Baseline Study on the Status of Young Women and Girls working under Sumangali Scheme at textile industries in Erode District
Acknowledgments

I owe my greatest gratitude to our supporter Dalit Solidarity Network UK and TRAID for their and support and masterly guidance to complete this study.

We are grateful to the local communities we met in the fields to collect the data. And to those we interviewed them for the purpose of this study.

Immeasurable appreciation and deepest gratitude and the support extended to the following who are in one way or the other contributing in making this study possible.

Ms. Sobha M, READ, Project Manager,
Mr. Maheshwaran, READ, Project Coordinator,
Mr. Vijayakumar, READ, Office Assistant

The volunteers who involved in the programme Ms. Mathammal, Mr. Kanakaraj, Mr. Ramesh, Mr. Raja, Ms. Senbagam who undertook to collect data from the field.

I am very much grateful to Mr. Somashekar for his support & guidance I also take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues for their kind support.

Karuppu Samy
Project Director
READ
List of abbreviations and acronyms used

1. READ : Rights Education and Development Centre
2. MFA : Multi Fibre Association
3. CBO : Community Based Organisation
4. CSO : Civil Society Organisation
5. SC : Scheduled Caste
6. ST : Scheduled Tribe
7. BC : Backward Class
8. ESI : Employee State Insurance
9. EPF : Employee Provident Fund
1.1 About READ

Rights Education and Development Centre (READ) is a non-government organisation established in the year 2001 with the objective of to create a society where each individual has the basic right to live a life of dignity without any form of discrimination and exploitation. READ adopted a community empowerment approach towards sustainable change specifically for the most marginalized community named Arunthathiyars in Tamil Nadu.

READ is working hard to liberate the community from exploitation, poverty, child labour and many other human rights violations that this community face each day.

We Believe:

Each individual’s basic fundamental rights are protected, more specifically the right to education, economic development, dignity of life and personal liberty.

Our Objectives:

- Ensure quality education for children of Arunthathiyar community
- Completely eradicate child labour and bonded labour system in Tamil Nadu
- Empower and build capacity of Arunthathiyar women
- Empower, educate, build capacities and create opportunities for youth in Tamil Nadu
- Eradicate the inhuman practice of manual scavenging which the Arunthathiyars are traditionally forced into.
- Protect the Socio, Cultural, Economic, rights of the Dalit groups
- Research and evidence building initiatives of READ leads to advocacy and lobbying towards change in the existing policy framework positively impacting the Dalit Communities.

1.2 About Textile mills in Tamil Nadu:

Textile Industry in Indian Scenario;

The Indian Textiles and garment factory plays an important role in the global textiles and garment industry. The textile industry in India has several big sectors within mills, garments, clothing, handloom, and power loom sectors. In each of these sectors, employers recruit millions of workers and also contribute significantly to the national economy. The developed countries have no need to produce goods that could be produced in developing countries due to the very low costs. The easing of Multi Fibre Agreement (MFA) in recent years cleared all the decks for the second and third rung nations to become work houses/garages/shopping alley's for many of the activities of the developed countries.

The textiles and garment sector has emerged as the most globalised sector in the world today. It alone employs around 3 million workers. A large segment of the garments are for the vast domestic market, while another significant segment caters to the export markets. Most of the units producing for exports are in Tirupur (Tamil Nadu), Delhi and Mumbai.

Status of Textile Industry in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu is the most prolific state in India in establishment of industries and factories, specifically textile providing not only to retailers across Europe but also contributing to the development of the
Indian economy. The growth of the textile industry in Tamil Nadu
is an indication of India's industrial development and provides
substantial employment in the state.

Tamil Nadu Textile Industry has its own significant presence in the
country's economy. Out of 2049 large and medium textiles mill in
India, 893 mills are located in Tamil Nadu. Similarly, out of 996
small units in India, 792 are located in Tamil Nadu. The 893 large
and medium textile mills include 18 Cooperative Spinning mills,
17 National Textile Corporation mills and 23 composite mills. The
spinning capacity is 14.75 million of spindle. Industries and
garments are predominantly well established in Coimbatore, Dindigul, Erode, Tirupur, Theni and
Viruthunagar Districts.

