Centre for Education Development Action and Research (CEDAR)



ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21



Centre for Education Development Action and Research (CEDAR) Annual Report 2020-21

COVID Lockdown

The year began under the severe spell of COVID 19 pandemic and the draconian lockdown. Complying with the Government order, we had already closed Children's Resource Centres (CRCs) on March 17th. The office was closed on March 23rd. We switched over to work online. We began a new journey and were to take up challenges hitherto unknown.

Scaling Down of Operations

The previous year 2019-20, was a remarkable year as we had expanded the scope of our activities. Maintaining that momentum, we had drawn up overambitious plans for expansion during 2020-21. In fact, six new proposals had been finalized. Anticipating approval, we had even made two senior level appointments- one to support our monitoring and research activities, and another one to support child rights education and child rights-advocacy. However, in the month of May, we had to submit a contingency budget for a period of 6 months only in view of the emergent financial constraints. Lockdown on one hand, and non-sanctioning of new projects on the other hand, forced us to drastically scale down operations.

Online Office

Though online office was quite a new experience for CEDAR, the office was conducted in a very diligent manner, the team almost meeting every day. We also wanted to take certain strategic advantages working online.

Website Development:

The first thing to happen was, to completely revamp CEDAR's website. The team was led by Dr. Chinnaraj and the in house technical support given by Mr. Deepak.

Social Media Promotion:

We also revised our social media policy. Now, it has the strategic objective of publicizing our innovation, seeking hand-holding support and promotion of

child rights and child safeguarding. New accounts were opened and effective social media presence of CEDAR ensured.

Mentoring Programme

We also made use of the lockdown opportunity to pay attention to the training of the staff. Caplor Horizon, UK was too very willing to run a staff mentoring programme. Two rounds of online mentoring sessions happened between April and June 2020. Dan Bishop of Caplor Horizon, an expert in leadership coaching, strategic planning and marketing was the mentor. The mentees were Babu Charles, Pandiyan Kemal, Rajadurai and Ponkundram. This was done with the support of Paper Boat UK, and free of cost for CEDAR.

Revisiting of CEDAR's policies

Lockdown also gave us ample time to study, reflect and rewrite the existing policies of CEDAR. Over a period of a month, we brought out updated versions of the following policies:

- Human Resource Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- o Finance Policy and
- Data Protection Policy

These are currently in operation.

Children Documentary

CEDAR was invited by Pandiyan to visit Thanjavur where he had worked with the Kuravar people which work, he wanted to continue. Kuravars are a de-notified tribe living in Tamil Nadu. Kuravars live in such abominable conditions. We met with the children of the Kuravars in Thanjavur and video documented their woes. This developed into a short documentary film. This was released online in June 2020. Following this, a webinar was organised attended by a number of child rights child-care professionals.





Child-Centric Humanitarian Relief

In the staff meeting held on May 1st, 2020, field coordinator Jeyakumar raised the issue of providing relief to our children who come from very trying circumstances. Further, he stated that the crisis situation demanded immediate attention as many children would slip into child labour. It was also highlighted that in any crisis situation, as is the case



with women and the elderly, the right and protection of the children would be greatly compromised. Apart from the critical physical needs and safety, the need for ensuring the mental health of the children was also seriously emphasised by the team. A decision was taken to write an appeal to Paper Boat for financial support for organising the relief work. Subsequently, a sum of Rupees 15 Lakh was sent to CEDAR by Paper Boat Charity UK, for the purpose of relief. (As required by the Ministry of Home Affairs, we also informed the Ministry appropriately on June 8, 2020 about the relief).

