

ECC Report of Kodai Students 2020

At the Entrance

Education is one of the yeoman Services of the PEAK (People's Education and Action in Kodaikanal) to the people of kodai hills. In catering the needs of the marginalised and disadvantaged people of Kodaikanal for the past 32 years since 1988, PEAK continues to render its helping hand in empowering the students of PEAK's target people through various means such as admitting them in the prestigious educational institutions for their schooling as well as for their higher education. The Tribal and Arunthathiyar Children benefit through the PEAK's various initiatives such as Evening Coaching Centres, Online cum Offline Coaching Camps, summer camps, etc. Although camps are periodical, ECC (Evening Coaching Centres) are being organized with efficient tuition masters in their respective villages. It is heart-warming to see the children showing their interest for the ECC with their regular attendance and to bloom like a rose plant with the sweet-scented aroma by their periodically obtained grades in their studies. By accompanying the target students PEAK could witness their ability to grasp things with high pace.

Evening Coaching Centres

The fifteen Evening Coaching Centres in Kodaikanal Hills for the academic year 2020-21 with the financial support of Aktion Indien has been a vital source to have caused an indelible remark in the life of the students of PEAK target villages, so as to continue to pursue their education, up to the 'higher-degree-graduation' and also to graduate in the profession studies such as, nursing, Law, etc. Although the ECC has been prevalent amidst the school going students, it has given a high amount of impetus to the students and to their parents, not to drop out of the schooling, rather to help them achieve a considerable status in educational qualification. It is indeed PEAK has witnessed the high number of students who long to study, once the favourable circumstances has been created for them. Thus, ECC has come into play an imperative role to push them up to empower themselves right from their childhood onwards.

The main aim of these Centres is to promote the pupils studying in local government schools to finish their assignments given to them by the class tutors. Part time teachers from the local villages are appointed by the PEAK to help out the pupils to strengthen the quality of their education. Students and parents showed a lot of hope in teaching and learning. Some of the teachers were extraordinarily good in organising the pupils and trying different means to fascinate the students at the centres to learn more. Some creative ways have been envisaged to make the student more participative.

The coordinators have been given a special training to take classes on different subjects like general knowledge, spoken English, awareness songs etc. The director and the assistant director visit the centres every now and then. They motivate the students and the teachers to accomplish their work very well. The guidelines have been crafted carefully by PEAK, and made sure to be followed in the ECC.

As per that, the Evening Coaching Centres begin their classes around 5 pm and end at 7 pm. They begin the tuition *with awareness songs and some games in order to fascinate the students* towards the tuition centres regularly. The teachers also persuade them to learn some moral values for life. Usually, the first half an hour is given to the students every day to complete their written assignments given by their school teachers. Then they set about to study their subjects. Teachers impart them some general knowledge and to teach some awareness songs on Saturdays. We provided the study materials and games things to each centre which is very useful to the teachers to teach the students very creatively and effectively.

Petty Savings

To cultivate the habit of saving for one's life is an essential part of leading one's life happily - has been planted in the hearts of the students by encouraging them to save their petty savings out of their pocket money which they obtain from their parents and their own relatives occasionally. Even though it is herculean task to press the hard button to make it happen in all the centres, yet some centres have seen the sizeable amount being saved periodically.

Children's Parliament

The future leaders are sown in the classrooms – age old saying. Yes, if we want to have democratic cum sovereign nation, our children have to be trained to be effective leaders. Hence, Children's Parliament is one of the activities that enhance the students to embellish in their leading capacities. It is the exact set up of 'Mini' parliament of our country. The students and Teachers are being given a proper orientation cum training to function in the 'Children's Parliament' in all our ECC centres. Although it is yet to reach 'full percentage level function in all the centres', some centres have been given the initiative to run the show.

Children's Day

A change is always good - it means that the innovative measures are being taken; it means that we move forward and do something according to the sign of the time. Yes! Unlike the previous years, the Children's day which is supposed to be on the 14th November, as it is used to be, the celebration has been planned in an innovative manner. Instead of having it in Shembaganur on a particular- 'one'- day, the whole second week of November was dedicated for the celebration. As the world is succumbed to the COVID -19 Pandemic, to bring the children to Shembaganur, seemed to be impossible and considered to be unsafe for all.

Hence, PEAK planned to have the celebration in their own ECC centres by spacing out it, in the whole week as it could be easy to organize according to their own convenient time. The children who were regular for the coaching centres were invited for this celebration. The children spent the day joyfully participating in different sports activities and games. They also performed a few cultural events in the afternoon and their parents and relatives were very happy to see their children's fantastic and fabulous performances. All those who attended the classes regularly were awarded on this day. Also the students who saved

regularly from their pocket money and students who secured first three places were given prizes.

