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# SAMPLE SURVEY OF LOSSES SUSTAINED DURING CHENNAI FLOODS

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WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO LOSSES AND DAMAGES OF POSSESSIONS, LOSS OF  
WORKDAYS AND DAMAGE TO HOMES

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JANUARY 2016

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## SURVEY CARRIED OUT BY:

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Arunodhaya: Centre for Street and Working Children; Bhavani Raman; Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG); Karen Coelho, Kavin Malar; Krishnaveni; Madhumita Dutta; Vettiver Collective; Prema Revathi; Priti Narayan; Students of Madras Christian College; TN Labour blog; and V. Geetha.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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A group of concerned citizens involved in relief work post-Chennai floods, 20015 undertook a sample survey of 610 households (including migrants) across the city to assess losses suffered/damages incurred to homes, goods, occupational tools and also to get an idea of loss of working days. The purpose of this survey was to identify the exact quantum of losses sustained by the population and to direct government to compensate the populace for damages/loss accruing on account of the floods.

- Places surveyed: Eekaduthangal, Jaffarkhanpet, Saidpet, Kotturpuram (Adyar flood plains), Mudichur (badly affected suburb), Semmencheri, Perumbakkam (resettlement/new housing tenements for low-income groups), Kodungaiyur, Ponneri (outlying suburbs with poor infrastructural developments).
- More than 95% of people surveyed had not received warnings about impending flooding.
- Inhabitants of over 85% of households surveyed have lost 25-40 working days and concomitant wages, ranging from Rs 250-500/per day.
- Almost all households had lost or were left with irretrievably damaged certificates, household articles, including fridge, washing machine, grinder, mixers, lights, fans, stoves, tools of trade, children's books, cycles and in some cases bikes and scooters.
- Total losses sustained by households range from Rs 75,000 (including wages lost and cost of damage to homes) to Rs 500,000.

It is clear that:

- rampant real estate growth, unviable building sanctions, and encroachment on water bodies by powerful business and state interests have rendered urban flooding inevitable
- the city of Chennai was utterly unprepared for disaster. The Comptroller and Auditor General's Report had pointed out that the State as such was unprepared.
- the city of Chennai had not put early flood warning mechanisms in place; in spite of radar information pointing to a pattern of heavy rain and flooding, the city had not put in place a system for gradual release of water from overflowing water bodies
- since government of Tamil Nadu had not sought to mitigate flood-related damages in spite of such damages being foreseeable, it must accept culpability for losses sustained by the people.

Those who have suffered losses need to have recourse to restorative justice, to be compensated for losses sustained on account of state inaction or not adequate action.

We demand:

- proper enumeration of losses to be undertaken by the state government
- due compensation amounts fixed and paid within specified time frame; that compensation is not linked to eviction and resettlement
- that for purposes of compensation migrant working people are accorded the same rights as non-migrants.

## BACKGROUND

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From November 9-December 1, 2015, Chennai city and its outlying areas, which are part of Kanchipuram and Thiruvallur districts received continuous and very heavy rain. The city was flooded at least three times, with the last flood, caused by non-stop rain on December 1, and the consequent opening of the Chembarambakkam Eri (tank) as well as various other Eris on the outlying areas causing enormous damage and devastation. We are yet to have a precise tabulation and description of what has been lost, destroyed and damaged. In addition to the efforts undertaken by government of Tamil Nadu by way of relief work in the immediate aftermath of the floods, various individuals, charitable organisations, non-governmental agencies, religious groups, and political parties have been working for nearly a month to feed, clothe, and offer medical assistance to the most affected and deprived populations.

## RELIEF WORK: IMMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM NEEDS: REASONS FOR UNDERTAKING SURVEY

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Those engaged in relief work were confronted with two realities: they had to attend to immediate needs, rescue people, provide them with safe shelters, ensure that they had enough to eat, and that they did not fall prey to diseases. At the same time, talking to those afflicted, it was clear to relief workers that individuals and families had lost a substantial part of their homes and possessions. This was true of all classes of people. The poor and the underprivileged had lost all that they had managed to acquire and save over the last 5-10 years, as well as all those given them by the government, by way of welfare handouts (such as mixer and grinder); had lost at least a month's work/employment and wages; and many had lost the tools of their profession, such as saws, hammers, electrical equipment, iron boxes, tailoring machines etc. The middle and upper classes and small businesses had also lost a great deal: vehicles, furniture, soft goods, entertainment systems, computers, stock (in the case of businesses) and documents.

Even as relief workers acknowledged the quantum of losses suffered by various sections of the population, they had to also engage with the question of responsibility: who was to compensate such losses, and for what reasons.

It was in this context that a group of concerned relief workers and citizens came together to undertake a sample survey of losses sustained by the city's laboring population; and also on a more modest level, undertake a survey of losses amongst the lower middle classes and middle classes.

## PURPOSE OF SURVEY

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The purpose of such a survey was to identify broadly:

1. The specific contexts of the flooding (day, timing, magnitude); and whether the city was prepared to handle disaster at the micro-level
2. The extent and scope of things lost as well as the value of what was lost.

