



**INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT**  
**EDUCATION**  
**ACTION AND STUDIES**  
**MADURAI**



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2024-25**



**Ideas**  
Institute of Development,  
Education, Action and Studies



**Ideas**

Institute of Development,  
Education, Action and Studies

## 1. Identity

Institute of Development, Education, Action and Studies (IDEAS) is a 'Capacity Building and Resource Centre', enabled by action-research, facilitating advocacy engagements and campaigns.

## 3. Vision

Building a Just and Humane Society characterized by respect for human rights, inclusiveness, secularism, gender equality and ecological integrity.

## 4. Stakeholders

Dalits, with a special focus on Arunthathiyars, Indigenous peoples, Women, Minorities, Children, and other marginalized people.



## 2. Mission

IDEAS enables the empowerment of Dalits, indigenous peoples, women, minorities, and other marginalized groups, animates, and supports people's organizations and movements, and intervenes in their dignity, rights, and livelihood issues and in state policies and programmes, promoting rights-based perspectives in partnership with secular and democratic organizations.

## 5. Thrust Areas

- ❖ Capacity building on social analysis and social action
- ❖ Building grassroots people's organizations
- ❖ Promoting human rights education
- ❖ Engaging in grassroots advocacy
- ❖ Networking with Dalit, Adivasi, Women, Minorities and various people's movements, human rights, civil and democratic organizations, and government bodies
- ❖ Engaging in action-research
- ❖ Preparing resource materials – print, audio-video, and posters, and dissemination.
- ❖ Publication, documentation services, and library facilities

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**PUBLISHED BY**  
**IDEAS Centre**

26 A, Valaithoppu, Chinthamani Road  
Madurai – 625001, Tamil Nadu.



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**Ideas**

Institute of Development,  
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## IDEAS PROFILE

**1978**

PALMERA – Grassroots  
movement work by the  
Jesuits

AICUF moved to Trichy

**1999**

**1978**

Scheduled Caste Welfare  
Movement of People  
(SCWM), Devakottai

Media Education

**2001**

**1984**

IDEAS-AICUF Centre, a  
resource and training  
centre, Madurai

Tamil Nadu Dalit Women's  
Federation Unit

**2012**

**1987**

Documentation and  
publishing of books  
and audio materials

Abolition of Manual  
Scavenging and Violence  
Against Women Units

**2015**

**1994**

Training of Dalit  
movements

Arunthathiyar  
Unorganized Women  
Workers Unit

**2017**

**1999**

Focus on Arunthathiyars

Accompanying  
Kal Oddar Unit

**2020**

## Director's DESK



IDEAS completed yet another fruitful year in accompanying and empowering the marginalised communities with greater vigour this year. This was possible because of the collective efforts and dedicated service of all the stakeholders on board.

The Tamil Nadu Dalit Women Federation (TNDWF) worked in four districts, accompanying Dalit women in their journey towards empowerment. The Federation's primary objective was to uphold the dignity, strengthen self-assertion, and expand access to livelihood opportunities and entitlements of rural women. Through a series of motivational training sessions at the panchayat, district, and federation levels, women gained confidence, enhanced problem-solving skills, and addressed personal and family challenges.

Operating under the auspices of Madurai Legal Awareness Coordination Committee (MLACC), the Prohibition of Manual Scavenging Unit walked with sanitary workers in Madurai, Virudhunagar and Dindigul districts. Dindigul was added this year. The focus has been on ensuring a dignified working environment for sanitation workers at the panchayat level, while effectively using the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013. Awareness sessions on the



act for workers and government officers, and leadership-building initiatives, led workers to form an association with 2,500 members. The unit also motivated the children and youth of these families to pursue alternative livelihoods.

The Multi-level Capacity Building Unit trained NGO staff, CSO representatives, teachers, students, youth, and women, nurturing essential skills and leadership qualities. With a strong resource pool, the participants gained meaningful learning outcomes. A unique practice has been the recital of the Preamble to the Constitution of India at all workshops, instilling constitutional values in participants. Around 25 interns from Madurai Institute of Social Sciences, Mannar Thirumalai Naicker College, and Lady Doak College also benefited. To all our efforts and initiatives, the response from the civil society organisations and NGOs was over whelming.





Our engagement with the Kal Oddar community, classified as a De-notified Tribe (DNT), marked another milestone. This nomadic community continues to face systemic discrimination, police harassment, and illegal detentions. The unit worked across seven districts: Madurai, Theni, Virudhunagar, Sivagangai, Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli, and Tenkasi. Our accompaniment through education, legal aid, socio-economic development and rights-based training has helped the community members to develop their agency and walk with determination and freedom. Fifteen village-level Sangams (associations) have been formed, operating democratically with elected leaders.

