

# “CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES IN INDIA”

## A BRIEF STATUS REPORT

### ABOUT VAAN MUHIL ORGANISATION

Vaan Muhil Trust, registered as a non – profit making, Non-Governmental Organization based in Tirunelveli has been working for the welfare and the rights of children, rural women, working adolescent girls, rural youth, unorganized workers and migrant labourers in over 100 villages in Tirunelveli, Tenkasi, Thoothukudi and Virudhunagar districts for the last 20 years.

Vaan Muhil has been collaborating with a few educational institutions in Southern Tamil Nadu and conducting trainings, workshops and consultations on specific thematic focus and creating awareness among students. Public education programs, formation of community support groups, running community resource centres, strengthening of workers collectives, campaigning, legal interventions, networking and collaboration are the key strategies that we adopt to materialize our objectives.

Based on the experiences, Vaan Muhil strongly believes that creating a culture of human rights among younger minds will have lasting impact on the society and the trained young children will be agents of



change in our society, which is hierarchical and male dominant. These children will pro-actively be involved in number of activities at different levels. Apart from attitudinal changes among the younger generation, the skills required for human rights interventions will be handy for them to fight any kind of injustice and discrimination. Therefore, a proposed Constitutional Rights Education training programs in schools and communities will be necessary.

Project on “Constitutional rights education in Schools and Communities in India” has been planned, promoted and implementing in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Odisha and the Union Territory of Puducherry (3 States and one Union Territory in India) since January 2021 to December 2023.

### **PROJECT OBJECTIVE(S)**

1. Children in and out of schools are participating in promoting, protecting and asserting their rights
2. Tamil Nadu Catholic religious Institutions and Catholic Diocesan Schools, state education departments in Karnataka and Odisha, school administrations, teachers work towards making their schools Child friendly, respecting their human rights
3. Vaan Muhil’s stakeholders are actively engaging in the Constitution Rights to education movement and advocating for inclusion of CRE in education process



The CRE programme for children in 125 villages in 16 districts in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry has taken off, in collaboration with 10 NGOs and grassroots movements across the state and we have a very good mix of villages and urban centres with fair geographic representation and the composition of the participating children in our program in communities is diverse.

### **FOCUS ON DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN**

There are children from Adivasi communities, arunthathiyars, dalits, fisherfolks, Muslims and Christians, Denotified communities and backward sections and of course the physically challenged. We will have very rich experiences from these children of diverse backgrounds and the cross learnings among them will be great!

### **ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**

Ten civil society organizations working on child protection and human rights issues at the grassroots level in different parts of the state have been approached to take up CRE programme through their child activity centers or community resource centers and adolescent girls’ groups in their communities. These CSOs have identified ten communities each, to take up CRE programme from June onwards and to form CRE clubs among the children, after the training programmes for the facilitators.

Series of online consultations with the NGO partners were held by way of preparing themselves and to give them a comprehensive picture on the CRE project in communities.

Village profiles for all 125 communities have been prepared by the community based trainers (facilitators) by way of preparing the CRE project in an effect way in their communities.

A structured format was given to the facilitators to collect basic details about the villages and the socio economic conditions of the people so that the project team better understands the ground realities in the villages where CRE project is being carried out.

All the NGOs started preparing the details of the children in their communities and these details were compiled by the project team before the start of the program.

## **GENDER FOCUS**

The project in all its activities will make genuine efforts to have at least 50% of total participation and beneficiaries to be girl students. The project through all its actions and programs will systematically ensure to have gender balance and promote girl child education through all its activities. Given the backdrop of the society in the above sections, it is believed that women in these communities face more violations because of society being patriarchal. Hence, the project will be implemented to address gender concerning issues within the target communities also. The module on gender for students will help in achieving this.

Children in and out of schools are participating in promoting, protecting and asserting their rights. It is a kind of outreach activity which will help children and teachers to reach the community through its various club activities. Meaningful involvement of the students in concrete cases will deepen their understanding of human rights and make them as agents of change and strong future human rights defenders.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The second area of our engagement with children in schools is through our proposed community engagement in human rights through our HRE children where they along with their teachers jointly work on local human rights issues and engage with the local community to spread human rights values within the community. For this, children and teachers will be enabled to access valuable resource materials, which we plan to provide both in print /digital form. HRE clubs in communities will be functioning in 10 districts in Tamil Nadu, with the support of NGOs and respective community educators will be in charge of running the HRE clubs in the villages.

