

Contours of Care

November - December 2025

Building stronger foundations and safer spaces in Bengaluru, Chennai and Delhi:

Early Childhood



From Butterflies to Brave Voices: How art helped Chengalpattu children feel, create & speak



Explore a Colourful Detour: How Art, Puppets and Children Reimagined 2025 with Art Vandit



Dear NalandaWay Community,

As we enter the new year, we wish you good health and steadiness in the months ahead.

This edition, *Contours of Care*, traces the many ways care takes shape — in classrooms, in early learning spaces, and in the relationships that hold children.

In early childhood settings, children engaged with stories, play, and creative activities that supported language development, emotional expression, and participation. Caregivers, Anganwadi Workers, and parents took part in trainings and discussions focused on inclusion, nurturing care, and everyday classroom practice.

Across schools and adolescent programmes, young people engaged in arts-based learning and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) sessions that addressed relationships, boundaries, confidence, and future planning. Teachers and Child Care Institution (CCI) staff participated in workshops that supported their well-being and reinforced their role in creating safe learning environments.

During this period, the organisation also continued to invest in capacity and systems — through Anganwadi Worker and Mega ECCE trainings, Teaching Artist development, teacher workshops, volunteer engagement, and strengthened Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) practices.

Together, these efforts reflect a steady approach to the work — one built on consistency rather than scale alone. This edition brings together snapshots from that period. Thank you for continuing to support this work as we move into the year ahead.

With regards,
The NalandaWay Team



EARLY CHILDHOOD

Our initiatives with children aged 0 to 10 are designed to improve their school readiness using the arts in fostering emotional well-being.

ABC

123

kanna mucche

📍 Bengaluru

Making Inclusion Visible, Measurable, and Everyday

Strengthening Inclusive Practice in Anganwadis

In December, Kanna Mucche conducted a comprehensive Anganwadi Worker (AWW) training focused on inclusion and gender equality. The training saw full attendance, with officers from the Women & Child Welfare Department also present, signalling strong institutional support.

The sessions focused on recognising inclusion in daily practice, identifying classroom barriers, and challenging gender stereotypes. AWWs explored practical, doable actions to address language differences, behavioural variations, and unconscious bias, reinforcing the idea that inclusion is built through everyday choices and interactions.



Assessments to Guide Holistic Support

SEL and formative assessments were conducted across **14 Anganwadi centres**, covering a rotational sample of **140 children**. The assessments focused on language, listening, motor skills, numeracy, cognitive thinking, focus, body awareness, health, and sequencing.

The SEL component provided insights into children's emotional awareness and responses to everyday situations, helping teams identify areas that require additional support and nurturing.

Reinforcing Learning Through Materials

To support learning continuity, basic literacy and numeracy workbooks were distributed across **14 Anganwadi centres**, reaching **380 children**. The workbooks reinforce story-based learning from sessions and provide structured opportunities for practice.

Learning Life Skills Through Activity

Children engaged in hands-on activities that supported social and life skills. Making friendship bands encouraged cooperation and fine motor development, while waste segregation exercises introduced early awareness of environmental responsibility.

gutargoo

📍 Noida

Small Celebrations, Stronger Foundations

Across 15 ICDS centres across **7 locations**, Gutar Goo focused on early learning, caregiver engagement, and community awareness.

Children's Day celebrations brought together storytelling, poetry, art-making, games, and shared meals, reinforcing joy and participation in early learning spaces.

The second Community Circle in Tilapta village focused on rabies awareness and prevention, reaching around 80 participants, while children remained engaged through creative play.

Across six locations, **60+ fathers** participated in Father Circle meetings, reflecting on nurturing care, communication, and the importance of spending intentional time with their children beyond financial provision.



