



CESCI

Annual Report 2024

**Nonviolence is a social virtue
to be cultivated like other virtues.**

– Mahatma Gandhi

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1. ABOUT CESCI

The Centre for Socio-Cultural Interaction (CESCI) is a non-profit organization in Tamil Nadu, India, that provides social activists training and resources for their recuperation. It focuses on the rights of landless, women, and marginalized communities, with 1000s of activists working for awareness building, social rights, and self-help groups over the past three decades.

CESCI has been focused on South India, but it has also played a role in north India through the Ekta Parishad's area of operations. In 2023-2024, it engaged in over 50 trainings and other interactions in MP, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, and Bihar. An outcome of those trainings led to dozens of actions between September 21st to October 2nd. There was a large component of women's leadership development where 500 women were identified and given support to take a range of activities. There were dozens of conferences held on many subjects related to development, peace, Gandhi, social action and nonviolence. There was also a Manipur coordinated effort with teams sent from Gujarat (teachers) and Chhattisgarh (doctors) to bring relief to people in this period of conflict.

CESCI was also involved in global programs. In the recent World Social Forum in February 2024 that occurred in Kathmandu, CESCI was partly responsible for ensuring that 150 Indian social activists came across the border. They were met by 100 Nepali land activists and together walked for a day before taking a bus up to the WSF in Kathmandu. This kind of large action was noticed by the organizers and brought the groups into a long-term collaboration.

CESCI also engaged in an international program in Canada, that help to support a peace march against nuclear weapons. There were efforts to engage the youth and local people in a Gandhian style action.

In May 2023, Rajagopal launched the Four-Fold Approach to Nonviolence, as a part of his receiving the Niwano international peace prize in Japan. The Four-Fold approach was a Buddhist rendition of what had been earlier written in the Green and White Book, as part of the Jai Jagat Manifesto. The Four-Fold Approach included: Nonviolent Education, Nonviolent Economy, Nonviolent Social Action and Nonviolent Governance. Each of these are referred to while presenting the activities of CESCI except for Nonviolent Governance. Although the reporting is primarily from South India, a few areas have been elaborated that are situated in North India as well.

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2. CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

2.1 Campus Utilisation Programs

During this financial year, from April 2023 to March 2024, a total of 945 people were accommodated by 42 organisations of which 9 are new. The CESCI campus facility was organisation utilised for 50 days. The amount generated from residential programs was approximately 20 lakh rupees.

The Nagapattinam campus was upgraded this year. Some training programs were conducted. Mr. Jimmy was managing this centre and he did excellent public relations work linking the centre with the local community.

2.2 Village Volunteers Meetings

Volunteers are the backbone of the child and women's development activities,



especially in carrying out the children's learning centres of CESCI in 14 village centres. The volunteers' meeting organised on the first week of every month, mostly on Sundays. In the meeting, the volunteers share about the progress, then hand over the

savings money of the children and the women group, which is recorded on the accounts of the children and women accordingly. Then it is credited to the bank account. Every month, volunteer meetings are usually attended by all the current

volunteers and a few past volunteers; altogether, 20 people participated in 12 different meetings.

2.3 Youth for Peace and Village Development



Mr. Suryakumar and Mr. Ravi reached out to young people in thirteen different villages. It took several months to organise them, but finally 30 young people have stepped up to work for peace and development in their community.



2.4 Women-based Programs:

Women have been organized in many villages and they have begun by creating a local bank through their own contribution to initiate economic activities. With the help of CESCI, they have also begun a stitching unit. This is inspired by the Ahimsa Santhai and Yellow Bag group.

Unlike the usual women groups where archetypal microfinance is involved, CESCI's women groups are unique. The members save money, give loans within the groups, and repay them. There is no interest charged for the money they receive. It is a mutual support group. Most of the women's group's members are mothers of one or more children who are attending the CLCs. The following table is the record of savings.

2.5 Women Federation Formation

The women group members come forward to organize as a women's federation, and the women's federation is named 'Namma CESCI Women Federation.' Thereafter, they selected the federation functionaries for a one-year term. Thus, the following members will be on the board of the Namma CESCI Women Federation, will work for the transformation of villages where peace and justice are upheld. This federation consists of a president, a secretary, a treasurer, and three members.

2.6 Women Group Program: Ahimsa Bag

A new initiative Ahimsa Bag is ventured through women groups. Two power sewing machines are installed and it is fully managed by the women group members. It is an economic activity that would bring regular and additional income to the women group members. In this regard, two power sewing machines were purchased for Rs.50000/- . Women group members are gradually making progress in the mission of eradicating the harmful plastic bags and promoting the cloth shopping bags.