In the May 4th meeting, we had a detailed discussion wherein it was decided to organise a child centred relief work. Pandiyan was appointed as the Convener of this Humanitarian Relief Initiative. The choice fell on Pandiyan because he had considerable experience in disaster relief work. Following items were to be included in the relief kit:

Dry Ration

- 1. Rice 5 Kg
- 2. Wheat flour 1 Kg
- 3. White Chenna 1 Kg
- 4. Biscuits 10 packets
- 5. Nutritional Supplement Mix 2 Kg
- 6. Bathing Soap 2 nos
- 7. Sanitary Napkin 1 packet



Dry Ration

Stationeries

- 1.2 HB pencil 2 nos
- 2. 6 HB pencil 2 nos
- 3. Round brush (no. 6) 2 nos
- 4. Round brush (no 2) 2 nos
- 5. A4 Colour Paper sheets 25 sheets pack
- 6. Drawing Note A3 1 no
- 7. Colour Pencil 1 pack
- 8. Eraser 2 nos
- 9. Watercolour Pencil 1 pack
- 10. Oil Pastel 1 pack
- 11, Writing Sheet A4 Plain 1 pack



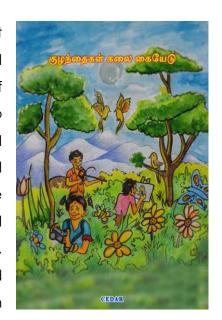
12. Children's Art Manual 1 no (126 Pages)



Art Material

Art manual- Addressing the Digital Divide During the Pandemic

The Children's Art Manual was to become the most important aspect of the relief. The idea behind developing an art manual was to address the issue of mental wellbeing of the children who got confined to their homes during the lockdown. The children concerned here, are children coming from highly marginalised social and economic circumstances. In the meanwhile, there were so much 'creatively self-engaging' art material available to children online which could to some extent, provide relief to children from anxiety, fear, fatigue and boredom. However, the possibility of our children



accessing these 'mental wellbeing art material' was next to impossibility. The only available alternative was, to develop an art manual in the print form. Such an art manual would induct children into various artistic and collaborative activities involving other family members in the lockdown condition. The manual was designed to contain eleven modules: Drawing & Painting, Storytelling and Story Writing, Photography, Writing Poems, Doing Craft Work, Cooking, Scripting Plays, Folk

Singing, Knowing Children Living Beyond the Margins, Protecting Against COVID and Journal Writing. The manual could be easily used as a self-study material by senior children. Younger children could jointly read it with senior siblings, or parents. 1,500 copies were printed for distribution.

Relief Distribution

The Madurai District Administration was very appreciative of the initiative taken by CEDAR towards the child-centric relief work. As a gesture of support, Dr. T.G. Vinay I.A.S., the Madurai District Collector inaugurated the relief on June 22nd. He also released the Children's Art Manual and a group of children from our CRCs, received them at his office.



Dr. T.G. Vinay I.A.S., District Collector, releases the Art Manual

The following are the details of the relief distribution:

Date	No. of	Activity	District
	Relief		
	Kits		
July 1 st and 3 rd	500	Relief Kits were distributed to Kovilpatti / Keela Eral from	
2020		the supplier by getting ePass from the Local	
		Administration for transporting the kits.	

