

**Constitutional Rights Education in Schools and Communities
in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry**

Annual Narrative Report
(January to December 2021)

Supported By
Misereor

Vaan Muhil Trust
Tirunelveli
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I. Introduction:

The activities that were undertaken in the last six months include formation of committees, preparations of the Modules for schools and community engagement and receiving feedback from the experts, establishing contacts with TANCEAN (Tamil Nadu Bishop Council Forum for Education) and TNCRI (Tamil Nadu Conference of Religious Institutions), identifying the NGOs for community engagement, meeting the members of the State Human Rights Commission, the State Commission for Minorities and the State Commission for Protection of Rights of the Children(SCPCR), contacting teachers associations, preparing NGO facilitators for community engagement, consultations with child rights and social activists on the program, preparation of the byelaws for CRE clubs and facilitators guide and preparations for the official launch of CRE Program in 125 communities in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

It was a testing time for the project team during April to June 2021, due to the spike of covid 19 cases in Tamil Nadu, subsequent lockdowns imposed by the Government of Tamil Nadu and indefinite closure of schools. Some of the staff were very badly affected with corona virus during this period. The Project team was clueless, with the uncertainty of the situation and the fear that gripped many of the staff. Even the Government itself was in a fix as to how to proceed with the surge of cases day by day and increasing number of deaths. The program staff were asked to work from home due to the increase of cases and the restrictions imposed by the State Government. Vaan Muhil strictly followed the rules and regulations given by the State and gave priority to the safety of the staff, keeping in mind the surge of the cases with the spread of the ferocious second wave in Quarter 2.

As the team realized that the start of the CRE program in schools and hostels was a near impossibility in June, as scheduled, with the closure of schools in Tamil Nadu and due to the hesitation of the parents to send their children to schools, the team decided to start working among communities, involving NGOs and grassroots movements and started identifying villages in 16 districts and preparing the facilitators slowly for CRE program in communities.

Vaan Muhil appointed eight full time staff and five part time consultants in January 2021 at the start of the project. Conscious efforts were taken to appoint experienced program staff, who were earlier engaged in Human Rights Education projects in Tamil Nadu and have good rapport with human rights teachers across the state. The key staff and the consultants were given a one-day orientation on the key components and expected outcome out of this project. Their inputs and past experiences in organizing HRE program were useful to the project team in working out concrete strategies in the implementation of the CRE program.

II. Changes in the project context:

1) significant positive or negative changes:

It is to be noted that the formation of the new Government in the State in May 2021 has provided a positive atmosphere for civil society groups to work with little more freedom, though the federal Government has remained the same, with the right-wing party at the helm in Delhi. Compared to the previous state Government, the present Government provides space to work on rights issues and allows meaningful interventions at different levels. This ambience has been conducive to effective implementation of our CRE Programme and the project team is able to interact the State Level Officials in the School Education Department and put forth the demands of introducing CRE Programme in all Government Schools. The positive signs from the officials have been encouraging and reenergizing for the project team in pushing the agenda further.

With the surge of COVID 19 cases in the wake of ferocious second wave spread, the Project Team could not effectively carry out a number of planned activities from mid-March to the end of August 2021 and this hampered the progress of the project in this academic year and many of the scheduled physical programmes in Quarter 2 and 3 could not be conducted and had to be postponed to next academic year.

The Government of Tamil Nadu imposed a lot of restrictions during the pandemic from April 2021 and the subsequent lockdowns were a challenge in organizing the physical meetings (Meetings with School Principals, Hostel Wardens, Orientation Program for the Teachers, Meetings with Curriculum Development Committee Members and Teachers' unions, besides meetings with Government Officials particularly with School Education Department, as originally scheduled for Quarter 2 and 3). Therefore, most of the activities had to be shifted to a later date. A sense of uncertainty with regard to reopening of schools in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry prevailing throughout the year, because of the pandemic situation, the project team could not plan the programmes properly and effectively as scheduled.

With the long closure of schools in Tamil Nadu due to Covid – 19 and lockdowns, there are huge learning losses among rural children. There are apprehensions among the parents and community members about the future of the children and their education prospects. Taking this view seriously, the Govt of Tamil Nadu (School Education Department) is planning for a massive campaign to bridge the learning losses among the children and planning to involve CSOs and communities in the Campaign in a largescale. Vaan Muhil has been included in the State level Advisory Body for this campaign, as the project team has been in regular touch with the School Education Department last year.

The Assembly Elections for Tamil Nadu was announced by the end of February 2021 and the code of conduct was in force and therefore a couple of programmes that were planned for March 2021 could not be conducted, due to monitoring of the State Election Commission, which put forth several conditions for organizing program in common places. The state election was held on 6th April 2021 and the results were announced on 2nd May 2021. Therefore, most of the physical programmes planned for March – April 2021 had to be temporarily suspended, while some of them had to be turned into virtual mode.

With the new restrictions and regulations on the NGOs by the Ministry of Home Affairs to open new FCRA Account and to renew FRCA, 12AA certifications, the NGOs find difficult to follow the process with the tight time schedules. There has been a sense of anxiety and uncertainty among the NGOs, particularly those who are working on rights issues, because of this tighter legal compliance that has been forced on the NGO sector every year and the NGOs have to work under continuous surveillance by the federal Government and this affects regular running of the NGOs. Newer rules and regulations with tight time schedules / deadlines by the MHA on the NGOs such as opening of the new bank account in Delhi SBI and to renew the FCRA put heavy pressure on the NGO Managements, who are not able to concentrate on their work fully and freely and eats up their energy and time. (However, Vaan Muhil Trust took maximum efforts to follow these processes and to complete the same in the time schedule stipulated by the Ministry of Home Affairs.)

Tamil Nadu experienced continuous heavy rains followed by a cyclone in November 2021 and several parts of northern and southern Tamil Nadu were literally battered by the torrential rain that lashed out. Chennai and Tuticorin were drowned in heavy floods in the last week of • It is to be noted that the formation of the new Government in the State in May 2021 has provided a positive atmosphere for civil society groups to work with little more freedom, though the federal Government has remained the same, with the right-wing party at the helm in Delhi. Compared to the previous state Government, the present Government provides space to work on rights issues and allows meaningful interventions at different levels. This ambience has been conducive to effective implementation of our CRE Programme and the project team is able to interact the State Level Officials in the School Education Department and put forth the demands of introducing CRE Programme in all Government Schools. The positive signs from the officials have been encouraging and reenergizing for the project team in pushing the agenda further.

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In a few CRE Clubs, the children started participating in Grama Sabha Meetings, which is a gathering of local people four times in a year to discuss about the implementation of developmental schemes at local body level, asking questions to the elected people's representatives and officials. This has been an interesting development after the formation of CRE Clubs in the villages and as a result of involvement and active participation of the facilitators. In future this could be replicated in other CRE Clubs in other districts.