The survey was to thus provide a sample picture of devastation and loss, and on that basis seek from government of Tamil Nadu:

- a) A more comprehensive survey along similar lines to assess damages in other communities in flood-affected areas of Tamil Nadu;
- b) An enhancement of relief and reparations to the afflicted;
- c) And also long term support that would enable individuals and communities to restart trades and small business and make up for the loss of working hours and days.

Such reparations and support have been forthcoming from government of Tamil Nadu in other contexts. In the wake of the tsunami of 2004, long-term support, including monthly allowance for 4 months for those who had lost or could not access livelihood options, was extended to afflicted populations within a year of the disaster (see *Tsunami and One Year After*, published by the Cuddalore Collectorate, 2005). This was part of what the government considered the ‘relief’ phase, following which was the ‘rehabilitation’ phase, which included further support packages for affected communities.

The survey has a precedent in the detailed survey undertaken in Nagapattinam district, in the wake of the tsunami (2004) to identify the nature of claims and reparations that could be made on government. Following this, government orders were passed to expedite relief claims in the region. Similar surveys were undertaken in Odisha district, following the 2006 floods there and submitted to the State government.

## WHO WAS SURVEYED?

As we have noted above, across classes and communities, people in the city of Chennai and its outlying areas have lost possessions, livelihood and businesses and have been left with damaged houses, or in some cases, with no houses. To understand better the impact of the floods, it was decided that we would look at a range of populations and areas – in the flood plains, resettled housing colonies on the fringes of the city, which are home to people displaced from the city on account of development or disaster, neglected city populations and neighbourhoods which bear the brunt of minimal or indifferent governance in times of disaster, and new residential areas, on the city’s limits which are home to an emergent middle class. It was decided too that we could focus on how out-of-state migrant workers experienced the flood, since even at other times, their living situation is precarious.

We identified the following neighbourhoods (and particular housing colonies and streets within these as suitable for our survey:

1. Eekaduthangal, Jaffarkhanpet, Saidapet, Kotturpuram: Floodplains of the Adyar River, which have long been vulnerable to flooding, and which also house substantial low-income groups

2. Semmencheri, Perumbakkam: Resettlement housing provided to communities of low-income persons evacuated from formerly vulnerable neighbourhoods in the city , including from lake-beds, river and canal banks
3. Kodungaiyur: North Chennai neighbourhood, which has suffered long-term infrastructural and population neglect; and additionally is home to low-income families
4. Ponneri : A fringe area on the outskirts of Chennai, which has seen the growth of a working class and lower middle class population
5. Mudichur/Old Perungalathur: New residential area that has emerged over the last decade and more, and are home to a growing middle class
6. OMR settlements of Migrant populations in and adjacent to Semmencheri

In all 610 families were surveyed. See Table appended to this report for these and other details, including numbers of those surveyed, and value of damages, losses.

## METHODOLOGY OF SURVEY

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Our survey comprised two parts. The first part had to do with the flooding: when and for how long were homes flooded; the state of the flooded environment, whether flooding included sewerage outflows; were people given adequate warning about impending flooding or not; whether people who fled the flood were provided with adequate shelter and relief. This part was designed to get a sense of the city's flood-preparedness, and whether some of the losses and suffering that people endured could have been mitigated through adequate and early warning and communication.

The second part of the survey had to do with damages to homes and possessions, including home goods, such as mixer, grinder, fridge, furniture, clothes etc, tools of trade; loss of possessions, loss of working days, and therefore earnings and other costs incurred, including food and medical costs, on account of the flooding. The purpose of this section of the survey was to arrive at a broad idea of the value of what people lost, on account of having to deal with not only an unprecedented disaster, but one for which neither they nor the city appear to have been prepared. (See attached Survey Questionnaire)

## PROCESS OF SURVEY

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The survey was undertaken over a two week period, from December 15-30. Groups as well as individuals were involved in administering it. An orientation workshop was held to discuss the purpose of the survey as well as the issues at stake in undertaking this exercise. Questionnaires were prepared in Tamil, English and Hindi and handed out to groups and individuals who took responsibility for doing the survey in particular areas of the city. All involved in the survey had experience of public work: the surveyors included students, research scholars, professors, journalists, NGO workers, members of the affected populations and writers.

The survey was undertaken by visits to particular homes and neighbourhoods, so that surveyors had direct experience of how houses had been damaged, and to actually see for themselves the extent and nature of damages and losses.

## SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS

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### DETAILS OF FLOODING: DATE, DURATION AND EXTENT OF FLOODING

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A majority of populations surveyed noted that the December 1-4 flooding was the most devastating, having been occasioned not only by excess rain, but by the opening of the Chembarambakkam and other tanks in Chennai and outlying areas. Additionally, ill-planned infrastructure including roads, buildings and other transport infrastructure that were built without hydrological impact studies, seem to have contributed significantly to flooding in many areas. Some reported that they experienced flooding in three phases: during Diwali and after (November 9-13); the flooding of mid-November (November 16-23); and finally the December floods (December 1-4). In all cases, water rose up to anywhere between 5 ft-12 ft. Many of the poor income areas did not have electricity from the last week of November, and in many places electricity was restored only two weeks afterwards, and in some places only by the last week of December (for example, in Satya Nagar, Saidapet).