Textile Industry in Erode District

Erode District is well known for turmeric and other vegetable
production. The water availability from two river sources, Kavery
and Bhavani resulted at one time in more agricultural cultivation.

At the same time the western part of Tamil Nadu is famous for
Spinning/garments. Gradually the globalization of the economy
has led to an increase in the textile industry and mills across the
state. In Erode district the trend of semi-industrialisation is
increasing. Erode District is now a source and destination place of
textile industry. The cotton textile industry in Coimbatore and
handloom industry in Erode district have encouraged the growth
of various subordinate industries to meet the needs of the textile
mills. Chennimalai, Erode, Gobichettipalayam and others are
important centres where cotton spinning is undertaken on a large scale. There are also important
dying works in Erode, Chennimalai and Bhavani. A number of factories engaged in cotton fabric
printing are functioning in Erode.

1.3 About Our Beneficiaries - Arunthathiyar Community

The word 'Dalit' comes from the Sanskrit root dal- meaning 'broken, ground-down, downtrodden, or
oppressed.' Those previously known as Untouchables, Depressed Classes, and Harijans are today
increasingly adopting the term "Dalit" as a name for themselves.

Dalit refers to caste rather than class; it applies to members of those menial castes which have born
the stigma of 'untouchability' because of the extreme impurity and pollution connected with their
traditional occupations. Dalits are 'outcastes' falling outside the traditional four-fold caste system
consisting of the hereditary Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Shudra classes; they are considered
impure and polluting and are therefore physically and socially excluded and isolated from the rest of
the society.

Dalits represents a community of 170 million in India, constituting 17% of the population. One out of
every six Indians is Dalit, yet due to their caste identity Dalits regularly face discrimination and
violence which prevent them from enjoying the basic human rights and dignity promised to all
citizens of India. Caste-based social organisation extends beyond India, finding corollaries in Nepal,
Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, as well as other countries outside of South Asia.
More than 260 million people worldwide suffer from this "hidden apartheid" of segregation, exclusion, and discrimination.

The Arunthathiyar community is at the lower rungs of this social ladder, their socio-economic condition is quite pathetic because of their poor economic status. They struggle even to get one meal per day. These people fully rely upon certain local money lenders for getting money. In order to pay this back, they may be forced into debt bondage, to work as a bonded labourer for an uncertain duration. Due to these circumstances, poor economic family parents are often forced to allow their children to work.

More and more Dalit children are becoming child labourers. It is the adolescent girls of these communities who are very much engaged in the textile industry in Tamil Nadu. The textile industries have been using the situation of girls from Arunthathiyar community for their benefit.

Arunthathiyar community has traditionally and historically been engaged in activities servicing the dominant communities. Services are disposal of dead bodies, sanitation, manual scavenging, and making shoes. Nowadays it is these communities who are exclusively involved in the manual scavenging of human waste/septic tank cleaning.

Arunthathiyar communities live outside the village on revenue waste and pond bank, farmland (pond bank), road side and government allotted Patta lands. Most of them are landless or dr other thatched houses or mud houses with Malabar tiles. Families all live together in that same area as they live in the same dwelling. Educational status of Arunthathiyar community is very low and erratic.

1.4 About Sumangali Thittam/Scheme:

Sumangali Scheme was introduced a decade ago by the textile and garment units in the Western part of Tamil Nadu. The schemes are designed to look like a government scheme and have been called various names such as Sumangali Scheme, Mangalaya Scheme, Thirumangalsam Thirumana Thittam.

This Scheme was first implemented at Udumeli pet in Coimbatore, and gradually spread throughout the Western part of Tamil Nadu (Trupti, Dindigul, Coimbatore, Erode, and Salem). Currently 9 lakh (300,000) young women are working in the Textile Industry. They come from 25 districts within Tamil Nadu and also from 7 other states.