With the emergence of the right-wing parties at the centre and religious fundamentalist groups across the country, there has been a sense of threat for the religious minority populations and the vulnerable communities such as Dalits and Adivasi groups. With scant regard for democratic principles and constitutional values, the religious fundamentalist outfits are making aggressive and malicious campaigns against the soft targets and these dangerous trends are increasing day by day and destabilizing the secular fabric of the country and democratic polity that has been consolidated for several years since the independence. The divisive and discriminatory forces are posing real threat to the communal harmony and peaceful co-existence of different communities and groups in the state. Therefore, the present situation in the country has provided an opportunity for Vaan Muhil (who are working on rights issues) to carry out the CRE programmes more effectively, involving as many stakeholders as possible to create a model in conscientizing younger generation on constitutional values and human rights standards.

2) Two changes in the organization took place during the reporting period:

- 1) The PME officer for the project could not continue his work, after he was severely affected with Corona Virus in September, 2021 and a new PME officer was appointed in October 2021. As he is an experienced person, the new PME Officer is able to carry

out the tasks assigned to him and supporting the programme staff in the implementation of the project.

- 2) There are some changes among the facilitators at district levels during quarter 4 and these changes are properly informed to Vaan Muhil by the partner NGOs in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry and the new facilitators are given proper orientation by the State Level Chief Trainer and the Assistant State Level Trainer. Some of the changes were also because of the payment of TDS (Deduction of TDS for those who receive above Rs.30,000/- in a financial year, and as a follow up of the recommendation in the Audit Report by the external auditor in August 2021, there was a detailed discussion on this point with the partner NGO Directors after the audit and a consensus was arrived at in the consultation with the Directors). However, Vaan Muhil is taking extra care not to compromise the quality of the programme and efficiency of the facilitators in implementing the project.

3) Implications of all the changes:

- a) The change in the post of PME officer does not affect the work involved. Because the new PME officer is able to grasp the issues and the components of the project easily, as he has been working with some of the reputed institutions and vast experience on rights issues. He has picked up the work very well and involved in documentation and reporting.
- b) With regard to changes in the facilitators, the project team is following them up at regular intervals and the new facilitators were trained in the second orientation training program for facilitators in December 2021. More over the partner NGOs do support to the facilitators at the local level in all possible ways

4) Effects triggered by the project:

- a) **Meaningful Engagement with Education Department:** Vaan Muhil continues to strengthen the relationship with the School Education Department at state level and two of the project team attend all state level advisory committee meetings (mostly online), organized by the Commissioner and the Director for School Education to take up to the special Programme “Illam Thedi Kalvi” (Education at door steps) and actively participated in the three day state level physical meeting on strengthening School Management Committees and School Development Plans from 18th to 20th November at Musiri, wherein 80 Master Trainers were trained for district level training Programme. In fact, our team played a major role in finalizing the three days Programme schedule and designing the entire Programme for the master trainers.

- b) **Inclusion of our demand in the State Policy for Children:** The Government of Tamil Nadu released the State Children Policy – 2021 on 20th November, after eight years of National Children’s Policy. Though there are some gaps in the policy, on the whole it is good and our demand of introducing CRE syllabus in all government and government aided schools in Tamil Nadu has been incorporated in the Policy, for which Vaan Muhil is thankful to the Social Welfare Department. This will help us to push our agenda with the School Education Department to introduce CRE syllabus in all schools for the next academic year.
- c) **Involving Elected Local Body Members and Government Officials:** The project team involved all partner NGOs in the meaningful celebration of National Children’s Day and most of the CRE clubs actively and creatively participated in the children’s day celebrations between 14th to 20th November. The partner NGOs have organized the inaugural functions of CRE clubs in each of the villages in October - November and they have invited number of government officials, District Legal Services Authorities, elected Panchayat Raj Leaders and other Civil Society Groups to the Programme, wherever possible. This has created visibility about our CRE Programme to some extent in their villages and among different stakeholders at panchayat and block levels. Number of government officials at local level and child protection structures at district level has come to know about our CRE Programme through the inauguration at panchayat level and through visibility materials that we prepared. The partner NGOs developed rapport building with District Level Education Officers and Child Protection Officials and their association has been very useful to effectively carryout CRE Programme for children and communities and in schools later.







d) **Participation of DLSA Officials and Judicial Officers:** The partner NGOs took efforts to invite District Legal Service Authorities and Judicial Officers for the inauguration of District Level CRE Programme and their participation in the CRE Programme added weightage and created visibility at the district level. Reading Materials and copies of the modules were provided to the judicial officers invited for the inauguration so that they come to know about the contents and design of the CRE Programme. Their involvement in the inauguration would be helpful to the local partners to effectively carryout CRE Programme in their respective district and the partners could seek their support whenever they need.



- e) **Interaction with Teacher's Unions and Child Protection Groups:** The project team had opportunities to interact with the leaders of teacher's union such as Tamil Nadu Science Forum, Palli Kalvi Paathukaappu Iyakkam and Child Protection Groups namely, Agaram Foundation, Institute of Social Education, Right to Education Forum, TN Child Rights Watch and Campaign Against Child Labour and to discuss about CRE Programme and for possible collaborations.
- f) **Integrating SDG Goals in CRE Module for Children in Communities:** Conscious efforts have been taken to include and integrate some of the SDG Goals in CRE Modules so that the children in CRE Clubs will be involved in monitoring of specific targets related to the SDG Goals that have been taken up in the Modules. Number of exercises have been included in the module and the children can be involved in these exercises as part of their work. Most of the targets that are identified in the modules are relating to No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, Quality Education, Gender equality, Clean Water and Sanitation, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Reduced Inequality and Climate Action.
- g) **Renewal of FCRA for Vaan Muhil Trust:** Vaan Muhil submitted the application for the renewal of FCRA registration in the month of April 2021, well before the deadline given by the FCRA division, the Ministry Home Affairs. Extra care was taken to follow the instructions given in the renewal form and the management is regularly following up. Vaan Muhil has received renewal certificate on 18th December 2021.
- h) **Opening of FCRA Account in New Delhi SBI Main Branch:** A new FCRA Account to Vaan Muhil Trust has been opened in State Bank of India Main Branch in New Delhi in Quarter 1, as per the regulations of the Ministry of the Home Affairs, following the rules of FCRA Amendment Act. The Managing Trustee cum Executive Director took pains to complete the process of opening the new FCRA account as per the instructions of the Home Ministry by the end of February. The MHA also approved the new FCRA account number to Vaan Muhil Trust and we have started using this new FCRA account for our transactions.
- i) **Renewal of 12AA and 80G certificates for Vaan Muhil Trust:** The Managing Trustee made all efforts to renew 12AA and 80G certificates for Vaan Muhil Trust and got both of them renewed before the deadline given by the Income Tax department. The management is taking utmost care in complying the legal requirements, as per the amendments made by the Government of India.

