



Centre for Education Development Action and Research (CEDAR)



ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023





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The pandemic years completely threw away the logic and rhythm of programme planning and delivery. A strategic planning exercise for 2022-2023 was undertaken to put the process back on the rail. In fact, the pandemic years have further strengthened our conviction on the need for the promotion of the alternative art pedagogy for children. Its role in infusing emotional resilience and building the capacity for creative problem-solving in children were tangible during the two troubled years.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR THE YEAR 2022-23

- Further upgrade the alternative art pedagogy
- Help children to use their artistic talents in child rights advocacy
- Present children's art works in public domain to encourage child-centric discourses
- Bridge gaps in foundational skills (Learning loss caused by school closure)
- Strengthen parental/community/ school participation in CRC work
- Collaborate with academia for knowledge sharing, internship and volunteering
- Do your own fund raising

CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING

Training

This year we paid more attention to training facilitators and parents, in child protection and child safeguarding. During the first quarter, a TOT programme in this regard was organized for the facilitators. The expert trainer was Mr. Sharath, Programme Officer, Tamil Nadu State Child Protection Society (TNSCPS). This programme has further enlarged the scope of creating awareness on child protection and safeguarding in the community, particularly among young parents. It was expected that in the next six months, our facilitators would reach out to 250 to 300 parents/community members.



In the second quarter (September), an awareness programme for parents relating to substance abuse by children was organized. Fifteen parents and twenty children from Jawaharlalpuram participated. Mr. Vinoth Kumar, a psychiatric counselor of a private psychiatric hospital was the resource person.

During the month of October, Mr. Sharath of Karpom Karpipom offered a training programme to the parents of Thomas Nagar and Koosalipatti. It was on 'adolescent behavioural changes in girls.' About 40 parents participated in the training. The same training was provided to Keela Eral Cluster parents on December 9th in which 35 parents participated.

Child safeguarding: Incident Reporting System

This year, CEDAR put in place an 'incident reporting system' relating to potential and actual abuse of children. The system primarily depends on the awareness and alertness level of the facilitators. One serious case of school dropout relating to trauma in Madurai, and two serious cases of potential sexual abuse in Kovilpatti were detected and reported. CEDAR could step in time and provide professional/legal intervention.

Child Rights Protection Committee Meeting (CPC)

The CPC met on August 19th at CEDAR office. All the committee members, including the newly inducted Chair, Dr Thressia attended. Three new cases were reported at the meeting. The progress on Tamil Nadu Government giving solatium to CRC child Reena was updated. She lost her father to COVID-19.

It was decided to do safety audits of CRCs. This means auditing physical safety, safeguarding policy, awareness of parents, facilitators and children, incident reporting system and the health and robustness of redressal mechanism in place. Mr. Sharath, founder of Karpom Karpipom and Programme Officer of TNSCPS agreed to help CEDAR in developing a safety audit system. It meant developing appropriate indicators first, which could be pilot tested in a few CRCs.

Handholding support to a child who lost her father due to the COVID-19 pandemic: CEDAR took all the initiatives needed for securing the solatium of Rs. 6,00,000/- for Reena's family (name changed) from the Govt. of Tamil Nadu. The family got the money on October 21st. Leena lost her father due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The family had already received Rs. 50,000, an interim relief from Tamil Nadu Disaster Management Fund on May 17, 2022.



PARENT COLLECTIVES: OWNERSHIP AND SUPPORT TO CRCs

We have come to realise that there is growing participation of parents in CRC activities thereby creating and strengthening child centric spaces in the community. Kovilpatti centres have been taking the lead in this respect. Specific mention must however be made here about the parents of Pungavarnatham who were in the forefront mobilizing Rs. 2,00,000/- for the Children's Festival held in October 2022.

CHILDREN'S COLLECTIVES CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND CHILDCENTRED SPACE

Children's Collectives acts as a platform for children to identify problems that affect them generally at the community level and find creative solutions collectively.

Children's Collective of Pungavarnatham approached the Panchayat asking for the supply of play material to children. It took six months before they got them. Malligai Children's Collective saw to that their parent representatives attended their monthly meetings.