3. PEACE CLUBS & PEACE EDUCATION

3.1. Children-Centered Village Program

Imparting values and instilling hope in the minds and hearts of rural children are the objectives of Namma CESCI Children's Learning Centres (CLCs). The CLCs envision the holistic development of rural children towards impartial, nonviolent, and peace-loving personalities. These centres play a pivotal role in scaffolding a child's general education, character formation, identifying hidden talents, and moulding them to become responsible citizens of the nation.

Children's Learning Centres are functioning in five Panchayats, they include Thethampatti Panchayat, Manjampatti Panchayat, Chathrapatti Panchayat, Velichanatham Panchayat, and Pikaikkarai Panchayat. In these panchayats, at 14 locations or villages, CLCs are functioning. The centres are run by qualified and committed volunteers. This academic year, 290 children are benefiting from this program. Apart from regular scheduled and programs, the children are also participating in numbers of skill-enhancing and character-building programs periodically. The CLCs is following a uniformed approach to this after school programme. A guidebook is prepared and volunteers are given orientation..

3.2 Children's Savings:

The children are encouraged to save money from their pocket money they receive from their parents or relatives. The aim of a children's saving scheme is to seed the habit of practicing economy that might help them become adults. All the money collected is recorded properly and deposited in the *Namma CESCI Children's Federation account*. At the end of the academic year, the total amount of money was taken out and distributed to them in the presence of their parents. The total amount collected in 2022-23 was Rs97,871 and in 2023-24 it was Rs29,210

3.3 Annual Summer Camp

The children's camp was organised at CESCI Campus, Majagram, Madurai, for the children of Children Learning Centres from the CESCI's working villages. The age groups of children who participated were between 12 and 17 years old. There were 40 children who actively participated in the four-day full-fledged residential camp. The camp had the following components:

- i. *Theatre Skills*: voice training, acting skills, story and drama creation, and property making.
- ii. *Craft and Art Works*: thinking, exploring, discovering, and imagining.
- iii. *Folk Dance*: Oyilattam
- iv. *Film Screening*: Ayali, a tele series addresses and raises a voice against the social and cultural factors that imposed by men to subjugate women.
- v. *Drama Creation*: Akkapor, a social and political sardonic drama.

3.4 CESCI Children's Theatre:

Children's theatre is coordinated by Mr. R. Ravi, an NSD-Bangalore (National School of Drama) graduate who has created a number of social awareness dramas with children. These dramas are played on the CESCI campus and other places. One of our children's plays in a state-level competition among schoolchildren came in 2nd place. At CLCs, Mr. Ravi visits children, identifies their creative potential, and trains them in story-telling, voice modulation, and acting. Now, a group of children is developing

a drama on alcoholism based on a real incident that took place in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, to create awareness and get 100,000 signatures to send to authorities to end liquor sales by the state. On this light, Ravi and children have created a drama '*Pothai Raja*' (King of Addiction). It has been performed six times ever since its creation. Drama is welcomed by all those viewed.

In a recent performance, on 30 January 2024, Mahatma Gandhi's death anniversary, all religious prayer meeting held at Gandhi Museum, the Gandhians, and including Dr. S. Andiappan, Director (Educational Services), Gandhi Memorial Fund, Professor Muthuraja, American College, Mr. K. R. Nantha Rao, Secretary, Gandhi Museum, Advocate M. Senthilkumar, Treasurer, Gandhi Museum, and Mr. R. Natarajan, Education Officer, Gandhi Museum and others appreciated the performance and asked take it to the street and reach out the general public.

3.5 Peace Clubs in Urban Area

Peace Clubs purpose is to inculcate the idea of nonviolence in children in many schools in and around Madurai. Mr. Saravanan and Mr. Siva, both schoolteachers, have been volunteering to engage and develop the children beyond their academic realm. It was started a couple of years ago. Teachers from government schools engage

CESCI CHILDREN'S THEATRE					
Sl.No.	Name of the Play/Drama	Theme	Location Performed	Number of Performance	Number of Viewers
1.	Iyarkkai (Nature)	Environment Awareness	CESCI CAMPUS	10	700
			Gandhi Museum	4	1200
			Yellow bag	1	120
			Children Fertility Hospital	1	80
			Chatrapatti School	2	1400
			Rotary Club	1	50
2.	Sathyarra Samuthayam (Casteless Society)	Social Issue	State Level Cultural Competition by Department of School Education 1. Madurai 2. Coimbatore 3. Chennai	3	40
3.	Negizhi (Plastic)	Environment Awareness	CESCI Campus	3	150
4.	Pothai Raja (King of Addiction)	Social Issue (Alcoholism)	CESCI Campus Gandhi Museum Chathrapatti School	6	650

themselves in this process of imparting knowledge on character formation through regular educational and cultural activities through which the children are moulded to grow socially well-behaved, nonviolent, and peace-loving human person in a violence ruling society.

