



Draft Tamil Nadu State Policy on Senior Citizens - 2022



Department of Social Welfare and Women Empowerment

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Background:

Tamil Nadu is in a phase of demographic transition. With the decline in fertility and mortality rates and improvement in life expectancy, because of implementation of public health programmes and application of medical advancements in both Government and private health sectors, the state witnessed a progressive increase in the number of senior citizens. The report “Elderly in India 2021” released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Government of India, projects a substantial increase in the population of senior citizens in Tamil Nadu from 75.10 lakhs in 2011 to 1.04 crores in 2021 and is expected to be 1.42 crores in 2031.¹ Tamil Nadu with 13.6% of senior citizens in 2021 is projected to have the second highest proportion of senior citizens with 18.2% in 2031.

Senior citizens in every society across the world play a crucial role in guiding the next generation with their living experiences. Elders are the treasure trove of knowledge, possessing rich experiences and skills. They are the living evidence of the past history, social construct, economic pattern and cultural practices. In Tamil Nadu, ‘ஆத்திச்சூடி’ (Aathichudi) - single line verses written by Avvaiyar (The Great Grandmother) is the basic curriculum for setting moral standards for children in the primary school at the entry level. It is a continuing tradition in the society to treat elders from all walks of life as the ‘light house’ and ‘guiding force’ of knowledge and wisdom. The legendary poet Thiruvalluvar had written a separate section on “Seeking the Aid of Great Men” (அதிகாரம்-45: பெரியாரைத் துணைக்கோடல்) reiterating the significance of senior citizens.

“அரியவற்று ளெல்லாம் அரிதே பெரியாரைப்

பேணி தமராக் கொளல்” (குறள்: 443),

“to cherish men of mighty soul, and make them all their own, of kindly treasure rare, as rarest gift is known (G.U.Pope)”.

On the other hand, with the increase in the number of senior citizens, the challenges they face each day also increases, which includes limited access to health and nutrition, safety and security, social security, information, adequate housing and environment, abandonment, abuse and denial of rights. Therefore, there is an emerging need to address the ageing-related issues and to promote holistic development through policies and programs for the senior citizens.

¹ Senior citizen means any person being a citizen of India, who has attained the age of sixty years or above – The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 (Government of India). The data for the year 2021 is based on the projections in ‘Elderly in India, 2021’ report, as Census 2021 was not carried out due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Continuing the legacy of the Dravidian Movement that earmarked the beginning of an era of social justice towards eradicating poverty, hunger, deprivation, and discrimination, the present Government of Tamil Nadu intends to improve, enrich, and empower the lives of the senior citizens in Tamil Nadu by framing State Policy for Senior Citizens, 2022.

This policy is based on Article 41 of the Indian Constitution that mandates the state to make effective provisions for securing the right to work, education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness, and disablement within the limits of its economic capacity and development. This policy reaffirms the commitment of the Government of Tamil Nadu to uphold the guiding principles of the National Policy on Senior Citizens in 1999, the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, 1991, the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 and the United Nations Declaration of “Decade of Healthy Ageing” (2021-2030) - marching towards sustainable development and improvement of the lives of the senior citizens, their families, and the community.

Preamble:

The “State Policy on Senior Citizens, 2022”, will adopt a just, and equitable approach in addressing the various concerns of the senior citizens of Tamil Nadu.

Recognizing the social vulnerabilities of senior citizens and the intersectional issues of gender, disability, mental health. The policy will ensure timely access to food and nutrition, healthcare services, safety and protection from abuse, information, social security measures, housing and enabling environment, and legal assistance for enabling them to live a healthy, active and a dignified life.

To achieve these goals envisaged in the policy, the Government of Tamil Nadu will partner with government officials, field experts, committed individuals, civil society organizations, academic institutions working in the field of age care, medical professionals, social activists and senior citizens to provide the best services for safeguarding the rights of the senior citizens living both in rural and urban areas of Tamil Nadu.

Vision

To serve the senior citizens of the state in a holistic manner thus enabling them to live a safe, healthy, active and a dignified life. And to promote an age friendly society through public and private partnerships and enhance the quality of life of the elderly in Tamil Nadu.

Mission

To enhance the quality of life of the senior citizens, the State will ensure timely access to health, nutrition, safety, security, financial stability, shelter, and protection from abuse for every senior citizen in collaboration with public and private sectors.

To adopt a preventive, promotive, rehabilitative and inclusive approach to ensure sustainable development of the senior citizens by ensuring that no senior citizens are discriminated on the basis of region, gender, caste, class, religion or disability.

