

Covid-19 and Tamil Nadu's Marine Fisheries Sector

Ajit Menon* and Maarten Bavinck†

The Covid-19 pandemic and its subsequent lockdowns have adversely impacted the marine fisheries sector in Tamil Nadu. This policy brief discusses the cumulative and differential impacts of both state and local institutional restrictions on different actors within the fisheries sector, considers the type of relief available, and suggests remedial and rehabilitation measures to cope at present and with similar emergencies in the future. In addition, considering the wider vulnerabilities of the sector, it comments on longer-term policy options.

¹ All future references to 'fishers' are to marine fishers.

Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries Department. 2020. *Fisheries: Policy note 2020–2021*. Government of Tamil Nadu.

² Different data sets, at different points of time, give different figures. The *Handbook on Fisheries Statistics 2018* estimates that there are 12,36,567 engaged in fisheries, activities (harvest and post-harvest), but it is likely to be more. More important than exact numbers is that the fisheries sector is labour intensive and employs a large number of people.

Status of Tamil Nadu fisheries sector

The Tamil Nadu marine fisheries sector became number 1 in the country in terms of annual fish production in 2019. The state counts 10.48 lakh marine fishers¹ in 2019–2020 (Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries Department, 2020) and likely a similar number of people engaged in the post-harvest sector though numbers are hard to come by.² Women comprise more than 50% of those involved in post-harvest activities and are

N. S. Sudhakara, Vijaya Khader, R. Sathiadas, H. Mohamad Kasim, R. Narayana Kumar, K. Dhanpal, & Fameena Hassan. 2003. *Participation of women in post harvest fisheries sector. Proceedings of the workshop on empowerment of fisher women in coastal ecosystem of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu* (pp. 69–75). Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University.

³ According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 'small-scale fisheries can be broadly characterized as a dynamic and evolving sub-sector of fisheries employing labour-intensive harvesting, processing and distribution technologies to exploit marine and inland water fishery resources'.

M. Sivadas, P.U. Zacharia, P.T. Sarada, R. Narayanakumar, Shoba Joe Kizhakudan, A. Margaret Muthu Rathinam, S. Surya, L. Remya, M. Rajkumar, E.M. Chhandaprajnadarsini, P.P. Manojkumar, I. Jagdis, M. Kavitha, K.N. Saleela, Grinson George, P. Laxmilatha, & A. Gopalakrishnan. 2019. *Management plans for the marine fisheries of Tamil Nadu* (Marine Fisheries Policy Series No.11). Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute.

Department of Fisheries. 2019. *Handbook on fisheries statistics 2018*. Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Government of India.

Maarten Bavinck. 2014. *Investigating poverty through the lens of riches—Immigration and segregation in Indian capture fisheries. Development Policy Review*, 32(1), 33–52.

Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries. 2017. *National policy on marine fisheries, 2017*. Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India.

particularly prominent in jobs such as fish handling, sorting, grading, drying, and retail marketing (Sudhakara et al., 2003).

Tamil Nadu's fisheries sector comprises both mechanised and small-scale³ (motorised and non-motorised) crafts. The mechanised sector, which comprises 5,893 crafts, accounts for 83.3 per cent of the 7.75 lakh tonnes landed in 2019, whereas the motorised and non-motorised small-scale sectors, which together comprise 38,779 crafts, account for 16.3% and 0.4%, respectively (Sivadas et al., 2019, p. 10). However, small-scale fishers account for a large proportion of seagoing fishers in the state as is evidenced by the large number of small-scale crafts. Though according to official statistics, approximately 90% of the fisher population is below the poverty line and dependent on fishing (Department of Fisheries, 2019), labour in-migration into fishing continues because of relatively better incomes in comparison with many other rural livelihoods (Bavinck, 2014).

The fisheries sector in Tamil Nadu depends highly on resources in the territorial sea (up to 12 nautical miles), which are becoming depleted (Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, 2017). In addition, the sector is frequently crippled by conflict between fisher groups. Governance structures and processes are generally considered to be weak and in need of reinforcement (see 'Challenges and Way Forward' section).

The Tamil Nadu fisheries sector is frequently affected by disasters, including cyclones and floods, and the occasional tsunami. The Covid-19 crisis is a new type of unfolding disaster, for which short-term relief measures and longer-term adaptation and rehabilitation are required.