July 6 th 2020	200	Relief kits were distributed to Thanjavur from the supplier	
		by getting ePass from the local administration for	
		transporting the kits.	
July 6 th , 2020	43	Relief Kits were distributed formally by inviting Kovilpatti	Thoothukudi
Forenoon		Tahsildar at Thomas Nagar 1st Centre	
July 6 th , 2020	44	Relief Kits were distributed at Thomas Nagar 2 nd centre	Thoothukudi
Afternoon			
July 7 th , 2020	40	Relief Kits were distributed at Viswanathadas Nagar CRC	Thoothukudi
Forenoon			
July 7 th , 2020	39	Relief Kits were distributed at Koosalipatti 2 nd centre	Thoothukudi
Afternoon			
July 8 th , 2020	41	Relief Kits were distributed at Koosalipatti 1st centre	Thoothukudi
Forenoon			
July 8 th , 2020	33	Relief Kits were distributed at Valluvar Nagar CRC	Thoothukudi
Afternoon			
July 8th, 2020	40	Relief Kits distributed formally by inviting the Block	Thanjavur
		Development Officer (BDO) at Manojpatti Village	
July 9 th , 2020	38	Relief Kits were distributed at Thalavaipuram CRC	Thoothukudi
Forenoon			
July 9 th ,	40	Relief Kits were distributed at Pungavarnatham CRC	Thoothukudi
Afternoon			
July 10th, 2020	37	Relief Kits were distributed at Narkalaikottai CRC	Thoothukudi
Forenoon			
July 10th, 2020	39	Relief Kits were distributed at Ettaiyapuram CRC	Thoothukudi
Afternoon			
July 14 th , 2020	100	Relief Kits were distributed at Vallam, Munnaiyampatti,	Thanjavur
		Muthuveerakanyanpatti, Sengipatti and Kantharvakottai	
		villages	
July 15th, 2020	45	Relief Kits were distributed at Keela Eral CRC	Thoothukudi
July 16 th , 2020	60	Relief Kits were distributed at Thirumanur, Ayyampettai	Thanjavur
		and Melattoor villages	
July 20th, 2020	42	Relief Kits were distributed at Manjanaickerpatti CRC	Thoothukudi
July 17 th 2020	10	Madurai District Collector inaugurated the relief kits	Madurai
		distribution to select children of Tallakulam at his office.	
July 18 th 2020	100	Relief Kits were distributed at Tallakulam CRC	Madurai
July 20 th , 2020	51	Relief Kits were distributed at Meenambalpuram CRC	Madurai
Forenoon			
July 20 th , 2020	50	Relief Kits were distributed at Ambedkar Colony CRC	Madurai
Afternoon			
July 21st, 2020	34	Relief Kits were distributed at Panangadi CRC	Madurai
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Forenoon			
July 21st, 2020	55	Relief Kits were distributed at Jawaharlalpuram CRC	Madurai
Afternoon			
July 22 nd , 2020	48	Relief Kits were distributed at Kalmedu SS Centre	Madurai
	18	Relief Kits were distributed to our CRC Facilitators	Madurai &
			Thoothukudi
	13	Relief Kits were distributed to Community members, select staff and others	
July 4 th , 2020	25	Art manual with stationeries were sent to DACS, Dindigul	Dindigul
	60	Art manual with stationeries were sent to Govt. aided	Theni
		school at Bodinayaknaur, Theni District	
TOTAL	1,060	1,060 Relief Kits	'
		85 art manuals with stationeries to DACS and Govt. aided school at Bodi.	



Relief kit distribution at kovilpatti and madurai

We also distributed the art manuals to Govt. officials, and agencies working with children. The art manual was uploaded into website for free download.

Community Digital Platform for Children's Resource Centres (CRCs)

Covid 19 lockdown, first time, brought our attention to the dangers of digital divide which would further exclude the poor children from the mainstream educational process. Initially, it was thought of as creating access to online teaching. We least realized that the digital domain creeping into the physical and face-to-face learning space of the CRCs would severely alter the learning environment of the children. CRCs have now necessarily become blended learning spaces that throw several challenges not only at children but also at the facilitators, creative leads and the programme designers. It has set in motion an iterative process that deserves serious attention. CEDAR Community Digital Platform, a state-of-the-art-technology includes a Cybernetyx camera with capabilities to convert the medium, into an interactive medium opening access to a world class resources curated via 'Intellispace' providing access to an interactive interface. It has been mindfully

configured to empower children to gain access to a world of educational resources that they confidently use in their day to day lives. The technology is highly interactive allowing children get connected to people, curated and created resources, and pathways for co-creation of digital capital for common good.

In-House Digital Content Preparation for Teaching

Our in-house content preparation aims at preparing on-line teaching modules in art, photography, theatre etc., on one hand, and mainstream subjects on the other hand. The idea however is to follow-up online teaching with 'minimum required physical-class-room wrap-ups.' This, we believe maximises learning as well reduce cost. The reach becomes extensive. This also facilitates a 'curate – create - co-create' continuum. It penetrates the community as well, developing a spectrum of capabilities in members other than children.





Digital classes to Kovilpatti children

Another Gesture of Support from the District Administration

The Digital CRC facility was inaugurated at Meenambalpuram on September 26th, 2020 by Mr. Rajasekaran, PA-General to Madurai Collector. Mr. Ganesan, Madurai District Child Protection Officer was a special invitee. At Kovilpatti, the Digital CRC facility was inaugurated at Pungavarnatham Village on October 1st, 2020.

