

Status and Scenario of Common Property Resources (CPRs) in Theni District of Tamil Nadu: A Case Study

Dr. A. Kannan

Assistant Professor

Department of Environmental Economics

School of Economics, Madurai Kamaraj University

Madurai-625 021, Tamil Nadu, India.

A. Ramar

Research Assistant

ICSSR, Major Research Project

Department of Environmental Economics, School of Economics

Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai-625 021, Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract

This paper analyses the status of CPRs in Theni district over the period of 1996 to 2012 by using secondary data which are obtained from statistical handbook of the Theni district of Tamil Nadu. The result reveals that the areas under the CPRs have declined in the study district in general and the study village in particular and there is no large changes in the forest cover area. The Private Property Resources (PPRs) have increased continuously partly due to encroachments of CPRs by the private individuals and partly by developmental programmes of the state government.

Keywords: Availability, CPRs, Developmental programs, Encroachments, Patta Scheme and PPR

Introduction

The Common Property Resources (CPRs) are important part of natural resources. According to Jodha (1986 p.1169) CPRs as: "the resources accessible to the whole community of a village and to which no individual has exclusive property rights".

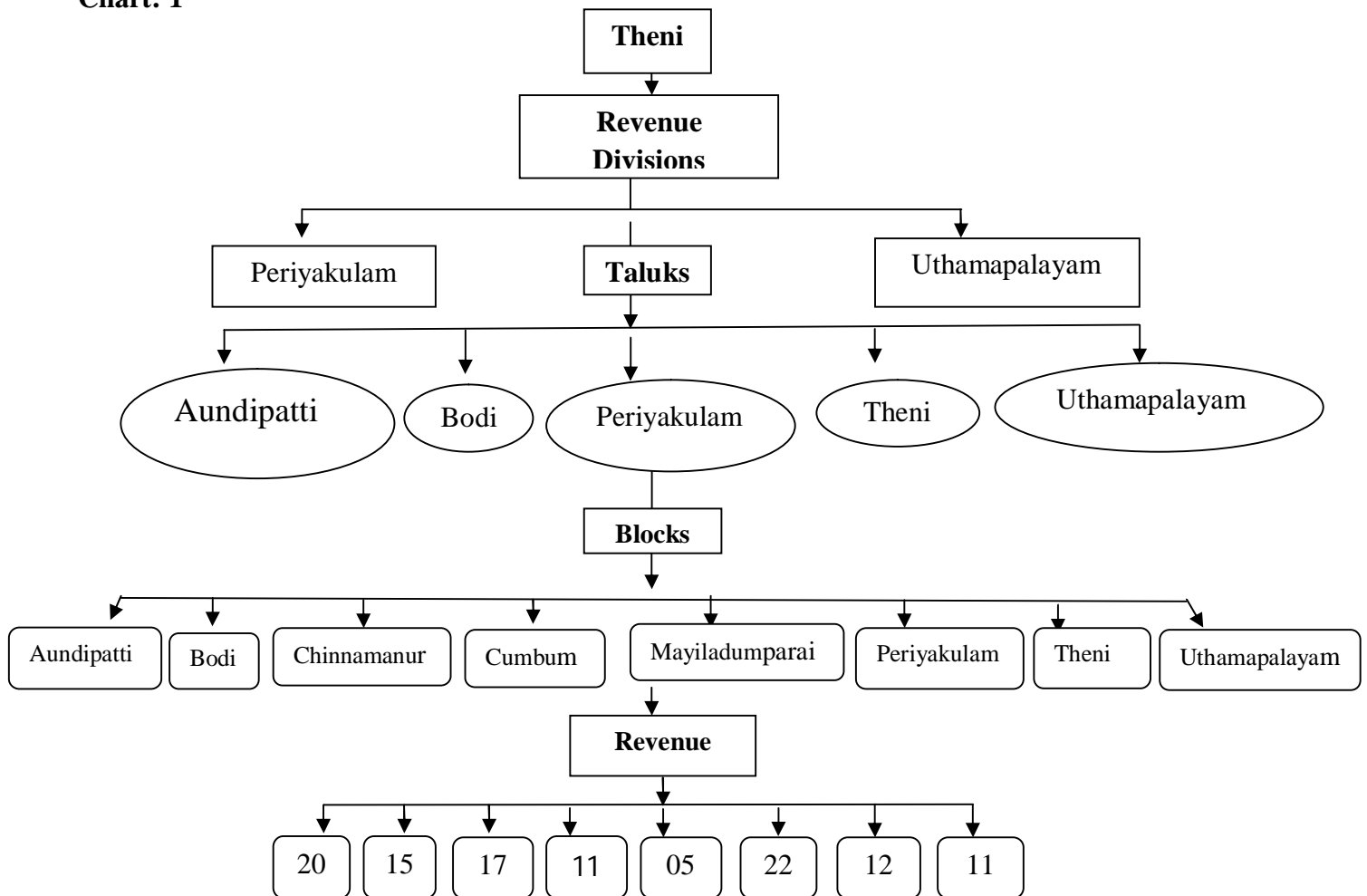
In the dry regions of India, they include village pastures, community forests, wastelands, common threshing grounds, waste dumping places, watershed drainages, village ponds, tanks, rivers/rivulets, and riverbeds, etc. The rural people depend for their income, employment, food and fodder and firewood collection for their livelihood sustenance on common property resources. For instance, particularly the 25 percent of their total income, more than 60 percent of households graze their animals and more than 90 percent of them bring fuelwood from the commonly owned CPRs land (Singh et al. 1996 p. 259). Degradation of common property resources and acute poverty is closely linked but the recent period number of cases was affected by common property resources so the CPRs were shrinkages in limited areas. As a result, dependents of common property resources will affect their livelihood sustenance in particular and economic development in general.