The Letter Behind Closed Eyes

As usual, I was telling a story to the children. Their eyes sparkled with curiosity, and their faces lit up with smiles — the most precious rewards I receive. Just then, Manvitha walked up to me with her familiar, cheerful voice and said,

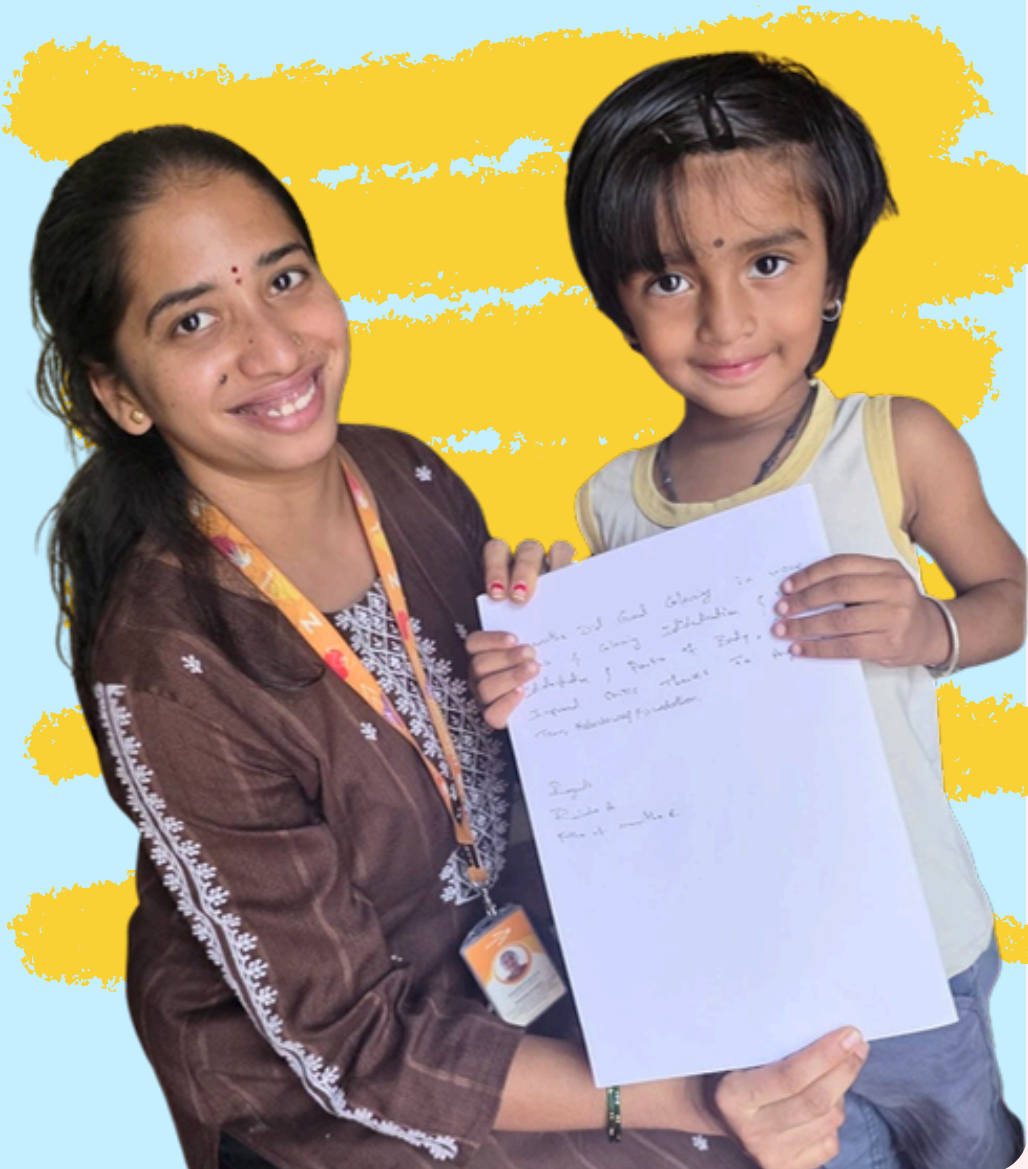
“Ma’am, my parents have given you a letter... close your eyes, I’ll show you!”

Curious, I closed my eyes. When I opened them, she revealed something hidden behind her Kanna Mucche workbook. It wasn’t a letter, but a feedback note from her parents about her growth at the Anganwadi.