Focus areas of the policy

The key focus areas of the policy are:

1. Health and Nutrition
2. Social Security Schemes
3. Livelihood/ Income Security
4. Housing and Environment
5. Safety and Security
6. Institutional Care
7. Awareness and Education
8. Research and Documentation
9. Disaster Management and Mitigation
10. Directorate for the Welfare of Senior Citizens

I. Health and Nutrition

Health and nutrition is a basic human need and is a necessity for a healthy life. Good health and well-being during old age is a result of the life-long efforts of the individual and the supportive environment. Access to adequate nutrition is critical in maintenance of health, decreasing the onset of chronic diseases, contributes to vitality and helps in maintaining functional independence.

Senior citizens are entitled to have access to timely preventive and curative health care and rehabilitation services for prevention and delay of disease and disability and to improve the quality of life of older persons. This includes health care inclusive of sexual health, disease prevention, early diagnosis and treatment.

The findings of the Long Panel Survey on Socio Economic Status of Elderly Population in Tamil Nadu conducted by J-PAL in 2019 indicates higher prevalence of diseases and lower self-reported prevalence of diseases, indicating an awareness gap. Despite the fact that diabetes and

hypertension are identified as two of the seven common diseases among senior citizens, only 34% of elders had ever had a diabetes test, and 9% had ever had a cholesterol test. The prevalence of these common diseases increases in age to an average of 2 chronic diseases for those over 70 years urging the need for increased awareness and access to health care facilities. 4.7% of senior citizens in Tamil Nadu report having been diagnosed with a neurological disorder, in which 75% is dementia and 8% is Parkinson's.

The responsibility of the Government is to create a supportive environment that enables the advancement of health and well-being into old age. Health services designed to meet the special needs of the older population must be available, taking into account the introduction of geriatric medicine in relevant medical university curriculum and health-care systems, as appropriate. The health care and services should include the necessary training of personnel and facilities to meet the specific and special needs of the senior citizens. The growing need for care and treatment of an ageing population requires adequate policies.

This policy aims to promote lifelong health, including health promotion and disease prevention, assistive technology, rehabilitative care, mental health services, promotion of healthy lifestyles and supportive environments.

1. Establishment of geriatric care in all medical colleges and district government hospitals

- 1.1. The State shall establish geriatric department in all district government hospitals/medical colleges. Exclusive queue for senior citizens in outpatient, laboratory and pharmacy must be practiced in all government hospitals and private hospitals.
- 1.2. The State shall make it mandatory for all senior citizens being admitted in hospital to go through a comprehensive geriatric assessment by a trained professional.
- 1.3. The State shall endeavor to establish and increase the number of seats in Doctor of Medicine (MD) Geriatrics postgraduate course in all Government medical colleges. The State shall make it mandatory for the private medical colleges to follow the same.
- 1.4. The State shall make it mandatory to include geriatrics in the curriculum of undergraduate medical course (MBBS), nursing and paramedical courses.
- 1.5. The State shall encourage to utilise the existing National Centre for Ageing in the King Institute Campus, Guindy as a centre of excellence for elderly care.

2. Establishment of specialized centres for the elderly – geriatric day care centre, mental health centre, palliative care centre, dementia care centre, rehabilitation

centre for differently abled elders and naturopathy and yoga centre in rural and urban areas

- 2.1. The State shall appoint a multidisciplinary team, which includes geriatrician/medical doctor, nurse, paramedical, professional social worker, physiotherapist, psychologist, psychiatrist, naturopathist and dietician, and provide training for the effective functioning of the centres to meet the holistic needs of the elderly.
- 2.2. The State shall develop new guidelines on managing palliative care centre, geriatric day care centre, mental health centre, dementia care centre and rehabilitation centre for the differently abled for both public and private care centres.
- 2.3. The State shall ensure doctors and health staff in Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and Urban Primary Health Centres (UPHCs) to be equipped for providing treatment and counselling for patients with mental health and mental illness issues. A therapeutic team should be trained to identify Dementia, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, depression in the early stages.
- 2.4. The State shall ensure access to aids and appliances for the differently abled senior citizens.

3. Universal and equal access to healthcare services for senior citizens

- 3.1. The State shall develop a public private partnership to conduct regular medical camps focusing on general health, hearing impairment and vision related problems/vision restoration for early screening, diagnosis, and treatment.
- 3.2. The State shall provide a comprehensive health insurance specifically for the elderly above 60yrs of age facilitated through the Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and Urban Primary Health Centres (UPHCs).
- 3.3. The National Health Insurance Scheme provided by the Government of Tamil Nadu can be extended to the parents as 'dependents' of the employees apart from their family members by deducting additional premium from their salary.
- 3.4. The State shall intensify the services of "Makkal Thedi Maruthuvam" for the elderly to ensure delivery of essential healthcare at their doorstep.
- 3.5. The State shall provide the monthly medicines/adult diapers for chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, renal and cardiac diseases and cancer and other non-communicable diseases through the "Makkal Thedi Maruthuvam" scheme.
- 3.6. The State shall provide need-based assistive devices to senior citizens for enhancing their mobility and active daily living (Free for elders in the BPL category and subsidised amount for others) in partnership with the private sector.
- 3.7. The State shall initiate an adult vaccination protocol that would be provided in all Government hospitals free of cost.