Covid-19 impacts on the fisheries sector

The Tamil Nadu government, like most state governments, imposed a total ban on fisheries when India went into lockdown from 24 March 2020 to 14 April 2020.

Fisheries, unlike agriculture, was not considered an essential service. After fishers

Department of Fisheries. 2020, April 18.
Model standard operating procedures (SOPs) related to movement of fisherman and fishing boats in COVID-19 scenario. Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India.

⁴ While *ur* panchayats are village-based institutions, fisher organisations include different types of craft/vessel associations which include members from different villages.

raised their voice, the Government of India relaxed restrictions and instead issued model Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) on 10 April 2020, to include marine fisheries and aquaculture, movement of fish and movement of workers along the fishery value chain, and subsequently inland fisheries from 15 April 2020. The SOP contained instructions for all four phases of fishing operations: before departure, during fishing, at the time of arrival, and post-harvest and transportation. The SOP was aimed at fisher safety and better hygiene (Department of Fisheries, 2020). Fishing was resumed under the guidance of crisis management committees and

comprised members of fisher associations and fisheries vessel owner associations. Local institutions (*ur* panchayats and fisher organisations)⁴ imposed their own sets of restrictions.

Despite these measures, the fisheries economy was impacted in multiple ways:

John Kurien. 2020, May 20.
To make fishers 'Atmanirbhar', India should re-vision small-scale harvesting post-lockdown. *OnManorama*.

⁵ We have not been able to access similar data for other months.

Supriya Vohra. 2020, April 30.
India's fishers have been crushed by COVID-19. *Hakai Magazine*.

⁶ The fishing ban applies only to the mechanised sector.

⁷ Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute uses the term 'crafts', but the term 'vessels' is often used, especially to refer to larger mechanised crafts.

- a. The loss to fisheries production in India as a whole was estimated to be around ₹6,700 crore per month (based on April data) as the fisheries sector functioned at less than one third of its capacity (Kurien, 2020).⁵
- b. Livelihoods of all fishers (mechanised and small-scale) were adversely impacted due to the lockdowns and because of transportation hurdles and safety concerns when fishing was later permitted (Vohra, 2020). Trawl fishing did not resume till June because of the two-month (15 April–14 June) fishing ban.⁶
- c. Fishers on mechanised vessels had no employment till June because by the time fishing resumed, the two months' fishing ban had started.
- d. Migrant fishers, who work on vessels⁷ in other parts of India during the lean fishing season on the East Coast, and in Gulf countries, were left stranded upon vessels with no wages.

- e. The post-harvest sector was equally affected. Exporters, traders, auctioneers, and small-scale fish vendors lost out due to dwindling markets and transport facilities.

Nathan J. Bennett, Elena M. Finkbeiner,
Natalie C. Ban, Dyhia Belhabib,
Stacy D. Jupiter, John N. Kittinger,
Sangeeta Mangubhai, Joeri Scholtens,
David Gill, & Patrick Christie. 2020.
The COVID-19 pandemic,
small-scale fisheries and
coastal fishing communities.
Coastal Management, 48(4), 336–347.

- f. Women fish vendors were particularly affected because of a scarcity of fish, high local prices, and restrictions on movement imposed upon them by local village institutions.
- g. Other allied workers, like those who transported fish, worked in ice factories, and repaired boats, had almost no employment.
- h. Similar impacts affected fish workers in many other parts of the world (Bennett et al., 2020).

Immediate relief measures in the Covid-19 context

The impact of the lockdown and local restrictions were to some extent cushioned by government relief measures and measures taken by village institutions, fisher organisations, and individual vessel owners. These included the following:

- a. Fisher families, like all families with ration cards, were entitled to the ₹1,000 relief amount given by the Government of Tamil Nadu. Fishers registered with the Tamil Nadu Fishermen Welfare Board were given additional two payments of ₹1,000 (i.e., ₹2,000) during the lockdowns. All fishers received ₹5,000 during the two-month-ban period.
- b. Local institutions (*ur* panchayats and fisher organisations) provided rations in some villages and neighbourhoods, whereas in others they urged fishers to prioritise supply of fish to local households first.
- c. Vessel owners provided rations to fishers engaged on board their vessels, often by taking loans themselves.

These measures, however, were inadequate according to fishers. The government's relief package did not compensate for the average earnings of fishers and fish workers. Moreover, the usual support given by the Tamil Nadu Fishermen Welfare Board excluded the most vulnerable groups, such as women fish vendors.