When she had newly joined the Anganwadi, she would not participate in colouring with her peers, though she showed a strong interest in learning new things. The feedback described her growth, her curiosity, and her eagerness to learn.

Reading those words filled me with both joy and motivation — a reminder that small, consistent efforts in early learning spaces can shape a child’s confidence and engagement over time.

An experience note shared by NalandaWay’s facilitator from the Kanna Mucche project.



Kanna Moochi

Chennai



Inside Anganwadis: Where Stories Build Skills



Aliya Fathima is a quiet and observant child who attends the Anganwadi regularly. As a single child, she enjoys learning and often repeats whatever is taught with interest. Although she understands lessons quickly, she sometimes prefers to sit alone, appears withdrawn, and does not sleep comfortably during the centre’s nap time.

During the mother circle meeting, parents were guided on positive parenting practices such as avoiding fights in front of children, not comparing them with others, using gentle communication, and avoiding harsh or abusive words at home. After the session, when each child’s progress was discussed individually, Aliya’s mother shared that Aliya is often afraid because her father frequently argues at home. Even though the mother tries to shield her, Aliya still overhears these conflicts and sometimes wakes up crying at night due to fear.

Through this conversation, the mother realised how these experiences were affecting Aliya’s behaviour at the Anganwadi. She expressed that she would avoid arguments in front of the child and create a calmer environment at home. This case highlighted how strongly the family atmosphere influences a child’s emotional well-being and showed the importance of mother circle meetings in helping parents understand and support their children better.

Notes from an Anganwadi Centre in the Kanna Moochi Project





Kanna Moochi reached **300 children** across **18 Anganwadi centres** through story-based, play-led learning.

- ✿ Across November and December, children explored emotions, empathy, hygiene, and friendships through stories, role-play, and hands-on activities. Term 2 concluded with structured recaps that strengthened listening, memory, emotional awareness, and verbal expression.
- ✿ First-quarter assessments with **144 children** supported a deeper understanding of language and cognitive development, guiding classroom support and future trainings.

Building Anganwadi Worker Capacity

In November, a comprehensive AWW training module was developed, centred on inclusion, gender equality, Divyang inclusion, and stress management — creating a practical and balanced framework for everyday classroom practice.

This was implemented in December through the AWW Training on Inclusion and Gender Equality. Using stories, visuals, films, role plays, and reflective tools such as the Promise Tree and Affirmation Wall, AWWs examined bias, dignity, and daily inclusion. The sessions focused on small, actionable strategies to include every child, promote equality between girls and boys, and support children with disabilities respectfully. The training also aligned workers with NEP 2020, Navchetna principles, and Adharshila’s structured activity planning.



Building on this momentum, the Kanna Moochi team was invited by CDPOs to conduct a Mega ECCE Training for **170 Anganwadi Workers**. The team delivered an interactive training focused on early childhood development, play-based learning, and child-centred practices. Positive feedback from both CDPOs and workers marked a milestone for the team and reinforced NalandaWay’s growing credibility in the field.



ARTS in Education

Chennai

When Art Changes the Classroom Dynamic

Phase I of Arts in Education concluded across **29 schools** for Grades 1–5, with **1,170** Visual and Theatre Arts sessions delivered.

Beyond delivery, the focus was on consistency and trust. Teaching Artists built strong working relationships with headmasters, teachers, and students. Over time, teachers moved from observation to engagement — supporting classroom management and offering feedback — signalling growing ownership of the programme.

Phase II Readiness: Teachers Step In

Teaching Artists and the programme team conducted orientations across all **29 schools**, reaching **145 teachers** and **school leaders**.

The sessions shared classroom-level observations from Phase I, outlined the structure of Phase II, clarified teachers’ co-facilitation roles, and walked through lesson plans. Hard copies of lesson plans were shared, responding to a key request from the previous year and supporting smoother classroom implementation.



Strengthening Teaching Artist Capacity

A three-day capacity-building workshop supported Teaching Artists in reflection, documentation, and research readiness.

- **Day 1:** Phase II reflection and basic Excel training to improve data management and documentation.
- **Day 2:** Photography, documentation feedback, and case story writing to strengthen reporting quality.
- **Day 3:** Orientation on field-level documentation and longitudinal study concepts, preparing teams for deeper impact measurement.

