

CESCI INDIA NEWSLETTER

EDITORIAL

Greetings from CESCI!

The months of April to June 2026 have been a period of meaningful learning and community engagement at CESCI. During this quarter, our women's groups continued to strengthen their livelihoods through skill development activities, while children and youth participated in creative programmes and educational excursions, including a memorable visit to Keezhadi.

We were also delighted to launch the Gandhi Fellowship Programme, bringing together young fellows committed to grassroots learning and nonviolent social transformation. We remain grateful to our friends, volunteers, and supporters whose encouragement continues to strengthen our journey. Together, we move forward with hope, dignity, and a shared commitment to positive social change.

— Biju Kallidumbil
Director, CESCI



FEATURE STORY

Learning beyond the classroom, Creating memories beyond boundaries!

The CESCI Village Program volunteers and children leaders had a wonderful opportunity to visit the Keezhadi Museum and a local temple on Monday, 26th May 2026, as part of their school vacation excursion. A total of 30 participants enjoyed this cheerful and enriching trip, exploring the rich cultural heritage of our region while sharing moments of learning, joy, and togetherness. The excursion became a memorable experience for all, filled with excitement, discovery, and joyful memories that will be cherished for a long time.



Small journeys of learning often create the most lasting memories.

| PEACE INITIATIVES

PeaceBuilders Forum Meeting at GRF Jalgaon

A four-day Peacebuilders Forum India (PBF) National Meet was held from 8–11 March 2026 at the Gandhi Research Foundation, Jalgaon, Maharashtra, bringing together 27 participants, including youth, women, and community representatives from different regions. Organized under the leadership of Shri Rajagopal P.V. and Dr. Jill Carr Harris, the workshop focused on strengthening grassroots leadership, promoting peacebuilding initiatives, and encouraging collaborative learning among participants.

Key themes discussed included women's challenges in peacebuilding, India's role in fostering peace, education for peace, peacemaking in conflict areas, and the relationship between peacebuilding and climate change. The programme adopted participatory learning methods such as group discussions, role plays, simulations, case studies, and leadership development sessions, creating opportunities for active engagement and reflection.

The workshop empowered participants to reflect on their community roles and explore nonviolent approaches to social change. Women participants demonstrated increased leadership confidence, while youth expressed greater interest in community peace initiatives and civic engagement. The event also fostered a strong network of emerging leaders committed to collaboration, social harmony, sustainable community development, and the promotion of nonviolent values in their respective communities.

| SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Empowering Women Through Aari Work Training



CESCI proudly marked the successful completion of its Six-Month Aari Work Training Programme for women with a certificate distribution ceremony held on 18 May 2026. The programme equipped participants with valuable Aari embroidery skills, enhancing their creativity, confidence, and livelihood opportunities. Certificates were awarded in recognition of their dedication and commitment throughout the training. Through this initiative, CESCI continues to promote women's empowerment, skill development, and sustainable livelihoods. We congratulate all the trainees and wish them success in their future endeavors.



"Peace is not merely the absence of conflict; it is the presence of justice, dignity, participation, and hope."

| SPECIAL FEATURE

Building a New Generation of Leaders Through the Gandhi Peace Fellowship Orientation Meeting 2026

Mahatma Gandhi envisioned India as a federation of self-reliant and self-governing villages. Inspired by this vision, the Centre for Experiencing Socio-Cultural Interaction (CESCI) continues to support grassroots initiatives that strengthen village leadership, local governance, and community self-sufficiency. Across the country, several communities are embracing Gandhian ideals and demonstrating successful models of sustainable development and collective action.



To further strengthen this movement, CESCI launched the Mahatma Gandhi Fellowship, selecting 12 grassroots workers in its first phase. The fellowship aims to nurture committed community leaders who can promote peace, social justice, and constructive social action within their regions.

The Orientation Meeting of the Gandhi Peace Fellowship was held at Gandhi Bhawan, Bhopal, on 3–4 June 2026. The two-day programme brought together fellows from diverse backgrounds for discussions, learning sessions, and reflections on Gandhian values, peacebuilding, community leadership, and social transformation.