III. Activities:

- 1) **Formation of Committees for CRE Programme:** The formation of two committees (State Advisory Committee and Curriculum Development Committee) took place

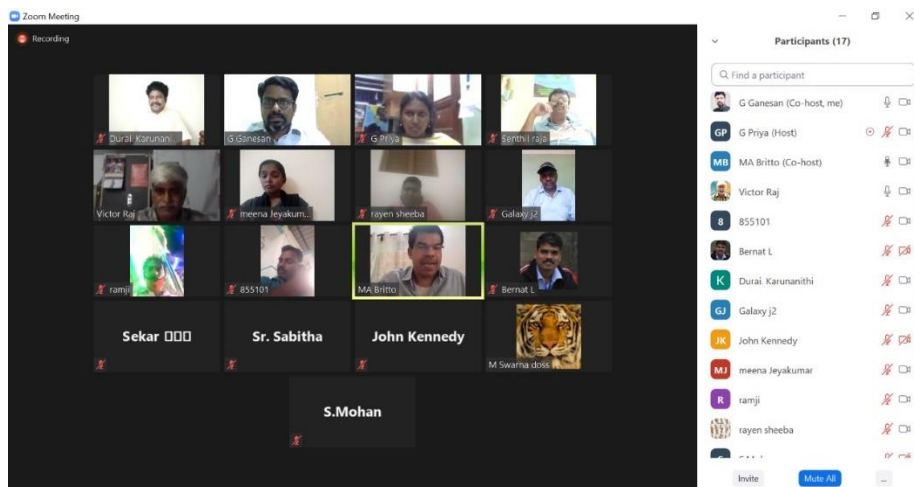
during the reporting period. The 15-member State Advisory Committee with vast experience and expertise in the fields of human rights education, social development and school education, is headed by Dr. V. Vasanthi Devi, a well-known educationist in Tamil Nadu, former Vice Chancellor of MS University, Tirunelveli. The 10 Member Curriculum Development Committee is headed by Prof. I. Devasagayam, who was the former Director of IHRE for 15 years.

2) Consultations with TANCEAN, TNCRI and CSI Synod: 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 and Leaders of TNCRI, (President, Rev. Bro. Velankanni Ravi, General Superior of Brothers of Sacred Heart of Jesus, Palayamkottai) to explain to them about the components and the design of these CRE Programme in schools, hostels and communities in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. A state level online consultation was organized for all congregations under TNCRI and TANCEAN members on 21st October 2021, which was attended by more than 70 major superiors, provincials and education coordinators of congregations and this was inaugurated by the Chairperson of Tamil Nadu Catholic Bishops Council. The one day follow up meeting on 13th November was very participatory and interactive. The Project Team took special efforts to meet the Church of South India's (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.





- 3) **Preliminary Discussions with Hostel Wardens:** 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.



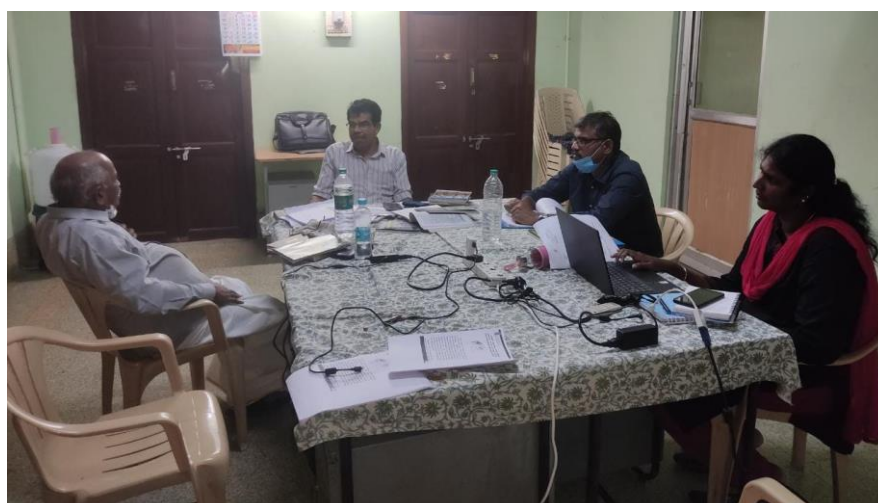
- 4) **Experiential Sharing by HRE Teachers:** Seven experienced HRE teachers from different parts of Tamil Nadu were invited for a one-day meeting on 20th Feb. 2021 in Trichy. Their inputs on the syllabus for CRE Programme for schools and practical tips as to how to handle these sessions in classrooms were useful to the curriculum development committee to fine tune the CRE module.

- 5) **Preparation of Modules for CRE Programme in Schools and Communities:** The Curriculum Development Committee prepared Module 1 for school Programme and Community engagement during the reporting period. The lessons prepared are aimed at ensuring child participation in the class rooms and developing rights perspective among the young minds. The pre final drafts were sent to a couple of experts for their



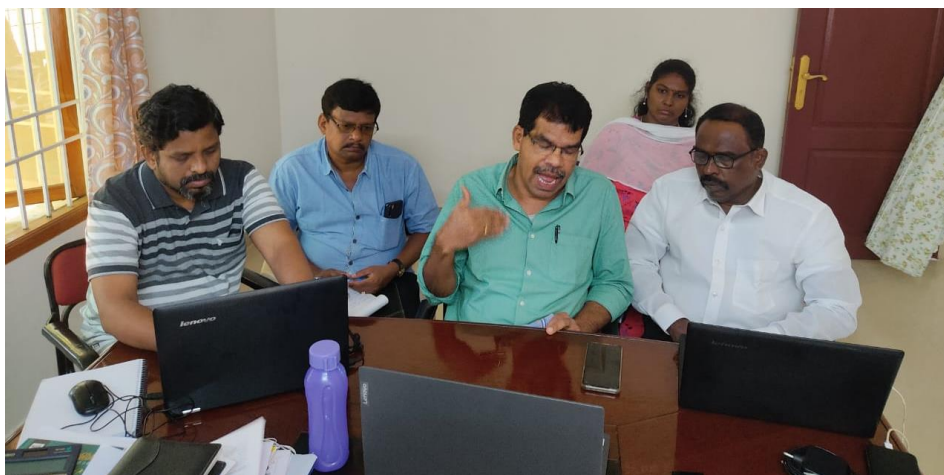
comments and feedback and after incorporating their feedback and comments on the lessons. Lot of case studies, real stories, group exercises, quotes, legal provisions and facts relevant to the lessons are incorporated in the Modules. Some of the activities and exercises for children in the Modules are aimed at highlighting relevant SDGs and the corresponding targets.

