

Society for People's Education and Economic Change (SPEECH)



Annual Report 2024 – 25

Society for People's Education and Economic Change (SPEECH)

2/1060, Manoranjitham St, Ezhil Nagar, Madurai -625 014,

Tamilnadu, INDIA

Mobile: 98421 44699, E-mail ID - mduspeech@gmail.com

web: www.speechtn.org

ANNUAL WORK REPORT FY 202 4 - 25

Introduction

SPEECH is a secular, non-profit development organization established in 1987, primarily to strengthen Human concerns in civil Society at large, to address issues that hinder the growth process. Strengthening grassroots democracy and Good Governance by facilitating participation and promoting self-sustainable development of the vulnerable sections from rural Tamil Nadu are the prime visions of SPEECH. As a development organization, SPEECH commits itself to releasing human potentials of the weaker sections through a wide range of activities conducted by the communities themselves. Its approach is highly development issue-based, countering biases stemming from caste, religion, linguistic, or community identities. It recognizes the need for a two-way process of transformation, enabling both top-down and bottom-up approaches to strengthen democratic principles.

Vision

Strengthen human concern in civil society at large and to address issues that hinder growth process of the vulnerable, besides strengthening grass root democracy towards promoting sustainable development

Mission

To build an internal system for child protection, gender and social inclusion that is coordinated, integrated and holistic.

Organization Objective

SPEECH aims to:

Enable the underprivileged to release their human potentials and achieve sustainable use of locally managed resource bases, fostering a user-friendly service delivery system.

Partner with the developmental efforts of weaker and vulnerable sections for holistic improvement in society.

More specifically, SPEECH aims to:

- Facilitate self-actualization among agricultural laborers, small and marginal farmers, women, and children below 18 through partnerships and federating them towards building grassroots organizations and interest groups.
- Build awareness of exploitative and suppressive forces and enhance faith in democratic principles of Good Governance.
- Revive indigenous traditional knowledge and practices in various sectors, including health and agriculture, to conserve nature and sustain the treasure for future generations.
- Protect child rights in line with the UNCRC, enabling children to enjoy their childhood.
- Conduct action research activities to provide feedback on field realities and viable approaches into policy processes.
- Capacity building of various development actors and stakeholders at all levels by convening and facilitating training activities aimed at efficient service delivery.
- Respond to emergency situations including war victims, communal violence, and natural calamities/disasters, with special reference to the vulnerable (children and women) through relief and rehabilitation support activities.
- This holistic approach underscores SPEECH's commitment to fostering sustainable development and social justice in rural Tamil Nadu.

In the financial year 2024–2025, our organization has actively implemented development programs across Virudhunagar District. Virudhunagar District one of the most vulnerable and aspirational districts of India. Within this district, our interventions have primarily focused on the marginalized and underdeveloped blocks of Thiruchuli, Narikudi, Kariapatti, Aruppukottai, Sivakasi, and Sattur.

Our initiatives aim to promote the holistic development of children, adolescents, mill workers, and women from marginalized communities, with a strong focus on education, health, livelihood enhancement, and economic empowerment. Efforts have also been made to ensure access to social protection and facilitate linkages with government welfare schemes, fostering inclusion, equity, and resilience among vulnerable groups.

This development journey has been made possible through the continued collaboration and support of our development partners Children Believe, Azim Premji Foundation, and IndusInd Bank through SWASTI along with the Government of India, the Government of Tamil Nadu, and various community-based organizations (CBOs). Their collective efforts have been instrumental in strengthening our organizational growth and amplifying the impact of our community development initiatives.

PEECH Operational Coverage

1. Retrieving Hope for Child Rights Project (CB)

Kariyapatti, Narikudi, Aruppukotai and Thiruchuli Blocks

Total Coverage of the Villages: 34

Total population of the village: 15,900

Phase 1: Breaking the Cycle of Child Labour (1994–2000)

SPEECH and Children Believe came together with a single, strong purpose help children return to school, safety, and the joys of childhood.