4. Introduction of new scheme - Integrated Geriatric Management Scheme (IGMS)

4.1.The State shall introduce a new scheme IGMS (similar to ICDS) to provide health and nutrition services by utilising the existing anganwadi centres/noon meal centres. The new scheme aims to improve the nutritional and health status through distribution of medicines and nutritious meals (noon meal scheme, meals on wheels services), awareness, and administration of vaccines (pneumococcal and flu vaccines) through multipurpose health workers/village Health Nurses, regular health checkups and referral services.

5. Special ration for elders

5.1.The State shall provide special nutrition-based ration package for elders through the public distribution system.

5.2.The State shall prioritise to issue ration cards to elders who are single.

6. Provision of Elder Card to all senior citizens

6.1.The State shall provide universal elder card to all senior citizens to get benefits on social entitlements, insurance and medical expenses, public transportation, and entry into recreational places.

6.2.The State shall permit the use of the elder card to access IGMS and claim the special ration package for elders in ration shops.

6.3.The State shall make it mandatory for all Government and private sectors to give priority and maintain a separate access exclusively for senior citizens for provision of seamless services.

II. Social Security Schemes

Poverty is high among the senior citizens and the pensions form a critical life support to the increasing elderly population in Tamil Nadu.

The findings of the Long Panel Survey on Socio Economic Status of Elderly Population in Tamil Nadu conducted by J-PAL in 2019 reveals that over 24% of the senior citizens in Tamil Nadu fall under the extreme poverty line (Rs. 38 per person per day). The percentage of senior citizens who fall under the below poverty line is higher in the urban areas (41%) than in the rural areas (32%). The study also reveals that women are most likely to fall below the poverty line than men. The survey also reveals that only 30% of the senior citizens have ever applied for old age pension and only 16% of the senior citizens are receiving the pensions.

A significant number of senior citizens are living alone in both the rural and urban areas. They tend to be lonely, depressed, of lower cognitive function and face higher physical challenges than other senior citizens do. Within the people above the age of 60 who are currently classified as senior citizens, there is a wide variation in the needs and challenges faced. Hence it is necessary to classify the elderly further based on their age suggested by World Health Organisation (60-70yrs, 70-80yrs, 80+yrs).

The existing pension schemes face multiple challenges including the exclusion of eligible elderly, denial of coverage to most deserving elderly compared to those who are approved, exclusion due to eligibility criteria, lack of awareness of the application procedure, needing assistance to apply or need for grievance redressal systems.

To address these shortcomings the policy aims to strengthen the old age pension (OAP) provisioning process and tailor the social security schemes accordingly.

1. Revision of eligibility criteria for old age pension

1.1.The State shall ensure the universal coverage of all eligible senior citizens who are 70 years of age and above.

1.2.The State shall apply the present criteria of dependency under the old age pension scheme for 60-69 years of age only.

2. Simplification of the application process

2.1.The State shall endeavour to cover all eligible senior citizens under social security schemes by simplifying the procedures of application, selection, and increase of pension based on WPI Food Index.

2.2.The State shall adopt a robust grievance redressal mechanism to ensure timely access to old age pension.

3. Increase of old age pension

3.1. The State shall increase the old age pension and introduce a differential pension system based on the age group (60-70yrs, 70-80yrs, 80+yrs) of the elderly. The highest pension shall be given to the 80+yrs senior citizens.

3.2. The State shall increase the pension amount for the single elderly women.

3.3. The State shall increase the pension amount if the senior citizen comes under special category i.e. widow, destitute women and differently abled.

4. Public distribution system

4.1. The State shall enable quality delivery of provisions through the public distribution system to reach out and cover all the senior citizens living below the poverty line.

5. Specialised Camps

5.1. To ensure access to social security and livelihood schemes the State shall conduct special camps through public private partnerships in elderly-friendly spaces and prior information about these camps shall be made available through different mediums.

III. Livelihood/ Income Security

Livelihood is a necessity for day-to-day survival. In order for a population to survive there is need for livelihoods that would sustain and support households. Economic growth creates opportunities for a wider choice of livelihoods. The concept of household livelihood security allows for a more comprehensive understanding of poverty, malnutrition and the dynamic and complex strategies that the poor use for survival.