The orientation was coordinated by Smt. Anuradha Behan, Ramesh Bhai, and Aneesh Bhai, whose guidance and facilitation helped create a meaningful and inspiring learning environment. CESCI extends its best wishes to all the fellows as they begin this journey of learning, service, and social transformation inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi.

| VOICES OF CHANGE

Brief Profiles of the Gandhi Fellows



Shraddha Kashyap (Chhattisgarh)

With over 35 years of grassroots experience, Shraddha Kashyap has dedicated her life to advancing Sarvodaya values and empowering rural communities. Her work focuses on strengthening women's leadership, village institutions, and social justice initiatives across Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.



Saraswati Uike (Madhya Pradesh)

A respected tribal leader from the Mahakoshal region, Saraswati Uike has played a significant role in securing land rights for tribal families. She continues to promote sustainable livelihoods and self-reliant village economies rooted in the principles of Gram Swaraj.



Snehalata Mohanty (Odisha)

For more than three decades, Snehalata Mohanty has dedicated her life to supporting tribal communities in Odisha. Through her work on livelihood rights, self-governance, and community participation, she has helped build resilient and self-sustaining rural communities.



Indira Yadav (Chhattisgarh)

Indira Yadav is an emerging Gandhian leader from the coal-mining region of Korba district. Her work focuses on empowering tribal women, strengthening village institutions, and creating spaces for dialogue and collective action through Gandhi Kutis.



Chunnulal Soren (Jharkhand)

A dynamic youth leader from Hazaribagh, Chunnulal Soren has spent over a decade mobilising young people for constructive social action. His work promotes education, leadership development, and civic responsibility among rural youth.



Suraj Sahariya (Madhya Pradesh)

Suraj Sahariya is a recognised tribal leader who has pioneered forest-based livelihood initiatives for the Sahariya community. Through grassroots mobilisation and community organising, he continues to strengthen tribal rights and self-reliance.



Manglu Jagat (Chhattisgarh)

Manglu Jagat has revived the tradition of Jangal Satyagraha as a nonviolent movement for forest communities. His leadership has encouraged villagers to engage in peaceful collective action while promoting sustainable village development.



Ramdatt Tomar (Madhya Pradesh)

With more than four decades of grassroots experience, Ramdatt Tomar has dedicated his life to peacebuilding and community mobilisation. His work promotes dialogue, reconciliation, and nonviolent approaches to social transformation.



Raghuvveer Das (Chhattisgarh)

Raghuvveer Das is widely known for his leadership in de-addiction campaigns and rural development initiatives. For over thirty years, he has worked to strengthen local livelihoods and improve community well-being through the ideals of Gram Swaraj.



Deepak Agrawal (Madhya Pradesh)

Deepak Agrawal has spent over two decades promoting sustainable livelihoods based on local resources in the Sagar region of Madhya Pradesh. A strong believer in the transformative power of collective action, he has organized numerous Shramdan camps and community initiatives. His efforts in water conservation and watershed development have helped address water scarcity in drought-prone areas, demonstrating the Gandhian principle of self-help through community participation.



Sujat Khan (Madhya Pradesh)

An artist-turned-activist, Sujat Khan has dedicated his life to raising social awareness among marginalized communities, particularly Dalit and minority populations in Damoh district. Drawing upon the power of culture, dialogue, and public education, he has become a respected community educator and motivator. His work promotes Gandhian values of social inclusion, communal harmony, and active citizenship through creative art and cultural forms and participatory methods.



Bijoy Pradhan (Odisha)

A committed Gandhian activist, Bijoy Pradhan is working among marginalized urban communities in Bhubaneswar. Specializing in community mobilization and mass education, he has led numerous initiatives aimed at improving educational opportunities for children living in informal settlements. Through his work, he encourages young people and their families to embrace the values and constructive action, adapting Gandhian principles to the realities of urban life.



