



# CEDAR

## Centre for Education Development Action and Research



Annual Report 2024-2025



# CENTRE FOR EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT ACTION AND RESEARCH (CEDAR)

## Annual Report 2024–2025

*Presented to the Board of Trustees*

## Executive Summary

The year 2024–2025 was one of consolidation and measured growth for CEDAR. We strengthened child safeguarding systems through Child Rights Monitoring Committees (CRMCs), deepened community ownership via Parent Collectives, and scaled art-based pedagogy across photography, theatre, and visual arts. Children's Collectives stepped into civic life—petitioning for public works, attending Gram Sabha meetings, and authoring a Children's Election Manifesto. Environmental action coalesced under the 'Children for Green Villages' programme, while foundational learning in Tamil and Mathematics matured into robust Level-2 modules. A special project in LKB Nagar demonstrated that persistent, compassionate community leadership can dramatically cut school dropout rates. This report presents the year's narrative, outcomes, challenges, and the road ahead.

- 13 CRMCs formed by Dec 2024; orientation and mobilisation held in 8 villages on 7 Feb 2025.
- 350+ children trained in glass/fabric painting through a peer-teaching cascade; 150 children trained in photography.
- Multiple village/school exhibitions (12 Feb 2025; 26–27 Mar 2025) showcased children's art and photo essays.
- Children's petitions and civic campaigns addressed drainage, sanitation, and space for CRCs.
- LKB Nagar: school dropouts reduced from ~50% to ~20% through case-work, parental counselling, and school engagement.
- Foundational Skills: Tamil & Mathematics manuals in steady use; Math Level-2 launched Feb 2025; ELT remains a critical gap.
- International theatre collaboration (Feb 2025) strengthened alternative pedagogy; select facilitators to be advanced as theatre leads.

## 1. Organisation Profile & Governance

CEDAR is a community-rooted organisation advancing child rights, foundational learning, and creative pedagogy in government-linked contexts. Our work is anchored in Children's Resource Centres (CRCs) that operate as safe, creative, and civic spaces. Governance emphasises safeguarding, transparency, and statutory compliance suitable for Board review.

Statutory oversight is exercised through quarterly reviews, Child Protection Committee meetings, and programme audits. A Child Safety Register has been rolled out across centres to document risks and resolutions. The Board is apprised of key risks—skills gaps in English Language Teaching (ELT), variable facilitator readiness for theatre pedagogy, and cost management in skilling units.

## 2. Child Rights & Safeguarding



Safeguarding workshop for Facilitator



A multi-layered safeguarding strategy combined capacity-building, community structures, and case-work. On 27 Apr 2024, staff and facilitators received intensive training covering identification of children in need of care and protection, relevant laws, and CEDAR's Child Protection Policy. This set the tone for the year's safeguarding posture.

1. CRMC Formation & Activation: By Oct–Dec 2024, thirteen CRMCs were active; roles were clarified through quarterly orientations.
2. Community Mobilisation: On 7 Feb 2025, mobilisation in 8 villages (65 participants) identified key risks—unsafe sanitation, school neglect, and parental stress.
3. Casework & Resolution: Case studies included counselling in parental verbal abuse, dropout prevention, and negotiating school transfers.
4. Child Safety Register: Introduced to standardise reporting and follow-up across CRCs; improves accountability to communities.

**Learning:** Safeguarding outcomes improve when community actors co-own the process. CRMCs act as bridges to state systems, ensuring early referrals and monitoring.



Community Participation in Child Safety



### 3. Community Ownership & Participation



Community Art Exhibition



Parent Collectives matured into engines of community stewardship. Kovilpatti and Ettayapuram clusters documented impact, while LKB Nagar saw rapid uptake. Parents organised and funded parts of exhibitions and celebrations (Pongal, Women's Day), signalling a shift from beneficiary to partner.

- Parents mobilised logistics, refreshments, and local publicity for exhibitions in Feb–Mar 2025.
- Women's participation was significant, with sustained SHG involvement and federation linkages.

**Learning:** Ownership correlates with sustainability—parents who invest time and reputation defend CRC gains in public fora.

### 4. Children's Collectives, Civic Engagement & Window to the World

Children's Collectives evolved as laboratories of democratic practice. In Keela Eeral, children conducted a signature campaign and petitioned the Collector to fix drainage/sewage mixing. In Pungavarnatham, they reclaimed a community centre for CRC activities. Across centres, children attended Gram Sabhas, enrolled peers, and coordinated mutual aid.