Mr. Thomson Devasagayam, Chairperson, CWC, Thoothukudi District was the Chief Guest. Mr.Kasirajan, Coordinator, Childline, Thoothukudi District was the special invitee.







Mr. Rajasekar inaugurating Digital CRC

Hybrid Learning

A total of 14 modules were developed in a short period of two months— 6 art modules, 5 theatre modules and 3 folk song modules. They were pilot tested in select Kovilpatti CRCs. These CRC children were specially chosen as they were not exposed much to art teaching previously either through physical-classroom teaching or through virtual classroom. The recorded sessions were screened to the children every week during February 2021 at planned intervals. This was followed by physical classroom wrap-ups by creative leads as planned.

Evaluation of Hybrid Learning

Creative leads went to Kovilpatti to assess Blended Learning Experiment of children in March 2021.

- 1. Assessment of Drawing session by Nagaraj was done on March 14th
- 2. Assessment of Theatre session by Selvam was done on March 24th
- 3. Assessment of Folk Song session by Jeyakumar was done on March 28th.
- 4. Assessment of Mathematics by Rajadurai was done on March 30th and 31st.

All the creative leads reported that *blended learning* method was really an effective method for learning. This was found more effective in the case of children who live in very remote villages and have little or no net-access.



Hybrid Learning: Wrapping up

Detailed evaluation reports on Hybrid Learning have been filed by the abovementioned creative leads.

Working with Aravind Eyecare System

Aravind eyecare system invited CEDAR to help them in developing an educational video to be used by their Instrumentation Department. Our Media Education Team led Basheer Khan took up the project. Ponkundram, Karthick and Balaji were the





Educational Filmmaking

other members. The quality of the output was acknowledged as 'of international standard.' The material has been used for Aravind's international clients.

Hope Based Communication Workshop

Members of CEDAR and Paper Boat came together for an online workshop conducted in three sessions- Nov 24th, Dec 1st and Dec 8th. The aim of the workshop was to motivate and equip CEDAR staff to regularly share inspiring and hope-based communications alongside evidence of impact; to create a shared strategy and plan for collecting and sharing stories of change; to continue to build CEDAR's capacity around organisational development and leadership. The workshops followed Simon Sinek's Golden Circles framework of 'Why, How, what': (1) 'Why does hope-based communications and stories of change matter?'; (2) 'How can we collect stories and communicate better?'; and (3) 'What actions will we take to support others and deliver this going forwards?' The workshop was led by Rosie Bishop and Dan Bishop of Caplor Horizon. Kemal Shaheen and Jo Bowen of Paper Boat also participated.

Following were the observations made by Caplor Horizon as the outcome of the workshop:

"The CEDAR team now have a clear understanding of the benefits of hope-based communication and the importance this can have on empowering children and young people and amplifying their voices. It is important that all communications are children centred and children led, and this value is deeply rooted in the hearts and culture of the team.

The team are currently doing well in many respects. For example, understanding and communicating the voice of the children, gaining trust in the communities, and taking captivating and positive photos and films. Moving forwards, it is important that the flow of stories from the communities outwards is improved."

Capacity Building Training for Facilitators

CEDAR considers facilitators who are community volunteers, are the key actors who would provide the much-needed interface with the children. Utmost importance is given to updating of their knowledge, understanding and points of view. Four workshops were organised to specifically to meet their need.

- 1. Using Smartphones for Creating Positive Narratives: This online training was given by our creative leads, Basheer Khan and Ponkundram on November 18th. Facilitators were taught how to visually capture moments that have implication for 'creating stories of change' and how to share them in appropriate ways. They were also sensitized to the issues of child's self-worth, safety and dignity when photo narratives are made.
- 2. Child Rights Training for the Facilitators and Staff: This training workshop was given by Pandian Kamal on Jan 12th at CEDAR office. The purpose of this training workshop was to sensitize the staff and facilitators on the legal and policy issues relating to child rights and child safeguarding in India.