In addressing the goal of employment for all, it must be recognized that the continued employment of older persons need not reduce labour market opportunities for younger persons but can provide an ongoing and valuable contribution to the improvement of National economic performance. The experience and skills of older persons to train younger and newer employees will be an added benefit to the society. Human resources management practices and policies should take into account and address some of the specific needs of older persons.

The information released by MoSPI reveals that the dependency ratio of senior citizens in Tamil Nadu has increased from 13.9% in 2001 to 15.8% in 2011 to 20.5% in 2021 and is expected to rise to 28% in 2031. The dependency ratio of elderly women is higher than that of the elderly men. Therefore there is a need for prioritizing livelihood and income security for the senior citizens.

The State considers that aging in dignity is an important part of the policy for the welfare of the elderly. One of the components of this is to build livelihoods for elderly, to assist older persons, to re-establish economic self-sufficiency through rehabilitation projects including income generation, educational programmes, and occupational activities, taking into account the special needs of the same.

1. Ensuring regular source of income for active elderly through Livelihood Activities

1.1. The State shall introduce livelihood training and skilling initiatives for the elderly to live an actively engaged, self-reliant and productive life with dignity.

2. Ensuring Vulnerability Reduction and Livelihood Promotions through developing institutional platforms

- 2.1.The State shall facilitate microfinance/microcredit with no age barrier, for elderly businesses through nationalised banks with easy repayment schedule to extend financial support for establishing new enterprises or strengthening existing enterprises to enhance income security.
- 2.2.The State shall establish training and capacity building centres for senior citizens in each district.
- 2.3.The State shall allocate marketing centres exclusively for elderly to sell products for their minimum guarantee income.

3. Formation and strengthening of Elders Self Help Groups

- 3.1.The State shall enforce the formation of “Elders Self Help Groups” with both men and women through urban and rural local bodies.
- 3.2.The State shall ensure to provide bank linkages to give adequate financial assistance to the self-help groups.

4. Enabling elders to be financially secure

- 4.1.The State shall launch a resource cell to provide reemployment opportunities with flexibility for potential senior citizens without age limitation.
- 4.2.The State shall create online job portals in partnership with manpower agencies which is technologically user friendly.

5. Establish market linkages for products manufactured by Senior Citizens

- 5.1.The State shall start a one stop centre for the elders to market their products for their minimum guarantee income.
- 5.2.The State shall offer free public transport facilities for senior citizens to transport the products for marketing.
- 5.3.The State shall make it mandatory to give preference for senior citizens in allocating space in other markets, melas and exhibitions.

IV. Housing and Environment

Poverty, denial of basic needs, abandonment, involuntary and forceful dispossession from property, exposure to prolonged threats, different forms of physical, mental, and financial abuse, chronic illness, and disability contributes to increasing homelessness among senior citizens.

Non-availability of adequate space and lack of privacy in houses in the informal settlements results in senior citizens pushed to the street situations. There are also instances of death of senior citizens in homeless situations because of non-access to dignified rescue and shelter.

According to the Longitudinal Aging Study (LASI) in India, 2017-2018 released by the Ministry of Wealth and Family Welfare, Government of India, only 59.9% of elderly households in Tamil Nadu reside in pucca houses. The current public housing programmes are not affordable for senior citizens from socially disadvantaged groups and economically weaker sections, therefore limiting the scope for ensuring housing continuum as part of community reintegration process. There is a need to evolve and implement enabling public housing programmes for the elderly.

Access to water and sanitation is crucial for ensuring a healthy and hygienic lifestyle for the senior citizens. According to the LASI study, elderly households in Tamil Nadu have better access to electricity and clean cooking fuel, but only 50.6% of elderly households have water facility inside their dwelling/own yard. The study also reveals that 39.7% of elderly households in rural areas and 12.8% of urban elderly households in Tamil Nadu continue to practice open defecation.

The J-PAL survey reveals that 70% of the elderly use public transportation. Mobility limitations of senior citizens and inaccessible public transportation facilities further increases the vulnerabilities of the senior citizens as it restricts their access to essential services.

To address these issues the Policy recognises and prioritises access to dignified, secure, and accessible housing, transportation, and other essential infrastructure facilities for senior citizens households in the rural and urban areas.