The Government of Tamil Nadu issued an order that the local bodies of the villages convened special Gram Sabha Meetings on August 15th, Independence Day. Children of the collectives from Keela Eral, Pungavarnatham, Manjanaickerpatti, Thomas Nagar I and II, and Koosalipatti Centres participated.

Malligai (Jasmine) Children Collective of Thomas Nagar-1, Siragugal (Wings) Children Collective of Koosalipatti Centre and Vaanavil (Rainbow) Children Collective of Thomas Nagar-2 jointly petitioned their Iluppaiyurani Panchayat President to provide transport facility to 150 CRC children and about 50 parents to participate at the upcoming CEDAR's Children's Annual Day Function in Pungavarnatham.

Agni Siragugal (Wings of Fire) Children Collective of Manjanaickerpatti Centre petitioned again to their panchayat to provide electricity connection to the Manjanaickerpatti Community Hall where the CRC functions now. The community hall was constructed by CEDAR a long time ago and was recently renovated.

Pungai Children Collective again petitioned the panchayat to remove the electric transformer located in the Panchayat Middle School compound considering the safety of the children.

Abdul Kalam Children Collective of Keela Eral Centre petitioned their Panchayat President for the electricity connection to their new building which was constructed by the local community leaders with the support of the Panchayat.

On January 26th, Gram Sabha meetings were organised in all village panchayats of Tamil Nadu. Manjanaickerpatti children along with the facilitators, field coordinators and Dave from Paper Boat, attended the meeting. They petitioned the panchayat to give electricity connection to their Children's Resource Centre.

Thomas Nagar Primary Centre Opening

An Anganwadi (creche) at Thomas Nagar was opened by the Minister for Social Welfare and Women Empowerment of Tamil Nadu, Ms. Geetha Jeevan, on January 28th. The District Collector, Dr. Senthilraj, The District Welfare Officer, Ms. Rathi Devi, and the Panchayat President, Ms. Selvi, attended the function. CEDAR children were specially invited by the civic leaders for the inauguration.

FOUNDATIONAL SKILL PROGRAMME

One of the biggest challenges children continue to face in schools is acquiring foundational skills in Math, English and Tamil. Though the government has come up with a few measures to compensate the learning losses, its reach and effectiveness are very doubtful. To help CRC children, CEDAR is developing its own bridge courses using alternative pedagogical methods. Creative Lead Selvam has developed a few modules in Tamil. Rajadurai will develop the modules for mathematics. He will collaborate with one Mr. Pandiarajan, a pioneer in the field of alternative pedagogy.

Mr. Selvam, Creative Lead also gave a three-day workshop to the facilitators for effectively using the foundational skill manual he has developed. Mr. Pandiarajan, (Director of Eden Educational Resource Centre), used a highly participatory workshop with the facilitators for developing the manual in Mathematics. The Facilitators thus became the co-authors of the manual.

ALTERNATIVE ART: PAINTING AND DRAWING

This year, we decided to further diversify and upgrade the quality of inputs relating to drawing and painting. CEDAR approached Babu, a very senior artist, for help.

The impact of Babu's involvement could be seen in the community level art exhibition held in June at Keela Eral. Another important achievement of this quarter is that children have started painting public walls highlighting child right themes. Invitations to paint school walls have started coming in.



ALTERNATIVE ART: THEATRE

The 'participatory theatre' in which all children can participate, happened as usual. However, a review of the theatre training programme was carried out during this year. The following strategies were worked out, and a major revamp will be carried out during 2023-2024.

The strategies are as follows:

1. To bring closer theatre training and drawing and painting training on a collaborative basis
2. To pay attention to a few more alternative theatre forms
3. Children to be taught how to make props using locally available material

4. To raise a signature-play that can help children tour around and inspire other children in other villages and towns



ALTERNATIVE ART: CHILDREN MAKING CHILDREN'S FILM – MUSICAL NARRATIVE

Children making Children's film is a unique invention as an alternative art pedagogy. More than any other collaborative art, it challenges children on the grounds of teamwork, leadership, and co-creation. It also brings out the best of individual talents too. During the early part of this year, about 25 children from Kovilpatti Children Resource Centres participated in a series of facilitative workshops. They identified the theme, wrote the lyrics, composed music, sang, and did the outdoor shoot. The outcome was the musical narrative "Thadaikalai Thaandalaam." It was released by Trustee Dr Navamani at the Keela Eral CRC on June 11th. The 'making of the musical narrative' was also made.