With the select exception of around 15-20 people, amongst the 610 surveyed, all reported that they were given no prior warning before the flooding happened. This is what was reported by those residing in the flood plains (Eekaduthangal, Saidapet, Kotturpuram), as well as those in outlying areas which experienced flooding on account of the opening of Eris (Semmencheri, Perumbakkam). A few people (around a dozen) said that the local panchayat had issued a warning of impending flooding (Ponneri). In some cases, people had heard from others that police had issued warnings, but had not seen or heard this from policemen directly (Semmencheri). In Jaffer Khanpet, 5 respondents reported that even as the police warnings came in, water levels were rising and soon came up to the first floors of homes; and the Corporation of Chennai had set up floodlights around the area, which made the flooding visible.

In many places, flood water remained anywhere between 5-20 days. That is, water inside homes could only be drained out after 5 days or even after week. In the streets, water stayed longer, sometimes, as long as 2-3 weeks. In some places, even after a month the walls of homes are damp, and homes continue to give off a dank and unhealthy odour (Jaffer Khanpet).

### RELIEF DETAILS

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People spent at least 25 days in relief camps, with some, who also sought shelter during the November flooding, reporting that in all, they spent 35 days. Among those who had to seek alternative shelter and relief, a majority reported that they were directed to shelters by government (to schools) or by NGOs (again to schools). In at least two cases, respondents said they resided in railway stations (Ponneri and Kotturpuram) because the shelters were full. Relief by way of food, clothing, mats, blankets, milk and rations, as well as medical

assistance was provided by both State and non-State groups, with relief provided by the latter being singled out as the most substantial. More than half of those surveyed reported that they had to spend anything from Rs 1000-Rs 5000, towards food, particularly milk and water and private medical assistance in the first few days of fleeing their homes, since adequate and appropriate relief efforts were not yet fully in place.

## DAMAGES TO HOMES

In all places surveyed, houses have suffered severe damage:

1. Where people have resided in huts, these have been completely washed away (Perumbakkam);
2. Flooring and walls have been irretrievably damaged (Ponneri), damaged, but yet needs extensive repair (Kottupuram, Saidapet)
3. Partially damaged, and in need refitting of doors and windows (Mudichur).
4. In all people expect to spend anything between Rs 8,000 - 40,000) getting their houses back in order. Some said (Mudichur) that they might have to spend even up to Rs 100,000 to fix their floors.

## DETAILS OF POSSESSIONS/CERTIFICATES LOST OR DAMAGED

Of things lost/damaged beyond use, the most important are: clothes, certificates, including ration card, birth and death certificates, Aadhar card, passport, school ID cards, caste certificates; television; fans, lights, mixer, grinder, aluminium kitchen vessels; phones; cycles; chairs. Additionally, in some areas, including in low-income neighbourhoods, people have lost fridge, washing machine, home theatre, motor-bikes and scooters. Or else these articles have been damaged and at the time of the survey, people had not yet found out how much it would cost to get these repaired. Tools of trade including carpenters' tools, masonry tools, bike repair tools, plumbing and electrical tools, ironing man's tools, tricycles used for vending, tailoring machines, house-keeping implements, stock such as aluminium and plastic vessels, stationery, clothes for stitching, water cans, steel vessels (in a factory) have been lost/damaged beyond repair.

## LOST WORK DAYS/LOST INCOME

People in all areas, but particularly amongst low-income groups, have lost workdays, ranging from 10-45 days (and with daily income ranging from Rs 250-500). In many places, those who depend on daily wages, whether as painters, construction labour, or daily petty vending have still not been able to get back to work – as on date.

## QUANTUM OF LOSS

Depending on the quantum of lost, people have lost possessions/income (calculated on the basis of daily wages) worth Rs 75,000- Rs 125,000 in low-income neighbourhoods, and from Rs 100,000 - Rs 500,000 in places such as Mudichur, where families are relatively better off.

## FACTS THAT STAND OUT

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In this survey, four factors stood out:

- The case of out-of-State migrant workers deserves special mention: They did not access government shelters, and chose to find their own, including alternative rented accommodation; they have lost belongings, which include clothes, vessels, phones, and cycles; they have not been able to access relief, especially dry rations, and the Rs 5,000 that government has earmarked for those affected by floods, since they do not possess ration cards.
- The plight of single women is stark, with many of them having lost jobs and if older, have become traumatized. They are also very afraid of getting into long-term indebtedness. Older women also are very unsure about starting new bank accounts to receive the Rs 5,000 promised by government.
- Areas such as Chemmenchery and Perumbakkam where several thousands have been re-located from ostensibly vulnerable neighbourhoods – such as canal and tank beds and slopes of rivers and canals – were flooded quite badly. This raises many questions about the meaning of ‘resettlement’ and ‘rehabilitation’ and also of ‘safety’ and ‘risk’. Most communities that were surveyed now live under the threat of eviction – and this has rendered their current status even more pitiable. The question of in situ housing has been raised time and again, or housing in higher ground in the immediate vicinity of vulnerable settlements and met with responses that stress ‘safety’ factors over the right of the poor to safe housing that addresses their right to life and livelihood.

## THE SURVEY AND RELIEF CLAIMS: TOWARDS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

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The survey is not only about number of possessions lost, and about the damages sustained to homes, neighbourhoods, and livelihoods. It is also an expression of the citizens’ right to restorative justice. For, it is clear that the disastrous flood that devastated Chennai city was not ‘an act of God’ merely. While nature certainly had a role to play in the unprecedented quantum of rain that came down on the city, several other factors were responsible for the devastation that followed. We might identify them as immediate and long-term factors.