- 6) **Preparations for Digitalization of Modules for Schools and Communities:** The Project Team had discussions with three digital experts on digitalization process of modules and developing Activity APP for CRE children’s clubs. The content has been given to an experts team for digitalization of the school module, after the training Programme for teachers. The process also involved the members of curriculum development

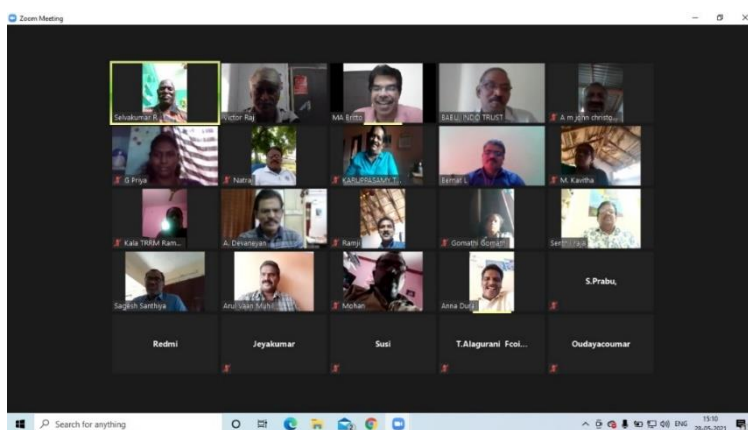


committee and their inputs has been incorporated in the design of the digital format of the modules.

- 7) Discussions with NGOs to start CRE Programme in Communities:** 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 program through their child activity centers or community resource centers and adolescent

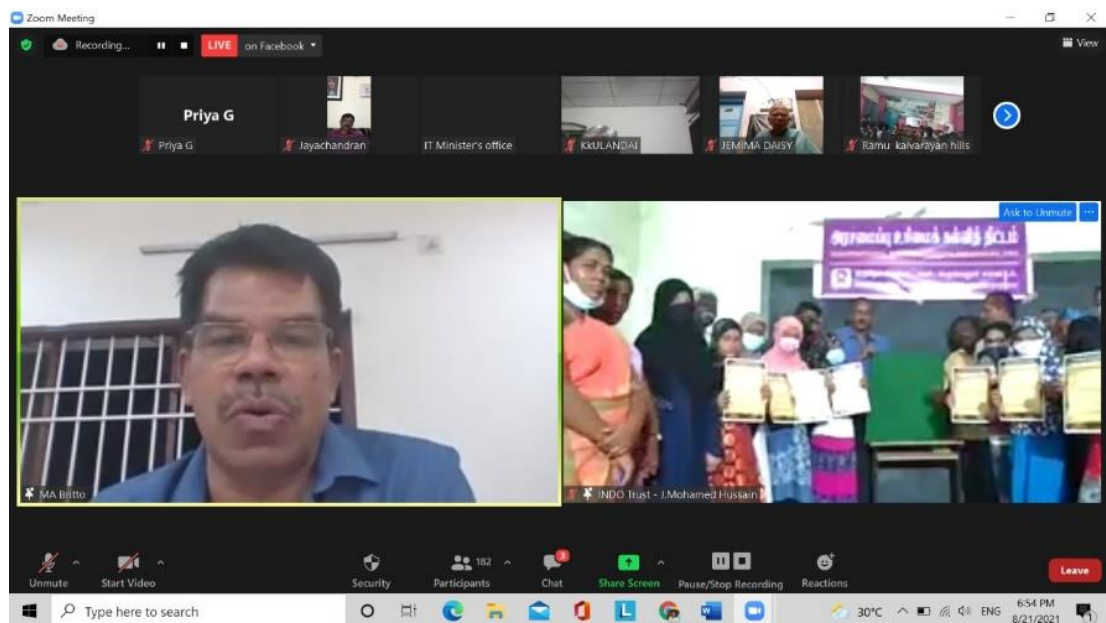
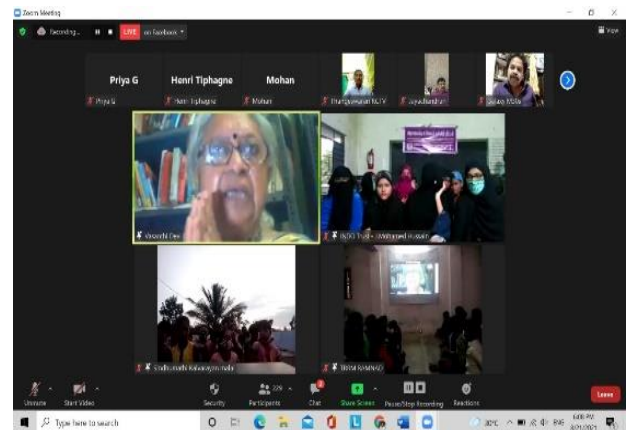
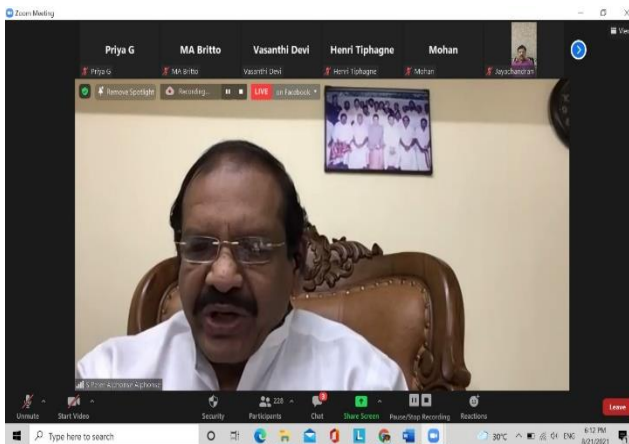


girls' groups in their communities. These CSOs have identified ten communities each, to take up CRE program from June onwards and to form CRE clubs among the children, after the training programs for the facilitators (Local Community based Trainers). Each of these CSOs has provided two or three Community based Trainers to work in the communities together with their ongoing programs. Series of online meetings (May 04th, May 12th, May 20th and May 28th) in Quarter 2 with the NGO partners were held by way of preparing themselves and to give them a comprehensive picture on the CRE project in communities. Their inputs were also received for effective implementation of the CRE program in communities and their practical suggestions were helpful to the project team in designing the training programs for the community-based trainers (facilitators) and designing module for community engagement. All the ten NGOs show keen interest in carrying out the CRE program in their communities and provide maximum support to the project team.