What is the Sumangali Scheme: Employers recruit girls and young women aged between 14 to 20 years of age for periods of three to five years of contract. According to the scheme, after completion of the contract, girls will receive Rupees 30,000 to 50,000 to meet their marriage expenses. Most of the families of these girls are attracted by the lump sum payment at the end. Poor parents then send their children to the mill/garment work. 60% of the Sumangali Scheme workers are from Dalit families. Along with lump sum amount, mills also promise a decent wage, comfortable accommodation and good food. But most of the workers do not receive their promised amount after completion of three to five years work.

The implementation of Sumangali Scheme brought in lots of changes in the Tamil Nadu Textile Industry. Previously, the working conditions were set up for adult workers, adhering to all legal requirements and conducive to increased productivity and employee satisfaction in the mill. The present situation of the textile industry violates all Labour Welfare legislation and takes no measures towards safety, protection and security for workers. Since, often the Sumangali Scheme worker is a child, they cannot be a member of a Trade Union, hence there are no means of access to any grievance mechanisms, so management do not hear any issues from the workers. In this way, it is easy to run the mills without giving and consideration to welfare measures and factory continues to function in this way as no complaint is raised against any violation of law or human rights of labour rights.
Reasons For Recruitment:

- Due to the poverty and illiteracy parents will send their children.
- False promises of the lump sum amount quite simple and attractive.
- After completion of three to five years the girls are given promised amount Rs. 30000/- to 50000/- at the end of the year, especially for girl marriage expenses.
- Jobs are given to the girls and young women age group 14 to 20 are preferred in the textile garment industry for their efficiency in work output and reduce the labour cost the same.
- Illiterate parents and economically poor families send their daughters to the mill/garment work to settle loans.
- Also employers will recruit unmarried women in the age group of 18 to 30 years. They have no bonus and they are often denied legally entitled EPF (Employee Provident Fund), ESI (Employee State Insurance) or any other payment promised an assured sum at the end of the scheme year, and promised a lump sum at the time of their marriage.
- According to the AHRF (Arunathsiyar Human Rights Forum) study, only 30% of the girls had gone beyond eighth standards. Most of them are school dropouts which show the massive need for guaranteeing education for these young girls.

Actual Conditions of Young Girls working under Sumangali Scheme

1. No Written Contract
   There is no written contract or agreement received when these girls are hired. Workers are left without any proof of what has been promised. Workers are often provided with agreements in languages that they do not understand. According to a 2011 study of 1,638 workers hired under 'Sumangali' scheme only 60.74% of the workers had signed an agreement and an overwhelming majority of the workers (96.1%) did not receive a copy of that agreement.

2. Underpaid
   The wages that workers receive vary from company to company. Under schemes like 'Sumangali', part of the worker's wage is deducted to give it as a lump sum amount at the end of the employment contract. Workers generally receive a daily wage that is around 60 rupees (approximately 1 dollar or 0.08 Euros). In Tamil Nadu, the minimum wage is however, Rs.224/-day. Studies have shown that during the last 3 years at least 50% of the workers take home less than the minimum wages.

3. Lure of Lump Sum Amount
   The biggest attraction for these female workers is often the large amount of money that she receives towards the end of the employment. It is schemes like 'Sumangali' that promise workers this lump sum amount.

   The promised amount varies between 30,000/- rupees to 50,000/- rupees ($550 to $950). Many families are fascinated by this option because of their poverty. Yet there are many cases when workers quit before the contract period and do not even receive the lump sum amount that was promised by the factory. Many workers cannot complete the 3-year contract because of the unhealthy and unsafe working conditions or they are fired under some pretext just before the completion of the contract.