## CHENNAI FLOODS: CONTEXTS AND REASONS

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Long-term factors include issues to do with:

1. Unplanned and chaotic growth, which involves building by corporates, educational institutions, even government institutions, on water bodies, with no regard for the environment, and with no thought given to building in ways that would ensure that flooding does not happen;
2. Another long-term issue has to do with planning that does not take into account the nature of water bodies in and around Chennai and the continued sanctioning of



projects that ignore their complex ecology and relationship to the lived and built environment

3. Issues to do with safe housing for the poor, who are only seen as encroachers on lake, river and canal banks, but not as productive citizens whose work contributes to the city's economy and who deserve in situ and safe housing, which is not impossible, but to which no thought is given.
4. Lastly, there is the issue of indifferent governance, and the resultant lack of attention paid to maintaining city water bodies, storm water drainage and sewerage systems.

Immediate reasons for the flooding as it happened have to do with the city's unpreparedness for a flooding on this scale.

1. Tamil Nadu's general unpreparedness to tackle disasters was taken note of by the Comptroller and Auditor-General's Report (*The Times of India, May 13, 2013*). Though the report was concerned with coastal areas such as Cuddalore and Nagapattinam, subject to regular flooding due to rain and cyclones, it also pointed to the absence of disaster preparedness mechanisms in the city of Chennai, in the event of an impending earthquake.

Further, the Union Government's call (in the report prepared by the National Disaster Management Authority on Urban Flooding, issued in 2010) to set up Early Flood Warning Systems in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh had not been acted upon by the government of Tamil Nadu perhaps with the urgency they deserved. A report that appeared in *The Hindu dated, August 25, 2015* noted how important it was to have such Warning Systems in place, since "More than 700,000 buildings are estimated to be located in areas prone to flooding along water bodies". Further, the report notes: "Currently, there is always a danger of flooding in downstream areas of waterways and in 130 water bodies as the city does not have any system to forecast how much water will flow in each neighbourhood." The news article notes that Anna University has been entrusted with the setting up of such a system.

Further, in spite of special funds being earmarked for Disaster Management, and suitable advisory bodies set up, the city was completely unprepared. This, in spite of Rs 1,621 crores set aside for this efficient disaster management under the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year plan (See 'Funding Pattern for Disaster Management', Dept. of Revenue Administration, *Disaster Management and Mitigation, GoTN*).

As late as September 2015, with the North-east Monsoon, only a few weeks away, newspaper reports quoted experts as saying that such warnings were still being put in place. In spite of the IMD noting that the North-east Monsoon will be significantly above normal in the quantum of rain that it brings, this fact was not considered important enough for a flood warning system to be put in place.

2. As and when the rains came and the city flooded, it was clear that the city was unable to cope with the very heavy rains of early and mid-November 2015. Even as the city's many Eris (tanks) filled, Chennai Metrowater released large quantities during this phase of flooding. However, this release system paused after the mid-November flooding, after November 25, and even as radar information and other weather reports anticipated the very heavy rain of December 1, no major release of water from the reservoirs was done, prior to the opening of the floodgates sometime on the same day: from a previous day's release of less than 1000 cusecs, overnight 29, 000 cusecs were released! Such was the level of the city's unpreparedness.

3. Further proof of the government's underprepared status to deal with flooding may be had in the manner it failed to coordinate relief operations - in fact a public interest litigation was filed in the Madras High Court on this matter, which resulted in the Court directing government to better coordinate its efforts, along with those of other civic and non-governmental groups working on relief.

## CULPABILITY

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Clearly, then Chennai floods were due to a variety of reasons that had to do with questionable policies of growth and development, and with problems to do with governance as such. Government's role in formulating these policies, as well as in not pushing for efficient and fair governance cannot be lost sight of. In this sense, government is culpable of having caused disaster to take place.

Further, when governments fail to act in situations where their action would have saved lives and livelihoods, then such governments are bound to restore and compensate for losses and damages, they failed to prevent from taking place. That is, those who have been affected on account of either governmental inaction or because action undertaken was not adequate must be rendered justice based on their needs, such as they are. It is this principle that this survey seeks to invoke, in its laying out of claims by way of restorative justice to the victims of Chennai's floods.

## DEMANDS

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1. Ensure enumeration of all flood affected residents of Chennai city and its outlying areas, irrespective of their migrant status or lack of documentation.
2. Ensure that the State provides reasonable and adequate compensation, based on the specific needs of residents in particular areas and that compensation is not routed through third parties. Additionally State must ensure that compensation is not linked to eviction and re-housing, or based only on possession of documents, such as ration card or land documents. Special efforts must be made to ensure senior citizens particularly elderly older women receive compensation without being made to open special bank accounts, and that existing facilities such as old-age pension accounts are utilized for this purpose.
3. Ensure that housing support is offered to all affected populations in situ: if residents live on rented premises, low rental public housing should be developed by the State including for migrant workers.
4. Finally a white paper must be issued on the state of disaster-preparedness of Chennai city on the eve of the flooding; and whether State machinery possessed the means and personnel to warn residents of impending flooding.