“Eradicating child labour was about restoring childhood.”

Key Interventions

- Rescue of children from fireworks and matchstick factories
- Sponsorship support to help children return to school
- Mainstreaming into schools through coordination with the National Child Labour Project (NCLP)

- Evening Resource Centres to offer bridge education for working children and school drop-outs
- Parents Committees formed in villages to support education and prevent dropouts
- Microenterprise development to help poor and Dalit families find alternative incomes and reduce dependence on child labour

Impact Summary

- ✓ Over 1,300 children were rescued and re-enrolled in school
- ✓ 99.9% reduction in school dropouts, especially among Dalit girls
- ✓ Many children became first-generation learners to enter higher education
- ✓ Local ownership grew — with schools, parents, and communities working together to protect children
- ✓ Most importantly, a strong message spread across villages: *“Our children belong in schools — not factories.”*

Phase 2: From Rescue to Child Rights Protection (2001–2008)

After years of successfully rescuing children from child labour, there was a growing need to shift from rescue work to a stronger focus on child rights protection — making sure that every child’s right to education, safety, and dignity was respected

29 villages across Sivakasi and Vembakottai Blocks, Virudhunagar District

Key Interventions

- ❖ Livelihood support - skill training, land development for agriculture, microenterprises,
- ❖ Naanayam Groups
- ❖ Child Rights Protection Committees created to strengthen advocacy and response
- ❖ Higher Education Committees formed to support college-going youth
- ❖ District-level Federation of Naanayam Groups established — called Southern Alliance for Ensuring Child Rights (SAFE CR)
- ❖ Climate change awareness programs introduced in schools and villages through CMCJ (Children’s Movement for Climate Justice)
- ❖ Established Devanesan School in Sivakasi primarily for bridge course at an affordable cost

Impact Summary

- Over 2,500 sponsored children and another 10,000+ children benefited, along with 5,130 families
- Child labour practices in fireworks and matchstick factories dropped to almost zero
- Shift in community mindset — from sending children to work to proudly sending them to school
- Families became less dependent on fireworks jobs, turning to agriculture and small businesses.
- Higher education enrolment increased, with growing ambition among youth to study and lead

Meanwhile, the work deepened in Vembakottai and expanded further into Tiruchuli and Narikudi blocks, responding to new and emerging needs in these areas - developing their full potential, especially among youth and adolescent girls. Education, higher studies, life skills, and community participation became core priorities

Phase 3: From Protection to Development (2008–2017)

This phase was not only about keeping children safe — it was about helping them grow, lead, and thrive.”

As the partnership moved into Vembakottai, Tiruchuli, and Narikudi Blocks, new challenges came up. Prolonged drought made farming unviable, pushing many families to seek work in private mills. In a 14 km stretch alone, there were 21 mills, placing children at high risk of dropping out of school and entering the workforce.

40 villages across Vembakottai (16 villages), Tiruchuli, and Narikudi Blocks (24 villages)

Key Interventions

- ❑ Creation of Child Rights Protection Committees (CRPCs)
- ❑ Child protection awareness at family, school, and community levels
- ❑ Children Learning Centres (CLCs) to improve learning and retention

- ❑ Addressing school drop-outs, child marriages & higher education especially among adolescent girls belonging to Dalit communities
- ❑ Youth development programs – Career guidance, higher education support
- ❑ Skill training in computers, driving, tailoring, and entrepreneurial skills
- ❑ Alternative livelihoods for families, especially women- skill training, microenterprise development
- ❑ School infrastructure improvement — toilets, digital classrooms, and biointensive gardens
- ❑ Climate action and natural resource management through land development and watershed programs for strengthening agriculture, their primary occupation.