Children Making Children's Film – Madurai Musical Narrative

Workshops were organised on November 12th, 26th and 27th. A two-day intensive production planning followed by shooting on December 3rd and 4th was completed. This involved 30+ children. The post-production work was completed in early January. The outcome was the musical narrative "Nee, Naan, Naam, Malar." And it was screened in Jaipur International Film Festival 2023 as a portion of the longer narrative **"Our Lives and Stories: We Children Make Our Films."**



CHILDREN MAKING CHILDREN'S FILM AND JAIPUR FILM FESTIVAL

"Our Lives and Stories: We Children Make Our Films" is a 53-minute documentary that tells how children in the age group 5 to 13 became co-creators in making three children's films. One short fictional narrative and two short children's musicals are the core part of this documentary, besides their makings and brief commentaries. This documentary talks about alternative filmmaking pedagogy as it questions the creation of spectacles, adult representation, child star persona, melodrama, and violence in Children's Films. This doc was screened on the 8th of Jan between 6.00 PM and 7.00 PM at Screen 4, JIFF.

This is the outcome of about 4 years of experimenting at CEDAR. It all started with teaching underprivileged children, creative photography. Slowly, we realized that children can be involved in filmmaking projects as collaborators and co-creators and not as mere 'child artists.' They could actively involve in bringing their own stories, writing scripts, acting, handling the camera, and even participating in editing. In this sense, the deprivation, suffering and even trauma undergone by children, can be narrated by children themselves with deep self-reflection. This is what we would like to call, with a certain audacity, Alternative Children's Film.

For us in CEDAR it is a big journey of eight years experimenting with alternative media. We really applaud the creative contributions made particularly by Basheer Khan, Pon Kundram, Karthik, Balaji, and Guru Prakash as Creative Leads.

It needs to be further noted that Madurai Transgender Resource Centre, organised a film festival on January 28th at Gandhi Museum where 'Nee, Naan, Naam, Malar' was screened and it won an award.



CREATIVE ART CAMPS

Creative art camps for Kovilpatti children were organised on July 9, and 10 at Thomas Nagar; July 23, and 24 at Pungavarnatham; August 13 and 14 at Thomas Nagar; August 27th at Pungavarnatham; September 10 and 11 for Madurai children at the CEDAR office. Children were introduced to the concept of basic Human figure-drawing, pointillism, abstract drawing, and paper sculpting. Artist Babu was the resource person.



Again, Art Camps were organised on Nov 12th, 13th, 26th and 27th at Pungavarnatham Village to teach folk-art forms. Children numbering 112 representing 12 Children Resource Centres of Kovilpatti participated.

Another 27 children participated in Theatre Workshop, 29 children in Parai Drum training sessions and, yet another 28 in Oyilattam, a folk dance.



CHILDREN'S ART EXHIBITION

On August 25th, a Children's Art Exhibition was organised at Chozhapuram Kamaraj High School. About 200 children participated with their teachers. In Madurai, on August 17th at the Al Ameen Higher Secondary School, two of our short films 'Little Dreams' and the Musical Narrative 'Thadaikalai Thaandalam' were screened. About 500 children watched it followed by discussions.

In October, an Art Exhibition was held as part of Pungavarnatham Children's Festival where children's Photographs, Paintings and Drawings were exhibited. An art exhibition was organised at the Ambedkar Colony during Dave Magill's visit in January 25th 2023.



Another Art Exhibition was held at Poigaikaraipatti Government Primary School on 9th February. The exhibition was inaugurated by the Block Educational Officers (BEO) East Madurai. The BEO, the Samagra Shiksha Coordinator, the local panchayat leader Arun Chinnaraj (Paper Boat), and the School Headmaster felicitated the children and thanked the parents for their wonderful support.

PUNGAVARNATHAM CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL

Maha Sakthi Federation (a collective of collectives) and Pungavarnatham Local Leaders organised 'CEDAR Children's Festival 2022' on Sunday, October 16th at Pungavarnatham village. Around 250 children, 140 parents (from Kovilpatti and Madurai), and staff of CEDAR participated. Children's Photographs and Paintings and Drawings were exhibited. Children staged their theatre, and folk-art performances. The documentary expounding the CEDAR's photo essay project 'Stories Behind Images' was screened.

