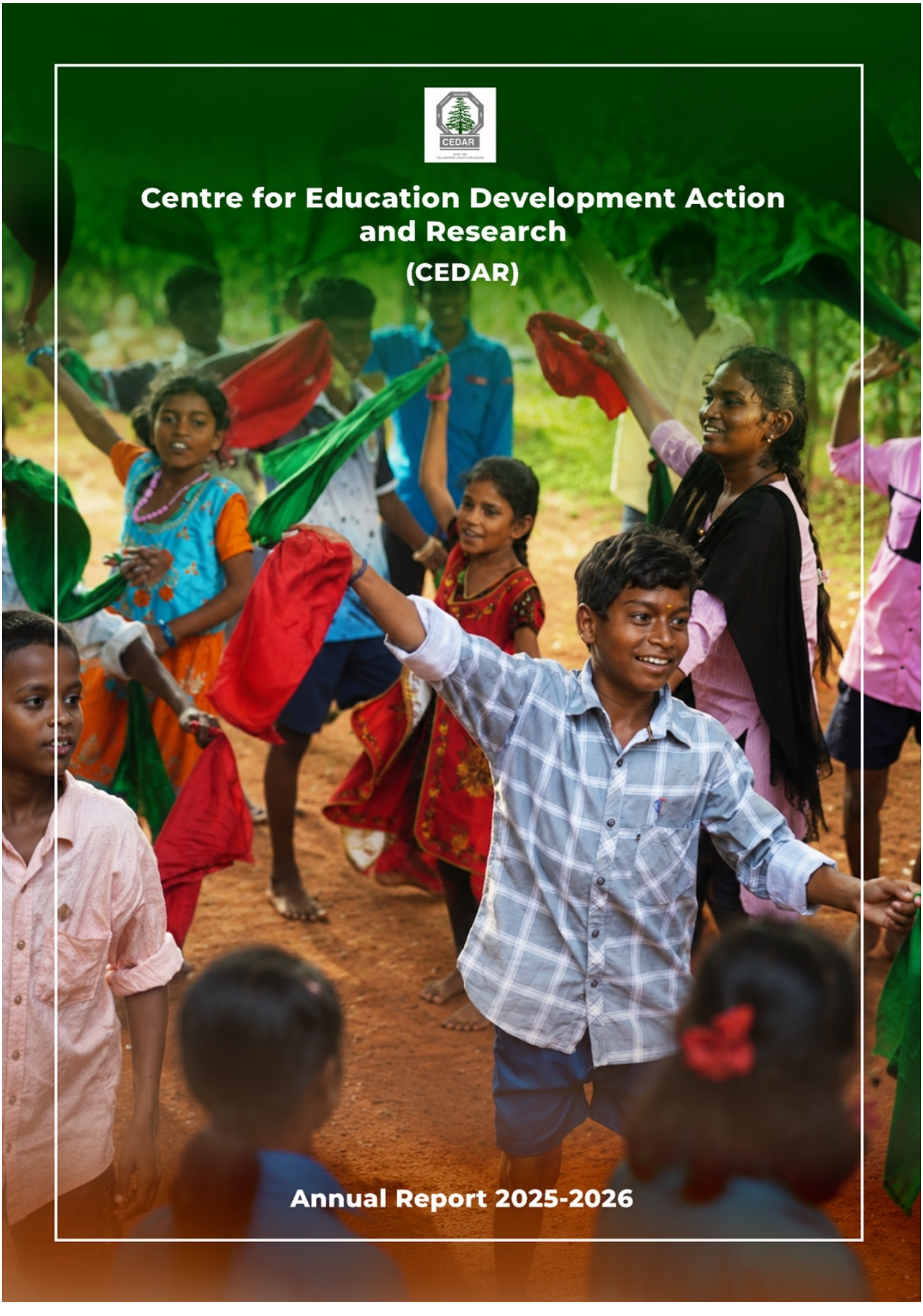


Centre for Education Development Action and Research

(CEDAR)

Annual Report 2025-2026

CENTRE FOR EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT ACTION AND RESEARCH (CEDAR)

Annual Report 2025–2026

Presented to the Board of Trustees

I am pleased to present the Annual Activity Report of the Centre for Education Development Action and Research (CEDAR) for the year 2025–2026.

The year under review has been one of meaningful growth, deeper reflection, expanding partnerships, and visible strengthening of our child-centred educational interventions. Across our Children's Resource Centres (CRCs), school collaborations, safeguarding programmes, art pedagogy initiatives, and community engagement efforts, CEDAR continued to remain committed to its vision of protecting the rights and dignity of every child and young person.