Accompanying the children through Evening Study Centres remained integral across our initiatives, supporting children from marginalised communities with constant guidance and mentoring. These centres also served as spaces to engage parents, workers and other stakeholders in their villages. By fostering education and personal growth, they lay the foundation for long-term social transformation.

The Unorganized Arunthathiyar Women Workers Unit, functioning under the Tamil Nadu Labourers Rights Forum (TLRF), worked in Madurai, Virudhunagar, and Dindigul

districts. Along with organising women for their rights, entitlements and dignity, the unit's notable achievement this year has been creating spaces for men and women to jointly discuss gender issues. It conducted important studies highlighting challenges faced by working women, including sexual harassment in the workplace, bringing these issues into the public domain.

The Library & Documentation Centre continued to be a valuable resource for students, researchers, trainers, movement leaders, social workers, and staff. The unit shared e-documents on social issues, media-related matters, critical essays, and data with interested groups. This unit improved the website by promptly updating the activities. The untiring work of the admin, finance, and support staff helped the institute to journey confidently.

Our success lies in our collective strength. IDEAS is sustained not in isolation but through the collaboration of our well-wishers, partners, and dedicated staff. Their solidarity and commitment remain the true strength behind our journey of empowerment. Despite many challenges, we continue to march forward with indomitable hope, walking with the marginalised communities, empowering women, uplifting workers, and accompanying children in their dreams for a brighter tomorrow.

**Philominraj SJ**  
Director





## Tamil Nadu Dalit Women's Federation Unit



The primary objective of the Tamil Nadu Dalit Women's Federation (TNDWF) is to accompany and empower Dalit women by strengthening their dignity, self-assertion, and access to livelihood opportunities and entitlements. TNDWF is actively working in four districts of Tamil Nadu: Madurai, Dindigul, Virudhunagar, and Theni. Our efforts are focused on 20 villages in each district, where we engage with 15 women from each village, offering them necessary training to develop into knowledgeable and responsive leaders of their communities. We have identified 950 women from the four districts. These women are receiving continuous motivational training at the panchayat level, along with review and planning sessions and skill development programmes conducted at the district and federation levels. This

involves providing ongoing training, mentoring, and guidance to help them build confidence, enhance problem-solving skills, and address both personal and family challenges.

We have observed a substantial increase in the awareness level of Women and the ability to work together. Some village women have grown in their leadership skills. Several women participated in the Gram Sabha meetings and submitted petitions to access basic facilities, such as common roads, drinking water for schools, sewage, etc. Women have learned to meet government officials boldly and negotiate with them courageously. Some villages have obtained the benefits of government welfare schemes, identity cards, and government loans. Yet another development has been in accessing





loans and government schemes meant for the Dalit women from Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar Housing & Development Corporation Ltd (TAHDCO). Skill training sessions were also organized to motivate women to explore new, alternative and sustainable opportunities. Women understand the need for engaging in alternative jobs, and they continue to motivate their children.

As part of our educational mission, we initially planned to establish eight evening study centres. Currently, six of these centres are fully operational with 58 male and 55 female children. These children receive supplementary educational support. Regular parents' meetings and extra-curricular activities help the children to excel in their studies.

| S.No | Nature of the Intervention                     | No. of Programmes | Participants |
|------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| 1.   | One-day Motivational Training at Village Level | 105               | 1,156        |
| 2.   | One-day District Level Review and Planning     | 7                 | 272          |
| 3.   | One-day District Level Thematic Training       | 3                 | 106          |
| 4.   | Two-days Federation Level Review and Planning  | 2                 | 31           |
| 5.   | Two-days Federation Level Skill Training       | 1                 | 20           |
| 6.   | Evening Study Centres                          | 6                 | 113          |
|      | <b>Total</b>                                   |                   | <b>1,698</b> |

| S.No | Nature of the Benefit              | No of Persons                 |
|------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1.   | Ayushman Bharat Health Card        | 15 women                      |
| 2.   | Construction of Anganwadi Building | One village with 150 families |
| 3.   | Construction of Paver Block Road   | One village with 100 families |
| 4.   | Compensation for Funeral Expenses  | 1 family with Rs 25,000       |
| 5.   | Free sewing machines               | 2 women                       |



| S.No | Nature of the Benefit      | No of Persons                       |
|------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 6.   | Renovation of an Anganwadi | 200 families, Rs 2,00,000 was spent |
| 7.   | Welfare Board Card         | 9 women                             |
| 8.   | Educational Assistance     | 5 children                          |

## IDEAS looked to me as my mother's house

"I had the wonderful opportunity to attend a state-level capacity-building training organised by the IDEAS Centre in Madurai from March 26–27, 2025. For someone like me, who rarely travels or stays away from home, this was a new and meaningful experience. I was cared for and treated with warmth, just like I would be at my mother's house. We were given healthy food, safe accommodation, and a space to learn and grow. The experience was both comforting and inspiring", stated Sudha, living in Jayamangalam, Theni district.