In this connection, the present study made an attempt to analyze the extent of forests, CPRs and PPRs land in the district, block and the study village, to identify the category of CPRs land in the study area, to find out the types and purpose of encroachment of CPRs in the study village and to analyse the role of State on CPRs in the study district in general and study village in particular.

Material and Methods

The present study on Theni district of Tamil Nadu is being wet district in which possessing potential irrigation facilities for cropping and good agro-climatic conditions in several other aspects. The total geographical area of the district is 257654.09 hectares. According to the 2011 census, the district has a population of 1243684 and has a population density of 433 inhabitants per square kilometer. Its population growth rate over the last decade was 13.69 percent. Theni has a sex ratio of 990 females every 1000 males, and a literacy rate of 77.62 percent. The district comprises of eight blocks and five revenue taluks covering a geographical area of 3242.30 square kilometres

Chart: 1



Its economy is mostly utilization of land area for cultivation in Theni district is 40.33 per cent. In study block of Periyakulam has a population of 188554 and has a population density of 495 habitants per square kilometers. It has sex ratio of 972 females every 1000 males and a literacy rate of 71.37 percent. This block comprises 22 revenue villages covering a geographical area of 381.63 square kilometers. Whereas in the study village of Gullapuram, has a population of 10194 and has a sex ratio of 956 females every 1000 males and literacy rate of 67.5 percent. And majority of them belong to main and marginal agricultural labourers and they are 64.37 percent and 53.08 percent respectively. For analysing the collected information, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used.

Simple statistical tools such as percentage and mean are used to find out the extent of forests, CPRs and PPRs land in the district, block and the study village, to identify the category of CPRs land, to find out the types and for the purpose of encroachment of CPRs in the study village.

Results and Discussion

This section infers certain results of the data obtained from secondary sources.

Status of CPRs in Study District

The table (1) explains that the endowment of Forests, CPRs and Private property resources (PPRs) in Theni district of Tamil Nadu. There is the fluctuation of forest lands during the period of 1996-2012.

It was 35.90 percent in 1996 and it has come down to 31.99 percent in 2006 and further it increased to 43.83 percent in 2007 and then it has come down to 41.57 percent in 2012. It is estimated that about 10.51 per cent of CPRs in the study district in 1996 and it has declined to 8.62 percent in 2002 and further it has gone to 24.14 percent and then it has come down to 13.58 percent in 2012. It is observed from the table that around 10.56 per cent of CPRs have been declined between the periods of 1996-2012. For instance, Gowda and Savadatti (2004 p.3753) studies in North Karnataka finds that the CPRs decline area under gomal from 72 acres and 37 gunthas to 56 acres and 35 gunthas during the year 1978-79. Another study by Wallace (1983 p.221) finds that the area of Nepal's forest has decreased from about 6.4 million hectares in 1964 to about 4.1 million hectares in 1975. The endowment of private property resource (PPRs) in this district was 53.59 percent in 1997 and it has gone to 45.84 percent in 2012. It was observed that an increment of 7.75 percent during the period of 1997 to 2012.