A meeting on peace held at Gandhi Museum a number of children and Gandhians and general public participated. CESCI Children's Theatre performed a drama named 'Pothai Raja was enacted.



4. NONVIOLENT EDUCATION AND PEACE BUILDING

4.1 School and College Interactions: With the Centre for Life Skills Learning, we visited twelve Universities to speak to students about peace clubs. This meant that students were persuaded to reflect on Gandhi and nonviolence and what that means in their lives. The plan was to build a group of peace leaders from most of the districts of Kerala.

Six other schools and colleges were visited with the Peace and Harmony Foundation in Kannur. A daylong program was held in the Christian College in Alwa in Kerala as well.

4.2 Kerala Government Curriculum for PE: The National Curriculum Frame for School Education came out in 2023. This pressed state-level curriculum bodies to adopt and or modify the policies according to their requirements. We were part of the Kerala State Curriculum process which included a conference. Through CESCI a paper was submitted on rejuvenating some of the elements of Gandhi's Nai Talim or basic education, which was accepted and later was deemed worthy of publishing.

4.3 Online Peace Education: IGINP and CESCI partnered with NEIISR (University of Nagaland), PINE in Manipur, and Assisi Foundation, Kerala to run a 75-hour course on peace and nonviolence. This occurred between July 2023 and March 2024. Fifty students participated and received certificate.

4.4 Peace Conferences: There were two important conferences in this past year. The Peace and Harmony Foundation along with the People's Peace Movement held a three-day meeting in Kannur. A second International Peace conference was held in Wayanad in January 2024 in Sultan Bhatteri on the tribal perspective of peace. One hundred and fifty participated. The conference was seen as a large achievement in its scope to bring so many people together.

4.5 Mediation: BIMS (Bangladesh International Mediation Services) set up a South Asia group in order to ensure more mediation particularly related to family law cases so that people can get justice. CESCI has partnered with BIMS to hold a workshop. In 2023 year to help poor people to litigate on land issues. This was followed by a BIMS

representative coming to Nepal in 2024 to work with the civil society on advancing the practice of mediation.

4.6 Exposure Visits: There were many different exposure visits: some involved Europe/Canada to India (Barbara S. & Joeri, Barbara & Urs, Louis & Isabelle Campana; Elham and Iraj; and others. Others involved associates between north and south India (Manipur to Kerala; Kerala to MP/Chhattisgarh; and so forth) . We also had more interactions between India/Nepal and India/Sri Lanka.

4.7 International Students in India: Six students who were studying Gandhi at the Gujarat Vidyapeet, joined the Kerala Peace Conference and spent five days learning about field level peace activities.

4.8 Peace Building in Germany/Switzerland: Rajagopal attended the yearly interreligious conference of The Community of Sant'Egidio that brings together 2000 lay persons from all religious backgrounds to talk about and pray for peace. The 2023 conference was held in Berlin. Also, there was a second conference of Helvetas in Switzerland.

4.9 Peace Building in Canada: A padyatra has been planned from Pugwash to Halifax. This is part of an effort to demonstrate Gandhian work so people can see that through a social action involving sacrifice, people are influenced to understand.

5. NONVIOLENT ECONOMY

5.1 Ahimsa Santhai Followup

After the Santhai, there were a few significant follow-up actions. One was the development of the concept of the Ahimsa brand. This is ongoing. The second was to give a lift to Adivasis economy. Thirdly, a group is doing capacity development with clusters, which is called Glide, based in MP. Fourthly, we held a meeting in Joura about direct marketing of organic and other items. This seems to be carried out in many parts of the country. One that we have helped to facilitate is one in Jaipur at the Kumarappa Trust.

5.2. Andhra Pradesh Community Managed Natural Farming Project

This project is managed by a community of one million farmers and farm workers with the objective of reducing cost of cultivation and increase income; to improve soil health, biodiversity and climate sequestration, and to enhance the health and nutrition of the farming communities.

5.3 Nonviolent Economy Network:

The Nonviolent Economy Network is still in formation. It continues to bring people together at many converging points. One of the advances that has been made is to introduce Nonviolent Economy into Ekta Parishad's economic activities. This allows us to show concrete actions on the ground before promoting to many other organizations.

5.4 Research on Nonviolent Economy by Graduate Institute Geneva

This was a study at our request to look at three different social enterprises: MJVS Katni on organic agriculture; and natural farming; Charka Karnataka on handloom textile production; Organic Farmers Group in Kerala.

6. NOVIOLENT SOCIAL ACTION

6.1 South Indian Coordination

In April 2023 there was a meeting called in CESCI to bring together 30 groups across the five states to speak of land and livelihood. Out of this process, two states emerged having more activities which were Tamilnadu and Kerala.

