



## State Institutions and Common Property Resources (CPRs) - A Case Study in Theni District of Tamil Nadu

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the recently implemented development programme namely the two acre scheme to the landless people by the state governments on Common Property Resources (CPRs) in Theni district of Tamil Nadu in general and the study village of Gullapuram in particular. The study showed that under the two acre scheme by Tamil Nadu government, 2441.96 acres of government wasteland (CPLR) was distributed to 2474 beneficiaries in Theni district. While in the study block of Periyakulam, it was estimated that 555.48 acres of government wasteland had distributed to 451 beneficiaries and in the study village of Gullapuram, it was shown that 99.64 acres are distributed to 87 beneficiaries of the scheme to the landless people. The study further observed that 37.2 acres of CPR lands were distributed to 28 beneficiaries in the first category of Government Pomboke wastelands without encroachment and in the second category i.e. Government wastelands under encroachment by small and marginal farmers, it was estimated to the extent of 62.44 acres of CPR lands were distributed to 59 beneficiaries in this study village.*

**KEYWORDS :** Common property, Developmental programmes, Encroachment, State institutions

### Introduction

Common Property Resources (CPRs) in developing countries continue to be a significant component of the land resource base of rural communities (Jodha, 1990, p.65). From the introduction of land reform legislation the legal approach to wasteland or common property resources in general has been the privatization of these public lands on a large scale. Rao (1992) noticed that there are three important roles in land reforms and common lands in the emerging development strategy in India. Primarily they have to promote integration of growth policies with poverty alleviation programmes; improved access to common lands specifically designed to meet the requirement of different sub-groups of rural labourers and poor and to promote the emergence of a viable and modernized peasantry consisting of small farmers and for the landless to enter the peasant or other self employment sectors developing in the wake of a growing and technologically resilient agriculture.

### Material and Methods:

This paper is fully based on secondary data which was obtained from the Official website of District Collectorate, Theni district of Tamil Nadu relating to distribution of two acres to the landless poor in Theni district of Tamil Nadu. The data was obtained from the district, block and the study village level for analyzing the types of wastelands distributed to the beneficiaries, category and the purpose of distribution for the same. For analyzing the collected information, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. Simple statistical tools such as percentage and mean are used to find out the extent CPRs land distributed to the rural households by the scheme in the district, block and the study village and to find out the types and the purpose of distribution of CPRs in the study village. The total geographical area of the study district is 257654.09 hectares. According to the 2011 census, the district has a population of 1243684 and has a population density of 433 inhabitants per square kilometer. Its population growth rate over the last decade was 13.69 percent. The district comprises of eight blocks and five revenue taluks covering a geographical area of 3242.30 square kilometres. In study block of Periyakulam has a population of 188554 and has a population density of 495 habitants per square kilometers. This block comprises 22 revenue villages covering a geographical area of 381.63 square kilometers. Whereas in the study village of Gullapuram, has a population of 10194 and has a sex ratio of 956 females every 1000 males and literacy rate of 67.5 percent.

### Results and Discussion

This section is for the discussion of different land based welfare oriented development program by the Tamil Nadu state government with respect to improvement of weaker sections in rural pockets of Tamil Nadu and very particularly the two acre scheme and Patta scheme on common property resources in Theni district. For instance

Pasha (1992, p.2499) study of 14 villages of Karnataka state reveals that recent past 35.6 percent of the total geographical area of land was available and used as CPRs in 14 villages of Karnataka during 1989-90, it has come down to 23.7 per cent. The reduction in CPRs is mainly due to encroachments by the rural households and due to the developmental programmes of the government. Out of the total CPRs lost 52 per cent have been encroached by the rural rich depriving the poor of complete access to it. Government it has tried to improve the access of the rural poor by distributing the CPR lands to individuals for crop cultivation, housing and for raising the trees which amounts to 600 acres. In addition to the grant of CPR lands to the poor, the poor themselves managed to have complete access over a part of the CPRs by way of encroachments. It was accounted about 22.4 per cent of the lost CPRs, awaiting regularization by the government. Unfortunately, even with this the poor are hardly able to meet their total biomass requirement

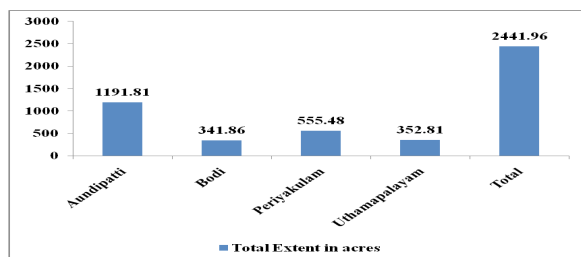
**Table 1: Extent of CPRs distributed to the beneficiaries in Theni district.**

S. No	Name of Taluks	Beneficiaries	Extent in acre
1	Aundipatti	1377	1191.81 (48.8)
2	Bodi	307	341.86 (14.00)
3	Periyakulam	451	555.48 (22.75)
4	Uthamapalayam	339	352.81 (14.45)
District total		2474	2441.96 (100)

**Source: Official website of District Collectorate, Theni, [www.theni.tn.nic.in](http://www.theni.tn.nic.in)**

Table (1) represents the taluk-wise distribution of CPR land to the private individuals through two acre scheme by the Tamil Nadu state in the name developmental programs under its regime. It showed that 2441.96 acres have been distributed to the rural masses in seven phases in Theni district of Tamil Nadu. It is further estimated that Aundipatti taluk registered the top in the distribution of CPR land to the beneficiaries followed by Periyakulam taluk. In absolute term it is estimated that 1191.81 acres of Aundipatti and 555.45 acres by Periyakulam respectively and in relative terms it was 49 per cent and 22.75 percent of the total land distributed to the beneficiaries in this district. The remaining two taluks were hardly about 14 per cent of each distributed to the private individuals.