Child Rights Training

3. Project Management - A Vision and a Process:



Project Management Training

On February 11th, a Project Management workshop was organised for the staff and facilitators at CEDAR office. Dr. Chinnaraj acted as the lead. The purpose behind the workshop was to emphasise the idea that project management is a 'shared vision' and responsibility of everyone in the

organisation. It was also called to attention the fact that the 'project management is a process' rather than a tool in the hands of the executives.

4. **Follow-up Workshop on Writing Stories of Change:** The workshop was specifically meant for facilitators who experience on a day-to-day basis. It aimed at developing capacities for making the right type of observations and

documenting of them as they participated in the change process. Stories of change they were told are nothing but collaborative construction of short narratives involving the facilitator and the child. This calls for deeply recognizing and acknowledging the voice of the child, the workshop emphasized.







Book making workshop

5. Children Led Journalism

One of our special programmes for the children is children-led journalism. As part of this programme, a book making workshop was organised on March 3rd at CEDAR office. Mr. Jebakani, a friend of CEDAR and a publisher, led the workshop, sharing his expertise.

Pongal Celebration at Jawaharlalpuram

Its noteworthy to mention here the Pongal Festival organised by the Jawaharlalpuram Community on February 3rd. It is because, it broke the tradition. First time, we heard anything like a 'child-centered celebration of Pongal.' Instead of the priest, family elder or the community chief leading the socio-religious ceremony of making the 'Pongal Offer to the Sun God,' the children led the ceremony. This apart, children decorated the venue with their own paintings and artifacts. They also organised a cultural performance using their own talents.







Pongal Offering

Children Exhibition

Paper Boat Trustee

They planted trees. As a gesture of friendship and inclusion, they invited children and parents from the neighbouring communities. CEDAR itself was only on the invitee list. Incidentally Mr. Arun Chinnaraj, one of the trustees of Paper Boat who

happened to be in India at that time, participated in the celebration and offered his felicitation to the children. And also, this was the first ever occasion, children, parents and members of the community came out to congregate physically and celebrate the end of lockdown. The entire expenditure was met by the community through liberal donations.

Screening of the Film 'I am Belmaya'

'I am Belmaya' is a film made by the award-winning Nepali Filmmaker, Belmaya Nepali. It was done in partnership with UK film producer and director, Sue Carpenter. The film was made over a period of 14 years, following an uneducated young dalit woman. The film was about her journey from subjugated wife to an award-winning documentary film maker. It is a great source of inspiration for those women and children who would like to bring out their voice loud and clear. Paper Boat arranged for the screening online from London, on March 8th with the help of Nepali Leprosy Trust. Our facilitators and staff viewed the film. This was followed by a lively and insightful review.

Wilshire Skyline Project Workshop

Photography itself is 190 years old and Photojournalism is 141 years old. Now there are more than 20 types of photographic genres. But the irony is that the poor and the oppressed have been always the subject matter for photographers either for aesthetic or journalistic purpose. They are thus objectified, tweaked, and narrativized as images and objects without a voice. We decided to provide digital photography for children as a tool for self-expression and creating counternarratives. The key was to bring out the creative innocence of children which is the much-needed voice to be heard. The Wilshire Skyline Project was initiated in the month of August 2020. Two workshops were conducted in September 2020 - one in Kovilpatti and another in Madurai. A total of 71 children participated.





Basheer and Ponkundram teaching photography to children

Later, about 25 children from Kovilpatti who are involved in the 'creative photography project' travelled to Madurai on March 20th to attend a special workshop. In this workshop, children shared their experiences as well wrote narrative accounts of the photographs they had taken earlier. This was not only an exercise meant to challenging them creatively, but also an instance that could tell the creative leads and educators how visual creativity worked in the minds of children.

Quantitative Study on Impact of COVID

CEDAR organised a major quantitative survey research in order to know the way the children responded to lockdown. The survey specifically tried to unravel facts relating to how the economic hardships that visited the families during the pandemic, affected the children; how much the children could



The Interview

access online education provided by the schools and the Government; to what extent the child-centred relief extended by CEDAR, was helpful?; what was the kind of family dynamics that emerged under the conditions of pandemic and lockdown; what was the coping pattern of children and how their problem-solving abilities were tested; how children and parents perceived the hand-holding support provided by CEDAR during the first lockdown. Children both from Madurai and Kovilpatti numbering 435, were interviewed by the facilitators. Parents numbering 195 from Madurai and Kovilpatti were also interviewed. The data were processed, and the preliminary report was released on March 26th.