4. Forced Overtime
   Women often work 12 hours per day on a regular basis that is one and a half shift. During the peak season, they sometimes also work for two shifts (16 hours) or three shifts (24 hours) in a row. They often have to work on Sundays during busy seasons. These workers sometimes do not receive any overtime payment. Hostel workers are subjected to excessive and forced overtime. Workers have also reported that they are woken up in the middle of the night to complete urgent orders.
5. **Restricted Movement**
Female workers especially those working under 'Sumangali' scheme live without much freedom of movement or privacy. They often live in hostels or compounds within factory premises. These workers are not allowed to leave the factory without prior permission.

6. **Unhealthy and Unsafe Working Conditions**
Headaches, stomach aches, sleeplessness, and tiredness are common among these female workers. The factories often have bad ventilation systems that cause workers' space to be full of small particles of cotton dust. The work places are hot and humid. Some factories do not provide protective equipment like masks to save workers from the cotton dust. Some of the workers underwent surgery to remove the balls of the cotton fibre from their bowels. Female workers in the spinning area also work on roller skates throughout the day, without wearing any protective gear.

Female workers have also reported about weight loss, irregular menstrual periods, and heavy menstrual pain. There are no proper medical facilities available at the factories. There have been cases of deaths where workers died due to respiratory illnesses or after ingesting cotton into lungs or stomach.

7. **Abusive Supervisors**
The higher caste male supervisors often physically abuse female workers as well. Cases of sexual harassment have been reported at the factories. It is difficult to establish these incidents though because of unwillingness of women to talk about it. There are also reports that these women have been forced into sex trade as well by the networks of supervisors, company managers, staff at hostels, or other labour suppliers.

8. **Child Labour**
Female workers are often hired as young as 12. Studies have also shown that 10-20% of the workers in 'Sumangali scheme' are child labourers. These girls often live within the factory hostels. These young girls are usually locked in the bathrooms to hide them during factory inspections.

It is also difficult to ascertain the number of child labourers in these factories because the workers have no identity papers or proof of age. They only go through the medical examination by the factory's medical staff at the time of employment. The medical staff often draws wrong medical reports about the age of the workers.
The broad objective of this study was to evaluate the current status of Sumangali Schemes.

5.1 Scope of the study

The scope of the present report is defined and limited to understanding the current status of Sumangali workers for Erode District, working in the textile industry of western part of Tamil Nadu. The western part of Tamil Nadu has a high population of Arunthathiyaar (Dalit) as well as this is the source and destination of Semi-Industrialization in Erode District. Hence it is the focus and appropriate for this study.

5.2 Aim of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to understand the extent and the magnitude of the problems of Sumangali workers at Erode.

5.3 Objective of the study:

- To survey the underage girls and young women working in the Textile Industry.
- To find out the working conditions in the Textile Industry in Erode District.
- To assess the Environmental situation of the Textile Industry in Erode District.
- To survey the Dalit girl’s workers discriminated in the work place.
5.4. Research Design and Process of data collection

In order to obtain a qualitative result, READ conducted survey among 220 girls/young women who worked and left the mills, and girls still working in the mills. These 220 girls were either working or had worked in the 64 mills/garments and are from 11 blocks of Erode Districts out of 13 blocks. READ undertook a mapping exercise in 2012, Erode district alone has 353 mills - 172 have Sumangali schemes. In total, around 37,000 girls/young women stays as hostellers and they work in the mills.

After completion of structured interview questionnaire, a baseline survey orientation meeting was conducted for survey volunteers. Volunteers from various CBOs participated. The total numbers of respondents was 220 from 11 blocks of Erode District - 20 respondents per block.

Who are the respondents?

- 121 ex-workers of the Textile Industry (Spinning mill/Garment Factory)
- 99 current workers of the Textile Industry (Spinning mill/Garment Factory)

The base line survey was conducted with support of CBOs and CSOs of the Erode Districts are working with children, women and on livelihood issues. We mobilized support from these CSOs to support our base line survey, since they know issues and children.

We mobilized 8 volunteers from 6 CSOs, held 2 days training/orientation on the processes of collecting data. Volunteers were trained on how to fill the form and how to ask question to the respondents. Field testing was done in 5 groups and the information collected by the volunteers reviewed.