On the first day, during the opening session, we learned about the Jesuits and their strong history of service. Then, Mr.A. Paraneetharan, a Trainer from the District Resource Centre for Panchayats, engaged the women, explaining how local government works. He explained how funds are shared, the roles of central and state governments, and the responsibilities of panchayat leaders. On the second day, we had a very informative session with Ms. Hilda Edwin Rufina, Deputy Tahsildar of the Social Security Scheme, Madurai. She explained which documents are needed to get certificates like caste, residence, income, and widowhood. She also gave us helpful information about different government welfare schemes for women. Many said, "Our doubts are cleared, and we have gained confidence." As a trainer and coordinator, I felt confident and inspired. I am truly thankful to the women of the Tamil Nadu Dalit Women's Federation for having confidence in IDEAS Centre and our work.



Ms. Flora. Trainer, DWF



## **B** Abolition of Manual Scavenging Unit



This unit, under the auspices of Madurai Legal Awareness Coordination Committee (MLACC), works in Madurai, Virudhunagar and Dindigul districts, focusing on a dignified working environment for the scavengers with three-fold objectives. Primarily, the unit effectively utilises the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, which mandates the provision of safety equipment and gear for workers engaged in hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks. It works on awareness generation on the act and its effective implementation among the workers, especially in rural areas, and the government officials who manage the day-to-day activities of these workers. It organizes the workers at the village, panchayat and block levels and builds leadership among the workers.

The workers, on their own, have formed an association with about 2,500 members. The association members are trained to negotiate with the government departments for their due rights and development. This unit also helps the association to file various litigations to secure legal rights. MLACC helps the workers by filing a number of RTI (Right to Information) petitions in order to get crucial information related to their rights. They are educated on various developmental schemes of the government and guided to access various income generation schemes from TAHDCO.

Secondly, the unit works with the children of these workers, especially the youth, motivating them to get into alternative employment opportunities.



It organises motivational sessions and job melas to help the youth explore decent and dignified jobs in various companies in the state. Thirdly, the unit accompanies the school-going children by organising evening study centres, summer camps, extra-cultural activities, etc., so that all children improve their education and move into alternative jobs.

| S.No | Nature of the Intervention                     | No of Programmes | Male         | Female       |
|------|------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1.   | One-day legal awareness for workers            | 65               | 1,916        | 2,875        |
| 2.   | One-day legal awareness for officials          | 19               | 431          | 98           |
| 3.   | One-day capacity building of frontline leaders | 9                | 68           | 86           |
| 4.   | One-day training for teachers                  | 5                | 2            | 17           |
| 5.   | Parents meeting                                | 168              | 1,496        | 2,324        |
| 6.   | One-day state-level consultation               | 1                | 53           | 59           |
| 7.   | One-day convention                             | 1                | 312          | 552          |
| 8.   | Four-day children's camp                       | 1                | 46           | 38           |
| 9.   | Evening Study Centres                          | 13               | 193          | 261          |
| 10.  | Problems redressed with the help of officials  |                  | 26           | 38           |
|      | <b>Total</b>                                   |                  | <b>4,543</b> | <b>6,348</b> |





| S.No | Nature of the Benefit                                         | No of Persons | Remarks                          |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| 1.   | Registration in Welfare Board                                 | 362           | 212 received welfare cards       |
| 2.   | Registered in THADCO for loans                                | 31            | 19 received - each Rs 1,60,000   |
| 3.   | Insurance for workers died during job                         | 7             | Each received Rs 5,00,000        |
| 4.   | Helped to get arrears for workers                             | 27            | Each received Rs 37,000          |
| 5.   | Retirement benefit @ Rs 50,000 and Monthly pension @ Rs 2,000 | 9             |                                  |
| 6.   | Helped the workers to get salaries                            | 8             |                                  |
| 7.   | Petition filed                                                | 1,680         | For those worked during Covid-19 |
| 8.   | Cases filed in the High Court and PIL                         | 11            |                                  |
| 9.   | RTI petitions filed on working conditions of the workers      | 72            |                                  |
| 10.  | Enrolment of children in schools                              | 18            |                                  |

### I am fondly called by community members, 'Thalaivar'

I am C. Karuppasamy. I have been working as a manual scavenger for the past 10 years in a village, Sedapatti union, Madurai district. I have participated in several motivational and training sessions organised by the Madurai Legal Awareness Coordination Committee (MLACC). Slowly, I realized the importance of being part of the Manual Scavengers Rights Association, facilitated by MLACC. The training sessions were highly useful to me, and I gained knowledge on the laws enacted for the protection and development of the manual scavengers, the government schemes, loans provided by THADCO, and the importance of registering myself under the Welfare Board and getting identity cards.