- 8) Preparing Community based Trainers (Facilitators) for CRE Programme:** With the list of community-based trainers from each of the ten NGOs, the project team organized series of online meetings (2nd June, 11th June, 18th June and 25th June) for them in Quarter 2. One contact person from each NGO also joined the meetings to support the programs in the districts by way of coordinating the activities and facilitation with the project team. These online meetings were useful for all facilitators and contact persons to understand the objectives and the components of the project and to understand the pedagogy to be adopted, while taking up CRE sessions for children in communities. The facilitators (community-based trainers) were properly oriented with the objectives and the expected outcomes of the project and their roles and responsibilities were also clearly mentioned through a series of weekly meetings. The facilitators were involved in rapport building with the communities and particularly with the children by way of preparing for the launch of the CRE programs. There were also inputs for the facilitators on the impact of the pandemic on the rural communities and the necessary precautions to be taken, besides the rules to be followed up as per the instructions of the government. It was accepted by the facilitators to attend weekly briefings through virtual mode and these weekly online meetings are very useful to get an update from them about the activities that are being carried out in their communities in the week and to plan a few things in the next week with regard to CRE project. The NGO Directors are properly informed by the project team about the decision taken in the facilitators weekly meetings and to get their consent for the same.
- 9) Creating a Website for CRE Programme and Subscription to Zoom:** The process of website creation for CRE Programme has been initiated. The project team has been organizing number of Programme through online mode, considering the pandemic and practical difficulties in organizing physical meetings.
- 10) Official Launching of CRE Programme for Children in Communities:** The inauguration of our CRE Programme for children in communities was held on 21st August, 2021. The Minister for Information Technology, Mr. Mano Thangaraj appreciated very much the initiative for children in communities and he made a public commitment that he would take this message to the Chief Minister and the School Education Minister and would make all possible efforts to introduce this Programme in Government schools. The short video message sent by Ms. Karin Stoll, the Consul General, German Consulate in Chennai was encouraging to us. She appreciated the partnership of MISEREOR with our organization and our efforts in this important project. The special address by the Chairperson of Tamil Nadu State Minorities Commission, Mr. Peter Alphonse highlighted the relevance and the need for such a wonderful Programme in

schools and in communities in today's context, where hate politics and religious fundamentalism literally rule the roost. The Member of the State Human Rights Commission, Mr. D. Jeyachandran and the Member of the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Mr. V.Ramaraj openly acknowledged the significance of the CRE Programme for children and promised the team that they would recommend this to the Government of Tamil Nadu. CRE clubs from 17 districts took active part in the inauguration through online and each group had the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the programme. Nearly 500 children from various villages attended the online Programme and they were very much impressed.



11) Inauguration of Village Level CRE Clubs in 17 Districts: The inauguration of CRE Clubs at Village level in all districts was organized by the NGO Partners in an effective way and the facilitators involved as many local actors in the ceremony so that very good visibilities CRE Clubs received. The elected panchayats Presidents, Community Leaders, Head Masters of local School, Local Admin Officers (Revenue Department), Women SHG Leaders, Anganwadi Workers, Representatives from welfare association, Leaders from Local NGOs were invited for the inauguration of CRE Clubs. Broader guidelines for the inauguration of CRE Clubs in villages were circulated to all NGO partners well in advance and facilitators were able to follow them accordingly. In many places there were local contributions from the communities the support local NGOs in whatever possible ways. Each of the CRE Clubs released the name boards for their club and there was also oath taking by club members and the release of child protection policy, preamble to the constitution and covid protocols by the special invitees during the inauguration. Media Coverage was done on the inauguration of CRE clubs at village level, where ever possible.





12) **Follow up meeting for TNCRI Education Coordinators in Trichy:** The one day follow up meeting on 13th November was very participatory and interactive. We explained to them in detail about the objectives of the project, the components and expected outcomes, besides our various efforts at different levels for the past 10 months, particularly about our community engagement with the support of the NGOs and club activities. Most of the participants appreciated our efforts and they felt CRE program is a timely intervention in today's context. The sharing by Mr. Henri with the participants (through online) on the need for CRE program in all Catholic schools was very effective and well received. We are planning to do the follow up this month and to initiate the process at congregational level.



13) **Meeting with State Human Rights Institutions:** Vaan Muhil approached the Tamil Nadu State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) on 01.09.2021 for its support to CRE Programme in schools and the initial discussions with the Commission was extremely positive. The project team met the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) and the Chairperson of the State Commission for Minorities (SCM) and made an appeal to them, requesting to recommend the CRE Programme to the Government of Tamil Nadu to introduce the same in all Government and Government Aided Schools in the next academic year. The Chairperson of SCM recommended the CRE Programme to school education department (Principal Secretary) to introduce CRE Programme in all Government Schools and the copy of his letter has been sent to Vaan Muhil on 28.12.2021 (Scan copy of this letter in Tamil has been enclosed as annexure).



14) **Meeting with Commissioner for School Education Department:** The project team met the Commissioner for School Education Department, Mr.Nandakumar I.A.S., on 31.08.2021 and subsequently on 25.09.2021 at Chennai to explain to him about the components, Contents and design of the CRE Programme and requested him to consider introducing the same in all Government and Government Aided Schools in the next academic year. The team also handed over the two draft CRE Modules and some of the visibility materials that were prepared earlier. He was very positive of our initiative and promised the team to look into the possibilities of introducing the syllabus in the Government Schools, after consulting the School Education Minister and the State Syllabus Formulation Committee for School Education.



15) **Meeting with Special Project Director for School Education Department:** The Project Director and the State Level Chief Trainer, as part of the State Advisory Committee for the Illam Thedi Kalvi (Education at Door Steps), had the opportunity to interact with the State Special Project Director for the School Education Department, Mr. R. Sudhan I.A.S., on 25.09.2021 and subsequently on several occasions both at Chennai and other places. The team explained to him in detail about the components, Contents and design of the CRE Programme and requested him to support the initiative and to consider introducing the same in all Government and Government Aided Schools in the next academic year. He was invited to release (Online) the Manual for CRE Clubs in Communities on 22nd December, 2021 during the two days facilitators residential training and he was highly appreciative of this unique effort in the entire country. He assured all possible support to our initiative in future.

16) **Preparations and Three days Intensive Residential Training for CRE Facilitators at Trichy:** A three days residential orientation Programme for CRE Facilitators was organized from 21st – 23rd Sep, 2021 in Trichy and totally 70 facilitators across Tamil Nadu and Puducherry actively participated in the three days training. Inputs were given to them on basic concepts relating to Human Rights and Constitutional Principles such as Rights to Equality, Non-Discrimination, Pluralism, Diversity, Secularism, Democratic Polity and basic knowledge on Child Protection Issues and Gender Equality. The Facilitators were also equipped with skills required for handling sessions on Child Rights and Human Rights, besides techniques and tips to organize CRE Club meetings at Village level, involving different stakeholders at Panchayat and block levels. There was a session to explain to them about the bye-laws for the CRE Clubs

during the three days training Programme. The Directors of Partner NGOs were invited for the last day of the Training and there was a separate planning meeting with them to workout logistics and to coordination of CRE Programme in their respective districts. A two day follow up training Programme for CRE Facilitators was organized on 21st and 22nd, 2021 at Trichy and the facilitators shared their experiences of taking CRE Classes for children in their clubs and various challenges they faced during the three months period after the inauguration in their communities.