**Diagram 1: Extent of CPRs converted into private properties**



**Source: Official website of District Collectorate, Theni, www.theni.tn.nic.in**

Despite the fact that the majority of these lands was distributed to this district of the district authority were from the first two categories such as Government Pormboke wastelands without encroachment and Government wastelands under encroachment by small and marginal farmers which falls under the category of CPR land. It is estimated that 1677.68 acres were distributed under the category of Government wastelands under encroachment by small and marginal farmers and 771.48 acres were distributed from the category of Government Pormboke wastelands without encroachment of the district (table 2). It notes that the legalization of encroaching CPRs is still having a norm in the case CPRs in the state of Tamil Nadu. While in the process of legalization of such encroached common land the state need to look into the existing norms and conditions laid down in the policy perspective.

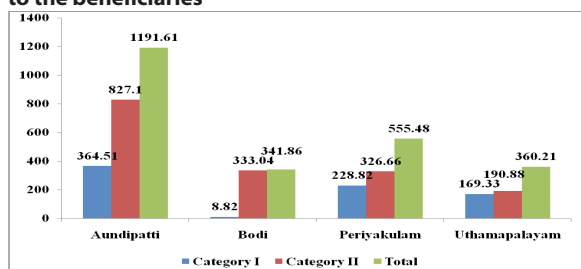
**Table 2: Category and extent of CPR land distributed in Theni district.**

S. No	Name of Taluks	Extent of area in acres		
		Category I	Category II	Total
1	Aundipatti	364.51	827.10	1191.61
2	Bodi	8.82	333.04	341.86
3	Periyakulam	228.82	326.66	555.48
4	Uthamapalayam	169.33	190.88	360.21
District total		771.48	1677.68	2449.16

**Source: Official website of District Collectorate, Theni, www.theni.tn.nic.in**

It is evidenced from the table that the majority of the private individuals who have received the land through this scheme from the second category were higher than that of the first category in this district. Aundipatti and Periyakulam taluk have registered the highest land receiver in both the category than that of other two taluk in this district. As per the observation from the field survey inferred that majority these lands were used by the people for their daily sustenance of both human and animal. After distribution of these lands to the very few inhabitants in this district the remaining sections of this district in general and the study villages in particular were felt worried about that the inconvenience in meeting their daily sustenance from the common lands.

**Diagram 2: Category and extent of CPR area distributed to the beneficiaries**



**Source: Official website of District Collectorate, Theni, www.theni.tn.nic.in**

A study by Thangaraj (2002, p.35) found that a vast area of over 80 percent of the land reserved for grazing has been included in the government wastelands and should be brought under the new comprehensive wastelands programme. It is worth noting that grazing land is one of the important common property resources in Tamil Nadu and bringing this land into this scheme will affect the rearing of cattle and collection of fuelwood by the poor in the rural areas. From this observation, the free land distribution scheme by the state government will ultimately affect the dependent communities in general and rural poor in particular in their daily activities as well as livelihood sustenance.

**Conclusion:**

The study showed that under the two acre scheme by Tamil Nadu government, 2441.96 acres of government wasteland (CPLR) was distributed to 2474 beneficiaries in Theni district. In the study block of Periyakulam, it was estimated that 555.48 acres of government wasteland had distributed to 451 beneficiaries and in the study village of Gullapuram, it was shown that 99.64 acres are distributed to 87 beneficiaries through the scheme of two acres to landless people. The study observed that the cultivation related encroachment was higher than the other type of encroachment by the private individuals and it is estimated that 91 private individuals got the *patta* to the extent of 54 acres of CPR land from these three categories. The study found that totally 99.64 acres of CPR lands were distributed to 87 beneficiaries through two acre scheme by the state governments in the Gullapuram village of Theni district. In the first category, to the extent of 37.2 acres of CPR lands were distributed to 28 beneficiaries and in the second category, to the extent of 62.44 acres of CPR lands were distributed to 59 beneficiaries in this study village.

The reason for the decline is CPRs is owing to population pressure, encroachment of CPRs by the community and developmental programmes of the State government such as free land scheme for the benefit of the landless and SC/ST people. An evidence by Jodha (1989, p.271) pointed out that government policies and programmes to help the rural poor through privatization of CPRs have not worked as intended. It is quite doubtful whether poor people's collective loss from reduced CPR areas has been compensated by private ownership of CPR lands given to them. A subsequent stage of privatization has benefited the influential who owned more land, particularly of the upper castes. Even when specific schemes were meant to enable the poor and lower castes to benefit, the net benefit was for the rich and dominant castes (Karanth, 1992 p.1687). A study by Jodha (1986 p.1169) study covering 80 villages in 21 districts in dry regions of seven states found that the per household per year income derived from CPRs ranged between Rs 530 and Rs 830 in different areas. The income earned by the households from CPRs was higher than the income generated by a number of anti-poverty programmes in some areas. The area of CPRs has declined by 26 to 63 per cent during last three decades. The privatization of CPRs was done largely to help the poor. Even though, 49-86 per cent of the privatized CPR went into the hands of the non-poor in different areas than the poor.

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