1. Ensuring access to housing, essential infrastructure facilities and public spaces

- 1.1. The State shall set up interim shelters for senior citizens in homeless situations under the Shelter for Urban Homeless Scheme in Cities and Towns (especially corporations/municipalities/towns of pilgrimage), to have access to dignified rescue services.
- 1.2. The State shall introduce transitional housing facilities for senior citizens in the existing urban and rural housing programmes to facilitate community reintegration process for the non-dependent senior citizen households in homeless situations or in institutional care.
- 1.3. The State shall increase sustenance allowance for elders who are evicted and resettled by Government for 12 months to mitigate the adverse impact of relocation on senior citizens.
- 1.4. The State shall ensure to earmark the services for the senior citizens in all regional plans and master plans across Tamil Nadu. The State shall instruct the panchayats and urban local bodies (ULBs) to earmark spaces for setting up facilities for senior citizens in all public housing and habitat development projects. The space will be used for setting up basic needs bank to meet the immediate needs of the senior citizens in distress situations.

- 1.5. The State shall allot priority seating, priority queue and free transportation for the senior citizens in all Government run buses. Public transportation services should provide an accessible environment for the senior citizens and persons with disabilities.
- 1.6. The State shall make it mandatory to provide separate access for senior citizens in all public spaces.
- 1.7. The State shall make it mandatory for all essential infrastructure facilities and public spaces accessed by the senior citizens to adopt elderly-friendly designs.

2. Establishment of transit shelters for the senior citizens in homeless situation

- 2.1 The State shall assist in the set-up of transit shelters for senior citizens in homeless situations in all the Urban Local Bodies in partnership with private sectors.
- 2.2 The State shall formulate specific guidelines for operationalising transit shelters for elderly in distress situations to enhance coordination between multiple stakeholders, ensure dignified rescue process, hospitalisation without requirement for care takers/attendants, undertake post rescue follow-up, and facilitate short-term rehabilitation services, referral to institutions providing long-term care.

V. Safety and Security

Elderly abuse is on the rise and is a grave threat to the safety and security of elderly. Neglect, abuse and other violence against senior citizens takes many forms — physical, psychological, emotional, financial - and occurs in every social, economic, ethnic and geographic sphere.

The data released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, in 2020 reveals that Tamil Nadu ranks third highest in the country in murder of senior citizens and first in robbery. Tamil Nadu ranks second in the number of pending police investigation cases on crimes against senior citizens, and fourth highest in the country in cases with pending trials.

There is a need to focus on prevention of elder abuse mechanism rather than action after occurrence of abuse. Necessary steps must be taken to prevent abuse in the first place. Communities must work together to prevent abuse, consumer fraud and crimes against older persons. Professionals need to recognise the risk of potential neglect, abuse or violence by formal and informal caregivers both in the home and in community and institutional settings. The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2007, ensures need-based maintenance for parents and senior citizens and their welfare to prevent the elders from being victims of abuse.

There is low awareness of various forms of safety and security nets available for the elderly. This includes personal security, health security and food security etc. Accessibility of services such as healthcare, police etc. is a major problem faced by elderly. This includes physical access as well as the approachability of these services. Elderly must be made aware of the

provisions of the Senior Citizens Maintenance Act, provisions of food and nutrition and protection from abuse.

The policy shall take up effective mechanisms to ensure the safety and security of the senior citizens.

1. Enforcement of punishments for elder abuse

1.1. The State shall make provisions for stringent punishments for abuse of the senior citizens – physical, emotional, neglect and abandonment, sexual and financial abuse.

2. Establishment of rescue/rehabilitation centre for victims of abuse

2.1 The State shall establish rescue/rehabilitation centres for victims of abuse and appoint a task force team consisting of police, medical personnel, social workers, NGOs and volunteers to rescue the victims, provide treatment and rehabilitation.

2.2 The rescue/rehabilitation centres shall also function as a ‘basic needs bank’ for the elderly homeless in urban and rural areas.

3. Policing

3.1. The State shall set up an exclusive wing “Vigilance and Crimes Department for Senior Citizens” under the Director General of Police.

3.2. The State shall direct the police to attend to the sensitivities of the senior citizens and keep constant vigil and monitoring programmes, which will include a comprehensive plan for security of senior citizens whether living alone or as couples. They would also promote mechanisms for interaction of the senior citizens with neighborhood associations and enrolment in special programmes in rural and urban areas.

3.3. The State shall institute protective services such as helplines, legal aid and voluntary organisations for the senior citizens.

4. Legal provision

4.1. The State shall hold a separate “Senior Citizens Grievance Day” to allow easy access for elders and give priority to those seeking assistance.

4.2. The State shall make provisions to handle court cases for and against elders, taken up with maintenance act tribunal/ State legal aid center/ family courts/ mobile courts.

4.3. The State shall strictly implement the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 through Tribunals so that elderly parents unable to maintain themselves are not abandoned and neglected.