17) **Formal Launching of District Level CRE Programme and Village Level Clubs:** The formal launching of district level inauguration of CRE Programme was organized by the local partner NGOs in all districts in November - December, 2021 and the partners roped in number of stakeholders at the district level, particularly those who are working on child protection and women empowerment. The departments of Education, Police, Social Welfare and Health were approached and their participation was ensured in the district level inauguration of CRE Programme. In many districts the judicial officers from the district courts and DLSAs were invited to inaugurate the Programme so that sufficient visibilities for our Programme were given to the officials concerned at the district level. The inauguration of CRE Clubs at Village level in all districts was organized by the NGO Partners in an effective way and the facilitators involved as many local actors in the ceremony so that very good visibilities CRE Clubs received. The elected panchayats Presidents, Community Leaders, Head Masters of local School, Local Admin Officers (Revenue Department), Women SHG Leaders,



Anganwadi Workers, Representatives from welfare association, Leaders from Local NGOs were invited for the inauguration of CRE Clubs.



18) Celebration of Children’s Day, Constitutional Day and Human Rights Day 2021:

Meaningful celebration of International Children’s Day and vibrant observance of National Children’s Day for all CRE Children throughout Tamil Nadu and Puducherry went on for a week from 14th November to 20th November 2021. Conscious efforts were taken by all facilitators and NGO directors during the week, creatively involving the children in the week-long celebrations. A State Level Webinar on the UN Theme for this year, “EQUALITY - Reducing inequalities, advancing Human Rights” was organized by the project team to meaningfully observe the International Human Rights Day last year. The project team also organized, under the banner of CRE

Programme, a special webinar on 26th November to meaningfully observe the National Constitutional Day and nearly 180 participants attended this webinar. We were able to highlight the important aspects of the Preamble to the Constitution and the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of the Constitution to the participants very clearly. This was an occasion for us to focus on the significance of our Constitutional Rights Education Programme and showcase some of the creative interventions of CRE clubs that we have started now and to highlight the relevance of Constitutional values among children.



19) **Organizing Drawing Festival for Children:** Children in our CRE Clubs were involved in drawing festival on the occasion of International Human Rights Day on 10th December and they were given a specific topic for drawing, namely “My Rights - My World”.

More than 500 children from all districts actively participated in the drawing festival and one best performance in each of the CRE Clubs to recognize their talents and duly acknowledge the same.



- 20) **Organizing Essay Competition for CRE Facilitators:** An essay competition for CRE Facilitators was organized on the occasion of International Human Rights Day to motivate them and to encourage them in writing on Human Rights Principles and Constitutional Values. Nearly 35 Facilitators came forward to participate in the essay competition and submitted the essays.
- 21) **Releasing of Promo Videos and Dissemination of Visibility Materials on CRE Programme:** Four short promo videos in Tamil have been prepared so far by our team and widely circulated among different CSOs and other groups to highlight the importance of our CRE Programme and announcing to the public (through social media). The project team is also widely circulating handouts / visibility materials on CRE Programme and E-Posters on our events to the public.
- 22) **Core Committee Meetings, Quarterly Reviews and Regular Meetings with NGO Partners:** Core Committee meetings were held regularly during the reporting period to ensure that all activities are being carried out as per original plan and to evaluate various activities under the project. The Core Committee meetings were mostly online last year, due to increase of covid cases and continuous lockdown imposed by the Government of Tamil Nadu. The feedback from the committee members were useful to realign some of the Programme and to design new Programme under each component so as to effectively implement the overall Programme. The project team had a brief review cum planning meeting with all NGO Directors to get their feedback about the inauguration and to work out concrete strategies as to how to effectively

take this Programme forward in the clubs in their communities. It was decided to organize district level launching of CRE Programme in all districts, involving district level officers from various departments and child protection structures such as CWC, DCPU, Child Line and DLSA, Members of Legislative Assembly from their constituencies and elected Panchayat Raj representatives, wherever possible.

- 23) **Revisiting and Revising CRE Modules based on Field Visits to CRE Clubs:** Based on the field visits by the team members and interactions with the children of the clubs, the project team realized the need for revisiting and revising the CRE Modules, taking into account the huge learning losses among the children due to long closure of schools during the pandemic situation. The children find a difficult to read the text fluently and analyze the subject matters of their standards. Therefore, the project team decided to revise the CRE Module, without diluting the content of the syllabus, but at the same time simplifying the subject matter and received proper opinion from the curriculum committee members on the revision of the syllabus. Though this process took some more time before finalizing the content and printing of the module, the project team felt it was a necessary move in a given context (Pandemic).
- 24) **Translation of CRE Tamil Module into English and into Odisha and Kannada:** The CRE Module 1 (We the people of India) has been translated from Tamil to English. This has been given to other State Partners in Odisha and Karnataka, who are engaged in the translation in their own regional languages. The design of the English copy is going on and the same might be used for Matriculation and other English medium schools, where CRE Programme will be taken up. All the translated versions will be uploaded in the website, when the final draft is completed. Some modifications according to their regions and languages are needed for their modules.
- 25) **Participation in State Level Conferences, Seminars and Workshops by our Team:** The team members had opportunities to participate in a number of state level conferences, seminars, meetings and workshops organized by the State School Education Department and by other Civil Society Groups / Networks / Collectives / Federations on specific themes related to Education, Child Rights, Child Protection, Gender Equality, Labour Rights, SDGs related to our thematic focus and Constitutional Rights / Human Rights. Two of our team members have been actively involved in curriculum development for the Government initiative to bridge the learning gaps among rural and poor children, involving different CSOs and academics working in this field. The contributions of the team members in these State Level Conferences, Trainings, Seminars and workshops are substantial and have been duly acknowledged by the state officials including the SPD and Additional SPD. The involvement of the team members was recognized by the School Education Department so much so that Vaan Muhil found a place in the State Level Advisory Committee for the Special

Initiative taken by the State Government during the pandemic (Education at door steps).

- 26) **Workshop on Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy organized by MISEREOR:** The two days online workshop on safeguarding policy and child protection policy gave an understanding of safeguarding and child protection issues and the mechanisms needed for addressing these issues at NGO level. The participants from Vaan Muhil benefitted through the online workshop and they were able to share the basic content discussed in the workshop with other staff members subsequently. The project director has promised to strengthen the existing mechanisms to address safeguarding and child protection issues in Vaan Muhil and planned for orientation Programme for all staff members on safeguarding and child protection policies.
- 27) **Printing, Distribution of Manual for CRE Club and its release by SPD:** A 52-page Manual for CRE Club was prepared by project team and the same was released by Mr. R. Sudhan I.A.S, Special Project Director, Tamil Nadu School Education Department, during the two day follow up training Programme for CRE Facilitators on 22nd December in Trichy. The Manual contains the Vision, Mission, Objectives of CRE Clubs and it elaborate the structure of the clubs together with the roles and responsibilities of the club members, the coordinators of the sub committees, the facilitators and the NGO Directors. It also speaks about specific rules and regulations for organizing the general body of the clubs and each and every club meeting. The guidelines for District Level Inauguration and village level clubs are enclosed in the manual. A brief write-up about the composition of the CRE Clubs and the participating the children and brief concept note of the background and the design of the CRE Programme are also enclosed in the manual to give an idea about the comprehensive nature of the CRE Programme.
- 28) **Identifying Partners in Odisha and Karnataka and Preliminary Discussions:** Vaan Muhil identified potential partners in Odisha and Karnataka to carryout CRE Programme in Schools, Hostels and Communities in these two states from second year onwards and the two NGO partners started identifying communities and local partners to initiate the Programme from January, 2022. The preliminary discussion with these two partners were held on 23rd September 2021, when the 3 days intensive training Programme for CRE facilitators was held at Trichy.
- 29) **Our Demand Raised in Tamil Nadu State Assembly:** Our demand for introducing CRE Programme in all Government schools in Tamil Nadu has been raised by one of the Members of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Abdul Samad, MNMK, to whom the project team had earlier explained about the CRE Programme and the need for taking this important Programme to all Govt schools in Tamil Nadu. Prof. Jawahirullah, the President of the same Party, gave felicitations in our inaugural function on last

