

Attempted Eviction at Konnur High Road settlement: A Summary

The settlement along Konnur High road presently houses more than 1,000 households and 200 shops along a 700-metre stretch. This settlement was declared as a slum in 1971 under the *Tamil Nadu Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act* in the first round of declaration. Despite being declared, this slum has had a history of eviction drives. There is a closed canal that runs underneath a part of the settlement. This canal, as well as the expansion of Konnur High Road, has been cited as the reason for the evictions. In the year 1984 the Corporation of Chennai (CoC) demolished the entire settlement stating that the settlement is on objectionable land. Post a stay order on the demolition by the Madras High Court, residents came back and rebuilt their huts. In 2011, a part of the settlement that was very close to the road was demolished and paved over in order to expand Konnur High Road.

In November 2014, there was another attempt by the government to evict the residents of Konnur High Road. This is a summary of the fact-finding report regarding this latest eviction attempt detailing the procedure followed by the government, and the violations of rights of the residents as a result of government action. It also includes an appraisal of the facilities available to the residents around the settlement (this can be compared with those available at Ezhil Nagar, the proposed relocation site, in the adjoining report).

Eviction Procedure

No information relating to eviction or relocation was given to the residents of the area prior to the date of demolition. On 10th November 2014, a Monday morning, CoC officials along with the police came to the locality to evict the residents and demolish their houses. One of the respondents, an auto driver, described the events of that morning as follows: "On the day of eviction, the corporation officials accompanied by some police officials went door-to-door and spoke with house owners individually. The residents were told that if they do not agree to vacate their houses and move to Ezhil Nagar that very day, they would be evicted without any alternative housing. Those who agreed to relocate under this pressure were given tokens for allotment and their houses were demolished. After which, as per CoC protocol, these families and the few belongings they could carry with them were transported to Ezhil Nagar in a Corporation garbage collection lorry. The houses of those residents who refused to go to the relocation sites were not demolished nor were tokens given to them."

Many residents felt coerced into accepting the eviction. Only on reaching the resettlement site were residents told that they would have to pay an amount of Rs. 25,000/- to finalise the allotment. No assessment of the economic impact on evicted residents was undertaken at all. No compensation for loss of livelihood was even considered. In all, 75 houses were demolished and the families residing in them were relocated to Ezhil Nagar, an extension of Kannagi Nagar at Okkiyam Thoraipakkam.

Reason for Eviction Unclear

There is still no clarity amongst residents whether the entire settlement is going to be evicted or only some residents are going to be moved to free up a portion of the area. The reason for the evictions also remains indeterminate. Some residents said that it was due to the construction of a storm water drain, some mentioned that a nearby canal needed to be cleaned, while still others said that it was for a road-widening project. Some residents also mentioned the area was classified as "objectionable," but it was not clear the grounds on which such a classification was made.

Major Infrastructure

As seen in the table below, Konnur High Road residents benefit from their central city location by having many public services within walking distance of the neighbourhood. This is in sharp contrast to the facilities in Ezhil Nagar, KN, which are extremely limited.

1.	Anganwadis	3 Anganwadi centres functioning in the premises of the corporation primary school, located within 300 m distance from the slum.
2.	Schools (Public)	2 schools run by Corporation (1 primary and 1 higher sec school) are within 300 mt distance from the slum. In addition, There are 3 private schools, one of which is government-aided, within 1 km radius of the slum
3.	Health Facilities (Public)	1 PHC, 1 Community Welfare centre, 1 government TB hospital, located within 500 mt distance from the slum
4.	Health Facilities	3 private hospitals and 3 private clinics, located within 1 km radius of the



	(Private)	slum
5.	Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are buses available to areas like CMBT, Broadway, ICF etc. • There are 2 bus stops adjacent to the settlement and the Ayanavaram bus depot is close by • Perambur suburban railway station is just 3.5 kms away • Chennai Central and Egmore railway stations are just 5.9 km and 6.5 km away respectively <p>All these important hubs are easily accessed by buses and shared auto services</p>
6.	Ration Shop	1 ration shop on Konnur High Road nearby catering to residents in the settlement, is just opposite the settlement on Konnur High Road

Livelihoods

The occupations of residents include flower vending, domestic work, can water supply, vegetable vending, construction work, petty shops, catering services, tiffin shops, small business, daily wage labour, rickshaw, auto, and tricycle driving, painting, etc., Almost all residents, except auto drivers, have their place of work at a distance of 3-5 km from the settlement.

Alternative to Resettlement in Ezhil Nagar

There are several pockets of empty and/ or unused land around the settlement where residents of the settlement could be resettled – close to their present livelihood, schools, and other facilities. Five of these, including government-owned vacant land leased to a defunct company and a vacant plot owned by the Tamil Nadu Housing Board, were identified by our fact-finding team. There is also a piece of land adjoining the settlement that is owned by the Revenue Department and is being used by the adjacent government-aided school. Some of these vacant plots were being used for parking large buses and trucks when the fact-finding team visited.