Three years ago, I was elected leader of the manual scavengers of the Sedapatti Union. I am proud to say that I have given a lead to help my union members access various benefits. Fifteen workers have received THADCO loans, and fifteen more have registered in the Welfare Department. I can feel that I am gaining confidence and growing in leadership qualities. I attribute all these changes to MLACC. Many of my colleagues call me 'Thalaivar'. I am well recognized by my community members. They believe that I could help them alleviate their suffering to some extent. For an uneducated person like me, MLACC has been a real gift.

**Karuppasamy, Sedappatti, Madurai**



## Multi-level Capacity Building Unit



The capacity building of the staff of NGOs, CSOs, teachers, students, youth and women is the purpose of this unit to nurture their skills, such as personality development, analytical skills, intervention skills, dialogue and negotiation skills, knowledge development, training skills, campaign skills, media skills, and organisational skills. This is a flagship unit of the institute. Several trained persons have become leaders of various movements and contributors to the social change processes.

In this financial year, the participants were from 20 grassroots movements and 40 NGOs from 21 districts of Tamil Nadu. The unit has a pool of resource persons who are knowledgeable and who can bring changes in the participants effectively. Out of the 640 participants, about 130 are functioning as leaders of various NGOs, the training capacities of 40 participants

have improved, 12 have developed expertise in the use of social media, and 20 have become good speakers on social themes. About 20 people have participated in all the major training modules. One participant has become the Secretary of a movement.

To instill the values of the Constitution of India among the participants in every workshop, the day begins with the recital of the Preamble to the Constitution. The Constitutional values were imparted to over 250 college students. We have also offered training to 5 Dalit movement leaders, and about 120 people have benefited. Our training support has helped the Puthirai Vannar community to form a federation at the state level. About 25 interns, from Madurai Institute of Social Sciences, Mannar Thirumalai Naicker and Lady Doak colleges, benefited.



| S.No  | Workshops / Training                                                       | Male | Female |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------|
| 1.    | Social Analysis - 5 days                                                   | 17   | 13     |
| 2.    | Dialogue and Communication - 5 days                                        | 22   | 8      |
| 3.    | Public Speaking Skills - 4 days                                            | 32   | 16     |
| 4.    | Media Education - 5 days                                                   | 15   | 27     |
| 5.    | Social Media Knowledge and Skills - 3 days                                 | 15   | 5      |
| 6.    | Dialogue with Teachers, Students and Youth on Indian Constitution - 3 days | 28   | 11     |
| 7.    | Dialogue with unorganised youth - 1 day                                    | 45   | 55     |
| 8.    | Dialogue with movement leaders - 1 day                                     | 48   | 79     |
| 9.    | Effective Training Methods - 2 days                                        | 16   | 11     |
| 10.   | Consultation with Dalit and Women leaders – 2 days each                    | 84   | 24     |
| 11.   | Children's Parliament - 2 days                                             | 5    | 17     |
| 12.   | ToT on Violence Against Women - 3 days                                     | 7    | 40     |
| Total |                                                                            | 334  | 306    |



### Three changes within me

My name is Benny, and I am studying second year of B.Sc. Mathematics at St. Joseph's College Trichy. As a representative of the 'All India Catholic University Federation' (AICUF), I participated in the Social Analysis workshop organised by IDEAS, Madurai. This was my first exposure to a five-day training session on social concerns. There were 30 participants.

At the end of the programme, I felt some changes within me. Usually, I am an easy-going person. I do not bother about anything. This course affected me. I begin my day by watching social media reels and shots, and end the day in the same manner. Some times I spend a lot of time watching social media at night. This course helped me to understand the positive usage and ill effects of social media. I go to my college by bus. On the way, I used to buy tinned soft drinks and snacks. After consuming, I just threw them off the bus. I used to enjoy throwing these. I never thought about the person who would be cleaning or the damage I cause to the environment. Now I have learnt the importance of caring for nature and my responsibility to wards the future generation since this mother

**Benny, AICUF,**  
St. Joseph's College

### We learnt the art of speaking in public

Mr. Surya, a post-graduate student of Social Work, shared his thoughts on how the Public Speaking workshop organized by IDEAS from 23-27 August 2024 made an impact on him. "The workshop attracted 45 young people. As I am a post-graduate in Social Work, I was interested in know in the kind of work the trainees are doing. It was interesting to note that most of the trainees came from a social work background, generally working in villages. I could mingle with all and make new friends.

The training helped me on how to prepare and take notes before delivering a speech. The trainers made us aware of the importance of body language and gestures, information sharing and engaging the audience. The sessions were practical. For example, we were asked to choose a theme in 1 minute and prepare and deliver a speech for a minute. It looked funny but was useful. Such exercises helped me to be agile and focused. I was also instructed on how to read a book and the importance of reading to become a good public speaker. On the last day, when I delivered a speech in front of my college teacher, I was in high spirits."