The field coordinator oversaw the information and the processes and entered data with support of project staff.

The entire study was carried out in the most participatory, ethical and democratic manner with prior informed consent of the communities visited and respondents interviewed.

5.5 Methods and tools of Data Collection

Survey was conducted in 11 Blocks of Erode District out of 13 Blocks. We adopted systematic random method to choose the Blocks Sathyamangalam, Bhavanisagar, Bhavani, Anthiyur, Govinhatipalayam, Ammapettai, Chennimalai, Peruundurai, Nambiyur, Talavadi, etc.

Tools for data collection

Structured interview schedules were used for data collection in the field and directly collected from the respondents.

Focus group discussions were used to collect the data from the respondents and their parents.

Case studies are used to highlight those workers affected by Sumangali Scheme

Along with primary data above, tools have collected the data from the secondary data like the previous research study READ has done, newspaper clips, photographs and the documents of the textile industry.
Diagram 1 shows out of 220 respondents 171 i.e. 78% of them are above 18 years old and 22%, 40 of them are below 18 years age. Therefore 22% of Sumangali workers are deemed to be child labourers.

Diagram 2 shows that 81% of the respondent are Schedule Caste (Arunthathiyar), 10% of the respondents are backward caste, 4% of the respondents are Schedule Tribe, and 5% of the respondent workers are Most Backward caste.

Majority, 81% of the workers are SC Arunthathiyar (Dalits). Amongst these workers, poverty is the major reason for working in the mill.

Other reasons include broken homes, large number of children in a family, and no parental care. Girls who drop out of school are often targeted and forced to work in the mill as there is no other source of income. Low levels of literacy means that parents will send their children to work in the textile industry.
Table No 3: Caste of the Sumangali Workers v/s age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste of SW v/s age</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Below 18</th>
<th>Above 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Caste (Arundathiy)</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Tribe</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Backward Class</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backward Class</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No 3 shows out of 179 SC Sumangali workers 42 were below 18 years, Among 8 ST workers 4 of them are below 18 years age and in the BC category out of 23 workers 10 of them are below 18 years of age.

The above table clearly shows the TN textile mills are hiring young girls below the age of 18 as Sumangali worker.

Table No 4: Age of the respondents on joining the textile mills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of the Respondents during the recruitment to the mill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No 4 shows that 55% of the respondents are below 18 years at the time of joining in the mill, with 45% of respondents being over 18 years at the time of joining in the mill.

It clearly shows that majority of the Sumangali workers are below the legal age limit of 18 on joining the mill and therefore can be deemed to be child labourers.
Table No 5: Working Hours of the respondents

Table No 5 shows 81 respondents work 8 hours a day, 116 respondents work up to 12 hours a day, 18 workers affirmed that this can extend to 16 hours a day and 5 stated they used to work 21 hours a day. 53% of the respondents worked over time above 12 hours, and a day. It clearly says that most of the Sumangali workers are forced to do unreasonable and excessive overtime. So there is a need to monitor and regulate the work given by the company with respect to all Sumangali workers.

Table No 6: Recruitment of Sumangali Workers

Table No 6 shows that 50% of respondents were hired through agents; 35% were influenced by friends and peers; 12% were convinced by their own relatives and family members, and 3% saw an advertisement and applied for work.
Table No 7: Lump sum amount promised v/s received

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hostel workers</th>
<th>Regular workers (PF)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. people</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lump sum assured for no. of people</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lump sum received</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People continuing</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People assured and not received</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No 7 shows that, there 70 respondents who lived in the hostel and worked on-site. All these 70 respondents were assured a lump sum amount when they were recruited. Of the 48 respondents who have left the mills, only 15 have received lump sum payment. The remaining 33 members did not complete their 3-year term and therefore received nothing. 47% of the respondents did not complete their three years contract.

Similarly, of the 150 regular workers in the spinning/garments, all of them were assured receiving their Provident Fund (PF) at the end of their work. However, during our survey we found that out of the 49 respondents who had resigned and quit the job, only one person received PF. The remaining 101 worker are still working and expect to receive PF.