Cultural Training

Mr TM Krishna, a vocal artist volunteered to support some of the folk artists in Kodaikanal during this COVID-19 Lockdown. We made use of this opportunity to teach our tradition art to the children. Parai artists from the Arundhatiyar community from two villages in the Palani Hills (Poombarai and Vilpatti) conducted sessions on traditional music for children in their villages. Whilst providing these artistes with a supplementary income during this period of crisis, these sessions also provided school-going children in these villages with an opportunity to actively learn a traditional art form, from artistes within their community, at a time when spaces for formal learning (government schools) remain inaccessible to them due to lockdowns. The students performed Paraiyattam during children's day celebration in both the villages. The people were wonderstruck by their performance.

Staff Meetings and Magazine:

Usually, The ECC teachers and the coordinators share about their accomplishments during the monthly meetings. It is a great help for the management to know the achievements and the difficulties of the students in depth. Also the sharing of a staff is exhilarating for another staff. They learn different creative methods of teaching and handling the tuition from one another. Again, it is needless to say that the Pandemic had obstructed this opportunity of gathering for the staff meetings. Hence, mostly individual contacts were made to each ECC centres; but still last two months we managed to conduct meetings in small groups and we wait to have the staff meetings with full attendance after the pandemic outbreak. Meanwhile we have created a group for all the staff where all of them post a photo of their classes regularly. Of course, some of them could not do it as they do not own android mobile.

Likewise, the magazine which is used to be released on every two months has found itself in hibernation since the lockdown blocked the printing press units. '*Sigaram Thodu*' the bimonthly magazine carries the creative writing skills of the ECC students which in fact motivates themselves and others to express their voices through drawings, poems, essays, etc. we recently resume the Magazine publication to be available to the students which is under circulation now.

Parents' Meeting

All the teachers are instructed to conduct parents meeting twice a year. Some of them are able to organize the parents and others are not able to do it. We could see a lot of difference in the performance of the children according to the cooperation of their parents. Parents are motivated to send their children regularly and they are explained about the activities of the coaching centres. Unfortunately many parents do not still cooperate enough

for the smooth running of the centres. They themselves give excuses for the students to skip the classes.

COVID -19 Relief Aid

It was disheartening to see our target people, during the pandemic outbreak caused lockdown, and struggled to meet their ends. The breadwinner of families lost their jobs and thereby, our target people have further been pushed to the periphery from receiving the government aids. This depressing situation of our people compelled PEAK not to be mere spectator rather plunge into action, and risking its members health, by going forward to reach out our people with the relief materials.

Essential grocery materials were distributed as people could not go out for any work. Our motive is helping the economically poor during the Corona lockdown and to encourage the women groups to develop their responsibility and capacity to serve their own people.

The Central and Tamil Nadu Government of India instructed to close down all the Children Homes due to spreading of Covid 19. So, the PEAK administration sent their home children off to their native homes in two batches such as, from 1st standard to 5th standard on 16.3.2020 and from 6th standard to 10th standard on 22.3.2020. In view of Covid 19 Pandemic, The State Government of Tamil Nadu declared its first Lockdown from March 23, 2020 which brought Kodaikanal to its first complete lockdown.

The PEAK extended its serving hand in terms of Relief materials to the families of our 'Home children', widows and aged in the villages. With the help of the field staff, the PEAK team collected and prioritised 'the name list' based on criteria such as Widows, non-Ration-card holders, Part-time staff, full-time Field staff and the Aged. The actual suffering of the people was very much obvious to the PEAK team, at the time of the distribution of the Relief Material to the needy. Having known the great challenge imposed on the People's buying ability, due to the inflation in the food prices, the PEAK team swung into the action to help them afford to their need in consuming their grocery and food materials. In view of the above-mentioned, the PEAK had a consultation regarding how to reach out the people with the relief work. PEAK director and staff called on Mr. Wilson Devadoss, the Kodikanal Tahsildar and obtained the legal permission in written form to do relief work.

At First, Mr. Surentharan, the RDO and Mr. Wilson Devadoss, the Tahsildar were invited to distribute the relief material at Kaduguthadi village for 49 families, at Kottakombu village for 17 families and at J.J Nagar for 12 families in the lower hills on 8th April 2020. Then the PEAK stretched its helping hand in giving relief material to upper hills.

