre of the Corporation of Chennai was recently inaugurated in Ezhil Nagar but has not yet started functioning. Kannagi Nagar has 0 PHCs and 1 Corporation Dispensary, with no in-patient facility. The closest PHC facility is at Thoraipakkam (3 kms away) which caters to all the residents around and is under enormous pressure as a result. Travel to government hospital takes two hours by bus.
- **Safety:** Many incidents of theft have occurred in Ezhil Nagar, but gone unaddressed by the local police. Residents said that even toilet pipes and window panes are stolen by the miscreants. The unoccupied tenements and dark, long, corridors are frequently used by anti-social elements according to residents.
- **Transport:** The bus depot is at Kannagi Nagar, 1 km away for Ezhil Nagar residents. Buses do not ply to several important areas such as CMBT, Tamabaram, etc. There is over-crowding and poor frequency. Journeys to the city take upwards of two hours and are extremely expensive.
- **Livelihood:** Many residents have had great difficulty in continuing their former means of livelihoods, owing to the great distance and costs to reach their erstwhile place of work. (For example, Ezhil Nagar is 25 km from Broadway.) This has either resulted in them having to change their jobs or spend considerable amounts of money and time on transportation.

From the above it is clear that access to basic services is very poor in Ezhil Nagar and it is not fit for occupation in its current state. Since our enquiries in May, while there have been incremental improvements with the opening of a primary school and a ration shop, these remain poorly provisioned and insufficient. On the other hand, there has been a worsening in the provision of water and sanitation, the condition of the roads, and unchecked incidents of crime.