Suggestions for improving short-term and medium-term responses

What can we learn from the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic? How can relief measures in Tamil Nadu be improved in future? What measures can be taken so that the fisheries economy is more able to deal with pandemics of this sort that have strong public health and livelihoods dimensions? The following actions will go some way in addressing these concerns:

- a. While adequate safety precautions must be taken, fishing—especially non-intensive fishing operations—should generally be permitted during such crises. Safety measures must also be ensured at fish markets, with proper hygiene measures and physical distancing.
- b. Relief measures should depend on the duration of the crisis. The government can give fisher families ₹250 per day as it gives to fisher families whose kin, while fishing, are apprehended by neighbouring countries. Further discussions must take place as to whether all transfers should be only in the form of cash or whether it can be in the form of social insurance also.
- c. A systematic updating of those entitled to benefits must be done, with such lists not being limited to active fishers alone. Many women fish vendors, for example, were excluded from relief from the Board. Migrant workers involved in the fish value chain—from fishers, to loaders and unloaders, and workers in ice and allied factories—were also excluded.
- d. Prioritising women fish vendors and implementing targeted policies that improve transportation facilities for them may help them to sell their fish in neighbouring areas. The government can consider a scheme similar to the Amma Two-Wheeler Scheme for working women.
- e. The government should ensure that internal migrant fishers and fish workers are registered so that they are entitled to government benefits that other informal sector workers get, including access to relief during disasters and crises, and welfare benefits.
- f. The government should provide access to safe and reasonably priced housing to migrant fish workers near major harbours in the country to give them more security.
- g. Close to 10% of highly skilled fishers, especially from the southern districts of Tamil Nadu, migrate to the Gulf countries for fishing. The government should make Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana insurance compulsory for all migrant fish workers irrespective of their status (Emigration Clearance Required or Emigration Clearance Not Required) and create awareness about this policy (renewal and claim process). The policy provides benefits in the event of accidental death or permanent disability, covers repatriation of migrants if medically unfit or made redundant, and allows for family hospitalisation insurance cover and maternity benefits.
- h. All measures regarding migrant workers will require better data on the status of

National Sample Survey Office. 2010. *Migration in India: 2007–2008 (NSS 64th round, July 2007–June 2008)*. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation., Government of India.

migrant fish workers to facilitate informed policy decisions. Existing data sets do not cover migration or labour mobility outside fishing—one can only assume this from the declining numbers of full-time fishers. The 64th round of the National Sample Survey in 2007–2008 involved a migration survey

(National Sample Survey Office, 2010); however, it is difficult to match this with fishing villages/habitations, given the definition of zone in the national sample survey. In 2011, for the first time, the Census collected data on migration (D-series). Unit-level data are not yet available, making it difficult to distinguish between fishing hamlets and the larger revenue village.

- i. The government should ensure better implementation of kisan credit cards for fishers, and banks should provide them credit against their entitlement as and when they require. Fishers, at present, are dependent on moneylenders, who charge high rates of interest.
- j. The government should go ahead and implement a centralised insurance scheme for owners of small-scale crafts, as specified in the latest Government of Tamil Nadu's *Fisheries: Policy Note 2020–2021*. Tamil Nadu State Apex Fisheries Cooperative Federation Limited will help fishers insure and liaise with insurance companies.

Policy measures to improve the resilience of the fisheries sector

⁸ We build here on the final report of a project jointly implemented in 2010 and 2011 by the governments of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). *Fisheries Management for Sustainable Livelihoods*, 2011. *Fisheries Management for Sustainable Livelihoods (FIMSUL) Project in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, India: Final Report, Volume I – Key Findings and Recommendations and Volume II – Summary of FIMSUL Process and Outcomes under each Work Package*. FAO.