From survey data we are inferring that, the companies are assuring different packages, either in the form of lump sum or form of PF but at the end of day of the 37% of girls who had left, only 7% got their assured benefits.

Table No 9: Details of the appointment without written contract

Written Contract

- Contact Signed details
- Signed Contract
- Not Signed Contract

47%
Table No 8 shows that 47% of the respondents had signed a contract paper without knowing what was written on it. None of them have copy of the agreement. 53% of the respondents did not know about agreements and had not signed any form of contract on employment.

Table No 9: Pay cycle of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pay Cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No 9 shows that 70% of the respondents were paid on a weekly basis, 29% paid monthly, a small percentage of the respondents were paid on a daily basis.

Majority, 70% of those paid weekly were not assured of any work from one week to the next. They had not signed or received a contract and were not given any kind of security measures/protection or injury benefits.

From our survey we found that, 39(18%) people are receiving equivalent to minimum wage i.e. Rs. 224/-, remaining 181 (82%) people are receiving less than the minimum wage.

Table No 10: Mill asked age proof of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Age proof</th>
<th>No. of person</th>
<th>Total percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Age proof asked and given</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Age proof not given above 18 years</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Age proof not asked and not given (below 18 years)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>220</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No 10 shows that 53 % of respondent were asked age proof and provided it, 37% of the respondent was not asked age proof because they are above 18 years.

10% of the respondent are below 18 years but not asked age proof. Often in these case, false proof is provided by the mill doctors.
Table No 12: Mill issued Identity cards to the respondents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Textiles Issued ID Cards</th>
<th>No. of person</th>
<th>Total percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Issued Id cards for casual</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Issued Id cards for Hosteller</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Not issued Id for the casuals</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Not issues ID for hostellers</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No 12 shows that 49 % of the respondents are not issued with ID cards even though they have worked in the same mill for more than 2 years.

10% of the respondents staying in the hostel and having worked more than 1 year were not issued ID cards.

Mills are not taking responsibility for risk or health of their employees. Many respondents say that they have not received any written agreement or contract letters or at ID cards on entry to the Mills. This allows the mills NOT to clear their due payment or pay the lump sum which is assured during the recruitment process, as the workers do not formally exist!

Table No 13: Restrictions and the facilities for the Respondents staying in the hostel

We asked the 70 respondents who stayed in the hostels, about their freedom to meet their family members, time spent with them and frequency of meeting with their family and home visits.

Case study:

- One of the girls from Erumaikaran Palayam 16 years old completed 9th standard, worked as an apprentice in a spinning mill for 9 months shared that 'I was sick and had stomach pain from 2-3 months and I felt many time to go home, but I was scared to go home, because I may lose my work, so that I came one time in months to meet my parents'.
• Sunitha (name changed) 17 years old from Ariyappampalayam, studied 10th standard worked as an apprentice for two months and left mill says that "I was joined mill on 3 years contracts, I felt that served food was not good quality, mills asked me to work more than 12 hours, the supervisors comes to the room and waked up in the nights and asked me to work overtime because there shortage of staff. One day I, called my father and requested him to take me back one day he suddenly appeared in front of mills; I went and asked management about the reason my father is being here supervisor got angry and shouted at me and beaten up me and told just get lost from here, so frightened and came out with my father".

• Girls from Vellimalakaradu aged 19 years she worked for two years in the mills as an apprentice she was given cards from the company, that cards allowed only to the parents to visit; but one day her brother came along with her parents so company was not allowed my brother to see me and they sent him back. I felt very sad about the situation.

Respondents shared about the size of the rooms and number of people who stayed in each room. The measurement was given like this; 10x15 size and 12 people in each, 10x10 size and 9 people in each, 15x15 size and 20 people in each, 10x8 size and 7 people in each. And from others - 10x10 size and 15 people in each; 15x10 and 11 people in each, 15x10 and 10 people in each.