**AREA-WISE LIST OF FLOOD-RELATED INFORMATION AND OF  
LOSSES/DAMAGES**

| <b>Neighbourhood</b>     | <b>Street Name</b>  | <b>Surveyors</b>  | <b>Date of Survey</b> |
|--------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|
| Satya Nagar,<br>Saidapet |   | V. Geetha (writer and publisher),<br>Krishnaveni (social worker and publisher)                                    | December 24, 2015     |
| Uthama Nagar,<br>Padur   | Near Siruseri IT Park - no street addresses for migrant workers   | Madhumita Dutta (PhD Scholar), and CAG  | December 27, 2015     |
| RA Puram/<br>Kotturpuram | South Kesavaperumalpuram Street; Annai Sathya Nagar (1st,2nd,3rd streets, 1st Cross Street), Sathya Nagar (1st Street, Amman Koil Street)   | CAG and Priti Narayan, Ph.d Student   | December 28, 2015     |
| Mudichur                 | Kannan Avenue 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th Street, 1st Street extension, 1st Cross Street, Kannan Avenue Main Road, GA Avenue Meenakshi Nagar, Gandhi Nagar 1st Street, VOC Street Parvathy Nagar  | MCC students  | December 20-24, 2015  |
| Perumbakkam              |   | CAG   | December 23-24, 2015  |
| Athipattu<br>Pudhunagar  | Srinivasa Nagar Angalamman Koil 2th, 5th Street; Angalaparameshwari Koil Street; Srinivasa Nagar 5th Street; Bhagat Singh Nagar 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th Street; Gokul Nagar; Angalamman Koil Street Om Sakthi Nagar; Poongavanam Street; Manikandan Nagar; BKN Colony 2nd Street; KGS Nagar; Seegar Nagar; ICL Road; Housing Nagar | CAG   | December 24-25, 2015  |
| Semmencherry             | 1st, 4th, 8th, 9th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 34th, 38th, 42nd, 52nd, 94th Cross Street; 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 9th Avenues; 5th, 6th, 9th Main Road; Semencherry Thoppu, OMR Kancheepuram  | Kavin Malar (Journalist), Prasad, Kannan and Ganesan, Srividiya Tadepalli (student) and Bhavani Raman (historian) | December 24-25, 2015  |
| Eekaduthangal            | Kaveri Street, Tandavarayan Street, Pillayar Koil IV and V Streets, Kannadasan Street   | CAG and Priti Narayan, Ph.d Student   | January 2, 2016       |
| Jaffarkhanpet            | Raghavan Street, Musalman Street, Illango Adigal Street, VOC Block, Balasubramaniam Street, Kannammal Street  | Prema Revati (writer and social activist) and several other   | January 6, 2016       |
| Kodungaiyur              | MGR Nagar 3rd Street  | Arunodaya   | January 8, 2016       |

## SUMMARY OF SURVEYS (TABULAR FORM)

| Place and No. of Persons surveyed                | Date & Duration of Flooding        | Whether Flood Warning was Issued  | Rescue and Relief Details   | Losses Sustained/ Working Days Lost   | Approximate Value of Damaged Goods/Losses | Other comments   |
|--|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|
| <b>Satya Nagar, Saidapet</b><br><br>200 families | November 9-13; Nov 16-23; Dec 1-2; | No  | Accessed local schools for shelter; Relief, including cooked food, dry rations, mats, bedsheets, sanitary pads, medical camp assistance provided by state as well as by private groups, with the latter preponderant in this area | Fans, lights, mixer, grinder, a month's provisions, mats, sheets, clothes, school books, college books lost/damaged in over 90% of families surveyed. Tailoring machines (in 6 families), plastic goods and aluminum goods (stock) and tricycles (in at least 30 families); cycles, bikes damaged, as well as lost in 40 families; in 10 families, fridge, washing machine lost; carpenters' tools, housekeeping tools etc lost in 10 families' Floors, roof, access paths damaged in all households surveyed. 45 working days lost for more than three-fourths of the population surveyed, particularly men. | From Rs 50,000- Rs 75,000                 | Residents of over twenty years claim that even routine flood warning was not issued. Usually two buses arrive, with police escort, in the wake of heavy rains, to take people to safe shelters. This time, even though people had to leave their homes twice, they did so on their own. There were neither buses nor police present at both times. |
| <b>Athipattu Pudhunagar Ponneri</b>              | December 1-2;                      | A few said that they were warned of the flooding by the local panchayat by beating the 'tandora'. | Government shelters; Athipattu Pudhunagar railway station platform and a Church. Relief was provided by government as well as private agencies, with private agencies appearing to be doing more.                                 | Loss of provisions, gas cylinders (not all of them only a few), clothes, chairs, vessels, fans, mixer, grinder, tv, phones (mobile and landline), radio. Some houses had CD player, DVD, furniture, cots, bureau, and bed sheets. Children's books, certificates and documents, including birth and death certificates, land documents, bank passbooks, ration cards. Ducks, goats and chicken (dome people). Many lost their dogs. Tools of  | From Rs. 50,000to Rs.75,000.              | Most note that the panchayat president arranged for their safe passage to shelters (school and railway platform). Houses completely washed away (For one tenth of surveyed). Walls, roofs and floors have to be redone (For most others). Sewage overflow and sewage and potable water got mixed.  |

