

DRAFT POLICY PREPARED AND SUBMITTED TO GOVT. OF TAMIL NADU FOR ADOPTION
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TAMILNADU POLICY ON THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR - 2010**1. Preamble**

- 1.1 The National Policy on the Voluntary Sector formulated by Planning Commission, Government of India and accepted by the Union Cabinet has made a commitment to encourage, enable and empower an independent, creative and effective voluntary sector, with diversity in form and function, so that it can contribute to the social, cultural and economic advancement of the people of India.
- 1.2. The Tamil Nadu Government also affirms the above policy and has formulated this State policy, which recognizes the vital role that the voluntary sector is playing in various areas. The State affirms the growing need for collaboration with the voluntary sector to serve the needy communities in an integrated and equitable manner at all levels in the State of Tamil Nadu.

2. Scope of the Policy

- 2.1. In the Policy, voluntary organizations (VOs) means Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), organizations working towards development of people such as Non Government Organizations, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Organizations involved in policy research and advocacy, movement based organizations, resource and research centers, support organizations, federations and networks; they also include institutions which are engaged in micro credit, micro finance, livelihood support and similar activities. The state shall also recognize individual voluntary efforts.
- 2.2. The Policy will include private organizations which are not involved in generation of profit. The state recognizes that the governance pattern of such VOs is a self governing system with formal registration or informal groups but with defined aims and objectives of assisting the marginalized sections of the society.

3. Objectives of the Policy

- 3.1 The specific objectives of the policy are listed below:
 - 3.1.1 To create an enabling environment for VOs that stimulates their innovation and effectiveness, and safeguards their autonomy;

- 3.1.2 To support financially and technically the activities of VOs involved in development.
- 3.1.3. The State treats VOs as equal partners on the basis of the principles of mutual trust and respect towards the objective of empowering people with shared responsibility.
- 3.1.4. The State recognizes the self regulation of VOs, encourages them to adopt transparent and accountable systems of governance and management.

The following paragraphs describe how these objectives are to be achieved.

4. Establishing an Enabling Environment for the Voluntary Sector

- 4.1. The State Government will develop all laws, policies, rules and regulations in such a way that Voluntary Organizations' autonomy is completely respected and at the same time enable them to strengthen self regulations and accountability.
- 4.2. The existing provisions of the Tamilnadu Societies Registration Act will be reviewed and simplified to respect the autonomy of VOs. As per the existing procedure of the National Planning Commission, the State Government will also constitute Voluntary Action Cell in the State Planning Commission for interface between the State Government and the Voluntary Sector.
- 4.3. Voluntary Agencies shall address the governance, accountability and transparency of their organizations and State Government will encourage self regulation by the Sector.

5 Partnership in Development (Financial and Technical Support)

- 5.1. The State recognizes that the Voluntary Sector plays an important role in the development process, particularly at grassroots level by facilitating community participation and ownership. VOs offer alternative perspectives; expertise; insights and understanding of the local opportunities and constraints; and perhaps most importantly, the capacity to constructively engage the community with meaningful dialogue in a sustainable way. It is therefore essential that the State and the Voluntary Sector mutually acknowledge each others' role and work together. Where necessary and feasible, such partnership may include other entities such as *panchayati raj* institutions, and other local bodies such as Town

Panchayats, Municipalities and Municipal Corporations, academic institutions, and other such organizations.

5.2. Partnership between the State and VOs implies identifying shared goals and defining complementary roles for achieving shared goals. It is based on the basic principles of mutual trust and respect, with shared responsibility and authority. These principles shall be explicit in the terms and conditions of the partnership and shall be evident in every system of collaboration reflecting collective ownership.

5.3. This Policy recognizes three instruments of partnership, viz.

(i) Participatory Consultation, through a formal process of interaction at the micro and macro levels;

(ii) Strategic collaboration for sustained social mobilization to ensure social justice.

(iii) The State shall provide financial support to VOs for empowerment and improving the quality of life of the marginalized communities.

The State will ensure that these three instruments (Participatory Consultation, Strategic Collaboration and financial support) of partnership are given due attention and made visible in Annual Plans prepared by all the departments of the State of Tamilnadu.

The action that will be taken in respect of each of the three instruments is discussed in the following paragraphs.

5.4 The State shall through a Government Order encourage setting up of Joint Consultative Groups / Fora or Joint Machineries of government and voluntary sector representatives in official decision making bodies. These bodies shall be constituted with a positive discrimination in terms of gender, Persons with Disability, trans-gender, dalits, adivasis, fisherfolk and other socially excluded communities as related reference groups in respective departments. The representatives from the civil society sector may be done on rotation basis. The State shall encourage district administrations, district planning bodies, district rural development agencies, and Panchayat Raj Institutions to do so. The State shall evolve suitable mechanisms for involving a wide cross-section of the voluntary sector in these Groups / Fora.

5.5. The expertise of the voluntary sector shall be utilized, by including experts from VOs in the committees, task forces, and advisory panels constituted by the State from time to time to help address important and critical issues. A roster of experts with various expertises in different thematic

areas shall be developed at state level and kept ready for this purpose by the VOs. This shall be made available to all government departments.

- 5.6. The State shall involve Voluntary Organizations where sustained social mobilization is required which include poverty alleviation, skill promotion, entrepreneurship development, empowerment of women and other socially excluded communities, population stabilization, all health related programs, combating HIV/AIDS, labour rights, elimination of bonded / child labour, reviewing the government policies and schemes, managing water resources, elementary education and forest management, disaster preparedness and management, addressing gender and other equity issues physically challenged, orphans etc. to name a few. Such areas urgently require strategic collaboration between the State Government and VOs, through State level programmes that are long-term in duration, and utilize multiple strategies, innovative methodologies and activities to achieve their objectives.
- 5.7. The third instrument of partnership between the State and the voluntary sector is financial support. This financial support includes schemes such as SHGs, surveys, research, workshops, documentation, awareness raising, training, creation and running of public welfare facilities, camps and so on. Project grants are a useful means for the State to promote its activities with the participation of VOs and communities through them.

6. Strengthening the Voluntary Sector

- 6.1. The State shall simplify procedures for VOs to approach various government departments for implementation of any development intervention. The State shall explore the possibility of extending exemptions from Sales Tax, Power tariff concessions and other such State levied taxes in case of Voluntary Organizations.
- 6.2. Accountability and transparency are key issues in good governance. The voluntary sector is expected to set and practice its own benchmarks in these areas. The State shall recognize excellence in governance among VOs.
- 6.3. The State Government shall provide financial and technical support for capacity and knowledge building training for the Voluntary sector.
- 6.4. Innovation in institutional, technical, social and other approaches to various human development concerns is an essential ingredient of voluntary action. The State shall encourage and recognize innovative & pioneering work. Such Institutionalization process must recognize the ownership and provide due credit. The state shall recognize the programmatic lessons learnt and useful good practices of VO sector and

engage VO sector in scaling it up through Government programmes where ever possible.

- 6.5. Information on State Government policies and programmes shall be made easily accessible to VOs. The websites of various State Government agencies will be re-designed to provide links to key documents and databases, including those related to project funding schemes. The state and the VOs shall jointly set up the last mile connectivity through grievance cell and / or setting up a system at state and district levels which will have direct access to the people in the community; also enabling them to use the tool RTI (right to information) act easily.
- 6.6. The state shall provide necessary social security benefits for the voluntary sector workers.