4.4.The State shall ensure effective functioning of the “State level and District level committee” to monitor the functioning of the Tribunals (including the appellate tribunal) set up under the Tamil Nadu Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Rules, 2009.

4.5.The State shall setup information kiosks equipped with information to ensure that senior citizens facing threat to life and property are linked with the Police, Revenue, Health, District Social Welfare Officers/Maintenance Officers/ Conciliation Officers on priority and legal aid assistance wherever necessary.

5. Baseline Assessment

5.1.The State shall conduct a periodical vulnerability assessment to categorise the needs of the elderly safety to enable targeted delivery of services. The State shall classify the senior citizens based on parameters of age (60-70yrs young old, 70-80yrs middle old, 85+yrs oldest old), physical ability/disability, mental ability/disability gender, economic, BPL, geographical location).

VI. Institutional Care

The increase in ageing population creates lots of issues and challenges to their own well-being, to their family, society and the Government due to various reasons like disintegration of joint family, new technologies, unemployment, poverty, migration, globalisation and modern lifestyles. As consequences of social transformation and evolving lifestyle, many of the older persons are landing in old age homes. The mushrooming of nuclear families especially in urban area has led to steadily increasing number of old age homes. The institutional care is responsible to fulfill their necessities but also ensure the conducive environment for their well-being.

Recreational centres enrich the lives of the elderly in so many ways, by providing many physical and mental activities for the benefit of the elders. Adult day care offers a win/win situation for everyone in the family. not only the elder who attends the program, but also for the family member who has the primary responsibility as caregiver. Adult day care provides a safe, secure environment to spend the day or a part of the day. Meaningful social interaction can improve both mental and physical health and help to prevent or delay cognitive decline in the elderly.

The policy framework will focus on the quality functioning of institutional care, to provide the elders a comfortable home away from home.

1. Establishment of residential old age homes – in rural and urban areas (non-profit and commercial)

1.1.The State shall formulate revised guidelines for the establishment/management of old age homes, run by both Government and private.

- 1.2. The State shall enforce compulsory registration of old age homes located all over the State and shall issue certification as 'Fit Institutions' for providing services for senior citizens.
- 1.3. The State shall ensure to develop and implement standard operating procedures (SOP), to be judiciously followed in all old age homes and age care centres.
2. The State shall endeavour to mainstream the mental health centres, elder resource centres/ clubs, elder day care centres, geriatric counselling centres and elder recreational centres at village/taluk/district levels.
3. The State shall setup a separate portal for tracking of missing elder persons. (helpline)
4. The State shall set up Elder Welfare Committee in every district through which admissions to old age homes are managed and monitored.
5. The State shall formulate guidelines for the burial procedures for the elderly to prevent needless delays.

VII. Awareness and education

Awareness and Education is the foundation for a dignified life. A knowledge-based society requires that policies be instituted to ensure lifelong access to education and training. Continuous education and training are essential to ensure the productivity of both individuals and nations. There is an urgent worldwide need to expand educational opportunities in the field of geriatrics and gerontology for all health professionals and caregivers who work with senior citizens. It is also necessary to provide awareness and basic training on the care of senior citizens to informal caregivers and family members.

Another aspect to be focused is the intergenerational bonding, which could contribute to a healthy society which nurtures human values. It can have a positive impact on everyone involved. It has the potential to improve the well-being of older adults, eliminating ageism and prejudice against senior citizens, giving them a feeling of comfort and contentment. It encourages mutual understanding and respect between generations.

Senior citizens possess rich experience, skills, knowledge, talents, wisdom, moral values and ethics. Hence, they should be looked up to as valuable treasures and should be celebrated. Therefore, international days for senior citizens should be observed to recognise and appreciate the contributions of the older persons and spread awareness about the importance of the senior citizens and the challenges they face in the present world.

One of the major challenge faced by senior citizens is the lack of knowledge on digital technology. Digital empowerment for senior citizens is truly the need of the hour. Digital up skilling of senior citizens is needed as this silver economy can become an asset for the economic development of the country. The Focus of the Government Digital India Projects has been on the country's youth but focus should also be towards growing elderly population so that this

community can equip themselves with the growing technology and contribute to true digital progress in the nation.

The policy framework will ensure to uplift the quality of life of elders through awareness and education by implementing the following strategies:

1. Develop new curriculum in schools, colleges, and universities:

- 1.1. The State shall develop an intergenerational curriculum on social values that foster bridging bond between generations at an early stage to prevent elder negligence/ageism.
- 1.2. The State shall make it mandatory for colleges and universities to include a paper on age care related to the specific course while framing the curriculum to inculcate the knowledge on elder care and the ways to contribute to the well-being of the ageing population through their education.
- 1.3. The State shall instruct colleges and universities to carry out mandatory researches in the field of ageing care with reference to physical, social, economic, psychological and legal aspects of senior citizens.