Table 1: Status of Forests, CPRs and Private properties in Theni District

Year	In percentage			
	Forests	CPRs	Private	Total
1996	35.90	10.51	53.59	100
1997	35.90	9.53	54.57	100
1998	35.90	9.51	54.59	100
1999	35.90	9.49	54.61	100
2000	35.90	9.41	54.69	100
2001	35.90	9.40	54.70	100
2002	35.90	8.62	55.48	100
2003	31.99	24.14	43.87	100
2004	31.99	24.55	43.46	100
2005	31.99	24.97	43.04	100
2006	31.99	24.42	43.59	100
2007	43.83	14.26	41.90	100
2008	41.57	14.82	43.59	100
2009	41.57	13.92	44.49	100
2010	41.57	13.68	44.73	100
2011	41.57	13.20	45.22	100
2012	41.57	13.58	45.84	100

Source: Department of Economics & Statistics, Theni District – ‘G’ Returns,

And the reason for the decline of CPRs is owing to population pressure and the encroachment of CPRs by the community and government free

land scheme for the benefit of the landless people and SC/ST people in this district.

Table 2: Per capita availability of CPR and PPR

Year	Population	CPR Land Including forests (In Hectare)		Private land (In Hectare)	
		Available	Per capita	Available	Per capita
2006-07	1093950	195903.05	0.18	141331.36	0.13
2011-12	1243684	175597.97	0.14	148632.24	0.12

Source: 1. Department of Economics & Statistics, Theni District – ‘G’ Returns, 2. Population Census 2001 and 2011

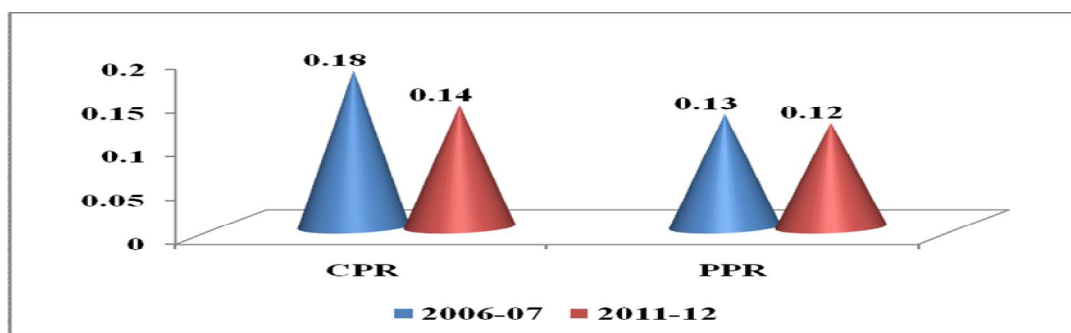
Table (2) clearly reveals that the per capita availability of CPR and PPR in Theni district for the year 2006-07 and 2010-11 (based on 2001 and 2011 population census). In 2006-07, the availability of CPR land was 195903.05 hectares and the per capita of such CPR land is 0.18 hectares and it has come down to 175597.97 hectares and the per capita of the same was 0.14 hectares in the year of 2011-12.

The per capita availability of CPR land declined was observed from the table that 0.04 hectares between the period of 2006-07 to 2011-12. It may be due to over growing population and illegal encroachment of common property resources of the private individuals.

The availability of PPR land in the same period has increased from 141331.36 hectares to 148632.24 hectares but the per capita availability of PPR land has decreased from 0.13 hectares to 0.12 hectares. From these observations the density of population is primarily responsible for the low per capita availability CPR and PPR in the study district.

A similar picture is obtained to the availability of Forests, Barren and uncultivable land, Cultivable waste, and Other Fallow land for the CPR land (table 3). The area under forest was 7.92 percent in 2007 and it has increased to 8.10 percent in 2012. There is little changes was observed in the case of Barren and Uncultivable wasteland during the period of 2007-2012. It was estimated that 11.14 percent in 2007 and it has come down to 11.13 percent in the year 2012. While in cultivable wasteland the area was 2.29 percent in 2007 and it has declined to 1.88 percent in the year 2012.