**Mr. Surya**





The Kal Oddar, a nomadic community classified as a De-notified Tribe (DNT), suffers from systemic discrimination, including police harassment and illegal detentions. We are actively working across seven districts in Tamil Nadu: Madurai, Theni, Virudhunagar, Sivagangai, Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli, and Tenkasi.

Our intervention is rooted in a participatory, rights-based approach that emphasizes empowerment through education, legal aid, and socio-economic development. A central element of our strategy is the formation of 15 Sangams (village associations), one in each village where we work. These Sangams include all adult members of the community and operate democratically, electing their own leaders. The Sangams play a crucial role in addressing village-level

issues such as access to basic amenities, housing, land rights, Aadhar and family cards, and other entitlements. The Sangam members have faced numerous false charges, and we have been consistently providing them with legal support. About 25 people received Aadhar ID Cards and 15 Voter ID Cards. About 25 have submitted petitions for housing.

In parallel, we run 13 evening tuition centres focused on providing supplementary education for children. These centres aim not only to support the regular academic curriculum but also to nurture children's talents through extra curricular activities. This dual approach enhances children's confidence, learning outcomes, and life skills.





| S.No | Nature of the Intervention      | No. of Programmes | Participants |
|------|---------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| 1.   | Child Rights Training           | 6                 | 170          |
| 2.   | Women and Child Rights Training | 3                 | 140          |
| 3.   | Life Skill Education            | 5                 | 173          |
| 4.   | Legal Training                  | 1                 | 40           |
| 5.   | Teachers' Training              | 1                 | 15           |
| 6.   | Career Guidance                 | 2                 | 39           |
|      | <b>Total</b>                    |                   | <b>577</b>   |

### Celebrating Constitution Day with Young Minds

November 26 is celebrated as Constitution Day. This year, a meaningful initiative was undertaken in collaboration with the Youth Wing of Chennai Jesuit Province. A recitation competition was organized for students from Classes 1 to 5, to memorise and recite the Preamble of the Indian Constitution.

In this initiative, 12 children from our 8 evening tuition centres actively participated. These young students, despite their tender age, took the effort to memorize the Preamble and recited it with clarity and enthusiasm. Each child's recitation was recorded as a one-minute video and submitted to the organizers. It was truly inspiring to witness the children articulate the ideals of the Constitution in their sweet and innocent voices. Their ability to understand, remember, and confidently present such an important national text was remarkable. As a token of appreciation, each participant received an e-certificate, acknowledging their contribution. These certificates were printed and ceremoniously distributed during the Republic Day

**G. Priya, Trainer**

## Successful Acquittal of IPRO Members

In the Eraniyal Judicial Magistrate Court, a total of seven criminal cases — C.C. No. 40/2017, 41/2017, 42/2017, 51/2020, 73/2017, 364/2020, and 412/2019- involving IPRO members from the Cumbum Unit (Velmurugan & others) were under trial. All government witnesses were thoroughly cross-examined by our legal counsel, who effectively exposed inconsistencies in the prosecution's narrative.

Despite the police department's aggressive efforts and repeated attempts to ensure a conviction, our legal defense remained strong, fact-based, and persistent. All eight cases resulted in full acquittal. This verdict not only proves the innocence of the accused but also stands as a significant victory for justice and human rights, reflecting the importance of strong legal support for marginalized communities.

The entire legal process, from the commencement of trial to final judgment, was completed in just two months, an exceptional achievement, considering the number of cases and the intensity of police involvement. The swift resolution was possible due to the timely coordination between the legal team and IPRO field staff, diligent documentation of facts, and the consistent follow-up by the accused persons and their local unit members.

This legal success has reaffirmed the confidence of the community in the legal support structure provided by IPRO and strengthened the resolve to continue the struggle against the criminalisation of the marginalized

**G. Priya, Trainer**





## Arunthathiyar Unorganised Women Workers' Unit



This unit is working in Madurai, Viruthunagar and Dindigul districts in organising the unorganised women workers for their rights and dignity. A few male members are also part of the associations. The unit was involved last year in the following activities.

- ❖ Organising training sessions on accounting, auditing, reporting and documenting.
- ❖ Conducting regular monthly meetings for the village leaders to evaluate and plan regular activities.
- ❖ Bringing men and women together to talk about gender issues.
- ❖ Organising sessions with experts for sustainable jobs, self-employment, or small businesses.
- ❖ Conducting small survey studies to bring out to the public domain the issues of working women.
- ❖ Organising training on constitution alrights and free legal aid camps.



