A demonstration was held on 03.08.2009, Monday opposite Chengelpet Government Hospital at Chengalpet at 11AM to protest the escalating sexual abuse on girl children and women of Migrant Workers in Thirupurur area and to demand protection of girl children and punishment of the perpetrators. Migrant workers, children, trade union representatives and NGO representatives working on protection of child rights participated and shared their concerns. Petitions were also given to RDO, Labour Officer and Police Superintendent of Chengelpet.

We all know about the continuing perpetration of disgraceful acts of violence against women including violence against women, rape, inducement to suicide, murder, harassment through physical blows to women’s bodies, forced prostitution, degrading display of women, women beaten up by drunken husbands etc. Both Governments and public has been a silent spectators to these acts of violence. We believe that another independence in India alone will ensure that women can live with freedom, security, benefits and opportunities.

In this environment and the context of Special Economic Zones, massive construction of IT industries, educational institutions and residential complexes are progressing in fast pace in Kanchipuram, Tiruvallur and Chennai Suburbs. Approximately 3 lakhs of poor migrant families from other states and districts migrate to these regions due to poverty and for basic livelihood and are engaged in the construction activities. It is a sad reality that there is no basic amenities or social security at the worksite where they live in makeshift residences.

Here, several sexual atrocities have been perpetuated against girl children less than 14 years of age.

1. A construction worker from Chemmencheri migrated and settled with his wife and daughter aged 4 years in a makeshift tent provided by a private company in Thuraipakkam outside Chennai. The girl child was missing on 26.9.2008 when she was playing in the street in front of her house and a police report was lodged at Thoraipakkam police station. News reports have alleged that the child was kidnapped and murdered after sexual abuse at the nearby bamboo farm at Chemmencheri.
2. On 4.7.09 a 5 year old daughter of a migrant construction worker from Andhra Pradesh was abducted from her house at Egattur while she was sleeping and sexually abused and was thrown away by unknown assailants. The girl who was fighting for her life has been admitted in the hospital and undergoing treatment.

3. A complaint was registered against a neighbor for sexual abuse on a 11 year old girl at Manamathi 2 months ago.

4. Last year, a 6 year old girl child was sexually abused and murdered in Thirupurur.

5. In many instances, sexual harassments against the girls are not even brought to light and families migrate or are forced to migrate in such cases.

Public should be vigilant to stop these happening in future. Local communities should understand that migrants are also humans and should be treated humanely and given protection.

Demands:

10. Police department should investigate thoroughly and efficiently against sexual harassment complaints and severe punishments should be meted out to perpetrators.

11. Proper compensation should be awarded to women and girls who have been affected by sexual harassment.

12. Sexual harassment complaints committee should be setup at worksites and regions where women work in considerable numbers.

13. Children under 18 should not be employed at worksites. Adequate protection and education in mother tongue should be ensured at all schools, anganwadis and child care centers.

14. Information and assistance centers should be setup at migrant community neighborhoods.

15. Temporary ration cards should be provided to migrant workers.

16. Tamil Nadu Construction Workers Welfare Board should register migrant workers compulsorily and ensure adequate amenities, minimum wage, crèche, education in mother tongue and medical facilities.

17. Drinking water and toilets should be constructed at migrant community neighborhoods.
18. Labour laws should be implemented properly in Construction Sector