The workshop concluded with collective reflection and planning for Phase III.

“NalandaWay’s art sessions encourage creative thinking and imagination. Students curate their own songs and stories, and teachers are able to identify hidden talents beyond academics.”

— Class IV Teacher, CPS Senniammankovil Street



Foundational Learning

📍 Chennai

When Students Begin to See What They’re Capable Of

Volunteer-led sessions across **three schools** engaged **195 students**, supporting reflection on confidence, strengths, teamwork, and goal-setting. Students created goal ladders that were displayed in schools and appreciated by teachers and headteachers.

These sessions were conducted with **volunteers from Michelin**.

Stronger Families, Supported Teachers

Across **five schools**, **75 parents** participated in workshops focused on strengthening family engagement in children’s learning and well-being

Teacher workshops addressed stress management, mindfulness, self-care, and work-life balance, with teachers developing simple, actionable self-care plans.



ADOLESCENCE

Recognising the challenges adolescents face, our emotional well-being interventions are designed to improve school engagement and prosocial behaviour. Programmes included workshops, games and activities focused on mental health awareness and peer support.



Project Sakhi

Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad,
Delhi, Thiruvananthapuram & Pune

Strengthening Girls' Confidence Through Care, Consistency, and Choice

Engaging Parents as Partners

Parents' Workshops were conducted across Delhi, Chennai, Pune, and Bengaluru, with over 50 parents participating. Sessions combined interactive activities with discussions on children's attendance, exam performance, learning needs, and everyday challenges such as missed sessions and unclear timings.

Parents reflected on their children's progress and shared that they had noticed improvements in confidence, responsibility, and engagement with Sakhi sessions. The workshops also strengthened parents' commitment to regular attendance and consistent support at home.

"Today we learned how our children can improve through small, everyday habits, like studying on time, using their phones less, and clearing their doubts. Now, we'll send our children to Sakhi sessions on time and provide more support at home. We truly appreciate the Sakhi team's efforts for helping our children thrive."

— Sannu, A Sakhi's Father, Delhi

"The meeting helped us understand the importance of regular attendance and daily study. We will ensure our child comes on time and follows didis' guidance. We appreciate the Sakhi team's support."

— Anita, A Sakhi's Mother, Delhi



Celebrating, Reflecting, and Setting Goals

Christmas and New Year celebrations were held across Delhi, Bengaluru, and Perambur senior cohorts.

In Perambur, 23 senior girls participated in a first-time fireless cooking activity, working in groups to prepare simple dishes. The activity encouraged teamwork, confidence, and sharing, followed by cake cutting and food sharing.

An accompanying art session focused on **goal-setting for 2026**, enabling girls to creatively reflect on academic and personal aspirations.

Supporting Career Awareness and Motivation

In Hyderabad, a visit by the Global Logic team supported Sakhi girls in reflecting on career goals, building confidence, and understanding how to make better use of Sakhi opportunities. The interaction also strengthened trust with schools and families, contributing to stronger support systems around the girls.



Building Everyday Health Awareness

A Healthy Habits session was conducted with **20 Sakhi girls** from the Bengaluru senior cohorts, focusing on nutritious food choices and good eating practices. Dry fruits were distributed to reinforce learning and encourage healthy snacking.

Strengthening Social and Emotional Learning

In Thiruvananthapuram, SEL sessions supported girls in understanding their emotions, building self-awareness, and strengthening confidence through reflection, discussion, and role-based activities. The sessions helped improve emotional regulation, self-belief, and decision-making in everyday situations.

Building Everyday Health Awareness

At Choolai School, Chennai, a Global Logic volunteering engagement brought **14 volunteers** together with Sakhi children to create motivational bookmarks. Volunteers shared personal stories, and children shared that they felt happy, safe, and encouraged during the session.

In Perambur, senior girls participated in an expert-led financial literacy session, where they learned about savings and investment. Following the session, girls began maintaining monthly budgets for spending, saving, and investing.