Fundraising Effort

A project proposal 'Digital Inclusion of the Marginalised Children' was sent to HCL foundation.

"The project is necessary as In India, online teaching has come to stay not only complementing the actual classroom but also substituting it at times of necessity. Covid-19 has made it evident. This has put millions of children of the marginalized communities in peril. Denial of access, lack of support from parents and loss of human touch are serious issues. 'Digital inclusion' of these marginalized children is the need of the hour. This project aims to set up cost effective 'Community Owned Digital Resource Centres' for children. As a spin-off, young mothers and unemployed youth of the beneficiary communities will be included.

Five strategies Proposed:

- 1. Create community owned digital platforms accessible to children across age, gender caste and other social divides.
- 2. Raise youth volunteers as mentors and guides.
- 3. Develop a 'parent collective' in each community for augmenting child rearing capacities as well developing ownership of the centre.
- 4. Organise direct contact programmes to complement, correct and humanize online learning."
- 5. Raise 'critical consciousnesses' and 'agency' in children about digital learning that will aid creative engagements for mainstreaming.

Though we did not succeed in getting the award, there is quite a bit of research that had gone into that. We have plans to knock at other doors as we see the immense importance, the issue calls for.

Board of Trustees Meeting and Statutory Compliances

The meeting of the Board of Trustees was held on December 19th, 2020 via Microsoft Team platform in view of COVID lockdown. The Board approved the Annual Activity Report and Audit Report 2019-20. After due deliberations, decisions were taken on several important issues based on the agenda tabled. Besides this, the Board of Trustees passed a special resolution appreciating the staff and facilitators for their commitment and involvement in discharging their duties during the pandemic,

especially in organising the COVID relief work. The Board of Trustees also placed on record their thanks and deep appreciation to Paper Boat Charity UK, for their financial support for the year 2019-20, and the special grant for Covid Relief Work.

FCRA Compliance

The Board of Trustees were also appraised of the amendment brought forth in the FCRA, which came into force on September 28th 2020. In view of this, two important decisions were taken in the board and approved unanimously. As part of the compliance, the Board passed a resolution to open an account with State Bank of India, New Delhi Main Branch, and a utilisation account with SBI Anaiyur Branch, Madurai. The Board further passed resolutions to close existing FCRA utilisation accounts, both in Madurai and Kovilpatti. In view of the amendment, CEDAR stopped routing of funds from Paper Boat to DACS with immediate effect.





With a heavy heart I place on record the passing away of Ms. Mariammal, our Field Coordinator at Kovilpatti on January 17th 2021, after developing serious renal complications. After a long stint of grassroots activism, Mariammal joined CEDAR in 2003, committing to child labour abolition work. She was instrumental in shaping CEDAR's Children's Resource Centre Strategy. Her sudden passing away has left all of us in shock. But for her blood, sweat and tears, CEDAR would have remained only as any other cedar tree. And it was her magic that transformed 'cedar' into a

banyan tree. Hundreds of 'her children'- young and old who assembled to mourn and reminisce her death on February 13th said, "We are the roots she spread and propagated, and the tree will not die... and her memories will lead this movement in days to come."





Mariammal Meeting

Mariammal never carried the aura of Aruna Roy or Meda Patkar as an activist. But she touched the life of hundreds of children in bondage. Born into one of the most marginalized communities of Tamil Nadu, Mariammal had to fight poverty and penury to acquire even school education. Poverty continued and forced her first son into child labour. This made abolition of child labour, her lifelong mission. She went to every nook and corner of Virudhunagar and Thoothukudi districts of Tamilnadu to salvage, mainstream and give dignity to children in bondage. It was three decades of her life and struggle. It is an untimely death. It is an irreparable loss to her family, and her extended family, CEDAR.

September 2021 Madurai. Dr. CHINNARAJ JOSEPH JAIKUMAR

Managing trustee

CEDAR



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