| S.No | Nature of the Intervention               | No of Programmes | Male       | Female       |
|------|------------------------------------------|------------------|------------|--------------|
| 1.   | Half a day village level legal awareness | 198              | 284        | 3,248        |
| 2.   | One-day training on Gram Sabha           | 40               |            | 1,164        |
| 3.   | One-day Gender awareness for couples     | 11               | 84         | 84           |
| 4.   | One-day Entrepreneurship training        | 10               |            | 299          |
| 5.   | One-day Leadership and Management skills | 47               |            | 904          |
| 6.   | Half a day free legal aid camps          | 10               | 43         | 538          |
| 7.   | Consultations with network partners      | 3                | 22         | 29           |
|      | <b>Total</b>                             |                  | <b>433</b> | <b>6,266</b> |

| S.No | Nature of the Benefit                     | No of Persons | Remarks              |
|------|-------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| 1.   | Financial assistance for marriage         | 5             | Rs 20,000 each       |
| 2.   | Financial assistance for education        | 42            | Totally, Rs 1,02,600 |
| 3.   | Old age pension                           | 3             | Totally, Rs 3,400    |
| 4.   | Financial assistance for death            | 2             | Totally, Rs 1,10,000 |
| 5.   | Financial assistance for cremation        | 1             | Rs 5,000             |
| 6.   | Financial assistance for maternity        | 1             | Rs 5,000             |
| 7.   | Financial assistance from bank for groups | 28            | Totally, Rs 9,45,000 |
| 8.   | Patta for houses                          | 40            |                      |
| 9.   | ID cards obtained and corrected           | 38            |                      |
| 10.  | Basic facilities accessed                 | 578           |                      |



### Working together bears many fruits

My name is Veerammal, and I serve as president of the Kattakulam branch of Aathithamizhar association in Vadipattitaluk, Madurai district. Our village has around 60 families. For many years, we lived without even the most basic amenities, no drainage system, public toilets, bathing spaces, and even drinking water pipelines.

We tried to raise these issues by individually petitioning the panchayat president multiple times. But no action was taken. That was when we turned to the leaders of the Aathithamizhar association for support. They informed us about Grama Sabha meetings that take place four times a year and encouraged us to participate as a group. At the next meeting held in our village, I led a team of members and submitted a formal petition demanding the construction of drainage systems, public toilets, bathing facilities, and drinking water pipelines. No action was taken.

At that point, the association leaders joined us, and we jointly approached the panchayat officials. One by one, our demands were met. Today, we have all the basic facilities we need. Our branch now has 40 registered members, many of whom are enrolled in the Unorganised Workers' Welfare Board.

**Alagurani. Trainer**

### Signature campaign worked

In Chathirappatti village, Virudhunagar district, the main road was filled with potholes. Despite raising the issue with the village president of the panchayat and no action was taken. We then used the Gram Swaraj app to generate a report that showed the government's own list of development needs for each village and presented it to the local officials. They were surprised, yet no action was taken.

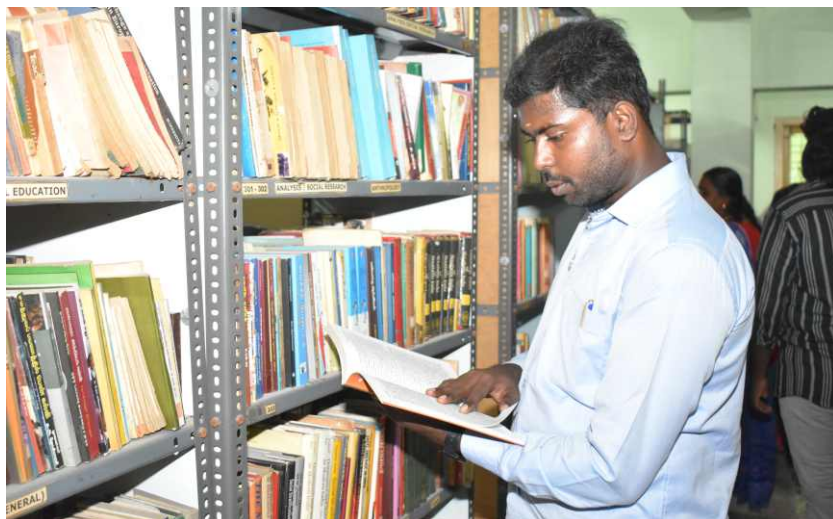
During the Karuppasamy temple Festival, a large crowd gathered in the village. We used that moment and spoke about how the poor condition of the road was affecting people. We collected signatures from all the villagers and submitted a formal complaint to the Free Legal Aid Committee. Following this, government officials summoned the village administrators, held talks, and quickly agreed to begin road construction. That was a real victory for me. The panchayat president later told us, "Whatever it is, come directly to me next time."

**Priya. Trainer**



## Library and Documentation Services

The library section has books, e-documents, and documentaries. Students and researchers interested in social issues visit our library to gather relevant materials for their publications. Those who come for various training sessions and workshops, such as trainers, trainees, field staff, members and



leaders of various movements, social work students, and IDEAS staff, make use of the library facility. Currently, the library has about 7,250 books in Tamil and English. Last year, about 190 people visited and benefited from this service.