Policy, in addition to addressing the immediate consequences of socio-ecological crises, must also aim to strengthen the fisheries economy in the medium term so that it becomes more robust to deal with such crises in the future. The following measures could go some way in strengthening resilience:⁸

- a. The Fisheries Department should set a minimum floor price for all species for the small-scale fisheries, based on market data, similar to the minimum support price for major crops, to ensure fishers get a fair price. The government should communicate these base prices widely through television, radio, and newspapers.
- b. The government can provide support, if needed, to a range of collective organisations including cooperatives, *ur* panchayats, or other local institutions, in control of local village and market infrastructure, including cold storage. The state could encourage women microcredit groups to take the lead as a way to integrate women empowerment with infrastructure development. This will ensure that those who provide credit to fishers do not have first rights to their fish.
- c. The small-scale fisheries sector must be enabled to use technology during fishing as well as for marketing. Small fishing craft need to be equipped with global positioning system and smartphones for tracking fish, weather information, price

John Kurien. 2020, May 20.
To make fishers 'Atmanirbhar', India
should re-vision small-scale harvesting
post-lockdown. *OnManorama*.

information, and so on. New forms of linkages between producers, distributors, and consumers can be built through digital platforms, such as online marketing, Whatsapp groups, and online transactions (Kurien, 2020).

Challenges and way forward: Strengthening marine fisheries in Tamil Nadu

The Covid-19 pandemic has given us an opportunity to look at the long-term status of the marine fisheries sector and marine fishing livelihoods. Although, as noted, the marine fisheries sector has hitherto performed well in terms of production, it faces various long-term challenges. These emerge from external as well as internal sources.

Challenges external to the fisheries sector

- a. The industrialisation of the Indian coast, with projects such as Sagar Mala that are taking place in the name of the Blue Economy, is having adverse impacts on the coast, namely in terms of coastal erosion, deterioration of mangrove forests and coastal wetlands, and pollution of ocean waters, and on the marine fisheries sector. Firm safeguards are, therefore, required for the continued access of marine fishers to coastal and marine space and resources. The recent draft Environmental Impact Assessment Notification, 2020, which dilutes the environmental clearance process and public participation further, must be deliberated upon more.

Animal Husbandry, Dairying and
Fisheries Department. 2020.
Fisheries: Policy note 2019–2020.
Government of Tamil Nadu.

Department of Animal Husbandry,
Dairying and Fisheries. 2017.
National policy on marine fisheries, 2017.
Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers
Welfare, Government of India.

The promotion of aquaculture and mariculture in Tamil Nadu's coastal space, such as advocated by Tamil Nadu's *Fisheries: Policy Note 2019–2020* and the National Policy on Marine Fisheries (Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, 2017), potentially affects the fisheries sector. Not only do these activities occupy similar spaces as those required for marine fishing, they also create negative externalities that affect the fisheries indirectly, such as through pollution or the introduction of alien species.

- b. To counter negative effects such as mentioned under (a) and (b) above, marine fishers in Tamil Nadu require a clear set of rights, such as advocated by Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995), which is recognised by the Government of India. These rights over fishing grounds and resources should be incorporated in coastal zone regulation.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the
United Nations. 1995. *Code of conduct for
responsible fisheries*.

This will contribute to confidence in the long-term perspectives of the sector and continued willingness to invest therein.

- c. Climate change is increasing the intensity of storms, resulting in sea-level rise and influencing the distribution of fishery resources. Ensuring the safety of fishers at sea

A. Ramachandran, Dhanya Praveen, P. Radhapriya, S.K. Divya, K. Remya, & K. Palanivelu. 2016. Vulnerability and adaptation assessment a way forward for sustainable sectoral development in the purview of climate variability and change: Insights from the coast of Tamil Nadu, India. *International Journal of Global Warming*, 10(1–3), 307–331.

Department of Environment. 2020. *Draft Tamil Nadu state action plan on climate change – 2.0*. Government of Tamil Nadu.

and their households on land is increasingly important and requires preventive measures of various kinds. A study done by Ramachandran et al. (2016) illustrates that the fisheries sectors of Thoothukudi, Thiruvallur, Chennai, Villupuram, Cuddalore, and Kanyakumari districts are highly vulnerable to the current climate scenario. In 2008, the Government of India encouraged all states to come up with a State Action Plan for Climate Change. Tamil Nadu formulated such a plan in 2014 and has now released a draft of a new plan (Department of Environment, 2020). Chapter 5 of the draft plan deals with sector issues including coastal management. The report recognises problems of coastal erosion, coastal flooding, water pollution, saltwater intrusion, and sea-level rise, all of which impact upon fish workers in general, and small-scale fish workers in particular.

Challenges internal to the fisheries sector

Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries Department. 2020. *Fisheries: Policy note 2019–2020*. Government of Tamil Nadu.