CAMPUS LIFE

New Campus Caretakers Join the CESCO Family

CESCO is delighted to welcome Mr. Narottam and Ms. Sunita, a dedicated couple from Chhattisgarh, as the newest members of the campus team. Having travelled to Madurai to become part of the CESCO community, they will play an important role in maintaining the campus and supporting its day-to-day activities.

Their warm presence will help create a welcoming environment for visitors, volunteers, and residents while strengthening the spirit of hospitality that defines the CESCO campus. Their arrival comes at a time of growing campus activity and reflects CESCO's continued commitment to community participation, employment opportunities, and inclusive development.

Warm Welcome

From: Chhattisgarh

Role: Campus Caretakers

Responsibilities: Hospitality, housekeeping, & campus maintenance

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

CESCO PR Puram Centre Strengthens Education, Safety, and Youth Awareness



During April and May 2026, the CESCO PR Puram Centre in Nagapattinam continued its efforts to support children's education, maintain a safe learning environment, and promote awareness on disaster preparedness and climate change. Regular monitoring of evening tuition classes ensured that children received consistent academic support and encouragement.

The centre also undertook campus maintenance, cleanliness drives, and intensive care for trees and plants during the summer season, reflecting CESCO's commitment to environmental stewardship. Infrastructure improvements, including the installation of wire fencing in vulnerable areas, further enhanced the safety and security of the campus.

A visit by Mr. Ananthapuri provided an opportunity to review ongoing activities and interact with staff members. In addition, a Disaster Preparedness and Climate Change Awareness Programme was conducted for 20 Youth Club members, equipping them with practical knowledge and skills to respond effectively to environmental and disaster-related challenges. These initiatives continue to strengthen community participation, youth leadership, and resilience.

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much. It is through cooperation, understanding, and shared effort that communities grow stronger and create lasting change."

— Helen Keller

BOOK RELEASE

Soil, Humans and Social Movements Released at Gandhi Bhavan

On 4 June 2026, a book release function for Soil, Humans and Social Movements, edited by Anilkumar P.Y., was held at Gandhi Bhavan, Thaikkad, Thiruvananthapuram. The event brought together social activists, scholars, and well-wishers committed to issues of land rights, social justice, and people's movements.

The first copy of the book was presented by Shri P.V. Rajagopal, renowned Gandhian activist and founder of Ekta Parishad, to Shri Ramesh Chennithala, senior political leader and former Home Minister of Kerala. The gathering highlighted the continuing relevance of grassroots struggles and collective action in shaping a more equitable society.

The publication documents the lived experiences, voices, and reflections of individuals involved in land rights movements across different regions. Through personal narratives, it explores the relationship between land, communities, and social transformation while preserving valuable experiences for future generations of activists, researchers, and policymakers.

"Land is not merely a resource; it is the foundation of identity, dignity, and community. The stories of those who struggle for justice must be preserved, shared, and remembered."



VISITOR SPOTLIGHT

International Visitor Explores CESC's Community Initiatives

CESCI was pleased to host Mr. Olivier from Switzerland from 10–14 April 2026. During his visit, he explored grassroots initiatives, interacted with community members, and visited projects and villages in Madurai, Sevaiyur, Kanyakumari, and Kodaikanal. He also met volunteers, children, and women's groups, gaining valuable insights into CESC's community-based development work. The visit strengthened international friendship and mutual learning.

CAMPUS UPDATE

CCTV Cameras Installed to Enhance Campus Safety

CESCI has installed a CCTV surveillance system across key areas of the campus to improve safety, security, and campus management. The system will help monitor activities, protect facilities, and ensure a secure environment for staff, volunteers, visitors, and programme participants.

With increasing campus activities and visitor participation, the installation reflects CESC's commitment to maintaining a safe and welcoming space for learning, community engagement, and effective campus management.



We'd Love to Hear From You!

Whether you're a volunteer, partner, supporter, researcher, or friend of CESC, we welcome your thoughts, ideas, and collaboration. Stay connected with us as we continue our journey of promoting peace, social justice, and community-led development.

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