2. Developing Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials:

- 2.1 The State shall develop Information, Education, and Communication materials for wider dissemination.
- 2.2 The State in collaboration with experts in the field of ageing care shall organise training, seminars, workshops on elder care for teachers, doctors and paramedicals, caregivers, PHC/UPHC health workers, Village Health Nurses, SHG members, senior citizens clubs, NSS volunteers, NCC and YRC.

3. Intergenerational bonding (IGB):

- 3.1. The State shall make it mandatory for universities/colleges to adopt an old age home at rural/urban/tribal/coastal levels to carry out extension activities to address their problems and to promote their standard of living through experiential learning.
- 3.2. The State shall promote awareness on IGB programs at educational institutions, corporate organisations and Government institutions.

4. Observance of International days related to elderly:

- 4.1. The State shall observe all-important days of elderly with a theme in accordance with the UN theme, which shall be universally followed throughout the State (Government and private organisations, educational institutions, and panchayat raj institutions), and

a pledge shall be taken to ensure their protection, rights, care and prevention of elder abuse.

15th June – World elder abuse awareness day

21st September – World Alzheimer’s day

1st October - International day of older persons

4.2.The State shall institute many categories of awards specifically for the elderly to recognise and honor their lives.

4.3.The State shall institute special awards for individuals/organisations to recognise and appreciate their contributions and services in the field of age care.

4.4.The State shall instruct educational institutions to observe “Grandparents day” to build intergenerational relationships.

5. Awareness and education through mass communication – print media/broadcasting media/digital media/social media (TV/radio broadcast, flyers, digital displays and advertisements in parks, malls, train and bus stations and social media):

5.1.The State shall distribute elder friendly phones with inbuilt speed dial for elders living in below poverty line for immediate access to emergency services – national toll free helpline service 14567, ambulance/medical emergency, elder abuse, meals on wheels, disaster.

5.2.The State in partnership with both the public and private sectors shall conduct campaigns in rural/tribal/urban areas, to bring awareness to the aged population and the society about the existing policies, schemes, programmes and legal provisions provided by the Government for the elderly.

5.3.The State shall set up separate elder friendly E-sevai centres in rural/tribal/urban areas in order to process the requirements of the elderly effectively.

6. Ensuring Access to Information

6.1.The State shall set up Information kiosks for the senior citizens in prominent places frequented by senior citizens to ensure access to timely and relevant information. Repository with information on services available for the senior citizens shall be made available and accessible in the information kiosks.

6.2. Information shall be available for persons with audio-visual disability (braille, sign language).

7. Adult Education:

7.1.The State shall establish a university as a part of the “University of third age programme” (U3A) for skill development courses to promote active ageing.

7.2.The State shall take efforts to increase the enrollment ratio in open universities with diversification of courses.

8. Senior Citizens in Media:

8.1 The State shall evolve and circulate guidelines to all media houses highlighting the need for adopting a sensitive approach while portraying senior citizens, for display of relevant information about helplines, while publishing stories on violence against senior citizens in the print and visual media.

9. Advocacy:

9.1.The State shall ensure the prevention of elder abuse and promote the elder rights through advocacy.

VIII. Research and Documentation

There is a need to encourage and advance comprehensive, diversified and specialised research on ageing in all countries, particularly in developing countries. Research, including age and gender-sensitive data collection and analysis provides essential evidence for effective policies. The availability of reliable information is indispensable in identifying emerging issues and adopting recommendations.

- 1.1.The State shall setup research centres to undertake and fund researches on the socio-economic vulnerabilities of senior citizens in urban and rural areas for evidence based policymaking.
- 1.2.The State shall allocate more funds to carry out research studies on diseases more prevalent in the elderly such as dementia, Alzheimer’s disease and Parkinson’s disease.
- 1.3.The State shall conduct pilot researches to take up larger studies related to elderly and aging-related gender inequalities.
- 1.4.The State shall conduct longitudinal studies and cross-sectional studies to determine variable patterns over time and to carry out future researches on developmental trends.
- 1.5.The State shall create opportunities and provide scholarships for research students who take up courses on geriatrics including overseas education.
- 1.6.The State shall establish research organisations that not only take up studies related to the elderly but also conduct technical researches that invent assistive devices that contribute to an ease of life of the elderly through technology.