Tamilnadu and Kerala:

In Tamilnadu, three local groups were strengthened. They were in: Pollachi, Kodikanal and Dharmapuri. In Pollachi, it was the Vallipari area where 700 titles were provided in 2022 and 300 titles in 2023 to Adivasis families under FRA. They also undertook many livelihood and support programs such as setting up 12 Mahatma Gandhi Evening Study Centres, taking care of the school-going tribal children and running a tailoring unit for Adivasi women. In Kodikanal there were efforts to get FRA for local tribal communities. This is along with mobilizing the community and setting up of a school. In Dharmapuri, they are also seeking to get Adivasis FRA. There is also other interventions, like after school sports program and weekly organic market. .

In Kerala, there were six groups: Arippa land occupation, Plachimara (water/Cocacola), Attapady, (land and livelihood), Kolam (Black Sands Mining), Malapuram (Prohibition), and land occupation (Wayanad).

These groups met together on four different occasions for training, and the Kerala group met on two additional interactions. These trainings were on: leadership development, planning, and advocacy. The final session was in collaboration with Action Aid that involved 20 groups from across South India and 15 from the Tamilnadu and Kerala.

Out of this there was a group created called CALL (Control and Access to Land and Livelihood). This is in early stage of formation.

6.2. Control and Access to Land and Livelihood (CALL)

CALL is planned as a network of individuals and organisations that work around the issue of land and livelihood.

6.3 Bonded Labour -Kanchipuram, Tiruvannamalai, and Villupuram Districts

Irular, an Adivasi group in Kanchipuram, Tiruvannamalai, and Villupuram districts, is pushed into bonded work in brickkilns and on farmlands without realising they are being exploited. The bonded labour system is prevalent in these locations. An awareness campaign was held at a number of locations in Gingee, Villupuram district, to identify ways to liberate them. As a result, it raised their consciousness and expanded the scope of the tasks.

Suresh Shetty, a second-generation released bonded labour community, is supported with working capital for his garlic business and five tailoring machines for women in Mukthigram village.

6.4 Ekta Kala Manch: Ms. Prabasini Rout

Ekta Kala Manch is a cultural wing of Ekta Parishad. The *Ekta Kala Manch* team participated in a number of programs and performed at all these events with awareness songs and plays.

- Peace Convention at Buxi Jangabandhu English Medium School, Bhuvaneshwar. In this event, all the theatre trainees were issued certificates.
- Participated in the 'Theatre and Communication Workshop', Sangeet Nataka Academy, Government of Odisha.
- National Level Women Leadership Training, at Prayog, Tilda, Madhya Pradesh, to speak on how to use theatre as a tool to address gender issues.
- Collection and republishing of social advocacy songs is now underway. These songs will be sung in cultural events held at the Ekta Parishad activities.
- Ekta Kala Manch started an effort to boost membership by uniting artists from seven Indian states.

- Organise a theatrical workshop for Ekta Kala Manch artists to improve their performance and spread the message of peace and nonviolence.

6.5. Flood Relief Activities

Flood Affected Kerala: At the field level, the Ekta Parishad, Kerala activists involved in the relief work. Among the flood affected areas especially in Wayanad and Arippa, in Kollam district. In Arippa 250 Adivasi and Dalit families been struggling on the land rights, erecting tents for decades. People at Arippa (105) and Wayanad (120) families were provided with food materials.

There were 5 tailoring machines were given to Adivasi women to learn and use the tailoring skills for their livelihood. A significant number of young women are undergoing training.

Migjam Cyclone Affected in Tamil Nadu: Heavy rain and flooding in Chennai and Tiruvallur districts hit the lives of people. In response to this calamity – the Migjam cyclone from December 4–6, 2023 – CESCI, SIPA, and a local NGO, RISE Trust, visited the affected area, and the people distributed the relief materials. In this programme, Mr. Pachaksharam, Treasurer, CESCI, Mr. M. Suryakumar, Accountant, CESCI, Mr. Promod P.K., Board Member, CESCI, and Mr. Vinod Kumar of RISE Trust organised the relief material distribution. Each family received a dry ration worth Rs. 1000, which included 10 kilogrammes of rice and groceries.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In reviewing the activities carried out in 2023-2024, it is evident that the children's learning and peace clubs are a vibrant part of CESCI's local program. The development of two networks have also taken place, that is the Nonviolent Economy Network and the CALL. These are large groupings of organizations working on assembling groups working on either on local production and marketing; as well as

on land and livelihood. These have come together organically and will be the focus of the 2024-2025 programs. There is also promising results in carrying out online training on nonviolence, specifically when the course offering presses for peacemaking-in-practice.

This report gives a special thanks to all those involved in these programs and are making CESCI a vibrant center in South India.