|  |                                  |    |  |   |                             |  |
|--|----------------------------------|----|--|---|-----------------------------|--|
|  |                                  |    |  | trade: iron boxes, iron carts, tailoring machines (dome). Most of them have lost a month's work (with earnings upto Rs 300-500/per day). Some said they've been without work for nearly 45 days   |                             |  |
| <b>Perumbakkam/Ambedkar Pudhu Nagar, Sholinganallur</b><br><br><b>40 families residing in housing board tenements + 12 families residing in huts</b> | November 16-23;<br>December 1-2; | No | Many moved to the top floors of their tenements. They drew on a mix of government and private relief materials               | Mixer, grinder, provisions, vessels, tv, furniture (chairs, in some cases sofas), and phones were damaged. School books were ruined. Certificates, and some lost aadhar and ration cards. Some lost in addition fridge, washing machines, DVD, home theatre. Cycles and TVS XCEL were damaged. One person's car that he had bought on instalment basis – he is a driver – has been badly damaged. Another person who trades in clothes (saris etc) has lost all stock. Those in the huts lost clothes, cycles, vessels and all books and certificates. All lost a month's work (with earnings upto Rs 300-500/per day). | From Rs 40,000 to 75,000.   | Boats were not deployed in the far reaches of the neighbourhood, and appear to have plied only in the streets that were in front. Almost all persons reported falling sick, with fever, cold, and foot sores. There are at least 4 physically challenged persons in the houses surveyed, and they suffered additionally on account of their condition. |
| <b>Mudichur/Old Perungalathur, Tambaram</b><br><br><b>42 families</b>  | November 15-18, Dec 1-2          | No | People were in shelters from Dec 1-Dec 17 at least. Most of those who came to them for relief work were not from government. | Educational certificates, aadhar cards, passports. Student's books. In all homes (with some exceptions – that is vessels or white goods were not ruined in all homes): tv, fans, mixer, grinder, fridge, vessels, clothes, heater, inverter, air cooler, furniture, water motor, water filter, washing machine, air-conditioner, cash upto Rs 1,00,000 (one lakh, in one instance), groceries, clothes. Additionally DVD player, Home theatre, laptops, computers, stabilizers  | Rs 50, 000 – Rs 10, 00, 000 |  |

|   |                                    |  |  |  |                           |   |
|---|------------------------------------|--|--|--|---------------------------|---|
|   |                                    |  |  | damaged. Bikes, scooters and cars in some cases have been ruined. A person who owned a stationery store has lost stock, another reported his Xerox machine being ruined, while yet another person reported printing equipment worth Rs 70, 00, 000 (Seventy lakhs) was damaged.  |                           |   |
| <b>Semmenche ry (Area where earlier populations from the city have been relocated )</b><br><b>50 families</b> | November 9-13; Nov 16-23; Dec 1-2; | No. But when there was no flood, one Sunday before December 1 <sup>st</sup> and after the 2 <sup>nd</sup> phase of rain, police warned them of flooding. People safe guarded their household things but no flood came. | Rescue boats did not come to the poor income areas, and instead went to evacuate upper middle class families from the nearby D.L.F area. Area youths made artificial boats from syntax tank and rescued many people. People were forced to buy necessary things like water, milk, vegetables etc for double prices. After flood, government conducted medical camps. Ngos, political party outfits issued relief materials. Most of the relief materials reached the affected houses which are in front. Those who stay in the interior didn't receive any excepting one or two. | Fans, lights, mixer, grinder, gas cylinder, kerosene stove, mobile phones, a month's provisions, mats, sheets, clothes, school books, college books lost/damaged in over 90% of families surveyed. Added to these washing machine, laptop, two wheelers, bi cycles been damaged. Some were running small shops in which all the things were fully washed away. Some houses lost their cattle. Most of them have to go for work to Chennai (Mostly housekeeping, domestic work etc.). Many of them lost their job since they couldn't go for work for at least 15 days. | From Rs 50,000- Rs 75,000 | One woman washed away in flood, another pregnant women died of dengue fever. Food packets thrown from helicopters by government were largely scattered and could not be used. Incidents of breaking the locked doors and robbing the available things happened in some households, when they were staying in nearby houses. A disabled women stayed in her house for a whole night standing in 3 ft water to save her household. Still drinking water is smelling because of mixing of sewage water. Many poisonous insects and snakes came inside the houses with flood water. |
| <b>Kotturpuram/ Raja Annamalaipuram</b>   | Dec 1-2;                           | No   | Kotturpuram Metro Railway Station; some took boats (provided mostly by private parties, though   | Mixer, grinder, provisions, vessels, tv, furniture (chairs, in some cases sofas), and phones were damaged. Fridge, washing machine lost / damaged; Cycles  | From Rs 50,000- Rs 75,000 | Some people said they continued to stay in places opposite their severely damaged houses for fear of theft.   |