Perambur juniors also took part in an exposure visit to DakshinaChitra and Marina Beach, exploring different state cultures, followed by an Annual Workshop focused on academics and relationships.



"In the SEL classes, I learned more about my feelings and why I feel angry or sad sometimes. The activities and role plays were fun and helped me understand myself better. I feel more confident now to talk and share my thoughts. When I have problems with my friends or at school, I try to think calmly and choose the right thing to do."

— Ananya A S,



Sampoorna 2.0

📍 Jharkhand

Strengthening Emotional Learning and System Readiness

Twelve Arts and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) sessions were conducted across **six government high schools** in the Ormanjhi, Ratu, and Itki blocks of Ranchi, **reaching 847 students** from Classes 9 and 10.

Using *Take It Eazy* audio stories and art-based activities, the sessions focused on empathy, compassion, healthy friendships, collaboration, and gender relationships. Students actively participated in discussions and reflection exercises, sharing perspectives on trust, respect, and kindness. The sessions provided structured spaces for adolescents to reflect on emotional well-being and interpersonal relationships in a supportive environment.

System Engagement and Early Childhood Learning

Alongside school-based work, the team engaged with government offices under the Department of Women, Child Development & Social Security to understand proposal processes and approval mechanisms for potential Anganwadi engagement.

A learning visit to Ek Jut Organisation offered insights into early childhood care practices and community-based work in Jharkhand, contributing to ongoing learning and programme planning.



Apollo Schools Delhi

Building Teacher Confidence Through Arts and Well-being

Six teacher training workshops were conducted across Apollo-supported MCD schools, **reaching 55 teachers**.

Five workshops focused on Arts Made Simple, helping teachers build confidence in using arts through practical, classroom-friendly methods. Activities included puppet-making, storytelling, theatre-based action songs, Dandiya, and arts-integrated lesson planning — demonstrating that arts can be meaningfully embedded into everyday teaching.

One workshop focused on teacher mental health and well-being, introducing mindful breathing and reflection exercises to support stress management. Teachers, mentor teachers, and school leaders shared that the sessions helped them feel relaxed, motivated, and more confident, while challenging the perception that arts are not accessible to all.

Children’s Day Across Apollo Schools

Children’s Day was celebrated across six Apollo-supported schools, **engaging 900+ students** from Grades 1 to 5 in age-appropriate creative activities.

Art forms included drawing, poster-making, painting, origami, paper craft, fancy dress, dance performances, and group games. Art kits were distributed to students in Grades 4 and 5 to support continued participation. With active involvement from teachers and school leadership, the celebrations encouraged creativity, confidence, teamwork, and inclusive participation.

“Teachers really enjoyed the session and should definitely conduct these activities in their classrooms. They are very helpful for everyone.”

— Mamta, Principal, MCD Mayur Vihar School

“The session on stress management was really nice. The activities were unique and we all enjoyed it. We request more such sessions in the future.”

— Shaheen, Special Educator,
MCD Trilokpuri School



Delhi Children’s Choir

 Delhi

Strengthening Family Engagement Through Music

A Parents–Teacher Meeting was conducted to strengthen dialogue between families and the DCC team. Parents shared observations of positive changes in their children, including improved focus and more thoughtful use of time. Some children also reflected that parents who were earlier unsure about music now felt proud of their participation and progress.

The meeting included a music-based SEL and mindfulness session, offering parents space to pause and reflect on their own well-being. It concluded with a light, interactive movement-and-music activity, building ease, trust, and stronger relationships between families and the DCC programme.



HR & Internal Culture

Work Culture, Beyond the Work

A 10-day Secret Santa initiative brought together **70+ team** members across locations, strengthening informal connections and reinforcing a warm, collaborative organisational culture.



Well-Being and Skilling of Children in Child Care Institutions

📍 34 Districts across Tamil Nadu

Learning to Name Care, Boundaries, and Self-Worth

Workshops on romantic relationships supported adolescents to reflect on ideas of love, care, and boundaries. Initial hesitation shifted to active engagement as children connected discussions to familiar movie scenes and lived experiences.