IX. Disaster Management and Mitigation

A disaster is a serious disruption to the functioning of a community, which causes human, material, economic and environmental losses beyond a community's ability to cope. Disaster

management aims to lessen the impacts of disasters and minimise loss of life and property. Technology has made forecast and early warning signs more accurate and it can certainly help in mitigating loss of life.

The association between higher age and negative mental health outcomes along with locomotors and visual disability among the elderly make them more vulnerable to disasters. Mitigation strategies, effective management and rehabilitation help prevent the negative consequences of the catastrophe and helps to revert to normal lives.

1. Mitigation measures

- 1.1.The State shall release a Disaster Management Manual for senior citizens for effective mitigation, management and rehabilitation, and shall distribute the manual to the elderly through stakeholders.
- 1.2.The State shall create a special task force for the elderly in collaboration with CBOs, health departments, Panchayats etc. for rapid action during disasters.
- 1.3.The State shall identify the vulnerable zones prone to natural disasters through mapping and update the census of elderly living in the zone every year, especially those who are ill, living alone, bedridden, under Palliative care and differently abled.
- 1.4.The State shall provide an “Elderly preparedness kit”- elderly should be prepared with their important documents, medical reports, medicines and devices, clothes, whistle etc.
- 1.5.The State shall make it mandatory for all new structures constructed for providing shelter and other allied services for the senior citizens to adopt climate resilient building plans.
- 1.6.The State shall ensure not to approve spaces that are low-lying, environmentally sensitive, and hazardous, to construct structures providing shelter for the senior citizens.
- 1.7.The State shall make it compulsory for all existing buildings providing shelter for the elderly, especially in areas that are prone to floods, landslides, and other natural disasters, to evolve Disaster Management and Risk Mitigation Plans to safeguard the senior citizens.

2. Management/relief measures

- 2.1.The State shall ensure to give highest priority to elders during the distribution of disaster relief packages including financial assistance.

3. Restoration and Rehabilitation measures

- 3.1.The State shall ensure to provide food, shelter, physical health services and medical care for the elderly during the post disaster phase.
- 3.2.The State shall provide counselling sessions and mental health services and support to the elderly affected by the horrors of the disaster.
- 3.3.The State shall reestablish and reconstruct the lives of the elderly within a short period and avoid needless delays.

X. Establishment of structures to implement the policy

1. Directorate for the Welfare of Senior Citizens

- 1.1.The State shall establish a separate “**Directorate for the Welfare of Senior Citizens**”. Implementation and monitoring of the State policy on senior citizens shall come under the umbrella of the Directorate for the Welfare of Senior Citizens, Tamil Nadu.
- 1.2.The existing “**State Council for Senior Citizens**” shall monitor the implementation of the policy and advise the Government on concerns of senior citizens.

ANNEXURE

1. Other statistics of elderly population in Tamil Nadu (Aged 60 & above)

Category	Total	Male	Female	Rural	Urban
Literate %	50.3	71.5	50	47.1	70.2
Widowed %	41.2	8.9	35.3	26.8	22.8
Currently Working %	39.2	71.7	41.5	60.6	46.2
Covered under work related pension scheme %	11	8	4.4	3.5	9.7
Covered under provident fund%	6.4	7	5	5	7.4
Currently receiving retirement pension%	8	6.2	2.3	2.5	5.1
Living Alone (%)	15.2	3.7	11.6	11.1	5.9
Prevalence of depression based on CIDI-SF form %	5.2	3.6	4.3	4.7	3.4

2. Age specific death rate (per 1000), 2018 (MoSPI Table 3.12, Pg 25)

State	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85+
Kerala	13.4	28.0	35.1	58.0	98.6	236.2
Tamil Nadu	15.9	29.0	42.7	62.8	76.4	126.6
India	19.5	31.3	47.5	66.0	106.5	174.7

3. **Average number of years in formal education** – Aged 60 years and above (MoSPI Table 5.3, Pg 65)

State	Total			Region	
	Persons	Male	Female	Rural	Urban
Tamil Nadu	7.7	8.4	6.6	6.7	8.3
India	8.3	8.7	7.5	7.0	9.7

4. **Quality of Life of Elderly Index released by Economic Advisory Council to PM**
([Link](#))

The Index framework includes four pillars: Financial Well-being, Social Well-being, Health System and Income Security, and eight sub-pillars: Economic Empowerment, Educational Attainment & Employment, Social Status, Physical Security, Basic Health, Psychological Well Being, Social Security and Enabling Environment.

States were categorised into Aged States and Relatively Aged States. The Aged States refer to States with an elderly population of more than 5 million, whereas Relatively Aged States refer to States with an Elderly population of less than 5 million.

Tamil Nadu comes under the category of Aged States and ranked 4th in the category with a score of 47.93.