Impact Summary

- 3,600 sponsored children, plus 7,600 other children and 4,370 families directly benefited and the impact areas as follows
- Schools were upgraded in several villages and girls enrolled and continued in school
- Increase in first-generation Dalit students enrolling in professional courses
- Over 500 youth in gainful employment, many earning around ₹20,000 per month
- Over 1,000 acres of barren land have been transformed into fertile farmland, revitalizing local agriculture and livelihoods
- 12 village tanks renovated, improving access to drinking water and irrigation



Phase 4: From Development to Sustainability (2018–2025)

As the program matured, the focus shifted from development to building sustainable systems that could continue without constant external support.

Empowering local leaders — especially Dalit and women leaders — became a key priority, along with engaging Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and helping communities lead their own development

34 villages across Tiruchuli, Aruppukottai, and Narikudi Blocks

Key Interventions

- Build Inclusive leadership through training for Dalit leaders, sensitisation of others, and capacity building of women in local governance
- Strengthening Women Self-Help Groups and Federations on governance, child focused interventions, linking with appropriate government departments
- Promotion and Strengthening of Farmer Producer Organization (FPO)
- Engaging PRIs (local leaders) on child rights, health, climate change, and livelihoods
- Collaborated with government departments to address child development issues, set up early childhood centres (ICDS), improve transport access, and support higher education and infrastructure in villages.
- Promotion of climate literacy among children and communities through village forums, school campaigns, Oxy Parks, and actions like climate science, reducing plastic use, tree planting, saving electricity, and increasing green cover.
- Organised sports and theme-based youth events to promote unity, gender equality and social inclusion

Impact Summary

- ✓ 1,700 sponsored children, plus 3,400 other children and 7,100 families directly benefited
- ✓ Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) trained and actively engaged with panchayats and government systems to ensure sustained, community led development.
- ✓ 15 Village Development Committees (VDCs) mobilizing resources from local sponsors and ensuring child rights in their villages

- ✓ Local leaders and PRIs strongly engage in social harmony, gender inclusion, and child rights protection
- ✓ Strengthened livelihoods for Dalit families, especially through self-employment initiatives
- ✓ 3 Oxy Parks created, and climate awareness extended to 10 more villages which led to replication of 14 more Oxy Parks in nearby panchayats by their own



30 Years of Impact- At a Glance

Over the past three decades, the partnership between **SPEECH** and **Children Believe** has reached thousands of children, families, and communities across rural Virudhunagar. Here's what changed — in numbers:

What We have Done- A Snapshot

Children First

- ✓ 27,652 children reached
- ✓ 8,275 sponsored and supported
- ✓ 1,586 children rescued from child labour
- ✓ 10,480 children nurtured under early childhood care
- ✓ 22,680 children supported in education – schooling to higher education
- ✓ 15,868 children accessed healthcare
- ✓ 229 differently-abled children included
- ✓ 4,265 children actively engaged in 34 Creative Learning Centres (CLCs)

Stronger Families

- 8,870 Dalit families empowered
- 11,425 families from other castes included
- 1,678 families started small enterprises
- 510 families found secure employment
- 4,425 families accessed social protection schemes
- 550 families supported with household toilets

Community-Led Institutions

- ❖ 650 Women SHGs (Self Help Groups) formed
- ❖ 2 Women Federations created
- ❖ 1 FPO with 1,030 women farmers
- ❖ 34 Youth Clubs & 34 ECHO Clubs activated
- ❖ 50 CMCJ groups for climate action
- ❖ 9 Palar Panchayats (Children's Parliament) formed
- ❖ 62 Parent Groups strengthened

Schools & Infrastructure

- 27 schools improved with infrastructure support
- 5 schools upgraded
- 8 villages connected with roads
- 51 villages supported with water and sanitation
- 710 toilets built
- 49 safe drinking water points installed

Natural Resource Management

- ❑ 22 water bodies restored
- ❑ 62,350 trees planted
- ❑ 14 Oxy Parks developed
- ❑ 1,250 acres treated under watershed – benefiting 790 farmers

What We Achieved - A Snapshot

Children

- 100% increase in school enrolment over 30 years
- 99.9% reduction in school dropouts
- 92% of children now reach higher education
- 99.9% decline in child rights violations- child labour, marriage, and abuse