Mr. Preeven Kumar, Poondi VAO (Village Administrative Officer) was invited to preside over the distribution of the relief material to our Home children, widows and senior citizens at Kilavarai for 11 families on 21.04.2020. Fr. Francis Xavier, Sacred Heart College was invited to distribute relief material to the PEAK administering Home children, and to the Grihini students. On 24th April 2020, at Poondi village, for about 37 families especially widows and aged people, at Poomparai village for about 37, at Manavanur village for about

32, at Polur village for about 21, at Gaunji village for about 25 families were the beneficiaries of the PEAK relief work materials. And Fr. Patric, the Superior of Sacred Heart College, was invited to distribute the relief material to 7 families at Puthuputhur, and to 6 families at Kookal in upper hills.

Mr. Wilson Devadoss, the Tahsildar asked the PEAK organisation to help out a group of tribes in Vilangulam near Moolayar and kadaisikadu near K.C Patti. And there by, Mr. Wilson Devadoss and Mr. Amalraj, the teacher of St. Xavier Higher secondary school, Shembaganur distributed relief material to Vilangulam for 18 families and to Moolayar for 51 families on 15th April 2020. Mr. Sivakumar, the RDO (Revenue Divisional Officer) and Mr. Wilson Devadoss, the Tahsildar distributed relief material to 32 tribal families at kadaisikadu village on 23rd April 2020.

In the beginning, they were given the food materials to light their kitchen and to survive amidst the pandemic outbreak. Of course, it was beyond the capacity of PEAK to deliver the relief food materials to all the needy. Hence, the families of ECC students were paid attention to be given the relief materials. Thanks to the sponsors who were generous enough to lend their ever encouraging never fading support to PEAK to give away the relief materials.

S. No	Material
1	Rice
2	Sugar
3	Tea powder
4	Dall
5	Bathing soap
6	Washing soap
7	Oil
8	Wheat
9	Chilli powder
10	Sambar powder
11	Chicken masala
12	Cumin
13	Turmeric powder
14	Pepper

Off late, ECC (the evening coaching centre) has become the place to distribute some food materials to the school going children who regularly attend the evening coaching at the centre.

Fr. Samy, the PEAK director, explained to the children about the purpose of giving snacks at every Evening Coaching Centres. In view of this, the PEAK provided snacks (Chick peas and biscuits) to the coaching centres namely kilavarai on 11.6.2020 and Poomparai on 15.6.2020 Polur, Kaunji and Poondi on 15.6.2020, Manavanur, Kumpur, Kookal and Puthuputhur on 16.6.2020, Moolayar, Nalurkadu, Korankombu on 16.6.2020, Kaduguthadi and Gandhipuram on 23.6.2020, Sathya colony 21.6.2020, Vilpatti on 22.6.2020, where they resumed their attendance of the students.

The aim is to help the students to improve their immune system by providing Snacks (peas, channa and biscuits) and to encourage them to refresh their knowledge on school subjects. This programme was started in June 2020 and continued till September 2020. Though our main motive was to build the immune system of the local children, it was also an attracting factor for many children to be regular for the centre. Since the schools are closed all the children who are studying in different boarding schools also remain at home; therefore the number of students who attended the tuitions increased from June.

PEAK also functioned as liaison between the school administrations and the students in the villages. We received the books from the schools and distributed to the students. Thus the students felt that they have something to study; otherwise they were mostly in holiday mood. Some of them have not still changed their mindset. Since their previous classes ended abruptly and the schools closed without exams, the government promoted all the students for the next level/class. When I ask some of the students, "Which class do you study?" They mention the class that they studied in the last academic year. In this context also, the tuition centers contribute a lot to the students. The parents are thankful that PEAK is helping their children at least to be in touch with their school subjects. Otherwise they forget everything and they would find very difficult to continue their studies when the schools reopen.

Once the situation emerged in a better way, the relief materials distribution were done in new and innovative methods through the small savings groups (women groups) to the target people of kodai hills. It was very inviting and made the people more participative in sharing the available resources with the needy.

1. To help the economically poor during the Corona Lockdown.
2. To sell the products for minimum price to maximum people. (Involving the people with 'share and care' principle amidst the pandemic outbreak – PEAK bought the necessary grocery items and entrusted them to the Women Self Help groups to sell those things for half the price – so that they realize the importance of the goods being shared to the real needy people lest it is misused.
3. To encourage the women group to develop their capacity of organization.