The Additional Deputy Superintendent of Police of Thoothukudi District, Theatre Artist Mr Murugaboopathy, Pungavarnatham Panchayat President, Pungavarnatham Panchayat Middle School Headmistress, and the Local Community Leaders felicitated the children.



VEETHI THIRUVIZHA CHILDREN'S ART FESTIVALS

CEDAR children participated in Veethi Viruthu Vizha, a two-day Children's Festival organised by the Alternative Media Centre of Loyola College, Chennai. It is their 10th Annual Grand Event for children mixing and interacting with folk artists. The number of participants including children was about 5,000. Thirty of our children who had passion and talent in 'Oyil Dance' participated. Their public performance before a huge audience was well received.



CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN STATE LEVEL NETWORKS

CEDAR is a member of the network Forum for Promotion of Child Participation (FPCP) and the Federation of Children Movements for Right to Participation (FCMRP). On July 2nd, FCMRP convened a virtual meeting to discuss the draft policy on the 'National Youth Policy' released by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Govt. of India. Two CEDAR children- Kanniraj and Gayathri participated in this online consultation. The second meeting of FCMRP was held on August 13, and 14th at Tiruchirappalli. Again, Kanniraj and Gayathri were the delegates. The theme was 'Children's Right to Participate.'

CONTINUOUS MONITORING AND STRENGTHENING OF CRCs

Based on the field data, a 12- Factor Assessment Tool to find out the health of the CRCs was developed. The factors are 1. How much is the felt need for CRCs, 2. Support of the community leaders, 3. Inclusiveness in terms of caste, 4. Parental participation and support, 5. Enrollment, 6. Attendance of children, 7. facilitator's commitment/ leadership, 8. Facilitators Assessment as to the progress of the CRC in general, 9. Parental perception as to how children have improved after joining the CRCs, 10. How schools assess CRC children, 11. Children's own self-assessment, 12. Scholastic performance, 13. Creative development of each child. Based upon this the CRCs will be classified as **I. CRCs that are above the mark, II. CRCs that function satisfactorily, III. CRCs which need more attention.**

Course Correction Strategy: 1. Special attention to weak CRCs, 2. Resource allocation based on special needs, 3. Monthly Monitoring and Reporting, 4. Quarterly Course Correction Plan for Action.

REACHING OUT TO SCHOOLS

The idea of reaching out to schools is threefold: 1. By collaborating with schools primarily serving the poor and the marginalized children, it provides a wider reach and there is an economy of scale, 2. Popularise the Alternate Art Pedagogy and 3. Promote safeguarding concerns. This year, this programme found strategic priority.

Outreach Programme	Name of the School	No. of Children
Collaborating with Schools in Teaching Art	Madurai Corporation Primary School, Palanganatham, Madurai	94
	Govt. Primary School, Poigaikaraipatti, Madurai	75
	Kamaraj High School, Chozhapuram, Thoothukudi	160
	Tallakulam Corporation Primary School, Madurai	30
Collaboration with Schools in Providing Awareness to School Children	Govt. Girls Higher Secondary School, Kovilpatti, Thoothukudi	400
Collaboration with Schools in Organising Art Exhibitions	Tamil Baptist School, Thomas Nagar, Kovilpatti, Thoothukudi	250
Collaborating with Schools in Screening Our Children's Films	Al Ameen Higher Secondary School, Madurai	500
	Kamaraj High School, Chozhapuram, Thoothukudi	240
	Meenakshi Matriculation Children's NSS camp	30
	Kattunaickers Community Children in Madurai	80
	LKB Nagar Govt. Panchayat Union Middle School	300
Number of Children Reached Through Outreach Programmes		2,159
Grand Total – Number of Children Reached Through CRCs and School Outreach Programmes from April to December 2022		466+2,159= 2,625

ACADEMIC COLLABORATION

The Postgraduate Department of Lady Doak College, Madurai came forward to sign a MoU with CEDAR for knowledge sharing and hosting of internship in the areas of community development and communication for change. A draft MoU was prepared and sent for approval. It is likely that the MoU will be signed at least by next academic year. However, in December, a 6-Day workshop on Documentary Filmmaking was organised by CEDAR for the students. Thirty postgraduate students participated.