- Children now lead 50+ local forums and issue-based groups
- Over 4,000 children improved life skills, communication, and self-confidence
- Joyful learning has replaced traditional learning for children in 34 learning centres
- Regular hygiene and health practices among children improved

Families

- ✓ 99% of families now fund their children's education
- ✓ Households with home-grown vegetables improving nutrition security
- ✓ Girl child education priorities and no early marriages
- ✓ 45% of youth have regular employment or run their own businesses
- ✓ Intergenerational poverty is breaking, as first-generation learners enter college and jobs
- ✓ Child marriage and child labour have become socially unacceptable

Communities

- ❖ 326 community groups continue to function independently
- ❖ 60 villages now openly practise social inclusion, reducing caste-based discrimination
- ❖ Women's collective action has improved decision-making at home and in the community
- ❖ More than 650 SHGs matured into economic and social platforms for empowerment
- ❖ Collective funds have reduced dependency on external aid
- ❖ Eco-friendly habits are now part of everyday community behaviour

Stakeholders & Ecosystem

- Panchayats now integrate child rights and gender equality in village plans
- Government officials and local industries now engage with communities
- Private mills and companies have adopted labour welfare measures and zero child labour
- Schools, ICDS, and ITIs have improved infrastructure and inclusivity
- Community feedback mechanisms embedded in local governance
- NGO–community–government collaboration evolved into a resilient ecosystem

Restoring Rights of Adolescent Girls and Young Women Jun 2022 – May 2025

Funding partner: Azim Premji Foundation – APF

Goal:

Retrieving Rights of Adolescent Girls and Young Women in Virudhunagar District of Tamil Nadu

Key Objectives

- Prevention of Adolescents from various types of abuses and exploitations
- Ensure women empowerment through strengthening their economic and social status
- Ensuring access, the quality of education and health facilities by promoting various welfare activities



Project Coverage, Duration & Budget

Target Group

- Adolescent Girls (13–19 years)
- Young Women (20–25 years)
- 9662 vulnerable families covering a total population of 33868

Location

- 40 villages in 4 Blocks (Tiruchuli, Narikudi, Kariapatti & Aruppukottai) of Virudhunagar District, Tamil Nadu
- **Duration:** 3 Years (2022 - 2025)
- **Budget:** 2.4 Crores



Outcomes and Impacts- Prevention of Exploitation & Abuse

- 437 petitions submitted; 126 CAG members joined SMCs and helped renovate 6 schools
- 162 dropout cases identified and prevented; CAGs intervened in early child marriage risks
- 40 tuition centres supported 1,364 children with continuous learning
- Youth-led cultural campaigns (street plays, songs, skits) raised awareness effectively
- Strong partnership with District Child Protection Unit (DCPU)



Outcomes and Impacts-Education, Health and Social Protection

- 40 Village Education Committees formed; ₹12.2L mobilized locally
- 364 vulnerable children supported with education aid
- 1,600+ children & adolescents benefited from 12+ health camps and VHNs follow-up
- 14 mental health sessions conducted for adolescents, parents, and workers
- 10,771 social protection linkages (ESI, EPF, insurance, education schemes)



Outcomes and Impacts-Women's Economic and Social Empowerment

- 122 SHGs supported; all manage records independently and linked to federations
- ₹10,000 revolving fund provided per SHG for livelihood activities
- 14 Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) formed in mills (target was 10); 16 trained WSG members serve on ICCs
- Quarterly ICC meetings conducted without fail, improving safety and legal compliance
- Community Action Federation formed; active in block-level advocacy and issue resolution



Case Stories

Aathikulam Gets Its First-Ever Bus Service

Aathikulam, a remote village in Kariyapatti block, lacked safe access to public transport. School children had to walk 2 km through dense, unsafe paths—leading to absenteeism, dropouts, and increased vulnerability to child labour.