The unit sends out e-documents on various social issues, media-related matters, critical essays, relevant data, and current issues to those who have requested our service. Last year, 134 essays on social issues and 134 posts on media-related matters were disseminated. About 475 matters were posted on Facebook. About 2,260 people follow us, and some followers further share the matter instantly.

The tri-annual E-Newsletter, Muhil Muzzakkam, is sent to 700 people, showcasing the impact of our work among the people. The website <https://ideasmadurai.org> has been upgraded. The primary purpose of the website is to share the change narratives and video testimonies of the people we serve. This newsletter and website give a voice to the marginalized people. Last year, 24 change narratives and 30 videos were uploaded. Our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@maduraiideas>

We are into Instagram. Through Instagram and Facebook, we share information about our training sessions and photographs from the field and the centre. About 110 are following us on Instagram.



## Lessons Learned

1. Consistent guidance and mentoring for children helps them take important steps forward in education and personal development. These efforts are laying the foundation for long-term change.
2. Awareness-building among women has played a crucial role in strengthening both families and the broader community. As women become more informed about their rights, health, and education, they are better equipped to support their children, participate in decision-making, and contribute to community development.
3. Youth leadership enables in creation of a new generation that is confident, socially aware, and ready to take up responsibility. Also, efforts to document and preserve cultural identity through storytelling, traditional arts, and language help in the resilience of the younger generation.
4. Collaborations with local NGOs and educational institutions are opening up new opportunities for skill development and livelihood support, gradually shifting the community members towards self-reliance.
5. Knowledge of the E-Gram Swaraj app has helped women to access the budget allocations for each panchayat. When women approach the Gram Sabhas as well-informed and knowledgeable persons, the panchayat leaders accept the petitions of women and fulfil the community's needs.
6. Whenever there were some unresolved issues with the local government officials, the practice has been to submit petitions to higher government officials. This did not work. The higher officials also behaved in the same manner. We changed this mode of going about. We approached the free legal aid authorities, who intervened in many cases and helped us to resolve the issues.
7. Only those village units which had more members and substantial common funds in the bank could access bank loans for alternative livelihood opportunities. Based on this experience, we focus our energy on building village units with a minimum of 25 members and substantial savings.
8. For an effective implementation of an act, awareness generation among the workers and the government officials is necessary. In whichever panchayats we succeeded in conducting workshops for

the government officials, won them over and made them realise the importance of effective implementation of the act, the workers benefited a lot. In such workshops, negotiation and dialogue skills are highly beneficial.

9. In sensitising the public and the government officials on social issues, access to entitlements, protection of rights and dignity of workers, collaboration and networking with like-minded organisations is key. Dialogue and common planning between the local sangam leaders and leaders of other organisations emboldens everyone to raise their demands effectively in a unified manner.

10. Sharing of success stories by the workers with co-workers, especially about accessing entitlement schemes from TAHDCO, strengthens the confidence level of many.

11. The culture of reciting the Preamble to the Constitution every day, during training and workshops, has helped the participants to value the importance of the Constitution. Several participants have agreed to introduce this practice in their respective NGOs.

12. Our plan to form one unit comprising four villages did not work in rural areas. The participation was poor and discouraging. When we changed the unit concept to two villages, we found greater participation of women. Their participation in Gram Sabhas also drastically improved.

13. More than expressing what the participants learned in the training and workshops, when they shared how such workshops impacted their lives through change narratives and videos, there were more viewers and much appreciation.





## **Publications, Consultancy Services & General**

### **Books Published (Print/E-Version)**

- ◆ Sahaya Philominraj (2024), Arivom! Ani Thiravom! Urimaigalai Velvom!

### **Research Reports**

- ◆ Joseph Xavier (2025), Market Feasibility Study about Re-orienting NGO-led IGPs, Udayani Social Forum, Kolkata.
- ◆ TLRf (2024), Marukkapatta Kanniyam – Arunthathiyar Samugangalil Ulla Sugathara Nerukkadigal, Research Report, November 2024.

### **Articles Published**

- ◆ Jenova Mary (2024), Thooimaipaniyalar Nilai. Samugam Mara Vendum, Namathu Manvasam, December 2024.
- ◆ Jenova Mary (2025), Pirappilum Veruppu. Anaithilum Maruppu, Namathu Manvasam, March 2025.
- ◆ Joseph Xavier (2024), Subaltern Social Movement and Socio-Economic Empowerment, in Dialogue and Solidarity: A Religio-subaltern Perspective, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore, pp. 161-194
- ◆ Sahaya Philominraj (February 2025) Artificial Intelligence and Society: A Critical Analysis of Challenges and Opportunities in the Digital Age, Vidya Deep Journal, Vol. 12, No. 2