⁹ Estimates of the potential of the offshore and deep sea fisheries in India's exclusive economic zone vary significantly. The *National Policy on Marine Fisheries, 2017* suggests that 'While the fisheries resources from the near-shore waters are fully utilized, the deep sea and oceanic waters offer opportunities of increasing the catch.' Government of India. 2017. *National policy on marine fisheries, 2017*, p.14. Also see, FIMSUL, 2011.

Shyam S. Salim, M. Ramees Rahman, & N.R. Athira. 2017. Labour migration and alternate avocation in marine fisheries sector of Kerala. *Journal of the Marine Biological Association of India*, 59(2), 109–114.

Tamil Nadu's *Fisheries: Policy Note 2019–2020* formulates a future perspective for the marine fisheries sector. The vision could be construed as further capitalisation of fisheries and the realisation of additional infrastructure. While the Policy Note recognises the possible adverse impacts of excessive capitalisation, for example in the Palk Bay, the solutions it offers, such as deep sea fisheries, do not address the basic problem of over-capitalisation, but rather move the problem further out into the Bay of Bengal and that too with the government heavily subsidising such initiatives.⁹ The rapid capitalisation of even the small-scale fisheries in Tamil Nadu over the past 40 years has significantly increased not only the costs of purchasing craft but also the cost of operations relative to returns, resulting in many fisher families suffering from high levels of indebtedness (Salim et al., 2017). The National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF), for one, has criticised the draft National Fisheries Policy, 2020, with which the Tamil Nadu Policy Note is largely in line, for not being people-centric and equitable, and for not

V. Sajeev Kumar. 2020, April 20.
 Covid-19 inflicts a daily loss of ₹224 crore
 to India's fishery sector.
The Hindu BusinessLine.

Fisheries Management for
 Sustainable Livelihoods. 2011.
*Fisheries Management for Sustainable
 Livelihoods (FIMSUL) Project in Tamil Nadu
 and Puducherry, India: Final Report, Volume I
 – Key Findings and Recommendations.*
 Food and Agriculture Organization
 of the United Nations.

Brajgeet Bhathal & Daniel Pauly. 2008.
 'Fishing down marine food webs' and
 spatial expansion of coastal fisheries
 in India, 1950–2000.
Fisheries Research, 91(1), 26–34.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the
 United Nations. 1995.
Code of conduct for responsible fisheries.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the
 United Nations. 2015.
*Voluntary guidelines for securing
 sustainable small-scale fisheries in the
 context of food security and poverty
 eradication.*

articulating any vision regarding the rights of fishing communities (Kumar, 2020).

a. The Fisheries Management for Sustainable Livelihoods (FIMSUL) project, jointly implemented in 2010 and 2011 by the governments of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry together with FAO, concludes that: 'the fisheries management system as a whole [in Tamil Nadu] is "weak"' (FIMSUL, 2011, p. x). It therefore advocated a Fisheries Reform Programme that: (1) strengthens policy and management requirements at a government level; (2) installs a fisheries co-management process; and (3) enables fisheries stakeholders (fishers and others) to develop the sector (FIMSUL, 2011, p. xv). One decade later, these recommendations continue to hold true.

b. The inshore and offshore marine resources of Tamil Nadu are recognised as being in decline (Bhathal & Pauly, 2008), and this trend needs urgently to be reversed.

One of the core recommendations of the FIMSUL report is to introduce capacity controls, particularly for the mechanised fleet, 'as it is the most over capitalised part of the sector and having a seriously negative impact on fishing habitat, fish resources, and other fishermen' (2011, p. xii). This would serve

to reduce environmental pressure and help alleviate the many conflicts that permeate the fisheries.

c. In addition, the report calls for a reorganisation of fisheries governance: 'Co-management is considered the most suitable approach to manage fisheries in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry given that the fishing community has its own management traditions and institutions' (FIMSUL, 2011, p. xii). A better connection between government and the fisher organisations that play an important role is still in order. The installation of harbour management committees is a step in the right direction.

d. The suggestions made by the FIMSUL report are in tune with FAO's *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries* (FAO, 1995) and its *Voluntary Guidelines for*

Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (FAO, 2015), both of which the Government of India has recognised. Recognising the contribution that small-scale fisheries make to employment, income, and food security, the Code of Conduct urges governments to protect the rights of such fishers, who make up a large segment of the fishers in Tamil Nadu. The Sustainable Development Goals, which were adopted by the United Nations in 2015, similarly seek governments and other

stakeholders to ‘provide access for small-scale fishers to marine resources and markets’ (SDG 14.b).