Figure:1 Per capita availability of CPR and PPR



Source: 1. Department of Economics & Statistics, Theni District – ‘G’ Returns, 2. Population Census 2001 and 2011

1.2 Status of CPRs in study block

It is observed that no availability of permanent pasture and grazing land during the study period (2007-2012).

According to Jodha (1985 p. 250) the cultivable waste land and permanent pasture land were used to collect fodder and grazing for animals but the slower growth of livestock during the latter decade is due to severe droughts during this period and partly due to decline in grazing area.

Table 3: Categories of CPRs in Periyakulum block

Year	In percentage					
	Forest	Barren and Uncultivable Land	Cultivable Waste	Permanent Pasture and Grazing Land	Other Fallow Land	Total CPRs
2007	7.92	11.14	2.29	Not available	15.10	36.45
2008	8.10	11.14	1.88		14.50	35.62
2009	8.10	11.14	1.88		12.75	33.87
2010	8.10	11.14	1.88		12.14	33.26
2011	.19	12.09	2.04		12.33	26.65
2012	8.10	11.13	1.88		10.88	31.99

Source: Department of Economics & Statistics, Theni District – ‘G’ Returns,

In case of other fallow land, the availability was 15.10 percent in 2007 and it has declined to 10.88 percent in 2012 and the approximate decline of other fallow land was 4.22 percent during the study period of 2007 to 2012.

It is estimated that the total CPR land in this block was 36.45 percent in 2007 and it has come down to 31.99 percent in 2012. The loss of CPRs was observed in this block was 4.5 percent to the total geographical area. The table (4) clearly shows that the status of forest, CPRs and private properties in Periyakulam block for the year 2007 to 2012.

Table: 4 Status of Forests, CPRs and Private properties in Periyakulum block

Year	In percentage			
	Forest	CPRs	Private	Total
2007	7.92	28.53	63.56	100
2008	8.10	27.52	64.39	100
2009	8.10	25.77	66.14	100
2010	8.10	25.16	66.75	100
2011	.19	26.47	73.34	100
2012	8.10	23.89	68.01	100

Source: Department of Economics & Statistics, Theni District – ‘G’ Returns,

The area under forest was 7.92 percent in 2007 and it has increased to 8.10 percent in 2012. The obtained data indicate that the area under CPRs are in degrading conditions in the study block of Periyakulum during the year 2007-2012. It was estimated at 28.53 percent in 2007 and it has come down to 23.89 percent in 2012.

The loss of CPRs during this period was 4.5 percent of the total geographical area. The area under private properties in this block was 63.56 percent in 2007 and it is continuously increasing and reached to 68.01 percent in 2012. The rate of increase observed from the table, is 4.45 percentage points between the period of 2007 to 2012

Status of CPRs in Study Village

The status of CPRs in the study village of Gullapuram in the recent two years was explained in the table (5).

Table: 5 Status of Forests, CPRs and Private properties in Gullapuram Village

Year	In percentage			
	Forest	CPRs	Private	Total
2009-2010	Not Available	42.16	57.83	100
2010-2011		41.11	58.88	100

Source: Department of Economics & Statistics, Theni District – ‘G’ Returns

This table inferred that there is an absence of forest resources in the study village. The availability of CPRs in the study village was 42.16 percent in 2009-2010 and it has declined to 41.11 percent in 2010-2011. In total, around 1.05 per cent of CPRs decline was observed during the period of 2009-10 to 2010-11 in the Gullapuram revenue village of the Theni district of Tamil Nadu. To the extent of PPRs has increased from 57.83 percent to 58.88 percent during the period from 2009-10 to 2010-11. The reason for such changes is due to conversion of CPRs into PPRs in the study village along with the intervention of the State to distributing the CPRs to the private individuals in the name of various developmental programmes. In addition to that, the regularization of encroached CPRs to the private individuals and free *patta* scheme to the benefits of the poorer sections of this village is also responsible for the shrinkage of CPRs in the study village.