## Consultancy Services

- ◆ Joseph Xavier facilitated the Pune Jesuit Province Assembly to review the implementation of the Province Apostolic Preferences.
- ◆ Sahaya Philominraj taught a two-credit course on "Theology of Justice" to around 35 students of Theology.
- ◆ On 11 September, the CCBI Pastoral Plan - Journeying Towards a Synodal Church: Mission 2033, was released, and the planning process and document preparation were led by Joseph Xavier. He facilitated the pastoral plan of the Karnataka Region, Udupi and Asansol dioceses.
- ◆ Joe facilitated the 36th Plenary Assembly of the CCBI, held at XIM University Bhubaneswar, on 'Discerning Synodal Pathways for Mission', in which about 140 Bishops and 55 clergy and religious participated.
- ◆ Sahaya Philominraj and Fr. Lawrence surveyed safeguarding measures within the province.
- ◆ Joe animated the Sacred Heart Brothers to develop a pastoral plan and the Chapter preparation of the CIC sisters.

## General

- ◆ The finance unit is streamlined with strict adherence to financial practices and compliance.
- ◆ The support unit plays a crucial role in providing clean facilities and high-quality food. All participants appreciated the simple and tasty food provided by the institute.
- ◆ On 27 May, a retirement function was organised for Mr. Kalimuthu, who served the institute for the past 21 years as maintenance staff.
- ◆ On 19 December, the institute staff celebrated Christmas with the inmates of Amala Home at Ammapatti, T.Kallupatti, run by the CIC sisters.
- ◆ The institute staff also celebrated Teacher's Day, Deepavali and Pongal.
- ◆ On March 28, approximately 100 nursing students from Meenakshi Mission Hospital visited the IDEAS campus for an exposure visit.



# **Institute of Development, Education, Action and Studies**

## **Accompanying the Marginalized since 1984**



In 1978, the Jesuits of Madurai Province began a mission in the East Ramnathapuram area among the Dalits, having its headquarters in Devakottai. The primary strategy was to educate and organise the Dalits to live a dignified life opposing feudal landlordism and caste discrimination. While the movement of the people was called as Scheduled Caste Welfare Movement, the Jesuits and collaborators called themselves as PALMERA (People's Action and Liberation Movement in East Ramnad) team. Several Jesuits, religious and lay persons contributed and benefitted through this grassroots engagement. In 1985, the People's Organization was rechristened as the Worker's People Rights Movement. As the grassroots works intensified, the Jesuits felt the need to initiate a training centre in Madurai, to empower the Dalits and other marginalized communities and work for their holistic development, and thus IDEAS was born.

Institute of Development, Education, Action, and Studies (IDEAS) was founded in 1984 at 26A, Valaithoppu, Chinthamani Road, Madurai 625001. On the same premises, the Tamil Nadu unit of the All India Catholic University Federation (AICUF) was also established, which moved to Trichy in 1999.

IDEAS has been playing a significant role as a Regional Resource Centre for various kinds of marginalized groups in society: Dalits, Women, Children, Unorganized Labourers, Sri Lankan Tamil Repatriates working as bonded labourers in the commercial forests of Kodaikanal Hills, Tamil Refugees from Sri Lanka, Dalit Catholics, Arunthathiyars, Puthirai Vannars, Paliyar and Pulayar Tribes on Kodaikanal Hills, and the Nomadic Tribes in the plains. Various civil society groups working with these groups have also benefitted from the institute's services. Right from its inception, the focus of the institute has been the empowerment of marginalized groups to become people's movements for accessing and enjoying their constitutional rights and entitlements and to live a dignified life.

In the late 90s, responding to the nexus among crony market forces, religio-cultural nationalist politics and hegemonic state and the increasing rate of discrimination and atrocities against Dalits, women and children, the institute has turned its lens in a new direction: socio-political, legal, and economic capacitation and empowerment of Dalit Women, Women facing Violence, Widows and Manual Scavenging Workers. Challenges posed to democracy and secularism today are another important area of concern.

From 2000, at the top of the list of engagements is the Capacity building programmes for members and leaders of people's movements/organizations conducted in and outside the Institute on a wide range of themes covering socio-cultural analysis, leadership skills, legal literacy, patriarchy and gender rights, the status of Dalit Catholics, etc. Besides, Issue-based involvement through legal information, guidance and judicial interventions, Research and Publications for advocacy purposes were other important activities. Seminars and Workshops enable teachers, NGOs, youth, and leaders of people's movements to develop their communication skills, acquire media education and learn social video production skills. The institute's Knowledge Services include library facilities and e-documentation despatch on current social issues. Collaboration with Jesuit Madurai Province social action centres and other institutions, with national Jesuit social centres and with Church agencies involved in social action expands the institute's scope of activity.

Given that the achievements since 1984 are indeed a powerful testimony to what the institute had envisioned, done, and impacted, the coming decades offer newer challenges to serve the marginalised with deeper commitment and greater vigour.



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**Mr. Kalimuthu**



# Ideas

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