The PEAK helped the village people through its 12 Self-help groups who are at Kilavarai, Polur, Gaunji, Poondi, Manavanur, Kumpur, Kookal, Puthuputhur, Poomparai, Viduthalai Nagar and Sathyacolony in upper hills and Moolayar in lower hills. They sold the grocery items to the maximum people with minimum prices.

Teachers' Details

S.No	Villages	Staff
1	Kilavari	Mrs. Valli
2	Poondi	Ms. Chitra
3	Kovilpatti	Mrs. Revathi
4	Mannavanur	Mrs.Poonkodi
5	Poombarai (Pattalaman Kovil Street)	Mrs. Nallammal
6	Poombarai (Vayalveli Street)	Mrs. Selvi
7	Kookal	Miss. Muthumari
8	Puthuputhur	Mrs. Varlarmathi
9	Sathiya Colony	Mrs. Annalakhsmi
10	Vilpatty	Mrs. Chandra
11	Kaduguthadi	Mrs. Chitra
12	Korankombu	Mrs. Selvarani
13	Nallurkadu	Mrs. Revathi
14	Gandhipuram	Mrs. Mageshwari
15	Mangalamkombu	Mrs. Kumaraye
16	Malayakadu	Mrs. Balanagu
17	Moolaiyar	Ms. Abirami
18	Kumbur	Ms. Packialakhsmi
19	Kavunji	Ms. Kanagamani
20	Mannavanur colony	Ms. Amsavalli
21	Pazhamputhur	Ms. Nagajothi
22	Polur	Ms. Parameshwari

Students' Details:

S.No	Villages	Classes	Boys	Girls	Total
1	Kilavari	1-8	15	21	36
2	Poondi	1-8	10	15	25
3	Kovilpatti	1-7	10	15	25
4	Mannavanur	1-8	12	16	28
5	Poombarai (Pattalaman Kovil Street)	1-8	9	11	20
6	Poombarai (Vayalveli Street)	1-8	6	14	20
7	Kookal	1-8	9	16	25
8	Puthuputhur	1-5	11	24	35
9	Sathiya Colony	1-8	15	30	45
10	Vilpatty	1-8	21	29	50
11	Kaduguthadi	1-8	21	18	39
12	Korankombu	1-8	15	16	31
13	Nallurkadu	1-5	17	10	27
14	Gandhipuram	1-10	7	11	18
15	Mangalamkombu	1-8	8	7	15
15	Malayakadu	1-8	6	9	15
17	Moolaiyar	1-8	5	13	18

18	Kumbur	1-8	12	15	28
19	Kavunji	1-10	8	12	20
20	Mannavanur colony	1-8	21	24	45
21	Pazhamputhur	1-8	11	9	20
22	Polur	1-8	18	21	39
	Total		267	357	624

Challenges

1. Financially it is challenging and hard to find a part time teacher who is dedicated to be with the children and obliging to the remuneration assigned.
2. The educated women are confined with their house hold works in the evenings and they could not be accessible to teach the children. Therefore, we keep changing the teachers even within a year.
3. It is very difficult to sustain the staff for 2 or 3 years. The class does not take place in a regular basis due to tutors personal works and sometime the internal conflicts between the families in the villages.
4. Students do not go for the class regularly.
5. Parents have not fully understood the importance of education and the need for a provision for their children to complete their assignments given by the school teachers. Thus, many of them do not cooperate enough to send their children to tuition every day.
6. Most of the teachers find very difficult to travel once a month to Kodaikanal for ECC staff meeting and other training programmes organized by PEAK. Last six months we changed our strategy to have the monthly meetings in two places in order to reduce the travel time.
7. As there was no public transportation our field staff could not visit the centres regularly; therefore monitoring supporting the part time staff and the students was a big challenge to us.

Before Exiting

Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships – as per the saying, PEAK in partnership with your generous hearts, would like to create champions with utmost quality among the target people so as to empower themselves in making use of all the available resources. Being in the field almost 32 years, PEAK is very grateful in joining hands with you all, in enhancing the life of target people in Kodaikanal. PEAK feels content and proud as it witness the younger generation raise their head high from their age-old inhumane clutches imposed on them by the creamy layer of the society. At the same time, PEAK acknowledges wholeheartedly, the invaluable contribution rendered by you all to this noble cause of accompanying and uplifting the target people especially, student of ECC to come up in their life through the quality education.

Let us continue to work for the needy as it brings them to the equity par excellence with the so called privileged section of the society. Let us create a 'better place' for 'our target' people.

Thank you!

Yours sincerely

Fr. Arockiasamy SJ.

The Director, PEAK.