Encroachment of CPRs

Most of the studies emphasized that the encroachment of CPRs by the private individuals is the major reason for the reduction of CPRs in the rural areas. The present study also made an attempt to identify the types of encroachment and the purpose of encroachment by the private individuals in the study village. The present study identified that there are seven categories of CPRs lands encroached by the private individuals namely A.W, D, (Assessed Waste), U.A.W.D, (Un Assessed Waste), P.W.D, Pond, Stream, Cart path and *Naththam*.

The table (6) represents that in the year 2006, nearly 58 persons encroached the CPRs land to the extent of 13.21.5 hectares and it had increased to the extent of 32.42.5 hectares by 91 private individuals in 2007 and then there is a slight reduction in the encroachment of CPRs by the private individuals were 21.41 hectares by 63 persons in the year 2011.

Table: 6 Categories of CPRs encroached by the private individuals in the Gullapuram revenue village

Types	Area in Hectares			Number of persons		
	2006	2007	2011	2006	2007	2011
A.W.D	5.44.0	24.53.0	5.54.0	15	49	17
U.A.W.D	2.66.0	2.66.0	10.19.0	5	5	9
P.W.D	0.90.0	0.90.0	0.70.0	12	12	11
Pond	0.16.0	0.16.0	0.16.0	2	2	2
Stream	3.78.5	3.90.5	5.11.0	20	19	19
Cart path	0.23.0	0.23.0	0.68.0	3	3	4
Naththam	0.04.0	0.04.0	0.04.0	1	1	1
Total	13.21.5	32.42.5	21.41.0	58	91	63

Source: Village Record Fasali 1416, 1417 & 1420

There is a variation in the encroachment of CPRs among the categories of CPRs by the private individuals in the study village was observed during the study period of 2006, 2007 and 2011 except in the categories of pond and *naththam*.

In table (7) reveals the purpose and the mode of encroachment by the private individuals in the study village.

The present study found that there are four important purposes of encroachment viz., for the purpose of cultivation, pipeline, well and business activities were observed in the study village. In the year 2006, about 13.03.5 hectares of CPR land by the 41 private persons encroached for the purpose of cultivation, while in the year 2007 it was declined to 12.29 hectares by 37 persons and it has further increased to 21.24 hectares of CPRs encroached by 46 private parties in the year 2011 for the purpose of cultivation alone.

Table: 7 Purpose of encroachment in Gullapuram revenue village

Types	Area in Hectares			Number of persons		
	2006	2007	2011	2006	2007	2011
Cultivation	13.03.5	12.29.0	21.24.0	41	37	46
Pipeline	0.14.5	0.14.5	0.14.5	14	14	14
Well	0.00.5	0.00.5	0.00.5	1	1	1
Business	0.03.0	0.03.0	0.03.0	2	2	2
Patta issued	NA	19.95.5	NA	NA	37	NA
Total	13.21.5	32.42.5	21.42.0	58	91	63

Source: Village Record Fasali 1416, 1417 & 1420

The purpose of cultivation related encroachment such as pipeline (for domestic and irrigation) and digging of well have also observed in this village during the study period.

The estimated encroachment was stagnant to extent of 14.5 acres of CPRs lands by 14 private individuals during 2006, 2007 and 2011. For the purpose of business activities, 2 persons engaged in encroachment to the extent of 3 acres during the period of 2007 to 2011.

In addition, the government also legally issued the *patta* of the encroached CPR land to the private individuals based on their periods of usage. It is estimated that 19.95.5 hectares to 41 private individuals in the year 2007 alone.

Government Scheme

Apart from the illegal encroachment of CPRs by the private individuals, the government has also engaged in the distribution of the CPR land in this district in general and the study village in particular.

Table: 8 Patta issued on CPRs in Gullapuram Village in 2007

Scheme	Category	Extent in acre	No. of beneficiaries
One time Scheme	Cart path	0.01.77	5
	A.W.D	0.11.74	22
Regular Scheme	Natham	0.40.49	64
Total		0.54.00	91

Source: Official website of District Collectorate, Theni, collrthn[@]nic.in

In this table (8) explain that the two important *patta* scheme on CPRs in the study village namely one time scheme and regular scheme. On one time, around 13.5 acres of CPR lands distributed to 27 members from the category of cart path and AWD.