Children After Attending Grama Sabha Meeting

- Children co-authored a Children's Election Manifesto addressing transport and documentation for ST certificates.
- Thomas Nagar collective raised ~₹20,000 in gifts, redistributed by children to peers—an instance of child-led solidarity.

**Learning:** Civic engagement deepens when children see state response to petitions. Intergenerational dialogue improves when parents join children in campaigns.

## 5. Children Making Children's Documentaries



Green Action Documentary by Children



From April 2024, children studied local water bodies—mapping pollution sites, interviewing elders, and building a narrative arc. The advocacy documentary 'Green Citizen Change Makers' emerged from this inquiry. Focus Group Discussions (29 Apr, Thomas Nagar) revealed strong identity effects—children value seeing their work on the big screen.

- Skills: research interviews, scripting, framing shots, voice-over work, consent norms, and public screening etiquette.

- Outcome: Environmental issues received renewed attention; parents reported pride and better school attendance

## 6. Drawing & Painting



Art Workshop

Workshops built foundational techniques and expressive confidence. Exhibitions celebrated rural children's creativity as public culture.

- Q1: 75 paintings displayed at Tamil Baptist School Annual Day; DEO Thoothukudi praised student work.
- Q4: 150 works exhibited (27 Mar 2025) alongside photography; collaborative mega posters (7×8 ft) showcased co-creation.

**Learning:** Art served therapeutic and pedagogic goals; teachers noted improved attention, and parents reported better emotional regulation.

## 7. Alternative Art Theatre



Theatre Workshop at Keelaeral



Two-day folk-art workshops (Parai, Oyil) in May 2024 anchored pedagogy in local culture—crucial for low-access villages. In Feb 2025, theatre artists Heinz & Christine conducted Forum/Image/Invisible Theatre workshops for children and facilitators.

A facilitator-only follow-up confirmed that a ‘select-lead’ model (not ToT for all) is the realistic pathway.

- **Use-cases:** role-plays on peer conflict, early marriage, sanitation, and school stress opened safe dialogue in communities.
- **Next step:** formalise a small Theatre Leads cohort; design term-plans for CRC-level theatre labs.

## 8. Creative Photography



District Collector Visiting Children's Green Action Exhibition



Regular classes in Madurai and Kovilpatti trained 150 children (10–16 years). Field photography in Feb 2025 covered five themes—Palm Craft & Livelihood, Salt Pans, Street Life, Children’s Hockey, and Children Assisting Traffic. 200+ photos are under curation for a municipal exhibition.

- Exhibitions: Keela Eeral Green Village (19 Jun 2024); Lakkammaldevi (26 Mar 2025); Manthithope school collaboration (Mar 2025).
- Visitors: District officials, headmasters, and international guests; feedback suggested festival-quality work.

**Learning:** Photography matured from skill to a medium of civic narration and portfolio development for older children.

## 9. Children for Green Villages

The programme aligned local action with SDGs—flooding, sanitation, waste management, and water channels. Children, parents, and sanitation workers participated in FGDs; petitions asked for canal/segregation fixes.



Sanitary Workers Participating in Green Action Discussion

- **Small research:** 83 senior school children and 96 college youth surveyed; >70% felt responsible for the environment; fewer than half had systematic instruction.
- **Public pedagogy:** exhibitions as science-civic interfaces; theatre and photo essays translated data into community dialogue.

## 10. School Collaborations



with School Children

Two Tamil Baptist Schools (Kovilpatti – Manthithope; Ettayapuram) partnered to host Alternative Art Pedagogy. Schools bore operational costs; 90+50 students benefited directly; 300 schoolchildren participated in exhibitions. Teachers began adapting drawing/storytelling into classroom practice.

- Evidence of shift: administrators openly supported joyful learning and co-curricular integration.
- Next steps: deepen collaboration; explore city-school partnerships under municipal agencies.

## 11. Foundational Skill Programme

Training cycles strengthened facilitator capacity: refresher (13 & 23 Apr 2024), higher-level Math module design (4 & 13 May 2024). Tamil Level-1 manual continued to perform strongly; Mathematics Level-2 launched in Feb 2025. ELT remains the critical gap.