Saturday. He had promised us that his party would raise this demand in the budget session and continue to pressurize the Govt. We wrote appeal letters to 8 MLAs from different parties in Tamil Nadu, with details about our CRE Programme and the need for taking this Programme in all schools in Tamil Nadu, and requesting them to include our demand in their speeches in the budget session if possible.



30) **Making use of Social Media Platform:** The CRE Project Team prepared and designed number of visibility materials and circulated among different sectors so as to give visibilities to CRE Programme continuously. Conscious efforts were taken to reach out more people through different social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and so on.

31) **Compilation of Children Profiles of the CRE Clubs in the Communities:** Vaan Muhil involved all the Ten Partner NGOs in preparing the details of all the children in their CRE Clubs in communities and these details were compiled by the project team before the start of the Programme. A total of 2662 children's profiles in 125 communities in 17 districts has been collated by the project team in Quarter 3. A Google Sheet was prepared by the project team and sent to all the facilitators to collect the details of all children in all CRE clubs. This exercise has been helpful to understand the diverse socio-economic backgrounds of the children from Adivasis, Arunthathiyars, Dalits,

Muslim and Religious Minorities, Fisher Folks, De-Notified and Backward Sections, besides the Urban Poor. Their experiences are definitely rich and the cross learning among the children will be great in future.

32) Village Profiles and Socio - Economic Conditions of the 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 effective way in their communities. A structured format was given to the community-based trainers (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. As the children and communities are diverse, these background details were of great help for the project team in designing the Module and some of the specific Programme for the CRE clubs in future depending upon the composition of the people and their socio - economic conditions.

33) Preparation and Finalization of PRE – Test Questionnaire for CRE Children: The Project team prepared a pre-test questionnaire on the CRE Programme to get to know about the knowledge level, skill sets and attitude level of the participating children before starting CRE Modules in their clubs. A structured questionnaire with 35 questions on the contents of the modules and 14 on personal information was designed in the month of November. 15% samples have been planned to take for the pre-test and a pilot was done to ensure the clarity in the content of the questions and proper methodology. The responses will be collated by the project team and the same will be used for survey after the completion of the project (January, 2024). Similar approach will be adopted for CRE Programme in Schools and the Hostels, once the formal Programme starts for schools and hostels in all the four states in June 2022

IV. Challenges faced by the Project Team during the half yearly:

1. With surge of COVID 19 cases in the wake of second wave spread, the Project Team could not effectively carry out a number of planned activities from mid-March to the end of June and this hampered the progress of the project in this academic year and many of the scheduled activities in Quarter 2 had to be postponed. Three of the staff were severely affected with Corona virus and they could not do any activity nearly for one and half months. Therefore, most of the programs had to be temporarily suspended, while some of them had to be turned into virtual mode.
2. The Government of Tamil Nadu imposed a lot of restrictions during the pandemic situation and the subsequent lockdowns were a challenge to team in organizing the physical meetings in Quarter 2 (meetings with school principals, hostel wardens, teachers, curriculum development committee members and teachers' unions, besides

meeting with government officials particularly with Education Department scheduled for Quarter 2). The orientation programs for teachers, hostel wardens and community-based trainers could not be held in quarter 2 as per our original schedule. Therefore, most of the activities had to be shifted to Quarter 3 and Quarter 4.

3. The Assembly Election for Tamil Nadu was announced by the end of February and the code of conduct was in force and therefore a couple of programme that were planned in March could not be conducted, due to monitoring of the State Election Commission, which put forth several conditions for organizing program in common places. The state election was held on 6th April and the results were announced on 2nd May.
4. With the new restrictions and regulations on the NGOs by the Ministry of Home Affairs to open new FCRA Account and to renew FRCA, 12AA certifications, the NGOs find difficult to follow the process with the tight time schedule. However, Vaan Muhil Trust took maximum efforts to follow these processes and to complete the same in the time schedule stipulated by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
5. With the long closure of schools in Tamil Nadu due to Covid – 19 and lockdowns, there are huge learning losses for rural children. There are apprehensions among the parents and community members about the future of the children. Taking this view seriously the Govt of Tamil Nadu (Education Department) is planning for a massive campaign to bridge the learning losses among the children and planning to involve CSOs and communities in the Campaign in a largescale. Vaan Muhil has been included in the State level Advisory Body for this campaign, as we have been in regular touch with the School Education Department.
6. Here in Tamil Nadu, we experience continuous heavy rains for the last one month and several parts of northern and southern Tamil Nadu were literally battered by the torrential rain that lashed in our state last month. Chennai and Tuticorin were drowned in heavy floods last week of November. I think this erratic and unpredictable rain in several parts of the state could be due to climate change. Normal life has been thrown out of gear and schools and colleges remained closed for several days due to heavy downpour continuously. Chennai recorded highest rain fall in 200 years, while southern districts received maximum rain fall, which is excessive in the recent memory. In spite of the heavy rains our work continues, though slowly and not with the speed as we expected.
7. Though the government of Tamil Nadu announced on 1st November about the opening of schools (primary, middle and high schools) after a long closure of 18 months due to the pandemic situation, but continuous rains did not make it happen, however we wished it. It was a total disappointment for us, as we planned many physical programs for our CRE project in November (such as meetings with school principals and Head Masters / school management of TNCRI and TANCEAN schools),

with the hope of opening of schools. One month has passed and we find it difficult to organize physical programs in schools and to initiate our CRE program for school children in Catholic schools, as heavy rains battered Tamil Nadu every other day. It is beyond our control.

8. We will have to work out the nitty-gritty as to the orientation program for the teachers and CRE classes in schools. There is a practical challenge for us to take the first-year syllabus to the children, as we have hardly four months in this academic year (including December). There is a suggestion from our team to take the first-year syllabus as pilot program for three months in selected CRI schools, after the orientation program for the teachers. This suggestion has been put forth, taking into consideration the huge learning losses among the children (mainly primary and middle schools – Government and Government aided schools, which are our target groups). In addition, we need to take into account the practical difficulties of the school managements, whose priority is on enhancing numeracy and literacy among the primary and middle school children in the rural areas, which was totally lost due to long and continuous closure of schools during the pandemic situation. The project team will sit and discuss among ourselves these practical difficulties and challenges faced by the school managements once again this week and initiate the process with the managements accordingly.