Through guided scenarios, participants examined how behaviours such as control, jealousy, isolation, and emotional manipulation are often normalised as love. By the end of the sessions, children demonstrated clearer understanding of healthy relationships, identifying respect, trust, communication, and mutual care as core foundations. Many also shared personal or observed experiences, helping validate emotions and reduce self-blame.

Supporting Caregivers to Sustain Care

A two-day online staff training was conducted in two batches with staff from multiple Child Care Institutions, creating space for reflection, emotional renewal, and shared learning.

Through creative activities and dialogue, staff reflected on their journeys, challenges, and sources of motivation. Many shared that participating in the same processes offered to children helped them feel relaxed, valued, and re-energised. Stories highlighted how patience, empathy, and consistent care enable children to re-engage, complete schooling, and imagine future possibilities. Leadership voices reinforced the role of kindness and emotional safety in helping children adapt and express themselves freely.

Building Confidence and Career Awareness

The second Hub Gathering, along with direct visits, **engaged 39 students** from **12 districts**, focusing on confidence-building, help-seeking skills, and early career awareness.

Discussion-led sessions helped students reflect on comfort, fear, and growth zones, and how hesitation or limited exposure can restrict personal and career choices. Practical demonstrations introduced the purpose of a résumé and its role in internships and employment. The hub model also ensured continued connection for care leavers unable to attend regular sessions due to college commitments.





"I usually don't talk much in sessions, so I just listened. After that day, I kept thinking about what was shared on unhealthy relationships and boundaries. I realised that some of my friends made me feel guilty and anxious all the time. Slowly, I started saying no and stepping back when I felt uncomfortable."

— Shared by a 12th-grade child from Nilgiris CCI



"I learned that love should make me feel safe, not controlled. Though my partner says to discontinue my studies, I will say no, and it is okay to say no, that my feelings matter, and that respect and space are more important than attraction or jealousy."

— Shared by a 10th-grade child from coimbatore CCI



Kalakriti

📍 Delhi

Celebrating Creativity and Belonging

Kalakriti organised a Children's Day celebration as a child-led cultural event. Children participated freely across dance, music, theatre, and visual arts, creating a joyful space to express themselves and feel a sense of belonging.

Tigri-Ki-Kalakriti: Christmas and Year-End Celebration

The year concluded with Tigri-Ki-Kalakriti, a Christmas and year-end celebration at the Kalakriti centre. Children from across programmes participated in different ways: visual arts students curated a small exhibition, musical theatre learners performed a play on mental health, and DCC children presented Christmas carols.

Parents joined to witness the performances, making the event a shared moment of reflection, learning, and celebration as 2025 came to a close.



Research & Impact

Strengthening How We Measure What Matters

R&I team member, Kirti Koushika, recently completed two professional learning programmes in the field of evaluation:

- 6th Asia Pacific Winter School for Young and Emerging Evaluators by EvalYouth Asia and
- Facilitating Gender Transformative Evaluations (FGTE) – Early to Mid-Career Professionals by Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST)

These programmes strengthened her understanding of evaluation practice with a strong focus on gender, equity, power, and reflexivity. *The learnings will contribute to NalandaWay's Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) efforts, particularly in designing context-sensitive and gender-responsive approaches across education and youth-focused programmes.*



Well-being for Children Using a Whole-School Approach

♥ Tamil Nadu

Making Space for Expression and Creativity

A Passion for Storytelling

Liza, a vibrant and active child of Class 8, has always possessed a vivid imagination. While she frequently participated in school activities, her inner world was filled with stories and scenarios she had never felt empowered to share. The scriptwriting activity session provided the breakthrough Liza needed.

For the first time, she was given the creative freedom to explore her storytelling potential. Working alongside her peers, Liza moved beyond simple imagination to the technical aspects of writing, such as organising ideas, building dialogue, and structuring a cohesive narrative.

The transformation in Liza was evident as the activity progressed: She learned to channel her "imaginative situations" into a professional script format. Having her ideas acknowledged and valued by her teammates significantly enhanced her self-confidence.

The process acted as a catalyst for Liza to recognise her hidden potential for creative writing. *"This activity provided me with creative opportunities and encouraged me to discover hidden talents I didn't know I had,"* she noted.