While on regular scheme, around 40.49 acres of CPRs particularly by *Naththam* land distributed to 64 private individuals in the study village. In total, the study found that 91 private individuals got the *patta* to the extent of 54 acres of CPR land from these three categories.

Table: 9 Land distributions in Two acre scheme by category of land (in acres)

Category	Extent in Acre	Number of Beneficiaries
I	37.20	28
II	62.44	59
Total	99.64	87

Source: Official website of District Collectorate, Theni, collrthn[@]nic.in

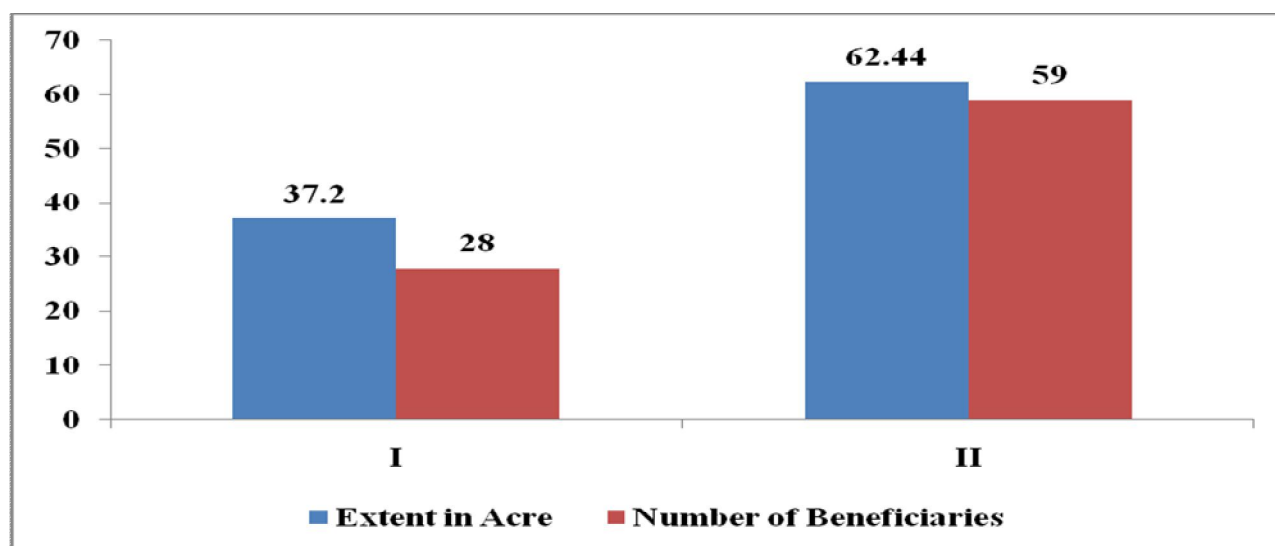
In table (9) clearly reveals that land distribution of state governments in the name of development programs such as Two acre scheme by category of land in the Gullapuram revenue village. It is estimated that 37.20 acres of CPR lands were distributed to 28 beneficiaries in the category I (Government Pormboke wastelands without encroachment) and 62.44 acres of CPR land distributed to 59 beneficiaries from the category II (Government wastelands under encroachment by small and marginal farmers).

Totally 99.64 acres of CPR lands were distributed to 87 beneficiaries through two acres scheme by the state governments in Gullapuram village of Theni district. For instance, Pasha (1992) on an investigation in 14 villages of Karnataka found that in the recent past around 6999 acres of land was available and used as CPRs in the sample villages. But in the survey period of 1989-90 it has come down to 4564 acres. The poor have to survive on decreased availability of the CPRs and this has aggravated both their living conditions as well as the quality of CPRs too.

The reduction of CPRs is mainly due to encroachment by the rural households and due to the developmental programme of the government. Out of the total CPRs lost i.e.2345 acres, 1220 acres (i.e.52 percent) have been encroached by the rural rich depriving the poor of complete access to it.

The government has tried to improve the access of the rural poor by distributing the CPRs land to individuals for crop cultivation, housing and for raising the trees which amounts to 600 acres (i.e. 25.6 per cent of the lost CPRs). Under tree *patta* system the degraded CPR lands planted with trees are allotted the rural poor ranging from 0.50 to 2.00 acres per household.