This year particularly demonstrated the growing maturity of our Alternative Art Pedagogy model. Photography, drawing, theatre, storytelling, reflective writing, and participatory learning increasingly evolved from isolated activities into integrated educational processes that nurtured observation, emotional expression, critical thinking, confidence, and agency among children.

One of the major developments during the year was the increasing recognition of CEDAR's work by schools, government institutions, local bodies, and communities. Our photography and art exhibitions in Thoothukudi, school collaborations in Trichy and Thoothukudi, and public interactions around children's creative work demonstrated that children from marginalised communities can become creators, interpreters, and contributors when provided with democratic and enabling learning spaces.

Child safeguarding remained central throughout the year. Programmes addressing body safety, emotional wellbeing, nutrition awareness, online safety, and responsive interventions in vulnerable child cases reinforced our belief that meaningful education cannot be separated from protection, emotional care, dignity, and wellbeing.

Another encouraging development was the visible growth of community participation and ownership. Parents, facilitators, local advocates, Panchayat representatives, schools, and volunteers increasingly participated in programme implementation and problem-solving processes. Children

themselves also demonstrated growing confidence and leadership through Children's Collectives, public exhibitions, and community engagement.

At the same time, the year also highlighted several ongoing challenges. The emotional vulnerability of children from difficult socio-economic contexts, foundational learning gaps—especially in English language learning—and the need for deeper parental and community engagement continue to require sustained attention.

The report also reflects important organisational developments, including strengthened communication systems, enhanced social media presence, facilitator training, programme reflection processes, and valuable engagement with trustees and collaborators.

On behalf of CEDAR, I would like to place on record our sincere gratitude to Paper Boat Charity UK, Gate1 Foundation USA, our trustees, supporters, collaborators, schools, facilitators, volunteers, and community members for their continued trust and encouragement.

I submit this report to the Annual Board of Trustees Meeting for review, reflection, and guidance as we continue to strengthen CEDAR's long-term vision of child-centred, creative, and socially transformative education.

With warm regards,

Dr. Chinnaraj Joseph Jaikumar
Managing Trustee & CEO
CEDAR

1. INTRODUCTION

CEDAR continued its work during 2025–2026 through an integrated approach combining child rights, child protection, foundational learning, creative pedagogy, community participation, and school collaboration. The Children's Resource Centres (CRCs) functioned as democratic learning spaces where creativity, emotional expression, safety, reflection, and collaborative learning were encouraged.

Throughout the year, CEDAR consistently attempted to move beyond examination-driven education and nurture self-expression, confidence, observation, and critical thinking among children. Photography, drawing, theatre, storytelling, games, discussions, and community participation became important pedagogical tools.

The year also demonstrated increasing recognition of CEDAR's Alternative Art Pedagogy among schools, local institutions, and communities. Public exhibitions, photography projects, school collaborations, and child-centred learning activities showed that creative pedagogy can meaningfully contribute to both educational and social transformation.

At the same time, child safeguarding and emotional wellbeing remained central to all interventions. Awareness programmes, nutrition initiatives, counselling support, parental engagement, and responsive follow-up in vulnerable child cases reflected CEDAR's holistic understanding of child development.

2. CHILD RIGHTS AND CHILD SAFEGUARDING

2.1 Child Safety Awareness Programme – Lingavadi



Child Safeguarding Professional Sarath in Session 21 July 2025

The year began with a Child Rights and Child Safety Awareness Programme at Lingavadi village involving children aged 10–15 years. The programme

coordinated by Dr. Thressia with facilitation support from Mr. Sarath, focused on body autonomy, good touch and bad touch, personal safety, and children's rights.

Children also participated in group discussions identifying positive and negative aspects of their villages and schools. They raised concerns regarding open defecation, alcoholism, caste tensions, poor sanitation, lack of privacy in school toilets, and unequal facilities between teachers and students.

The programme highlighted children's awareness of social inequalities affecting their lives and became an important platform for expression and civic participation. Follow-up plans included individual counselling support, school sanitation advocacy, and stronger engagement with local authorities.

2.2 Child Support and Responsive Intervention

Case Support: Child "Karthick" (Name changed)

CEDAR continued to support a vulnerable adolescent child referred to as "Karthick" for confidentiality. After being admitted to a government hostel in Thoothukudi, the child left without informing anyone. Mr. Michaelraj and Mr. Marikannan searched for him across the town and eventually located him.