To mark Children's Day, NalandaWay engaged around **100 students** from Classes 6 and 7 across two government schools in **Chengalpattu district**, using arts-based activities to create safe spaces for emotional expression while strengthening creativity, teamwork, and critical thinking.

At **GHS Perumbakkam**, the Butterfly Emotions activity encouraged children to reflect on happiness, sadness, anger, fear, and surprise. Using emotion masks and guided sharing, students connected personal experiences to emotions, fostering comfort and inclusion.

At **GHSS Thiruvanchery**, students created emotion masks using natural and recycled materials, followed by an emotion-based game that helped them articulate how emotions are experienced physically. These activities supported reflection, communication, and environmental awareness.



Finding Voice Through Musical Theatre

Classroom-based musical theatre sessions focused on voice modulation, expression, rhythm, and collaboration. Through breathing exercises and simple sentence work, students overcame initial hesitation and explored how voice connects to emotion.

Rhythm-based activities enabled students to create original songs with relevant lyrics and tunes, and build simple musical instruments using recycled materials. These sessions demonstrated strong creative engagement, teamwork, and confidence in expression.

Art Vandi

Chennai



Art as Access, Culture, and Connection

The final months of 2025 were a whirlwind of creativity and community for the Art Vandi, proving that art isn't just about drawing — it's about building bridges, nurturing emotions, and rediscovering heritage.

From the quiet, reflective halls of Olcott Memorial School, where teachers rediscovered themselves as artists through intensive arts-based training, to the historic grounds of Madras Seva Sadan, the Art Vandi delivered joy, with hundreds of students filling pages with imagination and laughter.

The journey culminated in high-profile participation at the **Madras Art Weekend**, where we proudly introduced our mission to dignitaries such as Palanivel Thiaga Rajan, Honourable Minister for Information Technology and Digital Services, Tamil Nadu, and Mani Ratnam, Ace film director, among others. More importantly, we helped children revive the fading tradition of the *Drishti Bommai* through puppet-making, proving that art is a powerful anchor for culture.

As Christmas approached, our focus turned to empathy. At CCI Vellore, art became a safe space for girls to explore peer relationships by crafting self-gifting zine books about trust and kindness. Simultaneously, over **120 children** at PUMS Tirusulam brought the festive season to life, crafting their first-ever stick puppets, their eyes lighting up with the magic of creation.

Art Vandi's message is clear: whether we are empowering teachers, engaging the public, or celebrating culture, art is the vital medium through which children find their voice, share their stories, and feel truly connected. We pause now, inspired and ready to roll into 2026 with brighter colours and new tales to tell!



IMPACT SNAPSHOT



300 children
across **18**
Anganwadi
centres (Kanna
Moochi, Chennai)



900+ children
engaged
through
Children's Day
celebrations
(Apollo Schools)

140 children
assessed through
SEL and
formative tools
(Kanna Mucche,
Bengaluru)



195 students
supported
through
volunteer-led
foundational
learning sessions



60+ fathers
engaged
through Father
Circle meetings

380 children
received
literacy and
numeracy
workbooks

847 adolescents
reached across **6**
government
high schools
(Sampoorna 2.0,
Jharkhand)