Civil Society Organizations and Movements working at the grassroots level will be one of the external stakeholders in the implementation of HRE project in some of the districts, particularly to run human rights clubs in communities. There are civil society organizations which have adolescent girls and boys groups, child activity centres and community resource centres through which they will be able to effectively take

up human education programs among the communities. Vaan Muhil will identify two or three civil society organizations in selected districts in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry so that they will be part of the project stakeholders. Panchayats and localized units of governance, in collaboration with the civil society organization, will be engaged with to build human rights clubs. Keeping in mind the social structures and dynamics, children from marginalized communities will be reached out and educated on human rights.

### **KEY ACTIVITIES OF THE PROJECT:**

Constitutional Rights Education (CRE) in Schools, Hostels, Communities, Training and Publications

### **STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

State Advisory Committee is Headed by Prof. V. Vasanthi Devi, Former Vice Chancellor MSU, Tirunelveli and Curriculum Committee, Headed by Prof. I. Devasahayam, Former Director, IHRE



300 middle and high schools from TANCEAN and TNCRI Institutions throughout Tamil Nadu. The focus groups will be 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> standard children (6<sup>th</sup> - first year (2021- 22), 7<sup>th</sup> – second year (2022- 23) and 8<sup>th</sup> – Third year (2023- 24).

There will be a two-day orientation programs for all selected CRE teachers and a one day CRE syllabus training for them before the formal commencement of the program. The inauguration of this pioneering programme for children in communities has made a huge impact on the children in rural areas in different parts of Tamil Nadu and created more expectations from the civil society groups about our programme.

### **LAUNCHING OF CRE PROGRAM IN COMMUNITIES**

A number of stakeholders were involved in the launching of the Programme on 21st August 2021 and the visibility materials that our team prepared for the inauguration and the two modules for our program were well received among different sections in Tamil Nadu.



## INAUGURATION OF CRE CLUBS IN 17 DISTRICTS

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### அரசமைப்பு உரிமைக் கல்வித் திட்டம்

Constitutional Rights Education Programme (CRE)

அரசமைப்பு உரிமைக் கல்வி மன்றங்களூடாக

**பெருமளவு பாதுகாப்பு நடத்தை முறைகள்**

- கொரோனா பெருந்தொற்று, பொதுமடக்கம் குறித்து குழந்தைகளிடம் உணர்த்தும்.
- பாதுகாப்பான இடை-வெளி, முக்கவசம் அணிதல், கைகளை சோப்பு போட்டுக் கழுவல்; குறித்து குழந்தைகளை விவாதித்தல்.
- கைகளைச் சுத்தம் செய்ய கிருமிநாசினியைக் களப்பணிவாளர்கள் வைத்திருத்தல்.
- மன்றக் கூட்டங்களில் பங்கேற்கும் குழந்தைகள் முக்கவசம் அணிவதை உறுதி செய்தல்.

- விளையாட்டுகளில் பங்கேற்கும் குழந்தைகளின் எண்ணிக்கை குறைவாக இருந்தல் நல்லது. அனைத்து குழந்தைகளுக்கும் சமையப்பு அளித்தல்.
- குழந்தைகளில் யாரேனும் உடல்நலக் குறையோடு இருந்தால், பெற்றோரை வரவழைத்து விட்டதற்கு அனுபபுதல்.
- கொரோனா அறிகுறிகள் இருப்பின் மருத்துவ பரிசோதனை செய்வதை உறுதி செய்தல்.
- தடுப்பூசி போடுவதை ஊக்கப்படுத்தல்.
- குழந்தைகளில் யாரேனும் மன அழுத்தத்தில் இருந்தால், அவர்களை உணர்த்தும்.

செயலாக்கம்  
**POWER Trust**

29, மாசியம்மன் கோவில் தெரு, நரசிம்பட்டம், ஆத்தூர், சேலம் மாவட்டம்

ஒருங்கிணைப்பு  
**வானமுதல்**

15, கவிதா நகர், மகாராஜா நகர் அஞ்சல், திருச்செங்கல்லை

## ORIENTATION CUM SYLLABUS TRAINING PROGRAM

The three day orientation cum syllabus training program (physical) for all facilitators from the ten organizations in 16 districts, was organized in Don Bosco youth Training Centre, Manikandam, Trichy on 21 - 23 September 2021. Nearly 70 facilitators from 10 NGOs across the state actively participated in the orientation programme.



Training inputs were given by the resource persons to the facilitators and practical tips were also given to them as to handle CRE sessions for children in the communities. Now these facilitators have started their regular sessions for the children in their respective communities with the modules given to them. Formal district level inauguration of these CRE Clubs in the communities has been initiated, involving a number of civil society groups and Government officials in their respective districts.