The child expressed frustration towards hostel discipline and formal education. Through repeated counselling and emotional engagement, the team gradually convinced him to return to school.

The case demonstrated the emotional vulnerability of adolescents from unstable family backgrounds and reaffirmed the importance of sustained relational support, mentorship, and long-term follow-up.

Case Support: Sarathi (Name changed) – Keelaeral

Another important intervention involved six-year-old Sarathi from Keelaeral. Regular attendance monitoring helped facilitators identify serious health concerns. Through coordinated support from facilitators, volunteers, and networks, Sharathi received specialised treatment in Chennai and gradually recovered.

The case demonstrated the importance of close community relationships, facilitator responsiveness, and integrated care beyond classroom learning.

2.3 Nutrition Awareness Programmes



Nutrition Awareness Programme, Keela Eral & Kovilpatti, 20, 23 sept 2025

CEDAR organised Nutrition Awareness Programmes in Kovilpatti and Keelaeral involving mothers, pregnant women, and adolescent girls.

The programmes, coordinated by Mr. Michaelraj and Mr. Marikannan with guidance from Dr. Velu Prakash Narayanan, focused on antenatal care, nutrition, hygiene, safe caregiving practices, and the dangers of junk food.

The initiative reached:

- 67 mothers from seven villages
- 65 mothers from five villages in Kovilpatti
- 14 adolescent girls

These programmes expanded CEDAR's child protection framework towards preventive healthcare and holistic wellbeing.

3. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PARENT ENGAGEMENT



Parents Collective Meetings, at Lingavadi, 12 Nov 2025

Parent participation significantly increased during the year, especially in Lingavadi and Pungavarnatham.

In Lingavadi, parents engaged more deeply with CEDAR's educational philosophy and raised concerns regarding youth unemployment and digital exclusion. This led to discussions on introducing Digital Literacy Programmes.

In Pungavarnatham, parents collectively approached Panchayat authorities

demanding improvements in lighting, sanitation, and ventilation facilities. Their successful petition resulted in visible improvements in the learning environment.

A strong example of community ownership also emerged in Thomas Nagar, Kovilpatti, where local advocates organised a child-centred emotional wellbeing and safety programme with CEDAR's support. Facilitated by Ms. Sherin, the programme addressed stress management, meditation, mental health, emotional wellbeing, and legal awareness.
The sessions demonstrated how community-led initiatives can become powerful mechanisms for child wellbeing when participation and local ownership are encouraged.

4. CHILDREN'S COLLECTIVES AND CHILD AGENCY


Children's Collective Meetings, Keela Eral 1 & 2, 28 Nov 2025

Children's Collectives across Kovilpatti and other CRCs continued strengthening leadership, participation, and problem-solving among children.
In Keelaeral, children identified practical issues affecting their learning environment, including power cuts and lack of educational resources. Instead of waiting for adults, the children mobilised community support and secured emergency lights and a blackboard.
The process demonstrated growing confidence, collective thinking, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities among children.

5. FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMMES


Foundational Skill Classes, Lingavadi, 20 Dec 2026

Foundational learning programmes in Tamil, Mathematics, and English continued throughout the year.

Tamil and Mathematics Level 1 manuals were implemented across centres, with facilitators reporting positive progress in comprehension, participation, and confidence.

English learning remained one of the most challenging areas, as many children associated English with hierarchy and fear rather than communication. To address this:

- Two-letter word learning modules were introduced for Classes 1 and 2
- Lingavadi became a pilot centre for contextual play-way English learning
- Creative and technology-based methods were integrated into language learning

CEDAR's evolving approach sought to reduce fear and increase confidence in English learning.

6. ALTERNATIVE ART PEDAGOGY

Alternative Art Pedagogy remained central to CEDAR's educational approach. Art was treated not as an extracurricular activity but as a democratic learning process helping children observe, express, reflect, imagine, and engage critically with their surroundings.

6.1 Photography as Pedagogy

Creative Photography continued to evolve into one of CEDAR's most impactful interventions.

Children learned framing, composition, storytelling, reflection writing, and visual interpretation while documenting local livelihoods, community life, and environmental realities.

Sivanthakulam Collaboration

The Sivanthakulam School collaboration became a major milestone during the year. Out of 350 photographs taken by children, 150 were selected for deeper reflective work and compiled into a sample Photo Essay Book.