57 parents
engaged
through Project
Sakhi workshops
across **4 cities**



75 parents
participated in
school-based
family workshops



29 schools
completed
Phase I of Arts
in Education

**170 Anganwadi
Workers**
trained through
Mega ECCE
sessions



145 teachers
oriented for
Phase II of Arts
in Education

55 teachers
trained across
Apollo-
supported
schools



**14 Anganwadi
centres** supported
through
assessments and
material
distribution

**1,170 arts
sessions**
delivered
(Visual &
Theatre Arts)



39 care leavers
from **12 districts**
engaged
through Hub
Gatherings



**70+ staff
members**
engaged
through internal
culture
initiatives

Looking Ahead

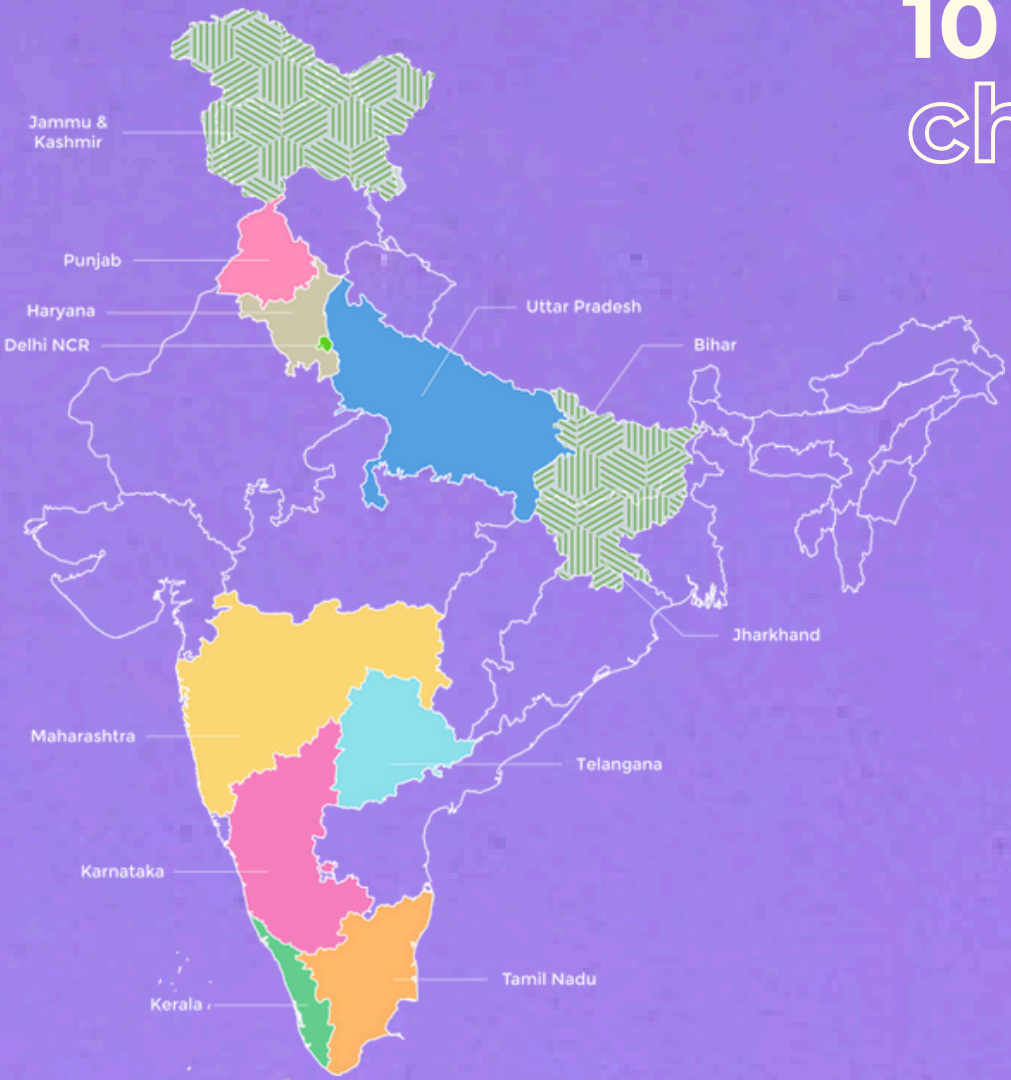
"The arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution, and that questions can have more than one answer."

– Dr Elliot Eisner

Each new year arrives with its own language of hope. For children, that language is often spoken through colour, movement, sound, and story. When we make room for art, we make room for feeling — and when children are allowed to feel fully, their minds grow steadier, their relationships kinder, and their futures less fearful.

As we look ahead, our focus remains on nurturing learning spaces that honour the inner lives of children, support those who care for them, and recognise emotional well-being as foundational to education. This is the work we continue to return to — shaping learning that stays with children long after the year has turned.

Our Partners



10 million
children
20 years
10 states

LEGEND
Locations where we have
previously worked and
left a lasting impact.