|   |                        |    |  |   |                        |   |
|---|------------------------|----|--|---|------------------------|---|
| <b>54 families</b>                                    |                        |    | some say they took boats provided by govt) and by walking. Some preferred to stay in top floors  | and Two wheelers were damaged; Auto parts , Water motor damaged; Children's books, certificates and documents, land documents, bank passbooks, ration cards, aadhar cards lost. For medical expenses many have spent from Rs 1000 to 1500 /-  |                        |   |
| <b>Eekaduthan gal</b><br><b>11 families + 4 shops</b> | Dec 1-2;               | No | Some went to their native places, some stayed in their neighbor's houses. No body stayed in any shelter homes  | Mixer, grinder, kerosene stove, provisions, vessels, tv, furniture (chairs, in some cases sofas, bed, pillows), and phones were damaged. Fridge, lost / damaged; Washing machine damaged in 3 houses, Cycles and Two wheelers were damaged; Tailoring machine damaged, Auto parts, Water motor damaged; Children's books, certificates and documents, bike insurance document, lost. One gold ring lost in a house. In 3 houses they lost their welding tools, electrical tools, stock for corner shop. In the 4 shops (auto spare shop, engineering work etc.) electrical work equipment, SSI certificate, pipes, Air Conditioner, stabilizers, 3 barrels of oil, EDM machine (worth Rs 1.5 lakh), 11 motors were lost / damaged. For medical expenses many have spent from Rs 1000 to 1500. |                        | Relief materials largely by private reached this area only after 3 to 4 days (Dec 5 <sup>th</sup> to 10 <sup>th</sup> ). That too reached those who live in main roads. People in the interior parts of the area did not receive even milk, water, and mats etc. To clean and repair their house it will cost them from Rs. 5000 to 25000. Some said they need from Rs 1 lac to 1.5 lakhs to repair the damages in their shop/office. For Arunachalam Engg works Central govt loan (Mithra) was sanctioned Rs 50,000/- before flood but it has been held to be given as part of flood relief. |
| <b>Puttamma Nagar, OMR Taluk</b><br><b>46</b>         | Nov 16-23;<br>Dec 1-2; | No | Many went to a local government-run school for shelter as informed by the local panchayat leader. The locks on the doors were broken open to gain entry. | Lost dry rations (some reported losing 10-25 kilos of rice), mixer, TV, fridge, stove and vehicles (bikes), Mobile phones damaged. Their work related items like sewing machine, taxi or even livestock (chickens) have been lost /   | Rs. 5,000 to Rs.20,000 | The temporary room rents were between Rs 500-Rs 1500 for a period 3-10 days. Some of the affected migrants stayed in such houses. Most of them were denied access to the relief   |

|   |                                    |   |  |   |                      |   |
|---|------------------------------------|---|--|---|----------------------|---|
| <b>households - Migrants from other states and other districts of Tamil Nadu.</b> |                                    |   | Some stayed in with relatives or in rented rooms instead. Many were given cooked food and water for about a week by residents of nearby high-rise apartment complexes and panchayat workers. They also received limited rations, blankets and mats from private sources including NGOs and volunteers.   | damaged. Many have lost their documents, with one respondent having lost all his identification including ration card, voted id, aadhar and PAN card. People spent for medical expenses from between Rs 300 and Rs 5000. Also lost 2-4 weeks of workdays      |                      | materials due to not having a ration card. The state government workers who came to the area to gather details for monetary compensation refused to record the details of any residents who did not have local identity proof such as voter id, ration card, etc.   |
| <b>Semencherry Thoppu, OMR</b><br><br><b>10 households - Migrants</b>             | November 9-13; Nov 16-23; Dec 1-2; | No  | Most interstate migrant families not allowed or offered any shelter or relief. Those who could not access camps or move in with the neighbors took shelter at work. The security guards stayed on duty the whole time. Private groups distributed mats, blankets, bread and biscuits to migrant families, and also arranged for a medical camp | As there was rain for a month many interstate migrants did not have work so borrowed money and had food for twice a day. There was no heavy material loss as they had very few. Most of them spent for medical expenses and cleaning their houses.            |                      | All the interstate migrants were told by Revenue officials that they were not eligible for compensation by government and they have no ration card. Several women reporting they had stopped buying vegetables altogether and have been eating rice with pickle for weeks. Even until a week ago, two-three families could be seen sharing one hut because some houses were destroyed by persistent waterlogging. |
| <b>Jaffarkhanpet</b><br><br><b>20 households + 1 company</b>                      | Dec 1<br>midnight-<br>Dec 2        | Three said police announced with loudspeakers; others said they | Many sought shelter in school relief camps on their own; some went to relatives' homes; several who tried to get out even when the police were announcing found they   | Mixer, grinder, fridge, water motor, certificates, fan, stove, provisions, vessels, cot, showcase, tv, CD player, bicycle, washing machine. Some people's homes are completely destroyed. Almost everyone interviewed have only the mats, sheets etc given as | Rs 50,000 - 5,00,000 | The areas surveyed are yet to recover in any sense of the word. Homes are damp and they stink. People have lost their jobs, several are very ill and appear to be suffering from asthmatic condition  |