Focus Group Discussions showed that photography helped children:

- Express emotions
- Develop curiosity

- Improve English communication
- Become self-driven learners
- Observe surroundings critically
- Ask meaningful questions



Dr.Chinnaraj Conducted FGD with Teachers and Student, 31 July 2025

The project demonstrated the integration of creativity, language learning, and reflective pedagogy.

6.2 Thoothukudi Book Fair Photography Exhibition

CEDAR's participation in the Thoothukudi Book Fair Festival 2025 marked one of the most important public events of the year.

Held from 23–31 August 2025 at Tharuvai Grounds, the exhibition showcased children's photography work and attracted:

- 25 private schools
- 10 Corporation schools
- 4 colleges
- 1,457 visitors

Distinguished visitors included MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi, Minister P. Geetha Jeevan, District Collector K. Elambahavath IAS, and

Mayor Jegan Periyasamy.

A particularly significant feature was the “Children Teaching Children” initiative where CEDAR children themselves explained photography concepts to visitors.







Photo Essay Book Release at Thoothukudi 25 Aug 2025

The exhibition became a powerful public recognition of children from marginalised communities as creators, artists, and knowledge-holders.

6.3 Drawing, Theatre and Silambam







Art Camps: Pungavarnatham & Lingavadi 29, 30 Sept 2025

Drawing and painting programmes across CRCs and schools encouraged children to explore pencil drawing, origami, mask making, abstract art, and colour experimentation.

At Lingavadi, children participated in highly engaging abstract art sessions using Plaster of Paris and colour mixing techniques. Facilitators observed strong emotional engagement, imagination, and joy.

Theatre sessions led by Mr. Balaji encouraged children to think critically, identify emotions, ask questions, and express themselves confidently.

Silambam training introduced discipline, body coordination, concentration, and cultural identity, reflecting CEDAR's holistic approach integrating physical, emotional, and creative learning.

6.4 Photo Exhibition at Lingavadi



Community Exhibition at Lingavadi

On feb14th, 2026, CEDAR organised a community photo exhibition on village life using photos taken by the children. Children also staged their theatre performance on themes were Self, Family, Community, and Identity, examining personal growth, relationships, social responsibility, and cultural self-perception.

7. ART CAMPS AND CREATIVE LEARNING SPACES

7.1 Kovilpatti Art Camp



Art Camp: Theatre Workshop, Pungavartham 29, 30 sept 2025

CEDAR organised a two-day Art Camp in Kovilpatti involving 81 children from 12 villages.

The camp included theatre, drawing, and Silambam sessions. Facilitators observed increased confidence, joyful participation, curiosity, experimentation, and strong peer interaction among children.

The programme concluded with performances and presentations showcasing children's learning.

7.2 Lingavadi Art Camp



Mask making Workship, Lingavadi, 29, 30 sept 2025

A one-week Art Camp at Lingavadi focused on creative exploration, sensory engagement, imagination, and experimentation.

Activities included mask making, abstract art, colour mixing, and material experimentation. The camp created a highly participatory and emotionally vibrant learning environment.

8. SCHOOL COLLABORATIONS



Photography workshop, Corporation School, Trichy, 22 Nov 2025

CEDAR strengthened collaborations with Tamil Baptist Schools, Corporation Schools, and schools in Trichy during the year.

Drawing and photography workshops enabled children to explore local

livelihoods, storytelling, observation, and creative expression. Exhibitions displayed 60 photographs and 45 drawings and received appreciation from DEOs, teachers, parents, and local communities.

The Trichy collaboration involving E. Pudhur and Pirattiyur schools progressed into field photography where children worked in 12 teams conducting field shoots, editing photographs, and preparing written reflections.

CEDAR also participated in the Kalvi Seer Varisai programme at a Corporation School in Thoothukudi, where parents and teachers engaged with the organisation's philosophy and pedagogy.

These collaborations demonstrated growing institutional recognition of child-centred creative learning approaches.

9. CREATIVE WRITING AND ENGAL KURAL

During Q3, CEDAR redesigned the Engal Kural initiative by first strengthening facilitators' writing confidence before engaging children.

Under the leadership of Mr. Balaji, facilitators collaboratively designed the structure of the proposed magazine and participated in writing exercises focusing on stories, poems, articles, and caricatures.

This approach strengthened facilitator ownership and laid the foundation for more meaningful creative writing engagement with children.

10. GAMES, SPORTS AND NEW COLLABORATIONS



Chess for Girls, USA Founder Iniya with Children, June 2025

CEDAR expanded its learning ecosystem through a collaboration with Chess for Girls, founded by Iniya Mathivanan from San Diego, California.