- e. While the fisheries sector in Tamil Nadu faces important challenges, we believe, if properly addressed, it has a promising future too. The fishing grounds are rich, and the fishing population is skilled and committed. Good governance is key. What remains to be done is the formulation of a long-term vision for the sustainability of the sector. This needs to be done in active collaboration with the fishing population. After all, fisheries and fish workers constitute a vital part of the history of Tamil Nadu and should be part of its future too.

Concluding remarks

The policy brief has investigated the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the fisheries sector of Tamil Nadu, pointing out some ways to improve short- and medium-term responses to disasters of this sort. It must be noted that this policy brief is written before the conclusion of the pandemic and should be taken as no more than an interim assessment.

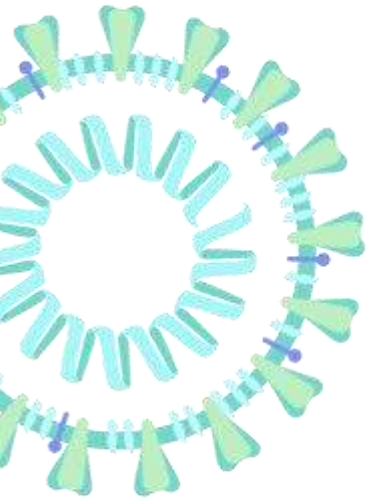
We have pointed out that the lockdown measures as well as the relief measures that were issued in response to their emerging side effects, have already had great impact on the marine fishing population of Tamil Nadu.¹⁰ Such measures were implemented both by government as well as by *ur* panchayats and fisher organisations at various levels of operation. Not only were fishing operations impaired but migrant fishers were stranded in distant locations. Trade in fish products also suffered badly, with small-scale, female fish vendors probably experiencing the most serious effects. Relief measures have not always been appropriate, and we have made several suggestions for their improvement.

¹⁰ The health consequences of the pandemic for the fishing population can only be assessed in due course. Such assessment should include what specific public health measures are to be considered for fishing communities and fish workers.

We concluded this policy brief with a scan of the measures that are necessary to improve the long-term health of the fisheries sector in Tamil Nadu. We emphasised the need for better and more participative governance, to restore the health of the inshore and offshore ecosystem and increase social legitimacy. We also noted the need for better protection of the rights of marine fish workers to marine and coastal space and resources. In conclusion, we are convinced that a combination of appropriate short- and medium-term response measures to disasters such as the present pandemic, plus long-term measures to improve the health of the fisheries sector as a whole, will revitalise the sector so that it can continue to make a major contribution to the economy and the public life of Tamil Nadu. 🌱

Acknowledgements

This policy brief is based on a larger report authored by a wider collective. We thank Tara N. Lawrence, Prabhakar Jayaprakash, Kohila Senbagam, Bhagath Singh A., Arun Kumar A.S., Mehala S.A., Preetha K.V., Nicolas Bautès, Nitya Rao, and Senthil Babu for their valuable contributions. Sebastian Mathew provided useful comments on an earlier version of this brief.



COVID-19 SERIES

We are in the midst of a pandemic shock as well as a deep economic recession. It necessitates extraordinary policy action. However, we do not have the luxury of time to carry out a new research plan. The situation calls for immediate reflection and action, based on available data. In the Covid-19 Series of Occasional Policy Papers, MIDS faculty contemplate on diverse issues of importance, contextualise their work to the contemporary challenge, draw attention to linkages with interrelated sectors and issues, and suggest short-to-medium-term policy measures. This series would be a useful input in the design of the state's post-pandemic socio-economic policy.

P.G. Babu
Director, MIDS

MIDS Occasional Policy Paper

No. 18 / August 2020

Covid-19 Series

© 2020, Ajit Menon and Maarten Bavinck

Image credit: Desiree Ho for the [Innovative Genomics Institute](#).

The views expressed in this publication are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Madras Institute of Development Studies.

Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS) was founded in 1971 by Malcolm S. Adiseshiah. It studies development problems of India, with a special focus on Tamil Nadu. Since 1977, MIDS is a national institute funded jointly by the Government of India (through Indian Council of Social Science Research) and the Government of Tamil Nadu.

79, Second Main Road, Gandhi Nagar, Adyar,
Chennai INDIA 600020
Phone: +91 44 24411574
email: pub@mids.ac.in
www.mids.ac.in