We also looked at the facilities and amenities at the hostels. Respondents shared that there was common toilets and common bathing rooms. They had boxes to keep clothes, and there were mats to sleep on but no bed spreads. But there was a TV.

Food served was of very low quality, many times the girls were sick because of food and accommodation, many of the respondents had health issues and non-hygicnic skin problems.

The below table shows how respondents faced unhigyenic situation in the hostels and even the casual/day workers also expressed how textile mills caused some health problems.
Table No 13: Health Problems among Hostellers.

Table No 13 shows 17% of the respondents had health problems like weight loss, vomiting, and hair drop; 12% of the respondents suffered headaches; 9% had skin problems and small percentages had body pain, shoulder pain, leg pain, fever and back pain. Chicken pox and Menstrual problems were also reported. The health problems are caused mainly by overtime work and the environment conditions of textile mills. In the hostel most residents do not have access to First Aid.

The above table indicates that the mill should provide medical facilities at the factories and mills and special care needs to be taken of women employees.

Table No 14: Violence at Workplace

Table No 14 shows that 1% of respondent faced physical violence by the supervisor and from other co-workers - mostly from other states. 19% of the respondents said that their supervisors used bad words and scolded them, calling by names. Most of these girls said that afterwards they cry and console themselves, and share with their friends.
Most of respondents felt they needed a Grievance Desk, and someone who can listen to their problems and check for the mishappenings. The remaining 80% of respondents said punishment was acceptable even though unknowingly they made mistakes. Most of the respondents would not revealed to us because it is personal and it takes lots of time to gain confidentialities.

We would recommend the formation of Anti Sexual Harassment Committees within mills (according to 2013 Act). These committees should constitute one social worker or lawyer, and women representatives, as well as company management etc.

**Table No 15 Accidents and injuries during work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Met accident</th>
<th>Not met accident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>207</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of persons</th>
<th>No of people left job after accident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among 220 respondents there were 13 cases of an accident. 7 girls who met an accident left their jobs and are now unemployed. Remaining 8 girls are continuing their work.

Secondly all respondents said that they know there are 25 accident, out which 8 of claimed compensation - the quantum of which was one month's salary, very minimal.
Survey findings:

1. 55% of the workers are below 18 years at the time of joining in the mill, with 45% of workers being over 18 years at the time of joining in the mill.

2. 81% of the workers are Schedule Caste (Arunthathiyar). 10% of the workers are backward caste, 4% of the workers are Schedule Tribe, and 5% of the workers are Most Backward caste.

3. The following reasons for working in the Textile Industry:
   - Poverty is the major reason for working in the mill.
   - Broken Family Children
   - Large number of children in a family.
   - No parental care.
   - Girls who drop out of school.
   - No other source of income.
   - Illiterate parents

4. 61% of the workers worked over time above 12 hours a day. And 39% of the regular workers worked 8 hours a day. It clearly says that most of the Sumangali workers are forced to do unreasonable and excessive overtime.

5. 50% of workers were hired through agents; 35% were influenced by friend and peers; 12% were convinced by their own relatives and family members. 3% saw an advertisement and applied for work.

6. 39 (18%) people are receiving equivalent to minimum wage i.e. Rs. 258/-, remaining 181 (82%) people are receiving less than the minimum wage.

7. 47% of the workers had signed a contract paper without knowing what was written on it. None of them have a copy of the agreement. 53% of the workers did not know about agreements and had not signed any form of contract on employment.

8. 53% of workers were asked age proof and provided it, 37% of the respondent was not asked age proof because they are above 18 years. Out of 37%, 10% of the workers are below 18 years but not asked age proof. Often in these cases, false proof is provided by the mill doctors.

9. 49% of the workers are not issued with ID cards even though they have worked in the mill for more than 2 years. 51% of the workers were issued ID cards regular workers as well as hostel workers.

10. Provide Facility and amenity at the hostels.
    - Workers shared that there was common toilets and common bathing rooms. Food served was of very low quality, many times the girls were sick because of an accommodation, had health issues and non-hygienic skin problems.
    - Workers faced unhygienic situation in the hostels and even the casual/day workers also expressed how textile mills caused some health problems.