The programme included chess workshops, tournaments, and strategic thinking exercises that strengthened concentration, analytical thinking, and

confidence among children.

11. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION

CEDAR strengthened its communication and institutional identity during the year.

Under Ms. Jennifer's leadership, social media communication became more consistent, visually coherent, and strategically organised using Hanna's Brand Booklet as a guiding framework.

Important organisational strengthening also occurred during the visit of Ms. Deborah from Paper Boat Charity UK. Her visit included:

- Child safety and online safety workshops
- Staff engagement sessions
- Programme review discussions
- Facilitator capacity-building workshops
- Field visits across centres

The visit strengthened team confidence, institutional reflection, emotional literacy, and programme validation.

12. OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The year 2025–2026 demonstrated significant progress across multiple dimensions of CEDAR's work.

Major Outcomes

Child Safeguarding and Wellbeing

- Increased awareness regarding body safety and child rights
- Stronger follow-up mechanisms for vulnerable children
- Expanded health and nutrition awareness among mothers and adolescent girls
- Greater integration of emotional wellbeing into educational programming

Child Agency and Participation

- Children increasingly participated in solving community problems
- Greater confidence in exhibitions, presentations, and public communication
- Improved leadership and collaborative learning skills

Alternative Art Pedagogy

- Photography evolved into a strong reflective and educational tool
- Children demonstrated improved observation, creativity, and emotional expression
- Public exhibitions validated children's creative capacities
- Art became integrated with language learning and civic awareness

Community Ownership

- Parent participation increased significantly
- Communities advocated for improved child learning environments
- Local institutions increasingly collaborated with CEDAR

Organisational Strengthening

- Communication and branding improved substantially
- Facilitator capacities strengthened through training and reflection
- Institutional learning and partnerships deepened

13. CHALLENGES AND REFLECTIONS

The year also highlighted several important challenges.

- Many children continue to experience fear and anxiety around English language learning due to its association with hierarchy and social power.
- Several vulnerable child cases revealed the need for sustained emotional support systems beyond educational intervention.
- While parental participation improved, deeper engagement—especially involving fathers—remains limited.
- As institutional interest in CEDAR's pedagogy increases, maintaining programme quality, facilitator preparedness, and reflective practice will become increasingly important.

14. GATE-1 FOUNDATION, USA

Infrastructure Development for the Lingavadi Children's Creative Learning Centre

The year 2025 marked a significant milestone in CEDAR's long-term vision of creating a child-centred alternative learning environment at Lingavadi. The Children's Creative Learning Centre project emerged not merely as an infrastructure initiative, but as an attempt to create a democratic, ecological, and creative educational space for marginalised rural children. The project,

supported by the Gate-1 Foundation, USA, sought to transform a difficult and underdeveloped landscape into a functional and inspiring environment for children's learning, creativity, and community engagement.

The Lingavadi site was selected because of its strategic and educational potential. Situated amidst a scenic natural setting and located as a nodal point connecting six surrounding villages, the land offered long-term possibilities for a regional children's learning hub. At the same time, the site posed major construction challenges.

The terrain was uneven and erosion-prone, with gravelly and depleted soil conditions that required extensive preparatory work before any meaningful infrastructure development could begin.

Core infrastructure development activities were started in May 2025.



Fencing



Creating the Canopy for Children



The initial phase of work focused on establishing the site physically and symbolically as a children's learning space. A project signboard acknowledging the partnership between CEDAR and Gate-1 Foundation was installed in May 2025. Simultaneously, land clearing and levelling activities were initiated to create an accessible entry point and immediate usable space for children. Existing trees were carefully retained wherever possible to preserve shade and ecological balance.

Securing the site was another major priority. Fencing work was undertaken along the western and southern boundaries to protect the land and demarcate the future campus area. A specially designed entrance gate with child-friendly visual motifs was fabricated and installed, symbolically communicating that the site belonged to children and their imagination.

Recognising the need for immediate activity spaces even during the

construction phase, a temporary sail canopy was erected to provide shelter for children's programmes and gatherings. Additional levelling work created open activity areas under the tree canopy, allowing children to begin using the space for art camps and creative learning sessions at an early stage of development.



Children's Camp at Lingavadi centre

A substantial amount of effort was invested in ecological and terrain management. The upper reaches of the land were heavily eroded and strewn with stones, requiring extensive manual labour for clearing and stabilisation. Stones collected from the site were reused to strengthen bunds and prevent further erosion. In addition, approximately 200 units of soil and silt were transported from a nearby local council desilting project to improve soil quality and facilitate levelling across the site.