V. Conclusions:

- 1) The activities that were undertaken in the last one year include formation of committees, preparations of the Modules for schools and community engagement and receiving feedback from the experts, establishing contacts with TANCEAN (Tamil Nadu Bishop Council Forum for Education) and TNCRI (Tamil Nadu Conference of Religious Institutions), identifying the NGOs for community engagement, meeting the members of the State Human Rights Commission, the State Commission for Minorities and the State Commission for Protection of Rights of the Children (SCPCR), continuous engagements with the state officials of School education departments as part of our advocacy efforts, contacting teachers associations, preparing NGO facilitators for community engagement, organizing three days orientation programme for all CRE facilitators in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, two days follow up training for them, consultations with child rights and social activists on the program, preparation of the byelaws for CRE clubs and facilitators guide, preparations for the official launch of CRE Programme in 125 communities in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, inauguration of district level CRE programme and village level units,

organizing state level online programmes on important days and special events for CRE Clubs in communities.

- 2) The preparations of four promo videos on CRE Programmes and printing of visibility materials including handouts on the programme took the message to different sectors across the state. The two modules are in the process of digitalization by digital experts and the first module for school children has been translated into English and the same is being translated in Kannada and Odiya. Identifying two NGO partners to coordinate the CRE programme in Karnataka and Odisha has been over and the preparations for forming CRE clubs are on.
- 3) The project team realised the huge learning losses among the children (mainly primary and middle schools – Government and Government aided schools, which are our target groups), due to the long closure of schools and increasing digital divide among the poor children. The children find difficult to read the text fluently and analyse the subject matters of their standards. Therefore, the team felt the need for revisiting and revising the contents of the modules, after visiting some of the CRE Clubs in the villages and understanding the level of the children during the inauguration of the clubs. It was decided to revise the syllabus of the modules, without diluting the content of the syllabus. Though this process took some more time before finalizing the content and printing of the module, the project team felt it was a necessary move in the given context.
- 4) Though some of the concrete physical programmes could not be organised last year due to the pandemic and the assembly elections, most of the programmes related to community engagements were carried out by the project team along with the NGO partners in all the districts as per our plan. Therefore, the community engagement will continue and there will not be any difficulty in achieving the objectives stated in the proposal. However, the CRE Programme could not be initiated in Schools and Hostels last academic year, as originally scheduled in the project, due to long closure of schools in the country and the project team will find it difficult in materialising the objectives that we formulated in the proposal. The project team would like to specifically mention that more CRE clubs have been formed in the communities than what was planned during the reporting period. The staff are intensively following them up and more CRE clubs could be formed in communities in future, involving more CSOs and definitely these CRE Clubs would effectively function in the communities. The children of these clubs will creatively be involved in number of activities in their villages.
- 5) The CRE team made use of this time to develop rapport building with the State Level Officials in the Education Department and with State Human Rights Institutions as part of our Advocacy efforts to take CRE Programme in Government Schools in the next academic Year. Successive meetings and interactions with the school education Commissioner and

Special Project Director (SPD) during the last six months provided a good space for the team members with the officials and the statutory commissions.

- 6) Taking advantage of the lockdown period, the project team organized a series of online meetings, webinars and consultations for different stakeholders such as, TANCEAN Leaders, TNCRI & Sister's Congregations Leaders, CSI Synod, Teachers Unions, Child Rights Groups, Student Bodies, Advocates, Welfare Associations, interested individuals and academics on various important topics that were relevant to CRE Programme and specific constitution related issues. This paved way for a good visibility for CRE Programme among different sectors in Tamil Nadu and the core team has been successful in roping number of actors.
- 7) The target groups (Children of CRE Clubs) are very much interested in taking part in the club activities and they feel that CRE programme is very relevant in today's context. Unlike the regular school syllabus and stereo typed class room approaches, the CRE Programme, they feel, provide them space to interact with others, to exhibit their dormant talents and to see the ground realities from different perspectives. Many of them have literally experienced in their clubs when they started learning the first two lessons in the module for community engagement. The composition of the children in the CRE Clubs is very diverse and inclusive of different vulnerable communities (Dalits, Arunthathiyars, Adivasis, DE-Notified Communities, Fisher folk, Religious Minorities, Urban Poor / affected due to force eviction and other backward sections) and their participation in club activities such as meaningful observance of important days and special events that are being organised at regular intervals at district and state levels has been very active and creative.
- 8) It was a testing time for the project team during April to August 2021, due to the spike of covid 19 cases in Tamil Nadu and subsequent lockdowns. The Project team was clueless, with the uncertainty of the situation. Even the Government itself was in a fix as to how to proceed with the surge of cases day by day and increasing number of deaths. As the team realized that the start of the CRE program in schools and hostels was a near impossibility in June, as scheduled, with the closure of schools in Tamil Nadu and due to the hesitation of the parents to send their children to schools, the team decided to start working among communities, involving NGOs and grassroots movements and started identifying villages in 17 districts and preparing the facilitators slowly for CRE program in communities.
- 9) The project target groups feel that this project is very much relevant in today's context, particularly in the post pandemic situation, where child labour and child marriages have been on the increase in most of the villages and this kind of education will definitely develop a perspective among the target groups and play a major role in conscientizing the target groups and the community members at large. The girl children in CRE Clubs actively participate in all the programme and they feel most of the lessons in the module are

relevant to them, as this enhances their understanding of constitution / fundamental rights and freedom in the communities where they live.

- 10) Since the cases of child abuses and violence against women are increasing, the relevance of module 1 & 2 is important and facilitators are proactively engaged with number of activities carried out under the banner of CRE Clubs. As mentioned in the proposal, some of the SDGs that are relevant to our CRE Programmes are incorporated into the activities to be carried by CRE Clubs in the villages. Goal Nos 1, 2, 4, 5, 8 and 11 are more relevant to our context and the children are able to take up a few group exercises that are more appropriate under these Sustainable Development Goals.
- 11) With the emergence of right-wing parties and communal forces in Tamil Nadu, the project is more relevant than before. Because the contents of the module will create awareness among the children on important principles such as equality, secularism, democracy and pluralism in the country. As the divisive forces are trying to divide the people on religious line, purely for the political gains, constitutional rights education for children will be an effective tool to stop the communal agenda by the saffron brigades

VI. Annexure:

1. List of NGO Partners
2. Format of Children Profile
3. Format of Villages Profile
4. District & Village wise Details of CRE Clubs
5. List of Important Events & Key Activities in 2021
6. Write up on the composition and background of the CRE Children
7. Participation of Govt Officials in District Level CRE Programme
8. Pretest Format
9. Pretest Analytical Report