## ADVOCACY

The project team is taking efforts to introduce the Constitutional Rights Education Programme in Government schools. The team met the Commissioner for School Education, Mr. Nandakumar IAS on 31.07.2021 and made an appeal to him to consider the proposal to introduce the CRE programme in all Government Schools. He was very positive about our initiative.



Our team had an opportunity to meet the Chairperson of Tamil Nadu State Minorities Commission, Mr. S. Peter Alphonse and the Member of State Human Rights Commission, Justice D. Jeyachandran,



requesting them to recommend the pioneering effort to the



Government of Tamil Nadu. Both of them gave us an assurance that they would recommend this programme to the School Education Minister, Mr. Anil Mahesh Poyyamozi.



As Mr. Abdul Samadhu, MLA from Manaparai and General Secretary of Manitha Neya Makkal Katchi, raised the demand during the Tamil Nadu Assembly debate on School Education in the last Budget The Project team had a series of meetings with Rev. Fr. Don Bosco, Secretary, TANCEAN (Regional Education Commission of Tamil Nadu Catholic Bishop's Council), Chennai to explain to him about the components and the design of our Constitutional Rights Education program in schools, hostels and communities in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

#### **MEETING WITH TANCEAN MEMBERS**

The project team had an opportunity to make a presentation to TANCEAN members during their General Body Meeting on 20.03.2021 at Chennai and most of the members felt the need for such program in today's context and were convinced to take up the program in their schools from this academic year.session on 26.08.2021, which was well received by the Government of Tamil Nadu.

The team also had an opportunity to explain to the Provincial of the Chennai Jesuit Province, Rev. Dr. Jebamalai Raja on 24th March in Chennai about the proposed Constitutional Rights Education programme in the state, involving various stakeholders across the state.



He was very positive about the initiative and promised the team to extend his fullest cooperation to implement the programme in their schools and their rural evening study centers located in vulnerable areas, largely of adivasis, dalit and children from fishing communities.

The Project Team took special efforts to meet the CSI Synod and CSI Chennai Bishop in their respective offices in Chennai, seeking their support and cooperation for taking up CRE programme in schools and hostels, run by CSI Dioceses in Tamil Nadu.

The series of meetings with Mr.Fernandes Rathina Raja, General Secretary, CSI Synod, Chennai and Rev.Dr.Benjamin Inbaraj, Director of SEVA of the CSI Synod Chennai and Rev.Dr.Jeyaharan, Director of Social Justice Commission, CSI diocese, Chennai and Rev.Paul Williams, Vice President, CSI Bishop office, Chennai were fruitful and they assured the team that they would explore the possibilities of joining this collective effort from this academic year.

An online meeting was organized for selected hostel wardens on 29.03.2021 to discuss strategies on introducing CRE programme in hostels from this academic year. There were 19 hostel wardens representing different sections, boys and girls- run by catholic Sisters, Fathers, Adi Dravidar Welfare Hostels and Backward Community Hostels. Their experiential sharing was very useful to organize CRE programme for hostel students and strategies to be worked out, keeping in mind the interests, likes and dislikes of the inmates and the hostel atmosphere.

Seven experienced HRE teachers from different parts of Tamil Nadu were invited for a one-day meeting on 20th Feb. 2021 in Trichy. Particularly, their inputs on the syllabus for CRE program for schools and practical tips as to how to handle these sessions in classrooms were useful to the curriculum development committee to fine tune the CRE module. These teachers have promised to extend their support to carry out CRE program in schools in an effective manner.

### **CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

The Curriculum Development Committee prepared Module 1 for school programme. It contains eight lessons, each lesson with specific objectives and an introduction to the lesson. The module contains a lot of case studies and real stories, besides quotes and facts related to the topics. At the end of each lesson, there are group exercises for children to understand their grasp and comprehension of the topic. The lessons prepared are aimed at ensuring child participation in the class rooms and developing rights perspective among the young minds.

## **EXPECTED IMPACT OF THE PROJECT**

Keeping the overall objective as “Building foundation of young citizens in values based on human rights” the project primarily focuses on human rights clubs in schools and communities and the students of the clubs will take up human rights issues in a smaller way in their own areas. The trained students will have critical thinking and human rights perspective to act on violation of human rights at home, in school campuses and from the community where they live. These children will pro-actively involve in issues of human rights wherever necessary. And therefore the positive effects of the project will be continued, as trained children will be the agents of change in their own ways.