- Spoken English classes for facilitators improved comprehension and participation in review meetings.
- Priority 2025–26: commission ELT experts to co-author a contextualised English manual and train an anchor cohort.



Spoken English

## 12. Capacity Building for Facilitators



Theatre Workshop For Facilitator

Capacity building was holistic—safeguarding, theatre pedagogy, foundational skills, and emotional intelligence. A peer-teaching cascade trained 40 senior children in glass/fabric painting, who then taught 300+ juniors.

- International collaboration (Feb 2025) and Trustee-led sessions (problem-solving, EI) enriched methodology.
- Caveat: Not all facilitators adapt equally to theatre pedagogy; shift to a selective ‘theatre leads’ model.

## 13. LKB Nagar Special Project



Chess Competition



Under Special Coordinator Easwari, LKB Nagar registered a substantial drop in school dropout—from ~50% to ~20%—through persistent case-work, parental counselling, and school negotiations (e.g., transfer certificates). The project also fostered child leadership—rallies, competitions (including chess), and cultural participation.

- Parents now engage school authorities more confidently; home environments show better child-safety practices.
- Way forward: explore livelihood pathways for women; expand parent collective leadership and monitoring.

## 14. Research, Monitoring & Advocacy

Research strengthened programme design—environmental awareness baselines; documentation of CRMC practice; and child-made films as advocacy artefacts. A six-month special monitoring cycle (May–Oct 2025) will produce a consolidated review by Oct 2025.

- Documentation priorities: CRMC effectiveness; arts-pedagogy impact on attendance/retention; ELT gap analysis.
- Advocacy: district dialogues using children’s exhibits and films; municipal partnerships for public showcases.

## 15. Risks, Mitigation & Lessons

- ELT Gap: Partner with ELT institutes; pilot English Level-1 manual; mentor cohort of facilitators.

- Theatre ToT Limits: Train a small ‘theatre leads’ bench; schedule CRC circuits; build video lesson bank.
- Programme Cost Pressures (e.g., tailoring): Re-cost modules; shift to performance-linked micro-batches; leverage CSR in-kind.
- Community Fatigue: Rotate exhibition themes; co-create with schools; integrate civic wins (e.g., petitions resolved).

## 16. Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Framework

Indicators are aligned to child safety, learning outcomes, and community ownership. CRMC registers, attendance logs, exhibition participation sheets, and case-work trackers feed quarterly dashboards.

5. Child Safety: CRMCs active; cases recorded/resolved; time-to-response; referrals to DCPU.
6. Learning: #children completing Tamil/Math levels; progression rates; sample assessments; ELT participation.
7. Civic Agency: petitions submitted; Gram Sabha attendance; community actions completed.
8. Community Ownership: parent collective meetings; resource mobilised; festival/exhibition leadership.
9. Creative Output: exhibitions/screenings; photos curated; illuminated; external recognitions.

## 17. Financial Overview (Narrative)

The year’s programme mixes prioritised low-cost, high-impact methods—peer teaching, community-hosted exhibitions, and school collaborations. Cost hot-spots included specialised training (theatre, tailoring) and equipment for photography. Going forward, we will pursue pooled procurement with school partners and seek CSR in-kind support for cameras and exhibition logistics.

## 18. Lingavadi Children’s Resource Centre Project

In April 2024, *Gate-1 Foundation (a Charitable Trust based in the USA)*, on its own initiative, expressed interest in supporting a **building infrastructure project** to establish a **Children’s Resource Centre / Alternative School**. Following a series of discussions, an **MoU between CEDAR and Gate-1 Foundation** was signed on **6 August 2024**.



New Chapter

Since Gate-1's support was limited to the construction component, our longstanding partner **Paper Boat Charity UK** generously agreed to fund the **purchase of land**. A **sub-committee** was constituted to oversee this process. After a detailed search, a plot measuring **1 acre and 72.6 cents** in **Lingavadi Village, Natham Taluk, Dindigul District** was identified as suitable. Paper Boat Charity sanctioned **₹ 10,091,365** towards the purchase, which was **successfully completed on 12 September 2024**.

Subsequently, a detailed **construction proposal** was submitted to Gate-1 Foundation. The first instalment of **₹ 4,736,473** towards the building cost was **received on 25 March 2025**, marking a significant milestone in the realization of the Lingavadi Children's Resource Centre.