CONNECTED DEVELOPMENT TEAM VISIT

Mr. William Harnden, Director of 'Connected Development UK' and Mr. Ian Wright, Advisor, visited CEDAR in October. The C&D team spent 5 days between October 18th and 22nd visiting the CEDAR field areas both in Kovilpatti and Madurai. They interacted with children, parents, schoolteachers, and the CEDAR, to better understand CEDAR's work. CEDAR had already signed an MoU with C&D for hosting students from abroad online for internship.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE TO DRAFT THE STATE EDUCATIONAL POLICY FOR TAMIL NADU

CEDAR organised three levels of consultation with the view to making a child-centred policy recommendation to the High-Level Drafting Committee appointed by the Government of Tamil Nadu to draft an independent state policy on education. The first consultation happened on Sep 30th in Madurai. Independent scholars, college teachers, schoolteachers, School Education Administrators, and NGO leaders working with children were invited. There were about 50 participants. Second, on October 1st, a consultation with schoolteachers was arranged at Ingo Plaza Hotel, Kovilpatti wherein 11 teachers, 4 children resource centre facilitators and 6 staff participated in that one-day event. Third, on October 2nd, a consultation with children was carried out at the CEDAR office. A total of 32 children - 24 children from Kovilpatti and 8 children from Madurai participated.

The recommendations were consolidated under the following four themes:

- 1.** Child-centered space and pedagogy
- 2.** Language learning
- 3.** Integrating the extra-curricular with the curricular
- 4.** Child rights, child protection and safeguarding at schools

The final report under the title 'Ensuring Quality in Primary Education' was sent to the High-Level Committee on 15th Oct 2022.

The full report is available at the following link:

https://cedarindiangomy.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/admin_cedarindia_org/EfHqij5j-V1HlbMzBHgwQYIBw9ieMheZcygllcPd8JqjqA?e=wxlm91

RESEARCH AND MONITORING

Four FGDs with the children, on the theme “Coping with Seven Month Post COVID Schooling” were conducted during the month of June. The following findings are worth recording here for reflection.

Major Findings:

1. Children's initial fears and anxieties waned away in no time
2. Bridge courses/ Refresher Courses were not conducted with required seriousness of purpose or rigor
3. Foundational skill depletion in children continue to remain as a challenge
4. Even though there were policy guidelines, programmes and teaching modules for refresher courses, teacher indifference and lack of commitment on the part of schools bring concern
5. Deliberate dilution of examinations and assessments are the tactics adopted by teachers/schools to tell the world “Everything goes well with our teaching now.”
6. Copying in examination is either encouraged or just condoned
7. Children cope well by default as there is no fresh challenge placed on them in terms of learning.
8. There is so much of restrictions brought on games and art classes in the name of 'need to allocate more time required for serious studies'
9. The single most important factor that motivates children to go to school, to put in their words: “We like to go to school because we want to meet our friends.”
10. Demeaning punishments continue in every school (if not escalated post COVID)
11. The impending danger is serious dilution of standards

DAVE MAGILL'S VISIT

Dave Magill, the new Manager of Paper Boat, made a brief visit to CEDAR between January 22nd to 30th. He visited Children's Resource Centres both in Madurai and Kovilpatti, interacted with children, parents, and facilitators. On Jan 28th there was a debriefing session, and the feed-backs and reflections were of strategic importance. By all likelihood, they will be incorporated in the 2023-2024 plan.



CHILDREN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN PAPER BOAT'S AGM

On invitation, 32 children's representatives from 16 CRCs, 11 parents and 15 facilitators and 13 CEDAR staff, participated online, in Paper Boat AGM meeting. It was very engaging that children, parents, and facilitators gave useful feedback and reflections.

STATUTORY AND LEGAL COMPLIANCES

The resolution that added Trustee Dr. Navamani as the co-signatory for cheques was submitted to the SBI, Anaiyur branch, which was approved. Annual FCRA filing was done on December 17th through the Auditor. Quarterly FCRA and TDS filings were done in January.

Dr. Chinnaraj Joseph Jaikumar
Managing Trustee
April 2023



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