|   |                    |  |  |   |                   |  |
|---|--------------------|--|--|---|-------------------|--|
|   |                    | did realized they were flooded; and also because the Chennai Corporation had set up floodlights and water was visible everywhere | were chest-deep in water. Others moved to top floors of homes or to the terrace. Initially choppers dropped food packets; later private relief agencies provided food, mats etc. | relief as their possessions as on date. Other losses/damages include tricycle (used for vegetable vending), iron-cart and iron box, a small grocery store, plumbing and electrical tools, tailoring machine, bike mechanic tools, vegetable stock, and a steel factory which has lost goods worth at least Rs 5 lakhs |                   |  |
| <b>Kodungaiyur, MGR nagar</b><br><b>48 households</b> | December 1-3, 2015 | No prior warning was issued  | Many moved to homes of friends, relatives; a few to a nearby school. Cooked food, mats, blankets provided by way of relief, both by government and private agencies.             | Mixer, grinder, fridge, water water motor, certificates, fan, stove, gas cylinders, provisions, vessels, cot, showcase, tv, CD player, bicycle, washing machine; Houses damaged, with walls, floor and ceiling oozing water as of date  | Rs 50, 000-2lakhs | Almost everyone surveyed have incurred high medical expenses, anywere between Rs 2800-Rs 5000. |

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

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**District:**

**Taluk:**

**Town/Village:**

Name:

Address:

Family Members:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

### **Flood**

1. Did the flood damage your area? Yes No
2. Was your house damaged by the flood? Or just only your road damaged?
3. When and where did the floodwater enter your house?
4. When/How did you first know about the flood?
5. Did anyone from the Government of Tamil Nadu come to warn people from your area about the dangers of the flood? Yes No If yes, then how?
6. When the flood came, was there electricity in your house? Yes No
7. Was there electricity in your house before the flood came? Yes No
8. How many days were you without electricity?
9. How high did the flood come?
10. How long did the floodwaters stay in you house and in your area? Is there still floodwater?
11. Did sewage pour into your street or you area Yes No
12. Did sewage mix with drinking water, well water, or bore-well water in your house or area? Yes No

### **Safety and Relief**

1. Did you leave your house as soon as the flood came? Yes No
2. Where did you go after leaving your house?
3. Did the government provide shelter for you? Or did someone else find you shelter?
4. What help was available to you?

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Boat rescue                                   | Government or Private |
| Cooked food provision (for how many days?)    | Government or Private |
| Drinking water provision (for how many days?) | Government or Private |
| Milk provision (for how many days?)           | Government or Private |
| Basic goods provision                         | Government or Private |
| Mat, blanket                                  | Government or Private |
| Medicines, medical camp                       | Government or Private |
| Sanitary needs                                | Government or Private |

### **Record of Losses**

What have you lost from the list below?

### Household items

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Rice, dhal, other basic food items (list them below)       | Grinder, mixer   |
| Cookware (water pot, cooker, pots, pans, list below)       | Gas stove, electric stove, kerosene stove  |
| Gas cylinder   | Kerosene   |
| TV, computer, radio  | Fridge   |
| Fans   | CD player  |
| Water filter   | Washing machine  |
| Cycle, bike, auto, pushcart, fish cart (list below)        | Clothing (saris, sandals, undergarments, nighties vesthis, pants, skirts or other items) |
| Mats, blankets   | Valuables (jewellery, gold)  |
| Sofa set, bed, pillows, chairs, table, and other furniture | Phone  |
| Important documents  | Books  |
| Other  |  |

### Work Related

|  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| Electrical work equipment              | Ironing cart           |
| Plumbing tools                         | Construction equipment |
| Tailoring machine                      | Small shop goods       |
| Restaurant equipment                   | Welding tools          |
| Animals (chickens, cows, goats, other) | Animal feed            |
| Other                                  |                        |

### Value of Losses

1. What kind of house do you live in? Thatch? Tiles? Concrete? Washing board?
2. What kind of damage was done to your house?
3. How much will it cost to clean and repair your house?
4. How many days were you unable to go to work? How many earnings have you lost as a result?
5. Did you suffer any health problems as a result of the flood? Yes No
6. Did you go to a government hospital when you were ill? To a private hospital? Were you admitted into hospital?
7. How much were your medical costs?
8. Did you spend extra on drinking water, milk, necessary medicines, or transportation costs to escape the flood? How much did you spend?
9. What other expenses were incurred during the flood?

## ABOUT THE GROUP (LISTED ALPHABETICALLY)

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Arunodhaya: Centre for Street and Working Children Arunodhaya: Centre for Street and Working Children is a non-governmental organisation working in North Chennai for over three decades on issues to do with child labour, child rights and with domestic workers

Bhavani Raman is a reputed historian who has worked on 19th century Tamil Nadu.

Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG) is a non-profit and non-political organisation that works towards protecting citizens rights in consumer and environmental issues and promoting good governance processes including transparency, accountability and participatory decision-making. Among others, CAG works on issues affecting the common citizen such as pollution, lack of access to information, poor quality health care and civic amenities, and land rights and housing.

Karen Coelho is an Assistant Professor at the Madras Institute of Development Studies.

Kavin Malar is a journalist and writer who works with the Tamil press.

Krishnaveni is a social activist.

Madhumita Dutta is a PhD research scholar.

Vettiver Collective works on issues to do with ecology and rights.

Prema Revathi is a writer, documentary film-maker and educationist.

Priti Narayan is a researcher-activist studying slum policy and practice in Chennai, India.

Tamil Nadu Labour Blog is an online resource for news about workers' rights, trade union struggles and legislation pertaining to labour.

V. Geetha is an historian and educationist who has worked closely with the SSA.