SPEECH and the local Community Action Group raised the issue through multiple petitions. When that failed, Adolescent Boys Group members escalated the matter and met the Finance Minister of Tamil Nadu in person, advocating for their village.

Their bold move worked — a daily bus service was sanctioned, improving school attendance and reducing safety risks.

☞ *This story shows the power of community advocacy and youth leadership in driving real change.*



Case Stories

Life Saved. Crisis Averted.

Thangaponnu, a 35-year-old mother from K. Velayudhapuram village in Thiruchuli block, faced a critical uterine condition that required emergency surgery costing ₹1.2 lakh—far beyond her family's means.

Earlier, during a social protection enrolment drive by SPEECH, her family was registered under the Chief Minister's Health Insurance Scheme.

Thanks to this, her surgery was fully covered. Thangaponnu recovered quickly and resumed caring for her daughters and home.

"The insurance saved my life—and saved my daughters from crisis," she shared.

This story highlights how timely access to government schemes can protect lives and ensure family stability.

Progress of the Proposal on GBV Project Retrieving Rights of Adolescent Girls and Young Women

- Project Concept Paper and proposal submitted to the foundation.
- Project Program Visit (Stakeholders & Community Groups Meeting) & Finance visits are completed.
- Operational Area finalized
 - Directly working in 40 villages of 13 Panchayaths in Thiruchuli block, Virudhunagar District.
 - Balance Panchayaths and Villages of Thiruchuli also covered in the project in extensive approach.
- Project Design, Budget & Activities are finalized.

Waiting for Approval of the Foundation



SOCIETY FOR PEOPLE'S EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC CHANGE

SOCIAL PROTECTION SCHEME

WELCOME TO ALL

BOARD MEETING FY-2025-2026 (SEP-28)



Key Objective – Sector Focuses

SOCIAL PROTECTION SCHEMES FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES VIRUDHUNAGAR DISTRICT

SECTOR

- ✓ Agriculture
- ✓ Skill Development and Financial Inclusion
- ✓ Healthcare & Nutrition
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Livestock/Animal Husbandry



FACILITATING ACCESS TO

- ❖ Social Entitlements
- ❖ Financial Services
- ❖ Trained on various schemes through Unified Help Desk

1st Phase- 2024-2025

GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

S.No	Block	Panchayat	Village
1	Thiruchuli	40	128
2	Narikudi	44	134
3	Kariyapatti	36	136
4	Aruppukottai	32	69
5	Sattur	46	96