11. the workers had health problems like (In the hostel most residents do not have access to first Aid)
    - Weight loss,
    - Vomiting,
• Hair drop;
• Of the workers suffered headaches;
• had skin problems and
• Small percentages had body pain,
• Shoulder pain,
• Leg pain,
• Fever and body pain
• Back pain,
• Chicken pox and
• Menstrual problems

12. 1% of workers faced physical violence by the supervisor and from other co-workers. 19% of the respondents said that their supervisors used bad words and scolded them, calling by names. 80% of respondents said punishment was acceptable even though unknowingly they made mistakes.

13. Among 220 workers there were 13 cases of an accident. 7 girls who met an accident left their jobs and are now unemployed. Remaining 6 girls are continuing their work.

14. 4% of the workers claimed compensation for an accident, 11% of the respondents met accident but did not claimed compensation for the accident, and 85% of the respondents did not meet accident while working in the mill.

15. Apprentice period is long compared with National Apprentice Act.

16. Out of 220 workers, 35% workers PF amount not received same as 10% workers are not received lump sum amount. 10% workers got received Lump sum amount, 1% person received PF amount. The remaining 44% employees still working in the mills expect to receive their PF.

17. During data collection, workers are not answered for discrimination part because the workers not aware or do not know how the other caste workers discriminated them.
1. Indian Government has to declare that below 18 years children should be considered a child, according to UNCRC Act 1989.

2. Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar Department to ensure that Dalit Children Scholarships should be paid and issued at the beginning of the academic year. Along with this, the Special Component Plan must be implemented by the Tamil Nadu Government for Dalit girls.

3. Allocate more funds through social protection schemes; Widowhood, old age student scholarships, more KGBV Hostels, more allocation and awareness "Tali ki Tangam Tittam". Add more social protection schemes and ensure NREG Schemes work for poor people.

4. Right to Education need to be relooked at and strengthened through SMC and Panchayat level children movements records.

5. Reduce apprentice period from 3 years to 6 months, and limit apprentice to 18 years and over.

6. Monitor and regulate the working hours through proper channels, and do random checks on the existence of child labour in the hostels and mills.

7. Concerned government department should screen the staff recruitment policy of the mills and other industries. A formal HR policy should be in place.

8. All recruited staff should get signed contracts from the designated persons in HR. The Department of labour should ensure the regulations are followed with regard to signed contracts and minimum wages.


10. All the payments should transfer through bank or post office accounts.

11. Apprentice should get all dues and entitlement at the end of every month.

12. Mills duty roster should be cross checked by the responsible department and all OT should be recorded and needs to pay entitlement.

13. The apprentice should get formal certificate after agreed period.

14. Required Proof of age should be mandatory. Action to be taken in case of false certificate and government doctors should be made aware of consequences of giving false certificate.

15. Labour department should insist mills to give ID proof to every person who works for them with detailed type of employment, and designation.

16. HR department should insist on having anti sexual harassment committee.

17. If anything happened inside the premises, a Grievance Mechanism should be in place to address issues. Committee to include, NGOs, Trade Unions and Mill management.
Conclusion

The textile industry in Tamil Nadu has been recruiting girls and young women into the mills under a contract-based agreement for three to five years. Most of the workers in the industry are unskilled women. In order to recruit the women and girls, the agents give false promises that at the end of the three years period they will receive a lump sum amount which can be used to offset marriage expenses or family debt.

Inside the mill, the reality to what was offered is very different. Uncomfortable working conditions cause workers to suffer health weakness, skin problems and irregular menstrual periods. In Tamil Nadu the current survey reveals that 80% of the workers are Dalit girls and young women recruited the scheme to further reduce the labour cost. They are not paid a salary as set out under the Minimum Wages Act. Girls and young women workers are denied their childhood and freedom. Most of the workers are from poor families whose parents have no choice but to send their children to the work.