Figure:2 Land distributions in Two acre scheme by category



Source: Secondary data

The above extent of lands was distributed to the beneficiaries in seven phases in this district and

the size and category of lands distributed to the beneficiaries varied in phase to phase.

Table: 10 Land distributions in Two acre scheme by number of phases

Category	Phase Number	Extent in Acre	Number of Beneficiaries
I	I	3.13	2
	IV	26.99	16
	VI	5.86	7
	VII	1.22	3
II	II	20.68	15
	III	2.00	1
	IV	17.33	11
	VI	13.67	17
	VII	8.76	15
Total		99.64	87

Source: Official website of District Collectorate, Theni, collrthn[@]nic.in

It is clearly evident from the table (10) that the first category of lands were distributed to the beneficiaries in four phases and second category of lands were distributed to the beneficiaries in five phases in this study village. In the first category, to the extent of 37.2 acres of CPR lands were distributed to 28 beneficiaries and in the second category, to the extent of 62.44 acres of CPR lands were distributed to 59 beneficiaries in this study village.

Thangaraj (2003) has shown that providing access to land for the landless through land reform legislation was considered an important component of the poverty alleviation programme in India under the ceiling on land holding Act, 1,78,801 acres of lands were redistributed to 1,41,680 beneficiaries and 2.07 lakh acres of government wastelands distributed to the beneficiaries as on September 2000 in Tamil Nadu.

Conclusion

The Common Property Resources (CPRs) have played an important role in the lives of the poorest of the poor in the rural areas. But in the recent periods it has witnessed vast changes due to various reasons. The present study found that there has been a tremendous change in the availability of different categories of CPRs in the study district, block and study village during the period of 2007 to 2012.

In the study district it is observed that around 10.56 per cent of CPRs have declined between the periods of 1996-2012. While in the study block, it was estimated that 28.53 percent of CPRs in 2007 and it has come down to 23.89 percent in 2012.

A decline of 1.05 percentage point in CPR stock was observed during the period of 2009-10 to 2010-11 in the Gullapuram revenue village. The study observed that the cultivation related encroachment was higher than the other type of encroachment by the private individuals and it is estimated that 91 private individuals got the patta to the extent of 54 acres of CPR land from these three categories.

The study found that totally 99.64 acres of CPR lands were distributed to 87 beneficiaries through two acre scheme by the state governments in the Gullapuram village of Theni district. And the reason for the decline is CPRs is owing to population pressure, encroachment of CPRs by the community and developmental programmes of the State government such as free land scheme for the benefit of the landless and SC/ST people.

Note:

This paper forms the part of a Major Research Project funded by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) New Delhi, entitled "Local Commons and Rural Poor Livelihood Sustenance: A Case study of Two Villages in Tamil Nadu". The authors are grateful to the ICSSR for financial support. The usual disclaimers apply.

References

- Jodha N. S. (1995), "Common property resources and the environmental context: role of biophysical versus social stresses", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 30, No. 51, pp. 3278-328.
- Jodha N. S. (1985), "Population Growth and the Decline of Common Property Resources in Rajasthan, India", *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 247-264.
- Jodha N. S. (1995), "Studying Common Property Resources Biography of a Research Project", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.30, No. 11, pp. 556-559.
- Jodha, N. S. (1986) "Common Property Resources and Rural Poor in Dry Regions of India" *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21(27): 1986, pp-1169-1181.
- Karam Singh, Nirmal Singh, Singh. R.P (1996), "Utilisation and Development of Common Property Resources – A field Study in Punjab", *Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, Vol. 51, Nos. 1 and 2, p.258.
- Thangaraj M. (2003), "...For Land Mark Achievements Developing Waste lands", *Waste Land News*. pp. 33-35.
- Manohara N Gowda, Savadatti P M (2004) "CPRs and Rural Poor: Study in North Karnataka" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39, No: 33, pp, 3752-3757.
- Michael B. Wallace (1983), "Managing Resources That Are Common Property: From Kathmandu to Capitol Hill", *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 230-237
- Syed Ajmal Pasha (1992), "CPRs and Rural Poor: A Micro Level Analysis", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 27, No. 46, pp. 2499-2503.