Securing power



Ramp

Access within the hilly terrain was improved through the construction of a ramp using discarded local boulders and traditional labour-intensive methods. This approach reduced material costs while integrating local knowledge and sustainable construction practices into the project.

Basic utility infrastructure also received considerable attention during the reporting period. A temporary washroom facility for visitors and programme participants was constructed, while electricity was connected from the main

grid to support construction work, lighting, and water pumping needs. Subsequently, a new submersible water pump was installed in the existing borewell, followed by plumbing works that enabled water access across multiple points of the site. More than 600 feet of CPVC pipeline was laid to facilitate irrigation, construction activities, and future campus use. Given the fragile terrain and the risk of water runoff, special emphasis was placed on rainwater management and erosion control. A drainage and groundwater recharge canal extending approximately 1000 feet was constructed along the boundary areas. The project adopted environmentally sensitive approaches inspired by architect Jateen Lad's recommendations, including the use of low-carbon red gravel plastering techniques and the planting of Chrysopogon zizanioides grass to strengthen the soil naturally and reduce erosion.


Test pit


Jateen explaining soil condition


Erosion Prevention

The project also benefited significantly from the site visit and technical guidance of RIBA architect Jateen Lad, supported by Paperboat, UK. His engagement contributed to the evolution of a bottom-up architectural vision rooted in children's experiences, ecological sustainability, and participatory design. The consultations involved children, staff members, and local stakeholders in discussions about zoning, spatial use, and long-term development possibilities. The process reinforced CEDAR's belief that educational spaces must emerge from dialogue with communities rather than from purely top-down architectural planning.


Jateen with workers



Test pit


Jateen with CEDAR staff



Rainwater drainage canals

Importantly, even during this early phase of infrastructure development, the site actively functioned as a children's creative learning environment. Summer, Pooja, and Diwali holiday art camps were conducted at the facility, where children engaged in drawing, photography, folk arts, performance, and collaborative activities.



Diwali celebration at lingavadi site

These programmes demonstrated the immediate educational value of the evolving campus and reaffirmed the project's core philosophy: infrastructure is meaningful only when it becomes a living space for children's creativity, participation, and joyful learning.

Overall, the Lingavadi Children's Creative Learning Centre project represents

an important experiment in integrating infrastructure development, ecological sensitivity, participatory design, and alternative education. Rather than pursuing rapid construction alone, the project adopted a phased and reflective approach that prioritised sustainability, child-centred space-making, and community involvement. The developments achieved during 2025 have laid a strong foundation for the future expansion of the campus into a vibrant regional centre for creative learning, art pedagogy, and child empowerment.

15. THE WAY FORWARD

In the coming year, CEDAR aims to:

- Strengthen safeguarding systems and emotional wellbeing programmes
- Expand Alternative Art Pedagogy into more schools
- Deepen foundational learning methodologies
- Strengthen facilitator training and reflective practice
- Increase parent and community participation
- Expand photography and filmmaking pedagogy
- Develop contextual English learning models
- Increase children's civic participation and public engagement
- Strengthen institutional sustainability and partnerships
- Develop lingavadi infrastructure for enhancing sustainability

CEDAR remains committed to positioning children not merely as recipients of educational services but as creators, thinkers, storytellers, artists, and active citizens.

CONCLUSION

The year 2025–2026 marked an important phase in CEDAR's institutional journey. Across CRCs, schools, exhibitions, workshops, and community spaces, children increasingly emerged as active learners, creators, and participants.

The year reaffirmed that meaningful education must move beyond examinations and memorisation to include creativity, emotional wellbeing, critical thinking, participation, and dignity.

The growing recognition of CEDAR's work by schools, parents, local institutions, trustees, and communities has created important possibilities for

future expansion and deeper impact.

At the same time, the organisation recognises the need for continued strengthening in safeguarding follow-up, foundational learning, parental participation, facilitator development, and programme documentation.

Gate-1 collaboration to develop a Children's Creative Learning Centre has reached a significant stage with the necessary infrastructure preparation completed.

As CEDAR moves forward, it remains committed to building democratic and child-centred learning ecosystems where creativity, emotional safety, and social participation remain central to educational transformation.

The report is respectfully submitted before the Board of Trustees for review, guidance, and future direction.

Dr. Chinnaraj Joseph Jaikumar
Managing Trustee & CEO
CEDAR
June 18, 2026



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