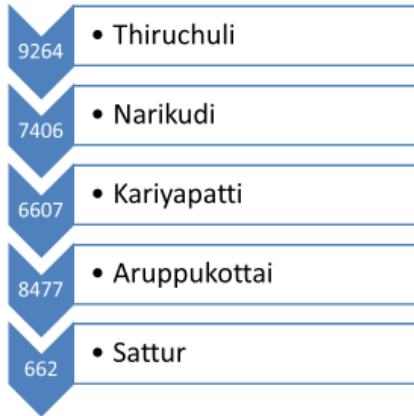
PROJECT PERIOD

2024 October – 2025 March

TARGET

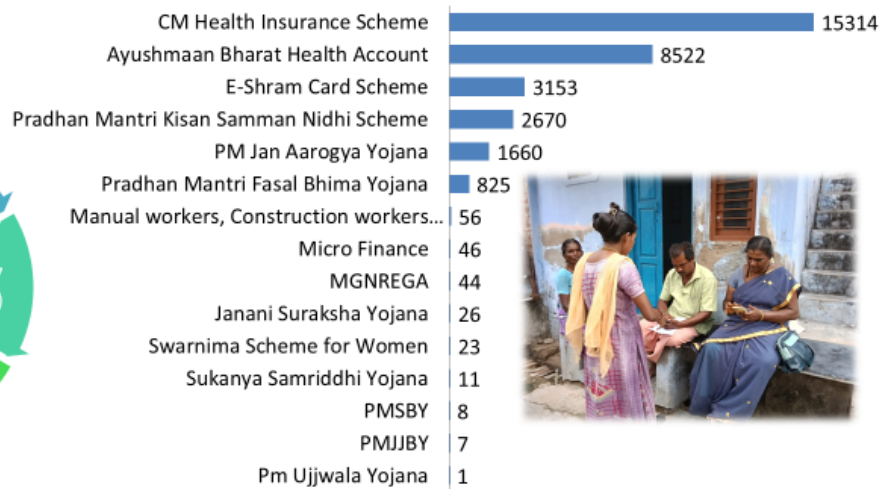
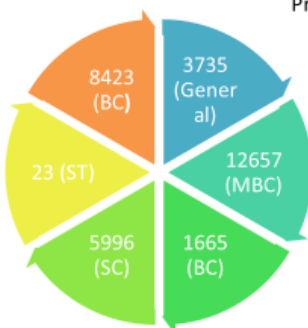
32000 No's

ACHIEVED- 32366



CATEGORY OF SCHEMES

Social Breakup



2nd Phase- 2025-2026

GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

S.No	Block	Panchayat	Village
1	Narikudi	44	134
2	Kariyapatti	36	132
3	Aruppukottai	33	53
4	Sivakasi	55	27
5	Watrap	27	18

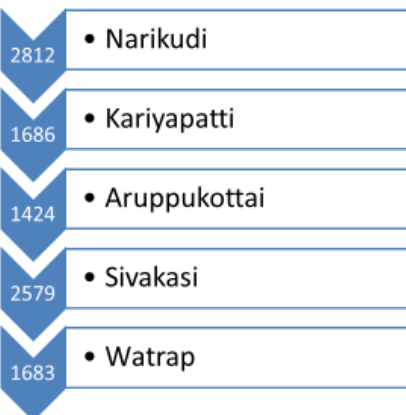
PROJECT PERIOD

2025 June – 2026 March

TARGET

35000 No's

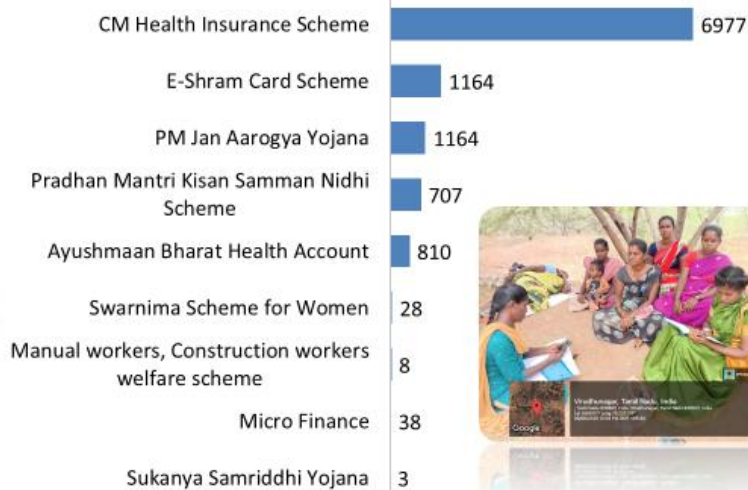
ACHIEVED-10180



Social Breakup



CATEGORY OF SCHEMES



Key achievements

- ✓ Since we successfully completed the first phase, the donor has approved the 2nd phase as well.
- ✓ SPECCH has Facilitating under the Social Protection Scheme in 7 blocks in Virudhunagar district and we have enrolled 42516 beneficiaries under various government schemes under this Project.
- ✓ Last year, government Schemes worth Rs. 51,54,31,679 were provided to the people through this Project.
- ✓ We have Focused Vulnerable Communities (SC, ST & Tribal) in this Project.
- ✓ As a result of the donor's trust in SPEECH through this program, they have recommended it to other donor projects. (SEED)
- ✓ Through this project, we have facilitating various government schemes to rural villages that are not connected to transportation.
- ✓ We have created a bond of government stakeholders through this project.