## 19. Conclusion & Way Forward

CEDAR's model—child rights supported by creative pedagogy and community ownership—proved resilient across contexts this year. The coming year's priorities are: (1) English foundational manual with ELT partners; (2) a focused Theatre Leads bench; (3) municipal-scale photography & film showcases; and (4) longitudinal documentation of CRMC outcomes. We remain committed to child agency, joyful learning, and community stewardship.

**Dr. Chinnaraj Joseph Jaikumar**  
**Managing Trustee**  
CEDAR  
June 2025

## Annexures

### Annexure A: Timeline of Key Events (2024–2025)

- 27 Apr 2024 – Safeguarding training for staff/facilitators; CPC orientation; Child Safety Register introduced.
- 3–7 May 2024 – Parai & Oyil folk-art workshops (Kumarikulam; Madurai).
- 19 Jun 2024 – Keela Eeral ‘Children & Youth for Green Village’ exhibition; petition to Collector on drainage/sewage.
- Oct–Dec 2024 – 13 CRMCs formed; monthly Children’s Collectives and Gram Sabha participation.
- 7 Feb 2025 – Community mobilisation in 8 villages; 65 participants (parents, CRMC, SHG federation, facilitators).
- 12 Feb 2025 – Kumarikulam Village Art Exhibition; international guests and trustee visit.
- 26 Mar 2025 – Lakkammaldevi Village Photo/Art Exhibition led by parents (lighting, electricity, refreshments).
- 27 Mar 2025 – Tamil Baptist School exhibition: 150 drawings/paintings; 30 CRC + 90 schoolchildren showcased.
- Feb 2025 – Field photography: 200+ photos on five city/village themes; curation for municipal exhibition.
- Feb 2025 – Theatre workshops by Heinz & Christine; facilitator-only follow-up confirms ‘theatre leads’ approach.

### Annexure B: Reach & Participation (Indicative)

- CRMCs: 13 units active by Q3; 8 villages mobilised in Q4.
- Creative Arts: 350+ children trained in glass/fabric painting; 150 in photography; regular drawing classes across CRCs.
- Exhibitions: 3 major exhibitions in Q4; 1 Green Village exhibition in Q1; multiple CRC-level showcases.
- Facilitators: 16+ trained in theatre; ongoing spoken English cycles; refresher and higher-level Math/Tamil pedagogy.

### Annexure C: Case Studies (Summarised)

10. Preventing Dropout via TC Mediation – A boy transitioning from Grade 7 to 8 secured transfer after negotiation with HM; re-enrolled and attending.
11. Public Exam Relapse Averted – A girl who failed Social Science re-attempted after counselling, passed, and is now a volunteer mentor.

12. Home Verbal Abuse Addressed – Counselling mother reduced verbal abuse; child's participation in school and CRC recovered.
13. Civic Petition on Drainage – Children's signature drive escalated sanitation issues to the Collector; Panchayat engaged in remediation plans.

#### **Annexure D: Programme Quality**

- Safeguarding: Response time, referral pathway clarity, CRMC attendance/records.
- Learning: Mastery checks for Tamil/Math; facilitator observation; child self-assessment logs.
- Creative Pedagogy: original works; narrative coherence; public feedback; peer critique cycles.
- Civic Agency: Petition outcomes; Gram Sabha minutes referencing child issues; parent-child joint actions.

#### **Annexure E: Risks & Mitigation Tracker (Excerpt)**

- ELT Manual Not Ready – Risk to English outcomes; Mitigation: commission ELT partner; pilot in two CRCs; evaluate by Q3 2025–26.
- Theatre ToT Saturation – Mitigation: small cohort model; quarterly intensives; CRC circuits for demonstrations.
- Cost Overruns in Skilling – Mitigation: re-scope modules; CSR in-kind; performance-linked micro-batches.

#### **Annexure F: Way Forward – 2025–2026 Milestones**

English Level-1 Manual drafted with ELT partner; facilitator cohort trained (Q2).

Theatre Leads cohort formalised; CRC theatre labs scheduled (Q2–Q3).

Municipal Photography/Film Showcase; photo-essay book release (Q3).

CRMC Longitudinal Study – 24-month outcome tracking framework initiated (Q4).



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